

Norm Cates'

CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 30+ YEARS OF TRUST

Cover Story Classics: The late Dr. Gerry Faust



FEBRUARY 2025

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CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 30+ YEARS OF TRUST

Cover Story Classics: The late Dr. Gerry Faust

By: Justin Cates

Last month, in our first Cover Story Classic, we went way back to 1994 and Club Insider's first cover story, featuring the legendary **Red Lerille**, Owner of Red's in Lafayette, Louisiana, who was recently announced as an inductee into the *inaugural class of the Health and Fitness Association's Hall of Fame*. This month, though this Cover Story Classic was published more recently, in July 2016, the subject takes us even further back in time, before Club Insider was even in existence!

It is because of the late **Dr. Gerry Faust** and *Faust Roundtable #1* that Club Insider came into existence. Like so many who have experienced them, way back then, and today, the Roundtable experience

is unique and uniquely effective. Many of the legends of our industry were part of Faust Roundtable #1. Today, many of them and even more up-and-comers are now part of **Ed Tock's REX Roundtables**, which was originally headed by **Will Phillips**, who worked with Dr. Faust for years. In this industry, everything is connected!

Today, REX Roundtables has grown to become an experience/knowledge goliath. In fact, recently, the return of the *IHRSA Institute* was announced, now called the *REX Leadership Academy*.

REX Leadership Academy Is Coming July 15 - 17, 2025

Are you ready to take your leadership skills to the next level? Join the

REX Leadership Academy, an exclusive, immersive experience designed for leaders like you who are ready to grow, challenge and transform their leadership potential.

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Where: Crotonville Conference Centre, 1 Old Albany Post Road, Ossining, New York

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(See **Dr. Gerry Faust** Page 12)

Norm Cates' CLUB INSIDER

The Pulse of the Health and Fitness Club Industry

Dr. Gerry Faust

Doctor of the Grand Problem Solving Event



JULY 2016

Read This Month's Edition and Previous Editions Online at www.clubinsider.com

July 2016 Edition of Club Insider

Crunch Fitness Takes #1 Fitness Spot in Entrepreneur's Franchise 500 Ranking

NEW YORK, N.Y. - Crunch Fitness, one of the fitness industry's leading high-value, low-price gyms, ranked #1 in the fitness category and #32 overall in the annual *Entrepreneur Franchise 500*, the world's first and most comprehensive franchise ranking. These rankings rewards Crunch for outstanding performance in areas including unit growth, financial strength and stability, and brand power. Achieving placement on the annual Entrepreneur Franchise 500 is a highly sought-after honor in the franchise industry and is recognized as an invaluable resource for potential franchisees.

"It's an honor to receive Entrepreneur's recognition as the leading



fitness brand in franchising," said **Jim Rowley**, CEO of Crunch Fitness. "We're particularly proud to lead the category again. Crunch has climbed the ranks for over a decade, and this year's ranking is

(See **Crunch** Page 8)

HFA Announces Its First Class of Inductees into the HFA Hall of Fame

BOSTON, MA - The *Health & Fitness Association (HFA)* has chosen six industry leaders to be inducted into its *inaugural HFA Hall of Fame* class. The inductees are **Dr. Kenneth Cooper**, **Rick Caro**, **Red Lerille**, **Julie Main**, **John McCarthy** and **Augie Nieto**. The honorees will be inducted into the HFA Hall of Fame in a ceremony to be held from 7 - 9 PM on March 11 at *The HFA Show* in Las Vegas.

"The establishment of the HFA Hall of Fame allows the industry to celebrate those who revolutionized our industry," says **Liz Clark**, HFA President and CEO. "These visionaries are the innovators and leaders who we strive to emulate in



countless ways. This year's inductees hold a special place as our inaugural class."

The HFA Hall of Fame recognizes
(See **HFA HOF** Page 10)

Inside the Insider: Edition #374

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- Why Every Gym Owner Needs a "Think Day" - **By:** Jim Thomas
- CES 2025: AI Fitness Take Over - **By:** Nancy Trent
- Instructor Recruitment: Rules of the Road - **By:** Jeffrey Pinkerton
- "Insider Speaks" - New Research Highlights the Global Potential of Affordable Fitness
- And, of Course, **Norm's Notes**

Norm's Notes

■Hello Everybody! This is your Club Insider Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993 checking in with our 374th monthly edition of this 32+ year running club business publication I refer to as: A Labor of Love! I'm very thankful that you've tuned in again for this iteration of **Norm's Notes**, as I proceed on my keyboard with my longtime habit of "Telling-It-Like-It-Is!" I'm really happy that you're reading this edition, and I want to **THANK YOU ALL** for sticking with us every month! As usual, we have a bunch of health and fitness club business news, **so please read on!**

■Is AMERICA a GREAT COUNTRY, or WHAT?!? Hmm... hmm... hmm! And, as usual, let me start these **Norm's Notes** with my normal monthly salutation to you all: **GOD BLESS AMERICA and GOD BLESS YOU, YOUR FAMILY and YOUR BUSINESS!!**

■Welcome Back to our friends at **Vending.com** as they re-join the **C.I. Advertising Team** in our *Directory Tier*. Vending.com is the factory direct supplier of a full line of new and factory certified remanufactured vending machines, including custom machines manufactured

in the U.S.A. Whether you want to offer beverages and snacks or sell protein powder and workout gear from a locker, they have over 90 years of experience and can provide you with the perfect solution. No need to pay cash for your equipment. Up to 100% financing can be provided by their company. Check out their **Ads** on our website and in our *Club Insider Monthly* and *Weekly eBlasts!*

■**GREG LAWLOR** has been named *President of Johnson Health Tech Canada*. Lawlor, who has been with the organization since its inception in 2015, was previously the *Vice President of Business Development*, overseeing revenue growth in both the commercial and retail segments. Lawlor has a track record of success in the Canadian fitness industry since 1994. Prior to joining JHT, he was a co-owner of **STAK Fitness**, which JHT acquired in 2015. In his new role, Greg will oversee all operations and strategic initiatives for JHT Canada. His focus will be on delivering exceptional client service, driving sales growth and leading the organization toward a profitable and prosperous future.

"Greg has been a valuable member of our team, bringing extensive

experience in and knowledge of the Canadian fitness market," said **JASSON LO**, *CEO of Johnson Health Tech Co. Ltd.* "He has consistently demonstrated exceptional leadership, strategic foresight and a deep commitment to our company's philosophy and goals. He has been instrumental in growing our presence in Canada, and I am confident that he will continue to elevate JHT Canada to new heights."

Lawlor commented: "I'm excited to take the helm of Johnson Health Tech Canada. We are well positioned to continue to build on the momentum that we have achieved with our industry-leading portfolio of brands. We've built a solid foundation with our customers, and we're ready to further our initiatives to continue to deliver outstanding experiences. It will be a privilege to work side-by-side with our outstanding team to create even greater value in a way that helps shape the future of our company."

■**Pickleball Kingdom** plans massive international expansion with *New Chief Global Officer*. Pickleball Kingdom, which is one of the world's largest and fastest-growing pickleball franchising entities,



Norm Cates

has announced the promotion of **ROB STREETT** from *Chief Operating Officer to President and Chief Global Officer*. In his new role, Streett will oversee the company's aggressive global expansion, with a target of operational facilities in 10+ international territories by the end of 2025! **Stay Tuned Folks!**

■**F45 Training** has reported a 23% year-
(See **Norm's Notes** Page 7)

About Club Insider

CELEBRATING 30+ YEARS OF TRUST

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Thanks and Appreciation

At **Club Insider**, we are excited to be in our **32nd Year** of this home-based health and fitness club trade publication! The thought that this publication was *founded to serve an industry I truly love*, and so that *I could become a Mister Mom for my son, Justin*, is still *intriguing and amazing* to us. So, I wish to extend my most sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to everyone who has made this amazing 30+ year run possible.

Very sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** go to **Rick Caro**, the late **Dr. Gerry Faust** and the **Faust Executive Roundtable #1** for helping me decide in 1993 what my home-based business would be. **Thanks and Appreciation** to my long-time friends, **Ron Hudspeth** and **Cathy Miller**, formerly of **Atlanta's Hudspeth Report** for the tremendous assistance they provided. **Thanks and Appreciation** to all of the folks at **Walton Press** in Monroe, Georgia. They did an absolutely excellent job for us all these years and printed every one of our monthly printed editions! And, of course, **Thanks and Appreciation** to the **United States Postal Service** for sending those editions to our readers!

Now, as we have gone all digital, **Thanks and Appreciation** to all of our **READERS**. Sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to our **Club Insider Advertisers**, past and present, for their kind and dedicated support of this publication. **Thanks and Appreciation** to all of our **Club Insider Contributing Authors**, past and present. **Thanks and Appreciation** to the **Health & Fitness Association** for all it does for all of us. And, sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to my son, **Justin**, our **Publisher**, who is a truly great business partner. You name it and Justin does it each and every month!

Last, but surely not least, this writer who refused to fear failure when many told him he didn't have a chance of surviving the publishing business for even a year did survive. And, he would like to give his sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to the power that made that survival happen: **God**.

Very sincerely, with love in my heart for you all,

Norm Cates, Jr.



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"Insider Speaks"

New Research Highlights the Global Potential of Affordable Fitness

WASHINGTON, D.C. - New research by the *Health & Fitness Association (HFA)* highlights the important role affordability plays in addressing the global physical inactivity crisis. Covering ten diverse markets, the study demonstrates how reducing financial barriers to structured exercise facilitated by fitness facilities could help drive substantial health, social and economic benefits.

Physical inactivity has emerged as a key driver of preventable diseases and premature mortality worldwide. Health and fitness facilities, as enablers of regular physical activity, provide professionally-guided, evidence-based programs at scale proven to reduce chronic disease risk, improve mental health and build stronger communities. Yet, access remains uneven, with affordability being a leading barrier.

The report, *Reversing the Physical Inactivity Crisis - Fitness Affordability as Strategic Policy*, reveals that fitness facility customers are significantly more active and healthier than non-customers. Across the ten surveyed markets, customers were on average 56% more likely to meet *World Health Organization (WHO)* guidelines for physical activity. These individuals also reported higher life satisfaction and greater trust in their communities, emphasizing the broad social value of structured exercise.

Despite these clear benefits, cost was cited as a leading barrier to participation in every surveyed market. On average, 61% of non-customers identified

affordability as a primary reason for not joining a facility, limiting access to the extensive infrastructure and professional expertise fitness facilities provide.

The research includes a price elasticity analysis, demonstrating that even modest price reductions, enabled by strategic public policy interventions, could on average motivate up to 14% of current non-customers to engage in structured exercise.

