A look at personal training that goes beyond the textbooks.
—MUSCLE & FITNESS

# IGNITE THE FIRE



REVISED UPDATED & EXPANDED

*The Secrets to Building a Successful Personal Training Career*

JONATHAN GOODMAN CSCS
**With a foreword by Lou Schuler, author of the *New Rules of Lifting* series**

# IGNITE THE FIRE

*The Secrets to Building a Successful Personal Training Career*

Jonathan Goodman

**REVISED AND EXPANDED SECOND EDITION**

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*To my mom and dad*

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I write this upon rereading the acknowledgements section for the original version of the book, I've become nostalgic.

In 2009, when I started writing this book, I didn't believe that I'd ever finish it. In 2011, I didn't believe that the Personal Trainer Development Center ("thePTDC") would ever get off of the ground. Now, in 2014, the sky's the limit and I believe that anything is possible.

Sure I *could* talk about the late nights and early mornings, the anxiety attacks, or the weight loss stemming from malnutrition after day-long bouts stressing about every word I wrote, story I shared, and strategies I described in the pages that follow.

But don't feel bad for me.

Life is awesome and I enjoyed those moments – at least most of them. The result of *Ignite (version 1.0)* was thePTDC, a collaborative effort that brings the "exercise as medicine" mantra into every corner of the globe from my home in Toronto to rural India, Europe to Australia, and everywhere in between.

The fact that this book has been read by tens of thousands of people, in over a hundred countries, is amazing. It's cool. It's fantastic. And most of all, it wouldn't be possible without you. So the first acknowledgement goes to you – the person who's reading this book. Thank you for your passion and dedication to the "exercise is medicine" movement.

To my Mom and Dad – everything that I ever do will be dedicated to you. You've been there, listened, and encouraged every crazy idea that I've ever had. To all of my older siblings – Lis, Dave, and Dan, and their loving partners, James, Kaela, and Rono – we're all so different in so many ways yet when we get together, nobody can do anything but smile. I love you all.

*Ignite the Fire* would have never happened without my editor, Kelly James-Enger. I've still got no idea how you took 65,000+ word ramblings and made it into what it is. But you're super-cool even though you try to force me into using American spellings.

And to Alison – my rock – I don't know how you do it. You've been through it all. You've seen it all. You can read me better than anybody else and are the most caring, compassionate, and patient person I've ever met. None of this would be possible without you. I love you.

I ended the acknowledgements of the original *Ignite* promising my family and friends that I would return their calls, remember appointments, go out on weekends, and take more showers – until I started the next book. Since then, I've written three books and have had the freedom to pursue whatever crazy ideas I thought were good at the time.

So you can probably give up on the promises I made years ago. I may miss an appointment or shower now and then, but I'm having too much fun to stop now.

# FOREWORD

I'm not a personal trainer. That is, I've never worked with clients in person, and don't want to. But I've spent more than two decades working with trainers on articles and books, and observing them in action.

The trainers I end up working with are, first and foremost, good trainers. Obvious? Sure. Why would I want to write a book with someone who isn't good at what he does?

But what makes a trainer good? That's a more complicated question. The ones I end up working with typically have these qualities:

**THEY'RE EXPERIENCED.**
Every now and then I'll hear from a young trainer whose every sentence throbs with ambition. In his mind, he's ready to turn the world upside down. In my mind? I don't see anything I can use. Not yet. Today he knows what works for him, and for his workout partners, and for the well-known athletes and coaches he admires and wants to emulate.

What I want to see is evidence that he knows how to get results for people who aren't anything like him, who have goals and obstacles he can't relate to at this point in his career. Even more important: I want to know that he's changed his mind about something important, based on his own successes and failures helping clients.

**THEY'RE EDUCATED.**
I know some terrific trainers who never went to college. But almost every trainer I've worked with on an article has a college degree. And all my book coauthors

have master's degrees.

If you ask, they'll tell you that they've had to unlearn many of the things they learned in school, and that real-life knowledge is different from a textbook education. Some young fitness pros hear this and think, "Why not just skip the useless stuff, and go straight to knowledge?"

Here's why: Before you can break the mold, you have to know what the mold is. You should understand how conventional wisdom became conventional. Yes, that means absorbing information that isn't 100 percent actionable. Sometimes it means absorbing *a lot* of information you'll never use.

But that doesn't mean it's useless. Knowledge acquisition is a skill you'll need throughout your career – any career, really. And before you can learn, you need to learn *how* to learn.

**THEIR SUCCESS IS BUILT ON HELPING OTHERS.**

Now I get to the content of *Ignite the Fire*, and the point of this foreword: The success of your clients is the measure of your success as a trainer. Education, both initial and continuing, gives you the knowledge you need. Experience teaches you how to apply that knowledge. But you will never be a good trainer unless the people who pay for your services achieve their goals.

Jon does a terrific job of explaining how to be a better trainer. He shows you how to help your clients figure out and tap into their deepest motivators – the secret reasons they want to get in shape, and stay in shape. And he also shows you how to make a better living at your profession.

I just hope you'll keep in mind that it all begins with your passion for helping your clients. Their success is your success.

— LOU SCHULER

# INTRODUCTION

It's now 5 years since I decided to write *Ignite the Fire*. There was no shortage of books on thriving as a trainer back then and there certainly isn't now.

So why did the book resonate with so many? I believe that there are two reasons. The first is that it was written in an easy-to-understand manner. The second was the focus on the "soft sides" of training. A program is only as good as your ability to get a client to do it. I believe that understanding psychology and being able to build strong relationships with clients – so that you can encourage a client to *want* to adhere to a program is your first priority as a trainer. Learning how to build a program is your second.

In the three years that have passed since *Ignite* was originally published, a lot has changed.

I no longer train clients. Since I published the original version, my focus has been on learning everything that there is to know about building efficient business systems and the intersection between fitness, business, and behavioral economics – which you will learn about in this updated version. (Even if I don't specifically mention it, almost every system and technique I discuss herein is deeply rooted in psychology.)

In the three years since *Ignite's* original inception, much has changed in the fitness industry as well. One-on-one training has taken a back seat to high-quality small group training programs, trends like CrossFit have become a staple, and options for where and how to train have increased exponentially.

Perhaps the most notable change is that simply providing information is no longer good enough to succeed today. If you want to have an amazing, successful, and fulfilling career, you must learn how to position your material and communicate effectively not just in what you say, but what you write and

how you present yourself as well.

As a result, this revised, expanded, and updated version is a completely different book. The flow is the same in that I'm writing it for you, my reader, not to impress other fitness writers with numbingly-obscure jargon. My only goal is that you enjoy, understand, and are able to apply everything that I say.

I still talk about finding the right job *for you*, identifying your place in this crazy fitness world, selling techniques, and developing beginner programs. In addition, you'll find either overhauled or brand- new sections on everything from creating multiple revenue streams to using social media to grow your business to living a fulfilling life as a trainer. I'm here to help you find the right balance for you.

Here's the unfortunate reality: obesity rates continue to rise around the world. Fitness is preventive medicine but without countless strong providers who operate with passion and integrity on the front lines, rising health care costs could cripple society in the not-so-distant future.

Personal training is the most satisfying, exciting, gratifying, and fulfilling career in the world. I aim to make it one of the most profitable as well. I'm here for you, bros and "bro-ettes." Let this be your guide.

SECTION

# 1

# Planning for Success

# 1 SO, YOU'RE A PERSONAL TRAINER – WHAT'S NEXT?

*"When the student is ready, the teacher will appear."*

— BUDDHIST PROVERB

It starts with passion.

Passion is what makes the difference between a successful (and wealthy) personal trainer and one who fails in this business. I mean not only passion for training, but the ability to instill that passion in your clients as well.

Let me explain. New personal trainers sometimes think that their primary goal will be helping clients reach challenging athletic performance goals, or to get lean, or shredded. And it's true that some of your clients will fall into this group. But the majority of trainers (myself included) work with a much broader range of clients. They're not amateur or competitive athletes and they're not striving for perfect, enviable bodies. They are striving not for perfection, but for fitness. They work out to be healthier: to manage their stress, to lose weight, and to add muscle. They work out to be vital and counteract the effects of aging or chronic health conditions. And ideally, they want to have fun.

These clients often lack clearly-defined goals. And that means they're not as motivated to train with you as you'd like them to be. They're often teetering

on the fence of deciding whether to continue working out with you – or to quit. Advanced loading schemes, periodization, and/or complicated programming are unlikely to help you keep these clients, irrelevant of how good that programming might be. Let me tell you something. For the majority or your clients, **the quality of the program that you design pales in comparison to your ability to make your client *want* to do that program**.

Surprised? The fact is that the best and most successful trainers have a good understanding of physiology, anatomy, and biomechanics and they apply their knowledge to workouts. But more importantly, they instill *passion* in their clients every single day. That passion is what sets them apart.

In the best-selling book, *The Talent Code*, author Daniel Coyle describes what constitutes a great coach for children. The coaches that produce the best athletes from the grass roots level are not the best at teaching skills – they are the best at instilling passion in kids. Walter Gretzky, Wayne Gretzky's father, didn't have the knowledge to address the biomechanics of Wayne's slap shot from a young age. He made Wayne love the game, and that was more important.

Beginning exercisers may not be children, but the same lesson applies. As a trainer, your primary job is not to teach your client to activate their glutes. It's not to have you client perform 3 sets of 12 reps. And it's definitely not to "block-periodize" a training regime. That is the job of physiotherapists, strength and conditioning coaches, and athletic therapists. *Your* primary job is to make your client excited to work out and to have him or her love every single workout. That means doing everything you can to help them identify the *real* reasons behind why they're exercising, a concept we'll be discussing in detail later on. What might surprise you is that these reasons often have nothing to do with the goals they often name at first, like losing 10 pounds or running a 5k race.

With these kinds of clients, you're not only in the fitness business. You're in the customer service business. **The best training regime is the one that will work for each client** – and the one that will make clients feel great so they keep coming back.

## TUNING INTO YOUR PASSION

To help your clients find their own passion, stay tuned into your own. Ask yourself questions like:

- What was your initial motivation for working out?
- How did you start working out? Did you go to a gym? If so, describe the first gym you ever joined in detail.

- What kept you going?
- What obstacles did you face? How did you overcome them?
- At what point did you start to feel successful in the gym? How did that impact your vision of yourself?
- When was the first time somebody noticed the changes in your body? What kinds of comments did you receive? How did that make you feel?
- When was the first time you gave workout advice to somebody else?
- Did your motivation for working out change over time? If so, how?
- What made you decide to make personal training your career?
- What kinds of obstacles did you face to become a personal trainer? How did you overcome them?
- How do you maintain your passion for fitness today?

**IDENTIFY YOUR CLIENTS' "WHY"**

The reason I ask you to identify your personal passion is more than just introspection. It will help you connect with clients. Here's what I mean. When you consider why you were first drawn to fitness, or first entered a gym, you'll likely start to tune into your individual passion and motivation. My very first motivation at age 15 was that I wanted to stop getting concussed in hockey. I was so scrawny and weak that I was constantly slammed by other players and wanted to be stronger. When I started lifting weights, I quickly found that I loved the act of becoming stronger – and better – for myself, and not for a team, and lost interest in hockey. My "why" then changed to, "I want to get laid" because, in my immature adolescent mind (I was about 15), I thought that girls only cared about biceps. (In retrospect, I didn't figure out I was wrong until I was in my 20s – and that's when I started training my legs.)

As I grew older I became obsessed with various lifting modalities, dabbling in everything from wanting to compete in kettlebell lifting competitions, to powerlifting, to fitness modeling. Currently I've become a fan of the "Golden Age" aesthetics era, viewing the body as a well-proportioned sculpture as opposed to growing as big as possible. I pursue this athletic ideal through training because I enjoy it, and it gives me confidence in social gatherings.

But that story is unique to me. Understanding where your *client* is coming from, what his insecurities are, and what he might be struggling with are paramount to your success as a trainer. The first step is to do what I did above, and track your passion for fitness over time. Why you train today is likely different from why you started training, regardless of when you began. Identify

what you were thinking when you first stepped foot into the gym, and what your personal motivation was. And don't forget about how scared or nervous or intimidated you may have felt then.

Because regardless of the age of your client, it's likely that she is insecure about training with you. It's not dissimilar than how you felt whenever you first started training. What you've come to expect out of yourself is new to her and you've got to meet her where she is. Reminding yourself of where you once were when you started will help you connect with your client, and put yourself in her shoes, so to speak. As you'll see in this book, when your client feels understood by you, she'll feel comfortable with you, and that's essential for her to trust you and want to train with you. We'll talk much more about that in future chapters, but for now I want you to dial into your passion as a trainer – both past and current – and keep it in mind as you read this book and move forward.

To help you find your "why," I've developed a worksheet called "What's your passion?" You can download it at **www.theptdc.com/ignite-worksheets**.

✓ **TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*Think back to where your passion came from, and work to instill that same feeling in each and every one of your clients. Make them feel what you felt when you made fitness a part of your life and they will stay. When it comes to client retention, passion is more powerful than all of the scientific knowhow in the world.*

## CHOOSING A CERTIFICATION

[NOTE: I am not associated with, nor have any financial interest in, any certifying body, so what follows is my unbiased opinion.]

When deciding on which certification is right for you, the first thing to keep in mind is that certifying trainers is a business, and a lucrative one at that. You should decide which certification meshes the most closely with your training philosophy. In addition, different personal training certifications require varying levels of background knowledge and study. Make sure that you're up to the challenge if you decide to apply for a more difficult one but keep in mind that typically the more difficult the certification is to acquire, the more respected it is throughout the industry.

NEGHAR FONOONI INSIDE INFO

Fitness & lifestyle coach, writer, entrepreneur, usaf veteran, and mom, Neghar Fonooni is

passionate about empowering women through strength.

A Los Angeles native with 14 years' experience in the fitness industry, Neghar believes that a positive mind-set is the most important aspect of a fit lifestyle. Through her blog, *Eat, Lift & be Happy,* and its accompanying You-Tube channel she teaches women how to embrace their bodies and encourages them to enrich their lives with food and exercise.

Neghar is a contributing blogger to several sites, including MyFitnessPal.com and Schwarzanegger.com, and is the author of the 12-week total transformation system, *Lean & Lovely.*

An unabashed sci-fi and fantasy nerd, Neghar snorts when she laughs and loves lifting weights, yoga, red wine, dark chocolate, travel, fashion, and reading and collecting books. She resides in Santa Monica, California with her husband, son, and two silly bulldogs.

**NEGHAR'S 3 KEYS TO SUCCESS IN THE FITNESS INDUSTRY ARE:**

① **Find your niche.** Everyone needs one, as it will help you zero in on the demographic that will most benefit from your knowledge. Sometimes it finds you, so be willing to listen and be open.

② **Be authentic.** There is no other you, and trying to be anyone other than who you are will seem contrived. Authenticity is always in style, and will allow you to attract the type of client and customer that you truly want.

③ **Live your passion.** If you wake up every day pumped about what you're doing, you'll work hard and contribute positively to the world of fitness.

**NEGHAR'S WORDS TO LIVE BY:**

*"The secret to getting ahead is getting started."*
*"Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear, not absence of fear."*

—MARK TWAIN

*You can learn more about Neghar Fonooni and her "Eat, Lift, and Be Happy" Movement at www.negharfonooni.com*

Personal training is unregulated in Canada and the United States and most other countries. That means that trainers don't have to be certified to work in the industry. It also means that no certifying body is held accountable for the actions of its trainers, and therefore a wide variation exists. However, most gyms' insurance plans won't cover trainers who lack a nationally-recognized certification, and some won't even hire you without one.

The industry has now grown beyond the basic personal trainer. More "side," or additional, certifications are appearing for everything from kettlebells to older adults specialization to healthy lifestyle coaching. Once again, consider your goals [see chapter 3 for more on developing a training niche] before you

sign up for a new certification. Getting certified for the sake of collecting pieces of paper and having letters behind your name may be a waste of money as your clients probably won't know the difference.

However, while clients don't know the difference, these certifications are almost always a way to improve your knowledge base and continue to learn as a trainer. You can pursue certifications to work with special populations or to broaden your skills, and stay up-to-date on research in the meantime. The benefit is in the knowledge, not in the letters or in getting continuing education credits. While you can acquire this knowledge through self-study, a certification will have gathered and organized the resources for you.

What you should keep in mind is that personal training certifications open doors. Can Fit Pro, the Certified Personal Trainers Network (CPTN), and the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP) are all great ways to get started in Canada. In the USA there exists a wider variety of personal training agencies including the American Council on Exercise, the American College of Sports Medicine, and National Academy of Sports Medicine. Online there are options like the National Sports and Trainers Association "NESTA", and the International Sports Sciences Association ("ISSA"), which is an attractive option to those all over the World. In addition, many countries have their own certifying bodies; Google your country and "personal training certification" to learn which are relevant for you. The benefit of being certified with a large organization is that they offer workshops, webinars, symposiums, conferences, and other continuing education opportunities to help you further your knowledge. Another factor to consider is that a company that owns a certifying body might also own a chain of gyms (for example, Good Life Fitness and CanFit Pro in Canada) or require trainers to have a particular certification. If you have a gym that you'd like to work at in mind, find out whether it requires or prefers a particular certification. That said, if you do decide to switch gyms, it's usually relatively easy and inexpensive to obtain the required certification.

I started my career with a Can Fit Pro PTS certification, which is a "basic" certification that's relatively easy to obtain. I eventually dropped that certification in favour of the "CSCS" (Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist) certification offered through the National Strength and Conditioning Association, which is one of the highest-level and most respected certifications available. After doing some research, I found that the CSCS aligned more closely with *my* personal interests than my other certification. The CSCS cert is more oriented toward athletic performance and the monthly research journal I received is a great resource. I switched certifications for two reasons. First, at the time I thought I might want to work with athletes. Second, I'd heard that *Men's Health*

(a well-known magazine I wanted to freelance for) only accepted writers with the CSCS designation. Since then, I have been featured in *Men's Health* numerous times, both in the magazine and in a *Men's Health* book. I didn't specialize in athletes but I'm still glad that I obtained the CSCS cert.

I suggest you take a close look at possible certification organizations before you invest time and money into one. (For the most up-to-date information, contact the certification agencies directly, or visit the Personal Training Development Center for a comparison at **www.theptdc.com/2011/11/top-personal-training-certifications-united-states**)

**DO YOU HAVE TO BE RIPPED TO BE A PERSONAL TRAINER?**

Walk the walk. If you are a personal trainer, you must be fit and practice what you preach. Think about it. Would you want somebody broke to be investing your money for you? How about getting your hair cut from somebody with a terrible hairdo?

Your physique and your appearance matter and speak volumes to those you encounter and will make the difference between attracting clients and turning them off. It comes down to psychology, and something called unconscious associative connections. In the 1950s a researcher named Alfred L. Yarbus performed a series of studies he later wrote about in a book called *Eye Movements and Vision*. Participants wore eye trackers to determine where they were looking and then they were asked to look at a painting. Not surprisingly, their eyes darted across the entire painting. But when they were asked how wealthy the people in the painting were, their eyes focused on the clothing of the people in the painting. When asked how old the people in the painting were, their eyes focused on the heads.

This was the first proof of the shortcuts that our brains take when absorbing sensory information. There's simply too much information in the world to process, so our brains "cheat" for us using preexisting unconscious associative connections.

In the example above, the participants' brains had existing knowledge that clothing reflects wealth. So when asked how wealthy the people in the paintings were, the participants knew immediately to look at the clothing. Because our faces belie our age (at least without cosmetic surgery), participants also know to look at the painted faces to determine their age.

Here's my point. Sure, you may have 5 certifications, attend tons of workshops, help out lots of people, and have a host of other accolades to your name. Unfortunately none of this means anything to a potential client unless he

or she takes the time to understand what it all means and, in this industry, that's going to take a long time.

So, do you have to be ripped to be a personal trainer? No. What is important is that you physically embody the goals of your potential clients. Whether you are in the gym or not, you're a walking advertisement for your product – yourself. I've found most of my clients outside of the gym, either at social events or from conversations with strangers in a coffee shop. Looking fit and appearing professional go a long way in making somebody want to train with you. You never know when you'll meet a potential client – or someone who may pass your name along to a potential client – so you should always be prepared to sell yourself, and hand out business cards.

Your physical appearance will influence your clients' perceptions of how much of an expert you are. In *Influence*, author Robert B. Cialdini lists three ways to show that you're an expert: title, clothing, and trappings. Trainers can adapt this theory in the following ways:

- **Title.** The Dos Equis dude in commercials calls himself, "the most interesting man in the world." That's a good title. So is "Dr. Dre." Give yourself a title – and yes, it can be "Doctor." Just don't refer to yourself as a physician or medical doctor. While you shouldn't make something up, you can be creative. My good friend Roger ("RogLaw") Lawson calls himself the "Chief Sexification Officer." I'd train with him.
- **Clothing.** As I mentioned earlier, people judge us by what we wear. Be professional. If you want to appear as a knowledgeable trainer and everybody else in your gym is wearing dri-fit clothing, show up in athletic shorts and a collared shirt. Immediately you will be viewed as smarter than your colleagues. Understand how powerful perception is if you want to be viewed a certain way, and work to create the proper persona around that which you want to create. If your gym has a dress code, you can't do much about what you're wearing, but you can ensure that your clothes are spotless, unwrinkled, and fit well. Your footwear should also be clean and nice-looking.
- **Trappings.** Why do you think "get-rich-quick" ads show expensive cars? Your surroundings, or trappings, play a huge part in how you are perceived. So surround yourself with clients doing great work. Even if you're not currently training somebody, find a member on the floor and hang out with him or her. Being associated with fit people will help others to view you as a good trainer. Bonus points if they're smiling.

While working out at the gym, there's a good chance people will notice you. Maybe they'll stare. That's a good thing as your workouts are another form of advertisement. One of the easiest ways to pick up new clients is to work out when your gym is busy. Make yourself visible, leave your headphones off, and put on a show. Performing new or unique-looking variations of exercises may garner questions from interested onlookers which you can use to either build relationships or offer a brief free session or assessment on the spot. Make sure you look approachable and greet people watching you; that may be the opening someone is waiting for to start a conversation with you.

Finally, never stop smiling both in your club and in your neighborhood. People will recognize you as a trainer from "that gym down the street" as you walk around the block with your coffee. Forget about checking your phone every five seconds like most of us do. The extra two seconds you take to approach somebody with a smile, shake his hand, give him a compliment, ask how he is doing, and wish him a good day could be all of the marketing that you'll ever need. Always remember that people buy trainers, not training. How you look and act is just as important as what you say.

One last thing I'd like to remind you about. As a trainer, you're in close quarters with your clients, and bad breath or any other offensive odors will turn them off. A few suggestions:

- Keep a stick of deodorant at the gym.
- Keep a toothbrush and ample breath mints at the club.
- Avoid coffee right before training a client. Opt for a 100mg caffeine tablet instead. If you do drink coffee, be sure to use a breath mint afterwards.
- Avoid cheap "dri-fit" clothing if you can. It starts to smell foul quickly.
- Always have a fresh pair of socks with you. There's nothing better than a fresh pair of socks.

**✔ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*Always remember that you're your own best advertisement, both in and out of the gym. Looking and acting fit is a prerequisite of the job, so behave accordingly.*

## POINTS TO REMEMBER

- A successful personal training career starts with passion – both the passion

you have for your career and your ability to create passion in your clients.

- A fitness certification can help launch your career as a personal trainer. Choose the certification that makes sense for your current career; you can change or add certifications in the future.
- As a trainer, you're selling yourself all of the time, sometimes when you least expect it. Make sure you "walk the walk."

# 2 THE RIGHT FIT

## *Finding Work as a Trainer*

*"Everyone enjoys doing the kind of work for which he is best suited."*
— Napoleon Hill

Once you've decided on a career as a personal trainer (and likely obtained appropriate certification), you have to decide where you will work. There are lots of opportunities for new trainers starting their careers, and each has advantages and drawbacks. The path you decide to pursue depends on your goals, but this chapter will give you an overview of the variety of places you can work.

### "BIG BOX" GYMS

*Examples: Bally's, Crunch, Extreme Fitness, Goodlife Fitness, LA Fitness*
Working at a "big box" gym is by far the most common path that new trainers

choose. These gyms often act as a breeding ground for trainers to develop their skill sets before moving on elsewhere. That being said, many accomplished trainers stay with large organizations for their whole careers. It all depends on your aspirations.

The push nowadays is for trainers to jump into owning their own facilities, renting space, working as in-home trainers or for smaller clubs, but there are benefits of working at a large gym early on in your career. Yes, sometimes the management of big box gyms mistreat trainers, but there are a number of advantages to starting your career at a large facility. You have access to many clients early on, are able to network, and don't have to worry about the administrative details of running a training business like billing clients and tracking your business expenses. Most large gyms offer trainers access to continuing education through conferences and workshops, and there's definitely a camaraderie that exists in a large gym setting.

Big box gyms aren't a good fit for everyone, but I generally advise new trainers to start their careers working at a big box gym. Big box gyms often have strong continuing education programs, and a well-trained staff that you can learn from. Make sure that you "interview" the gym just as much as the managerial staff is interviewing you. Confirm that they emphasize continuing education; ensure that your manager is willing to be a mentor; and speak to at least two other members of the team to get a closer look at the corporate culture. While you may be paid less per client and will definitely work hard, at the beginning of your career you want to get as much experience, and guidance, as possible, and a big gym will help you do that.

*Big Box Pros*

- Marketing ability/power
- Large existing/prospective client base
- Educational opportunities
- Ability to network with other trainers in different areas
- Ability to move up to more senior training positions
- Compensation package can be fair (which may include health insurance)
- Work clothes/uniforms may be provided
- Access to a lot of equipment
- Large offering of services lets you explore different training areas

*Big Box Cons*

- Pay is usually poor

- Management may see trainers as replaceable and mistreat them
- High trainer turnover rates
- Trainers may have unreasonably high sales requirements
- Little care or attention may be given to new trainers
- Driven by profit, not passion

## "BOUTIQUE" TRAINING STUDIOS

*Example: Body + Soul Fitness (Toronto), Peak Performance (NYC)*

The growth of boutique training studios is a relatively new trend but one that is becoming increasingly popular, especially in affluent communities. Boutique studios usually work on an "a la carte" model, allowing clients to choose only the services they want; some do allow clients to purchase "general" memberships. Boutique training studios often focus on higher-end services, attract well-off clients, and tend to be small but quiet and clean. In many major cities, big box gyms have made it hard for boutique gyms to compete for members. As a result, these smaller clubs have been forced to become more specialized.

*Pros*

- Higher pay than big box gyms
- More personalized management
- Higher end, more dedicated clientele
- Facility tends to be clean and professional-looking.
- More access to equipment
- Tends to attract career trainers who are serious about their work

*Cons*

- Smaller staff means fewer trainers from whom to learn
- Smaller number of current and prospective clients
- Trainers usually must market themselves to attract clients
- May attract clients whose busy schedules interfere with training
- May lack equipment because of smaller size

## IN-HOME TRAINING

As people get busier, there's more of a demand for trainers who work at clients' homes. Many new trainers launch their careers as in-home trainers. As an in-home trainer, you have two options – to work for yourself, as a freelance trainer,

or to work for a company as an employee or independent contractor for a company that provides in-home training.

*Pros (Freelance)*

- No overhead
- Business can be cash-based (but be sure to keep accurate records for taxes)
- Easy to develop a reputation as a neighbourhood trainer
- Can market yourself on a very local basis

*Cons (Freelance)*

- Must be able to develop your own training systems
- Lack of equipment (unless your client has it)
- Lack of opportunity to learn from other trainers
- Requires constant travel
- Isolation/loneliness
- Solely responsible for marketing yourself and your training business

*Pros (Working for a Company)*

- Clients are provided for you
- Pay can be competitive
- Training programs are provided
- Company is responsible for administrative duties and legalities.

*Cons (Working for a Company)*

- Prohibited from taking on your own clients
- Lack of equipment (unless your client has it)
- Requires constant travel
- Isolation/loneliness

## OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

Most trainers will work at the 4 types of training facilities listed previously, but there are other training opportunities available too. Those include the following:

## "GARAGE" GYMS

*Example: DeFranco's Training Systems LLC, Zhoosh Fitness Garage*

As the fitness community becomes more segmented, more "hardcore" training

facilities are opening up. Generally these are strongman-type operations that use tires, pipes, and sledgehammers in addition to traditional weight-training equipment. These gyms often focus on small group training or boot camp-type sessions as opposed to private, one-on-one training.

*Pros*

- Strong feeling of loyalty among staff and trainers
- Clientele self-selects this kind of training, so you know what to expect from them
- Group training can be very profitable
- Marketing tends to be handled by the gym

*Cons*

- Fellow staff members tend to be similar in strengths/weaknesses
- Focus on specific type of training leaves little room for other styles
- Can be hard to move up

## BEFORE YOU CHOOSE IN-HOME TRAINING

I decided to include a sidebar on in-home training because so many trainers are drawn to it early on. So was I – for a very short period of time, until I actually did it. On paper it sounded great. I could write off the car and gas expenses; I had no equipment costs; and I didn't have to pay a gym a cut of my profits. And while I reported my income, it would have been easy to accept cash and avoid paying taxes on it.

Yet I didn't last long as a mobile trainer. I know some trainers who enjoy training clients in their houses but it wasn't for me – and it may not be for you either.

First, if you're a gym rat like me, than you love the atmosphere and camaraderie in a club. While you will still likely be a member of a gym, you'll spend a lot less time there.

Next, living out of your car and coffee shops is no fun. If a client cancels at the last minute and you work in a gym, it's easy to get a workout in or find a place to put your feet up, get a snack, and read a book. The combination of holes in a schedule and last-minute cancellations could drive you nuts as a mobile trainer. There are only so many times in a day that you can spend an hour in a coffee shop.

If you live in a city like Toronto where traffic is reliably bad and construction is omnipresent, scheduling is all but impossible. Aside from making being on time difficult, it's hard not to be perpetually stressed and frustrated trying to stay on schedule – not a state that I want to be in every day.

Finally, I found that training clients in-home put a strain on me mentally. Being one-on-one with a person for a full hour is intense enough with distractions in a gym. But being one-on-one with a person in his home is another thing altogether; awkward silences seem to slow down time to a halt.

When I trained in a gym I would show up 15 minutes early and walk the floor once or twice to get in that "zone." Once I became engaged in my surroundings I could train multiple clients and

stay in the zone.

Training a client in her home didn't allow me that luxury. I found that I would feel "off" for the first 15 minutes of every session. Then I would finish the session, say "goodbye," drive to another client, and take 15 minutes to get into the zone again. I didn't enjoy this constant transitioning and think it affected my ability as a trainer. The bottom line is that I lasted only 6 months or so before returning full-time to a gym.

My point? Carefully consider the advantages and drawbacks of in-home training before you commit to doing it. It often looks much better on paper than it is in practice.

## NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMUNITY CENTERS/ YMCAS

Many neighbourhood community centers and park districts have fitness centers for residents. In addition to workout equipment, most offer a variety of fitness classes and some now offer personal training. In Canada, some of these positions are salaried government positions; in the U.S., the jobs tend to be hourly ones. YMCAs are found throughout the world; these nonprofit recreational centers focus on building healthier people, families, and communities.

*Pros*

- May be a salaried position
- Opportunity to be involved with your community
- Opportunity to train those who might not otherwise be able to afford it

*Cons*

- Pay tends to be low
- Little opportunity to learn from other trainers (you may be the only fitness employee)
- Possible isolation and lack of educational opportunities

## WOMEN-ONLY GYMS

*Examples: Curves, Women's Workout World*

Curves may have been one of the first on the scene, but there are now thousands of women-only gyms throughout Canada and the U.S. (Other gyms offer women-only hours and classes.) Millions of women prefer to work out in a gym that caters to women only, while others have religious beliefs that prevent them from working out in an environment with men.

*Pros*

- May be a good fit for trainers who want to train women exclusively

- May be the only opportunity for trainers with certain religious beliefs
- Feeling of belonging

*Cons*

- Gyms may focus on group exercise (so fewer training opportunities exist)
- Pay rates may be low
- Little variation in training
- Women-only gyms aren't found in some communities

## MEDICAL FACILITIES

*Example: MedCan*

In the past, medical facilities may have focused on rehabilitative services, but now more medical centers are starting to provide preventive care – and that often means offering fitness centers for patients. Some private medical organizations have full personal training studios (similar to boutique studios) and public hospital fitness programs (particularly pertaining to the bariatric community) are popping up in both Canada and the United States.

*Pros*

- Opportunity to work with medical professionals in a training facility
- Positions may be contract-based or salaried (so you know what to expect financially)
- Hospitals may offer significant benefits in addition to salary or pay
- Chance to help clients make dramatic and necessary changes
- Opportunity to be part of the growing preventive health care movement

*Cons*

- Number of facilities is small
- Facilities may be small and not as well-equipped as large gyms
- Facilities may require specific training/background in a medical field

## STUDIO SPACE

Many privately-owned gyms don't actually hire trainers. Instead, they use a rental model where trainers rent space either by the hour or by the month. Clients may or may not be members of the gym but needn't join the gym to work with a trainer.

*Pros*

- Can rent space at more than one facility if your clients are spread over a large geographic area
- May have access to a wide selection of equipment
- Small, stable overhead
- Ability to set your own hours and train on your own schedule

*Cons*

- Responsible for all of your own marketing and promotion
- Responsible for all of your own administrative work
- Quality and type of equipment may vary
- Isolation/lack of other trainers with whom to work and learn

**ONLINE TRAINING**

When you train clients in person, it's expensive for the client and location-dependent. With online training, you can train clients who live anywhere from anywhere – as long as you have a computer and Internet access. Clients may prefer online training as it less expensive than in-person training and doesn't require showing up at a certain time.

*Pros*

- Much greater flexibility in scheduling
- More flexibility in time of training sessions (for example, you needn't schedule a 30- or 60-minute session because that's what your gym offers)
- Possibility of additional income even if you already train clients at a gym
- Ability to set your own hours and train on your own schedule
- Ability to train clients even if you're sick or injured
- Ability to train clients anywhere in the world

*Cons*

- Responsible for all of your own marketing and promotion
- Responsible for all of your own administrative work
- Inability to control the equipment your clients have access to 12 Isolation/lack of other trainers with whom to work and learn
- Greater challenge in developing client relationships online than in person

**FINDING THE RIGHT FIT**

In today's competitive work environment, your goal is probably simply to find a job. But let me suggest that you choose carefully. Your goal should be to find a position that will provide personal and professional development as well.

To help find the right fit, first decide what type of work appeals to you. You may already have a particular type of position and employer in mind. If not, consider questions like the following [for a downloadable worksheet of these questions, visit **www.theptdc.com/ignite-worksheets**]:

- What size company would you like to work for?
- What geographic area are you seeking work in? (And are you willing to relocate for a job you really want?)
- What type of clientele do you want to work with? Do you want to work with a wide variety of clients, or specialize in a particular type of clients?
- What training tools and equipment would you like to have access to?
- What kind of management or supervision would you like? (For example, do you expect a lot of support from your manager or do you prefer a hands-off style of management?)
- What type of space would you like to work in? (In other words, would you rather work in a large facility or a smaller, more intimate setting?)
- How much marketing help do you need or expect? Are you willing and able to market yourself as a trainer?
- Do you need to learn how to "close sales" with potential clients?
- Are you looking for mentors? What types of mentors would you like to have?
- Do you want to work with other trainers and staff, or would you prefer to work on your own?
- What salary/income are you seeking? What do you need to make to pay your bills?
- What are your long-term goals? For example, what kind of position would you like to have 5 to 10 years from now? Do you want to eventually be a manager, or have your own training business? How will your first job help you reach those goals?

After you've decided what type of work you want to pursue, start your search. You may already have some ideas of where you'd like to apply. To find other opportunities:

- Network. Ask friends, colleagues and family members if they know of any great gyms or health clubs that might be hiring. (It's a bonus if they know any employees of these gyms). Tell people you know that you're looking for work and to pass on any ideas to you.
- Start with your certification. Most certification agencies maintain job boards on their websites where you can search for facilities that are hiring.
- Go online. In addition to popular job sites like Monster.com, gyms often use sites like Craigslist, eBay, and Kijiji to post jobs. You can also do a specific Google search for gyms in your area and contact them directly to ask if they're hiring. Check your certifying organization's website for job leads, and contact your favourite fitness bloggers and ask if they know of leads in your desired location.

## EIGHT TIPS TO SMARTER ONLINE TRAINING

If you're thinking about online training, I suggest that you have at least a year's worth of experience first. Yes, even a new trainer can work as online trainer, but having some experience will help you attract more clients, and build better programs for your long-distance clients, which leads to more results for them.

Online training is more convenient for both the trainer and the client, and an added benefit for both parties is that self-efficacy (the belief that one can achieve a particular goal) and adherence are often higher with online training. A large determinant of self-efficacy for personal training clients is believing that the program is effective and a perfect fit for them. So from a client's perspective, being able to choose *any* trainer with a specific skill (with no geographic limitations) is powerful for developing self-efficacy.

To get started training clients online either part time or full time, follow these 8 steps:

**1. Choose your client type.** Pick no more than 3 types of clients you want to include in your online training program. The only way to truly scale your program is to create template workouts that you can use for more than one client at a time, which means you need clients with similar goals and issues. For example, your client type might be a 25- to 30-year-old male looking to gain muscle; 40- to 50-year-old women; or 18- to 25-year-old male college students who play sports.

**2. Write 3 – 4 phases of programming for each client type.** To work efficiently as an online trainer, each client in the same category will receive a similar template with a couple of individual tweaks specific to him based on his initial questionnaire answers. (For example, a client with shoulder pain might do an incline neutral-grip dumbbell press instead of a bench press. He would still perform 4 sets of 8 – 10 reps at a 4010 tempo in phase one though. The template is the same, but you individualize aspects of it to suit each client.)

**3. Choose your software**. You can still send excel spreadsheets to your clients but client management software will make you become more efficient. While there are a lot of good options, you can get a free 30-day trial of my favorite at **www.theptdc.com/trainerize**.

**4. Create video of all exercises you include.** While most client software packages have an exercise library, it's nice for you to include a personal touch. Take a day and film a 20-second video of each exercise you include in your 3 – 4 phases of programming. Upload them all to a YouTube channel, and when you decide to include a new exercise later, add it to the channel.

**5. Create a website.** A website is optional at the start, but a website is a gathering point and

will be the first point of contact that new leads see. For a basic business, a simple one-page site with information about yourself will suffice. As your business develops, it's worth paying the money to get a high-quality site built.

**6. Determine pricing.** Online trainers typically charge $100 – $300/month for program design and maintenance. Determine how much you'll charge, and what clients can expect for that fee.

**7. Register for payment processing.** You'll also need some kind of online system for taking payments. I use PayPal for pretty much everything and it works great. It's easy and free to implement; the fees are reasonable; and you can deposit money directly to your bank account for free. If you want to use another service to accept credit cards online, you can. There are a lot of options.

**8. Get clients.** When talking to potential clients about online training, make sure that you discuss the benefits to the client, highlighting the convenience, flexibility, and value that online training provides.

I'm quite passionate about online training because I believe that it's a great way for trainers to have more freedom, help more people, and make more money. As a result, I've developed a popular course for trainers looking to make 1K Extra (or more) with an efficient and scalable online training business. For more information, go to **www.1kextra.com.**

- Walk in. Do you want to work at a local gym? Walk in, introduce yourself, and ask about available opportunities. Treat this appointment like a job interview; come dressed as a trainer, not as if you've come to work out.
- Consider an internship. Although nearly all are unpaid, an internship can give you an opportunity to work with fitness innovators and "big names" in the industry – and lead to a paying position at the place you dream of working. To find an internship, start with the gym owners or trainers whose work you admire, and ask whether they offer internships. Most of the high-profile gyms have fantastic internship programs but competition to be accepted into one is tough. When you apply for an internship, be sure to mention to the gym owner or trainer *why* you admire him and how his work has influenced you. Share your future plans within the industry, how you believe he can specifically help you reach your goals, and what you can offer in return.

