

# **THRIVE**

## **USER RESEARCH**

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# OUR PERSONAS



## TOM BLACK

### 42-45

- Athens, GA
- University of Georgia
- Head volleyball coach
- Looking to expand his network of professional coaches & teachers
- Finds it difficult to facilitate & maintain communication with other busy coaches
- Interested in becoming a better leader & teacher



## SUSAN HINES

### 35-38

- Santa Cruz, CA
- University of California Santa Cruz
- Women's tennis head coach
- Looking to create a broad network of coaches with experience in tennis and other collegiate sports
- Finds it difficult to create connections and communicate with coaches from other divisions, locations, & sports
- Interested in learning & growing from other more experienced coaches

# INTERVIEW: COACH BLACK

We began our research by scheduling a meeting with head volleyball coach, Tom Black. We prepared questions for Coach Black regarding his vision for the app, features, the purpose, and many more subject areas prior to our meeting. Below is the transcript from the interview.



**WHEN: September 12 @ 11 am**



**WHERE: Coach Black's office**

## KEY

**T = Tom**

**Pitch**

**Purpose**

**S = Students**

**Features**

**Branding**

**Common words/phrases:** learning, energized, burned out, learning from patterns, relationships, fired up, getting better

## Transcript:

**S:** If the app already existed, how would you be using it?

**T:** "Like in a perfect world, I'd have a **network on there of people that are passionate about the same things I am, teaching...** the main thing is **the real easy link to communicate, where the app like connects you without you having to do anything.**"

**S:** Just with coaches?

**T:** "I think you start with coaches because that's who I know but I think the end goal is like getting anyone who's **passionate about learning**, whether you're a parent, a teacher or a coach. These networks are just developing. I think the ideal things are a network of people I want to connect with and the end goal of that would be huge. **Connections that are really easy**, and then **I want to feel like I'm getting better from each interaction**. That's the big difference between this being just some social media app, this is something where I'm connecting people who are passionate about it and **we both get a little bit better every time we have an exchange**. And then **the app is learning each time hopefully and making those interactions better and better and better** from what it's learning."

**S:** What kind of conversations are you already having?

**T:** "Well it's early in the season... like the big thing with the app is like creating a connection that keeps you a little bit energized, because right now we're early in the season so we're just tossing ideas around. As you get more and more into the season you start getting really fatigued, you have really tough interactions with players and coaches, you're like limping by the end. You just want a break and I think that teachers feel that way, parents. So, what usually happens is like once you have some free time, you're able to talk to someone, and you get a lot better and you have some ideas so this is really trying to get this going more in real time. So, I think it's gonna change a little bit with time of year. So, there should be some freedom in the interactions. But that's why you input the 1, 2, 3 like how you're feeling and how you felt your practice went each time. That's the information. So if you're having some shitty practices and you're feeling like shit there's someone else that is too, so hopefully it's somebody you respect and have a relationship with and the app just links you, because what happens right now is like maybe a month later you might talk or you might see them 6 months down the road at a conference and that's nice but it's trying to just get that going faster so everybody can get better."

**S:** Would these be people that you already know?

**T:** "I think you'd have to start that way. But the angle is just this really smart app that links you with likeminded people that you probably would never meet, and then everybody gets better for it."

**S:** Will it be anonymous?

**T:** "I think they should know first names at least not anonymous, because if you were coach you want to at least know what school that guys at. Or that girls at so you can make sure you can find them. I don't think it should be anonymous I think you should be able to form a friendship out of it. The conversation shouldn't be surface level but I don't think I have to get into like your personal life I think there should be some emotion and stuff but it should be like what you're talking about. Because that's the whole part that burns you out. Thinking like these kids don't understand me, this coach doesn't understand me, like being about to talk about that. And then getting into the methods of what you're doing and then after each exchange I think you should be able to input something like thanks so much for talking to Jen, is there anything you can share of what you learned,? Like I learned I'm talking way too much I learned I need to be a better listener. I learned my lesson plans are too hard or my practice isn't hard enough and that's where I thought the word cloud function could kind of build the intelligence of it. I'm just trying to think of a way that the app can learn from each interaction. Because hopefully as the years go on it will be like hey Sam, we know you're a math teacher in West Virginia. This is a time that has been really hard for our clients. Here are some ways that we can help and here are some guys that are teaching your subject also, you might want to connect with them."