Modeling the effects of a hypothetical 10% price reduction revealed the potential for significant returns across multiple dimensions:

■ **Health Savings:** A return on investment of 1.5x to 4x through reductions in chronic disease prevalence, improved public health outcomes and productivity savings.

■ **Economic Impact:** Increased consumer spending in the fitness sector and related industries, alongside the creation of new jobs.

■ **Social Benefits:** Enhanced life satisfaction and community trust, fostering healthier and more connected communities.

"This research provides policy-makers with the evidence needed to act decisively," said **Liz Clark, President and CEO of the Health & Fitness Association**. "By prioritizing affordability, we can remove a leading barrier to structured exercise, drive health improvements, strengthen social cohesion and fuel economic

resilience. Public investment in fitness affordability is not just a cost but a strategic initiative with profound returns."

The findings emphasize the need to view the health and fitness industry as an essential partner in addressing some of the world's most pressing public health challenges. Policymakers and stakeholders are urged to integrate affordability into strategies promoting physical activity, thereby fostering healthier, more active societies worldwide.

Methodology: The report, *Reversing the Physical Inactivity Crisis - Fitness Affordability as Strategic Policy*, explores the impact of targeted price reductions for fitness facility memberships across ten global markets. Conducted by the *Health & Fitness Association* in collaboration with *Portas Consulting*, the study integrates consumer surveys with Portas' proprietary Social Return on Investment (SROI) model to evaluate health, social and economic outcomes.

The online survey, conducted in September 2024, included nearly 11,300 urban adults from a diverse group of 10 markets: Australia, Canada, Germany, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Spain and United States.

HEALTH & FITNESS ASSOCIATION

Insider Weekly, among other sources, **Steve Vucovich, Managing Partner of Club Apple** in Idaho Falls, Idaho, submitted the following questions and thoughts:

"You may have already read the report on affordability. The HFA (Liz specifically) is mentioned saying that we should make this a priority. Maybe you could reach out and ask her how? Is it with tax dollars? Should we lower our prices? There are already tons of \$10/mo. gyms out there.

We've offered a Membership Assistance Program (M.A.P.) for years. We ask for the prospect to furnish us with their tax return, and we go from there. We've had family memberships for \$10 up to half normal prices. Interestingly, we are not inundated with interest. Maybe they are already going to Planet Fitness!

Anyway, I'd be very interested in learning how to tap the affordability market without going broke. Incidentally, I'd like to know what percentage of the persons claiming not being able to afford a membership can afford other things many may not deem necessary?"

▪ ▪ ▪

Publisher's Note: In response to this Press Release, originally reported in *Club*

Integrating New Members into Your Fitness Facility

By: **Sara Kooperman, JD**

Successfully integrating new members into your fitness facility is crucial for long-term retention and overall satisfaction. The process should be structured, engaging and tailored to individual fitness goals to ensure new members feel welcomed, supported and motivated to continue their fitness journey.

1. Initial Assessment and Goal Setting:

A structured onboarding process should begin with an initial fitness assessment to evaluate the member's fitness level, experience and goals. This can include:

- Health and fitness questionnaires;
- Movement screenings and body composition analysis;
- One-on-one consultations with trainers to

discuss objectives.

2. Personalized Program Recommendations:

Based on the assessment, direct new members into the most suitable programs. Offer:

- Beginner-friendly group classes;
- Personalized training plans;
- Virtual guidance through an app or online platform.

3. Facility Tour and Staff Introductions:

A personal tour ensures members feel comfortable in the space. Introduce them to staff, explain amenities and highlight community activities that align with their interests.

4. Structured Onboarding Programs:

A new member orientation program that spans the first few weeks can improve engagement. These programs can include:

- Free personal training session or small group class;
- Guided equipment walkthroughs;
- Weekly check-ins from trainers or staff.

5. Community Building and Social Engagement:

Encourage social integration by:

- Pairing them with workout buddies or accountability groups;
- Inviting them to exclusive member events;
- Creating private social media groups for interaction.

6. Tracking Progress and Continuous Support:



Sara Kooperman, JD

Offer digital tracking tools or mobile apps where members can:

(See **Sara Kooperman, JD** Page 8)

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...Norm's Notes

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over-year increase in franchise inquiries as its Pilates business gains momentum. F45 is celebrating its 2024 wins with bold plans to amplify wellness initiatives, accelerate global growth across its multi-brand portfolio, including FS8 and Vaura, and unveil a reimagined studio design and an enhanced strength training program for its flagship F45 brand.

In 2024, the boutique fitness leader opened 75 new studios across its brands and sold 87 franchises. F45 also expanded into new regions through master franchise partners, growing its presence in South Africa, South Korea, the U.K. and Europe. Several strategic partnerships were also forged with fitness competition brands Hyrox and Spartan, tech giant Samsung and cancer-focused initiative Battle Cancer. F45's partnership with telehealth provider Dr. B may be its most lucrative, where program members can access GLP-1 medications and combine them with the franchisor's fitness and nutrition tools.

F45 Executive, **TOM DOWD**, commented: "As we step into 2025, we are determined to build on this momentum, expand our reach and bring more studios to communities with our three amazing

and proven concepts, along with building new and exciting partnerships that add brand awareness as we expand our global reach and take market share. Our Pilates business continues to build momentum with strong deal flow driving into the new year." **Stay Tuned Folks!**

■Here's some very interesting information about *HAPANA*... something that might help you improve your clubs. If you run a fitness franchise, gym or studio, this guide to running fitness challenges is for you. Hapana has a decade of industry experience working with some of the most innovative fitness names globally, and they've learned a thing or two about fitness challenges. Now, they've collated that knowledge into a handy PDF. Inside, you'll find:

- Real-world examples of successful fitness challenges (and one example of what not to do!).
- Step-by-step guide to rolling out challenges across franchises.
- Practical tips to make your challenge offering a standout experience.

If you're ready to beat the competition and become truly innovative, download this guide and get started today, by going to hapana.com.

■Folks, this sad news item is from dear friend, **BONNIE PATRICK MATTALIAN**, and it was delivered to me on January 22, 2025. Bonnie wrote:

"I've been quiet on LinkedIn for a while, but it's only because I've been deeply immersed in my role at the *Kaplen JCC on the Palisades*. Here, I have been able to really and truly directly impact the lives of our members. Together, we've worked to rebuild the community through the strength of our incredible team and a shared commitment to *tikkun olam* (repairing the world). This effort has been guided by the outstanding leadership of our CEO, **STEVE ROGERS**. In my career, I've had the privilege of working with many CEOs, but Steve stands out as a truly exceptional leader: caring, intelligent, approachable, articulate and always quick with a joke.

It is with profound sadness that we share the tragic news of the unexpected passing of Steve Rogers, *CEO of the Kaplen JCC on the Palisades* in Tenafly, New Jersey, and a former Member of the JCC Association Board of Directors. Steve leaves behind a legacy of remarkable leadership and unwavering dedication to the JCC Movement. Steve became CEO of the Kaplen JCC in December 2021 after many years as a devoted member and Board Chairman. As CEO, he led

with enthusiasm, pride, and an abiding commitment to Jewish values, elevating the Kaplen JCC to new heights and uniting his community in times of both celebration and grief. From 2018 - 2022, Steve served on JCC Association's Board of Directors where his steadfast dedication to the JCC Movement and Jewish communal work inspired colleagues across North America. His passion for his JCC, his local community, and the broader JCC Movement was unparalleled, and his vision will continue to serve as a guiding light for all who knew him.

The loss of Steve Rogers is a profound one, and our thoughts are with his beloved wife, **ROBIN**, and his children, **JASON, ALEC, SHANI** and **JAMIE**. Steve was a true mensch (person of integrity and honor) and friend, and his memory will forever be a blessing and an inspiration to us all. May his family, friends and colleagues be comforted among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

AMY HOLTZ commented, 'Steve was a true passionate visionary and an honor to not only work with him the last 14 months but a privilege to call him my friend for 50 years. He will be deeply missed by many, including me.'

While we will greatly miss Steve, we are committed to carrying forward his (See **Norm's Notes** Page 8)

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vision and continuing to make him proud. It was one of the greatest honors of my life to work with Steve. May Steve Rogers' memory be a blessing."

Bonnie, thank you for update.
May Steve Rogers Rest In Peace.

■ In a tragic event in Roswell, Georgia (a suburb of Atlanta), police officer **JEREMY LABONTE** lost his life after being shot during a response call at a local pickleball club. According to CBS News, **EDWARD ESPINOSA**, 23, was arrested and faces multiple charges including murder following the fatal shooting of the young police officer. The incident unfolded on Friday night, February 6th when the *Roswell Police Department* received a report of a suspicious person loitering in the parking lot of a pickleball club. An officer was dispatched to investigate the situation further. Upon arrival, the officer approached the suspect, who was later identified as Edward Espinosa, for questioning. It was during this interaction that the situation rapidly deteriorated. Espinosa allegedly produced a handgun and fired multiple shots at the officer, who sustained severe injuries from the gunfire. The tragic outcome following the altercation was the officer was promptly transported to a nearby hospital in an attempt to save his life. Despite the best efforts of the medical staff, the officer succumbed to the injuries and was pronounced dead. Shortly after the shooting, police backup arrived at the scene, securing it and apprehending

Espinosa without further incident. Following his arrest, Espinosa was charged with murder, aggravated assault on a law enforcement officer, and possession of a firearm during the commission of a felony.

Folks, this is very SAD news, indeed, and the Roswell community is now mourning its protector. The Roswell, Georgia Police Department released a statement, emphasizing their commitment to supporting both the family of the deceased officer and the members of the department during this difficult time. They stated, "Our priority now is to surround and support the family of our fallen officer and grieving department."

■ Those of you out there who own and operate a health and fitness club do, in fact, depend on your local Police Departments to keep your communities and your neighborhoods SAFE. But, here and now, I would like to ask you what I believe is a very important question. My question is this: How many of you have ever recognized and honored your local Police Departments for the very important and great job they do keeping your community SAFE? Well, folks, this former club owner/operator, and now long-time Author and Publisher, has done just that! And, I urge club owners/operators everywhere to consider doing what I did. Read on Y'all...

Way back in the 1980s, I built from the ground up, owned and operated the 46,000 square-foot *Downtown Athletic Club (DAC)*. The DAC was a big and fabulous club Atlanta's downtown OMNI mega-complex, which included: The OMNI Hotel with 500+ rooms, two 10-story OMNI Office

Buildings located on both sides of what, at the time, was the only indoor Ice Skating Rink in the City of Atlanta, as well as the OMNI Shopping Mall.

One of the best things about the DAC was the fact that, right in the same building, there was a precinct of the Atlanta Police Department. I was thrilled to have my club next to the precinct that was installed there, because during our pre-opening membership pre-sale period, there was a murder on-site in the OMNI Hotel! Following the installation of the police precinct, the OMNI complex and the DAC became known as a very safe place.

