



UNITED SQUARE DANCERS OF AMERICA

SQUARE DANCE – AMERICAN FOLK DANCE



Promoting Square Dancing During the Most Challenging of Times!

Presented by:

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Promoting Square Dancing During the Most Challenging of Times!



- Who's Mike Hogan?
 - Square Dance Caller for 45 Years.
 - CALLERLAB Vice Chairman.
 - CALLERLAB Board of Governors Member.
 - Travel extensively throughout the USA.
 - Called for the same local club for 42 years.
- Who's Mike Hogan?
 - 30-year career in the Marketing Industry.
 - Former Business Manager, Controller, Account Executive, General Sales Manager, Station Manager.
 - Former General Manager – Rutledge Integrated Marketing.
 - Market President, iHeart Media.



Promoting Square Dancing During the Most Challenging of Times!

“A Problem Well Stated is Half Solved” - Charles Kettering

- Leadership – Who is Really in Charge?
 - Who has vision for the future?
 - Who makes the important decisions?
 - Who recognizes challenges?
 - Who has the authority to act and solve those challenges?

TODAY: You are Mr./Ms. President of Square Dancing!

Today, it's your business and it must succeed, or you won't make your mortgage payment this month.

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So, how is business?

- Demand is down – small crowds.
- Customer base is unable to dance as often as in the past.
- Declining dancer population due to health reasons and age.
- Dance venues are expensive.
- Callers and Cuers are expensive.
- Declining Caller/Cuer population.
- Dancers don't want to hold office.
- Can't get anyone to take lessons.
- Can't get a large enough crowd to pay our bills.
- There aren't enough of you – the current square dancer.

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New Problem:



What we know:

- Shut your business down.

What we don't know:

- When will your business re-open?
- How many of your customers will return?
- How many callers & cuers will be available to hire?

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Marketing vs. Promoting

Promotions are the set of activities, that communicate the product, brand or service to the user. The goal of promotion is to increase awareness, create interest, generate sales and create brand loyalty.

Promotion is one of the elements of a marketing plan which includes:

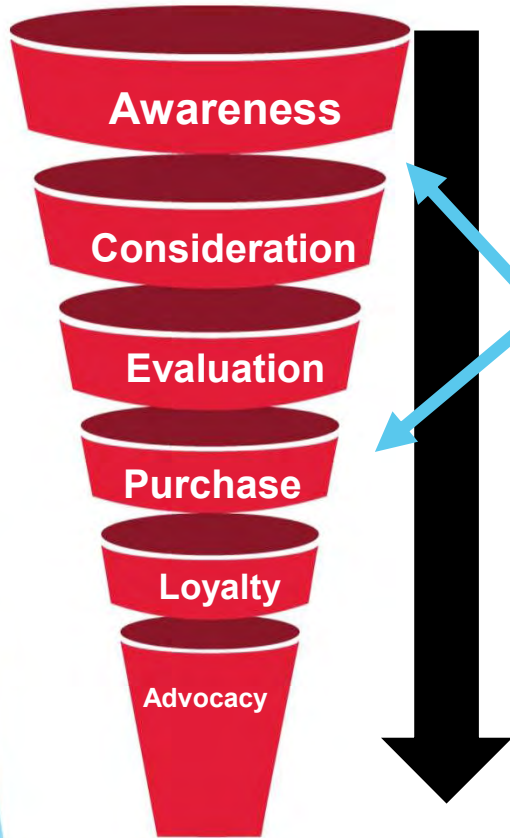
- Product
- Price
- Place (Distribution)
- Promotion

Consumers buy a product or service for only one of two reasons:

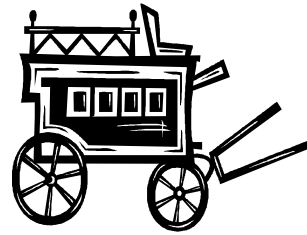
- They WANT it!
- They NEED it!
 - Or some combination of the two.

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Marketing Funnel Metrics



Recruit: Ad in the newspaper for lessons
Distribute flyers about lessons
Email a friend inviting them to lessons



Promote: Public Exhibitions
Beginner Parties
Publish Articles about Square Dancing
Tell friends about the fun we have



Promoting Square Dancing During the Most Challenging of Times!

