

# Effectively Marketing Your Dance Series

*“Everybody wants to dance at our series, they just don’t know it yet.”*

Marketing is a crucial aspect of the success of a dance series. My perspective on marketing is influenced by micro-business theory: It’s worth framing a dance series as a small business, and it’s also worth injecting a bit of entrepreneurial spirit into your work as a dance organizer.

I strive for the model of the self-sustaining micro-enterprise – the dance that **pays for itself**. How does it pay for itself? For one thing, it has effective marketing.

The following are steps in the process of creating a business plan, specifically the marketing strategy. While designed for the small enterprise, going through these steps can be invaluable to dance organizers too.

Consider completing this handout with your organizing team as part of your periodic self-evaluation. Some steps will require separate research, but the information gathered will serve you well, as you move forward to effectively market your dance series.

**“Due Diligence”** - a process which allows entrepreneurs to be objective & realistic about their “Vision.” Before launching into marketing, you take a close, hard look at your vision. What is it?

According to conventional wisdom, the **Vision** needs to be:

- **feasible** (or capable of being done – e.g. there is a market for the dance, there is a way to serve that market, and there are resources to get the dance started and into the market.)
- **viable** (or capable of living/growing/evolving – e.g. the dance can be sustained, the feasibility study shows that there is opportunity for an “ongoing relationship w the market.”)
- **desirable** (or worth wanting to do – e.g. the organizers are comfortable w/ the structure, duties, responsibilities that the dance requires from them, and the plan shows the dance will succeed.)

NOTE: You might have a vision that’s desirable (to you!) but not feasible or viable. Maybe what you want to do... Won’t sell.

Doesn’t fill an open niche or a need.

Competes directly w/ a dance that’s already cornered the market.

If you find it’s something that you *still* want to do, you may have to be content with less than what you imagined – or – be a creative marketer. Resourceful. Strategic. Crafty. Smart!

**Market Surveys** – Find out what it is that people want. Communicate with your dancers and your potential dancers for feedback to guide your series direction. “TLC – Think like a customer.” Without the customers (dancers) there is no dance! Do these formally or informally.

### **Commodity**

Define your dance (your product/service -- What is your product? What are you “selling”?)

\*\* Ideally drawn directly from your mission statement/visioning work.

**What is your Core Message?** What can a person expect to experience at your dance in exchange for the price of admission? Translate the characteristics and features of your dance into specific benefits for those attending. What are the tangibles? intangibles?

Once you develop your message, you need a plan for delivering it. What's that plan?

**What is your market environment?** (What's the economy of your area? Population stable/increasing/decreasing? Tourists/students? What do people do for work? Leisure? Population demographics? Lots of singles? Elders? Families w young kids? What role, if any, does traditional dance/music already play in your area?)

### Customer:

**Describe your ideal or target “customer”** (ideal or target dancer)

Zero in on the type of person you expect will come to your dance.

What’s this person like? What’s their lifestyle?

Why would they come to your dance?

How many of them are out there?

Where do you find them?

**How many** of these ideal dancers do you need to be financially viable? (Divide per dance expenses by the price of admission to your dance. Calculate your average per dance expenses using budget.)

**What sort of crowd** do you need?

(a) Numbers – depends on your budget (expenses, income, etc.)

depends on size of hall (what feels good in the space)

(b) Skill level – depends on your vision/mission

### Competition

Identify your particular dance’s competitors, indirect and direct. These are things that are vying for the attention of your ideal dancers.

- **Indirect competitors:** (other social entertainment in your area, ways locals spend their time/money if they are not dancing)

- **Direct competitors:** (other dances in general, others in your specific genre)

Compare further with direct competitors (other dances in your area): How are they doing? Which are flourishing and which are failing? Which might complement yours?

Why would your ideal dancer choose your direct competitors (over your series)? And what would motivate your ideal dancer to choose *your* series (over your competitor)?

Consider these: *Drive times? Style of dancing? Talent? Peer pressure? Other features?*

### Image/Reputation

Building a reputation or image is key. Hopefully your reputation springs straight up from your beautifully enacted vision! What image are you cultivating? (Consider plusses of offering a 'consistent product' so that dancers get what they expect every time.)

### Promotion/Advertising/Branding

Everything you do to create an image of your dance and generate income (primarily via attracting dancers) is promotion! Promotion also builds awareness of your dance, not necessarily directly garnering dancers at that very moment. Keep your dance in the public consciousness ("Oh yeah, that's the thing I saw in the paper.")

How do you plan to present your dance to the marketplace?

What will portray that image?

How can you make it most attractive to your customers?

How are you branding your series? (Andrew Zolli has interesting things to say about marketing and branding. A bit of a wild man, but entertaining and thought-provoking... <http://www.zpluspartners.com/about5.html>)

List ways you will get the word out about your dance. (eg radio, newspaper, community calendar listings, brochure, poster, website, FB, mailing list, community visibility, word of mouth...)

**Word of mouth** is not free! It is *earned* each time you provide dancers with an outstanding experience. Also, contributing to the larger community earns you a reputation via visibility. (e.g. Sponsoring 'free' dances at other community events, adult ed classes, school residencies, etc.) How can you generate word of mouth advertising?

### Pricing:

The right admission price is the one your dancers will pay **and** will bring you enough profit to pay your expenses. Admission is probably your **only source of income**. I say **think big**. I contend that very few regular dancers will give a hoot about price if it's in the \$8-10 range, or even if it's more. (Compare the local cost of movie? snacks & coffee? 3hr concert? 3hr exercise class? 3hr bodywork session?)

As you decide your admission pricing, consider pros/cons of these:

Large volume of dancers at lower prices?

Smaller volume of dancers at higher prices?

Pricing that's attractive to dancers?

Special discounts for certain folks? (kids, students, youth, limited income, per family maximum)

Self-monitored sliding scale? Barter?

High enough to cover costs of dance in long term and/or short term?

Higher or lower than competition?

### RESOURCES:

Small Business Development Centers (SBDC)

The E-Myth Revisited