



911 TRAINING CONNECTION

A NEWSLETTER FOR EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

9-1-1 INVISIBLE TOOLS OF THE TRADE DISCOVERING MASTERY

“No set of protocol flip cards can take the place of this level of mastery.” — Sue Pivetta

Emergency Communications is one of the most misunderstood yet fascinating professions in today’s complex world. Pause for a moment to consider the perplexity of the work: answering calls from those in need of emergency services, gathering critical information in minutes, and mobilizing any number of available responders — and sustaining the responders and citizens as a safety net. What incredible work this is! Robert L. Stevenson said, *“I know what pleasure is, for I have done good work.”* Any person who has answered emergency lines, or worked emergency radio knows *good work*. This training is dedicated to those who have and those who wish to achieve mastery in the work of emergency communications.

EXPANDING OUR PERCEPTIONS OF THE WORK

Perception is our understanding of our world and it is based on what we believe to be true. At

times our perception is limited by our experience, at times by what we are told and believe, and other times it is based on a set of unchallenged beliefs. Perception can be changed, that is what learning is about. Since our opinions and beliefs are based on history, we can change how we think about something by taking in new information. Every person takes the limits of the field of vision for the limits of the world. So, what is your perception of the work? Can the work be performed to a high level all the time, are there methods, techniques and attitudes that can define and refine the daily work? Can we get better at what we do? Of course the answer is yes, but how? First each person must expand their perception and open to new thoughts and awareness of possibilities. Each person must allow creative thoughts and expanded opinions to enter the current perception.

“Perception can be changed, that is what learning is about.”

how we think about something by taking in new information. Every person takes the limits of the field of vision for

“Accumulate learning through study, understand what you learn by questioning.”

“What do you mean by mastery in the work?”

Sue Pivetta: In workshops I ask “Is there such a thing as Mastery in this work?” As I look around the room I see heads nodding no, others speak up and say no, because there is no way to do this work perfectly, it’s too diverse. So I ask, Is Michael Jordan a Master, Yes — does he hit the basket every time? Is Tiger Woods a Master,

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WORKSHOPS FOR NEUTRALIZING STRESS AND NEGATIVITY 7

PLUS MORE GREAT IDEAS AND INSPIRATION THROUGHOUT!



Hello again from the beautiful but wet Northwest — we're lucky that way. My latest art project was in honor of the rain. Imagine if you can — what you would do if you wanted to create a piece of artwork that demonstrated the beauty of the rain. Raindrops hitting the window in the dawn?

Misty rain on a warm evening? A downpour outside when you are inside looking out the window in a warm office? We can complain about the rain, or we can find the beauty in the raindrops, the sunshine through the rain clouds, the end of the rain that brings the fresh smell of the pine trees. I used a variety of materials and created some interesting pieces — it was fun concentrating on one concept. I had to really just focus on rain, think about what felt like and how to offer that through artistic expression.


As you can see, this issue is focusing on Mastery. The concept of mastering the work of call taking or dispatching is like an art project. The first approach is INTENT. You first must hold the intent to want more out of your profession by acknowledging there is mastery. Like acknowledging that there is indeed good from the rain. Next our industry must set out to study the idea, think about how to frame the need for acknowledging mastery. We then can define what it feels like. Next what it must look like and then we purposefully create a tangible from the intangible. Again, there is intent then purpose but most importantly — action. Without the time spent on my project — no tangible would appear — only a vision. A vision is not helpful to anyone but myself — a vision is not real. I can explain the idea of the canvas with beads running parallel to signify rain — or I can create the canvas and people can view it and experience how I feel about the goodness of the rain — the beauty.

We can envision how we want our work to be improved or respected. We can plan or desire, or demand — but until the work is clearly acknowledged

“There is intent, then purpose, but most importantly — action.”

as expertise and that expertise is defined — the outside world will continue to look at the work as the simple act of asking questions and relaying information to responders. Those who truly understand the work know that others cannot tell you what to do on a call, no set of protocols can make ‘it’ happen. Protocols, procedures, rules, flip charts, prompts — are all tools — but the master builder must use these tools with cleverness, dexterity, proficiency and an understanding that it is indeed the invisible KNOWING that makes this all work in a masterful way. And that mastery of knowing that happens every day in comm centers

around the world — is unacknowledged both by those outside and those inside the profession. This is the unacknowledged recognition that must be discovered and revealed to those that do not understand the work yet strive to define it in all too narrow terms. Only then will the illusive feeling that something is *missing* pass away — finally replaced by all-embracing pride and appreciation of the extraordinary truth of the work of emergency communications.



