



SAFE-D

Texas State Association of Fire and Emergency Districts

Getting Involved: Becoming Politically Astute

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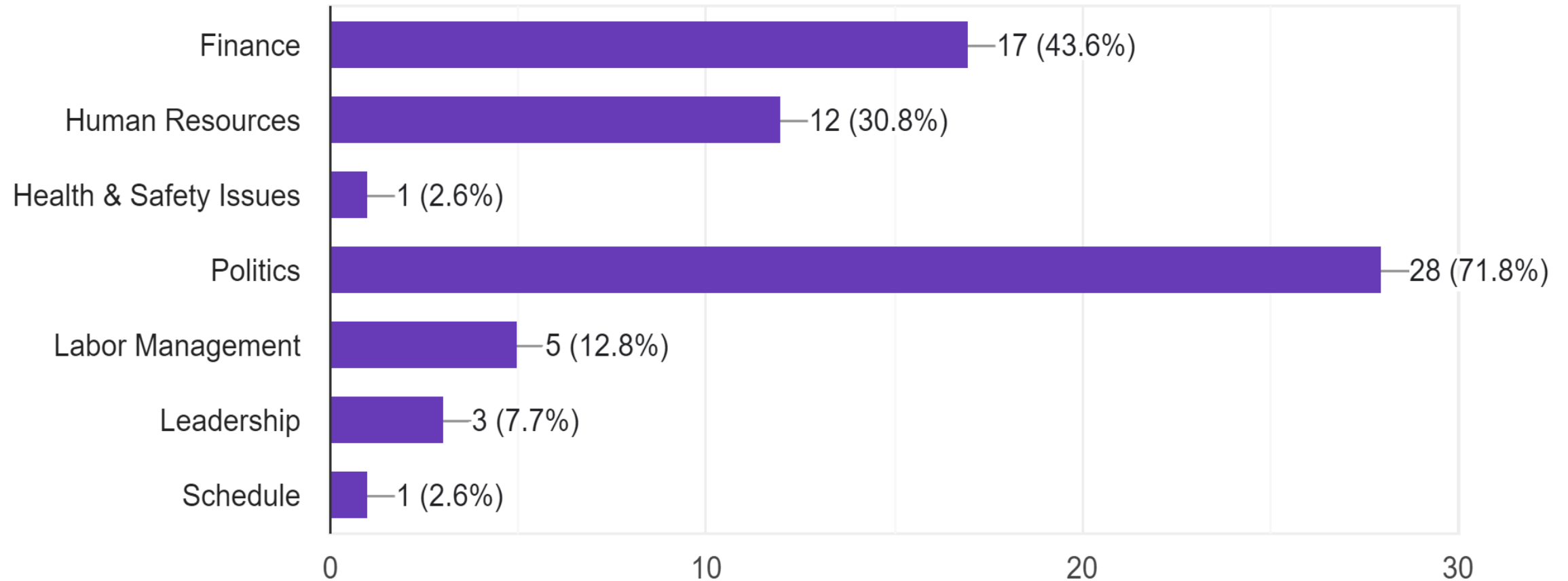
“It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so.”

- Mark Twain



What part of the fire chief's roles and responsibilities would keep you from OR reduce your interest in serving as a fire chief one day? If you are already...the job you had concerns with before taking the job?

39 responses



Awareness Level (FF-ENG/DO)

- What the public expects from its ESDs
- Our behavior and actions in the field and off-duty
- Why “public” safety matters and the trust taxpayers give us
- Examples of good/bad PR or events we gain ground from OR work against

Technician Level (CAPT-DC/ACs)

- Becoming comfortable enough in political situations and discussions to provide value
- Finding common ground on issues/building relationships
- Thinking past the now and looking at long-term outcomes/issues/concerns

Operations Level (LT-CAPT)

- Taking inventory of our political eco-system
- Knowing faces, VIPs, supporters, dissenters
- Understanding it’s not always black and white and facts differ from person to person
- Knowing where YOU stand on issues and how it aligns with the ESD or political issue at hand

Specialist Level (CAPT-FC/CMs/ACMs)

- Managing & creating conflict
- Creating opportunities when mutually beneficial, sets & reps for developing FFs
- Rebuilding soured or failed relationships
- Being unflappable
- Absorbing ambiguity / Not amplifying it!

