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THE Club Insider

NEWS

JULY 2006



Shawn Vint

Helping People...His Way of Life

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Norm Cates'

THE Club Insider

NEWS

Shawn Vint... Helping People...His Way of Life

By Norm Cates, Jr.

During the past 32 years in the health, racquet and sportsclub industry I've had the great pleasure of getting to know and working with many extraordinary and wonderful people.

Shawn Vint is one of those people. I want you to get to know Shawn Vint just like I have. That is because Shawn is a very special man. And, he has a very special message for all of us.

Shawn Vint is 42 years old. He is a young, fit and handsome guy. That's the "outside" of this man. I have learned a lot about the "inside" of this young man

too...a deeply good inside. The time I have spent getting to know Shawn Vint and his Greenmaple Company's work has convinced me that Shawn Vint truly is the *real McCoy*.

Shawn Vint has, within his inner-self, a mission driven determination and lifetime passion for helping people.

You should get to know him and his five-year old company, Greenmaple Wellness Communications, (Greenmaple Wellness) formerly known as FitDV.

Vint's Greenmaple Wellness is an internet-based club member and consumer educational company. Greenmaple Wellness ser-

vices will help you educate people, members and non-members, help your clubs enroll new members and help you keep members over the long haul. And, we all know how important that is in the club world today.

But, I think it is important for me to point out that I rarely do cover stories on industry manufacturers, vendors or service providers unless they have a health club history slant.

That is because for almost 14 years now CLUB INSIDER has focused on monthly cover stories about some of our industry's greatest club owners and operators.

I rarely come across



Shawn Vint and Lynette Flynn

a new company...a company that has an "outside-the-box"

product that I am very sure (See Shawn Vint page 12)

IHRSA Changes Guard

By Norm Cates, Jr.

IHRSA, the International Health Racquet and Sportsclub Association, had a change of guard on July 1, 2006.

On June 30, 2006, IHRSA's highly esteemed, 25-year Executive Director, John McCarthy, retired. In case you did not see it, we covered John's retirement in our June edition with a cover story entitled: Big John Mc-

Carthy IHRSA's "Alliance Master" Retires.

Joe Moore, completed four years of IHRSA Board service and including his one-year term as President of the IHRSA Board of Directors on June 30, 2006 as well. Joe did a terrific job leading and working with the IHRSA Board of Directors.

Also, on July 1st, Joe Moore stepped into the role of IHRSA CEO/President, the same position held by

John McCarthy and formerly known as Executive Director. Joe Moore occupies that role on an interim basis.

On July 1, 2006 Michael S. Levy, a 33+ year club business veteran from Toronto, Canada, began his fourth year of Board service and a one-year term as IHRSA's first ever Board leader entitled: "Chairperson of the Board." For 25 years that role had been entitled: President of the Board of Directors.

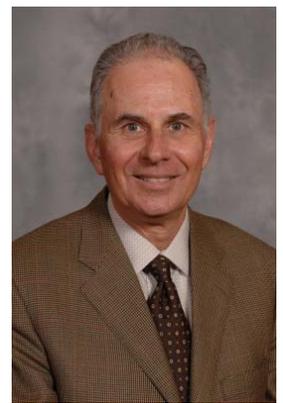
Joe Moore has stepped in to head up IHRSA operations through this interim basis. That is because although the one-year long executive search by the IHRSA Search Committee, assisted by the executive search firm Korn/Ferry, resulted in the selection of one candidate from 280 applicants. A stalemate happened when the hard working IHRSA Committee was unable to successfully

conclude negotiations.

The truth be told...I'm glad it happened that way. I am glad it happened that way instead of this outside the industry individual coming into this great organization with little, if any, knowledge of this industry and *then* deciding that it was not a fit.

I am also glad because I truly think we have a much more qualified person in Joe Moore in the role now. Even if it is on an interim basis, the drop off in excellence, with Joe stepping in, will be minimal compared to what it could have been.

Two big reasons are: #1: Joe's experience, dedication and passion for IHRSA and #2: because John McCarthy worked with Joe Moore for four years while Joe was on the Board. John also coached and mentored Joe for a couple of months in Boston before he retired on



Michael S. Levy,
Chairperson - IHRSA
Board Of Directors

June 30th.

Joe Moore is now as prepared and poised for success as IHRSA's new CEO/President as anybody on earth possibly could be.

(See IHRSA Changes page 19)

• Inside The Insider •

- Scudder Weighs In On Bally
- Powering Up Your Business
- Part IV by Will Phillips
- You Sell A Membership When You Ask
by Jim Thomas

Norm's NOTES

• **Hello everybody...** this is your friendly **CLUB INSIDER Publisher** since 1993 checking in! **Happy Independence Month!** I hope all Americans remembered our Troops, Airmen, Seamen and their families in their prayers during our Independence Day Celebrations this month. **God Bless** them all!

• The **IHRSA Board of Directors** now faces one

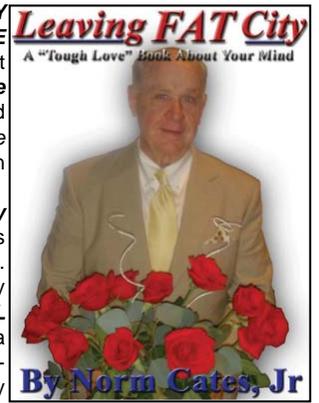
of the greatest challenges in the history of the Association: selecting a person to step into **JOHN McCARTHY's** role of leadership. The options are to choose someone from *within the club industry with knowledge and experience* in the club business or someone from *outside the industry with no knowledge or experience* in the industry. The choice *might seem obvious*. Stay tuned as the IHRSA Board is scheduled for a special meeting July 24th where emerging candidates will be interviewed by the Board. In the meantime, **JOE MOORE** is serving well as IHRSA's interim **CEO/President**.

• I must submit a *correction to an omission last month*, along with an *apology*. The omission was in last month's cover story report and interview with **JOHN McCARTHY**, who retired from **IHRSA** on June 30th. In that writing I failed to mention that amongst the many honors Big John had received was the **National Fitness Trade Journal's 2004 Life-**

time Achievement Award. My apologies to John and to NFTJ Publishers **WALLY** and **MESHELLE BOYKO** for my omission. The **2006 NFTJ Lifetime Achievement Award** will be presented to **LARRY SCOTT** in Las Vegas during the September 7-10th event. The Lifetime Achievement Awards Dinner will also honor the **NFTJ 2006 Distinguished Service Award** recipients **CHRIS HENNO, DEAN KATO, GREGG MA-LOLEY, AL ROUSSEAU and JOHN URMSTON**. The dinner will have an auction to benefit **Augie's Quest Cure ALS Research Fund**. The Conference and Trade Show event is growing significantly now because of the new alliance with **IHRSA's Club Business Entrepreneur Conference**. This Conference will feature keynote speaker: **THOMAS PLUM-MER** and presentations by: **CASEY CONRAD, MICHAEL SCOTT SCUDDER, KAREN WOODARD-CHAVEZ, WILL PHILLIPS, PAUL BROWN, ANTHONY BAYNARD,**

MIKE KINCAID, NANCY KOURIS and ANNETTE LANG. Please check out the **National Fitness Trade Show** ad on page #21 and *plan to attend*. I will be there and I hope to see you there in Vegas too!

• In Chicago, **Bally Total Fitness** released its **2005** financial statements. *Congratulations* to Bally Chairman and **CEO, PAUL TOBACK**, who received a total of **\$3.71 million** in compensation in **2005** as Bally **lost only \$9.6 million!** This was a *big improvement* in **2005**. A *big improvement* when compared to the **\$30.3 million** Bally loss in **2004** and a **\$106 million** Bally loss in **2003**. *Don't you think progress is progress? Even when it involves the reduction of millions and millions of losses to just single digit losses of millions?* Clearly, the investment of just **\$3.71 million** in paid compensation for Paul Toback provided Bally stockholders with a *smaller loss* than the *previous \$136.3 million* in **2003** and **2004**. I am



Norm Cates - Author - Says,
 "Visit And Read
www.leavingfatcity.com"

sure the investors feel this is something they deserved for their continued investment in Bally Total Fitness! However, my friend and **CLUB INSIDER Contributing Author, MICHAEL SCOTT SCUDDER**, has a very different take on Bally. In fact, he is so *strongly disagrees* with my support of Bally over the past few years that *he could not hold back any longer*. Scudder just let me have it this month about Bally and set forth his thoughts to me in a letter. I have published Scudder's letter on page #6 of this issue. Check it out. And...stay tuned!

• More Chicago-land area news. Last year I wrote about *rising club industry star, XSport Fitness' DANIEL MORRISEY*, becoming a club industry "fast burner." Well Daniel Morrisey has accelerated his XSport Fitness growth since then. Daniel has kicked in his "afterburner". (That's my jet pilot lingo for pushing the throttles forward to pour in a lot more JP4 fuel into the jet engines, thus rapidly accelerating the jet in what is called "afterburner".) The Big Rock, Illinois-based company just signed its **23rd deal** for a new XSports Fitness Club located at Elston and Logan Avenues in Chicago. XSport Fitness will have 19 megacubs (45 to 60,000 square-foot with 150 cardio and 300 strength pieces and much more) open and in operation by September 30th, 2006.

(See Norm's Notes page 8)

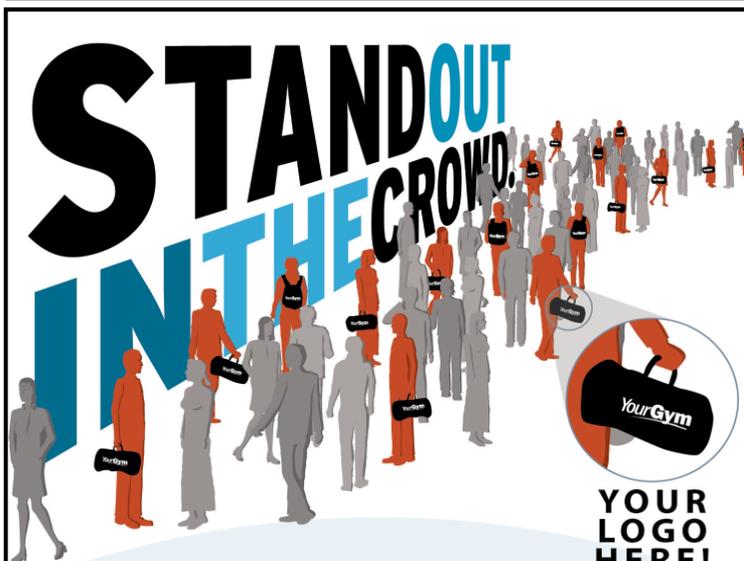
Thank You

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Scudder Weighs In On Bally!