That fact alone contributed hugely to our success and to our ability to attract over 6,000 members! We averaged 2,000 workout visitors per day on weekdays for years and years! Included among our many special DAC Members was *Atlanta Mayor, ANDREW YOUNG*. "MAYOR ANDY," as I call him, was a daily workout visitor to the DAC for many years. I bet his regular exercise habits way back then had a lot of do with his now being 93 years old and still kickin'!

Back to honoring those in blue, during my time owning/operating the DAC, with Mayor Andy's help, I began what became known as the *Police Appreciation Gala*. The sole purpose was to pay respect to and honor those protecting our community. Our club members greatly appreciated this, as well as the wonderful officers in attendance. Further, it was an opportunity to raise money for them, greatly assisting the community. If you have not done something like this, folks, I urge you to consider doing so. And, remember,

it does not have to be limited to Police. You could have a *Fire Fighter's Gala*. Or, an *EMT Gala*. Or, more generally, a *First Responders Gala*. They ALL deserve it.

■ **JUSTIN** and I want to THANK YOU for reading Club Insider! We appreciate you being with us. And, in particular, WE VERY SINCERELY APPRECIATE ANY and ALL SUPPORT OF OUR ESTEEMED Club Insider ADVERTISERS! PLEASE DO BUSINESS WITH THEM and WHEN YOU DO, PLEASE TELL 'EM Club Insider SENT YOU! THANK YOU ALL!

■ **God bless our troops, airmen and sailors worldwide and keep them safe.** Thank you, Congratulations and Welcome Home to all of our troops who have served around the world. God bless America's Policemen and women and Firemen and women; keep them safe. Finally, God bless you, your family, your club(s) and your members. God Bless America! Laus Deo!

(Norm Cates, Jr. is a 50+ year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. He is the Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993 of Club Insider, now in its 32nd year of monthly publication. In 1981, he was IHRSA's First President, and a Co-Founder of the Association with Rick Caro and five others. In 2001, he was honored by IHRSA with its DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award, one of its highest honors. And, in 2017, he was honored with Club Industry's Lifetime Achievement Award. You can reach Norm by phone at 770-635-7578 or email at Norm@clubinsideronline.com.)

...Crunch

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a testament to the commitment of our franchisees, corporate team, team members at our gyms and millions of loyal members. We look forward to an even more successful year in 2025."

The ranking follows a milestone year for Crunch Fitness, when the company celebrated its 35th anniversary; launched Crunch 3.0, an innovative new gym design; hit the three-million-member mark; and increased its franchise footprint to 500 gyms worldwide.

"Entrepreneur's recognition fur-

ther cements our position as the leading fitness brand in franchising," said **Chequan Lewis**, President of Crunch Fitness. "As we celebrate this year's ranking, we want to recognize the operational excellence of Crunch franchisees and team members at our gyms across the U.S. and around the globe. We look forward to delivering even more legendary experiences to gym members this year."

"The Franchise 500 is more than a list. It's really a collection of life-changing opportunities featuring strong and resilient brands that future franchisees will be proud to be a part of," says **Jason Feifer**, Editor-in-chief of Entrepreneur Magazine. "This

year's honorees represent the bold ideas, operational excellence and adaptability that make franchising a cornerstone of entrepreneurial success."

In Entrepreneur's continuing effort to best understand and evaluate the ever-changing franchise marketplace, the company's 46-year-old ranking formula continues to evolve as well. The editorial team researches and assesses several factors, including costs and fees, size and growth, support, brand strength, and financial strength and stability. Each franchise is given a cumulative score based on an analysis of more than 150 data points, and the 500 franchises with

the highest cumulative scores become the Franchise 500 in ranking order.

Over its 46 years, the Franchise 500 has become a dominant competitive measure for franchisors and a primary research tool for potential franchisees. Crunch Fitness's position on the ranking is a testament to its strength as a franchise opportunity.

To view Crunch Fitness in the full ranking, visit www.entrepreneur.com/franchise500.

Check out the **Crunch Ad** on Page #2.

...Sara Kooperman, JD

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■ Log workouts and monitor progress;
■ Receive motivational messages and program updates;
■ Set personal fitness challenges.

7. Collecting Feedback and Adapting Services:

Gather feedback through surveys

or in-person conversations to refine the integration process and ensure members feel heard and valued.

Conclusion

A well-structured onboarding process fosters long-term engagement, enhances member satisfaction, and increases retention. By providing clear direction, personal support and community engagement, fitness facilities can help new

members integrate smoothly and achieve their fitness goals successfully.

(Sara Kooperman, JD, CEO of SCW Fitness Education, WATERinMOTION, and S.E.A.T. Fitness won the *Most Innovating Fitness Pro* by Fitness Industry Technology Council. Sara is the best-selling author of *FIT FOR BUSINESS*, an inductee into the National Fitness Hall of Fame, an Illinois State Businesswoman of the Year, esteemed host for *NONE OF YOUR*

BUSINESS Monthly Talk Show and sits on the ACSM Communication & Public Information Committee. Kooperman sits on the Gold's Gym Think Tank and the canfitpro Advisory Panel and was a founding board member for the Women In Fitness Association (WIFA). Plus, Sara was recently nominated for the IDEA Fitness Leader of the Year Award. Learn more at www.sarakooperman.com.)



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...HFA HOF

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individuals whose contributions have elevated the Association and industry's profiles, set new standards for excellence in leadership and supported the industry's commitment to improving physical and mental health for all.

Dr. Kenneth Cooper: Cooper founded *The Cooper Institute* and *Cooper Aerobics Center* and is known as the man who coined the term "aerobics" in 1966. He has published multiple books, written nearly 700 papers and earned more than 70 top honors from public health groups. At one time, he had his own "Healthy Living" radio show syndicated on 40 stations. Cooper founded *Our Kids Health Foundation* to combat childhood obesity, and he was instrumental in the passage of a bill in Texas that requires more physical education in schools and annual physical fitness testing. He collaborated with *PepsiCo* to eliminate trans fats from its Frito-Lay snack line, which led to other companies doing the same.

Rick Caro: Caro is *President* of consulting firm *Management Vision*, but he started in the fitness industry more than 50 years ago as the owner and operator of eight multi-sport clubs. He was one of the *Founders of the Health & Fitness Association* under its original name as the *International Racquet & Sportsclub Association*. He served twice on the *Board of HFA* (once as *President*), and he also has served on the *Board of the American Council on Exercise*. Caro helped standardize financial best practices and operational methods for the industry and helped the industry attract interest and partnership opportunities from sophisticated institutional investors, analysts, researchers and global business consultants.

Red Lerille: Lerille founded *Red Lerille's Health & Racquet Club* in 1963 after winning several bodybuilding titles, including *Mr. America* in 1960. He counted **Joe Gold**, *Founder of Gold's Gym and World Gym International*, as his mentor. Lerille's hands-on style at his club, which included greeting many of his members at the door, and his support of his community of Lafayette, Louisiana, made him a well-known person in his town. One of his mottos was to always be changing, which led to continual improvements to his club that benefitted his members and cultivated intense loyalty from those members and his staff. He also was active in a roundtable where he shared his expertise and positive

outlook with other club operators.

Julie Main: Main was *Co-owner and President of the West Coast Athletic Clubs*, a group of five clubs in California. She served on the HFA Board of Directors for several years, including time as the second female Board President. She was a role model of volunteerism, serving on multiple board committees. During her battle with cancer, she learned first-hand how exercise can help with cancer treatment and rehabilitation. As a result, she co-founded the *Cancer Well-Fit Program*, which incorporated regular exercise as a component of the cancer recovery process. To honor her after her death in 2009, the HFA established the *Julie Main Woman Leader Award*, which recognizes women who exemplify professionalism, excellence, courage, perseverance and tireless contribution to the industry and community. Main's induction is posthumous.

John McCarthy: McCarthy was the first *Executive Director of the Health & Fitness Association* (then called the *International Racquet & Sportsclub Association*). His interest in fitness began with basketball, which he played in college and as a member of the *Washington Generals*,

perennial opponents of the *Harlem Globetrotters*. He then went to seminary school and served as a priest but left after 11 years. He then operated tennis and racquet clubs before being tapped as the first head of the association. Under his leadership, the HFA expanded its reach to support fitness facility operators around the world, established federations in multiple countries and launched multiple events and research products. After retiring from the Association in 2006, he advised several businesses in the industry and served as *Chairman of Augie's Bash*, an annual event that brought the fitness industry together to raise money to cure ALS.

Augie Nieto: Nieto was a *Co-founder of Life Fitness*, a brand that was initially based on the *LifeCycle*, the first automated stationary bike for health clubs. The *LifeCycle* helped to establish cardio as a category in health clubs, drawing in more female members. He began as a California health club owner in the late 1970s. Later in life, he was diagnosed with ALS and founded *Augie's Quest*, a nonprofit research organization with a goal to cure ALS. The organization brought together the fitness industry in an annual fundraiser. He continued to serve the industry as an advisor. Nieto's induction

is posthumous.

▪ ▪ ▪

The inductees were selected by a panel of industry leaders: **Amy Bantham**, *Founder and CEO of Move to Live More*; **Chris Craytor**, *CEO of acac Fitness and Wellness*; **Art Curtis**, *President of Curtis Club Advisors*; **Alan Leach**, *CEO of West Wood Club*; **Carol Nalevanko**, *President of DMB Sports Clubs*; **Jim Schmaltz**, *Editor-in-chief of Club Business International*; **Chris Smith**, *President and CEO of Fitness World Canada*; and **Greta Wagner**, *Executive Director and Executive Vice President of Chelsea Piers Connecticut*.

Tickets to the induction ceremony are available for \$200 and can be added during The HFA Show registration process. Proceeds from the tickets go to the *HFA Foundation*, a 501(c)3 public charity that works to support health through exercise. Direct donations to the HFA Foundation for anyone not able to attend the ceremony can be made by going to hub.healthandfitness.org/foundation.

Business attire for the event is recommended, and attendees will enjoy drinks and hors d'oeuvres.

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Dr. Kenneth Cooper
Ruminiscing About 50 Years of Aerobics



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...Dr. Gerry Faust

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Why REX? *REX = FAMILY*, creating an environment of exceptional honesty and openness. Members report that the direct, straightforward communication they routinely get from REX is not available to them anywhere else in their work or personal lives.

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■ ■ ■

The power of Roundtables are clear, as 40+ years later, they are more popular, and effective, than ever! But, in this industry, it began with the late Dr. Gerry Faust, *Doctor of the Grand Problem Solving Event*, and that is why we bring to you this Cover Story Classic.

