Doctrine for a Mission-Driven Culture (MDC)

Contents

From the Chief

As we build the department's future together, I feel it important for me to share a unique element of my vision with each of you. Specifically, our becoming a more Mission-Driven Culture.

Mission-Driven Culture (MDC) describes a set of principles for operating successfully despite friction, danger, and uncertainty. It defines key values and attitudes that foster adaptive action in uncertain times, and strengthening resilience when facing adversity. These values promote decision-making and initiative among those in the field.

As military services learned long ago, combat performance is an outgrowth of the behaviors ingrained during training and day-to-day operations. Subconsciously rooted, these habits are the foundation for action; particularly under stress. The same tenets apply to developing leadership ability. The results are seen in day-to-day operations long before being tested in the field under extraordinary circumstances. Therefore, the evolution in culture necessarily starts here at home.

The "rules-based" operational paradigm that we and most fire service agencies historically embodied illustrates a culture of compliance and permission-asking, one that reserves decision-making for the highest levels. Within this type of culture, firefighters and lifeguards are seldom tasked with exercising judgment or initiative – even though they are typically the ones with the most accurate picture of circumstances and the best awareness of what can or cannot be done.

This challenge is not an individual training problem; it is a cultural one. Policies and procedures are important and can aid decision-making by applying the expertise and experience of others in standard situations. They are, however, of little help – and can even be a hindrance – when dealing with ambiguous or extreme situations. In these circumstances, rules fall by the wayside, leaving decisions and action to be centered on individual beliefs, attitudes, and values.

Organizations shape their operational culture partly through doctrine but mostly through the influence of their leaders. At all levels, leaders establish, guard, and reinforce day-to-day cultural norms and serve as a foundation of the internal accountability system that shapes judgment and behavior. For this reason, strengthening operational culture begins with the leaders, especially those closest to operations.

In its application, this model of culture and operations holds responders responsible for acting in accordance with the principles of the organization and the articulated intent rather than for complying with a particular rule or policy. By delegating to the lowest possible level, it generates faster decision making on the ground and provides a foundation for cohesive action, even in rapidly changing or ambiguous circumstances.

Under stress and uncertainty, people naturally revert to what they know best and do most often. While every organization has some good leaders with natural abilities, there is a big difference between some leaders doing the right things and most leaders doing the right things. For this reason, we focus a great deal of our attention on leader and cultural development.

Brian Fennessy

Mission-Driven Culture

In its application, MDC holds people responsible for acting in accordance with the principles of the organization and with their leaders' articulated intent rather than only complying with a specific policy or set of rules. By exercising authority and responsibility at the lowest possible level, a Mission-Driven Culture generates faster decision making and provides a foundation for cohesive action, even in rapidly changing or ambiguous circumstances. At the planning levels, this paradigm provides a means to organize complex problems and set strategic priorities reaching well beyond the limits of conventional command and control.

A Mission-Driven Culture (MDC) is one that aligns all of its resources and systems to accomplishing its mission. The foundational values of MDC come from millennia of human experience in high risk, chaotic environments:

Service for the common good. This value serves as the touchstone to the culture, reinforcing the connection between team members and the people they serve. Highlighting the ethic of serving the public, service for the common good emphasizes the need for each team member to be focused on the- team results and their benefits to the greater good.

High trust state. The shared belief that each member of the team is there to serve is an integral part of mission success. Trust shapes confidence, communication, perceptions, and cohesion. Developing and maintaining trust—both in systems and people—up and down chains of command, enables core behaviors that improve resilience, including error detection and correction, robust discussion, and the ability to challenge team dysfunction and hold each other accountable without fear.

Pursuit of truth. You may have heard the saying about taking the hard right versus the easy wrong. This value drives us to dig deeper, whether to challenge assumptions, verify information, determine root causes and, when called for, to confront uncomfortable truths in order to do the right thing. In an incident environment, it compels everyone to acquire the best possible situation awareness and the soundest common operating picture.

Form and function defined by the end state. With the best possible situation awareness, team members plan and organize themselves to accomplish what ought to be done. This value embodies the need for adaptability and versatility to ensure that systems and plans serve the mission and common good. The goal is to minimize *tail wags dog* situations where policy or other non-operational requirements get in the way of serving the common good.

Individual initiative. A culture promoting individual initiative enables its people to serve at their best. Individual initiative builds adaptability in the team in the face of unexpected or emerging issues. It builds commitment from the team. It enables the speed and agility needed in complexity for tactical actions to support strategic effect.

Continuous improvement. This value reinforces learning and improvement both for the individual and across the organization to better serve the common good. While driving, when you take your hands off the steering wheel, the car starts drifting off the intended path. This is what makes non-stop improvement so critical to a high-risk team. If you are not constantly getting better, you are not staying still, you are drifting off course and falling behind.

To demonstrate alignment with the values of the Mission-Driven Culture and ultimately build an effective and functional team, we model behavior consistent with these values and build them in our teams.

Intent-Based Operations

A Mission-Driven Culture relies on human judgment. Computers can provide information and make calculations. Human beings make sense of the information, understand its implications, and make judgments about what ought to be done. A duty of organizations, then, is to develop its people to exercise their judgment to their fullest potential.

MDC uses intent-based operations as the means to accomplish the mission. It is based on the military concept of Mission Command, or "leading by mission." It includes providing clear intent and meaningful boundaries rooted in the assumption that we develop our people to be operators who innovate and exercise their judgment and then give them the opportunities to do so.

As with MDC, Mission Command and intent-based operations are built on human judgment. Regardless of how much or how advanced the technology, it still comes down to human judgment.

Advanced technology gives us much more information but does not necessarily distinguish between what is useful and what is not. Technology, then, does not excuse us from thinking and using our judgment; on the contrary, it creates the need for a well-honed ability to use our judgment and encourage its use in others.

Our philosophy of command supports the way we manage incidents. To generate effective decision making and to cope with the unpredictable nature of incidents, Fire-Rescue leaders decentralize command. That is, we respect the authority of our people to make decisions at their level based on their understanding of the local situation. In other words, by moving the authority to make decisions out to where the best information exists.

Translating vision into leader's intent is at the heart of our command philosophy. Describing what is to be done (task), why it ought to be done (purpose), and what success looks like (end state) is the prerequisite for empowering our people to exercise individual initiative and take appropriate risks and actions as the situation requires.

This philosophy is based on the understanding that competent team members who are at the scene of action understand the current situation better than a commander some distance removed. As powerful as human judgment is, though, people can make errors, especially in high-risk environments. Although we can and do take steps to mitigate it,

we can never eliminate error. We can only do our best to serve now and improve for next time.

