

RSCDS Tactics to Increase Scottish Country Dancers

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Locally counteract global social trend

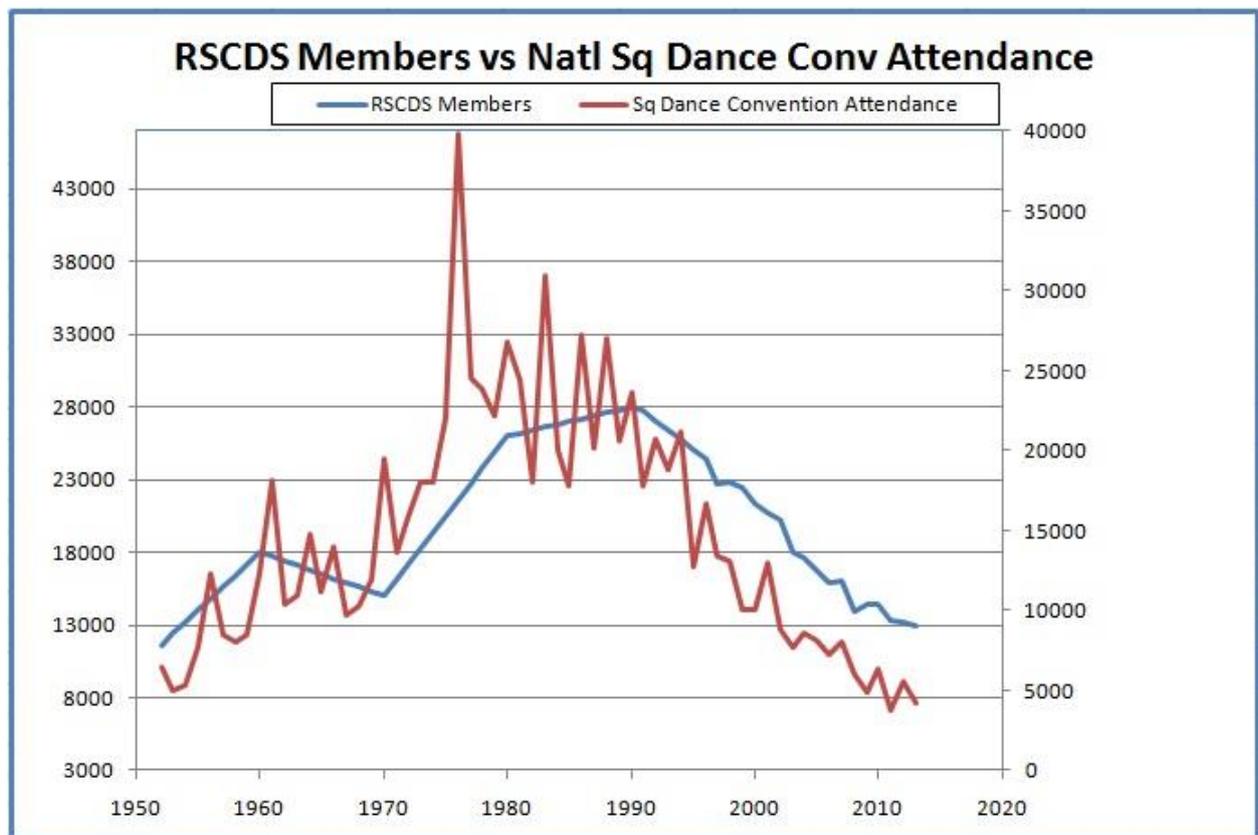
RSCDS HQ and branches-groups can collaborate in order to implement tactics to locally counteract the global trend of declining social interaction.

I compared RSCDS membership data with the attendance to the USA National Square Dance Convention 1952-2013.

<http://www.nsdcnec.com/index.php/nsdc-conventions/past-conventions>

The source of RSCDS membership data is *Scottish Country Dancing: Profile of dancers, motivation, organization (2011)* by Raphaëlle Orgeret, p34.

We observe similar trends when we overlay the charts of the two data sets.



Rider and Elephant psychology model

I considered the **RSCDS Strategy Framework** document concepts and applied the process to identify tactics. We can consider the Rider and Elephant model in order to motivate new dancers to try SCD, by communicating beneficial feelings. The following list of feelings unifies everything I have read or have been thinking about tactics to allow as many people as possible to experience and enjoy our dance form. I organized the feelings according to the familiar friendship, fun, and fitness categories, and assigned a **Strength** or priority/importance to the categories.

Scottish Country Dancer Human Brain		
Benefit	Strength	Feeling
Friendship	10	Inclusion/Attraction/Affection Dress up, Dining
Dancing Fun	8	Move to the Music, Touching Sense of Accomplishment
Fitness	4	Feel Healthy

Friendship

According to the April 2014 RSCDS membership survey results, the overriding reasons cited for an increasing or stable membership is the general friendliness of branches towards beginners or newcomers.

New dancers are open to new friendships and trying new dance forms, and become entrenched when they find a social group they like. Dancers and leaders can be trained to welcome new dancers, and resist the tendency to socialize only with their long-time dance friends. Schedule social breaks between instruction of dances.

