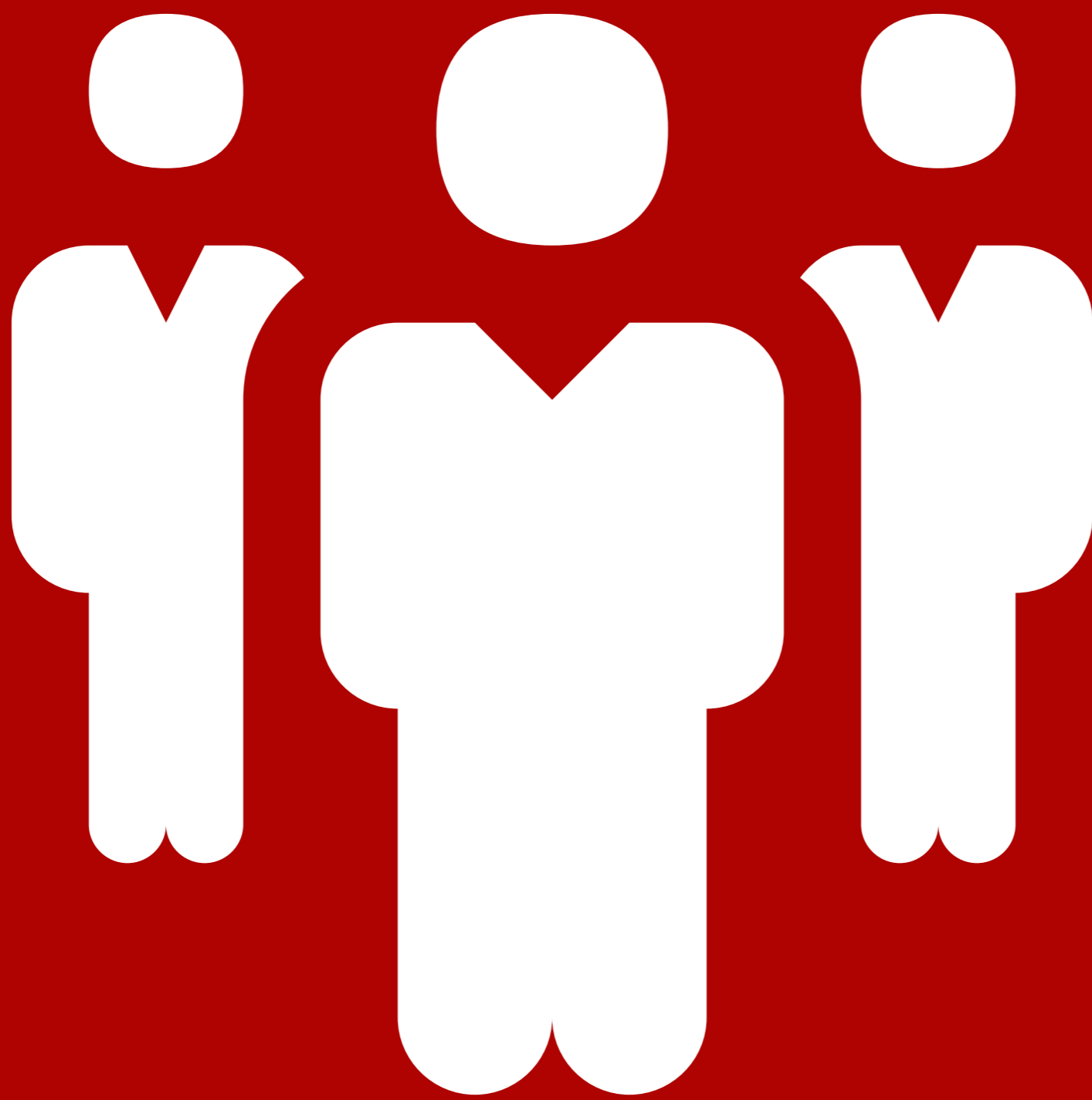


**10 SIMPLE IDEAS
TO IMPROVE
YOUR TEAM'S
CULTURE**



QUINN MCDOWELL

1

GIVE YOUR SEASON A THEME

Give each season a theme. Come up with a slogan, motto, or saying that encapsulates what your team wants to be about for the coming season.

After you come up with your theme, find creative ways to continually expose your players to that message over and over and over again. Cast your vision for what what the team COULD become and give them specific reminders to help them get there. For example, you could get T-shirts printed with the slogan on the back, you could have wristbands made with the theme engraved, you could say the motto whenever you break your huddle, you could have it printed on lockers, etc etc. Whatever the case, don't let your message go unheard!



