

Making moves: student uses tech to balance school with side hustle.

"A lot of people say I don't have bones," says freestyle dancer Wendy Luu. And after viewing her video "The One" on Instagram (@weeendyluu), you may be inclined to think the same. "I'm a very fluid mover," she says. "I just go with the sounds, and my body waves with it."

Fluid mover. It's a phrase that describes both Wendy's unique dance style and her near-daily transition from student-by-day to dance-coach-by-night. As an interior design major, Wendy adheres to a strict daytime college curriculum she hopes will pave the way for a vibrant career. "But at night," she remarks about her side hustle as an urban freestyle dance instructor, "it becomes this free flow of creativity and personality. I get to connect with people who have the same mentality, but also do something I love—and be able to profit off of it."

As any working student knows, balancing the demands of school and business can be tricky. Wendy credits Microsoft Outlook with keeping her side hustle on track. "I really like how organized it is, how simple the layout is," she says about the email program. "And that helps me out a lot because if there's too much going on, then I don't want to use it."



"Outlook is my go-to for all my professional emails," she adds. "I use it as my main source for all of my contacts."

Indeed, Wendy says technology is her primary way to connect with people—something her side hustle needs to thrive. "I feel like I couldn't do anything without technology. It has opened new doors for me by exposing me to new platforms and allowing me to work with people I've never worked with before. In just one click, the whole world can see what you're doing."

"I'm very honest about my personal style," she continues. "By being real on social media, I end up attracting customers who are going through the same problems in a different context. I feel like the same emotion applies throughout and that's a human emotion you can't fake."

"Instagram is huge for me," she adds. "I spend probably 98% of my marketing on there just because I use Instagram like a personal blog."

Dancing has always been a part of Wendy's life, but developing dance into a business didn't come automatically. As her style evolved, she posted videos of herself freestyling on social media. "A lot of people

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were like, 'Oh wow, what is that?' And I would never know how to respond to them because I'm literally just moving how I want to move."

But the questions got her thinking: could she choreograph her freeform style? "That was a huge challenge for me personally," she says. "But once I was able to choreograph something I enjoyed, and I was able to teach it to a room, the [students'] reaction sparked an interest in me."

Wendy says that learning to be confident in herself and in her style—that it's okay to be different and it's okay to be vulnerable, imperfect even, on social media—have been key to gaining students and expanding her business.

Given how essential connection and expression are to her marketing efforts, it's not surprising that those are the primary themes of her teaching style, too. In fact, the thing Wendy embraces most is the ability to make a difference in the lives of her students. "When I see one of my students succeed, it makes me feel as if I helped them take a weight off their shoulders, to get a little bit closer to who they want to be—and not who everyone tells them to be."

In the end, Wendy sees dance as its own kind of language, one that connects universally. "You don't need to tell people how you're feeling," she says, "your body language will tell it for you. I've never really enjoyed structured dancing. My class is more of a break in the matrix, just letting people breathe and know that, hey, you're not going to look just like your neighbor, and that's completely fine."

It's a freeing attitude that helps her students, just like their teacher, take flight.

