

## ICLA | CORNER

### PRINCIPLES THAT WORK!

Whether it's a small institution with a local market, a regional institution with a regional market, or a nationally-recognized institution with a national market, applying certain principles can lead to success. Many books have been written about the principles that lead to success in a person's professional, civic, educational and private life. These same principles can provide guidance for an institution interested in having long-term success. The focus in this article will be on the principles of vision, evaluation, goals, planning and the intangibles as these apply to collegiate licensing.



Lee Workman



**Vision:** One definition in Webster's dictionary for vision is "a mode of seeing or conceiving." What good is a road map if you do not know where you are going? We can work daily on the tasks at hand, but are we really getting anywhere? Vision provides direction for a licensing program's future. At East Carolina University (ECU), the vision for our licensing efforts revolves around product availability at retail, brand awareness, royalty revenue and being prepared to take advantage of athletics success and university growth. The importance of the vision for a licensing program is that it be clear and specific as to what the program should look like in the future.

**Evaluation:** I hesitate to use the word realistic as it can often be interpreted as limiting vision and goals; however, realistically evaluating a licensing program is a key to success. What are the program strengths? What areas need improvement? What are the variables that affect the sale of licensed product and impact the brand? In evaluating East Carolina's licensing program, a serious misconception that affected the availability of product at retail was a lack of understanding of just how many East Carolina alumni and students were living in the Southeast United States. With the help of the East Carolina Alumni Office, licensees and retailers were provided statistics that changed their production and buying patterns of East Carolina merchandise. Taking the time to evaluate a licensing program may not only identify areas of strength and challenges, but it may also help discover potential growth opportunities.

**Goals:** I do not remember who originally said, "Shoot for the moon and if you miss at least you landed in the stars," but I have always liked the saying. To me it means that if you go outside your comfort zone to set high goals and you get close, you will be further along in succeeding than if you have low expectations. Set big goals, write them down and establish a timeline. And, once a goal is reached, it is time to set a new goal. One major goal for East Carolina is to grow product availability in targeted areas outside of Greenville in an established priority of expanding locations, while at the same time, expanding local sales through all retail channels.

**Planning:** It is also important to plan the work and work the plan. It really is that simple. Write out a plan of attack for each goal in order to

capitalize on your program's strengths and attack the weaknesses. This will become a roadmap to accomplishing goals and realizing the vision. Part of East Carolina's plan was to educate licensees and retailers. To do this, a document was created that could be distributed to specific licensees and retailers. This resulted in growth across retail channels and led to the establishment of a retail recognition program.

**Intangibles:** In my opinion, this is where success can be won or lost.

**1) Input and council.** Talk with others that have a vested interest in your licensing efforts and/or have knowledge that can be beneficial to your efforts. This may be your licensing agency, fellow staff at your university, other universities, licensees, retailers, or consumers. These individuals can help offset your weaknesses with their strengths and they may see things you do not see.

**2) Persistent and consistent effort.** There may be people who do not believe in your vision and goals, people that do not jump on board quickly, or people who jump ship when the first obstacle arises. Persistent and consistent work matched with a good plan will always prevail.

**3) Building Relationships.** It has been said that people do not care how much you know until they know how much you care. Building relationships with the other person's best interest in mind goes a long way in building solid relationships and trust.

**4) Attitude.** Are you positive you will succeed or positive you will fail? Is the attitude of your office to serve your customers and consumers? If you help others succeed through striving to serve them, then you will succeed also. In other words, if you help enough of your customers (licensees and retailers) succeed in satisfying consumer needs, then your licensing goals and vision will be realized as a result. Everybody wins.

We have been fortunate at East Carolina. While there is still work to do, we have seen royalty revenue growth in 22 of the past 25 years. Over the last four years, the aforementioned principles have been applied and East Carolina product availability has expanded in the eastern region of North Carolina and to all the major North Carolina metropolitan markets. Royalties have doubled the past three years without raising our royalty rate. East Carolina's best year-over-year royalty growth came the year before last, before the football team made some noise in the national polls and won a conference championship. ECU continues to move closer to the vision of being fully prepared to capitalize on championship successes and to have product available through multiple channels of distribution throughout the Southeast region.

Applying these fundamental principles, using the right tools, and relying on hard work may not be the hot new way to make a short-term splash, but these principles have worked time and time again for long-term success.

Thanks for this article to Lee Workman, associate athletics director for administration at East Carolina University.