■ ■ ■

July 2016

Almost ten years ago, when I was graduating from college, I learned something very important: My time as a student was not over. In fact, it was just beginning, and the skills I learned during my 16 years of education were merely to prepare me for the ultimate study, that of life and business. To be successful in any medium, you must never relent in your passion to learn and improve. Without such passion, then what you are doing might not

be the right thing for you. Within the health and fitness club industry, the tools for that commitment to excel beyond what you already know into the realm of what you can know are numerous. This month, *Club Insider* is truly honored and pleased to present the story of **Dr. Gerry Faust**, who is responsible for several important tools that many of the true greats in our industry have been utilizing for years.

Dr. Gerry Faust's educational background leaves no doubt of his capacity for higher learning, having completed his Bachelor's in English and Education at *St. John's University (MN)* as well as a Master's and a Ph.D in Psychology at the *University of Illinois*. Additionally, his sports background in football and wrestling during those formative years, and the lessons learned from that experience, has continued to resonate in his style of leadership.

Later, his excellence in business, across numerous industries also leaves no doubt for his ability to convert strategic planning and thinking into actionable objectives that create success. In the mid-1980s, the health and fitness club industry was introduced to Dr. Faust with a keynote speech he gave at *IHRSA*. Since then, he has developed a true passion for this industry, and there is no doubt that he has contributed towards making it better than what it was.

Tying it all together and providing the rock of strength is his top priority of family. Together, with his wife, Terrie, they share six children and many more grandchildren. Additionally, they do a masterful job of working together professionally.

What follows is a truly in-depth interview conducted with Dr. Faust. It is our tribute to a man whom many in this industry owe a great deal of gratitude. You will learn his story, his methodology and some of the tools he has created. I invite and urge you to read on.

An In-Depth Interview With Dr. Gerry Faust

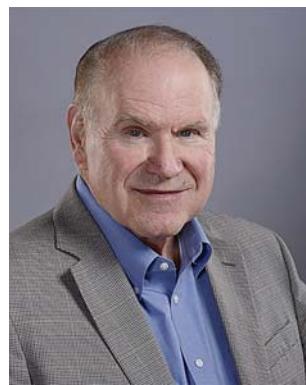
Club Insider (C.I.) - Please take us through some of your educational and career highlights prior to the founding of *Faust Management Corporation*.

Dr. Gerry Faust (GF) - Here are a few points that are important in terms of my development:

College and Post-Graduate Education/Experience:

St. John's University (MN) was a great leadership and academic development component in my life. There, I learned to be a better student and had some great professors who got to know me and encouraged me. I also had the chance to lead. I was in ROTC and learned a lot from the trials of that summer officer training boot camp. It was a great personal learning experience. I did very well there and was the ROTC Brigade Commander my whole senior year at St. John's. That, and my experiences in sports (football and wrestling) really built my skills in speaking, leading and having to think strategically. I was very fortunate. I won a national competitive Fellowship for graduate school thanks to the urgings of a couple of my professors who knew me and saw the opportunity. There were two of these fellowships to a brand new program that would eventually be called *Cognitive Psychology* at the University of Illinois. The focus of the program was really the psychology of instruction. My specialty became how people learn, solve problems and make decisions and what you can do to improve those processes.

I was also involved very early on in the applications of technology in education. Illinois was one of the birthplaces of computers used to teach. As a graduate student, I worked on several of our research programs in that area. I didn't spend much



The late Dr. Gerry Faust

time in graduate school. It took me 2 1/2 years to receive my Master's and my PhD. Unfortunately, I didn't meet the 3-year PhD residency requirement in Illinois, so they waited six months to give me my Doctorate. But, that meant they had to make me a Professor in the meantime, which really worked out (laughing). The year I graduated, I was given an Assistant Professorship and was made the Co-Director of the Training Research Laboratory there. This was the place that was doing the earliest work on using computers to teach. The plasma panel and touch screen were invented by the engineering department there and integrated into the first large-scale computer-based teaching system called *PLATO*. So, I was really on the forefront of that, and it turned out to be very important in some other things that I did later.

Once again, at Illinois I had a tremendous mentor who believed a lot in me, gave me pretty much free reign and decided his big job was to make sure I got through graduate school so I could start making a contribution to the field as soon as possible. I appreciated that. By the way, I was married as a junior in college, so I had a reason to get out of school quickly (laughing). My son, **Steve**, was born at the end of my first year in Grad school. Because of ROTC, I had a military obligation after grad school, so my next 'opportunity' was three years as an Army Captain at the *U.S. Army Medical Field Services School* in San Antonio, Texas, a great job during the Vietnam War. I was actually recruited for that job after giving a speech at the Pentagon on innovations in training. So, my Army career was teaching in a faculty development program at the school, doing research and developing curricular and some of the first military computer-assisted instruction programs.

Courseware:

The work and the team I was able to put together there led to my next really big adventure when I and a couple of my Army teammates started a company called *Courseware*. I called a little meeting at my

(See **Dr. Gerry Faust** Page 14)



Gerry Faust (#33) and Teammates Carrying Legendary Coach John Gagliardi After 1963 National Championship Victory

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...Dr. Gerry Faust

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house to discuss the idea in 1971. The guys met, we all got excited and a fledgling company was born. Courseware was a revolutionary company of its time. If not the first, we were one of the first companies in the high-technology training and education business. Because I still needed a 'real job,' I accepted an Associate Professorship at *The University of Texas*, just up the road in Austin. There, I partnered with another leader in the computer education arena, and we founded the *Institute for Computing Uses in Education* and received a \$9 million grant to develop a system to integrate computer and television technologies and do a large-scale demonstration of the effectiveness of computer-based instruction. We later moved the project to *Brigham Young University* where we founded the *Institute of Instructional Science*. So, being on the forefront of that technology and then building a business in that space was a great experience.

The business grew very fast, and soon, I could not afford to continue the Professor thing. So, I moved to San Diego where our biggest client (the U.S. Navy) was, and the business really took off growing over 100% per year. Courseware was an extremely successful company. We had a hand in the development of the Astronaut Training Program for the Space Shuttle; we designed most of the Naval Aviation Training in the '70s; and we were the major training supplier for both IBM and Apple during the '70s and '80s. We ended up with around 300 employees during that time and sold the business, as a very successful sale, to *Anderson Consulting*, now *Accenture*. The Courseware team became the *Change Management Division* of that company.

Leading a fast-growing private company is a great proving ground for business leadership. You either learn or die. We don't have time here to discuss all I learned in those days. But, importantly, I learned how to do my first turnaround in that business when we had a big hiccup in the late '70s and early '80s. I learned over and over again that great companies are built around great teams of people. Luckily, I was able to put together a great team: three key people from my Army days, two from the academic community, an old Harvard MBA sage and a CEO of a several hundred-million-dollar business who was on my Board.

The Adizes Institute:

Courseware led me to my next venture and a very important part of my development and my transition to a whole new space. I became a *Co-owner and President of the Adizes Institute*, so that's important to mention. At Courseware, I got very interested in business as a *grand problem-solving event*. I took on a number

of important projects where we were being asked to design training and development programs for managers, one of which was with *Bechtel Corporation*. They sent me around the world to figure out: what does it take to train people to run billion-dollar projects? So, I went up to the *SYNCRUDE Project* in Canada; *Riyadh* in Saudi Arabia and some of their other big projects. I wrote a large report on what it takes to develop managers of billion-dollar projects. It turned out to be a big thing for Bechtel because they ordered a lot of copies of the report (laughing). About this time, I had decided to move to *Chairman of the Board at Courseware* and to appoint a new President. It was becoming more of a manufacturing company. We had developed a methodology, and it was working very well. So, there was less R&D to do.

At that time, a man by the name of **Ichak Adizes** came to me as a client. He was literally one of the foremost 'gurus' in the management space. When I met him, he had done consulting and speaking, he was a professor at UCLA and was just writing a new book, *How to Solve the Mismanagement Crisis*, where he was introducing his work on the roles of management and the Life Cycles of Organizations. He was also working to develop a method of applying his thoughts to a consulting methodology. He was having trouble explaining his ideas and training others to use them. He came to me because of my education and training background on the recommendation of Will Phillips, who was working with him at the time. As Adizes was explaining where he needed help, I got excited about his concepts. It also became clear that his methodology was fragmented. The idea that I could work with him to polish and extend the conceptual base, and especially the application, was exciting to me. I also told him he really needed to have someone help him put together and manage the business. He was a great management

consultant but not necessarily a great businessperson at that time, which by the way, is not uncommon.

This turned out to be an interesting partnership as I bought about 49% of the business and became the *Senior Associate and President of the Adizes Institute*, which at the time, was a small consulting practice. We worked together for four years during which the business grew over 100% per year and the methodology and ideas really came together. In one of Ichak's recent books, he talks about how his methodology really developed in the period from 1979 - 83. Those were the years that we worked together, and I believe it was a great time for both of us. I do owe him a lot because our discussions helped me, and I believe both of us, and our ideas grew. They say two gurus is kind of hard for one company to handle, and I did eventually leave to start my own firm, *Faust Management Corporation*. Will Phillips also left, moving to *McGladley-Pullen*. Later, Will and I got back together at Faust Management.

**Faust Management Corporation
Comes to Be...**

C.I. - When and how did Faust Management Corporation come to be?
GF - Faust Management technically started in 1983. I decided it was time to modify some of that methodology to create my own methods and approaches. I've been in the consulting business ever since. For several years, Faust Management grew and was becoming a solid consulting firm. We had done some great projects. We had done a turnaround at *Bank of America*, which was a big success. And, actually, my ex-partner Ichak had called me to help with that project. I did major strategy work with *Domino's Pizza*. They were my client for about six years. In the time that I worked with them, they grew from about a \$30 - \$40 million company, which was out of cash at the time and struggling, and six

years later, they were at about \$1.6 billion. That was a ride with **Tom Monaghan** and **Domino's**. I was there several days every month for all of those six years. We did a major project with the *American Airlines* restructuring and helped them develop their non-airline businesses. By the way, a lot of them were built around computers and the *Sabre* system. Their travel groups were all built when we helped design the strategy for the restructuring. So, I was working with a lot of big clients in those years and charging wonderful fees because of that. Will Phillips and several other consultants joined the firm, and we began to train and license consultants around the world. Most of that work was built around our *Organizational Diagnostic* work and work on strategy and problem solving. With Will and my then COO, **Dick Lyles**, we wrote my first 'management book,' *Responsible Managers Get Results*, based on some new concepts regarding what responsibility in organizations is and should be and how to develop it.

By that time, I was also doing a lot of public speaking. I did a number of Universities of the Young President's organization. I had also started working with *Vistage*, which used to be called *TEC (The Executive Committee)*. It is the biggest CEO Roundtable group in the world. They have over 20,000 people in their CEO Roundtables worldwide. That relationship has been good. In 1986, I was voted their *International Speaker of the Year* and became one of their Elite Speakers, which means I can pretty much do as many of their talks as I want in a year. And, by the way, in 2010, I was named as the *International Speaker of the Year for Canada* by the Canadian subsidiary of the organization.

