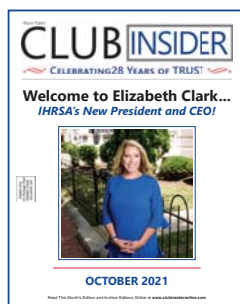
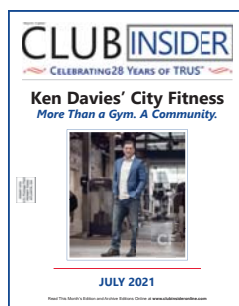
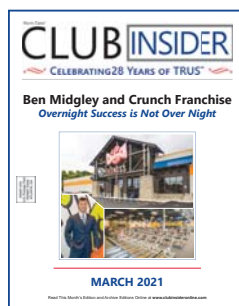
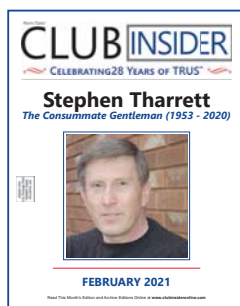
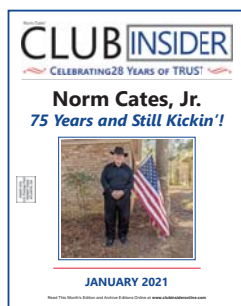


Norm Cates'

# CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 28 YEARS OF TRUST



## 2021 In Review

## DECEMBER 2021

Read This Month's Edition and Archive Editions Online at [www.clubinsideronline.com](http://www.clubinsideronline.com)

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# CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 28 YEARS OF TRUST

## 2021 In Review

By: Justin Cates

This time last year, I wrote the 2020 version of this yearly cover story. Compared to how slow 2020 seemed to proceed, *this year flew by*. I cannot believe my Thanksgiving Turkey is already a thing of the past, and I am gearing up to cook one for Christmas! *I am thankful this year was not last year*. But, I am also cautious not to lose sight of the past, and again, get caught in the incessant nature of daily life. As I recently wrote, it is important to take time (literally schedule it) to slow down, reflect on experiences and lessons, and reload and repurpose yourself with a new set of goals and challenges.

I have not shared this with many people, but I feel compelled to do so now. I

have a yearly ritual. On a dedicated day in December, I leave all of my electronics and distractions at home, and I take a notebook and a pencil to my local library. Surrounded by the aura of centuries of knowledge, I proceed to take inventory of the year soon to be passed in order to plan the year to come.

Reflecting on myself, personally and professionally, I write down easy, medium and hard goals. Without a computer, I sketch out budgets to force myself to think of the key components (again, both personally and professionally), instead of just starting with the previous year's line items, eventually guaranteed to be bloated. And, most importantly, I sit in silence and personally reflect. Many questions come to mind. They can't always be fully answered, but the act of asking them to myself plants

a seed that will eventually sprout in the form of new ideas when properly triggered by other future questions.

I explain this ritual of mine because, in written form, this has always been the modus operandi of our yearly *In Review Cover Stories*. We want to present one last lesson. Then, we want to reflect on what we have covered and honor those who have helped us to do so (*Our Authors and Advertisers*). If you've read everything, we want to remind you of something you told yourself to re-read. If you haven't read something, we hope we get your attention, and you read it now. Then, we hope you reflect on all of it.

The years 2020 and 2021 were not normal. We hope 2022 presents (See *2021 In Review* Page 10)



Justin Cates

## 50+ Year Industry Veteran, Chuck Leve, Passes Away

**Publisher's Note:** We were very sad to hear about the passing of **Chuck Leve**. Beyond the list of achievements about to be presented, he was a good and decent man. In my dealings with him, he always had a kind smile and kinder word: to me, to my family, to *Club Insider*. What follows is FBA's announcement about the passing of Chuck. Additionally, I reached out to those who worked with him for a majority of his career, his years at *IHRSA*: **Norm Cates** (Co-Founder, 1st President), **Rick Caro** (Co-Founder, 2nd President) and **John McCarthy** (25-Year Executive Director Emeritus).

■ ■ ■

FBA - MINNEAPOLIS, MN - It's with great

sorrow we inform you that on *Thursday, November 11th at 1:11 AM*, **Chuck Leve**, devoted husband, father, papa and fitness industry veteran passed away in his home surrounded by his family. Chuck's contributions to the fitness industry span over 50 years.

### Prior to His Time in the Fitness Industry

Chuck helped lead his high school alma mater (*Glenbrook North High School*, the same school both his son's **Josh** and **Michael** would attend) to the State Championship in baseball back in 1966. That success then turned into a baseball scholarship to attend the *University of Miami, Florida*.

### There at the Beginning, Helping to Create IHRSA

As *Executive Director of NCCA*, one of *IHRSA*'s predecessors, and over the next 28 years, Chuck helped usher in a new era in the fitness industry. His many accomplishments include:

- Creating the infrastructure and overseeing the meteoric growth of Racquetball from 1970 - 1980, leading to his 1997 induction into the Racquetball Hall of Fame;
- Creator of the *IHRSA Tradeshow*. It was Chuck's forward-thinking to have a trade show at the first, and subsequent, *IHRSA Conventions*. It quickly became more of an (See *Chuck Leve* Page 6)



Chuck Leve

## Inside the Insider: Edition #336

- Design Secrets for Management, Staff and Member Magic - **By:** Bruce Carter
- The End of the Fitness Industry as a Single Business - Part II - **By:** Thomas Plummer
- Opportunities with Personal Training - **By:** Bonnie Patrick-Mattalian
- It Is Not WHAT You Know But WHO You Know to Grow Sales - **By:** Gary Polic
- Are You Being Reactive, Proactive or Inactive? - **By:** Jeffrey Pinkerton
- Exercise IS Medicine - **By:** Mike Alpert
- Crunch Fitness Announces Milestone of 400th Franchise Club Opening
- 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 336th monthly edition!** And, today, I'm particularly excited as this edition kicks off our **29th Year of publication!** **WOW, has time FLOWN BY!**

■ Folks... Is America a **GREAT COUNTRY**, or what? *Where else on this Mother Earth could a guy who flunked English Composition 101 while he was playing college football on a full scholarship end up being a newspaper owner and publisher for 29 years, and all that time serving people he TRULY LOVES!?* **Yahoo! Haha!** To me, that's clear proof **there IS a GOD, and HE or SHE is a GOOD GOD!** And, of course, **thanks to YOU ALL for reading Club Insider!** Justin and I are very honored and pleased to serve you with our "Club Insider Labor of Love," and we welcome your feedback at any time about any subject! Just fire away to me at [norm@clubinsideronline.com](mailto:norm@clubinsideronline.com) or Justin at [justin@clubinsideronline.com](mailto:justin@clubinsideronline.com). Don't forget that we are **THANKFUL** to you all for being with us!

■ **CHUCK LEVE**, a 50-year veteran of our industry and huge contributor to the first 28 years of IRSA/IHRSA's existence, passed away on **November 11, 2021** after an eight-year battle with cancer. I've written about Chuck in the past when I chronicled the good fortune our industry experienced when, during the founding of IRSA, we dreamed up the idea of hiring Chuck to serve as our **Associate Member Director**. That was *pure good luck* for our industry, and Chuck served IRSA/IHRSA very well for 28 years. Thinking back, our industry worldwide should be **THANKFUL** to Chuck Leve for his achievements during his 28 years serving the industry at IHRSA and his achievements since his departure from IHRSA. **FBA's Announcement** about the passing of Chuck Leve appears on **Page #3**, followed by comments by **RICK CARO, JOHN MCCARTHY** and me. **May Chuck Leve Rest In Peace.**

■ From our friends, **LARRY CONNER** and **MARVIN GRESSE**, industry veteran, **KEN KACHTIK**, passed away **October 11th**, just before the start of IHRSA 2021. Though he

retired ten years ago, his contributions to the industry remain, having created, developed and operated facilities such as **Corpus Christi Athletic Club, Elmwood Fitness Center (now Ochsner Fitness Center) and E Fitness**. He was also a mentor to many industry leaders of today, including **Larry Conner, Marvin Gresse, Damon Kremer, Larry Welch, Lisa Gorsline** and many others. We wish Ken's wife, **SUE**, and family our deepest condolences. **May Ken Kachtik Rest In Peace.**

■ One of the tough jobs in writing **Norm's Notes** each month and year is reporting on those in the industry who have passed, as seen in the previous Notes. In addition to those just reported, I want to once again honor those who have moved on in the past year. In January, we reported on the **December 22, 2020** passing of our good friend, *former IHRSA President* and industry great, **STEPHEN THARRETT**. On **April 1, 2021**, **PAUL GRZYMKOWSKI** passed away. And, on **September 21, 2021**, **GEOFF HAMPTON** passed away. Each of these gentlemen touched those in their lives and made their marks on this great industry. **May They All Rest In Peace.**

■ Our apologies to **LOUISE IRWIN** and **Step Fitness Recreation and Fitness**, as we used the incorrect name for their company in last month's introduction as they rejoined the **Club Insider Advertising Team**. *Formerly The Step Company*, they are now known as **Step Recreation and Fitness**. We want to thank them once again for returning to *Club Insider*. Be sure to check out their **Ad on Page #11**.



Norm Cates

■ A happy news item from this past year that I'd like to recall with you here was the arrival of the lovely **MS. LIZ CLARK** as our new **IHRSA President and CEO**. I was very honored to interview Liz for over an hour so I could write about and feature Liz as our **Club Insider Cover Story Subject** for our **October 2021 Edition!** See **Cover Photo** on **Page #14**.

■ **CONGRATULATIONS** to the **Smith-Palluck** ownership group and management team as they celebrate their **30th Anniversary of Las Vegas Athletic Clubs (LVAC)** under that umbrella. In 1991, the new ownership took over four smaller racquetball and handball clubs with a very limited selection of exercise equipment. Over the years, the original four clubs were replaced with larger multipurpose clubs. The last of the original four clubs was the  
(See *Norm's Notes* Page 7)

### About Club Insider

### CELEBRATING 28 YEARS OF TRUST

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### Thanks and Appreciation

At *Club Insider*, we are excited to be concluding our **28th 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 28-year run possible.

