

CEO Chat Transcript – January 21, 2009

<CEO Scott> Good evening everyone

<CEO Scott> Would anyone like to start with a question?

<Dean> Who is your favorite orchestra director in Indiana?

<CEO Scott> You are!

<Dean> That's my only question!

<CEO Scott> Thanks for breaking the ice

<Dean> How about an alumni fundraising update? How are we doing???

<CEO Scott> The answer to the question about how we are doing with the Alumni Campaign is that today we crossed the \$32,000 mark of donations and we have a commitment for the last \$30,000 from another donor.

<CEO Scott> Bringing us to a total of about 62,000

<Jeff> So we still need almost 190k by the end of next month?

<CEO Scott> Thank you to the 273 donors who have an average gift of \$65

<CEO Scott> That is correct, another 190k to go

<Dan> what happens if we don't make it?

<Dan> I hate to be all pessimistic and that...

<CEO Scott> We feel very optimistic about making the goal. We have had many conversations and I will be scheduling some large conference calls in the coming weeks with our key bands.

<Robert> Who would you call key bands?

<Jeff> Finalists

<Robert> Finalists vary from year to year, with the exception of the top 5/6

<CEO Scott> Those groups who regularly participate in our programs

<CEO Scott> I am not even talking about programs that just compete in the fall. We have many schools who participate with large groups each summer at our Symposium also

<CEO Scott> Just this evening our first group, Marian Catholic passed the \$3,000 level with contributions.

<CEO Scott> That was an awesome vote of confidence for us. Additionally we have had a number of groups over the \$1,000 level.

<Jeff> Does that list of "key groups" include DCI?

<CEO Scott> Are you asking if I would go to DCI for donations?

<Jeff> That, or individual corps who participate in the competition at Symposium.

<CEO Scott> I believe ALL non profits are challenged at this time with the current state of the economy. That would include DCI, the corps, most arts organizations that I know.

<CEO Scott> I believe that would not be in our best interest.

<CEO Scott> As we say on our site we have to tap into the over 1.25 million folks who have come through our programs over the past 34 years.

[<CEO Scott> Unlike major universities, we have not done a good job of tracking that alumni.

<CEO Scott> That will be a major focus for us in the coming years.

<Robert> I've tried to get people in my band to donate, and for a while we were actually in the lead, but no one else seems to want to, its very sad.

<CEO Scott> While we have had 273 very generous contributors in the past few weeks, we need to get to many more. And that will come virally.

<CEO Scott> I appreciate your support in this.

<Dan> have you tried reconnecting wih famous alumni that have marched? For example, BOA did a "where are they now" with Glenn Kotche from Wilco last year. Have you tried asking him (or others) for money?

<CEO Scott> We will keep messaging as I do not believe anyone wants this organization to not be around.

<Deb> Dan, that's a great idea...

<CEO Scott> Specifically, we have not reached out to Glenn but it is a good suggestion.

<Dean> Scott, what does the city of Indianapolis have to say? Does MFA not bring in a good deal of money to the city in hotels, restaurants, etc...

<CEO Scott> Yes, we do have a huge economic impact in the city. We are currently looking at what options exist there as well. Recently, we met with the new facility to try to renegotiate the costs of renting Lucas Oil, and I think we are making some progress.

<CEO Scott> Why don't you guys tell me what states you represent.

<Dan> Illinois

<Zac> MI

<Jeff> Ohio

<Deb> Colorado!

<Deb> Zac, where in Michigan?

<Zac> Canton

<Robert> Indiana

<Greg> Hey Scot

<Greg> Scott

<CEO Scott> Hi Greg

<Greg> I'm one of your favorite past people

<Greg> me= aka Skramp

<CEO Scott> You are my favorite.

<Greg> hahaha, thanks

<CEO Scott> Glad to have you here.

<Robert> Going back to a previous statement, when you talked about having conference calls with "key" bands; does this mean you are trying to get donations from their respective band booster organizations?

<Greg> no problem, I'm actually sitting here watching West Genny from 91 while we chat

<CEO Scott> If you have seen our material on the website about PULLANTHROPY, we believe this fundraiser has huge potential to raise a great amount of dollars for our bands and the originator of the concept has of

<CEO Scott> offered a way for bands to raise enough extra money to make a sizeable donation to MFA and still come out ahead of the game.

<CEO Scott> This is one way bands and boosters can participate.

<Robert> Ah, ok, thank you for the clarification.

<Greg> I understand that idea Scott, but seems to rely too much on groups

<Deb> Also, not wanting to put words in Scott's mouth, but one of the primary reasons to reach out to the participating bands is to get them to pass the need for individual alumni to think of MFA as a cause

<Greg> I mean in these tough times, groups are having a hard time raising money just to support their groups, let alone have extra to donate

<CEO Scott> We also believe there are programs that could message to their current students and families as well as access their list of alumni to send the call for assistance out.

<Greg> can I bring up a point about the whole alumni thing?

