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B Non profit management

Football-to-Business or what is needed to be an elite coach?

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Background

The available literature on teams, team-building and general coaching can be considered to be fairly widespread. However, in order to manage groups of individuals in situations where the stress factors are probably higher than in any other conceivable context and where the economic stakes involve billions, there is much less published knowledge to draw on. This situation is found in the world of football and that of the global trainers or coaches of top teams. How is this knowledge to be collected and evaluated?

Football is expanding around the world from its home continent to Africa, to China, to places where it has become institutionalised as part of the national psyche (Hoehn & Szymanski, 1999). There are many reasons to explain the “demand” for football (Falter & Perignon, 2001). The success of this sport in Africa, for example, provides an (often fleeting) antidote to the pervasive poverty. How many black players are now selected for each of Europe major clubs? In Brazil, playing is next to godliness; the “samba magic juggle” with the football has become something close to a stereotype of South American Football. In Europe, football (or soccer) has an impact not only on the national culture but also on the prevailing business confidence (especially in France). Kirch Media, which includes the group’s core broadcasting and programming business, - like the World Cup Soccer of the Summer of 2002 - went bankrupt in April 2002 and will possibly be taken over by other media tycoons like Berlusconi or Murdoch. However, we can also point to the many positive influences in this emerging “leisure” business which other more industrially-oriented businesses can learn from. Our premise is that Football to Business i.e. “F to B” is becoming a growing issue in itself. What can football teach business and what part of this knowledge is transferable and useful?

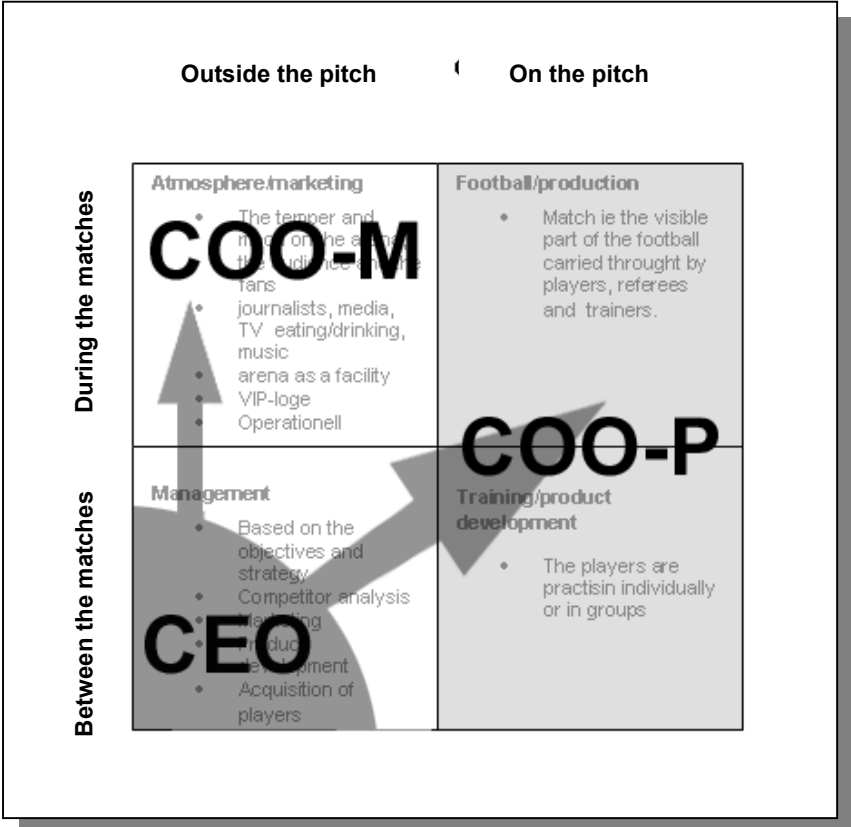
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Over the last decade, clubs like Manchester United, Bayer Munich, Real Madrid and Milan AC can be characterised by having illustrious sponsors whose brands are well known all around the world. This means that when one hears the name of one of these well-known sponsor companies, eg Vodaphone or Ericsson, one is able to associate it with a major club in a manner similar to the associations used in co-branding. One result of this co-branding is that the richest clubs also get the best players, and these clubs also perform the best according studies by Hoehn & Szymanski,1999 and Szymanski, 1998. The best-known players such as Figou, Zidane, Beckham, Effenberg and Chevenko belong to these co-branded clubs. See eg Carmichael, Forrest & Simmons (1999) on the dynamics of the labour market and Dobson & Gerrard (2000) and on the determination of transfer fees.

