

7 STEPS

TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

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REIGNAISSANCE PUBLICATIONS

7 Steps to a Divine Dance Company

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CONTENTS

Introduction: **Step-by-Step**

STEP 1: **In Good Company** 1

STEP 2: **Setting Up Shop** 10

STEP 3: **Spread the Word** 21

STEP 4: **The Doors are Open** 32

STEP 5: **Managing Your Company** 43

STEP 6: **Building a Reputation** 51

STEP 7: **Productions** 59

Conclusion: **Step Forward** 73

INTRODUCTION

STEP BY STEP

Over the next 7 chapters, you will obtain the necessary steps needed to successfully open, improve, and grow your Christian dance company or studio with greater confidence. This step-by-step guide will cover leadership strategies, marketing, legal aspects, student body management, and your personal requirements for success.

I am here to help you remove the fear factor from opening and running your own dance company as well as provide practical advice. Progressive planning and preparation in advance will lead to growth. Implementing these crucial steps will help your vision become clearer and position you for expansion.

As dance company owners, we must continually invest in educating ourselves and improving our businesses if we want to realize our God-given potential! Let's get moving!

STEP 1

IN GOOD COMPANY

Opening a dance studio may be a dream for many dancers with a passion for education and continual creativity. The truth is: It takes “stretching” beyond the average and familiar to run a company and achieve even greater results than you could ever imagine. Although there is a large spiritual element to running a Christian dance company, if you are not handling your business, you will not have one!

I served as Artistic Director of Reign Dance Company in Las Vegas, Nevada for several successful years. During the course of our tenure, we danced on major local and national platforms, traveled to multiple States and became missionaries to South Africa and The Bahamas! We also presented our first professionally staged dance production with over 80 percent of the seats filled in the theatre—without using pricey advertising! This did not happen by chance. Over the next several lessons, I will share my strategies with you. It is up to you to apply them.

Write the Vision

If you do not know why you exist, who you are called to impact, and what that means to your community, STOP! Why do you need to open a dance company or studio if it will not make a difference? You must be the first person to clearly understand why you exist before you can convince anyone else to get on board! Do not copy someone else's vision! Seek God for clear directions.

Review the Vision and Mission of Reign Dance Company:

Reign Dance Company is a training ground for dancers both naturally and spiritually. We exist to develop character, integrity, and knowledge in each company member. We offer education in the practical and technical elements of Christian dance, grooming each dancer to impact the world with his or her unique talents.

Reign Dance Company is a performing company of worship artists that have a passion for the surrounding community and the nations. We train each company member to be fluent in the language of dance that ministers to the souls of men, women, and children across ethnicity and cultures.

Don't get caught up in copying what the business world defines as a vision and mission statement. The key is that it must state your purpose, give clear direction, and identify your targeted goal. It must be realistic and attainable. Never give in to the temptation to over-exaggerate what you do or use "creative" deception to appear larger than reality. If your company vision is for a small team of people—obey God! Do not get caught up in competition! The vision and mission can be adjusted as God develops you.

Vision: Unusual discernment or foresight.

Mission: A specific task with which a person or group is charged.

ACTION STEP:

Forecast a plan for your dance company

What classes will you offer?

How long will each class be?

How many days per week will you run?

What ages or genders will be a part of your company?

What city will you establish your company or studio in?

What will be your impact in your local community?

What will it be nationally? Internationally?

7 STEPS TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

(Please note that you may only exist to serve your local community. Not everyone is national or international. Understand not only HOW, but WHERE you are to make an impact!) If you can write your vision and mission at this time, please do so below:

Dance Company or Studio Mission and Vision Statement:

Dance Company or Studio Name:

WAIT!

Why should you know your vision before you know your name? I believe that names are prophetic (as confirmed in the Scriptures). If you do not know why you exist, then your name may not line up with that purpose! I had the vision of establishing Reign Dance Company long before I had the name! After

writing down what the Company was to do, I then consulted with the Lord about writing a concise mission and vision statement. Later, I established the name.

Gathering a Student Body

Where do you expect your students to come from? Some people are under the false impression that just because you build it, people will show up. Many of us know that this is far from the truth! I cannot stress this point too many times: You must PRAY and be in relationship with the Lord if you want to grow your company by His principles! Before launching Reign Dance Company, I prayed over it for 4 years before opening the doors. Why?

-I was not yet well-established as a dance minister in my local community.

-I was not yet strong in dance technique, though I was experienced in dance leadership.

-I had not yet connected with other leaders in the community to assess specific needs.

-I was not ready yet! (Not because I was not ambitious, but because God needed to show me some additional things before my time came).

7 STEPS TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

When I first moved to Las Vegas, I still spent lots of time in Southern California because I had dance ministry influence and experience there. After logging miles practically every weekend, I heard the Spirit of the Lord say, “Grow roots in Las Vegas.” How would I influence a community I did not spend time with? I began to decline invitations to speak and dance in Southern California so that I could obey God. He directed me to pray for favor with the following in my city:

Apostles, Pastors, Evangelists, Prophets and Teachers (Leaders of believers).

Media (Print, Radio, Television and Digital Media—Influencers of the people).

Community Leaders (Aware of the needs of the people).

Notice that I did not pray for favor with other dance leaders! Why? The dance leaders in my community were largely fragmented and uncooperative. This type of attitude extended into many churches there and thus trickled down into the various ministries. As a result of praying for the Lord to send people, RDC was filled with many dancers who were not tainted by these divisions and had a true passion for movement ministry!

PERSONALLY SPEAKING...

I also spent those four years studying the Bible intensely and reading many leadership books by John C. Maxwell, as well as finance books. I enrolled in local dance classes at The College of Southern Nevada (Basic Ballet), West Las Vegas Arts Center (Ballet, Modern, and African Dance), and Nevada Ballet Theatre (Beginning/Intermediate Ballet). I also attended several dance conferences as both a student and a teacher during that time frame.

Although I can dance naturally, I had to be honest with myself: If I was going to be a dance leader of influence, I had to learn how to dance—for real! I cannot tell you how valuable that investment was! Reign Dance Company trained for approximately 6 hours per week! I was constantly looking for opportunities to develop as not only a leader, but as a skilled dancer as well through additional learning opportunities.

ACTION STEP:

Are you currently taking dance classes weekly?

If not, what are your options?

When will you start?

7 STEPS TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

After I enrolled in dance classes, I noted the teaching styles of the instructors, as well as shared my passion for praise dance with my classmates. This helped me become aware of other dancers in the community. I discovered that many others were looking for technical dance instruction with a spiritual basis.

As I obeyed God, I was able to establish relationships with the influential leaders and media in my community. Many Pastors began to take notice and asked for me to train their dance ministries through workshops. Journalists and radio interviewers then found me (YES—I did not have to beg them for an interview!) and the buzz began in my community about praise dance being much more than a "fun" activity.

When the Lord released me to officially open the doors of the dance company, the response was overwhelming! I ran my initial advertisement on a popular local radio station in 2009. I did not have to run another radio ad for students since then! We continued to grow by leaps and bounds due to word of mouth and participation in community events!

Seek God in prayer for every aspect of your ministry. Ask for successful strategies, wisdom, favor and strength. Also apply proven techniques that work.

