

Motivating Innovate and Invigorate

Invigorating and Building a Home Club

In brainstorming what the focus should be in having a successful class and developing the club we came up with 7 general areas that needed to be addressed:

1. How to effectively recruit new dancers
2. Class schedule: a class that covers basic/SSD in a shorter period
3. Ensuring high rates of student success and that students graduate with a skill level that lets them dance successfully dance typical choreography found at most open dances
4. End endless class format—getting out of a constant learning mode (going Basic, Mainstream , Plus in a year)
5. Build in regular recreational dancing that engages all club members.
6. Build in a high level of social interaction
7. Ensure dancers have high levels of fun at all stages

The challenge then was how to put these general objectives into a set of SMART goals.

Quick Overview of SMART Goals	
In my consulting work with school districts that need change, I focus on identifying SMART goals, and feel that we can use this format to set specific timebound goals to making change. We need to identify specific goals and accompanying action plans, that we can implement on a local basis and realistically attain:	
Specific	What specifics steps will you take to reach your goal? What accomplishments will help you know you've reached your goal?
Measurable	What will you use to your measure progress towards your goal? How will you know when you have reached it?
Attainable	Is this goal realistic? With the information, resources and time that you have, can you obtain the goal of your action plan?
Relevant	How is this action plan aligned with, and relevant to the goal you need to accomplish?
Time Bound	By when will you complete this goal? Is this timeline realistic?

Objective I: Look at the community and identify a few easy and direct ways to recruit people:

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1. Weekly Farmer's Market
2. Weekly Summer Music in the Park series
3. Flash Mob
4. Monthly Community Dance nights with a focus on sociability and having fun dancing.
5. Articles in Local newspaper
6. Community Bulletin Boards
7. Contingent in Apple Blossom Parade and Fourth of July Parade
8. Sign on hall
9. Someone to keep track of contacts

SMART Goal: Identify club members who will take charge of each of the items above.

SMART Check: did this happen? How many recruited for each action?

SMART Goals: Group of at least 4 dancers attend weekly farmer's market and

- pass out flyers
- wear pins that say "I love square dancing—ask me why"
- Get names and emails of folks interested
- Position themselves near food and beverage stands where they can talk to folks standing in line

SMART Check: did they do it? Every week?

SMART Goal: Group of at least 4 dancers attend weekly summer music in the park and:

- pass out flyers
- wear pins that say "I love square dancing—ask me why"
- Get names and emails of folks interested
- Position themselves near food and beverage stands where they can talk to folks standing in line
- pass out flyers
- Get names and emails of folks interested
- Position themselves near food and beverage stands where they can talk to folks standing in line

SMART Check: Did this happen? How often?

SMART Goal: Flash mob dancing: Organize a group of dancers who will do this. Have two dancers in charge of setting dates and schedule?

- At farmers market once a month
- Entrance to music in the park once a month, while people are coming and leaving.

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- Local shopping center once a month
- Other venues???

SMART Check: Did this happen? How often?

SMART Goal: Monthly Community Dance nights at the Hall (see details below)

- Third Friday of every month hold a social night with a social time, community dance time, and club level dance times.
- Have club members designated to make positive greetings and interaction with each new person who comes
- Have a social event for the first hour (see below)
- First hour: intro to square dancing with emphasis on high energy and fun
- Get contact information on all folks
- Invite them to the next month and keep them apprised of when new class will start.
- Follow up with emails saying thanks for coming, we hope to see you at our community dance night next month on (date) and will keep you informed of our next class.

SMART Check: Did this happen? How often?

SMART Goal: Designate someone to contact and work on getting an article on the club in the local paper.

SMART Check: Did this happen? Any results?

SMART Goal: Find 1-3 folks to design flyers and post flyers and information on local bulletin boards.

Content:

- Enjoyable, high energy class, with an emphasis on Having fun, meeting new folks, and
- Singles and couples welcome—all ages—all couple combinations—everybody welcome
- If you are a couple: get out of the house and have fun together once a week
- If you are single come and meet and variety of new people
- Take two hours a week to get of line a interact with other face to face
- No funny clothes—casual wear
- 12cweek course—first three week free—scholarships available for rest of course
- It's nothing like 8thh grade PE.
- Other ideas

SMART Check: Did this happen? How many postings?

