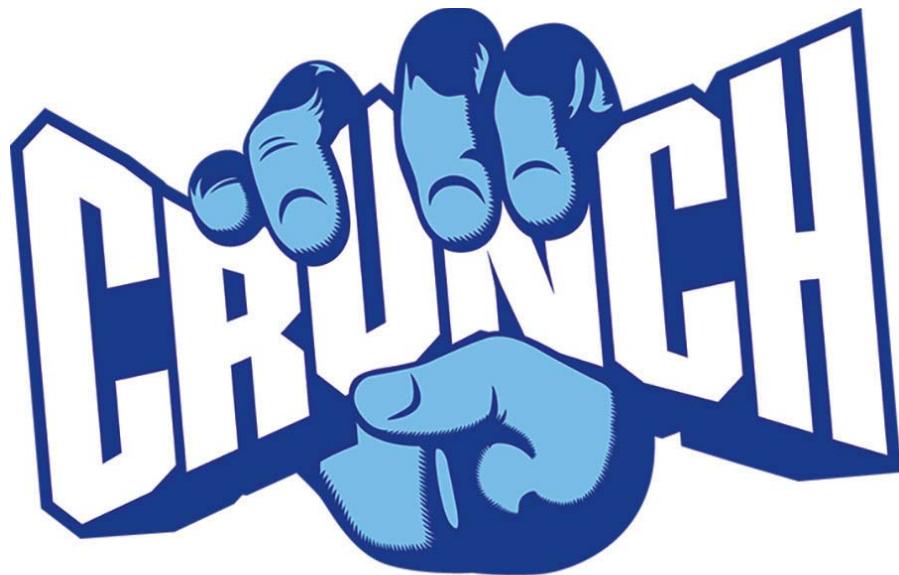


Norm Cates'

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in 2024!*

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CLUB INSIDER

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Crunch Fitness

Making Moves in 2024!

By: Justin Cates

Positivity. Inclusivity. Fun. These are the pillars of Crunch's No Judgments Philosophy, and now, 35 years after its creation, the company has become a stalwart of the health and fitness club industry. We know those pillars have been key to success. Today, their pace of opening new locations may be unparalleled. And, they are just getting started!

We are only halfway through 2024, but what a year it has already been for Crunch! What follows in this cover story are those key developments, announced during the first half of this year. They include:

■ Crunch Fitness Takes #1 Fitness Spot in Entrepreneur's Franchise 500;

■ Crunch Appoints Chequan Lewis, Former COO of Pizza Hut U.S., as President;

■ Crunch Fitness Appoints John Kersh as Managing Director of International Development;

■ NFL Star Dak Prescott Launches New Partnership with CR Fitness Holdings to Expand Crunch Fitness Presence Nationwide.

As time goes on, Crunch becomes a better and better opportunity for those who pursue it. We welcome you to view our friends, **Crunch Franchise's Ad on the Opposite Page** to see if that opportunity might be right for you. You can also go to www.crunchfranchise.com for more information.

(See **Crunch Fitness** Page 8)



Welcome to Crunch Fitness

Health & Fitness Association Elects New Board Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer

BOSTON, MA - At its June 3 meeting, the Health & Fitness Association Board of Directors elected **Chris Smith** as *Chair*, **Luke Carlson** as *Vice Chair*, and **Al Noshirvani** as *Treasurer*, the Association announced. Chris Smith has served on the Health & Fitness Association Board for four years, the last year as Vice Chair. He is *President and CEO of Fitness World Canada*, a position he has held since 2020.

His career in fitness began as a personal trainer 25 years ago. Since then,

he has served in various roles at *24 Hour Fitness*, *Bally Total Fitness* and *Steve Nash Fitness World*, which he joined in 2011 as *Vice President of Sales and Fitness* before becoming *COO* and then *CEO* in 2014. He later became an *Owner* and rebranded the business as *Fitness World Canada*. Smith is also the *principal of All Things Fitness and Wellness*, a media brand covering the fitness industry, and is *Founder and CEO of the British Columbia Personal Training Institute*.

HEALTH & FITNESS ASSOCIATION

"Chris is an inspiring and empowering leader, and his background as an international executive will help the Health & Fitness Association build on our recent transformation," said **Liz Clark, HFA President & CEO**. "His attention to detail and strategic vision will help us continue to deliver on our core strategic pillars of advocacy, education and research and to

(See **HFA Board** Page 6)

Inside the Insider: Edition #366

- Five Crucial Steps for Better Employee Onboarding - **By:** Chris Stevenson
- Recapping SIBEC 2024 - Plus a Bonus: Planning Your Fall FitFest - **By:** Frank Guengerich
- Shape Up Your Fitness Business With These DIY PR Tips - **By:** Nancy Trent
- The Use of Blood Labs and their Relevance to Health Club Clinical Exercise Programs - **By:** Eric Durak, MSc
- To Beat the Boutique, Be the Boutique - **By:** Jeffrey Pinkerton
- Here's Your Knockout Marketing Plan for a Comeback - **By:** Jim Thomas
- Genesis Health Clubs Acquires Both Locations of Saw Mill Club
- ACSM Unveils New Brand Identity, Marking 70th Anniversary and Strategic Shift
- 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 366th monthly edition of this 31+ year running club business publication I refer to as: **A Labor of Love!** I'm very thankful that you've tuned in again for this iteration of **Norm's Notes**, as I proceed on my keyboard with my longtime habit of "Telling-It-Like-It-Is!" I'm really happy that you're reading this edition, and I want to **THANK YOU ALL** for sticking with us every month! As usual, we have a bunch of health and fitness club business news, **so please read on!**

■Is AMERICA a GREAT COUNTRY, or WHAT?!? Hmm... hmm... hmm! And, as usual, let me start these **Norm's Notes** with my normal monthly salutation to you all: **GOD BLESS AMERICA and GOD BLESS YOU, YOUR FAMILY and YOUR BUSINESS!!!**

■On June 13th, I learned the very sad news that my friend, and a friend of our entire industry, **HOWARD RAVIS**, a great guy who for many years was a key man at the *Club Industry Shows*, had passed away. **May HOWARD RAVIS REST IN PEACE.** And, my heartfelt condolences go now

to **HOWARD's family**.

■Well, folks, the longer you live, the more life will bring sad events into your life. On the same day as the previous Note, I was informed that **WAYNE LEWIS**, an *N.C State College Football Teammate* of mine, passed away. **May WAYNE LEWIS REST IN PEACE.** My heartfelt condolences go now to Wayne's family.

■Big news out of the *Health & Fitness Association* (formerly *IHRSA*), as the Association has elected a new *Board Chairman, Vice Chairman and Treasurer!* At its June 3 meeting, the *Health & Fitness Association Board of Directors* elected **CHRIS SMITH** as *Chair*, **LUKE CARLSON** as *Vice Chair*, and **AL NOSHIRVANI** as *Treasurer*, the Association announced. Check out the full **Press Release** on Page #3.

■This from Athletech News: **GOLD's Gym makes Long Beach debut, gets \$15 million for California club upgrades.** The iconic gym brand is going all out in its home base of Southern California, opening new clubs and upgrading existing ones with state-of-the-art equipment, amenities and

floor plans. **Stay Tuned** as the **Gold's Story** continues!

■Recently, our friend **Eddie Tock**, CEO of *REX Roundtables*, sent out the following message:

It's been a busy year already for REX Members in the U.S. as we have had 21 REX Roundtable meetings, with 27 more this year. The perception of REX is that we sit in conference rooms, sharing best operational practices so we can have the secret sauce to succeed. While that part is true, it's only part of what really happens at a REX Roundtable.

In May, one REX Roundtable spent time in Yosemite. It was a great experience as we learned to appreciate nature and the air was so fresh! The digital detox was tough for some! In September, we have a group of REX members walking the battlefields of Gettysburg and studying leadership lessons from past generals.