Service to the Common Good

City of San Diego

Vision

A world-class city for all

Mission

To effectively serve and support our communities

Mission Statement of the San Diego Fire-Rescue Department

To serve the community of San Diego by providing the highest level of emergency/rescue services, hazard prevention and safety education ensuring the protection of life, property and the environment.

Duty begins with everything required of us by law and policy, but it is much more than that. We commit to excellence in all aspects of our professional responsibility so that when a job is done we can look back and say *I fulfilled both the letter and the spirit of my duty.*

Serving requires that we manage uncertainty and respond to events that are not within our control. A framework to understand this leadership environment is critical to developing and communicating sound intent in dynamic situations.

In these time-critical situations, Fire-Rescue leaders use judgment, act within the intent of their leaders, work in unison with others, develop and communicate a plan, and then inform others of actions as soon as safely possible.

The End State for every interaction on duty:

You…

made people feel your compassion and concern.

executed to standard.

took care of each other – physically, mentally and emotionally.

did the right thing to protect the public and the department.

Decision Criteria:

(Team of Teams Principle)

A subset and apart from of the larger cultural values and mission definition effort concerns principles or structures for how decisions are made.

Delegate to the point of discomfort.

Does it align with our core values and leader's intent?

Does it directly serve those we protect?

Do I own it? Ready to explain the rationale and willing to be held accountable?

Then make the decision and communicate: "My intent is… task… purpose… end state."

This encompasses responsibility for risk management, illegal, immoral unsafe, and all the items from the boards. The "did our best" language was ditched as it is way too subjective.

Decision Framework

Our objective will be to use this to create our own framework tool for people to have conversations about how to evaluate appropriateness of dialing in decisional space throughout the department.

D = Who's got the Decision authority? Do I need permission? My decision? Am I undermining a subordinate by making their decision?

A = What Advisors or Stakeholders need to be engaged? Do I need to just inform? Do I need input? Do I need coordination?

E = If there is disagreement, do we need to Elevate the decision higher?

Accepting the Responsibility of Service

We serve the people of San Diego, the state of California, and the United States of America. We fulfill our obligation by mastering our jobs, making sound and timely decisions, ensuring tasks get done, and fostering this spirit of duty in our people.

The unpredictable nature of our work environment means that any team member could be at a decisive point: A time sensitive judgment in a tactical plan or a chance encounter with a member of the public who happens to be in a position of great influence. The results of that choice or interaction—good or bad—could have a profound effect on our department. We take it upon ourselves to make sure our effect is a positive one, no matter what the mission may be.

Our Oath

Those who accept the role of responsibility of belonging to the SDFD accept the responsibility for their own self-discipline, becoming proficient in their tasks; to take initiative and learn from others; to ask questions and develop their communication skills with those they interact with.

The Need to Lead

The authority to lead in the Fire-Rescue service is established by law. Whether this authority is based on federal, state, or local law, we are legal agents exercising authority on behalf of our organizations. The ability to lead is a different matter; it is something that cannot be legislated. Effective leaders have earned the trust and respect of others. A leader's journey is one of acquiring, shaping, and honing the qualities of leadership. The leadership journey is never finished.

Once we committed to becoming leaders, our focus was no longer ourselves. Leaders in the San Diego Fire-Rescue Department assume the grave responsibility of putting others into harm's way and for making decisions that profoundly affect our citizens and community. Leaders choose to sacrifice their own needs for those of their teams, their organizations, and their communities. They routinely face situations and make decisions that others criticize and second-guess. Leaders take risks and face challenges every day.

So why do we choose to lead? The answer is deeply personal. Each leader's path to decision is unique. The common thread is our commitment to make a difference. This commitment is demonstrated in two ways. We take action and then we accept accountability for the results now and into the future. The Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius said, "What we do now echoes in eternity."

Our leadership legacy will be felt long after our careers end. It will take many forms, but the most important thing we can leave behind are new leaders, ready, willing and able to take our place.

Leaders of People

Leaders of people accept responsibility not only for their own actions, but for their team, including those of its members. Leaders of people act to develop credibility as leaders: placing the team ahead of themselves, demonstrating trustworthiness, mastering essential technical skills, and instilling the mission-driven values in their teams.

Although these leadership requirements are similar for the leaders at different levels of an organization, the challenges faced and the perspective required to meet the challenges are considerably different at each level. Leaders recognize the challenges of each level of leadership.

Leaders of Leaders

Leaders of leaders, accept the additional responsibility for multiple teams as well as their own leadership team. Thus, the distance between the leader and the led, both physically and figuratively; increases the challenges of leading because face-to-face communication is often not possible. These leaders connect the organization and the people on the ground, interpreting the vision into mission, translating abstract ideas so that each team members may take definitive action when needed.

For *leaders of organizations,* the challenges grow to looking both more broadly and further ahead. These leaders manage the most complex and high-profile undertakings.

High-Trust State

Individuals have values that govern their judgments and behavior. As they encounter others who have one or more values in common, they seek to build relationships and join together to put the values they share into practice and advance them. These relationships and shared values interconnect and overlap.

Organizations grow from such shared values and most, at some point, formally identify a set of values to help define its desired culture and by which their members may hold each other accountable. Further, within most organizations there are smaller teams, organizations, and other subcultures that identify and commit to their own subsets of values.

Respect is how we value our people and their individual commitment to the purpose of the team. This value reminds us that those whom we lead are our greatest resource. Not all of our people will succeed equally, but we owe them our respect.

Respect within your team and among the teams that make up the San Diego Fire-Rescue Department is what fuels the MDC values of the *high trust state, pursuit of truth, individual initiative,* and *continuous improvement* throughout our department.

To gain respect from others, we first respect them. We make the first move and risk that *trust*. Leaders demonstrate respect for their people in many ways: by getting to know them, by looking out for their well-being, by keeping them informed, by putting forth the effort to build strong teams, and by employing them in accordance with their capabilities. We use leader's intent and delegation to encourage individual initiative to increase those capabilities.

Values—What We Trust in Each Other

Each team member has personal beliefs and interests, but each joined the organization to serve a common goal. Individual points of view, though, can work for or against the team result.

If individual points of view focus predominately on their own needs, the team's efforts are diffused and conflict becomes factional. By aligning individual points-of-view toward team results, we can leverage individual attitudes for serving the common good. By keeping our focus on the mission, the variety of beliefs and experiences can lead to dynamic discussions that temper, refine, and strengthen the values of a team.