Various perspectives

From what perspective should we examine the issues; in what way can the elite coaches provide useful lessons for business managers? There are many relevant actors in football. This essay will focus on management’s viewpoint. A further focus is the knowledge needed to coach footballers and the extension it has on business. The framework is inspired by two concepts: the value chain and the balanced score card (Soderman, 2001).

Figure 1 The framework of management and coaching



Let us confirm that a top manager normally was and still is evaluated once per year after the annual report has been presented. More recently the stock exchanges in New York and later elsewhere ask for a quarterly result, and the manager is therefore evaluated four times per year. The top manager can acquire a company and say that the post merger integration is not carried through fast enough in order to gain the expected synergies - or he blames the international slump. There are many reasons to blame others for a poor performance. If the shareholders are loosely organised, or if they are satisfied with a long perspective, then the “moment of truth” for the top manager will seldom occur and, when it does, not at the prescribed moments. In football, the moment of truth occurs at least every Sunday or when the final whistle signals the end of the match. In business, you seldom know when there is a match: there are critical activities or there is “only training”. In football, the learning process - often called training - might be labelled product development and is central to the game. It is this accumulation of product development work that constitutes the football “knowledge”. “Knowledge” has intensively been discussed after publications by eg Prahalad & Hamel (1990) during the 90’s and later by Nonaka & Takeuchi in 1995. However, neither the theoretical nor the practical assumed advantages of “knowledge” development were attained. It was often said that it was never “operationalised”. There are, however, a number of efforts starting with the skilful and well-known librarian from Cyert & March (1963). This concerns one effort of studying a professional human being and what is needed to be “knowledgable”. Why F to B? Does football have anything to teach business? Although difficult to state with certainty, Szymanski & Kuypers (1999) indicate that business and football are much alike. A Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or a Managing Director very often has two important leaders under him: the marketing man and the production manager. In football, it is the same principle: the marketing manager is responsible for the revenues, the arena, the tickets the TV rights. Let us call him the Chief Operating Officer, Marketing (COO-M). The other man the Chief Operating Officer for Operations or for Productions (COO-P) is also very important. The top manager, the CEO, in business as well as in football has to appoint these two leaders. The Production man is squeezed between the CEO representing the shareholders and the production units. He needs to have knowledge to handle these two sides. The focus is on this COO-P or the top coach as he is labelled in this report. This means that our focus is on the pitch side in figure 1. The coach is preparing for the match by managing the training that is the activities before and after the match (see figure 1). He is also coaching his team during the match.

The managers thus will have the duty to identify the right coach. Will he be from a certain nationality? Will he be knowledgeable and have a certain proficiency? Most recently the British have chosen a Swede, mr Sven-Göran Eriksson also called “Svennis”. Let us look a bit first on this case and then focus on the manager’s or CEO’s difficult decision on managing a coach. One prototype is Svennis Eriksson the COO production presently for the English national team. Is he knowledgeable? Or has he had pure luck? The curious or remarkable aspect is that he has succeeded in several countries. Assume a Swedish COO who has been successful in a top company in Sweden, and in two various top companies in Portugal, as well as in top firms in Italy. All companies belonging to a very competitive industry. - Some striking features describing Eriksson. These opinions are based on public media (eg BBC Match of the day Magazine, 2001):

- Business model ie his skill
- his “raw material” ie the players,
- implement Swedish style or
- the Erikssonish style

How and if will Svennis implement the Swedish style and succeed in the World Cup Finals with his English national team?

