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Established 1993



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Steve and Bonnie Pfister

The Dynamic Duo Behind Longevity Fitness

JUNE 2009

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Steve and Bonnie Pfiester *The Dynamic Duo Behind Longevity Fitness*

By: Justin Cates

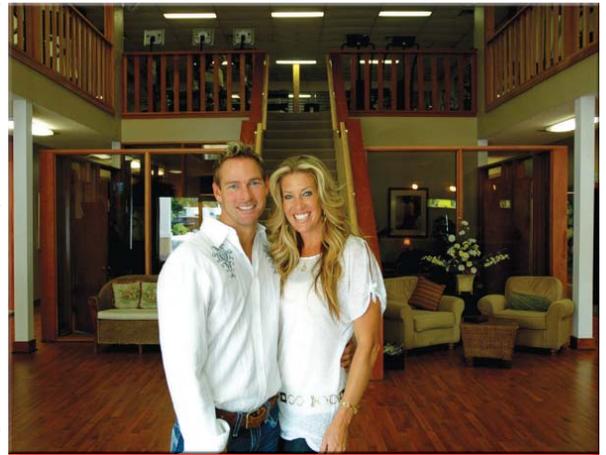
Through the immense love for what they do, and the relationships they have spent years building, Steve and Bonnie Pfiester have made their mark on the beautiful community of Vero Beach, located on the East Coast of Florida. In a city of less than 20,000 people, and literally surrounded by various clubs and gyms, they have built a brand that sets them apart from the rest and truly means something to the people who know them and use their facilities. Combining *Fun* and the power of *Relationships*, the dynamic duo behind Longevity Fitness are changing lives every day, and that is what our

industry is all about.

While preparing this story, I had the opportunity to spend the afternoon getting to know Steve and Bonnie, touring both of their clubs and speaking with some of their members. With this story, my only hope is that I can successfully convey the vigor, conviction and love the Pfiesters have for helping the people of their community live better lives with their two, mid-size facilities, Longevity Fitness Club & Spa for Women at 15,000 square feet and Longevity Max at 12,000 square feet.

Recently celebrating their 15th wedding anniversary, the Pfiesters' story of balancing work and marriage is one that can

inspire, especially during a time of economic uncertainty. They live and breathe the fitness business, and new challenges only serve to reassert their love for what they do. The greatest testament to this is that of their member loyalty and the love they have for the Pfiesters. While attending one of their boot camp program sessions, several of the participants came up to me and told me about their experience with the Pfiesters. Though separate conversations, the content was the same in each case. They explained how the hard work of the program had changed their lives because of the weight they had lost and how much better they now feel. But, (See *Longevity Fitness* Page 10)



Steve and Bonnie Pfiester
in the Lobby of Longevity for Women

The "INSIDER SPEAKS" *IHRSA, A House Divided - A Mirror Image of the Industry At Large*

By: Norm Cates, Jr.

This is a "tough love" article about an Association I love: IHRSA.

Some may translate my "tough love" comment to mean I am going to write bad things about IHRSA. Quite to the contrary; instead, I'm going to provide IHRSA with input that somebody has to have the courage to say if IHRSA is to

prosper in the future. You are reading it here because I want to be sure IHRSA Members are aware of what has been going on with their Association.

Keep in mind, this writing is the result of 28 years of involvement with IHRSA. I was very honored and proud to have served as IHRSA's 1st President, and I have supported the Association ever since.

First, let me make a

statement that will help set the stage for this article. If you know me, and understand what a dedicated supporter and promoter of IHRSA I have been since day one, then you already know I love all of you in this industry because of the choice you've made for your life's work. I believe that your occupational choice very positively impacts the people of the United States of America,

(See *Insider Speaks* Page 6)



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- Immunity to Change: A Breakthrough Insight Enabling Behavior Change - By: Will Phillips
- Seven Keys to Top of Mind Success - By: Andrea Sobotka
- The New Reality of Successful Fitness Center Operations - By: Bonnie Patrick Mattalian
- The Importance of Play in Your Programs - By: Sandy Coffman
- Cybex Launches Pink Treadmill to Support Breast Cancer Research

Norm's Notes: •My Condolences to Rick Caro for the Loss of his Father, Dick Caro •America is Great! •Congratulations to the Class of 2009 •Congratulations to Justin Cates on His First Cover Story for CLUB INSIDER •Club Industry's Light Traffic •Telling-It-Like-It-Is About Bad Club Operators •Trouble With Peak Fitness •Attend the National Fitness Trade Journal Conference and Trade Show •Rick Caro Joins Parisi Franchise Systems Board of Directors •Casey Conrad Launches Nationwide Tour •Jason West's Gold's Gym Sees Great Success with BTS •Cybex Releases Pink Treadmill to Fight Breast Cancer •Welcome Back to Sports & Fitness Insurance •ReachLocal.com •Randy Ivey Leaves Club Solutions by Fiserv •Helen Rockey Joins World Gym International as COO •Mike Minton's Sportsplex Completes Major Expansion •Great Speakers at NFTJ •Fitness Management Magazine Ceases Online Publication •Andy Graham Joins Fabiano Designs •Thank You to Diane Baskin for May 2009 Cover Story Correction

Norm's Notes

•Hello everybody! This is your **CLUB INSIDER Publisher and Tribal Leader Since 1993** checking in with another sad heart this month.

•I want to express sincere condolences to my long-time friend, **RICK CARO**, and his family, after the loss of his beloved **Father, DICK CARO**, in Madison Wisconsin on June 4, 2009. Mr. Caro would have turned 91 next month. Having met him and **MRS. CARO** many years ago, I can say that Rick inherited his Dad's easy going style and fun sense of humor. Rick says that his Dad was lucid during his final days and experienced a comfortable passing. May Mr. Dick Caro rest in peace, and may God bless Rick and his family in this time of great loss.

•Is **America** a great country or what?

•Congratulats to the **Class of 2009** worldwide!

•I could not be a more *fortunate man!* That's because, for 18 months now, I have had the pleasure and wonderful benefit of having my son, **JUSTIN CATES**, working with me full time on **CLUB INSIDER**. He now handles many of the jobs I formerly did every month for all these years, plus he rebuilt and maintains our website. This month, I'm especially happy and pleased to note that Justin wrote our cover story. It is about **STEVE** and **BONNIE PFIESTER**, and he visited their clubs in Vero Beach,

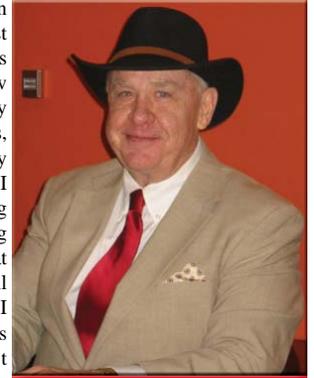
Florida last month. He did a great job on his first cover story, and I want to say thanks to Justin for capturing the excitement of the lives and work of Steve and Bonnie Pfeister so well! And, I want to comment on our story. To me, our story is an amazing one. Almost 17 years ago, and with the help of my **Faust Roundtable #1** friends, I established **CLUB INSIDER** as a service for our industry. My intention was to build a home-based business so I could be "**Mr. Mom**" to Justin, who was age 8 at the time. Now, after Justin graduated from the **Terry College of Business** at the **University of Georgia** with a 3.6 Major GPA in December, 2007, he is onboard **CLUB INSIDER** for the long haul. He is also advancing his education in the cyberspace world by attending the **Art Institute of Atlanta** at night. In the not too distant future, **CLUB INSIDER** will be launching a Web Division, and our services will include innovative website construction and maintenance for clubs and other businesses. Justin and I thank all of you for reading and supporting **CLUB INSIDER!**

•Let me say this about **Club Industry East** in Boston, May 27-30th. The Club Industry folks put on a very nice event featuring a wonderful **Opening Reception** and a terrific faculty of excellent speakers suitable for a national event, including: **RICK CARO, CASEY CONRAD, MARIA PARRELLA-TURCO, WILL PHILLIPS, CHRISPACIFICO, SANDY COFFMAN, BRUCE CARTER, EDDIE TOCK,**

Laurie Cingle, Mike Campstelle, Amanda Harris, Scott Chovanec and many more. However, here's the rub. My guess is that, if you added all of the speakers and all of the people working at the trade show exhibits together, you would be very close to the total number of conference and trade show attendees! Not good! It really saddens me, for both the trade show exhibitors and the great lineup of excellent speakers who spent and contributed their time and hard work preparing for the show, to end up playing to such a small audience. Club Industry did everything right with this event, but it just looks to me like the attendance was low because many of the folks in the Northeast region, where there are 700 or 800 clubs, were hunkered down at their clubs and may just be planning to wait out these economic times before trying to learn anything new or attending a trade show where they might be tempted to buy something new. The largest group I saw in Boston was at the terrific **NEHRSA Reception** (New England Health Racquet and Sportsclub Association). See **CIE Boston Photo Collage** at www.clubinsideronline.com.

•In the past, I've had the tough, but necessary, chore of "**Telling-It-Like-It-Is**" about some of our biggest chain operators who've allowed their employees to stray way across the boundaries of ethics and decent competitive behavior. Yesterday, in a phone conversation, I got wind of some

things that have been going on with one of the biggest, and most financially successful, companies in our industry coming into a new market and abusing, in many deplorable and unspeakable ways, the club operators that are already established there. Right now, I have one clear report about the big company I'm referring to doing things to their competitors that you just would not believe. I will have to use all the writing talent I can muster to describe what has happened in a manner that won't make my readers slam the **CLUB INSIDER** shut in embarrassment! But, before I issue that report, I want to have more information on these same operators in hand, so my report will have real meat on the low-down and dirty things they have been doing. So, I am looking to you, my readers, for more factual reports of such abuse that may have been done to your club, no matter who the club organization doing the abusing is. Please inform me of any club operators who are out there doing unethical and unthinkable things to their competitors. Send your contact information and true written reports directly to me at Norm@clubinsideronline.com, and these events will be chronicled in a big and important upcoming report. Your identity does not have to be revealed, but I must have your contact information for verification purposes. In the past, **CLUB INSIDER** has found that factual written reports on such activities, *very carefully crafted with the truth and nothing but the absolute documented truth*, actually get the attention of the owners of these abusive operations and have caused these kinds of things to stop happening because the upper level management becomes informed about what their employees have actually been doing and will step in and stop the abuse. **STAY TUNED** folks!



Norm Cates

one of the nastiest and smelliest health clubs I've ever visited in my life! So, whatever has gone on with the organization since does not surprise me. In January, 2009, Peak Fitness entered into a consent decree with North Carolina Attorney General, Roy Cooper, that they would provide their members with 90 days notice before closing or notice "immediately upon learning that a club will close or transfer." Well folks, that hasn't worked, as the Peak Fitness in Knightdale, North Carolina closed with no notice and posted a sign on the door that notified the members that **Planet Fitness Knightdale** has taken on their memberships. The latest news is that the owner of Peak Fitness, **JEFF STEC**, has agreed, pursuant to an order by the North Carolina Attorney General, to cease selling cashed out deals and other cash up front programs until he secures adequate bonds for all his clubs. But, I don't think that's going to happen because no bond company in its right mind would issue such bonds after all the negative publicity Peak Fitness has gotten. **Color this one TOAST!** I predict this Peak Fitness chain will bite the dust by the end of the Summer, once again further damaging the reputation and consumer trust in our industry! **STAY TUNED!**

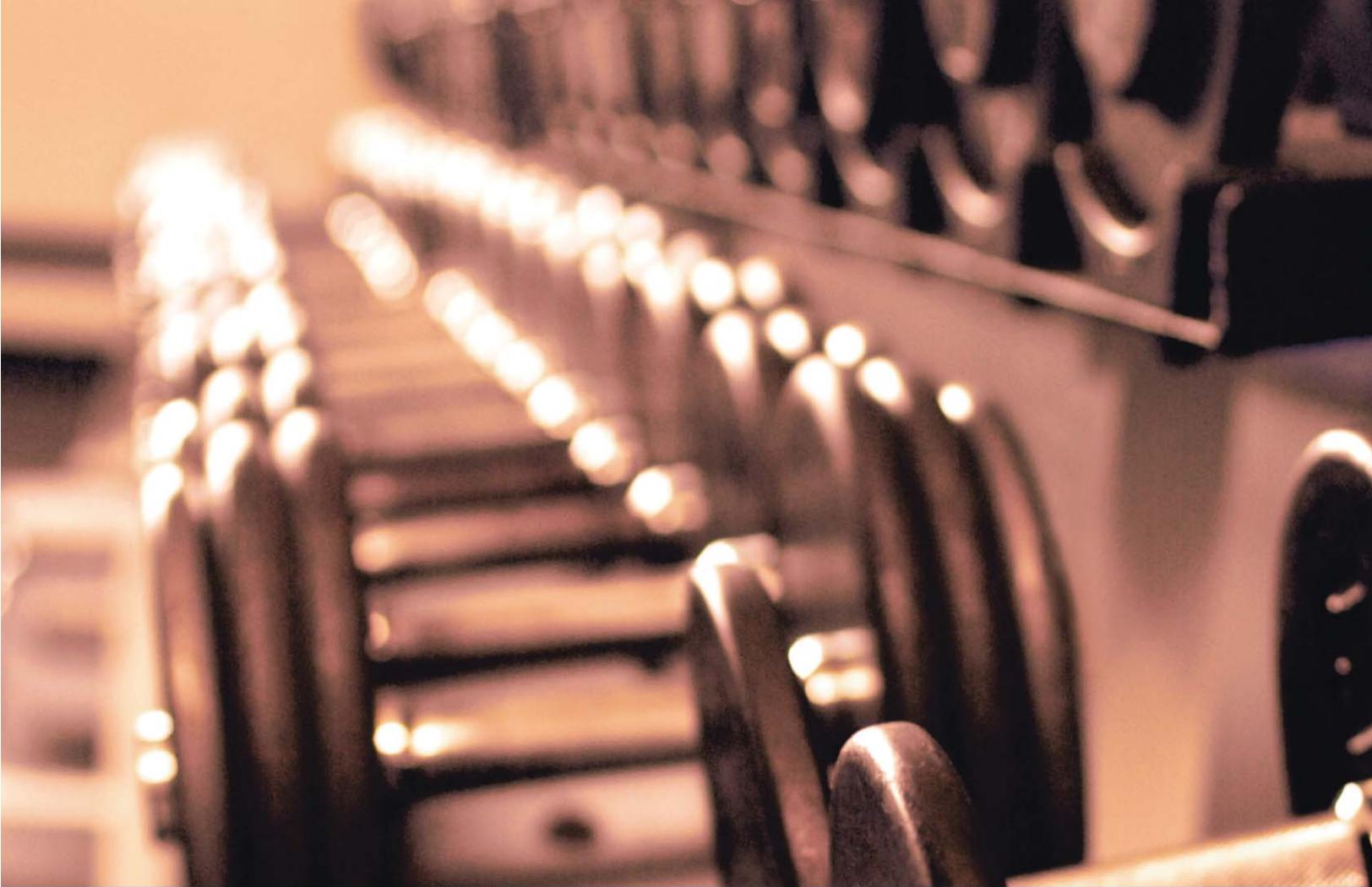
•Speaking of operators needing change, let me talk about **Peak Fitness** in Raleigh, North Carolina and their troubles. First, let me mention, in 2005, before they, Peak Fitness, acquired **Beyond Fitness**, I was on an East Coast road trip and visited one of their locations. The place was

•For those of you who do not know, I will be speaking at the **National Fitness Trade Journal Conference** on **August 18th**. The title of my presentation will be "**Why Building Trust in Your Community is the Key to a Great Future For Your**" (See *Norm's Notes* Page 8)

Thank You!

