

Norm Cates'

# CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF TRUST

## Roger Ralph

*A Club Industry Pioneer, Veteran and Gentleman*



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# CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF TRUST

## Roger Ralph

### A Club Industry Pioneer, Veteran and Gentleman

By: Justin Cates

My Dad, **Club Insider Publisher, Norm Cates**, sometimes writes, "Get a beverage of your choice, sit back, relax and enjoy the following read." Today, you will want to do exactly that for this month's cover story. Our feature this month is someone you may or may not have heard of or met, but I can guarantee you that he has had an effect on your health and fitness club business. His name is **Roger Ralph**, and he epitomizes the terms *Club Industry Pioneer, Veteran and Gentleman*.

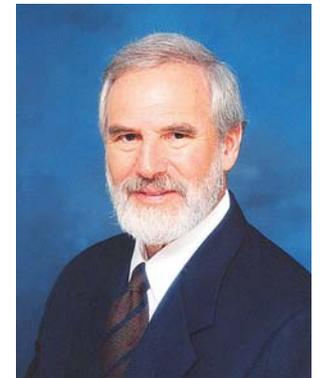
Growing up in Easton, Pennsylvania, Roger attended Middlebury College where he majored in History and American Literature. Upon graduation, having been in ROTC, he completed infantry training

at Fort Benning, Georgia and Military Intelligence Officer training at Fort Holabird, Baltimore. He was then deployed to Korea. He served there for a year until being awarded with an International Fellows Scholarship to attend Columbia University where he spent two years and earned a Master's in International Affairs. After some time in Washington D.C. at Job Corps (one of the main War on Poverty programs); then the Small Business Administration; followed by Booz, Allen and Hamilton, Roger joined the relatively new, at the time, *Columbia Association (CA)* as *Director of Human Services*.

At CA, Roger met and worked with one of his mentors, **Jim Rouse**, *Founder of Columbia*, a planned community with a blend of residential, office and retail

establishments. Columbia's population today is over 100,000 people. Some of Rouse's well-known quotes include, "Profit is always a byproduct of value," and "It's as hard to do a little thing well, so you might as well do a big thing well." Over time, Rouse affected Roger's view on business, and those lessons would come into play years later. During his time at CA, Roger entered the Loeb Fellowship at Harvard and began auditing courses there, as well as speaking to students in the School of Design about the groundbreaking things CA was doing. Soon after, a perfect storm of circumstances created Roger's entrance into the health and fitness club industry, and that's what the rest of this cover story will be about.

(See **Roger Ralph** Page 10)



Roger Ralph

## Jim Worthington

### One Busy Guy!

By: Norm Cates

**JIM WORTHINGTON**, Owner of **The Newtown Athletic Club (NAC)** in **Newtown, Pennsylvania**, and incoming **IHRSA Chairman, effective July 1st**, has been one busy guy! Here's a little run down on what Jim has been up to:

On **May 22, 2018**, the **Right to Try Bill** was passed by the **House of Representatives in Washington, DC**. This bill was **first passed in the U.S. Senate (S 204) in August, 2017**. It finally passed the **House** and was signed into

**law by President Trump on Wednesday, May 30, 2018.**

**JIM WORTHINGTON** had put all his resources and connections behind supporting this bill because of his friendship with **MATT BELINA**, a member of **Jim's NAC**, who suffers from **ALS**, a terminal illness giving him 2 - 5 years to live. Jim first met Matt in 2015 when he joined the NAC. Shortly thereafter, Jim began raising money at his club for **Matt's Mission** to support **Augie's Quest and ALS TDI research**, and they've continued to support **Augie's** (See **Jim Worthington** Page 8)

## Modern Club Architecture and Design

### Featuring Interviews With Rudy Fabiano and Bruce Carter

By: Justin Cates

#### Part II

In **Part I** of our 2-part cover story on modern club architecture and design, **Rudy Fabiano** and **Bruce Carter** discussed many of the aspects required in the detail-oriented field of club architecture of design. There are many things to consider with every project before you ever get to the stage of picking actual design elements, materials and finishes. This month, in

**Part II**, Rudy and Bruce will discuss those design elements, materials and finishes. I invite you to read on.

**Conclusion of Club Insider's May Interview With Rudy Fabiano, Principal, Fabiano Designs**

**Club Insider (C.I.)** - To close this interview, let's talk about some top level modern design principles. First, please discuss the various spaces of a typical multipurpose facility design.

(See **Architecture & Design** Page 26)

## Inside the Insider: Edition #294

- Exercise IS Medicine! - By: Mike Alpert
- Inside Instinctive Insights - Client Spotlight: WestFit Clubs - By: Deneen Laprade
- The Onboarding Process as a Sales, Retention and Referral Tool - By: Karen Woodard-Chavez
- Putting the Service Back Into Sales - By: Casey Conrad
- What Are the Elements of a Legal Contract? - By: Paul R. Bedard, Esquire
- Gym Owner's "Fat and Ugly" Sign Gains Fans, Avoids Fine - By: Paul Steinbach
- US Fitness Receives Majority Investment From Delos Capital and HRS Management

- Crunch Fitness Launches Strengthened By Heroes Campaign
- Blink Fitness Promotes Two Key Players; Names Todd Magazine CEO
- NFPT Partners With MS Fitness Challenge to offer New MS Fitness Training Course
- Genesis Health Clubs Acquire All Kansas City-area World Gym Locations
- ClubCorp Announces Leadership Transition
- Attend the 2018 IHRSA Institute
- And, of Course, *Norm's Notes*

## Norm's Notes

■Hello Everybody! This is your Club Insider Publisher and Tribal Leader checking in with our 294th Monthly Edition. Yahoo! This is clearly proof there is a GOD!

■Is America a great country, or what? In case you wonder to yourself why I write these words over and over for you every month, the answer to the question is simply: I LOVE The United States of America!!!

■Here's an important Note for you. Please read it all. In case you didn't know this, our Club Insider Archive Library now has 294 monthly editions of Club Insider with over 9,500 pages. IF you're a Paid Subscriber, you have access to all of it! That's right! For just \$89 a year, you receive 12 printed editions of Club Insider, PLUS 24-hour digital access to over 9,500 pages of Club Insider editions. Trust me when I say that, IF you're new to our industry and you want to learn all you can about this great industry as fast as you can, make this small investment of just \$89 for one year, or \$149 for two years and you simply cannot go wrong. PLUS, we provide an unconditional money-back guarantee. If you're not happy with Club Insider after you've invested in a paid subscription, we'll refund your moola. So, folks, check the cover of this month's edition. IF the copy you receive in the mail says "Promotional Copy" on the address label, you're not a

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■On May 22, 2018, the Right to Try Bill was passed by the House of Representatives in Washington, DC. This bill was first passed in the Senate (S 204) in August 2017. Now, it has finally passed the House and was signed by President Trump on May 30, 2018. JIM WORTHINGTON has put all his resources and connections behind supporting this bill because of his connection to MATT BELINA, a member of his Newtown Athletic Club (NAC) who suffers from ALS, a terminal illness giving him 2 - 5 years to live. Jim first met Matt in 2015 when he joined the NAC. The club began raising money for Matt's Mission to support Augie's Quest and ALS TDI research, and they've continued to support Augie's Quest hugely as AUGIE and LYNNE NIETO press on with their fight to beat ALS once and for all! Check out the Article on Page #3.

■U.S. Fitness, led by Co-Chairmen, KIRK and JOHN GALIANI, and President, JOHN CRISTIANO, has received a majority investment in their company from DELOS CAPITAL, a leading private equity

firm, with HRS Management, the family office of Apollo Management Co-Founder JOSHUA HARRIS, investing along Delos. There's a lot of moola getting ready to flow as the Galiani's say they plan a lot of club growth that will create 2,500+ jobs over the next five years, and they will invest \$50 million in club improvements, new equipment and new clubs over each of next two years! Check out the Press Release on Page #6, and Stay Tuned!

■World Health Edmonton Canada, Fresh Fit Foods and Tru Ride Cycle Studio has been acquired by the owners of World Health Canada, Spa Lady (Edmonton and Calgary) and Bankers Hall Club. The alignment between the companies brings 24 Alberta fitness clubs under one ownership group and provides a platform to increase convenience for members and deliver new and unique health and fitness offerings. Fresh Fit Foods makes healthy eating easy and convenient, by offering fresh, healthy, ready-to-eat meals at all locations. And, the company produced press release indicated, "The Tru Ride Cycle Studio is Edmonton's first indoor boutique cycle studio and offers members a luxurious and immersive cycling experience. In the future, the Company plans to expand these offerings to other locations." World Health now has clubs in Edmonton and Calgary.

■The Annual Club Industry Conference



Norm Cates

and Trade Show, to be held October 24 -26 in Chicago is rapidly approaching! If you've not made your plans to be there yet, then please join me as it's time to start doing what I'm doing today... booking air fare, hotel rooms and planning my conference schedule. Check out [www.clubindustry.com](http://www.clubindustry.com).

■NFL Football fans nationwide are probably as saddened as I am that DWIGHT CLARKE, the San Francisco Forty Niners wide receiver who made that all-world fingertip catch and game-winning touchdown against the Dallas Cowboys on January 10, 1982, has passed away from

(See Norm's Notes Page 7)

### About Club Insider

## CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF TRUST

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# Exercise IS Medicine!

By: **Mike Alpert**

When you write a monthly article for any publication, you must constantly be thinking about what your next topic will be and what you can write that will hopefully motivate and encourage people to think about how they might incorporate some of it into their own business/life. The intent is to build a following of people who are inspired to really make a difference for others.

This month, The Claremont Club did something that has made an impact on all 260 staff: we hired our *first quadriplegic Manager, Hal Hargrave*. I have written about Hal many times over the past 11 years, as he is such a special young man who I admire and respect so very much. What he has done in his young life has been an example and model for so many people. In 2008, Hal was the *Founder of The Be Perfect Foundation*, a non-profit 501C(3) that was founded to help people with Spinal Cord Injuries. In January of this year, I hired Hal as our *Education and Marketing Supervisor of The Perfect Step*, which is our Spinal Cord and Paralysis Center.

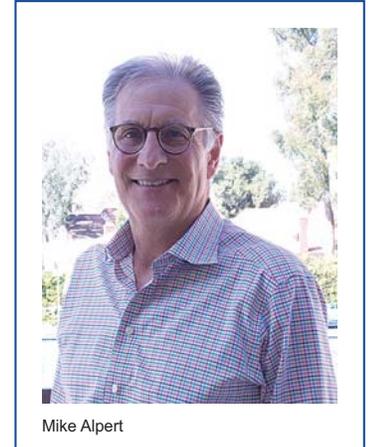
Watching him work with the Specialists, Aides and Administrator and how he interacts with our clients, it was an easy decision to promote him to *Director of the Center*. He is intelligent (he has received his Master's degree from The University of La Verne), articulate, passionate and dedicated to our club and to helping heal others. And, he is respected by everyone on our team. Hal's wheelchair has not been a barrier for him, and it certainly has not been for us. As a matter of fact, I wish we had 100 Hals.

Have you ever thought about what it means to be an inclusive club? Not just for your members, but also because of your culture. What does it say about your company? What do you get out of helping forge a career path for someone who has been challenged by a physical or mental disability? How does giving hope and possibilities back to someone change who you are. And, are you in this business to truly change lives and do you live it every day?

Yesterday, **Linda Johnson** came to see me. Linda has *Stage 4 Metastatic*

*Cancer* and went through our *Living Well after Cancer program* in May of 2011. She has been our Ambassador for many years and was in our documentary, *Exercise is Medicine*. I hadn't seen her in several months, but she came in to wish me a happy birthday (June 7) and to tell me about how much the Metastatic Cancer Support Group has grown here at the club and how much it has meant to people who attend it. She leads this group and also another one at City of Hope in Duarte, California about 24 miles from us. She is a remarkable person who has inspired so many members and staff over the years.

I write about this to show you that it does not need to be intimidating or unclear how to begin a program for people with chronic injuries or chronic illnesses. You can start small with a support group or you can hire someone with a physical challenge, even if it is only for 3 - 4 hours a week. We have hired people to read stories to children or to greet our members at the front desk. What does 3 - 4 or even 10 hours a week cost your club? And, what is the return on staff and member retention?



Mike Alpert

Your culture is what makes the difference. Exercise IS Medicine, and it is proven out in many different ways.

*(Mike Alpert is the CEO and President of The Claremont Club in Claremont, California, and he can be reached at malpert@claremontclub.com)*

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## US Fitness Receives Majority Investment From Delos Capital and HRS Management

**MCLEAN, VA** - US Fitness, a leading operator of high-amenity, high-value health and fitness clubs across the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast United States, announced that it has received a majority investment from Delos Capital, a leading private equity firm, with HRS Management, the family office of Apollo Management Co-Founder Joshua Harris, investing alongside Delos.

*Co-Chairmen Kirk and John Galiani and President John Cristiano* continue to own a significant interest in the company, and together with senior management, will drive the strategic direction and day-to-day operations of US Fitness. New Evolution Ventures has sold its interest in US Fitness as part of the transaction. The financial terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

"We are very proud of the business we have built at US Fitness, and we could not be more excited about our future with Delos and HRS as we accelerate our growth," said Kirk Galiani. The US Fitness portfolio includes 46 club locations encompassing a total of over 2.5 million square feet. "The success of US Fitness is driven by many passionate people dedicated to inspiring members and delivering the ultimate fitness experience. We are thrilled to work with our new

partners to bring our industry leading clubs to more communities around the country," added John Galiani.

US Fitness will be opening six new clubs in 2018 in Maryland, Coastal Virginia and Atlanta, and with the new investment, the company plans to add five to six clubs each year over the next five years. The company's brands include 30 Onelife Fitness, 11 Sport & Health and five Crunch Fitness locations. With these expansion plans, US Fitness expects to create over 2,500 new jobs over the next five years and will invest \$50 million in club improvements, new equipment, and new clubs over the next two years.

"Delos could not be more pleased to partner with US Fitness and HRS in this investment," said **Matthew Constantino**, *Founder of Delos Capital*. "By all metrics, US Fitness represents a best-in-class company and management team, and together we have identified a host of exciting opportunities to drive further value."

