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Coach's Manual

Penn M. Peterson

Boise State University

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Penn M. Peterson

Boise State University

LEAD 495 Capstone Project

Dr. Margaret Sass

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Author Note:

The content of this paper is done so in affiliation with Boise State University, specifically within the department of Multidisciplinary Studies.

Contact information: pennpeterson@u.boisestate.edu

Abstract

For my capstone project, I chose to write a coach's manual. I have coached in our district for five years now, and one of the glaring things that hindered me at times was the fact that I did not have anything to base my decisions or actions off of. When I thought about what we really needed that would benefit the most stakeholders within my district/workplace, I knew that this was it. Having a manual that sets expectations, mission statements, vision, rules, policies, contact information, etc. would greatly improve our ability to do our jobs correctly. Accountability for coaches, administrators, parents, etc. was now something that could be done. We needed a reference or a guide of some sort that was made specifically for coaches and outlined the most glaring issues that we face. Stakeholders include administrators, coaches, parents, kids, and anyone else involved in our athletic programs. This experience has helped me gain so much insight into our programs as well as provided something that can be built upon for years to come. I was able to provide our staff a foundation to begin their programs off of and give all stakeholders an opportunity to be on the same page.

Section 1: Introduction To Capstone Project

My capstone project was creating a coach's manual that would give our district a foundation in which anyone associated with our athletic programs could reference and use to keep things running smoothly. I wanted it to provide an answer to all of the questions that plague a coaching staff. Another goal was to have it written in a way that administrators, parents, and kids could find use for it. Whether it be a parent wanting to know protocol on bussing to and from away events or an administrator that needed to hold a coach accountable for not following protocol with fundraising money. I also wanted to make it something that would just help provide a basic foundation that a coaching staff could base a program system off of.

To gain knowledge of what coaches needed and could use in this manual, I used my own experience, as well as input from many other coaches in our district. I approached it as something that someone could take and find immediate use for. I didn't want it to have to be evolved or questioned. The information needed to be applicable and up to date in order to provide what I thought was needed for our coaches.

I found that many of the coaches had a lot of the same questions. What was difficult was that they didn't all agree on policy and regulations. For example, one coach complained that not being able to make purchases before any sort of consent would make him lose out on opportunities, especially in the summer. If he had the funds, then why was there a problem? Getting discrepancies like this out of the way and making people understand the issue it could potentially cause was the tough part. At the end of the day, policy is policy, but the fact that we had discussions on what would work better was fantastic.

Section 2: Elements Coming Together

Innovative Approach

Bringing together everyone's perspectives was tough, yet very helpful. I had to take the author Scott McDowell's advice, "The first step is to accept the learning curve and take on the challenge." (McDowell p. 1) I found that the administration loved the idea, but was concerned about getting their end of policies covered very thoroughly. Understandable, but I wasn't trying to create a disciplinary manual on accountability. The goal was to inform of the policies and procedures to a point but then to have a reference where the party using the manual could go to get more information. If I just created a manual with every policy and regulation, I would have a one-thousand page manual. This helped me understand that I needed to cover policy, as well as provide a reference on where to go when more information was needed.

Talking to the coaches is where I gained the knowledge that our district had a lack of cohesion and understanding of the very basic procedures and policies. Things that seem like they should know, they didn't. To no fault of theirs, I was in the same boat not long ago and am still learning as I go. What I gained from the coaches was that they were somewhat lost when it came to the actual policy and what was expected. Coaches were spending incorrectly, not fundraising to expectation, not keeping track of pay to play fees, and so on.

My approach is tough to call innovative in a sense that it was something new, but I feel that getting my information from the stakeholders was key in creating something that could actually be used by our staff. My experience combined with coaches and administration knowledge was key in knowing what we needed to get in this manual. It was simpler than I thought it would be in the fact that I didn't need anything that I wasn't familiar with from my own experience. Most of the issues we were having were from basic expectations and policies.

I also believe my approach was innovative because the manual can be applied to many different people. A parent could grab this manual and gain information that would be useful to them in some way. Maybe it was the bus policy or possibly it was regarding if you can utilize venmo for fundraising. The stakeholders would be able to find something of use in many different areas. The manual isn't one dimensional.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence is something that I love to talk about. I love consciously implementing this into what I am doing. For this project, I wanted to implement EI into my project so that I could really enhance what I was doing. Self-motivation was key when working on this project. Going over policies and regulations took a little bit of discipline. I had to make myself read through things so that I fully understood them in order to implement them correctly in my work.

I also had to be socially aware of my peers and how they might react to the content that I was putting together. When I talked to the coaches, I could sense a little bit of me vs. them mentality towards the administration. I was able to understand this because I was in their same situation. Through the use of empathy I was able to let them know I understood and I was also able to curb things so that the mood was not an us vs. them mentality. Travis Hyde, the head wrestling coach for the girls team said, "I appreciate the effort that you are putting in on behalf of the coaches. This is something that we have needed for a while." (Travis Hyde, personal communication, July 23, 2023). The acknowledgement of what I was doing helped motivate me to make this something that could be applicable to everyone.

