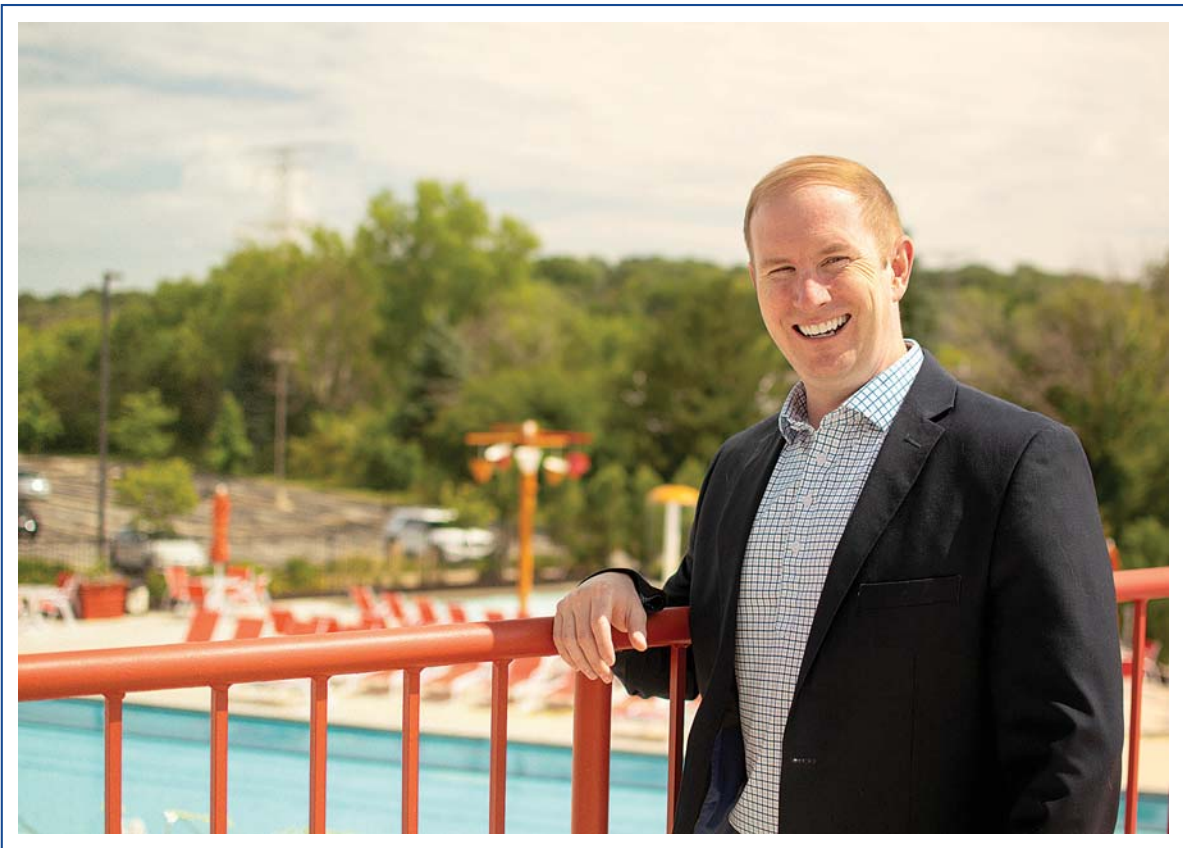


Norm Cates'

CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF TRUST

Chez Misko and Wisconsin Athletic Club *Making a Difference in People's Lives*



SEPTEMBER 2023

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CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF TRUST

Chez Misko and Wisconsin Athletic Club *Making a Difference in People's Lives*

By: Justin Cates

In a previous age, one's career spanned its length with one employer. Among younger generations, that idea has fallen by the wayside in favor of moving and upgrading as the needs of one's life dictates. Further, the idea of having multiple careers in different fields has become prevalent. So, it is becoming rare to find one who has dedicated an entire career to one field, and further, it is even more rare to find one who has dedicated all that time to one company. I introduce one of those people, and his name is **Chez Misko**, COO of Wisconsin Athletic Club (WAC), our September 2023 Cover Story Subject.

Chez began his career 32 years ago at West Allis Athletic Club, which would

become the WAC. Back then, and at a very young age, he was a martial arts instructor. Since that time, as Chez describes it, "I probably have 20 business cards with different titles on it, from either the *West Allis Athletic Club* or the *WAC* over the years." He has done it all at the WAC, and he looks forward to continuing to do more.

Along the way, he has developed a people-focused managerial and leadership philosophy. In addition to the story of his own maturation and the WAC, Chez will share those philosophies, as well as what the WAC calls *Aggressive Hospitality*. All of this helps the WAC complete its **Mission**: To make a difference in people's lives. So, I welcome you to read on as we interview **Chez Misko**, COO of the WAC.

An Interview with Chez Misko, COO of Wisconsin Athletic Club (WAC)

Club Insider (C.I.) - Where were you born and where did you grow up?

Chez Misko (CM) - I was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and I grew up in a suburb of Milwaukee called Greenfield. I still live in Greenfield today, so I've pretty much been here all of my life. I like to travel a lot, but I always come back home.

C.I. - Where did you go to school, and what did you study?

CM - I attended *Concordia University Wisconsin (CUW)* where I earned a *Bachelor's Degree in Athletic Training and Sports Medicine*. I was a *Licensed and* (See *Chez Misko* Page 8)



Chez Misko

Crunch Fitness Becomes First Gym to Enable Amazon One Palm-Based Entry

NEW YORK, N.Y. - *Crunch Fitness* announces it is the first fitness brand to introduce the *Amazon One* palm recognition service as an entry option for its members at select Crunch locations nationwide. Members who choose to use the convenience of Amazon One no longer need their Crunch membership tags or mobile app to enter; they can simply hover their palm over an Amazon One device to enter the fitness facility. Amazon One is currently being piloted at nine Crunch clubs across the U.S., including five in San Francisco, three in the New York City and one in the Los Angeles area, with more locations rolling out the technology in the coming months.

Crunch has been piloting Amazon One for the last four months, and the technology has received an enthusiastic response from Crunch gym members. At participating gyms, 80% of members are already using Amazon One for entry, and adoption is expected to grow as awareness increases and the program continues to expand to more locations across the U.S.

"We are thrilled to be the first fitness brand and gym to offer Amazon One as an entry option," said **Molly Long**, *Crunch Fitness Chief Experience Officer*. "Implementing Amazon One at Crunch gyms has been a win-win for our members and for our Crunch team. The feedback from our members has been positive. They

appreciate the ability to enter the gym swiftly and efficiently without the need to remember to bring their membership key tag or open the mobile app."

As one of the fastest-growing fitness brands in the industry, Crunch is committed to providing innovative and convenient service to its members. The implementation of Amazon One is designed to make the entry process more streamlined, and gym-goers may opt in or continue to scan into the club as they would normally.

"The fast-growing adoption of Amazon One at Crunch Fitness centers showcases the versatility of our palm recognition service, and how it can be used

as a quick and convenient entry option in gyms and fitness centers across the country," said **Sanjay Dash**, *Vice President of Identity and Checkout Technologies, AWS Applications*. "With Amazon One, Crunch members have a fast and innovative way to validate their membership and get to their workout without the hassle of carrying membership tags or using their mobile app."

Crunch members can enroll at the Amazon One kiosk inside participating Crunch clubs or pre-enroll online by visiting one.amazon.com/getting-started.

Be sure to check out the **Crunch Franchise Ad** on the **Opposite Page**.

Inside the Insider: Edition #357

■ Exercise IS Medicine - By: Mike Alpert

■ The Lost Art of One-On-One Coaching and Mentoring - By: Herb Lipsman

■ Four Keys to Effective Leadership - By: Chris Stevenson

■ The Six Key Areas to Prepare for Underwriting an SBA Loan and Equipment Lease - By: Paul Bosley

■ It's Booty Time! - By: Gary Polic

■ Biohacking: What's the Opportunity? - By: Frank Guengerich

■ How to Train to Be a Pickleball Pro - By: Sara Kooperman, JD and Sydney Rothschild

■ The Perfect Pickleball Workout - By: Jeffrey Pinkerton

■ JLR Associates Announces Exciting Changes

■ And, of Course, *Norm's Notes*

Norm's Notes

■Hello Everybody! This is your **Club Insider Founder and Tribal Leader** Since 1993 checking in with our 357th monthly edition of this 30+ year running club business newspaper I refer to as: **A Labor of LOVE!** And, let me just say this here and now... **YAHOO!!!** I'm saying **YAHOO!!!** to y'all because, with this issue of *Club Insider*, we've launched the first edition of our brand-new **Digital Era of production!** Yep, no more trees will have to die to make paper for *Club Insider's* printed editions! And, we are not alone! The publishing industry worldwide has been making this change, too! So, **JUSTIN CATES**, my son, and partner in *Club Insider*, our highly esteemed *Publisher*, and I are very excited to send you our first-ever **ALL DIGITAL EDITION!** Read on.

■As we begin this *new era of all digital production*, we want to thank the **Advertisers** who are sticking with us and continue to make *Club Insider* possible.

In our new *Premium Tier of Sponsorship*, we welcome previous advertisers: **Crunch Franchise, LA Fitness, MOSSA and Workout Anytime.**

In our new *Primary Tier of Sponsorship*, we welcome previous

advertisers: **Augie's Quest, JLR Associates and Sports and Fitness Insurance.** We also welcome **NEW** advertisers: **Health, Wellness and Lifestyle Services (HWLS) and Transformation Mastery.**

Finally, in our new *Directory Tier of Sponsorship*, we welcome previous advertisers: **Business Finance Depot, Fitness Premier 24/7, Polic Consulting Group and TG - The Gym.**

Next month, we will be dedicating a *Special Cover Story* to them so they can tell their story. If you'd like to join our ranks and that cover story, please contact **Justin Cates** at (863) 999 - 2677 or justin@clubinsideronline.com. To learn more about our new *Sponsorship Tiers*, go to www.clubinsideronline.com/advertise.

■Is AMERICA a GREAT COUNTRY, or WHAT!?! Hmm... hmm... hmm! And, let me add my normal monthly salutation: **GOD BLESS AMERICA and GOD BLESS YOU, YOUR FAMILY and YOUR BUSINESS!!!** Print or Digital... these important words will never change.

■This year, **September 11** marks the **22nd Anniversary** of the 9/11 attacks on the United States of America. These

horrific attacks, using jetliners as weapons killed **2,977 Americans**, including 343 firefighters, 71 police officers and other first responders. *May they all continue to rest in peace, and may we never forget.*

■August 14th, 2023 was a very SAD day for the folks in the town of **LANAIA** on the **Hawaii Island of MAUI**, and honestly, it was a very **SAD DAY for ALL Americans!** I say that because all of the folks on Maui endured horrible fires, causing the complete loss of their homes, their businesses, and essentially, their lives as they've know it. As I update this Norm's Note on August 31st, the death toll in Lanaia has reached **115**. Truthfully, the place looks like an atomic bomb hit it! Of course, by now, I'm sure all of you have seen the TV and newspaper pictures of the devastated Lanaia. **MAY GOD HELP THEM ALL! And, may those souls who've already passed away REST IN ETERNAL PEACE.**

■In Sacramento, 18 *California Family Fitness Clubs* and *Shoot 360* have teamed up to transform basketball training. *California Family Fitness (CFF)*, one of Sacramento's leading health and fitness clubs announced the launch of *Shoot 360*,



Norm Cates

the world's leading immersive basketball training experience, at its *Rocklin Sports Complex*. *Shoot 360* combines cutting-edge science and technology with hands-on, one-on-one coaching to deliver in-person skill development, digital gamification and virtual competition. **SCOTT TORREY**, *General Manager of Cal-Fit Rocklin Sports Complex's*, commented, "We're thrilled to incorporate *Shoot 360's* proprietary (See *Norm's Notes* Page 7)

About Club Insider

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF TRUST

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Thanks and Appreciation

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

Very sincere *Thanks and Appreciation* go to **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 did an absolutely excellent job for us all these years and printed every one of our monthly printed editions! And, of course, *Thanks and Appreciation* to the **United States Postal Service** for sending those editions to our readers!