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...Insider Speaks

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Canada and the entire world. My affection for our industry, and the devotion of your lives to it, is not just because of what your clubs do for human bodies, but what they do for human minds.

Just An Infant Industry

Perspective is needed here. It is important to realize that the commercial health, racquet and sports club industry in the United States, Canada and around the world is just an *infant* industry. It is an industry that is really only about 70 years old. For this article, and in conversations, I refer to the commercial health and fitness club industry as being "about 70 years old." That's because Jack LaLanne opened his first gym in Oakland, California in 1936, and his was one of the first commercial operations to open.

Let me explain my perspective this way. Let's think about another industry for a moment. For this example, let's think about the hotel industry as I use an analogy I first came up with 15 years ago. How old is the hotel industry? If you are a believer that the "Inn was full," causing baby Jesus to be born in a manger in Bethlehem, a good argument can be made that the hotel industry is *at least 2,009 years old*. The often mentioned "Inn" was actually an early hotel some 2,009 years

ago. Imagine what the people in the hotel industry have learned since then. Consider how, as each century has passed, the hotel industry has changed and improved and evolved. My point is that our industry is just a baby. It's really new, and all the club owners and operators in business in the past and today have been experimenting, learning and trying to find the best path to follow.

All of you who make learning and the expansion of your industry knowledge a priority are leading the way in the learning and evolution process of our infant, still developing industry. The problem with learning in our industry, however, is that some people make an effort to learn and some people do not. Those who do learn, and carefully apply that learning, prosper. In more cases than not, they prosper to a greater extent than those who just stay in their box and don't study or travel to advance their knowledge. Those who don't learn will not advance as progressively. The future of this industry, and IHRSA, is all about learning.

The Purpose of IHRSA

(I)HRSA was founded in 1981 to help clubs in the United States and Canada professionalize their facilities and grow their businesses. Note, I wrote the United States and Canada. IHRSA was intended to be a trade Association for the

owners and operators of clubs in North America (Defined for the purpose of this article as the United States and Canada only). IHRSA is now fouled up because it is trying to do too much. It is trying to be something it was not created to be. It was *not* our intention that IHRSA would become what it has become today, a fractionalized and divided Association with clubs of all kinds in 74 countries. That's why I must write what I must write, something nobody else in this industry will write, here today.

Consider what IHRSA Board Member, Phil Wendel had to say in our **April 2009 CLUB INSIDER Cover Story**:

"I am honored to serve on IHRSA's Board, and as you mentioned, my term expires this June. I have learned much and met many wonderful people. During my tenure on the Board, we dealt with John McCarthy's departure and finding his successor, the European Coup, the Music Issue and revenue challenges because of the uncertain economic times, somewhat in 2009. The IHRSA team is absolutely tremendous and capably led by Joe Moore. It is an incredibly hardworking group of 70 people. Their principal sources of revenue are the annual convention, ad sales (CBI) and membership dues. I have strong positive feelings and strong negative feelings about IHRSA."

Zeroing in on comments that Phil Wendel made in his cover story interview that convinced this author that NOW is the time to pursue significant change in IHRSA, I quote him directly:

"3. The IHRSA team is stretched far too thin. We are simply trying to accomplish far too much with very limited resources. Annual revenue during my Board Tenure was in the \$15 to \$18 million dollar range. I ask these questions:

- Should we not determine our priorities and limit our focus?
- Can we truly be a worldwide association?
- What creates the most value for our membership?
- 4. If I were king for a day, I would spend virtually all of my energy on the value equation. Namely,
 - What things should IHRSA do to greatly benefit our Member Clubs and our Associate Members?
 - With so much wind at our

backs (publicity about obesity, etc.), shouldn't IHRSA's annual revenue be in the \$30 to \$50 million dollar range?

•What do we have to do to get there?

•Why should the NRA be 100 times more influential than IHRSA?

5. Here's where I see opportunities to grow our trade association and make our members (both Member Clubs and Associates Members) more successful in building their respective businesses:

A. We should have 100 million health and fitness club members in the United States, not 41 million. We're looking in all the wrong places. Today, women's-only clubs, convenience clubs and multisport clubs are fighting over those 41 million members on price, convenience and amenities. Are we not better off as club owners and IHRSA in trying to find the best ways to grow the industry? Imagine how much better things would be for all of us if a club designed to be profitable with 400 members had 600 or if multisport clubs with 12,000 members had 15,000! In my humble opinion, this will only be accomplished by growing from the 41 million Americans that have joined our clubs to 50 million, 60 million and beyond.

B. What do I mean by the value equation? At the end of the day, any business, in order to succeed, must meet three needs:

- You need to attract and retain your customers.
- You need to attract and retain excellent employees.
- The owner-groups need a nice return on their investment.

It's a classic win-win-win! Everyone might have a different definition for what a win-win-win is, though. For some, it may be price, and for others, it may be service.

C. Let's go back to the 'interested de-conditioned,' the 65% of Americans who go to bed every night saying 'I know how valuable exercise is, and I wish I participated more.' Let's call that the 'Blue Ocean' of opportunity for club owners and IHRSA. What do we need to do to successfully broaden the welcome mat so that we can move this enormous demographic from inactive lifestyles into our clubs?"

That folks, is Phil

Wendel's excellent way of asking the "Question of the Century" for our Industry. That question? How are we going to *build relationships* with the 260 million Americans who do not currently do business with our industry... *before* we attempt to sell them a membership? Or, stated another way: How are we going to build **TRUST** in the minds of millions and millions of Americans so that, someday, they will actually come to our clubs, take a tour and then become customers of our industry? For those who did not read it, check out my article, "**The Question of the Century**" on **Page #3** of our **March, 2009 Edition**, available online at www.clubinsideronline.com.

Additionally, in a follow-up email after he reviewed this article before publication, Phil Wendel provided me with two additional and important comments, and they are:

1. **Commenting on IHRSA's global efforts, Phil said,** "In what other industry do we find worldwide associations? Are we not unique in trying to reach out to the entire world? You are correct; language barriers, travel issues, 200+ different governments and limited resources truly challenge IHRSA to be all things to all people. This mentality of serving the world is driven primarily by convention attendance and the need for our exhibitors to have a broader audience.

2. **Commenting on building TRUST of our clubs in the minds of consumers, Phil said,** "Our colleges, over the past 30 years, have just begun to offer degree programs in our field (Health Promotion, Exercise Physiology, Sports Medicine, etc.). Clubs, until the last few years, didn't have places for these talented and knowledgeable college grads. The well-educated went into Corporate Wellness, Cardiac Rehab or Physical Therapy. Colleges, over the past decade, are now producing highly-qualified, young graduates who can engender trust among the 260 million Americans who have yet to enter our clubs. If we're not employing these people, someone else will. Why shouldn't clubs truly on the side of disease prevention attract these people and not hospitals and corporations that 'get it'? It is far less expensive to prevent than it is to cure.

(See *Insider Speaks* Page 7)

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...Insider Speaks

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Back to Basics at IHRSA

The truth is IHRSA needs to *go back to basics* and become the Trade Association it was created to be: **A Trade Association for the Owners and Operators of Health, Racquet and Sports Clubs in North America** (Defined earlier for the purpose of this article as the United States and Canada only).

●IHRSA needs to spend its time and its money helping North American clubs prosper. IHRSA should stop using its limited financial resources to serve as an Association for clubs in Europe, Asia, Latin America and other places around the world (an exception could be made for regions that increase IHRSA's assets and show a profit for the association). Some regions already have their own associations in place, and for those that don't, they can start their own. They should have their own association activities in their own countries, in their environments, following their laws and using their languages. They should then be invited to attend the annual IHRSA Convention and Trade Show.

Beyond that, IHRSA should serve the United States and Canada only. In reality, IHRSA could substantially increase membership penetration. If IHRSA returns to its roots, and once again becomes what it was founded to be, it is not unrealistic to think IHRSA can reach far higher membership levels.

●Slowly but surely, an ill-conceived and misdirected plan was hatched to start putting people from outside the United States and Canada on the IHRSA Board of Directors. This happened because some of the Board Members along the way had gotten this global mindset, and no one, including me, remembered to remind them that IHRSA was for North American Clubs.

So that North American club owners know and understand, several inappropriate board member choices have occurred over the past six years, and this has led to what Phil Wendel called in his cover story interview "the European Coup," an attempt by Europeans involved with IHRSA's Board to take over IHRSA's interests. Thanks to Joe

Moore, Phil Wendel and other IHRSA Board Members, this attempt was defeated.

IHRSA was not founded so that there would be competition on the Board of Directors for budget allocations for non-North American IHRSA Clubs around the world. It needs to stop.

"Trust North American Clubs"

"We're trapped by 50 years of bad mistakes," said Thomas Plummer. This is a comment the veteran Plummer published in his Blog on May 5, 2009, and we reprinted in our **May 2009 Edition of CLUB INSIDER**. Plummer's comments cut to the chase on the reality of how our industry has gotten to the point it is at today, *with 260 million Americans not doing business with our industry*.

IHRSA, and the industry at large, is vastly divided when it comes to the marketing messages consumers get from us. Moreover, there is no agreed upon and coordinated central marketing message from our industry to potential consumers, and there never has been.

Plain and simple, our industry needs a single, unified message that every club delivers as part of their overall marketing and advertising plan. Sort of like a "tagline," it would be a quick message that thousands of clubs pound into the minds of consumers over and over, year after year.

To me, no better words could be delivered over and over to the American and Canadian population than these, **"Trust North American Health Clubs!"** Such a campaign, produced by IHRSA, and in concert with its Member Clubs, could begin the badly needed consumer *reeducation* process that would teach consumers that the vast majority of our health and fitness club industry operators in business today provide educated and caring staff, safe and clean clubs and ethical and upstanding business practices and policies. This same communication effort can teach North American consumers that the vast majority of today's club operators are different, and do not do the things of the past. For example, things such as bait and switch advertising, high pressure sales and using retail installment contracts that result in a lawsuit if the member wishes to resign.

Because of the history of

our industry in the United States and Canada, our industry has, over 70 years, very successfully built a very poor relationship with the average American consumer, a relationship lacking **TRUST**. This lack of consumer **TRUST** costs our industry huge sums of money every day of the year. If we build **TRUST**, we will build new business with Americans and Canadians who do not do business with us now. Lacking **TRUST** will continue to mean lacking better business results.

Another important thing to note is that North American health and fitness clubs have a *much greater need* for a message of **TRUST** to our populations than do clubs in Europe, South America and Asia. That is because the health club industry in the United States and Canada is older than in those countries, and we have had 70 years to build up the negative reputation in the minds of many North American consumers. This is a negative reputation that all club owners must deal with and overcome everyday if our industry is to avoid the "churn" our industry is stuck in; the "churn" where we keep recycling each other's members; a "churn" that has kept our penetration level at about 14% for the past five years. The industry has not existed long enough in these other countries to build up the negative reputation level our industry has built in North America. The truth is our industry earned this negative reputation with the activities beginning with the earliest pioneers, and our industry continues, even today, to be tarnished by such scandals as the steroid dealer story in Texas and the Peak Fitness Clubs problems in North Carolina, both breaking late last month (See **Norm's Notes on Page #4**).

I will admit there is one big problem with this proposed plan! Guess what that is? Aha! You guessed it. Not all North American health and fitness clubs possess the attributes described, nor do all North American health and fitness clubs deserve the **TRUST** of North American consumers! The truth does hurt, but especially if you're one of those clubs that comes nowhere near the mark needed to engender **TRUST** in the minds of North American consumers.

To the rescue come IHRSA's Joe Moore and Dr. Art Curtis who are working on the challenge of a completely voluntary industry accreditation

and certification for clubs. This move took a real push by Joe Moore and some board members and has not come easily for IHRSA, if the following comment by Phil Wendel is any indication, "I've seen, in my four years, *IHRSA and the Board run away from anything meaningful in the realm of certification. In doing that, we are appealing to the lowest common denominator rather than excellence.*"

Once this new qualifying system has been developed and launched, the certification sticker on the door of a club will begin to actually mean something to consumers, and moreover, a club will not receive the industry-wide marketing support suggested unless they have earned their certification and the sticker to display.

