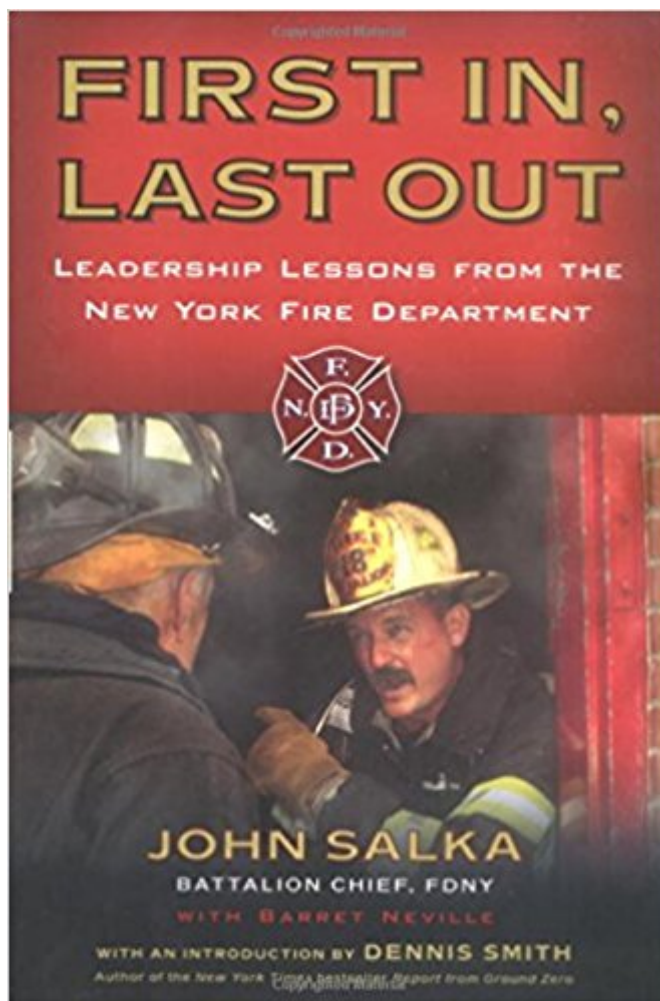


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First In, Last Out: Leadership Lessons From The New York Fire Department



Synopsis

What does it take to lead people into a burning building? How do the leaders of the New York City Fire Department develop so much loyalty, trust, and grace under pressure that their subordinates will risk their very lives for them? As a high-ranking officer of the FDNY, John Salka is an expert at both practicing and teaching high-stakes leadership. In *First In, Last Out*, he explains the department's unique strategies and how they can be adopted by leaders in any field as he has taught them to organizations around the country. In a tough-talking, no-nonsense style, Salka uses real-world stories to convey leadership imperatives such as: first in, last out • your people need to see you taking the biggest risk, as the first one to enter the danger zone and the last to leave • manage change • the fire you fought yesterday is not the one you'll be fighting tomorrow • communicate aggressively • a working radio is worth more than 20,000 gallons of water • create an execution culture • focus your people on the flames, not the smoke • commit to reality • never allow the way you would like things to be to color how things are • develop your people • let them feel a little heat today or they'll get burned tomorrow. Illustrated by harrowing real-life situations, the principles in *First In, Last Out* will help managers become more confident, coherent, and commanding. On the web:

<http://www.firstinleadership.com>

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Customer Reviews

After twenty five years in the most dangerous of all occupations, John Salka, Battalion Chief of The

New York City Fire Department, offers tough and tender lessons in leadership. Salka masterfully leverages examples from fire fighting--"where lack of leadership can kill people"--to create values for leaders in every organization. He alternates vivid summaries of historic and terrifying fires (the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist factory, the 1993 World Trade Center explosion and ground zero) with metaphors from the firehouse to describe three commitments for decisive leadership. "Follow the smoke," is an imperative to uncover reality in yourself, your organization and your industry. Next, Salka counsels, "know their names before you send them into the flames," and encourages leaders to identify the contributions of each employee. The maxim, "Find your top whip" conveys ideas for developing future leaders and making a job into a classroom. Other standout chapters focus on the nuances of building trust, clear decision-making and execution and tools for aligning individual and organization goals. Those expecting a macho approach to high-stakes leadership will be pleasantly surprised. Salka embraces intuition as "your subconscious trying to offer up a life time of experiences" and he explains how "managing emotional triggers" are ways of gaining competitive advantage. Salka's inspiring and passionate vision of leadership is a combination of reality testing, self-knowledge, and a shared mission when the heat is on. --Barbara Mackoff --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Salka, an FDNY battalion chief in the Bronx, has spent 25 years with the department, rising from firefighter to his current rank. He shares his insights on managing people, coping with crises, mentoring, decision making, adjusting to change and more. While Salka uses his experiences fighting fires, he clearly shows how his work has applications in almost any corporation: "[O]ur mission is to protect the people and property of New York City.... Since your customers define this value, your customers define your business. Organizations today need to ask themselves, Who is our customer? Only by figuring out exactly who their customer is and what they want can organizations fully grasp their mission." Salka discusses how he works with his firefighters and how managers can use his tactics. For example, he says, "[T]he most effective way to show your people that you trust them is to delegate to them. This is standard operating procedure in the FDNY. By letting them tackle problems on their own, you demonstrate your belief in them." The book covers key aspects to leadership's establishing trust, connecting with employees, decision making, engaging employees, dealing with crises and nurturing new leaders's in a logical fashion. The writing is solid though not inspiring. Readers who expected thrilling tales of firefighting will be disappointed because Salka's real-life anecdotes are toned down. Overall, this is a solid, but not unique, look at leadership. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier