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

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

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

*Norm Cates, Jr.*



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## ...Chuck Leve

continued from page 3

attendance draw than the seminars, and with help, he grew it into 1,800 10x10s in 2008, the largest commercial fitness show in North America;

■Through significant resistance, Chuck's success selling advertising in IHRSA's monthly newsletter led to the creation of *CBI Magazine*;

■Developing the entire sponsorship program, not only at the IHRSA Convention but for all events, which made the European Congress and other events financially viable;

■Creation of a lucrative sampling program at IHRSA to give away free samples via major brands through the member clubs;

■Co-creation and growth of the *Association of Fitness Studios (now FBA)* and its **SUCCEED!** event brand from 2012 to the present.

### Chuck's Battle with Cancer

What many probably don't know, however, is that Chuck had been fighting a battle with cancer for eight years. First diagnosed with Hodgkins Lymphoma in late 2013, Chuck never, EVER let his diagnosis impact his work. Whether it was taking sales calls from a hospital bed, drafting contracts during chemotherapy treatments or jumping on internal team calls, he simply loved to work... it was his passion.

Always the eternal optimist, Chuck battled bravely through countless scans, chemotherapy treatments, a stem-cell transplant and CAR-T procedure. His cancer morphed several times from Hodgkin's Lymphoma to Non-Hodgkins Follicular Lymphoma, to Non-Hodgkins Large Diffuse B Cell Lymphoma, then MDS (a rare bone marrow cancer) then finally Acute Myeloid Leukemia.

Truth be told, the family didn't expect Chuck to be taken as quickly as anticipated. Just weeks ago, Chuck and his eldest son, Josh, were talking about his transition into retirement following a press release to the fitness industry.

But, cancer had other plans. We never truly know when it's going to be our time, but Chuck's legacy will live on through his work, and now, through what he helped build with his son Josh at the Fitness Business Association (FBA).

### In the words of his son Josh...

"When it comes down to it, the truth of the matter is my father's legacy within the fitness industry goes deeper than integrity and dependability," says his son and *FBA Founder & CEO, Josh Leve*. "Without Chuck, there's no FBA, and without Chuck, there are countless business owners, entrepreneurs, fitness



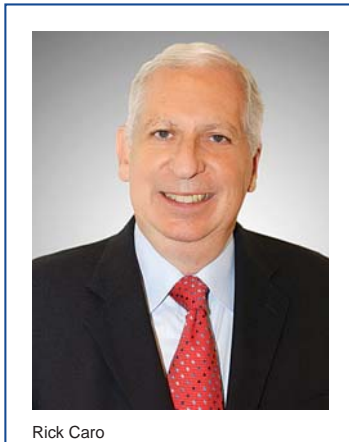
Norm Cates

professionals, executives and many others that aren't where they are today because of the path this man paved."

Josh continues: "My dad was a mentor and friend to many, including myself. He was the person I always turned to for an honest and direct response. And, while we also butted heads on many occasions, our bond and mutual respect only grew stronger. The truth of the matter is what he did for this industry can never be summed up in a paragraph or press release, because the impact he made on this industry is so much greater than that. He will be missed greatly, but his mark on the fitness industry will live on forever."

**Comments From Norm Cates,**  
*Founder and Tribal Leader of Club Insider,*  
*Co-Founder of IHRSA, 1st President*

Chuck Leve was one of a kind. The entire worldwide health, racquet and sportsclub industry owes Chuck a sincere debt of gratitude and many thanks and appreciation for his 50 years of service. On behalf of the entire industry, I wish to express to our late friend, Chuck, that gratitude for the very many contributions he's made to our worldwide industry during the 28 years he worked at IRSA/IHRSA with John McCarthy and their IRSA/IHRSA Team and thereafter. It's with great sorrow that I bid farewell to Chuck Leve. Without



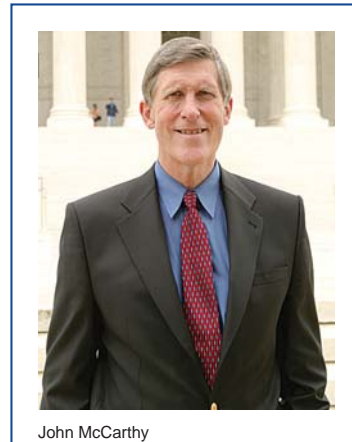
Rick Caro

Chuck's very many contributions, our industry would not be nearly the same as it is today. Thank you, Chuck.

**Comments From Rick Caro,**  
*President, Management Vision, Inc.,*  
*Co-Founder of IHRSA, 2nd President*

Chuck was a unique leader in the overall health and fitness club industry. As an elite athlete, he was always around the fitness world. His father, **Mort**, had a leadership role in the early stages of the racquetball industry. Chuck had a special opportunity to work for his father. When a subsequent non-profit trade association was then created for racquetball clubs, Chuck was hired as its Executive Director (aka President). He built up the membership numbers during its heyday and did all of the typical things a trade association does: annual convention and trade show, publications, member benefits, associate members (i.e. suppliers), etc.

When IHRSA (originally called IRSA) was founded, the individual racquetball and tennis associations folded to become a combined solution. IHRSA also embraced the fitness-only clubs. Chuck took a leadership role in heading up the Associate/Supplier side of the business. He was a consummate salesman. He created the largest U.S. industry trade show. He created tools for suppliers to invest in to



John McCarthy

reach this growing audience. He was a great and clever writer. He helped IHRSA grow as one of its key leaders in so many ways: new events, publications, research, International representation, educational programs of all kinds and more. He loved the work, the people, the industry and the challenges. It was never work to him. He and John McCarthy were a great team.

Chuck eventually left IHRSA and helped form a new Association, originally targeting studios and smaller fitness centers. What made this startup so unique was that he did it with his son, **Josh**. Not many can say that they worked in two family businesses. It became the *Association of Fitness Studios (AFS)*, recently rebranded as the *Fitness Business Association (FBA)*. Obviously, he trained Josh well to carry on his legacy.

Chuck devoted himself to the business of fitness. It was a passion for him. He loved it, and it was a perfect fit for him. In many ways, he was an entrepreneur cloaked in a non-profit world. He helped provide a platform for very early-stage companies to become known and eventually grow to real success. He cared as much about the little guy as the most successful public companies in the space.

He was far too vibrant for these past 50 years to leave us so prematurely. He was a battler who wanted to continue to make a difference. I will miss him. The industry already does.

**Comments From John McCarthy,**  
*25-Year Executive Director*  
*Emeritus of IHRSA*

Chuck was our All-Star. In addition to being one of the nicest guys you'd ever want to meet, year after year, for 28 consecutive years, he led our team in every major revenue category: trade show booth sales, advertising revenue, sponsorship sales, associate membership sales, awards revenue, etc. What's more, he did it all with a sense of joy and fun!

■ ■ ■

**May Chuck Leve Rest In Peace.**





## ...Norm's Notes

continued from page 4

30-year-old and 30,000 square foot East Flamingo location, and it was replaced in 2019 with the almost 90,000 square foot Henderson club. We can't wait to see what another 30 years brings!

■ Our friends and *Club Insider* Advertiser, **FlexIt**, led by **AUSTIN COHEN**, shared some fun photos from IHRSA 2021, in which *NBA Star, former Dallas Maverick, JASON "The Jet" TERRY* joined in on the Trade Show floor festivities at FlexIt's booth. Their booth was within view of the *Club Insider* booth, and Justin reports it was entertaining to watch, and of course, he stopped by to say, "Hello," as well as meet and greet. Check out **FlexIt** at [www.flexit.fit](http://www.flexit.fit). See Photo on This Page.

■ This from our friend, **DAVID GANULIN**, sent to us by **JASON GELLER**:

**Acquisition of KettleBell Concepts Continues NYSC's Growth Mode and Focus on Continued Education and Development for its Personal Trainers and Instructors:**

**NEW YORK, N.Y.** - *New York Sports Clubs (NYSC)*, operator of 68 gyms in the U.S. and Switzerland, announced that it has entered into a definitive agreement with *KettleBell Concepts (KBC)* to acquire the company for an undisclosed value. KBC has been a global business-to-business leader for 20+ years in providing high-quality and accredited kettlebell educational programs for health and fitness professionals. With this new acquisition, KBC's core certificate programs are immediately available at no charge for all qualified staff members at NYSC gyms (and the company's other five fitness brands). The KBC programs are approved by all widely recognized governing bodies in the fitness industry

to provide continuing education units/credits (CEUs/CECs). Additional KBC fitness trainer and instructor certificate programs will be developed in the future, and all KBC programs remain open and available for registration to interested and qualified members of the public. In connection with the transaction, NYSC acquired all intellectual property of KBC, as well as other assets. **KBC's Founder and President, David Ganulin**, will continue to operate as an advisor throughout the transition. NYSC will now grow the brand across its gym network.

"This is an exciting time for NYSC, as we focus on our vision of becoming the most sought-after company to work at in the fitness industry. We'll accomplish this goal both by investing in the professional development of our existing staff members and by recruiting and further developing the best available outside talent. The two will combine to build a strong foundation that will support the short- and long-term customer service and performance growth goals of the organization," said **Roger Harvey, Chief Executive Officer of NYSC**.

"KBC is the leader in the kettlebell education space, and the acquisition of KBC allows us to build momentum on our staff development initiatives, which will continually improving the workout experience for all of our members. I'm excited for the future of KBC as a part of the NYSC family because of the company's priority focus on the constant professional development of their personal trainers and group fitness instructors. Ensuring that fitness pros are properly trained so that they can safely and effectively use kettlebells with their clients is one of the primary reasons I started KBC," said **Dave Ganulin, Founder of Kettlebell Concepts**. "A fancy marketing campaign may get new members in the door, but investing in the education of the team so that they're providing new and existing members with the best possible programming for a

successful fitness journey is most essential component of the company's long-term success. I'm excited to see where they take the brand in the next few years."

