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Norm Cates'

# THE Club Insider

## NEWS

*The Pulse of the Health, Racquet & Sports Club Business Worldwide*

AUGUST 2005  
\$10.00



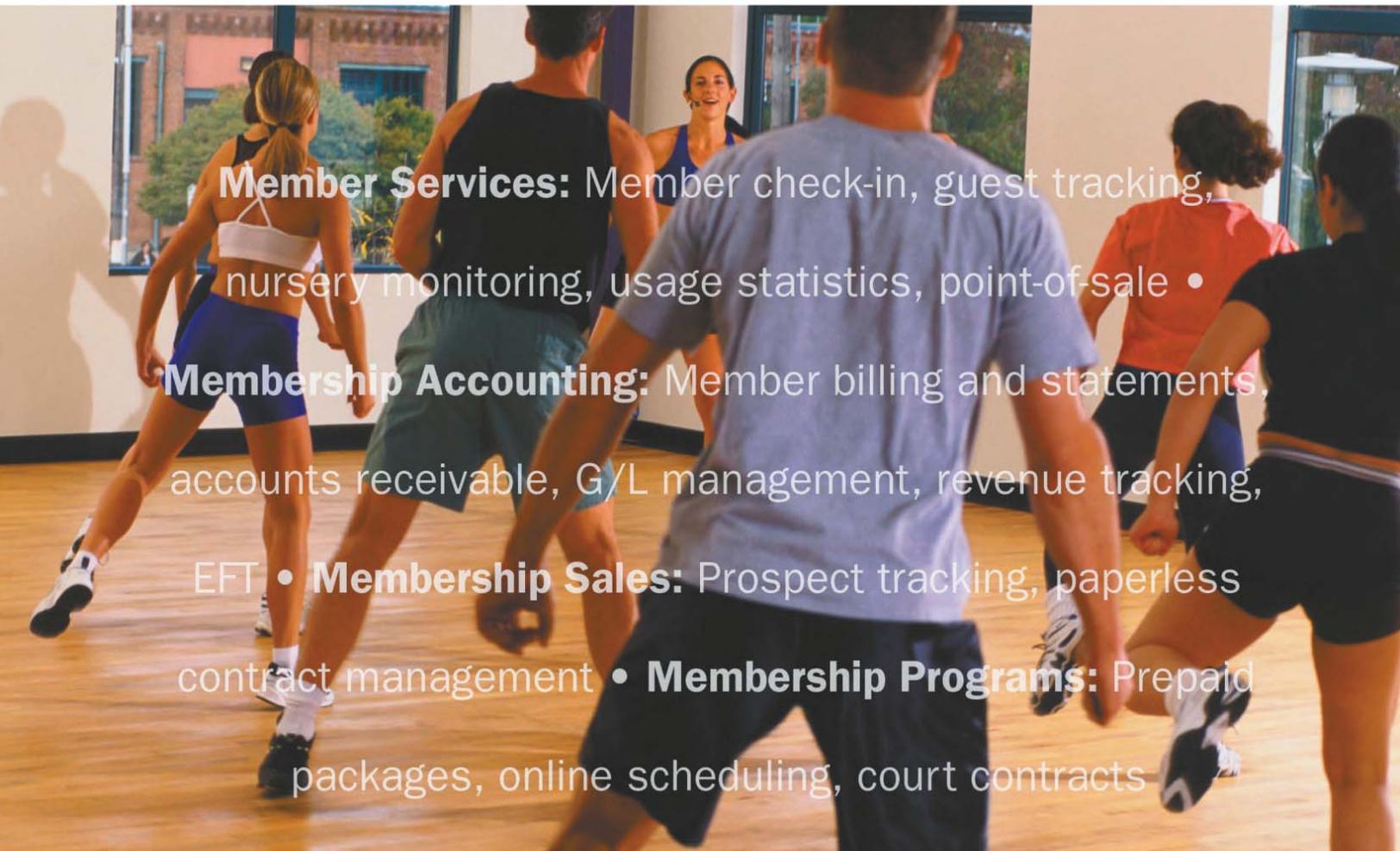
(Front row- L to R): Karen Mahoney, Karen Joor, JoEllen Farricker & Denise Griffin  
(Back row- L to R): Dick Gellis, Laury Hammel, Myke Farricker, Tim Crowley & Phil Parrish

## Laury Hammel and Longfellow Clubs

**“Making the World A Better Place”!**

**Longfellow Clubs Celebrate 25 Years of Love!**

# Manage your whole club with one flexible solution.



**Member Services:** Member check-in, guest tracking, nursery monitoring, usage statistics, point-of-sale •

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**CheckFree®**  
Health & Fitness

Norm Cates'

# THE Club Insider

## NEWS

## Laury Hammel and Longfellow Clubs

“Making the World A Better Place”!

Longfellow Clubs Celebrate 25 Years of Love!

By Norm Cates, Jr.

### Part I

I hope you all enjoy reading this in-depth Cover Story case-study about Laury Hammel, the highly successful 25-year Owner and Founder of the Boston-area, Longfellow Clubs. Contained in this amazing report are many ideas, facts and concepts that, if utilized, could help your club increase your bottom line through community service-related activities and, in turn, “help make the world a better place.”

Laury Hammel, just like all of our past cover subjects, is a very unique, “one-of-a-kind” individual. And, when I write the word, “UNIQUE”, I use it in the *most positive sense* with respect to this man.

Laury Hammel, age 57, *TRULY stands out in my mind* after considering the thousands of club developer/owner/operators all across North America that I *have ever met*. *Laury is very different. With respect to involving his clubs in charitable, community affairs, he is the most thoughtful person I have ever met anywhere in our industry in over 30 years.* This puts him in

the company of some very notable “heavy hitters” in community affairs mixed with clubs. These vast differences from the ‘NORM’ with respect to club operations shared here by Laury in this interview will hit your mind with powerful force. If studied and emulated in your club operation, they will make a *huge and very positive* long-term financial impact on *your club’s* bottom line each year.

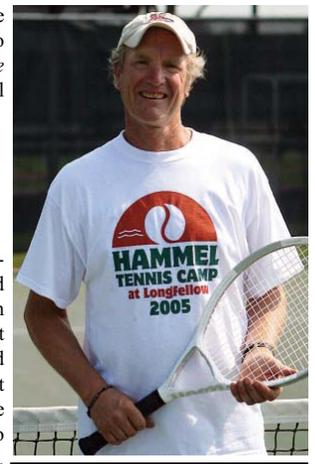
There never has been, and I doubt that there ever will be, *anyone in this wonderful industry* of ours that has been more *focused, driven, adept and successful* at incorporating a large

variety of community service and philanthropic activities into the *core value and corporate culture* of a highly successful club operation.

### Laury Hammel’s Terrific Longfellow Clubs Success Story

Laury Hammel’s four Longfellow Clubs are owned and operated in partnership with Myke and Jo Ellen Farricker, at Longfellow Wayland, MA; and Bob and Suzanne Hinrichs at Longfellow’s affiliate club, the Adirondack Club. Hammel also has two non-stock partners,

(See *Laury Hammel* page 6)



Laury Hammel

## Joe The “Gladiator” Moore

*IHRSA’s 25th President Shares His Great Story and the IHRSA Board’s ‘Vision’ for the ‘Future’!*

By Norm Cates, Jr.

### Part II

CLUB INSIDER’s last edition in July was called the Joe Moore Special Edition and it contained an in-depth interview and conversation with Joe Moore, IHRSA’s newly installed 25th President (as of July 1, 2005). Over the past 25 years, many

individuals have served on the IHRSA Board and given of their time to work as a team with John McCarthy and his terrific staff in Boston to produce many initiatives that would help grow the industry and serve the IHRSA members. Joe Moore shared his pride of being in this important industry leadership role.

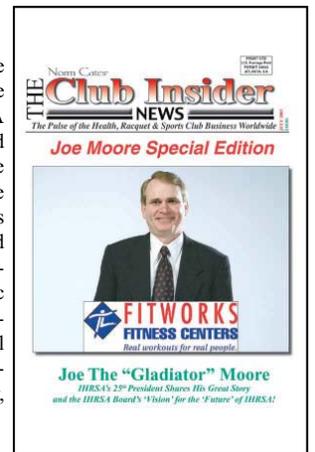
Part I contained his background

and history up until his first days in the club business when he started a home gym in his garage and later opened his first club in 1972, a 1,000 square-foot facility he called The Dayton Nautilus Health Club. We shared Moore’s club experiences for the next 32 years until the summer of 2004, when he sold his 10-club chain, Moore’s Fitness Centers to Fitworks of Ohio owners John Janszen and Pat Petrecca. Moore’s July 1, 2005 installation as the 25th IHRSA President and his views on the Association and comments from Moore on the IHRSA Board’s plans for the future of IHRSA were covered.

### Joe Moore - Part II

In this Part II installment we will hear more from Joe Moore on two very important IHRSA subjects that were not covered in our Part I, They are the IHRSA Convention and Trade Show planning now in progress and the current thinking and IHRSA’s Public Policy initiatives and thoughts on the topic by President Moore. At the conclusion of that segment we will hear from IHRSA’s terrific 16-year Director of Public Policy, Helen Durkin.

**Q.** “Joe, what does the IHRSA Board and staff have planned for the 25th Anniversary Convention and Trade Show in Las Vegas, Nevada, March 20-



Joe Moore

(See *Joe Moore* page 16)

### Inside The Insider

- A “Tribute” To Augie Nieto
- “Stopping the ‘Churn’!”
- Management Mentoring Disciplines
- NEW BodyTraining Systems Testimonials!

# A "Tribute" To Augie Nieto

By: Norm Cates, Jr.

Ladies and Gentlemen, for the first time in nearly 12 years of publication, a CLUB INSIDER issue will go to press without my NORM's NOTES included. However, you may access my NORM's NOTES for our August, 2005 edition on our Website: www.clubinsidernews.com

Do not let this edition get away... for it is **truly a Collector's item!**

I made the choice this month to break, (for one month only), from our 12-year monthly 'tradition' of publishing NORM's Notes for you because I wish to add to the well deserved acknowledgements and recognition our industry is bestowing on Augie Nieto.

Augie Nieto's great achievements, leadership role, and the **huge impact** on the health club and fitness industry overall is cause for celebration. I hereby, with this writing and with our very special page #5 "Tribute to Augie Nieto" photo spread to your right, 'Celebrate the Life' of Augie Nieto, one of America's greatest entrepreneurs, success stories and a leader in our industry for 25 years.

I hope you all enjoy this "Tribute to Augie Nieto" and that you will support Augie's efforts on ALS fundraising by sending in a donation to help Augie and thousands of others in America fight ALS.

And, don't forget to read our August NORM's NOTES at: www.clubinsidernews.com The 'Pulse' is there this month and will be back on this page next month!

## Why the 21st Century Health Club Exists Today

Everyday of the year, I think about the **hourly and daily challenges of our great industry and about YOU ALL, the owners and operators of the America's and the World's 21st century health clubs..** I think about the **differences** in our industry **today**, compared to the **way it was over 30 years ago**. I think of the **pioneers... the people** that have, through their **hard work, dedication and personal genius, "made the 21st century health club world a 'better place' for consumers everywhere"**.

**Exercise equipment development over the past 25 years has been, in addition to IHRSA, the single most important driving force in our industry's amazing growth. This is an industry that has grown from less than 3,000 clubs in the USA back then, to reportedly over 28,000 commercial clubs and fitness centers in America today.**

There are just a few great 'health club pioneers' that found the way in the early years. I have been very fortunate, through **in-depth interviews** with the **GREATS** in our industry for my cover stories, to get to know what is **'inside' the minds, hearts and spirits of these greats. I have been honored in every case to know these outstanding individuals better through over 100 cover story interviews!**

As we did last month, in our **Joe Moore Special Edition Part I and this month in Part I of the amazing Laury Hammel success story, along with Moore's Part II**, we have carefully chronicled their **lives. And, we have chronicled their 'impact' on our great industry by sharing their amazing success stories with you, our readers.**

'Pioneers' like **JOE GOLD, May He Rest In Peace, RAY WILSON, RED LERILLE and DALE DIBBLE have been honored by CLUB INSIDER with our 1st (2004) and 2nd (2005) Annual "Health Club Pioneer of the Year" Awards.** Their 'pioneer' status has been well earned.

The pioneering of these four, and many others, has cleared the way for great people to do great things on the equipment side of our industry. **Augie Nieto and Arthur Jones**, the genius who invented Nautilus and MedX, are the two people that have had more impact on fitness and exercise than any others on earth. Both of them provided health club operators everywhere with tools to start a revolution... a revolution in fitness in America. Arthur Jones revolutionized strength training and gave it a 'friendly' face. Augie Nieto, through his tireless work with Lifecycle and LifeFitness, revolutionized, no better yet, **'created'** the cardiovascular exercise equipment segment of this entire industry!

## AUGIE NIETO... The "Henry Ford" of the Health Club Industry

The reason our headline reads the "Henry Ford" of the Health Club Industry is not an author drawing a comparison between a stationary exercise bike and the transportation machine provided to the masses by Henry "T" Ford.

Instead, this author wishes to draw a comparison of the 'impact' on Americans and people worldwide that both of these men, Henry "T" Ford and Augie Nieto have had.

When Henry "T" Ford began to mass produce and deliver the "Model T" Ford, very few people in America in those days had **ever seen an automobile** in "their part of the world". The "Model T" Ford created an overnight market for "horseless carriages" when there was no market before, because "horseless carriages" did not exist.

The same thing happened when Augie Nieto took Lifecycle, Inc. and grew it into LifeFitness. Before Lifecycle, the health club operators of the world rarely had any cardiovascular exercise equipment at all. That was because very few cardiovascular exercise machines existed, and if they were in a gym of the early days, very few would use them.

The **'global impact'** of Nieto's LifeFitness work has had **far reaching effects. By mass producing efficient and reliable cardiovascular equipment, the opportunities for results through LifeFitness literally created a 'mass demand' for cardio exercise equipment. This mass cardio equipment demand has been responded to by the entrepreneurs and inventors of the world with their development of new cardio fitness equipment companies and a wide variety of new products.**

The LifeFitness creation of the **'mass demand' for cardio exercise by Lifecycle and then LifeFitness has caused a cardiovascular fitness equipment development boom that has helped generate at least 40, if not more, new commercial cardio exercise equipment companies since 1980. These new companies have learned a lot by watching LifeFitness.**

Almost all of the new cardio equipment development in the fitness industry has come since LifeFitness roared into the lead, and no one has come close to catching the 'giant' yet.

Exercise equipment development of all kinds is **driven today** by many **creative and brilliant people who invest heavily in research and development, marketing and expensive sales efforts**, such as trade shows.

