

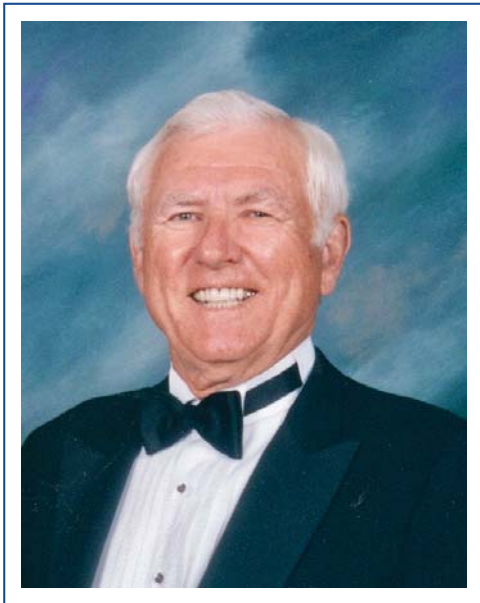
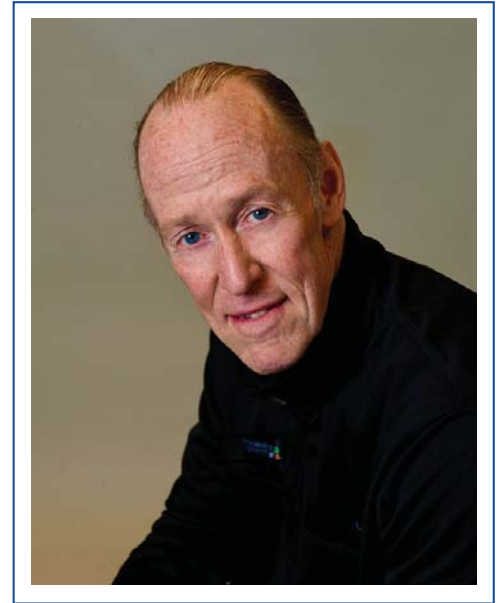
Norm Cates'

CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 30+ YEARS OF TRUST

Rich Boggs

1942 - 2026



Cecil Spearman

1929 - 2026

JUNE 2026



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CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 30+ YEARS OF TRUST

Rich Boggs - 1942 - 2026

By: Justin Cates

Last month, as we were finishing up the *May Edition of Club Insider*, we received the sad news that our friend and industry veteran, **Rich Boggs** had passed away. Sadly, we were too late in our monthly process to make it our feature story. But, this month, we bring you that story.

In the story that follows, you will hear from Rich's wife, **Lib**; protegee of Rich, now mentor in his own right as *President & CEO of MOSSA*, **Terry Browning**; Terry's wife, **Cathy**, *VP of Programming and Training of MOSSA*; and finally, **Louise Irwin**, wife of the late **Ray Lyle Irwin**, business partner of Rich in several ventures over the years. Comments from **Norm Cates** can be found in this month's

Norm's Notes on Page #4.

Rich will be missed by all those who knew him and loved him. **MAY RICH BOGGS REST IN PEACE.**

An Interview With Lib Boggs, Wife of the Late Rich Boggs

Club Insider (C.I.) - When and how did you meet Rich?

Lib Boggs (LB) - We met the fall of my freshman year of college and Rich's sophomore year. By spring we dated exclusively until graduation.

C.I. - When and where did you get married?
LB - We married on June 26, 1965, in my hometown of Florence, South Carolina.

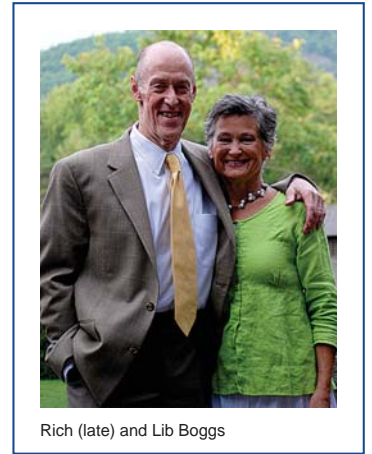
C.I. - Did you have children? If so, what are their names, ages, etc. What are they doing these days?

LB - **Richard, Jr.** runs a biotech out of Bangkok, along with parenting his daughter, who turns 13 in July. **Hollis** lives in New York and works for *Columbia University* while enjoying her three children, ages 21, 19 and 16. **Celeste** is busy raising two high school girls and three Great Pyrenees rescue dogs. All three have wonderful spouses.

C.I. - Please tell us what it was like to be married to a true fitness industry man like Rich Boggs.

LB - *A lot of work and exercise!*

(See **Rich Boggs** Page 10)



Rich (late) and Lib Boggs

Cecil Spearman - 1929 - 2026

Cecil E. Spearman Jr. lived a long, prosperous and remarkably full life, defined by his devotion to family, his entrepreneurial spirit and his lifelong passion for tennis. What began as a dream of club ownership ultimately grew into a thriving family enterprise that continues to flourish today.

Born in Alabama to **Cecil** and **Edith Spearman**, both dedicated educators, Cecil was primarily raised in Hinsdale, Illinois. From an early age, he developed an exceptional work ethic. As a young boy, he held paper routes and restaurant jobs. In older adolescence, he collected garbage and hauled bricks, mud and cement while helping his father construct three high schools in the Hinsdale area. After graduation, he performed demanding construction labor, pick and

shovel for thirty cents an hour. These early experiences instilled in him the discipline, perseverance and determination that would guide him throughout his life.

In school, Cecil excelled both academically and athletically, earning recognition in multiple sports, though tennis quickly emerged as his greatest passion.

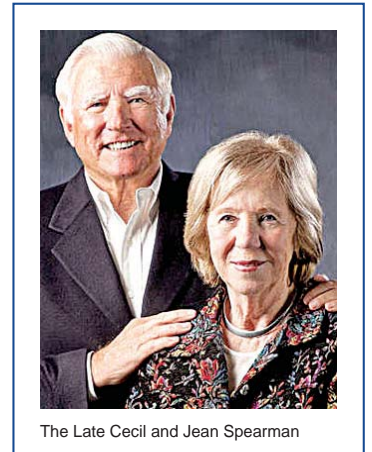
That passion led him to *Duke University*, where he competed on Duke's Men's Tennis Team and became a member of the *Sigma Chi Fraternity*. His leadership, professional accomplishments and lifelong commitment to the fraternity were later recognized through his designation as a *Significant Sig*, one of Sigma Chi's highest honors.

Cecil's connection to Duke remained strong throughout his life. A loyal

and enthusiastic Duke Basketball fan, he rarely missed an opportunity to cheer on the Blue Devils, whether courtside or from the comfort of home. He was an active supporter of the university, its alumni community and both the men's and women's tennis programs. In recognition of the Spearman family's enduring commitment to Duke tennis, the university's Outdoor Court 1 proudly bears the Spearman name.

Upon graduating from Duke University, Cecil served as a *First Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps*. After attending Officer Candidates School in Quantico, Virginia, and completing training at Camp Pendleton, he was stationed in Korea and Japan. He remained deeply proud of his service as a Marine and

(See **Cecil Spearman** Page 6)



The Late Cecil and Jean Spearman

Inside the Insider: Edition #390

■ The Invisible Member - **By:** Herb Lipsman

■ I'm Biased About Group Fitness. And You Should Be Too. - **By:** Jeffrey Pinkerton

■ A Variety of Financing Methods Available to the Fitness Industry - **By:** Paul Bosley

■ The Credibility Factor Behind Influencer Success - **By:** Nancy Trent

■ Five Moves That Can Instantly Change the Future of Your Gym Business - **By:** Jim Thomas

■ Why Fitness Conventions Are Really Educational Retreats - **By:** Sara Kooperman, JD

■ Crunch Fitness Appoints Chequan Lewis Chief Executive Officer; Jim Rowley Executive Chairman

■ And, of Course, *Norm's Notes*

Norm's Notes

■ **Hello Everybody!** This is your **Club Insider Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993** checking in with our **390th monthly edition of this 30+ year running club business publication** I refer to as: **A Labor of Love!** I'm very thankful that you've tuned in again for this iteration of **Norm's Notes**, as I proceed on my keyboard with my longtime habit of "Telling-It-Like-It-Is!" I'm really happy that you're reading this edition, and I want to **THANK YOU ALL** for sticking with us every month! As usual, we have a bunch of health and fitness club business news, **so please read on!**

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

■ Very sadly, in this edition of *Club Insider*, we must report on the passing of two of our industry's greatest participants. The photos for **RICH BOGGS**, my former partner in *CourtSouth* many years ago, and later, *Founder of MOSSA (formerly STEP)*, and **CECIL SPEARMAN**, *Owner*

of *Laguna Niguel Racquet Clubs*, appear on our cover this month, and we honor them with stories beginning on **Page #3**. I hope you will read all about them, as they were two extraordinarily great Gentlemen and stalwarts of this industry. **May RICH BOGGS and CECIL SPEARMAN Rest In Peace.**

■ Last month, I mentioned I would share the story of the *CourtSouth Boys*, so here it is:

Over the years, I have been asked by many people: "Norm, how did your airline pilot's furlough (a layoff without pay) lead you into the health and fitness club industry?"

