

Norm Cates'

# CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 29 YEARS OF TRUST

# Help Us,

# *Help You.*

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Norm Cates'

# CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 29 YEARS OF TRUST

## Help Us, *Help You.*

**By: Justin Cates & Norm Cates**

**Club Insider:** *Telling It Like It Is Since 1993... The Pulse of the Health and Fitness Club Industry... Celebrating X (X = currently 29, soon to be 30!) Years of Trust... MAKE IT FUN!!!* These are a few of our taglines over the years, and they tell our story. They are quick, memorable and true. This month, we announce a new one you will be seeing, and it is: **Help Us, Help You.**

In 1993, this publication was created to be a voice in the wilderness. Our goal was to say and share things others would not. Over the years, this has included telling the stories of those in the industry you might never have heard about

elsewhere (*Cover Stories*), sharing various news and happenings from coast to coast (*Norm's Notes*), and when needed, taking strong stances on industry issues and sharing special topics ("*Insider Speaks*"). All of this has been anchored with fantastic, in-depth content across a myriad of subjects by our hundreds of *Contributing Authors* over the years. And, of course, all of that has been brought to you by our esteemed *Advertisers*.

Across almost 30 Years of Trust, we have *Told It Like It Is*, sought to be the *Pulse of the Health and Fitness Club Industry* and have *Made It Fun!* But, now, we ask you to: **Help Us, Help You.**

(See *Help Us, Help You*. Page 10)



Justin Cates



Norm Cates

## Life Time Celebrates 30 Years of Inspiring Health and Happiness

**CHANHASSEN, MN** - *Life Time* (NYSE: LTH), the nation's premier healthy lifestyle brand, opened its first club in a Brooklyn Park, Minnesota strip mall 30 years ago. Much has occurred over three decades, including extraordinary growth of the company, which now offers nearly 160 athletic country clubs encompassing 16 million square feet across 41 major markets in the U.S. and Canada, and the development of a complete omnichannel *Healthy Way of Life* ecosystem. Over this time, *Life Time* has served millions of people and more than one billion visits, been part of incredible stories of personal achievement and life-altering events and grown an amazing community of like-minded people

seeking health and happiness.

*Life Time* Founder, **Bahram Akradi**, remains one of only a few active *Founding Chairman and CEOs* across the country. He says, "I started *Life Time* 30 years ago to create happy and healthy communities that the entire family could enjoy together, and with the support of our amazing team members, to help them meet all their health and wellbeing needs conveniently under one roof. Over the years, we have had the incredible privilege to serve millions of *Life Time* members as they pursue their dreams of healthier, happier lives. I am extremely proud of the company we have built and even more so about the wonderful member stories that



have been told and experienced since the beginning."

### Amazing Members

**Julia Porras** and her daughter, **Elena** - One woman's search for strength leads to her daughter's personal power, too. "Elena chose me to be her mom because I'm

strong enough to be her mom," Julie says. "I'm capable enough, and I appreciate the gift that she is and her purpose on Earth. She's been my biggest blessing. She's taught me so much."

**Jeff Morton** - When Jeff Morton needed a life-saving kidney transplant, his brother, (See *Life Time* Page 6)

## Inside the Insider: Edition #344

- Exercise IS Medicine - **By:** Mike Alpert
- Fitness Premier 24/7 Clubs Welcomes New COO, Josh Hettiger
- How Positive Changes Can Impact Your Gym Business/Work Culture - **By:** Jim Thomas
- The Arena Debuts at Wembley Club
- California Liability Waiver Upheld by Court and Lessons to Take from Case - **By:** Paul R. Bedard, Esquire
- And, of Course, *Norm's Notes*
- The Next Big Thing In Fitness: Your Team - **By:** Cathy Spencer Browning

# Norm's Notes

■ **Hello Everybody!** This is your **Club Insider Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993** checking in with our **344th monthly edition!** I hope this finds you and your family having a really **Super-Duper-Summer!** The **GOOD NEWS** is college football is about a month away! **YAHOO!**

■ **Is America a GREAT Country, or what?** Hmm... Hmm... Hmm! Thank **GOD for America!** And... **IF** you're not an American, **GOD Bless YOU anyway and YOUR COUNTRY** wherever you are!

■ Let's move on to some very important **Club Insider business... business that INVOLVES or SHOULD INVOLVE YOU...** because you're one of our **esteemed readers.** These comments are **SO IMPORTANT** that we've devoted our *August Cover Story* to it. Folks, after spending **almost 30 years** publishing *Club Insider* for you all, there's one thing I've learned for sure, and that is we're producing *Club Insider* because it's a "**LABOR of LOVE,**" and our sole purpose and intention is: **TO HELP YOU and YOUR CLUB TEAMS BE MORE SUCCESSFUL in your club business(es).** So, today, I sat down at this computer to write these **Norm's Notes**

with a **primary objective** for this month's iteration, and that is to ask you and your Team(s) to "**HELP US, HELP YOU.**" I'm sure you've already noticed, that's also the title of our Cover Story this month.

Purely, and simply put with **no B.S. intended or implied,** I'm sitting here writing this to **ASK YOU FOR YOUR HELP.** As all of us know, the last **2+ years** have been a **real test for ALL of humanity worldwide.** We here at *Club Insider* have not been left out of that "**real test,**" and with **God's help, we're still in business.**

And, come **November, God willing, we'll finish our 29th year of publishing Club Insider,** and in **December, we'll be celebrating our 30th Anniversary!** **YAHOO! Oooops! I'd better not start celebrating our 30th Anniversary too soon!**

Folks, what this **Norm's Note boils down to** are the following four words, and they say it all: **HELP US, HELP YOU.** Depending if you are a club owner or an industry supplier, here's what you can do:

**1. Purchase a Subscription** - In particular, we're seeking help from you folks who have more than one club, and that help would simply involve you investing in **ONE Club Insider Subscription for EACH of your**

**clubs.** But, if you think that instead of just one subscription per club, because of your very special relationship with your **KEY** staff members, investing in **ONE subscription for EACH of your Department Heads** would be a good idea, then we ask you to please do that. You will not regret that business decision and investment. In fact, that decision will put money into your bank account in the future because of the things your key people will learn from others in our industry by regularly reading *Club Insider!*

To do so, go to [www.clubinsideronline.com/subscribe](http://www.clubinsideronline.com/subscribe) Or, complete/mail the form on **This Page.**

**2. Invest in Advertising** - I want to ask each of you to look at your list of vendors and suppliers to see if any of your vendors or service providers are *Club Insider Advertisers* found in this edition. **IF they are NOT, please suggest to your vendors and suppliers that they consider advertising in Club Insider to help them grow their business.**

Go to [www.clubinsideronline.com/advertise](http://www.clubinsideronline.com/advertise) to download our *Advertising Media Kit.*



Norm Cates

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** To keep up with our paper, printing and postage costs (which have gone up almost 25% year to date), prices will be going up on **January 1st.** *Lock in the rest of 2022 and 2023 today.*

As I conclude the writing of this **Note,** one of my favorite songs comes to mind: **Stayin' Alive** by the **Bee Gees.** Folks, **help from you** with both **requests** *(See Norm's Notes Page 7)*

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## CELEBRATING 29 YEARS OF TRUST

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# Exercise IS Medicine

By: Mike Alpert

As I sit down to write this article for the *August Edition of Club Insider*, I wish to express my thanks to **Norm Cates** and **Justin Cates** for giving me the opportunity to have this platform that enables me to reach out to the health club community every month about the irrefutable medicinal benefits of exercise and the powerful effect that it has on overall health.