In time, the need for a unified industry message of **TRUST** will begin to be satisfied. Slowly at first, **TRUST** in the minds of consumers will grow as more and more clubs become certified. Then, our industry can truly begin to fight back against the negative reputation our industry has earned.

The central IHRSA message for all Americans can become:

American consumers can **TRUST** the people in our organization because we are an Approved and Certified organization.

The Certified Club Seal attached to the front door of IHRSA clubs in North America will then really begin to count. If an American or Canadian walks in the door of an IHRSA Club, it would mean:

1. The club will be clean.
2. The Staff will be friendly and helpful.
3. The club will be safe.
4. The Staff will be friendly and helpful.
5. The club will be FUN.
6. The Staff will be friendly and helpful.
7. The club will provide results for its members.
8. The Staff will be friendly and helpful.
9. The club will be well managed.
10. The Staff will be friendly and helpful.

The Messenger

Each of us stepping up and speaking out for our industry to the American public with this central message of **TRUST** would be the last order of business. Once IHRSA and our industry has come to grips with the facts presented here today, we must join and unite together in a mass effort to turn our industry into a winner for North American club owners and North American consumers alike. United, IHRSA and our industry can stand proud and prosper.

(Norm Cates, Jr. is a 35-year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. Cates was the Founder and is now in his 16th year as the Publisher of CLUB INSIDER. He was IHRSA's 1st President, and a Co-founder of the Association with Rick Caro and five others, in 1981. In March, 2001, IHRSA honored Cates with its DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award, one of IHRSA's highest honors. Cates may be reached by phone at 770-850-8506 or email at: Norm@clubinsideronline.com)



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...Norm's Notes

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Club" (Be sure to read my article **"Insider Speaks"** this month entitled, **"THRSA, A House Divided,"** on Page #3).

• **RICK CARO** has joined the **Parisi Franchise Systems Board of Directors**. Bill Parisi has done a great job with his company and reportedly has close to 50 clubs with the **Parisi Speed School** installed, and I've heard nothing but good things about the Parisi Speed Schools. If your club is located in or near bedroom communities with lots of families with high school or college athletes, your club might be an excellent candidate for a Parisi Speed School. They can become great add-on profit centers for clubs.

• The human dynamo, **CASEY CONRAD**, has announced a nearly coast-to-coast **U.S. Tour** to identify what club operators are doing to beat the economic crisis. Her trip will begin on July 27th, departing from Wakefield, RI, going West through Pennsylvania, Indiana, Iowa, Nebraska, Colorado and Wyoming; turning South through Idaho, Utah and into Arizona; then heading back East through Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Tennessee; and finally, heading back North through Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut, home to Rhode Island. In all, the trip will take 6 weeks to complete, and Casey hopes to visit as many clubs as possible. Casey has established a website, www.VisitOurClub.com, to help select the clubs she will visit, so be sure to go to there and arrange to have your club on Casey's visit list. Casey will be giving every club she visits a **training package valued at \$1,295**, next month, you will hear from Casey in **CLUB INSIDER** with a terrific article entitled, **"How Technology Improves Referral Success AND Saves Money."**

• **JASON WEST**, the owner of a **Gold's Gym** in Columbus, Georgia, formerly the **North Columbus Athletic Club**, tells me he now has 60% of his approximately 500-person daily traffic attending his **Body Training Systems Group Exercise** classes. He also said his EFT has jumped \$17,000 in the last year, and he attributes a lot of his success to BTS.

• **Cybox** has built and introduced custom-made pink treadmills to

help raise funds for **The Breast Cancer Research Foundation (BCRF)**. Check out the **News Release and Photo** on **Page #26**.

• Welcome back to **Sports and Fitness Insurance Corporation** and **JENNIFER URMSTON LOWE** as a **CLUB INSIDER Advertiser**. Best wishes also to **BOBBIE SIMPSON**, and my friend, **JOHN URMSTON**.

• **ReachLocal.com...** Have you heard of it? Well, the folks at **Sport and Health**, a chain of 24 upscale **Washington, D.C.** area clubs have very successfully used **ReachLocal** to generate **13,234 visits, 910 phone calls, 200 emails and 486 free trial signups** from an investment of **\$20,000!** That's an average of **\$833 for 551 leads per club**, a cost of **\$1.51 per lead!** I learned about **ReachLocal** by having the energetic **KELLY DECOLLIBUS** come by my **Exhibit at Club Industry East** in Boston. She was there to meet and speak with club owners and operators, but she didn't have an exhibit space. We chatted, and I decided to invite her to staff my exhibit on **YouTube** that Kelly directed me to, I decided to write this note so you will know about it. You should definitely check out the video, featuring **NANCY TERRY, Senior Vice President of Marketing, Sport and Health Clubs**. Just go to www.YouTube.com and search for **ReachLocal**. You will see the **Sport and Health** video as the first item. Kelly's territory is in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire and Rhode Island, and you can contact her for help in those states and in every State in the country. You can reach Kelly by email at kdecollibus@reachlocal.com or by phone at (617) 340 - 4700 Ext. 110.

• **RANDY IVEY**, a great guy and friend for years, has left **Fiserv Club Solutions** (formerly **CheckFree**) after 12 years with the company. Randy left **Fiserv** after the company shifted its marketing work to the **Campbell-Mithun Agency**. We wish Randy, his wife, **JOYCE**, and son, **BRANDON**, the very best in the future. Randy is a terrific "people person" and marketing professional. Any company, in or out of our industry, would do well with Randy leading the way in

their marketing department. You can contact Randy at (281) 376 - 1270 or (281) 788 - 9347.

• **HELEN ROCKEY** has been named the new **Chief Operating Officer of World Gym International**, and we wish Helen and the **JOYCE J. CAMMILLERI Family** well. Board Chair, **Joyce Cammilleri**, said, "We are thrilled to welcome Helen onto the team and can't wait to begin working with her as we strive to transform World Gym."

• **Minton's Sportsplex**, owned by **MIKE MINTON** in **Texarkana, Texas**, has just completed a huge, **\$7 million, 35,000 square-foot expansion**, and boy oh boy, what Mike's done is going to help his club dominate the **Texarkana, Texas/Arkansas** market forever, after they've already dominated it for 20 years! In fact, at one point in time, Mike had **ZERO** commercial competition in his city because they had all closed! Mike reminds me more and more of the legendary, and one and only, **RED LERILLE** in **Lafayette, Louisiana**. Red, Mr. America in 1963, opened his club in 1963 and vowed to make at least one improvement in his club every month. Now, Red's done that for 46½ years! Mike Minton, a former **University of Pittsburgh** football player, who somehow found his way to **Texarkana, Texas**, has really done it now. At the cost of \$7 million, **Minton's Sportplex** has gone from 3 to 6 acres, 89 to 300 paved parking spaces, added a new, two-story fitness center with a new lobby, day spa, café, massage therapy rooms, family locker rooms, luxurious adult locker rooms, saunas, steam and towel service. They also now have a new state-of-the-art sports performance training area and football field, and Mike's not done yet! Right now, their old fitness building is under renovation to become a new **Health and Wellness Preschool** that will be ready to open by August 29th. His last phase of work will gut their existing gym and renovate the area for an adult sports center. Mike utilized a combination of economic development financing tools, including an SBA long-term, low-interest mortgage and an economic development revolving loan with a 3% fixed rate for 7 years for their equipment. Mike Minton is a real leader in our industry and has built an awful lot of **TRUST** in the **Texarkana** community during his 20 years, and this move will cause

his **"TRUST Quotient"** to soar even higher! Congratulations on your amazing expansion, Mike!

• Speaking of **RED LERILLE**, Red will be one of the speakers on the **August 18th** morning agenda at **Wally Boyko's 28th Annual National Fitness Conference and Trade Show in Reno, Nevada**, and he will be delivering a presentation I have seen before but can't wait to see again. Red calls it his **"Five Strategies For Personal and Professional Success,"** and I can tell you flatly and truthfully that seeing and hearing Red Lerille give this speech is going to be worth *any expense* you might have to incur to be there. If you are anywhere near **Reno, Nevada** --by "anywhere near," I mean a 3 or 4-hour drive or flight-- you should set aside **August 18-20th** to attend this event. You just need to be there! In addition to **Red Lerille** on the 18th, the next day, you will hear from another "one and only" kind of man in our industry, **BILL PEARL**, four-time **Mr. Universe**, and in my book, the greatest historian in our industry, will speak on **Wednesday, August 19th** at 9:30AM, and his presentation will be called, **"The Pictorial and Dialog History of Physical Fitness."** I have seen Bill's presentation, sponsored by **Life Fitness**, and I can't wait to see it again!

Jumping back to **Tuesday, August 18th**, let me also mention the presentation yours truly is going to give. It will be called, **"Why Building Trust in Your Community is the Key to a Great Future for Your Club."** I am going to **"Tell-it-like-it-is"** about our industry's history and why very few Americans actually trust our industry. I will discuss the fact that we, as an industry, must begin to change our ways to those that will build confidence and **TRUST** in the American consumer's mind. Otherwise, thousands of club owners are going to see their businesses continue to flounder as they continue to try to get more members from those already on membership roles elsewhere, instead of creating new members from the 260 million Americans who are not doing business with us now.

Check out www.nationalfitnessradeshow.com, and you will also see that **MIKE CHAET** and **STEVE LUNDIN**, Co-authors of the new book, **Loops**, will speak, plus **DONNA KRECH** and many more experts including **Fiserv Club Solutions' SCOTT BURGESS**,

and **JEFFREY KELLER** will be making a presentation. This event is an **AMAZING DEAL** because the **Seminars** are **FREE**, the **Trade Show** is **FREE**, the **Awards Banquet**, where **MARK MASTROV, MICHAEL ROJAS, SCOTT FRASCO, JOHN SALVITTI** and **JOHN GUELZOW** will be honored, is **FREE**, the **Ms. Fitness USA** and **World contests** are **FREE** and the terrific **Grand Sierra Resort and Casino**, with a child-friendly outdoor play world, is only **\$79 per night!** You can't beat this deal, and you'll learn a lot and have a great time. Please make plans to join us in **Reno, Nevada** August 18-20th, and cash in on **WALLY** and **MESHELLE BOYKO's** generosity! Check out **Wally's Ad** on **Page #29**.

• **Fitness Management Magazine**, formerly published by **PETE BROWN**, is no longer published in print or online, but **Pete's Athletic Business Magazine** is going strong and making plans for their annual **Athletic Business Conference and Trade Show in Orlando, Florida** at the **Orange County Convention Center, December 2-5th**.

• **ANDY GRAHAM** has joined **Fabiano Designs** as the new **Director of Sales and Business Development**. Andy has 20+ years in the fitness business with **Cybox** and **Free Motion**. Long-time veteran architect, **RUDY FABIANO**, continues to create wonderful environments that will deliver fun and enjoyable experiences for your members. If you're building a new club or renovating and renewing your facility, contact **Andy** at (973) 746 - 5100.

• Thanks to **MS. DIANE BASKIN**, the Mother of our friend, **JULIE MAIN**, who passed away on **May 4th**, as she helped me realize I had made a writing error in the text of the cover story about Julie last month when I wrote Santa Monica when I meant to write Santa Barbara. In any case, thank you Ms. Baskin for bringing this to my attention and for your very kind words about the **CLUB INSIDER** coverage of this world's loss of a great human being. And, to Julie in Heaven, I say, **"We all love and miss you, Julie!"**

• **God Bless You, Your Family, Your Club(s)!** And, very importantly, **God Bless Our Troops, Airmen and Sailors.**

AUGUST 21

1989

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21 August 2009

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...Longevity Fitness

continued from page 3

most interestingly, they made it clear how much they love Steve and Bonnie. I believe this is interesting, and quite a statement, because most members or program participants will usually say they love the facility and the experience they have had while inside its walls, but in this case, each member specifically made a point to tell me how much they loved the Pfisters personally because of what they had helped them accomplish.

That is the ultimate end result as an owner or operator, but getting there is the challenge. After reading this story, though, I believe you will find many new ways to help build relationships in your community, leverage the power of programming in a time where membership sales may be declining, market your facility and programs more effectively, and above all, remember why you love this industry and how that love can help you make more of a difference in your member's lives. This is not to mention that the Pfisters' story will simply give you a good feeling. So, let's see what Steve and Bonnie had to say about their experiences with Longevity Fitness.

An Interview With Steve and Bonnie Pfister

CLUB INSIDER (C.I.) - Please tell us about yourselves. How long have you been married? And, how did each of you get started in the fitness industry?

Bonnie Pfister (BP): Well, we just celebrated our 15th anniversary last week. When we got engaged, we went down to West Palm Beach to ask one of his old buddies to be in the wedding,

and we looked at a health club that was just opening. We looked in the windows, and that's when we first talked about what we wanted to do together. We began dreaming and envisioning the club we wanted someday. Steve even drew a picture of what the club would look like. That was 1994, and ironically, it looks very similar to our women's club today.

As for background, I worked for my first health club when I was 18. Then, I went in the salon business shortly after. I went from being an employee of a salon to owning a salon while Steve was in school. While he was studying exercise and nutrition at Florida State University, we took the American College of Sports Medicine course together at the college. He later got accepted to physical therapy school and graduated at the top of his class. The entire time he was in school, he was training, teaching aerobics and working at a physical therapy center while I was running the salon. We thought he'd have to practice first before we could go into the health club business, but that was not the case. The week he took his final exam was the week we got our first opportunity to get into the business, and we've never looked back.

On the Longevity Clubs

C.I. - Tell us about your first club, Longevity Fitness Club & Spa for Women and how you came about operating it?

BP - Rich Barattini owned Longevity Spa Lady and invited us down to look at the club. We didn't know what to expect, but we ended up partnering with him, and that is how it all started. He has been very gracious to allow the club to take on our personality because we have completely

revamped the whole club. We have to give it to him, he has been in business for a long time, and he was able to take a backseat and let us have fun. It was so neat to be able to come in and do whatever we wanted and whatever we envisioned. He didn't hold us back at all.

