

HOW TO START YOUR OWN SCHOOL

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HOW TO START YOUR OWN SCHOOL

For Those Who Stand Apart

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introduction

There are many reasons for opening a school of the martial arts. Martial Arts give confidence to people. They give coordination and health and well being. They enhance the individual in more ways than the beginner can imagine.

So what you are doing is noble. For that reason you deserve help. For that reason I write this little tome concerning my experiences in running schools.

This is not an end all. Like the art itself, the art of running a school is filled with endless realizations and satisfactions.

But this should give you a running leap. By readin this book and following which advices pertain to you (not all of my advices will pertain to everybody, people are different, and so are arts) you should at least come to know which directions to follow, which areas you need to learn more about, and which areas you need not concern yourself about.

That all being said, prepare to start the adventure of your life.

chapter one
MONEY

For your martial arts school to survive it needs concern itself with money.

It is a cold, hard fact that you have to pay rent. You have to pay for advertising. You have to pay for the telephone. You have to pay for equipment and mats and...and your salary.

Some people will come in and expect to be taught for nothing.

Some people will come in and ask if they can do work around the dojo for you.

Some people will come in and offer to teach for you.

The answer is no, no, no...and no.

There is nothing wrong with being paid for a service. There is nothing wrong with you receiving compensation for giving confidence, good health, self protection, and all the other satisfactions of the art.

People who don't want to pay you, or who are offering some term of payment which will not help pay the bills, don't believe you should be paid.

RULE 1: Nobody goes on the mat unless they have paid their fees.

chapter two
FRIENDSHIP

Money is 'cold, hard fact' number one. 'Cold, hard fact number two is 'Friendship.'

Your school will not survive unless you make friends with each and every one of your students. The truth is that people will not buy (sign up) from some one they don't like. You can have the greatest art in the world, but if you are not friendly you have just ruined your chances for success.

This doesn't mean you have to pal around and go to the movies with all your students. To be honest, you may not like everybody you teach. But it is not your job to like or dislike. It is your job to teach. Being friendly helps this happen.

This brings about an interesting point. Just what kind of friendship is expected? Well, consider that you are going to have to be a father figure. People are going to look up to you. What you have to do is be willing to listen, listen and listen. Say the right thing, offer to the point advice, and listen some more. Quite simply, you are going to have to find the dividing line between disciplinarian and buddy.

chapter three
FLIERS

Starting out takes advertising. Usually it is just talking to a buddy, or some child's mother hears you do martial arts, or some other grapevine. One of the best types of advertising I know is a simple flier. This is an 8 1/2 by 11 sheet of paper which tells about you. On your flier include the following:

Your name.

Your location. (A map if possible).

Your phone number.

Your art.

A brief description of your art.

Any data concerning 'special offers,' etc.

A picture that is catching to the eye.

Keep whatever you say simple and to the point. You are not trying to 'wow' everybody, are attempting to communicate with them and get them to communicate with you.

Go to the library and read books on advertising.

chapter four
LOCATION

If you are just starting out you frequently start out in your living room or your garage, or perhaps your backyard. As your class gets bigger, however, you are going to have look into a larger location.

One possibility, before going full commercial, is to open a class at your local YMCA or YWCA, or at a health club, or some similar operation.

These places will rent rooms, spaces, by the hour (monthly rates), and will frequently send you students. (Put your flier on the bulletin board!)

It is not uncommon to make some sort of a deal with the owner or supervisor of such a location as to decreased tuitions for members of his club.

Sometimes these places will have mats or equipment that you can use for free. Sometimes you will have to bring in whatever equipment you wish to use.

At any rate, these clubs can provide you with a steady stream of interested students.

chapter five
PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Another source of income which comes in handy, one which will swell your school size and provide excellent word of mouth, one which is useful especially if you have made the break between the old 'nine to five' job and making your living as a martial arts instructor, is Private Schools.

I have found private schools to be extremely receptive to the idea of visiting martial arts instructors. They are often able to use the fact of having a martial arts instructor in their school to increase their own enrollment. Furthermore, these schools can provide fantastic word of mouth. A parent will come up to you, quite enthused about little Johnny's having so much fun, and naturally you tell him that you have adult classes.

