

Contributing Factors

by Jeff Garbutt

Let's look at some of the "contributing factors" there may be impeding people from being tempted to join us:

*Square dance attire:

Whether we like it or not, our square dance attire does "scare off" some potential dancers. We need to be seen as an activity that everyone can do - even those who don't want to dress up.

*Takes too long to learn:

Although this is not universally agreed upon as being a problem, it is currently being looked at by organisations all over the world, especially Callerlab. So watch out for more news on that front.

*Average age of square dancers:

Yes this is a problem. If we could entice more young people back into the movement - then we have a future.

But it goes further than this - I believe we need young leaders (*especially callers*) as well. Now it may be a coincidence, but we had our highest proportion of young dancers at a time when our callers were also quite young. As our callers got older - so did the dancers.

It may be a bit simplistic to say so - but callers tend to attract dancers from their own age group. So if we are to have a diversity of age groups in our dancers - we also need a diversity of age groups in our callers.

*Must have a partner:

This has been our standard solution to another problem - "we get more ladies than men". So instead of trying to solve one problem by creating another problem - why don't we find a better solution to the original problem?

In any case I've noticed that many single ladies do not always stay single. Are we excluding potential male dancers by excluding the lone female dancer?

*Competition from line dancing:

Let's get real - this is the biggest single challenge that square dancing has had in the 1990's.

But let's look at it as an opportunity - not a threat. That is because line dancing has brought a whole lot of people into the "dance movement" in general who may have never considered square dancing.

If we were to market ourselves effectively - we may be able to entice some over.

But why would people want to switch from lines to square you might say? Well consider the following:

*Line dancing may certainly take less time to learn, but some people will soon want to try something a bit more challenging.

*Solo dancing is nice - but some people may soon want to dance with others, maybe even in "teams".

*I get the impression from talking to some people that line dancing doesn't promote the fun and friendship that square dancing does. (*This is just an impression based upon a small sample - so it could be wrong*).

So there is scope to "entice" some of those people over who may be wanting "something more". (*I don't think we should "steal" them - just attract those who would have "dropped out"*.)

But we have to be geared up to attract these people - which means making square dancing as a more attractive alternative than any other activity.

Of course there are more "contributing factors". And if you are serious about the future of square dancing maybe you can think of some - then maybe together we can all start to find solutions to the problems we face.

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