

Capello needs to 'connect' with players



Fabio Capello

It is vital for Fabio Capello to address his players' mental well-being if he is to inspire England to reach their full potential, according to a motivational expert.

David Elliott, who has advised Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger as well as Gerard Houllier when he was at Liverpool, believes the national side's recent failures can be attributed partly to a previous lack of understanding about what makes individual players tick.

Elliott claims Capello must "connect with his players at an emotional level and to raise their self-esteem, belief and trust," if he wants to achieve the winning mentality which he has made a primary goal.

Elliott has told the Italian he must discover first what motivates each player individually and encourage them to understand and embrace one another's differences.

He said: "When you get acceptance of one another's differences as well as the strengths then people can become more mature, more flexible and more bonded, and therefore more willing to fight for each other.

"You can't demand anything from players.

"Let's say I'm going to demand from you a winning mentality. What do I mean by that?

"A winning mentality to one player can mean a completely different thing to another."

Elliott believes one way Capello can achieve a unity of purpose is to give his players a specific goal, such as a points target during World Cup qualification.

"There are two basic sources of motivation: aspiration and fear. If you give the players something to aspire to, that puts them in a really healthy position," he added.

"They already want to win but they need a specific target to aim at."

Upon his appointment, Capello explained one of his first tasks was to establish why England's players appeared incapable of translating their club form on to the international stage.

Elliott believes this is perfectly understandable under the circumstances but insists it can be rectified, even in the short time available when the squad meets up.

He cited his work with England's non-league team, whom his techniques helped win the 2003 Four Nations Trophy tournament and the 2006 European Challenge Trophy.

Elliott insists technical coaching is far less important at international level than the mental aspect.

"Those guys know how to play football," he said. "Michael Owen's body knows how to score goals, Steven Gerrard's body knows how to take free-kicks. They've been doing it since they were six, seven years old. It's embedded in their psyches.

"The only thing that can get in the way of that is the mind."

Elliott has been impressed with Capello's start to his job and his desire to encourage a disciplined attitude from his players.

He said: "A football team is like a family.

"Like families, all teams need structure; all teams need rules. People need to know where they stand because any anxiety or uncertainty upsets the equilibrium of the team."

But Elliott did warn Capello of the dangers of responding negatively to performances, even in his body language.

He said: "Some of these managers, you see as soon as a player misses a goal, they spin round, turn their back and they've got their arms up to the bench saying, 'what was that?'.

"Players see that. They're looking for positive reinforcement, not negativity."