



**HOW TO START
UP
A DRUM AND
BUGLE CORPS**



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INTRODUCTION

When first approached with the request to write this guide, My initial thoughts were “*not how – but why ?*” and I think that’s the most important question to ask yourself (and even more importantly – to answer carefully and honestly) – I’ll try and give some guidance in a while.

Secondly, I thought “*Why me ?*” – I’m no expert on starting from scratch – never done it – always been involved in some kind of transfer, development or “takeover”. However, I have been around the activity (and associated youth work) for some years and have learned a few salutary lessons which I’ll be happy to pass onto those daring enough to tackle such a project.

I have a firm belief that it is important for the overall character development of our “modern youth” (whatever that is ?) for them to have an interest into which they should put some personal effort and out of which they should derive some personal reward. Whilst the topic of this guide is involvement in a musical activity (which should give lifelong pleasure) it doesn’t really matter what the activity is – it’s the involvement with others that makes it work and the achievement of self-set targets through a disciplined and structured approach that leads to deep-seated satisfaction of something attained through ones own efforts.

Drum Corps, I believe, offers so many opportunities for personal development and social responsibility that far transcend the initial achievements of musical prowess and physical fitness. It’s the interaction with others; the team spirit; the friendships formed and the all-too-rare “feel good factor” that make this particular activity so special for young (and not-so-young) people.

This guide has been prepared, on behalf of Drum Corps United Kingdom, for those who wish to create a new marching unit. It assumes no previous experience of leadership within the activity but does assume that there is some prior knowledge of what a drum corps is and does. I have tried not to use jargon or technical terms but, where unavoidable, to explain them.

Much of the contents of this guide have been begged, borrowed or stolen from other sources and there is a lesson itself in this. Those considering such a venture should make every effort to profit from the experiences and lessons gained by others who have gone through the process. If you can be aware of the potential pitfalls and problems that others have faced (and, hopefully, conquered), you will be better prepared for your own adventure.

I am most grateful to all those individuals and organisations who have offered advice and help on this topic – they are listed at the end of the document.

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WHY

There is little more exciting and inspiring than watching a drum and bugle corps in full flight. The enthusiasm, emotion and exhilaration that comes bursting off that field is more than a little infectious and it is easy to understand that some people will want to provide a similar opportunity for a group of young people in their own particular neck of the woods.

This is a dangerous moment ! It may be the point at which your, hitherto peaceful existence alters – dramatically - because involvement in an active drum and bugle corps almost always is a life-changing experience – especially for a would-be organiser.

A warning to all. ***It ain't as easy as it looks !*** Running a successful drum and bugle corps may be considered akin to running a small-sized business in its complexity, variety of needs and financial requirements. Also to be considered are legal aspects, charity requirements and the minefields of child protection legislation. There are public relations issues; constant and complex communications needs at all levels; dealings with musical and visual arrangers; equipment suppliers; transport companies; rehearsal facilities; potential funders and, of course, the necessity to attract, maintain and motivate a team of volunteers of whom you will expect a great deal. Then, of course, there are children, adolescents, and parents . . . ! What you will see and remember from, e.g. a Finals performance, is the culmination of a tremendous amount of a hard work and experience by a large group of people – probably with vast totals of experience within the activity. This level of proficiency cannot be achieved without a deal of effort, learning, dedication and time. Those being understandably impressed and inspired must also be blessed with excessive helpings of patience and determination.

So, would-be organiser, the first person you need to question and convince is yourself. Do you really have the all-consuming vocation to devote a massive chunk of your time to the creation and development of a most demanding love-child ? Will your emotional self be able to cope with the undoubted roller-coaster ride to come ? Are you prepared to sacrifice a “normal” family life; expend vast amounts of energy and probably a good wedge of your own cash ? Do you have the charisma, self-belief and the abilities to convince many others of the reality of your dream ? It's a tall order but one with which you must be totally comfortable before you even start out on the journey. Drum Corps is no place for the faint-hearted or the half-hearted. It requires a passion that will carry you and your significant others through some very challenging times. Spend some little time on this soul-searching phase – it can save you many heartaches at a later stage.

Identify (and write down) your aims and objectives for the group. What do you want to achieve – in the long and short terms. How do you intend to go about that and what will you do if you don't achieve them at the first attempt. It is vital that, at this stage, you are realistic – nothing is more disappointing than failing to achieve massively over-ambitious targets – far better to achieve small steps along the way. Always be prepared to amend and update this list.

