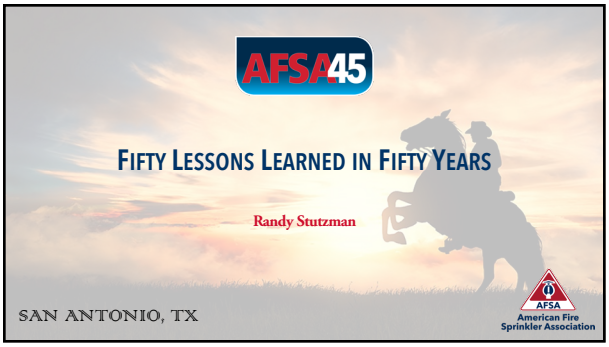
AFSA45
FIFTY LESSONS LEARNED IN FIFTY YEARS
Randy Stutzman
SAN ANTONIO, TX
AFSA
American Fire Sprinkler Association

1

Randy Stutzman
Randal Stutzman Advisors, LLC
After having completed a successful 45-year career with FMI Corporation and FMI Capital Advisors, Inc., I am currently sharing my expertise with a select group of clients. I have spent my entire working career acting as a trusted advisor to contractors. Starting in the late 1970s, I spent the next 20 years consulting with companies on issues including strategy, pricing and bidding, increasing field productivity and ownership transfer. Since the late 1990s I have concentrated on helping clients around ownership transfer and management succession. This includes representing sellers to third parties, finding opportunities for buyers, facilitating employee and family buyouts, and adopting Employee Stock Ownership Plans. My focus has always been to do what is right for the client and build company value.
RSA RANDAL STUTZMAN ADVISORS
randy@randalstutzmanadvisors.com | 813-335-2152

2

HOUSEKEEPING ITEMS
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National Fire Protection Association
The authority on fire, electrical, and building safety
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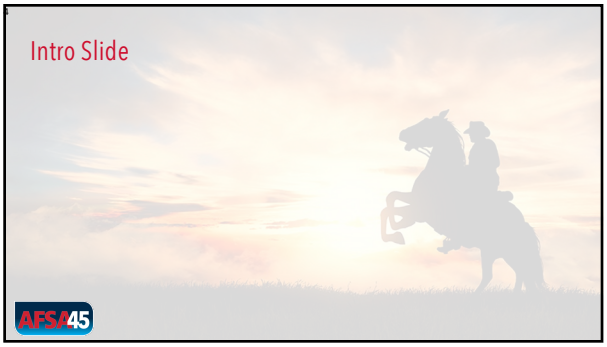
Intro Slide
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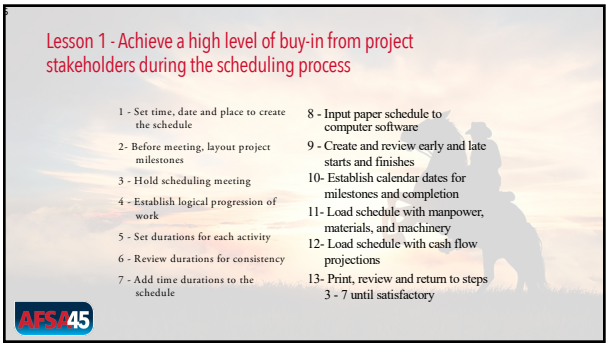
Lesson 1 - Achieve a high level of buy-in from project stakeholders during the scheduling process
1 - Set time, date and place to create the schedule
2- Before meeting, layout project milestones
3 - Hold scheduling meeting
4 - Establish logical progression of work
5 - Set durations for each activity
6 - Review durations for consistency
7 - Add time durations to the schedule
8 - Input paper schedule to computer software
9 - Create and review early and late starts and finishes
10- Establish calendar dates for milestones and completion
11- Load schedule with manpower, materials, and machinery
12- Load schedule with cash flow projections
13- Print, review and return to steps 3 - 7 until satisfactory
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5