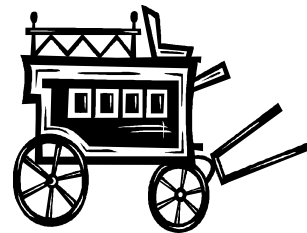
Marketing Funnel Metrics



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Promoting Square Dancing During the Most Challenging of Times!

Question:

In pre-covid times, when we offered square dance lessons, why didn't consumers flock to our lessons when they were offered?

- Lack of awareness? – best kept secret.
- Poor image? – did that in grade school.
- Lack of fit? – Square dancing is for old folks.

The real reason:

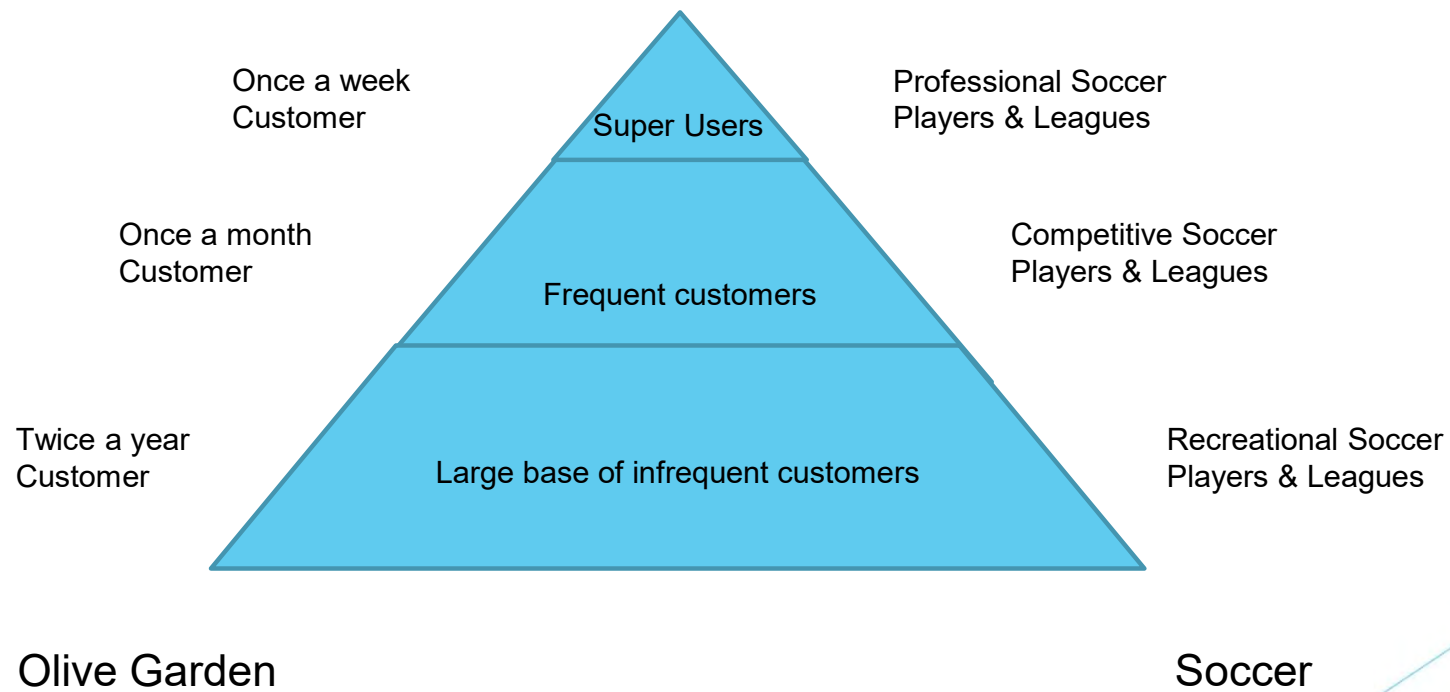
- They haven't associated square dancing as a product that satisfies a need or a want!

The solution:

Promote the product now,
recruit the dancers later!

