



World Swimming Coaches Association


Newsletter Volume 2021 ° Issue 04

*"If you don't have time to do it right,
when will you have time to do it
over?" -- John Wooden*

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COME JOIN US!

Guest Speaker, Coach John Leonard

John has enjoyed a 51-year coaching career that continues with his USA Swimming Club Team to this day. For 35 years from 1985 to 2020, he was the Executive Director of the largest coaches' association in the world, the American Swimming Coaches Association, and lectured in 27 nations around the world on a variety of diverse topics in the sport of swimming and sports development and international swimming governance.

He became one of the best-known advocates in the history of our sport, working on athletes' rights and opportunities, anti-doping, and productive sports governance at all levels from the local to the IOC and FINA.

John's coaching career has ranged the gamut from novice swimmers (which he still coaches to this day) to national age group record holders, to Olympians.

"I think I have the most content and ideas to lend to other coaches in the areas of developing age group athletes for a long and productive career, and certainly I am also comfortable on any topic in coach education and the important advocacy position of keeping the "Coach Voice" prominent in any and all administration of our sport, JL."



WSCA COACH WEBCASTS

May 12th, 2021 • 14:00 GMT – 9:00 AM CT •
Q&A Live on Zoom

*From Learn-to-Swim to the Olympic Podium.
How to take your club from beginners to Olympic medalists.*

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Innovation and the Future of Swimming Coaching: Part 1

by David Pyne, Ph.D., FACSM

Question from Bill Sweetenham

Given all that we have heard through this Zoom phase of our coaching life, where is the science innovation coming from in sport? Where will advantages be gained? Do we, as coaches, need to address our education and thinking? Are we, as coaches, getting the best of the athletes in our care? Are we developing winning points of difference in the strength and conditioning aspect of the athlete? Am I right in my philosophy and applied individualization and specialization principles? Psychologically, have we, as coaches, provided an advantage for all the athletes in our care?

How do we test all of the above? Do we need to test? WHERE IS THE BREAKTHROUGH GOING TO COME FROM? ARE WE TRAVELING BLIND ON ASSUMPTIONS FROM EXPERIENCE-BASED KNOWLEDGE/KNOWLEDGE-BASED EXPERIENCE? After 50 years of assumed and gathered knowledge, I want to know what I don't know? How many athletes did we coach who achieved their optimal performance? Are you sure?) HOW CAN WE DO IT BETTER?

Bill Sweetenham, AM, Churchill Fellow

Answer from David Pyne, Ph.D., FACSM

Hi Bill,

You've asked us to reflect on coaching breakthroughs and innovations and how sports science can play a pivotal role. These questions are not new to you. I'm sure those who have worked with you in the past will be familiar with the refrains, "What is your winning point of difference?" and "Where, when, and what is the next breakthrough in coaching?" Another way of thinking about this is the concept of life-long learning as a coach – you have pushed this theme several times during the recent Zoom meetings. Here are ten ideas to stimulate some discussion. Most of these ideas aren't new, but that's one of the key messages – look back and reflect to see the path ahead.

1. **Coach-to-Coach learning.** It's a well-established fact that 30-40% of learning is peer-to-peer, that is, students learning from each other, coaches learning from coaches, sports scientists with sports scientists, etc. This is one of the challenges of the current times, with everyone stuck behind a laptop online and missing that formal and informal interaction with colleagues.



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University lectures are typically online now across the world (even before COVID), but bringing students together in a tutorial, practical classes, field trips to learn from each other is even more critical than ever. Employ an assistant coach if you can, but let them do some coaching and listen rather than always instruct. Seek out other coaches in your city and do the coffee-shop discussions (e.g., Bill and Michael Bohl every Tuesday morning). Now that videoconferencing is so widely available and accessible, a coach can seek out any other coach worldwide and ask a question or set-up a discussion. They are all flattered when asked, so don't be put off by name and reputation.

2. **The breakthrough might be right there in front of you.** Coaches spend hundreds of hours on deck with a variety of swimmers and programs. The next breakthrough might be in your squad, with your best swimmer(s), with your assistant coach, with the support staff you might have access to (physiologist, strength and conditioning coach, physio), or observation that someone makes when visiting your program. We've heard a lot in recent times from Patrick and Hannah Miley's story, and as Bill has said, you can learn so much from your experienced swimmers. Look at your coaching logbook – what a treasure trove, so find the time to read and reflect. If necessary, get your assistant coach, a student, or even one of your senior swimmers who has number-crunching skills to assist.

