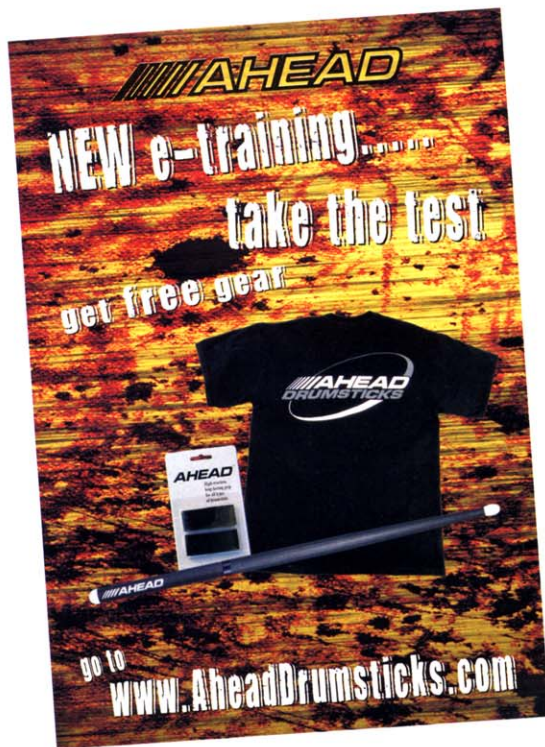


# Big Bang Gets “Ahead” With Innovative Dealer Training

Sales of even the most “basic” accessories improve when retailers fully understand the products



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course, if the cymbal is “chopped” at a 90-degree angle, it will break no matter what kind of stick is used.”

Kasha also claims that Ahead sticks transmit half the shock to the player’s hands and wrists compared with standard wood sticks. “We’ve had drummers who’d had problems with pain in their hands and wrists—guys with carpal tunnel and arthritis—tell us that after playing our sticks for a week, the pain was down to almost zero. They say things like ‘thank you; I can play drums again!’” These and other counter-intuitive performance characteristics make educating drummers—by first educating music store retailers—all the more important.

Brian Reed, manager of Drum Headquarters in St. Louis, Missouri, took the test soon after the program was launched. “The test is a good way for getting salespeople up to speed,” he says. “It not only improves sale; it also helps them answer customers’ specific questions.”

Based in Northridge, California, Big Bang is developing several tools to



Big Bang CEO  
Bob Kasha

enhance Ahead stick sales. For example, it recently introduced a new space-efficient, “concentrated” version of its wire rack stick display. But the company’s primary focus is on administering its Ahead e-training program and keeping up with prize fulfillment to new Ahead Challenge participants. Launched on February 1, the campaign has already drawn well over 700 responses, and

Selling drumsticks is pretty much a no-brainer, right? Drummers develop strong preferences for particular attributes—wood type, diameter, length, taper, weight, tip material—but these features typically only need to be explained to the very greenest beginners. This assumption that music retailers know all they need to know about drumsticks presented a special challenge to Big Bang Distribution CEO Bob Kasha. Because his Ahead Drumsticks line *does* warrant a deeper understanding of its features, benefits, care, and maintenance, Kasha developed a creative program designed to engage dealers in details they can turn into sales.

Kasha knew he needed to reach beyond store owners to the salespeople who interact directly with the customers. He also knew that the training would have to be easily accessible and engaging without occupying too much of their time. The ideal medium, he determined, was the internet, and the enticement was to present it as a kind of a game, complete with prizes.

Since February of this year, retailers who visit the Dealer Area of the Big Bang website are urged to “Take the Ahead Challenge.” After logging in with a user name and password they’re invited to read a two-page tutorial on the history, design, and benefits of Ahead sticks. At their convenience they can take a 26-question test. Nominally, the prize is an Ahead Drumsticks T-shirt and a pair of Ahead sticks, but the real payoff is in gaining knowledge they can use to sell more Ahead products.

“There’s a lot of technology involved in Ahead drumsticks,” Kasha explains, “much more for salespeople to know than they need to know about standard wooden drumsticks. The tutorial describes how the sticks evolved from technology that originated with baseball bats, and how we’ve been able to emulate the best attributes of wood while delivering superior response, rebound, durability, and shock prevention.”

One of the common misconceptions about Ahead sticks is that they transfer more impact shock to cymbals and to the player, when, according to Kasha, actually the reverse is true. “Ahead sticks have a polyurethane cover that’s actually easier on cymbals than wooden sticks if the cymbals are angled correctly. Of

Kasha’s goal is to reach at least half of its 2,600 U.S. Ahead dealers through its 18 domestic reps. (A parallel campaign is being promoted to Big Bang’s international dealers through its 45 international distributors.) Kasha cites an increase in Ahead drumstick orders of up to 30% over last year among stores that have participated in the e-training and displayed the new rack.

The program limits participants to one prize package per qualified salesperson and two salespeople per store. A notice on the Big Bang website stipulates that only qualified retail salespeople are eligible for the prize, but Kasha made the test accessible to anyone who wants to take it. Educating consumers, he reasons, will only increase Ahead drumstick sales.

“John Ochoa, a drum salesman at West LA Music in Whittier, California, comments, “Ahead sticks are very different from conventional sticks, so learning about how they’re made and their selling features will be helpful in trying to sell them. The ‘Challenge’ is easy to use and a great way to get the information across; it’s a great selling tool.”