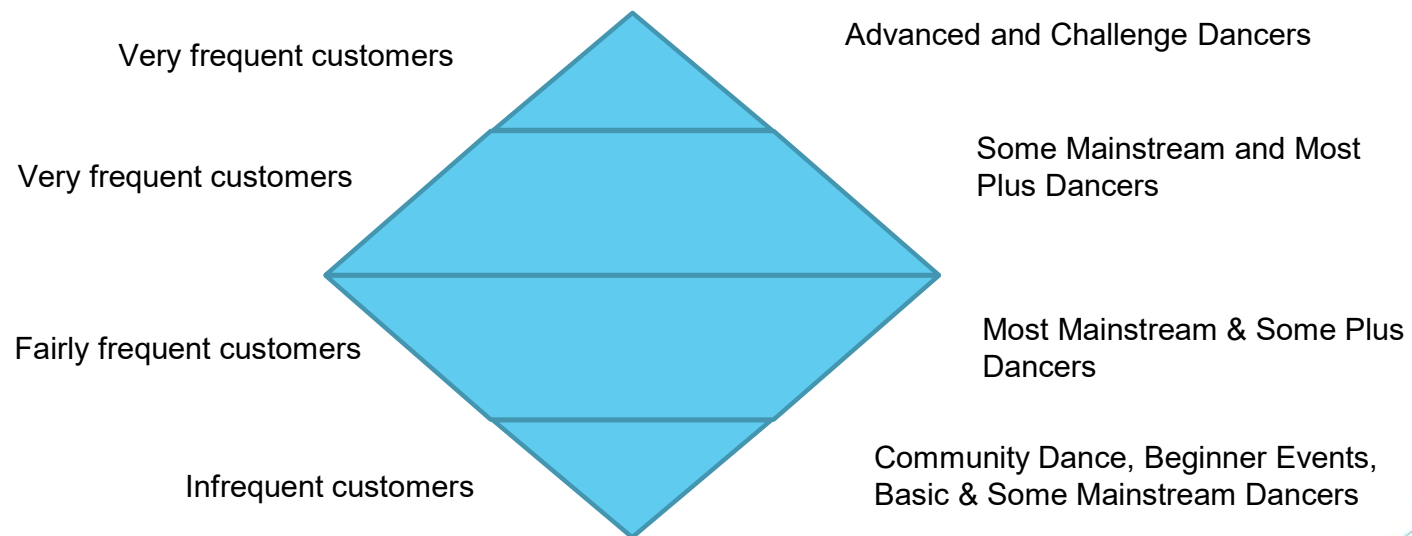
Promoting Square Dancing During the Most Challenging of Times!

Heathy business customer base:



Promoting Square Dancing During the Most Challenging of Times!

Mr./Ms. President,
Here is your business customer base:



Promoting Square Dancing During the Most Challenging of Times!

In pre-covid times, when we held square dance lessons, typically half of our lessoners didn't finish lessons, then half of those who did, didn't stay in the activity more than two years.

Question:

Why?

We have a product problem!

What these beginners came for and what they got were different!

Product: Lessons & Dances

What did they expect?

- To take a few lessons and be able to dance?
- To be entertained?
- To be welcomed?
- To have fun?

Promoting Square Dancing During the Most Challenging of Times!

Scenario: Mainstream

Beginners must sign up for **twenty weeks** of lessons offered only once each year on Thursday nights from 7pm to 9pm, pay for it all up front, and successfully complete those lessons, learning 67 calls from a multitude of positions and applications, before being allowed to attend a local club dance, and they are usually encouraged to take the next set of lessons before they finish the first.

Once completing the lessons, they are asked to go dance at an unfamiliar location, to a different caller, who calls faster than they are used to, using more complicated choreography than they are used to, with mostly strangers who are not tolerant of their slowness or lack of efficiency at executing the calls, where they can only dance to 10 of the 26 pieces of music played: **10 MS**, 4 PL, 12 Rounds, but pay the same as everyone else.

REALLY?

Scenario: Plus

Beginners must sign up for **one year** of lessons offered only once each year on Thursday nights from 7pm to 9pm, pay for it all up front, and successfully complete those lessons, learning 95 calls from a multitude of positions and applications, before being allowed to attend a local club dance.

Once completing the lessons, they are asked to go dance at an unfamiliar location, to a different caller, who calls faster than they are used to, using more complicated choreography than they are used to, with mostly strangers who are not tolerant of their slowness or lack of efficiency at executing the calls, where they can only dance to 14 of the 26 pieces of music played: **14 PL**, 12 Rounds, but pay the same as everyone else.

REALLY?

Promoting Square Dancing During the Most Challenging of Times!

We have a product problem!

