Overview

The pairing of a business consultant with a Division I head coach may seem unusual, but management consulting has many lessons to bring to coaching. Conversations between friends connected by their love of volleyball developed into innovative ideas about how coaches can run the “business” component of their program, stay connected with their players, and elevate their team’s success. Over the past five years, the authors have worked together to bring select concepts and tools from the world of business into the University of Utah’s volleyball program. We have presented our approach to numerous coaches' groups, and, based on the positive feedback from coaches at all levels, we have decided to collect these concepts and tools into this book.

Many coaches share a similar career trajectory. They started as players, entered coaching as a volunteer assistant coach or as a director of operations, earned promotion to assistant coach, and, eventually, were hired into a head coaching role. What they learned along the way depended on who they had to learn from. If they were fortunate to learn from great thinkers and communicators, they were well prepared when their turn came to run a program. If they had less capable teachers, they had to learn by trial and error and by developing on their own their approach to managing a program.

But no matter how effective the coaches they trained under, they learned lessons from inside the world of their sport. Because of this, many coaches have similar bodies of knowledge. A given coach may be better or worse than their competition, but they are all drawing from the same storehouse of ideas.
Winning as a coach requires incorporating ideas wherever you can find them and blending those which make sense to you into your program to make it more effective and more efficient. If you can access relevant ideas and tools from outside of coaching (whether from business, politics, healthcare, charity, volunteer work, or other fields), you will provide yourself with lasting competitive advantages. You will need to carefully sift and tailor the outside ideas to make sure they are relevant to coaching in general and to your program in particular, but you will find many that can help improve your program in both the short and long term and that will provide depth to the experience for yourself, your staff, and your players.

This book will address questions such as:

- What does it take to design a program to win consistently, year after year?
- How can you set high expectations so you realize full value from your star performers and deal appropriately with your “C” performers?
- How can you ensure you delegate properly so the right work gets done by the right people at the right level?
- How should you manage and develop a staff that will deliver results and that will free up the head coach to do the things only they can do?
- How should you optimize staff interactions on both short-term tasks and longer-term projects?
- How can you assess your player’s capabilities, growth, and eventual ceilings so you can plan to fill any gaps and leverage particular strengths?
- How can you look ahead and make sure your program is prepared for the future rather than being stuck in the past?
- How can you lead a program remotely during a crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and afterward when things have evolved into a new normal?

To validate the concepts in this book, the authors have interviewed a dozen top coaches in both men’s and women’s sports. These interviews include John Dunning (five NCAA volleyball national championships), Tara VanDerveer (two NCAA basketball national championships and one Olympic championship), and
Karch Kiraly (head coach of the United States women's national volleyball team and three-time Olympic gold medalist as an athlete). The insights and quotes from these luminaries run throughout the book. We also interviewed four business CEOs to provide ideas from their organizations that are relevant to leading athletic organizations. Their comments are used throughout the book and add richness from beyond the normal boundaries of athletics.

This is a book for coaches, administrators, and staff in all sports. It will describe approaches and strategies to design programs that will not just compete but will win at a high level year after year. Because athletics is seen as the gold standard for developing organizations with passion and commitment, the book will also interest those from outside the world of sports.

Beth Launiere and Leo Hopf

About Beth Launiere:

Beth Launiere enters her 31st season at the helm of the University of Utah volleyball program in 2020 and is coming off one of the most successful seasons in the program’s history.

Launiere was named the Pac-12 Coach of the Year in 2019 after leading Utah to a 24-10 record and the program’s fourth Sweet 16 appearance in program history (two in the last three years), with four players named to the All-American team. Along with earning her first Pac-12 Coach of the Year honor, she also was named the AVCA West Region Coach of the Year for the fourth time (2001, ’06, ’08, ’19) and MWC Coach of the Year three times (2004, ’06, ’08).

Beth is a past president of the American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA). She has also coached in the USA National Team program for the past 11 years.
About Leo Hopf:

First and foremost, Leo is a volleyball fan. He connected with Beth and her team through fan club events. He and his wife joined Beth and her team for a two-week European tour, during which they began the conversations which led to this book.

Leo Hopf is the co-author of *Rethink, Reinvent, Reposition: 12 Strategies to Renew Your Business and Boost Your Bottom Line*, which was named the book of the month in July 2010 by the Institute for Management Studies. He has led strategy efforts in 15 countries across 40 different industries. He earned a Master of Business Administration degree with highest distinction from the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth and has bachelor's degrees in chemical engineering and in metallurgical engineering from the University of Minnesota. He has led hundreds of strategy sessions with CEOs, leadership teams, and boards of directors, and he designed the decision-making and strategic-planning processes for five of the Fortune 100 largest companies.