■ **STEPHEN KINDLER, Jr., President and CEO of National Fitness Partners (NFP)**, which is a portfolio company of *Argonne Capital Group, LLC*, an Atlanta-based private investment firm, has announced a major achievement as the company prepares to celebrate its *100th Planet Fitness club opening* soon while it works on its recent acquisition of seven new club locations, expanding the group's footprint

along the East Coast. **Stephen Kindler Jr.**, commented: "This transaction represents the eighth acquisition for NFP, which now operates 107 Planet Fitness clubs in eight different states, including Pennsylvania, Ohio, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina. We remain confident with the long-term growth of the Planet Fitness brand, as encouraging membership and utilization trends continue to point to a successful re-emergence from the COVID-19 pandemic. This significant acquisition fits perfectly into our long-term strategic plan by expanding (See *Norm's Notes* Page 8)



FlexIt Team at IHRSA 2021 (Right Side: Jason "The Jet" Terry and Austin Cohen)



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## ...Norm's Notes

continued from page 7

our reach into important new markets and strengthening our efforts to ensure more people have access to affordable fitness options, as we believe regular exercise plays an essential role in enhancing the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of our members."

■ **CONGRATULATIONS** to our friend, **BEN MIDGLEY**, and *Club Insider* Advertiser, **CRUNCH FRANCHISE**, as they announce their **400th Club Opening!** See the **Press Release on This Page** and **Ad on the Inside Front Cover of This Edition**.

■ Last month, in **Norm's Notes**, I featured a **Note** about my **good friend in Southern California, DEREK BARTON**. We also featured a photo taken after his October 3rd major heart surgery, and it showed Derek with a big smile on his face shooting a Bird at Death in an effort to run off the Grim Reaper! Haha! Since then, Derek wrote a message saying he's doing very well in his recovery. Here's part of what Derek wrote: "Norm, I'm still alive and well. I had a follow-up meeting yesterday with my doctor/surgeon, **Rushi V. Parikh, MD**. He says he's never seen someone recover so fast from a near fatal heart attack. He loves telling his colleagues and friends that I played 18 holes of golf three days after he released me from ICU. I promised the doc that I would continue to eat healthy, take my meds and vitamins and exercise. Even though heredity played a big part in my heart attack, everything I learned in the health club industry helped me stay alive. Thank you for checking in with me

yesterday. You're a good friend!!! And, thanks for including me in your **Norm's Notes** last month. As I mentioned, our mutual friend, **RICK CARO**, was the first to reach out to me to wish me well. So, thanks to you, Norm and Rick!"

■ **CONGRATULATIONS** to my **Alma Mater's N.C. State Women's Cross Country Team**, who on **Saturday, November 20th**, won the **National Championship for the Women's Cross Country!** Kudos to **LAURIE HENES**, the **N.C. State Head Coach**, and her Team, on this amazing achievement! They made history claiming the program's first women's NCAA national championship! Way to go, ladies! The Wolfpack placed these four runners in the top-25 finishers: **KELSEY CHMIEL (6)**, **KATELYN TUOHY (15)**, **ALEXANDRA HAYS (22)** and **HANNAH STEELMAN (24)**. And, their winning score was 84, nearly 40 points better than the runner-up Brigham Young University. I repeat: **Way to go Wolfpack Ladies!**

■ Congratulations to **GEETHA KRISHNA**, a young lady who's an 11-year-old **Dodgen Middle School student** a couple of blocks from our home here in Marietta, Georgia. **Geetha has earned Gold Medals at The Table Tennis Pan American World Championships!** Only in the 6th grade, Geetha has already served as a representative of the United States on the world stage and has the gold medals to prove it! **Congratulations to Geetha and her family on her amazing achievements in Table Tennis!**

■ **JUSTIN** and I want to say **Thanks for reading Club Insider!** We hope you had

a wonderful **Thanksgiving Holiday**, and we hope the rest of the **Holiday Season** is bright and merry! Soon, we also add: **Happy New Year!!!**

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

## Crunch Fitness Announces Milestone of 400th Franchise Club Opening

**PORTSMOUTH, N.H.** - Renowned gym chain **Crunch Fitness** is proud to announce the February 2022 opening of its **400th Location** in San Angelo, Texas. With this opening, Crunch secures its place as the number one gym brand in the high-value, low-price category.

In addition to the highly anticipated opening of its 400th club, Crunch has continued to see rapid expansion in memberships. As of October 2021, **Crunch Franchise** has exceeded 128% of pre-pandemic membership levels, significantly outpacing the industry at large, with its closest competitor in the space recently announcing a 97% return to pre-pandemic membership. Crunch was the only major brand in the industry to grow throughout the pandemic, in a period that the global health and fitness association, **IHRSA**, reported that 22% of the fitness industry closed.

"We are proud of reaching the 400th Crunch gym milestone and the momentum we have maintained, despite the many challenges that the pandemic posed on the fitness industry," said **Ben Midgley, CEO of Crunch Franchise**. "The significant growth we experienced is a true testament to not only Crunch's leadership in the space but to our ongoing commitment to our members and their safety. It also

speaks to our franchisees' tremendous efforts and shows that our members wanted to get back in the gym as soon as possible."

This new club will follow the **Crunch Franchise** model boasting miles of cardio, tons of weights, advanced high-intensity interval training sessions in the **HIITZone**, and **Relax & Recover** services ranging from **HydroMassage**, to dry saunas, to red light therapy, to tanning.

The newest club's studio will also hold proprietary group fitness classes for members, including **BodyWeb** with **TRX**, **Zumba**, **Cardio Tai Box**, **Yoga Body Sculpt**, **Fat Burning Pilates** and more.

**Crunch San Angelo** is owned and operated by **Undeclared Tribe** and led by **CEO and fitness veteran, Tony Hartl**. This is their seventh **Crunch** location in the Lone Star State.

"We are beyond excited to be the 400th club within **Crunch**. San Angelo is our 7th gym of 50 planned locations over the next five years. We could not have picked a better partner than **Crunch Fitness**," said Hartl.

To learn more about **Crunch** franchising opportunities, please visit **CrunchFranchise.com**.

See the **Crunch Franchise Ad** on the **Inside Front Cover of This Edition**.



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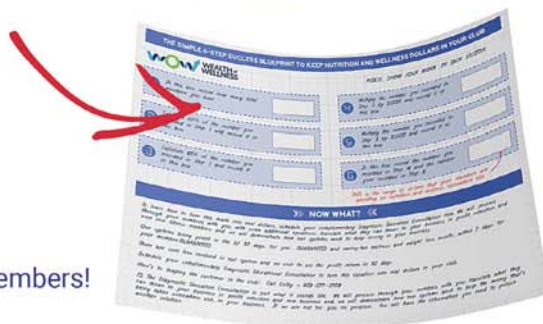
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*Donna Krech*

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## ...2021 In Review

continued from page 3

something we all recognize, but in my opinion, hopefully not too normal. The new normal does not have to be a bad thing. As we have done during the pandemic, we can continue to change the things we wanted to and should have changed before all of this began! This will create a better product for our customers, in turn, building a better position for our businesses. All of that said, here's what we shared in 2021. May you reflect on it and adjust in 2022...

### A Summary of Our 2021 Cover Stories

**January 2021:** I've had some really cool opportunities and equally fine honors in my short life. But, authoring this cover story was a combination of both! I had the opportunity to interview and write about my Dad, **Norm Cates**, *Club Insider Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993*, in commemoration of his *75th Birthday*. He and others of his ilk come from a much different era of this industry, and so much can be learned from them. Thanks for the opportunity, Dad!

**February 2021:** Our industry's dear friend and consummate gentleman, **Stephen Tharrett**, passed away on December 22, 2020. This cover story honored his life and service to our industry.

**March 2021:** Crunch Fitness is a club brand that has been around for 30+ years.

Like any business, it has had ups and downs, but in recent years, its trajectory has been up and up, leading to the subtitle: *Overnight Success is Not Over Night*. **Ben Midgley** is the *CEO of Crunch Franchise*, and he shares some great insights in this cover story. And, of course, check out the **Crunch Franchise Ad on Page #2**.

**April 2021:** It has been proven time and time again that going at it alone can create suboptimal outcomes in business. Feedback loops are paramount for growth and success, and **Eddie Tock** and **REX Roundtables'** mission is to be a catalyst for creating them among their Roundtable Members. Each Roundtable Group is tightknit, sharing the highs and lows of life and business with each other, from which ideas and potential solutions are brought forth. *Club Insider* is a product of *Faust Roundtable #1*, so this topic was very special for us to report on in this cover story. A fun fact we would like to share is that **REX Roundtable Members presented 16 of 62 sessions at the 2021 IHRSA Convention and Trade Show (See November 2021 Below)**. That equates to **26%** of the content presented! Incredible!

**May 2021:** We all fought and continue to fight through the COVID-19 Pandemic, personally and professionally. It has been devastating to so many. Now, imagine you were faced with two other disasters prior to the pandemic. Would you have survived? Well, **Dave Cardone** and **Memorial**

**Athletic Club** did, and in this cover story, he shares that experience and the leadership traits required to navigate such brutally rough waters.

**June 2021:** It was a dream come true for **Craig Dixon** and **Kendrick Ashton**, and category behemoth, **The St. James**, is something to behold! Further expansion was of course challenged by the pandemic, but with the passion of these gentlemen, it will occur in time.

**July 2021:** In the birthplace of America, **Ken Davies' City Fitness** is expanding at a furious pace for a brand that so uniquely encapsulates the neighborhoods in which they operate into their designs. Each is a beautiful sight to see, designed to create community, and they are doing just that.

**August 2021:** As we did in 2020, we felt it prudent in 2021 to thank and provide further exposure for the **Club Insider Advertising Team** that has kept this publication going throughout the pandemic. As we've said many times before, *Club Insider is a labor of love*. No one is getting rich here doing this, but we do it because of the people and industry we love. But, we are practical, so we will only continue if the P&L makes sense. Our Advertisers once again made this possible, so be sure to check them out in this edition, and of course, their cover story.

