

The #1 Fail Point Candidates Experience During Their Captain/Lieutenant Promotional Assessment Center Exam

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COMPANY OFFICER TRAINING WORKSHOP

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The Fire Captain/Lieutenant promotional exam, or otherwise known as the Promotional Assessment Center exam, can certainly be one of the most difficult challenges of your career. Outlined below, I've given you the #1 fail point that most candidates experience when they fail, or do poorly on their promotional exam.

While preparation for the exam itself is critical for success, it's even more important to prepare for the position. If you are prepared to assume the role of company officer, you will typically be successful and even excel in all parts of the examination process.

There are very few promotional exams that try to trick the candidate. While some exams are written and administered better than others, it's typically not the intent of the exam process to trick any of the candidates. With that being said, the exam is challenging and is written in a way that only rewards those who study and are prepared for the job, and fails those who are not prepared.

Always know that the raters and evaluators want you to succeed. Nothing overjoys a rater more than when a candidate comes in who is fully prepared to assume the role of Company Officer on day one.

Additionally, many times candidates finish within hundredths of a point of one another on the final list, so remember that every point counts. You typically start with 100 points and then points are deducted for each mistake you make.

The key is to not make the #1 fatal mistake that I share below. While there are other fatal mistakes you can make during your assessment center exam, this is easily prevented once you understand why it happens.

The #1 Fail Point is:

1. Testing for Company Officer Through the Eyes of Your Current Position, and not through the EYES of a Captain or Lieutenant

- a. This simple fact is the main reason why candidates fail one or more portions of the promotional exam process.
 - i. When you are out of your comfort zone, like when you're taking a promotional exam, it's easy to revert back to what you are

- comfortable with and what you know, which is thinking at the task level (Firefighter, Firefighter/Paramedic, or Engineer/Driver).
- ii. The line positions typically don't have to think tactically or even strategically, because their positions don't usually require it, even in emergency situations.
 - iii. On the fireground, line members are given tasks to perform, which include team and individual tasks and assignments, and rarely have to think tactically about how those tasks fit into the overall strategy of the incident, again reinforcing the task level mindset.
 - iv. Also, members in the line positions can have a difficult time thinking about the bigger picture in general, because they rarely have to think tactically or strategically when it comes to their crew, their shift or the department as a whole. This happened to me when I was first preparing for Captain and Battalion Chief. How many times have you heard or even said, "That's above my pay grade. Let the Captain deal with that." Again, reinforcing the task level mindset.
 - v. This is almost always an automatic fail point.
- b. When taking your promotional assessment center exam, you must be thinking like a company officer throughout the entire assessment center exam process.
- i. When you're taking your written exam.
 1. Especially if you're required to write an essay or memorandum, you must write it from the point of view of the company officer.
 2. When you must answer multiple choice questions, be in the mindset of the company officer. It's more than just getting the answer correct. Try to understand why the policy or SOP is in place. It usually has to do with safety, mistakes or conduct issues of the past. Policies also have to do with regulations passed down from the state or federal government.
 3. Be sure to look at policies and procedures in this new mindset and you will be on your way to getting promoted.
 - ii. During your oral interview.
 1. All answers you give to the panel must be from the point of view of a company officer and from the side of management.

2. Don't be vague or general. They want to know exactly what you would do in a given situation. They want to see your thought process and how you make decisions.
- iii. During the tactical simulator and discussion problems.
 1. Every decision you make and every action you take during the tactical portion of the exam must be from the tactical and strategic viewpoint, especially when you're the IC, or you will be given a failing score.
- iv. During your subordinate counseling/role playing scenario.
 1. If you aren't taking into consideration all of the reasons for the counseling session (seeing the big picture as to how the subordinate is affecting your crew, the shift, and the department), you will receive a failing score.
 2. It's important to counsel your members with the big picture in mind. Not just from the standpoint of what they did or the mistake they made was unacceptable. You need to understand their rights, especially if your meeting can lead to discipline, and the steps you need to take if disciplinary action may be required.
 3. When you do this, you will score very high on this portion of the exam process.

Conclusion

Testing for Company Officer through the eyes of task level positions is the #1 reason promotional candidates fail their exam.

As, you prepare for the exam and for the position, be sure to start training your mind to start thinking tactically and strategically, which is what is required at the company officer level.

Start thinking in a bigger picture mindset in everything you deal with and everything you see around the station and on emergency runs. Once you train your mind to start thinking about your crew, as a whole, your shift, and how decisions you make affect the department, you'll begin to see why this is such a big issue for those evaluating you during the exam.

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So, if you're serious about promoting to Lieutenant or Captain, I hope you will check out my Company Officer Training Workshop that will be available soon. It will help you prepare for every aspect of the company officer promotional assessment center exam process, so you can finish at the top of the list.

If you have any questions, or are interested in my group Company Officer Training Workshop, please contact me at:

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Good luck to you and I look forward to hearing from you!



Battalion Chief Dean Guccione

Chief Dean Guccione has helped dozens and dozens of career firefighters promote to the rank of Fire Captain/Lieutenant and Battalion Chief. As the Personnel Division Chief for the Beverly Hills Fire Dept., Dean was responsible for writing and administering the Captain's and Battalion Chief's exams.

Chief Guccione has also sat on interview and tactical promotional panels for cities all over California including LA City, Torrance, Santa Monica, Newport Beach, Fullerton, and Huntington Beach Fire Departments, just to name a few. He has also worked with Chief Officers all over the state of California in developing Captain and Battalion Chief promotional exams with Chiefs from San Jose, Long Beach, Oakland, Fullerton, LA County, LA City, Anaheim, Torrance, Manhattan Beach, Culver City and Santa Monica Fire Departments, just to name a few. Chief Guccione has also collaborated with Chiefs from Texas, Arizona, Colorado and Florida on best practices for writing and administering promotional assessment center exams.

His unique coaching style and perspective will give you the confidence you need to finish at or near the top of the list, and step into the position of company officer on day one.

