

It's Difficult to Fill a Salt Shaker With the Lid On!

Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser



What a silly title for an article. This should be about BAND, and what's a salt shaker got to do with any kind of music program?

We step into our profession with a sense of purpose and an enthusiasm about sharing the JOY OF MUSIC MAKING with the young artists who choose to be a part of the school band program. However, unlike many of the other academic subjects, we are responsible for “filling the chairs” in our rehearsal rooms. We don't simply walk in and find an ensemble with perfect instrumentation sitting in front of us. Oh no; we are responsible for finding the students to participate in the band, and then we also are responsible for keeping them once they join. Until that challenge is met, we cannot avail the young musicians (or ourselves) to the endless treasury of great music.

To interpret the metaphor suggested by this article's title, filling a salt shaker is accomplished most efficiently and effectively when there is nothing that keeps the salt from entering the shaker; in other words, NO LID! To remove THE LID from our band programs, we must create and execute successful recruitment and retention blueprints that work, and then we need to “work them.” When this happens, it opens a

pathway for the personnel needed to develop first class music-learning and music-making.

It is apparent the successful programs have tried-and-true recruitment and retention templates that attract new members and convince the present members to continue their participation. It is the lifeblood of any healthy band, orchestra, or choir program.

Hopefully some of these shared proven R-and-R techniques will help “remove the lid” and allow you to FILL YOUR STUDENTS' HEARTS AND MINDS with the gift of MUSIC.

Recruitment and Retention Success

“*Success breeds success.*” There is no substitute for EXCELLENCE. The human creature, by design, wants to be a part of a quality group. While there are many tricks-to-the-trade, nothing will replace the intrinsic motivation of the young musician who eagerly awaits his/her chance to be a part of THE BEST BAND IN THE LAND. The “word is out” when an ensemble represents the highest quality of musical artistry and appropriate behavior. We all want to be associated with high standards of success.

“*Personalization.*” People join organizations when they are

recognized for their potential and their value to the group.

It takes far more than the “poster of invitation,” that is merely the announcement of the chance-to-participate. Recruiting requires special visits with the new candidates, chats with parents, hand-written cards of appreciation, phone calls supporting the inclusion of the student, and an ongoing agenda of outreach communication. Equally, retention of students suggests a similar process. We often take for granted those who tirelessly give their time and effort for the betterment of the group. There is much to be said for the value of THE SPOTLIGHT OF RECOGNITION. Nurturing our students is a never-ending process, nor should it be.

“*The best recruiters are the performing students.*” There is a reason marketers are quick to embrace the latest youth hero to be associated with their particular product. It suggests to the potential buyer, “If you use this product,

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you TOO can become a great basketball player, golfer, whatever.” When the young ones witness their peers (of just a few years older) ENJOYING themselves in a performance, there is little more persuading to do.

Let's not just TALK about the benefits of being in a musical organization, but let's allow the students to EXPERIENCE all the positive values by involving them in a specially designed LIVE PERFORMANCE. Including the “to be” musicians in some fashion will insure their desire to join the group. For retention effectiveness, those students you invite to “be the musical recruiters” will become the future loyal leaders of the organization. We all want to feel a sense of WANT and NEED and you have provided this forum for them.

“**Communication; a three-step process.**” Step #1 - let the students you plan to recruit KNOW how much you and the other members of the group want them to join. Step #2 - do an extended and personalized follow-up immediately after the recruiting effort. Step #3 - do

a second follow-up a week later with another invitation to become part of the music-family.

We are all good at the first step of these three communication components, but momentum is often

lost on Step #2 and Step #3. In the sales world it is known as “THE ASK.” We must ASK and RE-ASK. Many students are lost because we do not ASK them (and their parents) to become involved in the program.

If we could focus on one vital aspect of recruitment and retention success, it would be COMMUNICATION. Those who emphasize the importance of

PERSONALIZED communication are certain to enjoy a healthy harvest of new musicians as well as a dedicated group of students who will stay the course and serve as the key leaders for the continued growth and development of the program...and, above all, it helps keep the lid OFF with each filling of the salt shaker!

“Strike Up the Band!”

**Hear more from
Dr. Tim on
Thursday, July 24,
at 2:15 PM.
His presentation will
inspire you!
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Tim Lautzenheiser is a trusted friend to anyone interested in working with young people in developing a desire for excellence and a passion for high level achievement. His career involves ten years of successful college band directing at Northern Michigan University, the University of Missouri, and New Mexico State University. Following his tenure at the university level, he spent three years with McCormick's Enterprises working as Executive Director of Bands of America. In 1981, Tim created Attitude Concepts for Today, Inc., an organization designed to manage the many requests for workshops, seminars, and convention speaking engagements focusing on the area of positive attitude and effective leadership training. Over two million students have experienced his acclaimed student leadership workshops over the last three decades. He presently serves as Vice President of Education for Conn-Selmer, Inc. In addition, he continues his rigorous travel schedule touting the importance of arts education for every child.

His books, produced by G.I.A. Publications, Inc., continue to be bestsellers in the educational world. He is also co-author of popular band method Essential Elements and is the Senior Educational Consultant for Hal Leonard, Inc. Tim is the Senior Educational Advisor for Music for All and NAMM (The International Music Products Association).

Tim holds degrees from Ball State University and the University of Alabama. In 1995 he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the VanderCook College of Music. He is presently an adjunct faculty member at Ball State University (Earl Dunn Distinguished Lecturer), Indiana-Purdue/Ft. Wayne University, and Butler University. In addition, he serves on The Midwest Clinic Board of Directors and the Western International Band Clinic/American Band College Board of Directors.