It is at this stage that you should decide and set down the standards of behaviour that you will expect from your members, staff and supporters. It is highly unlikely that the old-style, military forms of discipline will be appropriate in a modern drum corps. You should, perhaps, concentrate more on emphasising the need for self-discipline, mutual respect and the need for co-operation and teamwork in order to achieve the agreed goals. If necessary you can incorporate a Code of Conduct or Grievance Procedure into your Constitution or Equal Opportunities Policy. Whichever way you go, make sure that everyone involved understands the boundaries and ethos.

Set your standards high in every aspect of what you do – you may be voluntary but there's no need to be amateur !

WHO

We have so far assumed that you are going to be the leader / organiser of this new group. It may be that this is not the case and that you are to act rather as the facilitator who will have the responsibility for appointing others to run the group on your behalf (or on the behalf of the group you represent). Whether the former or latter is the case, it is vital that you do not act alone. To have any kind of credibility and, later, legal identity, it is necessary that such a group be led by a management committee of interested and capable adults. Some may call it a panel of trustees; board of governors; management council – the title isn't important – the function is. Essentially you will need a chairman (to ensure meetings are run efficiently and effectively); a treasurer (to take care that accounts are carefully kept and presented); a secretary (to record minutes of meetings and look after communications) and, at least, two or three others who are prepared to give their time, skills and experience to the care of your group. In an ideal world this group will not be involved in the day-to-day running of the group but will have an overseeing brief which is difficult to achieve if constantly at the battle-front.

So where do you find these people ? The simple answer is anywhere you can. It may well be that, initially, you are dependant upon family members, close friends or parents. It will be up to you, as organiser, to persuade them of the value of your dreams and to explain to them clearly just exactly what it is that you will require of them. It is frequently said that people these days are too busy or too insular to be bothered with helping voluntary organisations (I'll return to this theme later) but, if you are enthusiastic enough to bring them onside and to explain carefully and precisely exactly what their duties and responsibilities are, you should not have too much trouble in forming this group. Timing of the formation is important. It should happen well before the corps is launched – not as an afterthought. These people are the foundation upon which the group will stand and they must have a good grasp of what they and you are trying to do in order to build with success.

You may wish to consider looking outside your immediate circle for committee members. If you are fortunate enough to enjoy good relationships with local authorities, schools, youth support organisations, etc then a representative on your committee can do nothing but good. Local police forces may sometimes be interested as may support groups for young offenders, etc – all are worth exploration. In addition to their professional skills, they may also have access to pots of money – never to be eschewed.

A word at this point about parents. Obviously vital to any youth organisation as they actually produce your membership, many groups have a very successful relationship with their parents – others don't. The secret, I believe, lies in totally transparent understanding of their place within the organisation – what their responsibilities may be and where their limitations are set. If your parents have a firm understanding of how they fit into your organisation and what is expected of them, then they can be the vital asset that we all crave and will play a most important part in the success of your group. It's the old communication message again – keep 'em informed and ask for their help and they inevitably respond. They are important to your group – don't ever under-rate their potential contribution. If you appoint parents to your management committee, be prepared for them to lose interest once their offspring no longer take part in the activity.

Onto what is probably the second most important category of people in your group – the arrangers, designers and instructors (usually referred to as the staff of the corps). Unless you are a very wealthy outfit, most of your contributors are likely to be volunteers and you will ask them to put in a great deal of their time, effort and talents for nothing. Please never under-estimate the value of reliable, regular, committed staff members. If you have them, your life will be relatively easy and straightforward. If you don't, you will have a constant struggle ahead of you in achieving your aims and keeping your membership motivated and achieving.

It may be that you are the creative genius behind the group and have the abilities to create musical and visual packages to your requirements. If not, then you'll need help – where to find it? Whilst there are many musical talents around your neighbourhood, it is essential that you appoint someone who has an understanding for the style, format and genre of performance that you are trying to achieve. A great brass band arranger may just not be able to transfer their style to the drum corps scene (although they should!). It's worth trawling around existing groups – many people will be happy to offer help to beginning groups and will welcome the challenge to produce music to specific needs and ability levels.

