

Improvise, Adapt, Overcome – Coach Education & Continuous Learning

It is that time of the year where teams have put their plans in place for 2018 and hopefully a long season ahead. It is the time of good intentions and the best of ideas for what will unfold in the coming months before letting the excitement unfold over the summer. We lay out the best of plans and have great intentions but do we always follow them through to their culmination. We often hit stumbling blocks along the way and by god the stumbling blocks come in many forms.

“Improvise, Adapt, Overcome” is a much lauded mantra of the US Marines. Coaching and managing teams is very much a case of this. Over the course of the next few months, things will not always go as planned and you will be presented with problems that need addressing. As a coach or manager you will need to be able to deal with situations differently to how you previously dealt with them and the same problem dealt with the same way could equally result in a different outcome.



A mentor who is continuously looking to improve is likely to be best placed in dealing with the varying issues that present themselves in the coming months. Here are a few small ideas that could be beneficial to you in the next twelve months and could be the small percentages that we often hear are the difference between winning and losing.

1. **Formal Coach Education.** While we all think we have a good understanding of what is required to be a successful coach or manager, there are so many elements and the Camogie coaching pathway provides the framework to get a solid understanding of the many aspects that are required to be a highly functional coach or manager.
2. **Keep a diary.** It might sound very basic but it will help you in looking back at how things went during the year in training sessions or dealing with players. Be critical of yourself in it and challenge yourself on the smallest issues, thus allowing for their frequency to be reduced as the year progresses.
3. **Read a book.** There are many great sports books and other books out there that can help you in the functioning of your set up. They don't have to be camogie or even GAA books. Look into other arenas to see how things that are working there can be transferred into the meeting rooms, dressing rooms or Camogie fields to enable you to improve.
4. **Coaching workshops.** Get to one or more of these, they are becoming far more frequent and are often poorly attended. I know the Camogie association are looking to run a number of these during the year, with some great and varied topics which looking at the tutors will be excellent. There are also many others being run on the hurling side of things that can be easily transferable.

5. Watching Games. Many times we watch sport we often disengage and just watch for the pieces of brilliance or the moments of suspense and drama. There is often way more in watching a football, rugby or basketball match that can be transferable to our own code and can give us the chance to make a gain in a certain area by using a technique that has been successful in another sport, as primarily a lot of invasion team sports can learn massively of the thoughts of coaches in other codes.

6. Training sessions. If you can endeavour to go and coach another age group in the club or do a session for a friend in another club. There are certain differences within each team dynamic and being able to appreciate and understand these are critical to making subtle adjustments within your own team.

7. Mentor Reviews. These are often undertaken at the end of the year and are often shaped by the outcome of the last game of the season. Can you do them more regularly and at stages in the year when real substance can be taken from them? They can be invaluable if done in an open and honest format.



8. Coach mentoring. You would be surprised at the willingness of coaches within your club or even outside to come and assess what you are doing and give honest feedback on what they felt went well or not in a given match or training session. An open dialogue here is critical and massive learning can take place.

So while at times we may just look to drive forward with our own ideas and personal views despite evidence that suggests it may not always be the best course of action. We are not dealing with the myriad of problems and struggles that the US Marines are dealing with but we can always look to use their mantra. *"Improvise, Adapt, Overcome."*

