

Notes From “Circle the Wagons”: Northern California Regional IAGSDC Club Summit held 1/11/2015

Lorenzo Taylor introduced the session.

- First time for Northern California dance clubs to discuss how to sustain our clubs. We all came together a few years ago to stage weave your heart, and all 9 clubs staged a very successful convention. Made a profit of tens of thousands of dollars which were put into helping square dance clubs to grow. Bay Pearls decided to put funds into club development.
- Dan, Karen, Lorenzo = Bay Pearls planning committee
- Marketing, retention, recruitment.
- Deb Doyle, Sean Lemson are our outside speakers tidat. They don't know a lot of the politics and history of square dancing. We really want to focus on today and the future.
- Karen will take some general notes.
- Thanks to planning committee, Ellen from Oaktown 8's 8s, Bay Pearls.
- Diablo Dancers and Prime 8's weren't able to send anyone today.



Attendee Introductions

- Dan Mutschler-El Camino Reelers, Hotlanta Squares, Diablo Dancers Dances. Has been dancing a long time, first convention was phoenix
- Matt Thompson-El Caminio Reelers 2001-toronto first convention
- Mario Torrigino-Western Star Dancers 20 years ago, Foggy City Dancers
- Jess-Oaktown 8's for a year
- Ken Sale-20 years, calling for 8 years
- Allan Hurst
- Rusty-midnight since 2004
- John Kenny - Foggy City Dancers since 2004, gca member (retired after stroke), facilitate the interclub holiday social dance
- Gordon Macaw-President of Desert Valley Squares, Chair All Join Hands, All Join Hands took over from the Petersen Trust, want to host similar meetings, will be hosting a roundtable discussion at St Louis convention about resulting, dancing since 1996 with wilde bunch, first convention Wheel & Deal 1997..
- Ed Ziegler-Midnight Squares, dancing since 24 years ago with Western Star Dancers, Foggy City Dancers, pres of bay pearls, on All Join Hands board.
- Richard Woolley-dancing since a wee lad, took it up at 16, dancing for 22 years, started with straight club and rose to A&C because he was bored, and the gay community was much more interesting, Capital City/Prime8's/high level dancers.
- James Martin (Jamie), dancing 1.5 years with Capital City squares
- Harlan Kerr, dancing for 34 years, calling for 30 years, caller for Midnight Squares, Diablo Dancers, Foggy City Dancers, redwood rainbows, tnt's, quads, interlocked, Capital City, Oaktown 8's, El Caminio Reelers, and now that I'm retired i can call 9 times a week for fun. Vice chair of callerlab challenge committee. Founding chair of the iagsdc and one of gca's founders. remember first class in seattle was 15 squares, and now we're happy to get 6 or 7 people. I want us to get back to 15 squares. clubs are desperate for new members.
- Lynn Ashmall, dancing for 7 or 8 years, on board at El Caminio Reelers.
- Ed Wilson, board of El Caminio Reelers, started with santa cruz in 2000, "how can we make square dancing cool again?"
- Willy - El Caminio Reelers, started in 2006, danced with almost every club from the south bay to la, been on the board for the CPSD in san jose, staged an intro square dance ball.
- James Thompson, willy's partner.
- Gary Cohn, Foggy City Dancers 1989, didn't graduate until 1995 (39 people in graduating class), Midnight Squares, past admin of Western Star Dancers, mostly now dance with tam twirlers
- Russ King, started in sept 1981 with skip barret's troc trans foggy city, first Western Star Dancers class in 1982, first Midnight Squares class in 1982, attended first 6 conventions, on and off Western Star Dancers board several times over the years, in both Western Star Dancers and Midnight Squares, also recently got involved with queer and straight contra and english country dancing. looking for ideas that work there that might transfer to gay square dancing.