2

HAVE TEAM MEALS IN SOMEONES HOME

Connectedness is one of the crucial ingredients in creating a championship team. Getting connected is all about diving head first into relationships with your players, coaches, and staff. Getting and staying connected can happen in all kinds of ways, but the quickest way to create a real bond with the people around you is to interact with them in where they are most comfortable; in their home. There is a certain familiarity and comfort about being in someone's home that helps deepen and strengthen relationships. Instead of having team meals at your school or a restaurant, set up a schedule of meals that will be served at different staff member's homes. You'll find your team will enjoy getting to know each other in a warm and less formal environment.



3

PLAY THE "H" GAME

The H game is simple. Have one member of your team sit in the center of a circle and have them go through their six "H's". The six H's are:

Heritage - a quick snapshot of your family history

Highlight - a life event that stands out from the rest

Heartache - a life event that was particularly painful or difficult

Honey - a significant other in your life

Hero - someone you admire or look up to

Hope - a future dream or desire that is especially important to you

Have each person spend about 5-10 minutes going through each "H". After they finish, everyone else on the team is free to ask follow-up questions to dig further. Set aside a time over the course of several weeks or months for the entire team to get together so that each person (players and coaches) will have a chance to go through the exercise.



4

HAVE PLAYERS CREATE GOAL CARDS

One of the most powerful tools a coach has to keep their players accountable throughout the year is that a player's own list of goals and commitments! Give everyone in your program a notecard and have them write 3 goals on the front. Then on the back of the card have them write 3 specific commitments that they are going to make in order to achieve those goals. An example could be:

Goal: Lead the League in 3pt Shooting

Commitment: Make 100 three pointers after every practice

Then, during the ups and downs of a season, you can pull those cards out to help refocus a player who is struggling, or needs some added motivation. This is a great tool that provides accountability that is neither forced or corny!



5

LET YOUR CAPTAINS RUN PRACTICE

During a dead period, or a down time in the offseason, have your captains organize and run a captains practice. This setting gives your leaders a special opportunity to embrace the responsibility of leading a team without a coach around. Meet with your captains before the practice to brainstorm ideas and hear what they have in mind. Trust your players to run the show and avoid “over-coaching” in this situation. Give them some parameters and subtle guidance, but let them do most of the heavy-lifting. The process of having to organize, plan, and run a practice on their own will give them a stronger sense of ownership moving forward.



6

LISTEN TO AN OUTSIDE SPEAKER

Find creative ways to engage your team on topics outside of the basketball floor. The topic of the speech could be about anything (social issues, leadership, current events, team building, etc etc), but the most important thing is that everyone on the team is engaged. Whether your team watches a talk on Youtube, you bring in a speaker, or you travel to go hear an outside presenter: bringing a fresh perspective to your program can be an invaluable exercise in growing closer as a team. In addition to adding a fresh perspective, outside ideas can often break through to a team when the head coach's voice has grown stale and tired. If you have been trying to make a particular point to your team but can't see to break through, try using someone else's voice to make the point for you.





READ A BOOK TOGETHER AS A TEAM

This is one of the simplest, yet most powerful ways to improve your team's culture. Have the leaders on your team come up with a selection of books they would be interested in, or give them a list to choose from. Either way, have your entire team read a book over the course of a set period of time (usually the offseason or preseason are good times to do this). Break your team into discussion groups consisting of a mixture of upper and lower classmen to discuss what they read. Taken a step further, you could even assign a series of simple presentations to each group that they would have to present in front of the entire team.



8

GO ON A TEAM RETREAT

If you have the ability to get away, going on a retreat with your team can be the perfect kickstart to developing strong team culture. Not only will you escape the routine of every day life, but you'll give your players valuable time to begin developing meaningful relationships that can make a big difference in your team's chemistry and connection. On your retreat, consider planning various team building exercises, along with a healthy portion of fun competitions and an ample amount of free time.





PLAN A TEAM OUTING

If you're unable to get away for a retreat, going on a team outing is the next best thing. Block off an afternoon and plan an experience for your team that is out of the ordinary. Paintball, rock climbing, go-karts, canoeing, camping, the movies, could all be examples of a team outing that gets everyone out of their regular element. As a coach, the more you are able to see your team interact in different environments, the more you will learn about character and personality of each one of your players. The subtle personal cues that you pick up in these oddball situations, can go a long way in helping you relate to your players in meaningful ways.



10

USE HANDWRITTEN NOTES

Handwritten notes are powerful. They communicate a level of respect, care, and love that cannot be conveyed in a text message or an email. They take time to write, and require a level of thoughtfulness, which is why they are special. Get creative in how you use handwritten notes with your team. As a coach you can use them to encourage your players, or you could have each of your underclassmen write a short note to each senior on senior night. The possibilities for how you use handwritten notes are endless, but when unleashed, the power of handwritten notes cannot be contained.



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