San Diego City Values

Integrity

Do the right thing

Be ethical, truthful, and fair

Take responsibility for our actions

Service

Exhibit pride in all that we do

Treat others as we would like to be treated

Anticipate and promptly respond to requests

People

Value customers and employees as partners

Recognize that an engaged City workforce is the key to quality customer service

Promote diversity as a strength

Excellence

Foster a high performing culture

Establish clear standards and

predictable processes

Measure results and seek improvement in everything we do

Principles

Where the Mission-Driven Culture defines a foundational set of values by which we can judge how an organization accomplishes its mission, we can use a set of principles to further judge behavior.

These principles came out of a 1948 leadership study conducted to capture the battle experiences of World War II. These timeless principles later served as a foundation for leadership development in the U.S. Army.

MDC	Operating Principles	Leader Values	PRIDE
Service to the common good. **Form and function**	Be proficient in your job Make sound and timely decisions. Ensure tasks are understood, supervised, and accomplished. Develop yourself and others for the future.	Duty	Professionalism
Trust	Know your people and look out for their well-being.	Respect	Respect

Initiative	Keep your people informed. Build the team. Seek opportunities to employ our capabilities.		
Pursuit of truth **Continuous improvement**	Know yourself and seek improvement. Seek responsibility and accept responsibility for your actions. Set the example.	Integrity	Integrity
			Dedication
			Excellence

Character

Because character is the most valuable asset we have, it, more than anything else, promotes or hinders the development of a *high-trust state*.

Because other's perception of our character results from the observation of many actions, our people will eventually discern our true character. They assess our character every day; they know if we are open and honest; they see if we are indecisive, lazy, or selfish.

We cannot hide that *truth*. We can only pursue it to understand and *improve*.

We are mindful of our values and the way that we communicate and reinforce them to others and to ourselves. We set the example by taking steps to build our character continually:

- Knowing our values, reviewing them frequently, and contemplating areas for improvement.
- Acknowledging when we are wrong.
- Taking time to reflect on our actions.
- Finding role models and asking them to be our mentors.
- Studying leaders and leadership, learning from their successes and mistakes.

Integrity is a measure of where a person stands in times of strife or, when given power. We cannot be answerable for others unless we can govern ourselves. People of integrity separate what is right from what is wrong and act according to what they know is right, even at personal cost.

Moral Courage

We demonstrate moral courage by adhering to high ethical standards and choosing the difficult right over the easy wrong. We avoid ethical dilemmas by directing team members to operate in ways that are consistent with our professional standards and by directing them only to actions they can achieve ethically.

In the San Diego Fire-Rescue Department, the end does not justify the means. The *form and function* of our actions must be transparent and defendable in the public eye. They must always be seen as *serving the common good*.

When we make mistakes, we handle them in honorable and effective ways, addressing the immediate problem and then searching for root causes. People with moral courage look for causes, not scapegoats, learning and improving, looking for ways to turn weaknesses into strengths.

A facet of sound character, moral courage enables us to build trust with our teams and gain respect from peers. Although some may judge that leading ethically compromises short-term gains, leading ethically allows us to accomplish more than our mission.

Because the consequences of decisions concerning ethical dilemmas and other ethically challenging situations can be great and those who make such decisions may need to justify their actions to themselves, authorities, and others, following a careful and thorough process is a wise approach in situations with ambiguous courses of action. The values of duty, respect, and integrity should weigh heavily in any ethical decision.

Setting the Example

We set the example by exhibiting strong character, by showing optimism and encouraging others, even when facing setbacks.

Leaders cannot hide what they do. For better or worse, they are always setting an example. Team members assess their leader's integrity every day. If people believe a leader has integrity and is acting in good faith, they can accept other weaknesses and even help compensate for them.

Leader Credibility

Lead from the front. Say, "Follow me!"
and then lead the way.
Major Richard "Dick" Winters

It is absurd that a man should rule others, who cannot rule himself.
Latin proverb

Closely related to respect power, credibility also affects a leader's ability to influence. In general, credibility stems from others' judgment regarding these three questions:

Practical Wisdom—Do you know what you're doing?

Good Will—Are you working for the right reasons?

Virtue—Are you an honest and trustworthy person?

Your influence is a direct outgrowth of others' trust and confidence in these three areas. People tend to willingly follow those who demonstrate strong capability, appropriate motivation, and explicit integrity.

Perceived credibility along these lines is a constant barometer of a leader's ability to influence.

These areas reflect a timeless concept from the Greek philosopher Aristotle. In the fourth century BC, Artistotle wrote *Rhetoric,* a treatise on the art of persuasion. He defined three dimensions of *ethos,* one of the modes of persuasion: practical wisdom, goodwill, and virtue. Positive perceptions of these dimensions are essentially the starting point for influencing others.

Command Presence

More than anything else, the leader's command presence sets the tone for the command climate. Command presence is how we present ourselves to others, the myriad of personal attributes and behaviors that communicates to others that we are worthy of their trust and respect.

Character is the foundation of command presence. All people reveal their character in every interaction, and character shapes and permeates a leader's command presence.

Another component of command presence—demeanor—speaks volumes to others. Poise and self-assurance play a large part in the perception of the team. Leaders project an image that is calm, organized, and focused on serving the common good.

Leaders take charge when in charge; we lead from the front and act decisively. In times of crisis, a leader's command presence can be the key factor in determining whether a team succumbs to pressures and dangers or stays focused to seize an opportunity to overcome and succeed. We inspire confidence among team members by demonstrating a strong and effective command presence.

How you demonstrate command presence is a conscious choice. You align the *form and function* of your leadership to build *trust* with the end state of a more effective team – *the common good*.

Team Ethos

Leaders build cohesive teams—not simply groups of individuals putting forth individual efforts—to accomplish missions in high-risk environments. *Continuous improvement* ensures teams remain cohesive.

Cohesive teams are more creative and adaptable when dealing with complex situations. This enables them to detect and mitigate errors sooner. Cohesion allows team members to anticipate the needs and actions of other team members to ensure that their *form and function is directed toward the end state.*

Such teams are also more resilient, able to recover, regroup and bounce back after an error or tough impact occurs.

Trust

An indicator of the level of respect or quality of the *trust state* on a team is its command climate, the leadership atmosphere or environment you create on your team. People begin gauging the command climate from the first moment they engage with you. Even in informal settings, the very first introductions set the tone and begin to establish command climate—for better or worse.

No doubt you've seen leaders who intimidate, or withhold information, or behave inconsistently. This undermines *trust* and creates a negative climate.

Establishing a positive command climate demonstrates respect for our team members and generates far-reaching benefits: unity of effort, increased *initiative*, and more effective error mitigation.