3. **Coach education courses** – There's plenty of these around, particularly in the leading swim nations – face-to-face and now online - often more focused on early career coaches. The quality and value can be variable, and while fundamentals probably don't change that much, there is always new information coming through or new ways of looking at perennial issues. It can be instructive for a mid-career or even late-career coach to access, listen, or participate in these courses. Better still, get involved as a presenter, facilitator, and/or moderator. It's an old line, "The best way to learn new material and insights is to teach it."

4. **Find a mentor and a mentee** – it's a no-brainer. The mentor/mentee relationship and process are well established in business, academic, and sporting circles. Early on, an emerging coach should seek out a more experienced coaching colleague. Later on, an established coach should look to support a junior or assistant coach. This arrangement can also apply to the coach-sports scientist interaction. You put a junior sports scientist with the head coach for mutual benefit, and then take an experienced sports scientist and put them with a junior coach – everyone learns!



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5. **Multi-disciplinary or single discipline expertise** – This is a perennial one in sports science. We've had a decade or more of the notion that a multi-disciplinary approach is best. There is no doubt that coaching is an extensive (multi-disciplinary) set of skills, knowledge, experiences, and expertise. Here is a very recent discussion in academic circles. <https://campusmorningmail.com.au/news/merlin-crossley-on-why-researchers-who-stick-to-the-knitting-can-make-the-biggest-contributions/> This issue has hurt a lot of the sports science disciplines in Australia and probably elsewhere with a push to multi-disciplinary roles, appointments and funding. Swimming physiologists are a disappearing breed! There is a world of information on coaching pedagogy – often dense with theory and academic language. Still, if you can find a way to access this material, that would be a great asset.

6. **Look outside swimming and outside sport** – It is valuable to look at other sports to see their strategy, coaching, sports science, athlete preparation, and management approach. This exercise can help with sports similar to swimming (e.g., individual sports, Olympic sports) or something completely different (elite level football, motor racing, combat sports). Bill loves his football, and Wayne Goldsmith and I have spent more than 20 years encouraging him to look at cricket.

7. **Talk, read and write** – Talking and listening through the Zoom series is a very accessible form of learning. Reading both the old-fashioned hard copy and online can bring tremendous insights, but only if you know where to look, put the time in, and develop a filter for all the noise and fake news. What about writing? There are very few swim coaches who put to pen to paper (these days the keyboard) or respond to the information and challenges that Bill and many others put out, even when Bill asks for feedback. Writing is a very pure form of translating knowledge and experience in a coherent, concise, and informative way. This process doesn't have to be high-level literacy, but more typically just at the email exchange level (like this discussion here).

8. **Do a study tour** – It is good to look outside your own country. Head to the continent, the US, Australia, etc. (when COVID is under control). Seek out the leading lights and ask them to host you for a session, a day, or a week. Ken Sabotic did this last year with Eddie Reese and is still talking about it. This process requires initiative, planning, and funding and is a perfect post-season exercise when programs are on a break. Leave your assistant coach in charge! Why not find your way to the next World Championships or Olympics when normality returns.

9. **It's a technology world** – You can waste a lot of time looking at the latest tech and promises that new equipment, accessories, and the digital world might bring, but these just might provide an edge or something a bit different. Use the cost:benefit approach. If



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something is free, doesn't take much time, and won't comprise your program or the swimmer's progress, etc., then it could be an option. Leave the expensive, time-consuming, and risky initiatives to someone else.

10. **Numbers, numbers, numbers** – There aren't too many coaches around like Patrick Miley, who have such great insight (after a lot of effort over a long period) in immersing himself and his coaching in the world of spreadsheets. Swimming coaching and competitive performance are heavily reliant on a numerical approach, and so, of course, is sports science. It is an obvious point of interaction.

I hope these musings stimulate some thinking and further discussion.

Regards,
David Pyne, Ph.D., FACSM



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How Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, and Vince Lombardi Embraced the Rule of Formidable Expectations. The more you demand, the more you must be willing to give--not just in terms of pay.