We are taking three REX Roundtables to spend a day behind the scenes with the *Savannah Bananas* baseball team, the only team in any sport that sells out every game for the whole season within a few days! We want to learn



Norm Cates

what they have done to become so fan centric and what we can learn to become better at becoming member centric!

If we can get out of meeting rooms, we do! And, I am excited to share that, in the coming months, we will have confirmed companies outside the industry we will visit that are 'small giants' that do great things.

We know our REX members love
(See **Norm's Notes** Page 7)

About Club Insider

CELEBRATING 30+ 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 - Bonnie Patrick Mattalian, Bruce Carter, Casey Conrad, Cathy Spencer Browning, Chris Stevenson, Derek Barton, Frank Guengerich, Gary Polic, Herb Lipsman, Jeffrey Pinkerton, Jim Thomas, John McCarthy, Mike Alpert, Nancy Trent, 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 **31st Year** of this home-based health and fitness club trade publication! The thought that this publication was founded to serve an industry I truly love, and so that I could become a *Mister Mom* for my son, **Justin**, is still intriguing and amazing to us. So, I wish to extend my most sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to everyone who has made this amazing 30+ year run possible.

Very sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** go to **Rick Caro**, the late **Dr. Gerry Faust** and the **Faust Executive Roundtable #1** for helping me decide in 1993 what my home-based business would be. **Thanks and Appreciation** to my long-time friends, **Ron Hudspeth** and **Cathy Miller**, formerly of *Atlanta's Hudspeth Report* for the tremendous assistance they provided. **Thanks and Appreciation** to all of the folks at **Walton Press** in Monroe, Georgia. They did an absolutely excellent job for us all these years and printed every one of our monthly printed editions! And, of course, **Thanks and Appreciation** to the **United States Postal Service** for sending those editions to our readers!

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

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

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

Norm Cates, Jr.



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Genesis Health Clubs Acquires Both Locations of Saw Mill Club

MT. KISCO, N.Y. - *Genesis Health Clubs* announces the acquisition of both locations of the *Saw Mill Club*, effective immediately. The clubs, now known as *Genesis Health Clubs - Saw Mill Club*, and *Genesis Health Clubs - Saw Mill Club East*, represent the 71st and 72nd clubs in the ever-growing *Genesis* portfolio and the first in New York, its 11th state.

Rodney Steven II, *Genesis Health Clubs* Owner and President, commented on the acquisition: "We've always wanted to have clubs in New York, and what an introduction to the State. The *Saw Mill Club* is a tennis and fitness institution in New York and the health club industry in general. We're excited to have the *Saw Mill* clubs as part of the *Genesis* family of clubs going forward."

Rick Beusman, President of *Saw Mill Club*, also commented on the sale. "We've been working with Rodney and the folks at *Genesis* for awhile. *Genesis* checks all the crucial boxes for us when it comes to multi-sport health clubs. They are laser focused on member service, which is based around a strong company and club culture that maintains the highest operating standards for our members. Any time you consider a move like this, you want to ensure the members are truly taken care of, and we know that will be the case with *Genesis*. *Saw Mill Club* has been a privately held and family-owned business for 52 years. *Genesis* is also a privately held family-owned business, and that fact counts for a lot to us. The clubs could not be in better hands going forward, and their

future certainly is bright."

Steven continued, expanding on Beusman's sentiments, "We can't wait to welcome *Saw Mill*'s members and staff to our fitness family. We plan to welcome the staff into the *Genesis* family and offer them robust 401k plans, health insurance benefits, as well as access to *Genesis*' extensive member service training and state of the art club systems they may not have in their current roles. As for the members, this is such an exciting time for them. They'll continue with the same great programming they've got right now, but we'll also be reinvesting in the facilities. And, They gain access to over 60 clubs across 11 states, at no extra charge."

Steven continued, "We entered the region a few months ago with *The*



Atlantic Club in New Jersey, and there is so much opportunity. Stay tuned; you'll be seeing a lot more from *Genesis* in the coming months and years!"

ACSM Unveils New Brand Identity, Marking 70th Anniversary and Strategic Shift

INDIANAPOLIS, IN - In a momentous occasion coinciding with its 70th anniversary, the *American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM)* unveils the launch of its new brand identity and strategic plan at the 2024 Annual Meeting. This significant milestone reflects ACSM's commitment to innovation, collaboration and the advancement of movement.

The year 2024 is a pivotal one for ACSM as the organization not only celebrates seven decades of excellence but also embarks on a transformative journey with the introduction of a three-year strategic plan. This plan, meticulously crafted over the past two years, underscores ACSM's dedication to evolving with the ever-changing landscape of health care and wellness.

"At ACSM, we believe in the power of movement to transform lives," says **Irene Davis**, ACSM President. "As we enter this new era, our updated brand identity serves as a beacon of our unwavering commitment to science, evidence-based practice and the promotion of health and fitness for all."

Central to this rebranding initiative is the unveiling of ACSM's refreshed mission statement, emphasizing the

organization's multidisciplinary approach. ACSM also introduced, for the first time, a vision statement centered on the universal importance of movement in enhancing lives.

"ACSM's new brand identity reflects our core values and strategic objectives," said **Katie Feltman**, ACSM Interim Chief Executive Officer. "It symbolizes our dedication to leveraging scientific research, integrating medicine and evidence-based practice, and championing health and fitness as integral components of human wellbeing."

The new brand identity, effective immediately, features a dynamic logo comprised of three interlocking elements, each representing a foundational pillar of ACSM's mission: Science, Medicine and Health & Fitness. Together, these elements signify ACSM's holistic approach to driving progress and innovation in our field.

"As we embrace this bold new era, ACSM remains steadfast in its commitment to extending and enriching lives through the power of movement," Davis says. "We invite our members, partners and stakeholders to join us on this transformative journey as we continue to lead the way toward a healthier, more active world."

Publisher's Note: Luke Carlson and Discover Strength will be Club Insider's July 2024 Cover Story Subject.

AI Noshirvani joined the Board two years ago. He owns *Fitness Club Management Inc.* in Rockville, Maryland and co-founded *Alta Technology Group*, a boutique management consulting firm. He is also *Managing Director of Integrity Square*, a financial advisory and early-stage growth equity firm focused on the health, active lifestyle, and outdoors sector (HALO). Prior to his current work, Noshirvani co-founded *Motionsoft*, a software and financial service company serving the fitness industry. He is

a member of *Big Brothers Big Sisters* and the *National Iranian American Council*, and he is *Chair of the Georgetown Day School Hopper Fund*.

"Luke and AI bring important strengths to the board," Clark said. "Luke offers deep knowledge in personal training, the science behind resistance training and experience in business operations and franchising. AI has M&A, venture capital and consulting expertise along with experience on the supplier and club operator side."

In addition to the election of these officers, five new Board members who were elected at its March meeting have now joined the Health & Fitness Association Board



of Directors:

- **Ahmar Azam**, Founder and CEO of *TriFit*;
- **Deborah Fiorella**, Chief Technology and Digital Officer at *24 Hour Fitness*;
- **Richard Idgar**, COO of *EoS Fitness*;
- **Mel Kleist**, CEO of *East Bank Club*;
- **Matthew Stevens**, President and CEO of *The Bay Club Company*.

Check out the **HFA** Ad on Page #9.

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...Norm's Notes

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visiting clubs (we do, too). Real growth comes from when we are challenged in how we do things. So, we want to take groups to learn from outside the industry, to bring new ideas into our industry and to strive to get better with fresh outlooks.

This is important for all owners and members of leadership teams to do many do not have the time to find these opportunities. So, one of the best things about REX: We find the best of the best and give you the opportunity to learn from them.

Are you focusing on what really matters? Do you even know where that focus should be? Do you want to get better, be challenged and most importantly be supported?

If you have anyone you'd like to introduce to the REX family or you'd like to join the REX family, then drop me an email at Eddie@REXRoundtables.com.

Thanks Eddie!