Parents, incidentally, are a fantastic grapevine. Get two parents together and the first thing they talk about is their children. If one child is having a great time other parents want to know about it. Make sure you always have fliers available to hand out to parents you meet.

chapter six
SPECIAL PROGRAMS

There are any number of special programs you can put into action that will grow your school. You can call police departments and offer seminars. You can contact local businesses and offer programs for executives. You can arrange special classes for tots. Each program will require special tailoring, depending upon the clientele, the time of day, etc. Businessmen don't want to sweat, they may prefer a Tai Chi approach. Policemen are often interested in baton techniques and disarmaments. And so on.

There is nothing wrong with you creating a special program for a group of people. If you teach Karate but need to approach a group of people which will be more interested in Tai chi, say the Ladies Auxiliary, then take a good look at some Tai Chi books, change the face of your art, and teach.

Some people will scream that you are betraying the art. This is foolishness. What you are doing is anything you can to get people to enter the art. My instructor used to tell me that there were many ways to the top of the mountain. So what does it matter if you take a strange path?

chapter seven
SPECIAL CLASS EXAMPLES

Here is one dynamite idea that ensures your solvency immediately.

Karate for tots.

I know what you're thinking, 'What can a two year old learn?' Well, quite a bit if you just give up the idea of making him a black belt and just enjoy the experience of working with children.

Consider:

You provide a role model. You teach children how to roll and run. You teach body coordination. You talk about how they should never accept rides or take candy from strangers.

These last two types of things are items that terrify mothers...and they will throw money at you for making their children aware of them in a helpful and fun way!

People will be willing to help advertise such a program for free.

It is easy to find a space to teach this program.

And people will gather and talk while you teach! They will talk mostly about you!

Such a program engenders enormous good will!

chapter eight
TUITION

How much you charge is an interesting question. Obviously you want to charge as much as you can. Also obviously, you don't want to be too expensive for people. What I do is call around and find out what other schools in the area are charging.

Remember, you need to pay for a lot of stuff. There is rent, phone bills, fliers, gas, and all the things you need to stay afloat.

Take a moment and add up your bills, figure out how much you will need to live. No add 50%. This is what you will need just to start. And this normally doesn't include such costs as mats, mirrors, etc.

No divide the 150% you came up with by ten, by twenty, by thirty. If you find that you are going to need fifty students to break even you better rethink such things as the price of your location, the cost of mats, the price you are charging, etc.

If you can break even of 10 or 20 students you are probably in the right range.

chapter nine
VARYING RATES

You must have several types of tuition.

Joe Blow may walk out if you tell him it'll cost him a hundred dollars a month to take lessons. But if you watch him carefully while you are talking you may see the light in his eyes go out, and you should immediately say, 'Of course that's five times a week. Would a twice a week arrangement better suit your schedule or finances?

Ah, the light goes back on.

The fellow who walks into your school, regardless of what he says, wants to be signed up. All you have to do is make it easy for him. Varying rates gives him choices.

Here is one example of how I arrange my tuition rates.

3 lessons per week for \$80 per month.

2 lessons per week for \$60 per month.

1 lesson per week for \$40 per month.

Time and money are prime considerations. Give a fellow a choice and he'll never say no.

chapter ten
SPECIAL RATES

Charge special rates for special classes.

A seminar is obviously a one time shot. Consider that if everybody pays \$20, and there are ten people, you just made \$200.

A special class for tots you might charge \$100 for ten weeks. That's ten weeks of playing with children while the parents sit around and talk about how great you are and bring in friends to see you.

Private schools are a special problem. There are a couple of ways to charge private schools.

One way is to charge a flat fee. Say \$25 per lesson, no matter how many children are included.

Another way, one which creates more potential for money, but does require more work, is to charge per student. You might charge special rates, say half price (\$30 per student if you normally charge \$60). Parents will understand the break they are getting and you will instantly have a nice little 'sub-school.' However, the problem here is that to make this program work you have to contact each parent separately, and private schools may not want to give you a list of parent phone numbers, and they may not want you calling their parents without knowing you well. The way to handle this is to give a special series of classes, then, once the school becomes familiar with you, approach them on setting up a permanent schedule.

