

Scaling Masters Swim Coaching

From Small-Club Personalization to Large-Club Systems

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Coaching Growth Without Losing Connection – From Personal Touch to Simple Systems

- What changes when your team gets bigger
- How simple systems keep coaching quality high
- How to keep swimmers connected without burning out the coach

As your team grows, what is the first thing that starts to feel harder to manage?



What Changes When the Team Gets Bigger



- The basics of good swimming stay the same.
- What changes is how you coach the group.
- More swimmers means more messages, more logistics, and more decisions.
- Instead of reacting to everything, coaches need systems that make the day run smoothly.

What is one thing you can handle informally with 20 swimmers that becomes much harder with 40, 60, ... or more?

The Power of a Small-Team Feel

More one-on-one time with each swimmer

More room to change practice on the fly

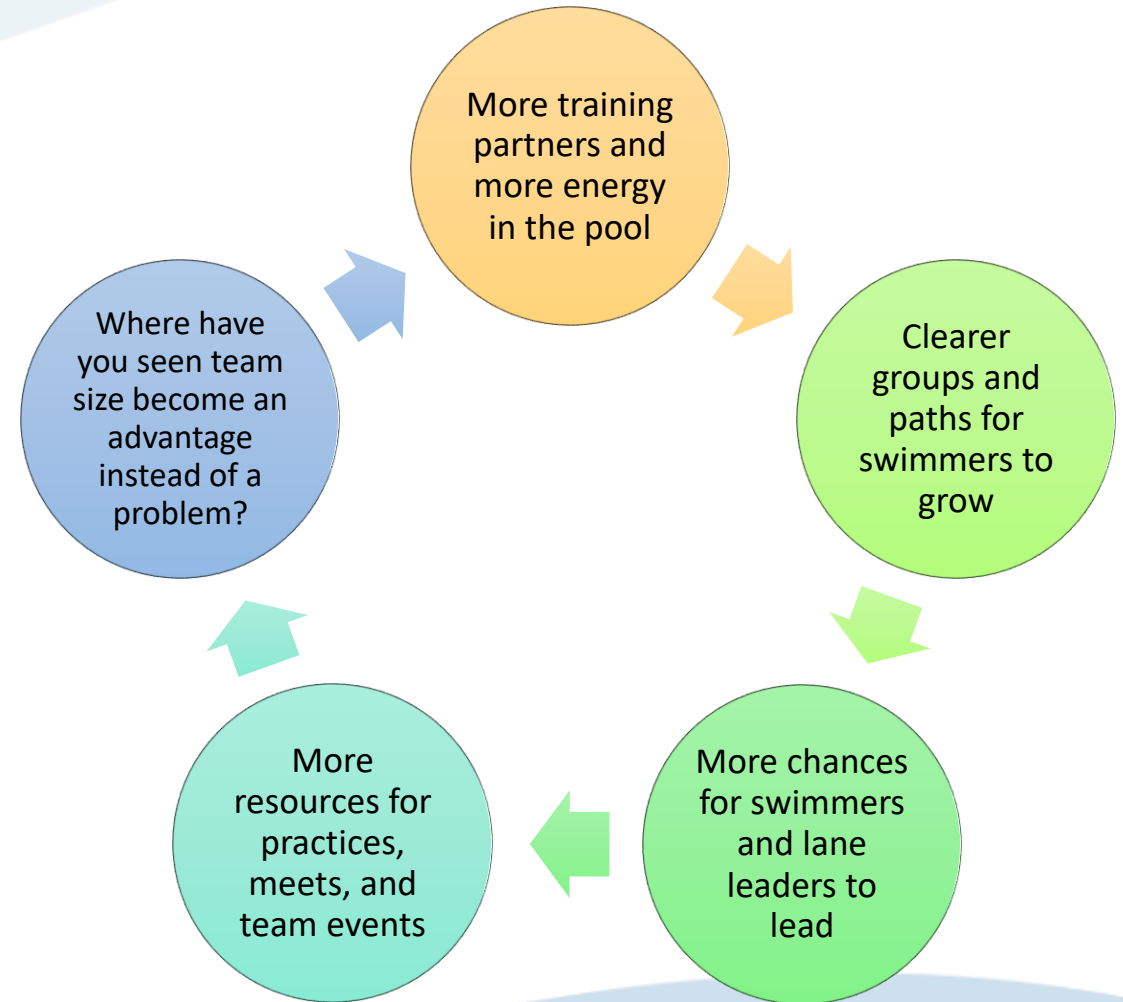
Better sense of each swimmer's goals, limits, and personality

Team culture grows through everyday connection

What is one “small-team” strength you would never want to lose as a program grows?