Meeting Rick Caro:

In about 1984, I met another interesting guy, **Rick Caro**. Rick and I keep trying to figure out which year it was that we met. I think it was 1984, but we are both getting too old to remember exactly when (laughing). It was at one of the big speeches I was giving, and I remember it because it was a 'really big' speech. It was for the *World New Products Conference* in Toronto Canada. Some of the other speakers were **Pierre Trudeau**, **Henry Kissinger**, **Alvin Toffler**, **Mike Vance** of Disney and other notables. So, there were a lot of big players there. I hung out with Kissinger for a while, which was a kick (laughing). One of the other notorious people I met there was Rick Caro (laughing). Rick can tell you his own story about how he got there, but the guy who was running the conference had heard me speak somewhere else and told Rick that, if he was going to one speech at that conference, he should go hear me. He said, 'You'll see all these other big names, but the guy you really ought to listen to is Gerry Faust.'

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Faust Roundtable #1 Members of Years Past - Kneeling: Tom Lyneis, Red Lerille;
Second Row (L to R): Barbara Garringer, Carol Nalevanko, Hannah Karras, Paula Porter;
Back Row (L to R): Clive Caldwell, Todd Pulis, Rick Caro, Carl Porter, Ray O'Connor, Tim Rhode, Liz Rhode and the late Steve Tharrett

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...Dr. Gerry Faust

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So, Rick sat in the audience, and I must tell you that I didn't see him among the 6,000 people. But, afterward, he came up to me and said he wanted to go to dinner and talk to me about another speaking engagement. So, Rick, the guy who was putting on the conference and me went to dinner and had a great talk. That was when Rick convinced me that I just had to speak at the IHRSA conference.

C.I. - When and in what capacity did you first work within the health and fitness club industry?
GF - In 1984 or 1985, I did a speech on the *Life Cycle of Organizations* to IHRSA. Like most of my speeches, I like to customize them to the industry or business. So, I was talking about the life cycle of an organization and adapted it to the club industry. I was a closing keynote speaker that year, and it must have gone over well because they asked me to come back as an opening keynote speaker the next year. Probably one of the best things I ever did was say, 'Well, if I'm going to come back, I'd also like to talk about the life cycle of the club industry.'

At that time, I was developing my

first real serious broad-based organizational assessments, which eventually became known as *Executive Insight*. So, I wanted to do that assessment on 10 - 20 of the most successful clubs, 10 - 20 in the middle of the pack and 10 - 20 among the lower performers based on IHRSA's *Profiles on Success*. IHRSA gave me the 'sample subjects,' and I did the assessment on them. Those assessments taught me a lot about clubs and the industry, so I gave two talks at IHRSA that year. One was called *The Life Cycle of Business and the Life Cycle of the Club Industry*. I pointed out that, at that time, the club industry was in the go-go phase. It was growing and evolving fast. It was making all of the mistakes of normal go-go industries and go-go companies. And, it had the normal strengths and enthusiasm of the go phase. Clubs were expanding, the groups were getting bigger, all kinds of ideas were coming into the organizations and it was getting pretty hectic. There was just a lot going on. It was like the Wild West.

Creating The Faust Roundtables

C.I. - Let's discuss the Faust Executive Roundtables for the health and fitness club industry. How did the idea of the *Faust Roundtable #1* come about? Please also tell us about the subsequent Roundtables that followed.

GF - That year, based on the knowledge I got and the assessments I did, I spoke to the *Vanguard Group*. The presentation was called *The Ten Biggest Problems in Your Industry and How to Solve Them*. It was a well-attended seminar, but it was only for the 200 biggest people, although I'll never forget that we had people standing all around the edges of the room and outside the door. As I came out of there, once again, Rick Caro showed up because, by this time, Rick had adopted me (laughing). He said, 'I've been talking to some of the IHRSA Board Members; we want to work with you.' I will never forget it. I looked him in the eye, and I said, 'The problem is there aren't that many people in the industry who can afford me.' That was true at that time because, to be very honest, I was charging a lot of money for my time in these big companies and doing mostly big company work. My typical retainer for larger companies was somewhere between \$100,000 - \$200,000 a month. That was obviously for more than just me but rather for my team and me. But, the fact was we had a lot of big clients and big projects.

I explained, 'You all can't pay \$5,000 a day for my time.' He said, 'Well, there must be some way we can do something.' I told him I would think about it. I came back to him and I said, 'I tell you what... The one thing we could

do is you could put together a group of people, and I would meet with that group, everyone sharing the costs.' So, that is when Roundtable #1 started. It was mostly then current and former Board Members. I remember there was **Brother (Curt) Beusman**, who was walking around in robes at one of those sessions (laughing); there was **Red Lerille** and there were a number of others who were kind of icons in the industry, including your dad, **Norm Cates**. They all came to me, we had dinner, we talked about it and I put together a proposal, which I sent the proposal to Rick. He said, 'Okay.' And, I told him, 'You've got to get twelve or more people together because it is going to take twelve of your people to be able to do this thing.' I thought that would stall him a little bit, but you know Rick, he knows everybody. So, the next thing I know, he called me back and said, 'Alright, I've got twelve people.' All had to be non-competitive in terms of the regions they represented. So, we started...

I have to say that it was one of the most wonderful experiences for me to run that Roundtable. I had watched several other companies try roundtables of one kind or another. One was the *Young Presidents Organization*, and I had actually given them some advice on how to run what they eventually called their *Forum Groups*. I

(See **Dr. Gerry Faust** Page 16)



"I highly recommend the HWLS team. They've provided us invaluable guidance regarding membership marketing and fitness programming."

- Mary Thomas | Owner and General Manager | Western Racquet & Fitness Club | Green Bay, WI

...Dr. Gerry Faust

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worked with Vistage and had actually done some consulting for that organization. But, everybody was doing local groups, and we wanted a national group. So, we came up with the idea that we would meet four times a year for a couple of days, which eventually got changed to three times a year for three days. So, with twelve members, we started the Faust Roundtables. In addition to starting the Roundtables in 1985, I also started my long-term association with IHRSA and the industry. This has been a 30+ year love affair, and I've truly enjoyed this relationship and the industry.

Anyway, as you know, the REX Roundtables have really done a lot in recent years. Of course, the first three of those REX Roundtables were actually started at Faust Management. Our first Roundtable became so successful that, within a year or two, there were people wanting to get into it. But, some were competitive with the people I had in Roundtable #1. I couldn't have them in there, so we started Roundtable #2. I ran Roundtable #1, and I didn't think it was a good idea for me to be running one with those competitors. So, I turned it over to one of my colleagues, Will Phillips, who is a very knowledgeable consultant and outstanding facilitator, two great attributes for a good roundtable leader. And, by that time, we were getting Roundtable #3 going, and after I got it going, Will decided to do that one too. Then, we ended up with Roundtable #4 that included smaller operators and some strong managers working in groups in #1 and #2, so I turned that over to my son, Steve. Will decided he really liked the roundtable business and was ready to make that the bulk of his work. For six or seven years, I was getting a royalty from the Roundtables, and they were the Faust Roundtables. Will was also doing some other roundtables in the Museum and other outside industries. After a while, though, I felt he had done so much good work that I ended the royalties.

C.I. - What similarities do the Faust Roundtables share with other industry roundtables? What are the differences?

GF - I have seen a lot of industry roundtables. Some good, some not so good. The differences are primarily the caliber of the leaders and the structure of the program. For the leaders, the keys are whether they have a depth of knowledge and experience in running a business and helping others run a business and are they great group process facilitators? Many leaders have one of these attributes; few have all three. As to the structure, the keys are the multiple-day meetings so you can get deep into topics, exposure to new ideas and the use of good problem-solving and decision-making skills. Another key is the members. We choose our members carefully to ensure they are prepared to learn and to teach, and they are ready to implement new ideas

that will improve their businesses. We ensure they do not compete with any other member in the group. We want people who will be a good match with the culture of the group, especially the openness, honesty and trust among the members. I don't know any industry roundtables that are as effective as the ones in the health and fitness club industry. Of course, there are the big CEO Roundtable companies, like the Young Presidents Organization and Vistage, which I have already mentioned, and I can tell you that there are dozens if not hundreds of CEO Roundtable groups around the world. Some of them are very small, but most of those are pretty much built on the same model:

- They meet only for one day.
- It's a monthly meeting, and in most of those months, they have a speaker who talks for half of a meeting. Often, they have great speakers, and I have to say that because I am one of them (laughing).
- They work issues during the last half of the day.
- They usually meet at another roundtable member's business, so they get to know each other's businesses. And, the host gives a presentation on their business.
- With many, there is a one-on-one session every month with what they call the 'Chairman' of the group, who is running it as a business. Those people have various backgrounds. The better ones have run their own business and have maybe retired from it. Some were or are executives in a larger business. But, in the big roundtable organizations, there is a lot of variability in the quality of the leaders.
- And, of course, they are trained in a certain methodology.

Some of them are a lot more effective than others. Vistage is the big player in that space right now, and it is successful. It has been sold about four times, so it keeps going through some

management difficulties and some changes of strategy. Those groups are generally good, and they are extremely effective. What has been learned over time is that we know that getting business leaders together to share experience and help each other solve problems and issues is a good idea. I think the big thing is that having all the people in one industry gives you so much more that the people have in common, and everything is so applicable to what they are doing. However, even in the other groups, the people have a lot in common; they are facing the same kinds of issues of a management nature, etc. But, there is even more depth of commonality when it is an industry group.

I can tell you that the longevity in our group is 3 - 4 times the average in other kinds of groups. I've got people in my group who have been there for over 30 years. Red Lerille has been in the group for 32 years. Rick Caro has been in the group for 32 years. And, we have the children of some of the original people who are now in there, such as **Rick Beusman** and **Steve Spearman**. I think that says a lot about how much people think of the value of the roundtables.

The Faust Roundtable Agenda

C.I. - Can you take us through what happens during your Roundtable meetings?

GF - My role is to facilitate things:

■ I introduce new concepts when I can. I say 'new' because when you have been talking to the same people for 30 years, it's hard to make up something new. The good thing is there is some turnover, and most of the people who have been there the whole time are getting older so they don't remember what I said in the beginning (laughing). So, they say, 'Oh, that's a good idea,' and we start over (laughing).

■ We have very few outside speakers,

though we do a lot of things to learn what is really happening in the industry and in business. About every other meeting, we select a book to read and discuss. My job is to lead the discussion and suggest applications, and even more important, relate what we learned from the book to the entire body of knowledge we have picked up and adopted in what we are doing. That way, it integrates everything.