I know one fellow who charged \$60 for six weeks per student. The parents cheerfully came up with this. What the fellow was delivering was one hour per week. This meant that for ten students he received \$600 for ten hours work, and he had a foot in the door for further instruction. At those rates he could give a deal that would make the parents twice as happy. Of course he would only receive maybe \$400 or \$500 for ten hours work. Oh well. Times are tough.

chapter eleven
CONTRACTS

Contracts are a good way to ensure that people (or organizations) stay with the program. They are also a good way to get people to sign up.

By getting a person to sign a contract you are guaranteeing a steady income for the school.

By getting a person to commit to a contract you are getting a person to commit to a course of study. The key word here is 'commit.'

What I do is offer financial encouragement to get a person to sign up.

Have a sign in your window. 'One free month!'

The student comes in and you place a contract before him that guarantees him six months study for the price of five.

What's wrong with that? He commits and you give him a deal!

One schedule I saw read like this:

\$480 for one year.

\$360 for six months.

\$270 for three months.

\$100 for one month.

\$100 per month might be expensive. \$40 per month is a real deal! If you can get the person to pay you up front, great! But at any rate, offer him the rate, even if he pays monthly, if he signs a contract.

This type of arrangement, incidentally, gives you wonderful opportunity to offer your customer choices.

When you advertise rates make sure that you emphasize the \$40 per month. Advertising \$100 per month can scare people from even coming in your door.

chapter twelve

RENTING A SPACE

You've been in business a while now, you have created a following, and you are ready to expand. Your rented space at the YMCA is packed every night, you have a couple of students good enough to help you teach, and you have proved to yourself, and others, that you are there to stay. Here are a couple of hints about how to handle the transition to a permanent space.

LEAVING THE OLD SPACE

First, don't abandon the people who helped you get started. Don't just bail out of the YMCA and leave them in a situation. By this I mean they might be relying on you to up their income. They may have put out advertising for you. (Most Y's and other locations do this.) And, if you handle the move to a new location badly, you might be responsible for people leaving their programs to follow you.

Communicate in advance with the people you are renting from. Let them know what you are planning to do. Make sure they are aware that you are planning to make your move without cutting their throat. Keep a class going if you have to. This will ensure that the flow of people they have given you won't stop. Your fliers will stay up on their bulletin board and you won't lose any advertising that they do for you. It will also ensure that that they don't hire somebody else to replace you...somebody who might ultimately offer you competition.

FINDING A NEW SPACE

When you shop for a new location there are several things you must be aware of.

Window space. You must have window space so that passersby can look in. People will stop, observe, talk, come in and talk, ask questions, and tell their friends. If your new location doesn't have window space

it's value is cut in half before you start. (Don't cover the window with too many signs and notices).

Whenever possible, leave the door open. People will hear you. They will be intrigued, and it is easier to enter a building if the door is open than if it is closed.

Choose a heavy traffic area. The more people that see your school the more people will come in. I know of one school located next to a movie theater. This guy will never go out of business! He makes a practice of scheduling classes so that they occur at the precise time that people stand in line. Another fellow I know made a practice of periodically placing fliers on every car in a thousand car lot for the mall next door. (Some malls object to fliers, so be discreet).

Check out your neighbors. Make sure you won't be disturbing people with your kiai. Try not to locate under an apartment.

Try not to set up across the street from a rival school. You don't need to start dojo wars with other schools.

Make sure you have a good place to hang a large, visible sign. It is helpful if you can make the sign yourself and hang it, at least in the beginning, because this can save you money.

While dressing rooms are good to have, don't make a big thing about them. It is easy to make partitions, or just hang some kind of movable curtain. You don't want to cut down the physical work out space of your school.

Make sure your work out space is not funny shaped.

Avoid cement floors if possible. People will complain of sore feet. If you do have a cement floor, get the landlord's okay to build a floor. (Make sure the ceiling is high enough to build a floor). A floor 20' by 30' will cost around \$500. It is also easier to install mats on a wood floor.

Make sure the walls are sound proof.

Make sure the landlord is amenable to a martial arts school. Many landlords have a strange thing about people kicking holes in their walls. A good way to allay this suspicion is to ask if you can upgrade the school. Paint is cheap, students can help, and incoming customers always respond better to a good looking interior. You may have to paint the walls every couple of months, at any rate, just to obliterate the constant putting on of hands by falling students. Make sure you always have putty and paint so you can repair any holes in the walls immediately!

