

## How do I get Promoted?

“It depends” is the most accurate, yet least satisfying, answer I can give to your question “how do I get that promotion?” “It depends” is not a definitive response, and you know there will be no quick and easy secret forthcoming. There is an answer, but “it depends” on your answers to my follow-up questions. Your question is how do “I” get promoted, “I” is personal, and it refers to an individual (you) working in your particular agency. You see, my answer to the question will differ for each person based on certain variables, that I am ignorant of; for example, if you’ve had “relations” with the Chief’s daughter that didn’t end well, my best advice may be to find a new department and start over.

However, short of some automatic disqualifier, and please realize that whatever is in your past, with very few exceptions (and I’m sure you’re not one of those exceptions if you are still employed and reading this article on promotion), will not be fatal to your promotional chances. By knowing and acting in accordance with basic principles, pertaining across the board to every organization, attaining the next rank can be your future. Therefore, in the absence of specific information about your precise situation, let’s review the two broad categories you need to focus on to earn the next rank:

1. Become very good at your current job. *Few things speak more loudly than excellence at one’s craft—John Maxwell*
  - a. Become a leader in your organization regardless of your present rank.
  - b. Prove that you can lead yourself effectively, by your daily behavior, to earn the privilege of leading others.
  - c. Make the job of those above you easier. *The more you help others get what they want, the more others will help you get what you want—Zig Zigler*
2. Learn how to excel during the promotional testing process.
  - a. Clearly understand the role of the position you aspire to.
  - b. Become intimately familiar with how your experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities relate to your proven ability to operate at the next rank and lead others.
  - c. Follow a system to prepare for the testing process (for example, know the leadership *Basics*, the 10 interview commandments, and the 8 Pillars of Promotional Success. All thoroughly described in the forthcoming book— *Law Enforcement Promotion Secrets*.)

As a former Chief of Police, who has made promotional decisions, let me cut right to the quick and tell you what a Chief is looking for when considering someone for promotion. A chief needs and wants to surround themselves with leaders who will help create a high performance agency thus making the chief’s life easier. I know, that “making the chief’s life easier” part, may sound a bit selfish, but hear me out. If you want to get promoted, be a problem solver, make those above you look good, and make their job easier. In short, make the team they lead (and you are a member of) actually be a strong cohesive team that accomplishes great things together. Remember, you are not doing this for the benefit of your boss, you are doing it to benefit your team and the community you serve; and your boss will appreciate the effort.

By being a great team member and setting the example for those around you to emulate, you are serving everyone on the team. You will earn the respect, trust and confidence of everyone in your agency—peers and bosses alike—and it will make your job so much more enjoyable. But your preparation can't stop there; too often, I see excellent cops mistakenly believe that their work ethic, great work performance, and job knowledge will be enough to carry them to the top of the promotional candidate list. Please don't make this mistake, you also need to excel during the promotional process.

In my opinion, the promotional process should confirm that you have demonstrated your ability to be a leader in your day-to-day behavior; the reality, however, is quite different. Frequently, depending on your jurisdiction's HR and personnel rules, the promotional testing process is judged independent of one's daily performance. Therefore, placement on a promotional "list" will often be based exclusively on your performance during the testing process. The promotional process does not attempt to determine who is the best cop, it attempts to determine who did best during the testing process. Of course, there are some people who are very good talkers and not very good "do'ers"; and the talkers can be...how do I say this delicately...supreme embellishers, thus ending up high on the list.

If you are a "do'er" and you get after it every day by being very good at your craft, and by being a positive leader within your agency (even without the rank), you owe it to your team, your peers, your bosses, and to your community to properly prepare for, and excel on test day. This profession needs leaders, not pretenders. The law enforcement role in society is just too important, and those officers you will lead and the community you serve need you to step up and truly be a leader.

If you have a desire to learn more about becoming the leader your team deserves and your community expects by attaining a promotion, pick up the book *Law Enforcement Promotion Secrets: The Definitive Guide to Promotion and Discovering the Leadership Keys to Earning the Respect, Trust, and Confidence of Your Team*. To be released Dec 2022.