

The Interview Process

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Where This Information Comes From

- ❑ Running ASCA's Job Service for 23 years
 - ❑ Listening to Employers
 - ❑ Listening to Coaches

- ❑ Reading countless articles in newspapers, magazines, and on the internet.

- ❑ Reading hundreds of cover letters and resumes, and interviewing dozens of applicants for jobs here at the ASCA office.

Order of Events for Today

The “Interview Process” begins before you apply for a job!

- 1) Looking for a Job
- 2) Learning About the Job
- 3) Do You Match Up with the Job?
- 4) Applying for the Job
- 5) The Cover Letter
- 6) The Resume
- 7) Preparing for the Interview
- 8) The Telephone Interview
- 9) The In-Person Interview
- 10) Final Notes

Looking for a Job – Part 1 of 3

- Know what you are looking for
 - What is your career path?
 - Is apprenticeship important to you?
 - Assistant coach or head coach?
 - Big club or small club?
 - Elite level swimming or something less?
 - Amount of authority and responsibility
 - Where do you want to live? (does it matter?)
 - Big city or little town? North, East, South, West?

- Know your strengths and weaknesses
 - Weaknesses are stepping stones to strengths

Looking for a Job – Part 2 of 3

- ❑ Know your coaching philosophy
 - ❑ Pick a topic, write about it on less than a half of page

- ❑ Where to find a job:
 - ❑ Check the ASCA Job Service web page
 - ❑ www.swimmingcoach.org/jobservice/jscurrent.asp
 - ❑ Check LSC Web Pages
 - ❑ Make phone calls

- ❑ Prepare your “ready to be customized” cover letter
- ❑ Prepare your “ready to be customized” resume

Looking for a Job – Part 3 of 3

- ❑ The number one complaint from Board of Directors about coaches is poor communication skills.
- ❑ If you nail this in writing, personal appearance, and verbal communication with your resume, cover letter, and interviews you have taken a big step.
 - ❑ Verbal Communication includes LISTENING SKILLS.

Learning About the Job, 1 of 2

- ❑ Contact the previous coach

- ❑ Talk to other area coaches

- ❑ Look at their web page
 - ❑ Coaches listed
 - ❑ Pool locations
 - ❑ General sense of organization

- ❑ Look at the USA Swimming's VCC

Learning About the Job, 2 of 2

- Why did the last coach leave?
- Do they want “just a coach” or someone who is also a manager?
- Are they looking for development of top level swimmers and if so, do they have an idea of what it takes?
- What is the pool situation and practice hours?

Do you match up with this job?

- Do not ever beg for a job you are not matched up with nor take a job from beggars who will accept anyone.

- What compromises are you willing to live with now... and 12 months from now?

- Write, to clarify your thinking.
 - This forms the basis of a cover letter.

- Know how much money you need to make and what benefits are important to you.

Applying for the Job, 1 of 2

- Follow instructions!
- Most employers request materials by email
- Your cover letter and resume should be 2 separate attachments, NOT part of the main email body

Applying for the Job, 2 of 2

- ❑ Do NOT send a scanned cover letter or resume. Send an original document.
 - ❑ A .pdf file is recommended.

- ❑ Read the ad – apply for the WHOLE JOB
 - ❑ Does your Immediate Career Objective match what the club is looking for?

Cover Letters, Part 1 of 3

- ❑ NEVER apply for a job without a cover letter addressed to a person
- ❑ It introduces you as a human being
- ❑ It draws attention to your resume and points out the relevant experience

Cover Letters, Part 2 of 3

- ❑ It explains why you are applying for the job
 - ❑ Avoid overused clichés and stupid language that literally says “I’m the best person for the job.”
 - ❑ Be emotional
 - ❑ “I love to work with age group swimmers.”
 - ❑ “I really like the values and the work ethic of the Mid-West”
 - ❑ “Developing a program into an LSC Championship contender really excites me.”
 - ❑ Be specific to the job -- NO GENERIC Cover letters.
 - ❑ If you are “overqualified” explain why you are interested in this job.
 - ❑ “I find tremendous satisfaction in building a club and working at first with swimmers at all levels.”

Cover Letters, Part 3 of 3

- ❑ If you have a really good reference, put it here. One only.
 - ❑ Other references go on a separate sheet.

- ❑ ½ to ¾ page max. 12 font, 1 inch margins. White space.

- ❑ Read What Color is Your Parachute by Richard Nelson Bolles.

