

GO BEYOND

MOTIVATION FROM MTJGD

Volume 02 | Issue 02



A message from Misty

> "Relationship building is where a studio's true achievement comes from. IT ALL STARTS ON DAY 1."

In my experience, every dance studio is built on an important foundation, a foundation not of size or credentials, but of relationships. This is the true infrastructure of a successful studio. Creating a rapport within the community and connecting with people who become lifelong customers. Relationship-building is where the studio's true achievement comes from. It starts on Day 1, the day someone enters your studio to join a camp, a class or a bring-a-friend-day.

I bet you can think of many examples within your own experience of how meaningful your studio relationships have become. You might never have guessed, for example, that the shy 3-year-old in pigtails who showed up to your summer camp fifteen years ago and cried most of the time, would become the outspoken, confident, responsible student leader she is today. Or that the 9-year-old who came to visit a class with a friend is now dancing sixteen hours a week (more than her friend!) andis auditioning for college dance programs. Or that the dance mom who helped organize your first open house would become your Community Relations Coordinator five years later.

For me, a perfect example of this mutually positive influence and relationship building is with a former student of mine, Kylie Williams. Kylie was a young student in my early years of owning a studio. She danced for several years, then took some time off from MDU to join her high school dance team. She came back to the studio later in high school, joining our senior dance company and teaching a few classes on the side. She achieved a degree in dance and performed professionally before returning to MDU and becoming our Assistant Performance Company Director. Kylie quickly proved herself a capable leader and is now the Performance Company Director, working alongside her husband, who became on of our Ballet Masters.

As many of you have probably experienced for yourself, it's such a beautiful, full circle experience to see a former student become a teacher and to share the lessons you taught them (and so much more!) with the next generation of dancers. I'm proud of the influence I've been privileged to have in Kylie's life, even during the times she wasn't directly involved at MDU. As to the positive influence she's had on me, I can say it's truly invaluable. She leads with humility and grace, and she cares deeply for our students. Staying connected with Kylie over the years was a true testament to the bond that was formed over time and now to witness her skillful teaching and leadership in the classrooms of MDU .... well, that's priceless!

In this newsletter, you'll read quite a lot about prospects, students, boosting enrollment and retaining customers. In other words, building relationships. At the end of the day, it's more than just the steps you teach, the programs you establish or the people you hire that help your business thrive; it's the relationships you form that infuse the foundation with a strength not even money can buy.

REGISTRATION

It may be past the first day of fall classes, but I bet you are still anxious to enroll new students. If you want to enroll new students during this busy time of year remember one thing . . .

KEEP IT SIMPLE!

When it comes to registration, is your process simple to follow? If there are too many clicks or steps to follow or the instructions seem complicated, people may not bother completing it - even if the special offer was enticing or their child loved her trial class. Create an easy-to-navigate path into your studio.

Let's identify some of the places where these speed bumps can occur and evaluate how to eliminate them:

It looks intimidating

Does the online registration page on your website make a prospective parent's palms sweat? Because it's familiar to us, sometimes we forget how perplexing it might look to someone who has never signed their child up for dance before.

Simplify the page with a **"Quick Register" 1-2-3 model:** offer three options for enrollment, such as over the phone, in person and online (sample 1). Those who feel comfortable with the details of the online system can click through and give it a go while those who feel overwhelmed by it can easily choose one of the other.



Still not sure that's enough of an improvement? Consider adding a "live chat" feature (such as Tawk or Drift) to your website to easily walk prospective customers through the process (see sample 2 at the right).

It's taking too long

The less clicks the better for most people these days; they want to sign up fast and move on. When you are reaching out to families who have been to your studio before (either as a regular student or through a micro-commitment, such as a camp) but haven't signed up for this season, a shortened registration form, embedded in an email, can make a world of a difference.

Just include enough lines for their basic information, a personalized selection of classes to choose from and a checkbox for payment authorization. Member Melanie Boniszewski, owner of Tonawanda Dance Arts, put this information into a Google form and added in a link to a voice memo inviting the student back to class (sample 3).