Fire-Rescue leaders set the stage by establishing a foundation of *trust*, enabling healthy conflict, requiring commitment, communicating expectations, and bringing focus to the team result.

Leaders create teams that engage in healthy conflict: enabling a dynamic exchange of ideas, the voicing of diverse viewpoints, and, ultimately, innovative solutions. We want to encourage healthy conflict in team discussion and after-action reviews.

Healthy conflict is vital to the *pursuit of truth* and enabling *continuous improvement*. To enable healthy conflict to flourish, we focus on the *what* not the *who*. By concentrating on *what* should be done or considered instead of *who* is right, we resolve issues more quickly and keep everyone's focus where it needs to be—on the team and its mission.

Commitment

Leaders foster teams committed to the mission and serving the *common good*. To increase the level of commitment, the more we are able to use the participating and delegating to get team members involved, the more we increase *trust*, allow *individual initiative* and build cohesion.

We involve team members from the start and actively solicit contributions. We make people responsible, give them enough authority to accomplish their assignment, and hold them accountable. Although we take a risk when we delegate, the resulting ownership far outweighs the risk.

Involvement is the foundation for commitment.

Team Results

The team result is the definition of *service for the common good*. Effective leaders create a team where individuals put the mission and the needs of the team first. This requires us to articulate a clear end state, specifying success criteria so that team members can translate intent into focused and decisive action.

Pursuit of Truth

Situation Awareness

The cornerstone of good decision making is good situation awareness. We can increase our decision space by attaining and maintaining good situation awareness. Decision space is simply the amount of time that a decision maker has for considering options before reaching a required decision point.

How well perception matches reality is called **Situation Awareness**. When our situation awareness is high, we have an accurate perception of reality. This is the entire basis of the *pursuit of truth* in a Mission-Driven Culture.

We can optimize our decision space by using time efficiently. Seeking advance information in new situations or utilizing standard operating procedures for routine tasks are examples of techniques that make good use of available time.

In the fire-rescue environment, decisions have serious consequences and often can have life-or-death implications for others. With so much on the line, we have a responsibility to understand the decision-making process—the components, the flow, the effect of time—and to develop the skills and confidence that enables us to make the best decision possible with the information and time available.

Simply paying attention is an important part of maintaining good situation awareness, but even more important is determining what to pay attention to. All perceptions are subject to filtering and focusing: people constantly filter information and shift focus. People also produce a lot of internal inputs such as thoughts about what to do next, stress, memories of similar experiences, fear. Those with more experience in an environment often can more easily filter out distractions and unimportant details and focus on the most salient information.

Critical Factors (Sun Tzu)

Another means of broadening and deepening understanding is to use different lenses to analyze situations. Sun Tzu offers such a lens in his philosophical treatise.

The Art of War, written in 510 B.C. by the military tactician Sun Tzu, describes a philosophy of leadership that remains applicable to this day. The Art of War not only outlines the tactics and strategies for warfare but also delves into the art of leading people.

- perceiving what is known and unknown
- discerning what you can and cannot control
- realizing strengths and weaknesses
- recognizing dangers and opportunities

Using this lens helps bring the larger picture into focus and furthers an understanding of the movement of the situation—how to form a strategy with what is known, where to best use scarce resources, how to recognize and capitalize on opportunities.

Knowing Ourselves and Seeking Improvement
Duty

Pursuit of truth means the starting point for our development is self-awareness. In many ways, our greatest challenge is to know ourselves. Self-awareness is an inward application of situation awareness. We honestly appraise our own strengths and weaknesses.

Understanding our abilities and limitations, seeking feedback, learning from our mistakes, knowing where to improve, recognizing when to seek others with complementary strengths—these are all behaviors that enable us to become better.

Increasing What is Known

We seek and accept feedback to maintain accurate situation awareness about ourselves. We take the *individual initiative* to examine and probe our blind spots, seeking feedback from others. Because blind spots can lead to problems, we accept and act on feedback as part of the responsibility to *continuously improve*.

We also share information about ourselves with others. Greater situation awareness about each other builds *trust* and enables us to help each other compensate for weaknesses.

Seeking and accepting feedback and sharing information enables us to increase what is known among team members and contributes to the development of a strong team.

Adaptive Communication

Adaptive communication involves selecting the appropriate communications tools given the people and the situation involved. Leaders use a variety of advanced communication tools, like "I" messages, active listening and direct statements, when interacting with team members, peers, and leaders.

Leaders adapt communication to engage the listener according to their style, using a variety of means to convey the message: visual, auditory, and written text. Context is important, and leaders continually make judgments about what communication tools to use and when.

Form and Function Meet End State

Making Sound and Timely Decisions

Sound and timely decisions ensure that the mission achieves the best feasible result. Maximizing gain, minimizing risk. We assess the situation, seek out relevant information, weigh options, make judgments, and initiate action as required to create a positive outcome within inevitable time constraints. The soundness of our decisions is judged by how well they meet the following criteria:

- Upheld Values at Risk
- Applied Sound Experience
- Based on the Fullest, Broadest Counsel Practical
- Applied of Critical Factors to End State
- Founded on True, Valid, and Clear Reasoning
- Applied Judgment – Rules Versus Principles
- Considered Unintended Consequences (PSESII)
- Mitigated or Justified Significant Risks

Upheld Values at Risk

Ethics are the principles and standards that guide us to do the right thing. Ethics are the moral context that defines our values and character. Professional ethics are the principles and standards that determine appropriate behavior and conduct for members of a profession.

The team's shared values and vision are an important starting point for common operations:

- Mission driven values
- Organizational values
- Team values

Keeping these in the forefront helps to reinforce the right kind of team behavior. These are the ethical responsibilities of a profession:

- Promote the safety and welfare of the public.
- Use all skills and knowledge to serve the common good.
- Promote the dignity and status of the profession.

Applied Sound Experience

You weigh the risks and select an option based mostly on your experience. In large measure, your experience and knowledge determine how many options you have and how well you evaluate them.

When you select a course of action, usually you mentally simulate how it might turn out—compare it with other similar experiences and give it a trial run in your mind.

The concept is a lot like having a set of slides depicting your experiences. You compare the current situation to the slides in your slide tray of experience.

When the time pressure is on, experienced decision makers have a natural advantage: they have more slides and thus more options. When they recognize a solution that—when simulated in their minds—provides a viable course of action, they usually select that option and stop the process.

Choosing a course of action based on previous experience is called Recognition Primed Decision-Making (RPD). RPD is a *natural* decision process, which is also used by other mammals. Being more primitive and tied to our survival mechanisms, RPD is understandably very fast and it explains why experienced operators rarely run out of time when making a decision.

