

The Historical DA Role



Traditional View (Past Model):

- Compliance enforcer
- Rule interpreter
- Tournament organizer
- Information conduit between Regional and Leagues
- Problem solver (when called)

Why the Role Must Evolve



Old Approach Limitations:

- Compliance-only doesn't build capacity
- Reactive support keeps leagues dependent
- Telling doesn't create ownership
- Information delivery doesn't ensure understanding

Why the Role Must Evolve



What Leagues Actually Need:

- Strategic thinking partners
- Capacity builders
- Problem-solving coaches
- Resource connectors
- Culture developers

The Consultative DA Model



What "Consultative" Means:
NOT:

- Doing the work for leagues
- Making all decisions for them
- Being available 24/7
- Solving every problem
- Taking over when things are hard

The Consultative DA Model



What "Consultative" Means:
YES:

- Asking powerful questions that help leagues think strategically
- Providing frameworks and tools for decision-making
- Coaching league leaders through challenges
- Building systems that reduce future problems
- Connecting leagues to each other for peer learning

The Continuum of Support



The DA Response Spectrum

DIRECT ←————→ CONSULTATIVE
(Do it for them) (Help them do it)

| | | | |
Tell Teach Guide Facilitate Coach

The Continuum of Support



When to Use Each:

DIRECT/TELL (10-15% of time)

- True emergencies
- Safety issues
- Hard compliance deadlines
- Clear violations requiring immediate action
- Example: "Your background checks expired. Here's what you must do by Friday."

The Continuum of Support



When to Use Each:

TEACH (20-25% of time)

- Knowledge gaps
- New policies or procedures
- Technical skill requirements
- Example: "Let me show you how to use the new training portal works."

The Continuum of Support



When to Use Each:

GUIDE (25-30% of time)

- Complex situations with multiple options
- When you have specific expertise to share
- Strategic decision-making
- Example: "Here are three approaches other leagues have tried for this. Let's talk through pros/cons."

The Continuum of Support



When to Use Each:

FACILITATE (20-25% of time)

- Connecting leagues to resources or each other
- Removing barriers
- Providing structures for their work
- Example: "I'll set up a call with the league that solved this problem last year."

The Continuum of Support



When to Use Each:

COACH (20-25% of time)

- Building leadership capacity
- Developing problem-solving skills
- Long-term league development
- Example: "What options do you see? What have you considered? What feels most aligned with your league's values?"

The Shift in Mindset



Old Mindset	New Mindset
"I need to have all the answers"	"I need to ask good questions"
"My job is to fix problems"	"My job is to build problem-solving capacity"
"Leagues should do what I tell them"	"Leagues should own their decisions"
"I'm responsible for league success"	"I'm responsible for league capability"
"Success = compliance achieved"	"Success = sustainable improvement"

The Consultative Skill Set



Diagnostic Thinking

Scenario: League president calls: "We're having trouble getting volunteers."

Compliance Response:

- "Well, you need to fill those positions. It's required to operate."

The Consultative Skill Set



Diagnostic Thinking

Advice Response:

- "Have you tried asking at registration? Put out a sign-up sheet. Send reminder emails."

Consultative Response:

- "Tell me more about that. When you say 'trouble getting volunteers,' what specifically is happening? Are people saying no when asked? Are you not asking? Are volunteers quitting? What's your sense of the root issue?"

The Diagnostic Framework



Key Questions DAs Ask:

- What's the presenting problem? (What they say is wrong)
- What's the pattern? (Is this new or recurring?)
- What's the context? (What else is happening in this league?)
- What's the root cause? (What's driving the symptom?)
- What's the capacity? (What can this league actually handle?)

Diagnose the Real Issue



Scenario A: "We're losing players to travel ball"

- **Surface: Competition issue**
- **Possible roots: Quality of experience, scheduling inflexibility, perceived value, coaching quality, league culture**
- **What questions would you ask to diagnose the real issue?**

Key Principle: Diagnosis before prescription. Understand before advising.

Powerful Questioning



Questions Build Capacity, Answers Create Dependency

Why Questions Matter:

When you TELL leagues what to do:

- They implement (maybe)
- But don't understand WHY
- Can't adapt when circumstances change
- Call you next time similar issue arises
- Never build independent capability

Powerful Questioning



Questions Build Capacity, Answers Create Dependency

Why Questions Matter:

When you ASK questions that help them think:

- They discover solutions
- Understand reasoning
- Can adapt approach
- Develop problem-solving muscles
- Become more self-sufficient

The Question Types



Opening Questions (Build rapport, understand situation)

- "What's on your mind?"
- "Help me understand what's happening."
- "What's the background here?"

The Question Types



Challenge Questions (Expand thinking)

- "What are you assuming?"
- "What if you're wrong about that?"
- "What would [successful league] do?"

The Question Types



Option-Generating Questions (Build solutions)

- "What are your options?"
- "What else could you try?"
- "What resources haven't you tapped?"

The Question Types



Action Questions (Create commitment)

- "What will you do?"
- "By when?"
- "What might get in your way?"
- "What support do you need?"

