



Who's who in Management Services?

What is Strategic Thinking?

Rosanne Taylor, Human Resources Office



Stacy King, Personnel Specialist

"If you think you can...you're right. If you think you can't...you're right." -Henry Ford

What is strategic thinking, and why is it important? In your professional and even social life, you no doubt face a stream of decisions to be made. Strategic thinking is the approach in which you, on your own or as part of a team, observe, contemplate, and design the future for yourself, colleagues, and your organization.

This approach involves more than responding to the day-to-day operational needs and problems; instead, it requires planning and re-structuring for tomorrow. In that way, strategic thinking is not reactive, but rather proactive, focusing on how to create a better future by committing to adding value to your personal and professional life through the accomplishment of specific goals.

Strategic thinking always involves a constant stream of change, and quite often, that change is profoundly personal.

However, there can also be drawbacks associated with strategic

thinking, particularly when there is a failure to communicate effectively. Communication is the key to a successful relationship, whether personal

or professional. It is important to clearly communicate your message and plan by defining all the important aspects and details of that plan and idea.

Another problem can occur when you jump to conclusions before you have all the facts on hand. Successful strategic thinking must include strong factual foundations and should not rely on guesswork. It is also important to not over analyze an idea or theory and to know when to move on; otherwise the thought process can be halted.

Always remember to stay committed to achieving the plan and reaching the goals. Disengaging from a project will derail the strategic thinking process and may lead to frustration and even failure.

Strategic thinking connects the past, present, and future; therefore, continuous strategic thinking is necessary if you and your organization are to achieve success. Anticipate change rather than simply react to it, and adapt your strategies and ideas as necessary to keep moving forward.

Budget Update!

As you may have seen and heard, the Legislature passed and the Governor signed a second budget for Fiscal Year 2009-10 to address the largest budget gap the state has ever faced. CAL FIRE did experience a one-year delay in vehicle and equipment replacements, as well as the cancellation of the existing DC-10 aircraft contract. In addition, the Emergency Response Initiative was not included in the second budget, with the General Fund replacing the entire amount to have been generated through the insurance surcharge. Headquarters staff are currently analyzing the second budget, and additional information will be shared throughout August.

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Connecting with Melissa Gamer

Karen Terrill, Office of the State Fire Marshal

Melissa Gamer started with CAL FIRE as the Chief of Budgets on May 26 of this year. And since then, she has decided that her job is both a science and an art. She says, “Sometimes the numbers speak for themselves, and sometimes a story has to be told about what the numbers mean.” That makes Melissa the perfect candidate for the job because she has a strong background in both budgets and communications.

“I’m an information broker and a program advocate,” she explains. “For instance, if our chiefs tell me that a budget cut of this amount will hurt their surge capacity by that amount, I need to put that into simple English and tell the firefighters’ story to the control agencies and the Legislature.”

Melissa has been a budget analyst and manager at the Department of Finance, a Budget Officer for the Department of Information Technology, and a Program Manager for a statewide information technology project at the Department of Social Services. In those positions, she learned how the state budgeting system works from different viewpoints within the Administration.

She also has political credentials, having worked on personal staff, as well as on the Appropriations Committee and the Public Employment Retirement Committee, in the State Senate.

Add to the mix a Master’s degree in Public Administration and Bachelor’s degree in Communications/Public Relations, and Melissa Gamer is just about as prepared as anyone could possibly be for a job that is a challenge in the best of times. And these certainly aren’t the best of times for budgeting.

She smiles and says that her job is never boring: “I like the diversity of the work. It is different every day. CAL FIRE has a simple and pure mission, but a huge number of varied responsibilities. I’m always finding out something new about us.”

You would think with her information technology background and a name like Gamer, our new Budget Chief would know all about computer games like “Halo” and “Gran Turismo.” But Melissa Gamer says the only games she plays

lately involve Playdough. That’s because she has a three-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Kyra, and a twenty-month-old son, Quinn.