But I think it would take a couple of years for it to get that good. **But learning the patterns, learning from interactions.** I think the pain point is the burn out that all of us feel from it and I feel like if you feel like you're getting better you'll be fired up to keep doing it instead of just thinking are chatting. And that's **why it's really important that the interactions, I'll learn a little bit, I'm better, I have to feel that connection. If you feel it I think you'll get to the point where you can't wait to see if there's an alert.** But if you feel like it's just like Facebook...

I feel like **the rating has to be automated, so when you wake up, it'll say like how are you feeling today, how did your practice go?** Like that's got to be automated.

**S:** What are some of the biggest issues coaches experience?

**T:** "The biggest thing is you tend to be a roller coaster with your results, teachers do too and parents. So really **one of the big things that app can do is get you centered on your process.** Like when you have a good or a bad result it's very easy to think are my methods working? And it's really good to connect. **Losing, the biggest one honestly is big conflicts with players and coaches. Those hit you the hardest."**

**S:** Like uncoachable players?

**T:** "**Just a blowup.** Like the kid got pissed for 1 million reasons, she didn't play, she blew up and practice or you went to hard on that kid. **Those are super draining.** And then assistant coaches get frustrated with head coaches and head coaches get frustrated with assistant coaches. So those are the moments that can really drain you were you start to look and reach out. So **it comes down to relationships.** When their relationships go bad, and it's going to happen, those are the moments that take the most energy. And then I think losing and winning, that stuff definitely has an impact on you, but I think it's after how things are actually going with the people in the group. Because **in the end you want to be good for your people and you want to feel like your people want to be around you.** When those things aren't happening, that's when you get the most drained. I feel like that's usually what people talk about the most."

**S:** Interested in a FAQ section?

**T:** "I think that's OK, I just don't think it would be used that much. I can just share a story like what kind of prompted this idea. I'm always reaching out to people and we're always saying like God we got to talk more, we got to talk more. So I created a message board and I got all of these people I'd been talking to connected. I had the head sideline guy, tight end coach, couple Olympic athletes, you get the picture.

I could pay I could get people to pay to subscribe for advice to that, right? I got those people, they all like accepted, and then I listed like six topics that we always talk about just to get the conversation going. **I had like four replies in three months.** And it was fucking infuriating. It was like I know these people I talk to these people all the time they all say they want to get together. And **they just admitted it was because they had to like go into it.** So I think all of those talks are great and you could probably have the best people in the world listening to it, I know plenty of websites like that but they just don't get hits. Because you've gotta go into it. **I want an app where you just swipe right and I'm talking to you.** But I think you still need that, I think you need that library because that's part of the intelligence but I think you'll get about an occasional hit. That's my gut."

"So if you and I got connected and I swipe right and You're like hey I had a tough day, I can't decide if I want to write back but **it's like right there. All I have to do is say like sorry, hope it goes better or I can engage.**"

**S:** How often do people reach out to you?

**T:** "A fair amount. Probably every other day or something. I think that's because I'm so proactive with it. I mean I'll ask anybody."

