

Norm Cates'

# CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 29 YEARS OF TRUST

## Jason Markowicz' Fitness Premier 24/7



***One Team. One Dream.***

**JUNE 2022**

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# CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 29 YEARS OF TRUST

## Jason Markowicz' Fitness Premier 24/7 One Team. One Dream.

By: Justin Cates

Over the years, countless health and fitness club industry professionals have exclaimed that this is a *people business*. To begin this month's cover story, I want to once again shout that from the rooftops! *The health and fitness club industry is a people business!!!*

Really, it's as people driven as it gets. Yes, we have some really cool stuff in facilities worldwide, and some facilities simply outmatch and outclass others. That is the nature of business. However, if we could be all-knowing and be granted the specific, non-skewed statistics as to what truly makes a club company successful or not, I have no doubt we would find that it is the people, not things.

Further, it is people at multiple levels. Good, no... *GREAT* line workers, department heads, middle managers, general managers, as well as regional and corporate leadership. Leadership flow must balance itself from the top down as well as the bottom up. Only through two-way feedback loops can true change and constant improvement be affected.

In addition to people, systems are important. Information flow and statistical data that can help make the best decisions are crucial but cannot be a crutch. Once again, balance must be utilized. Then, in the end, systems circle back to the people, who make the final decisions and execute the play.

At *Fitness Premier 24/7*, CEO **Jason Markowicz** has built a team and

the systems to support them. As they say: *"One Team. One Dream."* I welcome you to read on and learn how it all came to be and where they are going.

**An Interview With Jason Markowicz, CEO of Fitness Premier 24/7**

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

**Jason Markowicz (JM)** - I was born in the Chicagoland area and grew up not too far from there in the Southwest suburbs of Chicago. I still live there today, about 20 miles west of where I grew up with my wife **Kelley**, married 19 years, and two kids, **Chase**, 14, and **Kynzi**, 12. So, I am Chicagoland born and raised and a  
(See **Jason Markowicz** Page 10)



Jason Markowicz

## Six Reasons to Attend the IHRSA 2022 Trade Show

**BOSTON, MA** - The health and fitness club industry's biggest event is days away! *IHRSA's 41st International Convention & Trade Show (IHRSA 2022)* is slated to take place in *Miami Beach, Florida*, from **June 22 - 24**. And, arguably the most exciting and highly anticipated piece of the Convention is the two-day Trade Show on June 23 and 24.

Each year, the industry's top innovators showcase new, cutting-edge equipment, products, technology and more on the Trade Show floor. The IHRSA Trade Show is a lively and fun atmosphere providing attendees with the chance to observe demonstrations and interact with the latest and greatest products.

To that end, IHRSA has put

together a list of six reasons why all health, fitness and wellness professionals should attend the IHRSA 2022 Trade Show:

1. IHRSA Brings Fitness Industry Innovation to Miami Beach;
2. A Gigantic Exhibition Space;
3. Test Drive New Products Hands-on;
4. Build Relationships With Major Industry Brands;
5. Exercise Classes and Workouts on the Trade Show Floor;
6. IHRSA Members Receive a Registration Discount.

After successfully hosting IHRSA's 40th Anniversary Convention & Trade Show amidst the pandemic, the Association

truly expect *IHRSA2022* to be the event that shapes the industry's future. Share knowledge with global industry leaders, discover ground-breaking products, and learn how to build your business to be more resilient than ever at the IHRSA Trade Show.

1. **IHRSA Brings Fitness Industry Innovation to Miami Beach:** For the first time in IHRSA's 41-year history, IHRSA 2022 will be held in Miami Beach, Florida! It's a beautiful and eccentric destination that is sure to set the stage for an exciting atmosphere at the Trade Show. If you're looking for ideas on where to eat and what to do outside of the Convention & Trade Show, we've got you covered!



(See **IHRSA 2022** Page 6)

## Inside the Insider: Edition #342

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- And, of Course, *Norm's Notes*

## Norm's Notes

■Hello Everybody! This is your Club Insider Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993 checking in with our 342nd monthly edition! Yahoo! Spring has sprung, and the Summer is officially arriving on June 21st. I hope you and your family have a GREAT SUMMER!

■Is America a GREAT COUNTRY, or WHAT? Hmm... hmm... hmm!!! Here we are, already half-way through the year, and on June 22nd, the 2022 IHRSA Convention and Trade Show will begin in beautiful Miami, Florida! Justin and I hope to see you there at Club Insider Booth #1257. And, while you are there, be sure to check out our Advertiser's Booths:

MOSSA - 1921

Paramount Acceptance - 652

Sports and Fitness Insurance - 768

VFPnext/Club Automation - 831

■Welcome to new Club Insider Advertiser, Swift Financial Services! Led by our friend, Sam Lanasa, Swift is more than a collections firm. Their goal is to get members back on draft, and they use their knowledge of and experience in the industry to do so. Learn more by reading the Article

that begins on Page #16, in which Dave Dos Santos, CEO of Best Fitness, and Rich Drengberg, CEO of EOS Fitness, describe their experiences with Swift. Then, of course, check out the Ad on Page #17 and give Swift a call today. Nothing to lose; so much to gain.

■I want to wish my long-time friend, RED LERILLE, in Lafayette, Louisiana, a very HAPPY 86th BIRTHDAY on June 9th. Also, on June 19, HAPPY 80th BIRTHDAY wishes to RICH BOGGS in North Georgia, my former partner and long-time friend. HAPPY BIRTHDAY to BOTH of you INDUSTRY LEGENDS!

■Speaking of Red Lerille, who has been a private pilot for many years, this note is one I am very proud to write. For the first time in 40+ years, the Cates Family once again has a pilot in its ranks. My son and partner in Club Insider, JUSTIN CATES, has now added the title of Private Pilot to his many accomplishments over the years!!! He completed his FAA checkride on Monday, May 16 and is just happier than can be! I am, too! He is now working on his Instrument Rating to be a safer pilot and plans to accrue more hours (he



Private Pilot Justin Cates



Norm Cates

currently has just over 100 hours and 200+ landings) before taking his old man up for a flight! I look forward to that day! Congratulations Justin!!!

■For decades, I've called him UNCLE RICK. But, most people call him "The GENIUS," and I do not say that in any manner except for in a complimentary one! Long ago, before lots of you were even born, RICK CARO and I, along with five others, created what we then called IRSA, the "International Racquet Sports Association." For more than a decade, we called it IRSA until it became the IHRSA we know today. Along the way, now over 25 years ago, Rick began producing what became known as one of the premier annual happenings at every IHRSA Convention. Rick calls it the: The IHRSA Financial Panel. This annual event puts four State of the Industry Financial Experts

up on the stage with Rick in a large room that's always packed full of club owners and managers who want to expand their industry financial education.

Rick's Financial Panel is always one of the most highly anticipated AND highly attended annual events at the IHRSA Conventions. And, not only do Rick's Financial Panels provide attendees with the opportunity to hear market reports from highly-regarded financial experts, they also receive advice on how to apply this knowledge to current issues impacting their fitness businesses. This year's IHRSA Financial Panelists are:

- AARON GARCIA, Partner, Main Post Partners;
- JONATHAN KOMP, Senior Research Analyst, Robert W. Baird & Co.;
- VISHALL PRANA, Managing Director, (See Norm's Notes Page 7)

### About Club Insider

## CELEBRATING 29 YEARS OF TRUST

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PUBLISHER  
Justin Cates

(p): (863) 999 - 2677  
(e): Justin@clubinsideronline.com

FOUNDER & TRIBAL  
LEADER SINCE 1993  
Norm Cates, Jr.

(p): (770) 635 - 7578  
(e): Norm@clubinsideronline.com

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS - Bill McBride, Bonnie Patrick Mattalian, Bruce Carter, Cathy Spencer Browning, Daron Allen, Derek Barton, Donna Krech, Gary Polic, Jeffrey Pinkerton, Jim Thomas, John McCarthy, Karen Woodard-Chavez, Mark Williamson, Mike Alpert, Paul R. Bedard Esquire, Paul Bosley, Rick Caro, Sara Kooperman, JD, and Thomas Plummer

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### Thanks and Appreciation

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

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

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

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

Norm Cates, Jr.

# Fitness CRM of the year



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# Exercise IS Medicine

By: Mike Alpert

Over the past few weeks, I have had the great pleasure of attending two REX Roundtables: one in Green Bay, Wisconsin (which by the way was just named the third best city in the USA to live in) and one in Coronado, California. In Green Bay, the meetings took place in *Lambeau Field*, which has been on my bucket list to visit since I was a kid. Lambeau Field is the home of the greatest franchise in professional sports (the Green Bay Packers), in my opinion, and the only franchise that is owned by the season ticket holders. It's simply a great culture where players to this day ride their bikes home with kids after practices.

The leaders in these meetings are learning and sharing valuable ideas, but quite a bit of conversations seem to center on how to find new revenue sources that help with cash flow and net income. It is no secret that everyone in our industry has suffered financially from the pandemic and club closures that occurred in 2020 - 2021. But, with every challenge comes opportunity. So, for those of you reading this article, get ready to fight, thrive and get yourselves into a positive position of progressive strategy. A new wave is coming to the fitness industry, and those of you who

embrace it are going to reap the benefits for a long time to come. This tsunami I am talking about is the incorporation of fitness and physical activity into the healthcare system. The data is there, and it can no longer be ignored; consumers demand more than just expensive pills and costly procedures.

For over 20 years, I have been writing about *Exercise IS Medicine* and the need to merge the fitness industry with the health care industry. To me, it is the very best way to build and maintain healthy communities, which I believe is a societal obligation of everyone who works in the fitness industry. Finally, everyone is talking about it and our governing board, IHRSA, is endorsing it. You are going to hear a lot about it at the upcoming IHRSA Convention.

In the coming months, you are going to see strategic alliances and partnerships emerge between fitness professionals and organizations like *Maple Tree Cancer Alliance*, the *American Heart Association*, the *American Diabetes Association* and others to help treat and cure chronic health issues. Licensed programs and certifications are already being written, and licensed professionals are now, in many cases, able to code and bill insurance companies for reimbursement.

