

I was looking forward to the meeting in Prince George at the Festival which was unfortunately cancelled. I am now unable to attend the AGM because of a scheduling conflict. The discussion regarding what to do about the Federation Video Library has been

shifted to the BOD meeting in Victoria next year as well.

I have been most recently involved with the Class of 2011 contest and it is nice to see some organizations having recruiting success. In cross checking some of the results between the 2010 and 2011 contests however, I have noticed that most of the participating clubs saw their overall membership reduced this year, in spite of holding relatively well attended classes in 2010.

Retention is as big an issue as recruitment; a large percentage of individuals enrolled in square dance classes don't even finish the class, much less join the host club upon graduation. There is some discussion that our service is out of touch with our target market, the non dancing baby boomer, who just wants to be entertained "without attending lengthy classes", and that we need to shorten the program in order to grow our membership. The theory is that if we shorten the learning period it will enable us to offer more than one window of opportunity each year for new people to get involved with our activity. New dancers are our number one sales people and it has been suggested that the sooner we can give them the opportunity to invite their friends into the activity, the better success we will have in building our dance community.

As we address this issue we need to be cautious. We shouldn't necessarily equate club dancing with "entertainment" and class dancing as "lengthy lessons." We don't want to overwhelm new recruits with information, but if our callers and our angels can't find a way to make class entertaining for new dancers, chances are, they're not going to join the club anyway. There is merit in achieving some level of competency as quickly as possible,

since people do have busy lives and often are not able to commit an entire dance season to

lessons. People who don't finish a class are not likely to return to the activity in any way in the future.

But we also need to consider the reasons people aren't getting through an entire class. If it's because of health issues and I have been hearing that a lot, maybe we should be targeting a younger, fitter customer. Perhaps we could then shorten the learning period while retaining much of the current program.

If we think the wave of the future is to align ourselves with the "Baby Boomers" we should think again; that is the wave of the quickly fading present. We need to set our sights

on teens on one end of the spectrum and 40 to 50 year olds on the other and keep them there. The rest of us have been in this long enough that we can adapt to whatever changes need to occur to woo these groups.

Have a great meeting,

Gordon Ruedig  
First Vice President