

Leadership Series: Course Descriptions

This course overview includes descriptions for each of the following levels:

1. **Emerging Leaders**
2. **Mid-level Leaders**

Each distinct level will experience a comprehensive track tailored to develop and enhance skills and tools needed at various stages of a leader's career.

A Note on Artificial Intelligence (AI): Because AI usage policies vary significantly across firms and the technology itself continues to evolve rapidly, the **Leadership Series** has not designated a specific module to this topic. Nonetheless, AI fluency is fast becoming a core competency for leaders, and instructors will incorporate relevant AI discussions throughout the series as appropriate — including its use as a thought partner, its role in supporting leaders' growth and development goals, and its emerging role in management and leadership practice.

NOTE: Module titles, descriptions and order subject to change.

Emerging Leaders

Emerging Leaders - Overall Description: *This series is designed for emerging leaders who aspire to enhance their leadership abilities and build a solid foundation for future growth. Through engaging activities, practical exercises, and real-world examples, participants will gain tools and knowledge needed to navigate their roles confidently and lay the groundwork for future leadership success.*

MODULE 1: Leadership Series Kick-off Session (SHARI HARLEY)

Kick off the cohort with two essential leadership skills: Networking and Running Effective Meetings. This session is held in two parts, followed by a reception where you can connect with your fellow participants and enjoy some time together.

Part One: Dread-Free Networking Events – Making Networking Events Useful and Painless

Networking events can be awkward — you introduce yourself, but the conversation stalls. Everyone else seems to be deep in conversation with their own group. How do you break in? And when it's time to move on, how do you exit gracefully? This session will give you practical tools for navigating both.

Part Two: Making Meetings Work as a Meeting Leader and Attendee – Faster, More Effective Meetings

We all attend too many meetings — some of us spend entire days in them, then work at night just to catch up. Learn how to make meetings shorter and more productive, even when you're not the one running them.



MODULE 2: Developing Oneself for Leadership (DAIN JOHNSON, PMP)

Leadership starts with self-awareness, discipline, and intentional growth. This session helps participants understand how their habits, beliefs, and behaviors shape their leadership impact - and how to improve them.

MODULE 3: Time Management (DAIN JOHNSON, PMP)

Effective leadership depends on how you allocate your time and attention. This session introduces practical systems to manage priorities, reduce overwhelm, and focus on the work that matters most.

MODULE 4: Understanding the Numbers (SCOTT SUTTON, CPA)

You know how to design it - now start learning how it works as a business. This module introduces the basic financial concepts behind every engineering firm, so you can build a foundation for leadership as your career grows.

MODULE 5: Foundational Communication (DAIN JOHNSON, PMP)

Clear communication is the foundation of leadership credibility. Participants learn how to organize their thinking, express their perspective effectively, and be understood in high-stakes situations.

MODULE 6: Building Connections through Listening (DAN OBLINGER)

This module lays the groundwork for participants to understand and apply relationship-based negotiation principles and practices - key elements of effective project and talent management.

MODULE 7: Collaborative Leadership (DAIN JOHNSON, PMP)

Leadership is never practiced in isolation. This session explores how to work effectively within the realities of an organization—building strong peer relationships, navigating competing priorities, and creating alignment across teams to achieve better results together.

BONUS MODULE: ACEC Colorado and ACEC National 101 (HEIDI GORDON, CAE)

To be held at ACEC Colorado's 2027 Annual Conference

Leadership extends beyond your organization. In this bonus session, participants will explore opportunities to engage with ACEC Colorado and ACEC National through professional forums, industry coalitions, committees, events, and advocacy initiatives that strengthen both individual careers and the consulting engineering profession.

Mid-level Leaders

Mid-level Leaders - Course Description: *This course is designed for mid-level leaders who are looking to refine and expand their leadership capabilities. Through case studies, role-playing, and interactive discussions, participants will deepen their understanding of leadership critical competencies, enabling them to lead more effectively in complex and dynamic work environments.*

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Part One: Dread-Free Networking Events – Making Networking Events Useful and Painless

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Part Two: Making Meetings Work as a Meeting Leader and Attendee – Faster, More Effective Meetings

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MODULE 2: Manager Responsibilities (DAIN JOHNSON, PMP)

Leadership is never practiced in isolation. This session explores how to work effectively within the realities of an organization—building strong peer relationships, navigating competing priorities, and creating alignment across teams to achieve better results together.