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

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

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

Norm Cates, Jr.



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Exercise IS Medicine

By: Mike Alpert

Exercise! *It is the word that defines our industry.* Our clubs exist in order to encourage people to sign up for and to take the powerful drug called *Exercise*. We know how important it is in preventing and treating so many chronic health problems. Yet, many people are not made aware of the medical benefits. Many physicians don't prescribe it, and health insurance does not reimburse for it. Exercise is the best medicine we have to build a healthy immune system. Yet, throughout the most devastating pandemic and country closures of our time, when it became crystal clear that the best defense against COVID was a strong and healthy immune system, the best places to take that medicine were shut down for almost two years. People were not even allowed to play golf or use the beach, all outdoor activities.

As our elected State and Federal officials began to loosen restrictions that were forced on us, our clubs were limited to how many members could be in the club at any given time, and further, how many could be in any studio, such as group exercise, cycling or weight rooms. The numbers were ridiculously low, and this came after clubs spent thousands, and sometimes, tens of thousands of dollars on air handling equipment, sanitizing and disinfecting materials and equipment, gloves and masks.

Then, of course, there were the ridiculous mandates that we had to wear a mask when entering and exiting a restaurant but not while we were sitting at a table eating and drinking. I guess we were supposed to believe that COVID, which is an airborne virus could only infect us when we enter or exit, certainly not while consuming food and beverages. The same thing occurred while on a planes, trains and automobiles (in this case, buses): Always wear a mask at all times, except when you are eating or drinking.

I could go on and on about this, but I think you get the picture: We were told what we could and couldn't do by our elected officials; we got in line and followed instructions. Although hospitals and medical clinics that treat people who are sick or injured remained open (as they needed to be), the health and fitness clubs that keep people healthy were shut down. It made no sense!

With all that I have written above, COVID, and the fear of something like it in the future, seems to have had a positive effect on people's interest in the digital and in-person delivery of fitness and wellness solutions. That has brought about some extremely positive changes in the healthcare arena that are going to result in tremendous growth opportunities for

the health and fitness club industry. We all know the positive effect that exercise has on health. I have written about this for 20+ years, and the science and medical data is there to confirm it. So, let's look at what has happened recently: ASCO (*American Society of Clinical Oncology*) published the following *Guidelines on Exercise*: "Oncology providers should recommend regular aerobic and resistance exercise during active treatment with curative intent to mitigate side effects of cancer treatment."

Hospitals in the United States must be accredited by one or more accredited organizations. The *NAPBC (National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers)* accredits 575 breast centers that treat women for breast cancer, and they recently added the following to their standards: "Beginning in January of 2024, cancer patients entering their survivor journey will be referred to an exercise program." There are currently about 18.1 million people in the USA living with cancer (5.4% of the U.S. population), and there are an estimated 1.9 million people who will be diagnosed with cancer this year. I believe health and fitness clubs and community centers (YMCA's and JCC's) are the logical and best places to integrate these people into lifestyle maintenance programs that keep them engaged through social interaction.

Health Level 7 International (HL7) is a global network of health care databases. Finally, also recently, *Exercise is Medicine* passed a milestone when HL7 formally approved a *Physical Activity Implementation Guide*, adding physical activity as a vital sign and enabling referrals between exercise professionals and health care professionals. This achievement is a major victory for the exercise profession and health care, and it is the result of a collaboration between the *Physical Activity Alliance* and the *Coalition for the Registration of Exercise Professionals*. The approval by HL7 opens the door to establishing exercise professionals as a critical part of the health care team and adding physical activity as a standard vital sign in health care delivery. This is an amazing turning point in what I believe will soon become Federal Law. It is a major step towards making exercise a standard of adjunctive care, not only for people who must deal with the devastating diagnosis of cancer but for all people who are affected by chronic illness.

It has been a long time coming, but our industry is about to explode with an inflow of people who need and deserve the most powerful medicine we have today, and we, the health and fitness club industry are the ones to dispense it. The next paradigm in health care will not focus on making fit



Mike Alpert

people fitter. It must be about making all people healthier and in preventing and treating people with chronic illness. **As an industry, we need to focus a little less on abs and buns and a little more on hearts and lungs.**

Exercise is Medicine: Make it part of your club's culture and legacy.

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

The Lost Art of One-On-One Coaching and Mentoring

By: Herb Lipsman

We can all recall a private conversation with a teacher, coach, parent, relative, boss or other important figure in our lives that literally changed our lives. It may have been a conversation about where to go to college, a major career choice, whether to get married, how to deal with the loss of a loved one or some other piece of invaluable advice that helped us make a life-changing decision.

In today's rapid-fire world of management, many focus their time on analyzing the ever-increasing streams of data, reading and responding to meaningless email or text messages, filling out reports that no one reads, or holding and attending objectiveless meetings. This "busy work" leaves little time for good old-fashioned one-on-one coaching and counseling with our direct reports and front-line staff. Yet, these one-on-one conversations can be the most impactful for the respective employee as anything we can do as leaders.

Consider for a moment you have a young manager in his first management

position. He was promoted to this position because he was the hardest-working, top producer in his front-line position prior to the promotion. Now, he is being asked to manage a group of employees who were formerly his peers, and things are not going well. There seems to be lots of disenchantment between the new boss and his co-workers. This may be due to this new leader taking too aggressive of a tone or the opposite, appearing weak and "wishy-washy."

Consider another example where by a great frontline employee seems to be off lately in terms of her level, energy or enthusiasm. Do you take the time to have a private conversation to see how she is doing? Or, are you too busy to take the time or notice?

These are just two common examples of situations all leaders face in running their companies, departments or teams regularly. Think back to one or two conversations with someone you looked up to in your past and how their wise counsel may have impacted the direction of your life. Imagine how impactful your time and focused attention to each of



Herb Lipsman

your direct reports and frontline staff could be for their self-esteem, their personal and/or professional development, their state-of-mind.

We all have the same 24 hours in a day and 365 days each year. How we choose to spend this finite amount of time will determine our level of effectiveness as
(See [Herb Lipsman Page 7](#))

...Norm's Notes

continued from page 4

technology into our Rocklin Sports Complex to help Sacramento-area basketball players level up their games. This innovative technology and Training helps players of all ages enhance their skills and boost their confidence."

■ This news item came to us courtesy of our long-time friend, former IHRSA Executive Director, **JOHN McCARTHY**. He sent the following news item:

"Merrithew Becomes CIMSPA Approved Training Provider Partner, Expanding Pilates Education Opportunities in the UK.

TORONTO, ONTARIO - Merrithew, a global Pilates education and equipment leader, announces its partnership with the *Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA)* as an approved Training Provider Partner. This collaboration marks a significant milestone in Merrithew's commitment to delivering exceptional Pilates training and promoting the benefits of mindful movement throughout the United Kingdom."

Thanks JOHN McCARTHY!

■ F45 announced its intention to voluntarily delist and deregister its securities by external company. As previously disclosed, F45 received a notice from the NYSE because it's behind in its public filings and because the average closing price of its common stock was less than \$1.00 per share over a consecutive 30 trading-day period. **STAY TUNED!**

■ The following message is from *The John W. Brick Mental Health Foundation*:

"Hello there! We are so happy to announce that, due to the extraordinary response to our online *Mental Health & Well-Being Global Summit* earlier this year, we are presenting it again for **FREE!** Join the John W. Brick Mental Health Foundation and our partners, *Wisdom for Life*, for the *Mental Health & Well-Being Global Summit*, taking place online September 12 - 18. Join more than 60 presenters including **Deepak Chopra MD, Gabor Maté MD, Andrew Weil MD, Michael Singer, Tara Brach PhD, Jewel, don Miguel Ruiz, Wim Hof, Thema S. Bryant PhD, Sharon Salzberg, Mariel Hemingway, Patrick Kennedy, Jeezy, Peter Coyote, Dan Siegel MD, Kristin Neff PhD, Ray Lewis, Roland Griffiths PhD, Rick Hanson PhD** and over 40 more... There probably is not one of us whose life has not been touched by the mental health crisis that much of the world is experiencing right now.

Whether it's you, a friend or loved one --or, if you are a mental health professional-- your clients, the effects of this crisis have been profound. The good

news? We are in the beginnings of a mental health *renaissance*... More people are talking *openly and honestly* about their mental health than ever before. Stigma has been substantially reduced, and everyone from kids, elite athletes, celebrities, late-night talk show hosts, as well as everyday folks, are being more open and vulnerable about what we are experiencing. There are so many evidence-based, *whole-person approaches* that are providing tremendous help for overcoming, and even avoiding, mental health challenges.

Summit sessions will include cutting-edge approaches to mental health and wellbeing, including:

- Psychedelics & ketamine-assisted therapy;
- Energy psychology;
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- Transcranial magnetic stimulation;
- Exercise & movement;
- Nutrition & supplements;
- "Geek therapies" for adolescents;
- Post-traumatic growth;
- Social justice and mental health;
- Indigenous psychology;
- Music & sound therapy;
- Positive stress & resilience;
- And much, much more.

And, the Summit will also feature an exclusive free screening of the stunning and widely acclaimed film: *THE WISDOM OF TRAUMA*. To register, go to www.mentalhealthglobalsummit.com."

■ In this closing **Note**, I've written about **JIM HARBAUGH**, *Michigan's Head Football Coach*, and his belief about college players deserving to be **PAID for their WORK**. I say "**Hear, Hear Coach HARBAUGH!!!**" Folks, **DO TRUST ME** when I write the word "**WORK**" about playing football in college! It is some of the hardest work there is! Coach Harbaugh's belief completely matches my long-held beliefs that, in addition to college tuition, books, room and meals, college football players should also be paid an annual salary.

Folks, **college football players work their butts off year-round!** Day-in and day-out in the weight room... in running drills every day... Spring and Fall practices... Then, of course, the games where College Athletic Departments benefit and receive huge amounts of money for ticket sales plus for TV and radio coverage. **BUT**, the college football players **TOTALLY and VERY UNFAIRLY GET NOTHING!** **That's right... UNFAIRLY, college football players DO NOT get a dime of all that MOOLA!** Michigan's Head Football Coach, Jim Harbaugh, is absolutely right!

Many moons ago, when I was playing football at *N.C. State University* on a full football scholarship, we players received tuition fees, books, dorm room, meals and *get this...* **\$15 a month in cash, which they called: Laundry Money!** **Haha!** With the high school, college and professional football seasons starting all

across America, I found an article recently published in **PETER BROWN's Athletic Business Magazine (AB)** to be very true, and for me, personally, it brings back *real memories* of the days long ago when I was playing college football.

Interestingly, the AB article was about Coach Jim Harbaugh speaking out on behalf of college football players who play without compensation, except for their full academic scholarships, books, dorm rooms and meals throughout their school year.

The article headline reads: *Harbaugh: Student-Athletes Deserve Revenue Sharing 'Now.'* And, the article lead-in reads: "Michigan Head Football Coach, Jim Harbaugh, didn't mince words this week when he said that student-athletes deserve their fair share of the billions of dollars. During a press conference on Monday afternoon, August 28th Coach Harbaugh railed against the status quo, advocating for a system of true revenue sharing with student-athletes."

