

The Dance Machine

A division of X-Productions

SCHOOL DANCE PROMOTIONS

Below, is a guideline for a successful school dance promotion. This is a "boiled down" version of many years of experience promoting major events by our company. This company has been asked by many establishments, to promote or produce events in this area. We have also promoted many events on our own.

The various scope of the events we have promoted/produced includes:

- Teen dances
- Nightclubs
- Concerts
- Trade shows
- Boat race party central 1,2,3,4, & 5

The only time events have "tanked," is when a solid plan has not been followed. Yes, Really!!!

The problem:

- 1) A lack of enthusiasm/excitement about school dances.
- 2) Student Councils are finding it difficult to promote the dances to the student body.
- 3) Attendance is down and dances are being cancelled far too often.

The Solution:

Develop a formula for organizing dances that produces a high quality show every time, that is easy to follow, profitable and most of all, enjoyable.

Promotion:

- 1) The first step in promoting a school dance is getting the student council behind it. Without their commitment, drive and enthusiasm, the dances will not happen.
- 2) The student council must meet twice per week (ideally Mondays and Wednesdays) to get a progress report. The Monday meeting should be the longer one (1 hour) and the Wednesday meeting can be shorter (1/2 hour).
- 3) The following positions of responsibility will need to be appointed at the very first meeting:
 - a) *Production Manager* - responsible for overseeing the entire show and all the staff. This position is by far the most demanding. You will be responsible for making the production schedule, the budget, enforcing deadlines, dealing with conflicts and problems, and any other loose ends.
 - b) *Assistant Production Manager* - as the name applies, you will be assisting the Production Manager every step of the way and covering off if extra help is needed, especially when the PM isn't available. They will be responsible for the decorations the day of the dance.
 - c) *Promotions manager* - responsible for designing and manufacturing posters, flyers, radio announcements, e-mail newsletters, and word of mouth promotions campaigns.
 - d) *PR Manager* - responsible for securing sponsorship and prizes, all contact with teachers and administration, booking the gym and student body issues. Technically, this can be the job of the Assistant Production Manager, but if there is someone willing to take this on, it is an important position. The PR person should also record the minutes of the meeting.
 - e) *Facilities Manager* - (Ticket Sales, Concessions, Coat Check) this person is responsible for overseeing the sale of all tickets, the ticket booth design and music, concessions and coat checks. There can be additional people to help out, but one person should be ultimately in charge.

- f) *Show help* - this is pretty much limited to the day before and day of the event. This includes decorations; clean up, coat check help, concessions, and anything else that requires people.

4) The topics to cover at the first meeting are:

- a) Set an overall goal for the dance attendance and the profit target.
- b) Set a ticket sale goal for every week. For example, you may want to sell 400 tickets total. The breakdown would be something like this: Week 1 - 50 tickets, Week 2 - 75 tickets, Week 3 - 100 tickets, Week 4 - 175 tickets. *Set realistic goals and targets.*
- c) A budget which includes everything from ticket costs, to decorations to DJ costs.
- d) Generate a task list. In other words, who is going to take on what... i.e. Making posters, selling tickets, etc...
- e) Generate a full month long production schedule. This will help keep everyone focused on the daily and weekly goals. Everyone will have to report back to the group with progress reports. This reporting of results will allow you to step up your efforts in the event you fall behind.

A typical production schedule looks like this:

· **Week 1 -**

Monday: Assign all tasks and positions, review budget, set ticket sale targets, book the gym, book the DJ service, and book the teachers/chaperones.

Wednesday: Make posters and put them up, review dance sales pitch with all student council members, and prepare for first day of ticket sales on Thursday.

· **Week 2 -**

Monday: Get a progress report on ticket sales, feedback from student council on word of mouth campaign, prepare radio ad for play on the announcements on Tuesday & Thursday.

Wednesday: Get a ticket sales report, monitor vibe of student body, put up dance company posters.

· **Week 3 -**

Monday: Get a progress report on ticket sales, send out e-mail notice to everyone on your list, and review production schedule and see if there are any loose ends, get student council to start pushing the dance harder. Spread some additional hype about the dance, hand out flyers.

