



MASTERING BRAND AWARENESS THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



Introduction:

Brand awareness is paramount when establishing and nurturing community partnerships for your dance studio. It serves as the cornerstone for building trust, credibility, and recognition within the community. A strong brand presence not only amplifies your studio's visibility but also enhances its reputation. Ultimately, brand awareness acts as a catalyst for cultivating meaningful and sustainable partnerships that drive mutual benefit and impact. Getting your brand to stand out is more than just your logo on everything. In this masterclass, we're going to break down a few different ways to get involved in your community while keeping your brand and studio mission at the forefront of your decision making.

Thank you to Alisa Finney, Kim Field, and Heather Buelow for contributing to this masterclass.

Goals:

By the end of this masterclass, you will:

1. Have a detailed 9-step system to create community partnerships effectively.
2. Be able to reach out to potential partners using our proven pitch email template.
3. Know how to start creating partnerships with and best practices for making them beneficial.

Top 3 benefits of community partnerships:

1. Working closely with the community demonstrates a commitment to their needs and priorities, fostering trust and credibility. By actively engaging with community members, studios can build stronger relationships, leading to increased support, loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth.
2. Community collaborations provide access to valuable local resources, knowledge, and expertise. Creating relationships and having colleagues can give you access to diverse skills and perspectives within the community that you may need or want down the road.
3. Partnering with the community amplifies your reach and can help you generate leads! Finding individuals with the same target market but who aren't competitors can give you wonderful opportunities to increase your footprint in your area.

Things to consider before implementation:

Before collaborating with local businesses, a dance studio should consider several factors to ensure a successful partnership:

1. Make sure your [studios' values, mission, and vision](#) are established and that you and your staff have the capacity for collaboration.

2. Ensure your studio values, mission, and objectives align with those of the potential business partner. Collaborations are most effective when both parties share common goals and principles, leading to a more cohesive and impactful partnership.
3. Assess the resources, capabilities, and level of commitment of the potential business partner. Ensure that both parties are willing and able to invest time, effort, and resources into the collaboration to make it successful.
4. Clarify any legal or financial considerations, such as partnership agreements, revenue sharing models, liability issues, and financial obligations. It's important to have clear terms and agreements in place to avoid misunderstandings or conflicts later on.

What is a community partnership:

A community partnership is a collaborative relationship formed between organizations, groups, or individuals within a local community. These partnerships often involve pooling resources, expertise, and efforts to leverage collective impact and create positive change. Community partnerships can take various forms, such as alliances between non-profit organizations, collaborations between businesses and community groups, or joint initiatives involving local businesses. By working together, all parties involved can benefit in many ways while also providing value to the community.

For dance studios, these partnerships will typically be with businesses/organizations that bring complementary strengths and capabilities to the table, so each partner is able to leverage the other's expertise, resources, or market presence to achieve mutual benefits and competitive advantages. Community partnerships can range from formal agreements to informal collaborations but are always characterized by a strategic intent to create value and drive growth for all parties involved.

Top 3 reasons dance studios should develop community partnerships:

1. New customers:

Community partnerships often lead to increased sales and audience growth for both parties. Through cross-promotion, partners can tap into each other's customer base, expanding sales opportunities. Collaborative efforts also attract new customers drawn to the combined value offered, further broadening audience reach.

For your dance studio, community partnerships can significantly boost new student enrollment by attracting individuals who may not have previously considered dance classes. By partnering with businesses catering to similar demographics, your studio can entice potential students with added convenience or incentives, resulting in higher enrollment and revenue.

2. Opportunity to reach new markets:

Collaborating with local businesses opens opportunities to reach new markets that may have been previously untapped.

For example, partnering with a fitness apparel store could help a dance studio connect with health-conscious adults interested in both exercise and dance so they can grow their adult program. This expanded market reach allows the studio to attract new customers who align with their target audience but may not have been aware of their offerings before.