Prior to founding US Fitness, Kirk and John Galiani owned Gold's Gym International. In just five years, the brothers grew the largest full-service health club chain in the world by adding 200 new franchise and 38 company-owned locations before selling the company.

## ...Norm's Notes

continued from page 4

**the dreaded killer...** ALS. Dwight Clarke, the author of what has become known in pro football lore as "The Catch" died on **June 4, 2018 of ALS. Dwight Clarke was only 61**, and he passed away a little over a year after disclosing in March, 2017 that he had **Lou Gehrig's Disease**, also known as ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis).

■The annual IHRSA Institute is set for **July 31st - August 3rd** at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, N.C.

If you're making our great industry your life's work I urge you to give serious consideration to attending this annual learning experience because being there will advance your leadership skills and help you build lifelong industry relationships, to name just a couple of the Institute's many benefits. Here are the names of the "Who's Who in the club business Faculty" for the IHRSA Institute: **DENISE RYAN, Professional Trainer & Author, FireStar; BILL McBRIDE, President & CEO, Active Wellness & BMC3; BRENT DARDEN, CEO, Brent Darden Consulting; ALLISON FLATLEY, Industry Consultant, and**

**Director of Industry Relations and Brand Ambassador, IHRSA; ALAN LEACH, Group General Manager, West Wood Clubs IRELAND; CHRIS STEVENSON, Owner, Stevenson Fitness; RICK CARO, President, Management Vision, Inc. and IHRSA Founder; HELEN DURKIN, J.D. Executive Vice President of Public Policy, IHRSA; JAROD COGSWELL, General Manager, VillaSport Beaverton and Founder, Enterprise Athlete, Inc.; MARK MILLER, COO, Merritt Clubs; MICHELE MELKERSON-GRANRYD, M.Ed. General Manager, Castle Hill Fitness; ALBERT SEGARS, Ph.D. UNC**

**Kenan-Flagler Business School; and SRIDHAR BALASUBRAMANIAN, Ph.D. - UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School.** Check out the Institute Ad on Page #29.

■IHRSA's 2018 Global Report is out and full of facts and figures. It's one of the many benefits of IHRSA Membership. To join IHRSA, go to [www.ihrsa.org](http://www.ihrsa.org).

■World Gym International and Winfit Enterprises announced the departure of long-time key executive and industry veteran, **BILL WINDSCHEIF**. Bill joined the (See Norm's Notes Page 8)

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- Private Health Club Owner Client of Two Sites in the Midwest, U.S.

"I highly recommend Bill McBride/BMC3 on all challenges club operators face with their business. He relates well with the on-site team, ownership and is collaborative in delivering best practices. His expertise, authenticity, integrity and follow-through are beyond reproach. I trust him greatly."

- Private Health Club Owner Large Commercial Club in the Pacific Northwest, U.S.

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## ...Norm's Notes

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World Gym family in the summer of 2009 and helped grow the brand for nearly nine years as **Director of Operations and Vendor Programs**. "Bill has been a champion to World Gym. Among his many valued contributions, he developed the vendor program, helped plan and execute several international franchise conventions and provided sales, marketing and operational support to World Gym locations. We appreciate his contributions to the World Gym brand and wish him continued success in his future endeavors," said **GUY CAMMILLERI, CEO of World Gym International**. Best of luck, Bill, as you move on.

■ Here in the ATL, a true mecca for all

kinds of health, racquet and sports clubs AND studios, the opening of "**Motion Stretch Studio**" has been announced. The Atlanta Journal Constitution article by **BECCA J.G. GODWIN** commented: "During 30-minute private sessions, a stretch coach applies pressure on eight myofascial trigger points, which releases tension, reinvigorates the body, improves range of motion and frees the fascia. The sessions, customized based on the client's lifestyle, are intended to improve posture, flexibility and fitness levels." Godwin goes on to point out: "Stretch coaches are licensed massage therapists or certified athletic trainers. Coaches must complete a training course, pass an evaluation exam and receive continuous training." A Motion Stretch Studio was introduced here in **Cobb County** last year, and the company has also opened facilities in **Massachusetts**

and Texas. And, the aforementioned new Buckhead location in Atlanta is slated to open on Roswell Road on June 22nd.

■ This from **Hilton Head Island, South Carolina**. The **Professional Pickleball Registry (PPR)**, the newly formed subsidiary of **Professional Tennis Registry (PTR)**, announces it has signed a partnership agreement with **USA Pickleball Association (USAPA)** to be the **Official Education and Certification Partner of the USAPA**. The multi-year agreement will be a tremendous benefit to thousands of coaches who want to add or enhance their coaching skills and become certified in pickleball.

■ Justin and I want to say **THANK YOU** for reading **Club Insider!**

■ **God bless our troops, airmen and sailors worldwide and keep them safe. Thank you, Congratulations and Welcome Home to all of our troops who've served in Iraq, Afghanistan and around the world. God bless America's Policemen and Women and keep them safe. God bless you, your family and your club(s). God Bless America!**

*(Norm Cates, Jr. is a 40+ year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. Cates is the Founder and Publisher of Club Insider, now in its 25th year of publication. Cates was IHRSA's First President, and a Co-Founder with Rick Caro and five others, in 1981. In 2001, IHRSA honored Cates with its DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award, one of its highest honors. In 2017, Cates was honored with Club Industry's Lifetime Achievement Award. Cates can be reached by phone at 770-635-7578 or email at Norm@clubinsideronline.com)*

## ...Jim Worthington

continued from page 3

**Quest hugely as AUGIE and LYNNE NIETO pressed on with their valiant fight to beat ALS once and for all.**

As good luck would have it, **Jim had also been nominated by President Donald J. Trump to serve on his President's Council on Sports, Fitness and Nutrition**, and Jim was scheduled to be in Washington D.C. with the President when he introduced the Council at his **May 30th White House Event** entitled: "**The White House Sports and Fitness Day**." The event was hosted by the President and featured youth sports teams from across the nation playing games on the White House South Lawn with the members of the President's Council while the President addressed the group and then mingled with the crowd (See **Photo on This Page**). Jim brought two teams from **Bucks County, Pennsylvania** to meet the President and the other luminaries on the Council, such as **HERSHEL WALKER, MARIANO RIVERA and MISTY-MAY TRAENOR**.

Long before these events happened on May 30th, Jim had realized

that, although raising money for ALS research was crucially important, *he also felt there may be more to do*, and he asked Matt *what else could be done* to improve his situation. Matt mentioned the **Right to Try Bill**, which at that time, approximately three years ago, was not officially introduced in the halls of Congress. It was at that moment that Jim decided to work to pass the legislation, and with almost naïve enthusiasm dove into the endeavor never realizing that bills like this take many years to pass into law, *if ever*. **Since then, together with Matt Bellina, Jim Worthington has been a leading national advocate for this legislation.**

The **Right to Try Act**, which bears Matt Bellina's name, now allows terminally ill patients in America to access experimental treatments which have **passed FDA Phase 1 Trials** but are not yet fully approved. This law gives any terminally ill individuals hope and the control over their own life without interference from the government. Nonetheless, there are checks and balances built into this bill to protect patients, physicians and pharmaceutical companies providing the drugs. After almost three years of advocacy

under the umbrella of **Mr. Worthington's Have a Heart Foundation**, the bill landed on the President's desk where it was signed on May 30th. "This is perhaps the most profound and life changing endeavor of my lifetime thus far and is the culmination of much blood, sweat and tears on the part of a small group of patients, their families and a handful of dedicated advocates. I am humbled to be counted among those who were instrumental in making this happen," explained Jim Worthington.

The **Right to Try Bill** was first introduced by **Senator RON JOHNSON of Wisconsin** and co-sponsored by **Senator MIKE DONNELLY of Indiana**. The House version of the bill was introduced and co-sponsored by **Representative ANDY BIGGS of Arizona** and **Representative BRIAN FITZPATRICK of Pennsylvania** (See **Photo on This Page**). Over the many months of lobbying and advocacy, Mr. Worthington traveled to Washington DC many times to personally meet with legislators and to support Matt Bellina as he testified in several Congressional hearings on the matter.

In the case of Matt Bellina, his hope is to now be able to receive a drug,

formerly only available in Israel, which has demonstrated a reduction of the progression of ALS in other patients! Under the new **Right to Try Law**, this drug could be administered to him in the United States.

"**May 30, 2018 was a great day in our nation for the rights of our terminally ill citizens!**" said Jim Worthington.

**Sincere Thanks and Appreciation to LINDA MITCHELL, the Director of Public and Government Relations for the NAC**, for her very kind assistance in production of this article.

*(Norm Cates, Jr. is a 40+ year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. Cates is the Founder and Publisher of Club Insider, now in its 25th year of publication. Cates was IHRSA's First President, and a Co-Founder with Rick Caro and five others, in 1981. In 2001, IHRSA honored Cates with its DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award, one of its highest honors. In 2017, Cates was honored with Club Industry's Lifetime Achievement Award. Cates can be reached by phone at 770-635-7578 or email at Norm@clubinsideronline.com)*



Jim Worthington, Matt and Caitlin Bellina and Representative Brian Fitzpatrick



Jim Worthington Speaking With President Donald J. Trump on the White House Lawn

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## ...Roger Ralph

continued from page 3

Before moving into our in-depth interview with Roger, though, let me add these personal thoughts: Roger Ralph is as humble of a person as I've ever gotten the chance to meet and speak with. Raised by a good, hardworking family who instilled the values of fairness and equality, Roger has never faltered from those amiable qualities. Looking back on his successes, Roger fully credits staff and not himself for leading the businesses he was associated with to those heights. Now, in retirement, he still devotes time, the most important asset of all, to the future of society, our children.

So, in the words of my father, this month, I encourage you to get a beverage of your choice, sit back, relax and enjoy the following read, as we interview Roger Ralph, a true club pioneer, veteran and gentleman.

### An In-Depth Interview With Roger Ralph

**Club Insider (C.I.)** - Growing from 25,000 to 120,000+ square feet, and recognized as a Top 5 Club by IHRSA, *Bel Air Athletic Club* became a model for family-oriented clubs. Please tell us about that experience.

**Roger Ralph (RR)** - We built it in 1980, and it started out with about 15 employees. We had a dirt parking lot because we didn't have the money to pave it. And, we got very lucky in that we were able to acquire 1.5 acres behind the club to build a swimming pool. Ironically, the owner of that land was an owner of a Holiday Health Spa. In the end, we ended up with about eight acres. We had Bel Air for 20 years and sold to Wellbridge in 2000. At that time, we had about 350 full- and part-time employees and one of the largest club memberships in the country. It really became a very large, what I will always call, family- and community-oriented health club. But, if it had not been for my Columbia Association

(CA) experience and learning that there was a tremendous need for getting as much as you could under one roof for the entire family at a reasonable price --Columbia had a tremendous number of facilities in a program called the Package Plan-- I'm not sure we would have succeeded.

Even though we essentially started off as a racquetball club with a small fitness center, we knew we wanted to add swimming and have a significant child care program, which we did. So, CA had a big influence on that. We also had the good fortune to realize that it was very important to cater to families and women. We felt that women were key influencers on buying decisions, and early on, Bel Air had a Women's Gym that was popular with our female members.

From the beginning, we were active in the community, and I think over time we were the largest business contributor to the Boys and Girls Clubs in Harford County and the largest contributor to the county's sexual assault center as well. We were always active in the community and not just because it's good business. We believed it was important to run our business so that it was truly a major community asset, for sure something easier to do in a small community.

Another thing, which is still true today for IHRSA and IHRSA colleagues, is that the people in our industry are tremendously helpful. In truth, before getting into business, I knew little about the racquetball and health club business. To this day, I remember spending time with **Alan Schwartz** and the late **Dale Dibble**. A lot of other people were a tremendous help, and my takeaway message was: *Kick the tires, get out to talk to people and most people who are good-spirited will help you.* So, we had a lot of help.

I also think it helped that I was scared to death. I hadn't been in business before and wasn't sure I could add 2 + 2 (laughing). A little bit of fear was not the

worst thing. Most successful entrepreneurs and a lot of my friends in the industry are tremendously confident and make decisions very quickly. I've got good instincts, but as a lot of friends would vouch, it takes me a long time to make a decision because I tend to be careful in terms of analyzing things. For me, that's been a pretty good strategy.

Finally, one of the legacies of Bel Air was tremendous emphasis on growing the staff. In the late '70s, early '80s, so many business books were written about customer service and the importance of the customer. That's a theme that has continued; you can't succeed unless you are customer service-oriented. That's a given, but I think some things were underappreciated:

1. If you work on hiring the right staff and helping them grow, the customer service stuff is natural and falls into place. So, if I had to pick between focusing on the staff or focusing on the customer, I would focus on the staff.

2. **Marcus Buckingham** has spoken at various industry conferences, and the Roundtables are all familiar with him. His seminal work with **Don Clifton**, *'Now, Discover Your Strengths,'* really helped people figure out what they were naturally good at. We put a lot of emphasis on letting people use their natural talents. And, if they didn't know them, helping them uncover them.

3. We expected a lot.

**C.I.** - Looking back, what were your Top 3 reasons for success?

**RR** - 1. In 1980, when Elaine and I opened the Bel Air Racquet Club and Nautilus Center (that was the full name), there was little nearby health club competition and certainly not one consciously serving families. The YMCA had not yet entered the market place. Beyond that, even though

the club was initially only 25,000 square feet, its opening in a small community was a very big deal. I realized this when we held an event at a local restaurant introducing Rich Dauer, who was then the Orioles second baseman and our guest racquetball pro. Much to our pleasant surprise, 400 people showed up.

2. Year-in and year-out, we continuously invested in the club and made capital and program improvements very evident to members and appreciated by them and staff.

3. I think that, if you spoke with staff who worked at Bel Air, then you would hear them say: Regardless of position, they were part of our efforts to grow the club and make it better always. Our revenue and profitability increased every single year.

