

D2 ADACORNER



JR Smith

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I've been pondering, lately, the speed of sound. Perhaps because of the blitz of 50th anniversary Apollo 11 programming this July, I was reminded how impactful the concept of the speed of sound was in the 60s. Growing up it seemed like the cutting edge of things, a measure to achieve. The speed of sound was a brand that stuck with the space race until the public became disinterested and moved on to other things besides the moon.

As I began my career in Division II athletics, I wanted to be on the cutting edge, to experiment and try new ways and develop new strategies. In essence, perform at the speed of sound. Over 30 years later it's interesting to reflect on the change and growth that has happened in athletics and in our division.

In my first DII job in athletics, in the mid 1980s,

computers were the cutting edge. Our department was excited to receive our first computer, yes, just one for the whole department. Our secretary was the keeper of the keys. We all felt as though we were out on the edge by incorporating the computer into our daily lives. Today we would be challenged to function without a computer or the immediate information that is available via smart phone.

During my time as a DII commissioner, our conference was one of the first to produce television packages, broadband streaming, and our own monthly television show. What was novelty has now become commonplace, as DII conferences are readily available on broadband and broadcast mediums.

The role of sports information changed drastically to feed the need for speed. Websites, social media platforms, computerized stats packages and centralized reporting fundamentally changed the role of sports information. Early in my career, our SID was still updating stats via IBM Electric II (look it up) and a large bottle of whiteout. Today we can follow the action in real time wherever we are.

Compliance, especially at the DII level, evolved in the age of speed. From the stick and rudder days of paper filing and self-reporting, to the state-of-the-art compliance tools and NCAA reporting structures that assist in compliance with the rules, over the last 30 years Division II has established a solid footing for even competition.

I'm not saying that all of the change to satisfy the speed of sound has been good. We seem to have less and less down time in the summer. For those of us whose staffing hasn't kept up with the speed of sound, we certainly have to do more with less. And the one thing that hasn't seemed to keep pace is the budgeted resources. That being said, the growth was worthy of the speed of sound.

I'm probably several years from retiring, and I still hope to tame the speed of sound before I finish. It's a challenge I know many of you at Division II programs live every day. Today's athletics administrators need to be nimble and quick. Adjusting to change is a daily activity. The speed of sound has been a grand goal. Around the corner lies the speed of light!

D2 CCACORNER



Gregory Moore, Esq.

SIAC

Commissioner

Fundraising and Branding: Opposite Sides of the Same Coin

When I became commissioner of the SIAC over 10 years ago, our league was experiencing significant fiscal and brand-related challenges. Working with stakeholders throughout the SIAC including but not limited to SIAC member school presidents, athletics directors, and key corporate partners such as Coca-Cola, Nike, Toyota, Home Depot, NBA Players Association, NFL, SIDEARM Sports, Georgia Pacific, Lowe's, ESPN, and FLO Sports among others, we were quickly able to eliminate all debt from our balance sheet, more than double revenue, accumulate a reserve fund approaching seven figures, and enjoy 10 consecutive budget surpluses.

During this process I learned that one of the most crucial skill sets any sports administrator

could acquire is solid fundraising skills. This is primarily due to the fact that much of what most athletics departments, league offices, or colleges and universities for that matter would like to accomplish strategically is predicated on the ability to successfully cultivate resources. It is my judgement that successful fundraising efforts involve some combination of salesmanship, relationship cultivation, passion, and most importantly, understanding and articulating the unique value proposition that you are able to offer to prospective donors. Although all of these various constituencies may be able to provide resources, it is likely they also harbor slightly different sensibilities that underlie their motivations to give. In light of the foregoing, it is my view that a key prerequisite to sustaining successful fundraising efforts is developing the ability to articulate and communicate to prospective donors a sense of the organizational brand.

Howard Shultz, former CEO of Starbucks, shared the following insights with respect to branding: "If people believe they share values with a company, they will stay loyal to the brand." Steve Forbes, former editor-in-chief of *Forbes Magazine* remarked, "Your brand is the single most important investment you can make in your business." Finally, digital marketing expert

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Ashley Friedlein stated, "Brand is the sum total of how someone perceives a particular organization. Branding is about shaping that perception."

After engaging in the thoughtful and careful process of making a clear-eyed and honest assessment of an organization's value proposition and brand, a useful framework for a successful fundraising effort should involve the following four elements:

1. Perfecting the articulation of the fundraising pitch (i.e. sharing the value proposition to prospective donors and corporate partners.)
2. Careful culling and cultivation of prospective donors and partners whose values are in alignment with those of the organization seeking investment.
3. Cultivation of relationships with prospective donors and partners that can yield insights that can help tailor the pitch and value proposition to the priorities of the prospective donor.
4. Thoughtful follow-up with prospective donors to continue to cultivate the relationship in a manner which communicates the impact (or potential impact) of any investment in connection with both the near and long-term strategic priorities of both the donor and the beneficiary organization.