

Student acquisition, attrition and retention with Frank Sahlein

Suzanne: Welcome everyone. This is the dancestudioowner.co, members only webinar. Today our topic is on student acquisition, attrition, retention and much more, with our special guest, Frank Sahlein. I am really excited to have you here Frank. I am excited to learn from you. We get to share the platform that dance teachers have.

Each summer in New York, and I know you are a wealth of knowledge, and that is why we invited you to share some of your expertise with our members. I would love you welcome you, and give you opportunity to give us any background and get right into your presentation.

Frank: Thank you Suzanne. I appreciate that. It is wonderful to be here. It is wonderful to share with studio owners of any size, in all locations as well. I love the mission of dancestudioowner.com. It has done a great job in the industry, great service of the industry. I am pleased to be apart, an affiliate that is associated with that. Just a brief background, I don't want to spend a whole lot of time on that. We have way too much to cover.

The brief background, I grew up in the martial arts industry. For me, from a business stand point. It was always finding best practices. That was the driving force. For 37 years we have had our own facilities in Boise, Idaho, but we grew in the business part of it, and looking for who is doing cutting edge things. Who is doing things that really innovative in gymnastics and dance and cheerleading and swimming? Who is doing them in Australia? Who is doing it in the UK? Who is doing it in Mexico, Canada, US? Where is it? Best practices just fascinated me.

It has continued to fascinate me through my entire career. As such, when someone like Suzanne is kind enough to invite me to share something, it is always on a topic like management structures or marketing or staffing or technology or customer service or finance or facilities or inspirations or something like that. I think that what we do for consulting is very much aligned with dancestudioowner.com. I think that is why Suzanne and I hit it off.

Suzanne: Absolutely. I know that one of the questions that we bump into each other about is the beginning conversation. People come to me and say, "Suzanne, is it normal that I turn over X amount of students every year? Should I be retaining?" I know we are going to get into some of this, but definitely one of things I love about talking to you is that you are so smart when it comes to the technical side and processes, but you are also very relatable in the sense that you get the world we living in. You are in it. You are doing it. That's another why the listeners know why I invited you.

Frank: Thank you. I appreciate that. If you will, all business. If you want to make it really simple, we tend as owners and consultants to make business more complicated than it has to be. I am certainly guilty of that as well. If you strip it all down, it ends up with marketing number one to attract people into your facilities. Number two is, you have happy people to take care of your

other people. Number three is money. Those are the three things. After you get your cash flow, what they heck do you do with it anyway? The most important one is marketing. It is the engine that drives everything forward. I think as owners very few of us have marketing degrees. Very few of us have HR degrees. Very few of us have finance degrees. I have none of the above.

Yet, we are able to put it together over time. To be able to think about the things that practical. What do we really care about? I don't care about marketing strategies so much, but I do care about is when it meets the road, what is it that we are doing here, and how can we make it effective? The question here is always starting with marketing. It's always, "Is marketing an expense or an investment?"

What is it? I would say, for 90% of owners out there whether is gym, cheer, dance, swim, martial arts, child care, whatever it is in the children's activity center industry, it's an expense. That's a shame. It needs to be an investment. If you invest $1,000 in marketing, I am sure you want to make $1,500 back. Pretty sure you don't want to make $800 back on your $1,000, we will call it investment.

So, if you have some kind of a system that can start you off correctly and adapt over time, you are going to be in good shape. We have to look at why people struggle in their marketing efforts, and I think you know this. I am not going to read you slides. You can see the slides. You can see this. It probably resonates with you to some degree as far as inconsistent, shot gun approach, using a couple strategies, very different things, trying different things here and there. That's just fine. It really doesn't work until you get a system squared away.

One of the questions that is a burning question is, "What is a normal attrition rate?" I will tell you what happens in the psychology of all owners, not just yourselves, every owner, in every type of industry; in the children's industry especially. What's normal attrition ranges? What are they? Why are we losing we kids? Why are we doing that bad of a job? Are we doing a great job? A poor job? What's normal? What's not? What we found over time, look at the range here. Isn't this crazy, that it can be from 20-50% per year? That's my question here. Why such a wide range where some schools, any of the arts or sports could lose only 20% a year. That's not that bad. Only two percent a month, to 50% a year. Why?

It does depend on the specific sport or art. It does depend on the business model and business acumen of the owners. It is the attention paid to marketing. That is probably number one. The specific sport or art, some. Some sports or arts lend themselves to a little bit more turnover, gymnastics for example, it is a difficult sport. It is a strength of body weight sport. As such, kids are going to hit a wall at some point if we don't have a wider array of skills to let them know. Dance is a good one because dance, historically, people think they are going to be in it for the entire school year. I have a performance to be in. The dance industry has trained that. I think it is really good. Swimming is another good one because that's a need, not a want in people's minds. As such, they will keep their children in swimming and do it every year as well. There's a difference in the arts and sports, although, someone who is great at marketing in gymnastics is going to be beat someone who is not great at marketing in swim.

