

JIM HENSLEY'S SEMINAR, HELD DURING FESTIVAL 2005

We have listened to the recordings we made of Jim Hensley's seminar(s) and have made the following notes in a summarized form.

We hope you will find the information useful. Remember: these are just notes!

We have broken Jim's seminar roughly into two parts.

[Part 1 deals with the concepts and information regarding "Marketing"](#)

[Part 2 deals with suggestions for implementing some of the marketing ideas](#)

PART 1 Marketing (Comments in { } are our comments)

1. Square Dancing is the most politically correct healthy, social activity in the world, but we are not willing to make the marketing changes necessary for this cycle and this product.

This is what intensive research done by professionals shows:

We have badly underestimated the image issue we have.

Research showed that 90% of the focus groups surveyed thought that Square Dancing was done out in the country, in a barn with fiddle music, with the ladies dressed in puffy clothing! { THIS IS OUR CURRENT IMAGE. We know differently but John Q Public still holds this image to be true}

Those surveyed also thought that Square Dancing was fun, good for you and that they would probably try it when they were old enough. {The image is that only old people like to square dance}

All men are alpha males. When you mention "dancing" to an alpha male his immediate image is that of Barishnikov or Nureyev floating through the air in skin-hugging tights.

This is the guy who never asks for directions and cannot allow himself to look or feel awkward and he doesn't want the caller telling him what to do. So the caller must be supersensitive to this factor. If the alpha male is having a good experience, he will realize that this is not dancing - it's a problem-solving exercise and he enjoys it because he has overcome his fear of "dance"

2. We are trying to sell our product to the Baby Boomers and Generation X - those people born *after* 1946. They have a totally different mindset to those born *before* 1946. {They think differently from us.} There has never been in history, such a difference in mindset between WW2 generations and the Boomer generations.

Boomers are selfish. They do not want lessons, classes or commitments. They were not joiners when they were 21 and they are still not joiners at 61.

Often their previous experience with SD was in school when Square Dancing with the girls was used as a punishment for the boys. However, when asked {Surveys of focus groups} if their opinion of SD was positive, negative or neutral, only 12% said negative, 34% were positive, 14% didn't know and the rest were neutral. This points to a brand identity problem - "knew it was good, but didn't try it" {34% is a big number in marketing terms}

But the good news is that despite the mindset difference, if you can get them to attend two or three nights of dancing and give them a good experience, they will become hooked just as we were.

3. Thinking it would help promote SD, we kept prices low while prices for all other activities went up. However, price was not the problem - but we did not know that, just as we did not recognize the societal changes that had taken place after WW2. {Jim was very emphatic that we take no blame for the decline in our numbers.}

Nike does not sell \$125.00 shoes. They sell an experience. They sell a \$1.00 shoe to fathers so that their sons can have a \$125.00 Michael Jordan experience of flying through the air to the basket.

Starbucks does not sell coffee! They sell the experience of the Viennese coffee shop. You can buy coffee cheaper at Denny's but people are willing to pay more for the Starbucks "experience."

Our product, Square Dancing is an experience and it is important that people being asked to experience that experience see its value as its true value.

Most of us make an initial value judgment on price. If we say that an evening of Square Dancing is only \$3.00 then the Boomers will relate that to other \$3.00 experiences. {For a Boomer, \$3.00 is an insignificant amount suggesting that a \$3.00 experience will be insignificant too}

We can keep a perception of a higher price by copying TV ads: Price is \$19.95 but today you can have 2 for \$19.95 (then throw in something extra for free.) Offer "2 for 1". Register by --- and get 1/2 off. {There are lots of ideas on T.V. start watching the ads and see what they are doing and apply this to your SD advertising.}

The modern market place is incredibly competitive. The people we are trying to attract to square dancing are being bombarded by others pressuring them to do things. Square Dancing needs to see itself as a service not an immortal hobby.

Selling this experience will not lessen Square Dancing's tradition and heritage but we must see square dancing from a marketing perspective if we are to get new dancers through the door.

Boomers worry about health. The fastest growing section of the Health Spa industry is the 50 year olds and over. Bored with the treadmills and stair climbers they are looking for new ways to exercise and Spas are teaching Hip Hop and Tango and other ballroom dancing. Square Dancing is right there to answer this need.

Our Brand Identity is excellent. {36%} " Brand Identity" is what you think of a product that you don't use yourself.

4. The real reason - and the one that offers the best value - why Square Dancing is the best politically correct activity has to do with SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social Capital is the way we interact with people in our world. Social capital is known to be an important health factor but was placed way down on the list behind nutrition, exercise and so on.

However recent research shows that humans have an innate need to connect - we need to belong to a group outside of our work group and family group. {Perhaps the ubiquitous cell phone is the modern way to connect }

During WW2, we connected and trusted and postwar times saw group activities boom -bowling, churches, square dancing - to keep the sense of connection strong.

But the next generation lost that sense of trust and connection.

Indirectly the Boomers and Gen Xers are seeking to re-connect even though they are not aware of it. If they understand they might just as well smoke a pack of cigarettes a day because it will have the same negative effect on their longevity, how they do their job or how they run their business as will a lack of connection - and tell them that recent research proves this - and they will pay attention and see Square Dancing in a different light. { People connect in many ways while Square Dancing - physical, social, mental }

We need to spend more time promoting the social aspect of Square Dancing by giving people more time to mix during the dance. (30% of of your club comes for the social aspect of the evening rather than the dance.) Thus we need to make what we do in our club a special experience for the Boomers.