The Question Types



The Question After the Question

Most Important Skill:

Ask ONE MORE QUESTION before giving advice

When they answer, instead of responding with your solution:

- "Tell me more about that."
- "What makes you say that?"
- "What else?"

The Question Types



The Question After the Question

Example:

League: "I think we need more fields."

You (resist advice): "What makes you think that's the issue?"

League: "We're always scrambling for practice time."

You (one more question): "Walk me through how you currently schedule practices."

League: "Well, we let each coach pick their own time..."

You: "Ah, so is it a field shortage or a scheduling process issue?"

League: "Hmm, maybe we need to centralize scheduling first..."

They just solved it themselves. That's consultative.

Holding Space for Struggle



Resist the Rescue Urge

The Temptation: League is struggling. You can see the solution. You want to jump in and fix it. Save them time and pain.

Holding Space for Struggle



Resist the Rescue Urge

Why You Should Resist:

1. Your solution might not fit their context

- You don't have all the information
- Their constraints may be different than you think
- Culture/personalities matter

Holding Space for Struggle



Resist the Rescue Urge

Why You Should Resist:

2. Solving for them creates dependency

- They learn "call the DA when it's hard"
- You become bottleneck
- Unsustainable for you

Holding Space for Struggle



Resist the Rescue Urge

Why You Should Resist:

3. Struggle builds capacity

- Working through problems develops skills
- Ownership comes from figuring it out
- Confidence grows through competence

Holding Space for Struggle



Resist the Rescue Urge

When to Jump In:

- True safety issue
- Imminent compliance failure with serious consequences
- They've tried everything and genuinely stuck
- Time-sensitive crisis beyond their capacity

Holding Space for Struggle



What "Holding Space" Looks Like

- Bad: "Here's exactly what you need to do..." (taking over)
- Good: "This is hard. I see you working through it. What's your next step?"
- Bad: "Don't worry, I'll handle it." (rescuing)
- Good: "I believe you can figure this out. What support would help?"

Resource Connecting



You Don't Have to Know Everything

Consultative DAs are connectors, not encyclopedias

- Instead of: "I don't know" (dead end)
- Try: "I don't know, but I know who might. Let me connect you."

Resource Connecting



Your Resource Network

Internal Resources:

- Other DAs with relevant experience
- Regional staff expertise
- Little League International resources
- Successful leagues in your district

Resource Connecting



Your Resource Network

External Resources:

- Local Parks & Rec departments
- Youth sports councils
- Community foundations (for funding)
- Equipment suppliers

Resource Connecting



Your Role: Know who knows what, make introductions

Example:

League: "We're thinking about adding a Challenger division but don't know where to start."

You: "I don't run Challenger, but three districts in our region do successfully. Let me introduce you to those DAs and a league that just launched one. They'll share what they learned."

Applying the Consultative Approach



Scenario : The Overwhelmed President

League president calls you frustrated:

"I can't do this anymore. I'm working 20 hours a week on this league, nobody else helps, and I'm getting complaints from parents. I'm about to quit."

Applying the Consultative Approach



Scenario : The Overwhelmed President

Old Approach (Tell/Fix):

"Don't quit! We need you. Look, here's what you do: delegate the concession stand to someone else, set up a volunteer coordinator position, and only check emails twice a day instead of constantly. You'll be fine."

Applying the Consultative Approach



Scenario : The Overwhelmed President

Old Approach (Tell/Fix):

Problems:

- Assumes you know what will help
- Solutions may not fit context
- Doesn't build their problem-solving
- Increases dependency

Applying the Consultative Approach



Scenario : The Overwhelmed President

New Approach (Consultative):

Listen & Validate

- "That sounds really overwhelming. Twenty hours a week is unsustainable. Tell me what's taking up most of your time."
- *[Listen fully, don't interrupt with solutions]*
- "I hear you. That's a lot to carry, and it makes sense you're frustrated."

Applying the Consultative Approach



Scenario : The Overwhelmed President

New Approach (Consultative):

Explore

- "What would need to change for this to feel manageable?" "What's keeping you from delegating some of this?" "Have you talked to your board about how much you're carrying?"

Applying the Consultative Approach



Scenario : The Overwhelmed President

New Approach (Consultative):

Generate Options

- "What are your options here? You mentioned quitting - what else could you do?" "What if you stayed but significantly reduced your role? What would that look like?" "Who on your board could step up if you gave them specific responsibilities?"

Applying the Consultative Approach



Scenario : The Overwhelmed President

New Approach (Consultative):

Support Action

- "What feels like the right next step for you?" "What support do you need from me to make that happen?" "How about we check in again in two weeks to see how it's going?"

Applying the Consultative Approach



Scenario : The Overwhelmed President

New Approach (Consultative):

Result: They own the solution, you've coached them through it, they've built capacity

Chat Poll: "What feels hardest about this approach? The patience? Resisting advice? Something else?"

Today's Key Takeaways



- The DA role is evolving — from compliance enforcer to consultative partner
- Questions build capacity; answers create dependency
- Diagnose before you prescribe — understand the root, not just the symptom
- Hold space for struggle — resist the rescue urge
- You don't have to know everything — connect leagues to those who do
- Identify ONE league interaction where you will intentionally shift from telling to asking — and notice what changes.