**IHRSA 2022** in Miami, Florida was my *30th IHRSA Convention*, and much of the focus seemed to finally be on *Exercise IS Medicine*. It was certainly the topic of many educational and breakout sessions and at several cocktail and dinner tables. It is my opinion that, if IHRSA wants to *Survive*, and once again *Thrive*, they need to make sure that we all take a drink from the fountain. We must begin to really focus on the population that needs us the most and make them comfortable coming into our clubs, as well as offer them virtual options.

No one in this business can afford to go through another pandemic or facility closure, and we must be thought of as an essential business, one that keeps people healthy; helps build strong immune systems and healthy hearts; helps with

muscle strength and mental wellbeing; and leads the fight against obesity, diabetes and so many forms of cancer. We can do it together, but it cannot just be business as usual. What worked yesterday will not allow us meaningful growth going forward. This is the time, and this is the year. We cannot wait any longer! It is time that we, united, and working as an industry, finally merge with the health care industry and begin working together. It is the *Pathway to Future Growth*.

Technology has given us the ability to deliver content at the club level, in person and also virtually via Tele-Health, which is now the real "game changer." Hospitals and licensed practitioners can now bill insurance companies and deliver services virtually for reimbursement. Your certified staff can take courses virtually developed by organizations that address specific populations online and become certified by them to then train members and non-members at your club or outside the four walls of your club. And, the best part of this is that everyone (the club, the trainer, the certifying organization) gets paid. Further, all of this is done with very minimal upfront costs and no hiring of additional staff. Think of all the people you can now attract to programs and services at your

club or in the privacy of their own homes. You can play a vital role in helping them live healthier lives and reaping the rewards of exercise and nutrition.

You can also begin working with employers in your area that offer a wellness benefit or reward system for their employees. Show them how to lower their insurance costs by offering nutrition and exercise programs at your club or virtually to the 20% high claimant population of their staff. Make them the employer of choice in their community. The opportunities are out there and waiting.

**Dr. Bob Sallis** delivered a powerful presentation at the *IHRSA Leadership Forum*. **It is a presentation that every single person working in our industry needs to hear, and I am strongly urging IHRSA to invite him to be the opening Keynote Speaker next March.** I don't say this because he is a friend and colleague but rather because you will remember what you learn from him for years into the future. He will inspire you to think of the opportunities and need of working with the medical and health care community, and in doing so, how to build additional revenue. I have listened to many keynotes over the years. Most of them get me pumped up and excited, as they should, but one or two



Mike Alpert

months after I am back home, I have found it hard to really remember what they spoke on or the content of their talk. I guarantee you that will not be the case with a talk from Dr. Sallis.

**This is our year to not only recover but also to Thrive. Exercise IS Medicine!**

(Mike Alpert is the COO of Smart Health Clubs. He can be contacted at [mike@smarthealthclubs.com](mailto:mike@smarthealthclubs.com) or 951 - 205 - 1136.)

## ...Life Time

continued from page 3

**Scott**, volunteered to be his donor. But, Scott's own health issues made him ineligible. Already a Life Time member, Scott committed to improving his own health and soon discovered that in saving his brother, he was also saving himself.

**Ryan Jurgenson** - Perhaps the hardest thing in the world to do is to conquer your fears. "Resilient Ry" decided to measure her health journey without a scale. "It definitely taught me a very valuable lesson to never give up."

"**Love at the Club**" - After years of working out together, **Quacy Millett** surprised **Jamie Deutsch** with a proposal amidst rose petals and candle lights at *Life Time Syosset* in New York.

"**Love at the Club**" Part II - **Stacy and Jeremy Brown** met at the grand opening of *Life Time Vernon Hills* in 2008. That led to marriage in 2014. "We have traveled all over with Life Time together: Kansas, New York, New Jersey and Illinois," Stacy says. "Our daughter has been raised at Life Time and is a Life Time kiddo through and through."

**Ali Sorour** - After 40+ years of marriage, Ali lost the love of his life when his wife,

**Minoo**, died of leukemia. In his Life Time community, he turned to friends to help him battle through and cope with the grief, playing pickleball multiple times each week. "I cannot detach memories from my life," Ali says. "But, I am happy again."

### Life-Long Fans

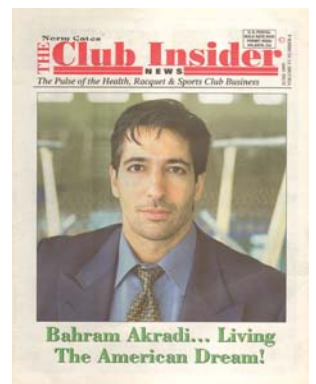
Thousands of people remain loyal Life Time members from the company's early years, many proclaiming that Life Time "feels like a second home." Others reinforce just how much their time at Life Time has impacted other aspects of their lives: "I'm more confident, more productive, more patient with others and just happier after I've spent a few hours taking care of myself at Life Time," said one long-time member. Here's what three more had to say about their membership of nearly three decades:

**Jeanne Kiel** joined Life Time in July 1993. "The club is a great social outlet, and that is very important to me. I have a plethora of friends at Life Time. On any given day, I see many I can call by name and vice versa. The front desk knows me well, too." Now, 76 years old, Jeanne participates in six different classes at *Life Time Maple Grove* in Minnesota. Monday through Saturday. "The workouts assist in keeping my bones strong while being good for the mind, too.

The instructors are excellent and dedicated to their work and kindly accommodate any who have limitations. The staff is friendly and helpful."

**Jan Dudley** joined Life Time in October 1992. "When I first joined Life Time, I worked with a personal trainer to learn how to use all of the equipment and the types of exercises I needed to help me remain as active as possible." These days, at age 75, Jan says she still enjoys working out at Life Time in New Hope, Minnesota several times each week. "I'm comfortable working out on my own now, and I've learned what I need to do to keep my body moving. It's fun, and I look forward to it every day."

**Marty Drasler** joined Life Time in July 1993 at age 28. Her fitness routine at the Fridley, Minnesota club includes 20 - 30 minutes of cardio three or four times per week; strength training three times a week; tennis twice a week; and yoga 2-3 times a week. "I have always felt welcome at Life Time. The facilities are clean, well-kept and it is a place I can go to keep up with my healthy lifestyle. Going to the club is also very social for me. I have met many wonderful people over the years and made a few close friends along the way. My whole family, including my husband (member for well over 20 years), and two adult daughters, are all members of Life Time!"



The June 1999 Edition of Club Insider

### Rapid Growth

Now in 29 states, one Canadian province and 41 major markets, Life Time is continuing to expand with new locations and programming to serve members from 90 days to 90+ years. So much more than a typical gym or fitness center, Life Time athletic country clubs average more than 100,000 square feet with programming for every interest area. New clubs will be opening soon in NYC, Atlanta, Palm Beach Gardens, Scottsdale and elsewhere.

## ...Norm's Notes

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will go a long, long way toward *Club Insider* stayin' alive in this new world in which we are all living. You will have our **Sincere Appreciation** always. **Thank You** in advance for **anything** you might decide to do to "HELP US, HELP YOU!"