**S:** What should we ask in the survey?

**T:** "I don't know if this makes it too complicated, but I know there are two things that I am most interested in. So there's **the science of coaching and teaching and then there's the relationship aspect,** like how to relate to your players. So for teachers it would be the same and parents the same. The science of raising a kid and then your relationship with your kid. So those two things are the things everyone's most curious about. So sometimes you have questions about how am I actually teaching and then other times you think how do I relate to this kid. So if it's in one of those two fields, people tend to get pretty excited about it. I don't know how to do that with in the app, I thought that might make it too complicated. **But that's where good conversations usually happens within those two.**"

**S:** Should it be invite only?

**T:** "I don't know how many people you think we need at first, but I can just invite the first."

**S:** I know last time you mentioned the location-based feature of the app, how would that play into the app?

**T:** "I think that's down the road. Because to me it's like say this thing couldn't be more successful that means like people all over the country are doing it. So I thought it would be cool if the app was linking in to say, hey we saw you were in Detroit there's like John Betty Sally are all doing the same things you're doing 10 miles away. But that's down the road. And that would be really cool it would be like **people just down the road that you actually want to hang out with.**"

**S:** Do you plan to monetize this?

**T:** "I think you can **monetize it any point.** Well, not in beta mode, but I think outside of the select group and then I don't know how you do it. Well actually now that I think about it, that does kind of simplify the science and relationship part because there are experts in that. So that might be like **the premium package if you want to connect to a scientist.** The other thing is a lot of people I talk to are like insane at what they do but they're easy to get to you because they're not, like their field is, they're not rock stars. They are rock stars at what they do but they are easy to access. **But if you are a parent or teacher you're desperate to know what they know. They'd be willing to pay.**"

**S:** What will the core features be?

**T:** "**The survey, the daily survey, the connection, and then inputting what you've learned.** I think location is down the road, I think if it grows we definitely need that. You might be able to do notifications once a day, right after practice."

"I feel like **it's a need where you don't really feel like you needed as much until it's happening.** It's not like my teeth always feel dirty and there's a toothbrush. It's like why am I so fatigued. I think **this app has the potential to make you feel better the more you interact with it because you're getting that connection that is really hard to get sometimes.**"

**S:** Do you have any ideas for branding?

**T:** "This will sound really clunky but maybe for a slogan think - **being better for the people that matter most to you.** That's what it's about. And I think **people I'm thinking of would gravitate toward that.** Just something about learning. Or **learning, evolving, enlightening. Coaching and teaching are so similar** and I learn a lot from teachers who never coach. I don't want to just talk to coaches. Have you guys been on the train ugly website? That guy is the man. He's a marketing whiz. He's so good with his videos. **He makes really sciencey stuff very entertaining.** One of his big goals is to get high school kids fired up on some of this stuff. Tell him you were talking to Tom and he said you were the man. Read his manifesto it will give you chills. **I get fired up every time I see it.** He would be fired up about being a part of it."

**S:** Should we include rules and regulations about NCAA?

**T:** "That's a little too specific, that's a little too niche. I can see people using the message boards once people are actually involved in the thing but not until. I think you need some investment before."

**S:** What do you mean by word cloud?

**T:** "If I input I don't want to think about what you need me to input when I tell you what I've learned. I'm just thinking of a way for the program to grab information and find patterns. I don't care what it is. "

# INTERVIEW 2: TREVOR RAGAN

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During our interview with Coach Black, he suggested we reach out to Trevor Ragan and use him as a resource throughout the creation of this app. Trevor is the founder of Train Ugly, a website that inspires coaches and other eager learners to perform to their fullest potential and strive to continue learning every single day. In Trevor's words, he "seeks out the experts, read and study their work, and usually go try and hang out with them for a while." We see Mr. Ragan as being an extremely useful resource for us while we research, brand, design & create this app. He has been unable to schedule a time for the phone interview thus far, but he will be free to answer our questions on October 2nd.



**WHEN: October 2 @ 3:30**



**WHERE: Phone Interview**

## Questions:

1. We looked over your website and were really inspired by your drive and passion to your work. How would you describe what you do for a living?
2. Tom mentioned that a big part of your work is working with students for motivating them. How does that inspire the content that you put out?
3. How did you meet Tom Black? What is your relationship with him now?
4. What are some of the biggest struggles coaches and professionals have expressed to you?
5. How do you communicate with coaches?
6. What are your initial thoughts on the app?
7. How do you see this app being beneficial for coaches? Do you believe coaches benefit from connecting with other coaches and teachers about the struggles in their jobs?

# SURVEY

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