

The Coaching Culture Podcast Notes



Episode 198 Taking Over a New Program | Part 1

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Highlights

- Sharing vs Imposing
- Information gathering
- Conversations with players
- Staff's conversations

Two Approaches When Taking Over a Program (**Sharing vs Imposing**)

- Bringing the vision on how the culture is going to be and the systems (offense/defense) you are going to run.
- Learning about the current culture and situation, and maybe slowly and incrementally implementing changes.

Learning About the Program

NATE

Approach to Information Gathering Questions

- Understand the athletic and parent culture.
- What is the level of commitment in the program (parents, players, administration, etc.)?
- What are the systems and strategies?
- How do they practice?
- What do they do in the weight room?
- How do the players interact with each other?
- What is the bench culture like?
- Where are the players, coaches, and administration at?
- What does it mean to be part of this organization?



The more information that you gather as quickly as possible, the better perspective you have on where to start.

Questions to ask before deciding where to start.

- What are people open to when it comes to change?
- Where am I going to get the biggest return for my investment (ROI) when I start
 - to prioritize the areas that I want to address first?

(What does it mean to be a Celtic? | Book: [The Big Three](#) by Michael Holley)

JP

Approach to Information Gathering Questions

- What's the story people are telling?
- Do people love playing here?
- Do people not like playing here?
- Are we winners here?
- Do they have a winning mindset?
- What's the commitment level?
- What are the behaviors?
- Watch films and identify if they play competitively.
- Is there a great bench energy?
- How are people talking?
- How are people thinking?
- What are their thoughts towards teammates and coaches?
- What do they see the coach's role as?

Gather a lot of information on people's thoughts and talk around the culture.

JP's Finds After Gathering Information

- Great tradition
- They saw themselves as hard workers and highly committed.
- Division between the players that played a lot and those that didn't.



Conversations With Players

- Schedule 1-on-1 (Whatever was more practical and comfortable for them.)
 - Face-to-Face
 - Over the Phone
 - Video Chat
- Google Forms (Maybe anonymous to see if some stuff can come out to the surface.)
- Call Around
 - Other Coaches
 - What do they think about the program?
 - What do they think about the administration?
 - What do they think about the players?
 - Former Coach
 - Thoughts on the roster.
 - Thoughts on the administration.
 - Thoughts about his/her experience.

NATE

Information Gathering Starts During the Interview Process.

- A wide view of what you are walking into.
- How you are going to address some of the needs that you can uncover before you get the job.
- Talk to coaches in the league.
- Talk to administrators in the league about the AD.
- Talk to people in the community.
- Talk to people that have kids in the district.
- Talk to coaches that work at the school.
- Talk to former school coaches.
- Talk to people in the media that have covered games at the school.
- Talk to anyone that has a contact point with the school district and/or athletic program.
- Get a perspective on the athletic culture and community.

It starts as soon as you decide to take the job.

- Process starts as soon as you decide to take a job somewhere.



- Watch films to see how the play and practice.
- Talk to the coaching staff.
- Talk to seniors.

JP

What to do in a one-on-one conversation?

- Less talking and more listening.
- Asking great questions.
- Follow up those questions with more questions.
- Engage where they are at.

JP's Favorite Questions from the book ["It's Your Ship: Management Techniques from the Best Damn Ship in the Navy"](#) by Captain D. Michael Abrashoff

- What do you like most about the USS Benfold?
- What do you like least?
- What one thing would you change (except for the captain!) if you could?

These questions start from the good/positive; and what has been working here.



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Go to the following episodes to listen to the interview with
Captain D. Michael Abashoff

[Episode 157 Resetting The Culture of Your Program](#)
[Episode 158 How Would my Own Son or Daughter Feel](#)



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Find opportunities for the team to be together.

- Talk about culture and team-building activities even before starting summer workouts to create momentum.
- Conversations with and without seniors. Have the same conversations but separately. Assistant coaches with the non-seniors.
- What can the seniors do for this team this year to get the kind of experience that we want? What are the seniors' role?
- What things can the seniors do to help us create a good experience?
- What things you don't want the seniors to do that will prevent us from having a good experience?
- What can the team do to help the seniors have a great senior year experience?
- What things you don't want the team to prevent that from happening?



JP

- Move the team from issues to solutions.
- Critical skill or strategy for the coach to use from day one to the end.
- Bring a problem/issue with a solution. When players come up with an idea they are more bought into it. They are empowered to become part of the change.
- Ask them what their vision for the program is?
- Create a shared vision.

Staff Retention

Nate

- Clean House or Keep Coaches
- Share vision with the assistants encourage them to stay. Let the coaches decide if they want to be part of it.
- Be conscious about the assistant coaches' relationship with the previous coach when asking questions.
- Structure your questions.
 - What was your role last year?
 - What was your role at practices?
 - What was your role on the bench?
 - What would you like to do at practice?
 - Are there areas that you would like to grow as a coach?
 - What things would you like to learn?

Focus on solutions, growth and moving forward while drawing on their experiences, their strengths and desire for what they like to see their role to be moving forward.

JP

Mistake - I came to the conversation with the assistant coaches thinking that I was the expert.

Mindset - You are new, and the coaches have the institutional knowledge of what the program has been and the current state of the culture. Coaches have an idea of what we need to continue doing and what we need to stop doing.

Empower the coaches to set the stage for the relationship with them. You want them to speak up and offer solutions for changes and ideas. You want them to feel respected and to feel that their opinion matters right from the very first conversation.

Create a good coaching culture right from the beginning.



Appetite for Change

- Understand the appetite for change before introducing changes.
- Understanding the landscape is very important to decide how much change I can bring at the beginning.
- Have an understanding of what the sacred cows are, if there are any. Long tradition of seniors playing--be aware of that. How much better are you if you play the underclassmen. Need to know before making that decision.
- Preview your ideas before you commit to them. How do we want to select our varsity team--based on ability?

The more intelligence you have the better decisions you are going to be able to make because you understand the cost and you understand the areas where there may be more resistance than others.

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