

# HOW TO BUILD A CLUB

If you think it's inevitable that square dancing is destined to decline, ask any member of **Frontier Squares** from Milford, Ohio – they'll offer a different opinion. We've been experiencing the Good Ol' Days for the past three years!

Using our Marketing/Advertising strategy, and working together as a team, our club achieved the following:

- **2015 - 102 new visitors attended the first three weeks of lessons. On the 15th week of class, 51 students were still attending. 11 squares were on the floor that night – 47 new dancers plus retreads were dancing with 41 Angels. Ten months later we graduated 32 new dancers plus 7 retreads strengthened their skills. We are happy to report that 31 of those new dancers still remain active club members in 2016.**
- **2016 - 117 people (calls or emails) expressing an interest in square dancing. 82 of the 117 came to class in the first three weeks of lessons and we had 50 new dancers on week three. For the first 16 weeks of class we averaged 44 new dancers, 7 retreads and 65 angels. We have had up to 14 squares on class night. 36 new dancers graduated.**
- **2017 – 78 people called or emailed regarding lessons (48 of those 78 saw signs). 61 of those came at least one night and we currently have 40 students.**

**Note** – There are also 46 people that could not attend on Tuesday nights, couldn't start lessons in January or started lessons but had to drop out for various reasons. They want information on our next class.

## How Did We Do It?

The Frontier Squares' Board agreed with Anthony Robbins - "If we continued to do what we've always done, we'd continue to get what we've always gotten." We unanimously agreed to change our approach and in 2015 spent \$500 on advertising. We purchased 100 re-usable yard signs for \$300 and the rest was used for other advertising. The signs were bright yellow with black lettering that simply read:

A yellow rectangular sign with a black border. The text on the sign is centered and reads: "Learn to Square Dance" on the first line, "Phone #" on the second line.

(We don't have to add the area code so we can make the phone number bigger)

**2015** - Although a variety of advertising methods were employed, (calls to former students and members; business cards placed in plastic holders at chiropractors, fitness centers, etc.; FREE Chili Supper; flyers – including tear-offs; local paper ads, etc.) the most effective technique by far was the method we used to display **YARD SIGNS** + word-of-mouth by those who saw the signs.

**2016** - We focused on our “Yard Sign” advertising strategy purchasing another 100 re-usable yard signs for \$300 and offered a FREE Chili Supper again the first night of class.

The initial call is very important – make the caller feel welcome. One couple handled the phone calls, gathering contact and marketing information. We asked how they heard about our class or where they saw a sign, so we could determine which marketing strategy worked. We emailed two class reminders and an invitation to a FREE Chili Supper (the first night of class) to those who had given us contact information.

**THE KEY** - Our Marketing/Advertising Chairman developed a geographic plan of neighboring communities within approximately a 15 mile radius of our club location. Milford, OH is a typical community located on the outskirts of Cincinnati – with city/suburbs to the west and north and rural areas to our east and south. He provided a detailed map identifying strategic locations where signs were to be placed at heavy traffic intersections where there was either a stoplight or a stop sign.

**2015** - 25 signs were distributed each weekend for six weeks leading up to our lessons that started in January.

- Each weekend we concentrated on a different neighboring community. We recommend concentrating on your own community twice during that six week period.
- Working in groups of two, signs were placed in the designated locations on Friday afternoon/evening and retrieved on Sunday evening (48 hours later). Municipalities and townships are far less likely to confiscate signs on the weekend.
- Typically, three hours were spent putting the signs out with another two hours picking them up. Although we did not reimburse the members for their mileage (gas), it is something to be considered.
- We did not send signs home with members to place wherever they wished – unless they lived in a “high traffic” location.

**2016** - Approximately six weeks before class, signs were distributed using two different methods this year:

- Volunteers distributed the signs in their community using the method above
- We took a chance and left signs out all the time at “high traffic” locations.

We lost over 50% of our signs (as expected) over the course of the advertising campaign - a small price to pay considering the results. **BE PREPARED TO LOSE SIGNS!** Note – Keep a list of the signs. Number them and identify their locations (important when it’s time to retrieve the signs).

- **We believe these 6 key ingredients have attributed to our success: (all of them are important)**

- 1. Vision**

- Our mission is to “*Foster the art of square dancing and improve dancers’ skills, with a strong focus on promoting and expanding square dancing within the community.*”

- 2. Leadership and Organization play a critical role**

- group decisions (consensus) – approximately 14 people attend board meetings consisting of officers and committee chairs. All club members
- are welcome to attend.
- “open-minded” board willing to try something new and work as a team
- Pre-session and Review Session for students
- computer squares or mixer system
- open to suggestions
- we are willing to help other clubs

- 3. Friendliness - Our visitors feel WELCOME!**

- our BIGGEST asset

- 4. Great callers** – We’re lucky to have Jack Pladdys and Pam Courts as class instructors.

- starting the first night, class is fun and energetic – they attend a dance!
- our leadership welcomes their input and suggestions

- 5. Angel participation and support**

- distribute signs
- it takes a village to pull off a Chili Supper for 159 people
- willing to dance with solos and mentor couples
- encourage students

- 6. Marketing/Advertising**

- successful sign campaign

**NOTE:** Most of the “ingredients” listed above were already a part of Frontier Squares’ DNA. All that was needed was VISION and an EFFECTIVE MARKETING STRATEGY. As a result, our club has exploded with growth and enthusiasm.

2015’s graduating class produced additional members willing to “give back” to promote this year’s class. By adding more and more new dancers each year that are willing to help, there is no limit to the size club you can build. In this report we have shared what has worked for us – take what you like and leave the rest.

Do you believe this is a “fluke”? Check with us next year!

Barry & Peggy Carney, President

Dale & Cindy Bennett, Marketing/Advertising

Website - [frontiersquaresohio.com](http://frontiersquaresohio.com)