

## **Team Recruitment & the “F.M.B.”**

By Chris Casteel

I know, I know...most of us are still lingering in the afterglow of Championships. We can, even now, hear the distant sounds of applause; the popping of the kettle corn; the slick gym floor beneath our feet; and the aroma of hairspray oddly mixed with sweat. Good times! Why can't we just hang onto these moments of euphoria for another week before embarking on yet another Color Guard process??!! Try as we might to remain in our world of denial, the truth is inevitable...it's time to talk TEAM RECRUITMENT!!

In my mind I like to akin the recruitment process with something I call a “Full Media Blitz” heretofore known as F.M.B. It is a campaign for potential guard members in a highly visual and explosive manner of communication. OK, I know it sounds a bit aggressive and slightly militaristic, but, let's be honest; we need to be assertive when it comes to building our programs! You never know when you might discover the future star/s of your program. In this day of constant visual and mental noise, it is imperative that you create an impressive F.M.B. Considering this, it is time to devise your plan of attack...I mean recruitment.

### **Objective #1: The Middle School Campus**

There is nothing quite like those middle school students to build and fortify your Color Guard arsenal...I mean team. Before you approach your district middle schools, there are a few things that you should be mindful of.

- The Target: Middle school students, for the most part, are driven by the need to belong. The idea of establishing themselves in a team, prior to their first day in high school is very appealing to them. Considering this, you must ensure that your team's exposure in this environment is visually cohesive. By this, I mean wear your team sweats, costumes, t-shirts etc. Anything that will make the members of your team appear as a unit will be enticing to the middle school student. In addition, your team members must be incredible encouraging and supportive to all potential candidates.
- Schedule lunch time performances of your Winter Guard show. These performances should coincide with a blanketing of audition flyers to the audience. Even if these flyers end up in the trash, it is worth it.
- Try to have a station/table set up at as many lunch periods as allowed by the school's administration. But wait, this is not just a table...make it a plethora of middle school delight complete with candy and any other tools of bribery you can think of. Of course in order to obtain these prizes, they must take an audition flyer. Make this table visually loud – think balloons, bright table cloth, music etc.

In the past, I have also asked students to fill out a form that includes their name and contact information. This will give you a potential call list. Whether this can be done, depends on the administration of the middle school.

- Stop by the school office with a **typed** announcement to be included in the morning broadcast for the entire school. Make sure that all pertinent information

for your auditions is included in the announcement, along with a contact name and phone number.

- Posters! Make them bright and colorful. Hang as many as possible. Make sure correct times and places are included.
- Flyers! Make them visually loud. Use graphics, fonts etc. to create an identity/look that is unique and as 'fun' as possible. Make sure correct times and places are included.

## **Objective #2: The High School Campus**

This target is a bit different for you as most of the students will already be involved with some campus activity. This doesn't mean you should ignore the recruitment potential in your school – it simply demands that you get a bit creative. **Use all of the above ideas to approach the existing student body at your school;** however, here are a few additional ideas.

- Make sure that your school's admissions office has a good amount of information about your program so that they can direct transfer students your way. If your school has a website, ask to have the audition information placed onto the site.
- Create a rehearsal party prior to audition week. Have existing guard members invite their friends to come to a rehearsal. Of course, this rehearsal will include games, prizes and snacks – go easy on the 'work' side of things. In addition, they will all get to leave the 'rehearsal' with a wonderful parting gift... an audition flyer!
- If your school has a TV station or media center, make sure you schedule 'air time'. Encourage your team leaders to create a 'commercial' advertising the auditions. By all means, review it prior to broadcast to ensure the appropriate message is being sent.
- Most of all get your existing team fired up and ready to promote and bedazzle (for lack of a better word) potential candidates. Your current team is your best weapon in the recruitment process. The reality is that for all your efforts, potential candidates will need to identify with the existing team members to feel a connection. Your members must be aware of their responsibility to welcome and encourage **all** who are interested in auditioning.

Finally, when considering your options in the F.M.B., be creative and original just like you are in the design process. Think **way** outside of the box. You are marketing your team and branding it for future performers. Do not think that you will be able to do this alone. Enlist as much parental help as possible. Your band director is also a fantastic tool in this process among the staff at the school.

So, without further ado, I leave you to plan your very own original F.M.B. – make it visually explosive and discover those future stars!!! 😊