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AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANISATIONAL
COMMITMENT AND COMMUNICATION CLIMATE IN TWO
ORGANISATIONS EXPERIENCING CHANGE.



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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between organisational commitment and communication climate in two organisations experiencing change. Emphasis was placed on personal qualities of leaders and included a discussion on trust, honesty and openness, and the impact of the leader's personal qualities on each organisation's communication climate.

Methodologies used were both qualitative and quantitative. Research settings were the Eastern Institute of Technology, Napier, and the New Zealand Fire Service - Napier and Hastings Stations. Eighty-seven respondents participated in the study. Both organisations were experiencing change which added another dimension to the study. Data collection techniques included a questionnaire survey and structured interviews. For the questionnaire survey, a selection of questions from sources which included Mowday, Porter and Steers (1979) Organisational Commitment Questionnaire and Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto and Wio (1979, 1984) communication climate questionnaire were used in conjunction with newly formulated questions.

Communication climate is one of the many factors that impact on organisational commitment. In this study, it is isolated from other antecedents and correlates of organisational commitment.

Results indicated that there is a relationship between organisational commitment and communication climate. Commitment to the organisation tended to be low when the climate exhibited characteristics of a defensive communication climate. When supportive characteristics were evident, organisational commitment tended to be higher. However, due to the nature of the work, when the climate was not as supportive, commitment to the clients of the organisation remained high.

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A thesis presented in partial
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INTRODUCTION

Thesis research: "enquiry to bring about a better understanding of the phenomenon [under study]" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p.21).

1.1 BACKGROUND

The catalysts for this investigation into the communication arena were the current topical nature of organisational commitment and organisational communication in industry, and a belief asserted by the General Manager of the Central Division of the New Zealand Institute of Management, Mr Ian Balfour, who said,

I'm convinced the one single issue which causes most companies problems is communications, or more correctly the lack of good communications. By this I mean the verbal, written, body language, and modern media (personal computers, e-mail etc). So often companies do not communicate well with their staff, shareholders, or customers with the obvious results (personal communication, 20 February, 1997).

1.2 INTRODUCTION

General Norman Schwarzkopf (1997) asserted that people are the fundamental elements of business, during his presentation for the World Masters of Business Seminar. He claimed, "without people systems would fail". People are the greatest resource for every organisation (Iacocca, 1986; Bolger, 1997; Makin cited in Du Chateau, 1996; Newland, 1996 cited in Trerise, 1997b; Toulson, 1990a; Handy, 1994; Lange, 1997; Lowy & Reimus, 1996). Power (1996, p.6) claims that "employees are the one asset the organisation has that can determine its success".

Ledford, Strahley and Wendenhof (1995) proclaimed that it was committed people who provided the success for Eaton Corporation, a Fortune 500 organisation. Henry Ford said that he could rebuild the Ford Motor Company, with "the five people who listened when I spoke and knew what I wanted" (cited in Yarwood, 1992, p.34). Levi Strauss' CEO feels the aspirations of his staff are the organisation's most important asset (Howard, 1990).

Communication has always been central to organisational activity (Orlikowski & Yates, 1992). Communication climate research conducted by Shockley-Zalabak (1985) concludes that it is strongly related to organisational behaviour, which supports Toulson's (1990, p.99) assertion that "increased productivity can only be achieved through the more effective use of people". Advances in technology do increase productivity but the ultimate decisions about its use are effected through people.

Dewe and Marshall (1996) propose that organisations are becoming value driven, and culture and organisational missions are essential elements in the process. Leaders must create a vision, communicate it to others, and encourage them to want to turn the vision into reality. Increasingly, change is what business is about. Leaders need to provide a vision and sense of mission, instil pride and gain trust and respect. Indeed, Fielder and House (1988) reaffirm this with their assertion that contemporary organisations believe in the power of ownership of vision and goals by all employees. An issue apparent for Angle and Perry (1981) was that organisational effectiveness was dependent on organisational members behaving in a manner which supports the goals of the organisation.

1.3 THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study considers the relationship between organisational commitment and communication climate. The data collection techniques include case study analysis, interviewing, and a questionnaire survey.

Two research sites were case studied - The Eastern Institute of Technology (EIT), Napier and the New Zealand Fire Service, Hastings and Napier stations. In total, 87 employees were surveyed, and 17% of these respondents participated in structured interviews. Several staff from both organisations participated in informal discussions during the year in which this project was put together. Both organisations are experiencing change, which adds another dimension to the present study.

The broad theories and research discussed in the literature review include organisational commitment, organisational communication, organisational climate, communication climate and organisational change.

It is accepted that leaders are not necessarily the same as managers, and a plethora of literature and research has been developed on these differences. However, for the purposes of the present study, as the focus does not include a discussion on the

distinction between these two constructs, the terms *manager* and *leader* have been used interchangeably in some instances.

1.4 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF CONCEPTS - RESEARCH VARIABLES

Five concepts, which form the foundation of the present study, are discussed in the Literature Review. These key elements are briefly described below.

1.4.1 ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

Organisational commitment can be defined as a “broad attitude towards one’s employing organisation, with components in terms of loyalty, acceptance of organisational goals and a desire to remain as a member” (Cook, Hepworth, Wall & Warr, 1981, p.76). A premise of the present study is that ultimately it is commitment, not authority, that produces results. “If firefighters were not committed, nothing else would work” (Trerise, personal communication, 20 June, 1997).

1.4.2 ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Open communication is achieved when listening skills, trust and honesty are operationalised. Sligo (1985) suggests that as long as staff are well informed about what guides management in their decision making, they will be able to think holistically about their contribution to the strategic direction of their organisation.

1.4.3 ORGANISATIONAL CLIMATE

Organisational climate “is a relatively enduring quality of the internal environment of the organisation that (a) is experienced by its members, (b) influences their behaviour, and (c) can be described in terms of values of a particular set of characteristics” (Tagiuri, cited in Cook, Hepworth, Wall & Warr, 1981).

1.4.4 COMMUNICATION CLIMATE

Communication climate is a specialised aspect of communication. It is defined as the “degree of supportiveness, trust, confidence, openness, and [honesty] present in an organisation” (Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto, Wiio, 1979, p.234).

1.4.5 ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

Lipton (1997, p.11) suggests that

A vision serves as a road map for companies as they move through accelerated change. Lack of vision is why transformation efforts

frequently fail. The use of vision as a management tool is the most significant determinant for easing the transition from a bureaucratic to a flexible organisation.

1.5 OVERVIEW OF THE PRESENT STUDY

Chapter One continues with a presentation of the research objectives, research question, and the guiding hypotheses.

In Chapter Two, the five part Literature Review begins with a discussion on organisational commitment, a fundamental element in the present study. Antecedents, correlates and consequences of commitment are discussed as the investigation develops. Part two - organisational communication - examines a model of communication and considers perceptual processes, a key aspect of interpersonal communication. An argument is put forward for management *being* communication, and consideration is given as to how to manage the communication process. Part three provides a brief overview of organisational climate. Dimensions and components of climate are outlined here. This provides an introduction to the discussion on communication climate in Part four, where major influences on communication climate are discussed, and the dichotomies of communication climate are outlined. Included in this section is a discussion on some of the personal qualities of leaders, a few of which coincide with the elements in the definition of communication climate. Part five – organisational change - provides the context within which the case study organisations were examined. A model for the change wave is introduced here.

Methodologies are the subject of Chapter Three. Arguments for quantitative and quantitative paradigms of research are reviewed, as are the methods of data collection used. This section provides an investigation into the methodologies applied in the present study in a sequential manner.

Historical information and an overview of the New Zealand Fire Service and EIT, the case study organisations form Chapter Four. Issues considered include an organisational overview, the staff and structure, and organisational change.

The results of the empirical study, and discussion are presented in the next two chapters, Five and Six.

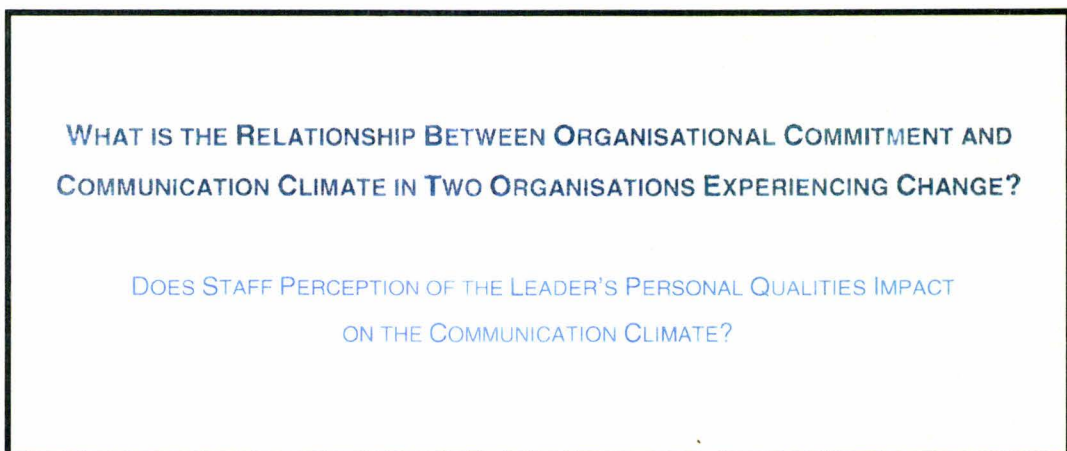
Results of this research have important implications for future study. These implications and the limitations of the present study are explored in Chapter Seven. Another issue discussed is the benefit from the present study.

1.6 THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The present study has the following research objectives:

1. To determine the relationship, if any, between communication climate and employees' commitment to an organisation.
2. To determine the impact communication climate has, if any, on organisational commitment.
3. To determine the strength of the correlation between communication climate and organisational commitment.
4. To consider whether staff perceptions of the leader's personal qualities impact on the communication climate.
5. To determine whether personal qualities of organisational leaders are communicated through informal and formal communication channels.

1.7 THE RESEARCH QUESTION



The substance of any study is in the research question (Frederikson, 1996; Dane, 1990). This study incorporates a broad examination of organisational communication and the definitive path of communication climate.

Some organisational commitment studies have considered phenomena associated with why people have commitment to their organisations, and what influences their reason for committing to an organisation. The present study examines the impact communication climate has, if any, on organisational commitment.

Incorporating organisational change into the research question provides for a context to examine the research sites. The New Zealand Fire Service is experiencing change stemming from corporate restructuring. EIT changed its direction in 1995. Once known as the Hawke's Bay Polytechnic, the new name more accurately reflects the programmes available to its constituents, incorporating degree level programmes and traditional polytechnic strengths (EIT, 1997a).

1.8 GUIDING ASSUMPTIONS

The present study has the following assumptions:

1. that there are factors other than communication climate to which organisational commitment can be attributed.
2. that communication is an antecedent of organisational commitment, as concluded by many researchers.
3. that highly committed employees are likely to remain with the organisation and work towards its goals, a conclusion put forward by Mowday, Porter and Steers (1982).
4. that analysis will reveal evidence consistent with a definition of organisational commitment.
5. that personal qualities of leaders play an important role in determining the communication climate of an organisation.
6. that in terms of organisational change it is good to have a committed work force, and this commitment may be facilitated through the organisation's communication climate.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

"All research stems from some sort of theory; explicit or implicit though it may be, theory is always present" (Dane, 1990, p.63).

OVERVIEW

Many theories have been proposed on the present study's research question and components. The selected theories have been chosen based on Myers' (1990) criteria. He suggests that a good theory performs well in certain areas:

...these are that it (1) effectively summarises a wide range of observations; (2) it makes clear predictions that can be used (a) to confirm or modify the theory, (b) to generate new exploration, and (c) to suggest practical application (1990, p.17).

A strategy is "no good if people don't fundamentally believe in it" (Howard, 1990, p.134). In the 1970s Levi Strauss and Company staff did as they were told but they did not believe in the strategy so they were not committed to it. The business was later reshaped around a new Aspirations Statement. The new philosophy accepted that staff wanted to feel listened to, and to be treated fairly. The CEO sought new behaviours including leaders who were open to influence and exemplified trust. The CEO stated that "not only must we model these behaviours but we must coach others to adopt them" (Howard, 1990, p.135). Ethics and communication became paramount. The CEO wanted his employees to know what was expected of them and to receive timely, honest feedback, "because we value open and direct communication, we give people permission to disagree" (Howard, 1990, p.138).

This extract from Howard's (1990) work reflects the essence of the following Literature Review by incorporating many of the issues and elements espoused in the present dissertation – commitment, communication, organisation change and communication climate dimensions. Common themes exemplified in the discussion include feedback and perception. These components consistently recur throughout the body of the text.

PART ONE

ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

"It is commitment, not authority, that produces results"

(Gore, cited in Blanchard, 1996, p.14).

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Most of the literature testifies to the fact that committed employees are performing employees (Baron & Greenberg, 1990; Johnson, 1995; Kanter, 1968) and, because of this, organisational commitment cannot be left to chance.

Research demonstrates that organisational commitment is both a consequence and antecedent of behaviour. It has been linked to many employee behaviours, including job performance, absenteeism and intention to stay with an organisation (Mottaz, 1988; Boulian, Mowday, Porter and Steers, 1974; Baron & Greenberg, 1990; Argyle, 1989; Eisenberger, Hutchison, Huntington & Sowa, 1986). However, an exception to most studies was found in Steers' (1977) study of hospital employees, scientists and engineers. Here performance was generally found to be unrelated to commitment. Further, Angle and Perry (1981) in their study of organisations offering bus services found that organisational commitment was associated with turnover but not with absenteeism.

Trust, respect, open two way communication and the opportunity for employees to develop their skills and to see that their contributions are valued, are just some of the factors to be examined when considering commitment (Power, 1996).

Commitment emphasises "attachment to the employing organisation, including its goals and values... and appears to develop slowly but consistently over time" (Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1979, p.226).

2.2 DEFINITION

Commitment has been defined and measured in various ways (Allen & Meyer, 1990, Angle & Perry, 1981). Buchanan (1974), Mathieu and Zajac (1990) and Mowday, Porter and Steers (1982) suggest that many definitions have been formulated.

An issue apparent for researchers Beyer, Stevens and Trice (1978) was that two distinct approaches of commitment are prevalent. They purport that one approach is *psychological*, referring to “an attitude or orientation toward the organisation which links or attaches the identity of the person to the organisation” (Sheldon, 1971, p.143 cited in Beyer, Stevens & Trice, 1978, p.381). As Lahiry (1994) points out, researchers generally differ on the basis of the attachment. The second approach is the *exchange* approach, which refers to the side bet theory (Becker, 1960) or notion of exchange (Mottaz, 1988). Mathieu and Zajac (1990) suggest that the common theme in the definitions is the link the individual has to the employing organisation.

The present study adopts the definition used by researchers, including Mowday, Porter and Steers (1977); Alutto & Hrebiniak (1972); Morrow (1983, 1993); Mottaz (1988); Argyle (1989); Lahiry (1994); Power (1996) and Johnson (1995). It is “the relative strength of an individual’s identification with, and involvement in a particular organisation” (Boulian, Mowday, Porter and Steers, 1974; Steers, 1977). Implicit in this definition of commitment is that “highly committed employees should have a strong desire and intent to remain with the organisation... and be more likely to have a strong desire to come to work and contribute toward goal attainment” (Steers, 1977, p.48).

Morrow (1993) suggests that organisational commitment is the psychological attachment of a member to an organisation, as opposed to commitment to various groups within an organisation such as management (Reichers, 1985 cited in Morrow, 1993) or the work group (Zaccaro & Dobbins, 1989 cited in Morrow, 1993). This definition represents something beyond passive loyalty. It is an active relationship where individuals are willing to give something of themselves in order to contribute to the organisation’s well being. “High levels of organisational commitment are associated with acceptance of the organisation’s values and willingness to expend effort on its behalf” (Baron & Greenberg, 1990). Indeed, commitment is often demonstrated by an individual’s expression of belief and actions (Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1979).

2.3 ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

According to Levinson (1965 cited in Eisenberger, Hutchison, Huntington & Sowa, 1986), that people personify organisations suggests that the actions of the agents of the organisations are actions of the organisation itself.

COMMUNICATION CLIMATE

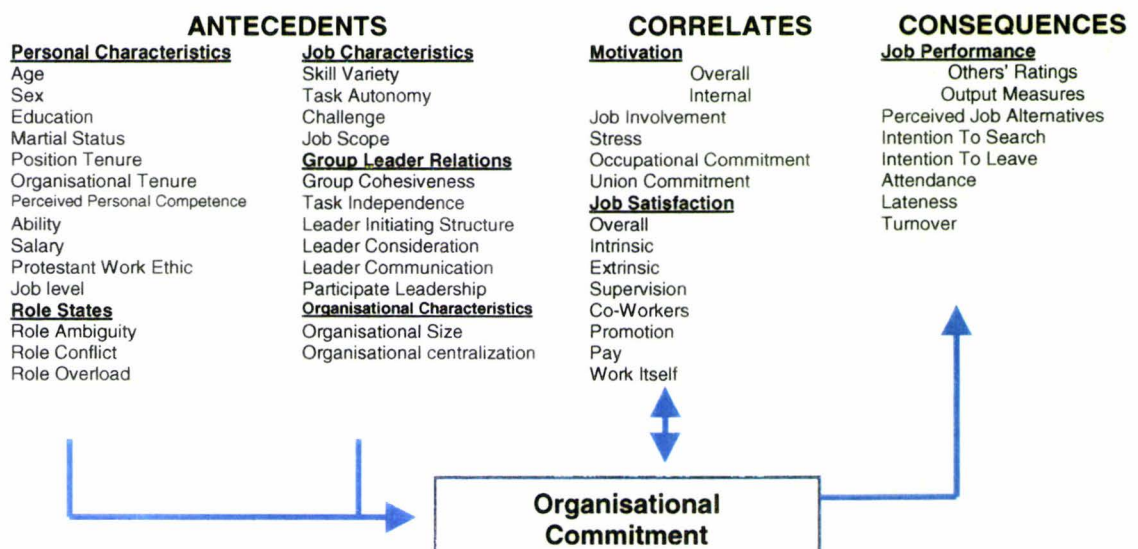
As a consequence, organisational commitment has been linked to many variables (Lahiry, 1994), role states, and aspects of the work environment ranging from job characteristics to organisational structure (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Romzek, 1989 cited in Johnson, 1995).

In its role as an antecedent of employee behaviour, commitment has been used to predict employee behaviours such as absenteeism and performance (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). The point is further emphasised by Steers' (1977) and Becker's (1960) assertion that antecedents of commitment are diverse in their nature and origin.

Other variables of behaviour, referred to as correlates which include job satisfaction and job involvement, have also demonstrated relationships with organisational commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Romzek, 1989 cited in Johnson, 1995; Steers, 1977).

Mathieu and Zajac (1990) constructed Table 2.1, from their in-depth empirical analysis of antecedents, correlates and consequences of organisation commitment. This Figure also serves to integrate some of the various studies mentioned in this section.

TABLE 2.1 - CLASSIFICATION OF ANTECEDENTS, CORRELATES, AND CONSEQUENCES OF ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT



Source: Mathieu and Zajac (1990).

Mottaz (1988) suggests that the antecedents and consequences of organisational commitment can be grouped into two main categories. These are individual and organisational characteristics. The individual characteristics consist of demographic or status variables and relate to variables such as age, tenure, education, and work values. Organisational characteristics relate to work experiences such as pay and promotional opportunities.

Intrinsic rewards have been reported to be the most powerful determinant of commitment, followed by extrinsic social and organisational rewards (Mottaz, 1988). However, the degree to which each was powerful varied according to the occupational groups studied.

Findings from Mathieu and Zajac's (1990) empirical study confirms a high degree of interrelationship between organisational commitment and all of the correlates except for extrinsic job satisfaction, which exhibited a smaller degree of interrelationship than the others.

Despite the substantial number of studies on the antecedents and consequences of commitment, Mottaz (1988) suggests that there is little agreement on the impact each factor has on the concept. This assertion is supported by others, including Reichers (1985 cited in Morrow, 1993) and Steers (1977).

Power (1996) presents three reasons why organisational commitment has received attention by researchers. The first is that commitment has been shown to reduce turnover. Secondly, enhancing the known factors of commitment is deemed to increase loyalty, a behaviour managers desire in an employee. Thirdly, management can become aware of ways to get the best from their staff, and commitment "ultimately gives the worker a purpose for coming to work each day and fulfilling their purpose and desires in life" (Power, 1996, p.8).

2.4 TYPES OF COMMITMENT

Five types of organisational commitment have been measured and studied (Morrow, 1983, Argyle, 1989). These are:

1. Loyalty/commitment to the organisation
2. Loyalty/commitment to the union
3. Commitment to a career
4. Valuing work as an end in itself (the Protestant Work Ethic)

5. Absorption and involvement in the job (similar to intrinsic motivation)

Power (1996) suggests other forms of commitment have been studied which include community commitment. Coverdale (1997), suggested that people should become more attached to professional organisations such as The New Zealand Institute of Management (Presentation in Wellington, 26 March, 1997).

The focus of the present study is type one: organisation commitment. Commitment to an organisation, argue Argyle (1989), Morrow (1993) and Johnson (1995), is the variable which has received the most attention due to its value in predicting work behaviour. Organisation commitment refers to “a psychological attachment to the entire organisation, as opposed to various constituencies within the organisation” (Power, 1996, p. 9).

Zoglio (1995) points out that commitment to corporate values and purpose provides the employee with a clear sense of direction, particularly if they can see how their work fits into the organisational picture.

2.5 TYPE ONE: ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT APPROACHES

Argyle (1989) suggests that there are two types of commitment, the first being *calculative commitment* based on rewards, and the second being *affective commitment*, based on non-instrumental attachment, through internalising the values of the organisation.

Research by Morrow (1993), Shouksmith (1994), and Allen and Meyer (1990) suggests that at least three perspectives of the nature of organisational commitment have been developed. These are functions of calculative (also known as continuance organisational commitment), normative, and affective (also known as attitudinal organisational commitment) involvement of employee dedication to an organisation. Morrow (1993) suggests that these orientations are probably independent of one another, although they may share some antecedents. These approaches are discussed below.

The following discussion focuses on calculative and continuance approaches, the attitudinal approach, the affective approach, the normative approach, and the integrative approach.

2.5.1 CALCULATIVE AND CONTINUANCE APPROACHES

Becker (1960) inspired the calculative and continuance approaches (Allen & Meyer, 1984; Morrow, 1993). Inspiration came from the side-bet theory of organisations, “a structural phenomenon which occurs as a result of individual-organisation transactions and alterations in side-bets or investments overtime” (Alutto and Hrebiniak, 1972, p.556). The focus is on the exchange components of the employee-organisation relationship, that is, those things that might be lost when a person leaves an organisation such as established relationships and seniority.

Power (1996, p.11) refers to calculative commitment as being “the reward of money for the service of working for the organisation”, and suggests that an employee often measures reward for participation by their remuneration package.

The distinction between the two approaches “incorporates assessments regarding the perceived ease of movement for one organisation to another” (Morrow, 1993). Allen and Meyer (1990) suggest that employees with continuance or calculative commitment remain with an organisation because they need to.

One approach to the concept of commitment is that it seeks to account for why people consistently engage in lines of activity over a time period (Becker, 1960). Becker introduces an array of arguments regarding why this may happen. These arguments include the fact that activity of a particular kind is regarded as morally right. However, all efforts to explain consistent lines of activity, Becker (1960) states, are met with criticism. From his discussion, the theory of a side bet was developed. This conclusion, however, is contradictory to most research findings.

Analysis of these constructs can be considered with respect to issues including age, occupational commitment, education and attitudinal organisational commitment (Morrow, 1993; Arnold, Robertson & Cooper, 1991 cited in Shouksmith, 1994; Kanter 1968).

Other researchers such as Allen and Meyer (1984; 1990), Mathieu and Zajac (1990), Hrebiniak and Alutto (1972), Morrow (1993) and Shouksmith (1994) have conducted empirical research on calculative and continuance organisational commitment.

Calculative or continuance commitment is not the only way to consider commitment, suggest Allen and Meyer (1984). They investigated other researchers who have

conceptualised commitment as an affective or emotional orientation to an organisation. Morrow (1993) saw this as Allen and Meyer's attempt to account for an employee remaining with an organisation when external inducements are high.

2.5.2 ATTITUDINAL APPROACH

Evidence from research by Mowday, Porter and Steers (1979) suggests that commitment in terms of an *attitude* exists when "the identity of the person (is linked) to the organisation" (Sheldon, 1971, p.143 cited in Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1979, p.25). Another situation would be when the goals of the individual and the organisation "become increasingly integrated or congruent" (Hall, Nygren & Schneider 1970 cited in Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1979). This approach to commitment therefore represents a state in which "an individual identifies with a particular organisation and its goals and wishes to maintain membership in order to facilitate these goals" (Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1979).

Morrow's (1993) work reports that attitudinal organisational commitment is the most extensively used approach to organisational commitment. This construct embraces three dimensions as below:

- a strong belief in, and acceptance of, the organisation's goals and values
- a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organisation
- a strong desire to maintain membership in the organisation

(Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982, p.27).

Morrow (1993), Allen and Meyer (1984), Angle and Perry (1981), Mottaz (1988), Steers (1977), Power (1996) and Baron and Greenberg (1990) used this conceptualisation in research. Straw (1977 cited in Angle & Perry, 1981) termed this the *organisational behaviour approach*.

Commentators have suggested that research conducted under this theoretical framework has indicated that "commitment is not only a predictor of employee retention but may also be a predictor of employee effort and performance" (Angle & Perry, 1981, p.2).

Such an approach to commitment “encompasses an exchange relationship in which individuals attach themselves to the organisation in return for certain rewards or payments from the organisation” (March & Simon, 1958 cited in Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1979, p.225).

Morrow (1993) has found many correlations evident in the literature for attitudinal organisational commitment. These include findings associated with age, organisational tenure, education, job level, organisation climate, organisational change, communication and leadership.

Researchers including Boulian, Mowday, Porter and Steers (1974); Blau (1988); Meyer and Allen (1988); Morrow (1983; 1993); Shouksmith (1994); and Mathieu and Zajac (1990) have investigated attitudinal organisational commitment. Investigations by Angle and Perry (1981) found other researchers of this approach to include Porter, Crampon and Smith (1979).

2.5.3 AFFECTIVE APPROACH

Morrow (1993) confirms that Allen and Meyer developed affective organisational commitment in 1984, although they report that this concept is similar to Boulian, Mowday, Porter and Steers' (1974) attitudinal organisational commitment. Indeed, Morrow (1993) suggested that affective commitment was intended to be an alternative to the organisational commitment questionnaire.

Studies have been conducted in combination with issues including age, financial rewards, job freedom, organisational tenure, and attitudinal organisational commitment (Allen and Meyer, 1984; Morrow, 1993; Mottaz, 1988; Shouksmith, 1994; Buchanan, 1974). Power (1996) reports that intrinsic job factors such as autonomy seem to be more important than extrinsic factors such as working conditions, when considering organisational commitment from this perspective.

Many studies of age and tenure have demonstrated a significant correlation with affective measures of commitment suggesting that older employees who have been with the organisation for a long time have a stronger affective commitment to that organisation, and are more satisfied with their jobs (Allen & Meyer, 1984). Employees with affective commitment or emotional attachment, remain with the organisation because they want to (Allen and Meyer, 1984, 1990).

Within the social exchange framework, employees who perceive a high level of support from their organisation are more likely to support the organisation with affective commitment (Eisenberger, Hutchison, Huntington & Sowa 1986 cited in McFarlane Shore & Wayne, 1993).

2.5.4 NORMATIVE APPROACH

This approach reflects a feeling of obligation to remain with the organisation, and employees are loyal, and remain with the organisation, because they feel they should (Allen & Meyer, 1990 cited in Morrow, 1993, & Lahiry, 1994; Shouksmith, 1994). This is a moral dimension and includes obligations to co-workers and the whole organisation (Power, 1996).

2.5.5 INTEGRATIVE APPROACH

Allen and Meyer (1990) developed a model of organisational commitment. This model integrates affective, continuance and normative commitment, varying by influence. Shouksmith (1994 cited in Power, 1996) agreed with this model.

2.6 FACTORS AFFECTING ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

Several factors reputedly affect commitment, tabulated in Table 2.2, were developed from the findings of Steers (1977) and Baron and Greenberg (1990).

TABLE 2.2 - FACTORS AFFECTING ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

SOURCE	ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT	<p style="text-align: center;">OUTCOMES</p> <p>Desire to remain</p> <p>Intent to remain</p> <p>Attendance</p> <p>Employee retention</p> <p>Job performance</p>
<p>Job characteristics</p>	<p>The higher the level of responsibility and autonomy, the less repetitive and more interesting, the higher the level of commitment</p> <p>Conversely, the fewer the promotional opportunities, and the greater the tension and ambiguity associated with the work, the lower the level of commitment</p> <p>Task identity</p> <p>Optional interaction</p> <p>Feedback</p>	
<p>The existence of other employment opportunities</p>	<p>The greater the perceived chance of finding another job and the greater the desire of such alternatives, the lower an individual's commitment tends to be</p>	
<p>Personal characteristics</p>	<p>Older employees, those with tenure, seniority, and those satisfied with their own level of work performance tend to report higher levels of organisational commitment than others</p> <p>Male and females are reported to show roughly equal levels of commitment</p> <p>Need for achievement</p> <p>Educational level</p>	
<p>Work characteristics</p>	<p>The more satisfied people are with their supervisors, the fairness of performance appraisals and other issues, the higher their level of commitment</p> <p>Group attitudes</p> <p>Organisational dependability</p> <p>Personal import</p>	

Developed by: Perkins (1997) from the work of Baron and Greenberg (1990), Steers (1977), and Alutto and Hrebiniak (1972).

2.7 COMMITMENT AND SOCIALISATION

Power (1996), in her research on a large New Zealand organisation, contended that although factors including financial reward, promotion and career development are well known and highly researched, they are not part of an employee's daily concerns. These issues tend to be addressed intermittently as they arise. People in one's own work team, the relationships formed, and the atmosphere in the organisation are amongst factors that affect commitment.

2.8 COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

Chairman of Levi Strauss and Company, Robert Haas, has held onto the strong community values instilled in the organisation by his grandfather, the company founder. In 1984, the company underwent major restructuring resulting in heavy downsizing of staff numbers. Howard (1990) felt that Haas kept the underlying values of social commitment, bringing them to the centre of the operation, even as change was occurring. Such values include assisting employees in a successful transition if they are faced with adjusting to technological change or redundancy.

2.9 CONCLUSION

In some instances, while highly committed employees work hard and remain with the organisation, this may promote a dysfunctional environment, leading to group think practices (Morrow, 1993), or it may prove to be costly in changing environments if they are resistant to change (Baron & Greenberg, 1990). Notwithstanding these concerns, high levels of commitment are often beneficial and should be fostered in most situations (Baron & Greenberg, 1990).

Carroll du Chateau's (1997, p.5) review of the New Zealand presentation by Charles Handy, management guru, says that Handy's underlying principle for encouraging the most out of employees is to commit to them. Handy claims, "If you're going to have people commit to you, you've got to commit to them, [and you have to walk the talk]". Indeed, one implication arising from Senge's (1994) text, *The Fifth Discipline*, is that there is nothing more powerful you can do to encourage others than to model the practice yourself. This principle is further discussed in Part Four – Communication Climate.

One assertion from Senge's (1994) earlier discussion on commitment was that genuine commitment is larger than the individual. Individuals with a vision beyond their

self-interest find they have more energy than when pursuing narrower goals. The organisation that taps this level of commitment will also be strengthened.

Johnson (1995) suggests that organisations that foster and actively nurture commitment will benefit. On a wider front, society as a whole tends to benefit from employees organisational commitment stemming from a more stable workforce and possibly higher national productivity (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

PART TWO

ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION

"To succeed, communications must be based on a reservoir of trust between management and employees" (Hastings, 1996, p.691).

2.10 INTRODUCTION

Communication is a complex process to study due to its unpredictable nature, the unique meanings words hold for each person, and because communication is part of one's own personality (Timm, 1986). It is a "complex, dynamic, interactive, and relational process" (Borland, 1996, p.116). Investigating communication can lead to consideration of many variables (Downs, 1988).

A manager's role almost always involves working with other people to accomplish tasks and objectives. Communication is the tool through which this is achieved. Indeed, The Queensland Chamber of Commerce and Industry (1997, p.1) suggests that "communication as an interpersonal skill is the basic requirement for all responsible business people. Motivation, team building and ultimately productivity relies heavily on sound communication". Bavelas & Barrett (1971 cited in Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto & Wiio, 1979) suggest that communication is the essence of organised activity. It is the fundamental process out of which all other functions derive, and as Hurley (1988, p.132) suggests "communication is not an option, it is part of the job".

Timm (1986) argues that an effective communicator focuses on the receiver. Hence an understanding of how the receiver establishes an understanding, and develops sensitivity for the receiver's attitudes, feelings, ideas and values - the perceptions of the receiver - will aid in effective communication. Listening skills are a crucial element, and this point is discussed in Part Four - Communication Climate.

Leadership communication influences organisational climates (Hunt & Lee, 1976 cited in Kreps, 1986). Sales (1994) believes two fundamental principles in effective communication are good people-based skills and a sincere attitude. Additionally, general behaviour, or 'walking the talk' (Makin cited in du Chateau, 1996), sets the standards by which personal actions are judged. The latter point is further advanced in Part Four – Communication Climate.

Part of the Eaton philosophy of *excellence through people* is honest and timely communication (Ledford, Wendenhof & Strahley, 1995). Communication is a primary and vital process for organisations (Jenks, 1990; Shockley-Zalabak, 1985; Clarke, 1989; Trerise, 1997e; Lownds & Otter, 1996; Level and Galle, 1988; Ledford, Strahley & Wendenhof, 1995; Blanchard, 1996; Roberts, 1988; Buchanan, 1996; Scanlan cited in Macalister, 1993). It is said to be the “support structure for the core competencies of the firm” (Cushman & King, p.114). “Without effective communication, businesses fail and relationships wither” (Sligo, 1994). Covey (1992, p.138) suggests that communication is “mutual understanding”.

2.11 DEFINITION

Communication experts who include Anatol, Applbaum and Koehler (1981), Hawkins and Preston (1981), Ludlow and Panton (1992), and Miller (cited in Hawkins & Preston, 1981) assert that defining the concept of communication is a difficult task. Fisher points out, “if communication is ubiquitous, it is equally equivocal” (1978, p.7, cited in Anatol, Applbaum & Koehler, 1981, p.5). When seeking definitions from ten communication experts, one may receive ten different definitions.

The construct of communication can be associated with many interpretations and contexts. Miller’s definition states that, “Communication is the sending of messages with a conscious attempt to affect the receiver’s subsequent behaviour” (Miller, 1983 cited in Hawkins & Preston, 1981, p.4). This definition encompasses conscious intent to convey a message, considers the effects of the conscious intent, and emphasises results. This is a behavioural conceptualisation from an organisational perspective. “A specific response is desired by the source of any message in an organisation. When a message has an intended effect, it does not matter whether the information is shared or not” (Anatol, Applbaum & Koehler, 1981, p.6).

Written or verbal messages are part of the communication, as the construct also involves the content of the message and other signs and symbols, including body language (Bardow & More, 1991). Knibbler’s studies showed verbal content of messages accounted for seven percent of importance, placing the remaining 93% on tone of voice, gestures and body language (1990, cited in McLean, 1995). Types of communication are listed in Appendix One.

Communications are used to inform, persuade and motivate. Internal and external communication effectiveness will influence whether or not the organisation achieves its

goals. As the size of the organisation increases, so does the complexity of message transmission because of the increase in gatekeepers. Even under the best conditions, some messages will encounter obstacles, such as social status, lack of time, and level of trust (Bell & Sigband, 1986).

Luthans (1989, p.515) answers the philosophical question, "Is there a noise in the forest if a tree crashes to the ground but no one is there to hear it?" From a communication perspective, the answer is *no* because there is no one present to perceive the noise made by the sound waves. Perception is essential in communication.

2.12 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONSTRUCT

Classical scientific management theory treated communication as a passive tool for management to convey information. The Hawthorne experience was a contributing factor in humanists investigating communication. This is due to the discovery that management and worker rapport was a catalyst for improved morale and productivity. Further, informal communication channels were seen to be just as effective as formal channels. Supervisors were encouraged to communicate approval and friendly encouragement. When organisations were viewed as a process rather than a structure, communication came to be seen as a crucial force in organisational life (Anatol, Applbaum, & Koehler, 1981).

Humanist and scientific management models regard communication as a "controlled, passive instrument of authority; neither treats it as a force that shapes and is shaped by the environment in which it operates" (Anatol, Applbaum, & Koehler, 1981, p.36).

People who are managed need to be communicated with. However, a manager cannot command a subordinate to be motivated. This downward mode of communication will not necessarily work. Contemporary management theory considers using interactive communication to better understand the recipients of the messages. This is the development of the organic organisation where power is shared and autonomy is experienced. Campbell (1986) sees the mode by which organisations function as changing; for example, companies practising the self-managing team concept find that 'directing' staff is inappropriate.

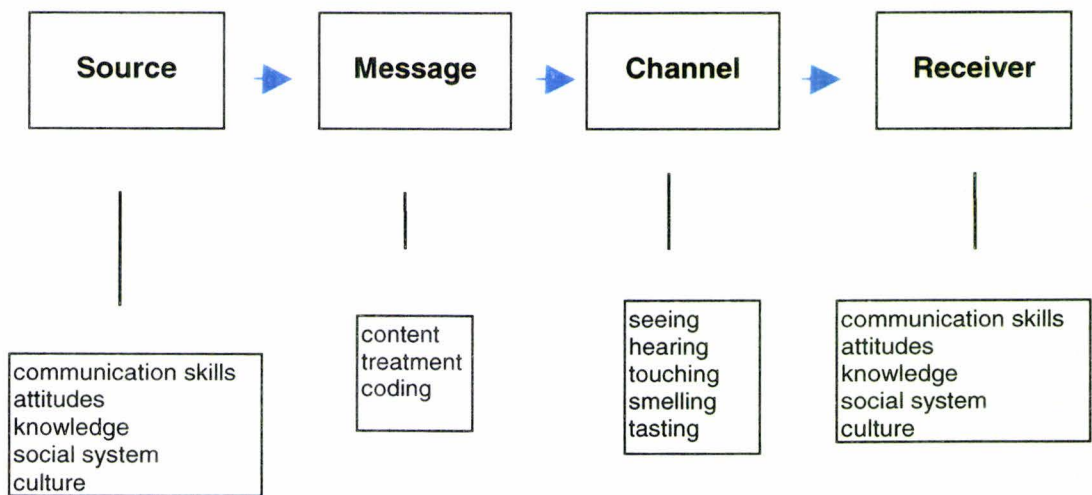
2.13 BERLO'S MODEL OF COMMUNICATION

Anatol, Applbaum, and Koehler (1981, p.11) assert that,

The internal and external processes by which all of the organisation's informing, adjusting, and coordinating activities take place form a dense network of signals and responses, actions and reactions, effects and counter effects, which often operate to trigger, cancel or reinforce each other in unpredictable chains and clusters.

