

Norm Cates'

CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 30+ YEARS OF TRUST

Sara Kooperman's SCW *Fitness Education for Life*



APRIL 2024

Read This Month's Edition and Archive Editions Online at www.clubinsideronline.com



JOIN THE FASTEST-GROWING FULL-SIZE FITNESS FRANCHISE

Convert your gym to Crunch or sell to a Crunch Franchisee

- Most competitive and progressive model in the \$32 billion fitness industry
- Rated best franchises to buy in 2023
- Highly recognizable fitness brand with a 30-year history
- Over 1,400 franchise rights sold
- One of the largest member bases in the worldwide fitness industry



Ready to talk about how to win in the high-value, low-price gym model? Contact us:

John Merrion
John.Merrion@crunch.com

Greg McDonough
Greg.McDonough@crunch.com



Norm Cates'

CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 30+ YEARS OF TRUST

Sara Kooperman's SCW Fitness Education for Life

By: Justin Cates

A good idea is a good idea. But, it doesn't mean it will work, at least not right away. The *Lightbulb*. That's a pretty good idea, right? Well, it took **Thomas Edison** over 1,000 tries to get it right, and its iterations have endlessly improved over time. *A car instead of a horse... A plane instead of a car!* **Henry Ford** and the **Wright Brothers (Orville and Wilbur)** might have a lot to say about that... They did not get it right the first few times, either.

Many times, the idea itself is not what is flawed when it first fails. It is the method... or, the timing... or, a combination of factors so minute that it takes a while to untangle each and reiterate. And, that is if there is still time, motivation or funding...

Our cover story this month is a good idea about a good idea. Now, post-pandemic, as we move on from the 2024 *IHRSA Convention and Tradeshow* (now *The Health & Fitness Association*), and we are full swing into our daily lives and routines, it is important to keep education at the forefront.

The easiest way to witness a piece of bread go stale/moldy is to leave it on the kitchen counter. No movement; unshielded from the elements (i.e. moisture from the sink); and sadly, no protein or condiments. Give it two or three days, and you won't want to eat it. Like bread and like our physical bodies, the human mind is the same. It requires movement, shelter/rest and the right diet.

Sara Kooperman, JD, CEO of

SCW Fitness Education is the culmination of this fun little excursion of the written word I have taken. Like any great expert/leader, she comes from initial failure. That failure concurrently created two things: (1) Motivation to succeed next time, and (2) At least one way not to do it. When combined with relentless motivation, it creates the recipe to bring that good idea to fruition.

I invite you to read on about how Sara brought her good idea to fruition, how it is impacting our great industry, as well as how it can impact you...

An Interview With Sara Kooperman, JD, CEO of SCW Fitness Education

Club Insider (C.I.) - Where were you born, (See Sara Kooperman Page 8)



Sara Kooperman, JD

Fitness Formula Clubs Celebrates 40 Years By Being Named Chicago Reader's 2023 Best in Chicago

CHICAGO, IL - As Chicagoland-based *Fitness Formula Clubs' (FFC)* embarks on its 40th year, another milestone is added to the celebrations: being named *Chicago Reader's Best Gyms in Chicago for 2023*. Founded in 1984, FFC is dedicated to making a lasting impact on the local communities it serves across its 10 locations, seven within Chicago city limits and three in the nearby suburbs.

Since its inception, FFC has been deeply ingrained in the fabric of Chicago, embodying the spirit and energy of the city

from day one. Founded on the principles of innovation, friendliness and integrity, FFC has continuously evolved to meet the ever-changing needs of its members while staying true to its Chicago roots.

"We are incredibly proud to celebrate our 40th anniversary alongside the honor of being named Chicago Reader's 2023 Best in Chicago. That's because we are so much more than 'gyms.' We are in the active sports and lifestyle business of which health, fitness, wellness and nutrition are components," said **Gale Landers**,



FFC Founder and CEO. "This award is a testament of our unwavering commitment to providing exceptional experiences and impacting thousands of lives. As we look

to the future, we remain committed to our purpose of enhancing the lives of our members and guests by improving their (See *Fitness Formula Clubs* Page 6)

Inside the Insider: Edition #364

- "Insider Speaks" - Things That Make Me Go "Hmmm" - By: Mike Manning
- Building a Gym Culture That Attracts and Retains Top Talent - By: Jim Thomas
- How AI Revolutionizes Personal Training Sales - By: Gary Polic
- Gold's Gym SoCal Marks 35 Years With Long Beach Expansion
- Franchising: The New Expansion Wave in the Fitness Industry - By: Paul Bosley
- Wello Works Launching in Australia and the United States
- Health Clubs as "Experience" Centers - By: Eric Durak, MSC
- USTA Seeks to Make U.S. the #1 Tennis-Playing Nation by 2035
- The Value of Group Fitness: Data, Dollars and the Doorman Fallacy - By: Jeffrey Pinkerton
- 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 **364th monthly edition of this 31+ 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!!!**

■ Well, folks, here I sit at my keyboard writing these **Norm's Notes** for you on **April 8, 2024**. It's **2:07 PM** now, and I'm watching television coverage of the solar eclipse. At the moment, they are showing the view from Mazatlan, Mexico, where it is almost totally black where the sun should be and

the "**diamond ring**" is showing, meaning there is only a sliver of sunlight showing around the moon. **WOW! AMAZING!** I hope we **Geezers** out here got a real good look at this, because the next solar eclipse viewable from the continental United States will not happen again for another 20 years! Folks like me, who are age 78, if we survive 20 more years, we'll be 98 during the next one! So, I hope you watched this amazing eclipse coverage. By the way, did y'all know that the sun's diameter is 400 times larger than the moon's? And, the sun is 400 times farther from Earth. This makes the relative size of each similar and enables the phenomenon of the solar eclipse to look as fantastic as it does! What an amazing experience to be lucky enough to be at my keyboard actually chronicling a total solar eclipse as it's happening! **Yahoo!**

■ The Virginia-based *acac Fitness & Wellness Centers* now counts 14 locations across three states. This news broke in *Athletech News* on April 8, 2024: "*La Maison Health & Fitness*, a family-owned fitness club serving the Main Line neighborhood of Philadelphia, has been acquired by Virginia-based *acac Fitness & Wellness Centers*. The La Maison facility will soon

be rebranded under the *acac*, said *CEO of acac*, **CHRIS CRAYTOR**, commenting on the move, which now gives *acac* 14 clubs in Virginia, Pennsylvania and South Carolina. 'We're thrilled to be part of the vibrant and active Main Line community. Our plan is to improve the member experience in the form of new equipment, system upgrades and cosmetic enhancements.'

Current La Maison members will be able to upgrade their memberships and access *acac*'s other nearby health and fitness facilities in West Chester and Eagleview, Pennsylvania, commented **STEPHANIE SPOSATO**, *President of La Maison*. Sposato added... commenting to the La Maison staff: 'We are excited that the 40-year legacy of La Maison Health & Fitness will continue under the ownership of *acac*, another family-owned fitness organization. We feel that *acac* will keep the family feel we have now... while taking the gym to the next level. You're going to be in such great hands!' Similar to *acac*'s offerings, La Maison provides members with a full scope of health and wellness services such as cycling, yoga, barre and aquatic classes, personal training, fitness programs for kids, health and nutrition coaching, recovery and physical therapy



Norm Cates

services and a shake bar. *Acac* locations also offer medical wellness programming." **Congrats to the *acac* and La Maison teams, and Stay Tuned!**

■ **DR. PAUL BEDFORD**, a friend of ours in England, produces educational videos and makes them accessible to club operators around the world via his digital video productions. Today, I'm sharing with (See *Norm's Notes* Page 7)

About Club Insider

CELEBRATING 30+ YEARS OF TRUST

Club Insider, established in 1993, is a product of Cates Media, LLC. Those wishing to reproduce any portion of this publication may do so, provided it is not for resale. Reprints for commercial use are available for a fee by request.

PUBLISHER (p): (863) 999 - 2677
Justin Cates (e): Justin@clubinsideronline.com

FOUNDER & TRIBAL LEADER SINCE 1993 (p): (770) 635 - 7578
Norm Cates, Jr. (e): Norm@clubinsideronline.com

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS - Bonnie Patrick Mattalian, Bruce Carter, Casey Conrad, Cathy Spencer Browning, Chris Stevenson, Derek Barton, Frank Guengerich, Gary Polic, Herb Lipsman, Jeffrey Pinkerton, Jim Thomas, John McCarthy, Mike Alpert, Nancy Trent, Paul R. Bedard Esquire, Paul Bosley, Rick Caro, Sara Kooperman, JD, and Thomas Plummer

DISTRIBUTION - Club Insider Online (www.clubinsideronline.com)

Proudly Published in The United States of America



www.clubinsideronline.com

Thanks and Appreciation

At *Club Insider*, we are excited to be in our **31st 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.



Join Our Team!

NOW HIRING



GROUP FITNESS INSTRUCTORS

We're looking for fun, high energy, motivating, and dynamic instructors!

If you're interested and have experience teaching group fitness classes, apply now!



Apply online at
lafitness.com/careers

**Also Hiring Sales Counselors,
Management, and Personal Trainers!***

- Competitive pay
- Fast track to management opportunities
- Benefits package (for qualified positions)
- Complimentary gym membership with employment

*Trainers must be nationally certified.