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SMART Goal: Parades: Designate someone to organize club members to be a contingent in Apple Blossom and Fourth of July parade

- Get a sign-up list of at least two squares,
- two people to carry club banner
- four people to pass out flyers along parade route.
- Set up Harlan in 58 Chevy convertible to call from

SMART Check: Did this happen? Result summary ?

SMART Goal: Sign on Hall:

- Some to take charge of having a large banner made to put on the front of the hall: learn to Square Dance: call: XXXXXXXX or go to (web address)

SMART Check: Did this happen? Result summary?

SMART Goal: Assign someone to keep a record of all contacts and to:

- Email them regularly about community dance nights
- Email them regularly about upcoming class start dates
- Remind them that scholarships are available
- Keep track of which mode of contact got them to come

SMART Check: Did this happen? Result summary?

Objective II: Class schedule a class that covers Basic in a shorter period

SMART GOAL: Design the class to be one semester long as that is a format that many folks are used to for classes.

- Plan the class to cover most Basic calls and the SSD Mainstream calls in 12-14 weeks
- Harlan to design the format for this class. Class to start in September and end in December.
- Also plan a second semester, that would follow starting in January that would cover the remaining Mainstream calls and Plus (note to Jim: in northern California most clubs teach Basic through Plus.)
- Give folks lots of social dance time while the class is going on to develop their skills—at least one class level dance a month

SMART Check: Did this happen? How successful was it in student learning, student retention and student success?

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Objective III: Ensuring high rates of student success and that students graduate with a skill level that lets them dance successfully dance typical choreography found at most open dances. In the past student have found it difficult to dance at open dances with success, and sometimes became frustrated in class—the new format and instructor will need to address this.

SMART GOAL: Ensure 90% student success on any given night and provide students with specific support mechanisms to assist with success.

- Dancers need to experience each call from all common positions they might run into at a dance
- Instruction needs to involve the shortest amount of time listening and not dancing and maximum amount of time dancing. Harlan plans to never just talk for more than 1 minute.
- Instruction needs to focus on dancer success—Harlan plans instruction for high levels of success and high amounts of positive feed back to students. Success is related to thoroughness of instruction and planning for easy student comprehension. (see Harlan’s paper on learning and square dance)
- Plan instruction with incremental difficulty so that students are successful at least 90% of the time at any given class session time in any given class night
- Have weekly review sessions for those students interested or students who missed a class. Schedule these for the 45 minutes before class. Have angels lined up to help.
- Dancers will dance each new call at least 25 times the first night of learning it and, at least 25 times the following night. Rationale: to internalize a new motor action an adult needs to complete it successfully 48 time. To become familiar with it they need to complete it successfully 26 times.
- Dancers will experience the calls for all common positions to avoid “Brain Groove” development (e.g.: dance swing thru with boys on end, girls on end, girls together, boys together)
- Dance cards: to ensure strong support, students are offered the option of dance card beginning in week three. A dance card pairs a new student with a different angel partner each tip, so the students know beforehand who they are dancing with. This is optional, and couples who wish to dance together are encouraged to do so, but many couples actually opted for dance cards in the classes. Need someone to take on the task of lining up angels and creating dance cards each week. Example’

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Dance Card for September 28th

Student Name: Jane Doe

Tip 1: Bob Doe

Tip 4: Jake Doe

Tip 7: Tom Doe

Tip 2: John Doe

Tip 5: Betty Doe

Tip 8: Open Tip

Tip 3: Mary Doe

Tip 6: Jim Doe

An Aside on "Brain Groove":

This is a personal construct of mine that I feel applies directly to Square Dance instruction. I believe in a learning element in square dancing that I call "brain groove". By this I mean the fact that if dancers learn a call from one formation and dance it a repeated number of times from the same position in that formation without experiencing variation, they internalize that this is the only way to do the call. As a result, their ability to generalize the definition to other formations, or to other positions than the formation is impaired because they have danced it from repeatedly without variation.

If the first 20 times you dance recycle, it is from right hand waves with girls in the center and boys on the ends, dancers will internalize that as how to do the call. Should you then call it from right hand waves with girls on the ends, they will struggle with the call, even though they have dance it many times. By initially calling a call repeatedly from the same set up, the caller is handicapping the dancers and limiting comprehension of how to execute the call and preventing them from being able to generalize their understanding of the call to a variety of positions. This is a caller error, not dancers' inability to learn.

This is grounded in learning research, that is based on the need to know all aspects of a task in order to generalize to all possible situations. From my experience, it is important to vary positions from the beginning of a call to avoid development of "brain grooves".

