THINK OUTSIDE THE DANCE HALL!

STOP RECRUITING "NEW" DANCERS

START CREATING EXPERIENCES PEOPLE WANT TO TRY

Most people don't wake up thinking, I wish I could learn to square dance. They may not know modern square dancing exists, may have outdated ideas about it, or may simply never have considered it. Our job is to change that.

The most effective recruitment activities give people a reason to be curious, an opportunity to experience the fun, and an easy next step toward taking lessons. Instead of asking strangers to commit to a series of classes, invite them to do something enjoyable that introduces them to square dancing.

You don't need a huge budget, a professional marketing team, or dozens of volunteers. You need imagination, a willingness to experiment, and a club that's ready to welcome newcomers. This guide offers practical ideas clubs can adapt to their communities, budgets, and available volunteers.

1. Create an Experience, Not Another Open House

Traditional open houses can work, but they often depend on people already being interested enough to walk through the door. Creative events give people a more compelling reason to show up.

Square Dance in 15 Minutes

Offer a short, energetic introduction at a community festival, farmers market, street fair, or local event. Invite passersby to join a few simple calls with a caller and other participants.

- Keep it short, lively, and easy to join.
- Use contemporary music that appeals to the event's audience.
- Display a sign: "Had fun? Learn to do more. Beginner lessons start [date]."
- Have a friendly volunteer available to answer questions.

Trivia, Treats & Twirls

Host a casual social night with trivia, snacks, music, and a short square dance demonstration or participation activity.

- Invite friends, coworkers, neighbors, and couples.
- Include trivia about music, pop culture, and surprising facts about square dancing.
- Focus on fun and meeting people.
- End with an invitation to the next beginner lesson.

The Bring-a-Friend Challenge

Ask every club member to bring one person who has never tried square dancing to a special event. Make the event about friendship, not recruitment. Include a short dance experience, refreshments, and time to socialize Give members a simple invitation they can text or share on social media.

Music, Movement & a Little Mayhem

Partner with a local band, brewery, coffeehouse, community center, or outdoor concert organizer to offer a short square dance experience. Promote the activity as a fun way to move, laugh, and meet people—not as a dance-call lesson.

The No-Partner Needed Party

Many potential dancers assume they need a partner. Make it explicit in your promotion that individuals and couples are welcome. Build the event around meeting people, trying something new, and learning together. Make partner rotation and participation comfortable and inclusive.

2. Borrow Someone Else's Audience

You don't have to build an audience from scratch. Other organizations already bring people together for entertainment, socializing, and activities. Look for opportunities to introduce square dancing where people are already gathering.

Breweries and casual restaurants: Host a themed social night or short dance break.

Libraries: Offer a program about the evolution of square dancing, followed by a try-it activity.

Colleges and universities: Hold a pop-up event, welcome-week activity, or stress-relief social.

Parks and recreation departments: Offer a one-time introduction or short beginner series.

Employers: Pitch a team-building event that gets coworkers laughing and working together.

Community festivals: Run short demos with audience participation throughout the day.

Apartment communities: Offer a resident social with music, snacks, and a dance experience.

Fitness and wellness groups: Introduce square dancing as a social activity that combines movement, memory, and coordination.

3. Turn Curiosity into Participation

People are more likely to consider lessons after personally experiencing something enjoyable. Create opportunities for them to try square dancing without feeling they're committing to a major undertaking.

The 10-Minute Dance Experiment
Run a short, beginner-friendly experience where people already gather. Teach just enough for participants to experience the satisfaction of moving together. End while they're still having fun, then invite them to a longer try-it event or beginner class.

The Try-Something-New Night
Invite people to an evening with several short activities, such as a simple dance challenge, a music-guessing game, and a fun group activity. Square dancing becomes one of several experiences rather than an intimidating activity that requires prior interest.

The Friendly Competition
Create a team challenge where groups earn points for trying activities, solving a music quiz, or completing a simple dance sequence. Keep the emphasis on participation, not skill.