RPD doesn't necessarily come up with the best solution for a given situation, just the first viable one. You can only make a recognition primed decision if you have a previous experience—a memory slide—that you can recognize as being similar to the problem or situation you face.

Each team member performs RPD, but they don't necessarily use the same recognition and experiences to behave cohesively. The challenge for a us is to develop in a team enough common experiences through training, interactions, and operations so that

members of a team can recognize a common problem or opportunity from their different perspectives.

Based on the Fullest, Broadest Counsel Practical

Teams are comprised of individuals, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. Some are stronger; others are faster. Some are better with numbers; others are better with words. Some are good with machinery, and others are better with people. Sound decisions are based on the best advice available in the circumstances.

Applied Critical Factors (Sun Tzu)

The Art of War, written in 510 B.C. by the military tactician Sun Tzu, describes a philosophy of leadership that remains applicable to this day. *The Art of War* not only outlines the tactics and strategies for warfare but also delves into the art of leading people.

- perceiving what is known and unknown
- discerning what you can and cannot control
- realizing strengths and weaknesses
- recognizing dangers and opportunities

Using this lens helps bring the larger picture into focus and furthers an understanding of the movement of the situation—how to form a strategy with what is known, where to best use scarce resources, how to recognize and capitalize on opportunities.

Founded on True, Valid, and Clear Reasoning

Refining Leader's Intent throughout the Chain of Command

Leaders at all levels go through the process of interpreting and refining the intent we received, developing intent for our team, and then communicating it. We narrow our focus at each level, identifying the actions that apply to our team. We make sure that each person understands the end state and the purpose behind the task.

Intent Guides Action
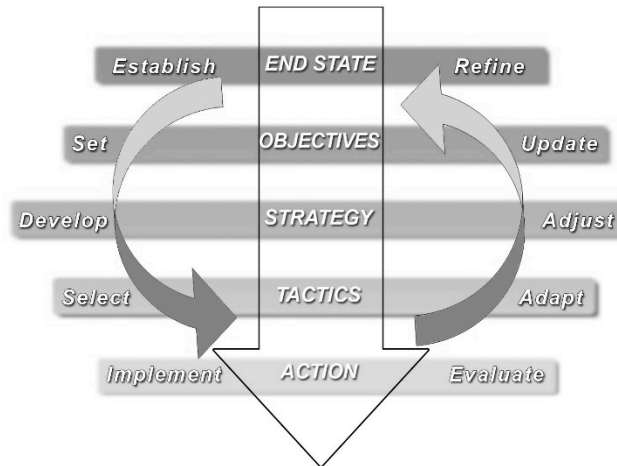
Turning intent into meaningful action is an iterative process.

The leader establishes an end state and sets objectives to accomplish it. Team members develop a strategy and make sure that the objectives can be accomplished given the available time and resources. Operational leaders then select the appropriate tactics and implement the action needed.

The process repeats when people evaluate the results of the action and modify the plan at each level according to changes in the environment or the team.

Applied Judgment – Rules Versus Principles

The culture of permission asking also creates risk aversion. People are more afraid of breaking rules and making mistakes than of missing an opportunity to make a difference. Team failure is acceptable because of the cultural norm that individual failure, and not team failure, is what gets punished. Thus, the focus is not on success, but rather on avoiding failure. Rules and standard operating procedures that work well in routine emergencies begin to break down quickly as the fog increases.

In MDC, many policies and rules are considered authoritative but flexible. We are expected to use disciplined initiative to adapt rules to a situation. We are even expected to supersede literal orders when we understand the situation has changed where following those original orders would prevent accomplishing mission intent.

MDC relies on professional judgment to reach the appropriate decision in chaotic circumstances. Decisions that result in bad outcomes, if made in good faith trying to meet the intent, are underwritten as acceptable losses and learning opportunities for the organization.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

SOPs are pre-made decisions, based on experience and best practices, communicated by the organization or team to its members. In a rules-based, permission-asking culture, SOPs are very directive. "You must", "You should", "Always", "Never" are common

terms in directive SOPs. They leave no room for discretion. Because they are black and white, they do not adapt to unfamiliar situations or high levels of complexity. These SOPs stifle adaptability and *individual initiative*.

In a Mission-Driven Culture, SOPs are written as delegating tools, allowing for discretion and judgment. This empowers and focuses *individual initiative* correctly because the SOPs are authoritative, but flexible. Like a playbook, we are accountable to know the SOP and if we deviate or adjust, we are accountable for those decisions as well. Adaptability without accountability is freelancing.

End State

Decision making begins with a mental model of success. Amending the initial model leads to the articulation of an end state. An end state is a formal description of success. End states are written to illustrate the gap between the current situation and subsequent success. When done well, they help create a mental model of success as well as imply the means for getting there.

Stemming from a mental model, the end state implies much more than a set of tangible conditions. With it, people can infer the values-at-risk, appropriate levels of effort, and the justification of acceptable risks.

When someone communicates this mental model to others, it propagates a common vision of success as well as a general sense of how to get there. It also facilitates enlisting help; once the end state is shared, others can actively engage, often with minimal additional direction.

Deriving the End State

Deriving an end state begins with understanding the gap between the current situation and how the situation ought to be. Often, a team is assigned a mission that fits into a larger effort and an end state describes the conditions of success for the situation in the context of the overall arc of the larger effort. End states may include both short-term, defensive statements, such as prevented the spread of the fire past the main road. They may also account for strategic and other long-term considerations such as those that describe conditions enabling normal governing processes to resume or implementing long-term policies, such as citizens received appropriate support to rebuild fire-damaged homes.

Considered Unintended Consequences (PSESII)

Because we serve the people of San Diego, the effects of an incident or the consequences of our actions can reverberate well beyond the tactical. These effects, whether they constitute opportunities or threats, also referred to as (PSESII) are summarized below:

Political—factors concerning the public and the governing agencies that are

held accountable

Security—protection of life and property

Economic—factors concerning wealth and prosperity

Social—cultural factors

Infrastructure—transportation, energy production, communications

Information—the message and its interpretation by the public and elected officials

Mitigated or Justified Significant Risks

Retired Marine Lieutenant Colonel Eric Carlson, put it best. "Oh no." he says, "We accept the risk of losses. There are no acceptable losses." There is acceptable risk. There is no acceptable loss. But there will be losses. So where does that uncomfortable truth leave us? With the sacred duty to keep that loss as low as humanly possible. With the obligation to tell the truth to ourselves, our colleagues, and our families about the world they've become a part of. Of the risks they will face. With making imperfect decisions using the best art and science possible. Each loss compels us to introspection and improvement.

