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Norm Cates' **CLUB INSIDER**TM

The "Pulse" of the Health, Racquet, and Sports Club Industry Worldwide

Established **1993**

JULY 2008



Ruth Stricker's
the MarshTM
A Center for Balance and Fitness

Ruth Stricker... the Legendary Creator of **The Marsh**

an innovative concept *meets a*

A startup's success



Pam Trader worked in the insurance business for 16 years, but her heart was always in the gym.

So when she and her husband started exploring the idea of opening their own health club, they looked for a brand with some muscle behind it.

"That's why we chose World Gym," Pam says. "As first-time gym owners, we wanted to go with a brand that was recognizable to people. We liked the aggressive approach to marketing, but we really liked the name. We wanted instant credibility."

For the Traders, World Gym 1440 was the right fit – a small, 24-hour key club developed by one of the most powerful brands in the fitness industry.

The Traders opened their 5,000-square-foot World Gym 1440 in Millsboro, Del., this month, and sold 400 memberships in pre-sale.

That's right – 400 memberships. Even before the doors officially opened. For Pam, it was goodbye insurance business, hello entrepreneurship.

"We've got beautiful equipment from Cybex and Life Fitness, and a mission statement that makes people feel welcome," Pam says. "Plus, being open 24 hours is convenient for our members' busy lives."

"We're really excited about the future," she adds. "We've got the passion and the commitment to succeed in the fitness business, and the brand name to help us get there."

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Norm Cates' CLUB INSIDER™

The "Pulse" of the Health, Racquet, and Sports Club Industry Worldwide

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Ruth Stricker... the Legendary Creator of The Marsh

By: Norm Cates, Jr.

Ruth Stricker, at age 73, is a living legend in our industry and in the mind-body-spirit movement. She is a great contributor to the lives of all of her 182 employees and many people in her community, the Minneapolis/St. Paul Metro area and across the country.

Ruth Stricker is a very balanced human being who possesses a special gift. She has gifts as a teacher, sharer and person who deeply cares about others. Ruth has refined, polished and used her gifts extremely well over the past 23 years.

23 years ago, she created her own platform for teaching, sharing and caring about people. Many people in her community have learned about and advanced their lives with much better

lifestyles through the inclusive platform she created to deliver her gifts. Her platform: The Marsh, Ruth Stricker's truly wonderful creation in Minnetonka, Minnesota.

The Marsh is open to the public and has 2,458 members. That one sentence alone says a great deal about Ruth Stricker and The Marsh. The Marsh offers what she calls "A la carte options" to the public.

The Marsh is not inexpensive and warrants annual dues of \$2,570 for full access, compared to one of the biggest operations in the Metro Twin Cities area, Life Time Fitness, that charges \$1,440.

Bruce Dayton, a prominent philanthropist with roots going back to the Dayton and Target Store chains he and his brothers launched years ago, helped Ruth with the backing that allowed her to carve out her own very profound and important

niches in life: The Marsh, her excellent staff and The Marsh members. She later married Mr. Dayton and they've been married for 20 years.

She received bad news 33 years ago when she was diagnosed with lupus, but she did not allow that awful disease, one that affects the immune system, to slow her down. In fact, about lupus, Ruth says, "The day I made room for Ruth and lupus in my body, I started healing. Once I understood the boundaries of the disease, I could get

on with my life. I am not a victim. I am a well person in a diseased body."

Ruth also says, "The Marsh is not a club... it is a center". That mindset made The Marsh a center for the mind, the body and the spirit... with a focus on balancing all three.

The Marsh is a gloriously beautiful, 67,000 square-foot mind, body, spirit center nestled on 6.5 acres, featuring a serene view of 65 acres of beautiful, (See *The Marsh* Page 14)



The Marsh Staff

Row 1 (L to R) Sharon Ruhland, Cece McCan, Mick Johnson, Gretchen Pearson, Liz Anema and Jennifer Rasmusson
Row 2 (L to R) Colleen Hagerman, Steve Wooldridge, Dan Otney, Tim Mortenson, Betsy Ellwanger, Arlene Robitsek and Frank Chase

Gym Members Hire Own Lawyer to Fight Settlement

Several members of a class-action lawsuit against Knoxville health and fitness club Court South have retained their own attorney because they are unhappy with a proposed settlement agreement that recently received preliminary approval.

