



# *Paul's Leadership Tips*

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## HONORED AND HUMBLLED

On September 24<sup>th</sup>, The California State Firefighters Association (CSFA) held their annual conference in Anaheim. CSFA has approximately 17,000 members. I'm was ***honored and humbled*** to be asked to be the conference keynote speaker.

When the CSFA General Manager asked me to be the keynote speaker we discussed topic and time. We decided 20 minutes would be the time limit. He asked me about a topic. I suggested "lessons learned" from a 32 year career in the fire service, 25 years of which were as a supervisor. I told him I would use the mistakes, and errors in judgment, I made and the lessons I learned from these mistakes as a foundation for the talk. He was skeptical. He reminded me in a nice way that I had only 20 minutes.

My plan was to talk about understanding people in order to get along, how to get people to want to work with and for you, and to pass on advice on how to be an effective and respected leader. Allow me to remind you that these are just my thoughts and life's lessons learned. So, here they are.

Let's start with understanding people in order to get along. The key to understanding people is to get to know them and their "value system." Do you ever wonder why people do the things that they do, or say certain things, or have certain cultural beliefs? Their beliefs and actions come from their value system and their genetics. A value system identifies how you view the world. What is right, wrong, good, bad, how people should act, what is appropriate to say or not say.

A person's value system is developed early in life. As a child growing up we are like sponges, absorbing everything around us and excepting much of it as true, especially when it comes to our parents. This is where we learn a sense of right and wrong, good and bad. Additionally, your social-economic situation, and where you live plays a role in developing your value system.

In the pre-teen and early teen years, we tend to copy people, often our parents, but also people. Rather than blind accepting, we are trying on things like cloths, to see how they feel. We may be much impressed with religion or our teachers. As I did, many of you had a favorite school teacher that we always remember.

As we grow into our teens and young adulthood we become extremely influenced by our peers. We develop as individuals and look for ways to get away from the earlier programming; we naturally turn to people who seem like us.

We use the same concept in the fire service during the new hire process. We like the candidates more when we see one of us in them.

I grew up in San Pedro, California. We were extremely poor and my father left the family when I was 12 years old. There were times when I didn't know if we were going to have a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, a Swanson TV dinner or

popcorn for dinner. This experience developed a value system that doesn't allow me to waste food, work hard so I won't be poor, never allow my children to be hungry, be grateful for all that I accomplished or have.

As a parent I shared these value systems, sometimes too often, with my two sons and now my grandchildren. As an example, a Stein house rule during meals was you could eat as much food as you wished. However, you must eat whatever you put on your plate. My sons never went to bed hungry so therefore they could not understand the reasoning for this rule. They didn't experience what I did, so my discussion on food really had no impact on them. However, that was and still is part of my value system.

Another part of my value system is I don't believe in entitlements. Why? Because I worked hard to reach the successes I have in the fire service and life. No one gave me anything. If I wanted something I worked for it. For many years while working as a firefighter I worked other jobs in construction, sometimes seven days a week. If you want it!! Work for it!!

The last component of my talk discusses "how to be a motivator."

I would like to share some thoughts about motivation. Below are three rules of motivation that I have learned over the years:

- You can't motivate anyone to do anything, they "gotta wanna."
- People do things for their reasons, not yours.
- Everyone is motivated to do what they do at all times whether the action is in their best interest or not.

The first rule of motivation indicates that motivation is internal. What might motivate one person might not be a motivator to another person. Our job as supervisors is to provide the carrot or the triggers of incentive that bring out individual motivation.

Below are some triggers that work:

- Knowing your job
- Constructive feedback; Up and Down
- Clear expectations
- Honesty, trust and respect
- Clear communication
- Proper authority/ownership
- Follow through in commitments
- Pride

The second rule deals with the interest or the "what's in it for me" concept of motivation.

Personal interests are the silent movers behind the actions of people. As supervisors we need to find out what interests people have then provide incentives to satisfy those interests. You might have to look for alternative positions which meet not only your interest, but your team members as well.

The third rule is "everyone is motivated to do what they do at all times whether the action is in their best interest or not." Have you ever said something and as soon as you said it you were sorry you said it. Or have you ever done something and as soon as you did it you were sorry you did it. These actions were probably a result from stress, anger, fear or even the need to get attention.



This is a good rule to remember if one of your team members or, heaven forbid, you, fly off the handle and say or do something inappropriate.

In summary, the motivation of your team members starts with you. Successful leaders are givers and not takers of positive energy.

Successful leaders are people of character. They build a sustainable ethical culture that nurtures and promotes motivation, integrity, accountability, respect and discourages dishonesty and other moral shortcuts.

Remember, Great minds discuss ideas; average minds discuss events; small minds discuss people.

*VIVI BENE--LIVE WELL  
RIDI SPESSO--LAUGH OFTEN  
E AMA MOLTO--LOVE MUCH*