We can imagine three levels of inclusion:

exclusive: group wants to maintain current members and selectively admit new members.

narrow inclusive: group wants to admit new members who are like us.

broader inclusive: group wants to admit new members with differences.

Dance teachers are often viewed as the main leader of a dance group, because a teacher is required in order for a dance class or event to happen. A collaboration with the teachers and group members combines the teacher's instruction of dance skills with members' friendship qualities. For example, groups can arrange social activities outside the dance classes.

We observe the Happy Hoppers Square Dance club member information centers on friendship.

<http://www.happy-hoppers.com/doc/HappyHoppersMemberInformation.pdf>

The dancing is the main common interest of the social group.

The international United Square Dancers of America website distributes educational materials to help clubs be successful <http://www.usda.org/educ.htm> . We can access two documents as examples.

<http://www.usda.org/trifold/IS00103.pdf> Recruiting New Dancers

<http://www.usda.org/trifold/IS00203.pdf> Retaining Dancers

RSCDS could generate its own documents and similarly distribute.

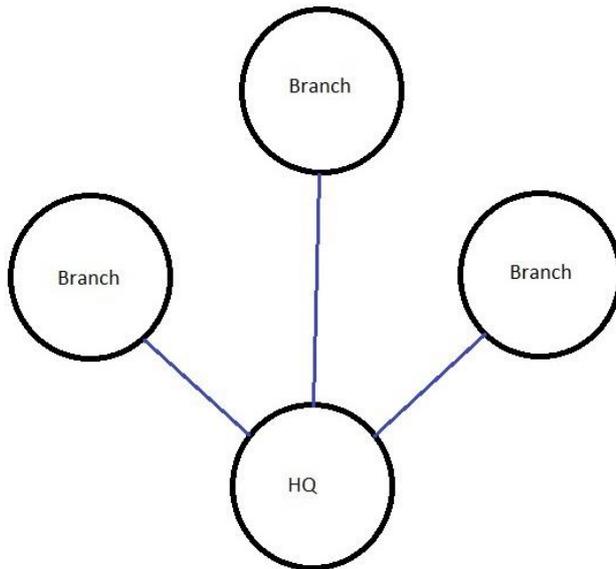
Recruit age 45+ and mature dancers

RSCDS has focused on recruiting youth dancers in order to counteract the aging trend of the SCD community. Recruiting empty nesters age 45+ is also on the radar. We can also embrace older "mature" dancers with special dance classes that have lower physical impact on the seniors. We can grow the number of new mature dancers.

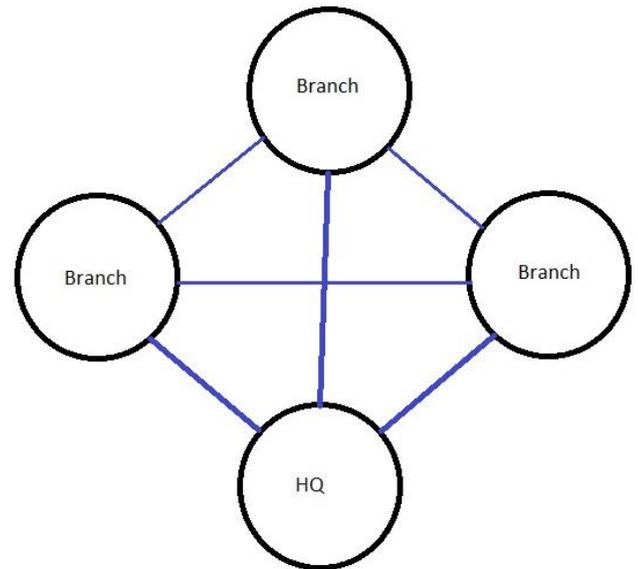
Align RSCDS HQ and branches goals

RSCDS HQ can establish an effective dialog with branches and groups in order to align goals and strengthen satisfaction. The Management Board and Committees can be more open with initiatives, and can provide timely feedback on the results of surveys and how suggestions have been processed. HQ can use social media like Facebook discussion groups in order to test ideas and designs with members. The method can also enhance communication with branches that are currently isolated from one another.

Current Communication



Improved Communication



RSCDS can use Facebook discussion groups to sponsor ongoing leadership workshops with worldwide participation, in order to train branch-group committee members and facilitate sharing of best practices. Members would become stakeholders in HQ initiatives. HQ can invest resources in initiatives that have a global reach and coordinate with branch-group partners' local initiatives.

RSCDS HQ can maintain a spreadsheet on its website, with a list of branch-group suggestions, stating the current status of each suggestion. The member can download and check the file at any time in order to observe an idea has been received, rejected, or acted upon. The method would be efficient use of HQ resources and would build member buy-in with the HQ Management Board and committees agenda.

RSCDS is challenged to find sufficient members to run for Management Board positions, and to find members with the desired skill set. HQ can more openly communicate leadership examples to members and generate excitement to contribute to RSCDS projects. The Board and Committees Update documents are a good beginning. Another example, the Southwest Washington State branch maintains an online (redacted) Secretary Notebook of meetings/reports and correspondence. Any interested person may access the files and learn about branch projects.

