



## MoveStudio Instructors Forum: March 7, 2008 Meeting Minutes & Notes

To start the meeting, we went around the circle introducing ourselves. Everyone was invited to offer a question or issue to the group for answers, ideas or feedback on during the course of the meeting. The questions offered were:

- Customer retention -- what do other studios do?
- How to bring in new students?
- How to balance personal practice with teaching?
- How to maintain perfect room temperature?
- How can we create more synergy/cohesion between instructors and staff?
- How can we help students embrace new rooms?
- How can we convert series students into long term customers?
- How can we draw more people to our Dance Jam events?
- What are some tips for remembering students' names?
- What are some tips for comfortably fitting students and dealing with limited supplies?
- How to handle latecomers?
- What protocol or standards were decided on for Pilates Equipment room?
- How can we emphasize the "MoveStudio difference"... physical, spiritual and emotional well-being, out with "no-pain, no-gain" philosophy

### ***Customer Survey Discussion***

Main topic of meeting was the Customer Survey feedback, which was conducted from December through January. 181 students responded with lots of constructive ideas, comments, stories, and of course, some complaints. Our focus in the meeting was this feedback and how we can use it to improve and increase business.

Lisa will be providing the link to the survey results so that instructors can review. A few instructors mentioned that they were not aware of the survey. We remind you of the importance of reading the "What's New at MoveStudio" email bulletin every week, so that you stay up to date and able to answer your students' questions about things going on at the studio. If you are not receiving these emails, please let Robin or Lisa know ASAP.

Top three "favorite" instructors of survey respondents were Jule, Mimi and George, who were asked to share their tips for success, and how they make a difference to so many.

Jule:

- Has a true passion for her specialty, Nia
- Tries to make her class feel 'new' every time, keep it fresh, playful
- Pays special attention to creating community; facilitates weekly coffees, has a mailing list to keep students informed, etc.

Mimi:

- Welcomes a new person directly, one-on-one, reassuring them and going out of her way to make them feel noticed and comfortable
- Has a couple of outgoing self-appointed “PR” people in class, that also go out of their way to take care of new students and make people feel comfortable
- Students know that they matter to Mimi personally
- Also uses email to communicate regularly with students

George

- Makes it a priority to learn every student’s name
- Gets to know students personally
- Spends time talking with students before and after class
- Challenges students to push beyond their comfort zones
- Often stands up front as people sign in, making a point to look at name and associate it with student, and also welcoming students
- Students are encouraged to get to know each other in class
- George also matches them based on personality, etc, for semi-private training

Shannon shared her technique for learning names -- at the start of each class, she gathers everyone for “Circle Time with Shannon”-- everyone introduces themselves, and this helps, especially with repetition, to learn names. She also shares the focus/intent for class while circled. This creates a sense of community and shared intention. This also helps newcomers feel welcome, without singling them out.

Reanee’s name-learning trick is to have everyone sign their name on the whiteboard as they enter class. As a visual learner, she finds it helpful to see the name written and associate it with the person.

Robin emphasized the importance of introducing yourself in every class, and never assuming everyone knows your name.

***Other survey findings:***

Many people listed instructors’ names as their “favorite thing about MoveStudio” or the “number one reason they come to MoveStudio.”

The instructors named the most on questions that did not specifically ask for names were Mimi, Jule and Gary.

Many (most) instructors were named in either favorite instructor or other positive categories.

The general consensus in the survey results was that what people love about MoveStudio, what they consider positive experiences, revolve around the following themes:

- Feeling like I matter
- Feeling like I’m noticed
- Feeling cared for

The big challenge is creating **consistent experience**, because the opposite of this was also true. What people reported they don't like about MoveStudio, what they consider negative experiences, revolve around the following themes:

- Feeling like I don't matter
- Feeling like I'm not noticed
- Feeling uncared for

For example, many people mentioned that what they love best about MoveStudio is being welcomed by front desk staff. Many others mentioned that they weren't being welcomed by front desk staff. To correct this situation, front desk staff has been making extra efforts to ensure that every person that walks through the door is greeted with at least a "Hi!" Instructors present in the front desk/reception area as people arrive can also help by greeting people if desk staff are on the phone, away from the desk, etc.

Another topic commonly mentioned in the survey was noise issues in the hallways, especially outside Studio B. Noise outside of class is being addressed with increased signage and "shushing" from desk staff. However, we don't want to squelch students' enthusiasm when they're simply energized and happy about being at MoveStudio! It's important for instructors to help students adapt to some noise from the common areas, *as part of their practice*, instead of feeding into the feeling that something is "wrong" or people in the hall "should" be more quiet and respectful of those in class. This is a very challenging issue due to our facility layout.