Publisher's Note:

Over the past few years Bally Total Fitness has been led by Chairman and CEO, Paul Toback. During that time a lot has happened. Over the past six to nine months there has been much speculation about Bally Total Fitness being on the auction block. To date...nothing has been announced by Bally with respect to those efforts except acknowledgment that Bally is looking at opportunities.

Over the last few years I have been criticized for my support of Paul Toback's regime. I have let such criticism be just that. I have supported a Paul Toback and his executive team and full Bally recovery in my writing about Bally Total Fitness.

Since Bally is a public company I sought to provide an analysis of Bally Total Fitness that was done by a person that was formerly a stock broker for 13 years and one who also has great club experience. This opportunity cuts to the chase with respect to volumes and volumes of Bally information released over the past year.

Michael Scott Scudder, CLUB INSIDER Contributing Author for years, is

both: a former stock broker and a veteran club guru who can correlate Bally activity to the realities of the club world.

Scudder weighs in here in an Open Letter to me dated July 6, 2006.

NORM,:

I have been following Bally news pretty closely every day since the earning conference call last Thursday (June 29). Brother Cates, despite what IHRSA keeps touting in their articles, and your positive stance on Toback turning that company around, I'm going contrary you and IHRSA. I want to give you a "heads-up" to share what I have discovered.

1. Their earnings report? Smoke and mirrors.

a. Take a close look at their 2005 year-end report and their first-quarter 2006 report. Year-end shows there is NO NET EQUITY in the shares of the company (this shows up as "net income applicable to common shares" - it is minus).

b. If it wasn't for the sale of **Crunch** (which they show as "prof-

itable" - a joke - all they actually did is take income from the sale and apply it to net earnings as an extraordinary event, which is allowable), they don't have "net earnings" in the first quarter.

c. Sales costs are UP in the first quarter, despite what Toback and friends said in the conference call.

d. This is a company with NO NET INCOME and \$85,000,000+ per year in interest expenses! Hello? Sound good to you?

2. U/D Ratio

a. This is the calculated ratio of "up" sales to "down" sales. It presently stands at .50. A healthy ratio is 1.0 or better. This ratio alone shows the stock of the company to be under serious selling pressure.

3. Options

a. This is a measure of "future interest." A CALL option is the option to buy the stock at a fixed price for x period of time into the future. A PUT option is the option to sell the stock at a fixed price for x period of time into the future. The options per share on "buy options" for Bally right now are selling at \$.20 (20 cents). The options per share on "sell options" for Bally right now are selling at \$.85 (85 cents)...FOUR TIMES the buy option price. This says that the market believes this stock is going down further and harder in the near future.

4. Message Boards

a. While Internet message boards can often be a collection of weirdos with nothing better to do, occasionally by sifting through them you get a good handle on a company. The message boards are all asking "where are the buyers?" both for the company and the stock, and one noted that yesterday there was over 50% of the 1.2 million share volume transactions by selling institutions. This, in spite of the fact that the stock is being buoyed up by the mandatory buying

of the Russell 3000 index funds, which must add stock purchases of all stocks that come on that index - Bally came onto Russell last Friday. In other words, bigger-shareholder-sellers are selling into the index funds buying.

5. Investment companies

a. Look at their message boards about Bally, and all of them are asking the question "What are these guys really doing? Is this membership sales thing simply a smokescreen for a company that is not doing well at all, despite what the executives say?" (Note that Bally's cost of sales is UP for the first quarter! That is something they said they were getting a handle on...apparently not.)

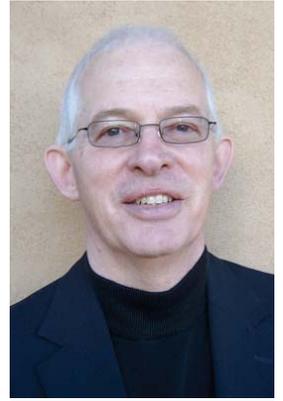
6. One analyst - downgrade

a. There is just ONE analyst on all of Wall Street that will venture an opinion on this company and quietly last week following the conference call, he went from a "buy" on the stock to a "hold." (In Wall-Street-talk, going to a "hold" is a spin-technique way of saying "lighten up" or "get rid of the stock.")

b. Technical analysis (charts of stock-movement patterns which are used to show "predictability") predicts a bearish outcome in the near term, with a "target" of \$4 per share! Sounds unreasonable? A couple of months ago this company was trading at \$9.90 and is now trading at \$6.50. That is a 35% loss in about 60 days. Prediction is for another \$2+ per share drop from here.

7. Insider transactions

a. This is perhaps the most disturbing of all. While this is calculated roughly one month behind the actuality (thus we do not KNOW how much stock has been sold this week by insiders and institutions holding the shares), the net insider selling of shares for the last 6 months shows a net selling of over a half-million shares. If



Michael Scott Scudder

the company is in such good shape, WHY are the insiders getting out?

Finally Norm, my good friend in Atlanta...look at the market cap of this company. (This is the value that Wall Street puts on the company based on number of shares outstanding and value of shares.) The market cap is in the neighborhood of \$275 million. Now, that's real interesting for a company that shows nearly a BILLION in sales! Could it be that everyone who really understands finance is saying "No way a company doing that kind of sales volume with NO NET EARNINGS in reality can continue to operate?" They not only cannot pay their outstanding \$600,000,000+ debt, they probably cannot continue to pay interest on their debt. And it is quite apparent that they cannot re-finance.

Would YOU buy a company that has 2.2 times the amount of debt that the company is actually worth??!! If you and I were personally in that situation...it would be called "headed for bankruptcy."

Anyway, my early-Thursday-morning-wrapping-up-here-and-getting-ready-to-hit-the-road-on-a-long-road-trip thoughts on one of my favorite (or un-favorite?) subjects! Thanks for listening!

Regards - MICHAEL

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...Norm's Notes

continued from page 4

By the end of 2006 XSport Fitness will have completed 4 more clubs including ones in Long Island, New York and Merrifield, Virginia. (Washington, D.C. area) Morrissey, the **Vice President of XSports'** parent company, **Capital Fitness**, commented, "We at XSport Fitness are very excited about our recent expansion efforts and will continue to strive to offer the customer the *best product*, for the *best value*, with the *best service*." Let me add here that Daniel Morrissey is fortunate to have the *expert help of a great club business veteran*, **GARY POLIC**, on his *Team*. Gary is a **CLUB INSIDER Contributing Author** and very popular industry speaker. Polic, just like Daniel Morrissey, is a *dog-gone good guy and a devoted family man*. To see **XSport Fitness** up close visit: www.Xsportfitness.com

• Last note about Chicagoland for now. **Don't miss** the upcoming and always great annual **Club Industry Conference and Trade Show** in Chicago, Oc-

tober 4-7, 2006. Check out the **Club Industry** ad on page #24. And, visit: clubindustryshow.com. Also, when you are in Chicago I would like to suggest that you plan to go and see the absolutely fabulous and amazing **East Bank Club**. For 25+ years now the mega - 450,000 square-foot East Bank Club has set the standard for all others clubs everywhere. **General Manager** since day one, **SIMON MEREDITH** and **Executive Manager**, **JOE ROSSIE**, have been perfecting this big beauty to the point where it is producing over \$48+ million per year!

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• **COLIN MILNER's International Council On Active Aging (ICAA)** reminds us of events: **#1- Active Aging Week**. 2006 campaign -September 25-October 1. Free pro resources and info on how to host: <http://www.icaa.cc/Activeagingweek/resourcesaaw.htm> **#2- ICAA Regional Meeting in Teaneck, N.J.**- Regional event Friday, September 29,

2006, from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. at the Classic Residence by Hyatt. Top speakers on industry trends and ways to build and maintain age-friendly staff. **#3. ICAA Active Aging Conference**, Nov. 15-17, 2006; **Mandalay Bay Convention Center**, Las Vegas, Nevada. Info call 866-335-9777.

* **ROYCE PULLIAMS' Global Fitness Holdings, LLC** recently inked a transaction with **Laurel Crown Capital** to develop **50 Gold's Gyms** in Tennessee, Ohio and Kentucky by 2012. Currently have 15 Gold's in business and 27 new locations in development. • **RAY GORDON**, the caring and wonderful human being and **Founder of Sales Makers**, is back from two exhausting, but uplifting weeks in **Rwanda**. There, for the 2nd year in a row, they built new school buildings. Gordon and his team of friends from the U.S. started with a 6000 sq. ft. cement slab upon which they made and erected the walls/trusses 5 rooms per building/doors/widows and hat channel on the roof in preparation for the 2nd crew who then puts on the wall covering/doors/ electrical and

roof. • **Sport & Health Company** in the Washington, D.C. area has announced the appointment of **MITCH BASKIN** to the position of **Senior Vice President of Fitness** in addition to the appointment of **MARK FISHER** to the position of **Vice President of Operations**. • **Representative JOE KNOLLENBERG (R-MI)** introduced the **Preventive Medicine for a Healthier America Act of 2006 (HB 5657)** intended to improve the long-term health of Americans and reduce skyrocketing health care costs. Reminds me of an idea I had a while ago. Given the health club industry's need to link with doctors in America I wonder why more clubs have not actually built and operate a Medical Doctor's office right inside their club? • **JOHN KERSH** takes on powerful new investors **TOM BEHAN** and **MARK SMITH** to grow his chain, changes name from: **GO! 30-Minute Workout** to: **Citrus Gym...** plans 400 co-ed, express Citrus Gym locations by 2010! • **TOM McCARTHY** long-time health club industry operator is now involved in luxury

home sales in the Naples, Florida area. So, if you're looking for a new retirement home you can reach Tom at: **800-692-4594**. Best wishes Tom. • **CLIVE CALDWELL's Club Sportiff MAA**, has been chosen by **Reader's Digest**, Canada's most-read magazine, as "**the #1 fitness club in the country**." Congratulations Clive! • The **HEAVENS** keep on giving...and promoting **Curves** really well. **GARY** and **DIANE HEAVIN** presented a check for **\$100,000** to the **American Diabetes Association** at a June **Chicago White Sox** game, **3,000 Curves members** walked around the baseball field and **Diane Heavin** threw out the first ceremonial pitch. • **Pennsylvania sales tax defeated!** It took months and a last minute late night debate, but the PA. House passed **House Bill 39**, with no sales tax for health clubs. Bill was sent directly to **Governor Rendell** to sign. Congrats to all PA. club owners and to **HELEN DURKIN** of **IHRSA!**

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Leaving FAT City Update

For those of you who have not taken the time to go to: www.leavingfatcity.com and check out, print it out for FREE and read the book, why not do it now?

