



Money, Money, Money !!!

By Chris Casteel

That's it! Is anyone else sick and tired of hearing about our ever spiraling economy?! From late-night comics to the everyday news, there are times when I want to yell "ENOUGH ALREADY!" Not to say that this isn't a very genuine and trying situation for us all, but – come on already – let's start to look at what we can do to adjust our lives to this new (albeit unfortunate) financial reality. Call me naïve, but I still believe that we are in control of our own destiny, and that we have the choice to give in to the doom and gloom prognosis **or** find a way to make things work! In the words of a very wise woman I know... "When the going gets tough, the tough get going!" (Yes, that woman is my mom) ☺

So, how is this connecting with color guard, you ask? Well, let me explain. I recently asked a few seasoned individuals in our activity if they could share any ideas or suggestions that could help other instructors find ways to cut costs for their programs in this economic crunch. I was pleasantly surprised by the amount of responses I received. Not only that, but the overwhelming amount of encouraging words that were said about this issue and our activity. It made me realize that while we are indeed involved in a competitive sport; there really is a wonderful sense of community and support in our circuit. I would like to express a huge 'Thank you' to all who graciously responded with ideas and inspiration for this article.

Below is the list of suggestions that came my way.

Go Back/Prop less:

Perhaps spending the extra money on backdrops and props is not the best way to go this year. By forgoing the all the extras, your show can still be successful and save money.

Billboards, Billboards, Billboards!!!

Instead of spending over \$1000 on a floor, try a billboard. Contact your local Billboard warehouse. Total cost: Less than \$400. They take paint well and can be re-painted for next year. Check out the article "How to Construct a Floor from Recycled Billboards" on colorguardeducators.com.

Sponsorships:

As much as businesses are struggling, you may be able to offer them a relatively inexpensive form of advertising in your program with a financial benefit.

Flag Material:

Polyester dress lining is really inexpensive. It comes in a variety of colors and makes a great flag.

Lunch Period Sales:

Approach the Student Body Advisor at your school to ask if you can set up a table during lunch that sells cookies, candy or any item that you think might work at your school. Determine prices that will give your program a bit of profit. This not only gives visibility to your guard on campus, but it can bring in a little extra cash too.

Sewing Parties:

Cantina Anderson from colorguardeducator.com sent this suggestion in. I think it is best to keep it in her words...

“I have to say, I don’t enjoy these as much as I did in my younger, more energetic years.

They’re a lot of work, but they save a LOT of money if you don’t have the budget for professionally sewn flags. Set up two weekends for all-day sewing parties. Prepare the patterns ahead of time and have the fabric, pins, cutting boards, and lots of scissors on hand. Enlist both parents and students to come in and set up stations. Each station completes a portion of the task (in assembly line fashion): cutting, pinning or sewing pieces of your flags together. In no time (and lots of socializing) you have a finished set of flags! Make sure to supervise students well and emphasize the importance of straight, clean cuts when cutting out pattern pieces or your sewing moms may be frustrated.”

Carpooling:

Avoid the expense of district transportation and opt for parent drivers and carpooling to tournaments. Make sure that you address automobile insurance coverage and liability standards that are held by your district for parental transportation.

Recycle:

Use costumes, floors, props and silks from old productions. You can either use them as is, embellish, reconstruct or modify them in some way.

Los Angeles Fashion District:

The LA Fashion District is home to the largest selection of textiles and notions in the United States. There are nearly 200 wholesale and retail textile stores selling trim, beading and fabric. Great deals exist, but it can be a bit of a hunt. Please note: some stores require a wholesaler’s license or tax id number, but this isn’t a requirement for all of them. If nothing else, this is a wonderful area to be inspired by endless piles of fabric.

Buy in Bulk:

Avoid buying single rolls of electrical tape at Home Depot. Instead search the internet for the best deal on purchasing electrical tape by the bulk. The savings is considerable.

Skip the Silkscreen:

Why not opt for painting your flags instead of having them silkscreened? Of course you would have to experiment a bit, because paint will change the weight and fluidity of material. Believe it or not, spray paint works really well and is not heavy on the material.

Networking:

There are so many programs that have bins of used flags and props occupying space in a storage room somewhere on their campus. Approach other instructors to borrow used flags that would otherwise have no use.

Potluck Banquet:

Scale back on the end-of-the-season shindig and go potluck.

Theme Choice:

When choosing the concept or theme of your show, perhaps you may want to work towards a selection that allows for simplistic costuming with items that can be worn from home. Examples: Western, Mechanic, High School, etc.

Budget:

I realize this is a word that strikes fear into some of us, but it really works. Keep a small notebook with you at all times. Get in the habit of recording every expense and saving the receipts. This will really help when it comes to identifying and prioritizing where your program money is spent.

Dollar Stores:

It is a bit of a hunt, but you would be amazed by the interesting items you can find at one of the chain dollar discount stores to add details and life to your show. Be warned, you have to walk in with a bit of a creative eye – look for potential in everyday items. If you do find something that you think may work; purchase it as soon as possible, because supply is not abundant in these businesses. Items can sell out quickly.

Well, that is it. Listen, our economy is what it is, yet I believe that now more than ever your students need their color guard programs. In the midst of these challenging times, you absolutely can create an effective and quality color guard program. In fact, your programs can thrive as never before, because you are additionally teaching your students how to cope in adverse circumstances. My hope is that this article provided you a few ways to make money saving adjustments to your program while giving you some encouragement along the way. Perhaps one of the suggestions above will help to inspire you to personalize it to fit your own program. Whatever the case, please realize that you are not alone in this economy thing. Remember....
“When the going gets tough, the tough get going!”