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# The Fire Service Food Chain: Leading from the Middle

## Part 2 – A Deputy Chief's View

*Line Chiefs Must Foster &  
Develop Trusting  
Relationships*

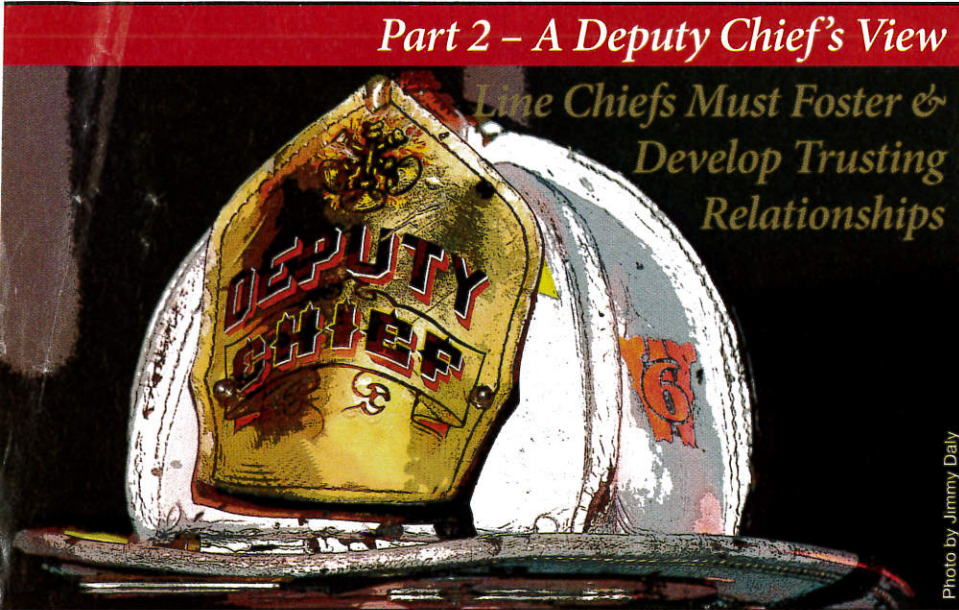


Photo by Jimmy Daly

**Leadership skills and abilities are essential at not just the top level of the organization, but at every level.**

*This is the second installment in a series of articles that examine fire service leadership responsibilities from the perspectives of a fire chief, a line chief and a company officer. This leadership food chain plays an important role in serving our internal and external customers.*

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components of leadership, this article will focus on differentiating between management and leadership and examine the concept of trust and its relationship to three leadership components – integrity, fairness and caring.

## Management Vs. Leadership

Ferdinand F. Fournies, author of the book *Coaching for Improved Work Performance* (McGraw-Hill, 2000) defines management as "getting things done through others." This entails developing the efficiency side of operations or getting the right amount of people and things (resources) in the right place at the right time. Leadership, on the other hand, is ensuring that those people in the right place and at the right time are doing the right things. Stephen R. Covey, in his book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (Simon & Schuster, 1989), has simplified these two similar, but different terms as "Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things." Leadership is about deciding what those right things are and getting others to want to do them. This is extremely important because it is entirely possible to do the "wrong things" very efficiently. Leadership is being effective while management is about efficiently getting things done through others.

Typically, fire departments work at two levels. One is at the emergency level and the other is at the non-emergency level. Emergency operations are usually characterized by the need for immediate action operating with a very real and limited deadline. On the emergency scene, we have clearly defined roles and responsibilities to help our members apply standard inputs toward gaining standard outputs. This has simply evolved because most of our emergency work must be accomplished within a short window of opportunity to be effective. This doesn't leave a lot of time for discussion. Figuring out who is going to carry

**T**he phrase "leading from the middle" almost seems like a contradiction. How does one "lead from the middle?"

The truth is that leadership skills and abilities are essential at not just the top level of the organization, but at every level, including the middle level.

The fire service is especially dependent on the leadership abilities of its officers. Leading from the middle is what line chiefs (deputies, assistants and battalion chiefs) do on a daily basis. Those line chiefs hang out with both the upper-level managers (staff chiefs and the fire chief) and the lower-level managers (company officers). This middle-management role is responsible for carrying out the goals and objectives of the upper-level managers by engaging the lower-level managers into action. While there are many