

Chapter 5

Communicating With Your Target Audiences



I. Organizing and Planning Swim team Communications

This section will provide the high school swim coach with a “road map” to ensure accurate and thorough communications with the various constituents that are a part of a successful season. The ability to communicate in a timely and orderly fashion will help reduce future problems that could arise. It will also help to promote the swim team as a professionally run operation.

A significant number of high school swimming coaches are not teachers in the school at which they coach. Many are new to coaching and will learn through experience as opposed to working under a mentor for several years. This situation leads to a high turnover rate in the swim coaching ranks. A study conducted of coaches in the Seattle area revealed 80% of the coaches had been at their present position for two years or less.

This communication plan is a starting point for a coach. Each school has different situations that will necessitate modification. The purpose of this section is to provide a new coach with a check list of communication ideas as well as the individuals and groups with whom they will be working.

The implementation of a communications plan will result in amiable relationships and an enjoyable swimming season for you and your team. It is important to remember that “Rome was not built in a day.”

The ideas and information in this section will help you build your communications plan, but it will take several seasons to implement them all. Pick the ideas that will help your program the most and do not worry if the end product is not perfect. For instance, a hand written meet schedule that is handed out to the parents and swimmers before the season is more valuable than a schedule that is done on a computer but is given out half way through the season.

The individuals and groups a coach will need to communicate with can be broken into three categories: swim team, school, and outside groups. Your ability to effectively communicate with these constituents will determine the success of your program and your coaching career.

Swim Team

Team Members
Team Captains
Team Parents
Coaching Staff
Team Managers
Volunteers

School

Principal
Athletic Director
Teachers
Student Body

Outside Groups

Meet Officials
Other Coaches
Media
Pool Manager
Community
League/State Associations
Equipment Suppliers

A. How to Get Started

The communication plan provided on page 139, in the form of a matrix, provides a list of communication methods, who needs to receive each communication, and when it should occur.

Several of the items occur before the season. Preparing for an upcoming season can be overwhelming for a first year coach. Using a check list method will help simplify matters. You can add or delete items from this list depending on your situation.



As you complete each item, check it off. Most of these items will only need minor modifications from year to year, so it is not necessary to recreate each one from scratch. The joy and excitement from coaching will improve each year. No two seasons are the same and likewise your communication methods will improve as you gain more knowledge from other coaches, books, tapes, etc.

It is very helpful to establish a relationship with an experienced coach in your league/state that you respect. You will find most coaches are more than glad to share their “secrets.” They can be a great resource and a mutual friendship could ensue.

The following sections will break the different types of communication methods into a time table consisting of Pre-Season, In-Season, Daily, Weekly, Monthly, and Post-Season. A brief description and some helpful hints are included to help you get started.

II. Pre-Season



A. Team Calendar:

- The team calendar is the single most important item in the communications plan. Your meet schedule, practice schedule, holidays, social events, swimwear order deadlines and meeting should be included. It should be handed out to the swim team at the Pre-Season meeting and discussed in depth



- If possible, the parents should have a copy approximately one month before the season begins. Mail a copy home or distribute at the parents meeting. If your team has a web site, post it on the site. **DO NOT** depend on the swimmers to give the parents a copy. Parents will be eternally grateful to you for this. Remember they often have children in other grades along with a busy work schedule. The more preparation time you allow them, the more likely it is they will be volunteers at meets, concessions sales, and other team projects.
- There are many software programs available that will help you create the team calendar. Software programs take a little time to get familiar with, so it is advised that you begin working with yours well before the season. This task can also be handled by team managers or parents. Many of them would be excited to help the team, already have the necessary software, and are familiar with it.

B. Pre-season Handbook:

- The pre-season handbook is an efficient method of presenting your program and answering questions that swimmers and parents will ultimately ask. It is also important to include the team's policies, standards and expectations. 
- We all hope our growing, young adults will behave in a respectful fashion and make wise life-style decisions, but on occasion they will slip-up. The handbook is a great way to keep emotions out of a disciplinary situation. If policies are clearly stated in writing, it makes your job much easier when dealing with a team member and possibly their parents. Make sure to check with your athletic director about team and school policies.
- The team handbook also helps the swimmer set goals and objectives for the season. Time standards for championship meets and All American teams, motivational quotes and stories, along with team/state records all help them begin to dream; and dreams become goals. If your school does not have class records, start assembling such a list. Often times the school records are too far out of reach to be realistic goals but the freshman record might be a possibility. Some schools keep a "Top 10" list for each event by class, or a "Top 25" list for the entire team. The more you can excite your swimmers about swimming the easier your job will be. They will attend more practices and stay focused. 