Staying with recycle. If you are teaching it you might start with boys on the ends (although there is no reason to do it this way), and in the first tip do it with boys on the ends, girls on the ends, girls together and boys together etc. I have done this for a few years now and find that varying positions from the start can be done easily and is highly successful.

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Objective IV: End the “endless class” format. In the past classes went one for a long time and then a new class started right away. Design a club format with more dance time for everyone

SMART Goal: Have one recreational dance for all club dance program per month. Ensure that class members are given one dance a month to just dance in a recreational/social format outside of class.

- Plan this for the third Friday of each month. Include a social aspect.

Example of the past year:

September class starts

October 3rd Friday: Halloween Dance (optional come as a square dance call) First hour class level dancing, then and other club programs

November 3rd Friday: Thanksgiving Dance Thanksgiving potluck with turkey and dressing provided, followed by dancing with first hour class level, then other club programs

December 3rd Friday: Holiday dance with potluck— class graduation dance (end of semester 1 class) 1 ½ hours of class level followed by other club programs.

January 3rd Friday Winter Dessert Night with one hour of new graduate program dancing and other club programs

February 3rd Friday Mardi Gras night—southern food themed potluck dancing with fall class level, and second semester class level dancing.

March 3rd Friday St. Patrick’s day with corned beef and cabbage provided dancing with fall class level, and second semester class level dancing. and other club programs

April 3rd Friday Ice Cream and pie night—also second semester class graduation— dancing at fall class and second semester class level, and other club programs

May 3rd Saturday—Big dance day: upper program dancing morning and afternoon. First and second semester class dancing evening. Guest caller.

Objectives V: --VII seem to be covered in the above items but:

Elements of fun and social interaction also include:

- Birthday night once a month—recognize birthdays and provide a cake
- High energy music and singing calls-singing calls will incorporate the new call taught at the end of the tip it is taughtii

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- “Smart dance cards”—for students who seem to be having difficulty design their dance cards to have strong, positive (but not pushy) partners, who are particularly selected to work well with them.

Revitalizing yourself as a caller

music, choreography, keeping classes and club nights interesting and varied. The monthly plan for this that I use.

One of the biggest challenges for a caller with weekly club nights is not falling into a rut and not being predictable.

Music. You need a dynamic range of music and must avoid using the same music too often. Here are my rules of thumb:

1. I call 9 weekly sessions and most of these have 7-8 Tips, so in the average month I call 28-32 tips per session a month.
2. I try not to use the same song twice in a month. Therefore I need 32 patten songs and up to 32 singing calls a month. I keep a data base of which songs I use in which tips each day to help me keep track of songs I have used.
3. Also I try to seven new pattern songs and seven new singing calls a month, so my reprioritize is always evolving.

Choreography:

Especially if you are using sight calling and/or modules, you need to really focus on not having your choreography repetitive or predictable. AT the end of each weekly club night send them away saying that was new and different. Not: New and different does not be hit of the head difficult.

My rules of thumb:

In any given tip do not use the same get in twice. This is easier at Advanced and above, and very challenging at Basic. It takes thought and planning

Examples:

- Sequence 1: Heads Pass the Ocean
- Sequence 2: Sides Square thru
- Sequence 3: Heads lead right

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- Sequence 4: Sides Slide Thru
- Sequence 5: Heads flutter wheel sweep $\frac{1}{4}$
- Sequence 6: Heads box the gnat and slide thru
- Sequence 7: Sides touch $\frac{1}{4}$ sides walk and Dodge
- Sequence 8: Heads spin the top
- Sequence 9: Heads pass thru Separate around One

Likewise, in any given tip do not use the same resolve twice. Again this is easier at upper programs and a real challenge at Basic. Never use Ferris Wheel, Square Thru 3 more than once a tip

Singing Call Figures:

Again you need variation

Choose or write ones that don't always start with heads/side Square Thru 4.

If you are teaching a class feature a new call in the e singing calls for the tip it is taught.

If you have an 8-tip night you need a minimum of 8 singing call figures. Opening, middle and ending breaks need to be varied as well.

1. You've got to have a gimmick: something new each week: making each club night novel when you call for the same club 50 times a year. The importance of programming each night

Although early in our careers we put a lot of energy and thought (hopefully) into programming, over time we tend to get into a rut if we do not actively continue to do this.

Once you become predictable you easily become boring and once you become boring dancer star to stay home.

So reinvent yourself, your music, your programming and your choreography—often.