“Insider Speaks”

Things That Make Me Go “Hmmm”

By: Mike Manning

Here is a short list of current things in the fitness industry that make me go “Hmmm.”

1. I recently saw a HV/LP contract for **\$10 dues per month** plus a **\$50 annual maintenance fee**. Both charges would be drawn from member bank accounts. Annual maintenance/enhancement fees strike me as a bad idea from 15 years ago that has gotten completely out of control, and I say this as someone who added an annual fee to a contract years ago. Members hate the annual fees and often forget about them until they're charged. The original idea was to get roughly an extra month of dues each year, but some of the charges seem to have evolved into several times monthly dues that allow clubs a sneaky way to continue to advertise a lower price than what the club charges members. With many HV/LP members living paycheck to paycheck, is it really a good idea to hit their bank account with annual charges of an amount several times the monthly dues charge and potentially cause an overdraft? As a member, I'd much rather **pay an extra \$4 or \$5 a month in dues** and **avoid a \$50 annual charge**, and I'm not living paycheck to paycheck. A club that is transparent about what it charges is more likely to sign me up as a member than a club with an annual fee, especially if that annual fee does not translate into new equipment every year that I can clearly see when I'm working out. Why are health club operators complicating the lives of their members with these silly annual fees? What other industry does this to its customers?

2. Fortnightly (or biweekly) dues were seen as a clever idea 15 years ago as it

lets clubs collect an extra month of dues each year. This was easier for members when most clubs charged dues to member credit cards. It's more of a pain in the butt now that most dues are charged to member bank accounts that can overdraft, and I'm not convinced that the benefit to the club outweighs the pain for your members of having to keep up with it. I'm more likely to join your club if you hit my bank account for dues one time per month. Two or three bank drafts a month is just tedious.

3. I'm seeing more clubs that open at 4 or 5 AM on weekdays open at 7 AM on Saturday and Sunday, which puzzles me. Members who work out at 5:30 or 6 AM on Wednesday are also likely to want to work out at the same time on Saturday or Sunday. Opening at 7 AM might save an operator a few dollars of payroll, and it might make employee scheduling easier, but it also makes some of your members who otherwise like your club go check out the 24-hour club down the street.

4. I frequently see clubs that have people working out several times a week who are not being charged dues. Sometimes, these people are ex-employees of the club, and sometimes, they're spouses or ex-spouses of former employees. How is this not caught in the back office or by the system provider? It should be easy to run a query on people who are checking in and not paying and to figure out why people who are not paying and who don't currently work for the operator are using the club.

5. I'm not sure why the IHRSA (now *Health and Fitness Association*) Trade Show hasn't been held in Las Vegas since 2013. If it were up to me, the show would be in Las Vegas every other year because it is

a relatively easy airport to get flights in and out of at different times of day, and the selection of hotels of varying price and quality is unmatched. In addition to the *Las Vegas Convention Center, Mandalay Bay* has enough convention space for an IHRSA Show, and there are probably a few other potential venues I don't know about. It also helps that the airport is adjacent to the Strip, minimizing transportation charges. San Diego, Los Angeles, Miami, Dallas, Orlando and San Francisco all make sense to host the show maybe once every ten years, but one or two of these venues are worn out for now. Less expensive flights and rooms are on offer in Las Vegas more than for most other cities, and clubs will often bring more employees to Las Vegas because it costs less. **Note:** Since this article was written, it has been announced that HFA's 2024 Show will be in Las Vegas, March 12 - 14, 2025.

These points are the opinions of Mike Manning and not necessarily agreed to by Club Insider.



Mike Manning

(Mike Manning has been a CFO, Consultant and Board Member in the fitness industry since 2006 and works with club owners and private equity groups who invest in fitness. Manning can be reached at manning@strategicadvicellc.com.)

Gold's Gym SoCal Marks 35 Years With Long Beach Expansion

LOS ANGELES, CA - *Gold's Gym SoCal*, the original home of fitness workouts, celebrates its **35th Anniversary**, marking three and a half decades of unparalleled dedication to health, wellness and community. To coincide with the milestone, Gold's Gym SoCal is unveiling its plans to open its newest state-of-the-art facility located at The Pike Outlets in Long Beach in Spring 2024.

Incepted by entrepreneur brothers, **Willy and Angel Banos**, recently awarded for **35 Years of Excellence**, the duo set out to start a new venture into the fitness industry. From opening the doors to the North Hollywood location to the unveiling of a 35,000-square-foot state-of-the-art club in the bustling heart of Long Beach, Gold's Gym SoCal has grown its club portfolio to 24 facilities sprawled across Southern California, providing best-in-class workout spaces to cater to over 160,000 members.

“Over the past 35 years, Gold's Gym SoCal has transcended its role as a fitness center to become a symbol of health, vitality and empowerment to local residents and gym-goers around the world,” said Willy. “What started as a vision has grown into a community of individuals committed to transforming their lives through fitness. Commemorating this milestone with our

new Long Beach location, we are excited to welcome the local community and continue our legacy of empowering individuals to achieve their fitness goals.”

The energy-filled, all-encompassing fitness space will feature *Eleiko* platforms, an escape room, free weight areas, world-class group exercise, a signature playground turf Area with sled lanes, a boxing rig with heavy bags and more.

To mark the occasion, Gold's Gym SoCal will be hosting a series of celebratory events at the new Long Beach facility, including a grand opening event in the summer with exclusive giveaways, challenges and community initiatives. Additionally, the gym will be offering special promotions and incentives for new and existing members to experience the state-of-the-art amenities firsthand.

Maintaining its position at the forefront of the fitness industry and inspiring individuals to achieve their goals, this year will kick off a \$15 million investment in transformative remodels across an additional ten clubs in the market. This includes the recent renovation of the Thousand Oaks location to bring in escape rooms, posing rooms and refreshed top-of-the-line equipment.

...Fitness Formula Clubs

continued from page 3

overall health and wellbeing and to serving as a force for positive change in our ten neighborhood communities.”

FFC's recognition as the Best in Chicago underscores its rich heritage and legacy of excellence. To continuously enhance the value provided to its members, FFC takes pride in reinvesting in its clubs and staff, maintaining a steadfast commitment to delivering top-notch facilities, cutting-edge programs and personalized services tailored to the diverse needs of its members.



Gale Landers

ELEVATE YOUR TALENT ACQUISITION GAME WITH US!



Are you tired of the same old recruitment methods that yield mediocre results? Ready for a game-changing approach that truly elevates your talent acquisition strategy?



What sets us apart:

Specialized Recruitment in Aquatics, Boutique Studio, Fitness, Wellness, Marketing, Sales, Group Ex, and Gymnastics

Our expansive network of candidates represent some of the most uniquely talented managers in the fitness industry

Building and fostering collaborative partnerships with both clients & candidates!

Customized Recruitment Solutions for the Fitness & Wellness Industry

Contingency Recruitment — **GURANTEED** Placements, Every Time

Phone: 609-430-8455 | Email: dennie@jlrassoc.com | Website: www.jlrassoc.com

...Norm's Notes

continued from page 4

you, our esteemed *Club Insider* Readers a production Paul released on April 2, 2024. Paul leads off with these comments, and I quote him here: "In this video, I talk about how we have given over control of the gym floor to *YouTube*. Over the last decade or so, the number of gym floor staff has continually decreased, and as a result of that, members are having to find their own ways of learning about exercise, find their own motivation and progress their own journey. I discuss how, as operators, we can take back some of the control by offering content that consumers can use that has validity." Folks, check out the video by going to: bit.ly/clubinsider154. If you have any questions or comments, send Dr. Paul an email at paul@retentionguru.co.uk.

■ Two important **Notes** from the ever-expanding *Pickleball World*:

■ *Life Time* is celebrating *National Pickleball Month* with the opening of its first dedicated, ground-up pickleball development. *Life Time Chanhassen Pickleball* is located adjacent to the *Life Time Chanhassen, Minnesota Athletic Country Club* and the company's headquarters. Spanning a total of nearly 46,000 square feet, the club

features eight indoor and seven outdoor courts with accompanying viewing areas, a bar and lounge, dressing rooms, retail and more.

■ **ACE RODRIGUES**, *Founder and CEO of Pickleball Kingdom*, has signed a multi-state deal in Nebraska, Iowa and Missouri. With the escalating fervor for pickleball, Pickleball Kingdom is dedicated to offering premier indoor pickleball facilities for players of all skill levels, addressing the burgeoning demand for indoor pickleball. Ace commented on the expansion: "We are thrilled to introduce Pickleball Kingdom to Nebraska, Iowa and Missouri. These states boast vibrant and expanding pickleball communities. With Pickleball Kingdom, we ensure year-round accessibility to this fantastic sport."

The helm of this expansion is led by **NEEL AMIN** and **KHOBE NGUYEN**. Amin commented: "I am excited to embark on this journey with Pickleball Kingdom. Our aim is to cultivate thriving pickleball communities in Nebraska, Iowa and Missouri, providing an exceptional experience for players of all backgrounds." Nguyen, echoing Amin's sentiments, added: "Pickleball is more than just a game; it's a vehicle for building connections and creating memorable experiences. I am honored to be a part of this endeavor and look forward to sharing

the joy of pickleball with people across our region."

