

Meta-Leadership Summit for Preparedness

SUCCESS STORY

DENVER, COLORADO

Applying Meta-Leadership in Multiple Arenas

Contributor: Deanne Criswell

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Deanne Criswell was deployed to the Middle East for six months in 2010. As Functional Fire Manager for the Air Force, Criswell was responsible for approximately 500 firefighters assigned to half a dozen countries. Her duties included managing the day-to-day operations of the firefighters, as well as the strategic planning for future air bases and closing of existing air bases, depending on the need at the time.

Relating back to the Summit

Her experience in the Middle East presented unique communication and leadership challenges that reminded Criswell of the Meta-Leadership Summit for Preparedness that she attended in Denver in May 2008. "During my deployment," Criswell described, "I could see clear alignment between the Meta-Leadership principles and the leadership challenges I was faced with during my time in the Middle East. I was constantly using the Meta-Leadership dimensions of 'leading up' and 'across.'"

Meta-Leading through change

Criswell described the environment as ever-changing. She noted that a new person would rotate into most positions every six months, and given the military structure, there were multiple levels of leadership and subordinates. Partners she worked with included the US Air Base staff, coalition forces, different branches of the US military and private contractors. "It was an amazing environment, warranting true leadership skills to try to work collaboratively with different disciplines and different countries, all within the structure of the military's chain of command. It was fascinating," described Criswell.

Expecting similar challenges & continuing to be a Meta-Leader

Criswell has since returned to the United States and has taken a position with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) working as part of the Federal Coordinating Officer Cadre for Region 8 which covers Colorado, Utah, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming and Montana. Although the position differs greatly from her deployment to the Middle East, she expects similar leadership opportunities to arise – needing to coordinate staff, volunteers, and resources in a short period of time in support of a unified mission.

No matter what the environment, she values and sees truth in the concepts presented at the Meta-Leadership Summit, specifically the need to lead up, lead across, and utilize influence over authority. She plans to carry these skills, along with the leadership skills she honed in the Middle East deployment, as she serves to lead communities affected by disaster to successful recoveries in the years to come.

The Meta-Leadership Summit for Preparedness empowered business, government and nonprofit leaders to act together in times of crisis. The five-year initiative connected 5,000 business, government and nonprofit leaders in 36 communities. For resources and more information about Meta-Leadership visit the [CDC Foundation Meta-Leadership Website](#).



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