- Including directions to the pools you will be traveling to can be very helpful. Parents and friends will come to away meets more often, if they have easy-to-follow directions.
- There are more than likely a couple of teams in your area that already have a team handbook, contact those coaches and ask for a copy. These will give you an idea of where you are headed. Here is a sample table of contents for a pre-season handbook. You are advised to start off small the first year and add new features each year. You will be more likely to get it done by taking this approach.

Table of Contents

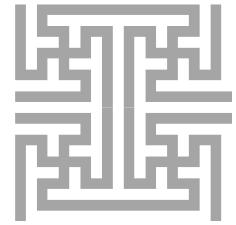
Team Calendar	Meet Schedule	Directions to Pools
Practice Schedule	Team/State Records	Sportsmanship
All America Standards	Team/School Policies	Eligibility Requirements
Directions to Pools	Transportation Policies	Letter Requirements
Practice Etiquette	Meet Conduct	Team Goals
Technique Tips	Individual Goal Forms	Coaches Phone Numbers
Motivational Quotes & Stories	Parent Volunteer Committees	

C. Planning Meetings

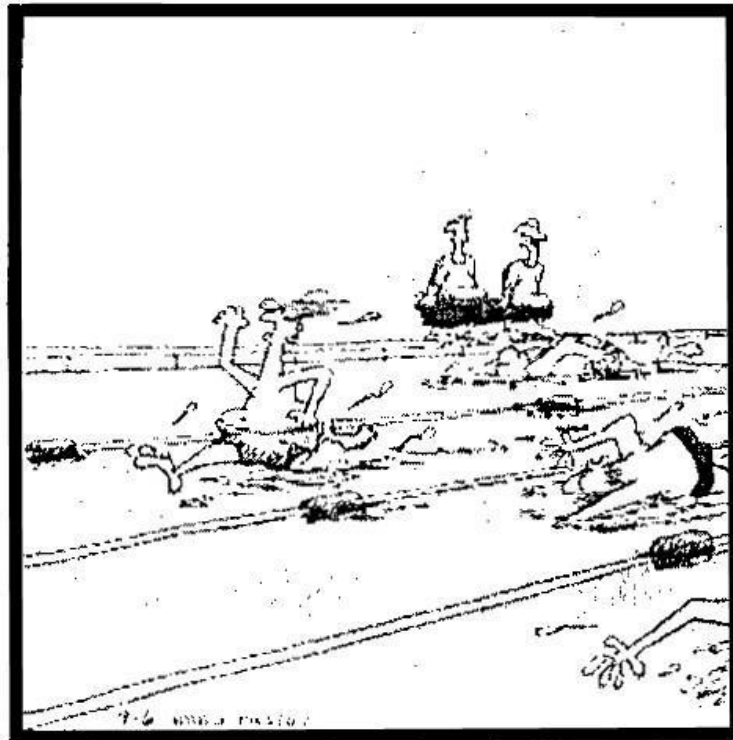
- The head coach should schedule separate pre-season planning meetings with their coaching staff, team captains, team managers, parents, athletic director, meet officials, other coaches, and pool managers. This will provide an opportunity to get more people involved in the different duties for the season.
- Assistant coaches will be more motivated if they help construct the season plan. They also provide a different perspective.
- The team captain(s) will be the squad's most important spirit builder(s). It could be beneficial to elect the next season's captains at the end of the current season. This will give them a chance to help plan the social calendar, design team T-shirts, and create team cheers. They are also the "pulse" of the team attitude. You need them to let you know when things are not going well, and why.
- Team managers need to prepare the equipment necessary and assist you with paper work. Have a list of duties to help guide them. A well trained manager will relieve you of many "busy work" jobs and they love being a part of the team.
- The Parent Volunteer Coordinator assists the team in many ways. The coordinator will recruit volunteers for meets, concession sales, banquet organization and social events. Always be looking for a parent with the qualities needed for the Parent Volunteer Coordinator position. These qualities should include; dependability, organizational skills, and an outgoing personality.



- Athletic directors across the country have a varying degree of interest in swimming. It is to your benefit to meet with the AD to discuss what you plan to do and how you will do it. The AD will help guide you through the maze of state regulations. Invite them to a meet along with the principal. School administrators will be thrilled to see their students working hard and having so much fun.



- Coaches in your region/league or state need to schedule meetings before and after the season. Check with other coaches to find out when and where these meetings take place. The agenda varies from state to state, but it will get a dialogue going and provide a forum to present new ideas. Hosting the coaches meetings during the lunch break of a swim clinic is a way to guarantee high attendance.



“I know this is the freestyle, so technically it’s legal. But it still freaks me out when he does that.”