By Jeff Haden, contributing editor, inc. @jeff_haden

https://www.inc.com/jeff-haden/how-bill-gates-steve-jobs-vince-lombardi-embraced-rule-of-formidable-expectations.html?utm_source=incthismorning

In the early days of Microsoft, Bill Gates was notoriously tough on his employees. Not only did he memorize license plates so he could tell who was still at work, but he also made a habit of sending 2 a.m. emails that started with, "This is the stupidest piece of code ever written."

Steve Jobs could be an even more brutal boss. According to one former employee: "Steve, like Napoleon, had two faces. On one side, he was a brilliant genius and a true misfit. And the other side--his lack of care and sensitivity for people, his disrespect and dictatorial behavior--were all real.

Then there's Vince Lombardi, the Pro Football Hall of Fame coach, and the Super Bowl trophy's namesake. Hall of Fame lineman Jerry Kramer said of Lombardi, "He shouted, bullied, drove us, underpaid us, and refused to spoil us." Henry Jordan, another Hall of Famer, famously said, "He treats us all the same--like dogs.

"Jerks, one and all? Maybe.

But then again, Gates built Microsoft. Jobs built Apple. Lombardi's Green Bay Packers won five NFL championships and the first two Super Bowls.

More importantly, many people reflect fondly on their time working with Jobs, Gates, and Lombardi. The experience taught them to prepare, think critically, work harder, work smarter, and put their teams ahead of themselves.

Does that mean the end always justifies the means?

Absolutely not.

But it does illustrate the rule of formidable expectations.



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The rule of formidable expectations is simple: The more you expect--OK, demand--from others, the more gratitude you must display for their effort, dedication, and loyalty.

Pay is Not Gratitude

Unfortunately, most bosses focus solely on the demand side. That's understandable. For one thing, we're all taught that great outcomes always spring from great expectations; the only way to get more is to require more.

A classic *Mad Men* scene illustrates another reason. Peggy is upset that Don got credit for one of her ideas.

"But you got the Clio," she says, referring to an advertising award.

"It's your job," Don says. "I give you money. You give me ideas."

"And you never say, thank you," Peggy says.

"That's what the money is for!" Don replies.

Don is right. And also wrong. Pay is a simple exchange of money for effort. Pay is not a reward, appreciation, praise, nor gratitude.

Higher pay can help offset higher expectations, but only to a point. That's when gratitude kicks in.

Gratitude isn't just an occasional "Thank you" or a few words of praise. Gratitude is also providing developmental opportunities, facilitating new connections, teaching new skills, mentoring, motivating, and providing a sense of purpose that turns work into something much more meaningful.

In short, gratitude ensures that someday your employees will look back and be grateful that you demanded so much--because they also received more in return. The more you expect, the more gratitude you must not only feel but provide. If you want more, you have to give more, not in terms of money, but in terms of yourself.

Granted, Gates, Jobs, and Lombardi might not have embraced the rule of formidable expectations. They may have wanted more simply because they wanted more. It's possible that career development, stock options, and Super Bowl wins were enough to keep their employees going.



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But I'm guessing they did, as evidenced by all the Microsoft and Apple employees who went on to greater career heights or started their own successful companies. And by all the ex-Packers who went on to successful business careers.

If you want to build a better company or organization--if you have incredibly high goals for yourself, your business, and the people you employ--you must embrace the rule of formidable expectations.

Do that, and then you all can get as much as you give. No matter how formidable the expectations.



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The Importance of Confronting Brutal Facts

By Robert Tucker

<https://www.innovationresource.com/the-importance-of-confronting-brutal-facts/>

After I wrote about the importance of seeing it coming in last month's newsletter, a subscriber wrote in to affirm what he called the "strong message."

Mark Frandsen is a CEO, a former Fortune 500 CMO in the foods industry, and a university board member who lives in Portland, Oregon. A long-term reader of this newsletter, Frandsen offered a specific example of where strategic foresight may have avoided crisis at the university where he serves.

We Didn't see it coming - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hlpjZQ7gLxo&t=5s>

Ten years ago, he explained, a new university president had warned the board that adverse demographic trends would impact the college with potentially threatening conditions in the coming years. As she looked ahead at declining numbers of high school students and enrollments, she saw the need to confront what Frandsen termed the "brutal facts." History proved her prescient. Declining enrollments have since caused the closure of over 100 universities and colleges in the United States, while many others are struggling financially. Indeed, Harvard Business School professor Clayton Christensen predicts that 50 percent of colleges and universities will bankrupt before the new decade is out.