You'll need a resume for most training positions, but keep in mind that your resume's job is to get you an interview. It's during the interview that a manager decides to hire you – your skills on paper are nothing compared to how you present them in person.

Use your resume to highlight your relevant qualifications, but streamline your experience. A manager isn't likely to care that you worked at a grocery store during high school or won an achievement award in grade 8. On the other hand, working for the same company for years (which shows loyalty) or winning

sports awards in high school or university may be relevant. Make sure you include a section about your personal specialties (for example, low back pain, cardiac rehab), and list the types of clients you are comfortable training, like older adults or pregnant women. List your certifications, related degrees, and other relevant education you've acquired.

Make sure that you customize your resume to the facility you want to work for. If you're applying to a big box gym, you may want to include the fact that you've lost 40 pounds and kept it off – it's likely that many of your clients will have weight loss as a primary goal and they'll appreciate a trainer with personal experience with it. If you're looking to work at a high performance facility, on the other hand, include your best lifts or something about your athletic achievements to show that you're a good "fit."

## CROSSFIT: A NEW TRAINING MODEL

The emergence of Crossfit has forever changed the landscape of the fitness industry. For the most part I'm supportive of the discipline, with a couple caveats.

First, Crossfit has brought intensity back into the gym. And wow, it was needed. For a couple of years, trainers seemed so concerned with "fixing movement patterns" that they were afraid to have people actually train.

One major aspect left out of many courses for trainers (which I aim to fill with this book) is coaching acumen. I've said many times that the importance of the quality of a program pales in comparison to one's ability to get a client to *want* to complete that program. Crossfit's emphasis on community and coaching principles is a welcome addition – and something that any fitness coach or trainer should adopt.

Second, Crossfit has finally broken the "hamster wheel" mold. Crossfit emphasizes primal movement patterns and full body movements instead of moving the body in a determined and constrained movement while sitting on a machine.

Finally, there's the diet aspect of Cross-fit, which is based on a "Paleo" plan. While I think that the word "Paleo" has lost all meaning and therefore needs to be thrown in the proverbial elephant graveyard along with "functional," "core," and "metabolic conditioning", I love how Crossfit considers nutrition and exercise as equally important. The nutrition requirements are simple and easy to follow enough.

Now the bad points.

First, the programming can be asinine. The barrier of entry to become an instructor and open up a "box" (Crossfit studio) is too low. The result is too many individuals that are unfit to train such an extreme and potentially dangerous discipline are instructing "WOD"s (Workout of the Day). There are countless fantastic coaches and boxes with great programs but there are also a lot of bad ones.

I'd have a hard time coming up with anything more dangerous to anybody other than elite-level athletes than prescribing complicated, full-body movements like Olympic lifts in a fatigued state.

I'm sure that some will read this and note that the form of Crossfit Games' athletes is typically good. There are exceptions to every rule, and elite-level athletes are exceptions. I'm talking about the average gym-goer, even if he or she is willing to train hard – and those are the people who come to Crossfit.

Finally I'd like to add a note on competition over form. Not everybody is an athlete and not everybody can withstand poor form. "Kipping" pull-ups are a great way to blow out a rotator cuff. Mix this in an exhausting circuit with an overhead press and it's dangerous. Now add in an element of competition with spectators yelling to keep going and "push through it" and you've got a recipe for disaster.

Crossfit certainly has its advantages. I love that intensity is being brought back into the gym. In the past few years there's been a promising development with better-trained Crossfit coaches and more responsible training, complete with appropriate progressions and regressions. I just hope that this continues.

Often gyms have an absolute (a non-negotiable element that they look for) or two for potential employees, like a certain level of experience or a specific certification. If you can identify what these are, highlight them in your resume and you'll have a much better chance at getting an interview and "wowing" them.

Gyms are often in a constant state of hiring, so don't be afraid to contact a gym you want to work for even if they're not actively recruiting. If you approach them the right way, there's a good chance that they'll give you an interview. Do your research first (you only get one chance to make a good impression). Figure out what type of clientele the gym serves, who their competition is, and if there are any potential gaps in their program that you can fill. Managers know that a good trainer will bring in clientele no matter how saturated the market is.

If need be, purchase a guest pass and workout in the gym for a week before introducing yourself. Tailor your resume specifically to the club as much as you can in terms of what you feel would appeal to them. With two copies of your resumé in hand, approach the receptionist and ask if a manager is around. Introduce yourself, and tell the manager that you would love to speak with him or her about how you can help increase their training numbers. Always keep the conversation about how you can help them, not the other way around.

When you look for a job, remember that there isn't a cut and dried solution. It depends on what your vision is. What I will say is that you're better off searching for great experience initially over financial incentive.

That's why my advice to new trainers is often to start at a big box gym (even to trainers with aspirations of performance coaching for athletics) as long as the big box gym has a thorough continuing education platform and mentors. There's no point working in a large gym for little pay unless you get access to people who will help you progress faster than the average.

Perhaps the biggest benefit of working in a large gym to start your career is the amount and variety of clientele that you'll encounter. Even if you think that you know what type of clientele you want to work with, that may change.

For example, I always thought that I'd work with athletes. After preparing a couple kids for the NHL draft and working with a Nationally-ranked mogul skier, I recognized that this wasn't the right direction for me. I preferred working with 25 to 40-year-old professionals who had some chronic pain. I may not have discovered that if I hadn't worked different types of clients at the beginning of my training career. The only way to really figure out who you love working with is to work with a variety, and take note of who you find yourself wanting to research and learn more about at night.

**THE INTERVIEW PROCESS**

The in-person interview is where you showcase your personality, your knowledge, and your enthusiasm. To prepare for this interview, do as much research on the company as possible and write down possible questions to ask. If you know anyone who works there already, ask him or her about the gym ahead of time.

Dressing appropriately is also important. Even though your work attire will be athletic clothing, you want to look polished. A nice pair of khakis or slacks and collared shirt work well for either gender. Bring copies of your resume and a pad of paper with a pen for taking notes; that shows you're interested and prepared.

From the minute you step foot into the gym, your goal is to make friends. Stand up straight, smile, and exude energy with every step that you take. Most gyms hire based on personality because it's the one "skill" that cannot be taught. A friendly, confident trainer always has an advantage over one who lacks personality – smiles are contagious. The receptionist may have a lot of power, so don't sit there catching up on Twitter while you wait for your interview. Say "hi" to the person and get to know him or her a little. When I hired trainers, I'd often ask our receptionist her opinion on applicants after the interview to see how good they were at "schmoozing." If they weren't friendly, they wouldn't be offered a job.

Yes, you want a job, but your goal in the interview isn't just to get a job offer. It's to find out whether the gym or facility is a good fit for *you*. Ask questions [you'll find a downloadable Interview Worksheet with these questions at **www.theptdc.com/ignite-worksheets/**] like:

- What is the main demographic of your gym's members and/or clients? What kinds of people come here?
- Are you trying to reach out to a new demographic? If so, what is that

demographic?

- How do sales fit into my role as a trainer? (For example, are you expected to sell a certain number of training hours to clients? Does the gym expect you to "work the floor" a certain number of hours each day or week?)
- Do you have any expectations for billable hours/month? What happens if a trainer doesn't hit them?
- How are you going to market me – and my skills? Are there other trainers who have similar skill sets and backgrounds?
- How many trainers do you currently have? How many hours do they typically work?
- How many trainers are you currently hiring?
- How long do most trainers stay at your club? What is the biggest reason they give for leaving?
- What programs do you have in place to keep your trainers for the long term?
- How do you monitor your trainers' development?
- How do you monitor training sessions?
- Do you offer support for tasks like greeting clients, following up with clients, and rescheduling appointments? Or is that the trainer's sole responsibility?

## JONATHAN ROSS INSIDE INFO

Jonathan Ross is a two-time Personal Trainer of the Year Award winner (ace and idea). He's the fitness expert for Discovery Health and the writer of *Abs Revealed*, published by Human Kinetics in 2010.

In 1995, Jonathan's father died from obesity-related blood clots that caused a heart attack. He weighed 424 pounds. His mother was 370 pounds. Jonathan knew then that he had found his calling.

He had earned an astronomy degree but had no career aspirations before his father died. He got certified by ace in 1997 and started working part time in a health club in the evenings. In January 2000, he made the jump to a full-time fitness career.

Currently Jonathan trains clients out of a large, multi-purpose health club. He maintains a blog for Discovery Health in addition to providing media expertise for tv, print magazines, and newspapers. He doesn't actively market himself and lets his reputation speak for itself. When clients call they're already sold on his services.

**JONATHAN'S 3 KEYS TO SUCCESS IN THE FITNESS INDUSTRY ARE:**

① **Take information from others and advance your development by forming your own thoughts, opinions, and training methods.** A sure-fire way to spot an intellectually lazy fitness professional is when you hear, "So-and-so says that doing/not doing something is

wrong/right." Absolutes are for those lacking the courage to take a balanced perspective.

② **Develop strategies to reach currently under-served markets.** The over-weight/obese population and the aging populations are growing. The obesity numbers are well-known, and by 2030, it is estimated that 1 in 5 adults in the U.S. will be over 65. Find their "why" to get them more into fitness. Their physiology cannot adapt to exercise until their psychology stops resisting exercise.

③ **Be a professional, don't just call yourself one.** That means no shirtless photos of yourself on your social media profile or on your website. It's not about you, it's about them. Show your professionalism by your conduct, not your biceps.

**JONATHAN'S WORDS TO LIVE BY:**

*"Measure your success by the ability of your clients to follow through on health behaviours when you are not around. Teaching is the process of making yourself unnecessary."*

*You can learn more about Jonathan Ross at www.absrevealed.com and www.aionfitness.com*

- Do you have in-house education programs or education funds available for trainers? What types of continuing education opportunities do you have for trainers?
- Do you offer mentoring programs for trainers?
- Can you describe your "ideal" personal trainer?
- What are the long-term goals of the company? How do you expect trainers to help you meet those long-term goals?
- What sets your club apart from the competition?
- What's the biggest challenge for your club?

Take notes during this conversation, paying special attention to what the interviewer tells you about the club, its goals, and its expectations of trainers. This will help you determine whether the goals and vision of the company align with *your* goals and visions. It's much easier to build a personal training career when you're in the right environment. The most successful trainers are those who take their time, find a great gym that fits their goals, and build their reputation and business from there.

After the interview, make sure you write down your overall impression of the club while it's still fresh in your mind. If you have multiple interviews or job possibilities, these notes can help you decide which one is the right fit for you. Write down the name of the interviewer (and anyone else you met while there) and consider questions like the following [You'll find the downloadable Post-Interview Review Sheet at **www.theptdc.com/ignite-worksheets/**]:

- What was your impression of the person who interviewed you? How well did you connect with the interviewer?
- What was your overall impression of the gym itself? Did you like the "vibe"?
- Was the club clean and well-maintained?
- Was the overall layout of the gym conducive to your training style? Does it offer the type of equipment you prefer to use with clients?
- If you met other staff, did you feel that you could work well alongside them?
- What was your overall impression of the staff members you met?
- What types of members did you see at the gym? Were they the clients that you'd like to work with?
- If you met your potential manager, did you feel you would enjoy working for him or her?
- Did you feel that your manager cared about developing trainers and helping them become more successful?
- How did you feel after leaving the interview? Were you excited about the possibility of working at this club or not?
- Can you picture yourself working at the gym?
- Does the organization's vision and goals align with yours?
- What did you learn about yourself as a result of the interview? Did the interview change your opinion about the kind of job you want to pursue?

**WHAT TO LOOK FOR**

I had multiple interviews before I accepted the position at the gym where I worked before I left to focus on the PTDC. After interviewing at different gyms, I realized I wanted a gym that:

- Was small and personal in feel
- Focused on high-end clientele
- Employed trainers who used functional training methods
- Provided me with an opportunity to learn and grow
- Treated me as an individual and not a number
- Would let me play an integral part of a growing organization

When I walked through the doors at Body + Soul Fitness, I was immediately

greeted by a friendly receptionist. Darren, the owner, walked by and introduced himself, offering me a bottle of water. The club's general manager also introduced herself and chatted with me for a couple of minutes. I immediately felt comfortable, and knew that the environment was right for me.

The sales manager gave me a tour of the facility and answered all of my questions, as well as introducing me to the trainers working on the floor. As the interview went on, I realized that this gym was the perfect fit for me for the following reasons:

- Both employees and clients seemed happy to be there
- The gym offered an education fund for each trainer in addition to periodic workshops
- The gym focused on each trainer's unique skills and marketed them accordingly
- The pay was competitive
- The company was planning to expand soon. (In fact, I ended up transferring to the new location when it opened and soon was offered the position of senior trainer there.)

After two more interviews, I was offered the job. I accepted, confident I'd made the right choice. Although I left that position in 2012 to focus on other opportunities, my career has continued to take off since that decision. My point? Know what you're looking for, pay attention during the interview, and make sure that a gym is a good fit for you before you accept a job offer.

**BEFORE YOU SAY YES…**

So you've been offered a position. Before you say yes, make sure you've taken into consideration the following issues:

- **Hours.** Surprised I didn't list salary or pay first? I cannot stress enough how important it is to know what hours you're expected to work before taking a job. I suggest you decide the amount of hours and days of the week you want to train and stick to it. Overworked trainers wind up performing poorly, which is bad for both you and your gym. If the gym has unrealistic expectations for the hours you'll work, it may not be the right place for you. Of course as a new trainer you can expect to work a lot of unpaid hours shadowing other trainers, canvassing the floor, making

calls, and marketing yourself in the local community. You'll also spend time waiting for clients; that's part of your job so you want to make the most of those small blocks of time. (I used to keep a book on me in case a client canceled, and I would use 30-minute breaks to write up workouts.) Spending more hours at the gym early on usually helps you build your clientele more quickly; if you put in fewer hours, you can expect a slower build in clients.

- **Health benefits.** Ask whether a gym offers health benefits; many offer medical and dental coverage and other insurance benefits. This can represent a significant amount of money, especially if you have a family or an existing medical condition you require coverage for.
- **Uniform.** Most gyms require trainers to wear uniforms; they can be as simple as all-black athletic clothing or a shirt with the gym's logo and khakis. Some gyms have agreements with sports apparel companies that require employees to wear certain brands, so know what you're in for before signing a contract with a gym.
- **Salary.** Salaries for personal trainers range across the board. Certification agencies quote rates from $18 – 75/hour, with an average hourly rate of about $26/hour (figures in US dollars). In general, I've found that large gyms tend to offer lower per-hour rates but provide you with clients while smaller gyms offer a higher hourly rate but expect you to do more marketing. Many gyms offer different hourly rates to different levels of trainers. That means that while your initial hourly rate may be relatively low, you can make more by gaining experience. Don't focus solely on what you're being offered per-hour but on the overall opportunity. For example, it might be worth it to start at a lower hourly wage in exchange for more support at a gym than take a higher hourly wage at a gym where you wouldn't have as much support and educational opportunities.
- **Continuing education.** If you're a new trainer, this is a more important consideration. Does the gym pay for trainers to get continuing education, provide in-house education or workshops, and offer other opportunities for its staff? Consider too the gym's management style. How often will you be expected to meet with your manager, and for how long? Will those meetings taper off as you gain experience? Ideally you want to have an open-door relationship with your manager without having to spend a lot of time in meetings with him or her.

Even if you're a new trainer, realize that what is offered salary-wise is probably

negotiable. And if you have experience, don't be afraid to ask for a higher hourly rate, or for a commission on sales through the gym, especially if you'll be bringing your current clients with you. Keep in mind that the gym doesn't have to do any marketing to sell to these clients – you've already done that. Second, many clients purchase big packages, which they pay for upfront. That money sits in the gym's bank account accruing interest while you're paid for only one session at a time. I think you're entitled to some of that cash, and many gym managers agree – commissions up to 10 percent of the package price upon initial sale are common.

Before you attempt to negotiate your salary, do some background research and find out what other gyms in the industry are paying trainers with your expertise. Check your certification agency for recent stats or check the website of the International Health, Racquet, and Sportsclub Association (**www.ihrsa.org**) for salary information. Make sure you understand all of the aspects of your position and how the gym pays trainers before you ask for money. Never lie about what you've made in the past, but don't be shy about stating what you want to make – and explaining why you're worth it.

## FOR SELF-EMPLOYED TRAINERS ONLY: NAMING YOUR BUSINESS

If you decide to become a self-employed trainer, you'll also have to consider what to call yourself. I can't tell you whether it's a better idea to operate under a business name (e.g., Performance Fitness) versus your own name (e.g., Jon Goodman's Awesome Fitness Spectacular). But I can outline the major considerations to help you make your own decision.

The first thing to consider is branding. Now, before I go on know that branding is an overused term. Kind of like "functional" [see **www.theptdc.com/2012/08/the-death-of-functional-in-personal-training/**], it's pretty much been abused and misused and lost all meaning. You are responsible for the reputation of your company. Create a good reputation and make it as easy as possible for your customers to speak about you and your brand will grow regardless of its name.

Naming your business with your given name can keep your life simple. If you just want to have a training business and don't have aspirations to hire on other trainers or grow, then don't overthink it. Consult your local business bureau of your government first, but keep in mind that it's possible to operate a business under your personal name as a sole proprietor nearly everywhere. You can also choose to register a name like Goodman Lifestyles without worrying about incorporating, but consult with a lawyer in your area to be sure that you're complying with any laws that apply to you.

Most trainers who choose a business name that's different from their own have larger aspirations. If you plan to do any of the following, you'll want a unique business name:

- *Hire on trainers to work for you*
- *Franchise your model*
- *Expand into other markets outside of training*

- *Sell the business outright (eventually)*

If your goals include the above, you should choose a name and create a reputation behind it that's not your own. There are examples (Cressey Sports Performance) of personal names that have become brands, but they are few and far between. If your aim is to grow and you want to keep your options open both for many different revenue streams and a potential exit strategy down the road, avoid a name that's specific to personal training as that may be limiting. Instead, choose a broader name that has, in the words of my friend John "Roman" Romaniello, "*implicit understanding, from which [you] can work to create explicit trustworthiness and value*." Consider the Personal Trainer Development Center. Immediately you know whom it's meant for and what it does. My friend Chris Wren in the UK named his online training business "Fitness Archetype." I love this name because it's different enough that it catches your attention but there's an implicit understanding and mystique that surrounds it. He's a bodybuilder himself and trains clients primarily for aesthetics, so it works.

When naming your business, consider what people want to talk about. People will be more prone to say that they're a member of "Performance Fitness" as opposed to "Drop-the-Weight Fit." If your name insinuates that your clientele is not in good shape, they won't be so open to share the name without serious prompting. If however your business name makes people feel like they are a part of a community, or the name showcases what they want to feel like they are, they'll talk about it.

Finally, it's important not to pigeonhole yourself when deciding on your name. I'm a proponent of leaving my options open. So should you. A fitness professional has many opportunities for accessory sources of income once he or she has developed a trusted reputation. Your opinion will be a trusted source for referrals on everything from supplements, to fitness advice, to time management strategies – you may be asked about anything heath-, lifestyle-, and fitness-related.

People with a trusted referral network will be very valuable in the years to come as it gets harder and harder by brands to access their audiences. As a result, commission structures for referrals will grow. So, if I were to name my company Goodman Performance, I might limit myself to only dealing with performance-enhancement products and programs. My favorite word these days is "lifestyles" because it encompasses everything, and leaves all of your options open for the future for multiple revenue streams and add-ons to your business.

It's important that you phrase everything in terms of how the *gym* will benefit. Let's say you only want to train clients 20 – 30 hours/week. Explain that you're drawing the line so that you can do the best job possible which will not only please clients but will also develop a great reputation for your club. And that kind of reputation will produce more referrals to come in the door at the gym that will help "fill" other trainers. If you want the gym to offer a continuing education fund for you, point out that additional training and education will ensure that you're constantly improving as a trainer. And letting potential clients know that you support continuing education for trainers will encourage them to train at your gym instead of going somewhere else.

## POINTS TO REMEMBER

- There are many job opportunities for personal trainers, so make sure you understand the pros and cons of each.
- Know what type of job you're looking for before you start your job hunt.

- Focus on finding a position where your personal goals and philosophy align with that of the gym you work at. You'll set the stage for a successful career.

# 3 SET YOURSELF APART

## *Creating your Training Niche*

*"If you're going to be truly successful, then set yourself apart from everyone else. Go beyond the limits of what classifies the average person and be exceptional."*

— Donald Trump

When I talk to new trainers through my work at the Personal Trainer Development Center, I often say that the key to a successful training career is two-fold:

1. Do a great job.
2. Make sure everybody knows about it.

In this chapter, we'll focus on these two steps. First, let's talk about one aspect of

successful training that new trainers overlook, and that's creating a niche. Forget about being a trainer who trains everyone. Instead, create a training niche for yourself – and become an expert about the niche.

That is how I build my career as a personal trainer. I knew that I loved the "softer" side of personal training – motivating, teaching, and inspiring clients. While I knew a lot about exercise prescription, I wasn't as interested in that aspect of training. I decided to diligently research the often-ignored "softer" aspects of personal training and created my niche. I began building a reputation as an expert – first locally, nationally, and eventually internationally.

However, it's unlikely that you'll know what niche is the right fit for you early in your career. That's why I suggest working with a wide range of clients with a wide range of fitness levels and goals. In doing so, you'll start to discover the people you're drawn to and enjoy working with the most – the people you're passionate about helping.

After all, the reality is that it is relatively easy to get certified and become a personal trainer. Add to that the fact that anybody in the world can call himself a personal trainer as the industry is unregulated, and you can see that you may have a hard time standing out. That's where your niche comes in.

There's nothing wrong with being an "average" trainer or for settling for an "average" career. If you want to stand out, though, you must become an expert in one particular type of training. Pick something you're passionate about and run with it. And this doesn't mean you're limited to that niche. The coolest part about becoming an expert in a niche is that once you become seen as an expert in one aspect of training, you're seen as an expert in all areas. But to become that expert, you need to focus in first and get truly great at one thing.

**WHAT MAKES YOU STAND OUT?**

Once you've decided what your niche will be, you have to market your specific skills to your clients and the public. Eventually when people think of that niche, they should think of you, and vice-versa.

Take the well-known coaches, Eric Cressey and Bret Contreras. Each built his name and reputation by focusing on one specific type of training. Eric Cressey is best known for shoulder performance (and as a result, training baseball players) and Bret Contreras is known to all in the fitness arena as the "glutes guy."

Do Cressey and Contreras train solely within their specialty? Absolutely not. But they both recognized that in order to build up a reputation, they had to pick one aspect of training and become the go-to guy on that subject. Once each

had established his reputation, he was free to explore other specialties.

I encourage you to take the same approach with the people you train, and with the people you encounter. The path you take depends on your long-term goals within the industry. If you want to eventually stand out on the national or international scale, follow Cressey's or Contreras' path, choose a type of training that few people are focusing on, and do your research. It takes time and dedication to build up a strong knowledge base. One of the easiest ways to do so is to start blogging about it. This is a good way to explore your own thoughts about the subject, and later, as you gain expertise and readers, to spread your ideas. You'll find more about blogging in chapter 11.

Even if your goal isn't as lofty as becoming internationally recognized, I still encourage you to create a training niche. Think about your clients' needs and look at areas in which you can specialize. For example, chronic low back pain is a major source of discomfort and even debilitating pain for many people. However, most trainers can help clients address low back pain relatively quickly once they learn how to perform muscle imbalance testing and become familiar with the work of professionals like exercise kinesiology expert Paul Chek and lower back pain expert Dr. Stu McGill.

Look at your clients and potential clients with an inquisitive eye. Are they professionals who all suffer from low back pain and bad posture? Do you train a lot of older adults who require balance and functional training? Maybe there are a lot of young mothers at the gym who would be interested in prenatal and postnatal training.

I suggest you consider two primary needs in your target clientele (for example, low back pain, weight loss, preventing or managing diabetes, or gaining muscle). Once you've identified those needs, determine whether anyone else is currently serving people with them. If other trainers or professionals are specializing in these clients, can you team up with those providers – or provide better service to their target clients?

## ELSBETH VAINO ON: DEVELOPING YOUR NICHE

Most of us have a tendency in both life and business to try to please everyone, and personal trainers are no exception. We market ourselves as the expert in fat loss, sports performance, rehab, bodybuilding, and powerlifting, reaching out to athletes, seniors, and couch potatoes alike. It takes a lot of time and money to market to so many diverse groups, and it often doesn't work.

It might seem counterintuitive, but marketing to fewer people can get you more clients. This narrowed focus works because it allows you to connect with people through your shared passion. You can focus your resources on this one group, allowing you to market more effectively.

The final benefit is that, if you are a great trainer and provide great results, you can become known as *the* trainer for the niche, which will have a multiplier effect for more clients in the niche, as well as those in other niches who will seek you out thinking, "*well, if she's that good with sports performance, she must be good with fat loss*."

What niche should you target? That's going to depend on two things: the quality of the niche, and how well you fit with the niche.

Consider the following four questions with regard to the quality of the niche you are contemplating:

- *How big is it?*
- *What is the competition?*
- *Do the clients you want to attract have time and money?*
- *Do they care about what you can do for them?*

The ideal niche is big; not well served by the competition; the people in it have time and disposable income; and they feel a real need for your service. That's the ideal. More often, a niche will be strong in two or three of those points, and weak with one or two, which is very desirable. If, however, a niche has only one or none of those things going for it, then you're going to be fighting an uphill battle. It may still be profitable for you eventually, but it will likely be a difficult path.

When assessing how you fit with the niche, consider a different set of questions:

- *Are you knowledgeable about the niche?*
- *Are you experienced in it?*
- *Are you well connected to the niche?*
- *Are you passionate about it?*

Use the same filter to assess great, good, and poor niches for you.

Here are a couple of examples to make sure this is clear. For the first example, consider a young male trainer contemplating pre- and post- pregnancy as a niche. The niche quality itself looks pretty good: it's very large; there is competition, but nobody owns it; many of these women have money, although time may be an issue; and they want to get their pre-pregnancy bodies back. The niche scores well.

But does the trainer fit the niche? He's obviously never been pregnant, and he doesn't have kids. None of his friends have kids either, and he's never trained a pregnant client. He has done some reading on it, but that's not enough: he's just not a great fit for that niche. That's not to say he can't become a good fit, but it will take a while. If he wants to be able to pay the rent now, he'll be wise to focus marketing resources on a niche that is a good fit now, and if training pregnant clients is a goal, he can still build toward that, accepting that he will need to gain experience and connections to really break into this niche.

What if that same trainer looked at bar staff as a niche? The niche quality is excellent: it is big; nobody "owns" it; the people have disposable income and time (in fact many bar employees have daytime availability, which is great for trainers); and they have a need to stay strong, and look great. Our young male trainer is also a good fit for this niche – he was a part-time bouncer throughout college, so he understands the industry and is well-connected, and bodybuilding is his passion when it comes to types of training. Bar staff would be a great niche to allocate his resources.

Once you've identified a great niche for you, you will want to plan your approach. When it comes to marketing to your niche, consider questions like the following:

- *How will you reach them?*
- *Where are they?*
- *Who influences them?*
- *What is their pain?*
- *What is your message?*
- *What is your goal?*
- *Does your approach reflect your goal?*

As you answer these questions, you should start to get ideas about how to get clients from this niche.

The last step in developing your clientele based on niche marketing is to keep score. Maintain records of time and money spent on various marketing initiatives, and keep track of how many leads and clients you get, and the value of each. Over time, this will guide future initiatives.

I know from keeping track of my initiatives, my social networks are responsible for 36 percent of Custom Strength's revenue; my efforts to market to health professionals are responsible for 32 percent; clients referrals make up 28 percent; events like health fairs make up are 3 percent; and giveaways like donating training for fundraising auctions are responsible for 1 percent. These numbers paint a very clear picture of where I should and should not focus future resources. Keep records like this so that you too can make great decisions about where to spend your marketing time and money.

*Elsbeth Vaino of Custom Strength can be found at www.elsbethvaino.com*

Consider too whether there are clients who have needs that aren't being served. Let's say you live in a community that has a large number of people with diabetes, yet no trainers specialize in training people with the disease. Are there other types of clients with specific challenges you could work with? List those potential clients and their needs, and then determine how you can serve them if you're not already in a position to do so.

That might include:

- Attaining more education about those specific needs
- Attaining additional certifications
- Connecting with charities that serve these people
- Connecting with professionals in different fields that serve the same population (for example, registered dieticians or athletic trainers)
- Marketing specifically to the target clients; and
- Asking your current clients if they know people with these needs. (Have a handout ready to give to your client so they can pass it on to their friend.)

As you determine your training niche, think back to what first brought you into the gym – and what motivates you today. While that shouldn't be the only determinant when deciding on what kinds of clients you'll work with, it will definitely impact your passion for the work you're doing.

✔ **TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*To create your niche, figure out what needs your clients have and tailor your skill set to fill the holes. Keep your*

*own motivator for training in mind to ensure a good fit.*

## SPREAD THE WORD

Once you've chosen your niche, it is time to let the world (or at least your neighbourhood) know. Here are several effective ways to get the word out about your new specialty:

- **Master your two-sentence pitch.** In other words, you must be able to explain to potential clients what makes you different in two sentences. If you can't talk about it succinctly, no one else can either.
- **Write.** Most well-known trainers have blogs they maintain, and I do recommend a blog if you can afford the time to post at least once or twice a week. [See chapter 11 for more blogging advice.] Even if you don't blog, you still should create a short handout about your specialty. Brand it with your (or your company's) logo and provide some valuable information about the subject of your niche. For example, if you want to specialize in lower back training, your handout might explain why lower back pain is so common, citing recent research. Give copies to your clients to distribute.
- **Speak.** Offer a free workshop to your clients and potential clients on one aspect of your niche. Advertise it in local coffee shops, at the gym, and with flyers in local stores, and ask your clients to help spread the word. These workshops are not only a way to meet potential new clients but also give existing clients a chance to know each other, strengthening your professional community.
- **Do a great job.** The most effective marketing technique is producing results for your clients. Build a strong, positive relationship with each client you work with, and help them achieve their goals. If you can't help them with a particular issue, refer them to someone who can. And always remember to ask for referrals. When you do a great job for people, your current clients are always your biggest source of new clients.
- **Get on social media.** I'll talk more about social media in chapter 5 but I suggest that at a minimum you maintain a Facebook page and Twitter account. Use these not only share what you're doing, but information and sites that your clients may find interesting as well.

✓ **TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*Once you've created your niche, make sure that everyone knows about it.*

## MOLLY GALBRAITH INSIDE INFO

Molly Galbraith, cscs, is cofounder and owner of Girls Gone Strong, a movement dedicated to getting the best training, nutrition, wellness, and lifestyle information to women.

After years of extremely hard training, dabbling in both figure competitions and powerlifting, Molly's body rebelled, and she found herself absolutely exhausted and miserable.

In the spring of 2009, she was diagnosed with Hashimoto's (autoimmune hypothyroidism), pcos (polycystic ovarian syndrome), and adrenal issues. This wakeup call helped Molly realize there was a better way, and running yourself into the ground in the name of "health" was not in fact, healthy at all.

For the last several years, Molly's mission has become to help women look and feel their absolute best and strongest, with minimal time and effort. Even more recently, she recognized the importance of self-love, and having grace and compassion for your body, whatever size or shape it is, and she works to spread accurate information and share these ideas with as many women as possible.

**MOLLY'S 3 KEYS TO SUCCESS IN THE FITNESS INDUSTRY ARE:**

① **Learn from as many smart, seasoned, and successful people as possible, not just in training, but in business, marketing, and life**–You will not only learn from their mistakes, but you will begin to develop an invaluable "filter" to help you decipher good information from bad. This filter also allows you to understand how two very smart and successful people can have opposing beliefs and philosophies, and can both be correct.

② **Find your niche**–For years I had no clue what my niche was. I liked so many different modalities of training, and I didn't focus on getting really good at any of them. Several years ago, I discovered that my favorite demographic is 20- to 60-year-old women who want to look and feel their best and strongest. I focused on learning exactly what that demographic needs to achieve their goals, and I feel completely comfortable with this niche. I also feel comfortable saying, "I don't know," when someone asks me a question about training another demographic.

③ **Be personable, accessible, and vulnerable with your clients**–Your clients don't want to work with a robot who never misses a training session, counts her oatmeal flakes, and is in bed by 9 p.m. every night. Your clients are human and when you show them that you are human as well, they feel heard and understood by you, and this will help you build relationships with your clients for years to come. **Warning:** careful not to take this too far. You don't need to be airing your personal drama, or last week's blackout-fest, with your clients. Be personable, but professional.

**MOLLY'S WORDS TO LIVE BY:**

*"Train because you love your body, not because you hate your body."*

—GIRLS GONE STRONG

*"You are perfect just as you are, and you could use a little improvement."*

— SHUNRYU SUZUKI

*You can learn more about Molly Galbraith at www.MollyGalbraith.com*

*If you're interested in the Girls Gone Strong movement, visit www.girlsgonestrong.com*

## SETTING YOURSELF APART: A CASE STUDY

Remember that any potential client has dozens, if not hundreds of trainers, from whom to choose. You can't try to be everything to everybody – that is a recipe for an average career. To stand out, figure out what your niche is, and stick to it.

For example, when Body + Soul Fitness decided to open a second location in midtown Toronto in 2007, the studio was less than a 10-minute walk from 3 big box gyms. Body + Soul's stated purpose was to provide a more personal feel and high quality personal training environment than the big gyms did, but it failed initially.

The first 2 years, Body + Soul tried to be everything to everyone. (And you know now that's impossible.) While its initial mission may have been to provide a more personal approach, the focus soon became gaining members. The club offered discounts, sent a mass mailing to 30,000 local homes, and altered its group exercise schedule monthly to try to attract members.

But Body + Soul Fitness is not a big gym, and its marketing budget was small. The mass mailing was expensive, yet failed to pull in new clients. And offering group exercise classes was expensive, yet drew few participants who were interested in personal training. It wasn't until Body + Soul's management decided to focus on what it could do better than its big box competitors that it started to thrive. Its competitive advantage was personal training.

The neighbourhood leaders had their primary strength in numbers. They were all large gyms that offered cheap memberships and had full group exercise programs and lots of equipment. However, the big gyms' weakness was the lack of personal attention paid to members. Body + Soul focused on hiring and retaining highly qualified trainers who specialized in different niches and who

gave one-on-one attention to their clients. To help spread the word, the gym also identified the "mavens" in the area, and offered them free memberships. (Author Malcolm Gladwell describes "mavens" in his bestseller, *The Tipping Point*, as those who have the power to influence large groups of people.)

## IDENTIFYING YOUR MAVENS

I know firsthand how important mavens can be. As a new trainer, I struggled until I read about the concept of a maven *The Tipping Point*. Just as Body + Soul did, I went out and identified the mavens in my neighbourhood. From that moment on I was flush with referrals and became the go-to personal trainer in my area.

But I didn't go to the usual suspects – the doctors, chiropractors, and massage therapists weren't of interest to me. My goal was to find the oft-ignored mavens in the neighborhood who had trust and connections and interact with a lot of people over the course of the day. I also wanted to find mavens who would be overjoyed when offered something in return for their recommendation.

A relationship is a two-way street so it's pertinent to have something to offer the maven in return. Here are 4 mavens to consider:

**Coffee Shop Baristas.** If there is a neighbourhood coffee shop I suggest you start to pay $2+ for your coffee and go there every day. Consider the insane mark-up a work expense. (Just don't buy the semi-hot, triple frappe latte with light form and almond milk.)

Wear your personal trainer shirt and walk in with a big smile. Say hello and ask how the barista is. Give them a tip and say thank you. Over the coming days you will see the same barista(s). After 4 – 5 visits he or she will ask if you "work at that gym down the street" because she noticed your shirt.

Say that you do and mention that you offer a referral bonus if he or she sends anybody your way (note: do this whether or not the gym supports it. You can afford to pay 10% out of your own pocket of the first package a new client buys. The barista will be ecstatic. Leave a takeaway with the barista in the form of a business card or flyer.

Continue to go into the coffee shop and the barista will start to go out of his or her way to introduce you to other customers while they wait in line. Baristas know everybody. Baristas also serve everybody caffeine, so people love them.

Instead of reading in an office during your break go for a walk and read in the coffee shop with your trainer shirt on. A break during the day when you wish you were training clients should be spent either on professional development or on getting new clients – reading in a coffee shop where the barista is looking out for your best interests accomplishes both. Other people who are out and about during that time are prime candidates for training. *If you want clients in the middle of the day go where people who have nothing to do during the day go* – which is the coffee shop.

**Real Estate Agents.** Your ideal client is somebody new to the area with money. Real estate agents are the first line of contact with new members of the community, which makes them perfect mavens.

Take 30 minutes tomorrow and walk around the neighborhoods that surround your gym. There's probably 3 – 5 of the same agents who have signs posted in front of a bunch of different houses. Write down their names and phone numbers but don't call them yet.

If you work for a gym, try to arrange for a free membership for the agent. If you're an individual trainer you have a number of different options that include everything from in-home training to offering them 8 sessions for the price of 10 to training them for free. After you know what you can do for them, contact the real estate agents and them that you're taking on new clients in the area and would be interested in hearing how you can help them with their fitness.

Be persistent. Real estate agents are busy and overstressed people. Keep calling and leaving messages offering to help and not asking for anything in return. If they aren't looking for fitness help themselves, think outside the box – maybe they have a significant other who you can train.

Even if training them isn't an option you can ask them to include a welcome gift to new homebuyers. This includes a certificate for a trial membership and some materials on fitness that you've written with an invitation to meet you.

**Hairdressers.** When two people share a small space and are forced to stare at each other through a mirror for at least 30 minutes it's awkward. Hairdressers' days are full of small talk. Find the local salons in your area (ideally the higher end ones) and introduce yourself at a time when they aren't very busy which is generally between the hours of 2 – 4 p.m.

Tell them that you are currently accepting clients and offer a referral bonus to anybody they send to you. For a hairdresser I suggest leaving information that you know their clientele wants to read. For example, if the clientele is mostly 30 – 50 year old women, write up a short article on post-pregnancy fitness. If you train dudes, write up an article on mistakes guys make building muscle and leave it at the barbershop.

Have your contact information on the flyer and include a special code at the top of the form specific to the barber or hair salon. On the flyer make sure to mention that the potential client has to bring it with them in order to get the discount. This way you can track how good the ad does and pay out commissions accordingly.

I like this system because the hairdressers are getting 3 things:

- *A talking point. Instead of awkward small talk they can chat about the great trainer down the street.*
- *Extra value to give to their clients. When people are waiting for their appointment or while they are getting their hair cut they can read your materials.*
- *Another stream of income.*

**Nutrition Store Employees**

Credit goes to Steven Jezyk for this idea. The employees at the local health food or supplement store employees get asked questions daily about how to lose fat, gain muscle, and feel better. They even get asked questions about workouts all the time and, while some of them might be trainers, they usually aren't looking at personal training as a career.

I suggest you take a similar approach that you do with hairdressers. Introduce yourself at the store, and mention that you give referral bonuses for anybody they recommend to you. Depending on the store you can offer to leave some information as well. Large chains like GNC likely won't let you leave physical materials but neighborhood stores might.

Identifying your local mavens takes some time and effort, but will pay off for you, even if you're a new trainer. I suggest you make it part of your marketing plan.

In this case the mavens were the people in the neighbourhood who had the power to influence many others. They were intelligent, well respected, and had jobs where they interacted with lots of people (think real estate agents, doctors, and local shop and business owners). These mavens comprised more marketing power than any mailing campaign could dream of, and in less than a year Body + Soul was thriving and profitable. The key was proper positioning.

My point? In today's market, you must position yourself to stand out and be successful. Creating a niche and spreading the word about it will help you do

that.

**POINTS TO REMEMBER**

- To stand out, you must create a niche for yourself. To determine your niche, determine what need your clients and potential clients have that are not being met, and focus on them.
- Once you have your niche, continually communicate it to the people around you.
- Identify and work with neighborhood mavens to attract new clients.