Some brutal facts. Don't expect a rush of talented, experienced, committed instructors to beat a path to your doors – just because you've launched a new group with big ambitions. I'm afraid the reality is that these people will tend to go where the success rate is fairly guaranteed – human nature I guess. True altruism is a rare quality. You will, undoubtedly, encounter the frequent responses of *"I'm willing to help, but can't afford the time just now / couldn't promise regular attendance / would be happy to work with you on a part-time basis"*. To be absolutely honest these people are better off not involved with your group – no matter what their reputation. What you (and more importantly your members) need is a regular set of faces who will guarantee to be there at all rehearsals (barring exceptional circumstances) giving the best quality instruction and support that they can. A regular face beats a big name any time.

Inevitably, most of your instructors will be young people who still retain the enthusiasm for the drum corps style of presentation. You should be aware and understanding that at the younger levels of adult life there are many demands upon the lives of these people. There are job developments and ambitions, the challenges of marriage, home-building, babies and, sometimes re-locations all getting in the way of your plans and frustrating your ambitions. Regrettably, no solutions to this. You will just have to learn to live with it and adapt. If at all possible (and I am aware of just how glib this sounds) try to provide at least one “back-up” instructor for each section. If no adult is available, encourage your staff to sufficiently brief a senior marching member to temporarily take over in absences. This is also good development policy for the provision of your staff of the future.

Instructional staff are, of course, just a part of the large and multi-talented team you will need to build. To keep a successful drum & bugle corps “on the road” requires careful attention to a wide range of matters – the absence or failure of any one of which can cause untold grief. Here are just some of the essential tasks that you will need to cover :

- Equipment management – making sure that instruments, accessories are always in the right place at the right time and maintained in good order
- Uniform or costume management – ditto (needs good sewing / repairs skills – often at short notice !)
- You may even need to provide specialist make-up / hairdressing services
- Transport needs – coach hire and liaison plus equipment vehicle if you have one. You’ll need drivers and someone to make sure vehicles turn up at right place and time. Someone with transport training or loads of common-sense essential here to ensure safety at all times
- Welfare staff – first aid skills plus provision of water at rehearsals, etc
- Catering – corps members cannot get through any length of rehearsal without a “tuck shop”
- Fundraising – much can be said on this topic – probably in another publication, although I have included a short section later. Suffice it to say that if you don’t have a mechanism for raising money, you won’t have any to spend.
- Public Relations – keeping the group in the public eye – publicising successes, events and needs. Not just publicity but ensuring that all in the group present the required public image all the time (a tall order). This task may or may not include recruitment. Building a good relationship with local media is a vital part of this role.

Having got your team together, it is behoven upon you to provide them with the knowledge and skills to do the job effectively and to their own satisfaction. There are many providers of training available and it's up to you to decide on which is the most appropriate for your needs. D.C.U.K. provides annual Instructor Training days which aim to give new instructors the background necessary to undertake their duties safely and with a basic understanding of the responsibilities involved. The one-day course is free, includes lunch and rewards participants with the "yellow pass" necessary to gain access to corps show critiques.

If you are fortunate enough to have an attachment to a national youth organisation (Scouts, BB, Cadets, etc) then they too will be able to provide high levels of leadership training through their established training programmes. The British Federation of Youth Marching Band Organisations (BFYMBO) provide a good on-line service giving lots of excellent advice and pointers as to where further information can be obtained (www.marchingbands.org.uk/support.html). They also publish good quality literature and a useful cd-rom. Incidentally, BFYMBO are currently developing their own accredited Leadership Training Scheme which will be launched later in 2005. This will give nationally-recognised qualifications to marching band instructors and leaders – aiming for a wider recognition and acknowledgement of our activity.

These days it is important that staff are made fully aware of the requirements of Child Protection legislation. The Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks can offer limited protection and reassurance to parents – although there are still problems within the system of getting them done. Your group should appoint a Child Protection Officer and most local authorities will have systems in place to offer training and policy writing. DCUK can supply samples of typical policies.

Once you have your team together it's absolutely vital that you treat them like a team and communicate (both ways) with them on every aspect of the running of the corps. Hold regular meetings and encourage everyone to make contributions. Encourage a sense of ownership and responsibility. Develop, if you can, a social as well as business-like relationship and have fun together. Most of all ensure that you all share the aims, values and aspirations for the future of your baby. There are many aspects of running a drum corps that share leadership and management techniques with business and there are many opportunities for organisers to undertake training in management. It is up to the individual to decide the level to which they take any such training. Local councils often arrange such training for voluntary groups.