Have you ever thought about what it would mean to your club if you were able to monetize nutrition and fitness services to members and non-members in your community at little or no cost to them? What if you could do this without having to incur the high labor cost of licensed professionals? And, what if you could offer these services at your club or virtually while expanding your community outreach?

We all know that there is a huge population in every community that we fail to attract to our clubs. This is where the *Golden Opportunity* lies. It lies outside of the four walls of your health club or gym. Many don't come in due to financial costs; some don't come in because they are deconditioned or intimidated and others due to chronic health conditions. You can monetize your services to them by offering virtual programs and virtual memberships. Don't lose sight of this.

There is a new type of medicine that does not require a painful shot; it does not taste bad nor is it hard to swallow; it does not leave you feeling nauseous or tired; and it certainly does not have long lasting side effects. It helps build self-confidence, improves energy, improves mental wellbeing and improves the overall quality of life for everyone who takes it. *The new drug is Exercise*. As an industry, let's



Mike Alpert

prescribe it to everyone in our communities.

There is a new pathway to future growth, and I cannot wait to tell you about it at the upcoming IHRSA Convention in Miami. Please stop by the *IHRSA Lounge* to hear all about it.

## Exercise IS Medicine!

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

## ...IHRSA 2022

continued from page 3

**2. A Gigantic Exhibition Space to Discover Products:** There's no better way to test-drive and compare products than with a firsthand experience. The Miami Beach Convention Center boasts over 360,000 square feet of exhibition space for attendees to feast their eyes upon a myriad of health, fitness and wellness offerings. After all, the IHRSA Trade Show is the biggest commercial fitness expo in the United States, so we need a lot of space to show off our sensational exhibitors' products.

**3. Test Drive New Products Hands-on:** We're all eager to meet in-person thanks to a big shift to hybrid or fully remote working models. This is a must-attend event for any professional in the health,

fitness and wellness industry to stay on top of what's trendy and test products in real life. You'll get to try out software to boost your business goals, fitness equipment that raises the bar, nutrition supplements to ensure your members are meeting their health needs, technology that will literally blow your mind and everything in between. Plus, we hear there may be some exciting new product launches.

**4. Build Relationships With Major Industry Brands:** Featuring more than 200 exhibitors over two days, the IHRSA 2022 Trade Show is the place to build relationships, learn innovative strategies and cut deals. Don't miss out on the chance to network with major brands, such as *Matrix*, *True Fitness*, *ABC Fitness Solutions*, *Club Automation*, *Technogym*, *Core Health & Fitness*, *SportsArt* and so many more. If your company is interested

in exhibiting at IHRSA 2022, there's still time! Check out the *Exhibitor Prospectus* for more information.

**5. Exercise Classes and Workouts on the Trade Show Floor:** We're in the fitness industry, so of course, we'll have fitness classes with top industry instructors! Rise and shine on Thursday and Friday morning to get your heart pumping during group exercise classes beginning at 6:30AM, sponsored by *Merrithew*. On Friday morning, stop by Trade Show booths between 7 - 8:30AM for live classes to test out the equipment and products that catch your eye.

**6. IHRSA Members Receive a Registration Discount:** If you didn't already know, all IHRSA members receive a discount for registering to attend the Convention & Trade Show, up to 50% off!

If you're not a member and you plan on attending, what's stopping you from saving money... and gaining access to IHRSA's valuable resources? Every member on your team receives a discount on IHRSA 2022 registration when you sign up to be an IHRSA Member.



We hope this list is beneficial for anyone on the fence about attending IHRSA 2022. Miami Beach is a stunning location, so make sure to enjoy your time while you're there. For all those joining us in June, we can't wait to see you, learn from you, build the future industry together, and most importantly, enjoy your company!

See the **IHRSA Ad on Page #15**. For more information and to register today, please go to [www.ihrsa.org/convention](http://www.ihrsa.org/convention).

# Visit Club Insider Booth #1257

## ...Norm's Notes

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Goldman Sachs;

■ **JENNIFER WALSH**, *Principal, Sixth Street.*

As always, the panel will be moderated by **RICK CARO**, *President of Management Vision, Inc.* IF you're a club owner/operator/general manager, and you will be in Miami for IHRSA, you **DO NOT WANT TO MISS THIS VERY SPECIAL EVENT!** Note: This is an in-person only event, and it will take place on **Friday, June 24 at 10AM.**

■ **IHRSA** welcomes **ELLEN LATHAM**, *Creator & Co-Founder of Orangetheory Fitness*, to its annual **Women's Leadership Summit!** You are invited to join fellow industry leaders to network with and celebrate a renewed future for the industry and to hear Ellen's story of determination as she created Orangetheory... as a female in a male-dominated industry while in her 50s! *The Women's Leadership Summit*, sponsored by *VFPnext, Club Automation, Motionsoft and CSI Spectrum* will take place on **Wednesday, June 22 at 8:30AM.**

■ **CR Fitness**, *Crunch Fitness'* largest franchisee in the Southeast has acquired *Crunch Ballantyne* in North Carolina and *Crunch Frisco* in Texas. These acquisitions brings CR Fitness to 40 locations in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and Texas. The company is owned by **Vince Julien, Geoff Dyer, Tony Scrimale and Jeff Dotson**, who together have more than 100 years of experience in the fitness industry.

■ **IN-SHAPE HEALTH CLUBS**, based in Stockton, California and operating 45 full-service health clubs across the state, has named **KENDALL WARE** as their new *Chief Operating Officer*. Ware will oversee operations, sales and fitness for the company. Ware commented, "I'm excited to bring my hospitality and operations expertise to the fitness industry and an inspiring brand like In-Shape. In-Shape's commitment to the communities it serves, its dedicated team that consistently innovates and its overall growth potential were all key elements in my decision to join this team." **Best wishes to Kendall Ware and the In-Shape Team.** And, **Special Thanks to Jacquelin Buchanan** for being in touch with this news.

■ Here are some **State by State Legislative Headlines** presented by **IHRSA'S JAKE LANDRY**:

- New Jersey to Consider Bill Regarding Online Health Club Contract Cancellation;
- New York AED Bill Recommended for Passage by Committee;
- Kentucky Legislature Overrides Veto, Passes Bill Expanding Sales.

IHRSA will continue to actively

monitor these and future bills and will provide IHRSA Members with further information and advocacy opportunities as they develop.

**IHRSA'S JAKE LANDRY** can be reached at [jlrandry@ihrsa.org](mailto:jlrandry@ihrsa.org). *If you are a club owner or operator, and you're not an IHRSA Member, we urge you to join IHRSA today! Just tell Jake that Norm Cates introduced you and he will take it from there!*

■ **PLANET FITNESS** is rolling along pretty well after having moved on through the pandemic. The Hampton, New Hampshire-based company reported first quarter 2022 revenue of **\$186.7 million, a 66.9% increase** over first quarter, 2021. The number is also an increase over first quarter 2019 revenue, the last first quarter not impacted by the pandemic. **CHRIS RONDEAU**, *CEO of Planet Fitness*, said in a media release: "Over the past two-plus years of operating during the pandemic, we've learned to be nimble and resilient while staying true to our mission of providing a high-quality, affordable fitness experience in a welcoming, non-intimidating environment. During first quarter 2022, Planet Fitness completed the acquisition of *Sunshine Fitness*, one of the company's best-performing franchisees as well as a refinancing of a portion of its debt. We are bullish on the future and believe that the acquisition strengthens our powerful business model by enhancing our corporate store team and diversifying the geographic profile of our corporate-owned stores, and the refinancing further supports our business model by locking in low rates on a significant portion of our debt." Another note of interest is that Planet Fitness ended the 1st Quarter of 2022 with **16.2 million memberships. Stay Tuned Folks!**

■ Here's an item that's hard to believe but one that apparently is true because I learned about it on television news and in several newspapers, so read on, my friends. *The Saturday, April 30, 2022 Atlanta Journal Constitution (AJC) Headline reads: 102 Marathons in 102 Days By AMPUTEE JACKIE HUNT-BROERSAMA!* On Thursday, June 28, Jackie completed this feat! **Jackie's left leg is an artificial leg AND every day for 102 days in a row, Jackie ran a 26.2-mile marathon!** *That's correct... every day for 102 days in a row, she ran the equivalent of a 26.2-mile marathon!*

The AJC report goes on to explain that this was "An unofficial women's world record." **Hmmm... you don't say!** To top it off, she ran two more marathons on back-to-back days bringing the total to 104 marathons in 104 days, clearly a record! I just whipped out my trusty calculator and did the math. That is **2,724.8 miles in 104 days**, folks! *The Guinness Book of World Records* reported that, before Jackie's new record, the standing record was set at **59 Marathons... 59 days in a row...** by an Italian named **ENZO CAPORASO**.

Jackie Hunt-Broersama, who is 46 years old, began her quest on her birthday, **January 17, 2022**, covering the classic 26.2-mile distance on a loop course laid out near her home in Gilbert, Arizona or on a treadmill indoors. Since then, the AJC report says, "It's been 'rinse and repeat' every day for the native of South Africa, who lost her leg below the knee to a rare cancer and runs on a carbon-fiber prosthesis." **Jackie's original goal was to run 100 marathons in 100 days!**

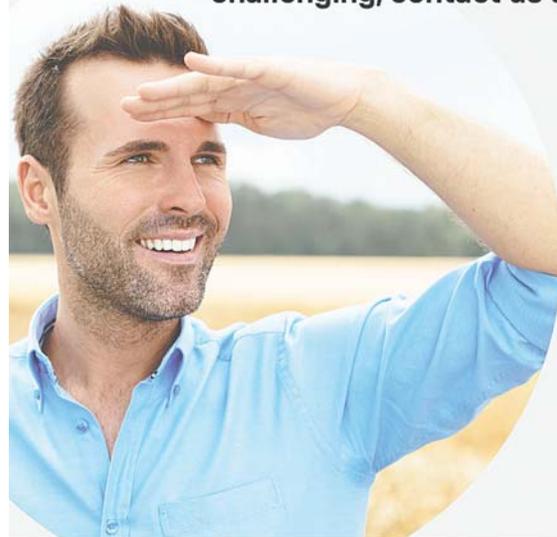
For laughs, let me add the following... 30+ years ago, I ran the 26.2-mile *Atlanta Thanksgiving Day Marathon*

in **4 hours 33 minutes and 22 seconds**. I might add that I did that marathon on a **DARE and a BET WITH A FRIEND OF MINE, LARRY TAYLOR**, after only three weeks of training! And, trust me when I say that was an agonizing 26.2 miles in one day taking me nearly five hours!