If business acumen of the owners and understand the business and process, how does marketing interact with my staff, interact with finance, interact with customer service? A whole set of systems? That's the business acumen of the owners. You have to pay attention. We have to be students all the time in the business. There's an attention you pay to marketing and how

marketing actually goes. If marketing is the number one area, the engine that drives everything else, then we probably better pay attention.

There's the progression to a marketing system. One of the slides I put up here, we actually have eight slides like this. There's one for management marketing people, technology, finance, etc. This one, we actually have 12 steps we can take in discussion that will make it a little easier. We just put it into eight. You look at these steps for marketing, and think about this as you go. As we talk about acquisition and retention and all those types of things, we keep these stair steps in mind. This is a slide that may be distributed to the presentation, I am not sure.

What happens here is, you are welcome to look at this, and look at these stair steps going, "Do I have a marketing team?" Maybe you do, maybe you don't. Have you actually done your product branding, in other words, what is that makes you so different in your local community from other dance parts, and even other children activities? Your brand is your logo and your business name. The commodity that you have is just dance lessons. It is stripped as dance lessons. The product is that four to six bullet points that make you different.

They better be authentic because if they don't ring, they don't ring authentic then people are going to expect it, but they are going to come in and find something different. So differentiating yourself from your product is critical. The experience design creating this experience in advance is a great exercise. That way you can truly use word of mouth. It builds up the public relations with a good word of mouth. It puts it out there and your referrals, and remembering that marketing is contact sport. It's a contact sport.

What that mean is, you can't just leave it to, "I know I am going to have great word of mouth. People will hear about us. They will come in. We have good online presence, number six. We have good web and social channels." Remember, you need to be out there too. You need to part of your community. Most of you probably do a really good job with that.

Number seven and eight is where the rubber meets the road in terms of being a student of marketing. What is your strategy or your goals? What are campaigns and themes you might use? What are the exact methods and channels of getting that message across? What are you going to do? That's what professionals do, marketing professionals that have actually training. Drill strategies that have campaigns and practice.

The best ones in the world are able to measure their marketing return on investments, not return on expense. Return on investment. In a nutshell, is a very valuable slide actually. As you compound these things, the progression goes from one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. You are going to find your marketing efforts improving. I wish you good fortune along that path, that route, and in the future we will do some more specifics as well.

Suzanne: Great. I want to say for everyone listening on the slides are available. We do post these slides with the replay. If anyone is listening in from the phone and didn't get a chance to do that… it is helpful for me too. Once again, you put the complexity of it into a simple visual. It's nice because it's a tool for us to use. I will let you keep going, but we do have the slides.

Frank: Wonderful. It is nice to have the visuals. There are plenty of things you can do. I am not going to go into depth. My point here, I have a marketing management slide up, that things that are marketing components, things for internal marketing, things for external marketing for our particular business. Those are things that a marketing person could do.

For one, was a marketing team, there is plenty to do in marketing. If you are thinking about, "I can't afford someone to just to marketing for my business. I can't even afford 10 hours of someone to do marketing for a week." Yes you can. As a matter of fact, if you don't you will probably sentence yourself to the same gerbil wheel again and again and rotating clients through in terms of effecting your retention rate.

There is plenty to do as you can see in this particular slide if you are on the phone. It talks about internal and external marketing. Think about internal marketing as retention. Think about external marketing as acquisition. You have acquisition of clients, external marketing going on all the time. You have internal marketing, your retention of clients going on all the time as well. Thinking internal, external, think retention and acquisition as a couple of different things, and you will be in solid ground. As far as the marketing plans themselves or just marketing in general, the marketing is the engine that turns that business is a direct reflection of your management strategy, your business model and all of that.

If you haven't tapped all that out, then ask yourself, "What do I want to be in two or three years? What do I want my business to be? What programs do I want to offer? Where am I going to be? What size do I want to be? Who is going to help drive it there? That is just a future based organizational chart. A future facing organizational chart is very valuable to chart it out for you. You may think, "I am a dance school. I am solely a dance school. That is what I am going to be forever. Here is what we are going to offer." Great. Map it out anyway. You might surprise yourself.

In this quote, "If you don't know where you're going, you might not get there." I think it's funny. It is only funny if you are already organized, you know what your business model is. you know what you are going to be in the future, and you are able to convey that to other people through your marketing. Keep this in mind, when you are designing your website for example, your website, your Facebook page, every brochure you post, everything that you have up there. Your newsletters that are coming out every month, if you have them. All of that is pointing towards the future.

