



Promoting, Growing and Building Our Square Dance Activity

*Collection of articles from Alberta Chatter
Newsletters published from 2012 to 2024
Compiled by Newsletter Editor Claudia Littlefair
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OVERVIEW

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Suggestions and ideas for promoting our activity and putting together a club marketing plan.

B: CLUB SUCCESS STORIES – Page 23

Read how clubs' marketing campaigns worked for them. Lots of practical ideas and suggestions.

C: RESOURCES – Page 44

Produce current eye-catching posters, brochures and other marketing material. Access a treasure-trove of material through CALLERLAB's Knowledgebase, CALLERLAB's Teaching Resource, the Canadian Society's Pinterest account, and source free square dance artwork.

D: MEDIA – SOCIAL (ONLINE) – Page 51

If your club is not online, (Facebook, website, online ads) it doesn't exist in today's marketing world. Find suggestions and help through these articles.

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How to write effective news articles for print media (hard or online). Includes several examples of news articles that can be rewritten to include your own club's information.

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Suggestions for radio or newspaper interviews, effective photography and effective use of signage.

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Demonstrations are different than when we entertain at places such as senior homes. Here's some valuable suggestions and ideas on how to present our activity effectively.

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Understanding the needs of New Dancers, and ideas and suggestions for retention.

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- More recently, the Social Square Dance program (SSD) of 53 calls was introduced as an alternative to the Mainstream program of 68 calls.
- And most recently, Spring 2024, a proposal was made to CALLERLAB to reduce the existing Mainstream program to 50 calls, and put the remaining 18 Mainstream calls into the Plus program. This would make each program about the same size. See article "Witnessing Generational Change" on page 134.
- Although most of the articles in this section pertain to the SSD program, the reasoning behind SSD explains why and how a shorter program is of more benefit to New Dancers.

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A. MARKETING CAMPAIGNS & STRATEGIES

Ideas for the Summer

(Issue 2024-2) Source: Oregon Fed. of Square & Round Dance Clubs Newsletter, President's Corner, Karyn Buchheit

A Challenge. A Challenge. A Challenge. Please ask your newer dancers these questions:

1. Why did you start square/round dancing?
2. Why did you stay with it?
3. What would you recommend that our club/council/state do to attract and keep dancers?

Take these answers, think about, discuss and maybe make some changes. As we are heading into a slower/down season for many of our clubs, now is the time to discuss and maybe set in place changes to be ready for a new season of lessons/dances in the fall.

What are some fun things that your club can do over the summer? Now is the time to start planning. Afternoon BBQ/potluck and social? An extra long mystery trip? A visitation that is a bit of a longer drive? Dance in a parade? Have a booth at a local summer event? Dance at your county fair? What normally happens in the summer in your area that you could participate in and get your club's name out?

If you are planning to travel over the summer is there a club that will be dancing where you are going that you could visit? Can you explore the square dance community and maybe bring some new ideas back? Are you going to one of the large conventions/festivals where you can meet dancers from other states/countries and talk about what works for them?

As you are out and about – please be a good visitor, a good club member, be positive and not negative. Promote our state, your club, your council and encourage people to visit and maybe try square dancing.

Benefits of Square Dancing Rate Highest

(Issue 2023-3) - Excerpt from the ARTS Recruiting Plan

Editor's Note: For the complete 58-slide "Recruiting Plan" presentation, go to:

https://www.arts-dance.org/ARTS_Recruiting_Plan.pdf The following slides were chosen because the information is relevant to any marketing plan, whether it's at the club-level, provincial or national.



THE ARTS – DANCE RECRUITING PLAN

This Plan was approved on October 16, 2005 (Revision A – October 23, 2005), and was developed by the CALLERLAB RPM Ad-Hoc Committee (March 2005) Tom Rudebock, Chairman and Mike Hogan, Facilitator. It has been presented to The ARTS for use in marketing. The ARTS dance forms "Square Dancing" as used in this plan is used to identify any and all the dance forms represented by The ARTS. Committee Members: Vernon Jones, Lyle & Jean Beck, Otto Warteman, Patty Green, Bill Heyman, Ron Counts, Jim Maczko, Jim Mayo, Patty Wilcox and Terry Wheeler.

The Plan was approved by the ARTS Governing Board. **It is available to dance Clubs, Associations, Federations, or any other organization.** This plan may be modified for use by any dance organization for marketing and promoting the dance forms represented by The ARTS, and copies of this plan are available at: www.ARTS-Dance.org

Slide 12: TARGET DESCRIPTION:

Seven committee members responded to specific questions about who our target should be for this project. The committee agreed on the following target description:

- **50-59 year old males and females, married and single, with children that have recently left home. They are middle class with household income from \$50,000- \$75,000 per year.**

Slide 13: BENEFITS SOUGHT BY TARGET:

Seven committee members responded to specific questions about the benefits square dancing offers. Those benefits are:

- Leadership Opportunities
- Make new friends/Socialize/Fellowship/Find a Partner
- Travel Opportunities
- Affordable
- Camping Opportunities
- Have Fun/Laughter/Joy of Success
- Learn Something New/New Challenge
- Clean Environment
- Family Activity
- Physical Health Benefits
- Mental Health Benefits
- Music
- Ability to Dance all Over the World
- Easy to Learn
- New Activity to do with Partner

Slide 14: BENEFITS SOUGHT BY TARGET:

Eight committee members ranked the benefits listed in terms of the most important to least important to the target. The top five benefits desired in order are:

1. Fun/Laughter/Joy of Success
2. Make New Friends/Socialize/Fellowship/Find a Partner
3. Physical Health Benefits
4. New Activity to do with Partner
5. Mental Health Benefits

Slide 15: COMPETITION

COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS: 3-Strong; 2-Neutral; 1-Weak

Activity	Fun	Social	Physical	Partner	Mental
1. Square Dancing	3	3	3	3	3
2. Movies/Theater	3	2	1	3	2
3. Cards/Games	3	3	1	3	3
4. Health Club	1	1	3	2	1
5. Television	2	1	1	1	2
6. Casino's	3	2	1	2	2
7. Bar/NightClub	3	3	1	3	1
8. Internet	3	1	1	1	3
9. Travel	3	2	1	3	1

Conclusion: Square Dancing is the only entertainment choice that offers all five benefits sought by the target customer!

The ARTS Alliance is made up of nationally recognized dance organizations. Its current members are: All Join Hands Foundation Ltd, CALLERLAB, CONTRALAB, International Association of Gay Square Dance Clubs, National Square Dance Campers Association, National Executive Committee, ROUNDALAB, United Square Dancers of America and, USA West Policy Board.

The Alliance for Round, Traditional and Square-Dance (the ARTS) was formed to bring together the diverse groups making up the 'greater' American Folk Dance community. This coalition offers all dance organizations a chance for affiliation on a balanced and representative basis. The ARTS provides effective public education of the square dance image, the health and fitness benefits of related dances to obtain corporate sponsorship, without diminishing any of the autonomy, or unique qualities and programs of any individual affiliate member.

Tips on Marketing To Age Groups

(Issue 2022-3) - by Caller/Instructor Mike Hogan, 2014

Editor's Note: At the 2014 CALLERLAB Convention Mike Hogan presented a marketing session called "Generational Marketing". Mike is from Omaha, Nebraska and started calling at the age of 13 – 46 years ago. He works full time as General Manager of Rutledge Integrated Marketing, a full service marketing, advertising and public relations agency. Mike was instrumental in putting together the Square Dance Marketing Manual. Below are excerpts from his handout on marketing as it applies to square dancing.

ADULTS 60 to 70

Profile: This age group is semi retired, does light physical activity, and are willing to join a group and make longer commitments. They are slower learners. They want exercise that helps them stay healthy. They will dance in churches. They are okay with, but not excited about, dancing in senior centers. They are very family and church oriented.

Music Preferences: Classic hits (70's-90's), modern country, classic country, and classic rock.

Recommendations:

- Very few changes needed.
- We use their favorite music.
- They will join a club and make a longer term commitment and will dance in the halls we use.
- They will dance with our current generation of dancers.
- Emphasize our health benefits.
- Involve travel opportunities if possible.
- Shorten your class time and possibly add a second night each week to increase retention.
- Don't set a required finish date for your beginner classes.
- Market to them through word of mouth, church bulletins and cause marketing events.



ADULTS 50 to 60

Profile: This age group is full time employed and they are beginning empty nesters. They want exercise to stay young. They are new grandparents. They are easily bored and impatient. They want to feel young. They will dance in a church. They don't mind senior citizen discounts, but don't want to be "old". They might dance in a senior citizen centre, but don't want to. They are embracing technology. They have laptops and are on Facebook.

Music Preferences: Classic hits (70's-90's), modern country, classic rock, and rock.

Recommendations:

- Minor changes needed.
- Use more modern country and classic rock music.
- Move your dance out of the senior center if possible.
- Emphasize the ability to re-connect with their life partner.
- Once a week classes work fine.
- Emphasize square dancing as a way to stay young and healthy.
- Mix in travel opportunities, dinners, additional social activities beyond just square dancing.
- Change things up to keep their interest.
- Use club websites and club Facebook pages, as well as email to stay connected with them.



ADULTS 40 to 50

Profile: This age group works full time and has middle school and high school aged children at home. They are very active and very busy. They are socially connected. They don't like long term commitments and are not joiners. They take care of children and parents. They belong to a gym. They like trends but don't have to be trendy. They embrace technology. They have laptops, smart phones, iPads, are on Facebook and text message friends and family.

Music Preference: Modern country, classic hits (70's-90's), and rock/adult contemporary.

Recommendations:

- Moderate changes needed.
- Use more modern country and adult contemporary music.
- Keep using the classic hits music but cut back on classic country and adult standards.
- You'll need to offer multiple times for dancing as you'll be competing with high school sports for their time.
- Get out of the senior centre.
- De-emphasize dress code.
- When marketing to them, try **not** to use pictures, videos or live performances with dancers over the age of 55.
- Communicate with them through email, club websites and Facebook pages.

Start capitalizing on social media.



Get Crackin'!

(Issue 2021-3) - by Editor Claudia Littlefair

Take advantage of this downtime – plan your club's advertising campaign now.

STEP ONE: Get a "think tank" going (2, 3 or more members). Share advertising ideas and suggestions. Get some creative juices flowing.

STEP TWO: Get informed! There are all kinds of online help, examples and advice - for free!

- Start with **CALLERLAB's 90-page "Square Dance Marketing Manual"**:
(<http://callerlabknowledge.org/callerlab-square-dance-marketing-manual/>).
A comprehensive, easy to use guide on putting together an effective campaign. Covers all aspects of advertising.
- Visit **Canadian Society's Pinterest account**: <https://www.pinterest.ca/canadiansquarea/>. Guaranteed there is something for everyone! Hundreds and hundreds of posters, news releases, brochures, photos, memes, newsletters, history, and general information on all of our dance forms. Get inspired, borrow ideas!
- View the **B.C. Square Dance Federation Youtube channel** for "how-to" videos on promotion:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCK7iAGys3NKC8YNV1svPQ>. It includes recorded Zoom sessions designed to help us improve our advertising. Sessions on topics like: Image; Using Social Media; Promoting Teamwork as a Benefit; Writing Press Releases.

STEP THREE: Get your Game Plan together! Some clubs might have a "soft start" in the fall, with heavy advertising for January, or some might do heavy advertising for the fall. Whatever your timeline, be ready to roll out your advertising plan.

ALL Advertising Works

(Issue 2019-5) - by Editor Claudia Littlefair

Have you ever heard or said, ***“We’ve tried everything, and nothing works”*** or ***“We tried that last year and it didn’t put any feet on the floor.”*** or ***“The only thing that works is word of mouth.”*** In my opinion, these statements and others like them are not true, because every time a member of the general public sees the word “square dancing” the advertising has worked!

The first step in successful advertising is not recruitment, it’s simply to say “we exist”. If people are not aware of a product, they won’t buy it! It’s disheartening to hear, ***“I didn’t know that people still square danced.”*** or ***“I didn’t know that square dancing was offered here.”*** Those statements are a reflection on how poorly we advertise. The general public (the thousands of people outside of our circle of family and friends) have no clue about the Modern Square Dance program. Many of our clubs have given up on advertising, or advertise very little and only in the fall. It’s no surprise that people don’t know about us, never mind wanting to join up.

So this fall, advertise! **Let people know we exist through posters, flyers, postcard-sized handouts, business cards, trade fairs, farmer’s markets, participation-demos at community halls, sandwich board signs, large rental magnet board signs, lawn signs, banners on fences, public service announcements on radio and TV, on-line Facebook ads, websites and Facebook pages, and any other way you can think of.** Use print material that feature happy people because people are drawn to “fun” and fun is our recreation’s strongest selling point (see sample below). If you see something you like, copy it. Use economic, on-line sources like Vistaprint to create attractive handouts and flyers. For examples of print materials, images, dance memes, news articles, and more, go to Canadian Square & Round Dance Society’s pinterest account: <https://www.pinterest.ca/canadiansquarea/>.

Most of all, don’t give up! Advertise, advertise, advertise – because it works – each and every time.

SQUARE DANCE ROCKS!!

Dance & Dessert
Singles & Couples - No Experience Needed

FREE!

TWO Wednesdays @ 7pm
SEPTEMBER 18 & 25
Westmount School Gym
220 Wheatland Trail, Strathmore

ANY WEDNESDAY 7pm • OCTOBER to APRIL • \$6 (1st time FREE!)
www.StrathmoreSquareDance.com Dave 403-620-5131

Sample of
double-
sided
handout.

Ready for something different? Bored?? Need a challenge?
Looking for something FUN to do?

We Need People Like YOU

WHAT TO EXPECT

- ★ MODERN SQUARE DANCE is FUN!! Most frequent comment, ***“I had no idea it would be THIS much fun!”***
- ★ FRIENDLY PEOPLE - Mixed ages, singles, couples.
- ★ CASUAL ATMOSPHERE - No dress code.
- ★ MEET NEW FRIENDS!
- ★ GREAT MUSIC - Rock, Pop, C&W, Latin, Blues and more.
- ★ EASY! “Two left feet”? No problem! No fancy footwork or lead/follow partner. If you can walk and listen at the same time, you can do this!
- ★ Light REFRESHMENTS & SNACKS
- ★ ACTIVE - Same benefits as low-impact aerobics.
- ★ NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED - Step-by-step instruction.
- ★ First Time FREE! See if it's a fit FOR YOU.

“We were new in town and it was an easy way to meet people.”

“It’s my stress reliever. I have so much fun and I always leave smiling.”

“Patient instructors - I’m not much of a dancer but this is different. It’s the perfect night out – great exercise, brain gym, fun people and easy on the wallet.”

“I LOVE the music – everything from country to rock, even salsa.”

Plan in the Spring for the Fall

(Issue 2019-3) - by Editor Claudia Littlefair

The best time to start planning promotion for your fall start-up is NOW – spring time! Now is the time to plan out your fall strategy – where can you advertise? what mediums will you use? who will design your material? who will volunteer to help distribute posters/handouts in the fall? who has the skills to look after online advertising thru Facebook or your club website? who can spend time online posting your “free intros to square dancing” on community calendars? what jobs can be done now before everyone disperses for the summer months? what public demos can be done over the summer? is it possible to have a table at a craft show, farmers market, or tradeshow? and what other new avenues can you explore?

Remember that ***failing to plan, is planning to fail.*** Waiting until mid-August when many are still away or in “holiday mode”, or September when the season is about to start, almost always brings in poor results. Taking the time now to carefully plan out a promotional campaign will ensure its success in the fall.

There are several valuable online resources that can help you with ideas and suggestions. Before planning your campaign, spend some time visiting these sites:

1. CSRDS Pinterest Account <https://www.pinterest.ca/canadiansquarea/>. Explore hundreds of pins (files) about our dance activity - square, round, line, contra and other types of dances. Look for current dance graphics and images, memes, copy ideas and wording for your own posters, print ads, and newspaper articles. Get inspired by looking at what other clubs are doing to promote our activity.
2. CALLERLAB has an excellent 91-page resource manual “*Square Dance Marketing Manual*”. Browse through it and choose ideas that suit your club. Find it at: <http://callerlabknowledge.org/?p=1736>
3. CALLERLAB KnowledgeBase has a category called “*Square Dance Marketing*” which contains information pertaining to the promotion of the square dance activity in general. See: http://callerlabknowledge.org/?page_id=437
4. CALLERLAB KnowledgeBase also has a category called “*Winning Ways*” – this category collects stories shared by callers and dancers who have tried something out and are willing to share their experience for the benefit of others. See: http://callerlabknowledge.org/?page_id=202

Be prepared for summer demos by having print materials ready to hand out. Several clubs use online print companies such as *Vistaprint*, to design attractive and appealing flyers, business cards and banners, all for an economical price.

So, don’t let the opportunity to do some valuable planning pass your club by! Plan out your promotional campaign now in the spring, so that you can roll it out in time for your club’s fall start-up.

Making Square Dance Less Square: Do-Sa-Do In Denver Pivots to Attract New Members

(Issue 2018-7) - Article by Mark Jaffe, The Denver Post, August 13, 2018

The strains of Adele's "Rolling in the Deep" are pulsing, and the dance floor is packed. *"There's a fire starting in my heart reaching a fever pitch and it's bringing me out the dark"*. Allemande left, Do-Sa-Do, Allemande left, weave the ring, *"See how I leave with every piece of you, don't underestimate the things I will do."* Swing and promenade ...



Yes, as the dark bluesy song pumped out of the speakers, the dancers — in a flurry that snapped into patterns — were square dancing. Just another Saturday night at the square dance club.

Sixty-four dancers, mostly having forgone traditional crinoline prairie skirts and Western shirts for shorts and polo shirts, packed the floor at the Maple Grove Grange in Wheat Ridge as the caller, Robert "Bear" Miller, sang out the steps.

Not your grandmother's square dancing? Well, actually, it still is, since there was a good chance somebody's grandmother was out there on the dance floor.

This is the Denver square-dancing scene circa 2018. In an

Couples dance together on Aug. 14, 2018 at Maple Grove Granger in Denver. (Shaban Athuman, The Denver Post)

effort to keep it fresh, sound systems have replaced fiddlers and banjos, and square-dance callers are using blues, jazz and pop. It is as likely these days to dance to Bruno Mars or Michael Jackson as Garth Brooks.

"For a while, square dancing got stuck in time, in the 1950s, and now we are trying to get unstuck and evolve again," said Miller, who calls for Rollin' Wheels and other clubs in Denver. Still, the metro area's square-dancing clubs are getting grayer and grayer, and working hard — with various degrees of success — to recruit new members.

Part of the challenge is that it can take months of lessons to master the basics of the dance, which is sort of "Simon Says" with the complexity and speed of the video game "Cut the Rope."

"It's something for people who really like puzzles," said Bob Riggs, the caller for the Sunflower Squares club in Castle Rock and owner of Square Dance Etc., which provides entertainment, lessons and workshops.

In the 1970s, Denver was a square-dancing hotbed with more than 70 clubs and thousands of dancers, as well as teen and college clubs. This was in part the legacy of Lloyd "Pappy" Shaw, the principal of Cheyenne Mountain High School in Colorado Springs, who in the 1930s and 1940s traveled the country collecting square dances and calls and organizing teaching programs. Shaw created a high school squaredance team, which toured more than 50 cities. The square dance is Colorado's state dance.

The University of Denver's Carson Brierly Giffin Dance Library currently has an exhibition and documentary on Square Dance in the American West from the Lloyd Shaw Foundation archives.

The number of square-dance clubs in the Denver area, however, has dwindled to 18, with perhaps 900 dancers, including a good number who have danced for decades, according to the Colorado State Square Dance Association. "Look at any group activity, (like) bowling leagues, bridge groups," Riggs said. "They've all had a significant fall-off. This isn't about square dancing; it's about our culture." Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam, in his book, "Bowling Alone," called the trend a "decline in social capital." While you can bowl alone, you cannot square dance alone, so the Denver clubs continue their battle.

One big hurdle is learning the steps. It isn't easy. The traditional approach has been a lesson a week for 24 weeks, with sessions costing \$5 to \$10 each (often with discounts). Basic square dancing involves learning 50 moves. The Mainstream program, which is what is primarily danced, uses 70 calls, and Plus takes it up to 100. Advanced adds another 90 calls.

"It seems so complex, but everybody can do it," Miller said. "If you can walk, you can square dance." Riggs and Miller, who both teach as well as call, are each trying to cope with square dancing's learning curve, such as tailoring shorter sets of classes, all-day sessions or a learn-at-your own-pace program.



Street Community Center calling for the club. When Miller shifted from Jerrod Niemann's "Lover, Lover," the dancing punctuated with claps and shouts as Miller called the Acey Deucey, Peel the Top and Explode the Wave. While Rainbeaus have a reputation as a lively, sometimes raucous group, moving to Plus had the same effect on the Rollin' Wheels.

Rainbeaus is the biggest club in the area, with 94 members. "One reason is they accept everybody, straight, a married couple, everybody," said Paula Kauffman, a straight woman, who owned up only to being north of 70 years old. Jake McWilliams, 40, a transgender man who has been dancing with Rainbeaus for three years, said, "I think we're all getting a lesson in being together." Rainbeaus may also be successful because of its \$5 lessons, with a special fund to help defray the cost for those who need a little financial help.

Littleton's Mountaineers has about 70 members. Club president Ray DeAngelis said financially, the goal is just to break even. The club's annual dues are \$20. The cover for attending a dance is \$6 a person for members and \$7 for non-members. Most clubs also provide refreshments. "It is a very affordable night out," DeAngelis said.

There is a dance someplace in Denver almost every night. Mountaineers dance the first, third and fifth Saturdays of each month. Rainbeaus dance Mondays, Tuesday and Thursdays, though some of the sessions are advanced. Rollin' Wheels dance the second and fourth Saturdays. Then, there are the 15 others clubs.

It isn't by chance that Mountaineers is a large club, since it has been aggressive in its recruiting. "Part of our recruitment effort is to bring the age down," DeAngelis said. "We did pretty well last year."

In luring more people, age can be an impediment. "Nobody wants to dance with their grandmother," Miller said. Moving to contemporary music and sound systems is one attempt to shake square dancing's hayseed image. The music has to have a strong walking beat of 110 to 130 beats a minute, good phrasing, and 2-2 or 4-4 time, Riggs said. "Country music comes closest," he said. Still, he has called to jazz and the Hustle.

But not everyone is a fan. Lyle Gillette of Littleton came off the floor at the Rollin' Wheels dance in his Western shirt and cowboy boots. His badge (each club has its own badge) showed he was a visiting Mountaineer. "Square dancing was founded on country music," said Gillette, who has been dancing for 30 years. "Some callers think they can get young people with new music. I'm not so sure."

Miller, however, said that square dancing is just finding a "new identity" and, it is hoped, new dancers.

Interested in finding a square dance club near you or square dance lessons? The Denver area council of the Colorado State Square Dance Association can connect you. Many clubs begin offering lessons in September. Email middlebrook.mb@gmail.com or call 303-332-4212.

The lessons are often sponsored by clubs, and efforts are made to adjust for costs, so no one is turned away. "If money is tight, you should come and dance," Miller said.

Dancers work in groups of eight, or four couples, called a square. (Get it?) The caller moves the dancers around, changes their partners, changes their direction. "You are trying to create patterns, throw an unexpected call, a little surprise and get them back to their partners," Miller said. "For the caller, it is a Rubik's Cube."

Each dance ends with dancers exchanging handshakes and hugs for a job well done.

Bear Miller calls a dance on July 14, 2018 at Maple Grove Grange in Denver. (Shaban Athuman, The Denver Post)

A few nights after calling for Rollin' Wheels, Miller was at the Washington Rocky Mountain Rainbeaus, Denver's LGTB Mainstream to Plus, accompanied by intensity in the room ratcheted up, the



Kelly Costello dances with a member of Rocky Mountain Rainbeaus dancing club on Aug. 17, 2018 in Denver. (Shaban Athuman, The Denver Post)

“Selling” Square Dance to New People

(Issue 2018-4) – by Bernie Coulthurst, Coordinator, WI Intern Group Email Service

Our marketing subject for this month is SELLING, the most important part of marketing the benefits of square dancing FUN, FITNESS & FRIENDSHIP SET TO MUSIC!

We will cover the common mistakes most square dancers make as they talk to a prospect who called them in response to one of their ads or publicity efforts.

The first mistake is calling your new dancer dances LESSONS! The word ‘lessons’ imply a class room setting, etc. and is interpreted as a negative experience. Please call them what they are - new dancer dances - because that is what they are in the real world. A good square dancer teacher-caller will have the new dancers dancing to a popular song within ten minutes of being on the floor for the first time. A caller from Wausau, Butch Danielski, is an expert at this. He has the rare talent of being able to call a singing call with only the calls that he has taught within the first ten minutes of being on the floor. His emphasis with the new dancers is to have loads of fun learning how to dance. Each new dancer dances has to be a fun experience for your new dancers!

The second mistake most square dancers make when talking to a prospect is that they talk too much. The secret is to get the prospect to talk what is important to them - not what is important to you. Often, the best way to answer a question from the prospect is to ask a relevant question.

Your job is to truthfully answer their questions and concerns with as few words as possible as you try to determine what their HOT BUTTONS are, namely what is their desire and what is important to them. The most common need of your prospects is the desire for a positive social experience! Take a close look at your club dances and you will see that the social aspect of your dances is as important if not more important than the actual dancing.

Your goal is to get their name, phone number, email address and street address (for your attached Dancer Prospect Data Sheet) and to close the sale by inviting them to your next new dancer dance or your club dance to see the fun that happens at your club dances.

The third mistake that most square dancers make when talking to a prospect over the phone is that they don’t know when to stop selling. Again, most square dancers talk too much when talking to a prospect. When you realized that they are “sold” you switch into the brief information mode.

The fourth mistake that most square dancers make when talking to a prospect is that they are not prepared to answer the questions coming from the prospect. Here are a few of the more common questions and comments that you will receive from your prospects:

- My husband or wife does not like to dance.
- I have two left feet.
- Is square dancing hard to learn?
- How long does it take to learn to square dance?
- Do I have to wear those old fashioned square dance costumes?
- Can we bring our kids to the dances?

I am sure that you can think of more possible questions and comments. The key to successful selling is to be prepared to answer the prospect’s questions and concerns. You will not be able to perceive all expected questions and comments. For those questions you will have to “wing it” but always TELL THE TRUTH.

As always I welcome individual questions and comments to this marketing memo and its contents. Thanks for reading this marketing tips for March 2017.

What's In A Name?

(Issue 2018-3) - by Tom Gray, Leduc

Naming a business or an organization is an important step that can be part of the difference between success and failure, according to some business sources. Entrepreneur Media's book 'Start Your Own Business' has these suggestions:

- Ideally, your name should convey the expertise, value and uniqueness of your product or service.
- Choose a name that appeals not only to you but also to the kind of customers you are trying to attract.
- Choose a comforting or familiar name that conjures up pleasant images so customers respond to your business on an emotional level.
- Don't pick a name that is long or confusing.
- People prefer words they can relate to and understand. That's why professional namers universally condemn strings of numbers or initials as a bad choice (IBM and BMW only became recognizable after their success).
- Stay away from cute puns that only you understand.
- Suggestive names that focus on what the business is about can be quite effective: Italiatour. HouseBoatAbout. DeLightFul. Shoperific. Note also that these names carry emotional connotations.

How are ballroom or other dance studios named? I googled "dance studio" and here's a selection from the first page or two (they are from the Edmonton area because Google read my location):

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • Connectivity Dance Studio | • Foot Notes Dance |
| • Elite Dance Academy | • Ballroom and Country Dance Studio |
| • Social Ease Dance Studio | • Nanaimo Ballroom Dance Society |
| • SugarSwing Dance Club | • Sugar Foot Ballroom Dance |
| • Let's Swing Edmonton | • ETown Salsa |

What do these have in common? They're all relatively short. Many are a bit "catchy". They generally indicate the type of dance on which they focus. In fact, with most, even if you take away the words dance club or dance studio, you still know what they teach -- salsa, swing, country, social. Sometimes the name indicates the city where the group is found. These factors are all important to a business or organization. You want your name to stand out, to be short and catchy and easy to grasp. You want prospective customers to be easily able to tell at a glance that your studio offers what they want and that you're in their area.

Now let's look at some local square dance clubs:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| • Country Sunshiners | • Country Cousins | • Dots and Dashes |
| • West Edmonton Promenaders | • Double Diamonds | • St. Peter's 2 x 4s |
| • Buttons and Bows | • Northern Twisters | |

Again, these clubs came up in the first two pages of a search for "square dance Edmonton". **Except for one name, do you have any idea where they are?** Without the full name of so-and-so "Square Dance Club", would you have any idea what they do? Most club names from the '50s and '60s are "cutesy" and meaningful only to the square dance community. "Rodeville Yellow Rockers" doesn't mean much to the average non-dancer (unless they think of cowardly rock musicians). Its full name, "Rodeville Yellow Rockers Square Dance Club" is clear enough, but very long. It may even be truncated in some print listings. "Rodeville Square Dancers", while prosaic, is short, clear and to the point, giving both location and activity.

Yes, your club has been in existence for 20, 40, 60, whatever years and tradition is hard to break, especially for the old folks who have been there from way back when. **But if your club is dying, and if you want to infuse it with new life (and new dancers), perhaps it's time to consider a new name.**

Same Image Problem 70 Years Later

(Issue 2018-1) - by Claudia Littlefair

When I was reading the book, “*As I See Saw It – Bob Osgood*” (see “*A Glimpse of the Past*” on page 5), I was surprised to read that square dancing suffered the same negative image in the 1950’s as we are facing today – almost 70 years later!

Bob Osgood wrote, “*One complaint frequently voiced was about the image square dancing was getting from magazines, newspapers, and especially, from motion pictures. Square dancing of sorts was portrayed in many movies. Most of them were Westerns, where a bunch of pioneer types would get up and, in the course of telling the story, do somebody’s concept of a square dance.*”

Many times these cinematic views involved knowledgeable individuals, real callers, or dancers. But many times, the dancing depicted tended to irk the new dancers just coming out of class, and the callers whose responsibility it was to steer clear of the old barnyard feeling.

Fully aware of this, we started early in the game looking for some individuals or organizations who might depict square dancing in a favorable way, and make it available on film. We weren’t too successful.”

Fast forward to the early 2000’s, when CALLERLAB hired Starworks to conduct a study on square dancing. The focus groups were baby boomers, primarily in their 40’s and 50’s. The results of the research was summarized by Starworks in the following statement, and it is this negative image that we are still up against.

“Square dancing has an image problem in the general public, particularly among those in the targeted empty nester Baby Boomer age group. This target population sees square dancing as out of date, country oriented, for hicks and hillbillies, using old-fashioned music and patronized by senior citizens in fluffy dresses with big hair, big belts and RV’s.”

“Most people say they are familiar with square dancing, but their familiarity is with traditional square dancing, not with modern western square dancing. As a result, their [baby boomers] image of square dancing is strongly influenced by the traditional square dancing and does not reflect the realities of modern western dance.”

So What’s Solution?

EDUCATE THE PUBLIC: Every time we put out a poster, a newspaper ad, a brochure, a leaflet we have an opportunity to educate the public about who we are, what we do, and what we look like! Many clubs have their own Facebook pages or websites. These are ideal places to show the general public who we are and what modern western square dancing is all about.

EDUCATE YOURSELF: As dancers, we should be able to explain the difference between traditional and today’s square dancing (see ad on next page for more information). More importantly, be ready and prepared to describe how dance personally benefits you.

ASK THE MEDIA FOR HELP: Take some time to explain to the news reporter about the negative image that we are trying to dispel. Once they understand our problem, they can help by addressing it in their write-ups and photos. Radio ads can use something more current than the traditional hoedown music in the background. Alternatively, submit your own news articles and weave information in that supports the image we want. Get help from the experts – ask the newspaper’s design department to make up your ad. Below is an example of a draft ad copy submitted to Metro Calgary News, and the final ad as designed by their department. Note the photo shows all ages, casually dressed and smiling dancers.

DRAFT COPY OF AD

DARE to SQUARE!
Introductory Dances in Calgary and area, starting in September
... and they are free! No previous dance experience necessary and no partner needed.

Five Things About Today's Square Dancing

1. **It's evolved.** Today's square dance is a multi-level, sophisticated program, with its roots in traditional square dancing.
2. **Music has changed.** Dance to all genres including rock, pop, easy listening, blue grass, classical, latin, old and new country.
3. **Dress is your choice** - casual, dressy, western or traditional costume.
4. **Easy as walking.** This is team dancing in groups of eight, with no fancy footwork or lead/follow partner. Painless for people with two left feet.
5. **Beats the gym!** Same benefits as low impact aerobics plus more! Meet new friends. Have FUN learning something new. Qualified dance instructors.

For dance locations, dates and times visit
www.squaredancecalgary.com
403-239-0177
info@squaredancecalgary.com




FINAL AD DESIGNED BY METRO CALGARY NEWS

DARE to SQUARE!
Five Things About Today's Square Dancing
Introductory Dances in Calgary and area, starting in September ... and they are free! No previous dance experience necessary and no partner needed.

1. **It's evolved.** Today's square dance is a multi-level, sophisticated program, with its roots in traditional square dancing.
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So, whenever and wherever possible, give people a new and unexpected image of who we are. Let this image conflict with the preconceived negative image, so people can see square dancing in a different light.

Step One: Creating Awareness

(Issue 2017-9) - Claudia Littlefair, Editor

The decline in the number of square dancers has been discussed, researched, debated, hashed out and talked over many times over many years, with the hopes that by understanding the decline, the problem can be fixed. **Even in the 1970's when square dancing was very popular, the retention rate was only 50% once dancers graduated.** Today, it's probably less than 50% returning the second year, and a further 50% decline by the third year.

One proven way to increase our numbers, is to increase the number of people who are exposed to our activity. Statistics show us that in every crowd, there'll be some who are willing to attend an open dance, and from that group there'll be a smaller group who are willing to sign up for lessons, and from that sub-group there'll be an even smaller group who will stay the course for several years.

For example, the Timberline Toppers in Colorado have often had new student classes numbering 30 plus students, because of their successful recruiting plan. (See next article "Growing Clubs".) Their statistics show that out of a list of 100 good prospects, 50 to 70 will attend the "chili dinner", 20 to 30 will sign up for lessons, and only 6 to 10 will be active after 6 months. **So think BIG!!** If we apply that same formula to a list of 1000 prospective dancers, this would translate to between 60 and 100 active dancers. **Exposure to our activity through demos, open dances, ongoing advertising, and signage will bring in prospective dancers.**

Most clubs do demos and advertise prior to the fall and then disappear from the public eye for the remainder of the dance season. **This time period, October to April, offers many valuable opportunities to showcase our activity.** Some ideas to consider:

- Write letters to local churches and community groups offering to host a free dance.
- Contact businesses and offer reasonably priced Christmas party entertainment.
- Get involved in community affairs like Christmas markets, farmers markets and trade shows.
- Participate in the community and make the news. For example, make monthly club food donations to the Food Bank, or put on a dance and donate proceeds to a local charity.
- Write regular updates on dance activities, and submit them to your community newsletter.
- Put up a sign every week on the day you hold dances that tells people 'we dance here'.

Keep a list of people's names and contact information who show interest, and promise them that you'll contact them in the fall. **So, think BIG - actively work on your 1000-Name Prospect List ALL YEAR LONG.**

Growing Clubs, The Timberline Toppers Plan

(Issue 2017-9) *Source: Excerpts from <http://timberlinetoppers.org/education2.html>*

The word is that square dancing is dying all over the country. Not here. **The Timberline Toppers have often had new student classes numbering 30 plus students.** After a few years, nearby clubs began to try the TT Plan, and they too have had success. Now clubs in other Colorado councils have begun to try the plan. On seeing a Timberline Toppers badge at a dance in Utah, a southern Colorado dancer exclaimed, "You saved our club!"

Preparing the Soil

Existing club members must have a positive attitude toward all other dancers, especially new students — smiling, friendly, welcoming. Reminders and practice may be necessary before any new students arrive. For example:

- No pushing other dancers
- No frowning at mistakes
- No chatter (students need to concentrate)
- No death grip on thumbs, hands, or arms. (Thumb twisters, finger crimpers, and arm pullers are usually unaware of these habits. They need to be told. If that doesn't work, try an entire dance with no touching allowed, which is actually kind of fun.)

Planning the "Chili Dinner"

The basic plan involves:

- Generating a list of prospects. (Friends from other social groups, neighbors, civic groups, home-owner associations. Strangers reached by newspaper articles and posters. Yes, this step takes work.)
- Plan a party dance with a fun caller. Try to get everyone on the floor learning and dancing a few calls.
- An enticement helps convince reluctant prospects to show up. For several years we conducted a chili dinner. Unfortunately, after a few years, a large bunch of repeaters came and then left immediately after eating. So we switched to ice cream, which was far less work, but also effective.
- Invite prospects on your list with a friendly phone call, email reminder, and, best, an old-fashioned invitation. (But, leave it open to walk-ins that respond to posters or ads.)
- Greet people at the door, and welcome them. Check them off on your invitation list. (Knowing which prospects came helps in future years.)
- Serve your chili or ice cream and make sure club members mix with guests. (An hour for sign-in and eating is typical, but depends on the food and the number of guests.)
- When the caller is ready, club dancers should look for reluctant prospects and encourage them. Partner up with prospects.
- As part of the evening, a demonstration tip with club dancers can highlight the fun, flow, and variety involved. (Be careful to not intimidate prospects with anything that looks "way too complicated to learn".)
- Explain the lesson schedule and cost. Invite prospects to sign up, or, at least, think about it, and perhaps sign-up at the first lesson.
- Be prepared to get names, phone numbers, email addresses, and money.
- Thank everyone for coming.
- Smile.

The key features are finding prospects, getting them to come, giving them a fun evening, and showing them a very friendly group.

No 'One Shot Wonders' in Advertising

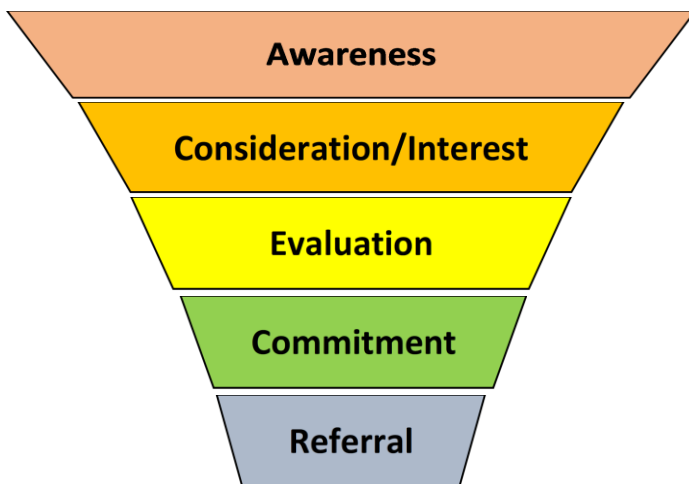
(Issue 2017-4) *Editor's Note: The following article is an excerpt from CALLERLAB's draft Square Dance Marketing Plan, put together by Mike Hogan. Mike lives in Omaha, Nebraska, and has been calling for over 40 years. He has a marketing background and happily shares his expertise to help build up our activity.*



The goal of a marketing campaign is frankly to sell something. For square dancing, our goal is to move individuals through the funnel until we receive the outcome of them joining our activity by learning to dance and then participating on a regular basis.

Often, we attempt to recruit new dancers through various means and the result is disappointing. A potential customer goes through several steps before purchasing a product as shown in the sales funnel below. A well thought out marketing plan should address all stages a customer goes through on their way to making a purchase.

Dance groups sometimes execute a marketing tactic with high expectations and then give up when those expectations are not met. For example, let's say your organization puts a float in the local Independence Day parade. You put a sign on the side of the float about square dance lessons beginning in two weeks. Your club member's expectations are that several people will show up to take lessons. When that doesn't happen, they determine that the parade was unsuccessful and should not be done in the future.



The research from Starworks tells us that the community is unaware that the activity exists, is unaware of the benefits our activity offers, and has an outdated image of square dancing. The float in the parade begins to address the AWARENESS phase of the buying cycle, but only that phase. It takes multiple impressions on the consumer before they move to the CONSIDERATION/INTEREST stage. **Growing the awareness and understanding of our activity should be the first step in your marketing plan. It's vitally important.**

The sign on the side of the float announcing where and when a beginner class is starting, is a call to action message. It is asking the consumer to make a commitment. It is possible that someone viewing the parade has enough knowledge about square dancing to react to the sign and show up for lessons, but that is extremely unlikely.

Now let's take this same consumer, let's call her Jane, through the sales/marketing funnel by reaching her in many ways. Imagine this: Jane has now seen your parade float four times. She also saw a square dance exhibition at the ballpark. Twice now, Jane was handed a flyer that talked about square dancing. In each case, there was a message about beginner classes and a website where she could learn more. She now knows the activity exists, has heard the music, and witnessed dancers having fun. She knows that there is a club near her that offers lessons, and she knows there is a website she can go to for information. But, she's not convinced. Her church scheduled a social event that included square dancing, and so she attended. AND, she had fun! She decided to go to the website but didn't recall the name. So, she googled "square dancing in Springfield" and found the site. Then while on Facebook, she saw a post about beginner lessons starting. She also got an invite through Nextdoor.com to go to a square dance party to kick off the local club's lessons. She attended and had fun. At that time, she was invited to learn the dance by participating in the club's beginner class and she said ???

In this example, Jane witnessed five exhibitions, received two flyers and participated in a beginner event before going to a website to learn more. Then a Facebook post and a Nextdoor.com invite got her to sample the product again. Now, came the close! Someone she had danced with asked her for the commitment to learn the dance. And she said YES!

The point here is that there are NO one shot-wonders. Moving your prospect from completely unaware of your product to a purchase takes an ongoing marketing strategy designed to engage them at every step through the sales funnel.

In My Humble Opinion

(Issue 2017-3) - by Jean Wood, Caller & Editor, "The Well Rounded Square" Newsletter

Jean and Bill Graduated as Square Dancers in April of 2013 and graduated Plus Dancing in December 2013. Jean began writing and editing The Well-Rounded Square Magazine for the Thompson Shuswap Region in September of 2013 and expanded the coverage area to include the Okanagan Region in 2014. Both Jean and Bill are very active in the Square Dance Community. Bill is 1st Vice President of the BC Square and Round Dance Federation and President of the Thompson Shuswap Square and Round Dance Federation. Jean is Webmaster for two Regions as well as Chairperson of the Chase the Fun Jamboree and Co-Chairperson for BC Festival 2019. Jean is Caller for her own Club, 4 Ways Family Dance, and occasional Caller for other Clubs.



REMEMBER, in order for Square Dancing to live on, we need new dancers, new callers and new cuers!

We keep trying to sell, "Modern Square Dancing" but are we really doing that? Your children and your grandchildren probably roll their eyes when you mention Square Dancing. You could remind them that it's a great way to spend quality time with the family. To get away from the habit of sitting on the couch watching the tube or being glued to that computer screen or video game. Social Media is great for some things but people need tactile contact, not to mention the physical activity that is healthy for all of us. Our brains will turn to mush if they are not exercised and challenged. Stress can drive us insane! But then, everybody already knows this, right?

Instead of pushing the health benefits, let's push the fun aspect. Isn't that why you started dancing...because it was fun. Way back when, did someone tell you that it was good for you? Let others know that things change as times change. If we can get younger dancers, we can work around their likes and dislikes. The only way we can know what they want is if they come out and tell us what makes them happy.

I am one of those dancers who is under 60. My children and grandchildren like to dance. They like the crinolines but don't want to be forced to wear them. They DON'T like the music! I also know, from experience, that there are those who do not want to dance with the young dancers or blame the new dancers when the square breaks down. Is that fair to them? Does it make them want to come back?

When I first started Square Dancing, I almost ran out the door before I even got on the floor. Why? I was not used to a lot of physical contact and there were all these people rushing to hug me. Even now, I don't like to be hugged by complete strangers. Should we be giving new dancers time to acclimatize before we start mugging them?

Are we being considerate of our new callers and cuers? Are we encouraging them to continue with a very challenging course of action? I am a new caller and there are those who complain about the music that I use OR that it's too fast (it's still 128 bpm) OR the fact that I like to throw in some of the more unused moves to mix things up. There are those who refuse to give me a chance to show what I can do because I like to be more up-to-date. There are even those who have said that they would rather quit a club if their current caller or cuer retires. Sorry guys and gals, but I find that a little insulting.

Doing demos is great IF you remember that the poufy skirts and yeehaw music is NOT the way to attract younger dancers. It's very nice to watch but not to be a participant. Get out there and shake it up! Use the kind of music that gets their feet going and makes them want to dance. Use easy moves so that you can invite them to join in and find out that it IS fun. The best way to learn is to DO.

Too often I hear, "This is how we've always done it." One caller said that we've been too easy on our dancers because of their advanced ages and the fact that they can't move as fast as they used to. Are our dancers getting too used to the same old, same old? So much so that they can at least dance the repetitive moves in their sleep?

We need to seriously rethink how we approach recruiting new dancers. Let's not forget that some of those new dancers could become new callers and cuers. So where do we start? How about talking about possibilities within your clubs and your region. What are other regions successfully doing? Talk to your delegates so they in turn can talk to the BC Federation. Who knows... that little idea of yours could lead to bigger things. Don't scoff at those same little ideas or the person making the suggestions just might think that it's not worth trying. **Try everything and then DO SOMETHING!!**

As I See It

(Issue 2017-2) - by Caller Nick Turner

(Reprinted with permission from Mary Anne & Nick Turner, editors of The Cariboo Connection Region 5, BC Newsletter)

One of the biggest obstacles to keeping Square Dancing alive is the Age Gap. We - the current club dancers in B.C. are almost all over 60, many are in their seventies. We have a badge for the 80 year olds and now an additional dangle for the over 90. Good for us!

Square dancing has kept us young. **But - and there is always a but - where are the 20, 30 40 and 50 year olds who could be dancing with us?** Square dancing needs to be multi-generational. We need the majority of our club dancers to be between the ages of 40 and 80 with a healthy sprinkling of 20 and 30 year olds and families with kids aged 12 to 19 and yes, the active over 80s. Problem is, we mostly talk to people who are watching our demonstrations and we talk to friends and acquaintances, as 'word-of-mouth' is accepted as the best way to recruit.

Do you really think 20 - 40 year olds are going to be enthusiastic when a pink-panted octogenarian or an elderly lady in a big flouncy skirt totters up and tells them to try Square Dancing "because it's so much fun." And do you think the 20 to 40 year olds will be enthused by the out-of-date music - especially Hoedowns - that many of us play? Take a look at Square Dancing as so often portrayed on You Tube and Facebook. It's oldsters tottering around with nary a soul under 60 or 70 tottering with them.

The Image we portray of our favourite activity does not enthuse the 20 - 50 group. So what can we do? First of all, if we are 70 and older, don't recruit friends and acquaintances who are 70 and older. Instead recruit 60 year olds and younger. If you are 60 and younger, recruit only people who are at least ten years younger than yourself.

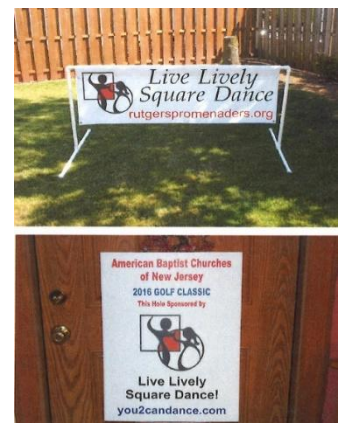
Callers, for heaven's sake invest in some new music. There's nothing wrong with old songs but the older music does not use modern instrumentation and older hoedowns are hokey. Go to the website "Music For Callers" and listen to what is available. A lot of old songs have been newly released with modern sounding instrumentation. Prices range from US\$6.00 - \$9.00 - pay with PayPal. Find new music on iTunes at \$0.99 - \$1.29 a tune that you feel comfortable using for your patter - easy immediate download to your digital device using an iTunes card. Treat your dancers to something new! Entice the not-yet dancers with something exciting! Spice up your entertainment value.

Promoting Dance Using Our Slogo

(Issue 2017-2) - by Roy Gotta, North Brunswick, New Jersey

Attached are 2 photos of how I have used the Live Lively slogo to promote the activity. The first is a banner I had made up that we put outside the hall whenever the Rutgers Promenaders dance. It lets the public know that twice a month there is a square dance at that location, and a website to go to for more information. The banner is 6' by 2' and I had it made at a cost of \$27.83, including shipping by www.StickersBanners.com.

I made the stand, which comes apart easily for about \$20 worth of 1" pvc pipe. I can send people the design. The second photo is of a sign I had made up for a charity golf event. Each year I sponsor one hole at a charity golf event here in NJ and a sign is placed near the tee box for that hole. This year I decided to promote square dancing.



Would Square Dancing Be Your First Choice?

(Issue 2017-1) Source: cedar.net/articleco-op – by John Fogg

Contrast these 3 situations:

1. **You walk into a bar where they line dance.** You never line danced before, you don't have a partner. They walk you through one specific line dance that night, and you dance that dance off and on all night. You don't need a partner.
2. **You walk into the Contra dance.** You never Contra danced before, you don't have a partner. They teach you each Contra dance before they dance it, and they have a half hour walk through on contra dancing basics before the dancing starts. Since the custom is to change partners with every dance, you don't have a problem finding a partner all night long, and you end up dancing with every person in the hall by the time the night is over.
3. **You walk into a square dance.** You've never square danced before you don't have a partner. Unless you were lucky enough to hit the beginning of a beginners' group, they tell you, you have to wait for a new beginners' group to form, take lessons for several months, you have to arrange your own partner situation and we'll see you in 6 months, 10 months or whatever. You don't dance at all that night.

Now after those 3 experiences, where do you go? Remember that this is the age of instant gratification. You may not like that, but it's true. Can square dancing compete with those other dance scenarios? Or with other entertainment scenarios, of which we have many. Finally, does it have to be this way with square dancing?

I don't think so. It wasn't always that way. **Imagine a fourth scenario.** You walk into the square dance, you don't have a partner, you've never square danced before. There's a half hour with very basic instruction like swing your partner do-si-do, maybe 10 calls maximum. There's other people there without partners and the old time club members try to line you up with a partner, maybe dancing with you themselves if they can't find somebody. Brand new dancers and old timers all dance, and the more experienced help the less experienced.

“... we are attempting to force them into the mold that most of us fit into in the late '40's and early '50's.”

The second dance is announced as mainstream, plus, A2 or whatever, and the people who can and want to dance at a higher level do so. The next dance is back to beginners.

Square dancing, in the present incarnation, started after World War II with married couples looking for fun and socializing without spending much money. Most of that has changed. Many couples aren't even married any more, and there are many, many more singles. There's a lot more money around, and a lot more variety in how to spend it entertaining yourself. Square dancing is still fun and a great way to socialize. We just aren't

reaching our potential members. Why we are not is because we are attempting to force them into the mold that most of us fit into in the late '40's and early '50's. We will not be successful in doing that. Unless there is a drastic change, square dancing as we know it will disappear in 10 years or less. If we insist on dancing at rarefied levels that require years of training and insist that beginners be part of a couple, square dancing will die with us.