Her husband of nine years, Allan Cooper, is a budget consultant to the State Assembly, which makes budgeting the family business. “Kyra, Quinn, and I often watch Budget Conference Committee and legislative floor session on Legislative TV while I’m preparing dinner,” says Melissa. “They call the Assembly floor session ‘Daddy’s meeting in the big green room.’”

Melissa feels strongly that CAL FIRE staff must work harder than most to find a balance between family and work. “We work for a 24-7 department with emergency response duties,” she explains. “So many of our staff miss out on important family time due to the job. If I was to give anyone advice, it would be to find a balance between professional and personal life. They are both so important to our well-being.”

Melissa rides a bike to work in the morning, and Allen takes their children to day-care. At the end of the day, Melissa bikes over to pick up the van, and she picks up the children while Allen rides the bike home. Talk about multi-tasking. “We know not everyone has that option, but it has been one way that we can combine family time and work,” and, she adds, “get some exercise.”

She wears her Blackberry home every night and admits to working after the kids go to bed. But she says the job is worth it: “I struggle with that work-life balance thing, like everybody else. But I love this department and I’m proud to represent CAL FIRE.”

Melissa has started going on trips to the field. She has been to the Aviation Management Unit, Mobile Equipment, two Emergency Command Centers, a Conservation Camp, and the Angora fire site. Additional trips are being scheduled through summer. “Getting out into the field helps me to be a better program advocate,” she says. “And, it really brings home the Chief’s total force concept.”



*Melissa Gamer,
Chief of the Budget Office*

Encryption Protection

Ron Ralph, Information Technology, and Tony Favro, Office of Program Accountability

"The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing."

-Walt Disney

Section 5345.2 of the State Administrative Manual (SAM) requires encryption, or equally effective measures, for all personal, sensitive, or confidential information that is stored on portable electronic storage media (including, but not limited to, CDs and thumb drives) and on portable computing devices (including, but not limited to, laptop and notebook computers).

In order to meet this requirement, CAL FIRE has implemented procedures to protect personal, confidential, and sensitive information stored on laptops and removable media. These procedures, which can be found in Section 0934 of the Information Technology Services Handbook, are especially concerned with information that, if lost or stolen, requires that affected parties be notified.

Personal Information is defined as an individual's first name or first initial and last name in combination with one or more of the following: social security number; driver's license number or California Identification Card number; account number, credit or debit card number, in combination with any required security code, access code, or password that would permit access to an individual's financial account.

Confidential Information is defined as non-public information that relates to individual people and is under the purview of a specific data owner (CAL FIRE business process, not CAL FIRE IT).

The privacy of this information must be maintained at all times, access must be limited to only authorized personnel, and the unauthorized release or loss of this information could reasonably be expected to cause legal and/or financial consequences.

Examples of confidential information include, but are not limited to, personal information (e.g., name, SSN, birth date, home address), medical records, legal records, and investigations.

Sensitive Information is defined as information whose loss, unauthorized access, or modification could adversely affect CAL FIRE and/or its partners' interests, the conduct of state programs, or the privacy of individuals.

Examples of sensitive information include, but are not limited to, legal records, public or confidential information, political opinions, religious or other beliefs of a similar nature, physical or mental health/condition, sexual orientation, the commission of any offense or criminal record.

Anyone working with confidential, sensitive, or personal information on laptops and portable media needs to ensure that he or she is in compliance with these procedures. To ensure compliance, employees should take the following steps:

- Do not store unencrypted sensitive, confidential or personal information on laptops or portable media.
- Do not expose unencrypted confidential, sensitive, or personal data in an unsecured environment, (e.g., leaving a laptop, CDs, etc., in unattended vehicle or unsecured location).
- If the confidential, sensitive, or personal data must be stored on a portable device or media, ensure that the data is encrypted.

Technical procedures for implementing encryption are available at: <http://cdfweb/its/ea/encryption/cdfencryptionproject.html>. If you believe you have a need to run encryption or have

any questions about these new procedures, please contact the CAL FIRE IT Help Desk at (916) 324-3541 or contact your Field IT coordinator.