My response has been: The now late **RICH BOGGS**, the late **LYLE RAY IRWIN** and the late **FRED STRECK**.

Together, we had an amazing experience in the health, racquet and sports club industry. As you may know, there's an old saying, "The Lord works in mysterious ways," and I can give testimony here to that being a fact and my belief that the Lord was working for me when he got me laid off for four years during my airline pilot's job due to the *1973 Arab Fuel Embargo*. I believe that was a very special event in my life, because it led me to meet these



The CourtSouth Boys



Norm Cates

three fine fellows in this order: Lyle Ray Irwin, Rich Boggs and Fred Streck. The four of us created a chain of nine sports clubs that featured racquetball. We called our clubs *CourtSouth*. We had four clubs with 58 courts in Atlanta and 50 courts in the five out-of-town franchises. These nine clubs offered racquetball courts; free weight rooms; indoor tracks; swimming pools; bar/lounges, locker rooms with full amenity packages including steam, sauna

and whirlpools; and LOTS of parking!

Here's how it happened. While living at *Riverbend Apartments* (you might have seen them in the movie *Catch Me if You Can*) and waiting for a racquetball court, I met a person who changed my life forever, and that was the late Lyle Ray Irwin. From that meeting in 1974, I became deeply involved in the health, racquet and sports club industry. Since 1973, I've spent (See *Norm's Notes Page 7*)

About Club Insider

CELEBRATING 30+ YEARS OF TRUST

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Thanks and Appreciation

At *Club Insider*, we are excited to be in our **33rd Year** of this home-based health and fitness club trade publication! The thought that this publication was *founded to serve an industry I truly love*, and so that *I could become a Mister Mom for my son, Justin*, is still *intriguing and amazing* to us. So, I wish to extend my most sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to everyone who has made this amazing 30+ year run possible.

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

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

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

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

Norm Cates, Jr.



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The Invisible Member

By: **Herb Lipsman**

There is a problem in the health club industry that most operators do not see... because they are not looking for it. I call it the **"Invisible Member."**

Picture this. A member walks into a club three or four times a week, like clockwork. Same time. Same routine. At the front desk, a staff member is laughing with another member, someone they clearly know well. There is energy, warmth and a sense of familiarity. Then, our member steps forward. They are checked in quickly, efficiently... and completely without connection: No eye contact, no greeting, no acknowledgment beyond the transaction.

They move on to the locker room. Same dynamic. A staff member is deep in conversation with someone else. Comfortable. Engaged. Familiar. Our member walks by unnoticed. Out on the fitness floor, a few trainers are gathered, talking among themselves. No one looks

up. No one says, "Hello." This is not a bad experience. It is worse than that. It's no experience at all. This is what makes it so dangerous.

Let me share a quick story to illustrate my point because I have seen this play out more times than I can count over the years:

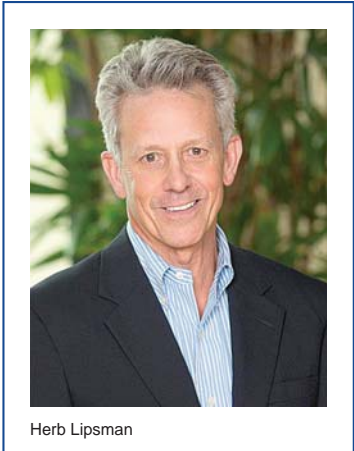
A member joins with good intentions. They show up consistently. They want to be healthier. They want to feel better. Maybe they're even hoping to feel connected to something or someone. At first, they don't think much of it. "People are busy," they tell themselves. "No big deal." But, week after week, month after month, nothing changes. No one learns their name. No one asks how they are doing. No one notices when they walk in. No one notices when they leave. Then, one day, they stop coming. Not because of the equipment. Not because of the programs. Not because of the price.

They came to a place full of

people... and still felt invisible. Here is the cold, hard truth: Most clubs don't have an equipment problem. They don't have a programming problem. They have a human connection problem.

Staff naturally gravitate toward the members they know, the ones who are easy to talk to, the ones who engage first. This is human nature. However, leadership's job is to design systems and culture that ensure no one gets left behind. And, leadership **MUST** model these behaviors, not only with members, but with the people tasked with serving the members. From the member's perspective, every visit is a series of moments that answer one simple question: **"Do I matter here?"**

If the answer is unclear, or worse, no, nothing else matters. We talk a lot in this industry about why so many people don't belong to clubs. Nearly 75% of adults in the U.S. choose not to join. We tend to blame cost, time or motivation. I would suggest that for many, it is something far



Herb Lipsman

more basic: They don't believe they will be seen.

At **SOZO Clubs**, this is where we are starting: Not with equipment. Not with amenities. Not with programming. But with people.

Our primary focus is simple, but not easy: To truly see and truly listen to every member. To understand their stories. To know their names. To recognize when they walk in and when they don't. When people feel seen, everything changes. Consistency improves. Engagement deepens. Relationships form. Community emerges.

The difference between a facility and a true community is not measured in square footage or equipment. It is measured in something much more human.

Does anyone notice when I walk in the room? Too often in our industry, the answer is no. At **SOZO**, it will be yes.

(Herb Lipsman is the Co-Founder and CEO of SOZO Clubs and can be reached at herb.lipsman@sozoclubs.com. Learn more about SOZO Clubs at sozoclubs.com.)

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...Norm's Notes

continued from page 4

50+ years of my life involved in this great industry we love. Meeting Ray Irwin that night, while he and I were waiting our turn for a racquetball court, truly changed my life forever!

Not very long after I met Ray, we were again by the courts one evening when I asked Ray to consider investing in the real estate syndications I was selling, because at that time, I was working with my friend, the now late **PETE BAILEY**. Ray Irwin told me he couldn't invest because he was saving his money to start a new business. I asked Ray what that new business was going to be, and he said, "a racquetball club!" And, THAT was the beginning, for me, of what has now grown to become a 50+ year career.

As I look back on those 50+ years, I realize that I really was very lucky to have met Ray Irwin while we were waiting our turn to get on the racquetball courts at the Riverbend Clubhouse. And, I was also very fortunate to have had the now late **ED JELKS**, a former U.S. Air Force Instructor Pilot I flew with at *Dobbins Air Force Base*, to introduce me to **RICH BOGGS** as they both had gone to college at *Georgia Tech*. **MAY RICH BOGGS**, **LYLE RAY IRWIN** and **FRED STRECK**, who were my three partners in CourtSouth, **all REST IN PEACE!**

■ Folks, *Club Insider* is proud to have recently published our **500th Club Insider Weekly Edition!** Over the past 10 years, we have reported 5,000+ news items, and we thank you for reading! We hope our efforts have helped your business in some way. There is much more to come folks, so stay tuned!

■ **RODNEY STEVEN II**, the head man of *GENESIS HEALTH CLUBS*, is currently hiring the best *Regional Club Managers* he can find. Rodney asks the following in a recent eblast:

"Are you a dynamic leader with a passion for driving growth, building high-performing teams and delivering world-class fitness experiences? Genesis Health Clubs is seeking a Regional Club Manager to oversee and lead operations at 3 - 5 premier health clubs. This executive-level role is designed for a strategic and results-driven professional who thrives in a fast-paced, competitive and goal-oriented environment."

In case you are not familiar with the Genesis Health Clubs organization, check out this description recently presented online by Rodney: "Genesis Health Clubs is one of the fastest-growing and most prestigious fitness brands in the country, operating 87 locations across 14 states, with a strategic plan for continued expansion."

Rodney comments: "In the past decade, we have grown from 21 to 87

clubs, cementing our reputation as the largest private sole-proprietor-owned health club chain in the USA. Our mission is rooted in the belief that health and fitness are paramount to improving lives, and we live this daily through our core values. As a *Regional Club Manager*, you will be responsible for driving the financial growth, operational excellence and sales performance of multiple locations. You will work closely with your *Club Managers*, *Fitness Advisors* and *Department Heads* to ensure top-tier member engagement, revenue expansion and overall club success. This role is highly strategic, focused on leadership development, team motivation and revenue optimization."

If this sounds like you, please apply with Genesis today by going to: www.genesishealthclubs.com/careers

■ This is an *exciting announcement* for those of us who live and operate here in Atlanta. The June 11th *AJC* news release says: "*EQUINOX*, the New York-based lifestyle and fitness, has announced that it will be bringing its first *EQUINOX* location to the Atlanta Metro area in 2027! It will be located in *BUCKHEAD VILLAGE*, and the facility will be 44,000 square feet, featuring group fitness and Pilates classes, along with spa services, personal and wellness offerings and coaching."