History:

1960's-1970's:

- Club dances ranged from 12 to 25 squares.
- Festivals ranged from 25 to 100 squares.
- National convention attendance was 20,000-35,000 dancers.
- Beginners were taught the 50 basics in 12 weeks (4.16 calls per night).

Today:

2010's-2020's:

- Club dances range from 3 to 12.
- Festivals range from 8 to 25 squares.
- National convention attendance 4,000 or less.
- Beginners are taught 67 or 95 calls in 20 to 50 weeks (3.35 to 1.9 calls per night).
- Increase in complicated choreography requires longer teach time.
- Longer teach time means longer time before lessoners get to dance.

RESULT: High drop out rate and low retention rate.

Mr./Ms. President,

Your new customer came, tried it, left, and now you need to find more new customers, who will come, try it, and leave!

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How did this happen?

- Not enough separation between lists made moving from Basic to Mainstream easy, virtually eliminating use of the Basic Program; 48 Basic Calls – 19 Mainstream Calls.
- Lessons went from 12 nights to 20 nights.
- Tenured dancers desired more.
- Tenured dancers were making the decisions based on what “They” wanted.
- Tenured dancers got older.
- Beginners found it harder to learn and a longer time before getting what they came for.
- Callers introduced more calls to entertain tenured dancers, and they loved it.
- Tenured dancers oversaw running the clubs and hiring the callers.
- Callers introduced more complicated choreography to entertain tenured dancers, and they loved it.
- The journey for a beginner became 20 weeks of class with a higher expectations of call knowledge and execution.
- Tenured dancer’s acceptance of beginners who couldn’t keep up with them waned.
- The journey for a beginner became 25 weeks of class so they could learn enough to keep up.
- Beginners found it even harder to learn and even longer before getting what they came for.
- Tenured dancers wanted more.
- Tenured dancers oversaw running the clubs and hiring the callers and made decisions based on what “They” wanted.
- Tenured dancers got older, and with the lack of beginners, the average age of square dancers got older.
- Answer: Add 28 calls and start dancing Plus!
- Callers saw a new revenue stream – teach Mainstream dancers to dance Plus.
- Callers saw a new revenue stream – start plus clubs giving them more calling opportunities.
- Mainstream was eliminated in many areas of the country and replaced with plus clubs.
- The journey for a beginner became a full year of class with high expectation of call knowledge and execution.
- Beginners found it even harder to learn and way too long before getting what they came for.
- Most of our customer base is now older, long time dancers, who dance Plus or more, who still make the decisions based on what “They” want, including running our clubs and hiring callers, who better call what “They” want, or not get hired.

Mr./Ms. President, You have let your high frequency customers make all the decisions about running your company based solely on what “They” want, instead of what is good for your business, and your customer base eroded!

Promoting Square Dancing During the Most Challenging of Times!

Let's talk money - \$\$\$

The high frequency customers are making all the decisions about running your company based solely on what "They" want, instead of what is good for your business!

- Human nature is to pay less, not more.
- If I ran the local Buick dealership, I would have only paid \$10,000 for my \$40,000 car, because I run the business and I said so!
- We don't have a marketing fund because our customers, who run our business, didn't plan for one.
- We don't have a marketing fund because our customers, who run our business, don't want to pay for one.
- Our customers, who run the business and make the decisions, no longer care where we dance and would prefer to dance in a church basement versus pay more for a more attractive venue.
- Our customers, who run the business are older. And since they would rather pay less, they've decided to take advantage of their age and dance at the Senior Center.
- Callers are expensive? In 2019, I called about 100 events and had a net loss of \$2,500, so every time you paid \$6 to dance to me, I paid \$25 to call for you!

We MUST attract and retain younger dancers, even if younger means 55 instead of 65.

- To do so, you CANNOT dance at a Senior Center.
- They will think nothing of paying \$10-\$20 per night per person for lessons.
- To retain them we MUST give them what they came for!

Promoting Square Dancing During the Most Challenging of Times!

What do we need to change about our product to make it more accepted and desirable?

Here are some things that I, Mike Hogan, believe:

Beginner lessons should take no more than 10 weeks.

Beginner lessons should be offered several times each year.

At five weeks there should be dances available for folks to participate in.

There should be clubs that dance regularly at the 10-week program.

Other easy to learn forms of dance like lines, and mixers should be included.

We should decorate for every dance.

I believe in a stage and in showmanship.

I believe folks would rather dance in a ballroom than a basement.

