



SWOSDA

Square and Round Dancers of South Western Ontario Inc.

INTRODUCTION TO MODERN SQUARE DANCING

PLAN TO HELP CLUBS GROW

Note: The following draft outlines an example of a process that could be used for Clubs interested in growing their membership. This can be tweaked for Clubs in different market areas or to meet different needs.

➤ **FIRST STEP:**

- *Recommend: Form a Committee of 4 to 8 people, each with their own skills and strengths (as outlined below), headed by a Chair Person.*

➤ **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- *Develop a **BUDGET** outlining all expenses (hall rental, advertising expenses, caller cost, etc.), revenues, expected target number of new dancers to demonstrate that the Club will not lose money; set standards around – ‘free first night’ but everyone pays a set amount UP FRONT on the second night for the whole program; remember you are adding value for each attendee; have a fall back position if target is not met. IDEA – set the budget based on 28 new dancers. Ensure that you have the Caller committed (e.g. night and time and his/her charge) during the budget and planning phase.*
- ***DESIGN THE PROGRAM (WITH YOUR CALLER and COMMITTEE)** to do the major calls of Basic over a 18 to 20 week period, ensuring that key calls will be covered; negotiate the hall rental around this length of time and budget. (Caller Lab outlines over 50 Basic Calls).*



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- **FLYER, POST CARDS, BUSINESS CARDS AND NAME BADGES** – must have a common theme in graphic design and messages; ensure that you obtain professional iStock photos that show ‘happy’ people having fun; promotion materials **MUST BE PRINTED PROFESSIONALLY** (ie. Not by a photocopy print service); ensure that you want people to dress in casual attire, comfortable shoes; demonstrate the key benefits that square dancing offers to each attendee;
- **FLYER DISTRIBUTION** – get each Member of the Club to buy-into putting up flyers in various locations of your target market areas (ie. in those places that are frequented by the public – libraries, gyms, doctors, dentists, chiropractors, grocery stores, hockey arenas, community centres, etc.); ensure that they check back at each location every two weeks to put up another flyer;
- **PAID ADVERTISING** – Must be planned carefully for the proper timing along with planned press releases; develop a Post Card that has shorter messages but hits ‘home’ to the reader which can be used in paid advertisements; consider smaller community newspapers, since they are read from ‘cover to cover’ in most communities. Be very selective with the community newspapers and watch your budget carefully.
- **PRESS RELEASES:** Develop intriguing messages for the release responding to the 5 ‘W’s’ of journalism. Remember, the editor of the community newspaper wants to sell advertising and have people respond to ads; the editor does not need your press release, so make sure that it is enticing and interesting. You may find that the editor may send a writer out to your Club to obtain photos and additional information.
- **HAVE NEW DANCERS CALL ONE OF TWO CONTACT PEOPLE (LISTED ON FLYERS & OTHER PROMOTIONAL ITEMS)**, ensuring that you collect the following information from each new dancer – NAME, PHONE, EMAIL ADDRESS, HOME ADDRESS. Find out where/how the new dancer learned



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about the “Introduction to Modern Square Dancing” program that your Club is sponsoring.

- **ANGELS from the CLUB** – are very important to have each evening, to be able to fill a square, assist gently, respond to some questions.

➤ **COMMUNICATION – CRITICAL:**

- Send out **INITIAL EMAIL** (mass email (ie. send to yourself, but bcc to each new dancer)) to welcome the new dancers, confirm first night free, confirm amount of fees per person to be paid on the second night, confirm location, start time and end time of dance, confirm casual attire, comfortable shoes, parking, etc.
- **WEEKLY UPDATE EMAILS** – to complement progress, encourage, outline calls introduced, reinforce that calls will be practiced as the course goes along;
- Establish a **WELCOME DESK** near the entrance door to welcome new dancers each night, place flyers, photo permission, a New Dancer List; **give a warm welcome by name (handshake)** to those who attend each evening.
- Make **NAME TAGS** for each new dancer and encourage them to wear them each evening.
- Develop an **EMERGENCY CALL LIST** for three people to get the word out to all attendees during inclement weather, hydro outage, etc.
- Contact new dancers who miss one wee to stay in touch.
- As you near the third last week, reinforce that the Club is looking to having you join; send out emails along these lines outlining cost, name badges, insurance cost, etc.
- Reinforce that the **FUN CONTINUES!**
- Get **CONFIRMATION** from the new dancers who plan to join the Club.



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- **HAVE A TABLE WITH SNACKS (COOKIES) AND WATER**, encourage the new dancers to bring/buy their own water bottle; spare water cups must be on hand.
- **KEY TO HALL**: Ensure that you have two people who can sign for the key, to allow for absences.
- **TELEPHONE QUESTIONNAIRE** (within two weeks of the end of the program):
purpose – 1) Confirm that they are joining the Club; 2) Confirm the correct name for new name badges; 3) Obtain **FEEDBACK** on what each person felt about the program; suggestions to consider to improve.

Some Feedback (TESTIMONIALS) that Strathroy Club received:

- *“Wonderful program. You did an amazing job! Caller was great! We especially liked the way that you got information out to everyone (weekly emails, announcements) and kept the enthusiasm going. Nothing to improve upon”.*
- *“Great idea to offer the program on a separate night. Caller is excellent, patient and very clear. No negative comments”.*
- *“.... The Angels always made me feel ‘welcomed’. No one pointed out any mistakes. Definitely was fun”.*
- *“Liked the start and finishing time (7:30 pm to 9:00 pm) each evening. Each night was not too long (1.5 hours). It was nice to have snacks and drinks available (cookies, water). The Angels were very helpful. Parking was great, no problems.....”*
- *“ Really appreciated the emails. You did a great job each evening. Snacks were great. Caller was very good.”*



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- ***“The program met my expectations. The way you handled the communications (ie. weekly emails, announcements) was ‘huge’. Angels were great as they always made me feel welcomed to the Club. Snacks were very good.....”***
- ***“We were impressed from the very first night when Tom (Caller) had us form a big circle with good music. Great way to break the ice for many. We found the whole experience ‘really good’. 1.5 hours each evening was perfect, starting at 7:00 pm. Overall – a very good experience.”***
- ***“The program was fun. A lot of laughs. I really liked the socializing aspect. Sometimes I found that I learned new calls better with the same square”.***
- ***“I really enjoyed the program and meeting a lot of people. I did not have any expectations, so the program exceeded everything. I found that it allowed me to have a lot of fun each evening”.***
- ***“From the first night, we enjoyed and learned something. More fun than expected. We have never laughed so much in a long time. Brilliant way to offer this program. To (Caller) – patient, fantastic in not holding anyone back.”***
- ***“Everyone was very welcoming. Not critical which sends people away, Not too serious. A lot of fun! No changes required.”***

Lastly, use the promotion templates that created for future programs, tweaking them as required. Obtain permission to use some of the testimonials received, using the new dancer’s first name and initial of last name only) in future promotions.