Make sure you have good security. Install bolts on back doors, bars on rear windows, and make sure that the front is well lit, or capable of being well lit.

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While you may not be able to control every last one of the items I have listed above, and any others that may be particular to you and your location and which you will learn about as you go on, the more of these items that are in line the better off you are.

chapter thirteen
INSIDE YOUR LOCATION

Here are some of the things you will need to do inside your school.

Have a picture space on your wall. People are fascinated by pictures.

Hang oriental artwork. This gives a feel to what you are doing.

Have a small area where people can sit and watch your class.

Have a place to hang your certificates. While they should be readable, don't make them too accessible to people. You don't want to spend all your time washing fingerprints off your certificates and, I hate to say it, there are some people who would steal your certificates. If possible, put up copies.

If possible, have dressing rooms.

Buy mats. This can be a large cost. At a buck a foot a 40' by 40' area will cost \$1600. Maybe rugs would be cheaper. What I used to do was go out and find used rugs at rummage sales and put them together with 'glue tape' I would get at the local carpet store. A dozen carpets might cost \$120, yet provide the thickness of regular mats.

Make the bathroom accessible.

If you don't have dressing rooms, and people have to wear their uniforms to class under coats, make sure they have an area of cubbyholes in which to place their shoes.

If necessary, have a lock up area where you can lock up people's car keys, wallets, etc.

Hang a bag. If you have a low ceiling, or one made out of flimsy material (acoustical tiles, etc.), you'll have to get a stand for a bag. If you have an overhead beam you can buy braces for hanging a bag at your local hardware store.

Incidentally, if you feel the need to cut costs you can always make your own bag. My first bag was a duffel bag, \$3.50 at the local surplus, filled with sawdust, which was free from a local mill.

Have mirrors on one wall. If you don't have the money for a big mirror you can also buy squares, even if you only buy them a few every month, and slowly mirror up your wall.

Have some sort of desk. You will need a place to write and do your bookwork.

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Have a place to store cleaning equipment. Have mops, window cleaning gear, paper towels and toilet paper, and whatever else you need. Never let dust or dirt accumulate anywhere in your school!

chapter fourteen
BUSINESS LICENSE

This is the easy part. Simply go to city hall and ask what you need to do to go into business in town. Usually you will need a license. This means a fee of \$10 to \$25, a notice in the newspaper, maybe \$50, and you are in business. It might help to make sure that the local zoning doesn't prohibit schools such as martial arts schools. (Don't worry about this too much while you are in your garage, just keep a low profile and make sure the neighbors aren't unhappy. If you are renting a space from the YMCA they will know about the zoning). Your landlord should know if you are appropriate to the area or not. If you have any doubts, call city hall and ask them who you should talk to concerning zoning. While a few students in a garage or backyard won't bother anybody, you don't want to unnecessarily break the law or lose a deposit on a building which is not zoned.

chapter fifteen
INSURANCE

Some landlords demand that you have insurance. The idea is that if you are covered they won't be sued. I don't want to get into the illogics of insurance and the law system and all that, so let me just say that insurance is cheap. If you feel the need to get insurance make sure you call several agents, feel no shame in playing off their lowest prices one against the other. Usually you will find that one particular type of insurance agent sells the type of insurance that you need. (In some small towns there is only one agent in town that sells this particular insurance). When you talk to him get him to write down in plain English exactly what it is you are buying.

Also, have all students sign a Release Form before walking on the mat. An example of this is on the next page, but you may want to do some research concerning laws and liability before you make up your own Release Form.

SAMPLE RELEASE FORM

MIDVALE KARATE SCHOOL
LIABILITY RELEASE FORM

I, _____, do release the Midvale Karate School, it's owner or any employees, from any liability in the event of injury, theft or loss.

I do promise to follow all codes of Conduct, 'Safety Rules,' and to conduct myself honorably while engaged in the study and practice of the martial arts.

Signed _____ Date _____ Witness _____

While the second paragraph isn't really necessary, it tends to provide a positive thought right from the beginning of the student's instruction. Since laws change from state to state you should research examples of Release Forms before making one up.

chapter sixteen
DEMONSTRATIONS

Demonstrations are a great way to get your school known. Work with a select few of your students, especially those interested in becoming instructors, and prepare a demo team.