■ **JUSTIN** and I want to **THANK YOU** for

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

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

(Norm Cates, Jr. is a 50+ year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. He is the Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993 of *Club Insider*, celebrating 30+ years of trust in publication. In 1981, he was *IHRSA's* First President and a Co-Founder of the Association with the late Rick Caro and five others. In 2001, he was honored by *IHRSA* with its *DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award*, one of its highest honors. And, in 2017, he was honored with *Club Industry's Lifetime Achievement Award*. You can reach Norm by phone at **770-635-7578** or email at Norm@clubinsideronline.com.)

I'm Biased About Group Fitness. And You Should Be Too.

By: **Jeffrey Pinkerton**

There are plenty of sales pitches, tradeshow booths, blog posts and marketing emails trying to convince you how and where to invest in growing your business. There is technology to review, trends to evaluate and equipment to consider. There are bold claims about the "future of fitness," the key to unlocking membership growth, and ad infinitum, the *NEXT! BIG! THING!*

Rich Boggs, the late *Founder of MOSSA*, who is kindly and rightly spotlighted in this month's publication, once told me when talking about the rise of racquetball, "The problem with a trend and a fad is that you won't know the difference, until it's gone. And, when it's gone, you'll know it was just a fad."

If you're guilty of chasing and befriending a fad, I won't dwell on the details. But, I will point out a theme. Whether it's a cardio studio full of treadmills playing movies, or a big-screen TV playing workout videos and calling itself "virtual fitness," or a circuit of machines in any of its various configurations from past to present (express, women's only, high-tech), these concepts share a similar implied promise.

They suggest that the fitness business can be done more efficiently, with less staffing and less coaching, with more automation and more technology.

Some are gimmicks, others are ridiculous, and a few are clever trick plays. Interestingly, trick plays may win a game every now and then, but no one builds a championship program – or a lasting business – around trick plays.

Too many of these ideas try to solve this problem: How do you deliver great results and an amazing member experience, while reducing the need for great and amazing people?

My answer? You don't.

The best fitness facilities aren't defined by their equipment, technology or square footage. They're defined by their people. Dedicated staff. Passionate instructors. Thoughtful leaders. And a caring community of members. They create experiences that people look forward to, friendships that keep people coming back and communities that are difficult (actually, impossible) to replicate.

I'm Biased About Group Fitness

For me, group fitness has changed the way I work out – for building a strong and capable body, for staying active as I age, for building and keeping a habit, and because I teach indoor cycling, it has created a super-hobby that brings me joy.

For your business, it can change the way you sell and service members – for building a better sales process, for creating more social energy and excitement, for ramping up your reputation and for improving your retention. Group fitness, more than anything else under your roof, is the most social, the most sellable and the most shareable of any of your offerings.

So, why am I biased about group fitness? Because when I look at where you could invest time, money, staffing and attention, you should prioritize experiences that create relationships, drive results and build your reputation. Group fitness checks all three boxes.

Group Fitness is Social:

Research on the benefits of social support and exercise is consistent. People are more likely to stick with exercise when they feel connected, more likely to stay when they make friends, and if you'll allow some anecdotal evidence from the boutique market, they'll pay more for a

great experience.

Group Fitness is Sellable:

Your prospects are looking for more than a cheap place to lift weights. Some people are looking for direction and guidance, some people motivation and encouragement. Others need structure and accountability. Group fitness delivers on all counts.

And, whether they know the research or not, when members feel the energy of the group, experience the power of synchronized movement (Google "Social Motion, Blue Zones" for details), and start to build their fitness friend network, their workout feels less like a chore and more like a social event.

Group Fitness is Shareable:

Have you ever had a member rave about a leg-press machine? Refer a friend to your facility because of the *Stairmaster*? Or, take a selfie and post on social media about their amazing walk on a treadmill? Aside from the random fitness fanatic or influencer, most people share about experiences, not equipment. We share how things make us feel, when a business goes above and beyond, when something is surprisingly better than anticipated and when the level of service or care is more than anticipated. We share shared experiences.

Be Biased About Group Fitness:

My advice, with a deep appreciation for Rich's vision and leadership, is that you *can stop* seeking the *NEXT BIG THING*, especially anything to do with reducing the need for great people. *You should be biased toward group fitness.* It will change the way people work out. It will change the way people connect to each other and to



Jeffrey Pinkerton

your facility. And, if you insist on chasing efficiency fads, here you go: Imagine 50 people in a single room, moving together, encouraged by a great instructor, building friendships and habits that last for years. That's not a fad. That's a business model.



The good news? Building a great group fitness program doesn't require chasing trends or reinventing the wheel. The most successful programs are built on a system – recruiting and developing great instructors, delivering consistent experiences, marketing effectively, and helping new members get started well. If you'd like to learn more about MOSSA's approach to building social, sellable and shareable group fitness, visit: mossa.net/clubs-facilities/why-mossa (Jeffrey Pinkerton is the Business Development Manager for MOSSA. Jeffrey can be reached by phone at 770-989-4737 or email at jeffreypinkerton@mossa.net.)

...Cecil Spearman

continued from page 3

considered it one of the great honors of his life to serve his country.

Following his military service, Cecil embarked on a journey that united his passion for tennis with his entrepreneurial spirit. His dream of club ownership began when he accepted a position at *Gulf Hills Country Club* in Ocean Springs, Mississippi. During his three years as *Director of Tennis and Assistant Manager*, he developed a deep appreciation for the club industry and envisioned one day owning a club of his own.

He carried that vision with him as he launched his business career with *American Hospital Supply*, eventually rising to the position of *Regional Vice President*. It was during this time that he met his beloved wife, **Jean**, a practicing nurse at a local hospital. Their courtship was brief but certain; after their first date, they

were married within six months. Together, they built a life that would span 63 years of marriage, raising their family in several cities as Cecil advanced through the corporate ranks.

While building his corporate career, Cecil took his first step into entrepreneurship with the purchase of *The Racquet Club* of Lake Bluff in Illinois, near the family's home. For several years, he successfully balanced executive responsibilities with club ownership.

Cecil later left *American Hospital Supply* to become *President of Bergen Brunswig*, a pharmaceutical company headquartered in Southern California. Eleven years after relocating his family from Illinois to California, he purchased *Laguna Niguel Racquet Club* in 1984 and made the decision to leave the corporate world behind, devoting himself fully to the business he loved. Over the years that followed, his three sons joined the business, and Cecil expanded his vision by adding

several clubs to the family's portfolio.

Cecil transformed his dream of club ownership into a thriving family enterprise. Working alongside Jean and their three sons – **Mark, Steve and Scott** – he built not only successful clubs but also a legacy of family leadership that spanned generations.

Today, Mark continues that legacy, operating the company's two remaining clubs alongside his daughter, **Cassidy**. Under their stewardship, the business is performing at the highest level in its history.

Even at age 96, Cecil remained actively involved in the family business. His passion, energy and commitment never waned. He possessed the heart of a lion, always thinking, planning, encouraging and inspiring those around him. His entrepreneurial spirit remained as strong in his later years as it was when he first dreamed of owning a club.

Above all else, Cecil was devoted to his family. Family gatherings were

among the most important events in his life, whether it be here in Southern California or at their home in Mammoth Lakes. He and Jean took great pride in the family they built together. Their sons, grandchildren and great-grandchildren were the true highlights of their lives. Nothing brought Cecil greater joy than watching his family grow and flourish.

Cecil passed away peacefully on May 23, 2026, surrounded by the love of his family.

He was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Jean, and by his son, Steve.

He is survived by his sons, Mark and Scott Spearman, and their families; his 11 grandchildren; and his four great-grandchildren, all of whom carry forward his legacy of hard work, dedication, and love of family.

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...Rich Boggs

continued from page 3

C.I. - What is your fondest memory? And/or maybe funniest story, because Rich sure was a character!

LB - Rich wasn't a stellar student at *Georgia Tech*, due to lots of socializing and bridge games. He talked his way into grad school at *UNC Chapel Hill*. When school began, he was amazed that the classes were really interesting! He studied hard and did well. The professor who interviewed him later said he was such an outrageous applicant that he decided to fill the last spot in the 1966 MBA class to see what would happen. Years later, that same professor was present in Palm Springs when Rich received an *Entrepreneur of the Year Award*. He turned out to be a pretty good bet.

C.I. - If you could only share one thing about Rich Boggs to others, what would it be?

LB - His determination and willingness to work hard for what he believed in were his core. Small business is tough, and he had the backbone and enthusiasm to make it happen. He cared deeply about his employees.

C.I. - I welcome anything else you'd like to share.

