

VISION: First things first

Annie Laskey, Linda Henry, & Michael Barraclough

What IS a vision/mission? How do we craft and implement a unique mission statement for our dance series? Why is this a crucial step in the growth of each dance? Whether your dance already has a mission statement, or you're just starting to think about this, or you're somewhere in between, this all-conference session will offer practical tools and thought-provoking perspectives for addressing this pertinent topic. Together we will explore these vital questions, generating answers to inform and guide our participation throughout the SWROC weekend.

On Saturday morning we will start off with an all-conference session on Vision. Our hope is that by exploring this vital topic together, we'll generate perspectives that will inform and guide our participation throughout the SWROC weekend and for years to come!

OUTLINE: VISION: First Things First (Annie Laskey, Linda Henry, & Michael Barraclough)

- Annie will begin by discussing the **difference between Vision Statements and Mission Statements**, as well as offering perspectives about why having a Vision/Mission is a crucial step in the growth of any dance series. She will also share some personal experiences with her local dance community and provide a sample Mission Statement for our reference.
- Linda will delve into the art of **crafting a Mission Statement**. Whether your dance already has one, or you're just starting to think about this, or you're somewhere in between, this portion of the session will offer thought-provoking and practical support for creating and/or revisiting your Mission Statement.
- Michael will explore ways to **implement our Mission Statements**. This includes suggestions for using them to guide ongoing choices about our dances. In turn, these mission-based decisions can affect the character and growth of our dances and help our visions come alive!
- Next we will include a **Q&A session** with the leaders asking for input from participants about several questions. We look forward to hearing several 1-2 minute stories about the process of crafting a mission statement, any problems resulting from not having one, and ways that having one has been helpful.
- We'll wrap up this session by providing information about **vision-related resources** to help us all continue honing our visions with our dance communities back home.

VISION: First Things First

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Annie Laskey's notes for her part of the presentation.

Dance organizers (whether a person or a committee) have to make choices

- Booking talent, what difficulty level of dancing is done, even when to take breaks
- Whether you're conscious of it or not, your series has a particular character right now which is based on choices that have been made in the past.

Having a **clearly articulated** mission/vision statement for a series can be a powerful tool for making **informed choices** that can energize a series and make/keep it successful.

Think for a moment about your own series.

- Can you/your committee readily articulate the mission of your dance?
- Can your regular dancers?
- Do you share the vision with visiting callers and musicians?

And what exactly is the difference between a Mission Statement and a Vision statement, and does it matter?

- Most people aren't clear on the difference
- Having a **clear goal** is what is important.
- Understanding the nuances of vision and mission can help you think in new ways about your dance
- The actual PROCESS of creating your statement(s), can be eye opening

Vision statement: This is Big Picture. The **ideal** that is achieved if your organization is successful. It does not address HOW the state is achieved, just what the state is.

Mission statement: This is Current Best Practice. What your organization does, who it does it for, and how it does what it does.

To explain, I use my dance, Culver City English Country Dance (CCECD) as a case study.

Formation

- I formed CCECD nine years ago with a fellow ECD caller.
- We had a very specific vision for the dance, which we discussed many times between the two of us.
- I was producer of record, he booked talent, the two of us have been the main callers, so we were able to maintain the vision pretty consistently, however, we never actually put pen to paper to articulate the mission for others.
- Our dance grew, continuing to attract 'regulars' who were strong supporters of the dance, indicating that our original vision - although unwritten - was appealing to others.

Why write draft Mission and Vision statements now?

- It was preparing for this session that made me realize that having a our vision and mission written down could be enormously helpful moving the dance forward.
- In the past year, we've begun transitioning the dance from being run by the two of us, to being run by a committee. In order for our vision to be carried on **intentionally** with different managers and other callers, it needed to be written down.
- The transition from founder-run to committee-run has taken longer than expected. Being able to articulate a mission may help finally finish the transition.

VISION statement

A vision statement should be general enough to express the over-arching goal of the organization/dance, but specific enough to define your particular organization

- An example of an overly-broad vision is "Happy People Dancing." It isn't a bad goal, it just isn't specific enough. Why are they Happy? Which people are they? And what kind of dancing are they doing?

Culver City English County Dance VISION Statement

"Our vision is a **vibrant, welcoming, and inclusive** dance community sharing **fellowship** through **social** English Country Dance."

As noted earlier, the Vision statement doesn't address HOW that state is achieved, just what the ideal state is.

- Social interaction is important to our group, so the vision includes words like **welcoming, inclusive**.
- Note the term **fellowship**, as opposed to friendship. We want everyone to get together, have a good time, and treat each other with equality and respect, but our goal is not to nurture personal relationships.
- **Vibrant** indicates that staying lively and relevant is important.
- "**Social**" in this context ("social English Country Dance") means that we are not a class or a performance group.

