

ORGANIZING FOR SUCCESS: Crucial aspects of building a strong infrastructure for your dance
Leda Shapiro & Eric Black

This session is designed to help organizers of any committee — old or new — get ourselves organized. Topics will include how to create a successful organizational structure, establish a mission statement, what to spend money on, how to make serving on a committee a fun and rewarding experience. We will also discuss how to successfully transition when the old guard retires and new volunteers step up to steward the dance. An information sheet will be provided for giving performers an idea of what is expected of them at each dance.

OUTLINE: ORGANIZING FOR SUCCESS (Leda Shapiro & Eric Black)

We only have an hour; here are important topics but we can't cover it all:

- What is your Hot Burning Question for this session? What fits into this hour?
- why form a dance organization? What is The Goal? (Mission Statement)
- general issues vs. special issues for dance organizations
- types of organizational structures; what makes sense for US?
- divide and conquer: committees, Champions, meetings (ouch!)
- where should we spend money?
- how much artistic control? financial control?
- case studies: BACDS, CA Dance Co-op, FolkWorks

Mission Statement

- short & sweet
- not too narrow but not vague and overly General
- makes it easier to focus on the goal and avoid splintering distractions
- examples of mission statements (BACDS, CA Dance Co-op, FolkWorks, others)

General Issues vs. dance-specific

- politics, inter-personal conflicts WILL HAPPEN; take them in stride
- meetings: the bane of civilization; must run meetings efficiently
- volunteers are the life-blood of the organization; value them!
- insurance, financial cushion

Considerations when Choosing Organizational Structure

- small vs. large, informal vs. formal
- organization can smooth a bumpy income curve, individuals would personally lose \$
- often driven by need for liability insurance
- incorporate? Educational non-profit [501(c)-3 corporation]?
- successful organization can have large cash flow, need controls & visibility
- recommend having By-Laws, written procedures. Don't just fly seat-of-your-pants
- "Directors' Insurance" rider on home/renter policy; may require formal organization

Divide and Conquer: Committees! Delegate!

- Many Hands Make The Lights Work
- each goal/event must have an owner/Champion or nothing will get done
- dance series: manager, door, booking, sound; see other sessions

- publicity, both print and online
- organizational: Treasurer, Officers (Chair, President) if incorporated

Recruiting

- there will be turnover/churn; count on it, exploit it! This Too Shall Pass
- relatively easy to cultivate performers (see other sessions)
- without the "behind-the-scenes" people there will be no dance
- public appeals don't get response
- button-hole individuals who appear to have personal stake/involvement
- training path: passing on the Institutional Memory
- let go of the apron strings; when the torch is passed, let it go

Should the organization purchase/own equipment?

- think about the Mission Statement
- depending on individuals vs. significant investment, maintenance, security
- sound gear
- instruments (usually pianos/keyboards)
- hall equipment (fans, mats, "portable" dance floors, etc.)
- what is spent here can't be spent elsewhere (e.g. for musicians & callers)

How much artistic control? Financial control?

- centralized bookings vs. independent events
- setting uniform prices, policies, etc.
- goes back to Mission Statement and choice of organizational structure

Infrastructure case studies

- BACDS: large org (# people, # events, geographic spread)
- CA Dance Co-op
- FolkWorks

ATTENDEE NOTES:

Dance organizations are groups of people, include politics, egos, power, etc.

"The politics are so huge because the stakes are so small."

Define a purposeful vision statement.

And a mission statement that defines how we'll achieve our vision.

General call for volunteers doesn't work.

Look at who your dancers are, ones who have investment in what we're doing, a regular dancer.

Ask people to do a little bit at a time, rather than a bunch at once.

Look for natural organizers, and couples are even better.

Detailed-oriented people to pay attention to many things.

Direct them in ways that will be helpful.

Grow core of helpful people outside the board.

Has to be a champion to take the event on as theirs to own to make it happen.

Action items need names attached to it, personal responsibility.

Have a date associated with a task.

Don't wait until due date to check in, and this will help keep someone involved -- help remove barriers for them.

Reporting is part of the task.

Contra pow-wow, dance growth evening

Invite everyone in our community to come together and plan what we'd like [our org] to do.

"Dance growth committee"

Potluck dinner

How to pass on organizational memory?

Jeff Spero and Jeff Hudson wrote a book to do this: "Southern California Twirls"

Institutional memory: structure is important, meeting minutes, job descriptions, policy motions, need to have a master document that we keep current.

Standing rules and procedures.

Archivist is a good idea as a position. Collect things from the past (and current) and make things available and searchable.

[Issues from participants] How do you wrangle run-away committees that won't communicate with the board, but whose decisions affect the organization? Define minimum set of details we need from [sub-orgs]. [Assess a] fine for failure to file reports.

[Some sub-orgs have] their own bank accounts, but that can't be done for our nonprofit status. Our treasurer needs to be a signer on their bank accounts.

Notes taken by Erik Erhardt