3. Increase brand awareness:

Community partnerships significantly boost brand awareness for both parties by leveraging each other's marketing channels and customer base. This amplification of brand messaging enhances credibility and reputation within the community, attracting more attention. Consistent exposure through partnerships prompts outreach, as repeated encounters with the studio's brand during joint events or promotions make it more memorable and encourage community engagement.

Potential challenges with community partnerships:

1. No trust - finding the right people to form partnerships:

Establishing trust is vital for successful partnerships. Without it, collaborations may face skepticism and uncertainty. Finding the right partners is crucial, requiring mutual respect, transparency, and shared goals. Selecting trustworthy partners committed to open communication lays the foundation for a strong partnership. Testing the waters with smaller partnerships initially allows for a gradual buildup of trust and the opportunity to create mutually beneficial experiences. As trust grows, larger collaborations become feasible.

2. No drive - one partner cannot drive all activity:

In collaborations, active participation from all partners towards shared goals is crucial. A lack of drive from one partner can hinder progress. Recognizing that no single partner should drive all activity maintains balance and accountability. Each party must equally invest in contributing ideas, resources, and efforts to ensure collaborative success.

3. Lack of resources:

A challenge in partnerships arises when there's a resource disparity between collaborators, which can strain the relationship. To address this, partners should proactively explore leveraging each other's strengths and resources. This could mean sharing resources, seeking external support, or adjusting responsibilities to align with available resources.

4. Different values:

Misalignment in values can hinder successful partnerships, leading to disagreements and collaboration breakdown. Establishing clear communication channels and openly discussing

values, expectations, and objectives from the outset is crucial. Partners should aim to find common ground while respecting each other's perspectives and maintaining their own values and principles.

9 steps to creating community partnerships:

1. Have a clear vision for your business:
 - a. Where do you see your business headed?
 - b. What do you want for your studio?
2. Determine your immediate business goals:
 - a. Define specific goals and outcomes for the partnership. Whether it's increasing brand visibility, expanding community outreach, or accessing new resources, having clear objectives ensures that both parties are working towards mutually beneficial results.
 - b. What is your goal with this partnership?
 - i. What are you trying to achieve?
 - ii. Are you looking to fill a certain class?
 - iii. Are you looking to grow a new program?
 - iv. Are you looking to get sponsors for your recital program?
 - c. Create a SMART (*specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound goal*) for it.
 - i. For example: I'm looking to grow my adult program by 30 new students by March 1.
3. Determine who could be a strategic partner:
 - a. Which businesses in your area have access to the target market you've identified in your goal?
 - i. Think of your current students and parents and where they go before and after class. (Local cafes/restaurants, gyms, ice cream shops, etc.)
 - ii. Write out a list of 10 businesses that you could partner with.
 1. Ensure that they are not direct competitors with you or already have partnerships with your competitors.
 - iii. Select the top 3 that have the most opportunity and that you're most excited about
4. What's in it for you?
 - a. Identify how this partnership could benefit you. What do you want from them?
 - i. Leads
 - ii. New Customers
 - iii. Sponsorship
 - iv. Mailing List
 - b. What channels/methods will they use?
 - i. Social media posts
 - ii. Email blasts