Coach Harbaugh said: "What I don't understand is how the NCAA, television networks, conferences, universities and coaches can continue to pull in millions, and in some cases, billions of dollars in revenue off the efforts of college student-athletes across the country without providing enough opportunity to share in the ever-increasing revenues. I'm aware and understand that when someone speaks out in defense of those without a voice, attempts are made to diminish the individual's character and credibility. As a former player and current coach, mentoring many of these student-athletes, what I want to do is be a voice for the student-athletes. I want them to be treated with the respect and the dignity that they deserve."

While Coach Harbaugh said he doesn't have all the answers, he made it clear that change is needed **"NOW"** and that the current state of affairs is **"UNACCEPTABLE."**

"You can't say you're about diversity, equity and inclusion if you aren't willing to include the student-athletes in revenue sharing," Harbaugh said. "It's a

shortsighted view of history to presume a system of revenue sharing would topple the current structure."

Folks, let me TIP My Black Hat to Coach Harbaugh, because even though when I played college football at N.C. State over 50 years ago on a full football scholarship, I can tell you very clearly and without a doubt that even now, 50+ years later that college football players work their asses off, and the compensation they still typically receive (tuition, books, dorm room and meals) is not enough! **NOW is the time to make this CHANGE!**

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

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

(Norm Cates, Jr. is a 49-year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. He is the Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993 of Club Insider, now in its 30th 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. You can reach Norm by phone at 770-635-7578 or email at Norm@clubinsideronline.com.)

Make It Fun!

...Herb Lipsman

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leaders and the ultimate contributions we will make to the lives of those around us, while also benefiting our businesses and organizations.

Today, pick one employee to talk to in confidence and see if you can help them in some small way. I'm positive you will find this time well spent and lead to you devoting more of your time to this simple, cost-free approach to helping your team members perform up to their full potential.

We are all perfectly aligned to get the results we get!

(Herb Lipsman is a veteran of the club industry, having managed some of the

*most prestigious athletic clubs and golf/country clubs in the Houston, Texas market over the past 30 years, most notably The Houstonian Hotel, Club and Spa. Lipsman has served on the Board of Directors for IHRSA. He was appointed by Mayor Bill White to serve as Chairman of the Mayor's Wellness Council for the City of Houston. Lipsman has also been invited to speak at numerous industry conferences and conventions around the world, including the U.S., UK, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Italy, Russia and Mexico. Most recently, Lipsman authored and published his book, *Caring (The Sequel): Valuable Insights into Effective Club and Hospitality Management. Learn more about Herb and order his book at www.herblipsman.com.)**

...Chez Misko

continued from page 3

Certified Athletic Trainer for a while, as well as a *Certified Strength and Conditioning Coach*. I stayed on as a *Graduate Athletic Trainer* and got an *MBA in Healthcare Administration*. I'm still involved at CUW today. I serve on their *Foundation Board*, and I'm the *President of their Alumni Association*.

C.I. - Did you play any sports along the way?
CM - While I was at CUW, I wrestled for one year. I was their first *Conference Champion* in wrestling. I wrestled in high school as well. Being able to compete at the collegiate level was one of the reasons I decided to attend CUW. I had to put **2,000 hours** in the training room to become a *Licensed Athletic Trainer*, so that cut my collegiate athletic career short, but I truly enjoyed my time as a student athletic trainer helping other athletes achieve success.

C.I. - Wow, that sounds like a true passion. How did that turn into getting involved in the health and fitness club industry?

CM - Well, my real passion has always been *Martial Arts*. My Dad was involved in the sport. I started when I was six years old, and I began teaching it when I was eleven. I competed in various forms of martial arts over the years and was a *National Escrima Champion*. I would attribute most of my personal and professional success to the lessons I have learned from training, teaching and competing in Martial Arts. I share that, because that is how I got my start in this industry.

My first job in the health and fitness industry was actually at the *Wisconsin Athletic Club (WAC)*, and at the time, it was called the *West Allis Athletic Club*. West Allis is a suburb of Milwaukee, so it was just named after the city. The joke around here is that, when I was 15 years old, my mom drove me to my interview, and I've been here ever since. I was originally hired

to teach *Martial Arts for the Kids Summer Adventure Program*, and I volunteered to teach adult classes.

While I was in high school and college, I did every job available at WAC... I worked at the front desk, I taught swim lessons, I did maintenance, I worked our bar area, did personal training and a variety of management roles. I literally did everything you could think of. In fact, I probably have 20 business cards with different titles on it, from either the *West Allis Athletic Club* or the *WAC* over the years.

C.I. - That is amazing! So, just to confirm, the WAC has been your job home pretty much forever.

CM - Pretty much forever, yes. I'm currently in *Year 32*. Over the years, I became a *GM*, then as we grew the business, I got involved as the *Chief Operating Officer*. Now, I'm one of the *Owners* of the company. It's a neat story from the standpoint of starting out teaching *Martial Arts* as a 15-year-old kid and now being one of the owners of what I would say is one of the highly respected and established privately owned fitness clubs in the industry.

C.I. - Well, that's precisely why we're talking to you. It is a great story, and we know our readers can and will learn from you. With 32 years of experience in the industry, you've seen the pandemic, you've seen the proliferation of all the different models and a club on seemingly every corner. Please take us through some of the highlights of your career as well as some of those trials and tribulations.

CM - The highlights of my career involves the amazing people that I have been lucky enough to work with throughout my career. I started with my business partners and co-owners of the WAC. **Keith Nygren** and **Ted Torcivia** (*IHRSA's 4th President, 1984 - 85*), who started the business back in 1976. Keith is still involved as an Owner, while Ted



Welcome to Wisconsin Athletic Club

retired in 2010. **Ray O'Connor**, industry veteran with over 40 years' experience and a former *IHRSA Board Member* and **Keith Mardak**, a very successful businessman makes up our current ownership group.

These partners have been instrumental in my success and have served as great mentors throughout my career. WAC also has a very talented group of *General Managers* and *Department Directors* that make up our *Leadership Team*. Over the years, WAC has accomplished a lot, and I want to make it clear that the credit for WAC's success belongs to our entire ownership group and leadership team. It has been a team effort.

We've had so many amazing people who have worked at the WAC over the years. That's really what's made us, as a company, successful. We've just been lucky in a lot of ways to attract and retain outstanding people. I'll talk more about our people later, but that is really our secret sauce. *Having the right people doing the right things gets the right results.*

The cool thing about being at WAC for over 30 years is that I've seen us grow from one club when I first started with approximately 50 employees, to today, where we have eight clubs and over 1,200 employees. Consistently growing the business year after year has been an extremely fulfilling, challenging and fun experience.

When I started in the '90s, our industry wasn't as established as it is today. Resources were limited and you had to figure out many things on the fly. Whether it was designing clubs,

determining program offerings or creating policies and procedures, you had to figure it out through trial and error. I really enjoyed the challenges that came with solving those problems and coming up with creative solutions.

Over the years, I've been able to be part of all the various aspects of our business, many of which I had no background or experience in. I had to become a quick learner and take some risks along the way. I would encourage young leaders to make sure that they are constantly learning and putting themselves in new situations to help themselves grow and develop.

Throughout my career, I've seen a lot of club models come and go. I think part of it is that our industry is relatively young. I always compare our industry to the restaurant industry. Think of all the changes restaurants have gone through over the past 100 years. Different models, price points, concepts, etc. Our industry is no different. Some models will be short-term trends and others will have a more lasting effect in our industry. While trends will come and go, the one thing that is consistent in our industry is change. To have success over time, you need to constantly improve and make sure that you're meeting your members' ever-changing needs.

C.I. - That's fantastic stuff. Well said. Please tell us about a typical facility for *The WAC* today (acreage, square footage, amenities, services, etc.).

CM - Our eight clubs are all a little bit different; we don't take a cookie-cutter approach. For us, the concept is to build clubs that we as owners would like to belong to. Specifically, our clubs range anywhere from the smallest club, about 30,000 square feet, to our largest at about 95,000 square feet. Most of them are in the middle range, about 40,000 to 60,000 square feet.

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Welcome to Wisconsin Athletic Club (The WAC)





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...Chez Misko

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They're all multipurpose. We have fitness programs, we have group fitness programs, and all but one has multiple pools, splash pads for kids, whirlpools, etc. They have higher-end finishes and quality equipment. Our largest club has tennis. Our *West Allis Club*, which was the original club, has an IHRSA award-winning racquetball and handball program with six courts. In most of our facilities, we have gyms that can do basketball, volleyball, and of course, now, pickleball is part of that. We also have some outdoor pickleball courts.

Maybe a little different than a lot of health clubs, in the majority of our clubs, we have a *Club Pub* area where we do have actual full-service bars in our clubs. That comes from our racquetball/handball days when it was pretty common for people to go to a bar area and socialize after playing. That's still a big component for us, because we really want to make sure that we keep the club feel versus just being a fitness center or a gym.

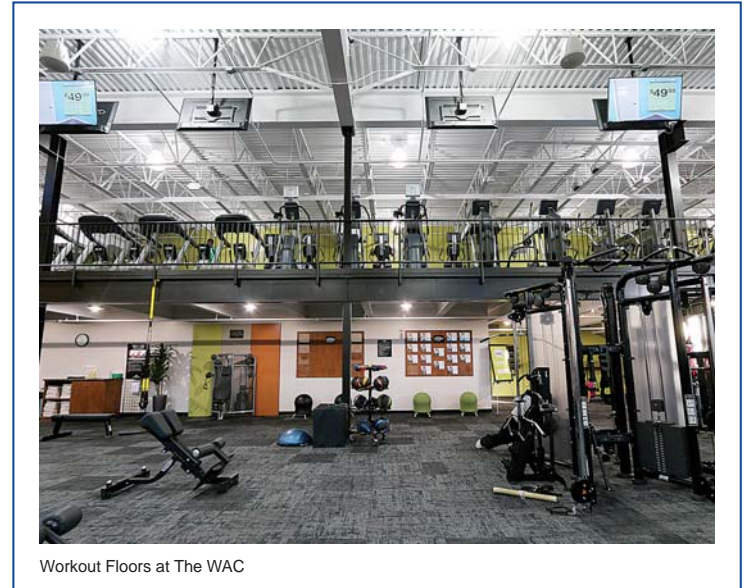
We want people to feel like they really belong and are connected. And, we find that, if we can really connect them on a social level, that has a much bigger impact on retention than almost any other

programming that we can do. That's because, when they come here and they have other friends here, those relationships really do make a big difference. A new club can be built, but if all a member's friends are here, they're going to stay where their friends are, where they have those relationships and where they have a sense of community.

C.I. - As a kid, I can remember my Dad loved that concept in his clubs. He loved the idea of people having a place to mingle, hang out and **HAVE FUN**. As you said, we really don't see that as much these days, and that is sad.

CM - Every club group tries to be the best at something, right? What we really want to be the best at in the world is *connecting*. That's really our focal point. *We want to connect people to other people. We want to connect our members to our staff. We want to connect our staff to other staff. We want to connect our members to our programs.* We really want to connect all those dots together, because we feel that's really what creates the best retention experience for people. The more people they know, whether it's our club members or our team members (staff), they have that community they feel comfortable coming into and interacting with.

