

Skills and attributes of a successful high school Athletic Director

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Abstract 321**

Throughout the last century, high school athletic program participation and influence has steadily grown within the educational atmosphere (Stier & Schneider 2001, Bucher & Krotee, 1998). At the turn of the century, this presence has surged as national coverage via media outlets such as ESPN, ABC, and USA Today have created additional attention and interest. It is anticipated that there will be continued growth of high school athletics creating an even greater demand for those who coach, officiate, and administer sport at the high school level.

The expansive growth in high school sport over the past century was enhanced significantly in the 1960s when most high schools with larger enrollments placed individuals in charge of athletics at each school. These individuals were frequently called athletic directors (Keller & Forsythe, 1984). As the position of athletic director developed, many who filled this position did so based on their status at the high school. It was not unusual for a popular or successful coach to be assigned or hired as the athletic director (Stier & Schneider 2001). As the position was refined, Stier (1985) explained that these positions needed to be filled by someone who had the formal training in the management and administration of competitive sports programs. Today these roles are more challenging than at any time in the past (Copeland & Kirsch, 1995; Hoch 2000c; Judd, 1995; Kjeldsen, Erik, 1992; Williams & Miller, 1983). The modern day athletic director manages every aspect of the program and is responsible for providing direction and leadership (Stier, 1999a).

The purpose of this study was to develop a construct of qualities, attributes, characteristics, talents, accomplishments, knowledge, education, and experiences that an individual should possess in order to obtain and excel in the position of high school athletic director. To this end, an adapted version of a survey utilized within the benchmark research conducted on high school athletic director perceptions by Stier & Schneider (2001) was utilized. The survey was submitted to athletic directors and principals within the Ohio High School Athletic Association and included rural and suburban high schools. The survey rate of return was 41%.

While the results revealed a high level of agreement between the athletic directors and principals, there were a few differences that are valuable to understand and will be discussed in detail. Based upon data analysis, a high school athletic director construct was developed. Three key elements of the construct are as follows:

1. Solid moral character was the most important attribute for an athletic director to possess.
2. Knowledge of the rules, regulations and laws that pertain to high school athletics was critical.
3. The ability to build and maintain relationships through effective communication skills was a third essential skill set.

This presentation will not only further discuss the results of the current study, it will also compare previous benchmark data (Stier & Schneider, 2001) and the implications that the new conclusions have on the way sport is managed. Furthermore, recommendations and strategies for those who aspire to work in athletics at the high school level will be addressed. Possessing the proper attributes will allow for success as high school athletics continues to share the national spotlight.