How Big Teams Create Momentum



From: Coach-as-Fixer

To: Coach-as-Builder



- Small club: the coach can handle most problems directly.
- Large club: the coach needs systems that keep the same problems from repeating.
- Small club: feedback is usually personal and immediate.
- Large club: feedback has to travel through assistants, leaders, and routines.

Working in pairs, list one recurring problem in your program that could be solved by a routine, defined role, or clearer expectation.

Protect the Coach's Energy

- Growth adds more emotional, administrative, and logistics work.
- Coaches need boundaries around messages and availability.
- Delegating does not mean caring less — it keeps quality higher.
- Burned-out coaches cannot build strong programs for long.

What is one coaching task that drains energy but could be simplified, scheduled, or delegated?

Maintain the Culture

- Say clearly what the team values.
- Create simple traditions that help swimmers feel connected.
- Give swimmers leadership roles they understand.
- Pay attention to cliques, gaps, and swimmers who feel disconnected.

In groups of three or four, name one team ritual or tradition that helps swimmers feel connected.



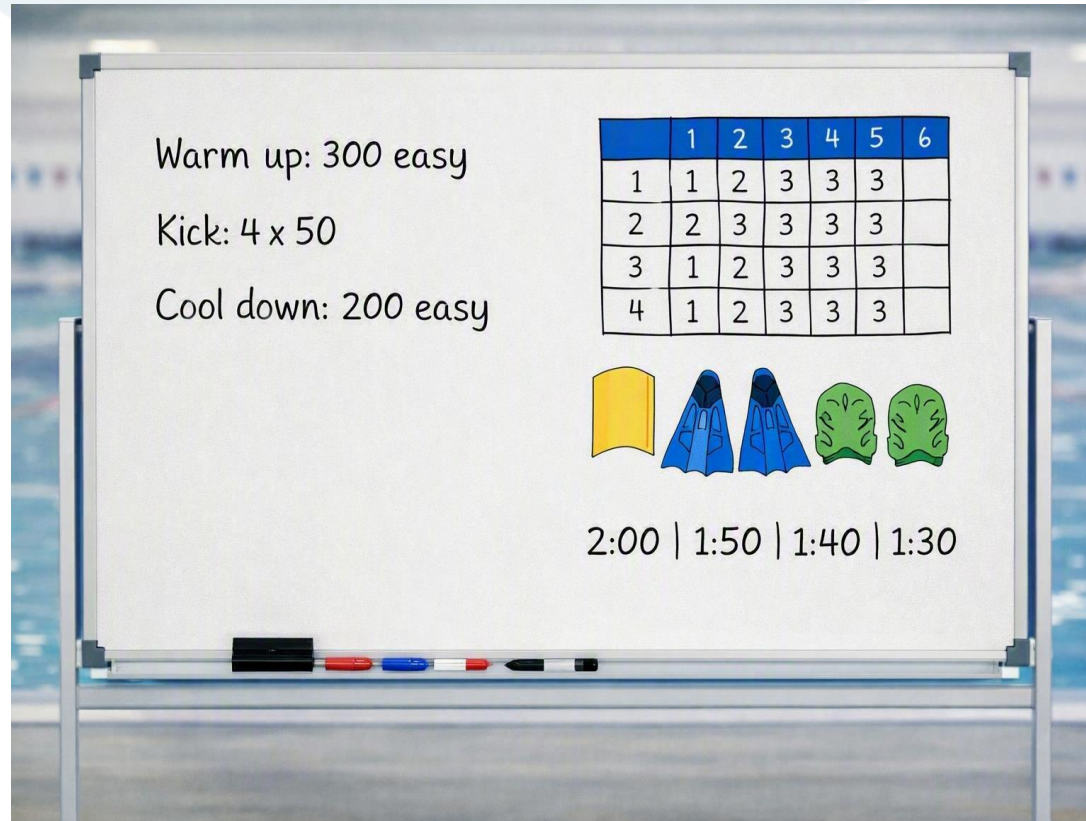


Make Feedback Feel Personal

- Rotate which swimmers, lanes, or strokes get extra attention.
- Use short feedback moments instead of trying to fix everyone at once.
- Look for common technique themes across the group.
- Let lane leaders help extend the coach's eyes and voice.