■Speaking of 30-year anniversaries (as mentioned, *Club Insider's* is in December), **Congratulations to Life Time** as they celebrate 30 years of inspiring health and happiness! Check out the **Story** that begins on **Page #3**.

■Welcome to **JASON MARKOWICZ' Fitness Premier 24/7** as they join the *Club Insider Advertising Team*. You may remember Jason and Fitness Premier 24/7 from our June Cover Story. You will see their online ads on our website and in our Monthly eBlast. Recent news from their company includes the announcement that **JOSH HETTIGER** has been named **COO**. **Congratulations Josh!** And, **thanks again, Jason!** Check out the **Press Release** on **Page #18**.

■Welcome back to **LOUISE IRWIN** and **Step Fitness and Recreation**, as they rejoin the *Club Insider Advertising Team*. Check out the **Full Page Ad** on **Page #13**.

■Our friends at **Crunch** recently made the following announcement: **FAYETTEVILLE, AR - Crunch Fitness** announces the upcoming winter launch of *Crunch Fayetteville*, a franchise club located in a spacious, \$5 million, 55,000-square-foot fitness facility, with \$1 million in state-of-the-art equipment and amenities. This will be the first Crunch location in Arkansas. Crunch Fayetteville is owned by partners **John Armatas** and **Brian Hibbard**, *Chief Executive Officer for Fitness Ventures LLC*, which owns and operates Crunch Fitness locations across the U.S. Crunch Fayetteville will be Fitness Ventures' 27th location nationwide.

Check out the **Crunch Ad** on **Page #2**.

■Yesterday, **July 13th**, I again had the pleasure of tuning into another episode of the terrific industry education series called "TALKS and TAKES." These **Zoom Shows** star **BRENT DARDEN**, **BILL McBRIDE**, **BLAIR McHANEY** and **SARA KOOPERMAN**.

(Sara was absent for this *Talks and Takes* edition, but I learned she was in Israel watching her son play ice hockey on **Team USA** in the **Maccabiah Games**, which are second only to the **Olympics** in terms of size. It was worth the trip because Team USA and her son, **Max Roth**, won **GOLD!!! Congratulations!!!**)

After tuning into "TALKS and TAKES" for a couple of years now, and in case you have not yet done so, I want to

tell you about them. The shows usually last about an hour and a half, and these **IHRSA co-sponsored sessions** are packed full of advanced thinking about many important, informative and interesting topics in our industry... topics that are currently happening in our industry, have happened or are about to happen. They're something anybody who has a career in our industry really should plan on attending every month. On top of that, they're **FREE!** Also, FYI, these sessions are saved digitally, so even if you've missed all of them in the past, you can still go back and learn from these industry leaders with their archived "TALKS and TAKES" sessions.

Go to [hub.ihrsa.org/talks-takes](http://hub.ihrsa.org/talks-takes) to view archived editions and to save the date for the next edition.

■Last month, I wrote about our great and fun experience at the **41st Annual IHRSA Convention and Trade Show** in Miami, Florida. In that **Norm's Note**, I mentioned several folks that I had the pleasure of seeing there, and in the same writing, I mentioned that I probably had missed mentioning some of the folks I was fortunate to see. So, let me mention that it was great again seeing **PETE BROWN**, *the legendary publisher of The Athletic Business Magazine for 40 years!* Although I only spoke with Pete for a brief time, he really looked great, younger looking than I've ever remember seeing Pete looking in the past! (*Haha... Hey Pete... I gotta learn your secret!*) I also saw **RANDY WILLIAMS** of **National Fitness** in Knoxville, Tennessee, and Randy and I had a chance to chat a little bit. Folks, **JUSTIN** and I are really looking forward to our **next IHRSA Convention and Trade Show in San Diego**, so **SAVE THE DATE** for **March 20 - 22, 2023**.

■Speaking of **IHRSA 2022**, we went to press very quickly last month following the show, and we left out two very important **Notes**, which we did add to our *Online Edition*. They now follow in print as published online:

■**THANKS** and sincere **APPRECIATION**

## TALKS & TAKES



to **PETE MOORE**, **DAVID GANULIN** and their terrific **Integrity Square Team** for the fantastic job they did producing their terrific **HALO Event at IHRSA Miami**. It was post-show on Thursday, and they hosted a marvelous reception, providing delicious complimentary food and drink for several hundred folks. These guys deserve **serious KUDOS** for their efforts. **SO, JUSTIN, my wife, ILENA, and I say: Thank You to Pete Moore and David Ganulin of The Integrity Square Team!** See the **Integrity Square Ad** on **Page #19**.

■**Thank you also to RON LAMB and DARON ALLEN** for the invite to the **Club Automation event**. This was held in conjunction with **Augie's Quest**, and their goal was to raise **\$100,000**. **LYNNE NIETO** provided an update on **AUGIE**, as well as everything **ALS TDI** is doing to stop this horrible disease!

■This out of **IHRSA: Over 66 Million Americans belong to a Health Club, Setting a New Record**. In an article written by **COURTNEY REHFELDT**, IHRSA has reported encouraging news for the fitness industry and says it validates the importance of access to fitness facilities. **Fitness industry participation in the United States has reached 21.8%, the highest level in history with more than 66 million Americans now belonging to a health club!** Simply put, IHRSA's report indicates that more than one in every five Americans belonged to a health club or fitness studio in 2021, with the most recent data showing a 3.8% increase over the last two years. IHRSA conducted the study as part of the *Physical Activity Council*. IHRSA has worked tirelessly to raise awareness

about the importance of access to health clubs and the link to mental health. "It is a clear indication of the importance of the bricks and mortar component of the fitness industry that growth returned despite the lockdown of clubs, the severe governmental restrictions imposed and the surge in digital offerings," said **LIZ CLARK**, *President & CEO of IHRSA*. "It is a strong testament to the value of clubs and studios, the importance of community, the quality of in-person instruction and the expansive offerings of the on-site experience."

■Folks, following the **IHRSA news** with comments from **LIZ CLARK**, let me also mention that Liz celebrated her **Birthday on July 16th**, so I repeat to her: **HAPPY BIRTHDAY LIZ!**

■**PAMELA KUFHAHL, MARTY McCALLEN** and their **Team**, our friends at *Club Industry*, are hosting the **Club Industry Executive Summit in Chicago, October 17 - 19th**. The event which will feature two keynote speakers. **DONATO TRAMUTO**, *Co-Founder of Health eVillages*, will kick off the education portion of the event on October 18th. And, on October 19th, **RAJ SISODIA**, *Co-Author of the book "Conscious Capitalism: Liberating the Heroic Spirit of Business"* with **JOHN MACKEY**, *Co-Founder and Co-CEO of Whole Foods Market* will follow. Both presentations will speak to the theme of the Executive Summit Convention, which is: **Enhancing the Bottom Line: The Role of Technology, Operations and Compassionate Leadership**.

The soon - to - happen **Club Industry Executive Summit** will be held at  
(See **Norm's Notes** **Page 8**)



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## ...Norm's Notes

continued from page 7

**The Renaissance Hotel in Downtown Chicago.** It will be geared to executive leadership at health clubs, studios, YMCAs, JCCs, university rec centers, medical wellness centers, and parks and rec facilities. The Summit will be an intimate experience where attendees will gather together in one room to hear speakers from inside and outside the fitness industry on topics related to attracting and retaining talent, becoming a holistic wellness resource, operational strategies, raising capital post COVID, industry alignment, the impact of technology on the industry, and reimagining the fitness experience, among other topics. The event will not have a traditional exhibit hall. Vendors interested in co-sponsoring can contact the folks at *Club Industry*. Learn more and register at [www.clubindustryshow.com](http://www.clubindustryshow.com).