**September 2021:** Going on five years, **Anthony Geisler** and **Xponential Fitness** have become a true force in this industry. Through acquisition, rebranding and repurposing, the company has built a portfolio of brands that touches nearly every potential member demographic out there. And, they aren't done yet. The month following this cover story, in which we reported on their nine brands and their successful Initial Public Offering (IPO), they added a tenth: *Body Fitness Training*, delivering functional training and strength-based programs.

**October 2021:** After its thorough search for the next *President and CEO of IHRSA*, the *IHRSA Board* announced the hiring of **Elizabeth Clark**, and this cover story featured an in-depth conversation with her. Our goal was to introduce both her personal and professional history and experience to you, as both blend to create her vision for *IHRSA* heading forward. Elizabeth and the *IHRSA Team* need your support to implement, re-grow and expand!

**November 2021:** The return of the *IHRSA Convention and Trade Show* was a great and important moment for our industry, and our cover story reported on many aspects of it. Though reduced in size for 2021, there was still too much to cover in one story. *IHRSA 2022 will take place in Miami, June 22 - 24, 2022*. Over the coming years, we believe the show will once again return to

previous form, so we stress now that being there in person, each year, will be of the utmost importance!

### Thank You All!

Before moving on, we must take a moment to thank those who make it possible for us to publish **Club Insider** each and every month.

First, we would like to thank you, our readers, for your support. This publication *always has you in mind*, and we hope it shows. We also want to say thank you to our printer, **Walton Press**, a fantastic 120+ year-old company in Monroe, Georgia for the great work they've done on all **336 monthly editions of Club Insider** since 1993.

Next, we'd like to thank all of our authors this year, as they took time out of their busy schedules to share a great mix of informative articles across a vast array of topics. Beyond our monthly cover stories and news coverage with both press releases and **Norm's Notes**, we try to bring *Best Practices* to you from the trenches. Our **Contributing Authors** this year included: **Bill McBride**, **Bonnie Patrick Mattalian**, **Bruce Carter**, **Cathy Spencer Browning**, **Cosmo Wollan**, **Donna Krech**, **Eric Durak**, **MSc**, **Frank Guengerich**, **Gary Polic**, **the late Geoff Hampton**, **Jeffrey Pinkerton**, **Jeremy Fishel**, **Jim Thomas**, **Karen Woodard-Chavez**, **Kristen Deazeley**, **Matt Zagrodzky**, **Mike Alpert**, **Mike Manning**, **Nelson Rodenmayer**, **Paul Bosley**, **Paul R. Bedard**, **Esquire**, **Sumit Seth**, **Terry Browning** and **Thomas Plummer**.

And, of course, we'd also like to thank all of the companies that advertised with us this year because we could not have come to you each month without their financial support. Our **Advertising Team** this year included: **Augie's Quest**, **BMC3**, **Business Finance Depot**, **ClubIntel**, **Club Industry**, **Crunch Franchising**, **Fabiano Designs**, **FlexIt**, **iGo Figure**, **IHRSA**, **Integrity Square**, **Iron Grip Barbell Company**, **JLR Associates**, **LA Fitness**, **MOSSA**, **Ohlson Lavoie Corporation**, **Paramount Acceptance**, **Polic Consultants Group**, **Pride and Discipline**, **REX Roundtables**, **Sports & Fitness Insurance**, **Step Recreation and Fitness**, **TG - The Gym**, **TotalLife**, **UpSwell**, **USA Racquetball**, **Visual Fitness Planner**, **Workout Anytime** and **Zeamo**.

### A Note About Subscriptions

Before we move forward with *2021 In Review*, let me mention our **Paid Subscription** options. Some of you reading this are doing so on a *complimentary basis* with a promotional copy of our printed edition. If the words **"PROMOTIONAL COPY"** appear above your address on the front cover, you are *not* reaping the full benefits of a **Paid Subscription** to (See *2021 In Review Page 12*)

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### And Now, 2021 In Review

#### January 2021

*Norm Cates, Jr. - 75 Years and Still Kickin'!* - **By:** Justin Cates

#### Inside the Insider:

■Panic - Pain - Suffering - Optimization - Opportunity - **By:** Bill McBride ■Ten Things Every Fitness Center Operator Must Do Moving Into 2021 - **By:** Bonnie Patrick Mattalian ■New Lessons in Design Learned From the Pandemic - **By:** Bruce Carter ■IRS Makes it Easier to Set Up Payment Agreements; Offers Other Relief - **By:** Kristen Deazeley ■"Non-Essential" Never Again - **By:** Eric Durak, MSc ■Your Menu of Services: A Recommendation About Recommendations - **By:** Jeffrey Pinkerton ■And, of Course, Norm's Notes

#### February 2021

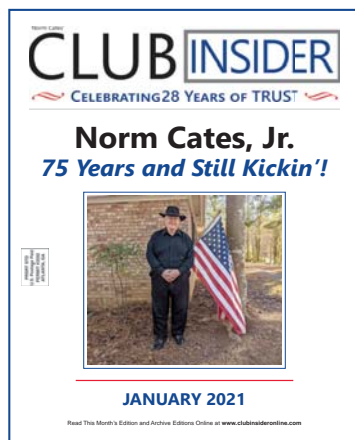
*Stephen Tharrett - The Consummate Gentleman (1953 - 2020)* - **By:** Justin Cates

#### Front Page Article Headlines:

■Where Do We Go From Here? - **By:** Justin Cates

#### Inside the Insider:

■The "Insider Speaks" - A Letter From Laury Hammel ■The Way We See The Problem Is The Problem - **By:** Jim Thomas ■The Pain of Closing a Club and How to Do It Properly - **By:** Mike Alpert ■An Opinion Piece: Data Suspicion - **By:**



Jeramy Fishel ■A Fork In the Road: Getting the Fit Fitter or Getting the 80% Moving? - **By:** Cathy Spencer Browning ■New Year, New IHRSA Initiatives ■Crunch Fitness Ranked a Top Franchise in Entrepreneur's Annual Franchise 500 ■And, of Course, Norm's Notes

#### March 2021

*Ben Midgley and Crunch Franchise - Overnight Success is Not Over Night* - **By:** Justin Cates

#### Front Page Article Headlines:

■IHRSA and REX Roundtables Agree on Strategic Partnership

#### Inside the Insider:

■Rebuilding Your Member Base With Direct Mail - **By:** Nelson Rodenmayer ■Sales Leadership: Getting Back to the Basics - **By:** Gary Polic ■Six Key Areas to Prepare for Underwriting an SBA Loan and Equipment Lease - **By:** Paul Bosley ■The Ultimate Guide to Gym Funding - **By:** Jim Thomas ■You Are Where You Eat: Eating at Your Own Restaurant - **By:** Jeffrey Pinkerton ■FlexIt Partners with Ebenezer Samuel, Men's Health Fitness Director ■Greetings to Clubs and Fitness Facilities from "The Court People" ■And, of Course, Norm's Notes

#### April 2021

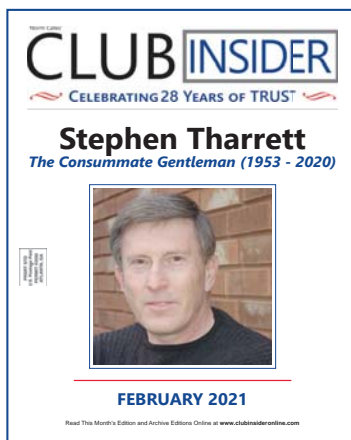
*REX Roundtables - Providing Industry Leaders With Advanced Learning and Sharing* - **By:** Norm Cates & Justin Cates

#### Front Page Article Headlines:

■IHRSA Reports Widespread Damage to the Industry Due to COVID-19

#### Inside the Insider:

■Leaders Aspire to Inspire - **By:** Frank Guengerich ■The Fight for Independent Club Operators: From The Battle of New Orleans to the Battle for Independents -



**By:** Geoff Hampton ■Keeping Your Gym In Shape: Ways Your Gym Billing Company Might Be Losing You Money - **By:** Jim Thomas ■Digital Deluge or Delusion: Is the Virtual World Becoming a Real Reality? - **By:** Jeffrey Pinkerton ■Using Courts and Court Sports Programming as a Competitive Advantage ■And, of Course, Norm's Notes

#### May 2021

*Dave Cardone and Memorial Athletic Club - Leadership Through Adversity* - **By:** Justin Cates

#### Front Page Article Headlines:

■Paul Grzymkowski Passes Away at Age 72

#### Inside the Insider:

■Exercise IS Medicine - **By:** Mike Alpert ■The Harsh Lessons of Failure... and Why They Matter to You - **By:** Thomas Plummer ■Why COVID Has Made Fitness Center Design More Important Than Ever - **By:** Bruce Carter ■An Industry Opportunity: Programming to Help COVID Survivors Recover - **By:** Bonnie Patrick-Mattalian ■Is the Fitness Club Industry Dead? - **By:** Matt Zagrodzky ■Live Group Fitness is the Answer... Again - **By:** Terry Browning ■IHRSA 2021 Moves to Dallas in October ■Gratitude... Belonging... Inspiration. Our "Third Place" ■And, of Course, Norm's Notes

#### June 2021

*The St. James - "Welcome to Your Best"* - **By:** Justin Cates

#### Front Page Article Headlines:

■An Important Update on Augie's Quest to Cure ALS - **By:** Justin Cates

#### Inside the Insider:

■Point - Counterpoint: Fitness IS Medicine - **By:** Cosmo Wollan ■Point - Counterpoint: (See 2021 In Review Page 14)







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Exercise IS Medicine - **By:** Mike Alpert  
 ■ Legal Considerations for Mandating COVID-19 Vaccines in the Workplace - **By:** Paul R. Bedard, Esquire  
 ■ Engagement: Building Your Club's Real Social Network - **By:** Jeffrey Pinkerton  
 ■ Over 100 Members of Congress Now Support the GYMS Act  
 ■ IHRSA Restructures Membership Options  
 ■ Keeping Courts Busy For Fun and Fitness  
 ■ And, of Course, Norm's Notes

