

Promotion/Communication

by Tim Marriner

Communication within the world of square dancing is multifaceted. The two forms of communication are verbal and non-verbal. We communicate to dancers directly from behind the microphone and also off stage. For this discussion let's focus our attention to verbal communication off stage. To effectively communicate you must have a sender, a receiver, and a response from the receiver showing that the message was understood. We communicate to dancers off stage by talking to them between tips. A caller must make themselves approachable at all times. Going out the back door and smoking between tips is not making oneself accessible. Dancers might have a great time but think the caller was standoffish or stuck up to talk with if they never meet you. Being out amongst the crowd is the biggest difference with our form of entertainment than that of a super star. We are just a part of the group. We are asked to sign Century Books, listen to old jokes, invited to eat with the dancers and many other important things. Being visible out on the dance floor during round tells the dancers you are a part of them. A smiling face spreads like wild fire in a crowd. Make it a point to walk around the entire room at least once and ask how everyone is doing. You will be surprised how fast the faces light up and conversations spark up. You are marketing yourself! You are the product at this point. You want a return engagement or get recommended elsewhere. What a great promotional tool; YOU! If the dancers had a great time you will see them again at another dance and more than likely they will bring along some friends.

Other forms of promotion of course are advertisements. Flyers are the first to come to mind. I like to keep my flyers up front by the stage. Why? I want the dancers to connect that these are flyers I am a part of. I also want them to come up front so that I might be able to interact with them. They pick up a flyer; you tell them what a good time they will have! Reinforce the event. Also, the flyers don't just get lost in a sea of papers out back and I can be sure to collect them at the end of the dance. Many times dancers take the opportunity to thank you after the dance and will come up front to shake your hand. Guess what? The flyers are right in front of them! They pick them up on their way out.

Today, promotion is available in many forms.

1. Business cards
 2. CD's or tapes
 3. Flyers
 4. Advertisements in publications
 5. PowerPoint presentations on laptops
 6. Infomercials through singing calls
 7. Internet
 8. Referrals
 9. Special demonstrations or events
 10. Festivals and Conventions
 11. Newsletters
- ...And the list can go on and on.

Leadership Communication

A caller must provide leadership and guidance. To do this they must be listeners. Really listen. Empathize with the speaker. Show a response that you understand. Use good judgment for a response and be ready for more feedback. Encourage, defuse, and direct with confidence. Problem solving is also an acquired art. When misunderstandings occur usually it is due to a break down in the communication process. Don't let it go. Problems don't just go away; usually they just fester and pop up again stronger later. Club politics can put a caller in sticky situations. It is hard to balance on the fence. Emotions can cloud judgment. After all the facts are verbalized a democratic decision needs to be made and carried out to the best of the leaders' ability. Experience is our best ally.

Business Communication

Telephone calls and postal mail were once the predominant forms of business communication. However, today with the advent of the Internet we now add Email to the stack of work. It can be overwhelming at times. Good bookkeeping and management techniques are needed to handle all of this work. Prompt replies get the most rewards. Remember that a written agreement can avoid misunderstandings by providing both parties a record of the important information. Mistakes do happen and prompt communication might make the difference. A caller who must cancel out of an agreement must fully explain the situation and ask to be released from the obligation and offer assistance to the group finding a replacement they deem as satisfactory. The caller should then offer to confirm the changed agreement with all parties.

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