This very sad news was reported by **ANDY BERG** in my friend, **PETE BROWN's** *Athletic Business Magazine*. The headline reads: *Experienced Climber Dies After 'High-Elevation' Fall Inside Climbing Gym*. The story continues:



Eddie Tock

An experienced climber and longtime employee of the *Vertical Dreams* climbing gym in Manchester, N.H. has died after falling from a high elevation within the facility. According to the **Patch.com** report, police were called to *Vertical Dreams* to attend to a climber who had fallen and was seriously injured. When first responders arrived, they found **LEE HANSCHE**, 46, of Allenstown, a well-known and experienced climber, had fallen to the floor with *no safety gear*. Hansche was transported to Elliot Hospital where he died from his injuries. Manchester Police confirmed

Hansche fell in the gym from a height of 50 to 60 feet. The *U.S. Department of Labor* has confirmed that the *Occupational Safety and Health Administration* has opened an inspection of *Vertical Dream Inc.* "To determine whether or not there were any violations of workplace safety standards in connection with this incident." People lauded Hansche as a committed climber and leader within the sport. In a post on Reddit, someone wrote, "Lee Hansche was a steward of the climbing community. He's bolted and maintained 100s of routes. He has provided a rich history of mountain projects. His passion and humor in the sport were contagious, and anyone who has met him knows it." **MAY LEE HANSCHE REST IN PEACE.**

Folks, this is interesting news from Tuesday, June 11, 2024. I'm sharing it with y'all because of the true significance of it happening. So, here goes:

Way back in 1964 - 67, after playing football in Rome, New York, I played college football at *North Carolina State University* in Raleigh, N.C. on a full football scholarship. Let me brag a little bit here... my Senior year, I was honored by selection to the 1967 1st Team All Atlantic Coast Conference Team, and I got an Honorable Mention on the All American

Team. I found that I had a really great interest in the following happening that I'm about to report to you. So, with my interest driving my fingers on this keyboard, I felt that *I JUST HAD TO COMMENT* on this sports news item that hit today... June 11th.

For those of you who've followed college basketball over the years, you may remember the amazing 1983 N.C. State Basketball Team that won the Men's Basketball National Championship. The now late N.C. State Head Basketball Coach, **JIM VALVANO**, led his men to victory, allowing them to believe that they could beat anybody. And, they DID! The headline and breaking news today is that ten of the those 1983 Wolfpack Team Members recently sued the NCAA over Name, Image and Likeness (NIH)!

THURL BAILEY, ALVIN BATTLE, WALT DENSMORE, TOMMY DINARDO, TERRY GANNON, GEORGE MCCLAIN, COZELL McQUEEN, WALTER PROCTOR, HAROLD THOMPSON and MIKE WARREN have filed suit against the NCAA for unauthorized use of the player's name, image and likeness. At this time, the sum of damages is unspecified. And, the Wolfpack alums, also known as "The Cardiac Pack," argue that, for many decades, the NCAA has unfairly profited from these 10 player's images.

(See **Norm's Notes** Page 14)

...Crunch Fitness

continued from page 3

Crunch Fitness Takes #1 Fitness Spot in Entrepreneur's Franchise 500

NEW YORK, N.Y. - Crunch Fitness, one of the fitness industry's leading high-value, low-price gyms, ranked #1 in the fitness category and #29 overall in the annual *Entrepreneur Franchise 500*, the world's first, best and most comprehensive franchise ranking. The company remains in the top 10% for the third straight year.

The Franchise 500 is a highly sought-after honor in the franchise industry, and the 2024 list is Entrepreneur's most competitive ever, with a record number of 1,389 franchisors submitting. The recognition comes during widespread growth for Crunch Fitness, which serves over 2.5 million members at over 450 gyms worldwide and in 41 states, the District of Columbia, Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Portugal, Puerto Rico and Spain. The company notably scored in the top 2% for consistent, positive U.S. franchise unit growth for over a decade, robust training and support for franchisees.

"It's an honor to receive Entrepreneur's recognition as the leading fitness brand in franchising," said **Ben Midgley, CEO of Crunch Franchising**. "We're particularly proud to lead the fitness category this year. Crunch has climbed the ranks for over a decade, and this year's ranking is a testament to the commitment of our franchisees, corporate team, millions of loyal members and our culture. Crunch is the originator of the 'No Judgments' environment and our gyms are all about helping members feel good. We look forward to an even more successful year in 2024."

2024 is a milestone year for

Crunch Fitness as the company celebrates its 35th anniversary and projects to increase its franchise footprint to 500 gyms worldwide. The gym franchisor aims to hit 3 million members by the end of the year.

"Every brand on the Franchise 500 has its own unique story, but they all collectively make the same statement: Franchising is strong and resilient, is full of innovation and opportunity, and provides a powerful entrepreneurial path for many people," says **Jason Feifer, Editor in Chief of Entrepreneur Magazine**. "Our 45th annual ranking is full of companies with fresh ideas, exciting business models, cultural sway and the kind of business sophistication that will define the next 45 years and beyond."

In Entrepreneur's continuing effort to best understand and evaluate the ever-changing franchise marketplace, the company's ranking formula also continues to evolve. The editorial team researches and assesses several factors, including costs and fees, size and growth, support, brand strength and financial strength and stability. Each franchise is then given a cumulative score based on an analysis of more than 150 data points, and the 500 franchises with the highest cumulative scores become the Franchise 500 in ranked order.

Over its 45 years, the Franchise 500 has become a dominant competitive measure for franchisors and a primary research tool for potential franchisees. Crunch's position on the ranking is a testament to its strength as a franchise opportunity. Entrepreneur previously recognized Crunch in its Franchise 500 10+ Club, which honors an elite group of franchises that have earned a spot on the list for ten or more consecutive years. The high-value, low-price gym believes in making serious exercise fun by fusing fitness and entertainment and pioneering a philosophy of "No Judgments."



Cardio Floor at Crunch Fitness

Crunch Appoints Chequan Lewis, Former COO of Pizza Hut U.S., as President

NEW YORK, N.Y. - Crunch Fitness, a leading high-value, low-price gym, announces the appointment of **Chequan Lewis** as *President of Crunch*. Ben Midgley will transition from CEO of Crunch Franchising to Crunch's Board of Directors as of March 15, 2024, and he will be integral in franchisee relations.

Lewis, the *former Chief Operating Officer and the first Chief Equity Officer at Pizza Hut U.S.*, will guide and direct company operations for owned and franchised businesses in his new role. He will work directly with other Crunch executives and franchise owners to develop growth strategies, improve performance and elevate the brand. Lewis is a Howard University and Harvard Law School graduate, former business litigator and Presidential Leadership Scholar who is deeply committed to civic engagement.

"We believe Chequan's strategic mindset and proven track record will continue to lift Crunch to new heights," says **Jim Rowley, CEO of Crunch Worldwide**.

"Chequan brings a wealth of experience and has delivered tremendous results in his previous roles. We look forward to working together to build on the strong foundation at Crunch and drive our company's success into the future."

"I'm fired up to join the Crunch team on our journey to deliver legendary experiences for our Members, Gym Teams and Franchisees," said Chequan Lewis. "As a lifelong fitness enthusiast with a passion for franchising, coming to Crunch feels like a homecoming. I'm excited to grow the Crunch legend alongside a talented team and a committed franchise network."

During Midgley's tenure since 2009, the franchising of Crunch Fitness has achieved remarkable results, setting new standards of excellence in the industry. Midgley has taken the Crunch franchise business from conception to being one of the fast-growing fitness concepts in 41 states and seven countries, with 460+ gyms, more than 2.5 million members and the #1 Fitness franchise on the Entrepreneur 500 list.

"Ben's unwavering commitment to Crunch, our members, and our franchisees (See *Crunch Fitness* Page 10)



Workout Floor at Crunch Fitness



Chequan Lewis



Ben Midgley

IHRSA is now the HEALTH & FITNESS ASSOCIATION

After two years of discussion and planning, IHRSA has made the next move in our evolution—we've rebranded as the Health & Fitness Association!

