

The Rocky Mountain Recruiting Plan

Grow and Strengthen Your Club

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This plan has been used multiple times to grow and strengthen square dance clubs. The degree of success is proportional to the effort. I believe you can develop a class of 40 or more anytime you decide to put forth the effort.

Various Club's Successes

- In **2005** Timberline Toppers (TT) struggled to get more than one square on the floor. They were faced with a choice of grow or die. They sought advice from national callers and leaders, TT evaluated their strengths and weaknesses, and tried *any* idea that might help. They hoped to get one square for lessons, but ended up with a class of **43**. (**38** joined.) The Club size was tripled! Was the first time luck? Challenged to prove they could do it again, they had a class of **61** (**58** joined). TT redoubled the size of their club! In **2009**, armed with a detailed plan (this plan), TT aimed for a class of 40 and stopped recruiting six weeks before the start of class because they had enough prospects. The class size was **42**, (**35** joined). Next year, using the same plan, TT again stopped recruiting 4 weeks before the start of class and developed a class of **45**, (**42** joined). Timberline Toppers grew from a Most-Likely-to-Fail club to (one of) the largest club in the state, and were able to maintain a club size of 110 – 125 for ten years. **90%** of the dancers who started lessons with Timberline Toppers became members.
- A club in the Four Corners area credited the Rocky Mountain Recruiting Plan (RMRP) with saving their club. They added 29 new members.
- **WE HAD THE BIGGEST CLASS EVER!!! YEA – YEA!** A quick run-down, as to what took place. We used signs and flyers advertised in all local newspapers, encouraged members to advertise in their own subdivision, posted signs along main streets inviting them to 2 free evenings of square dance lessons, Don handed out flyers to all interested parties at Metro Bus park and ride and I walked door to door in my subdivision ... With that being said, we had 66 attending the first class in September and graduated 40 on May 3. Everyone had gone thru Basic, Mainstream and Plus.
- Acting as an advisor, I helped the Mountaineers recruit a class of 25 (24 joined).

“These statistics are mentioned to point out that the Rocky Mountain Recruiting Plan is not only effective, but that the results are manageable and consistent.”

This plan emphasizes personal contact, interaction, and follow-up. It is not limited to marketing & advertising efforts as some plans do. This plan separates the effort to create new members into three phases. Each part of each phase is required for success.

- I. Preparation. Create the structure that sets you up to succeed. Create a plan!
 - a. Evaluate your club's strengths and weaknesses.
 - b. Key People, the Recruiting Committee
 - c. The Duration Time of the Campaign
- II. The Recruiting Campaign: starts with the Letter to Members and ends with the Kickoff Social.
- III. Retention: conversion of your new dancers to New Members.

I (Part A). PREPARATION OF THE CLUB

1. **A B C. Any Body Can . . . recruit. Attitude – Belief – Commitment.**

ATTITUDE. Your club must have an attitude that they want to be a strong club. If your club does not, your efforts to recruit a decent sized class will be wasted. Therefore, the first step may require an attitude adjustment within your club. Attitude is critical!! Feedback from several clubs reveal reasons for being unable to recruit a class: political, dissension, lethargy, why bother, fiefdoms, it does not apply to us, etc.

BELIEF. Your club members must have confidence and believe they can recruit new prospective members. Once they have made the efforts required, and succeeded, they will find it easier to recruit new members the next time. Success breeds success.

COMMITMENT. If the club members make a commitment to recruiting, they can succeed. If they do not, the recruiting campaign risks failure. Getting the *buy-in* from club leadership and members is *crucial to strengthening* your club.

The Reward is your club becomes energized by the enthusiasm of new loyal members.

2. **Evaluate Club Strengths and Weaknesses.** What is the current condition of your club? Are membership, enthusiasm, leadership, recent class sizes, retention rates, finances, dance facility, club's determination and openness to change strengths or weaknesses? Do you have a local or club caller to teach? Is your club in crisis? A club in crisis can be good – it helps you focus. Recognize your problems and fix, eliminate or neutralize them.

3. **Paradigm Shift.** Some clubs have changed tradition expecting to gain greater acceptance.

- Dress code – relaxed.
- Music – more variety.
- Traditional Lesson Format evaluated against Alternative Lesson Format
- Extra ladies – partner each other or singles/dancer rotation.
- Dance program – change level or format to accept new dancers.
- New graduates are green – add workshops.

Every problem has a solution!

4. **Identify Goals, Create a Plan.**

- Put in writing what you are trying to accomplish – membership, class size, facility, retention.
- Educate yourself and club members – take advantage of ideas from other individuals, clubs, associations, conventions, and the web.
- Ask for help. Provide written handouts.
- Sell your ideas at meetings, from problem to solution, not at dances. Reserve the dance time for dancing.
- Remember, this activity is FUN!

“Most people do not set their goals too high, and miss them. Most people set their goals too low, and meet them. Do not be too timid. Reach a little higher.”