You can begin to build your student body through:

-Prayer and Bible Study (Know the Voice of God).

-Developing yourself as a leader and dancer (Books, Workshops and Classes).

-Building a reputation of integrity that results from obeying God (Relationship).

-Getting the word out (Advertising and Positive Word of Mouth).

-Keeping your integrity! (Discipline and Spiritual Consistency).

STEP 2

SETTING UP SHOP

In the first lesson, you established a clear vision and got a handle on your demographic. You are also aware of the impact that you can have on those around you. Although running a dance company or studio may be a dream, the reality is that you must have a firm grasp on the business elements so that you may continue to grow the vision for the future. As your business develops, there will be changes, improvements, adjustments, and lessons learned that you must apply. Now, let's look at what it takes to open the doors and staff your needs.

Beyond the vision that you have written on paper, you will also need legal paperwork to establish and protect your dance company or studio. Determining the correct business structure (For-Profit, Non-Profit, Sole Proprietorship, LLC, etc.) will be based on several factors. Does every Christian-based business automatically have to be Non-Profit? No. For more detailed information about business structures, expectations and details for your area, please seek professional advice.

Put it on Paper

After determining your business structure, you will be able to file the necessary paperwork, establish a bank account, obtain additional licenses (business, occupancy permits, insurance, music licensing, etc.). If your students have to write checks to you personally without an established business, you will not be viewed as legitimate and therefore not taken as seriously. Also, having legal paperwork in place will help protect your individual assets. Do not give in to the temptation to take shortcuts. Kingdom business requires a Kingdom mindset!

Additionally, you will need the necessary tools to document the existence of your dance company or studio. These include:

Graphics: Business logos, signage, and quality photos. Please avoid using “clip art” for your logo. Make sure that your logo concept accurately compliments the mission and vision of your business. Do not allow yourself to go with the status quo by selecting images that may exclude the people you are trying to reach! For example, if you want to be multicultural, do not just show a dancer of only one ethnicity. If you desire to reach both men and women, then selecting a female dancer for your logo would deter men from joining. Your signage

7 STEPS TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

should be crisp, clear and professional, even if you are printing them from home. Professional photos are a must! Do not use camera phone pictures to represent your leadership or business. Invest with wisdom and you will see the excellence reflected in your company. Establish a good relationship with a graphics designer that “gets” the vision. Do not settle for less than what you know is excellence, and do not allow someone to entirely change the vision. Suggestions from others should enhance the idea, not eradicate the spirit of it.

Business Cards: Should include the business name, phone number, website, and email address. Add social media icons if you would like. You may also add an address, hours of operation, and other pertinent info. You may want to include your personal name and title but try not to include too much information. Utilize both sides of your card if you can, and have it professionally designed. Your business card serves as a “preview” of your dance company. If this is not done in excellence, people will not treat your business with the respect that it is worth.

Always be prepared with information to distribute when asked. Doling out cards unsolicited may be a waste of your time and money. Those who request one are more likely to contact you!

Setting Up Shop

Websites: Although websites are not “paper” they serve as a virtual resume for your business. People who visit you online will utilize your website as a “preview” of what to expect upon arrival. Avoid having a website that promotes your cosmetic sales, body shapers, sewing services, and dance company on the same site! Have a dedicated website for each business if you want to appear to be credible.

Social Media: If you want to be a legitimate businessperson, you must be very careful about what you post on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Periscope, or comments. If you have profanity-laced postings, silly videos or revealing pictures, this may serve as a deterrent to your business!

Finding a Home

Location, location, location! I am sure you have heard how important this is in terms of business. You do not have to own a multi-million dollar facility in order to open your studio or company. When starting out, cash flow may be a challenge. It may be a good idea to find a location that you can afford on your own, even if you have limited students or if students pay tuition late (and they will!). As a

7 STEPS TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

Kingdom company, prayer and seeking the direction of God has to come into play when looking for a location. What may seem to be a good deal may be too good to be true. A GOD deal is always a GREAT deal!

Renting: Renting a space from an existing studio or location can be a great option. Renting usually means that you will incur an hourly rate with utilities included. At the location we used for rehearsals, I negotiated a certain number of hours per month for two days per week. I also had keys to the studio and could open and close for my allotted time of use. Initially, I booked more hours than I was actually using to allow room for growth in classes, so that another group would not be able to book the time that I would need in the future. This allowed us to add classes or to host special community events during the extra hours we had at the studio.

Leasing: I have also leased space for business use. While leasing, I had to pay the rent, additional fees for trash pick-up, and had to establish and pay for electricity, water, and cable (for internet use). Because we were the sole occupants of our space, we had 24-hour access to the facility. Although this may be more expensive option, it can be viable for

Setting Up Shop

you if you have the clientele and financing to pay the lease and the utilities. The caution with many leases is that you may have to sign on for a certain time period or face financial penalties if you decide to withdraw from occupancy.

Purchasing: Whether you obtain bank financing or pay cash, you may decide to purchase a building for use. If you have it financed, you will be responsible for a monthly note over a period of years with interest as well as pay all utilities, fees and property maintenance. In the current economy, people who have been able to purchase buildings outright have been able to secure great deals!

Whatever “housing” option works best for you, do your research and try to negotiate a deal that you can honor, even in lean times. Also, keep parking availability, street access, security, crime rates, safety, and expansion in mind before making long-term decisions regarding a location. I chose to go with an affordable location close to where many members of my demographic lived or were already familiar with.

ACTION STEP:

My current location or options for my future studio location:

Why will this option work for me?

What will I be responsible for financially?

Staffing

As the traditional saying in business goes: Staff your weaknesses! You do not have to be a “Jack (or Jill) of All Trades” to run a successful dance company or studio. Be brutally honest with yourself about your strengths and weaknesses.

Setting Up Shop

When I first opened Reign Dance Company, technique was not my area of strength, although I had been dancing for several years and had taken formal classes. For the vision God gave me, I needed a strong technique teacher to come on board to make the vision a reality. The Lord showed me an individual who was strong in this area, so I asked her to join us as a paid staff member. This did not cause me to relinquish my place as the Artistic Director of RDC. Not only did this cause our company to grow in excellence, it also helped us to develop other up-and-coming teachers from within our organization! Here is a list of some of the paid and volunteer staff positions we utilized:

Artistic Director: Provides overall direction for the company including music selection, choreography development, production ideas and management, garment selection, spiritual coaching, workshop training and education, and overall implementation of the vision and mission. Also choreographs and makes executive decisions regarding all aspects of the operations of the dance company.

Technical Trainer: Conducts weekly training in the technical areas of dance (ballet and modern dance styles). Progressively moves the company forward

7 STEPS TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

in technical jargon and execution of proper movement and form.

Choreography Coach: Provides reinforcement and correction of choreography taught. Is the “go-to” person for questions on choreography for members of the company, regardless of the original choreographer. This person has strong memory skills and is able to perform various styles of movement with great execution. Acts as an assistant to all company choreographers.

Finance Director: Handles monetary transactions including the collection of student fees, special event donations, product sales, and reporting. Creates billing invoices and provides receipts. Submits a tally of money collected each meeting period and provides a comprehensive report to Artistic Director at month end.

