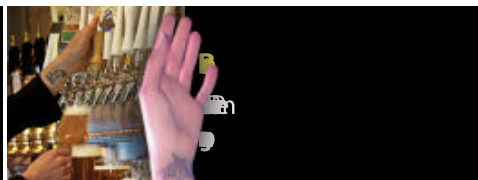




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The Best in Bar Management

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August 2011



Live entertainment can
make or break your night
— Are you **booking**
smartly?

FLUXX, San Diego
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From Go-Go Dancers to Bands to Hypnotists,
Live Entertainment Can Make or Break Your Night — Here are
Some Win-win Tactics for Managing Talent at Your Venue

Go-Go

by Jennifer McKenzie



Are you one of those nightclub operators who hires go-go dancers based solely on the “candy” factor? If so, you may be among the majority of venue operators who don’t know some important aspects of properly hiring a go-go dancer. That means you most likely aren’t getting the most out of your go-go dancers.

If you are thinking about adding go-go dancers to your business — maybe you are on the fence about it — consider this: Once the word gets out that you have live performers, customers of both sexes will be curious. Go-go dancing is an exciting form of entertainment, and just the mere presence of dancers helps create an energetic, vibrant and, most importantly, profitable group dynamic for your business.

Nightclub & Bar’s own Jon Taffer taught me three key ingredients that truly affect your nightclub or bar business: personal, interactive and group dynamics. Keep these in mind when hiring go-go dancers; these three elements play a crucial role in making sure you choose the right dancers to help grow your business.

Think about the personal dynamic, and ask yourself, is the dancer you are considering as a sub-contractor or a hire have the persona, character, personality and/or energy that fits your venue’s atmosphere? As for the interactive dynamic, can the potential hire fit in the environment, or can she/he create that environment through confidence? And finally the group dynamic: Will your entertainer potentially use or implement organizational development and social status to help you obtain your business’ group objective? No matter how gorgeous the entertainers may be or how well they move, if they don’t possess these three dynamics, they won’t help grow your business.

Bands & Entertainers

By Jeffrey Yarbrough & Matthew Mabel

It takes a lot of skill to be a successful professional nightclub and bar owner. It’s unlikely that you are going to be both an expert in your core profession and an expert in booking live talent. Still, you need to know enough about booking talent to make smart decisions.

If you have access to a professional talent buyer who will keep your needs and interests in

mind, it can be a great asset. The complexities of hiring talent. If you go it alone, it can be risky; the entertainer’s agents will detect right away that you’re inexperienced and be ready to take advantage of the situation or, as they would call it, “leverage their client’s assets.” However, a talent buyer is an expert in dealing with agents, is an extension of the club or bar and is paid by and works for the venue.



A professional talent buyer can help find the right acts, such as bands, to bring crowds to your venue.

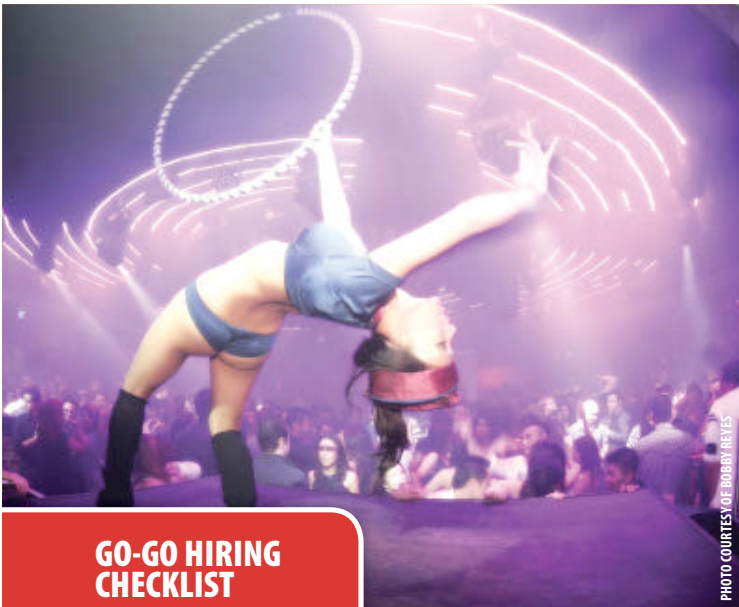


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GO-GO HIRING CHECKLIST

When hiring a go-go dancer, consider the following attributes:

- Creative ability to express one's self through music (e.g., a sense of rhythm and style).
- Incredible energy and ability to create a certain atmosphere while entertaining a crowd.
- Great confidence, physical fitness and stamina.
- Physical attractiveness.
- Outgoing and interactive (both are a must!).