I believe we can and should charge more for our dances.

Jeans are appropriate for some dances.

Petticoats and cloth ties are a turn off to potential dancers.

Callers should dress appropriately for the occasion.

I believe there are times when all generations can dance together, while still being okay that my generation doesn't always want to dance with my dads and my son's generation doesn't always want to dance with mine.

It's okay for my son not to want to dance to Barry Manilow, and okay that I don't want to dance to The Weeknd.

I believe, if we work together, modify our product to fit our customers needs, and market it appropriately, we can and will save square dancing!

Here are some things that I, Mike Hogan, don't believe:

I don't believe we should encourage new dancers to move to the next program.

I don't believe we should ask new dancers to be officers in our clubs for at least three years.

I don't believe we should dance in a senior center.

Promoting Square Dancing During the Most Challenging of Times!

Sound like SSD (Social Square Dance initiative)? It's not!

Virtually all the opinions and recommendations I stated above come straight from a speech I made in 2008 at Prairie Conclave, a leadership weekend held in Nebraska.

However, SSD is an initiative that is built to be the very product that I spoke about in 2008!

“Let em dance” – Jerry Story

- 50 calls.
- 12 weeks of class.
- Several new classes each year.
- Emphasis on standard applications, not left swing thrus from right-handed tidal waves.
- Where dancers who are excited about dancing can invite their friends, who will be dancing within in a very short time.
- Where the dancers are dancing, enjoying each others company, having fun, with no responsibilities.
- Where dancers can take a break from dancing then return and not feel intimidated or scared.
- Where dancers can enjoy dancing without dedicated a large portion of time to being a student.
- Where dancers are not pressured into climbing the staircase of programs.

Product: Lessons & Dances

What did they expect?

- To take a few lessons and be able to dance?
- To be entertained?
- To be welcomed?
- To have fun?

**Mr./Ms. President,
SSD is built to deliver exactly what they expected!**

Promoting Square Dancing During the Most Challenging of Times!

“A Problem Well Stated is Half Solved” - Charles Kettering

- Leadership – Who is Really in Charge?
 - Who has vision for the future?
 - Who makes the important decisions?
 - Who recognizes challenges?
 - Who has the authority to act and solve those challenges?

The largest and most recognized dancer and caller leadership organizations in the world:

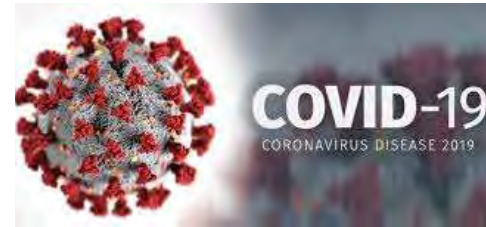


You and Me



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Covid-19's Effect on Marketing:



Covid-19 has no change on marketing principals, only the timing in which we execute marketing initiatives!

Disadvantages due to Covid:

- Availability of venues to hold classes are limited and possibly closed due to state regulations.
- It is impossible to social distance when square dancing.
- Many current dancers fall into the high-risk category due to age or underlying health issues.
- Prospects may have safety concerns.

Advantages due to Covid:

- Prospects are anxious for life to get back to normal.
- Prospects will have a much higher than normal desire and need for social interaction.
- Prospects are seeking out safe means of exercising.

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Covid-19's Effect on Marketing:

Timing and content of message delivery:

The marketing of "Why Square Dance"

- Start now.
- Tell your story.
- Address safety.
- Speak to the prospect's needs.
- This type of brand marketing can and should take place all the time!

Recruitment messaging: "When and How"

- Set up your class to start once state, local and CDC guidelines allow for group gatherings.
- I recommend setting up your class to start three months after group gatherings with minimal restrictions are allowed.
- The biggest change in the message content is the addition of where and when.
- Start inviting prospects to your class as soon as the date and location are set.



