

THE DANCE STUDIO REVOLUTION:

7 Ways to Grow, Thrive,
and Keep Your
Passion for Dance Alive
In This or *Any* Economy



Dance education is key to inspiring dreams, keeping performing arts alive in the world, and making a difference for this and future generations....



We wrote this report because we had more to say and share after we wrote the poem called *'We Dance'* for the 5678movie.com.

Ultimately we want each person who watches the two minute movie to be inspired and encouraged, but even better, we want you to see the difference you make in the world by being a dance educator, studio owner, artist – human being.

As dance studio owners ourselves, we know that the business of dance can be incredibly challenging. One must balance the love of dance with the hundreds of details required to run a successful studio. It is a very personal business – dance studio ownership – one size does not fit all.

We have the privilege of consulting with aspiring, new, and long time dance studio owners from around the world. We get to experience firsthand the ups and downs of starting, growing, adapting, changing, and succeeding in the dance business.

We've found these cornerstones consistent with successful dance studios:

- Quality Programs
- Technology Advancements
- Leadership and Teamwork
- Growth and Development
- Marketing A Unique Brand
- Excellent Customer Service
- Extraordinary Communication Skills

Our number one goal is that you enjoy success in every aspect of your business.

This report includes 7 ways to grow, thrive, and keep your passion for dance alive in this or any economy.

Revolution: [rev.o.lu.tion] major change: a dramatic change in ideas or practice.



INTRODUCTION

We are facing a dance studio revolution. Traditional marketing is not having the same impact it did even a year ago. Print media is becoming extinct. People often turn to the internet first to get their information today.

Starting, owning, and running a dance studio is complicated with or without support. It's even more complicated when you factor in the speed at which technology is impacting the world and every aspect of running a business.

We want you to live your dream. Plus we want you to have the success you desire *and* have your dance studio be a source of inspiration for dance education in the world now and in the future. It is our number one goal to help you keep your passion for dance alive as you grow your business.

The current data shows...

- 70% of the U.S. population regularly use the Internet ¹
- Over 1 billion people in the world are online ²
- The average adult spends 3 hours more a day online than watching T.V. ³
- While 82% of consumers use search engines for local business information, those local businesses focus *less than* 10% of their marketing budget toward web strategies. ⁴
- 66% of American use online local search, like Google local search to locate local businesses⁵

“What’s dangerous is *not* to evolve”

- Jeff Bezos, CEO Amazon.com



With a dance studio revolution, the future is bright.

Why?

Because the dance studio owners, dance teachers, vendors, and professionals embracing, learning, and utilizing the advances that technology make available are finding success - *now more than ever.*

Yes. Prices are up, the economy is down and dance studio owners everywhere are worried about the future of their businesses.

The fact of the matter is that dance lessons are a service, not a necessity, and when it comes to putting food on the table or sending kids to ballet lessons, the choice of what has to go is glaringly obvious. But don't despair. There is plenty of good news in this dark time, and with some creativity, you have the opportunity not only to sustain but grow your dance studio business.

#1. Stay positive

Despite the gloom and doom noted by the media, the most important thing you need to do is stay positive. Continue to breathe life and enthusiasm into your work, and don't let anything get in the way of the passion that gave birth to your business in the first place.

Yes, your business is service-oriented, but it has lasting value. *You are providing education, entertainment, development and training through art...and you are providing a bright light in these challenging economic times.* Dancing makes people of all ages happy. Give your students an experience in dance education and performance they will never forget.

Know your value. In every interaction on and off the dance floor you are building your future and the future of performing arts in the world. You are making an extraordinary and important contribution by running a successful dance studio.

#2. Give potential students an opportunity

When it comes to attracting more students, now more than ever, people are going to find you through your web presence. Your website is your first point of contact for people today. What does your website say about your dance studio and is your site helping you to convert visitors into students?

According to Clate Mask, CEO of Infusionsoft and advocate of the concept of 'ten second marketing' says that you've got ten seconds (or less) to:

1. Attract the visitor of your website.
2. Declare your message.
3. Get them to take action.

Most visitors of a website are searching for a site they can DO something on. Provide them with easy to find contact information, an invitation to come for a free trial class, studio tour, or open house. Have up-to-date current schedule and tuition information posted.

Having a website that can be easily updated is easier now and more affordable than ever. And there are people who can do this for you at a fraction of the cost from two, three, or five years ago.

It's now time to relate to your website the same way that you would if someone walked through the doors of your studio or if they called on the phone. Your website is your billboard to the world. It is your opportunity to make a great first impression!

Help potential students sample the spirit and enthusiasm you have for dance education at every point of contact.



#3. Learn to be *great* with people; it is a fundamental key to success.

As Maya Angelou said, “I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

Your reputation will develop from how you make your students and customers feel on and off the dance floor. Every interaction you or your staff has will create the culture at your dance studio. Develop a reputation that will have people become raving fans about the quality of your classes, interaction, and performances. Be the talk of the town for all the *right* reasons.