We are close to 15,000 square feet here, and for a women's-only club, I believe we have a large membership base for what we offer. We have 60 aerobics classes a week, not including our boot camp program and its classes. We have a spa area, too, where we have whirlpools, steam sauna, dry heat sauna and offer hot stone massage and sugar scrubs. We had always talked about combining health and beauty, so this particular club, Longevity for Women, was probably the first time we were like, 'Wow this is exactly what we've dreamed about for so long.'

C.I. - Let me ask the same question about your second club, Longevity Max?

BP - When we heard that a World Gym was for sale, Steve and I decided to go for it. We worked so hard on the Longevity brand that we just decided to carry it over to the new club even though they are totally different clubs. We knew we were buying a dying club. It was a World Gym with very few members. It was just really dead, with no energy or atmosphere. We still have a lot of things we want to do with the club, but what we felt like it needed immediately was personality. It needed more customer service and more relationships.

Steve Pfister (SP) - It just suffered. It was almost like the moment you walked in you did your own thing. There was no accountability as far as checking in and making sure everybody was taken care of and got what they needed. It was always clean, and the basics were there, but there was no customer service, no friendly atmosphere and no go-to person you felt like you could go to and get something taken care of.

BP - The two guys who owned it were the nicest guys. We're friends, and they're still members there, but it wasn't their passion. Like they said, 'We took it so far, and now it's your time to take it the rest of the distance. It's what you do; it's not what we do.' I think that's a big difference, especially in this economy; people that can



Pilates Room at Longevity for Women

succeed or hang in there are the people doing what they love.

C.I. - To follow up, I read on your website that, because you had such great success with Longevity for Women, you had gotten requests for a club that allowed men.

BP - When we first came to town, Longevity Spa Lady offered the basics, with no personal training or some of the newer programs. It was kind of a club from the 'spa days,' and being the newbies in town, we wanted everyone to know we were taking things up a notch. We wanted to really get into the community and let people know we knew what we were doing and that we were passionate about what we do. We weren't just business people coming in to paint the club a new color and slap a new name on it. More than just offering a gym membership, we wanted to change lives, and we wanted to build relationships. We worked really hard to build our reputation in the community, investing in people and building trust. We personally put ourselves out there a lot. After making that your mission over the years, eventually, after we started impacting women's lives, the word got out and husbands started approaching us, saying they wish they had Longevity for men.

It's not that there aren't other clubs in town that offer the same service or anything like that, it's they just know us or know someone else who knows us and trust our name. So, here came the opportunity to do a coed gym. Longevity Max is the only fitness center here that's not a mega health club. It's probably the only one in town that is affordable fitness, so it was a good fit, especially in this economy.

C.I. - Please describe for our

readers the interesting market in which your clubs are located.

BP - Within walking distance is a large sports club; a mile away is a family fitness center with an emphasis on kids, and there's another women's fitness, so we are really all within a mile radius of each other --that's five clubs all in one section of town. The neat thing is we all have really good niches here, so if everybody stays in their niches, we're all fine, but it is pretty wild to be this close to each other.

SP - It's weird because Vero Beach is actually a little farther west and that is really where all the growth is going to occur. We're crowded here, and I think, eventually, we will see the same thing happen out there. That's the idea for us. Part of buying World Gym was to poise ourselves to get ready for that.

On Internet Marketing and Beyond

C.I. - In my research for this story, I reviewed a dozen or so of your marketing emails from this year alone about Longevity and the programs you offer, not to mention the vast amount of information available via your multiple club and personal websites (See Sidebar on Page #12); how important have these efforts been? Additionally, what other mediums do you use to successfully penetrate the crowded market you are in?

BP - Our website is my baby, and we point everyone to our website because I feel the website is a safe place for consumers to get information. That's why we have so much online. Sometimes, I think it might be information overload, but if somebody is (See Longevity Fitness Page 12)



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...Longevity Fitness

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really thinking about joining a gym, I want him or her to be able to get a feel of the personality of our clubs. I want it to be an extension of us, where they are meeting us, hearing us, learning from us, and seeing what's going on inside and outside the club. By the time they get here, they should already know what the club looks like and whether they feel our club would be a good fit for them.

I feel there are a lot of websites that are very dry with only basic information. Sometimes, they're just 'stamp' sites where you just fill in your logo and club hours and say, 'Contact us.' It's a real downer for somebody that is really seeking information. They are seeking help. For people that come to the club, I kind of always relate it to church; when one comes to a new church, they are a little nervous. They are what I would call 'seekers.' They are coming for information, for help, for guidance and all these things.

I don't know about you, but when I think about needing to go to the gym, it's after I ate too much or after I couldn't get in my jeans, but it's at home. When people are thinking about it, at that moment, we are able to offer them hope and a connection of some sort online. I've actually heard people say they've spent hours on our site. That is thrilling to me. It means we are making a connection, and that's what it's all about, whether in, or out of the club.

Some people are a little worried about giving out too much information. Now, we live in the information age, so I want to give them as much information as I can because

The Websites of Longevity Fitness

www.longevityclubs.com

www.longevitymaxfitness.com

www.stevepfister.com

www.bonniepfister.com

it's expected. Back in the '70s, after scams of pre-selling gyms that never opened and stories of high-pressure sales, health clubs got a bad rap. So, people are now often nervous about being pushed into a membership or being lied to, and the more you can set them at ease, the better. Although I don't list every single membership we offer, I offer a few examples and stay away from tricky sales gimmicks that would give anyone a bad taste in their mouth for fitness. If you really love the industry, you'll realize their experience with you may be the only experience they have with a gym if it's a bad one, so it's important to run an honest, positive business. We represent the industry, not just our own health club, so it's important that our website is an accurate reflection of who we really are and what we really do.

Additionally, our other primary medium is newspaper print. We are a small town, so print works really well for us here. We also do a fitness tip of the day on a local television station and some radio. Once again, we are trying to get information and our name out there. I mix untraditional marketing with an emphasis on tips and sending a message, together with traditional marketing, focusing on specials or programs. I have to admit, untraditional marketing is risky and takes time. It's not like people flock to the gym just because you gave them a useful fitness tip.

Not everyone is ready to join a gym, but when they are, that style marketing pays off. Joining a gym is a big decision. They are going to visit us more than, let's say, their favorite restaurant. They're going to see us 3 to 7 days a week, so it is personal.

C.I. - When visiting your websites, it's hard to miss the great videos, and specifically on my mind is your video previewing your boot camp. Can you inform our readers about this program and its great success? Additionally, what other programs focusing on functional training do you offer, and what do you see as the balance between those and "traditional" health club training (free-weights, single-joint machines, stationary cardio, etc)?

BP - With the boot camp, it was such a new concept, we wanted to do a video of it so our members kind of knew what to expect. It's Steve's baby really. He had a vision of the type of program he wanted to run and the program we have today is everything he envisioned and more.

SP - We had been toying around with the idea of doing a task-oriented program. Even though we didn't really follow any other boot camp programs, we heard through the grapevine that boot camps were starting to be this big thing.

BP - After Steve was chosen to be the host and trainer for ABC TV's weight loss reality show, 'Fat March,' we had so many people say, 'where can I sign up?' We realized, in America, especially with reality television, people want their butts kicked. They are like, 'Sign me up. Put me through it. I don't care; I'll walk 595 miles to lose weight.' People need more than just a gym membership. They want their butts kicked, and they will do whatever it takes if they know they'll get results. People are realizing, with the help of reality television, if you do it right and you are pushed, you will get results. Then, we started brainstorming.

SP - About the time we started putting together our boot



Longevity Fitness Boot Camp Trainers

camp program, Country Music Television (CMT) was doing a casting for boot camp instructors, and Bonnie and I went out there. We both were the first pick of the producers, but the network didn't want a married couple to go against each other, so Bonnie decided she would bow out because she knew I was really passionate about boot camp training (Bonnie added, "He was in the Army, and if we're going to go solo, I'd much rather him do the show).

BP - We actually ran our first boot camp while he was gone (for the show), and I was freaking out because we had a hundred people signed up. I'm solo by myself, and here we are, this is the first time we had ever done it. He had trained all the trainers, and in his mind, the way he wanted it, it wasn't just a workout. He wanted it to be an experience; camo, whistles, yelling, 'in-your-face maggots,' and it had the whole feel. It was a role that he wanted them to play, and we did not want it to be a wussy thing. This is not a typical workout; they can get aerobics any day.

SP - There has to be strain, even to the point where they could potentially break bones and pull muscles. It's the risk they take for climbing a wall and doing open environment training, but it's a total stress relief.

BP - Steve came back home to

lead the kickoff, the very first day of boot camp. I thought to myself, no one is going to sign up for this, Steve's going to scare them all away. He was so tough, the training was so tough, and although we had a few people lose their stomach, they stuck it out. We even had women balling through every burpee, mountain climber and push-up and still decided to commit to the six-week program.

I don't think women are part of something that's really powerful and gives them confidence. A lot of women have never experienced being on a team or being truly challenged. The way we built the program is that we have different teams that are all working together for the greatest weight loss percentage. They train together, cry together, and encourage each other. Since it is tough, when they are done, it's a huge sense of accomplishment, and they all experienced it together. If it wasn't as tough as it is, I think they wouldn't be nearly as proud to be a part of it.

Once Steve came back, he jumped right back to leading the new boot camp program and even brought the actual obstacle course from the TV show with him. When the show airs, hundreds of ladies will be able to say they 'jumped over that wall' or 'crawled under that.' It has definitely been a nice addition and has allowed the members to share part of Steve's TV experience. (See *Longevity Fitness* Page 14)



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...Longevity Fitness

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SP - As for functional training, I really feel the bodybuilder days are over and the new trend in fitness is conditioning. The new school of thought is that, if you are fit, you'll look fit. One of our newest programs besides boot camp is based on Mixed Martial Arts training. With UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championships) growing in popularity, people enjoy training like a fighter and getting strong while learning how to fight or defend themselves. All in all, offering different training styles makes fitness fun, and before you know it, you've finished all the drills, and you can't believe your workout is already done.

C.I. - On both of your clubs' websites, the community is often mentioned. Can you share with our readers your outreach efforts?

BP - We try to do as many community events as possible. We host the Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours events, do as many health fairs as possible, speak to a variety of different social clubs and sponsor charity events. One of our favorite things to do is leading the warmups for local relays, races and charity walks like March of Dimes, Alzheimer's Walk to Remember, Breast Cancer Awareness Walk and Relay for Life for the American Cancer Society. It might be as little as a five-minute window where Steve warms them up, but they get a little glimpse of our personality and they get to have a little fun. Steve is very entertaining, and when he's doing a warm-up, I think it's refreshing for people to see a guy tell jokes and make fitness fun. It also helps remove the intimidation factor that often follows the industry. Even though we might not get to meet everyone there, they get introduced to us. It's just another way to build relationships.

I also write a fitness column for our local newspaper, which has been a lot of fun for me. I love to write and enjoy encouraging and educating people. Plus, it has given people the opportunity to get to know me a little better. I not only share useful information, but I can get more personal and use myself as an example, sharing my own struggles to stay fit. It's funny how people are relieved when they hear that we have our own set of issues. It's just

another way to bridge the gap between the fit and the unfit. I have to admit though, it's trying sometimes because we will go to a restaurant and total strangers will be like, 'You better be eating a salad.' It makes it very hard to go to an ice cream shop. Ha!

We also do a lot with schools. We just took some of our members from the coed club who do power team stuff, like bending bars over their heads, to an elementary school. The kids were so cute; they just loved it. We were supposed to 'pump them up' for the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) pep rally. Steve also does kickboxing demos for PE classes to show them fitness can be fun, and it's not all about running on a treadmill. This year, my mom, sister and I spoke at the county PTA meeting about being proactive with their kids and fighting childhood obesity. Since my mom recently lost a hundred pounds and my sister lost fifty pounds, we were challenging the parents to take action. We have an opportunity to make a difference in our communities, and in many ways, that starts with our kids.

Since our passion is education, we put a heavy emphasis on offering diet and fitness education online as well. If people can go to our sites, we can touch their lives, even if they don't join our gym. When they decide to join, hopefully, they will come to us. Or, if they can't afford it, but they know somebody who can, they will tell them about us. There is so much the general public is not very educated on when it comes to health and fitness, so that is our whole mission, really, *to educate and encourage people; touch them.*

On the Economy

C.I. - I am sure this next subject is on the minds of all of our readers; how has the economy affected your business in recent months? Additionally, what efforts have you undertaken to specifically combat these uncertain economic times, such as your \$1 sale?

BP - Well, the Dollar Days sale was a blast. We had all kinds of specials for \$1. You could take a class for \$1, get a body composition for \$1, buy one training session and get another one for \$1, join for \$1, all kinds of stuff. It made fitness affordable, even if it was just affordable for one day (like working out for \$1). It gave us an opportunity, once

again, to meet more people and build more relationships. We had a great response from both guests and members.

SP - There is a point where you have diminishing returns on trying to trim the fat. You want to bring payroll down for what's not producing, but not to where it starts to affect customer service or starts to affect sales. It's just making us be more careful about where we are putting the money, even in advertising. We are tracking our advertising a little bit heavier so that we are not putting money into radio if it's not working or television and some of the other stuff. If it's not working, we have pulled our money out. We are not as experimental right now with our advertising.

The same with shifts, it used to be more comfortable to have our heavy hitter sales people here, and we relied on them. Now, Bonnie and I are following up ourselves, personally, making sure this person got a letter, or this person got a thank you, or this person got a tour, so it's a little bit more hands-on. Since we are already here, the shifts where we didn't need people, we are cutting them out as well, so payroll has come down to a point where, really, a lot of shifts do fall on us. We have to actually work the shift, do the sales ourselves and do a lot of follow up. So, it's not as comfortable as it used to be, but it's what's needed right now.