All you are doing is a snap shot of a past. It doesn't help drive your staff forward, drive your customers forward, drive the children forward and keep everyone excited. When you are looking at a tax return because that is a snap shot of the past. When you are doing future projections of your financials that is exciting because you are painting a picture of the future for yourself. Same thing for your marketing, your marketing plans and all of that. I know it seems kind of silly, but on the other hand, it has a lot of meaning.

Now, one of the things that people always ask is, "Can you really determine your market share? How many people should I have?" There's all this acquisition, retention discussion and we will get into that in these slides of course, but first of all, how many children should you have or could you have? What is your actual market share? This is actually a science. We do this for expansion planning for people when they are getting ready to build a new place, third location, something like that. It all starts out with your demographics and your market share.

To determine that, just in case you wanted to do that at some point, you can get these reports, you don't have to go through us. You can get these reports from realtors I think, or chamber of commerce or something like that. A demographic report, and what you're after, is a report that is keyed off of your specific address. In other words, companies like third level, chambers of

commerce, realtors, they should be able to get you an address that radiates three, six, ten miles from your specific address. Not just a general zip code, not the city, from your specific address.

If you have that then you can figure out how many of the number of children in your target age groups. You say, "We are basically 0-14 let's say. Maybe 4-18. Something like that." It will have that information in there. You add up the total number of children in your target age group after you determine the radius that you draw the majority of your customers from. We generally ask for three, six, ten mile radius if you can from that address. It really varies. Someone in New York City might just have a three mile range because of the density of the population. Somebody in middle America, Boise, Idaho or Scranton, Pennsylvania, might have a six mile radius. Some of you in a rural area, if any of you are there might have a 10 mile or 20 mile radius even. Determine the mile radius, look at the total number of children in that radius in your target age groups. Then you can, step three, you can actually say, "Alright, I am going to look at the household income, the average home cost." You can usually take out somewhere between 30%-35% of the children.

Just delete them right away. Take them out of the figures right away because they are in households that can't afford it. Now, this number goes from the total number, cut about 30-35% out, then you multiply that remaining number by about 10% or so, 10 or 12%, which is the number of people looking for dance at any one time.

From there, then you can look at the competition in the area and say, "How many people are at my level or close to it?" You can divide that number through by the competition, and then you are going to come out with your market share. It is a formula that I am not going to spend a lot of time on. You have it on the slides one through six. You can actually determine, plus or minus five percent what your market share should be. If you have 300 children in your operation, and it says you should only have 225 then you are doing a heck of a job. Keep it up.

If you have 300 children and it says you could have 500 children, then you need to step up your marketing. So, the branding here, like we talked about a little bit so I am not going to spend much time here. There are professional branding templates. We have some as well that are 20 pages long. That go through each 10 areas of branding, but I will tell you what, branding is really for the big boys. When you think about the Nike's, the Coca-Cola's, the Hewlett Packard's, the Google's; that's where branding comes from.

We don't care so much about branding, as much as we do getting kids in the studio. That's what we care about. Just be careful. Branding is something people talk about a lot. It is basically for the big boys. What we really care about is making sure you the commodity products squared away, like I talked about earlier, these four to six bullet points. Do that and control your word of mouth within your local community. Unless you are doing three, four, five facilities or franchising or licensing or whatever it is.

Branding is not so critical, but establishing your product is. It is just for consistency and word of mouth. I've attached a brand commodity product worksheet for this. You can run off of the presentation, a dance studio owner will have. You can simply print this from there, and work on your own brand commodity product workshops on worksheets for each one of those.

Suzanne: This comes to mind. We said we would schedule a pause. This is the part that I am working on with our own team at our own dance studio, which is, what are the identifying four to six bullet points? I think so many studios get stuck, and we need to give an example. We all aspire to have

a strong floor. It is best for dancers. When you have a true, strong floor, you are proud of that. It separates you from every other dance studio. Can you give an example of what you see in our market, and what an example would be of that?

Frank: Sure. Let's do that. By the way, just as an aside, it is nor for your dance studio as a whole. It is for each program that you consider to be a unique business unit. For example, preschool dance and your preschool dance program is different than your academy program, developmental program, which is different that your performing company. I am using generic terms here. Would you agree or not, that those three are radically different, and would not have the same four to six bullet points.

Suzanne: Exactly.

Frank: Break that up. Let's just take a live example. Let's take a preschool program for example. What would those four to six bullet points have? It could be specifically designed, interior decoration for that particular age group; the colors that appeal to that particular age group. What elicits their brain movement, what elicits more movement? It could be something that we have teacher that are specifically trained in early childhood education as well as in dance.

It could be that we have very specifically produced music for these programs. Our curriculum is second to none because it came from, where ever. There are four real quick points there that are differentiated. Would you use those same four points for your company or your academy? No, you wouldn't.

