




# PROMOTIONS WITHOUT DEGREES

Incorporating the mindset of leadership from within yourself is the first step toward promotion in the public safety communications arena.

By Rhonda Braudis



**H**ave you ever sat down, took a moment to think about your future or the direction of what that future may look like? We

often think about it, but how often do we really make changes, take action or get moving? We think to ourselves we don't meet new job qualifications, we don't have those skills, don't think we are good enough yet, or for whatever reason we just don't think we'd be the ones chosen. A lot of us have been there; we've had those same feelings and thoughts and they truly didn't change until we changed our thought process. Stop thinking about the "excuses," and focus on the positives. We spend so much time thinking and worrying about what won't work, but when you stop to think about the positives and the possibilities you will be truly shocked at what you can accomplish. There are simple steps we can all take in our industry to make changes. So you may ask how do I start? Well, let's discuss that.

In the interest of full disclosure, I have a degree now, but I didn't always and certainly didn't when I began my path. College is expensive, takes a long time and didn't make me a better leader. What it did teach me I value, but you must first understand it was other things that taught me to truly be a good leader and those are the things that we are going to talk about. If you're reading this article, I would take it as your desire to gain promotion, and you want to know more. The first thing I will tell you is to take a hard look in the mirror and be honest with yourself. We often don't find anything wrong with the way we communicate or interact with others, but the real question is what others' perceptions are. Remember that perception becomes reality. It is not always just what you think; it is what others think as well. When you are looking for advancement in our profession or any other, you must first recognize areas where you need to grow.

It started for me with my approach to situations or problems. Sure, any day I can get angry or upset, because I am very passionate about my profession, but does that really fix the problem or provide me a clear solution? Here is what I had to realize: the answer is no, it doesn't. What getting upset and responding out of anger or frustration does is makes me have a really bad day. It provides no solutions and may create the perception that I can't work out problems or issues in a professional manner, or that I am too passionate about the subject at hand and am unable to be objective. I learned a long time ago one very important key from my daddy: We must think and remember, we have no control over what others say or what others do — what we have absolute control over is how we respond to situations and our actions. So, when I say look within, I'm not kidding. Once I began to figure this out, I had to look at what damage I had already caused, if any, and begin reparations.

Start thinking about this before you finish this article because it's that important. There is always time; I don't want to hear that it's too late. Now that you have strengthened these areas, you have to show to management that you are right for the job regardless of what candidates are out there. What you have to offer is far beyond what anyone else has to offer. Pretty bold statement, right? Well back it up!

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**First, learn your job. You should know every aspect of your profession forwards, backwards, inside and out. There is always something to learn and a new way of doing things.**

backwards, inside and out. There is always something to learn and a new way of doing things. Don't discount your team, as you can learn from each other. Being a leader is more than just managing others and being the authority; it's about building a team and fostering those relationships. Start now. Management wants to see your ability to work with others and how you react to or handle situations as they come up. As you continue to learn, share that knowledge and focus on the positive aspects of what we do. Think about your responses and interaction with others. I can tell you if you get passed over for a job right now, it doesn't mean there isn't something around the corner for you. However, remember those reactions? If you don't get something you were hoping for, quitting other things sends a clear message to management that if you don't get your way,

you will just give up. This is not acting like a leader or managing your emotions. If you disagree with your supervisor, have a discussion not an argument. Remember, there are two sides and there is an opportunity to see another side while still promoting yours. Begin now. If there are issues from the past, sit down, ask for a meeting and a fresh start. Prove your abilities and a change in those interpersonal communication skills. Send the message that you are ready and you are the right fit.