Summer - The “Off Season”

(Issue 2016-4) - by Editor Claudia Littlefair

Does your club take a vacation during May to August? Or do you capitalize on this time by creating a presence in your community? Open dance nights are not new, but consider holding one or more Summertime Dance Parties. Advertise in area churches, businesses, community clubs/associations, and ask members to bring family and friends. Keep the dances easy and fun, serve ice cream with sundae toppings, and invite your guests back for the next Dance Party. Most of all make it FUN!



New Dancer Survey - SquareUp BC

(Issue 2017-1) A survey of 220 new dancers was undertaken by SquareUpBC in the fall of 2015. The purpose of the survey was to learn how advertising and promotion efforts influenced people to join. Of the 220 new dancers,

- 92 (42%) were solo dancers.
- 50% of the 220 people were Baby Boomers (ages 51 to 69)
- 24% Silent Generation/Traditionalists (70 to 80 years)
- Remaining 26% split between 20 to 50 years old.

The following are the results of the promotional elements that influenced new dancer session attendance.

- 2 - Advertisement on Facebook
- 6 - Advertisement on Google when searching
- 19 - Own search of internet
- 5 - Promotional brochure or single page flyer
- 19 - Community calendar announcement in media
- 27 - Advertisement in local newspaper
- 12 - Poster on display
- 0 - Twitter message (tweet)
- 21 - Display of dancing in the community
- 124 - Friend, relative or other person recommended the dancing (52%).

Selling the “Why”

(Issue 2016-1) - By Editor Claudia Littlefair

The following excerpts are from an article from the *Saskatchewan Business Magazine*, September 2015. The article, “Sell ‘Why’ Not ‘What’ – The Art of Marketing Benefits” is written by CEO Ryan Townend, co-founder of the Calgary advertising and marketing company, *William Joseph Communications*.

“Imagine two advertisements selling the same four-slice toaster.

The first ad shows an attractive picture of the toaster, followed by the technical specs and purchasing information.

The second ad is an image of a brightly-lit kitchen table with a smiling family of four, each with their own slice of golden toast. The copy would read something like “No more fighting who gets the first slice. With our new four-slice toaster, your mornings will be peaceful once again.”

Although the first ad serves a purpose for those looking for specific information about the product, **the second ad has broad emotional appeal** to those in the market for a larger toaster to keep up with the family.

The second ad is an example of marketing the benefit of the product or service, not the features. To break it down: the features of the toaster (such as four slices, settings and technical specs) do not address any specific emotional appeal, such as the second ad’s call for calm mornings spent with your family.)

Emotional appeal is an important thing to focus on in advertising, as it uses psychological drivers to make the audience engage with your marketing. ...Selling the “WHY”, not the “What”, is another way to look at it.

Once you know what is important to your customers, you can better market the benefits of your product or service.”

Applying This Information to Dance Ads

Instead of simply advertising when our next classes are being held, we have an opportunity to tell non-dancers WHY they should join us. Do your homework! Take the time to research and define:

- The benefits of dancing (they are numerous).
- The needs of prospective dancers (also numerous).
- The WHY (the emotional appeal) between the benefits and needs.

For example, here's a poster based on the following:

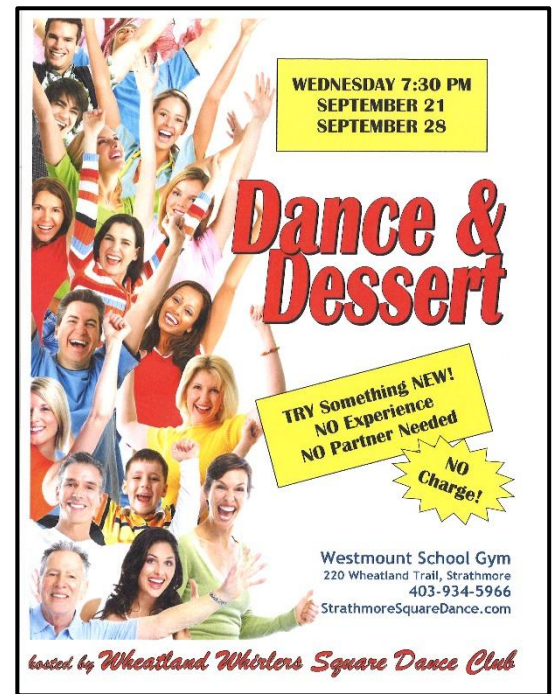
- Benefits – new friends, new skills, fun.
- Needs – companionship, new interest, activity.
- WHY – happiness, interaction, learning, value.

The picture conveys emotional appeal (happiness, interaction, having fun), and the words reinforce it.



This black and white picture features our activity, but it lacks emotional appeal. It doesn't get a reaction out of the reader, or make them smile, or make the reader wonder what the ad is about.

So, figure out what people are looking for, and use your ad to answer WHY they can find it at your dance club.



What Sells - Facts or Benefits?

(Issue 2015-4) Kim T. Gordon, a top U.S. marketing specialist, has numerous marketing articles available on her website, and much of what she talks about can be applied to our advertising. She states that *“it's vital to create a benefit-oriented message that will capture the attention of your target audience and motivate them to take action”*.

What does a 'Benefit-Based Message' look like?

- It is the heart and soul of what is offered.
- Sales increase when this message matches up with what the customer wants to buy.
- It is simple, direct and easy to remember.
- It talks about the benefits the buyer will enjoy.
- It's specific to the buyer, replacing words like “We provide”, “Our”, “We”, “I” with “You'll get”, “You”, “Yours”.
- It answers the buyer's question “what's in it for me?”

Is Your Square Dance Ad “Feature/Fact-Based” or “Benefit-Based”?

The following was written by caller Nasser Shukayr, in an article called “Selling the Benefits”.

Square dance advertising is usually “Feature-based” or “Fact-based”. We advertise the FACT that square dancing is good exercise. Instead, we should sell the BENEFIT that people will look and feel good because of square dancing. We advertise the FACT that square dancing is a social activity. Instead we should sell the BENEFIT of lifetime friendships.

While our advertising needs to briefly explain the feature and advantage, the main selling point needs to be the BENEFIT! Can you imagine an ad with the benefit screaming out in huge 3-inch-tall letters?

Maybe it'll work and maybe it won't, but really just about ANYTHING is better than a flyer which announces “Classes Starting Soon”. Let's start selling BENEFITS instead of FACTS!

In a sales course they teach you about FAB. F is Feature, A is Advantage, B is Benefit. In sales, F.A.B. is important but the main thing you SELL is BENEFIT. For example:

Feature: M&M's hard outer shell keeps the chocolate inside from melting.

Advantage: The chocolate is less messy, and it stays intact in the shell.

BENEFIT: Melts in your mouth, not in your hand.

Note they're selling the actual taste/texture of the actual melting chocolate. That's the BENEFIT.

Feature: Alka-Seltzer dissolves quickly in water.

Advantage: It goes to work faster than other brands.

BENEFIT: Plop Plop, Fizz Fizz, Oh what quick relief it is.

Note they're selling rapid relief. That's the BENEFIT. They're not selling how it works or why it works, just the fact that it works FAST and brings you relief. They're selling the end result.

How Can Our Ads Sell "Fun, Fitness, Friends"?

Using this information, how can we create a Benefit-Based Message for "Fun, Fitness, Friends"? Here's some examples:

- Where Friends have FUN getting fit!
- Where Friends, Fitness & FUN Happen!
- Three-Way Win: You Make Friends, Have FUN, and Feel Great!
- Reduce Your Stress - Laugh More - Connect with Friends.
- Enjoy Dancing Your Calories Away with New Found Friends!

Today's Square Dancer - Do We Have An Image Issue?

(Issue 2013-3) The CALLERLAB Foundation is an international professional organization of callers, whose purpose is to preserve and promote square dancing. In 2000 they appointed caller Jim Hensley, their current marketing director, and his market research company to determine the public's perception and image of square and round dancing.

The research showed we have badly under-estimated the image issue we have!

Information about our image from the survey include these comments:

"Almost all focus group participants claimed to be familiar with square dancing. The square dancing with which they are familiar is NOT modern western square dancing however - they know about traditional square dancing. Just a few actually were aware of modern western square dancing."

"The images which people have of square dancing are formed by traditional square dancing and they are not flattering."

"Words and images used to describe it:

- Country, hillbillies, hokey, cowboys
- Barns, grange halls, hay seeds, rural scenes, old fashioned and not with it.
- Fluffy dresses, plaid, big hair, big belt buckles and bolo ties, matching clothes.
- Older people, seniors, RVs and motor homes.
- Out of date music.
- Primarily for people who do not have a lot of other options for entertainment (e.g. people living in rural areas)."

"A few non-dancers were intrigued by descriptions of modern western square dancing and claimed they might give it a try."

"More non-dancers were not intrigued, however. What did not appeal:

- The clothing, especially for women - they want casual, jeans, no dress code.
- An unshakable image that it is for older people, and they aren't old enough."

Tony Oxedine, a professional traveling caller, gave the keynote address at the 2003 U.S. National Square Dance Convention, titled "Square Dancing - Is It Broke? - Can We Fix It?" In his address, he, too, talks about our image.

"People either know nothing about us or they figure we're still dancing half drunk in someone's barn. Sometimes we don't do ourselves any good in this regard."

"We have to understand that to the 'real' world, our clothes look kind'a funny. Now to each of us, we all look 'normal' but to 'civilians'?????"

"So if you're doing an exhibition in the public - CONSIDER not having everyone dress in full square dance regalia. Have some of the dancers wear western attire, or heaven forbid - even casual clothes. Show the people watching you that you really are normal people."

"We have to be aware that to the general public - we look funny. Our attire recommendations are throwbacks to the 40's and 50's. Back then, if you looked at women's 'dressy' dresses, they weren't that much different than what they wore to go dancing - just add crinoline. Consequently they didn't look THAT different."

Both the Survey and Tony Oxedine's Address cover much more than just our image issue, and both provide realistic, feasible suggestions that would help to promote our dance activity.

How Can Our Promotional Ads Help Our Image?

Keeping in mind that 90% of non-dancers see us as country bumpkins dressed in funny clothes allemande-ing left to fiddle music, these suggestions can help our image:

1. Use pictures or photos of dancers in modern, casual dress. **A picture is worth a THOUSAND words.**
2. Eliminate wording in your advertising (brochures, posters, newspaper ads) that might suggest "traditional square dancing", such as 'hoe-down', and 'folk dance'.
3. Back when square dancing was taught in schools often the boys felt they were being "punished" by being made to dance with the girls! Avoid words like 'classes' and 'lessons' which conjures up negative memories of school days.
4. Focus on what square dancing can give to the non-dancer, ie. fun, fitness and friends. In other words, sell the benefits of square dancing as opposed to the lessons.
5. Finally, make sure your ads answer the 5 W's - Who, What, Where, When, Why - and then the How.

Successful Square Dance Recruiting - Does It Exist?

(Issue Pre-2013-2) *An article written by Alabama Caller Patrick Demerath in the October, 2012 American Square Dance Magazine lists five proven methods to recruit new dancers. He writes, "All of them are proven methods, but they have one single thread in common. The club members and callers wanted to bring in new dancers. Without this intense desire, these are merely mechanisms or motions of trying to start a new class."*

What are these methods? Could they work for your club? Have you already tried them, and how successful were they? Now is the time to start planning for next year's group of new dancers. Consider using one or ALL of these methods, and see if it helps your club to grow.

Front Lawn & Car Signs

One group of clubs pooled their resources and put signs in their cars and signs on their front lawns. They merely said "Square Dance 232-5345." The person answering the telephone explained the new square dance lessons and gave them directions to the dances. The result was a large new and enthusiastic turn out of new dancers for square dance lessons.

Sunday School Classes

Several clubs reported that they asked their members and friends if a club representative or even a square could visit Sunday school classes of the various churches. They explained square dancing and left flyers/brochures. The result was again a large number of new dancers for lessons.

Club Invitation

Several clubs developed and used a 'Who Do You Know Form'. Club members invited people to visit their club and attend the free open houses for new dancers. The club members supplied the club president information on each person. The club president put each person's name on a database in his computer and contacted him or her by both telephone and written invitations. The club president continued to follow up prior to and throughout the recruiting period. The result was a large number of new dancers to the club.

Lunch Hour Dances at Businesses

A fourth club started an innovative approach where the club dances in a commercial business building once or twice a week over the lunch hour. Why can't we have clubs like this in our business districts? The answer is we can. This approach results in an often untouched supply of new dancers who want to join the fun.

Internet Advertising

Some clubs and callers are reporting success by advertising or having a site on the internet featuring the clubs, square dance lessons and contact information. People who may never learn about square dancing have surfed their way to dancing.

Any of these proven methods may need to be tailored to suit your club. The most important thing is to start your planning NOW. We know we have an excellent product to offer - let's find the best way to market it.

Editor's Note: The article's author, Patrick Demerath and his wife Angela, learned to dance in Lubbock, Texas while on his first Air Force tour. In 1973, they transferred to Taipei, Taiwan where he started calling and introducing square dancing to the Taiwanese people. They continued to call and teach wherever they were relocated - Texas, Spain, Guam, South Korea, Hawaii, and finally Montgomery, Alabama. In 2000 Patrick earned a doctorate in Marketing, and is active in the *American Callers' Association*. This Association was founded in the mid-1990s to create a simpler square dance program with less calls (to replace the current mainstream and plus programs) so that everyone can dance in one hall together.

B. CLUB SUCCESS STORIES

Square Dance Club Thrives Post-Covid

(Issue 2024-1) - by Nancy & Brent Daignault, President, Queens & Jacks, Calgary

Queens & Jacks Square Dance Club in Calgary took the same 'hit' as most clubs did following COVID – we lost about 15% of our Mainstream members. But we have been able to 'grow' back our club by recruiting new dancers.

During COVID we stayed in touch with our club members by continuing to publish a monthly newsletter which instead of featuring square dance events highlighted what club members were doing in their extra free time – their hobbies. During the first summer we met monthly for lunch in a public park, and during the second summer we met for coffee.

As soon as we could – in November 2021 – we started back with lessons to try to get our new dancers from before COVID up to the Mainstream level. We took a hiatus at the beginning of 2022 and then started up again in March. Then we did an unprecedented thing – we held new dancer lessons in May and June of 2022. We had 14 people start those lessons.

In the fall of 2022 we attracted 34 people to try out square dancing during the two free introductory dance evenings that we held – 8 new dancers joined the club. We ran two levels of dancing a night so that we could begin teaching the new dancers the Basic programme and get the dancers who had started in the spring session up to speed with Mainstream.

In the fall of 2023 we attracted over 70 people to try out square dancing. We did this by “hanging on the shirttails” of the Calgary & District Square & Round Dancers Association summer promotions campaign and by running our own promotions campaign in August and September.

Our club promotions campaign consisted of MagnetSign boards, our website and online advertizing - where I look for and post to online calendar and events sites. We

benefited from the Intro Hours and an Introductory Dance Party that were sponsored by Calgary & District. This is an example of a MagnetSign board.



Twenty-five people signed up for our lessons programme – including a family of 5 – and 20 of those are still coming out in the third quarter of the season. We have 6 squares out on our lessons night.

Youth & Square Dancing

(Issue 2024-1) Source: FaceBook - Donoca Fouts, Oregon, December 6, 2023

Recently I had someone ask me why I thought our Silver City Square Dance club has attracted and sustained so many youth. Here is a bit of back ground on me...I am a homeschooling mom of 4 of these teenagers. They all love to dance at our club. My 2 older kids joined our club in 2021, my other 2 joined in 2022 and have loved every minute of it.

But how did they get involved?

Not far from our grange hall is a church camp. My kids had close friends that they spent all summer with as camp staff, who also happened to be square dancers. Their friends dragged them to square dancing. At that time there was enough youth for about 3 squares in our club.

Prior to the next fall lessons, another homeschooling parent and I decided to post videos and information on the 2 huge homeschool families facebook pages and we had a significant response. Our club is now bursting at the seams.

I am sharing this with ya'll as a way to hopefully have more successful clubs around our lovely state and promote square dancing further.

Here are a few suggestions to get teens to come to your club...

- It might be a great opportunity for local callers to see if there are any church camps near your square dance clubs. Call them in January and ask them if they would ever be interested in having a team building square dance event for their staff. I encourage you to keep it to the staff in their off hours during the summer because campers do not carry the same enthusiasm as camp staff do. Camp Staff love being silly and have fun doing things they don't normally do.
- Find homeschool families that can advertise on their homeschooling facebook pages!

Here are a few things I've learned from my teens...that I believe has kept our club strong and growing.

Some of these might be things you already know...some things I may share might cause you to feel a bit offended. It is not my intent to be offensive, instead I'm trying to communicate through the lens of our youth.

1. **When new youth come to new dancer lessons, try not to split them up.** I know it's customary for an angel to be with a new dancer as a partner, but this breed of teen does not like to spend the night dancing with "old people". They want to dance with their friends. Instead put a couple of energetic adults in the square with them and since we all know that the women are circulated through the square, eventually they will have an angel as a partner. Allowing the teens to start out in the same square and holding hands with the partner of their choice, lowers their inhibitions and prevents a possible reason why they won't want to come back. This might be a great idea for some adult couples too. My husband stopped attending lessons with me 10 years ago because the club we attended insisted that we could NOT start out in a square dancing as partners with each other. He hated having the lessons with someone he didn't want to dance with, quit the lessons and won't return. Our teens are the same.
2. **Let them try and dance with whomever they want to in a square.** Ya, they will screw up. Yes, they will struggle...and in the end they will be much more willing to have a mixed square with angels who are older, because they will learn that they really don't know much and need help. It will take their arrogance down a few notches by their failures.
3. **Don't put pressure on them to have square dance attire at dances.** Kids just want to have fun, some want to wear petticoats and skirts and collared shirts. Some just want to come and not dress up. There is an added stress of
4. wondering how they look and the possibility of feeling like they have to spend \$\$ on an outfit – even if it is a gently used item. Or wondering if they will be the only teen there that put on the square dance attire and they would then feel stupid and like an outcast. Give freedom for teens to choose to wear their normal street clothes.
5. **Let kids go bare foot if they want to.** Yes, we know they can have their feet stepped on by boots. But it's their problem not the person who is wearing the boots. I don't know why but there are many kids in our club that just prefer dancing bare footed. We don't care, we are just happy they want to dance.
6. **Don't be offended if teens don't want to dance in a square with older adults.** The teens want to dance with their friends and while it is not the code of conduct for 20 years ago...it may be time to change. I promise eventually teens will warm up to dancing with adults, but most feel they have the most fun with their peers. Why?
(#1) Their peers love to do all the fancy swings, and twirls and grand square to show off moves. Teens don't know which adults they have to worry if they have bad shoulders. Teens also like to dance FAST! "Circle to the left" our teens practically run/skip while traveling in a circle. They don't want to go slow with older adults.
(#2) Honestly, they are single kids, with lots of hormones, they are looking to dance with their crush. Lets let them.
7. **It might sound crazy...but for some reason most kids hate "do si do" but they love the "highland fling"....let them.** If you put rules telling them that they can't dance this move in a square dance lesson, it will be one more reason why they probably don't want to come back. They love the fancy moves and "do si do" for some reason has a really negative history for kids, and is the butt of many square dance jokes.



Anyway...those are my few thoughts. I hope it isn't offensive and I hope you find these to be helpful in your clubs to grow more youth.

Rebuilding A Square Dance Club Post Covid

(Issue 2023-6) - by Tom Gray, Leduc Square Dance Club

COVID-19 hit our club hard. We had no one down with the virus, but it shut us down for two years. Our club missed its 40th anniversary and two of our founding members passed away. We lost the third year of a three-year city grant when the shut-down caused a break in communications.

We had been declining even before the pandemic, hitting a low of 21 members in 2014-15, sometimes barely managing one square. The grant application in 2017 was for rebuilding and by 2019 we had doubled to 40 members, seven of whom were new dancers. When we resumed in 2022, we again had 7 new dancers, but our overall numbers had declined by 40%. The low numbers led us to cancel our annual Homesteader Night dinner and dance, an historic first.

To rebuild the club, we invested what was left of the grant money, roughly \$1200, into marketing using a multi-strand approach that included summer community events, posters, street signage, and online promotion.

1. Community Events & Posters

The club has previously attended 'community awareness' nights in nearby towns, with varied results. With so few members available, we decided to focus on Leduc events -- Summer in the City on July 29 and VolunteerFest on September 10. Nothing unusual here: a booth with volunteers to smile and greet and hand out information.

Different this year: we skipped our costly tri-fold brochures in favor of a smaller, less expensive double-sided postcard as a handout, 250 for \$130 at a local printer (plus another 250 on hand for our January intake for that much again.)

One of our outgoing new members would approach couples, smile at the lady, and ask, *"When was the last time he took you out dancing?"* She would give her guy a dirty look and say, *"Never."* Our member would tell him, *"You really should take her out dancing. Ladies like that."* He'd give her our post card and explain about square dancing. Don't know that any of them came in, but his humor gave a lot of couples the idea.



We gave out about 200 postcards at the two events, and the remaining 50 were slipped under windshield wipers around town.

Printed posters cost about \$120. Most of this was for special dances that will go to other square dance clubs, but we did print up 50 promoting our startup (left, using traditional theme so we hit all bets). Perhaps 25 went into local businesses and the rest went under windshield wipers.

As far as I know, we got no new dancers from these events or posters, but **it is low-cost promotion that got more people aware that we exist.**

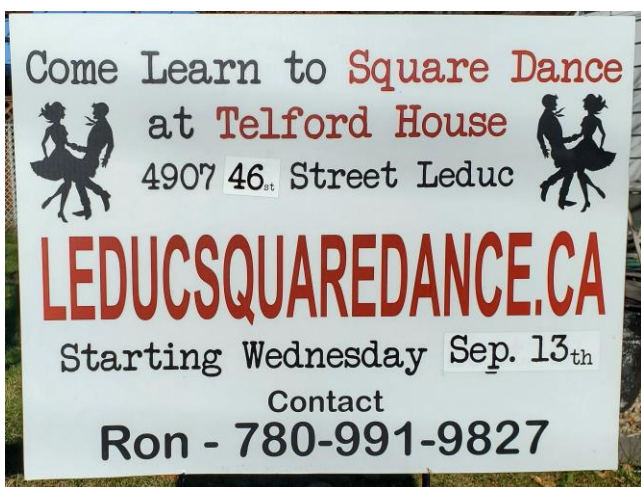
2. Street Signage

The bulk of the budget went to road signs, which pre-pandemic had given us good results. We wanted to get away from the traditional image of square dancing to show something exciting and fun. Two large and one small sign on major city

routes cost about \$700 through a local signage firm. We make a point of buying local whenever we can. I believe this image was used by the CDCDA (Capital Dance Community Dance Association) in an earlier campaign.



We added five double-sided coroplast signs designed for pedestrian traffic (LHS). Some of these wound up along traffic routes where they were less effective, too hard to read from a speeding vehicle, but the club website was prominent and the signs still got us noticed. Oddly enough, one of these was stolen from a pedestrian location.



The third form of street signage we used was A-Frame or sandwich board signs (RHS). The club had used these years ago but they had been almost forgotten in someone's garage. We cleaned them off and updated them. The cost of updates was about \$90.



One A-frame was too badly damaged to use, so we replaced it with a sign that simply said "Square Dance - Fun!" with an arrow pointing to the side. This one we put out on the sidewalk by our facility on dance night. It actually brought in a man who walked by, stopped in out of curiosity, had a good time, signed up for lessons, and joined the club.

3. Online Promotion

Although our website "leducsquaredance.ca" badly needs an overhaul, we still get inquiries through the site. The most recent was a pastor who wants to bring a group of young adults to our next open house in January. We also worked a little harder on our Facebook and Instagram accounts. We budgeted \$100 for two paid ads (promoted posts) on those social media sites, which led to considerable engagement and a dozen enquiries.



Vice President Dominique helped put out our sandwich boards

4. Word of Mouth

Our membership is always our best avenue of promotion. Our new VP is a gregarious soul who knows a lot of people, and invited most of them to come to our open house. A lot of them came, and some joined us. We also had the week after our opening night as "*Bring a Friend Night*" with a draw for small prizes - a \$5 Tim Hortons gift card for someone who brought a friend, with gift cards for the friends. Just a fun thing to get more people onto the floor. We had 60 people that night and it was a lot of fun.

About Grants

People ask about how we got the grant. We noticed on the city website that grants were available, worked hard on doing a good application, and did a presentation to a city board. We were fortunate to be accepted for the grant. We've reapplied this year (though the maximum grant amount is roughly \$1000, a fraction of what it was in 2017). We also found we could apply for a County of Leduc recreation grant, but missed the deadline.

Check with your municipality or county to see what grants might be available and just *apply*. But take care that you provide all the information required on the application, and go beyond the minimum.

Rebuilding

We're still rebuilding. We have a lively executive (two of whom started in January 2023) who, because they don't know "*how things were done for the last 40 years*" are willing to try new ideas. Having Gary Winter as our club caller has added to the fun. **We have 17 returning members and 29 new members, of whom 24 are new dancers, which has made things a little hectic!**

A Season of Rebuilding

(Issue 2023-2) - - by Claudia Littlefair, Editor

As the 2022-23 dance season comes to an end, it's natural to look back and review the year. What was done well? What could be improved? Like many clubs, our goal this year was on rebuilding. **We made an all-out effort to put more emphasis on having fun dancing, and less emphasis on learning a long list of calls.**

It helped to switch from Mainstream (68 calls) to the Social Square Dance program of 50 calls. We continued our 'open door' policy, where people could join our group any week of the year.

We held our first ever crafts & games day, as a way to include non-dancing partners and 'retired' dancers. And we held an Open Mic Night (amateur night with trophies) for the first time in 10 years - with 8 participants!



We've added two squares of new dancers to our group, and our numbers are close to where they were pre-Covid. **Best of all, though, we had fun. And that's the real reason dancers come to dance every week, and by extension, that's what will bring them back in the fall.**

Cuesteps Round Dance Club Bounces Back After the Pandemic

(Issue 2023-3) - by Cliff Dunn and Jane McKee, Round Dance Instructors, Cuesteps Club, Calgary

We are trying something different at CueSteps this coming Fall. Time was when our beginner classes were often 10 or more couples and we had the luxury of spending 2 dance seasons teaching them Two-step and Waltz. There was even a time when there were 2 similar classes running consecutively. Additionally at that time, the more advanced classes in the club were much bigger. As we all know times have changed, and particularly with the Covid pandemic, such that our class numbers have declined and beginner classes are much smaller. In short, it is no longer sustainable that we have a new dancer intake every one or two years.

There has been a trend in the Square Dance world to try to enable more frequent new dancer starts by creating shortened basic courses to allow more flexibility. We have also read of similar attempts in Round Dancing although it is not easy to reduce the figures needed since so many basic figures are needed to do many of our relatively easier dances. However, we will be trying to **create more frequent new dancer entrance points by taking a new class every semester - September and January.** We will rotate the initial rhythm which the new group starts through Waltz, Two-step or Cha-cha/Rumba and the new dancers will join with previous groups to learn together in a larger group.

For instance, we currently have a group of newer dancers which now know the basics of Cha-cha/Rumba and Two-step. This coming September new dancers will join with them and everyone will learn the Waltz basics together. Then in January 2024 a further intake of new dancers will start with Cha-cha/Rumba. Those dancers who have already completed one semester in their first rhythm then stay for a second class for further instruction on the rhythms they learned earlier. After cycling through these classes for about 3-4 semesters dancers will be proficient enough to join the general Phase 2/3 dance class. If you are interested in more information or would like to give Round Dancing a try, check out CueSteps "Chance to Dance" a free introductory round dance lesson on August 13th 2023.

For more information on Round Dancing in your area check out www.squaredancecalgary.com; www.rounddancecalgary.com or the Alberta Square and Round Dance Federation at www.squaredance.ab.ca



About Cliff Dunn and Jane McKee. Over the past ten years, Cliff and Jane have developed their keen interest in round dancing through their lessons with CueSteps. From their home in Lacombe, Cliff and Jane have already accumulated 10 years of cuer/instructor experience in Central Alberta with clubs in Lacombe, Rocky Mountain House, and Innisfail. In addition, they have been cuer/instructors at the 2018 Canadian National Convention, the Alberta Square and Round Dance Federation conventions, as well as various workshops and round dances in Alberta. To contribute to their skill level, Cliff and Jane have attended ROUNDALAB conventions and training sessions, and dance weekends such as the Western Ontario Workshop in London, Ontario. They are active members of ROUNDALAB and the International Choreographed Ballroom Dance Association.

Summer Promotion Pays Off

(Issue 2023-2) - Source: CALLERLAB Knowledgebase, Central Ohio Council of Dance Clubs, 2009

At the meeting of the Central Ohio Council of Dance Clubs (COCDC) on May 4, 2009, it was announced to the council representatives that we were forming a group to try to promote square dancing, recruit more new dancers for our classes in the fall, and ultimately to increase membership in our clubs.

Mary Galentine agreed to chair this committee. We gave the club representatives information of when and where the first meeting was going to be held. We also sent out this information by email to dancers from all of the clubs and announced it at each of the club dances we attended for the remainder of the spring. **Dancers representing eight different Central Ohio clubs attended the first committee meeting in May.**

We were successful in getting CLUB MEMBERS involved, even though towards the end there was only a hand full of us that really were left with getting the ball rolling. In these meetings we discussed ways to increase the numbers of new dancers recruited and the importance of us working together to make this happen.

We decided to purchase polo shirts with the logo on them "Ask Me About Square Dancing". In all, from August to October, we sold over 160 shirts. That is 160 bill boards of advertisement. We also created a business type card that had the same logo on it. The background of the card was the US Flag, with two people's names, phone numbers and email address as points of contact. The back of the card was a coupon for two free dance lessons with the locations of where they were being held in two different parts of town. We also stated on the card that if those locations did not work for the person, to please call one of the numbers on the other side of the card for information of clubs in "their" area. The two of us listed had already agreed that we need dancers and that it did not matter what club they chose. I know several people were referred to clubs that did not participate in our campaign just because that was the closest club for the new dancer. We put these cards on bulletin boards in library's, grocery stores, post offices, anywhere we were allowed.

All during our summer dances we reminded our dancers of these meetings and encouraged them to join us. **In late August and early September we wore our polo shirts and went to street dances and demos to do our best to get new dancers.** We passed out flyers to anyone who might be interested, giving them information about square dancing and the health benefits received from square dancing as well as listings of locations where they could go to learn. We had potluck open beginner dances at two different locations to help get people interested. There was also a potluck meal at one group's first free beginner class.

Other promotional activities included writing articles and sending them, along with photos, to local publications, and posting dance class information on a number of free on-line listings of community activities. Some clubs added or improved their web sites. All the attention placed on recruitment seemed to energize the dancers to talk to people about our wonderful activity.

I believe the combination of all of these things as well as the efforts of those that were involved on the committee is why our classes have increased as much as they have this year. We are starting to really work together to keep our culture alive. We have 98 new dancers who started classes this fall (25 at Bucks & Does Singles, 18 in the combined Orbiting Squares/Friendly Ties class, 14 at Grove City Squares, 13 at Little Brown Jug, 13 at Westerville Promenaders, 8 at Bunkhouse Reelers and 7 at Hicks & Chicks. One club, Rhythm Reelers, will be starting their class Nov 10.)

I would just like to say THANK YOU to everyone who helped with this campaign, even if you were not able to attend every meeting. Your efforts are seen in our results.

How We Attracted 16 New Dancers in the Middle of a Pandemic

(Issue 2021-6) - By Eileen Smith, Edmonton - November 26, 2021

In the Edmonton Alberta area, we have suffered the effects of COVID, just like everywhere else. **In September 2021 our provincial health authority rolled out an opportunity for our square dance activity to resume, albeit with certain requirements.** We embraced that opportunity and started our programs for experienced dancers in mid-September, with a requirement of proof of double vaccination, and the wearing of masks at all times. We also encouraged the use of hand sanitizer, and distancing when possible when off the dance floor, and we required the signing of a liability waiver.

Our 'Square UP!' club was traditionally a new dancer club, although even before COVID we were struggling for numbers. In mid-September 2021 we resumed Square UP! with a 6 week 'Back to Dance Mainstream Review' program for experienced dancers. We were getting 10 to 12 dancers out, but we really needed more dancers to make it sustainable, and our roots as a new dancer club were reaching out to us. Mid-October we made the all-in decision to promote a new dancer program starting November 1, 2021! We told our participating Mainstream dancers of the plan, and encouraged them to join us as experienced dancer helpers. We also told them that if we did not get a minimum of 8 new dancers, we would not go ahead, and we would remain a Mainstream group.

HOW DID WE PROMOTE?

It was a multi-faceted approach. **Other than a few 8 ½ X 11" posters printed at home, and a small batch of ¼ page handout flyers printed at Staples, we had no out of pocket expenses.**

Our promotion included:

1. **Using our parent association CDCDA (Community Dance Capital District) website and semi-monthly email,** we made sure that our existing dance community knew we were offering a new dancer program.
2. **We spoke to the dancers** in our clubs, including 'Square Up!' and told them it was a perfect opportunity to bring out their friends who might be interested to try square dancing.
3. **We used free on-line classifieds** for local and regional publications. We also used Kijiji, and Craig's List.
4. **We used free on-line events calendars,** including the City of Edmonton, and 'Next Door'.
5. **We researched and posted on Facebook group sites.** In Edmonton our city has many community leagues with Facebook sites. We found those closest to our hall, and posted where we could. Also 'Dance Edmonton' has a Facebook page. We asked CDCDA to post on their Facebook. We posted on our personal Facebook, and our friends 'liked' and some 'shared'.
6. That sounds like a lot of time on the computer, you're thinking. **Our approach was to create a Word document (a 'poster') with all the essential information including contact information and a link to our webpage.** Then we simply did a lot of copy and paste. I will also add here that I think it is important to take down your postings, in a timely fashion. This way we are not adding to internet litter, which can detract from our messaging.
7. **We visited area fitness centres, and senior recreational centres.** We asked to post a poster, and/or leave some flyers. Some refused, but some allowed it.
8. **We posted a poster, and left flyers at a popular indoor farmers market.** (With permission, and we also offered to do a future demo on their stage, once the COVID situation allows for it.)
9. **We followed up with every possible lead we ever had,** including those who danced with us for a short time pre-COVID. Everyone received a friendly email. Any phone calls we received were handled in a friendly welcoming manner.

SO WHERE DID OUR NEW DANCERS COME FROM?

- 2 – Were referred by other dancers in our dance community.
- 2 – Were friends/family of another dancer in our club.
- 3 – Two were on our prospect list because they had danced with us before, or had expressed interest in dancing with us before, and one of those brought a friend.
- 4 – Had done some square dancing, or had taken a few sessions with other clubs in our community, and wanted to restart with a group of beginners, they knew of our program because of friends and our association communications.
- 5 – 'Internet' or 'website', or we don't know exactly.



In numbers, most of the new dancers came to us through traditional methods; however the five who had no prior connections to our dance community came to us because of our online promotions.

WHAT FACTORS WORKED IN OUR FAVOR?

Really, we were the only game in town, and that may have been part of it. We have a webpage with our parent association, and that gives us legitimacy. We advertised as an 'Intro Program', only 7 weeks, 1 ¼ hours per session. **The message was 'come out and give Square Dancing a try, find out if it is an activity you might enjoy', which really was a minimum commitment.**

We welcomed singles and couples, however for singles I asked them to call first to see if I had other singles. Our pricing was \$60/single, or \$100/couple for the program. (For comparison purposes, in our market dancers pay from \$7 to \$8 for a two hour club evening.)

I had a number of singles reach out, and I encouraged them to bring a friend, and then I could charge them the couple's price. That strategy seemed to work. Two women brought gentleman friends, and one woman brought a girlfriend, and since we had more men at that point, that worked perfectly.

OKAY, SO WHAT ABOUT THE MASKS?

I honestly believe that in these COVID times, people are desperate for a safe, active, social activity. We have always emphasized our COVID safety measures. Our dancers feel more comfortable when wearing masks; several have told me that they would not come out unless the masks were a requirement.

I know there are dancers out there who are adamant about not wearing a mask to dance, and they are waiting for the COVID situation to improve. I understand that, I don't like to wear a mask either, however I am mentally and emotionally more comfortable wearing one, and I would rather be dancing than not dancing. I know there are others, with breathing difficulties, who simply cannot be physically active while wearing a mask.

In our experience of dancing with masks, including our programs this fall and two months in September – November 2020, plus several outside 'dancing in the park' summer dances in 2021, **the type of mask you wear makes a difference.** We have found that the disposable blue medical or non-medical masks are pretty easy to wear. Others prefer multiple layer cloth masks with an air pocket around the nose and mouth, or those wanting a little more protection wear an N95 mask. A style with an air pocket seems to improve comfort.

I am also planning to try a 'mask lanyard'. The lanyard connects the two ear elastics with an adjustable strap at the back of the head. It keeps the ear elastics off the ears, reducing pressure there, and holds the mask more securely on the face.

NOTES ON MASKS FOR CALLERS AND CUERS

My caller husband *Gary Smith* started his COVID-era calling by wearing a face shield and holding the microphone up under the face shield. Recently Gary has started using the blue disposable masks while calling. For our 'A1 Learning Program' night he can get by with one mask in an evening. When calling for our Plus and New Dancer groups, he is performing a lot of singing calls and must replace his mask at least once during the evening. The mask seems to have minimal effect on sound quality. Distancing from the caller is important, but that is usually easy to do if you have a stage, and/or a decent sized hall.

WHAT'S NEXT?

At the time of writing, we have three weeks remaining in our seven week new dancer program. We have 9 dancers who have indicated an interest in continuing with us after the winter break. Two dancers will be heading south for an extended winter holiday and won't be able to come back. Of the 5 others, we don't know for sure, but among that group are some of the most enthusiastic, so we expect at least a few more will stay if they can. We are also planning for another new dancer intake in January.

The COVID situation is in constant flux. A few of our dancers have received their third vaccine dose, others are hoping to receive one soon. As long as COVID case numbers and health restrictions allow for it, and as long as our dancers feel safe, we will continue our dance programs. As for Gary and I, and all of the dancers coming out to dance with us, ***you can see the smiles in their eyes!***

A Success Story Growing Classes

(Issue 2019-7) - by Caller Don Wood, Lacey, Washington

Much like many other areas, five years ago we were failing. Our classes were small, if we had enough for a class at all, and clubs were stagnating if not dying. Five years back we decided a change was necessary. Our dancer's organization and callers got together and came up with a modification of another caller's program that was having success in his area. Our success did not happen overnight. It took a couple of years and some tweaking. More importantly, it took cooperation between callers and clubs. Frankly, it was change or die as an activity. Thankfully we chose to change.

I should mention this amount of attendance is not an anomaly, it is fairly typical; at least it has been for the past three years or 18 classes. In any event, I thought you might enjoy seeing a success. We had 9 squares last night. What fun! My colleague (Glenn Raiha) was teaching, and I attended as my Monday class just ended and won't start until February. What a joy it was to see a full hall of happy smiling faces. **I do hope that others will consider what we are doing and be able to take something positive away from this. Please feel free to contact me should anyone want more information.** [Don's email: dwood196@comcast.net].

I recently read a posting from a caller proposing a ten week course for square dancing. This would, in that callers' opinion, require the removal of some calls and the addition of others; specifically some Plus calls. This was from an ACA (American Callers Association) member. As you are aware, I am a member of both organizations. What prompted me to write to you is this.

Without respect to the Plus calls, this is close to the program we run in our area. I work with another callers (a CALLERLAB member) and we run a program structured as follows. To begin with, **there are six start dates in our program over a given year. We have class on Monday or Thursday.**

1. In September, a ten week program from 6:30pm to 9:00pm on Thursday; the Basic 51 program is taught.
2. Five weeks after starting the Thursday class, a Monday class begins; the Basic 51 program is taught again.
3. Once the Thursday class has completed the ten week course, another Basic 51 class is started. Basic is taught from 6:30pm to 8:00 pm and Mainstream from 8:00pm to 9:00 pm.
4. Dancers who completed the Basic 51 program can choose to return and "angel" the new Basic 51 class and attend the Mainstream portion.
5. This scenario is duplicated for the Monday night class.

Generally, this structure is working well. It is relatively standard for me to have between five and eight squares attending every Monday or Thursday. **This is our fifth year, and we believe the program is working. Many of the dancers will go thru the program multiple times to get comfortable with the calls. They are actively joining clubs; and in our area, square dancing is growing.**

About the Author: *A Washington native, Don has been fortunate to have traveled world-wide calling square dances. He has called in England, Australia, Mexico, Canada, The Caribbean, as well as most of the United States. Recently Don and his wife Marie were awarded the Almond F. Parker award, Washington State's most prestigious award for a caller couple. He attributes this to Marie for her constant support and council. Don calls Mainstream through C1 and is the club caller for several local clubs. He is also co-owner, producer and recording artist for Lou-Mac Records, recording many popular square dance tunes.*



New Dancer Promotion Brings in Over Two Squares!

(Issue 2019-7) by Cuer Bill & Marge Webb, Brecksville Squares, Ohio 2009

How do you make a club grow and how do you invigorate a club? By getting new dancers. But how do you do that? As always, it's by asking people to come to lessons and learn. But we've tried that and we've asked everyone we know and got no takers. So then what?

The last two or three years we've had three or four new dancers in our classes and limited success in keeping them. So I decided we could do better. I talked to some of our more recent graduates and invited them to my house in November (before Marge & I went to Florida for the winter) and tossed around some ideas. **We decided to meet once a month after we got back from Florida to come up with names of people that might be interested. We encouraged all of our club members to get involved and put names into a prospective new member box.** We promised we would draw a name out of this box in July and give the lucky club member a special prize. That was the start.

Starting in May, we gathered and talked about ways to advertise our club and lessons. General calling cards were made and given to all club members to give to anyone they talked to who had any interest in square dancing. This was just general information with two contact names, the person who gave out the card and mine. We had a nice article in the local paper and we did a demo at a summer concert on our town square.

At the end of July we sent out a general letter to all those names we had collected telling about the value of square dancing, our local club, etc. and emphasizing that lessons start only once a year in September at almost all clubs around Cleveland. We made new cards which promoted our "fun night" with finger foods 30 minutes before we started dancing. In August we sent another letter out emphasizing that it now was only two weeks away and be sure they had it on their calendar. Finally, we had the club member who solicited the new dancer, call and get their reaction and interest in coming. This initial mailings had 98 names. We followed this with personal calls and we had about 40 who were interested. The first night we had 29 show up and about 40 angels. It was an exciting beginning.

The numbers have fallen off to about 15 to 18 showing up each week. I have made a point of calling those who miss to see if everything is alright and encourage them to come back. We have a short 15 minute review before our regular class to catch up anyone who missed. Each week I have come up with a saying on a business size card and a treat for the new dancers to take home. It's corny but they seem to look forward to it. **After nine weeks now, we are very pleased that it looks like we will have almost 20 who should graduate in April.**

This effort took some time and the committee of seven couples helped keep us all excited about the end goal but no one killed themselves and we had a lot of fun. The primary effort was to talk to anyone, wherever we were, about our great activity and if they showed any interest, get their name, address, and phone number so that we could follow up. It certainly was worth the effort and we hope we can do it again next year.

Using Yard Signs to Promote Square Dancing

(Issue 2018-4) www.swinginsugarsquares.com

When Darlene Kulpa, president of Swinging Sugar Squares, Evergreen Park, Illinois, put out yard signs at intersections around where her club meets, the reaction came soon. "We put out about 25 signs on a Friday," Darlene says. "By Sunday we'd received seven calls from people interested in learning."

Darlene's group has targeted about 50 intersections in her south-of-Chicago town, bounded by Archer on the north, Tinley Park on the south, and LaGrange on the west, and Ashland on the East. "More than 10,000 square blocks," Darlene says.

The club rotates target intersections each weekend. They put out their signs on a Friday afternoon and pick them up Sunday afternoon. (A few have already vanished, Darlene says.) Darlene has even affixed one sign to the back of her Toyota.

The club purchased their signs online at AGEGraphics.com. The wording is simple: "Learn to SQUARE DANCE" plus a phone number. Under a special currently offered by AGEGraphics.com, they bought one hundred 11"x22" signs, with wire stands, for \$275 including shipping and handling. That's \$2.75 per sign. Such a deal!

(Issue 2019-4) - By Bruce Holmes - A personal narrative, because those make the best stories

Editor's Note: The following are excerpts of what Bruce did to market his first classes and the results.

I felt the flyer needed to break down some stereotypes to even get them in the door. So the text read:



One park district cancelled its class a week before the scheduled start date because only one person had signed up. My experience since then is that most people don't sign up until that last minute, so perhaps they jumped the gun. The other classes both happened with seven or eight people. I had a head mic that I had left over from my days as a singer songwriter. That allowed me to call from the square. So seven students was not a problem. **If you have two classes a semester and two semesters a year, you can have maybe 30 graduates by the end of a year. By the summer of that first year I sent out an email asking if people wanted to start a club. By September we had 28 people signed up. By the following summer (2018) we were above 50 members and one of the students was now a caller.**

The two classes in the fall of 2018 have put our numbers to about 70 members. From now on I foresee being able to add at least 30 members a year.

...Why did I succeed? It's not because I have a special skill set. I'm smart, can crack a joke and I'd like to think I'm a good teacher. Plus I have that background in music, and that truly helps when it comes to the singing calls. But I wasn't an accomplished caller. I had only been calling for a few years, and that's not ideal. So I was not the best possible candidate for doing this. Except it worked.

Wait, there's something else I think I do well. **I let people contribute from the floor. I let the students help each other at the breaks. I let the angels teach.** Sure I listen in and correct when needed. But corrections are so rarely needed. The more advanced dancers will even hold weekend practice sessions which fosters friendships while providing more floor time. I'd like to think the students who lead such sessions are becoming more invested in square dancing and might even be on their way to becoming callers. **I don't insist that I'm the only one capable of passing on the information. So I've ended up with a very involved club.** Everybody pitching in and helping out the students.

I will also admit to getting lucky. The talent and organizational abilities I've discovered within the club have surprised me. We've created videos of the calls which we've made available online. We've created booklets showing the calls and distribute these as the students begin lessons. We have flashcards we pass out. We have remarkable people handling the intro parties, lessons, dances and club events (we're having a private party with chili and dancing on an afternoon later this month; the annual picnic, you get the idea). I really do not believe I was essential to our success. **I succeeded because I avoided the negatives, and because the positives are enormous. Square dancing shouldn't be in decline.**

Success with SSD (Social Square Dance Program)

(Issue 2022-2) - Excerpt from Scott Brown's post, March 7, 2022, SSD Public FaceBook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/319491818505954>

I realize that I haven't posted anything here in a while. **Since my last post in this group, we have been very busy here in Western Pennsylvania.** The SSD Community in our Tri - State corner continues to grow, with new dancers joining all the time. I wanted to take this time to provide a bit of an update from our community.



The SSD Community in our region, now consists of around 14 squares of dancers across four clubs and we are currently in the process of opening a fifth group soon.

We have multiple dancers of all ages who are learning how to call. In fact, this Saturday, we will be having a callers workshop with CALLERLAB Accredited Caller Coach: Ed Foote.

Also, while it is encouraging to see callers and dancers across the country using SSD to rebuild their own groups, **the need for training new callers is more important than ever.** As the activity grows, more callers will be needed to sustain that growth.

Promotional Ideas from Johnny Appleseed Club

(Issue 2018-4) Mansfield, Ohio April, 2015 www.appleseedsquares.com

1. **BUY-IN FROM CLUB MEMBERS:** The officers got a commitment in writing from club members about what, if anything, they would be willing to do to help their club thrive. They gave them a checklist with a number of things on it from passing out business cards, distributing flyers, putting up/taking down signs, posting to social media, making phone calls, sending reminder postcards, putting notices in papers/bulletins, cooking chili (for first night), angel-ing, etc. Nearly EVERYONE in the club got involved. This was not a "let Harry put up a flyer in Krogers" thing. **It worked because EVERYONE WORKED.**
2. **TIMING:** The club started advertising in AUGUST for the January class and then kept in touch with reminders so people didn't forget or lose interest. Different types of advertising were passed out at different times - signs, business cards, flyers. It was done in stages.
3. **MATERIALS, GRAPHICS, FLYERS:** The materials they used to advertise were attractive and professional looking with bright colors to get attention. No black and white stuff printed at home. The flyers were permanent ink on nice glossy paper, the business cards were laminated (no date - just time and place), and the signs were yellow and black with the president's phone number on them. In other words, it looked professional and not cheap. But the coordinators shopped around and bought smart. The graphics on the flyers and cards did NOT have out-of-date, old fashioned, country stereotypes. They were modern and very attractive and professional. Club business card design should be SIMPLE AND BRIEF. Club name, email address, telephone number. Designs can be distracting.
4. **YARD SIGNS:** About one month prior to lessons, the club distributes 'yard signs' to advertise. (Black and gold colors are the best from a PR & marketing viewpoint.) CAUTION: Check with all municipalities regarding where the signs can be legally placed. road medians, street corners, between the sidewalks and curb (parkway). The signs should be BRIEF AND SIMPLE – "LEARN TO SQUARE DANCE" & TELEPHONE NUMBER. People have a few seconds to read the sign as they drive by. REMEMBER: collect the signs and put into storage one week after lessons begin.
5. **PROGRESS REPORTS:** Progress reports were given to members weekly to let everyone know their efforts were paying off. This kept people excited about what they were doing.
6. **CLUB INVOLVEMENT:** We actually handed everyone a number of business cards (I gave everyone 5 at class one night) and asked them to find creative ways to pass them out - leave with a tip, hang on bulletin board, put by register, put in Christmas cards, etc. People may not pick them up if you just announce it. They can't ignore you when you put them in their hands.
7. **ENCOURAGEMENT:** We had good people who organized it and kept people motivated. Barry & Peggy Carney and Cyndi & Dale Bennett.
8. **GROUP EFFORT: We can't emphasize this enough. It worked because everyone got involved.** Barry & Peggy have promoted in the past without these results. So have Dale & Cyndi. They never had these results. We got these results because everyone pitched in.
9. **INTEGRATING NEW DANCERS INTO THE CLUB DANCES:** All club dances beginning in January are structured as 'hi-low'. The tips alternate between mainstream & plus during each dance. That gets the students from the fall session into active dancing and encourages: (a) membership; (b) improving dancing skills; (c) improving confidence; (d) getting acquainted with all the club members; and (e) learning etiquette and structure of dances.
10. **OTHER'S SUCCESS STORIES:** Robin Ragen's efforts with the Fairfield Iowa Square Dancers--In the past 2 years, they went from 4 dancers in a garage to adding nearly 200 dancers to the activity. We believed if THEY could do it, so could we. That club was my initial inspiration. I also spoke with Nasser Shukayr about the multi-cycle classes that he did which had similar results.