Purpose

To describe and explain the characteristic, knowledge and proficiency of elite coaches ie the COO-Ps’, at the highest international level. The focus is on knowledge regarding the process of coaching in connection with training and match.

Method to be qualitative and collected by an insider and towards categorisation

There is limited research on estimating coaching efficiency in professional team sport. Dawson, Dobson & Gerrard (2000) found that the estimation of coaching efficiency is sensitive to the choice of time-invariant efficiency models versus time-varying and inefficiency models. These type of studies are based on Premier League secondary data. Since our aim is to identify the drivers around elite trainers it is necessary to go for individual qualitative data collections. It is important to construct a model to enable an analysis. Three theories have been the inspiration for the empirical part of the study. Le Compte & Goetz, 1984 who are focusing on the requirement of interactivity and the need for an equally professional researcher. Otherwise the interview will be interrupted, which did not happen in

any of the cases. This deepens the trustworthiness of the data. In the work by Stensmo (1979) it is emphasised that the key is not only that the researcher is very familiar with the context but also with the role of a coach and what this means in relation with the player.

Intrinsic data from seven respondents

The sampling procedure started: Identify coaches which have either placed their team on one of the three top positions in a non Swedish league, or managed to save his team from critical relegation. Manage to reach at least quarterfinals in an international tournament like the World Cup, European Cup or international cup tournaments like Champions league, the FA-cup in England, the Italian cup etc, with a Swedish, a non-Swedish team or a national team. Another criterion is that the team coach should have worked during a longer period internationally and that they have shown a successful as well as a less successful performance. The final selection resulted in a sample containing: three national team coaches, two trainers from league A in Italy, and two trainers working in England of which one in the Premier league and one in league one. All trainers but one have also been national team trainers. - The result is then presented through seven quotations referred to each of the seven coaches. The three hours interviews were transcribed, word by word, analysed and categorised in collected order. When is the data sufficient? In Miles & Huberman, 1984, the risk not to see the patterns is emphasised. When an interview delivers no more categories of the third degree you usually quit the data collection.

Towards a revalidated scheme of categorisation

In addition to the above the relevant empirical studies were reported by Isberg in his work 1991, 1992 and 1997. A certain number of “moments” and “factors” were created by the use of cameras, videos and “pictures” and constitute 346 events and episodes of the third degree. To guarantee the accountability of the categorisation scheme 100 of these are identified for recategorisation (Isberg, 1997). This sort of revalidation is carried through by sports management graduates. It turned out that the inter judging reliability (accountability) was satisfactorily good. The trustworthiness of the study was found satisfactory after a comparison with how well the “scheme of categorisation” is mapped in the total data material. The same two procedures were used in Isberg, 2001.

The result

The analysis followed a bottom-top approach and simultaneously concluded in the following scheme of categorisation:

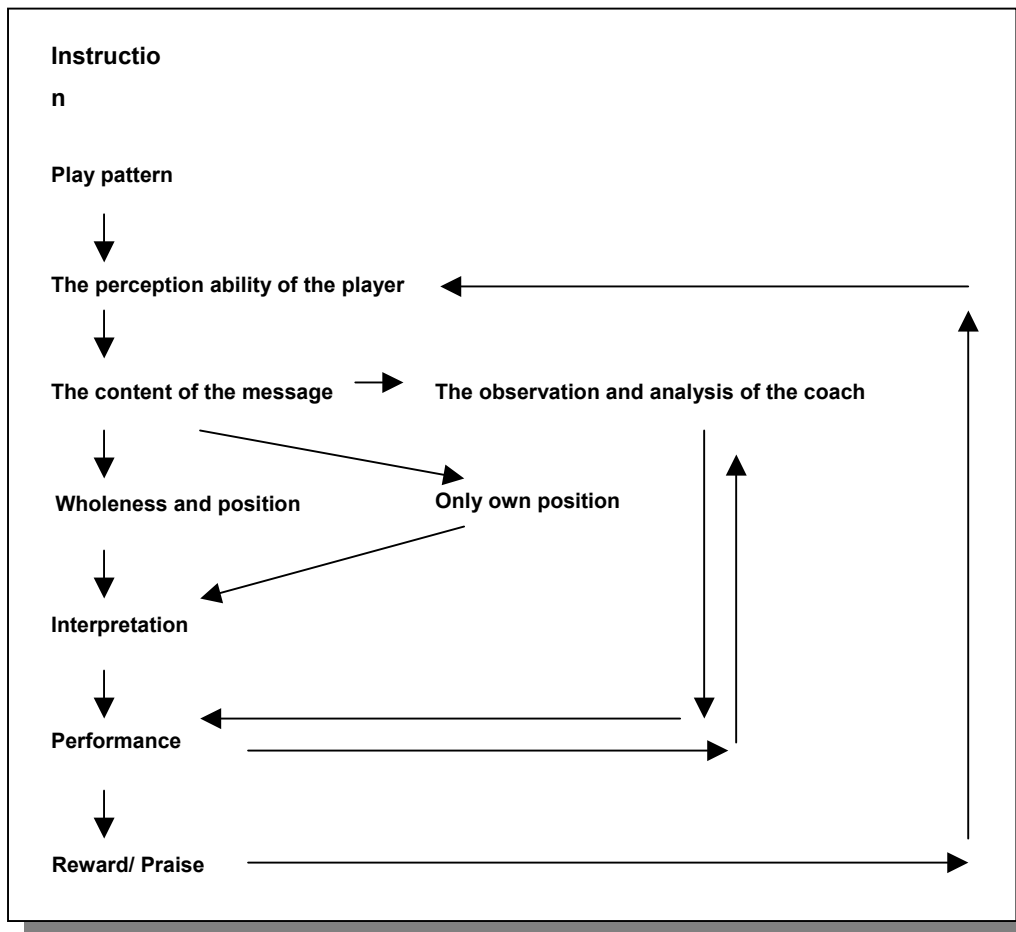
- Basic knowledge: Cultural insight
 Player experience
 Trainer experience
- Special knowledge: Leader philosophy
 Football philosophy
 Contextual knowledge
 -learning process
 -observation
 -analysis
 -communication
 Self insight

This emerging scheme consists of two main “categories”: the *Basic knowledge* and the *Special knowledge*. The Basic knowledge contains the three categories. Cultural insight, Player experience and Coaching experience. The Special knowledge is divided into subcategories: Leader philosophy, Football philosophy, Contextual knowledge and Self insight. Each subcategory contains key words and elements.

Observation, analysis and communication- proving the figure framework

One very central moment of the coaching process on elite level concerns the players understanding of the “play pattern” (Isberg, 2001, p 43). This understanding in combination with the ability of the player to perform various tasks are decisive on which duties a player can be allocated. This is also controlling the type of new messages as well as change messages a player can absorb and convert /transform into a purposeful action. The model in the figure 2 is based on Chelladurai, 1981 and 1990 and on Isberg, 1997. The figure is illustrating how the elite coaches manage the moments of “observation” and “analysis” during an ongoing match to secure team effectiveness. Referring to figure 1 which is focusing on the Football/Production.

Figure 2 The framework for observation, analysis and communication during ongoing match



Before the match there is certainly time to transfer a message and also to control whether the player perceived it the way the trainer expects the player to react. During the match the trainer must consider how to package the message to enable it to reach the desired receiver and on what in this message shall initiate the intended player to make the right interpretation of it. The message is either sent towards the box “wholeness and position” to the left in the figure 2 (the player understands the wholeness in the play pattern) or towards the box “own position” (the player does only understand what he shall do in his own position) to the right in the figure. When the message is sent, the coach must carefully “observe” how the player transforms the content of the message into action and what the consequences will be. This is indicated by the arrow from “the observation and analysis of the coach” to and from to the “performance”. If the intended action (indicated by interpretation) did not occur the coach must analyse once again and send a new message on change etc. And the process continues.

