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Dear Coaches,

Quote of the week:

“To think bad thoughts is really the easiest thing in the world. If you leave your mind to itself it will spiral down into ever increasing unhappiness. To think good thoughts, however, requires effort. This is one of the things that discipline - training - is about.”

~James Clavell, in his novel *Shogun*

The Chuck Wielgus Blog: Performance Reviews

Like in most aspects of life, when looking at the year-end performance review its perspective depends on how an individual chooses to view it.

Some may look at it as a time-consuming onerous exercise that “checks the box” and just needs to be done. Or you can positively engage the opportunity for improved communications, renewed goal-setting and honest self-critique.

For me, I embrace the latter approach and actually look forward to these discussions.

First, let me provide some context. I have a strong belief that we should be evaluating staff members on a continual basis. If a problem arises, I want it addressed immediately; and if a member of the staff does something extraordinary, then I want us to recognize and celebrate it instantly as well.

I manage as I coached, with a sense of urgency to get things done right and to produce real results.

We have incredibly high expectations here at USA Swimming and that has propelled us to ground-breaking accomplishments. We want things done thoroughly and done well. I also expect us to always be positive, forward-thinking and progressive.

With that, I suspect we might make mistakes along the way, but do insist that we learn from them. Conversely, I have a very low tolerance for a poor attitude.

When it comes to the “official” year-end discussion with those I directly supervise, I first ask them to provide me with their written self-assessment. This provides a good starting point for our discussion and allows me to learn what is of foremost importance.

Often times, I’ll read something in the self-assessment that I hadn’t even thought about before. This really helps to get us on the same page quickly, or it can tell me that we may see some things differently. Either way, it’s useful.

Prior to the discussion, I always create a list of questions to ask. Here are my favorites:

1. Who are the 2-3 most valuable members of your own staff team, and how are you helping them to grow professionally? The response to this question helps me know who the over-achievers within our organization are. Frequently these are people with whom I don’t have as much daily interaction, and it gives me a better understanding of our depth chart. I also like this question because it gets people thinking about how they are motivating, supporting and coaching members of their internal staff group
2. How do you think your peers view you? Self-awareness is among the most important qualities I look for in my co-workers. When a person is asked to talk about how they think they are perceived by others, it can lead the discussion into a thoughtful place. Invariably, we end up talking about aspects that reinforce existing behaviors and management styles, or possibly modify managerial behavior to become more effective.
3. What is it about your job that excites you the most? I want to be surrounded by people who really care about their work and their life in general. Upbeat people with positive



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attitudes make for a much more productive work environment and also project a great image for USA Swimming and our sport overall.

4. What was the biggest disappointment or frustration you faced this past year, how did you handle it, and what did you learn from it? It's an old – but true – adage that we sometimes learn best from our mistakes. I really want to hear about a struggle the person had this past year. How they handled this situation and what they've learned from it tells me a lot about their attitude and their approach.

5. What can I do to be a more effective supervisor and help you with your responsibilities? As USA Swimming has grown, my role has evolved. I have become responsible for overseeing a much wider array of programs, services and new initiatives. As I have delegated more responsibility to others, it is more important than ever that I understand how I can be most effective in helping the people I supervise.

The year-end performance review should be a thoughtful and constructive discussion. If we're continually evaluating throughout the year, there should not be any surprises at the end. These discussions are far more important than any 5-point scale designations.

For me, the best way to conclude this year-end discussion is to let the people with whom I work most closely know just how much I respect and appreciate everything they do for USA Swimming. Chuck Wielgus can be contacted at cwielgus@usaswimming.org. All of his blogs are archived at www.usaswimming.org: click on "News" and then click on "Org News & Blogs."

Important Safe Sport Survey

USA Swimming Safe Sport invites you to participate in a short survey about club culture. As new Safe Sport educational resources are on the horizon, it is important to understand how member coaches feel about certain aspects of the swim club environment. This information is intended to be used to inform future Safe Sport efforts, and the results will be made available to USA Swimming member coaches. Please take the few moments to respond and get out to your athletes to respond as well.

Thank you for your valuable input. The survey will be open now through December 12.

Please contact Maggie Vail, USA Swimming Safe Sport Education Specialist, with any questions or concerns. mvail@usaswimming.org

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[Athlete \(12 and older\) survey:](#)

[Coach survey:](#)

2014 Inside The Lane Lines Video

USA Swimming is proud to announce the release of the two DVD set as a service to our members. This video includes medal-winning performances, World and American record swims. Highlights from the 2014 Pan Pacific Championships. Also included are several promotional videos produced by and for USA Swimming.

The videos were shipped December 1 to your club contact. Please look for them!

