

Rescue Your Summer in Three Simple Steps

Randy Gilmore

Randy Gilmore will present "Find and Build From Your Strengths" on Tuesday, July 28, 2:45 p.m.

DCI, BOA, and the ABCs taught in educational institutions offer countless approaches to the strategic planning of a marching band program. Add individual preferences toward music—style, volume, sound, and technique—and the confusion could ruin anyone's summer vacation as one contemplates the impending marching season. I've always wanted to be a superhero, so let me save the day, or at least cut through the clutter and rescue your summer with three easy steps.

You've probably heard the quote, "Winners never quit and quitters never win." You may have even shared it with a student who was falling behind and contemplating dropping out of your program. But, have you ever considered the fact that you must quit some things in order to win at others? Winners make choices that keep them moving in the right direction.

The following three steps set up thoughtful decisions to keep your goals in the forefront and guarantee you will hit the mark.

Step One: Commit

"What makes a plan capable of producing results is the commitment of key people to work on specific tasks." —Peter F. Drucker

Unlike the chicken and the egg scenario, success has a very clear starting point, whether it is a marching program or a business. The first step is always to identify your goal and commit to obtain it. If there is no goal, how will you know when you've reached it? If there is no commitment, what will push you past the first hindrance that challenges your progress?

Think with excellence in mind. What will the end result look like? Dream big! What compels you to complete this goal? Why? Without a compelling cause, it may be possible to reach your destination, but it will be very difficult to bring others along with you. Bands accomplish great things when everyone identifies with the goal and has an invested interest in accomplishing it.

Commitment and goals alone are not sufficient to succeed, however. A goal without a plan is merely a dream. In fact, commitment is the fuel that runs the engine of a plan.

Step Two: Plan

"Strategic planning is worthless—unless there is first a strategic vision." —John Naisbitt

Develop a plan that focuses on all the elements that could hinder or contribute to your band's success. Working with a staff, student leaders, parents and/or administrators requires good, intentional communication. Take the time to brainstorm, discuss the plan and develop a strategy with your team to increase ownership and commitment. Spell out your plan and make it clear to all involved. This will probably not be a one-time presentation, but something that is spelled out and referred to constantly. Measuring lines should be instituted along the way to gauge progress and reassess.

A major factor that must not be ignored when developing a plan is the assignment of responsibilities. Optimize your strengths and the abilities of your staff, students and boosters. If you can delegate according to strengths and what individuals are passionate about, they will be more apt to give their best effort. Assigning work according to everyone's strengths will also allow you to magnify your leadership according to the 80/20 rule.

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“Your goal is to enable and empower people to make decisions independent of you. Each person in your group is an extension of your leadership. If they feel empowered by you, they will magnify your power to lead.” —Tom Ridge (former secretary of Homeland security)

Step Three: Act

“Act quickly, think slowly.”
—Greek saying

Once the plan is in place and commitment is secured, it is time to act. This is the moment of truth for a leader. He/she must make every moment count toward the accomplishment of their goal. The best plan in the world is worthless if no one implements it. Students, administrators, parents and communities are needed to bring life to your strategy. But how do you keep them all on task and headed in the right direction?

A leader's choice to constantly focus on excellence will fine-tune a band into a sharpened arrow, ready to hit the mark. Treasure your most precious resource, the people around you, by protecting them from

doubt and keeping their path straight toward the accomplishment of your corporate goals. Excellent leaders avoid blind spots by taking time to ask and LISTEN so they are in tune with the realities of the people they are leading.

As was stated earlier, we have to realize saying, “Yes,” to one thing always means saying, “No,” to something else. Therefore, decisions must be weighed out according to what is best for the group and the attainment of the goal. Stay focused on progress being made and where you're headed rather than rehearsing mistakes and floundering in setbacks. This positive focus will allow for wise “real-time” decisions.

As a music educator, a primary concern is whether or not you will

meet the needs of your students and community as you share your knowledge and appreciation for music. Even the smallest organization can bypass failure and operate an engaging and effective program by following these three important steps. Take a step closer to your dreams today. Ready? One, two, three...

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Over the past 21 years, Randy Gilmore has developed Marching Show Concepts (MSC) into a nationally known company in the music industry. Featuring quality marching band products, MSC is at the forefront of field show design innovation. Built on one-to-one, relationship focused service, Gilmore exemplifies an expertise and standard of excellence that is well known and respected by music educators. He began his career as a nationally recognized high school band director and assistant marching band director at West Chester University and continues to serve the industry as a clinician, adjudicator and drill designer. Gilmore resides in Fort Wayne, Indiana, with his cat, Winston, and travels extensively.