

Professional Reading Program

Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program



The Art of Clear Thinking by Hasard Lee

Best Wildland Fire Leadership Level to read this book:

- All leadership levels, but especially valuable to young leaders.

Why Read *The Art of Clear Thinking*?

“The ability to make a correct decision with incomplete information and limited amount of time is not just for fighter pilots though – it’s universal skill. From leaders to entrepreneurs to nurses to first responders, our success and ability to achieve our goals relies on making the right decisions at the right times.”

“Our decisions form the contact we make with the outside world – our relationships, our work, our health, our finances are all directly tied to the decisions we make. All of us deal with the consequences of our decisions, however, many rarely pause to think about how they arrived at them and how they can improve going forward. If most people did, I think the world would change.”

The Art of Clear Thinking a great book that examines decision-making principles, and ways to get better at making decisions in high-stress, time-limited situations. It’s an easy-to-read and engaging book suitable for leaders and followers at all levels in the fire service. Most of the principles the author lays out can be quickly and easily applied to the fire service. The vivid examples from the authors own experience as a combat pilot and trainer show that clear thinking and “good” decision-making are skills that can and should be practiced to improve and maintain.

A video interview with the author about the topic can be found at the link below:

- **The Art of Clear Thinking with the real Top Gun Master F-35 pilot Hasard Lee (1 hour):**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TSVfRJQVxck>

For more leadership ideas and to dig deeper, check out the Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program (WFLDP) blog, Facebook page, Professional Reading Program, and more at the links below:

Blog: <http://wildlandfireleadership.blogspot.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/WFLDP>

Professional Reading Program: <https://www.nwcg.gov/wfldp/toolbox/prp>

Main WFLDP page: <https://www.fireleadership.gov>

The Art of Clear Thinking Discussion Questions

Chapter One: Assess

What do you think of the idea of “winding the clock?” Could this be applied to wildland fire operations? What lessons (if any) did you take from the *Air France Flight 447* case study that could be valuable for you? In wildland fire, do we have to deal information from multiple sources that might not be accurate? What are some tools you can use to better assess not only what information you are receiving, but how accurately matches reality? Why can it be important to take time, even if it’s brief, to assess a situation before acting?

Chapter Two: Power Laws

What kinds of “non-linear” problems have you seen in the wildland fire setting? What are your initial thoughts about power laws and tipping points? What kind of tipping points might be important in the fire environment? How about in a human factors sense in your organization? What are some examples of this approach to forecasting or “futuring” information (i.e. rules of thumb) that you have seen in wildland fire?

Chapter Three: Learned Lessons

Why is it important to understand the concepts behind what you’re doing? What do you think of the idea of “concept over facts” for working with complex systems? How does the fighter pilot training model compare to how we train as fire managers? Are there areas where we could improve things that are within our control (i.e. training on your module, crew, station, etc.)? Are there any lessons to be taken from the fighter pilot style of debriefing?

Chapter Four: Fast-Forecasting

Have you ever had to make a decision under stress where you had to “fast-forecast?” How did it go? What are some benefits of using fast-forecasting techniques in the fire environment? Why is it important to practice these kinds of skills when we are increasingly relying on technology to make decisions?

Chapter Five: Creativity

Why is leaders intent so important in allowing for creativity in decision making? How does the concept of “effects-based operations” apply in the wildland fire setting? What are some ways that you can promote creativity in your squad, module, crew, or unit? Why is it important to train or organize in a way that promotes creativity as part of the process?

Chapter Six: Mental Toughness

How do you train for mental toughness? Do you put as much effort into mental training as you do physical or skills training? Why are mental training techniques (like mindfulness, for example) so valuable to leaders and followers?

Chapter Seven: Prioritize and Be Decisive

Why should you prioritize decisions? What are some tools you can use to do that? Why is it important to have a process for determining what’s important and what’s not?