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*Paying it Forward  
Leading with Purpose  
with Chief Randy R. Bruegman, (Ret)*

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## The *Why?* Behind The Leadership Crucible

When you look around the landscape of what is occurring in our country and around the world, we find ourselves at a critical time when we need leaders to be called to a higher standard. Yet we see an inability for many in leadership positions to do just that - lead! Today, there are few that will actually walk their talk and lead by example. This has created a leadership vacuum evident in government and in many public and private organizations.

We often learn our own leadership skills by observing and learning from others. One has to ask: what are our next generations learning from the people who are viewed as leaders because of the title or position they hold? In many cases, what they are learning is that it is acceptable to be dishonest, to say one thing and do exactly the opposite, and force others to adhere to standards without adhering to the standards they profess. These are not the leaders that we should emulate or aspire to be become.

### Paying It Forward

There are many exceptional leaders out there who are not in the spotlight yet are doing great things every day to make a difference in peoples' lives. ***Our mission is to find those people and bring them to you.*** We present their stories so you can learn from their experiences and, most importantly, the lessons they have learned.

***Experience can provide one of the best learning opportunities, but only when we share those experiences with others!***

I've always believed that good leaders are focused on doing two things. One is to leave it better than they found it, and the other is to pay it forward to the next generation who will lead us in the future. No matter what level you find yourself in your organization you always have an opportunity to do both, and that starts with the attitude that you bring to the job every day and a commitment to helping other people. Attitude is not a platitude! It is the grist and essential platform of great leadership. In my 40 years in the fire and emergency services I have worked with many different leaders, some

were exceptional, others were inept. We can learn lessons from both. I have also found that leaders are never born. They are forged from the experiences that they have in their personal and professional lives - their crucibles - that have helped to shape who they have become.

A crucible, by definition, is a transformative experience which helps to shape who an individual becomes. Crucible events often move an individual to a new or an altered sense of identity. I know I have experienced

many successes and faced significant adversity over the course of my career, and each has brought with it a lesson of how to become a better person and a better leader.

My goal is to attract people from all segments of society and from all walks of life, no matter what their title, who are making a positive difference in the lives of others. The best way to pay it forward is to share with others, and that is the goal of

**The Leadership Crucible.**

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**Randy R. Bruegman**  
Founder, The Leadership Crucible



## Value Alignment

The next 30 years will be unlike any other time in history, and will be filled with great challenges and exciting opportunities. The leaders of the 21st will need to have the ability to lead through more complex and ambiguous environments. They will need to lead and manage a workforce that will be comprised of both humans and machines. They will need to blend traditional expectations with new leadership competencies, and do so in a workplace where the demographics and employee expectations will be rapidly changing.

In our first 25 episodes, the leaders that we have spoken to have touched on several common themes, but one resonates throughout all professions: the need to create value alignment between the company you're leading or working for and your own values.

Workplace culture and company values have become an increasingly important job consideration for both candidates and those that are hiring them. This is especially evident since we have emerged from the recent pandemic. The next two generations entering the workforce, Gen Z and Gen Alpha, will not only be the most diverse and technologically competent generations to ever enter the workforce, but they will also seek to work for companies that share their values.

We can see we are about to enter a workforce revolution involving diversity, value structures, and employee expectations. All of these will challenge leadership to blend this new mosaic into an effective team. For those in leadership and managerial positions, the reality is this:





## The Reality:

1. The next generations will seek to find a healthier work-life balance than previous generations.
2. Work will continue to be increasingly team-based.
3. Coordination among a diversifying workforce and multiple generations will require a focused effort on team building and culture.
4. Success today will be dependent on attracting top talent, sustainability will be dependent on retaining that talent.
5. Building a strong organizational culture is at the core of organizational success.

## Building Your Organizational DNA

Building a strong organizational culture is at the core of organizational success. As a Fire Chief leading five different organizations to protect our citizens' lives 24/7, the one area that I did not focus enough time, talent, and treasure on was developing the culture of those organizations. Culture is the DNA capital of every organization; it defines the true essence of the organization: its heart and soul.

We often talk about how important the culture of organization is to its success and long-term sustainability. We think that posting a set of mission, vision, and value statements throughout the workplace will suffice in helping to accomplish that. It will not. Building and maintaining your culture must be a focus every day if you hope to institutionalize those values throughout your organization. Here are some strategies to do that:



- Determine the type of culture that you want to have
- Determine the values that will emulate that culture
- Values, to be remembered and followed, must be succinct and recitable
- Write down behaviors that are reflective of those values and behaviors that are not
- Hold people accountable to those values, no matter who they are, from CEO to the newest employee
- Celebrate and share the acts within the organization that represent the culture you are striving to be

## Chief B's Key Leadership Takeaways

Having the honor of speaking to great leaders in their profession in **The Leadership Crucible Podcast**, we make notes on the key leadership takeaways that are discussed. Will share those with you in hopes that it help you to reflect on your own leadership style, but also to provide some potential talking points that you can discuss with your team. Doing so is a great way to understand your teams, gain perspective on topics, helps you to gain a deeper understanding of how your individual team members think. It is an excellent way to build you team.

- ✓ Lead by example. What you do speaks so loudly, your team will not hear what you're saying if it is not in-line with your actions.
- ✓ Listen and influence. The less you talk, the more influence you have when you do - that's leadership.
- ✓ Remember, Don't Take it Personal (DTIP). When you are in a position of authority, people are going to say mean, ugly things about you and that's okay. That's life and human nature.
- ✓ Do your best, do what's right and treat everyone with dignity and respect. If you do those things, you're well on your way to being successful.
- ✓ There are no degrees of honesty. You're either honest or you're not.
- ✓ As a leader, you're always first in and last out. Leaders eat last. It's one of those things that really resonates with people.
- ✓ Humility is the #1 way to success.
- ✓ If you fail, fail forward. You have to learn from mistakes and the feedback received on why you were not successful.
- ✓ Money does not equal happiness. Just focus on being the absolute best person you can every day.
- ✓ Accountability matters!
- ✓ Jim Johnson, Pierce Manufacturing provided a quote attributed to his high school basketball coach: "You are where you are because that is exactly where you want to be." If you find yourself in a place you don't want to be, you are the only one that can change that.
- ✓ Remember that Leadership is a marathon, not a sprint.





## Readers are Leaders

I believe that, to be a good leader, one must be on a continuous quest to gain more knowledge. The leadership benefits of reading are wide-ranging. John Coleman's article in the Harvard Business Review, "For Those Who Want To Lead, Read," highlights that the leadership benefits of reading are wide-ranging. Evidence suggests that reading can improve intelligence and lead to innovation and insight, and, for example, some studies have shown that reading makes you smarter through "a larger vocabulary and more world knowledge in addition to the abstract reasoning skills."

Reading has many benefits, but it is underappreciated as an essential component of leadership development. To that end, we'll provide a few suggested titles for you to consider reading.

***Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance***

by Angela Duckworth

***Creating Magic*** by Lee Cockrell

***Thinking Fast and Slow*** by Daniel Kahneman

***Leadership on The Line***

by Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky

***Walk The Walk, The #1 Rule For Leaders***

by Alan Deutschman