Pickleball Kingdom's COO, **ROB STREETT**, emphasized the high demand for clubs in these states, underscoring the company's commitment to finding the right partners for expansion. Prospective franchisees interested in joining the movement are encouraged to apply. The new Pickleball Kingdom's franchise locations will offer premier indoor courts equipped with advanced technology, ensuring optimal playing conditions. Players can anticipate a welcoming atmosphere conducive to both competitive play and social interactions, nurturing vibrant communities in each locale.

Folks, stay tuned as the Pickleball Boom continues!

■ **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 31st 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 Insider's* Lifetime Achievement Award. You can reach Norm by phone at 770-635-7578 or email at Norm@clubinsideronline.com.)

Make It Fun!

...Sara Kooperman

continued from page 3

and where did you grow up?

Sara Kooperman, JD (SK) - I was born in Highland Park, Illinois, and this is also where I grew up. I lived in the same house until I turned 17, and then, I ran like hell to college... Away, never to return! (laughing) Honestly, it wasn't that it was really so bad there, but I was eager for new adventures in different places.

C.I. - Where did you go to school, and what did you study?

SK - I went to college at *Macalester College* in St. Paul, Minnesota, where I majored in political science and philosophy. My parents said that I could, 'go eight hours away by car,' so I did! St. Paul is exactly eight hours away from Chicago. I spent my senior year and summers abroad at the *University of Cambridge* in England, King's College (where **King Charles** went), and I studied political philosophy, focusing on **Karl Marx** and *French Utopian Socialism*. Whew! My minor was impressionism with a focus on **van Gogh**.

Realizing along the way that I thought socialism would never, ever work, I had to come up with a more practical career option. So, why not try law school? I went to *Washington University School of Law* in St. Louis, Missouri. And, I still am an art-freak!

But, I wasn't all about left-brain, dry subjects like politics and law. I actually had quite an artistic side as well! While I was in college, I danced both with a professional dance troupe and in some student shows. At Cambridge, I was perceived as a crazy American jazz dancer. That unique designation gave me the opportunity to choreograph the student show.

In law school, as you might imagine, I spent a lot of time sitting and studying. If you know me, I don't do well with being sedentary. So, I decided to apply my dance background to teach group

fitness in the basement of the English building, which was conveniently next door to the law school. One student, a professor in English Literature, got me a beautiful space in a gracious hall at Wash U., and I was off.

Those classes helped both my body and mind. Not only did I stay in shape, but somehow, I stayed sane throughout law school. Plus, I had 45 - 50 'paying' students three nights a week. I was making real bank. That led to a bit of a light-bulb moment. Not only did I believe that 'aerobics' would catch on, but I also realized that group exercise could make a terrific career.

C.I. - When and how did you enter the health and fitness club industry?

SK - When I was teaching exercise classes in law school, nothing in fitness had really bloomed yet. Not to date myself, but it was 40 years ago! Yet, I had an inkling that fitness was going to catch on. My sense is that it would grow, and I saw an opportunity.

Fortunately, my boyfriend at the time (whom I met in law school and later became my husband) was very supportive. Never one to shy away from risk, I took out four credit cards, said a whole bunch of deep and meaningful prayers and started a business!

C.I. - Please take us through some of the key roles/experiences that have shaped you into the industry leader you are today.

SK - Honestly, I think failure has been the best training I ever received. When I opened my first studio, which was aptly named 'Sara's City Workout,' I was desperate to drive traffic and make some money. So, I quickly lowered the price of the monthly fee, even though a friend of mine warned me not to, and off I went. Sadly, decreasing my accounts receivable resulted in me losing my entire investment in less than a year. Ouch!

What did I learn from that? A fitness business offers great value. *DO*



NOT undervalue your services and listen to the counsel of others. Both lessons have served me well over the years.

But, the failures didn't end there (Lucky me!). Once, I tried to host an event in a community that wasn't receptive. Have you heard of 'L.A. MANIA@?' Probably not! I plowed ahead and scheduled a convention. I contracted a hotel and booked more than 50 presenters. And, I wrote, designed, printed and mailed a very expensive brochure.

After all of that, nobody registered. I held a party that nobody RSVP'd to! Hence, despite my perseverance, I was forced to cancel the event. That meant I personally had to contact every presenter and activate the 'cancellation clause' in the agreement, beg my printer to give me a better rate and ask the bank for a loan to help me survive. It was painful but another teaching moment.

The lessons this time? Listen to others (as you can see, it took me awhile to get this one!); always have a good contract (shouldn't I have known this from law school?); and humility beats pride every time. In this business, you're only as good as your last venture, so I learned never to get too comfortable.

There are other stories of my failures throughout my career, which may make you wonder how I actually got to where I am today. But, I firmly believe that these were all valuable teaching and learning experiences that built on each other and helped shape me and my business ventures.

Ultimately, I got a lot of practice at evaluating both the upside and the downside of a business opportunity. That has definitely served me well over the years.

C.I. - When and how did *SCW Fitness Education* come to be?

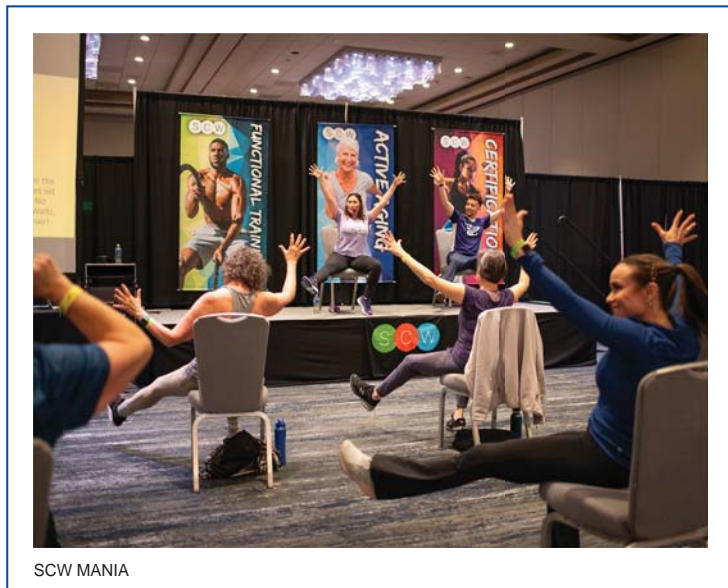
SK - When my studio failed, I wasn't going to simply give up. So, I started running workshops, training group exercise instructors how to teach. Actually, I ran one workshop in my studio that made more money in one day than I had made in the entire month. This is when another light bulb went off, and I thought training others would be a great idea.

While I realized that I had 'some' skill, I knew that there were others out there like me who desperately wanted to share their talents and train others. Finding these individuals and providing them with a venue to share these abilities and present workshops to other teachers gave me a strong sense of purpose and fulfillment. I love nurturing talent, and at some level, I enjoy being behind the stage rather than in front of it.

After successfully running one-day events with four presenters, I decided to take a big leap. Forget about proceeding gradually and cautiously. I jumped to an entire convention with 50 presenters. *SCW Fitness Education* grew out of four credit cards, some prayers and a ton of ambition and optimism!

C.I. - Please tell us about its **Mission** and **Objectives**.

SK - The *Mission of SCW Fitness Education* is to provide high-quality, affordable fitness education in cities, health clubs and homes throughout the United States. The *Objective of SCW Fitness Education* is to reach as many fitness pros, club owners and managers as possible to push our
(See Sara Kooperman Page 10)



SCW
MANIA[®]
FITNESS PRO CONVENTION

IHRSA is now the HEALTH & FITNESS ASSOCIATION

After two years of discussion and planning, IHRSA has made the next move in our evolution—we've rebranded as the Health & Fitness Association!

Our new name more readily reflects the amazing community of health and fitness leaders that we represent worldwide.

We will be transitioning to the new name during the next several months, so watch our website as we transition our url, social media platforms, newsletters, and more.

healthandfitness.org



...Sara Kooperman

continued from page 8

industry forward. By doing so, we will help more people become active and healthier.

Our annual conventions are called MANIA®, and we run them in seven cities with in-person sessions and livestreamed options. We also run summits for active aging, aquatic exercise, health and fitness business, nutrition coaching and more. Plus, we provide multiple certifications, special programs like WATERinMOTION®, S.E.A.T. Programming® (Supported Exercise for Ageless Training) and a wealth of continuing education courses.

I personally love seeing young or simply 'new' educators (whatever their age) entering the field and sharing their enthusiasm with others. At the same time, our veteran instructors have a wealth of knowledge and expertise that have really shaped the fitness industry, and they continue sharing this with their peers. That's really what SCW Fitness Education is all about. And, of course, 'SCW' stands for 'Sara's City Workout...' I didn't lose by humble beginnings.

Someday, I hope to see the fitness industry integrated into healthcare as a valuable preventative component. While I'm not certain what role SCW would play here, this is a personal mission of mine.

C.I. - MANIA@... What a fun name! Please tell us about that and what one can expect if they attend.

SK - MANIA@ is a great name. I was walking down Halsted Street in Chicago during "Midnight Mania," which was when every bar stayed open all night and you went drinking from establishment to establishment. Having just graduated from law school, with friends in town, I decided to enjoy the evening.