Interpersonal Skills

- Influence the thinking and behavior of others
- Build/get buy-in from people over whom the skilled user has no direct authority
- Make people feel valued and heard
- Listen **more** than talk – 90/10
- Highly effective at **managing up**
- Invest the time to build relationships
- **LEARN TO ASK BETTER QUESTIONS!**



Personal Skills

- Self-awareness of one's own motives and behaviors
- Resist the urge to be a fixer of all problems
- Lead people to resolve their own issues in the form of support, mentorship, and consultation



Reading People & Situational Awareness

- Be analytical
- Listen to both sides regardless of your feelings or biases
- Take an inventory of the dynamics that can occur when stakeholders and agendas come together.
- Assess the culture, rights of passages/entitlements
- Respect, but examine processes and social systems
- **Taking inventory and building YOUR exit strategy**
- **Managing ambiguity**



Strategic Direction & Environmental Scanning

Two major elements:

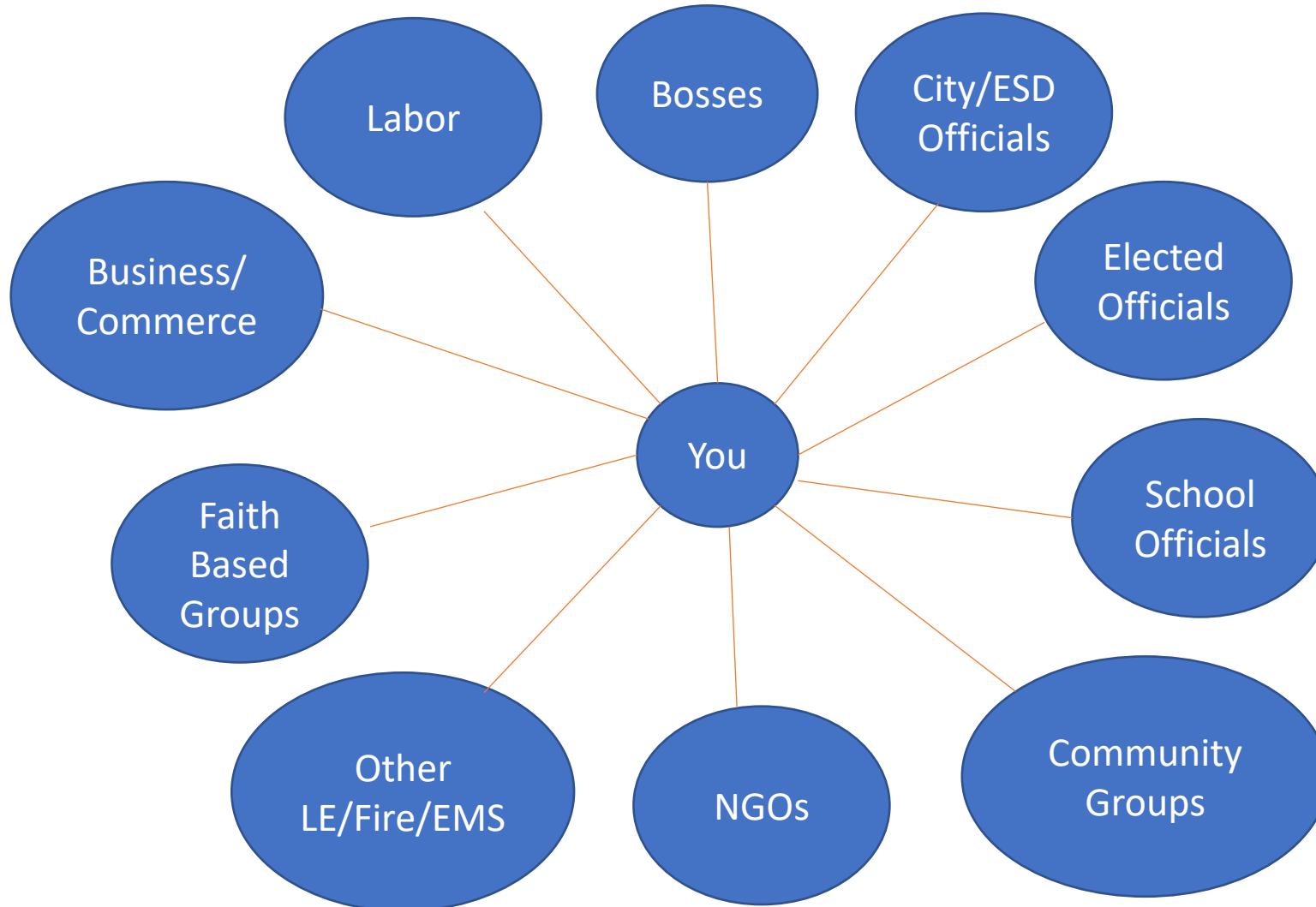
- A sense of strategic thinking and action in relation to organizational purpose
- Thinking about longer-term issues that may have the potential to have an impact on the organization not just on the horizon, but over the horizon.