Every club has a feel to it, and every club feels a little different. Going back to restaurants, one restaurant feels warm and welcoming, while another restaurant feels cold and uninviting. We really try to manage the 'feel' that our clubs have, and when people come into our facilities, we want them to leave thinking, 'I really enjoyed coming to the club today.' They might not even know why they enjoyed it, but they did. Maybe they didn't realize it was the *Aggressive Hospitality* they received from our staff, but it was there. Maybe they don't realize the way that we laid out the flow of the equipment and spaces or notice the little things that we do to try to make sure people



Workout Floors at The WAC

feel comfortable and welcome in our clubs, but they're there. It's all these little things that we do that make a big difference to what the members experience in our clubs.

C.I. - Once again, well said. Speaking of your members, please take us through your membership levels and what they include.

CM - We really try to keep it simple. We have *one membership: the WAC Membership*. We do have junior and senior memberships options that have a discount associated with them. Our pricing for that standard membership is approximately **\$79 per month**. Members have access to all of our clubs in the Metro Milwaukee area. For a lot of our families who are members, we might see the wife at one location and the husband at another location, or they might come and use the outdoor pool at one club or the indoor track at another club. They can utilize those multiple locations and various amenities to accomplish any of their needs. The access to multiple locations has been a differentiator for us.

I'll add to that. Because we've been in the community for so long, we've stopped doing traditional marketing. We don't do any paid advertising anymore. We stopped doing postcards, radio ads and those types of things, outside of opening up a new club. Our difference is our people, and you cannot convey that message on a postcard. So, we market by connecting our Team Members to the communities we serve. We make sure that we own our neighborhoods, so when someone decides to join a health club, we are the first club they think of and visit.

We also do what we call *Working Well*. It's a program that we have where we operate fitness programs/centers for companies in the metro Milwaukee area. In some cases, we're just doing a few group fitness classes a week. In other cases, we might have fitness and group fitness staff there for 60 or more hours a week. Each of those situations is a little different, but we have several hundred relationships with companies in the metro Milwaukee area that we provide a variety of different services for.

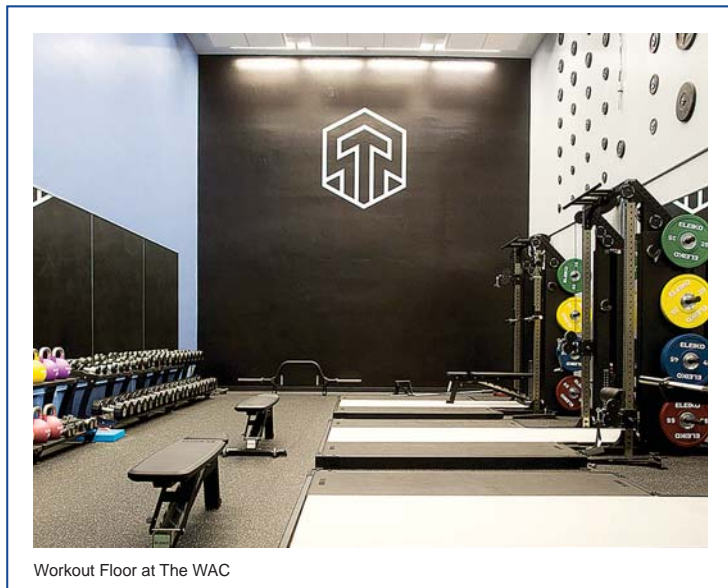
C.I. - If you can share, how many membership accounts do you have, and how many members does this equate to?

CM - From a membership standpoint, we have about **25,000 memberships**, and that equates to about **40,000 members**. Of course, this fluctuates a bit throughout the year.

C.I. - I'm pretty sure 'staff' is going to be the answer to this next question... So, what do you consider your key market differentiators?

CM - Exactly. Our differentiator is our Team Members. They're the ones who really are out there living our mission. Our mission is really simple: **We make a difference in people's lives**. As a company, we focus on making a difference with our team members' lives. In turn, they then make a difference with our members' lives, and that makes a difference in our business. Each part takes care of the next part in that process.

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...Chez Misko

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One way we bring visibility to this is that we start our Team Member meetings by sharing *WAC Moments*. We go around talking about all the ways that they made a difference in somebody's life. It can pertain to a club member or a team member. In some cases, it can be something very large, like someone doing CPR and saving a person's life. Another situation could just be that they saw somebody struggling entering the club with a bag and two small children, so they went out, held the door open and helped that person check into the club. It can be a little thing or a big thing, but we take the time to share and recognize this behavior with our Team Members. Every meeting starts with that.

We also have a program that we call *WAC Bucks*. If a team member recognizes another team member creating a WAC Moment, they can give them a WAC Buck, and it's worth a buck. Team Members can collect them and then use them for anything we offer, whether it's buying a drink or getting a massage. If you collect 20 of them, it's worth 20 bucks. They can utilize those for whatever they want. Any Team Member can give it to another; they just must share what it was for (a WAC Moment, not just showing up for work or covering a shift). I think that's really helped us create a culture where we're not just talking about our Mission but truly living it. That's a differentiator.

I mentioned our Mission (*We make a difference in people's lives.*), and with that, our core values are to *connect*, to *care* and to *continuously improve* our business. This is how we make a difference, and it's through all those little things that I mentioned. Being fun, friendly, smiling and creating a home away from home environment. These aren't just words or a sign on the wall for us; these are things that happen every day.

Another differentiator is that, in each of our areas, we strive for continuous improvement. Whether it's a customer experience, our programming or anything else, we strive to be better. I think we've done a really good job of offering great group fitness and fitness programming. Since COVID, I think a lot of clubs have seen a downturn in group fitness and personal training. With personal training, we've seen the opposite. Last year was our best year from a personal training total revenue standpoint. And, as an average, we see our group fitness classes at 70+% of total capacity.

So, we're really seeing a lot of people participating in programs, and we believe that is because of another differentiator for us... *We really want people to utilize our clubs*. Unfortunately, I believe a lot of people in our industry sell a lot of memberships and then hope that they don't use the club. We have the opposite mindset. We want people to be members, but we want them to utilize their membership. We feel that, if people are utilizing their membership, they're much less likely to quit the club. That's really the main point, and that's what our staff's job is. In fact, our staff's job description is simple: *'to get and retain members.'* That's the primary job description for every person who works at WAC, and it's all about creating the best possible member experience.

C.I. - Fantastic stuff! Carrying it further, and to what you mentioned earlier, what does The WAC do to reach out to and help the community?

CM - Each of our clubs has a community outreach plan, and we do a variety of different things. In some cases, we attend community events and festivals and offer fitness and group fitness classes. Other times, we support local non-profit events by donating raffle items. We do toy drives during the Holidays, we collect clothes for homeless shelters, food for food banks,

etc... So, each month, our clubs have a plan for what they're doing in each of their communities. In each community, we are constantly looking for new ways for us to reach out and connect. Of course, this is all driven by our team members. They are always sharing new ideas and bringing us ways to reach out and connect. Beyond our team members, our club members have really stepped up and are actively participating in these events and bringing new groups into the club for us to work with.

C.I. - I love it, and that puts you front and center, eye to eye with your fellow community members. And, I'm sure many come to visit you all because of it.

CM - Yes, our presence in the community has had a big impact on our ability to sell memberships and connect people to our club.

C.I. - After your experiences, I am sure you have some lessons you would like to share. Please share any you may have for upcoming participants in this field, from front-line to C-Suite.

CM - Yes, I have a few... *Create a personal development plan for yourself*. The hardest person you're ever going to manage is yourself. For many who get into our industry, they don't spend time on how they are going to grow and develop themselves as leaders. I would encourage you to have a written plan outlining the ways that you're going to grow and develop each year. Don't leave it up to chance. Set some goals for yourself and outline the steps that you're going to take to accomplish them.

I would correlate this to an exercise program. If you want to get in shape, you have to have a plan that includes a healthy diet and exercising on a regular basis. If you want to lead, develop, coach and manage people, you must make sure that you're starting with leading and developing yourself first. I think that personal development is really important. I

encourage all our team members here at the WAC to figure out ways to continuously improve themselves every year. That's the concept I keep going back to, but I think that's important. You're either improving or declining.

Another lesson that has helped me be successful is *visualizing what doing your best looks like to you*.

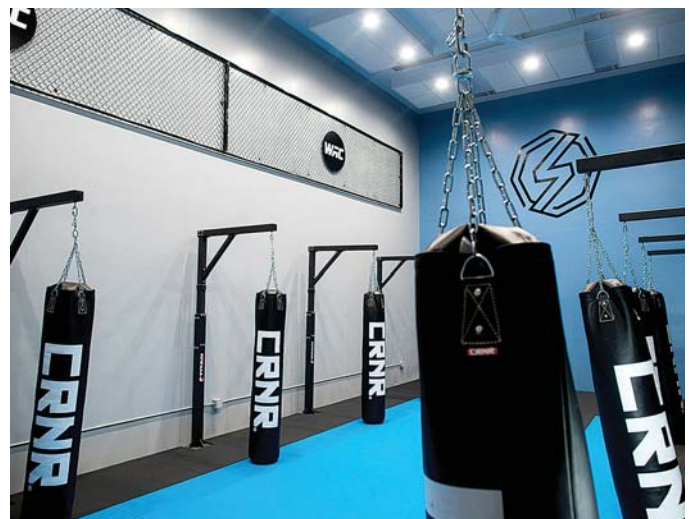
One of the things that I encourage people to spend time on is visualizing how they become the best at what they're currently doing. The exercise is simple. Visualize what doing your job would look like if it was done the best way possible. In your own mind, you are creating the image of what *best* looks like. Let's use this as an example. Let's say you are a Fitness Manager. What would the best Fitness Manager look like? What would they do? How would they manage their team? Etc. Once you have envisioned what the best Fitness Manager is, you can now take steps to become that version yourself. You have now created a standard for yourself and can work towards that vision.

Having that vision gives you feedback on how you're progressing at your job. Are you moving closer to the vision or further away? You don't have to wait for somebody else to give you feedback on your progress or how you're doing because you already know. That gives you more control over your career and allows you to push yourself to be the best that you can be. Personally, I have used this throughout my career, starting when I was 11 years old teaching Martial Arts and have continued to do so through all the roles that I've had at WAC. It has helped me stand out from the crowd because I have held myself to the high standard that I had created for each role that I have had throughout my career.

Lastly are my *Five Cs of Success*. It goes through five specific things that I've learned over the years that I think are really crucial for success. If you want to have
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Wisconsin Athletic Club - Since 1976



Workout Floor at The WAC

...Chez Misko

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success in anything, it comes back to these five concepts:

■ **Confidence** - If you don't believe in yourself, no one will. You have to learn to be comfortable in uncomfortable situations. Life is a confidence game.

■ **Communication** - To be a successful leader, it is imperative to have good communication skills. As a leader, it is your responsibility to effectively communicate a message. It is important to remember and use the following when communicating with your team:

■ **Congruency** - Make sure that your words, tone of voice and body language all convey the same message. If not, you will be sending a mixed message that lacks clarity.

■ **Conciseness** - Remove words that do not add clarity or value to a sentence. Eliminate unnecessary modifiers.

■ **Clarity** - Be crystal clear about what you want to achieve as a result of your communication. Know your point. There should be no ambiguity in the message. Say exactly what you mean.

■ **Check for Understanding** - It is not enough to just deliver the message. You have to make sure the recipient understands it.

■ **Choose the Right Medium for the Message** - E-mail? Voice mail? A group meeting? One-on-one? The choices are many, and the message should determine which medium you select. Choose wisely.

Don't forget that the most important communication you have is with yourself. Positive self-talk is crucial to your success.

