


  
**AFLCA Conference**  
 25 September 2008


**Coaching Effectiveness – AFL Senior Coach**

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**Background & Approach**

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**Research Issue & Objectives**

**Issue: Investigate & identify the key components that make AFL Coaches effective**


Provide a series of objective and evidence-based criteria for use in the:


- selection,
- evaluation
- retention of AFL Coaches

Criterion will also be used during the:

- ongoing performance appraisal
- personal development
- professional development of the Coach

Criteria will form the basis of a pathway program for the development of Coaches at all levels

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**Stride's Approach**

<b>Work Step</b>	<b>Questionnaire &amp; Data Gathering Approach</b>	<b>Interview Process</b>	<b>Report Findings</b>
<b>Duration</b>	7 days	42 days	7 days

Three step process:

- Questionnaire and data gathering approach
- Interviewing process
  - data gathering across 11 categories of the AFL Industry and other experts
- Report Findings
  - objective and evidence based criteria that make AFL Senior Coaches (SC) effective

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**Starting Point – Model of Effectiveness**


What is the club's "situation"?

**COACH EFFECTIVENESS**

LEADERSHIP    MANAGEMENT    PRODUCING HIGH PERFORMANCE    PERSONAL QUALITIES


← COMMUNICATION →

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**Questionnaire**

- Outline three measures of an AFL Senior Coach's effectiveness over a 3 to 5 year period
- **Leadership**
  - What style of leader is most effective as a SC?
  - What sorts of leadership should the Coach expect from his players?
  - What role should the Coach have in establishing the culture and vision for the club?
  - How should the Coach translate the club's culture and vision to the players, staff & supporters?
  - Is there a role for leadership facilitators & consultants?
- **Management**
  - What is the best organisational structure for an AFL club?
  - Describe the management skills required of a Senior Coach.
  - Should the modern Coach perform a "Manager of people" role or a "Coach the players" role?

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**Questionnaire**

- **Producing High Performance**
  - What are the most important elements required of a Coach in order to produce a high performance team?
  - Describe the Coach's role in list management & recruitment
  - Coach's role in the selection, development, trading or de-listing of players
  - Match day: describe the optimal structure in the box on match day.
  - At what level should the Coach be aware of sports science and developments occurring in other sports and industries?
- **Personal Qualities**
  - Describe the personal qualities of an effective Coach.
  - Specific skills required for dealing with Generation Y players and staff?
- **Communication**
  - Describe the communication skills of an effective Coach.
  - Different communication styles required for various stakeholders.

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**Interview Categories & Interviews**

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**Interview Categories**

AFL Industry	Interviews Completed
President/Chairman	4
Chief Executive	12
Senior Coach (SC)	13
General Manager – Football (GMF)	10
Assistant Coach (AC)	8
Player – senior	10
Player – mid-range	12
Player – young	9
Medical Staff/Strength & Conditioning	4
Retired Players	5
Former Coaches	3
Other	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>

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**Key Findings**

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**Measures of Effectiveness**

Effectiveness: producing a desired or intended result

Four key measures of effectiveness:

1. Win/loss, competitive performance
2. Develop players
3. Relationship with players & culture
4. Game plan, style of play & technical skills

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**Measures of Effectiveness**

	Win/loss, competitive performance	Develop players	Relationship with players & culture	Game plan, style of play, technical skills
President / Chairman	✓			
Chief Executive	✓	✓		
Senior Coach	✓	✓	✓	✓
GM Football	✓	✓	✓	✓
Assistant Coach	✓	✓	✓	✓
Player - Senior	✓	✓		✓
Player – Mid-Range	✓	✓	✓	
Player - Young	✓	✓	✓	
Medical Staff	✓	✓		✓
Retired Players	✓	✓	✓	
Retired Coaches	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>

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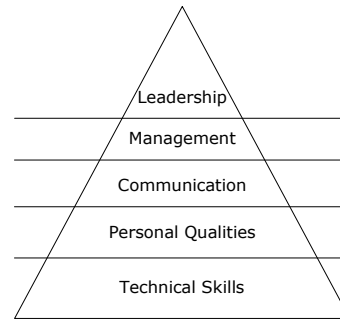
## Coach Effectiveness Hierarchy



- Research observations across the 11 categories revealed five common components that contribute to a Senior Coach's ability to achieve the intended results
- Five components:
  - Technical Skill
  - Personal Qualities
  - Communication
  - Management
  - Leadership
- The components have been arranged into a hierarchy of effectiveness
- Hierarchy refers to an individual's experience and personal make-up that are likely to contribute to his effectiveness as a SC
- The hierarchy has been structured to represent a natural order of priority that will dictate a SC's effectiveness at AFL level



