5 Steps to a Successful Dance Studio Website

Whether your website is years old, days old, or still in the planning stages, it's smart to consider how it can be most effective and how you can get the most "bang for your buck". Getting clear on your wants and needs makes for a website you can be proud of. And better still, one that brings new dancers into your studio doors.

Here are five steps and exercises that will give you direction and make it easier for you and/or your website designer to give you a site that works. Grab a cup of coffee or a glass of wine (depending on the time of day and your inclination), and dig in!

1. Consider the Role your Studio Plays in Shaping a Student's Life

Let's assume that your students will become better dancers by taking class at your studio – that's a no-brainer. But beyond that, what will they grow to become? A more confident and poised young person? Someone with a deep love of the arts? A disciplined individual who can achieve whatever they set their mind to? A child with friends of similar interests plus a supportive dance family? A student ready for a professional dancing career?

Dance studios that have a strong understanding of the deeper value they provide to their dancers will become not just a place to take hip-hop class on Thursday nights, but an integral part of students' lives. And fully invested students have a much greater sense of loyalty – and give more referrals!

So ask yourself:

"What will children become at my studio? What will their transformation be?"

Take a little time to consider what your dancers become by being a part of your studio, and write your answers below (or in a document of your choosing):

_____
_____
_____

Getting this message across on your dance studio's website, through words, photos, and images, will connect you more easily to your best new customers – those who want what you most excel at.

2. Figure out your Website's Purpose

When you're very clear on your dance studio website's purpose, it will influence all the choices you make about design, information, and functionality.

You can also have a secondary purpose or purposes, but it's best to have one *primary* purpose.

So ask yourself:

"Why does my dance studio have a website?"

Your Dance Studio Website's purpose might be:

- To describe your dance classes and programs to people considering dance studios in your area
- To generate leads – to interest prospects enough that they reach out and contact you
- To impress upon website visitors your status as the #1 dance studio in your area
- To reduce help requests by providing all pertinent studio information on your site
- To give newbies a sense of what their experience would be if they join your studio
- To build your reputation in the community as an expert in the dance world
- To direct people to your method of registering for classes online

All of these are valid objectives, and it's great if your studio's website does all of these things. But there needs to be one purpose put above all the others, a single purpose that your website strategy should focus on.

Your Website's Purpose:

Take a few good minutes and identify the mission – the purpose – of your website:
_____
_____
_____

You may have a fantastic website design with all the bells and whistles, but to get your message across, you need to know your site's primary purpose.

3. Determine your Individual Page Goals

You now have an excellent understanding of what you're providing to students and the purpose of your website. These are high level understandings that will color the overall experience of your website visitors.

It's now time to make your website work in your best interest. Defining your page goals will hugely improve the experience of those visiting your site, and that's our next step.

Getting lots of prospects to your dance studio's website is Not Enough.

People come to your dance studio's website with specific tasks, or goals, in mind. These tasks could be to learn about your studio's mission and history, view your class schedule, sign up for your studio newsletter, and/or to send you an email with questions. If it isn't easy to complete the tasks, they'll leave. To help visitors have success, there should be one clear focus on each webpage.

What are the top goals visitors want to complete on your website? Do they want to:

- find out about class times?
- figure out what their child should be wearing to ballet class?
- register for classes?

Align your page goals with the goals of your website visitors, and you're starting your relationship with them off right.

If you're not sure what the most common goals are, consider what questions dance parents and prospects ask most when they send you an email or call your studio. Brainstorm with your office staff.

So ask yourself:

"What do you want people to do when they visit?"

Write down the name of each of your webpages, and then the #1 goal for each page:

_____
_____
_____

The results you come up with from this exercise will help make it easy for visitors to find the information they're looking for, and complete their goals (one of which is hopefully to register for classes ☺).

4. Focus on your Website's Navigation & Usability

You will not lose a site visitor because your homepage doesn't "pop" enough, but you will lose plenty if they can't figure out how to get to your class schedule quickly and easily. Ease of navigation is ***imperative*** for a successful dance studio site!