- iii. Placement on their website
 - iv. Poster up in their space
 - v. Flyers at their door
 - c. What would a best-case scenario partnership look like for you?
- 5. What's in it for them?
 - a. Develop compelling value propositions that outline the benefits of the partnership for both parties. Highlight how the partnership can enhance brand exposure, drive customer engagement, or provide unique opportunities for collaboration.
 - b. The best partnerships are mutually beneficial. Put yourself in your top choice's shoes. What would they want from you?
 - i. Leads
 - ii. New Customers
 - iii. Sponsorship
 - iv. Mailing List
 - c. What are you willing to provide them?
 - i. Social media posts
 - ii. Email blasts
 - iii. Placement on their website
 - iv. Poster up in their space
 - v. Flyers at their door
 - d. Quantify the value of what you have to offer. Come with some metrics:
 - i. Email list size
 - ii. Social Media Following
 - iii. Customer list size and demographics
 - e. What would a best-case scenario partnership look like for them?
 - f. Your ability to empathize and predict their needs in this step will greatly impact the success of the partnership.
- 6. The approach:
 - a. Once you have a clear plan on what you would like and what you would like to offer, reach out to them.
 - b. [USE OUR EMAIL TEMPLATE HERE](#)
- 7. The conversation:
 - a. Start off with warm greetings and a genuine compliment. Thank them for sharing their time with you.
 - b. Ask them what some of their goals are and what they are looking to achieve in the next 90-180 days.
 - c. Present the opportunity:
 - i. Talk about your shared target market (and how you're not competitors)
 - ii. Share how it would be mutually beneficial
 - iii. Present what you are willing to offer them first

- iv. Then, share what you would like in return
 - d. Be prepared to share your metrics and feel free to ask them theirs
 - i. It's always best if list size/social following is comparable
 - e. Ask questions and be open to other options or offers
 - f. You do not have to make any hard promises during that first conversation
 - i. You (or they) can ask for time to consider, process, and reconnect later
- 8. Negotiate terms and agreements:
 - a. Clearly define roles, responsibilities, and expectations in a formal partnership agreement. Address key details such as financial contributions, marketing commitments, and timelines to avoid misunderstandings later on.
 - b. Both parties should sign 2 copies, and each keep one for their records
- 9. Execute and measure performance:
 - a. Check in regularly on progress to ensure all terms are met
 - b. Ensure you have a way to measure the results of these efforts
 - i. Dedicated landing page with specific URL
 - ii. Use a special promo code
 - c. If the partnership was not beneficial to you, do not feel pressured to continue or do it again
 - d. If it worked well, consider how you can adapt and evolve

[Click here for the full PDF: 9-Steps to Creating Community Partnerships](#)

Examples of beneficial business partnerships:

- Real estate agents
 - Real estate agents have a packet they give to new homeowners or renters. Ask to include postcards or business cards with new trial class offer:
 - Example messaging: "New in town? Join our dance family"
- Gyms
 - Oftentimes, gyms will host events or special pop-up classes. Ask to set up a table offering special dance class for members like 'Dance With Me' classes for parents and toddlers.
- Preschools and daycares
 - Offer to choreograph for their concerts, plays, and/or showcases and then hand out your flyers during pre-show and post-show festivities.
- Ice cream shops
 - One of IC Captain Kim Field's favorite partnerships is with a local Ice Cream Shoppe called the Split Banana - When one of her students achieve their splits - they receive a coupon from the Split Banana. They have done a few photo shoots

there and have promoted them on social media, too. All it took was an email to start the partnership.

- Music schools/theaters/visual art centers
 - Students interested in singing lessons may also be interested in dance classes, and vice versa. Through mutual referrals, both partners can expand their customer base and reach a wider audience, while also providing added value to their existing students. You also open the opportunity for interdisciplinary projects, joint performances, or shared resources.
- Other ideas:
 - Coffee shops
 - Physiotherapists
 - Florists
 - Athletic gear stores
 - Photographers
 - Beauticians
 - Give them logo placements, shout-outs on social media, and send out email offers to your clients from these businesses. In return you can request sponsorships, gifts, discounts for your families.

IC Captain Heather Buelow started a great initiative a few years ago where she selects 10 businesses and has her dancers participate in an in-costume photoshoot at the business location. She gets great advertising photos and gives the businesses full permission to use the photos for advertising, too. Having done this for a few years, businesses now look forward to getting new promotional material each year and she has a growing list of new businesses that want to work with her!