Truth be told, during a bit of a drunken stupor that night, it occurred to me that 'Mania' was also a fabulous name for

a fitness show. Midwest MANIA@... I liked it! While it may not be the most glamorous or inspiring story, it certainly has served me well!

When people attend a MANIA@ convention, they participate in all sorts of sessions, from a cycle class to an aqua program to a social media lecture to a business panel presentation on member acquisition and retention. The goal of MANIA@ is to get everything under one roof in your hometown. In fact, we aim to make the convention very convenient, and 90% of our attendees drive to one of our seven conferences.

Not only that, but we bring the highest quality presenters to our attendees. Each convention is a jam-packed, ultra-energized three days of almost 200 sessions. One of the most exciting things that happens at the conference is health club and studio owners and managers get to see what their frontline workers are doing. They witness what group exercise programs and personal training strategies are new, effective, successful, and most importantly, will bring in members!

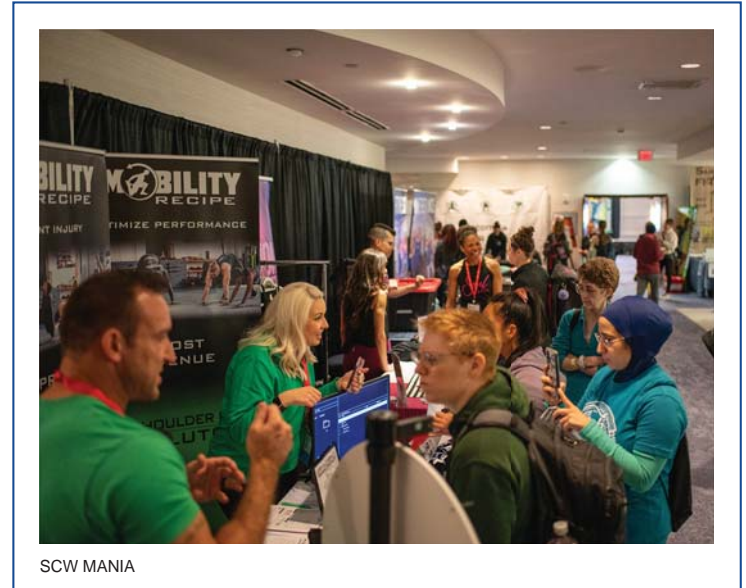
Plus, these owners and managers use the conventions to bond with their teams and learn financial strategies, social media techniques, AI updates and product and programming trends. They really are comprehensive and all-encompassing experiences. And, yes, they're a lot of fun!

C.I. - What is the best way to sign up for a MANIA@ Convention?

SK - Visit www.scwfit.com/MANIA and select a preferred city. We are in Washington D.C., San Francisco, Orlando, Atlanta, Dallas, Chicago and Boston.

C.I. - While we are on the subject of industry education, please tell us about Talks & Takes.

SK - I have absolutely loved my time on Talks & Takes with Brent Darden, Bill McBride and Blair McHaney. These



SCW MANIA

gentlemen have become not only my business partners but also my friends. It has been such a wonderful experience! We are a strong, unique team. And, anyone who has listened in can see that it's a lively discussion where we aren't afraid to disagree with each other.

Brent Darden is Mr. Organized. I thought he was going to be the most difficult one to work with, and it's so funny, because we are so much alike! Crossing every 'T' and dotting every 'i'! He has been our gentle but firm, fearless leader!

Bill McBride is absolutely a joy and a little bit nuts! He shows up last-minute but with these flashes of brilliance, keeping everyone on their toes. It never ceases to amaze me where he finds his facts and figures and personalizes everything. What a pro!

And, Blair McHaney is funny and the most well-read person I have ever met in the fitness industry! Always an opinion, always a comment, always great support!

Not only have I benefitted personally from Talks & Takes, but it has helped the industry overall come together. This show was started during COVID and was a lifeline for many club operators and fitness professionals. Today, it serves as a helpful forum for the industry to highlight broader issues that affect our day-to-day experiences in gyms, manufacturers, suppliers or professional organizations.

Although I think the talk show is just about at its end, my hope is that we are going to turn it into a monthly 45-minute webinar (and podcast) loaded

with fitness business advice! Look for 'It's none of YOUR BUSINESS!' And as we say, 'It should be YOUR BUSINESS!' As Club Insider always says, **Stay Tuned** on this one!

C.I. - Looking in the crystal ball, what do you see for the fitness industry in the next 3 to 5 years?

SK - That's a tough one. For group exercise, I see a lot of pre-choreographed programs, making it quicker and easier for group fitness instructors and small group trainers to get certified and upskilled.

In fitness education, I'm predicting a lot of automation and more certifications and education delivered online. This is a bit scary because we are such a hands-on community, and nothing can replicate the in-person experience of conventions. The good news is that live events aren't going away, and thank goodness, they are coming back! This year, our Florida MANIA@ event is as big as 2019. Wow! and Whew, this was a relief.

Although a lot of boutique studios closed during the pandemic, they're coming back strong and continuing to grow. People like the sense of community and belonging that smaller facilities offer.

And, as fitness becomes more of an accepted --and encouraged-- lifestyle, I expect hotels, apartment buildings and condos will also continue to provide --or even upgrade and expand-- their fitness facilities. This will not keep people from joining clubs, however, as they will continue to be members at multiple facilities. It will just serve to grow and encourage the number of exercisers and increase the value our medical community places on 'wellness' and movement in general.

C.I. - What lessons and advice do you have for industry participants, whether they are just getting started or are seasoned veterans?

(See Sara Kooperman Page 13)



Sara Kooperman, JD; Danielle Onteveros and Sohailla Digsby





INCURABLE IS UNACCEPTABLE



Donate via Credit Card



venmo

How AI Revolutionizes Personal Training Sales: An Insightful Q&A with Victor "VMan" Verhage

By: Gary Polic

In the rapidly evolving fitness industry, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) stands as a game-changer, especially in selling personal training packages and programs. *Polic Consultants Group, LLC* caught up with Victor "VMan" Verhage, a visionary in the fitness business landscape, to delve into how AI can be a powerhouse tool for personal trainers and fitness club owners. Let's explore how AI can specifically cater to members' goals like weight loss, muscle building, energy boosts and overall wellbeing.

PCG: Victor "VMan" Verhage (VMan), it's great to have you with us. To kick things off, can you shed some light on how AI is transforming the way fitness services are sold?

VMan: Absolutely, and thank you for having me. AI is fundamentally changing the game by personalizing the sales process. It can analyze vast amounts of data from member interactions, preferences and behaviors to predict the best packages and programs for individual goals. Imagine a system that knows a member has been researching weight loss and can suggest a tailored program even before they ask. It's about being proactive rather than reactive, which is a massive leap forward.

PCG: That sounds incredibly powerful. Can you give us specific examples of how AI can help in selling personal training packages?

VMan: Sure thing. One example is AI-powered CRM systems that track a member's journey within the club. Say a member frequently checks into the gym but hasn't joined any group classes or personal training sessions. The AI can flag this and prompt a salesperson to reach out with a personalized offer, perhaps a trial personal training session focused on energy boosting if the member has shown interest in this area.

Another example is virtual assistants or chatbots on gym websites and apps. They can engage members or prospects 24/7, answering queries about personal training packages, booking trial sessions and even providing initial consultation based on predefined algorithms. This not only enhances customer service but also captures leads at any time of the day.

PCG: Fascinating! How does AI cater to the specific goals of members, such as weight loss or muscle building?

VMan: AI excels in customization and precision. For weight loss objectives, AI

can analyze past successes within the gym's community and recommend the most effective personal training programs that have led to similar goals. It can also suggest nutritional guidance sessions as part of the package, enhancing the value proposition.

For muscle building, AI can help by recommending programs that include a mix of resistance training, supplementation advice and recovery techniques. By tracking progress, AI can adjust the training regimen in real-time, ensuring the member is always on the most efficient path to their goal.

PCG: In terms of increasing energy levels, how can AI play a role?

VMan: Energy levels are influenced by various factors, including exercise, diet, sleep and stress management. AI can create holistic packages that address all these aspects. For instance, it can suggest a mix of cardio, strength training, yoga sessions for stress relief and even link up with sleep tracking apps to monitor and provide recommendations for better rest. The idea is to use AI to create a 360-degree approach to boosting energy levels.

PCG: Moving on, how can AI help members move better and feel better?

VMan: AI can revolutionize functional training by using motion capture and analysis to correct form in real-time, either through on-site sensors or through members' smartphones. This immediate feedback helps prevent injuries and ensures the effectiveness of workouts, directly contributing to moving and feeling better.

For the "feel better" aspect, AI can monitor mood and stress levels through wearable devices, suggesting activities like meditation, breathing exercises or even recommending speaking to a wellness coach, all integrated within the gym's offerings.

PCG: Lastly, how can AI enhance the visual aspect, helping members look better?

VMan: Beyond just tracking weight or body measurements, AI can use advanced imaging to provide visual progress reports that show changes in body composition. This can be incredibly motivating for members. Plus, AI can tailor fashion advice based on body shape changes, partnering with health and wellness brands to offer personalized clothing suggestions that help members look their best as they transform.

