

News For

SWIM

PARENTS

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Common Purpose – Board and Staff

Perhaps the single most important aspect in establishing and maintaining a long term relationship between coach and program is the development of a common purpose shared by the Board, members, and staff.

There are two parts to this common purpose. One is called the VISION of the club. The other is call a club's CENTRAL THEME.

A central theme is a short expression which sums up the essence of the program. For example, Chevrolet uses "Heartbeat of America". Ford Motor Company uses "Quality is Job 1". Campbell's uses "Soup is good food." And General Electric uses "We bring good things to life". (Remember when it used to be "Progress is our most important product"?) We know these central themes because we hear them on tv and radio, and read them in magazines and on the packaging of the products.

Can you think of your club's central theme? Chances are, your club does not have an explicit central theme. If there is one, you would see it on swim caps, on bulletin boards, in your meet programs, in the newsletter, on team stationary, etc.

In the absence of an explicit central theme there may be an unwritten central theme. It may be something that is a feeling shared by many of the members,

Board members, and staff although it is not explicitly stated. Oftentimes an unwritten central theme is of a negative nature.

It is important to control the central theme by making it explicit and positive. Let it serve as a rallying point for all members of the club and let it tell the world what your club stands for.

A VISION is a statement of what the club expects to be in the long term, say, 5 to 10 years. A vision is stated in the present tense, for example, "The Hometown Swim Club is the finest youth organization in the county", or "The Grandview Swim Club is the top senior team in the Region", or "The Metropolitan Swim Team develops the finest age group swimmers in the state."

A vision statement is important because it gives a sense of direction for all of the team's operations.

The vision statement cannot stand alone, it must be part of a larger plan which includes 1) a mission statement of how the club expects to achieve its vision, 2) two year objectives, 3) six month strategies, and 4) monthly tactics. Identification of, completion of, and reporting of objectives, strategies, and tactics are the responsibility of the CEO type coach and Board of Directors. Like the central theme, the vision statement must be promoted to all members of the club and community.

Coaches who are interested in their long term future with a program must be a leader in the planning process along with the Board of Directors. Good coaches will stay with a program that engages in progressive long range planning that matches their career objectives and coaching philosophy.

During the planning process the desires and philosophy of both coach and parents are expressed in such a way that there is an understanding and agreement on the direction for the program. This is a big step in ensuring the tenure of your good coach.

What does all this have to do with your young swimmer?

Two things. First, stability. It's tough on young swimmers to go through coaching changes. Sometimes it cannot be avoided and it can be used as a growing experience for the child. However, young athletes experiencing fewer coaching changes usually have a happier and more productive young swimming life. Secondly, an explicit vision and central theme tell you the direction the program is taking your child.

What can you do?

If you do not know what the central theme and vision of the club are talk to the coach and talk to board members. Encourage the leaders of the program to initiate a process for identifying and promoting these important hallmarks of a healthy club.

If your club needs help in these areas ASCA has extensive experience facilitating a long range planning process with the club. For information contact John Leonard or Guy Edson at 1-800-356-2722. USA Swimming also has highly qualified representatives who can facilitate a long range planning process with your club. Contact USA Swimming at 719-866-4578.