The trainer cannot judge, in that moment if the deficiency is in the interpretation or in the performed activity itself. If the result is the intended performance the trainer should initiate a

positive feed back. The coach must be very careful on exactly what dimension he shall praise the player for (see arrow the “praise” to the understanding or perception ability of the player). In order to secure the desired effect of the reward, the message must include a concrete information of what is praised. Certainly the player get his internal motivation strengthened each time he succeeds with an action and, however, this is normally more important than the external feedback (Isberg, 1997). The coach tries to make his product look as effective as possible in the real marketing situation. In business the marketing situation deals with more or less a “complete” product . In case of failure changes, if needed, actualises when a product so not functioning as expected.

Also the performance of the coach has to be strengthened, but how? The internal motivation is there if the trainer observes that his message led to the intended effects. The “external” if the team takes the commando and fulfil the goal of the team with this match. The coach can receive feed back through two channels, partly by the player who understands and activates a desired action (represented by the arrow the performance to the coach observation and analysis) and partly when the team reaches the objective of the game (indicated through the result of the match). The coach certainly can receive his “reward” after the match from the players as well from other significant persons. The COO-P gets his internal and external reward in accordance to the attractiveness of the product.

Despite the differences in the chosen strategies of coaches this is a general conclusion as well as a conclusion for every individual match. Carrying through and follow up the common frame work of the coach and the players seem to be decisive for the efficiency of the play pattern. Such a common understanding seems to increase in line with the time they spend together. How the super coaches act during the processes of observation and analysis and when they will carry through changes during ongoing play is presented in the next paragraphs.

Observations from the seven trainers

Trainer 1: He prepares himself several days before the match on what may happen. He is quiet and concentrated during the match and does not take notes while sitting beside the pitch.

Trainer 2: He does not know how he concentrates. He studies the distance between “team parts” in his own team and if the opponents act as he has instructed his own players. He specifically observes how the players act in situations of fixed positions.

Trainer 3: Concentration is reached through focus on his own team. He does not observe good or bad things with the other team. He studies fundamentals of attacks and of defense of his own team and notes what can be affected in the short range. (during on going match) as well as more far reached. He communicates his observations to his trainer colleague who chooses to transfer some of these to the players. Technical mistakes are not considered but rather tactical errors as well as un-concentrated players.

Trainer 4: He controls the mood (and atmosphere) in the locker room before the match and observes if the players are in balance before the match. He never knows if any player would like to talk with the trainer, he tries to see if that is the case. This trainer has during several days thought through what could happen during the approaching match. He knows quite well what the players can achieve. If he in advance has given instructions on the play pattern of the opponents, he first observes the actions of the opposite team. This is the focus of his “observation”. The assisting trainers is asked to study the performance of the individual players, while he is observing the wholeness.

Trainer 5: He prepares what can happen before the match. He primarily studies the wholeness and how the players place themselves on the pitch and to what extent they support each other. He does not take notes during the match. He studies fixed positions and look at the next last pass before the goal (own team) which has led to, he confesses, a certain re-evaluation of some player actions. From being directed towards details in his observation behaviour he has refocusing from limited overview to a more calm and controlled view on the wholeness.

Trainer 6: He concentrates on the positions in the defense play and how the attack play and the individual achievements do function. Does not take notes during the game. During the interval he makes a selective sample from his memory and communicate it directly. Before that he carries through a dialogue with his assistant trainer. He perceives an internal happiness/concern on the bench but never shows anything until the match is over.

Trainer 7: He paints pictures in advance on potential outcomes during the match and he prepares of solutions on these. He has a continuous exchange of ideas with his assisting assistant trainer. He always writes down his observations. He has carefully studied the opponent players long before the match and he cautiously observe if these players act as he has informed his players. However, everything can not be planned. He concentrates himself by letting out everything else and he has never experienced that he has lost concentration during a match.