Wednesday: Get a progress report on ticket sales, review if there are any loose ends.

· **Week 4 -**

Monday: Get a progress report on ticket sales, try and get all the student council members to go out into the halls at lunch to remind people to buy the tickets, add an extra push to the announcements, send out one last e-mail, and update the school administration.

Wednesday: Get a progress report on ticket sales, review and reconfirm everyone's jobs at the dance, sell, sell, sell...

Day of Dance: Write up a firm schedule for the day of the dance that includes all of the event details, jobs, and responsibilities. For example, the decorations team moves in at 3:30pm to decorate, the Production manager oversees the decorations and greets the dance company. The ticket, concession, and coat check booths should be set up and everyone should meet back at least ½ hour before the doors open for a final briefing. Everyone should be at their stations, do their jobs and the assistant production manager should be the liaison between the DJ company and the student council (one person only as the contact person). Make sure the Dj company gets assistance with moving out their equipment, the clean up is done and the doors are locked.

The Day after the Dance:

Do a post show meeting with the entire student council and discuss what went right and what went wrong. It is important to document this information for future student councils to use and include it in a meeting log. Mistakes will happen and the most important thing is that everyone learns from them and that it doesn't happen again.

I would strongly suggest that you use this as a guideline only. Your production schedule should be designed and tailored to your specific needs.

5) There are a couple of essential aspects to promotions:

- a) **Word of Mouth...** Everyone on the student council must be able to sell the features and benefits of the dance. This includes Grade 9's through 12's. Create a sales pitch that everyone on the student council will use. They have to be excited about the show and tell as many people as they can. This is called word of mouth advertising. Every student council member should recite the pitch before the next meeting, that way the pitch is consistent. It can be as simple as saying, "did you hear about what's planned for the next dance? Oh man, we hired a company with the biggest set up in Eastern Washington." You may want to get the student council to change up their pitch every week, and release a little bit more information as you get closer to the event. The second week, you may say, "hey, did you know that the DJ company is bringing in a 15,000 watt concert sound system?" or "we added a laser show to the package", or "I heard from a friend that just hired this company that their Dj's beat mix the hottest R&B and hip hop." "You should see how we are decorating the school gym." The main thing is that everyone on council spends some time promoting the dance and spreading the hype. Last, but not least, always push people to get their ticket before the dance sells out. This will create rushes of ticket sales.
- b) **Flyers and Posters...** Book a time after school for all the student council members to make posters and put them up. This is a great team builder. With the amount of computer technology available today, you can generate your own flyers and go to a digital printer for 20 - 18" x 12" full color copies (costs around \$50). The prints can probably be donated. Full color is preferable. Include the date, time, place and features of the show. Also, put up the Dance Company flyers if they have them. If you don't have a graphics artist, advertise on the morning announcements that the student council is looking for a graphics artist. Offer two free dance tickets for the poster design. Hold a contest...
- Flyers are another great way to promote the dances. Full color is best, and if the student council distributed 100 to 200 quality flyers advertising the dance, it helps create hype. Another way to get the flyers out is to put them in everyone's lockers.
- c) **Announcements...** There is nothing better than the morning or afternoon announcements to generate interest about the dance. Everyone will hear the announcement and if it is professionally done, this can be the single biggest marketing tool. Try and get it on as much as possible. If you can use different music in the background (i.e. Hip hop, R&B, Dance). Also, as the dance gets closer, a student council person should go on after the Radio ad and give an update, like... We've sold over 300 tickets and they are going quickly, so get yours today before they sell out.
- d) **E-mail...** Yes, that's right. This is perhaps the most untapped marketing area. Take down everyone's e-mail address when they buy a ticket. Create an e-mail mail flyer to advertise the dance. This e-mail can be as simple as digitizing the poster you make. Once you have everyone's e-mail address, you can e-mail them about the next dance, with special ticket prices, promotions and even include sponsorship space that you can sell.
- e) **Lunch Hour events...** This is mandatory. Cool music that is going to be played at the dance, combined with something to attract their attention is a really good idea (like a lighting effect). Try and make your ticket sale display as interesting as possible.
- f) **Give aways...** Don't wait until the dance to do your give aways and prizes. Offer a free cd with the first 50 tickets. This gets people committed to going to the dance. Of course they will bring their friends with them.
- g) **Early Bird Specials...** Offer a staggered ticket price... \$5.00 the first week, \$6.00 the 2nd week and \$7.00 the last week. If the ticket sales are slow, try and offer up some specials... buy one and get one free. This increases the volume and costs you next to nothing.

