

CASTRO CONSULTING PROPOSAL FOR SERVICES

For Verne Fowler School of Dance & Theatre Arts, Colonia, NJ

OVERVIEW



The Verne Fowler School is a “fixture” in the Central Jersey dance world, with many former students having gone on to professional performing careers. The school’s 60th anniversary is a perfect time to reflect on the past and look toward the future. This proposal addresses strategies that will promote the school and celebrate its rich history while encouraging new students to sign up for classes.

Castro Consulting is pleased to submit this proposal for services to support the Verne Fowler School in achieving your goals for celebrating your 60th year in business and increasing enrollment.



Research

i My research indicates that area dance schools use social media (Facebook) and a school website to communicate with current and prospective students. The Verne Fowler School has an old website that is seldom updated, but they actively use their Facebook page to communicate with their publics. Redesigning the website and including more detailed information will help them communicate their message to new and prospective students.

To celebrate the school’s 60th anniversary, which is also known as the diamond anniversary, we will plan an event that allows target audiences to share their memories and create new ones. This will be a sparkling 60th anniversary party to be held in conjunction with the December Nutcracker performance. Everyone who attends the show will be invited to the party immediately afterward. The celebration will be promoted on Facebook, the Facebook alumni page, and the new website.

There are four target audiences for this campaign:

- Current students and parents at the school (who will want to celebrate this important milestone)
- Potential students and their parents (who will see what the school offers and sign up for classes)
- Alums of the school (the “nostalgia market,” who will buy tickets to attend the performances, purchase anniversary T-shirts, attend the anniversary party/reunion to mingle with their friends, and perhaps even sign up for alumni classes)
- Other area dance schools (whose owners may have been trained at the school, and whose students have interacted with the school at competitions and other dance events over the years).



Planning

- Objectives--The objectives of this campaign are to celebrate the Verne Fowler School’s anniversary and to encourage new students to sign up for classes.

- Strategies--This campaign will take advantage of social media, traditional media, and a special event to showcase Verne Fowler's history as a leader in the dance community and current and future opportunities available at the school.



Implementation



The key message is that the school is steeped in tradition, and the implication of that message is that future students will become part of a family when they register for classes.

Tactics

- Verne Fowler has retired from actively running the school, but her presence is still widely felt through frequent visits to classes and her appearance at major performances. Interviewing her and getting her recollections about the early days of her business will provide interesting material for the redesigned website and for local news media (the local newspapers, News12 New Jersey, etc.).
- My analysis of the school's website (www.vernefowerschoolofdance.com) compared with that of another area dance school (Woodbridge School of Dance [WSD]; www.woodbridgedance.com) shows that important elements are missing from the site. WSD includes bios and head shots of all their faculty members, descriptions of their classes, and numerous performance and classroom photos. The Verne Fowler School has a proud history that should be emphasized in a separate section on the website, complete with interviews and photos.
- The Verne Fowler School has a "VF Alums" Facebook page that is very popular with former students of the school. Digitizing many of the studio's old photos and adding them to a "history" section of the website would appeal to these former students, who enjoy sharing their memories of their time at the school.
- We will create a 60th anniversary logo to be used on all correspondence, programs, social media, and T-shirts produced during the anniversary year. Because the 60th anniversary is also known as the diamond anniversary, I am envisioning a sparkly T-shirt that will appeal to many of the younger students (who are primarily female). T-shirt sales will be promoted on social media, on the website, in the school's reception area, and at performances.
- The anniversary logo will also be used in a new one-page flier to promote the school at local street fairs and other arts events. Basic information about the school's offerings and contact information (website, phone number, Facebook page) to get additional details about the school will be listed.
- In conjunction with the Nutcracker performance in December, we will host a 60th anniversary party/reunion and invite anyone who has purchased a ticket for the show to attend. Light refreshments (including celebration cupcakes) will be served, and T-shirts will be available for purchase. As a special promotion, anyone who signs up for classes while at this event will receive a discount on their tuition. They will pay just 60% of the standard class fee for one year.



Evaluation



Success of this campaign can be measured in several ways:

- The number of mentions in various media would show that the campaign was getting attention.

- An increase in the number of children registering for classes would show that new students were hearing the message. When students register, there will be a “How did you hear about us” section for them to self-report this information on the registration materials. These data can then be easily pulled for analysis.
- Members of the target audience interacting with the school’s social media platforms, sharing their own photos, and using a specially created hashtag could also be monitored and measured.
- Monitoring traffic on the redesigned website will show any increases resulting from the new design.
- Ticket sales for the school’s two major productions (the Spring Recital and The Nutcracker) could be compared to those from previous years to see if the increased publicity results in greater attendance.