But, those very great companies of today **might not even exist**, had it not been for **Augie Nieto on the cardio side and Arthur Jones on the strength side.** They are the **two men** that stand out, **'head and shoulders' above all the rest.**

The **direct impact** on the **formation and growth** of the huge and ever growing equipment sector and the result of the many product creations have rapidly **'fueled-the-fire'** of the 21st century health club industry. The equipment world today gives the consumers the things they want: **ease of use, efficiency, reliability and results.** Those are the things health club members want in their equipment, and today, that is what they **get from the vast majority of commercial equipment manufacturers and suppliers.**

## Augie Was and Still Is... A Very Determined Young Man!

**AUGIE NIETO**, a determined young man and college student, teamed up initially in the mid-70's as a young salesman, and later, a protégé of **RAY WILSON. Together, they brought the Lifecycle to America.** Prior to that, Nieto and two others had acquired from Wilson the rights to Lifecycle with terms that required production. Early on, that production simply was not there. Nieto and his partners lost those rights from Wilson, but he kept them and others on board as he reworked the company sales structure. It was tough in those early years. Nieto initially was self-employed and traveled the country selling Lifecycles from a motorhome. In those nine months, he only sold eleven! That was not enough to live on. This early on sales volume is

**ample** evidence that American health club operators had very little interest in cardiovascular exercise, so they **assumed**, neither would their members or prospective members. How **wrong** some of those early club owners were with respect to the **value** of cardio exercise for members and how it should be presented to those members.

## Augie Nieto Simply Would Not Be Denied

Augie Nieto simply **would not be denied.** Although he had a tough start, he continued to sell Lifecycles and his results got better. Much better.

After Ray Wilson had reorganized his Lifecycle Company into a distributor and things had been going along okay for a while, he asked his factory manager, who was overseeing the sales distributors, who the top salesman of them all was. The manager said it was a young fellow named Augie Nieto. The manager told Wilson that Augie was selling more Lifecycles than all the other distributors combined.

Wilson invited Nieto to his home to have a meeting with him. After that meeting, Ray Wilson made Augie a full partner in Lifecycle. From that point on, Ray Wilson and Augie Nieto had a relationship in which Wilson worked hard with Nieto and gave him ideas to use in marketing and sales, an area where Wilson had excelled all his life. Nieto was very fortunate to have met Ray Wilson... and Ray Wilson was very fortunate to have a guy like Nieto to work with and mentor. Augie Nieto is just one of very many millionaires that Ray Wilson has 'taught the ropes' in business.

In 1980, Ray Wilson and Augie Nieto formed Lifecycle, Inc. One idea that Wilson had given to Nieto to run with was to ship 50 Lifecycles out to 50 of the top health club operators at the time. They put them into their clubs all over the country and their members loved them. Lifecycle began to get more orders from those same operators and from their competitors. Lifecycle, Inc. began to boom! When Ray Wilson and Augie (See A "Tribute" Page 7)



*A Tribute To*



*Augie Nieto*



## Augie Nieto



Reception & Dinner  
to benefit  
MDA's ALS Research Program

Thursday  
September 8, 2005

Rio All-Suites  
Hotel & Casino  
3700 West Flamingo Road  
Las Vegas, Nevada

5 p.m. Reception  
7 p.m. Dinner

Presented by:

IHRSA  
and  
National Fitness  
Trade Show

Sponsored by:

NORTH CASTLE PARTNERS



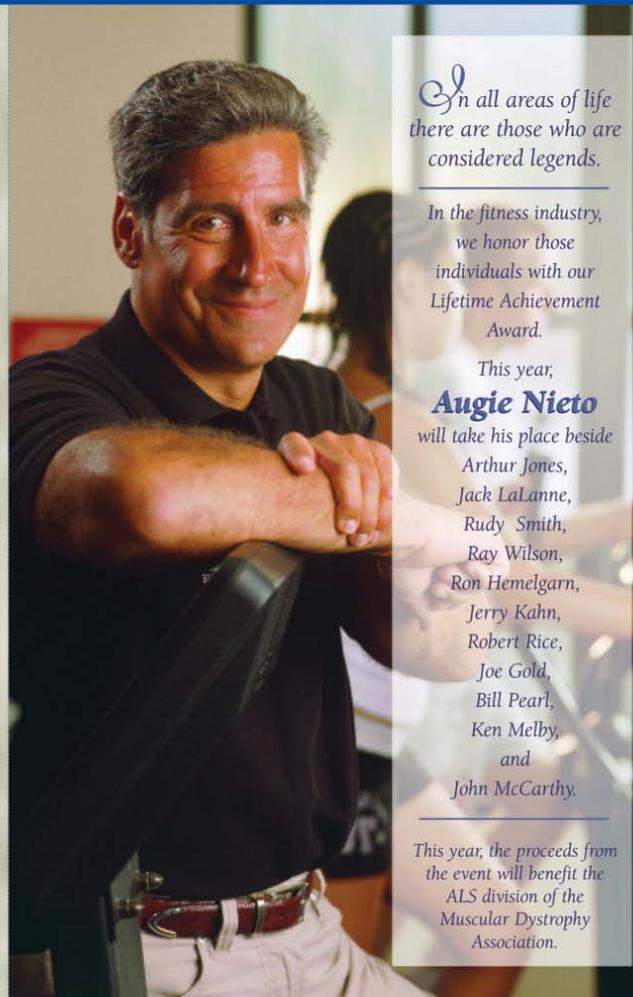
MDA is the world leader among voluntary agencies in fighting amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.

Since the early 1950s, when Eleanor Gehrig served as a national volunteer leader of MDA, the Association has led the effort to assist those affected by the disorder that takes its name from her husband, baseball great Lou Gehrig, who died of ALS in 1941.

MDA's ALS division offers the most comprehensive range of services of any voluntary health agency in the nation, and leads the search for a treatment or cure through its aggressive, worldwide research program. MDA has invested over \$170 million in its ALS program, and is committed to continuing to lead the fight.

To make an online donation or for more information on ALS: <http://als.mdausa.org/augie/>

To reserve your suite(s) at the Rio All-Suites Hotel & Casino, simply call 888-746-6955 and reference the discount code for the National Fitness Trade Show: S09FIT5. Discounted suite rates are \$129 per night (plus tax) for single or double room occupancy. Guests of the Rio will also receive two FREE tickets to the televised Ms. Fitness USA event (Sept. 9, a \$200 value) and two free tickets to the televised Ms. Fitness USA event (Sept. 10, a \$200 value) per suite occupied.



*In all areas of life there are those who are considered legends.*

*In the fitness industry, we honor those individuals with our Lifetime Achievement Award.*

*This year, Augie Nieto*

*will take his place beside Arthur Jones, Jack LaLanne, Rudy Smith, Ray Wilson, Ron Hemelgarn, Jerry Kahn, Robert Rice, Joe Gold, Bill Pearl, Ken Melby, and John McCarthy.*

*This year, the proceeds from the event will benefit the ALS division of the Muscular Dystrophy Association.*

## ...Laury Hammel

continued from page 3

Denise Griffin, the manager of The Longfellow in Wayland and Sheila Weinstock, the manager of the Natick Racquet Club, in Natick..

In the Boston suburbs, Hammel's clubs have been called "**The LOVE Clubs!**"

Laury Hammel and his "**Team Longfellow**" will celebrate their **25th Anniversary** on August 26, 2005 and we've dug deeply into Hammel's memory of those amazing 25 years. Read on...

### In Part I...

**YOU Will Hear From the Amazing Laury Hammel About...**

The "**Longfellow Clubs**" **Mission: "To Make The WORLD a Better Place"**, from four of his key people, **Myke and Jo Ellen Farricker, Karen Mahoney, and Denise Griffin** as well as **Alan Schwartz**, Chairman of Tennis Corporation of America and long-time industry leader and veteran; Hammel's deep involvement in "**Socially Responsible Business**", including his thrusts into helping the environment; Hammel's "**Corporate Culture of LOVE**" and why the Longfellow Clubs in the Boston-area have been referred to as: "**The Love Clubs!**"; his **vast** experience in community service and leadership as an integral part of his dominant club market presence; his leadership views and achievements; his involvement for years in the fight against **ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease)** and other fund raising community efforts; his **beautiful and spiritually-based CORE VALUE SYSTEM** and how he has gone about



Longfellow Group Studio

inculcating his own personal values into the corporate fabric of his Longfellow Team; and finally, his 'major job of being a "**Bloodhound For Tension**". To say that Part I of this two-part series is a **BLOCKBUSTER** is more than an understatement.

**Prepare Yourself To Read & Learn! This is NO 'Ordinary Article!'**

As always, **I want you** to realize that what you are about to read is an **extraordinary article** and that **CLUB INSIDER** is no ordinary club publication. **I do not write ordinary articles** and **CLUB INSIDER** does not publish ordinary Cover Story case-studies.

Therefore, **YOU** cannot be an ordinary reader with light, cursorily, sporadic, on again, off again reading in this extraordinary **CLUB INSIDER! So, we urge you to subscribe today if you have not and...** read on friends in the health, racquet and sportsclub industry! The **PULSE** is here...

### This Will Amaze YOU!

What you are about to read will amaze you. Imagine a guy, Laury Hammel, who, 25 years ago this month, started his first Longfellow Club in the town of Wayland, Massachusetts, with just \$633. Today, his four-location, 262,000 sq.ft. Longfellow Club business generates \$14 million in bankable income each year! Imagine the depth and strength in its community as Hammel's 25 year old club had a brand new, \$15 million dollar, 100,000 sq.ft. club move in 100 yards across the street about a year ago. Since that new club opened, Hammel's Longfellow Club has lost just 15 memberships out of 2700! Moreover, Hammel's four clubs, with 12,000 members, have an attrition rate in all categories of 75 to 80%! While at the same time, that new club is reportedly sitting rather still at around 300 members! I ask here: what does that tell you about this guy Hammel's talent at building member loyalty in the club business? Want to know how he has done it?

But, to this Author, the most amazing fact I learned from Laury Hammel during interview research for this article is that he spends 50% of his time year-round working on Socially Responsible Business thrusts, community service and charitable projects!

Do you want to know how Laury Hammel has done this much with his life? First, I suggest that you prepare yourself for study of this in-depth, Part I report on Laury Hammel and his Longfellow Clubs. I also suggest that you please schedule a place and a time in which you will not be interrupted by anyone while you read this piece. For the best results... we need your full-undivided attention! Grab a bottle of water, some juice, coffee or even an ice cold beer or glass of wine and be prepared to advance and increase your knowledge level in many areas that you will be thrilled about.

Please anticipate implementing what you learn here right away to increase, enhance and stimulate YOUR CLUB'S Market Identity with Consumers and build more and more "Member Loyalty" in your community, in turn, increasing your club's profits! Read carefully, take notes and hold onto your hat because you will be amazed at this BLOCKBUSTER story documenting the achievements of Laury Hammel and his Longfellow Clubs."

### An Amazing Family Raising A 'Star' Tennis Player and Big-Time Future Club Business Star!

#### Laury Hammel is really D-I-F-F-E-R-E-N-T!

Years ago, I knew that. I knew that because anybody who would show up at an IHRSA Convention and Trade Show on roller blades has GOT TO BE DIFFERENT! (And, pretty smart given the many miles we all walk during those shows) But sometimes, being DIFFERENT in this wild world we live in is good! Nah, not good... in Laury Hammel's case, being DIFFERENT, is not just good... it is GREAT!

Laury and I originally became friends back in 1981 when his Longfellow Clubs were founding members of IRSA (before the "H" was added). I visited Hammel's Longfellow "Clubs of LOVE" this past June, right before CLUB INDUSTRY East, and boy oh boy was I impressed with his Longfellow staff, his clubs, his programming and the happy and busy Longfellow members.

Ruby and Lee Hammel raised



(LtoR) Myke and JoEllen Farricker, Denise Griffin, Laury Hammel

him around tennis, and Laury began playing the game at age 8. He grew up in a Tennis Family, and they were honored by the USTA as the "2000 National Tennis Family of the Year". My belated CONGRATULATIONS to the Hammel Family!

When asked about his wonderful leadership talent and skills, Hammel says this about his parents, "I think that the source of who I am as a person is really my Mother and Father... and God."

Hammel continues, "There is a part of me that doesn't fully understand where it all came from and who I am - that is part of the mystery of being a human being. There are things I can point to in my Mother and Father that I know are characteristics that I've adopted."

"My Mother and Father are both icons in Salt Lake City, Utah, both in the tennis community and in general. They're really beloved because they give so much back to the community. They are both in the Utah Tennis Hall of Fame. My Mother has won the Distinguished Volunteer Award for AARP. They both volunteer. My Dad, who is 83, reads to blind people. They are both very active in their church and in trying to "make the world a better place."

"So, much of what I am is a reflection of who they are and the love they gave me... Characteristics that I think enable me to be as good of a leader as I am, whatever level that is, and to have passion for human beings and for life. I love people. I love life. I feel blessed to be on this planet. I love to see people thrive and grow and celebrate. And, I HATE when people SUFFER! I hate to see people hurt. So, if you have the passion to prevent illness, that sets you up for a lot of other qualities. For me, I learned a long time ago, if you can't 'walk your talk and practice what you preach', and as Ghandi says,

### "Our Purpose"

Our purpose, here at **CLUB INSIDER**, is to carefully, and in helpful detail, chronicle the successes, failures and everything in between for as many GREATS in our industry as we can each year. The purpose of these carefully chronicled case-studies is to help you get new ideas, tips, experiences, and stories of hard knocks... all of which are intended to help you get better and better in your club operations. That is the goal of what we do here. We want to help you and your clubs prosper and kick butt in your respective markets across America.

**CLUB INSIDER** is really a 'mini' club business convention that comes to you every month. Just like attending the very important, for you, and highly-educational conventions and trade shows mentioned below, you can learn a lot by participating as a careful reader of this publication. In addition to these case-studies, each month we publish excellent articles by our great Contributing Authors. This month is no exception as we feature, in this edition, articles by pros like Karen Woodard, Richard Ekstrom, and Gary Polic. And, due to the great display ads our excellent advertisers place each month, you, through phone contact or website research, can reach out to our advertisers and learn about their excellent products as well as make appointments to meet with them at upcoming Trade Shows.

By reading **CLUB INSIDER** every month, you can learn a lot, just like you're guaranteed to learn a lot when you go to Las Vegas for the **NFTJ/IHRSA Conference and Trade Show, September 8-11th**, in Las Vegas; **Club Industry, November 2-6th** in Chicago and the upcoming **BLOCKBUSTER... IHRSA's 25th Annual Convention and Trade Show, March 20-23rd of 2006** in Las Vegas.

(See Laury Hammel page 10)

## ...A "Tribute"

continued from page 4

Nieto formed Lifecycle, Inc. and sales really took off, it began to change the health club industry exercise equipment 'mix' for all time, putting aerobic equipment as a 'must have' into the minds of health club operators everywhere.