The Mystery Activity
Promote a "surprise social experience" with clues about music, teamwork, laughter, and movement. Reveal that participants will try modern square dancing, and keep the invitation playful rather than gimmicky. The goal is to get people to experience square dancing, not to overwhelm them with information about it.

4. Use Themes People Already Love

A theme gives people a reason to attend and makes your event easier to promote. It also creates opportunities for photographs and short videos that can generate interest in future lessons.

- **Throwback vs. Today:** Pair familiar music from different generations with a modern square dance experience. Challenge assumptions about what square dancing looks and sounds like today.

- **Boots, Beats & Beginner Dancing: Use a country-themed social night to attract people who enjoy country music, while showing that square dancing offers more than a traditional western image.Costumes, Couples & Chaos:** Host a Halloween, holiday, or other seasonal event with a short, accessible dance activity. Encourage groups of friends to attend together.
- **Date Night, Without the Dinner Bill:** Offer an affordable activity for couples and singles.
- **Meet Your Neighbors Night:** Create a community-building event for people new to the area.
- **The Great Group Challenge**: Organize a team event for coworkers or friends.
- **Parents' Night Out:** Offer a social experience for adults who want something different from the usual dinner or movie.
- **Dance Around the World:** Explore different music styles and the many forms of social dance.

Choose themes that fit your community. The point isn't to stage an elaborate production; it's to give people a compelling reason to try something new.

5. Make Social Media Part of the Experience

Social media should create curiosity and motivate people to attend. It doesn't have to explain square dancing in detail or teach people how to dance. The strongest content often shows real people having a good time, especially when the footage feels spontaneous and relatable.

Three Easy Videos Any Club Can Make

Video 1: "We Didn't Expect That!"
Film newcomers reacting after trying a short dance. Ask, "What surprised you most?" Capture authentic reactions, not rehearsed testimonials.

Video 2: "You Think You Know Square Dancing?"
Start with a familiar misconception, then show lively footage of a modern dance. Finish with an invitation to a beginner lesson.

Video 3: "Can You Do This in 60 Seconds?"
Invite viewers to watch a quick, visually interesting dance sequence. Show the teamwork, movement, and fun, then invite them to try it in person.

Sample Social Media Promotion

THINK YOU KNOW SQUARE DANCING? THINK AGAIN!
Forget what you think you know. Try something new, meet great people, and discover how much fun it is to move together.
No experience? Perfect No partne? That's okay, too!
Join us for a FREE Square Dance Try-It Night on [date] at [location].
Come curious. Leave smiling.
Reserve your spot or just come give it a try!
[Contact or registration link]

A Simple Content Strategy

- Show real people enjoying themselves.
- Use short videos that make viewers want to know more.
- Include clear dates, locations, and next steps.
- Share invitations through members' personal accounts, neighborhood groups, and community pages where permitted.
- Promote the same event repeatedly with different photos, hooks, and stories.

Remember: The purpose of marketing is to get people curious enough to take the next step. The event and the personal invitation help turn curiosity into participation.

6. Make the Transition from Event to Lessons Effortless

A fun event can attract dozens of people and still fail to grow your club if nobody follows up. Make the transition to lessons simple, welcoming, and personal.

The Newcomer Pathway

Step 1: Discover: Someone sees a video, flyer, community listing, or personal invitation.

Step 2: Try: They attend a fun, low-pressure activity and experience square dancing firsthand.

Step 3: Connect: A friendly club member talks with them, answers questions, and helps them feel welcome.

Step 4: Invite: They receive a specific invitation to a beginner lesson, with the date, location, cost, and what to expect.

Step 5: Follow Up: A volunteer contacts interested attendees within a day or two, thanks them for coming, and answers any remaining questions.

Step 6: Welcome Back: At the first lesson, someone greets them by name, introduces them to others, and helps them settle in.

What Should You Say at the Event?