New ISO Page Coming Soon!

CAL FIRE's Information Security Office (ISO) is working on updating its Intranet page and will be rolling out the new page in the coming months. ISO's goal is to make the page more user friendly and to provide important information on protecting personal and confidential information.

EEO Matters: Hazing

Michele Villados, EEO

A few years ago, headlines concerning the behavior of firefighters in Los Angeles brought the issue of hazing into the limelight. The situation in Los Angeles made it clear that the line between having fun and behaving inappropriately is easy to cross. More recently, videos shot inside two [Houston fire stations](#) and then posted on the Internet show “rookies” being subjected to pranks. A spokesperson from the Houston Fire Department indicated the videos would be reviewed for possible violations of the department’s anti-hazing policy.

But it is not only the fire service that is looking more closely at the issue of hazing. The military, fraternities and sororities, athletic organizations, and high schools are all taking a hard look at initiation rites and practical joking within their ranks. Many high schools now teach students how to recognize hazing and harassment—and encourage them to report it. This means that new employees entering the fire service have a greater awareness of their rights and may be less willing to tolerate practical jokes and demeaning treatment in order to fit in. Veteran firefighters who attempt to haze others in the name of “tradition” may find their conduct reported to their superiors as harassment.

CAL FIRE has “zero tolerance for improper practical joking or hazing,” which means the Department may take action against an employee even if the improper conduct has occurred only one time. That is worth remembering if you are feeling tempted to engage in “horseplay” in the workplace; however, it is not the only concern. In addition to the threat of adverse employment actions (and possibly legal consequences), there are plenty of other reasons why hazing is a bad idea.

In the past, when firefighters were mostly white males and came from similar backgrounds, hazing was a rite of passage in fire stations around the country. Despite evidence to the contrary, the argument was made that hazing helped toughen-up recruits and build strong teams. But in today’s fire stations, where persons of different races, ethnicities, genders, and backgrounds rub elbows everyday, even seemingly harmless pranks may be viewed as harassment. Instead of making new recruits feel like one of the group, being hazed may leave them feeling humiliated, isolated, and singled-out because they are different. Harassment is determined by the perception of the person who is the recipient (or target) of the action. That means that whether or not a person is singled out because of race, ethnicity, gender, or another protected characteristic, if he or she perceives that is the reason, the conduct of the perpetrator may be

considered harassment even if it was intended as a joke. Using the defense “I didn’t mean it like that,” or “we were just having fun” will no longer work as a defense—at work or in court.

Confused about exactly what kind of conduct qualifies as hazing? You are not alone. Even experts don’t always agree on an exact definition, but there are two simple rules you can follow to keep yourself out of trouble and in compliance with CAL FIRE policies. One, if you have any doubt about whether or not an act might be considered hazing, don’t do it. Two, before engaging in questionable conduct, consider how you would view the conduct if it was being directed toward (or required of) you, your spouse, boyfriend, girlfriend, brother, sister, mother, father, child, or best friend. If you would not approve of any of those people being subjected to what you have in mind, don’t do it!

While everyone can agree that building a strong and cohesive group is essential in the fire service, hazing is not the way to go about it. Someone who has been hazed is likely to feel isolated, humiliated, angry, and resentful—not exactly a recipe for team building. And consider this: When responding to an incident, do you want the person who has your back to be nursing a grudge against you? Probably not.

In addition to causing problems in the workplace, hazing also undermines the public’s trust in firefighters. It is more than just a question of whether tax dollars are being used wisely. Immature and/or illegal behavior reflects badly on the professionalism of any department—especially when it makes headlines. Add to that the possibility of uniformed employees showing up in videos on YouTube, and the likelihood of damage to a department and the careers of those involved in the hazing skyrocket. Just think about it. When a group of firefighters is all that stands between a member of the public and the destruction of his or her property, the homeowner needs to have confidence in the maturity and judgment of the men and women fighting the fire. Adolescent, dangerous, illegal pranks and infighting among firefighters not only look foolish, they undermine the public’s confidence in a fire department’s ability to do its job.

