

CLARITY COMPASS WORKBOOK

GREG WOODMAN

PENN STATE HEAD COACH HIRING EDITION



Sponsored by ConnectHappyValley.com
by Greg Woodman

Version Number 1 "Road to..." – October 2025

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Introduction

When Penn State selects its next head football coach, we are doing more than hiring for a season. We are appointing a leader of culture, a builder of legacy, and a guardian of identity.

This workbook helps trustees, search committees, alumni, students, faculty, and staff evaluate candidates not simply by wins and losses but by alignment with Penn State's values and vision. Leadership is not only tactical; it is moral, relational, and consistent.

Use this as:

- A shared vocabulary of alignment
- A map to filter statements into behaviors
- A system to hold leadership accountable after hire

Foundational Leadership Frameworks

Servant Leadership (Robert Greenleaf)

"The servantleader is servant first ... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first."

Great leaders are drawn to service, not status.

Captain Class Ethos (Sam Walker)

In *The Captain Class: The Hidden Force That Creates the World's Greatest Teams*, Sam Walker studied the most dominant teams in sporting history. He discovered that their success was not driven by star players or flashy coaches but by Tier One Captains — leaders who:

- Lead quietly, behind the scenes
- Hold teammates to standard even in private
- Sacrifice for the collective
- Stay consistent under pressure

A coach who understands that ethos will build a team others want to follow.

Part 1: Pat Kraft's Hiring Criteria (October 2025)

Athletic Director Pat Kraft has publicly described the traits the next coach must bring:

"Our next coach will be someone who embodies everything Penn State stands for: integrity, accountability, toughness, humility, and an elite motivator. They must recruit and retain elite talent, both from high school and the transfer portal. Player retention is key. This coach must represent toughness, a bluecollar work ethic, and the class that defines this institution. They should honor tradition but evolve. The right coach will rebuild unity, ignite belief, and lead with vision."

These criteria become foundational filters for all candidate evaluation.

Part 2: Assessment Guide & Scorecard

Evaluate each candidate across dimensions. Score 1 to 5, and include notes.

<u>Dimension</u>	<u>Key Prompt</u>	<u>Anchor / Value</u>	<u>Score (1-5)</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Vision Beyond Football	Can they articulate vision beyond wins?	"Vision of excellence"		
Integrity & Accountability	Do they own mistakes and lead transparently?	"Integrity, accountability"		
Toughness & Humility	Are they strong and teachable?	"Toughness, humility"		
Elite Motivator	Do they inspire consistently at every level?	"Elite motivator"		
Recruiting & Retention	Can they build pipelines and hold talent?	"Prioritize recruiting & retention"		
Transfer Portal Strategy	Are they adept with modern recruiting tools?	"Attract transfer talent"		
Resource Maximization	Can they use PSU's strengths fully?	"Maximize elite resources"		
Tradition + Innovation	Will they evolve while honoring identity?	"Honor tradition but evolve"		
BlueCollar Ethos & Class	Do they reflect grit, dignity, and school values?	"Bluecollar work ethic, class"		
Cultural Builder	Can they unify staff, players, and community?	"Rebuild unity, ignite belief"		
Brand Stewardship	Do they represent PSU in and out of spotlight?	"Weight of who we are"		
Resilience & Learning	Do they grow through adversity?	"Confidence, conviction"		
No Victim Mindset	Do they accept responsibility without blame?	"Never plays the victim card"		
ServantLeader Motive	Are they drawn to serve first?	Greenleaf alignment		

(Max. Possible Score: 70)

Part 3: Candidate Comparison Matrix

After scoring multiple candidates, compare:

Candidate Name	Vision	Integrity	Recruiting	Culture Builder	Brand	Victim Mindset	Servant Leader	Total Score
Candidate One: Terry Smith								
Candidate Two:								
Candidate Three:								

Use narrative notes to highlight differences, not just numbers.

Part 4: Candidate One - Terry Smith Alignment

Based on his public remarks and opening, here is how Terry Smith aligns:

- “I call this place home. I love this place. I love the Blue and White.”
- “We need to stick together ... represent Penn State with pride ... do it the right way.”
- “Success is the team pulling a rope in the same direction.”

Boxes Terry Checks (likely):

- Vision Beyond Football
- Integrity & Accountability
- Toughness & Humility
- Elite Motivator
- Recruiting & Retention
- Tradition + Innovation
- BlueCollar Ethos & Class
- Cultural Builder
- Brand Stewardship
- Resilience & Learning
- No Victim Mindset
- ServantLeader Motive

Strategic areas like portal strategy or resource optimization might require deeper probing during interviews.

Part 5: Love vs Fear Filter

This helps evaluate whether a candidate leads from belief (love) or reaction (fear).

Scenario	Fear Reaction	Belief / Love Response	Terry's Words Suggest
Taking interim role	Defensive or reactive	Ownership, clarity forward	"Now it's my job to press forward."
Identity & belonging	Guarded, transactional	Heart, legacy, commitment	"I love this place ... Blue and White."
Continuity & standards	Flip identity or reset	Consistent values, clarity	"Nothing changes ... expectation remains."
Responding to loss	Blame others	Pivot, clarity, ownership	"We didn't win enough ... lead forward."

Terry's language leans strongly toward belief-driven leadership.

Part 6: Vetting Panel – Cael, Guy, Char

Final candidates should submit to confidential evaluation by:

- Cael Sanderson (humility, consistency, culture)
- Guy Gadowsky (energy, connection, identity)
- Char MorettCurtiss (empathy, trust, people development)

Panel Questions:

1. How would you build sustainable culture in adversity?
2. How do you recruit not just talent but leadership?
3. How will you unify people from different backgrounds and compensation into one identity?

Their feedback—based on alignment, not popularity—serves as final cultural clearance.

Part 7: Game Tracker as Alignment Test

Use key upcoming games as real alignment checkpoints. After each, record final score and whether Terry's leadership earns a "+" toward full-time hire.

Date	Opponent	Final Score	Coach Evaluation + / –
Sat, Oct 18	vs. Iowa		
Sat, Nov 1	at Ohio State		
Sat, Nov 8	vs. Indiana		
Sat, Nov 15	at Michigan State		

If PSU becomes the first 3-loss team to enter the playoffs — and the locker room unifies and plays to their talent level— that points toward naming Terry Smith to full-time status.

Final Reflection Questions

1. Are we hiring from clarity or urgency?
2. Does this candidate build a culture people want to stay in?
3. Would students, alumni, faculty trust them through defeat?
4. Is leadership drawn to service or status?
5. Does the hire align with our identity and push us forward?

About the Author

Greg Woodman has taught Entrepreneurial Leadership at Penn State since 2007 and is the author of Why Penn State: Why the 1880s Gave the Nittany Lions a Common Cause, Culture and Shared Values. <https://whypennstatebook.com>. He will graduate in December with a master's degree in Corporate Innovation and Entrepreneurship. You can email Greg at Greg@affinityconnection.com or catch his podcast on Youtube called "The Clarity Compass".