How do you currently decide who gets feedback during a busy practice?

Make Practice Easy to Run



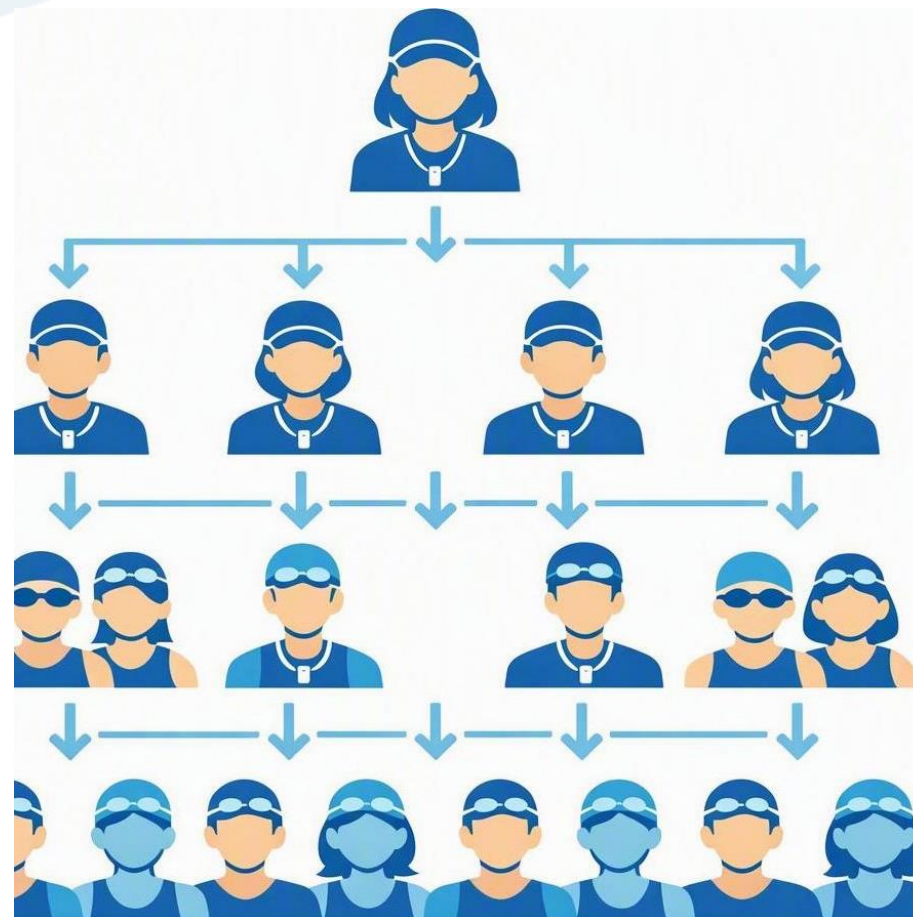
- Make intervals, send-offs, and lane spacing clear.
- Know what equipment is needed before practice starts.
- Use fewer drills but ask swimmers to do them well.
- Write sets that assistants and lane leaders can help run.

What part of practice most often creates confusion for your swimmers?

