

Figure 1
The Gatherer Profile Guide

RESOURCE

Adult-Oriented Coaching Profile Guide

Based on your results for the five adult-oriented coaching practices, your most frequently used approach is “considering the individuality of your athletes”. Therefore, you are:

THE GATHERER

As **GATHERER**: A coach who collects or assembles information about their athletes in order to tailor their coaching approach based on athletes’ experiences and motives. A gatherer considers the individuality of their athletes in the planning, delivery, and reflection of training!

Although adult-oriented practices fluctuate throughout the season, as a **GATHERER**, you are someone who often considers the individuality of your athletes, you observe, ask, and gather ways to give individual attention to your athletes when it is called for and valued! Using the information that you gather, you individually assist athletes to develop their skills. When you consider athlete’s individuality in your planning, programming, organization, and delivery, you are acknowledging and celebrating their range and wealth of life experiences and readiness to learn and train. Take some time to think about what you are currently doing as a Gatherer, and the frequency that you’re considering the individuality of your athletes because what you are doing is working for your team at this point of the season!

Athlete perspective: Athletes really like it when you consider their individuality, as it helps them establish confidence and competence in their sport skills. This approach also creates a closer relationship and ensures that your actions match their behaviours. Not only that, but athletes think that the Gatherer supports their volition to be there and their personal control in learning. In other words, as the Gatherer, you are helping empower your athletes and provide validation to their sport participation.

If you don’t often consider the individuality of your athletes in the planning, delivery, and reflection of training, read this!

Adult-oriented practices can fluctuate throughout the season. If at this point in your season you do not often consider the individuality of your athletes in the planning, delivery, and reflection of training, but you’re interested in becoming a **Gatherer** more often, you could try asking your athletes about their past experiences in the sport (and in other relevant activities), thinking about their expertise in planning the sessions, and considering their goals when organizing the sessions.

Here are some examples of Gatherers who have done a great job considering the individuality of their athletes and can help aspiring coaches to better understand how they can increase the implementation of this approach:

Coach Caleb (Kayak)

Made his athletes’ prior experiences useful by individualizing his coaching for each adult athlete based on what they have been able to do in past experiences. Without contradicting MAs’ prior knowledge, Coach Caleb used MAs’ experiences to help them better understand techniques. Coach Caleb highlighted alternative ways to master skills, allowing MAs to recognize the value of their prior experiences. He explained that he asked his athletes: “Hey, can you explain to me what it is that you were working on and how you came to have that skill?” The athlete said, ‘Oh, a past coach told me to do it.’ And I’ll say, ‘All right. Do you know why?’ We’ll just have a dialogue.”

Coach Bethany (Swimming)

Motivated Masters swimmers to learn by considering what her adult swimmers wanted to accomplish when organizing their training. Coach Bethany varied training sessions to help increase Masters swimmers’ desire to practice because training catered to everyone in different ways and kept it fun. Coach Bethany shared: “I get really excited when I’m going to give them a good set. We actually have a lot of fun! And they work really hard. I make sure to have easy days as well, so that I’m not always push, push, push. And they keep coming back! We play water polo and will do unconventional swimming things, lots of sculling and vertical kicking, just variety, variety, variety. Just because they’re grown-ups, doesn’t mean they don’t want to have fun. I’ve got to keep it interesting.”

Coach Sailor (Dragon Boat)

Personalized athletes’ goal orientations by listening to her athletes’ comments about their past experiences to inform how she set up their training. Coach Sailor gathered information about what the adult dragon boaters wanted to cater to their interests in training. Coach Sailor noted: “There’s a wider range of reasons why adults are athletes. You’ve got to change your coaching style to the needs of the MAs and their experience, what they want to get out of it!”

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Based on your results for the five adult-oriented coaching practices, your most frequently used approach is “framing learning situations”. Therefore, you are:

THE INSPIRER

An **INSPIRER**: A coach who makes athletes feel that they want to do something and can do it. The Inspirer often frames learning situations to influence adults’ learning and kindle their goals and purpose in sport!

Although adult-oriented practices fluctuate throughout the season, as an **INSPIRER**, you often use learning conditions to help athletes discover what and why they are learning. You motivate athletes to want to learn by creating playful contests that ready them for competition. You explain how more advanced athletes learn and perform, talk about or show them how pros do it so that they can try it too and you relate training to analogies to make complex tasks easier to understand. You may also use performance assessments regularly as a tool for self-improvement, and set up competitive activities in training to give athletes a sense of play. Take some time to think about what you are currently doing as an Inspirer, the frequency that you’re framing learning situations for your athletes is working for your team at this point of the season!