Leadership

Employing Our People in Accordance with Their Capabilities

In the same way leaders optimize tactical resources, leaders maximize the potential of teams by matching the tasks that need to be done with the people available to do them. When assigning tasks, leaders take into consideration a variety of factors such as skill, experience, fatigue, and physical limitations.

There are many models and descriptions of leadership styles within the body of leadership research, some sub-divided into nine different categories. Essentially, though, they can be broken three basic styles: *Directing, Participating*, and *Delegating*. Judging which is the most appropriate style requires a flexible, principles-based approach.

The experience and trustworthiness of the person receiving the assignment, the values at risk, time available, stability of the environment, and the amount of clarity regarding risks – are all factors in deciding which style is best for the situation. *Form and function driven by the end state.*

Supporting our People -- Directing

In its purest form, the directing style requires specifying all parts of a task—*who, what, when, where*, and *how*. It is the leadership style most aligned and associated with a permission-seeking culture. Certain conditions warrant using this approach. For example, it is appropriate when the timeframe is short and the tasks are straightforward or known only to the leader. It is also appropriate to use this style dealing with people who lack experience and competence at a task. It can also be used to cut through the filtering and distraction in a chaotic situation.

As leaders in a Mission-Driven Culture, we want to also explain *why* – the purpose behind the task – as long as time and safety permit. This not only builds and maintains a *high trust state*, but allows *continuous improvement* by sharing our knowledge base and developing team members.

Involvement Equals Commitment--Participating

The participating style entails involving those assigned to a task to determine what to do and how to do it, asking for recommendations and information. This kind of give-and-take builds confidence and increases ownership in the plan. It also increases team cohesion. This style is appropriate when the timeframe is less constrained and the task is being assigned to operators who have a reasonable amount of expertise or experience in similar circumstances. It also helps your people grow by understanding the issues and constraints involved.

This can include collaboration, coaching, mentoring, coordinating, advising both within and outside your team or the department. In addition to helping your people grow, it helps build relationships and cohesion within your team. It is useful for situations where you need to lead up the chain or influence peers or work with co-operators or the public.

Employing Your People's Strengths--Delegating

The delegating style calls for entrusting someone else with decisions about how to carry out a task. In contrast to the directing style, delegating is appropriate when the person receiving the assignment has the competence and experience required for success. It is appropriate for people who have demonstrated they are ready to accept such responsibilities.

This style is best for fostering leadership in your people. Leaders keep sight of the long-term goal of developing their people so that most tasks and responsibilities can be delegated, setting the conditions that enable them to grow professionally.

Engaging the Environment

Leaders engage the environment with making a judgment about how amy resources to employ and how much to try and achieve with them.

Strategy

The acronym DRAW-D was developed by the Marine Corps as a tool to understand the spectrum of strategies for engagement with an opponent—whether it be a wildfire, hurricane, oil spill, or act of terrorism.

The DRAW-D acronym is spelled out as follows:

- Defend
- Reinforce

- ▪ Advance

- ▪ Withdraw

- ▪ Delay

Each level of engagement is based on the relative energy states, or combat power as it is known in the military, of the opposing forces. It is defined as the total means of force a team can bring to bear on an opponent at a given time.

When the environment is unleashing overwhelming energy, such as during an explosion or a fire blow-up, conditions are far too dangerous and withdrawing is appropriate.

When resources are at a relative disadvantage, delaying tactics are used to reposition resources at a more advantageous location, or to slow the loss of previous gains.

When the energy states are equal, defense is used to protect previous gains and wait for an opportunity to regain the initiative and go on the offence.

Operational Tempo

Operational tempo is the speed and intensity of our actions relative to the speed and intensity of unfolding events in the operational environment. To ensure that the form and function of the effort remains defined by the end state, leaders plan, prepare, and execute operations proactively to ensure they gain and maintain the *initiative*.

Successfully maintaining operational tempo is not solely about speeding up to match or exceed the pace of the environment. It is also about knowing when operations should slow down and why.

Leaders balance activities such as planning, preparation, and action. Too much time spent planning increases the potential for missing opportunities. Too little time spent planning increases the potential for error. Your situation awareness includes the capabilities and endurance of resources. When committing them, leaders weigh expected gain against potential risks.

In doing this, we ensure that the *form and function* of our actions are always *defined by the end state* we seek.

Initiative

Being Proficient in Our Job

Much of the work in our department is technical. In demonstrating technical proficiency, we adhere to professional standard operating procedures, following established best practices.

We ensure that the form and function of their team helps achieve the end state. We develop and execute plans to accomplish given objectives and communicate plans

throughout the chain of command. We exercise good judgment to ensure that the plan matches the end state, employing people, equipment, and time wisely.

A Duty to Act

We are not only empowered but duty-bound to act in a situation that is within our power to affect, even without direction from above. The linkages to every one of the MDC values to this duty to act are very clear.

This duty is not intended to license freelancing. In high-risk environments, freelancing adds a dangerous and unpredictable element that has caused harm in the past. Ultimately, we are always answerable for our decisions and actions.

In our environment, events do not always go according to plan. At times, you may be the only one in a position to see what needs to be done and to make it happen. Time may not permit informing the chain of command before an opportunity is lost.

On a chaotic and rapidly developing incident, one person taking the *initiative* can make all the difference in seizing and taking advantage of an opportunity. Being hesitant, risk-averse, or indecisive can expose responders to greater long-term risks and translate into a waste of time, opportunity, energy, and resources.

Accepting More Responsibility

One's suitability to accept more responsibility for accomplishing the mission is founded on one's character. On this basis of a sound character, one learns the skills, habits, and trust needed to practice the art of leadership.

Character can be strengthened, and skills can be developed. Our perspective, therefore, is that leaders are made, not born.

As a result, we accept the responsibility of making ourselves the best that we can be no matter our natural gifts. We continuously seek opportunities to learn through formal training, field experience, and self-development.

Unity of Effort

Unity of effort means focusing the team's energy on serving the *common good* and the mission. It means being in sync with the other leaders around you.

Mixed messages or countermanding directives add to the potential for friction, danger, and uncertainty.

Many times we find ourselves in gray areas where jurisdictional lines blur and overlap. In these situations, we employ our skills to influence decisions, forge trusting relationships, cooperate, and ensure that objectives are achieved.

The longer it takes to develop cohesion, the more opportunity there is for confusion to build, which magnifies the risk to our people and increases the likelihood that people will take unproductive or independent action without understanding the larger common operating picture.

