



Gripping for Results

No. MS-2012-2 November 28, 2012

Learning Objective: The student shall be able to describe how to turn a gripe into a proposal.

Every day, in every fire department across the nation, firefighters share their gripes. Sometimes this is done at the coffee table, at the tailboard or in a heat-of-the-moment email to the chief. While good gripes can be cathartic, they seldom produce results. If results are desired, change your gripe into a proposal by following these four simple rules.

- 1. Get your stuff together (gather information).** Opinions are personal and everyone has them. To get results, use pertinent and current facts. Don't panic; you may have all the facts you need. Try brainstorming, mind mapping or outlining to bring them out.
- 2. What's the point (state the main point clearly)?** Decision makers are often busy. Rambling and unclear communication is often discarded. When making a proposal, be concise, clear and factual.
- 3. Your point of view just doesn't matter (know your audience)!** Explaining your point of view, while personally satisfying, will not always help you get what you want. Greater success is achieved when you ask, "What will my reader want to know?" What are the legitimate concerns of those whom you are trying to persuade?
- 4. Shape it up (use a proper proposal format).** When a standardized format is used, information is readily available. Organized writing is persuasive writing. Always be objective and state your case based on the facts.

While griping has its purpose and is deeply ingrained within the culture of the fire service, positive results are seldom realized when a gripe is just a gripe. Next time the urge to gripe comes upon you, try turning that gripe into a proposal that can make a difference. You may find it more satisfying.

“Gripes go up not down. Always up. You gripe to me, I gripe to my superior officer, so on, so on, and so on.”

— Capt. John Miller
(Saving Private Ryan)