**C.I.** - How often did you do major renovations?

**RR** - On the ground, it seemed like we were always renovating, especially since Bel Air grew from 25,000 square feet to 120,000 square feet over 20 years. Some things that come to mind instantly are:

- Conversion of six racquetball courts to other uses;
- Adding a massage and nail center above two of these courts;
- Expanding and redoing the locker rooms;
- Adding tenant space for a sports medicine center and a cardiologist;
- Getting rid of the café on the upper level of the club and using the space for a computer lab for kids; and
- A Pilates studio for adults.

Let me add that it's hard to imagine any good club wanting to stand the test of time not making changes and improvements regularly.

**C.I.** - How did you keep market share in the (See **Roger Ralph** Page 12)



Baacyard Clubhouse at Bel Air Athletic Club



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## ...Roger Ralph

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face of competition?

**RR** - Continuous capital, program and member service improvements. The fact that we had terrific programs for kids, including a summer camp and computer lab; a big-time dance program that Elaine initiated; a indoor and outdoor aquatics complex and a separate 20,000 square-foot Kids Gym were big assets in steadily growing market share. All of this reflected positive energy.

**C.I.** - During the years you were operating Bel Air, YMCAs, JCCs, etc. everywhere were provided with significant advantages over commercial clubs in the form of tax-exempt status. What are your thoughts on that, then and now?

**RR** - On the negative energy side: For five years, Bel Air Athletic Club and a coalition of Harford County Clubs we put together fought the Y's plan to build a huge complex in our market area. Eventually, the Y did build a nice facility, but its scope was reduced. As a result of our efforts, they agreed in writing to not put in swimming facilities for another five years. What I say here, frankly, is an over-simplification. The threat was especially real for us because, in many ways, we were like a Y, but we paid taxes and could not get the kind of beneficial financing in the form of public bonds or capital donations.

I spent a lot of time on the fair competition issue locally and nationally. And, I testified to a House Small Business committee on the issue on behalf of IHRSA. While I am glad we fought, especially since, at that time, a general perception was that the Y's goal was to build and operate in middle and upper income areas because member revenues would be far easier to obtain in those areas. My perception today is that the Y's across the country are promoting their service efforts and doing

a far better job of it, which makes it even more difficult to 'win' fair competition battles with them.

Years and years ago, I remember talking to **Augie Nieto** about this issue, and Augie said, 'Just do better; it will work out.' In hindsight, I am not sure whether we would have done much different, but the effort took an extraordinary amount of time away from running the club. We did a lot of education in the community about fair competition, and the fact that we were so involved in the community helped us. Back to Augie's point, which is a good one for the industry, it might be important to learn where Y's or public community recreation centers are a factor in one's market and how much real difference they have made in the membership and revenues of good clubs. A Y did get built in Harford County. I do not have the facts, but I think the negative impact was less than my fellow club owners in Harford County anticipated, me included. Perhaps that would be a good national research study for the industry.

### Hockessin Athletic Club

**C.I.** - In 2007, you helped Bob Carpenter develop and open the Hockessin Athletic Club, a 110,000 square-foot facility and the only one in the United States surrounded by a State park. Let's discuss that. First, were you 'retired' after you sold Bel Air? If so, how did Hockessin come about?

**RR** - As I mentioned, we sold Bel Air to Wellbridge in 2000. We moved down to Maryland's eastern shore. We live right across the Bay Bridge, but going from the western shore of Maryland to the east shore is a bit like going into a different world. My social life down here is that I'm very big at the dump and the K-Mart Pharmacy (laughing). The truth is we're blessed to be in a truly beautiful spot. And with that said, speaking for myself, when I get asked by friends about retiring from the health and fitness club industry,

I always say that, while I do not miss the problems or business anxieties, one does miss the relations with staff and knowing you have had a small part in their growth and what they've accomplished. I get why professional athletes retire from the game most often say it's not the game they miss the most, but it's their teammates, the locker room routines before and after a game, etc. After we sold Bel Air, in truth, I missed 'the action.'

It turned out to be timely when an old friend, **Cal Ripken, Jr.**, retired from baseball, and in 2001, asked me for some help with his businesses and starting a foundation to honor his Dad. I spent 2 - 3 years behind the scenes working with Cal and helping him get the foundation off the ground. I am proud to say the *Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation (CRSF)* is a \$30 million national foundation serving kids living in disadvantaged neighborhoods, operating in 43 states and 500+ cities working with local youth partners (eg, Boys and Girls Clubs and law enforcement agencies.) A key original strategic initiative was to help build professional level multipurpose synthetic surface, low maintenance parks. To date, CRSF has built 78 parks that allow children to play in a safe, clean environment while creating transformational change in surrounding communities. In truth, while I helped a little in getting the Foundation off the ground and remain on the Board, its success is the result of Cal's deep involvement. It has an exceptional non-profit CEO in Steve Salem; present Board Chair, Mark Butler, who founded Ollie's Bargain Outlet, a public company; and past Chairs Robbie Callaway, Frank Kelly and Jay Baker. And, it has a 40-member Board that contributes both talent and experience, and it sincerely cares about helping kids thru CRSF, along with the best staff in a non-profit organization I've ever known.

As many of your readers know, *the health and fitness club industry is tremendously addictive.* Most people

who work in it truly love it and successful, engaged owners even more so. There are great friendships in it, and it inherently does great things for people. Also, when you are an owner or are heavily involved in improving the club daily, over time, you get to experience the ability to make an impact, the ability to adapt to new circumstances and working with a team to overcome unexpected challenges. In short, despite this great gig with Cal, I still had 'an itch' to be back in the health and fitness club industry.

**Bob Carpenter**, whom I knew, and who had a small club in a residential area outside of Wilmington, asked me to come take a look at his *Pike Creek Club*. I did some consulting for him, and I probably made it worse (laughing). But, I finally said to him, 'Bob, for what's it's worth, if you want to have fun in this business, earn a decent living and employ quite a few people, you can't do it in this location.' I said that I believed the Bel Air Athletic Club model was a pretty good one given the demographic profile of the area, but it would be very hard because 10 - 12 acres would be needed. I thought it unlikely Bob could find an appropriate property to buy. Much to my surprise, he said he found a property and asked my opinion of the location. Although it had been the home to a defunct mushroom processing plant and was now identified as a 'brownfield site,' I thought the demographics were good (*Rick Caro confirmed this*), and I told Bob that I thought this could work.

We started the planning in 2003, and it was a very complicated project because of its past as a mushroom processing plant. Hervey Lavoie helped us in the early days with some site recommendations. And, I had worked with Rocky Construction and an architect there named Phil McWilliams. They probably did 30 projects for us at Bel Air, so I had a lot of faith in them. Unlike Bel Air, though, (See **Roger Ralph** Page 14)



Hockessin Athletic Club



Flags for Veterans at Hockessin Athletic Club

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## ...Roger Ralph

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Hockessin Athletic Club (HAC) came out of the ground in one fell swoop. It was a **\$30 million, 110,000 square-foot project**. It was scary in the sense that you had to hit on all cylinders because we had fairly high interest rates and were highly leveraged. Fortunately, the club was successful out of the gate. It had a terrific staff. Looking back, I suspect my contribution was that I had made a lot of mistakes in the past, so I helped make sure we didn't make them at Hockessin. It helped that Bob was able to sell Pike Creek and that many members joined during a successful presale which we ran out of an historic tavern not far from the club to be.

So, that's how I got involved in Hockessin. I was there from 2003 until 2012 when Bob bought me out. It's funny: I was in my 60s, and during the week, I was sleeping in the apartment above Bob's garage. It was like I was back in college. Again, it's the addictive attraction to the industry.

**C.I.** - What was the original concept, and how did you know there was a need for such a large club at the time?

**RR** - The original concept was, in fact, to copy Bel Air's model. Once we dove into

the demographics, it was pretty clear that the market area was a very good one given its population base, income and education levels, and a lack of family-oriented clubs in the area. While I thought this to be the case, the investment of dollars for a professional study was prudent. The result of the study by Rick Caro confirmed our driving assumptions.

Compared to Bel Air, there were some important differences between some of the things we ended up doing at Hockessin: Included in every family membership was the choice of once-a-week free classes in gymnastics, dance or martial arts. After I left, youth sports were substituted for gymnastics, and that proved to be a good decision. Also, HAC's café is hugely successful because of how we approached it. At the conclusion of every sale, we told the new member, 'be sure to use the café, because each month, you have a food credit.' I think it was \$10 for an individual; \$12 for a couple; and \$15 for a family.

**C.I.** - Please tell us a little bit about the club.

**RR** - Both the site design and the club design were very sound given it was previously a brownfield site, as well as the land we owned way back in Tweed's Park far from the main road. Having been able

to successfully negotiate with the Delaware Department of Transportation, which owned Tweed's park, we had the ability to share use of a parking deck, convert a storm water management area so it could be used as a playfield and create a continuous pathway around our property.

As for the building, we were very conscious of the ability to handle many children, parents and grandparents under one roof and have it all work. The truth is that most parents want to get a break from their kids (no matter how wonderful they are) and work out, but they want to make sure their kids are taken care of. We had family locker rooms and adult locker rooms. In the restaurant, we had separate spaces for families and adults. We had a very innovative 17,000 square-foot indoor aquatics complex with a lap pool and water slide. It had a roof that could be opened or closed, and that worked really well. Adjacent to the indoor complex, we had an outdoor pool complex. When I was there, this was only open in the warm weather months. Thanks to one of the industry groups, Bob picked up the idea of keeping it open year-round, and that, too, has worked very well.

Related to the community, from its opening, HAC has raised money for community causes. When it opened in May 2007, it made a substantial donation to the

local fire department. Since then, there has always been something going on to benefit local community organizations. After I left, HAC did something really significant that I believe will stand the test of time. It could have national potential and broad interest among IHRSA member clubs. They created a Veteran's Flag Day. Members would buy flags that would line the roadways and sidewalks up to the club. They probably raised \$25,000 - \$30,000, and that was for Veteran's Day. The funds went to something called *Operation Home Front*, which helped Veterans coming back who had injuries, needed transitional housing or help with bills. It was very nitty gritty, and the kind of thing that perhaps can be done in every community where a health club operates and is dealing with these same veterans' issues.

**C.I.** - In your opinion, what was your key contribution during your time at Hockessin?

**RR** - Other than having a lot of development experience, which enhanced our planning process and the end result, my biggest contribution to Hockessin was a constant emphasis on building and enhancing the culture of the club. The entire atmosphere, the energy of club, was evident the minute you walked  
(See **Roger Ralph** Page 16)

### Bob Carpenter, Owner of HAC, Comments...

**Club Insider (C.I.)** - When and how did you first meet Roger Ralph?

**Bob Carpenter (BC)** - I've been in the industry since 1988 and had met Roger briefly at the IHRSA shows but didn't know him well. Back in the spring of 2001, I called Roger (He had just sold his Bel Air Athletic Club) and asked him to come visit my old club (The Pike Creek Fitness Club) and give me his thoughts on



how I could improve it. It was a typical 1980s racquetball facility that had 40,000 square feet, and originally, 10 courts. By 2001, I think we were down to two. After looking at the club and market demographics, he suggested that, if I wanted to stay in the industry, I should find some land and build a large-scale, family-focused club like Bel Air.

**C.I.** - How did you both come together to work on the design and opening of HAC?

**BC** - I was able to find a 11.5-acre parcel in Hockessin, DE that was surrounded by a 35-acre state park. After Rick Caro's very positive market survey, and after spending more time together in the early planning stages, Roger realized he was still very passionate about the industry, and we decided to partner on the project.

**C.I.** - In his time at Hockessin, what were Roger's top contributions?

**BC** - Roger's experience was invaluable. With his help, we designed a modern version of the Bel Air Athletic Club in Hockessin, DE that caters to the family market. I would have never taken on such a huge project without his involvement, and I think at that stage in his career, he wouldn't have taken on a project like HAC without the Carpenter family's involvement. It was a perfect match.

**C.I.** - Anything else you would like our readers to know about Roger?

**BC** - Roger is a great friend and mentor. HAC would never have been possible without his involvement.

### John Peoples, GM of HAC, Comments...

**Club Insider (C.I.)** - In his time at Hockessin, what were the top contributions of Roger Ralph?

**John Peoples (JP)** - Roger's experience at his Bel Air Club was invaluable in helping to develop programming and offerings for HAC. Roger's penchant for thinking strategically and long-term was a great asset. Roger's wealth of industry contacts was very helpful in establishing a network of peers who can be accessed when evaluating projects or facing challenges.



**C.I.** - Anything else you would like our readers to know about Roger?

**JP** - Roger is a great friend and mentor. He also can't hit the breaking ball.

**C.I.** - Please tell us about some of your key market differentiators, such as your indoor/outdoor aquatics complex and child offerings.

**JP** - Our 17,000 square-foot indoor/outdoor aquatics complex has five pools, including a heated outdoor pool available year-round, warm water therapy pool, hot tub, indoor lap lanes and a zero-depth entry pool for families. Our children's offerings include two hours of free child care per day, before and after school care, a licensed preschool, summer camp and free youth sports and enrichment classes included with the membership.

**C.I.** - Please tell us more about your *Flags for Veterans* fund-raising initiative.

**JP** - Since 2014, we have partnered with Operation Homefront, which provides financial assistance to post 9/11 vets for a variety of needs. Each year, we reach out to vendors, members and staff to sponsor a flag that will be displayed on our walkway on Veterans Day. Typically, we sell around 1,000 flags, which creates quite an impression when members arrive in the morning. To date, we have raised nearly \$70,000 for the organization.

### Lisa Maguire, Marketing Director, Comments...

**Club Insider (C.I.)** - In his time at Hockessin, what were the top contributions of Roger Ralph?

**Lisa Maguire (LM)** - Roger's knowledge that he brought from Bel Air was invaluable. Our club model is perfect for our location and demographic. Roger was also very good at recognizing talents in our staff and helping to place them appropriately.



**C.I.** - Anything else you would like our readers to know about Roger?

**LM** - Roger has been a wonderful influence on me, both personally and professionally. His wisdom and insight have been helpful over the years in a number of ways, and I've always admired his passion for the industry.

**C.I.** - Please tell us some of the ways in which you market a mega-facility such as HAC and the demographics targeted with those initiatives.