Leader's Intent

Leader's intent is a key piece of Mission-Driven Culture. It is the primary tool we use to ensure that *form and function is driven by the end state*. It channels *individual initiative* and builds a *high trust state* by exercising authority where the best information exists to make the decisions. We use leader's intent so that people closest to the scene of action can adapt plans and exercise initiative to accomplish the objective when unanticipated opportunities arise or when the original plan no longer suffices.

Leader's intent reduces internal friction and empowers our people—especially when time is of the essence or chaotic conditions prevent the chain of command from communicating effectively.

Leader's intent is a clear, concise statement about what is expected to be accomplished for the team to be successful. It has three essential parts:

> **Task**—what is to be done.
>
> **Purpose**—why it ought to be done.
>
> **End state**—how the situation looks when it is successful.

Within this framework, people can develop courses of action that include incident objectives, priorities, strategies, trigger points, and contingency plans.

Keeping Your People Informed

Communication is the building block of *trust*. *Trust* is the building block of cohesion. *Trust* is the underpinning of all cohesive teams; without it, teams are merely collections of individuals that can never hope to achieve synergy. Recognizing that communication is the key to building *trust*, we communicate openly and make sure we convey the essence of our values, mission, and vision.

Effective communication requires us to actively listen with others. Active listening is a set of tools that shows through your actions that you understand what others are communicating to you.

Just as communicating with the team builds trust, so does communicating with our leaders. When they are out of the loop—whether intentionally or unintentionally—we bring about a host of negative effects: what is unknown increases; we are seen as unpredictable; our leader's *trust* in us decreases. We keep our leaders informed to gain their *trust* and to prove ourselves capable of increased responsibilities.

As leaders, we respect our people by keeping them informed—describing leader's intent for assignments, providing timely briefings and debriefing, identifying hazards, and answering questions at appropriate times. By keeping our people informed, we consciously create a command climate that fosters initiative.

Five Communications Responsibilities

In high-risk environments, the best level of protection against errors and accidents is effective team communication. Therefore, everyone—regardless of position—has an obligation to communicate pertinent information and build the common operating picture.

To value the *pursuit of truth, build trust*, and foster *initiative*, we practice the Five Communications Responsibilities. These responsibilities are not just tactical tools but apply to all, including staff, support, staff, and leadership environments.

- **Brief**—use briefings to ensure an accurate common operating picture.
- **Debrief**—develop the habit of *continuous improvement* by reviewing team performance using both informal interactions and formally by using After Action Reviews.
- **Acknowledge and understand messages**—acknowledge and reflect back clarity of received communications on conditions, assigned tasks, intent, and other important information.
- **Communicate hazards to others**—use hazard identification, a key component of risk management, to identify personal, tactical, situational, political, or organizational hazards. Good leaders ensure that team members are vigilant for hazards and communicate identified hazards effectively.
- **Ask if you don't know**—guard against making false assumptions when the picture is not clear.

Ensuring Tasks are Understood, Supervised, and Accomplished
Respect

Knowing Our People and Looking Out for Their Well-Being

Our approach to taking care of people encompasses mind, body, and spirit. Because our duty can take us and our people into dangerous situations, we reciprocate their trust by looking out for their safety and well-being in all circumstances.

Leaders learn about people as individuals, developing an understanding of what motivates them and how they derive satisfaction from their work. We consider how stress and fear can affect our people's well-being and take steps to understand and mitigate the effects of these human factors.

Motivation and Expectations

Leaders understand that people derive motivation from individual values and needs. We cannot force a person to be motivated or to change. Leaders are responsible for conditions that encourage motivation and right action and mitigate de-motivators. These are often situations that are out of alignment within the department, where *form*

and function are not being *driven by the end state*. It may be that we have little to no control over a policy or practice where it seems like the tail is wagging the dog.

To create these conditions, we start by taking the time to learn about our people—understanding their internal motivations, goals and accepting them as unique individuals.

Many barriers can prevent people's expectations from being met: poor relationships with their peers, intrusive supervision, inadequate resources, or work without meaning.

Leaders work to reduce barriers and increase benefits such as giving people a sense of achievement, recognizing accomplishments, resolving unhealthy conflict, providing meaningful work, increasing responsibilities, and supporting opportunities for advancement.

Resilience

The strongest teams can bounce back when problems or errors threaten cohesion and synergy. Resilient teams practice behaviors that reinforce situation awareness, communication, and learning.

We create an atmosphere that fosters resilient teams by:

- Establishing an expectation that people at all levels communicate have a duty to communicate effectively to pursue truth, build trust, continuously improve, and contribute to the common good.

- Communicating clear leader's intent, making sure our people understand what is to be done, why it ought to be done, and the end state.

- Defining roles and responsibilities so people have a clear picture of what they are supposed to do and how they fit into the bigger picture.

- Tracking situation status so we understand what progress has been made and can alert others when deviations occur.

- Developing contingency plans to extend decisional space. Maintaining the advantage over the environment by planning for error or unexpected events and calculating responses in advance.

Stress Reactions

In the short term, stress represents a significant risk to safety and operational effectiveness. Stress can bring about reactions such as tunnel vision or confusion that substantially degrade situation awareness—in ourselves and in our people.

To mitigate this risk, leaders act to alleviate the effects of stress by:

- Understanding our own stress reactions—the triggers that set them off, the symptoms, the mitigations to put into place to reduce them.

- Monitoring and preventing stress buildup in their teams—openly discussing the causes of stress and the potential mitigations.

- Encouraging team members to watch out for each other by monitoring one another's stress reactions.

In the long term, cumulative stress and post-traumatic stress can take a significant toll on both leaders and team members. Emotional survival of you and your people over a whole career is just as important as physical survival.

Effective leaders monitor themselves and their teams for signs of long term stress and "call for a second alarm" when extra support is needed.

Fear

A degree of fear of a high-risk work environment can reflect a healthy degree of respect for its dangers. We manage that fear for our people by demonstrating appropriate command presence and communicating effectively to maintain a *high trust state*.

Fear within a team is a sign of a low-trust state. Leaders work to keep fear from being a barrier by understanding those fears that affect their team. It can destroy communication and cohesion. In looking out for our people, we are mindful of their fears and vigilant in overcoming them.

Leading Up

Looking out for our people includes not only those who work for us but also our leaders and peers. Leadership is about influencing others to accomplish tasks that help the organization serve the *common good*; this often means influencing those above us and leading up. Similarly, we are open to upward leadership. In fact, we encourage and reward it to reinforce *individual initiative*, *pursuit of truth*, and *continuous improvement*.

We are expected to lead in many directions, an expectation that increases complexity and risk. Summoning the courage needed to intervene and influence peers or leaders above can be difficult, especially if providing unwelcome feedback about behavior or pointing out an alternative to a potentially bad decision.

