



Prepared for:  
*Square, Round &  
Traditional Dance Groups*

## **Research: Initial Report**

### **Scope:**

During this last year, CALLERLAB has worked on reorganizing its Foundation, to redefine it as a universal clearing house, open to representation and participation from ALL groups within the square, round and traditional dance community. And it strongly encourages all dance organizations, to join with them, in a collective effort to determine what steps CAN be jointly undertaken, to reverse the decline within our dance activity.

Utilizing the Foundation as a conduit, it hopes ALL dance groups will join in the effort, to co-develop and implement a remarkable marketing program, **THE PHOENIX PLAN**, the first stage of which is now under way. The responsibility for the Plan's completion and implementation, rests with the leadership of ALL S&RD organizations. The integration of each group's unique history and insight, coupled with their problem solving and leadership experience, is critical for the success of this Plan. To enjoy the support it needs, it must be understood, appreciated and embraced by the dance community at large. If this can occur, it will become, 'the new beginning', and the unifying ingredient in our formula for recovery.

CALLERLAB's fund raising efforts, along with generous donations from various individuals and organizations within the square and round dance community, is providing initial funding for the first step in this Plan. Utilizing market research, the Foundation proposes to examine the issues and problems confronting our S&R dance activity. It will, at the same time, become more knowledgeable about the competitive nature of the leisure, recreational, and fitness marketplaces, and how to better package and present its dance 'product' to attract the consumer's interest and loyalty. This initial Phase is equally concerned with the task of educating the existing dance population of S&R dancers, callers, and group leaders, to changes in perception support that will be required to support this new marketing approach.

### **Phase One Research:**

It appointed James Hensley, and his marketing company, CMS, to act as Marketing Director for the Foundation. In turn, the Foundation has engaged StarWorks, Inc., a respected market research company, to help in this work. This research data and analysis work, has the potential to impact all dance organizations, and help develop a successful promotional program. As indicated above, much of the Plan's success depends on ALL members of our fragmented community recognizing their, 'commonality of purpose', so that a working consensus can provide the necessary commitment and support, to make the Phoenix Plan a reality.

Phase One research seeks to discover the perception and image of square and round dancing, currently held by the 85 to 90% of our population that is not now square or round dancing. The Foundation is conducting two different types of studies to help answer these questions. There are Quantitative Studies, where we look at numbers and try to answer, "how many," and what is the "proportion," type question. And there are also Qualitative Studies, where we gather information about the, "what," and "how," and even begin to understand some of the, "why" questions.

## **Quantitative Study:**

In March of 2000, the Foundation commissioned an initial study, as an initial step in the marketing program.

### Study Objectives

- Conduct a low cost, preliminary study of general public opinion to
  - Assess the image of Square Dancing\*
  - Explore potential for expanding interest in Square Dance\*
  - Test viability of “Boomer Generation” as target for marketing efforts
  - Identify other possible marketing targets

### The Study

- 1887 respondents to National Family Opinion Internet Panel.
  - Balanced geographically and demographically
  - But limited by Internet methodology
- Three questions
- Large battery of demographic information

## **Questions Asked:**

1. *“Have you ever participated, as an adult, in square dancing?”*
2. *“Would you say you have a positive, negative, or neutral opinion of Square Dancing, \* or do you not know enough to say?”*
3. *“If you heard that Square Dancing\* is fun to do, a great activity for meeting and socializing with other adults, and also good for your health, would you consider joining a Square Dance\* class to learn how to do it?”*

\*Note: These questions used the term, ‘square dancing’, instead of the more inclusive, ‘square and round dancing’, to avoid confusion, since it was the more commonly recognized phrase.

## **Findings:**

1. Nationally, direct contact with SD is minimal. Most people (at least eight out of 10), have not participated in this activity as adults.
2. Yet, the image of SD seems stronger than anticipated. In this study, it proved to be moderately positive, with only a small minority having a negative opinion. Most people were neutral, and a third claimed to hold positive opinions.
3. People who had direct contact with SD as adults are much more likely to hold positive opinions of it. We can project that, experiencing the activity, appears to breed goodwill.
4. The reaction of people who have had contact with SD is similar across all income levels, yet people with incomes less than \$30,000 a year are significantly more apt to say they have a positive opinion of the activity than those who earn more.
5. Being younger, unmarried, and living alone, reduces the likelihood of having had direct contact with SD, and opinions of the activity in this group are naturally less positive.

6. Positioning SD as 'Fun-Social-and Healthy' would draw one in six to consider joining a class, and another 40% say they might consider joining a class. Together, the YES and MAYBE responses to consider joining a class, represent more than half of this national sample of respondents.
7. Despite parallel rates of adult experience with SD among males and females, there are significant differences between male and female responses. Females are far more positive than males and far more open to considering SD classes.

### **Summary:**

We have learned that:

1. Contrary to our original expectations, this study shows the general context for SD is relatively favorable. The activity does not appear to be facing a major negative image problem. Additional testing is necessary to validate this finding.
  - There is considerable potential for expanding interest in this activity.
  - The 'Baby Boomer' generation is a viable target market for SD, as are people over 55.
  - Specific marketing targets could focus on singles, who have been married, and on people with lower household incomes.

### **Recommendation:**

As we collectively begin to implement the Phoenix Plan, there needs to be further research to understand why, **whenthe general context for SD is relatively positive, the current level of participation is decreasing.** That kind of information will be critical to the Plan's final design, as well as our ability to initiate an effective marketing campaign.

### **Next Stage Research Studies:**

In looking for more, 'qualitative' type answers, the Foundation will begin "focus group" studies next month, in various cities around America. These will be in depth, face to face sessions, with a professional moderator questioning, under controlled conditions, a small representative group, of carefully chosen people. There will be groups of people who have not experienced our dance activity, and other groups who briefly danced, and then dropped out of the activity. These sessions, which are video taped and reviewed, will allow us to obtain better insight and answers for the more difficult, "what" and "how" (and perhaps, even some of the "why") questions, raised in our previous survey work.

Together these studies will begin to draw an accurate picture, of just whom our best prospects should be and what image they currently hold about S&R dance. Also, to some degree, we will began to understand what these consumers are seeking in their search for leisure time activity. From this data, our community of dancers and callers, can make better decisions, regarding recommended modifications to programs, attitudes, organizational structures, and the individual club member's changing role, if we REALLY want to attract those consumers to our classes.