SECTION

# 2

# Working as a Personal Trainer

# 4 YOU'RE IN SALES NOW

*The Art of Selling*

*"I find it useful to remember everyone lives by selling something."*
— ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Ask any new personal trainer about his or her biggest challenge, and it's likely to be selling. Few trainers start out knowing how to sell, let alone sell effectively. But once you understand what selling really is, and how to go about it, I promise you'll feel more confident – and more importantly, make more sales.

**THE ART OF SELLING**

At its heart, selling consists of two things: understanding your potential clients and making your skill set meaningful to them. If you can do that, they will want to work with you, and nobody else.

As a new trainer, you have to be able to market the skills you have. As

you gain experience, you also market the results that you've helped your clients achieve. So, the first step is to identify what sets you apart from other trainers, which you learned about last chapter. You need to know why you're a better choice than the competition, and to highlight that for potential clients.

Complete this sentence: *I differ from other trainers in that:* _____. List at least three attributes that make you special. Have you received training to work with specific groups of clients? Have you lost fifty pounds and kept it off through lifestyle changes? Are you knowledgeable about a particular medical condition?

Then think about the benefits you can provide clients. Be as detailed and thorough as possible, and don't worry about whether those benefits are unique to you as a trainer. For example, you can help clients lose weight, become more toned, add muscle, and perform better at sports. The more benefits you can explain to a potential client, the more likely a client will respond to one or more of those benefits.

When I was working fulltime as a trainer, I kept a poster on the wall at my office that read:

**WHY USE A PERSONAL TRAINER?**

- Optimize your workout time
- Ensure proper form
- Accurate assessment
- Exercise safety through proper form and adequate rest
- Accountability
- Everybody benefits from a trainer. The top athletes in the world still use trainers, so "knowing enough" to work out on your own is not an excuse.
- A trainer will push you beyond your comfort zone while staying within your limits. You won't push yourself beyond your comfort zone.
- Personalization
- Motivation
- Niche specialties
    - Cardiac rehab
    - Older adults
    - Post-rehab for an injury
    - Body fat loss
    - Muscle gain
    - Improve athletic performance
    - Chronic illness (training with Parkinson's etc.)
    - Pre/post natal training
    - Post-menopausal training (staving off osteoporosis)
- Improve flexibility with assisted stretching

- Easy access to a community and support system

I gave potential clients a copy of this list so they can see the benefits of training and what I can help them with. I suggest you create your own handout with your own specialties to share with potential clients. The more reasons you can give people to hire you, the more likely they are to do so.

## COMMUNICATING YOUR VALUE

I started working at Body + Soul wanting nothing to do with the business end of training. Like many trainers, all I wanted to do was train clients. I figured that an appointed salesperson would handle the business aspect and I would stick to what I did best. Fortunately I quickly realized that sales are integral to being a successful personal trainer, and that selling doesn't mean tricking someone into buying an overpriced product. Selling meant getting a client to want to work with me – in other words *I* was the product.

I was selling myself, and I wasn't overpriced. I knew I offered value. Selling consisted of educating the client on that value. That didn't mean I was effective at the beginning. As a new trainer, I bombarded a potential client with everything that I knew about the body and training. Take a client I'll call Jeff. My manager had booked a meeting for me with Jeff because he had inquired about training but wasn't quite sold. He told me that he wanted to lose some weight, specifically around his stomach.

In response, I described my credentials and also noted that his posture could use some work – a point that I harped on, adding that I was well-trained in fixing posture as well. Jeff didn't hire me and I don't blame him. Instead of listening to what he needed and responding to that, I was too eager to talk about myself – why I was awesome, in my own eyes. In retrospect I did this because I lacked confidence.

Fortunately, one of my mentors explained that I was working too hard to try and impress clients, and suggested instead that I focus on educating clients about what *specifically* I could help them with. So let's talk about a client I'll call Veronica, who was referred to me by another client, Suzanne. When Suzanne first told me about Veronica, I probed her for more information. Particularly I wanted to know any reservations that Veronica might have before meeting with me and any potential limitations.

When Suzanne came into the gym I met her at the door with a smile and offered her a bottle of water. We went into my office to talk even though I already knew what she was going to say. Veronica had shoulder pain and loved to play tennis. She wanted to lose a bit of weight. She lived 25 minutes from the

gym and didn't want to make the drive after work multiple times a week. She had a trainer before who didn't follow up so she had fallen off the training wagon.

Before we met, I'd pulled two articles on shoulder pain for her from my file. Veronica and I talked about Suzanne and another client I'd trained who also loved to play tennis. I also educated her about how I have weekend checkups with program design clients, which is convenient for clients who live a bit far away, and we talked about the importance of a weekly email check in on Sunday night to make sure that she had all materials that she needs for a strong week.

With a bit of proactive thinking, I was able to communicate my value to Veronica in a way that was specifically meaningful to her. In less than 30 minutes all of her reservations were addressed, and she hired me.

But in order to communicate value to a potential client, you need more information about that person. In order to know how to convince them that you can help them, you need to first know precisely what they're struggling with. Knowing that and then showing them how you can help them is the secret.

So to convince a client of your value, you must gather as much information as possible about him or her. Find out about past struggles, injuries, goals, and issues, and tailor your services specifically toward that client.

If the client has an issue or injury that you've dealt with before, tell him about your experience with his issue and how you've helped somebody with a similar problem. If the client has an issue that you don't know a lot about, I recommend you research the condition and send him information about it to show that you'll go the "extra 10 percent". (Don't tell him you'll send reading material – surprise him. It's more memorable.)

Clients increasingly want to train with somebody who knows about their specific issues, and by highlighting your unique qualifications (e.g., experience helping slow the decrease in bone density in post-menopausal women), you may attract clients who otherwise would be reluctant to walk through your door.

Keep in mind that after you've established your reputation as a trainer, communicating your value becomes less important. Once you've successfully worked with a number of clients, they'll go out of their way to tell friends about you. At that point, new clients will already be aware of your value and closing the sale becomes much easier.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*Understand your clients and the role you play in their lives. Educate them about your value using specific*

*examples and describe how you can help them.*

## DEAN SOMERSET INSIDE INFO

Dean Somerset is an international public speaker whose main area of expertise is injury and medical dysfunction management through optimally designed exercise programs. He is also the medical and rehabilitation coordinator for World Health Clubs.

Growing up in Western Canada, Dean worked as a sous chef, delivered pizzas, and had the biggest paper route in town (his words, not mine). Dean studied kinesiology with the intention of becoming a physiotherapist. After 3 years of kinesiology, he realized he wanted to work with the full gamut of clients and decided to become a personal trainer.

After completing his degree, Dean worked as an independent trainer out of community centers and people's houses for 2 years. For the last 7, he's worked in a commercial facility primarily with injury rehabilitation and medical management clients.

Dean markets through third party endorsements, mostly referrals from medical professionals, and previous clients. He also maintains a popular blog.

### DEAN'S 3 KEYS TO SUCCESS IN THE FITNESS INDUSTRY ARE:

① **Take care of yourself.** You're no good to anyone if you run around like a chicken with its head cut off and wind up burning yourself out. Your quality will decrease as the quantity of your sessions increases. Take time to make sure you work out, rest, eat, and de-load your stresses regularly.

② **"Sales" shouldn't be a scary word.** Every professional service available has a fee associated with its delivery, and personal training should be no different. Build the value far beyond the cost and you will never have to worry about people objecting to spending money on you and what you can do for them.

③ **Always learn and implement.** The ability to transfer knowledge to your clients is the essence of training. It will help to empower them to take ownership of their fitness program and make you incredibly invaluable to them as a part of their health care team. If you know more about something than any other trainer and you put it into action, you will get better results for your clients, which will translate into more referrals and a bigger bank account.

### DEAN'S WORDS TO LIVE BY:

*"If you care about this profession, show it. You have to treat it like a business, which means staying organized with scheduling, marketing, programs, invoicing, and taking care of yourself along the way. Take regular vacations, get hobbies, and make sure you live a balanced life."*

*You can learn more about Dean Somerset*
*at www.deansomerset.com*

**THE 5-STEP SELLING PROCESS**

After some requisite small talk, almost every meeting for selling personal training starts with a variation of one of the following questions:

- "How much does it cost?"
- "How often do I need to see you?"
- "What do I need to do to lose 'X' pounds?"
- "I just want a program to do on my own. Can you do that?

Don't answer the question. Doing so will decrease your chances of making the sale or disable you from selling a bigger package than the client initially thinks he wants. Instead, use the 5-step Selling Process, described below.

*Step 1: Ask, "What is it you want to achieve?"*

The client has taken time to come see you. You are in the position of power and should be controlling the conversation, not him. Immediately after small talk ask him or her, "what is it you want to achieve?" and shut up. It shifts control and focus to put you in the driver's seat.

Listen to what the person tells you and take careful notes. (Have a pad of paper and pen ready. Active note-taking is important in making the client feel that you care.)

When the client stops talking wait for a count of 5, in silence. Usually he will start back up but if he keeps quiet, ask if there is a specific reason why he is coming to you. Listen carefully for his *emotional* reasons for sitting in the chair across from you. *Why* does he want to lose 5 pounds? Always remember that emotion is what drives action and logic justifies it.

Once you know what the client wants to achieve, you can sketch out a path for him.

It's important during these initial meetings to be quiet and let the client speak. Often, all that I'll do is ask questions and paraphrase their answers. Make sure you ask every potential client the following before moving on:

## GATHERING AND USING TESTIMONIALS

Want to get more clients? Then you need testimonials. Every trainer should have a binder of testimonials from past and current client that you continually add to ready to showcase at any point in

time.

In an industry rife with dishonesty and associated distrust, it's important for you to have as many "proof elements" as possible *before* making a sales proposition. Getting testimonials for personal training is the best way to do it.

Imagine the power of having a full binder sitting in the waiting room for potential clients to flip through as they wait for a tour, complimentary session, or sales meeting.

One of the factors of self-efficacy (or the belief that you can achieve a particular goal) is what's called social modeling. This is a large contributing factor to whether a client will make the decision to purchase your services. You can enhance this belief by being able to show a testimonial specific to your potential client.

Ideally you'll first identify your target client types (or "avatars") as detailed as possible. For example:

*A 26-year old African-American woman who is 30 pounds overweight. She's never used a trainer and is finally looking for some direction after numerous failed attempts at the gym. She's a nurse, so shift work makes regular sleep and food habits hard to come by.*

The above is just an example, but I urge you to create 3 – 4 of your ideal client avatars. Include details about their gender, age, fitness goals, occupation, and challenges. Then you'll know which aspects of the testimonial that you want to highlight with your potential clients who have similar goals and limitations.

Here's an example of a great testimonial that I would show to the client above:

*When I started to train with Jon I wasn't obese, but definitely had some weight to lose. It's funny, you know, I'd been in the gym on and off for a few years without much to show for it. I didn't believe that a trainer would really be able to help me until I had "worked my way up to it". I also work shifts – sometimes nights – and don't sleep well.*

*What I particularly liked about Jon was that he looked at me as a whole as opposed to giving me some exercises and counting the sets and reps. It took a bit of time but he first helped me establish better sleep habits. Not one to diet, Jon took a look at what I ate and helped me identify what foods I really loved, and which ones that I could live without. The result was an almost immediate weight loss that I've kept off. I'd recommend Jon to anybody.*

The above example client and testimonial are made up but meant to showcase how important it is to have testimonials specific to your avatar. Notice how my testimonial shows how all-major reservations have been solved with my training.

*Collecting Testimonials*

You can simply ask for testimonials. But there are strategies that will result in you getting more effective ones. First, always get permission to use the testimonial for promotional purposes either in writing or via email, and keep that on file. Better to be safe than sorry. If you give the client a form to fill out, a simple "check box" and place for a signature with a line allowing permission of use should suffice.

The more specific the questions you ask, the better the chance that you'll get higher-quality answers in your testimonial. I recommend creating a simple document with questions and spaces to fill out the answers that you simply print and hand to clients. Be detailed not just in the question, but also in the length of response that you want. I also recommend including 3 questions for improving your business taken directly from Scott Stratten's book *UnMarketing* (the first 3 questions below):

Here's an example form that you might hand out:

- *What's one thing that you'd like me to start doing?*
- *What's one thing that you'd like me to stop doing?*
- *What's one thing that you'd like me to keep doing?*

- *In 3 sentences or less, can you describe any reservations that you had before we started working together?*
- *In 3 sentences or less, can you explain how I was able to help you with your reservations?*
- *Can you describe your 1 – 2 top goals when you started?*
- *In point form, can you list your achievements with training thus far?*
- *Is there anything else at all that you'd like to add?*

You can ask for testimonials at any time, but ideally it should be after at least 2 months of training with you. After a client registers for training, why not set a reminder in your phone for 2 – 3 months away to ask for a testimonial? This way you don't have to think about it. Once your phone beeps, you hand them the form that I just described. [I prepared a template of this form for you to use. Download a free copy at **www.theptdc.com/ignite-worksheets/**]

- Any injuries?
- What are your goals?
- Have you been a member of a gym before?
- Have you had a trainer before?
- Why did you quit (or not achieve success) previously?
- What are your expectations of me?

Pause for several seconds when you think the person is finished before you begin talking. The air in the room will be more awkward than when Luke Skywalker found out that Leia was his sister. When people feel awkward they speak about the first thing that comes to mind. Usually the result is for them to give you their deeper purpose for wanting to exercise.

*Step 2: Sell results, not packages.*

Once you know what the client hopes to achieve, give them an idea of a plan. You're doing it on the spot, so it doesn't need to be perfect and you can fill in the blanks later. Physically chart out the plan on a piece of paper in front of the client explaining 1 – 3 of the biggest steps. Explain why your plan is specifically suited to get them their results. The plan acts as the logic that will help a potential client justify his decision to train with you.

Be brief. Start to paint the picture but the details don't matter yet. Let the client lead you in terms of how much detail you provide. I found that some clients were more interested in the physiology behind adaptation than others. It was impossible for me to gauge upon first meeting. So I would ask something like, "Do you want to know a little about how soreness works and why it is not a great indicator of how hard you worked?"

If the client says “yes,” I’ll explain a bit about Delayed Onset Muscle Soreness (“DOMS”) and how it works. If she isn’t interested, I’ll leave it and move on. Remember that you’re an expert when sitting in a sales meeting. If you say that soreness isn’t a great indicator of a good workout and she doesn’t question you, then there’s no need to explain. Move on.

By the end of stage two make sure the client has a good idea of what your program for her entails. She should already be imagining working with you in the gym.

*Step 3: Address objections.*

The next step is to address any objections the client may have. Say something like, “What do you think about the plan?” and then listen to what he says.

It’s rare to make a sale without dealing with objections. Try your best to tackle them *after* the client is already picturing working with you. When you bring it up now, the client may mention an objection but, after already having been sold on your program, will start to figure out solutions on his or her own. Shut up and let your client talk through it.

Money (or lack of it) is the biggest objection. Sell value before you bring up the dollars. The cheapest trainer in the world is too expensive if the client isn’t yet sold on your value.

If a potential client asks what you charge before you talk about your value, I suggest gently changing the subject. If the person still demands to know the cost, tell him or her, but your chances of making the sale go way down at that point. There are some cases where you can’t do anything. Some clients will end up at the cheapest facility; shrug it off and rack it up to experience.

Here are some common objections or issues clients have and how to address them:

- Lack of time. If a potential client lacks time to train, discuss different types of workout routines suited to her goals that will work within her timeline. For example, if you have a client who wants to lose fat, discuss metabolic workouts and how much more “bang for your buck” these workouts will get your client as opposed to steady-state cardio.
- A previous injury. Make sure you understand the injury. I keep a database on the most common injuries I come across. (When I come across a new injury, I make sure to add it to the database.) Contained within that database are papers varying in complexity describing the injury and rehabilitation protocols. If I’m familiar with the injury, I proceed to

pummel the client with knowledge, so to speak. If I'm not familiar with the injury, I use the line "I can help you with that." Either way, I print out some information for the client on the spot and hand it to her. That shows again that I'm willing to go the extra 10 percent.

- A previous bad experience with a trainer. Don't bad-mouth anybody. Always give a former trainer the benefit of the doubt, but educate the client as to how you would treat the situation differently. Say the client didn't feel the previous trainer listened to her; I would tell her I was sorry about that but that as a client, she can call me during the day or email me any time. I also remind her that during our sessions (or anytime she sees me in the gym – as long as I'm not with a client.), she's welcome to speak about anything. Whatever the bad experience was, show that you're going to deal with it differently.
- A know-it-all attitude. A fair number of clients believe they don't need a trainer because they "know what they're doing." When I hear something like this, I get a thorough understanding of a client's previous and current workouts and goals. I will then highlight several points where she can improve, and if I can, I provide the person with research on whatever her goals are (like hypertrophy, fat loss, or toning). While this person may not hire you immediately, I suggest you stay in contact with this person. She may wind up approaching you and asking you to train her.
- Cost. Cost is a different type of obstacle. If you have demonstrated your value to a potential client, cost should not even be an obstacle. Yes, some people can't afford a trainer, but the fact that you're a little cheaper or more expensive than another trainer shouldn't matter. If $80/hour is too expensive, so is $70. But if a client understands your value, she won't balk at $80/hour versus $70/hour. Other than setting up payment plans when necessary, I'm against negotiating the price of training. It's important to stick to your value, but you can be creative in making a plan that will work for a client who can't train with you as often. (I'll give you some examples later in this chapter.)

*Step 4: Get the buy-in.*

Before bringing up price you should book the person into your schedule according to the plan you've sketched out. Having clients commit to training times and dates makes it harder for them to balk at the sale. Author Sheena Iyengar calls this the "foot-in-the-door" technique in her book, *The Art of Choosing*. Getting somebody to commit to you on a small decision increases the

chances they will commit to whatever you propose next.

Now it's finally time to discuss money.

I suggest you have a professional sales sheet with 3 options: A cheap option, a middle "good-value" option, and an expensive option with all the bells and whistles. Basic pricing theory suggests that 3 options works better than 2 if your goal is to sell people on your middle price. For example, let's say your options are:

- 3 sessions – $300
- 20 sessions and 2 assessments – $1,800
- 50 sessions, 3 assessments, and 5 massages from the therapist down the street – $4,800

Compared with the first two options only:

- 3 sessions – $300
- 20 sessions and 2 assessment – $1,800,

$1,800 now seems like a lot of money. The addition of the third option in my first example makes the middle price-point seem a lot more reasonable.

There isn't a set precedent for personal training prices. You (or the gym you work for) set your fees. In this example, the third package acts predominantly as a reference point. You will find more people will now buy the middle package. There are also people who want to buy the most expensive thing. So you may as well have a high-cost option, just in case.

When presenting the packages you can reference back to the workout you suggested in my second selling personal training step. I usually give 2 options to the client but show them the sheet with the 3rd so they can see the reference point. The conversation would sound something like:

> *Sally, you mentioned that you really want to give this your all and we've set some pretty lofty but attainable goals of X, Y, and Z.*
>
> *In order to hit these goals by the date you mentioned, I'm going to need you training with me 3 times/week and twice on your own, where I'll give you a full plan of what to do. The most cost-effective*

*option is the 50-pack of sessions and it will take our training over 3 months to finish. This is more than enough time to get measurable results.*

*If that's too big of a commitment for you off the bat, we also offer a 20-session package. Please also remember that our sessions are fully refundable so you don't need to be worried about getting stuck with a larger package if something happens.*

I like to give two options because it makes for a softer sell, and gives the client a choice. I also remind the client that she can get a refund if she decides not to pursue training with me.

*Step 5: Get creative if necessary.*
You won't always need to use step 5, but you will have clients that can't train with you as often as your plan requires. That's when you get creative to help your clients reach their goals.

For example, instead of giving a client a workout each time she comes in, you might give her an hour-long lesson in the weight room so that she is comfortable working out once or twice a week on her own. Or you might not even be in the weight room. I've taken clients into our conference room to go over their workout plans. The idea is to provide your clients with the tools they need to train on their own, if necessary. If your client travels frequently or has a hard time getting into the gym, consider making online training a part of your client's training package.

If your client can't work out with you as often as you'd like, tell her what she'll be responsible for on her own, and get her to buy into it. Remember how to manipulate price. This may involve creativity on your part to make the sale but be careful not to prejudge a client and always start high. If the client's goals require her to work out five times a week, be honest and educate her about why this is so. I was always surprised at how often a client would offer to train with me more frequently when I had properly communicated what she needed to do to achieve her goals.

For example, Vlad was a member of the gym who would often ask me questions but he never asked to train with me. I always answered his questions, and was surprised when he finally asked me to be his personal trainer.

Vlad was recovering from rotator cuff surgery and didn't have much

money. Having completed physiotherapy, he wanted an exercise routine that he could do three times/week with a focus on continual strengthening of the shoulder and functional strength. He couldn't afford to work with me this often, but wanted a program that constantly changed to keep him interested but still focused on his problem shoulder.

After educating Vlad on the necessity of progression, we agreed to meet once a week for seven weeks. Vlad's form was already pretty good, and I was confident that I could show Vlad a movement and he would be able to emulate it the following week. He also knew that he could contact me with any questions. I devised a workout plan for him that included 7 categories:

- Pull
- Push
- Mid-back/shoulder stability
- Core stability/anti-rotation
- Core rotation/flexion
- Legs (hip dominant)
- Legs (quad dominant)
- Arms

I included four or five exercises in each group and instructed Vlad to choose one to two exercises from each category per workout, focusing on shoulder stability and core strength. Our sessions consisted of making Vlad comfortable with the given exercises, and to make sure that he knew when the weight was appropriate and when it needed to be increased.

When we were done, Vlad had the freedom to choose from a large assortment of workouts. The exercises I included were specific to his needs and he knew how to progress. I gave Vlad the freedom and knowledge to make his own workouts within certain parameters, and he got much more value from this plan – yet he was still able to afford it. He was so happy with his results he wound up referring his wife and daughter to me for an additional 100+ sessions.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*Be creative. If a client has financial constraints, find a solution that will work for him and help him reach his goals.*

With another client, Lisa, I had to overcome the negative experiences she'd had with other trainers. When I asked her about her history, I learned that she'd always trained using low weights in a circuit. She'd been told that it was the best way to fat-burn since her heart rate would be up the whole workout. Second, none of her previous trainers had given her detailed instruction, so Lisa was clueless about how to work out on her own. She'd meet with her trainer once or twice a week, and then tried to work out on her own, but she hadn't achieved the results she wanted.

I developed a plan for Lisa that would enable her to meet her goals. Her initial goal was to lose 25 pounds, but I wanted her to put on muscle and get stronger. I educated Lisa on the difference between absolute weight and body composition, and told her that if she was going to train with me, she was going to train like a power lifter. I explained that the added muscle would increase her BMR ("Basal Metabolic Rate") and that the workouts would have a greater TEE ("Thermic Effect of Exercise"). The stubborn weight would come off as a byproduct.

In addition, I told Lisa that I didn't want to see her every week. I was going to force her to be self-sufficient. I therefore proposed an arrangement to Lisa where we would meet three times in one week. This would enable me to teach her enough to feel comfortable for the next month. I wanted to make sure she never left another gym feeling disoriented again. I was always available for questions, so she knew from the minute she walked into the gym she knew what she had to accomplish and had already acquired the requisite self-efficacy to complete the task.

I gave Lisa a power workout that contained fewer exercises for her to master. In short, I wanted Lisa to feel great doing 8 exercises in a workout as opposed to feeling confused trying to master 20+ exercises. So what happened?

In her first year, she got unbelievable results. She reached her goal of losing the 25 pounds while eating more than ever (I did get her to keep a diary and worked with her on making proper food choices). She's also incredibly strong, and most of all, Lisa is a much more confident person in and out of the gym.

All it took with Lisa was a minor push in the right direction. I listened carefully to what didn't work and made sure not to repeat the mistakes. I then devised a program that was completely different, that she could afford, and that I knew she could master. By helping Lisa become confident and knowledgeable in the gym, I gained a lifetime client until I left the hands-on training field.

I shared these stories to remind you that no two clients are the same. Often it takes a little creativity to sell clients on training and retain them. While it

would be great if every client wanted to train with you three times a week for life, that's not realistic.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*Educate and empower your clients. You can create a client army that will go out of their way to spread the word about how amazing you are. That's the key to being a career trainer.*

## THE BIGGEST MISTAKE TRAINERS MAKE: PREJUDGING CLIENTS

Trust me. Go through my five steps for every client and present whatever option you think is best irrelevant of the appearance, age, or anything else you know about the potential client.

I've trained high school students 3 times/week because they begged their parents after speaking with me. I've also made the mistake of prejudging an older client and sheepishly presenting a cheap option. I found out later he was well off, but had set a precedent of training him once every two weeks. It was impossible to get them back to training multiple times a week after that.

*You are the product. Believe in its value and learn to communicate it to a client. Selling personal training is about confidence; never miss an opportunity again.*

## SELLING IN ACTION

Not every sale takes place on the gym floor. I'd like to share an example of how you can find clients anywhere – if you know how to sell to them.

Several years ago at a party, I met Jeff, who suffered from chronic pain. It appeared that he'd been injured working with a personal trainer months before. Jeff hadn't gone back to the gym after that, but because he worked in construction, he'd been forced to constantly medicate himself. I asked Jeff about what had happened since then, and he told me that he'd quit working with the trainer and had tried acupuncture and massage therapy on a weekly basis but that the pain always returned. In addition, Jeff wasn't able to go mountain biking and was afraid to drive his motorcycle. His quality of life was severely compromised.

Normally I would take notes while talking with a potential client, but since I was at a party I didn't have that luxury. I already had valuable

information that I could use to make a sale, though, as he revealed the following emotional triggers:

- He couldn't do activities that he loved such as mountain biking and riding his motorcycle.
- He'd had a motorcycle accident in the past, which left him with permanent shoulder and knee damage in addition to his lower back pain.
- He was well-educated, and appreciated well-researched health and fitness information.
- His view of trainers had been tarnished as he viewed his previous trainer as being responsible for his injury. In addition, that trainer didn't follow proper programming and Jeff never saw any results.
- Jeff didn't want to pay any more money for acupuncture or massage therapy because it only helped the symptoms, not the underlying problem. He wanted to address the problem and get back into shape.

Keeping these factors in mind, I spoke to Jeff about his previous experience. I made sure to avoid criticizing the trainer but highlighted the importance of proper exercise choice and progression. We talked about the importance of a building from the bottom up and having a full dynamic warm-up and mobility work to prepare for exercises like the deadlift. We also talked about the benefits and limitations of disciplines such as acupuncture and massage. In combination with a proper exercise program, they can be effective treatments, but they won't create proper movement patterns or develop muscle. Finally, we talked about how he would feel when he would be pain-free and could get back to activities that he loved. I wanted to make our conversation emotional for him.

We didn't talk about goal-setting – and because his goal was to get back to mountain biking, not to bench-press a certain amount, conventional goal-setting may not have been effective at the time. I couldn't give him a timeline because he had not completed an assessment, and I needed more information about his shoulder and knee issues before I created a plan for him. At the end of the conversation, I gave him my card and told him to contact me if he wanted any more information, and asked him for his email address.

At no point did I ask him to train with me or even mention the gym I worked at. When I got home that night, I forwarded him a review article on lower back rehabilitation and told him to call if he had any questions about the article. (Note that I never mentioned during our conversation that I would send him any info. I made a note in my phone to send the study to him when I got

home.) It was the extra effort that refreshed his mind about our conversation the following day and showed him that I was a different breed of trainer willing to go the extra 10 percent.

Three days later, Jeff called to make an appointment to train with me. Without selling, I had a committed client. The cost of the training sessions didn't matter because he understood the value. When clients understand your value, they'll be happy to pay whatever you charge. On the other hand, if clients aren't sold on your value, you could be the cheapest trainer in the world and still be too expensive.

I wouldn't have said that I could have helped him with his back pain if I wasn't qualified to do so. After a complete assessment (and getting medical clearance), we started a plan that included showing him how to stand, sit, and carry objects properly to reduce pain while at work and followed that with a focus on getting him strong in the gym. Within five months, he was pain-free and stronger than he'd ever been – and I had another committed client who spread the word about me.

Without one word concerning sales, I was able to take a client whose view of trainers had been seriously tarnished and I converted him into a great client and an inspiring story. After we trained together, he wrote a testimonial that I used to sell myself to other clients with lower back pain.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*Listening is more important than talking. Make sure you know what your client's problems and goals are, and demonstrate how you can help. A client (especially one who's had a prior bad experience) will notice that you're different right from the start.*

## POINTS TO REMEMBER

- The ability to sell yourself and your value to potential clients is an essential aspect of succeeding as a trainer.
- The more you know about a potential client, the more easily you can sell to that person.
- Selling doesn't come easy to most trainers. It's a skill that needs to be learned the same way that squat progressions are, but you will get better with time.

# SHARÍ ALEXANDER ON: HOW TO APPROACH POTENTIAL CLIENTS ON THE FLOOR

If you need a prospecting pool, you need look no further than the gym floor.

Okay, I can already feel the tension coming from you. Approaching people on the floor is scarier than cold emails or cold calling. It means you'd have to, like, talk to strangers and stuff. Don't worry, I'm not going to tell you to suck it up and just approach people. That's a shotgun approach. **I want to help you be a sniper.**

**Your First Mission**

Who's your target when you approach clients on the floor? What's the profile of your ideal client? Male/female? Age? Goals? Exercise experience? Then, identify who in your gym fits that description. This is your "hit list."

You may not know their names yet. Just write down descriptions – bald guy who loves the squat rack or curly-headed chick with pink sneakers. These are the people that you'll approach with the rest of the process outlined in this section.

Next, you'll build rapport. Now that you have your hit list, it's time to slowly and strategically develop rapport with them. You'll no longer look out onto the gym floor and miss the trees for the forest. You know which trees you're going to pee on.

This means that any time one of your targets is in the gym, you smile and say hello. You do this for a week or two.

For weeks 3 – 4, you smile and say hi and spark chitchat. **This does not mean asking, "How's it going?"** We have socially acceptable short responses to that question. "Fine." End of conversation. To spark chit chat, use what's known in intelligence communities and the field of elicitation as a provocative statement, or something that provokes a response.

Here are a few examples:

*Compliments.* Never underestimate the power of flattery. "I like your shoes. Where did you get them?" will give you, at the bare minimum, a three-sentence conversation. Which, at this point, is all we're going for. But who knows, it could lead to a full discussion. And that's a discussion that you otherwise wouldn't have had with your target.

*Observe and comment.* T-shirts are like big identity tags that people wear in the gym. You can learn what college they went to, what teams they like, what music they listen to, what movies they watch, what races they've run – the list can go on and on. Make note of these and start a conversation. "Hey! I like your Captain America shirt. What did you think of the last movie?"

*Ask for their help*. Yes, you're an expert. But that doesn't mean you're an expert in *everything.* There's something special that happens when an expert asks a non-expert for advice. Don't worry, you're not asking for workout advice. Instead, identify opportunities to ask you target for their thoughts on something like this:

*"Hey, George. You're a married guy. I'm debating what to get my girlfriend for her birthday. Any thoughts?"*

*"Hey, Jane. You always have the cutest up-dos in the gym. Is there like a YouTube channel that shows how to do those or something?"*

The goal with each of these is to build rapport. After you've done that, you move on to the next step, which is reciprocity. Reciprocity basically boils down to this: if you give someone something of perceived value, then they're subconsciously, socially obligated to return that with something of equal or greater value.

I want you to get creative here.

The common kneejerk reaction is to offer free exercise advice. But as I'm sure you realize, walking up to your target in the middle of their workout and saying, "Would you like to know how you can do that better?" is not good.

For this part of the strategy, I want you to think of free *things* you can give them. Next time you see George, out of the clear blue say,

*"Hey, George, I've got an extra protein bar here. You want it for after your workout? Here ya go."*

*"Hey, Jane. We've got extra workout towels in the back. If you want one, here ya go."*

That item is now anchored with the thought of you and your random kindness.

Once you've established rapport and triggered a bit of reciprocity, it's time for intelligence gathering. If you think you've developed enough of a relationship with your target to say, "You know, I've really enjoyed talking with you when you're in the gym. I'd love to talk with you about being your personal trainer sometime. Would you like to chat just sit and talk after your workout today?" Then go for it.

If you don't think that you've built up to that yet, then you need to gather more intel about them. What are their goals? What do they want? What kind of program are they on right now?

But here's the thing, if you directly ask those questions, they might shut down. It will feel like the beginning of a sales pitch. When we ask direct questions, the other person's mind instantly defaults to pre-programmed software that says, "Why do they want to know this? What will they do with that information? What will they think of my answers?" **This defensive mode is what you want to avoid**.

So, you need to be subtle and speak in sentences. This conversational (and covert) style of interviewing is known as elicitation. You're eliciting information without asking a direct question. Types of elicitation statements could be:

*"Looks like you're focusing on strength building lately."*

*"I see you're liking the cardio exercises."*

*"You've been in here more regularly. Motivation must be kicking in a bit."*

In each of these, they'll either agree with you or not. Either response is good, because it's information. The information that they share will be about what they're doing, why they're doing it, and give you insight into their goals.

Once you have more information about your potential clients, its' time get them into the assessment meeting. There are two ways that I recommend you frame your "ask."

The first is with "social proof." This is my preferred option. Share an anecdote of one of your successful clients who's just like your prospect, like this:

*"I'm having a great day because one of my clients just hit her goals. She's just so happy. You know, she reminds me of you in a lot of ways – she's a busy lady and it's not like she had a lot of weight to lose, she just wanted to tone up and feel sexy. I really like working with people like that. You know, I'd love talk with you about the program I had her on and see if you'd like something like that. How about after your workout?"*

The second method is with "newness." People are highly compelled by new things. You could approach your target and say:

*"You know, George, I was thinking about you when I was reading the latest research on training men in their mid-forties. There's some really interesting things that people are doing that are making a big difference. I've always enjoyed our talks and I think I can really help you. How about we talk the program and some options?"*

In each of these scenarios, you've given them a subtle and socially acceptable reason for bringing up the sales pitch. Plus, they're more inclined to accept the sales meeting – and hire you.

Yes, this is a process. Yes, it takes time. But if you're not the type of person who feels comfortable "going for the kill" and approaching every Joe Schmo on the floor, then *this* is your process. Building the relationship makes the ask easier, for both you and them. Then, you do your thing in the sales meeting.

*You can learn more about Sharí Alexander through her business Observe, Connect, Influence at www.shari-alexander.com*

# 5 ONE ON ONE

## *Developing Client Relationships*

*"The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn."*
— RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Your relationship with your client starts the first time you interact with that person. Maybe you greeted her at the gym. Maybe you had a brief conversation with him in the weight room. Or maybe your first conversation was when he approached you about hiring you to train him.

But once a client hires you, your trainer/client relationship officially begins. Create a strong bond from the start, and you'll not only help your clients achieve their goals – you'll find that happy clients are more than willing to recommend you and refer friends, family members, and colleagues to you.

You probably already know that it takes much more time to sign a new client or customer than to retain a current one. So keep this fact in mind: *The*

*work to build a strong bond with a client pales in comparison to the work involved in continually attracting and signing new clients.* Business owners know that it's much easier to keep a current customer than to secure a new one, and this fact holds true with trainers as well. In fact, it's estimated that it take five to seven times more time and work to attract a new client than to keep a current one.

**BREAKING THE ICE**

Developing great relationships with a client starts with getting to know them on a personal level, but most clients seem reluctant to open up early on. Last chapter, you saw how Sharí Alexander suggested to build a relationship with potential clients long before they hire you. With a new client, you want to take a similar approach but in a shorter time frame.

The first step is to pay attention. What's the client wearing? Look for identifying pieces of clothing or jewelry to get the client speaking about herself or sharing a fond memory. If your client is wearing a "Hard Rock Café" T-shirt from Mexico, ask when he went there. Use anything to get the relationship out of the awkward first-date phase as quickly as possible.

Next, listen. You learned last chapter that it's important to listen to a potential client during the selling process. Now that you're training your client, it's even more important. Ask your client how he's feeling, or how his day has been. Small talk can help break the ice as you start a training session. Often clients are anxious or feel awkward; they're not trying to be rude. Don't take it personally. As your client gets to know you better, chances are good that he or she will become more open with you.

I always found that clients let down some of their barriers when I would tell a semi-embarrassing or funny story about my own life. It eased the tension and showed that I'm human. I recommend keeping a couple of stories in reserve at all times. The best stories are those that relate to the gym (for example, being unable to press a too-heavy weight at the bottom of a bench press, and calling somebody else to lift the bar off of you).

Sharing this kind of personal experience reminds clients that everybody struggles with exercise and they shouldn't be afraid to fail. In fact, they should embrace failure. (Later, when I discuss the physiology of skill acquisition, you will understand why "failing with purpose" is imperative to your client's success.)

One of my favourite stories to use was to describe my first experience curling. The short version is that I found I lacked curling skills. In fact, the first

time I tried it I fell on the ice, bruised my hip, and walked with a limp for two weeks. This story shows clients that personal trainers struggle with new exercise endeavors too. Reminding clients of that can help reduce anxiety.

Pay attention not only to your client's words but body language and actions as well. You can learn a lot about someone's personality and comfort level just by watching how she interacts with you and with other people. As you get to know your client better, you'll be better able to figure out what will motivate and inspire her [you'll learn more about that in chapter 8] but at the outset, you want to create a relationship of trust.

To help create a great relationship early, I suggest you work on developing rapport with your clients. Here are 6 ways to develop rapport; the list comes from Chet Holmes' fantastic book, *The Ultimate Sales Machine* with application steps added by me.

**1. ASK GREAT QUESTIONS**

I've already written about the importance of asking the right questions and not taking the client's goals at face value. The best coaches are not the ones who know how to give advice; they are the ones who know how to ask the right questions.

If you ask a 20-something single male client what his goal is, he might say to put on muscle. If he's read a fitness magazine he might even adopt the lingo and say "to get a shredded six-pack". But why does he want a shredded six-pack? Probably to get laid right? Well then, "getting laid" is the goal, not the six-pack.

When building rapport it's important to use questions to make a connection and find common interests. The faster that you can make the relationship personal, the more successful you will be with that client.

**2. HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOR**

Why so serious?

When I worked as a trainer, members of the gym would tell me that they knew that they had arrived the minute they walked in the door because they could hear my laugh. My clients worked hard, but we had a great time doing it.

It doesn't even have to be in the gym, do a simple Google search for "best fitness jokes" and find a great fitness joke or cartoon and email it to your clients. Heck, send your clients the "fitness joke of the week". Just make sure that the jokes that you send are actually funny.

**3. COMMISERATE**

Be a supporter. Clients might be in a bad state when they come into the gym.

I followed a 5-minute rule in these cases. If I sensed that something was wrong with my client (which you can almost always tell), I'd ask them to join me in my office. Don't discuss these matters on the gym floor.

Create a physical barrier in an office where you close the door behind you and ask them "what's up?" and continue asking questions (don't offer advice, it's almost never your place). Once you feel as if they've finished venting a simple, "thanks for sharing that. Are you ready to train? We can leave this in the office."

Give a big smile (and hug if appropriate, fist pound if not) and stand up and lead them out of the room closing the door behind you. Take them through a fun warm-up and get training.

**4. BE EMPATHETIC AND CARE ABOUT THEM**

I'm going to take the words directly from Chet Holmes. *"If you're going to be interesting, be interested. If you want to be fascinating, be fascinated."*

Take an avid interest in your clients. Know what's important to them. Know their family members' names. Know what important events are coming up. Keep track of their hobbies, interests, and quirks.

When I trained clients I created a spreadsheet for keeping track of these details. It's become very popular and is now used by 10,000+ trainers around the World. I urge you to read about it and implement it into your business immediately. [I've prepared a worksheet that you can use to track all of the important details of your clients lives. Download it for free at **www.theptdc.com/2014/01/tracking-personal-training-clients/**]

**5. FIND THE COMMON GROUND**

Finding a common current interest (or one you had during childhood) could be the key to creating a bond. Ask clients questions like, what music do you listen to? What are your favorite books? What are your favorite movies? Favorite sports teams? Favorite restaurants or places to go?

I love to read and always made sure to "forget" that I left the book that I was currently reading on my desk. My taste is pretty eclectic and ranges from non-fiction marketing books to fiction to classic literature to comics.