We are also relying on a lot on programs. Although memberships seem to be on the decline, programs, for us, are on the rise. But with programs, it's not like selling to a member that is going to be serviced throughout the year, you are selling to somebody that you have to physically be there for and follow up with and put them through a program. So, it's a little bit more hands-on and takes a little more work, but you know, so what? So, we're working a little harder... If you really love what you are doing, it's kind of fun. You forget, when you get back in here and start working behind the counter, you're teaching classes and that kind of thing, and you come back to it after a while, it's nice to come back and get your hands dirty again. It's necessary right now, so I am glad that we are stuck doing something that we absolutely love to do.

BP - For me, I think the neat thing about programs is how it has built



Alzheimer's Walk to Remember Warmup

more relationships. Obviously, you can't be here 24/7, so you are not going to meet every member that comes in the door. With our boot camp, it's given us an opportunity to personally meet all those people because we are personally involved. In some way, they are going to interact with us personally, whether we lead a boot camp class, teach a seminar, answer a question, take their picture or correspond by email. They know we are involved. It's more of an intimate opportunity to be connected with your members. It's like, once they go through boot camp, it's almost like that badge of honor; once a boot camper, always a boot camper. That connection has been made. With the six weeks we have invested in them, they've also invested in us and the other people in the program. When they're done, they have friends they never had. It's really bizarre watching it happen. People I would have thought were their life-long friends, they met in boot camp. They continue on. They have workout partners now, and they have a family. Their life has changed. They have the confidence now; they're stronger and feeling better than ever. I wasn't prepared for that part of the experience. I knew we could get them to lose weight. I knew it would change their lives physically, but I didn't realize how much it would change them emotionally, mentally and on a friendship level.

Half our boot campers repeat. They cycle in and out, and the other half is always new. We have a group of people that have been through it six times, some have been through it three or four times, and they are taking a break this summer and will do it again. It's an affordable way they

can get training, and they can get support and accountability. With the economy the way it is, people that can't afford personal training are paying a smaller amount of money for a larger group of accountability, programs and experience. Back during the depression, entertainment was thriving. In a sense, we are in the entertainment industry. You shouldn't just have a class, you should have an experience. You sweat, and you burn calories, but you are supposed to leave with some kind of feeling. You have to either provide them with an experience of being entertained, or you have to provide them with a relationship where they want to come back and see you. A combination of both is even better. In a bad economy, people should be getting better service. It's not just about better deals. We should all be on our game. The average gym is getting more exposed. It's definitely been one of those things where our weak areas have been exposed, and like Steve said, it was more comfortable to have extra staff; we could afford it. The economy should make us all step it up.

In this economy, people don't want to take risks. They are going to invest money where they heard people get results, where they heard they got good treatment. I think with us, and the relationship we have with our community, through boot campers and word-of-mouth, people aren't blinking an eye at dropping money on boot camp (\$350-400). They get a lot for their money. We average between 80 and 90 boot campers every time, and this is our 5th one this year. We have boot camp, senior boot camp, yoga boot camp and youth boot camp, so the programming has (*See Longevity Fitness Page 16*)

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...Longevity Fitness

continued from page 14

been a really successful addition, especially during this economy. It's interesting how people will be willing to fork out more money up front, rather than cheaper monthly dues if they know they'll get a good return on their investment. It's all about helping your members get results, not just taking their money.

On Balance and the Future

C.I. - You are two very successful fitness professionals with diverse resumes; how have you balanced marriage and working together?

BP - What balance? Ha! Honestly, balancing work and marriage is the hardest part. I'm a workaholic, and although Steve puts in serious hours of physical work where he trains, teaches and leads boot camps in between running the place, he's able to "turn it off" when he gets home. Not me. I'll work all day and find myself continuing my work at home, so we've had to set boundaries at home to help

us balance the two. I still haven't mastered it, but I'm trying.

Even if we are able to mentally turn it off, as all owners know, you're always on call. Plus, it's like our work is also our hobby, so it all seems to blend together. What I have learned, the hard way I might add, is that I have to put our marriage first. Besides, what would Longevity be if we couldn't do it together? Like a family, the foundation is our marriage, so we have to protect it with everything we have. When we're strong, our company is strong. Easy to say, hard to do, but we're all a work in progress, right?

As for balancing our duties at work, that's easy. We have opposite strengths and roles at work. I do all the marketing, PR, website and creative stuff while Steve does all the books, directs the programs and manages the staff. He's also the fitness guru. I always tease that he's the brains behind it all. He'll develop a program, and it's my job to get people to show up. We have a great respect for one another and what we both

contribute to our companies.

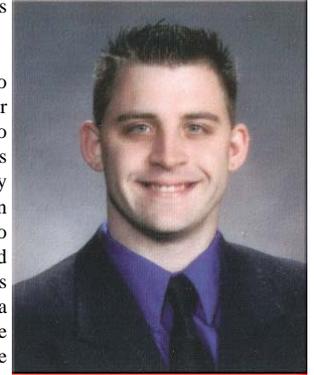
C.I. - You have created two great fitness facilities, you are changing the lives of people in your community, and you have followers across the country because of your PR efforts via the web, not to mention having a few television shows, what's next for you two?

SP - We'd love to do more clubs and keep branching out, but we're open to anything. Whether we grow these two clubs or grow in numbers, growth is the goal.

BP - Of course we have dreams and goals, we are dreamers, that's just who we are. It's funny though, I would have never guessed we'd be involved in reality TV, so I'm learning to dream bigger. I'd like to write a book, and we want to do fitness videos. I would also love to see our boot camp program be implemented at other clubs across the country. As long as we're going forward, that's what makes us happy. I just can't stand to stay still, and we love a challenge. Truth is, I can take very little credit for where we are now. God

has just been really good. That's all I can say.

In closing, I want to thank Steve and Bonnie for their time and contributions to this story and our industry. As you can see, they have really developed something special in Longevity Fitness. To those who are members of their clubs and participants in their numerous programs, the club is more than a club. It is their third place where they can escape some of the stresses of daily life, while also getting more fit and healthy. Is your club the third place in your members' lives? It takes time to develop such a report with a community, but once you do, issues like retention become a little less serious, even during tougher economic times. Though there are as many ways to accomplish this as there are potential members out there, Steve and Bonnie have found their balance, so I hope their experiences, shared here, have helped spawn some new ideas for you. A club is a canvas, and you can paint it anyway you want, from the front desk to your



Justin Cates

program menu, so unleash your creative energy!

(Justin Cates is the President of CLUB INSIDER and grew up in the health, racquet and sports club industry. From the age of eight, he spent his non-school and sports hours in a home which doubled as CLUB INSIDER Headquarters. He has lived and breathed this industry for 24 years and is now an integral part of the "Story" of Norm Cates and CLUB INSIDER. Justin may be reached by email at Justin@clubinsideronline.com)

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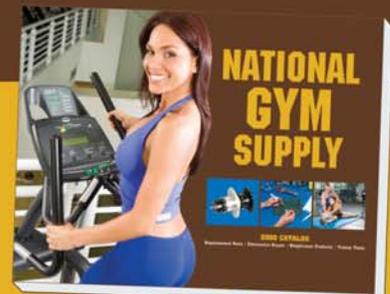
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Immunity to Change: A Breakthrough Insight Enabling Behavior Change

By: Will Phillips

I must own up to the fact that I have never owned a health club, nor worked in one, although I have been extremely physical in my avocations as a mountain climber, kayaker and hiker as well as being an outward bound chief (ph) instructor. When I entered the health club business some 20 years ago as the Chair of an owner's roundtable, I was struck by two items which represented significant barriers. The first obstacle is the penetration of only 14% of the market. The second is that we lose about half of our members annually, with the average membership lasting somewhere between 18 and 24 months.

These numbers have been persistently troublesome to every club owner I have ever visited. Because of these numbers, particularly the attrition, the health club business has been driven, more so than most industries, by its sales efforts. Sell well and succeed. Sell poorly and struggle. Although there is nothing wrong with having a strong sales lever, it does lead to several important dynamics in the club industry. There are more sales consultants than any other type of consultants, and attention to sales numbers often detracts from the attention we pay to

delivering value to members.

This article will give you a totally new perspective, as well as a set of tools to crack that retention barrier by becoming skilled in behavior change and helping members build successful exercise habits. As this happens and the word gets out, it will power clubs past the 14% penetration barrier to reach more of the market.

The Deception of Correlation

For the last 10 or 15 years, data has been widespread that shows the correlation or co-occurrence of a number of factors with retention. Members who pay a larger down payment stay longer; those who participate more in the first eight weeks stay longer, etc. It's a bit stunning that so many leaders in the club world have interpreted this co-occurrence as a cause and effect relationship since these are totally different dynamics.

Think of it this way, in middle school, taller boys always wear longer pants. So, would you use that co-occurrence to help your son grow taller by buying him longer pants? Of course not. It is more likely that the person who uses the club more in the first eight weeks will also stay longer, and the cause of both behaviors was that person walked

in your club as a committed exerciser. The committed exerciser is motivated to pay a larger initiation fee, exercise more and stay longer. Extensive research by one chain with 26 locations focused on improving new member experience at a club during the first four to eight weeks. They tracked data in great detail. The research showed less than a few tenths of a percent improvement in retention. Yet, clubs are still counseled on how to improve retention by doing things for which we have no evidence that it improves retention. Co-occurrence does not mean cause.

For example, CBI recently printed an article on Club Cleanliness in its May, 2009 issue. It presented data showing that clean clubs have higher revenue growth and higher retention and more income per member than clubs that spend less on housekeeping. This is true, and cleanliness is very important, but it seems like that article is saying spend more on housekeeping and you'll improve, revenue, retention and per member spend. That is highly unlikely, and saying it is even deceptive. It sounds like a sales pitch for housekeeping services.

For another example, there was a time 20 years ago when clubs that spent more on the Yellow Pages had more sales. It was not a cause and effect relationship. REX member clubs started cutting Yellow Pages as soon as they entered a Roundtable and it had zero impact on sales.

I think the correct way to view cleanliness is as a Negative Factor. This means if you are dirty, people won't join, but no one joins because you are clean. They join because of Positive Factors. This was discovered in public health centuries ago. If a city did not have clean water and good sewage, people with choice did not want to live there, but no one chooses where to live just because the water is clean and they have sewers.

Two Distinct Types of Members

One type of person

who joins your club is the committed exerciser, one who has made exercise a habit in life from an early age and wants to continue doing so at your club. Whether they do individual fitness, personal training or group exercise, they're committed; to exercise is a part of their life. These people joined health clubs long before the proliferation of health clubs began in the last century. More people that fall into second group --the uncommitted exercisers-- have joined your club. For them, exercise is not an abiding habit.

Your Success Creates A Problem For Most Members

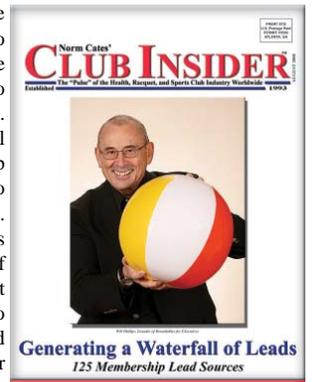
By selling these people a membership, you have created a secondary problem that most health clubs fail to solve.

Enabling the new member to change his or her exercise behavior. You provide exercise opportunities, but you should be helping them change their exercise behavior.

Essentially, this is like an industry that sells airplanes but has no pilot training programs, and as result, there are many crash and burn situations. Eventually, fewer people choose to buy a plane because they recognize the likelihood of being unsuccessful. I believe the same has happened in the health club industry.

The wonderful resources you have for exercise and engagement attract a large number of people --10% or even 20% may already have the exercise habit-- but as soon as they join, you've created a major problem for the rest. When asked, they'll often cite a time or money problem, but time and money are never barriers for a person doing what they really want to do. That is because they value it, and it's become a cherished part of their lives. Time and money both impact sales, yet they are superficial. Every time you overcome such an objection, you are failing to deal with the real barrier a new member will have in establishing an exercise habit, namely changing their behavior.

Engagement and atten-



Will Phillips

tion to the new member do help in resolving the regular exercise behavior change problem. This comes into play when a new member signs up for personal training or group exercise. Both of these provide extremely intense engagement and emotional support that are powerful tools in forming an exercise habit.

Simply having an appointment for every personal training session and knowing the trainer will call or email me if I don't show up provides an extremely successful motivation for engaging new members. However, very few of your members buy personal training, so this leaves the rest with the problem of behavior change.

The next extraordinary success that health clubs have in engaging new members is group exercise because it instills a motivation similar to that of personal training, such as regularly scheduled classes, which everyone feels obligated to attend. Further, connectivity occurs between those who danced together. Group exercise, or in its broader definition, dance, is one of the oldest human communal activities. There is reasonable evidence that human beings have been dancing for more than 10,000 years, and in many societies, dancing is primarily a spiritual and emotional activity rather than one that bonds people together.

Based on the data I have seen, I would summarize it by saying that group participants in a strong group exercise program will remain members of your club

(See Will Phillips Page 20)

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...Will Phillips

continued from page 18

twice as long as those which are in a fitness-only program. Group exercise provides a breakthrough in behavior change!

Behavior Change

The first thing that I learned about behavior change in health clubs was that those who didn't exercise regularly and couldn't make it a habit lacked self-discipline and willpower, and possibly, had a weak character. An observation like this would cause most other owners to nod their heads and agree silently. Clearly, this is an extremely dangerous response; however, it is so common across all industries that it has been given a name, "blaming the victim." In other words, if they don't do it the way we think they should, it must be their fault, and we have no responsibility to them. As a result, clubs tend not to dig too deeply into changing the behavior of their members in order to meet their deepest needs. Of course, they present the personal training and group exercise during their introduction to the club, but that is not the same as understanding the new member's most serious problem, how they are likely to undermine their desire to exercise.

