

SEPTEMBER 2010



▪ recruit ▪ promote ▪ maintain ▪

The BIG push!

Get Happy

Get Healthy

Get Square Dancing

IMPLEMENTING THE BIG PUSH

Our slogan for 2010 **GET HAPPY – GET HEALTHY – GET SQUARE DANCING**

All Clubs running a Free Open Evening/Taster Session preferably weeks commencing 6th or 13th September

All Clubs starting Newcomers' Sessions as soon after their Open Evening as is practical

Press coverage – National & Local

Press releases

Advertising – National & Local

Media – National & Local

Web sites – National and Local

Help with poster and advertisement design

Finance

RPM Booklets

Ask Me About Square Dancing - Badges

Evaluation of success

THE REASONS WHY

The RPM Committee realises that Square Dancing continues to decline in spite of previous efforts to reverse the trend. Any measure of membership chosen shows a steady and inexorable reduction in Dancer numbers over many years. Clubs as members of the Association have reduced in numbers from 235 in 1998 to 160 in 2009. Magazine sales have fallen from 1500 to 400 in the same period. However, while this is an overall National view there are some Clubs that have continued to grow or maintain their numbers at a viable level. These Clubs have been successful because they have recruited new Dancers on a regular basis; and as a general rule it can be said that those Clubs now in difficulties have failed to recruit.

It is the intention of the RPM Committee to try and reverse this National decline by persuading all Clubs to recruit new Dancers. If possible all Clubs including those dancing Plus, Advanced and Challenge need to be involved. They are also in decline because of insufficient numbers of graduating Dancers wishing to progress through the Programmes.

WHEN?

September 2010 has been chosen as the month of the Big Push. Why then? Because this is the traditional recruiting time of year. Everybody goes out and joins things, so potential new Dancers are likely to be looking for a Dancing class to start. People - more Ladies than Men - are interested in dancing as a result of the T.V. coverage, and are looking for something to do together. Once Men have seen Square Dancing it is easier to persuade them to continue as it may appear simpler than Ballroom dancing. The RPM Committee want to co-ordinate all recruitment for 2010 into September so that Square Dancing as a whole can benefit from the advantages of a burst of National and Local Advertising and Press coverage.

FREE OPEN EVENINGS We ask that all Clubs taking part in the Big Push run a **Free Open Evening** or **Taster Session**, open to anyone to come along and try out Square Dancing. Please publicise this session locally. RPM will advertise Nationally and contact details for each Club will be listed on the Website www.uksquaredancing.com We will not publish details of the venue as you will want to have an idea of how many people are coming along. Interested parties can contact you to reserve their place and to receive full details of the evening.

We would ask that your Club holds this event during week commencing 6th or 13th September. We would suggest it is held at your normal Club premises and that you make it a party night for your Members and aim to attract non-dancers. Ask your Caller to put together a Programme of easy mixers. Have Club Members available to welcome visitors and make sure they dance with them. Have leaflets about Square Dancing printed to hand out; samples of leaflets will be available on the RPM Group's Resources Page of www.uksquaredancing.com . Also remember to have advertising for your Newcomers' Sessions available to hand out.

Perhaps you could decorate the hall and lay on tea and biscuits. We would suggest that your ladies wear a variety of dress - we have had reports that in some cases introducing newcomers to everyone dressed in full Square Dance attire at the outset is off putting.

If no one comes you will have lost nothing – you were going to pay for the hall anyway. Come what may you will have had a fun evening with and for your Dancers.

Please have details of your Open Evening ready by mid July so that we can give Open Evenings full publicity. We will need to have details of your main Contact – Telephone Number and Email address. On or about 7th July RPM will email you a reminder to ask you to send the information through to rpm@224.eclipse.co.uk the following week.

NEWCOMERS' SESSIONS – RECRUITMENT OF BEGINNERS

Please start your Newcomers' Sessions as soon after your Open Evening as possible. Again, please have full details of your intended recruitment drive, including posters, ready by mid July so that we can give these sessions full publicity. On or about 7th July RPM will email you a reminder to ask you to send the information through to rpm@224.eclipse.co.uk the following week.

Prepare your newspaper advertising and articles to appear in good time for your Sessions. Line up your local TV and Radio so that they are ready to publicise your start date.