### July 2021

*Ken Davies' City Fitness - More Than a Gym. A Community.* - **By:** Justin Cates

#### Front Page Article Headlines:

■ IHRSA Names Elizabeth Clark President & Chief Executive Officer

#### Inside the Insider:

■ Exercise IS Medicine - **By:** Mike Alpert  
 ■ Health Clubs + Hormones = Higher Income in ONE WEEK - **By:** Donna Krech  
 ■ How to Create Strategic Partnerships in Your Community - **By:** Gary Polic  
 ■ Revenue-cycle Management Within the Health Club/ Gym Space - **By:** Bill McBride  
 ■ Using Video Marketing to Grow Your Gym - **By:** Jim Thomas  
 ■ Well, What Questions Should You Be Asking About Group Fitness? - **By:** Jeffrey Pinkerton  
 ■ Crunch Fitness Extends Business Relationship with ABC Fitness Solutions  
 ■ EVCS Collaborates With LA Fitness to Install EV Fast Chargers at Its Fitness Centers  
 ■ Thinking Outside AND Inside of the (20x40) Box  
 ■ And, of Course, Norm's Notes

### August 2021

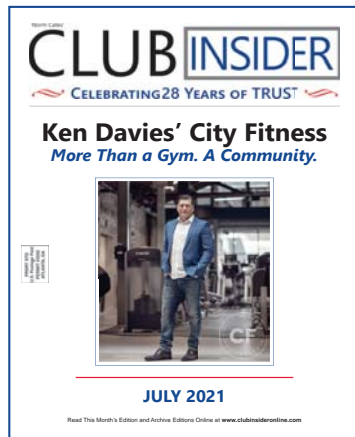
*The Club Insider Advertising Team - Dedicated Leaders in a Great Industry* - **By:** Justin Cates

#### Front Page Article Headlines:

■ Excitement Builds for IHRSA 2021

#### Inside the Insider:

■ Exercise IS Medicine - **By:** Mike Alpert  
 ■ The Surprising Link Between Environment, Mood and Club Success - **By:** Bruce Carter  
 ■ Proactive Prospect Relationship Building and Follow-Up Plans - **By:** Karen Woodard-Chavez  
 ■ Life Lesson from an Outdoor Cyclist: *Just Keep Moving* - **By:** Jeffrey Pinkerton  
 ■ Crunch Franchise Announces Newest Location in St. Petersburg, Florida  
 ■ OLC Announces Completion of the Lake Nona Performance Center  
 ■ And, of Course, Norm's Notes



### September 2021

*Xponential Fitness - The Curator of Leading Boutique Brands* - **By:** Justin Cates

#### Inside the Insider:

■ Exercise IS Medicine - **By:** Mike Alpert  
 ■ The Ecosystem of Technology - **By:** Bill McBride  
 ■ Legal Considerations for Mandating Face Masks for Employees - **By:** Paul R. Bedard, Esquire  
 ■ How Gym Owners Can Supercharge Sales Performance With Automation - **By:** Jim Thomas  
 ■ Are You REALLY Ready to Get People Moving? - **By:** Cathy Spencer Browning  
 ■ REX: Roundtables for Executives  
 ■ Court Sports: It's Academic!  
 ■ And, of Course, Norm's Notes

### October 2021

*Welcome to Elizabeth Clark... IHRSA's New President and CEO!* - **By:** Norm Cates

#### Inside the Insider:

■ Exercise IS Medicine - **By:** Mike Alpert  
 ■ Are You Asking Your Sales Managers The Right Questions To Grow Sales? - Part I - **By:** Gary Polic  
 ■ The Proven, Five Prong Client Experience Strategy That Wins Members Every Time - **By:** Sumit Seth  
 ■ Preventing Site Selection Mistakes When Opening Multiple Clubs in One City - **By:** Mike Manning  
 ■ Are You in the Recruitment Business? - **By:** Cathy Spencer Browning  
 ■ And, of Course, Norm's Notes

### November 2021

*IHRSA 2021: Celebrating the Industry's Revival* - **By:** Justin Cates

#### Front Page Article Headlines:

■ GENAVIX and Smart Health Clubs Join Forces to Create HealthyCARE®

#### Inside the Insider:



■ Exercise IS Medicine - **By:** Mike Alpert  
 ■ The Member Experience Cycle: A Simple Tool to Enhance Retention and Sales - **By:** Karen Woodard-Chavez  
 ■ You Evolve or You Die... The End of the Fitness Industry as a Single Business - Part I - **By:** Thomas Plummer  
 ■ Are You Asking Your Sales Managers The Right Questions To Grow Sales? - Part II - **By:** Gary Polic  
 ■ A Health Club's Superpower - **By:** Terry Browning  
 ■ And, of Course, Norm's Notes

#### Stay Tuned in 2022!

(Justin Cates is the Publisher of Club Insider. Having been born into a club business family in 1985, Justin grew up in the health and fitness club industry. He has lived and breathed this industry for 36 years, since his own day one, and he loves it dearly. Graduating from the Terry College of Business at The University of Georgia in 2007, Justin has run day-to-day operations of Club Insider for 13 years. Justin was elevated to Publisher of Club Insider on April 5, 2020. Justin's Dad, Norm Cates, continues to serve as Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993. You can reach Justin by phone at 863-999-2677 or email at [Justin@clubinsideronline.com](mailto:Justin@clubinsideronline.com).)




## Club Insider Seeks Contributing Authors

Contact Justin Cates

(863) 999 - 2677 or  
[justin@clubinsideronline.com](mailto:justin@clubinsideronline.com)



A close-up photograph of a man's muscular arm and shoulder as he lifts a large, black, octagonal dumbbell. The dumbbell has a textured, concentric ring pattern and the number '40' and 'IRON GRIP' are printed on its face. The man is wearing a dark blue tank top. A red line graphic starts from the top left, goes down, then diagonally across the middle, and then down again towards the bottom right corner.

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## Design Secrets for Management, Staff and Member Magic

By: **Bruce Carter**

Magic happens in a business environment when all parties involved are finding that their expectations are being met and then even exceeded, yet it is synergistic in nature. If one group is finding their expectations are being met, but the other two aren't, then there is no magic and no optimal potential being achieved.

There are a number of key design attributes that can greatly help in creating a winning environment for management, staff and members. Some may seem so obvious that they are often overlooked, minimizing the design attention they receive.

*Management* wants design to be exciting, inspiring people to join and keep coming back for more. Yet, they also want design to minimize their operational issues and expenses while also not being costly to build.

*Staff* wants design to make their job easier with more income potential and to give them opportunities to do the best they can with what their job description calls for.

*Members* want design to help stimulate them in their ongoing challenge of getting and staying in shape. They love the idea of having a variety of beautiful fitness and wellness spaces often wishing them to be exclusive but lower priced.

Successful design can get what each group wants, but it is important to define what those design objectives are and incorporate them into any design whether for a new design or renovation of any existing one.

So, how can design lead to magic with all three groups?

The following questions can help management reach new levels of operation success from design:

■ Does design allow for management to have good control over the environment?

■ Do sight lines allow for good visual and personal interaction with members and staff?

■ Is there a good interaction of technology with design, such as camera systems, allowing for better visual awareness of different areas of the club?

■ Does the lobby and front desk design make it difficult for members to get by without checking in (while also making it easy to check-in)?

■ Does design allow for the proper presentation of all the desired programs and services that are necessary to reach management's financial goals (yet are cost-effective to create)?

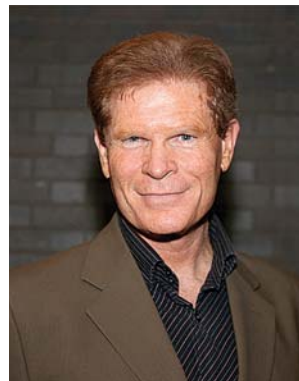
■ Are chosen finishes and materials easy to clean, and do they minimize maintenance issues (such as walls that do not show scuff marks)?

■ Does staff have to put in extra effort to keep things clean?

Proper design can solve all of these day-to-day bothersome issues for management. But, this requires a well-thought-out design being careful to choose materials and finishes that cost less, yet are as exciting and dynamic as more costly items. Here is a great quote about staff that can apply to clubs and design. **J.W. Marriot** was quoted as saying, "Take good care of your employees, and they'll take good care of your customers. And, the customers will come back."

Design is a key way to take care of members, but it is the staff in clubs interacting with members everyday who breathe life and spirit into the experience. That spirit can often overcome a flaw in design, but design can rarely overcome a gap in service.

One of the most often overlooked design points is space for staff. Staff lounges are in short supply, or they are an afterthought, having employees sitting in a storeroom on breaks. Commit to a well-thought-out staff space, and the staff will be



Bruce Carter

grateful for it.

Help staff in keeping a club clean and maintained. A janitor's closet with mop sink should always be in each locker room. Don't forget adequate storage (whether rooms, cabinets or racks) for anything and everything that needs to prevent clutter and allows for easy access and organized day-to-day use.

Give trainers the space they need to do their job. Lacking in many clubs is adequate, open space for functional/core movements and stretching. Make the  
(See **Bruce Carter** Page 19)

## You Evolve or You Die... *The End of the Fitness Industry as a Single Business*

By: **Thomas Plummer**

### Part II

In **Part I** of this article, I brought forth the premise that *there is no such thing as a single fitness industry*. I explained what this statement means and its origins. This month, in **Part II**, I will explain what it means for all of us in this industry.

#### What does all of this mean to us?

There is always opportunity in chaos, and in my over four-decade long career, there has never been a better time to attack in this industry. Here is where the opportunities might exist.

**There is no national leadership for this training segment:** These two groups live in separate universes. They have separate gurus, separate live events, different problems to solve, yet no national leadership has formed. The mainstream world has *IHRSA*, the training world has

nothing resembling national leadership.