- Katharine-Redwood Rainbows-dancing for 10 years with saucy squares, first and past president of RR.
- Leslie-Redwood Rainbows 2 years ago-now working up in sac, also member of Capital City. "Interpersonal problems"
- Tom Kaiser, Sacramento, dancing 7 years, calling 4 years, Capital City, on board since 2010. How do we get back to the heyday of square dancing with multiple squares, etcetera. We need to decide what kind of product we want to market to people.
- Richard Randall, Capital City squares, dancing since 1998, first con 1999 Lights Camera Linear Action!.
- Kurt Gollhardt, dancing since 1991 with times squares (8 squares in beginner class), calling 12 years, call with El Camino Reelers, Foggy City Dancers, and all over the bay area. Looking for a willingness to try new things.
- Kurt Kossig, Diablo Dancers, started with Foggy City Dancers 1996, came back to Diablo Dancers in 2002, went to form Oaktown 8's, now a member of rancho squares in hayward (advanced). also do contra, swing, etc.
- Jeff Norton, Oaktown 8's and Diablo Dancers, times have changed, interested in hearing about how to tilt the club towards a better balance of gay/straight people, excited about GDP or any other accelerated dance program.
- Aahz, dancing since 1986, clubs beaus and bows and quads, started doing weekend practice sessions for Oaktown 8's, on GDP committee with harlan and kurt. gdp is half the size of plus, and easier to learn. also been doing contra and folk dancing for a quarter century. "contra dancing is more fun"
- Bex Clark, started dancing 2 years ago, other types of folk dancing, Oaktown 8's, quads, and Midnight Squares. how do we keep vibrance in our community? there's a graying of the ranks.
- Kim Harris, dance with El Camino Reelers for 20 years, expectation is to get some good ideas and strategies of getting new people into square dancing AND retain current dancers.
- Steve Huggins, since 2006, first conv Denver Red Rocks & Purple Mountains 2007, President of Foggy City Dancers, member of most bay area clubs except RR and Prime8's, brief stint as a GCA member. How can we impart the joy and challenge and fellowship of square dancing to other people who just think it's dancing?
- Dan Smith, dancing since 2000 with Foggy City Dancers, officer of Foggy City Dancers several times, took plus with Western Star Dancers and board member there 3 times, advanced with Midnight Squares, and last year joined Diablo Dancers for a year. i want to learn about the history of each one of the clubs and how they're operating today, and see what people have to say about recruitment.
- Karen Schmidt, member Capital City squares, started dancing with CCS, now member of bay pearls board of directors (after convention was over), masters degree in dance, teacher, choreographer, (square dance never mentioned in dance education), thought gay square dancing was the most bizarre thing ever, but love it. i've been thinking about the good old days and how we need to get interclub communication working again.
- Italo Regoli, started with boots in sq, El Camino Reelers, Oaktown 8's, Foggy City Dancers
- Don Meju, Western Star Dancers in 80s, founding board member and board member of Diablo Dancers and El Camino Reelers. very unhappy about what's going on with Western Star Dancers, hate to see it end. how can we come up with a way to get some younger people involved in the clubs? used to be exciting, and now it's just kind of there.

- Lucy Whitworth, pres of RR up in Sebastopol, keen to share ideas.
- Rich Reel, caller for Western Star Dancers and El Camino Reelers, want to know how to be a better caller and how to get my chickens to show up at dances.
- Lorenzo Taylor, dancing since 1989 with DC Lambda Squares, in bay area for last 8 years, dance with Western Star Dancers and Midnight Squares.

What's the state of our clubs at this point?

(Status, biggest asset, biggest challenge, highlight of last view years, vision of club, interclub successes/challenges.)