Suzanne: One example that comes to mind, we were doing a brain storm around this. We found that all of our preschool teachers are also moms themselves. We have been promoting that as a real benefit for parents. It doesn't mean that a preschool teacher who's not a mom isn't a great dance teacher at a her own studio. It comes up from other parents. They say, "We love it that Ms. Teresa is a mom too. She can handle those bathroom breaks with grace." For our particular market they somehow appreciate that.

It doesn't mean that all of the market is the same. Is that an example of one or is that too specific?

Frank: No, I think its fine. You could have up to six points. You don't want more than six points by the way. No one will read them. Four to six points are great there. If that's one of the six points for that particular program, great; until something comes up that is even more impressive and knocks that one off the list.

Suzanne: Okay great. Perfect. Everyone will have access to that sheet. That's perfect Frank. I will let you keep going.

Frank: No problem. Just interject anytime. I value your direction on this because you are actually interpreting dance speak, and I love that. That's very good. We need that. Customer retention, and again I am not going to read you slides because you will have them all here. Customer retention, you can look at your membership value and structure. One of the things in retaining is building that loyalty. You might ask yourself, on my memberships, if I have a membership fee or registration fee, do I have different options on that? What are the options? Here's the question, if your membership or registration fee was optional, who would pay it?

Wait a minute, it is just something we do. Not from a customer stand point it's not. These days, customers are used to having choices. I am not saying this is what you need to do, I am saying you are trying to get some loyalty. So, you might have a couple different levels of membership structure, regular membership or enhanced membership, and here's the difference. Here are the things that you get for it.

You will engender that loyalty because you will be surprised at how many people step up. If you have a $40 regular membership and an $80 enhanced membership, if the benefits are appropriate, you will be surprised at how many people will step up. This has to do with retention. It is building that loyalty. That's why people stay.

Suzanne: That's cool. I know you are going to go over this. One of the things I have noticed that dance studios, in particular our market, is dealing with is that this whole lead to another webinar; the whole getting the uniform or the tights and leotard and shoes, with the registration fee. I think much of our tendency is to discount or take away the registration fee. This should plant the seed for our members listening, and say, "Ah I can keep my normal registration fee, $25, and instead of having to discount it." I could say, "Would you like the enhanced registration fee, and it comes with x,y,z, and it is an amazing value." That's a great point. I appreciate that.

Frank: It is about loyalty. Develop your own membership grid, saying, "Here is my normal. Here is my enhanced. Here are the benefits down the left side." Just play around with it. Have some fun with it. Bounce it off your staff. Grab a few customers that are friends of yours and say, "Can we do a quick focus group? We are thinking about doing something like this. What is appealing to you?"

It is one thing to put your little grid together. It's another to challenge the assumption. We think we know in our own little heads and own little worlds, many times it is off the charts wrong. We are talking to ourselves and trying to reinforce our own business objectives, as opposed to the client objectives. Part of your marketing team, periodically, you have something that you need input on, get a focus group together. People are honored to be part of it. Maybe you make it a little luncheon or something like that.

Another chance to build loyalty among those people that are your raging fans already. Word of mouth, very simple. Word of mouth by design. I know it sounds simple. Maybe some of you have heard us say this before, and probably Suzanne says the same thing. Those four six bullet points that you have on every single one of your programs, need to appear everywhere. If they do, and notice we are talking about consistency; your brochures, your websites, your print ads, your bulletin board, your staff training, your office scripts, parent discussions, social media.

Those four to six bullet points are critical and why? The why is, is that, that is what customers are going to expect. If it's authentic, that's what they are going to receive. Then, the only thing they know that they know to relay to their circle of contacts is those bullet points. The story goes on because if you actually deliver those things within the preschool program, within the academy program, within your company performance program, then that's consistent, it's authentic and it's not by happenstance or osmosis.

It's by design. There's a huge difference to this. It's one of the simplest marketing principles that small business owners like ourselves tend to ignore. So simple, but so powerful.

So, there's other things here; there's other things to improve your word of mouth efforts. I am not going to read your slides on that type of thing. The thing I want to emphasize in the middle

of this presentation, is this is the customer focus that is the problem. This is what happens over time. Normally, if you look at the circle like this, it says marketing staff, facilities and finances and the blue dots around the customer, the customer is dead center when you start off a business or small.

Eventually these concerns, marketing becomes more of a concern, your staff; saying. "What am I going to do? Who am I going to hire? How much am I paying them? Is my pay roll too high? Facilities. Am I too small? Too large? I rented too much, I didn't rent enough. Now I have competitors." Your finances. I hope I don't have to go into that.

Now I am really ahead. How many profit am I making? All those concerns, when you can see as a customer here, you can see it in the slides, the customer is starting to drift a little bit. They are not dead center anymore. They are outside of the circle. You can guess what the third one looks like. Yeah. The customer is completely outside of the circle. This is completely natural in businesses of all types; small, medium and large businesses.