Resumes, 1 of 2

- ❑ While the cover letter is human and emotional, the resume is factual. (...not that the cover letter isn't!)
- ❑ Accuracy, neatness, and spelling are important.
 - ❑ Actually, they are CRITICAL. Accuracy means honesty
- ❑ One page is very good. 2 is OK. 3 is definitely out!
 - ❑ Do not cover every inch of the resume with ink

Resumes, 2 of 2

❑ Order of topics in the Resume:

- ❑ Name, address, phone, email at the top
- ❑ Immediate Career Objective – MATCHES the job you are applying for
- ❑ Long term Career Objective – what is the connection?
- ❑ Employment history, most recent first. In ONE sentence summarize your most significant achievement. *
- ❑ Education. Limit to college degree(s)
- ❑ Personal Swimming Background
- ❑ Certifications
- ❑ Awards

* Since coaches are quite “accomplished” and like to list every qualifier, every ranking, etc., a separate attachment may be appropriate. Title it something like “Accomplishment Details”

Preparing for the Interview, Part 1 of 2

- Preparing means
 - thinking
 - researching
 - writing
 - practicing
- Have a prepared opening statement that includes:
 - thanks
 - excitement
 - why you are so interested in this job?
- Be prepared for situational questions
- Be prepared to be “put to work”

Preparing for the Interview, Part 2 of 2

- ❑ Be prepared to interview the interviewers
 - ❑ See download for list of questions you ask them
- ❑ Prepare your contract and take it with you!
 - ❑ And be prepared to discuss
- ❑ Be prepared to articulate your goals.
- ❑ Be prepared for “Is there anything else you would like to tell us?”
- ❑ Be prepared if they offer you the job on the spot.
 - ❑ Recommendation is NOT to accept immediately, but to ask for 24 hours and then... only upon acceptance of the contract.
- ❑ Practice!
 - ❑ See list of questions they are likely to ask you available as a download

The Phone Interview, Part 1 of 6

- Have with you...
 - Resume, cover letter, copy of their ad, notepad and pen
 - Your written List of your strengths and weaknesses
 - Why you are interested in the job, written.
 - Your questions for them, written
- Take the call in a private, closed room
- Turn your mobile phone OFF.
- No distractions, use a land line.
 - Preferably one with a speaker phone.

The Phone Interview, Part 2 of 6

- No food, no gum
- Have water for a dry throat (sip away from the phone receiver)
- Consider a headset
- Get everyone's first and last names. Write them down but refer to them as Mr. or Mrs.

The Phone Interview, Part 3 of 6

- ❑ Your telephone “brightness” is all they can “see”.
 - ❑ They need to “see” your posture
 - ❑ Sit on the edge of your chair, as though you are interviewing in person.

- ❑ Speak clearly.
 - ❑ Use a strong but not overpowering voice.
 - ❑ Change tone and inflection.
 - ❑ Show life and enthusiasm.

The Phone Interview, Part 4 of 6

- ❑ No sarcasm, no jokes

- ❑ Humble confidence
 - ❑ Express a conviction for what works but an openness for new or different ideas.

- ❑ In your answers use “our” and “we” with a scattering of “I”
 - ❑ “I” shows ownership and responsibility while “our” and “we” expresses community, staff, team.

The Phone Interview, Part 5 of 6

- ❑ Express long term ambitions
- ❑ No guilt or regrets from past: a victor, not a victim
- ❑ Answer questions directly. Give the bottom line first.
 - ❑ Good interviewers ask follow-up questions but parents are rarely good interviewers.
 - ❑ Offer to explain further, if not asked to.

The Phone Interview, Part 6 of 6

- Avoid interrupting the flow with questions – save for the end.
- Ask what their timeline is.
 - When can you expect a follow-up call.
- Thank everyone by name and follow-up with a thank you note.

The Interview, Part 1 of 4

- ❑ Follow all the same rules as with telephone interviews
- ❑ Be 15 minutes early, not more, not less.
- ❑ Leave your mobile phone in the car.
- ❑ Attire? Casual, Business Casual, or Business Formal?
 - ❑ Avoid “I am who I am.”
 - ❑ Dress respectfully, Generally the higher end of business casual
 - ❑ Believe it or not, you are often judged by your shoes.

The Interview, Part 2 of 4

- ❑ Warm your hands to shake hands

- ❑ If offered something to drink, ask for water. Hold in left hand.

- ❑ Body language
 - ❑ Confident, respectful, open.