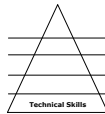
## Coach Effectiveness Hierarchy



## Layer 1 – Technical Skills



- Technical skill is a fundamental element of an SC's effectiveness
- SC uses his technical skills to achieve the team's goals
- SC must possess strategic skills to develop a winning game plan
- Must have strong belief in his game plan and sell it to the players
- SC must understand where the game is heading tactically, so that he can develop a competitive game plan
- Game plan must be clear & consistent
- Playing AFL at the elite level is widely considered as the best way to obtain a deep technical knowledge – respect & credibility to sell the message
- What other pathways exist for developing technical skills?



## Layer 2 – Personal Qualities



- Certain personal qualities are necessary to make full use of an individual's technical skills
- Four main themes emerged

Personality Profile	Relating with People
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self awareness &amp; improvement</li> <li>Resilience</li> <li>Intelligence</li> <li>Work ethic</li> <li>Balanced</li> <li>Self belief &amp; confidence</li> <li>Controlled</li> <li>Decisive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empathy</li> <li>Respect</li> <li>Understand people</li> <li>Open feedback</li> <li>Trust</li> <li>Approachable</li> <li>Consistent</li> </ul>
Personal Character	Working with Players & Staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Honesty</li> <li>Integrity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication</li> <li>Listening</li> <li>Teacher</li> <li>Motivator</li> </ul>



## Layer 3 – Communication



- Research findings identified the importance of communication in layer 2
- Communication is considered so important that it warrants its own layer
- SC must be an excellent communicator across all levels of the AFL Industry, including:
  - Players, Coaching staff, Volunteers, Board
  - Media, Sponsors, AFL Executive/Commission
- SC must engage with his playing group (old & young) and be effective at selling his message
- Must be a good teacher and be prepared to listen to feedback and gain their respect & trust
- SC should be appointed when he is a good communicator and replaced when his communication is no longer effective
- Importance of communicating with other stakeholders – must respect and understand the different objectives of each stakeholder



## Layer 3 – Communication



Board	Media	Sponsors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand their role and respect</li> <li>Clear</li> <li>Concise</li> <li>Honest</li> <li>Confident</li> <li>Consistent</li> <li>Keep them involved</li> <li>Develop a good working relationship</li> <li>Manage upward</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Media performance reflects the club's brand</li> <li>Best spokesperson for the club</li> <li>Consistent messages between players &amp; media</li> <li>Critical success factor</li> <li>Understand how the media works</li> <li>Open &amp; honest</li> <li>Professional</li> <li>Respect</li> <li>Work with them not against them</li> <li>Opportunity to sell himself and club through the media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SC is the best asset commercially for the club</li> <li>Keep the sponsors involved</li> <li>Aligned &amp; consistent communication between the Board, media, sponsors and players</li> </ul>



## Layer 4 – Management



- Importance of management has been driven by the increased professionalism of the AFL industry
- Role of SC has broadened to include activities with the media, corporate sponsors and other tasks not associated with coaching the players
- SC now manages a team of people to assist him in preparing the players for the game
- In many cases the SC has not been trained in management and prefers to stay involved with the players
- To cope with the increased demands of the role, the SC must relinquish control and learn to manage and trust staff & players – shared responsibility
- “Manager of people” vs. “Coach the players”
  - Management is now a much larger requirement
  - SC should do what he does best and that’s coach the players

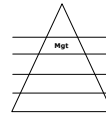


## Layer 4 - Management



### Comments

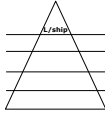
- SC should spend more time with the players
- Manager of coaching rather than an administrator
- Game is more strategic, hence a need for better management skills
- Importance & respect for the AC role has increased significantly
- Organisational Structure is driven by the skills and experience of the CEO, SC & GMF – must be aligned to be effective
- Key ingredient of management is experience
- Aspiring SC’s need experience managing before they become a SC, eg. manage a team in their own right
- Role of GMF critical



## Layer 5 – Leadership



- Leadership is consistently identified as a critical success factor
- SC must be inclusive across all levels of the club
- Preference for situational style leadership through empowerment of players and staff
- Challenge is to get the players to take responsibility and follow the SC’s lead in pursuit of the common goal
- Balanced, calm and a strong sense of belief in his game plan – clear and consistent message
- Key factors in successful leadership:
  - Genuine empowerment
  - Must understand each player’s individual personalities
  - Use leadership experts to assist players and coaching staff with leadership training
  - SC, AC and players must lead by example