A short word here about naming your group. Obviously a free choice but do give it some careful consideration and discuss it with a group who all find it acceptable. If you include a locality, make sure you have the local authority's permission to include their name. Try to ensure the name cannot be shortened or corrupted (because it will be !) and that it means something to the non-aware public. Wherever possible avoid difficult spellings or too-deep philosophical meanings. Keep it simple for all to recognise and understand. Try it out to see out it might sound when announced over a p.a. system. And, for heaven's sake try to be original – there are far too many Knights and Cadets still around !

And about your own title. Are you going to be a Corps Director (usual for drum corps) or, if you're not actually on the creative team, a Corps Manager ? You could be a Bandmaster, but that doesn't really fit with the drum corps image or a Co-ordinator. It doesn't really matter how you sign your letters – it's the role that counts and that you must define for yourself.

WHERE

The trouble with drum corps (some would say its magic) is that it tends to be loud ! Fine when you're on the arena presenting your exciting performance but not so fine for your neighbours to endure in rehearsal times. Finding a suitable base for your rehearsals and other activities can pose very real problems and many corps have yet to find a satisfactory solution. Ideally, your rehearsal facility (whether indoor or out) should be in the main catchment area of your membership group. This makes for ease of access, travel, parent co-operation and the essential reliability to your members (no group likes to have to constantly change rehearsal sites – it's most unsettling).

However, finding (and keeping) such facilities can prove a major headache for the organiser. A school hall or community building that might be ideal for playgroups, Guides, etc may be less than suitable for a concentrated 2 to 3 hour full-blown rehearsal of drums and bugles, especially if there are closely-situated residential neighbours. Whilst the majority of the public think "*we are doing a fine job for the kids*" they would rather it wasn't next door to them on a quiet Sunday afternoon or a Tuesday evening when they're trying to get their young children to sleep. I will not minimise the difficulties faced here – it's probably one of the most tricky problems we all have to face – unless we are very lucky. If you can find a situation in an industrial area where there are no homes, then you probably have to compromise over easy access and facilities. Schools can be very co-operative (especially if you can get the Head Teacher and/or Head of Music on your side) but try to locate rehearsals in an area of the building where it will cause least disruption to other users or neighbours. Using school premises can have two major disadvantages – they tend not to be available in school holidays and they can be quite expensive to rent.

Outdoor rehearsals, of course, present even more particular problems. The sound of a drum corps can carry over vast distances – especially bass drums - and whilst there may be no apparent immediate neighbours, the constant repetition of those few difficult bars of music can be irritating to even the most tolerant. Maybe one solution might be to look carefully at the length of our rehearsals. Whilst a 2-3 hour session might just be tolerable, to extend to 5, 6 or more hours may prove just beyond the pale.

Some corps do ease the problem by moving their rehearsals around but the advantages of this may be offset by the uncertainty of members and staff, the need for moving equipment more frequently and storing it securely and the need for constant communication to ensure everyone knows where and when.

Should you be fortunate in finding the ideal rehearsal facility, then it is obviously to your long-term advantage to educate all members of your group in the values of taking care of the premises and associated staff (caretakers are gods !) plus neighbours to ensure a long tenure of occupancy. It's worth staying around a few minutes after rehearsal to pick up litter and have a chat to the caretaker to maintain good relationships.

WHEN

The times that you hold your regular rehearsals depend entirely upon the circumstances and aims of your group. For minimum consistency, a weekly meeting of 2-3 hours should be considered. Two meetings per week help to achieve a greater memory retention rate and offer better progress. Obviously, wherever possible, meetings should be held on the same days each week. Many youngsters have a very busy and fixed routine which may involve them and their families in a wide range of commitments. Knowing that corps rehearsals are always Thursday evenings and Sunday afternoons helps them to plan for transport needs, visits to Granny, etc.

The length of rehearsals should be determined by considering the abilities of your membership to gain the maximum benefits. Children aged 8 to 12 simply cannot concentrate for as long as 18 to 20 year-olds, nor can they see the value of spending a whole evening repeating that particular 8-bar phrase. There is also a school of thought that says that rehearsing smartly for 3 - 4 hours can achieve just as much as a prolonged 8 – 10 hour day.