Have Club Members standing by to distribute Posters and Flyers.

NATIONAL PRESS COVERAGE

RPM undertook a National survey of reading material to discover which Newspapers and Magazines are read within the Square Dance Community. The underlying logic for this, is that existing Dancers read material that is of interest to them and therefore it will be of interest to like-minded potential new Dancers. It is RPM's plan to have articles, letters and/or advertising in the most popular National outlets inviting Readers to come Square Dancing. All articles and advertisements will point readers in the direction of the website www.uksquaredancing.com where we will have details of Free Tasters and Newcomers' Sessions.

Within the Journalist's scheme of things Dancing, whatever the variety, is not high priority. It is not News. What sells newspapers and magazines are Human Interest Stories So any attempts to get articles published must be written within the Human interest orbit. Therefore, to get material to put into National publications, RPM asked all Square Dancers to let them have details of any Human interest stories.

The Press want something different. Think how often you've read the same story with only the Characters/Dates changed? The aim is to catch Readers attention and interest? Will they want to learn more? Something along the lines of e.g. Square Dancing saved my Marriage or How I taught my Dog to Dance, or Square Dancers raise £xx for charity etc.

Publications these days are mainly "personality" based i.e. articles by or about so called "stars". Often the only content from the readership is in the letters and most of these refer to things readers have enjoyed in past publications. Therefore to provide acceptable editorial/letters has not been an easy task. We have absolutely no guarantee that any of our articles or letters will be published

If you see any reference to Square Dancing in the National media please let us know. We are particularly interested in the following publications, which proved to be the most popular "read" with Square Dancers:

Good Housekeeping

Yours

Take A Break

Saga Magazine

Woman's Weekly

Daily Mail

Daily Telegraph

Our thanks to our contributors

LOCAL PRESS COVERAGE

Co-ordinate all your press activity through one person. Whenever you deal with the press, and other media, make it clear you are talking about Square Dancing, as opposed to any other form of dance.

Write on a regular basis, but only if you have something interesting to say. In this way you will become known as the “expert” on Square Dancing.

Keep a scrap book of your articles and a note of which produced the best results – if you find a winning formula repeat it.

Always remember, that newspapers have different priorities from us, and what we consider important sometimes does not even rate a mention. The trick is probably to find a 'slow news day' when they are looking for something to fill the paper.

Invite the local press to your events – they may even send a photographer.

Many local newspapers have a section for club reports and would welcome regular news from you - remember to keep it positive.

Again you should look to use Human Interest Stories to gain publicity for your Club. Your local paper will be interested because it is about local people and will be particularly interested if you can provide photographs.

Perhaps details of a Square Dance party that was held to celebrate a special event; raising money for charity; perhaps something interesting that has happened to some of your Dancers. Never forget that the aim of your submission is to get publicity for your Club and for your recruitment of new dancers.

Often human interest stories start life within the local press and are then picked up by the “Nationals.” If you can attach your story to a National event/story then you may get some coverage.

When writing for several local papers make sure that there is a local angle and word each article in a slightly different way e.g. for one you could stress the venue, for another the local Club involved.

Do not assume that a small advert will guarantee editorial coverage, however, it is always worth telling the Editorial Team at the newspaper if you have an advertisement running.

Another contact to consider is the local News Agency – you should find this in Yellow Pages or on the Internet. News Agencies gather information from various sources and are often eager for articles as they get paid for selling news.

If you are contacted by your local press try to respond positively. Never say “no comment” if you need time to check facts make a note of who called you and the ‘phone number and call back as soon as possible.

Keep your communications precise and simple – do not write a “Dear Sir” to introduce your article – label it “Press Release” – see next section.

Please let us know of your success.

GET HAPPY – GET HEALTHY – GET SQUARE DANCING

PRESS RELEASES – *who to send to:* - Send Press Releases to newspapers, magazines, local TV and radio stations and to Community Newswire, www.communitynewswire.press.net (a joint project run by the Press Association and the Media Trust. Clubs can send their press releases via this service to be picked up by the National press)

How to Write a Press Release

The purpose of a press release is to give journalists information that is useful, accurate and interesting. A good press release should answer all of the “W” questions (who, what, when, why and where) about your Club or coming event. The local media may pick your press release and run it in their publications verbatim, however, they may edit it or may incorporate details in another feature. In every case try to write your submission as you would like to have it reported. To do this you must write your piece with the media in mind.