Pan American Sports Organization (PASO) Talks

USA Swimming has posted presentations from the Pan American coach clinic it held in October in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The presentations are available in Spanish and English, and can be [found online here:](#)

Coach Bowman and Laurie Lawrence to Speak **Presented by National Drowning Prevention Alliance (NDPA)**

WHY WOULD TWO OLYMPIC COACHES BE INTERESTED IN WATER SAFETY AND DROWNING PREVENTION?

Join the NDPA Board of Directors in Dallas next March to listen to both coaches

Coach Bob Bowman and Coach Laurie Lawrence will be presenting at the 2015 NDPA Educational Conference in Dallas, Texas March 11th –13th. (along with many other water safety experts presenting on water safety programs, check out the brochure)

You will enjoy both presenters in the general sessions. You can also join them for breakfast on Friday, March 13th. Check out the NDPA [2015 Educational Conference brochure to learn more.](#)

[Register before December 31st to receive the early bird discount for the 2015 conference](#)

SPECIAL EVENT

The USA Swimming Foundation and NDPA will be hosting the first annual Swim a Thon fundraiser for both water safety organizations on Saturday following the conference. More information check the brochure or contact [Tina Dessart](#) with the USA Swimming Foundation or [Sue Nelson](#) with USA Swimming.

How to Evaluate Butterfly Technique

By Russell Mark, USA Swimming National Team High Performance Consultant

Whenever I'm at a pool now or watching film, it's automatic: my eyes zone into the subtle movements of a swimmer while my mind processes all the information to make a preliminary evaluation of technique.

A short 10+ years ago, it was completely opposite, though. I would look at a pool and just see a mess of moving body parts. Coaches would say this and that about a swimmer's stroke like it was totally obvious, and I would nod in agreement even though it all looked the same to me. My eyes were open and I was looking... but not seeing anything.

Over time, by asking many questions and prioritizing what's important to a good stroke, the body movement doesn't look so random anymore. Nobody ever taught me how to look at strokes, and I don't think I have a special skill; the key is focusing my eyes on the right places. The amount of practice I've had and the conclusions I make – in other words, experience – are probably what enables me to work with the National Team and Olympic Team, but I can still tell you about the first things I look for.

[Here are the first things I ask myself when I watch butterfly technique:](#)

Speak No Evil - 6 Things Managers Should NOT Talk About At Work

By D. Albert Brannen, Atlanta Managing Partner at Fisher & Phillips LLP, Dec. 2 2014

Managers have a special role for employers because they are legal agents and what they say, do and know can be attributed to their employer. Depending on the issue, employers can be strictly liable for the conduct of managers. Several laws come into play here but there are certain things that managers should absolutely not talk about with employees or anyone else at work. This article lists five of these topics, but by no means is this an exhaustive list.

[Read more:](#)

The NEW Killer Interview Question

By Aaron Hurst, CEO of Imperative. Author of *The Purpose Economy*. Founder of Taproot Foundation, Dec. 2, 2014

Two years ago, I shared three killer interview questions <https://www.linkedin.com/today/post/article/20130108212947-201849-three-killer-interview-questions> I had used at the Taproot Foundation to hire an exceptional team of rock stars. I have since started Imperative and become an even bigger student of workplace psychology. As a result, I recently added a fourth killer interview question that may be the most important yet.

I have experimented with two different ways to ask it. Both are effective.

“How would you describe your ideal retirement?”

or

“What would you do if you won the lottery?”

You learn something critical in listening to answers to this question: what is the candidate’s orientation towards work?

[Read more:](#)

Hall of Fame Integrity

By Jon Gordon, Author, December 2014

A few weeks ago I attended the Cornell University Athletic Hall of Fame dinner where 11 new people were being inducted and honored. For the record, I was not one of them. :)

As I sat in the audience and listened to the honorees give their speeches, the stories they told contained lessons that went far beyond sports and I knew I had to share a few of these gems with you.

Kate Varde, a record setting softball player who graduated in 2004 didn’t talk about herself. She talked about her teammate Joanne Keck instead. Kate said, "As I look out at a room full of accomplished athletes, I’m aware that we all understand the sacrifices we make in pursuit of a common goal, but when that sacrifice threatens our personal success it is often much harder to act with the dignity and poise expected of us. An example of this is when I came to Cornell as a freshman and was chosen to start over a three year starter, Joanne Keck. I earned this spot because of my success with a bat, not a glove. It would have been natural for Joanne to treat me with anger and resentment, but instead she was the first person on the field to celebrate with me when things went well and the first person to pick me up when I was down. She showed the strength, selflessness, and grit that exemplify what true class looks like. Even when it was clear that we were competing for the same playing time, Joanne was a mentor to me. She advised me about the intricacies of the position despite how it might impact her personally. If I hit an important home run, she would be the first person lined up to congratulate me and celebrate the victory. When I made an error, she would be there to pat me on the back and tell me to keep my head up. She was a true leader that put the team first and reveled in our team’s success."