Hawkins and Preston (1981) interpret Berlo's Model as a simplistic view of the basic elements in the communication process. He attempts to demonstrate how the forces present prior to transmission of any message affect the source and receiver of communications, and therefore they have an effect on that message. This is depicted in Figure 2.1.

FIGURE 2.1 - BERLO'S MODEL OF COMMUNICATION



Source: Hawkins and Preston (1981, p.7).

Figure 2.1 is a simplistic view of the basic elements in the communication process. This model attempts to demonstrate how the forces present prior to transmission of any message affect the source and receiver of communications, and therefore they have an effect on that message.

The source, or gatekeeper, determines whether the information is relevant and will determine whether the information is to be passed on. Roles and affiliations of the source will impact on the credibility of a source, which will impact on the acceptance of the message. Managers, as information sources, need to build and maintain credibility if they are to be reliable information sources.

The message can have two dimensions of meaning - denotative and cognitive meanings of words. These are meanings assigned to words by the receivers. "The concept that meanings are in people is central to an understanding of communication" Denotative meanings relate to the specific object or concept for which the letters of the word have an agreed meaning, such as B O O K forming the word "book". However, *book* can refer to a collection of pages forming reading material or a person can *book* accommodation. The context will often determine which denotative meaning is operative; however, multiple denotations can lead to a communication breakdown. Connotative meanings are emotional and involve personal responses to words; for example, "a delicious sirloin steak" compared with "a chunk of the rump of a dead steer" (Hawkins and Preston, 1981).

The message itself can be content or relational. Content refers to the topic of communication. Relational messages are mostly non-verbal and may go beyond the conscious awareness of the source or receiver; these include power plays in hand shaking for example. Hawkins and Preston assert that "these interpersonal and relational messages are often more important than what is being said" (1981, p.10). The channel, as illustrated, pertains to the five senses through which the message can be communicated.

The receiver is affected by the same factors as the source. Receiver orientation and adaptation are crucial concepts in the study of communication as the receivers assign meanings to words. This involves putting the source in the place of the receiver and adapting the message so it can "best fit the needs and perceptions of the receiver" (Hawkins & Preston, 1981, p.11).

Feedback is a key element in Berlo's model. Indeed, Sigband and Bell (1986, p.59) suggest that "feedback is really the only way you know if your communication system is truly effective". This element is described in Appendix Two.

2.14 Perceptual Processes

Perception is a filtering process used to gain insight into the world around us (Toulson, 1990b; Lemoine & Raspberry, 1986), especially through sight and sound. When people wish to communicate, they formulate words and symbols for the receiver to interpret and understand. People have been exposed to different experiences and are influenced by age, past experiences, needs, and emotions (Ludlow & Panton, 1992), peers, teachers, supervisors, prior knowledge, opinions, values and attitudes (Lemoine & Raspberry, 1986).

Certain assumptions, correct or incorrect, determine the way things are perceived (Toulson, 1990b). The nature of those differences needs to be understood, and interpersonal behaviour modified to cope with these differences (Ludlow & Panton, 1992). Figure 2.2 demonstrates that what people see is partly determined by expectation. Most people are blind to the Dalmatian dog sniffing the ground in the centre of the picture. However, once their mind has the preconception, it becomes difficult *not* to see the Dalmatian (Myers, 1990).

FIGURE 2.2 – AMBIGUITY



Source: Myers (1990, p.24).

Perceptual ambiguity is normally resolved by choosing the most likely possibility that accounts for the available sensory information (Toulson, 1990b). Therefore, an understanding of perceptual behaviour will aid in improving communication. By

understanding these programming categories, “we become closer to removing the perception barrier that impedes management communications...” (Lemoine & Raspberry, 1986, p.43).

Intrapersonal communication manifests itself in the internal and external stimuli individuals are exposed to. Internal stimuli pertain to issues such as motives, self-concept and cognitive frameworks. External stimuli include information selected from events and the outcomes from one’s own actions. Perception is the way an object or event appears to the perceiver, not to the object itself. Knowing that perception is not the same as the object or event being perceived is important for managers. Perception is selective. It is affected by three physiological factors: access, detection and predisposition. That is, we may not have access to all the stimuli which may alter our interpretation of an event; we may not detect that an event is occurring if we are preoccupied; and our predispositions influence how we interpret events (Fisher, 1993).

Covey (1997) contended that the most common mistake people make is not listening within the frame of reference of others. An exercise he suggests is to wear the spectacles belonging to another person. It is not possible to have adequate vision, because this is the prescription for the owner of the spectacles, or their frame of reference. Covey (1997) suggested that one should “seek first to understand, then to be understood”.

Social psychologists, Daniel Katz and Robert Kahn, suggested that one’s role in a social setting dictates an individual’s perception of that system; they also suggested that organisational roles not only structure perceptions, but that changing one’s role will result in concomitant changes in one’s perception (cited in Timm, 1986).

2.15 MANAGEMENT IS COMMUNICATION

Timm (1986), Fry (1988), Drucker (1954 cited in Goldhaber & Roberts, 1979) and Kreps (1986) propose that communication is what managers do. Sligo’s investigation reveals that “most management is actually communication, be it listening, writing, interviewing, reading or using interpersonal skills” (cited in Pearson, 1989, p.56). Managers accomplish their tasks through the process of internal communication, and some functions include communicating goals and developing a sound organisational climate.

Writers such as Mintzberg (1978 cited in Sligo, 1994); Pearse (1974, cited in Sligo, 1994); Irwin and More (1994); Beck and Beck (1986); Cartwright and Sligo (1987); Goldhaber and Rogers (1979) and Barnett, Cochran, Dumler and Schnake (1990) have argued that between 50 – 90% of a manager's day is spent communicating. This is further illustrated by Henri Mintzberg's study demonstrating that managers spend most of their day communicating in scheduled or unscheduled meetings, tours, telephone calls and desk work (Timm, 1986; Bardow & More, 1991).

Managers must be aware of the prescribed lines of communication relevant to their organisation and the associated problems within each system. The structure of the organisation will impact on the formal and informal structure of the organisational communication channels. The formal communication channels usually reflect the organisational structure, and the informal communication networks generally enhance the formal organisational structure but do not follow any rigid structure.

2.15.1 MANAGING THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Kotter (1980, cited in Bardow & More, 1991), in a similar study to Mintzberg's, determined that the three aspects of managing a purposeful communication process are agenda setting, network building and dissemination. Bardow and More (1991) suggest that agenda setting is the issuing of statements that connect goals, strategies and plans with a manager's responsibilities; network building is the establishment of people for accomplishing these agendas; and dissemination is getting networks to implement the set agendas. Bardow and More (1991) and Campbell (1996a) agree that the role of these three issues will become increasingly important in communication. Communication should be viewed as a "cyclic activity encumbered in a continuous information environment" (Campbell, 1996a, p.8). Kotter (1980, cited in Bardow & More, 1991) views the information environment as separate from the organisational structure, as the hierarchy presupposes how communication should be conducted and therefore makes understanding of communication difficult.

For effective communication, the communication process must be understood. This includes recognising the communication channels, the barriers and pathways to communication, understanding the elements of human behaviour, the fundamentals of communication and understanding how the communication process affects organisations. Effective communication is time consuming. Ineffective organisational communication is very costly (Bell & Sigband, 1986, p.64). The directions of communication are depicted and discussed in Appendix Three.

Face-to-face discussion between the originator of the message and the individual to whom it is addressed is said to be the best form of communication. This provides opportunity for direct feedback, including facial expression, and the opportunity to clarify misunderstandings (Communication can make, 1996b; Ledford, Strahley & Wendenhof, 1995).

2.16 GRAPEVINES

“The term ‘grapevine’ originated during the American Civil War to describe the primitive communications equipment that involved stringing wires over a series of poles, in the appearance of a grapevine, from the front lines to the command post’ (Irwin & More, 1994; Sligo, 1995b). The term is now used to refer to informal, unofficial, speedy and very effective communication networks. Indeed, Irwin and More (1994, p.35) assert that “all organisations have them. Grapevines are effective in opening up communication channels and in bypassing bottlenecks and gatekeepers. They ignore communication hierarchies and structures”. Sligo (1995b, p.41) points out that “it cannot be fired because it was never hired”.

All business is dependent on informal communication amongst its staff, otherwise formal internal communication channels would seize up as the need to share information with people would exceed the ability of the system to cope (Sligo, 1995b). Sligo (1995b) refers to a Massey University communications study with the finding that the grapevine, in New Zealand is a major source of information, just as it is overseas. Eighty to eighty-five percent of communication acts are carried out on the grapevine rather than through designated or official channels (Irwin & More, 1994).

2.17 CONCLUSION

Communication does not always succeed. We know this from our own experiences, and from studies on effective communication. Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto and Wiio (1984) suggest that in optimal communication conditions efficiency is 25 – 50%. However, managers often work on the assumption that communication efficiency is 100% or close to it. Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto and Wiio (1979) suggest that there is no one best way to communicate, as effective communication is dependent on the organisation and nature of the message at the time. “It is a common assumption that many of our problems, individual and social, are the result of inadequate and faulty communication” (Kahn & Katz, 1966, p.429).

Communication and perceptual processes impact on all the dimensions of the organisation including culture, morale, motivation and company performance. Through understanding one's own perceptions, management can apply an understanding to interpersonal communications. Ultimately the receiver's perception is the crucial link in the communication process (Hawkins and Preston, 1981).

Greater effectiveness is achieved through communication. It keeps people informed and involves people in the organisation, which increases motivation and commitment to the organisation. It enhances understanding between people within and outside the organisation, and helps people understand the need for change, how they should manage it, and how to reduce the resistance to change (Ludlow & Panton, 1992).

Roberts and O'Reilly (1974, p.321 cited in Goldhaber & Roberts, 1979, p.6) have said, "if good communication makes a difference – then an understanding of what is good communication and its correlates should increase our knowledge of organisational behaviour".

PART THREE

ORGANISATIONAL CLIMATE

Structure is the skeleton of an organisation and climate is the way employees view the personality of their organisation (Smith & Toulson, 1994).

2.18 INTRODUCTION

Organisational climate reflects factors such as the history of internal and external struggles, the types of people attracted by the organisation and the modes of communication exercised within the system (Kahn & Katz, 1978). Schwarzkopf (1997) is an advocate for creating a supportive climate where people can speak up when something is wrong.

Although culture and climate are similar, it is important to make the distinction between the two within an organisational setting.

2.19 DEFINITION

Climate is often considered to mean *the way things are done around here*. It is a shared perception of formal and informal organisational policies, practices, and procedures. "It is a concept that is indicative of the organisation's goals and appropriate means to goal attainment" (Schneider, 1990, p.22).

Many organisational climate studies have used different definitions and measures, and have been shown to be significantly related to organisational performance (Hall, Lawler, & Oldham, 1974).

2.20 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONSTRUCT

The earliest reference to climate was in 1939, by Lewin, Lippitt and White (cited in Schneider, 1990). Kurt Lewin's proteges included Argyris and McGregor. McGregor (1960), in his text *The Human Side of Enterprise*, devoted a chapter to managerial climate. Schneider (1990) conceptualised climate as being primarily determined by the assumptions managers hold and enact in their relationships with subordinates, in McGregor's view. Managers create the climate for subordinates by "what they do, how they do it, how competent they are, and their ability to make things happen through upward influence in the organisation" (Schneider, 1990, p.18).

Researchers in the fields of industrial and organisational psychology and organisational behaviour have been investigating the concept of climate since the 1960s. In these early stages of empirical study, climate was correlated to work motivation and productivity (Litwin & Stringer, 1968 cited in Schneider, 1990), or salesperson success (Schneider & Bartlett, 1968, 1970, cited in Schneider, 1990).

Payne and Mansfield (1973) suggest that perceptions of climate vary with organisational level. Hall, Lawler and Oldham's (1974) work demonstrates that climate is significantly related to organisational performance and job satisfaction. Downey, Sheridan and Slocum's (1975) studies suggested that job satisfaction was a function of congruence between personal needs and organisational climate. Multiple climates were said to exist in organisations (Johnston, 1976; Woodman & King, 1978; Rentsch, 1988, cited in Schneider, 1990) and these were a function of the relationship between the individual and the organisation (Johnston, 1976). Joyce & Slocum developed the idea that "collective climates are defined by similarity of perceptions" (1984, Schneider, 1990, p.13). All these researchers focused on a particular type of climate.

2.21 CLIMATE DIMENSIONS

Six climate dimensions, including structure, warmth, reward and support, were introduced at the 1966 conference on climate by Litwin & Stringer (Schneider, 1990). Schneider (1990) develops the argument that the climate construct is a catalyst to understanding why some organisations function more effectively than others.

Organisational climate relates to an individual's perception of how they feel they are being treated by the organisation. Perception often determines reality so employees' feelings of supervisory and managerial fairness become critical to the effective operation of the organisation and function as affirmations of the existing culture (Harris, 1993a). Bureaucratic organisations often tend to make their staff feel confined and to stifle their innovation and creativity.

2.22 CLIMATE COMPONENTS

Taylor and Bowers (1972, cited in Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto & Wiio, 1979), assert that organisational climate has six major components. These are human resource primacy, communication flow, motivation climate, decision-making, technological readiness, and lower level influence. The descriptions of these components are illustrated in Table 2.3. In earlier work, Litwin and Stringer (1968, cited in Argyle, 1989) found five dimensions which are also important to the study of organisational climate.

These are the degree of delegation experienced by employees (responsibility); the expectations of work quality (standards); recognition for good work (reward); orderliness of the environment (organisational clarity); and a friendly, team spirit encompassing trust.

TABLE 2.3 - THE COMPONENTS OF ORGANISATIONAL CLIMATE

COMPONENT	DESCRIPTION
Human resource primacy	Whether the climate indicates that people are considered to be an important resource.
Communication flow	Whether information is perceived to flow effectively upward, downward, and from side-to-side in the organisation.
Motivation climate	Whether relationships in the work environment are conducive to effective work.
Decision-making	Based upon access and use of needed decision-making information, considers whether decisions are made at the right organisational levels.
Technological readiness	Whether technology and resources are current and well maintained.
Lower level influence	Whether lower level staff, including subordinates, believe they have influence in their department or work group.

Developed from: Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto and Wiio (1979).

Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto and Wiio (1979) propose that if an organisation's climate is perceived by its members to be weak, then communication climate will also be perceived poorly.

2.23 TWO TYPES OF CLIMATE

There are two prevailing types of climate. One type of climate is characteristic of member perception about climate in the entire organisation. The other type of climate is characteristic of individual perceptions about climate in one's own work group, department or office area (Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto & Wiio, 1979).

2.24 CLIMATE AND CULTURE

A distinction needs to be made between climate and culture. They are similar but separate constructs (Smith & Toulson, 1994; Schneider, 1990; Gaston & Sparrow,

1996; Butcher, 1994; Furnham & Xenikou, 1996; Gadd & Meudell, 1994). As with creating a supportive climate, Kennedy (1989, cited in Harris, 1993b) believes the key ingredient in building a strong corporate culture is effective communication. "The reaction to an organisation's culture is the communication climate" (Shockley-Zalabak, 1985, p.69).

What people have to know and how things are done within their organisation is dictated by culture (Toulson, 1990b; Martin, 1982 cited in Schneider, 1990). It consists of managerial and employee beliefs and underlying values (Smith & Toulson, 1994; Smeltzer & Zener, 1995; Hegarty & Henderson, 1995) shared meanings, understandings and assumptions (Smeltzer & Zener, 1995) that define the ways in which organisational business is conducted.

Furthermore, the construct involves the unwritten rules, the shared values and leadership styles exhibited in the organisation (Hegarty & Henderson, 1995), and embraces forms of social organisation, rules and laws, ideas, morals and beliefs (Argyle, 1989). Cultures are "historically created designs for living, explicit and implicit, rational, irrational and non-rational, which exist at any given time as potential guides for the conduct of [people]" (Kluckhohn, 1954 cited in Argyle, 1989, p.9).

Peters and Waterman¹ (1984, p.75) determined that "the dominance and coherence of culture proved to be an essential quality of the excellent companies" in their study of successful organisations. A "positive work culture is not automatically self-sustaining, but requires constant attention and updating through various procedures... based on communication" (Cillinger, 1983, p.2 cited in Harris, 1993b, p.72).

Climate is a function of an individual's behaviour and perceptions (Schneider, 1990), and temporary, whereas culture is more permanent (Smeltzler & Zener, 1995) because its role is to unify the organisation (Schneider, 1990).

Two crucial points Smeltzler and Zener (1995) stress in relation to assessing the organisational climate are to consider whether anything has happened to cause employees to lose trust in management and, secondly, whether management has recently been forced to renege on a commitment. They contend that employees in trusting, supportive climates tend to accept negative information more readily than

¹ Pascale notes that by 1990 only 14 of the companies in the original study continued to carry the Excellence label (cited in Harris, 1993b).

employees in distrustful climates, and less explanation about change is usually required in a trusting, low anxiety climate (Smeltzer, 1987, cited in Smeltzler & Zener, 1995).

Barney (1986, cited in Smith & Toulson, 1994) purports that sustained organisational performance stems from core values about how to treat employees, customers, suppliers, and others.

2.25 CONCLUSION

Structure is the skeleton of an organisation and climate is the way employees view the personality of their organisation. Most organisations differ by climate, and Toulson (1990b) suggests that this is an organisational attribute because climate is subjective. For example, the number of managers employed by an organisation is objective but feelings about the number of managers is subjective.

There is evidence to indicate that organisational climate can influence both job performance and employee satisfaction (Hall, Lawler & Oldham, 1973 cited in Toulson, 1990b). Muchinsky proposes that “some organisational climates can be promoted to facilitate the achievement of organisational goals” (1987, cited in Toulson, 1990, p.27).

PART FOUR

COMMUNICATION CLIMATE

“People in a trusting, supportive climate will accept more negative information than in a distrustful climate [and] less explanation about the change is required in a trusting, low anxiety climate” (Smeltzer, 1987 cited in Smeltzler & Zener, 1995, p.36).

2.26 INTRODUCTION

Within an organisation, communication is a primary concern because this will often determine commitment, attitude (Hurley, 1988), motivation (Beck & Beck, 1986; Hurley, 1988), job satisfaction (Kreps, 1986; Redding, 1972 cited in Shockley-Zalabak, 1985; Beck & Beck, 1986), and the degree to which a task is accomplished (Beck & Beck, 1986). Communication climate is very important because of job satisfaction (Cox, 1998a). One way to practically address the need for effective communication is to consider the climate that surrounds communication (Beck & Beck, 1986). Also, clearly defined communication policies reduce ambiguity and inconsistencies, thus stabilising the communication climate (Timm, 1986).

Shockley-Zalabak (1985) reports that several researchers have linked communication climate to morale, perception of, and actual, organisational effectiveness. Lewis (1987) asserts that companies, which encourage openness, honesty and trust, have lower turnover and higher morale.

Timm (1986, p.73) suggests that although ‘communication climate’ is a nebulous term it is crucial to creating an effective organisation, and there is an “interplay between organisational goals, personal goals, and communication climate”. The author reiterates Shockley-Zalabak’s (1985, p.69) earlier assertion that, “the reaction to an organisation’s culture is the communication climate”.

Gibb (1961, p.141) in his paper on reducing the degree of defensiveness within an organisation, suggested that

One way to understand communication is to view it as a people process rather than a language process. If one is to make fundamental improvement in communication, [one] must make changes in interpersonal relationships.

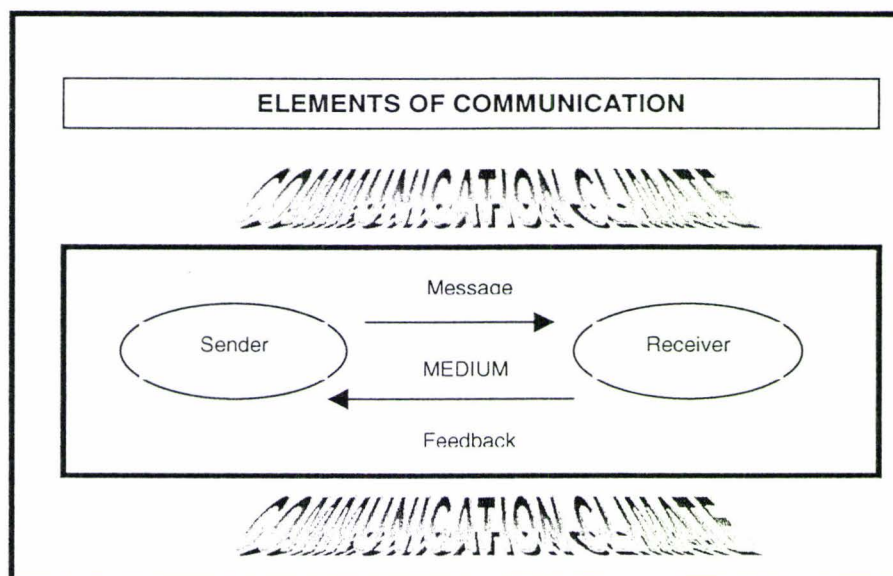
Continental Airlines and United Airlines are two organisations where the CEO has placed considerable effort on improving the communication climate. Amongst Fortune 500 companies that value communications are Johnson & Johnson, Hewlett-Packard and Motorola (Ten diagnostic tools, 1997).

2.27 DEFINITION

Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto and Wiio (1979, p.234) define communication climate as the “degree of supportiveness, trust, confidence, openness, and [honesty] present in an organisation”. These are ‘soft’ skills of human resource management.

Cox (1998b) regards communication climate as an element in the process of communication, and represents it as depicted in Figure 2.3. He suggests that it refers to the “atmosphere or prevailing condition in which communication takes place” (Cox, 1998b). The climate has an enormous impact on how individuals communicate and how this communication is received, the medium and the type of feedback received.

FIGURE 2.3 - COMMUNICATION CLIMATE



Source: Cox (1998b).

Communication climate is more psychological than physical because each person views climate differently but what each person perceives is real for them. It is created by a member's understanding of and commitment to organisational values,

as well as by the individual's interpersonal relationships with organisational members (Timm, 1986). That is, a person's reaction to climate is subjective because of their perception of communication events, and this subjective reaction is often shared by some or all members of the organisation (Shockley-Zalabak, 1985).

Cox (1998c, p.3) discusses Wilmot's definition of dyadic communication which is, "any face to face transaction between two people... whether fleeting or recurring... in varied context and many forms... from the perspective of the function it serves". This dyadic communication plays an important role in employee satisfaction.

2.28 COMPONENTS OF COMMUNICATION CLIMATE

Dennis (1974 cited in Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto & Wiio, 1979) suggests that there are five components to this construct. These are supportive communication, quality and accuracy of downward communication, communication relationships with subordinates, upward communication and upward influence, and information reliability. These components are described in Table 2.4 overleaf.

Redding (1972 cited in Shockley-Zalabak, 1985) and Cox (1998a) to an extent support Dennis' (1974 cited in Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto & Wiio, 1979) view of the components and definition of communication climate. He proposes that the collective beliefs that constitute the communication climate are associated with the following factors: supportiveness; participative decision-making; trust, confidence, credibility; openness and [honesty]; and high performance goals. That is,

The more supportive the communication environment – the more people participate in decision making, have trust and confidence in their co-workers, can be open, and understand organisational goals – the more likely there will be positive collective attitudes about the communication climate (Redding, 1972 cited in Shockley-Zalabak, 1985, p.69).

Cox (1998c) points out that the elements of a successful relationship include mutual regard, acceptance and trust, mutual direction, and mutually maintained supportive climates.

TABLE 2.4 - THE COMPONENTS OF COMMUNICATION CLIMATE

COMPONENT	DESCRIPTION
Supportive communication	Whether subordinates perceive that their superiors are truly responsive to them – for example, subordinates believe their superiors understand the problems subordinates confront.
Quality and accuracy of downward communication	Whether people are kept informed and information is freely exchanged, whether information is received from perceived sources, and whether people are notified sufficiently in advance about important changes that affect their jobs.
Communication relationships with subordinates	Whether superiors believe their subordinates are honest with them, and whether superiors believe they really understand their subordinates' problems.
Upward communication and upward influence	Whether people feel their opinions make a difference with respect to decisions that are made, whether people feel that recommendations are ever seriously considered, and whether people feel they are given the opportunity to establish their own goals and objectives.
Information reliability	This includes two specific areas: the perceived reliability of information received from subordinates, and from colleagues or co-workers.

Developed from: Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto and Wiio (1979).

2.29 TWO TYPES OF COMMUNICATION CLIMATES

Communication climates are generally on a continuum from supportive to defensive where supportive climates invite openness and defensive climates can lead to resentment and lack of communication. Gibb (1961), Anatol, Applbaum, and Koehler (1981) and Timm (1986) found that groups with more defensive climates accomplished less than groups with more supportive climates.

Understanding how communication climates operate and how people may react can help managers establish truly open communication (Beck & Beck, 1986).

2.29.1 THE DEFENSIVE CLIMATE

This is the condition when people put up a barrier to a perceived psychological threat. There is a perception that one's communication is used against one, so

communication is carefully edited to ensure protection from this real or anticipated threat. This behaviour reduces the opportunity for effective communication because of mistrust (Anatol, Applbaum, & Koehler, 1981).

Gibb (1961) points out that people exhibiting defensive behaviour use considerable energy defending themselves by exercising behaviours such as discussing the topic, considering how they appear to others, and how they may avoid a perceived or anticipated attack. This behaviour, Gibb (1961, p.141) reports, if unchecked, creates defence in others and the “ensuring circular response becomes increasingly destructive”.

Presumably, defensive behaviour distracts the listener from the message. Values, motives and cognitive meanings of messages are some of the factors distorted in this climate (Gibb, 1961).

2.29.2 THE SUPPORTIVE CLIMATE

Supportive climates, or defensive reductive (Gibb, 1961), are where individuals feel free from threat. People perceive that although the content of a communication may be evaluated and rejected, judgement is not being passed on one’s personal worth. In the absence of threat, and with the perception that others are open and honest, opinions and feelings are expressed freely (Anatol, Applbaum, & Koehler, 1981).

Supportive climates encourage employees to ask questions if they are unsure of a procedure, and to be more willing to make innovative suggestions (Beck & Beck, 1986). A supportive climate is marked by spontaneity, empathy and a sense of equality (Timm, 1986).

2.30 THE DICHOTOMIES OF COMMUNICATION CLIMATES

After an eight-year study of small groups Gibb (1961) reports that six dichotomies are prevalent in communication climates. These are depicted in Table 2.5. Characteristics in the right hand column have been demonstrated to arouse supportive climates, whereas defensive climates tend to arise from characteristics in the left hand column.

TABLE 2.5 - THE SIX DICHOTOMIES THAT AFFECT THE COMMUNICATION CLIMATE

DEFENSIVE	SUPPORTIVE
<p>Evaluation</p> <p>To pass judgement on another; to blame or praise; to make moral assessments of another or questions their motives; to question the other's standards. May limit communication.</p>	<p>Description</p> <p>Non-judgmental; to ask questions which are perceived as requests for information; to present feelings, emotions, events which do not ask the other to change his behaviour.</p>
<p>Control</p> <p>To try to do something to another; to attempt to change behaviour or attitudes of others; implicit in attempts to change others is the assumption that they are inadequate. Implies that the supervisor's view is the valid one.</p>	<p>Problem orientation</p> <p>To convey a desire to collaborate in solving a mutual problem or defining it; to allow others to set their own goals and solve their own problems; to imply that the manager does not desire to impose a solution.</p>
<p>Strategy</p> <p>To manipulate another or make them think they are making their own decisions; to engage with multiple and/or ambiguous motivations. Where a speaker appears to be open and honest but there is a preconceived direction. A mechanistic orientation.</p>	<p>Spontaneity</p> <p>To express naturalness; free of deception; straightforwardness; uncomplicated motives. This shows that each worker's individuality is recognised and respected. A personal orientation.</p>
<p>Neutrality</p> <p>To express lack of concern for the other; the clinical, person-as-an-object-of-study attitude.</p>	<p>Empathy</p> <p>To respect the other person and show it; to take their role; to identify with their problems and have empathy.</p>
<p>Superiority</p> <p>To communicate that you are superior in position, wealth, intelligence, etc. Conveying the attitude, " I'm the boss, do it or else"</p>	<p>Equality</p> <p>To be willing to enter into participative planning with mutual trust and respect; to attach little importance to differences in ability, worth, status, etc. The management by objective approach was initially developed to shift from the superiority proposition to create a climate of equality.</p>
<p>Certainty</p> <p>Dogmatic; wanting to win an argument rather than solve a problem; seeing ideas as truths to be defended.</p>	<p>Provisionalism</p> <p>To be willing to experiment with your own behaviour; to investigate issues rather than take sides; to solve problems, not debate.</p>

Adapted from: Gibb (1961), and Gibb (1961, cited in Anatol, Applbaum, & Koehler, 1981), Beck and Beck (1986) and Timm (1986).

2.30.1 DISCUSSION

When people feel as though they are being unjustly evaluated or criticised because of their speech or other behaviour, they are likely to become defensive. This may include content of message or tone of voice. If the description is objective, without judgment or evaluation, circumstances seem more supportive. The person is less likely to become defensive and to withdraw from communication (Gibb, 1961; Anatol, Applbaum, & Koehler, 1981).

Speech used for controlling the listener evokes resistance suggests Gibb (1961). People do not like to be coerced; it is much better to solve the problem without forcing people to go along with a particular solution. The degree of defensiveness depends on the openness of the controlling effort. Gibb (1961, p.144) suggests that the base for defensive reactions may be in a subconscious perception by the listener "that the speaker secretly views the listener as ignorant, unable to make [their] own decisions, uninformed, immature, unwise, or possessed of wrong or inadequate attitudes". Problem orientation suggests mutual problem solving and allows the receiver to make his or her own decisions.

The notion of the strategy to sway a person in a preconceived direction implies a preset plan as opposed to spontaneity. If this is detected, people may feel deceived and act coldly towards the other person (Anatol, Applbaum, & Koehler, 1981). In contrast, Gibb (1961) points out that defensive reduction stems from behaviour which appears to be free of deception.

Neutral attitudes, as opposed to empathic or sympathetic, tend to make people more defensive. Gibb (1961, p. 147) reports that, "the combination of understanding and empathising with the other person's emotions with no accompanying effort to change [them] apparently is supportive at a high level".

A person acting in a superior manner to others arouses defence (Anatol, Applbaum, & Koehler, 1981) such as communicating superiority because of position or wealth (Gibb, 1961). The message sender can create equality in many ways, including entering into "participative planning with mutual trust and respect [and by attaching little importance to] talent, ability, worth, appearance, status, and power" (Gibb, 1961, p.147-148).

Finally, someone acting as though they know all the answers or with dogmatism is less pleasant than a person with an open mind who acts with a degree of provisionalism

(Anatol, Applbaum, & Koehler, 1981). However, if a person is “genuinely searching for information and data, [they] do not resent help or company along the way” (Gibb, 1961, p.148). In fact, Gibb (1961) found that listeners perceived dogmatic attitudes as manifest feelings of inferiority.

Personal levels of defensiveness and general group climate affect the degree to which the reactions occur. Characteristics arousing defensive climates hinder communication, making it difficult to convey information clearly (Gibb, 1961), hence producing an array of problems.

2.31 CLARIFYING CLIMATE DIMENSIONS

Perception of communication climate is highly subjective. However, Timm (1986) has developed seven questions that work towards clarifying climate dimensions by focusing on the characteristics that help determine an individual’s perception of the communication climate. These issues are developed throughout this section.

TABLE 2.6 – CLIMATE DIMENSIONS

QUESTION	CLIMATE DIMENSION
What are we doing here?	Clarity of organisational goals.
What does the organisation want from me?	Clarity of tasks and expectations.
Where do I fit into the organisation system?	Understanding of roles and functions of others.
What rewards or punishments await me if I communicate in certain ways?	Motivation to communicate or not to communicate.
To what degree should I take risks in communicating my ideas or feelings?	Supportiveness and risk encouragement.
How am I treated compared to others?	Fairness, trust, and equity.
How am I doing?	Feedback and [honesty].

Developed from: Timm (1986) cited in Campbell (1996c).

2.32 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Trust, understanding and listening skills are crucial elements to be considered in the present study.

2.32.1 CLIMATE OF TRUST

Bell and Sigband (1986) recommend developing a *climate of trust* as the first step to improving organisational communication. This will increase morale and reduce staff turnover.

Trust means that you have credibility, that you do what you say, and that you say what you believe. With credibility comes a greater appreciation for your expertise, your reliability, your intentions, your competence, your objectivity, and even your personal attraction. In the final analysis, gaining trust of subordinates, peers, and superiors means that you can successfully unclog the lines of communication. And open communication leads to effective management (Bell & Sigband, 1986, p.58).

Trust is “the single most effective and powerful motivational force that there is. Without trust in any setting there is nothing on which to base foundation or future” (Rowe, 1997, p. 6). Indeed, building trust, sharing honest opinions, and creating commitment are essential elements at PepsiCo, suggests Roger Enrico CEO of PepsiCo (cited in DeRose & Tichy, 1996).

2.32.2 CLIMATE OF UNDERSTANDING

A *climate of understanding* needs to be established to ensure that your message is interpreted accurately. Providing a common basis for communicating does this, that is, by looking at your message from the receiver’s viewpoint. It is important to understand everyone’s problems and express that understanding to them (Bell & Sigband, 1986), as pointed out earlier in the discussion on organisational communication and perception.

2.32.3 LISTENING SKILLS

There is no communication without some indication that the intended receiver has been listening. The accuracy of the communication process can only be checked by ascertaining what the listener has extracted from the message (Kahn & Katz, 1966). Feedback systems help determine the level of commitment as well as understanding (Communicating in the, 1997).

A good listener listens to understand. With understanding comes the opportunity to make an accurate assessment of the messages so that good decisions can be made.

Bell & Sigband (1986) assert that it is important for managers to make it easy for others to listen by:

- Tailoring information to the other person's point of view
- Supplying information in small units
- Providing an opportunity for feedback

2.33 PERSONAL QUALITIES OF LEADERS

Essential qualities in leaders include being able to provide direction or vision and trust, states Warren Bennis (1985), and effective leaders help people to feel hopeful.

Trerise (1997a) suggests that New Zealand's managers of tomorrow must model their values and provide leadership that has substance, honesty and integrity. Traditionally run companies have ignored the fact that people come to work with more individual talents and unique spirits. Nowadays people explore spiritual concepts such as trust, harmony, values, and honesty for their power to help achieve business goals (Leigh, 1997 cited in Trerise, 1997a).

2.33.1 ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

Many organisational behavioural scientists and management philosophers have reported that the personal qualities of leaders and elements of supportive communication climates bring success, although it is noted that these elements are not a panacea for organisational problems and success is also reliant on the nature of the operating environment. To add quality to these components, walking the talk or modelling the expected behaviour adds to the adoption of the principle. These elements include:

- ✧ trust (Lownds & Otter, 1996; Furniss, Hills & Paterson, 1992; Hastings, 1996; Jenks, 1990; Trerise, 1997a, 1997c; St John, 1996; Brosnahan, 1997 cited in Trerise, 1997a; Senge, 1994; Covey cited in Bedford, 1997; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Reynierse, 1994; Scanlan cited in Macalister, 1993),
- ✧ openness (Zoglio, 1995; Lewis, 1987; Sligo, 1997; Senge, 1994; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Reynierse, 1994; Lauer, 1996; Rupp, 1996; Irwin & More, 1994; Roethlisberger & Rogers, 1991),
- ✧ friendliness (Zoglio, 1995; Iacocca, 1997),
- ✧ positiveness (Zoglio, 1995),
- ✧ and values (Perkins & Trerise, 1995b; Trerise, personal communication, 27 June 1996; Trerise, 1997a).

Other factors include:

- ✱ listening skills (Cull² cited in Manufacturing workplaces, 1996; St John, 1996; Lewis, 1987; Roethlisberger & Rogers, 1991; Bellante, 1994),
- ✱ honesty (Brosnahan, 1997 cited in Trerise, 1997a; Senge, 1994; Semler, 1984; Kreps, 1986; Schwarzkopf, 1997; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Scanlan cited in Macalister, 1993),
- ✱ integrity (Covey, 1992, 1997; Semler, 1984; Bennis & Hesselbein cited in Hesselbein, 1994; Brosnahan, 1997 cited in Trerise, 1997a),
- ✱ empathy and understanding (Lewis, 1987; Ludlow & Panton, 1992; Trerise, personal communication, 27 June 1996),
- ✱ ethical conduct (Bennis & Hesselbein cited in Hesselbein, 1994; Trerise, 1997a; Kreps, 1986; Blanchard, 1996),
- ✱ encouraging horizontal communication (Sligo, 1997),
- ✱ encouraging feedback (Lewis, 1987; Timm, 1986),
- ✱ and communicating visions of attainable futures (Semler, 1984; Avolio & Bass, 1990; Trerise, 1997a; Senge, 1994; Furniss, Hills & Paterson, 1992; Lipton, 1997; Covey, 1992; ETV 3 Nov 1997³; Blyde & Bebb, 1995).