Lesson 2 - Acquire a company only as a part of a strategic direction
Strategy and Acquisition
Planning for Acquisitions
Fundamentals for Contracting
Contracting is fragmented for a reason
A construction company is a group of people who can procure, perform and get paid.
Market opportunities come in waves
Contractors do not do well in downturns
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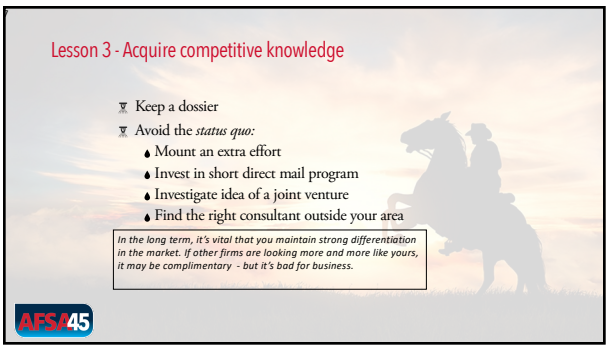
7
Lesson 3 - Acquire competitive knowledge
Keep a dossier
Avoid the status quo:
Mount an extra effort
Invest in short direct mail program
Investigate idea of a joint venture
Find the right consultant outside your area
In the long term, it's vital that you maintain strong differentiation in the market. If other firms are looking more and more like yours, it may be complimentary - but it's bad for business.
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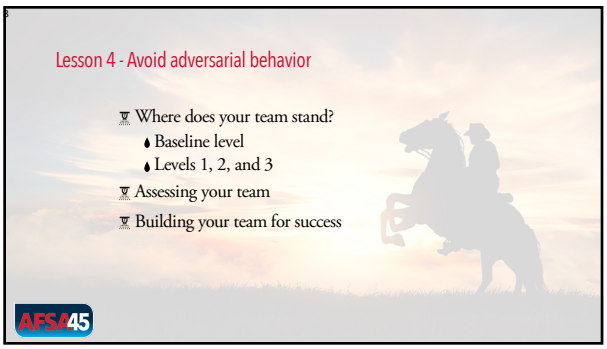
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Lesson 4 - Avoid adversarial behavior
Where does your team stand?
Baseline level
Levels 1, 2, and 3
Assessing your team
Building your team for success
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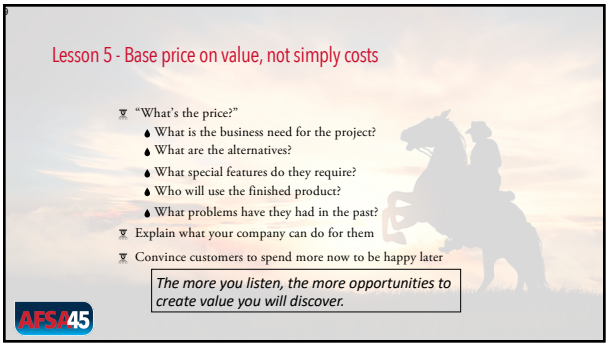
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Lesson 5 - Base price on value, not simply costs
"What's the price?"
What is the business need for the project?
What are the alternatives?
What special features do they require?
Who will use the finished product?
What problems have they had in the past?
Explain what your company can do for them
Convince customers to spend more now to be happy later
The more you listen, the more opportunities to create value you will discover.
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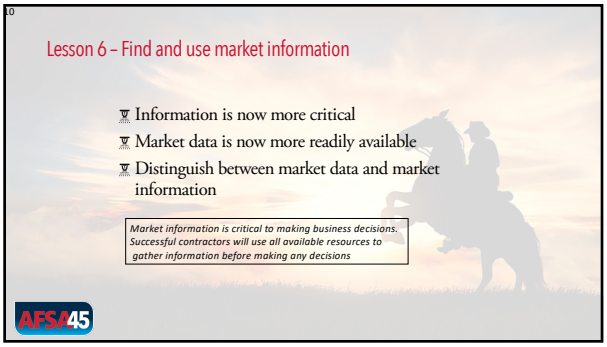
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Lesson 6 – Find and use market information
Information is now more critical
Market data is now more readily available
Distinguish between market data and market information
Market information is critical to making business decisions. Successful contractors will use all available resources to gather information before making any decisions
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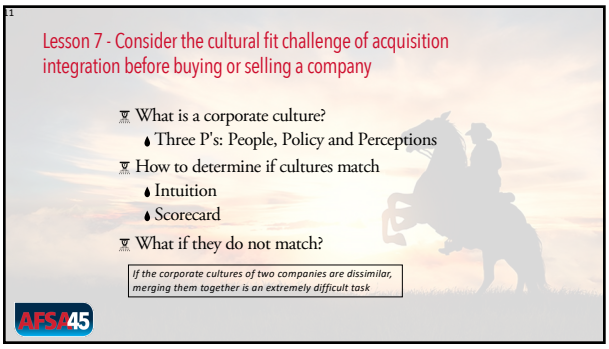
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Lesson 7 - Consider the cultural fit challenge of acquisition integration before buying or selling a company
What is a corporate culture?
Three P's: People, Policy and Perceptions
How to determine if cultures match
Intuition
Scorecard
What if they do not match?
If the corporate cultures of two companies are dissimilar, merging them together is an extremely difficult task
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12
Lesson 8 - Coach for leader development (1)
What is coaching?
Business reasons for coaching
Retention and turnover
Impact on the bottom line
Management succession
An FMI industry survey found that construction firms investing in more training of trade and craft personnel experience less turnover.
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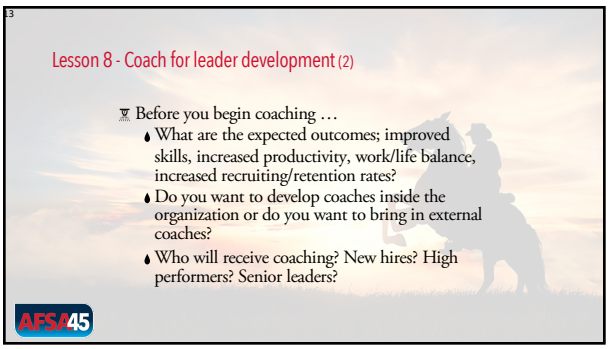