■ I'm going to close these always thoughtful *Norm's Notes* with some **HUMOR**... something we can always all use more of. The title to this erstwhile missive might briefly be misleading to you. Therefore, I hereby submit it to all of you for your (See *Norm's Notes* Page 8)

## A promising future is ahead in employment for the Fitness Industry!

If you are finding that hiring qualified candidates is challenging, contact us today!



We can help sort through a myriad of talent-related issues using our vast network of candidates. If you are looking for qualified, senior-level candidates for your facility, please give us a call to discuss your needs."

**Jeff Randall**  
p: 781-251-0094  
e: [jr@jrassoc.com](mailto:jr@jrassoc.com)

**Dennie Noecker**  
p: 609-430-8455  
e: [dennie@jrassoc.com](mailto:dennie@jrassoc.com)



## ...Norm's Notes

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close scrutiny because it contains a word that, in this case, should not cause you any feeling of alarm. The word is: **OBITUARY**. However, the *ENTIRE* title to this *NORM'S NOTE* is: **OBITUARY FOR COMMON SENSE**. This item was originally printed in the *London Times*. The author remains unknown, but whomever passed this on described it as "Absolutely Dead Brilliant!!!" So, I'm going to quote the unknown author exactly, word for word:

"Today, we mourn the passing of a beloved old friend, *Common Sense*, who has been with us for many years. No one knows for sure how old he was, since his birth records were long ago lost in bureaucratic red tape. He will be remembered as having cultivated such valuable lessons as: *Knowing when to come in out of the rain; Why the early bird gets the worm; Life isn't always fair; And maybe it was my fault.* Common Sense lived by simple, sound financial policies (don't spend more than you can earn) and reliable strategies (adults, not children, are in charge). His health began to deteriorate rapidly when well-intentioned but overbearing regulations were set in place. Reports of a 6-year-old boy charged with sexual harassment for kissing a classmate; teens suspended from school for using mouthwash after lunch; and a teacher fired for reprimanding an unruly student, only worsened his condition.

Common Sense lost ground when parents attacked teachers for doing the job that they themselves had failed to do in disciplining their unruly children. It declined even further when schools were required to get parental consent to administer sun lotion or an aspirin to a student; but could not inform parents when a student became pregnant and wanted to have an abortion. Common Sense lost the will to live as the churches became businesses; and criminals received better treatment than their victims. Common Sense took a beating when you couldn't defend yourself from a burglar in your own home and the burglar could sue you for assault. Common Sense finally gave up the will to live, after a woman failed to realize that a steaming cup of coffee was hot. She spilled a little in her lap, and was promptly awarded a huge settlement. Common Sense was preceded in death -by his parents... **Truth and Trust**, -by his wife, **Discretion**, -by his daughter, **Responsibility**, -and by his son, **Reason**. He is survived by his **five step children; -I Know My Rights; -I Want It Now; -Someone Else Is To Blame; -I'm A Victim; -Pay me for Doing Nothing**. Not many attended his funeral because so few realized he was gone. If you still remember, **Common Sense**, pass this on. If not, **join the majority and do nothing."**

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

■ **Are you a Paid Subscriber? Club Insider**

## Tony de Leede Named as Wellness Partner for Storylines Private Residential Ship

**Worldwide** - Storylines has announced *Wellness Entrepreneur and Founder of Wellness Solutions, Tony de Leede*, as a partner to build the largest Wellness Center at Sea onboard their Private Residential Ship.

Owners living aboard the ship will enjoy a 10,000 square-foot health and wellness spa with anti-aging clinic and extensive indoor and outdoor fitness areas. The extensive wellness facilities are part of the company's goal of providing a healthy travel lifestyle for the global citizens living aboard, enabling them to reach and maintain their optimal state of health while they travel the world.

The wellness center will be open 24/7 and include a waterfront gym, lap pool, meditation room, fitness class spaces,



Tony de Leede

relaxation pods, jacuzzi, steam room, breathing and meditation chairs, recovery massage chairs, infrared saunas and more.

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■ **God bless our troops, airmen and sailors worldwide and keep them safe. Thank you, Congratulations and Welcome Home to all of our troops who have served around the world. God bless America's Policemen and women**

**and Firemen and women; keep them safe. Finally, God bless you, your family, your club(s) and your members. God Bless America! Laus Deo!**

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

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Norm Cates'

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## ...Jason Markowicz

continued from page 3

die-hard *Chicago Bears* fan.

**C.I.** - Where did you go to school and what did you study? Did you play any sports?

**JM** - I went to college at *Saint Xavier University* and studied business administration. I played football there for four years. I was a wide receiver. Interestingly, after not playing my last two years of high school, I walked on as a freshman and started. I then played all four years.

**C.I.** - Well, I was a simple running back in high school, but I wanted to go to the *University of Georgia*. There was no chance of me playing there, and I accepted that for the education and college experience I received, maybe not in the order (laughing). And, of course, after our *National Title* this past season, not to mention the *NFL Draft*, I am a very happy man.

**JM** - Yeah, for sure. You all had a great year!

**C.I.** - Moving into professional life, when and how did you become involved in the health and fitness club industry?

**JM** - Playing football in college, I was always passionate about exercise. At that time, one of my college football teammate's family members was opening up a gym in the Chicagoland market. It was really this market's first \$19.95 a month, affordable family-friendly EFT-based club. This was the early 2000s, so really, no one in our market was doing this.

I had the opportunity to get a job at the first club they opened up in the suburbs of Chicagoland and kind of learned the business model over the course of the next two years. They opened up a few additional locations, and then, by the fifth one that was opened up under that chain, my wife and I were able to get into ownership and became an *Operating Partner*. So, less than two years in working for that concept, we got

started into owning and operating facilities; that was a pretty unique opportunity out of college.

**C.I.** - Wow, always keep in touch with friends/family and always be kind to those around you because you never know what opportunities may lay ahead.

**JM** - No doubt. No doubt about it.

**C.I.** - Please tell us about your experience as a franchisee.

**JM** - The company ended up growing to well over 35 locations throughout the Midwest and was a privately-owned concept. We ended up with ownership in about 12 of them. Fast forward to about 2010, we ended up getting involved in *Massage Envy*, which is a big franchise system. From 2010 - 2019, we opened up six of those stores as franchisees here in Illinois and Indiana.

With that experience, we really got to see how a big, billion-dollar brand operated. They did some things really well, and they did some things that I think affected the culture of the brand. So, we were able to take away a lot of nuggets from that experience. We saw what worked well for them and what didn't work so well and then applied it to our own system as we kind of got going on the next venture. That was very, very helpful.

### Fitness Premier 24/7

**C.I.** - When and how did you begin Fitness Premier 24/7?

**JM** - In 2008, we had some existing facilities in Illinois that we rebranded under our new *Fitness Premier 24/7* brand. Then, we started steadily opening them up. We started in small-town 'tertiary' markets, and we had good success. We would build nice 7,000 - 8,000 square-foot clubs and put in all the things that we knew worked. Then, we really focused on putting in strong leadership and training systems around



Fitness Premier 24/7 - Mahomet, Illinois

developing people who drive that type of experience.

**C.I.** - Please take us through the original concept and how it has since evolved.

**JM** - Back in 2000, things were simple. It was just about being family-friendly and memberships. There were not a lot of service offerings. As the competitive landscape changed, competition increased. The large brands that we all know today were born, they started entering markets and we all saw and experienced the effect of that.

Many had to evolve and pivot their brands, going from being simple, family-friendly, affordable and clean to having 'stuff,' because when members join a facility, that is what was going to make them stick. So, what was going to help them get better results? What was going to make them get involved with a personal trainer, team training programs and a nutrition program?

With *Fitness Premier 24/7*, we started pivoting and bringing in a lot of services that drove what we felt was the culture we were proud of and the results our members were looking for. From 2010 - 2015, we spent a lot of time testing and implementing different services we felt were important to create additional value, not only for the members but also for the profitability of each location.

**C.I.** - Prior to franchising, what were some of the key challenges and learnings as you developed the concepts for and ran the original company stores?

**JM** - We really learned how much *in-store leadership* makes a huge difference in the business. We had multiple locations

at this time. They weren't close to each other, so we really learned lessons about leadership the hard way, whether it was a *Franchisee, Operator or General Manager* who was running the day-to-day business. Experience for the team members and the club members made a significant impact on the results that happen.

So, we really started focusing on not only our hiring practices but our ongoing training and how we support those efforts. We started taking a really hard look at that and putting together systems that we felt we could make scalable to duplicate across multiple stores in our company. We talk a lot about two key concepts:

**OWN the Culture (OTC)** - In each facility, a lot comes with that, but it's something that we preach, train and are very intentional about.

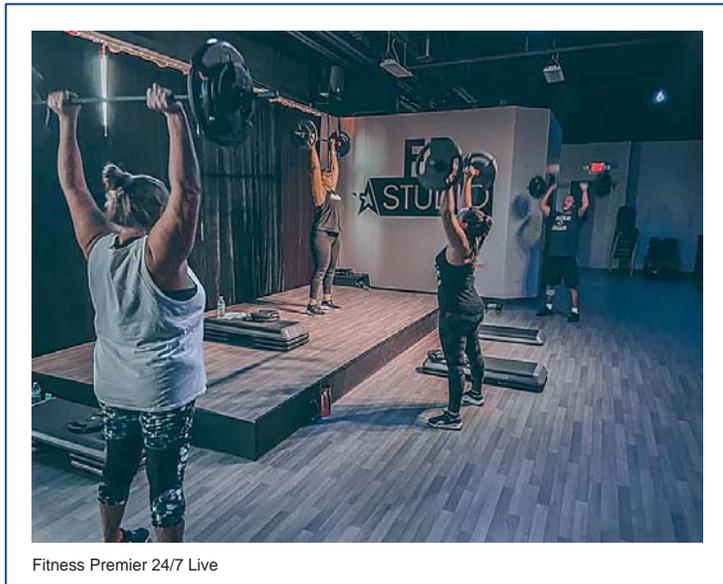
**Driving the Systems (DTS)** - We try to simplify things into a couple of simple concepts that have a lot of substance around them. We found that the people part of it was a big equation for us, especially in markets that we're serving now.