■As reported on July 19th in *ATHLETICH News* and other news outlets, **Equinox** employees have been given permission to proceed with three **class action lawsuits**. The class action lawsuits allege that the luxury fitness club violated wage and labor laws. More than 9,000 Equinox employees in California could be affected. The Equinox class actions were certified by **WILLIAM H. ORRICK**, a Federal Judge in California. The plaintiffs claim that they were forced to perform off-the-clock tasks such as programming fitness programs, communicating with club clients outside of classes and contacting fitness client leads. These duties, according to the plaintiffs, were uncompensated. Equinox fitness trainers and instructors also expressed

dissatisfaction with a company policy that they claim *required teaching "four, one-hour training sessions in a row without being able to take a rest break."* In California, a company must provide employees with a 10-minute paid break during every four hours worked. Another complaint claims that the luxury fitness club discouraged employees from recording their time spent performing off-the-clock work, resulting in inaccurate time-keeping records. Instead of paying employees by the hour, the luxury gym averaged their pay, say the plaintiffs, which violates the labor law in California. Lastly, Equinox allegedly failed to provide employees with 30-minute lunch breaks or pay out bonuses as promised. **Stay Tuned Folks!**

■**9Round Fitness**, the world's largest kickboxing chain, has been ranked to *Entrepreneur Magazine's 2022 list of the Top Franchises for Less Than \$150,000*, designating the brand as a top low-cost franchise. "We are honored to once again be recognized as a top low-cost franchise," said **SHANNON HUDSON**, *Founder and CEO of 9Round*. "Our low cost for starting a franchise allows more people to start their own business and realize their dreams. 9Round is a proven business model that has solidified our place as a leader in the industry, and this recognition is a testament to our successes and value as a business opportunity."

■**The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM)** has announced for the fifth time that **Arlington, Virginia** has been named **America's Fittest City** in the annual **American Fitness Index rankings**. The list is published by the ACSM and the *Elevance*

*Health Foundation*, the philanthropic arm of *Elevance Health*. The top cities were:

1. Arlington, Virginia;
2. Madison, Wisconsin;
3. Minneapolis, Minnesota;
4. Washington, D.C.;
5. Seattle, Washington;
6. Irvine, California;
7. Portland, Oregon;
8. St. Paul, Minnesota;
9. Denver, Colorado;
10. Chicago, Illinois.

■**PRESTON FIELDS** is a really terrific guy who formerly worked with my partners (**RICH BOGGS**, the late **RAY IRWIN** and the late **FRED STRECK**) and me way back in the late '70s and early 80's when we had a chain of nine **CourtSouth Sports Clubs**. Today, I want to send **CONGRATULATIONS** to Preston and his lovely wife, **BARBARA**, on their **42nd Wedding Anniversary**, which they celebrated on July 12, 2022! I received a phone call from Preston, and he and I enjoyed a great "catch-up" conversation in which we recalled many of our experiences long ago together in our great industry. I *really enjoyed our conversation*, Preston! Thanks for the call.

■**JUSTIN** and I want to say **Thanks for reading Club Insider!**

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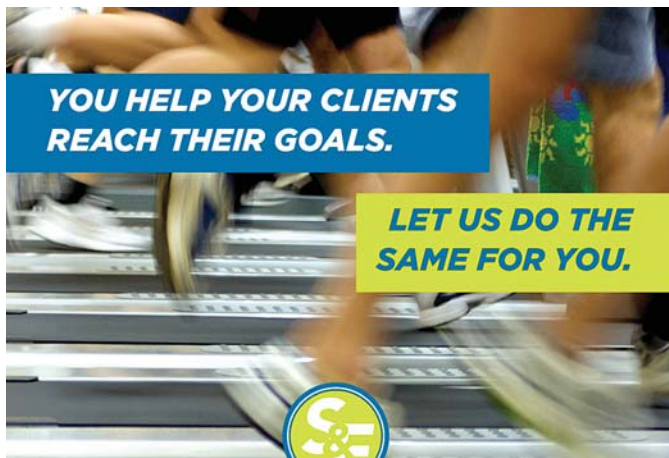


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(Norm Cates, Jr. is a 48-year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. He is the *Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993 of Club Insider*, now in its 29th year of monthly publication. In 1981, he was *IHRSA's First President*, and a *Co-Founder of the Association with Rick Caro and five others*. In 2001, he was honored by *IHRSA* with its *DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award*, one of its highest honors. And, in 2017, he was honored with *Club Industry's Lifetime Achievement Award*. He can be reached by phone at **770-635-7578** or email at [Norm@clubinsideronline.com](mailto:Norm@clubinsideronline.com).)



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## Thanks and Appreciation

At *Club Insider*, we are excited to be in our **29th Year** of this home-based health and fitness club trade publication! The thought that this publication was *founded to serve an industry I truly love*, and so that *I could become a Mister Mom for my son, Justin*, is still *intriguing and amazing* to us. So, I wish to extend my most sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to everyone who has made this amazing 29-year run possible.

A very sincere *Thanks and Appreciation* go to **Rick Caro**, the late **Dr. Gerry Faust** and the **Faust Executive Roundtable #1** for helping me decide in 1993 what my home-based business would be. *Thanks and Appreciation* to my long-time friends, **Ron Hudspeth** and **Cathy Miller**, formerly of *Atlanta's Hudspeth Report* for the tremendous assistance they provided. *Thanks and Appreciation* to all of the folks at **Walton Press** in Monroe, Georgia. They've done an absolutely excellent job for us all these years and have printed every one of our monthly editions! And, of course, *Thanks and Appreciation* to the **United States Postal Service** for sending those editions to our readers! *Thanks and Appreciation* to all of our **READERS**. Sincere *Thanks and Appreciation* to our **Club Insider Advertisers**, past and present, for their kind and dedicated support of this publication. *Thanks and Appreciation* to all of our **Club Insider Contributing Authors**, past and present. *Thanks and Appreciation* to **IHRSA** for all it does for all of us. And, sincere *Thanks and Appreciation* to my son, **Justin**, who has become our Publisher and is a truly great partner. You name it and Justin does it each and every month!

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

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

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continued from page 3

**The Pandemic**

As the pandemic began, the *Founder and Original Publisher of Club Insider*, **Norm Cates**, essentially went blind in both eyes with a combination of a Retinal Stroke blinding him in his right eye, and three weeks later, an advanced cataract blinding him in his left eye. That isn't exactly the best condition to be in if you are running a newspaper... or any other business for that matter. And, because of the pandemic, it was not a problem that could be immediately rectified. Elective surgeries by doctors in hospitals everywhere were no longer. And, for some reason, fixing a condition causing blindness was considered an "elective" surgery. What a dilemma! A few months later, elective surgery for the left eye did become available, and thankfully, that eye has returned to normal. Repair of the right eye was attempted, but it was too late.