Your website designer will help you with this, obviously, but it's smart for you to keep usability in mind when you're working with them. Whether you're revamping your entire website or just your navigation, a site map or outline can help determine where pages should go and what items should be placed together.

I'd strongly recommend looking at your navigation as if you're a prospect or dance parent. Do so, and you'll have a greater sense of how to organize your site's navigation and make it user-friendly.

Make sure to use terminology in your navigation bar that newbies will understand. A new family in your area will have no idea that your competition team is called Shining Stars. Instead of using that as your nav bar heading, use 'Competition Team'. The tabs on your navigation bar should be plainly obvious to them, otherwise they'll end up getting frustrated.

So ask yourself:

"If I were a non-dancer and had never been to my site before, would I be able to move easily through it?"

List any headings on your navigation bar that need some work (or rearranging), and notes on how to make improvements:

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_____
_____

Making sure that your navigation makes sense in the eyes of your site's visitors will allow them to move freely through your site to find what they need (and what you want them to see).

5. Make it Look AWESOME!

Yes, top level planning and navigation are very important, but come on now… you also want a website that looks fantastic! Having a site that is visually rich, highly creative, and a reflection of your dance studio's personality will, quite simply, bring in new dancers.

Sometimes a change of background or color scheme will freshen up a website sufficiently. Other times, a full website redesign is in order. Which route is best for you depends on how well your current website is serving your studio, how it holds up against those of your competitors, and other factors such as cost and time availability.

Want to get clear on your aesthetic desires for your new or updated website? Compile a list of other dance studio websites you like and make notes about why you like them. This can be a super fun exercise, but also a bit of a rabbit hole.

For best results, I'd recommend searching out studio websites from other states and giving yourself a time limit. Looking at studios in other regions lets you hone in on your likes and dislikes without the emotions that invariably arise when considering the websites of your competitors. And setting a time limit is valuable because it will keep you focused (we all know how hours can go by when sailing around the internet).

Obviously, you're not looking to "copy" another studio's website, but it's a starting point from which a unique design can be created for your studio.

As you're considering the aesthetics of your website, look back at the exercises you've completed. Remembering your target audience, purpose, goals, and navigation during the design process will put you on the path to a dance studio website that is successful on all levels.

For example, you may enjoy pastel colors in your personal life, but if your website's purpose is to establish your studio as the premier hip hop school in your area, catering to boys as well as girls, then the best website color scheme for your target audience would likely be much darker.

So ask yourself:

"What should a website that properly reflects my dance studio look like?"

Write down the website addresses of sites you love, and then **why** you like each website:

_____

_____

_____

Putting It All Together

Congratulations! You've gone through the 5 step process and (hopefully) have more clarity about your dance studio's website and how it can best serve you. Sharing your findings with your web designer will put you on the same page. If your goals and desires are kept top of mind when updates or an overhaul to your site are made, your website will make both you and its visitors happy.

One More Thing…

Remember that a successful dance studio website isn't a "set it and forget it" type of thing. Consistently updating your website's content, monitoring the site's progress, and making improvements will make it as effective as can be. Your website is your #1 marketing tool; you're smart to give it regular attention!

Let Us Hear From You!

I hope you enjoyed "*5 Steps to a Successful Dance Studio Website*"! Is your dance studio in need of a new website? That's what we do! We'd love for you to tell us about your dance studio website needs and to ask any questions you might have.

Contact us for a free consultation on how we can meet your specific design needs.

About the Author

Stacey Marolf is a website design and marketing expert who helps studio owners bring more dancers into their studios.

A former dancer/dance teacher/choreographer, she started Studio of Dance.com after a back injury sidelined her in 2003. Since then, Stacey and her team have dedicated themselves to helping dance studios grow their businesses through professionally designed websites and marketing strategies.

In need of a new dance school website or just want to check out our portfolio for fun? Please head over to Studio of Dance.com!