A New Face For An Old Dance Club

(Issue 2018-2) - by Doreen Guilloux, President, Rocky Whirlaways Square & Round Dance Club

The Rocky Whirlaways Square and Round Dance Club celebrated their 65th year of dancing this year. We started our 65th year off with our first dance of the year celebrating all that has been. The club was started by a group of ambitious, forward-thinking, fun-loving people and we've been lucky enough to have a core group that has carried that tradition through to the present. Without that solid core of values and objectives we may not be the successful group we are today. Over the years changes have been made to our club in an attempt to attract new people and to grow with the times. We have welcomed single people, changed our dress code to allow people to dance in whatever they are comfortable in (we draw the line at pajamas) and changed some of the ways we do things so we could become more welcoming and more attractive to a broader range of people.

Today too, our Club is made up of ambitious, forward-thinking, fun-loving people. We have club members who are creative thinkers and this brought about the idea that we started the year with celebrating our past and foundation so let's continue with a big celebration of our "now" and our future. Let's show Central Alberta that square and round dancing are fun, physically enabling, community minded, fun-loving, social occasions. Let's show them that we are welcoming, we have a lot to offer and that we love seeing new people come and join us. The celebration we planned was not only for our Club Members, but was open to the public and was held at the Leslieville Hall to honor the many people from that area who have joined our club and to show Central Alberta that we are welcoming, that we are here to have fun, that we listen to new ideas and that we are more than a square dance club, we are a modern dance club that gets together to support each other, to dance and to have a bunch of fun.

After the initial idea for the event was planned, a lot of work was done to apply for a grant from Alberta Culture and Tourism to help us celebrate our 65th Anniversary and to bring our recreation to the public. Until we knew for sure we would get the grant we couldn't proceed too far. The enthusiasm spread throughout the club and everyone got behind the idea and became a part of the whole event. One couple chaired the event and did all the serious leg work, did the bookings, organized ticket sales, planned and executed the decorating and put a tremendous amount of work into it. Nearly our whole club promoted, sold tickets, bought supplies, helped at the hall, and did everything that was needed to make it a success. This was not just an event put on by the executive or core group, it was a united affair that brought in 150 people. Some of these people came mostly to try the dancing, some because we had a special entertainer, some because supper was part of the package, and some out of curiosity. Many came because of the enthusiastic salesmanship of our members. It was critical in our view, to get the whole club involved. It renews enthusiasm, presents an opportunity for ownership, and helps to get the entire club to show up for the event.

The event itself consisted of a full-participation square dance in the afternoon. The dance was for never-before dancers and long-term dancers. We had 12 squares up on the floor and 30 of the dancers had never danced before in their lives. We had people as young as 1 year old to 92. We hired a topnotch caller (seems that all the callers these days fit that category) who knew how to get everyone up on the floor dancing with enthusiasm and confidence in 15 minutes. People kept asking when the next dance was. Of course, we will be obliging with another dance in April. After the square dance we had a few ceremonial things to attend to like a cake cutting and a short talk about our club's future and how people were being afforded the opportunity to see our new face. Then a delicious catered supper was served by the Leslieville ladies.

The chairs were set then for a presentation by Ben & Jessica Crane. Ben is an artist, a musician, a singer and a comedian and much loved by all in Central Alberta. His daughter Jessica is a musician and super singer. If that wasn't enough, we followed that up with an evening of social dancing with a few square dances thrown in for fun.



Official Cake Cutting by MLA Jason Nixon and the youngest club member, Tayva, with parents Tracy & Darcy Knopp.

The benefits of going out into the community and presenting a new face are countless. This, of course, not only became a 65th celebration the entire club could be proud of, it became a promotion. Even if none of those people ever come dancing with our club, they have seen that there is a new face to square and round dancing these days. They have



experienced firsthand how much fun it is and how easy it is to learn. They all went home and told their friends about it – all 150 of them. You can't get better advertising than that. It has also given us a super opportunity to observe and discuss the needs of the community regarding dancing. It opened our eyes to all kinds of ways we can improve our program.

Now the challenge is to pick up on what we learned by this event. We must take some advice from all the comments and try to provide more open dances and to try and be more flexible with how we present our dance program, more open about when people can join, provide more than one way of becoming a dancer with our club and to try and have more events such as this. We learned that there are several people who can only come to a dance like this once in a while during the year and can't commit to a whole year of lessons. So what can we do to keep them connected so that down the road they might become full time members? We certainly have a lot to think about and we want to act on it right away. Strike while the iron is hot (as they say). One of the first steps we took was to welcome all those 150 to come and dance with us anytime whether to drop in or to take lessons. We also gave out some Lesson Certificates as prizes. Next we held a meeting with the two callers who do our lessons for us to help us formulate a way to implement some of what we learned.

We do have another Open/Promotion Dance in April and next fall we will implement a few different ways to present our dance program. Our ideas on this are still being formulated but hopefully we'll be able to make at least these few changes:

- **Have three open dances next year** – open to the public, to people who have never danced before, to long term dancers and to those who have already experienced dancing and want more.
- **Have lessons starting twice a year** with the option to take a full year or half year of lessons.
- **Coordinate with our callers to use the "50 Call Program"** as a club mainstream entry instead of the full 68.
- **Revamp our mainstream program so that our turnover of callers can present new challenges**, such as the remainder of the mainstream calls, in a sequential manner. We are working with callers and using their expertise to help us with this project.
- **Welcome people whenever they drop-in to dance.**

This is a start. Wish us luck!!!!

New Marketing Strategy Attracts 40 New Dancers!

(Issue #2019-7) - by Tom Kahnert, Club Promotions, Strathroy, Ontario

The Town of Strathroy has a population base of about 8,500, located about 35 km west of London, ON. The Town is part of the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc which takes in a number of surrounding rural and smaller communities (total population base of 21,500, including Strathroy).

We have had a very successful program with 40 paid-up new dancers (ie. 5 squares), just finishing Week #4 of 8 at the time of writing this article. Each evening is a dedicated 1.5 hour program with repetition to the key calls as well as introducing new ones.

Our main promotional item was our flyer. All promotional items were professionally printed (not through Staples which uses a photo copy system).

In addition to the 8.5" X 11" flyers, we used post cards as well as business card size promotional/handout-items. We also relied upon press releases and some paid advertising to community newspapers (ie. not Big City newspapers or radio). The target market was the town of Strathroy (our Club location), and the surrounding smaller communities in SW Ontario within a one hour drive of Strathroy. Thank you, *Alberta Chatter*, for the tips, and for sharing the experiences of some Alberta Clubs.

Our marketing did not refer to "Basic Teach" or anything related to "basic calls", hence, "Introduction to Modern Square Dancing". We all know that the basic calls form the ongoing foundation of square dancing from Mainstream, Plus and higher.

We found that the three main avenues that attracted the new dancers included: Press Releases (supported by some paid advertising) 40%; Word-of-Mouth from our members (supported by the various promotional items) 33%; Flyers (located in chiropractors offices, post offices, grocery stores, libraries, hockey arenas and any other location where people will notice) 23%.

Our Club dances on Monday evenings at the Seniors Centre in Strathroy. **However, one key aspect of this new program is that we are holding the program at a separate location (Church Hall) and different night (Tuesday evening).**

Our structure for the program in each of our promotional items was to encourage any interested people to pre-register by calling one of two people listed on the promotional items, which everyone did. We stressed 'looking for something fun to do', casual attire, stress relief, professional caller, under \$6 per night, no experience needed. **Our key message was "WE WANT YOU!!"**

Prior to the first evening, we sent out a reminder email indicating location, time, dates, etc. and confirming that the first night was free and that the \$40/person fee was to be collected in Week #2. We have used emails as a key communication format weekly to keep in touch with each new dancer, an important component which many have really appreciated.

Our Club, similar to so many, has experienced a downtrend in members as health challenges set in over time. Our previous every-other-year programs to attract new dancers were 'fair' at best, as we endeavoured to do "Basic Teach" for 30 minutes before our main dance evening and include a couple of basic tips. As an example, four years ago we had 5 couples join, three of whom are still here. Two years ago, we had 4 couples join, with no one staying around. As you can see, a paradigm shift in our thinking and the way we offered the program had to occur.



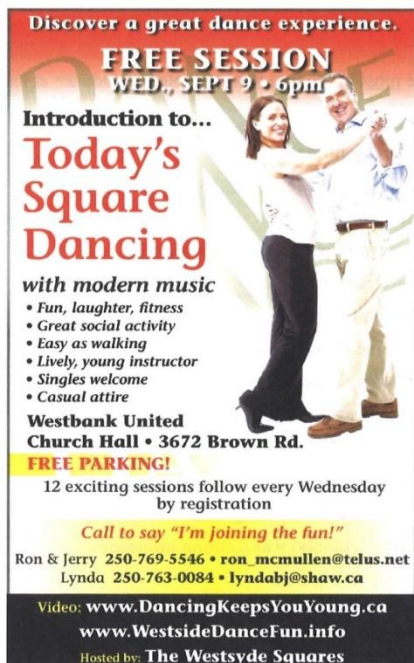
With the addition of the new dancers to our Club, there will be a very serious boost to our numbers in the future. **If all of the new dancers join our Club, it should grow the Club by over 50%!** However, we will take a more conservative view, given that some may not have our regular Club night free in their personal schedules at this time. Of course, we should plan on doing this "*Introduction to Modern Square Dancing*" again, possibly every year instead of every two years.

Recognizing different target markets, we were able to design a marketing strategy that fit our target market area (ie. empty nesters, people with teenaged children, people wanting to do something fun other than the usual 'bowling, curling, church group, watching TV,' etc.). And it paid off for our needs! My guess is that the main portion of the new dancers range in age from 45 to 65, with a few over that age limit.

Given that Convention 2018 (to be held in London) will most likely have a separate room for New Dancers, we hope to encourage these new dancers to attend. (As a matter of fact, many of our callers have encouraged everyone to visit that room as they say that everyone has a blast!)

B.C.'s Westsyde Squares Increase by 29 Dancers in One Year

(Issue 2017-1) Westsyde Squares, central Okanagan, purchased advertising starting late August and sought free media publicity wherever possible. The club purchased display ads in one of their free local newspapers that had wide distribution. The ad was 3 columns across (about 5") by 7" tall. The first night attracted almost three squares, and resulted in 12 paid-up newcomers for 12 sessions in the West Coast Program at \$120/person. The lesson day and time was Wednesday, 6-7:30 pm (the regular club dancers came at 7:30pm).



Discover a great dance experience.

FREE SESSION
WED., SEPT 9 • 6pm

Introduction to...
Today's Square Dancing
with modern music

- Fun, laughter, fitness
- Great social activity
- Easy as walking
- Lively, young instructor
- Singles welcome
- Casual attire

Westbank United Church Hall • 3672 Brown Rd.
FREE PARKING!
12 exciting sessions follow every Wednesday by registration

Call to say "I'm joining the fun!"

Ron & Jerry 250-769-5546 • ron.mcmullen@telus.net
Lynda 250-763-0084 • lyndabj@shaw.ca

Video: www.DancingKeepsYouYoung.ca
www.WestsideDanceFun.info
Hosted by: The Westsyde Squares

In January, 2016 the club purchased newspaper ads again and added paid Facebook ads. Apart from the paid strategy, press releases with photos were sent to the media and every opportunity was exercised to place a community calendar event announcement on radio, TV, newspaper and online websites.

As newcomers came through the door on the first free night, some said they saw it in the paper, some said it was advertised on their Facebook page, and one woman went so far as to exclaim that "it was everywhere!"

Results: 17 dancers joined in January, for a total of 29 new dancers during the 2015-16 dance year. Most influential elements given for attending:

- Fun with partner/spouse
- Was away from dancing and missed it
- Loving dancing & music
- Social aspect
- Square danced in earlier years
- To meet people
- Socializing, fun, exercising

Rocky Mountain House's Success Story

(Issue 2016-3) - by President Doreen Guilloux

The ROCKY WHIRLAWAYS SQUARE AND ROUND DANCE CLUB - an exciting, positive and growing group of dancers.

Being President of the Rocky Whirlaways Square and Round Dance Club is so much fun, and so exciting. The executive we have right now is full of wonderful ideas, enthusiasm and commitment to making the Rocky Whirlaways Square and Round Dance Club the very best club possible. Our executive meets and talks often to keep up with the many facets of the club. The bottom line is to keep positive, keep dancing exciting, keep the club growing and keep the dancers coming. Our club saw a huge surge in membership this year, 20 new people joined. Our publicity people consulted with Claudia who has gathered a portfolio of great ideas and worked hard to make sure the advertising was inviting and that it showed that our club is where people want to be.

We are lucky to have a Casino that can support the type of club we have. We are unique – no other club has mainstream square dancing with a rotation of excellent callers, full year square dance lessons with their own caller, and a round dance group that meets regularly with a special caller. Right now, our round dance group is as big as our square dance group!

Other dancers love coming to our club because we are warm, friendly and welcoming and our dances are always fun. This doesn't happen by accident. It takes a wonderful group of people, a lot of planning and a lot of organizing. But it's all worth it. We have the opportunity to be an innovative and leading group for the dancing community and we're proud of that.

This year we have added bus tours with the idea of supporting other clubs and providing a convenient and fun way of getting to other club dances. Not only has this been great for us but the clubs we visit are excited to see such a large group of people walk into their halls. Thankfully, we have two drivers who can share the driving and others who are thinking of getting qualified as well. Our secretary works hard to coordinate buses, drivers and passengers.

We have a rotation of callers at our club. This gives our dancers the best exposure to calling possible. Callers come from all over the province and feel at home at our club and enjoy being here. In fact, we have callers who contact us asking if they can be put on the roster. They are supportive of what we are trying to do and helpful with ideas. We have one person in charge of contracting the callers and setting up our dance schedules and other person contacts the callers each week before they come to let them know what dances we've been working on and what things they, and we, can do to make the next dance a good one. We also arrange for billets for callers who need to stay overnight.

We have one caller who teaches our lessons each week and our Vice-President is in constant communication with him and the dancers to make sure our lessons are the best they can be and that the wishes of the club are adhered to. As the year progressed and the new dancers were exposed to more calls, they joined the mainstream dances every night for at least one tip. They also join the mainstream dancers every night at announcement time and for our friendship circle at the end of the night.

Our Treasurer has taken on a big job and does it so well. She pays the bills including all the callers, does the banking, deals with AGLA, with the casino money and keeps the executive informed about financial matters.

Our secretary helps to keep me organized and keeps track of all the ideas and work lists that the executive comes up with. It's not just a simple job of taking minutes.



We have many people volunteering to open the hall, put on coffee and greet the callers and next year this process will be made easier for the executive because two people have taken on the job to make sure all the dances have someone to be the host and put on the coffee. We also ask our members to take turns being hosts for special theme dances. They come up with decorations, special foods, special dancing and other ideas to make the dances fun.

We recently asked for a round and a square dance representative to attend executive meetings. The idea is for them to be a liaison with club members and to take on some executive tasks.

Another big deal is our plan to open our dance year with a super caller and special dance with the Harvest Hoedown and end the dance year with a bang with our Graduates Ball and special caller. We wanted to make sure there was something exciting at both ends of the year. Next year both these dances will be for the entire club, round and square dancers. We feel it's important to have events that tie the entire club together.

Another innovation this year is the promotion dances. These have been a huge success. We find that promoting the dance at this time of year (March & April) while our present dancers are still dancing and excited is better than waiting until the fall to promote and recruit. Our dancers take invitations and hand them out to friends and relatives inviting them to a special social event. We have social dancing, mixer dances and introduce them to square and round dancing. We make sure they are up on the floor most of the evening and are having a good time. Our decorations are elaborate, our caller excited and exciting and our club welcoming. We offer these guests a special deal to sign up for lessons for the following year. We already have enough dancers signed up to continue with lessons next year for both square and round dancing. A big part of this is this year's dancers are so enthused that they do the advertising for us, they are excited to bring their friends into the group. Your enthused dancers are your best advertising tool.

But the most important part of any club is the members. Their commitment to the club through coming to every dance they can, volunteering to do all the many tasks, and being so friendly and welcoming to the guests makes our club a special community. The key to all of this is positive-ness. Get rid of the negativity in your club and work hard to get everyone involved in the club, that they feel ownership and that they want the club to succeed. Be open to new ideas. Allow people to wear what they feel comfortable in and welcome singles or couples or two ladies or two gentlemen. Make sure your club members interact with new people and are up dancing when lessons are being given to new dancers.

Make your physical environment friendly as well. If you have a large dance floor and a small group of dancers, move the chairs in to form a smaller space so there is interaction between the dancers on the floor and those on the sidelines. Don't talk about what you can't achieve as a club, talk about what you can achieve. Make your posters interesting, modern and inviting.

Our club is a wonderful group of people who make us all want to keep on dancing and laughing and having fun. I'm so proud to be given the opportunity to be the President of the Rocky Whirlaways, Square and Round Dance Club.

‘Winning Ways’ Success Story

(Issue 2016-2) *Editor’s Note: The following story is one of the many “Winning Ways” submissions. This one is about a club that was failing and how they were able to turn things around. For more such stories, go to www.knowledge.callerlab.org under the Winning Ways Stories section.*

NEW JERSEY RUTGERS PROMENADERS, By Ken Robinson March 2, 2015

Here are a few things that I think helped turn the club around:

1. We moved our dances from Thursday evening (which worked well when the club was still a college club) to Sunday afternoon. The original thought was that we would get families with young kids to come then. Initially, that didn't work; we got senior citizens who didn't want to drive at night.
2. The club always encouraged families with young kids to come to the dances, even if the kids didn't dance. There was always an adult to watch the kids; many of those kids are now dancing. We now say we are a “family friendly” club.
3. About six or seven years ago, a family of with home schooled kids showed up at one of our dances and asked when we were starting lessons. We hadn't planned on doing lessons that year, but we said "Today"; that was the start of the club's growth. The kids in that family got their friends to come and the momentum built from there. Then some of the teens got their parents to learn!
4. We hold our lessons before our regular dance. One hour of lessons and then there are class level tips during our regular dance. This way the class members feel like they are in the club from Day One. They also get used to coming to the dance on our regular dance day, not some other day/time. We don't quite get through the Mainstream program by the end of the dance season, but we graduate the class anyway and encourage them to get out and dance. Our retention rate has been very good over the last few years. I don't have exact figures, but I would guess that it's on the order of about 90%.
5. Although we are technically a "couples" club, we do not require people to be coupled up before getting into a square. There are almost always people who are willing to fill a spot in a square, and many of our regular dancers can dance either part.
6. Since almost everyone in the club has an e-mail address, communication is done via e-mail.
7. We dance the Mainstream program and welcome dancers who are coming back into the activity. We've had some members ask if we would dance any Plus tips at the dance and both Betsy and Dan have said "No Way"!
8. We are a fun club to dance with and we dance with our visitors! We moved to a nice facility with no steps, a good floor, and good lighting. It was more than double the cost of our old dance hall, but the increased attendance at our dances more than paid for the move

Here are a few things we don't do:

1. We don't require any specific dress code. While personally, I don't think this matters all that much, I've noticed that teens like to dress up and the new dancers love to buy square dance outfits.
2. We don't have committees and require members to be on them.
3. We don't require members to bring refreshments, but almost everyone does. We have one couple who has been refreshment chairs for years and they set up the punch bowl and some refreshments, but there's no sign-up sheets.
4. We don't push new dancers into leadership roles. For example, a few years ago a new graduate came up to me and asked what her job was for the following year. I told her that her job was to come to dances and have fun!
5. We don't discourage rowdiness in the squares. If the kids (and those of us who never grew up) want to horse around in a square (dancing as couples, nine pin, trading between squares), we let them.

C. RESOURCES

Free! Square Dance Artwork

(Issue 2022-6) Source: <https://squaredancetech.com/artwork/>

Square Dance art work for flyers, brochures, etc., has been stuck in the 70s and 80s. Old graphics someone may have scribbled out and word processor graphics have been passed along for decades.

On the next few pages you'll find nearly 60 galleries of Artificial Intelligence (AI) generated artwork. There are over ~~300~~ **500** images in the galleries.

Every single image is original art. It was created by describing a scene, in plain English, to a computer program. The computer then analyzed thousands, if not millions of images from around the planet, then combined and mixed those images with its style instructions, to create art which did not previously exist.

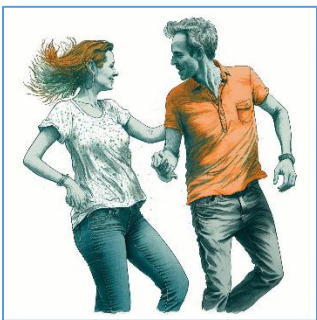
With an eye towards general marketing pieces for flyers, brochures, avatars, and websites, most images contain a man and a woman. (There are a few "same sex" galleries.) Most styles are western themed. (You wind up with a lot of cowboy hat wearing gentlemen.)

Some of the galleries are whimsical. (Blueprints of square dancers? Ice carvings? Marble statues? Origami? Plastic figurines? Huh.) These galleries are interesting and amazing to look at . . . but they may have limited chances to be used in marketing campaigns. (On the other hand, they're just quirky enough to be useful.)

The gallery names are horizontal across the thumbnails. Click on the thumbnail to open up the image at full size. You may right click on the image and save it to your device. (If you're on a desktop computer. There's a zillion ways if you're on a tablet / mobile device. Check your device operating instructions.)

You may use as many of these images as you wish at no cost. You may manipulate them any way you wish. You may use them in any media you wish, in any marketing campaign. You do not have to provide credit to Square Dance Tech. Bottom line: you are free to use any image in any way you wish.

Hopefully these images will help make our marketing materials more attractive and modern looking.



New & Improved - CALLERLAB'S "Knowledgebase"

(Issue 2022-6) Source: CALLERLAB Committee News, by Barry Clasper, KnowledgeBase Chair

If you haven't visited the KnowledgeBase lately, go and check us out: (<https://knowledge.callerlab.org>). **We have a new look, improved performance, and some new features.** For instance,

A new Social Connections category houses material on promoting sociability and bonding between club members, between the club and its members, and between clubs. We're especially looking for new material for this category. Is your club putting a special emphasis on social elements and connections? How are you doing it? How is it working for you? Please let us know at knowledgebase@callerlab.org.



A new Statistics page documents activity in the KnowledgeBase. It has charts showing visitors and views as well as tables of the 50 most viewed articles over a number of 90-day periods going back to March 20, 2021. You can view it at:

<https://knowledge.callerlab.org/statistics>. There is also a link to it at the bottom of the "most viewed" list on the sidebar on every KnowledgeBase page. So far in 2022, traffic has been making or meeting record highs. Over the past year SSD items have by far attracted the most interest, with the "Teaching Guide" and Alphabetical Call List vying for top spot in every 90-day reporting period since March 2021. If you'd like to see what's going on and get an idea what's in the KnowledgeBase, visit our statistics page.

As always, we're always looking for new items to add to the KnowledgeBase. If you see, hear, or do something you believe might be useful to someone else, please let us know. You don't have to write an article, just give us the information and we'll take it from there. You can contact us at: knowledgebase@callerlab.org. If you'd tell a friend—tell US too!

Idea-Inspiring Resources

(Issue 2018-5) - by Claudia Littlefair, Editor

C.S.R.D.S. (Canadian Square & Round Dance Society) PINTEREST ACCOUNT

A pin is usually a picture that links to a page on the web. These pins are grouped into boards, so the effect is like a bulletin board with pictures on it. In order to have access to this account, become a member of Pinterest: go to www.pinterest.com and set up an account. This is free. Next step is to link to the C.S.R.D.S. Board: <https://www.pinterest.com/canadiansquarea/>. Now you're in and ready to go. For example, if you see an image you'd like to use on a poster, click on it, click "copy image" and "paste" it on your poster.

Of the 38 different boards (topics) there are 4 that deal directly with promotion:

- | | |
|--|--|
| - Promo: The Best Ideas – 215 pins (items) | - Promo: Square Dance Imagery – 176 pins |
| - Promo: Great Websites – 9 pins | - Promo: The Best Videos – 60 pins |

CALLERLAB Knowledge Base

Looking for new recruiting ideas? Ways to advertise? Go to the CALLERLAB Knowledge Database <http://callerlabknowledge.org>. If you're trying to **recruit new dancers or promote our activity**, you will find valuable information here. Articles are gleaned from a wide array of sources and the database is continually updated.

There are two categories that offer information on promotion and advertising:

- **"Promoting Square Dancing"** category contains articles pertaining to the promotion of the square dance activity in general, as opposed to promotion of a specific event or club.

The **"Winning Ways Stories"** category collects stories shared by callers and dancers who have tried something out and are willing to share their experience for the benefit of others. When a story contains an especially outstanding idea, we highlight it separately as an "idea" article, but reading the complete story gives you the context in which the idea was tried.

25 Resources for Free Stock Photos in 2020

(Issue 2021-3) Source: Excerpts from *blog.hootsuite.com* – by Tony Tran, March 25, 2019

Here's a list of online resources and websites where you'll find free stock photos for your social media posts, website, or other marketing channels. **If a picture is worth a thousand words, then having a good stock photo website on hand is crucial for any digital marketer.**

That's because stock photos are a great way to:

- **Boost engagement**
- **Liven up a blog or social media post**
- **Build your business's brand**

But marketers should be careful not to infringe on anyone's copyright. Always respect the creative works and rights of others. If not, you risk serious consequences, such as big fines and even having your website taken down.

One great way to avoid this is to use a free stock photo site. **Stock photo sites collect images from artists and photographers who have given permission for anyone to use them.**

That's why we put together this collection of free stock photo resources and websites that you can use to grow your brand.

Bonus: Get the always-up-to-date social media image size cheat sheet. The free resource includes recommended photo dimensions for every type of image on every major network.



1. Unsplash: Unsplash is a fantastic free stock photo resource that contains more than 850,000 high-resolution images. Each photo is sourced from the website's talented community of photographers and media creators. Also, the images are arguably better than any paid stock photo service you'll find. With businesses like Squarespace, Invision, and Medium leveraging their free stock photos, you will be in good company.

2. Gratisography. Gratisography is one of the most interesting of the free stock photo sites due to the quirky style of photographer Ryan McGuire who captures everything from people making goofy faces to airborne cats. All of the photos are high-resolution and royalty-free—ready for your use wherever you please. The photos are organized by categories—animals, nature, objects, people, urban, and whimsical. And new ones are added every week, which McGuire shares on Twitter and Facebook.

3. IM Free. IM Free is a “curated collection of free web design resources, all for commercial use.” The royalty-free stock photos are organized by categories such as technology, education, and nature. But stock photos aren't the only things you'll find on the site. There's also free templates, icons, button makers, and more.

4. Pixabay. Pixabay offers nearly half a million free images and videos for both personal and commercial use. All images on the site are royalty-free and covered under Creative Commons Zero (CC0) license, which means they can be modified and used commercially online and in print.



Editor's Note: The stock photos on this page are from *Unsplash.com*. **For the complete article and list of 25 free stock photo websites go to <https://blog.hootsuite.com/20-free-stock-photo-sites-social-media-images/>**

***New* Canadian Society Pinterest Account**

(Issue 2017-6) by Claudia Littlefair, Editor

“Just try it – you’ll love it!” Have you ever said these words to family or friends in an effort to convince them to come dancing? We know it would be “good” for them – opening a door to some great fun, friends and so much more. Often it feels like we’re preaching to the “unconverted” and getting nowhere fast.

That’s exactly how I feel about the Pinterest Account that Rachelle Cournoyer developed on behalf of CSRDS (Canadian Square & Round Dance Society). We both want dancers of all kinds to try it out! See what it’s like. Experience firsthand the information that’s been gathered for you. All you have to do is “click” and you’ll find a one-stop shop for all kinds of useful, practical information about our dance activity!

There are 30 “boards” to choose from, with numerous items (“pins”) in each board. Need ideas for a newspaper article? Check out the board “Press – Square Dancing”. No need to write your article from scratch. Read a few of the 71 items posted. Borrow wording that appeals to you, or use the article and simply add your club’s location and details.

Learn about our dance’s history by reading through some of the 122 items in the “History of Square Dance” board. Watch some of the videos illustrating old time dance, costumes, and pictures. Browse through the “International Square Dance” and “Provincial Associations” boards to see what other regions and areas are doing. Square & Round Dancing have an international presence.

Visit the “Themed Square Dance Events” for new ideas and suggestions for your club’s theme dances. Wondering how to make a circle skirt? a crinoline? a dance floor? write a press release? make a movie trailer? get started on Facebook? or Twitter? or how to square dance? Visit the “How To’s” board. There are boards for Clogging, Contra, Round Dancing, and Promotion of our activities. There’s an extensive board on “Dance Research” looking at the benefits of our dance.

Best of all, these boards keep growing! New information is constantly being added, and new boards created when necessary, providing up-to-date information.

How it works: A pin is usually a picture that links to a page on the web. These pins are grouped into boards, so the effect is like a bulletin board with pictures on it. You would need to become a member of Pinterest in order to see the CSRDS page. Membership is easy: go to www.pinterest.com and set up an account. This is free. Once you have your account in Pinterest, link to the CSRDS board: <https://www.pinterest.com/canadiansquarea/>. Now you’re in and ready to go. For example, if you see an image you’d like to use on a poster, click on it, click “copy image” and “paste” it on your poster.

Amazing Resources Created By CALLERLAB

(Issue 2017-4) CALLERLAB has created, and continue to create, a variety of resources available through the internet. If you haven't researched online for new ideas, information or material - now is a good time to start! Hundreds upon hundreds of hours, by a few dedicated volunteers, have produced these valuable resource tools for callers and dancers.

TEACHING RESOURCE www.teaching.callerlab.org

This resource contains information to assist a caller who is teaching new calls to dancers, or teaching new applications of a call to dancers. The HOME page links to Basic Part 1, Basic Part 2, and Mainstream. Each call is linked to seven pages of information:

1. **Define** links to the definition of the call with command examples, timing, styling and comments. Also some background information and a link to the Taminations website (calls demonstrated by animation).
2. **Standard** links to descriptions of the formation and arrangements considered to be Standard Applications of the call.
3. **Analyze** links to Call Analysis comments about hand usage, body flow, good preceding and following calls, and ending formations for standard applications and a few extended.
4. **Module** links to Equivalents, Zeros, Get-Ins, and Get-Outs that use the call.
5. **Teach** links to Teaching Tips, more teaching suggestions and quick quotes (can be chanted to assist dancers through the call) and sample choreography for patter and singing calls.
6. **Other** links to Traditional Squares, Mixers, Sicilian Circles or Contra dances that use the call.
7. **Extend** links to choreography for workshops on Extended Applications.

KNOWLEDGE BASE RESOURCE www.knowledge.callerlab.org

This resource is for Modern Western Square Dance leaders, dancers and callers. The knowledgebase is divided into six categories:

1. **Promoting Square Dancing** - contains articles pertaining to the promotion of the square dance activity in general, as opposed to promotion of a specific event or club.
2. **Developing Dancers** - contains articles pertaining to the recruiting, training, and retention of dancers. This includes information such as how to start and operate clubs, how to hold specific square dance events, lesson plans, teaching methods, social activities, etc.
3. **Developing Callers** - contains articles pertaining to the education and professional development of callers.
4. **CALLERLAB Conventions** - contains articles with information drawn from CALLERLAB conventions. Each convention presents 40 or more hours of education, much of which has been recorded and/or has handout documents associated with it. Since there are now hundreds of session recordings available, index articles have been placed in this category to make specific material easier to find.
5. **Winning Ways Stories** - collects stories shared by callers and dancers who have tried something out and are willing to share their experience for the benefit of others. When a story contains an especially outstanding idea, we highlight it separately as an "idea" article, but reading the complete story gives you the context in which the idea was tried.
6. **Articles By Type**.

DANCE RESOURCE www.dances.callerlab.org

This resource contains dances for use at Beginner Party Dances and Community Dances.

DANCE TYPES

- **Circle Dances:** all begin in one large circle. They include No Partner Dances, Sitting Dances, Couple Dances, and Mixers.
- **Contras** generally begin in two long facing lines with partner pairs arranged in various ways. This collection includes Proper Lines, Proper Duple Lines, Improper Duple Lines, Triples, Triplets, and Becket Lines. There are also contras that begin in other formations such as the Sicilian Circle and Mescolanza formations.
- **Lines, Trios and Groups** includes dances that begin in loose lines of solo dancers and dances that begin with groups of 3 or more dancers arranged in various ways.

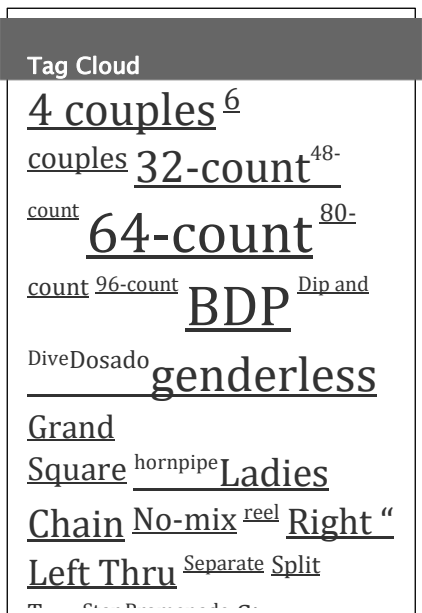
- **Square Dances** all begin in groups of eight dancers arranged in a square. This collection includes Traditional Square Dance figures of various types, Quadrilles, Singing Call figures, and Miscellaneous Ideas related to Square Dancing.

SEARCHING FOR A DANCE:

1. **Dance Categories** sort the dances by type, such as Solo dances or all Sicilian Circle Contras. Clicking on an option will result in a list of dances including a brief description. Clicking on the dance name will take you to the full dance description, and many include an option to download a cue sheet, or copy and paste.
2. **Tag Cloud** sorts the dances by their tags. Note the word size indicates the number of dances –the bigger the type, the more dances in that category.
3. **Dance Resource Table of Contents** is a “sortable” table of the dances with columns for Dance Name, Choreographer, Dance Type, and Difficulty.

CD (Community Dance) JOURNAL LINKS. There is a link to a “sortable” table, which lists all the dances by dance type as well as the major articles in all issues of the *CD Journal* (or previously *CDP Journal*). Clicking on the issue date will link to a .pdf download from the CALLERLAB website.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS. Work is underway on a collection of supporting documents designed to help a caller learn how to present these dances, and how to present Beginner Dance Parties and Community Dances.



Resources for Wording

(Issue 2016-5) - by Editor Claudia Littlefair

Need promotion ideas for the fall? Now is the time to get your information together, design your posters, ads, brochures and invites, in order to be armed and ready to hit the fall market. If you’re coming to the High River Convention on the September long weekend, plan on attending one or both “*Promoting Dance*” presentations. You’ll come away inspired with lots of practical and affordable ideas.

Three of my recent “favorite” website picks for a variety of promotional ideas are:

- **BC Square & Round Dance Federation** (www.squaredance.bc.ca) . Click on “Promotional Tools” – also offers downloadable material including editable posters and a promotional video.
- **CALLERLAB Knowledge Base** (www.callerlabknowledge.org) - contains a wealth of promotional information, ideas, success stories and examples of material.
- **Ontario Square & Round Dance Federation** (www.squaredance.on.ca) – Click on “About” then “Club Promotion Ideas” – in addition to ideas and examples, it includes the 22-page “*Henzel Plan*” for creating a recruiting database.

One of the more common tasks for promotion is writing up a news article. I’m always searching for some interesting wording to explain our activity. Below are two explanations that offer some good “pickings”.

SOURCE: Home page of Denver Area Square & Round Dance (www.coloradosquaredance.com).

The DAS&RDC is a non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of delighting MIND, BODY & SOUL through Square and Round Dancing in the metro Denver area as well as the surrounding Front Range region.

Square & Round Dancing is the fun way to keep MIND & BODY the best they can be. Learning the calls/cues keeps your brain stimulated. Dancing keeps your body moving, and the social interactions keeps your SOUL satisfied.

Square Dancing requires no fancy footwork, provides movement motivation and the social interactions create a basis for lifelong friendships. Casual dress and comfortable foot wear is all that is needed.

Round Dancing is similar to ballroom dancing except that the couples are taught/prompted through the moves by a Round Dance Cues just as Square Dancing is taught/ prompted by a Square Dance Caller. Singles, couples and families are encouraged to become involved in our activity. We truly hope you will come out to one of our many events to experience for yourself the fun and friendships that many of your neighbors already enjoy."

SOURCE: Ontario Square & Round Dance Federation (www.squaredance.on.ca) – click on "Blog" and look for "The Evolution of Modern Square Dancing".

"When most people hear the term "square dancing", they immediately think back to their memories of school dance programs, where they tried to interpret what to do upon the commands of "do-si-do" and "allemande left." For many, to be excited about square dancing meant you had to be a fan of old-time country music and dress up in traditional dresses and duds.

But square dancing has evolved quite a bit since the days of the hoedown, coming out of the honky tonks and into the mainstream.

Modern square dancing has been around for a long time, evolving from various types of dancing in the United Kingdom and continental Europe as well as North America. Modern and traditional square dancing are similar in that both involve groups of eight, all interpreting and responding to the calls.

What sets modern square dancing apart is that participants focus on mastering the individual steps, each of which are given names, rather than an entire dance. The Caller strings these steps together, with the dancers reacting to the calls. Part of the fun is not knowing what steps will be called next. No two dances are ever the same.

Not only does this evolution of square dancing make it much more exciting, it also makes it easier for the beginner to jump in and get involved.

Even the clothes people wear no longer fits the style long associated with square dancing. While some people enjoy donning those traditional-style clothes, all a participant really needs are comfortable shoes and clothing.

Not a fan of country music? Modern square dancing can employ any type of music, from classic rock, easy listening and classical, as long as it is up-tempo."

Email your favorite website picks or news articles to claudia.littlefair@gmail.com, and I'll be happy to share them with others. Promoting our activity is every dancer's job.

D. MEDIA - SOCIAL (ONLINE)

Why Facebook 'Likes' Are Important

(Issue 2024-2) Source: FaceBook Page: EDSARDA Square Dance Promoters, Lauren Cull Norford, Feb. 18, 2024

I often see clubs advertising dances, classes, events, and very few 'likes' to that post. This may be true even though the club's page has 200 or more followers or 'friends.' Did you know that the more we interact with each other's pages and groups, the larger our 'presence' is on social media?

If the algorithm starts to work in our favor, then square dancing and square dance activities start being 'suggested' to other active people who may not have ever thought of square dancing! This is why my Cast Off 8's FB page and Instagram continuously follow and Like other square dance club's pages, even if they are not close by. I will promote and forward that club's effort through my "like." Every "like" increases the likelihood that the square dance club advertising their event gets into someone's FEED (which is the content they didn't necessarily ask for, but comes their way.)

So, let's up our game! Click on Like or Love for as many other square dance clubs as you can. Heck, I even like the posts for clubs on the other side of the country that I may never visit. Because a rising tide lifts all boats! Social dancing is in, just look at my posts from the Dance Flurry here in Saratoga NY this weekend. Thousands of people, young, old, babes in arms, queer, straight, and everything else, here to contra, square, swing, tango, balkan, english, west african, polka, you name it. **Let's be sure MWSD is among that mix of activities people are seeking out!**

How Can Likes on Social Media Help Your Business?

(Issue #2024-2) Mad Marketing Pro (www.madmarketingpro.com), December 14, 2022

More and more businesses are turning to social media as a way to connect with customers and promote their products and services. But many business owners are unsure of how social media can help them specifically. One of the most important aspects of social media is building relationships with customers. When you have a strong presence on social media, customers will be more likely to like your page, which can lead to increased sales and profits. In this blog post, we will discuss how likes on social media can help your business grow!

1. Likes signal approval

Likes let you know that your customers approve of the content you are putting out. **The more likes a post or page receives, the better it looks to potential customers and other businesses who might be interested in partnering with you.** This is because likes show that people already enjoy what you have to offer and are likely to do so again in the future. In addition, customers may also be more likely to refer their friends and family if they see that you have a lot of likes. For instance, [likes on Instagram can improve your brand's engagement numbers](#) and increase your followers. This will help you reach more people with your message.



2. Increase visibility

When customers like or share your content, it can help increase the visibility of your brand on social media platforms. This will enable potential customers to discover your products and services, as well as gain valuable insights about what is popular among existing customers. **Additionally, likes can give you a better idea of how successful certain campaigns are and what type of content resonates best with your target audience.** By using this data, you can make informed decisions about which content works best for promoting your business.

3. Foster relationships

Likes also create an opportunity for businesses to interact with their customers in a positive way. **When someone likes a post, they are expressing approval of what was said or shared with them.** This can provide businesses with valuable feedback and create deeper relationships between brands and their customers. Also, when people like a post on social

media, it can help [create a sense of community](#) and encourage dialogue between customers. Additionally, customers may be more likely to recommend your business or products if they have a positive relationship with you.

4. Likes create social proof

By having more likes on social media, you can create a [sense of trustworthiness](#) for potential customers. People are more likely to purchase from a business if the content and page have been approved by people they trust. This helps build your reputation and can lead to more sales in the future. Additionally, when customers see that others have liked your posts or pages, it validates their choice in engaging with your brand and encourages them to continue interacting with you in the future. Also, a high number of likes can help boost your rankings on search engine results pages, making it easier for potential customers to find you online.

5. Likes generate traffic

When people like your page or posts, it can lead to increased website traffic because those individuals will be more likely to visit your site when they see what you've posted. This is especially true if the content provides value, educates them, or entertains them in some way. As these potential customers check out what you have to offer, they may be more likely to take the next step and become paying customers. For instance, if someone likes a post about a product or service that you offer, they may be more likely to click through to your website and make a purchase.

6. Likes give credibility

The number of likes on a post or page is often seen as an indication of its quality and reliability. When people see that an item has been liked by a large number of people, it can help give your business more credibility in the eyes of potential customers. This increased trust can lead to more sales and long-term customer relationships. In addition, having a large number of likes can help you stand out from the competition and give customers an additional reason to choose your business. For example, if two businesses are offering the same product, the one with more likes may be seen as the better option.

7. Likes can help with your marketing efforts

Using likes on social media to market your business is a cost-effective method of increasing brand awareness and engagement. **With just a few clicks, you can increase visibility and drive website traffic to your site.** This helps spread the word about your products or services and encourages potential customers to take action. Additionally, when people like posts from your page, it can show up in their friends' news feeds and potentially lead them to check out what you have to offer as well. This type of viral marketing is an affordable way for businesses to reach larger audiences without spending money on expensive advertising campaigns.



8. Likes increase user engagement

When people like posts or pages on social media, it can help keep them engaged with your business. For example, if they liked a post about a new product you're launching, they may be more likely to come back and check out the product when it is released. Additionally, having likes on your page can make customers feel comfortable interacting and engaging with your brand in the future. This helps create relationships between customers and businesses which can lead to long-term loyalty and increased sales.

In conclusion, likes on social media are an important tool for businesses looking to grow their presence online. They can provide valuable feedback from customers, boost search engine rankings, generate website traffic, give credibility to your brand, and help with marketing efforts. Additionally, likes can help keep customers engaged and create positive relationships between businesses and their customers. Therefore, it's important for all businesses to take advantage of the power of likes on social media and use them to their advantage.

What Are the Best Times to Post on Facebook in 2024?

(Issue 2024-1) Excerpt from On-line Article by Werner Geyser, Last Updated: November 14th, 2023

For the complete article click here:

<https://influencermarketinghub.com/best-times-to-post-on-facebook/#:~:text=What%20is%20the%20best%20time,from%209%20am%E2%80%933%20pm.>

Operating a business Facebook account is usually very different from how you run your personal Facebook account. You don't regularly upload pictures of your drunken exploits for a start. Nor do you (usually) share multiple images of your baby or child doing cute things. You have a dedicated Facebook business page (and possibly a group), and you make posts that you believe will be of interest to the people who follow you. Some (but certainly not all, hopefully) of your posts may promote your brand and its product.



But unless you are paying for Facebook advertising, it can be hard work keeping your brand visible on Facebook. The organic reach of Facebook business posts is low, thanks to the current algorithm that favors posts made by friends and family. Since July 2023, Facebook's engagement rate for organic posts plummeted down to 1.52% from 2.58%. Therefore you have to do whatever it takes to make your brand visible on Facebook. **One of the best strategies is to post at the best times on Facebook.** There is little point posting when few of your potential customers are looking at Facebook, and by the time they do come online, your post will be old news.

One way you can find the best time to post on Facebook to your social audience is to use your Facebook Insights. You will need a Facebook page to have access to these. You can gain access to your insights by clicking on the appropriate link at the top of your page.

You want to see when your Facebook fans are online. You can do this by clicking on Posts in the lefthand menu. This gives you a breakdown of when your fans are online, both by day and time. Look for any spikes in the data, indicating the times when your Facebook audience is most active.

Facebook Insights also shows you data about your most successful posts (further down the same page as your audience data). Take note of the posts that show the most engagement. You will be able to see when they were posted. You could consider posting more often at the same times.

What is the best time to post on Facebook?

Unless you pay for Facebook advertising, it can be hard work keeping your brand visible on Facebook. The organic reach of Facebook business posts is low, thanks to the current algorithm that favors posts made by friends and family. One of the best strategies to combat this is to post at the best times on Facebook.



According to Sprout Social research, the best times to post on Facebook are Wednesday at 11 am and 1 pm.

What is the best time to post on Facebook for maximum exposure?

As we discussed in this article, the best day to post on Facebook is Wednesday. And the best times are 11 am and 1 pm. You will get the most consistent engagement on weekdays from 9 am–3 pm. As we saw, people are more likely to take notice of your Facebook posts mid-week, from mid-morning to mid-afternoon. **This probably reflects that people check their Facebook apps during their morning tea, lunch, and afternoon tea breaks.**

When is the worst time to post on Facebook?

We saw in this article that the best time to post on Facebook is during the week, particularly on a Wednesday. Surprisingly you are likely to receive most engagement during traditional working hours and the breaks around them. **Conversely, the worst time to post on Facebook is on a Sunday, when you are likely to receive comparatively low**

engagement. Education brands perform better than most at the weekend, however. Indeed, Sprout Social found Saturday 5 pm is a peak time for that sector.

How do I get more Facebook likes?

As always, you will get more Facebook likes long-term if you use conventional organic methods – buying likes never does your account any good long-term. Some useful techniques to increase the likes for your Facebook page include:

Plan your Facebook marketing – don't do things ad hoc and random.

- Define your target audience and only actively seek likes from them.
- Create a compelling page that attracts people.
- Promote your page on other channels.
- Post relevant, high-quality content.
- Engage consistently.

How do I know if my Facebook posts are being seen?

You can't know for sure whether individual people see your posts. You can get some general data from your Facebook insights page, however. This will show you page, post, and video data for the past 28 days. This gives you key metrics for your page and the posts you have made. This will show you which posts had a particularly good (or bad) response. Post Reach shows your basic post reach stats such as impressions, engaged users, consumptions, and video views.

Do hashtags do anything on Facebook?

Although Facebook has never taken to hashtags like some of the newer social platforms, they still have a valuable role to play there. You can search for #-terms in Facebook's search bar, to find posts that highlight that hashtag (although it works imperfectly). Marketers often use the same branded hashtags on their Facebook pages that they do in their other social marketing. It is best only to use one or two hashtags per post, however. Research shows just one hashtag gives optimal engagement.

About the Author: Werner Geyser, Writer: With over 15 years in content marketing, Werner founded Influencer Marketing Hub in 2016. He successfully grew the platform to attract 5 million monthly visitors, making it a key site for brand marketers globally. His efforts led to the company's acquisition in 2020. Additionally, Werner's expertise has been recognized by major marketing and tech publications, including Forbes, TechCrunch, BBC and Wired.

Hash Tags & Social Media

(Issue 2023-6) - **Source: EDSARDA Square Dance Promoters - Lauren Cull-Norford, Cast Off 8's Club**

I wanted to talk about hashtags as I think they are pretty cool and important and I don't see too many other clubs using them.

A hashtag is simply a # sign followed by a word or phrase. You can make up your own hashtag (for example, I made up [#castoff8s](#)) or you can use ones that already exist (ex. [#livelivelsquaredance](#)) They connect content across the whole internet for the same hashtag. Once a hashtag exists, you can click on it and see all the things 'linked' by that hashtag.

So, why do this? It helps promote your content, it shows that square dance hashtags are growing in popularity and it helps people find things. If you go to your search bar and type in [#castoff8s](#) --or you can just click on it right here, you will see ALL the posts that this hashtag has been connected to, mostly mine, since I created the hashtag.

But if you click on [#squaredancing](#) you will see various content, including mine, because I use it a lot. It basically cross references content by all creators who have used a given hashtag. [#livelivelsquaredance](#) is another good one. You can add these to ANY of your posts in Facebook or Instagram, and it will link content.



TRY IT! What do you have to lose? I look forward to clicking on people's hashtags in the near future! **Together, we can go 'viral!'**

For an in-depth article titled “*Hash Tags: What They Are and How To Use Them Effectively*”, click here: <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/what-is-hashtagging/?fbclid=IwAR2CoqkKA4hrGirkJ6G7ez4eUK0J-wuwqqa8BFFCBcWtIL0s9Ot9acLveU>

Technically Challenged?

(Issue 2023-6) - by Claudia Littlefair, Editor

If you're like me, you might feel a bit like a fish out of water when it comes to anything computer related. I've had to learn a lot just to post some square dance ads on FaceBook. Hash tags, analytics, Instagram, SEO and many more terms take time and effort before they make sense to me. Thankfully there is help available. And you guessed it - it's online! Tech-guru, Ray Owens from Ohio has designed an amazing website, <https://squaredancetech.com/>, with the goal of “Bringing 21st Century Technology to Square Dancing”.

If you struggle with poster design, finding good photos and images, want promotional videos, need help with website design, or just want some ideas and information on marketing, spend some time on Ray's website. Below is the “Square Dance Tech” website header with all the tabs. Much of what he offers is free for the taking, and there's a lot to



take! He does, however, charge for website design and upkeep.

Ray recently produced two more promotional videos bringing his repertoire to 16. These are free and can be customized for your own group. Add them to your club website or use them as FaceBook ads.

He's added 200 more new images which total over 1,000. The images can be modified however you wish, they do not have to be attributed to Ray, and can be used for any project. Ray's added samples of video-flyers good for FaceBook and encourages you to up your game by creating attention getting paper flyers. Many of these are posted to give you examples of flyer art.

Of interest to callers, are all the education podcasts that were created during covid by GSI Caller School C.L.A.S.S. (Corona Learning Assistance Seminar Series). There's a wide variety of topics by the top leaders in our activity.

So, increase your technical skills - check out the Square Dance Tech website.

New! New!! Video Promotion Project

(Issue 2023-6) - ARTS Dance Newsletter, November 2023, www.arts-dance.org

If you are looking for a video resource to help you recruit or retain dancers we can help! The ARTS has created videos with information about the many benefits of dancing. Links to the videos are intended to be posted and shared throughout the dancing community. As the videos become available links will be posted, shared and publicized.

The goal of this project to produce short (90-second) videos which would be available via a URL link on the web. These videos will support marketing & promotion of our great activity. Michael Streby has taken the lead for this project. These videos provide information about the many benefits of dancing.

We are pleased to report the first three of six 90- second videos is available online. The videos feature Dr. Douglas Lee as he discusses the many benefits of dancing.