If you don't already have an established relationship with businesses, you can start by creating a VIP Directory of local businesses that you will promote to your studio families. *Consider all the different types of businesses we've listed above.*

Plan a face-to-face visit to pitch the directory to these businesses, highlighting the exposure their business will receive. Allow two weeks to create the directory, then inform the businesses of its launch and offer them a copy. Follow up with a phone call two weeks later, offering to provide gift cards or vouchers for your studio as an additional value proposition.

Collaborating with local schools:

Creating a partnership with your local school system is an excellent way to branch into the community. You can establish partnerships with schools by offering dance workshops, performances, or after-school programs. This collaboration not only promotes the studio but also enriches the educational experience for students.

Ways to get started:

1. Establish relationships with school administrators:
 - a. Reach out to school administrators, such as principals or curriculum coordinators, to introduce your studio and discuss potential collaboration opportunities. Offer to provide free workshops or demonstrations to showcase the value of dance education. Building relationships with key decision-makers can open doors for ongoing partnerships and residencies.
2. Networking with teachers and staff:
 - a. Network with teachers, counselors, and staff members at schools to create connections and opportunities for collaboration. Attending school events, such as career days or teacher professional development sessions, to introduce yourself and your studio. Offer to support teachers with dance-related activities or provide resources that align with curriculum objectives. By fostering relationships with school personnel, you can gain insight into their needs and interests, making it easier to propose teaching classes or residencies.
 - i. In return, you can ask to pass out your summer camp or class registration information. Oftentimes, students who already attend your studio will be at the school which presents an opportunity to use them as real-life testimonies to your studio!
3. Pitching tailored proposals:
 - a. Develop a tailored proposal that outlines the benefits of dance education and residency programs for schools. Highlight how your classes or residencies can enhance students' physical fitness, creativity, and social-emotional skills. Emphasize the alignment with academic standards and the flexibility of your programs to accommodate different grade levels and learning objectives. By presenting a clear value proposition and demonstrating the relevance of dance education to the school's goals, you can increase the likelihood of gaining access to schools for teaching classes and residencies.
 - i. [USE OUR TEMPLATE HERE](#)

Support community events:

Participating in or sponsoring local festivals, parades, charity events, or cultural celebrations not only showcases the studio's involvement but also fosters goodwill within the community. These are fun ways to stay active and building brand awareness in the community while keeping the involvements fun and accessible for all your students.

If one of your core values is 'community' then this is an excellent way to showcase that to not only the community, but instill these values in your students, too.

How do you choose which types of events to support?

1. Select relevant events:
 - a. Choose community events and initiatives that are relevant to your target audience and align with your studio's offerings. For example, participating in local parades or charity fundraisers can provide meaningful opportunities for engagement.
2. Demonstrate genuine interest:
 - a. Show genuine interest and enthusiasm when engaging with community events and initiatives. Actively participate, volunteer, and contribute in ways that showcase your studio's passion for community involvement.
 - i. If you have a parent committee, this is a great way for them to volunteer their time, too!
3. Provide value:
 - a. Offer value to the community through your involvement. This could include providing free workshops, performances, or educational resources that can entertain attendees, align with your studio's expertise, and still put your brand forward.
4. Build authentic relationships:
 - a. Focus on building authentic relationships with community members, organizers, and stakeholders. Listen actively, show empathy, and demonstrate a genuine commitment to supporting the community's needs and aspirations.
 - i. If you're not a member of your local Chamber of Commerce, this is an excellent way to stay current on your community's needs. Most chambers also offer quite a bit of advertising and support for their members.

Another way to support your community is by offering outreach programs. Providing outreach programs to underserved populations or offering scholarships to students in need demonstrates the studio's commitment to community enrichment and accessibility to the arts.

You don't have to accept every offer that comes your way. It's essential to be strategic and focus on opportunities that align with your target market and goals. If you're willing and able to invest the necessary resources, then it's worth pursuing. However, if it doesn't align or you're uncertain, it's okay to move on. In such cases, seeking referrals from others who have been in similar situations can provide valuable insights into the potential benefits.