It's confusing afterward

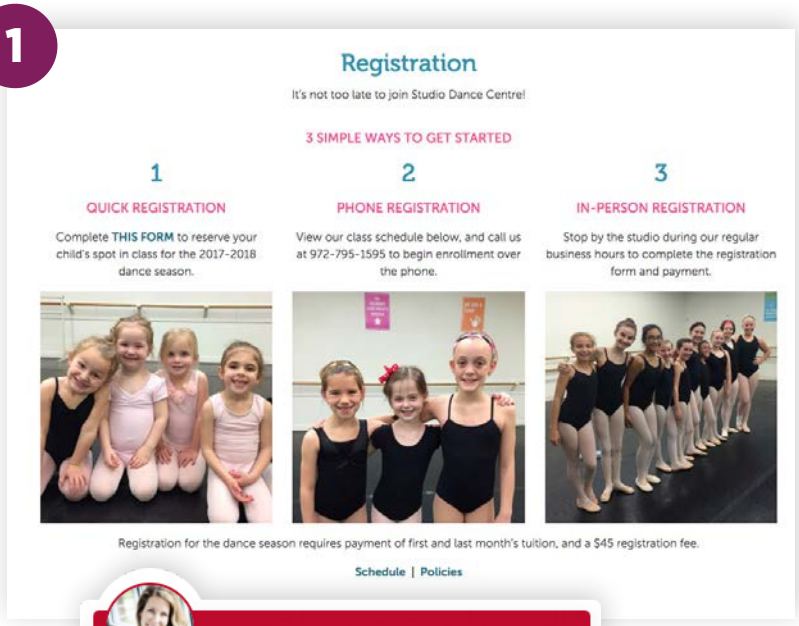
Once parents have signed up, then what? Do they receive an automated confirmation, thank you message or phone call? Do they have access to important information at their fingertips? If these things don't exist, it's time to make them a priority!

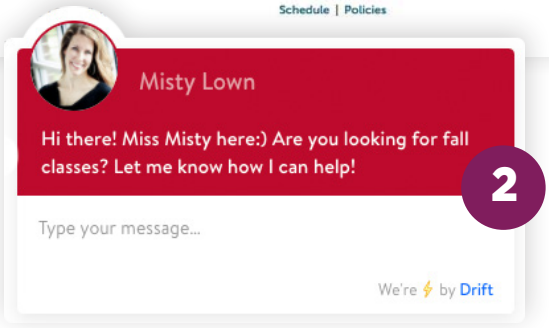
Many studio software programs can send automatic messages or you can have new registrations flow to a spreadsheet from which a staff member can make a personal welcome phone call and answer any questions. Having a personalized welcome folder, a password-protected website page just for parents and a phone app (either custom or free, such as Team App) are other ideas you can implement to make policies, dress codes and calendars easily accessible.

Simplifying the registration process from start to finish not only makes it more welcoming for prospects, it eases the burden on previous customers who may have lost track of time or thought it was too late. All of these things take more detailed work on the back end, but the time you have invested can keep enrollment moving throughout the fall, and will demonstrate excellent customer service from the very beginning.



1





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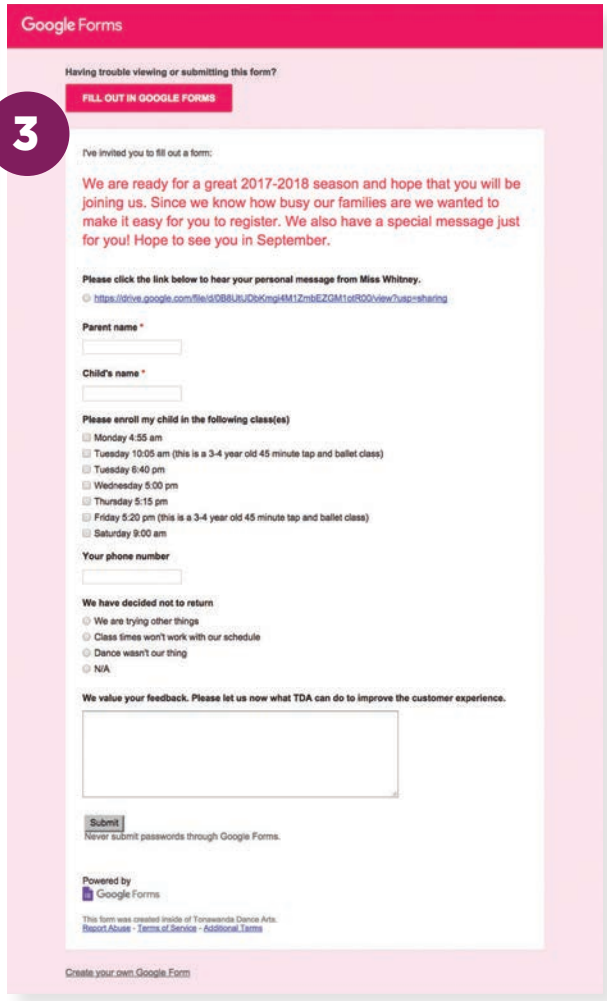