Your demo team should have a half dozen skits prepared. These can be such things as children being hustled for lunch money, ladies being bothered at bus stops, a youngster being accosted by more than one creep, and so on.

Always make sure the creeps are bigger than your heroes.

Always showcase a girl beating up, in great detail, some big bully.

Have a weapons demonstration prepared.

Have a breaking demonstration prepared.

And so on.

Equipment for demos need not be anything expensive. A purse and a chair and a girl looking at her watch and the crowd will believe she is waiting for a bus. A child with a couple of books under arm will be accepted as a student, and so on.

You can have a student hold boards, or you can get a couple of cinder blocks. Boards are usually no. 2 pine, 1' x 1' x 1," and the lumber yard will cut them for you. The actual measurements of the boards will be slightly less because they will be planed.

Places which are amenable to demonstrations are any place where people gather and of an age and type that would be interested in the martial arts.

I have seen and or done martial arts demonstrations for private schools (good for sign ups for special programs), half times of basketball games, in between boxing matches, at local YMCA or other similar organizations.

And so on.

Quite honestly, I always keep a couple of boards around the house. I get a kick out of impressing people, and I am ready for a demo at a moment's notice.

chapter seventeen
FREE DEALS

The word 'Free' can induce people to come into your studio.

As I said earlier, you can advertise openly to give 'One Free Month,' and just tack it to a contract.

You can also offer 'One Free Lesson' on your fliers.

A sign saying 'Free Uniform to next ten sign ups' placed on your window (remember, don't obstruct passersby view) will increase enrollment. Once you are established with your local supply house you can buy gi's for about \$15, in not less. That means that if the student pays you \$50 you have made \$35, and every month after that \$50. (Go to the library and read about salesmanship and getting people to commit to contracts.

chapter eighteen
PARTIES

Another great word in the english language, one which will ensure a gathering of people, is the word 'party.'

Be careful not to let just anybody hear about your party. You don't want undesirables floating around, selling dope, that sort of thing. Schedule 'Promotion Parties.'

Invite the people in your school to bring their friends and family. Have your latest 'promoted' student demonstrate a form. Have your demo team do a few skits. Break a few boards.

Have food. chips. Soda. Whatever.

After the demonstration and the promotion is over, turn on a TV in a corner and show 'Ninja Turtle' movies. This will keep the children occupied while you talk to their parents, or effectively 'store' prospective students until you get a chance to talk to them.

Make sure you learn everybody's name.

And have a party signing people up.

chapter nineteen
QUALIFYING STUDENTS

Upon opening your doors you will find an amazing assortment of prospective students wanting to talk to you. In order to save time you should learn which people you should spend some time with and which people are just there to waste your time.

Local Junior High Schoolers are going to want to talk your ear off, yet they have no money and can be flakey.

Don't be rude! Talk to them, make jokes, tell them they have to bring down their parents if they are serious, then tell them you have some work to do.

Parents inquiring for their children are a different matter. Sit them down and get them to sign contracts.

Drunks. You'd be surprised, every once in a while I will get a drunk come in and want to sign up. The fact of the matter is that if they needed alcohol to function in life it will be very hard to teach them. It doesn't mean you can't, but they will have to change before they can even start. At any rate, be polite, and shoo them out the door.

Troublemakers. I have had all sorts of people come in and want to put down my art, or have some sort of unpleasantness to share. I have even had people walk in dressed in uniforms and challenge me. I have even had people from other schools come down to 'tty me out.'

I have never had trouble with any of these troublemakers because I never let a fight happen. Remember, you are there to make money doing something you love. You are not there to fight every hairbrain that comes along.

The trick is, when you are handling a troublemaker, not to get upset. Troublemakers are actually sort of jokes. They are insecure. They have axes to grind which are rather meaningless. They just don't make sense.

When a troublemaker walks in I spot them as quick as I can and walk right up to them. I stand directly in front of them, but just out of reach. I ask them what they want, smiling easily and even cheerfully, and respond as I have to.

One time a 'wannabe' biker was drunk and making rude remarks in the back of the class. I told him he could stay but he would have to be quiet. He apologized before he left.

One time a drunk told me that 'Karate crap' was worthless. I said, 'you're right,' as I held the front door open for him. He left peacefully.