Keep in mind please... I did not write "Leaving FAT City"...A "Tough Love" Book About Your Mind for YOU. I wrote it for the 196 million overweight and obese Americans. I wrote it to save lives. The book will do that for anyone, at risk of premature death like I was six years ago, who gets a chance to read it.

But...for YOU, a health club professional in the 21st century, my book has many lessons you need to learn, too. You MAY THINK you know it all. Trust me. You don't. You don't know what an obese person goes through unless you've lived it. I have. It is tough. You need to learn more about the minds of the obese and overweight Americans so you can advance your club into the 21st century even more than you've advanced it now. My book will teach you.

In fact, if you have any interest in learning something about the real world a person fighting obesity lives in and you would like to be able to have new knowledge to prepare your club...now would be a good time to get to it, because I am taking it off the internet on August 31, 2006 for Final Editing before it goes to print.

Beginning in October, 2006 "**Leaving FAT City**" will be sold for \$7 per copy. I am taking orders now...but I am not accepting money for said orders. I will collect money for the book this fall. And, as I state on the website I intend to donate 49% of any profits to 7 entities to help them fight obesity more successfully than they do now.

Since May 16, 2006 until July 8th our site: www.leavingfatcity.com has had 751 visitors, 4,143 pageviews, 13,619 hits and has been linked to 101 domains worldwide. So I know we're moving along well.

And, for any of you

'scoffers' out there read this and **TUNE IN CLOSELY HERE...** I am just getting started after having embarked on a long, long journey that may take me 30 years. Those of you that know me ... know I am relentless when pursuing any passion I have. Those of you that do not know me will find out that I am relentless in this effort. And, you will learn, I am mentally set for the long haul in this American obesity/overweight fight.

I already have one friend who has lost over 160 pounds since reading just my single book **Intro Chapter** published 4 ½ years ago in CLUB INSIDER in February, 2002. One day millions will benefit from my work.

You can come along with me in your mind now. Or, you can stay where you are mentally now. But, trust me on this folks. If you stay mentally where you are now... you may well lose out in the long run. If you will just follow my mind and open yours and go mentally with me on this journey you will win.

I am now building alliances with people that really and truly care about attacking this 196 million American tragedy called obesity and overweight.

Sure...I know there are some of you club owners out there that say, "I am not interested. The only members I want in my club are fit members who are dedicated to regular exercise!" Well... for you club folks out there who THINK and SAY THAT... you should really think some more! It is entirely possible that you are going to take the place of the former health club operators in our industry who thought years ago that a "body building gym" was the only answer. Those same folks that have stuck with that model all of their club careers draw maybe 1 or 2% of the members in this industry nationwide. Some of you do not ignore this market. But, if you and your club(s) do ignore the 196 million prospective obese and overweight members in America, your clubs someday will fall way behind in the club membership race...still

the only real race in town.

Folks...this is the real world. This is the real world where you will benefit from "waking up and smelling the roses" (thus one of the reasons for my cover photo for the book) if you want to be in this race and this business over the next 20 or 30 years.

Right now key alliances include, but are not limited to, our cover story subject this month, **SHAWN VINT and Greenmaple Wellness Communications**, **CASEY CONRAD'S Healthy Inspirations** (whom will be featured in an upcoming cover story about **Tasso Kiriakes' Bodez By Tasso Club** in the Daytona Beach, Florida area), **DONNA KRECH's Thin and Healthy Weight Loss Company** (whom will also be featured in a cover story soon), **Richard Simons, a/k/a WeightSaint1**, who has never lost steam in his passionate and focused 20+ year battle to help the obese. Richard and I have been communicating for a month now. Richard has agreed and given me permission to begin publishing some of his writings next month.

My August edition will include his amazing writing entitled: "**Project Me**" and some of his writing from his wonderful website: www.richardsimons.com "Project Me" presented on a hard-bound folding card contains his **Project Me Passport...21** poignant statements that truly move one's heart. Others I am creating alliances with include **Alex and Norma Jones' Alliance Fitness Corporation**, (100,000 members in Canada), producers of the **Easy-Zone Weight Loss Program** and **ROBERT FERGUSON's** terrific **DietFreeLife.com** organization in California.

And of course, all of my efforts will go toward helping **IHRSA and IHRSA member clubs win** in one of the three major IHRSA challenges as cited by **Michael S. Levy**, new **IHRSA Board Chairman**, in our page #3 article/interview this month. Since my book launch in May, **GEOFF DYER's** terrific **Lifestyle Family Fit-**

ness Centers (in Florida and Ohio) and **BRIAN EVANS' amazing American Family Fitness Clubs** in Richmond, VA. have issued very positive press releases announcing new obesity programs for their clubs and communities.

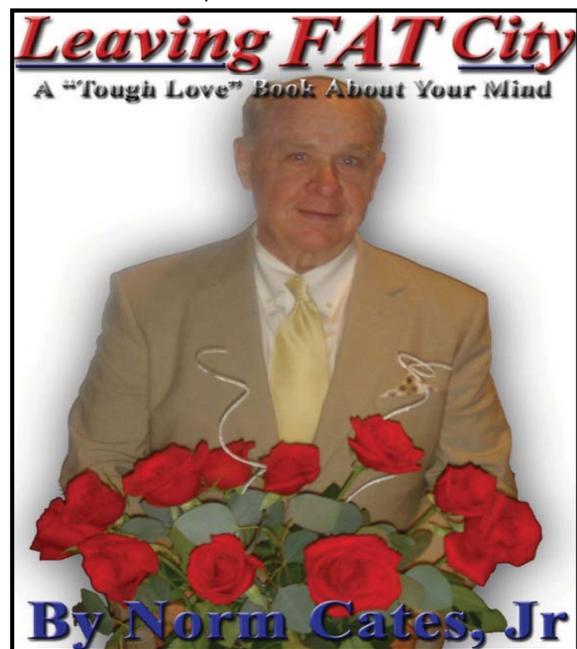
So...visit: www.leavingfatcity.com folks. **Read it all, including the About the Author page.** Trust me... there is no way, no how and no possibility that after reading "**Leaving FAT City**"...A "**Tough Love**" Book About Your Mind", thinking deeply about the content and applying what you realize and learn after reading it...that the future of your club will not be better...much better, if you are smart cookie over this upcoming long haul.

I will stop here now. But here is what **MICHAEL SCOTT SCUDDER** said about my book in his July 1st **FitBiz Connection** writing:

Somethin' Special... My wild, sometimes-wacky and always-wonderful friend Norm Cates (*Club Insider News*) recently released a seven-chapter small book over the Internet called "**Leaving Fat City**"...A "**Tough Love**" Book About Your Mind. To describe it is very challenging, even though I helped Norm by editing some of the text of this "out-of-the-box" publica-

tion. What it is about on the surface is Norm's incredible battle with managing his weight, his ultimate loss of over 100 pounds and his advice to anyone who is in that 67% of America that is either overweight or obese. What it is really about is a "**tough-love guideline**" for clubs **all over the world to get into the business of providing services to fat people... something we have hardly done at all.**

It is sobering, eye-opening, sometimes very frank and confrontational reading, because as usual, Norm pulls out all the stops... **this time on himself.** But it is also **must reading** because it really gets into the heart of fat-ness and obesity and will provide club operators with the beginning "framework" or "context" of how to serve a much more vast clientele than just those we have been taking care of for decades in this industry. It is, in that sense, a "**Blue Ocean**" creation that Norm is offering to all of us in order to "create a bigger marketplace" for our industry. Presently, the book is free and can be obtained as a download on the new web site, www.leavingfatcity.com... or by emailing Norm directly at clubinsidernews@mindspring.com.



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...Shawn Vint

continued from page 3

will help you and your clubs. I focus on "keeping my powder dry" until someone or something comes along that I flat **KNOW** will help you.

For example, in July 2004, I sat down for lunch here in Atlanta with Visual Fitness Planner CEO/President, Daron "Rocketman" Allen and his Information Technology Director, Robert Hatch. By that time, I had been watching Visual Fitness Planner from a distance for 3 years.

By the completion of our update meeting I was convinced reports I had heard from clubs and by Allen and Hatch that Visual Fitness Planner was "here to stay." I concluded that the 150 clubs Visual Fitness Planner was installed and operational in at the time was a number that needed to be 1,500 clubs or many more.

I featured Visual Fitness Planner Founder, Mario Bravomalo and CEO/President, Daron Allen, as our cover subjects for our September, 2004 cover story.

My goal was to illuminate the potential of Visual Fitness Planner for clubs and to get the attention of as many club owners as possible. I was convinced that Visual Fitness Planner would help clubs sell more new memberships, keep more members and greatly help personal trainer sales and services. The VFP Team continues to grow the company.

Visual Fitness Planner is approaching 400 installations in clubs and is becoming a growing and emerging force and power in this great industry.

Greenmaple Poised for Growth

Shawn Vint's Greenmaple Company is poised for growth. Vint and Company have recently completed a new name launch to: Greenmaple Wellness Communications, changing from FitDv. I want to help Greenmaple

Wellness reach you today because I believe their company will help your club or fitness center company. You, your members and your wallet will be the benefactors.

For almost 14 years now, the primary reason I've produced in-depth, case-study cover stories, is to help you and your club(s) advance the state of your club's art. This report will do that.

As those of you who are long-time CLUB INSIDER readers all know well...our cover-story-case study reports regularly provide many best practice ideas, tips for success and hints that will help you make your clubs better success stories too. I know you are always on the lookout for ways to advance your club operations. Here is one really good way.

My goal here is to provide an introduction to Shawn Vint, the man behind Greenmaple Wellness. That is just in case you do not know him already and are already doing business with Greenmaple Wellness.

My hope is that Greenmaple will become well known and trusted by many more than the current 850 clubs across North America and around the globe that Greenmaple Wellness now serves.