■ One of the greatest assets of Roundtable #1 is Rick Caro; I have to say that. Rick is essentially a partner in Roundtable #1 these days. He has been the person who has proposed new members, and he sees it as his responsibility to make sure we are always full and have the right people in the group. By the way, he takes that VERY seriously. The other thing is that, every time we get together, Rick gives an industry update. He is the guru in the industry when it comes to mergers and acquisitions and anything financial. He lives and breathes this industry, and I think he knows and cares for everyone in it. His update is an incredible feature of Roundtable #1. I owe him a big debt of gratitude for what he has done for us.

■ When we go somewhere, we try to choose cities that are not just fun places to visit. When we first started with Roundtable #1, every fourth meeting was held at a destination resort because we had a lot of mature businesses. Everyone liked a chance to get away, and it allowed us to bring along spouses and significant others. So, we ended up having a little vacation together. As time went on, we've gotten more serious about the business content, so now, we mix the social in with some international trips but with a view to going where there is some real action in the industry and where we can have dialogue with the area's industry leaders, movers and shakers. We also get to the home cities of our members, so we can see first-hand what they are doing and often to meet some of their people. We have 16 Roundtable members, and we only meet three times a year, so we only get around to a member's host city every five or six years.

So, here's the typical agenda for us, and I can only talk about Roundtable #1:

Day 1: Our meetings now start around 3PM. By the way, we change regularly based on what the group wants to do in terms of timing. So, we used to go Thursday - Saturday. But then, we decided to stop that, and now, we go Wednesday - Friday. So, as I mentioned, we usually start around 3PM. We do some follow-up about what is going on. We do an update about what has happened since the last meeting, the top 2 - 3 things, both personal and business; although, we now do a lot of that in the bus while we are doing our club tours on Day 2. We also do some follow-up on issues

(See **Dr. Gerry Faust** Page 17)



Long-time Friends Networking at IHRSA 2010 in San Diego
 (L to R) Steve Tharrett, Herb Lipsman, Dr. Gerry Faust, Gale Landers and Clive Caldwell



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brought up and processed in the previous meeting, just to see what resulted from planned actions. Then, we do the industry report and maybe take on an issue. We work until about 9PM that first night.

Day 2: The next morning, we do club tours. We visit 5 - 6 clubs that morning; of course, it can often take a bit more than the morning. The idea is that we try to pick up themes that we are looking at... So, sometimes, we are looking at the positioning of the clubs and how they are marketing themselves. We recently looked at studios to get a view of what the studio market is doing and how bigger clubs are integrating studios into their facilities. Usually, the owners of those facilities are pretty happy for us to come in, and it's rare that we don't get to go into some places we would like to go because they don't want us in there. In the bus, while we are driving around, we are discussing things: What is unique that we saw there, what can we learn from it etc.? And, we talk about things like how the club was designed, what are the different ways of handling things, etc., so it's a great learning experience. The discussion when we are on the bus is outstanding.

After that, we start our meeting

for the day and have an education piece. My role is to give about an hour, hour and a half presentation about some sort of management education topic. Sometimes, I go back to things we talked about. And, I will tell you that, every fourth or fifth meeting, especially if we have some new people, I actually have a seminar the day before at 8AM so the local people can bring their people to it. After the education piece, we process issues brought up by members and discuss prepared topics (i.e. retention, what we are doing with millennials, new marketing ideas, etc.).

Day 3: The most important thing that we do is that we allow people ahead of time to schedule topics related to their businesses. I've got a wonderful coordinator who has been working with me for over 20 years managing the administration of these events. Her name is **Barbara Garringer**. She is a sweetheart and a key player in what I do. So, I either call members to probe with them what some of their issues are, or they send in issues... if they have enough, then I don't need to call. What we want is for people to put on the table things that are really troubling them, as well as the things that are really working for them. We have taught a problem-solving process; so, during issue sessions, we use the process. The topics brought to the Roundtable are

very broad. If a member is having trouble with a partner; if they are having trouble with a tennis pro; if they are about to do a big update/refurbishing project of their club; if they have a new competitor moving in and are worried about it, we are ready to help.

Besides having people bring up their issues, we will often choose a topic ahead of time. So, we will take on a topic like retention or ecommerce and web presence or marketing, etc., and it becomes one large sharing activity. *We have a general rule:* If anyone has something that is working incredibly well, they can put it on as a sharing topic. They come in and give us an entire outline about what it is. The beauty of it is that, if someone really likes the idea, they know whom to call to get more information. But, they usually have enough information at the meetings to know how it will work and if it will work. And, we require people to provide the data. We tell them not to share ideas that have not been proven yet, so when you come, you better be able to share the data. The last part of the sharing piece is the sharing of other data. We will have everyone report their Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and we will grill the people who are doing the best with each KPI. And, we hope the people who are not doing as well are really listening. For example, we will take on

numbers like non-dues revenue. We work on the area and look for the results. We have had many great successes in these deep-dive discussions. We have seen dramatic increases in the personal training arena pretty much across the board in our member clubs. Generally, some of our people become the resident experts in some of these areas. **Brent Darden** is an example for the personal training space.

Some Faust Roundtable Stories/Lessons

C.I. - Are there any stories/lessons from your Roundtables over the years you would like to share?

GF - I'll give you some specific ones that have been outstanding:

■ Early on, in about the fifth or sixth year, one of our members had come to us every time and talked about the problems he was having with his partner and how their relationship was not doing well. There were a few owners of the club, but it was very apparent that he was responsible for everything, getting beaten up in the process and it wasn't working for him. During one of the meetings, another member basically said to him, 'You know, we've been listening to you complain about the ownership

(See Dr. Gerry Faust Page 19)

Why Every Gym Owner Needs a "Think Day"

By: Jim Thomas

As a gym owner, boutique studio operator or fitness entrepreneur, your daily schedule is packed with responsibilities: managing staff, handling sales, overseeing operations and keeping members engaged. The constant hustle can be overwhelming, and often, strategic thinking takes a back seat to the immediate demands of running your business.

The most successful entrepreneurs across industries, including fitness, take time for "Think Days," dedicated time to step away from daily operations and focus on deep thinking, problem-solving and vision setting. Gym owners who prioritize a Think Day don't just work in their business; they work on their business.

This article will explore why a Think Day is essential, how to implement one effectively, and how it can transform your gym's long-term success.

The Power of a Think Day

Think Days allow you to gain clarity, evaluate challenges and strategize for growth. When done consistently, they provide benefits such as:

1. Re-Evaluating Business Strategy:

- Are your gym's membership numbers growing or stagnating?
- Is your pricing model still competitive?
- Are your marketing efforts yielding results?
- Are you focusing on the right revenue streams (personal training, group classes, online programs)?

Without dedicated thinking time, you risk making decisions reactively rather than proactively.

2. Identifying and Solving Problems:

- What recurring issues in your gym need fixing?
- Are there bottlenecks in your sales or operations?
- Is your member retention rate declining? Why?
- Are employees disengaged or unmotivated?

A Think Day allows you to step back and objectively assess these problems without the distractions of daily operations.

3. Creating Long-Term Vision:

- What do you want your gym to look like in one, three or five years?
- Do you want to expand, franchise or add new revenue streams?

- What changes will make your business more profitable and sustainable?

Without a long-term vision, you'll always be stuck in the day-to-day grind without meaningful progress.

4. Developing Innovation and Growth Strategies:

- How can you differentiate your gym from competitors?
- What innovative member experiences could you introduce?
- Are there strategic partnerships that could benefit your business?

Some of the biggest breakthroughs in business come from quiet, uninterrupted thinking.

5. Preventing Burnout:

- The daily demands of gym ownership can be draining.
- If you never step away, stress accumulates, leading to poor decision-making.
- A Think Day allows you to recharge mentally, emotionally and strategically.

How to Structure a Think Day

Step 1: Schedule It Like an Important Meeting:

If you don't schedule it, it won't happen. Block out a half-day or full day at least once a month. If you can, do it weekly, even if it's just a few hours. Treat this time as non-negotiable.

Step 2: Step Away from the Gym:

You can't think clearly in an environment full of distractions. Find a quiet place:

- A coffee shop;
- A library;
- A park;
- A coworking space;
- A hotel lobby.

Wherever you go, make sure it's distraction-free.

Step 3: Go Analog (No Phones, No Computers):

The best Think Days are done with:

- A notebook and pen;
- A whiteboard;
- Sticky notes.

Avoid digital distractions. If you need to look something up, write it down

and research later.

Step 4: Focus on Deep Thinking Areas:

Use your Think Day to reflect on key business areas. Ask yourself powerful questions like:

Business Performance:

- What's working well in my gym right now?
- What's not working, and why?
- How can I increase revenue without increasing expenses?

Member Experience:

- What do my members love about my gym?
- What complaints or feedback do I hear most often?
- How can I improve retention and create more raving fans?

Marketing and Sales:

- Are we attracting the right kind of members?
- Is our marketing strategy effective?
- How can we generate more leads without spending more on ads?

Staff and Leadership:

- Is my team motivated and aligned with our goals?
- Do I need to hire, fire, or promote anyone?
- How can I become a better leader for my team?

Growth and Innovation:

- What new opportunities exist in the fitness industry?
- Should we launch a new program or service?
- How can we scale without adding unnecessary complexity?

What to Do After a Think Day

A Think Day is useless without action. After each Think Day, do the following:

1. Review and Organize Your Notes:

- Highlight key insights.
- Identify top priorities that require action.
- Categorize ideas into short-term, mid-term and long-term strategies.

2. Create an Action Plan:

- Decide on 1 - 3 big moves you'll make based on your insights.
- Set deadlines and assign tasks if needed.
- Commit to executing at least one important change.



Jim Thomas

3. Discuss Key Takeaways with Your Team:

- Share key insights with managers or staff.
- Get input from trusted team members.
- Align everyone with your vision and strategy.

4. Schedule the Next Think Day:

- Make Think Days a recurring practice.
- The more consistent you are, the more clarity you'll gain.

Final Thoughts

The most successful gym owners don't just work harder; they think smarter. A Think Day isn't a luxury; it's a necessity. Without taking time to reflect, strategize and innovate, you risk getting stuck in the daily grind with no real progress.

Make the commitment today: schedule your first Think Day, step away from your gym and start making smarter, more strategic decisions for your business. Your future success depends on it.

Your next breakthrough starts with one great Think Day. Make it happen!

(An Outsourced CEO, Turnaround Expert and Author, Jim Thomas is the Founder and President of FMC USA Inc., a management consulting, turnaround, financing and brokerage firm specializing in the leisure services industry. With more than 25 years of experience owning, operating and managing facilities of all sizes, Thomas lectures and delivers seminars, webinars and workshops across the globe on the practical skills required to successfully overcome obscurity, improve gym sales, build teamwork and market fitness programs and products. Learn more at www.fmconsulting.net or www.youtube.com/gymconsultant.)

