

# Meta-Leadership Summit for Preparedness

## SUCCESS STORY

HOUSTON, TEXAS

### Working Together & Being Proactive Produces Results

Contributor: Steve Vetrano

*“The Summit brought ‘non-usual’ suspects to the table...”*

Steve Vetrano was first introduced to the Meta-Leadership Initiative when he was asked to join the Dallas Meta-Leadership Summit Host Committee in the spring of 2009. Vetrano was initially drawn to the Summit because of the importance it placed on bringing together all sectors as he similarly valued his partnerships with police, fire, emergency management, business and other non-profits. These partners helped to execute a successful Summit in Dallas in May of 2009. Shortly after the Dallas Summit, Vetrano relocated to Houston, TX, to become the Chief Executive Officer for the American Red Cross. In continued conversations with the CDC Foundation, Vetrano learned that they were interested in hosting a Summit in Houston. Encouraged by his positive experience in Dallas and the value that it brought to the community, Vetrano, being a successful Meta-Leader, agreed to help promote and plan a Summit for Houston as well.

#### Championing for a Meta-Leadership Summit in Houston

The concept of a Houston Summit was first met with resistance. Leaders, on the heels of Hurricane Ike and other emergencies, were well versed in disaster response and recovery, had strong preparedness plans, and worked well with one another. Although the value a Summit could bring was not immediately apparent, Vetrano worked over the next year and a half to show his cross-sector counterparts otherwise. He shared his experiences in Dallas, noting that the Summit brought the “non-usual suspects to the table,” and particularly emphasized the connections that would be made to the business community. He discussed how important it was to meet business leaders, understand their industry, capabilities, and resources, and share with them the roles and responsibilities of emergency management, American Red Cross, and other traditional response organizations.

#### Personal Benefits of the Meta-Leadership Summit

Vetrano’s promotion of Meta-Leadership was successful and in January 2011 the Greater Houston Meta-Leadership Summit was held. The Summit was followed by a successful Post Summit Activity in July 2011 focused on educating business and non-profit leaders on incident command procedures. When asked what aspects of the Summit he values most, Vetrano identified the messaging conveyed regarding silos. He describes, “The Summit helped me to see that silos are not negative, but to the contrary, are important, and have their place. We need to work to our best potential in our silos but at the same time, must have visibility and access to our cross-sector partners.”

Going forward, Vetrano plans to complement his work at the American Red Cross by continuing to be a “meta-leader.” He is dedicated to bringing community members together and serving as a vehicle to educate others on how to be prepared and what action to take in the event of an emergency.

*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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