CONCLUSION

The 60th anniversary of the Verne Fowler School of Dance & Theatre Arts is a milestone to be celebrated and shared with the Central Jersey dance community. We look forward to working with the Verne Fowler School and supporting your efforts to share the joy of dance with this audience. We are confident that we can meet the challenges ahead, and we stand ready to partner with you in delivering an effective campaign.

If you have questions on this proposal, feel free to contact Helen Castro at your convenience by email at helen.castro@rutgers.edu or by phone at 732-841-6795. We will be in touch with you next week to arrange a follow-up conversation on the proposal.

Thank you for your consideration,

Helen A. Castro

Helen A. Castro
Principal, Castro Consulting

Part II—Analysis

For our final client pitch, I decided to create a PR campaign strategy for the Verne Fowler School of Dance & Theatre Arts in Colonia, NJ (hereafter referred to as the Verne Fowler School), which is celebrating its 60th year in business in 2018.

The design I have chosen for the handout I will present to the client includes graphics that will appeal to people affiliated with a dance school. In particular, I have selected clip art showing the five ballet positions and have used them to enumerate the sections of the proposal.

The Verne Fowler School is the oldest continuously operating dance school in Central New Jersey. The year 2018 marks the school's 60th year in business teaching dancers and performers ranging in age from preschool through adult. The influence of Verne Fowler Kreisel ("Aunt Verne") is ever present in the studio, and students feel like they are part of a family. It seems important to emphasize the warmth and connection felt by all those associated with the school during this milestone anniversary year. As Newsom, VanSlyke Turk, and Kruckeberg note, "You must clearly define your publics before planning your strategy. The demographics and psychographics of your publics will give you insight into the tactics and techniques you should employ to make your strategy succeed" (Newsom et al., 2013, p.300). I have selected four priority publics and targeted specific strategies to each one.

My first public is current students and parents at the school, who are core consumers of the brand. Many of these families have a long history at the school, often with students who grew up studying there sending their own children for dance lessons or even returning to take adult classes. This audience is actively engaged with the school through daily classes, interaction with the school's Facebook page, and participation in performances. Many of these students study all dance disciplines offered at the school ("from soup to nuts," as Aunt Verne has been known to say). Therefore, because they are already thoroughly engaged, their interest in the 60th anniversary will be that of wanting to celebrate with their dance family. Four years ago, many current students and alumni returned to the school to celebrate Aunt Verne's 80th birthday, so it is likely that they will be attracted to the special event that we have planned for the day of the Nutcracker performance, at which they can socialize with their friends, reminisce with alumni, and visit with Aunt Verne. In addition, many of them will want to purchase the 60th anniversary T-shirts featuring the anniversary logo. It is common for students to wear their Verne Fowler School-branded shirts for classes and rehearsals, and current students will welcome the opportunity to buy a new shirt for their collection. Because the 60th anniversary is also known as the diamond anniversary, I am envisioning a sparkly T-shirt that will appeal to many of the younger students (students at the school are primarily female). My inspiration for this style comes from the merchandise that was created for Disneyland's recent 60th anniversary celebration in 2015 (<http://micechat.com/102694-disneyland-diamond-celebration-merchandise/>).

The second target audience for this campaign is potential students and their parents, who may live in the area and have an interest in dance school. According to Valet and Pagano (2017), "Choosing the right studio can be a challenge." It is important to "visit the school, meet the staff, see the facilities and, above all, observe a class" before deciding to sign up (Valet & Pagano,

2017). There are many dance schools in Central Jersey, so being able to stand out from the crowd is important. One way that this campaign achieves this is through the proposal to have Aunt Verne interviewed for the local news media. In this way, she can share her story with those who may not know it. In addition, she can share the stories of former students who have gone on to successful careers in the performing arts, which will reinforce the school's reputation for high-quality training. Photographs or video accompanying the story in print, online, or on local television stations could show current students in class to illustrate some of the training options available and old head shots of famous alumni who got their start here. According to Newsom et al., "Publicity is information about an organization that is carried as editorial (not advertising) content in a publication or news medium" (2013, p.234). Sharing this type of publicity with *local* media is an effective strategy for reaching the target audience.