### Franchising Begins

**C.I.** - Franchising began in 2016. How did this come about?

**JM** - We had success in probably five or six corporate stores at this point. It was working well, it was scaling well, so we hit a tipping point to where we wanted to open up the opportunity for others to get in business for themselves, but not by themselves. We had a lot of organic interest from some members in local communities we were in who asked, 'Hey, how can I get one of these?' That kind of prompted us to formalize it to become an official franchise brand in 2016.

From there, we kind of self-generated our next batch of stores from (See *Jason Markowicz* Page 12)



Fitness Premier 24/7 Live



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## ...Jason Markowicz

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either existing team members who were part of the stores and wanted to do another one to new team members who wanted to open up elsewhere. So, we continued to organically evolve the business and grow mostly in the Midwest for the past few years in that way. Early on, we had many existing team members take advantage of our franchise model, which was great because they had operational experience already and knew our brand.

Obviously, in franchising, you're always thinking: *What's coming next? How can we become better? How can we support in a more effective way?* Those are some of the things that we thought about as we went to the franchise model.

**C.I.** - Step by step, how does your process for bringing on a new franchisee work?

**JM** - We have an inquiry page where we collect some basic information from candidates. It's on our website and a few other portals. Once a potential franchisee makes contact with us, our *VP for Franchise Development, Josh Hettiger*, reaches out to schedule a 15- to 20-minute introduction call. We get to know them a little bit, and they get to know us. From there, we schedule a 45-minute Zoom call where we take them through our differentiators and the way we think about the business so they can learn a little bit more about us. Next, we get a candidate application on file to make sure they are a good fit for us just like we want to make sure we are good for them. And, we provide the *Franchise Disclosure Document (FDD)* that we file every year. They get a chance to review that, then we set up a follow-up call to review it with them.

At this point, typically four to six weeks into the process, if everything looks like we're still moving along, we invite them to come to our home office in Manhattan, Illinois for a *Discovery Day*. It is usually

followed by a dinner so we can all get to know each other better. Following this, we can usually say, 'Hey, you're a fit for us, we're a fit for you. Let's shake hands and become a part of the family.' Or, 'Let's not.' Either way, that's the outcome that we're looking for from the *Discovery Day*.

**C.I.** - How many locations are now in operation? Company-owned vs. franchised? In the pipeline?

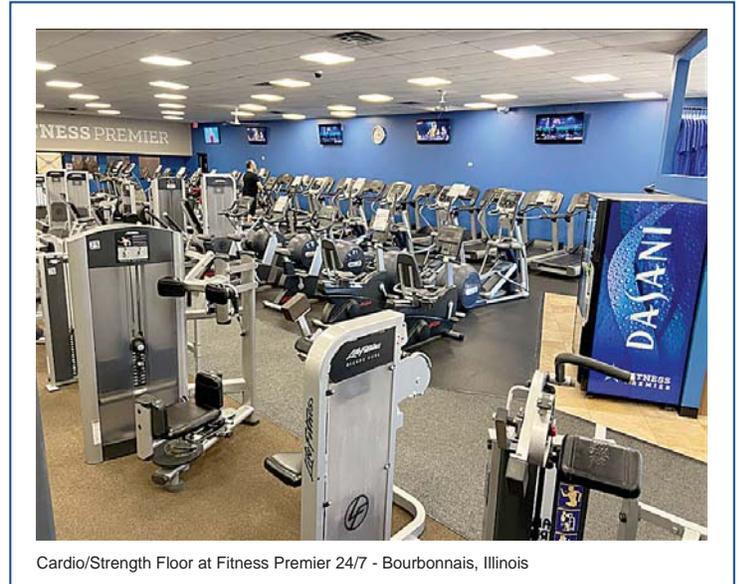
**JM** - We have 17 locations now. Two are company-owned and 15 are franchised locations. And, we have three additional locations in the pipeline that should open this year.

**C.I.** - Now, in 2022, with a fully developed concept and 17 locations in operation, please describe the typical Fitness Premier 24/7 location (size, amenities, services, etc.).

**JM** - Our average location is about 8,000 square feet with our smallest being 4,500 square feet and our largest being 15,000 square feet. We're typically a dry club, so the key amenities include:

- A private label group exercise experience in most of the locations, as well as a virtual group exercise experience;
- A pretty large team training area for our team training format classes;
- A private PT area;
- Recovery zones that include *Human Touch, HydroMassage, and Theragun*, which are highly used.
- Standard cardio, free weights and strength equipment;
- And, we still have tanning and supervised kids' areas in multiple clubs.

So, we have the amenities of a lot of big clubs, just kind of scaled down to a



Cardio/Strength Floor at Fitness Premier 24/7 - Bourbonnais, Illinois

smaller box in smaller towns because that is how we do it.

### Key Market Differentiators

**C.I.** - What do you consider Fitness Premier 24/7's Key Market Differentiators?

**JM** - I think most clubs that are in business today have and can offer the amenities and equipment I just rattled off. So, when I get asked this question, I focus on our people, our team and the leadership that we have and we create through our different training programs and the culture within the organization. That drives how we think, and it's a special thing that kind of transcends from us through the franchisee and the managers down to the member experience. It takes a lot of hard work, and we're really proud of it. We feel this is an important differentiator because we find that a lot of other people don't focus on it the way we do, so it enables us to be able to pivot quickly, have great relationships with the team, as well as provide ongoing training that enables us to adapt and evolve as we need.

Another is that we have back-office support we've been doing for all of our businesses and our locations over the years, so we have a pretty deep team from the back-office perspective. For our franchisees, we have a back-office system that supports accounting, collection, payroll, HR... all the non-fun things in the fitness world that any franchise operator doesn't want to do, myself included. So, we handle things centrally for all franchise locations. This lets them focus on the fun part of the business: driving culture, driving a team, experience with members, sales,

all those important things.

Together with reporting, we reconcile books every day, so they can log in for their current P&Ls, cash flow, balance sheet, etc. They have access to the operating costs, and we have different targeted KPIs that we have in our top performers report that basically aggregate all the clubs' data to put into one consolidated report. They have access to all of that without having the burden of putting the data in to make it accurate and effective. This is a big differentiator. As I mentioned, I think being able to take off the heavy burden of some of the administrative tasks that come with operating a business and centralize that and do it for them really enables them to focus on the more rewarding, fun part of the business.

### Member Demographics and Marketing

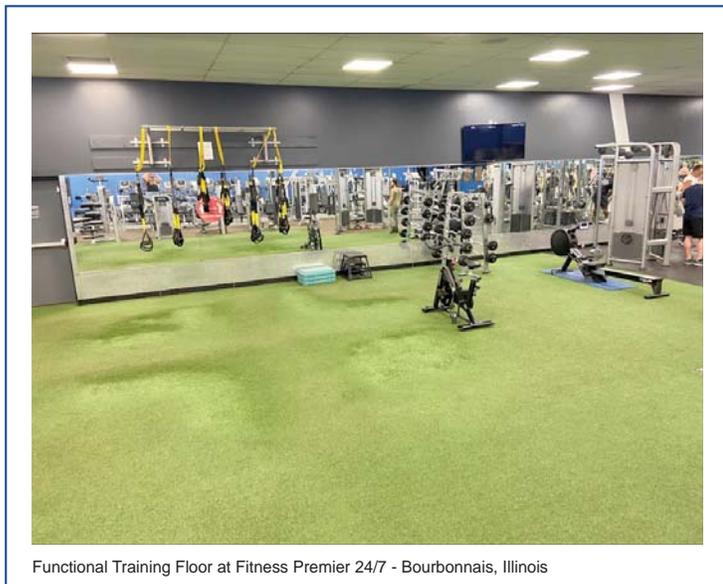
**C.I.** - What are your member demographics? Membership price points? How many members do you have system-wide?

**JM** - Some of our main member demographics are: **53% female, 47% male** with average age around **38**. The average price point for membership is **\$29 to \$39** a month, and system-wide, we have about **22,000** members.

The market demographics that we typically look for are towns with a population **over 10,000** and an average household income of **\$75,000**. Those are our two key indicators now, as well as competition of course.

**C.I.** - How do you go about reaching those specific markets? What are the key elements of a successful marketing campaign?

**JM** - We have a full-service marketing vendor, *SWETI Marketing*, which is focused on fitness clubs and does a nice job with our digital components. We have pretty strong  
(See Jason Markowicz Page 14)



Functional Training Floor at Fitness Premier 24/7 - Bourbonnais, Illinois



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## ...Jason Markowicz

continued from page 12

integration with our software system, and online acquisition costs are relatively low. It's all driven off the digital campaigns, primarily from Facebook and Instagram.

We are now focusing on creating content that we feel resonates with people who are the non-fitness users who might have weight loss goals or challenges and want to keep up with those. So, we're in the process of building content, campaigns and strategies around those folks in order to speak to them in a different way. I think that's going to be a big part of what we think about and do moving forward.

Of course, over the years, we've done the standard direct mail, billboards and aggressive digital campaigns to penetrate most of the markets that we're in today. With direct mail, we still utilize it two to three times a year, sprinkling it in around grand openings and special offers.

There's a lot of re-targeting that we do. Once you're in business for years, and you have a big database of people who joined, canceled, maybe come back, you can really target folks who have been interested in and bought from the company at some point. So, we try to spend a decent amount of time and energy re-targeting those folks as well.

