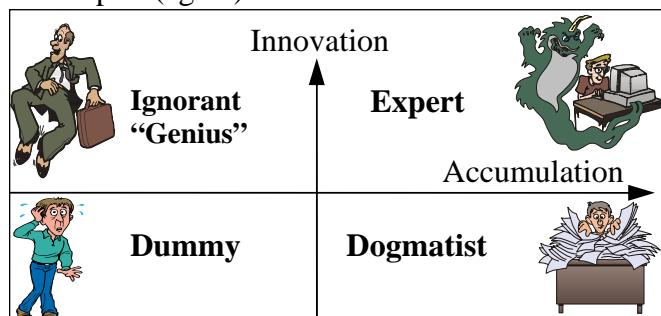


Q & A

? **Q.:** In RBN 6/2005 you discussed different types of coaches from a scientist's point of view. To be fair, it would be interesting to speculate about types of sport scientist from a coach's point of view.

✓ **A:** In the coach's quadrant we set the Y axis as ambition to use sport science. A scientist must have this ambition by default. Therefore, we will use another coordinate system: let the X axis represent ability to accumulate available knowledge in a specific area; the Y axis will be ability to develop new knowledge, i.e. research, invent, create something new. Let's conditionally call the four types of scientists Dummy, Dogmatist, Ignorant "Genius" and Expert (again):



Dummy is a person without good knowledge in the specific area and with no ability to learn or develop new things. This individual can be called a "scientist" by mistake only. However, it happens that a person with good manipulation skills or a loud commanding voice can find a position in science instead of placing himself in the administrative area. Life is not easy for this person. He/she is always anxious about his/her professional weakness. Usually this person picks up some fashionable ideas or technologies and uses them everywhere as a panacea, with or without a reason. Obviously, results are unpredictable and very often could be dangerous. Coaches should be very careful with this sort of person and can utilise them on minor tasks only, e.g. time-keeping, and equipment maintenance.

Dogmatist has read a lot of books and papers. He knows virtually everything not only in the specific area, but also many other things. It is very easy to understand what this person is talking about. He shares the opinions of many people, but he can hardly develop his own point of view. If established methods, testing protocols and analysis packs can be found, then Dogmatist can do a job successfully. However, in most cases it is necessary to define if a method would work or not, to

adjust available knowledge to current conditions, which can be controversial. Here problems arise for Dogmatist. Quite often he loses the ability to make sense of known facts and ideas, or to put them together. It is extremely difficult for Dogmatist to invent something new. If he has to do research, he usually selects an objective, which is obvious without any investigation, e.g. stronger athletes produce higher power, etc. Coaches can use knowledge accumulated by Dogmatist, but they have to work out the application of concepts themselves.

Ignorant "Genius" is very good in "reinventing the wheel". Usually he has no specific education and does not care to learn what is already known. This person believes that only his ideas are important and everything done before by other people is "rubbish". Usually his ideas are very difficult to understand and people think that this person is "crazy". It is hard to talk to "Genius", he speaks in his own language and needs to be interpreted. This person is excellent in innovation, but results can be next to zero, because similar things were already invented. When such high ambitions are well grounded, and the person is really talented, then it makes sense to help and persuade him to learn. However, quite often the "Genius" ideas are inadequate or wouldn't work in real conditions. Sceptical attitudes can make him aggressive and this can be a real problem for colleagues.

Expert is good in both accumulation and development of knowledge. He/she has learned everything that is available in the area, analysed it and found out where is a real "bottle neck" of the knowledge stream. At lower level, an Expert can find missing parts of the mosaic, do research projects and put them in place. At higher level, an Expert creates the "mosaic" structure himself, i.e. he/she creates a scientific theory, which explains and incorporates known facts. An Expert continuously develops his ideas and concepts, which can be difficult for coaches to follow. Something that is true today can be false tomorrow, which requires adjustment of training methods and technique.

Conclusion. Sport science has become very popular these days, but a coach needs to be aware what sort of scientist he/she works with. As it was with the coaches' types, the two opposites Dogmatist and "Genius" can make an efficient pair.

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