*Club Insider* could have immediately folded, but we fought on! Taking the reigns in April of 2020, then *Assistant Publisher*, now *Current Publisher of Club Insider*, **Justin Cates**, sprung into action. Wartime is never a fun or easy way to begin a new tenure, but it was the hand dealt. Like just about every other business, to ensure our company's survival, we made some immediate and drastic changes. And, to help everyone in the industry that we could, we focused our editorial direction on the pandemic and made that information available to all, **for free, regardless of the cost to us. Yes, we literally dropped our website's paywall for two years.**

During this time, growth was not on our mind; survival and helping others was. This was not a new concept for us, though, because it is who we have been since the beginning. *Club Insider* is a labor of love in the truest sense. It is a family business, and along the way, true sacrifices

have been made. But, they have been made willingly, even enthusiastically, to ensure our original **Mission** is always achieved: *"To help the owners and operators of health and fitness clubs professionalize their clubs and gain the TRUST and business of their community."* We have never missed a deadline and hope never to. Never forget that we do this for you.

**1993**

The year is 1993. *Bally* is the biggest health club chain around. *IHRSA* is just *IRSA* (before the "H" for Health was added). Gas is \$1.11 a gallon, and the Dow Jones is in the 3000s. It was a different time...

In January of that year, *Faust Roundtable #1* met, and during his allotted time to address the group, Norm Cates had a unique question for consideration: *Moving out of the day-to-day business of operating clubs, how could he remain in the industry AND work from home?*

At the time, Norm's wife, **Ilena**, had started a business that would keep her away from home many hours a day. Combined with Norm's business of running health clubs, also keeping him away from home many hours a day, the dilemma was what would happen with their son, Justin, each day after school? Norm decided he wanted to become a "Mr. Mom," so the question was asked to the Faust Roundtable.

During open discussion on that day in January, the idea of a new industry publication that would **"Tell It Like It Is"** was proposed by the late **Jane Beusman**. At a later Faust Roundtable session, it was named *Club Insider News* by the late **Curt and Jane Beusman**. This publication was born!

**Through the Years**

From the beginning, *Club Insider*



The December 1993 Edition of Club Insider



The November 2017 Edition of Club Insider

has never shied away from doing whatever it can to assist the health and fitness club industry, even when that means saying the tough things or literally going after crooks in the industry who give a bad name to us all. That is not always the easiest thing to do in a business sense, and on occasion, even a safety sense. Additionally, our old school newspaper format has had both its fans and its critics. We've been called a "rag," I'm sure jokingly, and been confused as a tabloid, but we are thankful to know that we have helped many more people than either of those descriptive publication types.

Through the years, there have been some good financial times for this business; other times have been quite challenging. As a family business, reliant on only ourselves, that has required its own level of will and determination. As mentioned, we have carried on, never missed a deadline and always expect to be here for you in one form or another. We prefer print (and online), but as you will read shortly, that will be up to you.

As previously described, the *Pandemic Era* has been the culmination and true test of our company's nature. We could have quit, but we didn't. We could

have lied and cheated customers, but we didn't. Instead, we did the opposite. We walked the tightrope of staying in business AND helping as many people as we could.

In short, we continued on, never faltered, and in our opinion, have done some of our best work over the past two years. We have done it for you. We will continue to do it for you. But, for the first time in many years, point blank, we ask you for your help.

**Help Us, Help You**

If you are in a certain age range, I am sure you remember the *Choose Your Own Adventure* set of books. If you're older than that range, your children definitely remember. Within them, they went to some incredible places, but they had to make some tough choices to progress the story. Unlike real life, though, they always got to reset and go again! So, this month, let's *Make It Fun*, as you get to *Choose Your Own Club Insider Cover Story Adventure!*

As you read the next/most important section of this Cover Story, please group yourself into one of the following three categories:

(See **Help Us, Help You**. Page 12)



Here's to Long-time Friends! (Ray Gordon, Doug Miller, Sandy Gordon and Norm Cates)



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continued from page 10

**Club Reader:** Club Owner, Operator, Manager, Department Head, etc.;

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Next, please find your appropriate color-coded category and read that section. Then, complete the **Action Step** listed:

**Club Reader**

*You are the reason Club Insider exists!* Our purpose is to do whatever we can to help you run a better and more successful club operation. Our *Dynamic Duo* won't always have all the answers, but we always make sure those who do are our *Cover Story Subjects* and *Article Authors*.

However, because of our *Promotional Mailings* (i.e. free samples, of which you are likely reading right now), we have been misconceived to be a **FREE** resource. That is not the case at all. To gain the full benefits of *Club Insider*, a *Paid Subscription* is a must.

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But, there is so much more! For that price, you will get a *new monthly edition of Club Insider* delivered to your door, as well as your email inbox. AND, our website is pretty extensive, so you will also have access to every edition of *Club Insider* ever published. **Going on 30 years, that's almost 350 editions, comprised of 300+ cover stories and closing in on 5,000 articles authored by 300+ authors.**

Simply put, you will not find that much knowledge value anywhere. So, we urge you to repurpose a few of those streaming dollars and subscribe to *Club Insider* today.

**Action Step:** Look on the Front Cover of *This Edition*. If the words **PROMOTIONAL NON-SUBSCRIBER COPY** appear, you are **NOT a Paid Subscriber to Club Insider**, and we need you to pay for a subscription today.



Here's to New Friends (Norm Cates and Liz Clark)

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**Supplier Reader**

*You are the lifeblood of Club Insider's existence!* You keep the presses rolling, so we literally could not do this without you. But, it is not just a payday for us. Your message is important, and we do our best to get it to every reader in multiple forms. That is correct. We have a myriad of advertising options, from *Online Only* on our website and in our eblasts to *Print and Online* with multiple Ad Sizes to choose from. And, we support ALL Advertisers editorially.

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Then,

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*Help Us, Help You.*

**All Read This**

Welcome back from the first-ever *Choose Your Own Club Insider Cover Story Adventure!* We hope it was **FUN** and informative. But, seriously, we need your help folks. We need your *Subscription Support* and/or *Advertising Investment*. We cannot do this in our current form without you.

**Don't Misunderstand:** *Club Insider* will always be around in one form or another. BUT, we would always prefer **PRINT** to be part of that offering, and only through your increased support can we do that.

*Help Us, Help You.*  
 (See **Help Us, Help You.** Page 14)

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continued from page 12

**In Closing**

Thank you for going on an adventure with us today. It has been fun to reminisce, and we appreciate you heeding our "Tell-It-Like-It-Is" call for assistance. Now, like any good movie, we leave you with some credits, so read on...

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**Bonnie Patrick Mattalian;**

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**Chris Stevenson;**

**Daron Allen;**

**Derek Barton;**



Norm Cates (L) with Rick Caro (R), the Health and Fitness Club Industry's "Best Friend"

**Donna Krech;**  
**Gary Polic;**  
**Jeffrey Pinkerton;**  
**Jim Thomas;**  
**John McCarthy;**  
**Karen Woodard-Chavez;**  
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**Mike Alpert;**  
**Paul R. Bedard, Esquire;**  
**Paul Bosley;**  
**Rick Caro;**  
**Sara Kooperman, JD;**  
**Thomas Plummer.**

*in the health and fitness club industry. He has lived and breathed this industry for 37 years, since his own day one, and he loves it dearly. Graduating from the Terry College of Business at The University of Georgia in 2007, Justin has run day-to-day operations of Club Insider for 14 years. Justin became Publisher of Club Insider on April 5, 2020. Justin's Dad, Norm Cates, continues to serve as Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993. You can reach Justin by phone at 863-999-2677 or email at Justin@clubinsideronline.com.)*

We are always on the lookout for new *Contributing Authors*. Whether your expertise is on the club side or the supply side, our readers can use your expertise. Contact us by going to [www.clubinsideronline.com/contact](http://www.clubinsideronline.com/contact).



