

THE VOLUNTEER FIRE OFFICER'S PROBLEM SOLVING AND DECISION-MAKING TOOLBOX 2025 FDIC

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- The toolbox
 - Tool - Metaphor for a specific knowledge or skill
 - *Primarily* experientially learned. (Experience – done right it doesn't have to be your own experience.
 - 1st - yours/observed
 - 2nd - other's
 - Training/simulation
- Do fires care if the firefighters are career or volunteer? Do we use different tactics or strategy?
- Leadership Different?
 - Selection of officers
 - Formality / environment of association
 - Role / Responsibility?
- LEADERSHIP - Is there a difference between career and volunteer FD leadership?
 - Dave's *opinion* – YES.
- Why are you a Firefighter?
 - to serve/protect the community
 - for the camaraderie
 - self actualization
 - excitement
 - for personal reasons
 - personal interest
- **#1 Rule of Volunteer Fire Service Leadership**
 - Respect their time away from family, job, “down time”.
 - Have drill time and other functions ready.
 - Appreciation
 - Make them want to be there
- IMPORTANT: The decisions that hurt officers more often relate to their leadership and supervisory abilities over their technical skills.
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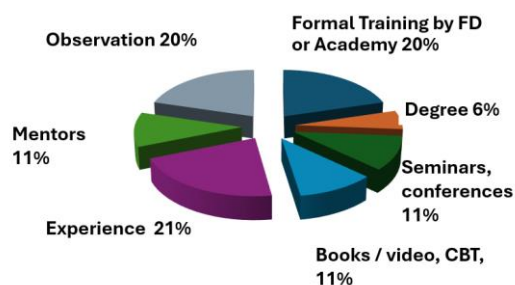
| Attributes of Favorite Officer | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respectful to all• Mentors• If goes bad “me”, go good – “we”• Integrity• Skilled• Knowledgeable• Approachable | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enthusiasm generator• Shows how• Teamwork• Assertive• Leads by example• Physically capable |

| Attributes of <u>Least</u> Favorite Officer | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Least favorite officer? • Badge heavy/bully • No respect to subs • Temper • Micromanages • Complains about subs/brass • (?) knowledge • Doesn't share | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unprepared • "Me" when right, blame if goes bad • Favorites • Lazy • Self over crew • Not skilled • No show • Rules not for him/her |

- Which do you learn more from...Positive or negative leadership?
 - Negative
 - Why? (more emotional impact, "dwell" on it, think what could have been done differently, by you or somebody else)
- Same for the Technical Skills
- The toolbox
 - At time of need, you use a tool that...
 - That has worked before for you
 - Frequently used
 - Have used
 - Observed
 - Learned about
 - Heard about
- If you don't have the right tool...
 - You will use closest applicable tool that you think may work....
 - It has to be the right tool or it may not work
- Look at Rapid Decision Making on the Fireground at <https://goo.gl/BL0d05> or <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a199492.pdf>

- Sources of Knowledge by Percentage
 - We observe interactions and actions
 - Constant
 - Conscious or not, evaluate encode/store "informal learning"
 - Think of attributes of good / bad, favorite / least favorite officers
 - What do you emulate / make work for you?

Sources of Knowledge



Most Often Used

- Experience 47%
- Mentoring 15%
- Observation 11%
- Formal Training 6%
- College 0%
- Tools (experiences)!!!
 - Simulations /Role play
 - Situation based / in context
 - Emotional attachment
 - "Community of Practice"
 - Other's experiences

| INFORMAL | FORMAL |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience • Observation • Self-study • Mentoring | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training/ Academy • College • Conferences |
| NOT FD Controlled | FD Controlled |

- How improve informal learning?
 - “Hot wash”
 - “Learning” points
 - “Good” calls too
 - Alternatives /“what ifs”.
 - Use O.P.E. and W.W.W.D.? (WWID?)
 - Make informal memorable, usable
 - Learn from other people’s mistakes
 - Place yourself in their role, “WWID”?
- Can there be a problem with experience? *Yes, might not be correct, or at least a best method, or even “CoP”*
- Is there a problem with “informal” learning/observation?

One of the tests of leadership is the ability to recognize a problem before becomes an emergency
– Arnold Glassow

- Technical skills
 - Many of the skills will be learned from observing.
 - Make opportunities
 - War Stories
 - Can have real value *
 - WWID?
 - MvA
 - ASK QUESTIONS
 - Gustin story
- How improve informal learning?
 - “Hot wash”
 - “Learning” points
 - “Good” calls too
 - Alternatives /“what ifs”.
 - Use O.P.E. and W.W.W.D.? (WWID?)
- If you leave today with NOTHING else, REMEMBER this: BE THE BOSS!
- If you got the gold – you have to be the boss!!
 - Because of you aren’t, doing it somebody else will be!
 - And do you think they will do it the way you want?
 - To be the Boss
 - Own it
 - Communicate expectations and the plan
 - No Dictator or micro- manager
 - Boss (Officer) ≠ Jerk
- REMEMBER
 - LEARN from mistakes (Incident and leadership).
 - LEARN from successes
 - Watch other people and see what works (and doesn’t)
- Take-away
- Recognize where you get your “tools” from
- How to maximize your learning
- Know how best to share

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| <p>If you cannot find a leader who inspires you, be the leader you wish you had. Simon Sinek</p> |
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- Are you an officer in a volunteer fire department?
 - Want to lend your opinion and experiences to a new book “The Volunteer Fire Officer’s Handbook” from ?
 - Please give me your card or email me at Dave@ascendleadershipllc.com if you are interested
 - No obligation!!
 - dave@ascendleadershipllc.com

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What does that mean? USE IT! In your FD, not for profit. If you want to use the survey information, go to <https://www.fireengineering.com/firefighting/learning-leadership-by-observing/>. If you need more, contact me and I will give you the information.