Scott and Cassie Powell are among six members who hired attorney Thomas Leveille and plan to object to the agreement that they said is far from the \$10-a-month membership fee they each were paying.

"We have a valid contract," said Cassie Powell, who became a member in 2000 when she joined a low-cost plan her husband has had since 1993.

Under the settlement, members who qualify as part of the class will have two options. They can pay a fixed rate of \$29.95 a month per person for 15 years or they can pay a staggered yearly amount of \$75 the first year, \$125 the second year, \$200 the third year and \$29.95 a month guaranteed for seven years.

Attorney Chris Cain, who represents the class-action plaintiffs, said members won't be able to get their old contracts back, calling the settlement "fair and reasonable under the circumstances on a class-wide basis."

Knox County Chancellor Daryl R. Fansler agreed Friday, telling the some two dozen class members who attended the preliminary hearing, "I believe it's sufficient and significant enough for the court to approve it preliminarily."

Using himself as an example, Fansler said depending on how old you are, the 15-year fixed rate might be considered "a guaranteed lifetime benefit."

At issue are low-cost contracts issued in the 1980s and early 1990s that allowed members to pay a slightly higher up-front price for membership in exchange for a lower fixed rate, which ranged from \$10 to \$100 per year.

"True" lifetime memberships, (See *Settlement Disputed* Page 10)

Fitness Business News Suspends Publication

Reported on www.clubinsideronline.com on June 27, 2008.

well as three conferences.

CLUB INSIDER recently received word that Fitness Business News, a 14-month running health/fitness industry publication produced by United Publications, Inc, had ceased publication.

United Publications, Inc. produces five other industry specific newspapers as

To confirm, and learn more about this early inside information provided by very reliable sources, CLUB INSIDER contacted United Publications, Inc. Vice President, Mr. Rick Rector via email. Rick Rector's reply to the inquiry by CLUB INSIDER Publisher, Norm Cates (shown on Page #10), (See *FBN Suspended* Page 10)

Inside The Insider

- **A Tribute to Tim Russert** - By: Norm Cates and *A Lesson From Dr. John A. McDougall*
- **Membership Responsibilities Make The Difference** - By: Ray Gordon
- **Driving Growth and Profit** - By: Will Phillips
- **Re-package, Re-brand and Re-launch?** - By: Ed Tock
- **Sustaining Independent Value** - By: Jeffrey Keller, M.S. M.B.A.
- **Make Your Club the Centerpiece of the Community** - By: Bonnie Patrick Mattalian

Norm's NOTES: • Gold's Gym Franchise Association Begins Revolution • Ray Gordon and Ed Tock of Sales Makers Have Parted Ways • CheckFree's RON POLISENO to Speak at Fit Life • Joe Cirulli To Be Profiled in INC. Magazine • TechnoGym Sells 40% Stake to Candover • Les Mills NE Region Rep Bill Austin Provides False Flier to NEHRSA Members • Tony deLeede Stepping Down at Fitness First Australia • Mike Sheehan Named Bally Total Fitness CEO... What He Should Do • 24 Hour Fitness Soon to Open Derek Jeter 24 Hour Fitness Center in New York City • Thomas Plummer's NFBA Says: "Make Fitness Less Complicated!" • Weekend Memberships a New Opportunity! • Andy Graham Joins ABC Financial • Nestor Fernandez Rises at WAC • John Agoglia New GM at Equilibrium • Adam Feit and John Metzger Win Scholarships

- **Supersizing Your Membership Market Share** - By: Andrea Sobotka and Lezni Garza
- **Symmetrical Fitness** - By: Dr. Jack Scammahorn and Jim Scammahorn
- **The Program Director!** - By: Sandy Coffman
- **The Clubs for the Cure Complete First Six Months**
- **International Fitness Buys Club Fit Chain**
- **The Thoreau Club/Camp Honored**

Norm's NOTES

• **Hello everybody!** This is your **CLUB INSIDER Publisher Since 1993** checking in! Read on and get the latest industry news and a perspective on many industry happenings and issues that no other publication will address! Thank you for reading **CLUB INSIDER!**

• The **REVOLUTION** is on! The **Gold's Gym Franchise Association** revolution against the franchisor, **Gold's Gym International**, that is. **Stay tuned!**

• **RAY GORDON**, **Founder of Sales Makers** and **EDDIE TOCK**, a protégé of Ray's and later in their relationship, a partner in **Sales Makers**, have parted ways. They are both friends and both are excellent at what they do for clubs.