Understanding Resistance to Change

For three decades, I have been consulting and trying to understand what change is all about. One of the most interesting paradoxes is understanding the resistance to change. I was first introduced to this some years ago and was pleasantly surprised to see a recent Harvard Business Review article on the subject [Decoding Resistance to Change, HBR April 2009] I thought all of us had learned years ago. Whether the change is motivated by a parent, a teacher, or a boss, the common response to resistance to change is to escalate the pressure to change, speak louder, speak stronger and talk about consequences. Invariably, as the person in authority escalates the effort to change, the resister digs in deeper. Therein is the paradox. You're doing what you believe is most appropriate to encourage the change, yet the result is the exact opposite.

The deeper paradox occurs when you embrace the

resistance and welcome it. To do this you must first accept that in all cases, the resister is making perfect sense to themselves. They are resisting for excellent reasons; however, you don't believe the reasons are appropriate because you don't understand the resister's world.

That's why one of the symbols that have floated around during most of my consulting career and many of the REX Roundtables is a beach ball. When you hold a beach ball between two people, neither person can see both sides of the beach ball, yet each person believes they can see the whole thing. This paradox arises whenever there is a difference, particularly when the difference leads to resistance. In order to move things ahead, you must lay down your arms, your impatience and your frustration.

Only when the person in authority or the person attempting to elicit the change of behavior in another person adapts an extraordinarily and deeply respectful approach can they begin to identify and eventually understand the nature of the resistance. Resistance is always about significant communication.

Some of the simple things you can do when you realize that someone is resisting your attempts for them to change their behavior include the following:

1. Stop trying to get them to change.
2. Take a few deep breaths to calm yourself down.
3. Ask, "Can you tell me some more?" When they tell you some more, ask again, "Can you tell me some more?" When they stop, say, "This is very interesting, I'm learning some new things. I'd like to learn even more. Can you give me a better perspective on why it is that this new program or behavior doesn't make any sense to you?"
4. You must do this without cynicism or skepticism. Of course, this requires you to control yourself. Clearly, this is why most managers, parents, salespeople and human beings generally don't do a very good job with resistance --they are emotionally immature. Don't be too offended by that, just be a little chagrined. What I mean is that when you are frustrated, it casts a shadow over everything you are trying to communicate. As a result, the

resister understands that you are not on their side, that you do not respect them and that they will not be talking with you.

In my book "Responsible Managers Get Results," we point out an example where United Airlines brought together its pilots, ramp workers and managers for the first time to brainstorm about fuel conservation. The idea was to use electricity instead of jet fuel to power planes idling at the gates, but ramp workers resisted doing this and fuel costs did not decrease.

"In the past, we would have sent out an edict, and nothing would have changed," says Robert M. Sturtz, United's top fuel administrator. Through patient listening and respecting the ramp workers resistance, "We were finally able to extract what the real problem was." The ramp did not have long enough ladders. Now, with taller ladders, United started saving \$20 million a year, every year.

Immunity To Change

Immunity to change is a very specific and in-depth way of analyzing resistance to change. It speaks precisely to some of the major problems in the health club world related to behavior change. It's a result of the work of two people, Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey, from the Harvard School of Education. Their research spans some 20 years, so it has great depth and benefits from practical application. Interestingly, Kegan and Lahey are good friends with Otto Scharmer at the MIT Organizational Learning Laboratory. Scharmer is the author of *Theory U*, which is the most insightful book there is about change. It is a difficult and challenging book to read, but it will give you the tools you need to enact change in your business, your life, your children's lives, your friends' lives, and yes, even political change.

Kegan and Lahey point out that, frequently, our best efforts to change are overwhelmed by forces within ourselves. We want to lose weight, or we want to stop picking our nose in public. Clearly, each human has generally discovered some area in which our best efforts to change, regardless of the nature of that change, are overwhelmed by other forces within us.

Frequently, we beat ourselves up --and others-- for

our lack of willpower, laziness, and weakness, yet doing so time and again will make absolutely no difference! The rule of thumb when encountering seemingly illogical resistance to change is to respect it and acknowledge it as logical. We must understand that we are always protecting something.

The question is, what are we protecting by our resistance? Kegan and Lahey say it is anxiety. Anxiety is the least understood private emotion. They believe that, when the brain sees something new and different, our immune system gears up to protect us. Every one of you is familiar with our physiological immune system, which protects us when we get an infection. Generally, this is good, but if you had a heart transplant, it's bad. This is because your body perceives the new heart as new, different, harmful and threatening to its system; it will do its best to reject the new organ. Only when doctors began to understand this natural immune reaction were transplants performed successfully. The same is true with human behavior.

"But I Don't Feel Anxiety."

In fact, that is true for most of us. We also see anxiety as some sort of weakness, but the very reason we don't experience anxiety is because our immune system is working very well to protect us and our brain from the invasion of new experiences and behaviors. So, the very admission of low anxiety is an admission that not much new may be getting into your brain and behavior.

So, this is all very cool, the mental, emotional, immune system works, but it charges rent! The rent that it charges is you achieving the behavior change goal you set for yourself. Most goals require us to make certain changes and by protecting us, our emotional immune system actually hurts us. Think of this as someone who is attempting to end a lifelong behavior of cigarette smoking, eating or failing to build an exercise habit. Folks know that the change is the right thing to do, but as soon as they begin the new behavior, the immune system works against it and undermines it.

The process of overcoming this natural immunity to change has four steps of learning. The first step is when you are unconscious of your immunity

to change. You don't even know you're immune to change. You feel no anxiety, and you don't think that you have immunity to exercise or that you have factors that will prevent you from building an exercise habit. When you join a club, and those factors come into play, your immunity system begins to undermine your exercise habits. A year later, when it's time to renew your membership, you decline. For example, a young woman was committed to start exercising and lose weight, but in the past, her efforts always failed. She would lose then regain the weight.

Taking her to the second step was a conversation enabling her to identify the forces within that undermined her desired exercise and eating habits. "When I was young, I was thin and attractive. Many men, older men stared at me. Some made suggestive comments. It scared me. Ever since I put on weight, men stopped hassling me."

This shows the importance of helping individuals who are truly committed to changing their behavior to look at themselves to see how they are undermining their good intentions. This is a delicate process which asks that the person take full responsibility for their past failures. When they see that they are undermining themselves and why, they have moved to the second step, described as consciously immune. In other words, you become aware that you are doing things that prevent you from changing your behavior. As you enter this stage, and become conscious of what you're doing to undermine yourself, you can move into the third stage of learning, which is called conscious release. Here, by becoming conscious of the behavior that is hurting you, you can let go of it. Eventually, having done this, you unconsciously release yourself and form the new habit. This is the fourth stage of change.

This is how you can solve the problem that you create when you sell a membership to a non exerciser. Help them gain self awareness.

Awareness

Ultimately, all change is based on awareness. This was pointed out by the writers of Gestalt psychology in the early 19th century. Their fundamental graph showed that no change (See Will Phillips Page 22)



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...Will Phillips

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happens until you increase your awareness of how a present situation is not working for you. As your awareness grows, it eventually moves into the consciously released stage, where change can finally occur. This simple theory is the basis of all organizational and all the human change efforts.

So, what shall we do about this in health clubs? First, start hiring people who are comfortable and experienced in working with behavior as opposed to working with bodies. Health clubs will not truly solve the second problem they've created --behavior change-- until they stop hiring only exercise physiologists and start hiring psychologists, sociologists and anthropologists, who are comfortable working at this unconscious and feeling level of existence. We humans are more than our surface world of bodies, muscles and physiology.

Learning how to engage members who are truly interested in changing their behavior at the level of exploring their resistance to change can be frightening, but now, you have some guidance in making this change happen. Now learn more from Kegan and Lahey's book Immunity To Change, or if you want lighter reading, see Page 138 of the January, 2009 issue of Oprah's Magazine, "O." Or, keep in touch with REX, as we are working on a workshop for club people from these experts.

(Will Phillips is the Founder and CEO of REX Roundtables and may be reached at: Will@RexRoundtables.com)

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Challenging Times...Right Choices

Families and communities are looking for hope. The circumstances that they face...that we all face...may require great change.

Hope, and Change. This is not a new message. It has been the message of health clubs for generations, re-enforced by medical and sport science along with the testimonials of countless health club members over those years.

Today, as you are looking for that 'something new' that will boost your sales and retention numbers, consider focusing on what the hope and change are all about...wellness. Wellness as it relates and spills over into every area of our life, and how you can better communicate that message to the community you serve.

It is a message health clubs are uniquely positioned to deliver, and Greenmaple Wellness is uniquely positioned to help you deliver it. Lynette and I have been working with club owners and managers for many years, and our 'big picture' approach to member communication and retention, as well as community outreach and education, will streamline your sales and retention efforts and maximize your results.

We're looking forward to speaking with you whenever you're ready.

Shawn and Lynette Vint

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- Hartford, CT July 22nd and 23rd

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Seven Keys to *Top of Mind* Success

By: Andrea Sobotka

Be thought of *FIRST!* When it comes to Health, Fitness and Wellness, is your facility top of mind in your community? If you are not sure, you need to launch a mission to ensure that you are. Every marketing dollar and effort you spend is indeed done for the purpose of creating valuable traffic, but it can't stop there; *every single action* you take should be approached from the perspective of creating a priceless "**Top of Mind**" awareness of your business within your community that stands the test of time. You, your facility and your staff should come to a community member's mind first when he thinks of anything to do with expertise in health, fitness and wellness... and a good experience or the prospects of a good experience. Here, we will discuss seven key elements that will help create this "Top of Mind"

awareness in your community.

Identity

Who are you anyways? How do you differ from the competition in your area? Not many facilities have the luxury of being the only game in town anymore. So now, more than ever, it is critical that you take a step back to look objectively at your operation as a whole and define who you are and what makes you special. Are you the 24-hour Key Club? Are you the full service family center? Are you the low-price, no-frills facility? Do you cater to a mature crowd? An affluent crowd, a spiritual crowd or any combination of the above? Try to narrow down to a sentence that clearly describes your business and quickly identifies it by the descriptive elements even before your name is uttered -- "We are a large full-service health, fitness and wellness center with

facilities, programs, resources and services catering to today's active family."

The Local Authority

You got into this business for a reason. Likely, you and/or your staff are extremely knowledgeable and passionate in some aspect of health, fitness and wellness. Don't keep it a secret that is only found out by joining your club! Shout it out! Offer to write a column in your local paper for free. Often, papers will accept the article as long as it is truly informative and is not just an ad for your club. The same can be done on radio. Start a blog, and send out newsletters, not just to your members, but to the community through cooperative efforts with other local businesses. Offer to speak at local organizations' events and put up information kiosks at local fairs. Today, it is

so easy and cost effective to share information and knowledge by utilizing the internet. Post articles on your own website and create your own informative but "light" e-newsletters, either on your own, or through a service such as Constant Contact, or through industry resource experts, such as GreenMaple Wellness. Bottom line, get creative and be persistent in letting the community KNOW what you and your staff are the experts on. Share just enough to keep your club top of mind so that, should a person want to know more, it is your doors they will enter to do so.

Your Demographic Info

People Power! Like attracts like! You need to understand very clearly who your target market is so that, in everything you do, you create image and communication patterns that directly speaks to this group. If



Andrea Sobotka

you are in the start-up phase, run a current demographic report of the population within an 8-minute drive time of your front door. Be sure you know what part of the community you are after, and then, speak directly to that market. If you are an existing facility, start by taking a good look at who the majority of your members are. (See Andrea Sobotka Page 26)

Fitness Fundraisers Can Drive Hundreds of Qualified Prospects Through Your Door At No Cost To You...Saving You Thousands!

If you are like most fitness facility owners and operators, you are constantly striving to increase your membership base. Unless you are in a very unique and fortunate situation where you have no need to market, you are most likely spending hundreds, maybe even thousands of dollars, on marketing media such as newspaper, direct mail, radio, television and more...all in an attempt to increase your membership. While these can be effective ways to acquire new members, using traditional marketing strategies can also be extremely expensive and only targets the 12% to 14% of a market per IHRSA statistics.

The Fitness Fundraiser program is an innovative new approach to marketing that will...

- ★ Reduce the need to market using expensive media...saving you thousands!
- ★ Have prospects pouring through your doors...
- ★ Increase your market penetration!
- ★ Dramatically boost your bottom line, and...
- ★ Make you a hero in your community!

Fitness Fundraisers is a unique marketing program that drives valuable traffic to your door while at the same time, allowing you to directly support many charitable fundraising efforts in your community. The key to this unique opportunity is SIMPLICITY! At Fitness Fundraisers, we have made it incredibly easy for both fitness facilities and fundraising organizations, to participate in this fantastic "win-win" program. At Fitness Fundraisers we provide both participating fitness facilities and fundraising organizations with a complete turn-key system...everything that you will need to make this program a huge success.

And there's MORE...

In addition to providing both the participating Fitness Facilities AND the Fundraising organizations with an array of professional, full color printed materials, marketing pieces, and a wide range of web plus live support, we also provide our participating Fitness Facilities with...

- ★ A comprehensive 4 Step Sales Training and Implementation program
- ★ Front desk and new member service coaching.
- ★ A Fitness Fundraiser Area Representative to directly assist in marketing efforts to secure Fundraising Organizations.
- ★ Access to a web resource center for 24/7 training and marketing materials, PLUS...
- ★ MARKET EXCLUSIVITY!

In today's competitive market, isn't it time to get an edge?

If you are a community minded, well run co-ed Fitness Facility, can you afford NOT to participate in the Fitness Fundraisers program? To learn more and be THE Fitness Facility in YOUR community to participate in this incredible marketing program contact us at:

1-866-855-5484

Or e-mail us at

info@fitnessfundraisers.com

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Daron Allen
CEO, Visual Fitness Planner

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- 10 **BRANDED/CUSTOMIZED/CONSISTENT**



A club chain in AZ reports – “The VFP is the standard presentation for both POS and New Member Orientation. Upon implementing the VFP, our club went from producing \$0 per day in Program/PT at the point of sale to now producing \$12,000-\$15,000 per day.”