Be aware that, at certain times of the year, you will experience a fall-off in your rehearsal attendances. Apart from the obvious Christmas, New Year, Easter and Bank holidays, mid-summer is always a prime time for family holidays and school trips can now occur just about any time of year. The best you can expect, through the communication thing again, is to get parents to advise you of forthcoming absences. At times, you may be wiser cancelling rehearsals than having a really poor turnout which depresses everyone. Depending upon the age range of your membership, annual SAT's, GCSE and "A" Level examination periods will affect you to some extent. It may be worth trying to persuade parents that a couple of hours a week relaxation off the concentrated revision regime might be good for little Johnny's brain – but I wouldn't push it.

The selection of a suitable time of year to launch a new venture is worth some careful consideration. Approaching summer holiday times or just before Christmas might not achieve the greatest response – neither will the above exam times. Look for the "quieter" times of year (early Spring or Autumn) when there may be less distractions.

WHAT WITH

Deciding just what kind of instruments your group will perform upon together with where and how these are to be obtained must form a very early part of your planning process. Whether you are going straight away for a full-blown drum and bugle corps instrumentation or whether you might be planning to start more simply and build up later, this is still a very substantial package of kit that you need to be able to provide. Much of your planning will depend upon how many members you hope to cater for and how rapidly you plan to build. You will need to consider whether you can raise the funds to buy new or second-hand from dealers or from other groups or whether you will try to "scrounge" what you need through goodwill or contacts. DCUK does have a "pool" of surplus instruments that are available to new groups – although, to be honest, this is somewhat limited.

There is usually a float of spare instruments around the activity as people re-equip and these can often be of good value although care must be taken to be sure of what you're buying. The DCK and BYBA websites can be a source of these as can the might of eBay. The major retailers will always be pleased to quote you for supplying new kit and sometimes have trade-ins available. In all cases "*caveat emptor*" (let the buyer beware) – you inevitably get exactly what you pay for and you must decide what you can best afford. Don't forget when preparing your budget for equipment, to include for all the accessories and "consumables" (drum heads, sticks and beaters, etc) as these can add up to an unbelievable annual expense. I've included a short section about grants application under the Finance heading.

On the "G" or "Bb / any key" brass debate, again the choice is very much up to the individual group. There are those who believe that drum corps should be "traditionally" keyed in "G" whilst the "Bb" supporters point to the alliance with "standard" British bands and school programmes. DCUK allows both forms and, in their Junior and Cadet sections, woodwinds too.

Drum Corps percussion seems to have settled into a standard format of snare, tenor and bass drums in the "battery" or field percussion with a totally free hand being permitted in the static or "pit" section. There are no regulations about percussion instruments, but lots of debate about whether having all your percussion in the pit is a fair way to compete. Read the DCUK Rules booklet for any restrictions. You make the choice.

Colour Guards (despite the misunderstandings) are NOT a compulsory component of a drum and bugle corps but, as there is a score allocated to them within the judging system, most corps feel them to be an integral part of the group. Increasingly there is a tenancy to refer to this component as the "auxiliary" or "dance" group – probably to avoid the difficulties of explaining colour guard to the non-initiated.

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

There have already been a myriad words written on and around this subject and I don't propose to go over old ground. The basic principles of recruitment would appear to be taking information about an activity for which you (the recruiter) have an obvious passion and enthusiasm and directing it towards those most likely to respond to the appeal. I realise that's ultra-simplified and that there are many, many ways in which you can aid recruitment. But the basic ingredient is enthusiasm and a sense of fun and enjoyment. We're offering a hobby, a pastime – not a job or vocation and potential new members must be able to see that they will enjoy being a part of your group. So whilst posters, brochures, flyers, newspaper, radio and tv reports may all be useful, it is the members themselves and their enthusiastic leaders who can best sell your attraction.

Once having got your new members, the key to retaining them for meaningful amounts of time is exactly the same. Provide them with an enjoyable activity – with challenge certainly (but achievable targets) and demonstrate that they form part of a team where all levels share the same ideals and ambitions – they'll stay and, hopefully multiply. The best recruiter of all is the member who enjoys what they're doing and tells their mates.

There are some drum corps and other similar groups that seem more successful than others in this particular aspect and they will be only too willing to share their techniques with you. Many portenders of doom will tell you that kids these days don't want the commitment, or can't be bothered to make the effort or have too many other easier, instant-fix alternatives. All this may be true but there are many thousands of youngsters across the UK (over 30,000 according to BFYMBO) who are currently enjoying the benefits and fun of belonging to our kind of group who will tell a completely different story.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Drum Corps is a potentially very expensive activity but every effort must be made to keep the cost of membership to a minimum. If the cost to members is high it will be difficult to recruit and retain.