In the first video he points to the Emotional and Psychological benefits participants gain. He emphasizes that dancing provides exercise and positive socialization which is equally, if not more, beneficial. He notes that dancers experience happiness. **In the second video he notes that Square Dancing helps fight one of the very serious health issues - diabetes -** by helping increase insulin resistance. **In the third video, he reports dancing helps strengthen muscles and helps increase balance.** Both of which are VERY important as we age.

In the fourth video, Dr. Douglas Lee notes that Square Dancing helps improve the quality of life for people suffering from early dementia. Square Dancing involves physical activity and requires participants to make mental decisions, both of which help fight early dementia. *"Doctors say that Square Dance movements raise heart rates like many good aerobic exercises should. All the changes of direction loosen and tone up the muscles — but not so severely as to cause injury. In Square Dancing, when you're not moving, you're clapping hands and tapping your feet, which all contribute to long-term fitness."*

Square Dancing may look complex to non-dancers. However, new dancers learn one move at a time, practice that move, then learn another and another. After a series of lessons, new dancers blend in with experienced dancers.

Other web sites which provide important promotion & marketing information include:

- www.You2CanDance.Org - includes information about the various forms of dancing
- www.livelively.org - includes a wealth of information about the activity including where to dance



Changing Our Image One Post At A Time

(Issue 2023-6) - by Claudia Littlefair, Editor

FaceBook is used by hundreds of thousands of people every single day. Because it's worldwide, posts can literally travel around the world. **What an opportunity to show an updated image of our activity!** It's also free advertising that can reach thousands of people within minutes of posting.

Using updated, interesting images that capture the reader's attention increases the likelihood of the post being read. At the very least, readers see an image that conflicts with the negative image the general public have of square dancing (ie. old people who wear fluffy dresses, big belt buckles and dance in a barn).



TAKE A STEP...

**Into Fitness
Friendship
& Fun!**

Open House
FREE to new dancers!
Sept 13, 2023, 6:45 – 9:00 pm
Telford House, 4907 46 St
Leduc

Sign up for classes
13 Sessions - \$90/person
(Plus \$20 for club membership, badge, insurance,
provincial & national registration)

Dressy, casual, business, western, or square dance attire
welcome at practices. Please wear comfortable
non-marking shoes

For more info: LEDUCSQUAREDANCE.CA

Leduc Square Dance Club had an unprecedented turnout of 40+ new dancers at a recent intro dance. They advertised aggressively thru different mediums, including a variety of FaceBook posts such as the one on the left.

In a recent FaceBook post from the private FaceBook group, EDSARDA Square Dance Promotors (Eastern U.S.), Lauren Cull, Vermont shares how FaceBook ads, together with other forms of advertising, helped attract potential dancers to their club.

"So excited and don't want to jinx it! We've had 30+ new and/or interested dancers for Cast Off 8's free nights. To put this in perspective for rural Rutland Vermont, the average for the years prior to the pandemic was 5-6 per year. Last year was 16 and we thought it

might be a fluke. 30 is unheard of for any period in the club's history (I think....) One thing I can say (in here) is that we advertise constantly, not just in late summer/fall.

- *We 'like' and 'follow' lots of pages on FB and Instagram, including civic pages (Chambers of Commerce, Rotaries, businesses large and small, Recreation Depts, libraries etc).*
- *We ran some Facebook ads targeting certain demographics.*
- *We made each free night a Facebook event so that people could click on Interested or Going and then FB reminds them.*
- *We had yard signs and flyers/postcards that matched the yard signs for visual recognition.*
- *We listed our events in papers, and calendars.*
- *We also added a button to 'pre register' on our website, which I honestly never thought of doing, but this gave me an opportunity to interact with about 10 folks ahead of time, remind and encourage them and when we had to change the time unexpectedly, we were able to tell them."*



Successful intro nights like these are encouraging. They indicate that there is, indeed, interest in square dancing today. By using appealing, fun-loving, happy images on FaceBook posts and in other forms of advertising, we can capture the attention of more people. It's easy for a non-dancer to relate to casually dressed people who are smiling and having fun.

Here are more examples of recent FaceBook posts that convey an u updated image of our activity.



Are YOU looking for a way to ...?

- Unwind & have fun
- Make new friends
- Exercise more
- Laugh a lot
- More to great music like you hear on the radio today

then come to a
Modern Square Dance Party

- No experience needed
- Couples, singles, and families are welcome
- Come as you are, bring your friends
- Square, Line & Circle Dances will be taught

**First Fridays (Oct 6, Nov 3, Dec 1)
7 – 9pm** (doors open at 6:40pm)

**Kennedy Hall
8870 - 120 St.
Surrey, BC**

\$5.00 / person

For questions contact:
sarahdanceswithkenn@gmail.com
(778) 584-2811

**OMG!
THAT LOOKS
LIKE FUN.**

In Williams Lake, BC, Canada

**SOCIAL SQUARE
DANCING
FOR BEGINNERS**

Starting Sept. 14, 2023

Thursday 7:00-9:30 PM

CHSD Development Centre
880 W. 3rd Avenue

www.ernstsquaredance.bc.ca
ernstturner182@gmail.com

Sept. 14 is Free!

After that pre-register for 12
evenings of square dance fun for
just \$40.00

• **LEARN A LOT**
• **MAKE NEW FRIENDS**
• **WAPLE COUNTRY**
• **NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED**

Photo by Stephanie and Gregor

GLASTONBURY SQUARE DANCE CLUB

LESSONS

OCTOBER 16TH
ACADEMY BLDG.
343 MAIN STREET
GLASTONBURY, CT
6:30 PM

WE OFFER

- SOCIAL, MEET & GREET HOURS
- VIRTUAL CHALLENGES
- LUNCH & LEARN
- LUNCH & LEARN
- LUNCH & LEARN

CONTACT NOW

US NOW

860-255-0032

Call for info or to register: Bob Simpson 778-288-0022

**Learn to
square Dance**

Have lots of fun while you
Learn to
square Dance

10 lessons, \$50/person
7-8pm starting Wednesday, Sept. 21, 2022

Prosser Valley Social Centre
8100 Sounmont Rd, Nanaimo, BC

Call for info or to register: Bob Simpson 778-288-0022

Free Ads on Online Buy/Sell Groups Help Fill Classes

(Issue 2023-3) - by Connie Sims, Line Dance Instructor

Hi, my name is Connie Sims and I teach a high energy line dance class in Lacombe. I have taught this class or variations of it since 1994. From 1994 to 2004, it took place in Rocky Mountain House through the Recreation Department as a group exercise cardio class using only line dancing. The rec department did all the advertising and fee collection, all I had to do was show up and lead the class.

When I moved to Lacombe in 2004, I also started with the rec department there, but it didn't work out as well as in Rocky. In 2007, line dance was put on the back burner and Ron Morgan and I turned our focus to teaching square dance for Red Deer and Rocky Mountain House square dance clubs. (I have been square dancing continuously since 1967). During this time, I still taught line dancing at various functions including weddings and square dance campouts.

In 2020, after being forcibly retired, my mind turned once again to high energy line dance. I knew this time I was not going through the rec department, and would run the class on my own. **Having been involved with publicity for the Red Deer Square Dance Club for many years, I knew advertising was key.** Kijiji was the preferred advertising media for me at that time, so I knew I had to put posters on Kijiji.

I personally don't care for Facebook. I look at my home page at the most 2 times a year and until 2020 had not heard of Marketplace. **Knowing that I needed as much 'free' advertising as possible, I taught myself how to put an ad on Marketplace.** I started advertising on Kijiji and Marketplace in February 2022 for a line dance class to start in March. The classes are 5 weeks long, and I held a class in March, April, May and June 2022.

Because things were just opening up, there was lots of response. **2022 classes ranged from 35-50 participants.** I don't really know at this time how many came from posters around Lacombe or Marketplace. Although no one signed up from the Kijiji ads, there were many people who looked at the ad, so I don't think Kijiji is a waste of time.

So, how did I advertise on Marketplace? Just like any other ad that is place as an item to sell. I took a picture of the poster (pictures are the only way an ad can be posted), put a catchy title (you know you wanna) as an example, then added the details in the text box, and **posted to Marketplace and local buy/sell groups.** I joined as many as I could within the local area. At first I didn't realize Marketplace was cancelling my ad as I wasn't on Marketplace very often. The ad was still on the local buy/sell groups, but not Marketplace itself. There are only a few of the local groups that don't allow me to advertise. There were a few times that Marketplace did not delete the ad but I don't know why. I try not to put the word dance or class in the title. It is enough to know that it is being viewed from the local buy/sell groups.

I have offered 5 different sessions in the 2022/23 season, from September to June and the average number of people ranged between 25-35. Many of the participants have been with me since the first class, but there is always new ones as well. I only have my phone number on the poster to register and ask to either call or text me. I follow up by text and now by email as texting that many people was very cumbersome. I have over 200 names that have either taken one class or more.

In summary, I advertise for High Energy Line Dance on Kijiji, local buy/sell groups as part of Marketplace, posters in businesses, doctor office, chiropractor and physio, nail and hair salon, and anywhere else that has a bulletin board. BUT, as with square dancing, the best advertising is WORD OF MOUTH.

Get your groove on and move your body

Register for this fun and energizing class today to get your body moving and grooving to fun and energizing music from country to disco and swing to rock songs you know and love from 70's to 90's.

High Energy Line Dance is a 5 – week 2 - hour class taught by an experienced line dance instructor. Suitable for most ages.

Place: St Andrews Church gym 5226 51 Avenue Lacombe

Date: Wednesdays May 24 – June 21

Time: 600 to 800 PM

Cost: \$50 for the 5-week class

Pre-registration only, sorry no drop ins

Please call/text to register

403 396 1523 cash or etransfer

A Few Helpful Tips & Ideas (Excerpts)

(Issue 2023-1) **Source: EDSARDA Square Dance Promoters FaceBook Page**

Editor's Note: This is a private Facebook group for Eastern District Square & Round Dance Association, U.S., formed to exchange practical tips and ideas on promoting and advertising our activity. Some of these ideas are featured here.

LINKING INSTAGRAM TO YOUR CLUB'S FACEBOOK PAGE

(Lauren Cull Norford) For clubs that wish to dip their toes in Instagram, here is a pretty simple walk through. Why do you want to do this? Because most young people have left Facebook. You won't recruit people under 40 on Facebook. They are all on Instagram. You can share the same content you are putting on your club Facebook page on your club Instagram account; in fact you can do it at the same time. More on that later. Facebook owns Instagram, so you will see how these easily weave together.



First, download the Instagram app onto your phone and create an Instagram account in your own name if you don't have one.

If you already have a personal Instagram account, or once you do, you'll need to create a second 'page' for your square dance club. You will do that in your Account settings ('add a professional account'). You will then use the exact same name your club uses on your Facebook account. It will ask you some questions on the way and you'll be able to link it to the FB page you already have. [https://blog.hootsuite.com/link-instagram-to-facebook.../...](https://blog.hootsuite.com/link-instagram-to-facebook.../)

POSTERS MADE EASY

(Monica Rollett) Just wanted to share that **Canva** is a free tool that I use to make fliers and social media posts at work. Its an app and a website that has borders, shapes, and fonts all in one place. The premium version is also free to nonprofits. Canva website: <https://www.canva.com/>

Facebook Posts Pay Off

(Issue 2022-2) - by Claudia Littlefair

Recently I decided to take my own advice, and guess what? It paid off! In 4 of the last 5 issues of the newsletter, I featured articles on using social media such as FaceBook to advertise.

The article that really inspired me to take action was from December's issue #2021-6, "*How We Attracted 16 New Dancers in the Middle of a Pandemic*", by Gary & Eileen Smith, Edmonton. One of their strategies was to post information about their start-up classes on several community FaceBook pages, at zero cost! I decided to put aside my reluctance to learn 'new computer things' and make an all out effort to utilize FaceBook.

Who Uses FaceBook?

"Users ages 25-34 years represent Facebook's largest audience. Despite the platform's reputation as a seemingly "older" network, 26.4% of the platform's user base is made up of millennials. That said, over one-third (36%) of Facebook's audience are 45 or older." – <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/facebook-stats-for-marketers/>

Our club's target market are people aged 40 to 60, so to us, that means 36% (almost 40%!) of people in our target market can be reached through FaceBook. Not only that, but the highest group of users, 25 to 34 years, will also become aware that we exist. Awareness is the all-important first step in marketing. Simply put, regardless of age, people need to know our club exists if they are going to come to it.

Searching for the Right Image

If people were going to read my post, I would need to use a captivating image or photo (a video would be even better, but I couldn't find one I liked). I wanted my photos to be unusual and eye-catching for two reasons. **One, to catch the reader's attention so my post would be read; and secondly, to conflict with the negative image most people have about our activity** (ie. seniors wearing puffy dresses, big belt buckles, dancing to fiddle music in a barn).

I spent hours searching for photos from the websites listed in issue #2021-3's article, "25 Resources of Free Stock Photos". The website I liked best was <https://unsplash.com/>. The description of the website reads, "Beautiful, free images and photos that you can download and use for any project. Better than any royalty free or stock photos." I downloaded and filed away quite a few photos that looked promising.

Searching for FaceBook Groups

Next, I searched for FaceBook groups that I could 'share' my post to (ie. post it first on our club's FB page, then share it to other groups from there). I needed to become a member of these groups in order to post in them. We live in Strathmore, a town of over 13,000 plus a large surrounding area of people to draw from. I was surprised by the number of FaceBook groups in our small community. My list of groups included:



- Strathmore Active Living
- Strathmore Community Bulletin & Chat
- Strathmore Ask
- I Love Strathmore
- Strathmore Free Items
- Strathmore Events

At the same time, I looked for and found several free online community calendars, and posted our event in them, too.

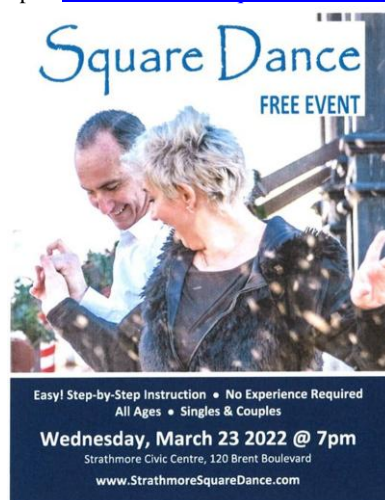
What to Say In My Post

Now it was time to write the post. My plan was to post a different image each week, for the three weeks leading up to our dance. First, I designed the mini-posters, ready to upload into my post, and then I worked on what to say. Wording varied slightly each week.

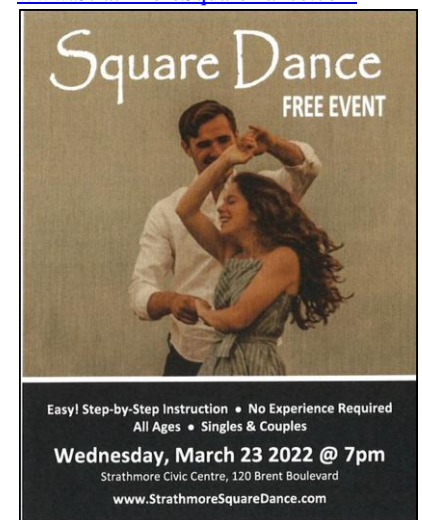
Discover why every square dance is a positive, energetic, fun-filled experience leaving you wanting more! It's easy (even for people with two left feet). Step-by-step instructions, no experience needed. Enjoy a variety of music - country, Latin, rock and more. For all ages, singles and couples. Dress is casual, wear comfortable shoes. Most often heard comment, "I had no idea square dancing could be this much fun!" www.StrathmoreSquareDance.com."



Enjoy music, but can't dance? Two left feet? Try square dancing! No fancy footwork, no lead/follow partner and the caller (dance instructor) tells you what to do every step of the way. Variety of music, too, from country to Latin to rock. If you can walk, you can square dance. Join the fun, March 23rd, 7pm. www.strathmoresquaredance.com.



JOIN US Wednesday, March 23rd, 7pm, Strathmore Civic Centre. Two left feet? This is the easiest way to get comfortable on the dance floor. No fancy footwork, no lead/follow partner, and the Caller (dance instructor) tells you what to do every step of the way. Variety of music from country to Latin, rock to pop. Most often heard comment, "I had no idea square dancing is this much fun!" So meet new people, laugh, move, learn. Best. FUN! Ever. www.StrathmoreSquareDance.com



WEEK ONE: People Reached - 600+

WEEK 2: People Reached – 2,400+

WEEK 3: People Reached – 1,800+

The Results

On Facebook, the “people reached” figure tells you how many users saw a particular post. In other words, this is how many people saw my post in their newsfeed. **Even if nobody came, it was rewarding to know that my posts created significant awareness that our club exists.**

The night of our intro dance arrived. We really had no idea whether anyone would come or not, but we were set up and ready to dance for 7pm. At 6:45 people started arriving. As one lady came through the door, she told me that my FaceBook posts worked because she came. **Turned out, we had 30 new people, doubling the night’s numbers.** Most were in the 40 to 60 age range, together with several older teens and two couples in their 20’s. People left with big smiles on their faces, and even though we knew not everyone would return, we felt that the evening was a huge success.

So, consider taking my advice and explore advertising on FaceBook. It just might pay-off!

Hash Tag? What is a Hash Tag?

(Issue 2022-2) - Excerpt from “Facebook Primer” by Caller Scot Byars

Editor’s Note: To read all of the article, go to BC’s Region 5 website: <https://r5ccda.squaredance.bc.ca/Miscellaneous/facebookprimer.pdf>

Hash tags are free, and they make it easy for those who are searching for specific information to find that information. Erin just recently prepared lunch for us using mangoes and a special remolded sauce. In her post she placed two hash tags (#mango and #remolded). When you place them in the text of your message it works like a hyperlink on a webpage – that is, anyone who sees the hash tag and clicks on it will immediately receive any and all messages on Facebook with that particular hash tag.

Below is her post complete with hash tags:

“Prepared chicken tacos for lunch, with fresh mango, homemade guacamole, and homemade remolded sauce... wonderful! **#mango #remolded**”

All you have to do is click on either hash tag and every post and attached communication line that contains that particular hash tag will appear in order of placement. Another way to search for specific Hash tags is to place them in the search field at the top of the page and look for the dropdown selection that contains the Hash tag and again all will appear. Pretty cool!

To place a hash tag in your post, you have to use a pound sign (#) followed immediately by the search words that users may want to find. No spaces or any other symbols should appear. I will show several examples below:

DO’S

#doghouse

#funtimes

#squaredance

#myfriend

#friedgreentomatoes

DON’TS

#dog house

#fun times

#square dance

#my friend

#fried green tomatoes



The next step is to come up with the right hash tag that will draw the most potential new square dancers. You can use ‘#squaredance’ or ‘#newsquaredanceclass’, however, most people who are looking for what we have to offer have no idea that what they are looking for is Square Dancing! Again, they want all the benefits of square dancing, but have no

idea where to find it. **Here are some suggestions:**

#newdanceclass	#danceclass	#health	#healthy	#exercise
#friendship	#friend	#fun	#music	#friendliness
#fellowship	#danceexercise	#memoryimprovement	#improvememory	
#brainworkout	#mentalexercise	#teamsport	#danceteam	#physicalexercise
#newfriends	#social	#socialize	#meetnewfriends	
#meetfriend	#socialexercise	#travel	#dancetravel	#dancefestival
#couples	#singles	#families	#familyoriented	

Here are some rules of thumb when working with hash tags/posts:

- Place no more than three hash tags in each post.
- Use responsive questions within each post to insure a response.
- Don't repeat posts – find a different subject.
- Use humor to get a response.
- Attach pictures or videos to get prospective dancers' attention.

Understanding Online Lingo

(Issue 2021-5) - Excerpt from *“Break the Social Code”*, by Stephen Cole, Caller CALLERLAB Conv2016

Some terms used online today are self-explanatory. Others are just strange. This list is not comprehensive. If you're new to social media and social networking, it will help to understand the vernacular.

Cloud Computing: There is no cloud. It is only someone else's computer. The term was invented, almost accidentally, for marketing purposes.

Creative Commons: This is a public copyright license that gives people the ability to use and share otherwise copyrighted material. For social media users, Creative Commons often comes into play when we are looking for images and photos to accompany a social media message or blog post. Unless you are using your own images or have express/explicit permission, you can only share Creative Commons images. There are different levels of Creative Commons licenses which can restrict whether an image can be used commercially or be modified and what kind of attribution is required.

Crowdsourcing: This is the process of leveraging an online community to assist in services, content and ideas for your business. Business examples include getting your audience to volunteer in helping translate your product or by asking your community to contribute content for your blog.

Embedded Media: Digital media that is displayed within another piece of content, outside of its native setting. If you put a video in a post, you've embedded it.

Engagement: Social media engagement is any interaction you have with other users. For that reason, it's a core part of every social media strategy. Your followers expect you to interact with them.

Hashtag: Hashtags are a simple way to mark the topic (or topics) of social media messages and make them discoverable to people with shared interests. On most social networks, clicking a hashtag will reveal all the public and recently published messages that also contain that hashtag. Hashtags first emerged on Twitter as a user-created phenomenon and are now used on almost every other social media platform, including Facebook, Google+, Instagram, Vine and Pinterest.

Meme: An idea, behavior, or style that spreads from person to person within a culture. The word was coined to resemble “gene” as it seems these thoughts take on a life of their own. To see some examples, refer to the websites: <http://knowyourmeme.com/> and <http://memegenerator.net/>.

Paid Social Media: The use of social media for ad placement. The most common types of paid social media are native advertisements such as Facebook Ads, Twitter Promoted Tweets, LinkedIn Sponsored Updates, and YouTube sponsored videos.

Phishing: An attempt to fraudulently acquire sensitive information such as usernames, passwords, and credit card information (and often, indirectly, money) by authentic-looking electronic communication, usually email. People are essentially being tricked into giving away their login information or money.

SEO: Search Engine Optimization is the practice of increasing the visibility of a web page in a search engine, such as Google without having to pay to have it moved to the top of a list of results. SEO refers to tactics that enhance the search ranking of a page.

SMS: This is the text messaging service component of phone systems.

Spam: Unnecessary and repetitive social media content that clogs up the feeds of social media users. The term has been used to refer to junk messages since the earliest days of the internet. Its name originates with the 1970 Monty Python skit where the word “spam” was spoken repeatedly to the point where it is absurd.

Tag: A keyword added to a social media post with the original purpose of categorizing related content. A tag can also refer to the act of tagging someone in a post, which creates a link to their social media profile and associates them with the content.

TL;DR: Too Long; Didn't Read. Much like this document, there are too many posts and they are much longer than they need to be. Know what you're going to say, say it, and be done. Everyone will thank you. Everyone.

Troll: A social media user who makes a deliberately offensive or annoying posting with the sole aim of provoking another user or group of users. (As far away from being a nice person as someone can get.)

URL: A Uniform Resource Locator is the address and protocol used to get to a computer on the Internet. The two most common protocols are http and https. The S in https stands for secure. Transmissions to and from the site are encrypted to prevent unauthorized access.

17 Simple Ways to Increase Facebook Engagements

(Issue 2021-5) Source: Excerpts from *blog.hootsuite.com* - by Christina Newberry, December 20, 2018

Learn how to easily increase Facebook engagement (comments, likes, shares, and more) with these 17 tips and tactics that actually work.

Facebook engagement is any action someone takes on your Facebook Page or one of your posts. The most common examples are likes, comments, and shares, but it can also include checking in to your location or tagging you in a post.

Facebook engagement matters because it can help extend organic reach. First, engagement helps boost your News Feed placement based on the Facebook algorithm.



And second, likes and shares expose your posts to your audience's extended network. DPNY Beach Hotel and Spa found that each like or share extended their reach to six or seven new people. That's a lot of extra exposure at no extra cost.

Finally, engagement also indicates that your audience is, well, engaged. And an engaged audience that wants to interact with your brand is something every marketer should aim for.

Seventeen tips that actually work:

1. Teach, entertain, inform, or inspire

Your Facebook audience is not looking for a sales pitch, and they're certainly not going to engage with one. They want to engage with content that will make them smile, make them think, or improve their lives in some way. To create content that connects with fans, you'll need to...

2. Get to know your audience

What you find entertaining or inspiring is not relevant. When you're seeking engagement, it's your audience's wants and needs that matter.

3. Keep it short



The vast majority of people use Facebook mobile devices—a whopping 88% of them. Facebook's data shows that people scrolling through News Feed on their mobile devices spend just 1.7 seconds to consume an item of content. Even people browsing on a computer only spend 2.5 seconds per content item. Source: Facebook
The good news is that people can recall content after seeing it for just 0.25 seconds. But you need to act fast to get their attention.

Keep your post short and sweet to capture attention quickly and entice users to stop scrolling and engage.

4. Focus on quality

With people moving through content quickly, there's no time for sub-par graphics, videos or text. If you're running out of original content to post, content curation can be a great way to share quality, informative content that gets your audience excited.

5. Use (great) images

Facebook posts that include a photo see higher than average engagement rates. Simple shots work well. Facebook suggests a product close-up or a customer photo.

6. Make a video, or broadcast live

Video posts see even higher engagement than photo posts. Like photography, videography can be simple and inexpensive, and you can get started using your mobile phone.



7. Ask a question

An interesting question is a great way to kick off an active comments thread. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- How do you [complete this action]?
- Why do you [like this event or brand]?
- Do you agree with [a notable statement, event, person, etc.]?
- What's your favorite [fill in the blank]?



8. Respond to fans

If someone takes the time to comment on one of your posts, make sure to reply. No one likes being ignored, and fans who engage with your posts want you to engage in return.

9. Test everything

You know how the saying goes about what happens when you assume. On Facebook, there are tons of opportunities to learn what your fans like, and what they don't.

10. Post consistently and at the right times

Since the Facebook News Feed is based on an algorithm, your fans will not necessarily see your content the moment it's posted. Still, "when was this posted" is one of the signals for the Facebook algorithm. And Facebook itself says that you're more likely to see engagement if you post when your fans are online.

The most important thing is to post consistently, so your audiences come to expect to see content from you regularly. Facebook recommends posting at least two or three times per week.



11. Drive traffic from other sources

People who are already interacting with you on other channels are a great source of potential engagement. Make sure they know where to find you on Facebook.

Try adding a link to your Page on other social networks. Link to Facebook from your website and email signature. Include a Facebook plugin on your blog to highlight your latest posts, or embed a post directly in a blog post.

Fans can like the post without leaving your blog, or click the comment button to transfer over to Facebook to join the conversation.

Don't forget about offline materials. Include your Facebook page URL on your business cards, posters at events, and packing slips.

12. Get active in Facebook groups

Creating a Facebook group is a great way to get fans involved and engaged. More than 200 million people are members of Facebook groups that they consider to be meaningful. And those meaningful interactions in groups can create brand loyalty and lead to engagement on your Facebook page.

Joining other relevant Facebook groups is also a great way to connect with fellow entrepreneurs and thought leaders in your industry.

13. Use Facebook Stories

Like Instagram Stories, Facebook Stories appear at the very top of the News Feed. That's great placement for drawing eyeballs to your content.

This informal way of sharing content allows you to post as often as you like, without worrying about overwhelming your fan's News Feeds. And since people expect production quality to be lower on Stories, you can be more personal and in-the-moment to build a stronger personal connection with followers.



That stronger connection builds desire to see more of your content, making followers more likely to check out—and engage with—the content posted on your page. In an Ipsos survey of stories users commissioned by Facebook IQ, 62% of people said they became more interested in a brand or product after seeing it in a story.

14. Add a call-to-action button

A call-to-action button gives people Facebook engagement options beyond liking, sharing, and commenting. Your CTA button can ask viewers to:

- Book an appointment
- Contact you (including through Facebook Messenger)
- Watch a video
- Click through to your website
- Shop your products or see your offers
- Download your app or play your game
- Visit and join your Facebook Group



15. Get verified

People want to know who they're talking to online. This applies to brands, too. A verified badge shows visitors that you're the real deal and they can feel safe engaging with your posts.

After all, no one wants to be the one to like or share a post from a fake page misrepresenting a brand.

16. Avoid engagement bait

When you're hoping for likes and shares, it might be tempting to ask for likes and shares. Don't do it! Facebook considers this engagement bait and will penalize you by downranking your posts in the Facebook algorithm.

As mentioned above, it's fine to ask a genuine question, or ask your followers for their opinion or feedback. You cross the line when you ask for a comment that doesn't indicate any real thought or consideration.

17. Boost your Facebook posts

Boosting a post is a simple form of Facebook advertising that allows you to get your post in front of more people, and thereby increase your chances of engagement.

(Issue 2020-1) - Excerpt from Article by Justin Russell, Caller, Memphis, TN, CALLERLAB Conv2015

Ways To Communicate Your Message

- [illegible]

1. **Have a Plan:** Before you start, have a clear idea of your purpose. Are you informing current dancers? Are you trying to recruit non-dancers? The type of information you include will vary as well as the language you use.
2. **Stay Focused and Be Consistent:** There are a lot of websites that litter the World Wide Web. Have you searched for your favorite caller only to find out what their calling schedule was for 2009? Be sure to keep it updated with relevant information. Some helpful hints are to post the schedule for the entire year or use language like “recently”, “last month”, or “soon”. Make sure phone numbers are up to date and watch for spelling and grammar.
3. **Create/Know Your Personal Brand:** A brand is anything that separates you from someone else. This can be a symbol, design, name, reputation, tone, etc. Be positive and upbeat. This can get you recognition in your field and better contacts. Maybe it’s a tag line “Thanks for coming and thanks for staying!” or maybe you always tell a story about your adventures. Be unique.
4. **Pictures REALLY Are Better Than A 1000 Words:** Research shows that **87% of all interactions of a Facebook page happen on photo posts**. To compare, posts with links receive 4% of all interactions. Choose a photo that is appealing. Crop and edit photos and remember who your audience will be. Tag people in photos as a way to share.
5. **Call To Action:** Leave your readers with a clear call to action. Try to only promote one objective at a time. You can talk about multiple things but have a clear conclusion.

6. **Mix It Up:** Try some different things to keep an audience engaged. Have a contest and offer a prize. Ask for people to submit photos or answer a question. Poll the audience for feedback.
7. **Know & Use Your Symbols:**
 - **Hashtags:** The pound sign (#) turns any words or group of words into a searchable link. #squaredancing, #CALLERLAB, #TeachingOldDogsNewTricks. Don't use spaces. Everything is one word. Numbers are okay.
 - **The "@" sign:** Is used to call out usernames in Tweets - "Hello@twitter!" People will use your @username to mention you in Tweets, send you a message or link to your profile.
8. **Start Slow & Run A Marathon:** It will take a while to build followers. This is usually a good thing because it will give you time to figure out your message. You don't have to create every account today. Start with one and watch it develop over time.
9. **Don't Try To Hardsell:** If you have been on social media awhile, you all know that one person you try to avoid because they will twist your arm to try "the latest thing that will change your life". Don't be that type of person. Create Awareness or start a conversation that can possibly translate into them becoming a dancer.
10. **Articles Online:** A free way to gain exposure. Have one person in charge of writing the articles and one for taking pictures. Three to four paragraphs are all that's needed. Give the basic description of the group and event. Pictures are a huge plus. List the dancers' names and where they are from. Email the same article to various newspapers and just change the names of the dancers listed.



About the Author: Justin Russell has been in the square dance activity since 2001. In 2008, Tony Oxendine and Jerry Story asked him to record for Royal Records. Currently, Justin lives in Memphis, TN and works full time for a local credit union. For more information, please visit his website www.justin-russell.com.

Adding 'QR' (Quick Read) Codes To Print Ads

(Issue 2019-5) - Excerpt from "Did You Know ..." by Lane Johnston, Footnotes Newsletter, Sept2017

Consider incorporating QR codes on flyers, posters, roadside signs, and banners to drive "traffic" to your club's website or Social Media sites.

- **QR codes are those odd-looking square blocks of pixelated/digitized information.** They are similar to UPC barcodes but, instead of identifying a part number or SKU, the information that is encoded is most-often a web address (URL).
- **QR codes allow anyone with a smart phone to "scan" the code and instantly be taken directly to the corresponding web address** without having to write it down or memorize it for later access.
- **Download a free QR code generator application** like "QR Code Monkey" (there are many others to pick from). Use the generator to create a QR code for any web address with content specific to your club (like your club or council web page, Facebook page, or your Twitter account, or photos on Instagram or SmugMug).
- **Try it out for yourself.** Download a free QR Code Reader app (there are lots of them) like "Scan Pro" to your smart phone, and save it to your Home Screen. Then simply launch the app and point your phone at any QR code you want to read. Once you "capture" the code, you can open the associated web address.



Editor's Note: Here's an example of a QR code. It'll take you to the website where past issues of this newsletter are kept.

Online Marketing Tips

(Issue 2018-5) - *by Eric Henerlau*

Editor's Note: *The following is an excerpt from the June, 2017 keynote address by caller Eric Hanerlau at the 66th National Square Dance Convention, entitled "What's Right With Square Dancing". This excerpt talks about using on-line tools and social media to grow your club.*

Technology is available in multiple forms to help you grow square dancing. If you are uncomfortable or unfamiliar with the variety of technologies in use, find someone in your group who can step in and do some of the work. Often the caller can help out as he or she may be using the various tools.



- **Website.** If your club's website is out of date, have someone volunteer to keep it updated. It's a bad sign to visit a club's homepage to find out about all the dances coming up in 2006. If you don't have a website, get one! They cost from \$0 to \$1000, depending on how robust you want it. Several companies offer free websites and website tools in exchange for advertising on the side. **The club's homepage should be designed for the non-dancing public. When a visitor lands on the homepage, the site should communicate the social and fun aspects of the club, along with when the next class will start.** All other club information and business can be on other parts of the site. The homepage is the most critical for a new prospect.
- **Facebook.** Keep your Facebook page up to date with current and relevant club activities. **Facebook and your club's website are the public's perception of who you are.** Anyone considering joining your class or club will visit the website and Facebook page first – make sure they are attractive and inviting.
- **Email Distribution Lists.** Use email group lists for communications within your club. Be clear, and concise with club communications so that everyone is fully informed. These emails strengthen social bonding. Your web hosting service may provide email groups; if not, Yahoo and Google both provide this service for free.
- **Google Phone Number.** Get a unique phone number for your club that you can give out to people. Google offers phone numbers for free, and you can have any incoming call to that number redirected to a person who is designated to receive it. This allows the leadership in a club to change while still keeping the same club phone number. It also keeps personal phone numbers private.
- **Twitter/Snapchat/Instagram.** You can use these to send out news and pictures about the club, club events, and recent activities.
- **Free or Near-Free Online Services.** Use Craigslist, local "patch" news sites, Meetup.com, etc.
- **Groupon, Living Social and Other Web-Based Coupons.** Some clubs have had success in using promotional coupons through the Internet. Explore this avenue to see if it may work for your club.
- **Prospects Database.** Once you get a person who is interested in learning to square dance, capture that person's name/email/city and phone number and put it in a database (spreadsheet or document). Use an email processing tool to send out email invitations to your prospects for upcoming classes.
- **Ads and Keywords.** Both Google and Facebook have abilities to promote your classes when people use certain keywords to search. Look for keywords that someone might enter that would make that person a square dance prospect. Bid on and buy those keywords, so that when a person enters them, your ad is displayed on the sidebar.

E. MEDIA - PRINT

Making The Right Call

(Issue 2023-4) 'Our Canada Magazine', Feb-Mar2023 Issue. Article by Gloria Bateman, Eganville, Ontario

After some initial reservations, learning to square dance proved to be the best thing this couple ever did!

Quite a few years ago, my husband, Doug, and I screwed up our courage and, with great apprehension, entered the local public-school gymnasium. Our first lesson was about to begin. This was Doug's idea. After having recently rejoined the workforce, I felt guilty about being away from home and our young kids. However, once we hit the dance floor that evening, everything changed. We were smitten with square dancing.

The only dancing we had done prior to this was a shuffle: leaning on one foot, moving a little in any direction and then leaning on the other foot – back and forth and, with any luck, in time to the music.

With square dancing, though, we were learning an actual dance: exactly what to do with our feet, where to put our hands and where to go on the dance floor. To add to the fun, we danced with six other people, a total of four couples creating a square on the dance floor. We interacted with one another as the square-dance caller instructed. What a lot of fun! We had so many laughs, got some exercise and made many friends. What more could a person ask for in an activity?

After square dancing for about six months and loving it, we realized there is a skill to learning all the various moves and recalling them when the caller tells us to perform each move. Only then did we realize that we had to shake off the fear of what people would think – and that we had to tell our family and friends what we had been up to. We even bragged about it!

Part of the fun is that no matter where in the world we might travel, we will be able to find a place to square dance – we learned that there are clubs everywhere. It seemed to us that modern-day square dancing had to be one of the best-kept secrets ever! There are several levels, so there is a challenge in learning and performing the various moves. Perhaps that is why today's square dancing is recommended as a great low-impact exercise that is a wonderful workout for both the body and the mind. It helps keep you sharp as a tack!

After family, our social life revolves around the dance community of friends we have made over the years. And to think, we nearly did not go into the gymnasium for that first lesson! While Doug likes most sports, especially hockey, the only activity that appeals to me is square dancing – for me, it's like a contact sport! If we hadn't given it a try those years ago, we would have missed out on making lots of good friends – and on all that fun!



“... And the Same Could Be Said For Square Dancing”

(Issue 2023-3) - by Claudia Littlefair, Editor

It takes me a long time to write up an article, create a promotional poster, or design a brochure ‘selling’ square dancing. I’ve never taken a writing course or one in graphic design, so I look at what others have done to get inspired and to kick start my brain.

For example, if I want a fresh idea for a poster design or great color combinations, I’ll browse through online websites like Poster My Wall: <https://www.postermywall.com/> or Canva: <https://www.canva.com/posters/templates/>. They also have free templates, but I prefer to do my own. I just need a ‘thought starter’.

Recently, on a trip to Radium, BC, I read a billboard for the Rockies that said, “Nourish Your Soul” and thought that would make a good attention-getter for a square dance poster. The other day I read an article about pickleball in the Costco newsletter and wrote down a few of the phrases that I really liked and could possibly use:

- “fans of fun.”
- “extremely social”
- “lots of camaraderie”
- “built-in socializing”
- “providing a social and recreational outlet”



Square dance websites and other dance websites are a great resource for inspiration and thought starters. **The Arthur Murray Dance Centre website** describes the benefits of dance, which are very similar to what is said about square dancing. For example, one of the benefits states “*Good dancing is a lifetime investment in fun, poise, confidence, improved personality and new friends.*” I like the phrase “**lifetime investment**” and would use it in this way: “*Square dancing can become **a lifetime investment** in never-ending fun and an active social life.*”

The next sentences from their website contain more phrases that I would use but probably not think of on my own:

- “providing fun without working at it!”
- “year-round social calendar.”
- “makes exercise a fun and enjoyable social event.”
- “less emphasis on “going for the burn” and more on having fun.”

The **Toronto Salsa Dance website**: <https://torontodancesalsa.ca/>, uses current and less formal wording, creating a welcoming and reassuring message to the non-dancer. The first message you’ll see, reads: “*This will be the best hour of your week. Where every class is a party. Let loose. Meet new people. Find where you #belong.*” The graphics and pictures are engaging and convey happiness. Their website is a great example of a 24/7 marketing brochure. Again, great for thought starters and inspiration. The website also has a blog, and the one titled “How Bachata Dancing Can Help With Loneliness” (see next article) could easily be written about our dance activity. It’s probably one of the most valuable benefits we have but don’t write about.

IMPORTANT NOTE: I’m not encouraging plagiarism (ie. “to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one’s own” – *Merriam Webster Dictionary*). But I am encouraging online research for ideas and thought starters to help create your own effective promotional materials. There’s a wealth of great information out there and with the internet, it’s literally at our fingertips.

Square Dance Club Cuts A Rug in Pittsford

(Issue 2022-5) - by Mat Clouser, The Brandon Reporter, Pittsford, New York

Editor's Note: *The following newspaper article is a good example of what to include in a submission, and parts of this article could be reused "as is". Articles are free advertising and an easy way to create awareness we exist.*

PITTSFORD — Following the Spanish flu pandemic in 1918, the world saw social dancing take off as people Charleston-ed, Shimmied, and Fox Trotted their way back into each other's lives.

Lauren Norford, one of the organizers for the Cast Off 8's Square Dance Club, says she hopes the same thing will happen following the COVID-19 pandemic. "Contemporary square dance is a great way to be active, meet new people, and get back into a lively lifestyle after these many months of restricted activity," she said following one of the group's recent free sessions at the Lothrop School in Pittsford.

The Club, which meets Wednesday nights at 7 p.m. from September through April, hosts a few free meetings—the last of which is Sept. 28 and comes with an ice cream social—each year that are open to dancers of all stripes and levels of experience. Couples are welcomed, but so are individuals or groups of all sizes.



"In addition to our 'new dancer' classes," said Norford, "we hold seven to eight dances for dancers who can dance at the Mainstream level, meaning they have completed the classes and learned about 68 square dance movements or 'calls' such as allemande left, ladies chain, right and left grande."

"The m Photo by Mat Clouser ave holiday themes and have a party atmosphere," she continued. "There are door prizes, refreshments, and

often a 50/50 or basket raffle. For these theme-based dances [we] often hire a caller from outside the area, so that dancers gain experience dancing to other callers."

Norford also says the club members are close, regularly celebrating birthdays and anniversaries. "When members are sick or experiencing hardship, club members pull together to support that person," she said. "So, members are a community that in some ways goes beyond just the physical and social aspects of dancing."

Many dancers have found a camaraderie in the square dancing community. One thing club members say that many don't know is that modern square dancing is misunderstood. People often think back to barn dances or elementary school square dancing, but things are done differently today.

The caller makes up calls as he goes along, and the dancers have to listen and follow the calls—the dance isn't memorized," said Norford. "In that way, it's fun because the dancer never knows what the caller will call next—it's like being in a walking puzzle. For folks who like a mental challenge, square dancing is awesome; it keeps you thinking and figuring out how to carry out the calls as a team," added Northrop. "The music is also contemporary and is really fun to dance to. The caller, Peter Tobin, picks songs that are accessible to dancers but have a great beat."

"New and interested dancers can still come to try it out for free on Wednesday, Sept. 28," she continued. "This will be the first night of the class for this year. Dancers can try it for one night or sign up in 8-10 week blocks for a discount (the full fee is \$7)."

Five Ways to Build Fun, Fitness and Friendship into your Fall Routine

(Issue 2022-4) Source: Kelowna Capital News, September 4, 2017

Editor's Note: Human interest news articles can be submitted to local papers at no cost. And don't think you have to write them from scratch. Here's an example which could easily be adapted to your club's situation, just in time for a Fall start-up. Draw attention to your ad with a photo showing happy people dancing.

Step and spin to your new favourite activity with free Westsyde Squares dance intro Sept. 13.

Fun, fitness and friendship – does a new activity get any better than that?

Celebrating 60 years as a club, the Westsyde Squares host a free introductory square dance session September 13 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the Westbank United Church Hall. *"We teach new dancers every September. Come try it for free, then we hope we'll see you back Sept. 20 when the 12-week fall session starts,"* says club president Lynda Bjalek. A second session builds on the basics from January to April. *"After that, they'll be able to dance anywhere!"*

- 1. GET FIT WHILE HAVING FUN** - The science is simple: If we want to move well, we have to move. Sedentary living can lead to a whole host of health problems, from chronic disease to difficulty with daily tasks like walking or climbing stairs. Despite this, Statistics Canada reports that just over 2 in 10 adults meet the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines recommending 150 minutes of accumulated weekly activity. Square dancing gets you off the couch and enjoying a low-impact cardio activity that engages the entire body, notes Lynda, who at one event counted 40,000 steps danced!
- 2. FRIENDSHIP** – Isolation can be one of the biggest challenges for adults of all ages. Whether through an "empty nest," moving to a new community, loss of a spouse, or retirement, life changes can make meeting new friends and building community connections challenging. The Westsyde Squares have a solution for that, welcoming both singles and couples, notes member Mary Potter.
- 3. FUN FOR ALL AGES** – Square dancing attracts enthusiasts of all ages, from competitive teens to seniors staying active with friends. And forget a playlist full of Red River Valley – today's dance music includes Broadway favourites, modern pop songs and more, plus energetic calling by 26-year-old musician Dustin McGifford. *"I've been dancing for 30 years. When I worked it was my stress release and now it's just a way to have fun,"* Lynda says.
- 4. NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED** – Mary danced as a teen and enjoyed returning to the social activity, but dance experience is not required. *"It's very accessible. You don't have to know how to dance to do this, you just need to be able to move to the music. There's also individualization with it too – and you don't need to wear a crinoline and a flared skirt if you don't want to."*
- 5. TRAVEL** – If travel appeals, there's lots of opportunity. *"We travel together to other club dances, we camp and have outdoor events in the summer,"* says Lynda, noting the group has welcomed callers and dancers from Japan, Saudi Arabia, Germany, Australia and beyond. Of course, if you prefer to do-si-do closer to home, that's great too!



(Photo from Intro Dance, 2022 in Strathmore.)

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The cost for new dancers is \$120 for 12 sessions between September 20 and December 13. All you need is comfortable clothing and non-marking shoes. Learn more at westsyde.squaredance.bc.ca.

Writing A News Release

(Issue 2015-5) *Recently I came across an article from CALLERLAB's book "The Modern Square Dance Image" (1978!) about writing a news release. The information is still relevant today.*

- Five points are important to a good news release: WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE and WHY. If possible a sixth, HOW, should be included.
- It is important to get all these points in the first sentence or two, whether you're writing for newspapers or broadcasting. These first sentences are called the "lead". A good lead captures the attention of a reader or listener and makes him want to know more about your club's activity or project.
- Now go into the details of your story. Each succeeding paragraph should be of *declining* importance. Professionals call this writing technique the "inverted pyramid". It permits an editor to pick up the important facts of your story in the first few lines. Then, if he does not have space or time to use the whole release he can cut it from the bottom, where least important details are given. This is true of both print and broadcast material."
- Use short words. Write short sentences, short paragraphs. Two sentences make a good paragraph in a news release.
- Always give exact date in a news release: "June 10" rather than "next Thursday" or "tomorrow". Specify "October", not "next month."
- List the address as well as the name of a meeting place. Remember, you are writing for people who do not know.
- Never use a word in a news release that you would not use in everyday conversation. Never use a ten cent word if you can think of a good five cent one.

Seven Reasons To Try Square Dancing in 2019

(Issue 2022-3) – by Janice Cha, President of Glenview Square Dance Club

In a time when people find connecting with others a challenge, square dance could be the answer. It has made a comeback in a more vital format than ever.

Here's seven reasons why learning to square dance might be the unexpected path to new friends and adventures.

1. **Brings people together:** Square dance (SD) is social networking IRL (in real life). Beginning SD lessons -- given on Tuesday evenings -- offer the time to get to know fellow dancers and become friends.
2. **Brain-building:** Teamwork with other dancers in your square will keep your mind sharp, focused and challenged – no matter your age.
3. **Like a game:** SD is Simon Says for adults. It's Sudoku for your feet. It's puzzle-solving on the fly with a team of people working together.
4. **Good for step-counters:** In one evening of square dancing, you might walk three to five miles. Moderate, low-impact heart-healthy movement.
5. **Fine for "two left feet" folks:** It's walking in time to music. As long as you know your right from your left, you don't need to be a fancy stepper to win at square dance.
6. **All kinds of music:** You will dance to just about any song with a good beat and brisk pace, including tunes by the Beatles, Adele, Garth Brooks, Lady Gaga, Pink, Pit Bull, and more.
7. **Inclusive:** No need for a partner in today's square dance. You'll find plenty of experienced dancers ready to dance with you.



As mentioned, [Glenview Squares](#) is offering Beginning SD lessons on Tuesday evenings. There is still time to join in, but hurry! Come Tuesday, Sept 10, at 7 pm, on the second floor of the [Glenview Park Center, 2400 Chestnut, Glenview](#). Look for the Square Dance check-in table at the top of the stairs. Questions? Contact Janice, janice@glenviewsquares.org.

Nine Reasons Why Listicles Work - And Why You Should Write Them!

(Issue 2022-3) - Excerpt from Blog Author Mason Sabre, The Partnered Pen, June 18, 2021

I've been an online content creator for a decade now. I've written everything from articles on here, on my blog, to novels and more. I've learnt a lot in that time, though I by no means claim to be an expert. However, I do claim to have experience. **It is all a learning curve, and one of those things I've seen online is listicles.**

Listicles are popular. We like to read them, and I have 9 reasons why that is and why you should create them if you're an online creator.



- 1. They're quick to read.** Did you know that 43% of people skim read the articles they open? A listicle is much easier to read and more than likely to be read more because you're not facing your reader with huge chunks of text.
- 2. They pique our interest.** They catch our interest. Most listicles appeal to something we need. They hold the promise of solving problems easily, and the ones that get the most action, are those who appear to solve the most common problems.
- 3. Our brains like lists.** Lists make things feel organised. It's why we like to-do lists so much and why we have the rise in the bullet journal world. If we have a list of things, we can see an end. Our brains like that.
- 4. They're easy to read and digest.** Lists make information easier to digest. We can run them off, check them, and understand them. The way they're organised just makes sense to us.
- 5. They're easy to come back to.** It is a lot to do with that block mentioned above of text versus a list of points. If you lose your way in a clunky block of text, it's going to be far more difficult to get back on track than if you're just picking back up at point 3.
- 6. They stand out.** There is something with numbers in titles that make articles stand out to us. It has a lot to do with the preciseness of an article title. With a listicle title, the reader knows what they're about to invest in. They know there will be X number of points to read. So the upfront reading investment is already known.
- 7. Minimal effort.** Listicles become popular because they don't require a lot of effort to read. Lists are short and sweet.
- 8. They help us remember.** In 1956, psychologist, Miller, hypothesised that we remember around 7 items, plus or minus two. This makes it easy for us to remember lists and why they are so appealing.
- 9. They're easy to write.** Depending on how you write and how you structure your work, lists are easy to write. To write them, you, or at least I, sit and write out a list of all the points I can think of. Then, I delete the ones I don't like and expand on those that make sense. This is because it's such an easy structure to follow.

A little fun fact for you, did you know that odd-numbered listicles perform better than even-numbered? They perform up to 20% better than those articles with an even count. Numerologists suggest it could be that people often have a favourite number, and more often than not, that number is odd. As well as that, the number seven is cited as being the most common number that comes to mind when someone is asked to pick a number between one and ten.

Conversely, others argue odd-numbered lists are easier to remember because of their nature. They're odd, so they stand out. Even numbers are nice, rounded and this makes them dull. To honour that, this article has 9 points instead of a nice even 10.

News Articles Create Awareness

(Issue 2018-6) - *by Claudia Littlefair, Editor*

Creating awareness that our activity exists is the first step in marketing. One of the main reasons why people have stopped joining our activity is that they don't know about us. **The sad thing is we have created this problem ourselves by relying on word-of-mouth to fill our classes.** We've cut back on all the methods that "don't work" but that do create awareness - demos, parades, hanging posters, writing regular news articles, signage, and by not utilizing on-line advertising (free community calendar postings, digital ads, advertorials).

