

Discovering the Seven Secrets of Successful Coaches

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Introduction

Have you ever wondered why some coaches achieve so much success with their athletes and teams - winning championships and everyone's respect along the way - while others continually fall short or struggle to get their teams to play over .500? If you are like most coaches, you have probably found yourself both fascinated and frustrated by the following questions:

- * How do some coaches build and maintain championship level programs year after year even though everyone else is trying desperately to knock them off?
- * How do some coaches come in and resurrect losing programs with a long and demoralizing history of defeat and quickly bring them to a championship level?
- * 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 the coach and what he or she is trying to accomplish?

To answer many of these intriguing and important coaching questions, my friend Greg Dale and I interviewed many of sport's top coaches including Mike Krzyzewski, Pat Summitt, Roy Williams, and Gail Goestenkors. Based on our interviews, we discovered a new style of coaching, we call credible coaching, that is helping coaches get the absolute most out of today's athletes. Unlike the traditional style of coaching which used fear and intimidation to motivate athletes, credible coaching focuses on developing solid relationships with athletes based on trust and respect. Coach "K" probably said it best in our interview with him - "Coaching is about relationships. It goes way beyond x's and o's. You have to create an environment of trust among your staff and athletes. Without trust, you have nothing. If you do have trust, you will be able to accomplish great things."

Credible coaching has seven primary components associated with it which we call the Seven Secrets of Successful Coaches. As you look over the components, see how you might rate on each of them.

Credible coaches are...

1. Character-based

Credible coaches seek to do the right thing. They are honorable people with high ethical standards and great integrity. They tell the truth to their athletes and never manipulate or play mind games with them. They conduct themselves in a professional manner and take pride in representing their teams and athletes with class. Credible coaches look to surround themselves with people of solid character because they know that character is just as important as talent in the long run.

2. Competent

Credible coaches have a thorough understanding of the strategies and fundamentals of the game. They know how to make the appropriate adjustments and are seldom out-coached. Despite their solid understanding of the X's and O's, they are highly inquisitive people who continually look for innovative and improved ways of doing things. They are lifelong students of the game. Further, they understand that admitting their limitations and mistakes is actually a sign of strength, not weakness. Even though they are highly capable and often revered people, credible coaches tend to remain humble and keep their success in perspective.

3. Committed

Credible coaches are highly committed people. They create successful visions for their teams and are more than willing to put in the time required to make them happen. They have a true passion for sport and coaching which fuels their intense drive and enthusiasm. They also have incredible reserves of energy and resiliency which enables them to weather the inevitable storms of adversity. Credible coaches tend to be highly competitive people who really enjoy competing and winning at the highest levels.

4. Caring

Credible coaches care about their athletes as people. They sincerely want the best for their athletes in all aspects of their lives and are willing to help them in any way possible. Credible coaches invest the time to get to know each of their athletes on a personal level, showing an interest in their athletes' families, friends, faith, and future goals. Further, this caring does not end when a player's eligibility or career is over, but often extends throughout a player's lifetime.

5. Confidence-builder

Credible coaches continually build their players' confidence. They plant seeds of success in their athletes' minds and convince them that they can and will be successful. Credible coaches have a special knack for making people feel good about themselves, capable of achieving almost anything they set their minds to. They are demanding and set high standards yet are patient enough to help athletes develop and improve. When athletes do fall short, as all of them eventually will, credible coaches use a good balance of being challenging and supportive to help people get back on track.

6. Communicators

Credible coaches are excellent communicators. They are open, honest, and direct when communicating with individuals and the team. They continually remind and refocus people on what they need to do to be successful. Credible coaches seek to involve their athletes as much as possible and value the input they receive from them. They have the remarkable ability to truly listen to their athletes. They take the time to understand where people are coming from and are able to make decisions accordingly. Because of their ability to listen, credible coaches are often aware of concerns and conflicts and proactively address them before they become major problems or distractions.

7. Consistent

Credible coaches develop a sound philosophy of coaching. This philosophy remains stable over time, but they are flexible enough to adapt to changing situations or personnel. Credible coaches bring a consistent mood to practices and games, regardless of whether their team is winning or losing. They control their emotions in the heat of battle and convey a sense consistency to their athletes by not letting the highs get too high or the lows get too low. Further, they maintain a consistent approach to the rules and standards of the team. They tend to have few rules, but are consistent in how they apply them whether a player is a starter or reserve. Finally, credible coaches tend to be highly organized people who take their practice and game preparation very seriously.

Being a credible coach is certainly a challenging task. However, the rewards of more motivated, committed, disciplined, and committed players are well worth it.