

# Survival Skills for the Newly Promoted Battalion Chief

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## **OBJECTIVES:**

- Define how the role of the Battalion Chief has changed over the years
- Create an action plan for success as a newly promoted Battalion Chief
- Identify various Battalion Chief survival skills

## **DIFFERENT NAME / SAME JOB:**

- Battalion Chief
- District Chief
- Division Chief
- Assistant Chief
- Deputy Chief
- Shift Commander

How has the role &  
responsibility of a  
Battalion Chief  
*changed* over the last  
20 to 40 years?

What are some of the *challenges* a Battalion Chief is faced with on a daily basis?

# What To Expect Your First Year As A New Battalion Chief

# **WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER PROMOTION**

- You may have a **probationary period**
- You may have a project to complete or program to manage
- You will be **evaluated**
- You will be under the microscope
- You will be **tested continuously**
- You will make decisions daily that could have serious long-term effects on your trust, credibility, and long-term success, among other things.....

# Survival Skills for the Newly Promoted Battalion Chief

# **SURVIVAL SKILLS FOR NEW BC:**

- Meet with your new boss a.s.a.p. to find out **their expectations** of you.
- Meet with your personnel in a reasonable time frame to **share expectations**
- Get to know your **boss** (more than you already know).

# **SURVIVAL SKILLS FOR NEW BC:**

- Get to know your **personnel** (more than you already know).
- Put together a to-do list, **and** use it as a check-list to evaluate your performance on a regular basis
  - *Include education, training, experience, **as well** as knowledge, skills, and abilities you would like to obtain*

## ***SURVIVAL SKILLS FOR NEW BC:***

- Learn the history of things (what worked, what didn't work, etc.)
- Take the time to observe things (management by walking around and actually paying attention).
- Remain neutral

## **SURVIVAL SKILLS FOR NEW BC:**

- Attempt to provide **face time** to your personnel daily.
- Don't get too involved **or** over commit yourself **too soon** while you're still learning your job.
- Develop excellent **listening** skills

## ***SURVIVAL SKILLS FOR NEW BC:***

- This isn't a competition – don't compete!
- Develop & maintain relationships – internal and external.
- In the beginning, attempt to obtain “little victories”

# ***SURVIVAL SKILLS FOR NEW BC:***

- Be respectful of others, especially your predecessors.
- Strive for consistency.
- Don't selectively enforce rules & regulations.
- Don't jump to conclusions.

# ***SURVIVAL SKILLS FOR NEW BC:***

- Immediately take ownership of your new position.
- Surround yourself with talented people.
- Maintain your personal sanity (health and welfare).
- If you never fail....you never give yourself the opportunity to succeed!

# *SURVIVAL SKILLS FOR NEW BC:*

- Enjoy the journey, it will go fast.
- Realize the higher up the chain of command you rise, the less people will “like you.”
- Don't try to be “everyone's best friend.” Instead, try to be “respected” by your peers and/or superiors.

## ***SURVIVAL SKILLS FOR NEW BC:***

- Don't forget: it's the position or rank they dislike.
- Realize, you're more in the spotlight now than you ever were.
- Don't compromise your values.

# *SURVIVAL SKILLS FOR NEW BC:*

- It's not "us versus them" anymore
  - It's "all of us are in this together" to do what is best for the personnel, the public, and the communities we serve
- Make sure you keep your supervisor in the loop, and know what they expect of you

## ***SURVIVAL SKILLS FOR NEW BC:***

- One wrong word out of your mouth can doom your career or reputation.
- One wrong word documented can also doom your career or reputation.
- Delegate when appropriate; you can't do it all.

# **SURVIVAL SKILLS FOR NEW BC:**

- You're no longer "one of the guys or gals" (hopefully you realized that when you got promoted to Company Officer).
- You're now "one of them" (administration). Get used to it.
- You can't please everyone, remember the 50.1% rule.

# **SURVIVAL SKILLS FOR NEW BC:**

- Inspect your stations, apparatus, equipment & personnel on a regular basis.
- Ask lots of questions.
- Learn how to see the big (or bigger) picture.
- Determine who the movers & shakers are – internally & externally.

# **SURVIVAL SKILLS FOR NEW BC:**

- If there was ever a time to be calm, cool and collect, at everything you do – now is it!
- I hope you realize the liability, the commitment, and the responsibility you have to your personnel, your community and your department.
- Admit mistakes (yes, it isn't fun at times)

## ***SURVIVAL SKILLS FOR NEW BC:***

- Don't allow your personnel to come to you with problems, without having thought of at least 2 solutions.
- You must continuously grow (personally and professionally).

# PERSONNEL EXPECTATIONS:

- As a Company Officer, you should have already established personnel expectations.
- *If you have not, it's never too late to start.*
- *As a Battalion Chief, failing to have personnel expectations is a recipe for failure!*

# **PERSONNEL EXPECTATIONS:**

- Write them out in advance, ensure they are reasonable, obtainable, legal, ethical, and appropriate for your situation
- Share them with your Company Officers to share with their crews
- Encourage your Company Officers to share their expectations with their personnel
- Hold your Company Officers accountable!

# **ETHICAL DECISION MAKING**

- Use the **Headline Test**.
  1. Is it the right thing for our personnel?
  2. Is it the right thing for our department?
  3. Is it the right thing for our community?
  4. Would you mind reading about it in the morning newspaper?
- ✓ *If you can answer a positive yes to all 4...  
GO FOR IT!*

## **CLOSING THOUGHTS:**

- Don't be part of the problem, be part of the solution
- You no longer have a “personal” to-do list every day.
- As a Battalion Chief, you're no longer in this for yourself.....

# *CLOSING THOUGHTS:*

- Some of the happiest employees are those that “like” their supervisor!
- *Thus it is ok and actually a good thing to be liked (people that are liked and also nice have a less likely chance to get sued...).*
- *Just be “liked” for the right reasons.....*
- Monkey see – monkey do (be on your best behavior)!

## *CLOSING THOUGHTS:*

- When all else fails, when your day is going south, when things are just not fun, please don't forget why you are really here:
  - To take care of your community & the public.
  - To take care of your department.
  - To take care of your personnel.

# QUESTIONS / CONTACT INFO:

- Thank you very much for your time!
  - Don't just stay safe – make it safe!
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