

## **Get *Inside The Box* — And win!**

I recently saw a comic depicting a boss pointing at a subordinate saying, “You get back to your cubicle and start thinking outside the box!” Other than being an obvious oxymoron, you can hardly live in our world without hearing, seeing or even saying the phrase “get out of the box.” We all know it’s a good thing. Isn’t it?

Of course, when you define the proverbial box as something that keeps us contained, confined, caged, trapped, claustrophobic, and otherwise unable to succeed, it is a good – and necessary - thing to avoid the box. But before you start planning your heroic escape, let’s take another look.

You are searching for that illusive “Wow Factor” that will catapult your program beyond mediocre to something incredible. You obsess about it. You have tried every “trick” in the book. You are constantly asking yourself, “What can I do that’s really different and exotic that no one else is doing?” Have you ever considered the possibility that you may be looking in the wrong place? Perhaps, you are over-thinking it.

I’d like to suggest that the ultimate WOW Factor is to present your show better than everyone else and to do so every single time.

The sad, cold, hard truth is that everyone seems to be chasing the wild goose of “WOW” because they can’t seem to win on the basics. They can’t differentiate music quality and marching skills. They endeavor to find a gimmick that (they hope) will pull their butt out of the competitive fire and place them in the winner’s circle.

Thinking outside the box is all well and good. But here’s the deal: If you win *INSIDE* your box - if you can actually do a better job with the basics - you win it all. Game over. You will take the grand trophy and walk away with head held high!

You may be thinking, “No, Randy, it can’t be that simple.” YES! It is that simple. The reason you’re repelled by this assumption is because it’s not easy. In fact, it is downright difficult to be better on the basics than the other bands. It is, however, where you will receive your greatest return.

Take a hard look at the programs that are consistently on top. They choose music that is appropriate to their organization; their music is always well played; their marching skills are refined and well-rehearsed and the thematic program is thoroughly and thoughtfully carried out. Do they capture the WOW Factor? Of course! They do it by winning inside the box. Nothing exotic. Nothing edgy. Just plain, old, awesome excellence. These bands are usually very well behaved, look sharp, have great organization and attention to details, which allows them to do really cool things, which send their scores off the charts.

Start today. List three to five basic things you feel are bottom line, absolutes in your program. Also consider your students’ and/or community’s expectations. Pick one basic item from your list. Improve your performance on that item by 20%. Then move on to the next basic and improve on that by 20%. Do this constantly—and forever.

You’re a winner. Go out and win!

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