MODULE 3: Risk Management (TBD)

This module takes a comprehensive look at risk management across the full lifecycle of a project. Participants will examine how different project delivery methods carry distinct risk profiles and walk away with practical strategies for mitigating risk across projects, job sites, and contracts.

MODULE 4: Know Your Numbers (SCOTT SUTTON, CPA)

Great engineering isn't enough — as a leader your firm counts on, you need to also understand the financial decisions that not only impact your firm, but the industry as a whole. From project-based metrics to tax policy that shapes every firm's financial decisions, this module translates the numbers principals live by into a language you can use with confidence.



MODULE 5: Advanced Communication (DAIN JOHNSON, PMP)

Great leaders don't just share ideas - they develop others' thinking. Participants learn how to communicate as a coach, using questions and structure to help others solve problems and grow.

MODULE 6: Relationship-based Negotiation (DAN OBLINGER)

This module emphasizes the principles and practices of relationship-based negotiation, including managing emotions and biases, conducting discovery, becoming trusted advisors, building empathy and trust, and developing creative solutions with colleagues, employees, managers, and clients.

MODULE 7: Strategic Leadership (DAIN JOHNSON, PMP)

This session focuses on aligning leadership responsibilities, coaching, and goals into a long-term development strategy. Participants define how they will continue to grow themselves and navigate the leadership pipeline in their organization.

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Shari Harley | Founder & President of Candid Culture



Author of the book *How to Say Anything to Anyone* and founder and president of the training firm **Candid Culture**, Shari will teach you how to manage a networking event with less stress and more ease. Shari will teach how to start useful conversations, break into groups, and how to get out of conversations that have run their course.

Shari was the keynote speaker at the ACEC Colorado 2025 Annual Conference and an instructor in the 2025-26 ACEC Colorado Leadership Series. She's Denver-based and is a great partner of ACEC Colorado. She promises you will have fun, make meaningful connections, and learn to make meetings more productive, even when you don't run them.

Dain Johnson, PMP | Engineer-Turned-Psychologist at Rev 0



Dain Johnson is an engineer-turned-psychologist, coaching technical experts and consulting technical organizations. He spent a decade as an engineer in global corporations, multinational projects, and high-tech start-ups, and brings a unique and pragmatic perspective to leading technical teams. With a master's in industrial and organizational psychology and a bachelor's in mechanical engineering, Dain blends technical expertise with an understanding of human behavior and business operations to help others develop transformational leadership and foster cultures of excellence.

Dan Oblinger | Consulting Negotiator at Leadercraft



Dan Oblinger is a hostage negotiator commander, author, international keynote speaker and consulting business negotiator. He specializes in working with architects, engineers and construction managers. Whether speaking at conferences, facilitating workshops for active listening and negotiation skills, or coaching and consulting with companies to build strong agreements, he loves to share his craft and enhance culture. He is a graduate of the FBI National Crisis Negotiator Course in Quantico, Va., and his books, *Life or Death Listening*, *The 28 Laws of Listening*, and *Negotiation Mythbusters* are used for internal negotiations training programs for companies ranging from large, multinational conglomerates to small design firms.

Scott Sutton, CPA | Managing Director at CBIZ



As a Managing Director on CBIZ's Architecture/Engineering and Advisory Teams, Scott has significant experience providing both compliance and consulting services to architectural, engineering and other small businesses across the country. Scott is a trusted advisor within the A/E community on industry best practices, operational and efficiency initiatives and helps organizations improve/enhance their performance. He has significant experience with Part 31 of the Federal Acquisition Regulation, FAR Compliant Overhead Rate Audits, Government Contracting Consulting and A/E Industry Software Packages. Scott is a Certified Design Accountant which recognizes a professional accountant with a specialized degree of skill,

education and working experience that is necessary to successfully manage the financial aspects of today's architectural and engineering firms.