- ❑ Don't be afraid of rephrasing a question in order to understand it clearly.

- ❑ Worth Repeating: “humble confidence”

The Interview, Part 3 of 4

- ❑ Beware of the “informal” interview
- ❑ Eye contact and enthusiasm
- ❑ Say nothing negative about anyone, even when “encouraged” to
- ❑ Don’t fudge it and never lie or take credit for something you did not do.
- ❑ Never say you know someone unless you really do.

The Interview, Part 3 of 4

- ❑ Looking down for a moment in thoughtful repose before answering a difficult question shows them... just that: you think before you answer.
- ❑ Save questions about compensation and benefits until last.
- ❑ Wrap it up with a final statement that is prepared in advance.
- ❑ Follow up immediately with thank you notes or email.

Final Thoughts

Don't wing it!
Preparation and Practice
are the recurring themes of this presentation.

Thanks for Listening!
Guy Edson



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Interviewing a Coach

Thoughts for the Employer

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1. Before the interview process the Board of Directors should meet to discuss what you want in a coach and to also know the direction the club wants to go in with a new coach. Put this information in writing. List the qualities you are looking for in a coach. Think about good coaches and bad coaches you have had in the past. Also, what is the philosophy of the club? Are you a Feeder program? Participation oriented? Olympic preparation? Senior oriented or Age Group oriented? Are you looking for someone to “just coach” or are you looking for someone to also manage many of the day to day operations of the program? Are you looking for a director of the staff with authority and responsibility for development of the staff, or are you looking for someone to just be part of the staff that is fully directed by the board? ASCA has a list of coach’s responsibilities and authorities that can be used as a guide.

Then seek the coach who matches what you want. This sounds simple, but too many clubs beg for a coach, see only the good, and later find that there has been a mismatch. Be careful on compromising principles or philosophies.

2. The interview committee should be three to five people in size and must include the Board President. The Board President is the person the coach directly reports to so there must be a match between these personalities. If possible, the person most likely to become the next Board President should also be on the committee. An age group parent and a senior parent should also be on the committee. Search the team roster for a member with corporate experience in the hiring process to also place on the committee. If possible, all people on the committee should have a business background and be familiar with the hiring process.

3. Meet before the interview to construct common questions that will be asked of all candidates. Agree on the answers you are looking for.

4. Ask questions that don’t give away the answers. For example, don’t ask, “How often do you evaluate your assistant coaches?” Or, don’t ask, “How do you evaluate your assistant coaches?” These questions indicate that you think the coach should evaluate his staff. Most coaches don’t evaluate their staff but when they hear this question, they will figure out that you think it is important and they will answer accordingly. It would be better to ask a more open question such as, “How do you develop your staff?” This is called a primary question that will open the door to secondary and tertiary questions. ALWAYS ask the secondary and tertiary questions. As a Board member I would want to know that the coach is interested in supervising (observing) the staff, conducting staff meetings for communication and training, and formally evaluating coaches based on written job descriptions. If a candidate says, “I like to observe the coaches working with their groups.” My secondary question is, “What kinds of things are you looking for?” My tertiary question is, “When you see something you don’t like, how and when do you address that with the coach?”

5. Ask situational questions. “During the final relays at an important meet, one of the parents grabs your shoulder and shouts, ‘You didn’t put my daughter on the relay. Why not?’ What do you do?” Why would you do it that way? What would you do to prevent that scene in the future?”

6. Don’t overemphasize the technical skills. Most coaches who are fired or forced to resign get themselves in that position for reasons that have nothing to do with their technical skills and most often have everything to do with their people skills. The interview process should be more directed to discovering the coaches ability to work with the staff, the Board of Directors, and the parents.

7. When you ask questions about technique, look for the coach's passion, forethought, lack of defensiveness, knowledge, humbleness, and commitment in his answer, more so than the specific answer. There are so many ways to coach successfully that it is not known what are the absolute correct ways. Avoid placing people on the interview committee who think they know the absolute correct way to teach a stroke or design a workout for a senior national level swimmer. It is fair to ask technical questions, and it is right to judge how they answer the question, but it is a mistake to dismiss the answer because it doesn't fit your understanding of the sport.

8. Expect to be interviewed. A mature coach who is not begging for a job will want to know everything they can about you. Welcome their questions and directly answer their questions. It is fair, and very revealing to follow-up your answers with, "May I ask you why you asked that question?" or "It sounds like you have had an experience with that issue, could you tell us about that?"