CAL FIRE recognizes that a tone of professionalism in the workplace must come from the top down. One of the reasons hazing is so destructive to station morale is that it erodes the trust that subordinate employees need to have in their leaders. Even when ranking personnel do not participate in hazing, by allowing it to occur they send an unspoken message

(Cont'd. on Page 6)

Dates to Remember!

Examination dates provided below are anticipated and subject to change. Please check the examination bulletin for specifics regarding any examination.

Anticipated **Final Filing** Date(s) for Examination(s) in Progress:

*August 18, 2009
Personnel Tech. I*

Anticipated **Interview** Date(s) for Examination(s) in Progress:

*August 2009
Assistant Chief (Sup.)
Fire Prevention
Specialist I/II*

*August/Sept. 2009
Research Analyst I
(GIS)*
Senior Acctg. Officer
(Spec.) and (Sup.)*

*Sept./Oct. 2009
Senior Personnel
Specialist*

*Dec. 2009/Jan. 2010
Fire Captain
Fire Captain
(Paramedic)*

**Multi-departmental
examination
administered by
Parks and Recreation*

The Travel Reimbursement Program

Department of Personnel Administration

“Achievement is largely the product of steadily raising one’s levels of aspiration and expectation.”

-Jack Nicklaus

Recent travel policy changes require all of us to re-examine current business needs to ensure our travel is necessary and in the best interests of the State (see [Executive Order S-01-08](#) and [PML 2009-018](#)).

Each Department is charged with reducing its operations budget and making the travel reimbursement process easier. Below are some ways to help you achieve those goals:

Consider the need for the trip:

- Make sure it’s essential to State business. If you aren’t sure, ask and get approval from your supervisor.
- Minimize the number of travelers to essential participants only.
- Take advantage of technology, such as video conferencing, teleconferencing, or webcasting when possible.
- Schedule meetings at or near your headquarters’ offices.

Method of transportation:

- Use the most economical method of transportation. Consider your time away from the office and the direct costs of the methods that may be used.
- Utilize DGS transportation contracts whenever possible (i.e., airline, rental car, State vehicle).

Lodging:

- Select a moderately priced commercial lodging establishment that caters to the short term traveler. DGS’ Lodging Guide lists lodging establishments at or below State rates.
- Although some vendors won’t accept them, present the Occupancy Tax Waiver form (STD 236) when checking in.

What are the current rates for reimbursement? The following rates are the current maximum per diem, lodging, and mileage reimbursement allowances. Only actual expenses may be claimed. You should always verify receipt requirements and current

rates with your agency/department.

Reimbursement for Meals/Incidentals (each 24-hour period):

- Breakfast: actual expense up to \$6
- Lunch: actual expense up to \$10
- Dinner: actual expense up to \$18
- Incidentals: actual expense up to \$6

Reimbursement for lodging cannot exceed the maximum amounts listed below:

- All California counties, up to \$84.00 + tax
- L.A. & San Diego counties, up to \$110.00 + tax
- Alameda, San Francisco, Santa Clara, & San Mateo counties, up to \$140.00 + tax

Reimbursement for lodging continued: If you are unable to find lodging at or below the State rate, you must complete an Excess Lodging Rate Request (STD 255C) form, obtain three quotes from other lodging establishments in the area, and select the least expensive location. The STD 255C must be submitted to your department and approved before your trip takes place. Requests submitted after-the-fact will not be approved.

You must submit a lodging receipt with your Travel Expense Claim (TEC) in order to be reimbursed. If you use a third party vendor you must provide a receipt from the third party vendor and from the hotel where you stayed. Failure to provide both receipts may result in the lodging expense being cut.

Mileage reimbursement: All employees (except Bargaining Unit 6) who drive their personal vehicle for authorized travel may claim the Federal Standard Mileage Rate (FSMR). The FSMR is subject to periodic changes and you should always contact your agency/department to determine the current FSMR.