LB - I loved being a librarian... a bit of calm in the midst of the Rich Boggs fast track!

An Interview With Terry Browning, President & CEO of MOSSA

Club Insider (C.I.) - When and how did you meet Rich Boggs?

Terry Browning (TB) - I first met Rich in 1992 when I joined *The STEP Company*. At the time, Rich was already a larger-than-life figure. He had co-founded *The STEP Company* and was building what would eventually become one of the most influential businesses in the fitness industry,

helping redefine group fitness.

What struck me immediately was his energy. Rich never entered a room quietly. He had a presence that filled the space, but it wasn't because he demanded attention. It was because he was genuinely excited about ideas, opportunities and people. That enthusiasm was contagious, and it drew people to him.

Over the years, our relationship evolved from employee and boss, to colleagues, business partners, and eventually, very close friends.

C.I. - How did you come to work for him and then with him?

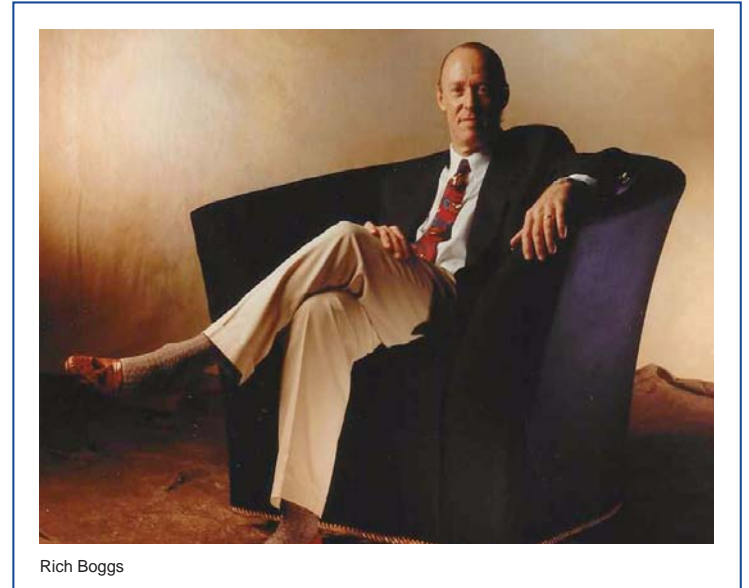
TB - After joining the company in 1992, I spent the next several decades learning from Rich. He was my mentor long before he became my peer.

One of Rich's greatest strengths was his willingness to trust people with responsibility. If he believed in you, he gave you room to grow. He wasn't interested in hierarchy for hierarchy's sake. He wanted capable people around him who were passionate about the mission and willing to work hard.

As the company evolved from *The STEP Company* into *MOSSA*, our roles evolved as well. We navigated tremendous changes together, including industry shifts, economic downturns, a major business disruption in 2005, and ultimately, the COVID pandemic.

In 2020, Rich officially stepped down as CEO, handing the reins to me and the leadership team. In many ways, however, that transition had been underway for years. Beginning in the early 2000s, Rich gradually transitioned more responsibility to me while remaining fully engaged as my mentor, the team's sounding board and everyone's cheerleader. It was the culmination of a relationship that had begun nearly three decades earlier.

C.I. - What are the key lessons you learned



Rich Boggs

from him?

TB - The first lesson was **optimism**. Rich was the most optimistic person I have ever known. He genuinely believed that challenges could be overcome and opportunities could be created. When others saw obstacles, he saw possibilities.

The second lesson was to **bet on people**. Rich cared far more about enthusiasm, character and passion than credentials or titles. He believed that great people could accomplish extraordinary things if someone simply believed in them and gave them a chance.

The third lesson was to **take action**. Rich was famous for what Cathy and I jokingly called his "often wrong, never in doubt" approach. Once he made a decision, he moved. He believed that progress was better than paralysis and that most problems could be solved through action and learning.

Finally, he taught me the **importance of being a leader who cheers others on**. His business card listed his title as "*Chief Cheerleader*," and that wasn't a joke. He genuinely viewed his role as helping others succeed.

C.I. - Adding to your own extensive knowledge and advice, what would you want to impart to our readers?

TB - The fitness industry is ultimately a people business. Equipment changes. Programming changes. Technology changes. Consumer trends change. What doesn't change is the importance of investing in people.

Rich understood that before many of us did. He built relationships. He developed leaders. He encouraged talent. He created opportunities.

For today's club owners and operators, I think the lesson is simple: build people first and businesses second. If you consistently invest in people, the business results usually follow.

The other lesson is to maintain optimism. Every generation of industry leaders faces challenges that seem unprecedented. Rich lived through multiple recessions, industry disruptions, competitive threats and a global pandemic. Through all of it, he remained convinced that tomorrow could be better than today.

That mindset is one of the greatest gifts a leader can give an organization.

C.I. - What is your fondest memory? And/or maybe funniest story, because Rich sure was a character!

TB - Some of my fondest memories aren't tied to a single event but rather a ritual that Rich and I shared for decades. Most Sundays, we'd talk on the phone. We'd catch up on how the weekend went, talk about our families, discuss ideas, work through challenges and look ahead to the week.

Those conversations could cover almost anything—business opportunities, industry trends, problems we were trying to solve, new ideas one of us was excited about, and of course, sports.

Rich and I had a standing tradition of betting \$50 on major sporting events. After more than 20 years of friendly wagers, I think he was ahead by exactly \$50. Somehow, despite hundreds of games, championships and seasons, neither of us could ever pull very far ahead.

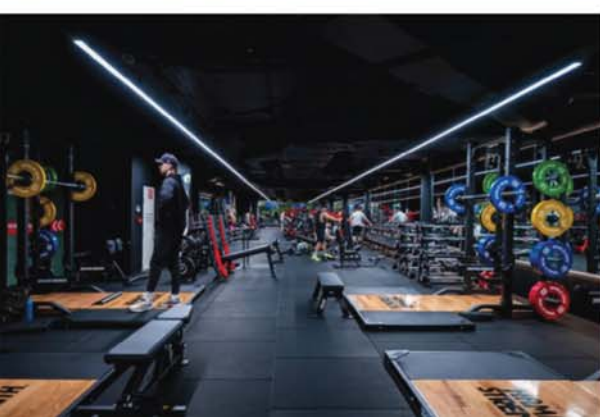
Looking back, the money was never the point. It was simply another reason to stay connected and continue a conversation that had been going on for decades.

Those Sunday calls reflected something that was rare and special. Through economic downturns, competitive challenges, industry disruptions and countless difficult decisions, Rich, Cathy and I always found ourselves aligned around the same core principles and

(See *Rich Boggs* Page 12)



Rich Boggs, Entrepreneur of the Year



KEEP BUILDING THE LEGACY

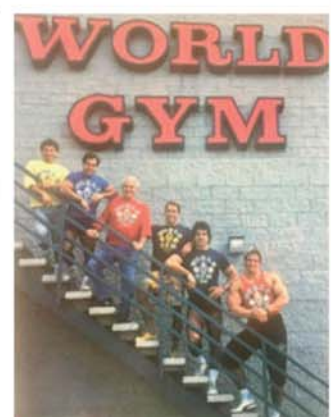
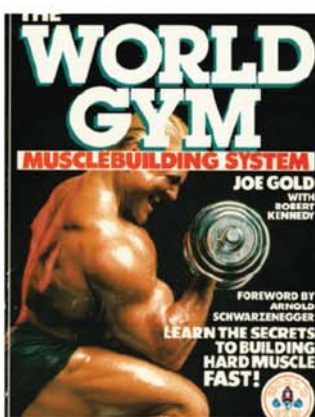
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To learn more, contact us at:

Mark Michael

Mark.Michael@worldgym.com



...Rich Boggs

continued from page 10

values. There was an extraordinary level of trust among us, and looking back, I realize how rare that is.

What I miss most isn't any single business accomplishment or milestone. It's knowing that on Sunday afternoon my phone would ring and we'd spend the next hour talking about family, life, sports, ideas and whatever challenge was in front of us. Those conversations became part of the rhythm of my life, and I will miss them tremendously.

C.I. - If there is one thing people should know about Rich Boggs, what would it be?

TB - Rich believed in people. That may sound simple, but it was the defining characteristic of his life and leadership. He believed in people before they believed in themselves.

He saw potential where others saw limitations. He gave opportunities where others saw risk. He encouraged people to think bigger, reach higher and accomplish more than they thought possible.

His entrepreneurial accomplishments were significant. His contributions to the fitness industry were substantial. But, his greatest legacy isn't a company, a product or even his many contributions to the fitness industry... It's the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people whose lives and careers are different because Rich Boggs believed in them. That's how I will always remember him.