- Capital City Squares (Tom): 52 paid members, up from 30s back in 2009, we had a weak board that didn't put much energy into recruiting, and we got a board which recruited heavily. Great caller who brings energy into the club (Charles Bridges), blast classes, intro sessions. Biggest highlight: going through sac GLBT pride parade which onlookers thought was fun, everyone who's a member of the club gets a job to relieve board members AND give people a sense of ownership in the club, club having an entire session devoted to new dancer level (MS), minimal success with offering private homes for people to stay over when attending a dance, challenges: how to meet the expectations of older dancers? Some of us couldn't keep angeling for MS/Plus year after year because it got boring. Looking at the needs of longer-term dancers is important for clubs. Biggest asset is our leader. Strong leadership makes for a strong club. If there's no youth involvement, we're going to go away. We're experimenting with two callers: one for the beginning class, one for full level plus, and it's nice to have advanced dances angel for beginners. Bay Pearls is subsidizing part of the cost of the second caller. 501(c)4.
- Harlan: something common to every club except maybe RR; there's a cycle of perpetual classes that interferes with established dancers' dance time. RR changed that recently to include a separate club night just for full level dancing. (James Martin: That was grandfathered in from the straight clubs.) My more successful straight clubs alternate a year of class with a year of dancing.
- Foggy City Dancers (Steve): 22 paid members for 2015, 501(c)3 allows us to sponsor a beer booth and raise funds at pride. Our assets are our caller Harlan and our 501(c)3 to raise funds. Biggest challenge is communicating the joy and fellowship of dancing to people who've never danced. (Dan Smith: Our biggest challenge is to reach out to communities we haven't reached out to.)
- Oaktown 8's: Impressed with how many callers are here. About 32 members, biggest asset is a strong board, biggest challenge is getting people to sign up after holding huge intro nights, and getting gblt people to sign up. Interclub: like that Steve Huggins blasts all of our events out to other clubs. Bex: We had a good beginning class this time around, now we have 7 or 8 this year. Having time for club dancing is important. Ken: We also paid someone to give advice on advertising, and that helped with recruitment. (David: new people come in and get discouraged at how long it takes to learn how to square dance, and angels get frustrated at how boring it is.)
- Redwood Rainbows: We have around 55 members, but we're top-heavy with A&C dancers, trying to bring Plus dancers' skills up and need to recruit. Our biggest asset is Fishman(?) Hall, what a beautiful space for dancing, strong board, many volunteers, did not get a good class in sept, recruiting is going better for our february class. Another challenge is that we're 85% women, which has discouraged gay men from coming because they see RR as a lesbian club. Getting our dancers to travel to other club dancers is a challenge, since we live on the outskirts. Challenge: straight caller, good person, calling for 30 years, but isn't interested in learning more about gay dancing and lgbt dance culture. (Harlan: The club owns the hall, and rents it out to other groups.) We also have a problem getting people from other clubs up to Sebastopol.
- Western Star Dancers (Russ King) financially, we're in good shape, but nobody has volunteered to run for the new board. The existing board will stay on for one more quarter. If enough people volunteer to

run for the new board, we'll be fine for the moment. We're doing the same thing after 30 years with diminishing results. In Scottish country dancing, we have two halls, one for beginner classes and one for experienced dancers. 60 members on paper. we haven't collected dues for the new year until we know if we're going to continue.

- Midnight Squares, 56 members, our C1 class is larger this year than in previous years (2 squares plus 3), we struggle in getting people involved with the club to take on different duties, we also struggle because we steal members from everybody else rather than recruit. The people who do come in are committed because they've been dancing for years.
- Diablo Dancers: strengths = very social group outside of dancing, most members are now from the Vallejo area, great caller (Harlan). I don't dance at Oaktown 8's because i didn't like angels being snide to students. With Diablo Dancers, they've done blast classes and recruiting events. Maybe 40 dues paying members.
- El Camino Reelers: About 80 paid members, biggest assets and challenges are the same: we have a long list of loyal members. However, it's hard to keep new people coming in while keeping old people happy. Good location. Lot of straight members, which is good, but sort of dilutes our identity a bit. Lynn: We've just added a second night for A&C, because we don't have a second room for them.