“Always be thinking 1-3 alarms ahead of your current alarm assignment (politically)”



P	E	S	T	E	L
Political	Economics	Social	Technology	Environmental	Legal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take inventory of known politics • Forecasts the “what ifs’ of doing/not doing • Short/Long term gains/losses politically • ID Int/Ext Stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it a gain or loss and to who, what, and when? • Assess: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sunken costs - Opportunity costs - ROI - Credit and liability positioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social perception of doing/not doing • Responding to a movement, trend, or true social change? • Assess social acceptance/resistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have the tech you’ll need or will you need to buy it/design it/adapt current tech? • How will the tech be supported short/long term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it a +/- for the org’s environment • Are there layers of approvals outside the org required? • +/- impact on internal and external stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it legal? • Do you need to change laws to accomplish it? • What are legal’s concerns with it? • Case law +/- exist?

Building Your Power Wheel...



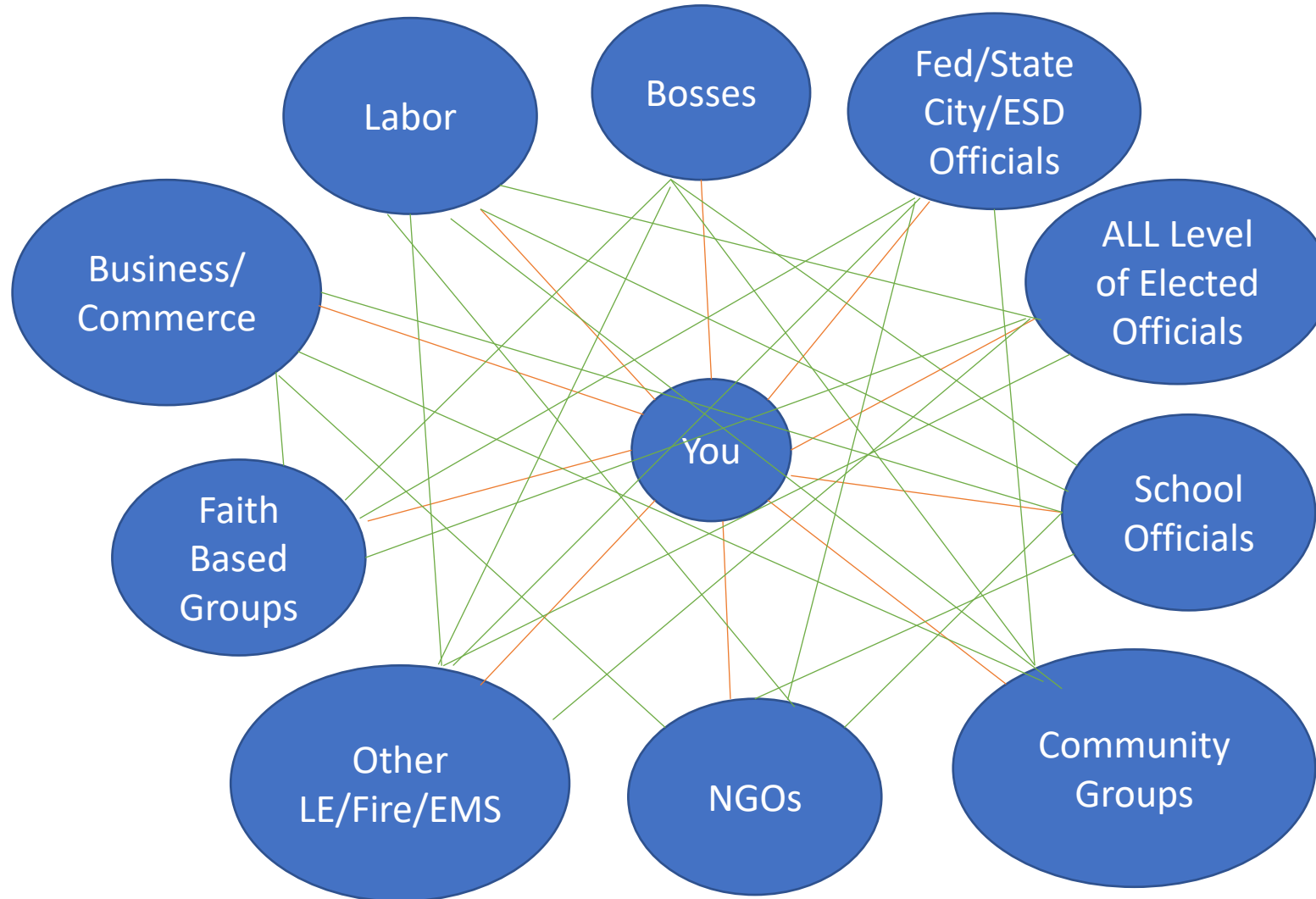
Don't wait until you are THE chief to start building your power wheel if coming from within.