Other important notes and ideas:

- 1) Tickets - Get the tickets printed by a professional company with an anti-counterfeit technology. Order enough tickets to cover your maximum capacity. Start your ticket numbers at 100. This will give the perception that there are 100 people coming to the dance already.
- 2) Ticket Display - Do a ticket display which shows the amount of ticket sales every week. This can be a bar graph that starts at 100 and goes up to 500. Every day, you should fill in the bar graph in 25 ticket intervals according to the amount of ticket sales. This will let students know when it is close to selling out and this is an important tool for your student council so they know how they are doing.
- 3) Ticket Sales - Try using innovative marketing techniques to sell more tickets, especially at the beginning. Offer a free prize to the first 50 tickets sold. The more incentives, the better. Try doing a 2 for 1 ticket sale; offer an early bird ticket on the first 100... Your job is to sell tickets, so be creative.
- 4) Sponsorship - Sponsorship is a great way to get free giveaways and are essential tools to promoting and adding value to any dance. The best way to get sponsorship is to approach local businesses that are nearby. This can include fast food, clothing stores, electronics, printers, and music stores, virtually anyone that caters to the high school market.

Create a one page presentation that states the features of your sponsorship advertising plan and explain the benefits. For example, I would call a clothing store (speak to the manager only) and say that I want to book an appointment to review a sponsorship proposal with you. Once you are in front of them, tell the manager how you will be promoting to the most outgoing part of the student body, you want to support local business, you will increase their exposure to their target market at a very low cost, add them to your e-mail lists as a sponsor, give prizes out, shout outs on the microphone at the dance, put up banners, etc.... Ask them to start tracking their sales by finding out how their customers heard about them. You would be surprised by how much they might be willing to give. Be sure to ask for enough and don't give your advertising away for free... its worth something. Who knows, maybe the clothing sponsor will pay for a fashion show at one of the dances.
- 5) Special Effects - Buy a special effect light for the ticket booth to generate attention and impact. We sell them for as low as \$100.00 + taxes per and it would make a huge difference.
- 6) Theatre Department Your theatre department is a potentially great resource if you can add it to the dance production. Meet up with the Theatre Instructor and ask them if they would be interested in creating an entrance effect for each dance to change up the look of the gym. This can be very fun and make the show that much more interesting.
- 7) Props - There are tons of props and decoration ideas that can be used to dress up the room. I saw giant, 6 ft. inflatable pumpkins for sale at Halloween for \$60.00 and there were Christmas ones too. These are inexpensive and are reusable. If you create a props and decorations budget you can devise all types of ways to make your dances more visually appealing.
- 8) Sell Glow Sticks - Try selling Glow Sticks or different products at your next show. You will generate extra revenues.

Themes

- 1) Underwater - bubble machines, H2O's, water towers,
- 2) Glow Party - Lots of UV Cannons (black lights), glow sticks and ropes, laser show.
- 3) Air Band - this is a talent contest where people lip synch. Very fun and cool.
- 4) Disco - easy to do and the student body *generally* likes disco a lot.
- 5) Space theme - Use black poly sheeting to cover the walls and put up white stars. Use Black light to make the stars glow.
- 6) Entrance Effect - Create an entrance way to the dance with props. Most of all try and put some extra effort into the dance and create some excitement.
- 7) Fashion Show - get a clothing store to sponsor a fashion show at your next dance. Use your student body as models. Have the clothing company or companies pay for the expense of the equipment and staging.

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