Chaplain: Organizes weekly prayer schedule and provides spiritual counseling for team members.

Keeper of the Wardrobe: Measures dancers for garments and places orders as needed. Coordinates with seamstress to provide payment and personally picks up garments upon completion. Distributes garments to dancers. Collects funds needed for garments and also re-orders attire as needed. Notifies

Setting Up Shop

Artistic Director of the need for additional fabric and gives inventory reports, when necessary.

Event Coordinator: Organizes company parties, field trips, and special celebrations.

Administrative Assistant: Creates monthly calendars and provides reminders as needed.

Receptionist: Greets people at the door and provides information to prospective students.

Historian: Takes photos at each event and records videos of dances and special gatherings.

Security: Patrols parking lot area and walks students to cars at night.

Member Services: Purchases cards and cakes for celebrations.

Additional staffing needs will surface as your company grows. Look within the company for faithful leaders that can be further developed. Properly train and communicate with all staff to promote corporate agreement concerning the vision.

Provide honest feedback where necessary and listen to the advice of those working closely with you to enhance your vision. For paid staff members, be sure to compensate them fairly and in a timely manner. When you are loyal to your people

7 STEPS TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

and treat them well, you can expect the same in return!

ACTION STEP:

My Immediate Staffing Needs:

PERSONALLY SPEAKING...

Your history as a leader in ministry will greatly impact your success in the dance company and studio arena. Make sure that you are living a life that can be an example to the people who will follow you. You are your best form of advertisement. As you show understanding of excellence in business and have a true compassion for people, your growth will be limitless. Your company and studio can grow only as large as you are willing to develop yourself and it. Make sure to study the success of other leaders in your area. Seek wise counsel from God and Spirit-filled mentors to help you become your best.

Depending on the size of your operation, you may need more or less people than outlined. To continue in business, you also need to make sure that your output does not exceed your income. Dream BIG, but operate in wisdom!

STEP 3

SPREAD THE WORD

Opening your doors and sitting around with a smile and a dance garment will not bring students into your studio. “If you build it, they will come,” does not necessarily work for dance companies. People tend to follow those they would like to emulate. You must begin by developing your leadership so that your influence will be magnetic. Your reputation will be the best form of advertisement beyond your posters, postcards, business cards, website, or logo. Good advertising starts with being a great leader!

Get Yourself Together!

The Bible reminds us in 1 Samuel 16:7 (KJV) that “...*man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.*” We must remember both of these when we establish our companies. Whenever I make a public appearance, I dress like a leader, behave like a leader, and represent the Kingdom of God in an appropriate manner. If you think that what you do in the studio alone is

enough, you may find that you are not respected in the way that you would like to be.

Appearance: I have met potential students in grocery stores, banks, at community events, and other public places. If I do not represent myself as a business leader, I may lose a prospective enrollment. When planning your wardrobe, make sure that you always have clean clothing ready for you to wear at a moment's notice. Never think that a casual errand will not result in business! The person you meet will often make a decision based on a first impression. Sloppy, unkempt clothing will definitely not help you in the presence of those who may follow you. Make sure that you look at your hair and face before you walk out of the door. Don't forget to wear quality shoes and "put your best foot forward."

Photos: If you claim to be a professional, you will need professional imagery. Invest in a picture that captures you at your best. You do not have to have a large budget to take a great photo. You may have to start with a 1-hour photo at a department store, but over time you should understand the importance of good representation for yourself. These photos may be used on your company website, on business cards, or for upcoming conferences you

7 STEPS TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

may participate in. People will form an opinion about your leadership based on the image that you present. Don't lose this opportunity doing what is cheap or the most convenient! If you need to, wear make-up (or hire someone to do it), have your hair styled, and select appropriate clothing for the best results. For example, when I did my last photo shoot, I took both a dance garment and a casual top to show different aspects of my personality. I use my dance photos for dance-related business and my other photos for corporate business.



I hired a make-up artist who understood what I wanted and used a professional photographer. The first two photos are used for dance-related advertisements and conferences. I can choose to use a dark or light background for a contrast, depending on the occasion. The third photo is used on my professional websites and flyers, which are more business-related in nature. In essence, your photo serves as a visual “résumé” of who you are and what you do.

Preparation: I am often asked for more information about dance ministry. If I have no business cards with me, I may have lost out on a valuable opportunity! Remember to go above and beyond. I ordered a beautiful business card holder to use in unexpected instances for networking functions. Not only am I prepared, but it also speaks to my attention to detail for the person observing my card handling technique. Distributing ragged, worn, or torn business cards may suggest that you handle business in the same way. I also carry a professional leather-like organizer that has a section reserved for business cards. I keep several cards inside and this gives me a professional edge.

At a minimum, know your own website address, telephone number, location address, and email address. Be prepared to describe what you do quickly, passionately, and professionally. Being “pushy” can push people right out the door!

Marketing and Advertising

Beyond what you can do in person, there are some great ways to advertise your dance company or studio. After you have a logo, good graphics, a class schedule, and a solid location, you need to get some faces in the place!

7 STEPS TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

Radio: One of the best forms of advertisement that worked for me initially was paid radio promotion. (Remember, I established a good reputation in my community FIRST!) This was not cheap. I set aside a budget and purchased airtime to advertise open enrollment for the company. Make sure that your timing is good (a few weeks before) and that you visit the station in advance to ensure that your spot will run in the time slot that will attract the most students. The cheapest station may not be the best station for you. Advertise on a station that your potential students will listen to. If you are on a tight budget, you may ask the station to only run your spot on certain days (like Sundays) or at certain times of day (like late at night). Because our local radio station only played gospel music on Sundays, I asked that my primary slots be run then.

Print Media: Print ads can be expensive, but very effective if you place them in the right publications. If you are Christian dance company, advertising in a Christian newspaper or magazine can be a great option. If many Pastors advertise in a publication, odds are that they may actually read it or leaders of their organizations will. If you are a local company, advertising in a national publication may not be the best strategy (and will cost lots of \$\$\$!). Developing good relationships with members of the print

Spread the Word

media can assist you with discounts or prime placement in the publication. Make sure to enlist the help of a good graphic designer or a friend with creative design skills.

Visual Media: You are most likely to run a commercial on local television or on video services like YouTube. Securing time on television can be costly, but with the right strategy, it can be effective. Popular cable companies will often run local commercials on certain stations that your potential students may watch. Do not automatically assume that television advertising is out of your reach. Set an appointment with your local commercial cable representative and consider your options. Even if you cannot afford it now, you may be able to plan for it later. Before you run off to shoot your video, find out what the digital standard is for the industry and then adjust to those specifications. For free video services, still operate in excellence! Always present your very best in order to attract the very best students.

Social Media: Facebook and Instagram can be great ways to advertise your company. Several students have contacted me this way. Do not overdo it! Make sure to time your ads so that you do not oversaturate your profile or appear to be a self-

7 STEPS TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

promoter. Put some space (time) in between your ads, and do not copy and paste the same thing over and over again. People get bored very quickly! With Facebook, you can upload a graphic, include a link to your website, post videos (watch that music!) and give updates. Take pictures of you dancing or of your company and upload them to social media. This works as advertising in itself when people can see the “fruit” of your labor. Remember the adage: A picture is worth a thousand words! The danger in using Facebook solely for promotion is that people will begin to hide or delete you if you are not sharing your personality or blessing them with news they can use.