Research shows that customers buy on service over price. They buy on how they feel about giving their money to a certain business. Most people have no problem spending a little extra money if they feel they are getting the attention they want. People are willing to pay for those little touch points that heighten their experience at your studio. You can be the reason why they come to your dance studio. It starts at the first point of contact either on the phone or email and it's completed on the dance floor.

Having a customer focused dance studio business will allow you to grow year after year. Use mistakes and problems as growth opportunities to see where you can improve, adjust, and turn your students into raving fans.

#4. Ask your customers what they want

But what do they want? If you don't know, ask! Use a survey and modify your class offerings to keep things new and interesting. Of course you will be limited by the floor space and times you have available; however there are many choices to expand your studio programs.

Think beyond your average class demographic and add adult- and toddler-oriented classes. Baby-n-Me classes offer a fun bonding experience for families through music and movement, while dance ranging from ballroom to Zumba, a Latin dance aerobic program, are all the rage for adults. Consider adding specialty classes such as Pilates, Yoga, Irish Step, Belly Dancing, Bollywood, Nia, and more. Look to the trends and popularity of the dance shows on TV, they are inspiring people of all ages to take dance lessons.



In experimenting with adult classes, consider using a class card that allows people to pick and choose which classes they want to attend and rewards them for frequent attendance. Offer a substantial discount to parents of registered students. Offer an easy way for friends and family of dancers to help pay for classes or costumes, such as gift certificates, to lighten the load on the parents. Do a drawing offering up to \$100 gift certificate for early registration for summer classes, costumes or fall tuition. Accept credit card payments and/or automated billing options.

To keep your school fresh, continue to hire new, young teachers to run classes. They will relate well to your younger students, and you will have more time to focus on the business aspect of owning a studio.



#5. Define and embrace your uniqueness.

Dance *your* dance, sing *your* song, be *you*.

All professions are fueled by competition, including the world of dance. When we focus on the big goal – keeping dance education alive in the world – the results can be wildly positive. Competition drives excellence in all operations both on and off stage.

Excellence is the source of ongoing growth and development. In what areas are you striving for excellence? This speaks of your uniqueness. Be extraordinary at what *you* do best. What is going to keep you inspired through the years? Focus on finding your ‘why’ for starting, running and owning your dance studio so that you can ride out the ups and downs of the business.

The studio owners who are connecting with each other through interactive websites, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and other communities online are learning from one another at a fast pace. The ability of technology to help us encourage one another, train, coach, and develop higher standards in the dance industry will benefit everyone. Who is inspiring, supporting, and helping you to grow and be your very best self?

Now you can take dance lessons online from great teachers and choreographers all over the world. The technology available to upload a simple video is growing at a fast pace. People are searching online for dance classes, lessons, now more than ever. From Manhattan to the far corners of the world you can access top choreography and dance lessons online. You must have a web presence to stay ahead and succeed going forward.

You are no longer bound by the limits of your studio walls. The reach of the internet is endless; you can interact and impact people across the globe. You can learn from masters of dance education and masters of studio management at the touch of your fingers on the keyboard.

#6. Create a multifaceted marketing strategy

Ongoing growth requires satisfied customers who spread the word about your dance studio. Happy students and parents will always be your most effective advertising but it is not sufficient in and of itself. What can new and experienced studio owners do to continually build student enrollment?

There are inexpensive ways to effectively market your dance studio. Now is the time to try something new and creative to get your name out there. A referral program that directly credits satisfied customers is always powerful and effective. Encourage your dancers to bring in new students for a credit such as partial tuition, costume discount, a dance bag or some other reward.



Look to take advantage of ways to create visibility in the community. You can design numbers for varying ages and ability levels to present exciting, inspiring, short entertaining programs to show your work to the public. Look for performing opportunities by networking with local organizations such as the chamber of commerce, service organizations (Rotary, Kiwanis, etc), churches, leadership organizations, boys and girls clubs, preschools, senior facilities, and more. They are often delighted to feature your dancers to add some color and fun to their fundraising events. Outside performances are great for your students as well.

Getting your name out there is a multi-faceted process. Whether your studio is about to open, may be only a few years old, or established it is time to use new marketing techniques, such as social networking, to advertise your studio.

Many studio owners overlook the power of a comprehensive marketing approach that doesn't have to cost much money – it will require planning, time and a clear vision. Consider the power of community outreach and involvement, free publicity, flyers, open houses, special events, showcases, and more that can build your business.

Rent available hours out at your dance studio for dance birthday parties or share space with other small business owners, such as those who own yoga or karate schools. Consider guest artist master classes or dance intensives and invite other local schools to participate.

#7. Look, listen, learn = Grow.

Look. Before you can really grow, you must assess the current state of affairs of your business. Take a look as objectively as possible at everything from your waiting room area, studio space, office setup, website, class offerings, student retention, marketing practices, faculty, staff, and more.