In the eyes of the general public we don't exist! And if we do catch someone's interest, they usually have a preconceived idea – and not a nice one - about our activity.

Try something new! **Use news articles throughout the dance season that will keep your club in front of the eyes of your community.** Next season, when you try to recruit dancers from your area, they might have the right idea of who you are and what you do.

Betsy Gotta, a well-known Caller, spoke about changing people's perception of square dancing in her key note address at a "Dancers Recruiting Educating and Motivating" seminar in New Jersey this year. She said:

"You and I know that square dancers are regular people who have held a variety of jobs, have different levels of education and enjoy other "normal" pastimes in addition to square dancing. Recently, clubs have relaxed dress codes and different callers use a variety of music. The public, however, has not yet modified their perceptions."

*"... Some years ago, a member of a North New Jersey Square Dance Association club wrote a human interest story about square dancing. He quoted square dancers about how much they enjoyed square dancing. **Each quote included the dancer's name, age and occupation.** There was a good cross-section of dancers quoted. That fall several clubs in the Northern New Jersey area had more people come to classes to try the square dancing activity than in past years. **I believe that the article changed the perceptions of square dancers from a bunch of like-minded blue collar people pretending to be hillbillies to a varied group of individuals enjoying a stimulating hobby.** These new dancers found someone that seemed like them who square danced, so they felt that they might enjoy square dancing."*

Not sure what to write? Go to the Canadian Square & Round Dance Society's Pinterest account and check out the "Press – Square Dancing" board with 418 news articles. <https://www.pinterest.ca/canadiansquarearea/>. It's a good place to get ideas and wording for your own articles.

Invite a reporter to come to your club and write about the experience. We had one young reporter write a review that ended with, *"This is not just an evening to learn a new dance. When you witness the comradery, respect and acceptance of age difference and watch new bonds being formed, hear so much laughter and see genuine joy in people's faces as they swing their partners, dosey do and sashay, you can't help but walk away feeling as though you've been privy to something special."*

We know we have something special to offer to those fortunate enough to walk through our doors. Let's let others in on our secret. Use news articles throughout the dance season to create awareness. Like the lyrics in 'Signs' by the Five Man Electrical Band says, we need to let people know that we're "alive and doing fine."

Seeking Free Publicity in the Square & Round Dance Activity

(Issue 2018-6) - Excerpt from Presentation from SQUAREUPB.C., the marketing initiative of the B.C. Square and Round Dance Federation - by Brian Elmer April, 2013

The Press Release

One of the best ways to reach a mass audience is by seeking free publicity in the press. In this case, though, we recommend a different approach than inviting a reporter from the media to cover an event.

Many times, things are left up to a visiting reporter, on the rare occasion that they come. They'll often prefer to focus on a human interest aspect that might not be favourable to our image and probably won't tell of the benefits of our dance form that you'd like to see.

The Central Okanagan region has seen exceptional, favourable response from both print and online media upon submission of ready-to-print press releases with accompanying photos. **The online media outlets are generally considered "community internet portals"** and they serve a city with news and events information and much more, like an electronic newspaper.



The method that has been followed is to write press releases in the style of a press reporter and submit them unsolicited, strictly by e-mail. A little research into your local media web sites should reveal the e-mail addresses of their editors. The topics have varied from detailing a club event to the special activities of dancers.

The distribution via e-mail is the easy part. Taking photos, gathering information about an event and writing the release is the hard part.

In seeking free publicity, we have little control over what the media editor will actually publish, if anything. You cannot expect 100 per cent success with every press release but persistence can pay off. Keep submitting! Dance news is "soft news" and your story might get "bumped" by some serious hard news.

If you wish, you can contact the various editors of your local print and electronic media sources and ask about their preferences regarding the submission of press releases. It can't hurt to establish a good relationship with the press.

If submitting to a newspaper, leave it to the editor to select where to place your story. They'll gauge whether it's suitable for the "About Town" section, the "Travel" section, etc. You might even discover your material on the front page!

An important thing is to know exactly what geographic area each media outlet serves. In the case of newspapers, where do they distribute? Again, those that are "community focused" will be disinterested in content that doesn't relate. An exception could be persons from the community going somewhere, in which case the story is about them and their experiences. Also, your dance group wants to be seen in media where there's reasonable chance that the readers/viewers can interact with you. **Concentrate on the media that serves the immediate community where the dance club operates and its members live.**

Photo Submission

A selection of three to six photographs are generally attached to each e-mail press release. Each photo has a suggested caption, naming the persons pictured and/or detailing what's happening in each shot. You want your photos to relate to the subject matter of the press release.



Providing the media outlets with several photos makes it less likely that they'll all publish the same picture. In the case of competing newspapers, they want to look a little different from each other.

Sometimes it's a "photo release" that is furnished to the media. That is valuable to maintain awareness in picture form where a full written press release is not appropriate. Again, the photos should be sent with suggested captions.

Resolution of Photographs: Newspapers need higher resolution photographs than online media. Photos for newspapers are usually requested at 300 dots-per-inch. A photo file-size of 1 megabyte or larger should ensure that. Pictures to be seen online can be furnished in low resolution (100 kilobytes or less). A simple approach is to issue the photos in high resolution and let those who don't need them that way make the appropriate adjustments.

Editor's Note: So now it's time to put into practice some of these tips and ideas for news articles.

Below is an article that took me more than 2 hours to write about our first of two free "Dance & Dessert" nights. I've submitted it to our town's weekly newspaper and hopefully there's room in the next issue to publish it. We had six squares of dancers including 22 people who were dancing for the first time.

THIS IS NOT YOUR COUNTRY HOEDOWN

Forget country hoedowns and fiddle music – today's square dancing has evolved! "We dance to anything that has a strong beat. It could be rock, pop, salsa, classical, techno, country, blues – you name it, we've probably danced to it", says dance instructor and square dance caller Dave Littlefair.

Wheatland Whirlers Square Dance Club held its' first of two free 'Dance & Dessert' nights for the public at Westmount School on Wednesday, September 19th. People from 8 years to 80 experienced the fun and challenge of today's square dancing. "It's a blast!" said Marian Ritchie. "Everyone is so friendly, the dancing's fun and the music is great! We'll be coming back again next week!"



The music is not the only thing that is different. "The dress has changed too." indicates Littlefair. "There are still a few who prefer the traditional outfits, but most dancers dress in whatever they are comfortable wearing."

Littlefair explains that the type of square dancing taught is called Modern Western Square Dance (MWSD) which evolved from the simpler form of traditional square dancing. In MWSD dancers are taught a series of 68 dance steps known as calls. These calls can be "walked" to the beat of the music and unlike ballroom dancing, there's no fancy footwork or lead/follow partner. It's the caller's job to create the dance by putting these calls together in whatever order he or she chooses. It's the dancers' job to carry out the calls successfully as a team, in groups of eight dancers.

"Invariably, calls are missed or done incorrectly," says Littlefair, "which results in a lot of laughing as the team tries to find the fastest way to get back to dancing and ready to do the next call. Because we need to work together as a group, it's easy to meet and get to know each other. By the end of the evening, you've usually danced with everyone in the room."

Sue Henderson, decided to try square dancing two years ago when she was looking for a way to blend her love for music with a physical activity that wouldn't hurt her injured shoulder. She's been hooked ever since. "Square dancing is a wonderful, rewarding and fun type of dance," she says. "It is inexpensive and you do not need a partner. The square dance community is very friendly and welcoming. It's all about having fun, meeting new people and having a great workout to upbeat music."

Singles or couples are welcome to come to Westmount School gym at 7pm, any Wednesday during the dance season from October to April. Cost is \$6/person and the first time is free. Dress is casual but it's important to wear comfortable indoor shoes. For more information go to

www.strathmoresquaredance.com or email strathmoresquaredance@gmail.com.

A Lesson in Marketing

(Issue 2017-2) *In the previous Alberta Chatter issue, a newspaper ad was featured in the article titled "B.C.'s Westsyde Squares Increase by 29 Dancers in One Year!" The newsletter was posted on the CSRDS Pinterest Board titled "Newsletters", and Cornwall's club publicity director inquired if she could use the "poster". Contact was made with Brian Elmer, Chairperson of SQUAREUP B.C. (a marketing initiative of the B.C. Square & Round Dance Federation). Below are excerpts from Brian's email response, containing a lot of practical marketing tips that could be of benefit to all of us in our promotion efforts.*

I received an inquiry from you about accessing an advertisement for square dancing that originated in West Kelowna, BC, in the Okanagan Valley. My apologies for this delayed response but it has taken some research to identify the photo source because the ad was created several years back.

The ad has never been a poster but is actually a "display ad" set up by a local commercial newspaper as part of a paid campaign exceeding \$1,000 in value. It was never furnished without the local lesson information, so we don't have a version where that section is blank and could be used by other clubs.

The photograph of a younger couple in a dance pose and looking at the camera is a professional copywritten photo owned by iStock. That's an online international micro stock photography provider based in Calgary. They furnish some photos online royalty free but the best ones tend to be at a cost. They sell their photos on a "credit" system and the one of the dancing couple costs 3 credits or \$36 CAN. See it online at: <http://www.istockphoto.com/.../happy-couple-enjoying-a-dance->. There are many other similar photos for sale by iStock, including older and younger demographics. I can send you my list if it interests you.

The B.C. Square & Round Dance Federation acquired the rights to use the photo as part of the graphics involved in making a pull-up promotional screen years ago. The "Dance Dance Dance" wording in the background was created by the designer of the screen, Papyrus Printing in Prince George, BC. When the newspaper ad was created for a member club of the B.C. Federation, the two graphics were again combined by the newspaper's graphics & layout department and married with the text for the advertisement. You could purchase the photo from iStock under the "Society" and have a print shop recreate the ad leaving a blank space for the local club information. I'll attach the "Dance" wording in PDF-format which is actually only the upper part of the white background behind the dancers. The print shop has to blend it.

Note that this ad involved a lot of thought and skillful understanding of "market segmentation:"

- The heading promises "a great dance experience" and offers a "free session".
- The start time of the instruction is 6 pm which is much more reasonable for working people who don't want recreational activities that run late into the evening (some employees today begin work at 6 am).
- The photo depicts a couple to which the target Baby Boomer demographic, now aged 53 to 71, relates (the Boomers see themselves as up to 20 years younger than they really are). Real people looking like they're enjoying themselves beats out any graphic or artistic rendering. Learn more about demographics from the Callerlab research of years ago. Refer to: <http://www.squaredance.bc.ca/jim-hensley-marketing-seminar>.
- The "Today's Square Dancing" heading moves away from more tired words to imply a current activity.
- The bulleted points stress fun, fitness, socialization, ease of learning and singles being welcome along with casual attire. The club placing the advertising is privileged to have a young instructor (aged 25).



- The instructional period shown of 12 sessions is inspired by the condensed "West Coast Square Dance Program" developed in British Columbia back in 2012. 25 to 30 two-hour sessions to learn the Mainstream program doesn't sell anymore. Refer to:
<http://www.westcoastsquaredance.com/index.html>. Callerlab has since developed the Condensed Teaching Method Program of 12 sessions.
- There's a "call-to-action" encouraging interested readers to phone or e-mail to say that they want to join the fun.
- The closing portion of the ad brings reader's attention to the 10-minute promotional video produced for the B.C. Federation called "Dancing Keeps You Young" (www.DancingKeepsYouYoung.ca) and the web page title for the host club is promotional (www.WestsideDanceFun.info) to send readers to an easy-to-remember club web page that's tailored to new dancer prospects
- Also, there was a desire to create a media synergy by having the photo and titling on the pull-up screen be similar to that used in the newspaper advertising.
- Further to media synergy, under the B.C. Federation's SQUAREUPB.C. marketing initiative, we've been running paid advertising on Facebook that utilizes the same dancing couple photo but largely as a mid-shot, picturing them from the waist up. The "landing page" to which interested persons are sent if the ad interests them is:
www.SquareDanceFun.info

Article Marketing

(Issue 2018-5) - **Excerpt From CALLERLAB'S Square Dance Marketing Plan**

Writing and publishing articles is a great way to tell the story about square dancing, and it will establish you as an expert on the topic. This can be done in a simple way, or a sophisticated way.

In Section 17 Case Studies/Repeatable Success (Square Dance Marketing Plan) there is a story about how the Morrison Grand Squares wrote articles, really press releases, monthly and mailed or emailed them to media outlets. That resulted in occasional stories in small town newspapers, interviews, discussion on small town radio stations, which in turn **raised the awareness of the club and their activities with the public**. In turn, that made businesses more receptive to having exhibitions, and residents more likely to consider square dancing!

When you write an article, it needs to be interesting and provide useful information. It also needs to include contact information and **should always lure people to your website** or blog to get more information.

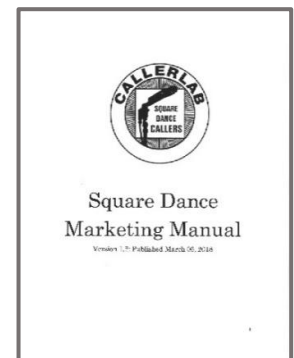
You can also publish your article in a variety of article directories. There are thousands of article directories out there, and many of them are free! Sign up as an author for one or several of these free article directories. To do this you'll need to choose an article marketing site, visit the site and create your profile. A Google search will show you the top sites.

To publish your article(s) you'll simply click on the "Submit an Article" and follow the online instructions.

The more articles you write and publish, the more exposure you will get, which will drive more traffic to your blog, your website, etc. The articles you write will stay out there, so they will work for you for a long period of time.

Online Press Release Campaigns

Just as there are free article directories to publish your articles, there are free online press release sites to publish your press releases. These sites are a resource media companies use to research topics they plan to write or report on. Distributing press releases does the same as article marketing, it establishes you as an expert on the topic. In many cases, these distribution sites will send your press release on to other press release sites.



For a copy of manual go to
<http://callerlabknowledge.org/?p=1736>

F. MEDIA - OTHER

Talking Points for Interviews

(Issue 2019-7) - by Eric Henerlau, Caller, Corte Madera, California

Sometimes square dancers and callers get the opportunity to be interviewed about our activity. The interviews could be published in a newspaper, radio or TV. They all have something in common: the reporters want to share a story that they think their audience will enjoy. When these interview occasions arise, there is a great opportunity to promote square dancing!

Many times we have seen interviews and stories that present square dancing in less favorable light. While there is nothing wrong with this, think about what we COULD say about square dancing that makes it exciting and would want people to check it out! Here are some points to consider when you are asked to talk to a reporter about square dancing:

- 1. Emphasize the FUN that you enjoy in the activity.** Think about the parts of square dancing that make you come back, week after week. Smile and show enthusiasm! The reporters will pick up on it and note it in the article.
- 2. Talk about the friends you have made,** especially if you have found a spouse or long-term partner through square dancing. If appropriate, talk about the various professions of members of your club.
- 3. If your club does other activities outside of dancing, mention those.** People who read/listen to the interview may be looking for all kinds of fun things to do.
- 4. Focus on the newer dancers and the joy they feel.** If you've been dancing for several years, sometimes looking at the beginners can help us remember the initial excitement we felt when we started.
- 5. Look forward to the future.** Don't dwell on the past. We all have stories about how big the dances used to be and how many clubs there were. Someone unfamiliar with our activity might interpret those comments in a negative light and be less willing to try out dancing.
- 6. If the reporter leads with a question that seems the answer wouldn't give square dancing a good image,** think about how you can answer the question truthfully, and then **give follow-up information on how it's better now.**



The above are just suggestions. You certainly can speak freely about anything. But the opportunity to get interviewed is infrequent, and if you share the same passion about the activity we do, you can help everyone!

About the Author: *Calling since 1980, Eric has taught **thousands** of beginners to square dance. Currently calling for Plus and Advanced clubs in the San Francisco bay area, Eric emphasizes inclusion for everyone in the activity. A wide variety of music and unusual choreography are cornerstones of his program. Eric is recognized throughout the country as one of the premier Square Dance callers and teachers.*



The Interview

(Issue 2018-3) - CALLERLAB Square Dance Marketing Plan, Caller Mike Hogan

Gaining media coverage of square dancing is a very valuable tool we can use to enhance the public's opinion of our activity. **The more we can get this kind of positive exposure, the more open to the idea of participating the public will be.** That in turn will make recruiting efforts more effective. You should always be prepared to handle an interview if one happens.

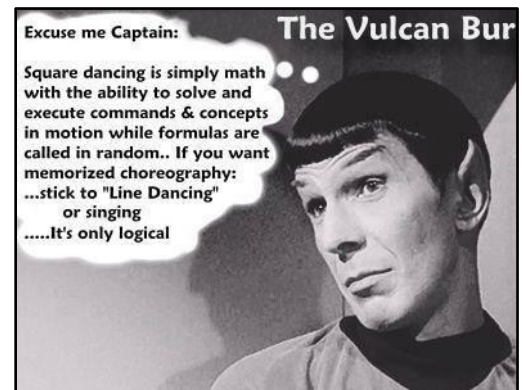
If they are coming to your dance, contact them and find out what they want. Do they want to just come to the dance? Are they going to write an article on the experience? If so, what information can you provide them with? What will the article be themed on? If it's health, be sure you have plenty of health facts to share with them. If it's about entertainment, ask if they want to meet with the caller before or after the dance and set that up.

Do Say

- Square dancing has modernized with new music and new dress codes.
- Square dancing is a fun social activity with many added benefits.
- Square dancing offers great low impact physical exercise. Dancer will walk 5,000 to 7,000 steps in a single evening of dance, burning over 300 calories, all of which is lost on them because they are having too much fun.
- Square dancing strengthens mental skills and reduces stress. Dancers must listen and react to the commands given by the caller which keeps them focused and unable to worry about their daily lives. Again, all of this is lost on the dancer because they are having too much fun.
- The (fill in name of District) is made up of (fill in number) square dance clubs and (fill in number) round dance clubs.

Do Not Say

- Do not refer to the declining population of square dancers.
- Do not refer to the increasing average age of square dancers.
- Do not refer to the health benefits helping seniors.
- Do not make any comments that infer that square dancing is for seniors.
- Do not mention alcohol.



Be aware of how you or the interviewee looks for the interview. A picture is worth a thousand words. This is show business now. This is supposed to be a fun, healthy activity for folks of all ages. If you put a 78-year-old overweight frowning woman with white hair in a checkered square dance dress with full petticoat on screen, you'll never sell the idea that we've modernized, that this is fun, or that this is for folks of all ages.

Whether the interview is live or for an article to be produced later, keep in mind that you do not have control over what is asked or what is written. **Control what you can control!** You can introduce the interviewer to dancers who are possibly younger, or have a great story like marrying someone they met at a square dance. You can provide photos to the interviewer ahead of time. Work ahead of time with the caller to be sure they are using a good mix of music at the event.

A Local Newspaper Reporter Just Showed Up

(Issue 2017-6) - by Mike Hogan, CALLERLAB Convention 2015

Since you didn't have a chance to ask them ahead of time what they want to report on or to feed them information about the activity ahead of time, do it now! Position yourself as someone who can help them get the information they want to write about. Introduce them to the caller. Introduce them to a club member who would be a good spokesperson for the club and the activity – in other words, someone who visually represents what we want to portray, and who knows the benefits of the activity that they could then provide to the interviewer, even if they don't ask.

Generally, here are some ideas about what to say:

- **Always start and end with FUN.** The single most desired benefit of square dancing is the fun and joy that dancers experience. Smile. Be enthusiastic. Reporters notice this.
- **Share stories about the lifelong friendships** you've developed, or share a story of dancers who married someone they met square dancing.
- **Share stories about your travels and square dancing** where you travel. Travel is fun. Square dancing is fun. A story that mixes both is a great story.
- **Talk about the members in your club** and what they do for a living if it's appropriate. If there is someone in your club who does something unique, like a military officer, or a doctor, or an engineer, these are professions that buck the image of dancers only being pig farmers. (Nothing wrong with pig farmers by the way).
- **Talk about the modernization of square dancing**, that music is now played from laptops and the music is from all genres of music. Give examples.
- **Talk about the underlying health benefits** of square dancing.
- If you're asked how long it takes to learn, here's a great answer I stole from Lanny Weakland: "Three lessons. After three lessons it's either not for you, or you'll love it so much I can't keep you away."
- **Talk about the changing dress code.** Tell them the traditional square dance dress is still the standard, but today many dancers come in jeans, and we welcome that.

Some reporters just have to have the dirt! If it bleeds it leads. So you'll get questions that are fishing for negative stories, like "Isn't square dancing a dying art?" or, "Why aren't there any young people at your dances?" Clearly these are tough questions to answer, and issues we are dealing with, so answer these type of questions truthfully then follow up with information on how we're improving on these issues.

Here are a few things not to say:

- Do not make reference to the declining population of square dancers.
- Do not make reference to the increasing average age of square dancers.
- Do not make reference to the health benefits helping seniors.
- Do not make any comments that infer that square dancing is for seniors.
- Do not mention alcohol.

Gaining media coverage of square dancing is a very valuable tool we can use to enhance the public's opinion of our activity. The more we can get this kind of positive exposure, the more open the general public will be to participating. That in turn will make recruiting efforts more effective. You should always be prepared to handle an interview if one happens. Better yet, why not proactively seek media coverage. I hope the ideas about will help you in that endeavour.

How To Photograph A Contra Dance

(Issue 2017-3) *Doug Plummer of Seattle, WA, is well known in the contra dance community nationwide as that guy who takes all the dance photos and videos and puts them all over Facebook and in a calendar. Since 2012 he has self-published the Contradance Calendar, a premium wall calendar that captures the best contra dance moments from around the country. "How to Photograph a Contra Dance" was published in the CDSS News (Country Dance and Song Society, www.cdss.org), Fall 2014; and is used by permission.*



*South Coast Folk Society contra dance, Green Acres Grange Hall, Coos Bay, OR, 2014
(Doug Plummer)*

There is no such thing as a photograph of a contra dance. The only thing we can capture is a moment in a dance. So the first thing is to identify that: a moment that might be captured.

Actually, let's back up. The first thing is to identify how we feel at a given moment. When we dance, we go through a series of fleeting emotions. There's the cordial greeting of a hands four. There's the ramp-up anticipation of a balance. The connection of an allemande. The dramatic feeling of a wall of you convening and receding in a great long line. The delight of a new neighbor. The alarming stare down contest of a gypsy. The consummation of a

lovely, long swing with your beloved partner, until you dump her for the next dance.

When you watch a dance, those moments and feelings have physical expressions. There are bodies in contact and in connection that you can isolate and capture. That is the reason to have a camera at a dance—to more deeply connect with those significant, fleeting moments full of feeling, and to maybe stop and hold one.

So, given that, what do you do to take a photograph that holds all that ambition? The first trick is to watch for just a single moment that you emotionally connect with. Shoot only that. Thirty-two beats later, it comes around again. Keep whacking away. How you feel inside is your signal that you might be getting closer.

Here is maybe the most important advice to becoming a better photographer. Don't stare at the back of your camera at what you just did. Don't pay any attention to the results of your shooting. It only takes you away from the moment. All that investment in getting connected with the dance, with the dancers, with the beat and rhythm and the energy surrounding and carrying you away—look at the screen for longer than a second and you've left the room. It takes great effort to reenter. Edit when you get home.

Another tip: get close. Get within elbow dodging range. Make people know you're there. Be engaged with them. If someone doesn't want you there, you'll feel it and you can adjust. But that rarely happens. Don't be a jerk, but don't feel you have to be a wallflower in order not to be one. Everyone notices the person trying to photograph unobtrusively. If you're in the middle, you disappear.

The first thing I tell my workshop students is, go forth and fail. You have great aspirations to capture the perfect moment, and mostly you won't. That's part and parcel of the creative process. You flail and you fail again and again, and then, you get a glimmer of something that's starting to work, and you chase that and see if you can do it again. It doesn't matter a whit what kind of camera you use. The process of creative growth doesn't care.



Contra dance, Bay Area CDS's American Week, Jones Gulch YMCA, La Honda, CA, 2014 (Doug Plummer)



*Wasatch Wiggle, Salt Lake City, UT, 2013
(Doug Plummer)*

Photography, especially in the digital age, is an act of great profligacy. That's not to say that you shoot indiscriminately and without intention. Just the opposite. It takes a great deal of attention and effort to stay deeply connected with the moment, and from that connection comes the urge to click the shutter. It might happen a lot of times in a few seconds, particularly in the complex, dynamic environment of a contra dance hall, as a feeling hits. I rarely come away from an evening of photographing a dance with fewer than two or three hundred exposures. And I don't sit out that many dances.

And when you do sit at your computer that night, posting on Facebook? Don't post the two dozen variations of a single move that are pretty good. Post only the best one. The fewer shots you post,

the better photographer people think you are. And it indeed makes you a better photographer.

Dance Signage

(Issue 2018-4) - Excerpts from CALLERLAB Square Dance Marketing Plan, 2018

SIGNAGE AT THE DANCE HALL

Create a large banner that can be hung on the side of your dance hall facing the street, or tied to stakes in the ground outside your hall facing the street. How many dances, lessons and beginner events are held in any week across the Country? How many total cars pass these halls on the street?

If every club and caller had a banner they could display by the street anytime they were holding an event, imagine how many impressions would be made on drivers and passengers in these passing vehicles. Always put the new logo and slogan on the banner. Possible messages might be:

- "Amazing 8's Dance Here Tonight!"
- "Learn to Square Dance Here Tonight!"
- "Square Dance Party Inside – Please Join Us!"

If your dance location has a marquee, ask to have phrases like these placed on the marquee. Ask your dance location if you can leave the banner up for a period. If so you may want to add more information on the banner.

SIGNAGE AWAY FROM DANCE HALL

Banners are more expensive to have made, so do some homework and find out where you might be able to hang banners. If you have members who own businesses, maybe you could hang them on their building facing the street. If your home is close to a busy street, perhaps you could hang one on your home. Maybe your backyard backs up to a busy street. If so, hang a banner on your fence. What you're looking for is real estate with traffic.

Once you know how many banners you can hang, get quality banners printed with messages that are not time sensitive. Always include logo, slogan and a website on your printed material. A few basic rules of print design include:

- Do not use more than three fonts – one Serif (fonts such as Times Roman with small "hooks" on the edges), one San Serif (like Arial or Helvetica), and one "headline" or "display" font such as a script or fancy font. Some experienced designers can get away with using more, but it is better to stick to three or less.
- Always make sure photos are facing into the page – a photo facing off the page draws the reader's eye away.
- Some "white space" is good, but make sure type sizes are big enough to read easily.

Signs Speak Volumes

(Issue 2015-7) - by Editor Claudia Littlefair

One of our chief marketing problems is that the majority of people do not know we exist! They believe that square dancing happened sometime in the past. CALLERLAB, the international association of callers, coined the phrase: **"Nobody's talking about it because nobody's talking about it!"** Most of our advertising takes place during early fall for 4 to 6 weeks. That means there is next to nothing about our recreation for 85% of the year.

Merv & Sandy Meyers, caller/cuer couple from Kamloops, have used their vehicles as "portable billboards" for the past two years. They have two sets of magnetic car door signs, so they can put them on whichever vehicle they are driving. When they purchased their van in 2014, they made the decision to put on some permanent advertising. Wherever they travel, people "read" their vehicles.



This fall they took the signs one step further. They put up a large banner on the front of the Community Centre. They put up a double-sided sandwich board sign in front of the building.



Their home happened to come with a ready-made, large signboard in the corner of their lot. The previous owner had built it to advertise his business, and left it behind when Merv and Sandy purchased the home. It was perfect for putting up another banner, especially since it faces a major road.

The result? 28 people came to their free dance, and 19 joined up for lessons. Each attendee filled out a survey about what influenced them to attend (some ticked more than one answer):

Community Calendar – 4
Demo at "The Bay" – 3
Newspaper Article – 8
Banner on Home Lot – 1

Friend Recommended – 12
Banner at Community Centre – 2
Own Web Search – 4
Van Decals – 1



ABOUT THE MEYERS



Sandy & Merv Meyer, caller & cuer couple for 'Thompson Valley Stars' club in Kamloops and Chase, BC, are very passionate about square & round dancing, having traveled as far south as Spokane, west to Hawaii and north to Fairbanks, Alaska to dance, call & cue. Merv started square dancing in 1982 and has been calling & teaching square dancing for 17 years in the Thompson/Shuswap region. Sandy started square dancing in 1978, dancing until 1986 when she took a 22 year break, happily returning in 2008.

Sandy loves cueing, and started this in 2009. She & Merv choreograph many of their own round dances. They are both enthusiastic about promoting square and round dancing and were presented the 'SILLERY AWARD' in 2014 by the BC Square & Round Dance Federation, 'In Honour & Recognition of Outstanding Service to the Square Dance Community'.

G. DEMOS & EVENTS

“No Experience Needed” Dances

(Issue 2024-2) - by Claudia Littlefair, Editor

Creating awareness in the community that our club exists is our number one marketing priority, **because people can't join a club they've never heard about.**

Regardless of how many posters are hung, signboards displayed, ads placed in print or on-line, public demos performed, open dances held, there are many people in Strathmore and area who have never heard of us. Or if they have, they think it's in the past, unaware that we are still operating. Sadly, I think that's the norm for any club in any community.

So, we need to constantly be looking for new ways to promote, on top of also doing ALL the other stuff we've been doing to promote. It's important to remember that every time someone in the public reads the words “square dancing” we have succeeded in creating awareness. That's our job – whether they join or not is up to them.

A few years ago, for several summers we held a Barn Dance with proceeds going to a local charity. This ensured that a different group of people would be made aware of who we are. The Calgary Mountain Fiddlers came out to provide the music – another drawing card. We sold watermelon, popcorn and other treats and everyone enjoyed dancing to live music. Some basic square dance calls were taught so that guests had a chance to try out square dancing. They also met the members of our club and made connections. It was a really fun way to attract a new group of people and to create awareness for our club.



This will be our third summer where we dance in our local park, every Wednesday during June, July and August. The first hour is a designated 'Intro Hour' so anyone who wants to try square dancing is welcome. We advertise the 'Intro



Hour' through magnet board signs, posters, Coffee News, online community calendars and FaceBook posts. Most weeks we have people from the park, or who've read our ads, or who are family/friends of our members come out to try. When people hear our music and see a group dancing in the pavilion they want to find out what's going on. It's a great way to create awareness for our club, and it's a bonus to our members who look forward to dancing outdoors.



Rich Sbardella is a caller from Connecticut whose specialties include Barn, Family and Community Dances. Each time people attend his dances, he and his wife, Lynn, have an opportunity to promote our activity. The following was posted on his FaceBook page, 'Rich Sbardella Dance Caller' on January 24, 2024:



"Friends, our Barn Dances are growing, and many folks are from local Square Dance Clubs. These events are excellent ways to introduce square dancing to family and friends, and they require no commitments. Many folks have moved from Barn Dancing to club dancing, and many continue to enjoy both the challenge of club dancing and the fast paced simplicity of a barn dance. Come join us and introduce your friends to the activity you love.

You probably know, we recently started a new Barn Dance series at the Powder Mill Barn in Enfield CT. This Saturday, January 27th 2024, is our second dance, and we are hoping to see some old friends, and to make some new ones. A "Barn Dance" is a simple dance evening with easy dances, anon

experience is required. WE will dance some dances in straight lines facing a partner, some in circles where we keep, or maybe change partners, some squares, and possibly a waltz.

Again, no experience is necessary to attend, and no partner is necessary. Teens and above are welcomed in this community dance, and you should be OK dancing with folks you do not know (Yet!). Admission is \$10 per person \$35 max per immediate family."

Brent Mawdsley (photo on right), caller in Surrey, BC does something similar with his 'First Friday of the Month' dances. Below is a post, dated December 23, 2023, from his FaceBook page "Square Dance with Brent: First Friday Modern Square Dance Party (Surrey/Delta)".



*"Thank you to everyone who attended our First Friday Modern Square Dance Party (Surrey/Delta) on December 1. We had another great turnout of over 100 people and enjoyed some different dance moves and Christmas music together. We also had a photo booth with props for some extra photo fun. The next [First Friday Modern Square Dance Party \(Surrey/Delta\)](#) will be held **Friday, January 5, 2024.***

*All dances will be at **Kennedy Hall - 8870 - 120 St., Surrey, BC, from 7 – 9pm** with doors open at 6:45pm.*



No previous dance experience is necessary at any of these events, and everyone is welcome, including couples, singles, and families (I suggest ages 8 and up).

I will use different music, dances, and a few different moves each time to provide variety for returning dancers. Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and best wishes for the New Year. – Brent"

So, this summer think of ways your club can create awareness in the community. Hold a free hotdog barbecue and dance, find a place to dance outdoors and put up signs saying who you are, enter a float in the local parade, organize a barn dance with a local music group. Be creative and create awareness that your club is alive and doing fine!

"I Knew You Were Going To Ask"

(Issue 2017-7) - **by Erin Byars, Cuer, California**

Ever spent an hour doing an exhibition or demonstration, then walked away feeling like you didn't really engage the audience? I mean, they thought it was a good show, but no one actually considered that they could be part of the wonderful world of square dancing. If you had walked among the spectators you would have heard them saying things like, "It looks pretty, but I could never do that!" But you know they can! So don't let people leave without answering those unasked questions.

You can work pro-actively by making short announcements during those few minutes when squares are re-forming. Besides being informative, it lets people know there is more dancing to come and keeps them from wandering away. We also, whenever possible, avoid using the words "lesson" or "class" as some people have adverse reactions to those terms.

Here are some sample scripts:

"I bet you worry about having two left feet! Well, if you can walk, you can square dance. It helps if you can walk to the beat of the music, but it's not required! Most of square dancing is knowing where to walk, and we can help with that. Just ask any of the folks you see up here."

"Most people think they need a partner to square dance, but that's not true! There are clubs just for single folks, also for teens and youth, and some just for couples. We also have handi-capable clubs. Something for everyone! In fact,

dancers, how many of you met your significant other square dancing? Raise your hands! Look how many of these dancers met their life's partner on the dance floor – isn't that great?"

"So, you think you can't take time for square dancing because you have youngsters at home? Well, we have something just for you! It's a family club, where moms, dads and kids can all learn to dance together. In fact, we are getting more and more grandmas and grandpas taking the grandkids square dancing every week! Would you like to spend more time with your kids, not less? And, unlike most sports, square dancing is not competitive – it's cooperative. Besides actual dancing, there is great interaction between kids and adults, helping one to mature and the others to stay young!"

"Did your doctor tell you that you needed more exercise? Have you considered walking but hesitated because it seemed so boring? How about walking to music with a bunch of fun people? Many doctors recommend square dancing, citing the measured, even pace of walking to the music – and you would be amazed just how many miles you can dance in one evening!"

"Lots of people tell me square dancing looks pretty, but they don't feel they could do it. Let me tell you, all of us were just like you once! In fact, dancers, how many of you have been dancing one year or less? Raise your hands! How many have been dancing five years? Ten? Twenty? More than twenty? And look, all these people are dancing together and having a wonderful time!"

These are just some suggestions to get you started. It is best to find someone who is great at speaking "off the cuff" to present this material. In fact, if you choose someone other than the caller, he or she can grab some water and breathe for a minute during these "answers"! **Get all the dancers, or even the spectators, involved in answering questions, interacting and smiling – especially smiling!**

About the Author

Erin has been teaching and cueing since 1975. Her cueing takes her all over California, with visits to Oregon, Nevada, Idaho, Colorado, New Jersey, Arizona, Washington and, in 2007, Alaska. She is known for her engaging, upbeat style, combining excellent timing with a cheerful voice and a lively wit. Starting her career while dancing with the Silhouettes, a teen round dance exhibition group based in Sacramento, she has combined those experiences with over 40 years of instructing to provide quality workshops that are also lots of fun.



Public Exhibitions

(Issue 2019-3) *Source: CALLERLAB Square Dance Marketing Manual*

An exhibition allows us to increase awareness of square dancing with the spectators. Not just that square dancing exists in their community, but also showcase many of the features and benefits of the activity. They are easy to set up, and they have little or no cost. Your group should be actively seeking opportunities to do exhibitions!

What will you present at an exhibition? **Think of an exhibition like a television advertisement.** When ads are created, a lot of thought goes into what is presented and how. Who is the target consumer you are trying to reach? What is the impression you want them to take from the exhibition. If you know this, you can tailor the exhibition to leave the appropriate impressions with the spectator.

As an example, let's say that **your group decided you wanted to recruit new dancers 45 to 60 years old.** You want to express how much fun the activity is, that the dress code has changed, and that we dance to many genres of music.

- To do this, first try to book exhibitions where the composition of spectators is more likely to be 45 to 60 years old.
- When you can, you'll want to use dancers who are in the same 45 to 60 age group.



- Your dancers should smile! Laugh! Have fun!
- The caller should select music that represents different genres and that would be more appealing to a 45-60 year old.



- Don't wear traditional square dance clothes.
- Don't use signage with the old square dance couple logo.
- The caller should tell the spectators about the activity and how it has changed.

You can incorporate several other marketing tactics when doing exhibitions to make them more impactful. Put up a banner with your club name, the new logo and slogan, and your website address. Print postcards or business cards with contact information and website address to hand out. Get extra dancers who can greet spectators and answer questions.

Here are just a few places to hold exhibitions: Parades, Farmer's Markets, County and State Fairs, Church Events, Major or Minor League Baseball Games, Home Shows, Craft Shows, Health fairs.

*****CAUTION!*** DO NOT expect that you'll get new dancers from doing one exhibition.** What you are trying to accomplish with all your marketing efforts is to move a prospect through the 'sales funnel'. The research tells us that the spectators at your exhibitions didn't know square dancing existed in the community, and either doesn't know anything about it, or have an outdated image of it. **It takes multiple positive impressions, what marketers call "frequency to the target", to create awareness and consideration.**

Think about it -- if you dance on a float in a parade, you will make one impression, good or bad, on a few thousand spectators, who don't understand square dancing. Exhibitions, more than anything, affect the top of the sales funnel – awareness. **Every sales effort starts with awareness, and so DO NOT stop doing exhibitions!**

Summer Demos

(Issue 2015-2) *The following excerpts are from an article in the September 2014 issue of American Square Dance Magazine, called "CALLERLAB Viewpoints – Demonstrating our Dance". It was written by Mike Seastrom, Los Angeles, CA, who is an international caller and recording artist. Mike started dancing in 1960 and calling in 1963. He joined CALLERLAB in 1977 and over the years has served on various committees and in leadership roles, including Chairman of the Board. As a practicing dentist, calling is an avocation for Mike, and he says he is fortunate to have such a wonderful and understanding staff and family. His article gives some practical suggestions and ideas on how to make dance demos successful recruiting events.*



"Showing our dance to others is a great way to update our image, demonstrate the fun and team spirit of our unique dance form, and interest others in joining our recreation. Yet to really be effective in using demonstrations as a means of bringing new dancers into our activity, it has to be done right and with a plan.

How many times has your group been out to a mall, a fair, a chili cook off or some other event? You had a great time doing a demonstration, but only had limited success encouraging those in the crowd to join your next new dancer program or class. I've spoken with many club and association leaders over the last 25 years who have said they still do some demonstrations, but they hardly ever get new dancers to join their group. Many clubs have just stopped doing them altogether.

The following suggestions are my opinions only. They come from personal experience and by talking to those who consistently succeed in bringing new people into their new dancer programs by doing these demonstrations. I'm not

talking about the times we entertain people with our dance in convalescent hospitals and the like. I'm talking about those events where others can see us and be excited enough to join.

1. **MUSIC:** Think about the age of the group you would like to target and have your caller program the demonstration to what would appeal to that age group. You'll also need to consider that the age of the dancers in the demonstration can't be too far off the group you are targeting. If all your demo dancers are in their 70s and 80s and you are trying to appeal to people in their 40s and 50s, you won't be as successful, even if you use music that they like. Be realistic, but definitely consider the age and music preferences of those you want to attract.
2. **DRESS:** If all your dancers come to the demonstration wearing their fancy square dance clothes, most of those watching will think you are all professional dancers and that they could never be as good as you are. They will also immediately think that it takes lots of time to be that good and will enjoy watching you, but will not participate when your caller asks all of you to go out and bring in volunteers to dance an easy number. It is my opinion that most of your group should wear clothes that your target audience would have in their own closet at that moment. It's much easier for your targeted group to imagine themselves dancing if they already own the type of clothes that your dancers have on. If a couple of your members absolutely have to wear their traditional clothes, then so be it; but I personally feel it can have a negative effect.
3. **NON-PARTICIPATING PARTICIPANTS:** I know this sounds a little shady, but having some of your group in "plain clothes" can really help the success of your demonstration. Appoint several of your own people to dress in the same attire that your targeted observes would be wearing at the event. As they mingle on the outskirts of your demonstration, it makes it look like there are people watching already, so others will be more apt to stop too. It also is a great way to get your audience to join you when the caller stops and requests some of the audience to join. Your "non-participating participants" gladly volunteer to join in an easy dance. This helps provide some additional incentive for others to join. Believe me, it works. How far you go with this is up to you, but people are more likely to join your demonstration when they see others jump at the chance.
4. **NAMES, ADDRESSES, PHONE & EMAIL INFO:** Plan a way to have people sign up for some kind of a contest or raffle. Print tickets on your computer that has the information on your next class or new dancer event. Have the other part of the ticket be your copy asking for names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses. This information gives you the ability to follow up by mail, phone, or email and contact these interested people with further information about the next opportunity to join you. This leads us to the next point.
5. **HOLD A RAFFLE OR PRIZE GIVE-AWAY:** Decide prior to your demonstration, what might appeal to your target audience. Some examples are free dance lessons, movie tickets, theater tickets, tickets to a sporting event, or a theme park. Use your imagination and the resources of those in your group. Don't miss out on this golden opportunity to provide an incentive to get personal information. Then be sure to follow up and personally contact those that have shown interest. These are important steps and are critical to your success. There may be some rules and regulations in your area dealing with prize giveaways, so check them out first.
6. **DANCING:** Be sure to have your caller keep the dancing easy and use movements that flow and look good. Your audience needs to picture themselves participating and if you're dancing figures like Relay the Deucey and Spin Chain the Gears, it can be a little intimidating to your observers and diminish the success of your demo. If you get too complicated, many will think it will be too hard for them to learn.
7. **SMILE AND HAVE FUN:** This point is pretty self-explanatory, but is often left out. Dancers should make eye contact with each other and with some of those in the crowd. Your success will go way up if you're having fun."

Demos at Parades, Picnics, Shopping Malls, Fairs, Etc.

(Issue 2017-7) -Source: www.ceder.net Article by Pat Tardiff

About the same time I had begun to unlock my repressed emotions, I discovered square dancing. **Dancing for me afforded me the opportunity to romp with joy and abandon.** Once I overcame my embarrassment of the 'costume' worn for square dancing and began enjoying the joy of dancing with crinolines flaring and skirts flying, demos were attractive to me. I was shocked and offended the first time someone called me a 'ham'. But once I overcame my upset, I realized they were right. I was having a wonderful time and I didn't care who knew it. If that makes me a ham, so be it!

What do we, as the square dance community, present to the general public when we do a square dance demo? I have participated in numerous square dance demos of every sort; parades, picnics, fairs and shopping malls. One in particular stands out as a positive experience. **This demo was well orchestrated. It was comprised of a cross section of dancers from all ages - with one common denominator - enthusiasm.** Let's not exclude the fact that the callers involved were lively and fun. They talked about their square dance club and dancers with pride. There was a colorful banner prominently displayed and equally festive flyers available to be handed out to the many onlookers. I remember teenagers who are usually seen at a demo snickering and rolling their eyes actually smiling and tapping their feet.

In contrast, I have participated in a demo where the caller showed up in a plaid shirt, jeans and a straw hat. The only thing missing was a fiddle. Little was said about who we were and why we were there. The group that showed up to dance were sour and no one smiled. The equipment being used malfunctioned which added to the overall picture of ineptitude. I was just as glad there wasn't a banner or flyers to tell them who we were.

Too many times I have participated in demos where there was no banner, no flyers and the caller delivered the information of who we were with the enthusiasm of a weather report. At the same time, dancers showed up in some ridiculous outfits. Save your funky outfits for fun night at your home club. We know it's fun to express your individuality, but to the general public it's just another reason to shake their heads and snicker. How do we expect to overcome the general public's prejudice towards square dancing if we don't consider their reaction when dressing to do a demo. Think: Would you like to be seen in a publicity poster wearing your choice for the demo? The most important thing to remember is to SMILE. If you aren't having fun, why would anyone else want to do it. Demos are fun, but consider why we do them. **It's all about promoting square dancing; remember that the next time someone asks you to participate in a demo.**

H. WELCOMING NEW DANCERS

Single In A Double World

(Issue 2024-2) - by Kelly Thompson

I think anytime you hear the word dance, one of the first things that come to mind is the need for a partner. Except for a few dance styles, the expectation is that you have a partner with you when involved in dancing.

Historically square dancing was a couple's activity, but due to dwindling club memberships, times are changing and more single people are becoming involved. It might be a hard thing to say but it could be "get with the program, or get left behind". **Some square dance clubs have as many as 50% members who are single,** and many of them take on important roles in the club, ensuring its stability and viability. Further, square dancing is somewhat unique as a social dance in that it can be far more inclusive, not only for single people but also for all ages, orientation and ethnicities.

I think we all should be aware how few social activities single people can fit into. Very few people are single by their own choice. Newly single people are especially apprehensive to engage socially because being suddenly single is a totally new environment. Their friend's husbands/wives suddenly become wary and protective of their spouse; therefore newly single people generally change friends and activities. I would also think it is difficult, as a single person, to move to a different city to find inclusive activities to become involved in.

In square dancing, one of the easiest ways we can be inclusive is to adapt our thinking of what makes up a couple. Instead of a couple being a man and a woman, think of a couple being the right hand dancer and left hand dancer. This then makes it irrelevant if it's a mixed couple, two women, or two men dancing together. And because there are often more women than men in a club, we need to encourage everyone to be able to dance either side. This kind of thinking not only welcomes the single dancer, but it ensures there's no shortage - everyone wins because everyone is dancing.

I think as a square dance club, we need to take every effort to make our activity the best experience we can for everyone, especially single people.

Creating A Welcoming Environment At Your Club

(Issue 2023-5) <https://loveadmin.com/management/creating-a-welcoming-environment-at-your-club/#:~:text=Tours%20and%20taster%20sessions,make%20an%20impression%20that%20lasts.>

Joining a club can be daunting, even for the most outgoing person. **Having a welcoming environment is important right from the moment someone finds out about your club through to when they're an active member.** This is key in reducing the barrier to participation and encourages members to become advocates of your club. Quite often though, clubs may unintentionally overlook some of the factors that create a welcoming environment.

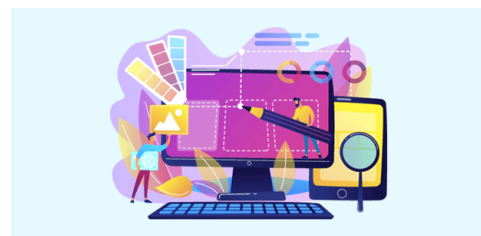
In this blog, we'll walk you through some practical ideas that will help your club become the place to be.

BEFORE JOINING

Website

Think of your website as a brochure. When prospective members visit your website, they want to find out everything about your club. Scan your website and see how many of the following you can tick off:

- Is your messaging clear in what you do and who you target?
- Are images relevant and inclusive?
- Do you have a meet the committee / coaches page?
- Do you have an FAQ page which addresses common questions?
- Are you posting regular news updates about your club?
- Can members join quickly and easily?
- Social media and email



Other touchpoints are typically your social media accounts and email. If someone is interested in your club, they might venture onto your Facebook page or send you an email so it's important to take these points into account:

- Are you regularly updating your social media with content?
- Is someone monitoring your social media and emails?
- Are you responding to enquiries in a friendly and timely manner?

Tours and Taster Sessions

To give prospective members a flavour of your club, it's a good idea to offer personalised facility tours and taster sessions. **This is the first time they'll see your club in person, so you want to make an impression that lasts.** Here's what to consider:

- Do you send relevant information to prospective members ahead of tours and taster sessions?
- Is your facility easy to find?
- Are there noticeboards and signposts in your facility?
- Do you have disabled access?
- Is your facility clean, well maintained and COVID-secure?
- Who is responsible for greeting prospective members when they arrive?
- Are taster sessions exclusively tailored to prospective members?



AFTER JOINING

Welcome Pack

Sending out a welcome pack when a new member signs up is the first step in making them feel like part of your club. Ensure you get this to them straight after the point of registration, so they immediately feel acknowledged and have enough time to absorb everything. Your welcome pack should include information like:

- A general welcome letter from the committee
- Your club's background and history
- Membership tiers and pricing – do you offer flexibility around payments?
- Committee / coaches contact details
- What kit members need to bring

First Day

First experiences can either make or break someone's decision to return to your club. If they feel welcomed and valued, there's no reason for them not to return. You want to go the extra mile and have a solid process in place to make new members feel at ease and help them settle in. What to think about:

- Who is responsible for introducing new members to everyone?
- Do they have an assigned buddy?
- Is the rest of the team aware that there is a new member?
- Are you getting new members involved straight away?
- Is your body language open and friendly?
- Are you following up with members to find out how their first day went?
- Ongoing engagement



A welcoming environment doesn't just end after someone's first day at your club – it's something that you have to consistently maintain. Here are some points to think about:

- Are you being patient with inexperienced members?
- Are you making an effort to get to know your members?
- Do you ensure that there are no cliques?
- Are you regularly encouraging your members?
- Have you invited members to join your private social media group?
- Do you ask your members for feedback on your club?

Every club wants to be known as the club that feels like a second home – a family. You have the power to implement the ideas above and be well on your way to achieving this.

How You Can Use Body Language to Make Others Feel Welcome

(Issue 2023-5) <https://www.linkedin.com/advice/0/how-can-you-use-body-language-make-others>

Body language is a powerful tool for communication, especially when you want to make others feel welcome and comfortable. Whether you are meeting new people, hosting a social event, or working in a team, your body language can convey warmth, interest, and respect. In this article, you will learn how to use body language to make others feel welcome in six simple ways.

Smile Genuinely

A smile is one of the most universal and effective ways to show friendliness and happiness. However, not all smiles are created equal. A genuine smile involves not only your mouth, but also your eyes and your whole face. **A genuine smile can make others feel more relaxed and positive around you, while a fake or forced smile can create distrust and discomfort.**

To smile genuinely, think of something that makes you happy or amused, and let your smile reach your eyes. You can also practice smiling in front of a mirror to see the difference.

Make Eye Contact

Eye contact is another key element of body language that can make others feel welcome. **Eye contact shows that you are paying attention, listening, and interested in what the other person is saying or doing. Eye contact can also create a sense of connection and rapport.** However, too much or too little eye contact can have the opposite effect. Too much eye contact can be intimidating or creepy, while too little eye contact can be rude or dismissive.

To make eye contact effectively, follow the 50/70 rule: maintain eye contact for 50% of the time when you are talking, and 70% of the time when you are listening. You can also use the triangle technique: look at the other person's eyes, then their nose, then their mouth, and back to their eyes. This creates a natural and comfortable pattern of eye contact.