The one-two combination of Lifecycle and Nautilus became the mainstay at the time for many health clubs across America and the world. Many racquetball clubs were saved with the conversion of courts to a Lifecycle/Nautilus exercise facility.

Lifecycle, Inc. became wildly successful, and Wilson and Nieto sold the company to the Bally Manufacturing Company in 1984. The next year, Nieto was named President of Lifecycle. Bally changed the name of the company to LifeFitness when it began to develop and sell its everlasting treadmills to go with the everlasting Lifecycle. As part of the sale to Bally's, Wilson received a million dollar, five-year consulting contract with Lifecycle/LifeFitness. Wilson advised LifeFitness on the types of equipment he felt the industry needed.

Ray Wilson had these comments about his years of working with Augie Nieto and Lifecycle in its infancy: "Augie is the youngest partner I ever had, and one of the three best partners I've ever had. Augie and I have never had one problem between us. In fact, I have never heard *one single person say anything negative* about Augie."

Wilson continues, "Also, I have never heard Augie say one negative thing about anyone (I guess that is one of many reasons Augie is so well thought of). In life, it's not that hard to accomplish a great and very positive image if you've never really done anything. But, to accomplish all that Augie has and *still have his terrifically positive image is a tremendous achievement.*"

He added, "Augie took our partnership in Lifecycle that we sold to Bally and created a revolution in cardiovascular exercise equipment!

When we sold to Bally Entertainment, I entered into a five-year consulting agreement with them. That was part of the deal when I agreed to sell. During those five years, I advised Augie on equipment this industry desperately needed.

I then bowed-out of Lifecycle and put my *full focus* on developing my Family Fitness Center chain in Western America. Augie grabbed the Lifecycle/LifeFitness ball and ran with it. And run he did! The rest is *history*. I think Augie's story is one of the *greatest success stories* in any industry, and one day a book will be written about him."

We appreciate Ray Wilson recollecting his and Augie's great times together... those great years when they were working hard to 'make the world a better place' through more aerobic exercise for health club members and millions of

other people everywhere.

### "UP" the Ladder!

In 1991, LifeFitness was sold by Bally Manufacturing Company to Mancuso and Company for \$60 million. Augie was named President and CEO and received a piece of the company.

Six years later, in 1997, the giant Brunswick Corporation acquired LifeFitness from Mancuso and Company for \$310 million after the company had reached sales revenues of \$195 million. Nieto negotiated that sale to the Brunswick Corporation in a transaction that was one of the largest in history.

### A "Scare" Ended... In Answered Prayers

In 2000, three years after Augie Nieto hit his 'Grand Slam Home Run' sale of LifeFitness, all of a sudden life changed rapidly during a terrible scare for the Nieto Family. Augie's beautiful wife, Lynne, was *misdiagnosed* with an *incurable disease*. Augie left LifeFitness and moved his family to California. After a proper diagnosis and treatment was provided (and I am sure, many prayers were answered), *Lynne Nieto made a full recovery.*

During the years from 2001 to 2004, Nieto became an operating advisor and Board Member with North Castle Partners, a private equity investor whose specialty was investing in companies with businesses in aging trends and healthy living product sales.

### Shock Hits Nieto Family Again... Augie Diagnosed With "Lou Gehrig's Disease" (ALS)

In 2005, Nieto became Chairman of Octane Fitness, a new strength training equipment company. Shortly thereafter, he was diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), better known as Lou Gehrig's disease.

Augie Nieto has set a goal. That goal is to DEFEAT ALS. He intends to do that by helping raise funds for anti-ALS research. He has asked for and is getting big time help and participation from friends around the world. His first big thrust to raise funds will be the special ALS Fundraiser Reception and Banquet in Las Vegas at the National Fitness Trade Journal Trade Show.

### Augie To Be Honored In Las Vegas

Augie Nieto will be honored by the National Fitness Trade Journal with its "Lifetime Achievement Award", to be presented at the Banquet. The event will begin with a reception at 5 pm at the fabulous Rio Hotel Resort, Casino and Conference Center on September 8, 2005 and the Banquet and Awards Ceremony. Many are attending from all over, and I am told that attendance could be over 1,000

(See A "Tribute" Page 8)

Need to Increase  
Membership Sales  
and  
Retention  
and don't have the  
*foggiest* idea how?

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**...A "Tribute"**

continued from page 7

and at \$300 per ticket, that will be a good night and a great start for Augie's ALS fund raising goals!

**Here Are Signs Of More Victory for Augie Nieto!**

Augie Nieto is a fighter. Since his stunning ALS diagnosis about one year ago, Nieto has not sat back and rested,

waiting for his health to deteriorate. Instead, he has done something he loves to do. He is working out a lot! He is on a new diet, has some new medication and is really hitting his workouts.

In the past year, Augie had lost about 20 pounds. The great news is that as of early August, he had gained back 15 pounds! Recently, he told Ray Wilson that he had just finished playing 18 holes of golf. He said he also had run 6 miles that day

as he does frequently. Like I said, Augie Nieto has not taken the ALS Diagnosis as a reason to stop exercising and he never will.

It is reported that there is one ALS patient who has lived for 22 years since their ALS diagnosis. It is only a 'feeling' I have, but if anyone in this world can defeat ALS, it will be Augie Nieto. I would not be at all surprised to see Augie 'blow the lid' off that 22-year record for survival. With the goal and the cause of continued ALS research and fund raising to help provide strong support for ALS Research, he is now on a Mission. When combined with his fitness lifestyle, these elements provide a break in ALS. Someday, Augie could be somewhere exercising when he hears that a 'cure' for ALS has been announced.

Then, Augie can look back and say, "Boy, I'm glad we started off with that ALS Fund Raiser in Las Vegas produced by Wally Boyko and John McCarthy back in 2005!" After that, Augie could then really be asking the world, "What's next? I'm ready!" That would be the best question a great man like Augie Nieto could ever be in a position to ask.

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## ...Laury Hammel

continued from page 6

'BE THE CHANGE THAT YOU WISH TO SEE IN THE WORLD', then everything else is a fraud. I try to practice what I preach. I think that people appreciate that. I do think that the **biggest statement you can make with your life IS your life.**"

Laury and Vicki Hammel raised a large family. Children, Sara, 34; Jed, 32; Eliza, 28; Jason, 24 and Samantha, 22, are all grown and working or studying around the world. Sara, is a freelance writer in London, Jed is working in movie production in Los Angeles, Eliza is working on her PhD at Harvard, Jason, who works for Laury, directs their Tournament Training Camp, and Samantha is still matriculating at Wagner College, but in here spare time (!) runs several professional acting and theater companies. Hammel is a dedicated member of United Church of Christ-Congregational and Vicki is a UCC Congregational Pastor.

Hammel says, "I grew up at my Dad's club, the Salt Lake Tennis Club, and it was idyllic. As a youth, we'd hang at the club with friends and family, play tennis, swim, and bounce on the trampoline. My Dad was the Manager of the club and at the time the only tennis professional in Salt Lake City.

(Author's note: Laury Hammel is still playful and happy as a 'kid' might be.)

Alan Schwartz, Founder and Chairman of Chicago-based Tennis Corporation of America, and former Chairman, CEO and President of the United States Tennis Association with over 650,000 members, knows Laury Hammel and his family well. Schwartz said this about Laury Hammel, "I have known Laury and his family for almost 30 years. Laury is a combination *piet piper, magician and tennis evangelist*. Children flock to him; he created a tennis fiefdom with no money down and his preachments have made tennis converts of thousands".

Hammel began playing competitive tennis at age 10. He also earned the highest rank, Eagle Scout, in the Boy Scouts of America. He earned a full tennis scholarship at the University

of Utah, and one year, his tennis team was ranked 5th in the nation. Hammel had the opportunity to play against some great players. He defeated the #2 Mexican Davis Cup player and narrowly lost 6-4, 6-3 to Stan Smith, the #1 player in the nation at the time. In 2004, Hammel was inducted into the New England Tennis Hall of Fame (NETHF). Other NETHF inductees include: Bud Collins, Hazel Wightman, James Van Allen, Tim Mayotte and many local luminaries.

In addition to being the current #1 ranked tennis player in New England among the 55+ group, Hammel continues to be an amazing fitness buff and athlete. He plays tennis 4 to 5 times a week, while also working out as a tri-athlete, attends "Hot Yoga" classes several times a week, enjoys skiing, rollerblading, and kayaking, logging 12 hours of exercise per week. Talk about *dedication to regular exercise!*

In 1972, Hammel moved from Utah to Boston, where he worked as tennis pro until 1980 when he opened his first Longfellow Club. The fact that he started his first Longfellow Club with \$633 is amazing! It's amazing to think that such a humble beginning resulted in a business that now covers 262,000 sq.-ft. indoors and generates \$14 million a year!

### **Why Laury Hammel's Longfellow Clubs Are Such A Success**

With the \$14 million a year set aside, probably the best measure for any club operator are the feelings of some of the *key people* in his organization. I asked four of them the 3 questions shown in bold below:

**Q. #1: What do you value the most in your work?**

**Q. #2: How long have you been with Longfellow and what is it like working with Laury Hammel?**

**Q. #3: If you could suggest just one thing to help improve the health club industry across America, what would it be and why?**

**Myke Farricker, General Manager of the Longfellow Clubs:**

**Ans.Q#1** - "What I value most in my work is the opportunity to



### **Laury Hammel Poolside**

contribute to others and being part of an organization where that is such a high priority, possibly the highest priority."

**Ans.Q#2** - "I've been with Laury since 1978 (27 years), and it's one of the best things that ever happened to me. I've gone from working the front desk in 1978, to tennis pro, to summer camp organizer, to club manager, to general manager of three thriving tennis and fitness clubs. All along the way, Laury has supported me and offered me opportunities to grow and become the best I can be. That's one of the special things about Laury... He is *always* looking to see how he can contribute to his staff, help them develop and become more educated in their specific field of expertise."

**Ans.Q#3** - "I would suggest that we continue to work to develop how to make fitness and recreation more fun and more accessible to everyone, so more people will get involved with fitness and recreation and discover the enjoyment and health benefits that can come from active living."

**Karen Mahoney, Director of the Longfellow Children's Center and Camp Longfellow in Wayland:**

**Ans.Q#1** - "I value having the ability to create new programs and improve or change existing ones with the knowledge that I will be encouraged and supported in my efforts, even if the outcome is not entirely successful.

Inspiration comes easily at Longfellow.

**Ans.Q#2** - "I have been at Longfellow in Wayland for 12 years. Working with Laury is like being with family that you actually like spending time with. You know you are loved and respected, and if things go wrong, you will stick together. You might not always agree, but in the end, you'll work things out because that's what family does."

**Ans. Q#3** - "As a Children's Program Director, I would love to see more emphasis placed on children's health and well-being and a return to low-tech, fun ways of getting children active. We do not provide enough training as an industry for those who wish to focus on these areas."

**Jo Ellen Farricker, wife of Myke and a partner in Longfellow Clubs:**

**Ans.Q#1** - "There are many, many things that I value about my work. The first is specifically more personal to me, and that is the creative freedom that I have been given. I have created lots of different programs and parties for the club through the years. I like developing an idea into a class or two and watch more and more people participate as it grows into a larger program. Overall at the club, I like that we try to do the "right thing" for our members and staff. We are fair. And, I like that we are an environmentally and socially conscious group of peo-

ple."

**Ans.Q#2** - "Nearly 25 years ago, Laury called me at 6:00AM (he has a lot of energy) and asked me to come to Longfellow to open our daycare center. Since then, I have worked all around the club in many different capacities and became a partner all because of the encouragement, leadership and training Laury offers. He has lots of enthusiasm for the industry and lots of ideas. Laury makes sure that, if you want to learn or grow within the company, it is not only possible - *it will happen*. This is true for many of our staff, not just for me. Laury is a very fair and compassionate man. He has a good sense of humor and is fun to work with and for."

**Ans.Q#3** - "I think that we need to have more beginner/starter classes encouraging more people to give the fitness industry a try... Easy entry and user-friendly group exercise classes of all kinds. Even at Longfellow we could use more 'beginner, beginner' classes for people who are getting back to fitness after a long hiatus and also for our older population. I hear that a lot. Clubs should become social centers, as well as fitness centers. There should be more social activities (outside of the usual group exercise classes) to bring the people who live in the area together. We could rally around community environmental causes, have parties and celebrate our member's fitness suc-

(See *Laury Hammel* page 12)

# The best of times and the worst of times in the fitness business

During the last 30 years there has probably never been a better time to be in the fitness business and sadly, there has also never been a worst time.

The good news is that the consumer has finally gotten the message. It's hard these days to pick up any news magazine; watch almost any news on television or pick up any newspaper and not see at least one article on the benefits of fitness.

It wasn't too many years ago that national awareness grew to the point with cigarette smoking that it slowly became very uncool to smoke. This awareness finally forced our nation to take action and now smoking is one of the most unacceptable things you can do in our culture.

Being overweight and out of shape is now at the point smoking was not too many years ago. National awareness about the dangers, and most importantly, how uncool being deconditioned is in our society, is building toward that tipping point where the consumer finally gets "it".

What this means to all of us in the fitness business is during the next few years we should be seeing a new type of client seeking out fitness centers for the first time, which will lead toward more business for all of us who in fitness.

The bad news is that during the last four years the number of members per club, according to research by IHRSA, is declining each year. In simple terms this means that we are adding clubs faster than we are adding members.

This can't last too long without a major correction occurring similar to those the fitness business experienced in the past, such as the ones in the mid 80's and early 90's. In fact, we are looking for a significant number of clubs to close during the next several years until the weight of the new members coming in overcomes the growth of the new clubs.



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Corrections are a normal part of any business and what we are going to encounter stems not only from recent growth but also from the type of growth in the industry, such as the increase in franchises and low-price providers; both of which will wreak a little havoc on clubs not prepared to do battle and protect their turf.

There will be great opportunity during this shift in the industry. Some clubs will fail but those that are prepared will have opportunities to expand their markets and their businesses. Look back at any major shift in any field and you'll always find those few who make money when everyone else is scrambling.

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## THOMAS PLUMMER COMPANY

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## ...Laury Hammel

continued from page 10  
 cesses.”

**Denise Griffin, Club Manager  
 The Longfellow Club:**

**Ans.Q#1 -** What I value most



**Laury Has 57 Different Serves!**

about my work is the interaction with members and staff.

**Ans.Q#2 -** I've been at Longfellow for 20 years and working with Laury is never dull. We work hard, but never forget that *work is supposed to be fun*. He creates an atmosphere that encourages staff participation, new ideas and fun!

**Ans.Q#3 -** I would try to do a better job promoting working out in groups of 2 and 3. I think this would help retain members.

