

Trust is everything

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It doesn't matter if you're a volunteer, paid, or part-time firefighter. In this business trust is everything. Without a strong foundation of trust, we will surely miss opportunities to be successful at every level of the organization.

Opportunity number 1 - Do your citizens trust that you know how to do your job, provide great customer service, and will be responsible with their tax dollars. Building this type of trust in your community is a non-stop effort. Every time you are in uniform, you are on stage. People are watching and paying attention to your actions and listening to your words. If your not on duty but wearing the fire department T-shirt as you have a few drinks at the bar, what type of message are you sending to the community about their firefighters. Trust can be broken in an instant, but could take years to rebuild.

Opportunity number 2 - Does the administration of your department trust you to be a great representation of the organization? Would you be the one they would call on to meet with a citizen, teach a class, or handle a citizen complaint? Knowing that they have a choice to call on anyone from your department, you should strive to be the person they want on the front line. What have you done in the last 30 days, 6 months, or year to build that trust?

Opportunity number 3 - Trust among your crew. Once again, this takes time to build. The good thing is that, in the fire service, we spend plenty of time together. It's how your crew spends that time that will make the difference between a strong crew and a weak one. The company officer bears the greatest responsibility among the crew members for developing a culture of trust. When this happens, people will feel safe. In turn, they will give their trust in each other. As a company officer, be their leader. As a leader, give your trust for free, but plan on earning theirs.