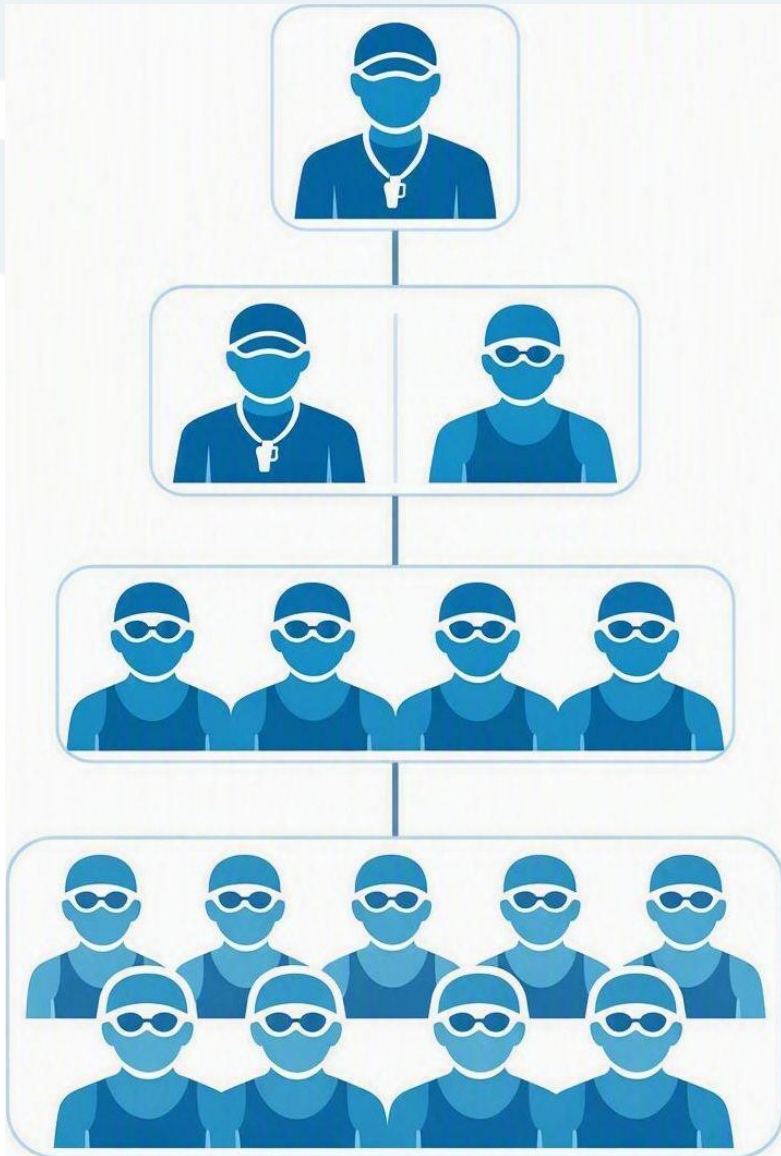
Keep the Message Simple

- Pick one main place for schedules, updates, and announcements.
- Have coaches and lane leaders repeat the key messages.
- Write down expectations before there is confusion.
- Keep messages short, clear, and consistent.

Take two minutes to identify the one message your team repeats most often and decide where that message should live.



Share the Leadership Load



Assistant coaches help keep things consistent across lanes and groups.

Lane Leaders can model the standard before coaches have to correct it.

Lane leaders help with send-offs, pacing, and practice flow.

Clear roles keep informal leaders from setting the wrong tone.

Who already has influence on your team, even if they do not have an official title?