9. Get additional help. Check out the bookstore or the internet for references on the interview process. My favorite resource is a CareerTrack Publication entitled "How to Interview and Hire the Right People." This workbook is short, simple, and invaluable. It gives example questions to discover the candidate's adaptability, competence, experience, manageability, interpersonal skills, attitude, initiative, maturity, stability, emotional control, integrity, and values. CareerTrack: 1-800-334-1018, item number 30073, \$9.95.

Putting The Candidate To Work

An Interviewing Tip for the Employer

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Here is a suggestion for a final question when you get to your finalists.

"Given what you have learned about our program, what goals would you set and how would you move the team in that direction? Imagine that you have full authority for any and all changes."

This is called "putting the candidate to work" and is based on an article that came across my desk last week.

Keys:

1. Is the candidate ready with ideas or hasn't he thought about it?
 2. How specific are their goals? Are they quantifiable and timed?
 3. What areas do the goals cover? Are the goals competitive oriented only? Or growth oriented? Or program oriented? Is there balance between all aspects of the club? Do they have a grasp of the larger picture? Do their goals match the Board's stated goals?
 4. Does the candidate show a command of the staff?
 5. Does the candidate show wise and responsible use of their imagined full authority?
 6. Does the candidate show the ability to have a vision while keeping one foot in the current reality.
 7. All goals boil down eventually to financial issues. Does the candidate address financial considerations?
 8. Does the candidate indicate a process for organizing tasks?
 9. Does the candidate indicate a process for delegation?
 10. Does the candidate indicate a process and timeline for evaluation and reporting?
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THE COACHING INTERVIEW

BEST PRACTICES

By ASCA Director John Leonard

Good beginnings and good process usually mean good results. When a club is looking to hire a new coach, be it for the Head Coach Position, or an assistant position, quality preparation for the interview process will give all candidates a good opportunity to show their strengths and discuss what they can bring to the program.

Asking quality questions of the coach is an important part of this process. A good interview process does several things:

1. Allows the interviewed coach to present a coherent picture of what they are looking for in a position.
2. Allows the club to provide a clear picture of what its goals and objectives are, and what it is looking for in a head coach.
3. Allows for a “discussion period” when both parties can freely explore questions and unexpected opportunities.

Generally, a format for the interview would first have the club discussing its history, current situation and expected needs. Following this, the coach might make a presentation of his history, current situation and what they are looking for in a new position. Finally, both parties should fully explore important questions that have arisen during the process.

Open ended questions typically are most comfortable and most educational for both parties. Here are ten sample questions that, if not covered during the early presentations, should be asked directly of the coach during the question period.

1. What are your Coaching goals? What do you see yourself doing in 5-10 years?
2. What are your personal strengths and weaknesses, and how do they enter into your response to the first question?
3. In our team we have “x” number of training groups. How would you develop and maintain a sense of “team” among our “Y” number of swimmers?
4. What do you see as the key elements in maintaining an effective Coach/Board relationship?
5. Staff continuity and improvement are key to any program. How do you develop your assistant coaches and what do you expect from them? What qualities do you look for when hiring assistant coaches?
6. Describe the transition from age group to senior swimming and how you accomplish this critical task?
7. We believe that all swimmers should value their personal achievements regardless of whether they are top swimmers or less talented. How would you go about reinforcing and focusing on this goal?
8. Describe your philosophy with regards to the competing items of family, school, and swimming. What priorities do you espouse, and why?
9. If you were not a swimming coach, what would you do for a living?
10. High school swimming is important here. How do you see the best relationship between High School swimming and club swimming being implemented?

INTERVIEWING FOR A NEW CLUB COACHING JOB

A Guide for Club Coaches

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When interviewing for a new job it is important that you have the attitude that you are interviewing the club as well as being interviewed by the club. Here is a list of questions that can help you find out what you need to know about a position.

Many of these questions can be answered by good research BEFORE the interview.

This is meant as a shopping list of questions and it is not intended that a coach should use all these questions. Choose carefully.

