



Jesse Godding

**Southwestern Assemblies
of God University**

Athletics Director

Attentional cues are information from the environment that participants take in while competing. Competitors take in relevant and irrelevant information. Environmental attentional cues exist outside the individual competitor during competition. Focus on the relevant information and the opportunity for success elevates. Focus on the irrelevant information and the opportunity for success lowers. What is true concerning attentional cues in competition is true for athletics leadership in educational institutions.

Educationally, leaders that pay attention to relevant environmental characteristics enhance the opportunity for organizations to succeed. Conversely, leaders that embrace or focus on irrelevant environmental characteristics diminish the opportunity for success. For athletics leadership, technology is an environmental characteristic that can elevate or lower the leader's, and their institution's, ability

to succeed. It is not the technology in itself that creates success or failure, but how athletics

leaders attend to the relevant cues concerning technology that provides opportunity for success. For example, think of the pre-COVID nature of virtual meetings and the current nature and adoption of virtual meetings.

Athletics, and education, has evolved to an environment of high technological capacity. Consider the impact of learning management systems on faculty life, or the streamlined capability of advancement software. These two examples signify the evolution of educational institutions from low technological capacity to high technological capacity.

As athletics and educational processes become high technological environments, the capable leader must recognize, and be ready to embrace, technology that advances their unique opportunity for success. However, in the rush to embrace technology suitable for their environment, leaders need to avoid common pitfalls created by that technology. First, leaders cannot embrace all the toys on the technology shelf. From CMS to apps, learn to discriminate how the adopted technology would enhance your unique workplace and environment, evaluating the technology

through the lens of your department and institution and not your colleagues.

Second, higher technological environments provide less worker adaptability. Streamlined processes can create bureaucratic layers resulting in repetitive decisions that do not allow for the nimble responses to changing workplace dynamics. The higher the reliance on technological systems the lower the ability to modify behavior and respond nimbly to environmental cues. Third, as processes become more mechanized, workers have less opportunity for interaction with the product or end user. The danger is creating technology driven systems that, while enhancing the opportunity for success, neglect human interaction in an industry designed for human interaction.

The workplace is enhanced by today's technology. Athletics leaders need to pay attention to the relevant cues within the workplace environment to ensure the proper technology is adopted for their unique situation, the technology is not decreasing the ability to nimbly respond to other environmental factors, and a high technological environment doesn't preclude the necessary human element.



Brian Henderson

**Patrick & Henry
Community College**

Assistant VP of Student
Engagement and Inclusion/
Athletics Director

"One Simple Click"

Within college athletics, technology is there to help and advance our world of communication, however, it also can be the trigger of many troubling issues going on today with our student-athletes. A student-athlete can hit the game-winning shot one night and be on cloud nine, but then wake up in the morning to read a depressing social media post that brings down their high. Unfortunately, for all the good technology has done for the sports world, we have to be aware of the many negatives that come from it also.

Imagine yourself as a student-athlete and you've just hit a walk-off home run to clinch the series. Of course, you're probably celebrating with your teammates and fans. I know my baseball team and I were celebrating in 2021 when we won the Region 10 baseball championship. That night, May 24, I was so full

of hope, pride and victory. I had no idea the next morning my energy would be brought back

down to the crippling reality of injustices in our world in one simple click. I opened my phone and read the many posts on the anniversary of George Floyd's murder. This is just one example that happens all too often.

Unfortunately, some days when we wake up, there is a tragedy that our student-athletes have to cope with that they find out via technology. Not to mention, many athletes already have personal struggles they are trying to overcome. We have international student-athletes in the NJCAA that are here to study and play the sports they love. Many of these individuals are dealing with their own consistent anxiety that comes from the idea of whether they can go visit home and come back to the United States. How can a young international student-athlete play the game they love when they are worried about being able to be here? How can they give their focus to winning a championship when one simple click opens them to political debates about immigration and they fear being sent home? We can never underestimate how a simple news report or a social media thread can affect our student-athletes.

Technology also provides the biggest platform for opinions. Imagine going to sleep after missing a game-winning shot and waking up to thousands of opinions about you on social media. For some student-athletes this one simple click alone can be the onset of anxiety.

While we would love for our student-athletes to just wake up and watch ESPN, unfortunately it's not just the game highlights being reported. Now they're watching stories on their favorite players in scandals, the owner of their favorite teams under investigation, or their favorite coach receiving allegations. While viewership has skyrocketed due to the advancements in technology, it's taken away privacy from a lot of families. Everyone from the pros, to college, to high school, are now steadily under a microscope created from social media.

The truth is technology is impacting our student-athletes at an increasingly negative rate. Addiction, anxiety, and depression are just some risk factors of the effect of technology on student-athletes. However, we as athletics directors, coaches, mentors, and parents must stay aware and even more accessible to our student-athletes than technology, in hopes that they utilize the positive resources available. We are their best hope of defense against all the negatives of the world they find from "one simple click."