

PROSPECTING

163 ~~157~~ Ways to Find and Retain New Dancers

Be Flexible Be Persistent Try Several Ideas
Smile. Smile. Smile

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There are many ways to attract new dancers. There is a difference between attracting dancer prospects and creating a class. A plan is needed to create a class. The Timberline Toppers' Plan has proven to be reliable and has been used repeatedly to create classes of 40 or more. The Timberline Toppers' Plan is not this list of Ideas, but this list of ideas is a small part of that Plan. If you have questions about the Timberline Toppers' Plan, contact mntndncr@att.net.

The ideas on this list have been grouped into eleven categories. Successful recruiting requires a blend of ideas that are likely to be unique for your club (and target market). These ideas are presented to help your club grow and become stronger.

This list was initially compiled and categorized by Jim Langdon in May, 2001.

Creation has been from multiple sources: panels, personal thoughts, conversations, ASD magazine, USDA, etc.

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Business / Commercial

1. Doctors and dentists. Ask permission to place brochures in waiting rooms. Doctors who understand the health benefits of square dancing may recommend it as mild exercise.
2. Hotels & Motels. Leave tri-fold information or flyers in hotel literature racks and other places which allow this.
3. Supermarkets. Leave information at checkout counters, on supermarket bulletin boards or place in every shopping bag.
4. Pizza Boxes. Obtain permission from the manager. Ask your local pizza parlor to include a tri-fold or flyer about your club or classes or the square dance activity in every box.
5. Companies. Companies, especially larger companies, can provide dividends through company papers, signs in shop areas and sponsorship of classes. They can also provide halls, help with finances, place articles in company papers, etc. ...
6. Small Businesses. Place flyers in windows or provide countertop tri-folds or business cards. Use locations such as hardware stores, dry cleaners, coffee shops, sandwich shops, art galleries, mom & pop shops, etc.
7. Sports events. Approach your major or minor league affiliate about a group rate. Attend the event as a club, association, or invite statewide participation. Include family and friends. As a bonus, you may be able to dance on the field or get other recognition of the square dancing activity in front of thousands of your closest friends. In addition to being FUN, this helps retain dancers in the activity.
8. Bulletin Boards. Many small businesses and supermarkets allow the community to post notices on their bulletin board. Ask if you can post a notice about your club and lessons.
9. Post Office. If your post office has a bulletin board for local notices, use it.

10. Chamber of Commerce. Get on the club directory or in monthly bulletin. Place an ad in the monthly bulletin. Supply flyers, brochures, and club information.
11. Personal letters. Send personal letters to all civic club presidents. Obtain a listing of available clubs from Chamber of Commerce Club Directory or local library.
12. Welcome Wagon / Newcomers. Get your information included in the information distributed to new residents.
13. Library. Place posters or square dance magazines on racks. Buy a subscription or donate used subscription to libraries. Donate teaching records, provide bookmarks, or make a monthly display for the library.
14. Electronic bank sign. Use it to place a message about your club or lessons.
15. Buses. Use bus placards for inside and outside advertising.
16. Bus benches. Use bus benches to advertise your club. Include a contact number for lessons or general information.
17. Service club program. Have your club sponsor or be associated with a service club's program.

Classes

18. Time. Prospecting for a class of new dancers takes time and effort. Allow two months minimum; four months is better; some clubs have taken as long as six months.
19. Free ticket handout. Handout free admission tickets to attend a dance (as a guest), to an open house, an introductory dinner, or to lessons.
20. Business card. Use a business card size handout with new class information.
21. Sandwich board. Place a sandwich board in the back of a pickup truck advertising lessons.
22. Sunshields and posters. Use sunshields and posters in personal cars advertising lessons.
23. Free prizes. Advertise free prizes at your first class to entice prospects.
24. Chili Dinner / First Night Party Night. Invite all prospects. Have a free dinner, party, socialize, eat, and everybody dances to basic calls. For more fun, name the buffet dishes after square dance calls.
25. Baby Sitting. Advertise and provide free babysitting for classes and club dances. This could be a lure to young parents and a way to lower the average age of your club.
26. Club contest. Have a club contest for members to see who brings in the most dancers and helps them graduate, with suitable reward and recognition.
27. Retread class. Hold a special retread class for dropouts and former dancers.
28. Three free nights. Keep class open for new enrollment for first three nights. (Best considered for once a year classes.)
29. Joint sponsorship of class. Seek joint sponsorship of your class with YMCA, YWCA, Community Adult Education, Recreation District, Community College, church, radio station, major businesses, your company, etc.
30. First phase FREE. Divide class into 3 phases (i.e. 30 sessions by 3). Offer first 10 sessions free.
31. Blast classes / Accelerated classes. Hold two classes per week, or five classes per week for two or three weeks, or five consecutive Saturdays, or weekend all day Saturday & Sunday, or other "compressed time" intensive classes.
32. Multicycle classes. Have 2, 3, 4, or more, classes starting throughout the year. If your classes overlap, the new dancers in one phase can help angel their friends in another phase.
33. Pyramid Your Prospects. Ask your current class to fill out 3x5 cards with prospect names. Their friends, co-workers, neighbors, new acquaintances.