**LM** - Tying everything we do up neatly with a bow can be a challenge, and I think any Marketing Director of a club our size would agree. We still do direct mail to drive foot traffic, but to save costs, we focus a lot of effort on email and social media. We do our best to target separate demographics with images that are appropriate for that segment, i.e. families see images of families, empty-nesters see images of the adult-only amenities, etc. We make a conscious effort to do this in emails, social media ads and direct mail. For the most part, our external marketing focuses on the facility and membership perks, while our internal advertising works to promote the many services and programs we offer.





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## ...Roger Ralph

continued from page 14

in and still apparent when you left. Bel Air had it. And, though I am biased, HAC does too and likely then some. They have a wonderful *General Manager* in **John Peoples** and a great *HR Director* in **Mike Givler**, who really understand the importance of an organization's culture and what needs to be done to make it exceptional. HAC is a very special place with talented giving people in place, and I am proud of my contribution in making it happen.

### Leadership and Education

**C.I.** - Please tell us more about your wife, Elaine, and her roles in the businesses over the years.

**RR** - First of all I am really blessed. Elaine is substantive and as beautiful on the inside as out. All my friends, Rick Caro especially, never tire of reminding me that I married up and how lucky I am, and the unfortunate part about that is it's true (laughing). When we started Bel Air, we literally put our life's savings in and were seriously at risk as we both signed personally on the bank loan. We didn't have much business experience, but our skills complemented each other. *Then, and today, with us the whole is greater than each part.* Elaine is extremely organized, is very thoughtful and gets beneath the surface on things. When we first opened the Bel Air Athletic Club, she did our books, did our marketing and got a terrific dance program started.

Elaine is definitely more private than I am, but to make a point, back in the early '80s, she ended up getting an Aerobics certification because we were getting some resistance from our Aerobics instructors who were saying things like, 'Why do we need to be certified? We've been to Jackie Sorensen; we know what we are doing.' Elaine understood the importance of certifications, so she went to school, came back and taught some classes. I don't think she was thrilled doing so, but she did it to make a point, and early on, every Aerobics instructor had to be certified.

We worked together for 13 years, raised three kids and moved three times. At the club, Elaine started the *Well Spring Center* in a separate space on the lower level of the club, and it had its own entrance to our parking lot. At the WellSpring Center, there was an acupuncture practice, a counseling practice and specialized physical therapy. Elaine organized all of that, and it was way ahead of its time. After 13 years of working together at Bel Air, Elaine went back to school at the *University of Maryland* and got her *Master's in Social Work*.

You may have a better idea about this, but I was trying to think of the couples who started businesses in this industry and made it work. I thought of **Ron and Sandy Franco**, **Scott and Beth Gillespie** and

**Mark and Debbie Eisenzimmer**. Really, not a lot come to mind, but I am sure they will all tell you that it's not easy to make that work. As I said, I feel fortunate that, for us, the whole has always been greater than each part. Sometimes, we approach things differently, but we absolutely share the same values. To me, that was a huge plus, and it was evident to the staff and the members. We got very lucky, and Bel Air would not have been successful without the *TWO of us*.

**C.I.** - That's a beautiful thing. What is Elaine up to these days?

**RR** - After Elaine retired from Bel Air and got her Master's, she was a social worker in a community mental health agency in Harford County, and later, in private practice for many years. She's now retired. We have six grandchildren and a very spoiled 4-year-old Australian Labradoodle who gets a lot of time and attention. Elaine's mom is 93 and lives nearby us, so like many people our age, she spends quite a bit of time with her. We are usually in Florida from January to April because we have a place on Longboat Key. In the winter, there are a lot of IHRSA folks spending time together, and that is fun and gratifying. Like me, each owes the industry a lot.

**C.I.** - Who were some of your key mentors over the years? How about those whom you've mentored?

**RR** - I was blessed with a terrific mom and dad, as well as a great brother. In terms of values, my dad was a very humble guy, always fair and honest, and owning a retail business, always a hard worker. He died at 67 and never got to see Bel Air. To say he'd be surprised that I got into business is an understatement. Unlike my dad, my mother was very outgoing and never had a problem talking. She was classy and fun, and folks liked her. My brother, Ron, and I have never forgotten one of her favorite

pieces of advice. *'Make a friend when you don't need them.'*

Later, **Jim Rouse** had a huge impact on me professionally. He taught me the importance of thinking big, having a vision and trying to do things better. Jim was definitely a visionary and very much committed to social causes in which I believed. For example, he started the Family Life Center in Columbia where anyone could get counseling, as all fees were on a sliding scale based on one's income, and before we moved from Columbia, I served as its President.

There were several industry people who really impacted me. **Will Phillips** and his Roundtable was a peak industry experience for me. Will is a great Roundtable leader. I am indebted to him for making me think more and think more deeply, and frankly, for the various books he had us read. As an entrepreneur, a lot of the stuff you do instinctively, then you read about it later and find out you're doing something right. Also, linking the academics and experiences from other clubs to what you are doing makes you a lot better. It was a gift being able to be a member of that. Some of my best buddies are from the Roundtable: **Larry Krieger**, **Ben Emdin**, **Spencer Garrett**...

Along with many, many other industry people, and you've heard this many times before, **John McCarthy** was a mentor and is a friend. John, by example, was just remarkable in almost every way. John and I still talk, and I feel fortunate for his friendship.

You asked me about whom I've mentored. I don't talk about this much, but a lot of other people do because there was an *ESPN E:60 Special* on this subject in 2010. It was called *Picking Up Butch*. In the early 1960s, when I was a sophomore at Middlebury, there was a snow storm. I had an old Plymouth Suburban, and I was driving from a football game to downtown. I saw a grandmother pushing a kid in a wheelchair.

I stopped the car and asked where they were going. They said, 'Downtown,' and I replied, 'I'm going downtown, would you like a ride?' So, I put the wheelchair in the back and put the grandmother and Butch in the car. Butch had Cerebral Palsy, and I found out he couldn't read. I began to tutor him and spent time with him, and when I graduated, other friends spent time with him.

In the process, the Middlebury Basketball team and Football team would pick up Butch before every home game and take him to the game, and this has been going on for over 50 years now. Along with the Middlebury Athletic Director, I am now a co-guardian of Butch. **Rick Riley**, who had been a writer at *Sports Illustrated* called it, 'One of the greatest college traditions ever.' In truth, when I talk about it, it's a classic case of something very small having unexpected consequences. It's the old stone in the still lake kind of thing. What a wonderful thing it is that the students have continued to help Butch, and everyone says the same thing. 'We get more out of it than Butchie.' So, Butchie was probably the first person that I mentored.

More recently, when I was working with Cal Ripken, Jr., I was an assistant baseball coach at an inner-city school in Baltimore. I befriended a 13-year old named Josh and sent him to a Summer Camp in Aberdeen, Maryland. He regards me as a mentor and friend, and this relationship has continued for sixteen years. I've also helped staff and the leaders of the Boys and Girls Clubs in Annapolis and Sarasota and do a little executive coaching there as a volunteer. I've got a lot of stories from those experiences, but in all those situations, you learn as much as you give. I've been very fortunate, and I enjoy it.

**C.I.** - Wow, that's very moving! Well, speaking of learning, let's talk about the importance of seeking to continue furthering one's education, whether via Roundtables, which you said were very important for you; conferences, which our industry has a plethora of; private study, etc. So, please take us through the importance of that in terms of career and life.

**RR** - That's a terrific question. There's a great quote by **Jane Addams**, *'The definition of a good social worker is someone who has one foot in the street and one foot in the library.'* I think that is good advice, whether your library now is the web, Google or whatever. You can always learn more, and it will make you better. I'm a big reader, and as I said, one of the great gifts Will gave us was suggesting really good and relevant books. Even though I'm retired, to this day, I still read a lot.

Related to conferences, one of the things we would always talk to staff about is picking up a few takeaways. That's helpful because you do end up remembering those things. Probably, the biggest thing for me is focusing on takeaways and

(See **Roger Ralph** Page 18)



L to R - Roger Ralph, Butch Varno and Middlebury Basketball Coach, Russ Reilly at Game in 2016

# Inside Instinctive Insights

## Client Spotlight: WestFit Clubs

By: Deneen Laprade

*WestFit Clubs, (fka Westford Racquet & Fitness Club)* was opened by the Shyjan family in 1970. In 1972, the family opened *The Westford Swim and Tennis Club*, 2.5 miles down the road from the fitness-based facility. Today, the Shyjan family and their clubs have served Westford and its surrounding communities for 45+ years. Those in the health and fitness club industry know the achievement this level of longevity represents. *General Manager, Patrick Duffy*, comments, "We have loyal members who've been with us for 30+ years. Local outreach is important to the Shyjan's, and for all this time, we've successfully maintained our core values."

WestFit is a 60,000 square foot, year-round club with a fitness center, five indoor hard courts and an indoor pool. This mature club is undergoing facility renovations, beginning with locker rooms, followed up by a 10,000 square foot expansion of the fitness center. Duffy explains, "In 2014, we embarked on a rebranding project that started with a fresh name, *WestFit Clubs*. The facilities were dated, and we needed a competitive brand. We knew it was time to reinvent ourselves and create a modern-day club that is understood for what it is in today's market. We tackled facility and programming renovations to reach our goal."

### The Challenges

With all the positive changes and improvements, Instinctive Insights wanted to know what challenges they faced along the way. According to Duffy, "It's *always* been about how to invent new marketing strategies and new ways to create new memberships, not just new bodies, but quality members." He continued saying, "Allocating marketing dollars that lead to ROI has always been a challenge. Times have changed. We knew we had to move away from our traditional print and paper strategies, but there was no clear direction for us to take."

Direct mail has always been part of the mix for WestFit Clubs, and over the years, Duffy has worked with multiple direct mail companies who, according to him, all lead with the same two questions: (1) What's your budget? And, (2) What are the mail routes? Duffy adds, "From there, a number was set, postcards were slung out there, and we waited to see what returned. Typically, not much, maybe two or three new members on a \$10,000 direct mail spend. Tracking where new members come from is difficult. We've struggled to know where and how to focus our efforts to drive membership, and we have been completely unable to quantify what's working."

### A Leap of Faith

The New England Fitness Community is small, connected and generous with successes and challenges. Patrick Duffy and the Shyjans are good friends with local *Weymouth Club Owners, Steve and Sally Goldman*, and *Jeff Linn, Executive Director*. In a casual conversation about marketing challenges, Jeff mentioned *Instinctive Insights*, suggesting learning about what they do. Duffy says, "Since we knew we were going to choose another direct mail company that year, I figured we had nothing to lose." He says he was, "a little skeptical at first." The concept that they can, "drill down to who has purchased a health club membership and who hasn't is really surprising to me." He gave the comprehensive *Market Penetration Study* that Instinctive Insights offers a shot.

"The information they came back with was unbelievable." After sharing WestFit Clubs' former and current member lists, the Instinctive Insights Team presented a robust predictive modeling report identifying the local non-members most likely to connect with WestFit Clubs and a strategy to engage. Duffy says, "The Instinctive Insights' process is like night and day when compared to all the other vendors I've worked with."

Duffy continues, "We usually did 3-4 direct mail campaigns a year and spoke with those vendors only at execution time. Instinctive Insights continuously follows up to refresh the data, so we know how each campaign performs and are ready for the next one. As a club operator, it's refreshing to work with a company that's genuinely interested in your bottom line. Instinctive Insights actually cares about us generating new members, and it's clear, based on our conversations with them that they feel a sense of ownership in our relationship."

### A Different Result

The effects of Instinctive Insights' data-driven approach are clear. Duffy explains, "We're six campaigns in, and to see the investment Instinctive Insights makes and the matches that come back is incredible. Retention is high because the right groups are being targeted. We clearly see what we're spending and know the return will last."

They're now spending about 25% of what they used to spend on direct mail and are realizing significant ROI with a 60% - 70% increase in memberships attributed to direct mail, as compared with previous vendors. Their most recent direct mail campaign produced 20 leads, of which 15 joined and the remaining five showed interest. "Our summer membership is about \$1,000. So, when 15 people join, we're getting \$15,000 in summer membership revenue, and we only spent

\$4,200 on the direct mail campaign."

Another noteworthy result is improved retention. Duffy explains, "50% of new members are now buying additional programming because we're sending relevant messages that target their interests. Retention rates are improving every day."

### Parting Words

Duffy concludes, "The main reason I'm

comfortable telling my club operator friends to consider Instinctive Insights is because, with these guys, you can be all-in or not. They're straightforward and encourage testing the product first. I know with confidence the Instinctive Insights Team will get my friends on the right path because they're honest about whether a campaign will work or not."

To learn more about Instinctive Insights, please visit [www.instinctiveinsights.com](http://www.instinctiveinsights.com).

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## ...Roger Ralph

continued from page 16

also how to engage. For example, if you go to a cocktail party or something, and particularly with men, we don't tend to ask a lot of questions. I've always felt that is how I learn. I'll drive people crazy sometimes because I ask so many questions. It's a way to get to know someone, and it also lets you establish relationships in a way that lets it become deeper.

Personally, Elaine and I follow the news and keep up to date with the things that are going on. I think my biggest

takeaway from all the back-and-forth and the extremism of today is the *importance of people talking*. For every single issue, there is a solution, and you've got to work through the details. You have to try to approach it in the spirit of good will.

**C.I.** - How did you first get involved with IHRSA? What roles did you serve? And, what has the IHRSA meant to you?

**RR** - I got involved with IHRSA because I knew, at the beginning, I was inexperienced and my knowledge pretty superficial. From the beginning, we went to every IHRSA Convention, started to talk about retention

and staff development as a speaker there, and over time, got to make friends with fellow club owners, especially those, like us, catering to families. I think that, in the late '90s, **Jim Gerber**, who was on the Board and owned the San Francisco Bay Club, asked me if I would be interested in joining the IHRSA Board. I said, 'Yes,' and did serve. It proved a gratifying experience.