{PART 2 {What can we do?}}

Jim told us that there is no easy fix, no simple answers. We do need to understand marketing concepts and that if we continue to do what we have been doing we will get the same results - i.e. declining numbers of Square Dancers!}

Basically there are two routes: Short term and long term

Long term involves the Phoenix Plan that Jim created for Callerlab and he will have a short updated version of this for us {we will distribute this along with other materials from Jim as they come to us}

Long term involves Corporate Sponsorship and this is in the works. This will be a major way in which we change our image. Until then, it is up to us.

Short term.

We need, now, ways to 'hold' what we have, perhaps get it back to where it was a couple of years ago.

One of the things to think about is how all products go through a down cycle until revived with new packaging and the words "New" or "Improved" to sell the same old stuff!

In short, we have to "repackage" and find ways to change our image at the club level, region level, provincial level and National level.

Back to the Seminar:

Those who say that they will come and try SD and never show up:

Focus groups pointed out that women saying they wouldn't join because of the clothing are using an easy excuse but it is not the real reason - it's just an easy out. Nonetheless, we have to diminish this excuse: Don't insist on SD clothes for your new dancers. Instead, hold a few theme dances and get them used to the idea of dressing up. Concentrate on making people feel comfortable at the dances.

Studies show that if people have one experience with a professional caller, 50% of their wrong image goes away. So one night stands, fund raisers, father/daughter events are important. Go to all nonprofit groups and offer to be their fundraisers. {A good experience will help with image change - make sure your caller understands what you are trying to do} During the event, get names, telephone number and email addresses. {Follow up prospects}

Levels. Boomers won't be heading for Plus or Advanced because they don't have time.

Terminology: Don't use the words, Class, Lessons. Don't mention the length of time needed to learn. Don't mention joining the club, graduation, moving on to Plus / A. Boomers are not interested (yet)

Square Dance as Exercise. We have to position SD in the market from a health perspective. In 20 - 30 years America will have bankrupted itself on health care alone due to weight related diseases. {Canada is also very much aware of the growing problem of obesity} Governments of both countries will be spending big money to overcome this problem. Again, Square Dancing is positioned to take advantage of this.

Ways to present Square dancing.

We need to find other ways to present SD. When a Dad goes to a father / daughter banquet he doesn't have the same SD image even though he knows that there will be Square Dancing at the event.

Go to Weight Watchers or the Health Spa with a SD exercise program -a sweat group. {Note, you are not recruiting for the club here, you are image changing}

Host a spaghetti dinner and then square dance after. People will come to a dinner - they probably won't come to a square dance!

Think about your club program. Do you allow kids? Do you insist that Mainstream is taught all the way through in one season? Does Mainstream have to be the destination level? What about a 50 call club? { There is a lot of discussion going on regarding bringing Basic back. This is a recognized and danced program in Europe and Scandinavia. {Also see the ABC idea}

Are your new dancers meeting all the club members or just the four angels that show up on new dancer nights? Rotate the angels so when the new dancers dance with the club they are not meeting a whole bunch of strangers. Will you dance at their level for a while until they can dance at your level?

Have a dance couple "adopt" a new couple. Get to know them, call them to see if they need a ride, or why they missed an evening. Show interest and concern. Connect!

Do you still have a greeter when people come in through the door? Do you all make the effort to make the newcomers welcome and comfortable so that they have a good experience?

Do any of the companies in your town / city have a lunch hour exercise program? What a way to change our image! Remember to have your caller use his/her patter to emphasize the exercise angle (Feel those muscles stretch/ good weight-bearing movement / this is good for strengthening the glutes or the quads / feel that aerobic power etc. etc.) Remember to have upbeat modern music and to play it a bit fast.

Some companies are holding retreats for the purpose of "'team-building" Can you think of any better way to team-build. Find out if they would include some square dancing as part of their retreat. {They probably have a budget that would pay the caller} Give them a good experience, let them see the "Connectiveness" of Square Dancing - use team building terminology when you approach them and in the caller's patter - and we can change their image of SD and they become hot prospects.

If husbands won't come and dance it is probable that the wife will come anyway. 60% of Boomers and Xers will come to you as a single. Clubs must decide what their attitude is toward this. Are you a "couple only" club? Deal with this issue.

Put a bounty on men! (One club did this with a \$25.00 bounty)

Try to creatively present your classes under another party-like name.

The Media.

The club needs a distribution system for its publicity. It needs people or a person who can write press releases and be able to go to talk to radio or TV stations and Newspaper editors. {You need to do your homework. Don't forget that Brian Elmer and SquareupBC are our experts for this. Contact Brian about a media Kit}

Find out what (electronic) format the newspaper uses and have your article "print ready". Most important, make sure the media you use understands what it is you want them to represent.

Not all publicity is good publicity when you are trying to change an image. You need to control the publicity as much as possible.

Look at the example of the Contra article included with this info package. Jim says he could not have done a better job if he had done the photography and the write up himself. {I'll send this to you as hard copy if you would like to see it - let me know!}

The photo isolates a couple in a contra line with the rest of the set blurred. Pay particular attention to the words the writer uses. Think "Image change" because this is what this article is doing.

America { and by extension Canada} is 'cause conscious' marketing oriented. People will pick product "A" because 10 cents goes to cancer research or some other cause.

84% of people respond favourably to cause marketing.

Remember, unless we change the image, all else fails. Reposition Square dancing as a fitness activity.

Think outside the Square!