We have to work to get that customer focus back and not to get that drift. To do that, there is some customer centricity tips that we have here. Again, I am not going to read your slides. There are some things that you can do that will keep a customer in dead center. There are 10 tips here. This whole marketing presentation is one of them because we are trying to not let the customer get away in the first place. Too many times, "Well, we are a great dance studio. Of course people are going to come here."

You are buying into your own story so to speak. We have to be careful of that.

Suzanne: Exactly. I just want to pause for a second because you are going to get into these tips and I want everyone listening. This is the nugget that I want everyone to take away. We are struggling with this at our own studio with all the growth that we have had and the changing and the evolution of our programs. It's simple, but we tend to let all the urgent fires get in the way of doing it. I am challenging myself to this, but I will let you read them. Keep going. It's very cool.

Frank: Thank you. One of the things that you really want to doing, is you want to be what you call, designing the customer experience. This is what the big boys do. I am going to show you really quickly here, I am just going to give you an idea. I am not going to go into any depth on this.

When you talk about designing the customer experience, don't you want to ask the customer what they want first, and then design what your service is. The answer is, techno and it's always going to be further than that. The answer is no. You design the customer experience first, and then you can survey people as to how well you are doing. Most people do not understand. They do not know what they want when they come into your facility, your studio, your business.

They think they know what they want, but they don't really know. If you look at this little diagram, I have a diagram of all of these yellow ovals, and a couple of gold ones on the left. That's how people come into your business. We are tracking the customer experience. That is how people come in, but the truth is that is just the beginning of your job. It's the beginning. Most people think, "Well I signed them up. They paid money. They're coming to class. We did it." No you did nothing.

We did step one out of all these little steps. Once they get in, a parent has the experience, the child has an experience curve and the staff has an experience curve. Just by way of example, the

parent experience, all these subpoints you see up here; their phone experience, their web experience, their ongoing office experience, their experience with the instructor, initially and ongoing, progress report, billing statements, newsletters, all that stuff; there's a point here on each one of these. It's one of these points here. We need to create a lab on each one of this. That's what we need to do if we are really going to design the customer experience.

What are they actually going through? This is what the Disneys do. This is what the Googles do. This is what the big companies do. This is what the hotel chains do. Restaurant chains do this. I am just bringing it down to our level. That's all. Say, "Here's the touch point on every single one of these clients." Parents are the client. The child is the client. Your staff is a client as well. They are all going to have their experience curve. It is up to us to take each one of these. Look at the touch point and say, "They are going to go through these things. How did this happen? How can we make the experience special in every one of them?"

I am telling you, if you take these slides, just those last two slides; the parent experience and the child experience and use them as a kickstart for your staff meeting, just say "What could we do here anyway?" You will have a wonderful meeting, and some wonderful ideas come out. I could give you all the wows on each one of these, but it's almost a disservice to do it because in developing them yourself, you will see how that actually works.

You will have buy in from your own people; whether it's your office, your program managers, your regular staff. This is huge. Doing this in advance; I will tell you that 99% of businesses don't do this. If you do it, you are going to separate yourself not only away from other dance competitions, you are going to separate yourself away from gymnastics competitions, cheer competitions, martial arts competitions, anything you can think of. We are not competing with other dance schools. We are competing with every other way that families spend dollars. That's the way it is today. Especially in the US, the recession taught us some things. People are not going to lose that experience any time soon.

That's tracking the experience and designing the experience; very important.

Suzanne: Great thanks. This is very helpful. I just want to repeat that anyone listening in from the web, you have access to the slides. We will make sure you get this on the replay. Without giving specific examples, when I look at this, and I think of everything else we have to do. You may not accomplish all these points in a month. It might take you a year to create this. Doing even a percentage of it, or places that are the most critical, you are going to separate yourself from most. I want to restate Frank's point.

It may look like a lot all at once. "I am doing this all by myself, or I only have one other person, and we are teaching all the classes and there are only 24 hours in a day." Start somewhere. Pick the one thing. You have to start with one thing.

Frank: Pick the one thing, and just take it to that. Just work your way through it slowly. This is a progress. This is a progression. Take your time. If you have to go one slide at a time and ask yourself, "Does this fit in with what I would like to do or my business model? No it doesn't. Yes this one does." Fine. They are all different sizes, geographies, different objectives. Fine. At the very least, this webinar is meant to make you aware of what is going on out there. That's all.

All we are trying to do, this is a customer service type of course. There are three different parts. I am not going to belabor it. There is all this material. In the end, that I just mentioned, you are just

trying to fill people in the light when they come in. You are trying to create this experience of what you are trying to do. It's not just customer service. It's experience.

I think dance teachers and dance owners know that because that is what you want for performance, competition, and recital. You are watching all these people out there. You are watching their faces, watching their children. That's what it really is. You are doing that anyway in the big picture, just in the background there are some other things we can do to create that customer experience.