One year I got 6 different gift cards from clients – all to the same bookstore. Books were something to talk about and we'd often take a minute to discuss what we were reading before or after the session. I had one client that I traded books with for over a year. We had such similar taste that we both simply

gave the other one a book when we finished if it was good.

Another client of mine loved to eat out in restaurants and is a big red meat eater. Well one day I invited him to have lunch after the session at a deli down the street. We would tell each other about great smokehouses that we found and still meet up for dinner every couple of months.

**6. MIRROR**

Mirroring is the everyday word for a concept called isopraxism. It means adapting your body language and attitude to the client's.

When a client stands, you stand. When he kneels, you kneel. If he speaks softly, so do you. If he sits on a bench after a set and you want to speak with him, pull up a ball and sit beside him – don't speak down from a standing position.

Aside from mirroring being respectful, we're a herding species. Matching body language and tonality to somebody else creates a connection and a subconscious affinity for one another.

To increase referrals and retention, work on establishing rapport. There's no point in trying to get more clients unless you already know how to treat your current ones.

**IDENTIFYING UNDERLYING MOTIVATORS**

You've probably heard that "the customer is always right." While I believe that personal trainers need to be adept in customer service, the customer is often wrong when it comes to setting goals.

It's not your clients' fault. There simply are a lot of problems with using conventional goal setting in the personal training industry.

For example, a client might come in and say that he wants to lose 5 pounds. Or she says that wants to run a 5K charity run in "x" number of minutes. When you hear a goal like this, I suggest you ask "why?" The best coaches in the world are the ones who are great at asking questions. Five pounds isn't the goal; the reason *why* your client wants to lose 5 pounds is the goal. For reasons unknown to you (whether the media, friends of hers, her own expectations), she believes that in order to achieve what she really desires, she needs to lose 5 pounds. Identifying that why will help you connect with her to help her meet that underlying goal.

So, your first step is to ask "why" whenever your client presents a superficial goal to you like "weight loss" or "getting fit." Continue to ask "why" until you're satisfied that you've uncovered the client's true goal. Look for both

the real reason why a client has come in to the gym to meet with you and aim to identify any "aha" moments that stick out.

After you know your clients' true goals, you can connect the quantitative measurement (generally the goal that they originally came to you with) to the real benefit that they wanted to achieve. It's also important to note that clients rarely understand what the significance of quantitative goals are. Be prepared to educate them on things like:

- Why weight loss is not a good goal for most because muscle is more dense than fat. Set goals for inches lost or body composition changes (if you have proper measurement devices available) instead.
- Why steady-state cardio exercise, like running, is not an efficient exercise modality to choose for fat loss or obtaining what most consider desirable body composition.
- Why resistance training is important for women.

If you want to ignite the fire in your clients, the final step is to connect the benefit (for example, feeling great in a sexy red dress she just bought) to the quantitative measurement that will get them there (losing 3 inches off of her hips).

## NICK MITCHELL

INSIDE INFO

Nick Mitchell is the Founder of Ultimate Performance, the personal training company with gyms in London, Marbella (Spain), Hong Kong, Singapore and Seoul (South Korea). He has had his own columns in *Men's Health* and *Men's Fitness* magazines and is currently a columnist for both *Flex* and *Muscle & Fitness*. Nick is also the author of *The 12-Week Body Plan*, a book that at the time of writing has been the number one fitness book in Amazon uk for 18 months and counting.

Nick has given himself a few more years working in the fitness industry and then he wants to see if the frustrated novelist inside of him can get a bit of air.

**NICK'S 3 KEYS TO SUCCESS IN THE FITNESS INDUSTRY ARE:**

① **Learn how to put on a performance.** Most people think personal training is a waste of money and I understand why. Lacklustre energy on the gym floor is one of the easiest remedied but most common problems. You may be tired, jaded, bored and hate your client– none of that matters. Have some pride and remember that personal training is an expensive, rarely non tax-deductible expense. Lift your clients up. A good trainer cannot do ten sessions a day without coasting, so think about that.

② **Give a sh*t about your client.** If you don't take your clients' results personally, then you're coasting and there's no place for that in effective personal training. If your client doesn't progress in some way, via some variable, from workout to workout, then you need to look at your programming and/or your ability to keep your client sufficiently motivated to live a healthy lifestyle. You won't win them all, but you should try to.

③ **You're not a rock star.** In the bigger cities it seems many trainers fall into the trap of thinking they are rock stars. You (we) are not. Our clients are. Your role is to get the best result possible for them, not to showboat or to spend too long pumping up your biceps. Rather than talk about yourself, stop and listen to your clients. If you don't do that then you will never know what buttons to push in order to get the all-important result that should build your reputation.

**NICK'S WORDS TO LIVE BY:**

*"Talk is cheap and ambition is easy. Grinding it out and sacrifice is what sets you down the road less travelled. Adjust your goals according to what you are prepared to put in and never lose sight of why we all became trainers in the first place–to help people!"*

*You can learn more about Nick and Ultimate Performance at www.upfitness.com and www.nickmitchellblog.com*

## 5 SIMPLE WAYS TO CREATE CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS

Want to build loyal, lasting relationships with clients? Use these five strategies:

*#1: Educate them.*

Most of your clients will come to you knowing little about fitness. Indoctrinate them into the workout culture. Teach them the jargon. Tell them what words like set, rep, hypertrophy, and even RDL (short for Romanian deadlift) mean. Make sure that they know why they're doing the primary exercises and what energy system they're developing.

Smart clients are confident clients, and they'll jump at the opportunity to tell their friends and family that they performed 2 sets of 8 reps of the deadlift – which was aptly named because it was developed in ancient Rome to lift the dead off of the battlefield. The more your clients speak the language of training, the more likely they are to share that knowledge with their friends and family. Remember, to create word-of-mouth referrals, you've got to give your clients a reason and motivation to speak about you.

Educated clients also feel more part of the gym. Retention will increase, and your clients will be less likely to "relapse" back into inactivity.

*#2: The Cheers Effect*

Remember the television show *Cheers*? When regular customer Norm walked in all of the patrons would shout out, "Norm!" in unison. That's the kind of welcome you want your clients to have when they come to the gym. Make them part of the gym community. Introduce them to all of the staff and their fellow members; they should be the most popular people in the gym. When they feel comfortable, they're likely to chat other members up – and guess what they'll be talking about? Their great trainer.

Clients who feel welcome in the gym stay longer, plain and simple. The gym becomes a place not only to work out, but also a place to socialize and have fun. And the longer they're in the gym, the more likely they are to become part of your "client army" and spread the word about you to anyone who will listen. They may even go out of their way to bring in friends and family not just because they enjoy the gym, but also because they want to show off their popularity.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*Build your army by making your clients popular. They will chat up new members for you, stay longer, and bring more people into the club.*

*Strategy #3: Surprise them.*

You probably already know that you should contact your clients regularly by sending thoughtful emails such as restaurant recommendations or new studies they may be interested in. This is a great idea, but you'll make a bigger impression if you don't mention it in advance.

When I was training someone and had the idea to send a relevant article, for example, I would make a note on my clipboard and continue the workout. The next day, I sent the email, saying something like, "I thought you would enjoy this – it's what we were speaking about yesterday."

That makes a bigger impact than telling your client you'll send her something and then keeping your word. The surprise effect keeps you in your clients' minds even during off days and shows that you think of them outside of training hours. (You know you're developing a good relationship when clients send *you* funny jokes, restaurant advice, or relevant articles on *their* off days.)

I call this going the extra 10 percent. Most trainers don't think much about their clients except when they're with them. When you go the extra 10 percent,

your clients know that they're more than a paycheck to you – and that creates a loyal bond. [See "Going the Extra 10 Percent," a little later in this chapter.]

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*Build your army by using the power of surprise to show that you're willing to go the extra 10 percent.*

*Strategy #4: Celebrate them.*

When I was working fulltime as a trainer, each month, I gave one client an award I developed called the HAF Badge (Hard As F***). The award was given to a client who has gone above and beyond, training-wise. I gave the person a badge with his name on it that he can keep, and profiled him on my website, highlighting his accomplishments.

I highly recommend you develop a similar award for your clients. I've found that when I started the monthly badge, my clients worked harder and canceled fewer workouts. They all wanted to win, and as a result, they all reached their goals faster.

The award also brought my clients together and created a sense of community and healthy competition among them. I've found that clients showed off their badges (because who doesn't want to show off that they're hard as f***?), and emailed their friends about their write-ups, which meant more exposure for me as they reach their goals. Giving out well-deserved awards can be win/win for you as a trainer.

*Strategy #5: Empower them.*

When you do a great job, your clients will want to spread the word about their results – and about you. Make it easy for them by always having business cards on hand, and make sure your clients always have them, too.

You should also have something in writing – say, a brief bio and a description of the services that you offer. Include client testimonials and any specialties, and offer it to clients. You should also have your brochure or pamphlet available for download on your (and your company's) website. Always make sure that clients have multiple cards of yours. Look for excuses to give them articles and other pieces of information, and always clip a business card to them. Keep a stack on your desk, and make sure that you give every one of your clients your business cards at least once a month.

✓ **TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*Make it easy for your clients to pass on info about you to their contacts.*

## HANDLING PRIOR NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES

In the coming chapters you'll learn about getting your clients excited about working out and about exercise programming and progression. But let me address an important issue here – what to do when a client has had a bad experience with a trainer in the past.

It may have been that the trainer's style just didn't work for the client, that the trainer didn't give the client enough attention, that the client was injured, or that the trainer simply didn't listen to the client. Regardless, make sure that you know what happened before, and don't repeat it. Communicate that to your client. You might say something like, "What happened before was the past, and we can't change that. What we can change, though, is the future. So let's focus our energy on your journey moving forward." Or, you might say, "I understand that you don't feel like your previous trainer listened to you. Well, the more information that I know about you the better, so please do not hold anything back. My clients will tell you that one of the reasons they train with me is because I pay close attention to them, and I assure you that you'll find this to be true."

Regardless of your personal feelings about another trainer and his training techniques, avoid bad-mouthing the person. First, you're only hearing one side of the story – from the client who didn't get the results she wanted. But more importantly, criticizing another trainer makes *you* look bad. Your best strategy is to make sure you understand why the relationship didn't work for your client, and communicate your understanding of that to the person. That sets the stage for a positive relationship between the two of you.

Often a client may have felt ignored or taken for granted by a trainer. If you suspect this is the case, show the person you're different. When you surprise him with an email, or go the "extra 10 percent" with a handout, your client knows that you've been thinking about him.

## WAYS TO GO THE EXTRA 10 PERCENT

That's not the only way you can go the extra 10 percent. Here are a few techniques I found effective as a fulltime trainer:

**Offer a post-workout snack.** Not only is this a nice way to add 10 percent, but it will contribute to better results for your clients. My clients were almost always rushing. They either didn't have time to prepare food for after the workout or were running somewhere and didn't have time to eat. Do something as simple as buying a box of protein bars to keep at the gym or you can have some fun with it like having a PB&J fund where you keep a jar at the gym and people throw in change. With that change, you buy bread, peanut butter, and jam for a post-workout snack. (Credit to Michael Zweifel for the PB&J suggestion.)

**Offer a pre-workout snack.** My clients would often come in without having eaten much. It frustrated me that they got dizzy during their workouts, so I started to keep fruit at the club. Orange slices and bananas are great pre-workout snacks.

**Mail a handwritten card.** When your client reaches any kind of a goal or simply has been doing really well, write out a nice card congratulating him or her. Get all of the trainers to sign it and mail it. Your client will remember it. Mark Fisher of *Mark Fisher Fitness* gets all of his trainers to sign congratulatory cards for members. While just one of the incredible things that they do at the Enchanted Ninja Clubhouse of Glory and Dreams (I'm not kidding – this is what he calls his gym), it's part of the reason why he can't keep up with the demand of new clients.

**Follow a "Token System."** Give a certificate and stickers to reinforce positive habits that you don't witness, like eating habits. For example, if they're following the "green face" diet you can give them a green sticker; every 10 stickers, they fill out a certificate and get a series of better prizes. (I developed the green face diet idea as a way to help improve clients' eating habits. I would tell clients that other than the food they eat first thing in the morning, and pre- and post-workout snacks, everything they eat should be a "green," or a fruit or vegetable, or should have once had a "face" (lean protein). If clients were sticking to the plan, they were on the green face diet.) You could start with a water bottle, then a T-shirt, then a gift certificate for a dinner out at a healthy local restaurant, etc.

**Have more interesting referral incentives.** I always thought that offering a free session was a boring referral incentive. Why not make the referral process personal and special? Instead of saying that clients get $100 credit toward training sessions for each referral, tell them that they'll get a present worth up to $100 for each referral. This way you can buy her dinner for two to her favorite restaurant, or get him tickets to the opera that he loves, or a sports jersey, or anything else. It will usually cost you less than $100 and is more personal.

**Put business cards on the wall.** Create community for all of your

members by having a section on your announcement board where they're allowed to post their business cards.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*Make sure clients know that you're different, and that you won't repeat any problems they had with trainers in the past.*

## EVERY CLIENT COUNTS

I'd like to share an example of how strong client relationships pay off, not only for them (they reach their goals) but for you as a trainer, too. I started training Cindy years ago. Cindy was in her 60s and suffered from shoulder and knee pain and wanted to lose some weight. While she'd tried numerous exercise programs, she had no gym experience.

I initially focused on creating a comfortable gym environment for Cindy, and within a few months, she was already feeling stronger and fitter. She referred her friend Pam to me. Like Cindy, Pam too had no gym experience and was apprehensive about working with a trainer. They asked if they could train together, and I agreed. I educated them about what we were doing, introduced them to other gym members, and kept in touch with them when they weren't in the gym.

They both had their share of aches, pains, and doubts, but they stuck with the program and started to progress. Within weeks, they were noticing how much stronger they were, not only at the gym but at home as well. Pam was glowing when she walked into the gym one day, and announced that she had climbed up on a ladder – something she hadn't done in years. And Cindy, who'd had some mobility issues, stood up one day without holding onto anything, and didn't even realize it until she was already up! These accomplishments (what I call "aha!" moments, which I'll talk about next chapter) kept them motivated.

Pam and Cindy became strong, fit, and healthy – and members of my client army. When I was working as a trainer, both continually sent friends and colleagues to me. (At one point, about two-thirds of my clients were direct referrals from either Pam or Cindy. That's how much of an impact they had on my success.)

But here's my point. Personal training success goes outside the boundaries of technical knowledge. Lots of qualified trainers could have helped them get in better shape. But I was unique because I made the experience *comfortable* for

them. Because of that, they both achieved goals they thought were beyond them, and they now look forward to the gym.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*Your client relationships are your number 1 priority. Develop them and enjoy them–that's what will make you or break you in business.*

## KEEPING IN TOUCH

Your clients will dictate how you keep in touch (make sure you ask what their preferences are), but you should always be easy to reach. When I was a train I stayed in contact with my clients in the following ways:

- *Text messaging.* Text messaging was by far the most common way I kept in touch with my clients, and that remains true for most trainers today. Text messages are quick, easy, and garner fast responses.
- *Email.* I used email frequently when I had a longer message to send to a client, or to pass along relevant articles a client might be interested in.
- *Telephone.* Texting and email are great, but sometimes a phone call is more personal.

In addition to these three "direct" methods of contacting clients, I used social media to stay connected with those I might not see as often. As a working trainer, I had personal and public Facebook accounts. I limited the personal account (under a pseudonym) to my close friends and family. However, I had a cross-section of clients, colleagues, and trainers on my public account, which was a great place not only to interact with my current clients but also to generate referrals. When a client reached a goal, I congratulated him on Facebook and "tagged" him in the post so it showed up on his wall. When I ran group classes, I took photos and posted them on Facebook, tagging each participant and congratulating them on their efforts. Facebook is a great community-builder for clients and an easy way to keep up with their birthdays and other special events.

I also set up an account on *LinkedIn.* Most of my clients are professionals and almost all of them have LinkedIn accounts, so I created my own account, added my clients, and asked some of them for recommendations. LinkedIn takes

little or no maintenance; it's a place where potential clients can get a quick snapshot of you and read testimonials. If you don't have a website yet, LinkedIn should be your calling card. And while I didn't use Twitter often as a trainer, it can be an efficient way for to you connect with clients and others.

## MAXIMIZING SOCIAL MEDIA

I've shared how I used social media but I could write a book about how to use it effectively as a trainer. (In fact, I have written a book on it called *Race to the Top: How to Take Over the Social Media Feed*, which you can find on Amazon.)

Social media has the ability to fill your schedule for free, in minutes a day, and without being "spammy." I know that that's a bold statement, but you're likely already connected to every lead that you'll ever need.

You need to keep it simple and focus on two things:

1. Understand why people use social media and why it's important.
2. Determine how to maximize results from the Facebook and Twitter.

My assumption is that your primary focus is on getting more clients. But if you want to make a bigger impact with social media, I've put together a couple products and courses, which you can find at **www.theptdc.com/product**.

This book focuses on helping you get clients and increasing local awareness of what you do. I suggest you focus on two platforms – Facebook and Twitter. I won't get into specifics on how to use Facebook and Twitter because social media changes too often. To keep this book current for years, I'll focus more on systems that work based on aspects that won't change.

### *Facebook*

If you only use one type of social media, Facebook should be it. With over 800 million active users, Facebook is without a doubt the most widespread. Almost everybody that you meet will have a Facebook account that they check. It's where we go when we're bored, have to vent, or want to show off.

I suggest you look at Facebook as the place that you use to stay at the top of your audience's mind. Everybody in your "Friend" group is either a potential client or knows a potential client. They might not be ready to buy training from you right away, but when they are, you want to be seen as the expert so that you're the first person they call when they are ready. This will all be done from your personal page. Unless you have much bigger aspirations than building a

clientele, it's all that's needed.

In a study conducted in the 1970s called the "Strength of Weak Ties," the researchers concluded that success was directly and exponentially correlated to the amount of people that you have a loose connection to. The reason is that in order to succeed, you need to get lucky – and your chances of getting lucky increases with the number of people you know (even if you don't know them well). So, say person A writes a "tip of the day" status update with advice on reducing chronic back pain to 100 friends and person B writes that same status update to 2,000 friends. Who do you think has a better chance of somebody knowing somebody who has back pain who is looking for a trainer? Obviously person B.

So step 1 is to gather as many friends on Facebook as possible. There are 3 approaches to gathering more loose connections:

1. Friend everybody that you meet.
2. Search Facebook for people based on your years of high school and college and add people who you knew back then.
3. Search through the friends of your existing friends and add anybody who you've met.

Step 2 is to be consistent. Every day post a "fitness tip of the day". These can be short and might seem like basic information to you. Here's an example:

> *Fitness Tip of the Day*
>
> *Squirt some freshly squeezed lemon into a cold glass of water first thing in the morning. It's a great way to start the day off right by stimulating bile and removing toxins from your body. It also helps with fat loss by breaking down adipose tissue.*
>
> *If you, or anybody that you know, has any questions about health and fitness you can message me anytime.*

At the end of every tip of the day, include a "call to action" for people to contact you. Once they do, respond by offering a 15-minute phone call to discuss. Aim to help, not sell them, because if you do, they'll ask you to train

and at that point no objection, not even price, matters.

In addition to the tip of the day, share articles written by somebody else a few times a week. When you do, be sure to add in your intelligent thoughts about the article in the description when you share the article.

Understand that your goal of these Facebook shares 7 – 10 times/week is not to educate or influence friends of yours. It's to continually remind them that you are the fitness expert in their friend circle. Everybody knows somebody who needs or wants training. Be consistent with this and reap the benefits.

Step 3 is optional, but also effective. Facebook is a great place to publicly celebrate client's achievements. Did your client just have a great workout? Or smash her deadlifts? Or put on 10 pounds of muscle? Celebrate and tag them. With their permission, sharing pictures of them training is powerful as well. It could be as simple as the following:

> *Just wanted to congratulate my client Dan Smith for crushing his deadlifts today. Two plates went up smooth like butter, my friend – like butter.*

"Tag" your client so that the comment shows up on his wall. His friends will see, comment, and like it. You'll see some "atta boys" and "wish I could do that" and you'll probably have a few people asking your client for your contact info.

You can also use Facebook to brand yourself beyond getting local clients. Facebook is the best place to find people interested in what you do best, collect them in one place, build a value-based relationship with them, and sell them on a multitude of services from online coaching, to Ebooks, to supplements, and everything in between.

*Twitter*

It's likely that some of your clients will have a Twitter account in addition to Facebook. The biggest benefit of Twitter is that it often has less friction or "noise" than Facebook. If you tag somebody in Twitter, she'll see it and is likely to respond. Facebook can be overcrowded and tags/status updates are often missed.

If your clients do have Twitter, feel free to follow them and hopefully they'll follow you back. Tweet at them after a workout congratulating them. If you do, there's a chance that they will retweet it to their audience effectively

promoting for you.

The other good use of Twitter for local trainers looking to brand themselves in their neighborhoods is to get local media attention. Reporters are hard to get in touch with by phone or email, but they almost all have Twitter accounts that are relatively quiet.

Identify local newspapers and magazines that you want to be featured in, either as a column writer or a fitness expert who can offer quotes. Look through back issues for articles written about health and fitness and make a list of the writers. In addition, on the inside cover there's often a list of all of the editors and contributors. Once you have the names, there are 3 ways to find the Twitter account:

1. It's sometimes written right in the author bio or somewhere in the attribution of the article itself.
2. If the publication has a website, the reporters' names and Twitter accounts are often listed there.
3. Search "in:YOURCITYNAME REPORTER NAME" in Twitter and it'll bring up all Twitter accounts for that name in your city. There won't be many. Sift through and find the one for your target reporter.

Make sure your Twitter bio mentions your fitness expertise and your location. Once you follow your targets, simply respond intelligently to tweets or articles that they link to on an ongoing basis. After a couple back and forth Tweets with them, feel free to let them know that you're available for content or quotes if they ever need anybody.

**RESPECTING CLIENT/TRAINER BOUNDARIES**

In a field like personal training, where you work in close physical proximity, it's important that you understand the importance of setting appropriate boundaries. First, I advise you to use your intuition. If you feel uncomfortable with a client, address the situation right away.

I think it's important to note, though, that there is a certain intimacy inherent in working as a trainer. There are some clients that are naturally more flirtatious than others, and I don't think there's anything wrong with having clients you really enjoy working with. Some of them you may feel more drawn to than others. That's completely normal.

However, I think it's important to always avoid sexual innuendo or other

comments that could be misconstrued by a client. If a *client* uses innuendo during a workout or otherwise makes you uncomfortable, pointedly ignore it the first time. (If your relationship is such that you know nothing was meant by it, and it doesn't bother you, no harm, no foul. Some clients just like to be friendly and flirty. That's their personality. If you are comfortable with it, fine.)

But when you ignore an inappropriate comment or innuendo, often the client will feel awkward and refrain in the future. Most of us are pretty good at reading people, and responding appropriately. If a client persists in making lewd or inappropriate comments, however, ask the person to stop. If the behaviour continues, speak to your manager (if you have one) and ask to have the client reassigned. If you work for yourself, you may simply have to "fire" your client. No client is worth risking your reputation.

While a lot of trainers use text messaging as the method of choice to communicate with clients, it should be used with care. Text messages should be kept professional and to the point; I only used them to quickly confirm a session or schedule a session. If a client texts you at odd hours (such as late at night), I suggest you respond during regular business hours or send an email in reply. It's a subtle way of training your client to respect your privacy.

Then there's Facebook. Clients will want to be your friends on Facebook, so you can either make yourself unsearchable (controlling who sees your profile), or you can set up two accounts, a public one with your real name and a private profile with an assumed name. Your public profile should be kept *very* professional. Monitor what people write on your wall and remove anything controversial, keep your status updates appropriate, and remember that employers often look at Facebook accounts as part of the hiring process.

There's nothing wrong with grabbing a quick bite to eat with a client after a workout or meeting over a cup of coffee for a change of scenery. This can strengthen your relationship with a client, but I suggest you avoid encounters that could appear inappropriate, like having dinner alone with a member of the opposite sex. If you're invited, just say "no" or ask permission to bring your significant other. That should send the right message to your client.

So, what if you have feelings for a client that you want to act on? Stop training the person immediately. Pursuing a romantic relationship with a client is a sticky subject and could potentially have legal ramifications, so always err on the side of caution.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*Understand the professional relationship that exists between you and your client, and make sure that you*

*don’t send the wrong message to your client (or anyone else) by your behaviour.*

## POINTS TO REMEMBER

- It takes less time to create lasting relationships with current clients than to constantly look for new clients.
- Make your clients feel comfortable and popular at the gym, and they will work out more frequently and reach their goals.
- Keep in touch with your clients, even when they’re not at the gym. This will help cement relationships.

# 6 LIGHT THE FIRE

## *The Excitation System*

*"Let's not forget that the little emotions are the great captains of our lives and we obey them without realizing it."*

— Vincent Van Gogh

As you learned from the stories I shared last chapter, your job goes beyond simply developing training regimes or teaching clients moves. Your real mission is to help your clients identify their deepest motivators (and remember, clients will usually fail to share these deep-down goals right away) and help them reach them. Successful personal trainers not only have passion for what they do, they're able to incite passion in the clients as well. I believe your real job is to create an emotional connection with exercise for your clients so that they will look forward to working out and stay with it for life. You do that by creating what I call "aha!" moments with clients.

## MY FIRST AHA! MOMENT

I started getting serious about lifting weights in high school but struggled early on. I didn't have any mentors and I really didn't know what I was doing. I was close to quitting when I started dating my high school sweetheart. I was young, inexperienced and self-conscious, but I remember when my girlfriend was impressed with my body. She was surprised I had some muscle on me! Apparently that year of working out had made a difference, and I remember how confident and proud I felt.

That was my first "aha!" moment and it was a powerful one. From that moment I was hooked, and I've never thought about leaving the gym since.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*When you train clients, remember your "aha!" moment(s)–and strive to create those for them as soon as possible.*

## THE EXCITATION SYSTEM

Once I understood the importance of creating "aha!" moments for clients, I developed the Excitation System. This system helps create enthusiasm and develop motivation in the clients you work with. In order to sell a client on a workout, you must get her excited. Light that fire so that nothing will get in the way of her progress. The *Excitation System* has 5 steps:

1. Paraphrase her goals. Remind the client of her goals and encourage her to visualize herself meeting them.
2. Give a brief overview of the workout. Explain that what you're doing is the best option for the client.
3. Go over the primary exercises. Describe the movement to your client; you may consider showing a video that demonstrates the move. If it's the first time that you're introducing the workout, explain the importance of the primary exercises, and that his progression will be based on these exercises.
4. Address any potential limitations. When a client has an injury or imbalance or has a planned break in training coming up, talk about how you'll address each issue.
5. Remind your client about proper warm-up and "prehab," or injury prevention. This will help keep your client healthy and injury-free.

The 10 to 15 minutes it takes you to use the Excitation System will save you hours later on. The system reinforces clients' goals, gives them a chance to ask questions, helps them understand progression and how you'll monitor it, addresses any barriers, and educates the client on the importance of warm-up and prehab exercises.

You won't be able to get a single client continual results unless you have her full commitment. Your job is to be a facilitator; you cannot work out for your client. I promise that the client won't give 100 percent if she doesn't understand or buy into the program you're giving her. If you have a client that you think isn't giving it her all, I suggest that you sit down and run her through the excitation questions. You'll be surprised at what a short candid conversation can do for her motivation. Once you finish the talk and get on the floor, your client will be raring to go.

**USING THE EXCITATION SYSTEM**

Now that you know what the Excitation system is, let's take a look at how to use it with a client. My client, Jenny, was 36 years old and a long-time runner who wanted to run faster and add some muscle; she originally had some muscle imbalances and inflexibility we'd addressed during the anatomical adaptation phase. Now I wanted her to start performing heavier lifting. After welcoming her to my office, and reviewing her progress so far, we had the following conversation:

*Jon:* Jenny, I'm really happy with the gains that you've made these past 6 weeks. Already you're moving a lot better. In fact, you're now ready to progress onto more challenging workouts. Do you remember our initial assessment? I told you that I wanted you to train for power after the initial anatomical adaptation phase. This is because power training will help you push off faster with you running in addition to helping you build nice dense muscle.

*Jenny:* I remember. So what's next?

*Jon:* I've chosen two exercises for you specific to your body type and goals. They are the clean and press and Romanian deadlift.

*Jenny:* Deadlift?

*Jon:* Don't be put off by the name. The deadlift is an incredibly effective exercise for strengthening the posterior chain, the connection between the hamstrings, butt, and lower back. I've chosen the Romanian deadlift for you because of your body type. It will allow you to take advantage of your long levers. It will make you a stronger runner in addition to tightening up the back of your legs and butt.

*Jenny:* Sounds interesting, but a little scary. I don't want my legs to bulk up lifting heavy weights.

*Jon:* I understand you don't want to get big, bulky muscles. The reality, though, is that most women don't have the levels of testosterone that men do that would create those big muscles. Judging from your build, I don't think it would be possible for you to bulk up even if you wanted to. [I make a note to send her an article about the same subject the next day.]

*Jenny:* Okay, I feel better. So, what's the clean and press?

*Jon:* The clean and press is a dynamic power exercise. It trains your entire body to be more explosive and has a great metabolic benefit. There isn't a muscle on your body that doesn't get worked. The clean and press will teach your body to transfer force well and burn a ton of calories. These two exercises, the dead lift and clean and press, are what I'm going to base your progression on. If you get good at them, I guarantee that you will become a better runner and put on lots of lean muscle.

*Jenny:* That sounds great. I'm excited to try them. What about the rest of the workout though? There is no way we're only doing those two exercises.

*Jon:* True. I want to put special emphasis on those two exercises since they're most important to you right now. The rest of your workout will actually work to support and make you better at the deadlift and clean and press. Let's get out there and I'll take you through the first day of your new workouts so you can see what I mean.

*Jenny:* Sounds good.

Do you see how this conversation used the Excitation System? Doing so, I accomplished the following things:

- I congratulated her on the work that she'd already done.
- I reaffirmed her goals of getting stronger at running and building lean muscle. This helped refocus Jenny after we'd spent the past few weeks addressing her imbalances.
- I "closed the door" on the myth of weight lifting creating bulky muscles in women.
- I painted a clear picture of what the next phase of her training would look like, and why I chose it.
- I got her excited about working hard on the primary exercises.

I kept the conversation brief because she was relatively new to training. If I described the ins and outs of a power program she might have been

overwhelmed. If she had more experience, I might have done that.

Note that I also didn't describe any secondary or tertiary exercises. Jenny was pain-free and moving well after the 6-week anatomical adaptation phase of training, so there weren't any other aspects I needed to put particular emphasis on. Otherwise, I would have addressed it and described the secondary or tertiary exercise I included to fix it.

I knew that Jenny would love the power training and would learn the secondary and tertiary exercises in due time. All I wanted from this brief conversation was for her to refocus and buy in to the program. If I hadn't taken the 5 minutes with her early on, she may have always been tentative about lifting heavy weights. I've found it's easier to convince a client to do something in the office ahead of time than on the gym floor.

Sometimes your excitation conversation will be long and involved and sometimes it will be brief. Regardless, take some time to get your client's buy-in before starting the workout.

✓ **TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*The 5 or 10 minutes you take to properly educate your clients on their upcoming workouts will save you (and them!) time and frustration later on.*

## WEIGHTS WON'T MAKE YOU BULKY!

You don't have to train very long before you run into the all-too-common misconception that lifting weights will make women "bulk up." You're likely to run into this training myth quite frequently so I suggest you have a go-to answer and brief explanation to overcome it. When I polled personal trainers several years ago, I was impressed at the variety of ways they addressed this issue. Some of the answers included:

*"I would explain that her testosterone levels are too low to produce those types of results and lifting heavy weights will be the quickest and most efficient way of shedding fat. I might throw the word "toned" in there too." – Dave Baker*

*"Strength training can increase the amount of muscle in your body, which in turn will decrease your body fat percentage, and improve your overall body composition." – Cynthia Redford*

*"Lifting weights means you can eat more without getting fat." – Reece Mander*

*"What is it that every female wants to accomplish? Lifting heavy weights isn't going to make you 'bulky.' It will make you feel strong. When you feel strong you feel confident. Best of all you'll look better naked and gain that 'toned' look every woman always tries to achieve, without stepping on the treadmill." – Trent Dubois*

*"Contrary to popular thought, lifting heavy weights will not make you bulky like a guy because women don't have nearly the amount of hormones that men do to 'bulk up.' Strength training will help you gain muscle; muscle takes up less space than fat and this will give you a lean physique. Your body fat percentage will also decrease." – Lavanya Krishnan*

Bottom line? Lifting weights won't make you bulky. Figure out your "go-to" explanation about why and be ready to educate potential clients about the reasons why.

## KEEPING THE BIG PICTURE IN MIND

If you want to use the Excitation System successfully, you should continually refer back to the big picture, or the client's overall goals. When you describe an exercise, explain why that will help your client reach her goals, which helps make each exercise experience emotional for her.

Often a new client cannot perform a difficult exercise right away, but that doesn't mean you can't get her excited about it. Let's say I had a client who couldn't yet do a deadlift. I would say something like, "since your goal is to tone your lower body, I want you deadlifting. The deadlift is one of the most effective exercises for your hamstrings, butt, and lower back. You're at a large mechanical advantage in the movement meaning that you'll be able to move a lot of weight, and that will lead to great gains. But you're not quite ready for the deadlift yet. We're going to work on glutes activation work, dynamic flexibility, and core stability first. In addition, I'm going to be giving you variations of other exercises with a focus on grip strength so that later on you'll smash the exercise."

This short speech educated the client on progression, and exposed her to my long-term vision and creates excitement to get there. This brief speech was just one part of the equation. I never stopped working on their excitement. This is also a way to continually remind the client that training is a long-term commitment – without coming right out and saying so. When a client starts to understand why he is training, he's more likely to commit to training for the long-term.

Every exercise that I included in my programs had a function, and I made sure that my clients knew that. So, if I were having my above client performing a farmer's walk, I would have described the exercise and explained how the increased grip strength and core stability would help when she's performing a deadlift later on.

When the day finally came when my client was ready to perform a

deadlift, I made a big deal about it. After all, she had worked hard to get to that point. I told her the day before to help her mentally prepare for it, and get her excited. And after she completed the first set, I reiterated all of the work that we had done leading up to it. I reminded her about the specific parts of her journey that led up to now. This helped make the experience emotional for her, and hopefully created an "aha!" moment.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*Always let your clients know how proud you are when they accomplish major steps toward their goals.*

## YOUR CLIENTS' GOALS ARE KEY

One of the reasons the Excitation System is so effective is because it continually reminds your clients that their workouts are helping them achieve their goals. To create workout plans to do that, you must know what your clients' goals are. (Remember in chapter 5 we talked about "drilling down" to determine your client's deepest motivators, not only the goals they may initially tell you they have. You need to know what is really driving your client to hire you.) That's why the first thing I did when I sat down with new clients was asked about their goals. Then I closed my mouth and listened.

What I found is that 99 percent of the time, my clients' stated goals were vague. Women usually want to lose fat or get toned. Men want to gain muscle or "get that v-shaped look." New clients usually have no idea as to the timeline of a proper exercise program so they need to be educated on the process. Forget the idea that "the customer is always right." When it comes to understanding what goals will motivate them – and the training plans to help them reach them – the client is often wrong, or at least misinformed.

While plenty of gyms, articles, blogs, and books extol the virtue of "SMART" (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-oriented) goals, I've found that for a large percentage of clients, setting specific short- and long-term goals doesn't work. As you saw in chapter 5, you should have already determined what your client's real motivations for working out are. In addition, taking the time to work on goals uses up valuable face-to-face time with a client. Lastly, goal-setting often sets the trainer up for disaster if clients don't achieve their goals. You may be blamed for something that isn't within your control.

That's why I suggest you start with a full assessment to know what you're dealing with. Then educate your client about what your plan is for him or her,

using the Excitation System.

Depending on the client, I would have either devised a 3-month plan that includes specific goals, or a 3-month plan that instead focuses on feeling or function.

When I was training clients fulltime, I set specific goals with clients for several reasons. First, the client had made the conscious decision to start a program (which is often daunting) and therefore had the intrinsic motivation necessary to keep with it through thick and thin. Also, a client will make her greatest improvements early on. If your client's goal is fat loss, with a new exercise program and some small dietary changes, she should easily drop 5 to 10 pounds within the first month. If a client's goal is strength gain, the neurological component will be responsible for huge gains in the first 6 to 10 weeks on a resistance-training program.

It's imperative that you educate clients on the physiology of these initial changes. If you don't, they may hold you accountable when they don't continually see the incredible improvements they made early on. I made sure to tell clients that while the initial improvements were large in an absolute sense, smaller improvements later become more significant in a relative sense. After 3 months, I usually avoided spending time setting specific goals and focused instead on the workouts themselves.

With other clients, however, I avoided specific goals entirely and focused instead on feeling or function. I used this kind of a system when a client scored poorly on an assessment or came to me post-rehabilitation. I explained that at this point in her training, the most important thing was to deal with her injury or imbalance. Later, the conditioning would take place. If you do choose to give goals based on function, I advise you to use a well-respected assessment tool that is used by professionals in different specialties.

Your time with a client is valuable, and I advise you to spend it teaching the client proper form and technique rather than inventing a number or goal to shoot for. That having been said, if your client is an athlete preparing for competition or has strong self-efficacy, goal-setting may be a valuable tool.

But usually this isn't the case and that's why the client has decided to hire you. Clients who have progressed beyond the initial 3 months should have enough self-efficacy to get them by without specific goal-setting. They've successfully started a program and completed the daunting task of sticking with it, and should have also achieved some measurable results.

That's why I think goal-setting isn't as important as some trainers think it is. I'm not saying that the client doesn't need to see continual progression, but proper monitoring of any good program should enable you to show that.

✓ **TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*After the initial 3-month period, motivation becomes less of an issue for clients and goal-setting with the primary goal of encouragement goes down in importance.*

## KATE HORNEY INSIDE INFO

Kate Horney created BeyondFit Physiques because she wanted to be able to get the message of fun, sustainable fat loss out there to a larger audience. Kate is a professional fat loss expert with years of experience in helping women shed body fat, boost fitness, and learn what it takes to live the fat loss lifestyle. She's mom to a little boy (with another on the way) and Beyond-Fit Physiques is her other baby.

Kate holds a bachelor's degree in Health and Exercise Science and is a certified Hormonal Nutrition Consultant. She specialize in female specific fat loss, using proven techniques to offer body change and coaching services to women both locally and online, with an audience of women worldwide.

Kate is the creator of BeyondFit's local Bikini Boot Camps, which started as 6 women in a park and has now grown (led by a team of trainers) to hundreds of women who want more out of their fitness programs. Through BeyondFit Physiques, Kate and the other BeyondFit trainers are able to offer training, nutrition, and educational services that are strategically designed to give women the tools they need to reach their goals, create lasting body change, and live the fat loss lifestyle.

**KATE'S 3 KEYS TO SUCCESS IN THE FITNESS INDUSTRY ARE:**

① **Always over deliver!** I always make it my goal to provide more value than expected. I want my clients, prospects, and my social media network to be blown away with what I'm providing them. Whether a paid service (like boot camp or online coaching) or free tips and tricks through my blog or social media, my goal is to provide value. I am always looking for unexpected ways to give something that provides a tip, idea, inspiration, motivation, entertainment or value to my clients.

② **Respect your client's time!** Time is money and your clients (and prospective clients) want more of both. Keeping this principal in mind enables me to make sure workouts start and end on time, that I create better content for my clients/followers, and that everything I do values my clients time. Before I post anything on social media, I ask myself if my followers will find some value (going back to #1) in my post. If time is money, and I've just wasted 15 seconds of their time by posting a sweaty post-workout selfie, why would I expect them to come back to me? The number one reason why people follow and eventually work with personal trainers is because they find their services valuable.

③ **Make (and follow) a to-do-list.**Making a daily to-do list has been the key to staying on track to reaching my goals. I have so much going on. And I'm not talking about just any old to-do list. I am strategic about my to-do-list… making it at the same time and in the same place each day so that it becomes a habit. It is something I have trained myself to follow.