34. Review sessions. Hold review sessions for those having problems; such as a half hour before class. Hold special sessions. Hold review sessions to help newer dancers or to increase the dance level of your club.

Club (Yours)

35. Develop a Plan! Establish your Lesson Committee. Create a plan and follow it. Determine WHO to attract to your club; WHAT media and methods to use; WHEN to do your promotion; WHERE to do your promotions, and WHY you are recruiting new members.
36. Elected club officers. Your club should include an Education / Public Relations / Marketing Director whose function is to generate and disseminate publicity, create public awareness, promote the activity, and build classes. This function can easily be divided into two chairmanships; Education and Marketing.
37. Promotion Committee. Create a promotion committee. Brainstorm for new promotion ideas. Select ideas that work best for you. Make promotion a continuous effort!
38. Database Administrator. The database administrator will keep a list (database) of prospects.
39. Public awareness of dances. Increase the visibility for club dances. Invite friends and spectators. Hand out "glad you came" tri-folds with club information.
40. Banner. Place a banner on your dance hall on dance night that is visible from the street.
41. Special Dances. Hold a dance for club members and square dancers in a public place such as theme parks, theme restaurants, malls, local festivals, fairs and other public events.
42. Club Members. Have each member fill out 3x5 cards with prospect names - their friends, co-workers, neighbors, new acquaintances, etc.
43. Social responsibility. Sponsor a benefit dance or fundraisers for a special cause.
44. Community activities. Take part in local activities, block parties, fairs, etc.
45. Float. Create a float for an area parade.
46. Offer square dancing year round and weekly.
47. Dance Party. Have your club or association sponsor a regular party dance that does not require prior experience, such as the Community Dance Program (CDP) or Square Dance ABC program. Some regular attendees will eventually desire "more" and become interested in your next set of Modern Western Square Dance lessons.

Handouts / Flyers

48. USDA, CALLERLAB, and other square dance organizations have handouts available. Check them out for cost and suitability.
49. Tri-Fold. A handout is more effective as a tri-fold rather than an 8-1/2 X 11 flyer. It fits better in pockets and purses and is more likely to be carried home.
50. Interpretive piece developed as a handout.
51. Placemats in local restaurants with your club information.
52. Play Money. Create fake money or scrip to advertise clubs, classes, or events. (Note. It is illegal to copy or alter legal tender.)
53. Fans. Create handheld fans with club and class information.
54. Create flyers that double as posters.
55. Flyer racks. Place brochures at Welcome Center racks (state lines and vacation areas).
56. Colorful handouts. Create eye catching, colorful, free ticket handouts. Pass out coupons for a free dance.
57. Pictures. Increase interest in your handouts by including pictures of people having fun.

58. Individual benefits. Formulate and circulate a written description of the physical, mental, and social benefits of modern square dancing.
59. Club Flyers. Distribute club flyers at other dances and out of state dances if appropriate.
60. Business Cards. Create square dance business cards. Use them as personal cards, or, club info cards for classes, or, “You have been patronized by a square dancer” cards.
61. Locations. Have flyers / brochures available at some of the following locations: businesses of many types, adult education centers, health & fitness clubs, senior centers, art centers, hobby stores (music, craft, etc.), shopping malls, barber shops, beauty shops, Laundromats, service clubs, teen centers, sporting goods stores, square dance shops, western wear stores, chamber of commerce, libraries, churches, local colleges, municipal offices, video rental stores, Welcome Wagon, movie theaters, visitor magazines, company recreation areas, real estate offices, restaurants, dentist offices, doctor offices, drug stores, YMCA, YWCA, grocery stores, bulletin boards, dry cleaners, ... and more.
62. Bookmarkers. Have bookmarks with your square dance information on them. Hand them out at fairs, parades, demonstrations, medical waiting rooms, libraries, new and used bookstores, to teachers, to friends, ...