Louise Irwin, Wife of the late Ray Lyle Irwin, provided the following comments:

"Rich and Ray's friendship and partnership

spanned a lifetime and became an important part of both their lives and the fitness industry they helped shape together. My husband lovingly called him 'Talk, Inc.' because he could talk to anyone, anywhere and always had a quick smile and a sharp wit to share. One of his greatest gifts was making people feel seen and heard. When he spoke with you, he gave you his full attention. I have always respected the deep bond he shared with my husband, as well as his dedication, intelligence and larger-than-life personality. Together, they shared years of hard work, vision, challenges and success that helped leave a lasting impact on countless people. He will be remembered not only for what he accomplished but for the friendship and loyalty that meant so much to my husband over the years. This was written by Ray about Rich: 'I don't think that I could have found a better partner than Rich Boggs and the fact that we are still together after 34+ years says a lot.'

MAY RICH BOGGS REST IN PEACE.

(Justin Cates is the Publisher of Club Insider. Having been born into a club business family in 1985, Justin grew up in the health and fitness club industry. He has lived and breathed this industry for 40+ years, since his own day one, and he loves it dearly. Graduating from the Terry College of Business at The University of Georgia in 2007, Justin has run day-to-day operations of Club Insider for 15+ years. Justin became Publisher of Club Insider in April of 2020. Justin's Dad, Norm Cates, continues to serve as Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993. You can reach Justin at Justin@clubinsideronline.com.)



Cathy Spencer-Browning, Rich Boggs and Terry Browning

"Mr. Rich Gave Me Business Wings"

By: Cathy Spencer-Browning

There are some people who enter your life and quietly change its direction forever. Mr. Rich was that person for me.

I met Rich Boggs in Germany, and from the very first conversation, I was captivated by his passion, enthusiasm and vision. Not long afterward, he convinced me to move to the United States. Looking back, I realize how many of the most important moments of my life trace back to that conversation and to a man who saw something in me long before I saw it in myself.

To many people, Rich was a leader, entrepreneur, visionary, mentor and friend. To me, he was all those things and more. My dad left when I was 12, and while nobody can replace a parent, Mr. Rich filled a space in my life that had been empty for a very long time.

He was my number one fan.

Rich trusted me when it mattered. He gave me opportunities. He let me lead. He believed in my instincts and challenged me to think bigger than I thought possible. Much of who I became professionally was built on the confidence he helped me find in myself.

His business card famously listed his title as "Chief Cheerleader," and honestly, no title ever fit anyone better.

He spent his life cheering people on. He made everyone around him better. If he learned something new, he couldn't wait to share it. If he believed you could do something, he made sure you believed it too.

There was no halfway with Rich. If he loved you, he loved you completely. If he believed in something, he was all in. If he committed to a person, a company or an idea, you never had to wonder where he stood.

Rich helped shape my life in ways that are impossible to measure. He championed me, challenged me, trusted me, believed in me and loved me like family.

I will miss his booming voice, his giant personality, his endless curiosity and his relentless enthusiasm. But, more than anything, I will miss knowing he was there cheering me on.

Always.



Terry Browning, Cathy Spencer-Browning, Russell Wilson and Rich Boggs



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JOIN A **THRIVING FRANCHISE**

THAT IS **PROVEN TO BE RECEPTION PROOF**

YOU COULD BE NEXT



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OWNERS OF WORKOUT ANYTIME CANTON

THE WORKOUT ANYTIME ADVANTAGE:

RECURRING REVENUE:

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

NO GYM EXPERIENCE NEEDED:

We offer complete franchise gym training.

LOW STAFF REQUIREMENTS:

Run your club with 3-5 employees.

TURNKEY MARKETING:

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

OPERATIONAL SUPPORT:

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

FLEXIBLE BUSINESS MODEL:

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

EXPERT REAL ESTATE ASSISTANCE:

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

THIRD-PARTY FINANCING AVAILABLE:

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

TERRITORIES AVAILABLE:

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

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

CONTACT TERRI HAROF TO LEARN MORE

TERRI HAROF
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A Variety of Financing Methods Available to the Fitness Industry

By: **Paul Bosley**

All financing options require the borrower(s) contribute an equity injection, so the borrower(s) have "skin in the game." The equity injection cannot be borrowed funds, such as a home equity loan, unless the loan will be repaid from an unrelated source, such as a spousal earnings or investment income. The typical sources of equity injection are savings, the sale of marketable securities, gifts from family members and/or the *Rollover as Business Start-up (ROBS) program* established by the IRS.

A ROBS program is an arrangement in which prospective franchisees use their retirement funds to pay for their new business start-up costs in a tax-free transaction. The ROBS program then uses the funds they choose to move to finance some or all of their new company to purchase the stock of their new C Corporation. If you are interested in exploring the ROBS program, please contact me so I can introduce you to a company that has been doing this successfully for years.

SBA 7(a) & 504 Loans (\$25,000 up to \$10,000,000)

The *Small Business Association (SBA)* offers a national loan program which can be used to finance any new business and a franchise approved by the SBA. The advantage of financing a startup franchise is that the lender can refer to the *Federal Disclosure Document (FDD)* to see the number of franchisees and their success rate. Our company is currently a funding source option for *Workout Anytime, F45 Training, Fitness 1440, FS8, The Yard Gym, The Camp Transformation Center and HOTWORX*. All approved franchises are listed on the SBA franchise registry. The SBA offers a 70% loan guarantee to the lender, which reduces the lender's risk and makes securing an approval more likely. SBA loans offer some of the lowest interest rates available and can be repaid over the longest term available today. The following information lists the six possible uses and qualifications of SBA loans.

1. Financing a Start-up Business:

- *Use of Funds* - The SBA 7(a) Loan will finance up to 90% of the total project costs, including equipment, organization costs, buildout, deposits, inventory, working capital and franchise fees.

- *Equity Injection* - Ranges from 10% to 30% of the total project cost depending upon lender and the financial strength of the borrower.

- *Resume* - Illustrates industry experience, transferable skills and/or related education.

2. Expanding a Existing Businesses:

- Same as qualification list above.

- *Cashflow* - An emphasis is placed on the profitability of the business based upon business's recent tax returns and interim financial statements.

3. Debt Consolidation:

- Same as qualification list above.

- *Use of Funds* - The funds are used to refinance business debt, including existing mortgages, equipment leases and loans. Credit card debt CANNOT be included.

- *Qualification Rule* - The resulting monthly



Paul Bosley

payment must reduce the total monthly payments of all debt being consolidated by at least 10%.

4. Business Acquisition:

- Same as qualification list above.

- *Business Valuation* - The *Letter of Intent* (See **Paul Bosley** Page 15)

WE SPECIALIZE IN FITNESS FINANCING!

SBA 504 LOANS UP TO \$10,000,000

Refinance or acquire real estate & equipment over a 25 year repayment term

SBA 7(A) LOANS UP TO \$5,000,000

Flexible Loan program for almost any business use including franchise fees and working capital

EQUIPMENT FINANCING UP TO \$1,000,000

The equipment is the only collateral required and the process is fast!

CURRENT FITNESS FRANCHISE PARTNERS INCLUDE:

HOTWORX | F45 Training | FS8 | CKO Kickboxing
The Camp Transformation Center | Workout Anytime
Lyft 24 | The Yard Gym | Zoo Health Club



Paul Bosley, Managing Member
paul@healthclubexperts.com
www.healthclubexperts.com
(800) 788-3884

Crunch Fitness Appoints Chequan Lewis Chief Executive Officer; Jim Rowley Named Executive Chairman

NEW YORK, N.Y. - *Crunch Fitness* announces the appointment of **Chequan Lewis** as *Chief Executive Officer*, effective immediately. Lewis succeeds **Jim Rowley**, who has transitioned to *Executive Chairman*. The leadership transition was announced at the opening of the company's *2026 Global Franchise Convention* in San Antonio, the largest gathering in Crunch's history.

Since joining Crunch as President, Lewis has worked alongside Rowley to help lead one of the company's most successful periods, driving significant unit growth, improving operational performance, and fueling innovation across the brand. Together, they have helped expand Crunch into a **\$1.5B systemwide enterprise** with more than **550 locations serving 3.5 million members** worldwide.

As CEO, Lewis will lead

the company, overseeing day-to-day operations, member-experience innovations, and branding and marketing. He will also shape and execute Crunch's ambitious long-term growth strategy. His appointment marks a significant milestone in Crunch's journey, reflecting the evolution of a leadership partnership between Lewis and Rowley, who work closely to drive franchise success, strengthen operations, and expand the brand's global footprint.

"Crunch has never been stronger, and that strength reflects years of close collaboration with Jim, our franchise partners, and our teams across the brand, who have built something special over time," said **Chequan Lewis**, *CEO of Crunch Fitness*. "I'm honored to step into the CEO role and continue that partnership, building on the foundation we've created together. As we enter this next chapter, our focus

remains clear: to support our franchise network, invest in innovation and grow the Crunch community in a disciplined way while staying true to the culture, values, and 'No Judgments, No Limits' experience that define this brand."