A club in Canada reports – “Fitness Managers are averaging PT packages of \$3,500-\$6,000 per PT deal.”

A club in IL reports – “The VFP helped build our monthly PT drafts from \$0 per month to over \$40,000 per month in our 15,000 sq. ft. facility.”



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Cybox Launches Pink Treadmill to Support Breast Cancer Research

MEDWAY, MA, May 29, 2009 - Cybox International, Inc. (NASDAQ: CYBI), a leading manufacturer of premium exercise equipment for the commercial and consumer markets, announced yesterday at the Club Industry East Show in Boston, Massachusetts its introduction of the first-ever, custom-made pink treadmills to log miles and raise funds for The Breast Cancer Research Foundation (BCRF) during Breast Cancer Awareness Month - October, 2009.

The pink treadmills, manufactured in Medway, Massachusetts will be sold to health clubs, YMCA's, hotels and spas, student recreation centers, corporate employee gyms and other exercise facilities around the country. Cybox will donate 10 cents for every mile logged on any pink 750T treadmill throughout the month of October 2009 to BCRF.

Research from The

Nurses Health Study, published in the Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA), tracked nearly 3,000 women up to 14 years after their breast cancer diagnosis and found that exercise reduced the likelihood of breast cancer recurrence and increased the odds of living longer. Dr. Carolyn Kaelin, Harvard surgeon and author of *The Breast Cancer Survivor's Fitness Plan* explains, "Recurrence rates and deaths from breast cancer decreased up to 40 percent among those who exercised most, compared with those who were sedentary. Brisk walking for 3-5 hours per week, about 30 minutes a day, netted the biggest benefits."

"We are committed to raising funds and awareness on the benefits of exercise, particularly as it relates to improving long-term survival for those who have been treated for breast cancer," states Joan Carter, Cybox Executive Director

and Founder of the Cybox Pink Ribbon Run. "The evolving body of research strongly suggests that, at all ages, physical activity, and in particular, cardiovascular activity, reduces the risk of developing breast cancer later in life. Cybox shares a common value with BCRF on the importance of science and research. The monies raised from this program can play an integral role in finding a cure for breast cancer."

"The Breast Cancer Research Foundation's mission is to achieve prevention and a cure for breast cancer in our lifetime," states Myra J. Biblowit, President of the BCRF. "Partnering with Cybox to promote the importance of exercise is a natural synergy and underscores BCRF's mission in achieving this goal. Additionally, the monies raised can provide critical funding for innovative clinical and translational research at leading medical centers worldwide and increase



Dr. Carolyn Kaelin and Joan Carter

public awareness."

To purchase a pink treadmill or to find out if your

local club is participating in the Pink Ribbon Run visit www.cyboxintl.com.

...Andrea Sobotka

continued from page 24

Do your marketing efforts reflect your current crowd? In an extreme example, let's say you run an active member report and discover that the average age of your membership is over age 55. Then, you look at what you have been putting out in marketing images, language and programming and discover that you are actually speaking to a 25-30 year old crowd. Talk about an identity crisis! It would be wise to regroup and go with the flow by altering your marketing, imagery and programming efforts to attract an even larger market share of the 50+ crowd. Learn what is important to this demographic group and create a space that is welcoming, accommodating... and very referable!

Visibility

Street Appeal... Is your club easy to see from the road? Do you have clear and identifiable signage? Step back and look at your club with fresh eyes from the road: Number one, can you be easily found? Number two, once found, what do you see? Make sure everything looks crisp and professional. Fix what needs repairing, paint what needs refreshing and arrange what

you can to make sure you can be found and that what is found is very pleasing to the eye. This is where your "physical" first impression starts, right from the curb. Then, move on from your physical location visibility and check your visibility through branding. Branding is king in any business. Branding is your logo, your tagline, your colors, your ad designs, your website, your sign; it is everywhere. Put it out there as much as you can! Why would you give away a T-Shirt for free? Because someone will wear it around and be a walking billboard for you! Be visible, and be present everywhere.

Consistency

People do not react well to "surprises" and won't necessarily notice common threads in ever-changing messages. In everything you do, from ad campaigns to membership policy and procedures, BE CONSISTENT. People like to know what to expect; it creates a comfort level and erases the fear factor of the unknown. It is also the foundation of creating a habit through repetition. In order to be quickly and easily recognizable, some things must be seen and heard over and over. Ad campaigns are a good example. If you run a 50% off Joining Fees for the

month of July depicting an image of a woman about to cut a bill with scissors, be sure that same ad and image shows up in every form of marketing you do. You might change up your ad offer and images each month, but try to keep a "template" consistency with your club info and logo always in a certain position. When it comes to the membership experience, make sure you have systems in place for everything from touring procedures to new member orientations to member appreciation events. A member is much more likely to refer a friend if he is confident that the pleasant experience he had getting started will be exactly the same for the friend or family member he recommends to the club. If there are varying stories floating around about how members are integrated and treated, the fear factor will prevent a member from referring someone "just in case" it is not a good experience. Look at all your activities and processes; are they consistent in nature?

Community Paths

Don't be the silo business. It is very easy to get caught up in the trap of operating in the urgent and never allowing yourself to think much beyond your front doors because there is just so much to manage and take

care of inside the club. Whether you are the only game in town or not, you must get out in the community on a fairly regular basis so people get to know you and hear your business story. Don't wait for people to come to you, join your local Chamber of Commerce and ATTEND the meetings! Even offer to host events. Join one or two local associations, such as Rotary, Kiwanis or even an active church group. Choose an association that is active in the community and can provide a growth experience for yourself as well as the opportunity to share your knowledge and energy. Make a point of shopping local as much as you can so that you get to know other business people and service providers in your community. Carve a path in your community from and to your facility.

Giving Back

Giving back might be the farthest thing from some folks' mind in a tough economy, but the truth of the matter is always this, what goes around comes around. Acts of kindness, whether in the form of regular donations, volunteering, mentoring or even giving blood, are always rewarded if done from the heart. Champion a specific cause and host a fundraising

event once or twice a year, such as Augie's Quest or Run for the Cure. Once or twice a year, you get the chance to showcase your club to the community. You can also give back in ways that do not eat up your time or money but allow you to give back directly to your community on a constant basis, such as participating in the **Fitness Fundraisers** program (www.fitnessfundraisers.com) as a Donor Club if you are a midsized to large coed facility. In return for your support as a Fitness Fundraisers Donor Club, you will get tons of grateful traffic! Again, those that act from the heart will be rewarded by the universe. Good things happen to good people and good businesses. Let the good heart and soul of your business be felt in your community, and again, it is your business that will be top of mind when thinking about health, fitness and wellness.

Start your mission today to become and remain Top of Mind when it comes to health, fitness wellness in your community. Be thought of FIRST!

(Andrea Sobotka and her husband, Rick, are the owners of *Fitness Fundraisers and Fitness Club Success* and may be reached by email at andrea@fitnessclubsuccess.com)

CYBEX® JOIN THE PINK RIBBON RUN

Let your members make their workout work for breast cancer research.

When you purchase a pink treadmill, CYBEX will donate 10c/mile logged during the month of October (Breast Cancer Awareness Month) to The Breast Cancer Research Foundation.



Breast Cancer Research: A great cause

- One out of every eight women will develop breast cancer. 182,460 new cases of breast cancer will be diagnosed among women in the United States, with 40,480 deaths.
- Breast Cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in women, after lung cancer.
- One out of 210 breast cancer cases occur in women under the age of 40.

Data from American Cancer Society 2008

Exercise: A great benefit for women's health

- A woman's hormone levels naturally fluctuate throughout her life, and we have found that exercise likely offers protection against breast cancer regardless of a woman's stage in life.
February 2007 - University of Wisconsin's Comprehensive Cancer Center (UWCCC)
- According to a study of more than 32,000 postmenopausal women, vigorous exercise may cut risk of breast cancer by 30 percent in normal-weight women.
November 2008 - Journal of Breast Cancer Research
- Girls and young women who exercise regularly between the ages of 12 and 35 have a substantially lower risk of breast cancer before menopause compared to those less active.
May 2008 - Journal of the National Cancer Institute



The Breast Cancer Research Foundation is dedicated to preventing breast cancer and finding a cure in our lifetime by funding clinical and translational research worldwide. For more information about BCRF, visit www.bcrfcure.org

To join the Pink Ribbon Run call CYBEX today at +1.774-324-8000 or visit www.cybexintl.com

The New Reality of Successful Fitness Center Operations

By: Bonnie Patrick Mattalian

In many areas of the country, fitness center owners and operators are confronting unprecedented challenges as our members react to their own economic concerns. Many factors, including the economy, changes in consumer expectations, aging facilities and increased competition, will contribute to this challenging business environment. We must now act quickly to identify the critical issues and implement necessary changes required for continued success in the future.

As consultants in the industry, it is our job to come up with solutions for challenges in clubs. It's important now to relook at every component of fitness center operations with an objective approach and realign how the business is run with the changes that are happening in the community. It takes an open mind to put yourself and your club under a microscope and identify changes specific to your club's needs.

That might mean re-looking at the tried and true, dusting off some old programs and services or throwing many things out the window and starting over, and as long as it makes sense for YOUR club, YOUR community and YOUR members, things can change for the better.

Instead of saying:

*"That won't work in MY club."
 "We already tried that."
 "We already do that."*

Consider these as exciting times to try innovative approaches to improving your club's performance. Take a step back and, look at the following to see what needs to be updated:

Market Demographics

When was the last time you ran your market demographics? I guarantee they have changed. Claritas Demographics came out with new reports in April that are very compelling. Couple those statistics updates with unemployment figures in your market and a competitive analysis of other clubs in your area and you may find that your market capture rate has changed. This is the basis for identifying your market penetration and the

potential number of members you can attract in your community. For information on running your demographic statistics, feel free to email me at info@clubsynergygroup.com.

Shop other clubs in your area often, and make certain your club is differentiated and well-positioned in the market.

Update Your Marketing Approach

Depending upon your location and your demographics, most consumers today make their buying decisions based on either online searches or word of mouth.

So, what happens when you search the keywords "Fitness Center" + "Your Town?" Does your club's website pop up in the top 6 listings? On the first page? If not, take some time to learn about Search Engine Optimization (SEO). Post free business listings on Google Local, MSN Local and Yahoo Local. Update your website frequently. Have incoming links from other sources. When you email out your club newsletter, have links to bring members or prospects to the site. All of these are easy ways to increase your SEO. There are more advanced ways to accomplish this as well, with tags and adwords, which we will discuss another time.

How effective is your website? Do people have a reason to keep coming back? Are there easy-to-find contact buttons and direct email addresses? Do you capture visitor information? Set up your club's website with Google Analytics to run detailed reports on visits to your pages and where they are coming from.

Does your brand match your club's experience? Every 2-3 years, update your brand and your brand messaging.

Rethink Your Sales Approach

"There are not as many people coming through the door."

"I've contacted all my leads so many times I feel like I am harassing them."

"Everyone has a problem with the price."

Do you hear any of these statements from your membership team? We do.

They are probably correct that not as many people are coming through the door, so it's time for them to get *out the door and into the community*. There are plenty of businesses out there that are looking for ways to help their struggling employees, whether it's a health fair, brown bag lunch or a free, one-month membership. Then, when your team does an excellent job of servicing those folks during the month, the prospects understand the value of joining based on what is important to them.

I have had the opportunity to mystery shop many clubs around the country and continue to be amazed at how infrequently I am contacted after my visit. I'd say 80% of the time I am not contacted, and when I am, it is maybe twice. Then, I hear nothing back. How do you counter this? Survey the prospects that have not joined, and give them a free month for filling out the survey. The results on the follow up will be eye-opening.

If we make the sale about the price, the objection will be about the price. Do you have the ability to record and listen to the incoming calls that your membership team take? My good friend and associate, Maria Parella-Turco, jokingly says that she needs a bottle of Jack Daniels when she listens to the recordings. Utilizing recordings of real incoming inquiries is a great training tool to understand whether your membership team is using a consultative approach or if they stumble on questions from a prospect. Also, what about your tracking as a Sales Manager? If this is not automated, and if there is no follow up by a manager to support and proactively address membership production, you likely will not achieve the results you could with a managed sales system.

Member Experience, Programs and Services

Your club's experience is your brand. Is it based on the types of members you have in your club and what their desired experience is? How often do you survey members and quantify the experience in each department? Manage the experience daily by identifying specific standards by department and by person,

measuring results and updating them frequently.

Have you ever offered a program and no one showed up? Gather as much personal data on every member, keep it securely in your database and use that information for segmenting your membership and developing programs accordingly. We don't use our software as much as we could or should.

Communicate new programs or services to members utilizing many mediums, not just one, for optimal response.

Operating Processes

As you upgrade the service delivery and member experience, it's essential to simultaneously look at every operating process to identify if it is effective and efficient. Many times, processes are in place "because that's how we've always done it," when in fact, it may have become a barrier. Email me for a detailed list of all the operational processes you'll want to take time to update.

Staff Compensation and Development

Our front line staffs will make or break our business. If you have "C-Grade" people, what is the plan to identify their strengths and help improve their performance? There is a plethora of great people looking for work right now. Use this time to ensure you have the right team in place.

Developing the leadership and supervisory skills of front line managers has an exponential effect on the success of all of their direct reports. Identify competencies and development needs on your own or with professional support. The return on the investment of a well-trained staff is extremely high when planned and executed



Bonnie Patrick Mattalian

well. As Tom Peters says, "Happy staff, happy customers. Want to put the customer first? Put the staff 'more first.'"

Is your staff tied in to performance? Or, is "just OK" rewarded the same as exceptional performance? There are many unique low, and even no-cost, ways to incentivize staff. Make it meaningful to them. Have them participate with their manager in restructuring their compensation plan in a way that is weighted more on the results from their hard work.

