

## What is a coach developer and what do they do?

The role of the coach developer (CD) is a combination of training the trainer and mentoring, with a focus on supporting the coach on the job.

The CD's role is to provide ongoing support, advice and encouragement to the coach. The key focus is hands-on helping the coach with the art of coaching.

It requires a person with a certain set of skills. Supporting coaches will naturally look different for coaches of varying experience and knowledge, so the CD has to be flexible.

The CD will not only work to improve the quality of coaches in your club, but also improve retention of coaches. Coaches more confident of their abilities, getting more support around them and being part of something larger will generally be happier in their job, get more satisfaction out of it and may well want to come back again next season.

### Why do we need a coach developer?

If your club or association is like many others in Australia, you probably have at least some of the following issues:

- > trouble finding enough coaches each season
- > coaches don't last long enough, turnover is high
- > there are too few new coaches coming through to higher levels
- > it's hard to get people to do coaching courses
- > at the junior level, many coaches are well-meaning parents who do their best but may lack relevant knowledge or experience
- > coaches tend to use methods from when they were playing, and today's kids don't necessarily respond well to that approach.

These issues are not new, but changes in society mean that they are becoming more and more of a challenge. To meet that challenge requires new approaches. We also know more about how adults learn, and how they can become better coaches.

A mix of 'traditional' training for coaches, such as accreditation, with newer methods like online courses is valuable. But research tells us that the best results are likely to come from 'experiential' on-the-job learning. Coaches will generally get better at their role over time as they learn for themselves through trial and error. But they will improve more and faster with support. This is where the CD can help.

### What makes a good coach developer?

The CD has a vital, threefold role in any sport. A good CD will:

- > help coaches deliver sport in a way that participants enjoy and get more out of, leading to increased retention and recruitment
- > help coaches feel more comfortable and confident in their jobs, so they too enjoy the experience more and are more likely to stay in the sport
- > have a positive effect on the 'culture' of the club, making the sporting environment more welcoming and enjoyable.



An effective CD needs to have appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes. Knowledge may include a command of technical coaching matters and the coaching process, and understanding people and their motivations. Skills might include honesty, empathy, planning, goal setting, people and process management, and the ability to communicate to groups as well as one-on-one. Attitudes relate coaching philosophy and attitudes towards their club or association.

Critical qualities of a good CD are the 'soft skills':

- > cares about people's growth and development
- > able to create a positive culture and environment for learning
- > possesses good communication and feedback skills
- > has an ability to build rapport and work with others including those who are hard to engage
- > is trustworthy and able to maintain confidence
- > has patience
- > can provide honest feedback – positive and constructive
- > able to challenge and guide coaches
- > is respected and respectful
- > provides support and encouragement
- > can focus on the coaching process, not just on participant performance or winning
- > able to prevent or defuse conflict.

Some sports have established criteria for selecting CDs, while others are more flexible. In general, the following factors should be considered:

- > good communication and people skills
- > a willingness to be involved
- > experience and technical knowledge of the sport
- > an understanding of their role and the roles of the coaches they work with in the development of participants in the sport's pathways
- > integrity and willingness to model the values of the organisation
- > credibility within the club, based on coaching experience and qualifications
- > the ability to commit sufficient time
- > are readily accessible to the coaches they work with.