<CEO Scott> Greg, very good point, but take a look at our PULLANTHROPY program. We have created an opportunity for the group to make 100%+ and make a contribution.

<CEO Scott> please do

<Greg> I think the one thing that bothers me about alumni, is that especially in high school, band was just something to do. Prob 75-80% of past band students

<Greg> could care less about BOA now and wouldn't give BOA a dime

<Greg> I understand the desire to ask the alumni, but realistically the idea of getting money out of most of them is a fantasy

<CEO Scott> I appreciate your opinion on that but that is not proving out with the conversations we are having with folks at present.

<Laura> Actually, I can agree with Greg on that

<Greg> Have the major sponsors made any significant contributions?

<CEO Scott> We received a major contribution from NAMM today for 15,000 and are in conversations with others.

<Greg> ok, what about Yamaha, Pearl, the Travel Groups?

<Greg> FJM

<bobo> was the honor band profitable for boa?

<Greg> the city of Indy?

<CEO Scott> Pearl is no longer a sponsor but we are talking with all of our partners. Many have given contributions over and above their sponsorship already this year.

<CEO Scott> bobo, are you referring to the band in Tournament of Roses?

<bobo> yep

<Robert> Going back to what Greg said about many people seeing band as 'just something to do.' I would tend to agree, being a current band student, a lot of people seem to just do it to socialize, or to have

<Robert> something to do.

<CEO Scott> All of the programs we deliver are set up to create a bit of profit to offset the costs of administration of the organization each year, and Tournament did just that.

<Greg> Scott, have you had any conversations with the city of Indy trying to come to a better agreement on stadium costs and such...

<bobo> seemed like there may have been too many staff people on the trip

<CEO Scott> I also know that having just come off a trip with 315 students in California, that was not just about socializing. This experience made an impact on their lives they won't soon forget.

<Robert> Oh, it's definitely not everybody, I know A LOT of people that do band because it is so GREAT

<Robert> Also, in relation to Greg's question about stadium costs; would it be possible to move some regionals to high schools that have large stadiums, to save money?

<CEO Scott> > Yes, we do have a huge economic impact in the city. We are currently looking at what options exist there as well. Recently, we met with the new facility to try to renegotiate the cost of Lucas Oil and are making some progress on that front.

<Jeff> It seems a lot of the regionals have already been moved to HS stadiums, i.e. Centerville

<Greg> it seems that with the amount of tourist dollars you bring in over the Nationals weekend, you would have serious bargaining power and leverage

<Zac> How will MFA/BOA act or look differently so that this campaign is a one time campaign and not a signal of the beginning of poor financial standing?

<CEO Scott> Great question Robert, we are in fact doing that this fall with some facilities. We are looking at everything we do very carefully and making those calls facility by facility.

<Greg> Scott, I don't know if you've seen my posts in the forums about the whole regionals thing?

<CEO Scott> Zac, one of the things we are doing differently is that we are creating a model that includes a base of contributed income. This is something that we have not focused a great deal on in the past.

<CEO Scott> That does not mean that we will go from one of these to the next.

<CEO Scott> It does mean however that we need to engage people to think of this non profit as a charity that they can give to in addition to participate in it.

<Deb> Like a symphony orchestra, ballet company, NPR

<CEO Scott> Greg, please tell me more about those posts, not sure I am following right now.

<Greg> I have been an advocate of consolidating the number of regionals over the past few years

<CEO Scott> Or college or university.

<Greg> IT seems that BOA has stretched themselves too thin trying to provide for too many

<Zac> and not providing consistency of venues, particularly out west and in the NE

<Greg> I mean when you have regionals that only attract 15 groups year after year, it doesn't make sense to continue

<CEO Scott> We have taken all of that into consideration with our schedule for this next fall. We have a provision to run a show with a minimum of 18 groups or it will be pulled in May.

<Greg> Not trying to sound bad, but I'm from back in the day where there were 8 regionals and it was really prestigious to make finals

<CEO Scott> We are being asked by all of these groups to bring shows back to their area and now they need to step up.

]<Greg> now, it seems to have lost some of it's luster

<CEO Scott> It still is really prestigious to make finals.

<Greg> I think back to the days of the Morgantown regionals, in the early 90's, it was a pure dogfight all day long

<CEO Scott> there are over 17,000 hs bands in the country, 17 or 18 shows can not possibly meet the demand.

<CEO Scott> The organization's mission is to serve as many as we can. And we need to do it responsibly.

<Greg> Is there a method in place for expanding BOA to reach new areas of the country and attract new groups?

<CEO Scott> Each year we attract a good number of new groups. We have looked at areas of the country that might make sense and feel that at present we are serving those areas that make the most sense.

<Greg> Ok, I'll shut up for a bit so others can talk

<CEO Scott> thanks for your questions

<Greg> no problem

<Greg> I'm sure I'll have more

<Deb> Someone asked above about the # of staff out with the Tournament band. I'm curious if that was meaning teaching staff?