These are exceptional times. If we sharpen our pencils and re-engineer "business as usual," we'll get through and even thrive.

For more ideas, or to brainstorm, call me anytime.

(Bonnie Patrick Mattalian is a 24-year industry veteran specializing in staff development, member experience delivery and operational systems and strategies for fitness centers. She is the President of the Club Synergy Group Consultants, a network of industry specialists providing turn-key performance improvement solutions for existing facilities, growth opportunities and start ups. Contact Bonnie at 732-236-2273 or bmattalian@clubsynergygroup.com. Or, go to www.clubsynergygroup.com)

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2009 LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

In all areas of life there are those who are considered legends. In the fitness industry we honor these individuals with our Lifetime Achievement Award. This year, Mark Mastrow will take his place in this elite group.



2009 DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARDS

This year's recipients (pictured left to right) are John Guelzow, Scott Frasco, Michael Rojas, and John Salvitti.

FREE SEMINARS

Tuesday, August 18, 2009 - Daily Opening Session Feature Speakers

	Closing The Seven LOOPS for Health Club Success in Today's Challenging Times - Mike Chaet "ClubDoc" This session is created to answer the tough questions as to how to SURVIVE AND EVEN THRIVE in today's craziness. Economic upheaval, over development, and tight money are having their effect on everyone. This workshop will help you understand how you can move to the head of the pack instead of falling by the wayside.	8:00 a.m. - 9:20 a.m.
	RED'S Five Strategies for Personal and Professional Success - Red Larille, Former Mr. Universe, Owner Red's Athletic Club, Lafayette, LA Red has been successful in all areas of his life both personally and professionally. He owns and operates one of the most successful clubs in the country. He is here to share with us his own personal SECRETS TO SUCCESS. You need to attend this one.	9:30 a.m. - 10:20 a.m.
Time	Marketing and Sales Track	Management Track
10:45 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	Why Building Trust In Your Community Is The Key To A Great Future For Your Club - Norm Cates, First IHRSA President, 20-year club developer, owner/operator, and 16-year Publisher of Club Insider	Using Data to run your club profitably - Scott Burgess, VP of Operations, Fiserv
11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	Lunch Break	
12:30 p.m. - 1:15 p.m.	Shoestring Marketing - Mark Davis, Master Trainer and VP CMS International	Using Systems to build Accountability, - Leesa Kirkland - Owner CMS Fitness Center Baton Rouge, Louisiana
1:30 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.	The Five Secrets To Successful Healthclub Marketing - Jarrod Sarrocco	How to Analyze Your Financial Information - Bryan Dugger CPA Owner Ogden Athletic Club
2:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.	National Fitness Trade Show Exhibits	
6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.	Lifetime Achievement Award Banquet	

Wednesday, August 19, 2009 - Daily Opening Session Feature Speakers

	Innovation Everyday In Every Way - Steve Lundin, Bestselling Author of FISH - Top Performer and CATS This refreshing approach based on the recently released book, CATS: The Nine Lives of Innovation, brings innovation out of the clouds and into the lives of everyday people trying to make improvements in their work and in their lives. After all, organizations don't innovate, people do.	8:00 a.m. - 9:20 a.m.
	The Pictorial and Dialog History of Physical Fitness - Bill Pearl, Former Mr. Universe, Owner Bill Pearl Enterprises, Medford, OR Bill will be taking us back to the Greek and Spartan society of physical culture, then bringing us forward to today's health and fitness lifestyle. It's a fascinating presentation that should be seen by everyone in our industry. Don't miss this one.	9:30 a.m. - 10:20 a.m.

SURVIVE AND THRIVE Covering a wide range of subjects, our seminars are given by experts and are designed to help you become more successful! Stay at the Sierra Grand Resort on our room block for as low as \$79.00 per night and attend three full days of educational seminars for **FREE** (\$750.00 value). If you choose to stay elsewhere, pay the unbelievably low registration fee of \$100.00 if you register by May 1, 2009.

Time	Marketing and Sales Track	Profit Center Track
10:45 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	Developing a dynamic Annual Marketing Plan - Mike Kincaid, Lebanon Sports Club	One on One Training Center - Huge bottom line profits - Tasso Kiriakos, Owner Bod Ez By Tasso, Ormand Beach FL
11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	Lunch Break	
12:30 p.m. - 1:15 p.m.	The Latest and Greatest in Marketing and Sales - Mike Chaet, Clubdoc	Tanning For Major Profits - Marty Sloan, Heartland Tanning Inc.
1:30 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.	Using a Holiday Fundraiser to Build a Steady Stream of New Members - Tony Auriema	Overcoming adversity- A gripping story of overcoming personal adversity and the lessons learned to make my club a success - Ross Suozzi, Cancer Survivor, Owner Peaks Athletic Club Fountain Hills AZ
2:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.	National Fitness Trade Show Exhibits	
7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Ms. Fitness USA Finals	

Thursday, August 20, 2009 - Daily Opening Session Feature Speaker

	How to Pull Profits From Thin Air - Donna Krech, Founder Thin and Healthy - Total Solutions and Life Success	8:00 a.m. - 9:20 a.m.
Time	Marketing and Sales Track	Service and Retention Track
9:45 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	Selling More Memberships Starting Tomorrow Using The Trust + Value = Price Matters Less Theory - Mike Deigan, Owner Temecula Athletic Club, Temecula, CA	Law suits and Liability: Steps club owner's can take to defend their club - Ken Reing, Sr. VP of Association Insurance Group
10:45 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	Close Each and Every Sale - Mark Davis	The FISH Philosophy to Improve Retention - Steve Lundin
11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	Lunch Break	
12:30 p.m. - 1:15 p.m.	Creating a Culture of Self Accountability - Dennis Shepherd, Former Owner Carmel Valley Racquet Club	Creating a Service Culture - Charley Hauser, Owner Wilmington Athletic Club, Wilmington, NC
1:30 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.	Sell Sell Sell - Duane McGill, Owner Human Behavior Sales Academy	Leveraging Strategic Value Management for Success - Jeffrey Keller, General Manager, Eagle Point Recreation Complex
2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.	National Fitness Trade Show Exhibits	
7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Ms. Fitness World Finals	

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The 28th Annual National Fitness Trade Show offers you the chance to see, test, and compare the latest products and services in the industry.

See hundreds of products and services displayed under one roof: cardio, strength, and freeweight equipment, lockers, financial services, flooring, computers, software, consultants, specialty items, supplements, health products, sportswear, suntan units, fitness accessories and much more. As the longest running trade show in the fitness industry, the National Fitness Trade Show features top fitness equipment from leading manufacturers, along with the products and services you need to make your business more successful. This Trade Show offers an inviting environment where every exhibitor is committed to working with you and ensuring your needs are fulfilled.

See everything in one place instead of spending valuable time contacting manufacturers and suppliers one at a time. Talk to companies from all across the nation, make on-the-spot comparisons and then YOU can decide who has the best product at the best price. You'll also be able to save money by taking advantage of special show prices. Plus to attend the Trade Show costs ... NOTHING!

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Well, you'll have to pay for your hotel, food, extracurricular activities for you and the family, but the National Fitness Trade Show, Seminars, Ms. Fitness and Awards Banquet are **FREE** if you stay at the Grand Sierra Resort with our group.

You see, we know running a fitness business is expensive to begin with, so we just want you to come and enjoy yourself while you explore and learn about the new options in weight/fitness/health products, services, and programs. We're betting you take some valuable new ideas home with you.

The Grand Sierra Resort is housed in the shadow of the snow-capped Sierra Nevada Mountains in Reno/Tahoe. Beautiful, well appointed rooms are yours at Grand Sierra Resort Casino; many with stunning views of the magnificent Sierra Nevada Mountains and the dazzling lights of downtown Reno. This soaring resort features a variety of amenities and services including free 24-hour valet parking, bell desk, laundry and valet service, gift shop, Entertainment Center, state of the art health spa with sauna and massage therapy, sun deck. The Grand Sierra Resort Casino also features several unique dining opportunities. Select any of the award-winning restaurants!

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The Grand Sierra Resort is offering a discounted rate of \$79.00 per night. Plus, if you stay at the Grand Sierra Resort with our group, you'll gain **FREE** access to our three full days of seminars (\$750.00 value) PLUS you'll also receive **FREE** of charge two \$100 tickets to the Ms. Fitness USA and the Ms. Fitness World (\$400.00 value). Visit www.NationalFitnessTradeShow.com to make your room reservations or call 1.800.648.5080 and reference Group Code *NationalFitness*.

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FREE ENTRANCE TO THE EXHIBIT HALL

Tuesday, August 18, 2009 - 2:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m.
Wednesday, August 19, 2009 - 2:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m.
Thursday, August 20, 2009 - 2:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

MS. FITNESS USA

August 19, 2009 - 7:00 p.m.

MS. FITNESS WORLD

August 20, 2009 - 7:00 p.m.
Stay at the Grand Sierra Resort on our room block and receive 2 **FREE** tickets to each event. (\$400.00 value)

FREE AWARDS BANQUET

Savor elegant cuisine prepared by the Grand Sierra Resort's acclaimed chefs. Everyone is welcome to attend Tuesday, September 18, 2009 at 6:00 p.m.

Programming Tip of the Month:

The Importance of Play in Your Programs

By: Sandy Coffman

Every now and then, it's time to revisit the phrase "mind, body and spirit" and think about what it means to a complete fitness and wellness program for all the niches--interests, skill levels, schedules, personalities, ages and genders-- in your club. Mind, body and spirit tells us that the experience of an exercise program is key to the result of it. It's actually quite simple. The mind and spirit will dictate what the body will do, and if the mind and spirit emits a positive attitude, it will lead to a positive experience and a positive result. A good example of this is very evident if you watch children at play. The more they are smiling and laughing together, the more fun they have. They will run faster, climb higher, jump further and enjoy the moment with more energy and enthusiasm. Play is a fundamental necessity of a child's development, and it becomes just as important in

the life of an older adult. Play is not merely important, but is essential for combating an all too often sedentary lifestyle of the older generation.

Our clubs, our programs and more importantly, our leaders, can provide the solution. It really isn't complex or profound. Just look at what works with children, and why it works, and incorporate the principles of play in your exercise programs.

Think of the most fun, active part of a child's day at school. It's recess time! Recess is never more than thirty minutes long, but children run out of a school building, run away from stress and sedentary time to join their friends in games, sports and all sorts of activities, and they look forward to it because it energizes them, gives them renewed spirit and prepares them for a more productive learning experience. Gerontologists will tell you that, as people age, it's healthy to recall and relive childlike (not childish)

experiences. The most productive fitness programs for your older adult membership should include exercises that incorporate "playtime" within the exercise routines.

There are many ways to include fun, upbeat, social experiences within many of the programs you already have. We can look at some of them here, but first, we must make sure that you and your program leaders are fun. Are they someone who your members would like to play with? Are you willing to provide the "play" in your programs? Don't take this for granted. Learning the skill of providing supportive play in exercise programs for our older market takes training, practice and a sincere desire to succeed with this market. Initially, you may have to tap into your creative juices, your own childhood experiences and some innovative use of tools and equipment that haven't been thought of as being "fun." But soon, you will feel the energy from your members as they respond with a greater joy of exercising their bodies with their minds and spirits.

For example, there are stationary bikes and sophisticated chairs available on the market now with cookie cutter programs, educational DVD's and infor-

mation booklets that provide pictures and explanations on how to perform the exercises properly. The engineering of the equipment is impressive and the demonstrations are exact and correct, but somehow, the effectiveness is lost if it isn't accomplishing a positive attitude, excitement, high energy or enjoyment in the participant. Without these things in your senior programs, you will probably find your members performing their fitness routines sporadically or for a two-week period at best. That certainly doesn't ensure an active lifestyle or a commitment to a lifestyle of exercise.

Children love to use props (sometimes known as "toys") to play with. Using balloons, hula hoops, balls and even paper plates can add a challenge as well as a giggle to a walk around the room or an outside area. Adding instruments like tambourines, bells, cymbals, drums or harmonicas add coordination and rhythmic skills to the "march," as well as high energy and laughter. Taking turns in being the drum major or majorette, carrying the American Flag of course, adds a twist that will keep everyone active and interested.

Music molds attitudes. There's far more fun to exercising to

music with familiar lyrics and tunes than to a bass beat that forces you to count to 8 or sixteen whether you want to or not.

Costumes, such as hats, T-shirts or anything with matching colors or logos bring an element of fun, camaraderie and sociability to any activity. Children love them. So will your seniors.

Research has shown that structured and unstructured play for children are essential for academic achievement and helps to ensure social, emotional and physical development. It is noted from IPEMA, the International Play-ground Equipment Manufacturer's Association, that Einstein referred to play as the "highest form of research." I strongly urge you to include play in your programs as you focus on the older adult market as well as children of all ages. Successful programming is the key, and it's guaranteed to make you more profitable. Check it out!

(To order Sandy's great programming book, *Successful Programs for Fitness and Health Clubs: 101 Profitable Ideas* go to www.humankinetics.com. Or, contact Sandy at SLCoffman@aol.com or visit www.sandycoffman.com)

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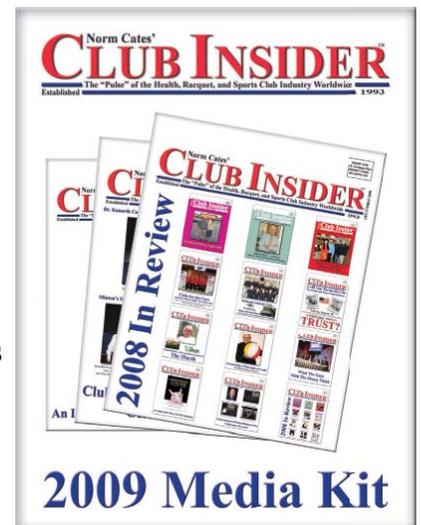
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Very Sincerely,

Norm Cates, Jr.



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Co-Owner, Global Fitness Centers

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