



Many organizations have begun spring evaluations and are planning coach assignments for next year....but many coaches are saying "Next year will be different!" Ever wonder what will be done differently to obtain different results?

With the season all but behind us now, perhaps it is time to reflect on your year as coach. Did you achieve your goals? If so, by what standards did you measure? If not, what obstacles remained in your way? Did your players believe in you? How about their parents and other boosters? Did you suffer the frustration of under-achieving? Consider this quote by Pat Williams, Senior Executive Vice President, Orlando Magic.

If you want to build an atmosphere in which everybody pulls together to win,  
Then you, as a leader have to recognize that it all starts with you.  
It starts with your attitude, your commitment, your caring,  
Your passion for excellence, your dedication to winning.  
It starts with the example you set.  
It starts with the way you treat and relate to your athletes.

What a great segue to this article that appeared in the USOC Olympic Coach E-Magazine. The article discusses those ever-important competencies – those qualities of leadership – for coaching youth, collegiate and professional sports....

### **SUCCESSFUL COACHING: GAINING AND MAINTAINING CREDIBILITY**

By Gregory A. Dale, Ph.D., Duke University © 2002-2006 USOC

Have you ever wondered why some coaches achieve so much success with their athletes and teams - winning and gaining everyone's respect along the way - while others continually fall short or struggle to get their teams or athletes to perform at a consistently high level? If you are like most coaches, you have probably asked yourself questions such as the following:

- How do some coaches consistently get the most out of their athletes while others have athletes who chronically underachieve?

- How do some coaches gain their athletes' confidence, trust, and respect while others have athletes who never buy into them and what they are trying to accomplish?
- How do some coaches inspire their athletes to compete with confidence, aggressiveness, and mental toughness while others have athletes who routinely crumble and choke under pressure?
- How do some coaches get athletes to willingly "run through walls" for them while others have athletes with little commitment, no work ethic, and bad attitudes?
- How do some coaches inspire a sense of loyalty and pride in their athletes while others have athletes who want to quit, or worse yet, instigate a revolt and try to get their coaches fired?

In my work as a sport psychology consultant, I have come to the realization that the most successful coaches are those that not only win most of the time but also are able to develop meaningful relationships with the athletes they coach. In other words their athletes respect them and willingly "put it on the line" for them when asked.

Following are seven characteristics that successful coaches and their athletes have identified as being essential for a coach to have credibility with their athletes and ultimate success. As you read these characteristics, I hope you will honestly examine the way you coach. Ask yourself if there are any areas that need attention.

Remember, you continually ask your athletes to work on aspects of their games that are lacking. It seems to only make sense that you would do the same for yourself if you want to improve.

### **Character**

These coaches:

- Do what they say they are going to do. They don't tell athletes one thing and then do another.
- Are honest with athletes regarding their roles on a team. They don't promise things that they can't deliver.
- Follow the rules as they are written and don't look for ways around those rules to have a better chance to win.

### **Consistent**

These coaches:

- Are consistent in the way they administer punishment. They don't show favoritism toward better athletes.
- They don't have a "doghouse". Disagreements are dealt with and everyone moves on in a productive manner.
- Are consistent in their mood and the way they approach their athletes on a daily basis. They don't take things out on their athletes.

- Create an environment where their athletes know what to expect from them. There are no petty mind games.

### **Communicator**

These coaches:

- Make sure their positive/instructive comments outweigh the negative comments.
- Are proactive. They seek out athletes and check in with them vs. waiting for problems to arise.
- Truly have an active, open door.
- Clearly communicate with athletes and staff about roles, expectations and standards. They make no assumptions.
- Focus on really listening to players.
- Seek input from team leaders on key decisions. Athletes feel like they can come and talk to them.

### **Caring**

These coaches:

- Act as servants. Athletes feel like the coach would do anything for them regardless of their talent.
- Take a genuine interest in the athletes' lives away from the sport.
- Treat athletes as more than just a group of individuals who can help the coach move up the career ladder.
- Forge long-term relationships with their athletes. There is a sense of loyalty for life.

### **Competent**

These coaches:

- Know their sport inside and out, but are also human enough to admit when they are wrong.
- Keep up to date with the latest advances.
- Always learning and willing to look for new ideas.
- Their athletes improve from the time they entered their program to when they finished, no matter how good they were when they started.

### **Committed**

These coaches:

- Have a clear vision for the program and are able to communicate that vision to athletes.
- Are passionate/invested. They are committed to putting in the time. They come early and stay late.
- They aren't afraid to list their secrets of success because they know no one will outwork them.
- Have a competitive fire. They are highly competitive individuals.

### **Confidence Builder**

These coaches:

- Are inspiring. They sell athletes on themselves. They create and maintain hope and optimism. They also plant seeds of greatness.
- Know that athletes want to feel appreciated, valued, competent, and important. Great coaches make athletes feel good about themselves.
- Realize that confidence is fragile and they are willing to praise athletes in public and criticize in private (never publicly embarrassing them). They catch people doing things right.
- Are appreciative. They share credit with staff, especially acknowledging the “little” people.
- They have the mindset that the athletes are the ones who really win games, not the coach.

Gaining and maintaining respect and credibility with your athletes is vital to ultimate success. Great coaches are great because they see the importance of credibility and respect. They know how fragile they are and work hard to maintain them. Where are you in your journey to becoming one of the great coaches?

In conclusion, I would like you to consider how you want to be remembered by the athletes you coach. Every athlete that competes for you will remember his or her experience with you and your coaching for something.

When you think about it, your coaching career is relatively short in the whole scheme of life. Whether you involved for a few years or dedicate much of your life coaching, the time you have available to impact people is relatively short.

Therefore, it is imperative that you invest your time wisely and determine what you will do with the time you have been given. What legacy would you like to leave behind after you are gone?

This article is based on the book: Janssen, J. & Dale, G. (2002). The seven secrets of successful coaches: How to unlock and unleash your team's full potential. Tucson, AZ: Winning the Mental Game.



**Remember there is nothing wrong with believing in your dreams!**

Thank you for coaching....

HRC Sports LLC  
*Mike Lichtenberger*