Athlete perspective: Athletes really like it when you frame learning situations, as it gives them a sense of mastery, enjoyment, and empowerment through instructional approaches that support their competence. When they learn and develop, they grow in their sport and feel inspired as athletes, which is so important for adult sport participation! Coaches have found that when they provide intellectual stimulation for their athletes through analyzing performance assessments with their athletes (for example in debriefing video analysis or in examining Personal Best time improvements), this helped the athletes’ desire to improve and persist in training, increasing their commitment. In other words, as the Inspirer, you are helping to create situations wherein adults’ passion and desire for sport can skyrocket!

This is an example of how a coach inspires their athletes:

Masters Swimmer Mitchel

“Now that I’m here, I see he has this incredible loyalty to the swimmers. You see he really cares about the club and he puts a lot of effort into it, and so the swimmers are willing to go out of their way and willing to do a lot things”

If you don’t often frame learning situations to make adults feel inspired by what they are learning, read this!

Adult-oriented practices fluctuate throughout the season, if in future moments throughout your sport season you’re interested in framing learning situations more often for your athletes to feel inspired by what they are learning, there are practices you can do more often. You could try to help athletes learn by discovery, by analogies or watching the professionals, by providing them with examples of how they use what they learn in training and competition and support them in assessing their performance. Some coaches might feel like they don’t have enough time to provide questions and allow athletes to figure things out through doing. It is definitely more efficient to tell athletes exactly what to do. However, there are times when they can learn more deeply by working through the problems themselves and generally, athletes want you to include this approach once every practice. In the long run, it’s worth investing time in.

Here are some examples of coaches who have done a great job framing learning situations:

Coach Claire (Alpine Ski)

Gave her athletes something to think about on their way up the chair lift, and then they would discuss at the top. This way, athletes were challenged to come up with an answer on their own, and they were given some time to do so: “They liked that because it got them reflecting on their own movements” and “they seemed to smile and be very engaged with that kind of questioning approach.”

Coach Tom (Alpine Skiing)

When we went in, they watched the video of themselves as they just came down the steeper pitches doing short radius turns, and they were all very interested. I tried to give each of them a little piece of what they were working on, but [I] also talked to them about some positive things they were doing nicely.

Masters Swimmer Jay

Jay’s coach motivated him to cross-train to help with stress and wellbeing. Coaches seeking to understand how they can support their athletes not only in sport but also to concerns they face outside of sport may use this as an example to follow. Jay shared: “I’ve been swimming 4 days a week. And I’m not only swimming, I’ve been walking 18K a week, I’ve been doing yoga 3 times a week, and paddle-board too. Those were the coach’s suggestions! The coach has somehow helped me discover those parts of me that I didn’t know that I would enjoy so much ... I think in general it’s helping me cope with work and stress... I think having the coach and concentrating on my favorite sport is helping me be a better me.”

Figure 3
The Connector Profile Guide

RESOURCE

Adult-Oriented Coaching Profile Guide

Based on your results for the five adult-oriented coaching practices, your most frequently used approach is “imparting coaching knowledge”.

Therefore, you are:

THE CONNECTOR

A **CONNECTOR**: A coach who is relationship-focused in their approach to life, to people, and to business. They act and get results with ease because they have a level of credibility and trust in and from their network through their ability to create associations between people. The Connector shares relevant information from their experiences to better relate to their athletes and also help them level up!

Although adult-oriented practices fluctuate throughout the season, you are versed in this coaching practice! As a **CONNECTOR**, you’ve realized that adult athletes appreciate that you share about the knowledge and experiences you’ve acquired from your own athletic history and coach development for a specific purpose: to help your athletes improve. You likely provide information that you have learned, for example an app or website that you find useful, tips that you’ve received, or explanations of drills that have helped you to improve. Take some time to think about what you are currently doing as a Connector, the frequency that you’re imparting your coaching knowledge to your athletes, because this is working for your team at this point of the season!

Athlete perspective: Athletes want you to impart coaching knowledge because it is motivating and makes you relatable. While some coaches are concerned about putting the focus on themselves if they talk about themselves, athletes actually see this as openness, interest in connecting, and it helps them feel pride in the credibility of their coach: “I’m lucky to have an amazing coach who has lots of information to share!”. This rings true across age (from younger to older MAs), gender, sport, and competitive orientation!

If you don’t often share your coaching knowledge and experiences to better relate to athletes and help them level up, read this!

