



## How to Build the Ultimate Color Guard – Part 1

By Chris Casteel

Here we stand at the dawning of a new team. Auditions are over, the team has been selected. If you think about it, you have a clean slate in front of you! How exciting! Now is the perfect time to make decisions about the best way to build your team for the coming year. Considering this, I have decided to write a 3 part series to take you through the summer months that will hopefully give you insight and tips on how to build the ultimate color guard team.

The first three concepts in this process are Vision, Commitment and Trust. These elements are essential in creating a team. And let's face it; color guard is definitely a team activity. I know that I have said this before, but ultimately learning to work well within a team atmosphere is one of the most important life lessons that is imparted through our activity. Given this, your role as a coach is one in which you must find ways to connect, relate and inspire a positive response to individuals within the team and your team as a whole.

### **VISION:**

Having a vision means the ability to excite the team about who they are, and what they are about to become. Even at this early stage of the game, this can begin in rehearsals. Start by sharing your personal vision for the team, but move one step forward in the process by eliciting what the team's vision is as well. They may not even know what that is at this point, but a dialogue can be opened that will eventually get them to their vision. Make sure that the vision you communicate to the team is one that appeals to their personal pride. Be positive and strive for only the best when speaking of your hopes and goals for the year ahead. Most importantly, above all else, they must know that you whole heartedly believe in all that they are; right now and in the future.

### **COMMITMENT:**

There is no doubt that this is a needed component for a color guard, because we spend hours upon hours in rehearsal perfecting various aspects of our programs. However, even with the clearest communication regarding the high level of commitment needed, I am not sure the new members can fathom this reality at this early stage of the game. So, don't assume that they understand the aspect of commitment just because you have handed them a rehearsal schedule

and they signed a piece of paper at auditions. If you assume it, you are heading into dangerous territory. This is particularly the case with parents. If initially parents and members are hesitant, they may seem as if they 'don't care'. I am not sure this is the case. Often times, this simply means that they may be caught up in the process of doubt. Realize that this process of doubt precedes every meaningful commitment. If you think back to your own life situations, I believe you will recognize this.

The bottom line on commitment: despite it all, establish an atmosphere of trust and within that atmosphere encourage, promote and endorse inclusion. Recognize that doubt will be the beginning of this process, and be prepared to support your members/parents through the phase. Once this is done, all the doubts will soon begin to disappear, and a committed team you will have!

### **TRUST:**

Trust is the antidote to self doubt and fears. Really, this is huge considering that the majority of us teach an age of adolescent that is known for its insecurities and self doubt. If you can build an atmosphere of trust among your members, this is 'gold' for you as a coach. I recently had a conversation with a very prominent instructor in our activity who teaches several highly successful programs all with large memberships. When asked why his groups are so large, his response was simply that the members feel 'safe' in the program. Because of this, they don't want to leave. Really, that speaks more to the issue of trust than anything I could ever write in this article. He gets it. He realizes that in order to produce a successful guard, he must be much more than a technician, a visionary or a creative genius. He must understand the need for trust, acceptance, support and safety in his program. Simply said, trust is a place you need to establish with your team *now* and build upon it when the pressure of the competitive arena seeps into your program.

So there you have it. Three things to start thinking about as you start those summer rehearsals. The great thing about these things is that they really aren't a lot of work on your part. Most of this comes inherent in our desire to work with young people. It is simply a matter of identifying it and making a concerted effort to establish them while we have the time in the summer months.

With that said, have a great month of June! Next article will be at the end of June – see you then! ☺