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If I had to read only one leadership book in my lifetime, this book would be it. Why? Because it is the best, most concise and most interesting themed book on how to lead, inspire and motivate people into TRUSTING their leadership I've ever read. That having been said, I struggled to finish it. Not because of anything to do with the book. Rather because so much of Corporate America in 2015 seems hellbent to do just the exact opposite of every principle in this book - and then stand around and wonder why they get only the minimum from people and nobody trusts their "leadership."

As the son of a retired battalion chief of a huge fire department, I knew some basics from my dad on how to lead people. When I first got a group to lead in my IT job, I knew I needed a book to reference to help me lead and guide my staff. This book helped me do this. I had a supervisor that laughed at me when I told him I was using this book as guidance to lead. He didn't think firefighting and IT support go together. It does. Oh it does. I felt I was able to compare a couple of firefighting moments Mr. Salka had to IT moments I've had. Working with staff and showing them you don't always sit behind a desk, but rather get up and do troubleshooting as well. They see you go in first and then come out last, staff earn your respect more. In the 4 years of having this book by my side, my turnover rate for staff is extremely low compared to other IT group and moral is higher as well. As I transition into a new role at work, my team is now stronger than ever from the skills I've learned from this book.

Chief Salka presents outstanding examples of how to lead by example in his profession, and this will translate to many other industries. His background and experience as a Battalion Chief in the New York Fire Dept. is his conduit to providing fire service-related examples of leadership techniques and how to use them. This work is an excellent presentation of how to lead, how to lead by example and how to get the most out of your employees. Highly recommended, will read it again.

Coming from a business background, I have liked reading books on "leadership." So, I have enjoyed reading this book. Think about whatever calling or mission you have, or have had in life, reflecting on the day-to-day framework in which you have to live and work out this calling, you may find that it comes up lacking in the support that you need, or would like to have. Hands-down, it seems that the FDNY has much more respect for, and interest in, the lives of their people than most organizations. Up and down the ladder, no pun intended, there is camaraderie, open

communication, help in accomplishing the goals of the organization, at all levels, to help them to do the right things. Yes, we all can bear the marks of bureaucracy. This is what happens when internal processes, mechanisms, and many times politics become so important that they override an organization's mission and purpose, becoming an obstacle to achieving them, prioritizing everything but concern for the people that comprise it. We easily drift far from the valuing of our people. This book reflects on how this is not so with the FDNY. Just one example comes from a story in the FDNY where, for the sake of collecting data, a computerized system was set up to improve the service that is provided to NYC. Its meetings became perceived by field commanders as "scripted" events, where the "system" and its data were "king" and the input and personal insights of the commanders were marginalized. The overemphasis on quantitative data by the higher-ups was recognized and the project was shelved because they realized they needed the input of the field to get the whole story and lead effectively. They recognized the ultimate value of their firefighters above everything else. The book is inspirational. I think you will walk away with absolute respect for this firefighting organization. The work they do is exceptional. The people who do it are priceless. The people responsible to lead them recognize it.

Chief Salka is truly the finest NYFD has to offer. I had attended training and served under Chief Salka's command many years prior to reading this book. The Fire Service is a safer place today, thanks to the leadership and training of Chief Salka. I have served for over twenty years in the emergency services, and I have never had a better nor more qualified leader. This book should be a must read for all leaders of men and women. Chief Salka is a hard hitting, leader whom leads by example. Chief Salka speaks from his experience as one of the finest leaders and Instructors that New York has ever had. Reading this book was like taking a journey into the mind of one of the best leaders a firefighter can ever serve under. After reading this book, the reader will understand why men will follow Chief Salka into the belly of the beast....and how Chief Salka is a true leader.

Heartwarming Story. Brooklyn's Best: The Michael Behette Story

Bought as a present for my husband, but only heard good things back about it.

I've recommended this book to young and veteran firefighters alike. In fact, I had to buy a second copy because I lent my first one out and never got it back. It's a permanent part of my bookshelf, and I've turned to it a number of times.

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