**KATE'S WORDS TO LIVE BY:**

*"Don't be afraid to play a different game on the same field as your competition."*

*You can find out more about Kate at*
*www.beyondfitphysiques.com*

## SO WHAT'S THE ANSWER?

I hope that I've made a valid argument against goal-setting beyond the 3-month mark. But you may be asking, what's the solution? How do you keep you clients engaged and committed, not just to exercise, but also to you?

My answer is to combine the power of workout monitoring and emotion. It's important to educate clients on the physiology of adaptation. Clients will get huge gains early with seemingly little work, but as they become more advanced, their gains become more significant but fewer in number.

Every step should be documented. Show clients their workout charts and note improvements. Take 5 minutes every 4 weeks to show them their results. First, they'll be blown away by all the work that they've done. It's a great feeling looking back at all of the numbers and reminiscing about the previous workouts.

"Aha!" moments also work well. Depending on the client, you can joke about how ridiculously easy earlier workouts feel now. Give them a point of reference for how far they've come.

As time goes by, your clients will have specific events that they want to work out for like a wedding, class reunion, or vacation. It's great to have an end goal for clients, and a good way to keep them engaged is to set a plan to *specifically* train towards this event. You can have some fun with it by using buzzwords or phrases such as working out to "get ripped for the beach." In addition to helping them maintain focus, they'll have another thing to talk to their friends about – the awesome beach body workout you're putting them through.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*Keep clients motivated by continually monitoring their progress, and using specific events as training motivators.*

## POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Your real job as a trainer is to get your clients excited about training.
- Your clients' goals should always determine the workouts you choose – and they should understand that.

- Specific goal-setting can be an effective tool in the short term, but is less important than motivating clients with “aha!” moments.

# 7 KEEP IT SIMPLE

## *The Focus System and Why it Works*

*"Try again. Fail again. Fail better."*

— SAMUEL BECKETT

You probably became a personal trainer because you love fitness, but that doesn't mean you know how to train someone. Up until you started training others (if you already have), you've only trained one person – yourself. Now you're responsible for training a huge variety of clients. In fact, my clients ranged from 25 – 67 years old. Some were athletic; others were obese. Some clients were injury-free while others had pain with any movement.

So how do you devise workouts for beginners, regardless of background? The answer? Keep it simple. In this chapter you'll learn how to follow the Focus System to create a training program for clients new to exercise. The type of workout program you use may vary, but use the Focus System (and the

Excitation System, which is described in chapter 6) and you'll have the foundation to train clients safely and effectively. It's beyond the scope of this book to teach you proper programming and exercise selection. What I will do is show you my system for quickly and effectively designing workouts from start to finish.

## UNDERSTANDING THE PHYSIOLOGY OF SKILL ACQUISITION

Before we talk about proper exercise instruction, let's review the basics of skill acquisition. Nobody will pick up any movement or skill right away, especially not one as difficult as the squat or deadlift. You must also remember that a lot of your clients will have muscle imbalances due to the repetitious nature of many of the things we do throughout the day. Muscles responsible for repetitive movements may be strong while opposing muscles are weak and/or tight. Therefore you need to "reprogram" your clients and, in the words of Dr. Stu McGill, "groove movement patterns," or stretch the overused muscles and strengthen the underused muscles while teaching the proper movements.

When grooving a client's movement patterns, keep the reps low and make sure that he maintains proper form. The moment his form breaks, he should stop the exercise. If your client is having trouble picking up one particular part of the exercise, then don't allow him to continue. Stop him, have him visualize the proper form, and then re-adjust. I can't emphasize enough the importance of demonstrating perfect form for your client. There are millions of bad YouTube videos that show people doing moves with poor, improper, and even dangerous form. You must be a perfect model for your clients.

For example, consider a client who is having a hard time retracting his scapula during the seated row, which is common for anybody with postural issues. I would demonstrate the exercise with good form, pointing out major cues. If I saw my client was having trouble, I would physically guide his shoulders into the proper position.

I then asked the client to stop and think about how it felt when his shoulders were moving properly as I guided him through the movement. After he had visualized the motion and knew what it felt like to do the movement properly, I would have him try again. The second his form broke, I would tell him to stop, visualize, readjust, and try again. It is through this concentrated repetition that skills are learnt quickly and effectively.

Let me get technical for a moment. We improve specific skills largely by selectively myelinating the nerve fibers, which occurs when supporter cells called oligodendrocytes and astrocytes wrap more myelin on the nerve fiber,

which improves nerve transmission. More myelination means that the nerve becomes better insulated, and increased insulation in the nerve means that electrical impulses are faster and more effective. From a fitness standpoint, that added insulation makes your movements smoother and more automatic. Selectively myelinating nerve fibers is how you produce coordinated movements.

The best way to add myelination and therefore improve the effectiveness of the nerve transmission is to *fail with purpose.* In other words, keep trying and visualizing the move properly and it will become automatic.

"Failing better" is the goal, but clients usually don't understand that. So I suggest you educate your clients about the physiology of skill acquisition and remind them that this process takes time. I would often spend a lot of time with new clients making sure that they understood why I wasn't going to let them work as hard as they wanted to at the beginning. It's sometimes difficult because when new clients are sold on personal training, they're excited and raring to go. But take the time to teach proper form. Once they learn how to do a move well, proper form will be cemented into their brains.

The reason this is so important involves a concept called "associative learning." Our brains are faced with the impossible job of making sense of every aspect of the world we encounter. There's an infinite amount of things to comprehend almost every second, and in order to cope the brain "cheats." Consider your mind as a tree to which you continually add branches.

So, for example, if I were to show you an odd-shaped box with 4 wheels and a motor on the road, you'd identify it as a car even if you've never seen anything like it before. To be more efficient at making sense of something new, your brain will unconsciously attempt to relate what it already believes to be true when it's exposed to a new stimulus.

This associative learning concept also applies to teaching new movements. In its simplest form, all movements in the gym can be broken down into 4 categories:

1. Squat
2. Deadlift
3. Upper body push
4. Upper body pull

I recognize how basic this is, but bear with me. If a client knows how to perform the squat movement, they will be able to pick up new variations much

quicker. The same goes for the other 3 movements.

But if you start a client on a single arm press while lying on a stability ball, you will need to teach every upper body press in full every time. Your job will become much easier when you decide to take a lot of time up front to teach the 4 above movements in full. Once you do, all that generally needs to be done to instruct a new exercise is a simple demonstration and cue.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*Failing with purpose leads to effective skill development. Encourage proper form early on and make sure that your clients understand its importance.*

## INTRODUCTION TO THE FOCUS SYSTEM

I developed the Focus System after years of research on the physiology of skill acquisition and tested it for years. I've found that it helps clients pick up movements quickly, and understand why they're performing different exercises. Once you know your client's goals [see chapter 4], you can devise a program for him.

The Focus System is based on the fact that most of your clients will be beginners, which I define as someone with less than a year of serious, consistent training. (As the client becomes more advanced, there are hundreds of different training protocols to choose from depending on his goals, and more advanced programming might be needed.) But you'll find that for most clients, especially those new to exercise, the Focus System is the perfect training tool.

The Focus System has 6 steps:

1. Decide what rep range is most appropriate for the client's goals.
2. Pick 2 to 4 exercises that are the **most important** for that client to reach his primary goal, keeping his initial assessment in mind. Rep range will dictate the type of exercise.
3. Pick accessory (secondary) movements that will help the client develop skill and strength on the primary exercises.
4. Pick rehab (tertiary) exercises depending on the client's existing injuries, limitations, or imbalances. If no injury or imbalance exists, pick "prehab" exercises to strengthen commonly injured areas with their specific type of training or body type.
5. Decide on an appropriate cardio protocol.

6. Put together an effective dynamic warm-up, including myofascial release, keeping in mind the client's skill level and comfort in the gym.

Now let's take a closer look at each of these steps:

*Rep Range (The Great Decider)*

Right away after establishing your client's goals, you should know what rep range he should be working in. If your client is training for power, his rep range will be 1 to 5; if he's training for muscular endurance, 12 to 15; and so on.

The rep range dictates every aspect of the workout:

- The number of sets is determined by rep range. For example, if the client is training for power in the 1 – 5 range, he will be completing more sets of the primary exercises. On the other hand, an endurance protocol of 12 – 15 reps will require fewer sets for a training effect. Efficiency of movement is also less important when the goal is muscular endurance. There is less of a focus on perfect form and neurological fatigue isn't as much of an issue as it is with a power workout.
- Rep range will also dictate the type of exercise that you will include. For a workout with 1 – 5 reps, you'll opt for power exercises such as the front squat over something like the biceps curl. I do appreciate the need to perform power training on isolated muscle groups for certain sports, but that's not the norm for the average client's power workout.
- Tempo, to a degree, is also determined by rep range. A power exercise may include a 10X (1 second eccentric, 0 second pause, concentric performed as quickly as possible) tempo. To improve muscular endurance, a number of different tempos can be useful. Pausing under tension will increase the stress on the muscle and is a good way to push the client that extra 10 percent. The most common tempo that's used for muscle gain is the "3011," or 3 seconds during the eccentric phase of the lift, 0 seconds pause, 1 second for the concentric phase, and 1 second pause.
- Rest intervals are also determined by rep range. A power reps range of 1 – 5 will require 2 – 3 minutes to replenish the creatine phosphate system. Your goal is to train the client at efficiency; so training when a client's creatine system is depleted is counterproductive. Muscular endurance, on the other hand, requires much shorter rest intervals. The goal is to improve the client's recovery so you need to stress both the anaerobic and aerobic

systems.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*After establishing your client's goals, determine what rep range is appropriate. Then you can use any textbook or training program to determine which exercises to include in his program.*

*Primary Exercises*

To choose the primary exercises, use a combination of intuition and knowledge. An analysis of the client's body type, in combination with their goals and assessment will dictate the *most important* exercises. These exercises are exclusively large multi-joint exercises and are often some variation of the squat, deadlift, lunge, chin-up, row, chest press, or power movement (clean and press etc.).

The primary exercises are the focus of the workout, and they're what the client will get the most gains from. Therefore you base progression of the client's workouts on the primary exercises. If he's getting stronger at the front squat, you don't need to know how his leg extension is doing. (Of course you should still track the weights and reps of all the exercises in the workout.)

There are two reasons I put so much emphasis on the primary exercises. First, beginner clients cannot focus on more than 2 – 4 exercises at once. Giving them too many exercises means that clients won't learn proper form and won't be able to progress efficiently. Second, it's much easier to sell a client on 2 exercises rather than 20. You don't want to overwhelm your client, especially if he's new to working out.

For a power workout, using the 2 above rep range examples, 2 primary exercises might be the sumo deadlift and bench press. For a muscular endurance workout, 2 primary exercises might be the goblet squat and seated row.

*Secondary Exercises*

The secondary movements are where you have the greatest flexibility and the most fun. Often these exercises are programmed as supersets or circuits. At this point in the workout, the client will be neurologically and physically tired since the primary exercises take constant focus.

The purpose of the secondary exercises is to support the primary ones, and take the client one step closer to his goal. You have the biggest variance with the exercise selection here. This is where I suggest including things like single joint

movements, abdominal work (rotation, flexion, anti-rotation), and single-leg exercises.

In a power workout where the primary exercises are the sumo deadlift and bench press, I might have chosen barbell glutes bridges and dumbbell skull crushers as secondary exercises. For a muscular endurance workout where the primary exercises are the goblet squat and alternating row, the secondary exercises might be a single-leg squat and dumbbell cross-body hammer curl.

*Tertiary Exercises*

You can use tertiary exercises in two different places during the workout. They can be used either as active rest between sets or after the secondary exercises if there is time left in the workout. If time allows, you can add in some prehab exercises here.

When I originally designed the Focus System, I considered tertiary exercises to be purely rehabilitative in nature, but I've now expanded the term to include "prehab" exercises. Prehab exercises are to prevent injuries, not treat them. They vary depending on the different stresses that primary exercises place on the body. That having been said, some clients will need enough rehabilitation that you won't be able to fit in prehab work.

Tertiary exercises aren't impacted by the type of workout your client is doing. If the client needs to fix an imbalance, for example, it doesn't matter whether he's training for power or muscular endurance.

*Cardio*

I've never been a big proponent of steady-state cardio. It's an important aspect of fitness, but I've found that you can often program sufficient cardio into a resistance training routine. (When my friend Jen Sinkler was asked what she does for cardio in an interview, she said, "lift weights faster"). Remember that the cardio protocol you prescribe has to fall in line with your client's goals. Cardio can be counterproductive if improperly programmed; for example, a hypertrophy workout shouldn't have much, if any, steady state cardio. You can be good at putting on muscle and cardio at the same time but you can't be great at both.

For a power program, a cardio protocol might be 1 – 2 days/week of HIIT (high intensity interval training). For muscular endurance training, I would suggest a combination of steady state running with hill or interval training.

*Dynamic Warm-up and Myofascial Release*

The dynamic warm-up depends on the client's skill and comfort level. A beginner client will probably be reluctant to do a long dynamic warm-up alone. If the client is more confident, you can give him a warm-up complete with dynamic stretching and self-guided myofascial release, or foam rolling, to help increase blood flow. Go through the warm-up once with him and then give him a handout, asking him to complete the full warm-up before you begin training.

The structure of the warm-up will depend on the nature of the workout. For example, a power workout will likely have more hip and shoulder mobility drills, and more myofascial release. A muscular endurance workout's warm-up will include fewer individual dynamic stretches and focus on increasing blood flow throughout the body.

## USING THE FOCUS SYSTEM

Now that you know the 6 steps of the Focus System, let's take a look at how you would use it with a client. Every primary exercise is introduced with the following 5-step process:

1. Show the client the name of the exercise on paper and repeat it aloud.
2. Explain why you chose the exercise specifically for the client.
3. Make it relevant to the client in terms of his goals or experience (the more personal you can make this, the better).
4. Demonstrate the exercise, highlighting the 2 most important points for proper form. (If your client often makes a common mistake, point that out as well.)
5. Have the client try the exercise.

I suggest you only follow these steps for the primary exercises as it's a time-consuming process and you don't want to risk your client losing focus. For all other exercises, follow steps 4 and 5 – unless you have a specific tertiary exercise for rehab or prehab. In that case, additional detail is necessary.

So, here's what that a conversation introducing a primary exercise might sound like with my client, Bill. Bill had experienced chronic low back pain in the past but he was pain-free and I knew he was ready to step up to the next level of training. I'd told him that in advance so he knew what to expect. I also asked him to perform a full dynamic warm-up before we met, and to meet me in my office.

*Jon:* Hi, Bill. How are things going today?

*Bill:* Great. I feel good today, but I'm a little nervous about the next stage.

*Jon:* Don't be nervous at all. You wouldn't be progressing if you weren't ready. As you know, we've been doing a lot of dynamic flexibility work and fixing up your movement patterns. We'll continue that but that training will be secondary from here on out. I've been really happy that your back is feeling good again and you've started to trim down, but we're now going to accelerate the fat burning.

*Bill:* Great.

*Jon:* I've chosen two main exercises for you that are going to get you great results. They are the bent-over barbell row and the squat. I've chosen these two exercises specifically for you because they both have the ability to burn a lot of fat. They work a lot of large muscles, so you'll get a great metabolic effect from them. In addition, they both force you to keep a stable core so you'll get good ab training and they'll strengthen your back as well.

*Bill:* Interesting. What about the rest of the workout?

*Jon:* The rest of the workout is secondary. I want to put particular emphasis on these 2 exercises because I'm basing your progression on them. I chose these two exercises specifically because if you improve on these 2 exercises, then I promise you'll get stronger and lose fat. The other exercises throughout this workout will either be a continuation of our low back/posture regime or help support clean and press and squat.

Bill: So which are we starting with? I'm ready!

Jon: [I demonstrate the squat to Bill.] As you sit back in the squat, it's important to press into your heels. This will shift the weight back to your glutes and hamstrings. As you're pressing back up I want you to breathe out and squeeze your butt at the top. Why don't you try it out?

At this point I have Bill try the movement with the barbell alone. I then correct the technique as needed until he has the proper form down. (Note that the cues I used for the squat are examples. I know different trainers have different ways of teaching moves. Regardless of how you teach, though, choose only 1 or 2 cues while you demonstrate good form. A picture paints a thousand words so a good demonstration is more important than tons of cues. After he's done a couple reps, you can make any corrections and have your client try again.)

This brief conversation with Bill accomplished several things. I complimented Bill on the good work that he's already done, citing specific examples. Next, I reinforced his goals and highlighted what he's already done to achieve them. I gave him a week's warning to get him chomping at the bit. By the time I introduced the squat, my explanation was brief and to the point.

Usually clients just want an overview of what they're doing and why they're doing it. Therefore I recommend you keep your explanations brief unless prompted further.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*Don't get wrapped up in describing exercises–all you need to include are the major points. After the client tries the exercise, you can identify what he needs to change and cue him accordingly.*

## TRAINING TRAPS TO AVOID

I'd like to close this chapter by mentioning some common "training traps" to avoid. As a trainer, your focus should always be on helping your clients get results. Avoid training traps like the following:

- *Program-hopping.* Too often trainers deviate from their plan because they've gotten excited about a new method of training. The best results can often be found with a relentless devotion to the basics. For example, I knew a trainer, Paul, who was working with a client, Jeff, who wanted to lose fat and put on muscle. They agreed that Jeff would add muscle mass first, and then focus on burning fat, and Paul created a program with those goals in mind. A month into training, Jeff was looking and feeling good, but then Paul decided to have Jeff do Tabata training (a high-intensity interval workout) instead. At the 3-month assessment, Jeff hadn't come near to his original agreed-upon goals. Paul had fallen into the trap of program hopping and Jeff's results suffered. If Paul had stuck with hypertrophy training for the full 3 months, Jeff would have met his goals. (In addition, Jeff would have gained a lot more from the Tabata training during the next phase of his training with the added muscle mass.)
- *Progressing too quickly.* More often than not, your client is new to exercise or has been exercising improperly. That's why he came to you. Your job is to devise a plan that works for that client. A simple program that works is better than a fancy, complicated one that doesn't. Linear progression works best for beginner clients and complicated loading schemes should be saved for when a client becomes more advanced.
- *Lack of a long-term vision.* It's hard to get your client focused without a long-term vision for him. This vision gets the client excited about what he's specifically going to accomplish, and gives you direction. *Everything*

you do as a trainer should be directed towards this long-term goal, which will form the basis of your progression planning. For example, if a client wants to burn fat you can progress them towards metabolic training and work towards barbell complexes, which build muscle and increase metabolism. Just remember the goal every step of the way and continue to lead the client towards it.

- *Using too many toys.* Don't get obsessed with fitness toys. More companies are trying to capitalize on the booming fitness market by putting out new equipment, but in my experience, the tried and tested basics always work best. I can't think of a better tool for burning fat than a barbell. Having a wide range of exercises and equipment at your disposal is a great idea. Just think of it as your training toolbox. You must understand the benefits and downfalls of the gadgets at your disposal, and when to use them.
- *Information overload.* This can lead to program hopping, which I already discussed above. There are tools ranging from dumbbells to cables to steps to BOSU balls to cables, and you can find hundreds of new exercises on the Internet in just minutes. Don't be overwhelmed by information overload because, as I said before, often the tried and tested work best. Of course sometimes you'll discover a new exercise that serves a purpose for your client. It's your job to be the detective and determine whether a new exercise is worth incorporating into a program.

The main point I want you to remember is that you should always keep your client's goals in mind. What do you hope the program will accomplish? Does every single one of the exercises you included bring your client closer to *their* goals in some way? If you can't explain to the client why you chose a particular exercise, leave it out no matter how nice it looks.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*You should always be able to explain why you chose every exercise in a client's program.*

NICK TUMMINELLO INSIDE INFO

Nick Tumminello is known as the "Trainer of Trainers." He's the owner of Performance University,

which provides practical fitness education for fitness professionals worldwide, and is the author of the book *Strength Training for Fat Loss*, and the creator of *The Build Muscle Without Weights Workout*. Nick has worked with a variety of clients from nfl athletes to professional bodybuilders and figure models to exercise enthusiasts. He also served as the conditioning coach for the Ground Control mma Fight Team and is a fitness expert for Sorinex and Reebok. Nick has produced over 15 dvds, is a regular presenter at national and international fitness conferences, a consistent contributor to several major fitness magazines and websites, and writes a very popular blog at PerformanceU.net.

**NICK'S 3 KEYS TO SUCCESS IN THE FITNESS INDUSTRY ARE:**

① **Know what your clients care (and don't care) about!** Successful fitness professionals don't hold the delusion that more letters behind their names means more clients. Your education (i.e. certification and/or degree) only awards the ability to call yourself a "personal trainer", but it's your personality and ability to successfully apply your education (in a practical manner your clients can understand and relate to) that determines how many clients you get, and how successful you are is a trainer.

② **The paying client rules!** Understand that you can do stuff to your clients and you can do stuff for them! A *dictator* tells people what their goals *should* be, whereas a good *trainer* tells people the best training direction they should take in order to achieve their goals! There seem to be lots of dictators in the professional fitness training field. Don't be part of that herd.

③ **Don't mistake the tools of the trade for the trade itself!** Fitness professionals are like carpenters. And, no one ever calls a carpenter a "jack of all trades, master of none" because they use all kinds of tools on each job they do. The fact is that all of the tools they use are just a part of their trade. They are not the trade itself. Their trade is to build stuff and improve stuff. And, what determines a good carpenter is his ability to successfully assess each job (i.e., each client), and then figure out what tools (i.e. exercise methods and modalities) are the best fit to accomplish the job (i.e., achieve the client's goals), and understand how to use those tools in a safe and effective manner (i.e., get the client results without hurting them).

The successful fitness pro understands that their job is to serve as an *exercise expert*, not as a specialist in using only one tool. You must be founded in universal training principles over being driven by the latest in-style training methods. Put simply, the fitness professional is the most significant part of the training session, not the equipment.

**NICK'S WORDS TO LIVE BY:**

*"Listen to everyone, but believe no one. It's far more dangerous to assume people know what they're talking about, than it is to assume they don't and let them prove you wrong. So, be a good skeptic and assume people are unaware of their own ignorance (including yourself) and ask questions to sort out the difference. Apart from social media, websites, et cetera, don't 'follow' me. Don't 'follow' anyone. Follow reason. Follow the evidence (i.e., the data), and follow it wherever it leads."*

*You can learn more from Nick Tumminello at www.performanceu.net*

## WHEN CLIENTS ASK ABOUT THE "LATEST THING"

There will always be an endless supply of new fitness products, videos, and books that promise to be the "next big thing." Tune into television at night and you'll see infomercials that support their claims with "studies" and "experts". They are usually marketed as giving results more quickly, with less effort, and for a bargain price.

Whenever people asked my opinion about the newest hit product or workout video, I had a system in place for responding. If I'd already researched something, I shared that with the person. If I don't know about the program, I looked into it and then got back to the person asking for the information.

Even today, when I'm asked about a product or program, I don't bash it. I try to point out the positives and the negatives. Say a friend asks me about a new workout that his buddy has had success with, I might say:

> *It's a good plan, but there's nothing magical about that it. If anyone exercises at a high intensity, following a proper program including appropriate progression and rest, and eats a clean diet for 3 months, he'll get results. The problem is that you're not accountable to anyone but yourself, so it requires a lot of intrinsic motivation. And it's not designed for everyone, which means you've got a higher risk of getting hurt. And you probably already know that no workout can match what you get working one-on-one with a trainer.*

See what I mean? I haven't put down the product, but I've pointed out the positives and negatives from an educated point of view.

If you haven't heard of the product or workout before, act quickly. Do your research so you can provide your client with solid articles about the product or your opinion about it as soon as possible. Read with a critical eye and form your own educated opinion, and share that with your client.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*Stay up-to-date on the latest workouts and fitness programs, and be prepared to tell clients the advantages and downfalls about them.*

## POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Using the Focus System with clients helps keep their motivation high and keeps them from becoming overwhelmed by a workout routine.
- Every exercise you give a client should have a specific purpose – and the client should understand that.
- New fitness toys, products, and programs come along all the time, but usually the "tried and tested" approach is the best to take.

## WHY PERSONAL TRAINERS SHOULDN'T PERIODIZE

I used to write 12 – 16 week programs for my clients and they were good. It took me an hour or two to write each program and old school Soviet coaches would have been proud. I was block-periodizing, waving, pyramiding, and undulating all over the place.

It started with a manager I had years ago. Her goal was to increase the quality of the training programs through a periodized program for each client, and together we built masterpieces. Every workout, exercise, and rep was planned out down to the tempo. The programs would transition every 4 weeks to a planned new micro-cycle. I read every book on the subject I could find and became an expert in theoretical periodization and started presenting workshops on it. Then one day I had my **first epiphany** and everything changed…

**Periodization in personal training doesn't work.**

Theory and practice rarely intersect. We're dealing with real people who have real lives and real stresses. Working out is not your clients' first priority. In fact, it's usually somewhere around number 15. Why the heck was I spending so much time programming for clients when they forget to tell me about their vacation smack dab in the middle of a mesocycle?

Periodization doesn't work. I know this and if you train regular people with regular jobs and regular families you also know this. Writing a 12 week plan is often useless because:

- *People get sick*
- *People's kids get sick*
- *Work gets busy*
- *Family joys or crisis happen*
- *Vacation*
- *The list goes on…*

All of these things lead to acute poor nutrition and unplanned time off. It's inevitable. Periodization research is exciting to read because it works in labs and with high-performance athletes. But your clients are not professional athletes. **Their training revolves around their lives, not the other way around**. So when you train a typical client, you are not his or her first priority.

You're in the service business. Your job is to remove stress from their lives – not insert more. Give them what they need even if it isn't a plan infused with soviet training awesomeness. Once I understood this I started to hash out a system not for organization and planning my clients' workouts. That was a large part of my success as a trainer. Instead of periodizing, I used a training template that I used to plan for each of my clients' programs based on their goals – and had much better results with it. [If you want to know more about this and download my template for free, go to www.theptdc.com/2012/01/personal-trainers-shouldnt-periodize]

# NICK TUMMINELLO ON: HOW TO SEPARATE THE TRAINING AND NUTRITIONAL SENSE FROM NONSENSE

The most common complaint I hear from fitness professionals is, “there is so much conflicting information out there, I don’t know what to believe.”

Put simply, all information isn’t equally valid. In this section I’m going to provide you with a quick and dirty resource on how to avoid confusion from conflicting information by being able to identify the sense from the nonsense.

**Conflicting Information: It All Can’t be Correct!**

It’s important to note that when we say there’s *conflicting information* about a given training topic, what we’re really saying is that there are two or more parties making mutually conflicting claims about how to achieve a given result. It’s crucial to realize this because when we do, we realize the undeniable reality that all of the conflicting claims about a topic *cannot* be correct – if one is correct, the other conflicting claims by default must be false.

**Anecdotes Make Bad Evidence!**

Another undeniable reality is that each party claims to be achieving the same results (i.e., less back pain, better health, etc.), but uses mutually incompatible methods to get there. It’s this fact that reveals a psychological reality that makes a mockery of anecdotal-evidence-based claims (for example, “it worked for me.”) And that reality is called *Confirmation bias*, which is a filter we all have that causes us to see a reality that matches our expectations. Research in social psychology has clearly shown that our observations and opinions are *not* the result of years of rational, objective analysis, but are the result of years of paying attention to information which confirmed what we believed while ignoring information which challenged our preconceived notions.

It’s because of our innate fallibility in judging the evidence of our own experiences that we have terms likes *self-deception* and *self-delusion*, and it’s why we have sayings like, “the plural of anecdote is not data.”

**Science: The Best Form of Evidence**

The scientific method is the best tool we have for objectively determining which claims are true and which are false (or at least offering probabilities of the likelihood of a claim being true of false). Sure, like you and I, individual researchers are subjectively biased, but the scientific method is not biased, it is an objective process that has built in machinery that teases out bias and bad science.

Now, sometimes people say that they disagree with science. And to that I submit these words from Dr. Steven Novella:

*“What do you think science is? There’s nothing artificial about science. It is simply a systematic way for carefully and thoroughly observing nature and using consistent logic to evaluate results. Which part of that exactly do you disagree with? Do you disagree with being thorough? Using careful observation? Being systematic? Or using consistent logic?”*

Now, in order to makes sure that the training practices you’re learning make scientific sense, here are some basic guidelines to separate good science (i.e. good evidence) from pseudoscience, non-science and downright nonsense.

**Marks of good science:**

- *It makes claims that can be tested and verified.*
- *It has been published in a peer-reviewed journal.*

- *It is backed up by experiments that have generated enough data to convince other experts of its legitimacy.*
- *Its proponents are secure enough to accept areas of doubt and need for further investigation.*
- *It does not fly in the face of the broad existing body of scientific knowledge.*

**Marks of bad science:**

- *Has failed to convince many mainstream scientists of its truth.*
- *Is not based on experiments that can be reproduced by others.*
- *Comes from overconfident fringe experts.*
- *Speaks dismissively of mainstream science.*
- *Claims to have knowledge no one else has or they have knowledge the "establishment" doesn't want you to hear.*
- *Provides data that takes the form of anecdotes, testimonials and/or studies of only one person.*

**Final Words**

It's great to use scientifically proven techniques that have been specifically evaluated in a studies, but it's unrealistic to ask that of every exercise method and application. Specific workout strategies don't have to be scientifically *proven* as long as they are scientifically *founded*, meaning they are founded on the universal training principles (for example, Progressive Overload, Specific Adaptation to Imposed Demands (SAID), General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS), etc.) that have been repeatedly shown to elicit the results you're after.

That said, without some type of objective scientific evidence, what we're basing our beliefs on is purely subjective and arbitrary. And, our clients deserve much better for their time and money than that.

Lastly, It's important that as fitness professionals we don't forget whose session it is when we're training. In that, it's *not* our (the trainer's) session; it's theirs – the client's – session. I say this because the paying client is #1. And, therefore, our #1 priority when it comes to, not only designing training sessions, but also when pursing fitness education, is to learn better and more effective ways to help clients achieve the goals *they're* after – not for us to spend most of educational time and money learning about the training concepts and techniques that we think are cool, or line up with our own training goals.

In other words, make sure the fitness education you're pursuing is actually something that will benefit your clients and help them achieve their goals. More happy clients mean more referrals. And, spend the money you've got left over to pursue the educational ventures that you personally are interested in.

Remember: You can do stuff TO your clients and you can do stuff FOR them! A *dictator* tells people what their goals *should* be, whereas a good *trainer* tells people the best training direction they should take in order to achieve their goals. There seem to be lots of dictators in the professional training field. Don't be part of that herd.

**Reference:**

1. "A letter to the TEDx community on TEDx and bad science." By TED and TEDx Teams, October 3, 2013.

*You can learn more about Nick Tumminello at www.PerformanceU.net and learn more about evaluating claims at www.theptdc.com/2014/06/analyze-fitness-research*

# 8 FUEL FOR THE FIRE

## *Keeping Clients Inspired*

*"The most powerful weapon on earth is the human soul on fire."*
— Ferdinand Foch

In the preceding 3 chapters, you learned how to create a relationship with new clients and how to use the Excitation System and Focus System with them. That knowledge alone will let you launch a promising career. But for long-term success as a trainer, you must be able to maintain long-term clients – and that means being able to motivate and inspire them for weeks, months, or even years.

What works for one client won't work for another, but there are some effective ways to keep clients excited about and motivated to keep working out – and hopefully, continuing to train with you. I've found that some strategies tend to work better with extroverted or outgoing clients while others are more effective with introverted ones.

## KNOW YOUR CLIENTS

In chapter 9, you'll learn about some of the common personality types you're likely to encounter when training and how to work with them. The most important thing you can do to help motivate any particular client, however, is to understand him or her. Is your client shy or outgoing? What does she do for a living? What is her family situation? (Is she married or single, for example? Does she have children at home?) What kinds of activities does she enjoy in her spare time? The more information you have about your client and what makes her tick, the better able you are to connect with her.

Here are some techniques that can maintain motivation and increase client retention:

- *Exercise contracts.* Exercise contracts detail their commitment both to you and their program and have a start and end date. These can be especially effective with introverted clients as the contracts make them accountable without having to involve anyone else. If you use contracts, both you and your client should sign it to show that you too are committed to their goals. Keep one copy for yourself and give one to your client. The contract also is a "take-away" that clients may show to other people. I suggest you make your exercise contract very specific. Set out exactly what you expect your client to do (for example, a 30-minute interval session on the exercise bike 2 days/week in addition to training with you) so that there's no question about your client's expectations.
- *Rewards.* Rewards can be big motivators. You might offer either free sessions or a refund of a percentage of their money once your client attends a number of agreed-upon sessions. I gave clients fitness-related gifts with my logo on them, but the best reward is often something personal to your client. Make sure your client understands that he earned the reward; it's not a gift.
- *Journaling.* Plenty of studies show that keeping a journal helps people stick to their workout routines. Encourage clients to keep a book or calendar detailing their workouts and progress, or give them a workout log with your logo on it. You can also print up a copy of the client's completed workouts and give it to the client so he can see how far he's come.
- *Fitness tests.* If you have "type A" clients who like to achieve specific goals, fitness tests can be a great motivator. They work harder so they won't fail the upcoming tests; just be sure to help them set reasonable

goals. However, fitness tests aren't to be used with every client, as they often don't align with your client's goals. Consider the pros and cons of using them before you do so.

- *Workout partners.* Organizing a signup board at your gym for workout partners can keep clients motivated and enhance the community at your gym. If you have two clients doing similar workouts on their own, introduce them and suggest they work out together. They're more likely to stick with their routine.
- *Star system:* My grade 2 teacher gave us a gold star every time we did something well or answered a question in class. At the end of the year, I was the proud owner of a genuine leather cowboy wallet for winning that game. Though the wallet was great, it was not my motivation. My motivation stemmed from looking up at that board every day and seeing my classmates get stars along with me. I knew I had to get my homework done and answer some questions the following day to stay ahead. My point? Consider using a "star system" or other visible tool at your gym. Post your clients' names on a board, give them gold stars when they do something great, and give the winner a prize. If you use a token system, make sure that it ties into small goals that move each client toward his or her bigger "end" goal.
- *Self-analysis.* To stay tuned in to my clients' need, I used an evaluation form after they've trained with me for a while. The form asked questions like:
    1. Why did you originally join our club?
    2. What were some of your original motivations and why did you choose me?
    3. Did you ever feel like quitting? Why? What made you stay?
    4. Did you have "aha" moments? What were they?
    5. How can I (or the club) make your experience even better and help you progress towards even more impressive goals?

  Answering these questions helps clients learn about their own motivators, which can develop self-efficacy, which is discussed more below.
- *Social support.* Giving clients printouts of their workouts, articles about their goals or injuries, and a detailed plan can help build motivation. The takeaways also give your clients something to talk about with their loved ones, which can help them get support and may result in referrals as well.
- *Surprise them.* One of the simplest but most effective ways to motivate clients is to send cards. I sent cards for the holidays, on birthdays, and when clients reach their goals, but you don't even need a special occasion.

I bought nice cards as I wanted my clients to display them at home or work, which can lead to more referrals.

- *Compliments.* Compliments can be incredibly powerful. When used effectively, they can reinforce positive habits. For a compliment to be effective, it must be sincere, specific, and timed properly. A compliment about a client's personal appearance, like commenting about new workout clothing or a new haircut, is appropriate because it shows that you pay close attention to him or her. (I've noticed that clients will often start wearing more form-fitting workout clothes as they get in better shape.) Be careful not to compliment clients too often, which can appear fake. I give quick "well dones" and fist bumps when training a client, but I save my big compliments for special occasions, like when a client has really struggled with a particular movement. For example, I had a client who had been training for weeks before he was able to complete 5 reps of barbell squats with excellent form. When he did so, I said, "Great job! You kept a nice strong back on the way down, and didn't have any forward shift coming up. You were definitely focusing on driving through your heels. I can't tell you how happy this makes me to see you squat so well. Remember when you started out and your knees hurt even as you sat down? I'm proud of you." Note that this compliment was specific, personal, and focused on what he had achieved. A sincere compliment that points out how far your client has come also helps him develop intrinsic motivation.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*Use sincere, specific compliments with clients for the greatest impact.*

## HELPING CLIENTS DEVELOP SELF-EFFICACY

You've been learning about ways to help motivate your clients, but the real key to motivation comes from internal, not external sources. When your clients develop self-efficacy, they will be motivated from the inside out. As a trainer, you should understand the concept of self-efficacy and know how to help your clients develop it – it will enhance their experience in the gym so they see results more quickly.

Self-efficacy is defined as the belief that you have the ability to execute

the course of action required to manage prospective situations. In other words, you know you can do it, whatever "it" is. Canadian psychologist Albert Bandura, Ph.D. developed the concept of self-efficacy and has studied and written about it for years. He describes 4 major contributors to it:

- *Social modeling.* This is achieved by witnessing others accomplish a similar task. If your client sees or knows others who have accomplished their goals, rehabbed their injuries, or become comfortable in the gym, for example, your client will become more confident *he* can succeed. Social modeling is especially effective if the client knows the "model" personally.
- *Social persuasion.* This comes in the form of verbal encouragement, such as with effective complimenting. The client will have less self-doubt and start to believe in himself more and more.
- *Psychological responses.* This aspect of self-efficacy has to do with a client's reaction to certain situations, such as trying a new exercise. Helping your client elevate his mood and lower his stress before a workout can help lesson negative psychological responses that may interfere with developing self-efficacy. (Note that the intensity of the psychological responses is *secondary* to how it's perceived and interpreted. In other words, you can help a client understand that an elevated heart rate can be a sign that his body is getting ready to take on a new challenge.)
- *Mastery experiences.* This is perhaps the most important aspect of Bandura's model as far as personal training goes. When a client performs well, his self-efficacy increases. When he fails at something, it decreases. It's therefore important to allow your client to succeed often, and to make note of their successes, early on in training. The easiest way to provide a client with a mastery experience is to start them at the proper stage of progression within an exercise; in other words, give them a move and a weight that they can handle. If a client fails, don't dwell on it. Quickly shift focus and bring up a previous situation where that client succeeded. The goal is to get the client thinking about their failure for as little time as possible

As a trainer, Bandura's self-efficacy research should always be in the back of your mind. Note that new clients will benefit more from its application than more seasoned clients since the more experienced ones have already gotten

results. Their initial intrinsic motivation was strong enough for them to persevere through their original insecurities. As clients becomes more seasoned, they gain mastery experiences and likely experience social persuasion from friends and family.

Let me share several examples of how I've helped clients develop self-efficacy so you can see it in action. Remember my client Pam from chapter 5? Pam was apprehensive about working out, but the fact that her friend Cindy had already achieved great results helped Pam develop her own self-efficacy. That's an example of social modeling.

I'd been training with another client, Fred, for a year. He'd started out at 450 pounds. During that year, he'd lost 120 pounds, eliminated his knee pain, and regained his shoulder mobility, which was a huge problem for him early on. I decided to write an assisted pull-up into his program. I knew he was still heavy, but he had gained a lot of strength and I thought he would be able to do this exercise.

However, after instructing Fred on the Gravitron machine, Fred got stuck on the bottom and couldn't pull himself up. I quickly showed him how to safely step off the machine and set the weight to the easiest setting, but once again, Fred couldn't pull himself up. Fred was still too heavy for the assisted pull-up and I had to act fast. Without mentioning anything about the pull-up, I set a manageable weight on the lat pull-down machine and had him bang out a set.

I made a mistake with Fred by having him attempt an exercise that was too advanced for him. Avoid this whenever you can, especially for clients with low self-efficacy. Challenging more experienced trainees with advanced moves is another thing; because of their high confidence, a failure is less likely to affect their self-efficacy.

As a trainer, you're also likely to encounter clients who show up for a workout and immediately say that they feel fat, tired, or out of shape. By using social persuasion, you can relieve anxiety that would reduce a client's self-efficacy.

My client Jenny had had an original goal of losing 20 pounds, and had only lost 5 so far. However, she was finally comfortable with exercise and had achieved some results. So I was surprised when Jenny came in for a session and told me that she felt fat. She'd had some friends over to swim and felt self-conscious in her bathing suit.