2.33.2 DISCUSSION

Commitment is built on trust (Dessler, 1994). Indeed, trust, honesty and listening skills are the keys to open communication (Gershenfeld & Napier, 1987; Hodgson and Hodgson, 1992; Krivonos & Sussman, 1979). Senge (1994, p.66) asserts that “living systems have integrity. Their character depends on the whole”. Many researchers suggest that trust requires honesty and integrity (Brosnahan, 1997 cited in Trerise, 1997a; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Reynierse, 1994; Lauer, 1996; Rupp, 1996; Irwin & More, 1994; Adair, 1997).

Open communication allows people freedom to express their ideas and views “through legitimate disagreement and debate” (DiBella, Gould, & Nevis, 1995, p.81). It was an open and honest communication style that helped Sir Peter Blake and Team New Zealand to create the winning team in the 1995 America’s Cup campaign (Perkins & Trerise, 1995b; Trerise, 1997a; Macalister, 1993, 1995; Perkins, 1996a; Ansley, 1990). These factors also ensured success at Lincoln Electric Company asserts, Donald Hastings, the CEO (Hastings, 1996). Martin Crowe, when discussing New Zealand

² Mary Cull of Tall Poppies Limited, the management consultancy that undertook research with the Manufacturers Federation on commitment.

³ A skill for the 21st Century stated by the Chairman of the International Task Force, Australia

cricket captaincy, stated that communication, developing trust, loyalty and confidence brought rewards (cited in McConnell, 1990).

The “key to accurate translation or effective two-way communication is high trust... High trust makes communication easy, effortless, instantaneous and accurate. When trust is low, communication ... is ineffective” (Covey, 1992, p.138). Trust makes it easier to become committed to the goals of the organisation (Kinlaw cited in Faden & Thibodeaux, 1994). Indeed, Bennis (1985, p.82) believes that “trust is essential to all organisations”.

A precondition to the improvement of trust is demonstrating to staff that keeping them informed is important (Sligo, 1995b), and demonstrating that the organisation cares when answering questions (Bellante, 1994).

Openness is more than a personal quality, asserts Senge (1994); it is a relationship you have with others. This is because people have different levels of openness with others. If openness is a characteristic of relationships, then building open relationships is “one of the most high-leverage actions to build organisations characterised by openness” (Senge, 1994, p.284).

The degree to which leaders are willing to open downward communication channels to keep employees informed has a profound effect on climate, and providing honest but supportive feedback helps to develop a healthy communication climate (Timm, 1986). Clarifying a vision and communicating it to everyone serves as a road map as companies go through accelerated change. A shared vision connects people to the purpose of the organisation (Lipton, 1997).

The ethics and standards of an organisation should align with the principles of society. Kreps presents honesty as the most important ethical consideration, including “such dimensions of good communication as openly giving employees information about higher management decisions that affect their work...” (1986, p.232).

Archie McCardell, President of Xerox Corporation during 1976, points out that it is important to manage the information disseminated. McCardell believes fervently in open communication as a policy and principle. However, he feels that sometimes staff need to accept a few things on faith, which at times may be difficult. This is because the more open the communication, the more questions are asked that cannot always

be answered because they are part of vital decisions in the workings of the organisation (1976 cited in Timm, 1986). Indeed, although internal communication can create synergy, at times certain restrictions may need to be placed on information dissemination.

Schwarzkopf (personal communication, 6 August, 1997) remarked that "People... lead people". The challenge of leadership is to get people willing to do things they ordinarily would not do, using good character and ethics. He cited a recent survey of workers in the United States where 75% said that it was okay to lie to their boss because they thought their bosses were unethical, so there was no requirement for them to be ethical either (Schwarzkopf cited in Bedford, 1997).

Researchers in climate and organisational success have placed considerable more emphasis on the importance of communicating a vision (Crossland, 1996; Bennis, Nanus & Hesselbein cited in Hesselbein, 1994) and on walking the talk, or modelling the behaviours you want from your employees (Farnham, 1993; Perkins & Trerise, 1995a). Covey (1997) believes that "you cannot build a culture of high trust if you're not trustworthy".

These philosophies of vision and modelling brought success for many people such as Iacocca at Chrysler (Hassed, 1992; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; St John, 1996), and Sir James Wattie at Wattie Frozen Foods (Perkins & Trerise, 1995a). Jeff Crowe also led by example (Martin Crowe cited in McConnell, 1990). Louise Wallace (1997) introduced Ricardo Semler as a person who has truly "walked the talk". Semler has been profiled in over 200 magazines and journals due to his "revolutionary new management techniques" (National Business Review, 1997, p.25) which brought him success with his Latin American Company, Semco.

J Wattie Foods actively promotes trust. The General Manager states, "We talked through the process of building up trust so that when I say something is the truth, or when you see something happening that previously may have raised suspicion, you will now... ask about it or trust that's okay," (cited in Jayne, 1991, p.63). Impediments to rich, honest and open communication are the tendency to criticise and judge (Covey, 1996) and lack of trust (Perkins & Trerise, 1995b). "Together vision and openness are the antidotes for internal politics and game playing" (Senge, 1994, p.274).

2.34 CHANGE

Trerise (1997a) suggests that managers who used to operate by commanding and controlling staff must change by focusing on the interpersonal, 'soft skills' of human resource management to build trust and teamwork. Resistance to change may be reduced by providing a vision and information, and by modelling a positive attitude (Zoglio, 1995).

2.35 CONCLUSION

Cox (1998a) points out that,

Organisational and communication climate are (short term) measure of whether or not employee's expectations are being met. Organisational culture is a (long term) pattern of shared beliefs and values.

An understanding of communication climate is important because of its influence on job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Cox (1998a) stresses that high trust will result in high job performance, and conversely low trust will result in low performance because destructive trust relationships impede performance and production.

One of Senge's (1994) five disciplines is shared vision. This practice involves fostering genuine commitment, not compliance. Compliance will impede gaining broader commitment. Without a common purpose, Senge (1994) argues, there is nothing beyond self-interest to motivate people. Binding people together around a common purpose has had marked success for organisations such as IBM (Senge, 1994) and Microsoft Computers (ETV Nov 1997). Communication climate is important when instilling a vision and seeking to gain acceptance.

Leadership, insists Schwarzkopf (1997), requires four factors: character and *doing what's right, not what others want you to do*, ethics, integrity, and communication of focused goals. Further, you must have a climate in which your employees can say what is wrong; and Schwarzkopf (1997) uses an analogy of Saddam Hussein shooting his best friend for saying the wrong thing.

PART FIVE

ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

Effective communications play a vital role in times of organisational change

(Gilmour, 1995).

2.36 INTRODUCTION

In the 1990s a revolution has been occurring in the nature and scope of organisations. As these changes occur, the nature of jobs is also changing (Dewe & Marshall, 1996; Handy cited in Grant, 1996; Iacocca, 1997; Trerise, 1997e; Sligo, 1995a). New organisational structures, concepts of business processes, and employment relationships are being formed (Gaston & Sparrow, 1996).

According to Aburdene and Naisbitt (1990), the approach of the new millennium is accelerating change, heightening awareness, and compelling us to re-examine our values and institutions.

Iacocca, the man who “orchestrated the most dynamic comeback in American business history” (National Business Review, 1997, p.14) chronicled some recent and significant changes during his *World Masters* presentation. He mentioned the political changeover in Hong Kong and major American and British technological changes that have had global ramifications. MacKenzie (1991) in a conference address noted the changes brought about from Perestroika and economic reform in the Soviet Union, and the reunification of Germany.

The nature of New Zealand organisations is changing due to mergers and organisational developments characterised in recent history (Sligo, 1994) and business closures. Examples include General Motors’ Upper Hutt plant closure in October 1990 and the introduction of Crown Health Enterprises in July 1993 (Garthwaite, Neufeld & Nseduluka, 1995). In order to consolidate business, Lion Breweries closed its Hastings manufacturing operation in April 1997, and major structural changes to the New Zealand Income Support Service and New Zealand Employment Service were announced in December 1997.

When organisations are downsized there is an inevitable drain of talent and experience, and corporate memory is lost. Most importantly, there is a loss of trust and

security (Hastings, 1996). Some significant downsizing, Hastings (1996) notes, occurred with the loss of 15,000 employees at Delta Airlines; 40,000 employees at AT&T; and 60,000 employees at IBM. Locally, December 1997 headlines reported downsizing at AFFCO Meats, Tasman Milk Products, Levene, and Carter Holt Harvey (Pre-Christmas job losses, 1997).

Change is facilitated through communication because during rapid change there is a greater need for timely, relevant and reliable information (Sligo, 1995c). Wartenberg (1996) states that a mandatory skill for the 21st century manager is communication.

2.37 DEFINITION

Another word for change is growth or learning. The world of work is changing because the organisations are changing their ways. At the same time organisations are adapting to a changing world of work (Handy, 1990). Change is occurring across the globe politically, technologically, environmentally and socially. Bass and Avolio (1990) report that globalisation of markets, greater efficiencies and economies of scale are evident. Downsizing, mergers and takeovers, and growth from new technology, products or markets are typical of recent history.

It can be argued that organisations are in a constant state of change. Organisations, as De Gues (1988) asserts, are in survival mode when the environment is turbulent, and when the pace of change is slow, organisations are in self-development mode. In changing organisations, people have a choice of becoming cynical and resigning, or taking advantage of the opportunities offered (Leibowitz cited in Brooks, 1995).

2.38 THE NEW ORGANISATION AND THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

Aburdene and Naisbitt (1990) candidly note such shifts as from an Industrial to an Information Society; from centralisation to decentralisation; and from hierarchies to networking. Bennis and Nanus (1985) suggest that these changes have been examined in many texts including McGregors, *Theory Y*, Peters and Waterman's *In Search of Excellence*, and Pascale and Athos's *The Art of Japanese Management*. Peter Drucker (1993) chronicles the rise of the knowledge society in his article of the same name, and suggests that information technology demanded a shift (Drucker, 1988). Avolio and Bass (1990) note that information flow is becoming more diverse and complex.

A reorientation in the staffing function is one sign of the recognition of change as *personnel* moves to *human resource management*, and companies focus on their human capital, not just on physical and financial capital in this information age (Dessler, 1992).

2.39 COMMUNICATING CHANGE

Menzela (1995) believes that change is what business is all about. "A leader must create a vision, communicate it to others, and make them want to turn it into reality", (1995, p.41).

Change is often met with and sabotaged by resistance (Lesser & Spiker, 1995) because lines of succession and the old ways of doing things are in jeopardy (Tichy, 1996). Fear (Coverdale, 1997; Iacocca, 1997), anxiety (Ettore, 1996), grief (Tichy, 1996) and uncertainty (Gibbons, 1992 cited in Sligo, 1994) are evident. Organisational change fails because someone failed to communicate the plan in an appropriate manner (Richmond and McCroskey, 1992).

Organisational climate is one of the most important components of change responsiveness (Mears, 1996). In a climate of openness and honesty, management's trustworthiness can be enhanced.

Organisational transformation or change is essentially a top down activity (Reynierse, 1994). Effective communications play a vital role in times of change to manage the processes within which change occurs (Gilmour, 1995; Ettore, 1996; Cohesive corporate, 1994). These processes are systems, climate, culture, leadership, direction, and structure (Gilmour, 1995). Approaches to the communication methods in a change process are dependent on the organisation (Irwin & More, 1994).

Gilmour (1995) argues that unless an organisation concentrates effort on non-didactic communication, the change will usually fail. Communicating both good and bad information can alleviate the reliance on speculation. Managers need to monitor changes in communication flows, and in formal and informal channels. Indeed, the use of the grapevine tends to increase in times of organisational stress. Other communication issues that may occur are related to distortion of messages (refer Appendix Four), overload and underload, and source credibility, perceptual problems in understanding the process of change, and realising the need for a supportive climate (Irwin & More, 1994).

Employee communication through a variety of media is important during change. The goal is to educate employees early on about what is happening (Nixon, 1995). This must be done openly and honestly (Ettore, 1996; Gibbons, 1992 cited in Sligo, 1994; Adrienne Stewart, PDL Executive Director, cited in Macalister, 1993) at the onset because this will lead to continuing communication and practical feedback mechanisms for management (Ettore, 1996). Management must clearly communicate benefits (Perkins, 1996b) and point out how individuals will be affected by the proposed changes because staff are interested in details of the changes which directly affect them (Denton, 1996; Ledford, Strahley & Wendenhof, 1995; Clarke, 1989; St John, 1996; Kreps, 1986). Brooks (1995), Clarke (1989) and Christieson (personal communication, 24 December, 1997) argue that staff are interested in what is in the change for them, what is required of them, and how they will be attached to the company and those around them.

Thomas Jefferson said, "If you don't keep people informed, you get one of three things: rumour, apathy, or revolution" (Bell & Sigband, 1986, p.31). Denton (1996) noted the advice of Jack Welsh, CEO of General Electric, an advocate for building support for change: when bringing people into the change process you must present everybody with the same facts; they will then generally come to the same conclusion.

Face to face communication is the best method, where possible, to communicate change, with regular updates (Gibbons, 1992 cited in Sligo, 1994). Lauer (1996, p.1) reminds managers that their "employees are more adaptable than you think – but only if they are part of the conversation".

Furthermore, as alluded to in Section 2.4.8.1, leaders must articulate a vision for the future (Nixon, 1995; Denton, 1996), communicate this with employees and get them moving in the same direction (Iacocca, 1997). The key to the success of an organisation hinges on the ability to hold a vision, share that vision, and move the organisation towards that vision (deValk, cited in Hot tips, 1995). Indeed, General Electric Corporation's organisational change was successful because of the high level of communication operationalised clearly promoting the goals and objectives (Lesser & Spiker, 1995).

2.40 A MODEL FOR THE CHANGE PROCESS

Colin Coverdale (1997), the President of the New Zealand Institute of Management, Wellington, in his presentation on organisational change found that change can be

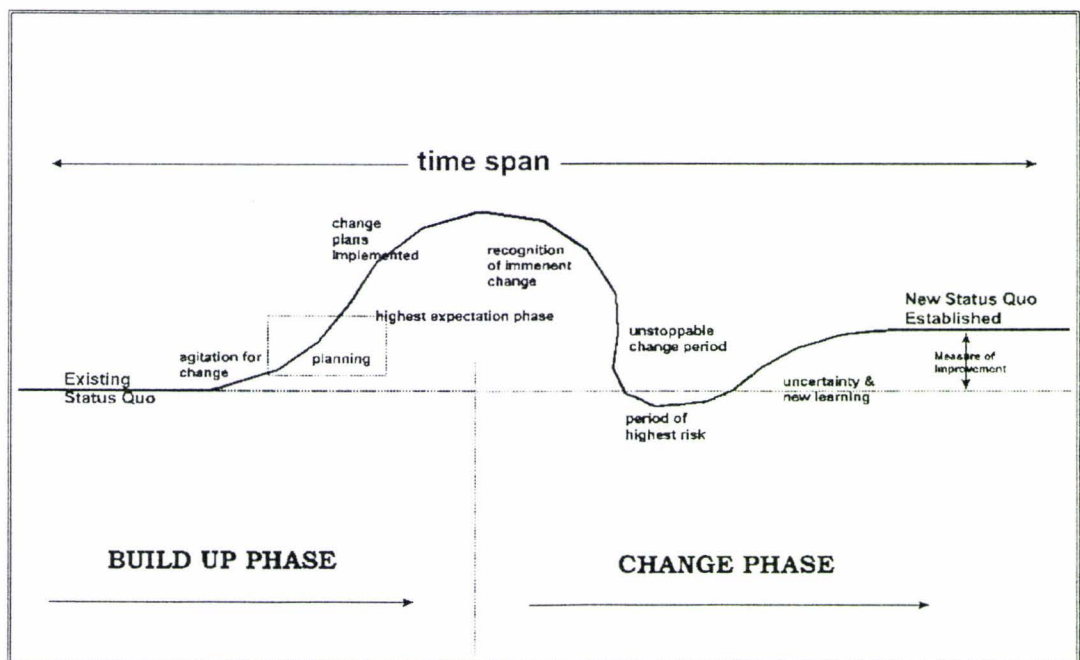
either continuous and a slow progression, or discontinuous and abrupt, disruptive and unsettling.

Coverdale (1997) developed a Change Wave model from a Swedish model, which he supplied for the present study. This model considers change as a 'wave' passing through a time scale. This adds another dimension to change, and brings change under control. Understanding the "wave is critical to managing the process" (Coverdale, 1997). Columbia University's Professor Hambrick suggests that it is typical to think that change comes in waves (Ettore, 1996).

2.40.1 APPLICATION OF THE MODEL

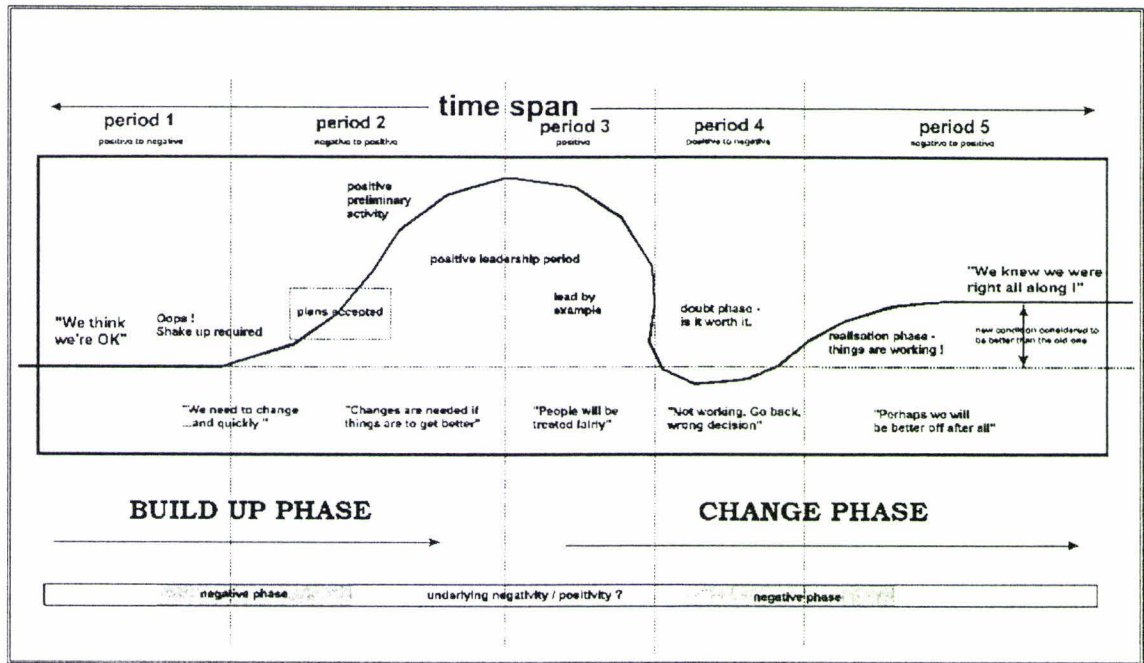
This model can be successfully applied to flat or hierarchical structures, small or large organisations. People at the top of the organisation usually have a greater understanding of what is going on and retain this power. If the organisational change is constant, then waves go through the organisation all the time. Large organisations may experience waves every twelve months. Two key steps in a change process are firstly to get people prepared and, secondly, to change (Coverdale, 1997).

FIGURE 2.4: CHANGE WAVE 1 – THE SIMPLIFIED MODEL



Source: Coverdale (1997).

FIGURE 2.5: CHANGE WAVE 2 - THE WORKING MODEL



Source: Coverdale (1997).

2.40.2 THE PHASES

There are two negative phases in the change process. The first phase occurs early on. Coverdale (1997) confirms that you cannot change people and tell them that it is positive and good for them. It depends on the way the leadership manages this critical phase by good communication. According to Coverdale (1997) you must tell people what is happening, be up front, and hold one on one discussions. If people are unhappy, they will spread their unhappiness, this may become an impediment for successful change management. Be fair to those who are selected for redundancy, suggests Coverdale (1997), and offer them the biggest redundancy package available.

In the second phase, ensure that you believe change was necessary. If the change does not work, then there will be another wave. Be honest with employees: if there is going to be another change wave, then say so. Let employees know that we do not know when the end is until we get there. When you reach the end, then inform the staff (Coverdale, 1997).

2.40.3 COMMUNICATION – AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT

An essential element of the model and implementation is communication, and one on one communication may be necessary. However, according to Coverdale (1997), some managers are reluctant to communicate with their staff. “People need to know and understand. Staff need ‘safety rails’ and knowledge. The boss must be trustworthy” (Coverdale, 1997, p.1). The biggest disruption is when management is trying to downsize as well as to change the modus operandi (Coverdale, 1997).

The communication system is a powerful tool for continuous adjustment of the structure and processes to meet changing circumstances (Anatol, Applbaum, & Koehler, 1981). In times of major change the role of communications is very important. Most people’s reaction to change is to resist. Managers must ensure there are positive avenues available for employees to express their resistance (Bellante, 1994).

2.40.4 TIME FRAME

Time periods for organisational transformation vary. Ettore (1996) reviewed change with organisations such as IBM, Eastman Kodak Company and Polaroid Corporation. He espouses the belief that deep and abiding changes to an organisation’s culture may take five to seven years. Coverdale (1997) suggests that it may take three years to change the culture in large New Zealand organisations.

2.41 CONCLUSION

The old understanding in organisations was that if staff were loyal, worked hard and did as they were told, they were provided with job security, and financial security in a dull, safe organisation. The new understanding is a mutually beneficial partnership if staff develop skills the organisation needs and apply them in ways that help the company succeed, and behave in a manner consistent with the organisation’s values. The organisation will provide a challenging work environment, developmental support and reward for contributions. The staff member will be part of a high performance organisation (Edward Lawler, Presentation in Wellington, 18 April, 1997). Successful implementation of change depends, in large part, on staff reaction to the change (Smeltzler & Zener, 1995).

Change is managed only when a leader’s behaviour matches the message. When a manager’s behaviour runs contrary to the guidelines prescribed by the vision, it may be perceived as betrayal. The impact of not “walking the talk” can devastate the manager’s credibility (Lipton, 1997). Haas (cited in Howard, 1990) states that you

cannot be honest if you assure your staff of job security in these turbulent times. "Our most basic value is honesty" (Howard, 1990, p.143).

Ettore's (1996, p.17) review indicates that,

Even as the new CEO is orchestrating strategy and vision and assembling the top team he or she has to be clearly communicating the moves throughout the organisation and to the world at large. The perception of change, say the professionals, is just as important as the actual change. It can buy considerable goodwill and time, especially when the organisation must undergo massive reformation.

Fiedler and House (1988) assert that the theory also supports achievement of personal goals concurrently with organisational objectives.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The balance between qualitative and quantitative methodologies plays a significant role in achieving the most holistic view of the organisation as possible (Morey and Luthans, 1984).

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This research adopts primarily an empirical approach encompassing both qualitative and quantitative paradigms. As research approaches have their limitations, a combined approach is often preferable, so elements of a rational approach are indicated. The paradigms support each other and form a more complete process of enquiry (Frederikson, 1996).

3.2 QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE METHODOLOGIES

The balance between qualitative and quantitative methodologies plays a significant role in achieving the most holistic view of the organisation possible. This is because it is only by applying these in unison that true organisational reality can be achieved. Both approaches seem essential for a complete research perspective because it is often considered that the whole is different from the sum of its parts (Hari-Das, 1983), and they both provide legitimate methodologies for organisational research. They are not mutually exclusive approaches (Morey & Luthans, 1984). Quantitative research tends to focus on reliability and validity while qualitative researchers tend to be concerned with the relevance, richness and depth of observation (Hari-Das, 1983).

3.2.1 THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THE METHODOLOGIES

Daft (1984) proposes that quantitative research methods assume social reality is concrete and measurable. Before research outcomes can contribute to knowledge, advocates of this approach stress the importance of reliability, validity and accurate measurement. Qualitative research is concerned more with meaning than with measurement of organisational phenomena. These procedures assume "organisational realities are not concrete, but are the projection of human realities" (Morgan & Smircich, 1980, cited in Daft, 1984, p.397).

Triangulation, the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon (Jick, 1984) was selected for use in the present study to improve accuracy and to provide a holistic approach to answering the research question.

3.3 APPROPRIATE STRATEGY

Frederikson (1996) suggests an appropriate strategy for research of a descriptive nature is multi-site case study analysis, and she recommended techniques for data collection such as interviewing and questionnaire surveys. These are the strategies for the present study. Hence, structure is based on an extensive literature review; case study analysis; data collection methods of a questionnaire survey and interviews; and statistical analysis.

3.3.1 THE LITERATURE REVIEW

There were many aspects to the literature review of the present study. Sourcing and examination of the material took ten months. Databases were searched at the Massey University Library, EIT Library, personal libraries belonging to the author and fellow Graduate Students, and numerous web sites such as the New Zealand Institute of Management and the University of Southern California. Databases included in the search were ABI Inform, NewzIndex, Current Contents and First Search.

The search process yielded over 1200 textbooks, journal articles, magazine articles and newspaper clippings, research projects and theses. Of these written sources, 256 were directly used in the research process and twelve were consulted but not specifically cited in the present study. Publication dates spanned 1960 to 1998. Other material used included university course notes, excerpts from educational television programmes (ETV) and notes from off-shore and local presentations. Web sites were located on many topics including communication and the New Zealand Fire Service, and authors such as Edward Lawler. Information came via e-mail as electronic discussions took place, while face to face discussions were held on numerous occasions throughout the year and recorded in writing or on Dictaphone.

Presentations were attended, such as The World Masters of Business (National Business Review, 1997) where the keynote speakers were General Norman Schwarzkopf, Ricardo Semler, Lee Iacocca and Stephen Covey. Other presentations included New Zealand Institute of Management seminars on organisational change, organisational success and management within The New Zealand Fire Service.

Initial literature investigations provided background material on the field of organisational behaviour. Following this, the search focused on key concepts and published research that included empirical findings involving organisational commitment, communication and communication climate. Articles were identified that

were written by, or referenced, researchers including Alutto, Dennis, Morrow, Mowday, Porter, Sligo and Steers.

Research site specific, the literature review provided grounding in the nature and focii of each organisation studied. Information was provided by staff from the research sites and also sourced as part of the literature review; for example, from EIT, the CEO's secretary provided material relating to the historical development of EIT, the 1998 Prospectus, the 1996 Annual Report and a copy of the organisational structure.

To develop the questionnaire survey, relevant management texts and social science literature were sourced, as well as studies from other researchers who have used versions of the questionnaire surveys that have been used in the present study.

3.3.2 CASE STUDY RESEARCH

Case study research serves four major purposes: "to chronicle events; to render, depict, or characterise; to instruct; to try out, prove or test" (Guba & Lincoln, 1981 cited in Frederikson, 1996, p.60). The purpose of the present study was to test relationships.

The two organisations considered in the present study were EIT and the New Zealand Fire Service – Napier and Hastings stations. These organisations were selected because of their geographical location and the nature of the organisation. It was anticipated that management of each organisation would have an interest in the outcomes of the present study.

3.3.2.1 EIT

Chapter Four, Part two provides information on EIT, a tertiary educational institute in Taradale, Hawke's Bay, New Zealand.

3.3.2.1.1 METHOD OF APPROACH

Initially, an informal approach was made to the Personnel Officer at EIT to determine staff numbers in various departments and the possibility of using EIT as a case study organisation. It was determined that management would be interested in participating in a project of this nature by supporting the questionnaire survey and by providing mobility of access within the organisation to conduct interviews.

The next step was to formally discuss the possibility with the Human Resource Manager. The package prepared for the meeting included an explanation of the study,

a copy of the questionnaire survey instrument, the research question and the requirements of the present study (Refer example Appendix Five). The response was positive; however, due to the questions reflecting on the management style of the Chief Executive Officer of EIT, the Human Resource Manager sought his approval before involving EIT.

The Human Resource Manager indicated that management was interested in the present study for three reasons: firstly, to assist a former student with a research project; secondly, due to the nature of the research question, they would have great interest in the results stemming from this project; and thirdly, when EIT demonstrates support for research, it encourages other organisations to allow EIT students to use them as case studies.

During a subsequent meeting, arrangements were confirmed for sample selection. The questionnaire surveys were delivered, arrangements were made for distribution, and dates set for the interviews to take place. Labels and envelopes were provided by EIT to facilitate return of the completed instruments.

3.3.2.1.2 SELECTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

EIT is comprised of 269 full time equivalent staff members divided into three categories of employment thus: permanent staff – full time and part time, and limited tenure contract staff; part time tutors and temporary allied staff.

The departments were selected because of the nature of their work, that is, the Faculty of Business Studies and Human Resource Section have similar interests to the Department of Human Resource Management, College of Business, Massey University from where the present study emerged. It was anticipated that because of the study's relevance to staff, there would be a strong interest in completing the questionnaire survey. The author also had an association with the Faculty of Business Studies and Education Services Section of EIT. It was expected that this might increase the response rate because the staff members are generally prepared to assist a former student with further study, and because a number of staff knew the researcher personally.

It was decided to select staff working 18 hours 45 minutes or more per week, that is .5 or more. This was to ensure that staff members would have a high degree of involvement in the communication processes of the EIT to be able to respond from an

informed viewpoint, and familiarity may increase the response rate. Table 3.1 indicates the departments and number of staff approached for involvement in the questionnaire survey.

TABLE 3.1 – EIT SAMPLE

DEPARTMENT	STAFF NUMBERS
Academic Section/CEO	5
Human Resources	4
Education Services	15
Marketing	16
Business Studies	28
TOTAL STAFF .5 HOURS OR MORE:	68

Source: Facsimile from the Personnel Officer EIT, 31 October, 1997.

3.3.2.2 THE NEW ZEALAND FIRE SERVICE

Chapter Four, Part one provides information on the New Zealand Fire Service. The stations included in the present study are Napier and Hastings Central Stations.

3.3.2.2.1 METHOD OF APPROACH

From the onset of the study, the Hastings Station was to be involved. This is because the Chief Fire Officer had a strong interest in graduate study and the topic areas, especially personal qualities of leaders and communication climate, and was involved in the selection of the broad area of research.

Once EIT became part of the study, further numbers from the Fire Service were required to ensure there was a good comparison of staff numbers. As the Napier Fire Service was in a similar geographic location and employed similar staff numbers, they were approached to be involved in the present study. This added another 32 staff to the sample.

Both Chief Fire Officers are involved in further education and understand the pressures and requirements of study of this nature. They were more than willing to allow their staff to be approached for both the questionnaire survey and regarding involvement in the interview process.

Following verbal discussion, a written explanation of the study was provided to both Chief Fire Officers. Included with this were a copy of the questionnaire survey instrument, the research question and the requirements of the present study (refer example Appendix Five). In subsequent discussions, arrangements were made to deliver the questionnaire surveys, and dates were set for the interviews. To facilitate return of the completed instruments, labels, marked with the researcher's name and the word "Confidential" for affixing to the Fire Service envelopes, were provided with the questionnaire surveys,

3.3.2.2.2 SELECTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

In an ideal situation, each station would be comprised of staff as depicted in Table 3.2; however, both stations have been short staffed for some time. Hastings Station, for example, has been four staff short for the past two years.

TABLE 3.2 – JOB ROLES AND STAFF NUMBERS

JOB ROLE	NAPIER STATION (N)	HASTINGS STATION (N)
District Chief Fire Officer (CFO)	1	1
Senior Station Officer (SSO)	4	4
Relief SSO	1	
Station Officer (SO)	4	4
Relief Station Officer (SO)	1	
Permanent Fire Fighters	28	28
Administration Assistant	1	

Source: Senior Station Officer, personal communication, 19 January, 1998.

Ideally, the shifts would have six fire fighters, one SSO and one SO, on the floor, and one reliever on leave. There are ten leave cycles, so staff would twice work two nights/two days, then have four days off, then have a leave period. On the extra leave cycle, the staff member works in maintenance or special projects on the station.

With Hastings Station being four staff down, effectively they did not have any relievers. This would mean that a typical staff member might work the shifts, as depicted on Table 3.3, in a weeklong period.

TABLE 3.3 - A TYPICAL SEVEN-WEEK PERIOD

DAY	SHIFT
Monday	Day
Tuesday	Day
Wednesday	Day and Night
Thursday	Night
Friday	Night
Saturday	Day
Sunday	Day

Source: Senior Station Officer, personal communication, 19 January, 1998.

In a typical week, in a high risk season, such as a Hawke's Bay summer, a firefighter or officer may work 100 -120 hours because they will be called in from off-duty to work while the rostered staff attend incidents. In a 48-hour period, there may be five hours available to return home to sleep.

Actual staff numbers selected for the questionnaire survey sample were as follows:

TABLE 3.4 – FIRE SERVICE SAMPLE

JOB ROLE	NAPIER STATION (N)	HASTINGS STATION (N)
Senior Station Officer (SSO)	4	4
Station Officer (SO)	4	4
Permanent Fire Fighters	24	24
Administration Assistant	-	1
TOTAL STAFF	32	33

3.3.3 DATA COLLECTION

The connection between the research methodology, the research topic and the research proposal stems from the need to involve many organisational members in a questionnaire survey to seek their opinion of the communication climate and relationship with organisational commitment. It was surmised that the nature and level of commitment would be different between organisational members.

Arguably, the most cost-effective approach to acquiring knowledge in this context, which also ensures rigour in the research methodologies, is to administer a questionnaire survey and to conduct cross sectional interviews. Indeed, Cartwright and Sligo (1987) suggest that the most searching insights into organisational communication are obtained through the use of questionnaire survey methods across a large staff sample, reinforced with qualitative research, usually interviews. A questionnaire survey and structured interviews were selected as the data collection tools for the present study.

3.3.3.1 QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEYS

Questionnaire surveys have the advantage of being able to collect vast amounts of information in a short time frame. Dane (1990) proposes that survey instruments are the most frequently used instruments for descriptive or predictive goals in research because the variety of questions that can be included allows for a variety of concepts to be described. The purpose is to obtain self-report information directly from the participants by posing questions.

3.3.3.1.1 THE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The purpose of the questionnaire survey was to collect attitudinal and perceptual data about each organisation's communication climate and employee commitment. It consisted of thirty-five items plus seven demographic questions, and was designed to be transparent amongst organisations.

For the present study, the questionnaire survey instrument was developed after consulting a selection of work such as, Boulian, Mowday, Porter and Steers (1974) and Cook, Hepworth, Wall and Warr's (1981) academic texts. The latter text focused on "scales for measuring work attitudes, values and perceptions" developed from 15 principal international journals published from 1974 - mid 1984 (Sheffield cited in Cook, Hepworth, Wall & Warr, 1981, p.1). The communication climate questions were sourced from Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto and Wiio (1979, 1984), and additional questions were developed specifically for the present study to ensure there was a linkage between organisational commitment and communication climate. The sources for the questions are represented on Table 3.5 and the questionnaire survey instrument is in Appendix Six. It was coincidental that the order of the questions coincided with the blocks of questions from the original sources. Considerable thought was given to the question order to ensure the questions flowed smoothly.

TABLE 3.5 - ORIGIN OF QUESTIONS

SOURCE	QUESTION NUMBER
Specifically prepared for the present study	1 – 5
Boulian, Mowday, Porter and Steers (1974)	6 – 16
Power (1996)	17 – 21
Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto & Wiio (1979, 1984)	22 – 35

Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto and Wiio (1979, 1984) designed the instrument to be administered to participants who would respond on a scale from one to five. Scales for Power (1996) and Boulian, Mowday, Porter and Steers (1974) were also from one to five. To reduce confusion when completing the questionnaire survey, the scale names were altered. If the question was related to a level or value, the scale *very low to very high* was used as the range of possible responses. If the questions related to a statement, the scale *strongly disagree to strongly agree* was used as the range of possible responses. The original scale names and the amended names are represented in Table 3.6 for questions six to 35. Questions one to five had a five-point bipolar response format based on the Likert scale, with scale names ranging from one to five. The scale names assigned to each numeric were very low (1), low (2), moderate (3), high (4) and very high (5).

Two types of information were gathered from the respondents. These were fact - demographic characteristics such as age, gender and educational level - and opinion, "an expression of a respondent's preference, feeling or behavioural intention" (Dane, 1990, p.122).

TABLE 3.6 - SCALE NAMES

SCALE (1 - 5)	DENNIS, GOLDHABER, RICHETTO AND WIIIO (1979, 1984), Q22 – 35	BOULIAN, MOWDAY, PORTER AND STEERS (1974) AND POWER (1995), Q6 –21	AMENDED TO
1	To a very little extent	Strongly disagree	Strongly disagree
2	To a little extent	Slightly disagree	Disagree
3	To some extent	Neither agree nor disagree	Indifferent
4	To a great extent	Slightly agree	Agree
5	To a very great extent	Strongly agree	Strongly agree

Source: Prepared by Perkins (1998).

It is understood that “survey questioning is a very delicate matter. Even when people say they feel strongly about an issue, the form and wording of a question may affect their answer (Krosnick & Schman, 1988 cited in Myers, 1990, p.12). Hence, care was taken to avoid wording of questions which included absolutes or negatives, or which might have evoked emotive or subjective responses. None of the questions was negatively phrased, as they were in the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire.

ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

The primary instrument used to consider organisational commitment was Boulian, Mowday, Porter and Steer’s (1974) organisational commitment questionnaire (OQC). The work of Mowday, Porter and Steers (1979), Shouksmith (1993), Power (1996) and Johnson (1995) has provided valuable material for developing the organisational commitment aspects of the questionnaire.

Questions were selected, and altered if necessary, to reflect the objectives of the present study. As Power (1996) pointed out, the original organisational commitment questionnaire instrument contained Americanised words that might not have been as easily accepted or understood in New Zealand, for example:

	<i>Example of a U.S. question: I talk up this organisation to my friends as a great organisation to work for.</i>
6.	Example of a NZ question: I am willing to put in effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this organisation to be successful.