PCG: With all these advancements, what should personal trainers and fitness club owners be mindful of when integrating AI



Victor "VMan" Verhage



Gary Polic

into their business?

VMan: While AI offers immense benefits, it's crucial to maintain the in-person human element in fitness. Personal trainers and staff should use AI as a tool to enhance their services, not replace the personal touch and motivation they provide. Additionally, data privacy and ethical use of AI should always be top priorities to maintain trust and credibility among members.

PCG: VMan, before we wrap up, can you offer any final thoughts on the future of AI in the fitness industry?

VMan: The potential of AI in the fitness industry is just scratching the surface. As

technology advances, we'll see even more personalized, dynamic, and effective ways to help members achieve their goals. It's an exciting time for fitness professionals to embrace AI.

(Gary Polic, as a 30-year veteran, is the Owner of Polic Consultants Group, LLC. Gary can be reached on his office phone at 630-410-1120; cell/text at 708-635-9522 or email at gary@policconsultantsgroup.com. You can also visit the website at www.policconsultantsgroup.com or connect with Gary on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/garypolic.)



POLIC CONSULTANTS GROUP, LLC
Experienced - Affordable - Supportive

At **Polic Consultants Group (PCG)**, we are committed to Increasing Sales, Ancillary Income and Profits for Health and Fitness Clubs worldwide!

"Your Club's Industry Experts"



Meet PCG's Victor "V-Man" Verhage

V-Man is an experienced Personal Training/Small Group Training/Group Fitness, Design, Recovery and Solutions Specialist with a demonstrated 28-year history working in the health, fitness and wellness industry.

Your Club's Road to Revenue RECOVERY!

victor@restrecoverywellness.com

(630) 410 - 1120

www.policconsultantsgroup.com

FITNESS FACILITIES



LIABILITY
PROPERTY
WORKERS
COMPENSATION
SURETY BONDS

THE PROTECTION YOU NEED

TAILORED FOR YOUR FITNESS BUSINESS



SPORTS & FITNESS
INSURANCE CORPORATION

sportsfitness.com

...Sara Kooperman

continued from page 10

SK - Stay on top of industry trends, and of course, artificial intelligence (AI). Technology is exploding quickly, and unless as a business you maintain and expand your understanding of AI, you will die. We need to constantly upskill ourselves and evolve our businesses.

Employ diverse staff that will keep you on your toes, offer different perspectives and push you ahead. Solicit input from and listen to your frontline workers, your front desk staff, group instructors and personal trainers. They know the trends, whether those trends come from Instagram or an educational convention.

And, collaborate with your competitors. Ask them for their best practices and share your own. Be generous with your knowledge. The only way to generate a thriving business is to be generous! When we share, the industry and its professionals (everyone) ultimately wins. We have come a long way, but we will go much further together!



Fit for Business is an inspiring memoir by fitness entrepreneur Sara Kooperman that chronicles her journey to

founding a successful fitness education company. Kooperman overcame a difficult childhood to discover her passion for dance and teaching. After graduating from law school, she took a leap of faith and invested her small inheritance into opening a fitness studio. Eventually, Kooperman pivoted her focus to fitness workshops and went on to grow her business into a thriving national fitness education company.

Throughout the memoir, Kooperman shares the hard-won lessons and strategies that helped her succeed, from learning to trust her instincts and find her niche to the importance of embracing

change and pushing beyond your comfort zone. With honesty and humor, she recounts both her failures and successes, including nearly losing everything and rebuilding after a disastrous first fitness studio venture.

Fit for Business is a motivating story of an entrepreneur who wasn't afraid to take risks, make sacrifices and do the hard work necessary to turn her dream into a reality. Kooperman's memoir will resonate with any aspiring entrepreneur and offers an inside look at the fitness industry from a pioneering female CEO. While sharing plenty of tough love, she empowers

readers to believe in themselves, face their fears and follow their passion to build the business and life they want.

To read *Fit for Business* today, go to: sarakooperman.com/books



Thank you to **Sara Kooperman, JD** for this great cover story interview. Additionally, thank you to **Sean Senigen** for assistance with photos and graphics. Folks, never let your mind go stale like a piece of bread! Move, rest and keep a good diet. It's what we want members to do for their bodies, right?

(Justin Cates is the Publisher of Club Insider. Having been born into a club business family in 1985, Justin grew up in the health and fitness club industry. He has lived and breathed this industry for 38 years, since his own day one, and he loves it dearly. Graduating from the Terry College of Business at The University of Georgia in 2007, Justin has run day-to-day operations of Club Insider for 15+ years. Justin became Publisher of Club Insider in April of 2020. Justin's Dad, Norm Cates, continues to serve as Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993. You can reach Justin by phone at 863-999-2677 or email at Justin@clubinsideronline.com.)



Franchising: The New Expansion Wave in the Fitness Industry

By: Paul Bosley

As an industry veteran of 49 years, I have witnessed profound changes in the fitness industry. I started working in sales in a privately held chain that merged in with *Health & Tennis Corporation of America*, owned by names that have become legends in our industry, including **Jerry Kahn** and **Don Wildman**. When our companies were acquired by *Bally*, the total number of clubs stood over 600 nationally, and the second largest chain was *Gold's Gym* with less than half that number of clubs. The only other chains which really operated as licenses were *World Gym* and *Powerhouse Gym*.

Our company started exhibiting in the franchise industry at the *International Franchise Expo* in NYC in 2016 and has been active in the industry since that time. Fast forward to today and our company has financed hundreds of new franchisees using SBA loans and equipment leases referred to us by *Workout Anytime*, *HOTWORX*, *F45 Training*, *the Camp Transformation Center*, *Athletic Republic*, *Physical Therapy Now*, *Zoo Health Clubs*, *Augment* and *CKO Kickboxing*. It seems like at every franchise expo, there are new fitness franchisors exhibiting to introduce their new franchise concepts, so in short, franchising in the fitness industry is exploding and very competitive!

What are the Advantages of Franchising?

As a member of the *International Franchise Association (IFA)*, our company is aware of the many advantages of franchising. In an article that appears on the IFA website entitled, "What Are the Advantages and Disadvantages of Owning a Franchise," the main advantages listed are, "Owning a franchise allows you to go into business for yourself, but not by yourself." A franchise provides franchisees (an individual owner/operator) with a certain level of independence where they can operate their business. A franchise provides an established product or service, which may already enjoy widespread brand-name recognition. This gives the franchisee the benefits of a pre-sold customer base, which would ordinarily take years to establish."

One of the other main advantages of purchasing a franchise is that a new franchisee is more likely to receive financing approval for equipment leasing and SBA loans. The same IFA article goes on to state that, "A franchise increases your chances of business success because you are associating with proven products and methods. Franchises may offer consumers the attraction of a certain level of quality and consistency because it is mandated

by the franchise agreement. Franchises offer important pre-opening support: site selection, design, construction, financing, training and a grand-opening program. Franchises offer ongoing support: training, national and regional advertising, operating procedures, operational assistance, ongoing supervision and management support, increased spending power and access to bulk purchasing."

When we meet a new franchisor, we first request their equipment list and their *Federal Disclosure Document (FDD)*, which a franchisor must file with the *Federal Trade Commission (FTC)*. Under the Franchise Rule, which is enforced by the FTC, a prospective franchisee must receive the franchisor's FDD franchise disclosure document at least 14 days before they are asked to sign any contract or pay any money to the franchisor or an affiliate of the franchisor. We present their documents to our leasing companies and banks, and we prequalify the franchisor for future equipment lease and loan approvals. Once we receive the green light for the leasing companies and the banks, it is simply a matter of submitting the specific information of the perspective franchisees for financing approval.

What are the Disadvantages of Franchising?

One of the main facts to consider is that a franchisee is not completely independent. Franchisees are required to operate their businesses according to the procedures and restrictions set

forth by the franchisor in the franchise agreement. These restrictions usually include the products or services that can be offered, pricing and geographic territory. For some people who seek to be independent entrepreneurs, this is the most serious disadvantage to becoming a franchisee. There are also costs associated with purchasing a franchise, including an initial franchise fee, royalties and advertising fees. These are additional costs that a business must incur in addition to the regular operating costs of running the business.

Conclusion

It is important to first secure the FDD from a franchisor when considering purchasing a franchise. The FDD lists the number of franchises open, where they are located and their rate of success. Nearly all franchisors schedule a "Discover Day" when the prospective franchisee visits the franchisor's corporate office to determine if there is a fit for both parties. Perspective franchisees must be careful to balance the restrictions and the support provided by the franchisor with their own ability to manage their business. This evaluation process will ultimately lead to a final decision to launch a privately held business as an entrepreneur or to purchase a franchise.

For more information, go to www.businessfinancedepot.com. Or, please contact **Paul Bosley**, *Health*



Paul Bosley

Club Experts.com dba Business Finance Depot at (800) 788 - 3884 or paul@businessfinancedepot.com.

(Paul Bosley is the Managing Member of Healthclubexperts.com dba Business Finance Depot. Bosley is known for his expertise in financing franchises and has partnered with several national brands to assist new franchisees acquire the capital needed to launch their new businesses or to expand their current business. Paul has been a volunteer counselor for SCORE, a division of the SBA, for over a decade where he learned the value of SBA loans for funding new and existing businesses. Paul can be reached at paul@businessfinancedepot.com.)