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DISCOVERING MASTERY

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Yes — does Tiger always sink a hole in one? Mastery needs to be redefined — or better defined — in our profession. Mastery means that you achieve success most of the time because you understand the work, the tools of the trade and know how to use them expertly when needed.

“What do you mean by tools of the trade?”

Sue Pivetta: All professions have tools that assist in effectively accomplishing the work. In our profession we need to understand there are tools that are not hardware. Of course there are chairs, and computers, and E911, and recording devices — these are certainly tools. But these are not the only tools. Can a carpenter build a house with only a saw? Not only are there a number of different tools for different purposes, there is the knowledge of how to use the tools. With this work there are tools that are intangible — or invisible unless exposed. These are the tools we have yet to fully isolate, define, name and pass on purposefully.

When a trainer works with a trainee, indeed they do demonstrate those tools. The expertise, the way of handling a caller, the method of compartmentalize information, prioritization, visualizing the scene — that all comes from within. No set of protocol flip cards can take the place of this level of mastery. And to think so would be like asking a paramedic to pull out a set of flip cards when treating a patient who is lying on the street bleeding. No, these tools are accumulated through experience, expertise, intelligence — not by following a script.

It is no good to use a saw to pound a nail, just as it is no good to use forcefulness when you need receptivity. What I am suggesting is that we begin to analyze what works and why and then isolate, name and teach these seemingly illusive ways of being and doing to those new to the profession.”

Examples of Intangible (Invisible) Emergency Call Taking and Dispatching Tools:

TOOL #1: SEND FIRST

TOOL #2: REASSURE THE CALLER

TOOL #3: VISUALIZATION

TOOL #4: COMPASSIONATE CONTROL

TOOL #5: GRASP THE WORK

TOOLS OF THE TRADE #1 — SEND FIRST

We will use the first tool as an example of how we can begin to define what seems to be a simple concept into mastery. In this work the primary objective is to “send”.. In order to accomplish this primary objective with mastery we can instill in the trainee the importance and

depth of skill for SEND FIRST tool. If we characterize a tool as something that accomplishes a goal, and when used correctly, skillfully and consistently this tool will create success. So it is with Send First. The product of this work is the *response*. A successful response means the units arrive quickly and safety with a full understanding of what they are responding to. Each call is a particular work of art, in that each is a new creation, each call is unique — therefore each takes the analysis of which tool to use. Regardless of the unique circumstances of the call, there are certain things to do, habits and methods that a call receiver can do consistently and purposefully to achieve the best results every time. Send First is one of those tools that quite simply is not discretionary but lacking in purposeful strategy. Tools have structure, substance, rules on how to be used and learning through demonstration and practice.

Building Mastery SKILLS

In order to build skills — methods and habits can be practiced to ensure trainees are performing to

“The product of this work is the response”



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the maximum potential. For example, you may want to build an allegory, metaphor or simple way to understand that can be remembered. Here is an example of what you could do with any tool, using SEND FIRST rules or keys to mastery.

Sequence send information first and foremost

Engage the caller about exact location

Never rely on ALI alone — confirm

Do ask the caller to repeat, never ask “Are you at....?”

Finish send info with phone number

Initiate response without delay

Resolve to travel your area often

Stay alert to location uncertainty

Train and re-train on area knowledge, maps, and addressing.

And in your efforts to further define this tool, you can expand on your interpretation of what that means by refining the allegory another deeper layer. Here is a brief example of what might be done with this example.

Sequencing is when you ask questions in a pre-determined format. Questions regarding the location are always first and foremost. At times location is not as simple as a house address, there may be more complex issues but the core address or location is obtained first and the call taker should go no further unless a good location is obtained.

Engaging the caller ensures that you are able to extract all that per-

son knows about the location. It is not the responsibility of the caller to offer this information. The caller could be in distress, distracted, or not focused on what is needed. It is your expertise that will be used to ask all the questions necessary to ensure arrival at the right location.