Analysis based on the seven trainers

Trainer 1: Analyse by help of edited video and computer means and products. He complements with own evaluations in relation to his *football philosophy*. Evaluations are also done regarding the entire season as well as an evaluation on how various players have acted in exactly the same position.

Trainer 2: Analyse on what he saw in relation to the *play pattern*. Focus is on the attitude and tuning of the player to his task.

Trainer 3: He identifies what can be changed during ongoing match and that is communicated during the interval. The *analysis* is done in relation what was planned.

Trainer 4: At a potential change it is critical that the coach and the players think alike about the situation. The acting team is compared with what was planned. During the interval he conveys a limited number of messages and then it is required that everybody has a similar understanding of what are said.

Trainer 5: The frame of reference in the *analysis* is the logic of the *play pattern*. At a possible change he decides due to fear of giving “double messages”. He also endeavours that it is important that the players know exactly who decides on what.

Trainer 6: He compares what happens in relation to what was planned to happen. It is here included all that freedom he gives the player to do what they are good at. He separates “technical errors” and “understanding errors” and the latter type is brought up during the interval. He listens to suggested corrections by the players. Those players which feel they have a secure place in the team firstly come up with their ideas while the others hesitate. He tries to get the individual player to create the same picture of the situation as he has. The player is demanded to come up with solutions and the coach accepts or let the discussion continue.

Trainer 7: He compares what he has observed with what was planned and then he makes corrections during the interval. He is always very cautious to explain why he makes his corrections.

The case of Trainer 1

We narrowed our focus even more to point out the importance of an understanding of the relation between the soccer culture and the philosophy of leadership. When only a few matches of the season remained and the team was on the verge to be relegated to the lower division the trainer was dismissed. Here is a unique possibility to study some of the factors which evolved and became embedded in the trainer situation. It is obvious that the position in

the league has a decisive influence on the quality work of the coach as well as of the team. The entrance into the British football culture made him uncertain and he therefore started in a very careful way. The football culture, a part of the basic knowledge, became a big surprise for him when he really was to enter it. The strong authoritarian style, the players lack of trust and openness was new knowledge for him. Player quotations: “...*how on earth does he think that we shall obey him to 100% when we not are afraid of him...*”, is clarifying the football culture of that team and the players view on leadership. When he after a loss delayed the analysis till the succeeding day and tried to be positive his approach was met as a weakness. English players don't say much, they consider that the coach makes decisions and that they themselves don't have any opinion but to do what the trainer asks them to.

Football philosophy- a type of special knowledge. Continuation Trainer 1

The play pattern with “zone defense” was perceived positively and it worked rather well. It was more difficult with the “breakthrough play” and the rapid transformation to play straight and in depth. The short pass play including many passes was so deeply rooted among many players. He got a possibility to sell some players and to purchase some others which in a better way suited his *football philosophy*. He had planned a three phases development but he did not only reach phase one before he was fired. The owner of the team should according the trainer 1 have thought more long-term. The CEO and the board of directors lacked according to trainer 1 enough insight in football as a game. One big problem was the pressure from the fans and from the media and the dirty press which wrote about made up things.

The learning process- a subcategory of special knowledge. Continuation Trainer 1

The trainer was initially very careful in introducing his *football philosophy*. He started with the zone defense which was well received. The players, however, easily fell during some matches, into their old type of play. He utilised computer based data analysis and went through this analysis with each one of the players. Most of them found this interesting while some of them did not care at all. Trainer 1 meant that if he had got more time he probably would have succeeded to carry through a more breakthrough oriented attack play. Trainer 1 had already at the beginning individual discussions with the players and one issue dealt with was if the player preferred any special play style. The general answer was “ you only tell me if I shall kick short or long balls and I will do it, you decide it is your business, I don't care”. If trainer 1 would redo his sejour he said that he should have been much more tougher concerning the players doings outside the pitch, so called well-mannered behaviour should be

secured. He did not realise how bad the situation was but rather followed what he thought was good advice to take it easy and slow. He would have been much more authoritarian as a leader and much more distinct in ordering when changing the playing pattern. He gave up too early. He also realised that the football culture of the country is important. In fact this trainer with experience from training a national team when he was in an effective way balancing between a more humanistic and a more authoritarian style. When he came to England, lacking *cultural insight*, he wrongly chose the complete humanistic style at once, instead of doing it with small steps!

