**5 Things Your Swimming Coach Shouldn’t be Doing**

***By Wayne Goldsmith***

Being a swimming coach is like being the CEO of a large company.

Strategic planning, team building, leading people, inspiring others to achieve remarkable things, safety, continuous improvement, understanding and using the latest technology, innovation, communication…..these skills, essential to successful executive leadership in the corporate world, are equally important in the career of a swimming coach.

There are literally hundreds of things a [swimming coach](http://www.swimmingworldmagazine.com/news/lessons-from-coaching-legends/) has to do each week….. working with swimmers, communicating with parents, leading the coaching team, analysing stroke techniques, reading and researching the latest swimming articles, planning for training sessions, planning strategies for upcoming meets…your swimming coach has a lot of things they ***should*** be doing: it’s all part the day-to-day responsibilities of being a swimming coach.

**But here are 5 Things Your Swimming Coach Shouldn’t be Doing**

1. **Motivating you.** Motivation is a much talked about but usually mis-understood thing. It is something which burns inside you – it’s the fire that fuels [commitment](http://www.swimmingworldmagazine.com/news/swimming-coaches/) and sparks the desire to pursue excellence. Motivation – is the inner drive which helps you to willingly and gladly get to the pool for early morning workouts. Motivation keeps you training when you’re so tired, you can’t imagine being able to swim another lap. Motivation is that spark within you – that voice that keeps saying, *“I can get faster. I can do better. I want to improve. I love swimming.”* **It is not your coach’s job to motivate you**. It is not your coaches role to try to convince you to swim, or to motivate you to chase fast times, or to[motivate](http://www.wgcoaching.com/motivation-and-coaching/) to keep doing laps….that’s your job. What your coach ***must*** do however – is to understand what it is that motivates you and provide you with the opportunity to express your motivation in your training and racing.
2. **Telling you anything more than once.** Want to know how to improve at a faster rate than you ever thought possible?**Listen more.** It’s as simple as that. If you want to [improve your swimming](http://www.swimmingworldmagazine.com/news/become-great-swimmer/) – if you want to achieve higher standards of performance – if you want to win more races –***listen more***. Put up your hand right now if your coach has had to tell you to “streamline” more than once this week. Let’s assume every swimmer in the world reading this article has just raised one hand. Every time your coach tells you something, it’s an opportunity for you to learn. If they have to tell you the same thing twice – it’s not *more* learning –**it’s time wasting**…..because they could have told you something new instead of having to repeat something you already knew. Imagine that your coach has to remind the team to “streamline” 10, 20, 50, 100 times a week. That’s hundreds and hundreds of times a year having to re-teach the swim team the same lesson and hundreds and hundreds of times the team could have learnt new things: important things that could have made a huge impact on their swimming performances.
3. **“Pushing-you”**. Contrary to popular belief….it is not the coach’s job to “push-you”.  In the end, if you don’t want to be there….don’t swim. Stay in bed. Go to the park. Watch T.V. Do something else that you enjoy and that *do* love doing. But if you’re relying on your swimming coach to force you up and down the pool, make you get in at the start of workout and yell and scream and jump up and down to push you to achieve your goals, you’re wasting their time – and yours. Coaches inspire. They encourage. They nurture. And yes – from time to time they will set you [seemingly impossibly high standards](http://www.swimmingworldmagazine.com/news/5-hard-choices-to-swim-successfully/) to help bring out your best. But they shouldn’t be “forcing” you to train: it takes too much effort and energy and frankly no coach has either of these in unlimited supply.
4. **Being responsible for your training equipment.** I do a lot of work in swimming coach education. One of my first lessons to young coaches is:***“Never****pick up a kickboard (or anything else)”.* Your swimming coach is not your parent. It is not your coach’s job to look for your fins, help you find and adjust your goggles, fill up your water bottle, track down your pull-buoy and carry it over to you or lift a finger to do anything even vaguely related to the care and maintenance of your training equipment. That’s your job. It is your responsibility – and yours alone. Every time your coach has to help you find lost training equipment, adjust your goggles or help you look for your fins, a coaching opportunity is lost: a coaching opportunity that could have helped you – or another member of your team – learn something new.
5. **Constantly telling you how good you are**. Your swimming coach can help you develop self-confidence. That’s true. But not in the way you might think. [Self confidence is](http://www.wgcoaching.com/coaching-self-confidence/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)**[belief](http://www.wgcoaching.com/coaching-self-confidence/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)**[(the way you feel about yourself)](http://www.wgcoaching.com/coaching-self-confidence/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)**[x](http://www.wgcoaching.com/coaching-self-confidence/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)****[evidence](http://www.wgcoaching.com/coaching-self-confidence/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)**[(knowing with certainty that your training and preparation have been the best that they can be).](http://www.wgcoaching.com/coaching-self-confidence/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) Self-confidence – that is –*real* self-confidence – a self-confidence which sustains you through difficulties, tough times, set-backs, poor-performances and other challenges – does not come from a coach telling you something positive every day. If you need to hear “well-done” or “you’re amazing” constantly, chances are you need to work on other aspects of your mental skills – and particularly focus on your capacity to love yourself for who you are and unconditionally accept yourself for simply being you. If the way you feel about yourself is totally dependent on whether or not the coach praises you after every lap, then you need to re-think what it is you expect from swimming and how you feel about yourself as a human being.

