

## ***Community Dance Leaders Seminar***

Presented by CALLERLAB Committee for Community & Traditional Dance

### **INTRODUCTION**

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The Community Dance Leader Seminar is focused on the knowledge, skills and philosophy of providing dance entertainment to those that include dance intermittently in their lives. Participants that participate infrequently have very different desires and objectives than our recreational dancers. Think about it. They have lives that include work, family, and a variety of activities that fill their discretionary time. So as dance leaders, do we have a product/service that would interest these consumers?

My experience covers providing education and entertainment for schools (elementary, secondary, colleges/universities), churches (solos groups, youth groups, seniors groups, etc.), neighborhoods or communities (block parties, summer gatherings, annual meetings, etc.), various gatherings & celebrations (weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, reunions, etc.), as well as limited basic recreational events such as Basic and SSD Dances.

So as entertainment/education services business owners, what services do we choose to provide to our clients? Once we decide on the services we choose to provide, then we must adequately prepare to professionally provide them to our market.

To accomplish this, we must establish a business model that provides for the many aspects needed to conduct this kind of business.

- Preparing the content for our services – different units of entertainment will be needed for each type of client. Elementary school programs will be significantly different from an anniversary party, etc. When selecting appropriate material consider:
  - Dance Form – for each “tip” what dance types will be featured: squares, contras, solo dances, grand circle dances (mixers, single/double circles, Sicilian circles, etc.).
  - Dance Type – Are dances pattern dances or module/extemporaneous material dances, i.e., contra routines, Sicilian Circle routines, line dance routines, named dances like singing squares or quadrilles.
  - Difficulty of Dance – what is the number of terms/vocabularies used in the dance, is the vocabulary only used from standard applications, what is the experience of the dancers, are there physical or mental limitations that should be considered there.

- Music for dances – what is the theme of the event, what atmosphere will the dance be held, what is the age and physical ability of the participants. For example: if the event is a dance at a dude ranch the music probably should be traditional square dance music, not contemporary music.
- Sales/Marketing ... the service that you have prepared to offer to clients must be well defined to enable effective marketing to the your clients by type, i.e., churches, youth camps, weddings, or individual planning birthday parties, weddings, anniversaries. The pricing strategy for the service should be well defined and competitive. A full spread of marketing efforts is recommended (flyers, mailing lists, social media, networking). Focusing on only one form will generate disappointing results.
- Purchasing ... in preparation of the content that you will offer, acquisition of the needed music and supplies must have been accomplished. This must include performance licensing for the planned music.
- Contracting ... written agreements are necessary to protect both the client and you the provider. All contracts need event name, date(s), time(s), location including directions, if necessary, description of program, what is provided by both the client and provided by the caller, normal or emergency cancelation language, the agreed to fee and contact information for both the caller and the client (I collect cell phones & email for primary contact and sometimes an alternate contact).
- Equipment ... when preparing for a community dance or one night party it is imperative that sufficient equipment is available for the size of the event. Events could be for 20 people, 50 people, 100 people or even more. The dance space could be a church basement, or outdoors on an athletic field. Do you have or can you get the necessary equipment, and can you maintain it so it will work when you need it?

So, choosing to entertain in any of these situations is a serious matter. To get started we recommend that you identify an environment that you would feel comfortable in. For example: say you could develop an opportunity to provide a dance for adults at a church. You have an understanding of the age group, some understanding of the music they like, you know that they may already know each other somewhat, you may have been in the venue where the dance would be held. Now, what should you do for the dancing? We recommend a program that progressively builds on a small number of square dance basics to create an evening of enjoyment.

During the next few sessions of this seminar, we will present a variety of proposed programs for these events, material that you can acquire and include in you own program and the philosophies around presentation.