13. Reading People to Leading People

Instructor: Zach Mathews

You can read smoke and EKGs—but can you read people?

Strong leadership begins with human connection. Reading People to Leading People© is an interactive course designed to help fire service leaders build meaningful rapport, recognize communication cues, and communicate with greater confidence and empathy—even in challenging situations.

Developed from more than two decades of investigative and interrogation experience, this course brings practical human-connection skills to the fire service. Participants explore how words, body language, and vocal delivery work together to shape understanding, credibility, and influence.

In high-stakes environments, words alone may not convey the full message. This course examines nonverbal communication, including facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, and posture, alongside paraverbal communication—the tone and delivery of the voice—to help leaders better understand others and communicate their own intentions.

About the Instructor:

Zach Mathews is an experienced speaker, international trainer and executive coach who inspires audiences with his fast paced and entertaining programs focused on leadership, communication, and personal growth. With over twenty-eight years in public safety, Zach brings a wealth of experience to the table. His journey has taken him from conservation officer and wildland firefighter to leadership roles such as Investigation Section commander, Training Section commander, Logistics Manager, and Office of Professional Standards commander. In 2019, the Indiana Department Homeland Security recognized Zach's leadership abilities, tapping him to teach essential skills like body language and executive leadership courses across the state.

Zach now serves as the Planning Section Chief for the Indiana Fire & Public Safety Academy where he and his staff are responsible for firefighter certifications and instructor standards. Zach also coordinates statewide executive leadership training programs to include the biannual Indiana Fire Chief's Academy, and a company officer executive leadership course taught throughout the state. Zach is a John Maxwell certified executive coach and DISC behavioral analysist who works one-on-one with fire chiefs to achieve both professional and personal goals. Zach has trained thousands throughout his career and is motivated to provide training that will positively impact the fire service. But what truly sets Zach apart is his passion for effective communication.