**C.I.** - As the name suggests, Fitness Premier 24/7 is 24/7, 365. How do you implement this? What are the opportunities and challenges of 24/7 operation?

**JM** - It gave us a chance to allow members to have a convenient time to get in 24/7, 365, which is literally when they could access the club, but it also gave us the chance to not have to be staffed and have payroll costs for a lot of those hours, which can add up tremendously.

Things that enable us to implement this is that we have a full surveillance system at each facility, as well as security

panic buttons that clients can wear at the club when it is not staffed. In the event of an emergency, it is linked directly with the police and fire departments. We've been really fortunate in that we haven't had any serious situations that have happened at any facility. In the event there is one, we are prepared for that.

At the front door, everyone who joins the club can download our app. Within the app is a barcode they can scan right at the front door. This will allow access to paying members, so we still control who can access the club. And, we do have a tailgating system that identifies anybody who may come in behind somebody else who is a paying member or if somebody lets someone else into the facility. So, we have systems in place for identification and loss prevention.

Those are some of the challenges of it, and we do have some systems that help solve it. But, the big opportunity for us is to allow convenience for the members while also keeping our payroll costs inline.

**C.I.** - To confirm, is 24/7 access part of all memberships, or is that an upgrade?

**JM** - That is typically part of our *Platinum Membership*, which is our \$39 monthly. The *Basic Membership* is just fitness only use during staffed hours, which for most of our clubs is 8AM to 8PM during the week and limited hours on weekends.

### The Team

**C.I.** - Please tell us about some of your key team members (name, tenure, job title/responsibilities).

**JM** - **Rick King**, 16 years, COO - Focused on unit level performance and growth for the company;

**Kathy Mecklenburg**, 15 years, *Director of Finance & HR and Multi-Unit Franchisee*;

**Mike Orwig**, 8 years, *Vice President of People Development and Multi-Unit Franchisee* - Focused on leadership



The Fitness Premier Olympics

training and development;

**Kristina Scardine**, 7 years, *Director of Franchisee Support* (all things support with the network);

**Sam Gorman**, 9 years, *FP Live Director and Multi-Unit Franchisee*;

**Emily Janssen**, 6 years, *Director of Real Estate & Construction* - Oversees all real estate and construction needs;

**Josh Hettiger**, 2 years, *VP of Franchise Development* - Oversees all franchise sales and acquisitions company-wide;

**Brent Bergeson**, 4 years, *Nutrition Director*;  
**Mary Haynes**, 1 year, *Marketing Coordinator*;  
**Sara George**, *Club and Member Support Specialist*.

### Roundtables and Leadership

**C.I.** - As a Roundtable participant, please tell us about some of the key lessons/learnings over the years.

**JM** - I'm a big lifetime learner, so being involved in a Roundtable with REX has been amazing for me. I mean... just being surrounded by the people you are with in the room, including **Eddie Tock** and **Brent Darden**, and the different topics that come up regarding leadership, communication, teamwork, collaborating and sharing best practices really just makes you a better person, a better leader, a better business owner. The power of a team, the power of a group, I think, really channels a lot of momentum for those of us who are part of the Roundtable. I really enjoy it.

**C.I.** - You also implement Roundtables in your organization. Please tell us about this and its future plans.

**JM** - Over the years, we've taken a lot of

different concepts, whether it's training or ideas or articles that I get from different Roundtables I'm part of and brought them into the company. We do weekly training, and I embed those lessons within. We do a two-hour training live Zoom for clubs and all employees every week, supporting different topics, both personally and professionally. We do a lot of goal-oriented training and how to establish personal and professional goals as well as follow through.

We also have a monthly *Mastermind Group*, and it's been going on for seven years. Anybody in the organization can join it, as long as they complete our *Commitment Agreement*. We have about 35 team members who are in that group. It's a four-hour session, and it's all about collaborating and working together. We provide some curriculum and things they can develop, both personally and professionally, and it flows every single month; the team absolutely loves it. We also do a lot of fun things with it. For example, we just did a *Shark Tank* event where they had to pitch business ideas to a few key executives in the company. So, we **Make It Fun!**

We also just launched the *Next Level Group*, for those who have been in our *Mastermind Group* for five-plus years or have ownership in their location. That meets on a quarterly basis in different parts of the country, so we're seeing a lot. Once again, it's not just focused on business but on the personal side as well. We have about 15 team members in that group right now.

Overall, we're pretty team-centric in the way we think about things, and our team members learn how to make it work and they do it together.

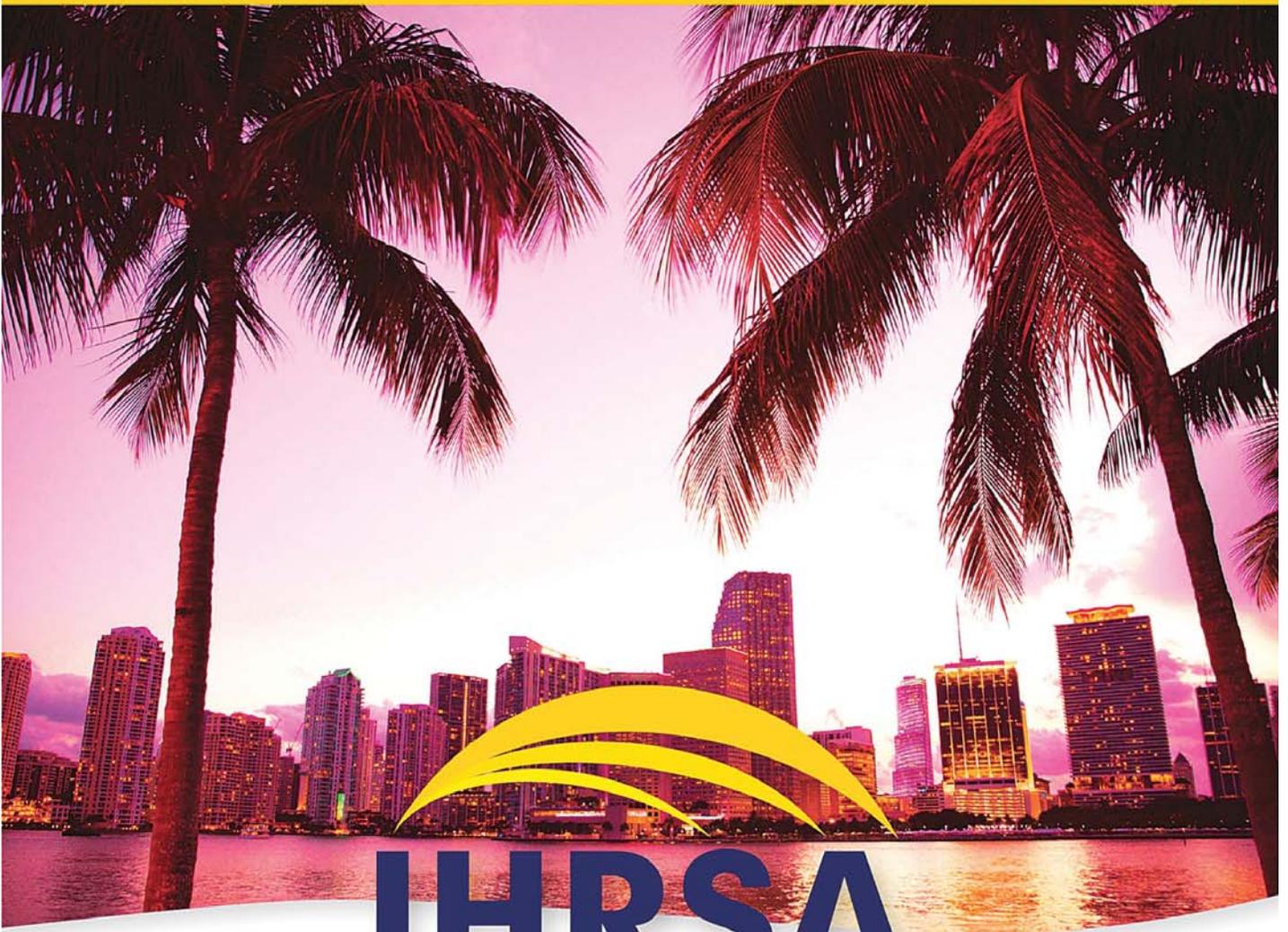
**C.I.** - Pardon the pun, but that is next-level stuff! Please tell us about your **4Cs of Coaching**.

**JM** - When we teach different systems in (See Jason Markowicz Page 16)



The Fitness Premier Olympics





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## CEOs Weigh in on the State of the Industry and Importance of Cash Flow Recovery Best Fitness and EOS Fitness Partner with Swift Financial to Get Members Back on Draft

By: Alex Wolf

We sat down with two industry leaders: **Dave Dos Santos**, CEO of *Best Fitness*, and **Rich Drengberg**, CEO of *EOS Fitness*. The topics? Where we are, where we're going and why we can't ignore cash flow recovery, especially now. Read on to learn their thoughts on this important subject and how **Swift Financial** can help you in this area.

**Alex Wolf (AW)** - Give us a quick gut-check: Where is the gym industry right now? Are we back in business? Still in recovery? Something else?

**Dave Dos Santos (DS)** - People are coming back to the gym, but I wouldn't say we're fully recovered. From what I'm seeing, the longer you were in lockdown, the longer it's going to take for you to recover. So, different parts of the country, and different gyms and studios, are recovering at different paces.

**AW** - We've been hearing a lot about 'cash flow recovery' and how, for many clubs, having the right strategy or partner has been central to recovery. How has your partner, Swift Financial, supported your clubs' recovery and growth?

**Rich Drengberg (RD)** - We've worked with

Swift for years, and from the beginning, they've been a tremendous resource. Not only have they handled our third-party collections, which frees up my team to handle other essential in-club tasks, but they've created an incremental revenue stream for us, by getting lapsed members back in the door and back on draft.

**AW** - Has that been your experience, too, Dave?  
**DS** - Swift has been central to our recovery and growth. They understand every part of the industry: sales, membership, training, everything. Other companies are just collections companies, and they have no view into what it takes to run a club. Swift brings in people who understand the industry, and they can flex and bend to what customers actually need.