Use Open Gestures

Your gestures can also communicate a lot about your attitude and intention. Open gestures are those that expose your palms, chest, or torso, and indicate that you are open, confident, and friendly. **Open gestures can make others feel more welcome and invited to interact with you.** For example, you can use open gestures to greet someone, such as waving, shaking hands, or hugging (if appropriate). You can also use open gestures to show agreement, enthusiasm, or appreciation, such as nodding, clapping, or giving a thumbs up.

On the other hand, avoid closed gestures, such as crossing your arms, legs, or hands, or touching your face, neck, or hair. Closed gestures can signal that you are closed, defensive, or nervous, and can make others feel unwelcome or uneasy.

Lean In Slightly

Another way to use body language to make others feel welcome is to lean in slightly when you are talking or listening to them. **Leaning in shows that you are engaged, curious, and respectful of the other person. It also creates a sense of intimacy and trust.** However, be careful not to lean in too much or too fast, as this can invade the other person's personal space and make them feel uncomfortable or threatened.

To lean in slightly, move your upper body or head a few inches closer to the other person, while keeping your lower body stable and your posture straight. You can also tilt your head slightly to show interest and empathy.

Mirror Their Body Language

Mirroring is a subtle and powerful way to use body language to make others feel welcome. Mirroring is when you mimic or match the other person's body language, such as their posture, gestures, facial expressions, or tone of voice. **Mirroring can create a sense of harmony and rapport, as it shows that you are in sync with the other person and that**

you understand them. Mirroring can also make the other person feel more comfortable and confident around you, as it validates their feelings and opinions.

To mirror effectively, pay attention to the other person's body language and try to copy it in a natural and relaxed way. Don't overdo it or copy every move, as this can seem fake or mocking. You can also use mirroring to influence the other person's mood or behavior, by using positive and welcoming body language yourself.

Respect Their Personal Space

The final way to use body language to make others feel welcome is to respect their personal space. Personal space is the area around a person that they consider their own and that they don't want others to enter without permission. Personal space can vary depending on the culture, the situation, and the relationship between the people. **However, in general, most people prefer to have at least an arm's length of distance between them and strangers or casual acquaintances, and more or less depending on their level of comfort and intimacy.**

To respect their personal space, observe their cues and reactions, and adjust your distance accordingly. If they seem to back away, move closer, or turn their body away from you, follow their lead and respect their boundaries. If they seem to invite you closer, move forward, or turn their body towards you, reciprocate and respect their signals.

Recruitment

(Issue 2016-3) - **by Caller Tim Marriner, South Carolina**

Editor's Note: Tim started calling in 1973 and made the decision to call full-time in 1987. In addition to calling at his home club in Bluffton, South Carolina, his calling career takes him all over the world.

His article on "Recruitment" discusses the importance of sharing the tasks of advertising and recruiting with all of the club members, and gives some practical ideas for advertising on a small budget.



One of the most important necessities of our activity today is the need to find perspective new dancers.

Unfortunately, many current dancers have grown weary looking for new people for various reasons. Existing dancers often have hounded their neighbours and friends several times to the point of being a nuisance. There are also dancers that would prefer not to have to "angel" anyone else again, possibly due to burn out. Some members might not really want to lower their proficiency or may wish to move ahead to other forms or programs of dance, not really interested in recruitment of new dancers. **If a club determines they need to host new dancer sessions, the entire club needs to understand their responsibilities to support the effort 100%. Recruitment should not be left in just the hands of the caller or the club officers.**

First of all, recruitment should be happening all the time, not just two months prior to a starting date for new dancers. Anyone thinking a flyer can be posted and folks will come, will be greatly disappointed. There are many different things each member can do to advertise a new dancer session. The trick is finding what they feel the most comfortable doing. **At the very least, every club member should have access to current club business cards with information regarding the new dancer session on the back.** This card should be updated regularly to allow for alternative start dates. Any time a member hands someone money, this card should be provided. These cards should be displayed at every dance for visitors to take or for dancers to pick up for distribution year round.

Informational post cards are also effective. They can be posted on various bulletin boards at grocery stores, schools, churches, and businesses that will allow advertising. They can also be used as a reminder mailed to anyone providing their address for further information.

Full size paper brochures can also be developed and printed to be placed in newspaper slots or mail boxes where allowed, or handed out door to door. Some grocery stores allow these to be stuffed in bags. Just ask! The trick is to have eye catching logos, with just the right amount of details or web site reference to get someone to read the information.

If a club has a budget, other items of promotion could be distributed such as pens, pencils, note pads, wooden nickels, or any other useful items that folks would enjoy. A web address, email, or phone number should be present for someone to contact for more information. With today's internet age, other social media outlets should be investigated as a means to promote a new dancer session. At a loss for words that best describes the activity, then point dancers to the You2CanDance.com web site for more information. Other recruitment material is available online at CALLERLAB.Org, Arts-Dance.com, LiveLivelySquare Dance.com, and USDA.org.

Remember, promotional materials are only effective if they are placed in the hands of non dancers.

Billboards, yard signs, radio spots, television ads, can be effective if used in a timely manner but can be pricey. Newspapers often will list new dancer information, interview a group, or cover a special event for free. Timing for all of this is important to support a new dancer session.

Demonstrations, open house dance events are also effective ways to help promote a new dancer session. Still, face to face reference is the best form of recruitment. Friends bringing in friends is the most effective method of recruitment. New dancers are energetic and eager to help. Usually they have access to non dancers others have not approached. Strike while the iron is hot, not a year down the road.

No matter what a club does to recruit, it is very important to follow up on the effectiveness of any promotional methods. Without measuring the results, no improvements can be made. This will provide great insight for future promotions. Track how a perspective dancer heard of the new dancer session. Have them provide this information along with an address, phone number, and email address. While they are providing information, find out a little bit more about them, such as interests, hobbies, and jobs. This can assist with networking them with current dancers of similar backgrounds and interest. This helps with retention. It will also provide a reference of skills for future help.

It is important for each member to have a duty and a goal when it comes to recruitment. Provide several different means of recruitment tools members can choose to help. Measure the results and reward those that excel! The club must all pull together for the same goals. Anyone with other selfish motives will not provide any useful help. Get them on board with some other chore to assist. **With everyone's help, only then can a club collectively achieve growth through new dancers.**

Thinking 'Outside the Box'

(Issue 2022-5) - by Claudia Littlefair, Editor

There's no question that Covid has had a major impact on our activity, as numbers are down at some clubs by as much as 50%! When it comes to promotion, thinking 'outside the box' is more important now than ever. Here's one such idea that might be worth your while.

Prior to Covid, our District held a free "intro hour" at our weekly summer dances where people could come and try out square dancing. The summer dances were the perfect set-up since the hall was booked, a caller hired, and dancers were coming anyways. The results? Some of these new dancers came several times during the summer, and some joined clubs for lessons in the fall.

So, what if this same idea were applied to your regular weekly dances? Free "intro hours" could be held every week, or two, or monthly. Members wouldn't have to wait months to invite their friends to try it out, and best of all, we'd have a product to offer and advertise throughout the dance season.

“The Any Friday, Saturday or Sunday Fun Fest”

(Issue 2023-1) “Excerpts from “The No Experience Dance Theme” by Dave and Bonnie Henry

Editor’s Note: Creating awareness that our activity exists is the first step in marketing.

This article describes the success a club has by holding monthly Open Dances.

The Whirlybird Square Dance Club in Lynnwood, WA is the sponsor of the dance, and I initially suggested a once-a-month student dance which became The First Friday Fun Fest. The club is officer-run and I’ve called for the club for 45 years. “First Friday Fun Fest” started out as a student dance beginning in September about 9 years ago. It was to become a Half and Half dance when the new January classes started that first year. Well, we had a lot more newer dancers coming versus the Sept. students, so I dedicated every third tip for the September students. It wasn’t long until I dedicated the whole program to the newest dancer in the hall. About the second or third year, experienced dancers would ask if it would be alright if they brought their niece, or their grandchild who was home on college break, or some non-square dancing friends, etc., and so this became the beginning of the no-experience-necessary designation of the dance. **Thus, our no-experience-necessary dance was dancer-created, having evolved into an entire program dedicated to the new dancer!**

More about This No Experience Dance Theme

At the very beginning of the dance, I ask those people that have never square danced before to raise their hand. We give them a round of applause and thank them for coming. Then I tell them they are going to experience a lot of square dancing, but the only thing I truly want them to remember, when it is over, is that they had a great time!

We start the evening off with “this is your partner, corner, home position” and quickly teach Do Sa Do, Allemande left, and Promenade, and then I put the music on and start dancing through some star sequences.

The square set is followed by a line dance, or easy round dance is taught and the dance progresses from there. **It is fast-paced programming. The music rarely stops.** There is no down-time and everything is briefly taught as-we-go, so they can dance as much or as little as they want. Nobody ever must sit out because of a star tip of upper-level squares or rounds, because there aren’t any! Just before the finger food break prior to the COVID changes (and now, it is placed second to the last tip), we have a light hearted hot hash hoedown competition, where the squares dance until they make a mistake that they can’t recover from. When that happens, the square breaks it up and if there is food, they line up in the potluck line. The last square standing gets a hot hash hoedown dangle for their badge.

The competition does a few things:

1. It creates entertainment for those sitting out or standing in the potluck line.
2. It is fun for our club dancers, too, and it gives a sense of accomplishment to the winning square.



The competition is based on the material taught up to that point, and my goal is not to break the squares down, but to help them accomplish as much as they can with the skills that their square has as the competition gets faster & trickier.

Prior to Covid

We had never had a dance with less than 8 squares; the average was 13 squares! The hall maximum is 18 squares but the parking lot is full at about 16 squares. We have actually had people come to the dance and leave because they couldn’t find a parking place!

Our dance time was from 7:30-10:30 with a finger food and announcement break at 9:15. When COVID hit, all dancing, and many other activities, in Washington State stopped because of a state mandate. As of the first Friday in September 2021, we are up and running again. Prior to COVID,

Post Covid

When we reopened the dance program this September of 2021, we made a couple of changes:

1. Because of COVID; no more food, and because we weren’t taking a food break, we shortened the dance time.
2. The last set of squares now starts at 9:30 P.M.

The first September dance in 2021 we had less than 8 squares (we had 4), but about 1/3 of the floor were people experiencing square dancing for the first time which was amazing. October's dance had 8 squares again and one square was made up of college students. November's dance had 9 squares, and our square of college students were back, and they stayed through the very last set of squares. They were laughing and giggling as they walked out the door. As they left the November dance, they said they had other plans for December, but they would be back in January. December's dance had 8 squares again and there was at least a square of brand-new dancers in attendance.

There are opportunities to recruit new people into our activity all the time. When opportunity knocks, don't let it pass you by. It might lead to your next big class, or the beginning of your new big club. Programs like The First Friday Fun Fest can be a destination dance too, and we are proving that every month!

Good Things About Square Dancing

(Issue 2022-3) - by Caller/Instructor Betsy Gotta, presented at Northern New Jersey Square Dance Association (NNJSDA) Convention, April 2018

We are involved in a great activity – Square Dancing! We must be involved, or you would not be here listening to this speech and I would not be making the speech. **Our question is how can we involve others?**

Each of us needs to be an ambassador for our activity. Now some of you are becoming uncomfortable, thinking, *"I am not good at talking to strangers,"* or *"I am not good at selling things or convincing people to try things."* I am not talking about knocking on doors like a religious group, I am talking about just being aware of opportunities to talk about our activities. We all have square dance tee or polo shirts, but where do we wear them? Do we wear our square dance tee shirts to a dance event or do we wear them to a baseball game? If we wear our square dance tee shirt to a ball game or a movie, we are publicizing our activity, just by having a visible mention of square dancing. It also can help members of the public to understand that people who square dance are "regular" people, not a category.

One of the barriers to convincing people to try square dancing is their preconceptions about the activity. They know that we always dance to country music, we have to wear those funny outfits, and we are all from rural areas in the West or Midwest. You and I know that square dancers are regular people who have held a variety of jobs, have different levels of education and enjoy other "normal" pastimes in addition to square dancing. Recently, clubs have relaxed the dress codes and different callers use a variety of music. The public has not yet modified their preconceptions. For example, a few years ago, I was hired to call a beginner square dance party for a group of college students from overseas. Since I was working with younger people, I picked a variety of music, using some rock, some modern pop, some country, etc. At the end of the dance, the group leader told me that for future bookings, I needed to use more country music to give the students a "real" square dance experience. He disregarded my explanations that real squares dancers dance to a variety of music.

Some years ago, a member of an NNJSDA club wrote a human interest story about square dancing. **He quoted square dancers about how they much they enjoyed square dancing. Each quote included the dancers name, age and occupation.** There was a good cross-section of dancers quoted. That fall several clubs in the Northern NJ area had more people come to classes to try the square dancing activity then in past years. I believe that the article changed the perceptions of square dancers from a bunch of like-minded blue collar people pretending to be hillbillies to a varied group of individuals enjoying a stimulating hobby. These new dancers found someone that seemed like them who square danced, so they felt that they might enjoy square dancing.

We may not be able to change the public's perceptions about square dancing immediately, but we can try. **When we talk about our activity we can emphasize how well square dancing meets many human needs.**

The other night on the news there was a story about how many people today feel lonely and isolated even though they stay connected on Social Networks. **Square dancing fills the need for face to face social connection.** We need to meet together to enjoy the dancing.

This news story prompted me to check online for what people needed to have good health. One website listed the following basic human needs:

- Need to give and receive attention;
- Need to heed the mind/body connection;
- Need for purpose and goals;
- Need for community and making a contribution;
- Need for challenge and creativity;
- Need for a sense of intimacy;
- Need for a sense of control;
- Need for status.



Let's consider how square dancing meets many of those needs.

Since dancers function in groups of 8, people can give and receive attention and feel like they have a sense of community. Since many clubs often donate to charity, the need to make a contribution is satisfied. Learning the calls involved in the programs can satisfy the need for purpose and goals. Unfortunately, many dancers have attached status to what Program/Level they have achieved instead of how well they execute the calls.

Square dancing also provides mild aerobic exercise – music plays at 124 to 126 beats per minute which means the dancers who walk with the beats can be walking 2.5 miles per hour. Have you checked your Fitbit before and after a dance? Those of us who dance on a regular basis are fitter than when we started due to the regular walking. New class members are often tired before the angels, because the new class members are not yet used to all of the walking that takes place during a dance.

Square dancing, and the learning of calls provides mental stimulation and uses the puzzle solving functions of the brain. One of the things that people find when they are square dancing is that they must concentrate and focus on the caller's commands. This means that for the length of the tip, the dancers can forget the other problems and concerns that are in their life. I do not mean to say that all tension is relieved, because many new dancers can stress about remembering the calls and how to do them. However, the regular tensions of their lives are forgotten for a while.

If you post on social media, do you mention how much fun you had at the square dance you attended last night? If you have non-square dancing Facebook friends, they will hear about your activity. Mention that the caller used music by Bruno Mars (if you know about such music) or the pirate –themed decorations and/or clothing worn by the dancers. Such a post may help change the stereotypic expectations of non- square dancing friends. At the very least, you are communicating to others about how you love this activity (and you didn't have to knock on a strangers' door).

Now, if you talk about all the information about square dancing that I have mentioned in this speech, you will either bore potential dancers to death or make them run screaming from the conversation. The strategy is that if you happen to mention that you square dance and a person responds with mild interest, make one point about how square dancing fills a need in your life. **My point is that we need to let the general public know what square dancing is today and how much we enjoy the people and the activity.** If nobody talks about square dancing, nobody will change their minds about trying square dancing.

“The Future of Square Dancing” (Excerpts)

(Issue 2019-2) - by Jim Mayo (Original date September 29, 2009)

We, Modern Western Square Dance (MWSD) callers and dancers, are pretty much in agreement that our activity is not thriving. Certainly, it does not come anywhere close to the popularity it once enjoyed. There are several possible explanations for this. Summarized they are Society has changed, MWSD has changed, or some combination.

We all know that society has changed. People do not have the free time they once had, and they are much less willing to commit to anything which requires regular attendance. **If we are honest, we will admit that MWSD has become much more complicated than it was in the heyday of its popularity.** So, we can agree that the way square dancing is at present does not match the needs of today's society. Those who love square dancing know it could be adapted to whatever society needs. At some level we also know that square dancing will have to change if it is to become more popular. This form of dance activity will need to be easier to enter.

Those who are involved now are not much interested in trying some new form. We like it the way it is. We want clubs with a commitment to membership. We want people to go through a course that teaches at least the 70 calls we all know. We realize that folks cannot just "walk in" and take part. They have to go through the training – and we like it that way. **What we have not been willing to acknowledge is that training is not only the class. We know, but don't really say, that after class the new dancer will still not be able to dance comfortably at most of the dances that will be available. The new dancer will have to go for another year of dances, at least, before they will be comfortable dancing with folks at an open dance – no matter what the advertised program.**

If we made a "new" form of square dancing what could it be like? Where could it be started? Who would come? Would they be people we wanted as our friends? Most of "us" are older and were brought up in a different kind of world. It's not surprising that we do not recruit successfully in a new group of people. Perhaps we callers should try to find or create a different form of square dancing that would serve folks who are not just like us. If we did that, we should not expect today's dancers to recruit our new customers.

If we start with a blank page and redesign square dancing to serve today's people what could it be? **I would suggest that it should be easier to learn and that it should not require people to show up at every session even while they are learning. It should provide an opportunity for folks to enjoy each other as well as the dancing.** After all, that was one of the most important aspects of MWSD even though we never recognized how important it was until quite recently.

A new square dancing should also continue to provide both physical and mental exercise. They are both popular with our prospective new customer base. It would be good if we could find some organization to help us reach a new customer base. Ed Gilmore said, "Find some people and do what you have to do to get them." Where could we look for people? Churches are an obvious possibility. Much of what we have to offer is the kind of thing that churches stand for. We should not expect to recruit people away from the churches. We should offer a program that provides a social experience within the church. Another possibility is to look for support from community organizations; service clubs, recreation departments, YMCA or YWCA. They helped us get started 50 years ago. Or we could just use a community recreation facility and run it ourselves. I know of one such that has been going and growing for a couple of years.

Why isn't this happening? I think it's because we don't want square dancing that is different from what we have created. We cling to the old model because this is what we all know and feel comfortable with.

To find that alternative we need brave callers to set out on a new course. Our CALLERLAB Winning Ways material describes some different approaches and I know a couple of them who are surviving and thriving. I don't see many other callers or dancers that are interested in following those paths. **Until we find some folks willing to break out from the old patterns, I doubt that we will see a rebirth of interest in the activity we have loved.**

About The Author - Jim Mayo (Hampstead, NH)

Jim has been calling square dances for more than 60 years. He calls for clubs (Mainstream to Advanced) in his home area of New England and has called at festivals, weekends and clubs throughout North America. He is accredited by CALLERLAB as a Caller Coach and was chairman of the Caller Training Committee and editor of the *Caller Training Technical Supplement* to the CALLERLAB Curriculum Guideline. For more than 30 years, he has trained callers throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, New Zealand and Australia.

He is a member of the *Sets in Order* ASD Hall of Fame, The New England Square Dance Foundation Hall of Fame, and recipient of the CALLERLAB Milestone Award. He is the author of *Step By Step Through Modern Square Dancing*, about the history of the modern form of square dancing.



How Conducive Is Your Hall Space?

(Issue 2018-7) - *by Editor Claudia Littlefair*

How we utilize the space we dance in can make a huge difference to the social atmosphere of our group. It's worth spending some time evaluating hall set-up. Is it welcoming? Is it awkward to socialize? Does the shape of your hall split up your group?

Some halls are too big for the number of dancers. It's easy for the experienced dancers to set themselves apart from the new dancers. They visit with each other while the new dancers are learning to dance. They may be one club, but it feels like two separate groups. The feeling of interconnectedness is lost in the big space. The solution – use only one-half or less of the space. Bring the chairs up from the back of the hall.

Sometimes a small group of chairs is set-up to fill a specific space. It doesn't take long before the same dancers sit in that same place every week, similar to church goers who have their "own" pews. Again, this splits up an already small group, and can unintentionally affect the club environment.

The two clubs we teach New Dancers at have significantly increased the social component of their evenings simply by setting out the lunch during the dance time. Originally, this was done because not everyone could stay late to enjoy lunch after the dancing. The pooled lunch table is set-up beside the coffee and water, and between breaks everyone congregates around them. It's an easy way for the new dancers to meet and mix with the experienced. It's wonderful to watch how welcomed and included everyone feels. It doesn't take long before the new dancers start bringing something to contribute to the food table. Of course, any lunch left over is enjoyed by those who choose to stay and socialize after the dancing.

Jerry Junck, well-known caller in Nebraska and Arizona, relates this story about the change an unplanned table set-up made. He believes it has led to an increase in the number of dancers attending his dance.

"For years I had always set up my hall with two rows of chairs in the back, side by side. Never really gave that a thought but did it because "that is what I've always done." That section is a 20 foot wide area behind a row of four columns. Too small an area to dance, but great for seating away from the floor.

Two seasons ago, my activity director decided to leave tables set up in that area all the time. I wasn't all that sure about it, but that is what she wanted. They set two rectangular tables set end to end. Each table set seats 8 people on a side, and there are ten sets of these tables. That seats 160 people. Using my old method of chairs side by side, I could not seat that many dancers.

What I have found is that dancers LOVE those tables. To the extent that I believe it has contributed to the growth of this dance in these last two seasons. Also, people are arriving earlier to "stake out" their tables for their friends. This has given dancers a place to put their drinks, their bags, and plates, if we have treats, and a place to put their elbows, if nothing else. It has increased the social aspect of the evening tremendously. Much easier to visit with people across the table rather than down the line beside them on chairs."

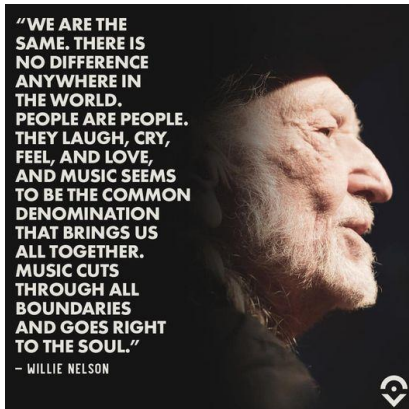
So, look through new eyes at your hall set-up. Is there a change you could make that would benefit the club? Is there a more welcoming way to arrange the room that would encourage socializing and intermingling? Try something new and see where it goes.

I. KEEPING NEW DANCERS

Respecting New Dancers

(Issue 2024-1) - by Claudia Littlefair, Editor

I cringe at the thought of new dancers going to dances outside of their clubs, even those dances that are purposely designed to help new dancers hone their skills. Why? Because there is no control over what us 'experienced dancers' say or do to these new dancers. I've heard nasty comments like, "You shouldn't be at this dance", or "You can't dance", or "Why are you here?" I've seen new dancers be yanked or dragged by the arm to be put in the correct place, and eyes rolled or looks of disgust directed their way.



If a new dancer hears 25 positive comments and one negative comment or action, they'll likely remember the negative one - forever. And sadder still, is that some new dancers never do come back because of how they were treated at these special dances where they supposedly can hone their skills.

My husband, Dave and I have been dancing for 30 years, and Dave's been calling for more than half that time. **We recognize that each new dancer is an individual.** Some will take longer to learn the steps, while some catch on right away. Some are more capable of hearing the beat and others have no sense of rhythm. Some need more repetition, others have excellent recall. Some have more self-confidence, and some need extra encouragement and positive feedback. Some can move or hear better, and some have limited hearing or mobility. Some are easily guided, while others stop dancing on the spot when lost in the square. The list of differences is as long as the

list of dancers. **But what we've experienced over and over again, is that some of the so-called 'hopeless dancers' turn out to be some of the best dancers, and often become core members of our clubs.**

As experienced dancers, it's our job to respect and support the new dancer regardless of how 'good' they are.

Just A Humble Opinion

(Issue 2024-1) Source: Square Dance News Sheet, Vol 1-No.2, January 1954, Article by Al Berry, Caller

Editor's Note: Even though this article was written 70 years ago its message is still relevant today.

When a person first starts square dancing they are usually very vocal about the fun and enjoyment that they are getting out of square dancing.

However, after dancing for awhile, some of these people begin to add a little more to their remarks with "Gee, that was a good square, but did you notice the way the Drizzabells never even got thru it", or, "My, I had a wonderful evening, except when McGooble got in the same square with us", and so on.

Sometimes it happens the other way around, when some person feels he is being snubbed because of an unconscious action on the part of another dancer. Two partial-squares on the floor need a couple and two from the side, seeing hands raised across the room, head that-away, bypassing the other square without even noticing them. Someone remarks "there they go again – too good for us". You know what I mean.

Before we ever start to say anything about anyone, we should ask ourselves, "Is it going to be detrimental to square dancing?" If it is, then forget it. Because after all, if it's small enough to be forgotten – we should be big enough to forget.

What We Forget To Mention

(Issue 2024-1) Source: President's Corner – Karen Buchheit, Oregon Newsletter, January, 2024

It is hard to believe that it is 2024 already! And that Mid-Winter Festival is just a few weeks away. It is looking to be a good crowd this year – come join the fun.

A couple of things that no one ever seems to remember and always forget to tell new dancers:



1. **Every caller and cuer sounds different.** They also all have different equipment and set up at a hall differently. Every hall sounds different and EVERY HALL has at least one spot where it is very difficult to hear. BEFORE complaining that you can't hear (or that the caller/cuer isn't loud enough/isn't good/isn't clear/or whatever) try dancing in a different spot in the hall. Also try dancing in a different position in a square. Moving around the hall will let you try out the sound in other spots and you just might find out that you can hear great in a certain corner or in the middle of the hall. You might find that you can hear better as a side or as a head. Example: in our hall I find that I have the most difficulty hearing clearly in the right-hand front corner in the head #1 position and I hear the best when I am in the back center square in the head #3 position.
2. **There are several moves with different types of handholds/hand touches.** Not every move is the same and not every dancer thinks to be easy/quick to release hands if they have not been specifically told to do so as they learn each move. Please remember that it is not always the new dancer who forgets to let go – there are angels who also forget. We all need to remember to let go of hands when we need to do so.
3. **The more we talk to each other in a square or as partners in a round, the less we and our fellow dancers can/will hear.**
4. **The louder the conversations at the edges of the dance floor, the harder it is for the dancers to hear a caller/cuer.**

Going further into this year and as we have the opportunity for more special dances and larger Festivals WE ALL need to pay attention to some things.

1. **Be aware of our own dance style.** Do we each need to adjust our personal style to match with others in a square?
2. **Be aware of who is in the square with you.** Are you in with all newer dancers? Are you in with someone who cannot handle being swung or twirled? If they are wearing a DON'T TWIRL ME badge – OBEY IT! Are you in a square where not everyone is able to move at the same speed? Some squares will not be able to handle some styles of fooling around. YOU as an individual dancer need to be able to be aware if the square you are in at any time can handle someone being a little crazy with their fun.
3. There will be squares in your dancing lifetime that can handle any and all wildness/crazy style/goofing around. There will also be squares where you will have to dance completely by definition with no extra frills/flares/swings/twirls added. **Most of the time, the square you are in will be somewhere between the two extremes.**
4. **Round dancers – if you are dancing with someone who is not your regular partner, please try to adjust your stride to match closer with your current partner.** We should also adjust our personal style in rounds to the level of our current partner.

One of the most important things for everyone to remember and adjust for: we are here to have fun. We might need to adjust our style so that we can accommodate others while those same others might need to adjust their style to accommodate us. Be patient with each other – everyone can have an off day or a move that we struggle with (even after all my years dancing, I have one very simple Plus move that it will take me all night to get right). NEVER, NEVER, NEVER tell someone that they aren't getting it – that is the best way to make sure that someone drops out, never comes back and will be very negative about square/round dancing for the rest of their lives.

We do this to have fun. We need to do our part to help make it fun for those around us. This activity is very hard to do all by yourself.

Calling to the 'Level of the Floor'

(Issue 2023-6) **Bob Riggs, Caller Coach, Our Side of the Mic, Summer 2023** www.squaredanceetc.com

As we call in the region, we are challenged by events where the capabilities of the dancers have a wide range. We call each dance using our very best skills and experience to call to the capability of those who are attending. Dancers often have attended a class, refresher workshop or review session and believe they have achieved the desired competency. We as callers adjust our calling for each dance to match their competency. Thus, every event results in the dancers being thoroughly entertained. We have accomplished the goal we were hired to achieve.

However, we have continued to see and experience a slow decline in the capabilities of dancers in the activity. Let's drill a little deeper into the topic of dancer skills.

As expected, our Social Square Dance (SSD) students/newer dancers come out of class with an ability to dance the SSD program calls from most/all of the Mainstream (MS) Standard Applications. Most have little experience dancing these calls from standard variations (SAV) or extended application (EA) found in the SSD Program.



The MS dancers who have recently rejoined the activity after the pandemic, believe they can dance MS, but lack the reaction time for some calls when called from the less frequently used formations and arrangements. For example: when executing a Walk & Dodge where the ladies are walking, and the men are dodging there will be a significant delay. Thus, when calling a MS dance callers must increase the time for dancer reaction and execution time will use more helper words to enable dancer success.

The Plus dancers who recently completed a Plus Class can dance the Plus calls from standard arrangements only as the typical class does not sufficiently provide time for them to see and understand the calls from all 6 arrangements. We have dancers who can dance the Plus tip at a MS dance where a limited vocabulary is called. We have other dancers who excel in their Plus and can dance a more challenging Plus program such as found at Plus.com. And we have dancers that excel in their ability to dance MS/Plus for a variety of extended application formations and arrangements, such as found at Moonlight Madness, Diamond Squares, and Red Hot Country Plus.

THUS, from a caller's perspective we don't have SSD, MS or PLUS programs, we have a stated program for a dance, but must either add or reduce difficulty depending on the dancers in the hall. This makes caller preparation for a dance very difficult. Experienced callers can adapt to the circumstances, but newer callers will find the situation very difficult.

To stabilize our dance activity, our callers and clubs must work toward improving the competency of our dancers within their current chosen program. This means we must allow dancers within each program to participate and enjoy their program of choice. We must stop the rush to PLUS by discouraging unprepared dancers from taking Plus classes. We must encourage our SSD dancers to stay in their groups and enjoy the pleasures of dance. We must encourage MS dancers to stay in their clubs and not attempt PLUS until they are truly ready.

And most of all we must provide opportunities for dancers in their program to strive to perfect their execution and enjoyment of their program calls, i.e., continuing education. We must ensure that the activity does not lose its ability to entertain with variety. For example, we have dancer success if we call the sequence Swing Thru – Spin the Top, but we will lose some of the dancers on the floor if we call the sequence Spin the Top – Swing Thru. Our activity has slowly over the years moved from our ability to do true hash calling to one where certain sequences will be successful and other sequences may fail.

We must encourage groups/clubs to encourage us, the callers, to include a quick teach of a call that some are having trouble with when appropriate. This, along with continuous recruiting for nearly year-round class opportunities, will allow our activity to grow.

Building For Tomorrow

(Issue 2023-2) - Presented by Mike Hogan at CALLERLAB Convention, April 2017

How do you keep them coming back?

Losing beginners as the transition through lessons and into your club has always been a problem. Two studies have happened over the years. One was conducted in the late 60 to early 70's by Jim Mayo, the other was conducted in the 90's. The result of both studies showed:

- You will lose half of your beginners before they complete lessons.
- You will lose half or those who complete lessons within two years of graduation.

Why do you lose them during class? I don't know, but I can guess:

- Just wanted to try a new thing but never planned to make it a permanent hobby.
- Class is too long.
- Square dancing was harder than they thought it would be.
- Didn't make a connection with other students or club members.
- Other responsibilities kept them from completing.
- Politics.
- Didn't feel they fit in.
- Didn't feel welcome.
- They were not having fun.



How do you solve these problems?

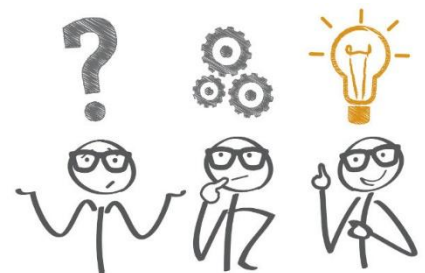
- Most important is that they are having fun. Entertain them, don't just teach them.
- Shorten class length – less calls followed by workshops maybe.
- Try to have social time between tips to allow for connections to be made. You must educate square angels to do this!
- Give them more dance time and less teach time. This will make the dance easier.
- Improve your teaching skills. Sometimes it's the teacher, not the student.
- Stay in touch between classes by making phone calls and sending emails. Phone calls from the caller or a club officer will often uncover frustrations the student is having. Address those frustrations as needed.
- There is nothing you can do if they just wanted to try it or have other responsibilities that keep them from completing class. You can invite them, but you can't make them come.

Why do we lose them after graduation? I don't know, but I can guess.

To start with, transition from class to club is difficult. Often, we graduate dancers and then ask them to come dance on a different night, at a different location, with many people they have never met, where the caller calls faster, and calls movements they don't think they've ever done, and dance with dancers who are not tolerant of their mistakes. And within a few months of dancing, they are asked to be the club Secretary. Really? Really!

Why else?

- Just wanted to try a new thing but never planned to make it a permanent hobby.
- Can't dance on the night your club dances.
- Didn't make a connection with other students or club members.
- Other responsibilities kept them from completing.
- Politics.
- Didn't feel they fit in.
- Didn't feel welcome.
- They were not having fun.



How do you solve these problems?

- First – be aware that these problems exist.
- Second – it is our responsibility to entertain them so gear down if you must.
- Hold lessons in the same location as your dance.
- Hold lessons the same night as your dance.
- Hold workshops before the dance to increase their floor time and expertise.
- Invite students to your dance while they are in lessons at no charge and have a tip they can dance.
- Make sure they are welcome by many club members.
- Offer them free membership for the first year.
- Involve them with banner stealing and retrieval – this will get them dancing and make them feel welcome because they were invited by a club member to go to other dances with them.
- Don't ask them to have host and hostess responsibilities in their first year.
- Don't ask them to hold an office until their third year of dancing.

Making Connections

(Issue 2022-4) **Source: Email from Dave Drinan, Dancer, Lafayette, Indiana**

Square Dancing is like commission sales. Clubs must be willing to sell the product to the community.

A good sales-person shrinks the world down until they find something in common with the person that wants to make a purchase. Once a common denominator has been found the salesman and the customer focus on that. Generally, this is a third person. If they both have had positive experiences with this third person, he or she becomes the focus of conversation and they each share experiences they have had with this individual.

The salesman never talks about price before this connection is made. When they get to the price most objections can be overcome more easily when an element of trust has been established.

What most dancers do not understand is that the club has to be able to connect with the prospective dancer in more than one way other than square dancing. This second connection will be the element that retains dancers and makes people look forward to coming to a dance because they know the other person will be there.

For example, I met a caller from Kankakee, Illinois. When I asked him what he did for a living I learned that he knew an uncle of mine that worked in the same factory. After that whenever he was calling in down State Illinois they would e-mail me and his wife would be my partner. This was 30 plus years ago when I was single.



IDEA: The first introductory night I want the experienced dancers to pair off with the prospective new dancers and for 30 minutes find out as much about the prospective dancers as possible. They talk to each other and at the end of the conversation the experienced dancer stands up and introduces the prospective new dancer to everyone present.

This shines a light on the new dancer and as the experienced dancers explain some information about the prospective new dancers there may be other people present that have the same common interests or know someone that they know. **Ultimately, this would introduce connectivity to the club in order to retain dancers.**

Keep Those New Dancers

(Issue 2022-6) Source: Caller & Leader, Mike Seastrom, California

When new dancers walk into the door of your hall to join you for the first time, what do you think is running through their minds? Think back, if possible, to the first time you walked into a hall to learn to square dance. If a friend, relative, co-worker, or neighbor brought you and introduced you to others in attendance, you were lucky. If you were courageous enough to walk in by yourself, how you were treated and received probably made a big difference in your decision to stay or leave and never come back.

They say that we only get one chance to make a first impression, so let's take a good look at not only what it takes to make that first impression a positive one, but what it takes to keep our new dancers coming back week after week and becoming new friends and members of our club.



There are a few things that already need to be in place when you open the doors for the first time to your new dancer program. When there are more than a few members of your club helping and attending your new dancer dances, it's extremely important to make assignments ahead of time. If no one is asked specifically to do a job, it probably won't get done so make sure to have a written list of those members helping out.

Surely a person or couple will be taking names, money, and personal information of those attending as they come in the door, but what about the other important things going on? At least a couple of people, (ideally as many as four to six members) need to be assigned to act as host and hostess positioned around the entrance and inside after your new dancers sign in. **These folks are not only verbally welcoming everyone coming in the door, they are introducing themselves, exchanging and learning names, and introducing people to one another.**

Get to know your new dancers a little as individuals. Knowing some personal information about new acquaintances helps you remember their names, because you can associate a visual or mental image about them. It also gives you the opportunity to share some of that personal information with others as you introduce them, and it will in turn help those folks who have like experiences or hobbies, to more easily converse with each other. This "social tuning" can really get a good verbal buzz going before people even start to dance and it can make the evening even more fun. Successful clubs have done this at their regular dances for years, as a way of welcoming and getting to know their guests while getting their dance nights started.



That brings me to another point. Try to make each 'new dancer dance' or 'new dancer evening' a party. It may sound like more work, but everyone likes going to a party and it will give your new dancers another reason to come back week after week. Celebrate Square Dance Month in September, celebrate the first day of fall, celebrate Columbus Day, Halloween and on and on. Put up some simple decorations and you'll find it really makes it seem like a party is going on. These are simple things that can be delegated to members of your club. Be sure to involve your new dancers later on down the line.

Always have food available and when possible have the food you serve go along with the theme of the party for the evening. Food and square dancing go together and it always seems like more of a party when there is food. You can also use the food you serve for your theme. Have a Fruit Night, Pie Night, Men's Cake Bake and so on. Use your imagination, have fun with the food and themes you choose, but keep it simple so that no one feels burdened or inconvenienced.

Bob Osgood, the long time editor of Sets In Order, Square Dance Magazine, and the caller leader that started CALLERLAB, said long ago that the **'dance is the bricks that our club and our dance nights are built with, but the social fun is the mortar that holds all the bricks together'**. Pay some real attention to the detail that makes up the social part of your club and dance events and the extra effort will really pay off in the long run.

Many leaders in our activity have been very careful in the last ten to twenty years to eliminate certain words from our vocabulary that might be offensive or sound like too much work for your members and new dancers. I used to think we were just being too picky, but I have seen this change really have an impact on my own new dancers and I now believe that it really makes a difference.

The first one is calling a new dancer a 'class member', 'student', 'greeny' or something like that. They are new dancers, because they're dancing the first time the music starts and should be recognized for that. Although this may sound like a small thing, it subconsciously recognizes their accomplishment and unlike some of the other terms above, is much more positive.

I also found that by welcoming new dancers the first night to the "(Your Club's Name) New Dancer Dance", that I had a much more positive impact then when I previously welcomed them to the "(Your Club's Name) New Dancer Class". It's

much more motivating to your new dancers to come back week after week to a dance than (yawn) another class. **Think about it, would you rather go to a party every week to dance or go to class?**



Make each night a dance and not a close order drill or rigid event, and it will add so much to the fun. It's really easy to do singing calls right away, get the new dancers singing with you, shouting back at you with various calls, and just plain enjoying themselves. It's all about the FUN every night and every tip!

Lose phrases like, "When you learn to really dance", or "When you get good enough to dance with our club". They're dancing from the first night and it's much more positive to be encouraging. Say things like, "You are doing so well", and "Isn't this dance of ours good fun?"

Try to be encouraging with comments like, "Don't worry, we were all new dancers before and we can really understand what you're going through". I know these things sound so picky, but just making the attempt to be positive and encouraging can go a long way in making your new dancers feel more comfortable. It's important for them to know that their feelings are normal and understood by the experienced dancers and club members.

Offer some additional learning opportunities to those that need it. Sometimes just another walk through of a call between tips is enough. Occasionally it really helps to schedule a separate time, in a fun and social setting (with food) at someone's house, to dance and practice what has been taught. These efforts can make the difference in keeping new dancers coming back instead of becoming frustrated and dropping out.

Have someone assigned to personally call those new dancers who miss a new dancer dance. It lets them know they were missed and that someone was thinking about them. New dancers will be absent less if they know, in the back of their minds, that people miss them and know when they are not in attendance.



If you have someone good enough with email and you have email addresses for your new dancers and members, an email can be sent out a day or two after your new dancer dance to thank everyone for coming and list what was taught. You can also remind them about the next event,

mention the theme, and any changes in time or venue. I've seen some groups make up fun questions about what was taught in these emails. This short email can go a long way in connecting with your new dancers and club angels and is another opportunity for your new dancers to learn and remember what they were dancing.

Include your new dancers in as many club events as possible. Make them honorary members of your club right away and send them the club newsletter. Put your new dancers' names in the newsletter under the section for birthdays, anniversaries and accomplishments as often as possible. These little steps can go a long way in keeping your new dancers with your program and eventually becoming regular members in your club. Treating them like royalty is a great

way to make them feel good about themselves and their achievements as new dancers and a terrific way to keep them coming back. That's really what it's all about. Have some great new dancer dances and have a great new dancer program!

About the Writer: Mike Seastrom has been dancing since 1960, and calling since 1963. He started dancing after losing a bet to his mother and calling when he tried to show his 6th grade teacher what "square dancing was really like". He taught his first class in 1963 after borrowing money from his folks to buy a small sound system and was able to pay them back before the class was over.



After receiving his doctorate in 1976, Mike joined CALLERLAB in 1977, and has been Chairman of several committees, as well as an annual presenter for interest sessions and seminars at CALLERLAB conventions. Mike served on the Board of Governors from 1984 to 2003 and completed a two-year term as the CALLERLAB Chairman of the Board in 1994. He was also awarded the Milestone Award in 2001 by two of his mentors, Bob Van Antwerp and Bob Osgood. He submits the monthly CALLERLAB Viewpoint articles to "American Square Dance" magazine and his articles have appeared in various publications around the world.

Mike teaches, calls Basic through C-1, prompts contras, and also enjoys doing dance party events when his schedule allows. He is a strong advocate for the Multi-Cycle Method of teaching new dancers and enjoyed a very successful program with the Valley Trailers Square Dance club in California. Mike currently teaches for the Buckles & Bows.

Mike records for Rhythm Records, regularly does Caller Clinics, and helped produce an Introduction to Contra Dancing package for R & R Video, with the California Contra Callers Association.

Calling has given Mike the opportunity to travel extensively in the United States, Canada, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Germany, Costa Rica, New Zealand, Australia, and Japan. Mike enjoys dancing as well as calling and still feels that "dancing as a team of eight" is the best recreation in the world. As a practicing dentist, calling is an avocation for "Dr. Mike." He feels so fortunate to receive such tremendous support from his wonderful and understanding family and staff.

Remember When ...

(Issue 2019-6) - by Editor Claudia Littlefair

Remember when you first started learning to square dance? For us it was 25 years ago. I remember . . .

- Being amazed at our caller's patience and skill. How did he us back home every time?!
- That for a long time I couldn't remember the names of the calls or do them at home, but by some small miracle I could do them the following week at the next class.
- The first time we danced to a different caller - Dave and I looked at each other wondering if the caller was speaking English.
- Apologizing to everyone because I was a "new" dancer, assuming everyone in the square were better dancers.
- Thinking I was the reason the square broke down (even when it wasn't).
- The fast speed of the calls compared to the speed at the lessons.
- Being constantly reassured and encouraged by the experienced dancers.
- That the reason we kept on dancing was because of the constant reassurance and encouragement by the experienced dancers.

Never underestimate the power of an experienced dancer. Their role is vital and significant. They can be the reason your new dancers will continue coming – or not.

They Are In The Door, Now What?

(Issue 2022-4) - by Roy Gotta, Keynote Speaker, Northern New Jersey Square Dance Asso. April 2018

You've done all your marketing. You've done your best to get dancers in the door, and you have a group of eager dancers ready to join our activity. **What are you doing to keep them?** What are you doing to make them want to continue being a part of your club?



During her Chairman's speech at this year's CALLERLAB convention, Patty Greene said *"It's what happens when we get them in the door that we don't do such a good job with."* She was focused on the caller's responsibility to be open, welcoming, encouraging, respectful, and friendly. We as dancers and club leaders need to focus on those same attributes and qualities that embody our motto, "friendship set to music."

We have become so focused on the dance, the successful execution of the figures, and the quality of the callers, that we have forgotten one of the main reasons square dancing became so popular when it did. **That reason is the sociability, the fun and friendship that made the activity so inviting.** Sure, the music, the choreography, and the exercise with your partner are major factors, but you need the full package to remain a viable club. **The clubs that are retaining their members, and growing, are those that have realized that the appeal of square dancing is more than just the dance.**

How do we fix this? It really isn't that hard.

Personal contact: Do you know their names? Do you know what they do or did for a living? Do you know if they have any children or grandchildren? Do you know where they live? Have a conversation with these people. Engage them. Now don't go badgering them with all these questions all at once, but say hello to them at each dance, talk to them for a little while, get to know them, **BE FRIENDLY.** Think back to when you started. Did this make a difference?

Treatment at the Dance: Did you invite them to square up with you? It doesn't have to be every tip, or even every dance or class, but at least every once in a while. If a number of the established club members are doing this, it creates a welcoming atmosphere that will make them want to come back. At the very least it will not make them not want to come back.

Newer dancers are going to make mistakes. These are indirectly pointed out to them when they are corrected while dancing. **This is negative reinforcement. Be sure to comment on all the things they did correct, how well they are doing.** Say something like *"You should have seen us when we started."* Always say something positive. At the end of the evening, they may not know exactly why, but they will have had a good time and will want to come back.

When you go square dancing, is it just to go to a club to execute some figures, hopefully listen to some good songs, and hope the other dancers don't mess up the squares? Or perhaps do you go to socialize with some friends who you probably met through square dancing and still share your fondness of the square dance activity?



A couple months ago I was at a Hunterdon Flutterwheels dance. This is a club that is growing and thriving. I was impressed with something I saw. There was a dancer who is no longer able to drive or dance. I believe his wife is in a nursing home and he is in an assisted living facility. One of the club members picked him up and brought him to the dance, so he could

socialize with friends and enjoy the sights and sounds of the square dance. The disabled dancer just missed being around his square dance friends. I was impressed by this action and thought to myself, *"This is why this club is so successful."*

Have you lost dancers because they no longer like to drive at night? How about offering to give them a ride to and from the dance? We want our dancers to feel good when they leave a dance. **Good calling and good dancing goes a long way towards achieving this, but other aspects of the dance will also affect this.** For instance, have you ever had members of the club complain about this or that during the dance? Whether or not they are part of the discussion, this

will affect other dancers. Maybe not directly, but negative vibes pile up, just as easily as positive ones. **If you feel the need to complain, try to do it one on one, and quietly. On the other hand, if you feel really good about something, let lots of people know.**

Does your club have any non-dancing activities? A lot of clubs have a summer picnic. Sometimes, you already have people interested in taking lessons in the fall. Why not invite them to the picnic? How about inviting some of your non-dancing friends to the picnic? You are exposing them to the square dance “community”. It gets them into the conversation. Does your club do any other social activities, like a bowling outing, or going to a ballgame, or a movie night. If so, have you included your students?

Finally, after the dance, some of us sometimes go out to get a bite to eat. Sometimes some of us get together before the dance. Is it always with the same people, or have you invited the newest members of your club? All I am really trying to say here, is that it’s easy for us to fall into familiar patterns. We go to the dance, we talk to the same people, and we go home.

We need to make a concerted effort to engage our newest members, to make them feel welcome, to make them want to come back. Not just because they like the dancing, but because they like the atmosphere, the sense of community, and most of all, the people.

When Younger Dancers Come

(Issue 2022-3) - **Excerpt from Lisa Minton’s Post, SSD Public Facebook Page**

In response to the questions about how we get so many young people, I am posting the following ten guidelines that we follow regarding SSD. Remember, it’s not about a list of calls.

1. Provide a safe and welcome environment for everyone and all ages.
2. Provide them with quality entertainment and dancing.
3. Get them dancing as soon as they walk in, encourage them to stay and dance the night, and return next week.
4. Encourage them to bring their friends, family, or anyone else they think might want to try it, anytime.
5. Stop calling them students, newbies, greenies, or any other isolating term and refer to them as dancers, or new dancers.
6. Let them form their own social structure, and dance with whoever they choose. Do not assign partners or squares, just encourage them to get up and dance when the music starts. Respect them individually and don’t try to make them see things the way you do.
7. Stop asking them how old they are, telling them how cute they are, or saying how nice it is to see young people square dancing. They are not museum pieces or pets – they are people. Treat them like any dancer you meet, regardless of their age or size.
8. Get to know them as people, learn about their interests and hobbies so that you understand their social needs, and what they want from a social activity.
9. Let them dance. They are not there to bring refreshments, serve as officers, run the club, or pay dues. They are there to dance, enjoy themselves, make friends, meet a partner, get their exercise, and just pay their money and have fun.
10. Let them know they are more than just dancers, they are part of a movement to rebuild and preserve a part of the American cultural legacy for future generations. They are also part of a new and growing SD counterculture that is cool, strong, inclusive, modern and separate from the negative stereotypes sometimes associated with traditional square dancing.

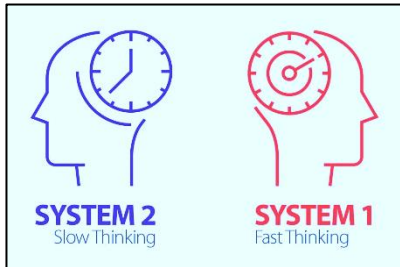


Thinking Fast & Slow for Square Dancers

(Issue 2021-4) - by Caller Coach Calvin Campbell

Have you ever thought about what has to happen in a dancer's brain when they square dance?

There is a book named *"Thinking Fast and Slow"* by Daniel Kahneman that can be applied to square dance calling and square dancing.



The human brain uses two systems. The first system, Mr Kahneman labels as System 1. **This system "operates automatically and quickly and no sense of voluntary control."** Round dancers often use System 1. Once a round dancer starts a memorized sequence of moves in a dance routine, such as a two-step, System 1 controls most of the movements.

Mr. Kahneman states that **"System 2 allocates attention to the effortful mental activities that demand it, including complex computations. The operations of System 2 are often associated with subjective experience of agency, choice and concentration."**

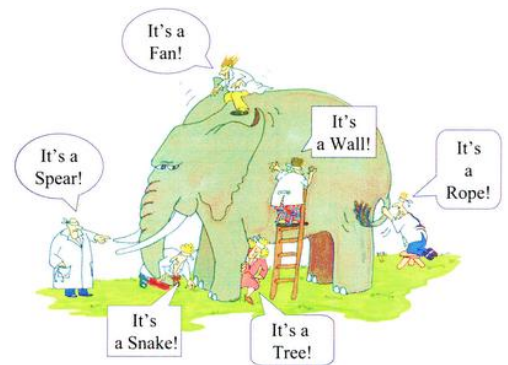
That sounds a lot like how we Modern Western Square Dance now. Every time a dancer hears a caller speak a square dance "basic", the dancer searches their memory for a definition of the movement that "basic" describes. If they correctly understand the application of the "basic" in the context of what they are presently doing, they can execute the "basic" correctly.