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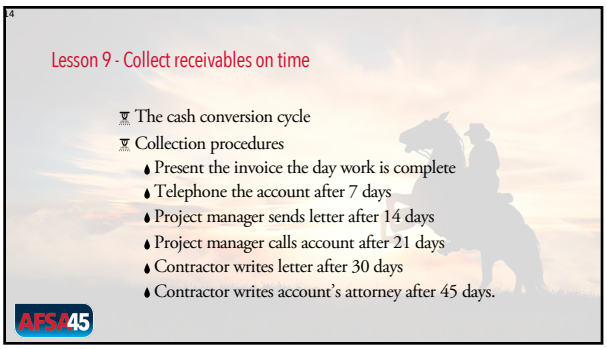

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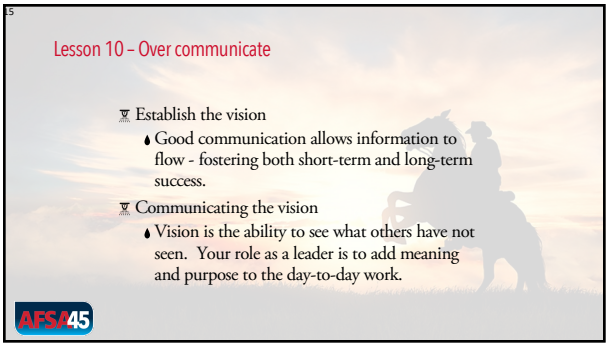