I am proud to be able to write: "CLUB INSIDER readers are leading edge club operators. You are thinking club operators. You are smart club operators. You always have an 'eye-open' for ways to advance the state-of-your-art."

Industry leaders, thinkers and a smart club operators should not miss this informative interview with Greenmaple Wellness Communications Founder Shawn Vint.

Shawn and his Team have worked hard for five years now to modify and adjust Greenmaple Wellness to become an even better and more valuable tool for your club(s). Greenmaple Wellness will help you advance your club's market penetra-

tion and retention. It will help you advance the 'state-of-the-art' of your club. Perhaps most importantly, it will help you clearly differentiate your club in a marketplace crowded with both new arrivals and long-term operators.

Greenmaple provides clubs with a tool that many clubs lack. A tool, that for sure, is one that all health clubs everywhere need. That tool? A regular source of exercise, fitness and health education for your members and prospective members, delivered in a simple and easy to use electronic format.

Shawn's interview is illuminating. Once you've read it and reviewed his Greenmaple Wellness website (www.greenmaplewellness.com) you will know that Shawn Vint is someone special that has something very special for you, your club and your members. I believe you will be motivated to learn more by contacting Shawn Vint directly on the phone at Greenmaple. 1.888.355.1055.

To know how and why Shawn Vint and his company have now been in our industry, a new industry for him, for five years...it is important that you know the man and his wonderful past.

Shawn was a fireman. He spent his life before becoming involved in the health, racquet and sports club industry helping people and saving lives as a fireman.

A unique and wonderful cross-over happened in Shawn's life. The cross-over carried forward his passion for helping people as a fireman to his passion for helping people in the health club industry through Greenmaple Wellness.

Read on. You are the judge.

I am your reporter.

By now...most of you know you can trust me to: "Tell-It-Like-It-Is".

Shawn Vint does that right now right here. You can read this interview with confidence that you will learn about the "inside" of Shawn Vint and his Greenmaple Company and how it fits perfectly with our CLUB INSIDER "Tells-It-Like-It-Is" promise to you.



Agnes Jedrszczyk & Greg Chan, I.T. Manager

An Interview with Shawn Vint... Greenmaple Wellness Communications Founder

Q.- Shawn tell us about your youth and your interests then?

A.- Well, I grew up in Southern Ontario, Canada in farm country, a great place to be a kid. I played ice hockey from the time I was 4 (yes 4!) until my middle teen years. Great parents, wonderful sister, all of whom I'm still very close with. When I was 16 I started to train with weights. I loved the feeling of working out and eating right and have continued a personal fitness lifestyle ever since. I have two incredible children from a previous marriage. Emily who is 14 and just won the Gold medal at Supermeet for her track and field performance against the schools in the area. (A proud dad speaking). And Ben, who is 11 and still loves the farm life and his daily chores. Both are great kids.

I've a great woman in my life, Lynette Flynn. Lynette is not only my partner in life. She is also a tremendous asset to Greenmaple Wellness Communications. She has been a great teacher to me on the power of simple, effective business systems. Lynette's knowledge and skill has been a benefit to our own company and all of our clients.

Q. - When, where, why and how did you decide to become a fireman?

A. - Interesting story. I was working as a membership coordinator at a local fitness club, 22 years old and without a lot of responsibility in my life. A good friend

of mine had seen an advertisement in the paper asking for recruits for the Hamilton, Ontario Fire Dept (population 500,000, about a 45 minute drive from Toronto) and talked me into accompanying him. There were over 1,000 applicants for 24 positions. After a lengthy series of interviews and a fitness test, I was lucky enough to be chosen. My friend wasn't, but since he's now the COO of a fairly large city, I think it worked out well.

I worked with the best group of individuals imaginable at the Hamilton, Ontario Fire Department.

I experienced 17 wonderful years with this very diverse group of talented, dedicated and service oriented individuals. These are men who would place their lives on the line for one another in a heartbeat. They are still some of the closest friends that I have.

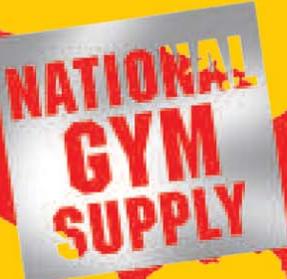
It's was a career that by its very nature taught me certain values: teamwork, discipline and a dedication to service. Certainly these values were taught by my parents at a young age. But, the Fire Department, by its very duty, continued to impress upon me the importance of those characteristics.

The firefighters I worked beside every day were the same individuals who were first to invest when I had this vision for a company back in 2001. As with any new business start-up, especially one that had never been tried before, the first few years were very tough. They have been unwavering in their support. I am proud to call them friends. Our success is and will be their

(See Shawn Vint page 14)



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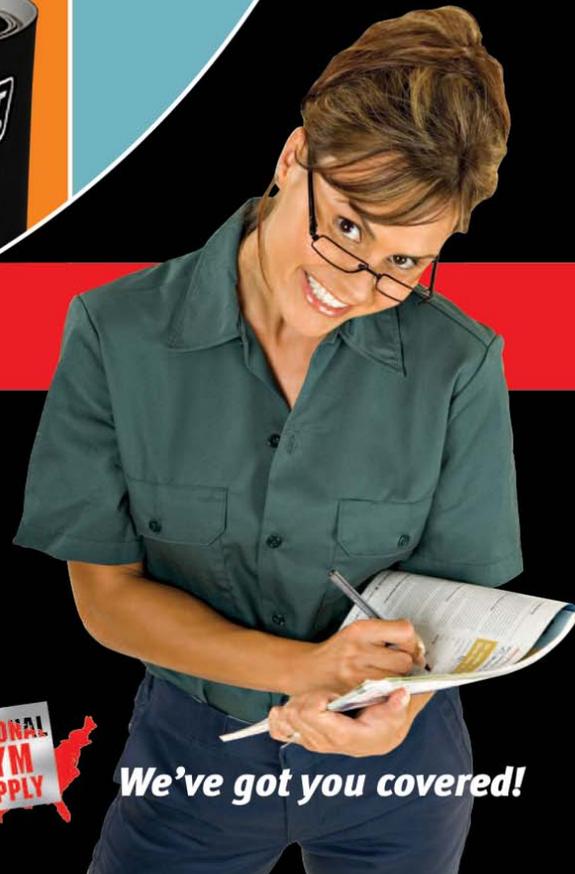
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...Shawn Vint

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success. For that, I am very happy.

Q.- Tell us about the most important things you learned in your life as a fireman?

Putting others before self certainly. And, the realization of how truly fortunate I have been in my life when compared with others who, through no fault of their own, have been through a devastating experience. Also, from a business perspective, the importance of both systems and training within any organization

Q.- Tell us about your feelings as a fireman about helping and serving others?

It can be a humbling experience at times. Especially, in those instances when you and others in your crew are doing everything possible in a circumstance, yet you still can't bring about a positive outcome. It also at times is very rewarding when we could make a positive difference in someone's life.

Certainly one of the most moving experiences I've

ever been privy to occurred in the days after 9/11. Here we were in a different country. We are some 500 miles away from New York City.

Yet, when we responded to our regular calls pedestrians would be clapping and waving at us from the sidewalk. Drivers were honking their horns out of respect for our Brothers in New York and their heroic efforts. I think firefighters around the world felt that same sense of appreciation from people during that time.

Q.- When did your career path veer from being a fireman toward the establishment of Fitdv, now called Greenmaple Wellness Communications?

Fitness and wellness have always been my passions. Sometime in late 2000 or early 2001 I started thinking about the opportunity presenting itself by providing good fitness and wellness content over the internet. The first business model was one in which individual consumers would subscribe. But, we quickly learned the value of working from within the industry and for the frontline work-

ers in the clubs themselves.

Q.- Exactly what is Greenmaple Wellness Communications and what do you do?

Greenmaple Wellness Communications delivers fitness and wellness content (articles, videos and fitness tools) predominantly through websites and email, to individuals around the globe.

Our goal is twofold: first and foremost is education.

IHRSA has set forth a very realistic goal of having 120 million members working out in health clubs by the year 2010. We won't reach that goal with "2 for 1 Sales". We will reach that goal by educating our surrounding communities on the overwhelming benefits of a healthy, active lifestyle.

Our monthly on-line magazine is delivered to the Inboxes of a clubs' members and prospects automatically every month. Each version of the magazine is completely customized for each particular client club.

I always talk about

"trigger moments" in life. For the club industry, that "trigger moment" in life, be it the thought of a wedding in June or a New Year's resolution, is the time when you want that individual to be thinking about your club. And when that individual has been receiving a fitness and wellness magazine "chock full" of great fitness and wellness content every month, with your club's logo and services prominently branded throughout, which club do you think is going to be the *first one they are going to think of when they finally reach their "trigger point?"* Your club will have already established its presence in their minds, through the magazine that you're providing them, as a very service oriented club or fitness facility.

Q. - Beyond educating members and prospects, what else can Greenmaple Wellness provide a health club or fitness facility?

The tools to make owning and running a club a more simple and enjoyable experience. Let me explain. In speaking about *education being a key*, most people miss a very important quali-

fier to that statement.

A club can have the best services, the best training advice, the best equipment and the best message to the community. But if they aren't communicating that message effectively to the community, they've dropped the ball and rendered much of their good work meaningless because consumers may not be informed.

Greenmaple provides the tools to help every department within a club or fitness facility easily and effectively communicate with their particular audience. Every department has a different target audience, whether it be: member, prospect, personal training client or short-term-program prospect.

Technology today can and definitely should make running a club easier than it has ever been.

Our combination of content and communication tools will help give independent club operators a way to differentiate themselves from the homogenous, big box clubs that are popping up next door in most communi-

(See Shawn Vint page 16)

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Mark and Karen Steinfield

Gold's Gyms of Howell, Point Pleasant, and Long Branch



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Association Insurance Group

...Shawn Vint

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ties. Greenmaple Wellness does not offer our services to the large chains. Thus, this provides Greenmaple Wellness club and fitness facility clients with an excellent market differentiator. Being positively different in a crowded club or fitness facility market can mean a great deal.

I believe *better service*, no... make that *better* and *personalized service*, in many instances, will be a deciding factor in determining club choice for many individuals.

Just as importantly is the fact that the *simplicity of our system* will allow club staff to work "*smarter not harder*". Show me a club owner paying attention to that detail within their organization and I'll show you a club owner who is elevating service while lowering costs. The two are not mutually exclusive.

