

Music for All CEO Chat Transcript – February 11, 2009

<CEO Scott> Good evening folks, we are in the middle of a storm and I have no power, so I am operating with battery power on a wireless card. Not sure how long this will last.

<CEO Scott> Maybe everyone is without power tonight.

<BandDad> I'll start. What's new since last week (other than total updates)?

<CEO Scott> Did you happen to receive the eblast update this afternoon?

<CEO Scott> There is much of the update in that.

<DebMFA> I bet some of our guests the past few weeks are at TMEA, or traveling...

<BandDad> I did.

<DebMFA> Can you update us on the town hall meetings?

<CEO Scott> Beyond that we have been talking to a great many people and working to finalize our budget to submit to our finance committee.

<CEO Scott> I conducted 2 town hall meetings in Atlanta and Indianapolis this past Wednesday and Thursday.

<BandDad> Right now you are \$170K short (assuming you get the target and the match).

<CEO Scott> We had about 13-15 schools represented at each of those. It was an opportunity to share in greater detail where we are in the campaign and the needs we have for many to step up with their programs.

<BandDad> I am sure you are looking at programs ... what have you ascertained to be "mission critical"?

<CEO Scott> At this point we believe all of what we do is mission driven. We are beginning to look at mission critical.

<jim> first off, I think you have done an excellent job with your new campaign

<CEO Scott> I do not believe that anything other than under performing programs are at risk.

<CEO Scott> Thank you, Jim

<jim> Are there any elements or phases of your programs that are not operating in the black and if so, which ones?

<CEO Scott> The truth is that this campaign has been great in engaging our audience to take a look inside beyond the events they might attend. This is a charitable organization that needs support beyond ticket sales.

<CEO Scott> And that message has begun to be understood.

<jim> but as far as the summer symposium, concert band festivals, outreach programs, regionals, and grand nationals, are they all in the black?

<CEO Scott> When you look at the whole of what we do, and we at present are returning less than a 1% ROI on the total of what we do, I would unfortunately have to say most of what we do does not operate in the black.

<CEO Scott> There a number of Regionals that we are looking at how they have performed over time.

<jim> Are any of those programs more at risk than others?

<CEO Scott> The Summer event, the Music for National Festival in the spring have positive results and we are looking at the orchestral piece of both of those events to make sure they are performing where they need to.

<Scott Lang> Has the orchestra component been an overall financial drain (I hate to phrase it that way)

<Scott Lang> Sorry I am late, I misjudged the time difference, we don't observe daylight savings time.

<CEO Scott> Hi Scott, and yes, to date the orchestral component has been a bigger drain than we would like. We have some exciting new initiatives on that front however.

<BandDad> Positive cash flow initiatives?

<Scott Lang> I just do not understand why they have not seen the value. Almost every school that has an orchestra has a band program that is singing your praises. The disconnect is confusing to me.

<CEO Scott> We have just partnered with Barrage who is out on the road promoting the summer event with a boot camp where they will be in residence with us at the event. They have 30+ shows between now and the Symposium that are geared at the high school string market.

<Scott Lang> Well, I know that you have a cadre of competent and skilled people working round the clock on this but if there is anything I can do to be of service, consider me in.

<Scott Lang> I am going to send a check tomorrow.

<CEO Scott> Band Dad, positive cash flow initiatives, what in particular?

<CEO Scott> We cash flow pretty well throughout the year. It gets tight in the times where we have had a number of years of losses. And that is where we find ourselves now. Working out of that.

<CEO Scott> Thanks, Scott, much appreciated.

<BandDad> you indicated some "new initiatives" - are these geared toward generating a positive cash flow

<BandDad> especially when they have not been such until now?

<BandDad> Along that line, I am sure you have looked at \$/student "impacted"?

<CEO Scott> BD, I am sorry that I was scrolling up to see what I said. The newer initiatives have been our orchestral offerings and any new initiative generally takes some time to return a positive numbers to the bottom line.

<CEO Scott> We are looking at this and making sure that it does or will be in jeopardy of not continuing.

<CEO Scott> Reminder that I am working by candlelight as we are without power and in a storm, so I apologize for my slower than normal response.

<BandDad> (gotta get the hamster fired up!)

