


dance dresses are always popular at spring recitals, and she plans to offer dried flower posies in the coming year. While Thomas also focuses on gift items—stuffed animals, candy, charm bracelets, dance bags, cosmetic cases—she makes sure to carry some recital essentials. False eyelashes, spray glitter and tights are always great last-minute purchases, she says.

As for payment on the go, all three retailers agree that renting a credit card machine is too expensive. Most accept only cash or checks but will take credit card numbers from those they know personally. They advise selling products in a range of price points, from \$2 to \$50, even though the average sale will be \$10 to \$20. If you are unable to access your POS system remotely, keep track of what and how much you sell manually, so you can enter the sales when you return to the store.

A recital kiosk is also great marketing for future in-store sales. Drive traffic to your store by offering perks, like coupons for a discount on a customer's next purchase, or give a small percentage off to anyone who brings their recital ticket stub in before the end of the month. Be sure to hand out business cards and sign customers up for your e-mail list. Prior to the event, ask studio owners to mention your on-site setup in e-newsletters, e-mails and handouts, post flyers around their schools and make an announcement during intermission. Happy customers will return, and showgoers who don't make it to your booth will likely think of you when the need arises. 

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LAUREL'S LEADS

Top Tweets for the Holidays



Do you tweet? If your answer is no, it's time to make a change. Crafting 140-character posts for the micro-blogging site may sound time-consuming, but the process is easy to streamline (visit sites like HootSuite to schedule posts in advance), and your efforts will be rewarded with new customers.

The secret to success on Twitter is to limit the number of promotional messages. If you tweet 10 times a day, for example, only one should be directly about your business. This balance engages followers and turns them into frequent buyers. Here are some creative ways to incorporate interesting dance information and promotional messages into your Twitter feed this holiday season.

1 Gather all the details about local performances of *The Nutcracker*. Post show dates and ticket buying information, as well as facts about the history of the show—like where and when it was first performed and famous dancers who have held roles in the production. Encourage conversations

with questions, and make prizes available by in-store pickup.

five people who respond to the sentence, "Boy, was my face red..."

2 The color red is not just for holiday displays. Offer a discount to followers who wear red into the store, or take a percentage off all red dancewear items. While the promotion runs, ask your followers about holiday dance books they have read, or offer prizes to the first

3 Dancers value their health, and the holidays make it easy for their good eating habits to slip. A wellness initiative will create endless opportunities to tweet. Invite a nutritionist to the store and tweet about it before, during and after the event. You can also share your favorite recipes and healthy eating advice.

How to Get More Followers

If you haven't yet, invite shoppers on your e-mail list to follow you on Twitter. They already see value in being connected to you, so there's a good chance they'll join you online. Sweeten this request by offering a small giveaway or special shopping code when they follow.

Also, search hashtags such as #dance, #retail, #sales, #shoppers, #customers, to find people to follow. Many will check out your tweets and follow you as well. Plus, go through the list of followers of similar businesses, and once again, follow the people on it who seem like a good fit.

Don't forget to add your Twitter address to all of your printed materials—including your business cards, shopping bags and receipts—and to your e-mail signature and on your home page.

Laurel Tielis is the founder of Laurel Tielis and Associates, a retail consulting firm. She has over 15 years of retail experience, most recently serving as a marketing and public relations consultant for small businesses.



Got a marketing question for Laurel?

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