Some questions related to specific types of organisational commitment such as affective organisational commitment, for example:

9.	I am proud to be part of this organisation.
13.	Senior management inspires me to do my best.

However, questions referring to Normative Organisational Commitment such as, *I really care about the fate of this organisation*, and to Continuance Organisational Commitment, such as *there is not much to be gained by sticking with this organisation indefinitely*, were not included in the present study. Questions pertaining to other forms of commitment were removed such as Job Commitment or Job Involvement questions

– *the most important things that happen to me involve my work, and I live, eat and breathe my job.*

Power (1996) derived some questions from unspecified sources. Five of these questions were retained for the purposes of the present study and reworded in keeping with the research question and for ease of understanding, such as:

	<i>Original Power (1996) question:</i> <i>Working in this company is like working with friends.</i>
19.	Reworded thus: My co-workers encourage a friendly, supportive climate.

COMMUNICATION CLIMATE

The instruments pertaining to organisational climate were “descriptive in their orientation, being concerned with what is the case, not with what is desired nor with affective reactions to current circumstances” (Cook, Hepworth, Wall & Warr, 1981, p.171). The organisational climate measures were based on individual perceptions and mainly descriptive in their nature. However, they mostly have a broader focus, with concern for the organisation as a whole (Cook, Hepworth, Wall & Warr, 1981). Using communication climate narrows the focus of the study.

Dennis (1974 cited in Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto & Wiio, 1979) in his doctoral dissertation, *A theoretical and empirical study of a managerial communication climate in complex organisations*, developed a communication climate inventory. Modified questions from Dennis’s 45 item, five factor, communication climate inventory were implemented in the present study. The factors were superior/subordinate communication (one), quality of information (two), Superior openness/[honesty] (three), upward communication opportunity (four) and reliability of information (five).

Elements relating to factors three and five were inappropriate for the research question, so were not used. This is because factor three primarily related to superiors responding to their beliefs about their subordinates, and factor five was concerned with reliability of information. Issues included in the questionnaire survey pertained to supportiveness from a superior perceived by the subordinate (factor one), perceived affective aspects of relationship such as openness, empathy, and accuracy of downward information (factor two), and perception of upward communication opportunities and degree of influence (factor four).

Again, wording was important and changes were made to facilitate the present study. In this case, the words were changed to current New Zealand terms such as *honest* rather than *candid*, redundant words were removed, and the perspective of the questions was turned from “you” to “I”. Three representations of the questions used, with the word changes, are below:

	<i>Original question – factor one:</i> <i>Your superior makes you feel free to talk with him/her.</i>
22.	Reworded thus: My superior is approachable.
	<i>Original question – factor one:</i> <i>Your superior is frank and candid with you.</i>
25.	Reworded thus: My superior is honest with me.
	<i>Original question – factor two:</i> <i>People in this organisation are encouraged to be really open and candid with each other.</i>
29.	Reworded thus: People in this organisation are encouraged to be honest with one another.

Specific to the Present Study

Questions specifically addressing commitment and communication were developed during a discussion with a scientist and a Massey University staff member. Examples include:

2.	The quality of communication in this organisation is...
4.	Management’s level of concern about effective communication is...

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Background information was compiled after viewing a number of questionnaire surveys, such as Sligo’s (1996) Questionnaire Survey on Information, but the main source was the guide used in the ICA audit presented in Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto and Wiio (1984, p.249).

The seven demographic questions pertained to gender, age group, tenure in the organisation, length of time at his or her current position, current position in terms of

subordinates, educational qualifications and how many other organisations the respondent had been employed with during the past ten years.

3.3.3.1.2 SUB-SCALES

Sub-scales were generated for analytical purposes, specifically for the questionnaire survey used in the present study. This is because the diverse origins of the questions meant predetermined subscales could not be used. Re-engineered subscales developed by Gray and Perkins are depicted in Table 3.7.

TABLE 3.7 – SUB-SCALES

SUB-SCALE	QUESTION NUMBER
Organisational Commitment	
Co-workers	11
Supervisor	12, 23, 24
Management	5, 13, 21
Organisation	1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16
Organisational Communication	
Interpersonal	31, 32, 33
Management	3, 4
Organisation	2, 30, 34, 35
Communication Climate	
Individual	27
Co-workers	17, 19
Management	20, 21
Supervisor/superior	22, 23, 24, 25, 26
Organisation	18, 28, 29

Source: Prepared by Gray & Perkins (1998).

3.3.3.1.3 DATA ORGANISATION

Quantifying data provides objectivity and guidance in clarifying research results. Numerical expression of the questionnaire survey results demonstrated the extent to which there is a relationship between the variables, thus providing indicative data for answering the research question.

Consideration was given to the numeric representation of the data. Each response was given an identification number (ID), and the three groups were joined in one numerical sequence from one to eighty-seven.

The structure of the data file and the codes assigned to the data were recorded, and the responses were collated on Microsoft Excel 97. To check the data, systematic data cleaning was performed and every response was audited.

At each of the three levels of analysis, a breakdown of results in relation to the objectives and hypotheses was considered. The first level of analysis involved looking at the frequencies and understanding the data. This involved calculating the basic frequencies and statistical variance for every question. Bar charts were prepared, as visual representation helped with analysis of the frequencies to consider distribution of each question and to see the skews. Cross tabulations provided a more detailed level of analysis. Following this, professional guidance was sought on analytical procedures for manipulating the data and for assessing the extent of the relationship between the variables. Correlations were analysed between organisation commitment and communication climate. Chapter Five – Results discusses the data analysis in greater depth.

3.3.3.2 STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Interviewing adds another dimension to data collection with the principal purpose being to “corroborate and/or expand upon concerns reported in the other audit tools” (Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto & Wiio, 1984, p.243). The interaction between interviewer and respondent tends to improve the chance of obtaining valid and reliable responses. However, a disadvantage is the cost required to obtain valid data (Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto & Wiio, 1979). One to one interviews were used in the present study to uncover the participants’ perspective on the phenomenon being researched and to reveal the reasoning behind participants’ opinions and feelings.

3.3.3.2.1 THE INTERVIEW GUIDE

For the present study, an exploratory interview guide was adapted from the guide used in the ICA audit from Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto & Wiio (1984, p.251) and the Foltz (1973 cited in Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto & Wiio, 1984) sample interview guide. These interview guides and the guide pertaining to the present study, were developed to alleviate some of the problems associated with questionnaire surveys such as difficulties with coding open-ended questions into appropriate quantifiable categories

and with biased responses. Additional questions, specifically prepared for the present study, were developed during consultation with two Massey University staff members. The origins of all the questions are depicted in Table 3.8. The complete interview is in Appendix Seven.

TABLE 3.8 - ORIGIN OF QUESTIONS

SOURCE	QUESTION NUMBER
Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto and Wiio (1979, 1984)	1, 2, 3, 7
Foltz (1973 cited in Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto & Wiio, 1984)	4
Specifically prepared for the present study	5, 6, 8

Questions that contained one issue and directly related to the objectives of the present study were used in their original form, such as,

2.	What are the major communication strengths of the organisation?
----	---

Some questions were reworded due to their length, such as:

	<i>Original question:</i> <i>Describe the communication relationship you have with your immediate supervisor; with your co-workers; with middle management; and your subordinates (if appropriate). Ask for specific behavioural examples.</i>
7.	Reworded thus: Describe the communication relationship you have with your immediate supervisor.

Questions which did not uphold the principle of one issue per question were reworded or not selected, such as the following question which has three issues contained in one sentence:

	<i>What are your views on the value of developing and maintaining effective internal communications programmes?</i>
--	---

Another question, which may have generated elaborate or lengthy responses, was reworded to provide more focus:

	<i>Original question:</i> <i>Do you have formal, written communications objectives and policies? If not, what do you believe the key policies are?</i>
--	---

3.	Reworded thus: Do you have formal, written communications objectives and policies? If yes, what are they?
----	--

The questions used in the interview guide were intended to draw out some issues in the questionnaire survey and to work towards the objectives of the research, that is, some objectives were achieved specifically from the questionnaire survey whilst others were achieved via the interview process. There were two parts to the interview, the first being the research questions and the second part being the demographics.

The first question was intended to help to build rapport with the interviewee, followed by questions pertaining to current communication practices.

1.	Describe your job (duties, functions).
2.	What are the major communication <i>strengths</i> of this organisation?
3.	What are the major communication <i>weaknesses</i> of this organisation?

The final four questions were more direct and related to organisation commitment, communication and relationships.

5.	How strong is the commitment among staff at present, would you say?
6.	Does the way in which management communicates the plans, developments and changes in your organisation affect your commitment?
7.	Describe the communication relationship you have with your immediate supervisor.
8.	Do the personal qualities of your leader affect your commitment to this organisation? Why?

Question four was directed to the Personnel Officer and the Chief Fire Officer to determine the communication systems operating in the organisation.

4.	Do you have formal, written communications objectives and policies? If yes, what are they?
----	---

3.3.3.2.2 SELECTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Issues considered in selecting the interview participants included position, age group, job type and length of time with the organisation.

- (a) Interviews were conducted with the Chief Fire Officer – Hastings, and the Personnel Officer at EIT. The Human Resource Manager had recently returned from 15 months' parental leave, so it was suggested it was more appropriate to interview the Personnel Officer as she had been part of the developments at EIT, in the absence of her Manager. The aim of the interviews was to determine the view of their communication system and staff commitment to their respective organisations.
- (b) Cross sectional interviews were conducted within each organisation because it was anticipated that different levels of commitment and impressions of the communication system existed within each organisation.

From the Fire Service, the Chief Fire Officer and Senior Station Officer in both instances selected the participants. Issues for selection included selecting a mix of 'watches' to ensure a balance of feelings towards the organisation. Eight staff formally participated in structured interviews and positions included a Chief Fire Officer, senior fire fighters, fire fighters and station officers. During the course of study, six staff were involved in informal discussions of the topic and added value to the project.

From EIT, the author selected the participants based on her knowledge of the organisation. The participants were intended to reflect a cross section of the organisational structure and views of staff, and the staff involved had an interest in the specific project. Seven people were formally involved in this process. Seven staff formally participated in structured interviews and positions included tutors, a section manager and academic support staff. During the course of study, five staff were involved in informal discussions of the topic and added value to the project.

3.4 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

Attention was given in the design and implementation stages to item topics, item formats and arrangements of the topics. These, according to Dane (1990), have been known to have an impact on the information obtained. To ensure these issues were covered, the questionnaire survey instrument was subjected to a pre-test of independent respondents and two pilot tests prior to being given to the managers of the case study organisations for approval, and then being administered to their staff.

For each of the 35 items, respondents were asked to indicate how they rated each statement. Each item could be scored independently with ranges as illustrated in the example (Table 3.9), and as presented in Section 3.3.3.1.1, on a five-point bipolar response format based on the Likert scale. In the example, a score of one indicates that the respondent is of the opinion that the quality of communication in her or her organisation is very low, whereas a score of five indicates that the respondent feels the quality of communication is very high.

TABLE 3.9 – EXAMPLE OF A FIVE-POINT BIPOLAR RESPONSE FORMAT

	Very low				Very high
In my opinion the quality of communication in this organisation is...	1	2	3	④	5
<i>In your opinion, the quality of communication in your organisation is "high".</i>					

In the second part of the questionnaire survey, each respondent was asked to provide information on demographics such as gender, age group, tenure and length of time at his or her current position.

3.4.1 PRETESTING THE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

A test of the instrument was conducted, which included an interview spanning 15 – 25 minutes, following the pre-testing of the measure. Issues included the effectiveness of the instrument; how well the instructions were understood; and whether the cover sheet conveyed the message it was intended to. Other issues included a check for readability, flow of questions and ambiguous questions. The pretest responses were examined to see how well the instructions were followed to ensure the instructions clearly explained how to respond to each item. These issues followed recommendations provided by Dane (1990).

The questionnaire was pre-tested on six people - a Manager for Melco Sales New Zealand Limited, an Assistant Principal, a Systems Analyst, a Careers Advisor for a tertiary institute, a fire fighter and a secondary school teacher.

A comment arising from the interviews was that the interview was comprised of good questions asked in a variety of ways. None of the respondents felt that any of the questions was ambiguous because the interpretation was up to the person answering the questions. One respondent commented that it was difficult to give a five rating to

any questions, although some questions were rated as five. It was felt that a five made the organisation seem like 100% all the time whereas some days a five would not be awarded on the question. Questions nine and ten could be very subjective, and a comparison between these questions was interesting because it would make respondents seriously consider how they felt.

A suggestion was made to include a verbatim *comments* section for respondents to add comments if they wished to, rather than having to confine their thoughts and feelings to a scale from one to five. A *comments* section was added following the final question and preceding the demographics section.

The only criticism was concerning item two of the demographic questions. Originally, the respondent's specific age was asked for. Participants felt their responses could easily be identified and other participants simply were not comfortable assigning a specific number in this section. Following the results of the pre-test, question two was changed to age groups thus:

2. Age:

Under 21	<input type="checkbox"/>	41 - 50	<input type="checkbox"/>
21 - 30	<input type="checkbox"/>	50+	<input type="checkbox"/>
31 - 40	<input type="checkbox"/>		

As only two minor modifications were made to the instrument, following the results of the pretesting phase, it was not necessary to readminister the questionnaire survey to the pretested candidates.

3.4.2 PILOT STUDIES

Conducting pilot studies provided an initial understanding of an organisation's communication processes and how people reacted to them. This was also a preliminary indication of the level of commitment within each organisation. Two organisations were involved in this process. One organisation was EIT and the other organisation was the corporate office of a Government Department. In all seven participants were involved in this process.

The Fire Service was not approached to be involved in the pilot study for three main reasons: the major changes taking place within the Fire Service causing stress for the fire fighters; the fact that the survey was taking place during the summer months and fire fighters are under pressure with fires in dry temperatures; and that as few as eight staff are at the Station at any one time. The Chief Fire Officers had been most generous with the provisional time allotted for interviews and the questionnaire surveys, and asking for more time during the research process would have been inappropriate.

During the pilot studies, the researcher looked for additional ideas on how to proceed with implementing the questionnaire within the case study organisations and how feasible the present study would be.

A comment arising from the questionnaire survey pilot studies was that the interview comprised of good questions asked in a straightforward manner. The instructions were clear which made them easy to follow. It was felt that the scales in both cases could easily be applied to the questions. Most participants preferred not to add their name to questionnaires, and commented that the confidentiality and anonymity aspects of this instrument respected this.

A suggestion was made to include a “not applicable” response on the scale. However, after discussing this suggestion further in the context of an organisation it seemed that a respondent would rarely find a need to reply, *not applicable*, so the choice of “not applicable” was not added to the questionnaire survey. The *comments* section was used in most instances, and respondents appreciated the opportunity to add their thoughts in an unstructured manner.

3.4.3 ADMINISTERING THE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

Sample sizes were determined by selecting a manageable participant number given the time frame, financial resources and the constraints of handling large sample sizes. The total possible sample of 153 participants comprised 65 fire fighters and 68 EIT staff.

As previously discussed in Section 3.4, the three managers were each provided with a copy of the questionnaire survey instrument. Covering memoranda (Appendix Eight – Ten) from the managers accompanied the questionnaire surveys when they were distributed to staff. Issues of anonymity and confidentiality were stressed in the cover

sheet to the instrument, in the memorandum distributed with the questionnaire survey, and in the meetings where the instruments were distributed. It is believed that stressing anonymity and confidentiality reduced the response bias or incomplete responses to sensitive areas in the questionnaire survey. The letter from the researcher to EIT was amended to include the words *strictly confidential*, and stressed that there was no need for the respondent to put their name on the questionnaire survey.

3.4.3.1 EIT

The questionnaire surveys were distributed at section and faculty meetings over a one-week period. Depending on the department, a reference was added to each questionnaire survey to facilitate ease of identification, for example, "ES" for department of Education Services.

Using the internal mail system the responses were returned to the Personnel Officer in a sealed envelope marked "Confidential." Prior to the deadline, voice mail messages were targeted at the sections that did not return many completed instruments.

3.4.3.2 THE FIRE SERVICE

Previous researchers, when administering questionnaires to fire fighters, had tried a range of methods. Due to shift work, difficulty was encountered with distribution and collection of the surveys. Often, due to low total staff numbers, the fire fighters would work a variety of shifts to cover colleagues who were ill or on leave. In an earlier discussion, one Chief Fire Officer said that due to shift changes he might not get the opportunity to talk with some shifts for up to three weeks (Trerise, 1997e). To overcome some of the problems encountered by other researchers, the Chief Fire Officer established a point of contact for the researcher. The point of contact oversaw distribution and collection of the questionnaire surveys. The researcher worked closely with management and the contact person to maximise contact. Due to the nature of the operating environment, it was impossible to deliver the instruments in the morning for collection at the end of the same day.

The questionnaire survey was distributed to the sample over a one-week period. This was to accommodate those fire fighters on shift work. Submission of the completed questionnaire was facilitated by two methods: at one Fire Station, the completed forms were placed in the office of the Chief Fire Officer, and at the other Fire Station, the completed forms were deposited in a box, in a secure location at the station. Just prior

to the final date for returning the instruments, a notice was placed on the noticeboard as a reminder to return the completed forms.

3.5 CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEWS

The interview consisted of two parts. Firstly, the interview guide was put to the test. After successful testing of the instrument, the guide was given to the three managers for their consideration. After managers had agreed on the schedule, the interviews were then conducted in the case study organisations.

Pilot interviews were held around Hawke's Bay and Wellington, in convenient locations for the respondents, whereas the interviews for data collection were held on the premises of the research site. Each person was interviewed separately. Prior to and during the interviews, participants were given the opportunity to decline answering the questions; however, none did so. The procedure and questions for both the pre-test and the actual interviews were identical. However, during the pre-test interview, during most questions and after completion of question eight, there was a discussion about the question content and format.

3.5.1 PILOT INTERVIEWS WITH THREE SETS OF PARTICIPANTS

Seven people were involved in the pilot interviewing sessions. Each interview averaged 30 minutes with the purpose being to determine how well the questions matched their purpose, the flow of questions and the anticipated duration of an interview session.

People involved with this pre-test were a mobile team coordinator for Community Health Hawke's Bay, a Lecturer in Diploma in Teaching Early Childhood Education, a Systems Analyst, a Massey University staff member, two staff from the Eastern Institute of Technology (EIT), and one staff member from the New Zealand Fire Service.

Issues covered verbally at the beginning of the pilot interviews addressed the following:

- ✖ An introduction to the study
- ✖ The level of anonymity and confidentiality with which the data would be treated
- ✖ Recording of the interview to facilitate data analysis and destruction of the tape after submission of the final report

COMMUNICATION CLIMATE

- ✱ Explanation of what the interview was about
- ✱ Why the respondent's information was important to the study
- ✱ How the results would be used

Comments from the participants of the pre-test of the interviews included:

- ✱ That there was a good flow of questions
- ✱ That respondents generally felt comfortable answering the questions
- ✱ One participant felt that they needed longer to consider the questions such as being provided with the questions the day before the interview. However, they understood that this method might not suit the purpose of the project.
- ✱ The respondents could see how the questions fitted with the research question
- ✱ Straightforward questions, short, precise, to the point and easy to follow
- ✱ People don't openly say they are fed up and why during the ordinary course of business, and so this may help them to really consider the issues in the workplace
- ✱ Uncomfortable with answering questions concerning supervisor if they did not get on well, respect or have an open communication link with them
- ✱ The respondents working for the organisations under study were able to provide an insight into specific information that could be gleaned from the interviews such as discussion concerning the Strategic Plan 2000 for the New Zealand Fire Service, and the methods and types of communication used within each organisation.

Following the pre-test procedure, no changes were made to the interview guide.

3.5.2 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERVIEW GUIDE

Following the same procedure as in the pilot interviews, the interviews were conducted in six stages, over a one-week period. One additional point covered in the verbal discussion at the beginning was:

- ✱ How the respondents were selected to be included in the questionnaire survey, that is, that they were purposely selected members of their organisation, with the intention of expanding on issues in the questionnaire survey.

Formal interviews spanned 20 minutes to one hour, 30 minutes. The informal discussions varied in length and in the number of participants at one time. A broad selection of staff from both organisations formed the final group of participants who were formally interviewed. Fire Service staff came from a selection of Watches to ensure a mix of feelings and opinion, while EIT staff were a mix of teaching and support staff, management and non-management, and one participant was also the allied staff representative on Council.

3.6 CONCLUSION

Returned questionnaire survey responses were assigned an identification number (ID) as they were received by the researcher. Statistical analysis was then performed using Microsoft Excel 97 and SPSS. (Refer to Chapter Five – Results).

On completion of the interviews, the organisations were given written feedback. Issues were covered, verbally and in writing, concerning the use of the organisation's logo (Appendix 11 and 12) for Chapter Four and, for EIT, provision of a suitable photo to be used in the final document. Arrangements were also made for the relevant sections such as the methodology, historical information and results to be edited by representatives from each organisation.

The study of both organisations was completed in a timely and cost effective manner through implementing these methodologies. Case study results were then examined in the context of the knowledge derived from the extensive literature review, and a conclusion drawn on what the relationship is, if any, between communication climate and organisation commitment in two organisations experiencing change.

THE CASE STUDY ORGANISATIONS

OVERVIEW

The New Zealand Fire Service is a traditional, hierarchically structured organisation that has experienced considerable change and refocus. Change management is still in operation whilst the organisation finds a new equilibrium. The message from Government was to initiate change internally, or be exposed to external change directed by Government. The New Zealand Fire Service promotes lifetime employability, not lifetime employment. Providing staff with transferable skills was an initiative in the Strategic Plan for 1995-96. The Fire Service provides personnel in the area of administration and two types of fire fighters with slightly different philosophies – existing fire fighters, and the community safety team members. Further restructuring announcements were made in October 1997.

The Hastings and Napier Fire Stations have a vision statement prepared by their corporate body.

**Vision:
Planning to Protect, Acting to Save**

Hawke's Bay Polytechnic "emerged as a multi-disciplinary educational institution" in 1991 (EIT, 1996a, p.2). Growth in programmes and student numbers has continued since then. The name change in 1996 to the Eastern Institute of Technology (EIT) reflected the change in strategic direction and more accurately reflected the range of programmes on offer. In 1996, EIT catered for 1956 equivalent full time students (EFTS), a marked increase from the 750 EFTS in 1987 when they first began operating as a polytechnic, a transition from a community college.

EIT has a stated vision, mission and strategy, which have contributed to its success.

**Mission:
To Provide Excellent Tertiary Education**

CASE STUDY RESEARCH SITE: ONE
**THE NEW ZEALAND FIRE SERVICE –
HASTINGS AND NAPIER**



Photo 4.1 - A typical house fire in the Napier District. The photo depicts a Firefighter checking the weatherboards for heat spots to ensure the fire has been completely extinguished.

Photo courtesy of Kodak, Taradale.



CASE STUDY RESEARCH SITE: ONE

THE NEW ZEALAND FIRE SERVICE – HASTINGS AND NAPIER

Employment is a series of relationships that will not form if there is no trust (Trerise, personal communication, 11 September, 1997)

4.1 THE ORGANISATION

As the Fire Service is a volatile and rapidly changing organisation, time was frozen at November 20 1997 for the purposes of the present study.

The Fire Service is a community-based organisation with a budget of \$156.2m. The Minister of Internal Affairs through the Fire Service Commission, oversees the Service. The Commission was empowered by The Fire Service Act (1975) to control and be responsible for the Fire Service (Cummings, 1996; Mears, 1996). The National Office services three regions - Northern, Southern and Central, as indicated in Appendix 13. Each area is divided into districts. Forty permanent districts were established. A typical regional station may have one Chief Fire Officer, eight officers and twenty-seven firefighters. Two crews would take four watches (Trerise, personal communication, 15 November, 1997). Hastings District, for example, has an operating budget of \$2.5 million, plant and equipment of \$6 million, and protects a \$30 billion asset value (Trerise, 1997e).

On November 21, the regional offices are to be closed and a new organisational structure formed as noted in the organisational change section and depicted in Appendix 14.

During 1995 the first Strategic Plan, entitled 'Advancing to 2000', was completed for the five years beginning 1996 (Refer to Appendix 15). This plan was developed to ensure that the Fire Service had a clear direction. A review of the Fire Service, which began in 1993/4, was to be completed in 1996. Further restructuring was announced in October 1997. The operations of the Fire Service were reappraised and restructured with the intention of improving its ability to deliver services to the community, particularly as the needs of the community change. The role of its staff was seen to be pivotal in the continued success of the Fire Service and the leaders are ultimately responsible for the culture, communication, motivation and inspiration of the staff.

The plan arose out of a need for the New Zealand Fire Service to adapt to its changing operating environment, such as deregulation, changing technology, and society including cultural background and education; and encompassed the concept of Comprehensive Emergency Management (Perkins, 1996c). Comprehensive Emergency Management includes hazardous substance emergencies, medical assistance, public welfare, motor vehicle accident, fires and other rescue or emergency incidents. Attending incidents accounts for five percent of total duty time, and fires are 25% of the total of calls responded to in that time, with the remaining time being attributed to other emergency incidents (Trerise, 1997d).

4.2 THE STAFF

Staff include 1500 paid, permanent full time personnel, 8000 unpaid volunteers, and 300 paid community safety team staff who “work together to provide an effective service [to New Zealand communities]” (NZFSC, 1995, p.5). Community safety teams were appointed during 1995/6. They work alongside but not with, existing fire fighting teams, with their primary focus being risk identification and risk reduction. Volunteer fire fighters serve small rural New Zealand towns covering about 20% of the population. New Zealand has a population of 3.6 million spread over 270,534 square kilometres. Auckland, Hamilton, Christchurch and Dunedin accommodate approximately two million people. The New Zealand Fire Service staff work with the community and colleagues in other emergency services to enhance their effectiveness.

4.3 THE NEW PHILOSOPHY

The mission and vision statements and strategic objectives are fundamental elements which draw together the restructured Fire Service. The Mission Statement encompasses everything the Fire Service is about - serving the community by protecting life, property and the environment from the effects of fire and other dangers. Maurice Cummings (Ex-Chief Executive, New Zealand Fire Service) and Kerry Everson (Ex-Chief Fire Service Officer) saw the vision grow from the primary and secondary emphasis of the Fire Service, prevention and saving lives - Planning to Protect, Acting to Save. The new focus announced in October 1997 is fire.

4.4 SNAPSHOT OF MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION STYLE

Kevin Trerise, the Chief Fire Officer, Hastings District believes employment is a series of relationships. A relationship will only form if there is trust. He believes in being

“100% up front and honest” (Trerise, personal communication, 30 July, 1996) so his staff will accept his sincerity.

The changing values and vision of the Fire Service towards promoting community education has meant a change in focus for the firefighters. Hence, development of key skills, including communication, is imperative. Kevin acknowledges the power of effective communication and staff empowerment and he feels that a leader’s role almost always involves working with other people to accomplish tasks and objectives, and communication is the mode through which this is achieved.

4.5 PRE-RESTRUCTURING

Prior to the Review, the Fire Service was described as a “quasi military model with centralised control” (Cummings, 1996, p.3). Typical of bureaucratic structures that are traditionally associated with the maintenance of stability and order, management intervened to ensure staff complied with expected behaviours and rules. Many staff lacked tertiary qualifications. Rules were imposed through collective bargaining.

4.6 ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

The type of change the Fire Service is undergoing is strategic, affecting the whole organisational system (Nadler & Tushman, 1990 cited in Irwin & More, 1994). The Strategic Plan recommendations impacted on all facets of the Human Resource function. These included altering the management’s way of thinking, flattening the structure, empowering staff, introducing reward systems, aligning job activities, enhancing training and development levels, and providing accountability measures (Perkins, 1996c).

The desired culture for management was to be one of “open, honest, communicative and participatory style” (Summers, 1995, p.5). The Service adopted a soft HRM methodology as it attempted to increase employee participation, commitment, and involvement (Storey cited in Toulson, 1996). This is not to discredit the operating strategies of the past. They were appropriate to the conditions and environment the Fire Service was functioning in. The environment was changing and the Fire Service had to adapt to these changes. Had they not initiated the changes internally, the Government would have invoked change - “change or be changed”, (NZFS, 1995, p.2).

Originally, restructuring was to provide flexibility and an opportunity to build on group strengths, increase the total pool of skills and knowledge and carve a path for more successful response to change. Theoretically, there was an emphasis on staff empowerment, commitment, ownership of vision and goals, and participation. There was a general acceptance amongst staff of the need to implement operational changes, such as introducing community education, planning for safe buildings and assistance with preparing for evacuations. Change was essential as existing policies were inappropriate in the current or anticipated operating environment (Perkins, 1996d).

Stage one involved implementation of the new management structure and change to management philosophy. Stage two “involve[d] negotiating a new employment contract and roster system with paid staff, reducing over-resourcing and improving support for volunteers” (Cummings, 1996, p.6). The development of a five-year strategic plan was part of stage two. In these stages, the Fire Service responded to the need to develop its staff and interrelate with the communities it serves. The preparation and analysis of HRM conducted by the commission, in order to prepare for the future, was said to be extensive and a crucial step towards achieving success.

Trerise (1997d) asserts that the first wave of restructuring improved the effectiveness of the operational outputs, technostructure and support staff of the fire service. However, a power struggle developed between National Office and the Regional Offices, and between Regional Offices and Area Offices. An outcome of these struggles is reflected in the negative effect at District level as staff try to deliver an improved service. Indeed, a report prepared by Trerise (1997b) prior to the third wave of restructuring recommended removal of one level to improve management and support function effectiveness; this in turn would improve the effectiveness of service delivery to the public. This delaying was part of further changes announced by senior management in October 1997. Trerise (1997d) felt the activities that staff are now involved in has changed considerably in the last 12 – 18 months, and more change is to come. The direction of the Fire Service is depicted in Table 4.1.

TABLE 4.1 - THE DIRECTION OF THE FIRE SERVICE

STATE PRIOR TO FIRST WAVE OF CHANGE IN 1994/95	DESIRED STATE FOLLOWING RESTRUCTURING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> public sector approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a more businesslike, professional approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> internal direction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> actively working with customers and colleagues in the emergency services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> focusing on response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> encouraging prevention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reactive work ethic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> proactive work ethic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> doing more of the same 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> developing new and better ways
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> focus on fire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> providing a wider range of services to complement other emergency services

Source: NZFSC (1995).

4.6.1 THE FIRE SERVICE AND THE CHANGE WAVE MODEL

The change wave deals with the human dynamics of an organisation and is based on the communications plan. Colin Coverdale's change wave, Figure 4.2, was intended to depict the current change wave within the Fire Service. From discussions regarding organisational commitment and communication climate, it appears that a communications plan is non-existent or has low priority which makes applying a change wave for communications very difficult.

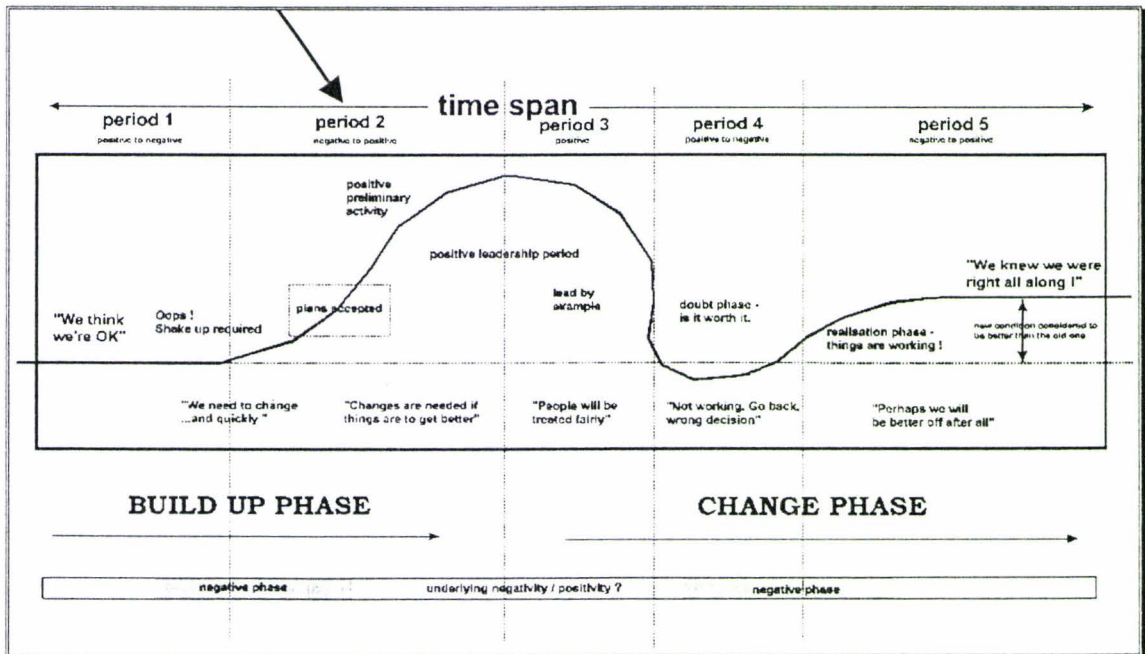
To the observer, it appears as though some of the first waves of change failed, an indication of this is the replacement of top management, such as Maurice Cummings. In terms of the change wave, it may have been suspended and restarted under Roger Estall. If the same strategies from the Strategic Plan 2000 are continued, this may be fundamentally acceptable providing staff believe in them.

The wave does not necessarily start in period one. An organisation must determine where they are along the wave and take control. If one was to make a determination as to where the change wave was in October 1997 it might be "period two" where management are regrouping and reapplying a new plan. However, there may be more than one level of a wave working at any one time, for example one at senior management level and one at station level, and the wave itself is dynamic. A communication plans is essential so that once it is rolling, the wave will highlight any problems in the communications, and also allow for communication to be intensified

as the organisation works through the change. The communication climate currently appears to be poor between Head Office and the rest of the organisation. The block of doubt apparent amongst firefighters is an indication that implementation of plans needs to be treated with sensitivity and with increased communication.

Following a consultant's report suggesting that firefighters, due to the nature of their job, prefer quick decisions, Estall appears to have adopted that philosophy and announced and implemented swiftly, without adequately preparing his staff for change. This may be the best method at the fire ground; however, in matters of major organisational change it may not be appropriate. When staff acceptance is fundamental to a successful outcome, it is questionable the extent to which rapid implementation of decisions is the best approach, or alternatively the way in which the rapid decisions were executed may have been faulty.

FIGURE 4.2 – THE CHANGE WAVE MODEL



4.6.2 THE TRANSITION PERIOD

Ken Comber (Ex-Chairman, New Zealand Fire Service Commission) believed the Strategic Plan to be an important step in the reform of the Fire Service (Comber cited in NZFSC, 1995, p.3). Recommendations included:

- reducing the number of ranks from fourteen to six
- flattening the structure
- separating administration from operations

The first change wave saw the promotion of some new leaders to manage the reform of the Fire Service in the wave of repositioning of staff which followed the Fire Service's Chief Executive's review, and the formulation of the Strategic Plan. Their leadership style is interwoven with the principles guiding the Fire Service which have developed in response to the changing needs and focus of the organisation. It is important to supply employees who are "likely to support the existing culture are more important during periods of rapid growth because neither time nor development resources will be sufficient to engage in a wholesale employee transformational effort" (Butler, Ferris and Napier, 1991, p.23).

Every position in the Fire Service will have a position specification (objective five of the draft Human Resource Functional Plan) which includes the training and educational requirements of the role, and courses and educational opportunities available. A key feature of the education and training policies is the preparation of all staff for roles external to the Fire Service - "Lifetime employability, not lifetime employment", objective six of the draft Human Resource Functional Plan (Summers, 1995, p.4).

McMahon and Wright (1992) see innovative strategies as requiring long-term focus, a moderate concern for quality and quantity, and a greater degree of risk-taking. This is applicable to the Fire Service. It is seeking to achieve, through its people, innovative practices and risk-taking strategies (not at the fireground), and seeking to adapt staff to change.

David Owens, an Assistant Fire Region Commander made redundant as a result of stage one restructuring, believes in the CEO's vision of reducing costs and focusing on education. However, he predicted industrial unrest will continue for some time (Norris, 1995). Media coverage of the industrial unrest was extensive, including reports from Barton, (1995a,b,c), Boyd, (1994), Kearney (1995), and Webster, (1995).

4.7 CURRENT SITUATION

Late October 1997, the newly appointed Chairman of the Fire Service Commission, Roger Estall, announced the third section of the four part restructuring process. This included 103 job losses in management and administration, an area which had grown over the last few years; and structural change across New Zealand including the closure of three regional offices and the National office creating a small, tightly focused Chief Executive's Office (Reid, 1997; NZPA, 1997a, 1997b).

The announcements led to the resignations of four top level staff. Firstly, Maurice Cummings announced his retirement. The National Commander, Bob Baillie, resigned as he felt he could not work with the new management and its direction, and was disappointed at the lack of consultation between the Commission and himself (Samson, 1997b; NZPA, 1997b). Northern Region General Manager, Dave Allen, and Southern Region Counterpart, Sean Wilson, retired, announcing similar feelings to that of their National Commander (Samson & NZPA, 1997; NZPA, 1997a).

The recently appointed commission has reversed the former commission's emphasis on the Fire Service helping people in all kinds of emergency situations including accidents, illness and disasters, not just fires (Cummings cited in Samson, 1997a). Yet, "targets set for protecting lives and property had been surpassed and response times were demonstrably faster" (Cummings & Baillie, 1997 cited in Samson & NZPA, 1997, p.3).

Issues arising over recent changes include lack of communication, lack of consultation, and possible changes with the emergency management roles of Civil Defence and St John Ambulance. Further, Firefighters had not received a pay rise for seven years, yet departing managers received a share of \$785,000 says Derek Best, Firefighters Union secretary (NZPA, 1997a). Anger from volunteer firefighters surfaced following news that the new commission is to cancel the Volunteer Strategic Issues Project initiated by the commission under Maurice Cummings (NZPA, 1997b).

Roger Estall's changes were rapid. Staff were offered two weeks to submit a proposal on issue, including the disestablishment of the regional and national offices (Samson, 1997a). The restructuring plan was to be completed by November 12, while staff proposals were to be completed by November 5. November 21 saw the closure of the National office, and the 11 regional offices (Reid, 1997). The new regions from 21 November 1997 are shown on Table 4.2.

