

Leadership Lesson

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Welcome to the lessons from the great coaches podcast. I've learned that you don't do it alone, you learn so many different things from so many different coaches. That's an elite learning environment.

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How you deal with how to be resilient, how important it is to infuse joy in the process of learning. To be a good candidate, you've got to do more than you take. What an interesting way it is to be a leader.

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My name is Paul Barnett, and you are listening to the great coach's podcast, where we explore leadership through the lens of high performance sport, by interviewing great coaches from around the world, to try and find ideas to help all of us be better leaders. As the podcast has grown, the great coaches we've interviewed have shared so much insight and wisdom that we decided to create episodes dedicated entirely to the ideas that have resonated with us the most. Today's episode is on the topic of leadership. And it features audio quotes from a selection of coaches that we have interviewed from around the world.

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The lessons from the great coaches podcast, after more than 100 interviews with these great coaches from around the world, men and women who have won multiple Olympic medals and championships at regional, national, and on the world stage. The definition of leadership that best sums up their views is illustrated here by world championship winning basketball coach Jen Sterling,

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how can you stay on task and stay focused, and do your job and focused on what you need to do, and still be true to yourself and still true to the playing group and still deliver on your values and behaviors in the best possible way, while you're in this quadrant of chaos. And that's when I think good leaders stand hold true, is they can still function appropriately. Lead, and more importantly, be influential leaders. Everyone can lead but can you influence others? But can you influence people to actually then thrive and deliver on the values and behaviors that your environment post pilot? Can you influence people to embrace that and then deliver and then influence the next group of people. So in our more into influential leadership, rather than just saying, Oh, who are your best leaders, the best leaders are the ones who can influence other people.

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The definition by Jan is the ability to influence in a way that allows people to thrive.

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Thrive is such a strong word. To me, it encapsulates the idea of growing in a way that is fit for the long term. It infers resilience and strength, while the word influence comes up many times as being essential when it comes to leadership. In fact, here is Neil Craig saying that influencing is the start of being a leader.

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I mean, soon as you influence someone, for me, you're leading, okay? So you can be a player in the team and have

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you know, and your behavior might be quite poor, and certainly not

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related to good performance. But if you're and that might be okay for you. You might say, well, that's, you know, it's just the way I am. And if I don't get selected, that's okay. But soon as your behavior influences someone else,

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you're exhibiting a leadership, okay, because you're influencing that, that other team. And so, I'm not saying that leadership is good, but it's still leading. It's still leading. So the capacity to influence is, is where I sort of go with with leadership.

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Leadership, as the ability to influence in a way that allows people to thrive also means that you become a role model. And this was something that Australian rules football coach, Paul Roos spoke to us about.

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A leader is fundamentally first and foremost a role model. Yeah, if you want to be a leader, you have to be a role model. You can't ask people to do things you're not prepared to do yourself.

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And as American basketball coach Brenda Frese said to us, once you accept a leadership position, and the fact that you are a role model, you have to be prepared to act. When you say something that is not right.

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If you know right from wrong, you don't just sit back and watch it as a leader, you step out and you're uncomfortable, and you make sure that people know the difference from right or wrong. And if you can't change it, you walk away from it, you get out of the situation that you're involved in, but I think those are the biggest things that I try to instill with them as they're gonna come across in these teenage years.

There could be alcohol, there could be drugs, there could be naive enough to know you know what's gonna go on. We've had a lot of conversations to anticipate

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ate. So they're prepared for different things that lie ahead. But ultimately, that in those moments that they're ready in their hearts to make the right decisions.

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The good news for all of us is that leadership can be taught, as long as there is a sense of openness to learn. Here is John Sterling again,

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our leaders born or our leaders, I think, I think it's a bit of a combination, Paul, I think you can, I think it can be part of it is in it, for sure. But I think you can teach it, whether the person is recipient is like me, you know, had I not made changes, so it can be taught, it's whether that person wants to flip the switch, and understand that they can be better at what they do.

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And the skill of leadership is something that will be even more important than the technical knowledge you have about the sport, or industry that you are working in. This was something that Thomas Frank, the coach of Brentford, in the English Premier League spoke to us about

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maybe we should have built up differently or press No, it's the thing, it's so much about leadership. Because I know that the way the route I took was an unplanned to, as you described before, go through the for the youth and develop my coaching skills on the pitch. And in terms of the details of the game. I think I managed to get a decent level or those need to do just that. So I know that's one of my strengths. But the more and more been in this world leadership is I would say it's number one. Of course, we need to have a good level of football knowledge. But But leadership is number one.

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Another common theme from our interview guests, is that the focus of your influence should be very clear to the people who you are leading. The Australian cricket coach Justin Langer encapsulates this idea. Well, in this audio quote,

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yes, get great leaders, great leadership, lead doesn't matter whether it's in a sporting team, a family, an office, a business, great leadership, leadership is the essence of all this working. And what great leaders do one is they're very, very, very clear on the path, the team or the family or is taking. They know what they don't compromise on, I would say and it's a exercise for anyone listening as well in as a leader, you should be able to write on a little napkin, exactly what you stand for.

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There are many different types of leadership styles that you can use. The five most common styles were described by psychologist Daniel Goleman, the person who popularized the importance of emotional intelligence as a leadership predictor. These styles are commanding, visionary, affiliative, pay setting and coaching. Here is an example from swimming coach John Rudd, describing the affiliative style.

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Whereas now I would consider myself to have much more of an affiliative type style to the way that I do things. My leadership has coaching within it as a coach within meetings off or interactions with those with whom I work very much. Now, I'm part of a team where we make joint decisions. And it's very, very rare that I make an autonomous decision, I'll work with my senior leadership team in the in the performance arm of the sport.