■ **Continuous Improvement** - I've spent a whole bunch of time on this already. Being content to remain at the level that you

have already achieved is your first step backwards. You're either getting better or worse; there is no in-between. Our job as leaders is to make sure we're constantly pushing people so they're continuously learning, developing and growing. Things are either improving or they're declining. There's no in-between.

■ **Consistency** - The consistency of doing the right things makes you successful. You have to create consistent habits that allow you to be the best you can be. As a leader, inconsistency can make people feel uncomfortable. It makes people not trust you. It creates a variety of negative issues. You must have the self-discipline to hold yourself accountable to do the important things every day.

■ **Caring** - You have to show care and compassion in order to have success.

If you're not successful at something, look back at these Five Cs, and you can probably pinpoint one or two of them that are the reasons why you're not. Maybe you don't have the confidence in yourself to do it, or you aren't doing the consistent things that you need to do to be successful... So, look to these Five Cs to see if something is missing and preventing you from being successful.

For those in Leadership roles, I would also like to share my *Three D's*. To be successful as a leader, there are certain things that you should be **Doing**. There are other things you should be **Delegating**. And, it is critical that you make time for **Dreaming**. You need all three, and you need to consistently be evaluating the tasks that you're doing and how you are spending your time so that you can be productive. As a leader, it's easy to get caught up with the "doing side" of your job, but it's critical that you can delegate effectively so you have the time to be able to *Dream*... I believe the Five Cs and the Three Ds go together.

C.I. - I LOVE IT!!! Those are excellent words of advice and great lessons. Closing out this interview, what does the future hold for the WAC?

CM - From a WAC standpoint, we want to continue to grow the business. Right now, our focus is getting our clubs to be the best they can be. We have a few locations that we will be remodeling and expanding over the next year. We're always looking for expansion, but we want to make sure that we grow in a way that allows us to be in business for another 47 years. My business partner always says, *'It's not the deals that you don't do that kill you; it's the ones that you shouldn't have done.'*

When you look back at our industry, over the years, you have seen companies come in and they had a hundred locations before you knew it. Then, they couldn't manage and sustain that growth. For us, we want to really have quality over quantity. With that being said, if we found the right location, we would definitely expand and grow. We're actively looking and doing things, but it's got to be the right thing/fit at the right time. And, we have to have the right people to be able to do that. We are constantly focused on building our team so that, if the right opportunity did come along, we would have the ability to do that and not have that as a reason we couldn't grow or expand. We try to always have the next person on deck, and we spend a lot of time making sure that we're positioned to grow at any point in time. For us, we believe that, if we're at the level where we can absorb a new club, it means that we're also able to really execute on what we're currently doing as part of that process. I think that's the big deal.

We will continue our Aggressive Hospitality. It doesn't seem difficult, right? Smiling... Using people's names... Connecting with people... It's not hard. But, because it's simple to do, it's also simple not to do. I think there's a lot of people who just don't do some really basic things,

and that's what causes them to not have success over time. A five-year growth plan of 10+ new locations is sexy, right? The basics aren't as sexy, but they are the most important thing that makes us successful and will create a legacy.

C.I. - How about you personally? What can we expect from you in the future?

CM - From my standpoint, I love this industry. It's just something that I really do enjoy. From being a Martial Arts Instructor to start with, then Personal Trainer and other things, I always loved being able to really help people. I can see their progress, and for me, that's the part of our industry that I love. I'm in a position now where I can coach, develop and train people, and we have literally hundreds of people, whether it's our team members, or club members that I can continue to do that with. While we've made a lot of great strides over the years, we still have a long way to go to continue that mission. Our company's Mission is also mine personally. I really feel strongly about making a difference in people's lives. I feel that I have a long roadway ahead of me to continue to make all those things happen. Besides the club stuff, I've been helping other small businesses and entrepreneurs grow or get their business started. I enjoy helping them solve problems and sharing the lessons that I have learned.

■ ■ ■

Thank you very much to **Chez Misko** for his time interviewing and the expertise he has shared with you all. Thank you also to **Stephanie Pauly** for her assistance with photos and graphics. Finally, thank you all for reading!

(Justin Cates is the Publisher of Club Insider. You can reach Justin by phone at 863-999-2677 or email at Justin@clubinsideronline.com.)



Aquatics at The WAC



Aquatics at The WAC

Four Keys to Effective Leadership

By: **Chris Stevenson**

Effective leadership is essential for the success of any organization. Leadership is a skill that can be challenging to learn. However, once mastered, it makes a massive difference in the success and growth of an organization. While many skills, traits and strategies are necessary for effective leadership, four fundamental building blocks have emerged throughout my career as the most essential. Influential leaders inspire and motivate their team members, communicate effectively, create an environment of collaboration and participation, and ensure that all team members always feel appreciated. A foundation for success has been laid when these building blocks are solidly in place. In this article, we will explore these four critical attributes of effective leadership and how they can be used to create a successful and productive work environment:

1. Inspiration: Effective leadership begins with inspiration. The key to inspiration is creating and infusing culture with a meaningful vision, mission statement and core values. While creating these items is an article in and of itself, we will focus on infusing these criteria into an organization. Infusing culture consists of marketing it to the team and making it part of the employee journey. Culture can be sold to team members through strategies such as posting the vision, mission and values in the facility's office, breakroom or other areas that team members utilize. Also, consider creating tools such as "core cards," which list the mission, vision and values that employees keep in their pockets while on shift. Another avenue includes cultural reminders in training materials, handouts and email signatures. The more creative ways of keeping vision, mission and values in the forefront of your team members' minds, the more they become ingrained. Incorporation into the employee journey is the other facet of infusing culture. Include your guiding fundamentals in job listings and the interview and hiring process. Make them a comprehensive part of onboarding and ongoing training. Evaluations and expressions of appreciation and gratitude should heavily reference the vision, mission and values. When leaders infuse culture, team members feel a sense of purpose, which leads to higher engagement and productivity, thus, a healthy and effective work environment.

2. Communication: Effective leaders are effective communicators. To effectively communicate, three areas must be addressed: cadence, methods and skills. Cadence refers to creating a regular schedule of what and when things will

be shared. A predictable communication pattern creates trust and empowers team members. Great communicators also use various communication methods since team members receive information differently. Methods include meetings, emails, Zoom, phone calls and face-to-face. The other part of communication diversification is knowing what methods are the most effective and appropriate for different types of information or messaging. The final component is basic communication skills. Leaders who communicate effectively focus on skills such as body language, tone, word choice, active listening and empathy. Communication is the undercurrent of successful relationships. Leaders who can communicate effectively enhance company intelligence, growth and morale.

3. Participation: Effective leaders drive participation from team members. The more team members can participate, the higher the buy-in from them. Two ways to involve team members are seeking feedback and active participation opportunities. Feedback can be acquired through various methods, such as surveys, eNPS, the Gallup Q12 questionnaires, start/stop/continue exercises and face-to-face conversations. The great thing about seeking feedback is that you give team members a voice they appreciate while gathering valuable information. It's a win-win. The complementary piece to feedback is finding active ways for team members to participate. Examples are personal development, professional development, training assignments, mentorships and special projects. When team members participate, they feel more like a part of a

team rather than just an employee. Such ownership leads to much higher satisfaction and performance.

4. Appreciation: Effective leaders consistently express appreciation. While appreciation is a concept that can seem nebulous, it's not. Plenty of research demonstrates the impact of feeling appreciated and its positive impact on employee engagement and performance. The practical expression of gratitude must be done frequently, timely and specifically. In practice, this means catching team members doing things well often and praising them specifically at that moment. Effective leaders also recognize that different team members will likely prefer to receive praise differently. These leaders use various methods, such as face-to-face, emails, meeting announcements, posts on social media, etc. Note that appreciation isn't just about recognizing good performance. Acknowledging birthdays, work anniversaries and other personal achievements lets team members know they are cared about. Get creative with how you let team members know they are appreciated. An appreciated team member is an engaged and productive team member.



These four keys have helped me tremendously throughout my career. When leaders inspire their team members, communicate effectively, provide opportunities for participation and show appreciation for their hard work and dedication, they stay engaged and give it



Chris Stevenson

their all. When team members give it their all, customers have a great experience and the organization is successful! Leadership is a complex and challenging task, but when done right, it can bring out the best in everyone involved and is truly rewarding.

(Chris Stevenson, former Power Ranger stuntman, is the Founder of The Empower Group, a full-service consulting firm with services ranging from staff training, workshops, full facility management and more. Stevenson has over 20 years of experience in many aspects of the health and fitness industry. In addition, he is an international speaker who regularly presents at IHRSA, Athletic Business, Club Industry and many other fitness and business events. From health and wellness to business strategies. Chris can be reached by phone at 818-519-6038 or email at chris@stevensonempowers.com.)

The Six Key Areas to Prepare for Underwriting an SBA Loan and Equipment Lease

By: **Paul Bosley**

The process of underwriting SBA loans, equipment leases and equipment financing agreements has evolved significantly since the pandemic began a few years ago. The purpose of this article is to share our observations of the six key factors considered by analysts in the underwriting process. It is a rare occurrence that applicants are strong in all areas, so the process is subjective in many respects weighing the following key considerations.

1. What is your Personal Credit Score? A 700+ credit score is a safe minimum standard. By looking closely at your credit report, lenders can gauge how well you pay your bills and if you have comparable

credit. If an applicant is a homeowner with a house mortgage that is current, an analyst can determine if the applicant is or has serviced comparable credit. Lenders also consider your available credit compared to your current level of debt, which is used to calculate your debt-to-income ratio. This ratio is calculated by comparing your annual family income to your current annual debt payments. Some lenders calculate a global debt to income ratio, which adds the estimated annual debt payment of the loan or lease to your current annual debt payments.

2. What in your Background will lead to your future success? Underwriters first look for work experience and/or education
(See **Paul Bosley Page 17**)



Paul Bosley

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JLR Associates Announces Exciting Changes

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NEW JERSEY - In today's rapidly changing business landscape, the fitness industry is just like any other industry and must be able to adapt and evolve to stay competitive. One crucial aspect of this adaptability is the ability to successfully reposition a company for success, and *JLR Associates* is doing just that. As part of our ongoing commitment to delivering the best possible solutions to meet your recruitment needs, we are excited to share some significant developments within our company.

First, as with any repositioning strategies, we determined the specific target markets or audiences we needed to focus on with our repositioning efforts and realized we needed to increase our reach to new segments. As a result, we have expanded our team by incorporating *seven new Recruiter Specialists*. They are poised to provide the diligent focus your search has consistently merited. Our specialized segments are aquatics, gymnastics, group

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Our Mission is to *build lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with both clients and candidates while staying true to our core values*. We are committed to serving as trusted partners to our clients and gaining maximum results by finding top-performing talent that fits your culture and will make a positive and lasting impact on your organization. Through these strategic changes, we aim to elevate our partnership within the fitness and wellness industry,

and our goal is to ensure that we continue providing you with exceptional service and remain a reliable partner for your recruiting needs.

If you would like to reach out to any of our recruiters to discuss any of your recruiting needs, they will be more than happy to schedule a call with you at your convenience:

Daniel Plante
Fitness Studio Recruiter Specialist
 (856) 412 - 8201

Jason A. Freeland
Fitness Recruiter Specialist
 (856) 807 - 5464

Shannon Malooy
Marketing Recruiter Specialist
 (856) 807 - 5181

Jaimie Clout
Aquatics Recruiter Specialist
 (856) 807 - 5484

Gary Polic
Sales Recruiter Specialist
 (856) 886 - 4896

Laura Aiello
Group Exercise Recruiter Specialist
 (856) 807 - 5348

Tanya Schmidt
Gymnastics Recruiter Specialist
 (856) 412 - 8390

Thank you once again for your continued trust in JLR Associates. Feel free to drop us a line or give us a call!