**Read on,** and learn how Laury Hammel has taken this wonderful team and worked wonders!

### **An In-depth Interview With Star Club Owner Operator Laury Hammel**

**CIN -** Please, for our readers, 'boil' your 25-year club career success story down to your **Mission Statement.**

**Hammel -** "Our **Mission Statement** is to: **'Make the World A Better Place!'** So, from day one we were looking for other businesses that shared that 'Vision' and 'Mission'. In 1988, I got a chance to meet a lot of people who did share the 'Vision', including: Ben Cohen of Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream, the owners of Stony Field Farm Yogurt and Tom's In Maine Toothpaste.

I met all these people and went out to organize businesses that shared a 'Mission' of trying to change the world through their business. I organized this group called the New England Business Association for Social Responsibility in 1988. It was

the first organization that we know of in the world composed of businesses that are trying to change the world. That led to me, in 1991, founding Businesses for Social Responsibility (BSR). BSR now has over 1,000 members, and it is a national non-profit group with an annual budget of over \$10 million dollars. They work with businesses that try to improve their practices so they are more socially responsible.

Then, I founded another association, a local group in Boston and another national independent businesses association called Business Alliance Association of Local Economies (BALLE). It has about 20 networks that include approximately 4,000 local businesses. It's pretty big. Basically, it's a multiple stakeholder model of growing a business. We want to make sure we're making a profit because if you *don't make a profit*, you *don't survive*. We want to make sure our investors, our managers and our staff are taken care of. We want to make sure that our customers are taken care of, and we want to make sure that the environment is taken care of. We also want to make sure that our community is taken care of, and we've done that in many, many ways. We want to make sure that our vendors are treated with respect and dignity and ethically. And finally, we want to make sure that all stakeholders are treated with respect, dignity and ethics. As a business, we've been trying to be a model for businesses that value socially responsible business practices, and we've also worked to reach out to other businesses that share those values."

**CIN -** Please share the experience you had and the job you did with the inner city Sportsmen's Tennis Club.

**Hammel -** "For \$1 a year for five years, we managed a non-profit inner city indoor/outdoor tennis club that was almost bankrupt when we walked in. During the course of those five years, we provided leadership, management, raised money, donated money, gave in-kind services, did construction, painted the outside of the building, hired tennis pros, and raised the pay scale for the staff. We did the whole 'kit and caboodle' and for no charge. I was there a day or two a week for five years. The end result was that the

almost bankrupt, physically deteriorating club was transformed to a really beautiful facility with resurfaced courts, a new ceiling, new lights and new remodeling inside the building. We built four more outdoor courts and went from 43 kids to 500 kids in the programs. It was just a beautiful thing. *It not only survived, it thrived.* We don't manage it any more, but I still serve on the Board of Directors. That's the kind of thing that IHRSA clubs should try to do when possible. They need to look for partners (even non-profits) in underserved communities where they might be able to help out in some capacity. We encourage IHRSA clubs to do that."

**CIN -** Tell our readers about your community fund raising efforts.

**Hammel -** "Every member of our staff knows we want to encourage people to support non-profit, charitable organizations so that we can contribute to the community. So, like many clubs, we give away, to non-profits, 3-month memberships, personal training sessions, tennis lessons, and sometimes, full-year memberships for raffles, etc. If a non-profit organization comes in for donations, and if they are legitimate, we give them 'in-kind' donations. I would estimate that we give away a minimum of \$15,000 a year in donations this way. Then we hold numerous events. For example, we ran a huge 'Spin for ALS' fund raiser because my partner, Myke Farricker's brother, Pete, passed away from ALS. We raised over \$120,000 this year for ALS. All four of our clubs do 25 or more fundraising events each year. Before I ever opened Longfellow, back in 1978, when I worked as a Tennis Pro, I began to serve our community by providing 'Special Needs Tennis and Swimming Programs'. Vick and I founded the Handi-Racket Tennis Program for special needs children. Now, a lot of these people who started with us as kids have now been with us for almost 30 years and are still taking lessons. They're so enthusiastic about tennis, so we donate court time to them. They're here every Saturday. A lot of them are involved in Special Olympics as well. A lot of the members and the Juniors are involved in giving them tennis

lessons. It's awesome, and we also have a swimming program that we donate the pool to which brings in special needs kids to swim. That group includes some big people who end up splashing and raising a ruckus in the water, but rarely has a member complained to me... we just say 'look, these people are special, they need special treatment and we're going to support them'. We've been doing the swimming program for 20 years now, and I feel really good about that. We provide moments of joy for them in both tennis and swimming."

**CIN -** Certainly Laury you must feel really good when you go to work!

**Hammel -** "Oh, I really do. These things have helped deepen our relationships in our community for years. For example, I just called up a bank because we're in the process of refinancing. The woman I spoke to had been one of my tennis students 20 years ago. It happens all the time. Everywhere I go throughout my community, I see people I know that are members or were at one time and the connections prove valuable. **It is all about relationship building.**"

**CIN -** Tell our readers about your efforts with the environment.

**Hammel -** "We've been a pioneer in recycling and energy efficiency. For example, 're-lamping' our lights and making sure recycling is completed. We provide plenty of places for people to place their recyclable refuse, and we ran the 'Earth Day' celebration for the community. We try to do what we can to be as environmentally responsible as possible."

### **You Need A Hug!**

**CIN -** Laury, you, along with **Red Lerille, Joe Cirulli, Dale Dibble, Todd Pulis, Ed and Zoe Veasey, Ron and Sandy Franco** and just a very few others whose names don't immediately pop into my mind right this second, are clearly in the **'Top' echelon of independent club owners and operators in America.** Tell our readers what your **core values** are that have **enabled you to take a \$633 investment** and parlay it into a **\$14+ million a year multi-location business?**

**Hammel -** "**#1 is LOVE.** I think **love** is the **most powerful force**

in the world. Sometimes people have called us **'The LOVE Club'**. Let me tell you about our front desk person, who had, until she retired, been with us since we opened, 25 years ago. Her name is **Sandie Erdle**. She was (and is) the most charming, sweetest, most friendly person I've ever met in my life. She would answer the phone 'musically'. Sandie was a model for everybody here about how to treat people. She was always hugging people and being kind to them, and sometimes, even telling them that she loved them.

Once, a couple who had just joined the club, were learning how to swim. That day, they had come from the pool by the front desk and were very, very upset and unhappy. They had come to use a lap lane when it was very crowded, and we couldn't have non-swimmers in a lap lane because it could and would disrupt many very dedicated lap swimmers in a single lane doing laps. So, our life-guard was very courteous, but he asked them to leave for the time being and come back at another time. They came up to Sandie and said, 'The life guard was very nice, but he told us, because we were non-swimmers, we could not use the lap pool right now. He suggested that we come back during a less busy time. But, the bottom line is, we can't use the club right now, and that is very upsetting for us because we were planning on it.'

Without hesitation Sandie said, 'I think you need a hug'. She stepped from behind the front



### **Hammel's World**

desk, gave them a hug and said, 'We're really sorry that happened. Let me see if there is some way we can work this out because I know there is a way to make it convenient for you. I'm so sorry that happened.' The

(See **Laury Hammel** page 14)

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### ...Laury Hammel

continued from page 12

husband said, 'You know what? We can't even be upset here! First, the life guards were nice, now you come up and you understand us. We're trying to be upset here! It's impossible to be upset here... it's just too kind!'

**CIN - Now, that's beautiful! Is that not a memory you guys will treasure for a lifetime!? That's the essence of what our business can and should be. If our entire industry could get to the point where you guys are, if we could just clone your mindset of kindness and niceness, our industry would not be at 14% penetration of the U.S. population. We would be at 30 or 40% or even higher! Your recollection of this story is a beauty!**

**Hammel - "#2 is empathy.** Empathy is really an essential part of love. To me, the ability to understand what it's like to walk in someone else's moccasins is really a critical piece for being a human being, and it's a *totally critical piece for being in business.* Let's say you're dealing with a staff member, a member or a vendor; if you don't know what it's like to be in their shoes, you can't really converse with them.

**#3 is a commitment to the community.** We want to make sure that everything we do has a positive impact on our community. Business can play an incredible role in building strong communities and making it a livable place. Business is the place where we live. It's the place where we do business. It's the place where we enjoy life and have our frustrations and our challenges. We want to make sure we build an organization where people say, 'Those people are part of our community. They contribute to our community. That's a place I'd like to be associated with. I think those three are very important, but I'd like to add one more...

**#4 is we make decisions by consensus.** We want to make sure that *people on our team feel they can fully participate and be fully engaged... so that's a good start.*

**A "Bloodhound for Tension"!**

**CIN -** Tell us about your policy of 'Open Book Corporate Transparency' and your 'major job' within your organization.

**Hammel -** "We have never made a secret of the financial condition of our company, our club objectives, and what we needed to do to move forward as a business. These are discussed and, in fact, developed at our semi-annual management retreats. At these gatherings we discuss the state of the business, report on the current key numbers, determine the club objectives for the next six months, and then together we go about planning to bring these goals into reality. One of the beautiful things about the club business, is that there are always improvements, new facilities, and new equipment to build or purchase. At these retreats and other meetings, staff members have the opportunity to present their ideas for growth and expansion, and to then discuss and debate them with all their fellow managers and department heads. When people participate and are engaged in the process they feel a sense of ownership. Not only do we make better plans this way, but, since everyone is involved in the process, things get done more efficiently and effectively. *Running a business in a transparent way and utilizing consensus decision-making is a win for the business and a win for the staff.*

*I have three major jobs. Number one* is to make sure the company is strong financially, that we can meet our financial obligations, and expand the business in an organic and successful manner. *Without profits, the company doesn't survive and everyone loses.*

**The second,** is to nurture and build our corporate culture. A business is only as strong as the team that leads it, and, indeed, the commitment and quality of all the staff. Ensuring that our 'Mission' and our 'Values' are being practiced and embraced by our team is a major priority of mine and of all of our club managers. We make a covenant with our staff members—We will do all we can to help you reach your full potential as a person, and we expect you do all you can to help Longfellow achieve our mission—a win-win!

**#3 -** One way I describe my job



### Longfellow Tournament Training Camp 'Stars'

is to be a **'BLOODHOUND for Tension'**. I keep my nose sensitive and aware as to how our staff is feeling, and I **'sniff-out'** tense situations. When one person is not getting along with another, when there is just a 'sense' of one individual not supporting another, or if there is 'talking bad' about another on our staff our managers spring into action. It is important that a company have a culture where people feel free to raise performance-related issues to the appropriate person and in a compassionate way. *However, harmful gossip and 'negative talk' about other staff members destroys morale and is totally against our corporate culture.*

If I discover that there is a problem within the staff or if a staff member feels that I or another manager has let them down, I am Johnny-on-the-spot and ready to address it. If it is not being resolved by the people having the conflict, either a manager, or myself will jump in. We will immediately sit down with the individuals involved to see what we can do to resolve it, and fortunately we generally find a positive resolution to the problem. *If people feel that they are respected and are being responded to, they will come to me if they are upset or have a problem. Anger, frustration, and resentment can eat up an individual and destroy a business. Listening to staff members and responding on a timely basis is what ultimately creates trust. We have created a transparent atmosphere of trust, where, if I've got something on my mind, I will tell them, and if they have something on their mind, they will tell me.*

Occasionally, for whatever reason, the *organization will outgrow an individual.* At that point, if they're not raising their game to the level we are seeking in our business, we *must* address it, even if they've been with us for 10 years. Sometimes, we've had to talk to an individual and explain that for the benefit of them and Longfellow it is better to part ways. If our team is really working hard to make things right and one staff member is effectively sabotaging their effort by not doing their part... I must act. *Powerful relationships are those where both parties mutually benefit and are happy.* I have made these difficult decisions for over 25 years, and I've seen that in by far the majority of cases (even if the staff member initially was upset), he or she moved on and ended up being more happy. And the level of performance at Longfellow took a quantum leap forward. As I've visited and consulted with businesses of all types, I've noticed that most businesses have at least one staff member that everyone agrees is not doing their job, and yet the CEO is not willing to act. This type of inaction is devastating to a corporate culture.

My third job, is to lead our community efforts—both locally and nationally. Our staff and members feel pride in how Longfellow contributes to building a strong community. Fortunately, I have a staff of terrific people and dynamic leaders who do great work. This allows me to take a leadership role in building and growing several local and national nonprofit organizations. *"I feel blessed to have this opportunity to give back."*

This concludes Part I of this wonderful sharing of knowledge by Laury Hammel, some of his key staff members and Alan Schwartz. In Part II, in our September, 2005 edition, we will have a whole lot more for you:

- The Longfellow Holistic Health Center;
- Hot Power Yoga;
- The "Service Breakthrough Project";
- Longfellows' World Class Programming;
- Regional and National Tennis Tournament Hosting;
- IHRSA's recently retired Rick Devereux comments on Hammel;
- WHY Laury Hammel Values IHRSA So Much;
- Hammel's New Book on Socially Responsible Business;
- Laury's Views on the Low Cost Clubs;
- Laury Hammel's Excellent Dissertation on Obesity.

**STAY TUNED** for our September, 2005 Edition!

(Norm Cates, Jr. is the Owner and Publisher of The CLUB INSIDER News. Cates was the 1st President of IHRSA and a Co-founder of the Association in 1981. Cates is a 31-year veteran of the industry and was honored by IHRSA with its 2001 Dale Dibble Distinguished Service Award. Cates may be reached by phone at: 770.850.8506 or by email at: clubinsidernews@mindspring.com)

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## ...Joe Moore

continued from page 3  
 23rd, 2005?

**Joe Moore** – First, let me mention the ‘theme’ for the big event: **“Celebrating Silver. Going for Gold.”**

The idea is to make this 25th and all conventions really friendly and easy to use for the people who may be attending for their first and second time. This will be a world-class event.

### More Roundtables and Discussion Groups

Moore continues, “ We will have more ‘Roundtable’ activities and ‘discussion groups’. In the early morning when people have their coffee and continental breakfasts we plan to have discussion groups facilitated by various industry leaders. This will provide break out time that may be used in a productive manner. We would like to see more ‘relationship’ building. The people that get the most from their IHRSA Membership are those that have been coming for years and know a lot of others. They have a ‘network’ built up. We want to try to help build networks for many by arranging to have a veteran to sit at a roundtable with newer IHRSA Members. This will really help newer members to get more information and to learn how to use IHRSA more productively. **“We want to provide a FUN, productive experience for everybody. We want to help the attendees to make new friends and contacts throughout the industry. All IHRSA Members should know how helpful and important convention networking is.”**

**CLUB INSIDER-** Joe, this month’s cover guy, *Laury Hammel*, will be really glad to hear this news. In Laury’s Part II interview coming next month, he expressed wishes that IHRSA would get back to scheduling more ‘roundtable’ time. I am happy for the IHRSA Members as this will definitely facilitate more learning for them.