Many people see the cost of running a corps in terms of musical instruments and uniforms but there are many more costs which must be met in the running of a corps.

Below are some of the main areas of expenditure divided into the day-to-day or "revenue" costs and the major "capital" expenditure.

REVENUE COSTS:

Rent	Rehearsal venues can be very expensive. Many corps using schools have found that in recent years they are having to pay commercial rents.
Administration cost	Printing, stationary, postage, web-page cost, telephone, etc.
Passenger travel costs	Coaches will be needed to get the corps to events. It is difficult to recoup the entire cost from members
Other motor expenses	The corps may need to run a vehicle to carry equipment to rehearsals and events. Remember to budget for vehicle tax, insurance, maintenance, fuel etc.
Equipment maintenance & "consumables"	The nature of drum corps means that there is a need to frequently replace drum heads, sticks, beaters etc. Brass instruments get damaged and repairs can be expensive. Colour guard equipment is, by its nature, short-lived.
Tuition & music	It may be that you will need to buy musical arrangements and to pay expenses to specialist instructors. Be sure to agree terms in advance.
Insurance premiums	A vital part of your expenditure. Instruments need to be insured to protect your investment. There is a need for personal injury cover for your members and staff. Most important in today's litigious society is adequate third party liability cover

Subscriptions to organisations	If your corps is competitive you will wish to join DCUK who will charge you an annual subscription. Additionally you will have to pay a capitation fee for each corps and staff member. Whilst these are reasonable in terms of the service received, they can amount to a considerable expense each year
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CAPITAL EXPENDITURE:

Musical instruments	These can be expensive even if second-hand. However with care they can last a long time. Depreciation over, say, 5 years is not unreasonable. This means that after 5 years an item would have no value in your accounts even though it may remain in use for many more years. Care is needed when spending money overseas – credit cards work best. Be careful with any “endorsement” deals – ensure all arrangements are crystal clear.
Vehicles	Most competitive corps find that it is essential to own an equipment vehicle. Once again depreciation over, say, 4 years for a second-hand van is reasonable
Uniform	There is an argument that uniforms should be regarded as a revenue expense as second-hand they have little or no value. However a full uniform including head-gear can be such a large expenditure that others regard this as a capital expenditure
Buildings	Few, if any corps, own their own buildings. Perhaps the cost of maintenance and running such a facility outweighs the convenience and savings in rent.

This all looks very daunting but corps do manage to meet these costs and operate successfully.

Perhaps it may be of value to look at how it might be possible to meet the costs.

It can be difficult to gain donations and grants for revenue costs so you will need to work at raising such funds by your own efforts. There are many ways of doing this but it is always worth trying to get some of your running costs from those not directly involved with your corps.

Members subscriptions	These are important both in financial terms and in showing members and parents the value of your organisation. Ensure members & parents know the rates when joining.
Donations	You may be able to get donations from those who support your work.. If they are UK tax payers and are willing to agree you can claim back the tax paid by them on their donation. You may also wish to consider this for subscriptions. However you must ensure that you comply with the Inland Revenue requirements. A donation must not be of any tangible benefit to the donor.
Grants (Local authority)	Your Local Authority may be willing to help fund revenue costs but they will expect that you fit their current criteria and complete their entire monitoring requirement. This is often a difficult area as you are competing with many other causes for limited funds.
Fundraising Efforts	All the old methods such as raffles (you will need a small gaming and lottery licence from your local council), sponsored events, sales of work, race nights, dances, jumble and car boot sales. To this we can now add EBay auctions.
Appearance fees	There is the opportunity to perform for events which will pay you a fee. Make sure that you charge enough to make the job worthwhile after you have deducted your expenses. Consider getting onto a theatrical agency's books.
National Lottery	There are several different funds which can be approached. Most will only fund capital expenditure. They expect a high standard of bid presentation and in most cases "matched" funding. This can cause difficulties if you are submitting a large bid for say £30,000 and have to find 10% match funds.
Foundation For Sport & The Arts	This is a fund run by the football pools companies. Many corps have been successful with bids to them. Unlike the Lottery, they have been willing to fund good second-hand equipment trucks. However their funds have been severely curtailed by the introduction of the National Lottery. Their latest guidelines state that they will not fund musical instruments or uniforms.