Rowley will remain actively involved in the business as Executive Chairman, focusing on the company's vision, long-term strategy, and overall performance. Since joining Crunch in 2009, Rowley has helped guide the company through a transformative period of accelerated expansion, international growth, increased membership, and the recent strategic investment from *Leonard Green & Partners*.

"Crunch is on a mission, and it takes thousands of dedicated people across our system to bring that mission to life every day," said **Jim Rowley**, *Executive*



Chairman of Crunch Fitness. "Chequan and I have built a close, trusted partnership, which gives me real confidence in his leadership as he steps into the CEO role. I'm excited to move into a role focused on strategy, results and performance, helping guide our current priorities and future plans that will shape the next phase of Crunch's growth."

See the **Crunch Ad on Page #2**.

...Paul Bosley

continued from page 14

must be supported by a business valuation. The valuation is conducted by the SBA lender using the seller's tax returns and interim financial statements.

Common Criteria, Terms and Conditions for These Four Uses

- **Collateral** required include all business assets. For loans over \$350,000, additional collateral up to the loan dollar amount is required, which typically includes real estate owned by the principal(s).
- **Personal Credit** - 700+ credit score is preferred.
- **Repayment Term** - 10-year loan term for home-based businesses and locations being rented from a landlord.
- **Prepayment** - No prepayment penalty.
- **Interest Rate** - Variable rate calculated by adding the prime rate as published in the *Wall Street Journal* (currently 6.75%) plus a risk premium by the SBA.
- **Closing Costs** - Approximately 5% of the loan amount, which is added to the amount being financed.
- **Timing** - 90 -120 days varies with the bank workload and responsiveness of the borrower for home-based businesses and locations being rented from a landlord.

Additional Uses

5. Working Capital:

- **Loan Amount** - The *SBA Express Loan* provides working capital up to \$150,000 for a home-based business and an existing business.
- **Collateral** - Business collateral only.
- **Restrictions** - This loan cannot be used for business acquisitions, purchasing real

estate and for construction.

6. Real Estate Mortgages:

- **Loan Types** - The SBA 7(a) loan ranges up to \$5,000,000 and the SBA 504 loan ranges up to \$10,000,000.
 - **SBA 504 Loans are a 2 Step Process** - SBA 504 loans are first approved by the lender and then approved by the regional Community Development Corporation.
 - **Use of Funds** - The loan will finance up to 90% of the real estate purchase and the development costs.
 - **Equity Injection** - Ranges from 10% to 20% of the purchase price depending upon lender and the financial strength of the borrower.
 - **Qualification Rule** - The business must occupy at least 51% of the useable space which provides an opportunity to lease up to 49% of the useable space.
 - **Terms and Conditions** - Same as above with the following exceptions:
 - **Repayment Term** - Up to 25 years. Fully amortized loan repayment with no balloon payment.
- Prepayment* - Prepayment penalties range from 1 - 4% over the initial 3 - 4 years of the note.
- Interest Rate* - Variable rate calculated by adding the prime rate as published in the *Wall Street Journal* (currently 6.75%) plus a risk premium by the SBA. **Note:** SBA 504 loans have lower interest rates than SBA 7(a) loans.

Equipment Financing (\$5,000 up to \$1,000,000)

One of the main benefits of equipment leasing is that these transactions are completed much faster than SBA loans. There are two product options: equipment leases and equipment finance agreements.

The lender owns the equipment when an equipment lease is used. The borrower owns the equipment when an equipment finance agreement is used.

- **Use of Funds** - Any equipment needed to operate the business, which can include signage, point of sale systems, furniture, vehicles and tools.
- **Interest Rates** - Fixed rates vary by the borrower's financial strength, time in business and industry experience.
- **Collateral** - The equipment package being financed.
- **Equity Injection** - The down payment or security deposit ranges from one lease payment up to 20% of the dollar amount being financed depending upon the useful life of the collateral.
- **Repayment Term** - Ranges from 3 - 7 years.
- **End of Term** - Once the equipment lease is paid, the ownership of the equipment is transferred to the company leasing the equipment.

Unsecured Personal Loans (\$25,000 up to \$250,000)

Unsecured personal loans are used to provide working capital and combined with an equipment lease or for clients not interested in or eligible for SBA loans. One of the main benefits of a personal loan is these transactions are completed much faster than SBA and USDA loans.

- **Use of Funds** - The funds are unrestricted and can be used for any purpose.
- **Repayment Term** - 5 - 7 years.
- **Interest Rates** - Fixed rates varying from 9% - 13% depending on the borrower's credit score and annual income.



Business Finance Depot (BFD) specializes in providing financing for new and existing franchisees, helping them to acquire the capital they need to launch or grow their business. They are experts in packaging SBA guaranteed loans with their network of active lenders and helping franchisees get that financing quickly so they can open their stores faster. Above all, BFD's attention to customer service, which helps reduce the stress associated with applying for business financing.

For more information, contact **Paul Bosley** by emailing paul@businessfinancedepot.com or calling **(800) 788-3884**. Paul is known for his expertise in financing franchises and has partnered with several national brands to assist new franchisees acquire the capital needed to launch their new businesses and to expand their current businesses. Paul has been a volunteer counselor for *SCORE*, a division of the SBA, for 15+ years where he learned the value of SBA loans for funding new and existing businesses.

Check out the **Business Finance Depot Ad on Page #14**.

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

The Credibility Factor Behind Influencer Success

By: **Nancy Trent**

The fitness industry has embraced influencers as a powerful marketing tool, but the most effective advocates are rarely created through sponsorships alone. Whether it's a trainer with a loyal social following, a respected wellness expert, a fitness entrepreneur or a member who inspires others, authentic advocacy begins long before a paid partnership is signed. Public relations plays a critical role in that process.

Credibility Comes Before Influence

Fitness consumers are increasingly sophisticated. They can spot a paid endorsement immediately, and many are skeptical of recommendations that feel scripted or transactional.

Before influencers are willing to attach their reputations to a club, fitness product, recovery service or wellness program, they want evidence that the brand is legitimate, effective and trusted by others.

That validation often comes

through earned media. When a fitness brand appears in industry publications, local news stories, wellness features, podcasts or expert interviews, it gains credibility that advertising alone cannot provide. Influencers notice these signals just as consumers do. Media coverage helps answer an important question: "Why should I trust this brand?"

Building Momentum Through Visibility

Influencers are constantly searching for what's new, innovative and relevant to their audiences. Public relations helps create the visibility that places a brand on their radar.

When a company consistently appears in industry conversations, whether through media coverage, expert commentary, event participation, awards or trend stories, it begins to develop momentum. Influencers see the brand appearing repeatedly and gain confidence that it is worthy of attention.

This process is especially important in fitness, where reputation often drives purchasing decisions. Trainers,

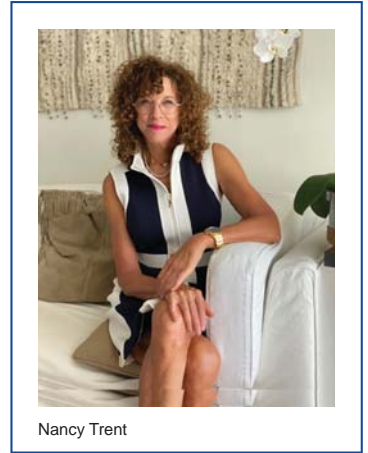
coaches and wellness professionals are careful about the products and services they recommend because their own credibility is on the line.

Creating Genuine Product Discovery

The strongest influencer relationships often start organically. A trainer reads about a recovery tool in a trade publication. A wellness creator sees a fitness concept featured on television. A club owner hears industry leaders discussing a new technology at a conference. Exposure through public relations creates opportunities for discovery that feel natural rather than forced.

When influencers experience a product or service after hearing about it through trusted sources, their enthusiasm tends to be more authentic. Instead of repeating marketing language, they share personal experiences and real results. That distinction matters.

Audiences respond more positively to recommendations that come from genuine use rather than contractual obligation.



Nancy Trent

Turning Customers into Ambassadors

In the fitness industry, some of the most influential voices are not professional influencers at all.

Members who achieve life-changing results, trainers who build loyal communities, instructors who inspire
(See Nancy Trent Page 19)

YOUR PARTNER IN ALL THINGS
HEALTH, WELLNESS & LIFESTYLE

- Operational Review
- Feasibility Study
- Design Consulting
- Sales & Marketing Training
- Fitness Programming
- Medical Wellness Startups (GLI-P/Peptides)

VISIT OUR SITE

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

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

A Stronger Industry Starts With You.

A Stronger Business Starts Here.

