

## ***Community Dance Leader 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 who 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?

Our seminar presenters have extensive experience 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 a wide variety of recreational 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 type 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, in 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, check with the hosts to see if the music probably should be traditional square dance music, not

contemporary music. If the event is for a college group, take care that the music reflects what they might expect and would like.

- Sales/Marketing ... the service that you have prepared to offer to clients must be well defined to enable effective marketing to 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. Once you have booked the event with the organizer, provide them with materials that they can use to effectively market the event to their prospective participants.
- Purchasing ... in preparation of the content that you will offer, acquisition of the needed equipment, music, and supplies must have been accomplished. This must include performance licensing for the planned music. Also, make sure that your equipment will be sufficient for the size of the audience and space identified for the dance.
- 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). When discussing an event with the sponsor ask how many people they expect and what is the size of the space to be used for dancing. We recommend 18 square feet (*sf*) per dancer. For example, if they expect 80 people, they should provide a dance space of at least 1,440*sf*. If the provided space is more than twice that needed for the number of dancers, look to reduce the feel of the size of the space, i.e. build a barrier like chairs or tables.
- 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 understand the age of the group, have some understanding of the music they would 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 your own program and the philosophies around presentation.