Robin mentioned that instructors can take note of the timeframes that tend to be the noisiest (class transition times) and avoid doing meditation or very quiet activities during those times. Instructors of dance classes can also help the situation by reminding their students at the end of class about the other, more quiet, activities going on in other rooms and the need to maintain low voices in the hallways, at the water fountain, etc. This may be a reminder that needs to happen at the end of every class, especially if you know there are yoga classes going on when your class lets out.

**Sound/Volume Management Reminder:** Aside from talking in hallways, another common sound complaint is music carrying over from other studios. To help minimize this, be sure to close the door(s) to your studio BEFORE you turn on your music at full volume. All studio doors must be closed once class begins. While it may seem more "inviting" to leave the door open, the sound coming from your room through the open door contributes greatly to the noise problem and bleed-through of sound between studios.

Another common customer complaint was other students who arrive late for classes and are disruptive, as well as teachers who chronically arrive late. The latter is simply unacceptable, and Robin emphasized that if you are unable to arrive on time for your classes consistently we need to look at whether a schedule change is needed. The former is somewhat out of our control, as we know some students will always arrive late. However, instructors can help manage this situation by talking openly in class about the need to be on time and how disruptive it is to come in late, as well as talking privately outside of class with individuals who are chronically late or don't understand how to enter class late without being disruptive. Another idea is to always have an extra mat or two already set up, with props, etc., for those inevitable latecomers. Front desk staff is

working to more effectively enforce our late policy of 10 minutes for mat-based classes and up to 20 minutes for dance classes, depending on how crowded it is.

### ***Client Relationships, Class Management, etc.***

A good amount of time was spent discussing client relationships, and managing class and student issues, challenges and differences.

Robin and others emphasized the importance of the following:

- Instructors review protocol in each class, address specific expectations
- Instructors maintain control in classroom; don't appear wishy-washy or unsure of your authority, or some students will take advantage or take over
- Teach tolerance in class
- When needing to confront a 'problem student,' be firm and straightforward but also sensitive, presenting possible solutions to the problem you are addressing

Robin stated that teachers are responsible for maintaining a comfortable temperature in their rooms. If you don't know how to operate the thermostats in every room you teach in, see Robin, Amber or Crystal. Robin emphasized again that it is important you take responsibility for this, or your students will either start taking the liberty of adjusting temperature themselves, or just blame you for their discomfort. Robin suggested the following:

- Frequently ask the class if they are comfortable, and don't just listen to the outspoken students, try to get a consensus. You will not be able to please everyone, so don't go to extremes to please just one or two students.
- Suggest to students who are always too warm when everyone else is comfortable that they choose a spot under one of the fans if possible and/or wear lighter clothing.
- In general, it is preferable for rooms to be too warm than too cold. It is safer for the body, and most people will assume that they are simply getting a better workout if they break a sweat. Temperature should never be set below 70 in ANY room!
- Figure out what your ideal temp is for each of your classes, and set the thermostat when you arrive, rather than waiting until it is too warm or too cool.

In regards to maintaining a comfortable temperature in Studio A, which has presented a challenge for many, Robin suggested that setting the FAN to "on" vs. "auto" can help, as this way the system does not keep turning on and off during class. In addition, because of that room's western exposure and wall of windows, the "ideal" temperature setting will change rapidly depending upon time of day, so you may simply need to keep adjusting the temperature during class as opposed to leaving it at a certain setting as we do in other rooms.

*(Additional info not discussed at meeting: Please DO NOT turn any thermostat to the "OFF" position! Use the arrows to adjust temperature up or down, as well as adjusting the FAN setting, to stop cold or hot air from blowing. When you turn the system off entirely, it is unable to return to its programmed settings at the end of the day. PLEASE do not do this, and do not drastically change temperature... usually an adjustment of one*

*or two degrees is all that's needed. Learn how to use the thermostats effectively, and also be respectful of the next teachers in that room by returning the system to a "normal" setting at the end of your class, especially if you have significantly raised or lowered the temperature.)*

In response to a question, Robin stated that all instructors are encouraged to bring their own music for classes. Each classroom is equipped for both CD and iPod/MP3 capability. If you're unsure how to operate any sound system, please see Robin or staff.

Regarding the new speakers and system in Studio D, for now they are staying but we are still looking at options. Please help students get comfortable with them, and learn to use the system properly to avoid frustration that students pick up on. If anyone has recommendations or referrals for professional audio technicians or consultants, please forward to Robin.

Lastly, Reanee won our drawing for attendees. She chose the \$75 in Boutique money and enjoyed shopping after the meeting.