Live / Personal

63. Demonstrations. Hold planned performances at shows, street dances, block parties, malls, fairs, festivals, craft shows, wherever people gather. Have information to handout.
64. Entertainment. Provide entertainment for churches, civic groups, service clubs, organizations, businesses, etc. Solicit them. Provide demonstration and information.
65. One night stands. Party Programs. Hold a party program for church groups, couples groups, professional & business groups, resorts, campground programs, anniversaries, school groups, neighborhood associations, etc.
66. Private Party. At your own birthday, anniversary, promotion, or holiday party include some square dancing. Invite your non dancing friends to join in a simple square dance. Guide those expressing enthusiasm to lessons.
67. Word of Mouth. Let people know you enjoy square dancing. - friends, neighbors, co-workers, acquaintances ...
68. Daily activities. Every time you get your car serviced, buy groceries, get a haircut, and all other daily activities, you come in contact with a potential square dancer. Let them know you square dance.
69. Your car. Your car is a billboard. Decals, bumper stickers, magnetic signs, a square dance flag on your antenna can all be used to let people know square dancing exists.
70. License plates. Use square dance license plates (specialty plates) or square dance license plate frames.
71. Yard signs. Plant a front yard sign at home. “Learn to square dance – inquire within.”
72. Road sign. Plant a yard sign at edge of road, “Square Dancer Crossing.”
73. Personal items. Personal items can let people know you are a square dancer. Examples: wear a square dance tie at work, square dance pins, decals, emblems, aerial flags, desk ornaments, mugs, tee shirts, jackets, flyers at your workstation ...
74. Information booths. Man an information booth at fairs and festivals. (State, county, city, neighborhood, ethnic, food, music, any place where people gather.) Ask anyone who comes within 10 feet, “May I give you some information on square dancing?” If possible get name, address, and phone number for follow up by mail and phone.

75. Flea Markets. Have a TV/Monitor set up with a DVD showing square dancing. This attracts people to your booth and exposes square dancing to the public.
76. Personal checks. Use a square dancer logo on your personal checks.
77. Paying Bills. Include a business card or flyer with info on your club and classes.
78. Address labels. Use a square dancer logo on your return address labels.
79. Public Speaking. When asked to speak to your group, talk about your recruiting system and square dancing. One dancer chose to use this subject to her Toastmaster's group.
80. Canvassing. Have club members go door to door in their neighborhood with information about square dancing and lessons. If all members do it the same day, you can hold a dinner party after and trade stories. (reinforcement)
81. Shopping. Go shopping dressed in square dance attire. This visibility works especially well for the ladies.
82. Dinner. Eat out before a dance dressed in square dance attire. Someone will comment. Hand them a square dance business card, strike up a conversation, invite them to your dance to watch at no charge, tell them about lessons, or get their name and number for future contact.
83. Eat Out. Leave the tip with a square dance business card or inside a square dance tri-fold.
84. Club badge. Wear your square dance badge with street clothes when going out or to other meetings. Someone will ask and you can tell.
85. Club badge. Attach an "Ask me about square dancing" ribbon to your club badge and wear it in public.

