

Thinking About Taking A Promotional Exam?

If So, Start Preparing Now!!!!

International Association of Women in Fire &
Emergency Services Conference – Omaha, NE

May 14, 2009

- Steve Prziborowski -

Battalion Chief, Santa Clara County (CA) Fire Department



Objectives

At the end of this session, you will have gained.....

- Valuable tools to help increase your scores on your next promotional exam
- A better understanding of where you are and what you need to do to get promoted
- Various methods to best prepare yourself for the promotional process



You may ask yourself.....

- Why another promotional class?
 - I do not profess to know it all
 - If you walk away with at least one new concept or idea, I will be happy
 - Listen to as many people as you can, take something from each of us, then formulate your own plan of action



Some General Ideas to
Reinforce the Importance of
Why you Need to Start
Preparing Now for that Next
Promotional Exam.....



Don't wait until the last minute

- Take responsibility and control of your destiny
- Excuses, excuses – we all have them
- Lack of time? We're all busy.
- Learn time management and organizational skills – you're going to need them as a company or chief officer.



The Question is not if the next process will occur – but when

- Can be 18 to 36 months in between tests
- Might not seem like a long time, but it can be an eternity depending on your current situation



The key is whether you will be prepared for the next exam

- Need to be in great mental and physical shape to be successful
- If you have experienced at least one promotional exam, you'll understand
- This process can and will be draining on you and your family



People fail for two reasons:

1. They are nervous
 2. They are unprepared
- Do what you can to overcome the above
 - The ball is in your court



Are you aware of the.....

- Liability
- Responsibility
- Accountability

That a company or chief officer has within your organization and the fire service? If not, you're in for a rude awakening.....

- As they say – be careful what you ask for, it just may occur!



Why do you want to get promoted?

- Ego?
- Money?
- Power?
- Control?
- Ability to make a positive difference?
- ???????
- If you don't know – don't pass go or collect \$200! Stop and reevaluate.



Think about this:

- It's a full time job getting the job
- You must think, act, sleep, breathe and continuously place yourself in the position you aspire to every moment you can



Are you still positive that you
want to get promoted in the
fire service??

If so, then let's get going – we
have a lot of information to cover!



Getting promoted in the fire service is not an easy task.

Having a plan and sticking to it will greatly increase your chances at getting promoted.



Whether you want to ride the seat
in this vehicle.....



Or drive this vehicle.....



You need
a plan of action to
get there!



The Fire Department Promotional Candidate's Plan of Action



1. Ensure this is what you really want to do

- Talk to those already in the position
- Look at the negatives and the positives
- Ensure that you know the roles and responsibilities of the position you're aspiring to



2. Ensure that your family is on board

- Can lead to serious problems if not
- Vacations/events may have to be postponed, cancelled or continued in your absence
- The badge will not drop out of the sky – you're going to have to spend time obtaining it



3. How long are you going to have to study?

- Should have started prior to getting hired
- Everything you learned as a FF will help
- As soon as the last exam was announced, you should have already started
- You can't learn everything in 6 to 12 months!



4. You're being watched

- Perception is reality
- Be on your best behavior
- The Fire Chief wants mature people that make good decisions and use sound judgment
- Are you somebody that will represent the department in the best light?



5. Review previous flyers

- They will provide you with valuable information
- Ask around for a copy
- Look at other promotional flyers from other departments – even if you don't want to work there



6. Get your resume up to date

- Keep it to one page if possible
- You can do it yourself
- Back it up
- Update regularly



7. Know the minimum qualifications

- Look on previous flyers, in department manuals, talk to your H.R./Personnel folks
- Remember this is just a minimum
- Realize they can and should change with time – plan for the future



8. Know the desirable qualifications

- May be found on the flyer
- May be obvious based on past promotions
- Ask the Fire Chief / senior staff
- Go above and beyond the minimum



9. Know written exam reading list

- May be found on the flyer / previous flyers
- Ask your HR / Personnel folks and Senior Staff
- Department manuals should be a “freebie”
– you should have learned that stuff the day you were hired



10. Develop your own promotional library

- Don't rely on having to check out books from the department library
- Don't rely on having to borrow books from others
- Have your own copies to mark up
- You have to spend money to make money – this is an investment, maybe a tax write off (check with your tax consultant)



11. Know your department

- Website
- Role of the union
- Department manuals
- SWOT's
- Current issues, problems, programs
- Future issues, problems, programs
- Mission statement
- Annual report, master or strategic plan
- Budget, run stats, etc.



12. Know your community

- Website
- Demographics
- Elected/appointed officials
- Type of government structure
- The future
- This is critical if you live outside the area
 - Don't be the one with the license plate bracket: "Happiness is seeing ___ in my rearview mirror"



13. Subscribe to trade publications

- Firehouse
- Fire Engineering
- Fire Chief
- Journal of Emergency Medical Services
- Don't just limit yourself to fire and EMS, consider local/state government ones as well



14. Subscribe to email mailing lists

- Firehouse.com
- FireEngineering.com
- DailyDispatch.com
- Local news paper
- Many other fire/EMS related choices to stay abreast of current issues



15. Get involved with associations

- Training
- Fire Prevention
- Fire Investigation
- Chief Officer
- Health and Safety
- NFPA
- IFSTA



16. Become an expert in something

- Training
- Fire Prevention
- Fire Investigation
- Safety
- Technical Rescue
- Leadership
- Haz Mat
- Computers / technology
- Legal issues
- Be the “go-to person”
- ??????



17. Create your mentor network

- Within your department
- Outside of your department
- Personnel of all ranks
- More opinions the better
- Ask them to review your resume, provide advice, etc.



18. Select assignments carefully

- Supervisors
- Station assignments
- Apparatus assignments
- 40-hour staff assignments
- Busy vs. slow companies
- Have a diverse background to offer



19. Practice, practice, practice

- Written examinations
- Size-ups, strategy/tactics, unit deployment at emergencies
- Attend training & educational seminars
- See if folks in the positions you aspire to will do mock simulations or orals
- Instruct at the department & college level



20. Never let your passion become a 10-55

- Passion is the key to success
- Life is full of ups and downs
- You must remain passionate
- It will show in everything you do
- Look around you, it's not too difficult to distinguish between those that still have it and those that have lost it



Final Thoughts



Why waste your time...

- If you're not going to be the best you can be?
- I don't know about you....but I have better things to do than continuously prepare for promotional exams



I'm not ready for this exam, I'll wait for the next one....

- Using that logic, you may never be ready
- By taking the exam, you'll learn more about yourself
- Plus, you'll get to experience the process
- You may even get some acting time in the position
- What's the worst that could happen???



Do so well the first time....

- You don't have to take it a second time!
- Easier said than done, but it's true!



And if there is a second time...

- We hope you have learned from the first time so now you can come out on top!
- No reason to be a career test taker



After the process is over...

- Take detailed notes in case you have to take the test again
- Talk to the proctors to see what you did well on and need to improve on
- If nothing else, a great way to build your network



The Bottom Line....



Set yourself up for success
long before the process
begins and your odds of
success will greatly
increase!!!



Doing so will not only prepare you for the promotional process itself, but for situations like this.....





1/2 to 1/2 Gals Wye 1/2
6 lengths pencil line
2 pencil line
1 pencil wye
1/2 Gals
ARRS

DFT-5 CH12
CH13

CALIFORNIA
FIRE

Questions?



Contact Information:

Steve Prziborowski

sprziborowski@aol.com

408-205-9006 – Cellular phone

For more Fire Service Promotional
Preparation information,

visit my websites: www.chabotfire.com &

www.code3firetraining.com