"With her leadership, we prepared to compete," recalled Frandsen. "And we have since remained strong with an ever-improving product for our undergraduates. It has been a constant challenge, but we were able to see it coming and to prepare."

See it coming and prepare for change. That's an excellent philosophy for success in the 2020s. And not just for colleges facing extinction, but for all of us. If you think the rate of change will slow down in the coming years, think again. The 2020s will be full of immense threats and incredible opportunities. We'll see friends and neighbors and regions and whole populations



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blindsided by change, whether from automation or disruption or climate change. We'll see more companies like Blockbuster, Sears, Kodak, and Nokia hit by massive technological change and sudden consumer shifts.

And for those who are willing to spend time figuring out the future and face up to sometimes brutal facts, I predict prosperity and good fortune.

Mark Frandsen's career is a case example of how to navigate change. I've followed Mark's career since he invited me to speak at Knott's Berry Farm decades ago. Mark is a strategist, a forward thinker — always plotting his next move. He's been willing to take risks in navigating his career, including uprooting his family more than once to pursue a promotion or a career opportunity. Mark has always been about pouncing on emerging opportunities — and above all, facing up to "brutal facts."

Yet, everywhere we look these days, an alternate reality seems to be taking root. I find that more and more people have stopped keeping up with the news. "Too negative," they say. "I'm only reading fiction these days," others tell me. Information overload is leading to cognitive dysfunction and alternate facts.

Instead of confronting the brutal truth and formulating a strategy, as the university president did, I constantly see examples of tough decisions being put off for others to deal with later — when there's a full-blown crisis. In the political realm, they call this "kicking the can down the road." At the highest levels of leadership, unwillingness to confront brutal facts has become an exercise in denying that the facts are indeed brutal ("skyrocketing budget deficits are not a problem"). They even deny that they are facts at all ("climate change is a hoax."). Only 17 percent of the American public correctly understand that almost all climate scientists think global warming is happening and happening even faster than anybody imagined just 25 years ago.

Such magical thinking seems to be seeping into the business realm. I asked a group of 25 high-level supply chain executives in a closed-door meeting not long ago, "How many of you are heeding the Treasury Secretary's advisory to reorient your supply chains out of China"? Only



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one manager raised his hand. The rest assumed that the Trade War will be settled quickly and that things will return to the way they were. But suppose they don't?

Here are four strategies to help you see it coming and prepare for the significant changes ahead:

1. Develop a growth mindset. The best defense is a good offense, so figure out what you need to do to your personal and professional value proposition to shore it up before a competitor or a negative trend does it for you – at your expense. Learn something new every day, and challenge your assumptions. Read everything from the New York Times to InnovationTrends to your local, struggling hometown newspaper.

2. Develop metrics to reflect how well you are adapting to change. More and more firms set up sophisticated "dashboards" containing gauges and warning signals measuring sales, service levels, etc. I invite you to design your personal dashboard. What do you need to measure in terms of your career development and navigation? How much fuel remains in your tank before you need to refuel and change careers? How well have you been re-skilling yourself in your current profession? What's your lifelong learning strategy going to be? What stage of life are you in, and what's next in your life journey?

3. Be willing to accept bad news. If you're a manager, your direct reports have formed an opinion about you on this question. Do you or do you not want the unvarnished truth? If you surround yourself with "yes men" and "yes women," you may not receive information that doesn't cater to your preconceived notions, your prejudices, your paradigms. But having this information could prevent you from making a terrible decision. Don't blame the messenger. Instead, thank them and start focusing on what to do with or about the news.

4. Don't wait for all the data to come in before making a decision. By then, it may be too late. Observing weak signals of change — whether the change appears positive or negative — when noticed early on and given proper attention, gives you a jump on crafting your response.

The decade ahead, the 2020s, will bring forth extremes in good news and bad. Extremes in weather, in wealth accumulation, inflection points, and in human achievement. It will bring incredible new technologies and medical cures, but also cyber-attacks and drones buzzing



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about overhead that will make you wish they'd never been invented. And through it all, if you think and act ahead of the curve, you'll probably do just fine.