

It is through conversations – talk, observed actions, listening, writing – that leaders manage, reinforce and create culture.

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CHAPTER FIVE

The Mechanics and Prerequisites of Culture: Creating Your Development Zone

Every organization has a culture – a way of doing things – but often it is slipshod and inconsistent, poorly conceived and unevenly implemented. Great organizations have consistent cultures with clear norms and expectations for behavior that encourage and reward people for doing the right thing at the right time.

Organizational Culture in the Business World

A new CEO may be brought in to turn around a company doing poorly. Perhaps the CEO finds a significant lack of care for customers. The CEO takes steps to integrate customer service into the company's culture to be able to gain enthusiastic repeat customers.

The CEO can't individually manage each employee. But she can manage the organization's culture so people know what they are supposed to do. Some employees may disagree with the new ways and may leave the company, which may be necessary. For the culture to succeed, it's necessary to get the wrong people "off the bus," which we'll discuss later in this chapter.

On the other hand, if employees who embrace this idea and take good care of customers get rewarded, they will be motivated to do more of it. Taking special care with customers eventually becomes just the way this company does things. And, that simple – but not easy – cultural change can transform the failing company into a thriving one.

The same mechanics that leaders of great companies use to establish and maintain a strong, positive culture can be used by youth sports leaders to help their organizations achieve greatness.

The Stages of Culture Shaping

The three stages of developing organizational culture are:

- ① **"Setting the Table"** so everyone clearly understands what kind of behavior is expected in various situations.
- ② **"Fixing Broken Windows,"** in which organization leaders (and eventually others, too) intervene to protect the culture whenever it is violated. People being people, violations will occur, so it is important to have a procedure in place to protect the culture.
- ③ Integrate the culture into the **"Structural Pillars"** of the organization so the culture doesn't erode over time. The structural pillars must reinforce the culture through the day-to-day operations of the organization.

In the next three chapters, we'll explore each stage in detail, but first I want to address some prerequisites for establishing a strong culture.

Alignment Before Empowerment

In *The Fifth Discipline*, Peter Senge stresses the importance of getting people aligned with a vision before empowering them. In a typical YSO, people's motives differ greatly – some are there to help kids have a good experience, some to make sure their child gets fair treatment, while others may be living out their own unfulfilled dreams of greatness.

If the leaders empower these unaligned people, things can get ugly. Many YSOs are run by volunteers, and it can be hard to find coaches, so it feels impossible to make demands of them. In effect, the leaders say to the coaches, "Here's your roster, practice times, uniforms and equipment. Now go out and coach the way you coach (whatever that is)."

Get people aligned first, especially coaches: “In this organization we expect every coach to be a Double-Goal Coach who uses practices and games to develop each player into a Triple-Impact Competitor, committed to improving oneself, teammates and the game. The way we do things here, we provide training you’ll need to attend so you know how we coach here. No exceptions.” (Note: PCA developed on-line courses to make it easier to require Double-Goal Coach training.)

Who Gets On Your Bus – Assembling Your Leadership Team

Jim Collins in *Good to Great* uses the metaphor of a bus: “...if you have the right people on the bus, the problem of how to motivate and manage people largely goes away. The right people...will be self-motivated by the inner drive...to be part of creating something great.”

Many people will get excited about the vision of your organization as a Development Zone. You will find that some people, whether they know it or not, have been waiting for someone to articulate this exact concept for a very long time.

But some people will be immune to the vision. They can be a drag on you accomplishing it. And this brings us to a crucial point – not everyone involved with an organization is going to get with your vision of greatness. Sometimes this means some folks need to “get off the bus” for the vision to become a reality.

It’s also important to exclude Emotional Tank drainers from your leadership team so they don’t drive away the people you want to keep on your bus. Changing the culture of a major institution like youth sports is hard work. You need E-Tank fillers on your team.

To set yourself up for success, you will need two things:

- **A Critical Mass:** You’ll never get everyone on board, which isn’t necessary, anyway. But you do need a critical mass of people on your leadership team who are committed to the vision. Having people on the leadership team who actively undercut the vision will doom it.

In particular, look for “mavens,” individuals who command other people’s attention and admiration. (The old commercial comes to mind: “When E. F. Hutton talks, people listen.”) Often, mavens are established coaches with a lot of scoreboard success. If you get mavens to be vocal supporters, you are on your way to success.