Q. - A news release came out recently highlighting your wide viewer base: 300,000 per month. What would you attribute that large number to?

Two things. *Quality content and delivery systems*. The customized monthly magazine we attach to our client club websites is based on what we feel are the 6 pillars necessary to contribute to a better quality of life.

Topics involving mind, body and spirit are explored every month in our unique way. Our high readership underscores just how popular this magazine, through our client sites, has become. The delivery system we have developed is effective in that it delivers the club's magazine to each member's inbox, where the convenience of having the magazine virtually at their fingertips makes it easy to open. Once they're inside, the *great content takes over*. They continue to read and explore.

To us, the excitement is the sure knowledge that in continuing our present growth rates, we will be at, or over, 1 million readers monthly within the next 18 months. That's good for us certainly, *but also very good for the club and fitness center industry*.

Q.- What were the beginning years of business like?

Interesting in that we were carving our own path. In doing so there was really no company we could emulate and say, "Ah, that's how you do it!" So we worked and we listened to the feedback we received from club owners. We worked some more. Then we kept on working.

But it was also very telling to me very early on that the people within the industry were second to none. A brief story will highlight this. One of my closest friends lives in Mandeville, Louisiana. I attend a men's Christian retreat with this particular friend every

year, same weekend every year. In the fall of 2001 the Greenmaple Wellness vision was still mostly that: a *vision*. I desperately needed feedback from club owners to see if we were on the right track.

Well, it happens that my friend belongs to Franco's Athletic Club in Mandeville, Louisiana, owned by Ron and Sandy Franco. I had absolutely no idea at the time how influential and respected they both are in the industry. I was just looking to talk with a local club owner. So my friend made an appointment for me to go in and speak with Ron the afternoon my flight was scheduled to land in New Orleans. As it turned out the flight was delayed, and delayed again as this was just a few weeks after 9/11.

So, when the plane landed in the evening I had no expectation that my appointment would still be on. I rented a car and made the long drive from the airport, across the lake to Franco's A/C, and entered the lobby of their beautiful club. I was fully expecting to just leave my name with an apology to Ron for my absence at the appointed time and hoped to make another appointment after the retreat. To my astonishment Ron had left word at the front desk that when I arrived he was to be called at home. They called. Ron drove from home and proceeded to give me all the time in the world. I will never forget that. Thank Ron Franco!

Q.- Tell us about five or more KEY things or more, that Greenmaple does for clubs?

A. We make the club experience a simpler, more enjoyable experience for all involved....by:

1) **The Online Magazine:** The Online Magazine could be considered our roots. Although we've expanded our approach substantially over the past few years, the Magazine reflects our philosophy.

2) **The Prospects** within your community- providing an educational, inspirational resource for your community about the benefits of a healthier lifestyle, is **THE message** that any club should be shouting from their rooftops. If individuals have the misconception that a healthy lifestyle is beyond their reach or they are too intimidated to walk into your club, let me be very frank. If you as a facility aren't delivering a message that reaches out to these individuals, one of two things will happen. Either they will never hear that message and never change their lifestyle and that would be a shame. Or, someone else will deliver that message. That would be a shame too for your club or fitness facility.

It is really that black and white.

3) **Your Members:** with (See *Shawn Vint* page 18)

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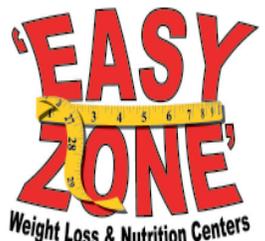
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If you own or manage any type of fitness business, we have new ideas that will help you make more money and compete successfully against anyone. During the last year, Thomas Plummer Seminars have attracted thousands of people, including small training centers, the biggest chains in America, independent club owners, wellness and hospital facilities and even clubs that are in new categories.

It's been hard to make money in this business during the last several years but we have the ideas and resources to help you change what happens. New ideas and leadership is what the Thomas Plummer Company is all about, and we promise that if you give us two days, we can make a major difference in how you make money.

In Their Own Words...

-Every club owner, no matter how long they have been in the industry, needs to attend a Thomas Plummer seminar.

Jason West
North Columbus Athletic Club

-Thomas Plummer is very fun and inspirational, the information is top notch, and I just enjoy being around other gym owners for 2 days.

Ken Laurie
World Gym Express

-I look forward to attending and sending my staff to a Plummer seminar every year. I take something back each time that will help take my business to the next level.

Mike Shirley
Double Diamond Athletic Club

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...Shawn Vint

continued from page 16

competition as fierce as it is today, communicating with your members on a regular basis is a must. Our package is easy to implement, cost effective and is uniquely tied to our exceptional content.

4) Your Sales Dept.:

Regardless of how well your sales team performs, at the end of the day, 20% to 40% of prospects that get the tour and presentation for whatever reason are not signing that particular day. The "be back's". Club's have traditionally had their sales staff follow up these "be backs" by phone. Well, as we all know the sales staff aren't exceptionally keen on picking up that phone, truth be told... probably because the "be backs" don't particularly appreciate receiving the phone calls. I've seen studies that show that by calling more than twice, you may actually be causing more of a barrier to that individual joining your facility. It comes down to the nuisance factor.

We provide an au-

tomated, yet personal approach, designed to encourage individuals to make a lifestyle change by providing inspirational or educational articles from the Magazine we're providing a club or fitness center, along with a series of very nice letters. No phone calls, no nuisance factor and you're establishing your club as a very service oriented facility right from the start.

5) Your Marketing

Budget: Clubs spend a lot of money on marketing. My experience and what I currently see and hear tell me that most clubs could spend less AND be more effective. A paperless approach, one in which there is a combination of both targeted messages and broad based lifestyle messages is much more effective. It keeps the emphasis away from price and more directed at needs and emotions in a manner which is non-intrusive. With an ongoing "unsubscribe" rate of less than 1% from our club's members and prospects, we know what we're doing is successful for our clients.

We accomplish an awful lot for a very reasonable investment. I'm very confident that we can accomplish better bottom line results for less than what clubs currently spend. In fact, we guarantee it with a money back commitment. And, we do this, while at the same time raising the service bar for existing members.

Q. - Beyond your list of benefits above Shawn please tell us WHY clubs should investigate Greenmaple Wellness?

A. - That's an easy one. We provide cost effective results with very simple to implement strategies.

Q. - Tell us anything else you would like to say that might be meaningful and important to our readers?

A. - *Getting your staff on board to anything new is key.*

The most effective way to ensure this is by having very simple to implementation strategies for each department. That will make their life EASIER, not more complicated. If you expect your staff to implement an "all

in one" kind of program along with a half-inch thick implementation manual, *it's just not going to happen. Simple, effective solutions for every department* is what Greenmaple Wellness provides.

Ladies and Gentlemen...Shawn Vint has shared his life of service to others with us and it has been a really good life so far. This young man, Shawn Vint and his significant other, Lynette Flynn, and their Greenmaple Wellness Communications Team are going places in this industry.

I hope you will carefully evaluate the benefits and values Greenmaple Wellness provides for your club(s). And, I hope that one of the places Greenmaple is going will be to your club or fitness facility.

To make that happen...as I wrote in the beginning..."I hope you will be motivated to contact Shawn Vint directly." To personally call Shawn at Greenmaple Wellness: 1.888.355.1055.

(Norm Cates, Jr. is the Founder of CLUB INSIDER News

and Publisher Since 1993. Cates is a 32-year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. In 1981 Cates was the 1st President of IHRSA and a co-founder of the Association with Rick Caro and five others. He was honored by IHRSA in March, 2001 when he was presented with its DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award ... an honor that was the greatest of his life. Norm Cates may be reached at: 770.850.8506 or at: clubinsidernews@mindspring.com or at: normcates@leavingfatcity.com Look for Norm Cates' new book online for free now and in bookstores for \$7 a copy by October, 2006. Go to: www.leavingfatcity.com - click on Chapters List, download fast PDF and print all 105 pages. You will be glad you did! And Cates welcomes your criticisms or other suggestions. If provided, they may be included in the printed version of the book.)

...IHRSA Changes

continued from page 3

An Interview With IHRSA Board Chairperson Michael S. Levy

It was my great pleasure to have interviewed Michael S. Levy, new IHRSA Board Chairman (or Chairperson), as he would prefer to be called.

First, Michael Levy shared his feelings about serving IHRSA and the service of others in general. His comments were excellent, poignant and I think, will be of value to all of you. I think that since you all, in fact, are in the business of serving others.

Michael Levy said, "I really believe it's an honor to serve on the Board of

IHRSA. I really believe that if you are asked or if you have the opportunity to serve, it is something you should jump at. Sure, it can be time consuming. It can be stressful. There are disparate interests across the country and across the world. There are sometimes personalities that are difficult to deal with. But, you also get to work with a Staff that is uniformly excellent and to participate on issues that will lead IHRSA into the future. And, most importantly, you get to work with the best of the industry leaders, make new friends and give back a little to the industry that provided you with so much.

Norm, I will tell you that we work in an industry we are so privileged to be a part of. We are in one of the greatest businesses in the

world because of the good we do for people. We are so lucky. I cannot think of a business in the world that I would rather be in. Since I retired from The Sports Clubs of Canada, I was recruited to become the CEO of a couple of companies. I went in and interviewed and looked at their businesses, met their people and turned them all down. I told my wife Caren, "I don't have any interest in that stuff. I am not going to work 70 hours a week for a business that I couldn't care less about."

I also really believe that it is very important to get our club members more involved in using and participating in IHRSA. I know the stock answer is that "I don't have the time". However, we have to make the time, so we can be better and improve what we do, for ourselves and for the industry. And, I am not saying this from a Pollyanna perspective. I worked and operated Health Clubs for over thirty years. I know what it's like to meet payroll. I know what it's like to be afraid. I know what it's like to wonder if you are ever going to turn the corner. But, I always made time to learn, to get better and to give back to society.

I also know what it's like to be able to contribute to the society we live in. My Grandmother said it best, "Michael, if successful people like you don't give back to society, who will?" I think it is your duty to give back to society. I think it's your responsibility if you become successful, and enjoy the fruits of your labors and probably live beyond our dreams, then you have an obligation to give back to the society that enabled you to become successful. I know that everybody on the IHRSA Board believes that they are lucky to be able to serve and give back to this Association.