<http://www.rscds-swws.org/meetings.htm> User name | Password : cranberry | tart.

The Branch Board Notebook is a training guide for branch leaders.

<http://www.rscds-swws.org/notebook.htm>

Encourage curiosity to try new ideas

The book *Our Iceberg Is Melting* tells a fable how a penguin colony solves the problem of its melting iceberg home with necessary changes.

<http://halpenny.imaginationprocessing.com/OurIcebergIsMelting.pdf>

Which are SCD's melting icebergs and which methods will we try in order to adapt?

I have observed a tendency for SCD group leaders to settle into a set of processes and repeat the processes from year to year. The processes used to be successful, however the underlying conditions might slowly change and the methods have become less effective to accomplish the goals. The leaders resist trying new ideas until the situation becomes sufficiently painful. A SCD newsletter item titled **Branch Goals and methods Update** explores curiosity.

<http://www.rscds-swvs.org/news/201403/vol30-5.htm#art.3>

Since then I have read complex strategic plans and process documents for a couple large SCD branches and I wonder how successful they have been? I have learned the **Rider** part of the brain becomes exhausted. We need to motivate the **Elephant** and shape the **Path** in order to improve behavior.

Website videos

SCD videos can communicate a dramatic **move to the music** feeling to HQ website visitors.

A SCD newsletter item contrasts the value of dance videos with still photos of dancing.

The article references excellent videos for several folk dance forms.

<http://www.rscds-swvs.org/news/stories/movemusic.htm>

The Birmingham branch implements imbedded videos on its website.

<http://www.birmingham-rscds.org.uk>

After viewing the videos and walking away from my computer, I observed the music was playing in my mind. A video of a dance teacher teaching a class communicated her charisma, and I would like to attend the class to meet her.

The excellent Commonwealth Ceilidh videos are concurrently filmed from multiple angles and merged.

<https://www.rscds.org/article/commonwealth-ceilidh>

I observed a GoPro camera video that coordinates video clips with music phrasing.

A similar method can be used to sequence SCD video clips, phrased with the dance music.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3PDXmYoF5U>

I tested the suitability of a GoPro camera with an additional perspective, as an idea to show the experience of a dancer who is dancing a Scottish dance, to merge with the external views.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=niJguHjGsvw>

Publicity partnership

Branches-groups would appreciate publicity help from HQ in order to improve awareness of Scottish Country Dance. HQ can invest resources to create high-impact videos that "speak to the elephant" and appeal to cultural regions. Branches can find ways to locally publicize the videos. Some regions might prefer accordion music while other regions prefer fiddle and piano.

Partners can also write and share articles for the local press. Would be ideal to generate a trigger for people to frequently think about SCD and cause the message to go viral, like viewing SCD in a movie or identifying a well-known celebrity who likes to Scottish dance.

Learn ideas from other folk dance forms

I would like to point out a systematic psychological block among dance groups. The longer a person has been dancing, the more entrenched they become and less willing to try the other dance form. The leaders are the most entrenched, and they politely tolerate me, and rapidly disengage from any conversation about the merits of another dance form or group. We all have psychological blocks to new ideas. I like to try to identify the blocks and then embrace the discomfort. We can find undiscovered territory and explore ways to apply new ideas to our preferred dance form. Leaders of other folk dance groups have outstanding ideas in the areas of organizing, teaching, and music, that SCD leaders are psychologically blocked from exploring.

SCD Connection with Ceilidh dancing

The Commonwealth Ceilidh practiced how to introduce ceilidh dancing, which dancers can immediately **move to the music** with little instruction. The idea can be further developed with a revised design that is more globally inclusive, without the exclusionary word **Commonwealth** in the title. Irish Ceili and Contra dance groups teach a 30-minute lesson before each dance.

The power of touch in dancing

We can communicate the beneficial feelings of physical contact while dancing. For example, <http://blogs.forward.com/sisterhood-blog/209426/the-power-of-touch-and-contra-dancing/>

Zumba slogan

Zumba is a popular dance and fitness form in the USA. <http://www.zumba.com/>

Their slogan is **Zumba – ditch the workout and join the party**

How can RSCDS emulate the feeling message that Zumba has?

Health Strategy

The Health Strategy is a challenging benefit to communicate to dancers. I personally am enthusiastic. I have recorded daily pedometer steps in a spreadsheet for three years, and I recently posted the following information on my Facebook timeline.

I calculated my 2014 activity from pedometer data.
743 miles folk dancing ... move to the music!

The minimum goal is 10,000 steps per day.
10,100 steps on 135 non-dance-days
16,500 steps on 230 dance-days
14,100 steps daily average with 4.4 dance-days per week
2587 total miles per year (100%)
1844 non-dance miles per year (71%)
743 dance miles per year (29%)



I talk about pedometer steps and fitness with my dance friends. Few people cite fitness as a reason why they like to dance. Fitness is an incidental benefit. It seems to be challenging to generate an effective **Elephant** message to motivate people to try dancing for fitness reasons.