Be sure to check out the **JLR Associates Ad on This Page**.

It's Booty Time!

By: Gary Polic

Back by popular demand, here we go again with another Q&A with **Victor "VMan" Verhage!** This time, we are highlighting what will be the #1 focus and on the "main stage space" for members in your clubs in 2024! I am privileged and honored again to highlight *Polic Consultants Group* specialist, Victor "VMan" Verhage. It is *Booty Time!* Are you ready to light up your members' Gluts? Well, you better be, because their Booty has everything to do with lower back pain and so much more than looks! So, buckle up *Club Insider Subscribers...* Let us get you ready to Rumble! It's *Booty Time!*

An Interview With Victor "VMan" Verhage

Victor "VMan" Verhage is an experienced *Personal Training/Small Group Training/Group Fitness, Design, Equipment Selection & Purchasing, Recovery and Solutions Specialist* with a demonstrated 28-year history working in the health, fitness and wellness industries. Skilled in maximizing usage, profitability and member traffic in the PT/SGT/GF areas and spaces.

Polic Consultants Group (PCG) - What do you believe will be the absolute 'Hottest Trend' on the main fitness floor? Cardio? Lifting Platforms? Abs?

Victor "VMan" Verhage (V) - No Sir, none of those, the answer is... It is 'Booty Training Time!' Please let me explain, because I've yet to see one fitness club, studio or boutique figure this out and be able to explain their plan.

What do I mean by that? Well, first, if they have figured it out and do have a plan, then it is very obvious. When you walk in the door where the 'Ab' section used to be #1, they now have a 'Booty Boutique' in its place.

More importantly, it has been professionally designed by someone like **Barbara Chancey**. She is the top professional studio and boutique designer in the world. Long gone are the days of just sticking 'Booty' equipment in along with the other 'Body Parts,' then saying, 'we've got a 'Booty' training area, do you see it, it's mixed in with the rest of the massive amount of equipment we have in the warehouse we call a fitness club or gym.'

PCG - There are a lot of options to choose from when adding Booty Training equipment; which are your top picks and why?

V - Hang in there and wait for the surprise ending:

#1 is *Booty Builder*, they make a complete circuit and have 'Booty Builder' branding to help identify the space or area easily for members and clients to find.

My #2 pick is *FreeMotion Fitness*, a cable-based line where every piece can be used to train the booty.

Coming in at #3 is *Perform Better* with their mini bands and super bands; this is the most affordable option.

There is a two-way tie at #4: *Hyperice* and *Power Plate*, utilizing their vibration technology, one of my most guarded secrets that I see no social media gurus even mention.

Finally, #5, completely unknown, is the *OHM Run Delta-Kinetic Trainer*. I bet you have not heard of this one; it's absolutely incredible technology.

PCG - What about booty training programming?

V - This is a really tough question, but here goes... First and most important, before I ever suggest or recommend a booty exercise or piece of equipment, I have to check to see if the booty even works, meaning do the booty muscles activate or turn on (booty muscle contraction)?

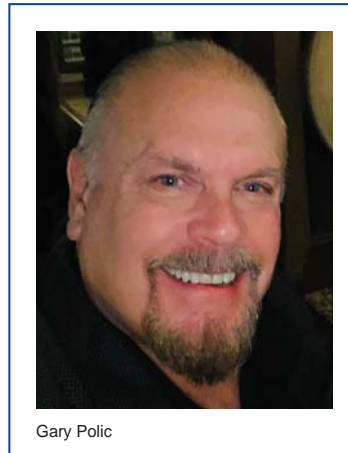
What is going to really be a news flash is that 98% of the members, PT/Studio clients or athletes that I screen, have little to no booty activation. Ready for this? Even more amazing is how the living body with fascia, CNS and brain work together vs. the old body part philosophy of just believing that the booty can be isolated from everything else and just automatically contract, grow, shape and firm because you do a booty exercise or use a booty machine.

That is why I screen and verify vs. just pretend and guess. The ultimate is using surface EMG (bit.ly/clubinsider150).

PCG - Is booty training important and why?

V - Absolutely, most of the members, athletes and PT clients I train are not genetically gifted with a 'big booty' that grows, lifts and twerks no matter what they do. To be clear, when I see them train online or in the gym, clearly, they are putting in the effort to get the amazing results they earn, gift or no gift.

Here's 'why' booty training is so critical and important from a non-fitness figure competitor perspective. First, the booty is the backside of the core to help with protecting your spine from potential injuries. Just ask **Gray Cook, Lee Burton, Dr. Stuart McGill, Dr. Gary Gray, Thomas Myers** and other world-renowned experts with the data to verify this.



Gary Polic



Victor "VMan" Verhage

How many potential members or clients have low back pain or problems that require core training for the rest of their life, and they also have a 90% daily sedentary job? What could you offer them to help? A 'Booty Training Backside of the Core' program.

There's currently 619 million people globally with low back pain, and it's estimated to increase to 843 million by 2050 if we don't do something to help them. We must communicate we care and want to help them with a new booty training program, which should also include nutrition, hydration, recovery and sleep.

The booty is also super important in helping steer your knees, foot and ankle when walking, stepping, running or sprinting. How many potential new members, PT clients or athletes would love to come meet with you to learn more about helping them with that?

So, with all the potential new members and clients and the certified skilled professional you need to accomplish this, would this also help with recruiting more long-term career focused coaches and trainers?

PCG - How do you use booty training to market or prospect for new member leads, then convert them to paying clients, then retain them (long-term over 18 months) and earn referrals?

V - Getting started, I use social media to create awareness and interest (you've got to be very creative and interesting with your tagline and post). Next, I go out on the fitness floor and engage members so they can 'discover' the specific benefits or problems I can help them solve with booty training. Usually, they will investigate to see and experience for themselves to build value and trust.

Then, I have an 'Intro Booty Training Offer' to help them get started and create consistent positive engagement. Yes, this is where hands-on skill training

will retain and keep them as a paying client; there is no option for, 'fake it, till you make it,' or 'just pretend you know what you are talking about.' High level skill training and experience will usually earn a potential guest or member's trust in 2 - 4 reps, five mins or less, not 30, 45 or 60 minutes. That is exactly how long it took **Gray Cook, Dr. Stuart McGill** and **Gary Gray** to earn thousands of dollars and tons of referrals from me for over 15 years.

Results = Referrals. When you use your education, skills and booty equipment to produce positive lasting results, referrals show up in your appointment book/CRM without asking, and even better, referrals show up to your club or studio, early and on time. I still do ask and reward clients and members who do. The focus of each session or class is to help ensure clients and members are moving better, feeling better and playing better.

PCG - How do you explain what a booty training program is to a guest or staff member?

V - It is a complete, 'Toes to Nose,' approach with more energy and focus on the booty. We begin with a simple, short bodyweight movement screening evaluation to determine if they know how to move, if they move with compensations (feet flattening, ankles overpronated, knees diving inwards, toros tipping forward, low back rounding, shoulders and scapula stiff or stuck) or if they move, smoothly, naturally and with high quality alignment of their joints from ankles to fingertips.

For most guests, members, clients and athletes, their highest priority is durability and injury prevention training. They simply want to move and play better with lower risk of injury, pain and missed work or playing time. Also important is the cost of surgeries... For an ACL, it is \$6K and up. For lower back surgery, it is \$50K (See **Gary Polic** Page 17)

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and up to over \$100K. Huge difference!

PCG - VMan, do you have any final thoughts or suggestions?

V - Just two. First, booty training is so much more than loading up a seven-foot barbell with as much weight as possible, then using a plyo box or dumbbell bench to do hip thrusts, while you crank your neck into excessive flexion, decreasing your oxygen intake and increasing your blood pressure, just so a member can get tons of clicks on social media.

Finally, the booty boutique area should be designed to invite and inspire. The space should be well promoted and programmed for maximum walk-in guest traffic, conversions, retention and referrals. And, yes, I can and would love to help you design and create everything I shared with you in this article to help grow your new member base, sell more PT, earn more referrals and retain your members and PT clients for many years.

(Gary Polic is the Owner of Polic Consultants Group, LLC. Gary can be reached by phone at 630-410-1120 or email at gary@policconsultantsgroup.com. You can also visit www.policconsultantsgroup.com.)

...Paul Bosley

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in the industry you are applying to secure financing. Previous or current ownership and/or management experience within the fitness industry is especially highly valued. Next, portable skills learned from positions outside the industry, including finance, sales, marketing and management, are then considered if you have not previously worked in the industry. Finally, educational degrees in health and fitness or a related field are also considered. In short, creating a resume to highlight and customize your strengths is an important element in securing a loan approval.

3. How much is your Equity Injection so you will have "skin in the game?"

Typically, SBA loan applicants must invest at least 10% of the project's total cost, and rarely are applicants required to invest more than 30% of the total project cost. The total project cost of SBA loans typically includes all monies needed to successfully launch any business, including three months of working capital. With equipment finance agreements and equipment leases, the equity injection for a new business is typically 20% of the total equipment and soft costs of the total dollar amount being requested. The deposit requested for an existing business can be as little as one lease payment in advance.

4. Do you have a Secondary Source of Income? Are you keeping your job? Are you married and will your spouse continue to work? These are critical concerns when the underwriter is calculating the debt coverage ratio. In the best case, your family income can support your current personal debt and the ratio exceeds 1.25. If the lender is using a global debt, the estimated repayment of the loan or lease is added to the denominator. As a result, many applicants applying to launch a new business opt to keep their current employment and hire management until the business becomes profitable and can replace the owner(s) income. In the worst case, the owner(s) only income will be the projected annual income from the new business, which makes securing an approval difficult *unless* the applicant(s) have significant liquid assets listed on their personal financial statement.

5. What is the industry of your business? Is it a Franchise? In today's post-COVID environment, securing financing for fitness centers are more easily approved than during the height of the pandemic. Established franchisors offer the best chance for applicants to secure financing because the franchisor has established a track record of success, which is reported in their annual *Franchise Disclosure Document (FDD)*. Launching a new, non-franchise business is difficult, but not impossible, to secure financing unless

the owner(s) have a very strong industry-related background. For example, our company recently arranged the financing of a climbing studio owned by a climbing instructor currently working in our Armed Services.

6. What is your Collateral? SBA loans more than \$350,000 require the owner(s) to use the business and their personal and/or commercial real estate as collateral up to the loan amount, which is discounted on a liquidated collateral basis. Collateral is required at the option of lender for all SBA loans under \$350,000. The equipment used to operate any business is highly discounted when valuing collateral for an SBA loan. Alternatively, the equipment being financed using equipment leases and finance agreements serve as the collateral for the transaction. It is important to point out that collateral is a second form of repayment, so it is rarely the main consideration of any lender because they are focused on approving applicants that they believe will be successful in repaying the loan or lease.

♦ ♦ ♦

For more information, go to www.businessfinancedepot.com. Or, please contact **Paul Bosley**, *Health Club Experts.com dba Business Finance Depot* at (800) 788 - 3884 or paul@businessfinancedepot.com.

Biohacking: What's the Opportunity?

By: Frank Guengerich

Biohacking has been around the fitness industry for years, but only recently have owners and operators come to realize the opportunities. The definition of biohacking is when you change your body chemistry and physiology through science to increase energy and vitality. So, why should a club owner and operator get heavily engaged with biohacking? There are three primary reasons.

Biohacking is perfectly aligned with the fitness industry.

The primary purpose of biohacking is to "hack" or break into one's biology to increase vitality and energy. While this is done passively, the benefits of biohacking are significant.