<p>Local & National Trusts</p>	<p>There are many charitable trusts and foundations with funds for a variety of purposes. It is important to research what each will fund and to pitch your bid in the right area. It is no use wasting time on a bid to a trust whose stated aim is assisting the elderly or who only fund religious activities.</p> <p>Again many of these will only fund capital expenditure although they may help with matched funding for Lottery or Foundation for Sport & The Arts bids. Local councils may have an advice service.</p>
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General Points

It is important that you establish good financial controls from the start.

Not only do your members and supporters need to feel confident that their funds are being properly managed but donors and grant making bodies require sight of accounts which support your requests for support.

The Charity Commissioners have established practices for accounting dependent on the financial income of an organisation. Even if your corps is not yet a registered charity it would be best practice to meet these requirements. Charitable status is important as many donors and grant making bodies will only give to charities. It also enables you to take advantage of the Gift Aid Scheme.

It is good practice for your trustees, committee, board, or however you style those responsible for the overall objectives of your corps, to approve and monitor the budget. They are ultimately responsible for the financial management. For this kind of voluntary organisation there are no legal requirements about the form of accounts that should be kept. A simple Income and Expenditure format will suffice although a little more sophistication may help to better present your Annual Accounts. Any competent book-keeper or careful volunteer will be able to manage such a system. There are many computer-based systems available to assist you.

Review your membership subscription rates every few years to ensure they are still covering the costs you intended. Make sure you advise everyone of the changes (well in advance) and of the reasons for any increases. Avoid annual changes – rather try to make long-term predictions that will allow stability. Offer a range of payment methods, e.g. weekly, monthly or annual payments, bankers orders, direct debit – maybe with incentives for taking up these options. Family rates may also be worth considering with reduced rates for the second or third child in any one family.

If your corps is part of a larger organisation such as the Scouts or Boys’ Brigade there will be established procedures which you must follow.

LEGAL BITS

You do not have to become a Registered Charity. However, registration with the Charity Commissioners does have very useful advantages. It gives you a legal identity and the protection of their systems; it offers accountability and control of your financial records and can bring some tax relief (see the references at the end of the document). Achieving charitable status takes a little time but is not now too difficult. DCUK can supply typically-acceptable constitution forms and the Charity Commission website is very useful.

Your management committee should meet (formally) three or four times per year plus an Annual General Meeting to re-elect officers and accept annual accounts. Minutes should be kept of all meetings and accounts should be formally recorded. Guidelines on these are available via the Charity Commissioners. Your local authority will probably have a Voluntary Action Services department who will be willing to assist you in setting up such administrative systems.

It will help your fundraising enormously if your management committee adopt a formal constitution. This is basically a document that sets out what your organisation is for and how it will achieve its aims (again DCUK can supply examples). You'll need a constitution to achieve charitable status and it is a requirement for DCUK membership.

As mentioned earlier, many funders are now asking for groups to show that they have both Child Protection and Equal Opportunities Policies in place. Good old DCUK again can help you with guidance on this.

For certain fundraising activities (e.g. street collections, lotteries) you will need to obtain a local authority licence. Your local Town Hall will be able to advise on this. Costs are minimal and the licence is renewable annually.

Insurances – you MUST have good comprehensive public liability insurance cover (most acceptable now is £5 million cover). This should cover all your activities and provide individual protection for members and staff, in addition to third parties. Brass Band Insurance Services understand drum corps needs and will be happy to quote you – or try your local insurance broker. This is separate to any cover you may arrange for your instruments and equipment (please read the small print carefully for all exclusions) and for your vehicles. Insurance is never cheap but a wise investment. It's always worth shopping around for a good deal.

Much of the above work will already have been done on your behalf if your group is to be directly linked to an established national youth organisation. The Scout Association, for example, provides a very comprehensive set of guidelines for those wishing to form a Scout band (tel : 0845 300 1818).

SUMMARY

If you're reluctant to commit yourself to an all-consuming, life-changing slog against the odds, then my advice is simple – ***don't do it!*** Find yourself a slot helping out in an established corps – you'll be made most welcome. However, if you do have a dream and a passion for the activity, then go ahead. The drum corps activity in the UK needs more groups to be established and your successful venture will be greatly welcomed and fully-supported by DCUK and its members. There are many rewards ahead in addition to the heartaches and disappointments that will also inevitably come. Don't do it alone – you need to have someone off whom you can bounce ideas and who can provide a shoulder when needed. If you have family ties, it is absolutely essential that you agree their support in advance – they will have to put up with a lot, including a great deal of your absence. Make sure your job commitments are such that there will be little interference – either way.