As an interesting side note, *IHRSA* had it right a number of years ago but was probably too early to the dance. Their leadership at the time, especially **Meredith Poppler**, recognized the emerging training-centric world, and *IHRSA* offered a separate track recognizing these gym owners. Perhaps too early, but they were right the first time and had their chance to own this separate market.

The problem on the training side is no one over there has heard of *IHRSA*, *Club Industry* or any of the traditional names associated with the industry as a whole. Yes, there are several small groups trying to be this leadership group, but mostly, they exist as nothing more than avenues to connect vendors with training gyms and provide little, if any, national leadership. Someone needs to step up and form a legitimate national training gym association.

**There is a need for training segment specific vendors:** There is no

one specializing in the collection of memberships for this group. There is no national marketing company that can service the gym world. There is no national trade show for this segment.

The equipment people have especially failed here. With the exception of *Perform Better*, which does provide national workshops attracting thousands of these players, and which is the most respected player in this segment, most of the other vendors have failed to recognize this is a separate business altogether and not part, stated strongly again, not part of the mainstream fitness world.

You cannot take equipment designed for a national big box chain and shove it into a training gym. You cannot use a sales force experienced in chasing big box gyms then talk to a gym owner. They do not understand this owner, his problems or his true equipment needs.

If the vendors want to compete here, they need dedicated teams for this market, equipment designed for this gym and services specific to a gym client who



Thomas Plummer

pays \$300 per month, not \$10. An example of a national failing was one of the major equipment guys building a \$40,000 piece of equipment, designed as a rack system, which could only accommodate four people at a time. Totally tone death when it comes  
(See **Thomas Plummer** Page 19)





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### ...Thomas Plummer

continued from page 16

to a training gym, which services large groups on a quick turnover basis. But, it was created for the mainstream guys, and by God, we have it so we will just sell it over here, too, even though it doesn't fit the concept.

#### The murky world of the big franchises:

You cannot be everything to everyone in 2021 and beyond. We felt this going into the virus, and it is especially true now we are on the other side. Franchises have two choices going forward. Either evolve your concept away from chasing volume, and teach your owners to chase return per client, or create a separate brand under the same franchise organization that will attract both sides of the fence. You cannot offer a 7,000 square-foot box and expect to house a cheap client at \$39, yet seek a high-end client paying \$80 per hour. It's time to decide, and the future is open for the company that figures this out the quickest.

**Bigger is not better:** Training gyms are getting larger. Some progressive owners, such as *Advantage Personal Training* in Mystic, Connecticut, and *Pittsburgh North Fitness*, are 9,000 square feet or bigger, but both set the entry barrier for

new clients at \$229 per month or higher. This larger model, offering open access to its members, meaning the clients can come in on their off days, is the future of this segment. Yet again, the vendors fail to recognize this since they want 3,000-client gyms in 40,000 square feet. We assume the future of the industry is still the large box, a massive fitness facility in an old *Sports Authority*, not realizing the future is the neighborhood player with 300 members generating \$1.4 million a year or higher.

#### In Summary

Pressure, in the form of the virus, has revealed the weaknesses that were already underlying the industry in 2019 and earlier. These failings include the ever-increasing cost to build and sustain a big box, the pending extinction of the independent operator in the mainstream world, the race to the bottom in price as the price wars rage on, and perhaps the simple been there, done that by the mainstream client, now happy pedaling along in his underwear, drinking wine, at home on his new \$2,000 bike.

Yet, while one stumbled, the other half rose. The more sophisticated client, defined by money and education, continued to support the training gyms during the

virus, because he or she understands the connection between fitness and health. This support will be what drives the training gym growth for the next decade.

The virus finished the work the gym-centric players began in the late 1990s. There is now not one, giant fitness industry, but rather two, distinct industries with different outcomes, tradeshow, heroes and vendors.

If we recognized this, then we would recognize the opportunity this represents. This group is simply ignored... by the leadership organizations, by the vendors, by the franchises and even by the government agencies who lump a giant sweat box, crammed with shoulder-to-shoulder people on treadmills, with a training gym, which even in non-virus times, has always kept social distancing and cleanliness as priorities.

The training world is simply a whole new world just waiting for someone to discover it, and this is where the future, and the money, will be.

*(Thomas Plummer has been one of the primary thought leaders in the fitness industry for over 40 years. His approach of change through leadership, delivered in the 1,100+ workshops he has taught all around the world since 1980, has resulted in the creation of many of the current business concepts now in use in the industry, such as the modern training gym business model and layered pricing structure used by so many financially successful fitness businesses. He is perhaps best known for helping young fitness professionals understand and master the business side of the gym business. You can contact Thom at [info@thomasplummer.com](mailto:info@thomasplummer.com).)*

# Make It Fun!

# Opportunities with Personal Training

By: **Bonnie Patrick-Mattalian**

We continue to see decent growth in membership again. Yet, many operators see two very distinctive paths with personal training: (1) either the trends replicate membership growth or (2) it has stalled. I spoke with several industry personal training influencers to get their take on this service's current and future state. And, of course, with the New Year on the horizon, in addition to new membership sales and other club access models, delivering personal training results will be paramount to retention.

## GymGuyz

**Josh York** is the ebullient CEO of *GymGuyz*. His program, "the largest personal training brand in the world," matches trainers to participants, and the trainers work through a regional *GymGuyz* franchise. They have locations in 752 cities in the United States.

Success requires discipline and accountability, and *Gym Guyz* bring that while removing barriers, including time, by bringing the session to the participant. "Our utilization has been predictably through the roof," York said.

During closures and restrictions, his business went to an all-virtual model with no loss of business. And now, everything is back to in-person but for 3% of the company. York relates the ongoing success to the focus on individualized customer experience. With a *Net Promoter Score* of 94, it's easy to see how the business retains and attracts participants.

Like so many others, *Gym GUYZ* saw some challenges with hiring staff. "We are doing it all," York explained. "Culture matters, and we provide paths for trainer growth, health benefits and to make every interaction fun," he continued.

Guerrilla marketing has helped grow regional businesses, from strategically placed realtor signs to branded vehicles and participant referrals. *GymGuyz* has found a niche that is providing a much-needed service. York continued, "People will go back to gyms, and convenience matters more now." He clarified that the organization helps people feel good about themselves to augment training at their local gym.

## The Training Hub

**Gary Blackledge** has had an esteemed career as a world-class personal trainer. He is a *Managing Member* of *The Training Hub* in New Jersey, a unique concept offering studios for rent or lease to personal trainers.

He and his business partner

launched the concept in March of 2021. He saw that some local fitness centers were closing. "Trainers were losing their jobs or their business was significantly impacted at their place of employment, and consumers had concerns about returning to big box gyms. So, we found a way to fill a niche," Blackledge said.

Initially, much of the training was done virtually. The 800 square-foot outdoor space was booked frequently. Now, the business is growing. Blackledge attributes some of his success to the utilization of technology. "I recently started using the *Bridge Athletic* app for my programming," he continued, "I am also able to sell my programs to consumers through the use of this app." He says the *Bridge Athletic* app videos are top-notch, led by *EXOS* trainers and utilizing their methodology.

He believes that, "the future trends in personal training will allow the trainer to have more flexibility and a more robust revenue stream." Virtual options and technology will help a trainer more easily scale and help the participant remain engaged via an app.

## LifeStart/WTS International

*WTS International* is a consulting and management firm catering to spas, fitness and wellness centers, corporate wellness, hotels and lifestyle residential projects.

**Josh Zaffino** is the *Director of Training and Development* for *WTS*. At the beginning of the pandemic, like so many others, virtual programming was up and running within two weeks. "We created studio settings and launched our *LifeStart* at Home YouTube Channel with over 100 videos," he explained.

For members, their virtual membership pricing evolved to \$14.99 per month with 30-minute PT sessions at \$25 for 30 minutes. Zaffino takes pride in their hybrid model, giving members options and flexibility. "Our 3- to 6-week programs are very popular, offering a mixture of prerecorded and live virtual sessions for participants to follow," he said.

He agrees that virtual offerings close the gap to convenience. He stated, "Historically, when clients traveled, trainers lost income." Virtual capabilities keep participants engaged no matter when or where.

## FlexIt

*FlexIt* is a white-labeled platform for participants to access gyms without a membership. The app is both B to B and B to C, and it has received national recognition in major US publications. They work with close to 3,000 gyms in 25 states,

including *Blink*, *Crunch* and *Gold's*.

**Justin Turetsky** is the COO of *FlexIt* and a *Founding Member*.

"This optimized software was the easiest way for consumers to access gyms during the pandemic," he explained. The company provides 1:1 sessions with top trainers from around the country.

The app is easy to use, powered by AI and is tailored to personal trainers. The intake process includes a session where a participant is matched with a trainer and tailors a plan to the individual.

"FlexIt is reaching consumers who are new to fitness, including those who may be older, overweight or suffering from chronic conditions," Turetsky noted. By lowering the barrier to beginning a program without fear and with the ease of convenience, the app can be an extension of a bricks-and-mortar club.

Turetsky believes that wearables will hold a more vital home in the industry in the next five years, connecting with a trainer to assess data and make it actionable.

Check out the **FlexIt Ad** on the *Club Insider* website and in weekly/monthly *Club Insider* eBlasts.

## Avenu Fitness + Lifestyle

**Brent Gallagher** is the *President* of *Avenu Fitness + Lifestyle*, just outside of Houston, Texas. He is renowned for operational excellence at his centers, which offer 1:1 and small group training to a demographic typically of age 40+.

His operation has seen a groundswell to small group training. "We have found people wanting to be in a smaller, controlled environment, 1:1 and on up to four participants," he stated.

What you were known for before and how you operated your business influenced what happened next. He recalled, "We have always been known for the fact that we are a surgically clean facility, and people often said that they felt badly sweating on our pristine floor."