Media

86. Information Sources: Pick up ideas and see what other square dance groups are doing from magazines and websites: American Squaredance magazine, www.usda.org, www.callerlab.org, www.dosado.com, www.squaredance.ca, <http://w.webring.com/hub?ring=squareup> and related links. Also check out associations, federations and councils in other states.
87. Billboards.
88. Square dance information signs at edge of town.
89. Adopt a highway sign. "Next mile kept litter free by Rooty-Toot-Toot Square Dance Club." Be sure 'square dance club' is part of the verbiage; Rooty-Toot-Toot could be a plumbing company.
90. Burma Shave Signs. Create a short series of life-lesson-humor-with-a-twist road side signs leading into town or to your club.
91. Airport posters. Create and place airport posters, full size and colorful.
92. Schools. Hold a poster contest in area schools.
93. Banner. Place a banner across Main Street.
94. Window displays. Create a window display for square dance month. Place it in a willing business or library.
95. Radio. Use free spots, paid ads, weekly forum series, or talk show call-ins.
96. Radio & TV. Send information for their Public Service program.
97. Media personnel. Invite television and radio personalities, photographers, and news staff to cover special dances, regular dances and classes. You may end up on the 10 o' clock news.
98. Cable Television. Local cable programs sometimes offer golden opportunity for exposure, possibly as a series.
99. Television, Public Access: Highlight local dance shows, clubs, SD organizations.
100. Television commercial. CALLERLAB has an available videotape commercial.

101. Square Dance videocassettes. CALLERLAB has a half-hour video suitable for TV programming.
102. Internet. Maintain a website about your club; include club, class, dance and contact information. Link to/from other square dance sites. Include email address for information inquiries.
103. Internet. Place banner ads or button links to/from non square dance web sites; i.e. local businesses, local clubs, local groups, job sites, regional sites of national sites (AARP, match.com ...) etc.
104. Social Media / Internet. Join the 21st century. Our kids are using Facebook, Twitter, and other social media to communicate. Some square dance leaders have successfully tapped this source to attract new dancers.
105. Moveable trailer signs.
106. Create an ad that can be used as a trailer for local movies, drive-ins, cinema slide blurbs.

Print Media

107. Letters. Create a letter campaign (invitations).
108. Bulk Mail. Send out letters or cards by bulk mail. Obtain the carrier routes from USPS.
109. Postcards. Use pre-printed postcard reminders for classes, dances, special events.
110. Coupon Books and Mailouts. Have an info page on your club or classes included in free coupon books and mailouts.
111. Partnership. Piggy back or be a partner for bulk mail opportunities with companies, utilities, car dealers, merchants, sales people, colleges, etc.
112. Newspapers. Cultivate a relationship with the entertainment reporter and community activities reporter ... and provide them with material.
113. Newspapers. Use daily, weekly, and "shoppers" papers. Some ads may be free, some will be paid ads.
114. Newspapers: Take advantage of the variety of specialty papers. There are entertainment guides, lifestyles, sports clubs, camping, horses, apartment complexes, homeowners associations, singles scene, etc.
115. Newspapers. Write press releases. (Who, What, When, Where, Why).
116. Newspapers. The Denver Post newspaper has a "Dailey Deal" that places a one-day sticker on the front page and advertises goods and services at half price. It has been used to get 30 new dancers into lessons. The paper gets their half-cut from the dancers that sign up; cost to club for advertising is \$0. The club gives lessons at reduced price and adds new dancer members to the club. Win-Win.
117. Postal Meter Plates. If you (or your company) use a postal meter instead of stamps, create a square dance message.
118. Want ads. Write a want ad; "Dancers Wanted," "Exercise and Dance." "Single Men Needed." "Couples wanted," etc. Place the ads in the paper and section that will be read by your target audience.
119. Humor gets attention. Example ad for a club seeking more men: "Learn 68 moves you can put on a woman. Lessons start Tuesday ... "
120. Specialty printings. Place an ad in church bulletins, theatre programs, school programs, association or club newsletters, company newspapers, etc.
121. Square dance magazines. Place notices/announcements of special club activities and success stories in area magazines (i.e. Denver Bulletin) or national magazines for dancers.

122. Subscriptions. Receive subscriptions to local and national magazines to pick up ideas and see what other square dance groups are doing.

Phone

123. Phone campaign. Use the phone to follow up prospecting leads. (follow up calls).
124. Phone campaign. Use the phone to make cold calls. *
125. Phone boiler room. Borrow a members' business office one night. *
126. Phone campaign. Collect all your old roster lists. Highlight any old members no longer dancing and give them a call. Invite them back.
127. Club listing. List your club in the phone book. Hook the number up with an answering machine and a square dance message.
128. Maintain a telephone information line. Advertise in yellow pages.
129. Computer telephone canvas. *
130. 800 number. Use an 800 number to gain wider exposure.

*Some forms of unsolicited calls may be illegal. Check in your area.