General Questions About the Team:

1. How many swimmers on the team?
2. What is the age group distribution?
3. How many workout groups are there?
4. How many assistant coaches are currently on staff?
5. What is the competitive record?
 - How many Junior and Senior national qualifiers are there currently in the program?
 - How many in recent history?
 - Are there any age group top sixteen swimmers?
 - How has the team placed at the local junior Olympics?
6. What is the team travel history?
7. What are the membership fees?
8. Is there a team office?
9. Is there a paid team secretary?
10. Is there a private meeting room available for team and individual meetings?
11. How much has the team budget expanded by over the past 3 years?
12. What is the size of the pool(s)?
13. Who manages the pool(s)?
14. Where are the pools located?
15. What are the pool hours available?
16. Are the hours shared with any other programs?
17. What has been the history of family involvement?

Questions about Coach and Program Stability:

1. How many head coaches have been with the program in the last 5 years?
2. Why did they leave?
3. Who evaluates the coach?
4. Is there a written procedure for evaluating the coach?
5. Is the evaluation written?

6. How often is the coach evaluated?
7. Has the Board of Directors devised long range plans and short term objectives for the program?
8. Does the Board of Directors engage in a regular review of objectives and strategies?
9. Is the coach a member of the planning committee?
10. What is the extent of Board initiated and parent run fund raising?
11. Is pool use secured by written contract?
12. Is it a multi-year contract?

Questions about Coach Authority and Responsibility:

1. Is the coach a voting member of the board?
2. Does the coach have sole authority in matters pertaining to the conduct of the swimming program such as practice times, groups, coaching assignments, meet and event selection, season planning, discipline?
3. Is the coach the Chief Executive Officer of the organization?
4. Is the coach allowed a sense of "ownership" of the program?
5. Is the coach a permanent member of the nomination committee?
6. What is the budget process?
7. Is the coach a major part of the budget process?
8. Does the coach have purchase and travel authority within the confines of the approved budget?
9. Does the coach have sole authority for hiring, firing, supervising, training and changing all swim staff?
10. Does the club expect the coach to work with all the swimmers in workouts and at meets?
11. What are the expectations of the Board concerning the coach's relationship with the entire team?
12. What club's attitude about sending the coach and a small number of elite swimmers to special training or competitive opportunities such as training camps, altitude training, or major regional and national meets?

Questions about Compensation and Benefits:

1. What is the base salary?
2. Is major medical provided for the family?
3. What is the deductible?
4. Is dental insurance provided?
5. Is life insurance provided?
6. Is liability insurance above and beyond normal coverage provided?
7. Is the contract a single year, rolling, or multi-year?
8. Is the contract a no cut contract, meaning that if you are fired, you are paid for the duration of the contract?
9. What expenses are paid for swim meets?
10. Are expenses paid per diem or actual expenses?
11. Does the club pay for membership in USA Swimming and ASCA?
12. Does the club pay for required safety courses?
13. Does the club pay for travel, hotel and per diem expenses to the ASCA World Clinic?
14. Does the club pay for expenses for other clinics and seminars?
15. Does the club pay for subscriptions to professional periodicals?
16. Does the club provide at least 2 weeks of paid vacation?
17. Does the club allow for occasional personal days?
18. Is there an incentive opportunity based on team numbers?
19. Is there an incentive opportunity based on special projects such as a SwimAmerica learn to swim program or a triathlete's swim clinic?
20. Is there an incentive opportunity based on special fund raising projects initiated and run by the coach?
21. Is there an incentive opportunity based on the competitive performance of the team?

22. What percent of the total budget is the coaching salaries and expenses?
23. Does the club send the coach to at least one junior or senior national meet each year even if no swimmers qualify?
24. What are the extent of moving costs that the club will reimburse?
25. What does the club feel about allowing the coach a short sabbatical leave after 4 years?
26. When it comes to salary negotiation time, what about a bonus for renewing the contract or staying with the club for a certain number of years?
27. Does the club respect the coaches right to private time with his family?

Consider saving your questions about compensation and benefits until last, rather than first. The most important part of an interview may be to first find out if you are compatible with the organization and it with you. Then, ask about compensation and benefits after you know that you are genuinely interested in the club and the club is genuinely interested in you.

In addition to interviewing the search committee you should also attempt to speak with team families, team swimmers, Master swimmers, municipal parks and recreation officials, high school and area college coaches, pool administrators, community leaders, current staff, and former staff.

Dress, attitude, manners, and respect are always important. Visit job search web sites for advice on how to handle yourself at an interview. www.monster.com is one resource.

If the expenses for a potential interview are great and a club is hesitant to bring you in for an interview, consider offering to split expenses if, and only if, you are one of the top two candidates. Agree with the club to reimburse your full expenses if you are hired for the position. Be creative and be willing to compromise if it is a good job opportunity.