Avoid ending with "We have lessons sometime. Check our website," or passing out a flyer.

Instead, try: "You did great. If you enjoyed this, our beginner lessons start on [date. You don't need any previous experience, and you don't need to bring a partner. We'd love to see you there. Can I give you the details?"

Have a printed business or index card with the next lesson date, a clear contact method and your website address. If lessons aren't scheduled yet, collect contact information with permission and tell people when they'll hear from you.

7. Remove the Barriers That Keep People Away

Sometimes the biggest recruitment problem isn't a lack of creative events. It's what prospective dancers worry about before they arrive.

"I'm too young for that": Show people of different ages participating and having fun.

"I don't have a partner": Explicitly welcome singles and explain how participation works.

"I'll look foolish": Emphasize that everyone starts as a beginner; mistakes are part of learning.

"I can't afford another expensive hobby": State lesson costs and explain any trial options.

"It looks old-fashioned": Use current photographs, contemporary music where appropriate, and modern, energetic promotion.

"I don't have time for a big commitment": Explain the lesson schedule and invite them to try an introductory session first.

"I'm not a good dancer": Explain that square dancing is learned step by step; no previous dance ability is required.

Your promotional materials, event design, and club culture all need to support the same message:

You belong here. You can learn this. You can have fun along the way.

8. A Practical 30-Day Recruitment Challenge

Don't try to do everything at once. Pick a few ideas, test them, and learn from the results.

Week 1: Choose Your Experiment

- Select one creative event or community partnership.
- Set a date, assign a lead volunteer, and define the budget.
- Create a simple invitation and a clear beginner lesson offer.

Week 2: Build Awareness

- Contact potential partners and community calendars.
- Publish the first social media invitation.
- Ask each club member to invite two people.

Week 3: Deliver the Experience

- Host the event or introductory activity.
- Collect contact details from interested people with permission.
- Invite attendees directly to the next beginner lesson.

Week 4: Follow Up and Evaluate

- Contact attendees who expressed interest.
- Welcome new learners personally.
- Review attendance, lesson sign-ups, costs, and feedback.

The point is to move from talking about recruitment to actually testing an idea.

9. Measure What Matters

Recruitment isn't successful just because people attended an event or liked a Facebook post. The goal is to get more people into beginner lessons and help them stay.

Track a few basic numbers for every recruitment activity.

Number of attendees: Did the event attract people?

Number of non-dancers: Did you reach a new audience?

Number expressing interest: Did the experience create curiosity?

Number attending lessons: Did the event convert interest into action?

Number returning after the first lesson: Did the experience lead to continued participation?

Total cost and volunteer hours: Was the effort worth the results?

Ask new dancers how they heard about you. This helps identify which activities are worth repeating and which need to change.

The Bottom Line: Be Willing to Experiment

No single recruitment idea will work for every club. What works in a college town may not work in a rural community. A brewery event may be perfect for one club, while a community festival or neighborhood social may suit another.

But the principle is the same: Give people a reason to discover square dancing, a chance to experience the fun, and a welcoming path into lessons. Don't wait for potential dancers to find you. Go where people are, create experiences worth talking about, and invite them to take the next step.

Recruitment is a long game, not a one-time event. As marketing expert Mike Hogan has emphasized in his discussions about growing square dance membership, building membership takes persistence, repetition, and a willingness to keep trying different approaches. Not everyone who sees an advertisement will attend an event, and not everyone who attends will sign up for lessons. That's normal! Our goal is to introduce people to square dancing, spark their curiosity, and give them a reason to take the next step. Even if only a small percentage of attendees enroll in lessons, that is progress worth celebrating. Every new dancer starts somewhere, and today's introduction may lead to a lesson next month—or a new member next year. Success isn't measured by how many people show up at one event; it's measured by the relationships we build and the new dancers we bring into the activity over time. Keep reaching out, keep experimenting, and keep inviting people in. That's how membership grows.