TABLE 4.2 - THE NEW REGIONS FROM 21 NOVEMBER 1997

REGION	BASE
Northland	Whangarei
Auckland	Auckland
Bay-Waikato	Hamilton
Eastern	Napier
Western	Palmerston North
Arapawa	Wellington
Transalpine	Christchurch
Southern	Dunedin

Note: The Northland, Eastern and Southern regions were renamed as a result of consideration of submissions to the NZFS Commission, in the second round of the consultation process for stage three of the restructuring.

Source: NZPA (1997a); NZFS memo 14 November 1997 from NZFS (1998).

4.8 CONCLUSION

The four R's to emergency management are readiness, reduction, response, and recovery. The old Fire Service focused on response. Reduction and readiness needs to be developed, and a certain amount of recovery. Under the new direction of the Fire service reduction activities need to be expanded, and response needs to be shrunk. Funds and human resource need to be swapped between the two. People need to be "ready" and while they are at the station "ready", they are involved in reduction activities as well as being available for the response and recovery (Trerise, personal communication, 23 November, 1996).

CASE STUDY RESEARCH SITE: TWO

THE EASTERN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY



Photo 4.2 - Bruce Martin, CEO, introducing the new Bachelor of Business Studies Degree programme to the business community. Photo courtesy of the Marketing Department, EIT.



HAWKE'S BAY

Te Whare Takapeka o Kaitiaki

CASE STUDY RESEARCH SITE: TWO

THE EASTERN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

"Our mission is to provide excellent tertiary education"

(EIT, 1997a, p.i).

4.9 HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

EIT began as Hawke's Bay Community College in 1975. Initially, there were twelve staff and 120 students. Buildings included automotive and welding workshops, a library and a building barn. In 1987, the College became Hawke's Bay Polytechnic, catering for 750 equivalent full time students (EFTS), the basis for measurement of student numbers used in education (EIT, 1997a).

By 1991, the Polytechnic had a net worth of \$15m. University Degree papers were added to the programmes on offer. Student numbers rose to 1450 EFTS in 1992. Hawke's Bay Polytechnic was one of the fastest growing polytechnics in New Zealand, and numbers increased again to 1812 EFTS in 1994. The growth was over 50% per year for the previous three years. During 1996, approximately 7000 students studied at EIT, which equates to 1956 EFTS (EIT, 1997a).

4.10 EIT TODAY – THE ORGANISATION

EIT today is a thriving tertiary institute. Taradale is home to EIT's main campus which is situated adjacent to the Otatara pa. There are centres in Hastings and Waipukurau, and one course is offered by correspondence.

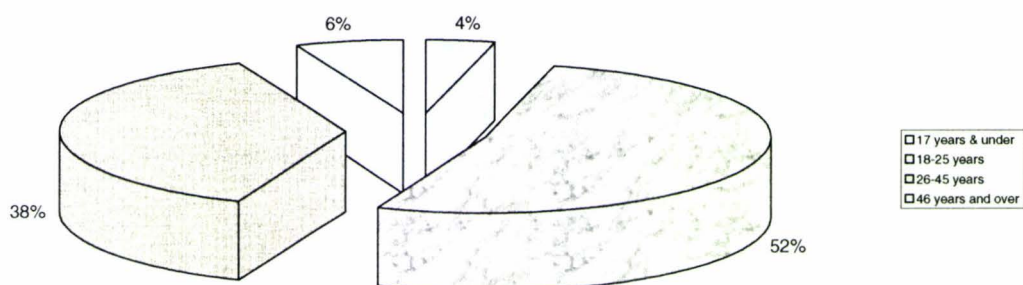
Bruce Martin, the Chief Executive Officer, confirms that staff are proud of the origins of EIT, and they retain a strong commitment to a diverse range of applied programmes at certificate and diploma level. They are mindful of the need to provide the Hawke's Bay community with degree level programmes (EIT, 1997b). Indeed, a recent announcement confirmed a switch of allegiance from Massey University to UNITEC to enable EIT to offer a full degree level programme in Business Studies from the start of the 1998 academic year – an impressive achievement for the academic staff and a benefit to the wider Hawke's Bay Community.

EIT has links with institutions in North America, Asia and Australia, and close ties with local industry, commerce and the professions. With these links, EIT is able to offer

programmes that are internationally focused, and both academically and vocationally relevant (EIT, 1997b). Staff feel that the programmes are of a “high academic standard and are relevant to the rapidly changing workforce on a global basis (EIT, 1997b, p.7).

Many programmes of study are offered both part-time and full-time leading to National Certificates, Diplomas and Degrees, and cater for a wide age group. Figure 4.4 depicts the student age composition for the 1996 academic year.

FIGURE 4.4 - EIT STUDENT AGE COMPOSITION 1996



Source: EIT (1997, p.4).

Degree options at EIT include the Bachelor of Arts (Maori); Nursing; Maori Performing Arts; Business Studies in conjunction with UNITEC Institute of Technology, Auckland; Applied Science (Wine Science) in conjunction with Charles Sturt University, NSW, Australia; Arts and Social Work conjointly with Massey University; Science conjointly with the University of Waikato; and Applied Science conjointly with Auckland Institute of Technology (AIT).

The vision for the future includes a target of 2500 EFTS for the year 2000. It is expected that this target will be met in the 1998 academic year. A key characteristic of EIT will be to:

Proactively seek opportunities to provide high quality, relevant education that is in demand from the region’s key industry groups and the wider employment market, and to build partnerships to develop and promote [their] programmes (EIT, 1997a, p.2).

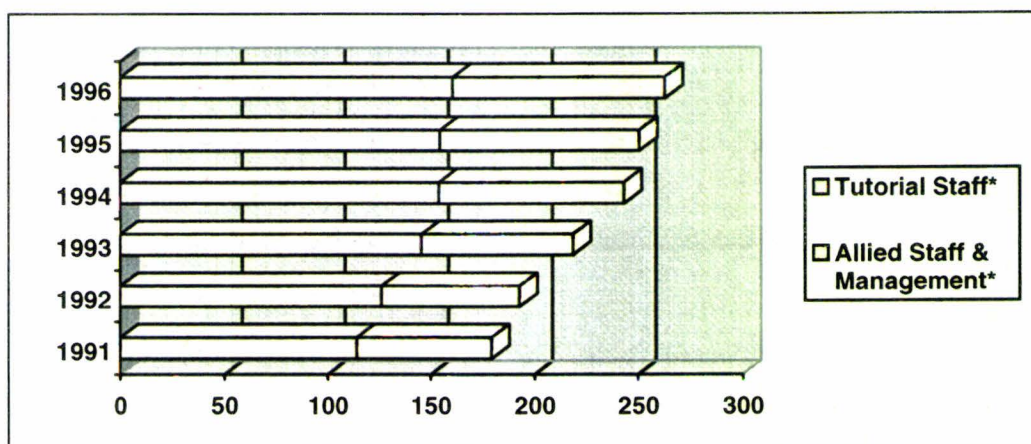
A major concern for educational institutions is the funding debate. EIT is not alone in its struggle to operate with increased demand on their services and programmes, with a reduced government funding provision.

4.11 THE STAFF

Council chairman, Tim Twist, comments on EIT staff that, “even under the pressures which under-funding brings to all parts of the education sector, our staff have remained positively and enthusiastically committed to the task of providing education at the highest professional level” (EIT, 1997a, p.9).

During 1996, full time equivalent (FTEs) staff numbers were 262.2 (EIT, 1997a). A number of these staff hold appointments with national bodies. The progressive increase in staff to reflect the demand for services is depicted in Figure 4.5 and Table 4.3. The organisational structure is presented in Appendix 16.

FIGURE 4.5 - THE INCREASE IN PEOPLE RESOURCES AT EIT



Source: EIT (1997a, p.5 & 47).

TABLE 4.3 - THE INCREASE IN PEOPLE RESOURCES AT EIT

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Tutorial Staff*	114.2	126.3	145.5	154.0	154.5	160.6
Allied Staff & Management*	65.2	66.4	73.1	89.3	96.1	102.2
Total Staff*	179.4	192.7	218.6	243.3	250.6	262.6

*expressed as equivalent full time staff

Source: EIT (1997a, p.5 & 47).

Approximately 190 staff are involved in the Staff Education and Development Unit programmes, and many staff are working towards bachelor and post graduate qualifications through other tertiary institutions. A substantial number of research reports are being prepared across all faculties at EIT. Staff are actively involved in domestic and international Conferences, often being key note speakers; they are also authors of articles in numerous publications, have contributed to exhibitions; and are involved in consultancy and on commissions (EIT, 1997a).

4.12 FACILITIES

Tim Twist asserts that EIT is “probably the only truly regional facility in the greater Hawke’s Bay area. We are non-parochial, or if you like, on the other hand extremely parochial and all of Hawke’s Bay is our parish” (EIT, 1997a).

The Taradale campus offers a wide range of facilities for students. The newest feature is the Student Amenities Building completed in 1997. This building houses the Students’ Association, the Otatara Bookshop and the Café provides a relaxing environment for students to meet informally (EIT, 1997b). Scholars Restaurant is a fully licensed training restaurant open to the public on selected days. Opposite the Taradale campus is The Student Residential Village complex due for completion in time for the 1999 academic year. Initially, this complex will house 66 students (EIT, 1997b). The Performing Arts School is located in Hastings. Performance venues include the internationally regarded Municipal Theatre and the Concert Chamber.

Prospectus 1998 (EIT, 1997b) cites an extensive range of support which include:

- ✦ Massey University Regional Office – providing students with a local port of call for study through Massey University. Assistance includes advice on courses, enrolment and learning skills
- ✦ Careers Counsellor/Course Advisor – to assist students to make well-informed decisions concerning career options
- ✦ Education Services – including the Twist Library which provides study and research facilities for students and staff; Learning Skills Centre which provides help with learning and study skills; and Disability Liaison Services which offers students who have a disability learning assistance, aids and equipment, and facilitation of any resources to assist students with their studies
- ✦ School Liaison/Maori Liaison – staff working with schools, Iwi, and community groups to provide general information on EIT programmes

- ✦ STAR Activity – Secondary- Tertiary Alignment Resource, for students from secondary schools attending EIT at the same time, for tertiary level or non-conventional subjects.
- ✦ The Students' Association – advocating for student issues and providing representation on relevant councils and boards; also promoting social, cultural, recreational and intellectual interest and welfare of students on campus
- ✦ Health Services – a doctor, nurses, counsellor, and physiotherapist
- ✦ Child Care
- ✦ Radio Kahungunu – A commercial, New Zealand wide Maori radio station
- ✦ ARLA – *Adult Reading and Learning Assistance*, a voluntary organisation offering help to adults with learning difficulties
- ✦ ESOL – *English for Speakers of Other Languages*, offering help to people for whose native language is not English

4.13 ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

Diminished government funding and an increase in corporate support have brought change to EIT. Increasing student numbers reflect the fact that students are taking financial responsibility for their education. This market-led approach in education has raised the standards of education and student expectation (Moss, 1996). However, Moss (1996) points out that funding difficulties have been an issue since the formation of the college. For example, churches, the local bodies and the County Council met shortfalls in 1977. In that year, government funding for the library was \$865.

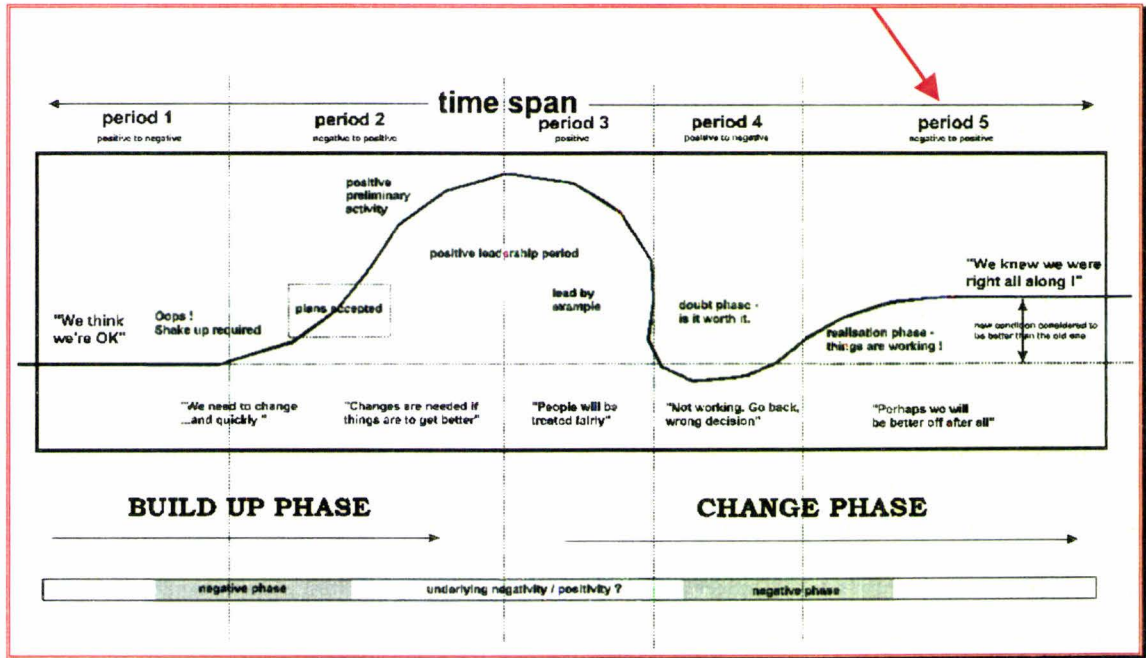
EIT is experiencing an anticipatory form of change, that is, change carried out in the belief that anticipating future occurrences may lead to competitive advantage or a better chance of corporate survival (Nadler & Tushman, 1990 cited in Irwin & More, 1994).

4.13.1 EIT AND THE CHANGE WAVE MODEL

Figure 4.6 depicts EIT in period five of the change wave. Change has been gradual, participative and evolutionary. To the observer, the lows in wave have been minor because of the high level of consultation that has occurred to ensure acceptance of the changes. EIT has adapted to its operating environment and worked through the processes of change with success. The Chief Executive Officer has led by example

and staff have recognised that change has worked well. The new organisation is considered to be better than the old one (period five).

FIGURE 4.6 – THE CHANGE WAVE MODEL



4.13.2 THE NEW VISION

A new vision for the strategic direction of EIT was developed during 1995. It was intended that this new direction would reinforce EIT as the “dominant provider of quality tertiary education in the eastern region of the North Island, and renew [their] commitment to be market led in education delivery” (EIT, 1997a, p.i). The objective of the Institute is to provide the “best of both worlds” by providing degree level programmes to complement traditional vocational and technical education and training (EIT, 1997a). The fundamental vision for EIT remains the same as it was when it opened as a community college in 1975, that is to be “a place where those who seek increased learning and understanding are stimulated to discover them” (Moss, 1996, p.5).

With the revision of direction, on April 15 1996 Hawke’s Bay Polytechnic became EIT to reflect the unique and progressive structure. “Changes in the tertiary education market, growth of the Polytech itself and the need to lift its status in the eyes of its customers were reasons for change... It broadened the geographic focus of the institution and offered an acronym (EIT)” (Polytech swaps, 1996, p.8).

4.14 CONCLUSION

EIT “has a clear sense of direction, strong community support and backing, and dedicated and professional staff” (Martin cited in Annual Report 1996, 1997, p.14). Moss (1996) noted that the presence of EIT has finally slowed down the flow of young people out of the Hawke’s Bay region.

Looking forward, Bruce Martin envisages more degree options will develop and the international flavour will be enhanced due to the global community EIT is now part of. Finance will continue to be an area of concern as EIT seeks to fund new technology and programmes of study (Moss, 1996).

Moss (1996) concludes Martin’s beliefs:

The public perception of the value of education has changed. People now see all education as important and tertiary education increasingly as the norm, which ensures their participation and their children’s. Good qualifications are seen as essential to ongoing employment. The future requires adjustment to these ideas, a need to work more effectively, to be constructive, and open-minded (1996, p.124).

RESULTS

Results for the present study have been presented in five parts. Characteristics of the sample are presented first, then validity and reliability measures are discussed, questions one to five are considered in Section 5.3 and analysis of the sub-scales follow in Sections 5.4 – 5.5.

5.1 SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

Of the possible sample of 133 respondents, five participants were not included in the distribution of the questionnaire survey instrument due to illness. Subsequently, 128 instruments were distributed - 64 within each organisation. Eighty-seven instruments were returned – 40 from the Fire Service and 47 from the Eastern Institute of Technology (EIT). This represented a combined return rate of 68% - 62.5% from the Fire Service and 75% from EIT. All instruments were usable.

Twenty-six staff from both organisations participated in formal and informal discussions concerning the present study. This is 20.3% of the total sample. Considered by organisation, 12.5% of Fire Service staff participated in structured interviews and 9.4% participated in informal discussions, representing a total of 21.9% from the sample. From the EIT sample, 10.9% participated in structured interviews and 7.8% participated in informal discussions, representing a total of 18.6% from the sample.

There was some evidence to suggest that people had discussed aspects of the questionnaire survey amongst themselves in advance of filling it out. This calls into question the extent to which the responses are individual as it may be a reflection of group perception emerging because respondents may have been affected by the discussion. This may have reduced the range of responses or possibilities producing a levelling or change affect; however, it is impossible to tell. The main area of discussion appeared to be pertaining to whom they should consider when answering questions pertaining to supervisor.

Demographics of the total sample are depicted in Appendix 17. Due to the small percentage of female staff in the Fire Service, there was a possibility that publishing

and analysis of individual participants' scores could breach guarantees of confidentiality, hence a break down of this group was not reported.

5.2 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Most questions were derived from previously validated questionnaires; however, measures of construct validity were considered during discussions concerned with the construction of the sub-scales with a University Assistant Lecturer and a Research Scientist. Each question was analysed in light of sub-scale categories developed during the course of the discussions. A consensus decision was formed on the sub-scale categories and where the questions fitted.

The questions used in the present study had its origins in two main questionnaires that had been subjected to vigorous psychometric testing, such as the organisational commitment questionnaire (Allen & Meyer, 1984; Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1979; Steers, 1977). As the present study is a compilation of several instruments, Cronbach's Alpha was used to more accurately assess the sub-scales and the following results were reported.

Organisational Commitment

Cronbach's Alpha for this set of questions is .259, which is not particularly high. Factor analysis suggests that these questions may relate to two separate factors - one (accounting for 36% of the total variation) made up of Q1, Q6, Q7, Q9 and Q15; the other (accounting for 24% of the total variation) made up of Q8, Q10, Q14.

Communication Climate - Co-Workers

Cronbach's Alpha is .482. Since there are only two questions on this scale, factor analysis is not a useful tool; however, the correlation ($r=.356$) between the two questions is significant.

Communication Climate – Superior

Cronbach's Alpha is .925, which is very good. Factor analysis on the questions suggests that a single factor, made up of an average of all of the items, accounts for 77% of the total variation in the responses – this appears to be a very consistent scale.

Communication Climate – Management

Cronbach's Alpha is .718, which is good. Since there are only two questions on this scale, factor analysis is not a useful tool; however, the correlation ($r=.561$) between the two questions is significant so this also appears to be a fairly consistent scale.

Communication Climate – Organisation

Cronbach's Alpha is .510, which indicates that this group of variables is reasonably consistent; but other tests suggest that Q18 is measuring a somewhat different construct than Q28 and Q29. There is some evidence for this from the factor analysis (one factor, consisting of an average of Q28 and Q29, but not Q18, will account for 53% of the total variation in the responses), but this factor structure is not particularly strong - each question is getting at something slightly different, and they don't group together much at all; though from the view of face-validity, they do appear to be measuring Communication Climate.

Management's Concern with Effective Communication

Cronbach's Alpha is .606. Since there are only two questions on this scale, factor analysis is not a useful tool; however, the correlation ($r=.435$) between the two questions is significant. This looks like a reasonably consistent scale.

5.3 ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONS ONE TO FIVE

The first five questions of the questionnaire survey returned significant levels of difference on four occasions, as depicted in Summary Table 5.1.

TABLE 5.1 – SUMMARY RESULTS: PEARSON'S CHI-SQUARED Q1 – Q5

Question	Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance	Mann-Whitney U-test
1. My level of commitment to this organisation	14.49241	4	.00588***	p<0.01
2. The quality of communication in this organisation	34.11560	3	.00000***	p<0.001
3. I rate the ability of my direct supervisor to communicate effectively with his/her staff	7.81710	4	.09851 (NS)	p<0.087
4. Management's level of concern about effective communication	29.17796	4	.00001***	p<0.001
5. Management's level of concern about employee commitment to this organisation	32.40221	4	.00000***	p<0.001

- where *** signifies $p < 0.01$.

The Chi-Squared test tests for a difference in pattern. However, what is of greater interest in the present study is whether one group has higher scores than the other. Using the Mann-Whitney U-test for this purpose, the same pattern of results was found.

Figures 5.1 to 5.5 relate to the questions analysed in Sections 5.3.1 to 5.3.5, respectively, and depict the measures of central tendency (mean, median and mode), the standard deviation and the variance for questions one to five of the questionnaire survey instrument.

5.3.1 QUESTION ONE – MY LEVEL OF COMMITMENT TO THIS ORGANISATION

EIT did not return any low or very low (1-2) responses, with the majority returning high to very high (4-5), whereas the Fire Service returned scores ranging across the scale. Pearson's Chi-Squared statistic (14.49, 4DF, $p=0.006$) indicates a significant difference between the responses from the two organisations on the issue of *an individual's level of organisational commitment*.

Count	1 very low	2 low	3 moderate	4 high	5 very high	Row total
Fire Service	2	5	14	11	8	40 46.5%
EIT			9	16	21	46 53.5%
Column	2 2.3%	5 5.8%	23 26.7%	27 31.4%	29 33.7%	86 100%

5.3.2 QUESTION TWO – THE QUALITY OF COMMUNICATION IN THIS ORGANISATION

The Fire Service have are fairly closely spread between very low to moderate (1-3) with no result in high or very high (4-5) for the response to how individuals feel about the *quality of communication* in their organisation. EIT has an equal spread between responses moderate and high (3-4), with seven responses falling into low (1).

Pearson's Chi-Squared statistic (32.12, 3DF, $p < 0.006$) indicates a significant difference between the responses from the two organisations on the issue of *the quality of communication perceived in the organisation*.

Count	1 very low	2 low	3 moderate	4 high	5 very high	Row total
Fire Service	10	17	13			40 47.1%
EIT		7	19	19		45 52.9%
Column total	10 11.8%	24 28.2%	32 37.6%	19 22.4%		85 100%

5.3.3 QUESTION THREE – THE ABILITY OF MY DIRECT SUPERVISOR TO COMMUNICATE WITH HIS/HER STAFF

Responses for the respondents rating *the ability of their direct supervisor to communicate with his or her staff* are spread across the scale range for both samples. The bulk of the responses occur in moderate to high (4-5), with a minority of responses rated as very high (5).

Pearson's Chi-Squared statistic (7.82, 4DF, $p = 0.099$) indicates that there is no significant difference between the responses from the two organisations on this issue. The level of significance is just below ten percent, which indicates that the results could be occurring by chance.

Count	1 very low	2 low	3 moderate	4 high	5 very high	Row total
Fire Service	3	4	18	13	1	39 45.9%
EIT	3	6	11	18	8	46 54.1%
Column total	6 7.1%	10 11.8%	29 34.1%	31 36.5%	9 10.6%	85 100%

5.3.4 QUESTION FOUR – MANAGEMENT’S LEVEL OF CONCERN ABOUT EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Ratings for *management’s level of concern about effective communication* are spread across the scale range for both samples, with the exception of very high not occurring with the Fire Service. The pattern of the results show the Fire Service has lower scores than EIT. Only two people rated the Fire Service as having concern above a moderate level.

Pearson’s Chi-squared statistic (29.18, 4DF, $p < 0.001$) indicates a significant difference between the responses from the two organisations on this issue.

Count	1 very low	2 low	3 moderate	4 high	5 very high	Row total
Fire Service	7	18	13	2		40 46.5%
EIT	4	4	13	20	5	46 53.5%
Column total	11 12.8%	22 25.6%	26 30.2%	22 25.6%	5 5.8%	86 100%

5.3.4 QUESTION FIVE – MANAGEMENT’S LEVEL OF CONCERN ABOUT EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT

Very strong differences were reported on the factor pertaining to *management’s level of concern about employee commitment*. Twenty-eight of the responses for the Fire Service rated as very low or low, whereas the vast majority of the responses for EIT (38) rated as moderate to very high. Pearson’s Chi-Squared statistic (32.40, 4DF, $p < 0.001$) indicates a significant difference between the responses from the two organisations on this issue.

Count	1 very low	2 low	3 moderate	4 high	5 very high	Row total
Fire Service	14	14	7	5		40 46.5%
EIT	2	3	21	17	3	46 53.5%
Column total	16 18.6%	17 19.8%	28 32.6%	22 25.6%	3 3.5%	86 100%

FIGURE 5.1 - QUESTION ONE: MY LEVEL OF COMMITMENT TO THIS ORGANISATION

My level of commitment to this organisation	N		Measures of Central Tendency				
	Valid	Missing	Mean	Median	Mode	Std Dev.	Variance
Fire Service	40	0	3.45	3.00	3.00	1.12	1.23
EIT	46	1	4.26	4.00	5.00	0.99	0.97
TOTAL	86	1	3.88	4.00	5.00	1.10	1.21

Fire Service	Sum of Frequency		Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
	Very low (1)	2	5.00	5.00	5.00
2	5	12.50	12.50	17.50	
3	14	35.00	35.00	52.50	
4	11	27.50	27.50	80.00	
Very high (5)	8	20.00	20.00	100.00	
TOTAL	40	100.00	100.00		

EIT	Sum of Frequency		Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
	Very low (1)	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
2	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	
3	9	19.15	19.57	19.57	
4	16	34.04	34.78	54.35	
Very high (5)	21	44.68	45.65	100.00	
TOTAL	46	97.87	100.00		

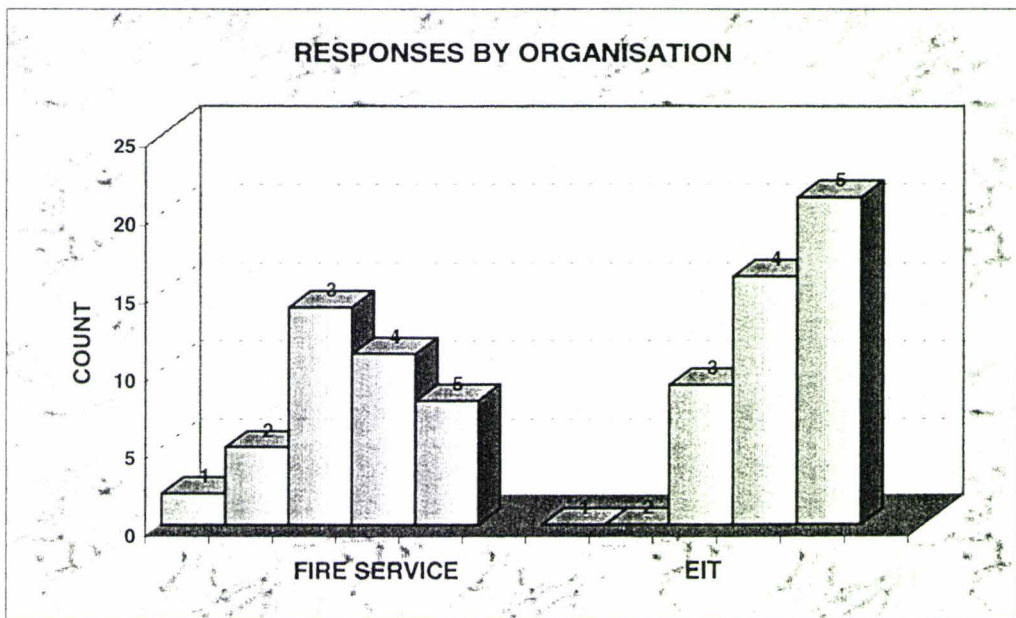


FIGURE 5.2 - QUESTION TWO: THE QUALITY OF COMMUNICATION IN THIS ORGANISATION

The quality of communication in this organisation	N		Measures of Central Tendency				
	Valid	Missing	Mean	Median	Mode	Std Dev	Variance
Fire Service	40	0	2.08	2.00	2.00	0.77	0.58
EIT	45	2	3.27	3.00	3.00	0.97	0.94
TOTAL	85	2	2.71	3.00	3.00	1.02	1.05

Fire Service	Sum of Frequency		Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
	Very low (1)	10	25.00	25.00	25.00
2	17	42.50	42.50	67.50	
3	13	32.50	32.50	100.00	
4	0	0.00	0.00	100.00	
Very high (5)	0	0.00	0.00	100.00	
TOTAL	40	100.00	100.00		

EIT	Sum of Frequency		Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
	Very low (1)	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
2	7	14.89	15.56	15.56	
3	19	40.43	42.22	57.78	
4	19	40.43	42.22	100.00	
Very high (5)	0	0.00	0.00	100.00	
TOTAL	45	95.74	100.00		

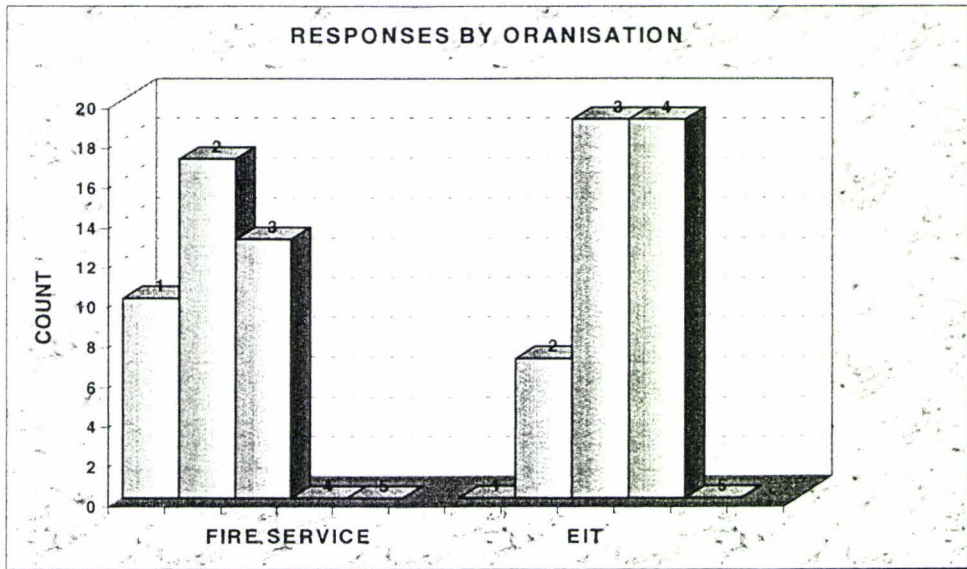


FIGURE 5.3 - QUESTION THREE: I RATE THE ABILITY OF MY DIRECT SUPERVISOR TO COMMUNICATE WITH HIS/HER STAFF

I rate the ability of my direct supervisor to communicate effectively with his/her staff	N		Measures of Central Tendency			Std Dev	Variance
	Valid	Missing	Mean	Median	Mode		
Fire Service	39	0	3.13	3.00	3.00	1.04	1.07
EIT	46	1	3.48	4.00	4.00	1.23	1.51
TOTAL	85	2	3.32	3.00	4.00	1.15	1.32

Fire Service	Sum of Frequency		Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
	Very low (1)	3	7.50	7.69	7.69
2	4	10.00	10.26	17.95	
3	18	45.00	46.15	64.10	
4	13	32.50	33.33	97.44	
Very high (5)	1	2.50	2.56	100.00	
TOTAL	39	97.50	100.00		

EIT	Sum of Frequency		Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
	Very low (1)	3	6.38	6.52	6.52
2	6	12.77	13.04	19.57	
3	11	23.40	23.91	43.48	
4	18	38.30	39.13	82.61	
Very high (5)	8	17.02	17.39	100.00	
TOTAL	46	97.87	100.00		

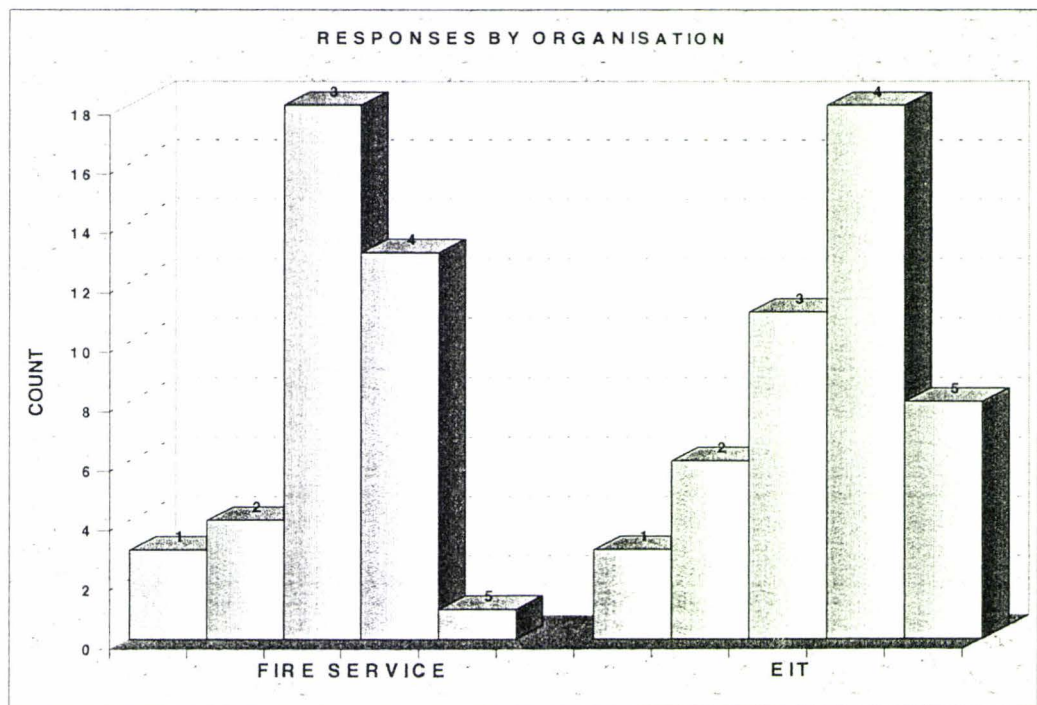


FIGURE 5.4 - QUESTION FOUR: MANAGEMENT'S LEVEL OF CONCERN ABOUT EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Management's level of concern about effective communication	N		Measures of Central Tendency				Std Dev	Variance
	Valid	Missing	Mean	Median	Mode			
Fire Service	40	0	2.25	2.00	2.00	0.82	0.65	
EIT	46	1	3.39	4.00	4.00	1.18	1.40	
TOTAL	86	1	2.86	3.00	3.00	1.15	1.33	

Fire Service	Sum of Frequency		Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
	Very low (1)				
	Very low (1)	7	17.50	17.50	17.50
	2	18	45.00	45.00	62.50
	3	13	32.50	32.50	95.00
	4	2	5.00	5.00	100.00
	Very high (5)	0	0.00	0.00	100.00
	TOTAL	40	100.00	100.00	

EIT	Sum of Frequency		Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
	Very low (1)				
	Very low (1)	4	8.51	8.70	8.70
	2	4	8.51	8.70	17.39
	3	13	27.66	28.26	45.65
	4	20	42.55	43.48	89.13
	Very high (5)	5	10.64	10.87	100.00
	TOTAL	46	97.87	100.00	

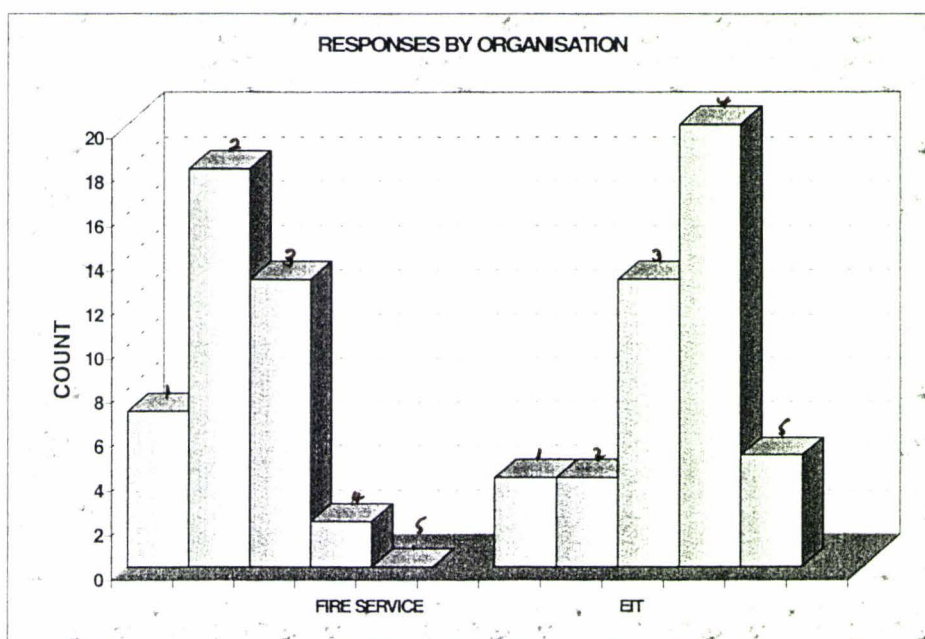
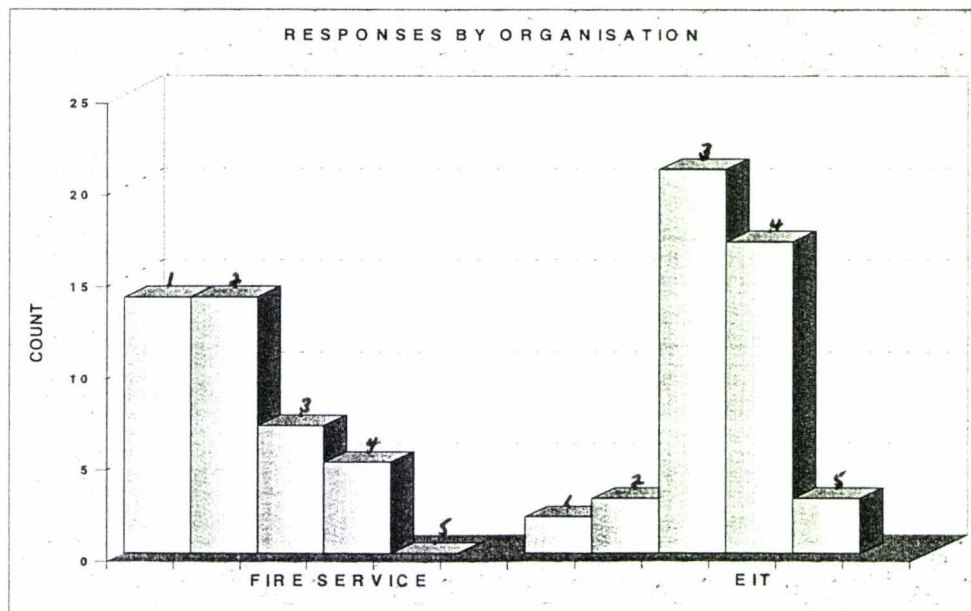


FIGURE 5.5 - QUESTION FIVE: MANAGEMENT'S LEVEL OF CONCERN ABOUT EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT TO THIS ORGANISATION

Management's level of concern about employee commitment to this organisation	N		Measures of Central Tendency			Std Dev	Variance
	Valid	Missing	Mean	Median	Mode		
Fire Service	40	0	2.08	2.00	1.00	1.04	1.05
EIT	46	1	3.35	3.00	3.00	0.99	0.99
TOTAL	86	1	2.76	3.00	3.00	1.17	1.36

Fire Service	Sum of Frequency		Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
	Very low (1)				
	1	14	35.00	35.00	35.00
	2	14	35.00	35.00	70.00
	3	7	17.50	17.50	87.50
	4	5	12.50	12.50	100.00
	Very high (5)	0	0.00	0.00	100.00
	TOTAL	40	100.00	100.00	

EIT	Sum of Frequency		Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
	Very low (1)				
	1	2	4.26	4.35	4.35
	2	3	6.38	6.52	10.87
	3	21	44.68	45.65	56.52
	4	17	36.17	36.96	93.48
	Very high (5)	3	6.38	6.52	100.00
	TOTAL	46	97.87	100.00	



5.4 ANALYSIS BY SUB-SCALE - ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT AND COMMUNICATION CLIMATE

5.4.1 THE FIRE SERVICE

For the Fire Service, there is no significant relationship between the sub-scales for organisational commitment (one measure) and communication climate (four measures).