**AW** - It sounds like Swift manages collections, which let's face it, every gym needs. But, it sounds like that added "back on draft" message has been a real win for your clubs.

**RD** - Traditional collections aren't future-focused. Reps are calling to recoup past-due payments. It's important, but that can only take you so far. Focusing on the bigger picture: collecting late payments, updating payment information, engaging and reactivating lapsed members, all of that



Dave Dos Santos



Rich Drengberg

comes together to really move the needle and accelerate recovery and growth.

**DS** - When I hear 'collections,' I assume someone is dialing away with no real understanding of me, my business or what we're trying to do. They just want the person to pay. But, I want to encourage people to get back on draft and back in the club. I want to build those relationships. And, lapsed members feel it; they know this isn't a collections call. This is us trying to work with that customer to reignite the

relationship, to get everyone on the same page, back on draft and back in the door. That goes a long way.

**Check out Swift Financial's Full Page Ad on the Opposite Page.**

*(Alex Wolf is VP of Customer Success for Swift Financial Services, which provides targeted collections services exclusively for gyms, wellness studios and fitness facilities. You can reach Alex at 347-943-6668 or info@Swiftfinancial.fit.)*

### ...Jason Markowicz

continued from page 14

the company, we try to keep it simple. We want to make it easy to teach and easy to learn, so our *4Cs of Coaching* are all about *connecting, caring, coaching* and *consistency*.

**Connecting** - When we think of connecting, it's always about finding a way to connect with those around you. That can apply to a coach who's teaching a team training session, or it can apply to us coaching a franchisee. In fact, it can be as simple as coaching a front desk person on how to properly handle a telephone inquiry or saying 'Hello' to each and every person who comes through the front door.

**Caring** - When communicating with those around you, do so in a way that shows how much you really care. This could apply to a trainer working with the clients, a franchisee working with their team or various other situations.

**Coaching** - Be present in every situation and always coach in the moment.

**Consistency** - Give feedback consistently in a connecting and caring way as often as possible.

Those are our **4Cs of Coaching**, and it's really a simple format. As you execute those things, obviously, it does take a lot of focus and hard work to keep all those things mindful across every interaction.

**C.I.** - I'll add to what you say by saying it just strikes me that these also seem like the steps to being a good, kind person, too. It all goes hand-in-hand.

**JM** - Yes, for sure. No doubt about it.

**C.I.** - In addition to the franchising of *Fitness Premier 24/7* clubs, you also operate *Fit For You Franchising*. Please tell us about this.

**JM** - This is our franchise development division, and we got it going a couple of years ago. It's focused on the franchise sales part of the house. **Josh Hettiger** is the VP of *Franchise Development* for the brands that we have, and he does a great job overseeing that division of our business. *Fitness Premier 24/7* clubs is one of three concepts that we represent right now under this brand.

We also have a boutique team training concept called *FitWave* that we're starting to implement throughout all our locations. It will become the way we brand and talk about team training within our facilities. We have been redesigning and reinventing that experience in our clubs, but we're now positioned to also sell it as a

stand-alone franchise.

We have another brand that I'm a *Partner* in as a franchisor called *Carpet Chemist*. So, those are the ones right now under that house. We really focus on branding, marketing and trying to get people to any one of those brands that could be a fit for them.

**C.I.** - How do you balance it all?

**JM** - That's only half of it! (laughing) We have a real estate company, a construction company, property management, etc., so that's the other side of the house that has some synergy with what we do on the fitness side. And, we have a really great team that helps there.

**C.I.** - To close this interview, what are you most optimistic about heading forward? And, what is on the horizon for *Fitness Premier 24/7* in the upcoming 3 - 5 years?

**JM** - I think we're probably most excited about good, smart, healthy, scaled growth. We've been pretty focused on the Midwest, but we do have some growth plans nationwide. And, I think by doing that, we'll continue to create opportunities for existing team members and new team members.

Most of our franchisees, about 80%, are multi-unit operators, which we love. They're really excited about the growth, and some of them are set to grow in different states. We're prepared to facilitate

that with them. We have Georgia coming up soon. From there, I am just super excited about continuing to find great people to partner with and just making a huge impact in the communities we're serving.

■ ■ ■

*Fitness Premier 24/7*, a brand on the go with great people and systems ready for the next level! Thank you to **Jason Markowicz** for his time interviewing and assistance with other tasks related to this cover story's production. Thank you also to **Mary Haynes** and **Emily Janssen** for their assistance with photos and graphics.

*(Justin Cates is the Publisher of Club Insider. Having been born into a club business family in 1985, Justin grew up in the health and fitness club industry. He has lived and breathed this industry for 37 years, since his own day one, and he loves it dearly. Graduating from the Terry College of Business at The University of Georgia in 2007, Justin has run day-to-day operations of Club Insider for 14 years. Justin was elevated to Publisher of Club Insider on April 5, 2020. Justin's Dad, Norm Cates, continues to serve as Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993. You can reach Justin by phone at 863-999-2677 or email at Justin@clubinsideronline.com.)*



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# Get Ready to Rumble!

## An Interview With a Personal Training Expert

By: Gary Polic

I am a firm believer in surrounding yourself with people as good or better than yourself. Well in that case, I thought to myself: "Who is the best Personal Training expert I know in my 40 years in the industry?" To answer that question, I would need to go to Polic Consultants Group, LLC's expert in that field, and his name is Victor "V-Man" Verhage. Those who know V-Man would wholeheartedly agree with me. Victor is an internationally recognized personal training educator and fitness management systems expert. He is also the owner of Victor VMan & Advisors, LLC. I am proud and honored to have him in our prestigious group at Polic Consultants.

His experience is specific to Personal Training/Small Group Training/Group Fitness, Design and Solutions Specialist with a demonstrated 30+ year history working in the health, fitness and wellness industry, skilled in maximizing the usage, profitability and member traffic in the PT/SGT/GF areas and spaces.

**An Interview With Victor "V-Man" Verhage of Polic Consultants Group, LLC**

**Polic Consultants Group (PCG)** - Please describe your current recruiting process for finding and hiring career-minded Personal Trainers.

**Victor "V-Man" Verhage (V)** - First, we begin by creating a positive and supportive

work environment where quality Personal Trainers will want to work. Next, we treat our current Personal Trainers very well and focus on building an incredibly positive culture. Then, we take extra time to verify their credentials and plan a specific interview based on their skills and client base. If they qualify, we are ready to make a quick offer, and if not accepted, we follow up and stay in communication with them. Build relationships with all the local colleges that offer a PT cert program, then visit them each quarter.

**PCG** - Please describe your onboarding process.

**V** - First, the new team member receives a 'Trainer Guide' book that answers most every question they may have about our mission statement, pay dates, vacation policy, organizational chart, rewards and guides them where to find clients to fill their schedules with appointments to get their services seen by the masses. It also offers business and marketing plans for them, then we help them to decide if they want to train one on one, in person, online or both.

**PCG** - Would they like to coach small groups or large groups, also offered online or in person?

**V** - Some parts of the live training is lecture, mostly learning by doing on the fitness floor or in one of our three custom designed training studios.

**PCG** - What does the agenda look like? Length of training daily?

**V** - Seven hours each day:

**Day 1** - Overview and expectations of the personal training position, pay and compensation (ways to increase income daily, activities and actions).

**Day 2** - Intro to Software Systems - VFPnext, Club Automation, skills and sales.

**Day 3** - New Client Intentional Intake, step-by-step guide to successfully getting a new client started on their fitness journey.

**Day 4** - Intro to Advanced Technology like the Power Plate Pro7, OHM Run, Morpheus heartrate training systems, WeStrive PT program design app and much more.

**Day 5** - Live training demo with other trainer/coach teams to practice from start to finish onboarding new clients, on-demand floor demos, equipment demos, then transitioning into the sales presentation to ask for the sale only once you have proven and demonstrated to the client and they believe that, with your help, support, education, motivation, they will get the results they desire and use the club two to three times per week for the next year. In other words, you earn potential client's money, time and energy.

This structure offers a much more comprehensive and complete training process with plenty of live practice on the floor, to build confidence and demonstrate their ability to provide a high-quality training experience.

**PCG** - What are the expected outcomes?

**V** - Be able to confidently inspire and engage members to hire them to upgrade their fitness training program. Also, be able to build a long-term revenue generating personal training business that provides an income that allows one to live an exceptionally good quality lifestyle.

**PCG** - What do you provide in the way of ongoing education that they use and want to grow the PT revenue?

**V** - Partnerships with top certification companies and conferences to offer great discounts, to complement our inhouse monthly live trainings based on specific needs.

**PCG** - What are your 'Core Offerings' to help PT's schedules stay full and incomes consistent or growing?

**V** - Transformation contest, social media ad campaigns, targeted programs like Booty and Core Camp. We also offer 14-Day Intro Journey, then we pre-book them and



Gary Polic

ask, 'Do those days work for you?' We also offer 'Weekly Specials' Lucky 7; purchase 7 of our 7 packs, a total of 49 sessions at a reduced price or \$70 for your first week of training.

**PCG** - How do you market your PT services and where?

**V** - In-house, online, community outreach with targeted approach.

**PCG** - Are you testing and tweaking the images and content?

**V** - Yes, monthly.

**PCG** - Are your PTs excited to share your 'New Member Journey Experience'?

**V** - Yes, it is the only one of its kind and a major value builder that proves we can help clients succeed, safely and positively. The new member or client receives an automated response, first from the Owner welcoming them by answering any objections or concerns, then their Trainer/Coach communicates with them by setting clear expectations of what to expect during their time together. During their session together, a discussion occurs and plans are put together for future appointments. A follow-up and 'Thank You' text and email are sent out following the first appointment. This engagement process continues for the next 8 - 12 weeks until they are seeing wonderful results and checking-in a minimum of 2 - 4 times per week.

**PCG** - What is your referral program to help your PTs grow their income and your profits?

**V** - Asked and earned based on proven results, once achieved. We do this at three different times: at point of sale, with family and friends or your place of worship and Member Appreciation Week, which offers a variety of fun, positive events.

