

ASSESSMENT CENTER 360° HOW TO CLIMB PAST YOUR COMPETITION AND GET PROMOTED

Attention dedicated and proactive firefighters!

Do you have a burning **desire** *and* the **commitment** to get promoted? Do you fear assessment center unknowns, public speaking and the testing process? Many do. Don't give fear and anxiety the power to derail your promotion aspirations.

With meticulous preparation, you can gain confidence in your abilities and learn to demonstrate this during the promotional exam so you ***Get Promoted.***

• In this article, you'll learn what successful fire officers
• demonstrate to get that promotion and how you can
• **get the tools and training to help you make it happen.**
• ***Let's get started!***

What is an Assessment Center?

An assessment center is a trained assessor's standardized evaluation of job-related behaviors. It begins with a Job Task Analysis (JTA), which determines the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) necessary to perform effectively.

The JTA determines the exercises used and establishes the dimensions (more on **dimensions** later) observed by the assessors. The process may include surveys, interviews and questionnaires. The JTA identifies the frequency, criticality and validity of the KSAs needed to effectively perform the role evaluated.



How do I start preparing?

You've already started. You're reading this.

The good news is that with proper planning, preparation and training, the assessment center can become just another day at the office. Of course, a day at our office—the firehouse—is typically challenging and unpredictable, but **you've** learned to function there.

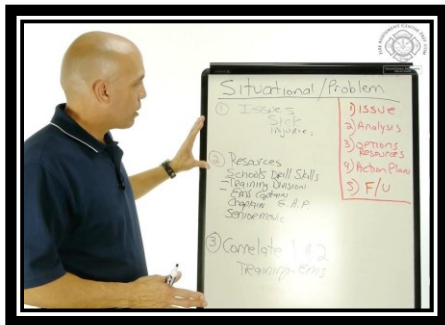
Preparation and training allows firefighters to function in a professional manner during any incident. Applying the same approach applied to the assessment center will increase confidence, reduce anxiety and lead to a life-changing

promotion. As a competent fire officer you already respond to a variety of emergencies, using your preplanning and experience to make good decisions.

Subordinate counseling, mentoring and guiding are a large part of an effective leader's day. Besides being skilled at delivering valuable presentations, a senior fire officer manages a great deal of paperwork and correspondence each shift. An assessment center examination will reflect what we do each tour of duty. Let's take a 360° view of an assessment center.

What are they looking for?

Dimensions: How the top officers in your department handle the situations being evaluated, dimensions are behaviors, characteristics, personality traits, and actions that have been identified by the JTA that mirror those of superior fire officers. Receiving high marks in an assessment center is directly related to the dimensions used by the assessors.



Request a list of dimensions to be used on your assessment center. The way to score points in basketball is to put the ball through the hoop. In the assessment center, dimensions equal points. You score points by demonstrating the dimensions during your exercises. Dimensions are based on the knowledge, skills and abilities the best officers in your agency portray.

Here are the most common dimensions:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • Communication | • Judgment and Decision-Making |
| • Problem Identification & Analysis | • Planning and Organizing |
| • Interpersonal Skills | • Leadership |

Dimensions: How to Score the Maximum Points

- **COMMUNICATION:** Good communication accurately and clearly conveys information, ideas, tasks, and directives to groups or individuals. Learn to display assurance and command presence while avoiding distracting mannerisms since both verbal and nonverbal communication is important.

Tip: Have a logical flow with clear pronunciation. Maintain eye contact at all times and show enthusiasm when appropriate.

Pitfall: Unorganized rambling with unnecessary fillers like “uh” or “you know” and failure to maintain eye contact will lower your score.

- **PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS SKILLS:** Have a methodical way to identify issues and problems. Often only symptoms are brought out in the open and the real problem can be missed. For example, a reliable employee recently started performing poorly on basic tasks. Perhaps coping with a newly developed personal problem has caused the performance issue.

Tip: Obtain additional information and determine underlying causes.

Pitfall: Don't make assumptions. Failure to ask clarifying questions.

- **INTERPERSONAL SKILL:** This is the ability to interact positively with others, while showing understanding, friendliness, courtesy, tact, empathy, concern, and politeness. Demonstrate this skill by constructively managing and resolving conflicts, disagreements, and confrontations. Excellent interpersonal skills are critical in handling problems before they're blown out of proportion.