Resources


Section 5-1

Swim Team Communications Plan

Communication	SWIM TEAM										SCHOOL						OUTSIDE GROUPS					
	Team Captain	Swimmers	Team Parents	Coaching Staff	Team Managers	Volunteers	Principal	Athletic Director	Teachers	Student Body	Meet Official	Cyclists	Media	Pod Managers	Equipment Supplier	League/State						
Team Calendar	Pie	Pie	Pie	Pie	Pie	Pie	Pie	Pie	In Season	Pie				Pie								
Pre-Season Handbook	Pie	Pie	Pie	Pie	Pie	Pie	Pie	Pie														
Planting Meetings	Pie		Pie	Pie	Pie	Pie	Pie	Pie		Pie				Pie/Post		Pie/Post						
Pre-Season Meetings	Pie	Pie	Pie	Pie	Pie	Pie	Pie	Pie			Pie			Pie		Pie						
Workout Schedule	Pie	Pie	Pie	Pie	Pie		Pie	Pie						Pie								
Restricting Swimmers	Pie	Pie	Pie	Pie	Pie		Pie	Pie		Pie												
Suit & Apparel Orders	Pie	Pie	Pie		Pie		Pie	Pie		Pie				Pie								
Meet Schedule	Pie	Pie	Pie	Pie	Pie		Pie	Pie	In Season	Pie				Pie		Pie						
Team/Individual Goals	Monthly	Monthly	Pie	Monthly	Pie		Pie	Monthly														
Team Meetings	Weekly	Weekly	Weekly	Weekly	Weekly		Weekly	Weekly														
Team Socials	In Season	In Season	In Season	In Season	In Season		In Season	In Season														
Team Newsletter	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly		Monthly	Monthly						Monthly								
Phone Tree	In Season	In Season	In Season	In Season	In Season		In Season	In Season														
Record Board		Weekly	Weekly				Weekly	Weekly	Weekly	Weekly												
Announcements/News	Daily	Daily	As Needed	Daily	Daily		As Needed	Weekly	Weekly	Weekly				Weekly		Weekly						
Team Bulletin Board	Weekly	Weekly	Weekly	Weekly	Weekly		Weekly	Weekly	Weekly	Weekly												
Meet Program/Lineup	Weekly	Weekly	Meet Day	Weekly	Weekly		Meet Day	Meet Day	Meet Day	Meet Day												
Meet Results & Split	Day After	Day After	Day After	Day After	Day After		Day After	Day After	Day After	Day After				Weekly		Weekly						
Attendance Record		Daily	As Needed	Daily			Post	As needed														
Swimmer Progress Report	Weekly	Weekly	Monthly	Weekly			Weekly	Weekly	Weekly	Weekly				Weekly		Weekly						
Team Awards Voting	Post	Post	Post	Post	Post		Post															
Post Season Booklet	Post	Post	Post	Post	Post		Post	Post	Post	Post				Post								
Post Season Banquet	Post	Post	Post	Post	Post		Post	Post	Post	Post												

Pre = Pre Season Post = Post Season

December 2004

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2 Ben Lomond @ Tooele	3	4 Practice 7:30 - 9:00
5	6	7	8	9 Tooele @ Park City	10	11 ACT Test Practice 7:30 - 9:00
12	13	14 Box Elder @ Tooele	15	16	17 Tooele Invitational	18
19	20 Practice 7:30 - 9:00 4:30 - 6:00	21 Practice 7:30 - 9:00 4:30 - 6:00	22 Practice 7:30 - 9:00 4:30 - 6:00	23 Team Party Practice 7:00 - 9:00	24 <i>Moratorium</i>	25 
26	27 <i>Moratorium</i>	28	29 Practice 7:30 - 9:00 Alumni Meet	30 Practice 7:30 - 9:00 4:30 - 6:00	31 Practice 7:30 - 9:00 4:30 - 6:00	

Swimwear Order Form

Name _____ Phone _____

COST

Suit: Female / Male

Size: 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 \$ _____

T- Shirt: Small Medium Large X-Large \$ _____

Warm-ups Top: Small Medium Large \$ _____

Bottom: Small Medium Large \$ _____

TOTAL \$ _____

Make checks payable to: _____

Check must accompany this order form

Season Goals

Name _____ Year _____

Events	Best Time	Mid-Season Goal	Season Goal
200 Free	_____	_____	_____
200 IM	_____	_____	_____
50 Free	_____	_____	_____
100 Fly	_____	_____	_____
100 Free	_____	_____	_____
500 Free	_____	_____	_____
100 Back	_____	_____	_____
100 Breast	_____	_____	_____
Diving (6)	_____	_____	_____
Diving (11)	_____	_____	_____

Academic Goals: GPA _____
 SAT _____
 Colleges _____
 Other _____

Health Sleep _____
 Nutrition _____

Training Attendance _____ % Weekly Yardage _____
 Technique Starts _____
 Turns _____
 Free _____
 Fly _____
 Back _____
 Breast _____