Observation, analysis and communication: pressure from fans, media and owners

There are differences between the international elite coaches concerning the processes of observation, analysis and communication. Let us just mention a few general conditions. The conditions differ very much from trainer 2 who can purchase those players he needs to implement his *football philosophy* to trainer 5, who came to a team in crisis with a table position close to relegation from the top league. The team of trainer 5 also lacks resources to buy any players at all.

Obviously all the super coaches are well prepared for *observation* processes as well as for the *analysis* processes. This is concerning the planning before, going through what can happen during the match and to find solutions if this happens. They seem able to keep concentration during the matches. It is also to be pointed at that their behaviour attracts much attention with media and the supporters of the team implying an increased psychological pressure on them.

In these preparations it is included when and if any change at all is possible to implement. Since most matches are played with an audience of 30 thousand up to 70 thousands of spectators the coaches have learnt that the probability, that any message sent to the players on the pitch during ongoing match, will reach the desired effect is low or non existent. The coaches therefore have realised that they need other alternatives. These alternatives include a thorough analysis of what a player understands (his perception ability) from a specific message. The creation of common pictures of the actual situation is constantly critical so that the coach knows that they are talking about exactly the same events. Referring to figure 2 it is often a very carefully designed *learning process* with a combination of verbal, tactical and practical ingredients in order to capture a player's tacit knowledge and his experience. This is a *learning process* created to maximise the possibilities of the player's success. A process

which is a combination of gestures to enable a certain *communication* during the game. This process also constitutes the base, the *contextual knowledge*, for what type of content wholeness and/or position that can be sent to the different players before and during the match.- These messages normally are transferred individually in England as well as in Italy. It is not common for a coach in these football cultures to talk to the whole team simultaneously (*trainer experience*). There also exists division of labour between the head coach and the assisting coaches. Thus again referring to figure 2 with the boxes on play systems-tactics and the player perception.

Concentration is a part of basic knowledge and of self insight

If the performances of the players are not well accepted (*player experience*) there will be further analyses ending up in suggestions of change. If it should be necessary to send a message during the match the coach is very well experienced on the possible factors of disturbance. The existence of these disturbances forces the super coaches to choose to present their suggestions during the interval and they do it knowing that a player is ready to perceive only a very limited amount of information.

The national and the super coaches

There are many differences between the super coaches and the investigated national coaches in the research conducted by Isberg (1997). The prime difference is the use of resources and the tools attached to the role of a coach. The super coaches are much more focused on developing their personal resources. By acquiring an increased *self-insight* their understanding of how they can manage their talents and avoid things they are not good at. Their increased *self-insight* is acquired through academic research, literature studies, contacts with persons able to analyse personalities and by studying other coaches.

A general observation, while meeting with these super coaches, is a very profound humbleness they have shown during the interviews in this study but also in their meeting with players, other personell and as towards unknown people. They also show a great insight and an understanding of what their employment is about. The following quote is from trainer 2 who said:” *you live in a sort of dream world with a lot of money, with a big pressure on you as a person, a dream world which you might have to leave after the next coffee break...*”

Conclusions

1 The football culture is important.

A certain insight in the football culture specific to the country has a very strong influence on the *learning process* and on *communication*. This also lends support to view that the category of *football culture* belongs to the basic knowledge. Within categories and subcategories there are elements which can be handled in various ways that can point to success.

2 Learning process

Learning is such a subcategory where a coach is trying to create a common image within himself and the player in order to ensure that they talk about the same situations. One is using both verbal and tactical contributions in the process of instructions and letting it happen on the pitch. All trainers emphasise that necessary changes have to happen in small steps.