Adult-oriented practices fluctuate throughout the season, however, if you’re concerned that you shouldn’t be talking about yourself, and that it should be about the athletes, then realize that by imparting your coaching knowledge and experiences you will make athletes feel more comfortable with you to in turn tell you their knowledge and experiences. Relationships are a two-way street and divulging some information about you can go a long way to helping your athletes open up. If in future moments throughout your sport season you’re interested in imparting a bit more of your coaching knowledge you could try providing information that you learned more readily to your athletes, perhaps sharing a book you have read, tips you have received from a recent course, or something that you work on yourself.

Here are some examples of coaches who have done a great job imparting coaching knowledge:

Coach Valery (Alpine Skiing)

I’m not a person to talk about myself, but I intentionally went out of the way to tell them about some different times that I was in things, or whether I failed, or succeeded at it. I wanted them to understand that I struggled too, or I’m qualified to speak about this.

Coach Larry (Soccer)

I ask what would help them to hear, understand, learn, and apply the concepts on the field and now even feel more comfortable sharing experiences from my professional soccer career..

Masters Swimmer Mathew

I like the fact that my coach is a swimmer. And he’s a good swimmer. He has obviously, at some point, competitively swum. He will set a program and get in the water too. That makes a difference to me—between a coach that I never see swimming and a coach that swims—it gives me a different level of respect.

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Based on your results for the five adult-oriented coaching practices, your most frequently used approach is “respecting preferences”. Therefore, you are:

THE DIPLOMAT

A **DIPLOMAT**: Someone adept at the art of negotiating agreements bilaterally and multilaterally across a team, engaging in bidirectional dialogue, and cooperating with athletes and others in the sport environment. A Diplomat therefore respects their athletes’ preferences for effort, accountability, and feedback by being attentive and helping their MAs develop through a channel of individualized feedback!

Although adult-oriented practices fluctuate throughout the season, as a **DIPLOMAT**, you are someone who often respects your athletes’ preferences for effort, accountability, and feedback. You pay close attention to individual needs, give positive and constructive feedback, and challenge your MAs in ways that work for them. You help your MAs feel comfortable in the training environment by understanding when and how to give motivating feedback depending on the nature of their individual and personal goals. You often adapt your approach by considering how each athlete wishes to be held accountable for working hard and giving effort (or not!), and how (and whether) they wish to receive feedback at practice. Take some time to think about what you are currently doing as a Diplomat, the frequency that you’re respecting athletes’ preferences for effort, accountability, and feedback is working for your team at this point of the season!

Athlete perspective: Athletes really like it when you respect their preferences for effort, accountability and feedback every practice. They feel close to coaches who are Diplomats because the trust and respect is mutual. They also think that Diplomat coaches match their interests and motives. When coaches show effort and integrity in their practice plans, the athletes respond with accountability. The Diplomat coach also supports athletes’ basic psychological needs for autonomy. In other words, as the Diplomat, you are helping to give athletes more choices in practice, important for adult learners!

If you don’t often respect athletes’ preferences for effort, accountability, and feedback through a channel of individualized feedback, read this!

Adult-oriented practices fluctuate throughout the season, if in future moments throughout your sport season you’re interested in respecting preferences for effort, accountability, and feedback more often for your athletes you could try spending some time finding out how your athletes like to be pushed/not pushed, what will help them to feel committed to the sport (and practicing sport), and what kind of feedback they like to receive. You might feel like there’s just not enough time to provide individual feedback to all your athletes all the time, especially not if you’re also participating as an athlete at times (e.g., in competition). But, keep in mind that research has shown that it’s not about giving lots of feedback to everyone all the time, it’s about selecting when, how, and to whom to give feedback strategically based on their interests and motivations. Some coaches have said it’s harder to coach adults because, while you need the technical skills of the sport, you really need to have people skills to know how to engage with each person differently (e.g., some with more active authoritative coaching, others more passive or discovery-based).

Here are some examples of coaches who have done a great job respecting athletes’ preferences:

Coach Bennett (Rowing)

Considered how each athlete wished to be pushed during practice. Coach Bennett empowered her adult rowers, while still guiding them to a solution that she believed was sound. When she got MAs to do a drill, Coach Bennett shared: “I monitor for effort, but not attendance. Rowing is always a side part of adult’s real lives, and they’ve got families and grandkids, and medical issues, and all kinds of personal stuff going on. So, I’ve never stepped in and been very forceful and I don’t think I should be.”

Coach Laurie (Swimming)

Respected athletes mature self-concepts by considering their preferences for being held responsible for working hard. Coach Laurie shared, “They’re adults so I’m not sure ‘stern’ is the word I would use. I’d say ‘diplomatic’, that’s what I try to do is be diplomatic! I will move swimmers [fast or slow swimmers] into other lanes. Some coaches let the swimmers resolve it, but swimmers want the coach to deal with it.”