Wello Works Redefines Work-Life Balance with Dual-Concept Space, Launching in Australia and the United States

AUSTRALIA - Tony de Leede, renowned wellness entrepreneur, is set to make waves in the world of coworking with the grand opening of *Wello Works* in Rosebery, Sydney, Australia and Sandy Springs, Atlanta, United States. This groundbreaking space introduces a dual-concept approach, seamlessly integrating coworking and wellness under one roof. *Wello Works* comprises two distinct spaces, *Wello Coworking* and the *Wello Collective*, each designed to cater to the diverse needs of today's consumer.

The Wello

A key component of *Wello Works* is the introduction of a new concept: 'The Wello.' An evolution from the traditional "smoko," a smoking break at work, the innovative "wello" is a wellness break

designed to foster a healthier and more balanced workplace.

Recognizing the changing landscape of workplace culture and the increasing emphasis on wellness, *Wello Works* is taking a bold step forward by redefining the concept of breaks during the workday. The transition from smoko to wello reflects a commitment to offering an environment that actively promotes movement, mindfulness, holistic health and wellbeing.

Wello Collective

Housing state-of-the-art wellness amenities, the *Wello Collective* includes an array of premium offerings including HydroMassage, LED Light Therapy Bed, Relax Meditation Pods, Infrared Sauna with Salt Bricks, CryoLounge - Cold / Hot

Therapy and Somadome deep meditation.

Sessions range from 10 to 20 minutes, and the *Wello Collective* is independent from Coworking (Coworking membership is not required).

Wello Coworking

Offering a variety of workstations, private offices and meeting rooms, *Wello Coworking* provides a versatile environment for individuals and teams.

Located within the coworking space is the wellness lounge featuring lounge style seating and a relaxed atmosphere. The wellness lounge houses core wellness offerings, which include O2 Breathing and Meditation Chairs, Recovery Massage Chairs, Zen Immersive Room and Virtual Movement Studio.



LET US BE YOUR SOLUTION TO ENTERING THE WORLD OF
BIOHACKING &
MEDICALLY SUPERVISED PROGRAMMING
 LEARN MORE AT HWLSERVICES.COM

USTA Seeks to Make U.S. the #1 Tennis-Playing Nation by 2035

ORLANDO, FL - The USTA announces an ambitious, multi-faceted growth strategy aimed at making the United States the number one tennis-playing nation in the world by 2035, increasing the country's tennis-playing population to 35 million total players (or 10% of the country's population). The growth strategy is the vehicle for realizing the organization's new mission: "Growing tennis to inspire healthier people and communities everywhere." The strategy includes a dedicated focus on player retention, coaches and courts.

"When players have exceptional experiences, we all succeed. When the delivery system flourishes, tennis grows. At the USTA, our role is to be a connector of excellence across the entire tennis ecosystem," said **Lew Sherr**, USTA Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director. "By ensuring players new and old have access to the programs, coaching and facilities they need to progress on their tennis-playing path, we can continue to grow the game and deepen its positive impact, creating new opportunities for human connection and improving the physical, mental and emotional health and safety of our communities, both on and off

the court."

Over the past four years, tennis participation in the U.S. has experienced remarkable growth of 33%, fueled by new players taking up the sport. This growth stretches across a variety of communities, with participation among Hispanic/Latino players and Black/African-American players growing by 105% and 63%, respectively, over the past five years, making tennis look more like America than ever before. However, even with this surge, too many players give tennis a try and then choose not to continue. Recognizing Americans are playing tennis at a variety of ages and abilities, across different types of facilities, and in and outside of organized play, the USTA wants to meet them where they are.

The USTA is taking this challenge head-on with a new strategy aimed at continuing the sport's strong uptake and better retaining existing players by supporting local communities and providing options for tennis formats, equipment and programs that enable players coming to the game to become players for life. The USTA strategy includes making a generational investment in strengthening tennis by:



- Creating and scaling programming that keeps new and returning players on the court, for life. By ensuring every player has access to new and existing programming that meets their needs at every step of their journey, the USTA plans to grow the nation's tennis-playing population to 35 million players, roughly 10% of the total U.S. population. This will include the roll-out of a portfolio of competitive and casual play programs that meet the needs of every age and interest, from young to old, cardio to competitive and beyond.

- Expanding the availability of quality coaching at all levels. To ensure that every player receives the guidance and quality instruction they need, the USTA aims to further raise the standard of coaching and increase the number of available SafePlay-approved coaches to over 80,000 nationwide, including both professional

coaches and community-level instructors who provide on-court instruction and facilitation, keeping pace with the goal to grow overall player participation. In doing so, the aim is to get more coaches in parks, public facilities and at schools; provide additional support for volunteers in the roles they choose to play in their communities; and create more viable career opportunities for those who choose to make coaching their profession.

- Maximizing court availability to keep pace with participation. Increased player participation requires more courts and more available playable hours on those courts. The USTA plans to deepen its partnership with local governments, parks and recreation facilities, school boards and local clubs to build, renovate and protect tennis facilities across the country, while also

(See USTA Page 16)

Health Clubs as “Experience” Centers

By: **Eric Durak, MSc**

In most businesses (it should be all businesses), relationships are key to enhancing business models. The old adage that, “doing business with people you like,” goes a long way to moving forward. In the health club sector, having a good “experience” is about as key to the business as any new equipment or clean bathrooms or plenty of parking. The fact that they are part of the great experience is paramount to clubs. But, it is important to understand what the current experience is and what other types of experiences may be used that will enhance the experience above that of just “renting equipment.”

This means a higher caliber of staff, from trainers to nutritionists to massage therapists to front desk workers. All those who work at clubs should be thinking of themselves in the “experience enhancement” business. People who come to a club for the first time with little to no expectations should leave with the mindset of returning to achieve goals, meeting new people and learning lots of interesting things from the staff. Any club can do it, and many are. In this article, we will be diving into some of the interesting experiences that clubs are now offering.

Changes in Health Clubs in General: Over the past couple of decades, clubs have moved from only weight training to aerobic machines, exercise classes and amenities. Even moderately priced clubs now have space in their locations for hydromassage, massage therapy, chair massage, tanning beds and other therapies, such as red light. It's not uncommon to see meditation classes, stretching programs and mind-body enhancement as a part of many

clubs. They are moving in a direction in which clients may retain their membership because of their experience.

Precision Wellness: One of the newer aspects of therapy that should be taking the health club industry by storm is precision wellness or the application of heat, light, cold, vibration, sound or other frequencies to heal the body. My first experience with precision wellness at *Cerulean Advanced Wellness* in Scottsdale, Arizona introduced me to Nano Vi (using exclusion zone water to enhance cellular health), compression sleeves (pressure sleeves to enhance circulation), cryotherapy (high level cold for healing) and hyperbaric chambers (using pressure to enhance therapy for a number of medical conditions). Collectively, these types of therapies can allow persons with medical conditions, or just being out of shape, to experience the health club in a “phase I” program that will help enhance their health and get them ready to exercise in programs. This all while giving another opportunity for the club to deliver new types of technologies that are safe, have no side effects and are also profit centers, which may give management more incentive to investigate what may be the best types of precision wellness programs for their clubs.

Food and Nutrition: For many years, health clubs have shied away from doing any nutritional programs, as they felt it was not part of their Mission. Today, I am happy to see that specialty clubs are working with supplement companies and promoting products that will help with muscle gain and overall health. Clubs are also employing nutritional specialists to help persons with their food issues as they develop an exercise program.

and coaches that U.S. tennis has to offer, empowering up-and-coming competitors to achieve their full potential, and providing a clearer path for our top junior performers to reach the pinnacle of the sport and motivate millions more to follow in their footsteps.

“Tennis is the healthiest sport in the world. In fact, tennis extends our lives by almost 10 years, which is more than any other sport or form of exercise, while improving cognition, psychological wellbeing, strength and agility. We can't let current or future generations miss out on these life-changing benefits,” said **Dr. Brian Hainline**, *USTA Chairman of the Board and President*. “Whether it's the thrill of watching professional play or swinging a racquet on a community court, it's important to help ensure that communities everywhere have access to the life-enhancing benefits of our wonderful sport.”

...USTA

continued from page 15

seeking to maximize existing infrastructure through enhancements that will extend playable hours and lengthen the tennis season. The goal is to ensure there are 350,000 courts (including both traditional and non-traditional playing spaces), one for every 100 players, available to help catalyze play in local communities, with a particular focus on underserved areas. As part of this effort, the USTA will support facility operators with the tools they need to run effective, efficient and profitable operations, including programming, technology, data intelligence, coaches and equipment.