Things that they won't even know necessarily, but you will be doing it. Customer retention, there are ways to measure the retention. I put some graphs in there. This is a particular way someone does it session to session. You can actually explore a little bit at your leisure. You can make an excel chart yourself to see what your own retention was going through. In the end it is nice to be able to measure. You can measure by instructor, how many you started with and how many reenrolled. It doesn't matter if they reenrolled with a different class because they still stayed with the company. That is important too.

I am not going to get into this because this is more technical. I just wanted to have the slide up here. You can go back and look at this, and see how they did it. You may do it your own way in terms of retention tracking. It is just nice to know. The bigger you are, the more important it is by the way.

Suzanne: That's a helpful chart. Is there a technical tip if someone is using their own software. They should be able to export their list of students. Is that what you did here?

Frank: That's correct. Generally it is done that way. So for customer acquisition be sure when you are trying to acquire customers that you understand, and I think dance does it better than any other industry, better than martial arts, better than gymnastics, better than child care, better than swimming. Maybe even better than cheerleading. There is so much emotion in dance itself as an art. We have to remember that adds as well. We have to convey because you sell on this concept of emotion. What people want to be, what they want to do, what they want to have or what they want their children to have. Eventually if they want to make as well.

These concepts are really important when you put an ad out there. Anything is an ad by the way. A webpage is an ad. Your Facebook page is an ad. If you put a flyer out, it's an ad. Anything you do is an ad actually. Be thinking about those concepts and attracting that attention. I think you do that pretty well. I just have a couple examples.

You notice that picture is interesting. If you picture that caption and become one with the water, that's not a normal ad. It looked like a child was tumbling underwater for one thing, but they are totally confident. It has become one with the water. Who wouldn't want their child to do that? Then, the ad progresses on.

It attracts attention. It grabs you and pulls you in, or something like this. This is a little wordy, but then again it's a full page ad. You can see where your eye goes immediately like the other one, your eye went to the child who was an underwater swimmer and into that caption, same thing here. You go to this really fun kid, and this caption says nothing short of everything. Kind of fun right?

There's one other item that I am not going to spend time on. This is called the customer life cycle. This is a very valuable sequence of slides. This came out of a $5,000 marketing seminar that I was at a while back. You have these slides here, dance studio owner just saved you $5,000.

Suzanne: We appreciate that.

Frank: You got these slides about customer life cycle that goes from generating interest to capturing leads and building education to trusting to conversion to processing the sale to fulfilling and wowing, that's the customer experience, up sell and create advocates.

Each one of these slides, it shows which one that it does and gives you some suggestions for what you might do. It goes through each one of these little metrics here, and gives you an idea of what you might do on each one. This one is to educate and build trust. How do you nurture that? It's called the nurture phase. How do you actually convert them? You may say this is way to much, you just want to sign them up and get them in there. Great. There's a whole trail, and the important thing about this. This is what is going through the customer's mind. This is not our psychology. It is yours.

Your psychology is one thing. You have some business objectives. The customer could care less about your business objectives or mine for that matter. What they do care about is what happens to them. If we do it, we are eventually going to end up creating advocates over here. You may think you have a good word of mouth, and that is creating referrals and advocates. No it's not. Not even close. You see with this, that's this little cycle. I am not going to go through that. You have it there for you to study if you want to. That's what is third level consulting. That's what dancestudioowner.com is trying to do. We are trying to provide great resources for you, and we are proud to be a part of that.

In terms of how we market, you might have some very specific things. Websites, email, Facebook, voicemail, voice broadcast, text messages, direct mail. This is just a set of slides that I wanted to show you here. Your website is a big deal these days. So is your Facebook page. The website is always going to be something. It is still a primary driver. You drive people to that. If you are small, and you are relying on Facebook, that is probably okay. If you are any size at all you are still going to have a website because websites and Facebook and your texting and your social media are all linked. Look at Google.

You have to go back and ask yourself what are the functions of your site? Are you trying to sell, inform, do both, whatever it is? When you are designing this or having your designer work on it, understand there is a magic formula for a web page right now. That changes all the time. That's why I stay a student of marketing. Right now, the magic formula for your web page, let's go back to that model of your preschool program, academy developmental program, performing company program. You can probably take more. You also have tumbling. You also have cheer.

Some of you have gymnastics motor development. Some of you have parties. Some of you have retail shops. Those are all programs that need that brand commodity product. They all need their own web page. You can see on this magic formula, the short description of what the program is and the bullet points. Kind of a short video. Not more than two minutes long. Maximum two minutes, and probably only a minute and a half. It features children, instructors and parents in that short video, a couple of testimonial quotes for social proof, a call to action button; that's your registration button and your social media link to share.

