

# The Heat Is On

Retailers share their secrets on how to avoid a summer slowdown.

BY JEN JONES

**L**ooking to make the “lazy days of summer” a thing of the past? *DRN* spoke to five innovative storeowners determined to create a sunny outlook on summer sales. From in-store workshops to customer reward programs, these retailers are flipping the notorious slow season into a business heat-up. Who says sales can’t rise along with the temperature?

**Shawna Beth Rea, owner  
ATTITUDES DANCEWEAR, ETC  
Wichita, KS**



“Summer has always been a downtime for the store and the studios,” says Rea. “So last summer, we decided to use it wisely.” To keep dancers and their families in the fold, the storeowner conducted a series of workshops on topics including bun making, pointe-shoe care and foot health. Selected by the staff and based on questions asked frequently in the store, the sessions

were a big hit with customers. “People who signed up got a wealth of knowledge, takeaway info packets and freebies like mesh pointe-shoe bags, Epsom salt for the feet and hairnets,” says Rea, who plans on running the events again in July 2008. “Many customers also bought items. The whole idea ended up being very worthwhile. It kept people coming in and thinking about us.”

**Kelley Tumas, owner  
MOTIONS  
Rapid City, SD**

Despite a traditionally slow summer, Tumas says that Motions has grown gradually each year. She attributes much of this to her common-sense approach: During June and July, the shop reduces its hours of operation

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in an effort to cut costs. “We make our days shorter, but more productive,” she says. “We also order sparingly, although I joke with my husband that it never fails—the one thing we don’t order is the one thing someone needs!” Another summer tradition at the store is a large June sale in which the entrepreneur offers sizable discounts on “discontinued items and other odds and ends.”

Last summer, Motions also sponsored and organized a summer dance competition at a local theater. “It didn’t bring in a lot of revenue, but it was successful,” says Tumas, who has owned the store for five years. Looking ahead, she hopes to hold either a similar event or a fashion show in August 2008.

**Debi Hughes, owner**  
**“THAT REALLY GOOD DANCE STORE”**  
**St. Charles, IL**

At “that really good dance store,” summer doesn’t mean lights out. Children’s theater is extremely popular in the area, and the storeowner uses the time to shift gears. “I have a big group of loyal theater kids who keep me afloat,” says Hughes, who has provided gear for productions of *The Music Man* and *The Wizard of Oz*. “They often need body liners, hair accessories, character shoes, jazz shoes, shorts, tights and false eyelashes.”

Summer is also when Hughes catches up on her

sewing, especially for custom-made skirts that are particularly popular with tiny dancers. “The skirts are something that customers can’t get any place else,” says the retailer, who has been in business since 2002.

**Kathy Kosty, owner**  
**ALL THAT JAZZ**  
**Wexford, PA**



Focusing on the upcoming back-to-school rush occupies much of Kosty’s summer. “We spend our time trying to get ahead before back-to-school hits,” she says. “July is our slowest month, but it’s also a great time to get all the fall merchandise price-tagged and out on the floor.” The retailer also prepares a letter for studios and customers that previews the store’s sales, offering promo giveaways and discount incentives to shop during August. “It helps alleviate the huge flow of customers after Labor Day,” says Kosty.

According to the storeowner, another part of All That Jazz’s summer success has been the launch of its loyalty card. “July is still our slowest month, but not as slow as it was prior to the loyalty program,” she admits.

“It has been extremely positive for us. Customers continue to shop during the summer because they love to get rewards.”

**Amy Kenney, owner**  
**BOULDER BODY WEAR**  
**Boulder, CO**

An influx of dance festivals is what keeps Boulder Body Wear afloat throughout July and August. “We have so many dance programs around here during the summer months that we started to cater to them,” says Kenney. Among others, she names the Boulder Jazz Dance Workshop, the Frequent Flyers Aerial Festival and the Motion Underground Hip-Hop Festival as parts of the mix.

Dancers from all over the world fly in to Boulder for these diverse events, contributing to the continuous flow of business at the shop. Because of their varied backgrounds, they often have a range of costuming and dancewear needs and preferences that are just as eclectic. So how does Kenney maximize the opportunity? “We always give festival attendees a discount and place an ad in the programs, including a website plug so they’ll continue to shop with us when they get home,” she says. ■

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