

# **Pitfalls are the Pits!**

## *The Most Common Mistakes Band Directors Make*

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Let's explore:

### **I. What does a successful band director look like?**

- a. In his community?
- b. To his parents?
- c. To his students?
- d. To his administration & fellow colleagues?

If you can describe a successful director, you can evaluate one (yourself).

### **II. What is expected of band directors in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?**

- |               |               |                   |            |
|---------------|---------------|-------------------|------------|
| a. teacher    | b. counselor  | c. consultant     |            |
| d. promoter   | e. accountant | f. motivator      |            |
| g. bookkeeper | h. conductor  | i. problem solver |            |
| j. organizer  | k. architect  | l. designer       | m. speaker |

### **III. Critical mistakes band directors make often involve -**

- a. communications
- b. ethics (never compromise your ethics!)
- c. competition driven (abusive to students, staff and self)
- d. failure to properly plan (rehearsals, trips, transportation, calendar of events, disburse information to everyone, esp. parents)
- e. ENJOYMENT for band is taken away (your approach)
- f. good rehearsal skills (ask for help, seek advice)
- g. selection of contest music (ask colleagues for ideas that fit)
- h. getting "too close" to your students- perceptions- (draw the line)
- i. money & financial records (get parent or colleague to assist)
- j. inappropriate language or gestures of disrespect
- k. being "fair" and impartial – auditions, tryouts, etc.
- l. failure to "play ball" with the faculty and administration
- m. RETURN your phone calls / respond to your EMAIL!
- n. get the paper work done in a timely manner – avoid the stress!
- o. ignoring family and self needs (time and attention)
- p. YOUR HEALTH! (drop a few pounds, enjoy your life!)
- q. failing to ask colleagues to come listen (watch) your rehearsals
- r. failure to keep band "fun", meaningful, and enjoyable
- s. maintain energy to make it through the day – get your rest!
- t. failure to properly interact with an irate parent (no plan)

**Suggestions that will produce big-time success for you:**

1. Be a professional in every way. Be a positive role model on campus and in the community. Make your students and parents proud that you are the director.
2. Be VERY creative in the area of public relations.  
(e.g. invite the head coach or the principal to conduct the fight song at pep rally)
3. Promote "good will" in your town...offer to provide musical groups at the key town gatherings; parades, ribbon-cutting ceremonies.
4. Invite school board members & the superintendent to your concert. Be sure and acknowledge them at the concert (have them stand and be recognized).
5. Send out a special letter to parents when their child has accomplished something marvelous (e.g. all-state, a one at UIL solo & ens., Eagle Scout honor).
6. Read articles in the music journals; keep up with new state rules-TMEA, UIL, etc. Keep up with latest "hot" mouthpieces on the market. Network information.
7. Don't sweat what you can't control. Ex: bus breaks down on your way to contest, this is out of your control. ... how you handle it IS in your control: simply reload passengers on other buses and move on.
8. Invite guest soloist to perform with your group (or solo feature them)...have the soloist give a master class. The kids love this.
9. Go to live performances! Encourage (or better yet, take) your students to local concerts (symphony, college bands, church, etc.). Invite college groups to come perform on your campus. GREAT PR for you and them.
10. Teach your band to respect and applaud the hard work of other bands.
11. Promote band director parties & bonding activities in your area.
12. Send notes of congratulations to other directors & bands for their achievements. This is a VERY classy gesture on your part.
13. Bond with your faculty when you get the opportunity. They can help your borderline students avoid the "no-pass, no-play disaster because you established good communications early in the year...tell them academics come first.

14. RETURN phone calls!!! - People gain tremendous respect for directors, teachers, and public servants who return their calls. It speaks highly of you to them!
15. Be positive much more than negative. Enjoy the kids, your friends, your job!

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