Coach Julia (Basketball)

Supported athletes’ motivation to learn by taking measures to better understand what each athlete wanted in terms of coaching feedback. She was conscious to orient her feedback in ways that would enhance athletes’ self-efficacy. Coach Julia shared, “With Masters, I don’t want to discourage them. So, I find out what they’re working on, and I’ll let them know that I could tell what they were working on. I had a whole athletic career of being criticized and the reality is that constructive criticism or applause feels really good. So, I praise their efforts!”

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Based on your results for the five adult-oriented coaching practices, your most frequently used approach is “creating personalized programming”. Therefore, you are:

THE TAILOR

A **TAILOR**: Someone who can organize and manage an individual practice plan or season-long program to meet the needs of individual athletes, making it suitable for a particular person or purpose by changing the details as needed. A Tailor will create and adapt personalized programming for athletes to enjoy their sport experiences by feeling more confident and competent!

Although adult-oriented practices fluctuate throughout the season, as a **TAILOR**, you are someone who often creates personalized programming. You consider your athletes’ schedules and interests when you schedule practices, you take into account their obligations and goals when creating season-long programming, and you support them towards (and at) competitions. You ready athletes by creating quality program-level training that is realistic based on where athletes are, to best accommodate gradual improvement. Take some time to think about what you are currently doing as a Tailor, the frequency that you’re creating personalized programming for your athletes is working for your team at this point of the season!

Athlete perspective: Athletes really like it when you create personalized programming. In particular, athletes like when you work on practice plans because it develops their commitment to your coaching. A Tailor will create and adjust personalized programming for athletes to promote enjoyment by building athletes’ progress through the sport season, leading athletes to feel more confident and competent. Therefore, this adult-oriented approach, while under-appreciated by some, is an ace in your pocket!

If you don’t often create and adapt personalized programming for athletes to enjoy their sport experiences, read this!

Adult-oriented practices fluctuate throughout the season, if in future moments throughout your sport season you’re interested in creating personalized programming more often for your athletes you could try paying attention to your athletes’ abilities in relation to season-long goals, considering their other obligations outside of sport, creating a season-long plan and letting them know it, and supporting them to go to competitions or to see their improvement as ‘competition with oneself’. You may also trouble shoot on the spot to accommodate changes in the program. Keep in mind that programming for adult groups can be difficult because adults have different obligations that may make them miss training. You can try to provide training/workouts for athletes to complete on their own time to keep up to the group (e.g., through a social media post or emailing them the week’s plan in advance). Some coaches think it is not important to think through the progression of training for adults, as any training will be good enough, but adults are still learning, improving, and gaining value from personalized programs that support their quality sport experiences.

Here are some examples of coaches who have done a great job creating personalized programming:

Masters Swimmer Carter

Explained how his coach, Wendy personalized programming for him by paying attention to progress relative to season-long plans. Carter shared: “I’m trying to swim more 200’s and 400’s and I just kind of die out three quarters of the way through. So, Wendy says, ‘Well, do it like this: break it up into four 100’s and then give yourself 30 seconds between each one. Okay. Now give yourself 20 seconds between each one.’ Slowly I’m building up my ability to do the 400 so it’s a neat way of breaking it down that I hadn’t thought of myself . . . It helps me because then I can stop at a certain level, do that for a little while until I feel better, and move up again. When I do it myself, I just swim as fast as I can for the 400 m and then I’ll say ‘damn it! I can’t do this!’ She’s got a structured way to break it down to help me.”

Coach Sandra (Bowls)

“The athletes can really pick and choose their practices. While that’s great for the athletes’ flexibility, it’s not so great [for yearly planning]. It very difficult because I don’t know what people have done. They’ve had another coach throughout the week. And I will have to adjust.”

Masters Athletics, Gemma

Described how coaches point out aspects of the competitive schedule and how they have tailored long-term programming for her specifically: “I wouldn’t have thought my body would respond well to a half hour warm-up and then some extra sprints. I thought it would tire me out. To be told that’s the right way to do it, and to see it work—I needed the coach to do that. It’s the same thing with cool downs, without that being drilled into you, how important it is, I probably wouldn’t do it. When you’re doing multiple events in the same day, it’s so important, that recovery point. So managing a long day with warm-ups, cool downs and a certain amount of food and fluids, is not something you do very often. And having that mapped out for you by the coach has helped out at competition.”