

# Could **you** be an EMS leader?

by Jay Fitch, Ph.D.

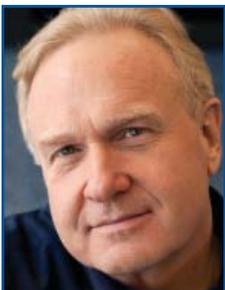
**C**OULD YOU BE A LEADER IN YOUR CHOSEN FIELD OF EMS? True leadership comes from all levels of an EMS organization. Whether you are involved in only your local service, or are appearing on the “larger stage” of national leadership, it’s important to know and carry out your exact role and become the most effective leader you can be.

Leadership can be a calling, but it also takes knowledge, added learning and hard work to be an effective leader. The three C’s – *Context*, *Commitment* and *Community* – can help you remember what’s involved in each step of leadership, whether you are at the bottom of the organizational ladder or on the very top rung.

**Context** – Understanding yourself, your role and your organization is key to mastering context, or what’s going on around you. What is the mission and vision of the your EMS organization? Do your values align with its culture?

Many of us mindlessly move through our day-to-day activities without being fully aware of the importance of our values and how we use them to interpret the motives

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Fitch

of others. Clarity about who you are and your EMS service’s or association’s culture provides a key frame for leadership as you move forward. And, just like the frame around a favorite photo, the values and goals of the organization in which you are involved help provide perspective on your leadership.

**Commitment** – When you choose, or are chosen, to serve as a leader within an organization or the larger community, it’s important to make a strong commitment to your role. Sometimes, you have to “give up, show up and grow up” to become an EMS leader.

Giving up involves sacrificing the time it takes to learn leadership skills – time that could otherwise be spent with family or friends. Showing up involves being on the job both physically and emotionally, even when it’s not convenient. It’s about consistently delivering results of which you are proud. Growing up means paying



attention to your own behavior. It means realizing that as a leader you are always “on stage,” with others keenly observing your attitude, skills, knowledge and style. Most importantly, leadership is about keeping commitments — holding yourself and others accountable for the best possible outcome in any given situation.

**Community** – Developing community means connecting with a wide variety of stakeholders. These include subordinates, peers and bosses, patients and other customers, the medical community, national organizations and political leaders, to name just a few.

Bringing together a community involves learning to collaborate and communicate. Collaboration is about engaging and involving others in meaningful ways. Communication is the single most important skill and tool that true leaders develop and use. God gave us two ears and one mouth as a sign we need to listen more than we talk when communicating.

Effective leaders learn to listen in 3D; that is, they listen with their ears, eyes and heart. Each provides important perspective on what’s being said.

Developing community, keeping commitments and understanding context all help you continue to develop your leadership skills.

One final concept to remember is that when we learn to help others meet their needs, ours usually can be met too. That’s one of the not-so-secret lessons of being an effective leader, regardless of where you are in EMS.

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