One time a guy wanted to challenge me. I told him I don't accept challenges. He said 'okay' and left.

The point here is that I never made a threatening response to any of these fools. And I never let the situation dissolve into a fight. And I did this by remembering that these guys weren't in their right minds.

Consider this subject of troublemakers in another light. If you owned a plumbing store, would another plumbing store owner come down and tell you his washers were better than yours? No. And he would be laughable if he did!

The funny thing is, because of the nature of the martial art business, some people think they can come down and be laughable.

And aside from this 'laughable' aspect to troublemakers, consider the consequences if you did get in a fight. Because you are a 'martial arts expert' (you must be or you wouldn't be teaching) you are going to be liable in a lawsuit. Even if the fool came in drunk and started swinging a club indiscriminately!

And if you lost such a 'fight' the results could really be gruesome. Students would leave, and you might sustain physical injury, and there goes your studio in the blink of an eye.

So don't ever start a fight, or let a fight start, and if a fight ever happens you have somehow done the wrong thing. Furthermore, you are no longer in the teaching business. A good teacher teaches. He never fights.

chapter twenty
THE PHONE CALL

You will get phone calls. Phone calls, if handled in any way but one will be a waste of time.

The one way to handle a phone call is this:

ANSWER AS FEW QUESTIONS AS POSSIBLE!

And, MAKE APPOINTMENTS!

Look, they should know what art you teach or they wouldn't call. But I have that if I answer questions I will end their interest in coming down. If they don't come down I can't sign them up. So I don't answer questions.

Question: Do you teach freestyle?

Answer: I teach all manners of things. Let's make an appointment to discuss what you need.

Question: Do you know Joe Blow down at the Dragon School?

Answer: I know all sorts of people. I'll be here Tuesday night and Wednesday night. Which night is best for me to interview you?

Question: Can you teach me to defend myself?

Answer: I'll have to interview you to see. What is your work schedule like?

Question: Are you a Black Belt?

Answer: Could you hold the line a second? (Cover the mouthpiece with your hand and mumble like you are answering a question from a student. Take your hand off the mouthpiece and...) Excuse me. Yes, I have some free time before 7 o'clock. If you can't drop by then could you come by after class? Say 9:00?

At this point you might be saying, 'Holy Jupiter! This guy is telling me to lie and be dishonest. He's telling me to...to...to be a SALESMAN!

I am not telling you to lie, merely to avoid answering questions. I have found that if I answer so much as one question over the phone then the act of making an appointment is useless, because that person will not show up for any appointment.

And I am telling you to be a salesman. Doggone it! That's how you stay in business! And if you have been put off by a salesman before, or perhaps you have experienced some-

body not answering your questions in such a manner, then just understand that they are trying to stay in business. If you stay in business you can teach the Art!

Please notice, at this point, that there are several other things going on in these phone calls. In making the appointment I try to emphasize that it had to be at my convenience. This sets a standard for the student. He must understand right from the start that what you teach is valuable, and that your time is valuable. Getting your students to understand this right from the start will help you immensely.

also, though I didn't demonstrate a lot of this in my questions and answers, you should pump the student for information.

Find out where he got your number from so that you can expand your advertising in the areas that work.

Find out who he heard about you from so that you can thank whoever is talking about you.

Find out his work schedule. If he works then he can pay. Knowing when he works can help you schedule which class he should be in.

Find out if he has family. Other family members may be interested.

Find out if he has friends. Maybe you can offer a special rate for two friends who sign contracts together. People who sign up together, after all, will tend to work out together and keep each other going to class and so on.

Talk about his friends, especially if they are doing martial arts. People like to know that people that they know are going to be in the same program. It makes them feel safe, and encourages them to be part of the group.

FIND OUT HIS PHONE NUMBER! This should actually be among the first things that you find out. I have had conversations be cut off and never heard from people who seemed to be interested. Besides, you want to call him should he not show up for an appointment (reschedule him without making him feel guilty), or in the event that you have some sort of promotion which might interest him.

Find out his address so you can send him a flier.

And find out anything else you can. Everything he says should be put neatly on a piece of paper which will go in his file, and which you can use to understand him, any problems he

might have, or how to sign him up. The more you find out about him the better your chances of making him the kind of friend you need to ensure your school stays afloat.