If the dancer is an experienced dancer, their brain uses mostly System 1 because the information is firmly implanted in their memory. If they are new dancers, they use System 2 because they aren't really sure what the caller means.

If they are an experienced dancer and the call is trying to keep-them-on-toes then System 2 gets involved. Almost all learning requires constant interaction between System 1 and System 2. **System 1 does not take over until new dancers have spent years practicing square dancing.**

Modern Western Square Dancing complicates the problem. Modern Western Square Dancing requires that eight team members in a square all understand the definition of each "basic" the same way and how each "basic" is applied in the context of what they are currently doing. That is expecting a lot from a square of dancers with varied experience and skills.

Square dancing and other team dances are only possible because the dancers practice together frequently. They practice the "basics" hundreds of times from dozens of formations and arrangements of dancers.



However, something simple such as 'right and left through' is not always interpreted the same way by all square dancers. Some square dancers may have difficulties dancing 'right and left through' from formations such as 'ocean waves'. Who is the person opposite you? Who is the person you need to 'courtesy turn'? Each context requires a different set of movements at the starting point and different actions to reach the ending point. The dancers need to know how the definition applies in many different formations. All of this involves System 2.

Any involvement with System 2 causes "stress". In the present edition of Modern Western Square Dancing, the stress level is often high. The dancer seldom knows if what they are dancing is right or wrong for extended periods of each tip.

The dancer can only be successful if all the dancers in a square have practiced every "basic" from dozens of different formations and arrangements hundreds of times over months and perhaps years. At that point, the knowledge resides in memory, and the action is carried out by System 1.

In most other dance formats, dancers are taught a series of repeating movements, usually based on the phrases of music. These sequences of movements are practiced until they can be quickly recalled from the brain by System 1 without having to involve System 2.

Traditional Square Dances and Contra Dances work on set sequences of movements. These are known as dance routines or modules. They are blocks of information that are practiced, processed, and stored in the memory of the dancers. They can be fitted together like pieces of a puzzle to produce dances that please the mind and body.

Modern Western Square Dancing has adopted a different system. It has broken down the dance routines into many, many small chunks we call “basics”. Each “basic” is defined very precisely. Sometimes the description of a “basic” can contain several paragraphs. Callers are supposed to know how to mix and match these “basics” to produce dances that please the mind and the body.

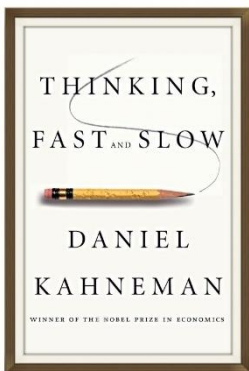
The mind and the body of the vast majority of people prefer to work more with System 1 actions. In dancing, the majority of dancers think of dancing as blocks or modules of action rather than as collections of individual short movements (basics). To put it into square dance terminology, dancers like strings of commands they have danced many times much better than they like close-order-drills.



Close-order-drill requires the constant consultation of System 1 with System 2 to hopefully get it right. This, in turn, causes stress, which results in fatigue. Most square dancers don't mind thinking a little, but don't make them think a lot.

As callers, we often hear other callers talk about “keeping the dancers on their toes”. **The phrase essentially means keeping the dancers under constant stress.** That may be what a small population of square dancers desire, but it's certainly not what most dancers want.

Average dancers don't need to be kept-on-their-toes. They are stressed every time they get up to dance. What they have stored in their memory is often in direct conflict with what the caller is telling them to do. Why? Because, in 2020, many callers feel every sequence of “basics” must be different than any other sequence of “basics” the dancer has heard before. This is in direct conflict with what the minds of most dancers want to hear.



It's a lose-lose situation. Modern Western Square Dancing is killing itself off by demanding more from most newer dancers than they can deliver until they have had years of practice. It also explains why, when square dancing became square puzzle solving, that many dancers left the recreation and why we can't recruit replacements.

All of the above is fact. It's not speculation. The proof is laid out clearly in “Thinking Fast and Slow”.

About the Author: Calvin Campbell is a long time and renown square dance caller. He has written numerous articles and several books on the subject and conducted many workshops. The most recent book is “All About Modules”. Cal has been leading Community Dances and Beginner Dance Parties for over 60 years. He is the senior author of the book “Dancing For Busy People” and the author of “Teaching New Dancers”. Cal has been a member of the CALLERLAB Board of Governors for many years and is a Mile Stone Award recipient. This is the highest award CALLERLAB can bestow on any individual. The primary purpose of the award is to recognize outstanding and significant contributions to the field of square dancing.



Advice for Square Angels (Helpers)

(Issue 2019-6) - by Bill Van Melle, Behind the Mike Newsletter, Australia, October, 2019

*This article was reprinted from the September issue of News and Notes by Stephen Noseck. With classes underway in the Northern Hemisphere and some new dancer classes starting in various areas in the Southern Hemisphere, it is a pertinent article and a reminder to all callers to "school their angels" for new dancer success. **Please read through this list and keep it in mind, even if you think you've heard it all before, as the success of the class depends as much on the attitude of the club as on the talent of the students. Much of this advice is appropriate in any square dance situation, but it's especially so with newer dancers.** Your Lesson success starts here; don't blow it because of bad habits or because you did not know.*

Callers, You are the Leader, do your part. Share this with your Club and Class Coordinator.

Be friendly. We want new dancers to have a good time, so please make them feel welcome. Ask them to dance with you, rather than letting them fend for themselves. Talk to them during the breaks.

Don't push. This is a special case of being friendly. If a class member is unsure of a call, some of you angels may experience a great temptation to grab the person and push him or her into position. DON'T DO THIS! Really -- God, I hate to use all caps like that, but this is really important. At the very least, this is simply rude behavior. Remember, the object is not for you to get through the sequence; it's for the *class members* to learn. They don't learn by being shoved.

Do your best to be in the right position yourself, hold out your hand expectantly and/or exert gentle (I repeat, *gentle*) hand pressure consistent with the flow of the call, but never, never grab or shove. It is far better to let your square break down than to start shoving people around to fix it.

Squares breaking down is great feedback to the caller (you as the Caller should see this too) about what moves the dancers are having trouble with. If you observe others shoving people around (sometimes there are visiting angels who fancy themselves good dancers by the amount of pushing they do), please take them aside after the tip and encourage them to behave themselves.

If someone is already in the right position but is looking around frantically as if lost, the best thing you can do is nod and smile. Not that you shouldn't be smiling even when the square is breaking down.

Balanced squares. If you can do so unobtrusively, attempt to balance the number of club and class members in a square. Experienced dancers in a square help to be good examples (please do), and reduce the likelihood that one dancer's error will take down the whole square, depriving the other dancers of practice.

The problem that arises time and again is that club members remember that it's important for class members to dance, and as result neglect to square up at all until they're dragged from the sidelines to fill out the last square. Of course, that square ends up being club-heavy, while the class members in their enthusiasm have already formed very class-heavy squares.

Don't let this happen - get out there when the music starts! One of the best ways to achieve balance is to preferentially ask class members to be your partner. Just think--if every class member was partnered with a club member, we'd automatically have balanced squares.

Class members have priority. Remember, they're here to learn, and so they need to dance. But many are shy, or not completely comfortable yet asking for a dance. If you see a class member sitting out, offer to give up your spot in the square, especially if you're in a club-heavy square. Of course, if you all do your job of asking class members to dance with you, we won't need to go bumping club members like this.

Don't play-caller. Sure, you can whisper small hints to people who are momentarily confused, but while a tip is in progress, don't try to do any teaching or fixing on your own (and if you're on the sidelines, don't jump into the square

trying to help). There's already a caller up front with a microphone, and we'd like to train new dancers to pay attention to him (or her). Reserve lengthier problem solving to breaks - ask the caller for help with the move that was in question.

No frills. *Never initiate* a frill with a class member. In fact, don't even do them with club members during class tips. Frills make dancing more fun but interfere with learning, even if a class member is not directly involved in your frill. Save your frills for the club tips at the end of the evening. Class members typically don't get interested in frills until December or January.

Examples of frills are the twirl on *Weave the Ring*, the highland fling *Do Sa Do*, and the swing in the middle of *Sides Promenade Halfway Round*. And please dance hands up, at least for the class - it's still the standard styling for Mainstream and Plus in our area and across the country.

Positive? Or Negative? You Decide

(Issue 2019-4) - by Editor Claudia Littlefair

At a conference, a dance group played a game called “Go Viral”. First one person was secretly dubbed the “negative inspector general” and had to “infect” other people with negativity by scowling. Once someone was infected, he or she had to infect three others by scowling. At the end of the game, the group was asked to identify the source of negativity, which was easy to do.

Then the game was replayed, but reversed. One person was secretly dubbed the “positive inspector general”. Instead of scowling and infecting people with negativity, that person smiled and infected people with joy. The problem? At the end of the game, nobody knew where the joy came from; it was hard to pinpoint the source of happiness.

The point? Bring the “positive inspector general” to your dance! If there is positive energy, people will come, and people will return! This is especially important at our summer dances where newly graduated dancers are trying their best to remember and dance the mountain of calls and information that they’ve gathered during the year. To complicate things even further, they are hearing and dancing to other callers – often for the first time, and are squaring up with dancers they don’t know. It can be overwhelming.

It always surprises me to hear experienced dancers complain about “these new dancers” and their lack of skills. Keep complaining, keep giving dirty looks, and they won’t be coming back. Can we really afford that? Is there an alternative? You bet! Be positive! Help them, encourage them, smile at them, give them gentle guidance, and give them hope that through repetition (which can only be gained by coming to dances) that they will get better. When something goes well, acknowledge and celebrate with them. **Every person in the square is valuable - without each person we have no square.**

Encouraging New Dancers

(Issue 2019-2) - by Editor Claudia Littlefair

ALL new dancers benefit from encouragement, patience and positive support as they learn our complex program. Thankfully, these are gifts that all experienced dancers have to give.

During the lengthy learning period, guidance in the form of pushing and pulling, thoughtless or disrespectful comments, comparisons, evaluations, or assessments by fellow dancers can make the difference between a new dancer staying or leaving our activity. What we do and what we say can make, or break, a dancer.

To be supportive means to respect the many factors that affect how quickly a dancer will learn. These include such things as age, mobility, floor time, lesson attendance, dance background, retention, and learning ability.

Letter to Square Angels

(Issue 2018-7) - by Tim Marriner, 2014

First of all, I would like to thank you for your support. The area needs dancers like you taking an active role in recruiting new members. The local dancing community must have new members for it to grow. The activity thrives off the new energy beginner's manifest. They remind all of us that we too were once beginners.

Next, I would like to remind you of your responsibilities. This session is for new people to learn the basics of square dancing and not a workshop for you to attend to brush up on fundamentals. If you have not been dancing on a regular basis and are going back through to review, you really are not an angel. Having sponsored someone to attend does not guarantee or reserve floor space for you. **Angels are utilized to fill the odd numbers of dancers in order to complete a square.** If square number cards or a computer rotation system is being utilized, you will be added as needed and should follow the number indicated on the card or screen. From time to time you still may be moved from square to square or may be asked to sit out to accommodate a late arriving new dancer. If numbers are not in use please allow the new dancers to square up first and then fill in where needed or as directed.

Lastly, this is a new dancer session, and they deserve the right to learn properly. Please, no extra flourishes, short cuts, or excessive talking while teaching. The goal is to provide the best possible learning environment. If a dancer has a question about a call, let the caller teaching know, but do not try to teach from the floor as it disrupts others. Proper hands and positioning are essential! We can still have fun and dance proper at the same time.

One of our main goals for the new dancer is fun! With your help, we can provide family entertainment and promote community fellowship, through the folk art of Square Dancing. We can harness new dancer's enthusiasm to attract more people for our next new dancer session to perpetuate this beautiful dance heritage. **Thank you again for your understanding and assistance.**



About the Author: Tim was an international caller, and a Certified Caller Coach. His passion was working with callers to make them better, and he wrote several papers on calling that can be found on the CALLERLAB website. Tim passed away in August, 2016.

Exceptional Learning Resources Just A Click Away

(Issue 2024-2) Source: North Shore Squares, Chicago

Looking for HOW-TO videos for calls in the Social Square Dance, Mainstream or Plus programs? Or a handbook written in plain English explaining each call? Or flash cards?



All of these teaching resources can be found on Chicago's North Shore Squares website: <https://www.northshoresquares.com/>

Read more about this innovative club that built up from zero members to 50+ members in 18 months! Click here for the complete story as told by caller Bruce Holmes, Evanston, Illinois:

<https://knowledge.callerlab.org/north-shore-squares-zero-to-50-in-18-months/>. Bruce shares his personal experience of square dancing, how he ended up learning to call, and finally how using the Social Square

Dance (SSD) program helped build up the club by offering classes 2 or 3 times a year. There were many obstacles to overcome and important changes to make along the way. Today they have expanded to 5 clubs in the Chicago's North Shore area and they are all thriving.

How May I Help?

(Issue 2019-2) - by Barry Clasper, Longtime Caller & Educator

To help or not to help? That is the question. Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the confusion of others or, by meddling, save the square. (Sorry, Willie).

There are situations in which we expect to be helped. Self-service massage parlors are rare. There are other situations in which we would prefer to handle things ourselves; "Please Daddy, it's my train!" One of the more common sources of interpersonal conflict (academic euphemism for "fight") is the failure to understand when to help and when to leave well enough alone. This is nowhere more true than in Square Dancing, particularly at the Challenge levels.

At just about any Challenge dance [editor's note: or any dance program] you don't have to look hard to find somebody who is upset because they've been helped, or because they haven't been helped, or because their proffered help was spurned. Often this situation is extremely upsetting to the individuals involved. People leave dances, sometimes even a club or tape group, over what they feel to be an inappropriate ration of help.



Having spent considerable time as both a "helper" and "helpee", sometimes concurrently, I feel I have developed some insights which may serve to rectify this problem - to, ah - help, as it were.

Herewith, then, are my **Helpful Hints for Hinting Helpfully**:

1. **Help for the Right Reasons.** Ask yourself the question, "Why am I so eager to help, anyway?"

I think there are three basic answers to this question:

- a. **So I can display my knowledge (i.e. show off).** At some time or other, we have all heard somebody expounding on how their superior dancing skill and expert assistance enabled a square composed entirely of hacks and clods (with the exception, of course, of you-know-who) to make every sequence. Such squares are usually wonders to behold; seven bewildered people surrounded by one whirling dervish who leaps about from place to place, individually positioning each person, hollering instructions and cues, and providing lengthy tutorials during the inevitable periods of standing around.



This is not "help". This is ego gratification at the expense of seven innocent people.

b. **So the square makes the sequence.**

This is a better reason than the first, but still short of ideal. **It's not the square that makes the sequence; the people make the sequence.** This may seem a subtle difference, but it reflects an important dancing attitude. If you allow yourself to focus on the square, you have implicitly relegated the individuals comprising it to a secondary status. This attitude may permit the intensity of help to escalate to inappropriate levels, sometimes approaching violent crime. Since the square is of primary importance, we are willing to sacrifice individuals to the "greater good". "Who cares if Joe Klutz feels like he's been mugged, we got the allemande left didn't we?"

Which brings me to the ideal reason to offer help.

c. **To show somebody the way.**

It is often said that Square Dancing is a team sport. In the ideal case, eight dancers and a caller contribute to an experience that is exhilarating precisely because it can only be accomplished by these nine people working in close cooperation and understanding. To the extent that some participants cannot smoothly execute their roles, the experience is marred. No matter how skilled you are, you cannot dance somebody else's part and still attain that wonderful peak. It's just not the same.

Therefore, it's in all our interests to help those individuals in the square who are having difficulty with their role. **But our goal in helping should be to help them understand, not just to "get them**



through it". Someone who arrives in the correct position in a dazed and bewildered state is not likely to be any more successful the next time. We should strive to provide our assistance in a way that permits the person being helped to learn. In this way, we are contributing to their development as dancers, not just the success of a single tip.

The following points serve to elaborate on how this may be accomplished.

2. Help at the Right Time

When I was in flying training, I was amazed at the mistakes my instructor would allow me to make. I can remember asking, "Aren't you going to take control?", as the aircraft jinked and staggered its way towards the airfield in a travesty of a final approach. His reply was always calm; "You're doing fine. A bit more power, nose down a bit". Only at the last moment would he take the controls, after letting me work my way through as many non-fatal mistakes as possible. It makes for an intense learning experience!

We need a few more like that in square dancing. We've all had the experience of being helped, sometimes with great force, at the very instant that we had it all figured out. Isn't that frustrating? Some people will drop into help mode the first time they see you make a mistake, or even look uncertain. Thereafter, they help you with everything for the rest of the tip (dance, weekend, your life).

It is important to give people the opportunity to do it themselves. Don't help unless:

- a. it's requested, or
- b. the person is clearly confused (so to speak), or
- c. the person has started to make an unrecoverable mistake.



3. Help with Appropriate Force

The basic principle in offering help should be "less is better, none is best." Given this idea, I suggest the following escalating levels of help:

- a. **No help at all:** By far the best sort of help. Dance your own part. Be where you're supposed to be when you're supposed to be. Give others the maximum opportunity to see positions and formations by being precise and correct in your own dancing. Don't take shortcuts, dance all movements completely and to the music. When dancing material involving complex formations, do a surreptitious check before moving from your spot to ensure everyone else has seen the formation. Once you leave, their task is an order of magnitude more difficult. Be firm in your use of handholds and hand pressures during the execution of calls. Limp appendages during moves like Relay the Shadow or Follow Your Leader, can throw somebody who is unsure.



- b. **Point the way (discreetly):** An inconspicuous gesture to indicate a direction or a target position is often the only clue people need to handle their part of the call. No marks awarded for flamboyance or clever charades.

- c. **Verbal cues:** Only a word or short phrase, combined with a gesture. No dissertations, just a clue.
- d. **Hand pressure:** A nudge or a touch on the arm or shoulder to get their attention, or hand pressure to indicate a turning direction. No blunt objects, please.
- e. **Laying on of hands:** As an absolute last resort, grasp an arm or shoulder (gently, always gently) and move the person into position - but only if you can do it without leaving your own proper position. If you leave your rightful spot to tend to somebody else, you may sufficiently distort the formation that others become confused. Now you've compounded the problem!

4. Know When to Stop

Just as you shouldn't help unless it's absolutely necessary, don't continue to help when it's no longer needed. A single mistake does not necessitate a whole evening of continuous assistance.



A tougher call to make is when you are asked to help by people whose dancing skills exceed their self-confidence. If you continue to help past the point where they actually need it, you may be breeding a dependence that will hamper them later. Make sure they dance everything they are capable of and provide the encouragement they need to build their self-confidence - but, again, gently. Encouragement is almost as controversial as help (when does encouragement become pressure?)

So much for the helpers. Being a "helpee", however, also requires certain skills. Here is my Helpee's Handbook:

1. Admit When You Need Help

Everybody needs help sometime. If you're confused or unsure, ask for help. You will usually find that those you ask are more than willing to provide it.

2. Don't Panic

As is the case with most pressure situations, dithering about in a panic when the square starts to look strange will accomplish nothing. Instead, concentrate, examine the formation, recite the rule of the call, force yourself to think.



3. Let People Know You're in Trouble



Don't force the other dancers in the square to read your mind if you have a problem with a call. Do or say something to let them know. There should be a significant difference in your demeanor that demarks the "I'm in deep trouble" state from the "I know what I'm doing" state. I usually just say "Help, I'm lost". It's kind of boring but it gets the job done.

As a corollary to this, keep your eyes open for help that is being offered. Don't expect someone to escort you to your position and tuck you in. You have to cooperate and be receptive.

4. Use Recovery Strategies

There are some easy tricks that might help you recover your position even if you have no idea what just transpired:

- a. **Look for the hole.** If you're the only one who is at sea, there is usually a hole somewhere in the formation, conspicuous by your absence.
- b. **Go With the Flow.** Good callers tend to use choreography that flows. If you follow the body flow there is a decent chance that you're headed in roughly the right direction.
- c. **Be Flexible (be a girl, or head or side etc.).** If you find you're not where you're supposed to be, just assume your new identity. Who knows, you may find a new thrill in life. If you keep the square going there is an excellent chance that you will get an opportunity to fix the problem later.
- d. **Watch Opposites and Counterparts.** If you're confused, keep an eye on your opposite. If your opposite is also confused (or is watching you), look for your counterpart in another square. DON'T use this as a dancing technique. It's a recovery technique, only to be used after you've become completely lost.

5. Keep Dancing, Don't Stop to Analyze.

If something happens that you don't understand, wait until the tip is finished to mull it over. Thinking about something that's over while you're still dancing is sure death. I speak from bitter personal experience.



6. Say Thanks

This seems sort of obvious but is often overlooked. Let people know you appreciate their help.

I recognize that this deliberate, reasoned approach is difficult to implement in the heat of battle. That doesn't mean, however, that we shouldn't strive to attain the ideal. The next time somebody becomes upset with your attempts at assistance, ask yourself where you might have fallen short. The next time you feel you did not receive help that you wanted, ask yourself whether you were clear in indicating your need. **In this way, we can help each other to attain new levels of dancing pleasure.**



J. PROGRAMS FOR NEW DANCERS

Witnessing Generational Change (CALLERLAB 2024 - The Proposal)

(Issue 2024-3) Source: GCA Call Sheet Newsletter, Spring 2024, Editorial by Allan Hurst

Over the last few years, we've seen a generational change at CALLERLAB, resulting in an organization that's moving to become more flexible and agile, and a willingness to try some new things ("everything old is new again!") that will help make square dancing and square dance calling and teaching easier.



I feel that the SSD (Social Square Dancing) program was the result of the prior and incoming generations of CALLERLAB leadership working together to create an easier way to teach square dancing. For the first time, callers were handed not just a teach order, but a timed 12 week structured syllabus paired with teaching/check choreography.

In a related activity, the Choreographic Applications Committee (chaired by Dottie Welch and vice-chaired by Doren McBroom) realized that a new generation of incoming callers needed a more structured and accessible set of teaching resources.

The amazing result was <https://teaching.callerlab.org>, which provides the following information for every Basic, Mainstream, Plus, and A1 call:

- Definition
- Standard Applications
- Call Analysis
- Sample Modules
- Teaching Choreography and Tips
- Other Related Tips
- Extended Applications

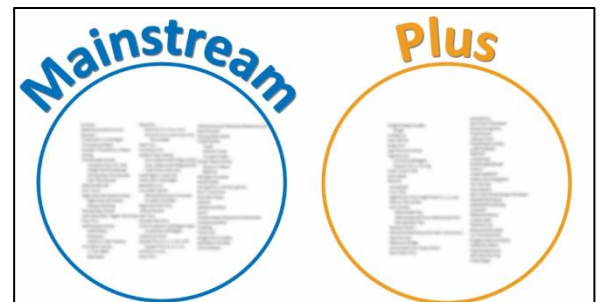
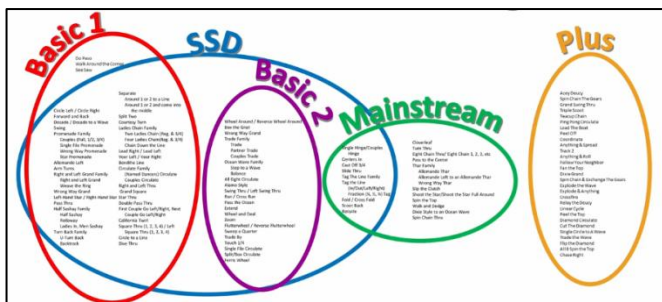
If only this had been available 25+ years ago, when I was learning to call! Even now, as a moderately experienced caller, I find new gems of knowledge to glean every time I access the site.

I'm already rewriting much of my own SSD teaching choreography that I created just a year ago, simply because the bounty of information available from the Teaching site is just that good. If you're a teaching caller who hasn't yet checked out the site, you're doing yourself and your dancers a disservice.

But this project is also a result or a reflection of the generational change taking place inside CALLERLAB. **We have a new generation of leadership which is computer- and technology-literate, and who understand the concepts and power of websites and social media.**

Another example of generational change: CALLERLAB Chair Ted Lizotte made a proposal that would have caused a huge commotion a decade ago, but which seemed to be quite well received this year.

In short, he proposed that Basic, Mainstream, and Plus—three levels with highly dissimilar counts of calls—be “normalized” into two sets of calls: Mainstream and Plus.



While details need to be worked out over the coming year and presented for discussion and voting at next year's CALLERLAB convention, Ted proposed that we combine Basic and Mainstream to form a new level called simply "Mainstream" (Jon Jones later suggested that the name "Social Square Dancing" be retained for this initial level), with about 50 calls. That would be similar to our current SSD program.

Everything else would move up into a new Plus program of...about 50 (maybe 60) calls, with a similar teaching guide and choreo examples to SSD.

The point of this? For a change, the answer isn't the same as the prior generation's cry of "Make it simpler for new dancers!". Instead, the answer is to make learning square dancing a more structured and consistent experience for dancers and callers.

That second part is not to be overlooked, because it contains a nugget that wasn't immediately apparent to me: Make it easier to train newer callers.

Specifically, make it easier for newer callers to teach classes using a set of structured guides similar to SSD's, which worked out better than most people seem to have expected.

There is, of course, another point to be taken into consideration. Generational knowledge of how to teach is being lost with every caller that passes away.

Restructuring the programs to simplify teaching will also allow us to record much of that generational knowledge in a set of structured documents that can be passed on to the next generation of callers.

Another benefit to consider: SSD was always intended as a destination level, with no "upgrade path." **By restructuring calls into two sets of highly documented lists with teaching guides, we now have a natural path for dancers to "move on up." And an easy way for callers to help get them there.**

There are still some details to work out. While I liked Jon Jones' comment that "SSD" should be retained as the name for the new entry level, that's something that will be worked out in committee and at Convention next year. Ditto discussing how many calls will be in the "new Plus."

Frankly, I'm kind of rarin' to go at the thought of a Plus teaching guide similar to the current SSD teaching guide. It would make my job (as a comparatively new club caller) far easier. And it would provide a standardized set of choreography that callers can use to measure their dancers' progress.

This has a profound potential to ease the job of training newer callers. After all, us old folks aren't going to be around forever. And this would be one heck of a legacy to pass on to the next generation. I'd like to think they'll be appreciative.

This article was reprinted courtesy of the GCA Call Sheet, technical journal for the Gay Callers Association. Information on the GCA can be found <https://www.gaycallers.org>

About the Author: *Allan Hurst serves on the CALLERLAB Marketing Committee. He has been calling since 1997, and currently calls SSD through Advanced for three clubs in Sacramento, California. He is the editor of the GCA Call Sheet, and leads the IAGSDC History Project.*

Stopping the “Zero to Plus in One Year” Trend

(Issue 2024-2) Source: Social Square Dancing Public FaceBook Group

Rod Shuping, November 9, 2023

I live in an area that the classes are and have been for a long time 0 to Plus! In Sept the clubs start their classes and run until late May or June. This is not enough time to correctly teach people to dance but it is what we have and we have "adjusted". Generally the classes start losing students a few at a time depending on how good the caller is but many get overwhelmed by the continued new calls they are expected to learn each week! By the end of the class those left are not the strongest dancers that you will meet by any means! Many of the new dancers will not go to dances other than class night!

Now lets look at SSD:

12 lessons, I give them a break between a few of the lessons so it takes around 15 weeks to complete which is a much less stressful experience! I suggest that they come help out in the next class and we give them dance time to practice the entire list. If they go through the class the second time they have NO STRESS and learn the calls completely and become very good dancers by the end of the 2nd class!

Some of these dancers will be happy to just dance SSD for the rest of their time as Square Dancers but others will express a desire to move up. NOTE: Because they had a break in learning their stress levels are very low meaning that they can learn easier. But as they own the basics they can learn the rest of MS in a short time. Give them another break and they can then learn Plus with little or no effort.

Why do we push so hard to get them to a certain level? Do we need a time line? I feel that it is once more the clubs and some callers that just don't understand and are falling to peer pressure!

Jeff Palmer, Caller, Colorado Springs:

Great post Rod. Less stress and the mind/learning overload is much less and, they are dancing with the club a lot sooner. Having them attend the next class really helps them cement their confidence and dancing experience. 🍌

Phil Rarick, Caller, Kansas

Well said. Keep in mind the average age of students today as opposed to the 70s is much higher and they simply do not learn as fast generally.

If you consider general class teaching strategies for any school system teaching progressively harder material - math, english, etc. - students are taught in stages (english 101, english 102, on so on) and must show proficiency before moving on to the next class. **Our first and primary goal is to get new dancers dancing and having fun without being excessively repetitive, not to be master dancers.**

Teaching all the way through plus in one shot is like taking SD 101, SD 102 and SD 103 all at once without showing proficiency of each step before moving on to the next. The result is high levels of attrition of potential dancers either as students or weak new dancers breaking Squares too much.

A note about weak dancers: each square is a team and, as a rule, square dancers are very forgiving of mistakes of others on their team. Mixing strong and weak dancers can lead to frustration rather than growth of the weak dancers. A stair step approach like basic, mainstream, plus with opportunities to dance at those levels provides fun and growth opportunities for all dancers. In a similar way the SSD program provides a reduced stress level way to get dancers dancing and growing.

Charlie Robertson, Caller, Washington State:

Rod, you speak the truth!!!! The dancers wear their badges that say “plus” but they honestly don’t know or really care what calls they are dancing. For several years I have been doing a couple of SSD or Club 50 tips at every dance no matter

what the advertised level is. No one has noticed. As you know, a well prepared caller can make any list challenging, interesting and fun.

John Harden, Caller, Illinois:

Rod, thank you! **That is one of the most thoughtful and succinct descriptions of "why SSD" that I have seen.** At the end of the day, we Square Dance. At a dance, the caller calls to entertain the dancers. The only thing the "level" does is give the caller a framework for what calls he can use, and in my experience it's a loose framework anyway. There's no guarantee that the average plus dancer will be any more successful than the average SSD dancer; often it's just the opposite when the dancers have been taught in just the "no stress" environment that you describe above.

A funny thing ... one of my SSD students decided one night to try dancing with a Plus workshop. With very little coaching she was doing as well as, and sometimes better than, some of the "experienced" plus dancers in the square. **The lower stress teaching approach of SSD has a tendency to promote more confidence.**

Building For Tomorrow

(Issue 2022-2) - Excerpt from Handout by Caller Justin Russell, CALLERLAB Convention 2017

I graduated from the University of Memphis with a BA in Political Science and a minor in Sociology. **I vaguely remember but often tell a story of an experiment done with monkeys.** The short version goes like this... A group of scientists placed five monkeys into a room with a rope in the very center with fresh, beautiful bananas at the top of the rope. Every time a monkey tried to climb the rope the scientists would use a fire hose on the monkeys and blast them down until eventually all five monkeys just quit trying to climb the rope.

Then, the scientists started removing one monkey at a time and replacing him with a new one. Immediately the new monkey would see the bananas and try to climb the rope but the other monkeys would quickly pull him down. The scientists continued switching new monkeys with the old ones until the very end when all new monkeys are in the room. Without ever having water sprayed on them, they learned to never even try. If it was possible to ask the monkeys why they constantly pulled each other down, their most likely answer would be **"I don't know. It's just how things are done around here."**



Full disclosure – when I tried to look up this experiment recently, I found out it never happened. It was inspired in part by the experiments of G.R. Stephenson as well as certain experiments with chimpanzees conducted by Wolfgang Kohler in the 1920s. But the meaning is still relevant. **Too many times, especially in this activity, one enthusiastic volunteer will make a suggestion only to be told "that's not the way we do it".** As we discuss different options, let's try to do it with an open mind.

Over the past two decades, with the decline in square dancers, leaders around the country have created programs to try and revive the activity. CALLERLAB created Target 2000 in the late 90s, the American Caller's Association (ACA) had a One Floor Dance. Nasser Shukayr, Jerry Story and the Rio Grande Valley Caller's Association created Square Dance ABC. You may have also heard about The Nest, the Multi-Cycle Program, and the Blast Class.

The reasons for all of these programs is to recruit more dancers in the activity through a different system than the 30 year old "September classes" that lasts a year and takes people thru Plus. In the late 90s, CALLERLAB spent over \$150,000 on market research. (These reports are available at <http://www.arts-dance.com>) The market research points to two key factors:

1. People do not like committing to yearlong classes and they do not want costumes. (That is what Top Spinners is trying to address.)
2. No one is really running towards Modern Western Square Dancing, but for the people who try it – they generally give positive feedback.

What if we could develop a program that met people's need of *Entertainment, Socializing, Exercise, Learning Something, Getting out of the House*? At Top Spinners, our #1 goal is to get people dancing! We are less focused on a class graduation, finishing the Plus List, or recruiting new officers.

Beginner Series: Twice a year – September and February we start a 15 week beginner series. My goal is 50 “Core” calls that you would see at most mainstream dancers. We leave out Thars, Spin Chain Thru, etc. The class dances from 7:00-8:00. For our first tip at 8:00, we dance at whatever level the beginners are at. As we go further into the 15 weeks, we ask them to stay longer with the club. Once the 15 weeks are over we tell them to dance every tip with the club. My job then is to slowly integrate the remaining calls into their vocabulary. This does present obstacles with out of town callers coming thru and State Festivals; however, I believe this is a better product for new dancers.



About the Author Justin Russell has been in the square dance activity since 2000, and in 2003 he attended his first Caller School in Tyler, Texas. Justin is an active participant in National Square Dance Conventions and CALLERLAB Conventions. His travels have also allowed him to call in over twenty states. Justin currently calls for Top Spinners in Eads, Pistols & Petticoats in Bartlett, and Cotton Pickin' Squares in Memphis. He travels when possible calling both Modern Square Dances as well as Beginner (Party Night) Dances. Justin is passionate about teaching new dancers about the activity.

About Social Square Dance (SSD)

(Issue 2024-1) **Source: FaceBook Page 'Social Square Dancing'**

Author Ron Shuping, Caller: I live in an area that the classes are and have been for a long time 0 to Plus! In Sept the clubs start their classes and run until late May or June. This is not enough time to correctly teach people to dance but it is what we have and we have "adjusted". Generally the classes start loosing students a few at a time depending on how good the caller is but many get overwhelmed by the continued new calls they are expected to learn each week! By the end of the class those left are not the strongest dancers that you will meet by any means! Many of the new dancers will not go to dances other than class night!

Now lets look at SSD:

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Some of these dancers will be happy to just dance SSD for the rest of their time as Square Dancers but others will express a desire to move up. NOTE: Because they had a break in learning their stress levels are very low meaning that they can learn easier. But as they own the basics they can learn the rest of MS in a short time. Give them another break and they can then learn Plus with little or no effort.

Why do we push so hard to get them to a certain level? Do we need a time line? I feel that it is once more the clubs and some callers that just don't understand and are falling to peer pressure!

Author: Shawn Brown, Caller: It seems my last post in this group was in November of 2022. I wanted to take this time to provide an update on the SSD community here in the Tri-State Corner of Pennsylvania, West Virginia & Ohio.

The SSD Community in our Tri - State corner continues to grow, with new dancers joining all the time.

We now have 5 SSD groups, (Including a brand new one, which I will get to in a moment) working closely together, offering lessons at different points throughout the year, making it easier than ever for people to start square dancing at any time. This accessibility is the key to success.

Each group provides SSD dancing on a weekly basis and they come together to put on special dances with traveling callers when the opportunity presents itself.

2023 was a year of progress and a whirlwind of events. With hard work and dedication from dancers throughout our community, we have rebuilt our entire dance community using the SSD program. This has resulted in a significant increase from our pre-COVID numbers.

On Wednesday, January 10, 2024, a brand new SSD club opened its doors in Pittsburgh, PA. **Square One, held its first open house dance and welcomed over 5 squares on their first night. A little over 20 of these dancers were brand new, experiencing our wonderful activity for the first time.** They hope to use this momentum to continue to grow throughout the year.

Attached to this post are photos and video from Square One's first dance on January 10th.

Anyone can make SSD successful if you put in the effort. All you need is a few clubs and callers who are willing to work together, offer lessons multiple times per year and above all else, offer SSD dancing year round for those dancers you graduate.

Thank you to everyone out there who is using the SSD program and making it successful. Let's continue the progress and success in 2024!

Are People Joining Up?

(Issue 2022-5) **Source: FaceBook Page: Social Square Dancing - For the Time Of Your Life**

About: This group is focused on implementation of the Social Square Dancing program and all the related successes and challenges, along with solution-based discussions about it.

QUESTIONS POSTED BY NICK & MARYANNE TURNER, Caller/Cuer, Williams Lake, BC:

It was predicted, a year or more ago, that after Covid, people would come flocking to the Social Square Dancing Program, looking for a way to end their forced pandemic isolation. Did this in fact happen and is it happening now, as many SD clubs begin to start a new season?

Many questions go unanswered:

1. If your club successfully recruited new dancers to your SSD program, how did you get them through the door?
2. What was the age range of those who came?
3. Of those who came to your first night of lessons, how many returned for the second night?
4. How many completed the SSD Program and are continuing to dance SSD?
5. How many of the callers teaching SSD were able to successfully teach the SSD program in 12 - 14 weeks?
6. How many took 15 - 20 weeks?
7. How many SSD dancers chose to move on into Mainstream (and beyond) after completing SSD?
8. Is any one keeping track nationwide or state/area wide of how successful SSD is?

Up here in British Columbia, in my Region, we are about to start the new season. The three clubs remaining after Covid will all be using the SSD Program for their new dancers. It would be helpful to be able to see the big picture. Can anyone help by answering the above questions? Thanks. Nick Turner

REPLY FROM LISA MINTON, Caller, Gold Rush Outlaws, Pennsylvania

That is a lot of questions I will try to answer them.

1. Yes we did experience a dramatic influx of new dancers post pandemic.
2. We advertised using a brand marketing approach rather than the traditional product marketing approach. We focused on **selling a social experience rather than square dancing.**
3. The age range was very broad from 8 to 70.
4. For us, retention is about 75 percent using the SSD program. 75 to 80 percent of new dancers complete the SSD program and continue to dance with us.

5. The average time to complete the program with us is 6 to 8 weeks.
6. Here is a breakdown of the percentage of dancers that move on. 25 percent remain at SSD with no desire to move on. 75 percent will eventually go on to mainstream after some time dancing the SSD program. Only about 25 percent would ever pursue Plus.
7. We are tracking the progress both regionally and nationwide. We currently have five SSD clubs in our area that continue to grow monthly. More and more callers are having success in other regions and are sending us updates for our SSD video newsletter. We will be posting a new video update this month which should bring everyone up to date.

(Editor's Note: View this youtube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1cTID8jsJc>)

I hope I answered most of your questions. Good luck, Lisa

New Social Square Dancing Program Proving Successful for Our Vernon, BC Club

(Issue 2023-2) - British Columbia Square & Round Dance Federation Facebook Post, February 25, 2023

Members of the Star Country Squares square & round dance club of Vernon, B.C., are happy with having adopted CALLERLAB's Social Square Dancing program (SSD) this dance season. On Thursday March 2 they'll launch the third of three new dancer "intake" programs. The club's dedicated caller-teacher is the amiable and talented Allan Peterson of Salmon Arm. Allan is tutoring dancer Joe Marcotte of Vernon to learn to call.

About the Social Square Dancing Program (SSD)

The SSD program is structured for busy people here in the 21st Century by limiting the calls to 54 in total, suggesting 12 to 14 instruction sessions (not less than 24 total hours) and considering it a "destination program." Participants can dance the program without having to spend more time learning additional calls.



CALLERLAB says on their Frequently Asked Questions webpage (FAQ) that, through the SSD program, "learning time is kept short. Dancers reach Dance Mode faster. Dancers are encouraged to stay in Dance Mode. This crop of new dancers can dance with the last crop of new dancers and (the) next crop of new dancers. Instead of tedious stop-and-go (used to learn longer dance programs), dancing is fun, flowing movement with 'wind in your face.' We gain back our historically tremendous recruitment tools of 'Friends Bring Friends' and 'Friends Dance with Friends.'"

The nearby Thompson-Shuswap Square & Round Dance Association is conducting regular dances where the Social Square Dance Program is made available to those who have completed the instruction. Their special dances often alternate the SSD program with the Mainstream program.

It's learned that the Star Country Squares club is considering limiting the new dancer intakes during a dance season to just two instead of three, probably because of the large effort to rent a hall, engage a caller and promote the lessons.

New Dancer Perceptions Are Important

Something notable is the club's awareness of marketing to the Baby Boomers (in 2023, aged 59 to 77) by not promoting the dancing as taking place at what was once known as a "Seniors' Centre." Research reveals how that demographic does not perceive themselves as seniors. In promoting anything, perception is everything and needs to be carefully considered.

The club is promoting the dance venue as the "The Vernon Recreation Centre Halina Activity Room." The City of Vernon has now rebranded the building as "The Halina Activity Centre" (instead of the Halina Seniors' Centre) and they promote it as "offering programs and themed events for Vernon, BC residents aged 50 and over, as well as their guests."

Congratulations to the Star Country Squares of Vernon upon their success with the Social Square Dancing program! Best wishes for lots of new dancers as they undertake a third set of new dancer sessions this dance season.

Why SSD? What About Mainstream??

(Issue 2023-2) - by Barry Johnson, January, 2020, Source: CALLERLAB Knowledgebase

Dean Dederman posted a question in the 'Sustainable Square Dance' group in Facebook. The following is an excerpt from that dialogue between Dean and Chicago caller and SSD (Social Square Dance) instructor, Barry Johnson. For the entire article go to: <https://knowledge.callerlab.org/facebook-stories-about-using-sustainable-square-dance-ssd/>

Dean Dederman's Original Question

I have a question. I ask this with no agenda or dog in the fight, and just ask for honest answers and opinions with no one getting upset or offended. CALLERLAB's teaching list of basic and mainstream has been the gold standard in teaching modern western square dancing for many years. But as numbers have gone down, different lesson teaching ideas have been tried and discarded. Among the ones that have come to prominence and have enjoyed some success are the ACA's (American Callers Association) teaching list and the Club50/SSD. **My question is a long one, but can anyone explain why SSD was not presented to CALLERLAB for approval before presenting it as an option to replace the standard teaching list....or if it was, what were the reasons it was rejected?!**



Where it has been presented in piecemeal fashion where some clubs...federations....state organizations are for and against it, do both the traditional methods and the SSD methods a disservice. I ask this so I can give an answer to questions posed to me by various club and association officials, as well as for my own personal knowledge. I appreciate any opinions, and again ask that they be given in a constructive manner. Thank you.

Barry Johnson Comment #1

That's a very fair question, Dean. As you said, as numbers have gone down, different lesson teaching ideas have been tried and discarded. Along the way, CALLERLAB has supported experimentation: People trying to do something different, looking for success. Some of those experiments succeeded; many showed little improvement over the norm. Yet the problems persisted.

In certain parts of the country (in the Rio Grande Valley specifically) the "season" is a short one. There simply aren't enough weeks in the dance season to teach new dancers the full Mainstream program and give them remaining weeks in which to dance before they leave the valley. The callers in that area developed the "Club 50" program with a goal of teaching for 12 weeks, then dancing a common program across the valley.

Why not simply use Basic? Well, there are some popular Mainstream calls that aren't very hard to teach, and there are some not-so-popular Basic calls (and others that are harder to teach). So why not, if they're working as a group, leave a few Basic calls off the list and add in a few of the popular/easy MS calls? So they did.

The RGV (Rio Grande Valley) callers weren't the only ones to look at sharing the entry level programs. Callers in the San Fernando Valley area (if I remember right) established a common teaching order that was somewhat different. Representatives of CALLERLAB and ACA negotiated a common list of 50 calls with a recommended teaching order (and CALLERLAB calls that the "Condensed Teaching Order"). Again, the goal was to look at something like 12 weeks of teaching time, not 16 or 20 or 30.

Later, much later, the benefits of a shorter teach cycle began to be realized in various parts across the country. A 12-week teach can comfortably be finished in the September-December timeframe without getting into holiday stress. A second class can be done in January-April, and even a third class in the summer.



Not only that, we're finding that a larger percentage of dancers graduate from a 50-call program than the full mainstream program (and we could spend an hour discussing *why* that happens). AND, perhaps more importantly, being able to start a new class relatively shortly after the previous class gives the newly graduated (and excited!) dancers a chance to bring in their friends and start through the classes again.

Together with yet other reasons, it looks like this type of 50 call program actually does make a meaningful positive improvement in recruiting and retention of dancers.

So, given that success, what should happen next? How does one try to share and build on that success? **The CALLERLAB Board of Governors has authorized a non-permanent committee to explore continued development of this program.** The RGV Club 50 list was chosen as a starting point. Teaching orders were developed, suggested choreography and lesson plans were created, and pathways to provide continuing education to dancers (the "with variety" and "extended applications" areas).

If this program shows success in growing areas of the country, then it may be reasonable for CALLERLAB members to adopt this as their entry level program. And we are indeed seeing successful implementations across the country, with everyday clubs and callers (the success is not limited to exceptional callers or regions of the country with specific demographics, for example).

Why not just use the Basic list? That's certainly a possibility: The approach (50 calls, 12 weeks, standard positions only, get 'em dancing -- THEN improve) is the important thing, not the specific list of calls. But what the heck -- why not leave Do Paso and Allemande Thars to a little later, and bring in Scoot Back and Recycle a little bit sooner? Some tinkering with the contents of the Basic list could very well be reasonable.

What are the downsides? In the eyes of some (perhaps many) existing dancers, this feels like a step backwards for them.

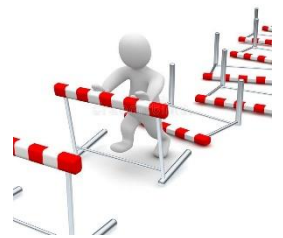
- *"I'm a Plus dancer, and I made it from 0 to Plus in one year, so of course we should continue doing that!"*
- *"I don't want to dance some measly little 50-call list."*

Those dancers, of course, turn out to be exceptional people: They were one of the 10% that survive the lengthy indoctrination into the activity. Many of them have been dancing for decades, so it seems very easy to them.

But if you look at the numbers -- if you look at the way people learn -- if you look at the benefits of dancing a smaller program, you find that callers can put on high-energy, fun dances with a small dance program and reinvigorate an area. By letting dancers get into the activity several times each year (at least twice, if not three times!), by capturing their excitement at its peak, we're seeing rejuvenation in areas that have been stagnant for a long time.

Barry Johnson Comment #2

Shoot, hit "enter" too quickly. Anyway, **very few dancers are willing to step up and say "Let's make our activity simpler". That's been a giant hurdle.** And this is where callers -- "Square Dancing's Professional Leadership" come into play. **If CALLERS see the benefits, if CALLERS lead the way, if CALLERS make this happen -- even at the risk of pissing off certain dancers -- then we can see the success.**



Not all callers are in favor of this, of course. Not all see a difference between, say, a 16-week class and a 12-week class. **Except that the 16-week classes are generally only once per year, and the 12-week class can easily be twice a year... and right there, just off the top, you can double the number of dancers entering.**

"Our angels don't want to dance that much". Well, the answer is to get more angels, isn't it? So let's get more new dancers, and turn them into angels faster, and that problem goes away quickly. We can talk for a long, long time about all of the benefits that come out of this. But it's hard to talk many-decade dancers into believing that a new approach can make a difference, and some very actively oppose it.

All I can say is that it works. It works in multiple areas, it works for many reasons (some of which are quite subtle), and the results are worth the arguments. As callers, we're leaders... and it's time we get up and lead. Sorry for the strong words -- but you can tell I'm pretty passionate about this subject. And that's because of my personal experiences with it,

and seeing how other callers in our area are having exactly the same type of success. I'm running three beginner classes this year, and we'll graduate something like 20 to 30 new dancers. That's compared to years prior to this where we were getting 4-6 new dancers per year. **So we're looking at four and five times as many new dancers coming into the club. WOW!**

And those dancers are, on the average, a bit younger than we've been getting in the past... and those somewhat younger folks are bringing in their friends. The 12-week commitment is easier for those younger folks to make, which is one of the reasons why the average incoming age is dropping... which is another one of the benefits ****grin****.

But back to some of your original questions: "Why wasn't it presented to CALLERLAB"? It was presented to the Board of Governors, and they authorized the continued development of this still-experimental program. And as the program develops, the various CALLERLAB committees and membership will consider whether it looks like something to adopt as a permanent program, or whether some of the existing lists could/should be changed, or whether the experiment should be abandoned.

It takes time to steer a very large ship, and course should be changed only for good reasons and after serious consideration. I really believe that is what's happening now -- as an organization, CALLERLAB is learning whether or not it's a good idea. I happen to think it IS a good idea, but we'll need to present convincing evidence to the rest of the membership to make a change. Long answer to a very good question!

Barry Johnson Comment #3



Oh, other questions that often come up from the dancers:

- "People won't come to our dances if we do this."
- "We won't be able to take our new dancers anywhere else."
- "We can't take them to association dances, special weekends or conventions"

The long-term answer to all of this, if it works out this way, is to grow the support for the program across wider areas. But in the shorter term, this has been our experience:

"People won't come": Attendance at our 50-call dances has actually INCREASED, not decreased as our club members feared. There are several reasons for this: The new 50-call dancers from -other- clubs are attending our dances (woo hoo!); some dancers that felt like they couldn't keep up with our higher-level programs have continued to dance instead of dropping out; our own membership is growing faster because of the change; and the experienced dancers in the area have realized that they can still have a fun night dancing without needing Spin the Top or Shoot the Star.

By focusing on standard arrangements first, we can get the new dancers dancing at "club speed" sooner and with more success, so as callers we're able to put on a higher-energy event... which raises the attractiveness of our dances.

"We can't take them to other clubs" That problem can be surprisingly short-lived, particularly when a leading club has success with the program. If one club starts growing much faster than others, then others may choose to copy that model... and it starts to grow. Inviting other callers to come in to the first club gives them experience in how to call at that level, and that eases the transition into other places. And honestly, the newest dancers are often the ones least interested in going to other clubs at first, giving more time for "continuing education" that improves their skills before heading out.

"Can't take them to large events." Yep. That's part of the overall picture of change. In our area, we've been able to convince our association leadership to offer SSD tips, if not a full-time hall, and it's been popular (in some cases, more squares on the floor in that hall than in the 'big' hall). For our state convention this year, the hall that would normally be Mainstream is going to be SSD full time... the convention chairman and the programming chairman both strongly support the concept. For Nationals? Yeah... most of the newest dancers are not willing to travel to Nationals in their first

year anyway, and by the time they ARE invested enough in the activity, they've probably had time for the continuing education to bring them up to the Mainstream level.

Of course, there are always roadblocks to making change, and these are good examples of the hurdles that need to be worked through. But they ARE solvable, and generally shouldn't be considered to be complete show-stoppers.