Thank you for reading! And, thank you for the assistance to *Help Us Help You!*

*(Justin Cates is the Publisher of Club Insider. Having been born into a club business family in 1985, Justin grew up*

*(Norm Cates, Jr. is a 48-year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. He is the Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993 of Club Insider, now in its 29th year of monthly publication. In 1981, he was IHRSA's First President, and a Co-Founder of the Association with Rick Caro and five others. In 2001, he was honored by IHRSA with its DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award, one of its highest honors. And, in 2017, he was honored with Club Industry's Lifetime Achievement Award. He can be reached by phone at 770-635-7578 or email at Norm@clubinsideronline.com.)*



Help Us, Help You. (Justin Cates and Norm Cates)

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# Doing Well by Doing Good

## How Positive Changes Can Impact Your Gym Business/Work Culture

By: **Jim Thomas**

Positive gym business culture is characterized by a sense of caring, comfort and collaborative effort. This type of work environment fosters an atmosphere where employees feel like they can bring their whole selves to work and know that they will be accepted for who they are.

It also helps establish clear boundaries between personal and professional life, which allows people to take care of themselves outside of work without feeling guilty or anxious about the consequences at the gym.

**The Result:** Happier employees, more focused workers, higher levels of productivity and better results in general. This is how positive changes impact business.

### Increased Creativity and Innovation

Creativity is the expression of new ideas. Creativity can lead to innovation, which can lead to creativity. This means that creativity is an ongoing process of coming up with new ideas, implementing them and adapting them. Creativeness relies on problem-solving skills, inventiveness, flexibility, imagination and spontaneity.

Being creative in the gym business world has grown immensely in recent years because it has become a competitive battlefield for top jobs. If you want to be seen as innovative and creative by your peers or potential employers, you have to have a certain level of creativity or risk being overlooked.

If your employee sees that you are not being innovative enough, then they will most likely move on to someone else who is more creative, flexible and open to change.

### Positive Work Environment Examples

Positive changes in the gym can increase creativity. Here are a few examples of how changes can impact your gym business environment:

- Introducing a new, more efficient way of doing things in the gym;
- Having a space where employees can think creatively and work on their projects;
- Designating certain days or time slots for teams to work outside the gym;
- Helping employees get back to business

following a pandemic.

All these changes allow you to grow as an individual, which is also much needed when it comes to being creative.

### Increased Communication Levels

For communication levels in any workplace to go up, there is one thing that needs to change: *the people's mindset*. This includes both the employer and employees. A positive change in work culture can help to shift this mindset, making it easier for people to communicate with one another effectively.

Here are a few other key things that need to happen for communication levels to improve in the workplace:

1. Employers need to create an environment where employees feel comfortable communicating their thoughts and feelings without fear of repercussion.
2. Employees need to be proactive in reaching out to their coworkers instead of waiting for others to reach out to them.
3. Everyone needs to be on the same page regarding what is expected from them and what they expect from others.
4. All communication should be clear and concise so there is no room for misinterpretation.

### Improved Morale and Productivity

Happy employees are more engaged in their work, take fewer sick days and are less likely to leave their jobs. So, how can you make your employees happier? There are several ways:

- Offering flexible working arrangements;
- Providing opportunities for growth and development;
- Encouraging social interaction in the gym;
- Creating a positive work culture goes a long way in making your employees happy and productive;
- Encouraging your employees to give back to their communities can compound positive effects of business on society;
- Giving regular recognition.

### Reduced Stress Levels

In any workplace, stress is bound to occur from time to time. However, if stress levels become too high, then it can have a negative impact on employees. This is why employers need to do everything they can to reduce stress levels in the office.

When you reduce stress levels, it can lead to a more positive work environment. Employees will be less likely to feel overwhelmed or stressed out, leading to improved productivity and creativity. In addition, a positive work environment can help to attract new talent and reduce staff turnover rates.

### Improved Employee Retention Rates

Employees are more likely to stay with a company with a positive work culture. For employees, it is not always about the actual job itself. Instead, they are attracted to companies that offer opportunities for growth and development, provide exciting work and give them autonomy when it comes to how their work gets done. Therefore, if you want to keep your employees long-term, you need to do everything to make their jobs enjoyable.

### Better Work-Life Balance

A positive work culture helps to improve the work-life balance of employees. This is particularly true in cases where employers are flexible with their employees regarding things like working hours, taking time off, and generally, doing the best job they can.

Employees who have a better work-life balance are happier, which means that you will have satisfied, engaged employees who are more productive at work. Happy employees also have lower stress levels, so it makes sense that organizations with positive cultures see improved productivity levels.

### A Competitive Advantage

Having a solid internal workplace culture is essential if an organization wants to maintain a competitive advantage over its competitors. Employers play a significant role in shaping this strong internal workplace culture by understanding how positive changes can impact your business culture. With this in mind, it's crucial to understand how employee engagement and satisfaction levels can affect overall productivity.

Employee engagement is directly



Jim Thomas

related to an organization's performance, so the importance of accepting change positively should be a high priority for employers. It is also worth highlighting that strong internal work culture directly affects external workplace culture, which means that there are plenty of benefits of positive workplace culture.

### Conclusion

Positive changes, like offering flexible working hours or allowing breaks can reduce stress, as well as increase productivity and creativity. However, these changes should only be implemented if they benefit both employers and employees alike; otherwise, both sides will resist.

Finally, start small when it comes to implementing positive changes in the workplace; this way, there will be minimal pushback from workers while at the same time making sure that both sides are getting benefits.

*(An Outsourced CEO and expert witness, Jim Thomas is the Founder and President of Fitness Management USA Inc., a management consulting, turnaround and brokerage firm specializing in the gym and sports industry. With more than 25 years of experience owning, operating and managing clubs of all sizes, Thomas lectures and delivers seminars, webinars and workshops across the globe on the practical skills required to successfully overcome obscurity, improve sales, build teamwork and market fitness programs and products. In addition, his company will buy gym equipment from gyms liquidating or closing, provide financing or advance funds on receivables. Visit his websites at [www.fmconsulting.net](http://www.fmconsulting.net) or [www.youtube.com/gymconsultant](http://www.youtube.com/gymconsultant).)*





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# California Liability Waiver Upheld by Court and Lessons to Take from Case

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

Health clubs must regularly defend against various types of legal claims. A well-designed risk management strategy can greatly reduce a club's legal exposure. One of the most fundamental and effective tools within the risk management toolbox is a well-drafted liability waiver. Although the enforceability of these waivers varies across jurisdictions, a *California Court* recently upheld a health club liability waiver. The court's written opinion provides takeaways for other health clubs in this regard.

**This article is intended for educational purposes only. It is not offered as legal advice. Widely varying jurisdictional laws and standards, along with circumstances unique to each case, prohibit blanket recommendations. Therefore, please consider the following information as an educational guide, and please consult an attorney for specific direction.**

## Joshi v. Fitness International, LLC

A member of *City Sports Club*, a club owned by *Fitness International, LLC*, sued the club alleging that she sustained injuries when she tripped and fell in the locker room sauna. The member alleged that the club was negligent because it failed to maintain the sauna in a safe condition, and therefore, failed to guard the member against a dangerous condition. Specifically, it was alleged that an interior light within the sauna was burned out, giving rise to a dangerous condition. The member burned her arm while contacting the sauna heating element after tripping and falling within the dark sauna.