Postcards: You can order some postcards (larger than business cards, smaller than posters) for your students or supporters to hand out to others in the community. Postcards should include your company logo, location, website, phone number, and a listing of classes and times that you operate on the back, if possible. Do not include too much information. You want to give enough information to attract students and help them to get there, but you do not want to scare them off.

Your options do not stop here. Make sure to use the best methods that you can afford. Whether you

Spread the Word

use e-blasts, text messaging, or send out smoke signals, none of this will be effective if the right people do not see it. Know where your potential students gather and meet them where they are.

ACTION STEPS:

Radio stations in my area that potential or current students listen to:

Print media in my community that is read by my demographic:

TV stations in my area or on cable that my potential or current students watch:

Attracting and Enrolling Students

As your company begins to advertise and get the word out, you must be prepared when they come through the door. Several times a year, I ran an “Open Enrollment” for Reign Dance Company. I chose not to “audition” students because the goal

7 STEPS TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

of my company was to be a large community organization. Auditions traditionally imply rejection in the minds of many people, and so we chose to draw them in by labeling it an “open” environment. This does not mean that we relax our training standards. I often do not worry about students who are unable to dance over a long period because they eventually realize this and decide to pursue other interests. You can also “place” new students in an appropriate class level based on experience.

Atmosphere: Arrive early and place sign-in sheets, postcards, brochures, applications and other information at the check-in table. Strive for excellence! Place a nice tablecloth on the table and have pre-printed spreadsheets for the students to sign in. Handwritten papers are always unprofessional. Try to avoid them as much as possible. Play upbeat music in the studio so that people are encouraged as they enter.

Signage: Order a banner with the logo and name of your dance company or studio. If your location is difficult to see from the street, you may want to hang your banner in a safe, conspicuous place so that people will not feel anxious looking for the entrance. Make sure that all restroom signs and other signage are clear and professional.

Applications: Develop professional applications for your students to complete so that you have basic information in order to contact them. If you'd like, you can also ask them background questions about their beliefs or church affiliation so that you get an accurate assessment of what you are to expect. Include a handout or manual that they can keep that lists your expectations, dress code, mission and vision statement, etc., so that they have an understanding of their commitment as well. Scan these applications into the computer and file them in a safe place in case the original paperwork is lost or misplaced. Keep a record of anniversary dates of joining the company for celebration later.

Personal Touches: You may choose to present your students with a welcoming gift or other personal touches. If you have a portable whiteboard, you can write their names down for everyone else to welcome them into the company when they join. Be creative and remember to be economical when developing personal perks.

Whatever method you use to attract and enroll students, do it well! You may try something that does not work. It is ok. Keep working at it or re-working it so that it succeeds for you and the demographic you are designed to reach. Continue

7 STEPS TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

to form relationships with other people who run successful dance companies and glean from their expertise. You do not have to have all the answers to get started but try to get as many solutions as you can to keep going!

ACTION STEP:

**I will attract students
by using the following methods:**

Formulate an advertising strategy and begin to pray for open doors. Next, you will discover how to continue running your company with growth in mind as you open your doors and move forward.

STEP 4

THE DOORS ARE OPEN

(AND HOW TO KEEP THEM THAT WAY)

You now understand the importance of how you present yourself to others, being prepared, getting the word out, and opening the doors. As many of us have heard, almost 90 percent of businesses fail in the first few years. I do not look at this negatively. For me, this means that I have at least ten tries to make my business succeed! If you develop some surefire strategies to keep your company or studio afloat, you will not have to shut your doors prematurely.

Although most ministry-minded dance companies and studios are established on passion, if you are not careful, that same passion will be the cause of your demise. It is not enough to set a plan in place without following it through to completion. You must consider the whole picture before you begin bringing it to life.

Count the Cost

How do you determine what your tuition or fee schedule will be per student? Several factors must be considered when reaching this number:

Operating Costs: Includes rent/lease/mortgage payments, utilities, website fees, phone bills, staff salaries, maintenance fees, and other miscellaneous needs. Your students should, at minimum, cover these costs from month-to-month. If these basic expenses are not covered, you will personally have to reach into your pockets to keep the doors open. Over time, this will discourage you.

Marketing and Advertisement: Includes postcards, business cards, special event advertisements, commercials, and media coverage. Not only does printing usually have a fee, most graphic designers require payment to provide top-notch imagery. If you are on a budget (and have artistic skills), you can design your own marketing tools or ask a generous supporter to offer his or her skills for low or no cost.

WARNING: Do not take advantage of “free” help longer than necessary. Over time, you must invest

The Doors Are Open

in the quality of your communications if you want your business to grow and be respected.

Hidden Costs: That sign-in sheet utilizes ink! Décor, taxes, billing, newsletters, monthly calendars, and other seemingly insignificant things add up! Need to replace a radio? Cha-ching! Don't forget to plan for unexpected expenses that may surface.

ACTION STEPS:

-Create a sample schedule of class fees.

-Add up an estimate of expenses and determine how many students or classes you would need per month/quarter/year to meet your budget.

Reality Check! At first, you may fall short of your financial goals until you attract a larger student body or secure additional funds. After my first successful year, I raised tuition fees by \$5.00 per student. As your company grows in quality, adds staff, or expands, pass on the cost of improvements made. If you are realistic about your true needs vs. wants, you will ensure that as you grow, you are able to add elements of excellence to enhance the business. Does the thought of money cause anxiety

7 STEPS TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

for you? Let me help you with some successful tips and strategies that have worked for me personally.

Financing

You do not necessarily have to go to a bricks-and-mortar bank to obtain the money needed to keep your business afloat! I ran a debt-free dance company, meaning, we collected money via monthly tuition, dance concerts, special events or raised the capital needed to cover our operating costs.

Tuition and Fees: Think that posting a notice of fees will mean that all of your students will pay as agreed? NOT! You will have to have a solid collection system in place so that students pay tuition! Here are some words of wisdom when gathering student fees:

Collecting Payments: Clearly mark the table or place in the rehearsal space where payments are to be made. Set up a payment system online as well! Determine a date each month when tuition/fees must be paid. Establish a finance person to collect student fees. Why? If you are busy teaching classes or doing another activity, students will not know when or where to drop off payments. Send

The Doors Are Open

reminders with payment links for those who may want to pay online.

Late Payments: If funds are not received on time, add a late payment fee to the final balance. Put this amount in writing. This encourages students to pay on time and discourages them from continuing to make payments past the expected due date. This also prevents you from financing the operational costs for current bills and having to repay yourself later—*maybe!* Send an invoice via email or print it to give to the student in an envelope at the first rehearsal following the missed payment.

Missed Payments: Believe it or not, students will show up to class week after week, knowing that payment has not been made! DO NOT let this behavior continue. Grant the student a probationary period to catch up on payments or ask the student to limit class attendance until these fees are resolved. More than a monetary issue, this is an issue of integrity! If other students hear of non-payment by fellow dancers, they may also begin to take liberties with making payments. Follow up with loving, but firm reminders.