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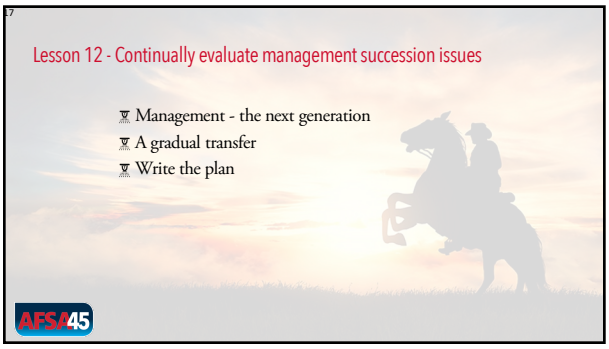

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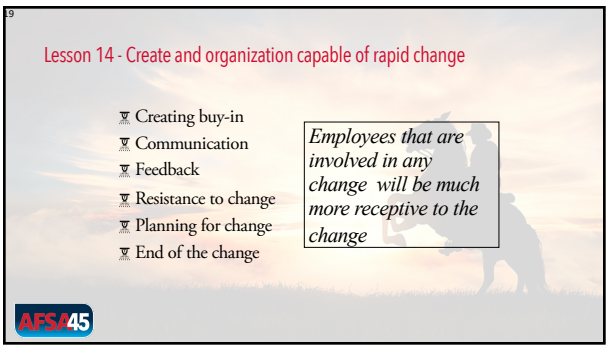

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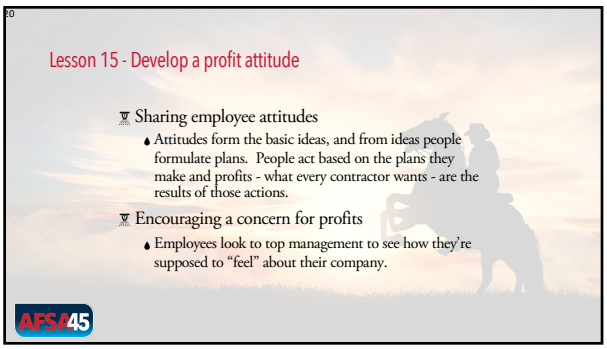

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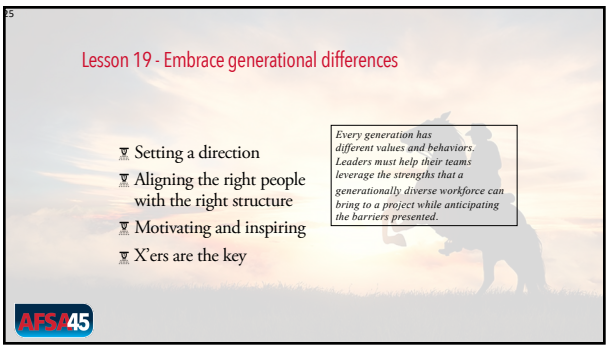

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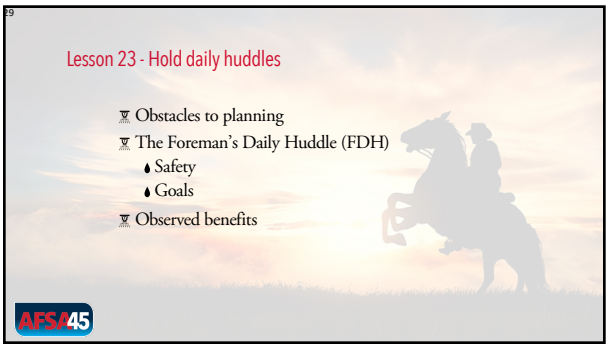

