

Providing ongoing training for coaches throughout the season

There is a huge range of options for clubs to facilitate coach training including:

- If your club has a lot of coaches then it may wish to consider a Create a “Director of Coaching” role. While you may have a different title, the role is tasked with the responsibility of developing your club’s coaches. This role could go to an experienced coach who may not have the time to coach a team in their own right but is happy to oversee the development of the next generation of coaches. The Director of Coaching would sit down with each coach and create a development plan about how they will achieve the club goals.
- Many clubs appoint mentors for each coach. It could be the mentor who will work with their nominated coach throughout the year, introducing new skills and ideas but they would also be the first person the coach could go to bounce around ideas or to help them tackle a complex issue strategy. Think about your current club environment, where do your coaches currently go for support? Creating mentoring roles for coaches is a great way for very experienced coaches to stay involved in the club, when otherwise their knowledge and experienced may have been lost.
- Guest coaches – many clubs invite guest coaches to visit the club, take training and share their knowledge. Most state sporting bodies have highly qualified coaches on staff who work with clubs as part of their role. Not only is this a very positive experience for your club coaches, but it’s great for the players to hear a different voice at training. Many National and State sporting bodies now have a significant number of great coaching resources online so check out their websites. Also, it really doesn’t hurt to Google or search YouTube for coaching tutorials from your sport. You will be amazed at the resources you will find from all around the world that can help develop your coaches, their knowledge, skills and ability. It doesn’t need to be just coaches that you can bring in as guests but other people who you believe could assist with “soft” skills such as communication and leadership. For instance you may invite a school teacher into talk to your coaches about how to best communicate with parents.

This only just scratches the surface of the different options available to committees. Be creative and continually ask the coaches about people they would like to talk to about coaching and what they would like to learn.

Coaching reviews

Regular coach reviews are another great tool if used well to develop and support coaches. This isn’t a purely performance-type review – there is a time and place for these types of reviews – this is about setting aside a specific time or times throughout the season to review what has happened so far and identifying:

- What has been learned from the season
- Whether performance is above, below or meeting expectations
- Areas that need to change
- What those changes need to be

Setting aside time to review the season to date is a very powerful development tool because it creates the need for coaches to step back from the day to day doing of coaching and consider if there is any new information, resources, knowledge, support that they could use to help them in their role as coach.

Ideally there may be a couple of reviews through the season and one also at the end of the season. The review dates should be set prior to the season so coaches understand this is a process put in place to support them not undermine them.

Many clubs only undertake reviews when the team's performance is going poorly and the calling for a review (or come and front the committee) can be isolating for the coach at the time when they actually need the support the most.

Regardless of the performance of the team a formal time of review creates the opportunity to the coach to reflect on what has happened and honest reflection can be one of the greatest teaching opportunities a person can have.

Clubs where the coaches have a strong sense of trust between the coach and the club also establish more formal review processes where an experienced coach may watch and assess another coach at training and in competition and provide regular feedback. When used constructively this is a very powerful development tool because the assessor and the coach are reviewing actual situations and the coach and assessor can review possible options but in the context of what actually happened and the subsequent result or consequence of the coaches decision or actions.

Again it is important that these processes are introduced at the start of the season otherwise the coach may feel the committee is simply gathering evidence to be used against them.

Support

Take a minute to consider, how your club can support its coaches throughout the season?

A coach's need for support can take many forms:

- Do they have enough help and support to run training and oversee the games or competitions?
- Do they need additional assistant coaches or if a junior club do they need parents to help with the coaching and supporting roles?
- Have we provided the coaches with all the off field support they will need such as team managers, medical staff, scorers etc?
- Have we provided them with the equipment and facility access they need?

While experienced coaches may understand and know exactly what sort of coaching support staff, equipment etc they need, they often underestimate this area of support while many new coaches simply do not know what they will need.

If you are communicating regularly with your coaches then you will be able to find out quickly what they need and when throughout the year, and this can become part of your ongoing coach development and support strategy for future years.

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