Fitness International filed a motion for summary judgment, asserting that the liability waiver signed by the member barred the member's ordinary negligence claim. Fitness International further asserted that the member could not establish a claim for gross negligence, and therefore, could not establish a claim for premises liability, because Fitness International had no actual or constructive knowledge of the dangerous condition. The trial court granted the motion, entering judgment in favor of Fitness International.

The member appealed the case, arguing to the *Appellate Court* that there was a triable issue of material fact to support a gross negligence claim against the health club. Furthermore, the member asserted that the club had knowledge or constructive knowledge of the burned-out light within the sauna at the time of the member's injury and failed to take action to

eliminate the dangerous condition.

The *California Court of Appeals for the Sixth District* affirmed the trial court's ruling.

First, the Appellate Court determined that the liability waiver the member signed as part of her membership agreement released the health club from liability for ordinary negligence. The court found that the language within the waiver releasing all claims for, "accidental injuries occurring in dressing rooms, showers and other facilities," was sufficiently broad to include injuries resulting from tripping and falling within the sauna.

Second, the Appellate Court ruled that Fitness International was not liable for gross negligence. The Court contrasted ordinary negligence, "which involves a breach of the duty of exercising reasonable care to protect others from harm," with gross negligence, involving "scant care" or "an extreme departure from the ordinary standard of conduct." The court noted that the evidence showed that the club performed detailed weekly inspections of the facility and documented maintenance issues in need of attention. The court elaborated and highlighted the fact that employees performed daily walkthrough inspections, including the women's sauna, to determine whether any conditions required attention. This evidence negated the member's assertions that the club's actions equated to gross negligence.

Finally, the Appellate Court held that the premises liability claim fell short because there was no evidence that the club had actual or constructive notice of the dangerous condition, the burned-out light in this instance. The Court opined that a plaintiff asserting a claim for premises liability, "must show that the owner knew or reasonably should have known about the claimed dangerous condition on the property."

## Takeaways

Generally speaking, liability waivers are enforceable in California and many other jurisdictions when they are drafted clearly and concisely while addressing the scope of coverage. However, although a well-developed liability waiver may protect against a claim of ordinary negligence, it may not protect against claims of gross negligence, recklessness, intentional torts or illegal acts. The language of the waiver itself, and the circumstances of the claim at hand, will weigh greatly on whether the liability waiver is found to be enforceable.

Health clubs must exercise reasonable care to protect their employees, members and guests from harm. Maintaining

and archiving consistent inspection and maintenance protocols will prove extremely valuable should your club be on the receiving end of a gross negligence claim. Moreover, regular walkthroughs and club inspections will help ensure that unknown dangerous conditions don't develop that the club should have otherwise known about. However, and equally important, the club must take immediate corrective action when a known dangerous condition arises. Failure to safeguard people from a known defect may trigger liability for a premises liability claim against the health club.

In the *August 2019 Edition of Club Insider*, I wrote in more detail regarding how to maximize the enforceability of your liability waiver. Although even the best liability waiver cannot provide a guarantee against legal liability, the absence of a liability waiver or a poorly drafted liability waiver is guaranteed to increase a club's legal exposure. At a minimum, your liability waiver should bar claims due to negligence, identify the inherent risks within the health club and describe the member's assumption of risk, be written in clear and conspicuous language and include relevant provisions such as severability and choice of law provisions.

*(Paul Bedard has nearly twenty years of management, leadership, and operations experience in the health and fitness industry. Paul is a solo practitioner at The Law Office of Paul Bedard, LLC, in Southington, Connecticut. As a practicing*



Paul R. Bedard, Esquire

*attorney, Paul's health and fitness industry experience provides him with a unique perspective when advising health clubs regarding employee training, handbooks, policies, contracts, disputes or premises liability claims. When not practicing law or spending quality time with his wife and daughters, Paul strives to be active in his local community. In addition to running his private practice, Paul serves as the Assistant Town Attorney for the Town of Southington, Connecticut. He has also served on the Southington Zoning Board of Appeals and the Board of the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency. Paul can be reached at [AttorneyPaulBedard@gmail.com](mailto:AttorneyPaulBedard@gmail.com) or 860-414-0110.)*

## Fitness Premier 24/7 Clubs Welcomes New COO, Josh Hettiger

**MANHATTAN, IL** - After a successful football career at *Saint Xavier University* and a short run in the NFL, **Josh Hettiger** met with **Jason Markowicz**, CEO of *Fitness Premier 24/7 Clubs*, and **Rick King**, VP of the brand, to discuss life after football. Hettiger saw how the two had transitioned from college athletics to business owners, and he became an owner/operator of *Fitness Premier Cedar Lake* while also working on franchise development efforts. Through this process, Hettiger received the mentorship and support he needed to learn how to run a business, manage day-to-day tasks and really grow into his role as a franchisee and operator.

Now, as COO, Hettiger handles franchise development and other growth efforts for the brand. He is generally the first contact a prospective franchisee will have with Fit For You, and he has discussions about entrepreneurial goals and franchisor-franchisee fit leading up to the franchise exploration process.

Fitness Premier is unlike other fitness

concepts in the market as they are not quite a boutique model but also do not follow the big-box gym model. This, along with the general flexibility of the brand's leadership, allows franchisees to develop a model that works for them, their goals and available resources.

During the signing and buildout process, Hettiger is available to either answer questions for prospective and newly signed franchisees or connect them to a specialist within the Fitness Premier corporate team. After moving through this journey as a young entrepreneur, Hettiger has become even more passionate about helping Fitness Premier franchisees achieve their dreams.

"At the end of the day, it's all about the people," he said. "Jason played a huge role in supporting me through this growth and giving me the tools I needed to run my business smoothly, which allowed me to focus even more of my energy on connecting with, training and helping my clients. I'm excited to step into a similar position and provide that same support."

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## The Arena Debuts at Wembley Club

The spectacular *Arena* debuted at *The Wembley Club* in Chagrin Falls, Ohio in early June 2022. The Arena is over 15,000 square feet, including a beautiful room for yoga, state-of-the-art cycle theatre, group fitness room, a large fitness floor featuring a huge selection of new equipment, and two side-by-side pickleball courts. The Arena has a schedule of over 60 group fitness classes per week and is known for the excellence of its instructors.

"Over the past eight years, I have watched our fitness offerings blossom from the most basic existence into a multi-faceted program with incredible enthusiasm and energy," said club owner **David Barr**. "Our incredible team, led by **Colleen Ryan**, steadily built a schedule of interactive classes with the most personal touch, and I have learned so much from them. The goal in building the Arena was to give everyone a facility that matches the excellence of our instructors. We spared no expense

because the intent was to have the best of everything."

During the construction process, the description was understated by management. Since the beginning of the COVID era, one of the club's tennis courts had been used for fitness. Members knew that court and one other tennis court were being converted to a new and improved fitness home, but the level of finish was left to be a pleasant surprise as the project finished. "As the project finished, and everyone could see the fantastic finishes, the excitement grew by leaps and bounds. It has been an incredibly fun time," said Barr.