MISSION statement

A Mission Statement is about how you work to achieve the ends in the Vision statement.

- Succinct enough to fit into a sentence or two, and yet address the things most important to your group, so that decisions can be made based on these stated points.
- Basically, it should be able to help you focus on ways to do things to promote the mission
- And enable you to say "no" to choices that are counter to that mission.

Culver City English County Dance MISSION Statement:

"Culver City English Country Dance is a **social dance** based on the **living tradition** of English Country dance, welcoming to **youth and adults** of **all experience levels**, promoting community through **friendly dancers, live music, pleasant and informal atmosphere**, while keeping alive the **entire spectrum of ECD**."

So what does that do for us? How does it protect what is most important to CCECD's character?

*"Culver City English Country Dance is a **social dance** based on the **living tradition** of English Country dance,*

- **Social dance:** we're not a "class" and it is not important that we hone dances to performance caliber. That doesn't mean we can't teach, have workshops occasionally, or form a demo team; only that the regular dances should spend a minimal amount of time teaching.
- **Living Tradition (ECD):** identifies that we follow the folk dance tradition of ECD, and are not a reenactment group focused on historical authenticity.

*welcoming to **youth and adults** of **all experience levels**,*

- **Youth and Adults,** Not "all ages," because, although we welcome kids who are old enough to dance on their own, we are not a family dance for small children.
- **All experience levels:** beginners always welcome but care and attention is also given to advanced dancers' needs.

*promoting community through **friendly dancers, live music, pleasant and informal atmosphere**,*

- **Friendly dancers:** a culture of welcome is promoted and valued within the group.
- **Live music:** shows our commitment to the importance of live music for the dancing
- **Pleasant and informal atmosphere:** "pleasant" because we want the dance to be a comfortable place to be. Informal because we're not costume-centric, rigid, or require formal behavior.

*while keeping alive the **entire spectrum of ECD** from the 17th Century to the present."*

- **Entire spectrum of ECD:** we're committed to keeping everything in the repertoire - from the first published dances of 1651 to the newest compositions, including set dances, circle mixers, triple minors, fast, slow, easy, complex, etc.

ATTENDEE NOTES:

Annie's Section on Vision and Mission

Vision Statement - unchanging ideal big-picture purpose, goals, and aspirations. (1 sentence)

Mission Statement - primary objectives, current best practice, accommodate the current situation, consistent with the vision. (several sentences)

Have a goal for our dance and articulate it. What defines our dance and makes it what it is? -- beyond articulating only between leaders.

Mission statement for our dance:

Can I articulate it?

Can our dancers articulate it?

Do we share it with our visiting callers and bands?

<http://www.caldancecoop.org/cgi/coopdriver.cgi>

Our vision is to preserve and further the enjoyment of traditional dance in community settings.

Our dances are held in comfortable social settings throughout Southern California and feature mostly live music. Newcomers are welcome and there are lessons available prior to many dances. You do not need a partner to join us. Comfortable soft-soled shoes are recommended. If you would like more information, please see our menu on the upper left of this page or call the hotline number.

vibrant community

Vision Statement:

<http://topnonprofits.com/examples/vision-statements/>

Smithsonian: Shaping the future by preserving our heritage, discovering new knowledge, and sharing our resources with the world (17)

Boy Scouts of America: To prepare every eligible youth in America to become a responsible, participating citizen and leader who is guided by the Scout Oath and Law. (24)

Mission statement:

Succinct to fit into a sentence or two, what are the most important positive aspects of our group.

To help us focus on what we do.

Enable us to say "no" to things that don't fit with this.

Example:

"Culver City ECD ... is a social dance (not performance) based on the living tradition of ECD (not a reenactment group, not historical) welcoming to youth and adults of all experience levels (they don't have families and kids, we may want to include families, too) promoting community through friendly dancers (culture of welcome, dance angles), live music (important for dance experience), pleasant and informal atmosphere (you don't have to dress up in period-specific costume, always food all the time), the full spectrum of ECD (first Playford through modern, need to communicate to all local and visiting callers).

Linda's section on Crafting a Mission Statement

The art of crafting a Mission Statement is just that -- an art. There are many ways to approach this process. Here are questions and considerations to help guide your way...

Imagine that you're watching a video of your dance being VERY successful. What would you see? Who is on the dance floor? and on stage? Why are they having so much fun? What has made it possible for this dance to become so healthy and vibrant? What are a few adjectives that would describe your dance? Take a few minutes to jot down your thoughts.

To begin crafting a Mission Statement for your dance (or revisiting/updating yours if your dance already has one), start by asking yourself questions like...

- Who is our target audience?
- What ages are welcome at our dance?
- What type(s) of dances do we include?
- What level(s) of dance experience do we expect?
- What type(s) of music do we include?
- Who do we hire for callers and musicians -- local talent? traveling bands?
- Do we want to develop new/young callers, musicians and/or organizers as part of our series?
- What general tone do we want to set at our dance?

