

# Dance Movement Therapy and a Journey to the Corporate World

**Candy Beers**



*I am delighted to share with you my journey to the corporate world and what I believe dance/movement therapy (DMT) has to offer corporate leaders. I live in State College, Pennsylvania, home of The Pennsylvania State University (Penn State), where I received my bachelors degree in psychology. My focus was in social and developmental psychology. After graduation, I worked for Penn State at their Prevention Research Center where I conducted research in clinical and developmental psychology. My goal at that point was to earn a Ph.D. in counseling psychology. While researching schools, I stumbled upon DMT. After reading the description of DMT I instantly felt it was a perfect fit for me. I began researching universities that offered graduate studies in DMT and chose Pratt Institute in New York City. I sent my application, was called for an interview, fell in love with my first taste of DMT, and accepted the offer to attend.*

My goal throughout graduate school was to use DMT for wellness and personal growth. I was interested in working with high functioning individuals who yearned to better understand themselves, their emotions, and their behaviors. With this as my goal, I planned to work at a wellness center in State College. However, before I graduated from Pratt, a business professor of Penn State approached me. He was in the midst of starting his own training and development business and felt that I could bring innovation to the training

he planned to offer corporations. I was immediately interested then terrified. I did not know anything about business. I had many questions and was afraid that people would laugh at what I had to offer. So, I began to read books that I borrowed from my business partner, books he used in his management classes. I realized that I had a lot to offer businesses, and have been offering it ever since.

What I have been offering is the expertise dance/movement therapists have in group facilitation. Self-awareness, presence, an understanding of movement, and an ability to improvise are qualities managers benefit from when leading a business team. I strongly believe that dance/movement therapists excel at these skills and want to share with you how I feel each suits the business world.

## **Self-Awareness**

The crux of my studies in DMT focused on instilling in me the ability to be self-aware and present in the moment. This skill enabled me to be efficient in all the other skills needed to run a DMT group; skills that will also be looked at in the following pages of this article. The ability to be aware and present allows me to be with my clients wherever they are and to see their strengths and build on them. A top manager in business needs these same skills in order to do what is best for the business.

Self-awareness lends itself to good leadership skills, good observation and attunement skills, and good communication. This basic interpersonal skill creates imperative working skills and lack of self-awareness costs corporations a significant amount of time and money. The companies I have worked with ask mainly for training in communication. The previous training these men and women had was based on making eye contact, leaning forward, and having an impressive vocabulary. It neglected the fact that communication happens between real people and that self-awareness plays a vital role in good communication. DMT can help someone become aware of what they are communicating to others through their behavior. Working with a dance/movement therapist can help a person understand how their rhythm, posture, breathing patterns, and speech influence their employees' behavior.

## **Presence and Improvisation**

DMT can help leaders be present and have the ability to use what is in front of them. Trust in the

self and in the process is much more easily attained when someone is present in their body and able to have confidence in their instincts. While leading a dance/movement therapy group, there is no time to focus on anything but the present. It is not helpful to focus on what happened two minutes ago or attempt to predict what the group will do next. Presence is harder to achieve than one would believe, especially when one is in a leadership position. There is a sense of responsibility, a feeling that people are counting on you to know what to do. Dance/movement therapists have the ability to let go and trust that the group is capable of taking us to great places. We are able to do this, because we are present in our bodies, we trust the process, and we understand that our job is to facilitate this process. A good leader in a business team must also be able to do this. They must be able to let go and allow the group to excel. The book, *One Minute Manager*, was written about this very topic and has sold millions of copies. It is seen as the must have book for management. As I read the book, I realized the One Minute Manager is a dance therapist. He takes the time to observe his employees, helps them become aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and facilitates their growth into independent and capable individuals. The title is derived from the fact that this type of managing saves time and energy and stresses the importance of developing individuals.

### **Observation Skills**

DMT can share the secrets of success by unveiling the mystery of non-verbal communication. NVC accounts for 83% of all communication. A DMT is able to take "body language," which is understood by some, to the next level and educate companies on rhythms, postures, tone of voice, and gestures. Through understanding NVC, one can:

1. decipher whether a particular client is ready to buy
2. learn how to build trust in teams
3. efficiently and effectively lead groups
4. excel in persuasive communication
5. learn the importance of and be able to attune with employees

DMT can help leaders observe what is happening in the present and what to do with it. Understanding movement will help a leader know which individuals will work best together in a team and what rhythms stimulate different activities.

### **Trust the Body/Trust the Process**

I use dance in this section, because dance is the breath of DMT, and we were all dancers before we

were dance/movement therapists. I believe we are able to share skills of dance as well.

Dancers on stage are constantly communicating with each other, all without speaking a single word. They know where the other dancers are, and they trust that they are doing their jobs. There is an immense amount of trust in dancers who are put together to perform choreography. They need to trust each other for the dance to work. They need to have faith in each other's abilities so everyone can do his job. The leader is the choreographer. A good choreographer knows each dancer's strengths and weaknesses and makes dances for the dancers. They trust their abilities to get the work done. They do not have to waste time supervising them and are free to create more dances. By giving the dancers space, the choreographer is showing trust in the dancers' abilities as well as the group's ability to work together. A good leader does the same. There is so much communicated in behavior and a DMT can help a person understand what their behavior is saying to their employees and how it influences their communication, work ethics, ability to trust, and productivity.

I believe DMT has prodigious knowledge to offer corporations. My training is still in infancy, but I hope to be able to share more as I gain experience in my field. What I have learned through my process of entering the corporate field is that a dance/movement therapist can walk into any profession and share their knowledge. I believe whole-heartedly that what we have to offer can help so many. We just need to believe and have the confidence to walk into a room and say, "I am a dance therapist, and this is what I have to offer."

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