Excuse Me? Those of us who have a true heart for people may be moved by hardship and extenuating

7 STEPS TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

circumstances. While you may grant some exceptions to accommodate students from time to time, what you may notice is the SAME people, make the SAME excuses, and regularly ask you to relieve them. People will take advantage of your sincerity to help them, to your detriment! In essence, what you are doing is paying them to show up at your studio. Encourage them to plan a fundraiser, ask for outside assistance, or inquire about help from their local support systems to cover class participation. Remember: If there's a will, there's a way!

Fundraisers

Reign Dance Company planned two major group fundraisers per year:

Annual Anniversaries: During the anniversary month of our opening (April), we held different types of fundraisers. We hosted a worship celebration service and collected donations for the company. While the amount collected was fair, after we deducted the costs of renting the facility, décor, dance floor rental and love offerings, we barely broke even! If you are supported by a large church, this may still work as a viable fundraiser if you can reduce your bottom line. We also hosted a dinner banquet that proved to be very successful! Because

The Doors Are Open

we sold tickets in advance, we were able to pay for the facility, pay the caterer, and make a profit. Our goal each anniversary was to raise the funds needed to cover the cost of theater rental for our next big fundraiser: A dance production!

Dance Productions: Reign Dance Company presented professional dance productions consisting of several dances that we learned throughout the year. This was more than a recital! It was a staged production with lighting, props, and corresponding garments. We sold tickets in advance. After deducting expenses (rental fees, ticket printing costs, production fees, music licensing fees, advertising costs, and refreshment costs), we are able to make a significant profit! The long-term goal of our dance productions was to cover our yearly operational costs. This meant that student tuition would enhance the ability of the company to grow our staff and would not be the sole source of financing for the company.

Community Classes: Once per month, Reign Dance Company hosted a community dance class that highlighted a particular dance style. This class was open to the general public and we collected a small donation at the door. Regular students also paid the small donation. This greatly increased our monthly

7 STEPS TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

revenue and provided funds needed for group travel. We made sure that students learned choreography in these classes from various guest teachers that specialized in that area and designed them to be fun for all in attendance.

Food Sales: During rehearsals and community classes, we hosted snack tables that included chips, beverages, candy, and other goodies for breaks and after class. Each item was assigned a price and the list was posted at a table separate from the main sign-in table. This was a great success! For creativity, I named Reign Dance Company's snack table "The Royal Pantry." Bottom Line: It worked! Make sure that you clean up any wrappers, trash, etc., or you may have unwanted guests.

Traditional Fundraisers: Your options are unlimited! Bake sales, garage sales, car washes, candy sales, specialty catalog sales, and a plethora of options await you! Be creative, but count the cost FIRST!

Individual Fundraisers: Our dance company traveled several times per year. We encouraged dancers to plan individual fundraisers for airline tickets, event registrations, and hotel accommodations. Any amounts raised were credited directly to that

The Doors Are Open

individual. The dancers would also pay for these expenses on their own.

We also allowed dancers to use funds raised for garment purchases for annual productions. This encouraged them to participate and rewarded each dancer for his or her personal effort. Keep accurate records and update everyone as to their balance frequently. Do not spend the money raised by students for company expenses. Integrity matters!

Reality Check! You may not reach your fundraising goals in the first few tries, but each experience will show you where to make any changes needed to maximize your profit and reduce your overall costs.

ACTION STEP:

Fundraising options that I would like to try:

Taking Care of Business

You do not want to make all of these efforts and then find yourself without a location to dance or way to be contacted! Make sure that the same expectations placed on your students are honored personally.

Payments: Pay your bills on time! Do not give the rental or mortgage company an excuse for late or missed payments. Having a phone that is without service means missed business opportunities and develops mistrust of your fiscal management. Websites WILL disappear if maintenance fees are not paid. Who wants to open the studio doors to find out that the lights have been shut off? Good stewardship is a must!

Responsibility: I encouraged my students to pick up trash in front of the building, even if it was left there by others. We always wanted to leave a location in better shape than before we entered it. Be a good neighbor to other businesses near you and to the people in the community. You never know who is watching!

Consistency: Make sure that you have a standard that you are willing to adhere to. Be as fair and

The Doors Are Open

balanced as possible with your students, parents, vendors, and community. This will build confidence in your company and set you apart from being average.

CHECKPOINT

Consider what changes you will make to your approach in establishing or growing your dance company with what you have learned. Next, you will learn how to continue running your company with growth in mind as you open your doors and move forward.

Celebrating a Grand Opening may be exciting, but the ability to remain in business will determine your true success. The Bible instructs us to count the cost before building. It is important to embrace good stewardship in business. Now that you have a greater understanding of some of the deeper issues to consider, you can now proceed with even more confidence!

STEP 5

MANAGING YOUR COMPANY

Putting a class schedule in writing is one thing, but we must also consider HOW our gatherings should be managed to foster efficiency. Once you get your students in the door, it will take organization, preparation, and consideration for rehearsals to be well-managed and enjoyable for all. Take some time to review this process and determine what will work best for you.

Scheduling

Previously, you determined your class schedules and what you will offer to your student body. Even in things that look great on paper at first glance, the truth is that you may need to make adjustments due to the dynamics of your particular students, location, staff, etc.

Have Some Class: Many people like to enroll in classes that sound interesting. Consider giving your classes creative names. State what the technical discipline will be in the class description. For exam-

ple, the technique class at Reign Dance Company (Ballet and Modern) was called “Training to Reign.” I would also refer to ballet as “FUNdamentals.” If you run a creative dance company, why not invoke creativity throughout?

Timing is Everything: Do not be afraid to adjust the start and stop times for your classes if you need to. It may look perfectly symmetrical to have all classes run for the same amount of time, but if children or senior dancers need less time than allotted, you may want to adjust this to keep the students and teachers encouraged. Also, people that are employed may need a little more time to get to the studio if there are more adults in the company or if the location is far away. While one schedule may not work for 100 percent of the students, the one that works for most of them would be the better choice.

Transitional Timing: If you are running classes back-to-back, allow for transitions between them. This is especially helpful if you have different age groups occupying the same space or parents and students who seem to have a lot of questions. There should always be a pre-set time at which physical instruction ends and verbal instruction or announcements begin. Ending at least 5 minutes before the following class starts will allow incoming students to

7 STEPS TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

quietly stretch and be in position to start the next scheduled class on time.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T: Remember, when you respect people, you will respect their time! If class is scheduled to start at 6:00 p.m., a 6:13 p.m. start time is unacceptable. Equally important is the time that you are scheduled to end. There are times when a class may run over, but this should not be the norm. As many parents and adult students have other responsibilities, honoring these times will promote mutual respect throughout the organization. Ensure that all staff members adhere to the call times as well. There is nothing like showing up for class when the teacher is late!

Reality Check!

If you need to make adjustments to any schedules, change the classes offered, or have dates that classes will not be in session, communicate this clearly, early and often so that everyone can make any needed preparations. Text messages, email, newsletters and social media can help, but make sure to communicate well!

Time to Rehearse!

I have often described rehearsals as RE-HEARS-ALL, which basically means that a rehearsal is a time to review what has already been taught. As often as possible, students and staff should also recite the vision and mission of the company to stay united in purpose.