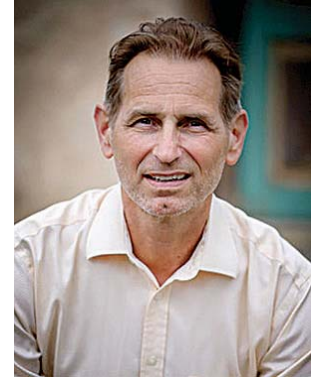
■ Supporting and elevating the next generation of stars. The USTA remains committed to its efforts to develop, support and showcase the best events, players

Enhancing Behavioral Health: One of the fastest growing maladies in our health care system is behavioral health issues. From depression to self-sabotage, there are almost too many issues to manage. Traditional health care services provide individual and group counseling, and of course, medications. With people being at home during the pandemic, some of these conditions worsened by large gaps. The good news is that exercise is one of the best ways to improve depression, enhance self-esteem and self-efficacy, and reduce feelings of fatigue and low energy that accompany many behavioral diagnoses. With that in mind, health clubs should be playing a role in developing exercise programs that directly show improved outcomes for behavioral-related issues.

Medically-Based Fitness: I have spoken about and will continue to speak on medically-based exercise as the foundation of future health club offerings, now and in the future. It will continue to bring in persons referred from physicians, or those who come to clubs because they have heard of some of the medical fitness programs that may benefit their health. In any case, using some type of medically-based wellness program will move good health clubs to great and change the scope of how health clubs are viewed by allied health, by physicians and by the community at large.

In Conclusion

One of finest examples of an experience-based health club is *The Marsh* in Minnetonka, Minnesota (See Cover Stories on *The Marsh* in the *Club Insider Archives* at www.clubinsideronline.com/archives). My first visit to The Marsh in the 1990s was filled with the wonder of a health club that had its own restaurant, conference rooms, art and sculptures from all over the world, a meditation tower, bookstore, day spa, and many, many other amenities. The late **Ruth Stricker** spared



Eric Durak, MSc

no expense to make The Marsh a “one of a kind” place to go to, not just to exercise, but to relax, meet with friends, eat good food, pamper yourself, learn and read and even take walks on the property in the summer and cross-country ski in the winter. I have described it to many as a “magical” place, and I am still honored that I was a part of the Marsh family as a consultant and educator for a few years.

Looking at concierge medicine, boutique studios, at home deliveries of food and products and other types of specialty services, it isn't hard to realize that, in order to compete in today's marketplace of health, clubs need to grab onto a sector of the market and run with it. Their ability to change with the times and develop programs that will attract many more members will bring in more members and keep their doors open as essential businesses.

(Eric Durak, MSc is the President and Founder of Medical Health and Fitness. He is a 35-year veteran of the health club industry. His company performs clinical outcomes and consults on medical fitness. He can be reached at edurak@medhealthfit.com.)

Club Insider Seeks Contributing Authors

Contact Justin Cates
(863) 999 - 2677 or
justin@clubinsideronline.com

The Value of Group Fitness: Data, Dollars and the Doorman Fallacy

By: Jeffrey Pinkerton

Group fitness is not often seen as a profit center, but it is a huge differentiator for your facility. And, when you invest in it, it can pay huge dividends for community, for connection and for the member experience. But, since it's not a simple line item on your profit and loss statement, there is a good chance that group fitness is viewed as an amenity more than an asset. If you view it as an amenity only, you're probably looking for ways to cut costs (and ultimately, cut corners). If you view it as an asset – with the potential of growing into a million-dollar department – you should ask yourself this question: how can I build on what we have, invest more and maximize the return?

Two Types of Members (The Data)

To calculate a dollar value for your group fitness department, you must assume that there are essentially two types of members in your facility – machine members and group fitness members.

Machine members spend most of their time working out by themselves. For them, working out is a disciplined habit at best and a dreaded chore at worst. They start a watch. They close a ring. They check a box. No social connection and no staff interaction. They've probably chosen your facility because it's convenient, or because it's clean, or because it's the right place and the right price. They ask themselves this question: Is this really the right place at the right price? If Yes, stay. If No, go search for

a better place or a lower price.

Group fitness members spend most of their time in group fitness. Working out for them is often less about the expense and more about the experience. They show up early. They stay around after to socialize. They hang out with fitness friends outside of your facility. It's a high level of social connection, and by design, direct staff interaction. They've chosen your facility (or once they find group fitness, they've chosen to stay at your facility) because of the motivation, the accountability, the friendships and the community. They ask themselves this question: Is this experience worth my time and energy and expense? If Yes, stay. If No, go search for a better experience.

(See *Jeffrey Pinkerton* Page 18)



Jeffrey Pinkerton

Why Work Here?

Building a Gym Culture That Attracts and Retains Top Talent

By: Jim Thomas

The fitness industry is booming, but so is the competition for talented employees. In this war for talent, your gym culture is your secret weapon. It's not just about treadmills and protein shakes; it's about creating an environment where people thrive, grow and feel valued. Here's how to build a gym culture that makes people say, "Why wouldn't I want to work here?"

Beyond the Basics

Sure, competitive pay, flexible scheduling and employee discounts are important. But, they're table stakes. Differentiate yourself by focusing on the things that truly matter to your staff:

■ **Passion for Fitness:** Make your gym a place where enthusiasm for health and wellness is contagious. Offer free or discounted memberships for staff, host internal fitness challenges and organize teambuilding activities that get your blood pumping.

■ **Investing in Growth:** Show your staff you're committed to their professional development. Offer management training programs, provide financial assistance for relevant certifications or partner with local colleges for discounted fitness-related courses.

■ **Empowerment and Recognition:** Don't micromanage. Trust your employees and give them the freedom and autonomy to excel. Publicly recognize achievements and celebrate successes, big and small.

■ **A Community, Not Just a Job:** Foster a sense of camaraderie and belonging. Organize social events outside of work, encourage cross-departmental collaboration and celebrate birthdays and milestones. Make your gym feel like a family where people genuinely enjoy being around each other.

■ **Work-Life Balance:** Respect your employees' personal lives. Offer flexible scheduling options whenever possible and be understanding of personal needs. A healthy work-life balance leads to happier, more productive employees.

■ **Making a Difference:** Help your staff connect with the purpose behind your gym. Highlight the positive impact they have on members' lives. Organize volunteer opportunities or partner with local charities to give back to the community.

Building Your Employer Brand

Once you've cultivated this positive culture, shout it from the rooftops! Utilize social media, your career page and online review platforms to showcase your unique work environment. Encourage current

employees to be ambassadors for your gym, sharing their positive experiences online and with friends.

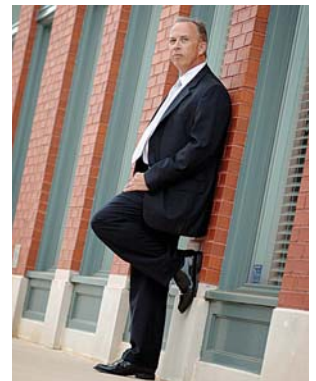
Remember, a strong gym culture is a two-way street. Invest in your employees, and they'll invest in your gym. By prioritizing their wellbeing, growth and sense of belonging, you'll create a workplace that attracts the best and brightest, keeps them engaged and motivated, and ultimately, fuels the success of your entire fitness business.

So, why work at your gym? Because you're not just offering a job, you're offering a career path, a supportive community and the chance to make a real difference in people's lives. Who wouldn't want to be part of that?



If your fitness business is in need of a turnaround, a boost in sales or a fresh marketing approach, we're here to help. We offer a free initial consultation to discuss your specific situation and explore how our expertise can make a difference.

(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



Jim Thomas

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.)

Make It Fun!

...Jeffrey Pinkerton

continued from page 17

Sample Member Math (The Dollars)

- You have 10,000 members.
- Each member pays the national average: \$50/month.
- 20% of your members are group fitness members.
- That's about \$100,000 in monthly membership value.
- That's a \$1.2 million annual group fitness department.

Misguided Math Moves (The Doorman Fallacy)

There are certain things about the group fitness experience that are impossible to measure with only data and dollars. I recently stumbled onto a podcast interview with **Rory Sutherland**. He is a marketing

and advertising pro and author, and in his interview, he introduces the concept of "the doorman fallacy." It addresses the idea that one person has one role in an organization. For example, the doorman's job is to open and close the door, and that's basically all they do. But, we know that's not true. We know that a doorman of a nice hotel actually elevates the experience for guests. A doorman allows the hotel to charge a premium because it's a sign that the hotel is worth the rate they charge. The doorman is also the face that greets customers. They make conversation and greet people by name. And, even though it may not be in their job description, they often tidy up the entrance to the hotel, pick up the trash and ward off non-guests. All of those things are part of the value that the doorman brings to the organization.

Then, the hotel hires a consulting firm, and the consultants propose a plan: you can save a ton of money by getting rid of the doorman and replacing the job with some cool technology and some infrared scanners that will just automatically open the door. But, the fallacy, the mistake and

misconception is that the person's role and the value that they bring to an organization is just one thing. That automatic door can't freshen up the lobby, greet guests or justify the premium charge, and it certainly won't invite them back.

Who's the doorman at your facility? It's your group fitness team. And, Sutherland's cautionary tale perfectly fits the role of the group fitness instructor. Yes, their role is to teach a group fitness class. Yes, it could be replaced with some technology that provides a similar function – it plays music and leads members through a group fitness workout. But, a great instructor does more than just teach a workout. They elevate the experience for members. They allow a great, social facility to charge more than the machine-only club down the street. They are the face that greets members by name. And, even though it may not be in their job description, they tidy up the group fitness room, are the influencers promoting your facility on social media, are the hosts for launch parties, the new-member on-boarders for first time guests, the scouts for new instructor talent, and they are the

personal connection that motivates and connects and invites members back. The value they bring is more than just teaching a workout.