ACTION

TAKE

Identify two key areas where you can simplify your registration process and HOW you will achieve that simplification? **WHO** on your team can be the champion and help make it happen? Most importantly, **WHEN** will you make it happen?

What _____

WHO _____

WHEN _____

What _____

WHO _____

WHEN _____

4



Shout-Out to the staff



As studio owners, the importance of nurturing customers is pretty obvious; we know that we need to invest time and effort into relationships so our business can thrive. If we don't keep our customers happy, and if they don't feel loved by us, there's no reason for them to stick with us year after year. But to our staff, this may not be as obvious. They are used to coming and in and doing their jobs (and often doing them well!) but they'll probably never experience the same nail-biting anxiety we have over retaining customers year after year.

To this point, our staff members need to hear from us how significant their role is in nurturing the studio's students and their parents. The voice of a child's teacher can carry so much more weight and meaning than the voice of anyone else at the studio, including the owner.

So how can we help our staff members use that "voice" effectively for nurturing? Ask your teachers to help with tasks such as birthday cards, "good job" postcards and follow-up phone calls or emails. Make sure that they understand they will be paid for a certain amount of administrative hours (per week or per month) for their attention to these tasks.

Then create a written schedule (for example, every Thursday from 2-3pm, Ms. Lisa works on class nurturing) and a tracking document to help them achieve completion (see sample below). Pre-written scripts can also be super helpful so that the studio is represented with consistent wording/language and in the case of a teacher being asked other questions (such as about payment plans) he or she is equipped with the right words to refer parents to your office manager.

Consider following the lead of Kristen Holliman, owner of **Absolute Dance in Midland, Texas,** who created a Studio Relations position for a staff member who is able to do exactly that; she helps coordinate connections between the studio and the students throughout the year to ensure that each student knows they're special and that no one feels like just a number.

Whether you tackle this on your own or with the help of a team, the most important thing is consistency. Even small actions will make a difference if applied consistently.

TAKE ACTION

What is your retention goal this year?

Which customer nurturing tasks can your staff members help you with to reach your retention goal using even just one hour's worth of time each week?

_____

What kind of coaching, guidance or scripts can you offer your staff to make their nurturing and retention efforts successful?

_____

Monday Ballet/Tap Combo – Ms. Lisa					
Name	**Postcard**	**Birthday Card**	**Phone Call**	**Email**	**Other**
Jones, Sarah			Called on 9/7 to see how the first two weeks of classes have been going	Sent 9/21 to say thanks for being a good friend to Paige	
Monroe, Kelly	Sent 9/13 for working hard on ballet skips, way to go!		Called on 9/7 to see how the first two weeks of classes have been going		
Smith, Layla			Called on 9/7 to see how the first two weeks of classes have been going Called on 9/21 for congratulations on Student of the Month		

SPOTLIGHT JOB DUTIES

Kristen Hollimon
Studio Owner Spotlight

What do you do when you feel like your studio is growing so well that it's getting harder and harder to keep the close-knit, family-like culture? You do like Kristen Hollimon, owner of Absolute Dance in Midland, Texas, did and create a Studio Relations Coordinator position.

Bonnie Luna, who is also a part-time instructor at Absolute, took on the position about two years ago when Kristen realized that the studio needed a dedicated staff member to help enrich the customer experience. Bonnie now spends a few hours per week on her Studio Relations efforts and the return on those few hours is huge.