- **A “Culture Shaping Team:”** To make this work, assemble a Culture Shaping Team (CST) of individuals who see this as the most important thing they can do to make the organization great. It doesn’t work so well if it’s just you. The CST needs at least two people, preferably three to seven, depending on the size of your organization and its leadership team. Consider carefully who would be excited and effective in this role and recruit them to be part of it. I’ll talk in more detail about the CST in Chapter 9.

When individuals in an organization are empowered after they have been aligned with the vision, you have an organization that is ready to take off and do great things!

Who Gets On Your Bus – Recruiting Double-Goal Coaches

After you and your leadership team of culture shapers, the most influential people in your organizations are your coaches. If each of them is a Double-Goal Coach, good things are in store for your athletes. If you have win-at-all-cost (WAAC) coaches, then you are going to have problems.

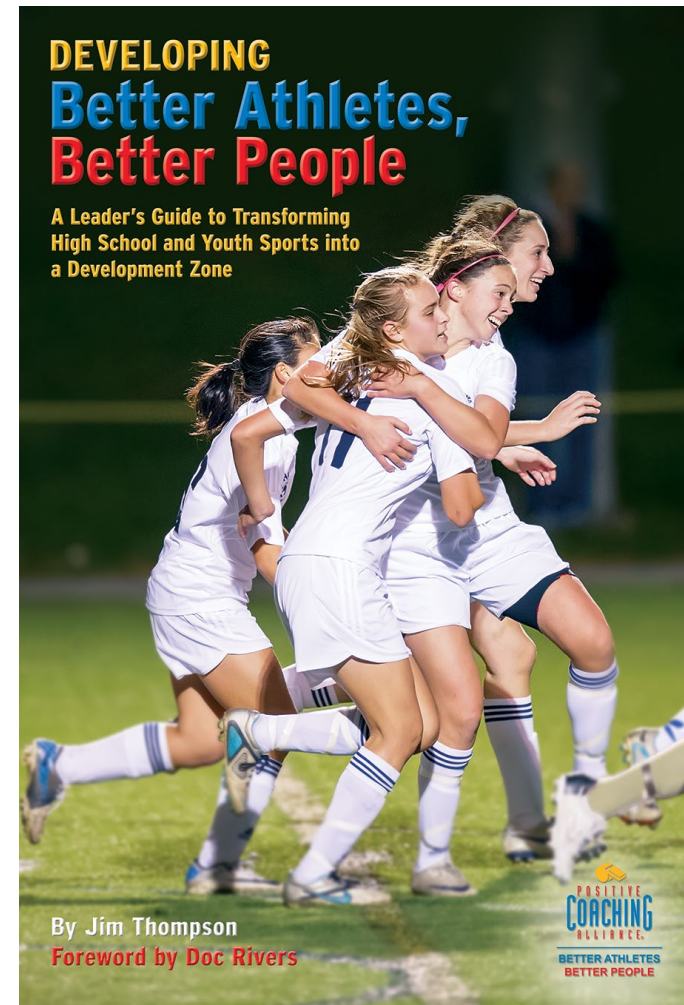
So it is worth a lot of your thought and energy to figure out how to get the right coaches on your bus and keep the wrong ones off (or help them off if they won’t change).

Robert Lewis, Jr., founder of the Boston Astros youth baseball program (now The BASE), tells of an Astros coach who yelled at his players even though he knew that was not the way the Astros did things. When Robert took issue, the coach said, “That’s my style.” To which Robert replied, “You know, you’re right. That is your style, and it just doesn’t work for us, so we’re going to let you go.”

We'll talk about how to align the people in your organization – especially coaches and parents – in the next three chapters. For now, understand that you should articulate a vision of where you want your organization to be, get people on your team who share that vision, and get those who do not share your vision off your bus.

Take-Aways

- 1 The stages of establishing culture are:
 - a) Setting the Table so everyone knows what behavior is expected,
 - b) Fixing Broken Windows by intervening when someone violates the culture, and
 - c) Building culture into the organization's Structural Pillars so the culture is reinforced over time.
- 2 Ensure alignment before empowerment! Make sure you have the right people on your leadership team – people who are excited about the vision and who will work hard to make it happen.
- 3 Exclude Emotional-Tank drainers from the leadership team so they don't drive off people you want to keep on your bus. Changing the culture of a major institution like youth sports is hard work. You need E-Tank fillers on your team.
- 4 Coaches are hugely influential, the key conduits to the ultimate beneficiary of your Development Zone – the youth athletes. It is crucial to get the right coaches on your bus – Double-Goal Coaches, who understand what it means to coach in the Development Zone – and to get coaches who will not buy into the program off the bus.



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