Michael added, "I am honored. I really am honored to be Chairperson of the IHRSA Board. To be frank, I am very nervous about it because this is a challenging time for us. However, I am also a very fortunate that we have an extraordinary Board of Directors. I am so impressed by the people on the Board I work with. All

of them, without exception, bring honor, integrity and hard work, ethics, insight, and enthusiasm to the work. I am really proud to be part of it and that is what I am, a part of a team. I may have the title of Chairperson, but I am part of the group. I learned from Jay Kell, my partner at Sports Clubs of Canada for over twenty years, who often shared what we called "Kellisms" with us. He said and you can quote me, "There is no I in the word team."

Here is our interview with Michael S. Levy, IHRSA's Chairman of the Board:

Q. – Michael, please tell our readers about your background?

A. – I founded The Sports Clubs of Canada in 1973. Jay Kell joined me in 1981. We sold the business to Bally Total Fitness in 1999. I stayed on as the President of Bally Canada and Vice President of Bally Development for four years. My major responsibility was the development of new locations in the Eastern United States and in Canada. By September, 2003, Bally had ceased a major growth phase and was slowing down the expansion into new areas.. I sat down with Harold Morgan, Senior Vice President of Administration at Bally, who subsequently has become a very good friend and said to Harold, I have this nice contract. But, there is little point for me to stay on here and do nothing. We agreed that it was probably an appropriate time for me to retire. I left Bally under very favorable circumstances. They were very generous, more so than I think they even had to be. I continue to have a great relationship with both Paul and Harold, in particular. And, I want to put this on the record. I think Paul Toback is doing a very good job in a very difficult position. So, I left Bally because there was really very little of substance for me to accomplish. And, Jay Kell had left the year before, and the loss of my friend and partner left a huge void for me. There is no one in the industry I respect more than Jay Kell. I think Jay is probably, if not THE finest, he is certainly in the top few of the best club operators in North



Joe Moore

America. He is just an extraordinarily special person.

Q. – When did you establish Casaral, Inc.?

A. – Casaral had existed for a number of years. It has been a holding and investment company for me. But, in 2003, once I had retired, I decided to make it an operating company. I use it for consulting services in the industry, and for ownership of various enterprises I am involved within. And, I utilize the company for my management work for Spa Chakra. I am now the Executive Director of a company called Spa Chakra Fitness. I do that through the auspices of Casaral, Inc. I did some consulting as well when I first retired. But, I didn't like the consulting end of the business. I prefer to own the business, wherein I have the ability to make the decisions; and, either reap the joys or the problems those decisions entail.

Q. -- How did you pick the name Casaral?

A. -- It sounds very complicated. But, Norm, it is an acronym for my wife Caren and my two children Sara and Alissa.

Q. – Tell us about Spa Chakra Fitness?

A. – The Company is called Spa Chakra, Inc and we are the Club Fitness Division. You may look it up on the web at: www.spachakra.com I am very proud of that company. The CEO, a man named Mike Canizales, is just doing an extraordinary job with it. He built the company from inception into one of the great Spa Operators in the Luxury business worldwide. We, Spa Chakra Fitness, have a great Chief Op- (See IHRSA Changes page 22)



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Powering Up Your Business!

White Paper - Part IV

By Will Phillips

Hire People With The Right Strengths

If you take Buckingham's research discussed in Part III seriously, it means you are not going to try to hire people without the needed strengths and train them to do it right. The U.S. corporate world supports a \$10 billion dollar management training industry. It all starts with the performance evaluation or the more sophisticated 360 evaluation. This invariably points out weaknesses.

The training industry steps in and provides highly energizing management training books, tapes and seminars. Yet a few years ago Rutgers University researched how much real value was contributed from management training in the U.S. and found 95% of CEOs felt that no value was added to their business from training. No wonder many CEOs hate the human resource people as Forbes Magazine reported. The problem of people not doing what we want is not the issue. The problem is that we are running our people function based on the **Five False Assumptions** that Buckingham wants you to **BREAK!**

The Animal School

Once upon a time there was a school for animals. Every new student was tested to identify strengths and weaknesses. The squirrels invariably did poorly in swimming. The ducks failed at tree climbing. So remedial classes were set up. Now the squirrels really tried to swim, but never came close to a duck's ability. This led to summer programs for the squirrels. Over time most of the squirrels became discouraged and did not try as hard to learn to swim. Many dropped out and others were dismissed as unteachable or unmotivated or suffering from learning disabilities. When

they went back to tree climbing, they discovered their tree climbing muscles had atrophied so they got tired easily, and soon believed they were a failure at everything. Other squirrels who were convinced by their school that they were really a duck went out and bought a duck suit. If you met them on the street you'd say they were a duck. Just don't go swimming with them!

Sound silly? Unrealistic? Well, look at your organization's approach to people. See if there are parallels. Buckingham saw enough similarities that he entitled his book: "**First, Break The Rules**". Meaning let go of your *unworkable* and *ineffective assumptions*.

Remember, Ducks Duck and Squirrels Squirrel

So if we're not going to try turning a squirrel into a duck what do we do? We're trying to find out the real talents of that squirrel, i.e. climbing and put them to work in that arena. If it turns out that we thought someone was a duck and they were really a squirrel dressed up in duck's clothing, we now need to figure out how to get their squirrel-ness, i.e., their climbing ability, out of them, so we can put them to use in that arena. Failure to understand this fundamental concept is a major flaw in most service businesses. In the world of building construction, for instance, if we need to have a structural member in a skyscraper with 50,000 pounds of tensile strength, we know we have to use steel, not wood. We don't try to convert the wood into steel. We find out the needs and then we select the material based on its intrinsic qualities to satisfy that need. If we want windows, we use glass; we don't put up sheets of plywood and try to make them transparent. Yet, when we look inside the service business, we find over and over again that managers are trying to make wood transparent and squir-

rels into ducks. *This has major implications for your hiring process, which is to hire people who have the right talents to begin with.*

Discover Your Strengths

As Marcus Buckingham concluded his research and reported in "**First, Break The Rules**", he realized that discovering people's strengths was a *key part to getting them to sit in the right seat on the bus*. This led to a second tier of research reported in his book: "**Now, Discover Your Strengths**". And, this research, which had been going on for some time at the Gallup Institute, uncovered two key flawed assumptions about people:

1. *Anybody can be competent in almost anything.*
2. *Each person's focus for greatest growth is in his or her area of greatest weakness.* Buckingham does his best in this book to discourage you from taking on these assumptions. Rather, he presents two alternate assumptions that actually guide the world's best managers, the ones who have the most productive employees.
 - a) *Each person's talents are enduring and unique.*
 - b) *Each person's greatest room for growth is in the areas of his or her greatest strengths.*

Buckingham was not the first to focus on strengths in the business world. Richard Bolles in his blockbuster, classic about career choice and transition, "**What Color Is Your Parachute?**", which has been on the Business Week Best Seller list for some 34 years, provided practical tools for any interested person to discover their strengths. Many years later a powerful approach to organizational change was developed which is called appreciative inquiry. It provides a straight forward process to help organizations build on their strengths.

Further research by the Gallup organization over the last 30 years discovered

that there were some 34 patterns of strengths that show up in the world of work. Of course, they don't capture every single human idiosyncrasy, but they give you a powerful starting point on how to design a productive management team, project teams and staff.

The book consists of a page long description of each of these 34 strengths. Here are examples of a few titles of these strength themes: analytical, arranger, commander, strategizer, relater and communicator.

Each copy of the book includes a password on the inside of the book cover which entitles you to access an online half an hour survey, which delivers an analysis of your top five strengths of the 34 presented in the book. Each one has a paragraph long description. *This is very valuable in deciding who to hire, who should work on what tasks and how to implement Buckingham's admonition to build on strengths.*

Here is the way some top performing clubs have used the strengths profiles of their top managers. The executive team meets for about an hour once a month where each person gets the chance to be in the hot seat. When it's your turn in the hot seat, you arrive with your pre-printed strength profile and any fine-tunings or modifications of the words and phrases that describe your strengths in your view.

Your time in the hot seat consists of four distinct discussions. The first one fine tunes your strengths using your teammate's perceptions of you. You pass out your top five strengths. The management team engages in a dialogue on the accuracy and precision and fine-tuning of your strengths. It's one thing for you to report what you see as your strengths; it is often much more valuable to hear those who work with you on what your strengths are. They are more likely to have an accurate perception



Will Phillips

than you do of yourself. *Listen with humility; not defensiveness.*

After you fine-tune your strength description, the second task is devoted to looking at the job you are doing and specifically describe the top three to five major tasks you are focusing on. Your job is to describe these and have the rest of the management team chime in to fine-tune the description of those tasks. These should be designed to support your club achieving its desired results. In the third part of the meeting you go first, as usual, and then the management team chimes in to explore where the match between your strengths and the task's needs are a strong match and where the match is weaker. One of the best indicators is where the task is not progressing well or on time or not producing the desired results. As this discussion progresses, focus on how well your strengths match the strengths needed for the tasks and what can be done to get a better match. This may mean peeling away parts of the task and assigning them to others with a more appropriate strength or it may mean creating small partnerships or mini-teams to manage the task to make sure the right strength comes to bear on the task. One club CEO reports extraordinary success in using strength profiles in composing the right

(See Will Phillips page 22)

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For more details about the National Fitness Trade Show, call **541.830.0400** or visit NationalFitnessTradeShow.com

... Will Phillips

continued from page 20

team to address improvement tasks in their business. The last and final part of this meeting focuses on *Chapter 6 in the book*. It explores how to manage people with each of these strengths in order for you and your boss to explore, with the team's help, the best possible way of managing your strengths while you are managing your top three to five tasks.

If you've got six people on the management team, it means you have a strength hot seat about twice a year. If you've got 12 people, it may mean once a year. *It is important to continuously revisit these four areas – your strengths, your job strength requirements, the integration of your strength and the job requirements, and fine-tuning of how best to manage someone with your strengths.*

...IHRSA Changes

continued from page 19

erating Officer, Paula Comfort. She was #2 to Jay at The Sports Clubs of Canada. We are growing very rapidly in Asia, Europe and now into the USA

Q. -- Michael...as you move into your first month as IHRSA's first official Chairman of the Board do you have specific focuses and ideas for the Board that you plan to set forth at your soon to be next meeting? If so, would you like to share those with our readers now or hold them until then?