If coming from the outside, start building it the moment you decide to apply for the job!

Let others build their power wheels, too! Second in commands and those that have been identified in succession planning as future chiefs.

The saying, "that it's never too late" may not apply here. Sometimes it is too late in the game of politics.

Making the connections...



Know the ABC (CCCC)s... Always Be:

- Communicating – On needs, wants, ideas, concepts, opportunities for others and partnerships
- Connecting – Enhance current public safety networking – **INCREASE** *outside public safety networking! If you don't want to be a "politician" become a connector!*
- Collecting – Money/funding, favors, offers of more discussions, ideas and concepts from others
- Closing – On favors, follow ups, deals, contracts, agreements, selling YOU and the organization as someone or a group that can get stuff done!

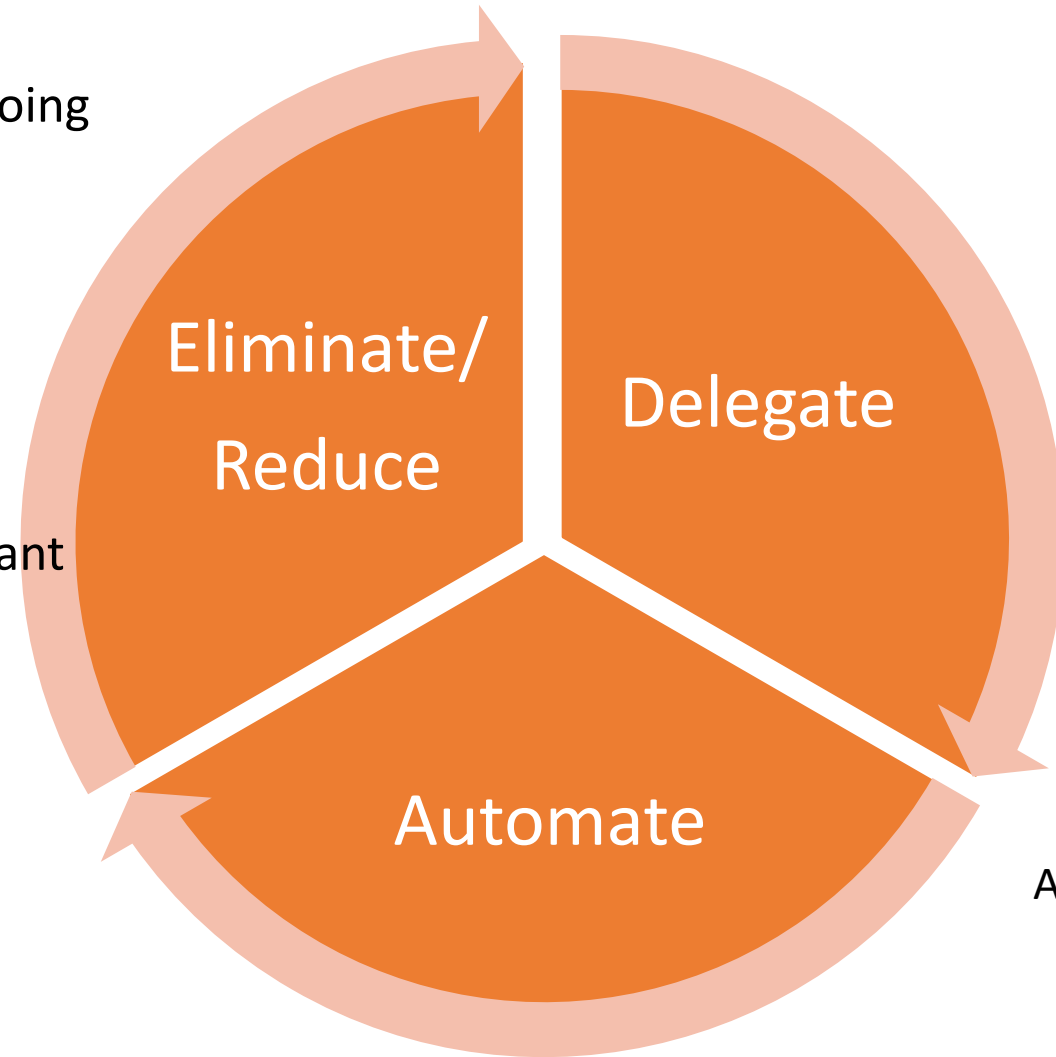
Putting others' fingerprints on the “thing”