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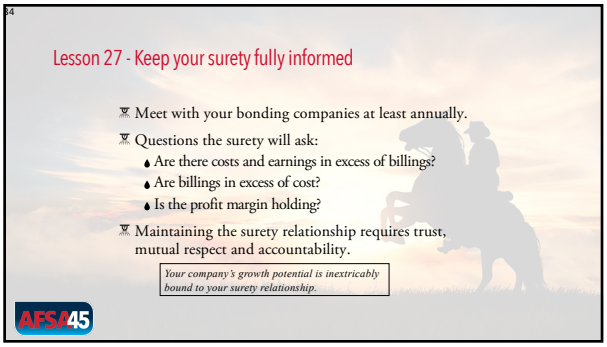

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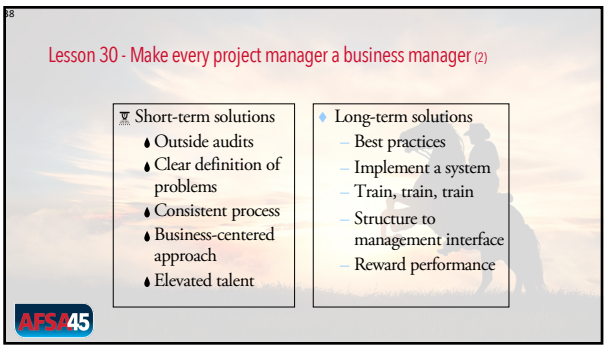

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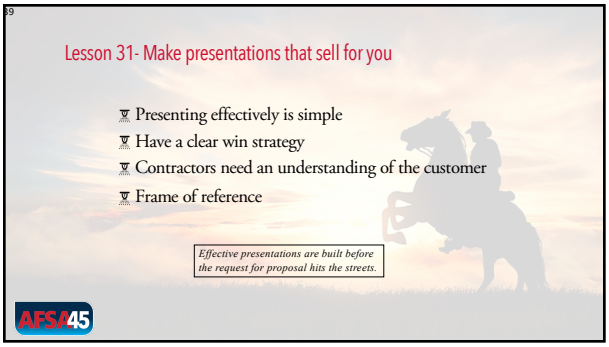

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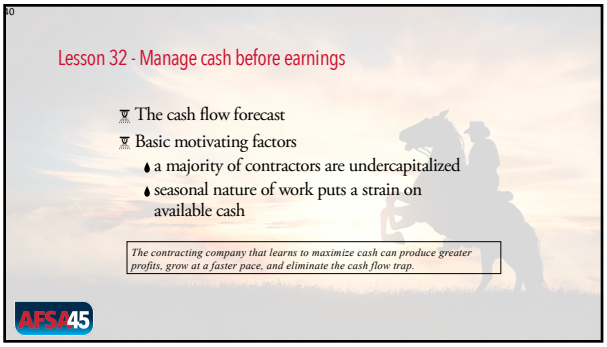

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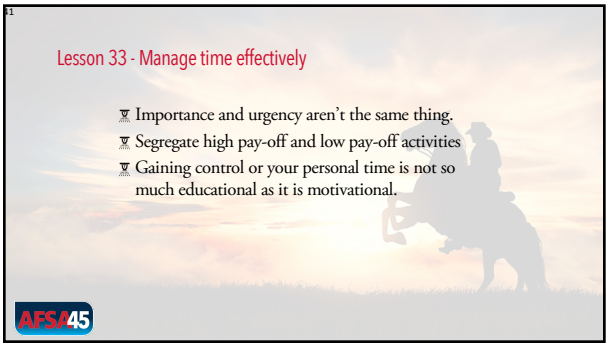

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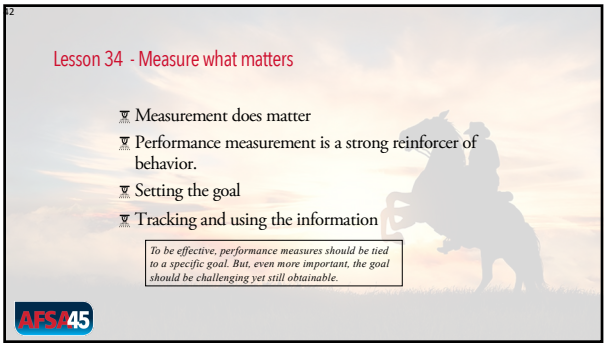

