
The Three Commandments Of Promotion

As announced at the recent Commercial Member Forum, NAMM has made available a whopping \$2.1 million to fund industry promotional efforts. This extraordinarily generous contribution is, by far, the largest sum ever made available for the purpose of stimulating interest in music. It also represents the second time that NAMM has stepped forward to provide substantial resources to promote the benefits of music to the general public. The first time was in 1947, when the association dramatically increased dealer member dues in order to raise \$45,000 to launch the American Music Conference. After sustaining sharp criticism from manufacturers in recent months for failing to respond to the industry's pressing needs, NAMM officers and directors deserve high praise for their bold commitment to fund promotion.

Ever since the development of "Player Piano Week" in the twenties, countless industry groups have attempted to create generic music promotions to increase consumer demand. But, after over 60 years of trying, a successful industry promotional campaign has yet to be developed. Some may argue that there have been successful industry promotions, but the record indicates otherwise. No major industry campaign that we can think of, from The Piano Manufacturer's "Enjoy Life With Music" ad campaign in the thirties to NAMM's "Discover Music" promotion in the seventies, ever generated sufficient results to warrant repeating. Cynics point to this disappointing record and claim that effective industry promotion is simply an impossibility. We feel, however, that nothing is inherently impossible about industry promotion; the failure of past efforts was the result of misplaced expectations and an unwillingness to accept the realities of the marketplace. We hope that by reviewing past efforts NAMM management can avoid some of the mistakes that undermined previous campaigns and will develop a successful promotion.

Not surprisingly, most industry promotions have failed for the same reasons. Based on a review of past history, we submit the following "Three Commandments" of industry promotion. While adhering to

them will not guarantee success, flouting them will unquestionably lead to failure.

Commandment One. Don't promise more than can realistically be delivered. Over-zealous promises build unrealistic expectations that ultimately lead to disappointment and disillusion.

Commandment Two. All promotional ideas should be based on the way the industry is, not the way a promotion manager would like it to be. For example, the music industry is extremely fragmented, and the probability of all segments supporting a single promotional program are slim. Programs that fail to recognize this, as well as numerous other specific industry characteristics, are not likely to succeed.

Commandment Three. Keep the number of decision-makers to a minimum. Large committees lack the decisiveness necessary to effectively manage a promotional campaign.

The amount of funding available also has a direct bearing on the type of promotion possible. Over the years, there has been a common tendency to launch promotions whose costs greatly exceed industry resources. NAMM's general fund of \$2.1 million seems like a vast sum, but in the realm of national advertising it represents a pittance. Given that annual advertising expenditures for a minor consumer brand like Preparation H top \$5 million annually, it is doubtful that NAMM could launch a national ad campaign extolling the benefits of music with available funds.

If NAMM can avoid some of the pitfalls mentioned above, there is a good chance that it can assist the industry in spreading the good word about participation in music. At the Commercial Forum, which is covered in depth elsewhere in this issue, NAMM officers challenged industry suppliers to submit various promotional schemes for consideration. Here's hoping the challenge is answered with well constructed proposals.

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