(See Gary Polic Page 21)



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**Meet PCG's Victor "V-Man" Verhage**



V-Man's Specialty includes: Club Design, Equipment Purchasing and he is Internationally Recognized for his Personal Training Education & Fitness Management Systems.

**Testimonial:** "Each interaction with Victor is one of joy, curiosity and an exploration of what is possible. His knowledge of motivation, human nature, fitness and health club operations in general is prolific but his heart and humanity are what makes him special. Work with him if you can." - Bryan K. O'Rourke, Executive, Advisor, Investor, Board Director

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## Exercising at Home Vs. Exercising at a Club *Competition or Members on the Same Team?*

By: **Bruce Carter**

As it is widely known, a short while ago due to COVID-19, club exercise dropped off a cliff. Exercising at home obviously became a very popular option when clubs closed and people did not have a choice: exercise at home or don't exercise at all. Surprisingly, then, through things such as blogs and news stories, a "good guy, bad guy" story started to unfold. Clubs were unhealthy and only cared about money, and home exercise was safe and an unselfish approach to fitness. Many jumped on the bandwagon, and the gulf between home and club exercising widened. However, COVID did not motivate people who were not already exercising to exercise at home. Contrary to what was being portrayed, the amount of total exercising done during COVID was not higher than before. If anything, it was substantially less. Things just shifted temporarily.

Now, we see home exercise equipment sales dropping off a cliff from

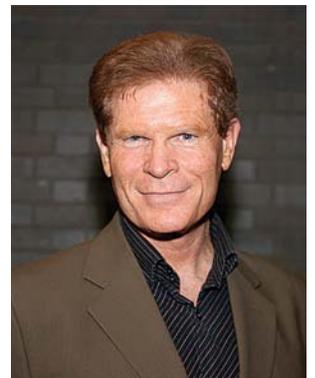
the recent COVID-related peak. Why? Well, one reason is obvious, people need people, and they want motivation and variety. But, also, research is showing that much of the home equipment bought during COVID simply did not get much use. That established narrative was forgotten during COVID, but once again, it is a common shared experience.

People have always been exercising at home, but very few people actually did exercise back when clubs started. **Jack LaLanne** opened his first club in 1936 in San Diego, and in 1940, **Vic Tanny** opened his first club in Southern California. Interestingly, his rent for the space was \$35 per month, the typical cost of a membership nowadays. Vic opened his second gym in Long Beach then suffered a COVID-like situation, and it closed. As a result of Pearl Harbor in 1941, the gym's location was in the part of the city near the waterfront where a black out was imposed. People were afraid to go out, and he was forced to close. Sound familiar? Also, back in that era, membership sales were difficult with a

common response from people coming in saying, "You want me to pay you money to lift those things?"

Gyms grew slowly but something gave the industry a big jump. What was it? *Home exercise*. By 1951, there were still not many health clubs, but a new TV show started: *The Jack LaLanne Show*. Just turn on the TV, and you had your very own (and first) "virtual trainer," helping you through an exercise routine in a safe environment. Did it work? Jack's show went on for 34 years. Jack was famous for saying, "*The only way you can hurt the body is to not use it.*" This show helped make exercise more popular than ever, especially for women, and clubs grew because of it. Many home exercisers searched for an expanded exercise experience.

Another big club exercise catalyst once again came from home exercise growth: *Jane Fonda's Workout Tapes*, which started in 1982. It was the top selling VHS tape for six years and sold more than 17 million copies. This clearly benefited the growth of the club industry. Yet, as clubs



Bruce Carter

grew, out of shape people often had an uncomfortable and intimidating experience, thus looked for something to do at home.

One of the things that happened with the Vic Tanny gyms became a forerunner for the growth of health clubs.

(See **Bruce Carter** Page 21)

# Tips On How To Grow Your Gym Business and Secure Business Financing

By: **Jim Thomas**

Accessing sufficient capital is difficult for independent gym businesses because traditional lenders, like banks, consider them risky ventures. Raising small business capital is also a drawn-out process, especially with poor credit. While many gym business loans do not have a minimum credit score, most lenders work with a range they consider acceptable for their small business loan requirements. So, how do you navigate the financial world and figure out how to grow your small business and secure gym business financing?

## Selecting the Right Funding for Your Gym Business

There are plenty of business loans available, but you should know how to get the best rates on financing to grow your small business. You need to understand the available loan options, loan duration, and terms and conditions. Once familiar with these basics, find out the available funding categories. Once you have calculated the amount of start-up funding you require, then you need to choose the most appropriate funding method. Here are the available sources of financing you should consider for your small business:

**Bootstrapping:** This is a form of self-funding where you leverage your personal financial resources to get your enterprise going. The money can come from your savings, family, friends or your 401(K). Self-funding gives you the freedom to have complete control of your business and take on the entire risk burden. If this is one of your business financing strategies, ensure that you don't go overboard with your spending. Work with what you can afford and be careful when dipping into your retirement funds.

**Venture Capital Funding:** Investors can offer you small business financing for growth. Venture capitalists typically seek out viable, innovative business ideas that show the potential for future profitability. Investors exchange capital financing for ownership shares in your business. Unlike banks and other traditional lenders, venture investors take on more significant risks and are willing to invest their money based on future projections. This financial form of investment also has a longer investment horizon than traditional financing. Understand the venture capital terms of engagement before making a deal, since some investors may want a controlling stake in the business that you struggled to set up.

**Alternative Gym Financing:** This is by far the most popular choice for financing a small gym business. Alternative financing

options are especially popular for those who need access to funds fast or may have trouble accessing financing options from banks. The typical requirements for alternative financing depend on how long you've been in business or your average monthly revenue. If you've been in business for more than six months and you're grossing over \$10,000 per month in revenue, you will qualify for most options.

**SBA Loans:** The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) collaborates with appointed lenders to provide money to small-scale enterprises. SBA has a set of guidelines used by partner lenders, micro-lending organizations and community organizations to disburse funds to businesses that qualify. Eligibility for SBA government small business loans is often less stringent than bank loan facilities. The terms are competitive, and the rates are generally similar to non-guaranteed loans. In some instances, your loan may come with counseling and education support, allowing you to get professional financial guidance. Additional benefits of SBA loans include flexible requirements, subsidized down-payments and no collateral requirement for some loans.

**Crowdfunding:** Online platforms like *Indiegogo* and *Kickstarter* allow startups to pitch their business ideas and get financial contributions in return. This pooling of funds from the public can help small businesses access quick financing with few obstacles. Some businesses use crowdfunding to secure business financing in exchange for shareholding. So, as a contributor, you get to own a part of the business you contributed to. Make sure you confirm whether the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has registered the crowdfunding platform you use.

**Convertible Debt:** Once you pitch your business to potential investors, they may agree to offer business financing, and in return, the debt will be converted to equity

in the future. This is difficult for many small business owners because it requires you to give up some control of your enterprise to investors. The benefit of convertible debt is it's easily accessible and has flexible terms.

## Small Business Capital and Why It Is Important

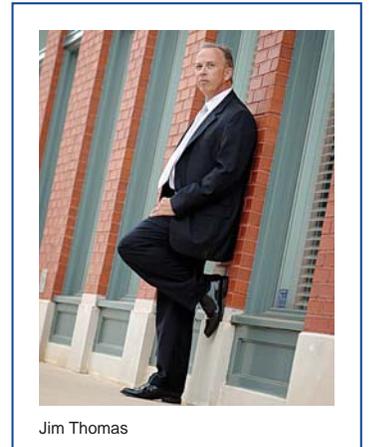
Now that you have an idea of how to get a business loan with no money, you need to know how to put it to good use:

**Business Expansion:** Most business ventures get to a point where they need to grow. Here are some ways to expand your business after securing small business capital: Expanding the current business premises or moving to a better facility. Opening a new location of the business to increase revenue. Adding a new product range to your portfolio. Business growth is expensive; that's why you have to seek additional funding rather than depending on working capital.

**Increasing Brand Visibility:** Even the most robust business strategies require new customers. Marketing is essential to building your customer base, enabling your business to reach new milestones. Close to 50% of small businesses shut down due to reduced market demand. Therefore, you must keep making efforts to increase your brand visibility and reach out to as many people as possible to grow your business.

**More Cash for Eventualities:** However much planning you do, you'll always need additional funds for contingencies. Having extra cash means your business won't grind to a halt if a couple of unexpected expenses arise. Extra cash on hand gives your business the flexibility for growth without fear of cash flow problems.

**Improving Processes:** It's not easy to budget for new equipment or software when you already have many running costs. Using business financing to improve and



Jim Thomas

modernize your business processes is a more viable strategy. Asset-based lending can also enhance your business practices by enabling you to get more funding.

**Purchasing New Inventory:** Buying new stock in bulk is always more economical than piece-meal purchases. Financing assures you of steady product supply to your customers even when your working capital is insufficient to buy new stock. Businesses turning to asset-based financing can easily sustain normal operations when there isn't any collateral for financing.

## Bottom Line

You now have some tips on how to grow your gym business and secure business financing. Securing small business capital is the key to growth, so don't get too caught up in daily tasks and forget to build your enterprise. If the process of seeking small business financing feels overwhelming, you may be interacting with the wrong partners. The key to small gym business success is to plug into the right networks and get the best rates on financing to grow your small business.

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

## Club Insider Seeks Contributing Authors

Contact Justin Cates

(863) 999 - 2677

or

[Justin@clubinsideronline.com](mailto:Justin@clubinsideronline.com)

# What Do You Believe About the Future of Fitness?

By: **Terry Browning**

People are back. Rooms are refilling. Your members are reconnecting. And, we are so excited to be with our fitness community at *IHRSA 2022!* People need people to share ideas, for inspiration and collaboration, and to keep each other moving and moving forward. Today, let's talk about the recovery work ahead and how we can keep traffic trending in the right direction in the near and distant future... and, in fact, how we can future-proof your facility.