And, if this doesn't sound like the instructors on your team... maybe you don't need new technology and a new automatic door; maybe you need a new doorman?

■ ■ ■

Group fitness instructors are a key component to delivering an amazing member experience and should be an important part of your member onboarding and social media strategies. To learn more about a few of the topics in this article (MOSSA Metrics, Instructors as Influencers and Member Onboarding Strategies), visit our website and white paper library at mossa.net/clubs-facilities/white-papers.

(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.)

Thank You to Our Sponsors



The excellent companies below bring *Club Insider* to you every month, so please take a minute to see what they can do for you. To learn more about them, or about joining **The Club Insider Sponsorship Team**, go to www.clubinsideronline.com/advertise today!

Premium Tier:

Crunch Franchising - Page 2
LA Fitness - Page 5
MOSSA - Page 19
Workout Anytime - Page 20

www.crunchfranchise.com
www.lafitness.com
www.mossa.net
www.workoutanytime.com

Primary Positions:

Augie's Quest - Page 11
Health & Fitness Association - Page 9
Health, Wellness and Lifestyle Services - Page 15
JLR Associates - Page 7
Sports and Fitness Insurance - Page 13

www.augiesquest.org
www.healthandfitness.org
www.hwlservices.com
www.jlrassoc.com
www.sportsfitness.com

Directory Tier:

TG - The Gym

www.thegymvista.com

To join **The Club Insider Sponsorship Team** (and to be included in next month's Cover Story), contact **Justin Cates** by phone at (863) 999 - 2677 or email at justin@clubinsideronline.com.

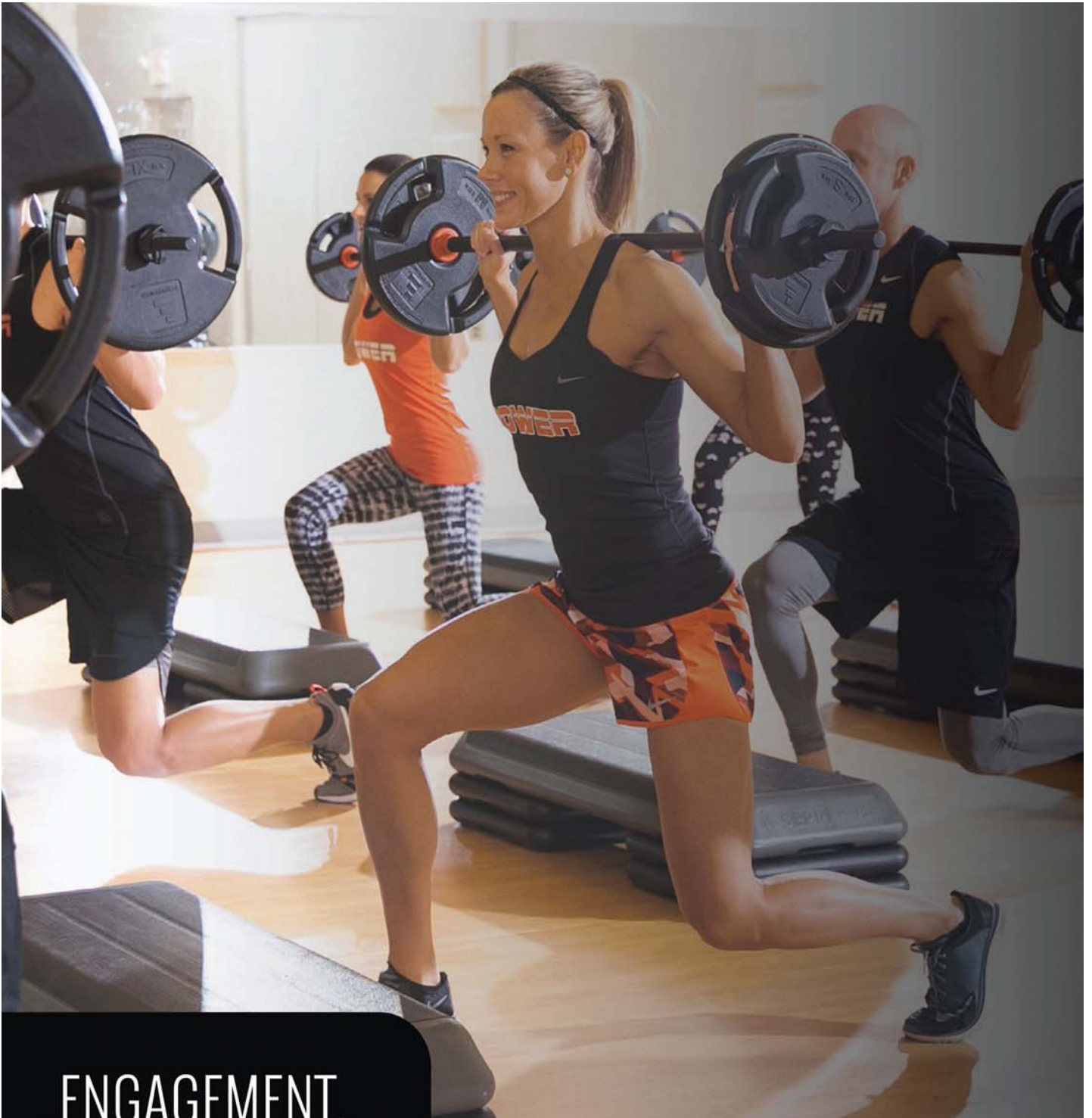


Download the
Club Insider Media Kit at

[www.clubinsideronline.com/
advertise](http://www.clubinsideronline.com/advertise)

Thank You to Our Contributing Authors

- **Bonnie Patrick Mattalian** - Independent Consultant - bmattalian@gmail.com
- **Bruce Carter** - President, Optimal Design Systems International - (954) 888 - 5960
- **Casey Conrad** - Sales and Marketing Consultant - CaseyConrad11@gmail.com
- **Cathy Spencer Browning** - VP of Training & Programming, MOSSA - (770) 989 - 4700
- **Chris Stevenson** - Founder, The Empower Group - chris@stevensonempowers.com
- **Derek Barton** - Owner, Barton Productions - derek@bartonproductions.com
- **Frank Guengerich** - President of Hospitality, Williams Group - frank@williamsgroup.com
- **Gary Polic** - Owner, Polic Consultants Group - (630) 410 - 1120
- **Herb Lipsman** - Author and Industry Consultant - www.herblipsman.com
- **Jeffrey Pinkerton** - Business Development Manager, MOSSA - (770) 989 - 4737
- **Jim Thomas** - President, Fitness Management USA - (800) 929 - 2898
- **John McCarthy** - 25-Year Executive Director Emeritus of IHRSA
- **Mike Alpert** - COO, Smart Health Clubs - mike@smarthealthclubs.com
- **Nancy Trent** - President, Trent and Company - nancy@trentandcompany.com
- **Paul R. Bedard, Esquire** - Crunch Fitness Connecticut - paul@crunchct.com
- **Paul Bosley** - Owner, Business Finance Depot - (800) 788 - 3884
- **Rick Caro** - President, Management Vision, Inc. - (212) 987 - 4300
- **Sara Kooperman, JD** - CEO, SCW Fitness Education - scwfit.com
- **Thomas Plummer** - National Fitness Business Alliance - (800) 726 - 3506



ENGAGEMENT.
CONNECTION.
RETENTION.

Unlock the full power and potential of group fitness at your facility through MOSSA's innovative programming, custom engineered music, inspiring marketing, and thoughtful strategy.



Learn more at www.mossa.net



WORKOUT ANYTIME

JOIN A

THRIVING FRANCHISE

THAT IS PROVEN TO BE

RECESSION PROOF

YOU COULD BE NEXT

TINA & MATT CURIED
OWNERS OF WORKOUT ANYTIME CANTON

THE WORKOUT ANYTIME ADVANTAGE:

RECURRING REVENUE:

Ongoing revenue from monthly dues, plus add-on fees from personal training, reACT Training, hydromassage, and tanning.

NO GYM EXPERIENCE NEEDED:

We offer complete franchise gym training.

LOW STAFF REQUIREMENTS:

Run your club with 3-5 employees.

TURNKEY MARKETING:

Leverage our sophisticated Web platform, videos, and marketing collateral.

OPERATIONAL SUPPORT:

Our support team brings decades of fitness industry experience to help you open your business

FLEXIBLE BUSINESS MODEL:

Fits into a storefront, freestanding retail, and non-traditional spaces.

EXPERT REAL ESTATE ASSISTANCE:

Our executive team includes a professional commercial real estate consultant/broker.

THIRD-PARTY FINANCING AVAILABLE:

Our solid relationships with preferred lenders can jumpstart your financing process.

TERRITORIES AVAILABLE:

We are actively pursuing new locations across the country and throughout the world.

WANT TO JOIN OUR BRAND THAT'S HERE FOR YOU 24/7?

CONTACT TERRI HAROF TO LEARN MORE

TERRI HAROF
DIRECTOR OF FRANCHISE DEVELOPMENT

terri.harof@workoutanytime.com

workoutanytime.com **770-809-1425**