Our new name more readily reflects the amazing community of health and fitness leaders that we represent worldwide.

We will be transitioning to the new name during the next several months, so watch our website as we transition our url, social media platforms, newsletters, and more.

healthandfitness.org



...Crunch Fitness

continued from page 8

has led us from being a concept to becoming the fastest-growing gym franchise in the country," added Rowley. "With Ben joining the Board, our franchise partners will continue to have a dedicated advocate and liaison to represent their needs across Crunch's business strategies. This is the right move at the right time as we gear up for even greater growth in 2024 and beyond."

**Crunch Fitness Appoints
John Kersh as Managing Director
of International Development**

NEW YORK, N.Y. - Crunch Fitness, a leading high-value, low-price gym, announces the appointment of **John Kersh** as the company's *Managing Director of International Development*. The addition comes as Crunch Fitness emphasizes global expansion, and Kersh will be integral to opening more Crunch gyms across the globe.

Kersh brings over 25 years of experience in the fitness and franchising business and has previously held the *Chief International Development Officer* role at Xponential Fitness. In this role, he was responsible for the global expansion of all Xponential Fitness brands like Pure Barre, Club Pilates, CycleBar, StretchLab, Row House and Rumble. Before Xponential, John held executive development roles for Self-Esteem Brands, franchisor of Anytime Fitness, and the Health and Fitness Association (formerly IHRSA), the health and fitness industry's trade association. At Crunch, Kersh will be responsible for the brand's international expansion strategy, identifying global growth franchise partners, and ultimately, bringing Crunch's legendary brand experience to new markets worldwide.

"With John's exceptional back-

ground in the fitness industry, his addition to Crunch opens the door for even more opportunity when it comes to growing our brand on a global scale, which is something we are highly focused on," says **Jim Rowley**, *CEO of Crunch Worldwide*. "With a proven track record of great success, we're looking forward to seeing John set new standards for growth and drive Crunch forward globally in his new role."

"In terms of expansion, Crunch has been crushing it over the past 12 months, with the company set up for even more success and growth through 2024," said **Chequan Lewis**, *President of Crunch*. "Having John join our team is another step in the right direction. We're keeping a foot on the gas pedal as we look to drive new openings, both domestically and internationally. John is highly qualified to direct Crunch's international expansion and grow our global reach."

Crunch has long been a global brand, with gyms in Canada, Spain, Portugal, Australia and more. Uniquely positioned to experience significant growth in the industry, and now led by Kersh's deep knowledge of global markets, Crunch will expand into new markets around the world.

**NFL Star Dak Prescott Launches
New Partnership with CR Fitness
Holdings to Expand Crunch Fitness
Presence Nationwide**

TAMPA, FL - *CR Fitness Holdings LLC*, a leading Crunch Fitness franchisee, announces a new partnership with **Dak Prescott**, star quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys. This collaboration aims to expand the Crunch Fitness brand by delivering affordable fitness and wellness services to local communities throughout the United States.

Prescott chose the CR Fitness team due to their proven track record with the Crunch brand and their strong sales



John Kersh



Dak Prescott

and operational performance, making them the largest and fastest-growing Crunch Fitness franchisee. As industry leaders, the CR Fitness Team establishes strong bonds with every community it serves. Prescott, an essential figure in the community, is equally committed to this philosophy and will actively engage with members and staff, contributing to the excitement surrounding the upcoming Grand Openings of Crunch Fitness locations in Texas, Florida, North Carolina, Georgia and coming soon to Tennessee and Arizona.

"I believe mental and physical health are so important. Health and fitness are incorporated into everything we do, and more people should have access to affordable, high-quality ways to improve their overall wellbeing," says Prescott. "Crunch Fitness is a game-changer for many people, from first-time gym-goers to seasoned athletes, which is what attracted me to come on board. I'm excited to help the CR Fitness team continue to introduce the inclusive Crunch gym experience to the surrounding communities nationwide."

Fusing fitness with entertainment to make serious exercise fun, Crunch offers an extensive selection of premier cardio equipment, top-quality strength training equipment, dedicated group fitness studios, cycling studios, hot yoga studios, boxing classes, performance turfs, dry saunas, a Training Hub, HydroMassage tanning, and HIITZone. Members also have access to a staff of experienced personal trainers and over \$1.5M worth of equipment per location.

"We are thrilled to work with Dak, a tremendously successful and admirable athlete on and off the field," says *CR Fitness CEO, Tony Scrimale*. "Dak truly understands the importance and value of accessible fitness and health options. We're

looking forward to working with him to bring the highest quality equipment, amazing group fitness classes, and experienced personal trainers to so many people at an unbeatable value."

With a goal to operate 100 clubs nationwide by 2026, CR Fitness Holdings LLC is led by industry veterans **Vince Julien**, **Geoff Dyer**, **Tony Scrimale** and **Jeff Dotson**, who combined have more than 150 years of experience in the fitness sector. The team currently operates 62 locations across Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and Texas, with ambitious expansion plans reaching across the United States.

▪ ▪ ▪

Crunch is experiencing a milestone year in 2024, ranking first in fitness and #29 overall in Entrepreneur's Franchise 500, celebrating its 35th anniversary, and pushing towards 3 million members and over 500 club locations in 2024. **Stay Tuned!!!**

(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 38 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 15+ years. Justin became Publisher of Club Insider in April of 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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Five Crucial Steps for Better Employee Onboarding

By: Chris Stevenson

Staffing the fitness industry is often a revolving-door scenario. Some team members move on, some are let go and some get promoted, leaving a gap to fill. Particularly in the post-COVID era, many facility operators will find hiring a top priority. Hiring encompasses team members new to your company, as well as returning team members in need of refresher training. In either case, a comprehensive onboarding program is crucial for team member success.

Training new employees not only gives them the skills and tools needed to do their job well but the sense of achievement critical for employee retention. For those reasons and others, taking the time to create and execute a strong onboarding program is well worth the effort. On a side note, using robust methods for recruiting new team members is essential. This will secure a larger funnel of talent from which to choose during a comprehensive interview process, thus guaranteeing you'll bring quality people into your organization. The best onboarding process in the world cannot overcome a bad hire.

That said, an onboarding program can be broken down into five segments, which when executed properly, lead to great results:

1. Warm Welcome: The first and often most missed step in the onboarding process is taking the time to officially welcome a new team member. It is tempting to simply jump in and train someone to do their job. However, new hires are much more receptive if the actual training happens after they feel welcomed and part of the team. Even the most experienced new hire might feel uneasy stepping into a new and unfamiliar workplace. A warm welcome includes having the new hire's uniform and name tag ready on the first day, as well as making an introduction on internal and external social media channels. At our clubs, we include a small gift, such as flowers or a Starbucks gift card. A handwritten note from the owner or manager also makes a lasting impression. I once wrote a welcome card to a new cycle instructor that he posted on social media with the caption, "Some bosses are the sh**!" I recommend preparing an agenda for that first day so the new hire knows exactly what to expect. We also made sure to assign a coworker as a buddy for them during breaks or lunch time. The first day always ended with a meeting with their

supervisor to receive feedback and answer any questions. These little things add up to create a great first impression and can go a long way toward making the new team member feel at home.

2. Culture Training: All onboarding for new team members should begin with culture. Every employee must know the vision, mission and values of your facility. The new hire should learn a little about this in the interview process. However, during onboarding, they learn much more. A strong understanding of why a facility exists and what it stands for, the "facility DNA," is integral. It also helps instill purpose. A clear purpose helps employees make the right decisions and understand their roles and contributions within the company. As an example, while the hire may "work at the front desk," their real purpose is to be the best part of a member's day. When people find meaning in their work, they will be more engaged and perform better. Culture training is the foundation for all training that follows.

