



Overcoming Institutional & Interpersonal Resistance to Change in the Fire Service

2024 Thought Leadership Essay Competition

Prizes

- 1st place – \$3,000
- 2nd place – \$2,000
- 3rd place – \$1,000

Recognition on Inside Darley video series, Darley Times newsletter, Darley media distribution, partner publications, and the InService Podcast.

Timeline

April 1 – June 16, 2024

Essay Format

- 3 pages maximum / 1500 word maximum
- 12-point, Times New Roman
- Double-space
- Submit as a PDF (preferred) or Word Document

Grading Rubric

There are four criteria for essay grading. Ranked and weighted in importance.

- 1. Specific Solutions Offered** – Do you present specific recommendations for change? How innovative, impactful, and viable are the proposed solutions?
- 2. Potential Impact on the Fire Service** – Can this impact the fire service in the short and long term? Can this concept move the fire service forward in a positive manner?
- 3. Quality of Writing** – How is the essay structure, vocabulary, readability, and overall authorship?
- 4. Intangibles** – Is this exciting? Does it challenge preexisting assumptions? Does it invoke a thought-provoking discussion? Is the core message courageous?



The essay competition is not about reiterating known problems in the fire service, restating current doctrine, or drafting theoretical essays; it's about offering original thought and identifying actions to address the specific root causes of institutional and interpersonal resistance.

Thought-provoking essays will ignite discussions and challenge readers to understand & embrace their roles in a diverse and evolving fire service. We encourage new ideas to help foster a culture within the fire service that embraces both change and curiosity. Authors and readers of this essay should be motivated and challenged to act beyond the status quo using critical thinking concepts.

We encourage participants to focus on the substance of their ideas and put personal experiences in context without spending too much of their essays on personal stories. We also encourage you to address impactful change at every level of the organization so that the proposed solutions have a broader reach and contribute to overall organizational improvement.

darley.com/essay-contest





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Judge's Quotes

"Darley Essay contest is one way to bring out critical thinkers who will examine specific issues and challenge the fire service to do something that might upset the status quo. The nominees are all practitioners who may actually be working through some of the issues identified by the papers. Each of the authors did complete significant research to validate their paper in a very limited time."

- Judge John Buckman

"This year's topic choices were challenging. After reading through numerous essays it is clear that the solutions to hiring, retaining, and ensuring a diverse and inclusive workplace are complex. Anecdotal evidence will no longer suffice and agencies must start relying on research and data to find out what is truly working/not working in our industry to make sure we retain our best employees."

- Judge Kerry Henderson

"Reading these essays provided me proof that there are several thoughts and ideas developing across the country toward building firefighter workforces that reflect the communities we serve. As these strategies are implemented by fire service leaders, we will begin to see continued improvement of our services and our people that provide them."

- Judge Bertral Washington

Confirmed Judges



Dr. Burton Clark
Management Science
Chair, American Fire
Culture



Nick Russo
Ast. Director-Office
of Federal Disaster
Coordination



Vincent B. Davis
Senior Director of
Disaster Services



LaRae Smiley-Sliger
Emergency Management
Director at Hardin County
Fire/EMA



Rachael Staebell
Firefighter/Paramedic at
City of Colorado Springs



Dr. Lindsay Judah
EGH Fellow,
2023 Essay Winner



Kerry Henderson
Battalion Chief,
2022 Essay Winner



Demond Simmons
Deputy Chief



Danny Kistner
Lead Coordinator,
Fire Chief



Anthony James
Deputy Chief/
Fire Marshal



Lisa Mayers
Deputy Chief (Retired)



Martin Serna
Deputy Fire Chief



Bertral Washington
Deputy Fire Chief



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