No one can afford to assume that anyone has all the answers, especially in high-risk environments. Everyone, at every level, can feel pressure to make decisions without adequate information or make decisions based on outdated information. The potential for error is inherently high.

To build the kind of healthy and resilient culture required in our department we lead up—holding our leaders accountable, providing unvarnished situation awareness in challenging situations, and offering unbiased and viable alternatives.

Leading up with respect is essential to maintaining a *high trust state* with leaders who themselves are probably under a lot of stress. Putting a senior leader into a corner or on

the spot detracts from the *common good*. It makes leaders defensive, lowering *trust* and the willingness to *pursue truth*.

Continuous Improvement

In a high-risk environment, if you're not moving forward and improving, you are falling behind. Standing still equals complacency and accidents. To maintain the initiative in Mission-Driven Culture, we evaluate performance at all levels to understand what caused successes and failures. All those involved learn incrementally, applying today's lessons to the next assignment. This focus on continuous improvement brings with it a responsibility to share lessons learned throughout the organization.

In a learning organization, we treat mistakes made in good faith as opportunities to learn, grow and do better next time. Understanding that failure is a necessary part of learning, a mission-driven culture ensures that new team members are motivated by desire to succeed in serving the common good rather than fear of failure.

Know yourself and seek improvement

One of the most challenging aspects of a Mission-Driven Culture and the *pursuit of truth* is performance feedback. Others, often our leaders, provide feedback for the *continuous improvement* of the team we accept feedback, acknowledging strong performance as well as pointing out where our efforts fall short.

In a mission-driven culture, we are committed to building a high level of competence in team members. Their satisfaction, as well as the future of the department, depends on it. It is the leader's responsibility to mentor and help cultivate the right tools and skills needed to grow by creating open lines of communication and providing an opportunity to exchange ideas, perspectives, and concerns.

We try to praise in public and criticize in private, always respecting the people involved and the situation. When given in a timely and appropriate manner, feedback builds the leader's credibility among team members, demonstrates respect for them, and strengthens *trust*. Failing to provide feedback represents failure in a basic responsibility of leadership: to guide team members in learning accountability, accepting responsibility, and being effective communicators.

Seeking and Accepting Responsibility for Our Actions

We are responsible for the decisions we make and for the actions we take. This responsibility also means that we are accountable for our teams—for the decisions we make and the actions we take based on the leader's intent we received.

We strive to meet and exceed standards for performance in accomplishing the mission. When we fall short, we take action to make it right, getting our teams and ourselves back on track.

Set the Example

A mission-driven culture builds teams in which team members hold each other accountable. More than any system of reward and discipline, more than any policy, the fear of letting down respected teammates and peers represents the most effective means of motivation.

Peer accountability is an outgrowth of *trust* and commitment to serving the *common good*. We set the example by demonstrating that we can hold be held accountable, encouraging others to give us feedback on our own performance in meeting stated goals.

After Action Reviews (AARs)

In our department, we walk the talk of the learning organization by routinely using the After Action Review (AAR) as a tool for evaluating team performance and applying lessons learned. AARs maximize learning from every operation, training event, or task. They represent a powerful tool for team and organizational learning.

AARs allow people to share honest opinions and learn from each other. Leaders make sure that debriefings focus on what instead of *whom;* keeping the discussion focused on the *form and function*, and the *common good*, instead of the individual people involved. We use AARs to improve weaknesses and to sustain strengths. This allows the team to both maintain a *high trust state* and still aggressively *pursue truth*.

When something serious does revolve around an individual violation or negligence (a *who*), that becomes an accountability issue outside the scope of a debriefing and handled by our organization accordingly.

Discipline

The word *discipline* is derived from the Latin word for learning or teaching and should not be confused with mere punishment. Those who are unwilling to perform to standard after providing clear standards and timely feedback, though, may require harder lessons.

Once you recognize a behavior or pattern that may lead to discipline, you may need to engage the chain of command and the systems of systems to assist you. Discipline in our department can be a complex process and involve many people. If you do not do it right the first time, you will come away with the leadership scars to show for it.

Although it can be a difficult process, failing to properly discipline team members who refuse to meet standards undermines team cohesion. Shirking this responsibility represents a failure in the leader's duty to other team members.

Leadership

As leaders, we chose to reach beyond the technical challenges of our profession by stepping forward to lead people in complex and dangerous environments. We trade the

weaknesses of complacency, second-guessing, and fault-finding for the responsibilities of *serving the common good*, improving our people, and building our organizations.

As our careers progress, some move from being leaders of people to being leaders of leaders to being leaders of organizations. At each level, we rise to meet the challenges of adhering to our values of duty, respect, and integrity and assume the responsibility of instilling those values in others.

A leader's accomplishments are measured in their people's actions over their lifetimes. Our character, decisions, and actions create powerful ripple effects that continue to influence people and organizations long after we are gone.

This is the legacy that each generation passes on and entrusts to our successors.

Fitness for Command

Our position as leaders requires us to take people into unpredictable situations where mediocre leaders can be quickly overwhelmed in a crisis and make dangerous errors in judgment.

We accept the responsibility to demonstrate fitness for command as leaders in Fire-Rescue. We prepare for command by learning the applicable technical and leadership skills, by gaining the requisite experience, and by developing the physical, mental, and emotional capabilities through training, certification, and evaluation of behavior.

Setting and Achieving Standards

Leaders set standards as a means of clarifying the leader's expectations as well as those of the organization. Standards define acceptable performance and holding people accountable is contingent on clearly defined standards.

As leaders, we step up to the responsibility of establishing reasonable standards, training to those standards, and providing the resources necessary to achieve the standard. With standards in place, we help people develop technical and personal competency, enabling them to grow as individuals.

Recognizing Accomplishments

Leaders recognize efforts that move their teams toward stated goals. Teams value recognition as evidence that their leaders understand and appreciate their dedication and hard work.

Insincere or uninformed praise, however, can quickly backfire. When a leader singles out someone with extraordinary praise for what is perceived to be an ordinary effort, the leader loses credibility with the team member as well as the team. Often, false praise is more damaging than inappropriate criticism.

At the same time, failing to recognize those who put forth extra effort paints the leader as disinterested and uninvolved. Leaders praise and reward appropriately, based on the situation.

Coaching and Mentoring

Effective leaders coach or mentor and then step back to allow people to take on new responsibilities. Providing the opportunity to test and try new skills and competencies is important in developing people for the future.

We consider the individual skill levels and developmental needs when assigning tasks. We make sure people have appropriate challenges that press them to grow and expand their skills.