- Planning – reports, studies, plans, and short/long range forecasting
- Programming – public relations, education, risk reduction, emerging trends, and collaborative partnerships
- Data driven changes to the norm, planning, programming, or developing issues



Too Much on Your Plate to Become Politically Astute?

- Unpack the “WHY” you are doing something
- Time Driven Activity Based Costing (TDABC)
- Left over from the previous regime?
- Are you REQUIRED to do it?
- Ask your bosses what they want you focused on



- Train someone else to do it
- Develop check lists for someone else to keep tabs on things
- Develop Processes
- Empower your team
- Use as a form of development for employees
- Develop “Let me know WHEN’S”

Automate Renewals

Automate Emails & Notifications

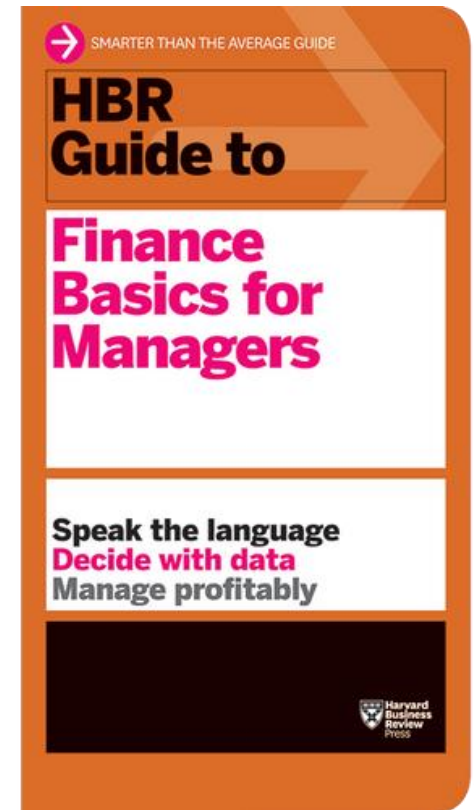
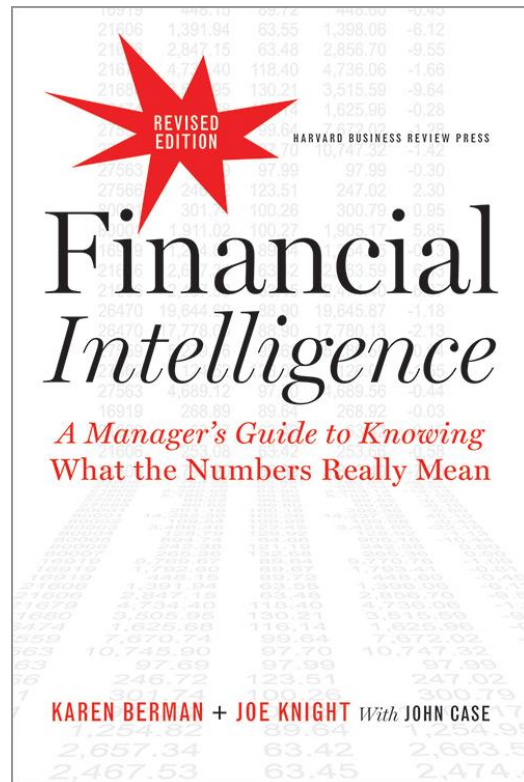
Automate Notification of New Articles & Press Releases

Automate Scheduling/Meetings/Follow Up

Automate Reminders & Reporting

Recommended Books on Finance

(Click on each book for the link)



Thank you!

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