For right now, that's the magic formula. That may change over time. Your website needs that. Your social media success is just a few points here and here. This goes on to social media discussions and email and Facebook and integrating text messages and voice broadcasts if you want to do that kind of thing. I don't want to belabor this too much. Direct mail still does work as long as you have an offer. It can be part of a postcard. The most important part of the postcard is the back of the postcard with your offers for current and existing clients.

Here is the front of a postcard. Here is the back where there are actual offers there. No more than three and make sure there is something there for current customers so you don't tick them off. I was not trying to have this be an exhausting marketing presentation, but when you do develop your marketing plan there is a lot of ways you can do it. You don't need a professional company so it if you use the right templates. It is the whole strategies, campaigns and tactics thing.

If you want to design a campaign, you have a worksheet for you. This is very sophisticated actually. It is very sophisticated. Who are you trying to target? What is the offer code? What is your timing and what is your budget? For a specific campaign with a specific objective. This is very valuable. Use it. Use it if you can.

Suzanne, do you have a comment on that one?

Suzanne: You just made a point right before this. This campaign template is helpful. I guess my thought is when we talk to dance studio owners, many of us are still nostalgic newspaper advertising.

I think we are still there. Jill, can you here us?

Jill: I can here both of you guys.

Suzanne: Great. I am assuming everyone can still here us on the line. The thing is, when you said print mailing can still work, the question is, should they print and send something in the mail as their primary objective? Jill and I are passionate about the mobile site and website. What do you advise folks to do first?

Frank: In terms of tactics, in terms of a postcard and direct mailing, you have to remember that you cannot just rely on technology. The more high tech this world gets, the more high touch we need as a balance, which is why dance school, gymnastics school, cheer schools are fantastic. We will be here for life. Society is getting more tech, so we are the high touch, and marketing is the same thing.

All the high tech stuff that is out there, we still need something that is high touch. There are still dance magazines out there. Why? Because there has to be high touch. We could actually read them on the internet. The point is, people like to touch that. If they get something unique in the mailbox, I am talking about a small black and white postcard talking about the things I had up there. Over sized postcards that are color that have colors on them. That are target marketed to those households with a certain income with children of certain ages.

If you do that it is going to be effective because no one else is doing it. When everyone else is zigging, you zag.

Suzanne: I know there are things out there that every door, direct mail. Jill and I have taken it upon ourselves to share with some of our members how you can upload geoanalytics. You can take

your current data base and load it into a tool like map keys. It shows you where everyone lives. Do you find it is more the radius that matters, or does it help that you are going where the current customers live where you know they have the target market for your business.

Frank: It might be the same thing. You might find it is exactly the same thing. It is a great distinction, but I think it might be redundant. I think it is the same thing. Your customers are going to come from the same markets, with the same income brackets. They flock together, as they say in demographic speak. That's true, they do. They are going to drag their friends. It is worth it. Definitely worth it if you target it.

When do you marketing campaigns you might look at some things. These things are copy written to us obviously. You look at things like swimming. You look at these types of ads that have a posted note to it. It says, "How?" Expand communication skills. It builds confidence using dance pictures or whatever, develops their brain. It is a campaign because the ads are similar. They build on learning, memory. These are campaigns. You can use a graphic designer. It is extremely valuable.

A graphic designer should be part of your marketing team. Absolutely. I think Suzanne that's as much as I can run through.

Suzanne: It's so awesome Frank. Jill and I both appreciate those tips. I know we have plenty of people listening from the web, and we have a few folks that have dialed in from their phone, and we want to give a minutes here before you have to go for anyone. You might have initial questions, and as I always promise, if you have follow up questions, we will make sure to get in touch with Frank. We have our discussion forum on dancestudioowner.com.

If anyone is listening on the web and has a question or comment, you can go ahead and type that right in there in the Q&A box. If you are on the phone, you can press star seven. Star seven will allow you to ask a question. If you unmute your lines. Frank, while we are waiting on someone to ask a question, how would someone find out more about you and your information. How would they reach you?

Frank: They can go to thirdlevelconsulting.com. It's a website that we have for our services. One of the things you might be interested in, and it's free, you are getting that extended through dancestudioowner. You go there to the dashboard. It is how to look at how you might run your business. We have a free version of that. You can go to successdash.com. You can have a free little dashboard right there. It's an interesting little process. You can connect with us more by going to our site or by going to successdash.com.

Suzanne: Cool. That's awesome. Jill, do you see it? I haven't had a chance to check in terms of what we have on the web going on. I know that Frank is out on tour talking. I would say the dance teachers summit you can certainly speak live there. You are a wealth of information for everyone listening into the call who will listen to the replay. This could help you restructure your whole approach just for the whole year. We are taking on a lot of this at our own dance studio for how things have evolved over time. Is there anything that you are hearing or seeing out there?

Let's take this question from Wyoming. Go ahead.