For example, the benefits of using a hyperbaric chamber are hard to dispute. The science shows it increases blood flow, decreases inflammation and swelling, increases the body's ability to fight free radicals and simulates growth of new blood vessels. And, since there are over 60,000 miles of blood vessels in your body, it is vital we stimulate new blood vessels. Did you catch that? Yes, I said you have 60,000 miles of blood vessels! That's enough to circle the world an astounding two times! One more fascinating attribute of this biohacking technology is that it has been shown to slow the shorting of the telomeres. Telomeres are directly tied to aging, and as they shorten, the body ages.

So, all forms of biohacking can directly tie into the same goals we are attempting to achieve through physical fitness.

Biohacking is a massive revenue opportunity.

While dues revenue is our primary source of revenue, the massive financial opportunity with biohacking that club owners are clearly missing should not be underestimated. One of the most recent clubs my company operated under a management contract had a 2,000 square-foot space that was totally underutilized. We basically had eight rooms the size of a large massage room that we converted into a wellness and recovery center. This space generated between **\$30,000 - \$70,000 monthly**, netting 40% overall.

The margins can be significant. For example, a medically-supervised weight loss program is a cash cow. The medication is titrated, and the product cost is minimal. The primary cost is labor, but the fee charged is basically **\$500 per month** for a minimum of six months. IV Therapy and injections (fat burner, B-12,

Tri-Amino) are similar in terms of profit margin. Red light therapy and hyperbaric chamber margins are even better because of very minimal labor costs, and sessions will cost a customer **\$60 - \$100 a session**.

Yes, you will need a physician and nurses involved, but as long as you know how to negotiate the relationship properly, it is actually easy to identify a quality practice to be affiliated with. Not only does this place the risk of liability on their practice, thus keeping you out of the primary "line of fire," but you'd be surprised how motivated many practices are to be involved. It's a second source of revenue, opens them up to receive referrals and it's a cash business with no insurance billing involved.

One thing that is fascinating and important that you are comfortable with is that the majority of customers will not be members. This fact leads me to the third opportunity.

Biohacking can help you reach new customers.

For the 30+ years I've been in the fitness business, we've always been in search of ways to get sedentary people involved in our clubs. *Biohacking is the gateway.*

Depending on which stat or survey you follow, approximately 25% of the U.S. population are members of a health club. According to the *Surgeon's*

Report, 25% of the U.S. adult population is totally sedentary. This leaves 50% of the population that may be doing some form of minimum biohacking or marginal inconsistent exercise.

By offering biohacking services to the public, you've created a gateway for those individuals who would otherwise never step inside your club. It's vital that you create entry points for these individuals, such as walking and stretching programs, pre-rehabilitation, back programs and any other form a semi-passive exercise.



So, what does it take to enter the biohacking space? You'll need three things: space, equipment and professional expertise. The capital cost can be minimal but some of the equipment can be expensive if you dive in headfirst.

My company, *Health, Wellness and Lifestyle Services (HWLS)*, has created a program called the *Matrix Approach* where we have identified the *Top 15 Menu Items* that have greatest revenue and profit margin, but at the same time, minimize capital costs. Email me at frank@hwlservices.com to discuss and learn more.

In conclusion, biohacking is something that you are probably already doing, but with some strategy put behind it, you can be much more productive and

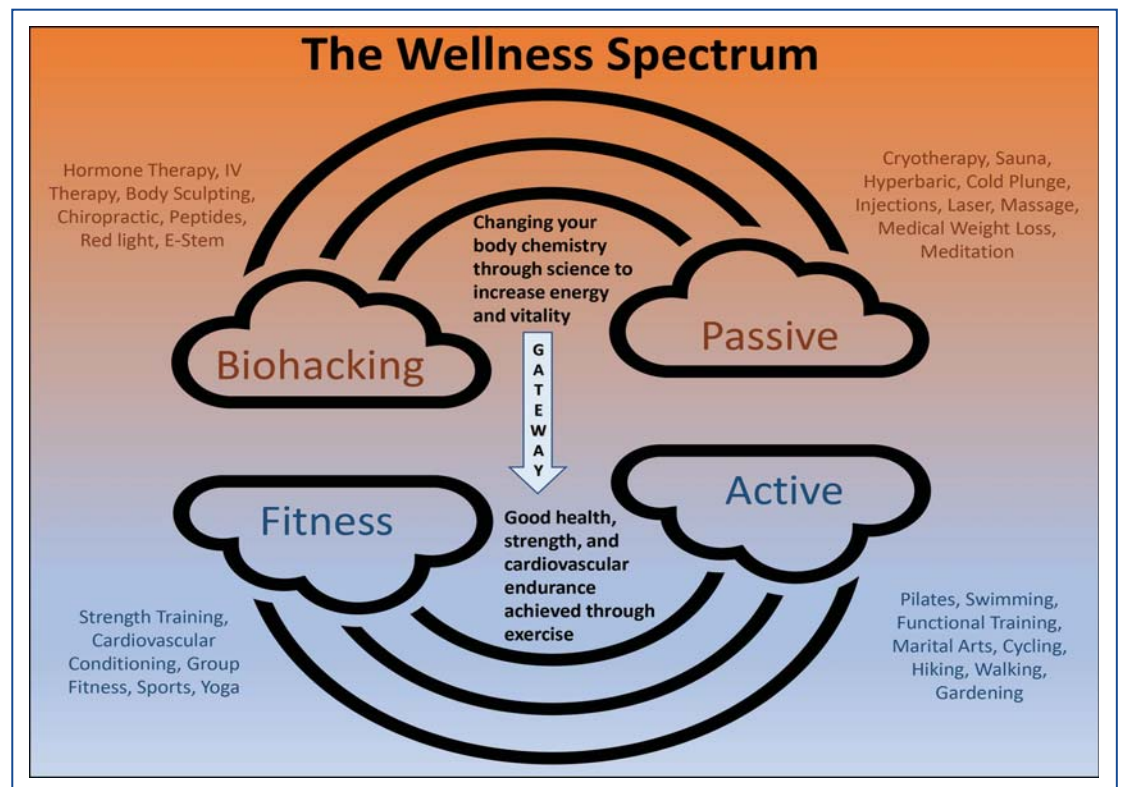


Frank Guengerich

maximize the opportunities.

(Frank Guengerich is the President and Chief Executive Officer of Health, Wellness and Lifestyle Services (HWLS), a club ownership and management consulting firm. HWLS specializes in assisting clubs maximize revenue and profitability, with a focus on membership marketing and sales, fitness programming and wellness/medically supervised programs. For more information about HWLS, go to www.hwlservices.com or email frank@hwlservices.com.)

Be sure to check out the **HWLS Ad** on the **Opposite Page**.







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The Sport of the Summer: *How to Train to Be a Pickleball Pro*

By: [Sara Kooperman, JD & Sydney Rothschild](#)

Publisher's Note: Pickleball seemed to explode out of nowhere, but in fact, it has been around for a long time. To that end, though, if you are not yet capitalizing on this sensation, it is certainly not too late. I write these words, both for you the club owner/operator and for your members. Read on to learn more about this sport and including it in your facilities. Then, by all means, print a copy of this article, and provide it to any participant who wants to get better at the game. Thank you to **Sara Kooperman, JD** and **Sydney Rothschild** for this in-depth article! We hope you find value in it.



Five years ago, I didn't even know what *Pickleball* was; now I play regularly. Over the past few years, Pickleball has become one of the fastest growing sports in the United States. According to the *Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA)*, over 8.9 million people played pickleball across the country in 2022, which was nearly double the 4.8 million players reported previously. While the game had been on the rise prior

to COVID-19, the pandemic definitely helped further spread its popularity as seen in a report by the *Association of Pickleball Professionals*, which found that more than 36.5 million people played pickleball from August 2021 to August 2022. Pickleball is a fast-paced and highly addictive sport that has taken the world by storm. The game combines elements of tennis, badminton and Ping-Pong, making it an accessible sport for players of all ages and skill sets.

A Brief History of Pickleball

While only recently becoming popular, Pickleball was actually invented in the summer of 1965 on Bainbridge Island, Washington, by three friends: **Joel Pritchard**, **Bill Bell** and **Barney McCallum**. Using Badminton paddles, a perforated plastic ball and a modified Badminton court, they created the foundations of the game. Funnily enough, the name took after the Pritchard family's dog, *Pickles*, who had the habit of chasing after stray balls and stealing them. Throughout the process of creating the game, the three kept in mind their original purpose: Creating a game that the whole family could play together. By 1967, the

first permanent Pickleball court was built in the backyard of Pritchard's friend and neighbor, **Bob O'Brian**. Soon after, in 1972, a corporation was formed to protect the sport, and in 1975, the *National Observer* wrote the first article about Pickleball. Over time, the rules became more refined, and by 1990, the sport was being played in all 50 States of the U.S.

How One Plays

As someone who is new to the sport myself, I'm still figuring out the rules and understanding the game. For starters, Pickleball is played as either singles or (more commonly) doubles. Similar to Tennis, a serve starts the game, which is hit diagonally crosscourt. After the serve, the ball must bounce before being returned, and then, the serving team must let it bounce before hitting the ball back. This is known as the "two bounce" rule. After that, both teams can either volley the ball or play it off a bounce. However, players cannot volley in "the kitchen," which is the seven-foot service area (think the area in front of the service line in Tennis) on both sides of the court. Players are able to go



into the kitchen and hit a ball only once it has bounced. A typical game is played to 11, where participants must win by two. The sport is relatively easy to learn, making it welcoming to newcomers of all ages.

Off-Court Pickleball Training

Offering off court Pickleball
(See [Sara Kooperman, JD Page 20](#))

...Sara Kooperman, JD

continued from page 19

training is growing in popularity. Personal training, group exercise sessions and small group training programs are an excellent way to leverage the popularity of this sport. Connecting with your community while increasing your bottom-line revenue will grow your club membership and expand your neighborhood outreach.

Health Benefits

Besides being a competitive and entertaining game, Pickleball offers numerous health benefits. The sport is a full-body workout that incorporates elements of cardiovascular exercise, strength training and agility. It is estimated that a single game of Pickleball can burn up to 600 calories per hour, making it a great way to lose weight while being social. Pickleball is also an aerobic exercise, which means it helps lung functionality, control of blood sugar levels, regulation of blood pressure, and improve cardiovascular conditioning. Pickleball is also a low-impact sport that puts less pressure on your joints and muscles.

Compared to Tennis courts, Pickleball's 44-foot by 20-foot court enables players to not have to travel far to keep the ball in play, which reduces the strain on knees, hips and ankles. Additionally, Pickleball is great for one's heart health. In fact, a study showed that playing Pickleball may lower a person's risk of heart disease by positively changing risk factors such as cholesterol levels and blood pressure. It is also an excellent stress reliever as aerobic activities like Pickleball cause the body to release endorphins (also known as feel good neurotransmitters) that help relieve stress as well as anxiety.

Strength Building Exercises

Despite the social component and health benefits of Pickleball, we all know that, at the end of the day, we all want to crush our opponents as this is a competitive game after all! The best way to get extra power on the court is to get stronger off it through strength training exercises. Pickleball is a great workout, but it is not the most efficient way to build muscle, which is why strength training is so important. There are three main benefits of strength training for pickleball players:

- 1. Power Increasing Performance** - Building up muscles and one's overall strength means you are then able to hit the ball harder, increasing not only strength in shots but confidence on the court as well.
- 2. Boosted Speed and Endurance** - Stronger muscles can also lead to faster running and more endurance to get every shot. Running and hitting become easier, enabling you to keep doing them for longer.