3. Member Experience Training: Now that a new hire knows what the facility stands for and the true purpose of their personal role, it's time to train on member experience. No matter what the actual day-to-day duties, every job should center around providing the best member experience possible. In this segment of onboarding, cover the importance of a great member experience using data and statistics as support. Data confirms it's not just your opinion, it's a fact. Once you have built a case for the importance of experience, it is time to teach best practices. Best practices include warm welcomes and fond farewells, using names, owning questions, body and luxury language, plus countless others. The list of strategies is long, so choose a dozen best practices to drill into your new team member. At this point, new team members know their purpose and understand the importance of providing an unparalleled member experience.

4. Product Knowledge and Technical Training: Product knowledge is exactly what it sounds like. Your new hire must understand everything there is to know about your products and services. This training includes teaching the hire about your programming, such as group exercise classes and personal and small group training, to the point the new person can speak to those topics with confidence. The

hire should also be trained to promote any other additional amenities and offerings you provide, such as a snack bar or pro shop, aquatics components and childcare services. While some of this knowledge comes from your ability to clearly explain things, hands-on experiences guarantee the best results. I would have new hires take a few group exercise classes, do a personal training session, or participate in a specialized program. There is no better teacher than actual experience. We once had a situation where a woman picked up her daughter from childcare and told the childcare attendant she was going to cancel her membership because the barre class she had just taken wasn't traditional enough and had too much jumping. Because the childcare attendant had taken barre classes as part of onboarding, she was able to recommend a different barre format with a better fit for the member's needs. A membership was saved due to excellent product knowledge. Basic information about your business should be committed to memory, too. Knowing the facility address and phone number, emergency plans, where things are located, etc., creates a better member experience because team members can answer questions quickly and accurately. Technical training includes skills specific to the position. These topics could be as simple as clocking in or as complex as software system training. These are the real nuts and bolts of doing the job and are obviously essential. At this stage, new team members believe in their purpose, understand the importance of how to take the best care of members and possess the knowledge and tools to do their job well.

5. Cross-Training: In this final, but crucial segment of training, new hires learn about other roles performed within the facility. This creates an understanding of those roles, plus respect and appreciation for what others do. Not only does this foster a greater sense of and appreciation for the "team," it also gives team members enough broad job knowledge to help fill alternative roles when needed. For example, a personal trainer may learn aspects of working the front desk during cross training so that when the front desk team member is tied up, the personal trainer can check people in and answer the phone because they have been trained on how to cover those tasks. This builds teamwork and creates an enhanced member experience. Once this final training segment is completed,



Chris Stevenson

new hires are invested, purpose-driven and competent in their roles.

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Another aspect to consider when creating your onboarding programs is to vary training media. Use lectures, Power Points, videos, articles and any other means of communication you feel will be effective. People learn things better when they are delivered in a variety of ways. Plus, it helps eliminate monotony and boredom. Also consider giving homework or suggested reading, then test for comprehension and information retention by conducting quizzes on that material. Finally, employ interactive exercises and lots of role playing. Do your best to make your onboarding an engaging, educational and fun experience. When done well, the result is engaged team members, enhanced employee retention and team members performing at high levels to deliver an unparalleled member experience.

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



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Recapping SIBEC 2024 *Plus a Bonus: Planning Your Fall FitFest*

By: Frank Guengerich

This year's summer 2024 SIBEC Event was on point! One of the best events of this type I've ever attended and certainly the best attendance from both Suppliers and Buyers. The location was fantastic, the *Langham Huntington Resort*, in Pasadena, California. **Robert Shannon** and his team from SIBEC did a great job organizing and coordinating the event. The logistics and scheduling of this sort of event is no small feat, but they did it flawlessly. These are my main take-aways:

Spent valuable time with colleagues.

There are too many to name them all, but some of my good friends and colleagues that I was able to say "Hi" to and spend time with were: **Jeff Skeen** (*ReEnvision*), **Christina Cabrera** (*La Quinta Resort and Spa*), **Lynne Devaney** (*Health and Fitness Association*), **Danny Dulkin** (*Arch Amenities Group*), **John Ruyak** (*Corporate Fitness Works*), **Jeff Jeran**

(*Power Wellness*) and **Sheldon McBee** (*Universal Athletic Club*), among others.

One of the evening highlights was when we went to the *Rose Bowl* and had dinner on the field! Some brave attendees attempted field goals and played ball. Fun stuff.

Learning from the best.

The supplier/product line-up was robust, to say the least. Virtually every product I wanted to get an update on or learn more about attended the event. Some of the highlights for me were:

TRUE: Ralph Ruggiero - The expanded product list is impressive. They have a very diverse product list that delivers almost every piece of equipment needed. I was very impressed with both the strength and cardio lines.

Nustep: Linda Wojciechowicz and Kristi Allen - They continue to innovate and offer very specialized equipment that

is unmatched.

Theralight: Valerie Krossin - Such an impressive product line that has great science backing the effectiveness of the product.

Next Wellness: Mark Thomas and Ed Navan - This recovery company has one of the best product lines to include red light, cryo therapy and a host of other items that are focused on recovery.

Rebecca Windsor and Associates: Becky Allsup - This group provides "turn-key" support with FF&E packages. If you need it, they probably have it or can get it.

Digilock: Carolee McKanna - They just came out with a new lock that is simple, inexpensive and easy to use.

American Barbell: Hillis Lake and Clay Whittaker - I've had the opportunity to visit their product development warehouse with my *REX2* colleague / peer group, and these



Frank Guengerich

folks make great stuff!

Aldous & Associates: Tyler Rice - Late-stage collections group that does it the right way. Professional, tactful yet thorough.

(See **Frank Guengerich** Page 15)

Shape Up Your Fitness Business With These DIY PR Tips

By: Nancy Trent

If your fitness center offers unique classes, innovative programs or success stories, you're a prime candidate for publicity. Journalists love "stories with purpose, led by people with passion," and your gym fits the bill perfectly. First, some basics:

What is PR? - Public Relations (PR) is the strategic communication of your message to your target audience. PR professionals use media coverage --free editorial mentions in media outlets and social media platforms-- to amplify your message.

The Power of Good PR - Turn on your TV, pick up a magazine, scroll through social media... These platforms aim to entertain, engage and inform. Effective PR transforms your story into newsworthy content.

Benefits for Your Fitness Center

PR helps spread your message widely. When done right, it can generate buzz and word-of-mouth referrals. In today's business environment, it's the endorsements from others that drive memberships and sales.

When potential members see your gym featured on popular morning shows, blogs or Instagram feeds, they start to see your gym as a must-visit. This visibility reinforces existing members' loyalty and encourages them to share their positive experiences.

Investing in PR

Consider PR an investment in your gym's growth. Allocate part of your

marketing budget to it or be prepared to manage it yourself. Starting a PR campaign can be challenging yet exciting, and with a strategic approach, you'll see great results.

Steps to Launch Your PR Campaign

- Get Motivated:** Identify the unique benefits your gym offers. Research competitors and highlight what makes your services different and better.
- Develop a News Instinct:** Stay updated on current news and trends to time and place your stories effectively.
- Create a Media List:** Identify media outlets that reach your target audience. Look up editors, producers and contributors. Many websites offer media kits with editorial calendars.
- Understand Lead Times:** Different media types have varying lead times. National magazines, for instance, plan 4 - 6 months in advance. Map out your PR goals on a calendar and prepare materials accordingly.

Preparing Press Materials

Press Kit: Compile background information, biographies, fact sheets and story ideas along with high-quality images. Have statistics, case studies, photos and videos ready for use.

Media Training: Train your spokespersons to handle media interactions professionally, focusing on conveying the gym's message without being overly promotional.

Press Visits: Arrange face-to-face meet-

ings with the media to give them a firsthand experience of your gym.

Making News

Your goal is to create newsworthy moments. Consider the following:

Piggyback on Trends: Leverage current trends to make your gym relevant.

Seasonal and Awareness Days: Use holidays and awareness days to boost visibility.

Announce New Developments: New classes, equipment or expansion plans can be newsworthy.

Leverage Initial Press: Once you get media coverage, use it to generate more interest.