At Reign Dance Company, we separated technical dance instruction from choreography. The technique classes built upon the fundamentals of movement as well as introduced new concepts for growth and combination possibilities. Rehearsals for us were choreographic in nature. We learned new pieces and reviewed our existing repertoire. As a general rule, to keep moving forward each gathering, I instructed our choreographers to start with new movement first before reviewing the prior material learned. Not only did this ensure that we made progress during each class session, it also discouraged our students from missing classes.

Rehearsal Flow: Dance studio leaders should develop a “lesson plan” for the students. Make sure that the class can always access the music needed. Do not just haphazardly show up without knowing what pieces are going to be covered or what technique needs to be taught that day. Having a plan

7 STEPS TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

will also give you the option to direct a substitute instructor to fill in for a staff member that cannot make it for whatever reason. Believe me, the students will know if you are “winging it” or if you have come prepared.

A sample lesson plan may look like this for a 1 ½ hour technique class:

- 5:30 p.m. Arrive at the studio and set up
- 5:45 p.m. Play music and adjust temperature
- 5:50 p.m. Greet students as they arrive
- 6:00 p.m. Prayer
- 6:05 p.m. Stretching and warm-up
- 6:15 p.m. Basic Technique
- 6:45 p.m. Across the Floor and Combinations
- 7:20 p.m. Announcements and Closing Prayer
- 7:25 p.m. Class transition or dismissal

A sample lesson plan may look like this for a 1 ½ hour choreography class:

- 7:30 p.m. Technical Warm-Up
- 8:00 p.m. New Choreography
- 8:25 p.m. Short Break
- 8:30 p.m. Review Dance Piece
- 8:55 p.m. Announcements and Closing Prayer
- 9:00 p.m. Dismissal and Facilities Check

Student Relations

Ultimately, coming together is more about people than anything. People have emergencies and other unexpected things that surface. People also like to be celebrated. If you put together a plan to deal with these situations, it will lead to a better overall rehearsal flow.

Names: As much as possible, try to learn the name of each student in the class.

Coaching: When instructing students, be as clear and as loving as possible. This does not mean that corrections cannot be made. Always reinforce the positives when offering corrective suggestions. If you must, schedule a personal meeting with challenged students to see what alternatives can be used to prevent any hindrances to learning. Assign a mentor if needed.

Celebrations: Keep a record of birthdays and other special days and acknowledge them. If the budget permits, have the entire student body sign a card and celebrate with a small gift or allow parents and family to bring in cakes or refreshments. You may also encourage your students to announce any job

7 STEPS TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

promotions, graduations, or other milestones so that they feel supported.

Attendance: Reign Dance Company had an accountability policy which stated that students were to notify their section leader of any absences or tardiness each and every time they occurred. Due to our “moving forward” approach to choreography, we had to know who we would be working with.

Monitor your attendance records and contact any missing students with a phone call, email, or a card. Also, students who have a poor attendance record may be asked to refrain from dancing at a specific event or program. If the budget permits, you may establish a quarterly “attendance award” to encourage faithfulness. However, attendance is handled, it must be done in love and fairness across the board.

Support: Although you may not be able to attend every event that your students (both children and adults) would like you to, make every effort to show your support whenever you can.

ACTION STEPS:

-Develop sample lesson plans for at least two of your scheduled classes.

-Think about what types of recognition programs that you would like to put in place for your students.

-Consider both financial and non-financial rewards for celebrations.

Remember, you can assign someone within your organization to handle hospitality and student relations. Next, you will consider how to manage booking requests, improve community relations, and establish a good reputation in your community.

STEP 6

BUILDING A REPUTATION

As we have learned, details matter when running a dance company and studio. Success is a strategy, not a coincidence. Maintaining a solid reputation is great and caring about your people will help you grow. Employing creative approaches to your business will not only gain the interest of your students but will also breathe life into sustaining the vision God has given you.

A dance company that stays hidden inside of any four walls will continue to lag behind in enrollments. Why? People are attracted to organizations that are visibly making a difference. Also, they want to be involved in something that will give them a personal sense of satisfaction. The opportunity to impact your community should not be approached lightly. Some strategic considerations will help with managing the external influence of the company.

When, Where, and Why?

We should not look at dance ministry opportunities as “gigs.” If we do this, we will make decisions based on the wrong reasons: financial gain, personal exposure, and desperation. Review the vision and mission of your company. If the opportunity presented does not agree with the reason why you exist, then it may be an invitation to decline (with grace).

Invitations: Every offer is not necessarily a good fit. If you accept an engagement and are ill-prepared, it may create a negative perception of your organization. Failure to ask sufficient questions regarding sound, spacing, the type of attendees expected, or specific time limits may also present obstacles if not determined in advance.

Set up a standard system for handling and responding to requests to dance. You may opt to do this via a “Request or Booking Form” on your website, set up a hotline for telephone requests, or have a printed form available for download on your site or via email request. Take it from me—always look at your calendar before accepting an invitation to make sure there are no scheduling conflicts even if you think there are none. Write all of your events

7 STEPS TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

on a single calendar. In our excitement, sometimes we agree to things before counting the cost.

Dates: As much as possible, inform your dancers of confirmed calendar dates as far in advance as allowable. This should include both internal dates (recitals, productions, company celebrations, etc.) as well as external dance requests. Access to this information should be readily available. You may create a calendar that students can download on your website, send updates via email, use a Facebook group, send text messages, or use good old-fashioned paper. An issue with paper is that it can be expensive to produce over time. For those who are technologically savvy, notify them through electronic means and keep a few paper copies on hand for those who cannot access the information through other means. Provide frequent updates and be as detailed as possible. Consider the schedules of your students and avoid over-committing the group to dates that they cannot honor.

Location: Dancing in a hotel ballroom differs greatly from dancing in a park. Prepare your students in advance for different scenarios. Do not assume that everyone knows how to behave in a variety of environments. Train them on how to deal with hotel staff, servers, attendees, guests of honor, etc.,

Building a Reputation

BEFORE you venture out. This will impact the reputation of your company and either garner additional invitations or make them disappear. Ensure that the shoes and garments that the students wear are suitable for the location (and the type of event) in question.

Rhyme and Reason: Know before you go! Select pieces and presentations that are a good representation of your company and are appropriate for the type of gathering you are attending. If there is no true assignment concerning why you are dancing at a gathering, why bother?

Reality Check! Many people will say that you will receive a future invitation to dance for this or that. Wait until the actual offer is extended. If you share things with your students prematurely that do not come to fruition, this can cause them to become demoralized and distrustful of you and the company.

Community Relations

You need wisdom to operate effectively. If the desire of your team is to only dance on “celebrity” platforms for exposure, you are doing a disservice to yourselves and your community. There are some

7 STEPS TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

invitations that you may receive that will allow you to engage the community through dance and outreach, but there must be other occasions when your student body should plan to give back to the community on their own accord.

Outreach: Street corners, public facilities, hospitals, prisons, and schools are great places to serve. Before “taking it to the streets,” find out what places will allow you to do an outreach event with very few limitations. This is not “asking for a gig.” This will be structured to serve the needs of the community and can be coupled with Back-to-School giveaways, food drives, domestic violence awareness, cancer awareness, blanket and sock distributions, etc. This builds a sense of connectivity and partnership with the communities you dance in.