Second, look at your image and begin to refresh. You may already be the most liked individual and the most knowledgeable, but what does that really look like to others? I'm not saying go out and change your personality, but you do need to understand those relationships. Set those boundaries now. Work is work and personal is personal. You may one day be the supervisor over those friends you have and you want to make certain those lines are clear. Treat everyone the same regardless of whether you are friendly outside of work; we are a team and there should never be a break in that professional team environment. Set the tone and the example for others to follow. Remember that management doesn't just post a job, throw out some darts and check to see where they land. They do their research as well and want the absolute best candidate for the job. That may not be you today, but it doesn't mean it won't be you tomorrow.

Begin looking at and reviewing job postings. I know we don't want to just up and leave our current position, but we must look at what type of person is being considered for those positions and what requirements or skills are being reviewed or sought after. Often, these postings are very similar in nature and they desire college, but will typically say, "or any combination of schooling and years that meet the minimum." Remember, you don't have to have a college degree to advance. I didn't when I started my process. Across this industry many directors don't possess a college degree. Although I'm not going to name them, I can tell you to look around and ask questions.

Look at different programs that are out there currently; if you look at desired qualifications many of the leadership roles desire RPL (registered public safety leader), CPE (certified public-safety executive), or ENP (emergency numbers professional). These are programs either through APCO or NENA. They have scholarships that you can apply for

in order to take these courses. They are amazing. I began with RPL, and I can't begin to describe the changes in my leadership style. It opened my eyes even wider to my flaws and areas that I needed to work on as a leader. I would highly recommend researching all of the qualifications.

Ultimately, you know what to do so get started. It takes time to find the right fit. Many agencies that initially seek outside applicants may, and even often, have someone inside the agency they are looking at. This is common so don't let it get you down; these positions are opened for due diligence to ensure they truly do have the best applicant possible. Conversely, if you are on the inside,

and it is opened externally, don't let it bother you if someone from the outside is chosen. You may truly feel you are the best candidate, but many aspects are looked at and reviewed. Now comes the truly important question. Ask yourself, how much do you want this, and are you willing to move to attain it? Depending upon your jurisdiction, open positions may be rare and there may be a large number of local candidates to compete with. If this is the case, don't let time or rejection slow you down. Keep applying, but don't do it because you think that it will be better somewhere else or because you just need a fresh start. Leadership comes from within not from our surroundings. Determine if you are willing

or able to move; if you won't move, how far are you willing to commute for a position? Take these things into consideration when searching for that leadership role. Ultimately, when you're ready, you'll have done the work. You're ready to research the position, go to that interview and dress for success. Then rock it because that is your time to sell yourself, and convince the panel why you're there and why you are the best! ●

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## CDE EXAM #54563

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stop thinking about the _____ and focus on the positives.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Disruptions</li> <li>b. Irritations</li> <li>c. Excuses</li> <li>d. Negatives</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. College is inexpensive, takes a long time and doesn't make you a better leader.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. True</li> <li>b. False</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Perceptions become _____.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Reality</li> <li>b. Truth</li> <li>c. The Way of Life</li> <li>d. Tools for the Future</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. We have _____ control over how we react to a situation.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Zero</li> <li>b. 90%/10%</li> <li>c. Some</li> <li>d. Absolute</li> </ol> </li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. There is always something to learn.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. True</li> <li>b. False</li> </ol> </li> <li>6. Start _____, management wants to see your ability to work with others and how you react to situations or handle situations as they come up.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Tomorrow</li> <li>b. When You're Ready</li> <li>c. Now</li> <li>d. Next Week</li> </ol> </li> <li>7. In the second step, look at your image and begin to _____.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Rework</li> <li>b. Reload</li> <li>c. Renew</li> <li>d. Refresh</li> </ol> </li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Reviewing job descriptions and job postings will give you an idea of what employers are seeking in their candidates.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. True</li> <li>b. False</li> </ol> </li> <li>9. Scholarships are only available through APCO for online courses.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. True</li> <li>b. False</li> </ol> </li> <li>10. When preparing for an interview, there is no need to research the position or qualifications.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. True</li> <li>b. False</li> </ol> </li> </ol> |
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