Other aspects to consider:

Who will craft your Mission Statement? If you're running your series on your own, you're free to make it up on your own. Otherwise, who will need to be involved in this process?... committee(s), board, other members of your community who are invested in your dance?

How will you proceed with choosing and shaping the words for your Mission Statement? Will you ask whoever will help out with this process to meet with you and craft the words as a group effort? Will you have one or two people create a draft for others to consider?

Resources to help you continue crafting your Mission Statement:

- Materials from the Vision Session that was held at the Puttin' On the Dance conference in White River Junction, VT in November 2011. Visit the online archives: <http://www.puttinonthedance.org/post-conference/archive/>
- Information on the Country Dance and Song Society website: <http://www.cdss.org/crafting-a-vision.html>
- Other links with helpful suggestions on this topic.

<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/structure/strategic-planning/vision-mission-statements/main>

http://www.diffen.com/difference/Mission_Statement_vs_Vision_Statement

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/smartwork/201004/vision-and-mission-whats-the-difference-and-why-does-it-matter>

http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_90.htm

P.S. Erik has offered some qualities he would like to see in a mission statement for his group: joy, community, family, movement, belonging, appreciation, acceptance, connection, companionship, inclusion, safety, peace, beauty communion, harmony, inspiration, play, touch, expression, celebration of life, contribution, creativity, effectiveness, learning, participation, purpose, self-expression, to matter, spontaneity.

NOTE: Organizers with open communication will help make this process work better.

Michael's section on Implementing your Mission Statement

Mission statement in practice

Vision: desire to provide dances

Mission: running dances on 5th Sat advanced dance

Situation: 40 beginners want to come to the 5th Saturday dance.

Strategy consistent with mission: Invite them to a non-advanced dance. We send them a dance on their turf as an intro.

<http://www.fridaynightdance.org/>

About the dance

The Friday night dances are brought to you by the Friday Night Dancers, Inc (a nonprofit, community-based organization) in cooperation with the [Glen Echo Park Partnership for Arts and Culture](#), the National Park Service, and Montgomery County, MD. Dances are held every Friday evening in historic Spanish Ballroom or Bumper Car Pavilion at [Glen Echo Park](#), 7300 MacArthur Boulevard, Glen Echo, Maryland 20812. Admission is \$10.00 for adults, \$5.00 for 17 and under. Open Band nights are free for 17 and under. Contra dance is a type of folk dance for all ages and a social dance in the most literal sense. It is a great way to meet lots of new people and potentially make new friends. **You do not need to bring a partner.** [Bring proper attire.](#)

Dance all evening to top quality live music in an alcohol-free environment. Music may be traditional or modern inspired by folk tunes. For examples of what Contra dance music sounds or looks like, visit Robert Cox's [contra podcast](#) page or videos on the [Klmabon Channel](#) on YouTube.

Beginners are always welcome! There is a beginner's lesson every Friday from 7:30 pm - 8:15 pm which is included in the price of admission. Beginners learn faster and have a better time when they dance with experienced dancers, rather than other beginners. We encourage beginners to ask Dance Buddies to be their dance partner. Dance Buddies are experienced dancers who enjoy dancing with beginners and who volunteer to help beginners have a fun experience. **They are identified by the name tag with a happy face sticker or a button that says "Dance Buddy."** **Dancers who wish to be Dance Buddies should inquire at the admission desk.**

There is always a Dance Manager on hand every Friday to answer questions and solve problems that arise during the evening. If you need to speak with the manager on duty, ask the person at the admission table to locate the manager or another Board member.

The Friday Night Dancers (FND) is committed to providing an **inclusive and welcoming environment** and making reasonable accommodation for participants in its activities. FND does not and shall *not discriminate* on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status or sexual orientation in any of its activities or operations. Read our [anti-harassment policy](#).

FND has a "No Dancer Left Behind" policy. If you need a ride to and from the dance at Glen Echo, leave a ride request on the Friday Night Dance Facebook page. If you find yourself at a dance without the means to go back home contact the FND dance manager on duty. An announcement will be made on your behalf.

<http://www.phxtmd.org/about-phxtmd.html>

Phoenix Traditional Music & Dance (a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation) preserves old-time music in Phoenix by presenting and promoting dances, concerts, and other special events throughout the year. Your membership supports PHXtmd's work, entitles you to discounts at other Arizona contra dances, and a subscription to the Arizona Folk News, a newsletter published four times a year. A monetary donation to Phoenix Traditional Music & Dance, beyond the membership fee, is tax deductible.

Encourage dancers to mingle:

Written guidelines for callers. -- Eric Black

Notes taken by Erik Erhardt