You would be surprised at the fascinating things I have found about people through these simple phone calls. I have found out about such varied things as hang gliding, scuba diving, flying, buying used motorcycles, and so on. Some of the things I have found out have actually made me feel like a halfway intelligent man. And all of the things I have found out have helped me connect with my fellow man.

Incidentally, one last thing on this subject of not answering questions until they are physically in front of you. (Even then be somewhat spare in your answers). Every once in a while you will come across a person who realizes that you are not answering questions, who may even get a bit frustrated. With these type of people be honest. Give a chuckle and compliment them on their observation, and tell them that, quite honestly, you get so many people asking questions that you prefer to separate the serious ones from the ones who are just talking. Tell them that, in any case, you could tell people how to swim until you're blue in the face, but they won't know what you mean until they get in the water. Then make an appointment and get them down to your store!

chapter twenty-one
THE FIRST LESSON

So, you have put out fliers, done demonstrations, answered the phone, and the prospective student walks in the front door. It is time to get him to sign his name and give you money. Here's how you do it.

First, be friendly. Joke with him. Have a good time. Let him know that though you are a Martial Marvel, and though your time is valuable, you are accessible.

Second, ask him some questions that will tell you what kind of person he is. Does he like sports? Does he play video games? Don't let him talk for hours and hours and bore you to tears, but find out what kind of guy he is.

Third, find out if he has any problems. Physical injuries? School problems? Drug history? Anything else you think you might need to know.

Fourth, find out if he has studied any martial arts before, what kind and how long.

Fifth, find out why he wants to study the martial arts. Does he want to lost weight? Get fit? Stop smoking? Get discipline, self-confidence, peace of mind...? Whatever his reason, assure him that the martial arts will help him achieve whatever he wants to achieve.

Sixth, get physical with him. Show him a simple concept block and get him to do it until he suddenly brightens up and says, 'Wow! I can do this!'

Now it is time to sit him down and get him to sign up. Place a pen before him right away, even hand it to him so that he will get used to it. Have a couple of contracts you can write on at hand.

He may be so enthused at this point all you have to do is shove a contract in front of him and he'll sign.

If he isn't, don't ask him to sign. Ask him to make choices.

Which schedule is best for him? Write on the two schedules, circle class times, until he takes the one that is best for him. He has now made an affirmative choice.

Which tuition fee is best for him? Write on two contracts until he takes the one that is best for him. He has now made another affirmative choice. He is getting used to saying 'yes.'

Don't ask him to sign outright because he may get used to saying 'no.' Just have him make choices until he has 'choiced' himself into the logical next step. He has the pen, he has chosen what he wants, the next step is to sign.

Now, at this point, if he hasn't signed, you have to find out his reasons.

You can ask him outright if there is any reason why he doesn't sign.

There may be any number of reasons why he doesn't want to sign. They may be valid, they may be ridiculous, but in his eyes they are important.

For instance, what if the guy is happy and ready to go, but he wants to check with his wife.

Tell him, 'sign now, let me close my books, and if she objects we can cancel the contract.'

Then make sure you get the wife down and sell her, either on him, or a program for her!

And deal in similar fashion with all of his considerations, until there is nothing left but the pen and the contract sitting in front of him!

He signs. Make sure you shake his hand and welcome him to the club, introduce him to people and make him feel like part of the group.

And in the unusual instance of him not signing, don't get irritated. Just realize that you have created good will, and that somewhere down the line your courtesy and time will be repaid.

chapter twenty-two
'YES'

On the subject of selling people the martial arts let me overstress one thing I mentioned in the last chapter.

Never ask a question that will result in the customer saying 'no.' 'No' is a negative, and no matter what it refers to, once the customer gets used to saying 'no,' he will find it easy to say 'no.'

Always ask questions so that the customer says 'yes.' 'Yea,' aside from being an affirmative, makes a person happy. 'Yes' is just a happier word than 'No.'

Never put a customer in a bad situation. Never give him a 'do or die' position from which to work from. People resent being put upon, and the chances are he'll say 'no.'

Always give a customer a choice. 'Is the twice a week schedule better for you? Or three times a week?' This question gives him a problem he will enjoy solving, and when he answers you he has committed himself to a course of study without having the opportunity to say 'no.'