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Marketing Funnel Metrics



Decide what tactics you will use. There are far too many to use them all. Keep in mind the most important part of the marketing funnel is AWARENESS! All tactics below are explained in detail in the CALLERLAB Square Dance Marketing Manual. At a minimum, I recommend the following tactics:

- Elevator Pitch – be prepared to tell people everything that is great about square dancing!
CSDMM Section 9, page 33
- Build a Database – there is nothing more valuable than having contacts.
CSDMM – Section 9, page 34
- Public Exhibitions – builds AWARENESS!
CSDMM – Section 9, page 45
- Special Events – dance parties are the best way for consumers to sample our product.
CSDMM – Section 9, page 36
- Direct Contact Sales – get out and talk to as many people as you can.
CSDMM – Section 9, page 46
- Public Activities Listings – they reach a lot of people and they are FREE.
CSDMM – Section 9, page 46
- Public Service Announcements – they reach a lot of people and they are FREE.
CSDMM – Section 9, page 46
- Local Website Development – your website is your showroom.
CSDMM – Section , page 67
- Email Signatures – tell everyone you email that you square dance.
CSDMM – Section 10, page 48
- Facebook – great place to tell the world about your club.
CSDMM – Section 11, page 55
- Business Cards – cheap, convenient, a tiny billboard folks will hang on to.
CSDMM – Section 12, page 58
- Event Signage – put that banner out by the road so people know you're there.
CSDMM – Section 12, page 60

Promoting Square Dancing During the Most Challenging of Times!

Marketing Funnel Metrics



Taking a consumer from knowing nothing about square dancing to LOVING IT!

Awareness:

- Elevator Pitch
- Public Exhibitions
- Public Activity Listings
- Public Service Announcements
- Email Signatures
- Facebook
- Business Cards
- Event Signage

Consideration:

- Elevator Pitch
- Special Events – dance party
- Direct Contact Sales
- Public Activity Listings
- Public Service Announcements
- Email Signatures
- Facebook
- Business Cards

Evaluation:

- Special Events – dance party
- Use Direct Contact Sales, Public Activity Listings, PSA's and Facebook to drive consumers to your event.
- Any visit to your website

Purchase:

- Beginner Class
- Promote like you would a special event

Loyalty:

- No marketing tactics
- This is a retention issue handled differently

Advocacy:

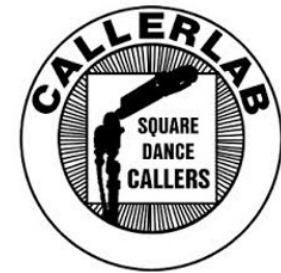
- Elevator Pitch
- Direct Contact Sales
- Email Signatures
- Facebook

Promoting Square Dancing During the Most Challenging of Times!

Use the CALLERLAB Square Dance Marketing Manual

The CALLERLAB Square Dance Marketing Manual provides:

- Education about marketing fundamentals.
- Research about the state of our activity and an understanding of the general public's image and awareness of our activity.
- Defined marketing strategy elements and exercises for groups to determine:
 - Target Demographics
 - Benefits sought by each target demographic
 - Analysis of our product versus products we compete with
 - Defined marketing challenges
 - A position statement.
- Brand management tactics.
- A large list of marketing tactics with “How To” instructions for each.
- Recommendations.
- Fundraising ideas.
- Case studies to demonstrate successes that are repeatable.



Square Dance Marketing Manual

Version 1.2: Published March 06, 2018

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Promoting Square Dancing During the Most Challenging of Times!

Resources:

CALLERLAB Foundation

- Lesson Grants
- Caller Education Grants
- Square Dance Marketing Grants

CALLERLAB

CALLERLAB Marketing Committee

- CALLERLAB Square Dance Marketing Manual
- Individual advice and recommendations – just ask!
- Face to face training – just ask!

Multiple marketing related education sessions from past CALLERLAB conventions on both audio and video.

CALLERLAB Knowledge Base Website

- Multiple marketing education articles
- Winning Ways success stories – repeatable successes

The Alliance for Round, Traditional and Square Dancing (The ARTS)

- Marketing collateral material
- National Logo and Slogan
- Add-A-Buck Fundraising Program
- Education Grant Program
- Recruitment Plan (2005)

USDA

- Publications and Educational Material

Me – Mike Hogan

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Promoting Square Dancing During the Most Challenging of Times!

“A Problem Well Stated is Half Solved” - Charles Kettering
Leadership – Who is Really in Charge?

What can we do?

- Embrace change and modify our product so beginners stay!
- Develop a plan to market square dancing to the public where you live.
- Raise funds.
- Aggressively pursue opportunities to dance in public.
- Create opportunities for non dancers to sample our product through beginner dances and parties.
- Make learning to dance easy and readily available.

“Vision without action is hallucination” – Albert Einstein

Thank You!