Speaker 4: Hi my name is Leslie. Thanks for taking my call. I have been trying to decide about sending out postcards or doing door hangers. Is there an opinion on which would be a better approach?

Frank: A door hanger, seems like would be a more shot gun approach as opposed to post cards, which are a more targeted approach. I would always take the targeted approach, unless you know which of those household have children of the appropriate ages and income of the appropriate level.

Speaker 4: Okay.

Suzanne: I prefer that you send me something in the mail that I can look at. It comes to me. You sent me something. Send something. As Frank said, you have to have an offer on there. I see stuff come in the mail all the time, and I think "Gosh, this was a waste of money for this so and so place." Nothing even makes me want to get on their website. You think you might have a thought about that too.

Frank: I do. Again, if you put something in somebody's hands. Door hangers to me, they are obnoxious. They are just obnoxious. It is low budget is what it is. I am betting you don't want your studio to have the impression of low budget. I am betting you want to make a nice impression with a nice offer and go from there. You are going to spend extra money on the targeting, postage, etc, but it is targeted again.

It's no good unless it is targeted. You will see on the marketing worksheets, be sure you have an offer code on it. That I failed to mention. This deal about tracking your return on investment over time, that's going to become a very important element of your marketing. One of the things I was starting to ask, was, one of the trends out there is we see the dance industry market turning, and I know Suzanne and dancestudioowner.com owner sees it. People are getting much smarter and much more tuned into business.

They have always been tuned into art obviously. Business was a necessary pain. I see that turning very quickly. If you don't have competition now just thinking about business and marketing, you will.

Suzanne: Great. We have two quick questions on the website before you go. Do you have a moment to answer those?

Frank: Yes

Suzanne: Great. I will let you ask them.

Jill: Just tacking on to what you were just talking about, more of a direct marketing campaign, we have a question about how you would get a list of targeted addresses.

Frank: Your local mailing house will do it. Sometimes your local mailing house will not only help you design the piece, they will also print it for you. They also have all these addresses and such. They will help you target them. The more you target, the more expensive the individual label is, but it's worth it.

The local mail house or print house will have a complete service for you. They will have the design, print and mailing using their permit to these specific addresses as well. This is part of what they do. That is part of their extended service, many of them.

Suzanne: Another question that was coming in on the web, when you mention 12 hours a week on the web marketing, is that for a particular role or is it everything combined, graphic design, social media, etc.

Frank: Great question. The answer is, it depends. All of that is marketing. Every single thing you do one way or the other, represents you in any way shape or form, internal or external is marketing. It is more relative to your size than anything else. If you have 100 kids and you want to grow to 200 kids, you might only have someone working five or six hours a week, something like that. If you have a couple hundred kids and you want to go to four, then you might have somebody working 15 hours.

You have two studios already, and you want to have four studios, you probably want to have full time marketing.

It is relative to your size and your business objective.

Suzanne: Can you just clarify something too? I have worked with local mail houses in the past, and it's an easy thing for us. The question is, what is the local house? It's not your post office correct?

Frank: No. It is somebody that is going to design and print your postcards. I think if you Google in your own city, just go design mail print Syracuse, New York, you will get a few things that come up. That is how those results will come up. Try that first.

Suzanne: Fantastic. There is a comment that someone has used Vista Print in the past, and they have been able to target the house hold income, the children's ages and the location.

Frank: Absolutely. That's what I mean. Sometimes you do it like that. You do it online. There are three or four online services like that. There's somebody in your local area if you want that local touch for design, but Vista Print can do it absolutely as well. You bet.

Suzanne: That's awesome. We certainly appreciate every bit of the advice and expertise. Anyone who is a member of dancestudio.com listening live or replay, if you have any follow up you can think of, please post it on our forums. If you have the question, there are probably nine other people who have it too. It is just a matter of taking the time to place it in there.

There is nothing that is too simple or silly. No it's not. It's really not. I love the quote, and I will leave you with at. We are all students of learning our business. If we embody that beginners mind every day we can have that enthusiasm for trying something new. I always tell my own staff at our dance studio that we are not going to be the same studio this year that we were last year so what are we going to do to have fun with this.

None of us have a bachelors degree in marketing. We are all artists. We have different strengths Leverage the education that's out there, especially on the website. Frank you are hugely talented. Is there anything you want to say before we wrap up the call?

Frank: I just want to reinforce the role of the business woman, business man as a lifetime leader. We always look at our management, marketing, technology, finance people, facility risk and most of all inspiration. That is where it is going to come from. They follow inspiration. They follow energy. They follow vision. As we are lifetime learners, that's what our people are going to

follow and be inspired by as well. I think that's our first job. I just want to back you up on that one.

Suzanne: Perfect. This has been a dancestudioowner member only webinar. We hope to see you on the next call. Have a great day.