Strategic Plans to Multiply:
Defining and Communicating Your Band's Culture

By David W. Vandewalker

Most social behavioral science experts define culture as the learned behaviors regarding the symbols, ideals, and intangible aspects of an organization. Culture guides the values, interpretations, and perspectives of the organization and how those elements are shared and transmitted by the members of the organization (Banks, Banks, & McGee, 1989). One significant strategic plan to multiply an organization is to: discover who you are as an organization, identify your culture, and effectively communicate your culture to the community. Lou Gerster, former Chairman and CEO of IBM maintains that "culture isn't just one aspect of the game—it is the game." What does culture have to do with a band booster organization? Culture defines and somewhat dictates a band program and/or booster organization's opportunity for success; defining and communicating your culture bring clarity and effectiveness to your community.

Establishing a mission statement, generating core values, and implementing policies of operation create clarity and help to define the culture of the organization.

A vision, or mission, statement is a description of what the organization would like to achieve; it offers broad guidelines for a course of action. This statement brings definition to the task, thereby offering direction and motivation. Soon after the completion of Disney World in Orlando, someone asked Michael Vance, the creative director, "Isn't it too bad Walt Disney did not live to see this?" Vance quickly replied, "He did see it and that is precisely why we are here today." Vision enables your organization's ability to maximize its efforts thus avoiding pitfalls of wasted energy and time due to unfocused efforts or worse yet, focused energies on matters that are not necessarily productive towards your program's goals and objectives (Hawkins, 2012).

After your vision has been defined, core values should follow. These values, 1-10 in number, form the foundation by which your organization works and conducts business. These critical practices are basic overarching elements by which each member of your organization goes about work. They are the essential elements of

your organization and articulate what your booster organization stands for, clarify who you are, guide organizational practices, and explain why things are done in a certain manner.

Finally, operational policies are established for each booster board member, fundraising opportunities, and critical chairpersons. These policies are practices, detailed procedures, and individual competencies for tasks to be matched to the appropriate booster members based on their competencies and skill sets. A strategic review of these guidelines should be systematically scheduled to ensure the organization is making crucial modification in response to changing times to maintain an accurate reflection of the evolution in the program's culture.

One of the key components to your organization's successful maximization of efforts is the effective communication of the culture that reinforces and educates the community-at-large. Successful

communication must be redundant, duplicated, and intentional. Lee Ellis reports, "A simple message must be repeatedly delivered in a cascading manner through multiple channels" (2012).

Communication in most band booster organizations occurs when a memo is sent home with the students or an email blast is sent out to the band database. An organization's communication efforts might gain greater productivity if consideration is given to how people learn or receive information. For instance, if you need every band parent to come to a mandatory meeting, someone who best responds to information visually may need to be sent three emails and two text messages; for someone who best responds to information aurally, they might need two phone calls and video attached to a text message; others may respond best by having a memo or newsletter to tactilely touch and hold, etc. Thus, effective organizational communication becomes about personal conversation, meetings, presentations, phone calls, text messages, newsletters, posters, graphics, Facebook events and status posts, emails, postcards, press releases, twitter, instagrams, etc. Remember, the communication should be concise, intentional, repeated often and through multiple channels.

Henry Ford states, "Coming together is the beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success." Working toward a shared, common goal creates community. Through the successful strategic implementation and communication of the organization's culture a by-product of community is realized in shared meals, projects, and stories. Community is created when there is trust between leaders and volunteers. A good leader trusts those in their charge and happily hands the reins over to them to complete their tasks. A good leader knows that emotions are contagious; they foster a positive atmosphere in their community by smiling, caring, laughing, sending emails/notes of encouragement. They find people doing something right and applaud it. The heart of community is building and sharing stories. These stories add character to your organization; they provide an element of hospitality, they help to create relationships, and they give voice to vital signposts in your organizations past, as well as offering excitement and expectancy for the future. Moreover, when people understand the culture of your organization and are enveloped by their band community . . . your band booster organization will multiply both in mass and effectiveness.

Banks, J.A., Banks, & McGee, C. A. (1989). *Multicultural Education*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Ellis, L. (2012). *Leading with Honor*. Freedom Star Media.

Hawkins, O.S. (2012). *The Joshua Code*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

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