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THE 5 KINDS OF LEADERS EVERY TEAM NEEDS TO BE SUCCESSFUL

by Jeff Janssen, Janssen Sports Leadership Center

Your leaders are absolutely critical to your success for a variety of reasons. Finding and developing just one effective leader can be challenging enough for most teams. However, in actuality, you really need 5 kinds of leaders if your program is going to be successful on and off the playing field.

The 5 Kinds of Leaders Every Team Needs to Be Successful include:

1. Performance Leaders (Competition Captains)
2. Locker Room Leaders (Culture Captains)
3. Social Leaders (Chemistry Captains)
4. Organizational Leaders (Campus Captains)
5. Reserve Leaders (Sub Captains)

While some of the five leadership functions can overlap and be fulfilled by the same person, each of them has a slightly different skill set and impact on your team. Let's take an in-depth look at each of the five kinds of leadership.



1. PERFORMANCE LEADERS (COMPETITION CAPTAINS)

Performance Leaders are your primary on field/court leaders. They take charge of your team in practice and competitive settings to focus people and keep them on task. As Competition Captains, they provide the strong vocal leadership necessary to help your team perform to its potential during practices and certainly come game day.

Your Performance Leaders need to be highly results-oriented. They set the tone with their own strong example and work ethic and make sure their teammates play with a high level of intensity and

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accountability. Your Performance Leaders are typically your most committed and competitive athletes on the team. Because they tend to have a certain edge about them, they raise the level of play of everyone around them. They are serious about success and very motivated to accomplish something special with your program.

Carolina women's soccer coach Anson Dorrance says, "The most attractive type of leadership to me is the student-athlete who is a coach on the field. I want a driving verbal force who won't let standards slip. That's how teams with ordinary talent can win championships. Without leadership, even a team with great talent will struggle to become a champion."

Unfortunately, many teams lack a strong vocal Performance Leader. Some athletes shy away from this role because they lack confidence in their leadership skills. They don't demand enough from their teammates because they worry too much about what others think of them. This lack of leadership then puts the onus on the coaching staff to continually set the tone rather than the athletes stepping up and taking responsibility and ownership of it themselves. Worse, when the team struggles in competition, no Performance Leaders step up to calm and refocus the team to get them back on track. The team often crumbles when adversity hits because they lack Competition Captains.



Who are the Performance Leaders on your team? How well are they fulfilling their role on a 1-10 scale?

(For a 10-week program on developing effective Performance Leaders for your team check out our [Team Captain's Leadership Manual](#).)

2. LOCKER ROOM LEADERS (CULTURE CAPTAINS)

Arkansas pitching coach Dave Jorn says, "A lot of your success and failure is going on in the locker room. Your leaders are key to managing the locker room." Detroit Red Wings assistant coach Tom Renney echoes his statement when he says, "If you don't have good people, first and foremost, in your dressing room, it will be a long season."

Locker Room Leaders serve as the critical creators, champions, and caretakers of your team's culture. Through their words and deeds on a daily basis, trusted Locker Room Leaders mold, monitor, and maintain your team's culture into one that is positive and productive for your program. In their role as Culture Captains, they determine and dictate what is acceptable and unacceptable to do in your program, both on and off the field/court/track/etc.



Effective Locker Room Leaders take pride in your program's culture and do everything they can to enhance, protect, and preserve it. If someone acts in a way that is outside of what is considered appropriate, the Locker Room Leaders will step in and set the person straight. They willingly and quickly confront those who do not act in a way that is aligned with your program's vision, values, and standards. Often, you'll find that effective Locker Room Leaders contribute more to your program's success with their leadership than they do with their individual physical talent.

It is critical that the coaching staff and the Locker Room Leaders are on the same page and support and defend each other. Following a tough practice or frustrating loss, the locker room is often filled with upset individuals, disgruntled subs, critical comments, and seeds of dissension. It is during these times especially when your Locker Room Leaders need to step up, be vocal, and keep the team positive and productive. They need to constructively confront the snipers and grippers on the team so that they don't infect the fence-sitters. Left unchecked, these pessimistic attitudes and negative comments corrode your team's culture and chemistry.

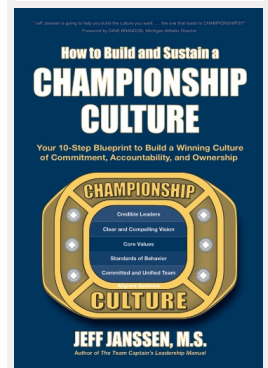
Destructive Locker Room Leaders are better described as Ring Leaders. They are not bought in to

the vision, values, and standards of the positive team leaders and coaching staff and often have their own stubborn way of doing things. They stir up problems, cause instead of quell drama, and instigate issues in hopes of bringing everyone to their side. They often disdain and undermine the coaches and sometimes mutinously attempt to orchestrate an ouster of the staff.

