



REDLINE

LEADERSHIP L.L.C.

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT COACHING FOR PUBLIC SAFETY LEADERS



Issue 23 —February 2025

Tip o' the Hat

This month's "Tip o' the Hat" goes out to Mike Murphy, Brighton Fire Rescue District, for his promotion to Lieutenant! Mike has had quite the journey getting to this point in his career; unlike any I have seen. Mike started his journey as a Volunteer firefighter in Loveland (CO) around 2002 while also attending Aims Community College where he was working towards an AA in Fire Science. While at Aims, he took a career planning test, and it pointed towards a career as a firefighter. So, what did he do? He got into fire sprinkler design, where he remained until sometime around 2015. What was he thinking, right?

His wife Nicole recognized he wasn't fulfilled in his work and suggested he get back into the fire service. Mike was concerned that the big gap in time with no fire service activity would be a black mark, hampering his efforts to get hired. A mentor of his said, "No, it's your passion, your story." Soon thereafter, Mike began volunteering in Windsor (CO) until he was hired at Fort Lupton Fire in 2017. He took a leap of faith in 2019 and moved his career to Brighton Fire Rescue where he is thriving. Mike was promoted to engineer in 2022 and now to Lieutenant.

As we visited, I heard Mike say a couple things that really struck me, demonstrated values that I truly believe in. I asked him what he did outside the fire service, to give back, etc. He said, "Outside work, my passion is going home and being dad. In the chaos." Holy cow! I love that.

"Steeeeeerike!!...nah, Home Run!!"

When our girls were young, like most parents, we encouraged them to try different things. We didn't focus or "overdose" them on any one thing, we tried a lot of different activities so they could decide what they liked and what they didn't. Softball was one of those activities.

One sunny afternoon, we were at a local field for the big game. I can't recall which daughter was slated to play but I know that the kids were all around 10 or 11 years old. A few minutes before the game started, as the kids eagerly warmed up, it became apparent that we did not have an umpire. The game looked doomed.

One of the coaches approached the stands and asked if anyone would be willing to umpire the game. With all my knowledge and experience with sports, I knew I was off the hook. The very last person they would want to umpire was this guy. There were conversations amongst the parents, and after a few minutes, no one volunteered. No one stepped up. Some of these parents had been watching their kids play softball for several years and not a single parent felt it was important enough for them to lend a helping hand. Of course, in their defense, none of them were umpires, none had any experience. The game looked doomed.

I raised my hand, and told the coach I had never umpired before, but would be willing to try if no one else offered. I had virtually no knowledge of the rules except I had been watching our girls play for a couple months and understood a bit about where the pitch was supposed to be, in essence a ball vs a strike.

Continued

Tip o' the Hat...(continued)

I also heard him say, when referring to how he feels after his days off, or a vacation, "....I get to go back to work...." His work; second best only to being a dad.

I asked Mike for his Words of Wisdom, and for a minute, he didn't know what to say. Then he said, "I stole this from a mentor: 'You are what you eat so where's your M.E.A.T.-Money, Energy, Affection and Time.'" After that, Lt. Murphy shared some words he shares with others in the fire service; "This is a profession I love, I am proud of what I do but it is not who I am." Well said, Lt.!

Mike shared that while he was sitting in class back in 2002 at Aims, he thought it would be fun to be an officer. This year, he has realized that goal. Congratulations, Lieutenant!!



“Steeeeeerike!!...” (cont.)

However, I had no idea what it looked like from field level or from behind the plate. But I nervously made my way to the field where they provided me with minimal protective equipment and I took my place behind the plate.

Things got started quietly with a few kids getting hits, a few walks; nothing too exciting. First inning down, second inning finished, middle of three. Wow, I was actually pulling it off and I felt pretty good about it. Then, “the call.” I called a pitch a strike and apparently that didn’t set well with one or two of the crowd members. I heard the comments and felt like I was failing. Not just at the call, or umpiring, but also failing the kids. Then it dawned on me; I was the one doing the work. No one else. Not a single person volunteered to give it a shot, to try. But they certainly volunteered to criticize the work they weren’t willing to do. I can’t recall how I reacted, but I am certainly hopeful that I offered to let them have a crack at the job, that which no one wanted.

So, my message is this; be willing to step up, to try, to take on something no one else wants to do. Step out of your comfort zone to invest in others, make a sacrifice in the interest of being servant. You will learn something, you will “fill your bucket” and you may even inspire another to act. Additionally, don’t be too quick to criticize the work of others, especially that which you are unwilling to do. And criticizing the work of others, work that you have no experience with? Well, I’ll save that for a different day!

“So Irritating!!”

I was grabbed by an article in Fortune Magazine that was titled, **“No one cares if you roll in on time...”** The article talked about the impacts of COVID on our sentiments about punctuality. I found it interesting because I am very prompt. And I believe in the Fire Service, we expect our replacements to be prompt. But what about other areas of irritation in the workplace. Take a look at the top five irritating behaviors and the share of workers who found them the most annoying:

- Not cleaning up after oneself (88%)
- Gossiping (81%)
- Using inappropriate language (78%)
- Being unresponsive to messages (77%)
- Consistently being late to meetings (77%)

Reflect on the list a bit. For the full article, follow this link:

[“No one cares if you roll in on time...”](#)



On Track?

NUGGET: noun: a lump of something, as of precious metal; anything of great value, significant, or the like.

Are you constantly seeking *NUGGETS* of leadership that you can use for your personal improvement?

“Real Intelligence!”

I have been thinking about Artificial Intelligence (AI) and it’s application in the fire service, and specifically the impact to what I am doing with developing leaders. I’ve been dabbling in it a bit myself just to understand it better. Part of my expectations for those that I work with is that they do their own work and not use AI. Ok, to be honest, I give them permission if they so choose but I want to see original thoughts, original words, original work so we can identify areas of potential improvement.

Working with a mentee recently, I could see his writing needed some improvement and I shared that with him. Then, I did something I have never done before: I recommended he use AI to improve his writing. What happened next was amazing; he said, **“I put my work into an AI app but I didn’t like the result. I wanted you to see my words.”** Honesty, integrity, vulnerability and transparency are some of the words that came to mind. What a brave soul. I want him on my team!

I see the value in AI to help clean up documents, to improve grammar/punctuation, and to present professional looking correspondence and reports. But for us, in a service industry, let’s not lose our original thoughts. Let’s use it to improve the stuff we come up with from our own brain, based on knowledge, understanding, emotion and experiences. In a sense, let’s keep it real!!