



## 183 Creating a Growth Culture within Your Staff

[Point Guard College](#) was founded by Dick DeVenzio in 1992 - over 100,000 athletes & 15,000 coaches have attended PGC events.

Mano Watsa became the CEO of Point Guard College in 2007 and has overseen an expansion of basketball courses and coaching education including the [Key5 Coaching Community](#).

### The PGC Teaching Philosophy

- **Hear It** - In the classroom to understand the Why - When - How behind each skill & concept
- **See It** - On film watching examples of skill execution and decision-making
- **Do It** - In the gym provide players with opportunities to practice on the court

### How do you build a dynamic culture for the people who work for PGC?

Adopt a specific **way of being** in terms of how we approach our relationships, the work we do, our preparations, etc.

The challenge is how to live out those values and ensure that everyone in the organization embodies that way of being.

### How do you develop your staff at PGC?

- 1) We must be clear about what's important to us
  - a) What do we want things to be like around here?
  - b) How does everyone do what they do?

The greater the clarity the easier alignment becomes.

- 2) How do you convey that vision with your assistants / players?
  - a) Modeling - They must see it in you first
  - b) Communicating with a common language

### How do you help individuals develop within your organization?



We communicate explicitly that we are creating a growth culture.

We grow by coaching each other up - giving feedback in real time or soon after to help us to grow, stretch, learn, change.

We are a group of life-long learners. To work for PGC is to commit to learning, growing, and changing.

**Any good culture is polarizing - it draws in those that align and repels that don't.**

Every coach wants their players to grow, learn, and change. Every coach highly values being coachable, but too often we don't foster that environment on our staff. Then it becomes difficult to give feedback. This happens because we haven't first fostered a growth culture where there's buy-in.

**What it looks like:** Giving each other feedback on what we do well and what we could do better.

**How do you coach others to give and receive feedback?**

**Leaders go first.** Leaders do the hard things first. Before I coach someone up, I open the door by modeling and asking for feedback from them. This automatically disarms them and reduces the likelihood of them feeling defensive when I give them feedback. This shows that I'm a work in progress, and allows them to accept and embrace that they are a work in progress too.

I ask my assistants these questions every day after practice:

- *What did I do well?*
- *What can we do better for tomorrow?*

Eventually my staff started asking me, *Mano, what do I need to do better?*

The coaches at the highest levels (college & professional) are curious, inquisitive, and view themselves as a work in progress. They are life-long learners. These coaches put their ego on the shelf and don't need to convince others that they have arrived.

Coaches tend to avoid being vulnerable (inviting feedback) because we want to impress.



**They key to growing through feedback? Get over yourself.** The day you've "arrived" and believe there's no more to learn is the day that you're done.

Seek feedback from your staff and players. Ask what you can do to better serve them. As coaches we don't get nearly as much feedback as we could or should.

### How do you create a common language?

- 1) **STEAL** - Look for easy to understand terms that convey what you're trying to get across in the most efficient and effective way possible.

Leveraged sticky language from Dick DeVenzio such as SCHAPE:

**Spirit** - Fill the gym with energy, enthusiasm, and passion

**Communication** - Give reminders before they're necessary

**Hustle** - Always be willing to do more than your share

**Approach** - A mindset that pursues the best from every situation

**Precision** - Ridiculous attention to detail

**Enhancement** - Making the environment better because you are in it

- 2) Use language from your players because its relevant and they understand it

### Why is building a culture of appreciation so important to PGC?

Appreciation is a way of conveying value to people - to help others feel valued. We do this by acknowledging their good efforts, what they're doing well, and who they are.

Appreciation comes from a place of gratitude for others.

**Every PGC staff meeting begins with celebrations** - we express gratitude for one another, for something that's taken place, an accomplishment, etc. It's a way of recognizing others and seeing the good in any situation.

**Gratitude is good for the giver and changes how you see the world.** It forces you to see the best in a situation or in someone else.

We use these moments of appreciation to create an uplifting environment.

**We begin and end every practice with celebrations:**



Players and coaches celebrate one another as we gather at the center court circle to reinforce how our players live our values off the court. For example:

- Bringing energy before practice
- Speaking up in class
- Sweeping the floor before practice
- Recognizing a coach for helping them during pre-practice

Gratitude is good for the giver (helping to hone what we see). It's good for the receiver (reinforces the behavior makes them feel really good about their contributions), and it reinforces the culture and standards / commitments.

When players are acknowledged, celebrated, and challenged our culture is reinforced through celebrations motivating everyone to rise to the occasion.

At the end of practice do it again to celebrate individuals for how they showed up during the practice.

Most of us have grown up in environments where we see the short-comings of others, or the negatives in situations. When we encourage players to see and speak the best in each other, many players have never done anything like that before. We are re-training their brains and eyes to see the good in their teammates.

