

HIRE TEACHERS WHO STAY

The 6-Step Interview System from Studio Owner University® 2026

STUDIO OWNER UNIVERSITY®

POWERED BY MORE THAN JUST GREAT DANCING!®

This interview system gets them in the door.
Studio Owner University® teaches you how to keep them.

A strong interview process helps you hire the right person. Keeping them for 10 or 20 years takes more. Pay structures, benefits, leadership and a culture people don't want to leave.

That's what Studio Owner University® teaches. Fewer seasons spent replacing teachers. More time building a business that grows.

Studio Owner University®

January 26-29, 2027 | Orlando, Florida

Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center

- **LIVE, in-person learning** with studio owners from across the country
- **Hands-on tools** like this one, from every session
- **Open to ALL studio owners**, not just MTJGD™ members



"I thought I was running a 'successful enough' dance studio, but I felt it could be better, I just didn't know how. After attending my first SOU™, I realized my business needed a lot of help. After putting in the hard work... I have the privilege of controlling my business instead of my business controlling me."

-Angela H. | Live 2 Dance | WY



Save your seat at studioowneruniversity.com

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From Tara Pickford's session, "Hope Is Not a Strategy"

Every season you lose a teacher, you start over. You repost the job, retrain, and hope the next hire sticks. Hope is not a strategy.

Great hiring isn't only about finding talented teachers or strong admins. It's about finding people who fit your culture, your values and your long-term vision. This six-step system helps you hire on purpose, cut turnover and build a team that supports your students and your mission.

Adapted for the dance industry by MTJGD™ Certified Coach, Tara Pickford, drawing on *The Manager's Handbook* by David Dodson and Darren Hardy's *Business Master Class* hiring resources.

1. Phone Screen (15 to 20 minutes, owner or office lead)

Purpose: *To confirm basic qualifications, communication skills, and initial alignment with your studio's culture and values before moving forward.*

Why it matters: *Early screening prevents wasted time later. You'll quickly identify who understands the expectations of working in a values-driven, youth-centered environment.*

 **Red Flag:** *They can't say why they want to work at your studio, or the only questions they ask are about pay.*

Sample Questions:

- What drew you to the dance industry or to our studio in particular?
- What does a positive learning environment look like to you?
- Tell me about your current commitments and how this role fits your schedule.
- What are your pay expectations and availability for classes or events?

2. First Interview (45 to 60 minutes, owner or office lead)

Purpose: *To assess skills, mindset, and professionalism. This is where you determine if the candidate can deliver quality instruction, communication, and consistency.*

Why it matters: *Strong studios are built by people who combine technical ability with reliability and care. This interview focuses on problem-solving and alignment, not just talent.*

 **Red Flag:** *Every answer is about their own dancing. None are about students.*

Sample Questions:

- Walk me through how you prepare for a class or rehearsal.
- Tell me about a time you helped a student who was struggling to stay motivated.
- When you have competing priorities, like choreography deadlines and class management, how do you decide what comes first?

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3. Fit Shift (60 to 90 minutes, paid trial with peers)

The step most studios skip.

An interview tells you how someone talks. A Fit Shift shows you how they *teach*.

Purpose: *To observe the candidate in action. This could be teaching a short class, assisting a current instructor, or shadowing an office shift.*

Why it matters: *In dance, how someone moves, leads, and communicates tells you more than an interview ever could. This stage shows you how they connect with students, handle challenges, and bring your studio's values to life.*

 **Red Flag:** *They arrive late or unprepared, or they ignore the student who is struggling.*

Examples:

- **For instructors:** Have them teach one or two classes, paid at market rate. Observe tone, energy, and classroom management.
- **For admin staff:** Have them work a four-hour shift. Assign a simple office or communication task and watch how they organize and problem-solve.

Debrief Questions:

- How did you plan and approach the task or class?
- What did you notice about the students or studio systems?
- What would you do differently next time?

4. Peer Interview (30 to 45 minutes, with peers)

Purpose: *To confirm team chemistry and culture fit. This interview can be led by a senior instructor or front desk lead who represents your studio's daily rhythm. Ideally, two or more peers lead this interview.*

Why it matters: *Peers often recognize fit faster than leadership does. This stage helps ensure new hires will strengthen your culture, not disrupt it. Interviewees will often be more relaxed in this interview and true colors are easier to spot.*

 **Red Flag:** *Your team feels unsure but can't say why. Take that seriously.*

Sample Questions:

- What kind of studio culture helps you do your best work?
- How do you handle feedback or suggestions from a teammate?
- What does "professionalism" mean to you in a youth-based setting?
- How do you balance fun and structure in your classes or workday?

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5. Reference Check (owner or office lead)

Purpose: *To confirm that what you've seen and heard is consistent with the candidate's track record and to ensure student safety.*

Why it matters: *The best predictor of future behavior is past behavior. References reveal reliability, attitude, and how they show up under pressure, especially around children.*

 **Red Flag:** *A reference hesitates on "Would you rehire them?"*

Sample Questions:

- Can you describe their role and responsibilities when you worked together?
- How did they interact with students, parents, and staff?
- Would you rehire them? Why or why not?
- What kind of feedback or support helped them succeed?
- Is there anything you wish they had developed further?

6. Final Interview (30 to 45 minutes, owner)

Purpose: *To confirm alignment with your studio's mission, values, and long-term vision. This is your "final clarity check" before making an offer.*

Why it matters: *This stage brings together skill, chemistry, and character. Both you and the candidate should leave confident that expectations and values align.*

 **Red Flag:** *Their picture of success at six months doesn't match yours.*

Sample Questions:

- What excites you most about joining a studio that focuses on leadership, mentorship, and community?
- How do you define excellence in your teaching or administrative work?
- What does work-life balance look like for you during competition or recital season?
- What would success in this role look like after six months?
- How can we best support your growth as part of our team?

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CANDIDATE SCORECARD

Score each stage from 1 to 5. Anything below a 3 is a conversation before an offer.

Candidate Name: _____

Role: _____ Date: _____

Stage	What You're Scoring	Score (1 to 5)	Notes
1. Phone Screen	<i>Communication and fit with your values</i>		
2. First Interview	<i>Skills, preparation and professionalism</i>		
3. Fit Shift	<i>How they teach or work in real time</i>		
4. Peer Interview	<i>Team chemistry</i>		
5. Reference Check	<i>Track record and student safety</i>		
6. Final Interview	<i>Alignment with your mission and vision</i>		
Total		/30	

Hire with confidence when the total is 24 or higher and no stage scores below 3.

Decision: ☐ Hire ☐ Hold ☐ Pass