Usually your productive Locker Room Leaders are the more senior and veteran athletes on your team who are extra invested in your program's success because they see that their time left to accomplish something special is fleeting. Their advanced age often provides them with a greater level of maturity as well, so they have less tolerance for the shenanigans that could distract, disrupt, and destroy your team. There is often some overlap with the Performance Leadership role as well.

Who are the Locker Room Leaders on your team? Are they positive leaders or negative Ring Leaders for your team? How well are they fulfilling their role on a 1-10 scale?

(To learn how to develop a Championship Culture in your program with the help of your Locker Room Leaders, check out our book ***How to Build and Sustain a Championship Culture.***)



3. SOCIAL LEADERS (CHEMISTRY CAPTAINS)

Your Social Leaders lead the charge on building and maintaining your team's chemistry, hence the term Chemistry Captains. They focus on the relationships of your team and how well people bond together. They look to connect with teammates on a regular basis and often plan various social events to get everyone to get to know each other at a deeper level, especially outside of your sport.

Effective Social Leaders intentionally build strong relationships with the various subgroups on your team. Subgroups occur naturally within a team based on positions, year in school, hometowns, race, etc. Good Social Leaders are able to move in and out of each of the subgroups on your team. In this way they are the glue that bonds the various subgroups together, rather than allowing them to be exclusive and destructive cliques.



Destructive Social Leaders often create and promote contentious cliques, where certain segments of your team covertly battle each other, sometimes more intensely than they do your opponents. Further, destructive Social Leaders make your team's social life THE priority. While people might get along and have a good time at the parties they plan and host, your team's success and reputation typically nose dive.

Who are the Social Leaders on your team? How well are they fulfilling their role on a 1-10 scale?

(For team building tips on developing positive and productive Social Leaders, check out our book ***Championship Team Building.***)

4. ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERS (CAMPUS CAPTAINS)

Organizational Leaders get involved in the various clubs and organizations on campus. They represent your team or athletic department on the Student-Athlete Advisory Council, student council, and a variety of other campus related organizations. Acting as your Campus Captains, these leaders keep your team involved and engaged with what is happening on campus and in the community. They often plan various campus programs and community service events.

Poor Organizational Leaders miss meetings and/or represent your team in an embarrassing way in your athletic department. Their apathy and irresponsibility can quickly give your program a poor reputation among athletic administrators and community leaders.

Who are the Organizational Leaders on your team? How well are they fulfilling their role on a 1-10 scale?



5. RESERVE LEADERS (SUB CAPTAINS)

Finally, an often-overlooked yet important kind of leader are your Reserve Leaders. Your Reserve Leaders lead the second and third string athletes on your team. Because they don't play much or receive much outside attention, your reserves can be a very volatile segment of your team. Keep this in mind - too many disgruntled subs can torpedo your team.

Baseball manager Casey Stengel once said, "The secret of successful managing is to keep the five guys who hate you away from the four guys who haven't made up their minds." Your Reserve Leaders assist in the process of managing expectations and the frustration that can arise with limited playing time for your substitutes.

Numbers-wise, your reserves make up a significant portion of your team, comprising sometimes one third to one half of your total roster. So you need to find a respected leader of your reserves who can help them understand their important yet limited role and quell any dissension that might rise up during the course of the season.

Great Reserve Leaders create a sense of pride in their group's unique role. As an example, the Carolina men's basketball reserves have even named themselves **Blue Steel** and have created a cult-like following for their unique contributions to the team. Encourage your Reserve Leaders to develop a sense of positive pride and perspective with their fellow substitutes on your team.

Who are the Reserve Leaders on your team? How well are they fulfilling their role on a 1-10 scale?



SUMMARY

After reading through this article, invest the time to chat with your coaching staff about each of the 5 kinds of leaders and how they impact your team. Slot your current leaders into each of the 5 kinds and rate them on a 1-10 scale. If you are like most teams, you will likely have some strengths but some deficiencies and voids as well. Make a conscious effort to develop the leadership areas where your team is weak and be sure to praise the effective leaders who are doing a solid job for you.

Then follow up with the various leaders on your team and express your appreciation for the important leadership roles they play. Discuss with them the roles and responsibilities of each kind of leader. Collectively decide which of your leaders will be the primary person(s) responsible for each role. Be sure they understand what is needed and are committed to stepping up and fulfilling these important roles for your team. A lot of the leadership roles will fall to your team captains, but you should be able to

allocate some of the Social, Organizational, and Reserve roles to other leaders on your team.

12 TIPS TO SELECT AND DEVELOP EFFECTIVE LOCKER ROOM LEADERS

Looking to develop more effective Locker Room Leaders on your team? Often effective Locker Room Leaders contribute as much if not more to your team's success with their leadership than they do with their athletic talent. [Click here to discover 12 strategies you can use to develop the Locker Room Leaders you need to succeed.](#) Exclusively for our ChampionshipCoachesNetwork.com Members.

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