**Joe Moore** – “So, in summary,



the IHRSA Board and Staff are trying to do everything they possibly can to make the 25th and future Conventions and Trade Shows *FUN, easy to use, friendly and educational. We hope to provide a substantial return on their investment in time and money.”*

Joe, you’ve given our readers some terrific examples of the many new and creative things that IHRSA has planned for Las Vegas next March 20-23rd in Las Vegas. Let’s direct our reader’s attention to a big-new IHRSA alliance and involvement with Wally Boyko’s NFTJ Conference and Trade Show, also in Vegas September 8-10th, 2005. The 1st Annual Club Business Entrepreneur Conference and Trade show for IHRSA’s independent club owners will be featured. Please comment.

### IHRSA and NFTJ Alliance Produced for Independent Club Owners!

Joe Moore – “ The new partnership we have with Wally Boyko and the National Fitness Journal Conference and Trade Show is a *major event*. This new ‘alliance’ will provide a huge new IHRSA educational program for independent club owners. And, it is ‘right around the corner’ and scheduled for September 8-10th. It will be held at the fabulous Rio Hotel, Casino and Conference Resort in Vegas.

Let me emphasize that this new IHRSA/NFTJ alliance was specifically created, designed and targeted to serve IHRSA’s independent club owners. However, you will meet some of the Industry’s pioneers at the show.

We think that the entrepreneurial club business people that attend September 8-10th will also be very likely to attend the big 25th Anniversary IHRSA Convention in March. The *Entrepreneur Conference* in September is going to be a *very intimate and excellent learning setting*.

The NFTJ Conference and Trade Show alliance will go a long way in helping new and veteran club people. We will help them learn what IHRSA offers them to help their business. IHRSA provides such a

*vast array of services to help independent club owners that it takes an ‘educational process’ to fully use it all.*

### Selected Seminars Will Be Presented Two Times In Las Vegas

Moore explains, “First, we are hoping to reduce the ‘schedule overlap problem’ by having some of the speakers actually give their presentation twice during the convention. That means if you miss one presentation because someone else was speaking at the same time, you will be able to pick it up at a ‘repeat’ session later in the conference. Bill Dussor mentioned this plan at the June board meeting and we think it is a great idea!”

A big draw will also be the presentation of the NFTJ’s Lifetime Achievement Award to Augie Nieto, Founder of Life Fitness. I can’t say enough about Augie. I’ll leave that for another day. However, his LifeCycle was an *epoch for the Industry*. It is easy to demonstrate his influence. *I think of it in terms of pre-LifeCycle and post-LifeCycle days. He changed the face of exercise.*

### Helen Durkin and Kevin Buckley Provide Important Help For IHRSA Members

Last month Joe Moore shared some of his thoughts on IHRSA’s terrific Public Policy Department, Directed by Helen Durkin who is assisted by Kevin Buckley.

One of the most prophetic comments he made during his interview was, “Our grass root IHRSA Member club owners and operators across the world are doing a *great job* for their members and making their members healthier. But, they really *don’t take the time* or *can’t take the time* to get involved in a tax issue, or stopping a Rec Center or helping the industry as a whole. They hope the big players will deal with the problem. *I understand that because I’ve been there. If you are a club owner deeply involved in trying to make a rent payment...it’s hard to spend time on government relations...so it’s difficult to reach some folks because their focus is on survival...not learning new things!”*



### The “Gladiator” At Work

IHRSA’s recently announced success in Washington, D.C. with ‘scoring’ for the WHIP Act (Workforce Health Improvement Program) finally being done by the U.S. Congress, is a major achievement that Helen Durkin and Kevin Buckley have been working on for many years. We congratulate them both and we congratulate John McCarthy.

IHRSA asked President Moore to explain ‘scoring’ for our readers in laymen’s terms. He said, “Every time you go to the U.S. Federal Government and say to them: **‘We’ve got a Bill that we would like to have passed, they say: HOW MUCH IS THAT GOING TO COST US IN TAX DOLLARS? What’s the HARD COST?’** In this case, it’s a *tax deduction for joining a fitness center* that IHRSA’s Public Affairs Department has been seeking approval for literally years and years. The WHIP Act, when eventually passed, will greatly benefit IHRSA Members and all health club owners across America. But, it’s hard for us to sell this *intangible thing* called a health club membership to legislators. We explain to them that when a person joins a health club and uses it, he or she will be happier, healthier and have less doctor bills. We now finally know through this ‘scoring’ how much it will cost for the U.S. Government to go ahead and vote in favor of this Whip Act Bill. The U.S. Congress, thanks

largely to the efforts of Helen Durkin and Kevin Buckley, has now ‘scored’ this measure at \$268 million. In the Federal Government, where they keep score in billions and trillions of dollars, the cost of approving and providing this tax benefit to Americans is a drop in the bucket, when compared to other measures they debate. We don’t know the *tangible benefits to club owners* yet. But, we do know that the *intangible benefits far outweigh the miniscule cost*. Helen Durkin, IHRSA’s dedicated and hard-working Director of Public Policy, was so elated about this HUGE industry news that she actually interrupted the June Board Meeting to excitedly announce to the Board and John McCarthy and his staff that this hugely important victory had finally been won!”

### Helen Durkin Comments On the Great Importance of the Involvement of Small and Large Health Club Operators In Legislation

Helen Durkin is a Massachusetts native who earned her Undergraduate Degree at Holy Cross University in Boston and went to Law School at American University in Washington, D.C. Before coming on board with IHRSA 16-years ago she worked for a labor law firm and she worked in various political jobs in the D.C. area.

(See Joe Moore page 18)

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### ...Joe Moore

continued from page 16

#### Extremely Important Information For Club Owners In Every State!

Helen has worked hard and done a remarkable job for 16-years for the IHRSA Member Clubs in America.

I asked Helen, "Due to Joe Moore's comments in our July issue, about the need for clubs to become involved in government legislation (in the Joe Moore Special Edition Moore's quote on previous page), I wanted to ask you to 'pretend' that I am an independent club owner in the U.S. who is an IHRSA Member club owner. Please explain why all independent club owners should become involved with and support efforts on their behalf in the arena of government legislation?"

Durkin replied, "There are a couple of reasons. In IHRSA's government relations we have a *legal* component and a *legislative* component. On the legal side is one of the things that hurts small independent clubs most often. **Bad membership contracts that may be easily voided!** I can't tell you how many calls I've gotten from small club owners that had a corporate attorney or a brother-in-law or someone to draft their contract and the lawyer did not even know that the state had *consumer protection legislation!* Most states have consumer protection language that says specifically: 'Your contract must contain the following... and it must be in 10 point bold.' I have had people call who did not have the required by law elements in the contracts they had produced and all of those contracts may be voided! And, they thought they were doing it correctly!

*The idea that you can just go to some random attorney in your area to find out all the stuff that specifically applies to clubs isn't really true.* That's why we have IHRSA Legal Briefing Papers and the 'Tips' for our members. You might still need your own attorney, but first you want to make very sure they don't miss something that they should know because they're not familiar with the health club industry and its consumer protection laws in your state. *We have*

*done the legal background work for you!* It is just one of your many benefits of IHRSA Membership, so why should you have to pay for it again!? You can get the legal Tips for free, saving you \$2,000. For example, back when I started 16 years ago we hired a law firm to prepare just one document and IHRSA paid \$5,000 to do that original memo 16 years ago! Imagine the cost to your club for that work now.

There is a tendency to say, "Oh, it doesn't impact me." I respond, 'Yeah, the law does!' *You need to pay attention to it because if you don't you can get yourself into big trouble.* We are no longer surprised by any call we get. So, we listen to the people's questions and then we come up with the answers to those questions for them. At IHRSA, in addition to me, we have a staff attorney and attorney's on retainer because it really could come back and cost you a lot of money. We can *save* you that money!

*The second part is the legislative part.* My husband is a contractor and his gross revenues are a lot like the gross revenues in a lot of clubs. I see the 'worry' about meeting payroll and the day-to-day-details. So, I realize it is really easy to step away and just say 'I can't follow this, I don't have time for anything!'. But, you can't just walk away from it.

*Sales tax is another thing.* Recently in New Jersey there was a great achievement because they defeated the proposed sales tax on health club memberships. By getting the club owners to spend just a little extra time making phone calls and having their members make phone calls, the legislators 'get the message.' Some clubs have even installed a dedicated phone in their clubs so their members can call up directly and object to the sales tax measures in state government. In New Jersey, Kevin Buckley was talking to the legislative staff during this sales tax debate and they were saying: "We've got the message! We've got the message! We've heard from clubs!" Even lobbyist said that "It was the combination of the clubs owners and members and IHRSA as a team that stopped that sales tax measure! What we've found is that when sales taxes get imple-

mented, it takes the club's ability to raise prices away. When it passed in Ohio we saw some clubs go out of business because of the sales tax!

Part of the problem is that state legislators don't really understand our business! We have a big problem with that in the area of 'continuation of service' also known as 'automatic renewals'. Really what we find when we dig down deep is that legislators are trying to stop long term renewals. Renewals where you add three years onto three year contracts. What is happening is that even in a lot of first drafts it would be illegal to have month to month renewals!

We fax or email warning messages to club owners when something detrimental to their club business is going on in their state legislative houses. As a club owner you can make friends with your local and U.S. legislators in your city, town or community. You would be amazed at what can be done. We've had club owners who have had friends in the legislature to say, 'I can't vote for a Bill because it's going to hurt my friend. Then they pick up the phone and call their friend and let them know there is a sales tax Bill on memberships being considered. Or, there is an bad automatic renewal prohibition clause being considered. The club owners then call us and we begin our warning faxes and emails in that specific state and get the troops going on the telephones.

**CLUB INSIDER – That's a huge and really important message Helen. And, everything you've shared in this important interview for protection of club owners is very important!** I think that all club owners should realize that any one of these topics could hugely impact their club business investments and futures! I sure hope our readers are reading this *carefully* and coming to understand how much your Public Policy Department at IHRSA has been doing and will continue to do to protect the IHRSA Member Clubs.

I asked Helen if she could give us some 'A,B,C' steps for club owners to protect their club interests by 'getting in the loop' and utilizing the services that their IHRSA Membership dues



(L to R) Washington D.C. Legislative Summit Panel:  
Jay Sweeney, Tom Scanlon, Kevin Buckley and Helen Durkin  
pay for?

**#A** -- I would say they should view the Capitol Report on the IHRSA Website every week on Wednesday because that is when we try to have updates for State Legislative Alerts posted. Go to: [ihrsa.org](http://ihrsa.org) scroll to the bottom and click on: Public Policy and Public Health for the latest news.

**#B** – *Make an immediate phone call* when the situation is warranted and will impact your state's laws. When a legislative alert comes in from us on email open it immediately. Whatever it is, we will have a phone number for you to call and you should call as directed immediately. **This is critical because in the New Jersey situation there were only minutes for the club owners of New Jersey to react and act by picking up the phone to start objecting.** You should pick up the phone and call! It will only take five minutes. You don't have to be an expert. **Just call** because that puts a name and a club with the problem.

**#C** – If you get fired up and excited and feel that you can become involved and do more, just call IHRSA at 800.228.4772 and we can help you with suggestions for what you can do.

**#D** – Don't forget what clubs are so good at: building relationships! You should begin to establish relationships with legislators. Invite them to your charity fund raisers. Even invite them to come as your guest and work out in your club! .

In this legislative field, *your involvement* can be as little as a *five minute phone call* or it could involve traveling *all the way to Washington, D.C.* to participate in **IHRSA's 4th Annual Two Day Legislative Summit next year.** That is a really good thing for club owners to become involved in. There you will see in action the things you learned

about in Civics class in school. And, YOU can help!

Durkin closes her excellent, important and informative comments, "There is something for everyone in the health, racquet and sportsclub industry to become involved in this legislative field. We at IHRSA urge you to become more knowledgeable and more involved. There is something on the spectrum in this realm for everyone and we urge you to become involved. We welcome your call to IHRSA at: 800.228.4772.

#### An Amazing Story About An Amazing Man!

Joe Moore's Special Edition Parts I and II, presented in our July and August editions represent an amazing story about an amazing man. We wish Joe and his family well. And, we wish Joe the best of luck serving as the 25th President of IHRSA during its 25th Anniversary year. "Mr. President", Joe The "Gladiator" Moore is a great man with a great heart and a lifetime track record of successfully helping others. You CAN'T ask for much better than that. We congratulate Joe on a life very well lived.

(Norm Cates, Jr. is the Publisher and owner of The **CLUB INSIDER** News. Cates, a 32-year industry veteran, was the 1st President of IHRSA and a Co-founder of the Association. In March 2001, Cates was honored by IHRSA with its Dale Dibble Distinguished Service Award. Cates may be reached by phone at: 770.850.8506 or by email at: [clubinsidernews@mindspring.com](mailto:clubinsidernews@mindspring.com) )

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# Focus: Your Tool for Sales Excellence

**By Karen Woodard-Chavez**

Excellence in any endeavor demands focus. Whether the area of pursuit is sports, the arts, or business there are several common threads that weave the fabric of success: repetition and improvement upon your best performance, desire to be the best and a clear focus on the outcome as well as the process to achieve the outcome.

Achieving excellence in the craft of selling is no different. Before we go further, let me define my interpretation of excellence in selling. First – it is not about memorizing boiler-plate tech-

nique nor is it about manipulation. It is instead about your ability to be able to create a connection between yourself, your prospective Member and your business that results in an exchange of value for all parties involved. Thus, achieving excellence in sales is about your ability to consistently communicate in a professional customized manner that reaches the Member as well as moving you toward your goals.

The purpose of this article is to provide you with some Focus Tools to achieve sales excellence. As you read the content of this article, assess how you currently do with this information. Ask yourself if you implement these

tips at all, occasionally or consistently. Remember, occasionally and consistently are very different things with very different outcomes.

## **Focus Tool #1 Clarity about expectations.**

Being clear about expectations, both yours and the expectations of your sales manager is an imperative to successful focus. If you don't have the end result in mind – how can you ever get there? More than likely, you will have a number of sales you are to meet and or exceed every month that is set by the club. That's the obvious stuff. Are your personal sales goals higher than the goals the club has set for you? They should be. How clear are you that

your job is to create business not simply to wait for business to come in or call? How clear are you that this is the job you want to be doing and have chosen to do? Are you clear that when you put effort in that you have clear and realistic expectations of what you will get from that effort? Answering these questions will help you refine your clarity and move toward your success that much faster.

## **Focus Tool #2 Clarity with the plan to meet expectations.**

Once you are crystal clear about your expectations you need to have your plan in place to achieve the expectations. The simplest and most effective way to put together your plan is to use the following formula:

1. Know your sales goal is for the period.
2. Know your closing ratio – let's use 50% for simplicity.
3. Know how many tours you need to give to reach your sales goal based on your closing ratio.
4. Know how many appointments you need to have for tours factoring in a no-show ratio of 20 – 30%.
5. Know how many contacts you need to have to be able to schedule the necessary number of appointments.