The correlation between organisational commitment and communication climate (co-workers) was not significant ($r=-0.07$). Organisational commitment and communication climate (management) offer the same range of scores for organisational commitment regardless of how communication climate (management) is rated ($r=-0.05$). Organisational commitment and communication climate (organisation) showed a greater relationship ($r=0.14$) but was not of any statistical consequence. (Refer Figure 5.6). Organisational commitment and communication climate (superior) showed $r=0.14$, also; however, this relationship was not significant. The levels of significance are depicted on Table 5.2.

TABLE 5.2 – THE FIRE SERVICE: LEVELS OF SIGNIFICANCE

	Communication climate with...			
	Co-workers	Management	Organisation	Superiors
Organisational Commitment	$r = -0.07$ NS	$r = -0.05$ NS	$r = 0.14$ NS	$r = 0.14$ NS

However, worthy of note, but not directly related to Objective Two, are the results shown on Table 5.3. This indicates a linkage between communication climate (organisation) and communication climate (management). Respondents tended to rate communication climate of the organisation similarly to communication climate of superiors and management.

TABLE 5.3 – THE FIRE SERVICE
ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT/COMMUNICATION CLIMATE

COMMUNICATION CLIMATE	CORRELATIONS (N = 40)			
	Co-workers	Management	Organisation	Superiors
Co-workers	1.00			
Management	0.11	1.00		
Organisation	0.24	0.45	1.00	
Superiors	0.19	0.51	0.56	1.00
	Co-workers	Management	Organisation	Superiors
	COMMUNICATION CLIMATE			

5.4.2 EIT

EIT results demonstrated a significant relationship between organisational commitment and one of the four measures of communication climate. The levels of significance are depicted on Table 5.4.

The measure demonstrating a level of significance was organisational commitment/communication climate (organisation), $r=0.35$, $p<0.05$. (Refer Figure 5.6). The correlation coefficient was not significant for organisational commitment and communication climate (co-workers) due to lack of a relationship being represented by the pattern of responses. Respondents with a high level of communication climate (co-workers) gave a similar response on organisational commitment scales as those with a low level of communication climate (co-workers). Organisational commitment and communication climate (management) is not significant but showed more of a pattern. As in the Fire Service, the fourth analysis for EIT, organisational commitment and communication climate (superiors), was not significant.

TABLE 5.4 – EIT: LEVELS OF SIGNIFICANCE

	Communication climate with...			
	Co-workers	Management	Organisation	Superiors
Organisational Commitment	$r = -0.01$ NS	$r = 0.19$ NS	$r = 0.35$ ($p<0.05$)	$r = -0.10$ NS

Table 5.5, although not specially related to Objective Two, is worthy of note. The same management-organisation and management-superiors correlations occurred in EIT as with the Fire Service, but the organisation-superiors correlation was not significant at EIT, whereas it was in the Fire Service.

**TABLE 5.5 – EIT
ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT/COMMUNICATION CLIMATE**

COMMUNICATION CLIMATE	CORRELATIONS (N = 47)			
	Co-workers	Management	Organisation	Superiors
Co-workers	1.00			
Management	0.21	1.00		
Organisation	0.21	0.47	1.00	
Superiors	0.10	0.53	.017	1.00
	Co-workers	Management	Organisation	Superiors
	COMMUNICATION CLIMATE			

5.4.3 AGGREGATE OF GROUPS

No significant relationship was found between organisational commitment and communication climate (co-workers) for the two separate organisations. Similar results to individual organisations were found for aggregate organisational commitment and communication climate (management). No relationship of significance was evident.

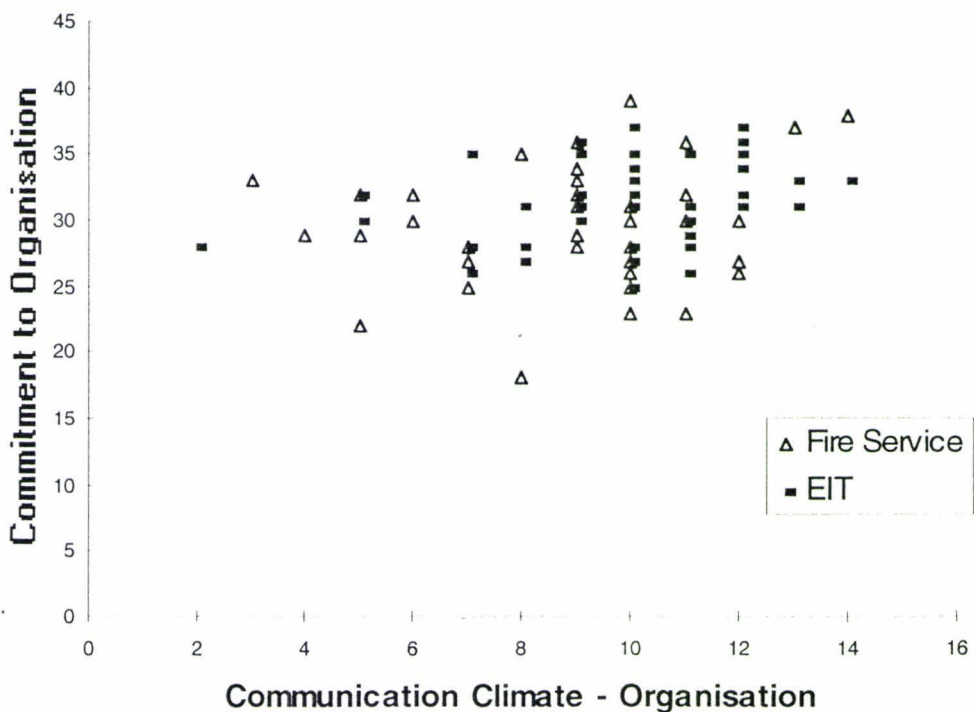
The Fire Service demonstrated no significant relationship, however, when combined with EIT, as significant relationship resulted. (Refer Figure 5.6). On the whole, the Fire Service showed lower levels of organisational commitment and lower levels of perception of the communication climate.

The fourth analysis considered organisational commitment and communication climate (superior). The relationship was not significant, as in the two samples when considered individually. Combined levels of significance are shown on Table 5.6.

**TABLE 5.6 – AGGREGATE OF GROUPS
LEVELS OF SIGNIFICANCE**

	Communication climate with...			
	Co-workers	Management	Organisation	Superiors
Organisational Commitment	r = -0.02 NS	r = 0.15 NS	r = 0.25 (p<0.05)	r = 0.08 NS

**FIGURE 5.6 – AGGREGATE OF GROUPS
COMMITMENT/COMMUNICATION CLIMATE (ORGANISATION)**



Although in both organisations communication climate (management) was significantly correlated with communication climate (superiors) and communication climate (organisation), in the Fire Service communication climate (superiors) and communication climate (organisation) were significantly correlated. This suggests that respondents were giving a global assessment of “superiors”, “management” and “the organisation”. Whereas at EIT, the correlation between communication climate (superiors) and communication climate (organisation) was not significant suggesting that respondents were making separate judgements of “superiors” and “the organisation”, with “management” somewhere in between (with elements of the “superiors” entity and also elements of “the organisation” entity). Table 5.7 depicts the correlation coefficients for both organisations.

**TABLE 5.7 – AGGREGATE OF GROUPS
ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT/COMMUNICATION CLIMATE**

COMMUNICATION CLIMATE	CORRELATIONS (N = 87)			
	Co-workers	1.00		
Management	0.20	1.00		
Organisation	0.24	0.46	1.00	
Superiors	0.17	0.57	0.37	1.00
	Co-workers	Management	Organisation	Superiors
	COMMUNICATION CLIMATE			

5.5 ANALYSIS BY SUB-SCALE - MANAGEMENT CONCERN AND COMMUNICATION CLIMATE

5.5.1 AGGREGATE OF GROUPS

Analysis depicted strong relationships on all three measures for both organisations; for example, the relationship between personal qualities of management and effectiveness of communication in all three matrices. Tables 5.8 – 5.10, show the results of the correlations of these measures.

**TABLE 5.8 – THE FIRE SERVICE
MANAGEMENT CONCERN/COMMUNICATION CLIMATE**

	CORRELATIONS (N = 40)		
Communication climate - management	1.00		
Communication climate - superior	0.51	1.00	
Effectiveness of communication	0.41	.052	1.00
	Communication climate - management	Communication climate - superior	Effectiveness of communication

**TABLE 5.9 – EIT
MANAGEMENT CONCERN/COMMUNICATION CLIMATE**

	CORRELATIONS (N = 40)		
Communication climate - management	1.00		
Communication climate - superior	0.53	1.00	
Effectiveness of communication	0.50	0.60	1.00
	Communication climate - management	Communication climate - superior	Effectiveness of communication

**TABLE 5.10 – BOTH ORGANISATIONS
MANAGEMENT CONCERN – COMMUNICATION CLIMATE**

	CORRELATIONS (N = 40)		
Communication climate - management	1.00		
Communication climate - superior	0.57	1.00	
Effectiveness of communication	0.55	0.62	1.00
	Communication climate - management	Communication climate - superior	Effectiveness of communication

Figure 5.7, the relationship with management concern and communication climate (superiors) for both organisations, depicts EIT higher up on the scattergram, with responses from the Fire Service concentrated around the middle of the representation.

**FIGURE 5.7 – AGGREGATE OF GROUPS
MANAGEMENT CONCERN/COMMUNICATION CLIMATE (SUPERIORS)**

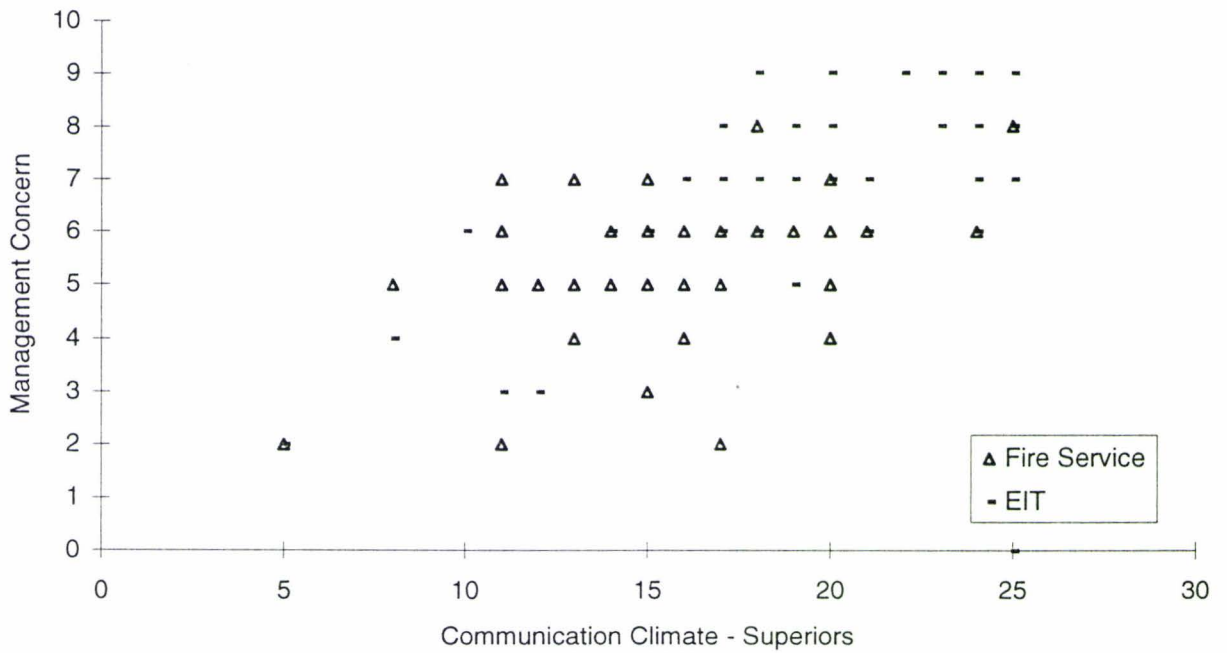
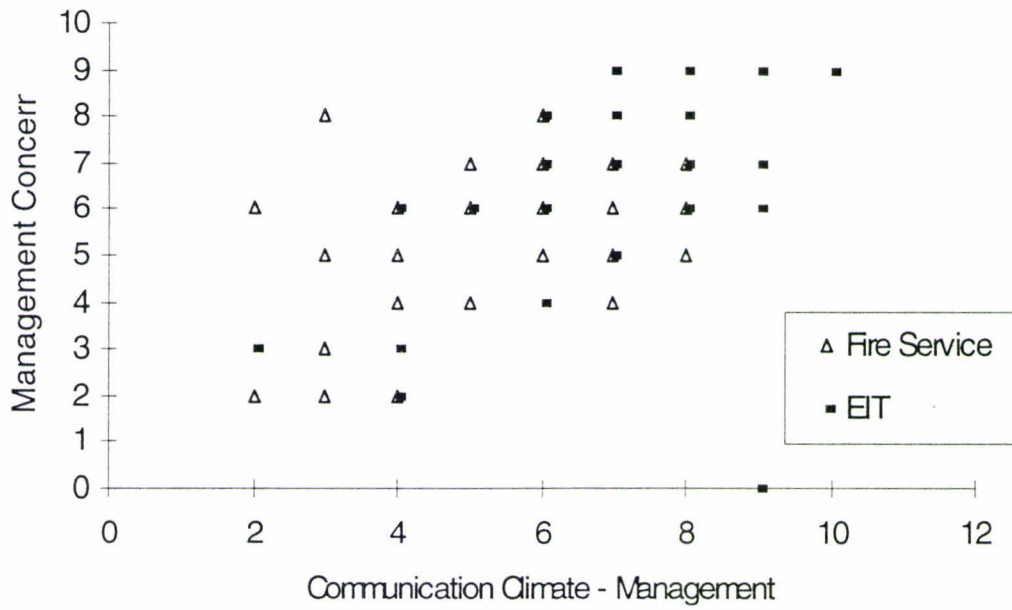


Figure 5.8 (overleaf), depicting the relationship between management concern and communication climate (management), shows on the whole a slightly lower rating from the Fire Service on management concern but a few people from EIT also give a lower rating. This is supported by questions one to five (Section 5.3.1 – 5.3.5).

FIGURE 5.8 – BOTH ORGANISATIONS
MANAGEMENT CONCERN/COMMUNICATION CLIMATE (MANAGEMENT)



5.6 SELECTED QUESTIONS

Question 16, a factor in the sub-scale for organisational commitment, produced the following result (Table 5.11). Ninety-six percent of EIT respondents *agree to strongly agree* that they are interested in helping their organisation to be successful. From the Fire Service, 62.5% of respondents *agree to strongly agree* that they are interested in helping their organisation to be successful.

TABLE 5.11 - QUESTION 16: I AM INTERESTED IN HELPING THIS ORGANISATION TO BE SUCCESSFUL

I am interested in helping this organisation to be successful	N		Measures of Central Tendency			Std Dev	Variance
	Valid	Missing	Mean	Median	Mode		
Fire Service	40	0	3.75	4.00	4.00	1.01	1.01
EIT	47	0	4.32	4.00	4.00	0.56	0.31
TOTAL	87	0	4.06	4.00	4.00	0.84	0.71

	Sum of Frequency		Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
Fire Service	Very low (1)	1	2.50	2.50	2.50
	2	3	7.50	7.50	10.00
	3	11	27.50	27.50	37.50
	4	15	37.50	37.50	75.00
	Very high (5)	10	25.00	25.00	100.00
	TOTAL	40	100.00	100.00	

EIT	Very low (1)	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
	2	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
	3	2	4.26	4.26	4.26
	4	28	59.57	59.57	63.83
	Very high (5)	17	36.17	36.17	100.00
	TOTAL	47	100.00	100.00	

Questions 11, 12 and 13 related to inspiration of an individual and the responses are represented on Tables 5.12 to 5.14 and Figure 5.9.

TABLE 5.12 – QUESTION 11: MY CO-WORKERS INSPIRE ME TO DO MY BEST

My co-workers inspire me to do my best	N		Measures of Central Tendency				Std Dev	Variance
	Valid	Missing	Mean	Median	Mode			
Fire Service	39	1	3.00	3.00	3.00	1.11	1.20	
EIT	47	0	3.53	4.00	4.00	0.93	0.86	
TOTAL	86	1	3.29	3.00	3.00	1.05	1.10	

	Sum of Frequency		Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
Fire Service	Very low (1)	3	7.50	7.69	7.69
	2	6	15.00	15.38	23.08
	3	22	55.00	56.41	79.49
	4	4	10.00	10.26	89.74
	Very high (5)	4	10.00	10.26	100.00
	TOTAL	39	97.50	100.00	

EIT	Very low (1)	1	2.13	2.13	2.13
	2	6	12.77	12.77	14.89
	3	12	25.53	25.53	40.43
	4	23	48.94	48.94	89.36
	Very high (5)	5	10.64	10.64	100.00
	TOTAL	47	100.00	100.00	

TABLE 5.13 - QUESTION 12: MY IMMEDIATE BOSS INSPIRES ME TO DO MY BEST

My immediate boss inspires me to do my best	N		Measures of Central Tendency				Std Dev	Variance
	Valid	Missing	Mean	Median	Mode			
Fire Service	40	0	2.85	3.00	3.00	0.81	0.64	
EIT	47	0	3.60	4.00	4.00	1.08	1.16	
TOTAL	87	0	3.25	3.00	3.00	1.03	1.05	

	Sum of Frequency		Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
Fire Service	Very low (1)	2	5.00	5.00	5.00
	2	10	25.00	25.00	30.00
	3	20	50.00	50.00	80.00
	4	8	20.00	20.00	100.00
	Very high (5)	0	0.00	0.00	100.00
	TOTAL	40	100.00	100.00	

EIT	Very low (1)	2	4.26	4.26	4.26
	2	5	10.64	10.64	14.89
	3	13	27.66	27.66	42.55
	4	17	36.17	36.17	78.72
	Very high (5)	10	21.28	21.28	100.00
	TOTAL	47	100.00	100.00	

TABLE 5.14 - QUESTION 13: SENIOR MANAGEMENT INSPIRES ME TO DO MY BEST

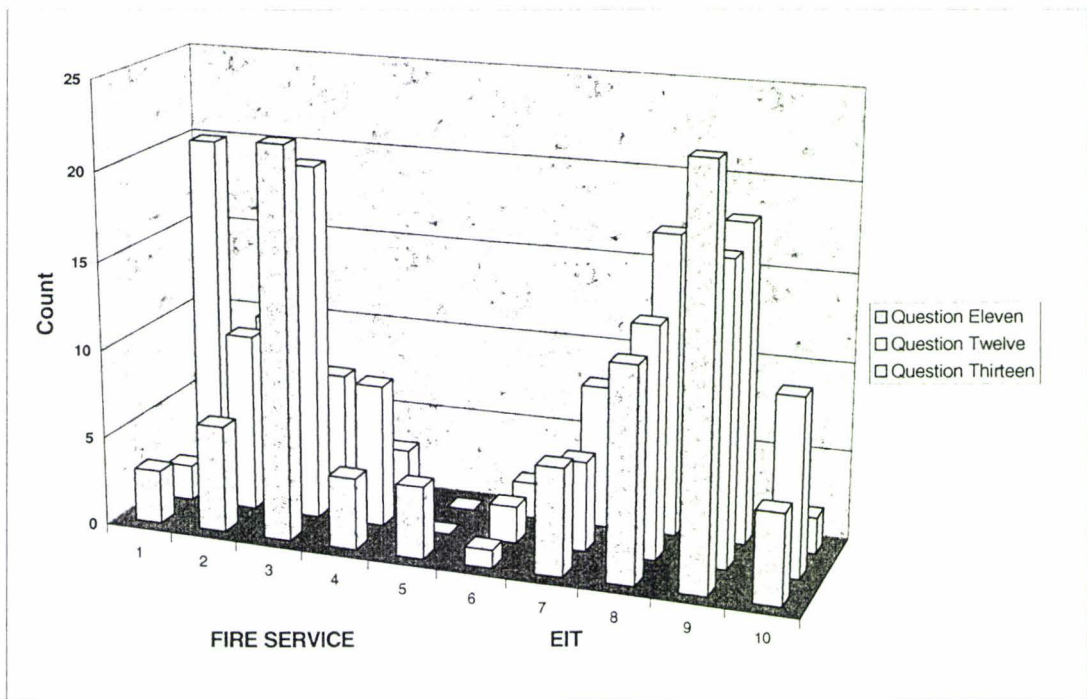
Senior management inspires me to do my best	N		Measures of Central Tendency				
	Valid	Missing	Mean	Median	Mode	Std Dev	Variance
Fire Service	40	0	1.83	1.50	1.00	1.00	0.97
EIT	47	0	3.21	3.00	4.00	0.93	0.87
TOTAL	87	0	2.57	3.00	3.00	1.18	1.39

Fire Service	Sum of Frequency		Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
	Very low (1)	20	50.00	50.00	50.00
2	10	25.00	25.00	75.00	
3	7	17.50	17.50	92.50	
4	3	7.50	7.50	100.00	
Very high (5)	0	0.00	0.00	100.00	
TOTAL	40	100.00	100.00		

EIT	Sum of Frequency		Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
	Very low (6)	2	4.26	4.26	4.26
7	8	17.02	17.02	21.28	
8	17	36.17	36.17	57.45	
9	18	38.30	38.30	95.74	
Very high (10)	2	4.26	4.26	100.00	
TOTAL	47	100.00	100.00		

Note: change in EIT ratings from 1-5 to 6-10 to accommodate the default labels on the Microsoft Excel graph (Figure 5.9).

FIGURE 5.9 – INSPIRATION TO DO MY BEST



DISCUSSION

"Research is in essence the pursuit of knowledge" (Dane, 1990, p.4).

6.1 PURPOSE

The primary purpose of this investigation was to explore the relationship, if any, between organisational commitment and communication climate in two organisations experiencing change. This aim was achieved. The overall findings of this study suggest that, in these types of organisations and in the context of experiencing change, there is a relationship between organisational commitment and communication climate. Indeed, staff perception of the leader's personal qualities do impact on the communication climate. Commitment is essential because theorists such as Baron and Greenberg (1990) and Dublin, Mowday and Porter (1974 cited in Steers, 1977) indicated that committed employees will behave differently at work from those with little or no commitment. This is central to the present study. Similarly, Federico (1996) used the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire to identify the relationship between communication satisfaction and organisational commitment in Guatemala. Findings from the study indicated positive relationships between these factors.

Interviews and the questionnaire survey, in the present study, formed an holistic approach to satisfying the research objectives and contributed to an understanding of the phenomena. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a relationship between communication climate and employees' commitment to an organisation (Objective One), and determines that personal qualities of organisational leaders are communicated through informal and formal communication channels (Objective Five). Questions One to Five, analysis of the sub-scales of *organisational commitment* and *communication climate*, and the interviews contribute to determining the impact communication climate has on organisational commitment (Objective Two), and to determining the strength of the correlation between organisational commitment and communication climate (Objective Three). Analysis of the sub-scales for *management concern* and *communication climate (superiors and management)*, and findings from the interviews, contribute to satisfying Objective Four which considers whether staff perception of the leader's personal qualities impact on the communication climate.

Linked to the research question is the extent that staff are willing to help their organisation to be successful (Question 16), and the source of inspiration for an employee (Questions 11, 12 and 13). These factors impact on the communication climate and contribute to organisational commitment.

While the present investigation was not especially designed to examine this issue, job commitment rather than organisational commitment was frequently cited as the form of commitment held by firefighters. EIT staff, whilst they have strong organisational commitment, they also have very strong commitment to their job.

6.2 INTRODUCTION

A survey of 2000 British workplaces concluded that how companies communicated with their employees was an important workplace issue. Evidence showed that where the communication climate was good (as in EIT), top management had highly functioning groups, suggestion schemes and regular meetings with their workforce. Alternatively, where top management cascaded information down the management chain (such as the Fire Service), employee relations were poor. This indicated that two way communication was essential (Smith, 1995). Perfect (1993, p.31) states that "the finest human resource management strategies will fail unless a proactive, two way communication process underpins their development and implementation". A recent study by Ellis demonstrated the importance of the form or source of information in the change process, and how this can affect employee commitment (1992, Irwin & More, 1994). This is because information encourages a sense of identification with the values and objectives of the organisation. The research also found that high levels of commitment were linked to high levels of performance (Putti et al, 1990 cited in Irwin & More, 1994).

6.3 SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

Both organisations considered the return rate of the questionnaire survey instruments to be beyond expectation despite a firefighter suggesting that his colleagues were "sceptical of questionnaires" because of a two-tier problem solving exercise implemented by Head Office that betrayed the trust of firefighters. The pleasing return rate could be attributed to the data distribution and collection methods, or it could be a reflection of interest in the topic and commitment to their respective organisations. Anecdotal evidence and interviews from the Fire Service showed that respondents wished to share their views with the possibility that changes for the better may come

from it and/or because of the poor communication climate between Head Office and the stations.

Fire Service

Firefighters see their job as being to serve the public, “life saving”, ahead of putting out fires – “anyone in trouble, we are there to help”. Their main role encompasses fire fighting, fire education and prevention, and attending car accidents. During extreme fire risk, Hawke’s Bay summers, firefighters will often be called in to work additional shifts. On occasion, a respondent pointed out that they might be covering shifts for periods up to 36 hours without returning home.

The first interview session was suspended following a call out. On a return visit, another discussion was deferred with the Chief Fire Officer because of a more significant emergency incident. Similar themes developed during the interview sessions with the Napier and Hastings stations. However, as one Chief Fire Officer pointed out earlier, there was some discomfort amongst the firefighters at the time of the present study. Previously, he had felt that, on the whole his staff were “committed to the organisation and where it was going but there was confusion at present over the recent changes” in the strategic direction – “even as recently as three months ago, staff felt differently”. Therefore, comments must be considered in the context of the changes that were occurring at the time of this investigation. Issues discussed during the research process were connected with the changing environment: uncertainty, lack of communication downward and lack of opportunity to communicate upwards. These issues did appear to impact on commitment to the organisation but not commitment to the job of life saving and fire fighting.

EIT

Polytechnic staff encounter stresses and pressures from workloads and deadlines for examinations and preparation for in-term work. There is a strong commitment to the end-user, the student. Staff are concerned about funding, an issue of concern to all educational institutions. A few interviewees felt that education was now “run like a business” with student loans and EFTS funding.

6.4 POSSIBLE AMBIGUITY

An instance where confusion seems evident is with the phrase, “this organisation” in the Fire Service. An observation from the interviews was that some firefighters considered the vocation of fire fighting as opposed to the Fire Service as an

organisation. Therefore, when responding to a question such as, Question One: *My level of commitment to this organisation is...* there appeared to be confusion between commitment to the job itself of attending incidents and saving lives, and commitment to the strategy and direction, and Head Office management. It was not possible to determine the level of confusion in statistical analysis.

6.5 THE CHANGING ORGANISATION

Change management professionals suggest that turmoil gets in the way of long lasting change when too many changes are occurring simultaneously or when there is not enough communication (Ettore, 1996), as appears to be the situation with the Fire Service. Analysis suggests simultaneous changes are occurring and anecdotal evidence highlights a perception of a communication deficiency. EIT staff appear to have reacted positively to change which could be attributed to the sound communication policies positioned to facilitate change and the positive communication climate.

Fire Service

Some interviewees acknowledged that the Fire Service “needed” to be changed; however, one respondent stated that he did not agree with the way the restructuring was conducted. One cost cutting measure cited was the employment of Community Safety Teams on lower salary packages; however, Head Office increased staffing levels from around 110 to 140, a situation that was reversed in October 1997 with the announcement that administration staff numbers would be reduced. As the Fire Service changes, a prevalent belief is summarised by one interviewee

What annoys me is that people say we haven't got outside business experience and we're coming in to save you. This [current] review is because those people couldn't save us, they actually led us down a worse path. Right now the positions they are advertising for fire region commanders nationally and internationally, outside the Fire Service... [this is] underplaying our management skills... the actual people skills central to the organisation. You don't get better background than we have.

A respondent suggested that the latest round of restructuring with Roger Estall and the new commission is carrying on the change initiated by Maurice Cummings' except they are not communicating with staff. Coverdale (1997) stressed that in times of change

people need to be informed so they can understand the process. Following the direction to refocus on fires and make everything else secondary, Estall was asked about incidents other than fires such as substance spills and motor vehicle accidents. His alleged reply was that he had not considered all these other things but he would deal with them when he could. The firefighter felt that "what that does now is close down our communication, we don't understand where he's coming from, we mistrust what he's up to". In contrast to this view, Roger Estall provided the opportunity for a respondent to talk one-on-one with him. The respondent felt Estall's aim to get back to core business, and to make emergency management work properly, was "sound" and that Maurice Cummings' eight strategies, in the Strategic Plan, were also "very sound and would probably be built on".

EIT

Growth and development has progressed since EIT began as Hawke's Bay Community College. Development is accepted and encouraged. All interviewed staff were clearly informed of the direction of the polytechnic and agreed with the strategies in place. Staff were "involved in the consultation process and [their] opinions were actively sought by management". Should staff be uncertain or unhappy with any aspect of the Plan, they all reaffirmed, and valued, the open door policy operated by the Chief Executive Officer. Beck and Beck (1986) suggested that perception of a manager's open door policy is dependent on one's level in the organisation, and the communication climate within the organisation. However, all respondents felt this policy was equally available to all staff, and some interviewees cited occasions where they had taken the opportunity to discuss concerns with the Chief Executive Officer.

SUMMARY

Jayne (1991) pointed out that Watties went from an \$86 million loss to a \$110 million after-tax profit in a short time frame. Jayne (1991) discovered that two days of discussions with union officials were designed to reduce the uncertainty and mistrust generated by change. Irving (cited in Jayne, 1991, p.63) stated that the process of building up trust was discussed so that

when I say something is true, you believe it, or when you see something happening that might previously have raised suspicion you will now have some confidence to come and ask about it or trust that it's okay.

This scenario demonstrates the value of good communication and a communication climate that supports openness and encourages trust in times of organisational change. These elements are essential because “modern organisations must be capable of change” (Drucker, 1970, p.179). A statement on change expressed by a firefighter is supported by the literature, “if you don’t get the support of the staff, change will not be successful”.

6.6 ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION

A study conducted by Fry found that effective leaders viewed the essence of their work as verbal communication. Setting up “meaningful agenda dialogue often distinguishes effective organisations” (1988, p.10). There is no panacea for ineffective communication. However, it’s possible to acquaint people with techniques, train their judgement and encourage and support them to do what they can (Timm, 1986). Staff development at EIT is “very important” particularly because they are a learning institution. There was no mention of structured communication programmes at the Fire Service.

Results indicated a significant difference between the responses from the two organisations to Question Two, *the quality of communication perceived in the organisation*. The quality of communication in the Fire Service was perceived as being significantly poorer than the quality of communication at EIT. As depicted in Figure 5.2, 100% of the Fire Service ratings appear in *very low to moderate* categories, with an average score of 2.08. This is alarming. EIT ratings predominately appear in the *moderate (3) to very high (5)* categories. These findings are consistent with the literature and Spinks and Wells (1992, p.213) report that “a full flow of open, honest communication will foster high morale and an atmosphere of trust and confidence on the part of lower level personnel toward upper levels of the administration”. However, it is noted that the Fire Service is a national organisation whereas EIT covers a smaller geographic region, which may impact on quality, speed and accuracy of information.

6.6.1 METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

A mix of “formal and informal forms of communication is the key to a healthy climate” (Sligo, 1995b, p.41). Orlikowski and Yates’ (1992 cited in Sligo, 1996) investigation found that the nature of organisational communication is influenced by better and faster forms of communication. However, e-mail can cause information overload because of the ease of the facilitation of instantaneous and massive distribution of information (Aiken & Milam, 1993).

Fire Service

Bell and Sigband (1986, p.24) suggest that "there is no vacuum in communication...If the formal channel is closed or unreceptive, the message will be communicated on the informal one". Within the Fire Service, the largest source of information cited was the grapevine because it is "a small compact service". The majority of staff felt this was the "quickest source of national information". At times, information will be provided informally up to six weeks prior to an official notification. An exception occurred during recent restructuring where a tight knit management team contained information until a major press release. Two respondents pointed out that "never in the history of the Fire Service" has a secret, such as the number of new regions, been able to be kept a secret. Other forms of communication include the informal Star magazine, the formal Gazette magazine, meetings and internal memoranda. The latter three are primarily for operational activities.

Massey University's Institute for Executive Development conducted a survey amongst over 100 chief executives and human resource managers. Results published in February 1995, showed that the two most important issues in business are communication of business directions, problems and plans; and secondly, facilitation of full employee involvement (Smith, 1995). It is felt that the Fire Service does not "necessarily put out good information about what's happening, philosophies, where we want to go, organisational strengths, values and [if we do,] we don't communicate these particularly well". The main direction of communication is downwards with no formal structure for upward communication. Head Office has frequently used electronic mail; however, few stations, especially the volunteer stations, can facilitate this form of communication due to lack of resources. A firefighter pointed out that when the only personal computer adapted for electronic mail was not on site, they did not receive communications unless they were faxed by Area Office. At times "major announcements" were made using email. Few staff have access to, or knowledge of, the web site for the Fire Service.

During the restructuring process, there were a few consultation phases giving firefighters the opportunity to put their views forward. However, general feeling was that the consulting teams took the problems openly discussed by firefighters and did not listen to firefighter-generated solutions to the problems. One suggestion was that the consultation process was "false". It is possible, at times, to write submissions. However, one respondent felt that the deadline date usually did not give them

adequate opportunity for preparation, and volunteer stations were “often disadvantaged because they meet infrequently and are not always informed”.

EIT

Forms of communication are extensive and include face to face discussion, electronic mail and voice mail, written memoranda circulated to staff, staff meetings and a staff consultative committee. The Staff Consultative Committee is a forum of staff to deal with any issues related to staff or what may happen or has happened, with an “emphasis on open, honest discussion”. One staff member describes this as a process whereby

staff can feed in issues and concerns to staff on the committee and they will get a straight answer from the CEO there and then or will investigate and report back. It's a two-way communication process with an open style and no hidden agenda. What's heard on council and what's said every day is very similar.

Recurring communication strengths were described as being at a micro level, within the immediate team and throughout the organisation. There is a “great opportunity for open discussions and to voice concerns” with all levels of the organisation. “There is goodwill and commitment to have good communications... and the structures are there [to facilitate communication]”. Full staff section or faculty meetings are effective if people attend.

New Zealand businesses are expanding, complicating information transfer, and multiplying communications (Sligo, 1994). Some concerns were raised in the present study over the quantity of information that comes via MS mail that may also be duplicated on a regular memorandum or voice mail - the message may not be related to the receiver. This may be an indication of information overload (Aiken & Milam, 1993). In contrast, one respondent commented that duplicating of messages through various methods is a strength because people tend to pick up on one method or the other, so it provides a choice of medium.

6.6.2 COMMUNICATION CLIMATE

Sligo (1985) in his work on communication flows, determined that channels of communication are not as open as management would like. It was suggested that to be effective an organisation must maintain a constant flow through the organisation from the top down. The study provided evidence of the information gap between the

information people now receive and the information they want, in every category surveyed with knowledge workers. A particular area of concern was how staff are kept informed about their position and how it relates to the rest of the organisation. An issue apparent in the study is that the more people are kept informed about the relationship between their role and the organisation (Sligo, 1984a; 1985), the more committed they feel, which reflects positively on performance.

Anatol, Applbaum and Koehler (1981) assert that communication climate is influenced by the organisational objectives and by the philosophy and communication style of management and decision-making processes and it is affected by the presence of each of its participants. Researchers assessed climate amongst 5500 United Kingdom manufacturing employees, using employee perceptions of work environment examining factors which included effectiveness of communication. They found that climate is important because it affects employee motivation, absenteeism, performance and turnover (Employees' views, 1996).