So much has changed in the past two years. Some elements of our industry, and certainly our appreciation of wellness, may have changed forever. **Less Serious:** We'll never *not* clean off our bikes. **More Serious:** We'll never take our health for granted. If your business is like our business, our mission is now even more clear: *We must get more people moving.* To do this, we have to build and invest in the most impactful programs and people. And, we have to surround ourselves with people who believe what we believe.

## ...Gary Polic

continued from page 18

**PCG** - Please describe your PT retention and referral program.

**V** - Focused on achieving results, then asked once earned.

**PCG** - How are they rewarded?

**V** - Choices, bonuses, gift cards or education conference pass.

**PCG** - Is it working?

**V** - Our top PTs have been retained for over 15 years.

**PCG** - Why would a PT want to work for you?

**V** - We create a career journey with them, then support the process to get them there each day through KPIs.

• • •

Thank you, V-Man! Every time I have a conversation with you, I leave more educated and refreshed on how I can help others in the industry. I hope everyone reading this feels the same way. To learn more about **Victor "V-Man" Verhage** or to contact him, go to [www.policconsultantsgroup.com](http://www.policconsultantsgroup.com).

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

You've probably heard us quote **Simon Sinek**, author of *Start With Why*, but this idea bears repeating as we navigate a new era in fitness. *"The goal of business should not be to do business with anyone who simply wants what you have. It should be to focus on the people who believe what you believe."*

Do you believe what we believe at MOSSA? Here are a few of our fundamentals:

### Exercise Should Fit Everyone

Pre-pandemic stats regarding exercise --80% of adults weren't getting the recommended amount-- were already alarming, and we imagine they've only gotten worse. At MOSSA, we happily serve the 20%, but at our core, we aim to get more people moving. After all, why zero in on just 20% of our market, trying to make fit people fitter, when the other 80% needs to move more than ever?

We believe exercise and movement should be accessible to everyone, regardless of age, experience level or

geography. MOSSA workouts are both varied and inclusive; we offer eleven in-club group fitness programs to suit every need, but even a single workout is created for a broad spectrum of abilities. We emphasize movement for health and mobility in real-life, not crazy or extreme fitness for aesthetics; we want to help more people build healthy habits and live long, active lifespans.

### People Crave Connection

We believe in the power of "together." We know that exercising in groups enhances enjoyment, increases results, boosts endorphins and fulfills our basic human need to connect with other people.

That makes group fitness powerful, unlike anything else under your roof, because it will bring people together for the essential shared experiences that they'll want to revisit over and over, for years to come. They might not see each other outside of your group fitness spaces, but their very specific community drives motivation, adherence and loyalty to



Terry Browning

your facility.

Add an engaging instructor, an amazing playlist, innovative programming and an inclusive mindset, and you can deliver a never-miss experience that, by design, will strengthen the social community and connections at your facility.

(See **Terry Browning** Page 22)

## ...Bruce Carter

continued from page 19

As Vic Tanny gyms started to grow, one strategy would revolutionize the club image. Prior to that, as the famous **Joe Gold** put it, clubs had, "the worst pieces of junk in the world; they stunk and were like dungeons." Vic Tanny took gyms "out of the cellar" and created lavish (for the time) facilities that got many more people to join. In fact, this was the beginning of the concept that the environment of the club made all the difference in getting people to join, a concept that is still prominent in gyms and membership sales today.

Of course, home exercise environments vary dramatically. Yes, commercials

showing someone on an exercise bike in a big spacious room overlooking an ocean view is "selling the dream," but so many home exercise environments serve as a temporary experience. Outdoor exercise options once again can vary dramatically depending on where someone lives.

Strongly motivated exercisers are the exception, and they often will make do with whatever is available. They often exercise both at clubs and at home. Yet, most people need all the motivation they can get, and the new virtual options try to make this a key part of their offerings. Clubs, however, have great potential if they create exciting environments... Environments that exceed almost all types of home environments. Environments that

offer the highly in demand variety. Also, environments that are non-intimidating. But, possibly most important of all is camaraderie! People need people. People exercising give off an energy, and others around them pick up on that energy. Then, they too, give off energy. This dramatic energy interaction is a dominant club asset, and it can only be found in clubs. It is a visceral experience that does not transfer over in such options as in a virtual class with others exercising. Simply put, better environments mean better results. This energy interaction works whether the environment is an intense, crossfit-style environment or an upscale type of space.

Home exercise has always led to more interest in clubs because there is a desire to move to the inspiring and varied experiences in clubs. Yet, often, people get started in clubs and then try the home experience. Both clearly supports one another. Always has and always will.

The bottom line is there are way too many people that do no or little exercise. It's not so much that one group takes away from the other, but as one grows, so does the other. COVID was initially an aberration in the back and forth flow for everything went to home fitness. But, all that will lead to growth in club usage, including an ever-expanding group that will do both. *Inactivity is the enemy, the competitor. All types of exercise are the solution!*

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

# Make It Fun!

**...Terry Browning**

continued from page 21

**Group Fitness Is Future-Proof**

In our noisy industry, full of fleeting fads and fitness fanaticism, it's easy to get lost in the noise or lured into "the next big, thing!" Innovation is great, but gimmicks and gadgets rarely appeal to the broad audience... at least for any meaningful length of time. Your investments have to attract and keep the most people, by delivering results. And, "the latest," we've learned over time, is rarely the greatest.

It might also seem easy, after a sale, to send a new member to a machine. "Good luck! Have... fun?" Machines won't offer connection or community, and let's be honest, aren't a differentiator. In fact, you and I both know they are available

at the low-price, low-service place down the street.

Our friends at IHRSA said it best when talking retention: "Machine members are by definition, high-risk members. They belong as it were in every club's 'intensive care.' The loyalty of such members is paper-thin. For them, their club is no more than a place that stockpiles exercise machines."

Let's put our money where our members are... or at least where we want them to be and invest wisely in group fitness. Consider this: for the cost of a treadmill or two, which serves one or two high-risk members an hour, you could pack your group fitness room with 30, 50 even 80 loyal, raving fan members in a workout.

For as much change as we've endured in the past two years, this constant remains: Group fitness stands the test of time as a top retention tool, attracting

members who are less price-sensitive and more likely to stay as long-term members. MOSSA programs are developed and tested to attract the broadest possible audience, something for everyone, and connect them to a community, no gimmick required.

**Meet Us at IHRSA!**

We hope to see you in Miami Beach in a few weeks! If you are going to be at IHRSA, we'd love to meet. Please come by **Booth #1921** and say, "Hello."

If you believe what we believe, that fitness should be more about social connection than internet connection, we should talk. If you believe that the future of membership is about finding new members and serving new markets, more than fueling the fitness fanatics, we should talk.

And, if you believe that the longevity of your business has more to do with your people and your programming, more so than digital and devices, we should definitely talk... in-person, face-to-face, at our booth, in Miami.

(As President and CEO of MOSSA, formerly known as The STEP Company, Terry Browning has been instrumental in guiding the company's directions after the introduction of The STEP to the fitness industry and retailers, has led the team that introduced Branded Group Fitness to health clubs in 1997 and now steers the company's growth in the consumer digital workout market. Terry has nearly 30 years industry experience and holds a degree in Marketing and Business Administration from the University of Akron. Terry can be reached by email at [terry@mossa.net](mailto:terry@mossa.net) or phone at 800-729-7837, Ext. 242.)



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[www.policconsultantsgroup.com](http://www.policconsultantsgroup.com)  
[www.sportsfitness.com](http://www.sportsfitness.com)  
[www.mysfs.io](http://www.mysfs.io)  
[www.wellnesssuccessblueprint.com](http://www.wellnesssuccessblueprint.com)  
[www.zeamo.com](http://www.zeamo.com)

*Online Positions:*

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[www.augiesquest.org](http://www.augiesquest.org)  
[www.businessfinancedepot.com](http://www.businessfinancedepot.com)  
[www.clubindustry.com](http://www.clubindustry.com)  
[www.igofigure.com](http://www.igofigure.com)  
[www.flexit.fit](http://www.flexit.fit)  
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**Thank You to Our Contributing Authors**

- **Bill McBride** - Founder, BMC3 - [BillMcBride@bmc3.com](mailto:BillMcBride@bmc3.com)
- **Bonnie Patrick Mattalian** - Independent Consultant - [bmattalian@gmail.com](mailto:bmattalian@gmail.com)
- **Bruce Carter** - President, Optimal Design Systems International - (954) 888 - 5960
- **Cathy Spencer Browning** - VP of Training & Programming, MOSSA - (770) 989 - 4700
- **Daron Allen** - President & CEO, Visual Fitness Planner - [dallen@vfp.us](mailto:dallen@vfp.us)
- **Derek Barton** - Owner, Barton Productions - [derek@bartonproductions.com](mailto:derek@bartonproductions.com)
- **Donna Krech** - Founder/President, Wealth of Wellness - (419) 991 - 1223
- **Gary Polic** - Owner, Polic Consultants Group - (630) 410 - 1120
- **Jeffrey Pinkerton** - Business Development Manager, MOSSA - (770) 989 - 4737
- **Jim Thomas** - President, Fitness Management USA - (800) 929 - 2898
- **John McCarthy** - 25-Year Executive Director Emeritus of IHRSA
- **Karen Woodard-Chavez** - Premium Performance Training - [karen@karenwoodard.com](mailto:karen@karenwoodard.com)
- **Mark Williamson** - Co-Founder and Principal, ClubIntel - [markw@club-intel.com](mailto:markw@club-intel.com)
- **Mike Alpert** - COO, Smart Health Clubs - [mike@smarthealthclubs.com](mailto:mike@smarthealthclubs.com)
- **Paul R. Bedard, Esquire** - Crunch Fitness Connecticut - [paul@crunchct.com](mailto:paul@crunchct.com)
- **Paul Bosley** - Owner, Business Finance Depot - (800) 788 - 3884
- **Rick Caro** - President, Management Vision, Inc. - (212) 987 - 4300
- **Sara Kooperman, JD** - CEO, SCW Fitness Education - [scwfit.com](http://scwfit.com)
- **Thomas Plummer** - National Fitness Business Alliance - (800) 726 - 3506

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