Now that you have your formula down, a plan needs to be created to make it realistic and not theoretical. To do that, consider the total number of contacts you will need to hit goal then determine how many leads you need to generate to get the contacts or prospects or leads – whatever the terminology is in your club. To do that, know the average number of calls and walk-ins you personally get monthly and those will come right off the top of what you need to create, as those are gimmes. For example, if you need to create 300 leads per month and you personally get 100 call-ins and walk-ins each month then you know you need to create 200 more on your own. You will do that by consistently, not occasionally, having a thrust in each of these areas every month: your referral membership sales plan, your group/corporate/small business plan, your alumni Member plan, your community outreach plan and your current lead follow-up or



**Karen Woodard-Chavez**

wrap up plan so you can close as much business as possible by the end of the month.

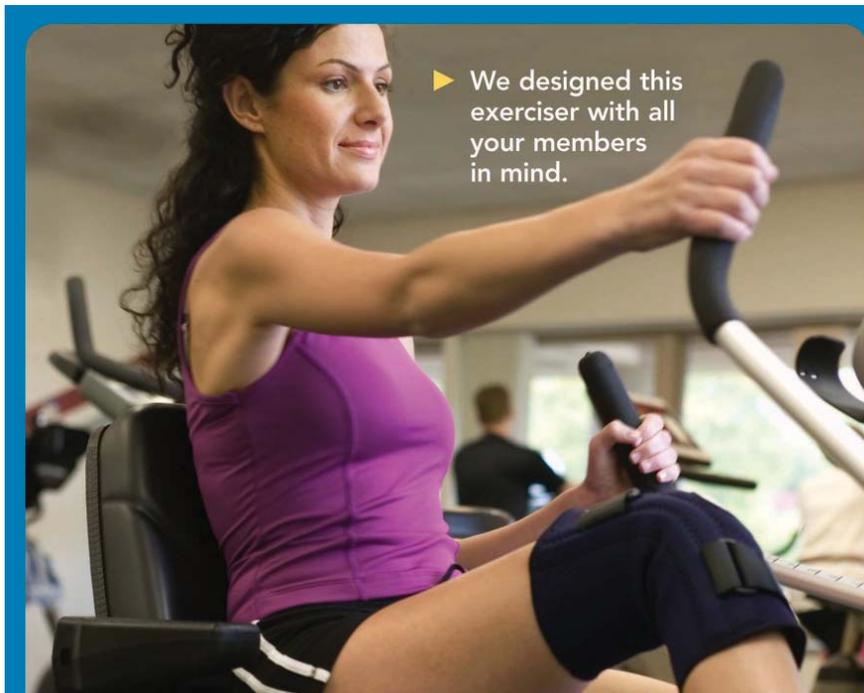
Additionally, you don't just create the plan, you need to monitor and make corrections all throughout the month so you don't find yourself at the end of the month short of your or the club's expectations.

## **Focus Tool #3 Consistent and productive work habits.**

There is that word again – consistent. The reality of a true professional and a successful person is that they do their best and are productive all the time – not just when they feel like it or with occasional spurts of motivation. We have to be very diligent about this particularly in our work environment because our work is very social both with Members and other co-workers. Or if you are not having a very good sales day, the temptation is to visit and commiserate, which is even less productive. There are lots of temptations that can pull you away from being productive. Assess your consistency with the following productive activities:

1. How much time do you dedicate to calling leads everyday with the focus of moving the relationship forward?
2. Do you come into the club everyday knowing that you have a minimum of four appointments scheduled for yourself?
3. Do you dedicate a minimum of two hours each week to your business development plan as referred to in Focus Toll #2?
4. Do you have 15 minutes twice a day planned into your schedule current lead follow-up or

(See **Karen Woodard-Chavez** page 21)



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**...Karen Woodard-Chavez**  
continued from page 20

for SBWA? (Selling By Wandering Around)

5. Do you have a wrap-up mentality as in getting as much business in before the end of the month or period?

6. Are you driven by and practice the belief that what you do or don't do today effects you – either positively or negatively – your choice -- weeks and months down the road?

7. How committed are you to a 30 minute weekly sales skills practice session outside of sales meetings, with a partner in your department?

**Focus Tool #4 Feed your belly and your brain.**

We all know how difficult it is to focus when our blood sugar is too low from not eating enough. And no, this is not your Mother speaking. Sometimes we get

going sooooo fast and the day has gone by with you not having had lunch, enough hydration or a moment to catch your breath. You know those days – when your tongue and lips can't seem to form the sounds you need for the words you intend? Well, stop it. Taking time out for a quick bite, a beverage and some mental break time will do wonders for your ability to focus. Have a breakfast you enjoy, pack snacks, sip on water all day and take a break or two to regroup and make any corrections you need throughout the day. Sales success is a very conscious process – not autopilot. With regard to feeding your belly – let's use the analogy of an athlete – do you think an endurance athlete could make it all day with no food and water?

With regard to feeding your brain –what was the last book you read or CD you listened to

on your own (without the requirement of your manager) for your own professional development? Sales success is not just about how you spend your time at work but also about what you give focus to when you are not at work. If you get into the habit of reading one book per month, one publication per month or even take 30 minutes per week to cruise the web for sales information you will find that your focus changes dramatically and so will your sales.

**Focus Tool #5 Accept no excuses from yourself.**

We are talking about your success here. Sometimes we make excuses for ourselves such as “I am not comfortable with going out and seeking referrals”, “I am tired today”, “I am not good at asking for the sale”, etc. There are a myriad of different things that we say and the reality is that

we are making an excuse for not being good at something. I repeat – *we are talking about your success.* Know what your weaknesses are and change them. Do not expect them to change on their own. Ask for help and you will be amazed at what resources exist for your progress.

As stated earlier in this article – how consistent are you with your focus on each of these five areas? If you occasionally focus on these areas and choose to make them consistent areas of focus your outcomes will include a higher sense of mastery, pleasure in your work, better relationships with Members and co-workers and of course increased performance in your sales. The choice is yours on

how you use tools of focus to impact your sales excellence.

(Karen is President of Premium Performance Training in Boulder, Colorado. She has owned and operated clubs since 1985 and now consults with and trains club staff throughout the world. She provides her services on-site, online, by phone and through books, tapes, and manuals. She can be contacted at 303.417.0653 or karen@karenwoodard.com)

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# “Stopping the ‘Churn’!”

By Richard Ekstrom

The CLUB INSIDER article by Publisher, Norm Cates, in his June and July's **Part I and Part II article entitled “Wall Street ... What the Experts Think About The Health Club Industry”** opened a lot of eyes in our industry. The interviews with David King, Senior Managing Director of Bear Stearns Merchant Banking, John Maxwell, the Managing Director of Fixed Income Research of Merrill Lynch and Paul Lejeuz, a Vice President of Credit Suisse First Boston was enlightening with regards to their objective perspective on the industry and how much emphasis or importance they put on building customer loyalty.

Their comments about “Stopping the ‘Churn’” demand a “Call to Action.”

The financial ‘Achilles Heel’ and biggest obstacle to investors is the industry’s high attrition. John Maxwell of Merrill Lynch put it succinctly: **“The biggest challenge in the health club industry is going to be the ‘churn-factor.’ Anything that the industry can do to reverse that would be important.”**

From a financial lending side, investors are skeptical of how wide open the back door is. High sales are great – and Wall Street is very impressed with our industry’s sales volume – but when you look closer, the industry’s standard high sales, combined with the industry’s standard high attrition, results in a combined NO or LOW growth NET membership number

Potential investors are all about revenue growth and want to see what you are doing differently

today that you were not doing yesterday to impact membership growth. If a company can show definitive steps towards “Stopping the Churn” their attraction as an investment in the financial market will improve significantly.

However, in order to “Stop the Churn” we must do more than recognize the issue. We must take action.

Sweeping changes are not new to our industry. For example, in Part I when David King spoke of changing membership types, he states, “There was definitely a reputation problem. ... there weren’t a lot of month-to-month memberships.” Fast forward to now and month-to-month memberships have been embraced by the entire industry and consumers alike. It’s standard practice now largely because in the early 1980’s many leading IHRSA (then known as IRSA before the “H” was added to the Association’s name) club owners switched to month-to-month and ‘big players’ followed their lead.

(Publisher’s important note here: “Industry legend and icon, Ray Wilson...the ‘biggest player of them all in the history of the health club industry, helped lead the charge when he spoke to IRSA club owners at the first IRSA Convention in 1981. At that time a number of leading IRSA independent club owners had already switched to ‘month-to-month’ memberships. Ray Wilson’s speech and sharing on racquetball club conversions to total fitness facilities and monthly dues during that first IRSA Convention drove many more club owners to ‘month-to-month’ plans. Since Ray Wilson had been the first club operator in history in the 1950’s to utilize “Lifetime” memberships during the early pioneering days of our industry...it was very significant and important that the man stepped up and shared his personal evolution in this industry with the club owners of the world at that time. I was there and I thank Mr. Wilson for that candor.)

Because the future of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry is at stake, it’s time for any independent club that is not focused on “Stopping the Churn” and for

all of the big players to take lead on the challenge as well.

There are methods, systems and companies that can be adopted, implemented or contracted for that will make a difference and help to close that back door a little tighter. This assistance is available at a fraction of the cost it will take to put them in place.

Multi-club companies like The Alaska Club Network, Spectrum, Fitness Formula, Lakeshore Athletic Clubs and Healthtrax have made closing the back door a priority and have implemented comprehensive retention initiatives in their facilities. This doesn’t mean that new membership sales have taken a back seat for them. New membership sales remains a strength. But, they are also expanding their focus to “Stopping the Churn” in order to ensure future NET new membership growth.

Carrying this concept further, David King, while commenting on similarities to other industries, went on to say, “If you’re not watching what’s going on in other consumer spaces ... and adapting your box to that, you’re going to flat out lose.” The companies above are adapting and by doing so, will fortify their long-term financial position.

The clubs that reach out to me for “Stopping the Churn” support (retention help) are overwhelmingly the independents of the industry. The reasons for this are clear: There’s a lot more of them and many of the independents have already been focused on “Stopping the Churn” for years now. (Publisher’s note: see Laury Hammel’s amazing and exemplary Longfellow Club Cover Story case study in this issue for what may be the best example on this topic in America.)

However, while all clubs will benefit by reducing the “churn” the larger operators have the most to gain: for a typical single independent club, just a 2-3% retention improvement will lead to a \$20,000-\$30,000 annual revenue jump. But, when you multiply just a 2-3% improvement by 20 or more clubs in a growing chain, you’re talking about a serious NET revenue increase in the half

million or more range generated from an investment of a fraction of the NET result. Absent of an intense club company focus on “Stopping the Churn” millions upon millions of dollars will continue to be walking out the door in big chains if attrition continues as it has been in the past or it increases.

To maximize your club businesses’ financial success, whether you operate a single independent “Mom and Pop” club or a large chain of 400+ clubs, reducing the “Churn” needs to become more than a topic of conversation. It needs to become an intensely focused upon aspect of any club business organization...just as the focus on membership sales have been in this industry for the first 60-years of its history!

In Part II, John Maxwell noted, “It (exercise) is not a ‘FAD’ anymore, people (Publisher’s note: ‘especially ‘Baby-Boomers’) have grown up with it and they recognize the importance of it and they’ve continued to do it ...” Maxwell also commented that, similar to the restaurant industry, “... you want to build customer loyalty.” This is certainly true: exercise and health clubs now play a fundamental role our society. We are way beyond it being a “fad.” Once a regular exercise routine is established they’re hooked – and that’s a good thing. However, that doesn’t mean they’re hooked on your club – they will jump ship at anytime if you don’t take steps to build customer loyalty. Are your members attached to the equipment or are they integrated into your club environment? “Machine members” will jump ship and never look back ... unless the price is right. Fully integrated members are far less likely to leave because they feel as though they belong and know that if they left they would be missed – creating customer loyalty is a “Churnbuster”! Start bustin’!

Another large percentage of “churn” members are those that joined but never established a solid exercise habit and an ‘exercise adherence’ lifestyle. For many clubs this is more than half of all new members. They joined with the best intentions in mind.



Richard Ekstrom

But they never stuck with it long enough to start feeling the true benefits. If caught early many of these members can get hooked – these are the easiest of the potential “churn” members to impact. They just need some prompting and a little handholding. In fact, we have seen great results with something as simple as sending new members a weekly email that provides support and tips on building the exercise habit (11% fewer cancellations compared to members who never received the emails.) Something as simple as regular ‘reminder emails’ in the first 30 to 60 days produces immediate results and validates how easy it is to take steps towards impacting the “churn.”

This is a great industry with great people that is having a wonderful and important impact on millions. But, in order to take it to that next level and to become more attractive as an investment opportunity, we have to adopt retention initiatives and begin today to focus intensely on “Stopping the Churn”.

Oliver Wendell Holmes said, “The great thing in this world is not so much where we are, but in what direction we are moving.” If you are not taking action to create loyal customers you may be reading about your competitors in a local newspaper story in your town about your competitor being honored by the Chamber of Commerce for its great success or if you are a big chain operator...you may be reading about your competitor(s) in the Wall Street Journal.

(See Richard Ekstrom page 28)

**STOP  
THE  
‘CHURN’!**

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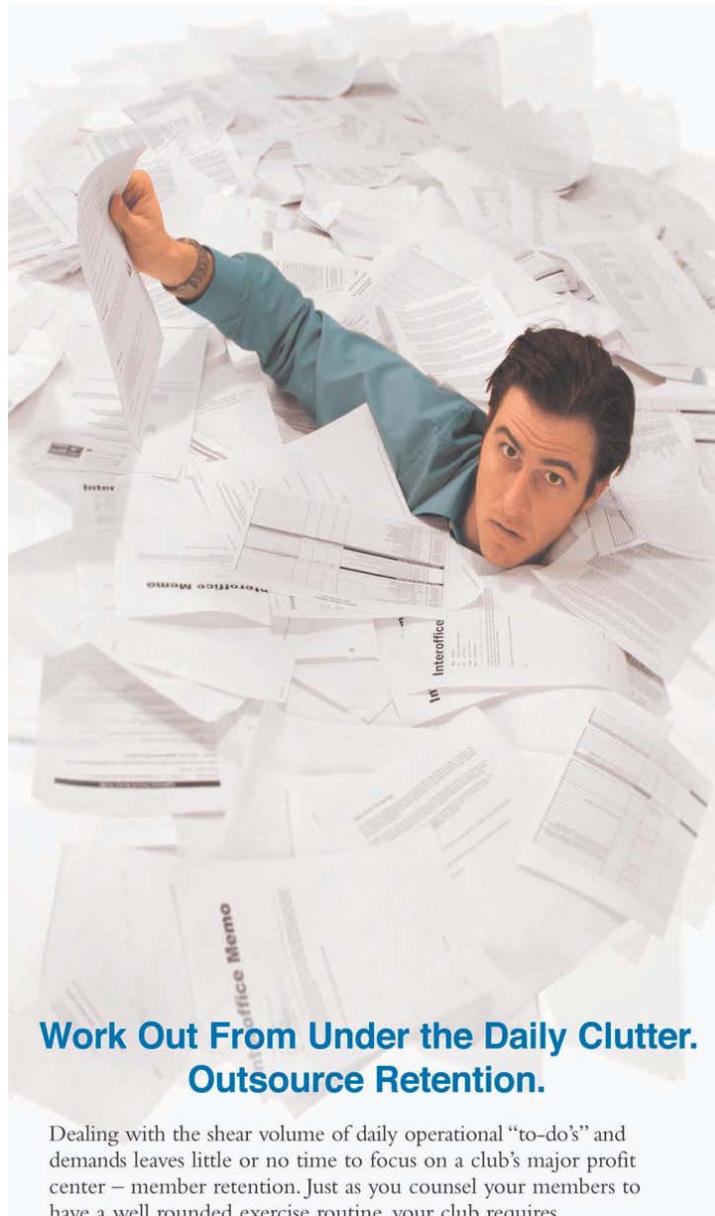
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# Management Mentoring Disciplines

## “Are you truly developing your people?”

By Gary Polic

If you want to leave a achieve “Greatness” in this wonderful industry you need to begin by “Developing Your People.” It is single-handedly the most important ingredient of “True Leadership.”

