

Recruitment and Retention

Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser

Recruitment and retention are the hottest topics in the band world at this time.

- Will my students enroll for the fall semester?
- What about the beginners?
- How many might I lose?
- Is there a way to sustain the registration numbers?
- Will reduced membership impact our staff/faculty?
- How will this affect the expectation of the administration, the parents, our community?

...and on, and on...and on...these are all valid inquiries.

The ultimate question is: HOW CAN WE MAXIMIZE OUR ENERGIES FOR THE MOST PRODUCTIVE POSITIVE OUTCOME IN OUR RECRUITMENT/RETENTION EFFORTS?

Whether you call it marketing, advertising, promoting, selling, publicizing (plus a host of other labels), it still comes back to: COMMUNICATION. It is the wherewithal to create a powerful message that will grab the attention of the listeners to understand the BENEFITS of the given program/band, and - above all - to deliver the message multiple ways to connect with the potential prospects. Let us not overlook the value of FREQUENCY; there is a reason they show the same television commercials time-and-time again. Each cast of the nets will garner more fish.

In a world that is saturated with communication, how do we FRAME OUR MESSAGE to offer a bountiful

harvest with our recruitment and retention efforts? Might I suggest one of the answers is PERSONALIZATION. We've become numb/oblivious to mass marketing, generic cyberspace messages, colorful brochures, fancy websites and a host of other information outreaches. However, when we see anything that has our name attached to it, then we are more likely to seek what is being offered. The following list suggests some tried-and-true ideas that can be adapted to interface with decision-makers (parents, administrators, counselors, students, colleagues) who are the key influencers. Of course, these are merely blueprints; the real magic lies in the persistence required to manifest the ideas into reality.

EMAIL: Take the time to put the NAME of the reader in the subject line: "TO JIM PATTON from Mrs. Band Director...a personal note is included about Sarah's future." The additional name of the daughter pulls the reader even closer; this is no longer "just another email." It warrants attention. Yes, these have to be sent one at a time; no mail-merging.

NOTE CARD: A handwritten card with a short invitation to seriously consider membership in the band is a home run. Use a real stamp, smile. People take the time to READ a card addressed specifically to them. It separates this mail item from everything else. Ask for a return phone call, text, email, etc. Create a two-way highway of conversation.

LETTER OF INVITATION: The student leaders can hand-address the envelopes. While the letter can be printed, script a special note to the recipient: "Thanks, Mrs. Jones, I certainly hope Jeff will consider joining our beginning band program. Please let me know if you have any questions; here's my contact information...I look forward to hearing from you."

BIG BROTHER/BIG SISTER: The high schoolers can take-on the task of selecting a beginner to be a nominee for their band sibling. With the myriad of social media networks the students employ, they can recruit the candidate accordingly. This has win-win written all over it.

BOOSTER/PARENTS: Herein lies a group of loyal fans who are clearly aware of THE VALUE OF BAND and what it means to their child/children. Put together an event where they can speak to the new group of "possible" band parents about the importance the band experience for their entire family. There's something to be said for the ICE CREAM SOCIAL...in addition to the ice cream.

ADMINISTRATORS: Seek testimonials from the administrators; include various quotes from those who understand the intrinsic and extrinsic value the students are availed to throughout their band lives. From the artistic language to the leadership life-skills, we know it puts the students at the forefront of the school environment. Let the principal speak about the benefits of band. Then share this GOOD NEWS with everyone.

Recruitment and Retention

YOUTUBE MOVIE: We know we have students who can create Academy Award winning movies on their phones. Challenge them to produce a 5-minute documentary with the theme: “WHY BAND?” They can use snippets from alumni band members, present band members, parents, community leaders, etc. Send the link to everyone; the best recruiters are our students.

PROFESSOR HAROLD HILL: “The Music Man” taught us much about RECRUITMENT. Professor Hill spent many hours talking to the townspeople about THE VALUE OF PLAYING IN A BAND. He used the old-fashioned approach, face-to-face, eye-to-eye in an open conversation and he convinced an entire community about the importance of HAVING A BAND! It’s still the best form

of recruitment there’ll ever be...and it produced a parade led by 76 TROMBONES!

The list is endless, the possibilities are at the limit of the imagination. Let me reiterate: ***The real magic lies in the persistence required to manifest the ideas into reality.***

All parents want their children to have a happy and successful life. Empirical research continues to point to the band/music experience as a culture that prepares our youth to handle the challenges they will face as they embrace their adult responsibilities. Let’s use every delivery method we can to make certain this critically important information is understood by everyone.

There’s never been a better time to “band together!”

STRIKE UP THE BAND!

Tim Lautzenheiser began his teaching career at Northern Michigan University. He then moved to the University of Missouri, and from there to New Mexico State University. During that time, Tim developed highly acclaimed groups in both instrumental and vocal music. Following his tenure in the college band directing world, 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 teacher inservice workshops, student leadership seminars, and convention speaking engagements focusing on the area of effective leadership training. After thirty-plus years of clinic presentations, some three million students have experienced one of his popular sessions. Tim presently serves as Vice President of Education for Conn-Selmer, Inc. He is a nationally recognized voice touting the importance of arts education for every child.