

10 GOLDEN RULES OF STAGE MANAGEMENT

by Carissa Dollar

1. Learn From Mistakes. No one is perfect. We all make mistakes as we practice our crafts. The best thing anyone can do is to analyze these situations and learn how to avoid making the same mistake again.
2. Don't Panic! Always remain calm, cool and collected. Never, Never yell. All Stage Managers should know the difference between raising their voices to be heard and yelling. If the Stage Manager loses it, everyone will panic.
3. Safety First! The cast shouldn't set foot on the stage unless you would walk on it barefoot. Inspect the set daily for potential problems. Are all stairs and platforms secure? Are all escapes adequately lit and glow taped? Do you know where the first aid kits and fire extinguishers are located? Who is certified in CPR and First Aid? The SM should be!
4. Plan & Think Ahead. What can be done to avoid problems? How can the Stage Managers make life easier for everyone?
5. There Are No Dumb Questions. It is better to ask and feel silly for a few seconds than to cause a disaster later.
6. Prioritize Tasks & Delegate Authority. One person can't do everything. Why do we have assistants if we don't use them?!
7. Early Is On Time. The SM should always be the first person in and the last person out of the theatre for a meeting or rehearsal. I always try to show up about 15 minutes before I really think I need to be there, just in case traffic is bad or any problems or delays occur.
8. Put Everything In Writing. In other words, be a communicator! Dated daily rehearsal notes aid in communication and help to avoid conflicts over when requests or changes were made. (Voice mail and email are also great forms of communication! Get a pager or cel phone so you are easy to reach at all times!)
9. Please & Thank You. Use these word everyday, especially when you are working with volunteers.
10. Stage Managers DO Make Coffee. They also do a million other menial tasks that are meant to make people happy and boost morale. Buy donuts, bake brownies, make sure birthdays are recognized, and hole-punch all paperwork. These little things are really appreciated by everyone.