Don't simply hire "eye candy"! Go-go dancers must have a presence, dancing ability and talent as well as style, to succeed.

When we think "go-go dancer," we envision energy and motion, not to mention a little sex appeal, but

behind all the glitz and glam, there are profitable and fundamental reasons you need to be hiring the right go-go entertainment for your venue. Recruiting talent suitable for your specific setting/venue is imperative. The go-go dancers you hire must be trained and able to adapt to any environment, whether it be a regular night or a corporate event. Obviously, they have to look exceptional, but they also must be versatile and able to perform different dance styles. I've seen it time and time again: A venue's management hires "eye candy" without a clue about dance talent, experience, stage presence or style. The point in hiring go-go dancers is to entertain your guests while creating a fun-filled, energetic experience. If you hire someone who can't dance, has no energy and isn't able to work a crowd in a positive light — in other words, you hire solely on looks — you are not practicing quality control, and, worst of all, you're missing out on profits! You must look for the whole package when hiring. Creating the look of your club through your ambiance and entertainment allows you to build your venue's reputation.

By now you're probably thinking, "Who cares if eye candy can't dance?" or "Who cares if a quality dancer isn't as appealing?" Women care! They are the prime demographic in the nightlife industry; you should know by now that "the money goes where the ladies go." For instance, many women enjoy these entertainers because they

"Good go-go dancers ALWAYS PAY FOR THEMSELVES."

According to Richard Pollock of Rainbow Entertainment, "The talent buyer should know the entertainer — along with their fees and habits — to perform. The talent buyer should also know what kind of draw a particular act can bring at the door and their performance reliability."

Can't find a professional to buy your talent? Then you have to seek out a lot of information before you make the buy yourself. Here are some crucial questions to explore:

How does the comedian, performer or band you are booking drive traffic in equivalent venues in your town and other towns on the days of the week they will be performing for you? Make a reasonable assumption of attendance — not the attendance that could occur if the entertainer draws to gross potential — and determine what your projected door revenue is going to be. For established talent, be prepared to give up almost all of your ticket sales or cover charges to them, as well as production and promotion. If you have an event

"Any deal worth doing is worth writing down. So many times bookings are done by the seat of our pants or over a quick phone call, WHICH CAN CAUSE ROOM FOR ERROR OR MISUNDERSTANDINGS."

entertainment, you can afford to allocate the door money to him or her in exchange for taking all of the risks, such as the possibility of low patron attendance.

Find out when the talent last played and will play next in your area. Ask for a "radius clause" or "barring clause" in the contract, which prevents them from playing your market for a quantity of days before and after your gig; 60 to 90 days would be fair.

How much gross profit is their appearance going to push to your bottom line? Multiply that reasonable attendance number you computed previously by your per person average (the average amount each guest spends), then subtract your variable costs, including cost of goods sold and extra labor scheduled for the event.



Whether you hire a band, comedian or other type of live act for your establishment, on show night, treat them like the rock stars they think they are.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BOBBY REYES

Go-go dancers should be able to earn between \$150 and \$275 per night or per four-hour shift.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BOBBY REYES

tap into their own inner go-go dancer; they are intrigued with the fantasy of being in the limelight. If your female customers enjoy and embrace your go-go dancers, everyone else will as well.