3 Self insight

The sample of trainers is characterised by the fact that they have all experienced great success at an international level. In spite of all their successes, they are very eager to improve by looking for more special knowledge. They all emphasise that the type of knowledge which gives impetus to the role as a coach is increased *self-insight*. This includes maintaining a positive attitude, being self-effacing in front of the players and the task at hand, understanding how people react internally, learning how to trust people, developing greater internal calm, daring to show one's shortcomings, generating belief in the players, recognizing their individual competences and finally learning how to look critically at oneself. The category *self-insight* belongs to the category special knowledge. All top trainers have achieved major successes and thereby high paychecks. In their positions, it is perhaps easier to be humble and dare to show some shortcomings. Another interpretation is that these trainers actually reached their positions due to their humbleness and their ability to view the players as human beings. All the quotations in this research lend support to the second interpretation.

4 Contextual knowledge

Football culture and *self-insight* therefore are the overall concepts for how the subcategories (*learning process*, *observation* and *communication*) relate to the category *contextual knowledge*. The trainers all agree that the positioning of those resources at hand is the decisive factor. But they also know that the expectations from the media, public and their own board often loom larger in relation their available resources.

The trainers also know that the players are well educated technically and tactically but when it comes to attitude, there are often some tuning possibilities available. All trainers focus first on “self insight”; this is the first lesson to consider. They also monitor the defence play and leave a great deal for the attackers to accomplish themselves. Perhaps this can be a lesson for top business managers. All the coaches use their available resources and tools and fully agree that this constitutes basic knowledge. But their focus is on the special knowledge.

5 Learnings from F to B?

What about Football to Business? Professional football on the international level is business. However, within the management procedures are found both differences and similarities among the two endeavors, The top manager (CEO) in both business and football appoints the COO-P man. In football, we mentioned the head coach. In the coaching study introduced in this paper, we find that the head coach is evaluated at least twice a week by the fans, the media or the club’s board. The evaluation process in other production units mostly takes place once or twice a year. The head coach must prepare himself to create and manage his players with an effective playing pattern. He also has to act during an ongoing process (the match) in order to keep up with the effectiveness required in the actual game. At the same time, he has to manage the staff (medical doctors, physiologists, assistant coaches and others). He has to be aware of how to handle journalists from different kind of media at least five days a week. In the end, all people interested in football are able to judge the quality of the team including the head coach by looking at the placing of the team in the league. The conclusion from the coaching study pointed out that in order to handle the situation in an effective way, the coaches focus their own learning and managing of specific knowledge. But to do so they need to be aware of what kind of leadership style is accepted in the country’s football culture. The next step made is to focus on getting a better self-insight to be able to handle the learning process even better. From football to business? Learning from one context to another. The generalisations from qualitative studies made in one context and transferred to another are determined by the reader with help of guidelines from the researcher.

This article has focused on the managing process used in football where the coaches are working on a top international level. We have identified some important elements, occurring before, during and after the game, in this process. *Cultural insight* is the most important knowledge, and *self-insight* turned out to be that special knowledge which the coach might

inspire an industrial manager to acquire. Their strong *self-insight* enables and promotes various learning processes helpful to the players. This unique context should be transferable to other more industrial orientations.

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Short abstract

Football-to Business or what is needed to be an elite coach?

By Leif Isberg and Sten Söderman

Knowledge is supposed to be an essential skill for good management. The knowledge concept was discussed intensively during the 1990's but seems to perceive difficulty due to limited practical support. In a recent empirical study of seven international elite football trainers such support is discovered as regards what type of knowledge is needed to be successful. The football coach is evaluated twice weekly by the fans, by the media and by the board of the club not least if it has invested in expensive players. His, and the team's, performance is continuously reflected in the league position. Our research shows what leadership style is accepted in the specific national football culture. The good manager should follow the way the elite coach improves his self-insight which is a special knowledge enabling effective learning processes.