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I've got a very strong and supportive CEO who, who I would meet with and use them as a sense check. I use a performance management group, which is a check and challenge group of experts from outside of my sport, but with expertise in high performance sport, a strategic level to put my plans to them. So I'm highly consultative, there's a decision that's made. And to get a fully rounded, or as much of a fully rounded view as you can, from experts in different fields before a decision is made, I think is essential, and helps further down the line, then of not having to retract a decision and go with a different one. The only time that we really now retract decisions and change them is if things outside of our sphere of influence change. So if the national governing body or the have a view on things, or the world governing body have a view on things, or the European governing body have a view on things and they change something in their plans. Well, that's when we would respond and change. But it's rare that we say we're going to do this and then we change it because unless something else changes outside of that that impacts on a decision. We've done as much consultation as you possibly can to get to a definitive decision. And that's

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Get some leadership style.

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However, your leadership style isn't fixed. It grows and evolves with you as you learn, and the needs of your organization shift. This lesson was something that academic author, and for time premierships coach, David Parker and talked about.

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So what I learned, and I think the lesson out of this, and I think it's football coaches, is that you must be flexible in the style which you bring to the individual or the group, according to where they are, in their experience, competencies and confidence. I think that's the critical issue that I bring out of this. And we've seen this happen now, time and time again, not only in Australian football, but across all sports, that they have become flexible in their leadership, ie their coaching staff.

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Regardless of what leadership model you deploy, though, the focus is the same to influence in such a way that the behaviors and values that the team or organization aspires to are met. Here is Jen Sterling, again, making this connection.

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So very quickly learn that

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there's no one leadership model that fits all, at the end of the day, Paul, I still think it's about the values and the behaviors that you instill. And how are you gonna be your true leadership comes through when there is chaos around you. And you're still able to deliver to the best of your ability. In other words, you can still stay focused on the task and deliver to the best of your ability, when there is absolute chaos around.

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Success in maintaining the team's vision, values and behaviors does not just lie with the leader though, for any team or organization to be successful, a critical mass of people must come forward and support the effort in influencing across a broader group. This is why leadership groups are so often critical to high performance. Here, the legendary coach Rick Charlesworth talks about the role everyone can play, when it comes to leadership.

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If your team is going to be successful, you need a critical mass of leaders, not just one, one person doesn't embody everything you want. And so I wanted to develop a,

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a leadership group and develop leaders. And we had captains and CO captains and as many as six in the group all through the first four years. And then after that, we extended it even further, you know, so we had as many as eight. And when we were two years out from the Olympics,

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again, my approach was, well, do we need a captain at all somebody who is the captain, if you like, and one of the, you know, there was a, there was a practical element to it, because we had a lot of players who had been successful, who were well known it was starting to, they had status. And they will, they all wanted to be captain. And my, my view was, as soon as I said, we're not going to have a captain, then all of that politicking stopped, because there was no and but what I want you to do is be a leader, and I expect everybody in the team to be a leader, and to make decisions and judgments accordingly. And not everybody has all the stuff you want for leadership.

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For instance, some people set a tone at training that lifts the quality of training, some people do inspirational thing on the field, someone in a social environment and social Yes, and includes those on the periphery, someone else will put the hand up and say I made a mistake, and that's leadership, others when the whole team wants to do X, they'll say, Well, what about y, that's also leadership, going

against the grain having a different opinion, I think that all of them have something to offer. Not many of them have all of it. And so why not give them the space to show that.

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Another leadership idea that has resonated with me strongly and builds on Rick's view of having a critical mass of leaders within the team is that as a leader, one of your main tasks is to develop other leaders. Here is the WNBA championship coach Dan Hughes, explaining his view on this.

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The other thing that I found and I found it through some events, leadership, if you're talking about the coaching, leadership is not the end all for me what the end goal for me is to develop leaders. That's the end goal. It's not so much what a great leader I am, what I need to be and what my mission is, is to develop leaders and those those are people that work with me, and those are people that play with me and the the way you do

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do that is through an empowering, you're kind of on the job training, and you're empowering, handing over the leadership to them in situations and then you nurture it, and watch it grow. And that's what I feel like the greatest calling is for me and for truly, coaching is about developing leaders.

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To finish went to feature a wonderful quote from South African rugby coach Heineken, Maya,

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if you were to ask me what my leadership philosophy is, now, after all these interviews, this would sum it up.

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So we need more leaders, I think in the world, and every single guy out there is a leader if we always think leaders are the successful people now leaders, if you look at the Kennedys, they matter, raise them. And she thought you make a difference in the world by rising leaders, and she was a leader. So the normal guy out in the street is a leader in his own community or his own household, and we need more people like that.

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We hope you enjoyed our episode on leadership, and found one or two things that you can bring to your own dinner table, locker room or boardroom table for discussion. The key lessons I've taken away on the topic of leadership from our great coaches.

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The best definition of leadership from the great coaches is the ability to influence in a way that allows people to thrive. When you embrace a leadership role, you become a role model, and you have to be prepared to act. When you see something that is not right. The skill of leadership will be more important than your technical knowledge. There are different types of leadership styles you can use, and these

will evolve as you develop. And as soon as you start to implement someone, you're exhibiting leadership, and therefore it's the responsibility of everyone in the team.

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Here at the great coaches podcast we're always trying to learn, so please let us know if you have any feedback. Just like Jules who said, these podcasts are little gems when it comes to learning what it takes to be great. Thank you, Jules. It's the interaction with people from around the world who listen give us great energy. And so if you have any feedback or comments, please let us know. And all the details on how you can connect with us are in the show notes or on our website, the great coaches podcast.com