At the time, the public perception of the industry was mixed. In many states, consumer complaints of health clubs were second only to those about car dealerships. Some of this had to do with the popular membership approach at the time of selling long-term contracts and viewing financing of these as a major revenue stream. While, today, a monthly dues approach is the norm, this was not the case then. When I was on the IHRSA Board, we did not have a code of ethics for the industry, and I was asked to Chair that committee and did so. It was important work that laid the foundation for the industry's formal code of ethics.

I also worked closely with IHRSA staff, particularly **Helen Durkin**, on fair competition and legislative issues. Even then, there were always state legislators wanting to place a sales tax on club membership sales.

My experience with IHRSA undoubtedly was one of the most enriching and satisfying professional and personal experiences of my life. Across the board, great people involved. It was exciting to work in a young, ever-evolving industry that was inherently doing good things for people, and best of all, getting the chance to develop lasting friendships with quality people.

I remember that I got a chance to encourage new initiatives like *Commit to Get Fit*, which I was involved with. By chance, I recently came across a photo of John McCarthy and myself on the White House lawn with Arnold Schwarzenegger and Barbara Bush in the background. We were invitees, but today, IHRSA's new Chair, **Jim Worthington**, is actually on the President's Council. Jim is very capable and should do great things in this arena, which will be good for the industry.

**C.I.** - What are your thoughts on the state of the health and fitness club industry today? In particular, how about the state of the industry with niche studios seemingly popping up on every corner?

**RR** - My response is predictable. It's a lot harder today. No matter your core approach, there are more and more folks out there wanting to take market share, and that trend will continue. The larger clubs like Bel Air or Hockessin and those in the Life Time Fitness chain are less vulnerable because of their scale. Also, the effective models of LA Fitness and Planet Fitness are less vulnerable because they are clear about their location criteria and how to control costs while serving large numbers.

So, the important question for

those entering the industry or those struggling or wanting to improve in ways that make a difference long term, is what elements are really common to your type of business if you want to have success? If you assume there, in fact, is a need in the marketplace for what you are offering, and you assume a nice facility and appropriate location, the single biggest differentiator is the personality, emotional intelligence qualities and knowledge of staff. Why, for example, are some physical therapy groups more successful than others? Why are a few personal trainers always way above others? The ability to appreciate this and have a passionate team that gets it are key to operating a truly successful business in our industry, no matter the size. And, though easily said, the reality is this is very hard to accomplish and requires tremendous passion, focus, commitment and help from organizations like IHRSA.

**C.I.** - To close this incredibly insightful interview, what are you up to these days?

**RR** - I spend a lot of time on *Ripken Foundation* matters. I am still on the Executive Committee, and that has been a wonderful experience. As I mentioned, I volunteer at Boys and Girls Clubs, both in Annapolis and Sarasota, and going forward, I will try to help with the Baltimore Boys and Girls Club as a volunteer, lending some of my business experience. In addition, I play in a 60+ softball league, and I play in a few hardball tournaments during the winter, albeit at sundial speed (laughing). Frankly, I wake up every single day and say, 'Thank you,' because I've been so extraordinarily lucky, blessed and fortunate. I never take it for granted and certainly owe a lot to our industry. The life we are able to live we owe to the health and fitness club industry. It never would have been able to happen without it.

• • •

Thank you to **Roger Ralph** for his time speaking with me, assistance with this story and dedicated service to this industry. Thank you also to **Lisa Maguire** and **Phil McWilliams** for their assistance.

*(Justin Cates is the Assistant Publisher of Club Insider and grew up in the health and fitness club industry. Justin was born into a club business family in 1985, and from the age of eight, he spent his non-school and sports hours in a home that doubled as Club Insider Headquarters. He has lived and breathed this industry for 33 years, since his own day one. Cates graduated from the Terry College of Business at The University of Georgia in 2007 and then went on to two years at The Art Institute of Atlanta, where he studied Interactive Media Design. Now, he is an integral part of the "Story" of Norm Cates and Club Insider. Justin can be reached by phone at 423-314-4310 or email at Justin@clubinsideronline.com)*

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## The Onboarding Process as a Sales, Retention and Referral Tool

By: **Karen Woodard-Chavez**

How many of you reading this article have some sort of onboarding process for new members at your club? I would bet most of you would say that you have that available. How many of you reading this article mention it on the tour and then again rush through it in the post tour? I bet some of you, if you really thought about it, would have to say that that is what you do. How many of you are not thrilled with the participation rates of new members engaging in your onboarding process? Again, from what I see in the business, most clubs are not getting the engagement level in these services/sessions that they are intending to see.

There are two reasons this happens: (1) your onboarding programs may not be attractive to new members and (2) the selling staff is not selling them. This article will focus on reason #2. Here we go...

In my experience in training membership sales staff, I see very little effort in creating excitement and desire for a new member to engage in the onboarding programs. What I see is a mention on the tour and a mention in the post tour. If you want to amp up your participation rates in your onboarding programs, you need to do the following: (1) create a goal for all sales staff to have "X" new members enroll and show for the program and (2) "sell" the programs *on the tour not after* the tour. When you make these two simple changes, you will see a positive impact on retention, and your sales team will start to see referrals increase. The impact on retention is obvious, but the impact on referrals may not seem as obvious to you. The reason your referrals will increase is due to the fact that you have new members who feel more clear and confident on how to be successful with their membership and have the experience of building more and better relationships in the club. When that happens, they feel as though they "belong." When they feel that they belong, they will start telling more of their friends. What a terrific and simple opportunity. Let's explore more...

### Creating a Sales Goal for New Member Enrollment and Showing Up for the Program

Anything that you want to see a change in requires more focus and attention. Most clubs set goals for new member sales and non-dues revenue sales, and they create accountability for the goals to be met or exceeded. The same thing needs to happen with Onboarding Programs. By the way, just as you create a commission structure for new members sales and non-dues revenue sales, I encourage you to do

the same for *participation* (not just enrolling in) in your Onboarding Programs. If you are a club owner reading this, you may be sighing and rolling your eyes at this concept. BUT, if you were to get 1,200 new members engaged in your well-designed program that is intended to keep them longer (pay dues and purchase other club services longer) and increase club revenue, doesn't it make sense to pay a little out to get a lot more in return? Furthermore, because you are paying a commission for participation, the sales staff will ensure that the new member makes it to the program. Please think about that.

### Sell the Program *ON* the Tour *NOT AFTER* the Tour!

The membership sales staff needs to understand the direct correlation between happy members who use the club more and referrals. To be clear, it is not the unhappy members whose usage is low that refer their friends. It is the members who use the club, get results, have relationships and feel like they belong. That is what an Onboarding Program does for Members. With that said, the sales staff needs to understand the importance of "selling" this program benefit on the tour multiple times. Key in this discussion is knowing *what questions to ask the prospect* so the seller knows *what benefits to present*, making sure that the *discussion happens multiple times on the tour* and that the seller "*closes*" the onboarding sale *on the tour*.

Some of the questions to ask include: "*Katy, what kind of help would you like us to provide you to be more successful in reaching your goals?*" or "*What structure would be helpful for you to be more consistent with your use of the club?*" or "*What kind of instruction have you had in the past?*"

Once you get some insight from these questions, you will better understand which benefits of the program will be important to the prospect. When you speak to relevant benefits, you create the connection bridge between their goals and our program. A mistake many sales staff make is simply referring to the feature that the Onboarding Program is. That *mistake* sounds like this: "*Katy, we have a terrific Onboarding Program that is free for you.*"

*We will test your body fat, your flexibility, your strength and we will weigh you to give you a baseline. It is super valuable."*

Ahem, no wonder not very many new members are enrolling in the program! That description does not create any connection to their results and why the program would help them. In fact, I discourage you from using the term "Onboarding" with members. That term likely means nothing to them.

Instead, consider the following, again, *on the tour*, perhaps on the fitness floor, in a studio, etc.: "*Katy, part of what is included in your membership to help you reach your goals faster are our discovery, planning and setup sessions. Let me explain: the **discovery** is **Step 1**. In the discovery, you will meet with one of our exercise physiologists and have some discussion about your lifestyle, habits and what you want to achieve with your health and fitness. You will also have an analysis of your weight, body composition, flexibility, strength and cardiovascular capacity. It is not a workout, but you will be active, so you will need to wear exercise clothes. The discovery is very revealing in that we will show you precisely where you are now and provide suggestions in terms of lifestyle as well as targeted options for exercise at the club to accelerate your meeting your goals."*

### The Setup Session With Your Personal Concierge

*"The setup session is a separate session from the discovery with the purpose of setting you up on a basic program in the club. One of the benefits that you will not find at any other club in town is that you will have a **Personal Concierge** available to you to organize and schedule all of the services mentioned as well as update you along the way in your membership of new programs and services that are relevant to your needs. Does this sound like it will help you? Shall we get you set up with your concierge and move forward with scheduling the services for you? Let's get you scheduled so you can begin moving toward your best state of health and fitness yet."*

That presentation is very different from what most sales staff are presenting.



Karen Woodard-Chavez

Notice that the agreement to go forward/closing the sale of the program happens *ON* the tour *NOT AFTER* the tour. This is very important for two reasons: (1) if you wait until the post tour, you will rush through it and not sell it; you will simply mention/present it, which will not earn the sale and (2) it is always smarter to *close the little sales first* that lead to *the big sale*, whether the little sale is complimentary or a fee for non-dues revenue program. When you close the little sale first, you have gained agreement on the "big" sale because the little sale requires you to be a member to have that service.

Another element to consider is having this service be a complimentary service during the first 45 days of the new member's membership then applying a charge after that period. The purpose of this is to create an incentive for the member to immediately engage the program rather than wait. I would encourage you to be very transparent in explaining that, which could sound like this: "*Katy, these services are a gift from the club during the first 45 days of your membership. After that period, there is a charge of \$150 for these services. I will be very transparent with you Katy; we want you to get started on the right foot right away."*

Please incorporate these simple tools into your organization so that your onboarding process can become the sales, retention and referral tool it should be.

(Karen is President of Premium Performance Training in Boulder, Colorado and Ixtapa, Mexico. Karen has owned 11 different businesses, successfully sold nine of them and continues to operate two. Karen consults with and trains staff throughout the world on sales, complete communication, management and leadership. These services are offered on-site, online and through her books, manuals and DVDs. Karen can be reached at [karen@karenwoodard.com](mailto:karen@karenwoodard.com) or 303-417-0653.)

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## Crunch Fitness Launches Strengthened By Heroes Campaign

NEW YORK, N.Y. - Crunch Fitness announces the launch of the *Strengthened by Heroes* national campaign. Strengthened by Heroes demonstrates Crunch's gratitude by honoring those veterans and first responders who are everyday heroes. Through this initiative, Crunch hopes to make a difference in their communities by encouraging other veterans to join their team or to find support through fitness.

The campaign kicked off with a 2-minute video honoring and celebrating some of Crunch's own veteran employees and families. The video can be seen at [info.crunch.com/crunchheroes](http://info.crunch.com/crunchheroes). The campaign will run throughout the summer and carry through to Veteran's Day on November 11th. The multi-faceted campaign includes special discounts for veterans and first responders at participating gyms, unique military service-themed bootcamp workouts to raise awareness and job fairs for veterans and first responders held at select Crunch locations.

In addition, Crunch is working with DAV (Disabled American Veterans)

to support their Victories for Veterans program. The program asks supporters to set a one-month fundraising and exercise mileage goal, with charitable contributions dedicated to help U.S. veterans conquer their challenges. Crunch has a national team page on [victoriesforveterans.com/crunch](http://victoriesforveterans.com/crunch) where members and employees can join, set goals and contribute to fundraising efforts for DAV. By completing a Crunch Victories for Veterans challenge, participants will help DAV get one step closer to creating the next victory for a veteran.

"We are excited to honor and highlight our veterans and first responders with this new campaign," says **Keith Worts**, CEO of Crunch. "This campaign recognizes the important contributions these individuals have made to our society, to Crunch's workforce and as members of our gyms. Importantly, by showing our support of veterans, first responders and their families, and we hope it will educate and inspire others in support of first responders, our veterans and our military."

## Blink Fitness Promotes Two Key Players; Names Todd Magazine CEO

NEW YORK, N.Y. - Blink Fitness, a premium-quality, value-based gym that has challenged industry norms by celebrating how exercise makes you feel, not just how it makes you look, has announced the promotion of former president **Todd Magazine** to Chief Executive Officer and former Vice President of Operations **David Collignon** to Senior Vice President of Operations.

"Todd's vision and tenacity have propelled Blink Fitness into a thriving bi-coastal, multi-state brand," said **Harvey Spevak**, Executive Chairman and Managing Partner of Equinox Holdings, Inc., Blink's parent company. "He has simultaneously established the brand as a highly differentiated player and transformed Blink into an autonomous, profitable business. Under his leadership, we look forward to a future of sustained, strong performance and continued growth."

Magazine joined Equinox in 2012 as the Executive Vice President of New Business. A year later, he transitioned exclusively to the Blink brand, serving as

the Executive Vice President and General Manager before serving as President prior to this most recent promotion. Under Magazine's leadership, Blink has grown from four to 70 locations in six years and has more than 400,000 members. The business has added a franchising system to supplement its company-owned efforts, all of which is helping accelerate the brand's growth and expansion.

"The last six years have been the most fun and rewarding of my career. And the best part is that we are only getting warmed up. The runway for this business is as far as the eyes can see," said Magazine. "We have an awesome brand, an incredible business model, and the most dedicated and passionate people I have ever worked with."

Since joining Blink in 2016 as Vice President of Operations, Collignon has transformed the Operations team, enabling the business to continue to grow at a rapid pace and to seamlessly expand geographically. With this promotion, David's responsibilities will be expanded to include Franchise Operations.

# Putting the Service Back Into Sales

By: **Casey Conrad**

It's no secret that the retail landscape has forever changed as Amazon (and other online options) makes it ridiculously easy to buy online. We have all seen some of our favorite, local stores close their doors. Many larger chains have consolidated, and in some cases (Toys-R-U's most recently), bankrupted. One would think that, in an effort to keep more customers, retail stores would work harder at customer service; sadly, this doesn't appear to be the case. Although a gross generalization, today's employees appear to have more interest in checking their phone than in on a customer. Add technology to the equation and what you often get is a very impersonal customer experience. I may sound old fashioned, but I find that getting good service is more the exception than the norm. It's frustrating and sad.