Where do you find yourself frustrated? What's not working? What do you see that needs improvement? Do you notice any patterns or trends both positive and negative? What business practices or systems are missing that would make a difference? No action can be taken for positive change until you know what action must be taken.

Listen. Are you set up for growth? Do you survey your students? Are you asking them to evaluate your faculty and staff mid-year and year end? Do you do a performance evaluation on yourself and your staff? Do you truly invite feedback both positive and negative to make improvements and adjustments?

Where are you resisting change in areas of your business practices? Do you take any negative comments personally or do you use it as an opportunity to make positive change? It takes sensitive eyes and ears to measure and monitor the state of affairs within your business and it can change from week to week, year to year.

Learn. What are you doing to keep growing as a business owner, artist and human being? What books are you reading and blogs do you follow to sharpen your skills and stay motivated? What associations, conferences, seminars, programs and training do you participate in?

Do you have a vision of your studio one, three, five and ten years from now? Are you setting goals each year and on a regular basis? What are your planning methods? Are you set in your ways or are you looking to find people, resources, mentors and information to help your



business grow and thrive? Do you solve problems in a positive way? The studio owners who have the greatest success are the ones who continually want to learn and grow.

Grow. Growth occurs for dance studio owners and dance educators when they look, listen, learn and understand the importance of every aspect of the dance business. Take action according to the areas that will fulfill your dream, mission, and purpose. To be a successful dance studio owner and dance educator there are techniques and competencies necessary on and off the dance floor. Growth requires professionalism and excellence in every aspect of business management and artistry. Your passion and your power will expand as you grow your business and you will leave a lasting legacy that will live beyond your own efforts and lead to a long and satisfying career.

Looking ahead....

Successful studio owners are resourceful and strong. There is a bright and exciting future ahead for dance educators. Kids are only kids once and there is no substitute for good dance education. Regardless of whether a student dances just for fun, recreation, or aspires to a career in dance they are coming to your studio. Now more than ever, adults of every age are searching for an activity that brings joy and rewarding ways to add exercise into their lives.

Know the difference you make in so many lives. Stay positive, be creative and just keep dancing. The future of the performing arts depends on you!

To your success!

Suzanne Blake Gerety & Kathy Blake

Co-Founders, www.DanceStudioOwner.com

DanceStudioOwner.com Co-Founders....



Kathy Blake is widely respected for her extensive life-long training in classical ballet, tap, modern, jazz as well as ballroom dancing in which she competed in both International and American Styles. She is nationally known for her "Let's Learn How to Dance" instructional DVD series and has taught and performed extensively in her career. Her performing arts studio of over 1,000 students exemplifies the highest standards in the industry, thriving in a suburban area of southern New Hampshire.

For 35 years she has maintained consistent growth in the face of changing trends, personal losses, studio splits, and financial hardships. Her passion for dance and commitment to integrity in business practices has always overcome any challenging circumstances.

Kathy Blake is one of the founders of and a consultant for www.DanceStudioOwner.com, a collaborative online community and resource that is full of information on everything you need to know to attract more students, retain top talent, inspire loyal faculty and staff. Kathy has been a contributor to Dance Teacher Magazine and will be a presenter at the 2009 Dance Teacher Summit. She is dedicated to helping studio owners keep their passion for dance alive as they grow their business!



Suzanne Blake Gerety owner of On Pointe Media LLC, the parent company of www.DanceStudioOwner.com, is the daughter of Kathy Blake and Vice President of Kathy Blake Dance Studios. Suzanne brings a combination of expertise in the publishing and event planning industry.

As the co-founder of DanceStudioOwner.com, she empowers studio owners to grow their business with the tools and technology that help them work smarter, not harder. In addition to a degree in Psychology and Child Development, Suzanne has training and experience in communication and leadership from one of the world's foremost personal development companies.

She is the mother of two young children and is an advocate for dance education throughout the world. Suzanne has been a contributor to Dance Teacher Magazine, will be a presenter at the 2009 Dance Teacher Summit, and is the creator of the Dance Teacher Master Class Online. She brings the resources and support to current and future dance studio owners to help them achieve success.

We'd love to connect with you, here's how you can:

Become a Fan on Facebook: www.Facebook.com/DanceStudioOwner

Connect on Twitter: www.Twitter.com/SuzanneGerety

Visit us at www.DanceStudioOwner.com we offer a variety of resources for members, including advice on nearly every aspect of starting, running and growing a dance studio. From how to creatively market your business or bring in new student to tips for creating a memorable recital or communicating with parents effectively. *Come find out why our members say it is their #1 source of support, knowledge and information on how to run a successful dance studio.*

Report Sources:

1,2,3 The Edge of Success: 9 Building Blocks to Double Your Sales" by Clate Mask of InfusionSoft

4 The Kelsey Report®: Global Print & Internet Yellow Pages

5 ComScore www.comscore.com

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