Gallagher noted that, with the pandemic, people were gravitating to the shorter, 30-minute workouts. An hour just felt too long to spend on screen. So, they scaled back most virtual and in-person sessions to reflect that need. "Around 20 - 25% still participate virtually. One member says she likes watching the *Today Show*. So, this way, she can watch and still participate in the session," he said. An hour workout with a trainer broken up into two 30-minute sessions has proven very attractive to his clientele.

Gallagher agrees that the pandemic has resulted in a shortage of qualified trainers. He asked, "What is the next generation of trainers? They are more experienced in virtual and may enjoy that



Bonnie Patrick-Mattalian

flexibility." However, the downside is the lack of stability and growth, and many trainers who are out there on their own are experiencing burnout.

"Strong, caring leadership is more critical than ever. I don't make it about the numbers. We are a team, and we all need to be rowing in the same direction," he concluded. People are looking for careers in an organization with a culture of understanding, collaboration, and growth. And, that's why *Avenu Fitness + Lifestyle* continues to dominate its market.

## Summary

The future is what we make of it. Responding to the needs of a clarified target market will yield a return. *Motus Creative* is one of the best in our industry in pinpointing market demand:

**Staff:** Consider educational reimbursement for newcomers in the field after some time with your organization. All can be part of the solution with collaborative strategies for growth. Taking time to be flexible and understand each trainer's needs will help the culture to be appealing. Everyone needs a mentor and a development path. Many will choose alternate routes like *The Training Hub* or *GymGuyz*, which is a positive since that is still keeping people active.

**Technology:** Your CMS and technology platforms can help scale your programs, engage participants and help your trainers track results. Programs like *Cipio.ai* will give us a leg up on predicting the behavior of our participants. Consumers will remain attracted to wearables, which should better interface with our apps and equipment.

**Hybrid Services:** Perhaps only a small percentage of our members are utilizing this service. Here's the thing: Many people (See *Bonnie Patrick-Mattalian* Page 19)



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### ...Bruce Carter

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space commitment, even if it means less equipment, because open space is now as important as any other space in a club's exercise offering.

Unique lighting and sound systems for group training spaces are increasingly popular for both staff and members. However, proper design should allow for easy-to-use, wall-mounted control panels for music and lighting choices. Over complicated systems confuse and frustrate.

Of course, members surely play a significant role in the design of a club. Management and staff would love to give members as many programs, equipment and space as possible. But, the cost to do

business (such as rent and debt service) means space efficiency is so important, so successful design often results in having to prioritize what to offer. Don't make the mistake of trying to offer too much in too little space. Once again, no magic there.

Group exercise/training spaces should be multi-functional. The restaurant design principle of, "don't design for mother's day," also applies to clubs. You can't design a group exercise room to handle your largest class easily then have it be underutilized most other times. One design "secret" is to design a group room with the ability for it to be widely used all hours a club is open. Typically, a group exercise room may be used 6 - 8 hours a day but is then minimally used the other eight or so hours a day the club is open.

Often, clubs close the room off and turn out the lights. Consider adding a glass garage door or an extra set of double doors so when a class is not going on, it can be opened up to all members for stretching and core movements. Always have the doors open when no classes are taking place, because keeping a set of doors closed signifies to members the room is not available for use. Also, do not let a trainer go into the room with a client and close the door, because this gives the message that the space is off limits to everyone else.

A key principle for management and staff is to, "maintain the integrity of the design." For example, if white walls are chosen for a desired design theme, then management must be willing to commit the time and expense to keep the walls

cleaned and repainted. If it is decided to put new flooring tile in the locker rooms, then don't make the mistake of buying a tile that does not work with the existing décor just because it is cheaper. Do it right, or don't do it at all.

With design, everything makes a difference, good and bad. Taking care of the needs of management, staff and members must be part of the decision making process of any design. When you align a clear purpose, great design and a strong spirit to serve, that's the club business at its best. That is when magic happens.

*(Bruce Carter is the owner of Optimal Design Systems, International. Bruce can be reached at [bruce@optimaldsi.com](mailto:bruce@optimaldsi.com).)*

### ...Bonnie Patrick-Mattalian

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in the same target market are using online and virtual programming. We need to find them and develop a relationship to attract them to our offerings.

**Programming:** Mindset will continue to be a need for 1:1 and SGT. Keep an eye on *Whoop* and others like that, which will quickly tap into the same markets. The social component of programs is more

attractive than ever, being with a like-minded community.

**Convenience and Safety:** For a while, at least, a portion of the market for personal training services will continue to prefer training in a confined area, in a controlled group, or in their homes. Survey members frequently to understand their needs.



As always, good leadership yields

happy team members and customers. Take time to learn, understand and define strategies for both now and later.

*(Bonnie Patrick-Mattalian builds high-performance teams and businesses in both the private and not-for-profit sectors in multiple industries. As a consultant with proven solutions for customer experience delivery success, financial profitability, project management, employee recruitment and advancement, business evolution and scalability, and leadership/organizational*

*development, in her experience, Mattalian has improved EBITDA 3 - 12% over a three-year period. She is renowned for innovative methodologies to understand consumer insights and behaviors, having facilitated the successful launch of over 60 businesses and turnarounds for another 20 locations throughout her career. You can contact Bonnie at [bmattalian@gmail.com](mailto:bmattalian@gmail.com) and [www.linkedin.com/in/bonniepatrickmattalian](http://www.linkedin.com/in/bonniepatrickmattalian).)*

## It Is Not WHAT You Know But WHO You Know to Grow Sales

By: Gary Polic

We are all the experts in the "educational" piece of marketing our clubs. "You want to know **WHAT** to do to get the results you are looking for, then come to us!" That is the position we are all in currently when fighting for our market share. I mean, who would want to trust their fitness results to just anybody, right? But, what about relationships? The consumer buys from someone they trust and has good rapport with initially or over time. Well, then, that leaves us with the most important question, and that is **WHO** do you know *personally* in your communities that is an influencer?

**Fast forward to today:** It is the Holiday Season! Did you know that 60% of the total annual revenue for most retailers is produced between Thanksgiving and Valentines Day? Further, 80% of retailers have a database; 60% correspond with that database! That is exactly what gives our clubs the perfect opportunity and "reason why" we would approach retailers to cross-promote and create a long-term alliance to WIN! Your local communities (now that COVID is slowly becoming behind us) are having events being planned. And, corporations are meeting with their employees again and sharing gifts over the holidays.

**Increasing the sales at our clubs:** We are all counting on our marketing and social media postings to bring in those sales,

and rightfully so. However, what do we do collectively as a management team to inspire and lead our department heads and their respected teams to grow our brand awareness and sales in our communities?

**Consider this...** Every Department Head should be able to participate "actively" in the following five lead-in questions to follow. When I say "actively," I mean have a "present/ongoing" strategic influence attacking these questions and subsequently "building a database" of influencers/leads on a weekly and monthly basis for their clubs.

The GM should be leading this effort and delegating tasks to cover the ground that needs to be covered. It is not an easy task but well worth it when you consider life and business is all about building and sustaining relationships and increasing lines of communication of how we can better serve each other.

Remember to lay out a realistic plan to execute the roadwork necessary to elevate your club's brand awareness in your communities. Take the time weekly to add this task to your Department Head meetings weekly, especially now, during the holidays and the New Year celebration fast approaching us.

### Five Lead-In Questions

Here are five lead-in questions to consider asking your management team, and subsequently, their staff during this

holiday season.

**1. Do you know your Members Personally?** If you were to walk into your club, take an employee with you out on the fitness floor and point to a member, would they know that member personally? Your members are the hottest influencers in your community. I always say, "Once a member invites you over to their house for dinner on a Sunday night to meet their family, that's when you've done your job in building the relationship."

What is your established "New Member" follow-up protocol? I personally always liked scheduling a seven-day follow-up appointment with the member at the POS. This way, we can re-connect and ask them how their experience was at the club so far and who they have shared the good news with recently! We talked about it before, and that is your Member Surveys being utilized by your new sales representatives to begin the member building relationship process.

**2. Do you know your Retailers (small business owners) Personally?** If you were to walk outside and go to the first business to the right or left of your club, would you know that owner personally? Have you began calling on that old corporate listing (pre-COVID) of the club you are working at yet? *Executive Sales Manager, Ronald Jones, of the Athletic Club Northeast at The Wellbridge Company* did both, and he has not only built a long-term relationship with the business but also closed 42 new memberships to boot! Great hard and SMART work, Ronald Jones!

How about making your clubs available for small businesses to congregate? The small business can send out invites to their entire databases and invite their customers into the club for a weekend of fun on them! What about utilizing your clubs for a *Chamber of Commerce* "retailer community event" sponsored by your club?

**3. Do you know your Community Leaders personally?** If you were to ask your GM the name of the town Mayor, Chief of Police or Fire Marshall, would they know them personally? Also, who is your Congressional Representative in your district? Have you been on the local town's website? What events are happening over the holidays, and how can your club contribute? Most importantly, are you laying out your annual marketing calendar regarding giving back to your communities through charitable events and donations? Do you know your local news station? Are they looking for healthy topic segments?

**4. Do you know your Staff/Team**



Gary Polic

**Members Personally?** If you were to ask your Personal Training Department Head what is one of their personal trainer's "super why," would they know the employees' personal reason "why" they work at your club or need to make money? We expect our individual team members to produce. However, we do not know what triggers them to produce. If you genuinely care for your people and are invested into their development, then you should know "why" they work at your club and what motivates them to perform.

**5. Do you know your Local Corporate Decision Makers Personally?** Driving a five-mile radius of your club, would you know the CEO/COO or HR Director of that corporation with hundreds of employees? This really takes us back to #1. At the POS, we should all be asking our sales representatives that make the sale the question: "Where does the new member work, socialize or place of worship?" The funny thing is our local corporate influencers are working out at our clubs today! How many times today have you asked a member where they work? What "listing" are you calling on? Is it being worked "daily?"