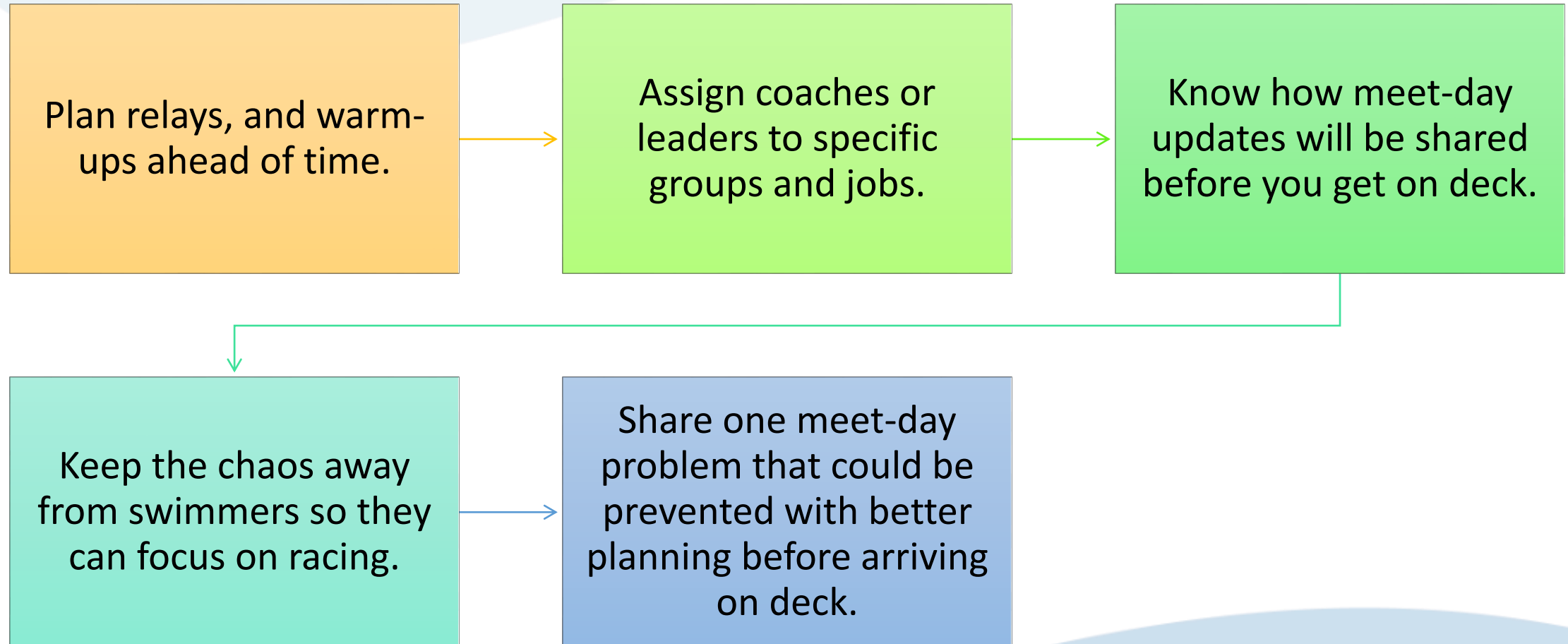
Give Swimmers a Clear Path



- Make group placement and movement easy to understand.
- Look at times, attendance, effort, and readiness.
- Keep the process fair without making it too rigid.
- Offer paths for competitive, fitness, and returning swimmers.

What do swimmers in your program most often ask about group placement or progression?