A. -- My first official Board meeting is October 3rd. We are having a Board meeting on July 24th and I'll get to that in a moment. One of the things I believe in is "process". To that end, I have sent out a memo to all of the Board members asking them to examine the nature of our Board meetings. I want to get everyone to examine whether we are efficient, are the Board meetings properly structured, are we accomplishing what we want and are we using the IHRSA Team, the Staff in an efficient manner? If not, what are their suggestions? I will be putting out a position paper to the Board in the next few weeks with their thoughts and my compilation of the ideas.

Those four tasks can be continuously fine-tuned to improve the quality of management in the organization.

How to Power Up the Management of Your Business

This 4-part article has focused on three different levels of powering up your management team by adjusting the *fuel rods precisely for maximum power*. Number one is to build a management team that can truly engage in conflict so that it can build commitment, which is the foundation of accountability, which in turn will deliver the highest level of results possible. The improved results come partly from better quality decisions and partly from 100% commitment. Once your management team has begun adjusting its power using these tools, it is time to look down the organization

But, do I have specific focuses and ideas for the Board? Yes. We have a number of issues that are very, very integral to where IHRSA is going in the next few years.

The #1 issue, of course, is the determination of who will become the next CEO of the Association. The Executive Search Committee, which is being chaired by Harold Morgan and Debra Siena, is an excellent group of people who are undertaking the job of interviewing and selecting suitable candidates. We've reinstituted the procedure. We've met more candidates. In fact, the meeting on July 24th is specifically being devoted to the new CEO/President search.

We're examining IHRSA Public Policy and Legislative initiatives. We're reinvigorating the ILC (Industry Leadership Council). Bahram Akradi has agreed to take a leadership role in the ILC. And, we're hoping to get Gary Heavin, Founder of Curves, very heavily involved in the ILC. Because we believe that Public Policy, the WHIP and the PHIT bills are absolutely essential for where IHRSA must proceed over the next 15 to 20 years.

A crucial focus for IHRSA is the obesity crisis worldwide, and particularly in the USA and Canada.

to the direct reports of each person on the management team and also for the owner of the business to look at how he or she manages their direct reports on the management team.

Number two is learning to manage all your people for highest productivity and morale using the tools of Buckingham's questions. Central in doing this is enabling every employee to do what they do best every day. **"Now, Discover Your Strengths"** gives you the tools for continuously fine-tuning and improving the integration between each employee's strengths and the work that they do.

Number three is learning how to articulate the strengths of each employee and each job position and then matching and managing them.

These three human resource strategies require

Through the mobilization of the IHRSA Club members and their members, we believe we can bring real solutions and real progress to America's fight against obesity. Certainly we have to get children outside and playing again. The obesity epidemic is rooted in inactivity. Kids just sit and don't get out and play. The Internet, Nintendo and Xbox Generation, for lack of a better euphemism, is causing a sedentary lifestyle that creates enormous issues, including obesity, illness and psychological problems. And, it is causing socialization problems with our children too. Certainly the obesity issue is directly attributed to kids not having fitness programs as a part of their everyday life.

I think the third focus for IHRSA is non-profit competition. I am not so certain the YMCA's are the only and biggest issue. I think the Parks and Recreation Centers are becoming a huge problem because they've got this desire to expand into areas where they are not needed and not expand into areas where they are needed. I think IHRSA has to keep the focus on the not-for-profits and say, "You must meet your mission. Your mission is to provide fitness, recreational and psychological programming for the disenfranchised,

humility and courage to begin and persistence and follow through to maximize. They are low dollar cost investments, but high ego challenges. The clubs which pursue these for two to three years are likely to find growing revenues, growing profits, improved member retention and a dramatic decline in serious competitors.

(Will Phillips the Author is the Founder and CEO of REX Roundtables for Executives which operates 24 industry roundtables including 10 for club owners and GMs in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Down loadable copy of this article will be on www.REXonline.org under Management Briefings.)

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for inner city youths and for people who don't have accessibility to health clubs. Your mission is not to provide health clubs for the rich." If the not-for-profits want to achieve their stated mission, we'll support them 100%. If they don't want to work toward their stated purpose, IHRSA should go after them aggressively.

Q. -- With Big John McCarthy retired, Joe Moore, your predecessor at IHRSA as its last President, stepped in for John because the initial IHRSA CEO/President search ended up not being successful.

– Would you like to share your thoughts and plans for the continuation of that search?

– Do you believe that there are viable candidates amongst that group of 280 original candidates that are now key candidates and are being followed up upon?

– Are there feelings amongst the Board that Joe Moore is not only a fine choice for the interim role, but is also one being considered by the Board for the permanent role as IHRSA's new CEO/President?

– First, let's talk about the search. We've spent over three months on the reconstituted search process. We've gotten to the point

where we feel we have two superb candidates. I really don't think it's appropriate to discuss the process further, because we're in the middle of the search. I can tell you we're working very hard on it.

But, the question you asked about Joe Moore needs to be addressed. Joe Moore has done and is doing, I believe, a first rate and very successful job in the transition as interim CEO. Joe is conscientious, he's honorable, he's smart, he's tough, he's organized, he's got real insight in the industry, he understands the club member issues and he understands vendor issues. He's doing a terrific job.

So, the question is: "Why isn't Joe Moore not just appointed as the new CEO?" The answer is difficult:

#1, if we didn't go through the search, I believe it would be the wrong way of approaching the solution. A lot of people who applied for the job and were turned down would have the right to feel hurt, ill treated and that the process was unfair. So, that is one issue that we, as a Board had to deal with.

Now, the second question is: "Could Joe do the job?" The real question is what is the job of the new CEO? Is it to continue the di- (See *IHRSA Changes* page 26)

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2. PROFILE

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <p>1. Which of the following BEST describes your facility? (Check one)</p> <p>AA <input type="checkbox"/> Multi-purpose
 BB <input type="checkbox"/> Gym/Fitness Only Club
 CC <input type="checkbox"/> Racquetball/Tennis Club
 DD <input type="checkbox"/> Golf/Country Club
 EE <input type="checkbox"/> YMCA/YWCA/JCC
 FF <input type="checkbox"/> Swim Club
 GG <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Rec. Facility
 HH <input type="checkbox"/> Hotel/Resort/Spa
 JJ <input type="checkbox"/> Weight Loss Center
 KK <input type="checkbox"/> Wellness Clinic/Hospital/PT/Medical Fitness Center
 LL <input type="checkbox"/> College/Univ./Institution
 MM <input type="checkbox"/> City/Club Park & Rec/
Public Works/Comm. Ctr.
 NN <input type="checkbox"/> Developer
 PP <input type="checkbox"/> Government (incl. Military)
 QQ <input type="checkbox"/> Aerobic/Dance Studio
 RR <input type="checkbox"/> Comm. Dealer/Retailer
 SS <input type="checkbox"/> Martial Arts
 TT <input type="checkbox"/> Indoor Climbing Center
 UU <input type="checkbox"/> Other Club</p> | <p>GG <input type="checkbox"/> Director
 HH <input type="checkbox"/> Assistant Manager
 JJ <input type="checkbox"/> Personal/Athletic Trainer
 KK <input type="checkbox"/> Fitness Instructor
 LL <input type="checkbox"/> Other</p> | <p>5. Are you coming to the show with specific plans to purchase any of the above products or services?
 AA <input type="checkbox"/> Yes BB <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>5a. If yes, what is your timeframe for making such a purchase? (Check one)
 AA <input type="checkbox"/> Purchase at show/within 1 month
 BB <input type="checkbox"/> 1-3 months
 CC <input type="checkbox"/> 3-6 months
 DD <input type="checkbox"/> 6 months-1 year</p> <p>6. What is the size of your club?
 AA <input type="checkbox"/> Under 5,000 sq. ft.
 BB <input type="checkbox"/> 5,000-9,999 sq. ft.
 CC <input type="checkbox"/> 10,000-19,999 sq. ft.
 DD <input type="checkbox"/> 20,000-29,999 sq. ft.
 EE <input type="checkbox"/> 30,000-49,999 sq. ft.
 FF <input type="checkbox"/> 50,000-79,999 sq. ft.
 GG <input type="checkbox"/> 80,000 sq. ft. plus</p> |
| <p>2. Which of the following BEST describes your title? (Check one)</p> <p>AA <input type="checkbox"/> Owner
 BB <input type="checkbox"/> President
 CC <input type="checkbox"/> Vice President
 DD <input type="checkbox"/> Manager
 EE <input type="checkbox"/> General Manager
 FF <input type="checkbox"/> Program/Fitness Director</p> | <p>3. In which of the following ways are you involved in the purchase or leasing of fitness equipment, products or services for your club/facility? (Please check all that apply)</p> <p>AA <input type="checkbox"/> Final decision
 BB <input type="checkbox"/> Specify brands
 CC <input type="checkbox"/> Recommend
 DD <input type="checkbox"/> No role in purch. process</p> <p>4. What specific categories of products & services are you interested in seeing? (Please check all that apply)</p> <p>AA <input type="checkbox"/> Cardiovascular equipment
 BB <input type="checkbox"/> Strength training equipment
 CC <input type="checkbox"/> Food/bev./nutritional supps.
 DD <input type="checkbox"/> Club mgmt. software/svcs
 EE <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment/sound/music
 FF <input type="checkbox"/> Financial services
 GG <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance
 HH <input type="checkbox"/> Flooring/carpet/court surfaces
 JJ <input type="checkbox"/> Spa equipment & services/saunas
 KK <input type="checkbox"/> Other</p> | <p>Please complete all questions. You may photocopy for additional registrants. Incomplete forms cannot be processed. Photography is prohibited in exhibit hall. Must be 18 to attend. You will receive written confirmation if you register by September 1, 2006.
 For more information, call 800-927-5007 or 508-743-0105 (9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. EST)</p> |

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You Sell a Membership When You Ask

By Jim Thomas

What happens when you fail to ask a guest to join your club?

The short version is that you don't get the sale.

The longer version is that they join another club, don't join at all, or continue putting off their decision. In any of these cases you have failed in your role as a health club salesperson. After all, aren't you paid to make sales?

One of the most interesting sales questions for health club owners, managers and salespeople is simply this:

Why do owners, man-

agers and salespeople spend such a great deal of time, effort, energy and commitment to get in front of a prospect only to let the opportunity to sell a membership slip away from them?

Why does that happen?

Is it a sense of fear that is driven by a desire not to offend - or to avoid being offended yourself when your guest says "No?"

Is it an inability to establish value and benefit in the mind of the guest that the salesperson never really knows when or even how to ask someone to join their club today?

