

## The Power of Networking

By Paul Strong

One of the great things about the fire service is that we are large in numbers. When you meet someone who is also a firefighter, there's an instant bond and conversation can easily flow. Regardless of how different your departments may be, you still have a lot in common with that person.



I have been fortunate enough to attend FDIC the last 2 years and experience the massive opportunities to talk with other firefighters and do some networking. The classes are great at FDIC, but a lot of the value, information, and opportunities come from the discussions that take place outside of the classroom.

Walk into nearly any restaurant or pub in downtown Indy during FDIC week, sit at any given table, and make instant friends. These places are filled with brothers and sisters and produce no shortage of instant camaraderie. Discussing the similarities or differences, the strengths or weaknesses of the "system," or enjoying the stories of the the people who are all like you could be the topic of the moment. It doesn't really matter, does it? It's about making new friends and new contacts.

I took many great classes this week and presented RIC for REAL on Thursday with great success (Thanks for the awesome feedback everyone). During it all, as student or instructor, I was treated with care by every FDIC staff member and volunteer. These people are always polite, professional, and ready to make the experience of being here a positive one. Once again, they succeeded. Not only that, but I was able to do some networking with them as well!

Like I said, there are a lot of us, especially when 30K plus are in downtown Indy all at once. But it doesn't stop there. Back home we all have opportunities, or at least the ability to create opportunities, to get to know firefighters from a neighboring city or district. Building these relationships takes a small effort, but could yield great benefits for you or possibly your entire department.

The more we are united and maintain (at least) working relationships, the stronger we are in the American fire service. I encourage you to find opportunities to do some networking in your area of the country and take a chance on building firefighter relationships that could turn in to something

great.

**Paul Strong** is a 24 year firefighter who is currently a Captain with the Valley Regional Fire Authority in South King County Washington. He is the lead instructor for [www.3sixtytraining.com](http://www.3sixtytraining.com) and is the creator of the original hands-on RIC for REAL training, as well as "The Road to Fire Service Leadership", and "Fire Ground Practices-1st on-scene." Paul has been a repeat lecturer at FDIC, IAFC Fire Rescue International and Washington state Fire Safety & Training Officers conference. He will be lecturing RIC and Leadership at the Washington State Firefighters Association Annual Fire School in June 2014 and well as for the King County Zone 1 Ops Chiefs.