Once committed to the idea, think it out very carefully. Write down all the things you think you'll need. Take lots of advice. Talk to lots of people in the activity and to those who you wish to involve. Check out the availability of instructors, support workers, accommodation, transport links, equipment, uniforms and funding. Until you are you sure that you can put all these things in place don't even think about members. If you can produce and sell a well-established and professional organisation then the kids will come. They need to be convinced they can succeed (and be careful how you define that word) and that it will be a fun activity. This is far more important than competitive progress and status- achieving. You need members who want to belong to your corps not those whose prime motivation is a "red patch".

If at all possible, make your corps locally-based. If your members can reach your rehearsal base within, say, half an hour's travel then they are much more likely to make all your rehearsals and not just weekends. A local identity can also prove very valuable from a "pr" point of view. People like to identify with a local group and are much more likely to give their support in a variety of ways if they see it happening on their doorstep with local kids. Bringing in "outsiders" (especially those with experience and claimed expertise can also bring its own set of problems, with reliability of attendance and "ownership" being the main difficulties.

Establish an early and transparent relationship with the parents of your members. If they understand their role within your organisation they can be an enormous asset. Similarly try to forge a relationship with your local civic authority – if they are on your side it can open many doors.

It is absolutely vital to have your financial house in order. Setting up and running an active drum and bugle corps is a VERY expensive business and you need to be absolutely certain of your revenue streams for the many mundane things that are essential in addition to finding large capital sums to equip the corps.

Finally, give yourself plenty of time. There is such a lot to think about and arrange that, realistically, you should allow a good 12 months from initial conception to the birth of a healthy new baby.

Here's one further thought. There are many corps out there who would love to have their own junior section but cannot find the staff to run it. This is an excellent way of "learning the trade" and you would be fulfilling a very valuable role in the activity. DCUK may be able to point you in the right direction.

CHECK LIST

I hesitated before including this as, no matter how comprehensive you try to be, you will inevitably omit something that may be important to someone. However, as it does seem to be acceptable as a form of reminder, I offer the following for your guidance only. The items listed are not necessarily in any kind of chronological or priority order.

- Are **YOU** convinced you want to do this ?
- Can you write down a **good “case”** for forming a corps in your area ?
- Have you talked through your ideas with **someone else** ?
- Do you have the support of your **immediate family** ?
- If attached to a **uniformed youth organisation**, do you have full agreement from that group ?
- Can you specify your **aims and objectives** ?
- Is your **constitution** drafted ?
- Have you begun the process of registering with the **Charity Commissioners** ?
- Have you found the **essential people** you need to run the corps on a day-to-day basis ?
- Have you held **planning meetings** with your “staff” ?
- Do you have people to form a **management committee** ?
- Will you be able to raise the necessary **support personnel** ?
- Have you located **suitable premises** ?
- Have you contacted your local **civic authority** ?
- Do you have a source of **instruments and equipment** ?
- Have you worked out your **financial plan** ?
- Have you looked into **insurances** ?
- Have you worked out a **recruitment strategy** ?
- Have you contacted **DCUK** for assistance and advice ?
- Do you have a **Child Protection and Equal Opportunities Policy** ?
- ***Sit back and ask again “Do I really want to do this ?”***

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USEFUL WEBSITES

www.dcuuk.org.uk

links to all DCUK member corps

www.byba.org.uk

links to member bands

www.tymba.org.uk

www.marchingbands.org.uk/support

lots of good advice and a cd-rom
comprehensive fact-sheet

www.scoutbase.org.uk

www.boys-brigade.org.uk

www.dci.org/

USA activity

www.drumcorps.nl/en/

European scene

www.lottery.culture.gov.uk

www.arts.org.uk/directory/regions

www.fundraising.co.uk

www.syfab.org.uk

excellent fundraising service

www.dsc.org.uk

www.charity-commission.gov.uk

advice on constitutions

There are many, many more that can offer advice and further contacts – *get “surfing !”* If you find others that are useful, please let DCUK know so they can be passed onto the membership.

MAKE CONTACTS

Locate and contact other established drum and bugle corps and ask them for their advice and experiences – they will be pleased to help. Most have a website and email address. DCUK will help put you in touch.

THE VERY BEST OF LUCK !!!

RCS

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