I brought Jenny into my office so we could talk more. After listening to her, I reminded her about one of her previous aha moments. Two months earlier, she'd taken a cruise with her husband and had worn a flowing red dress, and her husband had told her how beautiful she looked. Then Jenny jumped in, recalling

how she had given away all of her jeans because they had all become too big for her. The emotional response that she gained from visualizing her red dress brought up other positive emotions!

After our brief conversation, I had Jenny do her warm-up. She had a great workout that day and left her "fat" feelings in the office.

Physical changes occur slowly, and clients' moods ebb and flow during that time. Some days they'll be happy and motivated to train. Other days, they may feel depressed, discouraged, or even angry. Pay attention to your clients' moods at the beginning of a session. To use social persuasion, let your client speak – even rant. Often your client just needs someone to listen to her frustrations. After she's gotten whatever she needs off her chest, encourage your client to remember and focus on aha moments. After she has done so, get her out on the gym floor and get her sweating.

If your client arrives in a great mood, the stage is set for a positive training experience. If she arrives crabby, angry, or upset about something that happened at work, or even on the drive to the gym, take a minute to listen and reset her mood. If you can get your client feeling good before she works out, she'll be more engaged and will forget about her stressors. The minute or two you spend listening will lead to a better session overall.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*You can use social modeling, social persuasion, mastery experiences, and psychological responses to help increase self-efficacy in clients. Make sure that new clients develop ample self-efficacy to help retain them.*

## UNDERSTANDING MOTIVATION AND REWARDS

It's impossible to walk into a gym and not see a trainer giving his client a "high five." A high five is one type of reward. So is a T-shirt for hitting a weight loss goal or an "atta boy" for knocking out 30 burpees to end a session.

But is all motivation good? Not quite. You have to be able to motivate your clients to provide the most benefits with the least amount of drawbacks. Before I get into the actionable parts of how to do so, let me help you understand a bit about motivation and how it can actually be harmful if used improperly.

If you give somebody a reward (like a high five), then he or she will get a flood of a feel-good neurotransmitter called dopamine into a region of the brain called the nucleus accumbens. This process is similar physiologically to what happens when you take an addictive drug, like heroin.

As with any addiction, our senses become dulled to it over time. In the case of heroin, it makes us crave more heroin. In the case of external rewards for exercise completed, it makes us crave

more slaps on the back, T-shirts, or high fives.

Yes, you still want to reward your clients. But I want you to be a lot more purposeful with those rewards. Your end goal is always to help the client feel like the activity is its *own* reward. A strong external reward might have an initial benefit but will have the longterm consequence of decreasing intrinsic motivation, which will in turn decrease the client's adherence (and the retention of you as a trainer).

A University of Wisconsin professor named Harry Harlow is credited with first identifying what's now known as intrinsic motivation in 1949. While you likely already have an idea of what it means, let me discuss the specifics of how it increases and decreases.

First – and there are a few notable exceptions that I'll discuss in a minute – extrinsic rewards decrease intrinsic motivation. If the client truly finds enjoyment in a task, me telling him that I'm going to give him a T-shirt for finishing his workout will decrease the intrinsic motivation and performance.

One way around this is to provide the reward as a surprise. The reason, according to Professor of Psychology at the University of Rochester Edward Deci, is that a surprise reward is less likely to be seen as reason for doing the task. So consider sending a surprise text message or handwritten card congratulating your client.

Keep in mind that a task that requires little or no skill will be positively influenced by external rewards. A client will perform a set of 50 burpees better, for example, if you hold a proverbial carrot on a stick for the client. The minute that skill is introduced, however, intrinsic motivators prove far more powerful.

To help develop intrinsic motivation in your clients, make sure your motivation is meaningful and non-tangible. By "meaningful," I mean specific. Instead of saying "great job," say, "great job keeping your spine aligned and squeezing your butt as you come out of the hole on those squats."

Tangible rewards are things like a T-shirt or trophy; for our purposes, a non-tangible reward consists of praise. Tangible extrinsic rewards almost always decrease intrinsic motivation but non-tangible rewards like a well-timed high five can be positive. That said, use them carefully and only if you wish to firmly reestablish a particular habit. Giving a client a high five after every set will quickly diminish the effectiveness – it's kind of like showing all of your cards on the first hand. Instead, when your client finally achieves the depth in a squat that she's been aiming for, take a minute and give her a great, specific compliment. This kind of compliment will help her develop intrinsic motivation that will feed her own desire to continue to train.

Finally, if you really want to make your client feel special, reestablish why she loves training (with you), and make her smile, send a hand-written card signed by all of the trainers that says something like this:

*I just wanted to tell you again how great your form and intensity was as you finally nailed that full-depth squat. The entire team and I have loved watching you get stronger. Thanks for being awesome.*

*Big Ups.*

*– Jon*

Remember your goal is not only to program for clients but to get them engaged in their workouts. Helping clients love the feeling of a workout – not only the results they achieve from those workouts – is the most effective way to help them become intrinsically motivated, and to help inspire them to reach their goals.

## SCOTT TATE

INSIDE INFO

Scott Tate is a personal trainer in Toronto specializing in chronic disease clients, specifically fibromyaligia, chronic lyme disease, and Parkinson's. He also heads up the continuing education

department for a multi-gym company in Toronto.

Scott began his career by volunteering in physiotherapy clinics throughout high school and university. Helping friends in the gym and in sport led him to a job at the University of Guelph's Athletic Center in Ontario, Canada. After finishing his human kinetics degree, Scott stayed on at university to study applied human nutrition. He left after two years to embark on a career in personal training.

Scott has worked in boutique-style training facilities and trained clients in-home. He started a company with the sole purpose of connecting practitioners to provide well-rounded inter-professional care. When Scott realized he needed more space and more focused attention from his clients, he moved to a boutique training gym in Toronto. His business is referral-based through clients who he's already helped and other health-care practitioners he's connected with.

**SCOTT'S 3 KEYS TO SUCCESS IN THE FITNESS INDUSTRY ARE:**

① **Be passionate about helping people.** If you don't care, neither will they. If you're in this only for the paycheck, it will show. Passion rubs off. Potential clients can sense it and will immediately be drawn to you, while existing clients will never want to leave.

② **Have patience and empathy.** We never truly know what's going on in our clients' lives. Stressors beyond our control get in the way of their workouts. If you want to help your clients, patience and empathy goes a long way.

③ **Know that neither you, nor any system, is perfect.** Continually improve. Strive to get better and never be satisfied. Preventative medicine is still young but it's the most powerful drug ever designed. Keeping up to date with methods will ensure you stay on top.

**SCOTT'S WORDS TO LIVE BY:**

*"Are you in this to help people or to help your bank? If it's the people that pump you up, the bank will do its thing. If it's dollars that drive you, take another route."*

*Scott Tate can be reached at Scott@bodyandsoul.ca*

## WORKING WITH UNCOMMITTED CLIENTS

However, most people are not intrinsically motivated, and in fact few trainers consistently work with highly motivated individuals. If we did, our job might not exist. In modern day society, exercise's priority is placed far behind work, family, friends, social time, and sleep. It's usually fit in when convenient. You want to make it a higher priority for your clients.

You will encounter clients who seem to be uncommitted. They may miss appointments, show up late, or seem unengaged during your session. Your job is to find out what the problem is, and help the client address it.

Ask whether the client has had a previous bad experience with a trainer. If so, make sure that you don't repeat the problem [see chapter 5 for more on this]. If the issue isn't a previous negative experience, it's likely personal issue and is

one of the following:

*Unsupportive Spouse*

I've dealt with this issue a number of times. The spouse may believe that a trainer is a frivolous expense or that their significant other's time would be better spent with the family or at work.

I suggest you provide your client with lots of written material on the importance of training in addition to a write-up of your short and long-term plan with the client. I also made myself available to meet with the client's spouse if he or she was willing. And I always sat down with my client and got him to tell me why exercise is so important *for him*. Having him create an emotional attachment to exercise encouraged him to stand his ground when speaking with his spouse.

Better yet, nip the problem in the bud by anticipating it. Before meeting with a client for the sales meeting, ask whether anybody else will be involved in the decision-making process or influential in his fitness program. If he says "yes," ask if that person can be present as well. Talk about how important it is to have full support from loved ones and you want to make sure to answer all questions for both parties. An unsupportive spouse can be an insurmountable problem, so deal with it ahead of time if at all possible.

*Lack of Community*

A lack of positive relationships in the gym won't necessarily cause clients to leave, but good relationships will encourage them to stay. Your early days training a new client should include lots of introductions to other trainers and long-term members. Seeing familiar faces when they walk through the door goes a long way in increasing adherence.

Over the long term, this habit also creates a unique feel and works to position you better. When your clients feel at home in the gym, they're likely to train more often. That's the *Cheers* effect I mentioned in chapter 5. They're also more likely to chat with new members and may recommend you to others.

*Lack of Education*

Clients may be uncommitted due to lack of education. If you're not able to explain *why* you're doing what you're doing [see chapter 7], they will eventually lose faith and leave.

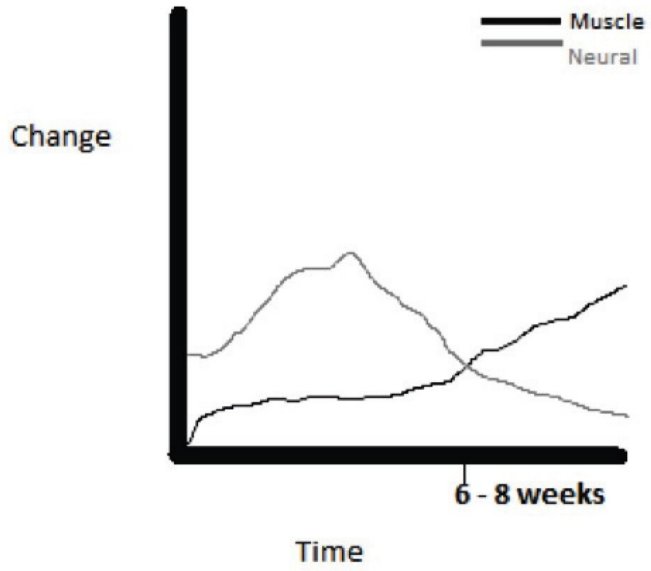
It takes 6 – 8 weeks for any serious physical adaptation to take place in

most new clients. Before that, clients are experiencing primarily neural gains. That's a lot of time and money for somebody who's been promised results and made the life changes necessary to start working with you. If you don't take the time to explain the process of adaption to your clients, you may lose them before they get real results.

To a new client, I might have said something like, "You don't build a skyscraper without lots of planning and a strong foundation. It takes time, but the sky's the limit." Or I'd say, "The easiest way to imagine your fitness is as a large stone wheel. It will take a lot of momentum to get going, but once it starts moving, it's hard to slow down." The idea is to use a metaphor that your clients can relate to and remember.

If I felt a client would appreciate a more scientific approach, I would get into the physiology of adaption in more detail. I'll say something like:

> *I'd like to take a couple minutes to explain adaptation to you. The first couple months are called the anatomical adaptation phase. Here's what I mean by that: (I sketch the graph below and explain it as I go).*




> *As you can see, the first system that will start to adapt is the neurological system. That happens rather quickly, so you will see strength gains within the first couple weeks. Somewhere around the 6- to 8-week mark, muscle gains start to happen and an overlap*

*takes place. That's when you will start seeing the aesthetic benefits of your training.*

*One other point to note is that connective tissue adapts slower than muscle. Therefore in the interest of safety, the weights may be a little lighter than you feel you can manage early on. I want to make sure your joints are protected. Not to worry, though – the stimulus on your body will be more than adequate to have a strong training effect. Later on we will be getting more specific in your training to stimulate specific systems. For now, whole body training is the best course of action. Does that make sense?*

Remember that if you can't give your client a reason for doing a particular exercise, you shouldn't do it. By keeping your clients' minds active throughout the workouts, they'll be more engaged in the training and will get better results. I also made sure to ask my more advanced clients their opinions on workouts and where they would like to head next. I then took the time to educate them on the pros and cons of their next goals in addition to what it will take to get them there to gain their buy-in to my training program. I suggest you do the same with your more experienced clients.

*Life Crises*

Sometimes you don't know why a client is uncommitted, but going the extra 10 percent can make the difference. Take a trainer I worked with, who had been working with a client for 4 months when she started cancelling sessions out of the blue. He immediately sat his client down to speak about what was going on.

She told him that her husband had just been diagnosed with late-stage cancer and had been given 6 months to live. Her life was falling apart. The only time she was able to let loose a little was in the gym but she had no control over her schedule. This trainer came in as early as 5:30 a.m. and as late as 9:00 p.m. to train his client. He knew how important exercise was for her well-being and went the extra 10 percent to help her any way he could. He kept the client and, as a result of treating her so well, had other clients referred to him through her. Plus he made an incredible difference in her life, when she really needed it.

Remember, you are dealing with real lives and real issues. If you want to retain your clients over the long term, you should become part of their lives. This means that you deal with the issues they encounter in stride without letting the

issues get in the way of their training. That may mean going the extra 10 percent, but that's what sets you apart as a trainer.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*You may not have control over the situation that's keeping your client from working out consistently. Find out what it is and go the extra 10 percent if necessary.*

## POINTS TO REMEMBER

- There are different ways to motivate clients. The more you know about your clients, the easier it will be to choose motivational techniques that will work for them.
- One of your goals as a trainer it to help your clients develop self-efficacy, so that they believe that they can handle the challenges they encounter in the gym.
- You can't control what happens in your clients' lives, but by keeping their needs in mind and going the extra 10 percent, you can retain them and obtain additional referrals as well.

# 9 THE TEN TYPES

## *Common Client Personalities and How to Work with Them*

*"In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity."*

— Albert Einstein

No two clients are alike. Clients range from shy to intimidating, compliant to easily distracted, and fanatical to undedicated. Each person brings his or her own challenges, issues, and abilities. You've already learned that the more you know about your clients, the easier it is to motivate and work with them.

However, while every client is unique, many fall into 1 of the 10 general categories described in this chapter. Understanding these "types" will help you communicate effectively with clients while reducing the risk of boring, intimating, or insulting them. Read on for a description of the "top 10" client types and how to work with them.

**THE ALWAYS OFF-TRACK**

The Always Off-Track client never focuses on the workout. It's a constant struggle getting Always Off-Tracks to give 100 percent. They do enjoy your company and are happy to chat about whatever pops into their heads. On the bright side, the Always Off-Tracks make time fly as they entertain you with stimulating conversation.

*Primary Characteristics of the Always Off-Track*

The typical Always Off-Track is:

- Talkative
- Easily distracted
- Interested in the latest fitness gimmicks

*A Real Life Always Off-Track*

Justin started training with me after his trainer left our gym. He had worked with this trainer for 8 months but didn't have the results to show for it, which confused me. Justin's previous trainer was qualified and had gotten great results with other clients. I decided to take Justin on as a challenge to figure out what the missing piece of the puzzle was.

Justin and I talked for an hour at our first meeting. Justin was young, athletic and had no injuries. He wanted to put on muscle and seemed committed to his goal. We spoke about his exercise history, goals, and any possible barriers, and nothing jumped out at me as being a problem from that initial conversation.

Justin had already been training, so I outlined a 16-week power routine for him that I thought would translate into a better bodybuilding routine later on. I also gave him some guidance on his eating habits and suggested he eat a bigger breakfast, more protein, and lots of vegetables, among other things.

It wasn't until we started training that I understood Justin's problem. During each break between sets or exercises, he would talk about sports, cars, philosophy, or anything else on his mind for several minutes. I didn't have an issue with this during the anatomical adaptation phase as my goal was to build a strong bond and get his continual buy-in. But as time went on, I realized Justin couldn't focus.

From the minute he walked onto the floor, he wouldn't stop talking. He would even continue his conversation in the middle of his working sets. During his breaks, he wouldn't start his next set until he had finished his point, which

would take upwards of 5 minutes.

This created 3 problems. First, his breaks were far too long, so Justin wasn't getting enough of a training effect. Second, I had trouble fitting in his entire workout in the time we had. A young guy who wants to put on weight needs a lot of training volume. I couldn't possibly fit in the requisite amount of work in an hour with all of his talking. But third, and most important, was his lack of focus. He was never fully engaged in his workouts, and lack of focus is detrimental to increasing power.

I decided to apply a version of Pavlov's experiments and train Justin with a beeper. I set my timer to the allotted break time, and when his break was over, it would beep. He would then start his next set, no questions asked. If he didn't comply, I had him do positive punishment – he would do 2 jump squats or 2 plyometric push-ups, depending on whether he was doing upper-body or lower-body exercises. This meant that Justin knew he had to do something immediately when the beep sounded, and the positive punishment helped prepare his body for a set of power lifting.

After a year of training, Justin's squat improved from 95 pounds to 215 pounds and his bench press went from 105 pounds to 190 pounds. He still chats with me about a wide array of interesting subjects before and after workouts, but is 100 percent focused during the actual sessions.

*Always Off-Track Challenges*

Your biggest challenge with these clients is focus. Your job is to get them results, and they won't get them unless they're engaged in their workouts. Also, if they're not focused on their exercises, you'll have to repeat yourself constantly. Getting Always Off-Track clients to complete their workouts in the allotted time can be a challenge because 45-second breaks inevitably turn into 3 minutes.

Always Off-Tracks often get bored with your workouts since they don't take the time to dive in and understand their purpose. They constantly ask you to change it up. Finally, Always Off-Tracks are often avid readers who want to try every new invention or workout regime. You'll probably find that you spend a lot of your time at the beginning of sessions debating the latest fitness trend.

*Always Off-Track Solutions*

Training Always Off-Track clients often takes a little creativity. Your goal is to figure out a way to improve their focus *without losing sight of their goals*. Using a stopwatch, like I did with Justin, works well. Say something like, "When you hear the beep, you go!" Positive punishments for non-compliance such as

“burpees” work well if your client wants to burn fat. Just make sure that the punishment doesn’t detract from the workout or have the opposite training effect. For example, you don’t want your client doing burpees if his main goal is to add muscle.

Sometimes all it takes is sitting the client down, revaluating his goals, and making sure that he buys in to the program. If I think an Always Off-Track client is always talking because he doesn’t know what he should be doing during breaks, I’ll explain the importance of mentally gearing up for the next exercise between sets.

If you suspect your client is bored, make sure that you explain your workouts, progressions, and vision to your client. Boredom stems from a lack of understanding on your client’s part. When you explain what to look for, they’ll be motivated by small improvements.

## CONTENT KATHY

The typical Content Kathy has had an injury or loss of function, and because of that, she’s happy just to be exercising again. Or she may be an older client whose primary goal is to maintain her ability to get around. Content Kathys usually don’t care about progression or lifting heavy weights. Most of them prefer lower-key workouts that include lots of stretching.

### *Primary Characteristics of the Content Kathy*

The typical Content Kathy is:

- Recovering from an injury, or has had injuries in the past.
- Afraid of or unwilling to push her physical limits.
- Middle-aged or older and is focused on maintaining function and mobility.

### *A Real-Life Content Kathy*

Leslie came to me with a whole host of injuries. She had copies of her MRI that revealed a herniated disk, and she had a doctor’s note stating that she suffered from patella femoral pain. Leslie also suffered from obsessive-compulsive disorder and asked that I avoid using numbers with her. She refused to let me perform an assessment because she said she would dwell on the results too much.

As you can imagine, setting specific goals for Leslie was out of the question, but I agreed to train Leslie once she got full medical clearance from

her physician. Through continuous assessment of her movement patterns, I was able to identify Leslie's imbalances over time. (It took longer than it would have as I had to sneak my assessment in without her noticing.)

I saw Leslie twice a week for 2 years. Leslie was different from any client I'd had before. She didn't need motivation from me as her intrinsic motivation was based on maintaining pain-free function. Yet Leslie was always in a great mood, and she was happy to be active. She loved feeling her body move and wasn't interested in increasing her number of reps or how much she lifted. Yet over time, I was able to challenge her more to help her get stronger.

My work with Leslie helped her retain her function and stay pain-free. She was able to remain active in her everyday life, which was most important to her. And she was able to garden, shovel snow, and carry groceries – things that she hadn't been able to do before. Her goals may have seemed minor compared to some of my clients, but reaching them made her a happy client.

*Content Kathy Challenges*

Content Kathys often have lots of injuries. Keeping them healthy is your biggest challenge. A second challenge is that the typical Content Kathy loves working out – as long as it's not too challenging. They love feeling their body move but they don't want to strain or push too hard. You have to avoid being lulled into a state of equilibrium when training this client.

*Content Kathy Solutions*

Every Content Kathy is different, but each needs direction. She's come to you because you have the knowledge to help her. Your job is two-fold: to organize her workouts in a safe, efficient manner, and to subtly push her while making the workouts enjoyable.

The key to dealing with this client is being willing to veer from your usual training model to meet her needs. You must accept that you can't get this client the kind of results that you expect from others because she doesn't want to push that hard. Yes, it can be difficult to accept a client failing to work as hard as *you* think she should. But with Content Kathys, you must remember why they're exercising and what their goals are, and then work within them. In Leslie's case, I couldn't give her specific numbers, but I was still able to help her meet her goals. You can do the same with the Content Kathys you train.

**ASSIDUOUS MONSTER**

The Assiduous Monster is the hardest working person in the gym, day in and day out. This type of client loves to “feel the burn” on every exercise, and he won’t stop until he’s given everything he has. He leaves the gym exhausted after every workout, and rarely misses a day of training.

*Primary Characteristics of the Assiduous Monster*
The typical Assiduous Monster is:

- Highly competitive.
- Driven to get results.
- Self-motivated.

*A Real-Life Assiduous Monster*

Alex had been using Crossfit, a high-intensity interval program, before he started training with me. He loved the feeling of exhaustion he got from those workouts, but his assessment revealed a number of muscular imbalances. His hamstrings, hips, calves, and chest muscles were all tight; his lats and glutes had poor activation; and his core strength was almost non-existent. In short, Alex was prepped for disaster.

After going over the results of the assessment with Alex, I told him I wouldn’t train him unless we started with an anatomical adaption phase. This would force Alex to take a step back to ensure his safety moving forward. I also laid out my long-plan, which included plenty of high-intensity training when he was ready, and he agreed to the program.

It took 6 full weeks of daily foam rolling, dynamic stretching, and activation exercises to get his body back in order. I also took that time to re-teach him the squat, deadlift, pull-up, and push-up and gave him some nutrition advice.

After those 6 weeks, Alex and I talked again and I gave him my plan for moving forward. By that point, he understood that my job wasn’t just to push him as hard as possible, but to help him exercise with proper form so he could get the results he wanted. I developed a list of 18 exercises that would make up our workouts. Each day would be different, but would include lots of high-intensity cardio throughout. I would teach him proper form for each exercise, choose the specific exercises for the next workout, and keep records of reps, weights, and rest periods for each exercise.

This plan gave Alex the variation and the challenge he wanted, but it also

let me stay in charge of the workouts. Alex could work out as hard as he wanted, as long as he stayed within the parameters of the program. By training with me, he continued to progress and reach his goals.

*Assiduous Monster Challenges*

It's difficult to convince Assiduous Monsters to slow down when needed. They feel like they're not getting their money's worth if you don't bring them close to passing out every session. But going all out every workout may eventually lead to injury and in order for progression to happen, you have to program lighter days among the tough ones.

After years of training, the Assiduous Monster may also have bad form and minor injuries and imbalances that must be fixed. A thorough assessment will help you determine how to address these issues.

*Assiduous Monster Solutions*

These clients have usually participated in exercise programs before, but they probably weren't well-rounded. They may have focused on strength training while ignoring stretching and cardio, for example. Assiduous Monsters may not see the value of a personal trainer, so your first step should be to educate them on the benefits of working with somebody who has the requisite knowledge and passion – namely, you.

A full assessment will reveal what the Assiduous Monster needs to work on, so be frank in telling him what needs to be done. By showing him his weak points, you're giving him a challenge, and his personality will have him chomping at the bit to fix his imbalances.

You must take charge when working with Assiduous Monsters. Don't let them dictate their workouts; you're the trainer. Make sure they're aware of why and how your plan is different from what they were doing before, and most of all, that they know how it's going to help them.

If the Assiduous Monster refuses to change his ways after your attempts to educate him, you may want to encourage him to look elsewhere for a trainer. The short-term gain of training the Assiduous Monster is not worth hurting your reputation, or worse yet, a lawsuit if he gets hurt.

## CHALLENGING CHARLIE

The Challenging Charlie questions everything. These clients are skeptical of you and your gym and won't commit to anything longterm. Whether they've

exercised before or not, they've probably done research before hiring you and may want to "test" you early on.

*Primary Characteristics of the Challenging Charlie*

The typical Challenging Charlie is:

- Somewhat knowledgeable about exercise.
- Skeptical about working with you.
- Reserved and unwilling to share too much personal information.

*A Real-Life Challenging Charlie*

Daniel had been working with a trainer for 18 months before he met me until the studio he trained at closed down. Initially Daniel was standoffish. He refused an assessment and didn't give detailed answers to any of my questions. After I learned more about his past, though, I realized that he had been poorly trained before. His previous trainer had promised results, but Daniel hadn't achieved them. As a result, Daniel's view of the industry had been tarnished. I had to show him that I was different.

Since Daniel refused an official assessment, I secretly worked the assessment into the first 3 workouts. After each exercise I would take a minute to tell him in detail what was happening in his body. I started to answer his questions before he had a chance to ask them, and as the workouts went on, Daniel gained more faith in me. I trained with him several times a week for 2 months; after that, he felt confident that he had developed a good routine and we parted ways.

*Challenging Charlie Challenges*

The Challenging Charlie doesn't converse easily. Your questions will be met with one-word answers. They've often done some research before meeting you and want to test you before they commit.

I love it when clients educate themselves, but the problem is that their research isn't always accurate. Setting out a long-term plan for a Challenging Charlie is difficult due to lack of information and commitment. He may stop you midway through your description to remind you that he hasn't signed up for anything yet.

*Challenging Charlie Solutions*

Because Challenging Charlies have usually had bad experiences in the past, it's important to take your time to educate them about how your approach will be different. Often, educating them about what you're doing, and why, helps convince them of your value.

Challenging Charlies need relevant information – and noticeable results – to help them overcome their negative history. Before every workout with a Challenging Charlie, take 5 minutes to explain your plan for the day and why you're doing it. Use the Excitation System often and explain how the exercise will move him closer to his goal. That's the first step. Then as he begins to notice improvement, he'll begin to relax and trust in you as a trainer. When you take this approach, a Challenging Charlie will develop faith in you and become easier to motivate and train.

**THE QUIET ASSASSIN**

Quiet Assassins kick butt! They come in the gym and give you 100 percent every time. It doesn't matter how their day went – and this is convenient because they'll never talk about their day. The typical Quiet Assassin never speaks about anything other than the workouts and, even then, words are few and far between. Getting to know Quiet Assassins (or even gathering information about their work, family, or social life) is like pulling teeth. (With luck, over time the client will become more comfortable and become an Assiduous Monster.)

*Primary Characteristics of the Quiet Assassin*

The typical Quiet Assassin is:

- Private, even shy.
- Motivated.
- Introspective.

*A Real-Life Quiet Assassin*

My client, Lin, was a 28-year-old engineer who had been working with another trainer at the club. Besides her exercise history I knew little about her life, other than the fact she had two parents and a sister who got married midway through her training. (I only knew about her sister because she told me about the wedding 2 days before she took a week off from training.)

I've never had a client who worked harder than Lin, but she said little

during our sessions. I spoke a lot during the workouts, giving her instruction and background information on the exercises, and shared anecdotes to break the silence. Lin's response was always a nod and occasionally, a smile.

After training her 2 times a week for a full year, Lin gave me a holiday card that surprised me. She poured her heart out in that card, and thanked me for getting her through a really hard time in her career and personal life. She said that she always looked forward to the quiet motivation and Zen-like atmosphere of our workouts and thanked me for my professionalism and knowledge.

Lin had been listening all along. After that first year, Lin's demeanor changed. She still worked her butt off but spoke with me during breaks. She seemed more comfortable than she had been before, and continued to train with me until I left the gym to work at our new facility.

To this day, I don't know what was going on in Lin's life. I admit it was none of my business! My job was to give Lin a great workout every time. I provided her with a service and if she wanted it to be silent, I had to accept that. I still did my job and described my short- and long-term plans to make sure we were on the same page. I also spent the time and detailed the importance of her exercises. But it was only later that I discovered I had made a difference – she was simply too mentally drained from her personal life to interact with me.

*Quiet Assassin Challenges*

It's hard to gather information about the Quiet Assassin, which makes establishing a relationship difficult. Every workout is like a bad first date. You will receive one-word answers to every question that you ask the Quiet Assassin, and he probably won't ever ask anything about you.

Since you never quite know where the Quiet Assassin's head is, programming in long-term progression is difficult. They may not tell you how long they want to train with you and getting a grasp on the Quiet Assassin's goals can also be tough. As a result, you may struggle with designing your workout sessions. In addition, any scheduled rest periods often consist of awkward silences broken only by one-word answers to your questions. Quiet Assassins make you second-guess yourself, and they're hard to retain as clients because of the difficulty in creating a solid bond with them.

*Quiet Assassin Solutions*

The best advice that I can give when dealing with arguably the most challenging client type is this: "stay the course." Quiet Assassins often have issues that they're dealing with and see the gym as an oasis. It's important for you, as their

trainer, to not get offended when they don't share any information about their personal lives with you. Your job is to give them great workouts and to educate them. Don't get frustrated about the lack of feedback you may get; focus on challenging them in the gym to keep them coming back.

Keep in mind that once they've battled through their personal issues, Quiet Assassins may eventually open up to you. Then you may find out that they're grateful for the help you've given them. At that stage, they're likely to remain loyal clients.

## THE KNOW-IT-ALL

Initially the Know-it-All may be your most challenging client. He's probably been exercising for years and will tell you that he just wants a program to follow. He's convinced that he can already perform all of the exercises and won't need to spend much time with you. He'll often give one-word answers to your questions and he will seem closed off to conversation. Know-it-Alls usually don't seek a trainer on their own but are referred to me by a friend or family member.

### *Primary Characteristics of the Know-it-All*

The typical Know-it-All is:

- Well-informed about exercise (or at least believes he is).
- Authoritative.
- Unwilling to admit his shortcomings.

### *A Real-Life Know-it-All*

Phil came to me after I trained his daughter before her wedding. She'd bought her parents an introductory pack of training sessions, but warned me that her dad would be a challenge to work with. Phil had been active his entire life. Now retired, he did 3 days of weights and 1 or 2 days of light aerobic activity each week despite having sciatic pain, knee pain, and shoulder pain and stiffness.

I was prepared for Phil to be a Know-it-All because his daughter had told me he'd be more interested in showing me what he already does than listening to my instruction. And Phil was, by definition, a Know-it-All. He hardly let me introduce myself before giving me a complete run down of his self-prescribed program. I let him speak but took careful notes so that I could refer to them later.

Once Phil was done, I did an assessment so I could gather as much

information as possible before attempting to correct his faults. The assessment showed that Phil suffered from numerous imbalances in addition to pre-diagnosed arthritic pain in his knees and left shoulder. His lower back pain seemed to be a result of hip immobility, which had been worsened by doing hundreds of crunches every day he worked out.

After his assessment, I sat down with Phil. I first laid out the positives in his self-prescribed workout. After “pumping his ego” a bit, I went into detail about his lack of mobility and why it was causing him pain. Finally, I congratulated him on staying active throughout the years and into his retirement.

This is called the “sandwich” technique. In short, it’s sandwiching the trait you want to change between two things that the trainee already does well. I told Phil that I wanted to spend the entire first hour making him comfortable with a full dynamic stretching routine that he was to do before exercise. I didn’t think he was happy about it, but he agreed.

I must have asked Phil 20 times throughout his first workout how he felt. I wanted to make the sensation of stretching emotional for him so that he could connect to it later. After the first workout, I could tell that Phil was reluctant to continue. To my surprise, when he came back 3 days later he had completed the prescribed warm-up before we met.

I took 10 minutes to explain the initial anatomical adaptation phase, and Phil immediately started to fit his self-prescribed workout into my initial phase. He was trying to prove his worth by showing that he had developed a similar program, so I decided to utilize a different method. I told him the name of each exercise, and asked him to show it to me. If he didn’t know what it was, mission accomplished! He was now ready for me to teach it to him start to finish.

If he did know the exercise, I used the sandwich technique to pick out part of exercise that Phil executed well. I then gave him a suggestion, and finally, added another aspect that he was doing well. For example, on the squat, I noted that his heels stayed down. I then told him to keep his shoulders back and lower himself down in a more controlled manner, and added that his breathing was good.

Phil’s biggest problem was his pride. He had been working out for 45 years, so what could a 24-year-old trainer teach him? My goal was to gain his respect, which gave him a reason to listen to me. During the first session, I made him listen to my explanation on the importance of stretching and spent a full hour teaching him the proper form. That initial hour established a clear line of authority that, up until that point, wasn’t there. In our second session, I showed him that I valued his knowledge but wasn’t afraid to correct him when necessary.

After our initial 3 sessions, Phil bought a package of 10 more on his own.

He still wanted to design his own program, but now he knew he needed some help. It may not have been a perfect solution, but at least Phil realized the importance of my coaching and we were able to work together.

*Know-it-All Challenges*

The Know-it-All usually comes to you because of someone else, not because he really wants to train with you. He may not view you as an authority or respect your knowledge, and therefore he's less likely to listen to what you have to say. I've found that Know-it-Alls are more interested in showing *me* how they do things before I attempt to instruct them.

You also don't have much time to make an impression with Know-it-Alls; their attention span is short and they probably don't see the value in the initial meeting. Most of the time, they'll only come for a session or 2, which means you have to educate them on your value during that time.

*Know-it-All Solutions*

Keep in mind that Know-it-Alls aren't trying to be rude or disrespectful. They just don't see the value in training with you, so you have to prove yourself. Always listen to what the Know-it-All tells you before trying to sell him on your system. Second, make sure that you establish yourself as the authority figure. Show him that you're not afraid to seize control and gain his respect. Third, make sure that you ask for his opinions and make him an integral part of the training process. When you reiterate the good points of his previous work, he'll be more open to you addressing his weaknesses.

**APATHETIC ANNE**

Apathetic Anne is uncomfortable in the gym and usually doesn't want to be there in the first place. Like the Know-it-All, Apathetic Anne probably came to you not of her own volition, but either because her family pushed her to exercise or her doctors suggested it. Apathetic Annes are usually shy and reluctant to divulge too much information to you. They also don't want to spend one more second in the gym than they have to.

*Primary Characteristics of the Apathetic Anne*

The typical Apathetic Anne is:

- Reticent, even shy.

- New to exercise.
- Unsure of her ability.

*A Real-Life Apathetic Anne*

Remember Cindy and Pam from chapter 5? Helen was one of the clients they referred to me. Helen's doctor had repeatedly advised her to start an exercise program since she had severe chronic low back pain, was peri-osteoporotic, and had low energy, which was possibly due to abnormally low blood pressure.

When Helen finally came in, my primary goal for our initial meeting was to make her feel comfortable. I'd already spoken to our receptionist and asked her to make sure to greet Helen and make small talk with her when she came in. When I sat down with her a few minutes later, we spoke in detail about her medical history and concerns. I then told her about my background, using examples of people I'd helped who had similar issues. I took her on a tour of our facility so she would know where everything was.

Helen agreed to meet me once a week, but would only commit to 3 sessions up front. Those 3 sessions turned into 10. When she completed those, she bought another pack of 20 sessions, and next, 50 sessions. After all her hard work, Helen's serious back pain disappeared and she regained her overall strength. She loves coming into the gym now and will stay to chat with the receptionist for 20 minutes before leaving.

What worked with Helen was making sure the gym was a place where she would receive gentle encouragement in a comfortable, non-intimidating environment. As she progressed, Helen gained not only strength, but also confidence and self-efficacy. She is now a dedicated exerciser.

*Apathetic Anne Challenges*

There are two main challenges with an Apathetic Anne. First, she is probably uncomfortable at the gym. Second, this client is almost always a beginner and has little or no exercise experience.

*Apathetic Anne Solutions*

When you encounter an Apathetic Anne, remember to step back and focus on making her feel comfortable. She probably hasn't come to a gym before because of the intimidation factor. When you first meet this client, make sure to listen to her carefully and start the workouts in a private space. Tell her a little bit about yourself to help her connect with you on a more personal basis. When you focus

on making her feel comfortable, she'll gain confidence and may turn into a long-time client.

**ALISON AVERSE**

The Alison Averse client has never enjoyed exercise. Allison Averses are likely to have tried (and failed) a number of different programs in the past. They may have previously worked with a trainer, taken group exercise classes, or tried the latest fad programs in the past, but nothing has worked for them.

*Primary Characteristics of the Alison Averse*

The typical Apathetic Anne is:

- Skeptical about exercise.
- Struggling with motivation.
- Doubtful of her ability to become and stay fit.

*A Real-life Alison Averse*

Ruth had tried working out on 3 occasions before we met. She had first joined a gym 15 years prior, but quit training after 3 months due to family issues. Five years after that, she joined another gym and signed up for an exercise class where she tweaked her back. She was immobilized for 2 days. Needless to say, she didn't continue. Then, 2 years later, she tried a local Curves chain but didn't stick with it.

When our new Body + Soul Fitness branch opened near her house, she decided to give exercise another try. She was motivated and open to suggestions. She wanted results and trusted that I would help her get them. However, Ruth had developed a number of bad habits through her previous gym experiences. After her assessment, I told her I wanted to be extra careful to ensure proper form and activation before we progressed. I didn't give Ruth a timeline, but I did tell her that I'd give her homework and if she completed it diligently, she'd progress quickly.

It took 6 quick weeks to groove her motor patterns well enough that I felt comfortable pushing Ruth. After that, she progressed quickly. She started a power program and she picked up exercises like the deadlift, clean and press, and squat well. Today, Ruth is still working out 6 days/week and has surpassed all of her original fitness goals.

*Alison Averse Challenges*

The typical Alison Averse is usually open to suggestions from you. Because she's failed in the past, she may realize that she needs help to get in shape. However, most Alison Averses have bad exercise or eating habits. One of the things you'll want to communicate to an Alison Averse is the value of correcting bad habits before she can progress. She may also lack long-term motivation because she's probably never stuck with an exercise program for more than a few weeks.

*Alison Averse Solutions*

The key point in dealing with an Alison Averse is establishing trust. Laying out a long-term plan with the Alison Averse also helps create motivation. Because she's probably fallen off of the wagon before, this helps her feel confident she'll be able to stick with a program. With an Alison Averse, you need to really listen to what her goals are (remember, she may not share her deep-down goals right away) and show her that you are there to help her meet those goals. Helping her learn to enjoy exercise will also help ensure that she overcomes her negative attitude toward working out and make her a lifelong exerciser.

**AEROBICS ALICE**

The Aerobics Alice doesn't care about form. She wants to look good and *feel* each workout, but she's not interested in detailed explanations of exercises, workouts, or the physiology behind them. The Aerobics Alice has already been active by taking exercise classes or working out with friends. She'll typically see you as a tool for quicker results and will hold you accountable if she doesn't get them.

*Primary Characteristics of the Aerobics Alice*

The typical Aerobics Alice is:

- Already a regular exerciser.
- Expecting fast (perhaps unrealistic) results.
- Hooked on group exercise or cardio workouts.

*A Real-Life Aerobics Alice*

Rebecca had been training in our gym for a while before I started to work with her. She had just had her third child in 4 years; her upper body was relatively

strong but her legs and core were weak. After speaking with me, she agreed to an initial 5 sessions.

I told Rebecca that I wanted to focus on her posterior chain and rebuild her pelvic floor. After the first 2 sessions, Rebecca mentioned that she wanted the workouts to be faster-paced. I made the mistake of pretending not to hear, and continued training her the same way. But when the initial 5 sessions were up, Rebecca didn't want to continue training with me. I did chat with her when I saw her at the gym, and complimented her when I saw her doing the leg exercises I'd given her.