I (Part B). PREPARATION FOR THE RECRUITING CAMPAIGN

Creation of Lesson Committee and club meeting to Create Your Plan

5. **Lesson Chairperson.** The lesson chairperson has overall responsibility for everything related to developing the class, instructing the class, and retaining the class members as new members of the club. This person has way more responsibility than a class coordinator.
 - Possible Job Description: Should possess excellent social, organizational and administrative skills. Experienced live-wire member preferred. Bull dog OK.
6. **The Committee and the Committee Plan.** The Lesson Chairperson will gather a committee together. If you can get the whole club together at this meeting, great. At the first meeting the objective will be to create a plan from the day of the meeting through the Kickoff Social. At this meeting, some people will be selected to do specific jobs. The next five items (#7 - #11) should be determined at this first meeting.
7. **Database Administrator.** The database administrator will keep a list of all prospects given to him/her by club members and from advertising or other sources. Information must include name and contact info; prospect's name, address, phone number, email address, and name of referring member or source. The database administrator will be involved in Recruiting Campaign steps one through four (#12 – 15), either solely or with the help of other members. Gentle reminders are needed; the database administrator or lesson chairman should make ten second progress reports at dances, reminding everyone to find guests for the Kickoff Social.
8. **Publicity Chairperson; Choosing Prospecting Ideas.** Choose someone to be in charge of overall publicity. Create a publicity plan! ... Frequently, publicity and recruiting sources receive a great emphasis when discussions about recruiting occur. This can be a trap. Publicity/Marketing is just one portion of this plan's success. Marketing & Advertising efforts only work if you are prepared to use the results. Make the preparations outlined in this plan to maximize your efforts. ... I have a list of (over 170) recruiting ideas that can be useful in publicity and retention. No one club has the resources to do everything on the list, so it is necessary to pick and choose ideas that will work for your club. ... One to One! Have one club member responsible for each idea selected, and friends can be a committee. Responsibility will yield results. To get a copy of the list, contact me at mntndncr@gmail.com .
9. **Kickoff Social Chairperson.** The Kickoff Social is any event that will draw prospects to an event you hold. We emphasize to our members and guests that the invitation will be to a social, not lessons. We include an introduction to square dancing as part of the recruiting event. The Kickoff Chairperson could also be called a Social Chairperson or Dinner Chairperson. He/she is responsible for - a bunch; from initial planning to final planning, including menu and food amounts needed, program, place settings, tables, chairs, greeters, servers, etc. ... One club has used a chili dinner as their Kickoff Social, but your club could hold a potluck, a breakfast, a barbeque or other social gathering to kickoff and introduce your guests to square dancing.
10. **Set Date Classes to Start, Location, Instructor.** At the first committee meeting, these items may already be set. If not, set a target date to start lessons, and assign someone to find a location for lessons and an instructor for the class. Start your lessons immediately after the Kickoff Social. Hook your prospects while they are still excited; starting lessons two to seven days after the Kickoff Social is recommended.

“Every job on the team is important. When you have established your Lesson Chairperson, Database Administrator, Publicity Chairperson, and Kickoff Social Chairperson, you are ready to execute your game plan and start your recruiting campaign.”

II. The RECRUITING CAMPAIGN

11. **Recruiting Campaign - Minimum Time.** Allow a minimum of two months to develop your class, three or four is better, and even six months is not too much time. The time period will start with Step One, the Letter to Club Members.
12. **Step One; Letter to Club Members.** The recruiting campaign should kickoff with a letter to all members, asking them to help keep the club growing and strong, and requesting them to give the lesson committee the names of two or more prospects. The database administrator will be receiving names forwarded from committee members, directly from members, and from marketing and advertising sources. The database administrator may have to prompt members if the contact information is incomplete. If you would like a sample 'Letter to Members' to adapt to your club, contact me at mntndncr@gmail.com .
13. **Step Two; 1st Letter to prospects.** Send a note to all prospects within ten days after putting them in the database. This is basically to acknowledge that you are looking forward to meeting them, who to contact if they have questions, and you will be in contact with them again as the Kickoff Social date gets closer. The format of notice can vary. Some people advocate newsletters to prospects, others use postcards or email. Reminder to Members, - you are inviting guests to a Social, not lessons.
14. **Step Three; Invitation to prospects.** About four weeks before the Kickoff Social, send all prospects an invitation to the "Chili Social and Introduction to Square Dancing." Hand address envelopes, include a note and sign the invitation. Hand addressing the invitations impresses the prospects and separates it from junk mail. If you would like a sample invitation to adapt to your club, contact me at mntndncr@gmail.com .
15. **Step Four; Reminders to Members.** Shortly after sending out the guest invitations (within two or three days), send a reminder to all members who submitted prospect names. We use email to members and cc the Kickoff Chairman. List their guest's names and remind them you have contact info available in case they have misplaced it. It is critical that your members contact their guests before the Kickoff Social and let the Kickoff Social Chairman know who is expected to attend. If you would like a sample email to adapt to your club, contact me at mntndncr@gmail.com .
16. **Step Five; Preparation for the Kickoff Social.** Some preparations for the Kickoff Social can be made months in advance, but the last two weeks are very hectic for the Kickoff Chairperson. The caller MC should already be set. A reliable estimate on the numbers of guests and members is needed to determine food requirements. The Kickoff Chairperson should be copied on all 'step four' emails so he/she will know who to contact if members do not contact her/him. The Kickoff Chairperson needs some reliable assistants that she/he can delegate jobs to. Get a copy of the master prospect list from the Database Administrator, sorted in a manner that you can use it.
17. **Step Six; the Kickoff Social.** You have spent the past several months getting your prospects to this point. Do not lose them now! Greet the guests as they arrive, check them in, and give them name tags. (Members: Wear your club badge and mingle!) When it is time to eat, put the guests in the front of the chow line, and have members seated to eat with the guests. Mingle! Clear the food and have guests and members up for dancing. Mingle! If you hold a demonstration, keep it brief. During breaks, make brief announcements on lesson details; cost, start date, start time, etc. Mingle! Have information cards or tri-fold flyers available. Have a sign up table for lessons; the treasurer should be prepared to accept money for lessons if the guests choose to pay that night. Thank the guests for coming as they depart. The evening should be fun and informative for the guests. The Guests are the reason for the evening.