Working With Journalists

Be Brief: Journalists are busy. Appreciate their time and be concise.

Know Your Journalist: Understand what they cover and tailor your pitch accordingly.

Meet Their Needs: Ask about their current projects and offer relevant story ideas.

Deliver Promptly: When a journalist shows interest, be ready with the information they need.

▪ ▪ ▪

Navigating the media landscape can be complex. Start early and do what you can until you're ready to bring in PR



Nancy Trent

experts. With dedication, PR will soon become a favorite part of your gym's growth strategy.

(Nancy Trent is a writer and speaker, a lifelong wellness activist, a globe-trotting trend watcher and the Founder and President of Trent & Company, a leading wellness PR firm. Trent & Company, which launched many health and beauty brands, grew out of Nancy's personal and passionate commitment to helping people live longer and healthier lives. A former journalist for New York Magazine, Nancy has written seven books on healthy lifestyles, serves on the editorial boards of several magazines and travels around the world speaking at conferences and trade shows on trends in the marketplace. She is a recognized expert in PR with more than 30 years of experience creating and managing highly successful campaigns. Learn more at www.trentandcompany.com or contact Nancy at nancy@trentandcompany.com.)

...Norm's Notes

continued from page 7

"For more than 40 years, the NCAA, and its co-conspirators, have systematically and intentionally misappropriated the Cardiac Pack's publicity rights including their names, images and likenesses associated with that game and that final amazing game winning dunk play, reaping scores of millions of dollars from the Cardiac Pack's legendary victory," wrote lawyers from the three Raleigh-based firms representing the players.

The heart-pounding final moments of the 1983 NCAA Championship final game, when NC State ultimately came out victorious over Houston University, have been played on repeat over and over and over during *March Madness* promotional videos and advertisements. The iconic 54 - 52 buzzer-beating dunk and coach Valvano's victory lap are synonyms with the

hype for college basketball.

This case is poised to be a precedent-setting powerhouse, as the lawyers argue that a student-athlete's value continues well past their college graduation. In the new era of NIL deals and paid student-athletes, it is no wonder that the Cardiac Pack is finally speaking their mind about the unpaid publicity they've participated in for decades. Compare their representation with that of the high-value deal that current athletes like N.C. State rival **ARMANDO BACOT** earned. Bacot plays center at *The University of North Carolina*, and he has had success on and off the court, proven by his NIL deals with big-name companies such as *Dunkin'*.

The NCAA tournament earns nearly \$1 billion each year, and the championship Wolfpack team is ready for pay day! So far, the NCAA has not commented on the suit.

Folks, this is going to be

interesting to watch. Shoot, if this NIH movement can go back to 1983, and Jimmy Valvano's amazing team's championship run, then my/our 1967 *Wolfpack Football Team* that went 9 and 2 and *BEAT THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA* in the 1967 *Liberty Bowl*, should also get paid some moola. haha **STAY TUNED!**

JUSTIN and I want to THANK YOU for reading Club Insider! We appreciate you being with us. And, in particular, **WE VERY SINCERELY APPRECIATE ANY and ALL SUPPORT OF OUR ESTEEMED Club Insider ADVERTISERS!** PLEASE DO BUSINESS WITH THEM and WHEN YOU DO, PLEASE TELL 'EM Club Insider SENT YOU! THANK YOU ALL!

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 50-year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. He is the Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993 of Club Insider, now in its 31st year of monthly publication. In 1981, he was IHRSA's First President, and a Co-Founder of the Association with Rick Caro and five others. In 2001, he was honored by IHRSA with its DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award, one of its highest honors. And, in 2017, he was honored with Club Industry's Lifetime Achievement Award. You can reach Norm by phone at 770-635-7578 or email at Norm@clubinsideronline.com.)

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...Frank Guengerich

continued from page 13

Club Automation/Daxko: Rudy Nieto and Tom Antosik - My favorite software solutions group. Always working to make the product better.

Final Take-Aways.

As health and wellness professionals, it's vital that we stay up-to-date with current equipment, products and trends. The SIBEC event does that very thing, and I've found it to be invaluable. I learned so much in such a short period of time because we had so many 20-minute "face-to-face" meetings set up for us. I met in person with 25 suppliers. And, then, to be able to sit down for breakfast, lunch and dinner with colleagues and discuss their business and mine was so helpful.

Next year's event will be in May in Orlando, Florida, and I highly recommend

that you attend. I will be!

BONUS: Planning Your Fall FitFest

As health club operators, we all know the Fall is the most challenging time for driving revenue and new membership sales. For this reason, I have learned that we must create energy and events for our clubs to promote to the public and for our members. For this reason, I've always organized a *Fall FitFest*. The purpose of this event is to be the center piece of your external marketing campaign and to also drive referrals and retention.

Keys to Success:

1. **Planning** - Get at least three months ahead of this event so you have plenty of time to organize and promote it. I suggest you hold it on a Saturday or Sunday for two hours, 9 AM - 11 AM.

2. **Sponsorship and Community Involvement** - Local sponsorship can easily be sold to your members who own businesses. One feature sponsor and a handful of event sponsors will cover all your costs and allow you to assess a "facility use fee" to hold the event, thus making the event profitable.

Get local high school varsity coaches involved by holding clinics for the kids. These coaches are like rocks starts to young kids. Basketball, soccer, lacrosse, football, baseball, softball, volleyball. For adults, LIIT activities and simple fitness challenges are perfect. If you can afford it, get a celebrity trainer or instructor to come teach a class for adults. Having a vendor area in the middle of the action is important to create energy.

3. **Kids and Adults** - Have events and activities for kids and adults. Elementary/ middle school age is ideal. Gear all classes, activities and events for beginners /

intermediate skill and fitness level. The theme should be simple... "Get Moving."

4. **Membership Campaign** - Start a membership promotion 30 days prior to the event to get excitement and interest in the event. The hidden golden nugget of this event is that, if done right, you will drive new membership sales.

Check out the **HWLS Ad** on Page #13.

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

Make It Fun Every Day!

The Use of Blood Labs and their Relevance to Health Club Clinical Exercise Programs

By: Eric Durak, MSc

The use of blood labs within the health club profession is not a new concept. In the 1980s, as the interest in high levels of cholesterol was becoming more common, health clubs used the *Cholestech* machine to take a finger stick of blood, and in three minutes, obtain a total cholesterol value.

In the early 1990s, the concept of the home glucose monitor was developed for diabetes care. Now, a person with diabetes could use a finger stick blood sample to see their blood sugars at any time of the day. It was a revolution for the diabetes community and something that health clubs could use to see how blood sugar responded to both intense and chronic exercise programs. Athletes then began testing their blood sugars for triathlons, marathons and cycling programs.

Soon after blood glucose machines came on the market, blood lactate machines made their way to clinics and clubs. Again, athletes used the machines to see the response to exercise, and an entire category of performance assessment was born. Since that time, testing tools have been refined, and many of the blood diagnostic centers are working on research for the elusive "noninvasive" blood testing for any type of component.

So, why is blood testing so important for the health club sector? Isn't this the purview of doctors (and only doctors)? One may think, and we'll discuss State laws relating to interpretation of labs later in this article, but the use of many assessment tools has moved from "only

doctors" to other health professionals over the decades, from blood pressure monitoring to oxygen saturation to heart rate variability to body composition and others once thought of to be only "interpreted by doctors" to being used in clinics, holistic clinics and health clubs around the world.

That said, if a person obtains a blood lab from a lab, the results of that test (take cholesterol) may need to be interpreted by a physician if they fall out of a normal range. Trainers, therapists and others may not under specific State laws make a diagnosis but may request that their training clients see a doctor if levels are abnormal.

Interpreting blood labs has gotten easier over the past few years as online programs allow for consumers to log on, fill out the test they want, make an appointment and get a blood draw. For companies such as *Request-A-Test*, onsite doctors will read labs and interpret any readings that fall out of the norm. Their jobs are then to contact the consumer and have them schedule a meeting with their primary care doctor.