**One of the greatest gifts we can give our players is to teach them the ability to see the best in others and communicate that so one day they can do that with their co-workers, spouse, and children.**

### **Additional Activities**

**Start team meetings with, *What are we most proud of this week?*** Focus on growth over the past week, where we've improved, who we've become... *When did it feel best to be us?*

**Start / Finish practice with triangles.** In groups of three, give each individual 30 seconds to share one thing that has gone really well and one thing that has been a struggle / challenge this week.

What we miss in coaching basketball is opportunities to build camaraderie and trust. Give players an opportunity to share moments of vulnerability. Helps players connect and build rapport and trust with each other.



## 184 How to Teach a Championship Mindset

Point Guard College hosts [camps](#) across the country that include a week-long immersive experience.

### What is your philosophy regarding the experience you try to create for athletes during a week of camp at Point Guard College?

The goal is to take the players on a journey of discovery, change, and learning to see beyond themselves. Players often come self-absorbed.

When players focus on themselves, they add pressure and don't play as free.

We bring players back to the essence of the game:

- To be present and in the moment
- To play for the love of the game
- To experience joy in the game
- To focus on learning
- To embrace mistakes and failures.

Players discover how to see themselves and see their teammates and to see adversity and failures from a different perspective.

They learn that as a leader you have to have tremendous energy (sheepdog leadership).

They learn how to truly "think the game." They cast vision for themselves, and strive to maximize their potential and their experience in the game.

### How does one teach Mindset?

Pep talks about championship characteristics are not enough - it must be woven into the fabric of our teaching, and be integrated into the entire athlete experience.

### How do we teach leadership, a champion's mindset, help players to be more competitive and to operate with greater urgency?



Start with a conversation so players have an understanding of mindset characteristics (ie hustle, grit, competitiveness, etc). We might begin in the classroom with a discussion about what hustle:

- What it is
- Why it's important
- What it looks like

### **How do we correct a lack of HUSTLE?**

The first time they don't meet the standard in the gym, we address it directly.

For example, we call them over to start practice and they walk.

- 1) We stop them in the moment, without anger / frustration, and bring awareness to the situation. We might use a rating system, 1-10, to self- evaluate their hustle then hold up their numbers by a show of hands.
- 2) We quickly determine that the group was below 5 on average
- 3) We reflect - *Is that championship level?*
- 4) Assuming it's not - we do it again. They scatter in the gym and we call them back.
- 5) When they return by sprinting we ask, *Did that feel different?*

Now we know what hustle looks like and feels like in the gym and a standard has been set moving forward.

### **In Summary:**

- 1) Communicate succinctly
- 2) Ensure they understand how to translate the value to specific behaviors
- 3) Recognize when they get it right - "stop the world" when they don't

As long as you, the coach, are the only one who gives feedback to players - you will be the sole leader. Our goal is to empower players to be influencers on their teammates to help create [player-led teams](#).

### **Speak to the Leaders**

We don't always correct the stragglers that walk, we speak to the leaders in the group. We ask, *Did you notice that some of your teammates didn't sprint over? What did you do about it?* Then give them a do-over for the leaders. This is one way to teach leadership.



We embrace moments of failure to teach mentality just like we would basketball skill. Those moments are where we learn to be who we want to be. This is especially valuable early in the season.

When training our directors, Tyler Colston emphasizes the first 20 minutes of PGC experience and establishing the standards and expectations. We must know what we want to establish in the first 20 minutes!

We emphasize standards early in the year - not just what we do but HOW we do everything. If you get the HOW right then everything else falls into place.

### How do you teach perception at PGC?

We help players identify the cues or clues that help them to know what decision to make.

#### **Example: How does a player know when to stop and fake or shoot off of one foot?**

- 1) We tell them where to look (peak back at the pursuing defender and find the help defender). We ask the players, *how do you know when a defender is going to try and block the shot?*
  - Their eyes get bigger
  - Their hands start to swing back
  - Their feet start to stagger their steps to time the shooter's footwork

If you see any of those indicators → go off two feet.

If none of those signals are present → finish off of one foot.

- 2) We use a guided defender showing the clues or NO clues.
- 3) We randomize the cues to practice the decision
- 4) We compete in live play in a carefully designed context

### What is PGC's relationship with the Mully Children's Family?



[The Mully Children's Family](#) is an orphanage / rehabilitation center for abandoned children in Kenya. PGC has partnered with MCF to build a gymnasium to further enhance their mission to rehabilitate "street kids" in Kenya.

Visit [PGC Cares](#) for more information.

### **The PGC Mission**

Our purpose at PGC is to be a light in the basketball world - to use our platform and privilege for the benefit of others through the game of basketball.

Too many players / coaches leave the game discouraged and disillusioned - we want to bring players and coaches back to the essence of the game, to help them find joy in the game.

Our mission is to inspire and equip every player and coach everywhere, to help them define a clear vision of the career they can have and who they can become.

We want to use basketball as a vehicle to change lives, through our work with [PGC camps](#), [Key5 coaching community](#), the [Hardwood Hustle Podcast](#), and our [partnership with MCF](#). We want our impact to be felt far beyond the basketball court.