Current FSMR as of January 1, 2009:

- Automobile: up to 55 cents per mile
- Private Aircraft: up to 50 cents per mile
- Bicycle: up to 4 cents per mile

The reimbursement rate covers the operation and maintenance of the vehicle, and both liability and

Information Technology Customer Services Unit—Here To Serve You

Dave Tarquino, Information Technology Services

In the twenty-first century, CAL FIRE has become increasingly dependent on computer technology. With our reliance on computers, we also have the expectation that they will be working when needed. As reliable as they are, sometimes computers malfunction. When this happens, CAL FIRE has a unit that is ready to help you with your problem.

This unit is “Customer Services,” and it is part of the Information Technology (IT) Services Division of Management Services. The twenty-six staff members in Customer Services exist to provide computer technical support and problem resolution for all CAL FIRE users statewide. CAL FIRE has thousands of computers, printers, and local area networks. Customer Services is at the forefront of keeping this equipment running. The unit is also involved with procurement, deployment, and retirement of all IT equipment.

In order to provide the best possible service, Customer Services employs a multilayered support approach. The first layer is the Customer Services Help Desk. When you have computer problems that cannot be fixed, you can immediately call the Help Desk at (916) 324-3541. The Help Desk is manned Monday through Friday from 0700 hours to 1600 hours, and the Help Desk staff can fix a wide variety of computer problems. They can reset passwords, troubleshoot computer malfunctions, and set up access to CAL FIRE applications. They also perform triage and assess your situation. If the Help Desk staff cannot fix your problem, they will escalate it to our second layer of support, the IT Coordinator.

Each IT Coordinator supports a designated geographical area. The Coordinator is responsible for all the computers and IT equipment located at all the facilities in his or her area of coverage. Customer Services has twenty-two Coordinators covering CAL FIRE facilities statewide. Some of these areas are quite large and can span multiple units.

Although the IT Coordinators provide on site help to their users, it is not their only duty. They are also charged with carrying out all IT related projects that occur within their coverage area. They are engaged with IT infrastructure upgrade projects, Emergency Command Center (ECC) remodels, developing the System Management Plan, procuring IT equipment, and deploying IT

equipment. Additionally, it also falls on them to provide incident-based support when needed. And when large incidents strike, IT Coordinators volunteer to be InciNet Administrators and Computer Technical Specialists, and they support the ECC during expanded operations.

With such a heavy workload, the IT Coordinators often find that their time must be prioritized by local management to assure that the most important tasks are being completed. Customer Services management works with designated Region and Unit management, called “On-site Supervisors,” to help coordinate and prioritize work in a specific coverage area.

And since the Coordinators cannot be everywhere at once, they may not be able to fix your problem as soon as needed because they are working on a higher priority item. Because these situations happen frequently, Customer Services asks users to call the Help Desk first when they have a problem. In this way, Customer Services can provide better coverage for all.

EEO (Cont'd.)

that they condone it. In recognition of the critical role of supervisors and managers in creating an atmosphere of professionalism, CAL FIRE has specified the responsibilities of the Department’s leaders in preventing unprofessional conduct in the workplace by holding them personally responsible for maintaining a workplace free of discrimination and harassment.

It is important to note that supervisors and managers may not side-step their responsibility by claiming ignorance if they reasonably *should have known* that hazing or other inappropriate conduct was occurring on their watch. And that is as it should be. As an organization of professional firefighters representing the State of California, our leaders are dedicated to encouraging diversity within our ranks to reflect the diversity of our state. When all personnel within the Department feel they are accepted in the job they were hired to do and judged on the basis of their ability to perform that job, we will be best able to serve the people of our state. And in the end, that is what really matters.