To fully understand the importance of: “Developing Your People”, ask yourself these two questions:

#1 - “When I begin my day, do I have others best interest in mind?” and #2 - “When my day comes to an end, can I name the people I have helped become more successful that day?”

If your people are WILLING AND ABLE and still not hitting their numbers, they evidently are in need of additional “coaching, mentoring and motivation” from YOU! It is your responsibility to develop your people!

**READ and HEED** these suggestions all of you ‘inactive’ managers... “Get out of your office and become a part of the solution today!”

### Four Management Mentoring Disciplines

Below are four Management Mentoring Disciplines to incorporate into your day and develop as habits. The list could go on-and-on, but for now, let’s start with these four disciplines. These disciplines are based on

developing your: sales people, department heads and personal trainers.

### WALK THE TALK

**WALK THE TALK:** Let’s break this one down into the three components of a winning sales person’s activity. They are: **networking and prospecting, outgoing calls and closing the sale.**

As a leader, develop a systematic approach on how you network inside and outside the club. You may have read my writing before in CLUB INSIDER’s June, ’05 edition: utilize the Memo Pad Concept! The memo pad will empower you to write down all the information needed to professionally follow up with a member or community contact. Remember 80% of a result is achieved through your follow up. The Memo Pad will force you to network and follow up. It is **GOLDEN!**

**Networking and Prospecting:** I have a question for you, “When was the last time you followed up with a current member or community contact just to *serve them* in some capacity other than membership?”

It is this *sincere service act* which allows you to prosper through to “The Law of Reciprocity!” There should **ALWAYS** be a follow up with a

member or community contact after a conversation.

For example, when you see a **member** you don’t know, go out of your way and introduce yourself. Then sincerely, ask them these two questions: #1 - “How long have you been a member?” and #2 - “Are you *receiving the results you joined and hoped for*?”

For a **community contact**, you might use a dialogue as simple as:

“Good afternoon. My name is: \_\_\_\_\_ . I run the \_\_\_\_\_ (name of your club) down the street at (location) and I am out in the community today seeing how I can *serve others and share the wealth of health*. I have a total of (\_\_\_#) members at my club and I would love to set-up a *cross-promotion* with your business to *increase your exposure* in the community. How would you like to increase your daily foot traffic in your business by 25%? Great...have you ever been to (your club name)? Are you currently on an exercise program? Have you worked out in the past? As a “Thank-You” for participating in our *cross-promotion* I also would like to give you and your family our **Gift of Wellness**. It is a *complimentary* 60-day family membership to our club! How’s your interest level at this point? Great...let’s begin by reviewing our community distribution packet.” (Discussed in detail later.)

This is how I do it. But there are *many ways to meet and greet* merchants and business people as you work the community. The bottom-line is **GET OUT and JUST DO IT** with a new sales rep. I DO and it is very effective and productive!

**Key Point:** Here’s a great idea. Go out with your people one day per week from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. and work the community. You can simply put together, what I call a “**Community Distribution Packet**.” This packet should be well done and should represent your club pro-

fessionally. Use care in the selection of materials for your Community Packet as it will be the *sole contact beyond yourself* that the business will have with the club initially. Be *sure* to have visual materials to illustrate different options to cross-promote. Examples are: employee or customer gift of wellness certificates, trade-outs for merchandise, open houses, wellness workshops, vendor parties, lead boxes or new member “vendor certificate” packets.

Here is another great idea: set up a “**Referral Table/Prize Wheel**” in a **high traffic area of your club**. YOU should personally man the table with one of your sales reps. Show them how to manage the table to generate new leads with your members.

**The bottom-line:** “Get out there and generate new membership leads with your people!” Empower them by giving them the opportunity to sit across their desk with more people!! Give them *new* traffic. But, most importantly, **TEACH** them how to do it !!! Remember the old Biblical saying: “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. *Teach a man how to fish and you will feed him for a lifetime!*”

**Outgoing Phone Calls:** Set up uninterrupted time to sit down and make calls with your people. Make this a *set and scheduled* event (1-2 nights per week) during prime phone time. Be sure they do it in their office so others pick up on the “live” training opportunity.

You can also utilize the “**Experience Survey**” script. It is a *proven winner* when you *follow-up* with a past guest. It is as simple as calling a past guest and introducing yourself as a customer service representative and then *performing a survey based on their most recent club visit*. Then close for the appointment by *inviting them ‘back’ to pick up their complimentary gift at the club* as a “**THANK YOU**” to them for taking the time to participate in the



Gary Polic

survey.

**Closing the Sale:** *YOU as a Sales Manager or General Manager closing a sale with a sales rep present is single-handedly the greatest example of mentoring I’ve seen.* YOU should take the next walk-in or appointment that shows. Bring the new sales rep with you and allow them to experience a “live” training session with you. **You may ask; “What are you saying here?...you want ME to take a tour and sell a membership?” YES YOU – the Leader!** Take the tour and discover what your people confront in regards to their obstacles and successes. You will open a *whole new chapter of understanding and wisdom to empower others.*

**Provide “SALES ASSISTANCE” on Every Sale**

**Provide “Sales Assistance” on EVERY SALE.** I use the term “*Sales Assistance*” here in place of a *dying term* in the health club industry. That dying term? The “**Turn-Over**” or the “**T.O.**” I, Gary Polic, hereby declare the decades old term, “**T.O.**” a/k/a the “**Turn-Over**” - **‘DEAD and BURIED.’**

**BUT,** the *potential for increased sales production everyday* by General Managers or Sales Managers providing their staff with “Sales Assistance” on a *regular basis* remains there for the taking. “**Properly done**”, “**Sales Assistance**” is as a *valid, productive and wise choice* for all Managers.

(See Gary Polic page 26)

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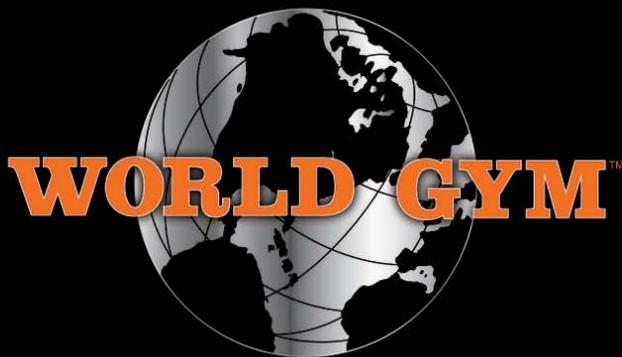
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## ...Gary Polic

continued from page 24

Years ago many "inactive" managers decided not to "provide Sales Assistance" on each sale. Instead, they discarded "Sales Assistance" as a 'high-pressure' sales tactic. Well I would agree that this procedure, if done the poor and "legendary" bad ways it has been done in the past, could easily give a potential member a feeling of "high-pressure sales." Yes, a prospective member could get that sense if you are not properly educated and trained on exactly how it should be done. If YOU, as a General Manager or a Sales Manager, have never mastered the "art" of "Sales Assistance" I welcome you to feel the enjoyment of the great learning opportunity it gives the sales rep.

But, the best opportunity regular

"Sales Assistance" creates is...A **NEW MEMBER!** Yes, you can have a **NEW MEMBER** that otherwise would have been 'JUST ANOTHER PERSON back out on the street'. We all know that very possibly that person would have never showed again as the often promised "Be Backs!" tend to do. Which is better? A very low percentage chance to make a sale on a "Be Back" on 'another day that may never come' OR 'Sales Assistance' NOW provided by you, a **Professional General or Sales Manager**, who took the time **NOW** to provide NEEDED "Sales Assistance"?

**Think about this.** By going this extra mile, each time you provide "Sales Assistance" you are truly benefiting a person that is seeking help in your club. By enrolling that person as a member of your club today, you are help-

ing him enormously to take that first, most critical step in "changing his lifestyle." By taking this action, you **dramatically increase** the prospective member's **chances and potential for a more fit, more healthy, more HAPPY life!** In essence, your "Sales Assistance" will be a **Blessing for any prospective member.**

Here are the four components of regular "Sales Assistance":

(1) A very brief and articulate **transition statement** from the sales rep to the guest simply seeking the prospect's permission to approach the Manager for the purpose of inviting him to meet the prospect.

(2) During the walk from the Manager's office back to the prospect your rep should provide a brief and quick communication of the following information to YOU, the Manager: (A) The transition statement the rep used and (B) the guests 'hot button(s)' or his 'true objection(s).'

(3) When the sales rep and Manager arrive back at the closing table the sales rep should politely and warmly introduce the Manager to the guest. The Sales Rep should then review the: hot button(s) or the true objection(s) again with the prospect and the Manager to get the Manager's input.

(4) The Sales Rep should sit next to the guest and JUST LISTEN TO THE MANAGER...THE SALES REPRESENTATIVE SHOULD SAY NOTHING MORE AT THIS POINT!

Two transition statements to "Sales Assistance" I commonly use:

(1) If the guest is not showing the body language that invites "Sales Assistance" simply state; "Bob, before you leave today let me introduce you to our Manager. We want you to have more than one 'friendly face' here at the club to serve you. I'll be right back!"

(2) If the guest is interested in joining but there are still some issues on the table, simply state: "Bob, what you are saying is, **IF** you didn't need to (state objection(s)), **THEN** you would consider joining the club today to get started on your program to reach your stated goal of losing 20

pounds, right?! Great...let me see if my Manager may "Assist" us with this **one issue (or these issues)** that must be addressed today. I'll be right back!" (Tying down the true objection(s) and the possible solution(s) is critical at this point)

**Key Point:** Do some follow-up interviews. One day ask a new member who joined two months ago after you provided "Sales Assistance" **What he thinks now?** Ask the new member if he now values the "Sales Assistance" YOU provided a couple of months back because he has since lost 16 pounds and he has now become the "active" father for his son he has always wanted to be due to his new-found-energy that allows him to Coach his son's baseball team? Ask this new member if he felt your "Sales Assistance" approach was "high-pressure?" or if he felt that it was a means of meeting another person in the club, receiving the important additional education he needed to feel better about his important decision that day and if he had made the best decision of his life? I will bet that this man will THANK YOU when you do this follow-up interview!

**The Great Importance of Role Playing In Training For "Sales Assistance"**

I wish to make this very clear. **DO NOT and I repeat, DO NOT just read this article and immediately go out and try it "live" with a new member prospect. Instead, as a General Manager or Sales Manager, take your Sales Reps, one at a time and TEACH them exactly WHAT will be done by you in the scenario and exactly what will be done by them. After teaching...test them verbally. After testing them verbally...ROLE PLAY with them the entire "Sales Assistance" approach several times until YOU, the Manager have the language PERFECTLY MASTERED and your REP also has mastered the dialogue and actions to be used. This ROLE PLAYING is CRITICAL TO YOUR POTENTIAL SUCCESS!**

If you're not into the "Sales Assistance Concept" but YOU ARE unhappy with your closing percentages consider this: using my "Sales Assistance" methods described here...over 50% of your first visits will join that day. And, a bonus is: "Sales

Assistance", performed professionally, will result in GREAT reduction of cancellations AFTER THE SALE to few, if any!!

**Think about this one too:** The "Sales Assistance" method described above, when also used in the Member Referral Presentation after the sale, is almost always an immediate home-run!

### ACTIVITY GOAL SETTING

**ACTIVITY GOAL SETTING:** Here it is plain and simple: "Manage the activity goals and the production will take care of itself!"

**Key Point:** Start with a simple mathematical equation. Let's just say we are in need of writing \$15,000 in Personal Training. We will then work that goal backwards. For example: let's say the average PT package purchased is \$1,000. That means I need 15 packages for my monthly quota. The next question would be: "How many members would I need to present a Personal Training package opportunity to in order to sell 15 packages?" Write that number down right here: \_\_\_ PT package presentations. Now the next step is to figure out; "How many members would I need to build a relationship with in order to have the opportunity to present PT?" Remember here that that a Personal Training package purchased by this person, will be a great benefit to the person without a doubt!

As a manager I would **manage two activities** in this case. They would be:

#1- "How many members have you met today that you have follow up dates and times scheduled to serve them in some capacity?" This means you have or are building a relationship that establishes their needs and wants. And...

#2- "How many PT presentations have you made today that include an A to Z description of your Personal Training Services with prices presented?"

Consider these activity numbers: if you meet 10 members per day and make two PT presentations per day multiplied by an average of 23 days worked in each month you will have made 46 PT presentations that month. 46

(See Gary Polic page 28)

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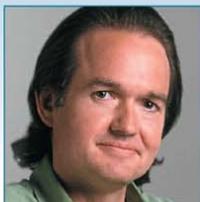
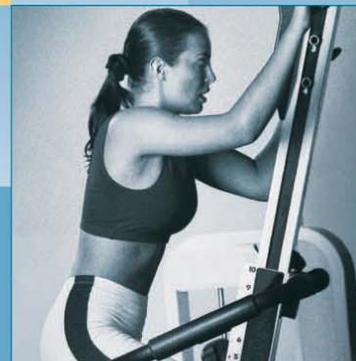
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- Improve knowledge and skills of managers & staff
- Employees learn in real time, at their own pace, in their own space
- Training customized for the club industry by industry experts and nationally recognized business leaders
- No cost of consultants, work time loss or travel expenses to conventions

### ...Gary Polic

continued from page 26

presentations will easily allow you to sell 15 PT packages purchased per month. This is simply: "The Law of Averages" based on realistic and efficient MANAGEMENT OF ACTIVITY GOALS!