"I want every customer to feel like we know exactly who they are and that we care about what is happening in their lives," says Kristen. "Our retention rate has increased by about 15% since we started this position."

Here are some of the tasks Bonnie might accomplish on any given week:

- Following up with families who have recently enrolled to see how their experience is going so far
- Sending cards or flowers to families who are either celebrating an important event or going through a difficult time
- Organizing the Student of the Month lobby display and yard sign delivery
- Coordinating small gifts or treats for studio spirit weeks or other events

Kristen's advice for implementing a position like this at your studio? Find someone on your team who has a caring heart and a gift for service. Have that person start helping with a few small tasks (like writing birthday cards) to measure the outcome (Were your directions followed? Was there positive feedback?). Slowly add more tasks until you find just the right balance for your studio's needs.

NOTE: *If you have a large school or you have a large team who might not have the necessary time to achieve this level of personal contact, consider assigning one reliable team member to lead the other teachers and assist with these tasks.*

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EXPANSION!

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It's probably crossed your mind a time or two,

especially on those busy nights when classes are hopping and your studio lobby is jam-packed. So how do you know when it's actually a smart time to increase your studio's physical space?

Whether it's remodeling your existing location, adding a second location or buying or constructing a new building, there are many questions that might be running through your mind about growth. While there is no one magic formula for knowing the right time to expand, there ARE formulas for evaluating if it's worth taking the plunge.

At the right are some numbers to dig into to see if expansion might be a smart move for your studio...







Percent of utilization

This percentage will tell you how much of your studio space you're actually using with your classes. If you end up with a number that's over 70-80%, expansion might be the right choice.

For each class you offer, list the number of students who are actually enrolled. Then list the maximum number of students who could be enrolled. You'll want to do this for every class offered before finding an average percentage.

# of students actually enrolled divided by maximum # of students times 100 = utilization percent for that class

Once all the classes are calculated, add up all of the percentages and then divide by the number of classes offered to find the average utilization percentage.

Example:

Class 1 - 7 (students enrolled) ÷ 16 (max students possible) x 100 = 43.75% utilization
Class 2 - 12 ÷ 20 x 100 = 60%
Class 3 - 18 ÷ 16 x 100 = 112.5%
Class 4 - 16 ÷ 16 x 100 = 100%
Class 5 - 14 ÷ 16 x 100 = 87.5 %
Average % utilization = **80.75%**

Try it with your numbers:

Class 1: # Students:____ ÷ Max # Students ____ x 100 =_____
Class 2: # Students:____ ÷ Max # Students ____ x 100 =_____
Class 3: # Students:____ ÷ Max # Students ____ x 100 =_____
Class 4: # Students:____ ÷ Max # Students ____ x 100 =_____
Class 5: # Students:____ ÷ Max # Students ____ x 100 =_____

Average percent utilization: _____

Ratio of students to classrooms

Looking at the number of students (not units) in your current space, are you serving at least 125 students per classroom? For example:

If you have	**Then you should have**
2 classrooms	: 250 students or more
3 classrooms	: 375 students or more
4 classrooms	: 500 students or more

Try it with your numbers:

#Classrooms:_____

#Students:_____

Net profit

You'll want your net profit percentage to be 20% or higher before saying yes to more space and to more expenses.

Step 1) Total revenue, minus COGS, minus regular operating expenses = net profit amount
Step 2) Net profit ÷ total revenue x 100 = net profit percentage

Try it with your numbers:

Total Revenue - COGS - Net OE = _____

Net Profit ÷ Total Revenue x 100 = _____

A few other questions to dig into

(and we're looking for YES answers to all three!)

- Has the occupancy of your current space exceeded your parking allowance?_____
- Do you foresee the ability to increase prices if you expand? _____
- Do you have the staff (including teachers, support staff, and leadership) to grow your space and class offerings?

  _____

I'm sure you can already guess that I have been through these tough questions and many times - no matter how excited I am at the idea - I've discovered I shouldn't expand just yet. Only recently have I felt confident that expansion is really, truly necessary for MDU's future growth. It's not just a gut feeling; it's in the numbers. I've also successfully coached many members through their own growing pains, so I'm always happy to take your coaching call on the subject!

