

**Ask Diane “I love to teach but hate to sell!” July 17, 2009**

*Dear Diane,*

*I've been a teacher for two years. I love to dance and I love watching my students grow. But I am extremely uncomfortable selling dance lessons.*

*Our students are treated like walking wallets. The sales procedure at our studio requires we spend part of every lesson selling set packages of lesson plans, regardless of what our students want.*

*I have a sales meeting with my manager every week and I never make my quota. I'm on the verge of being put on probation, even though I am a great teacher and the only one on staff who is professionally certified.*

*I wanted to be a dance teacher, not a car salesman, but I can't teach anyone if I lose my job!*

*Please help.*

*Sincerely,*

*Denise in Portland*

Dear Denise,

Thanks so much for this great question. The emphasis on sales has bedeviled the ballroom industry for a long time. Many wonderful teachers, like you, are uncomfortable with traditional hard-sell techniques and strict lesson contracts.

There is nothing inherently wrong with selling dance lessons, as long as the sale is **customer-focused** and based on your student's individual goals and desires. If you look at the sale as an extension of your teaching relationship, you will maximize the student's learning experience and make the sale as well.

Before you even begin the process of selling, spend some time at the beginning of each teaching day focusing on your intentions for your lessons. This does not mean you intend to do 25 repetitions of the Samba bounce. Your intentions here involve creating a warm and supportive atmosphere in which your student's individual learning style and goals are respected. You want to be open to which teaching methods seem to work with each student, and which methods are less successful.

Be accountable to your students and to your profession by being on time, appropriately dressed, trained to teach the dance you are working on at a professional level, and 100% focused on your student for the entire lesson.

Your professionalism will enable you to identify your student's dance goals and desires, and this, in turn, will enable you to create a lesson plan that is truly in line with the optimal dance experience for each individual student. For example, if your student would like to lose weight, you can suggest working on Lindy Hop or Salsa, and making a goal to spend an evening dancing at a Salsa club. If your student is interested in serious competitive dancing, you create a lesson plan that will prepare him to compete at the next local competition at the appropriate level.

Your behavior with your student is always generous, appreciative, truthful, and attentive. Your integrity will enable you to sell your student a lesson plan that is completely in accord with his best interests. You as his teacher are in the best position to accomplish this because of your relationship with him.

And you will sell lessons! These lessons are the path to achieving your student's goals. He will soon discover, as we all have, how wonderful and transformative ballroom dancing is. The very best teachers always sell the most lessons, and it won't be long before your results speak for themselves.

Thank you again, Denise, for this wonderful question. Dedicated teachers like you are at the vanguard of transforming the sales process in the ballroom world, and I salute you!

Warm Regards,

*Diane*

*Diane Jarmolow welcomes your questions and comments. She has recently created a revolutionary sales training program for dance teachers at all levels, and is also available for consultation on a wide range of issues involving dance teacher training, BDTC-in-a-Box, studio management, and studio culture. You can visit her web site at [www.teachballroomdancing.com](http://www.teachballroomdancing.com), and can contact her at [diane@teachballroomdancing.com](mailto:diane@teachballroomdancing.com).*