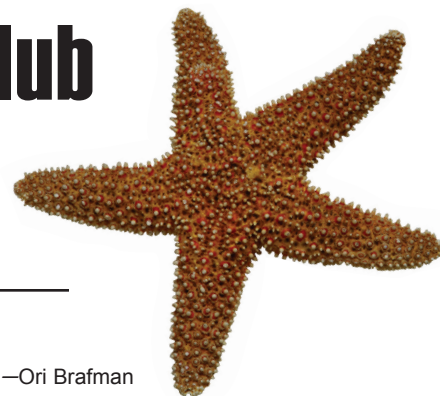


# A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Booster Club Can Make a Difference!

David W. Vandewalker



*“If you cut off a spider’s head, it dies; but if you cut off a starfish’s leg, it grows a new one, and that leg can grow into an entirely new starfish.”* —Ori Brafman

The best selling book *The Starfish and the Spider: the unstoppable power of leaderless organizations* written by Brafman and Beckstrom discusses how traditional top-down organizations are like spiders, but starfish organizations are now changing the face of business and the world. Revolutionary organizations like Wikipedia, Craigslist, Ebay, Google, Youtube, Facebook and Skype have discovered hidden powers in creating a sense of community through decentralized systems. In these organizations, power is distributed among all the people and across demographic or geographic regions. From the beginning, Ebay declared, “We believe people are basically good. We believe everyone has something to contribute. We believe that an honest and open environment can bring out the best in people.” The organizations like Google and Ebay are hybrids of the spider and starfish as there are clearly executives casting the vision and directing the core business while starfish elements are catapulting the growth and success by giving their customers a role. Ebay turned over the policing of the site to its users; Amazon encouraged any reader—however educated or well read—to review book titles; and Oprah

created circles where her readers became coveted customers of the publishing industry. I am convinced that a 21<sup>st</sup> century booster club can make a difference if it functions as a hybrid spider/starfish business model with the band directors at the head of the company sharing the vision and nurturing relationships while booster members empower each other in creating a starfish that will have a growth and success of perpetuity.

A 21<sup>st</sup> century booster club organization could really make a difference in the life of a band program. The challenges of a successful program can be overwhelming especially when one must “reinvent the wheel” frequently. How many times have you found yourself in a crisis needing to find a replacement for that special parent who has “done it all” and no one else knows how to do it? Developing a booster club with a starfish approach creates a win-win environment for the teacher and students. Having a booster organization that continues to grow and can rebuild itself can truly rescue the band director. When the band director gets rescued, then the students and director can get back to making more music! Isn’t that the ultimate goal for all of us? The

more time students and teachers spend studying and listening to music...the more musical they will be. The more time teachers have to teach... the more prepared and trained the students will be, etc. It becomes a WIN-WIN situation.

This year at the annual TBA Convention/Clinic, we will be hosting “**The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Booster Club**” seminar on Monday, July 26. The purpose of the day will be to explore how to successfully nurture a small army of volunteers through three training sessions integrated with a visit to explore the myriad of vendors in the exhibit hall.

Mike Brashear, TBA Executive Director states, “I hope band directors from all across the state will register their booster teams for this exciting day.”

As a band director desiring to develop a strong army of volunteers, I researched various topics of leadership, management, event coordination, etc. and discovered four reoccurring topics, which I believe, are the essentials in building an army of boosters for building a successful small business of volunteers.

The four topics are:

- Sharing the Vision
- Relationships
- Preparation
- Empowerment

## **A 21st Century Booster Club Can Make a Difference!**

I find it very intriguing to discover that the qualities of great leaders and visionaries of the past are quite similar to those of present day. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Booster Club seminar will explore the four topics and their significance in building an effective business plan for the future.

### **Part One: Enlisting an Army of Volunteers**

Perhaps the number one biggest issue in establishing volunteers is taking anyone who will say “YES, I’ll do it.” This occurs when educators get so buried in the job that one reaches a point of desperation and gladly takes any volunteer who will say “yes” whether or not they are capable or able to do job well. This session will examine the four basic personalities that exist in every organization and how to easily discover their gifts and skill set. Once you identify what people like to do, determine what they do well, and build a relationship...getting them to say “yes” becomes exponentially easier, thus your army of volunteers gets bigger and bigger.

### **Part Two: Creating a Small Business Plan of Volunteers**

It is all in the details. Often in a parent organization, we have people who are willing to help and serve but

are timid due to their limited experience. There are several components in which we can assist parents in their success. One is to clearly define the tasks or projects we are asking them to do. It can easily become the “cart before the horse” scenario. In many organizations, they don’t know “what” is needed so they really didn’t know “who” is needed or “how many” are needed, etc. This session will help discover how to develop plans necessary for developing a successful event or project through clearly defined business plans and project teams.

### **Part Three: Developing an Effective Project Plan**

This session focuses on how to build the “big picture” and then carry it out in full detail. Once the volunteers are assessed and the business plans are in place, then it is time to build an effective project plan including detailed preparation and information which becomes empowering for the team to create a successful, well-implemented project. This is the most critical and also the most difficult component due to the deferred gratification aspect of the effort and preparation necessary to bring it into full realization and completion.

*David W. Vandewalker is the Director of Bands at Harrison High School in the Cobb County Public Schools (GA). He serves Cobb County and the Georgia State Board of Education as a lead curriculum writer for band as well as GMEA as Chair for the State Music Selection Committee. Additionally, he is a currently elected High School Representative on the Board of Director for the National Band Association. He is the author of Boosters to the Rescue, 101 Ways to Harmonize the Madness for Music Educators, and Foundations for Wind Band Clarity published by Vision Publications. Prior to 1996, he taught in the Klein and Belton School Districts (TX). Mr. Vandewalker was honored as the 1995 Teacher of the Year in a National Exemplary School of Excellence. A third generation band director, he received a Bachelor of Music Education degree from Baylor University, earned his Master of Arts in Education degree from Central Michigan University and his pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Boston University. David is recognized in multiple editions of Who’s Who Among American Teachers, a*

*seven-time recipient of the prestigious National Band Association’s National Citation of Excellence Award, a 2006 and 2009 National Wind Band Honors Award Winner, and the 2006 recipient of the prestigious Sudler Flag of Honor presented by the Sousa Foundation. Mr. Vandewalker has conducted ensembles in numerous state and national events which include: Georgia Music Educators Association Convention, Bands of America National Concert Band Festivals, the University of Georgia High School Honor Band Festivals, and the Midwest Clinic. The Harrison Marching Band is a 2004, 2006, and 2008 Bands of America Regional Champion, a Grand Nationals Finalist, and a performing ensemble in the 2009 Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade. He is affiliated with professional organizations that include the NBA, Phi Beta Mu, MENC, WASBE, and GMEA. Mr. Vandewalker and his wife, Pamela, reside in Marietta, Ga. where she is Minister of Creativity and Worship Programming at Johnson Ferry Baptist Church. She has over 800 children actively involved each week in children’s music.*