Leadership - Sean Lemson

- I'm not a dancer, been doing leadership work for about 6 years now, worked in corp america for way too long
- i'm bringing you questions, not answers. listen to the questions and decide if they apply to your organizations.
- i'm the f*cking new guy (FNG); you can either let the fng's ideas in or attack him for bringing up challenges to existing ideas.
- Simon Sinek ... talk called "begin with 'why'?" Three circles: (((why), how), what.)))
- the organizations that succeed begin with "Why?" A lot of unsuccessful companies lose track of the why. Apple markets the WHY, Dell markets the WHAT.
- Why do you square dance?
 - fun
 - fellowship
 - embracing
 - puzzles
 - mind challenge
 - exercise
 - friendship
 - social
- - Is dancing the essence of it?
 - Harlan: at challenge, yes. At MS/Plus/Adv it's more fun and social.
 - Ken: I still think it's a social thing. There are dancers I like dancing with, and dances I don't like dancing with. It's the people that matter to me.
- So the idea is to HAVE FUN?
 - You're not sounding like it's fun or making it sound like it's fun.
 - ...and *you're* the marketers.
- The stake is a thing you plant in the ground and tether yourself to it, to use as a compass to provide guidance. Are my activities taking me away from or keeping me near the stake?
- Consider this statement: "Square dance leadership joyfully provides the bridge others cross to dance."
 - someone thought joyfully wasn't appropriate
 - someone else through joyful was VERY important, to convey happiness
 - it's important for boards to have fun to promote fun throughout the organization
- Two extremes in organizations: Chaos and Bureaucracy.
 - Chaos nothing gets started.
 - Bureaucracy nothing gets finished
- In the beginning, people know the WHY?, but don't know how to start. As an organization ages, it naturally moves from chaos to bureaucracy. As you move towards bureaucracy, you tend to forget WHY?