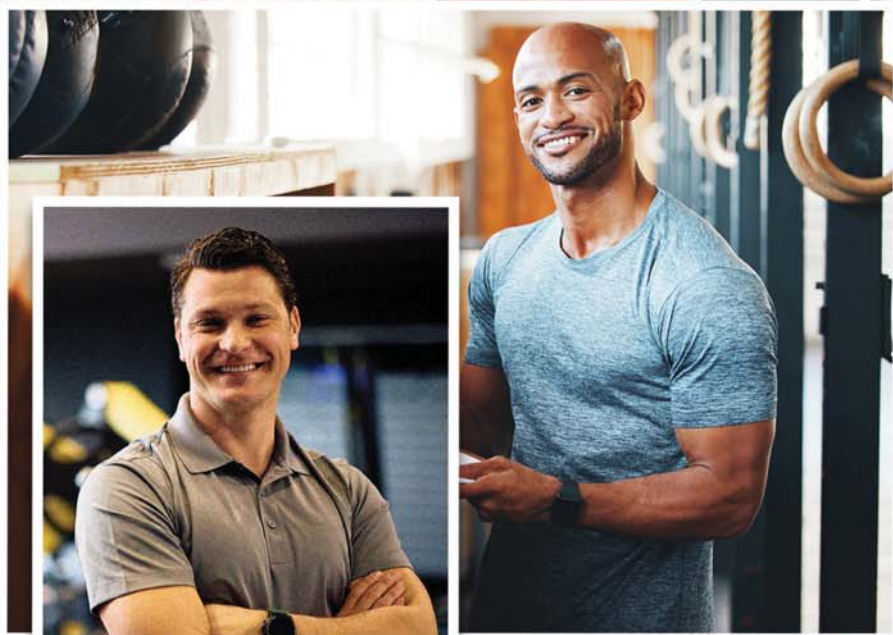
When you join the Health & Fitness Association—the only global nonprofit trade association devoted to protecting, promoting, and growing the fitness industry— you fuel the work we do on your behalf to move the industry forward, and you unlock powerful benefits for your business:

- Free access to HFA research
- Savings on music licensing, energy programs, and group purchasing
- Discounts to The HFA Show & HFA European Congress
- Special member-only events and connections

Memberships are open to club and studio operators as well as industry suppliers.

**Do something
GOOD for the
industry.**

**Do something
GREAT for your
business.**



Five Moves That Can Instantly Change the Future of Your Gym Business

By: **Jim Thomas**

There's a hard truth in the fitness business that many gym owners, boutique studio operators, gym entrepreneurs and personal trainers don't want to hear: *Being busy does not mean you're productive.*

Every day, I speak with operators who are exhausted, overwhelmed, understaffed, frustrated with sales, struggling with retention, worried about payroll, stressed about marketing and wondering why the numbers are not where they should be.

And yet, when you look closely, many of the biggest problems in the gym business are not caused by a lack of effort. They are caused by a lack of focus on the right activities.

The good news? You do not necessarily need more money, a bigger facility, better equipment or even more staff to improve performance.

Sometimes, the biggest breakthroughs come from making a few key operational adjustments immediately. The operators who dominate their market are often not dramatically more talented than everyone else. They simply execute the fundamentals better and more consistently.

The following are five things you can do starting today that can dramatically improve the performance of your gym business. And the best part? Most of them cost little to nothing to implement.

1. Improve Your Speed-to-Lead Immediately

One of the biggest revenue killers I see in the gym business today is slow response time. A prospect visits your website at 9:00PM on a Tuesday. How long does it take before someone contacts them? An hour? The next morning? Two days later? Never?

Here's the reality: The gym that responds first usually wins. In today's world, prospects expect instant communication. They are conditioned by *Amazon*, *Uber*, *DoorDash*, streaming services, AI systems and instant messaging.

Consumers no longer tolerate waiting. If your gym takes too long to respond, prospects move on emotionally before your staff ever gets the opportunity to speak with them. This is why "speed-to-lead" has become one of the most important KPIs in the fitness industry. The fastest-growing gyms today are utilizing:

- AI follow-up systems;
- Automated SMS;
- Instant lead notifications;
- Immediate appointment scheduling;
- CRM automation;
- Automated nurture campaigns;
- AI chat support;
- Personalized lead workflows.

Programs like *MaxMembers.ai* are helping independent operators compete with large corporate chains by automating communication, follow-up and lead management.

The gyms winning right now are often not the gyms spending the most on advertising. They are the gyms responding the fastest.

Action Step: Audit your lead response process today:

- Submit a lead form on your own website;
- Call your own phone number;
- Send your gym a Facebook message;
- Fill out your guest pass form.

Then ask yourself: "How easy is it really to do business with us?" Because what you discover may shock you.

2. Treat Every Prospect Like a Buyer

One of the most damaging habits in gym sales is prejudging prospects. I see this all the time. Staff members decide:

- "They probably can't afford it."
- "They're just looking around."
- "They're not serious."
- "They don't look like they'll join."
- "They're only price shopping."

That mindset destroys sales. You cannot close opportunities you mentally disqualify before the process even begins.

The top-performing gyms understand something critical: Every single person who walks through your doors has a problem they want solved. Maybe they want:

- Weight loss;
- More confidence;
- Accountability;
- Stress relief;
- Athletic performance;
- Better health;
- Community;
- Structure;
- Recovery after injury;
- Mental clarity.

People rarely walk into a gym accidentally. The key is learning how to properly uncover emotional motivation. One thing I constantly tell gym owners and sales teams: Stop giving tours. Start conducting needs analyses. There's a major difference. The highest-performing gyms slow the process down enough to:

- Sit with prospects;
- Ask questions;
- Learn goals;
- Discover frustrations;
- Understand emotional triggers;

- Build trust;
- Position solutions properly.

People buy emotionally and justify logically. If your sales process is rushed, transactional or robotic, your close rate suffers.

Action Step: Require every prospect interaction to include:

- A sit-down consultation;
- Goal discussion;
- Needs analysis;
- A clear recommendation;
- An actual ask for the sale.

You'd be amazed how many gyms fail simply because nobody asks the customer to buy.

3. Focus Aggressively on Retention

Too many gym owners are obsessed with getting new members while ignoring the members already paying them. That's a dangerous mistake.

Retention is one of the most overlooked profit multipliers in the fitness business. Here's a question I ask operators all the time: If your average member stays six months... why not twelve? That gap between six months and twelve months is where enormous hidden revenue exists. And, yet, most gyms:

- Do not monitor member usage;
- Do not track attendance drops;
- Do not intervene early;
- Do not contact disappearing members;
- Do not create accountability systems;
- Do not personalize the member experience.

The result? Silent cancellations. Members emotionally quit long before they formally cancel. The operators growing fastest right now are proactively managing retention. They use:

- Attendance alerts;
- Automated check-ins;
- Accountability coaching;
- Goal tracking;
- Referral systems;
- Community engagement;
- Challenges;
- Social connection;
- Personalized communication.

The gyms that create emotional attachment create longer member lifespans.

Action Step: Pull a report today showing:

- Members with declining usage;
- Members not checked in for 7 - 14 days;
- Members nearing cancellation risk.



Jim Thomas

Then, contact them personally. Not with a generic email. With real human communication. Sometimes one phone call saves thousands in recurring revenue.

4. Eliminate Dead Space and Unused Revenue Opportunities

One of the biggest things I see in struggling gyms is underutilized space. Dead space kills profitability. Walk through your gym today and ask:

- What area produces the least revenue?
- What equipment rarely gets used?
- What rooms sit empty during off-peak hours?
- What square footage is not maximizing ROI?

Most gyms are dramatically under-monetized. The most successful operators think differently. They think like venue owners. They ask: "How many revenue streams can this space generate?" Additional opportunities may include:

- Small group training;
- Recovery services;
- Stretching programs;
- Nutrition coaching;
- Corporate wellness;
- Specialty programs;
- Kids fitness;
- Sports performance;
- Physical therapy partnerships;
- Rent-paying trainers;
- Events and workshops;
- Supplement sales;
- Advertising partnerships.

Revenue per square foot matters. The gyms thriving today are not simply "selling access." They are building ecosystems.

Action Step: Identify one underperforming area in your gym today and ask: "What could this space generate monthly if properly utilized?" Then, create a plan immediately.

(See *Jim Thomas* Page 19)

...Nancy Trent

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participation and club owners who share successful outcomes can become powerful advocates for a brand.

Public relations helps identify and amplify these stories. Media coverage that highlights transformations, innovation, community impact and success stories creates opportunities for real users to become part of the conversation. Their experiences often resonate more strongly than traditional advertising because they are rooted in authenticity.

The Foundation for Successful Partnerships

Paid influencer campaigns can certainly be effective, but they work best when supported by a foundation of awareness and credibility.