3. Lower Risk for Injuries - Strengthening muscles also strengthens bones, tendons and ligaments, which makes joints less vulnerable to injury.

There are many ways to build strength from bodyweight exercises such as squats, push-ups and sit-ups to gym equipment exercises that utilize dumbbells, barbells, kettlebells or cable machines. The key to strength training is finding a routine that works for you and keeping with it as even a few simple exercises can create a huge difference in your Pickleball game. Here are five of some of the best strength training exercises for Pickleball players:

- 1. Split Squats** - Builds leg strength to help you easily hit the lower shots that can often come at you during Pickleball. This exercise uses your quadriceps, glutes and hamstrings.
- 2. Dumbbell Lawnmower Rows** - Helps strengthen back muscles and better trains your core to rotate with more strength, which is helpful with turning to hit forehands and backhands in pickleball. In this exercise, your quadriceps, hamstrings and biceps will be utilized.
- 3. Goblet Squats** - Strengthens your legs to help with jumping and overall movement on the court. The exercise uses your quadriceps, glutes, hamstrings, lower back muscles, abdominals and biceps.
- 4. Dumbbell Chest Press** - Just like most racquet sports, in Pickleballs, you tend to favor one arm, which can lead to strength imbalances. This exercise works to counteract and correct these bodily imbalances through the use of chest muscles, front deltoid and triceps muscles.
- 5. Single-Leg Deadlifts** - Not only does this help with balance and coordination but also builds serious leg strength. This exercise will mainly use your hamstrings as well as your gluteus maximus and gluteus medius.

Strengthening Your Core

Besides strength training, another key way to improve your Pickleball skills is developing a strong and stable core. The core stretches from the pelvis to the neck and surrounds the trunk, the central part of your body that houses most internal organs. Your core muscles are crucial in generating power, maintaining balance and enacting precise movements on the court. Incorporating these forms of exercise into your routine can improve your agility, shot accuracy and stability during your Pickleball games. A well-conditioned core not only optimizes your Pickleball skills but also contributes to better balance, posture and prevention of injury in your everyday life.

1. Plank Variations - Plank exercises are most effective at engaging all of your core muscles. Using a basic forearm plank, ensure that elbows are directly under your shoulders and your body is a straight line. Hold this position for 30 - 60 seconds.

2. Russian Twists - Russian Twists are a great way to strengthen your obliques and improve rotational power, which is essential for powerful shots in pickleball. Start by sitting on the floor with your knees bent and your feet lifted off the ground. Then, lean back slightly while keeping your back straight. Have either a medicine ball, dumbbell or kettlebell in your hands and rotate your torso from side to side. As you rotate, tap the weight on the ground and go for 10 - 15 repetitions on each side.

3. Bicycle Crunches - Bicycle Crunches are a staple for developing your rectus abdominal and oblique muscles, creating a stable core. Begin by lying on your back with your hands behind your head and your knees bent. Then, lift your shoulders off the ground while bringing your right elbow towards the opposite knee, extending the right leg straight. Repeat on the other side and repeat 15 - 20 times.

4. Dead Bugs - Dead Bugs improve your core stability, coordination and control. Start by lying flat on your back with your arms extended straight and your knees bent at a 90-degree angle. Lower your right arm above while straightening your left leg, make sure to keep them just above the ground. Return then to the beginning position and repeat on the opposing side. You should repeat this 10 - 12 times per side.

5. Swiss Ball Pike - The Swiss Ball Pike targets the entire core, including the rectus abdominis, obliques and lower back muscles. Start in a high plank position with your feet on a Swiss ball. Engage your core and begin to lift your hips toward the ceiling, rolling the ball toward your hands. Then, pause briefly at the top and slowly lower your back into the starting position. You should aim for 8 - 10 repetitions, focusing on controlled movements and maintaining your balance.

6. Standing Rotations - Standing Rotations help to improve rotational stability and power, which are essential for quick changes in direction on the pickleball court. Start with feet and shoulder-width apart and a resistance band at chest height. Engage your core and rotate your torso to one side while keeping your hips stable. Return to the starting position and repeat on the other side 12 - 15 times.

Conclusion

Pickleball has rapidly gained popularity as a fun and engaging sport

for individuals of all ages and skill levels. With its unique combination of Tennis, Badminton, and Ping Pong, Pickleball offers a dynamic and exciting experience. However, in order to become a Pickleball Pro, it is essential to train both your overall strength and core muscles. Incorporating these exercises into your routine gradually improves your pickleball skills, enhances your performance and reduces risk of injuries. Trainers of all types are offering growing and financially successful off-court Pickleball training. So, hit the court with confidence this summer, knowing that you too can excel in the sport of Pickleball.

Experience the best techniques used to train for power and performance for the ever-growing sport of Pickleball. This incredibly creative strength-focused tubing workout uses effective and manageable resistance techniques. Enhance speed, increase endurance and decrease the risk of injury. Hit the ball harder. Chase the ball faster. Enjoy the sport longer. This Pickleball press program ensures your clients will compete at the highest level.

(Sara Kooperman, JD, CEO of SCW Fitness Education, WATERinMOTION and S.E.A.T. Fitness, is a visionary leader that has transformed the fitness education community. A successful business owner and advisor, she is a keynote speaker, published author, webinar host, podcast presenter and sought-after industry trailblazer. Kooperman has launched seven successful live MANIA fitness professional conventions, another six streaming conferences and more than 40 live and online certifications. Her company has touched more than 100,000 fitness professionals face-to-face, engaged another 300,000+ in virtual connections and produced over 600 fitness instructor training videos. Kooperman currently serves on IHRSA's Headlight Committees for Facility Standards, is a co-host of IHRSA's Talks & Takes Monthly Talk Show and sits on the ACSM Communication & Public Information Committee. She is also part of the Gold's Gym Think Tank and the canfitpro Advisory Panel and was a Founding Board Member for the Women In Fitness Association - WIFA. Recently nominated for the 2022 IDEA Fitness Leader of the Year Award, Kooperman won the 2022 Most Innovating Fitness Pro by Fitness Industry Technology Council. She is also an inductee into the National Fitness Hall of Fame, an Illinois State Businesswoman of the Year and a winner of AEA's Global Award for contribution to the aquatic industry.)

(Sydney Rothschild, a Marketing Intern at SCW Fitness Education, is a rising sophomore at Loyola Marymount University where she is studying psychology and is an active member of Agapé, a service organization that focuses on destigmatizing mental health.)

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The Perfect Pickleball Workout

By: Jeffrey Pinkerton

Yes, I consider myself a Pickleball fanatic. I'll spare you my opinion on the playability of one ball type over the other or my indifferences on the current updates to our rating system. Instead, I want to talk about what it takes to play Pickleball, my experience getting "Pickleball Fit," where I see people's mobility and agility lacking, and how hours spent in your facility can help people spend more --and better-- hours on the court. Because, yes, your programming can prepare members to be more active in life and in sport... including, and for the purposes of this article, Pickleball.

Are You Pickleball Fit?

As a longtime tennis player and ping pong player, my transition to playing Pickleball was a relatively easy one; it's no big surprise that a serve-and-volley tennis player can make the move to Pickleball relatively seamlessly. What was surprising, however, was how sore I was after each time I played. I work out an

"above average" amount during the week, including lunchtime workouts at MOSSA HQ, so I consider myself to be fit... but Pickleball fit?

If you're under the impression that Pickleball is an older person's activity; believe that, because the court is small, there must not be a lot of running; or think that a whiffle ball means that things move slowly, go try it, then let's talk. And, if you've never played, I encourage you to join the 36+ million people who are playing it (I'm guessing your members are among them!) and see how you feel. But, before you buy a paddle and run out on the courts, here are some things you can do to prepare yourself (and your members) to play.

Mobility and Agility

Pickleball involves running, jumping, shuffling, bending, lunging and lots of starting and stopping. Players move side to side throughout the game, run forward towards the net, scramble to chase balls, jump (for various reasons) and run

back to chase lobs. Because the serving team is required to let the return of serve bounce, returning players run to the net 99.9% of the time. The quicker you can get there, the better. It's jogging, running, stutter-stepping, starting and stopping. If you don't train for it, you'll shuffle your way in after you return, and your opponent will drive the ball down at your feet before you can get into position. Sorry, not sorry.

Bucketloads of Bending

Unlike tennis, the vast majority of Pickleball is played at the net, or at least near the net. And, if that sounds easy, well, let me explain why it's anything but.

Generally, in doubles, the goal is for both players to get to the kitchen (near the net) and then exchange dinks (shorter shots that go over the net and land in or near the kitchen) until someone hits a dink that is "attackable." A dink hit too high allows one team to speed up play or put the ball away entirely. In pro and amateur Pickleball alike, patience often wins these dinking exchanges, as they often go on for



Jeffrey Pinkerton

6, 8 or 10+ shots.

During this time, players spend a good deal of time with their feet near the kitchen line, bending and reaching over the kitchen. This takes lower-back core strength, quad conditioning and hamstring flexibility. Spend a couple of hours on the (See *Jeffrey Pinkerton* Page 22)

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court, and also on the balls of your feet (an enthusiastic "ready position"), and your lower back and calves are sore for the next two days, at least!

Lots of Lunging

Thankfully, Pickleball is not just played standing at a white line, bent forward, dinking the ball back and forth. Players use angles of their dinks to move their opponents from side to side and to force them into awkward positions. The challenge is to move quickly to the ball, return the ball safely or to a more advantageous position, then return yourself back to just outside the kitchen line. As a result, being able to quickly lunge forward (to get a ball that bounces in front of you), lunge laterally (to get a ball that has been dinked out wide) and lunge backwards (to get a ball that you can't take out of the air) ends up being one of the most essential but physically challenging parts of Pickleball.

If you watch a pro Pickleball player, they'll take a couple of shuffle steps to the side, make a low lateral lunge, then reverse

that process to quickly return to where they started. For a player who lacks the strength, ability, coordination or balance to lunge, the results are not good. It's difficult to get settled, so they are still moving when they hit the ball (it often goes in the net), they overcompensate by reaching and swatting at the ball (it often pops up) and they don't lunge or bend well, and because the Pickleball ball doesn't bounce a tremendous amount, they actually swing and miss completely... whiffing the whiffle.

Rest, Recover and Repeat

As the popularity of Pickleball continues to rise, unfortunately, so will the injuries. Part of this is just the statistics of it all, but part can and should be prevented with better training and better preparation.

A good number of my friends have been sidelined by injuries that they classify as "overuse" injuries. They chalk it up to too many days of playing too much Pickleball. But, could they be more accurately classified as "under-trained" injuries, or even better, "unprepared" injuries?

That's where I believe health and fitness clubs can have the biggest impact as it relates to the current (and I hope, long-lasting) Pickleball craze. Sell the benefits of training to prepare people for life and sport. In membership conversations, when asking people what kind of activities they like to do, be prepared to help people connect the dots in their training and in their active-life endeavors. And, here's the advice that will sell any hardcore Pickleballer: convince them that more time in your club (in training and in recovery) will actually allow them to

spend more time on the Pickleball court.



If you are interested in learning more about what I believe to be the ultimate Pickleball workout, a combination of cardio, strength, balance, mobility and Movement Health, check out *Group Active* (and *3D30*, *Group Blast*, *Group Power*, *Group Core*... okay, honestly all of our programs) at mossa.net/workouts/group-active. It's MOSSA's solution to getting more people, and more Pickleballers, moving!

(Jeffrey Pinkerton is the Business Development Manager for MOSSA. Jeffrey can be reached by phone at 770-989-4737 or email at jeffreypinkerton@mossa.net.)



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