Let's look at some of the real causes

- A lack of *selling benefits and results* on the part of the salesperson. Selling on price and facility will rarely work.
- A lack of *decent boldness* on the part of the salesperson.
- A lack of professional sales skills on the part of the salesperson.
- A lack of *confidence* or *low self-esteem* on the part of the salesperson.
- A lack of personal accountability.
- A lack of true belief in the club or exercise on the part of the salesperson.
- A lack of a proven sales system that leads to the sale.
- Letting the guest convince you they're coming back.

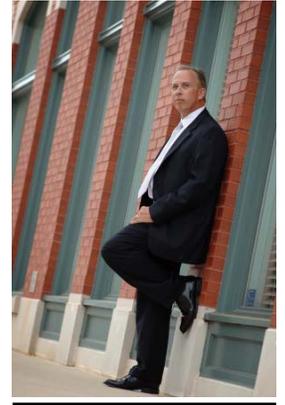
Whenever a sale is not made, it is generally the fault of the salesperson. So stop blaming poor marketing, pricing, the club, the boss, competition or anything else for your own failure. It's you...not the guest, who have failed. If it is to be, it's up to me!

That being said, how do you fix the problem? Here are some strategies to help you begin closing membership sales today:

Understand and stay focused on what your real job

is. It is making sales. Period.

- Learn how to use feedback questions ("How does this look?") to be sure you're on target as you move through your tour.
- Learn how to listen and observe better. Listen to what your guest has to say. Don't just wait for your turn to talk. Be sensitive to body language.
- Take notes on the tour. It tells your guest this is important, plus you can use the information later in closing the sale.
- Learn how to overcome guest concerns on the tour, before they even come up.
- Develop the art of value-added selling so you can show your club in a way that makes it irresistible. Understand your Unique Selling Position.
- Be sure you're using a guest profile or needs analysis and take notes. Be sure to find out the REAL reason the guest is in your club.
- Believe in yourself, your sales process and your club so much that you badly



Jim Thomas

want others to become a part of it - and ask them to do so, with enthusiasm and *decent boldness*.

- Learn, apply and become comfortable with several different ways to ask for a sale and use them consistently. Statistics show that *more sales are made after the fifth attempt* than any other time.
- Learn how to ask people to buy after agreeing on the results they are looking for.
- Take the time to establish the value of the regular membership, otherwise your special just might become the rate.

Now, go close a sale, today. (Jim Thomas is the President of Fitness Management and Consulting. He may be reached at: 800.929.2898 or jthomas@fmconsulting.net or www.fmconsulting.net)

A Message from

Fitness Management & Consulting...

When The Going Gets TOUGH The Smart Get Help™

Jim Thomas is the well-known founder and president of Fitness Management USA, Inc., a management consulting and turnaround firm specializing in the fitness and health club industry.

With over 25 years of experience owning, operating and managing clubs of all sizes, Mr.



Jim Thomas

Thomas lectures and delivers seminars and workshops across the country on the practical skills required to successfully build teamwork and market fitness programs and products.

Since forming Fitness Management, Mr. Thomas has been turning health clubs around at an amazing rate and garnering a reputation as a producer of change...a sharp-eyed troubleshooter, a brilliant sales trainer, and a motivator. Fitness Management provides programs that show measurable results and Jim's team is proud of their ability to glean profit from every square foot of a client's investment.

A dynamic, articulate motivator, Mr. Thomas exudes confidence without artifice and accomplishes wonders without the bruised feelings that can so often accompany change. "We pride ourselves in reaching people and motivating change in a way that encourages self-esteem on the part of the players."

Whether you operate a health club, fitness center, gym or other type club, Fitness Management and Jim Thomas have a program to fit your need, expand your market base, and keep your members and staff productive and enthusiastic. Jim Thomas may be reached at 800-929-2898, jthomas@fmconsulting.net or www.fmconsulting.net.

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...IHRSA Changes
continued from page 22

rections that John McCarthy set, or is it to examine new paths, new business opportunities, more interaction with legislators and Governments at all levels. That is the issue that we, the Board, are working to define to ensure we have the appropriate team in place with the most appropriate new CEO. However, as to Joe Moore, the answer is that Joe would be a credible CEO for IHRSA. The question relating to the future and all that it entails is more difficult and I have to leave the answer for Joe to provide. That has to be Joe's decision.

So, what we said to Joe is, "Joe, if you want the

job, go after it. We will be honored to treat you in the same way we would treat any other excellent candidate." That really has to be Joe's decision. That's the reason why this is a difficult conversation because Joe hasn't decided yet whether he really wants to take it on as a permanent role. You have to remember...Joe has a family in Ohio and a grandchild that he adores. Joe and I have become very good friends. I give him so much credit. He's uprooted his life. He's moved to Boston without his family because he's working 16 hour days 7 days a week, I won't put words in Joe's mouth. But, it's a tough decision. If he decides to become the CEO he's got to move to

Boston. That means uprooting his family. And, you know Norm, we're not kids anymore.

But Norm, I will tell you there is not one person on the Board or IHRSA Staff, including John McCarthy and Anita Lawlor, who doesn't think that Joe Moore would make an excellent CEO/President for IHRSA."

In closing I want to thank Michael S. Levy IHRSA's new Chairman of the Board for his dedication, hard work, energy, passion and commitment to IHRSA and this industry. It's guys and gals like Michael that have given IHRSA the worldwide standing it enjoys now. And, it is guys and gals like Michael who will carry the torch

on future IHRSA Boards. Are you one of those who will step up and get better and better at your club business using IHRSA services, products and attending its events? Are you one that after you've attained great success in your club business, will step up and serve IHRSA? You should be. For information on joining IHRSA today call: 800.228.4772.

(Norm Cates, Jr. is the Founder of CLUB INSIDER News and Publisher Since 1993. Cates is a 32-year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. In 1981 Cates was the 1st President of IHRSA and a co-founder of the Association with Rick Caro and five others. He was

honored by IHRSA in March, 2001 when he was presented with its DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award ... an honor that was the greatest of his life. Norm Cates may be reached at: 770.850.8506 or at: clubinsidernews@mindspring.com or at: normcates@leavingfatcity.com Look for Norm Cates' new book online for free now and in bookstores for \$7 a copy by October, 2006. Go to: www.leavingfatcity.com - click on Chapters List, download fast PDF and print all 105 pages. You will be glad you did! And Cates welcomes your criticisms or other suggestions. If provided, they may be included in the printed version of the book.)

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Norm Cates' **THE Club Insider** NEWS

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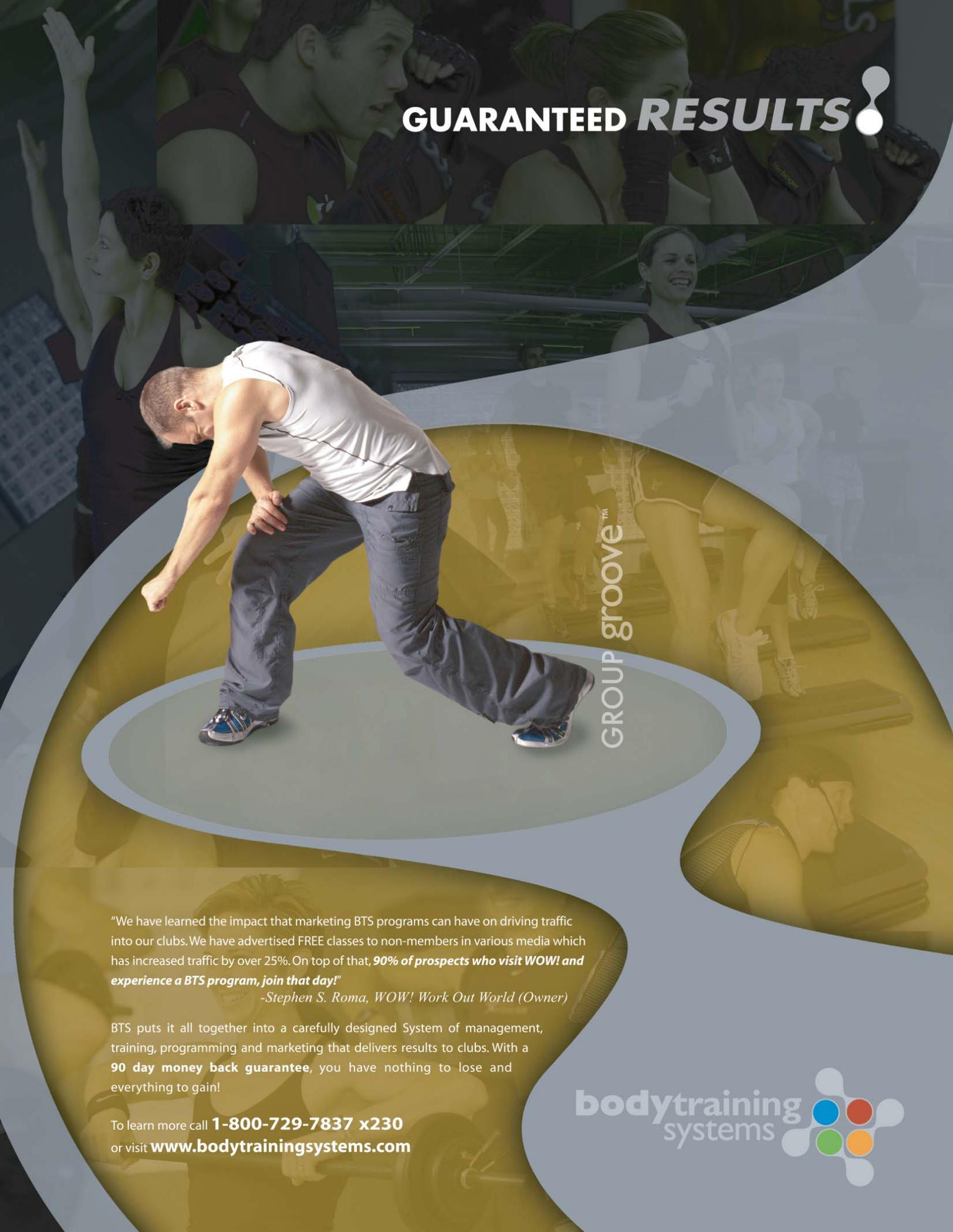
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We appreciate and LOVE you.

Very sincerely, Norm Cates, Jr.

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