Now, if there are clubs that don't care about increasing the number of incoming dancers by 2 or 3 or 4 times... well, then, the right answer may be to let that club continue exactly as they are. They'll either flourish (good for them!), stay the same, wither away and die, or decide to change. That's entirely their prerogative, and that's OK. No-one HAS to change.

Barry Johnson Comment #4

Sigh. I just can't stop talking about this subject...**One other very important point about the approach. IT IS NOT AN IMMEDIATE SILVER BULLET!**

A giant contributor to the success of this program is small positive changes that compound year after year. There is no magic wand to wave that makes a huge difference from day one. Instead, the success builds over time as the principles are applied season after season, year after year. It's the old "friends bring friends" approach... if you get 5 people through the first class, then make it easy for them to bring new friends to a second class, then THOSE friends bring more friends for the third class... it grows over time.

But doing lessons just once per year isn't enough. A shorter class makes it easier for an excited new dancer to sweep up a friend or few and start again "in just a few weeks". And by increasing the percentage of folks that finish, this all compounds class over class over class until you're seeing the good results.

And if you have someone that can't finish for some reason? "Why don't you come back and join us again in six weeks when we start again?" instead of "Gee, I'm sorry you're on vacation for 5 weeks. Will we see you again ten months from now?"

So, for all of my cheerleading about the process, it's like advertising: you don't get much result from just one application, but if you keep doing it over and over, it works better and better. OK, I think I'm done now ****big grin... ****

Then And Now - Why S.S.D. Makes Sense

(Issue 2022-1) - by Buddy Weaver, Caller and Recording Artist. August 2021

Editor's Note: This article compares square dance club numbers in 1970 against those today, and how the new Social Square Dance Program (SSD) promotes club growth.

Recently, I stumbled on the results of a survey conducted by Jim Hilton of Hilton Audio Products in 1970. Hilton Audio has long been considered by many callers, particularly the professional traveling callers, to be the best sound amplification available. Founder, Jim Hilton was a highly respected "sound man" providing his sound engineering service to some of the biggest festivals as well as many National Conventions. The Hilton Audio survey involved mailing thousands of questionnaires and tabulating replies from all of the United States. Published in October of 1970, the results were to be compared with your own club and see if the picture looked familiar.

The average square dance club was located in a medium-sized city with club meetings held twice a month.

- On the average night, one more couple is needed to make seven squares, but the club is growing.
- **More than three fourths of new members come from the one beginner class** which the club sponsors each year.
- One third of the members have been square dancers for more than five years.

Now let's place this information in historical context. **In 1970, square dance clubs and callers recognized two dance levels. The "Fifty Basics" and the "Extended Basics". Average time in class to learn the fundamentals to gain membership in a square dance club was between ten and sixteen weeks.** Square dancing was no longer in vogue with

the movies and magazines. In fact square dance classes were competing for a generation of non-dancers who was more content to sit at home watching TV, but in spite of all this, square dancing was growing. The National Convention held in Louisville, Kentucky attracted 19,452 dancers. The WASCA festival hosted in Washington, DC was sold out one-year in advance along with every single dance week at Kirkwood Lodge in Missouri.

So what can we take away from the 1970 survey?

1. **An average club in America had seven squares as an average attendance.** Is this true for your club today? We know of many areas in where the average club attendance is ten to thirteen squares, so it is possible to meet those averages.
2. **The average club was growing** and we know from history, that growth started before 1970 and continued for another six years. Is your club growing? **Again we know of many areas today that work hard on growth, many of those clubs dance the SSD Program where classes are held more than once a year.** The SSD Program has been the major contributor to areas that are experiencing square dance growth.
3. **In 1970, three fourths of new club members came from the annual beginner class.** This statistic points out the fact that dancer attrition has always been with us, but clubs were sustainable through an influx of new members/new dancers. Just like today's clubs with an average ten to thirteen square attendance, there is a steady flow of new members/new dancers. In my opinion, the average square dance club does not grow new members through their new dancer program on a steady basis. Certainly, not to the level that represents three-quarters of the membership.

Why is that? One reason is the fact that our classes to learn the fundamentals in order to gain membership in our square dance clubs are taking way more than ten to sixteen weeks. Most everywhere classes take almost a year and even then the graduate is ill prepared to be a successful club dancer.

Questions.

- Do we believe that the average non-dancer is willing to spend nine more months in class today versus the same non-dancer of fifty years ago?
- Does today's new dancer crave the ninety additional calls they've never heard of, versus the same new dancer of fifty years ago?
- Said another way, does any non-dancer want Plus instead of SSD? Mainstream instead of SSD?

The final citation from the 1970 survey shows that the dancing enthusiast, one who has been dancing for five or more years, represented a third of the average club membership, whereas today's percentage is more than double that. It is fair to say, the dancing enthusiast has far more years of dance time to master the large number of square dance calls foisted upon the new dancer/graduate.

The expectation of the new dancer/graduate is likely too much. The new dancer/graduate quits and the degree of difficulty to assimilate remains unchanged and in this way, we don't have new dancers representing three-quarters of the membership, we fail to grow, and we don't have seven squares average attendance.



Attributed to Confucius is the quote, "*study the past if you would define the future*". In closing, our future is bright. We are coming out of a world-wide pandemic with tools like SSD, mentorship of those knowledgeable in SSD, and the desire in many areas of the country **to implement a program that looks very much like the program we used during our period of growth – SSD.**

We know the excuse that people today have too many distractions is no different than it was fifty years ago; **the only thing different today is our entry program is too big, too long, and assumed to be part of our culture. You are invited to be part of change that promotes square dance club growth.**

Get more information about SSD by sending me an email: buddy@buddyweaver.com

About the Author: *Buddy Weaver started calling in 1977 while still in school, living in Honolulu, Hawaii. He is a third generation square dance caller who lives with his family in San Diego, California. Buddy became an accredited member of CALLERLAB in 1981 and is currently on the Board of Governors. He is active in teaching other callers and has called/conducted seminars in the United States, Japan, and Europe. Buddy has been active in the square dance recording industry since 1981, with over 300 vocals released. He has consolidated the major square dance labels of Blue Star, Hi Hat, and Rawhide Music into Buddy Weaver Music, copyright holder of the largest square dance music library in the world. BWM produces a weekly podcast dedicated to the perpetuation of square dancing, offering episodes for free listening (streaming) or download.*



SSD For The Dancers and Callers

(Issue 2021-5) - by Buddy Weaver, Long-time Caller & Leader

The topic of Social Square Dancing (SSD) has been covered in many forums. Arguments for and against still appear on social media. What is often missed is the basic setup.

The program is made up of only fifty calls so that it can be taught in twelve to fourteen weeks. It is not a new idea; in fact, it is as close to the Modern Western Square Dancing (MWSD) that was enjoyed by tens of thousands of dancers up to the early seventies. A program of fifty calls taught in a matter of weeks was the hallmark of MWSD for the dozens of years that saw square dancing not only grow but spread worldwide. As square dance clubs start to reopen in the States, many are embracing SSD as the new destination program, but can SSD work in your club?

FIRST STEP: ASK A QUESTION

The answer will be found by asking the question, **why won't SSD work in your club?** Let's explore the latter question. First, there are the naysayers, some of these folks don't understand the new program, some don't want change, some will just be opposed to everything. There are some of these folks who have stated that "dancers will never give up (Mainstream or Plus or whatever the old level)."

Well, respectfully, that has been proven wrong on many occasions. One only needs to look at yesterday's most popular square dance calls that are no longer in active use. Do you remember "Arch In The Middle, Ends Turn In," "Dixie Chain", "Cross Trail"? Most don't, because they've faded from active use or were not part of the CALLERLAB programs when they first came into being in the late seventies. Few callers and no dancers remember these old calls, and even if they were used, no-one would know what to do with them.

In my opinion, callers are in love with square dance calls; dancers love the experience. It is often the caller who wants to hold on to his or her favorite call. For example, I remember when "Curlique" was dropped from use by CALLERLAB, one caller in my area refuse to stop using it. For a while, the dancers still did the call but after a year of not hearing it used by other callers, when they danced to this fellow and he called "Curlique", the dancers stopped 30 and gave him a puzzled look. That caller soon gave up "Curlique". **Bottom-line, dancers love the experience; not counting calls.**

POST PANDEMIC PROBLEMS

Second, there are some who are not prepared to change. In my area, some Plus clubs have declared they will not give up Plus. Frankly, no-one is forcing change on anyone, but the question I have is this: If your Plus club restarts, post-pandemic with 50% of the dancers you had pre-pandemic, how do you make ends meet? Do you double dues and door fees? The only way to get new members is through a class that runs for one year, so can your club hold out that long? What if you make it a year and don't graduate enough dancers?

Change is hard and it will be forced on each of us like in the case of not having enough dancers to keep the doors open. We can deny change is upon us, we can resist change, or we can accept it and even embrace it. There are many Plus and many Mainstream club in the America that have chosen to embrace change by adopting SSD, not only to survive but to thrive.

HURRY UP & WAIT

There are some club leaders who have said they will wait for dancing to resume post-pandemic, see how many dancers come back, then make a decision about what to do. If this is you, I encourage you to not wait. **A failure to plan is the same as planning to fail.** Ask yourself, would you drive out to the middle of nowhere, running your tank of gas to empty, with the thought that you'll wait until you get there to find out if there is any gas at all? Of course not. You would probably have a primary plan and a contingency plan. As a professional, it is hard to see club leaders seemingly give up, to let the tide either get their boats to rise or drift into the rocks. Sad.

RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE

Let's end on a positive note. **We are about to experience extraordinary opportunities for growth.** We will all face change; some will embrace it and plan for existing dancers to return comfortably while making a great nest for new dancers to come in and find a home. We have a great resource in the SSD program. **It is a home club builder.** It has a proven track record with some of the most brilliant minds in square dancing, mentoring, and teaching how to implement SSD in your home area.

We are about to see a new square-dancing world where the biggest problem will be finding a hall big enough for your club dances. SSD is for your club

Social Square Dancing

(Issue 2021-3) **Source: Google Group - Square Dance Modules. Article by Calvin Campbell**



Social Square Dancing is a new program designed for square dancers who do not want to spend time to attend 25 or 30 lessons or more to dance with their peers. The number of "basics" they will be taught will be 50 "basics" from the Basic and Mainstream list. The length of lessons will be about 12 to 15 weeks. The complexity of material presented will be largely Standard Applications and a few examples of Extended Application. For additional details please consult The SSD Teaching Guide and Standard Application Document available from CALLERLAB.

I view the plan as a breath of fresh air to Modern Western Square Dancing. A way to attract a new population of dancers. A way to get away from the present culture of puzzle solving square dancing. A way for dancers to have a choice on what and how they dance.

All of Modern Western Square Dancing is in a time crunch. We can't recruit enough new dancers to replace the dancers who are leaving the recreation. When we do recruit them, we don't spend enough time training them properly. We need a shorter list of "basics" to teach and we need some place for these dancers to dance.

Social Square Dancing will hopefully provide that place. **Social Square Dancing will provide an environment where dancers can have "FUN"** and can decide whether they want to try "Plus" or some of the other dance programs. Since there are only 15 lessons, it provides a way to have more classes per year. Several areas in the U.S. have successfully tried the program (under the name Sustainable Square Dancing) and it works.

It takes skilled square dance callers to make it work. Some callers worry about providing variety. Any caller who has 30 years or more of experience has the variety. The SSD Teaching Guide is another source. CALLERLAB has many documents that can provide examples. I went through my book (*All About Modules*) and I only had to eliminate about 25% of the Modules to meet their list and I still had over 800 Modules.

Variety really has nothing to do with the terminology. It has to do with the dances that can be created using that terminology. **There are thousands and thousands of dances that can be created with the calls on the SSD list.** When dancers finished a tip, they don't remember the terminology the caller used. They only remember whether the dance was fun and if they were successful in doing the dance.

SSD will also not be focused on keeping the dancers on-their-toes. The type of dance they will want to dance will be the kind that keeps the wind in their faces. This will mean the callers will have to learn timing and smoothness. Success will be the joy of constant movement.

Singing calls will probably need to be limited to one opening, break and closing and one or two figures. SSD dancers will want to turn off their brains and enjoy the music. Callers will be able to really match the call to the lyrics.

I foresee the return of the walk-thru. If the caller wants to do a figure that might cause problems. Walk it before you dance it. The dancers will welcome the practice. It's the success of the dancers you are after and not the average skill of any audience.

For callers, it will be a fun time. You may have to learn some new skills, but each of these skills can be carried forward. You will be calling to dancers that do not expect you to know hundreds of "basics" to the last detail. Since "Standard Applications of the "Basics" will be the norm you will have to be creative with how to make these "basics" into dances. In the process, you will learn a lot about square dance choreography.

One of the most important elements of the SSD program will be the ability to shorten the teaching time for beginner classes. Fifteen weeks of teaching time will mean up to three classes a year. It will allow slower learners to recycle back through the next class if they fall behind for some reason.

Teaching 50 "basics" in 15 weeks will still be hard. "Basics" introduced in the lessons will have to be refined after graduation, but most likely the audience at the clubs will welcome the review.

New dancers are the most enthused about getting their friends interested in square dancing about three weeks into lessons. In SSD, classes they will only be waiting about two months or less.

Lastly, SSD clubs will be more social. The format is tailored for promoting social glue. A lot of the success in this area will depend on the caller. Remember that the dancers are there to relax and have "fun". They are not interested in being tested on their knowledge of square dance terminology Just put the wind in their faces and let them dance.

About the Author: Calvin Campbell is a long time and renown square dance caller. He has written numerous articles and several books on the subject and conducted many workshops. The most recent book is "All About Modules". Cal has been leading Community Dances and Beginner Dance Parties for over 60 years. He is the senior author of the book "Dancing For Busy People" and the author of "Teaching New Dancers". Cal has been a member of the CALLERLAB Board of Governors for many years and is a Mile Stone Award recipient. This is the highest award CALLERLAB can bestow on any individual. The primary purpose of the award is to recognize outstanding and significant contributions to the field of square dancing.

Square Dancing 1970


(Issue 2022-5) - by Caller/Instructor Darryl Clendenin, SSD FaceBook Group, May, 2022

Granted, there is no way to turn back the hands of time. BUT if it were possible, would you want to remake the activity to what it was in 1970? I'm sure that many of the responders weren't dancing in 1970. If they were, they would have been very young adults or children of various ages. That was over a half century ago.

From someone who was a very young caller in 1970 (29 years), here is what I remember.

- **It was a lot simpler.** All but a very few callers read cue cards for everything they called. The most challenging things they called were probably "Pickle Up a Doodle" or "Running Bear." Both were singing calls that were sung exactly the same way every time.
- **The closest thing we had to levels of dance was "Square Dancing"** which pretty much followed the Sets In Order 50 Basics with selections from the Sets In Order Extended 25. There was no Plus level. Advanced and Challenge existed

but were generally danced in someone's home or garage to tapes. The feeling by most dancers was that they were too serious, and you had to be good enough to qualify.

- **It generally took 10-15 weeks to get through New Dancer lessons.** Partly because everyone was anxious to get the new people into the club and partly because they were paying caller and rent from the little bit that was charged for participation. The clubs typically slowed the dancing down a bit, and dropped the expectations of the material called, to fit what the new dancers were capable of doing. There was usually just one class a year, and when it was time to start a new class, the new members from the previous class had time to get very comfortable dancing what was called.
 - **Attrition was not a new thing.** The same complaints about retaining dancers existed back then and I'd guess proportionally, about the same. I recall it being said back then, *"The average life (referring to how long someone danced) of a square dancer, was three to four years."* Naturally there were those that are still dancing today. They are very few in numbers. Back then, those that stuck around longer were involved in more than just the dance. Club or area politics, becoming callers, or reasons other than just the dance kept some in the activity longer.
 - **Yes. It was much more "Social" back then.** It was pretty much expected that there would be a real "potluck" dinner during the evening. Not just finger-food. A real sit-down, visit across the table, hot food, Potluck. No one really needed another meal, but it was always there. It was part of the evening's program, and everyone was involved in the program of the club.
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- **In the area in which I grew up, we didn't have Cuers.** They came along later. We did Round Dance though. A part of the callers' job was to teach the "Round of the Month". There were no phases. They were all "Square Dance Rounds." They were mostly Two-Steps and Waltzes. with the occasional Cha-Cha worked in, eg. Folsom Prison Blues. The rounds were quite easy and written to fit the particular piece of music rather than seeing how many moves could be crowded in. "Rangers Waltz", "Hot Lips" and "Desert Blues" were typical to what we danced. I still haven't seen a round dance that would fill a floor as fast as "Miss Frenchy Brown." No cues! The dance was taught, the caller told them how it would start, put the needle down and let them dance to the music. The music cued the dancers so there was no problem for the dancers that weren't round dancing to carry on a conversation. It was part of their socializing time.
 - **At that time, we had the occasional Traveling Caller come through the area and stop to call a dance.** They always had a new movement to share with everyone. They were never too challenging, and we were allowed to forget it when the dance was over.
 - **Callers' Note Services.** Lord! There was a bunch of them. You could subscribe to one and usually have your choice of several or more newer moves to spring on your dancers. The workshop material and singing call figures were all there to help you use the material. Bill Peters, Bill Davis, Les Gotcher, Jay, King, Jack Lasry I can't remember them all, but it seemed everyone was publishing a note service. That's how Burlesons' SD Encyclopedia became so large.
 - **Callers' Schools? Not so many and certainly not as complex as they have become.** The callers' school that I attended taught us to write the figures down on 3X5 index cards and read them with music as a background. It must have been enough at the time because I was calling and teaching for three clubs within my first two years. I really knew nothing.
 - **At that time, we had 48 Square Dance Clubs and 48 Square Dance Callers in the area.** There were a few clubs that had two callers and a few callers that didn't have a club. It all worked out. Today in our area we have 18 clubs and 10 callers. There were a few more clubs before the Pandemic.

Could we go back to what it was back then? Probably not. At least not with the programs being what, and as they are. The current dancers are the ones that have adjusted to the type of dancing we do these days. The type of current callers that we have are the ones that love it the way it is. Change might be inevitable but it ain't easy.

I would say, from my opinion, **the SSD program (Social Square Dance program) is the best chance we have at this point, to create an activity that would be similar to what we had in 1970.** Today our program is too often a tip of Mainstream square dance, and two round dances phases anywhere from 2 -6. In some areas, every third tip of Plus Square Dancing, two round dances, a tip of Mainstream, Two Rounds, A tip of Plus and so it goes.

These days, if one doesn't go for the dance, one doesn't go. There really isn't much else there.

About the Author - from Daryl Clendenin's website: *"Been calling and teaching since 1969. Traveled internationally as a full time professional till 2003 when I semi-retired to my home in Oregon. There I call regularly for The Hoedowners of Aloha, Oregon. I teach on-going callers schools locally and conduct an annual callers college each July at Circle 8 Ranch in Cle Elum, Washington. I have conducted seminars and clinics in and out of the United States. I was the owner/producer of Chinook and Hoedowner Records and recorded on both. I have also been featured on Global and Greenwood records. Still calling, teaching and enjoying the life of a caller."*



SSD (Social Square Dancing) Conversations

(Issue 2020-6) - **by Buddy Weaver, Music Review November 2020**

Recently, an on-line meeting of local dancer association leadership and prominent callers/teachers was held. This meeting produced many constructive thoughts on how square dancing will look when we are able to restart – post COVID-19 shutdown.

There is tremendous support from both dancer leadership and callers for a destination program that would allow for non-dancers to become full club members in a much shorter period of time than it currently is. **The most discussed "program" is SSD, Social Square Dancing.**

Some folks have asked why SSD? After all it is not a "recognized program" as legislated by CALLERLAB. Why not Mainstream? Why not Basics? **This article offers facts for the purpose of answering those questions.**

1. **SSD compared to Mainstream.** To form the basis of this comparison, I will resource from CALLERLAB, the institution that founded Mainstream and has by committee, managed said program since it's inception in 1976.
 - **Mainstream has 67 calls plus 24 subsets.** An example of a call with a subset is Circulate that has five listed subsets of named dancers, couples, all eight, single file, split/box. Any veteran teacher will tell you this is not a single call to teach in one lesson; this is easily six different calls as split and box do not mean the same thing.
 - **Mainstream recommended teach time is 59 hours.** With an average learning window of 90 minutes, this requires 40 weeks of consecutive teaching/learning. While this sounds simple, there is a problem that few are talking about – if the student misses one week they are no longer in consecutive learning. In reality, when missed classes are taken into consideration, whether missed by the student or missed because the hall was closed, the learning window must expand beyond 59 hours. To properly learn Mainstream in a relaxed setting, it would take one-year.
 - By contrast, **SSD has 50 calls in a recommended 12-weeks.** Use the above example of dancers who miss a lesson thereby expanding the learning window, you would properly learn SSD in a relaxed setting within 3 months. Furthermore, for the dancer who has missed, it is easier to catch up when the total number of calls is 50 versus 67 plus 24 subsets.
2. **SSD compared to Basics.** Again, I will resource from CALLERLAB for this comparison.
 - **Basics, comprised of A & B recommends 44 hours to learn 48 calls plus 21 subsets (really 69 calls).** At 90 minutes per class, this is 30 consecutive lessons.
 - **SSD is again shorter in class time using fewer total calls.** It also incorporates some of the more popular Mainstream calls that Basics does not.

More than anything else, **SSD is not part of the CALLERLAB escalating program series.** Basics has since its' inception been a stepping stone to a higher program – Mainstream. In many parts of the world, Mainstream is only a stepping stone into Plus. Whether or not the programs were meant to be used in this way, the reality is, they are. **SSD may be our chance to "reset" this reality.**

SSD is a club level. It doesn't replace Mainstream or Plus. It isn't a tool to get people in the door then extend classes to make them Mainstream or Plus. In just the same way that Mainstream clubs offer Plus tips and Plus clubs offer A-1 tips, then the SSD club can offer a Mainstream or Plus tip. We can keep Mainstream and Plus dancers happy in a dance setting while growing our clubs at SSD.

The Social Square Dance Program - An Introduction and Overview

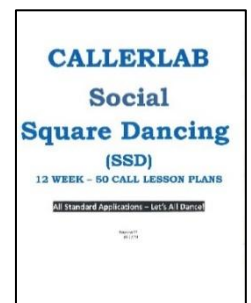
(Issue 2021-2) - By Caller Barry Johnson

Editor's Note: This article features some of the power point slides. For the indepth, one-hour power point audio presentation go to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_cc3u9eSEA

This talk was given by Barry Johnson when he was a guest of the Northwest Callers Association in November of 2020. He presents an overview of what the SSD Program (Social Square Dance) is, what its benefits are, how it has been implemented in the Chicago, Illinois area, and how it has started to revitalize the modern square dance activity in his area. This is an excellent introduction to what SSD is and how it works. While it was presented to an audience of square dance callers, it is appropriate for all square dance leaders; callers and dancers alike.

WHAT IS SSD?

- "Social Square Dancing" is an approach that can dramatically increase club membership over a medium term (a few years).
- More than a list or teaching order, it's a method.
- Key principles:
 - Reduce barriers for beginners to start and to finish.
 - Let people enjoy dancing within 90 days of starting.
 - Harness fresh enthusiasm **immediately**.



WHAT DO YOU MEAN, A "METHOD"?

- Quite simply: Teach 50 calls in 12 weeks (90 days); Dance; Rinse and repeat. Right away.

HOW MUCH SUCCESS?

- Woodstock: Membership up 60%, still growing, beginning to accelerate after turnover of some club callers.
- Glenview: From 20-some members to 90+ in 3 years.
- North Shore Squares (spinoff of Glenview): 0 to 60 members in 2 years, continued growth from there.
- Arlington Squares: 60% growth in first 2 years, then covid hit.
- McHenry B' n B: Dropped the program. Membership declining.

WHERE DO WE LOSE DANCERS?

- Long lesson times discourage some prospects from starting.
- Holidays, vacations, illnesses cause losses.
- Dancers overwhelmed by complexity drop out.
- Lose dancers during transition to club membership.
- Lessons not fully preparing them for pace of dances, then drop out.
- Long breaks (particularly summertime) causes losses in Fall season.
- Long time until next start of class means friends can't start right away.
- Big gap between beginners and graduates means friends can't dance with friends for a year (or more)!



SSD PROVIDES INCREMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS IN ALL THOSE AREAS

FOCUS IS ON EASY AND FUN, NOT TECHNICAL COMPLETENESS

- As teachers, we **want** to produce good dancers.
- But look at every sport or hobby with lessons: does **anyone** else attempt to teach "full complexity" to raw beginners?

- Our stated goal of teaching each call from many positions and many arrangements to **beginners** is really just hubris: excessive pride.
- It's perfectly OK for us to leave some nuances to "Continuing Education" that happens later.

REMEMBER, THIS IS FOR FUN!

SSD SHOULD BE A DESTINATION, NOT A RUNG ON A LADDER

- The clubs that have shown large growth have been those that embrace SSD as their primary dance level.
- Those that have offered it as a "partway to Mainstream" generally have **not** shown as much growth.
- That doesn't mean SSD should be the final destination for *every* dancer.
- It's okay to offer dancers opportunities for further growth, but pressure for them to move further up is counter-productive.

BUT IT'S SO CLOSE TO MAINSTREAM!

- The SSD program is the CALLERLAB Basic program:
 - MINUS: Do Paso, Thars, Walk Around Corner / SeeSaw
 - PLUS: Hinge, Centers In/Cast Off $\frac{3}{4}$'s, Slide Thru, Folds, Tags, Scoot Back and Recycle.
- Depending on how you count calls, SSD is only missing about 12 calls from full Mainstream.
- That seems so close! Why not just "workshop" those last dozen calls, and get everyone up to Mainstream not long after graduation?



LOOK AT IT FROM A BEGINNER'S PERSPECTIVE

- Adding 12 calls to the "SSD Program" increases the program size by 24%.
- BUT calls like Allemande Thars (and Shoot the Star, Slip the Clutch), Spin the Top, Dixie Style, etc. are often considered the harder calls to teach and to learn. Even Walk & Dodge has someone moving to a vacant position in a way that's NOT a circulate they've seen before.
- When you factor in the increase in difficulty, the full Mainstream program is actually 50% to 60% more difficult than all of SSD.

50% INCREASE IS A BIG NUMBER

- And even more: SSD is generally "standard position only", where MS should include more formations and arrangements.
- So going from SSD to full Mainstream is nearly as large as Zero to SSD. (CALLERLAB recommended teach time for full MS is 58 hours.)
- That's the true simplification in the program that allows us to teach SSD list in just 24 hours of class time.
- Moving someone up to full Mainstream is fine – but only as a "continuing education" separate class, taken by just those dancers that **choose** to go beyond SSD.
- Even though "it's just 12 calls", it's a LARGE increase in complexity from the beginner's point of view.

IN SUMMARY

- SSD really isn't about a list of calls – it's a method for growth.
- At it's heart, SSD is a simpler classes offered more often, combined with the "joy of dance".
- Clubs are often resistant, but those that embrace the methodology have generally shown large growth: Doubling and tripling membership (over a few years) is not unusual.

About the Author: Barry Johnson has been calling for 16 years and teaching various levels for the past 14 years. He is past president of the Illinois Square Dance Callers Association and a member of CALLERLAB's Board of Govenors. He has been successfully using the SSD program for the past several years.



History of SSD (Social Square Dancing)

(Issue 2020-6) Excerpt from ‘SSD Program FAQ’s’ - by Jerry Story & Deborah Carroll-Jones

*To know where we are **going**, we must understand where we have **been**.*

Who started SSD?

SSD was started by a “who’s who” of prominent callers and leaders. If we “name names”, we risk omitting some folks who made a contribution. It’s correct to say that SSD is a **grass roots** effort.

SSD is also the culmination of a movement which has been ongoing for decades. **Most leaders recognize the need for a shorter, easier entry program to make square dancing more marketable to new dancers.**

What is the difference between SSD and the CALLERLAB Basic program?

Basic is a **stepping stone**. SSD is a **destination**.

The CALLERLAB Basic program is the first step of the Dance Level Escalator. Except most of the time, we completely **skip** that step. After a new dancer learns Basic, they **never** get to actually **dance** and enjoy it. Instead, they immediately **rush** onward to learn Mainstream. Then Plus. Then Advanced One. And so forth. New dancers are pressured to learn **more** calls and move up the escalator. Basic is **not** a **dance** program. It’s a **teach** program. Basic is the first step of the escalator.

By comparison, SSD is an active, vibrant **destination** program where people happily dance with **no pressure** to move up to higher levels.

Another key difference: SSD is far more **popular** than CALLERLAB Basic. How many Basic dances or clubs are there anyway? **Very** few, if any! And even if any Basic dances exist, they are only a temporary stepping stone to higher levels. Every Basic dancer is **expected** to learn more calls.

By comparison, SSD dances are held at locations and clubs all over the map. SSD is a **destination** with no pressure to move up. You can bring your friends in a few **weeks**, instead of just one time per **year**.

What’s the difference between SSD and Target 2000?

Target 2000 tried to **change** existing CALLERLAB programs. SSD is a separate program which does **not** alter existing CALLERLAB programs in **any** way.

Back then (and still today), Mainstream has about 70 calls and Plus has about 30 calls. Many dance leaders felt that Mainstream was **too large** and Plus was **too small**. Mainstream took **too long** to learn. The relatively **few** survivors from a long Mainstream class immediately rushed into a Plus class. Target 2000 attempted to **balance** Mainstream and Plus. The idea was to make Mainstream **smaller** and Plus **larger**, so that **each** program would have about 50 calls.

A smaller Mainstream program would be **easier** to learn. Thus, more beginners would **survive** the class. A larger Plus program would be **harder** to learn. Thus, we could discourage brand-new Mainstream dancers from immediately **rushing** to Plus.

It was a great idea, with one huge **drawback**. **Changing** the existing CALLERLAB programs is almost **impossible**. Those programs are too firmly entrenched. Everyone wants change but no one wants **to** change. Any successful new idea must be a better mousetrap and **also** must **not** alter the existing mousetrap.

SSD is an easy-teach, fun-dance **destination** which can be reached by new dancers far more **easily**, and far more **often** (more beginner classes per year) than Mainstream.

What's the difference between SSD and Mainstream?

SSD is a sub-set of Mainstream. Mainstream has about 70 calls. SSD has about 50 of the most **popular** / most **fun** / **easiest** to learn Mainstream calls.

Here's another very important difference. Mainstream is a **stepping stone** on the Dance Program Escalator. Everyone who learns Mainstream is **expected** to eventually (and often, immediately) learn Plus. By contrast, SSD is a stand-alone **destination** program. People are welcome to dance SSD for as long as they want, with **no pressure** to move up.

SSD is aimed at people who **want** something that the existing CALLERLAB dance programs **cannot** give them. Think about the last time **you** started a beginner group. Only **some** of those people survived until the end of the class. SSD is aimed at the people who dropped **out** of Mainstream class, along with all of their friends they **would** have brought in. SSD lets us **lose fewer** and **keep more** new dancers.

Callers who use SSD report that most SSD dancers are **happy** to dance that program forever, and to bring their friends. Always remember that SSD is a new product aimed at a new (and **bigger**) audience than Mainstream.

Why was SSD created?

Square dancing needs a thriving **entry** program which is **also** a **destination** program and which does **not** even attempt to **change** the existing CALLERLAB dance programs. Fortunately, such a program has **already** been around for decades. Each year, millions of people migrate to warmer climates for the winter. They're known as "snowbirds" or "winter Texans" or "winter Arizonans" or "winter Floridians", etc. For many decades, square dancing was and continues to be a popular recreational activity for temporary winter visitors. A winter dance program must absolutely be teachable during a **12-week** winter season.

Over the years, winter square dance programs have been extremely successful. Some groups are **huge**, with hundreds of members.

If you said "the SSD program was born in the winter RV parks", you'd be correct. Square dancing today needs a dance program which is **quick** and **easy** to learn, and also **fun** and **satisfying** to dance. SSD borrowed heavily from the most **successful** program of this type. SSD achieves the delicate **balance** between the needs of both **new** and **experienced** dancers.

What do the letters SSD mean?

SSD started a few years ago as "**Sustainable** Square Dancing". Shortly after SSD began, CALLERLAB did what they always do. They formed a committee to study and test the new idea. The study came back with good news. Clubs using SSD were able to **grow** their groups with great results.

Now it's time to introduce this experimental program to a **wider** audience. "Wider audience" means "**all** callers and dancers outside of the SSD committee". The SSD committee has already had the product for a few years.

Recently, the SSD committee voted to **change** the name from "**Sustainable** Square Dancing" to "**Social** Square Dancing". Let's agree that the SSD committee is the proper place to shape the program. We have no need to worry about **why** they wanted to change the name from Sustainable to Social. The name changed because a majority of leaders voted **for** the name change.

From the very beginning of SSD, it was common to use just the acronym "**SSD**". That common term remains the same. The general plan is to promote SSD as **Sustainable** Square Dancing to callers and leaders (who care a great deal about **sustainability**), and to promote it as **Social** Square Dancing to dancers and prospective beginners (who care a great deal about **sociability**).

If SSD is from CALLERLAB, why can't I find it on the CALLERLAB website?

It's there. It's just buried underneath a **mountain** of other things CALLERLAB has done for the past five decades. CALLERLAB documents decades of square dance history. SSD is just the latest chapter.

Search is your friend!

If you want **general** knowledge about SSD from many different sources:

- The **CALLERLAB Knowledge** website has extremely good info on almost any square dancing topic. Go to <http://callerlabknowledge.org> and search for **ssddoc**.
- The very first result is "SSD Documentation and Support Materials", a collection linking to documents and materials from many different sources. Here's the direct link: <http://callerlabknowledge.org/?s=ssddoc>

If you want **specific** info about **current** items of **business** in the CALLERLAB SSD **Committee**:

- The regular CALLERLAB website has current documents for active committees. Go to <http://callerlab.org> and search for **SSD**.
- The search results will contain all current CALLERLAB documents mentioning SSD, including the Teaching Guide, press releases, committee brief, etc.

Who uses SSD?

Callers and dancers all over the world! The **Social Square Dancing** group on Facebook has over 500 members, and the number increases every week. More and more leaders discover SSD every day.

You might wonder why there is no published list of SSD leaders. Here's why: SSD is growing very **quickly**. Any roster of SSD groups would be out of date before you could even read it. The best answer to "Who uses SSD?" is "People who have **found a better way** for square dancing to **thrive!**"

(Issue 2020-5)

"SOCIAL SQUARE DANCING" - THE NEXT STEP? Excerpt from 'SSD Program, FAQ - We Urgently Need New Dancers'

Why do we need new dancers?

All activities and organizations need new people for growth. The number of square dancers has **dwindled** each year for decades. Here's why: it's far easier to **lose** a dancer than to bring in a replacement. Losing an experienced dancer is instantaneous. Training a replacement to comfortably dance at club level takes more than a year.

We desperately need a way to bring in new dancers **faster** than we lose existing dancers. We have needed that for decades.

In 2020, Covid-19 shut down square dancing completely. After months away from square dancing, many existing dancers will never return.



When we **restart** after Covid-19, our need for new dancers will be greater and more urgent than ever. If we can focus on making square dancing an ideal activity for **new** dancers, we can **grow** like never before. Let's consider the Covid-19 shutdown, and the upcoming restart, as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for tremendous growth.

Why can't we do what we've always done in the past?

The age-old methods bring in **few**, if any, new dancers. New dancers can begin square dancing just **once** per year when (and **if**) you start a beginner group. It takes **more than a year** for a new dancer to reach a comfortable club level. The combination of **limited** product availability, and a **huge** commitment to a **long** training period, makes it very **difficult** for you to build up a nice-size group of dancers.

Decades ago, when square dancing was booming, beginner lessons lasted just a few weeks. You could start **several** beginner groups each year. Beginners could reach club level in a **reasonable** timeframe.

Over the decades, square dancing's entry barrier **rose** higher and higher. Classes became **longer** and class starts grew **less frequent**. We can all plainly observe that the number of dancers has **dwindled**.

The age-old methods **do not work**. We need a different approach which is more **friendly** toward **new** dancers.

What is the Dance Program Escalator?

Today's square dance scene involves constant **teaching** so that dancers can continuously **move up** to the next level. Dancers are always in **Learn Mode** and **never** in **Dance Mode**. **Next** year's new dancers will never get to dance with **this** year's new dancers, because the two groups will always be on different steps of the Dance Program Escalator (i.e. B1-B2-M-P-A1-A2-C1-C2-etc.), the undesirable, counterproductive Escalator of Levels.



What is the difference between Learn Mode and Dance Mode?

In the old-style training model, new dancers start out in Learn Mode. Each call is **explained**. Then, a **walk-thru**. For several weeks, new dancers require a distinct **pause** before and after each call. Therefore, Learn Mode consists of "**stop-and-go**" dancing, which gets tedious. Stop-and-go makes dancing a lot **more work** and a lot **less fun**.

Eventually, dancers learn to do a particular call at full dance speed. Yet they are **still** in Learn Mode. As soon as they learn a call, they must immediately learn **other** new calls. Each new call is explained, walked, instructed, then executed stop-and-go. **Most** dancing in Learn Mode is stop-and-go.

The **few** dancers who survive until the end of Mainstream class are pressured to immediately take a Plus class. Then maybe a wild west version of DBD. Then A-1. And so forth. New dancers are **perpetually** in Learn Mode with **stop and go** dancing. It takes **years** to eventually get to true Dance Mode where you can flow through an entire fun dance at full speed, moving with the music. New dancers' original goal was to finally get to dance with their friends who brought them into square dancing. But those original friends are no longer at beginner level. They moved on, to dance in Learn Mode for a higher program.



SSD is vastly different. For starters, learning time is kept **short**. Dancers reach Dance Mode **faster**. Dancers are encouraged to stay in **Dance Mode**. **This** crop of new dancers can dance with the **last** crop of new dancers and **next** crop of new dancers. Instead of tedious stop-and-go, dancing is fun, flowing movement with "wind in your face". We gain back our historically tremendous recruitment tools of "Friends Bring Friends" and "Friends Dance with Friends".

For decades, square dance leaders wanted to **teach** people to dance.

But people just wanted to **dance**.

Let's give people what they **want**. Let them **dance**!

What kind of square dancing would be easier to sell?

Square dancing is a **leisure** activity. A long training period is a huge entry **barrier** which keeps new customers **out**. For greater entry and success, we need a program that today's busy people can enjoy after a few **weeks** (instead of a few **years**) of training.

A shorter training period gives **you** many immediate benefits. First, during a year's time, you can easily start **two, three or even four** beginner groups. Think about how many new dancers you normally get from old-style once-a-year classes.

SSD features **multiple** starts per year, so you'll immediately **double, triple** or even **quadruple** your numbers, by simply offering the product more often. Add in the amazing factors of "Friends Bring Friends" and "Friends Dance with Friends" and you gain a huge potential for **growth**.

**What kind of shorter program can be easily learned by new dancers
and also enjoyed by experienced dancers?**

A good destination program must be **small** enough to learn in 12 weeks. It must also be **large** enough to provide an exciting and varied dance experience. These two goals (**easy** to learn, **satisfying** to dance) have always been a balancing act. In the past, we focused **mostly** on making square dancing more "interesting". That focus **cost** us big-time, by building a huge entry **barrier** to new dancers.

Today's callers who use SSD report that it offers a great **balance** between **short** training time (which favors **new** dancers) and a robust program with substance and **variety** (which favors experienced dancers).



When you consider the Covid-19 shutdown and the upcoming restart, our **best bet** is to emphasize a form of dancing which makes the activity very **friendly** to **new** dancers. **SSD is that product**.

How can we maximize "Friends Bring Friends" recruitment?

SSD is a fun yet meaningful dance program. Beginners can learn it (Standard Application) in 18 to 22 hours. Dancers are encouraged to **dance** that program, and to **recruit** their friends, with **no** pressure to move up to higher programs.

Think back to when **you** were a **new** dancer. You were enthusiastic about the **joy, friendship** and **excitement** of square dancing. You **loved** dancing to lively music and being on the same **team** with other fun people. You would have **gladly** invited your non-dancing friends to try it. **Except**, you couldn't. The beginner class you are in is already **closed** to new members. The next class starts a **year** later. After waiting a year, your enthusiasm **declined**, or you have already moved on to the next program.

What if a new class starts every 12 **weeks**, precisely when new dancers reach their **peak** of excitement? You'd have **far** more selling opportunities per year, and far more **enthusiastic** salespeople. We could once again enjoy a **key** selling feature which we lost over time: "Friends Bring Friends".

Every survey of square dancers shows that the **vast** majority of us got started because a friend or acquaintance **invited** us. With a shorter and easier program, we can **maximize** the recruitment method which is by far the most effective: "Friends Bring Friends".

While "Friends Bring Friends" will continue to bring you new dancers, a **strong marketing program** is always **desirable**. You can share marketing ideas, and find out what works for other leaders, in the **Social Square Dancing group on Facebook**.

What is the 'Social Square Dancing Program'?

(Issue 2020-3) - *Excerpt from CALLERLAB Knowledgebase*

In 2016 CALLERLAB authorized the formation of the Sustainable Square Dance Committee and charged it with developing materials to support callers interested in exploring the use of the experimental lesson system called Sustainable Square Dance (SSD). Earlier versions of this system had been in use in some areas for quite some time under the name 'Club 50'.

In July, 2020 CALLERLAB announced this system and the supporting Committee were renamed **Social Square Dance (SSD)**. Only the name changed. All existing supporting materials still apply. At the same time, the CALLERLAB Board of Governors formally endorsed **the use of SSD as a recommended vehicle for a rapid restart of square dancing after the COVID pandemic subsides.**

SSD is designed to provide a 50 call entry program that can be taught quickly, roughly 20-25 hours of instruction, and yet serve as a realistic destination program for long-term square dancers. While the idea of a shortened entry list is certainly not unique to SSD, its design differs in providing a mechanism for keeping dancers happy in the entry program for at least 2 years, and in many cases, forever.\

This article collects in one place documentation and materials that support the use of the SSD system. Some were created by the CALLERLAB SSD Committee while others were created by people using the system in the field. For this material, go to: <http://callerlabknowledge.org/?p=3297&>. To access the SSD Teaching Guide go to: <http://callerlabknowledge.org/?p=1874>.

Save Square Dancing - The Social Square Dancing Program (SSD)

(Issue 2020-3) - by Callers Jerry Story & Deborah Carroll-Jones

For Square Dancing to ever thrive again, we have three known FACTS that must be addressed:

1. Having only ONE class each year does not work very well anymore.
2. Plain Vanilla Standard Application to EVERY Level does not work.
3. Compared to the rest of the world, American dancers are a bit sloppy.

Clubs, Dancers, Dancer Associations and Callers ALL want the same thing! **We all want this very special activity to continue, to grow and to thrive.** We are all on the same side and we must work together if we are going to bear witness to this goal. That means things as we have always known them or done them HAVE TO change.

FACT #1 - Having only ONE class a year.

If today's people are having fun they certainly do not want to wait an entire year to invite their friends! THIS MUST CHANGE!

Today's people will bring us plenty of dancers with 2 or 3 starts each year. Square Dancing has always been built strong by "friends bring friends bring friends". Our current structure makes it difficult for new dancers to excite their friends about taking lessons a whole year later. It just takes too long. SSD 50 Calls Standard Application (SA) with 2 or 3 starts each year is much more suited for success. This will reinstate our most powerful marketing tool – “friends bring friends”.

FACT #2 - Plain Vanilla Standard Application to EVERY Level does not work.

This takes the integrity out of the Programs and destroys the recruitment base ruining our best marketing tool "friends bring friends". Without a little variety or maybe some symmetry, it makes it way too easy to move on up and leave your friends behind even when they're really not ready to move on themselves.

Instead, how about just getting the new dancers out of teach mode and into DANCE mode for awhile? This is what we need! SSD accomplishes this goal. Without this educational threshold creates a rush to the next program. When NEW dancers are rushing to the next program the last thing on their mind is bringing in new people!!

So, how do we start to reverse our current (unintentionally) destructive trend, before it's past the point of no return, and before our clubs are completely dead?

Answer: Clubs make a two or three-year pledge to use current class resources and help create 50-Call Standard Application SSD Clubs within their existing clubs. No Plus classes until they have made SSD a success. If Monday night is

the club's class night, turn it into an EVERY-Monday-night-never-stop-year-round SSD Multiple Classes/Club night. This is the Most Important Part of the every other Saturday Night Plus Club!

There IS something in it for the Plus clubs in due time. This requires PATIENCE as well as FORESIGHT! Fight the temptation to move new dancers to Plus too soon. Just Let Them DANCE!

FACT #3 - Sloppy dancers.

After making SSD successful (might take 2 or 3 years) then and only then does the club offer a ONE start each year for Plus Class. This 9 to 12 month class would include the rest of the Basic and Mainstream calls, maybe a little variety and symmetry training and of course the Plus calls.

NOW, from this point forward, EVERY YEAR thereafter, new dancers will begin tricking into Plus clubs! Retention rate will be near 100%.

Mainstream dancers will have choices. They either learn the rest of the Plus calls or be happy DANCING SSD and helping build the club strong.

The neatest thing is: these new dancers will know how to dance!!! We all know the effort it takes to keep new dancers' confidence up as they learn where and how to maneuver. By giving them MORE TIME to learn, dance and assimilate the 50 calls, they naturally become more proficient.

Part of our new wave criteria would be to EMPHASIZE Team Dancing, doing the same steps and flourishes all together. Grand Square will eventually be 32 steps once again!! We want smooth flowing, well timed choreography with no more "stop and go" dancing. It's all about the FLOW! CALLERLAB and the new SSD Committee will be there every step of the way helping callers achieve these goals.

The greatest thing will be the high rate of retention due to this new structure. It would be entirely probable for the retention rate for existing clubs to shoot up to nearly 100%. The last great benefit is the "user friendly," positive marketing transfer we will create. Square Dancing will now be available and served in the doses today's people like it served to them, instead of in the doses that we have insisted it be served to them.

Many may be wondering if we have any proof that this new system will work in practice. It is! In little old Fairfield, Iowa - Jerry Story's home town. There are others in Wisconsin, Chicago, Western PA, Dallas Tx, as well as in several other states, who are not afraid to step out of the OLD and into the NEW, and are successfully building SSD Clubs!

It has even taken root in California - a place where 99% Plus groups exist. Ask the world famous Kip Garvey. The Jackson Claim Jumpers are really jumping. This program will help areas like California rebuild the activity the correct way for a sustainable and Social Square Dancing future.

The SSD Teaching Guide is out and has some suggested flow modules consisting of variety and symmetry. More information will be forthcoming on both these techniques. Also the SSD FAQ document will be coming soon and its full of valuable information.

Hear this interesting statistic: **after six 12 week rotations in Fairfield, they had built their SSD group to nearly 100 new dancers!** Out of this group of nearly 100, and after dancing SSD for another year, 30 chose to go on to Plus.

The 70 that did not choose to go on, but rather stay where they are for now, plan to bring their friends to the next NEW CLASS starting in just a few short weeks. It all just makes too much sense. These 70 new dancers who chose not to go on, would have been our current structure's DISCARDS! These would be the dancers who today we throw away. Ironically, this same 70% figure is very close to our average national dropout rate. **There are brighter days ahead for our wonderful activity.**

Some have mentioned that it takes 2 nights a week to make this initiative work and that they just don't have the time. We say, please re-evaluate your current situation and try again to join us. In other words: if need be, give up that one square in your A group or fold up that dying Plus club with 5 couples in it, and join our winning team. It only takes ONE night a week to operate a SSD Program. One & 1/2 or 2 hours class followed by one & 1/2 or 2 hours SSD Club Dance.

Generally speaking today, to go through to Mainstream/Plus, requires 2 nights a week - club on one night, class on the other. SSD likes class and club on the same night, once a week. Then SSD focuses on FUN & FELLOWSHIP!

We hope your priorities lead to the CALLERLAB APPROVED Social Square Dance Initiative. Dancers now have choices! They can dance 50 calls Standard Application and never know they are not dancing Mainstream. Or, they can help the SSD program become a huge success to insure their Plus club stays alive and well.

“The Nest” Program Works

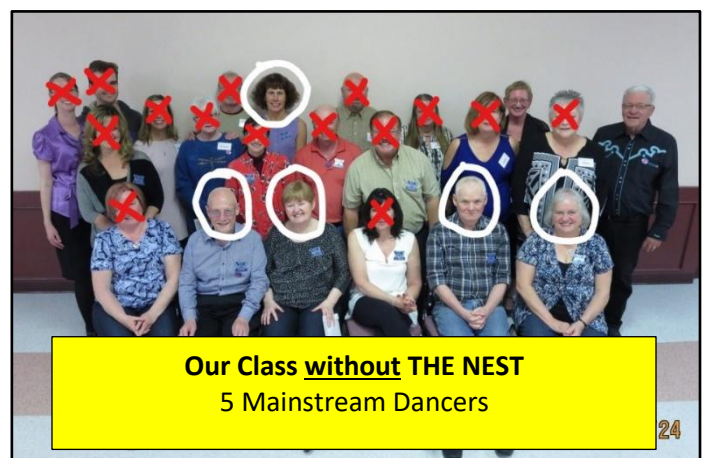
(Issue 2017-4) by Editor Claudia Littlefair

Imagine a New Dancer program that:

- Allows people to join any week they want.
- Allows dancers to bring their friends any week they want.
- Allows people to return and pick up where they left off after being away on vacation or because of illness.
- Is tailored to an individual's learning pace, without holding others back, or having to wait for others to catch up.
- Provides on-the-spot, one-on-one instruction, without disrupting the whole floor.

This may sound like a pipe dream - but it's real, and it works!

The program is called THE NEST, and this is the 3rd year that we've used it in the Calgary club where we teach New Dancers. This program was designed by an American square dancer, Dale Bennett, in 2012. It is run with a Caller and several Narrators. The Mainstream Program is broken down into one-couple, two-couple and four-couple calls. The Narrators, who are trained square angels, teach the one and two-couple calls at stations, using a script of patter. They read the script and stop when they reach a new call. The Narrator teaches the call, and then the script is read again until the next new call. After several new calls, the same script can be re-read with patter music, to reinforce the calls that were taught. On completion of the one and two-couple calls, which make up 70% of the Mainstream program, the New Dancer is ready to move to the last station - the Four-Couple calls, which is taught by the Caller in the main hall.



This year we had quite a few new dancers join during January to March. Some of them made it thru to Mainstream, and some completed about half of the program. This group is our Basic Dancers, and it means that in the fall when we start

up again, we have a possibility of nine dancers returning before we've even advertised! We also had some dancers that started in the fall, but due to absences, did not complete the Mainstream program.

Because this is our third year, we have built up our base. We used to dance one to two squares an evening, we now dance three to four squares, and occasionally five. The mix has changed from mostly experienced dancers (square angels), to a 50/50 split, and sometimes even more new dancers (1st & 2nd year) than experienced. The average age has also been lowered with most of the dancers in their 40's – 60's. Our lessons feel more like a party night because of the enthusiasm and energy that the new dancers provide!

If you think your club might benefit from THE NEST program, or if you want to find out more about it, please email me for the material and more information. claudia.littlefair@gmail.com