### SERVANT LEADERSHIP

"SERVANT LEADERSHIP": Other than managing the ethical and moral issues that need a strong and fast hand...consider serving others and their needs first. You will establish amongst your team an underlining strength and discipline based on your ability to earn their respect each day. And, remember...Fear Management leads to disgruntled employees and short sightedness in your Mission Statement. I've worked with these "Fear Management" management types and they will drive an organization into a deep-dark abyss. Lack of leadership is ever present when you are not involved in the tasks that lead to results. These "Fear" managers have lost their vision on the

company's definite and chief aim. They are lazy. Their laziness makes them "inactive" managers. Their *personal lack of action and initiative makes them unwilling to lead or to get their hands dirty.*

**GET ENGAGED with your people and your people will GET ENGAGED with you!**

**Key Point:** People will pay the price and go beyond normal expectations if they are served first. By becoming a servant leader you will allow your people to grow because they will stick with you through thick and thin. By sticking with you they will give themselves a chance by investing the time it takes to achieve greatness. *Greatness takes time* and lots and lots of hard work! Give your people the time to succeed by being a Servant Leader today! Consider this quote by *Vince Lombardi... Leadership defined: "The ability to inspire others to follow!" Inspire your people by "catching them doing things right" and being a part of their solution!*

Consider this quote from the

ancients: "Sometimes you have to serve...in order to lead!"

In closing, I will leave you with this...

**"YOUR PEOPLE ARE COUNTING ON YOU TO LEAD THEM... DON'T LET THEM DOWN...IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY!"**

(Gary Polic may be reached at: 866-825-8501 or e-mail gpolic@sbcglobal.net)

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### ...Richard Ekstrom

continued from page 22

"The biggest challenge in the health club industry is going to be the 'churn-factor.' Anything that the industry can do to reverse that would be important."

John Maxwell, the Managing Director of Fixed Income Research of Merrill Lynch

(Richard Ekstrom, President of Retention Management, can be reached at 800-951-8048 ext. 2 or riche@retentionmanagement.com. Comments and questions are welcome and appreciated. Retention Management is a privately held company that manages the complexities and time demands of running a comprehensive retention improvement service for health clubs.)

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# Body Training Systems Update...Members and instructors Love New BTS Programs!

"We launched Group Centergy this past weekend and Group Kick tonight...Group Power and Group Step are still going strong after our DOUBLE LAUNCH on June 4th. Lots of positive feedback about both programs. Our members are blown away! We had a new participant at our Group Kick Launch tonight... She approached me after the class, thanked me and the other instructors, let me know how much she enjoyed the class and she can't wait to come back! Thanks so much to all of you who worked so hard and FAST on making the Summer '05 releases such a huge success. This is only the beginning and we are proud to be a part of the future..."

**-Bethany Morton, Instructor, Spartanburg Athletic Club, Spartanburg, S.C.**

"Just wanted to give a little feedback for the Group Power Summer '05 release. I totally loved it!!! I am super satisfied with the amount of new movements and the great picks of different music for the entire release. Hey guys keep up the awesome work. THANKS!"

**-Heather Ashcroft, Just Ladies Fitness, B. C., Canada**

"Joan and I taught Summer 05

Group Centergy today at lunch and the class members loved it. Joan and I felt like rock stars! They just crowded around us and raved on and on about how beautiful it was. One lady even cried it moved her so much.

Wow.... This was the best experience of the "new and improved". We had a great, positive response to step today, too. Please keep the good stuff coming!!! Thanks so much. We had excellent feedback about your Kick class last night, too."

**-Cheryl Butler, Gold's Gym - Norcross, GA**

"I have found that stepping higher for longer is the key to it all. I've re-educated the members regarding the step height and they are seeing and feeling the difference. They are also movin' and groovin' to the new music and moves. I'm really enjoying the Group STEP now. BTS continues to make a great impression on me and the members."

**-Amanda Murphy, Instructor, World Health, Calgary, A.B. Canada**

"I just took Group Step this morning for the first time and thank you, thank you, thank you! I love the flow of the

class much more. I am one of those "fragile eggs" when it comes to the cardio classes, but I felt so much better doing Group Step. It was enjoyable and I didn't get to the point where I feel anaerobic and overworked. There are great options that create a wonderful, intense workout, but without going too fast. It was great!"

**-Dianne Reardon, Member, Global Fitness, Leominster, MA**

"Just wanted to tell you what a HUGE success our launches for Group Power and Group Step were today. Our members LOVED Group Power (even more than BrandX). Everyone really enjoyed Group Step as well. We had 33 for Group Power, and 32 for Group Step. We decided to make a big deal about the launch, and not just do it softly, and we are glad we did. We followed the classes with a pool party for the members, and the entire day was a success. Please feel free to give my name and number out if club GFMs want some ideas, or feel hesitant about these programs."

**-Carol Nees, Owner, Spartanburg Athletic Club, Spartanburg, S.C.**

"I recently made the decision to switch our health club to the Group Power program. And I am so happy I did. Our members were a little nervous about the change, but after one class they were sold on Group Power. The exercise combinations are easier to follow and the music is very motivating and appropriate.

As someone in the exercise and fitness field, I had many concerns with the previous program, but I can honestly say that Group Power has addressed all of those concerns. The choreography DVD's are much better - the instructors on the DVD are performing the exercises slow, precise and with proper form. Actually our members were watching the

choreography video as the instructors were practicing and three members commented on the "good form" of the individuals on the DVD. It is nice to see properly dressed instructors on the DVD's, promotional items and music that is appropriate for everyone in class. The slow/deliberate moves help teach people the correct way to perform the exercise as opposed to just instructing a class because the moves were done so quickly in the past.

I recently sent two staff members to the Group Power certification course in Virginia Beach. My staff had such a good time and were so impressed with their instructor they were calling me during all their breaks and each evening to tell me about their day, their training and the trainer. He not only taught them how to be an instructor, he taught them the skills to be a great instructor."

**-Tammy Shelley, Director, Avion Health Club, Chantilly, VA**

"There are 3 main reasons why we chose BTS, all are of equal importance to us.

First, you personally cared about our current situation. You allowed me to explain our "story" in it's entirety without interrupting me to tell me how great your program is. As we are in the beginning stages of expanding our group fitness program, we need someone who will listen and assist us through the process. You answered all of our questions so well that the reservations we had were eliminated. Thank you for your professionalism, friendliness and enthusiasm!

Second, I have always been impressed with the professional staff at BTS and professional resources and management classes produced by BTS.

Last, about 80% of our membership is over 30 years old. Our members are here to get fitter & healthier, not to look beautiful. Your marketing

approach really resembles our vision at Bayview Fitness.

A big thank you for making a difficult decision much easier! We look forward to moving forward in our relationship with BTS."

**-Cindy Bockelman, Owner, Bayview Fitness, Poulosbo, WA**

"CHB Sports, Inc. kicked off Group Power Summer '05 the weekend of June 25 and 26 at all three of our fitness centers: Colonial Fitness, Wyomissing Health Club and Flying Hills Fitness. The response from our members was extremely positive and enthusiastic. Our instructors and members look forward to more great music and more variety in the Group Power program! Thank you, BTS, for all of your hard work!"

**-Elaine Forry, Fitness Director, CHB Sports, Inc., CHB Sports, Inc., Reading, PA**

"WOW! Implementing Group Power into our programming was a wise choice. We currently offer eighteen classes per week to our 12,000 members; if we had more space, I would provide more classes. We are hearing nothing but positive feedback from our instructors and members on how they LOVE the new Group Power, with the great music and moves! It is my job as Fitness Director to provide quality programming. Choosing BTS was a wise decision!"

**-Debbie Cutler, Physical Director, YMCA, Kennett Square, Coatesville, PA**

"We didn't realize how many things were "broken" in the old programs until we started to play with the New and Improved (N&I) BTS programs. The N&I BTS programs are exactly that, absolutely positively better than ever. The programs are safer. The music is more familiar and fun. The marketing material finally speaks to "all" of our

(See *Body Training Systems* page 30)

**BODY TRAINING SYSTEMS ANNOUNCES**



**"NEW & IMPROVED"**

LET'S MOVE!

**...Body Training Systems**

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members. And, on top of all that, past program feedback that our instructor team shared about the old programs has actually been incorporated into the N & I - this was exciting to see. The bottomline is simple - The programs are better, our instructors are believers, and our members are packing the studios like never before (and bringing their friends)."

**-Stephen S. Roma, Chief Operating WOW!zer, WOW! Work Out World, Brick, N.J.**

"After launching all the N&I BTS programs, I am still wide-eyed and I just can't seem to stop smiling. The classes are unbelievable! It's amazing to see how much thought you guys have put into making these programs.

Since we have all five programs and are a Platinum Elite club, I have often wondered if

my group fitness numbers have reached a peak. Although our numbers are up about 10-15% from last year, we have noticed a huge decline over the past months in our "combative class". However, after launching the Group Kick class, I now have an obvious reason for the drop off in attendance. WE lost sight of our target market. Even our instructors have noticed that only half of the room can actually keep up.

Staying with the BTS team and changing the names of our programs was a "no brainer."

What a small inconvenience for the limitless opportunities you guys have now presented to our club. I just wanted to share my enthusiasm and thank you for everything. Especially, for the level of service you guys have given us over the past years. No matter whether we had one, two, or five programs, your team has always been just a phone call away to help in any challenges we have faced."

**-Jason F. West, President, North Columbus Athletic Club, Columbus, GA**

"We thank you for making the programming transition easy and seamless for our staff and members. The task of rebranding a successful program was one that we were apprehensive about. Leann and Natalie were outstanding and we appreciate their quick responses and constant support. They were always so helpful, so sincere and were always positive.

The N&I marketing materials are not only eye catching but they send the message of enhancing lifestyle through fitness and really showcase our membership: families, females, 30 and older. The messages are positive, appropriate and heart-warming. We can relate to all

the posters and images.

We watched our Body Combat and Body Step numbers decrease due to excessive complexity and speed and knew changes were needed. Over the past two months since we launched the N&I programs, our Group Kick and Group Step numbers have increased by 15%. The demand for these classes is reaching higher levels than we have ever seen before. To accommodate the demand we have added 6 new Kick and Step classes on our fall schedule. Our team is excited and so are our members."

**-Gordon Johnson, Owner, Leslie Austin, GFD, Gold's Gym Douglasville, Douglasville, GA**

"We chose to continue with LMI through June so our team

could fully prepare for the programs and our members would get the best experience possible. It truly paid off. We are in the midst of the dreaded summer months and we have not had this much excitement in our club since we launched a barbell program (I forgot the name) 2 years ago. Our team did an amazing job selling, marketing, and presenting the programs. The members have enjoyed the renewed excitement and the newness of it all again. They really like the changes in each program. The instructors have been reenergized like never before. Our classes are filling again and many of the participants are back that we lost with the former Step & Martial Arts program. KICK, POWER, STEP & RIDE have been our most well received. All in all there has been an amazing transformation of our Group Fitness Program overnight. The new brands, colors, logos, banners, passes, clothing, marketing materials etc. are incredible and already paying off."

**-Jason Cook, General Manager, Sims Health & Racquet, Charlton, MA**

Norm Cates' **THE Club Insider NEWS**

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- Jason F. West, President, North  
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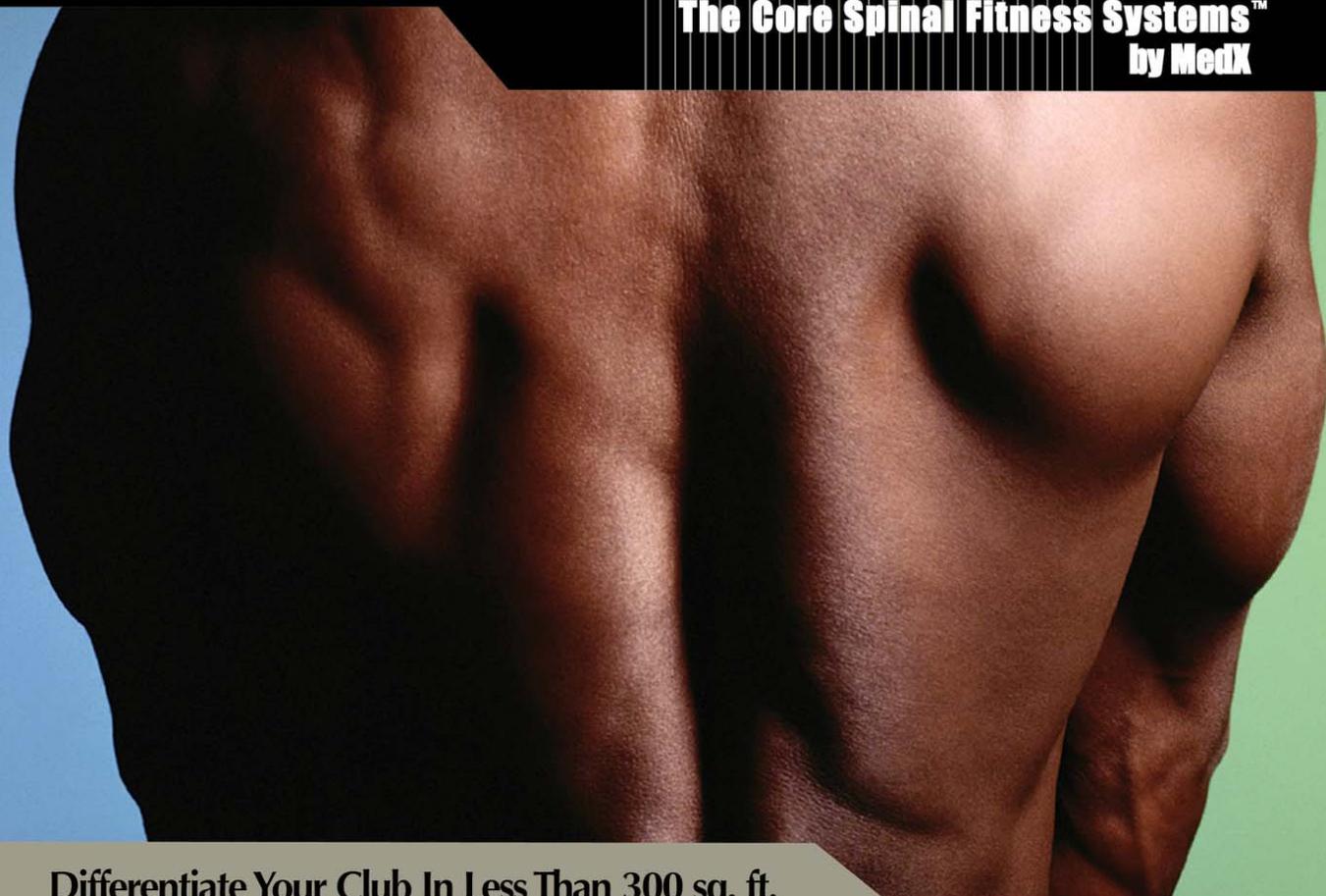
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