<CEO Scott> We are always looking at the \$'s we invest versus the returns that we deliver per student, but it is hard being mission driven knowing the benefits that come to kids through what we do

<CEO Scott> and having to balance that against a straight cost per student. In today's economy we are having to look at things more in that light.

<CEO Scott> I am leaving in the morning for Texas and the Music Ed Convention there. We will hold another town hall meeting on Friday night there with a larger crowd, nearing 50-60 schools.

<BandDad> I think right now you have to look at these metrics. I know we are having to do so in my business ...

<Scott Lang> Scott, do you have any questions for these people, perhaps about how this is "playing" in band rooms or how it is viewed by parents?

<Scott Lang> or do you have a pretty good feel for that at this point.

<BandDad> ... and I am strong encouraging this in my band boosters. We simply have to cut costs wherever we can.

<CEO Scott> BD, absolutely

<BandDad> If we don't, we could lose members.

<CEO Scott> I am interested in knowing how what is occurring with us and in the economy effecting things in your communities.

<CEO Scott> The conversations I am having with teachers and parents so far have been positive for the most part but guarded.

<CEO Scott> Scott, you are an educator and seeing lots of teachers out there, what are you hearing?

<Scott Lang> I think people are guarded because they didn't see this coming. Frankly, in my eyes, you are a victim of your own success. You have done things at such a high level for so long,

<Scott Lang> that few if any were aware of the shoe string margin you were operating on.

<Scott Lang> It is to your credit you have been able to put on the events you have for so long, on the resources you have.

<CEO Scott> You are correct, when you produce at the level of excellence people have come to expect from us, most do not understand how costs have escalated.

<Scott Lang> Everything is done with such class and integrity, that it gave the perception that the situation was far different than it was.

<Scott Lang> Which is a credit and a complement to your staff.

<BandDad> However, this is an issue, because the deficit has been there for 3 years plus, and now it appears to be panic time.

<Scott Lang> On the staff and the band director side, never did I see a situation where a corner was cut

<CEO Scott> we will find the way to continue to do so.

<Scott Lang> or a short cut was taken. Only after working for BOA did I come to see how close those margins are for you.

<BandDad> Panic time is taking place all over; I am being told to cut "non-essential" items ...

<CEO Scott> BD, that is correct. However, we are working on the plan to change that. We have been charged by our board to bring in a return of closer to 2% this year.

<CEO Scott> this would equate to roughly \$200,000

<BandDad> and some "non-essential items" I consider essential!

<CEO Scott> again, you are right and we are taking the same stance.

<Scott Lang> Scott, can you put a "face" on 200,000.00

<Scott Lang> what cuts are being considered

<CEO Scott> We have to find the model that will work to put this organization on solid ground and I am blessed to be surrounded by a number of smart folks on our team who are helping to figure this one out.

<CEO Scott> The cuts include finding facilities that cost less, finding ways to not have to travel with the number of staff and using more volunteers at some regional events.

<CEO Scott> They also, unfortunately, include not replacing staff that were let go in the last year.

<CEO Scott> I believe we will be successful at bringing this year in very close to the number we anticipate, basically a break even.

<CEO Scott> We have already had positive looks at our first event in March which has at least 4 more ensembles participating than last year, which will show positive results.

<Jay Oberfeiting> Hello everyone

<CEO Scott> We are also seeing good early numbers year over year with our Summer event. And I believe we are close to having 400 bands enrolled already for fall events.

<CEO Scott> Hi, Jay

<Jay Oberfeiting> It appears that participation is increasing slightly?

<Jay Oberfeiting> Or is it a large increase

<CEO Scott> Participation in the campaign is increasing daily at this point. Which is a great thing.

<CEO Scott> It is not as large as we need it to be but hopefully like most campaigns, there is a crescendo to the finish.

<Jay Oberfeiting> I see that my Alma Mater - Norwin is participating in a big way. The school where I currently live - Dobyns-Bennett does not seem to be doing anything that I have heard about.

<CEO Scott> We just sent out 200 packets via express delivery to BOA programs who have consistently participated over the past number of years asking them to step up to certain levels.

<CEO Scott> We have also provide some ideas of how they could do so including through this new fundraising program we have called PULLANTHROPY.