Let's talk numbers!

The Micro-Commitment:

The micro-commitment: it's one of the key strategies we've been talking about over the past year for getting prospective students in your door. These bite-sized, free or low-cost entry points to your studio are where prospective customers can test-drive your services before deciding whether to commit to a full dance season.

Here is just a sampling of the micro-commitments I've been hearing about that tribe members are offering: Imagine That! Camps, Mini-Mesters, Girl Scout Badge classes, Free Dance Days and Movement Story Time at the library.

I know you know how important this type of programming is, but the question is: how are YOU using it and is it working? (And if you aren't on board yet, it's time to jump in!) Ask yourself: are my micro-commitment offerings still strong or is it time for a makeover? What does my market need?

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Fall is THE prime time to plan your winter and spring micro-commitments. Here are some fresh ideas to get your wheels moving forward on this essential strategy.

1. Host "presentation nights" with your performance team kids.
Offer free tickets to neighborhood children to watch your performance team practice in the studio, especially if the performance team needs an extra dress rehearsal or two! Consider offering tickets to your current students if they also bring a non-student friend. ("Tickets" could be as simple as an Eventbrite email to your leads or as fancy as printed business cards.) Host a Q&A or dance party with the dancers and guests after the showing to foster even more connection between the groups and inspire the guests. Dress up the presentation with refreshments and goody bags in the lobby afterward.

2. Join forces with a learning center.
If you don't already offer a library or story time program, consider partnering up with a local learning center to host a similar concept in the spring for the pre-kindergarten set who will be heading off to school in the fall. Many companies who specialize in test prep or tutoring for older students also offer early literacy programs for young learners. Together, you can offer a free weekly or monthly community event with themes centered around reading and movement - call it Rockin' Readers or Reading Rhythms and incorporate educational take-home materials.

3. Create a community shopping event.
If your area is anything like mine, you have a LOT of moms who also have side businesses with direct-selling companies like LulaRoe, Pampered Chef and Norwex. Why not take advantage of their wide range of products (and motivation) and set up an evening of vendor booths at your studio and offer childcare in a classroom? This could be an excellent pre-holiday season event to help parents complete some of their holiday shopping, all while their kids are enjoying free dance classes, games and crafts in the next room. Ask the moms who want to participate to help spread the word to their friends and prepare a thank you swag bag for all the families who attend.

It's becoming more important than ever that you have a strong micro-commitment offering (or several!) for prospects to "try before they buy" at your studio. Some families may be ready to sign up right away; others may want to stick to the micro-commitment options for a year or more. Either way, you have the opportunity to begin earning their trust as soon as they set foot in your studio. Just getting them in the door to experience your facility and customer service is a much-needed first step to building long-term relationships.









REMEMBER:

Provide a "bounce-back" offer to the participants of all your Micro-Commitments. Give them the opportunity to take the next step!

ACTION

TAKE

I recommend you take the time to evaluate your micro-commitment offerings. Measure what's working (and what's not) and determine the programming you want to offer for the rest of the season.

Some ways you can measure the success of a program are:

- **The percent of participants who sign up for a regular dance class**
- **The percent of participants who sign up for another micro-commitment**
- **Participant feedback (offering a survey to parents)**

Which micro-commitments are you already offering at your studio? Which are the most successful?

_____

_____

What new micro-commitments will you add to your calendar?

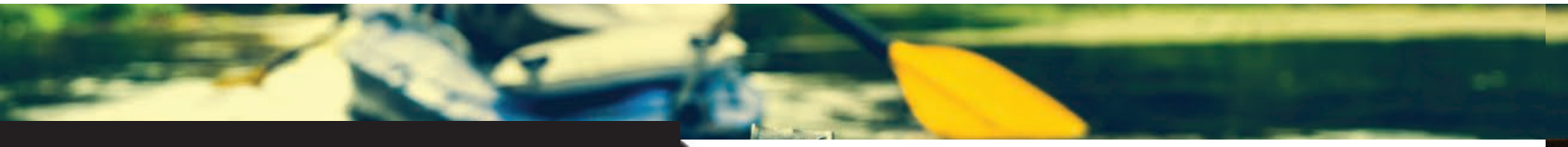
_____

_____

WHO and **WHAT** will you need to make those programs successful?