TIP: Provide courteous, constructive feedback and clear expectations.

Pitfall: Not listening attentively and interrupting will lower your score.



- **JUDGMENT AND DECISION-MAKING:** This requires generating and evaluating alternatives and the ability to commit to actions even in uncertain situations. The assessment center considers the decision-making process as important as the actual decision. Making a judgment call with limited information while choosing a course of action based on sound decision-making will get you a top score.

Tip: Validate your decisions by explaining your decision-making process.

Pitfall: Indecision and not looking at alternatives are frowned upon.

- **PLANNING AND ORGANIZING:** This is accomplished by structuring priorities, using time management tools, defining objectives and establishing follow-up mechanisms. Identify specific and measurable goals for each step in your plan. Establish achievable timelines to meet objectives. Document and make appropriate notifications.

Tip: Identify specific and measurable goals. Include a timeline.

Pitfall: Failing to anticipate obstacles and not developing contingency plans are negatives.

- **LEADERSHIP:** Like command presence, leadership may be hard to define but is easily identified when displayed. A leader motivates and challenges subordinates to climb the ladder. There is a direct link between a leader and his/her team's performance. You're not a leader if you don't have followers.

Tips: Embody the mission, vision and core values of the organization. You must be a good follower to be a good leader.

Pitfall: Not taking responsibility for the work product and blaming others for poor performance won't score any points.

How do I learn more about dimensions?

The value of a great coach can't be overemphasized when incorporating dimensional strategies and terminology into your answer format. Benefit from our experience and success during each consultation.



[Learn more about coaching.](#)

What are the most common exercises?

The most common exercises you will encounter in the assessment center are:

- Emergency Operations
- Presentations
- Subordinate Counseling
- Interviews
- In-Basket
- Situational Responses

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS: In a simulation you must verbalize all of your actions. Both the mockup and the real event require performing ongoing size-up, calling for resources, identifying incident priorities, setting strategic goals and assigning crews to carry out tactical objectives.

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) and an effective accountability system are fundamental to success. The JTA ascertains the most frequent incidents in your jurisdiction. Your preparation should include identifying and reviewing the SOPs for each type of emergency.

Emergency operations testing formats:

- Static
 - Modified Static with Updates
 - Static with Questions
 - Dynamic Role Play
- **STATIC:** This format provides typical information such as a building description, weather, time of day, the location of the fire, units responding and occupant information. A few minutes are allowed to review the information and then you have a set amount of time to present your response without interruptions.
- **MODIFIED STATIC WITH UPDATES:** This format, similar to static, provides additional information at specific intervals. The updates deal with the progression of the fire, occupant status or strategy and tactics. Your incident action plan must adapt to the updates as it would during an actual emergency.



- **STATIC WITH QUESTIONS:** This format, similar to the modified static, has questions at certain intervals. Your incident action plan must address the questions and adapt to the additional information provided.
- **DYNAMIC ROLE-PLAY:** Most reflective of an actual emergency incident, this method utilizes live role players, radios, and feedback to your orders, questions, or directions. Prepare to handle obstacles such as delayed responses, ineffective crew performance, or poor water supply.

Tip: All information provided should be considered or mentioned in your delivery. Follow SOPs consistently.

Pitfall: Failure to adapt the incident action plan to changing conditions or updated information and small mistakes in information analysis will hinder your score.

Typical presentations:



- Instructional
- Demonstrative
- Informative
- Persuasive
- Inspirational/motivational

Presentation topics are related to current events at your agency or a teaching topic based on current industry trends. Prepare for various audience types and tailor your presentation to that audience. The ease and comfort of your delivery and the structure of your presentation is as important as the actual content. Proper perfect practice prevents poor performance.

Tip: Effectively use all of the time allotted by following a systematic approach.

Pitfall: Speaking in jargon to a non-fire service audience can turn them off and lower your score.

Subordinate Counseling Exercise:

The most common format involves a live role-player. Handle the performance problems by implementing an achievable improvement plan. Performance problems are likely the result of underlying personal issues.