David Eckel, a cross country track and field champion, shared a story from the fall of 1955 that took place during the Heptagonal Championship in Van Cortlandt Park in New York City. David said he led most of the race with his Cornell teammate Michael Midler right behind him in second place and Doug Brew from Dartmouth about 60 yards behind them. With about a mile left in the race David and Michael took a wrong turn and headed on a path away from the finish line. Doug Brew saw them going the wrong way and shouted to them, "You are off course! You are off course! You are going the wrong way!" David and Michael quickly got back on the right path and finished in first and second place while Doug Brew finished third. That year Cornell won the individual and team championship and if it wasn’t for the integrity of Doug Brew it never would have happened. Years later David and Doug still keep in touch and Doug said he never regretted it. He felt it was the right thing to do and that the Cornell guys would have done

the same thing for him.

When I asked Kate Varde why she talked about Joanne Keck she said, "I have always felt that the true team leaders are the people who exert the same effort without the glory; the players who are enthusiastic and engaged in the success of their team regardless of whether they set foot on the playing field. Teammates like Joanne are a big reason why I am here."

David told me he spoke about Doug Brew because he knew his induction to the Hall of Fame might not have happened if it wasn't for the integrity and help of his competitor. Doug Brew could have easily let his competition go the wrong way and become a champion. Instead he became a champion of integrity.

Ironically on a night that was all about honoring the achievement of the individual it was clear that making it into the Hall of Fame requires the Hall of Fame Integrity and selflessness of others. And while very few of us will get elected to a Hall of Fame, we can all choose to live with Hall of Fame Integrity and receive the greatest prize of all – the gift of knowing we did things the right way and made a positive difference.

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Hey You Counted Yours?

By Unknown

Blessings

Some things to think about before it is too late!

Real life stories that teach you many things in life. Excellent reading; These are based on true incidences both wonderful and inspirational.

1. Today, I interviewed my grandmother for part of a research paper I'm working on for my Psychology class. When I asked her to define success in her own words, she said, "Success is when you look back at your life and the memories make you smile."
2. Today, I asked my mentor - a very successful business man in his 70s- what his top 3 tips are for success. He smiled and said, "Read something no one else is reading, think something no one else is thinking, and do something no one else is doing."
3. Today, after a 72 hour shift at the fire station, a woman ran up to me at the grocery store and gave me a hug. When I tensed up, she realized I didn't recognize her. She let go with tears of joy in her eyes and the most sincere smile and said, "On 9-11-2001, you carried me out of the World Trade Center."
4. Today, after I watched my dog get run over by a car, I sat on the side of the road holding him and crying. And just before he died, he licked the tears off my face.
5. Today at 7AM, I woke up feeling ill, but decided I needed the money, so I went into work. At 3PM I got laid off. On my drive home I got a flat tire. When I went into the trunk for the spare, it was flat too. A man in a BMW pulled over, gave me a ride, we chatted, and then he offered me a job. I start tomorrow.
6. Today, as my father, three brothers, and two sisters stood around my mother's hospital bed, my mother uttered her last coherent words before she died. She simply said, "I feel so loved right now. We should have gotten together like this more often."
7. Today, I kissed my dad on the forehead as he passed away in a small hospital bed. About 5 seconds after he passed, I realized it was the first time I had given him a kiss since I was a little boy.
8. Today, in the cutest voice, my 8-year-old daughter asked me to start recycling. I chuckled and asked, "Why?" She replied, "So you can help me save the planet." I chuckled again and asked, "And why do you want to save the planet?" Because that's where I keep all my stuff," she said.

9. Today, when I witnessed a 27-year-old breast cancer patient laughing hysterically at her 2-year-old daughter's antics, I suddenly realized that I need to stop complaining about my life and start celebrating it again.>

10. Today, a boy in a wheelchair saw me desperately struggling on crutches with my broken leg and offered to carry my backpack and books for me. He helped me all the way across campus to my class and as he was leaving he said, "I hope you feel better soon."

11. Today, I was feeling down because the results of a biopsy came back malignant. When I got home, I opened an e-mail that said, "Thinking of you today. If you need me, I'm a phone call away." It was from a high school friend I hadn't seen in 10 years.

12. Today, I was traveling in Kenya and I met a refugee from Zimbabwe. He said he hadn't eaten anything in over 3 days and looked extremely skinny and unhealthy. Then my friend offered him the rest of the sandwich he was eating. The first thing the man said was, "We can share it."

The best sermons are lived, not preached

