



## Social Marketing in the Band Room

Your students do it. Your vendors do it. Your boosters do it. Nearly 8,000 people are fans on just two marching band Facebook pages. What about you?

Isn't it time you joined the masses in communicating your program's brand and message through social media? No matter what your excuse has been thus far, it's time to take the blinders off. This is the wave of the future. And it's not just a wave that has come in, only to go out in time. No, the wave created by Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and the like, has come in with finality. It may mutate into things we know not of as yet, but it's not going away—of that you can be sure.

Why should you bother with social media? If corporate America is riding this wave with increased fervency, it is likely that it could benefit even a marching band program. 93% of Americans believe a company should have a presence in social media.<sup>1</sup> Why? The answer is as diverse as the many faces of social media, but the primary reason you, as a band director, should pay attention is: communication.

Social Media describes tools, websites and software that allow people to connect and share online. Social media websites, such as MySpace and Facebook offer a place where people can share ideas, images, and videos in relatively quick and easy manner.<sup>2</sup>

56% of American consumers feel both a stronger connection with and better served by companies when they can interact with them in a social media environment.<sup>3</sup> Another revealing survey recognized customer engagement as the single most important benefit of social marketing (87%), with direct customer communication following closely behind.<sup>4</sup> Engagement and communication. Wouldn't you like that kind of response from your field of influence?

What are your major frustrations as a director? Getting parents on board? Making sure students keep band a priority in their busy schedules? Generating community interest and support for your programs and needs? Fueling a passion that results in fervent commitment and joyful responses from staff, students, parents and others?

These issues all revolve around the need for engagement and effectiveness of communication. What is the primary benefit of social media? Engagement and communication. It is no longer a question of whether you should embrace social media. It's now a question of identifying the potential opportunities in doing so.

As we struggle to arise from the economic downturn we, as band directors and staff, need to focus on new ways of communicating with our students, parents and community. Social media technologies provide an excellent means of uplifting these relationships. In fact it does more than that, social media allows us to add value to our interactions with these key individuals in our program.<sup>5</sup>



Take it from this “over fifty” non-technological wonder, you may not be able to do all this yourself (nor should you). Most of us have youthful (and knowledgeable) resources in our classroom every day. Get everyone involved. Why not develop a contest on Twitter and raise awareness for your next band trip? Post your schedule of rehearsals online. Send out an encouraging word following a performance.

The possibilities are endless, but one thing is for sure. Begin. It is time to start. With budgets cutting back on resources, there is no better time than now to communicate with your students, parents and community. Engage them in your endeavor and see support and participation soar. Send me a tweet at @msconcepts

<sup>1</sup>Brent Leary, Cofounder & Partner CRM Essentials

<sup>2</sup>ResourceNation.com

<sup>3</sup>Leary

<sup>4</sup>2008 Marketing Executives Networking Group (MENG) “Social Media in Marketing” as cited in press release, November 6, 2008

<sup>5</sup>Leary