- * Keep it concise
- * Make every word count
- * Avoid jargon
- * Stick to fact and avoid fluff
- * Proof read your work properly – check your spelling and grammar - get someone else to read it too.

Structuring your Press Release

Every journalist sees dozens of press releases every day. It is important that your press release looks professionally produced and follows the following structure. This will allow any journalist to make a judgment on the strength of your piece immediately. As such, press releases are written to an easy to follow formula.

Firstly say what it is: At the very top of the page, the title PRESS RELEASE should be spelled out in all capitals, centred and in bold.

Grab their attention: Below the title is the HEADLINE. It should also be bold and centred. The heading is a one line description of the event. It should be short and snappy. It should be designed to capture any reader’s imagination, impressing them enough to read on and help the journalist to imagine the piece in print.

Facts and figures: The next two paragraphs present the useful, accurate and interesting BODY of the press release. This is a couple of paragraphs containing all the “Ws” who, what, why, when where. The first paragraph should contain in brief detail what the press release is about. The second paragraph explains in detail: What the event is for - Who the event is for - Why the event is happening – When the event is happening - Where the event is happening (including the post code for sat-nav users) – Why people should care.

About you: The final paragraph is a brief SUMMARY of the release and further information about your Club and, the all important, Contact details.

Centre these marks “####” at the bottom of the page to indicate the end of your release.

Please include details of the National Website www.uksquaredancing.com on all submissions.

NATIONAL ADVERTISING

RPM are currently negotiating advertising rates – the amount we spend will be reliant on the amount of money we are able to raise. Please let us know when you see examples of our National advertising

LOCAL ADVERTISING

All of our Evaluations of successful recruitment tell us that local Newspaper advertising is the best method for attracting new Dancers. This is not to say that other methods such as Bringing your Friends, advertising in the Parish Magazine, Hoe-downs etc. are ineffective. These other methods should be seen as an adjunct to Press Advertising. The more advertising you can do the better. If you have limited funds to meet all your recruitment costs then RPM advice is to spend it all on the Newspaper advertising.

The rules for poster layout (see section on poster design) apply equally to newspaper advertising. Keep it clear and simple and only say what is necessary.

National MEDIA

RPM are providing National TV and Radio with details of September recruitment. We have no guarantee of National publicity; please tell us if you hear or see mention of Square Dancing.

Local MEDIA

Keep a record of Who's Who in your local radio and TV area so that you know who to approach. Forward planning is essential – radio and TV stations need to know well in advance if you wish them to become involved.

Local Radio often has a “What's on” slot or community desk, and likes to be involved in community activity. They will often promote coming events.

If you feel you may be interviewed on local TV or Radio practise interviews with friends – Square Dancers may help you think of questions and answers. Other friends who know nothing about Square Dancing can tell you what they have learned from your answers.

Keep your answers short – twenty seconds is about right. The interviewer is not the master of the subject – you are, but he may have a little knowledge. Some of the questions will be as a direct result of your answers. Don't let the interviewer side track you by his curiosity or lack of knowledge – especially in a live interview. Remember you are there to publicise your recruitment.

Decide on the points you wish to get across – write them down. Decide on the most important point you wish to make and highlight it. Take your list with you to the interview and go into the interview determined to get your main point across. Often radio interviews are conducted over the telephone so ensure you give a telephone number where you will be available.

With broadcast interviews there is little difference between local radio and TV. Both are working to tight deadlines with enormous restrictions on space. Items rarely last more than two minutes, which equates in tests to one side of A4 paper.

Prepare copies of contact details on Club headed paper and take it with you to hand out wherever you go.

Some local TV stations offer facilities for publicising events.

NATIONAL WEBSITE

The National Website www.uksquaredancing.com is an integral part of the Big Push. Chris Allen is always very supportive. Chris will be regularly updating the website with details of Clubs taking part in the Big Push, and their Free Taster and Newcomers' Sessions

Photographs on the Web Site: Square Dancing has suffered over the years because it has failed to find an iconic image so that it is instantly recognisable as Square Dancing. In other words something to give the brand some shape. To remedy this the RPM Committee are running an international photographic competition to find the best image of Square Dancing. It is hoped that this competition will result in some images that can be used in advertising throughout the Big Push and beyond. The winning photographs will be published on the web site in June and may be used by all Clubs.