### The Bottom Line

As we compete with other clubs for market share, we are very aware of the growing need to build long-term lasting relationships in and outside our clubs with the influencers of our communities. I like to say: "*The clubs that know the most members personally... WINS!*" Well, in this case: "**The GM who knows the most Members, Retailers, Community Leaders, Corporate Decision Makers and Staff Personally... WINS!**"

So, I leave you with this final question to begin your journey to grow your brand and sales, and that is...

(See Gary Polic Page 21)



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# Are You Being Reactive, Proactive or Inactive?

By: **Jeffrey Pinkerton**

In chemistry, as far as I can recall from my college career as a Biology major, activation energy is the amount of energy required to trigger a reaction. These reactions require more energy to start than they do to sustain. They are made easier with catalysts and made more difficult, slowed or stalled with inhibitors. This is true in chemistry and in business. And, as it turns out, it's true in human behavior as well.

The energy and effort to get started with something new is often the hardest part. It is pushing the rock up the hill to build a new process, to launch a new initiative or to build a new healthy habit. The energy required continues to build

to the transition state, where the hardest work is behind you, momentum can take over, where the rock rolls down hill, where the system runs smoother and things feel easier. Our prediction for 2022...? The year will require more activation energy... for consumers and for your club.

**Being Reactive.** Being reactive often holds a negative connotation, but maybe it shouldn't. Reacting to the changes of consumer behavior, consumer expectations and consumer activity (and consumer inactivity) is important for any business to stay relevant. The challenge is timing the needs of the market with the services you provide, cutting through the noise of those selling the "future of fitness" and balancing reading the data and forecasting for

the future.

Data in and of itself can be misleading. A meteoric rise in digital fitness in 2020 had more to do with a forced consumer mandate (approximately 180 million members worldwide lost access to their health clubs) than a permanent change in personal preference. Do your members expect heightened cleaning protocols? Probably. Do they like the idea of a digital option when life gets complicated? Sure. Do they expect more from an in-club experience? We think so. Will they need a compelling reason to come back and reactivate their membership? Of course. Will they need more direction, more encouragement and more incentive to reactivate their routine? Absolutely.

(See **Jeffrey Pinkerton** Page 22)



Jeffrey Pinkerton

# Exercise IS Medicine

By: **Mike Alpert**

The *Christmas Holiday Season* is my favorite time of the year. In general, it seems that people are in a more giving spirit. Lots of Holiday movies and much cooler weather... It is also a time that I find myself reflecting on all the things that I have to be thankful for, like my wife, **Annie**; daughter, **Justene**, and many other family members and special friends. And, of course for being able to work in the health and fitness club industry for so many wonderful years.

So, for my article this month, I want to re-visit an article that was actually a letter written to me from a very dear woman who went through our *Living Well After Cancer* program back in June of 2011. I have been so moved by this letter over the years that I wanted all of you to be able to read it again. It was originally published in the *August 2015 Edition of Club Insider*, but here it is again, as written by **Linda Johnson**:

Dear Mr. Alpert,

My name is Linda Johnson, and I am the lucky and grateful recipient of a free membership to your beautiful club. I

am writing to thank you for this amazing opportunity.

I had the extreme pride of recently completing the *Living Well After Cancer* program. It was not easy, because for me, I am trying to live well WITH cancer. My breast cancer from 11 years ago became metastatic over three years ago. I now have metastasis to the pleura surrounding both lungs and in multiple locations throughout my spine and both hips. I will be in treatment for the remainder of my life. Average life expectancy is two to four years. It is incurable.

I have never been a person who enjoyed exercising, and certainly, the last three years (more than two of which were on chemotherapy, the remainder on hormonal therapy), and an additional new diagnosis of asthma, I have become a professional couch potato. Well, I garden, but that's about it.

When the opportunity to participate in this program came up, I have to admit that I was scared. I have never actually been in a real gym. I went to *Curves* for a few weeks, but that's the extent of my athletic experience. I was sure I would be unable to keep up, or worse, my bones would not be able to take the stress

and would fracture. Here's this idea of doing something that would give me a tiny bit of CONTROL over something that has so devastated my life; well, that ILLUSION of control was enough to keep me dragging myself there and trying to do better.

The treadmill has been a challenge for me, both physically and mentally. The whole time I am walking, the word **CANCER... CANCER... CANCER...** keeps playing in my head. I think of the two friends I have just lost to breast cancer (I went to a service today) and my dear cousin, who died last month of lung cancer at 48. I feel like I am trying to run away from it on the treadmill. But, I know I can't outrun it.

I have been using the weight room and the cardio room specifically to improve my shape and to give me a fighting chance at the next treatment. There will always be another treatment to start, until I give up and enter hospice. I want to be strong for this fight. I am strong mentally. I want my body to catch up. You are giving me this chance to help myself.

I am convinced that exercise can improve the survival of first-time breast cancer patients. I wish I had figured that out before I became a statistic. I am so thrilled that your club is giving so many women the opportunity to help themselves survive! I hope they understand the importance and the necessity of a lifestyle change.

Over the years, I have volunteered at *City of Hope Links Breast Cancer Group* and am currently involved with **BCMETS.ORG**, a message board for metastatic breast cancer patients. I am educated and informed about the poor prognostic biology of my disease. My own impending death has been a sure thing. There is approximately a 2% 5-year survival rate. I have learned to live with that every day. The worst part of it is the idea of leaving my family: a 17-year-old daughter who still needs me; my husband; my mom, who



Mike Alpert

recently developed Alzheimer's disease; my precious pets and my friends.

But, on that damned treadmill in your cardio room recently, I had a strange new thought..."What if I live?"

It had never occurred to me before. You gave me that sliver of hope with this membership. I know it's not likely, but it does now seem possible, at least for a while longer that I was supposed to. What if I live? You asked me if the program had changed my life...

What if I live? Thank you so very much... I am going to try.

■ ■ ■

Your venue (club) makes these kinds of changes in the world we live in possible. This Christmas, make it happen for someone in your community. **Exercise IS Medicine.**

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

## ...Gary Polic

continued from page 20

"When will there be a better time of year and logical 'reason why' to reach out and wish an influencer of your club and communities a Happy Holiday and Happy New Year than now?!"

■ ■ ■

Time to work SMART like Executive Sales Manager, **Ronald Jones**, of the Athletic Club Northeast at The

*Wellbridge Company!* Check out Wellbridge (headquartered in Denver, Colorado, which brings decades of elite health club experience to the 19 athletic clubs, tennis clubs and spas it manages across the United States) at [www.wellbridge.com](http://www.wellbridge.com).

(Gary Polic is the Owner of *Polic Consultants Group, LLC* and *National Director of Sales Support at The Wellbridge Company*. Gary can be reached by phone at 630-410-1120 or email at [gary@policconsultantsgroup.com](mailto:gary@policconsultantsgroup.com). You can also visit [www.policconsultantsgroup.com](http://www.policconsultantsgroup.com).)

## ...Jeffrey Pinkerton

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**Being Proactive.** Being proactive means preparing now for what is coming in the future. It also means being realistic with the road ahead. As one customer predicted at the beginning of the pandemic in reference to membership and member traffic, "this situation came on like a switch, but it's going to come back on like a dimmer." It is so true. Things will not suddenly correct themselves with the turn of the calendar year. Members won't necessarily come back because your facility is open and clean. Or, because they are vaccinated and unmasked. People have been knocked out of sync with their routines. Life rhythms have changed. Job schedules and commutes have been disrupted. For many people, getting back to exercise will take even more activation energy than before. But, you can make their journey easier and help them find success faster.

Now is the time to evaluate everything. If guest traffic is slower, how will your team increase conversion rates?

If consumers continue to be bombarded with digital options, how will you elevate the live experience at your facility to compete? What upgrades can you make to fine-tune your sales tour to maximize every opportunity? We recommend an experience-driven 'try before you buy' approach, not just a 'try whatever you like' free pass. How will you ensure that members get socially connected at your facility? We recommend channeling people to shared experiences led by your staff, personal training and group fitness. Being socially connected, being part of a group, having workouts as a scheduled part of the week and having the encouragement and motivation of an instructor or trainer can reduce the amount of thought and effort someone has to spend in getting the most out of their time at your facility. Finding a workout in a magazine, trying to figure out what machines to use and manufacturing your own motivation while working out alone takes more thought, makes the hill steeper, makes the rock heavier and takes more activation energy.

**Being Inactive.** With the exception of being on vacation, doing nothing is the worst thing you can do. As consumers, we are attracted to new things. We appreciate when things get upgraded. We notice when a restaurant remodels or when a store updates their space. We slow down when we overhear people talking about a new movie or TV show. What simple upgrades can you make to show appreciation to your current members, attract old members back and create energy and buzz? Can you update an outdated group fitness space? Can you pull down mirrors (yes please)? Or, organize the equipment, build a stage, add a fresh coat of paint and install a few lights to make the space cooler? What about adding something new to the group fitness schedule or bringing new instructors on to your team? Or, what about adding a new tradition to the calendar of annual events, ramping up a new social media or referral promotion or running a contest in the New Year to keep people on track with their goals? Any of these updates and upgrades can be the small catalyst to encourage someone to restart their

fitness journey, rebuild their habit and rejoin your club.

■ ■ ■

While activation energy, chemical reactions and catalysts may not be part of your conversation with new members, *Newton's First Law* probably should be: an object in rest (isolated, sedentary, not exercising) tends to stay at rest, and an object in motion (connected to a social event, active, making exercise a part of their weekly schedule) tends to stay in motion.

To learn more about how MOSSA can help your club deliver a better member experience, redesign your group fitness room, reorganize your member onboarding, or redefine your sales process, visit their white paper library at [mossa.net/clubs-facilities/white-papers](http://mossa.net/clubs-facilities/white-papers).

(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](mailto:jeffreypinkerton@mossa.net).)

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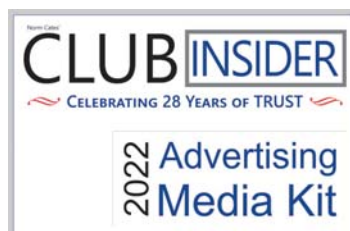
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