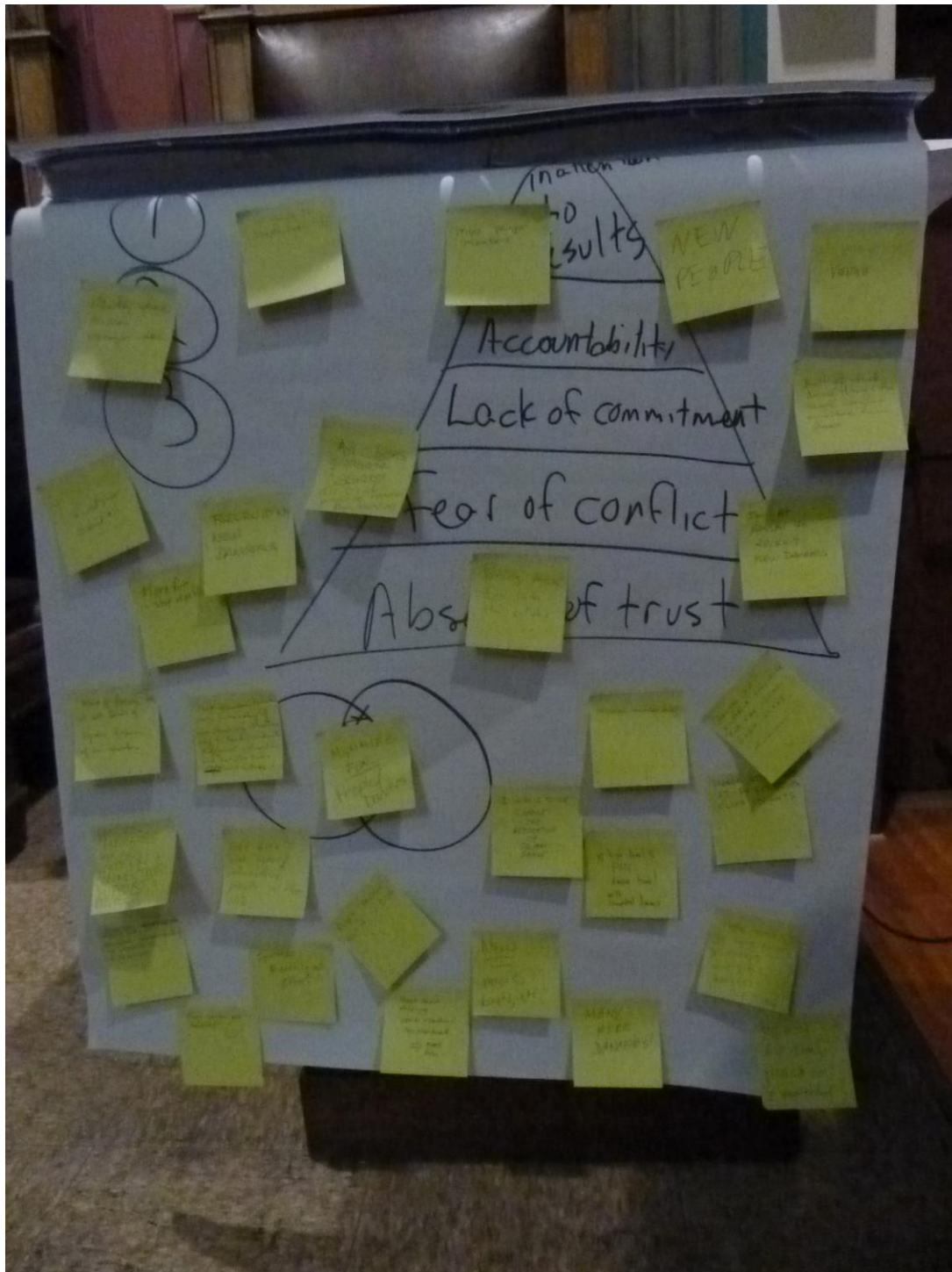
- What do leaders have?
 - followers
 - vision
 - ability to listen
 - responsibility
- Leaders have followers...because of all of the other attributes you all just mentioned.
- The balancing point between Chaos/Bureacracy is what I call "autonomy". Not too much leadership, not too little.
- Two steps in leadership:
 - stepping forward
 - stepping aside
- In Chaos, we need people to step forward. In Bureaucracy, we need people to step aside.
- Stepping aside means creating space and mentoring new leadership, empowering people, helping those who are struggling to overcome their obstacles. In Agile, we have a word: "25% process, 75% soft skills" ... "Servant Leaders". They don't tell people what to do, they HELP PEOPLE OVERCOME OBSTACLES. A Servant Leader asks a struggling team member, "How can I help?"
- Managers have subordinates. Leaders have followers.
- FNG says: "y'all are here to have fun, but you have this whole bureaucratic thing called a board...why? Is there another way to do it?"
- Leaders ADD VALUE. A leader will say "You do A, so I can go do B."
- Servant Leadership = "DARLA", which stands for:
 - Develop Others,
 - Appreciate when people do right,
 - Respect everyone the same,
 - Listen
 - Autonomize (decentralize decision making)
- Responsibility is not Accountability.
 - responsibility can be given, but accountability has to be taken
 - "who wants to be accountable for that?"
 - Someone signing up (to be accountable) has a better chance of doing a good job than someone who is signed up (made responsible).
- Book: "Switch"...elephant/rider. Elephant=emotional brain, Rider=logical brain. How do you speak to people's elephants? How do you get people to want to take on duties to run clubs?
- When accountability is taken by someone, they are more likely to follow through. What ways could you get people to take on accountability? Don't talk about getting people in chairs, talk about getting people to take on duties.
- If the elephant cooks, they can bring food (what are people passionate about?)
- Rotating board jobs is a terrible idea, because it prevents people from doing what they're passionate about.
- Explain what needs to be done and don't micro-manage. (OUTCOME is a WHAT, OUTPUT is a HOW. Focus on OUTCOMES, not OUTPUT.)
- when i started dancing, the group at that point had people who enjoyed doing their chores, so it was fun to work with those people who enjoyed the chores, which created a culture of service to one's

club. (Simon Sinek uses bricklayers in Rome to illustrate this. One bricklayer talks about the trials of the job, while another says "I'm building an historic building".)