LOCAL WEB SITES

All Club websites should also be up to date to cater for the Searcher whose interest has been aroused by National/Local advertising. We cannot assume that all the information people seek on individual Clubs will be available via www.uksquaredancing.com so clubs should ensure that their website displays current information relevant to the Big Push and Recruitment etc,. Please also display details of any other recruiting Clubs in your area.

Do a web search for local sites where you can display information about your Club and your new sessions. This should be done about 6 weeks before your start date.

HELP WITH POSTER/ADVERTISING DESIGN

All posters and flyers should be clear, simple and only say what is necessary. For recruitment advertising all that is required is DANCING - RECRUITING - PHONE No.

You can add :- Where it is, When it is, How much it is, etc,.

The 'simplicity' rule applies equally to Posters and Press adverts with 2 provisos:-

- a). Press Adverts need white space around them to make them stand out from the clutter of the page. Think oval shapes and/or thick borders.
- b). A 'rule of thumb' for posters is A5 for Handbills, A4 for Shop Windows and A3 for Driving past.

Top Tip – always use a 'phone number in the same locality as the hall in which you are going to hold your newcomers' sessions. Two Clubs have told us that they used one local and one out of area telephone number on their advertising and the latter did not get any response.

If you do not have the ability to produce a poster yourselves RPM have designed a poster which can be adapted for use by your Club (see Page 9). RPM can personalise this for you. Send your request to rpdesign@btopenworld.com

FINANCE

The RPM Committee has sourced funds for the Big Push from both the BAASDC and Callers Club, and are promoting a Grand Prize Money Draw. All the Federations have been asked to run fund raising Dances but to date only the London Federation has responded. An application has been made to the Lottery Fund for a grant and the acknowledgement of receipt has been received. We expect a decision this month. This grant could represent up to 50% of the funding available, so a rejection will have a severe impact on the spending plans of the RPM Committee. However it is the agreed intention that all the available funds will be shared out equally between recruiting Clubs. Although a balance still has to be struck between the value and cost of any National advertising and the funds needed locally for each individual Club. Only when the full and final total of funds available is known, can the decisions as to where to best spend the money, be taken. The RPM Committee are re-approaching their existing Donors to ask if they could reconsider their initial donation with a view to increasing it. Clubs who received Lottery funding in 2008/9 have been asked if they are in a position to pay anything back to RPM.

We would ask that Clubs taking part in the Big Push keep all receipts so that we can justify any payments we are able to make to the Club. We will contact you as soon as we have further information.

In the meantime your Club may wish to source its own funding. If you approach your local Community and Voluntary Service (CVS) they should be able to tell you what grants are available in your area.

It is also worth speaking to your Local Authority/Council. Many have Grants Schemes - it is just a case of finding and speaking to the right person. Before you write in speak to this person and establish the correct procedure and any relevant documentation you may have to submit.

RPM BOOKLETS

A wealth of additional information is on the RPM Group's Resources Page of www.uksquaredancing.com where you can read and/or print off various booklets including:

- How to Market Square and Round Dancing
- How to Approach the Press
- How to Recruit
- How to Raise Funds for Recruitment
- How to Retain Dancers
- How to Arrange the First Night

ASK ME ABOUT SQUARE DANCING (BADGES)

Please find 2 free badges enclosed – please wear them and have information about Square Dancing to hand.


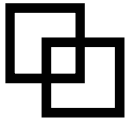
Additional badges may be obtained at a cost of £2 each (to include postage and packing) from Mike Rhodes
Tel: 01623 648676 Email rhodesmike@hotmail.co.uk Mike is also happy to provide badges to your own design; please contact him for a quotation.

REPORTING BACK

All Clubs participating in the Big Push will be asked to complete an evaluation form so that we may measure success.

SAMPLE POSTER

If you would like an A4 poster personalised for your Club email the details to rpdesign@btopenworld.com



**Get Happy
Get Healthy
Get Square Dancing!**

Beginners' Group starting

Monday 6th September 2010

8.0 pm at St Peter's
Church Hall, Greenford

phone Susie or Simon on 01280 816940
www. xxxxxxxx.com

www.uksquaredancing.com

Your club details here