A sub-par service market may not be fun when you are a consumer, but the situation provides club operators with a wonderful opportunity to stand out in an over-crowded fitness market. Unless you are a low-cost provider, having a strong point of differentiation when it comes to customer service will positively impact your bottom line. For prospect sales, as well as referrals, re-incorporating some good, old-fashioned sales elements is something your club should consider. Let's look at some service-based sales strategies that you may no longer be utilizing that make significantly positive customer impressions:

## 1. Full-time sales people who give comprehensive tours.

Over the past decade, with the increase in the number of low-price providers, many clubs cut back on or eliminated full-time salespeople. Some of this was driven by cost control, but much of it was due to the vilification of the sales position. "Don't get pressured into long-term, expensive contracts; come join us for \$10 a month with no commitment." Add to the equation a savvy consumer who became more frugal with spending, and we witnessed a lot of independent club operators begin to utilize part-time salespeople, front-desk staff or training full-time staff to handle multiple roles, including sales.

Although this may have trimmed expenses in the short-term, without full-time salespeople, prospects fall through the cracks and closing rates drop. For a number of reasons, now is a great time to bring back the full-time sales position at your club. First, the "Wow" factor of a \$10 club no longer exists, so it's not necessarily the hottest new thing in a market. Second,

consumers who joined a low-price provider but really needed more support are more likely now to realize that, for them, it's worth paying more to have the support. Third, if you haven't had a full-time salesperson, it's time to go back and really work your missed guest and former member lists! Bi-annual postcards or email campaigns alone rarely maximize response rates.

## 2. True new member orientations.

I know this one is going to cause a raucous, but one of the worst outcomes of the last recession was the bastardization of the new member orientation process. Where clubs once gave members 4 - 6 supervised workouts, with a workout card, to ensure members were comfortable with the equipment, the majority of facilities now give one equipment orientation with no card, followed by a hard sell on personal training (if this isn't your club, then hooray for you!). Having written the book, *Selling Personal Training*, I am all for educating and promoting PT, and I can appreciate the need to cut costs. But, a compromise between these two approaches would be much better for member retention and referrals. Consider the first workout with a trainer and then two subsequent "supervised workouts" with hourly floor staff during specified hours. At the *very least*, this additional staff interaction time will help create a deeper bond between the new member and the club.

## 3. New member welcome cards, not just email.

I'm sure that, at this point in the article, the Millennials are rolling their eyes and the Boomers are nodding their heads! So, yes, I realize that some of these suggestions are generationally appropriate. But, hey, who doesn't like receiving an actual card in the mail!? When I owned my clubs, we sent out handwritten cards to both new members and prospects who didn't join. Okay, the price of a first-class stamp was only .30 cents, but custom printing costs were actually higher then, so the final

cost probably wasn't much more than it would be today with services like *GotPrint* and *VistaPrint*. The incredible impression a hand-written note makes on someone cannot get any easier, and it is so simple to do! Of course, adding a business card and perhaps a guest pass or two is appropriate and can lead to future referrals and sales. This means that, even if there is printing on the inside of the card, the salesperson should write something personal to the new member and then sign it (all in their handwriting, no matter how illegible). Using purely pre-printed notes that one signs greatly minimizes the impact.

## 4. Welcome to the Club Night.

One of the best things about being a consultant is getting to visit so many different facilities and seeing the creative things they are doing. One such client had so much success with *Welcome to the Club Night* that I began introducing it to my other clients. Once or twice a month, the club runs a 90-minute meet-and-greet type event, including wine and appetizers, and each department head speaks for ten minutes explaining all the things that are available to the new member in that area of the club. For larger facilities, maps are projected onto a large screen, and the general manager gives a visual overview of the facility, explaining the best way to reach certain areas, etc. Some clubs would even invite VIP members who would give a testimonial during the evening. Attendance would usually range from 10 - 20 new members, BUT the sales staff sent out invitations to all no-enroll tours, inviting them to this event as a way to gather more information to make an informed decision about joining. Only 1 - 3 prospects would show, but the join rate for those that did was north of 80%!

I realize that, in today's day and age, you may not get that type of attendance, but if you are a larger, full-service club, commit to trying this for a year and measure the results. As the famous marketing author, *Seth Godin*, teaches, you must find ways to be "remarkable."



Casey Conrad

We could dedicate another whole article on this subject, but I hope you get the idea. Today's hyper-competitive market makes running a profitable fitness business more challenging than ever. In order to stand out from the rest, you have to do things better. From a sales perspective, there is no more important goal than positive first impressions; this is especially true with the customer sales experience. People have such bad experiences with retailers these days that, when they receive great service, not only do they notice, but they will be more inclined to buy and be a more zealous advocate for that business. This is especially true when they are local businesses. Take the time to bring back key "service" elements into your sales processes, and it will pay dividends in your numbers.

*(Casey Conrad has been a long-time industry consultant and Contributing Author to Club Insider. She is the author of numerous best-selling books, including Selling Fitness and Selling Personal Training. Be on the lookout for her newest book, Hidden Profits; How to make more money in the fitness industry with programs and products. She can be reached at [www.HealthClubSalesTraining.com](http://www.HealthClubSalesTraining.com) or [CaseysHealthClubTraining@Yahoo.com](mailto:CaseysHealthClubTraining@Yahoo.com).)*

# Make It Fun!

## National Federation of Professional Trainers Partners With MS Fitness Challenge to Offer New MS Fitness Training Course

**LAFAYETTE, IN** - The National Federation of Professional Trainers (NFPT) has partnered with MS Fitness Challenge to create and produce the *MS Fitness Essentials* course. This course is an essentials concepts course which focuses on the fundamental needs and modifications that must be understood and implemented when working with clients who have been diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. Using the correct training protocol for safe exercise with MS clients is crucial to injury prevention and comfort with the training program.

More than 200 cases of MS diagnosis are reported each week in the United States alone. As a personal trainer, it is important to know that training with MS is unlike working out as a "healthy" person. So, trainers must be educated and experienced in assisting someone with MS to have a positive workout experience that does not induce symptoms or discourage them from continuing. *Clients with MS will each have individual specific symptoms, and from day to day, these may change; therefore, they must be assessed and addressed during every workout.*

This course goes into depth regarding the three keys to fitness with MS. Each of the three keys to fitness with MS must be adhered to, implemented and discussed before each workout: *mental fitness, physical fitness and nutrition.* These components are like those with any client. However, with the MS client, there are factors for each that must be taken into consideration before each workout to assure that each has not been affected in a way that will alter results or cause discomfort or injury. Each of these components work together to conquer the symptoms of MS, in or out of the gym.

**Angie Pattengale**, NFPT's Certification Director, says, "It is becoming more known and understood that exercise with MS is



Angie Pattengale

extremely beneficial for one's physical and mental wellbeing. Unfortunately, there has not been a focus in this area for how personal trainers can best combat MS symptoms in a safe and effective way. Now that we have partnered with David Lyons and the MS Fitness Challenge, who are experts in this field of study and training, we are confident in our ability to deliver this education and actual exercise programming to personal trainers, giving them the ability and confidence to work with MS clients."

*MS Fitness Essentials* is an online distance learning course that can be completed in your own time from within the NFPT online account portal. The course is attainable and affordable, at a cost of \$129. Upon completion of this course, you receive a Certificate of Completion. Also, Certified Personal Trainers (CPTs) receive Continuing Education Credits (CECs) that go towards the recertification of their CPT credential. NFPT-CPTs receive 2.0 CECs for course completion, other certification credit awards vary by organization. *NFPT offers a CEC guarantee for this course, meaning that it can be submitted to any personal trainer certification organization for credits, and you will receive CECs (or, if you don't, then you receive your money back on the course).* There is no reason, no excuse and nothing stopping new learning! With this course, you will learn how to work with MS clients.

**David Lyons**, *MS Fitness Challenge Founder and President*, says, "In 2006, I was diagnosed with MS, and at first, I felt hopeless. But, then, I realized I could turn this around and not only help myself but others as well. I made it my life's work to help those who struggle with the symptoms of this disease to live a lifestyle of health and wellness despite MS, the same way that I do. The good news is it doesn't have to be debilitating; together, we can educate people on how to conquer MS with the right mindset and the training to fight, through fitness. I partnered with NFPT to write and deliver this course as one fitness professional to another, except I'm not only the fitness professional, but the end user as well. I have the insight into this disease because I have it, and I have dedicated myself to learning and teaching about MS and exercise to improve daily living and overall wellness of those affected by the disease."

This partnership helps connect people with MS to qualified fitness trainers who can support their health and fitness goals in a safe and effective way. In addition to the learning, certificate and CECs, personal trainers who participate in

this course will also have access to support staff of NFPT and MS Fitness Challenge as well. MS Fitness Challenge experts will assist in everything from course curriculum preparation and mentoring, to connecting you with MS clients in your area. The MS Fitness Challenge is a large community of potential clients with MS who need your

training support and guidance in their walk through this disease. The people of NFPT and MS Fitness Challenge are here to help in that walk for MS clients and MS supporting trainers.

To learn more, go to [www.nfpt.com](http://www.nfpt.com) or [www.msfitnesschallenge.com](http://www.msfitnesschallenge.com).

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# What Are the Elements of a Legal Contract?

By: **Paul R. Bedard, Esquire**

Health club owners and operators are routinely parties to contracts. Some of these contracts are formal and complex, whereas others are informal and simple. However, regardless of these specifics, what constitutes a legal contract?

An enforceable contract requires three elements: an offer, acceptance and consideration. There must also be a meeting of the minds between the contracting parties, along with an absence of fraud, duress, legal incapacity or any one of the many legal defenses to a breach of contract claim. Although contracts can generally be oral or verbal, some types of contracts must be reduced to writing. State laws govern contract enforceability and these laws vary, adding yet another legal facet that requires analysis when trying to determine whether a contract is legal.

## Offer

A contract begins with an offer. The offer must evince a party's willingness to enter into a contract under certain terms in exchange for performance by another party. The party making the offer is the offeror. The party receiving the offer is the offeree. Once an offer is made, the burden shifts to the offeree to either accept, reject or counter the offer.

## Acceptance

If the offer is accepted without deviation from the offer's terms, a contract is formed. If the offer is rejected, there is no contract until a new offer and a resulting acceptance occur. However, when an offer is rejected, and a counteroffer is made, the burden then shifts back to the original offeror to either accept, reject or counter the counteroffer. Any rejection of any offer or counteroffer throughout such back and forth negotiations extinguishes any potential contractual relationship until a subsequent offer and corresponding acceptance transpire. When an offer is made and formally revoked by the offeror prior to being accepted by the offeree, the offer is no longer legally valid and any acceptance thereafter will not constitute a binding legal agreement.

## Consideration

Consideration is the legal term for the exchange of money or services, the benefit to each party as a result of the contract. Consideration is a legal requirement for a contract to be binding. Consideration can be in the form of money in exchange for goods and/or services, services in exchange for services, goods in exchange for goods or any combination of thereof. Consideration can also be in the

form of relinquishing a contractual right or agreeing to not perform an action that a party otherwise has a legal right to perform.

## Exceptions to Verbal Contracts

Contracts can generally be oral or verbal. However, written contracts provide valuable documentation when a contract dispute arises, and some types of contracts must actually be in writing to be enforceable. The Statute of Frauds details those types of contracts that have to be reduced to writing. Contracts for the sale of real estate, those contracts that cannot be performed within one year of being made and contracts for the sale of goods beyond a certain dollar amount are just a few of the types of contracts that fall within the Statute of Frauds exception. State laws govern in this regard, and these laws vary.

## Defenses to a Breach of Contract Claim

Just because a contract contains an offer, acceptance and consideration, and is not governed by the Statute of Frauds, does not necessarily mean that the contract is valid. There are many legal defenses to a breach of contract claim. For starters, what is legally referred to as *mutual assent* must be present between the contracting parties. If it is found that there is no "meeting of the minds" between the contracting parties as it relates to the relevant terms of the contract, the contract will not be enforceable.

Each party to the contract must also possess the mental and legal capacity to enter into the contract in the first place. Minors cannot be bound by most contracts, as they lack the legal capacity to enter into a contract. People with intellectual disabilities and those suffering from mental illness may also be found to be incapable of being bound by a legal agreement.

A contract may also be deemed unenforceable when it can be shown that a party to the contract was induced through fraud, misrepresentation, undue influence or nondisclosure. There may also be a valid defense to a breach of contract claim when a party commits to a contract while under duress. A contract that contains a material mistake unreflective of the true intent of either of the parties may also be unenforceable.

When a contract is found to be shockingly one-sided or incredibly unfair to one or more parties, the relevant parts of the contract, or the contract in its entirety, may be voided due to the doctrine of unconscionability. Public policy considerations can also come into play. When a contract promotes illegal activity, or may result in harm to society at large, it may be unenforceable on the grounds of public policy.

## In Summary

Businesses regularly rely on various contractual relationships. Regardless of the relationship, an enforceable contract requires an offer, acceptance and consideration. Mutual assent must exist between contracting parties along with an absence of defenses to a breach of contract claim including but not limited to fraud, mistake, incapacity, misrepresentation, undue influence, nondisclosure or duress. While most contracts can be oral or verbal, the Statute of Frauds dictates that certain types of contracts must be in writing. State laws govern contract enforceability and these laws vary. Legal counsel is essential when trying to determine whether a contract is binding.