Political

131. Mayor's proclamation of square dance month.
132. Governor's proclamation of square dance month. Dance at the Capitol.
133. Celebrity recognition. Find a celebrity (political, sport, entertainment) to endorse square dancing.

Retention

134. Club mentor. Have a mentor for all students after graduation. Visit other clubs as a group. (Especially if your club goes dark for the summer.) Get them involved in the fun more than the work. Get them on the floor.
135. Century Books. This booklet requires dancers to get the signature of 100 callers and qualifies them for their choice of a pin or badge. While doing this, they are building interest and staying in square dancing.
136. Club Newsletter. Send via print or email. Distribute to all members. Occasionally send special edition to former members. Emphasize future activities. Keep simple and easy to read. Maximize impact, minimize essays/words.
137. Flyers, newsletters, or activity handouts. Send information on your club's activities to former dancers. Invite them to participate.
138. Past classes chairman. Assign a club member as chairperson for past classes. The objective is to get old graduates back dancing and mixing with club members.
139. Value class members as an important part of your club from the day they walk in.
140. Students dance with the club. Invite new dancers to dance with the club members for the first half hour of regular club dances, at no charge. Coordinate with the caller to limit calls to the new dancers' lesson experience. Some clubs start after only three lessons.
141. Membership. Make class members full fledged club members (right to vote, the whole enchilada) before the end of class. One club does it after the third class.
142. Homecoming Dance. Have a homecoming dance or homecoming social. Use old roster lists to locate past members. Invite them back.
143. New members. Give new members a gift certificate or discount coupon at the local western wear store for all graduates who join your Club.

144. Social activities. Have non-dancing social activities for the club; parties, celebrations, holiday parties, theater parties, dinner parties, game night, card night, summer activities for clubs dark during the summer, etc.
145. Singles rotation / Dancer rotation. This practice ensures that everyone dances. It works at singles clubs, couples clubs, or classes.
146. Names. Remember names. Know club member and class member names. Make them feel important by knowing who they are.

Target Markets

147. A target market is any part of the population (demographic) to whom you would like to aim your message. Demographics are the statistical characteristics of the human population. We can be grouped by age, sex, ethnicity, geographical location, financial success, education, activities/hobbies, personality, life styles, marital status, vocations, etc., ... or a combination of these.
148. Groups & Organizations. Contact other existing groups for interest in square dancing. Examples: churches, camping/outdoor groups, equestrian groups, homeowner associations, service clubs, social clubs, social organizations, Moose, Elk, VFW, etc. Lists of clubs are available in phone books, Chamber of Commerce, etc.
149. Churches. An associated function of many churches is wholesome social activity. Square dancing fits. Advertise square dancing and classes to the congregation. Offer classes in the church social hall.
150. Clubs. Your club members belong to other types of clubs and organizations. Let them know you enjoy square dancing. Invite them to your next introduction to square dancing or lessons.
151. Recreation Departments. Target district and city recreation departments as sources for your next class or as a place to hold your next class.
152. Alcoholics Anonymous. AA members are frequently dedicated, high energy people. They seek an alcohol free entertainment environment.
153. Home Schoolers. Involve kids and parents. Square dancing may satisfy a physical education requirement of their home schooling.
154. Demographics. Look at the demographics of your club, and search for people with similar demographics.
155. Retirement Groups. Retired people? Yes, we are "old" but today's retired people are looking for activities to keep them active.
156. Independents. They are not a club. Invite them to join yours.
157. Specialty Groups. Any group that would benefit from mild exercise and social activity such as weight loss groups, Weight Watchers, Curves, exercise groups, support groups, over-the-hill-gang, etc.
158. Singles. There tends to be more women than men. Seek out men directly from places that have more men than women; EMS companies, fire and police departments, maintenance departments at hospitals, schools, businesses, etc. ... Use want ads. Use humor.
159. Singles. Contact other singles groups in your area and offer them an additional activity.
160. Ethnic groups.
161. Youth groups. high school activities groups, college activity groups, other forms of dance groups, scouting groups, 4H, ...
162. Subdivisions. Especially those with a strong neighborhood identification.

163. Large companies. Contact large companies, especially those having an activities director for their employees and/or those having a facility available for on-site lessons.

Note: Some groups or circumstances may be better suited to form a class with the intention of creating a new homogenous club rather than assimilating them into an existing club.