Another way to target potential students is through social media and a redesigned website. Current students who are active on Facebook could be encouraged to share the school's posts on their own pages to give them greater exposure. The Facebook page and "VF Alums" Facebook page could share links to the school's new website. As Newsom et al. note, maintaining interest in a website involves "offering substantive content, keeping it updated and fresh, making it easy to navigate and having all of the 'basic' data such as you would expect to find on organizational 'fact sheets'" (Newsom et al., 2013, p.248). A redesigned website that draws potential students in with a vibrant section on the school's history, current class schedule, biographies and photos of teachers, descriptions of classes, and videos of performances will help potential students see the opportunities available to them if they register. The new website and the school's social media channels could also contain an announcement inviting potential students to buy a ticket to see the Nutcracker performance and meet the school family at the party afterward. This is a great way for potential students and their families to engage with the school. Who wouldn't want to enjoy a 60th anniversary cupcake after watching a magical dance performance?

An additional tactic to engage with potential students is the use of a brochure. According to Newsom et al., "The first decision you have to make in producing a brochure is to determine its purpose and its *audience*" (Newsom et al., 2013, p.259; emphasis in original). The target audience for this brochure is *potential* students who may be attending local street fairs or other arts events. Because of this, the brochure needs to contain relevant information about how to contact the school, along with links to the website and social media pages. The message is important, but the design is equally important. Brochures "often succeed or fail with readers because of the strength or weakness of their graphics" (Newsom et al., 2013, p.259). The brochure must catch and keep the reader's attention.

The third audience for this campaign, the "nostalgia market," consists of dance school alumni. Many members of this audience remain engaged with the school through the Facebook alumni page. Some members of this audience are former students who might be interested in coming back to take an adult class, whereas others are looking to reunite with old friends and reminisce about the fun times they shared at the Verne Fowler School. Many have moved away from the area, and getting them to engage with the school on social media is a way to broaden the reach of the school. A milestone anniversary is a great "excuse" for a reunion, and this audience would be excited to come to the Nutcracker performance and the party if they felt that

it would be a chance to see their old friends and share memories. Once they are at the event, they would be eager to purchase an anniversary T-shirt as a reminder of the party, and those who live nearby might even be interested in signing up for adult classes. This is a potential area of growth for the school, which currently offers a limited number of classes for adults.

The final audience, teachers and students from area dance schools, will be interested in the campaign for a few reasons. First, teachers might be familiar with the Verne Fowler School because they were former students when they were young. They will want to celebrate their “roots.” Students from area dance schools might have interacted with the school at competitions and other events over the years and will want to attend the party so they can share this moment with fellow dancers. Other students might be looking for a new dance school and will appreciate the detailed information available on the school’s redesigned website.

This campaign would be the first of its kind for a dance school in this area, which could start a trend with other schools as they mark significant milestones in their history. And if other schools adopt similar campaigns, everyone will know that the idea came from the Verne Fowler School, which will make the school even more prominent and reinforce its reputation as a leader in the field.

Although this campaign is directed to four separate target audiences and uses multiple methods and media to reach each one, the message being conveyed is consistent. The Verne Fowler School is steeped in tradition, and everyone who has ever been involved with the school is part of the family. Whether you take one class or ten, you can join this family and share in its proud history while dancing into the future together. In addition, including a special event in conjunction with one of the school’s major performances—and providing a discount to new students who register as a result of attending that event—is an effective way to target all of the audiences at once.

The evaluation phase of this campaign will involve several steps. First, we will track the number of mentions of the school in traditional media (print, television, and online news sites) to measure how much exposure the campaign is getting. Next, because the school’s new registration materials will include a “How did you hear about us” section, we will be able to collect that data from all new students and analyze the impact of our various strategies on enrollment. We can use online tools to monitor and measure the use of a specially created hashtag that the school will introduce and the target audience will be encouraged to use when they discuss the school or the anniversary, or when they share their photos on social media. It will also be important to monitor traffic on the redesigned website and compare the amount of interaction to what the old website received in order to determine whether the new design is getting people to come to the site more often or to engage with it longer once they are there. After the 60th anniversary party, we can either talk to some of the people who attended or distribute a survey to get their feedback on the event. Finally, we can keep track of T-shirt sales and ticket sales from the school’s two major productions and compare them to those from previous years to see if our efforts have led to an increase in sales.

This campaign for the Verne Fowler School’s 60th anniversary illustrates the importance of following the RPIE model. With careful research about the needs of the target audiences,

strategic planning, implementation of specific tactics, and follow-up evaluation of the actions taken, we can ensure a successful anniversary celebration and increase business for the school.

References

- Newsom, D., VanSlyke Turk, J., & Kruckeberg, D. (2013). *This is PR: The realities of public relations* (11th ed.). Boston, MA: Wadsworth.
- Valet, V., & Pagano, E. (2017, July 20). Happy feet: Best dance schools for your kid. *NJ Family*. Retrieved from www.njfamily.com/Choosing-the-Right-Dance-Studio/