



ANYONE CAN LEAD!

All it really takes to be a great leader on your team is a willingness and a desire to help your teammates be all they can be.

When people talk about leadership, most of the time they're thinking about some great historical figure or exceptional speaker that they've seen on television or in the movies. Or maybe they connect the word, "leadership," with a prominent writer, artist, musician, politician, coach or another notable achiever that they've seen, met, heard or read about.

However, leadership has changed. You don't need to be a great writer, artist, musician, politician, coach or great speaker to be a great leader.

Anyone can lead.

ART OF SUBTLE INFLUENCE

- *Leadership isn't about telling and yelling. It's all about the art of subtle influence.*
- *Leadership isn't about rules. It's about inspiration.*
- *Leadership isn't about qualifications. It's about connection and engagement with other people.*
- *Leadership isn't about public speaking. It's about making quiet, meaningful and effective connections with other people, understanding what it is that's motivating them...and helping them—leading them—to see and believe that anything is possible.*

So, what does leadership in swimming look like, and how can you use your leadership skills to inspire your team to achieve remarkable and extraordinary things?

Imagine watching a commercial on TV about a new pizza place that has just opened in your town. The commercial is loud with lots of flashing signs and bright colors and people yelling about the cheese and the pepperoni and the special super deal of "three pizzas for the price of two."

Most people watch these commercials with a little scepticism and only passing interest—unless, of course, they happen to be very hungry! We also know that people avoid watching TV commercials and do all they can to cut them out of their favorite programs.

However, what if your best friend calls you up and says,



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“You know how you love pizza? Well, there’s this new pizza place in town. The cheese is amazing. The pepperoni is incredible. It’s the best pizza I’ve ever had—the best in the whole world. We gotta go try it!” Chances are as soon as you put down your phone, you’re running down the street with 20 bucks in your hand, heading straight to the new pizza place.

Why? Because we listen to people who listen to us. We feel connected to people we care about and who we know care about us.

This is the way leadership really works.

It’s not about flashy signs or loud noises or long speeches. It’s about you reaching out to other members of your team, taking time to get to know them and what motivates them, about spending time learning about their goals and their dreams, and then inspiring them to see longer, to reach farther and to be more than they ever thought possible.

LOOK, LISTEN AND LEARN

Whether it’s pizza or performance—leadership is the same: it’s about the three L’s: *Look, Listen and Learn*. Leadership is a very simple communication technique that anyone can master.

Here are three simple skills you can learn that can help you become an effective leader:

1. **Look:** First, get comfortable with looking at people in the eyes. The best way to connect with people is to show them that you are interested in them and what they have to say. By

looking into their eyes when you speak with them, you are telling them that at that moment, they are the most important person in your world and you want to get to know them better. *Everyone loves to feel important*—and you can show them how important you feel they are by looking at them in the eyes.

2. **Listen:** Listen—*really listen*—to what people have to say. So many people don’t really listen: they are waiting for the other person to stop talking so they can start talking themselves. Try to master the art of listening...and to ask “why” questions. “Why” questions are sending the message that you are interested in the other person’s point of view and you would like to hear even more of their ideas, thoughts and experiences.

3. **Learn:** Try to learn as much as you can about your team members. Why are they swimming? What do they love most about the sport? What are their goals? What do they dream about—the Olympics? A world record? A great college swim program? Strive to understand the things that interest your team members, what’s motivating them and what’s driving them to want to swim successfully.

SAY, DO AND FEEL

When it comes to leadership, remember this leadership mantra:

- *People will forget what you say...*

CONTINUED ON 40 ►

FIVE PRACTICAL EXAMPLES OF HOW YOU CAN “LEAD IN THE LANES”!

EXAMPLE	SAY – what you might say as a leader.	DO – what you do as a leader...as a role model.	FEEL – how you inspire others by making them feel important and valued as your team member.
Finishing on the wall	“It’s important to finish on the wall every repeat.”	Finish on the wall yourself every repeat.	“When you finish on the wall like you did on that last repeat, you looked powerful and strong. Excellent work.”
Turning	“Try to make every turn a race turn.”	Ensure all your own turns are race quality.	“When you did fly turn at that last meet, you looked amazingly fast coming off the final wall. I think if you did that off every wall in training, you’d be even more brilliant next time you race.”
Starting and underwater	“Do eight fast fly kicks in three seconds underwater.”	Be consistent in your own underwater kicking practice at every training session.	“I’ve been watching your starts. I think that if you worked your feet faster, you’d be able to explode to the surface even faster. Would you like to stay back after training and practice some starts with me and see if we can both get faster underwater?”
Doing a PR time at a meet	“Great PR today at the meet.”	Strive to prepare to do your best every time you race.	“I am so proud of you. What a great PR. You’ve been working hard at training, and it shows just what a committed, hardworking, dedicated swimmer you are. Well done.”
Doing a great practice session	“Great work at practice today.”	Aim to make everything you do in practice consistently the best it can be.	“That was an outstanding practice today. The way you hit those walls, the underwater kicking—your effort in everything was amazing. I can’t wait to see you race at your next meet.”

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- *People will forget what you do...*
- *But people never forget how you make them feel.*

Leadership isn't about what you say. It isn't about speeches and team talks. It isn't about making up signs and posters and running long, dull, boring team meetings.

It's about how you connect with the other swimmers on your team—listening to them, learning from them, sharing with them and making them feel respected, valued and important.

LEADERSHIP IN THE LANES

The purpose of leadership is to inspire change.

As a leader, you look, listen and learn from your team members as you aim to connect, engage and inspire them to change—to inspire them to change something that will help them to become better swimmers.

The key is to SAY and DO the right things at the right time and in the right way to help your team members FEEL positive and important—and in doing so, become motivated to change their training and racing behaviors. ❖

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SUMMARY

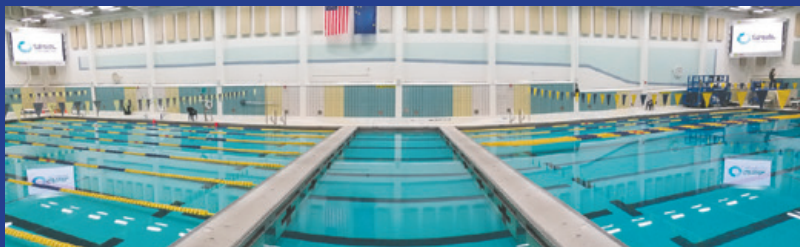
1. Anyone can lead. All it takes is a commitment to help other people be all they can be—and to achieve even more than they ever thought possible. Everyone loves to feel important and to feel that the people around them care about them. Leaders show genuine interest in the other members of their team. They want all the members of their team to succeed—as much or even more than the other swimmers want to succeed themselves.

2. You don't need to do a leadership training course or an education program about leadership to become a leader. Just look, listen and learn about the people you want to help, and then quietly, simply and subtly influence their attitudes and actions in ways that will help them realize their potential.

3. It's not about you! Too many people believe that leadership is about their own ability to speak in public, their ability to plan, their ability to motivate other people. It isn't about you—it's about them! It's about understanding the people you hope to lead and providing the environment and the opportunity for them to learn how to lead themselves. It's about showing them and inspiring them to make the decisions that will lead them to achieve the goals and the dreams they desire. It's showing them that it's their choices—not your leadership—that will help them to do remarkable, extraordinary things. Leading is serving! Remember: it's not about **ME**...it's about **WE**.

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