Issuance Updates

POLICY

0900 Information Technology Services Handbook; **adds** section 0934 Encryption Protection

1000 Personnel Procedures Handbook; **revises** section 1501 adding State Fire Marshal Information and **adds** information to Collar Brass Exhibit

1700 Health and Safety Handbook; **revises** section 1723, Eye and Face Protection

3600 Accounting Handbook; **adds** sub section 3770.8 2008 – 2009 YEAR-END ACCRUAL PROCESS - OE & E

3800 Incident Fiscal Management Handbook; **revises** The Standard 7 day work week for FC42

4100 Joint Apprentice Committee (SubJAC) Handbook; **revises** section 4185, **revises** section, and **revises** section 4144

8500 Cooperative Fire Services Handbook; **adds** a new link under the heading of State Agreements, **deletes** the link for “DMAT”

OSHPros Corner: Ergonomics

Suzan Bravo, OSHPros

"The most rewarding things you do in life are often the ones that look like they cannot be done."

-Arnold Palmer

The safety and well being of every CAL FIRE employee has been, and always will be, paramount. Following the Department Safety Program's completion of *CAL FIRE's 2009 Focus on Safety*, the Director has asked that we take time to reflect on the staggering statistic that shows that 1 in 14 firefighters will sustain a reportable injury this calendar year. Additionally, it is nearly impossible to determine the number of non-reportable injuries (abrasions, cuts, strains, aches, and pains, to name a few) that CAL FIRE employees will sustain during the same period.

CAL FIRE is required to implement and maintain an effective Injury and Illness Prevention Program, and one element of that program is Ergonomics. Ergonomics is improving the fit between a job and the capabilities of the employee performing that job. This means considering the variability in human capabilities when selecting, designing, or modifying equipment, work tasks, and the work environment. Ergonomic principles consider that employees' abilities to perform physical tasks vary because of differences in age, physical condition, strength, gender, stature, and other factors. Simply put, the same solution may not work for all employees performing identical work tasks.

CAL FIRE's 2009 Focus on Safety serves as a form of communication, reminding employees that their safety and well being is the priority in our day-to-day operations and that every attempt should be made to reduce the frequency and severity of injury and illnesses in the workplace. As such, as part of *CAL FIRE's 2009 Focus on Safety*, the Occupational Safety and Health Programs (OSHPros) Workers' Compensation Unit created an Ergonomics Awareness Training that consists of the following: 1) Ergonomics Awareness PowerPoint Presentation, 2) An Ergonomics Awareness Quiz, 3) The CAL FIRE IIPP-6 Employee Training Sign-up Sheet, and 4) An Ergonomics Awareness Quiz Key.

The Labor and Human Resource Management Office has utilized this training presentation to satisfy the required training component for employees under *CAL FIRE's 2009 Focus on Safety*. All Labor and Human Resource Management staff were asked to: 1) complete the

PowerPoint training presentation, 2) take the quiz, and 3) upon completion of the quiz, complete the IIPP-6 Employee Training Sign-up Sheet and give it to their supervisor. (This provides supervisors with documentation that the training has been completed.)

If you would like to enhance your Ergonomics knowledge and take the Ergonomics Awareness Training please click on the link below: <http://cdfweb/EmployeeInfo/HumanResources/ergawaretrain.html>

Thank you in advance for your support and commitment to bettering the health and safety of all CAL FIRE employees, including yourself. The OSHPros Workers' Compensation Unit looks forward to each and every one of you gaining Ergonomic knowledge.

If you have any questions regarding the Ergonomics Awareness Training, please contact Suzan Bravo, Workers' Compensation Manager, at (916) 445-7878 or via email at Suzan.Bravo@fire.ca.gov.

Please note that this training is not the same as "ERGO 101" and "ERGO 102," which are located on the OSHPros Intranet website.

Travel (Cont'd.)

comprehensive insurance.

Contact Information:

DGS Office of Fleet Asset Management Travel Portal: Airline, Car Rental, State Vehicles, Lodging Guide, etc.

<http://www.travel.dgs.ca.gov>

(916) 928-2550

DGS State Administrative Manual: Travel Section

<http://sam.dgs.ca.gov/TOC/700/default.htm>

(916) 327-8908

DPA Travel Program: DPA Rules, State Travel Policy, Forms

<http://www.dpa.ca.gov/personnel-policies/travel/hr-staff.htm>

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