REDLINE LEADERSHIP L.L.C.

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT COACHING FOR PUBLIC SAFETY LEADERS

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## Tip o' the Hat!!-

This month's "Tip o' the Hat'" goes out to Nate Scott of South King Fire (Federal Way, WA), for his promotion to position of Lieutenant.




*Lt. Scott with Mom-in-law Deanne P. who has been a strong supporter for Nate.*

Nate's path began when he was 18 years old when he decided to attend Bates Voc-Tech's Fire Service program. While attending, he volunteered with Mountain View/Black Diamond Fire and worked various jobs. Something common to every place he worked is that he advanced through the ranks. In 2017, Nate was hired by South King Fire and was promoted to Engineer in 2021. In 2023, he took an 18-month leave of absence and completed the King County Medic One training program through the University of Washington. Nate learned paramedicine wasn't on his path and returned to SKF in December of 2024. Lt. Scott received his bugles in July of 2026.

Additional roles Lt. Scott has held include an assignment to the HazMat team, CBT/EMS cadre and is a career long member of the Rescue Swimmer program.

Nate holds a Fire Science degree from Bates and a Paramedic Certificate from the UW. He is also working on completing a Fire Administration degree through Eastern Oregon University.

Nate recently completed the Tacoma Half-Marathon, which is just one of his day off pursuits. The soon-to-be dad also enjoys cycling and gardening.

Words of Wisdom?: Lt. Scott says "Lead with Kindness."

Congrats Lt. Scott! Job well done!! I can't wait to see what the future holds.

## "Surprise!"

People don't like surprises. Subordinates, peers, bosses, um…People with a birthday!?

When I moved into the training division in 2008, the previous strategy for developing or identifying training topics for the year was to host Company Performance Evaluations in the fall wherein crews would be called to a drill site, ask to perform some skills, provided with no feedback and then sent back to their stations. These evolutions were intended to identify weaknesses that could be turned into training topics for the following year.

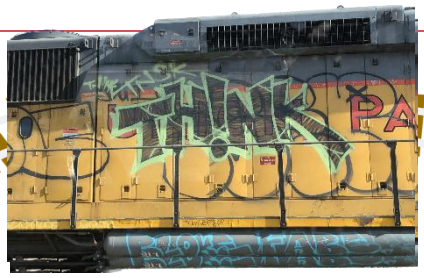
I participated in these evolutions the year before I was assigned to the Division and felt that we had room for improvement. I may have been new in the training division, but I wasn't new to training. Throughout my entire career, I hosted training for my team, neighboring stations and even regional level events. Crews participating in the Performance Evaluations felt like it was a game of "stump the chump" where no actual learning occurred. They were resentful of the fact they weren't given feedback on where they could improve their performance. I thought we needed a change and saw an opportunity. So, at the top of my white board, I wrote ***"No Surprise Philosophy."*** My belief was that if I told the crew what to expect they may be more willing to engage in the training I was offering. I carried this through my annual training plan by identifying the skills that we would practice each quarter and then I would build my annual skills evaluation evolutions off those first three quarters training. No surprises.

The crews completed quarterly training and maybe some crews "pencil-whipped" it. However, no one wants to look bad when they go to training so in preparation for annual

## "Surprise!"

evaluations, the crews reviewed/practiced the training for the year so they would look more skilled when they showed up. I'm calling that a win! And No Suprises! They appreciated the adjustment.

When I was promoted to Battalion Chief in 2012, my boss, Ed Plumlee, shared some words with me that I now recognize as expectations. The words that he shared changed my life in many ways, not just in the fire service or as a leader. His words were simple, but impactful, and have made me a better human being. I think about them often and use them almost daily. Ed told me, ***"Never let me be surprised."*** Think about those words coming from your boss. What great advice!



**SURPRISE**: *noun: something that surprises someone; a completely unexpected occurrence, appearance or statement.*

**Does your communication or leadership style leave room for SURPRISE?**

As I went about my business as a Battalion Chief, I would think of whatever it was that I was facing and ask myself, *"Would I want Ed to be surprised if he heard this tomorrow from somebody else?"* If the answer was no, I'd get him in the loop immediately.

Hopefully you can see that this is likely the best advice I have ever received from my boss, any boss. No, actually, from my ***leader***! Thanks, Ed!

## "Making a Difference? Maybe!!"

This next lesson takes place in a low-income rental space. We have all seen them; articles of clothing tossed haphazardly around, dirty dishes spilling out of the sink, a garbage can that should have been emptied yesterday. A single mom, crying baby, no food in the kitchen. "Vacuum? I don't have time for that." The kind of place where that single parent is struggling to make enough money for food, let alone rent. Where the absent parent still sucks up more resources than the empty spot should. What can we learn in this environment? Plenty!

I was talking to a colleague, dare I say friend, the other day and she shared a story about a time when she was fairly new in the fire service, working with some others to install smoke alarms in these types of low-income places. She and her partner had just completed an install in a mobile home that was home to a family that was obviously struggling, like what I have described. Upon completion of the install, her partner proclaimed something to the effect of, "We just made a difference in these peoples' lives!" My colleague acknowledged the statement and responded; "These people really don't care about the smoke alarm; they can barely afford food!"

My friend said, "Initially my reaction is that she (the tenant) has way more to worry about than a smoke alarm. But the beautiful part is, let me worry about the smoke alarm for you." "She doesn't have the bandwidth, let us who serve the community shoulder the responsibility to worry about the smoke alarm for her" she continued.

The lessons that came to me from this involve humility, empathy and realistic perception of self. My friend clearly recognized the reality of the situation and was humble enough to acknowledge that while our work is important, it's not everything. She projected empathy, looking at the situation not from her perspective, but from that of the tenant.

Thank you, Elizabeth Bednarcik for sharing the lesson you learned. I say, "Be like Elizabeth! We need more like her!"