This article provided a very brief overview as it relates to the elements of a legal contract. Exponentially more space would be required to fully address this subject. **This article is not intended as legal advice. Varying laws and contract circumstances prohibit blanket recommendations. Please consult an attorney for specific direction when making any decision related to any contract matter. The saying, "The devil is in the details," is particularly relevant as it relates to contract formation, negotiation and enforceability.**

*(Paul R. Bedard, Esquire, has nearly 20 years of management, leadership and operations experience in the health and fitness industry. As a practicing*



Paul R. Bedard, Esquire

*attorney, Paul's health and fitness industry experience provides him with a unique perspective when advising health clubs regarding employee training, handbooks, policies, contracts, disputes or premises liability claims. When not practicing law or spending quality time with his wife and daughters, Paul strives to be active in his local community. Paul serves as the current Assistant Town Attorney for the Town of Southington, Connecticut and has previously served on the Southington Zoning Board of Appeals and the Board of the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency. Paul is a partner at Sheffy, Mazzaccaro, DePaolo & DeNigris, LLP, in Southington, Connecticut. Paul can be reached at [pbedard@smddlaw.com](mailto:pbedard@smddlaw.com) or 860-620-9460 x109.)*

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## Gym Owner's "Fat and Ugly" Sign Gains Fans, Avoids Fine

By: Paul Steinbach, Senior Editor of Athletic Business

Scott Campbell wanted the sign outside his Pell City Fitness center in Alabama to be an attention-grabber. Soon, the eyes of a nation would be on his slogan, "Tired at being fat and ugly? Just be ugly!"

"We can help fat, but we can't fix ugly," a smiling Campbell told WVTM-TV, an NBC affiliate in nearby Birmingham. "People had a hard time finding us. I wanted something that was kind of catchy, that would catch people's attention."

The sign, which also promotes the gym's Crossfit, boot camp and personal training offerings, as well as its nutrition advice and meal plans, with memberships starting at \$125 a month, reportedly offended residents. *The Washington Post* reported that one Facebook commenter stated, "The sign should be taken down. Think about it, some [people] are already struggling being bullied, and my opinion is that the sign is making it harder on [people] being bullied already. I'm not fat nor am I ugly."

That said, comments on the club's Facebook page were overwhelmingly pro-sign, and Campbell claims he received supportive calls from outside the state.

Pell City officials warned Campbell that the sign had been put up without a permit, and that it had to come down or Campbell would be fined. A GoFundMe page had even raised \$245 toward a \$1,000 goal to help cover a fine. However, the *Post* reported that Campbell later filed the permit paperwork and that no fine had been issued. "The owner is aware of his failure to properly request a permit and has since filed a request," city manager Brian Muenger said, adding that, "the city does not object to the content of the sign."

Campbell, who according to *Inc.com* weighed 300 pounds before committing to his own fitness, had erected signs outside his facility before without permit and without any problems with the city. The *New York Daily News* quoted Campbell as saying he had a hard time believing the city's pressure wasn't slogan-related. "We cut up. We have fun. We poke fun at each other," he told WVTM. "At the



Pell City Fitness' Fat and Ugly Sign

end of the day, we're all here to support each other, to help each other in our fitness journeys." (Paul Steinbach is the Senior Editor of Athletic Business)

## Rodney Steven II and Genesis Health Clubs Announce Acquisition of All Kansas City-area World Gym Locations, Reaching 20 Clubs in Kansas City Area

**WICHITA, KS** - Rodney Steven II announced that Genesis Health Clubs will acquire both Kansas City-area World Gym locations and begin a major remodeling project on the Merriam Genesis location.

Following closely on the heels of the announcement of the \$30 million Goddard Aquatic Center, the acquisition of the new Merriam and Vivion Road locations brings the total count of Genesis Health Clubs locations to 47 across Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, Missouri and Oklahoma.

In the coming months, Genesis will announce specific plans on a multi-million-dollar remodeling project for the Merriam location. The club will receive additional strength and cardio equipment, a dedicated cycling studio, an All-American Training studio, a basketball court and an indoor pool. In addition, it will receive a fresh coat of paint throughout, new flooring and completely renovated luxury locker rooms. Indoor tennis courts will receive a new ceiling and lights, new backdrops and added Cardio Tennis classes.

*Genesis Health Clubs Owner and President, Rodney Steven II*, commented on the vision for the club. "We've been talking about this for a few years, and the time is right. The former Kansas City Racquet Club has long been an institution for Tennis in Kansas City, but it needs a little TLC right now, which is coming very soon."

Steven continued, "We've had huge success over the years finding wonderful tennis facilities that needed a little help and rehabilitating them into world-class health clubs. We just completed a major one at Topeka Wood Valley, and we're just getting started in Overland Park. I can't wait to show you what we have planned in Merriam. We're determined to grow and nurture tennis in Kansas City, and this is a major step in that direction."

In regards to World Gym Owner, Wade Ferguson, Steven had many compliments. "Wade has really been a visionary and a leader for over thirty years in Kansas City. He's responsible for bringing a passion for fitness that has spread here over the years. He has been one of the best operators in the Midwest for years and we are honored to be part of this transition. We know that these clubs and members have been given the care they deserve over the years."

Ferguson echoed similar sentiments. "I've been doing this for a long time, but it's time to take a step back. I couldn't be happier to pass this off to Rodney; his vision for the future of these clubs will make our members and staff very, very happy, and that's what's most important to me. Our members can now use many clubs in KC and throughout the Midwest."

Genesis Health Clubs has brought over 1,600 jobs to the Kansas City economy since acquiring its first club in the metro in

2015, located in Overland Park. Steven explained, "Kansas City is our biggest market. We have fourteen clubs, located all over the metro area. If you include nearby cities like St. Joseph, Leavenworth, Topeka and Lawrence, we have twenty in the greater Kansas City area. There's such a need for health and fitness options here, and we're happy to provide them. We love Kansas City, and we won't rest until it's the

fittest major city in the nation!"

Asked about any other upcoming news in Kansas City, Steven smiled, "We're in Kansas City to stay. Are we finished? Not even close. Right now, we're focused on getting these clubs remodeled and running them right, which can take a long time, but I imagine you'll be hearing more from us in Kansas City before too terribly long."

## ClubCorp Announces Leadership Transition

**DALLAS, TX** - ClubCorp - The World Leader in Private Clubs - announced that **David Pillsbury** joined the company as *Chief Executive Officer* effective June 1, 2018. Pillsbury has held numerous leadership roles in the golf industry over the past 30 years.

Pillsbury commented, "I am thrilled to join ClubCorp, the leading owner and operator of private clubs. The rich history and extensive capabilities of ClubCorp combined with the support of a transformational sponsor like Apollo makes for an unparalleled platform to further enhance the lives of our members, guests and teammates."

The company also announced **Mark Burnett**, *President and COO*, will be

transitioning out after 12 successful years of leadership. Burnett served in multiple roles at ClubCorp including EVP of Operations, COO and, for the past two years, President and COO. During Mark's tenure, ClubCorp experienced consecutive years of growth, significantly expanding the network of clubs and member services. ClubCorp is grateful for Mark's significant contributions.

"It has been an exciting time to lead the organization through the acquisition by the Apollo-managed funds, and I am confident the company is well positioned for the future," said Burnett. "It has been an honor to be a part of this team and I look forward to ensuring a successful transition to new leadership."

**...Architecture & Design**

continued from page 3

**Rudy Fabiano (RF)** - Spaces and their sizes will vary depending on regional expectations, client experience and what they are trying to achieve. As an example, the south has always had larger group exercise studios. Your typical multipurpose health club now will vary between 30,000 - 55,000 square feet. That's the average project. We certainly have projects that are smaller, down to 10,000 square feet, and some projects that are much larger. It tends to be bigger if you have aquatics or

basketball. Those are the two components that tend to kick it up to over 50,000 square feet.

For that size, almost everyone has group exercise studios, usually between 2,000 - 3,500 square feet. Everyone has 70 - 110 pieces of cardio. Everyone is including functional training, turf and track, probably about 18,000 square feet. Everyone has free weights and circuits. At this level, from what we used to do, locker rooms are probably the most elevated aspect of design. Most of our locker rooms are very high design. They don't need to be expensive, but they need to be highly

designed: great lighting and presentation, proper space so people aren't bumping into each other and very durable materials.

Obviously, lobbies are made to be impressive, so money is spent there. But, ironically, we have a client in the northeast with about 25 clubs that does not put a lot of stock in a great lobby. What's important to them is the flow, having a great workout and having great views of the club when you come in, so the lobby is less important. With another client, the lobby is critically important where they don't want anyone to see the club until they get beyond the lobby. Both these clients are very successful, so I don't know if there is one rule of thumb.

Right now, a lot of real estate is available because spaces have become vacant. All the bricks and mortars are suffering. And, who needs a lot of parking and a high ceiling? So, who better to move in? We build a lot of larger clubs, so we are getting a lot of that. Interestingly enough, the styles for what we might do for a client in Atlanta is very different than what we may do for a client in Philadelphia, and that is very different from what we will do for a client out in Los Angeles. So, we really believe the style needs to be regional and needs to connect with the area it serves. It needs to feel relevant to its users.

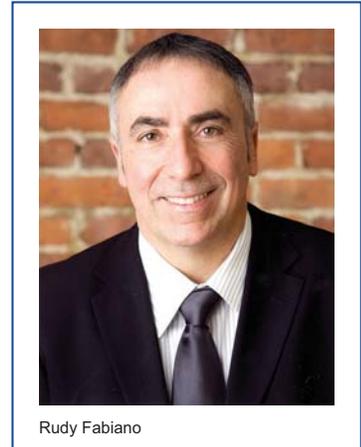
Of course, sometimes, we do a complete departure. We did a project in Saudi Arabia that was modeled after a New York loft. Because Saudi Arabia is such a closed society, from a style perspective, we decided to use design to transport users to a different place and time. What better than a New York loft? So, sometimes, it's important not to be regional. And, sometimes, it is. Let's say I'm designing in Orlando. It's important to take into consideration the sunlight, the temperature, the mood, the flow, etc. vs. Atlanta, vs. Philadelphia, vs. Los Angeles. So, we get influenced by the regions, but it's a case-by-case basis.

**C.I.** - That makes sense, especially for health and fitness clubs. When a person is coming to spend their time and money with our industry, they want an experience. Maybe a different place and feel. Maybe what they already know in a different light. That way, time becomes less relevant for them.

**RF** - That's true. I see going to a health club as a mini one-hour vacation. What does that mean? On one hand, you want to be transported. On the other hand, you want it to be about you; how do you feel when you come in vs. how do feel when you leave? A key is creating architecture and design that support and enhance those feelings.

Two of the biggest growth areas we are seeing being put in health clubs are:

**Functional Training** - The abstract boutique fitness components clubs are competing against, whether it's cross-training, boxing, climbing, etc. Now, we are introducing those boutique elements in clubs, making them really legitimate, and individualizing



Rudy Fabiano

them from a style point of view.

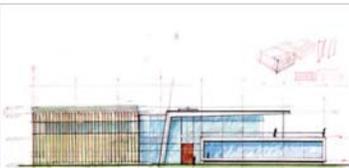
**The Recovery Area** - We have ignored this for the longest time. What I mean by that is that we have seen it trickling in. You see people putting in the HydroMassage beds or the massage chairs, etc. Recovery is really about the 'yang' to the 'fitness ying.' Anyone who lifts weights or gets in shape will tell you immediately that, to gain muscle strength and tone, you need to rest, hydrate and reduce stress. That's a huge component the fitness industry can offer that we are just starting to touch on. So, we are designing very cool, fun and appropriate looking spa areas, which are mostly automated. They don't require a masseuse to make it work because we are not in that industry, but it's enough to make people relax, take time out for themselves and recover.

**C.I.** - Please tell us about modern lighting technologies.

**RF** - From a technological aspect, lighting has become the most important element that you can think about. Because of technology and the dwindling cost of it, you can now replicate sunlight inside. As the sun changes when it moves across the sky, the color of light changes throughout the sky. I don't want to get too technical, but humans have an internal, *circadian*, clock. And, the body responds to natural light. For years, we put everyone under fluorescent light, which was consistent lighting, then we wondered why at 3PM everyone needed coffee and chocolate to stay alert. The lighting didn't change, and our bodies were fighting our natural urges to either become more or less energized. Now, with a product called *Tunable Lamps*, you can actually track the color of natural daylight within a facility. It keeps people more refreshed, and they actually feel better while in the club, which is extraordinary. It's really using technology at a higher level to affect people's mood and health. So, we are very excited about that.

**C.I.** - Please tell us about accessibility and safety regulations;

(See *Architecture & Design* Page 27)



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## ...Architecture & Design

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**RF** - Accessibility has been huge and is nothing new. But, I think owners taking it seriously has become more relevant. Being a licensed architect, I have no choice but to follow accessibility. Everyone mentions ADA, the Americans with Disabilities Act. It's actually a civil law, not a building code law. It's an anti-discriminatory law that says you can't discriminate against someone because they have may a disability, whether they are in a wheelchair, can't see properly, can't walk properly, etc. It's not strictly for someone who is in a wheelchair. That also extends to hiring. For example, you can't not hire someone because they can't access equipment they need to clean that is not accessible. It needs to be accessible.

So, it's an anti-discriminatory law, and I guess for a logical reason, it is administered by the building departments. Sometimes, building departments do a great job. Sometimes, they are overbearing. For example, as a rule, Massachusetts and California are incredibly strict about all the rules. You may go down to Alabama, and it's not as heavily enforced. But, nonetheless, it's a law that we take very seriously. Having accessibility in our designs is almost second nature to us.

**C.I.** - How do you approach transgender issues related to locker rooms and bathrooms?

**RF** - The accommodation of transgender individuals is newer to the building industry, and it's important. We typically do add private toilets and changing areas, and they usually serve a dual usage. In addition to privacy for transgender individuals, these areas allow for privacy for people who need more assistance or for families with kids, as well, vs. throwing everything into a locker room.