To my surprise, Rebecca approached me again 2 months later. She said she wanted to train more seriously, but I took a hard stance by only agreeing to train her if she committed to a minimum of sessions. After I laid out my plan, she agreed – and the results were mind-blowing.

Rebecca had a strong training base and now I had her commitment. In addition, Rebecca was willing to train 6 times a week. I saw her twice a week and made sure that she was following my program the other 4 days. Within a month, Rebecca was accepting compliments left, right, and center concerning her physique.

After she finished her 20 sessions, Rebecca couldn't afford to continue working with me. But she went back to group classes armed with an extensive toolkit of exercise knowledge. As a result, she was able to perform the movements properly in the group exercise classes and maintained her fabulous results. I stayed in touch with Rebecca even after she moved to a different facility. After a year, she returned for another 20 sessions with me for an extra push again.

In retrospect, I could have dealt with Rebecca better. I ignored her early comment instead of taking the time to explain myself. I also should have recognized that Rebecca was inevitably going to return to group exercise after the 20 sessions, and I should have prepared her better. Instead of losing Rebecca as a client for a full year, I may have been able to keep her on an irregular but ongoing basis.

*Aerobics Alice Challenges*

The Aerobics Alice client forces you to walk a fine line. Focus too much on form and you'll lose her, but focus too little on form and she may get injured. Without proper form, progression is impossible, which makes it hard to improve beyond a certain point. This leaves you in a difficult position.

The Aerobics Alice often has bad habits to address as well. It's not

uncommon to re-teach exercises weekly. The Aerobics Alice may also want to work out with friends between sessions, which can make it hard for her to stick to a routine. Therefore workout adherence between sessions may be low.

*Aerobics Alice Solutions*

There are two basic approaches to take with a typical Aerobics Alice client. You may want to recognize that your client will go back to group exercise classes or working out with friends, and prepare her for it. Add some aspects of group exercise into your workouts and focus on proper form, and you may be able to keep the client on an irregular but continuing basis, such as once a week or even once a month.

The second approach is to take a hard-line approach. If you think that Aerobics Alice would benefit more from your training than from what she was previously doing, tell her. Just keep in mind that it's her goals that matter, not yours.

If you do take this approach, it has to be an all-or-nothing conversation. You cannot bend on your opinion of the most effective way to train. If she refuses to buy in after you've extolled the benefits of your system, move on. But I've found that often clients respect the hard-line approach because you have their goals in mind and are holding true to your values as a trainer.

**BUSY BILL**

Time is the issue with the Busy Bill. He runs in on his cell phone and rushes out the minute the workout is done. Sometimes during the workout he'll even stop to take a call. This client understands the value of working out and usually wishes that he could be more consistent. Most Busy Bills have trouble committing to recurring sessions every week, and are lucky to get in 2 workouts in a week. Busy Bills often cancel regularly, and don't know when they can reschedule.

*Primary Characteristics of the Busy Bill*

The typical Busy Bill is:

- Over-scheduled.
- Attached to his smart phone.
- Inflexible.

*A Real-Life Busy Bill*

Ed started training with me when his other trainer left our club. I had always seen him working hard and was excited to take him on as a client. Ed had been working out for years and possessed a wide knowledge of different exercises and had solid form. His previous trainer warned me not to give him my cell phone number, which I thought was odd. After receiving numerous emails and text messages between the hours of 2:00 and 5:00 a.m., I knew why.

My training with Ed started off great. I got him back on track, and laid out a long-term plan for him that he was excited about. The first 3 months went by well. Ed started to monitor his eating, cut down on his alcohol consumption, and diligently completed his cardio. He was losing inches and gaining strength, but then work started to take over Ed's life.

He was involved in a nasty legal battle over a business, and making time for exercise became close to impossible. When he did make it in, his attention was elsewhere. The stress caused him to increase his alcohol consumption, and the gains he had made over the past 3 months disappeared quickly.

I was frustrated, but I wanted Ed to stay active during a difficult time in his life. So, I decided to switch our focus. I gave him 2 simple 30-minute workouts and some homework. Every time he was feeling stressed or overwhelmed, he could come into the gym on his own and complete the workouts. My goal was to make the gym his sanctuary. In the meantime, I cancelled all of our organized sessions and told him to call me if he wanted to book a session.

Ed made it to the gym an average of twice a week during that difficult stage of his life and met with me once every 2 to 3 weeks. This lasted for nearly 5 months before the legal issue was resolved. During that time, he didn't make any progress, but he did continue working out, which was my primary goal.

*Busy Bill Challenges*

Getting the Busy Bill results is difficult. They work out sporadically so any programmed progression is close to impossible. In addition, because their lives are so busy, stress gets in the way of regular workouts. The typical Busy Bill's eating habits are usually sub-par and a weakened immune system due to stress may cause frequent illnesses. From a scheduling point of view, he can be frustrating because of the frequent cancellations.

*Busy Bill Solutions*

First, don't overwhelm a Busy Bill. Busy Bills have enough stress and having another appointment to keep doesn't help. If the stress is due to an acute problem

(for example, an important work project), give them space. Keep in touch on a friendly basis but be careful not to bug them.

If your Busy Bill's life is always going to be stressful, there are a couple ways to deal with it. The first is to do a mini-assessment every time the client walks in. His physical and mental state will be a wild card. Some days he will come in relaxed, and excited for a break in his routine. Other days he may be so stressed he can hardly move. It's important to read your Busy Bill and take as much time as needed for an appropriate warm-up and cool-down to let his nervous system recover after working out.

The second way to ensure success in overscheduled clients is to give homework. I'll often advise them to buy a foam roller and mat for their house. Twenty minute of foam rolling, even if it's before bed, will help them feel good when they can't get to the gym and give them something to look forward to.

Finally, if a Busy Bill refuses to leave his cell phone in the change room, I always hold it during the workout. If someone calls, I tell him who it is and ask if he needs to take the call. That way he only answers the important calls, and can let others leave messages.

## MEET YOUR CLIENTS' NEEDS

Note that the above list of ten is only a sampling of the types of clients you're likely to work with. As you gain experience, you'll probably identify plenty more.

Just remember that the beautiful part of our job is encountering many different people and working with them to achieve their goals. Your job will change based on the needs of your clients, and their goals are your first priority. Sometimes it takes hard work, sometimes creativity, and sometimes you may even be forced to bend – but not break – from your training style. Do whatever is necessary to get results for your clients.

## POINTS TO REMEMBER

- While every client is different, most fall into general categories. Understanding each of those "types" will help you train your clients effectively.
- Listen closely to your clients, and pay attention to their body language when you meet and work with them. They'll help you identify what type of client they are.
- You should be willing to bend your training philosophies without breaking them to help your clients.

# 10 IN-HOUSE RELATIONS

## *Working as Part of a Team*

> "*Dealing with people is probably the biggest problem you face, especially if you are in business. Yes, and that is also true if you are a housewife, architect, or engineer.*"
>
> — DALE CARNEGIE

As a personal trainer, you don't interact with many different people over the course of a day. There are your clients, of course, with whom you'll work either in a 1-on-1 or group setting. Your clients may come and go, but your fellow staff members (your manager, fellow trainers, receptionists, and other employees) change less frequently. It's paramount to get along with your coworkers whether you work in a large club or smaller facility.

### THE ADVANTAGE OF STAYING PUT

Before we talk about developing relationships with coworkers, though, let me share a piece of advice an early mentor gave me: *Find a great gym that you're comfortable in and stay there.*

I have seen many trainers throw away the reputation they've worked hard to build for what they think is a great opportunity at another gym. It then takes them at least 4 to 5 months to build up a new clientele. Remember, a good reputation takes years to develop, and there are no shortcuts.

Take a trainer I used to work with, who had a great reputation. He spent 30 – 35 hours/week training a solid client base – clients to whom he'd already given free initial sessions. When he was offered a position closer to home to start a training program at a 24-hour fitness facility, and a chance to buy into the business, he took the new job. His plan was to train fewer hours but make up for his loss of training time by taking a cut of the other trainers' pay as a co-owner of the business. However, he had left his dedicated clientele and reputation to start over in a new neighborhood.

He went a full year earning very little money trying to get this business off the ground. However, the new business went bankrupt and the trainer had no choice but to work at a big box gym earning a lower hourly rate than before. He once again had to develop a reputation and regular clients. All in all, it took him 2 full years to fill his schedule from the time he left our club.

You will encounter adversity, but it's up to you to rise above it. By staying in one place, your reputation will grow and you'll spend less time selling as people learn who you are. If you're not happy with some aspect of where you work, you're probably better off addressing it than to jump ship to a new gym.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*Stability in the personal training business is essential and shouldn't be sacrificed without carefully considering your options. Make sure an opportunity is worthwhile before giving up your hard-earned clientele and reputation.*

## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH COWORKERS

Sometimes trainers focus only on the relationships with their clients, or future clients. Don't make that mistake. When you have good relationships with your coworkers, you'll attract more clients and become more successful overall.

Treat all of your coworkers with respect. You don't have to be close friends with everyone you work with, but little things can make a big difference.

For example, when I was a fulltime trainer, I asked all the other staff members (including the receptionist) at my club if they would like coffee when I got some.

The $2 that I spent on a coffee was well worth it. It helped create a strong bond that said, “I respect that you’re working hard and I want to thank you.” Taking note of important events in your coworkers’ lives can also go a long way. For example, I worked with two staff members who were in a band. I attended their local shows, and promoted their music on my various social media outlets. That showed them that I cared about them as individuals and supported them in their endeavors. As a result, they went out of their way to support me.

It would be great if all of the trainers you worked with shared *your* training philosophies and took a similar approach to working with clients, but that’s rarely the case. To thrive at your job, you must be able to work with trainers you disagree with or even envy.

*The Trainer you Envy*

I found myself jealous of other trainers early on in my career, especially those who worked tons of hours and therefore made lots of money. I particularly envied a trainer named Jim, who worked 7 days/week, training 7 to 10 clients/day. Jim didn’t have any high-level formal education and, from what I could see, he didn’t do anything special on the floor. By my estimation, he was making a six-figure living, plus bonuses – for somebody with no formal education, that’s a pretty darn good salary.

Over time, I started to recognize why Jim was so successful. He might not have had any high-level certifications but Jim had been a great attitude. In addition to his 25+ years of experience, he always had a smile on his face, and his presence improved the mood in the room.

I made a point to study Jim to learn the secrets to his success. Jim greeted every person (not just his clients) who walked into the studio with a big hello and smile, as well as hugs, high-fives, and handshakes. He remembered specific details about his clients’ personal lives. I quickly learned that his ability to develop and maintain relationships had made him so successful.

Jim became a mentor to me and I followed him around for months. He taught me the difference between training and coaching, how to focus my energy to survive days that started at 5 a.m. and ended at 9:00 p.m. When he was with a client, he was always “on” but when he was between clients, he would rest. It may have appeared to me at first that he wasn’t doing anything special, but he possessed a skill that most trainers are missing. He was able to coach, and that’s how I learned to do the same thing.

If you are jealous of a trainer, study and learn from that person. *Look at successful people, not with jealousy, but with curiosity*. Identify what has made them successful, and apply those skills to your own life. Don't be afraid to ask someone you admire to serve as your mentor. Even if he says no, you can still watch, learn, and employ the techniques he uses in your own training business.

*The Trainer you Disagree With*

There are many different ways to achieve the same goal, so it's not unusual for you to disagree with coworkers' training methods. How you handle this situation will depend on your position in the gym. If you're a new trainer, often the best course of action is to keep your mouth shut as long as the client isn't in danger.

However, if you feel the client is in danger, you should speak to your manager right away. Unless you're a senior trainer or manager, it's not your place to intervene in another trainer's workouts.

If you feel that you can help the trainer address a problem, approach him privately to ask if he's willing to meet with you for 10 minutes. Most trainers are happy to have you help them fix clients' improper form, for example, if you take a helpful, not insulting approach.

For example, Jack had been a trainer at our club for 5 months. He hadn't been a personal trainer before but had a background in kinesiology and a couple of years of experience in a physiotherapy setting. One day on the floor, I saw Jack instructing a female client on the sumo deadlift. I knew that Jack had never performed the exercise himself (you should never teach an exercise you haven't already performed yourself), so I watched from my office. His client was struggling and he wasn't able to correct her. I immediately knew what the issue was – her grip was too wide and Jack didn't know to tell her to grip the bar inside her legs, not outside of them.

Jack had kept the weight light, and his client's form was good, so I waited until he was finished with the workout. I sent him an email and asked him to meet me the next day to help him with his sumo deadlift instruction. (I was the senior trainer, so I had the authority to book meetings, but I would have asked him to meet me regardless.)

During the meeting, I had Jack watch a couple of YouTube videos of people performing sumo squats correctly so he could see proper form. Jack was happy for the help. He practiced the exercise and the next week, demonstrated the exercise to his client, who was able to perform it properly.

Note that I first made sure that Jack's client was safe. If she had been in any danger, I would have intervened immediately. I then sent Jack a private

message and helped him with the form and instruction without telling another trainer or client. This preserved his pride and kept the lines of communication open.

*The Trainer you Don't Click With*

Finally, you may work with other trainers you don't particularly like. This problem exists in any job and usually the best course of action is to keep your mouth shut.

The reality of personal training is that you don't have to have much, if any, personal interaction with the other trainers. You can go into the gym, meet your clients, train them, and leave. The only interaction that you may have on a daily basis is working around each other on the gym floor. Treat every trainer with respect, but if you really don't care for someone, just stay out of the person's way as much as you can. You needn't make small talk or be "buds" with all of your fellow trainers. Just don't badmouth or gossip about anyone at work – that can turn a personality conflict into a bigger problem.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*You may not agree with, or even like, everyone you work with. But treat everyone with respect, and look for ways to create relationships with your coworkers.*

## MANAGING YOUR MANAGER

In chapter 2, you learned about what to look for when searching for a job. If you're lucky, you'll wind up with a manager you can work well with, but you may not have control over who winds up managing you. If you have the opportunity to choose, however, the key qualities to look for include:

- *Empathy.* A good manager has been a trainer herself and remembers the challenges of it.
- *Understanding of clients' needs.* A good manager knows who the members of the club are, what they want and need, and how to design appropriate workouts for them.
- *Time management skills.* Meetings are essential but can also be huge time-wasters. A good manager respects your time and is prepared for meetings.
- *Personal connection.* Ideally, you'll have a positive relationship with your

manager and legitimately enjoy spending time with her.

- *Leadership.* A good manager is comfortable being the figurehead of the club, and gets along with all of the members there.

While trainers often focus on the negative aspects of their managers, you can always work to improve your relationship with yours. Remember that it's in your manager's best interest for you to succeed, and keep these strategies in mind.

*Identify His Style*

Understanding how your boss likes to manage is essential for a good relationship. Maybe your manager is hands-on and open to conversation all the time. Or maybe he prefers to keep set appointment times in their schedule and does not appreciate guests outside of those times. Know how your manager prefers to communicate – whether in person, on the phone, or through internal or email messages. If you're not sure about his preference, ask him.

*Build Trust*

Every good relationship is grounded in trust. Managers are no different. Always do what you say you will do in the time given. If you don't finish a task, be honest. Lying or making excuses will only make the situation worse. If you've made a mistake, tell your boss immediately and start trouble-shooting. He should never feel as if you are hiding something from him.

The second aspect of trust is to avoid blindsiding your boss. Anything negative you have to say about your workplace should be said directly to him. If your manager finds out that you were speaking negatively about an aspect of the business or if he sees that you are seeking other opportunities, it's likely to hurt your relationship with him.

*Understand His Goals*

Your priorities matter to you, not your boss. Recognize what his goals are and make it known that you are working to help him achieve them. Tell him you want to train 25 hours a week, not to achieve *your* goals, but because the club has set a goal of 1000 hours of training this month.

It's likely your boss has both skills and weaknesses. If you can identify a weakness in your boss' skill set in an area you're knowledgeable about, offer to help. Perhaps your boss doesn't have much experience in post-rehabilitation training for the knee and you are strong in that area. Why not write up a proposal

to your manager offering a workshop to your fellow trainers?

*Communicate your Goals*

We've talked about your manager's goals, but what about yours? Your manager should know what your goals are, too. For example, if you're training the number of hours you want to, and your manager is pushing you to sell more, talk to him to make sure he understands your goals. But keep in mind that your manager's job is to challenge you.

If you are training your desired number of hours, consider ways to make your time more valuable. That may mean developing a specialty, pursuing an additional certification, or offering to take on additional projects for your boss. However, if management seems to want you to train more than you would prefer, you may want to consider whether your goals align with the company's.

On the other hand, if you're not training as much as you want, ask your manager to help you develop a plan to get more clients. That might include canvassing the gym, making phone calls, establishing an Internet presence, or creating relationships in the community. When you set goals that have your manager's buy-in, meeting them will make him happy too.

*Ask for Feedback*

Asking for feedback is one of the most powerful ways to develop a positive relationship. In so doing, your manager immediately assumes the role of not only your boss, but he becomes your mentor as well. Ask for a weekly or biweekly meeting with your boss, and come prepared with pre-written questions or points to discuss.

*Be Professional*

You'll make your manager happy if you take a professional approach to your work. Your clothing should identify you as a personal trainer. Some gyms require uniforms while others have color guidelines (such as wearing all black or a red shirt and black pants). Regardless of what you wear, you should always have clean, new-looking indoor sneakers and nice-looking athletic pants/shorts or khakis, and a collared shirt or nice-looking athletic shirt. Your clients should know instantly that you are a personal trainer.

Remember that some people still think of trainers as rep-counters, not professionals. Combat that idea by presenting yourself as a well-spoken individual. You needn't quote poetry, but make sure you sound intelligent. Speak

slowly and clearly, avoid slang, and listen carefully to your clients when they speak. Even if your clients use slang or improper language, don't follow suit; you never know who might be listening. And never talk about other clients during a session, unless you're sharing a motivating story that you know will help your current client.

During a training session, focus on the client you're training. It's fine to wave or say, "hello" to a client or member during a break in your client's workout, but I suggest you avoid making eye contact with anyone else when your client is performing a set. Don't let yourself be drawn into a conversation with someone else while you're with a client. If you must, glance at your watch, or motion to the clock and say, "break's up, let's go" to your client, or offer to talk to the person after you're finished with your client.

*Make Your Boss Feel Valued*

Finally, remember that everybody is human. Everyone likes to receive sincere compliments. Providing positive recognition to your boss about something he does well makes him feel valued and helps you focus on his positive aspects. For example, if your boss hires a new trainer make sure to congratulate him and tell him you're looking forward to working and growing with the new employee. I can tell you from experience that hiring and staffing a club is the most difficult, time-consuming, and second-guessed aspect of any manager's job.

I've learned a lot from the various managers I've worked with and you can do the same. Be open to criticism, and strive to help your manager succeed. By doing so, you'll become invaluable to him and to your gym.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*You and your manager need each other to succeed. Figure out what he wants and needs from you, and strive to give it to him. When you help him reach his goals, you'll help yourself as well.*

## IS MANAGEMENT FOR YOU?

This is a book about succeeding as a personal trainer, not as a manager of personal trainers. But if you're considering taking on a position as a manager, consider whether it's the right fit – and the right time – for you to do so. According to one of my mentors, you're ready to become a manager when you're ready to celebrate other people's successes. Do you already help team members develop themselves? Are you willing to continue to grow yourself, and

to take the time to learn to become a successful manager?

I made the mistake of transitioning to management too early. I'd been working as a trainer at Body + Soul's new location for about a year when I was promoted to senior manager. Initially I was excited. I admit that what got me most excited about the position was the title. After only 2.5 years working in a gym, I was able to call myself "senior trainer" on my resume. I was so clouded by the opportunity of a promotion that I didn't stop to think for a minute what my new responsibilities were. I was being asked to comment on other trainers' etiquette, to offer my opinion on their training style, and to help new trainers develop their business skills. I was also asked to give my opinion on the new location's direction. I was happy to put in my 2 cents, but I really had nothing to base my decisions on.

As a senior trainer, I was also given access to more detailed information on the day-to-day duties of running a gym, and I had a chance to get a front row seat and watch how a fitness club was run. I put fitness education on the back burner for the time being and focused more on learning the sales and marketing part of the business as well as managing the younger trainers.

I stuck with the senior trainer position for just under 2 years, but I can say now that I wasn't an effective manager. There were a number of projects that I undertook which never came to fruition and I was nervous approaching the trainers if I wasn't happy with them. My age felt like a stumbling block since there were times when I was the youngest trainer by 4 years in the club and yet, I was their senior.

Eventually I realized that I really wanted to focus on personal training, and my manager, Jason, agreed that my strengths were in education, not management. I retained the senior trainer title but my responsibilities shifted and my role became more focused on education and support of trainers rather than overseeing them. At the time, that position was a great fit for my background and skills, and I was much happier now than I was before.

My point is that every manager position may require different responsibilities. To succeed in management, though, consider whether you possess the following:

- Strong relationships. To be a manager, you must always search for the truth. To do so, you need to have information sources outside of the regular chain of command. Having good relationships with the people you work with (including receptionists and support staff) and club members is essential.

- Empathy. The best managers can put themselves in their employees' shoes. It helps if you have worked various jobs within the organization before. Empathy is paramount to your success.
- Listening skills. The best managers are those who listen to their employees. If you're able to listen to coworkers and consider their ideas in addition to your own, you're one step closer to being a good manager.
- Delegation skills. The best managers are able to break down large projects and responsibilities and delegate tasks to others. Make sure you're able to do so; you cannot do everything yourself as a manager.
- Ability to lead by example. If you want your trainers to work hard, you must work hard as well. If you're a dedicated, driven trainer who takes your career seriously, you're more likely to succeed in a managerial role.
- Organizational skills. To succeed as a trainer, you have to be able to maintain client records, remember information, and stay on top of what's happening with dozens of clients. As a manager, your duties are doubled (if not tripled), and organizational skills are a must.

Often management positions are offered to those who excel as trainers, and that's likely to happen to you if you follow the advice in this book. Don't jump at a management position until you're ready for it, though. Make sure that you have the skills you need and a supportive team before you take that leap. [In the next chapter, you'll learn more about how to ask for a promotion.] Also make sure that you understand exactly what your new responsibilities entail, how much you'll be paid, and how many hours you'll be spending at the gym. You may find that a better title doesn't necessarily translate to a better job.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*Successful trainers are often offered manager positions, but this promotion isn't for everyone. Make sure that you know what's expected of you, and that you have the necessary skills to succeed in that role, before you accept a promotion to management.*

## IS IT TIME TO GO?

Yes, this chapter started with excellent advice – find a great gym to work at and stay there. However, it's unlikely that you'll spend your entire career at one place. There are a number of different reasons why you might want to change jobs.

Say you've switched gears in terms of training, and your current gym can't provide you with the equipment for your newfound training focus. Robert, a fellow trainer, used to work at a boutique-style gym with lots of machines and very little open space. As Robert's training style matured, he realized that he enjoyed powerlifting so he moved to a gym that had Olympic lifting equipment.

You may also outgrow your current facility if you want to move up in the industry. Maybe you want to move into management and there's no room for you at your current gym. Or maybe you want to make more money and your gym pays you a lower salary than you think you're worth.

Another factor is that many smaller clubs are being bought out by large organizations. Trainers will often leave after a takeover whether it's due to new management, a cut in pay, or because they prefer to work for a small neighbourhood club, not a large corporation.

Of course there are other reasons to change jobs, too. You may want to move into management to maintain more consistent hours, or decide to relocate. Or you may find that an opportunity comes along that is a better fit for you and your overall goals. Just make sure that you compare the advantages and drawbacks of staying put versus taking a new position *before* you move on.

If you do decide to leave, keep these tips in mind:

- Keep it classy. Even if you're leaving because your manager is a moron (it happens), keep your personal feelings about why you're leaving to yourself. Take the high road and simply say you're leaving for a "better opportunity." To quote my father, "never burn your bridges."
- Be considerate. If you can, give your manager two weeks notice (or more) to make it easier to transition your clients to a new trainer. Share the information you have about your clients, their needs, and their goals to help match them with new trainers who will be able to help them.
- Tread carefully. Many gyms and clubs have anti-competition clauses in their contracts that prevent you from taking clients with you when you move to a new gym for a set period of time. I suggest you honor your contract or you may find yourself in a legal jam. If there's no such contract provision, it's okay (and even expected) to let your clients know that you're leaving, and where you're going – and if they want to follow you there, great.
- Remember last impressions. The last few days at your "old" job, make a point of chatting with the staff and club members. Let them know you'll miss them, and if true, what you learned from them. Everyone wants to feel appreciated and noticed and you want to leave positive impressions at

your old job. You'll find that personal training isn't that large of a field, and you're very likely to work with someone in the future that you've already encountered in the past.

- Highlight your takeaways. You (presumably) learned a lot from the job you're leaving. Make some notes about what you learned, not only about yourself but about what you enjoyed doing there and what you did not. What do you want to do differently in your new job? What worked well for you at your old job that you'd like to repeat? When you look at each job as a step along the path you want to take, you'll reach your goals more quickly.

**POINTS TO REMEMBER**

- Treat all of your coworkers with respect and support them in their work.
- Strive for a positive, open relationship with your manager and make sure that each of you understands the other's goals. Your success is tied to his success, and vice-versa.
- Consider your skills and the pros and cons of a managerial position before you accept a promotion.

SECTION

# 3

# Growing your Personal Training Business

# 11 GET MORE GREEN

## *Making More Money as a Trainer*

*"I have a problem with too much money. I can't reinvest it fast enough, and because I reinvest it, more money comes in. Yes, the rich do get richer."*

— ROBERT KIYOSAKI

While you got into training because you had a passion for it, I'm sure you'd like to make a decent living pursing the work you love. In this chapter, you'll learn about how to make more money as a trainer, regardless of where you work.

The pay range for personal trainers can range greatly depending on the socioeconomics of a gym's neighbourhood and a trainer's qualifications. Generally trainers who work for a fitness club make a lower annual salary than ones who are successfully self-employed. Canadian stats are hard to locate, but according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, as of 2012, U.S. personal trainers

average about $31,720. Their average hourly wage is about $15.25/hour.

Keep in mind that these figures represent a wide range in income. The lowest 10 percent of trainers average $17,630 while the highest 90 percent are making more than $66,500/year. That's a huge difference.

Of course what really matters to you is how much you are making. As a new trainer, you may not have a lot of say negotiating your starting salary, but understand your starting salary is just that – a starting point. As you gain experience and increase your value, you can ask for – and get – more money whether you're paid an hourly rate or a salary. As you'll see, salary from training is just one piece of the puzzle.

## BOOSTING YOUR VALUE

The fact is that not all trainers are alike. The more experience and education you have, the more money you're likely to make. Yet a lot of trainers neglect personal development. That's a big mistake.

Even early on, I understood the importance of education, and made it a rule to read for an hour a day, every day, Monday through Friday. (If I wasn't able to do it during the week, I made up the time on weekends.) I read everything from science textbooks to journal articles to training manuals to books on business and sales.

The more I learned from books that I could apply (and did apply) to my work as a trainer, the more successful I became. In fact, my business grew exponentially, and my manager started to groom me for more senior roles at the club – even though I was a relatively young trainer. In addition, I started to train some of the newly hired trainers and I continued to gain respect from the people I worked with – all because I took the time to educate myself and continued to learn.

Nothing in this world can replace education. It's up to you to take advantage of the fabulous wealth of resources available. You must catch, cradle and use the power that education gives you for a successful career.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*Continue to read, learn, and educate yourself to boost your value both to your employer and your clients. Remember that educating yourself about business, as well as training, will help you become successful.*

## PROVING YOUR WORTH

The next step of boosting your value is getting your employer to recognize it. It's relatively simple to do this – make yourself indispensable. You want to make your company need you more than you need your company.

I've found one of the best ways to do this is to get to know your clients, and other gym members, on a personal basis. You know that you've done a good job with this when members of your club come to you with complaints or concerns to pass on to management. Not only have you become a trusted person to those members – you've also become a resource for market-level research for your managers. In other words, you can gather information when you're out on the floor that you can share with your bosses.

Another way to demonstrate your value is to offer to serve as a mentor to fellow trainers. (You may want to ask your manager for permission to do this first.) Providing newer trainers with informational coaching sessions provides an extra benefit to the organisation. It also helps create a hierarchy, with you at the top of the pyramid.

You may be surprised to learn that offering consistent, honest feedback also goes a long way to proving your value. Most employees are worried that saying anything negative to a manager will reflect on them, but that's not the case. When you are honest, you make your manager's job easier. All of the managers I've worked for have thanked me for being upfront and candid and giving them information they may not have otherwise been able to access.

## BRAD SCHOENFELD INSIDE INFO

Brad Schoenfeld phd, cscs, fnsca has over 400,000 books in print with 8+ different titles. He is widely regarded as a leading authority on body composition training.

Brad originally obtained a bachelors degree and followed it up with a medical imaging certificate from vocational school. He worked at a family medical business, earned a master's degree in exercise science, and has now achieved a doctorate.

His fitness career started with a short stint doing in-home training. He found it inefficient and opened his own facility. Most of his time is now spent teaching at the college/graduate level and conducting workshops for fitness professionals.

The majority of his marketing has been through word of mouth, appearances in major media, and through his blog.

**BRAD'S 3 KEYS TO SUCCESS IN THE FITNESS INDUSTRY ARE:**

① **Be knowledgeable.** Everything starts with good knowledge of the science of exercise. If you don't know what you're doing, you not only won't get people proper results, you could hurt them. You need to be a student of the craft, constantly seeking to acquire more

knowledge. Read the research. Go to conferences. Further your education. Learning never stops, no matter how much schooling you've had.

② **Communicate effectively.** No matter how knowledgeable you are, you won't be a good trainer unless you communicate properly with your clients. The essence of communication is listening. Learn to be a good listener, and you're halfway there. The other half is knowing what motivates your client and responding in a manner that will inspire.

③ **Have confidence**. When you train a client, confidence is paramount. If a client senses you aren't confident in your approach, you're done. It's imperative that everything you do is done with conviction. Sadly, a lot of bad trainers are very successful because they ooze confidence.

**BRAD'S WORDS TO LIVE BY:**

*"If you are good and you display confidence, you have a leg up on most."*

*You can learn more about Brad Schoenfeld*
*at www.workout911.com*

When you make your manager's job easier, you prove your value. Do anything in your power to help your manager out. If it means staying later to help clean the club because the regular cleaning person is sick, do it. If it means answering phones while the receptionist is on a coffee break, do it. Showing that you're willing to go above and beyond your assumed duties will set you apart from the other trainers. Always remember that your manager usually has *his* own manager or boss (even the owner or CEO) that he's trying to look good for. When you make your boss look good, *you* look good.

Your goal in teaching a class like this is to attract new clients (and revenue) to the gym. Take a close look around the club where you work, and consider what type of clients the gym is attracting. Then think about your background and how you might reach people that the club isn't targeting. After you've come up with a class idea and some marketing tactics, talk to your manager about it. This will demonstrate your willingness to give the extra 10 percent that will set you apart from other trainers.

## ASKING FOR MORE MONEY

In some instances, your employer may recognize how valuable you've become and offer you a raise or promotion (or both). Most of the time, though, you'll have to ask for it. First, request a meeting with your boss, preferably first thing in the morning or right after lunch (people are more open to suggestion if they are well-fed). Tell your boss that the meeting is about professional development.

Second, prepare. If you're asking for a raise, you should know what your

gym (and similar ones) pay trainers with your expertise and experience. If you're asking for a promotion, you should know whether your gym is expanding and which positions may be available. If you want to create a position, you should have a good overview of what that position will look like. For example, you might suggest creating a new position of "continuing education coach" which would make you responsible for all of the workshops and continuing education materials for the other trainers.

Gather all relevant information and statistics for this meeting. How many hours have you trained? What certifications do you have? What "extra" work have you done (for example, mentoring other trainers) that has made your supervisor's job easier?

If you're asking for a promotion, list specific ideas of how you will help the organization in your new position. Do you want to launch new programs to hit a so-far-untapped clientele? Do you see trainers struggling on the floor and think you can help them? Do you think your supervisor is overwhelmed and a promotion would let you take some work off of her hands? Type up your "pitch," and have it ready to present at the meeting. Finally, brainstorm follow-up questions that your manager may ask so you're ready for them.

During the meeting itself, focus on how you will be able to help the organization through your aforementioned ideas. List some areas of improvement at your gym, and describe how you would address them to benefit the organization. Make sure your passion rings through.

Expect some follow-up questions and be prepared to answer them. Don't bring up a specific raise yet – wait for your supervisor to do it. You want to make sure that he comprehends the additional value you bring to the table *before* talking money.

At the end of the meeting, thank your supervisor for his time. If your request for a raise or promotion is denied, ask why. Determine how you can address any weaknesses your manager points out, and continue to do your best work. Chances are that now that you've planted the seed, your manager will pay more attention to the great work you're doing and you're likely to get a raise or promotion next time you ask.

**BLOGGING FOR BUSINESS**

Perhaps I'm biased, but I believe that every trainer should have a blog. Whether you ever intend to sell anything through it or not, it's still a great idea for a few reasons.

First, writing about a subject is the best way to learn. Structuring a

concept into words that make sense on a page forces you to think and analyze.

Before the PTDC, I had a blog. It was for me. It was terrible by conventional blog standards both in the quality of writing and design. However, I attribute a lot of my development to my early, terrible blog. I learned more not only about the subjects I was writing about, but what kinds of posts attracted readers, comments, and feedback.

You can read and study and make notes for yourself but if you truly want to learn, make notes for somebody else. That's what improves your grasp of a subject. And as you do so, you become an expert – and you become thought of an as expert.

In addition to using a blog as a study tool, it's also a fantastic promotional tool for trainers looking to build your clientele. I'm not talking about the Internet lifestyle blogger who garners thousands upon thousands of hits a day – developing a blog of that size is beyond the scope of this book. Your blog should be a place where friends, family members, and clients go to learn. It doesn't need to be innovative and it doesn't need to get more than a 100 hits a week. Write to help your target clientele, not to impress other coaches.

Think of your blog as your home base. It's where people will go to learn more about you. It's a nice way for somebody who heard from a friend that you're awesome can learn about you before calling or emailing you. If a potential client has been secretly reading your blog posts for a few weeks before contacting you, the sales meeting will go much smoother as well.

Finally, a blog is a great place to promote existing clients. One of my favorite things when I was a trainer was to celebrate my client's achievements publicly on my site. With her permission, write about her progression from inactivity to a body weight deadlift or tell the story about how he was able to quit taking diabetes medication as a result of exercise. These stories are great for enhancing retention and are fantastic as promotional tools.

I encourage you to start a blog for you. At least initially, don't do it for any other reason than to learn better. But you don't have to do it alone. [To help you get your blog up and running literally overnight (and as close to free as possible), my team and I produced a free e-book called *Start a Fitness Blog Blueprint*. You can get your copy at **www.theptdc.com/start-a-fitness-blog/**]

A blog can also produce extra income in the following ways:

- *Product/affiliate programs.* As you will see below, affiliate commissions are big business, and you can make up to 75 percent of the purchase price on informational products. This makes for a huge opportunity if you have

a trusted voice among readers – they're more likely to buy products you recommend. Almost every major fitness, nutrition, and book company has an affiliate program these days; the easiest to implement are ones like Amazon.com and Perform Better but these offer relatively low commissions. I suggest you only agree to affiliate commissions for programs or products you personally believe in; your readers and clients should be able to trust your recommendations. It's also important to read the affiliate contract carefully as the companies' agreements can vary quite a bit from one another.

- *Advertising.* Advertising on your blog or Website can also produce some passive income. Google ads are the most common form of online advertising but some companies will pay a monthly or yearly fee for banner ads or links within embedded text on your page. Remember your integrity, though, and don't promote anything you don't personally believe in.
- *Opportunities to write for pay.* As you gain experience writing your blog, you may also decide to pursue writing for online or print markets. Writing articles can help you build your name and make a little extra money as well. There are hundreds of online and print markets that cover fitness-related topics, so identify possible markets and pitch ideas if you're interested in this route. Magazines can be a great way to give you some exposure, but they're inundated with trainers who want to write for them so it can be difficult to get assignments. For most trainers, it's a bad option. Magazines don't care about you and typically don't pay that well, so you lose money by writing for them (because you're spending time you could be training clients working on articles). Unless they offer exposure to a particular client base you're trying to reach – or you want to build a bigger "name" for yourself, I suggest you skip writing for magazines. Write for a publication once so you can say, "as seen in Magazine X," and move on.

## OTHER WAYS TO PRODUCE INCOME

Working by the hour, whether for a club or as a self-employed trainer, you're unlikely to make a 6-figure income. And if you're paid by the hour, time off means no money coming in. (If you're salaried, you may be offered paid vacation and/or holidays.) So it's not surprising that many trainers turn to other sources of income to help boost what they make.

While the average salary for a trainer is considerably lower, if you think

proactively it's not difficult to make $100,000+/year. The fitness industry is arguably the most profitable industry in the world, and as a trainer, you have unlimited opportunities as a trusted source of information on health and fitness. Companies are paying larger and larger commissions for referrals every day, and I believe that this trend will continue.

I've outlined some of the ways to produce passive income as a trainer below.

However, let me say something first. Be very careful selecting the products and programs you promote. It takes years to build up a good reputation and seconds to ruin it. *No amount of money is worth risking your reputation.* I get asked daily to embed links onto my sites for as much as $100 a month (for 2 words.) and I say no because I don't know anything about the products being advertised.

Remember that your reputation is your #1 priority. Once you start working as a trainer, you will be faced with "opportunities" to promote things with the promise of riches for very little work. There are a host of multi-level marketing companies that exist and friends of yours will try to get you involved. Think long and hard before following this path. I'm not telling you not to do it, but know that I've turned down every multi-level marketing opportunity and with my network, I've likely got a lot more money to gain than you would.

If you want to make more money, you can increase the number of customers you have, increase the income per customer, or increase the number of transactions per customer. Too much emphasis is often put on getting more customers when it should be placed on serving existing customers better. Before deciding that you need more clients, consider different ways to serve your existing clients better by providing them more things that they need either directly or through a commission-based referral.

Below is a brief description of ways that you can make more green as a trainer:

**Supplement Reselling.** The most basic agreement is that you act as a wholesaler for a supplement company. You recommend supplements to your clients and buy direct from the company, the client buys from you, and you keep the difference.

On a small scale this works for some trainers. You can choose to deal with a company whose products that you either use yourself or can vouch for. It's a nice way to make some extra pocket change but won't make you rich. Keep these four caveats in mind:

1. You have a responsibility for disclosing the income that you earn to your clients.
2. Educate your clients about other options as well.
3. Depending on where you live, you may have issues with importing supplements and other products to sell.
4. You must be responsible and only recommend what clients need. You could be liable if clients have complications or health issues from the supplements.

**Multi-Level Marketing.** This market has exploded in recent times. The basic set up is that you act as a reseller for supplements (this is the most common) or fitness programs. You make money when others buy the product through your custom store similar to the reseller agreement discussed above. Where it gets interesting, potentially profitable, and often irresponsible is that you attempt to build a "downline" of people who do the same thing as you. When you do, you also get a commission on their sales.

The idea is attractive. What's often not readily apparent (you must read the fine print) is that you have to purchase the product for yourself as well. All programs are different, but participating can represent a significant financial investment on your part.

Still, I know a lot of trainers who make a lot of money with multi-level marketing. Yet I've chosen to ignore all of these "opportunities," so allow me to explain why.

First, the supplements are almost always poor quality. This isn't the case 100 percent of the time, but read the ingredients carefully before basing your reputation on them. Not only are they poor quality but as a reseller you could be held legally accountable for recommending something potentially harmful to a client.

Even if the product is high quality, it's massively overpriced. The reason why the commission structure is so attractive is because the consumer pays too much. You don't want to be put in a situation where a valuable client finds out that the meal replacement shake that you recommended to them is 40 percent higher than a competitor – and you receive a 30 percent commission.

Finally, with any multi-tier marketing program there's a lot of pressure put on resellers to contact everybody that they know and get them involved. Putting pressure on friends and family to get involved in a multi-level marketing business as part of your down-line is an awful way to treat people you care about.

