

# Organizational Communication: Getting the Message Out

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Successful communication is critical for a successful band program and booster organization. It reinforces the organization's vision, core values, connects volunteers to the community as well as the students, fosters process improvement, facilitates change, and drives outcomes. An Air Force study examining leadership challenges found that poor communication was the most significant obstacle to effective leadership (Ellis, 2012). Booster organizations must create communication plans; critical to all communication plans is the act of over communication.

If you don't have a communication plan, the first place to start is to develop a list of the "who, what, how and why" of communication being specific in the protocol so that others can follow it and be rewarded in the proper implementation. Consider the structure of the organization and the need for information; then develop your communication chain based on your organizational framework (i.e., directors, executive board, project managers, and project team members).

The plan should include:

- each person/contact info listed in the plan
- a list of the communication chain for collecting data and channeling information to the appropriate parties
- determination of what method will be used to distribute information
- determination of the frequency of information delivery
- assignment of responsibility for whom will broadcast what information

Clear plans and well-defined messages must be repeatedly delivered in a cascading manner through multiple channels. Lee Ellis encourages reflection on the following list of "typical problems" that occur when leaders fail to intentionally and diligently over communicate:

- Uncoordinated actions
- Duplication of effort
- Failure to share best practices
- Friction and unnecessary competition
- Wasted energy
- Projects don't get completed on schedule due to inaction and slippage
- Wrong actions result in costly mistakes
- Bad assumptions leading to bad decisions and bad outcomes
- Decision-making becomes disconnected from values, strategies and policies.

- Frustration and fears begin to erode morale and energy
- People move into a survival mode and cohesion breaks down
- Teamwork degenerates to every person "looking out for number one"
- Mission effectiveness degrades and morale plummets
- High performers begin looking for a way out.

(Ellis, 2012)

The writers of the best-selling series, *Guerrilla Marketing*, suggest that most organizations significantly under communicate in that the average person needs to read or see an advertisement nine times before taking

**Vandewalker will present "Foundations for a Successful Booster Club for Band Boosters" on Monday, July 28 8:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. -and- "Booster Concepts: How to Organize and Empower Your Boosters" on Tuesday, July 29, 9:30-10:30 a.m.**

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action. Furthermore, because everyone has their own preference for receiving or responding to information, one must advertise a minimum of 27 times, across multiple media, to ensure a customer is adequately exposed to the information (9 or more times) to motivate action (Levinson, 2011). So, one must ask the question, if these are the statistics required of household names like Macy's and Home Depot, why do band programs and booster clubs think that successful communication occurs when only one flyer is sent?

Importantly, successful organizational communication should seek to clearly and concisely state a message or goals on a particular issue and then over communicate that message many times through multiple channels. Strive to include a minimum of one print, voice and digital method for each message, per week of your campaign or preparation leading up to an event. These methods could include:

presentations	emails	blogs
radio	blogs	skype
memos	websites	facetime
reports	text messages	linkedIn
policies	face-to-face	facebook
newsletters	phone calls	iChat
promotional	group	twitter
materials	discussion	instagram
voicemails	surveys	

As you seek to build your booster team, remember that strong communication provides the framework to keep your team strong. Henry Ford quips, "Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is a progress. Working together is success." The summer vacation provides the perfect opportunity to reflect on your program's communication effectiveness. Are you communicating a consistent message in multiple settings and multiple times? Are you using a variety of media and channels to communicate your goals and messages? Begin preparations now for developing strategic plans for implementing more effective communication for the new school year.

For additional information on this and other organizational management topics, please attend the "Foundations for a Successful Booster Club" seminar as part of the 2014 TBA Convention in San Antonio. The seminar will further explore important booster concepts in developing stronger organizational management strategies, communication plans, marketing, and branding a band program or event.

### Sources:

Ellis, Lee (2012). *Leading with Honor*. Freedom Star Media.  
Levinson, J.C. (2011). *The Best of Guerrilla Marketing: Guerrilla Marketing Remix*. Entrepreneur Press.  
Vandewalker, D. W. (2014). *Boosters to the Rescue*, 3rd Edition. Vision Publications.

*David Vandewalker is the assistant director of bands at Georgia State University and the music director/ principal conductor of the Metropolitan Atlanta Youth Wind Ensemble. During his tenure, the GSU Marching Band has received several honors and accolades including an invitation to march in the 2014 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, participation in the 57th Presidential Inaugural Parade, and a national top-ten honor by the 2013 College Band Directors National Association (CBDNA). Prior to his appointment at GSU, Mr. Vandewalker taught for 24 years in both middle and high school settings in Texas and Georgia. He is a recipient of the Sudler Flag of Honor (Harrison HS/GA), nine-NBA Citation of Excellence Awards, three National Wind Band Honors Awards, is recognized in multiple editions of Who's Who Among American Teachers, and is an elected member of the prestigious American Bandmasters Association.*

*As a conductor, he has led acclaimed concerts at the Midwest Clinic, MFA National Concert Festival, GMEA, and the CBDNA/NBA Southern Division Conference. As an active clinician, David has had multiple appearances at conferences for the Georgia Music Educators Association, Music for All Summer Symposium, Smith Walbridge Directors Institute, Texas Bandmasters Association, and the Midwest Clinic. He is the author of Boosters to the Rescue, Everyday Stuff Every Director Needs to Know, Foundations for Wind Band Clarity Arrangements, and the Foundations for Wind Band Clarity Instructional DVD published by Vision Publications. Mr. Vandewalker and his wife, Pamela, reside in Marietta, Ga. She is Minister of Creativity and Worship Programming at Johnson Ferry Baptist Church where she has over 1000 children actively involved in music making.*