

NEW MARKETING STRATEGY ATTRACTS 40 NEW DANCERS!

- 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

Our secret is now out

Looking for something FUN to do?

Interested in something that allows you to

- Laugh
- Keep fit (easy as walking!)
- Feel good
- Enjoy a great social activity
- Meet new friends
- Relieve stress

WE WANT YOU!!

Introduction to Modern Square Dancing



- NO experience required
- First evening FREE!!
- Under \$6/night
- Professional Caller / Instructor
- Casual attire



Tuesday Evenings, 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm
October 17th to December 5th, 2017

St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church Hall
34 Head Street N.
Strathroy, ON (lots of parking)

To pre-register Call: Tom (519)709-8665 or Jo (519)666-2026

Strathroy Swinging Dues - SWOSDA.ca

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!)