

# A BYTE-SIZED MESSAGE

How to build your studio's social media presence

BY SUZANNAH FRISCIA

When Holley Themer decided to change the name of her Lewisville, Texas, studio from North Texas Dance Academy to Paragon Dance Centre last summer, she knew it would mean starting from scratch with the social media presence she had been building. "It was a nightmare," she says. But less than a year later, the studio, which offers ballet, tap, jazz, pom and hip hop, has over 1,200 likes on its new Facebook page, easily surpassing the old page's number.

Today, social media is one of the best ways to build a larger customer base. But to really take advantage of it, you need a creative approach to posting that invites participation and keeps your audience engaged. Here are some tips to keep in mind.

## DO CROSS-MARKET

Social media works most effectively when you spread your presence across multiple platforms. "I tell studio owners not to put all their eggs in one basket," says Jill Tirone, owner of DanceFit Marketing. And while posting the same message on different social networks might feel like overkill, Alison Krejny, of To The Pointe Marketing, finds that overlap helps: "Especially if you have an important message, say a recital coming up, you want to make sure you're hitting up all the different profiles," she says. Each platform's unique features can be used to get the same message across in different ways. On Facebook, you have more room to post content, while Twitter works best for shorter blurbs with links. Instagram and Pinterest let you present the same information in a purely visual way.

At Paragon, Themer starts with a post on Facebook, where she has the most followers. "I'll say 'We won first overall again this weekend at competition. For our full list of awards go see our Instagram' and direct them to the Instagram account to see all of the award pictures," she says.

## DO FOCUS ON VISUALS

No matter which platforms you use, the bulk of your material should be visual. "We've seen that

posts with image or video tend to get more likes and shares," says Krejny. And with photo-driven Instagram, you can also tag other users in your posts.

Themer's most successful post to-date was a picture of her junior competition team after their overall win at Tremaine Dance Convention in Dallas this past March. She shared the photo on Instagram and tagged Tremaine, which then reposted the photo to their own account. On their page, where they have thousands of followers, the photo got over 800 likes.



Paragon Dance Centre's Twitter and Facebook feeds.

## DON'T BE A MEGAPHONE

You want to promote your business via social media, but that doesn't mean all of your posts should be self-promotional. "You don't just want to be shouting your services to the world," says Tirone. "Make it a two-way street. You engage response, you ask for input, you listen." On Facebook and Twitter, she suggests posting questions, sharing healthy recipes for dancers or promoting a local dance company's performance. "Being involved in the community is really a key factor. It's about showcasing other people, as well," she says.

## DON'T GET LOST IN THE SHUFFLE

To help you stand out, use certain features to make sure more people see your posts and pages. Facebook allows you to promote important posts so that they show up on more people's newsfeeds. These are also more likely to be seen by friends of the people who have "liked" your page. Themer says that by putting her advertising dollars into this type of promotion, she has seen an increase in actual new customers, not just online followers. "We've had a lot of friends of friends come because of those posts," she says. ■

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