Fire Service

No particular relationship was demonstrated between the sub-scales of *organisational commitment* and *communication climate* within the Fire Service (Table 5.2). However, anecdotal evidence from informal discussion and the structured interviews tend to suggest possible confusion with some of the questions, disproving some results from the quantitative analysis. The linkage indicated on Table 5.3 between communication climate (organisation) and communication climate (management) was interesting because respondents tended to rate communication climate of the organisation similarly to communication climate of superiors and management.

EIT

Organisational commitment/communication climate (organisation) was the only communication climate measure to demonstrate a significant relationship for EIT. A significant (positive) correlation indicates that respondents who give low ratings to the climate of *communication (organisation)* have low commitment ratings and vice versa. Table 5.5 demonstrated that the same management-organisation and management-superiors correlations occurred in EIT as with the Fire Service, but the organisation-superiors correlation was not significant at EIT, whereas it was in the Fire Service. There are two immediate suggestions for this slight confusion or overlap. One is that there is confusion between to which respondents understood management and superior positions to refer to. Alternatively, the results may have something to do with

overall management style of the organisation. There seems to be as much emphasis on communication at team leader level as at management level.

Both organisations

Of interest, was the analysis of organisational commitment and communication climate (organisation) in the combined sample. The Fire Service demonstrated no significant relationship, however, when combined with EIT, a significant relationship resulted. Although, EIT dominated the high end, this result reinforces the analysis from Section 5.3. On the whole, the Fire Service showed lower levels of organisational commitment and lower levels of perception of the communication climate. These results suggest that when communication climate is considered within the organisation as a whole, it does seem to be related to the commitment to the organisation.

Management Concern was a scale comprised of Questions Three and Four. The combined results from the Fire Service and EIT from the consideration of the sub-scales of management concern and communication climate (superiors and management – Questions 20 to 26) pertain to Objective Four. The relationships considered here are the management's concern for effective communication and personal qualities of leaders.

Question Five, "Management's level of concern about employee commitment to this organisation..." deals with issues of individual organisational commitment so was credited to the sub-scale concerned with management and organisational commitment and not the sub-scales used in this analysis. It could be argued that sub-scales for 'management' and 'superior' could be joined together; however, Questions 22 to 26 consider issues that may not necessarily relate to a manager, rather a team leader.

6.6.3 IMMEDIATE SUPERVISORS AND THE TEAM ENVIRONMENT

Downey, Sheridan and Slocum (1975) conducted a study which focused on the relationships among leader behaviour and subordinate job performance and satisfaction at a specialty steel firm. Some of the 14 outcomes most frequently mentioned by the participants in interviews included - the opportunity to work with friendly co-workers and managers who listen to workers' solutions and take action on worker generated solutions. In a similar vein, a New Zealand organisation introduced a young graduate to replace a long term, well liked employee who chose to leave the organisation. The staff were initially apprehensive of the supervisor. However, the new

supervisor introduced open communication, and feelings of equality within the work place which made the workplace more enjoyable and productive (Power, 1996).

Pearson's Chi-Squared statistic indicated that there is no significant difference between the responses from EIT and the Fire Service on Question Three, *the ability of my direct supervisor to communicate with his/her staff*. Results from Figure 5.3 indicated a more consistent spread of results from both organisations. Each organisation had a similar pattern of responses. The ratings suggest that each set of employees generally feel that the ability of their direct supervisor's level of communication *is moderate to very high*.

An indication of the main source of employees' inspiration comes from was the subject of Questions 11, 12 and 13 (Refer Figure 5.9). An overwhelming number (75%) of questionnaire respondents at the Fire Service strongly disagreed (1) to disagreed (2) that senior management were a source of inspiration for them. Immediate bosses were rated indifferent (3) to strongly agree (5) in 70% of the cases, which is similar to the ratings for co-workers. For EIT, inspiration from senior management rated indifferent (3) to strongly agree (5) in 79% of the cases. Staff rated the inspiration from the immediate boss as indifferent (3) to strongly agree (5) in 70% of the cases and coworkers rated indifferent (3) to strongly agree (5) in 85% of the total sample. In studies reviewed by Jablin (1979 cited in Barnett, Cochran, Dumler and Schnake 1990), climate was related to the quality of superior-subordinate communication because this influenced the subordinate's willingness to engage in upward communication.

Fire Service

All respondents reported very good communication and overall working relationships with their immediate supervisors, Senior Station Officers and the Chief Fire Officer. Again, good responses to the communication relationships were evident. One interviewee felt that a major communication strength was the "personal contact on the Station". This assertion was confirmed by a number of sources, and one respondent commented that "most communication areas had broken down in the organisation other than at Station level".

Generally, all interviewees felt that the officers were open to suggestions and that all communications, verbal and written, within their Watch and between other Watches was extremely good or excellent, "100% no problem at all" and there existed a "close

working environment” within each station. “Everyone works to a common goal”. Between stations there are minor differences in the way that things are done but with the same result. Seldom are there problems with communication because if someone is unsure, “the environment supports them asking questions”. According to one Chief Fire Officer, “it is not just the [communication] medium used, it is what value or organisational issue that is communicated and how it is communicated, and what effect it has on staff to raise their own level of commitment” (personal communication, 27 July, 1997).

EIT

Interviewees generally felt that their leaders were very good communicators on both personal and professional levels. Comments from staff included, “very good and easy [to communicate with]”; “a direct and good relationship existed”; “easy to relate to, an open relationship”; “mutual trust” and most people stated that personal qualities of their leader has a direct impact on their commitment.

The overall feelings of the personal qualities seem to be reflected in one interviewee’s comment, “I trust them and I’ve never been surprised by anything. I appreciate them being honest with me...honesty and integrity are very important”. Issues openly discussed with management include performance (one comment being that “feedback from managers is very important with how effective I am and how I can improve myself and helps with job direction”), pay scales, contracts, and other sensitive issues.

6.6.4 TOP MANAGEMENT

Study by Whitworth (1990) on Hewlett Packard found that the better the manager’s communication, the more satisfied employees are with life in the organisation (cited in Irwin & More, 1994). Results from the present study indicated a significant difference between the responses from the two organisations on Question Four, *Management’s level of concern about effective communication*. Figure 5.4 indicated that 95% of the scores in the Fire Service are *very low (1) to moderate (3)*. Two respondents gave scores of *high (4)*. There is evidence from the interviews to suggest that *management* in this instance was used as a reference to head office, and not to the Chief Fire Officer at each station.

The results indicate that there may be something different between the two samples because the Fire Service tends to give a low-moderate scores, while EIT staff tend to give moderate-high scores. It is not possible to say conclusively from the questionnaire

surveys as to why this occurred. It may be related to factors such as more extensive communication in EIT or it may be a result of the staff that were recruited originally. Another factor may be a reflection of the different sizes and geographical spread of the organisations. Issues drawn out in the interview process suggest a lack of trust for management and a lack of downward communication and few opportunities for upward communication. This is consistent with Lewis' (1994) extensive research on organisational change and communication. Interviews and focus group discussions revealed that in the context of change participants felt loyal and committed to their organisation because cooperation was important, as were the values of loyalty, trust, honesty and top management listening to them.

Fire Service

Blue Lotus Research reported that the Fire Service suffered from bad communication between firefighters and management, and "an abiding mistrust of management among all levels of its workforce" (Wilson, 1996). This is supported by Morrow's (1993, p.166) broad statement that "there is a popular opinion that manager-employee relations are poor [in many organisations]". Luthans (1989) adds that besides feedback, other variables such as trust, expectations, and values greatly influence the interpersonal aspects of communication. If the subordinate does not trust management, there will be ineffective communication.

An officer expressed a belief that there was a "major fraction in the unity between the employer and employee not just from the restructuring because it has always been there... the restructuring [exacerbated] the problem". The statement captures the overall feeling from the interview sessions because a number of respondents felt there was a lack of communication between top management and the workers/firefighters, and that firefighters are not "overly informed" by top management over many issues. It was suggested that "information comes down from the top by edict". A major communication weakness was cited as being the lack of accountability by top management, and another respondent said head office was using the system to "suit themselves". One employee felt that the only opportunity to communicate with Roger Estall was in writing, and another opinion was that the Chief Executive does not communicate with his staff. Indeed, a belief by one respondent was that Maurice Cummings, when he was in office, did not like to receive bad news so staff refrained from discussing certain issues with him.

Staff felt they were not given a reason for the change, and were “disillusioned” when they discovered that interest groups and stakeholders, even the New Zealand Police, were told of the impending restructuring by “personal briefing” before firefighters. This occurs in other organisations such as Air New Zealand. Fourteen new planes were bought in January 1998 to service the New Zealand – Australia routes, information that made television news headlines. Staff selling airline tickets were not aware of the purchase prior to hearing the news. Some staff were unhappy with top management because they informed the public before advising staff (personal communication, 26 January 1998). Perkins (1996b) suggested that priority must be given as to who to inform and when, and channels of communication when communicating information.

An example of poor communication was one part of the restructuring announced under Maurice Cummings. A formal announcement was made on Television One at 6.30am. This screening was not widely publicised to staff and staff who were “worried about their jobs had to find out about it with the rest of the country on a news broadcast”. Hearing announcements on public media (other announcements were made on radio, television and in the newspaper) at the same time as the rest of New Zealand impacted on organisational commitment.

Some interviewees felt that they should be consulted considerably more than they are, “especially from top management”. This information suggests that there was confusion when responding to the questionnaire survey instrument as to which superior they should be considering when answering the questions. Of the known respondents, some responded positively if they were referring to people at their Area Office or own Station but negatively of the reference was to staff at National Office.

The communication in this round of review has been very secretive. The grapevine usually works well but not this time. Nobody knows anything [and because of this] it does have an impact on your job. I’m pretty disappointed with the Fire Service particularly with the way they’ve treated their managers. It’s a terrible situation for them and has unsettled us.

A respondent suggested that head office had “bombarded” staff with newsletters and circulars that did not have much value to firefighters, and this may be because they do not understand the realism of fire fighting. If materials for employees are created

honestly and recognise an employee's need to know, they will help improve morale and productivity (Bell & Sigband, 1986).

EIT

Comments concerning communication policies of the Chief Executive Officer included that "he likes to be fair and listen to what others have to say". One respondent commented that "leadership and visionary qualities do affect commitment because you're going in the same direction and tends to engender commitment". The open door policy "is an important part of the culture and you're not told to go away and put [your concerns] in writing. I have never known [the door] to be closed to anyone". However, it is generally accepted that this is a consultation process and "at the end of the day a decision has to be made and that's the CEO's responsibility. He has to make decisions that he feels are appropriate". In summary, one respondent stated that "formal communication links are very good and staff are always kept in touch with the general strategic direction of where EIT is going".

The way managers lead is changing from planning, organising and controlling, to a person who has the trust and confidence of people, who builds relationships and values fairness and openness in communication, respect for others' (Trerise, 1997a). This seems to be a reflection of the management style.

6.6.5 SUMMARY

Anecdotal findings from the present study confirm conclusions from a recent survey of 122 white-collar employees in an American engineering company. Results suggested that the satisfaction of organisation members concerning the amount of information available to them could enhance their commitment. The Fire Service confirms the findings of the American report by not providing information. EIT reaffirms the findings by providing ample information and structures for communication to be facilitated. Cook and Wall (1980) using the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire in their study of a large sample of British blue collar workers, concluded that trust in management to treat employees fairly was positively correlated with measures of involvement and loyalty.

6.7 COMMITMENT

Bennis and Nanus (1985) refer to a study by Public Agenda Forum concerning commitment. Some results follow:

- ⇒ Less than 25% of employees said they were currently working at full potential
- ⇒ 50% said they did not put in extra effort beyond what was required to hold their job
- ⇒ 75% reported that they could be significantly more effective than they are
- ⇒ Almost 60% held the perception that they did not work as hard as they used to

The primary reason cited for these results is the commitment gap, where leaders have not instilled vision, meaning and trust in employees.

Buchanan (1974 cited in Eisenberger, Hutchison, Huntington & Sowa, 1986) used the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire to examine managers in business and government. An interesting finding from his research was that affective commitment tended to be related to a belief that contributions were recognised and that the organisation could be depended on to fulfil promises. Similar to this is the result of another study indicating that organisational commitment is “strongly influenced by their perception of the organisation’s commitment to them” (Eisenberger, Hutchison, Huntington & Sowa, 1986, p.500).

Question 16 produced an interesting result as to the extent to which staff are willing to help their organisation to be successful. An overwhelming 96% responded in the top two categories for EIT. Despite the concerns of the firefighters, 90% of firefighters responded in the top three categories. A willingness to help an organisation to be successful is to an extent an expression of organisational commitment. It could be surmised that there is confusion between organisation and job commitment at the Fire Service in view of other information gathered.

There is a significant difference between the responses from the two organisations on Question One, *an individual’s level of organisational commitment*. The average rating for the Fire Service was 3.45, whereas the average rating for EIT was 4.26 (Refer Figure 5.1). A significant difference is 80.4% of EIT staff rate their commitment in the *high to very high* categories compared with 47.5% in the same categories for the Fire Service.

A number of studies show a positive correlation between commitment and work performance (Argyle, 1989). Steers' (1977) study of hospital employees, scientists and engineers (Section 2.1) demonstrated that performance was generally found to be unrelated to commitment. This was demonstrated in the Fire Service suggesting that there are other factors aside from communication climate and the other antecedents and correlates (Section 2.3) which have an influence on their commitment.

Very strong differences were reported on the factor pertaining to Question Five, *Management's level of concern about employee commitment*. This indicates that the perception of management by employees on this factor is very different. Seventy percent of the scores for the Fire Service rated *very low to low*, compared with 15.22% in the same categories for EIT. Once again, it is suggested from the interviews, that management in this instance pertains to head office not each fire station or Area Office.

Fire Service

Anecdotal evidence suggests there was confusion in answering this question in the questionnaire survey, particularly from the Fire Service, which may have increased the rating on the issue of an individual's level of organisational commitment. Often commitment may have been misinterpreted to mean commitment to the *job* that is attending incidents and saving lives rather than commitment to the *organisation*.

Findings from the interviews suggested that morale was very low. One respondent said that he was pleased to get away from work at the end of his shift. However, this was not because of his colleagues, it was because of hierarchy and that staff do not know where they stand with their employment. This respondent, as with others, felt concern for his local management because of their own uncertainty in their employment.

Of note is that the original people whom wanted change, such as Maurice Cummings, have left the Fire Service; this has had a bearing on staff commitment. A number of interviewees confirmed that their commitment was directly affected by the way in which management communicates plans, developments, and changes, and one firefighter added that certain directives discourage commitment, "motivation through participation, [firefighters] like to be consulted". Commitment to the job itself is seldom affected by communication about plans, developments and changes, but it does impact on commitment to the organisation. At the time of the interviews, it was felt that

head office was not communicating at all, and this all impacted on organisational commitment.

Question Eight of the interview guide received attention by the interviewees on three levels. The first level was job commitment, leaders within their fire station, and people leading the organisation. Trust and respect for skills affected commitment to the job and organisation for a number of employees. Certainly, in terms of the present study, commitment to the organisation is affected by the personal qualities of the leaders. These qualities include trust, honesty, reliability, knowledge and capabilities and are prevalent on the stations; however, trust and communication links with top management were “very, very weak”. Indeed, one Chief Fire Officer believed his Area Chief had some fine qualities which is why he had put so much energy into his own District.

An officer asserted that commitment for the job is very strong because firefighters are goal orientated and get the job done as proficiently as possible, but they find that no wage rise for seven years and management implementing changes they do not agree with. “People depend on us for saving their lives, and what they own. We have to be proficient at it, otherwise people would die”. Comments included that “it is important that people know they can call the Fire Service [if they need help]”; that there is “no commitment to the structure at all. We don’t know what direction we are heading in”.

The latter point is further emphasised by another respondent,

Our organisation is lucky because whilst the corporate organisation is sorting themselves we push that to the back of our mind and we focus on the people of Hastings... we’re here primarily for the people. It’s a terrible thing that we have to say that the corporate organisation means nothing to you... given all these communication problems. The commitment is strong to the people of Hastings; it is not strong at all to the employer.

EIT

When considering commitment amongst staff, one interviewee stated that “there is strong commitment to the customer group, that is the students, and as such to the organisation”. People agreed that staff “go beyond their job descriptions... and are strongly committed”. Another interviewee stated that there is a “strong commitment to

education... although commitment tends to wane a little because of the different philosophies at work as to what education is". This is a manifestation of the difference between education for the sake of education or as a business. It was reported that education as a business is seen, at times, to compromise the educational delivery, and this may impact on staff commitment to the direction of EIT. One member expressed their consideration for career and personal direction by saying,

I don't see commitment as being here for the rest of your life, although that may be some people's idea of commitment. Commitment is until you feel as though it's time to move in. You go through a process and you outgrow an organisation or it outgrows you.

Handy (1996) quotes the *New York Times* as suggesting that there is a new mantra in corporations which is what the EIT staff member is alluding to. Handy says organisations are stressing that they can no longer guarantee the future for their staff, and that employees are responsible for their own career. Organisations will provide opportunities for staff to develop skills and experience, but employability not employment is the best they can offer. This *lifetime employability, not lifetime employment* is the intention of the Fire Services' Strategic Direction 2000.

Communication of plans, developments and changes did impact on commitment "tremendously". It was reported that,

We all have input into the strategic planning - We're part of those so to some extent it does drive your commitment... [Management] keeps people informed, inviting comment and feedback. It has the overall effect of strengthening commitment. People own the organisation.

Staff felt like part of the whole process because of the strength of the consultation process and openness in communication and because there is an opportunity to voice one's concerns. Other interviewee added that commitment is affected if people don't feel as though they are involved. Management consults with staff and explains "why", and staff understand and generally accept the issues. Another interviewee commented that commitment was affected more by the content of the plans and changes rather than the method because the interviewee daily experiences the "difficulties of

communicating everything to everybody effectively and would not base commitment solely on that".

6.7.1 COMMITMENT AND PARTICIPATIVE DECISION MAKING

Commitment tends to be greater amongst organisations where participative decision making processes, and staff are delegated responsibility (Argyle, 1989) and the communication climate must be supportive of these practices. The degree of participation in the decision making between the organisations was varied, for example the strategies of EIT were developed in a participative style. Within the Fire Stations, decision making on the floor is "encouraged" but this does not extend to the planning of the overall strategic direction of the Fire Service. Senior management in the Fire Service, however, could argue that firefighter input was called for during the two submission processes. However, in most instances the firefighters did not believe they were provided with adequate time to prepare a document and the station without access to e-mail were hampered due to lack of communication regarding the process.

6.7.2 SUMMARY

Studies reviewed by Bebb and Blyde (1995) indicate that 60 –75% of employees across many organisational groups reports that the worst or most stressful aspect of their job is their immediate supervisor. There was little indication from either organisation to substantiate Bebb and Blyde's (1995) claim. Furthermore, Handy (1996, p.35) asserts that "total commitment for a limited time is better, we shall come to realise, than no commitment for an unspecified time".

Lange (1997), the proprietor of Tony's Tyre Service, stated that their most important document was their business philosophy which stresses that staff "go about our business with honesty and integrity". Staff are proud to work for Tony's Tyre Service. Schwarzkopf (1997) in his World Masters of Business Presentation encouraged people to be proud to work for their organisation, as it is essential to on-going success. At EIT some staff remarked that their Department was a reflection of the organisation as a whole, it was just a "smaller picture" and all qualities were equally as important. These ranged from being "well organised" to being a "good communicator".

6.8 CONCLUSION

Irwin and More (1994, p.37) state that "the pace of change in today's world is greater than at any other time in history". Change inevitably incorporates a communication dimension. The two case study organisations reflect two dichotomous changes

suggested by Irwin and More (1994). The Fire Service is undergoing dramatic, large scale, top down, revolutionary change. EIT is experiencing, gradual, participative evolutionary change. Scott and Jaff (1989 cited in Irwin & More, 1994, p.194) stress that consideration must be given to “ensuring the appropriate climate for communicating about change by maintaining open communication to alleviate difficulties engendered by rumours, uncertainty and anxiety”

The Chairman of an Australian Government funded organisation which examines best business practice believes that during change trust is essential and trust is earned through supportive communication (ETV, 3 Nov, 1997). Elements of supportive and defensive communication climates are known and their effect on the communication situations (Beck & Beck, 1986, p.15) and the communication climate must support trust and openness.

Common elements of high performance teams and characteristics of Fortune 500 companies include commitment and communication. Evidence suggests that EIT and the Fire Service, Napier and Hastings Stations and Eastern Area Office, practise the components of supportive communication climates such as supportive communication, quality and accurate downward communication, honesty and understanding communication relationships, and upward influence and reliable information. Staff are able to express opinions and feelings freely with the perception that others are open, honest and non-judgmental; a problem orientation and spontaneity are key components with both organisations; as are empathy and equality; mutual trust is paramount and provisionalism is an acceptable practice. Such a climate has predictive outcomes for organisational commitment, although communication climate in itself is not the only predictor of organisational commitment.

The communication climate external to the Eastern Area of the Fire Service is perceived to be poor which suggests that parts of the Fire Service represent a dichotomy in itself of the supportive/defensive communication climate continuum. Defensive climates have ramifications for issues which include organisational commitment. Evidence suggests that this has been the case for the Fire Service, with one effect being a negative impact on organisational commitment. A perceived lack of concern (neutrality) for the welfare of staff by Head Office personnel is evident. Upward communication, if any, may be edited to ensure protection from anticipated threat, such as the consultation processes that were initially treated with openness and honesty by employees until some staff felt that the process was “false”. Some staff are

distracted from Head Office communications as they feel the content “has no value” to them, and that the senders do not “understand the realism of fire fighting”.

An Australian study of organisations found that effective management of internal communication systems contributed in a major way to corporate effectiveness. Such systems included fostering an environment of openness and trust, and structures that encouraged vertical and lateral communication (Kriegler, Dawkins, Ryan & Wooden, 1988 cited in Irwin & More, 1994). An EIT respondent concluded with the following statement which captures the essence of the present study,

I think organisational commitment has a great deal to do with your organisation's vision statement, tertiary education and equal employment opportunities, issues staff are committed to. If you have a good vision statement then everyone knows where you're going and what it's all about. The organisation has a commitment to you and you have a commitment to the organisation, you write your goals, and professional development plans. You can say anything you want to anyone, and because communication is encouraged amongst and between all levels.

As anticipated, the results of the present study demonstrated that communication climate has a strong correlation with organisational commitment. Promoting a positive communication climate is a factor in organisational commitment, and when staff are committed to an organisation they will help to establish and maintain a positive communication climate. Generally, if a positive climate does not exist then discontent and lack of organisational commitment will be evident, with a negative impact on productivity, performance and profitability. This will depend on the nature of the organisation. However, “no claim is made that any new theories have been propounded; only that the research has built on and filled in gaps in theories that already exist” Kuhn (1970 cited in Lewis, 1994, p.53), and according to Kuhn, that is the best that most researchers can hope to achieve”.

BENEFITS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDY

"Future research needs are inevitably suggested by most empirical analysis" (Perkins, 1996a).

7.1 BENEFITS FROM THE PRESENT STUDY

Through in-depth empirical and theoretical research and constructive thinking, the hallmarks of useful research proposed by Daft (1984), it is intended that this study will result in useful research that will aid in further understanding the components of the research question. The benefits derived from the present study are several. However, this section focuses on the benefits specifically associated with the two key elements of this study - Organisational Commitment and Communication Climate. Both concepts are of major theoretical importance, and of significant importance to the practice of management.

Objectives of the present research were satisfied, producing a significant finding; this was the determining of a relationship between communication climate and organisational commitment. Indeed, communication climate makes a considerable impact on organisational commitment. Results have demonstrated the strength of the correlation between these two key elements. Central to this is the indication that personal qualities of an employee's immediate leader or superior also impact on the communication climate.

This research contributes to the body of knowledge of organisational behaviour by developing a more accurate measure of concepts and more refined questionnaire survey items in the context of two organisations experiencing change. A benefit from the questionnaire survey instrument was the late addition of the *Comments* section. This Comments section was used by many respondents, providing further insight into the feelings and reasoning behind some of the responses to the coded questions, and providing a supplement to the questionnaire survey and interviews.

7.1.1 ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

COMMUNICATION CLIMATE AS A CONTRIBUTOR TO ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

Commentators, including Cook, Hepworth, Wall and Warr (1980), and this study, have demonstrated that issues other than communication climate impact on organisational commitment (Assumption One). This study focused on communication climate as a

key to establishing and maintaining organisational commitment, and was observed simultaneously with organisational commitment. The benefit was the precise nature of the research question and the development of the dissertation, in considering a component not normally isolated from other contributors to commitment.

7.1.2 COMMUNICATION CLIMATE

Section 1.2 mentioned many influential commentators who acknowledge that people are the number one resource for every organisation, and that through people organisational effectiveness is achieved. Through the process of communication activities of the organisation can be performed, and the goals of the organisation disseminated. Hence, the communication climate is of important theoretical and practical significance.

Communication climate has been demonstrated to impact on organisational life and organisational behaviour. Hence, empirical analysis that considers communication and the environment in which communication takes place can serve to benefit the functioning of organisations.

The discussion on personal qualities of leaders brought together many issues that are considered to play an important role in determining the communication climate of an organisation (Assumption Five). 'Soft' human resource management, encompassing traits of leaders which include trust, honesty and respect, is increasingly becoming the norm.

Drawing attention to these personal qualities is essential as there are organisations which do not place sufficient emphasis on these qualities to facilitate their success. An example of this was anecdotal evidence of an Auckland-based chemical company that in 1998 no longer exists, where resignations reached epidemic proportions during 1994/5. Major reasons for the organisation's demise include lack of respect for the General Manager, mistrust of management by employees and mistrust between members of the management team.

7.1.3 CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Empirical analysis of three important and relevant concepts in organisational behaviour were considered together. Organisational change is prevalent in industry as organisations seek to find a new equilibrium in changing times. Some organisations

are seeking a degree of commitment for a term rather than no commitment for an indefinite period.

Using change as the context for study has enhanced the benefits emanating from the present study. Communication in times of organisational change and development is often neglected or ineffective. The disharmony prevalent in the Fire Service at the time of analysis is evidence of this assertion. The study has presented the relevance of communication in turbulent times for gaining support from employees. This is crucial as change is most often achieved only through effective management or guidance of people, facilitated through processes including the communication climate (Assumption Six). Commitment must be gained from staff if change is to be successful.

7.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

To ensure the project was manageable, the research question was precise, which imposed constraints or parameters for the present study. Considering this issue and analysing the empirical process shed light on limitations stemming from the concepts, methodologies and instruments used. Despite these limitations, the present study contributes to literature on organisational commitment and communication climate.

Empirical analysis of commitment could take vast amounts of time and resource because of its complexity. Steers (1977) has suggested that problems with reported research on commitment include the lack of comprehensive or systematic approaches to study, and this has resulted in little information to guide model-building attempts.

7.2.1 CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVE

DIFFERENTIATING VARIABLES

Differentiating organisational commitment from other forms of commitment may be difficult at times. For example, there is an overlap between job commitment and organisational commitment as replicated in correlational studies researched by Power (1996). Both job commitment and organisational commitment involve “feelings of psychological attachment and intention to stay with the job” (Morrow, 1993, p.67). There was no description in the Literature Review of Job Commitment.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Organisational commitment is a complex concept. As Boulian, Mowday, Porter and Steers (1974) pointed out, organisational commitment requires an individual to think in global terms about his or her relationship with the organisation demonstrating that there are factors other than communication climate which impact on organisational commitment (Assumption One). As there are many independent variables, results are also likely to vary depending on variables used in the analysis. Investigating the degree of influence that communication climate has over other variables on organisational commitment is limited by the scope of the research question. Different studies vary greatly in terms of the variables included in the analysis and Mottaz (1988) suggests that key research variables in one study may not be given a mention in other studies.

Communication climate literature is limited. Few studies investigated the relationship, if any, between any type of commitment and communication climate. There appears to be a lack of relationship with communication climate. However, it could be argued that

aspects of some research have links to communication climate such as trust (Buchanan, 1974; Hrebiniak, 1974 cited in Steers, 1977).

SUBSCALES

Sub-scales constructed for the present study could have been constructed in a variety of ways. Although the stated sub-scales were subjected to various tests for reliability and validity, other combinations of questions may have been as reliable and valid and perhaps producing different results.

LEADERSHIP VERSUS MANAGEMENT

The present study did not account for the difference between leader and manager. Many commentators have researched the significant differences between these constructs (Senge, 1996; Bebb & Blyde, 1995) and these differences may play a role in the approach to managing staff and the climate of communication. Furthermore, no consideration was given to the different styles of leadership, for example transactional versus transformational leadership approaches.

CONGRUENCE OF ORGANISATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL GOALS AND VALUES

Shared goals and values were considered in the present study but the study did not account for what happens if the individual does not share the organisation's goals and values – whether they resign or remain with the organisation with an effect, if any, on performance. There is no explanation, but instead, an assumption that whether or not an individual remains with an organisation may depend on these factors. The exchange perspective suggests that organisational commitment is largely a function of work rewards and work values and Mottaz (1988) asserts that the more one's experiences in the organisation are congruent with one's values, the more likely the individual will be committed to the organisation. Future research may consider workplace and personal values in organisations.

ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

There was no accounting for what happened to the employee in times of organisational change if they did not agree with the direction that the company was intending to move towards. Levi Strauss had employees who did not commit to the company strategy during the 1970s (Refer Chapter Two – Overview). The company strategy was altered and employees did adopt the new strategy; however, this assumes that if people know the direction the organisation is heading, they would then be committed to the strategy. This is a limitation of the design, and it could be

considered to be beyond the scope of the project to consider this aspect. Nevertheless, the limitation is there.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Due to the nature of the two case study organisations, the present study tended to focus on the superior–subordinate relationship in hierarchical structures. The Eastern Institute of Technology (EIT) is primarily a hierarchy. However, there is evidence of the structure softening to reflect a flatter organisational design. The Fire Service is a traditional hierarchy. A future study has the potential to focus on flatter organisations to compare and contrast the differences in the relationship between organisational commitment and communication climate.

7.2.2 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

TRANSPARENT QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY TOOL

The questionnaire survey instrument was intended to be transparent amongst organisations. However, an issue which became apparent was the confusion between the use of the term “superior” in conjunction with the Fire Service. Some firefighters were unclear as to whether they should consider the role of their immediate superior on their watch, their Senior Station Officer, or the Chief Fire Officer.

PERCEPTION-BASED TOOLS

DeWine and James (1988) examined the limitations of the International Communication Audit (ICA) questionnaire instrument. Some shortfalls from their investigation are also found in the present study. This is because measurement tools used in the ICA and in the present study are essentially perception-based. Like many communication instruments, this depends on the subjects’ and others’ perception of communication behaviour in the organisation. An example of this would be the measurement of the ‘quality’ of some factor because the level of ‘quality’ a measure has is dependent on someone’s perception.

THE SCALE OF MEASUREMENT

Another area of concern for DeWine and James (1988) was the use of a 5-point Likert type scale. They argued that this scale reduces the usefulness of information. Indeed, the work of Barnett, Hamlin & Danowski (1982, cited in DeWine & James, 1988) suggested scholars have previously argued that an ordinal scale restricts the opportunity to measure the finer changes in an organisation’s communication patterns.

Hence, communication climate changes also become difficult to measure when considering acute changes.

REPRESENTATIVE RETURN RATE

Questionnaire surveys have the advantage of being able to collect vast amounts of information in a short time. However, Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto and Wiiio (1979) suggest that difficulties associated with this method may make it difficult to get a return rate representative of the population.

CODING

Similar to the review put forward by Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto and Wiiio (1979) another problem arises with coding open-ended questions into quantifiable categories. In the present study, a section was provided for respondents to add comments. It was not intended that these comments would be quantified; however, comments made were extensive. Some of the remarks were used in Chapter Six to enhance quantitative statistics.

BIAS

As discussed in Chapter Five, there was a possibility of collective rather than individual perceptions being represented in the questionnaire survey due to participants discussing the instrument prior to completing it. This may have reduced the range of responses or possibilities producing a leveling or change affect; however, it is impossible to tell.

An additional concern stemming from the work of Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto and Wiiio's (1979) is bias that may be reflected in responses. One such source of bias with the present study is that more committed employees are likely to complete the questionnaire survey.

INTERVIEWS

Interviews have similar difficulties to those of open questions in questionnaire surveys. Lahiry (1994) reinforces this point suggesting it is not easy to convert data about scores of variables into workplace applications. One needs to piece data on organisational and work-related experiences into patterns and to organise those patterns into workable categories.

7.2.3 PARTICIPANTS

The present study involved a relatively small-scale investigation, given the size of the New Zealand Fire Service and EIT. There is a question as to the extent to which the conclusions presented reflect other fire stations or parts of EIT. Certainly, there is a limitation on the extent to which the conclusions can be generalised to other parts of each organisation, locally for EIT and nationally for the Fire Service, because of the relatively low numbers surveyed.

Factors that contribute to this limitation include the geographic region and environmental factors. For example: lifestyle and climate, which do tend to have a bearing on people's feelings, beliefs and expectations. In fact, DeWine and James (1988) commented on the ICA audit's inability to compare local organisations to national norms.

A particular area of concern was the extent to which the selected areas of EIT represented the organisation as a whole. Had a mixed selection of participants been chosen from the wider organisation, there may have been a greater chance of bias, as fewer people, less committed to the organisation or those with little or no interest in completing surveys, may have produced a lower response rate.

Community Safety Teams (CSTs) were introduced into the Fire Service in 1995. Napier and Hastings Stations do not have any CSTs therefore the questionnaire surveys and interviews were not flavoured by any influence that this group may have on workplace environments.

7.3 FUTURE STUDY

Future research needs are inevitably suggested by most empirical analysis. The present study is no exception as the results and discussion support and may stimulate further research into the topic areas. Requirements for future research may include a more comprehensive questionnaire survey instrument, and related to this is the suggestion that a greater number of participants may benefit from the results.

AMBIGUOUS FACTORS

Future study needs to consider the possible ambiguity of the job role the questions are referring to, that is, it needs to be more precise about the use of the term 'superior' by providing a concise explanation at the outset of the questionnaire survey or interview.

LONGITUDINAL STUDIES

Farrell and Rusbult (1983) discovered a prominent issue amongst recommendations for the study of commitment. This was longitudinal research, particularly of a multivariate and integrative nature. Longitudinal studies allow for analysis of the implications of changes over time on the organisations and staff. When results are viewed longitudinally, trends or relationships may be evident in the study. Another method to apply to the analysis is test-retest where the variables are measured before and after an identifiable change process.

It is suggested that a longitudinal study will be of value to organisations undergoing considerable change, for example, the Fire Service. Indeed at the time of writing a number of management within the Fire Service had to reapply for their positions, and this may have eventuated in a change of leader for those staff who completed the questionnaire surveys. Given the rapid and significant changes happening within the Fire Service, longitudinal study seems relevant. The media regularly draws the public's attention to the internal battle between the Professional Firefighters Union and the new Management team members. This may have an effect on the employee's commitment and the communication climate, nationally.

EIT was also heading into a vacation period, preceded by intense concentration on end of year reports and analysis, and examination periods for students. This high-pressure time may have impacted on the results of the questionnaire survey, possibly indicating scope for investigation of the organisation at another time of the year.

EMPIRICAL EXAMINATION OF FIVE TYPES OF ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

There are five generally accepted forms of organisational commitment. Consideration may be given to an empirical examination of the five major forms of commitment, in conjunction with a more comprehensive instrument for the measurement of communication climate. However, Becker (1960, p.40) suggests that “the concept of commitment has been made to cover such a wide range of phenomena in ordinary discourse that confusion may arise over trying to limit its use.”

There is an overlap in some forms of commitment, such as job commitment and organisational commitment; hence, an empirical examination of communication climate in conjunction with measuring the types of commitment prevalent in the organisations will provide valuable insights for organisational behaviour. Types of commitment include job commitment, career commitment and professional commitment.

THE DEGREE OF INFLUENCE

Research effort directed toward consideration of other antecedents of organisational commitment together with communication climate may help to gauge the degree of influence communication climate has in the organisational commitment equation.

INFORMATION SOURCES

Aiken and Milam (1993) provide another perspective on the aspect of communication - electronic methods. Availability of on-line information sources and the extent to which these supplement or replace conventional methods (Sligo, 1996) may be worthy of empirical analysis, as may access and use of information sources including the Internet, Intranet and electronic mail.

Sligo (1995a, p.245) points out that “information to which a person has access is only as good as the source that supplies it. Different sources have different strengths and weaknesses”. An investigation into how reliable different forms of information are within the Fire Service may be beneficial.

ORGANISATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Research, which considers the extent to which organisational characteristics impact on organisational commitment in conjunction with communication climate may also contribute to an understanding of organisational commitment.

Viewing communication climate within the framework of different types of leadership styles and the resulting impact on organisational commitment will produce results of significant importance to the body of literature on organisational behaviour.

OTHER GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS

Given the findings of the present study, it would be interesting to study the reactions of other fire stations around New Zealand, and the fire fighters' view towards the corporate body; and the findings of other polytechnics.

CONSIDERATION OF DIFFERENT INDUSTRIES

New Zealand fire fighters have strong job commitment despite not having a pay increase for around seven years. This indicates that there could be a difference between types of commitment between industry or job type – some of these factors were alluded to during interviews for the present study but they were not subject to intense examination. Feelings of obligation to the community or other interest groups could be a topical area of study.

PERCEIVED ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT

One officer pointed out that the Fire Service has to be:

a mechanistic organisation when it comes to fire fighting; it won't work otherwise. At the same time we try to be organic in everything else. Managers try to work in both fields and I think we do that very well. But we're not getting credited for that.

At the time of interviewing, the Chief Fire Officers and Area Management were having to reapply for their positions, positions that many of the staff in similar positions across New Zealand had held for just two years following previous restructuring. Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa (1986 cited in McFarlane Shore & Wayne, 1993) suggest that the study of perceived organisational support (POS) may produce significant findings in organisation behaviour research. This concept can easily be incorporated into a discussion on organisation commitment and communication climate through a questionnaire survey instrument.