_____

_____



HOME/LIFE BALANCE

Unplugged Time



Not long ago my dad was sick and he was in the hospital for a week. It's painful, as I'm sure some of you well know, to see one of your parents in such a vulnerable state - or any close family member. It is difficult and yet at the same time, I also felt such gratitude at being able to spend time with him. To be there for him when he really needed me.

It's in moments like these that the value of being an entrepreneur really becomes apparent. I'm not talking about the financial part. I'm talking about time wealth and the freedom to work from anywhere if you want to (or if you need to do so). One of the reasons I love being an entrepreneur is the freedom I've been able to build for my life, to put my family first without hesitation. I have learned there's no reason to wait . . . life is happening NOW.

At this time of year, when I know you may be feeling (as I often do) that the days are beginning to blur together and that the routine might be weighing you down, I encourage you to make time for your family. Say no to the PTA meeting you don't really want to go to anyway; say yes to your parents' invite to dinner. Say no to taking on another private lesson and say yes to picking your own child up from school.



Say no to staying up to answer email and say yes to watching a movie with your spouse.

Entrepreneurs typically don't lack any muscles in the work department. What they lack is the discipline to shut off work and truly step away for unplugged time with the people they love the most. In fact, some entrepreneurs have such a hard time with this that they feel it's easier to keep going than to take a day of rest.

Does this sounds familiar to you?

If the thought of taking a full week or even a full day of R&R, makes you sweat a bit, don't worry. Just start small. Start by leaving your phone in the car during dinner or your kids' activities. Work your way up to date nights without texts from the studio and full days without checking email.

Whether it's a whole day or an hour here and there, commit to quality time with those you love: a game night, baking cupcakes together, window shopping, watching a movie, going to a soccer game or just hanging out. I promise the work will be waiting for you later. Don't say you'll wait for the holiday break or you'll set aside the time "soon" **. . . just do it!**

TAKE ACTION

What can you say YES to for your family this week? This month?

If you're like most studios, your weeks are pretty much the same. Start by looking at your weekly events at the studio and see what you can pass off. Maybe it's a large task to free yourself up to attend a child's sports practice or maybe it's just a 15 minute task that will help you get home in time to watch your family's favorite show together. Do your best to free up some time every day. Maybe you can't swing it, but start somewhere and make it a weekly/monthly practice to carve out space for you and your family. You won't regret it!



MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
WHAT:	**WHAT:**	**WHAT:**	**WHAT:**	**WHAT:**	**WHAT:**	**WHAT:**
DELEGATE TO:	**DELEGATE TO:**	**DELEGATE TO:**	**DELEGATE TO:**	**DELEGATE TO:**	**DELEGATE TO:**	**DELEGATE TO:**

MEMBER NEWS

Wishing You All Wonderful Birthdays!

BIRTHDAYS

SEPTEMBER

09.01 Brooke Maxwell
09.01 Lori Weil
09.01 Claire Dye
09.01 Kristin Moody
09.04 Christie Garrett
09.07 Anekia Boatwright-McGhee
09.12 Vanessa Berry
09.13 Bonnie Walker
09.13 Amanda Cacciotti
09.14 Lilia Weisfeldt
09.15 Dana Riste
09.15 Vanessa Terrell
09.18 Sandy Embry
09.18 Laura Peterson
09.20 Shari VanderWoude
09.22 Monique Joseph
09.22 Andrea Camacho
09.23 Betsy Colombo
09.24 Emily Weber
09.24 Julie McFarland
09.26 Meghan Dunn
09.26 Cara Patrick
09.28 Darcy Fagerwold
09.28 Annie Mix

OCTOBER

10.02 Beth Bartlett
10.04 Nancy Solomon Rothenberg
10.05 Rana Poley
10.05 Erica Leanna
10.06 Leah Anna Sanguinetti
10.09 Michele Buckley
10.09 Malorie Cox
10.11 Roz Miller
10.14 Julie Holt Lucia
10.16 Lacey Valenti
10.17 Jane Stewart
10.19 Valerie Harman
10.26 Janet Bracale

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