Time invested with people equals success.

chapter twenty-three
SELLING EQUIPMENT

Selling equipment can improve your income immensely. When starting you can take money, then run down to your supply house for the goods. It is better, as soon as possible, to have your own stock.

Weapons go over big.

Books go over big.

Magazines companies sometimes have deals whereby you can stock their magazines for free.

For that matter, most people will be quite happy for you to place their products in the public eye.

One especially big money maker is uniforms. Give away a cheap one when they sign up, then sell them an expensive one later on.

Or, depending on how you are working your selling pitch, sell them a good one right at the start.

People who are starting a program always want to start right, and a simple \$50 sign up can escalate into \$80 or \$100 easily. It is perfectly okay to say such things as 'I got a deal on ten uniforms from my supplier. Want a good one right now? I only have a couple left.

chapter twenty-four

HIDDEN COSTS

A great way to make more money is to have built in 'hidden costs.'

A 'weapons' seminar for three hours 'this sunday only' can net a couple of hundred dollars quick.

A 'testing fee' can be built into every promotion. After all, testing takes time, and you should charge equal to at least a private lesson fee. (Make sure the testing fee is posted to that students don't feel that you are springing something on them.)

Sell books you write describing forms and self-defense moves and so forth for each level.

And so on.

chapter twenty-five
BOOKWORK

You will find that there is too much to remember in order to run a business, and you will need to do some bookwork. Here are some suggestions.

Keep a master phone list. If a student is late you can call without going through the files. Do not ever give out the phone list for any reason. Do not let anybody, including students, meander through your list. The phone company provides the general public with a telephone books. Your phone list is your business!

Get a calendar with big, blank squares. You should be able to see what you are doing at any time of the month with a glance.

Get an appointment book.

Keep a file on each student. Keep first interview information in it. Keep test results in it. Keep anything else you might deem worthwhile in it.

Get a ledger to keep a running tally of incoming money and outgoing expenses. Balance these every single week without fail. put it on the calendar and make sure it gets done!

Get a receipt book and make receipts for every single business transaction you conduct. Make sure you give the students receipts. Make sure the receipts and the entries into your financial ledger balance every single week.

Make a list of addresses for every telephone caller or interested party. Send them fliers every few months. Add any personal notes concerning callers so that you can treat them like individuals and not 'junk mail' targets.

Be willing to do any other type of bookwork that is needed or may come up.

Most of the things I have listed are easily purchased at a stationary store or drugstore.

chapter twenty-six
CURRICULUM

One of the problems I have seen with people who start their own school is that they are constantly changing and experimenting with their curriculum.

It is easy to get lost in the amount of martial material available today on tape and book and in seminar, but don't change what you are teaching!

Have a special class of advanced people to practice new theories on. But no matter how tempting, don't start changing your curriculum. Students will be put off and leave.

chapter twenty-seven
CODE OF CONDUCT

Post a Code of Conduct where all students can see it. Make sure all students follow the Code of Conduct. Be willing to lose students who do not conduct themselves in an honorable manner. Here are a couple of items I included on my Code of Conduct which I have found to be of paramount importance to the preservation of my school.

‘No Drugs!’ People who are messed up can’t learn.

‘No sex or dating between students.’ Your people are there to learn, not to start a ‘singles club.’ The slip of a girl who wanted to learn martial arts, and who was doing well, will suddenly disappear after being jilted by the White Belt Romeo.

‘No put down humor.’ This is a killer. When people are put down, even in fun, they tend to wander off. Who wants to be the butt of a joke?

‘Always be on time.’ You don’t want people breaking up your class.

‘Tuition must be paid by...(date).’ You are depending on money for your survival.

And so on.

chapter twenty-eight
DON'T LET DOWN

As I said in the beginning, you will learn more and more as you proceed. There is, truly, an art to running a business. But if you follow the advices I have listed you will stand a good chance of succeeding. Towards this end I can really only tell you one thing.

Don't let down!

If you're tired at the end of the night, go out and put up posters anyway.

If you are sick and there's a class, teach it anyway.

Never miss an opportunity to share your art, and never let anything stand in your way. This determination, more than anything I've said, will ultimately determine your success or failure.

Good skill to you.