III. RETENTION

18. **The Class.** Cheers! You have a class, but your job is not complete. The energy from one successful new dancer feeds to another, the angels help per the instructor's desires and everybody bonds during breaks.
- And still needed; a Class Coordinator and friends to set up the hall and assist the instructor as necessary.
19. **Retention.** Frankly, a 90% retention rate is extraordinary and specific reasons are hard to pinpoint. However, I believe that these are among the reasons that contribute to a high retention rate.
- Members make an effort to welcome and become friends with new dancers from the start. During the first night at the Kickoff Social, members mix with and welcome guests. They continue to build these friendships during lessons.
 - The class is sponsored by only one club. Angels and new dancers mix freely. New dancers do not concern themselves with which club to join. Members help seal the choice to join your Club.
 - During lessons, the instructor takes a real interest in the new dancers. Class is made to be FUN. If the instructor is a member of your club, you are fortunate. New dancers will identify with the instructor and your club.
 - Lessons taught twice a week for ten to twelve weeks puts dancers on the floor quicker, facilitates learning, and can avoid holiday breaks. (Mainstream lessons)
 - The new dancers are invited to regular club dances after they have had as few as three lessons, at no charge. The squares are mixed member and new dancer couples. The first half hour is limited to calls the new dancers have been taught. Guest callers have embraced this format; coordination is required.
 - New Dancers receive an email-newsletter after each lesson. Obtain all the email addresses of the students. Topics include an abbreviated definition of the calls learned, info about the Club, info and history about square dancing, Club activities that can include the students, upcoming student level dances, etc.
 - New dancers are invited to join the club before graduation. About a month before graduation membership applications are filled out and badges are ordered.
20. **Flexibility.** Be prepared for the unexpected. Creating the most and best new members from your new dancer class may require you to work around weather, absences, illnesses, and other things.

PERTINENT MISCELANEOUS THOUGHTS

Feed Back. Yes, I would love feedback regarding your efforts and successes. I would also welcome any questions.

A Plan is a recipe. There could be variations in a recipe to bake a cake, and the results will be different types of cakes. We also know that if we leave out key ingredients, the final result is unsatisfactory. Milk, flour, eggs, baking powder, sugar, special spices and flavorings, timing and temperature are all needed to result in a great cake. *The twenty items (ingredients) above are your keys to a great class!*

Mainstream Clubs have been the first clubs to use this plan. This Plan should work for any club, including Plus and Round Dance Clubs.

Numbers.

How many prospects do we need to create a class?

How many of our prospects will start class?

It is an approximation, but we expect about **35%** of our list of prospects to start lessons.

 About 70% of the prospect list may say they will come to the Kickoff Social.

 About 70% who said they would come may show at the Kickoff Social.

 About 70% of the guests at the Kickoff Social may start lessons.

One frequently asked question is, **“What is most important?”** Among many answers: Make it FUN; Shake their hand; Know their name; Ask; Make them feel important; etc.

But consider this as one possible most important thing –

It is not you.

It is not your club.

It is not the database list.

It is not the Kickoff Social.

It is the Guests!

It is making them feel welcome.

It is the excitement of the evening.

You are on a date with your Guests and you are going to seduce them, (into the square dance activity).

Parting Thoughts:

Nothing happens ... but first a dream. – *Carl Sandburg*

Even if you are on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there. – *Will Rogers*

Change your thought and change your world. – *Norman Vincent Peale*

It's choice – not chance – that determines your destiny. – *Jean Nidetch*

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