



## Developing Yourself as a Leader

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**Learning Objective:** The student will be able to consider ways to build and improve himself or herself to develop his or her leadership skills.

The National Fire Academy course “New Fire Chief III: Contemporary Issues” (NFC III: CI) reviews many of the contemporary issues that face any agency today. One of the challenges to you as the contemporary fire services leader is how to remain current and in tune with today’s issues in your agency.

Some recommendations that you can consider are:

- **Find and develop a strong relationship with a mentor:** Find an experienced person you can talk and share ideas with who will give you the advantage of his or her perspective and experience.
- **Seek out leadership opportunities:** Look for chances to be a leader in activities outside the fire department. Look at social community organizations, volunteer organizations, clubs, or any organized efforts in your community.
- **Observe other leaders:** Watch and learn from the triumphs and failures of leaders, both locally and nationally. Research them online, and learn more about their thought process. Read books or articles about their successes, or study their beliefs. You can learn from both good and bad leaders.
- **Be willing to fail:** We all make mistakes. The important question is do we learn from our mistakes and remember how we failed?
- **Be a great communicator:** Your success or failure often revolves around your ability to communicate with others and the honesty of that communication. In today’s connected world of the Internet, videos, smart-phones and other technology, you must use a variety of communication tools to reach different groups.
- **Be social media smart:** Are you up on the current technology? It may be Twitter and Facebook today, but it will change quickly. Are you on Snapchat, Instagram or whatever is now popular?
- **Have a vision and a plan:** Do you have one? Is it written down? If not, spend some time putting down your thoughts. It is good to refer to them on a regular basis to see how you are progressing.
- **Get up on the balcony:** Always remember to climb up the “balcony” of life on a regular basis. Make sure you see the world and your life from a different perspective. This effort allows you to see the bigger picture of your life.
- **Think and act politically:** Politics is not about specific parties. It is about people. Your strengths are your abilities and skills that influence people and relationships that help your agency. This is not about personal gain, but it is about improving your agency.
- **Get as much training and education as you can:** This effort will allow you to better react with and understand the fast-paced world we now live in. It will give you better skills to work with other people.

Developing yourself is a never-ending effort. Keep at it!

For more information on the NFC III: CI course, visit <https://apps.usfa.fema.gov/nfacourses/catalog/details/10599>.