According to Barr, one of the keys to the massive success of the project was the selection of *Icon Interiors* as the General Contractor. "When you are embarking on any kind of construction project, the performance of the GC is of paramount importance. I can't say enough about Icon. **Glenn Pickens'** team was

flat out fantastic in every way. The project manager, **Jameson Pagan**, handled all of the planning and communications, and his foresight enabled us to escape the supply chain delays that are so common today. Our on-site foreman and carpenter, **Alex Pagan**, was spectacular with his attention to detail and high standard for every aspect. And, we will forever appreciate the dedication the rest of Icon team gave us every day."

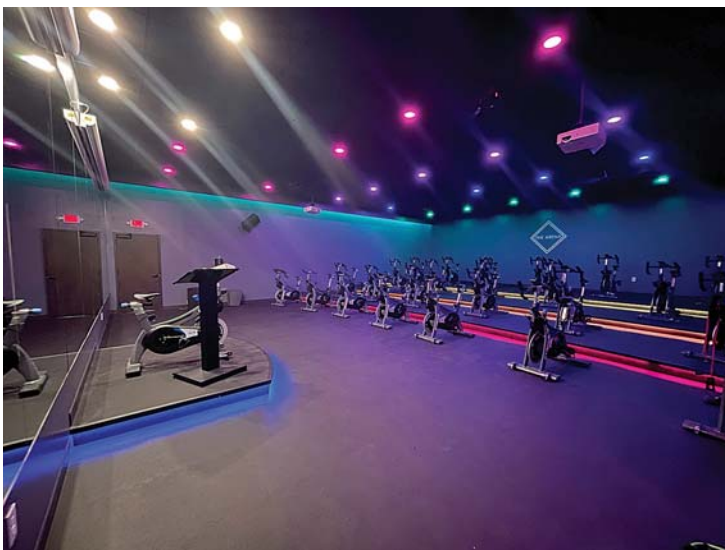
When asked what he would do differently, Barr indicated that he would have had a higher budget amount for equipment at the beginning of the project. During the course of the construction, and even after its conclusion, there were continuous new discoveries of equipment needed and the cost thereof. "We spent quite a bit more than originally anticipated, with the increase of construction costs and all of the extra equipment we purchased. Every time we had the opportunity to buy something to make for a better member experience, we

gave it the green light."

The Arena is in the early stages of marketing, which has been mostly social media, such as Facebook/Meta and Instagram. Referrals and word-of-mouth have been extra plentiful, and member growth in the first weeks has exceeded expectation. "We had the goal to make The Arena among the finest facilities in the entire country, and the appreciation from our members and in the market has been incredibly gratifying. Our entire staff is so proud of what we have become," said Barr.

■ ■ ■

*Club Insider* is happy to congratulate **David Barr** and *The Wembley Club* on this accomplishment. Be sure to see the **Photos on This Page**. And, we want to hear from you. Tell us about improvements you are making at your club. Go to [www.clubinsideronline.com/contact](http://www.clubinsideronline.com/contact).





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## The Next Big Thing In Fitness: *Your Team*

By: **Cathy Spencer Browning**

Let me cut through some noise and cut to the chase: I get a wee bit fatigued from the many articles, webinars and "expert" opinions that speculate about the next big thing in fitness. Is it going to be virtual? Is it going to be gadgets and trackers? Is it HIIT or mind/body? Is it the biggest thing ever? No, no, the smallest ever! Is it the lightest? No, wait, heaviest!

During my 30+ years in this industry, I have seen many a thing come and go. Slide anybody? Ab Roller? Tai Bo? The list goes on. But, here's the thing: *People*, and their basic needs, have not changed. We desire social connection because we are social beings. That said... no noun, no "thing" is going to be a magic bullet in this industry.

I promised to cut to the chase: I believe that the perfect tool, the best device, the not-so-secret formula is... "us." The next big thing in fitness is who we are as individuals and as a team, how we service, how we connect, how we talk to people,

encourage people and how we build sticky social webs that keep people engaged and keep people positively influenced.

So, the next big thing in fitness is focusing on "the team," on "us" and looking inwards before we look outwards. The next big thing in fitness is becoming a world class team, one that delivers world class experiences to bring about world class results. Because, let's be real, nothing else --no bands, or balls, or better bicep curl bar-- has really moved the dial.

I am sure many of you reading this right now played some form of team sport when you were younger, and like me, loved the camaraderie of being part of a well-oiled team machine. Maybe you're even reliving, and loving, those team sports experiences with your kids as we speak. There is nothing like the trust, support and performance experienced when a team is well-formed and well-trained.

Whoa, whoa, whoa, hold up, did I just say well "formed" and well "trained?" Yes, those are very much verbs or "doing" words as we learned in school. That means

we must... do! We must both *form* a team and *train* a team.

### Forming Your Team

**Stephen R. Covey** has famously said, "*All things are created twice. There's a mental or first creation and a physical or second creation to all things. Take the construction of a home, for example. You create it in every detail before you ever hammer the first nail into place.*" Your team is the same.

What does a world class team look like to you? What type of people do you want? I was having a conversation with a *Group Fitness Director* recently, and she was complaining about an instructor on her team. This instructor was hard core, always taught classes at the high end and was all about herself. She never subbed, often was a bit dodgy knowing her programming but... (long pause) ...she was "popular" with a crew of front row fanatics. She always announced when she *wasn't* going to teach, basically sabotaging the



Cathy Spencer Browning

experience for the sub. After all that, the *Group Fitness Director* then described her as her "best instructor." I asked her why, and she answered, "Because she gets the best numbers." My response: "So, this aggressive, egocentric, selfish, unreliable, manipulative, unprepared and even (See *Cathy Spencer Browning Page 22*)

**...Cathy Spencer Browning**

continued from page 21

uncaring person is your best instructor?"

Hopefully, we all know that turning a blind eye to this behavior sends a bad message to the rest of the team. **Peter Schutz**, *ex-CEO of Porsche*, lived by the doctrine, "Hire character, train skill." He believed that most skills can be taught, but no amount of training can produce character. If you hire someone with integrity and a solid work ethic, you can take care of teaching the rest. This is the reason you must have a mental or first "creation." What do you want your team to "be" like? What type of employees will service people,

connect with people, encourage people, and build sticky social webs that keep people engaged and positively influenced?

**Developing Your Team**

We must stop the madness of complaining with our eyes closed that, "good people are hard to find." Maybe we need to say, "Good, pre-trained, plug and play so I don't have to do any work people are hard to find." Right, it's nearly impossible, so stop looking for those. But, don't stop looking.

We need good systems in place to find and hire outstanding people; develop and train them; mentor them and keep

them learning, improving and engaged. Yes, we need to take people under our wing and guide their road forward. And, bluntly, we need to up our game and become better employers, because the current job market very much belongs to the employees.

As we dust ourselves off and come out from under the rubble the COVID earthquake caused, there is no better time than now to regroup... To rebuild with a new plan, first mentally and then... actually. To look inward and create a plan, then start hammering nails. To ask yourself: Is this team world class? Will this team give people a world class experience? Is this team capable of getting world class results? Is my team the next big thing?

If your answer is a resounding no or even a... "meh," well, it's time to get to

business, the business of recruitment. Go find your people... the right people, and we can help.

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*(Cathy Spencer Browning is the VP of Training & Programming for MOSSA. Cathy can be reached by phone at 770-989-4700 or email at [cathy@mossa.net](mailto:cathy@mossa.net).)*

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