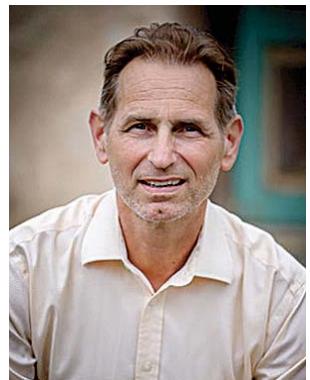
So, where do health clubs come into this? As we know, the interest in clinical exercise has grown over the past decade, and over the past two years, the need for quality clinical exercise programs is stronger than ever. This is where online lab companies play such an important role. Let's look at a scenario.

A new member comes to a health club and wants to participate in a weight loss program with a small group of other attendees. This is a three-month program whereby lipid and cardiovascular bloods

are part of the assessment. The trainers use the *Healthy Stats* outcomes software (*Well Health* company, Charlottesville, VA) and blood labs are included. Trainers make a suggestion and choose specific lab profiles with the client. They log onto the *Lab Corp* online portal, put in their information, pay via credit card and select a location for their draw. Results are usually completed in three days.

The system is becoming seamless and easier for persons in health club programs to use technology to get labs done independently and use those labs to improve their overall health. Lab Corp, the nation's leading blood lab draw company has partnered with online *Request-A-Test* to host a selection of hundreds of tests. For the purposes of health clubs, tests may be reduced to *cardiovascular* (Total Cholesterol, HDL, LDL, VLDL, Triglycerides), *fasting blood glucose* and *A1c* (diabetes markers) and *C-reactive protein* (vascular inflammation). These tests give a pretty good indication of where the body is regarding weight loss, blood pressure measurement, dietary changes and weight loss. There are many other tests, such as immune markers, hormone panels and sports performance blood values.

One aspect of gaining knowledge of blood labs is the new CEU course called the *Blood Lab Wellness Specialist*. This course gives an overview of labs and details some of the issues that trainers and therapists may encounter when dealing in the blood lab space. The strength of using software such as *Health Stats* cannot be



Eric Durak, MSc

overlooked, as it simplifies the assessment process to include labs on a regular basis.

Future programs for clinical exercise will make use of blood labs as often as trainers use blood pressure cuffs today. It will add significant value to training sessions, as the aspects of health are now married with the fitness values of body composition, strength and endurance that are the hallmark of fitness training and progression.

(Eric Durak, MSc is the President and Founder of Medical Health and Fitness. He is a 35-year veteran of the health club industry. His company performs clinical outcomes and consults on medical fitness. He can be reached at edurak@medhealthfit.com.)

Club Insider Seeks Contributing Authors

Contact Justin Cates

(863) 999 - 2677 or

justin@clubinsideronline.com

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justin@clubinsideronline.com

To Beat the Boutique, Be the Boutique

By: Jeffrey Pinkerton

The boutique fitness space has grown exponentially over the past decade, and it has grown at a pace that exceeds new people joining a health club for the first time. So, it's fair to say that, if you operate a full-service health club, your business has been impacted by the competitive pressure of these often single-service, often higher-priced, always socially driven, usually smaller footprint fitness facilities. What can we learn from the business model and learn from the consumer attraction? How can you create a boutique-like experience to beat the boutique at their own game? And, to be clear, the game is delivering amazing, engaging, social group fitness experiences.

Driven by Social Connection

Whether it's a studio that offers cycling or yoga or rowing or barre or boxing or bootcamp, each is driven by the social experience and the social connection they create. The model has taken the group fitness door and made it their front door (and in fact, their only door). They recognize the power of the shared experience, the benefits of a staff-led workout and member-to-member relationships.

While a typical health club might deliver this type of social experience to 10 - 20% of members, the boutique studio has 100% group fitness participation. *One hundred percent!*

Your Advantage: Full-service facilities can offer more variety to attract a broader

spectrum of members. **Caution:** Too much variety can be overwhelming and have the opposite effect.

Your Action Items: Measure, monitor and maximize your group fitness participation percentage.

Single Focus and Single-Message Marketing

If you've never searched the *Facebook Ads Library* to see what ads your competition is running, I highly recommend it. Do a simple Google search for "Facebook Ads Library," then select Ad Category for All Ads, then search for your competitors by Facebook page name.

You'll find your boutique competitors market a single message and



Jeffrey Pinkerton

(See **Jeffrey Pinkerton** Page 18)

Is Your Gym on the Ropes? Here's Your Knockout Marketing Plan for a Comeback

By: Jim Thomas

Gym owners, listen up! Facing tough times? Your marketing needs a major overhaul. Here's why... **Same Old, Same Sinkhole:** The ideas that got you here won't get you out. It's time to ditch the stale tactics and inject a bold, fresh approach into your marketing strategy. Here is *The Turnaround Blueprint*:

1. New Blood, New Ideas:

■ **Fresh Eyes:** Your current marketing team might be great, but sometimes, a new perspective is the key. Consider hiring talent with a bold vision who isn't afraid to challenge the status quo.

■ **Learn from the Past:** Were there marketing folks who left with brilliant ideas that never saw the light of day? Revisit their proposals and see what sparks can be rekindled.

■ **External Expertise:** Bring in unbiased marketing, sales, and finance experts to diagnose the issues and recommend solutions. Don't shy away from harsh truths; they're crucial for the turnaround.

2. A Brutal Honest Self-Audit: *Culture Check* - Is your gym resistant to change? A third-party internal audit can reveal any cultural roadblocks hindering progress. Be prepared for uncomfortable truths, but remember, they're the key to recovery.

■ **3. Back to the Drawing Board: Rewrite the Blueprint:** It's time to revisit your business and marketing plans with a critical eye. Re-evaluate everything:

■ **Future Prospects:** Where is the market heading?

■ **Your Services and Structure:** Are they meeting current needs?

■ **Competition:** How do you stack up, and how can you differentiate?

■ **Value Proposition:** What makes your gym an irresistible choice?

■ **Pricing:** Are you hitting the sweet spot?

■ **Customer Focus:** Who are you targeting, and what are their concerns?

■ **Customer Service:** Is the experience top-notch?

■ **Branding:** Does it reflect your business' new direction?

■ **Staff:** From sales to service, are they equipped for success?

■ **Marketing Channels:** Are you reaching the right audience?

■ **Financial Projections:** Can you weather the turnaround?

4. Short-Term Action Plan:

■ **Set Measurable Goals:** Clearly define short-term objectives to guide your marketing efforts.

■ **Targeted Budget:** Develop a tight budget focused on marketing activities with a proven track record of delivering results.

■ **Quick Wins:** Prioritize marketing strategies that will generate rapid bursts of interest and qualified leads.

■ **Brand Refresh:** Re-engineer your brand identity to reflect the new, improved gym you're building.

■ **Align with Sales:** Collaborate with your sales team to ensure your marketing efforts perfectly support their closing efforts.

5. Product Revamp:

■ **Listen and Adapt:** Work with your marketing and sales teams to understand customer needs and retool your service offerings accordingly.

■ **Focus on Delivery:** Don't make promises you can't keep. Excellent service delivery is the cornerstone of building and maintaining trust.

Remember: Tough times demand courageous action. Embrace new ideas, talented people and a data-driven approach to marketing. Listen to uncomfortable truths and be willing to adapt.



Jim Thomas

out the competition and emerge stronger than ever. Are you ready to fight for your gym's future?

(An Outsourced CEO, Turnaround Expert and Author, Jim Thomas is the Founder and President of FMC USA Inc., a management consulting, turnaround, financing and brokerage firm specializing in the leisure services industry. With more than 25 years of experience owning, operating and managing facilities of all sizes, Thomas lectures and delivers seminars, webinars and workshops across the globe on the practical skills required to successfully overcome obscurity, improve gym sales, build teamwork and market fitness programs and products. Learn more at www.fmconsulting.net or www.youtube.com/gymconsultant.)