- sometimes you have to let people know there's a choice: if you don't do this, then something will stop. (Reminding people about the WHY, the REALITY.)
- Don't get married to the HOW...get married to the WHY.
- What discourages people from joining leadership roles in this organization?
 - doesn't look like fun
 - too much work
 - no end date
 - somebody else is already doing it well
 - you don't care
 - lack of appreciation/recognition
 - different people want appreciation expressed in different ways
 - dealing with complainers
 - politics ("do you want to be right or do you want to have a square dance club?")
 - poor communication
 - not "keeping it fresh" (content or attitude problem? The elephant gets bored....)
 - lack of commitment limits
 - dearth of people to bring leaders out from
 - wasting people (Mario gave the counterexample of turning complainers into volunteers)
 - new ideas are discouraged ("tradition paralysis")
- Agile software development methodology uses something called a retrospective to periodically take a pulse of what's going on to modify the team's behavior.
- Ask intro night dancers who don't want to commit to a new class...WHY?! Ask them questions to figure out why they don't want to come back...because you've all been in this so long you've forgotten.
- (Good marriage: HOW person with a WHY person?)
- What are the duties of the board today?
 - operations/logistics
 - finances (dues, rent, class fees, facility rental, caller fees, equipment, insurance)
 - producing dances
 - communication
 - scheduling
 - recruiting
 - membership administration
 - vision
 - hiring (callers)
 - volunteer coordination
 - conflict resolution
 - PR/marketing
 - refreshments
 - internal/external communication
 - representation to iagsdc
 - student care
 - conflict resolution

- creating and amending bylaws / legal
- fundraising
- Morale is something that everyone in a club should take care of.
- Many of the things on the above list shouldn't be a duty of the board...they should be a duty of the group:
 - vision
 - recruiting
 - marketing
 - fundraising
 - conflict resolution
- Think of ways to get the things that shouldn't be duties of the board done...like using teams rather than a board. Take the HOW out of your requirements. Shift from OUTPUTS to OUTCOMES. Avoid positions that represent power, to not encourage power hungry people to dominate clubs.
- Competence can follow passion, but passion rarely follows confidence.
- Look at everything you as a board from the point of view of an FNG. How does everything you do help you to HAVE FUN?
- Temple Squares and Diablo Dancers have themed nights to HAVE FUN.
- The people who are out there as potential members are looking for FUN.
- Harlan: Face to face contact is most effective.
- Tools for interpersonal communication/problem solving
 - When someone goes on and on and on or is communicating badly pick an innocent word to get people back on track, such as "sausage!" ("sausage making"). "Bottom Lining."
 - Don't make people ask "What's your point?"
 - There are three listening levels, from easiest to hardest:
 - Level 1 = when you're speaking and I'm thinking about me.
 - Level 2 = i'm listening to you and I'm thinking about you. (being empathic)
 - Level 3 = i'm listening to you but I'm thinking about this whole room.
- "Five dysfunctions of a team." (pyramid, from top to bottom...)
 - inattention to results - nobody else cares about this but me
 - avoidance of accountability - i avoid accountability
 - lack of commitment - why should i care if we disagree and you don't have my best interests in mind?
 - fear of conflict - i will not have a conflict with you
 - absence of trust - i don't think you have my best interest in mind
- Respectful heated debates are important to a functional relationship.
- Consensus vs. compromise
 - a compromise always has someone losing
 - a consensus says "we agree about what we agree on, and we agree about what we disagree on"
- If you start to argue, bring the discussion back to the points where you both agree. See the book, "The Anatomy of Peace".
- Retrospectives, which are a regular interval at which you discuss what's working and what's not working.
- Fist of Five - have everyone shoot out a number of fingers to indicate confidence, and look for the low score. That's where the fruit of your change will happen.

- Last exercise: take a sticky sheet, and on it write down your magic wish to change ONE THING about gay square dancing.



Deb Dolan, Stage 2 Marketing (www.stage2mktng.com)

For the next two hours, we're going to have a structured discussion (45 minutes), walk through a few universal marketing principles, and then break you up into small groups to think about specific marketing tactics you've discussed.

- How do you get more people?
- What is "a lot of people" in an introductory class? (40, 15)
- What's the graduation rate? (Usually less than half.)

(One group is going to talk about increasing the starting numbers.)

(How do you manage that funnel? What do you need to do to improve the number of people who graduate? What are the barriers that prevent them from finishing? What can you do to help them finish?)

(How can you take the dynamism of interclub visitation to apply to recruiting/training.)

(You have older members who want to rediscover the joy of dancing, and are tired of angeling?)

(How do you get experienced members to angel without being snippy and snide to new dancers?)

(How do you keep people engaged? Some of you looking into other dance forms, etcetera.)

Deb is a *brand storyteller*. How do you offer something that will get people to give something up--money, time, effort--to participate?

