

A Recruitment Film, Standards, & Other 10% Solutions

Ever since NAMM agreed to put its financial strength to work for the industry, there has been a scramble to come up with the one "big idea" that will send music sales soaring. Unfortunately, "big ideas" are hard to come by, as amply evidenced by the lack of original promotional programs. While "big ideas" are in short supply, there is an abundance of small programs and projects that, collectively could assist industry sales in various segments.

School music dealers desperately need a contemporary and inspirational recruitment film, designed to encourage students to join the band. In the 1930s C.G. Conn Ltd. made the industry's first recruitment film, and it was enthusiastically received by retailers. Unfortunately, there have been few films made in the subsequent years, and those that still exist look like the out-takes of some 1950s television sitcom.

A recruitment film extolling the benefits and pleasures of participating in a school music program has several commendable features. First, it is a tool that qualified retailers can immediately use to stimulate interest and sales. Second, it is a manageable undertaking, one within the budget and expertise level of industry associations. And finally, it is the type of project that is unlikely to become bogged down in endless controversy. Think of it: A sure-fire means to recruit more students into a school music program that doesn't cost a king's ransom, is relatively easy to produce, and is completely uncontroversial.

We would urge NAMM, the National Association of Band Instrument Manufacturers, and the National Association of School Music Dealers to give consideration to the idea of creating a generic industry recruitment film. All parties would be well served.

On the subject of "small ideas" that might help assist the sales of musical products to schools, the music industry should follow the lead of the School Builders Association and the National School Library Association. In an effort to encourage communities to build the largest and most lavish schools possible, the School Builders Association has created a list of "standards" that outline acreage and square foot requirements on a per-student basis. Never mind that the School Builders minimum shames the majority of existing public schools. Simi-

larly, in their efforts to sell books, the Library Association has also assembled a list of "standards" that outlines number of volumes required per student as well as certain required texts every adequate school library should have.

Why not have AMC, or some other non-commercial association, assemble a list of minimum standards for school music programs? These standards would, of course, carefully detail faculty requirements, equipment requirements, and a basic course of study.

A list of impartial national standards would provide the local dealer with powerful ammunition for encouraging certain school districts to make a larger commitment to music, and for bestowing meaningful recognition on those schools maintaining an excellent program. Industry standards for a school music program are nothing terribly revolutionary, and they will hardly cause a revolution. However, they are easy to compile, they are within the grasp of existing associations, and they can produce immediate results in the hands of motivated retailers.

As the old saying goes, there is no single thing that can increase your business by 100%, but there are at least ten things you can do that will produce a 10% increase. We urge NAMM, and all other associations looking to improve the market, to consider all those 10% ideas.

Brian T. Majeski
Editor