Creative Thinking

Making a manual is very direct. Creative thinking was something that was essential in making this project successful. The creative aspect of my project was getting input from all of the stakeholders so that, once again, this would be applicable to the majority and not just a few. Gaining perspective from the staff was something that caught people by surprise. The lack of communication was very apparent throughout every conversation I had with the stakeholders.

As Albert Einstein famously said, "Creativity is seeing what others see and thinking what no one else ever thought." (Barnhart, 2021, Linearity) Finding a solution towards the lack of communication and knowledge of procedures within our district was something that needed to be addressed. When brainstorming projects, I wanted something that would impact my place of work or my peers. I was able to find this through creative thinking. Stepping back from my position and looking at things from other perspectives gave me the opportunity to find something that was needed.

Innovative Solution

Going out and actually communicating with the stakeholders ultimately led to a positive outcome. The combination of Self-awareness, social awareness, as well as empathy, gave me the understanding of what was needed and why. Learning about empathy has been very beneficial in the fact that I now look for it so that I can relate to someone else's frustrations and/or joys. The ability to use emotional intelligence really enhanced this experience.

My own knowledge of our policies and regulations has increased immensely since taking on this project. An unexpected variable that I ran into was that there were so many stakeholders that were not aware of the way things needed to be done. I knew that there was a need for a manual or guide that would set a foundation for all stakeholders, but I didn't realize how big the gap was that needed to be filled.

I keep resorting back to the communication with the stakeholders, but this was really the foundational cornerstone that allowed me to gain ground on this project. From the outside looking in, one may assume that the overall effectiveness of this project may be the subject who actually utilizes the manual. With the implementation of the manual in our district, the non-use of the manual will be something that will be easy to identify. Basic protocol in running a program with consistency is one of the goals that was achieved with this project.

Section 3: Results

I truly believe that through the capstone project I was able to have a positive impact on all stakeholders. This project is something that can continue to be enhanced to have an even greater impact on all of the stakeholders. Administrators, coaches, parents, and student athletes will now have a cohesive foundation that thrives on a consistent effort from top to bottom to provide the best experience possible for everyone involved in our programs.

The athletic director, Ashley Holt, said, "This is something that puts us all on the same page. We can continue to enhance this and build upon your work," (Ashley Holt, personal communication, Jul 28, 2023). Football, volleyball, and wrestling coaching staff members were presented with the coaches manual. The reviews were positive. The questions posed were positive and there was no one that found the manual to be useless or a problem.

The vice principal, Stu Peterson said, "This is something that gives us an opportunity to make sure that expectations are met. It is nice to see that you took the time to do this for us," (Stu Peterson, personal communication, Jul 28, 2023). The overall goal, to put our district on the same page, and to have something ensures we are meeting standards set by the state and our district was met. Giving all parties something that they can reference to at least point them in the

right direction has been something that I look forward to enhancing as time goes on. Hopefully it can be a standard that is used for generations to come.

Section 4: Conclusion

The capstone project has allowed me to practice many of the skills that I have learned throughout my time here at Boise State University. Self-awareness when dealing with people in any project is one of the most beneficial areas that I feel I have grown. Listening to people give their opinions on what I was doing wasn't always easy, but with the ability to understand the value of using empathy and compassion, as well as social awareness, I was able to take the good and the bad. Finding useful information from both the good and the bad is another quality that the capstone project encouraged me to use in order to find solutions to my work.

Being able to put bias aside was greatly beneficial as well. Not only did it help me keep negative emotions out of my work, it also helped me understand where people were coming from. I was reminded of the book, *Growing Influence*. There is a chapter called "Where Should I focus?". One of the main characters, David said, "Oftentimes, the relationship between the members determines the success of the team." (Price, Ennis. p. 68) Being able to put differences or biases aside leads to the greater good when done correctly. These skills were not only utilized for my capstone project, but have been utilized in my day to day life. The knowledge and abilities that I have gained at Boise State have all had immediate impacts on my life both personally and professionally.

Looking back, there are things that I would have done differently in certain areas of my project. The amount of time I spent deciphering what information to put in and to leave out ended up being something that hindered things a bit. I had to adjust my approach and realize what I actually had time for, but this allowed me to use the skills that this program has put into

place for me. Rather than be so dead set on a manual, I would have been better off to make a handbook or guide that was more of a reference from the beginning rather than having to do that later in the project. The positive in making that adjustment regardless of the time period, is that I can continue to build off of the guidelines that I have put into place. I can add policies, regulations, etc. anytime that there is a need or a question.

At the end of the day, I feel very fortunate to have had this experience. I am ready to continue forward in working on building all of the skills learned throughout my time here at Boise State. There is no end to continuing to enhance my leadership abilities as well as my emotional intelligence. As Boise State did for me, I hope that my manual can do for others. That is to help build a foundation built on a growth mindset that allows people to better themselves in both their personal and professional lives. I can walk away from this project knowing that I have the skills to be successful in all aspects of life.

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