Audience: I'm going to guess that most of your new dancers aren't going to Coachella. Here's the thing to remember: We are herd animals. We're social. We're herds. We want to belong with those who make us feel comfortable and most powerful, and more like our authentic selves.

Let's say you were going to walk into a frat party at the U of Virginia? Would that be somewhere you wanted to be? You wouldn't.

WHO: When you understand who you're marketing to, you'll be able to pick them out of a crowd like needles in a haystack.

WHY: People buy with their hearts, and justify with their heads.



HOW: What are the emotional reasons you're going to use to get people to show up to learn how to dance?
What are the barriers to prevent someone from dancing?

WHAT: In order to find new people, you want to find people who are like you (only younger), who will walk into one of your dances and feel like "Oh, this is my tribe; this is where I want to be.", and NOT feel like "Too many twinks/jocks/whatevers here..." As a huge diverse area, the Bay Area has many new people to offer.

Deb liked the Puddletown youtube video, because the caller was easily audible, they had inset clips of people talking about why they joined, nobody was wearing a dress except one man, and they all looked like a fun group of people, the video quality is great, the music quality is good.

The people you want to talk to probably don't even know you exist.

WHO IS GEORGE? (A typical Bay Area square dancer.)

- gay/lesbian
- age: 40s-50s (30 year olds aren't a target audience)
- college educated, probably highly educated ("smart")
- geeky
- employed
- white collar, academia
- eco-friendly
- introverted
- partnered, not necessarily joined at the hip
- social, not cruisy
- flirts
- not a big drinker
- physically active

WHY DOES GEORGE DANCE?

- Mathematical/Puzzle challenge
- Sense of community
- Exercise (more of an excuse)

BARRIERS TO NEW MEMBERS:

- 9 month commitment is scary
- (harlan notes that students who stay for 2 months usually graduate)
- websites aren't very welcoming of new dancers
 - go compare your website with puddletown's and chitown's websites, which are very welcoming.
- not very aspirational
- skirts and funny clothes
- hick music
- uncertainty of singles being welcome ("do I need a partner?")
- don't understand the language ("where's the dictionary?")
- only starts once a year
- not asking potential new dancers why they didn't sign up for a class

BARRIERS TO EXISTING MEMBERS:

- keeping them challenged
- spending 9 months not dancing (during class sequences)
- going to conventions

WHERE TO FIND GEORGE?

- LGBT groups at the companies most likely to employ George
- Social media
 - facebook
 - consider paying for facebook ads targeting George
 - gay meetups for hiking groups and other active groups

Current places to find dancers:

- pride parades/celebrations
- demo dances
- gay AA meetings (source of sober people)

Advice:

- why do you guys have *so many* clubs (9)?
- get better websites.
- consider a single overarching recruiting website.
- build a professional website.
- make the bay area dance calendar easier to find.
- put the calendar on all clubs' websites.
- post a FAQ for prospective dancers

Interclub discussion.

Lorenzo:

- Each club has received funds for recruitment and retention.

Ed:

- Bay Pearls continuing to accept proposals for grant money, considered quarterly.
- Next cycle closes end of January.
- Maintaining Bay Pearls cost \$1,000/year for administration (insurance, incorporation, etc.).
- Considering extending BP's 501(c)3 status to other clubs and perhaps other conventions. In talks with IAGSDC to extend Bay Pearls to host future conventions. If enough clubs fed into Bay Pearls to fund its operation, this could happen. We're thinking about \$2/club member/club.

Karen: We need to have more MS/class level to retain dancers, and we can't do that any more as individual clubs I want to increase communication between clubs to jointly sponsor MS dances.

(Steve Huggins discussed the GDP dances.)

(Steve Huggins offered Joe Iser's domain name "circlethebay" as a website to bring in new people as a recruiting tool for all Bay Area clubs.)

(Steve Huggins said that Foggy City Dancers has secured 2 weeks of the Castro Street Walgreen's window for the last two weeks of May. Harlan has suggested a square dance video be shown in that space.)

(Steve Huggins offered his wedding videographer's services to create a video)

[end notes]