Arts Advocates: If you expect people to buy tickets to your productions, you should support the efforts of others. Look for additional educational opportunities through the arts that your students can glean from. Organizing group outings to dance productions not only supports the arts in your community, it expands the minds of the students you train. These productions may not all be “Christian” in nature but should be appropriate nonetheless for learning. Look for group discounts

Building a Reputation

or specials. Some organizations even allow you to write letters to request a block of group tickets for low to no cost. Even if you do not venture out as a group, you may post appropriate ads for dance or theatre programs coming to town on a community bulletin board or information table at the rehearsal location for students to attend optionally.

PLANNING STEP:

If I were to take my students to a production in the near future, the following would be a good educational opportunity:

(Name of Show, Date, Location, and Ticket Prices)

Protect Your Rep

No matter how wonderful your program may seem to you, your reputation will make a big difference in your success.

Personally: Do not deceive yourself, your personal reputation will affect your business! Be realistic

7 STEPS TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

about your personality and character weaknesses and work on improving them immediately. Pay your personal bills, take care of your responsibilities, and treat others with respect. By the same measure that you sow, you reap!

Corporately: Who wants to be known as the people who are always running late, frequent no-shows, misbehave, or leave other negative impressions? Remember, you must make sure that your staff and students are well trained as to their expectations both inside and outside of the classroom. Rowdy and rambunctious dance classes will also discourage people from returning. Classes that are too strict or do not offer a personal benefit for the students will also be perceived as detrimental. As much as possible, foster a sense of “environmental and spiritual” health in your company.

Expansion: Great work garners attention. Your primary goal should not be the approval of others, but of the One Who gave you the vision. When you operate in excellence, obedience, and order, your gift will surely make room for you and bring you before great men. When you run a respectable and successful enterprise, others will come to you for advice and encouragement. What may work for you may not translate the same way for everyone, but

Building a Reputation

the basics remain the same. Continue to expand your reach by helping others to prosper and continue to develop yourself as a business owner.

ACTION STEPS:

-Develop a sample “booking form” via MS Word, Excel or on your website!

-I would like others to say the following about my dance company or studio:

STEP 7

PRODUCTIONS

A good name is definitely better than riches! Learning how to better manage invitations, building community relations and serving those we are sent to can be challenging. You now have greater awareness of the many aspects of dance company and studio management. Continue to refine the way you approach this line of business. Your options are endless if your foundation is strong enough to handle it.

Approach everything that you do with excellence. Never underestimate the impact that even small events can have on your company. Planning your activities in advance will help you make a phenomenal impact on those around you and open future doors. Next, let's discuss the many elements in productions for dance companies and how they can help you grow.

Be as Detailed as Possible

Many dance companies present regular recitals for students to demonstrate what has been learned in class to friends and family. Before you grow to the level of staging theatrical productions, you should also know how to properly manage smaller events.

Recitals: Traditionally, recitals are scheduled in advance and may take place at a local dance studio. Often, chairs and refreshments are set up and guests attend to support their favorite student dancer. An informal announcer may provide a brief description of each piece demonstrated. The recital may also include student recognition or awards. The program is usually short and space is often limited. Admission is often free and other studio or company-related keepsakes may be sold as fundraisers.

Programs: You should already know what songs will be presented at your recital and the order of them. If you are not going to distribute paper programs to everyone, print out a few for yourself, the announcer, and the person running the sound system.

7 STEPS TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

Set-Up: Make sure that any chairs in the studio space are arranged so that the audience can see the students well. Also keep safety in mind. Ensure that patrons can enter and exit the dance area with minimal interruptions. The restroom should probably be located behind the seating area and not in front of it. Little details matter!

Concessions: If you will be selling food or other memorabilia, set these up at a separate table. Ensure that money is handled properly and that proper sanitary conditions are maintained when serving food and beverages. Even if you will be handing out free cake slices, make sure that you protect your business by requiring servers to wash their hands before doling out the goodies.

Concerts: Concerts usually take more planning than a recital. Key components for planning dance concerts include the date, location, spacing, sound system, number of seats, and platform composition. A dance concert can feature pieces from your company in addition to having other dancers, musicians, or singers appear as featured guests. Usually, the concert takes place over a few hours and may be open to the public with a request for

Productions

donations at some point in the program. You may also decide to sell tickets. Today, there are a growing number of options for locations, but many venues expect some form of payment or a donation to host the concert—including churches!

Timing: Planning a concert during a Holiday weekend or at the same time as other major events in your city can negatively affect your attendance. Always pray before deciding on a final date. Also, try not to have too many dance outings around the same time period as your concert so that the dancers are rested and enthusiastic. Concerts scheduled too early in the daytime or too late in the evening may also impact your attendance. Plan strategically and set realistic expectations!

Presentation: Expecting 20 groups to dance in three hours is unrealistic. Let the quality of your dance program draw attendees, and not the quantity! Inviting guest dancers is always an option but overloading the program with too many presentations may cause people to leave early and decide not return to your next event. Make sure that all of your students and invited dancers clearly understand the vision for the concert!

7 STEPS TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

Theme: If there is a certain theme for your concert, participants should be encouraged to embrace it. If the concert calls for worship, then worship songs should be presented. This can also be done in sections. Try to avoid having high-low-high moments during the concert. You can build from the softer pieces into high worship or praise pieces that open the possibility for further ministry to take place.

Vendors: Some theaters may allow you to have vendors but may charge a small fee or require vendors to report any sales tax collected. Be sure to read the fine print!

Productions: Staging a theatrical production is not something that should be done on a whim! Before booking a theatre, perform a site visit and look at entrances, exits, backstage areas, and inquire about restrooms and dressing rooms. Also, find out what exactly is included in the theatre rental! Some rentals include the use of cordless microphones, but some locations will charge you per item used, along with requiring extra compensation for facility crew members and security.

Productions

Contracts: Most theatres will have you sign a rental contract or facilities use agreement to use a professional stage. This includes the date, time, expectations, restrictions, and additional venue requirements. You may be charged for overtime if you run over the agreed time allotment. Try to negotiate the largest amount of time you can afford for the greatest return on your investment.

Rehearsals: Dress rehearsals, tech rehearsals and run-throughs should also be factored in. If possible, do a technical rehearsal the day before the concert. If not, try to gather all of your participants as early as possible to run lights and sound so that rest can be taken before the production starts. Train your students about the theatre environment before the bid day arrives! Review proper backstage decorum, modest quick changes, conversation noise levels, how to navigate a stage in blackout, and other general safety precautions.

Ticket Sales: The venue that you book may require you to use their box office for ticket sales. Other venues may allow you to sell your own tickets and either use their box

7 STEPS TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

office on the day of the production or set up a ticket table inside of the foyer. You can order custom tickets through a printer or use a professional ticket company, such as Ticketmaster. In addition to selling tickets for larger events, Ticketmaster offers custom printing for smaller amounts of tickets and is able to include your logo or special font on your event tickets. They also allow you to select the color of your tickets for a more customized appearance for a reasonable fee. Research your options! People are more inclined to buy tickets that are presented in a professional manner. Make sure that you are realistic about projected sales and set a fair price. Never count on ticket sales alone to pay your bills! Raise funds in advance help cover your costs so that ticket sales can provide your company with additional revenue.