When influencers have already encountered a brand through trusted media, industry conversations or peer recommendations, a partnership feels like a natural extension of an existing relationship rather than a paid transaction.

PR creates that foundation. It establishes trust, generates visibility and

positions a brand as part of the broader fitness conversation.

Maximizing Influencer Value Through PR

Brands often focus on securing influencer partnerships but overlook a significant opportunity: generating media coverage for the influencer themselves.

The reality is that most influencers are focused on building their own platforms and serving their audiences. While they may enthusiastically promote a product or service they believe in, they are rarely responsible for generating publicity for the brand. That responsibility typically falls to the brand and its PR team.

When a brand actively creates media opportunities that include its influencers, the relationship becomes far more valuable for everyone involved. Savvy influencers welcome these opportunities because media exposure expands their reach, strengthens their credibility and helps position them as experts in their field. At the same time, the brand benefits from third-party validation and additional exposure that extends far beyond a social media post.

The most productive influencer

relationships often involve individuals who are already comfortable working with the media. These influencers understand that remaining relevant requires a steady stream of fresh ideas, expert insights and compelling stories. They recognize the value of participating in the PR process and are often eager to contribute when media opportunities arise.

Likewise, influencers are frequently drawn to brands that are already generating ongoing publicity. Consistent media visibility signals momentum, credibility and relevance. When brands combine strategic public relations with influencer partnerships, they create a cycle in which media coverage strengthens the influencer's platform while the influencer helps amplify the brand's message.

The result is a deeper partnership that delivers greater long-term value than paid promotion alone.

Influence That Lasts

True advocacy cannot be purchased outright. It is earned through consistent visibility, meaningful storytelling and demonstrated value.

When public relations is working effectively, it does more than generate

headlines. It creates recognition, builds trust and encourages the kind of organic enthusiasm that inspires people to share their experiences with others.

In fitness, where relationships and credibility remain essential, those authentic voices often become the most powerful influencers of all.

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

Make It Fun Every Day!

...Jim Thomas

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5. Become Relentlessly Consistent With Marketing

Here's another painful truth: Most gyms market inconsistently. They post randomly. They run promotions occasionally. They disappear for weeks. They stop when they get busy.

That inconsistency destroys momentum. The gym business is a visibility business. Obscurity is expensive.

If people are not consistently seeing you, hearing from you, engaging with your content and being reminded that you exist, you lose market share.

And, remember: Your competition is not just other gyms anymore. You are competing against:

- Netflix;
- TikTok;
- Restaurants;
- Comfort;
- Convenience;
- Distraction;
- Every other spending decision consumers make.

This is why content consistency matters so much. The operators winning right now are:

- Posting daily;
- Sending emails weekly;
- Creating educational content;
- Producing short-form video;
- Using testimonials;
- Highlighting member success stories;
- Running community campaigns;
- Leveraging AI tools;
- Building personal brands;
- Optimizing for AEO (Answer Engine Optimization).

AEO matters because consumers increasingly search using:

- AI assistants;
- Voice search;
- Google AI Overviews;
- ChatGPT;
- Conversational queries.

Your content should answer questions people are already asking. For example:

- "What's the best gym near me?"
- "How do I lose weight fast?"

- "What's the best gym for beginners?"
- "How do I stay accountable?"
- "What gym has personal training?"
- "What's the best gym for busy professionals?"

The gym owners who dominate search visibility will dominate lead flow.

Action Step: Commit to publishing something every single day for the next 30 days, even if it's:

- One video;
- One testimonial;
- One educational tip;
- One client success story;
- One FAQ;
- One behind-the-scenes post.

Consistency compounds.

Final Thoughts

The fitness industry is evolving rapidly. The operators who adapt will thrive. The operators who resist change will struggle. The encouraging part is this: You do not need to fix everything overnight. But, if you improve lead response, sales processes, retention, revenue utilization,

marketing consistency... you can dramatically improve your gym business performance faster than you think.

The gyms that win over the next five years will not necessarily be the biggest gyms. They will be the most adaptable. They will be the most responsive. They will be the most consistent. And, they will be the operators willing to take action while everyone else is still making excuses. The opportunity is enormous for those willing to move.

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

Why Fitness Conventions Are Really Educational Retreats

By: Sara Kooperman, JD

In today's fast-paced world, fitness professionals spend much of their lives giving energy away. Instructors motivate exhausted members through early morning workouts. Personal trainers spend hours coaching clients through challenges, setbacks and personal victories. Managers solve problems all day long while trying to inspire both members and staff. By the end of the week, many fitness professionals are physically tired, mentally drained and emotionally depleted.

That is why conventions are no longer simply "conventions." They have evolved into something far more meaningful: *educational fitness retreats*.

A true retreat is an opportunity to step away from daily stress, reconnect with purpose and recharge both personally and professionally. That is exactly what happens when fitness professionals attend live educational events. While continuing education credits, certifications and workshops are important, the real magic often happens between the sessions... in the hallways, over coffee, during workouts, at dinner tables and through simple face-to-face conversations with people who truly understand the industry.

There is something deeply energizing about being surrounded by people who speak the same language of movement, motivation, wellness and human connection. In an age dominated by screens, emails, social media and virtual meetings, live events restore something many people do not even realize they are missing: authentic human interaction.

Fitness professionals often work in isolation. A group fitness instructor may teach classes to dozens of people each day but still feel professionally alone. A trainer may spend hours helping others improve their mental health while quietly struggling with burnout themselves. Owners and managers carry enormous responsibility and often have very few people with whom they can honestly share their challenges.

Conventions Create Community

When people gather face-to-face, energy changes. Ideas flow more naturally. Inspiration becomes contagious. One conversation can spark a new program, a new friendship, a new business partnership or even a renewed love for the profession itself. Attendees return home remembering not only the sessions they attended but how they felt while they were there: motivated, seen, appreciated, inspired and alive.

The educational environment itself also feels different at a live event. Online learning certainly has value, but virtual education cannot fully recreate the

emotional electricity of being in a room filled with passionate professionals moving, laughing, sweating, learning and growing together. Live events activate the senses. Music pulses through activity rooms. Presenters share stories that resonate emotionally. Participants exchange smiles, encouragement and ideas. The learning becomes experiential rather than passive.

And, perhaps, most importantly, conventions remind fitness professionals why they entered this industry in the first place.

Most people do not join the fitness profession because they want an ordinary career. They enter the industry because they want to help people transform their lives. Over time, however, schedules, financial pressures, management responsibilities and personal obligations can slowly chip away at that original passion. Educational retreats reignite it.

There is enormous emotional power in stepping into a room with hundreds of people who believe in wellness, movement, health, positivity and possibility. The collective energy becomes restorative. Fitness professionals often leave these events renewed, not exhausted.

Even the travel itself contributes to the retreat experience. Leaving one's normal environment creates mental space. Staying in a hotel, exploring a new city, eating meals with colleagues, attending social events and breaking daily routines all help participants mentally reset. The mind becomes more open to creativity, reflection and growth.

This is especially important in the wellness industry because the people

who spend their lives taking care of others often forget to take care of themselves.

Educational fitness retreats allow professionals to refill their own emotional and motivational tanks. They provide permission to learn, play, move, laugh and reconnect with joy. A dance session may heal stress. A meditation workshop may calm anxiety. A leadership lecture in an expo hall may create a life-changing business opportunity.

The benefits extend far beyond the individual attendee. When professionals return home energized, their clients, members and communities benefit as well. Recharged instructors teach with more enthusiasm. Inspired trainers coach with greater creativity. Motivated managers lead with stronger vision and positivity. One weekend away can influence thousands of lives indirectly.

The fitness industry has always been built on human connection. Technology may support education, but it can never fully replace the power of shared experiences, eye contact, laughter, movement and community.

That is why conventions matter so deeply. They are not simply conferences filled with lectures and certifications. They are retreats for the mind, body, career and spirit. They are places where professionals remember who they are, why they started and what is possible when passionate people come together in one space.

And, in a world where burnout has become increasingly common, perhaps that kind of reconnection is not a luxury at all.



Sara Kooperman, JD

Perhaps, it is essential.

(Sara Kooperman, JD, CEO of SCW Fitness Education, WATERinMOTION, and S.E.A.T. Fitness won the Most Innovating Fitness Pro by Fitness Industry Technology Council. Sara is the best-selling author of FIT FOR BUSINESS, an inductee into the National Fitness Hall of Fame, an Illinois State Businesswoman of the Year, esteemed host for NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS Monthly Talk Show and sits on the ACSM Communication & Public Information Committee. Kooperman sits on the Gold's Gym Think Tank and the canfitpro Advisory Panel and was a founding board member for the Women In Fitness Association (WIFA). Plus, Sara was recently nominated for the IDEA Fitness Leader of the Year Award. Learn more at www.sarakooperman.com.)

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