<Seth> I have also talked to a DB alum and she is forwarding the message down there as well

<CEO Scott> Norwin has been great. And Dobyns is about to receive one of those packets, we will see if there is any return.

<Seth> DB is relatively new to BOA, but they have experienced programming in both the fall and the spring

<Jay Oberfeitinger> Good. I used to be one of the directors there....But teach college now and do not currently have children in the program. I will do my best to get in touch with Lafe Cook and we'll see what happens

<CEO Scott> They have a great program there, your help is appreciated.

<CEO Scott> Does anyone else have any input from other programs or your own perspective to share?

<Jay Oberfeitinger> Scott, Keep up the good work. It has been a long time since we met at a Dr. Tim workshop @ Norwin....I have been impressed with what BOA has become - and will be in the future.

<CEO Scott> In these town hall meeting of the last week, I have been blown away by the support and open communication that has come.

<CEO Scott> Thanks Jay

<Scott Lang> Scott...and this is solely from my perspective...I would be willing to do a free workshop as a prize for a group or groups that raise a certain dollar figure.

<CEO Scott> Scott, how would we put that out there? This is a great gesture.

<Scott Lang> if something like that is of any value to you.

<Scott Lang> Well, honestly I would think that Fran and Tim would consider something similar,

<Scott Lang> we could be a 1st, 2nd, and 3rd prize.

<CEO Scott> Absolutely, maybe we can highlight in the next blast we do early next week in an update on the campaign.

<Scott Lang> Make a one day contest....

<Scott Lang> March 1st...the group that turns in the largest donation gets a workshop...

<CEO Scott> Great idea. Deb, you taking notes?

<CEO Scott> Scott, I will get with you offline to talk about this and thanks

<Scott Lang> If a group donates 100.00, and gets a workshop, they win BIG TIME

<Scott Lang> but if 20 groups donate 100.00 in hopes of winning it...you win.

<Scott Lang> Those are some small numbers, but you get the idea.

<Scott Lang> You could make a minimum bid

<CEO Scott> yes thanks

<CEO Scott> I could put you on ebay :)

<Scott Lang> I definitely have some thought but don't want to dominate the conversation.

<Scott Lang> How do you think my wife got me!

<Scott Lang> She had low bid!

<CEO Scott> WOW

<Scott Lang> She bid on James Stephenson but lost out

<Scott Lang> James Stephens

<Jay Oberfeiting> Ba-dum-bum!

<James Stephens> I heard that...I mean see that...

<Scott Lang> At any rate, contact me if you are interested,

<CEO Scott> I will thanks

<CEO Scott> James Stephens in OK?

<DebMFA> Hi James Stephens!

<Jay Oberfeiting> Good to talk with everyone----gotta go!

<CEO Scott> Bye Jay and thanks for your support

<James Stephens> Yes! Hello Scott. Hello Deb!

<CEO Scott> Looking forward to being in Tulsa on Tuesday to meet with directors in OK. Thanks for hosting me.

<Jay Oberfeiting> Scott - are you doing this (chat) again?

<CEO Scott> I will be back every wed through the end of the campaign.

<Jay Oberfeiting> Good. I will check in as often as I can. Bye all!

<James Stephens> Scott, we are looking forward to having you come out here and visit next week.

<CEO Scott> Thanks, have not been to Tulsa for a while.

<James Stephens> There are many band programs out here that are all ready involved in MFA/BOA and more and more showing interest each year.

<CEO Scott> Band Dad, I appreciate your questions from earlier in the chat and for caring enough to challenge us to continue to think differently.

<BandDad> you are welcome

<CEO Scott> We sent invites to a number today to join us, if you have names of groups we should invite to Tuesday, please send them to me in an email.

<CEO Scott> We have about 4 minutes left by my clock, does anyone have any parting thoughts or questions?

<James Stephens> I will.

<BandDad> I think you can unplug the hamster :-)

<CEO Scott> I would ask that you continue to share the information about our campaign with all you know who can help and appreciate all of your support.

<CEO Scott> I am very confident we will get through this tough time with your help. There are the next million young folks who need this experience.

<CEO Scott> Thanks everyone for joining us tonight and I will see you back next week.

<Scott Lang> Take care. Let me know if I can help.

<DebMFA> Night, all