There are several tools that can assist in obtaining, confirming and validating a location — especially when the caller is unable to offer a confirmation or the ALI is not available.

Never rely on ALI alone. ALI is computer data, you have a person on the line, use the opportunity to secure the information from TWO sources. Relying on the ALI alone is careless work, don't be careless with people's lives.

Do not ask the caller to confirm what you repeat, have them repeat. Again, it is not the caller's responsibility to be a professional listener or an expert information giver, it is yours. The caller is often distracted and has other noises or thoughts

“In order to build skills — methods and habits can be practiced” : going on, If you simply offer them information, they may not hear 7 instead of 11, understand or distinguish the

difference between let's say Northeast and North.

Finish send info with phone number. Like the life preserver on board a boat, it may never get wet — but when it's needed desperately and you look around and can't find it — you could drown. Think big by obtaining the phone number of other locations that could be useful, for example, if the caller is at another location, ask the number into the

response location — there are a variety of phone numbers that may be helpful — however the send information is not complete without a phone number.

Initiate response without delay. As soon as you have a good location and a sense of what is happening —

“One of your tools is area knowledge.” : initiate a response. Units can be updated or upgraded if necessary. Callers are requesting a response, not dialogue. Be sure to use the

terminology, “...as soon as possible” in reference to arrival times. You may tell a caller the units are dispatched if they are indeed ‘dispatched’. Call back if you have advised initially that the units were enroute if they are rerouted or delayed.

Resolve to travel your area often. One of your tools is area knowledge. A good dispatcher is familiar with the area, an excellent dispatcher has current in-depth knowledge of the area. If your agency dispatches for multiple agencies, travel unfamiliar locations often. If your agency brings in a new jurisdiction, travel before attempting to call take and dispatch that new area. Unfamiliarity with the landmarks and geography can lead to serious judgment errors and mistakes in information.

Stay alert to location uncertainty. If there is any indication the caller is not sure of the location or the location seems not right somehow — trust your feelings and challenge the information. Dig deeper, find a way to confirm what is said, ask things in a different way. Allow yourself to change or challenge your mind — you can only do this when connected to the call. Critical thinking asks each person to challenge the authority

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of information — to question — to never be satisfied unless completely satisfied.

Train and re-train on area knowledge, maps, and addressing. If you understand the addressing system (or lack of system) you can be of great assistance to the caller, the responders or other support agencies that may need to respond. The addressing system is not un-essential knowledge, this is vital knowledge. There are many ways to learn the area; by maps and by traveling the area. Your perceptions is based on experience, knowledge and history. Do not give yourself the opportunity to come up blank when confronted with areas you could have schooled yourself on.

RE-CAP Your job is to send! Gather send information first — using:

your skill at asking questions

recognizing addressing or location problems

by your extensive knowledge of the area

and attitude of professional and masterful dispatcher.

Isn't knowing how to send just basic, why such an emphasis on send?

Sue Pivetta: As you can see above, by really isolating this simple need there are many complex issues. That is what we have been missing in this profession. This is what people on the outside do not understand

— that every part of this work has layers and layers of complexity. Sending the responders isn't quite as simple as initiating a response, just any response isn't good enough. In the last five years I have been involved as an expert witness in several lawsuits where — although there was a response to the right address — the quality or quantity of information provided to the responders was either not sufficient, incorrect or misleading. Those arriving on the scene often act according

“Never feel that mastery is a far reach.”

to the information received from dispatch. Insufficient, incorrect or misleading information is not the work of an expert, a professional, and certainly not a high level individual who had achieved mastery. Mastery must be earned, it is not given.

What is the message you wish to pass on about Mastery?

Sue Pivetta: Begin to see the work of emergency communications as work that can be mastered. Never feel that mastery is a far reach. Mastery is not perfection. Know that many of our professionals have reached Mastery — although they may not claim it or know it. How do you achieve mastery? Mastery comes from confidence. Confidence comes from experience. Experience defines mastery. Mastery comes from practice. Practice comes from commitment. And commitment comes from desire. Desire creates vision. Vision is created by visionaries. Visionaries become Masters and lead others to Mastery.

The Exceptional Trainer, by Sue Pivetta.

One agency purchased this book for every trainer and created a discussion group around the 'adult learning concepts' found there.