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structure of your business and how it is being run. It's time for you to fish or cut bait. You have to decide to either change things or get out of that partnership. It's a bad thing for you, and we don't want to see a friend and colleague be so distressed by this. It's got to be affecting your health.' We went around the table, and everybody said something similar, 'You bring other issues here, but that is one you have to face.'

So, we literally gave him 90 days to make his decision about what to do and to come back and report to us. He came back to the next meeting and reported that he had decided to sell out to his partner, leave the industry and do other things. We supported him in that decision. In the next meeting, he said, 'I want you to know that I have done it, and it is the biggest and best thing to happen to me in my life. You all forced me to make a decision I probably never would have made, and you probably saved my life, my marriage, my sanity and I thank you for it.' By the way, he has gone on to a great career in what he is now doing. It was life-changing. The thing about this Roundtable is that members develop so much closeness, mutual respect and trust in one another. There is so much candor that you cannot get away with anything in that Roundtable; there is a lot of honesty there.

■ We had been going for 25 years, and we were having a meeting in Hawaii. Just before this, Vistage had asked Will Phillips and me to create a program where we would go around to their underperforming groups and do a 'roundtable tune-up' for them. By doing some of these tune-ups, I decided that I had to at least propose that we stop having this Roundtable. We had been doing it for 25 years, and I was worried it was just becoming a habit and something we all did without meaning. So, the first night there, I told the group that we should decide if we want to keep doing this. I told them that I would not mind if they felt we had done enough and that they should not stay in the Roundtable for me. I would be fine if we closed it down. And, if we didn't shut it down, I wanted to talk about what changes to make to make it better. They all knew I was going to bring the topic up the next morning.

So, I walked into the meeting, and by the way, this is probably the single most emotional thing that has happened to me in the consulting business; I can hardly tell this story without crying. Once again, Brother Beusman was at work... If you can recall the movie *Dead Poet's Society*, it starred the late **Robin Williams** and was an interesting story about him as a phenomenal teacher at a men's academy. At one point in the movie, Williams was about to leave the school. He came into the classroom, and to honor him and support him, all the students stood on their chairs and recited *O Captain!*

O Captain! by **Walt Whitman**. So, I come walking into the meeting, and here are all of the Roundtable members standing on their chairs, which is exactly what the students did in the *Dead Poet's Society*, and they recited that poem. It broke everyone up and was a very emotional thing, but they basically said that we are never going to stop this. It has been too good of a thing for all of us.

At that point, we did change the model some: We went from four times a year to three, and we expanded the amount of time we were there. Now, when we go overseas, we do so to visit the industry in that country. We were recently in Munich, Germany, and we met with the CEOs of five of the largest club groups in the country for about three or four hours. And, there have been a number of times where we have had fairly famous businesspeople join us for lunch and have an open dialogue with us, such as a Q&A. For example, we had lunch at one of **Danny Meyer's** restaurants in New York. Danny is the #1 restaurateur in New York, and at one time, had six of the top ten restaurants there. He's recently taken *Shake Shack* public; they are extremely unique, and he wrote a book called *Setting the Table*, which we had read. While we were at lunch at one of Danny Meyer's restaurants, he came out for about 30 minutes and gave us a seminar on how he develops customer service. Of course, Rick Caro had arranged that. Once, we had the Founder of the largest pet hospital group in the world, *Banfield*, join us for lunch. He talked for about an hour about what it takes to start and run a business with 4,000 employees, he talked about the big issues and key decisions and his philosophy, etc. He then invited us to his home on a ranch 1/6th the size of Rhode Island, where he cooked up steaks from his own special breed of cattle. I have to tell you, we ate really well that time (laughing). So, we've had a number of experiences like that.

C.I. - What happens between meetings?
GF - If a member is regularly running into an issue or they are trying to develop a policy or they are doing something that requires advice and assistance, they send the requests to Barbara. She sends them out to everyone, and our email fills up with the responses. One time, we had a member who had moved his club and made some significant changes. Things weren't working well, and his business was suffering. I had gone and worked with this guy a bit. Then, four of the Roundtable members, on their own, flew in and spent two and a half days there with him looking over everything and giving him suggestions. It made a massive difference in that business. So, when I say that the people are truly committed to helping each other, I am not kidding; it's true, and it's incredible.

C.I. - Are there any recommended requirements for the Roundtable par-

ticipants (i.e. business size, management experience, etc.)?

GF - We want a person who is willing to share. It is all about the character of the person. We don't want a person who would just come in and be a taker and not be a giver. That's a major thing. We don't really worry about the size of the business because, as you know, we have people who have just one club. Of, course, it might be one club and be the *Houstonian* or Red Lerille's one club (laughing). We've got some who have three or four clubs, like the *Village Clubs* or the *Eisenzimmers* or the *Beusmans*, for example. Then, we've got some bigger groups, but we don't have any monster groups or public companies at this time. We kind of decided a long time ago not to have the big, public companies. Generally, they can't share their data like these guys can. So, mostly, what we are looking for is someone who we feel is a good operator and someone who is prepared to share, as well as learn. And, if you look at what has happened, everyone in that Roundtable is doing extremely well.

How to Pick a Consultant

C.I. - Let's discuss your consulting services. What should a club owner consider and be aware of when deciding *if he should bring on a consultant*? And then, what should a club owner consider and be aware of when deciding *on whom to bring on as a consultant*?

GF - The first thing they should consider is if they have a real need for it. I will also tell you that the thing I feel a lot of people do in this industry is bring in people who are tactical specialists. So, we bring in people who have expertise that we don't have... I'm not saying that is the wrong thing to do, but there are only a few in the industry who have brought in true strategic management consultants. They are bringing in IT consultants, sales consultants, programming consultants, people who know about personal training, etc. Those are all good things to do, but what is lacking are the people who have a broader base of experience and can look at the organization as a whole and talk to them about improving the organization, rather than a specific function.

If you are going to bring someone in, the first rule is: *You better bring in someone you trust*. A good consultant is going to get inside your business, so you need to know you can trust him and that he is going to give you the right advice. My other suggestion is that there are all kinds of consultants who are prepared to give you advice on everything, but what they really know is one thing... So, you've got to take with a grain of salt what some of the people say, but there are also a lot of people who have been around the industry for a while. There are a lot of well-respected, good consultants in this industry, depending on what you need. You want to look at the person's experience, and you probably want to look at whom they have worked

with. And, one of the things I think more people should think about is to not just go with people who are industry specialists, but then again, I've got a vested interest in that. Another thing is that they should be prepared to listen carefully to what the consultant has to say.

The other comment I would make is that, if you get a really good consultant, you might want to use him more than once and have him hang around a bit. I pride myself on working with my clients for long periods of time. I have many consulting clients whom I have worked with for more than ten years and several that I have worked with for more than 20 years. My current longest running client is the one I mentioned previously, the owner of the *Banfield Pet Hospital Group*. I was on his Board for seven years after being his consultant for ten years; I still work for him, so it has been 25+ years that we have worked together. For 17 years, I also worked with a big company out of South Africa and all of its subsidiaries. I'm on my fourth or fifth year with several club groups, and obviously, the Roundtables are a big thing. For example, I am working with a unique company headquartered here in San Diego. I am an executive coach to the CEO. I believe he had about 14 or 15 clubs when we started working together, and he is up to over 50 or so clubs now. I've done his strategic planning four years in a row. So, if a person is dealing with a consultant and is given great service, you do have an advantage because they know your club or group, and you might want to continue with that work.

C.I. - With something as complex and intimate as business is, it just seems that, once you find the right fit, it only makes sense to have them long-term as they learn more and more. It becomes almost a snowball effect.

GF - Yes. And, another thing people should do is to not be afraid of the price tag. A lot of people shy away from higher price tags or whatever, but they have to consider that consulting is an investment in the business. It's a long-term investment, and you have to do something to make sure you get the value out of it. The tricky part about consulting, though, is that it is a soft thing compared to buying more equipment or doing all the other things that need to be done. The challenge of the club industry is all the investments that need to be regularly made in addition to what you already have.



Dr. Gerry Faust passed away in 2019 at the age of 77. The number of people he touched with the gift of his life in this world cannot be overstated. **May the late Dr. Gerry Faust continue to rest in peace.**

(*Justin Cates is the Publisher of Club Insider and can be reached by email at Justin@clubinsideronline.com.*)

CES 2025: AI Fitness Take Over

By: Nancy Trent

The 2025 Consumer Electronics Show (CES) wasn't just about gadgets; it was about the humanization of artificial intelligence (AI). For the fitness industry, this trend meant fewer tangible demos and more groundbreaking integrations of AI into wellness and fitness technology. Here's a rundown of the standout innovations shaping the future of fitness for both home gyms and personal wellness.

AI and Digital Health Impact Fitness

The fitness industry is experiencing a seismic shift as AI-powered tools redefine how people approach their health and wellness. From wearables and connected equipment to predictive analytics and AI coaching, these technologies enhance the workout experience while streamlining personal fitness management. The key benefits include:

Personalized Fitness Experiences: AI-driven fitness apps and wearables provide tailored workout recommendations, real-time progress tracking and customized nutrition plans, making it easier to achieve individual goals.

Smart Workout Scheduling: Automated systems help users plan workouts efficiently, whether at home or at the gym.

AI-Powered Guidance: Virtual trainers and coaching tools deliver real-time feedback, ensuring proper form and maximizing results.

On-Demand Support: AI chatbots and virtual assistants can answer fitness questions, track progress and provide motivation 24/7.

By embracing these technologies, individuals can elevate their fitness routines, achieve their goals faster and maintain a sustainable wellness lifestyle.

Smart Wellness Tech

Tech is revolutionizing wellness with personalized, data-driven solutions. At CES, several innovations stood out for home fitness enthusiasts:

SCS LifeTrend AT3 Walk and Work Treadmill: A game-changing fitness solution designed to elevate the home workout experience. The AT3 treadmill adapts to one's daily routine with features like a device holder, a full-length mirror for guided

workouts via the *Jillian Michaels Fitness App*, and other fitness apps without the need to pay extra for proprietary access. Its additional active recovery products include a near-zero EMF sauna for detoxification, a dual-core premium massage chair for spa-quality recovery and a multi-function cold plunge and hot soak tub to support muscle recovery and relaxation.

Nutrix gSense: A Swiss innovation offering AI-driven at-home monitoring for chronic conditions like diabetes, stress and cardiovascular health. Their cortiSense stress monitoring device measures cortisol levels in saliva in just 10 minutes.