<zac> Were the GN crowds smaller this year, or did it just look that way because of the size of the stadium?

<CEO Scott> Sorry I missed that question. We had about 16 teaching staff out with us in California.

<bobo> how many staff total?

<CEO Scott> GN Audience was slightly smaller at finals. But the biggest reason for it looking as it did that night was "stadium management".

<Deb> And I'm curious because the question just said staff and I know MFA cut back on the number of staff originally scheduled to go.

<CEO Scott> We had a great number of people in the upper deck and we learned a great deal about how we need to sell tickets in the future.

<Greg> Ok Scott, I have to interject one thing

<Greg> I bought club seats for semis, as I have many years before at the dome

<Greg> After going this year, I wont buy the club seats anymore

<CEO Scott> bobo, I am not understanding what you are trying to get the answer to.

<CEO Scott> Greg, we learned a great deal about the club section this year and are making the necessary adjustments so we don't experience what we did this fall.

<Greg> there was no extra value in the club seats

<Greg> just two sections over from us were a bunch of crazy band parents who talked through every show that wasn't theirs

<Robert> I missed out on the very beginning of the chat so this may have been answered, but if the \$250k goal is not met, does that mean there will not be a 2009 fall season?

<Greg> last year at the dome we had a lot more food and drinks given

<bobo> was pretty simple i thought....guess not. how many total staff including the 16 teaching staff went to california? i only ask as there have been many people comment about unnecessary trips.

<CEO Scott> It is critical that we meet the 250k goal and feel optimistic about doing so.

<CEO Scott> Is it possible if we do not meet it that the organization would not have a fall season, I guess as possible as it is for things like the big 3 auto makers to go out of business as well.

<CEO Scott> Our bail out plan unfortunately is our constituent.

<Greg> Scott, another question that you may not know the answer too

<Robert> I noticed on the alumni website, it says that the fiscal year 2008 is only in the red 128 bucks, is this 250k the accumulation of years of being in the red?

<CEO Scott> I understand your questioning on TofR now. We had the number of staff needed to deliver on the program. We had an additional 8 or so MFA staff out there.

<zac> Would the current state of affairs be any different had the BOA/MFA alliance not been formed?

<CEO Scott> All of us worked very long hours to deliver on our mission.

<Greg> Not trying to sound bad with what I said, just wanted to know if you knew the general numbers who signed up for the fan network

<Deb> Bobo, if you were there and observed staff, I know there also staff spouses and family who paid their own way but helped out during the week so the staff may have appeared larger than it was.

<CEO Scott> Robert, the 128 in the red was our last fiscal year that ended in Feb of 08.

<Robert> Oh, yeah, I just noticed that

<bobo> just a perception that i have heard many times....that there is too much waste at boa....if too may people really feel that way, it might explain the difficulty in raising money.

<CEO Scott> The 250k is what we need to make sure we meet a break even for this fiscal year. Our accumulated deficit is far larger than the 250k which will take us a number of profitable years to get out of.

<Robert> Ah, ok

<CEO Scott> Good insight for us but the concept of waste is not something that we know too well.

<Jeff> In that case, why did the Alumni Campaign start just this year? Why not several years ago, when the burden would be less and easier to handle?

<CEO Scott> I have a team that works very hard to deliver on our mission. When we have to lay off 6 people to keep the organization open after cutting every expense we can find, it is a very painful day.

<Cheryl> Scott, I personally know that everyone in BOA works extremely hard, especially the SWAG team. I am wondering if SWAGs still volunteer and get maybe 3-4 hours of sleep.

<CEO Scott> Hindsight for us is 20/20. Until our current ability to build a successful fundraising department, we did not have budget to get this started as we needed to.

<CEO Scott> Thanks to the Lilly Endowment Grant we received a year ago, we are now on our way.

<CEO Scott> Yes, that is the case Cheryl.

<Robert> Is it possibly in any way for the government to give a donation/grant? Considering the educational impact band/music has.

<CEO Scott> Although, we have gotten better and smarter with the team as well.

<Deb> The grant was specifically to support the development efforts of the organization, because they understand how involved a development and fundraising program is

<CEO Scott> We are looking at National Endowment for the arts grants now.

<CEO Scott> And other grants.

<Deb> Cheryl, one caveat to that – the Team is still unbelievable AND the leadership has now created a system that I think allows for a better rested SWAG than perhaps the case in the early years :)

<CEO Scott> Turning on the development team unfortunately takes longer than we or anyone likes but we have made great progress this year and I am thrilled with the efforts of our team.

<CEO Scott> We are nearing the 10pm hour and I want to thank all of you for participating and for the great questions and thought provoking messages. I will be back next week with another of these.

<Cheryl> That's what was so great about being a SWAG. no sleep, no food, helping everyone, etc.

<CEO Scott> In the meantime, please help us spread the word. For those who have contributed, thank you.