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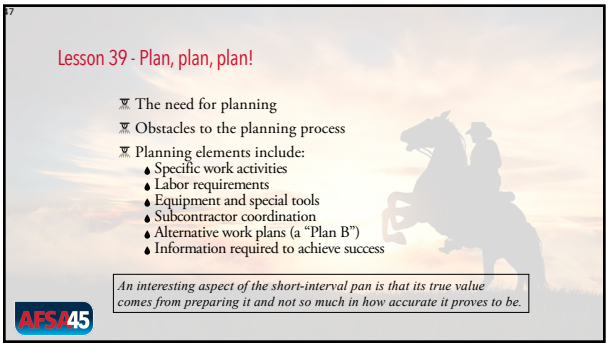

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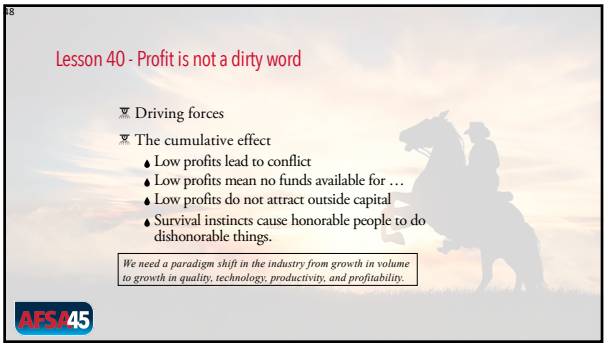

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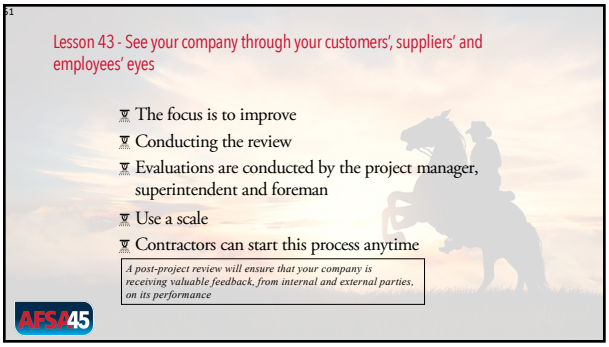

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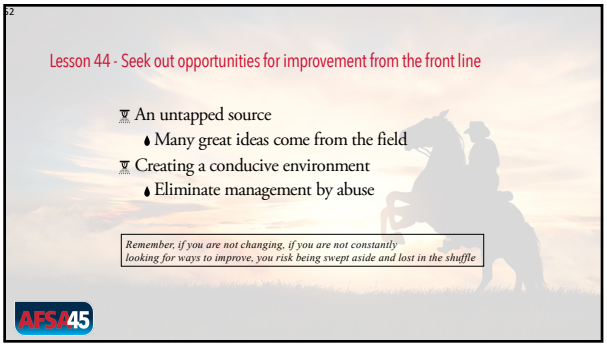

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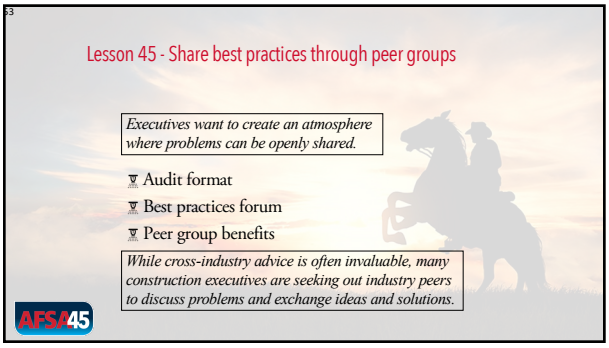