Bottom line: Your go-go dancers help create your overall club persona and vibe, ultimately influencing guests' perception of the quality you deliver. When hiring, consider

dancing ability and talent; personal-, interactive- and group-dynamic abilities; and appearance. The right go-go dancers will generate excitement in the club, create buzz about the total experience and bring in greater sales and profits. **NCB**

Jennifer McKenzie is an experienced and award-winning go-go dancer, choreographer and instructor who assists nightclub operators in maximizing revenue from live entertainment as entertainment director at Monsoon Group Las Vegas.

Go-Go Pay & Scheduling

When discussing the opportunity that go-go dancers present for clubs, the most frequently asked questions include, "What do I pay? And how do I schedule?" Remember, there are industry standards. Adhering to them will help your venue deliver a great experience for guests, entertainers and your bottom line.

Depending on your market, dancers should make between \$150 and \$275 per night or per four-hour shift. To ensure dancers can remain energetic and fresh, I recommend using one of these approaches when scheduling:

- Dancers perform for 20 minutes of each hour. In between sets, each should be given the opportunity to increase liquor sales and make tips by selling shots or running a "beer tub" or other station. This enables them to create a regular fan base by generating a dynamic interaction with your customers.
- Dancers perform for 30 minutes of each hour with no additional duties.

Assume ticket sales will cover the costs of the event. Determine if you have the financial wherewithal and stomach to attribute some of the cost of the event to boosting the overall profile of your nightclub or bar, because if all does not go to plan you still have that opportunity.

Once you've done your legwork and run your numbers, written contracts are very important. Any deal worth doing is worth writing down. So many times bookings are done by the seat of our pants or over a quick phone call, which can cause room for error or misunderstandings to occur.

"A simple written agreement on who, what, where, when and for how much is necessary to ensure no surprises come your way on the night of the show," Pollock states. "The entertainment has the upper hand until the show starts. Venues should insist on paying the act after the stage is set. Entertainers should insist on being paid in full before the show begins. It all needs to be in writing: from the length of a show with how many breaks to the number of green M&Ms in the entertainers' rider that accompanies a contract."

Once you have made the buy and the day of the show arrives, switch your perspective from being a smart, skeptical buyer to treating the talent like the rock stars they think they are. The marginal cost of being friendly and welcoming are small compared with the value of being successful with an act or agent who would prefer to work with you over others in your market in the future. Often, we look at the talent as the enemy, as the guy who just wants to come in and collect a check. The reality is they are artists who have as much passion for their craft as we have for selling whiskey. Don't you think that if the artists are happy they would do a better job on stage and maybe

even offstage?

Here are a few things you can do to ensure your bookings go well from start to finish:

First, create an environment that makes the artist feel welcome. Start by making the dressing area clean and inviting; if it's messy or unkempt, he or she might get the impression that you don't view him or her as a serious artist, which could affect a performance.

Second, buy the performer a meal and a drink. They aren't called "starving artists" for nothing, and being hospitable will make or her feel appreciated.

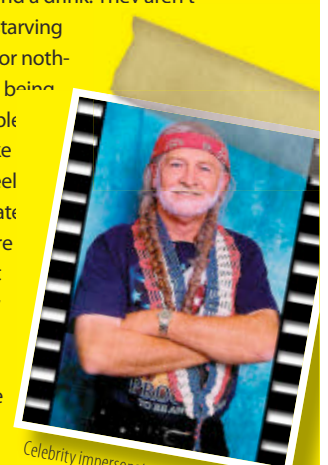
The more they get to know you and see that you care about setting talent up to give a

good performance, the harder it will be for your competitors to book the same acts in the future. Show you care, and you will start building great relationships and making talent happy. And if talent is happy, that spreads to your guests...

Lastly, hold yourself accountable. When the event is over, compare the actual numbers to the ones you relied on to make the buy. How entertained are you feeling now? **NCB**

Jeffrey Yarbrough is founder of biglink PR & Marketing, a Dallas-based firm, where he applies his 25-plus years of experience as a nightclub and restaurant operator to grow his hospitality clients' visibility and sales.

Matthew Mabel is the founder and president of Surrender Inc., a hospitality and management consulting firm based in Dallas.



Celebrity impersonators can be a fun addition to your live entertainment lineup.