ACTION STEPS:

- Ask your local printer about ticket options**
- Research Ticketmaster Custom Tickets**
- Consider alternate ticketing options**

Souvenir Booklets and Technical Programs:

Another way to generate income is through selling ads or placing congratulatory notices in your souvenir booklet. Businesses and supporters may purchase a section of a page or an entire page for a set donation to help cover printing costs and raise funds. You can include this cost in your ticket prices or sell the booklets for an additional fee. Again, the more professional they are, the more likely it will be for others to buy them. Make sure to assign this task to a gifted administrator with a command of the language used!

Licensing: When entering a professional venue, you may be required to furnish proof of permission for you to use the songs selected for dance pieces. Plan this several months in advance, as it takes some time to receive the official paperwork back from the licensing companies. For one of the venues I used, I had to furnish this paperwork at least two weeks ahead of time, or my event would have been cancelled!

Insurance: Venues must protect their own interests and may ask you to provide a certificate of insurance, naming the facility or

7 STEPS TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

organization as an "Additional Insured" on the policy. Make sure to read the requirements completely and use the exact terminology required for the name listed and amount of insurance requested. Many online companies provide this type of insurance and will send you the documents in a PDF via email. Make sure that the insurance company selected offers coverage in your location and for the venue selected.

General Tips: Collect all music as far in advance as possible. Have all songs emailed in MP3 format or place them on a playlist so tracks do not skip. Make sure that the sound engineer knows exactly when to start and stop the music.

ACTION STEP:

-Visit the ASCAP, BMI, and SESAC websites and provide a cost estimate of the annual cost for you to license the music from each provider for your company.

For more accurate info, you may also call before paying the fee to make sure that you are purchasing the appropriate license.

Productions

ASCAP

<http://www.ascap.com/licensing/>

BMI

<http://www.bmi.com/licensing/>

SESAC

<http://www.sesac.com/Licensing/Licensing.aspx>

I had a license as a dance school, which allowed me under ASCAP to host one dance “recital” per year as a blanket use license. You may also contact the artist or record company directly to get permission to use individual songs if you will be selling DVDs, etc.

Production Notes

A successful dance production requires foresight. Even if you do not have a venue yet, write down the visions and inspirations received from the Lord and wait until it’s time to move. In my experience, the Lord has given me several productions, but not necessarily in the order they were to be done. Learning to follow His lead and timing will result in success.

Graphics: Building a relationship with a trusted and creative graphic designer will greatly aid your pro-

7 STEPS TO A DIVINE DANCE COMPANY

essionalism. This person can design your logo or use your existing one to develop eye-catching posters and postcards for you to advertise on websites, printed materials, and social networking sites.

Stage Management: If you plan to dance in your own production, you may want to hire a Production Manager or Stage Manager! If you have limited experience in theatrical productions, you may need the services of a knowledgeable professional. A volunteer with experience may also help if the theatre provides technical staff trained in light and sound operation. Before the production, your Stage Manager and Production Manager should attend rehearsals leading up to the event. Be sure to ask about lighting options, arrange any technical needs, and contact the theater staff in advance to discuss your options and challenges.

At a minimum, you should have someone to keep the time, make sure dancers are in place, call the show, and provide any on-site production notes. You may decide to utilize both a Stage Manager (handles backstage, artists, dancers, etc.) and a Production Manager (handles the box office and technical aspects of the production) to help.

Props and Staging: Prop utilization and set building should be planned as far in advance as possible!

Productions

Make an inventory of your props to include flags, swords, billows, specialty props and any other item the dancers or stagehands will handle. If sets need to be built, make sure that they are transportable and can be stored safely before, during, and after the production. Many facilities will not allow you to paint sets or build them on site, so prepare to be finished with your set before the actual production date arrives!

General Tips: Be as creative as possible! If your production title has already been used by many others, there may be no sense of urgency for people to attend. God is a creative God and never runs out of ideas! Seek Him directly regarding every aspect of your productions and pray for unique concepts and innovation.

ACTION STEP:

List local theaters in your area available for rent or venues that would be suitable for a staged dance production:

Plan, Prepare, Produce!

Writing the vision, selecting the songs, securing the location, running rehearsals and selling tickets are all important to your production. You may gather a crowd and pack the house, but what you offer the people when they get there will determine your future success.

Volunteers: Who will greet the people as they arrive? Who will seat them? Who is designated to answer questions regarding the production? How will the crowd enter and exit and at what times? Who will sell tickets at the door? Who will run the Box Office? You will need to enlist a roster of Spirit-filled volunteers who will represent your organization in an excellent manner. Offer a volunteer training session for those who will represent you and make sure that they understand any attire requirements, arrival times, and the chain of command regarding their area of responsibility.

Order: Provide adequate signage, break as appropriate and give clear directions for everyone involved. Will you allow video recording or flash photography by non-designated staff? Have you allowed adequate time in between dances for garment changes or set reconfiguration? If you are

Productions

new to productions, consult with a seasoned veteran to ensure that you are presenting your very best and have not missed any important steps.

Give Thanks: Remember to acknowledge those who have helped to bring the vision to life. Students, staff, parents, volunteers, community supporters, parking lot attendants, mentors, and anyone else that makes a contribution should be thanked. This can be done verbally or with small tokens of appreciation. Plan this in advance as well or you may forget! Although people may forgive you for overlooking them, everyone remembers when you take the steps to appreciate them.

ACTION STEP:

Write out a sample 1-day dance production program to include the number of dances, potential songs, props, sets, colors, etc.

If you do not have a specific date, please note what time of the year your production may take place. Be as detailed as you can. This will help you as you move forward!

CONCLUSION

STEP FORWARD

I have to admit... I was pretty scared when I had to take the step to launch a Christian dance company. What made it even more challenging was that I was in Las Vegas, of all places! Las Vegas is widely known as "Sin City" and the Christian community had a reputation of being non-supportive. I told my fear to come with me and stepped out on faith! Reign Dance Company succeeded far beyond my imagination.

The 7 steps outlined throughout this book may take some time to develop. You do not have to implement everything at once. Establish a strong foundation and build from there. Maintain genuine relationships with people.

It is my sincere hope that more Christian dance companies and studios will emerge that offer excellence in service locally, nationally, and internationally. I thank you, the reader, for allowing me to share my techniques. These steps may not fit your situation perfectly, so feel free to adjust. Most of all, seek God for direction and step into success!

REKESHA PITTMAN

Rekesha Pittman has been in training for ministry from her youth. Whether singing, dancing, or speaking publicly, the Lord has graced her to be able to stand before His congregation with boldness. Her intense desire for ministerial excellence has opened the doors for her to minister in both dance and teaching of the Word on a National and International level.



Rekesha is a teacher of the Word and serves as workshop facilitator, mentor, consultant, and intercessor for various dance ministries, churches, worship arts departments, and music ministries. She is married to Matthew Pittman, a dynamic musician and ministry supporter and is the blessed mother of Lynynn Pittman. Her innermost desire is that pleasing the Lord remain the focus of service in ministry, and that worship becomes an essential component in the daily life of every believer in the Body of Christ.

For booking, correspondence, or for additional information, please visit:

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