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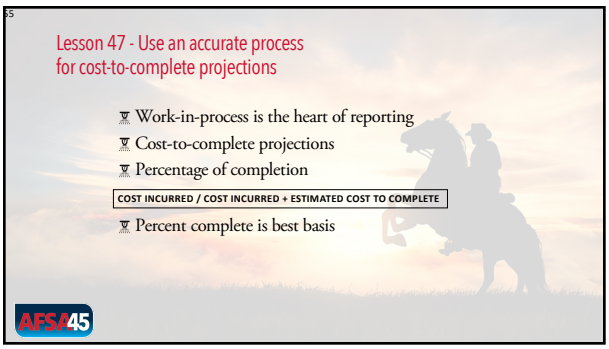

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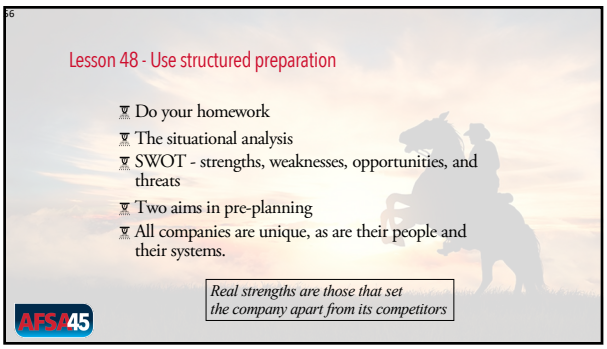

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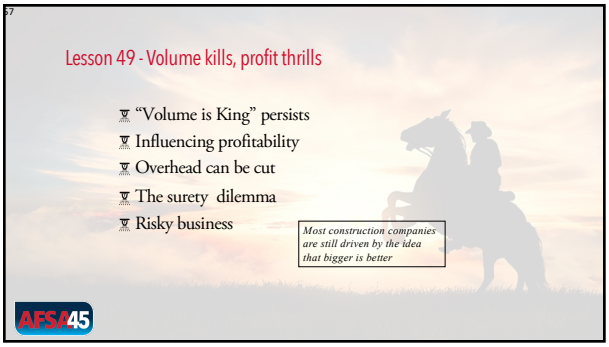

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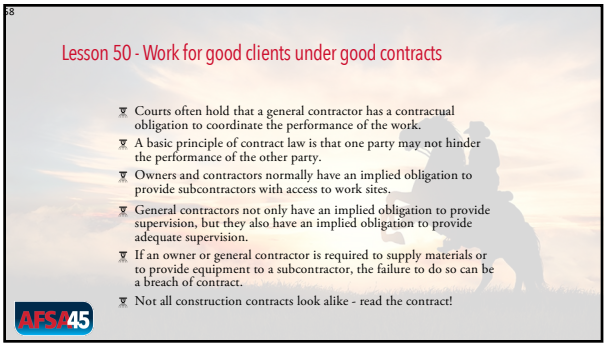

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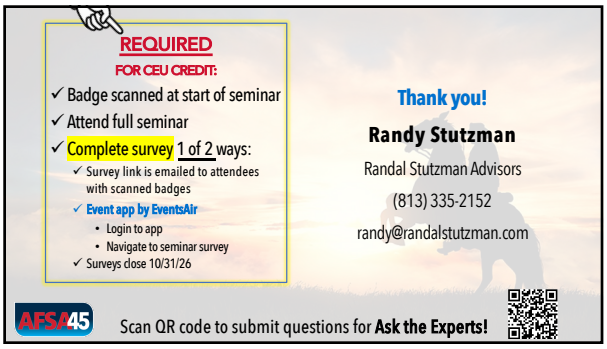