This is your chance to knock

...Jeffrey Pinkerton

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an offer to try-before-you-buy (first class free). This single-message creates a clear call to action: *Come try THIS at our studio*. It creates a smaller, less confusing menu. And, it helps shape the path for member onboarding (fewer options make it easier for people to make buying decisions). Too many health clubs spend their resources on marketing features and benefits (bullet lists of machines and amenities) and specials and discounts (no joining fees and "hurry in!" price specials).

Your Advantage: Multiple offerings allow you to create multiple marketing campaigns. Different programs can attract different people with different interests.

Your Action Items: Investigate the competition. Create marketing and member onboarding strategies that focus on your most inclusive, most successful programs and offerings. And, if none come to mind, let's talk.

Amazing Group Fitness Rooms

Marketing gurus and website copywriters call it an "immersive

experience." My Gen Z children would call it "the aesthetic" or "the vibe." In simple terms, to deliver an amazing experience and to compete with the boutiques, you need amazing group fitness rooms. The overall look and décor, the sound system, the lights, the stage, the equipment, the flooring; all of it affects the experience.

Your Advantage: You can create multiple boutique-like experiences in different rooms. We recommend one main room, one cycling room and one mind-body room, each with its own design elements.

Your Action Items: Give an honest review and audit of your group fitness space and what needs updating. Send me an email (jeffreypinkerton@mossa.net), and I'll send you our White Paper with MOSSA's *Group Fitness Room Design Top 10*.

Social Media Is Social and Instructors Are Influencers

I am still surprised by the number of clubs that are using their Facebook and Instagram accounts for traditional marketing. Meta's algorithm continues to aggressively suppress business page posts, in particular, those that are advertisements

(images with words, copy with sales language, posts with external links).

Social media should be social. It should be the platform that you use to highlight the social events and social experiences at your facility. And, your group fitness instructors should be deployed as content creators and brand ambassadors to provide after-workout photos, workout highlight reels and pre-workout social story invites, all to attract more people to your facility and more members to their workouts!

Your Advantage: You can leverage the variety of your workouts to create a ton of varied content. This content can be used in your organic and paid social efforts to reach various audiences.

Your Action Item: Shift your social media strategy to be more social and more single message. Develop a plan for leveraging your instructors as influencers. I've written on this topic before, and we also have a great white paper and webcast recording on the subject.

Don't waste your time bemoaning the boutiques; borrow from them and then

be ready to go head-to-head in marketing and the member experience. Specifically, borrow this bold business model: *group fitness is what we do, and we do it better than anyone else*. Because, for your members, the benefit of belonging to your "full-service" gym isn't lots of treadmills, elliptical machines and rows of weights. The benefit of belonging is the bigger picture of belonging: community, accountability, results, enjoyment, variety, and social, consistent, amazing experiences.

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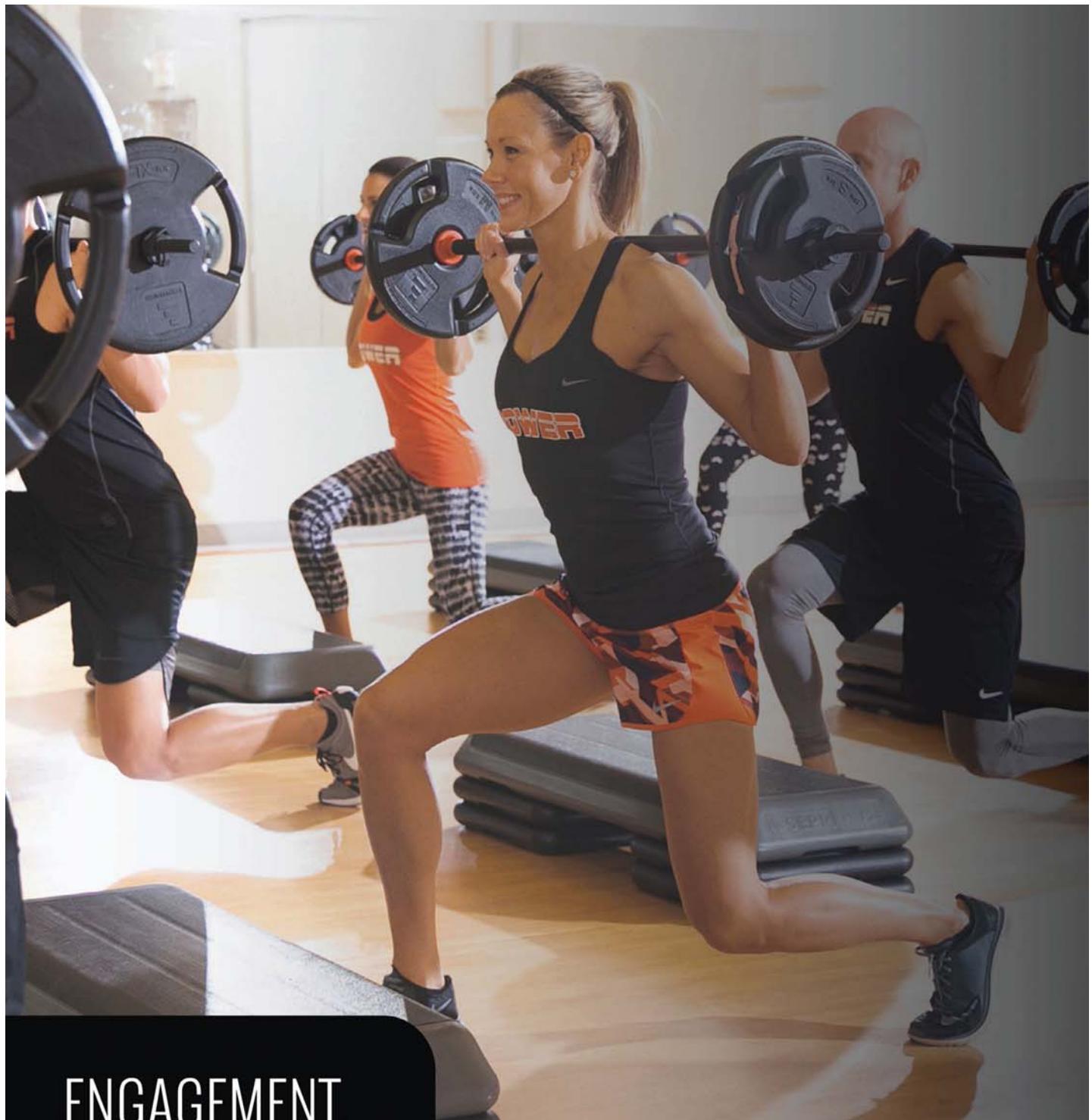
Thank You to Our Contributing Authors

- **Bonnie Patrick Mattalian** - Independent Consultant - bmattalian@gmail.com
- **Bruce Carter** - President, Optimal Design Systems International - (954) 888 - 5960
- **Casey Conrad** - Sales and Marketing Consultant - CaseyConrad11@gmail.com
- **Cathy Spencer Browning** - VP of Training & Programming, MOSSA - (770) 989 - 4700
- **Chris Stevenson** - Founder, The Empower Group - chris@stevensonempowers.com
- **Derek Barton** - Owner, Barton Productions - derek@bartonproductions.com
- **Frank Guengerich** - President of Hospitality, Williams Group - frank@williamsgroup.com
- **Gary Polic** - Owner, Polic Consultants Group - (630) 410 - 1120
- **Herb Lipsman** - Author and Industry Consultant - www.herbripsman.com
- **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
- **Mike Alpert** - COO, Smart Health Clubs - mike@smarthealthclubs.com
- **Nancy Trent** - President, Trent and Company - nancy@trentandcompany.com
- **Paul R. Bedard, Esquire** - Crunch Fitness Connecticut - 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
- **Thomas Plummer** - National Fitness Business Alliance - (800) 726 - 3506



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TERRI HAROF
DIRECTOR OF FRANCHISE
DEVELOPMENT

terri.harof@workoutanytime.com
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