Renpho Lynx Health Ring: This smart ring monitors heart rate and sleep quality with precision, helping users optimize their daily routines.

Smart Radar System: Utilizing 4D imaging radar, this technology enhances medical device capabilities for monitoring vitals and ensuring safety.

Pontosense: Advanced RF sensors monitor biometrics like heart rate and gait, providing real-time insights for health and mobility applications.

Wearable Therapeutics for Recovery

Wearable recovery devices showcased at CES are designed to support healing and performance optimization through cutting-edge technologies:

CareWear LED Light Patch: A wireless, FDA-registered device using red light therapy to relieve pain, spasms and improve circulation.

Crearoma: Specializing in scent marketing and air management, this innovation enhances recovery environments through aromatherapy and essential oils.

Smart Nutrition for Fitness at Home

AI is transforming how individuals approach nutrition with at-home solutions for smart, personalized meal preparation:

Figo Sous Vide System: This sleek, app-connected device cooks gourmet meals on schedule, ensuring nutritious food is ready when needed, seamlessly integrating with fitness goals.

ColdSnap: This nutrition tech innovation delivers single-serve frozen confections in under two minutes. Made with fresh

milk, cream, real fruit and nutraceuticals, its rapid freezing system ensures ultra-smooth textures and premium quality. SQF-certified, ColdSnap offers indulgence with confidence for health-conscious and tech-savvy consumers.

By incorporating these smart dining solutions, individuals can enjoy a holistic wellness experience that combines exercise with tailored nutrition.

• • •

CES 2025 highlighted how AI and digital health are not just about innovation but meeting the demand for personalization and data-driven wellness. By adopting these technologies, fitness enthusiasts can:

- Create superior workout experiences at home.
- Optimize their nutrition and recovery routines.
- Build long-term wellness habits with tailored, data-driven insights.

As AI continues to evolve, those who embrace its potential will shape the future of health, wellness and personal transformation.

(Nancy Trent is a writer and speaker, a lifelong wellness activist, a globe-trotting trend watcher and the Founder and



Nancy Trent

President of Trent & Company, a leading wellness PR firm. Trent & Company, which launched many health and beauty brands, grew out of Nancy's personal and passionate commitment to helping people live longer and healthier lives. A former journalist for New York Magazine, Nancy has written seven books on healthy lifestyles, serves on the editorial boards of several magazines and travels around the world speaking at conferences and trade shows on trends in the marketplace. She is a recognized expert in PR with more than 30 years of experience creating and managing highly successful campaigns. Learn more at www.trentandcompany.com or contact Nancy at nancy@trentandcompany.com.)

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Instructor Recruitment:

Rules of the Road

By: Jeffrey Pinkerton

As a father of four, I have an above-average amount of experience teaching teenagers to drive. It is time-consuming and challenging for both student and teacher. Starting in a parking lot and progressing to quiet neighborhood streets, eventually to short, sometimes terrifying chaperoned errands, then braving the highway(!) is part of the learning process. But, it's necessary, because there's more to driving than knowing the rules. Imagine if we just gave them a book, and once they passed a written test, we let them jump on the road and start driving (Talk about terrifying!). Well, preparing people to teach group fitness is no different.

When learning to drive, you need practice time behind the wheel. You need a great coach – ideally someone who is patient, tactful in providing feedback, able to put someone at ease in a stressful environment, and someone who knows the

rules of the road. Since two of my children did not believe that I fully possessed those characteristics, a good portion of their driver's education was supplemented with the school's professional driver's education courses. And, honestly, it's some of the best however-many-hundreds of dollars we've ever spent.

Imagine trying to drive without coaching time behind the wheel, without a training process. For anyone on the road, and for any sane teenager, it would be a scary and dangerous proposition. Can you image trying to convince someone to start driving? You'll read this book. Pass a test. And, then, you're good to go.

When you are recruiting group fitness instructors, are you providing a clear training process? Are you helping people understand the education and coaching and mentoring that you'll provide? Or, are you just asking people to read a book, pass a test, and then, they're good to go?

Here are three rules to start you

on the road to better instructor recruitment:

One: Stop Searching, Start Training

I look at a lot of health club websites to get an idea of their instructor recruitment strategy. The overwhelming majority of the time, the job posting for group fitness instructors says something like, "We are looking to grow our group fitness team! If you are a certified instructor with XYZ certification, call [group fitness director name] for more details." This is not a recruitment strategy. This is a hiring strategy. You are looking for people who already have experience teaching. And, my guess is these people, if interested in teaching at your facility, have already contacted your group fitness director.

Imagine if Starbucks took this approach. "We are looking to grow our team! If you are an experienced barista, and you already know all of the recipes and have experience working the drive-through



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and counter simultaneously, please inquire!" Starbucks hires great people, no prior experience needed, and they train them on how to deliver (technically and

(See Jeffrey Pinkerton Page 22)

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philosophically) a great customer experience.

Two: Provide a Clear Coaching Pathway

One of the reasons instructor recruitment is such a challenge for many clubs is because the pathway to becoming an instructor is too mysterious. Prospective instructors need confidence that they'll be well-trained, well-equipped and well-coached. That means you need a well-mapped-out process – a training event and mentoring before and after – and you need to promote that process in your recruitment materials. And, of course, the best pathway is one that involves a combination of book knowledge, movement practice and feedback, coaching, testing, mentoring and ongoing education and improvement.

Three: Promote the Why and Then the What

Most job postings I see searching for group fitness instructors look more like job descriptions – with every detail and requirement of the job. Most look like an orientation syllabus that you'd receive on

your first day of work, requiring a signature, lest you be written up in your permanent file. While all this information may be technically accurate (and legally necessary) at some point, it isn't a message that inspires people to join your team.

I recommend you create a "Join Our Group Fitness Team" page on your website. Use it as a place for the inspirational message as to why people should join your team. Use it to map out in simple steps the pathway to becoming an instructor. Highlight some of your team and how they started teaching. And, give

people a clear, simple, next step to learn more. In today's day and age, a phone call is NOT a simple, next step.

• • •

Following these three rules of the recruiting road will help you stop "looking for instructors" and instead start attracting people who can become amazing coaches and connectors, delivering (technically and philosophically) amazing member experiences.

If you don't have the time or

the resources to build and manage a comprehensive group fitness training pathway and process, or if you are looking to supplement your current recruitment efforts with a professional instructor education course (just like a professional driver's education course), let us be your training partner. We can provide the knowledge, the movement practice and feedback, and the testing (video assessment) and ongoing education. You can focus on the managing, coaching and mentoring. And, together, we can get more instructors and more people moving!

• • •

To learn more about how we can help you with your instructor recruitment, to stop searching and start training, to provide a clear coaching pathway, and to help you promote the why and then the what, learn more about our comprehensive group fitness system by visiting mossa.net/clubs-facilities/why-mossa.

(Jeffrey Pinkerton is the Business Development Manager for MOSSA. Jeffrey can be reached by phone at 770-989-4737 or email at jeffreypinkerton@mossa.net.)

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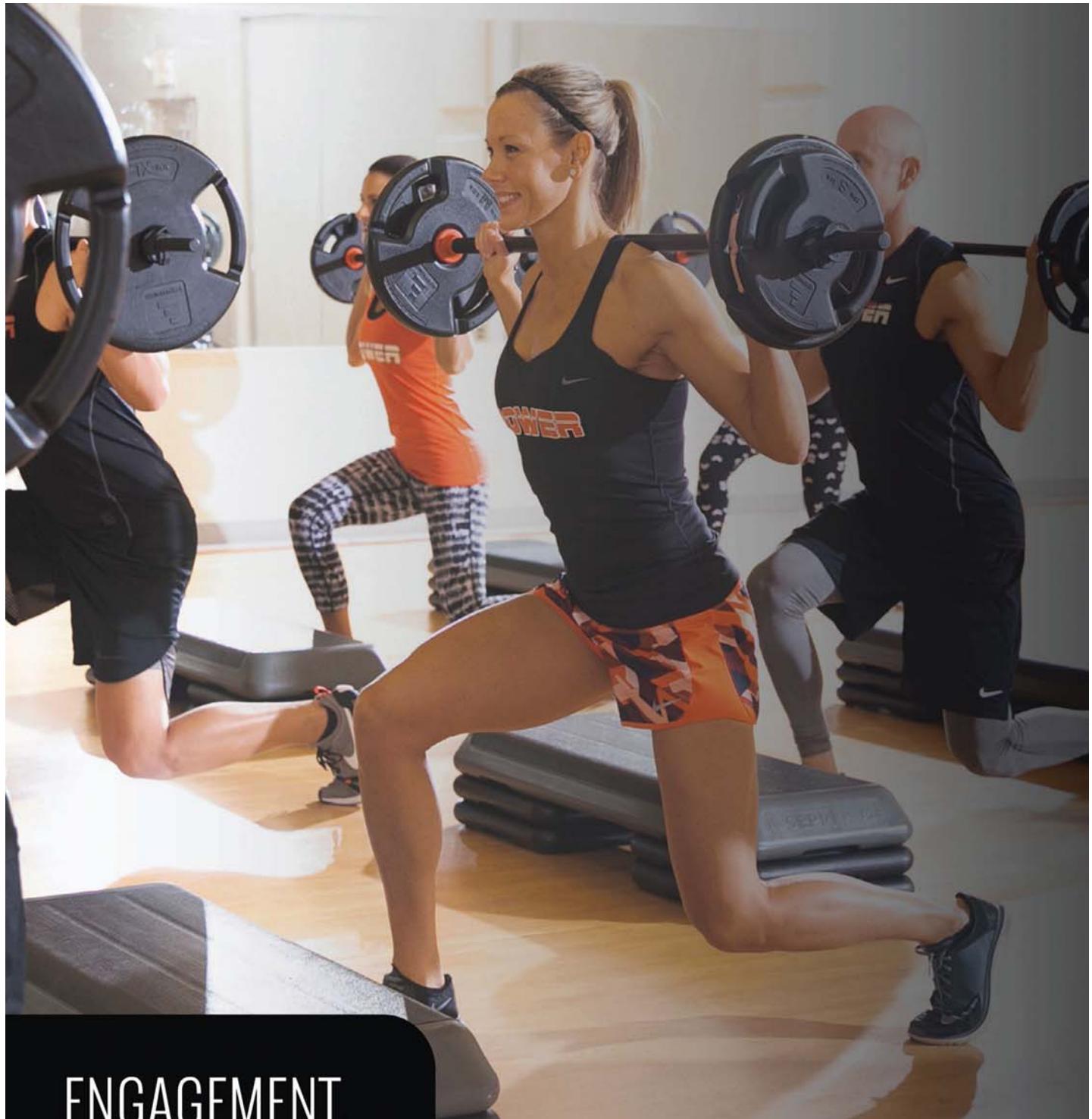


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