

Mergers; Do They Work?

by Pacific Northwest Drum Corps.com

Corps-1	+	Corps-2	=	Corps-3	From	To	Seasons	Aftermath
Flamingos	+	Royal Lancers	=	Flamingo-Lancers	1965	1965	1	Returned to separate drum corps
Toreadors	+	Sentinels	=	Sentinels	1968	1974	7	Toreadors folded end of season in 1967. Members & equipment went to the Sentinels
Hawks	+	Royal Lancers	=	3rd Regiment	1975	1978	4	Folded in 1978. This was a fairly successful merger.
Shamrocks	+	Sentinels	=	Marksman	1975	1976	2	Folded in 1976
Oregon Crusaders	+	Imperial Cadets	=	Dickinsen's Imperial Crusaders	1973	1973	1	Returned to being the Oregon Crusaders. Imperial Cadets folded
1st Canadian Regiment	+	Calgary Cavaliers	=	1st Canadian Cavaliers	1984	1984	1	Returned to separate drum corps
Pacifaires (Surrey BC)	+	Brassmen	=	Pacifaires D&BC	1985	1987	3	First international drum corps in North America

Out of seven mergers, six corps folded post-merger (deaths in blue).

This small slice of data doesn't tell us much. No clear moral to the merger story. Sometimes you merge and die, and sometimes you don't. Looks like a 50/50 proposition.

The Toreadors were going to fold whether they merged with the Sentinels or not. At the time this was considered a merger, but to us, it doesn't fit the definition of a "merger".

It's more of a "we're folding, do you want our stuff" type-thing. Our definition of a merger is two corps in trouble, joining forces to avoid imminent death.

^PNW mergers were initiated because of two conditions (in our opinion): 1) Financial trouble, and 2) Low membership numbers

Typically the merger immediately results in a larger corps, but then membership falls off to the point of unsustainability. As the chart shows, most mergers do not last beyond one or two years.

The exception, and the only merger that clearly worked, was the 3rd Regiment in Portland Oregon. Four seasons post-merger was longer than some corps lived their entire lives **without** merging.

Editorial Opinion - You cannot take two failing businesses, put them together and expect them to work without changing your business model. You have to change what ails each component otherwise when you put them together, the problems do not go away. This is exemplified by the mergers of Sears & Kmart and The Bon Marche & Macy's. Somehow you have to identify and change the fundamental issue that is causing your business to fail. Otherwise the merger is just putting off the inevitable.

^Examples:

Financial Trouble

Poor management
 Poor fund raising
 No sponsors
 Malfeasance
 Budgeting Issues

Low Membership

No recruitment drives
 Low Community Involvement
 Low morale
 Poor equipment
 No Advertising