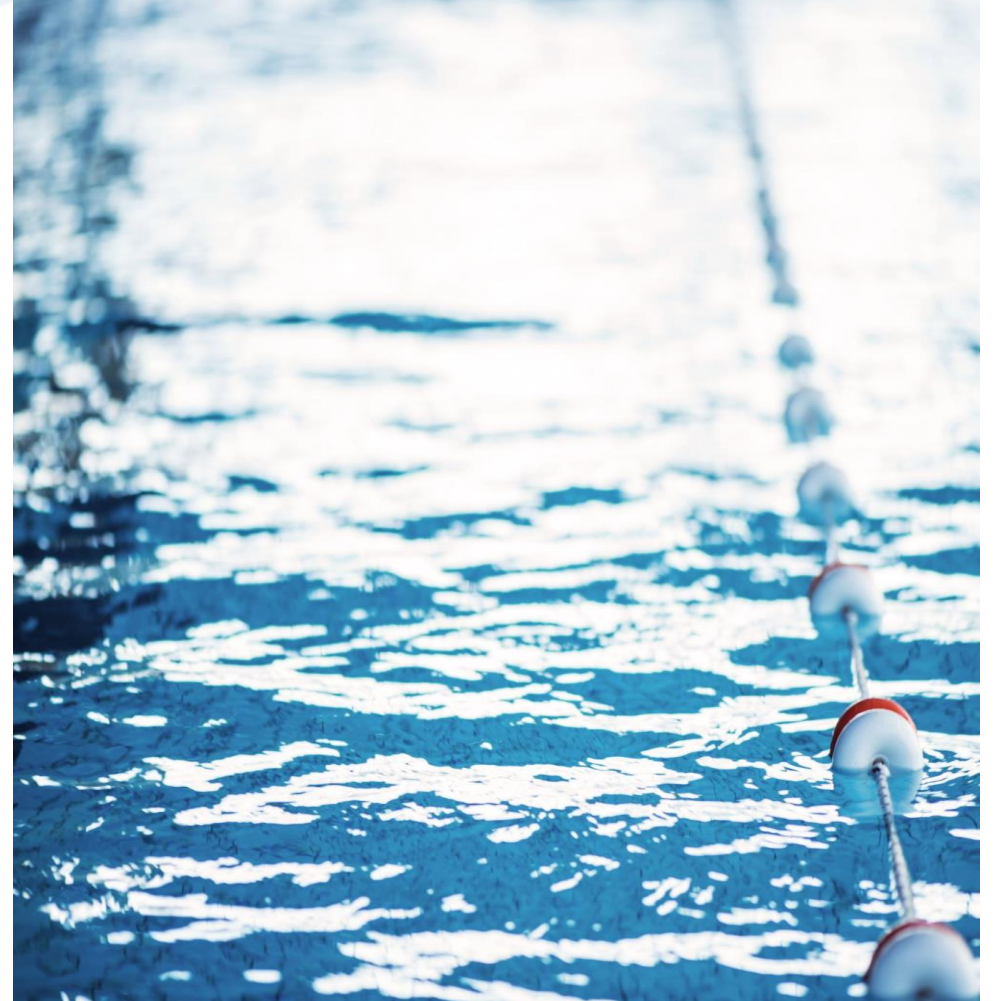
Take the Chaos Out of Meet Day



Watch Out for These Scaling Traps

- Coaching a big club like it is still a small club
- Adding swimmers without adding better communication
- Handing off jobs without explaining the standard
- Letting team culture happen by accident
- Making things more complicated than they need to be

Pick one scaling trap from this slide and discuss what an early warning sign would look like.



Start with a Few Simple Systems

Choose one system from this slide that you could add first, then write down the first step to make it happen.



Weekly practice plan and theme



One main place for announcements and schedule updates



Lane leader expectations



Feedback rotation plan



Meet-day job chart



Clear group movement guidelines

Keep the Heart, Strengthen the System



Small teams win with personal connection.



Large teams win with simple systems.



The best growing teams use systems to keep things personal.



Scaling well means keeping the heart of coaching while making the structure stronger.

What is one system you could add that would help your swimmers feel more seen, not less?

Summary:

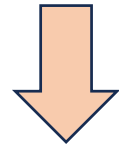
Scale the System, Keep It Personal

Write down one action you will try in the next two weeks and one person who can help you follow through.

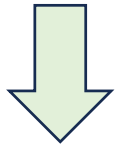
Growth changes how coaching gets delivered.



Simple systems make bigger teams feel calmer and more connected.



Leadership, communication, feedback, and meet-day planning all need structure.



The goal is not to make coaching less personal — it is to make personal coaching sustainable.



Q & A

Don't be afraid to ask. If you're
thinking it, someone else is too!

Actionable Items

<i>Culture</i>	Strengthen team culture by building safety and trust
<i>Rituals</i>	Identify team rituals will you keep and/or add
<i>Personal</i>	Identify and establish new System you will use to keep personal connections
<i>Protection</i>	Establish boundaries, delegate responsibilities
<i>Leaders</i>	Implement a new leadership role(s)
<i>Practices</i>	Make practices easier to run
<i>Communication</i>	Establish the team communication system
<i>Meets</i>	Implement Meet-Day Responsibility chart



Thank You!

Slides, Resource Links, and Panelist
Bios will be posted on the USMS
website

Resources

The following resources can support the ideas in this presentation to help build scalable systems, strengthen staff and lane leadership, design cleaner practices, and protect long-term coaching quality as a Masters program grows.

- [USMS Coach Central](#)
- [USMS National Coaches Clinic](#)
- [USMS Club Development Grant Program](#)
- [U.S. Masters Swimming Workout Library](#)
- [USA Swimming Coach Education](#)
- [American Swimming Coaches Association Educational Resources](#)
- [ASCA Coach Sustainability Research](#)
- [TeamCheck Swim Team Attendance and Management App](#)
- [GoSwim](#)
- *The Culture Code* by Daniel Coyle
- *The Language of Coaching* by Nick Winkelman
- *Think Again* by Adam Grant
- *The Way of Excellence* by Brad Stulberg
- *Mindset* by Carol S. Dweck
- *Next Level* by Stacy T. Sims
- *Fast after 50* - Joe Friel

All attendees will have electronic access to presentations after the meeting, so hyperlinks are included on this Resources slide