

Hey 757 Family,

Hopefully you all are remaining strong as we finish up another week at home. To all the Bronze 2 families, it was great to connect with Coach Mike and your kids yesterday over Zoom. Last Friday I sent an email outlining the benefits of summer swimming. This week I wanted to provide you with an article that elaborates on the importance of culture in summer swim leagues, and then provide specific ways you can elevate your own team's culture.

<https://www.swimmingworldmagazine.com/news/in-the-beginning-the-benefits-of-summer-league/>

I don't think I fully realized how vital parents were to the success of my summer team until I became the head coach. It is simply not possible to run a summer swim season without an amazing group of parent volunteers. As a coach, I try to emphasize to my swimmers the sacrifices their parents make for them to be able to compete and have fun each summer. Additionally, after working with 757 for the past two years, I can confidently say that this group of parents is the most devoted I have experienced, and I have a strong feeling that sense of devotion carries over into the summer season. However, not every summer team has the benefit of having superstar parents.

While the majority of my summer team's parents are fantastic, it was often challenging to find the multiple timers, referees, clerks and marshals necessary to run a meet. Thankfully, my amazing team reps put their heads together and came up with a plan. To incentivize parents to volunteer their time, our team offers the option of partial refunds for families whose parents work a predetermined number of volunteer hours. Additionally, for parents who truly went above and beyond, we started offering gift cards to local bars and stores in our area such as Total Wine. Having parents who will volunteer their time and do it happily can change the culture of a team and create a more welcoming environment for both swimmers, coaches, and opposing team's families.

Being a on older swimmer on any summer team brings with it a great deal of responsibility. Although you might not realize it, as a senior swimmer the younger kids are always watching and emulating you. I encourage all my senior swimmers to take this role seriously. With every action, you are shaping the future of your team. If you want your team to grow and be successful, model appropriate and inclusive behavior. Take time between races to talk to and motivate a younger swimmer. Show them that its okay to not take yourself too seriously. Provide examples of what it means to be a teammate by getting decked out in team gear and cheering on fellow swimmers. If you do your best to ensure that younger swimmers are learning the values that your team promotes, your team will grow as a result. Additionally, if you think you may want to coach your team one day, find ways to get involved. My team's developmental program is run exclusively by 13&over swimmers who are supervised by the coaching staff. Put yourself in positions where you can be a leader, and where you can learn from the coaches on the team.

If you're a coach on a summer swim team, odds are its because you love your team and the sport of swimming. Additionally, if you've been hired to serve in any type of leadership role its likely because you are a consistently positive role model. Each team has different roles and

responsibilities for their assistant coaches outside of strictly coaching practice. Often these tasks are arduous. No coach will tell you that their favorite part of coaching is setting up for a meet or tracking down a runaway child to make sure they don't miss their event. My advice to you as an assistant coach is to do these tasks with a smile. Bring positivity to the parts of the job that are seemingly dull and unimportant. Part of being a good coach is being a good teammate, not just for your whole team, but for your team of coaches. Finally, recognize that this is your chance to change your team in a positive way. Be creative, think outside of the box, and never be afraid to share any idea with your fellow coaches that you think could have a lasting impact. This past summer, every one of our 13& over swimmer participated in a scavenger hunt that became a highlight of their summer. The event would have never happened if a new assistant coach hadn't pulled me aside after practice and shared his idea.

Whatever your role, be it a parent, older swimmer, or coach, you have a unique opportunity to change your team's culture. Think about what you like about your team's culture and how you can build upon it. Or, think about what you like about our 757 culture and how you can translate that to your summer team. I have seen countless examples over the past two winters of parents, swimmers and coaches on 757 contributing to the outstanding environment we have created on deck. If even half of you think of ways to carry this over to summer league, I am confident all your teams will be in good shape.

In the meantime, I hope you all remain healthy, strong, and positive.

All the best,

Coach Riley