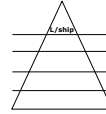


## Layer 5 - Leadership



### Comments

- Dictator style coach is OUT
- SC must be approachable
- Empower players to take responsibility
- Player leadership with guidance
- Must develop a clear and concise message and sell it to the Board, coaching staff and players
- Empathy and emotional intelligence
- Strong relationship with the players is vital
- Creating the right environment is critical and outside experts can assist



## Other Comments



- AC accreditation program required
- AC pathway program should be developed that is supported by club Boards and the AFLCA
- AC’s need proper tuition to enhance their coaching credentials – accreditation program
- AC’s need to understand the breadth & depth of the SC’s role for their own development
- Adaptability, balance and the ability to switch off will add longevity to a SC’s career
- Clubs do a poor job of succession planning their SC
- Clubs that aren’t prepared to bottom out must gain competitive advantage through better coaching
- Being a captain or member of the leadership group is a good breeding ground for the role of SC
- Lack of knowledge by clubs of up and coming ACs or coaches in other leagues
- Turf building within the industry can inhibit the growth of some individuals



## Conclusion



- Coach effectiveness hierarchy provides a guide as to the criteria that a club could use to select, evaluate and retain coaches
- Each club should identify the specific objectives that it believes will dictate success and measure improvement on an annual basis
- Coaching hierarchy may be useful in shaping an accreditation program for players aspiring to a career in coaching
- Are we headed to the NFL model, where a new head coach brings his team to deploy his game plan?
- Some clubs believe they should reduce their key man risk by building a mature organisation that will continue to progress if certain individual are no longer at the club
- Coach development has traditionally involved playing/coaching under successful coaches who have become mentors
- Industry needs to take carriage of a more defined pathway program for skills development





## Appendices



## Project Team

### Ian Foote, Executive Chairman – Quality Assurance Role

Ian has over 35 years of corporate business experience, predominantly with a consulting focus in a range of blue chip Australian and International organisations. In 1992 he co-founded Ajilon Consulting Australia, which was sold to a large Swiss company in 2000. Ian provided a quality assurance role on this project and drew on his vast business experience and involvement in the St Kilda and Essendon coach appointments.

### Craig Mitchell, Chief Executive – Project Director Role

Craig has 18 years of strategic business experience having worked as a management consultant in Australia (Arthur Andersen, SMS Consulting) and the USA (CHI Consulting) as well as managing a diverse range of growing businesses. He holds a Bachelor of Economics and a Master of Sport Management and has a strong blend of business and sports acumen. Craig managed the research project, conducting all interviews and delivered the final report.

### Glenn Archer, Stride Director – Subject Matter Expert Role

Glenn is recognised as one of the most courageous and successful footballers to have played the game in a career spanning 10 years. As a Director of Stride, he has a hands on role in the business development and strategic operations of the business. Glenn participated in most of the interviews and provided subject matter expertise in terms of his broad AFL background and his credibility allowed Stride to get the "best" out of the interviewees.



## About Stride Sports Management

- Integrated sports management & marketing business established in 2004
- Blend of successful business and sport professionals bringing unique experience & intellectual property to the research project
- Board & Executive Management

Ian Foote (Chairman)	Craig Mitchell (Chief Executive)	Glenn Archer	Richard Foote
Keith McKenzie	Ricky Ponting	Anthony Stevens	

### Stride's Key Divisions

#### AFL Player Management

50+ players represented: accredited player managers Alex McDonald, Tom Petro, Ned Guy & Jason Dover

#### Soccer Player Management

20+ players represented around the world: FIFA accredited player & match agent, Lou Sticca  
Management presence in the UK

#### Wellness

Corporate health & wellbeing services provided to blue chip corporates, using athletes as positive role models.

Successful programs conducted at Laminex, Russell Investment, Vindex, Talent2 & MetLink

#### Events

Corporate hospitality, eg. Business of Sport breakfasts, AFLPA's Madden Medal  
Exhibition matches, eg. LA Galaxy & Beckham's tour to Sydney/Wellington 2007

#### Stride Recruitment

Recruitment services across the sports industry

#### Consulting

Sports specific management consulting

- AFL Coach Effectiveness – Research Project
- HR recruitment services:
  - St Kilda coach appointment 2006
  - Essendon coach appointment 2007
  - Psychological assessments
  - Balanced scorecard framework development
  - Benchmark studies
- Soccer operations: list management for Sydney FC
- Commercialisation of online properties: [www.kitballfootball.com](http://www.kitballfootball.com)
- Private equity investment into sports franchisees
- Sponsorship sales & activation: National Poker League

