

FACEBOOK POSTS PAY OFF

- by Claudia Littlefair, Editor, Alberta Chatter On-line Newsletter

Recently I decided to take my own advice, and guess what? It paid off! In 4 of the last 5 issues of the newsletter, I featured articles on using social media such as FaceBook to advertise.

The article that really inspired me to take action was from December's issue #2021-6, "*How We Attracted 16 New Dancers in the Middle of a Pandemic*", by Gary & Eileen Smith, Edmonton. One of their strategies was to post information about their start-up classes on several community FaceBook pages, at zero cost! I decided to put aside my reluctance to learn 'new computer things' and make an all out effort to utilize FaceBook.

Who Uses FaceBook?

"Users ages 25-34 years represent Facebook's largest audience. Despite the platform's reputation as a seemingly "older" network, 26.4% of the platform's user base is made up of millennials. That said, over one-third (36%) of Facebook's audience are 45 or older." – <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/facebook-stats-for-marketers/>

Our club's target market are people aged 40 to 60, so to us, that means 36% (almost 40%!) of people in our target market can be reached through FaceBook. Not only that, but the highest group of users, 25 to 34 years, will also become aware that we exist. Awareness is the all-important first step in marketing. Simply put, regardless of age, people need to know our club exists if they are going to come to it.

Searching for the Right Image

If people were going to read my post, I would need to use a captivating image or photo (a video would be even better, but I couldn't find one I liked). I wanted my photos to be unusual and eye-catching for two reasons. **One, to catch the reader's attention so my post would be read; and secondly, to conflict with the negative image most people have about our activity** (ie. seniors wearing puffy dresses, big belt buckles, dancing to fiddle music in a barn).

I spent hours searching for photos from the websites listed in issue #2021-3's article, "*25 Resources of Free Stock Photos*". The website I liked best was <https://unsplash.com/>. The description of the website reads, "*Beautiful, free images and photos that you can download and use for any project. Better than any royalty free or stock photos.*" I downloaded and filed away quite a few photos that looked promising.

Searching for FaceBook Groups

Next, I searched for FaceBook groups that I could 'share' my post to (ie. post it first on our club's FB page, then share it to other groups from there). I needed to become a member of these groups in order to post in them. We live in Strathmore, a town of over 13,000 plus a large surrounding area of people to draw from. I was surprised by the number of FaceBook groups in our small community. My list of groups included:

- Strathmore Active Living
- Strathmore Community Bulletin & Chat
- Strathmore Ask
- I Love Strathmore
- Strathmore Free Items
- Strathmore Events



At the same time, I looked for and found several free online community calendars, and posted our event in them, too.

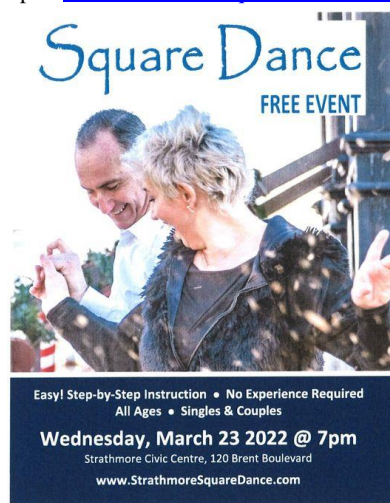
What to Say In My Post

Now it was time to write the post. My plan was to post a different image each week, for the three weeks leading up to our dance. First, I designed the mini-posters, ready to upload into my post, and then I worked on what to say. Wording varied slightly each week.

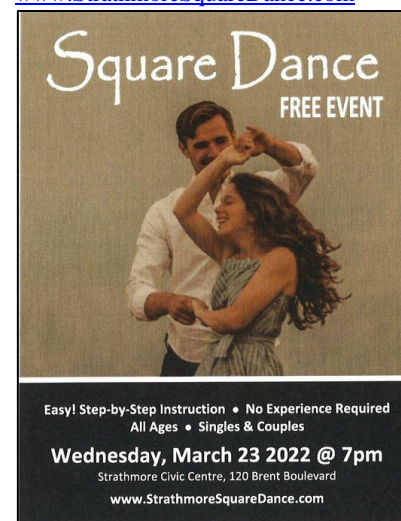
Discover why every square dance is a positive, energetic, fun-filled experience leaving you wanting more! It's easy (even for people with two left feet). Step-by-step instructions, no experience needed. Enjoy a variety of music - country, Latin, rock and more. For all ages, singles and couples. Dress is casual, wear comfortable shoes. Most often heard comment, "I had no idea square dancing could be this much fun!" www.StrathmoreSquareDance.com."



Enjoy music, but can't dance? Two left feet? Try square dancing! No fancy footwork, no lead/follow partner and the caller (dance instructor) tells you what to do every step of the way. Variety of music, too, from country to Latin to rock. If you can walk, you can square dance. Join the fun, March 23rd, 7pm. www.strathmoresquaredance.com.



JOIN US Wednesday, March 23rd, 7pm, Strathmore Civic Centre. Two left feet? This is the easiest way to get comfortable on the dance floor. No fancy footwork, no lead/follow partner, and the Caller (dance instructor) tells you what to do every step of the way. Variety of music from country to Latin, rock to pop. Most often heard comment, "I had no idea square dancing is this much fun!" So meet new people, laugh, move, learn. Best. FUN! Ever. www.StrathmoreSquareDance.com



WEEK ONE: People Reached - 600+

WEEK 2: People Reached – 2,400+

WEEK 3: People Reached – 1,800+

The Results

On Facebook, the "people reached" figure tells you how many users saw a particular post. In other words, this is how many people saw my post in their newsfeed. **Even if nobody came, it was rewarding to know that my posts created significant awareness that our club exists.**

The night of our intro dance arrived. We really had no idea whether anyone would come or not, but we were set up and ready to dance for 7pm. At 6:45 people started arriving. As one lady came through the door, she told me that my FaceBook posts worked because she came. **Turned out, we had 30 new people, doubling the night's numbers.** Most were in the 40 to 60 age range, together with several older teens and two couples in their 20's. People left with big smiles on their faces, and even though we knew not everyone would return, we felt that the evening was a huge success.

So, consider taking my advice and explore advertising on FaceBook. It just might pay-off!