**C.I.** - Finally, please discuss green initiatives, both mandatory and voluntary.

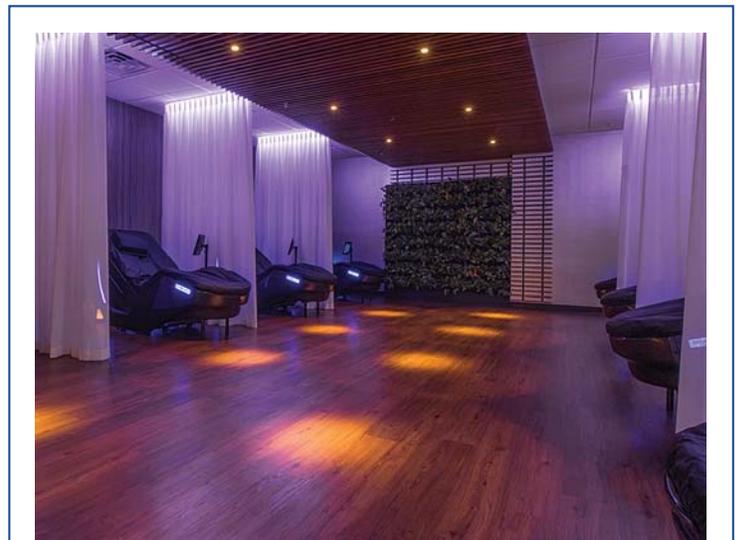
**RF** - The things that are mandatory are almost unseen to the typical client. Those are things like the energy codes, which is having a certain building envelope that is efficient from an energy perspective, or you have to have a certain amount of fresh air within the space, certain lighting levels, etc. All of that is infrastructure that is mandated, and it's important to the safety and health of the occupants.

Green initiatives in terms of recycling, using recycled products and renewable energy sources tends to be less mandatory. The costs can vary, but we have adopted a strategy of going green when we can use appropriate products. For example, paints and glues that are more

natural and less volatile. That 'new building smell' you get is not necessarily healthy for you, so we try to use the more natural products and have proper ventilation. And, we are creating more outdoor workout spaces. For a while, to many of our clients, the cost of being green did not meet the returns a business would normally expect from that investment, but that is starting to

level out. We have LEED-certified staff that keep on that, and any opportunity we get, we pursue.

I'll give you quick example of one of the easiest green things you can do. Go into a space, and polish the concrete floor. That's green, and you would actually get points for that. So, there's a lot of things (See *Architecture & Design* Page 28)



Chill by Gainesville Health & Fitness

## ...Architecture & Design

continued from page 27

people can do. And, now, the majority of products that are introduced into the market, though not specified as green, will have 30 - 50% recycled materials because it makes business sense from the producer's point of view. From the perspectives of lighting, environmental and user comfort, green elements in these areas do make a difference from space to space.

### Conclusion of Club Insider's May Interview With Bruce Carter, Principal, Optimal Design Systems Intl

**Club Insider (C.I.)** - Let's talk about some top level modern design principles. First, please discuss the various spaces of a typical multipurpose facility design.

**Bruce Carter (BC)** - When you get into the spaces within clubs, the business model will dictate the types of rooms and their sizes. Typically, you can expect:

**Group Training Rooms** or spaces will be 1,000 - 3,000 square feet or larger. Depending on the business plan, it can be a separate room or a space to the side.

**Spinning Rooms** will be 800 - 1,500 square feet.

**Yoga Rooms** run 800 - 1,500 square feet.

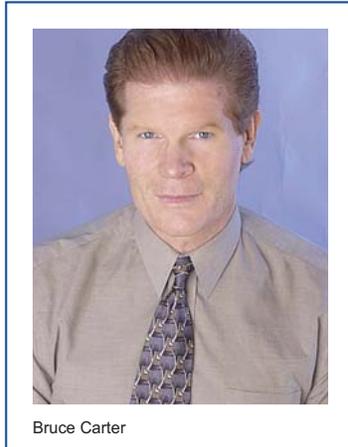
**Group Exercise Rooms** are usually in the realm of 1,500 - 2,500 square feet, and sometimes, bigger.

A caveat with any kind of training room, group exercise especially, is that clutter is a big negative. Clutter is anti-energy and anti-Feng Shui. What evolved with all the great, new additions to group exercise options were the various apparatus used, and they ended up being ugly clutter. Over time, group exercise rooms began to fill up all their perimeter walls with stability balls, kettlebells, dumbbells, barbells, chairs for Silver Sneaker, STEPS, mats and they were just a big, messy room with space in the middle to work out. So, with anything we do related to group, we will include storage spaces where all those things can get off the floor. When you walk into the room, we want it to be clean, uncluttered and a beautiful space. We love all the new racks and rigs, so everything has a place. No club should open without something like that.

As far as locker rooms, our typical locker room is 1,000 - 2,000 square feet. And, recently, child care has been one of the biggest growth areas and revenue-producing areas in multipurpose clubs. We have clubs where we have allocated anywhere between 10,000 - 25,000 square feet for kids. This has become a very important niche to offer and market.

**C.I.** - Please tell us about some of the modern materials used.

**BC** - Compared to the past, we are now bringing a lot more materials in from the



Bruce Carter

hospitality industry. From floor to ceiling:

#### Flooring:

We use less carpet in clubs than ever before, and we use a lot more *Luxury Vinyl Tile (LVT)*. This can look like wood, stone, etc., and the beauty of LVT is that it adds personality to the workout areas. In a lot of clubs, we do all the cardio areas with LVT. It's beautiful but inexpensive, and if you get the right kind, it's very durable. We also love the look of stained concrete, and we can do a variety of colors. So, the typical old look of carpet with machines has been replaced by stained concrete or LVT for the cardio area and rubber (we have more colors than ever before) for the free weights area. We would also be more apt to use LVT for the lobby than regular tile. We are also using more turf than ever before with functional areas. I am a firm believer, and research has shown, that people experience less pain and discomfort when they are in a more natural environment, and turf can add to a natural 'feeling.'

We very rarely put carpet in locker rooms. It's all tile, but here is the key: there are very few options for what is a *true non-slip tile*. This is the number one area where injuries can occur, so it's very important. If the slip co-efficient is not correct, people will still slip, and the club ends up having to cover up the beautiful tile with mats, which are unsanitary. It takes some homework to find beautiful, non-slip tile at a good price.

#### Wall colors, signage and graphics/art:

We are doing a lot of wall coverings, from vinyl to colored plexi-glass so the light can shine through it. There is window film, which can create all kinds of cool effects. It can be colored, striped, rice paper (for yoga rooms, in which light comes through, but there is privacy), etc. Along with window film, we are putting graphics in the windows of clubs. The graphics do a great job of visually communicating to the outside world the personality of the club and what they are about. Importantly, there are codes that restrict the amount of signage that can be used on the exterior of

the club. However, if the club's name is not put on the graphic, the club will often not have any issues with the sign codes. These are inexpensive, so there is big bang for the buck.

Concurrently, we are getting more variety out of the use of paint and color where we don't just paint a wall one color. We might do some sort of geometric design on the wall, angles, etc. We create a lot more of excitement and energy with it. Again, it's a lot of bang for the buck. Depending on the club's brand, certain rooms will have specific colors. What is hot now is that colors will have backdrops of white and grey, then we pop that with color here and there like a vivid green, blue, orange or yellow. Earth colors are still popular, but of course, the popularity of colors changes over time.

Now, more than ever, we are trying to protect walls that get beat up. For example, in a core training area, they are constantly getting scuffed up, so if you are painting them, you have to keep repainting them. Two of the best ways to protect them are carpet squares adhered to the protected area of the wall or something called *Fiberglass Reinforced Plastic (FRP)*. FRP is very durable, and there are now many great options for colors and finishes.

#### Ceilings:

We still love the idea of open ceilings that we paint. And, we love the idea of 'clouds' in open ceilings, which are sections of sheet rock or dropped ceiling panels that break up the big, open industrial look. There's something called tray ceilings, sectional ceilings, where it is part sheet rock and part drop ceilings. We might put wood in the ceilings and love to do that. Of course, ceilings sometimes have to perform a very important function, which is sound absorption. If it's a spin room, we typically have to do something to grab sound from bouncing all over the

place. Rubber floors help, which is why we do those in spin, and we may drop in some sound absorbent panels.

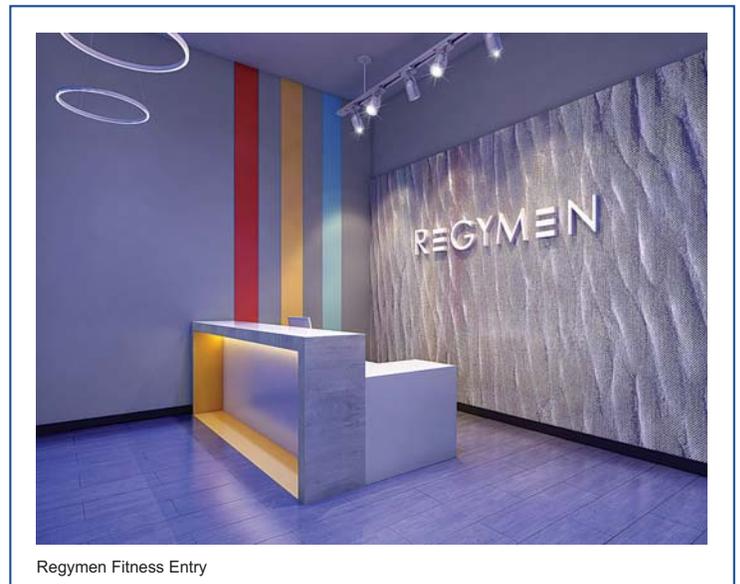
#### Lighting:

Lighting has undergone a big-time change. We are bringing in a lot of colored, 'theatrical,' lighting. It's all remote-controlled LEDs, and it allows us to bring in the energy of color. Cove lighting is another example where you can see the glow of the light but not the light itself. Clubs are bringing more of these entertainment-style lighting options into group exercise, group training and spin rooms to define the energy of the space. We've always used things like track lights and spot lights to 'wall-wash' or light a graphic, as well as colored drum lights, but now, you're seeing a lot more of the lighting options from hospitality industry to create environments that have a different ambience than they would have before. Interestingly enough, with all this, we are bringing down the amount of brightness in lighting clubs (in terms of lumens). Keep in mind, many people are not overly fond on how they look, especially in work out clothing, so putting them in super bright areas with lots of mirrors just adds to their discomfort and will not help to reinforce their desire to keep coming back to the club. Soften the light a little, and make them feel more comfortable working out.

There is also lighting that is based on the time of the day, like it would be outdoors. It's a little brighter at 2PM and not so bright at 5PM. I think if you had a choice, you would do that, but it's relative to budget. I don't know the research of saying whether it truly makes a difference, but conceptually, it sounds like a good idea. Of course, if we can bring actual, natural light into the workout area, that's a great option.

**C.I.** - Please tell us about accessibility and safety regulations.

(See *Architecture & Design* Page 30)



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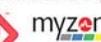
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## ...Architecture & Design

continued from page 29

**BC** - ADA is a must. There are national regulations, but they are often interpreted locally. For example, Los Angeles has their own ADA compliance regulations, which are different than other areas. It's key to understand those and comply with the code. We design to the code, and we look to the local architect to tell us how the local area interprets ADA compliance. Life Safety Codes address things like fire exits, distance of travel to get out of a building and things like that. The owner doesn't need to know the details of those things (your design professional will), but meeting these codes can effect considerably how a layout is done.

**C.I.** - Finally, please discuss green initiatives, both mandatory and voluntary.

**BC** - It's good to know that most of the major brand building materials are recyclable

items: your laminates, rubber, carpet, etc. The manufacturers have already built in green components into the products, so they are recyclable. They know the game, and they've already jumped in there and done the job. I'm sure you've heard of LEED certification. LEED is a governmental points criterion where you can design a building and get a certain number of points. If you design it to LEED certification, you are a 'green and energy efficient building.' It's important to know that a full LEED buildout typically adds 20% to the cost of a project. There was a big movement to go green and LEED, then the economy tanked and not many were very big on it. I will add, though, that we have had good results with new clubs who tell the local press that, 'The new ABC Gym is built with a lot of the latest energy saving and recyclable materials.' The press loves to hear that, and they are eager to report it. The market loves to hear that, so it's a good opportunity. And, the truth is that, with modern HVAC systems

and LED lighting, you are going to be more efficient anyway. In addition to more of your materials being recyclable, whether you know it or not, you are building a greener building, though maybe not LEED certified. The goal of a club should be to improve the physical, mental and spiritual health and wellbeing of its members, and 'going green' with a club surely adds to this goal.

Thank you to **Rudy Fabiano** and **Bruce Carter** for their time interviewing for this cover story. Thanks also also to **Kellie Fabiano**, **Kirsten Braddock** and **Johanna Carter** for their assistance with photos, graphics and other support activities. Finally, be sure to check out [www.fabianodesigns.com](http://www.fabianodesigns.com) and [www.optimaldsi.com](http://www.optimaldsi.com) to learn more about both of these great companies and how they can assist with your next project.

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## Thanks and Appreciation

At **Club Insider**, we are excited to be in our **25th Year** of this home-based health and fitness club trade publication! The thought that this publication was *founded to serve an industry I truly love*, and so that *I could become a Mister Mom for my son, Justin*, is still *intriguing and amazing* to us. I wish to extend our most sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to everyone that's made this amazing 25-year run possible.

A very sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** go to **Rick Caro, Dr. Gerry Faust** and the **Faust Executive Roundtable #1** for helping me decide in 1993 what my home-based business would be. **Thanks and Appreciation** to my long-time friends, **Ron Hudspeth** and **Cathy Miller** of **Atlanta's Hudspeth Report** for the tremendous assistance they provided us during *our first eight years of publication*. **Thanks and Appreciation** to all of the folks at **Walton Press** in Monroe, Georgia. They've done an absolutely excellent job for us all these years and have printed every one of our **294** monthly editions! **Thanks and Appreciation** to all of our **READERS**. Sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to our **Club Insider Advertisers**, past and present, for their kind and dedicated support of this publication. It's amazing to know that we have several advertisers with over 15 years of continuous advertising with us. We also want to say sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to all of our **Club Insider Contributing Authors**, past and present, who've contributed *thousands* of excellent articles to help our readers with their Best Business Practices. **Thanks and Appreciation** to **IHRSA** for all it does.

Sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to my son, Justin, who started working part-time for **Club Insider** when he was just 8 years old (helping with mailings). This young man, pretty much behind the scenes for 25 years now, has truly been a fantastic partner for his Dad in **Club Insider**. Justin does our editing, publication layouts, all of our website design and maintenance, all of our bookkeeping and subscription processing work, as well as archive management and anything else that needs doing, including writing a majority of our cover stories each year.

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

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

*Norm Cates, Jr.*

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