## **ADDENDUM**

The following is additional info from Robin, in response to questions/issues posed at beginning of meeting, not discussed at the meeting due to running out of time:

*Customer retention -- what do other studios do?*

*How to bring in new students?*

*How can we convert series students into long term customers?*

*How can we draw more people to our Dance Jam events?*

We are actively working on strategies in all these areas. If anyone has ideas or suggestions, or experience from other studios of techniques that work, please share them with Lisa and we will share them with the entire group.

### ***How can we create more synergy/cohesion between instructors and staff?***

All of our MoveStudio staff is committed to helping our instructors provide the best possible experience for our clients. To that end, we are here to assist you as needed. However, first and foremost, staff is here to serve our clients and customers, and they must come first. Please be aware when you may be unnecessarily taking staff attention away from other priorities to deal with issues that are not urgent and could be handled later via phone or email. Or when you may be distracting staff at the front desk from providing their best possible service to clients. Or when you are consistently pulling staff off the desk to deal with the sound system or thermostat, which you should know how to operate. These are all frequent occurrences. It is "human nature" to get caught up in our own needs or conversations. In business, clients must come first and that we never know when the next one is going to walk in the door. So please, just be mindful in your interactions with staff at the desk. I think we must function as a team in order to be most effective in serving our clients. Whether staff or instructor, if you see a way you can assist our clients by helping out another instructor or staff member, jump in and do it! If you see a way you can help maintain the cleanliness and beauty of the facility, jump in and do it, rather than assume someone else is going to! If you see something that is out

of place or in need of repair, please jump in and correct it, or let a staff member know about it ASAP! Please do not complain in front of students or leave cryptic notes on equipment that clients may see. Help us to help you retain students and clients by presenting our best face at all times!

***How to balance personal practice with teaching?***

I encourage you to take advantage of one of the “perks” of teaching at MoveStudio - unlimited drop-in classes! In addition to giving you time to focus on your own practice, your presence in other teachers’ classes can also help our clientele get to know you and come try your classes. In addition, the smaller rooms are often available for your use for your personal practice, just check with desk staff in advance to find a time that is free. You do not have to “rent” the space when using it for your own personal practice or to prepare choreography for classes, etc.

***How can we help students embrace the new, smaller rooms?***

I personally believe that this is another example of students “taking their cue” from teachers. It is so important how we respond to complaints about things that are essentially out of our control, such as room size, noise from hallways, not enough yoga props, class scheduling, etc. We each have the ability to turn perceived negatives into positives, simply by choosing to focus on the positive and not feed into the negativity. Studio A may seem small to those used to classes in Studio B, but it is also one of our most beautiful rooms, with decorator lighting and an amazing custom art mural. How can it possibly be so bad? You can also talk privately with chronic complainers to explain how their behavior affects the mood and energy of the class and ask for their help in maintaining positive energy.

***What are some tips for comfortably fitting students and dealing with limited supplies?***

We have carefully calculated the maximum number of students each room can accommodate, but a lot depends upon you helping your students arrange their mats and manage props effectively. It is part of your responsibility as instructor to help students arrange themselves so that everyone fits and is comfortable. This is why it is critical to arrive early for your classes, so you can assist and take charge while people are finding their spots. Generally, it helps to ask students to move toward the front of the room rather than all crowding in the back, and to show them how to “stagger” their lines/mats so that even in a full class they are not running into their neighbors. Yoga teachers, please be sure you are letting students know the benefits of purchasing and bringing their own mats, blankets and other equipment.

***How can we emphasize the “MoveStudio difference”... physical, spiritual and emotional well-being, out with “no-pain, no-gain” philosophy?***

Talk about it! Remind students that this is why they come to MoveStudio. Dance, yoga and mind-body exercise create feelings of well-being that many people don’t experience with traditional exercise. Reinforce those feelings in your students. Ask them how they’re feeling, what they notice in their bodies and hearts, how they felt after their last class or workout, etc. Remind them what they’re doing all this for, and that it DOES work.

Again, if you have suggestions or information to offer on any of the questions raised at the meeting, please email them to Lisa so that she can share them back to the group.

**Closing Note from Robin:**

*Thanks for indulging me and my soapbox! I care passionately about creating a unique and wonderful experience for our clients and students, as well as our instructors and staff. I know you all care deeply as well. I strongly encourage us all to make it a priority to share information, ideas and assistance in a new and more connected way. The synergy in the room during our meeting was amazing to witness. I know it's challenging to have that kind of synergy on a day-to-day basis when we don't often see each other or have time to really connect, but it is so important. I am grateful for you and all you do. Thanks, Robin*