

[A Rowing Coach Has to Decide . . .](#)

Posted on [August 8, 2012](#) by [SeattleCoach](#)

A 13 foot oar hangs from the ceiling in my office on Lake Union. It was used for years in the big racing shells that row past my office, through the Montlake Cut and into Lake Washington.

For ten years I rowed these “eights” competitively, and practiced the lessons of this beautiful sport. The old oar in my office reminds me of how those lessons apply today as I coach the men and women who walk under it. The lessons are many, but as I watched the US Women’s Eight win the gold in London a few days ago, I thought of one that applies to the executive leadership of many of my clients.

When a rowing coach puts together a competitive eight, she asks her rowers to compete for their seats: Who should be in this boat? Who should be in which seat? The same questions any good leader has to ask. The questions of strength, time, skill are pretty easy to measure. But veteran coaches also have to ask a very intuitive question, “Do I choose the eight best? Or the best eight?” Which eight can row as one? Each rower unique, committed and connected.

The eight best? The best eight? Guess which crew usually wins?

To read more Lessons from Rowing, click here to read my article, “Getting to Whoosh!”