

Janssen Peak Performance

The Seven Secrets of Successful Coaches

By Jeff Janssen, M.S., Peak Performance Coach

Have you ever wondered why some coaches achieve so much success with their 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 in" to 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, Gary Barnett, Marty Schottenheimer, Mike Candrea, Mary Wise, and several others. 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.

"A lot of our success in Duke basketball has to do with character. And at the heart of character is honesty and integrity."

Mike Krzyzewski, Duke Men's Basketball

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.**

"Sometimes the most important listening you do is the listening that comes after you've reached the top, after you've gotten very good and could be susceptible to the idea that you know everything. Even though you're having a lot of success, you still have to be open. That's how you keep growing, keep competing, even after you've reached that high level, because there are a lot people out there who can affect you and help you and teach you."

Dan Gable, Former Iowa Wrestling Coach

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.**

"I've been fortunate that my commitment almost demands that the players have the same type of commitment. And I've had players in the past say, 'Coach works so hard it sort of embarrasses us if we don't work that hard.' I think the commitment I give them sort of asks for them to give that back without me saying anything."

Roy Williams, North Carolina Men's Basketball

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.

"I know if somebody really cares about me and is really fighting for me, I'll go through a wall for them. The same works in reverse. If somebody knows you don't care about him and aren't really fighting for him, then he won't go through the wall for you."

Mike Shanahan, Denver Broncos

5. Confidence-builders

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.

“When people realize that someone has faith in them productivity usually increases. We have a natural desire to not want to disappoint those who believe in us and trust us.”

Tom Osborne, Former Nebraska Football Coach

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.

“You have to listen to develop meaningful relationships with people... You can't do that by talking. You do that by listening. What I have learned is, coaching is not all about me going into a locker room and telling them everything I know about basketball. It's a matter of knowing how they think and feel and what they want and what's important in their lives. Listening has allowed me to be a better coach.”

Pat Summitt, Tennessee Women's Basketball Coach

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.

"I don't play favorites. I offer no special favors to high-salaried stars or players I like, nor do I show personal preferences."

Joe Torre, New York Yankees

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

© Jeff Janssen. Please contact us if you would like permission to reproduce any of these copyrighted articles in your publication or website. All articles must include the following at the end: Jeff Janssen helps coaches and athletes develop the team chemistry, mental toughness, and leadership skills necessary to win championships. For more information on Jeff's programs and resources, visit www.jeffjanssen.com or call toll free 1-888-721-TEAM.

[Close Window](#)