Probe for the underlying issue after placing the employee at ease. Catching non-verbal clues, maintaining eye contact and listening attentively to the employee's responses result in a productive counseling session. Input from the subordinate earns extra points. Your subordinates are your most valuable assets.

Tip: Don't jump to conclusions; ask clarifying questions. Listen carefully to statements made by the subordinate. Have the subordinate restate the action plan. Get a commitment from the subordinate.

Pitfall: Not relating to subtle clues provided by the role player with the underlying issue decreases your score.

Interviews:

Most interviews begin with questions about your background and qualifications. This is your chance to shine while letting the panel know you are confident in your knowledge, skills and abilities. A comprehensive understanding of your resume and how your background qualifies you for the position leads to a confident response.

Questions about usual events faced at your agency such as interpersonal issues, public relations activities and emergency responses are common. Preplan items you may encounter and practice your responses on video.

Tip: Prepare a resume and print out a copy for each member of your panel. Dress appropriately to make a positive first impression.

Pitfall: Poor eye contact and slouched posture imply a lack of confidence.

In-Basket:

Learn how to triage and manage your day. You'll receive a challenging number of items such as emails, messages, memoranda, calendars, rosters, etc. A limited period of time is allowed to set priorities, organize schedules accordingly and respond to the items.

In-baskets are designed to be overwhelming and taxing in order to replicate the duties encountered on a hectic day at the office. Responses can be oral or written. You will learn to use a systematic approach,



how to be detailed, how to implement follow-up plans and keep the chain of command informed.

Tip: Review all in-basket items prior to making any decisions. Mark the calendar in pencil immediately with any time commitments.

Pitfall: Making a decision *prior* to reviewing all the items is poor performance.

What do I do now?

[Schedule a free get-promoted consultation now!](#)

Your first step is talk to a knowledgeable, experienced Chief Fire Officer at Fire Assessment Center Prep. Start on your path to success today.



My staff and I will listen to your needs and then construct a customized course of action. [Click here for your free consultation](#) and we'll help you get promoted.

Climb over the competition, perform confidently during the assessment center, develop greater job satisfaction and improve your financial position with Fire Assessment Center Prep training today.

One recent participant secured an Assistant Fire Chief position in Orange County (Fla.) beating out 17 other applicants. Our training assisted the #1 Battalion Chief candidate at BSOFR who outscored his next closest competitor by over 10%.

Over 150 of our candidates have scored #1 on their promotional process and hundreds have scored in the top 5. Take **your** first step now and [contact us](#).

About FIRE ASSESSMENT PREP CENTER

Fire Assessment Prep Center serves you, the dedicated, proactive firefighters and fire officers who yearn for and deserve promotion. While you'll brave a burning building, you may be petrified of public speaking or assessment center unknowns. Our in-depth, experience-based coaching helps you gain confidence in your abilities and demonstrate this during the promotional exam as well as during actual emergencies. Our students pass their exam and climb the ranks. Since 2013, over 1,200 and counting have reached their Fire Service promotion goal, many achieving 3 promotions with Fire Assessment Prep Center. It's your turn.

About Your Instructors

Chief Freddie spent 32 years with Miami Fire Rescue. He held every civil service rank, spending his last five years as the Deputy Fire Chief. Chief Freddie's extensive teaching experience includes training firefighters, police officers and corrections officers. He holds A.S. degrees from Miami Dade College in EMS and Fire Science.

Since 1999, Chief Freddie has specialized in test preparation courses for entry and promotional level public-safety candidates. He's facilitated, prepared and assessed hundreds of examinations, conducting seminars and private training sessions for all ranks. Students have been promoted 3 times because of his training.



[Chief Freddie Fernandez](#)
305.772.0595



[Chief David Johns](#)
561.718.9589

Chief Johns began his career in Palm Beach, Florida in April of 1990, serving in many capacities including firefighter, driver, paramedic, lieutenant, company officer on pumper and ladder crews and EMS Captain.

He is now a District Chief in the busiest battalion in the county. David received his BA from Barry University in 1988. He is a certified Instructor III, Live Fire Instructor, and Inspector. Chief Johns has conducted seminars and private training sessions for hundreds of candidates with spectacular results.