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2027 Training Schedule

WEBINARS

1/6	Updates to NFPA 20
1/20	Calculating Pressure Reducing Hose Valves
2/3	Consumer Alert: Nitrogen in Sprinkler Systems
2/17	Reviewing Hydraulic Calculations
3/3	Updates to NFPA 13, 2028 Ed.
3/17	Updates to NFPA 13R & 13D, 2028 Eds.
4/7	Topic Coming Soon
4/21	NFPA 25: Roles & Responsibilities
5/5	Standpipe Flow Test Procedures
5/19	Storage 101
6/2	NFPA Technical Meeting - Voting Guide
6/16	Topic Coming Soon
6/30	Topic Coming Soon
7/7	Updates to NFPA 14, 2027 Edition
7/21	Adjacent Hazards & Design Methods
8/4	Acceptance Testing
8/18	Modifications to Existing Systems
9/22	Topic Coming Soon
10/6	Seismic 101
10/20	Proposed Updates to NFPA 25, 2029 Ed.
11/3	Evaluating Fire Pump Flow Tests
11/17	Top 10 Tech Reviews
12/1	Designing Water Storage Tanks
12/15	Pump Room Layout

PROGRAMS

Feb 9 - Mar 5 Apr 20 - May 14 Aug 3 - Aug 27** Oct 26 - Nov 19	Beginning Design School*
Apr 26 - May 7 Nov 1 - 12	Intermediate Design School*
Feb 8 - 10** Apr 12 - 14 Jul 12 - 14 Oct 11 - 13	Sprinkler Hydraulics Calculations Workshop
Apr 19 - 21 Oct 18 - 20	Advanced Hydraulics Calculations Workshop
Feb 11** Apr 30 Jul 23 Sep 24	Introduction to the Fire Sprinkler Industry
Mar 1 - 3 May 17 - 19 Aug 16 - 18 Oct 18 - 20**	NFPA 25 Essentials Workshop
Jun 7 - 10 Sep 20 - 23	Experienced Inspector Skills Lab
Mar 4 - 5 May 20 - 21 Aug 19 - 20 Oct 21 - 22**	NFPA 25 Fire Pump Workshop
Spring Summer Fall	ITM Inspector Development Program* *This program is 20 months.*

** Hybrid course **At General Air Products Lab, Exton, PA*

AFSA46

September 8-11	Manchester Grand Hyatt San Diego, CA

For More Details Visit:
firesprinkler.org

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Dates subject to change. Programs subject to minimum registrations.

rev 9/14/2026

Virtual Instruction Path (VIP)

for Sprinkler Fitting Apprentices

Level 1 - Begins January 2027

Level 2 - Begins February 2027

Level 3 - Begins January 2027

Level 4 - Begins March 2027

www.firesprinkler.org/VIP

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HANDS-ON WORKSHOPS FOR 2027

FEATURING AFSA'S TRAINING LAB

NFPA 25 Essentials Workshop

Mar | May | Aug | Oct

Description: Understand roles, responsibilities, and NFPA 25 ITM procedures through hands-on testing of wet systems, dry systems, and fire pumps.

NFPA 25 Fire Pump Workshop

Mar | May | Aug | Oct

Description: Develop practical NFPA 25 fire pump ITM skills, including no-flow and full-flow testing, water supply graphing, and performance evaluation.

Introduction to the Fire Sprinkler Industry

Feb | Apr | Jul | Sep

Description: This course is designed for those new to the industry. An introductory, wide-ranging 8-hour course that provides a broad overview of core fire sprinkler industry concepts for those new to the field.

Experienced Inspector Skills Lab NEW

Mar | Sep

Description: Take your ITM expertise beyond the basics. Designed for experienced technicians, this course combines focused classroom instruction with hands-on system lab training to strengthen your application of current NFPA 25 inspection, testing, and maintenance requirements. Refine fire sprinkler testing practices, improve documentation, deliver more consistent service, and help reduce liability while reinforcing knowledge commonly covered on certification exams.

Learn more about AFSA's fire sprinkler lab featuring functional risers, a spray room, fire pumps, and an interactive classroom.

firesprinkler.org/lab