With all of this said, I'm sure that companies exist with good products and fair prices. If you choose to promote products in a structure similar to what I've described above, know that you have a responsibility to ensure high quality and fair pricing and understand what you're getting into before committing. Read the fine print and please do your research.

**Offline Affiliate Sales.** Most fitness equipment companies and stores will offer some sort of commission if you refer people to them. Take the time to walk into the retailers near you and ask about this possibility. Commission is usually 10 to 20 percent of all sales and could be anything from a special discount code that you give your client to simply stating that you referred her when she goes to the store. If your client wants to buy a treadmill, it's a nice way to put some bucks in your pocket and offer a great referral at the same time.

**Online Affiliate Sales.** Online commissions are generally much higher than offline. Fitness equipment companies almost always have an affiliate or trainer/partner program and will offer 10 to 30 percent commissions.

The really high commissions come in when promoting digital materials like e-books and courses. It's become the norm to receive a 50 to 75 percent commission on items like digital recipe books, clean eating guides, and workout programs. If there's a recipe book that you love and want to recommend it to your clients, it's as simple as sharing the book with them via your special link.

With online affiliate sales, full disclosure is very important. You must tell your client that you get a commission if they purchase through your link and should present to them multiple options.

If you have a blog, embedding your commission links into your blog posts are a nice way to make a few extra bucks as well. If there's a company or product that you like, look for a link usually in the footer that says either "affiliate" or "partner" program. The most common and easiest to use affiliate marketplaces are Clickbank and JVZoo.

**Small Group Training.** As a trainer, your time is your most limiting factor when it comes to making money. Training 3 to 5 clients at once still allow a personal touch but you can charge less per-client and still make more per hour.

**Online Training/Program Management** – I've already discussed online training in chapter 2. Program management is another way to offer a type of online training. Your current clients, past clients, and others likely ask you a lot of questions about their workouts. Why not offer a service where, for $49/month (or another fee), you offer "office hours." This means that everybody in the program gets access to you for the same 2 hours (or another time) on Skype each week to ask questions.

This kind of program management serves 4 purposes:

1. It eliminates tons of back and forth emails during the week.
2. It allows you to offer one-on-one support to multiple people at once.
3. It helps you be more efficient with your time.
4. It creates a reliable and consistent income stream.

**E-books.** The cost of producing digital intellectual material is so low that I think every trainer should do it. All it takes is a bit of proactive thinking.

Did you just write an awesome program for a 20-year-old guy who wants to get shredded for the summer? Why not take an extra hour and produce a template of the program for others to follow at the same time? Write 2 to 4 lines describing each exercise and either film or find a video on YouTube with instruction.

Great graphic design is worth the money, but when you're starting you can literally spend $20 on fiverr.com to get somebody to design a cover, make your template look good, and save it into a pdf file for you. You then upload to your blog (for free), integrate PayPal (for free), and set the page that contains the e-book as the "thank you" page after users pay in PayPal.

One sale and you've likely made back your entire investment. Two sales a week and you can make an extra $2080/year. Now imagine if you did this with a hotel workout, a series of workout finishers, and a holiday workout. Now you've got 4 e-books. Sell each twice a week and you make an extra $16,640/year minus $80 (or whatever you spent) in production costs. These are assets and they don't depreciate. All that it takes is a touch of upfront effort and cash and you have them for life.

You can also promote your monthly program management service for $49/month and your other e-books in each e-book you sell. See how this could add up quickly? All that it takes is a bit of proactive thinking.

**Swag.** I'm referring to everything from water bottles to T-shirts here. Swag is obviously great for brand promotion but it's hard to make any serious money with it. In order to profit from things like T-shirts, you've got to be in a position to have large (at least 500 generally) order quantities.

Because of that, I recommend using a service like Spreadshirt that offers print-on-demand merchandise. You can upload a design and are only charged when an order is made. CafePress offers this service as well; you can put your logo or tagline on everything from coffee cups to magnets to gym bags. If you have a compelling tagline, you may be able to sell a decent quantity of shirts. For example, my friend Tim Arndt's tagline, "fitness is simple, it's just not easy" sells itself. Tim's company goes along for the ride and he keeps the profits.

**Leading Workshops.** As you build a reputation as an expert, you may also be able to give talks or lead workshops for a fee. (If you're interested in this and are new to public speaking, check out your local Toastmasters group to improve your presentation skills.) Once you've gained experience, you can approach a certification agency and offer to lead workshops, or set up your own by advertising to clients, friends, family, and colleagues. Many certification agencies will partner with trainers who offer workshops (once the agencies have reviewed and approved the workshops). In exchange for promoting your workshop and pre-approving for CECs, or continuing education credits, the agency gets a cut of the workshop proceeds. This arrangement can be very profitable for you.

**Saving.** One of the most underrated ways to make more money is to save. If you collect credit cards for your sessions, a simple call once a year to your credit card processor to negotiate rates could save you hundreds or thousands a year. Do the same with your phone company and any other services where you're a valuable customer. *Saving* money is just as valuable as *making* money.

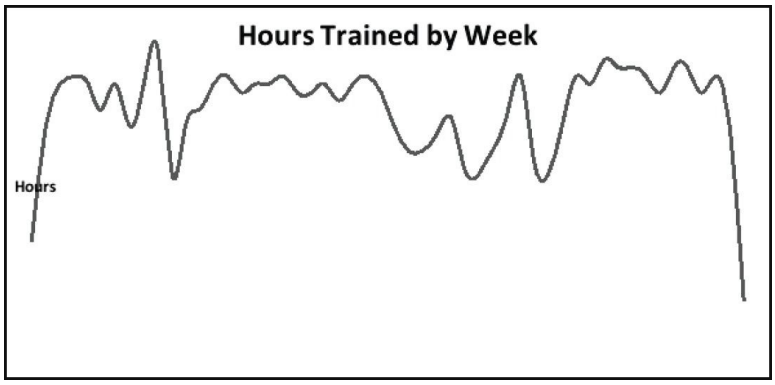
**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*Personal trainers are trusted, and you can leverage this trust to create other sources of income. Just be sure to maintain your integrity as it takes years to build your reputation and just seconds to break it.*

## MAKE YOUR TIME WORK FOR YOU

I've been talking about other ways to make income, but the fact is that your income as a trainer starts with training. Some trainers are paid a flat salary, regardless of the hours they work. Most trainers, however, are paid by the hour, and for actual hours trained. And if you're one of those trainers, I can promise that you will experience ebb(s) and flow(s) throughout the year.

My third year of training, I decided to chart the hours I billed/week. Here's what my time looked like:




By looking at this chart, I saw that there was serious flux during the year. I was also able to identify several obvious trends. For example, the last week of December and first week of January are pretty dead. In addition, the summer is slower than the other seasons, and March break (March 11–18) was very slow. That tells me that those would be good times to plan vacation or other time off.

I was surprised, though, that mid-September was one of my slowest times of the year until I examined the demographics of the people I trained. Many of them were Jewish, and early to mid-September is when the Jewish high holidays occur. Even though normally this is a busy time for trainers, I had a lot of cancellations during these weeks. From mid-September until Christmas break, though, all Hell broke loose. This was by far my busiest time so I prepared myself for it.

As you gain experience, I recommend that you complete a graph similar to this for your first 2–3 years of training. It will help you set realistic goals in terms of the number of hours you plan to work. You also may realize that you encounter trends depending on the people you work with. I found that mid-September was a great time to plan a trip since travel is cheap and I didn't lose out on many clients.

When working as a trainer, I also planned on preparing all of my long-term workout plans and preparing my resources for study during times that I know will be slow. By understanding the demographics of the people I train and my personal ebb and flow, I was able to reduce the amount of stress in my work.

## MORE ISN'T ALWAYS BETTER

You might assume that the more hours you work, the better. That's actually not the case. Yes, as a new trainer, you'll put in extra hours, marketing yourself and getting clients to hire you. But at a certain point, you should reach a level where you're training a number of hours that you can sustain over time.

Two years into my career, I found myself training close to 160 hours/month. I was spending 13- and 14-hour days at the gym to market myself and train clients. At first it seemed like a great idea financially. I was working a ton of hours at what I considered a high hourly rate. But I couldn't sustain the pace. I was working 6 – 7 days/week and sleeping only 4 – 5 hours/night.

There was no way that I could give all of my clients the attention they deserve, so I had a high rate of attrition, or client loss. That forced me to spend even more time recruiting clients, and the vicious cycle continued. Finally I took a closer look at what I was actually making. At an hourly rate of $26/hour, and 160 hours/month, I was making $49,920/year. Subtract taxes and the natural ebb and flow of clients over a year and I was actually banking between $30,000 and $35,000/year.

I knew some changes had to happen. I was making myself miserable to put $35,000 in my bank account. I'd quit recreational hockey when I was working 160-hour months. Games were held on Wednesday nights, which meant I had to cancel a night of client appointments to make them. Torn between work and my hobby, I wound up giving up my spot on the team to focus on building my business. I wanted to be the most successful, and therefore busiest, trainer possible.

At the time I didn't realize that being a successful trainer has little to do with being jam-packed busy. In fact, the trainers making the most money are those who have learned to leverage their time effectively. The winter when I quit hockey, I was going through the motions. I woke up at the break of dawn, trained clients all day, and got home with enough energy and time to read for 30 minutes before I fell asleep. I started to contemplate my career because I knew that I couldn't live like I was

*The Block System*

After analyzing my schedule and my clientele, I found that I had a combination of long-term dedicated clients, program design clients who I saw once in a while, and less dedicated "wishy-washy" clients who scheduled fewer appointments. To work more efficiently, I employed the following steps:

- I first decided the blocks of time that I would train, based on the preferences of my regular, dedicated clients. Those blocks wound up being Monday night, Tuesday night, Wednesday morning to night, Thursday night, Friday morning to mid-afternoon, and Saturday morning to early afternoon.

- I then gave the few dedicated clients who had recurring appointments outside of those blocks of time first dibs on available spots within those blocks.
- If there were any spots left within these blocks, I asked the wishy-washy clients if they wanted to book recurring appointments at open times. If they didn't want to, I suggested they train with another trainer.
- Every time a program design client wanted an appointment, I booked the appointment during a block.

Once in a while I would go out of my way for a regular client by coming in to the gym outside of the blocks. This is going the extra 10 percent. At that point, I trained around 120hrs/month consistently and my retention rate was high.

Yes, I lost a number of hours where I would have otherwise made money training by blocking off time and politely explaining to clients that I have another commitment. But what I accomplished by reworking my schedule far outweighed the superficial loss of income.

First off, I got my life back. I no longer had to wake up at 5:00 a.m. and work until 9:00 p.m. every day of the week. I had time to see friends and family. I also had more time to pursue "passion projects" outside of the gym, like writing this book and creating and running the PTDC. I was able to read for pleasure and didn't have to miss any important events. I played hockey again and looked forward to the weekly games.

But here's the most important aspect from a training perspective. Scheduling my time into blocks gave me more time not only to pursue my personal interests, but to research, learn, and increase my value as a trainer, too.

When I was working 160 hours month, I was making $26/hour, which meant I was earning about $49,920/year. Cutting my hours by a quarter did cut my income by $12,480, true. But that's shortsighted thinking. As a direct result of my revised schedule, I became a happier and more energetic person, I created better workouts for my clients, and I researched and learned more about training. Within a year of my schedule revision, I came close to doubling my salary. Since then, my pay has increased every year while training about 120hours/month until I left my position to focus on the PTDC and other pursuits.

There was one very simple reason for the continual increase in income: *I did a better job!*

I was more educated, energetic, had the time to write better workouts, and had the energy to establish stronger relationships with clients. In addition, the money I earned no longer came solely from training clients. The first year after I

made the change to a more efficient schedule, I was promoted to senior trainer and started to earn a base salary plus commissions for referrals. Within 12 months, I was making much more money than I had before, even while working fewer hours. Just as important, I was able to write the first version of this book. The first version of this book directly resulted in growing the PTDC and other web ventures, which have created over 30 different streams of income and counting.

Here's the point I want you to remember. Instead of training 160 hours/month, collecting my $26/hour salary, and growing more and more burned out, I elected to scale back my hours and make my time more valuable. I used my additional spare time to develop myself and to provide better service to my clients. Management quickly recognized my value, and my hourly salary nearly doubled, even while I worked fewer hours.

Just as important, I was happier in my overall life, and looked forward to sustaining a long-term career in the profession I love. Most trainers don't get into the business because they want to become millionaires, but there's nothing wrong with wanting to make a good living either.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*Consider your long-term earning potential, not just what you're making per-hour. Your number 1 priority, after attracting clients, should be developing yourself and increasing your value.*

## FOR NEW TRAINERS ONLY

My suggestion to new trainers is to start with an open schedule. Schedule clients whenever you can, and work your butt off for the first 6 months or so. Then look for trends within your dedicated clientele. Use the block system I described above to organize your schedule in a way that will work for you in the long term.

In the meantime, work on increasing your value. Start researching and developing a specialty that's needed among the people you train. Work on your selling skills and spread the word about your abilities to everyone you meet. In addition, treat every client with respect and focus on developing amazing relationships with everyone you come across. The goal is to turn your clients into your personal "brand ambassadors." They'll be eager to spread the word about how great you are, and you'll be on your way to increasing your income as a trainer.

I think one of the biggest mistakes new trainers make is by being short-

sighted. They focus only on how many hours they can train, and think that that's how they'll become successful. That's a fallacy. I think it's more important to have time to think, brainstorm, and come up with creative ways to approach your business. After all, nearly any trainer can properly demonstrate a squat or shoulder press. What will you bring to training that makes you unique and valuable to clients? How else (for example, affiliate programs, leading workshops, blogging) can you make a good living as a trainer? You'll never discover the answers to these questions unless you give yourself an opportunity to learn, to read, to think, and to explore. I often say, "freedom is providing yourself the opportunity to fail," and I suggest you build some of this freedom into every week if not every day as a trainer. You'll be amazed at the results.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*To be successful, work on developing yourself and building relationships with the people you encounter. As you increase your value, you'll find that you can increase your income as well.*

## MARK YOUNG INSIDE INFO

Mark Young has 13 years and over 10,000 hours of training experience under his belt. He earned his reputation through his training and writing online, and is the creator of the video series *How to Read Fitness Research*.

After 2 years of work at a commercial gym, Mark launched his own business by first renting space in a private gym before starting his own facility with his wife a few years later. He wanted to be his own boss and though that owning his own space to train in would be an easy path towards financial freedom.

In 2009 Mark and his wife stepped away from gym ownership to raise a family. Since then, he has had the opportunity to work as a kinesiologist in a bariatric medical program, served as a personal trainer in a high end private gym in Toronto, Canada, and now works from home performing online exercise and nutrition coaching as a coach for Lean Bodies Consulting.

**MARK'S 3 KEYS TO SUCCESS IN THE FITNESS INDUSTRY ARE:**

① **Being good at business.** I chose this as number one because if a trainer has any inclination to go out on their own, they must have a strong understanding of business. If they do not they'll be buying themselves out of a job rather than buying a business... and I've been there. Develop systems. Plan your marketing funnel. Create call scripts, and upsells. Incorporate. Make sure you have enough capital. If any of this stuff sounds foreign, you'd better learn it before you start. Early mistakes can cost you dearly. Don't get overzealous and rush into anything. Plan carefully.

② **Be good at what you do.** Once you've established your business systems, you must

establish your training systems and you must keep up to date with industry trends. And along the same vein, don't just follow what you've heard the latest experts are doing. Make sure there is a sound scientific basis for what you do with your clients.

③ **Eat well and train.** Trainers so sincerely want to help others that they neglect themselves. Don't do that. Take care of yourself. Not only will you look better (which is one reason why people might listen to you), but you will feel better, avoid burnout, and deal with day to day stressors much better.

**MARK'S WORDS TO LIVE BY:**

*"Contact those who are better than you and ask questions. You'll be surprised how many will answer you."*

*You can learn more about Mark Young*
*at www.leanbodiesconsulting.com*

## POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Educating yourself and increasing your value will help you command a higher salary as a trainer. Focus on what you can make in the future, not only on what you're making right now.
- Always be willing to go the extra 10 percent, not only with clients, but with your coworkers as well. It will position well when you ask for a raise or promotion.
- Consider other ways to boost your income, using your training expertise and reputation as a jumping-off point.
- Once you gain experience, use the block system to work more efficiently and leave time for personal development, education, family, friends, and hobbies.

# 12 INVEST IN YOURSELF

*Succeeding as a Trainer*

*"I was seldom able to see an opportunity until it had ceased to be one."*

— MARK TWAIN

So, you've found work as a trainer. You're selling your skills to clients, working with them, and having the satisfaction of helping them reach their goals. So what's next?

That depends on you. Maybe your goal is to stay at your current gym. Maybe you want to change jobs. Or maybe you're thinking about working for yourself. Regardless of your goals, make sure that you invest in yourself to do the best job you can right now – and that you think about your future plans, too.

## AVOID COMPLACENCY

I compare a trainer's client base to overall fitness level. Once you reach a fairly high level of fitness, it's easy to maintain. It's the same with your client base. I consider a trainer "stable" when he or she is training clients 20 hours/week and developing good relationships with those clients. If you reach that point, and keep doing what you're doing, your client base should stay stable. An inevitable ebb and flow of clients will occur, but referrals should account for any attrition.

At this stage in your career, your hard work is done – at least for now. I reached this point several years after I started working as a personal trainer. I had put in my time and had given many complimentary sessions. I'd worked with a wide variety of clients and knew whom I was comfortable training. I'd learned how to market myself, and had developed a loyal following. And while the process of education and research never ends, I'd learned enough about different training methods to know how to choose what would work best for my clients.

Yet I found myself at a turning point several years ago. For the first time in 3 years, my numbers were down. I wasn't training as much as I was used to, and I didn't have referrals coming down the pipeline. My client base was dwindling and it had been a long time since I experienced any attrition. Simply put, I was at a loss. I talked to my manager, Jason, about it, and identified the problem. I was bored. I'd been training the same clients for a long time and wasn't being challenged. I'd been coasting, and it reflected on my work.

After taking some time to think about what I *wanted* to be doing (as opposed to what I *was* doing), Jason and I agreed that I would change my senior trainer duties to focus on education and development of trainers instead of some of the other work I'd be doing. We devised a new job description for my senior trainer role. I was no longer responsible for day-to-day club operation nor required to attend company meetings. My job was to pick 2 – 3 trainers each month and work with them individually to enhance their skills.

First, my new role brought me back to what I loved doing. It also forced me to think critically about the programming I was doing for clients. Every time that I worked with a trainer, I remembered all of the creative ideas for effective programming that I used to do. Working with the other trainers forced me to refocus and consider how I wanted to proceed.

I started to re-think the workouts I'd spent so much time writing for my clients and realized that I needed to get back to basics. I had gotten caught up in fancy advanced protocols before my clients were ready. I realized that I needed to get back to the "KISS" (Keep It Simple Stupid) method, and started developing the Focus System.

To start, I sat down with each of my clients and re-evaluated their goals. I then decided on 2 exercises that I wanted them to master – just 2. Usually the

exercises were variations of the dead lift, squat, bench press, and chin-up. I then revamped each workout to focus specifically on mastering these lifts. One reason I took this approach was that I realized that beginner clients (and most clients are beginners after all) couldn't master more than 2 – 3 things at once. Therefore, writing a 3-day split program with 8 – 10 exercises in each workout was overkill. I shortened my workouts and made them much more specific.

Progression was solely based on these 2 exercises. As long as the client's form was improving or the weight was increasing, I knew the client was making progress. The rest of their workouts consisted of prehab, core strengthening, and mobility/flexibility work.

The results of my KISS programming, which I named the Focus System, were astounding. Every one of my clients got great results (I wish I could've said that before) and I once again found myself having to turn away clients. By the time I finished working fulltime as a trainer, most of my clients did 2 main exercises per workout for a minimum of 12 weeks. I wasn't worried about clients getting bored because they were getting fantastic results. What I did was choose the most important exercises for them at that point in time. I used the Excitation System to educate them about the exercises and in turn created enthusiasm about their workouts. Once they start to plateaued on those exercises, I chose 2 other important exercises and repeated the process.

I realize that linear progressions of this sort won't work forever. But as I said in chapter 1, the majority of personal training clients are in the beginner to intermediate stage of training and this approach is extremely effective. Don't get bogged down by fancy periodization schemes until your clients get to a much more advanced level.

But the real point of this story is to avoid becoming complacent. It's easy to get into a training groove where you're coasting and no longer challenging yourself. But if you don't feel challenged, it may be reflected in how you train your clients.

**✓ TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*Avoid complacency. If you find yourself "coasting," it's a sign you need to change your approach to your business.*

## WHO DO YOU WORK FOR?

While many trainers thrive working for an employer, many others want to be

their own boss and become self-employed. Your personality will impact which is a better fit for you, but most trainers wind up working as independent contractors (as opposed to employees) whether they work at a gym owned by someone else or not.

As a trainer, I'd always been an independent contractor ("IC") even though I worked for an organisation. I choose to be an independent contractor instead of an employee for several reasons:

- *Scheduling freedom.* You already know that I enjoy traveling. One year I spent multiple weeks traveling to locales ranging from South Korea to Panama to San Francisco to New York. As an independent contractor (IC), I didn't get any paid vacation, but I could (and did) plan to take my vacation time during slow training times. I doubt that any employer would let me take as many weeks off as I did. As an IC, I could also set my own schedule and choose which days and which times of day I work.
- *Opportunity for other work.* Many trainers train clients outside of their club or studio. (Just remember that you must declare all of your income, regardless of who pays you.) As an employee, you usually must sign a contract that prohibits you from training clients "on the side." An independent contractor's agreement may require you to work a minimum number of hours, but you're free to train other clients as long as you meet that minimum.
- *Personal/professional projects.* If I were an employee, I wouldn't have had the freedom to schedule blocks of time that enabled me to develop the Personal Trainer Development Center. In addition, my boss could have seen the center as a competing business and forced me to shut it down. If you're like me and have an entrepreneurial mindset, working as an independent contractor gives you the ability to pursue other opportunities or interests.
- *Financial benefits.* Independent contractors are usually paid a higher hourly wage than employees, which makes sense. Since gyms don't pay independent contractors benefits, paid time off, or certain taxes, they can afford to pay these trainers a higher hourly wage than in-house employees. Most trainers have minimal expenses – you invest in items like athletic clothing (you'd probably buy that anyway), a cellular phone (again, you'd need that anyway), and possibly some fitness equipment. You may need to rent studio space, but you can take that as a legitimate tax deduction.
- *Tax benefits.* Depending on where you live, you can write off expenses

related to your business that may include a home office, laptop, your Internet connection, workout clothing, books and journals related to fitness, and continuing education.

## ELSBETH VAINO — INSIDE INFO

Elsbeth opened Custom Strength in 2010 with 2 clients she trained out of another gym. By 2012, she had too many clients for that space, and moved into a garage behind a house that her clients nicknamed "The Shed." There she grew the business to over 60 clients and hired staff.

In early 2014, she moved to a great new location (with street visibility!), where she's excitedly marketing and growing her business. Before becoming a trainer, Elsbeth was an engineer and then a management consultant. One day while she should have been working on a contract with a tight deadline, she found herself reading a strength and conditioning textbook instead. It was a very clear sign. Sometimes she wishes she had figured out what she was meant to do sooner, but recognizes that her previous career experiences contribute significantly to her success as a trainer and as a business owner.

**ELSBETH'S 3 KEYS TO SUCCESS IN THE FITNESS INDUSTRY ARE:**

① **You have to mean it.** People can tell whether or not you're sincere and passionate. If you are, people will shout your praise from the rooftops.
② **Don't be afraid to say you don't know something (then go find out).** Faking it might work for a while, but it will catch up with you. Having the integrity to say you don't know, and then the work ethic to find out will make you look like a star.
③ **Being a great trainer isn't enough; you have to market yourself.** How else will anyone find out that you're a great trainer?

**ELSBETH'S WORDS TO LIVE BY:**

*"It is okay to love what you do and also make money at it. I've encountered many in the fitness industry who are against efforts to sell themselves because they do it to help people, not to make money. Be excellent and market yourself, and you'll make money and you'll also help more people than the person who's just in it to help people."*

*You can find out more about Elsbeth Vaino at www.elsbethvaino.com*

Of course there are benefits to being an employee as well. Employees enjoy more job security, managerial support, educational opportunities, and often receive benefits (think sick days and paid vacation) that independent contractors do not. Deciding which option is a better fit will depend on your priorities and your opportunities.

✓ **TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

*There are advantages and drawbacks to working as either an employee or independent contractor. Make sure you know which one is the right fit for you.*

## SHOULD YOU OPEN YOUR OWN BUSINESS?

Many trainers have a goal of opening their own training business, but to cover that topic adequately is outside the scope of this book. However, I would like to make a couple of recommendations.

First, I caution against opening your own gym right off the bat. Yes, the freedom is tempting, but many trainers struggle for years or go bankrupt because they opened up a gym or studio before they had a complete view of the industry. Take the time to develop yourself first. Spend time in different types of gyms and work with as many different types of clients as you can. Fail, learn from your mistakes, and read everything you can about starting your own training business.

Second, hold off on opening your gym until you are 100 percent confident in your ability to do so – and you have a network to help you. Before you do anything, I suggest you read as much as you can about business ownership, marketing, and management. They'll help you get up to speed to help ensure your gym is profitable and successful from the outset.

## YOUR CAREER– AND YOUR LIFE

Last chapter, I explained how employing the Block System made me more productive as a trainer. It also gave me the time I needed for myself to pursue interests like hockey and travel, and helped me avoid burnout.

You may think that spending 12 hours or more in the gym every day will help you succeed as a trainer – and that may be true for the first few months, as you build your business. But you have to have a life outside of the gym, too, and you have to take breaks on a regular basis.

When I'm working, I work hard, but I take plenty of time off. In the bestseller, *The Power of Full Engagement*, authors Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz describe the process of increasing your work capacity. They apply periodization principles to work efficiency and have found that to produce high-quality work, you must push yourself hard, and then take a full break. As a result, the next time you will be able to push harder and longer. And so on.

Planned vacation time will help you recharge, as will taking breaks

throughout the workday. Even a short walk makes a huge difference. For example, when I worked fulltime as a trainer, there was a large park near my gym. I'd take a 30-minute walk there before I was scheduled to see clients in order to build in some necessary downtime. I came back refreshed and was ready to work hard again.

Another way to recharge is by mastering a new skill. Attend a conference, take a class, or educate yourself about an area of fitness about which you know little. Earlier in this chapter, I warned against becoming complacent. If you don't continue to challenge yourself, complacency can lead to burnout.

For example, I met a woman who was studying to become a personal trainer when I was creating the Personal Trainer Development Center. Her background was in martial arts, so we negotiated a deal where I would help her become a trainer and she would teach me martial arts-based training. I benefitted by learning an exciting set of skills, and my clients benefited because of the advanced bodyweight techniques I could now incorporate into their training.

Personal training is a fulfilling career, but it's a challenging one, too. You'll be worn down physically and mentally at the end of the day, and motivating clients is tough when your own motivation wanes. To succeed, you should be willing to give the extra 10 percent to your clients, but make sure that you attend to your own needs as well. If you're starting to feel bored, figure out what would light your fire again. If you feel like you're coasting, set a new challenge for yourself. And if you feel like you're starting to get burned out, take time off to recharge.

In chapter 1, I reminded you that *you* are your own best advertisement. In chapter 4, I reminded you that *you* are the product you're selling. Let me now remind you that even if you work for someone else, *you* are in charge of your career and your future. That means continuing to learn, continuing to grow, and continuing to challenge yourself.

I believe that personal training is the best job in the world. You play an integral role in the lives of the clients you train. Through your work, you not only provide motivation and support – you enable people to live longer, healthier, more satisfying and more productive lives. That's why I created the thePTDC – to connect with more trainers and to help them succeed in a field that matters. This book is designed to help you be not only the best trainer you can be, but to be able to make enough a good living doing so. Those goals are not mutually exclusive.

I can't imagine a better definition of success – to do what you love, and to support yourself (and your family) while doing so. I hope you'll find that your career as a trainer is just as satisfying. My hope is that no matter how tired you

are, you end every day with a smile on your face.

**POINTS TO REMEMBER**

- As a trainer, you are responsible for your career, and your success.
- Before you decide to open your own studio, take the time to educate yourself about how to run a successful business. Most new trainers lack this ability and even experienced ones usually can benefit from more knowledge about marketing and running their own gym.
- Avoid complacency. When you feel continually challenged, it will reflect in your work. A sense of challenge will also help you avoid burnout.

# AFTERWORD

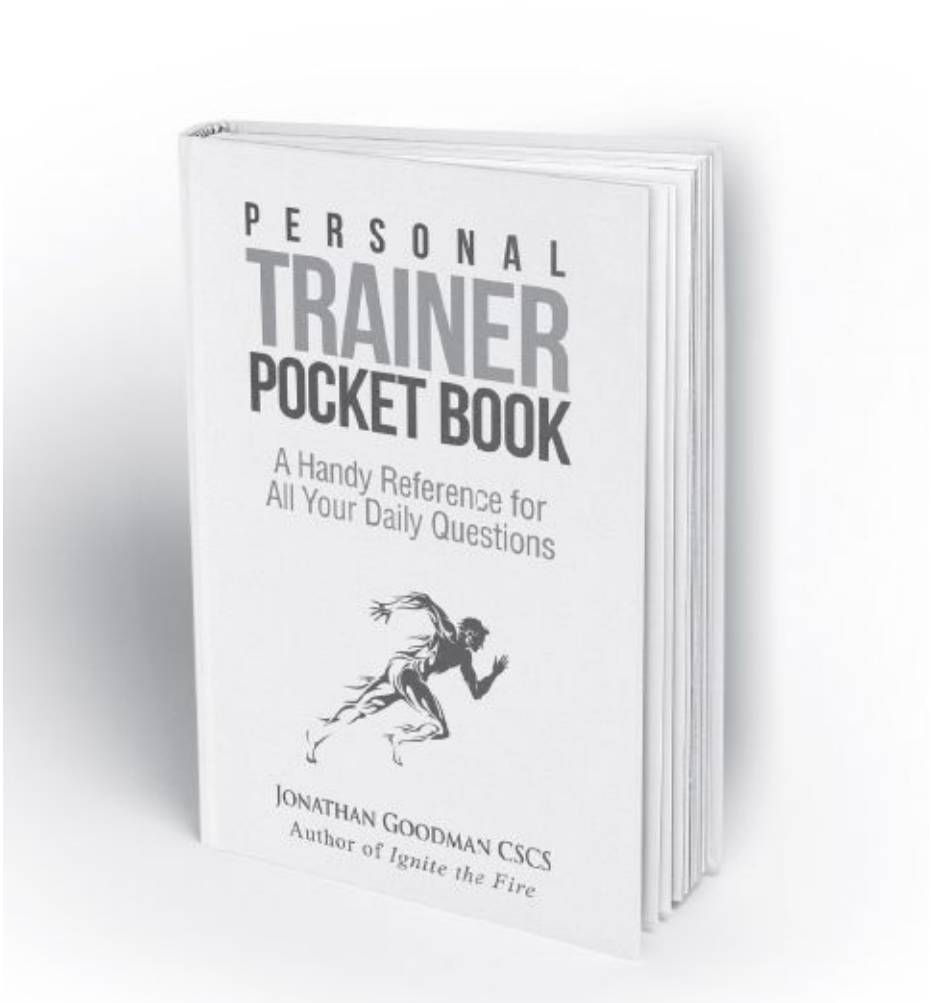
First, I want to congratulate you for discovering and second, for finishing this book. You're already 10 steps ahead of the competition. I love helping personal trainers develop successful careers and want to help you as much as possible, but it's impossible to include everything I wanted to in this book.

To assist more personal trainers, I created the Personal Trainer Development Center ("thePTDC" – **www.theptdc.com**). I don't pretend to know everything, and that's why thePTDC is a collaborative venture with vetted contributions from trainers in every corner of the globe. We publish new articles each week but also have an extensive archive, which you're free to search through. We also have developed a selection of free e-books and other premium resources. If you go to **www.personaltrainerebooks.com** (an extension of the thePTDC), you can register as a V.I.P. for free and get full access to them.

In addition to the PTDC, I also maintain a personal blog called Viralnomics (**www.viralnomics.com**). This is where I do the majority of my personal writing, predominantly covering business and social media but really, I write about whatever is interesting to me at the time.

Finally, I truly hope you enjoyed this book and want to sincerely thank you for taking the time to read it. I hope that I've ignited your fire, and that it will continue to burn.

TO YOUR UNLIMITED SUCCESSES,
— JON GOODMAN


PERSONAL
TRAINER
POCKET BOOK
A Handy Reference for
All Your Daily Questions
JONATHAN GOODMAN CSCS
Author of Ignite the Fire

# DO YOU HAVE THESE QUESTIONS ABOUT PERSONAL TRAINING?

- *How do I overcome the "too-expensive" objection?*
- *How do I market myself as a trainer?*
- *What do I do when my clients keep cancelling?*
- *How do I (or can I) advise clients on nutrition?*
- *How do I sell personal training?*
- *What are my options for multiple income streams?*

**Get the *Personal Trainer Pocketbook: A Handy Reference for All Your Daily Questions* today.**

From the UK to Canada, United States to Australia, and everywhere in between, Jonathan Goodman has been answering questions about succeeding in personal training to 100's of thousands of trainers Worldwide since 2009. For the first time ever, these 48 invaluable answers have all been compiled into one handy reference – no stone is left unturned. Amongst other things, you'll finally know how to:

- Get your career started right
- Market, sell, and keep clients
- Deal with all possible objections
- Become more organized and efficient every day
- Turn your job into a career by making more money both in-training, and beyond.

With the *Personal Trainer Pocketbook* by your side, you'll never be alone again. Get your copy from Amazon or by emailing **admin@theptdc.com** today.

*Bulk order discounts for gym owners, mentorships, and certification companies available. Please email admin@theptdc.com or visit www.theptdc.com/bulk-orders.*

# TESTIMONIALS

*Sure you know the art and science of fitness. But, do you know the business of fitness training? I've seen it a thousand times; Great trainer—Bad business person! Running a business is not unlike designing a program... You have to understand fundamental business strategies and you have to be able to implement them together into a comprehensive plan for success. Except your certification course never taught you that part!*

*Put simply, Jon Goodman's book "Ignite the Fire" tells you everything you need to know (and nothing you don't) about how to become successful at the business of Fitness Training. He's provided you with the simple to understand and immediately applicable strategies proven to help you find your niche, how to become the trainer who everyone wants to train with, and how to build a waiting list of clients beating down your door!*

— NICK TUMMINELLO, OWNER OF PERFORMANCE UNIVERSITY

*A look at personal training that goes beyond the textbooks.*

— MUSCLE & FITNESS SEPTEMBER 2012 ISSUE

*Goodman shares the secrets of how to land your dream job in fitness, build a client list, and make money in the fitness game.*

— LIVESTRONG, RATED ONE OF THE 21 MUST-READ HEALTH, FITNESS, AND NUTRITION BOOKS

*This book comprehensively covers everything you need to know to be successful in the field. All you need to do is apply the information and you'll be well on your way to a prosperous career.*

— BRAD SCHOENFELD, PHD, 2011 NSCA PERSONAL TRAINER OF THE YEAR AND BESTSELLING AUTHOR

*As a College Professor in a Human Kinetics Program I often find that while I do an excellent job of preparing my students with the academic knowledge and practical skills for a personal training career I lack the knowledge and experience of working with clients on a daily basis. Jon has filled a gap in my teaching with his new book. I will be adopting Ignite the Fire for my courses this coming year as students are seeking out more and more 'real World' knowledge.*

— GREG DUMANOIR, UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA OKANAGAN

*I just finished reading Jon Goodman's Ignite the Fire: Secrets to Building a Successful Personal Training Career. If you are a fitness professional, and especially if you are new to the industry, I highly recommend picking up a copy.*

— JOE DOWDELL, CO-OWNER AT PEAK PERFORMANCE, RATED #3 GYM IN AMERICA BY

MEN’S HEALTH MAGAZINE

*Jon is passionate about improving the field of personal training. He is a visionary in seeing a need for proper high quality personal trainer education. He has applied his knowledge, skills and talent and genuineness and taken a lead in improving his industry.*

— DR. THOMAS UNGAR, MD, M.ED, MENTALHEALTHMINUTE.COM

*This is not only some great advice, but rules to live by as a coach/trainer. I have seen myself in what you wrote and how I dealt with it throughout the years and I must say that you did an awesome job. You can be sure that I will refer your work to every trainer, beginner AND advanced, as we tend to forget very simple but so important way of dealing with our clients as we get comfortable in the game. It should be a reference for trainers and coaches to be.*

— ERIC FALSTRAULT, PICP 5, OWNER OF BODHIFIT

*The traditional ways of the personal training industry are gone. Those without business prowess will be swept away or forced to work for someone else. Any personal trainer interested in being their own boss needs to read this, plain and simple. Boom.*

— SAM LEAHEY, ASSISTANT STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING COACH AT SPRINGFIELD COLLEGE

*Jon's got it nailed. In the complicated world of fitness professional advice, this book is like an arrow on the bullseye. Get it, read it, and start applying. You'll be miles ahead of the competition.*

— PAUL VALIULIS, PRECISION NUTRITION LEAN EATING COACH

*This book is exactly what I wish I'd had when I started my career in personal training. This book goes beyond certifications to cover types of employment, client scheduling, marketing, and even business ownership for those who dream of one day running their own facility. Having spent over a decade training people I can say that without a doubt Jon is spot on in his presentation of all elements of this industry. If you aspire to have a successful and exciting personal training career you absolutely must read this book.*

— MARK YOUNG, OWNER OF MARK YOUNG TRAINING SYSTEMS

*A must read for current or aspiring personal trainers. It will make you money by catapulting your career to the next level, very highly recommended.*

— DANIEL FREEDMAN, FORMER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, CROSSFIT INC. AND WEB STRATEGY CONSULTANT, PRECISION NUTRITION INC.

*In a very short time, Jonathan has gone from starting an aspiring website to becoming one of the most prominent members of the online fitness professional community. His ability to bring together heavy-hitters and to aspire to create something great has made him a very inspirational friend, and someone who can be trusted to deliver honest and un-pretentious information on a wide variety of topics. Jon may very well become the next Tim Ferriss.*

— DEAN SOMERSET, MEDICAL AND REHABILITATION COORDINATOR FOR WORLD HEALTH CLUBS

*When Jon first approached me about taking part in his project, I was honoured and unsure of where it*

*would go. Now, after seeing the work that Jon has put into this book and into creating the right team to spread the word, all I am left with is excitement for his next projects and for our industry with passionate, fire-inside-people like Jon progressing it, challenging it and loving it.*

— SCOTT TATE, CONTINUING EDUCATION COACH AT BODY + SOUL FITNESS

*Jon Goodman is a rare gem in the fitness industry and he will change your life. Jon possesses the perfect blend of in the trenches experience tempered with the kind of optimism that would make Anthony Robbins jealous. By sharing his own experiences getting started as a personal trainer and challenging the reader to think about their career in ways they wouldn't have done on their own, Jon has created an amazing resource that will literally reduce the learning curve of new trainers by years while adding tens of thousands of dollars to their bottom line.*

*This product is a MUST HAVE for anyone who is looking to build a successful personal training career. Simply read & apply - success is inevitable.*

— ROGER “ROG LAW” LAWSON II, PERSONAL TRAINER

*Jonathan is one of today's most dynamic and thought provoking leaders. He has the unique ability to communicate the most complex ideas to simple everyday language. If you truly want the best out of your career then this book is a must have/read.*

— BILL SONNEMAKER, MS, 2007 IDEA PERSONAL TRAINER OF THE YEAR

*This book is a must for personal trainers of all skill levels. Too often we focus on training programs and forget how important it is to truly coach. Becoming a great trainer is so much more than exercise science, and Jon illustrates that beautifully in this comprehensive book through his knowledge, experience and passion. If you want to get better at your craft, this book should be part of your coaching arsenal.*

— NEGHAR FONOONI, PERSONAL TRAINER