



THE REVIEW

Central Arizona Fire and Medical - 8603 E. Eastridge Dr., Prescott Valley, AZ 86314 – **February 25, 2022**

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**"Life is essentially an endless series of problems.
The solution to one problem is merely the
creation of another." Mark Manson – The
Subtle Art of Not Giving a F&*k**

The Assistant Chief's Desk

By: Dave Tharp

How often have we been engrossed in self doubt? It is often said that "you are your own worst enemy" and in so many ways it is true. I was honored to teach in the Company Officer Academy this week. I was asked to discuss and prepare the future leaders of organizations from around the area about the ART of the Oral Boards in promotional testing. Now I will tell you that many are looking to find out about the process, types of questions and the "magic wand" that they can wave that will make their oral board a success. And we do talk about the types of questions and what is being assessed in an oral interview. But I usually really garner their attention when I ask three questions – What are you testing for, who's interview is it, and what are you really doing to prepare?

For most in the room, the answer is obvious – they are testing to become a company officer. They usually mention their motivations – more pay, more responsibility, steps towards being a chief officer, or just looking to score high enough to make "the list". But what we try to instill is the idea that your testing for the position starts way before the actual date of testing. Each candidate should be looking at the position of what they envision, or what their agency envisions, is the leader they should be – and if they don't know what that is – they better find out! At CAFMA, the culture and expectations are outlined in our Mission, Vision and Values – and if a more in depth explanation is needed, then reference the Compass. We encourage the participants to talk to other company officers, chief officers and even the fire chief to find out what is a great leader and how that person will become an asset to their specific organization. If you don't know what you are testing for, it is very difficult to know the standards expected. What we also try to emphasize is that the lessons we provide in preparation for the

Company Officer testing doesn't just apply to that specific process – but to life. Development of what you are and what you want to become is natural. But how often do we actually ask the question of what are we testing for in life? What are those expectations? Have we consulted with others to know what are the expectations or are there just uncommunicated expectations that you have no hope in fulfilling?

Moving on, the next question always seems to stump the class. It is a simple answer – it is your interview. It doesn't feel that way when you are trying to answer the proposed questions and you are stressed out of your mind, but it is your interview. You control the answers, you control the delivery, you control the content, you control the verbal and non-verbal responses, and the effectiveness of the communication. And ultimately – you are your own worst enemy. We have seen it time after time, where trains of thought derail, nervous habits come screaming forward and the stress of the situation causes self doubt and self destruction. Interestingly, this really seems to resonate with the participants when we talk about how this applies to life outside of the interview. While the interview offers a 45 -60 minute snapshot into someone's abilities to communicate, control the situation, mitigate time and construct meaningful responses, it actually teaches us about their character, how they will react to stress, and who they are as a person. How often are we tested in life? What are we being tested on? How do we respond? Do we react and hope for the best – or do we realize it is our life, our challenge, our issue – then realize what we can and can't control, formulate a meaningful answer or solution and work through it? Do we truly realize we are our own worst enemy? Alex Smith's TED talk on what happened to him and the challenge he needed overcome all started with acknowledgement of what was happening to his body. Accepting it was his life, and though he would need help, it was ultimately his decision how his "interview" was going to go... good, bad or ugly.

TED Talks – An NFL Quarterback on Overcoming Setbacks and Self Doubt

By: Alex Smith

https://www.ted.com/talks/alex_smith_an_nfl_quarterback_on_overcoming_setbacks_and_self_doubt

Assistant Chief's Desk Continued

The third and final question posed to the class participants is "what are you really doing to prepare?" Many respond with their studying techniques, or how many mock oral boards they practice with. But realistically, can you prepare for every possible question that may be asked in a promotional interview? For my Battalion Chief's oral interview, I studied over 2500 questions. How many of those questions were asked? One. I prepared in the way I thought was going to produce a successful outcome. But I did not actually prepare for the interview. How often do we prepare for a situation, but life throws us a curve ball? The answer is all the time. Just like in oral boards, the answer is actually a process of preparation that occurs with how you actually react, respond or adapt. Just like in promotional interviews, you will bomb it at times in life (believe me, I can provide you multiple instances in my life for reference), but do you have the grit to recover? Can you adapt to questions that you don't know the

answer to or formulate an answer without having ever gone through the experience? The point is that the time to prepare for an oral interview is every day. Recognizing your strengths, weaknesses, and working on both. Knowing your triggers, learning your ability to overcome adversity, setting your moral compass, and humbly realizing that you do not know it all – nor will you ever. We challenge the class to begin the preparation process daily – find out what are the expectations, understand that it is totally up to you, and *really* preparing ...to become a company officer, better spouse, or better person... understanding that promotional exams occur every day.

“May we never lose our way.”