EMPLOYEE/EMPLOYER AND SUPERIOR/SUBORDINATE COMPARISONS

Comparison of employee versus employer commitment may provide an explanation for an individual's behaviour. Significant findings may be made from the study of an organisation's commitment to the employee.

Barnett, Cochran, Dumler and Schnake (1990) concluded that managers in their research sample perceived themselves to be better at communicating than their own subordinates thought they were. They found that the largest differences in perceptions related to feedback, communication openness, and the degree to which the manager encourages subordinate participation and upward communication. Following on from here, comparisons in levels of commitment and perceived communication climate at different levels of the organisational structure would prove to be valuable to the body of research.

Furthermore, within the Fire Service, a comparison between the corporate office, area office and fire stations in different geographic locations would result in useful information. At EIT, a similar study would stem from a study of the employees, management team and Council members.

PERCEPTUAL CONGRUENCE

Superiors and subordinates may have different perceptions concerning what affects their relationship. These factors have been termed by Barnett, Cochran, Dumler and Schnake (1990) as perceptual congruence. Three studies researched by Barnett, Cochran, Dumler and Schnake (1990) reported that superiors and subordinates displayed significant differences in perceptions of the quality of communication. This phenomenon has the potential to occur with other factors under investigation because of perceptual differences.

EFFECTS OF EDUCATION AND OTHER DEMOGRAPHICS

Many commentators (Angle & Perry, 1981; Hrebeiniak & Alutto, 1972; Morris & Sherman, 1981; Morris & Steers, 1980; Sheldon, 1971) cited in Savery, 1994 have reported that organisational commitment seems to be positively related to age and negatively related to education. However, Mottaz (1988) suggests that demographic variables may be correlates of commitment, but they are not determinants. In their findings, demographic variables had little or no explanative effect on commitment. They assert that other studies than exhibit relationships between these factors "may be

spurious" (Mottaz, 1988, p.479) but they do have predictive capabilities, thereby attempting to predict who will or will not be committed to an organisation.

Sligo (1995a) secures an argument for the higher the level of an employee's education, the more information they seek and use, generating a greater use of resources which include letters, memoranda, library resources and a willingness to consider information from outside the organisation. Historically, firefighters had little or no formal education. Recently, staff have been encouraged, and financially supported, in tertiary education. EIT has a staff development and training unit on campus. Additional emphasis can be placed on educational factors. Such issues would be more than a question about education in a demographic section. They may include whether the employee is currently undertaking further education, the nature of the courses, at what stage of the person's career further study began, and the extent of organisational support, such as financial, study leave and recognition for success. It would be interesting to investigate the bearing these factors have on organisational commitment.

UPWARD COMMUNICATION

Another variable which Barnett, Cochran, Dumler and Schnake (1990) deem worthy of further empirical study includes motivation and how it affects upward communication. It is suggested that confusion and ambiguity about job content affects motivation on the subordinate's part. Therefore subordinate motivation should be related to the perceptual congruence about communication between the subordinate and superior. Savery, L. (1994). It could be that the employees' feelings of being able to influence what happens in the enterprise may also create a more positive attitude about top managements' interest in the welfare of the rank-and-file workers.

OTHER FACTORS IMPACTING ON ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

Important influences on commitment discussed in the interview sessions that have a relationship with communication and change, according to Beyer, Stevens and Trice (1978, p.384) are "work overload, managerial level, organisational tenure, positional tenure, task characteristics, perceptions concerning the importance for promotion of performance, seniority, and technical skills". Mottaz's (1988) findings suggest that in addition to traditional rewards of comfortable working conditions and promotional opportunities, people are seeking workplace autonomy, meaning and challenge.

Clear relationships exist between commitment and low staff turnover, absenteeism and lateness (Argyle, 1989; Baron & Greenberg, 1990). The Organisational Commitment

Questionnaire has been used to assess affective attachment and “has been found to influence productivity, absenteeism, and turnover” (Meyer & Allen, 1984; Mowday, Porter and Steers, 1982). However, in the present study it was considered that staff turnover and lateness weren’t appropriate reflections of commitment due to the nature of organisational work. It would be difficult to attribute measures of staff turnover to commitment in EIT because of the large staff number and the nature of many of the contracts, that is short term or temporary duration depending on the tasks. The Fire Service requires promptness because of the critical nature of the work. Turnover in such turbulent times within EIT may not be clearly indicative of the true intent of the employee because of the change processes, and having voluntary redundancies called for in the first stage of the change by Maurice Cummings. It would be difficult to set a time frame to study the resignations and reason for the attrition.

7.4 CONCLUSION

The review of related research by informed experts may demonstrate a small gap in the body of knowledge specifically on empirical research concerning organisational commitment and communication climate. In addition, it will reinforce the substantial amount of literature espousing the benefits of good communication strategies in times of organisational change, or when communicating the goals and strategies of the organisation.

By definition and consistent with Assumption Four, organisational commitment is essential to organisations because it encompasses loyalty and a desire to remain with an organisation. DeCottis and Summers (1987 cited in Johnson, 1995) pointed out that organisational commitment is central to organisational life and has important implications for individuals and organisations. Employees come to organisations with personal desires, values and expectations, not with in-built commitment. Therefore, as presented earlier in this dissertation, commitment cannot be left to chance.

If the organisation provides interesting and meaningful tasks, a friendly and supportive environment, and can satisfy the value needs of the individual, commitment to the organisation is likely to result (Johnson, 1995). Hence, any insights into the nature and scope of organisational commitment are likely to be of great benefit to managers and organisational leaders.

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APPENDIX ONE

TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

Communication is not something that can be totally controlled by management. However, management can use various formal and informal modes for communicating as indicated below.

Written material	Verbal activity	Utilising personal computers and the media
Bulletins Orientation Manuals Policy Manuals Letters Reports Weekly Briefing Sheets Newspaper Articles Notice Boards Memoranda Company Newsletters Company Journals Payslips Goodwill Messages ¹ Specialised Annual Reports for Employees Personal Letters Suggestion Boxes or Suggestions Posters, Job Advertisements, Posted In-House Signs, Contracts and Forms, Invoices Employee Magazines, Handbooks Letters to Employees	Face to face discussions Suggestions Schemes Group Meetings Staff Meetings Council Meetings Quality Circle Sessions Sound Bites ² Interview Situations – <i>Appraisal, Informative, Counselling, Disciplinary</i> Telephone Voice Mail Presentations to Groups and the Entire Workforce MBWA ³ Team Briefings Public Address Systems The Grapevine Open Door Policies Anonymous Opinion Surveys	Computer Bulletin Boards Electronic Mail ⁴ Message Centres Video Presentations Film Television Intranet ⁵ Internet Videoconferencing

Developed from work of Bell and Sigband (1986); Frohman (1996); Smith (1995); Firth and Smith (1984); Communication can make (1996); Aburdene and Naisbitt (1990); Clampitt and Hughes (1996); Rupp (1996); Campbell (1985); Goldhaber and Roberts (1979); Sligo (1995b); Hurley (1988); Brooks (1995); Reynierse (1994); Aiken and Milam (1993); Yates and Orlikowski (1992); Howard (1996); Faules and Pace (1989); Company Communication (1987); Baron and Greenberg (1990); Covey (1992); and Hinds and Kiesler (1995).

¹ Messages that may create rapport with employees. For example, a note to an employee offering special recognition for a job well done.

² A formal process of ensuring consistent messages throughout the company (Brooks, 1995).

³ Management by Walking Around - interpreted as a communication, rather than management control (Peters & Austin cited in Bardow & More, 1991).

⁴ Termed *cold communication* by Evans and Spitzer (1997) because it does not allow for firm confirmation as in face to face communication.

⁵ "An intranet is essentially a piece of the Internet that a company calls its own. Instead of being open to the world, it is a private network. To restrict access, the company puts up a barrier called a fire wall to keep the public out" (Rupp, 1996, p.18).

APPENDIX TWO

FEEDBACK

Feedback is a control mechanism and an effective tool in managerial communication. It is the response made to what is heard, read, or seen and is communicated back to the sender verbally or non-verbally. It indicates the degree to which a "message has been understood, believed, assimilated and accepted" (Lewis, 1987, p.155). Feedback is the last step in the communication process, giving a cyclical nature to the message, which enables the source to learn if the receiver has received, and responded as desired, to the message (Anatol, Applbaum and Koehler, 1981).

No system can survive without feedback, as it is an integral part of any communication process (Byker, Cespedes, Micheli & Raymond, 1984; Clampitt, 1991). In fact, Sligo (1985) proposes that it is an important concern of employees, and the best method is face to face. These include non-verbal communication, tone and pitch of voice. It adds the cyclical nature to the message and puts the original source in the role of the receiver. Management by objectives⁶ and performance appraisals⁷ are forms of feedback. Feeding back information to the source returns the content control of the communication process (Hawkins and Preston, 1981). Hurley (1988) encourages feedback and questioning to reduce the possibility of misunderstanding. The problem solving nature of the communication process is vital in human resource management and impacts in such areas as the development of successful leadership, motivating personnel and conflict resolution.

Bell and Sigband (1986) stress the importance of a manager monitoring feedback from downward communication. They cite management consultant Peter Drucker as stating that communication will work if the manager allows upward communication.

In times of change, Bellante (1994) suggests, all possible communication channels are used. Managers must ensure there are several ways for employees to get their questions answered.

⁶ Management by Objectives (MBO) - involves employees in the process of setting objectives. The premise is that their involvement will build greater commitment - a "forward thinking strategy"

⁷ Performance Appraisals - backward looking strategy

APPENDIX THREE

DIRECTIONS OF COMMUNICATION

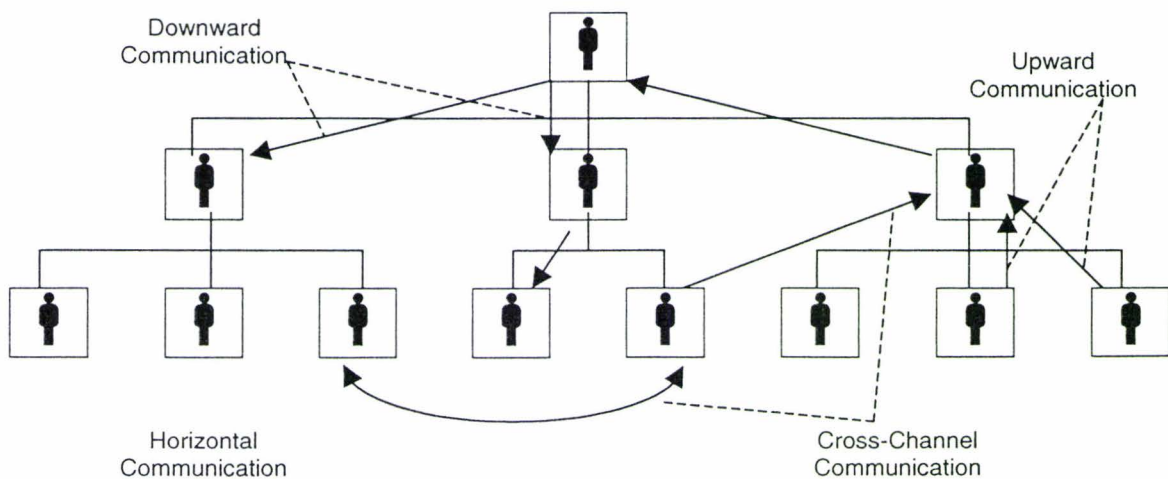
Communication allows us to understand others. With this understanding we can compensate for differences in backgrounds, attitudes, knowledge levels, and communication skills. In essence, communication lets us integrate all of these differences (Bell & Sigband, 1986, p.61).

MULTILEVEL AND MULTIDIRECTIONAL

There are five channels of communication: upward (with superiors) and downward (with subordinates), lateral or horizontal (with peers), diagonal, and informal (Wells and Spinks, 1992; Perkins, 1996e).

Anatol, Applbaum and Koehler (1981) assert that multilevel and multidirectional communication is important for the regular transfer of accurate information around the organisation. Communication must flow up, down, and laterally in an organisation if it is to achieve its goals. Blanchard (1996) recommends that employees are able to communicate in all directions.

FOUR DIRECTIONS OF ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION



Note: grapevine or informal communication is not depicted in this representation of communication directions.

Source: Faules & Pace, 1986, p.98.

1. UPWARD COMMUNICATION

There are many devices for upward communication. However, none will prove highly effective without a prevailing atmosphere of trust and credibility of management.

2. DOWNWARD COMMUNICATION

The largest percentage of vertical communication flows downward and includes directives, memos, policies and instructions. These are usually one-way communications, based on many manager's assumptions that communications are always understood and received (Bell & Sigband, 1986). Downward communication channels are often overburdened with messages that can be confusing and frustrating for the subordinates which can lead to anxiety and affect morale.

3. LATERAL COMMUNICATION

Horizontal communications are often under-utilised yet they can provide a key for solving problems or for effective co-ordination of activities.

4. GRAPEVINE

Refers to messages that do not pass through an organised structure (Sligo, 1995b). Information spread through informal networks travels faster than formal networks. Over 85% of the information sourced by the grapevine does not pass through formal channels (Perkins, 1996e).

5. NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

This is sometimes referred to as the silent language. Examples include body language and time, that is, being late or early for an appointment. Thus, whether a person speaks or not, they are still communicating. However, ways in which people verbalise, that is, *paralanguage*, is an important dimension of nonverbal language. This includes voice quality, volume, pitch, and the environmental context in which the conversation takes place such as the office or the golf club (Luthans, 1989).

6. NETWORKS

Networks are teams of people grouped together from across the company's functions, business units and hierarchical structure for speed, flexibility and focus. They reshape how and by whom business decisions are made. Charan (1991) asserts that a network identifies the small company inside the larger company. Amongst other things, they are designed to empower employees to talk openly, honestly and emotionally to build trust.

APPENDIX FOUR

COMMUNICATION DISTORTION

With upward communication⁸, deliberate distortion occurs to avoid reporting failure or to cover up failure. Employees also bypass links in the upward chain, which will create a communication gap. Unintentional distortion occurs through lack of trust subordinates hold for their supervisors. Supervisors may fail to meet the aspirations of their employees and the organisation may pose physical limitations. Improving upward communication will increase levels of trust and security. This will also reduce bypassing of levels of employees as they will be more willing to go directly to their manager (Gibson and Hodgetts, 1986).

In downward communication,⁹ deliberate distortions arise from managers being uncomfortable with delivering unpleasant news, and from inadequate provision of feedback, or emphasis on negative feedback, whilst omitting positive reinforcement. Managers unwilling to provide unpleasant news cause communication problems. The two main sources of unintentional distortion are managerial anxiety and multiple transmissions. Managerial anxiety creates internal conflict and may result in distorted information due to status¹⁰ or competition¹¹ anxiety felt by the supervisor. Multiple transmission errors occur when information is transferred through the organisation, losing information at every level. Research shows there is an 80% loss of information between the board and front line workers (Gibson and Hodgetts, 1986).

Horizontal communication reduces the delay in information transmission as it is more direct. However, gossip and rumours are transferred via this channel, deliberately distorting information. Unintentional distortion occurs because there is no control mechanism to monitor this lateral channel. Lateral communication should be encouraged, but with order because it encourages staff to bypass upward and downward communication systems so will harbour communication distortion.

⁸ is used for feedback on problems and job performance

⁹ is designed to carry policies, procedures and instructions.

¹⁰ Conflict between management requirements and a desire to be liked by subordinates.

¹¹ A manager's job is often political. Conflict anxiety occurs when the manager is still adjusting to the competitive nature of the work.

APPENDIX FIVE

**EXAMPLE OF EXPLANATION OF STUDY FOR
RESEARCH ORGANISATION**

Tina L Perkins

5 November 1997

Mr Trerise
Chief Fire Officer
Hastings District
125 Maraekakaho Road
HASTINGS

Dear Mr Trerise

**Re: Participation in a research project – organisational commitment
and communication climate.**

As part of the requirements for a Masters Degree in Business Studies, I am completing a thesis in organisational commitment and communication climate. Currently, I hold a first Degree in Commerce and Administration from Victoria University, and a Post Graduate Diploma in Business Administration from Massey University.

Theses emphasise empirical approaches to research and analysis. It is with this in mind that I request your permission to approach staff at the Hastings and Napier Fire Stations to participate in completion of a survey questionnaire, and a small selection of staff to participate in interviews relating to the research question. I envisage the survey questionnaire to take ten minutes to complete, and the interviews to take between 15 – 30 minutes.

I am conducting thesis research during November, and wish to include the Fire Service during this period. The study will be completed early in 1998, at which time I would be happy to provide you with a final copy of my thesis.

Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to the opportunity of discussing this research project further with you.

Yours sincerely

Tina Perkins
DipBusAdmin Massey BCA WUW
ANZIM

Telephone - 06 8435940 res 06 8437770 office
PO Box 3139, Onekawa - NAPIER
E-mail: perkins@voyager.co.nz
Facsimile - 06 8436771

CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

New Zealand Fire Service
HASTINGS & NAPIER

To: Mr Kevin Trerise
From: Miss Tina Perkins

1 THE RESEARCHER

Tina L Perkins
Box 3139
Onekawa
NAPIER

E-mail perkins@voyager.co.nz
Telephone 06 8437-770
Facsimile 06 8438-771
Cellular 025 223-6155

2 RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the relationship between organisational commitment and communication climate in two organisations experiencing change?

Does staff perception of the leader's personal qualities impact on the communication climate?

The substance of any study is in the research question (Frederikson, 1996, Dane, 1990). This study incorporates a broad examination of organisational communication and the definitive path of communication climate. These areas have a relationship leadership, and the nature and content of communications including organisational vision and missions.

Organisational commitment studies consider phenomena associated with why people have commitment to their organisations, and what influences their reason for committing to an organisation. Communication climate is the "degree of supportiveness, trust, confidence, openness, and [honesty] present in an organisation" (Dennis, Goldhaber, Richetto, Wio, 1979, p.234). The present study examines the impact communication climate has, if any, on organisational commitment.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

Purpose

The purpose of this survey is to find out how well your organisation is fostering a positive “climate” of working together.

The researcher, Tina Perkins, is working on this Research Project under the supervision of Associate Professor, Frank Sligo, Department of Human Resource Management, Massey University.

Confidentiality

The individual responses from participants will be kept ***strictly confidential***. Individual responses will not be made available to anyone in your organisation and no one will be identified in any subsequent reports.

If you agree to participate in this study you have the right to refuse to answer any particular question and withdraw from the study at any time. If you find any questions unclear, please ask the researcher about them. It is assumed that filling out this questionnaire implies consent.

ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

COMMUNICATION CLIMATE

Below is a list of statements about your organisation. For each statement please circle the rating you give it from very low to very high.

Very low	1
Low	2
Moderate	3
High	4
Very high	5

EXAMPLE

	Very low				Very high
In my opinion the quality of communication in this organisation is...	1	2	3	④	5
<i>In your opinion, the quality of communication in your organisation is "high".</i>					

	Very low				Very high
1. My level of commitment to this organisation is...	1	2	3	4	5
2. The quality of communication in this organisation is...	1	2	3	4	5
3. I rate the ability of my direct supervisor to communicate effectively with his/her staff as...	1	2	3	4	5
4. Management's level of concern about effective communication is...	1	2	3	4	5
5. Management's level of concern about employee commitment to this organisation is...	1	2	3	4	5

Below is a list of statements about your organisation. For each statement please circle the number that best describes the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement.

Strongly disagree	1
Disagree	2
Indifferent	3
Agree	4
Strongly agree	5

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
6. I am willing to put in effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this organisation to be successful.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I feel loyal to this organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
8. My values and the values of this organisation are similar.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I am proud to be part of this organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I would prefer to work for another organisation so long as the type of work was similar.	1	2	3	4	5
11. My co-workers inspire me to do my best.	1	2	3	4	5
12. My immediate boss inspires me to do my best.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Senior management inspires me to do my best.	1	2	3	4	5
14. It would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave this organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Often, I find it difficult to agree with this organisation's policies on matters relating to employees.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I am interested in helping this organisation to be successful.	1	2	3	4	5

ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

COMMUNICATION CLIMATE

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
17. I am open with my colleagues.	1	2	3	4	5
18. A new staff member would feel comfortable here.	1	2	3	4	5
19. My co-workers encourage a friendly, supportive climate.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Senior management encourages a friendly, supportive climate amongst co-workers.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Managers trust their employees.	1	2	3	4	5
22. My superior is approachable.	1	2	3	4	5
23. My superior has my best interests in mind when s/he talks to his/her superiors.	1	2	3	4	5
24. My superior is an effective manager.	1	2	3	4	5
25. My superior is honest with me.	1	2	3	4	5
26. My superior understands me.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I understand my superior.	1	2	3	4	5
28. People in this organisation are encouraged to be honest with one another.	1	2	3	4	5
29. People in this organisation freely exchange information and opinions.	1	2	3	4	5

ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

COMMUNICATION CLIMATE

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
30. I am kept informed about how well organisational goals and objectives are being met.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I am notified in advance of changes that affect my job.	1	2	3	4	5
32. I am satisfied with explanations I get from top management about why things are done as they are.	1	2	3	4	5
33. My job requirements are specified in clear language.	1	2	3	4	5
34. My opinions make a difference in the day-to-day decisions that affect my job.	1	2	3	4	5
35. My views have a real influence in my organisation.	1	2	3	4	5

Please add any comments you wish to make...

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This section is for statistical purposes only. It will be used to study how different groups of people view their organisation.

1. Sex: Female Male

2. Age:
 Under 21 41 - 50
 21 - 30 50+
 31 - 40

3. How long have you worked in this organisation?
 Less than one year 11 - 15 years
 1 - 5 years Over 15 years
 6 - 10 years

4. How long have you held your present position?
 Less than one year 11 - 15 years
 1 - 5 years Over 15 years
 6 - 10 years

5. What is your position in this organisation?
 I don't supervise anybody Top management
 First line supervisor Other - Please specify _____
 Middle management

6. What is your highest educational qualification?
 Up to and including school certificate, UE or higher school qualifications
 Some technical, polytechnic or university study
 Completed technical, polytechnic or university qualifications
 Postgraduate study

7. How many other organisations have you been employed with during the past ten years?
 No other organisations
 One other organisation
 Two other organisations
 Three other organisations
 More than three other organisations

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX SEVEN

THE INTERVIEW GUIDE

-
1. Describe your job (duties, functions).

 2. What are the major communication **strengths** of this organisation?

 3. What are the major communication **weaknesses** of this organisation?

 4. *For the HR person or Chief Fire Officer:*
Do you have formal, written communications objectives and policies?
If yes, what are they?

 5. How strong is the commitment among staff at present, would you say?

 6. Does the way in which management communicates the plans, developments and changes in your organisation affect your commitment?

 7. Describe the communication relationship you have with your immediate supervisor.

 8. Do the personal qualities of your leader affect your commitment to this organisation? Why?

DEMOGRAPHICS

Position _____

Sex: Female Male

Age:

Under 21 41 - 50

21 - 30 50+

31 - 40

Length of time with this organisation _____ years

Highest educational qualification _____

APPENDIX EIGHT

COVERING NOTE - FIRE SERVICE (NAPIER)

Memorandum

File A05-01



To Green, Red, Blue and Brown Watch

CC OIC's

From Trevor Brown

Date 11 November 1997

Subject Attached Student Survey

Kevin Treise and myself have been approached by a university student for our permission for her to survey the paid staff at Napier and Hastings station as part of her thesis for her masters degree. Kevin and I are both happy for this to occur.

Attached is a letter from her outlining her proposal and the survey forms. The Fire Service has no involvement in this research and will not have access to the survey.

I would encourage all staff to take the small amount of time involved to complete the questionnaire, place it in a sealed envelope and the student will collect them when they are completed. She also wishes to interview about three staff from each of the stations which will be arranged later on.

Please contact me if you have any concerns or require further information.

Thanks

Trevor Brown
Chief Fire Officer
Napier

APPENDIX NINE

COVERING NOTE - FIRE SERVICE (HASTINGS)

Document

Memorandum

File



To All Staff
CC File
From Kevin Trerise
Date 17 November 1997
Subject Massey Study Research

A Massey University student, Tina Perkins has written, copy attached, asking for firefighter participation in a research survey she is conducting as part of her degree studies.

I have given permission for her to approach staff, as requested, and ask that you participate if you choose.

In no way are the Fire Service or myself involved in the research other than that of granting permission to survey staff.

I do encourage you all to participate and assist this student by taking the 10 or so minutes to complete the Questionnaire. Envelopes and labels are supplied to maintain the confidentiality required.

If you have any queries please contact Tina. Ira will be the collection point for completed Questionnaires, due for collection on Friday 28 November, 1997.

Thanks for your participation in this survey I am sure Ms Perkins will appreciate your response.

Regards



Kevin Trerise

Tina L Perkins

DipBusAdmin Massey BCA vuv ANZIM

Telephone: 06 843-5940 res. & 06 8437-770 office
PO Box 3139, Onekawa - NAPIER, New Zealand
E-mail: perkins@voyager.co.nz
Facsimile 06 843-8771
Cellular 025 223-8155
DX MP72004

APPENDIX TEN

COVERING NOTE – EIT

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: November 17, 1997
TO: Staff Sample for Survey
FROM: Kimberly McKay
RE: Survey For Student Project

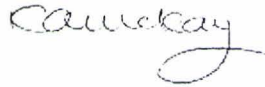
Congratulations! You have been selected to be part of a sample of EIT staff surveyed by a Massey Student, Tina Perkins, as part of her Masters Thesis. The survey relates to organisational commitment and communication climate.

EIT has not initiated this survey and will have no access to individual responses which will be returned in a sealed envelope to Tina. Responses will be strictly confidential and you are not required to put your name on the questionnaire.

We do support Tina in her endeavours, as a past EIT student, and ask you to take a few minutes to help her by completing the questionnaire attached. (Tina estimates 10 minutes of your time)

Please return your questionnaires in the envelope provided to Marilyn Brown by 27 November 1997. Marilyn will then send them on to Tina.

If you have any queries about the survey please contact me.



APPENDIX 11

LOGO APPROVAL LETTER - FIRE SERVICE



17 December, 1997

Ms Tina Perkins
c/o Graeme Christieson
Department of Labour - Corporate
PO Box 3705
Wellington

Dear Ms Perkins,

Further to our previous discussions and your request to use the Fire Service logo on your thesis document

I have discussed this with the Acting Chief Executive Murray Dudfield and he is comfortable with you using the logo on the understanding that no detriment will be brought on the Fire Service.

I trust this meets your needs.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Trerise'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue background.

Kevin Trerise
Chief Fire Officer
Hastings District

APPENDIX 12

LOGO APPROVAL LETTER - EIT



HAWKE'S BAY

Ti Māori: Takahē Kāwhiri

16 February 1998

Tina Perkins
P O Box 3139
Onekawa
NAPIER

Dear Tina

AUTHORISATION TO USE EIT LOGO

This letter confirms that you may use the Eastern Institute of Technology Logo Style A in your Master of Business Studies thesis with our permission.

This permission is granted for one-off usage in your thesis, and we ask that you destroy or return the bromide that was sent to you and any copies you have made.

Yours faithfully

Megan Harris
MARKETING ASSISTANT

EASTERN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

MAIN CAMPUS Gloucester Street, Private Bag 1201, Tairāhema, New Zealand. Telephone 06 844 8710, Facsimile 06 844 1910
HASTINGS CENTRE Cavendish Street & Hastings Street, PO Box 1477, Hastings. Telephone 06 878 4748, Facsimile 06 878 5933
CENTRAL HAWKE'S BAY CENTRE 55 Russell Street, PO Box 210, Waipukurau. Telephone 06 858 2609, Facsimile 06 858 7018

APPENDIX 13

THE NEW ZEALAND FIRE SERVICE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES

This structure was introduced on 3rd April 1995, as part of the transformation process generated from the Review.

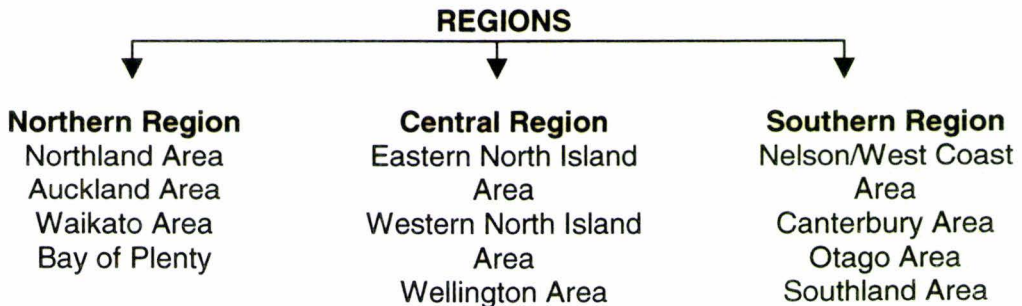
MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS
The Minister oversees the Commission



FIRE SERVICE COMMISSION
Consists of a Board of Directors with the CEO reporting to The Minister. Acts as the Minister's purchasing agent for Fire Service outputs and develops policy in relation to the Fire Service roles and functions



NATIONAL OFFICE
National Office now has a strategic direction and is responsible for coordination of activities and audit of administrative and operational activities



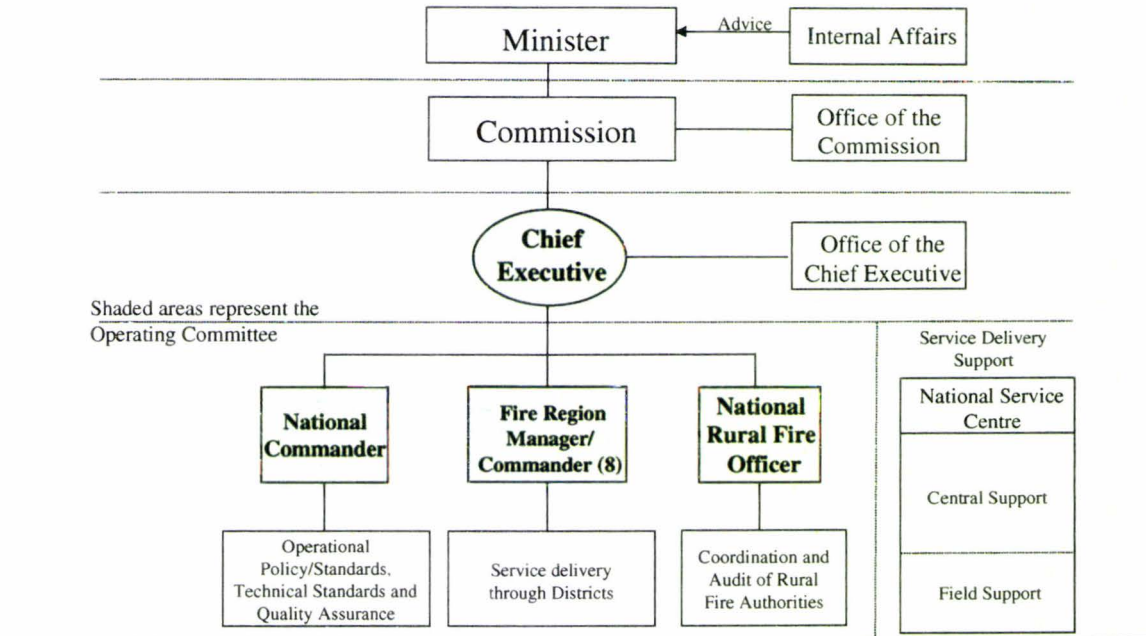
The New Zealand Fire Service Company Structure adapted from Cummings, (1996), NZFS, (1995); NZFS, (1996); NZFSC, (1995); and Summers (1995).

The new structure is to take effect from 21 November, 1997, and is outlined in Appendix 14.

THE NEW STRUCTURE – 21 NOVEMBER 1997

The New Structure - An Overview

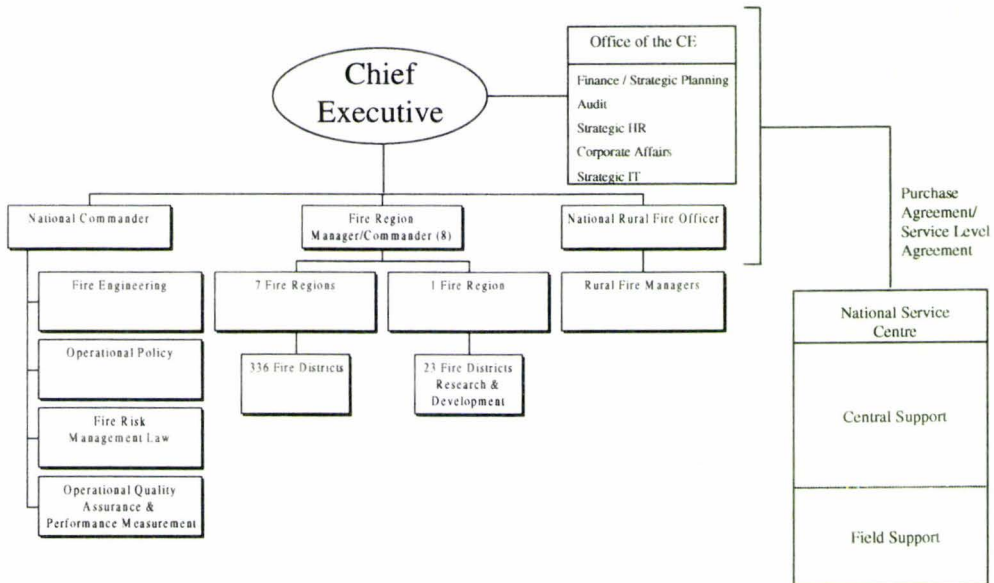
Appendix 1



New Zealand Fire Service

Appendix 3.1

Proposed New Structure - Broad Functional Description



Source: <http://www.fireservice.org.nz>, 30 November 1997.

KEY FEATURES OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN - ADVANCING TO 2000

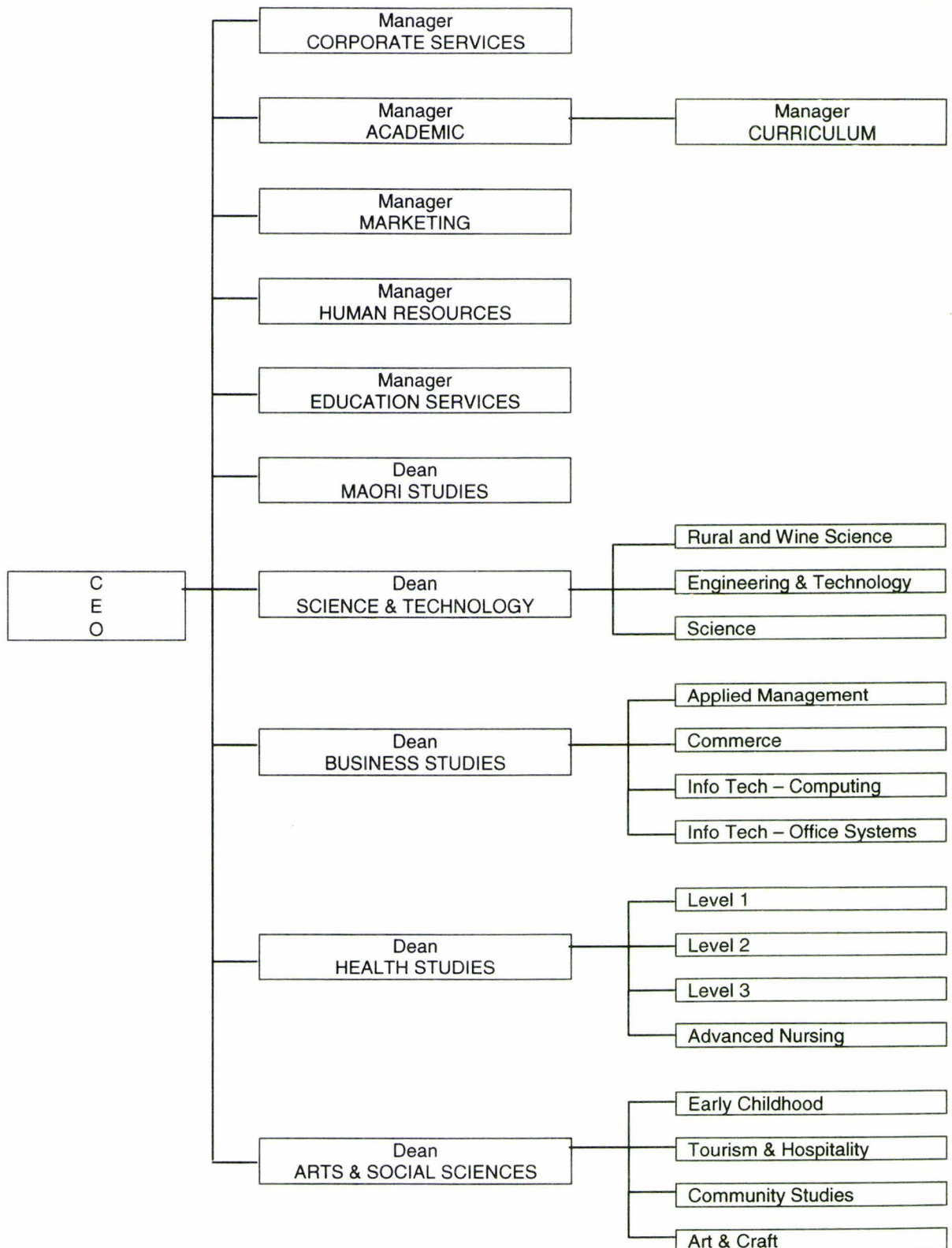
- ⇒ a more open, consultative and community-orientated approach to service delivery;
- ⇒ a much clearer identification of the Fire Service role and functions
- ⇒ a more comprehensive role for the Fire Service as an integral part of the provision of emergency services in New Zealand
- ⇒ a much stronger emphasis on a preventative approach to the management of fire and other risks;
- ⇒ an identification of results to be achieved and a willingness to be accountable for these

The plan also acknowledges the vast amount of work that needs to be completed over the following five years, to develop the key features of the Strategic Plan and make them happen.

(Comber cited in NZFSC, 1995, p.3).

APPENDIX 16

EIT - ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



APPENDIX 17
DEMOGRAPHICS