Coaching Opportunity: A Critical Concept for Every Swimmer to Understand

Imagine there are 100 “coaching-opportunities: in a two-hour swimming training session: 100 moments when a coach can help a swimmer learn something new or correct an error or modify a technique or change something that will make difference to the swimmer’s skill level.

Those 100 “coaching-opportunities” are important – they are essential: they are the times when a [coach can deliver ideas, information, knowledge and concepts to swimmers which can help them get better.](http://www.swimmingworldmagazine.com/news/morning-swim-show-wayne-goldsmith-and-the-one-thing-that-makes-coaches-great/)

Now take away……

25 *“Streamline”* reminders.

17*“Finish on the wall”* reminders and

15*“Don’t breathe on your first stroke”* reminders.

That’s 100 “coaching opportunities” less 25, less 17, less 15 – leaving your coach just **43 coaching opportunities** to teach you new things and help you and your team mates become faster swimmers.

And it gets worse.

Imagine this happens every day – week after week – month after month….every day “coaching opportunities” are missed because your coach has to tell you the same stuff over and over and over and over instead of being able to teach you new stuff.

That’s thousands of “coaching opportunities” missed each year.

Thousands of times your coach *could* have been helping you to improve – but instead had to waste time reminding you about things you already knew.

Thousands of missed opportunities that will never come back: chances for you to have improved your swimming that are gone forever.

The Bottom Line…What is your swimming coach’s***real*** job?

The job of a swimming coach is to work with you and help you realise your potential.

They have the skills, the training, the experience and the passion to help you achieve your swimming goals and to provide you with the environment and the opportunity to be the swimmer you want to be.

However, they can’t and they shouldn’t do it all.

If you expect your coach to provide the motivation, the energy, the dedication and the focus you need – you’re way off.

The coach’s job is to coach you: not to force you to be great or yell at you to become excellent or scream at you to become brilliant.

[Success is a choice:](https://vimeo.com/121744639) one that**you** must make willingly and with complete commitment.

Every moment you and your coach spend together should be focused on the three Ls – **learning, laps and laughter:**

* **Learning** – learning as much as you can in the shortest possible time – i.e. learn more, learn fast – improve sooner;
* **Laps** – training hard to master the skills, techniques and capacities required to swim fast;
* **Laughter** – enjoying the experience of working hard with motivated, committed people.

And remember…don’t count the laps…make every lap count.

**Wayne Goldsmith**