• **Ron Polisenio**, the **Director of Client Development** for **CheckFree Health and Fitness**, now a part of **Fiserv**, will speak at the **Fit Life Conference** in Bend, Oregon, August 3rd - 5th. Ron Polisenio is a former club owner and Ohio State University graduate. Polisenio's presentation entitled, **"Information is Key to Profitability"**, will provide valuable insight into how information can be analyzed and extracted to compare club performance to a database of more than 2,500 health and fitness clubs. It also provides information on tools that can be utilized for corporate and regional management to the individual club level. The **Fit Life Conference** will be held at the beautiful **Seventh Mountain Resort**, in Bend, Oregon. If you've never been to

this fabulous resort, attending the **Fit Life Conference** there will be a real bonus for you as the venue is one of the most beautiful places in America.

• **CLUB INSIDER Contributing Author, WILL PHILLIPS**, informed me that one of his roundtable clients, **JOE CIRULLI**, the owner of the more than fabulous **Gainesville Health and Fitness Centers** in Gainesville, Florida and **IHRSA's 20th President**, will have a feature story about him and his clubs published in the August edition of **INC Magazine**. **Congratulations Joe!** Additionally, in that same August edition, a **Letter to the Editor** by **Rick Caro**, disputing a previous writing in **INC Magazine** about the valuation of a club based on a **negative EBITDA**, will appear. Pretty cool that two of our industry's greatest professionals, **Rick Caro** and **Joe Cirulli**, will be heard from in **INC Magazine!**

• Word is, **TechnoGym** announced that private equity firm, **Candover**, has acquired **40%** of the company. This lends to the now roaming rumor that this acquisition will lead to the outright acquisition of another major equipment manufacturer. Could it be **Life Fitness**? Or, how about **Precor**? Or, maybe **Cybex**? This story may play out soon, so **Stay Tuned!**

• **Les Mills International** regional representatives continue to make inappropriate moves to try to compete with **Body Training Systems**, an **American** company.

In this case, I am writing about the recent **NEHRSA Conference** where **LMI Northeast rep, BILL AUSTIN**, provided a flier with a false headline statement on it for distribution in the welcome bags at the Conference. That statement appears below and is underlined. Kudos to **NEHRSA's, JAN WOODMAN**, and **IHRSA's, JOE MOORE**, for seeing to it that this false flier headline was disclosed to the **NEHRSA Members**, even if after the fact. Here is the note that appeared on the **NEHRSA July 2008 Newsletter**: **"Please note: There was a NEHRSA Conference Sponsor flier included in the conference welcome bags that was incorrectly titled: IHRSA Confirms Les Mills Leads Club Retention. It has been brought to our attention that IHRSA has not confirmed that any company leads club retention. Our apologies to all concerned for this error."**

• **TONY deLEEDE**, our **"Aussie/American mate from down under"**, has informed me that, as of September, he is stepping down from his post as the **Fitness First Australia Managing Director**. Tony deLeede accomplished more in Australia during the last 8 years than he did in 20 years here in Atlanta with his excellent **Australian Body Works** chain of 22 clubs that he sold to **LA Fitness** about 10 years ago. When he stepped in, **Fitness First** had acquired 8 clubs in Australia, and now, under Tony's leadership, **Fitness First**, the world's largest club chain has 84 locations in

the country. **PETER STIRLING BENSON** will step in for Tony. Also, thanks and appreciation is due to Tony as he has given an awful lot of time during the past four years serving on the **IHRSA Board of Directors**.

• **Bally Total Fitness** has chosen **MIKE SHEEHAN** to be the new CEO for the post-bankrupt company. I sincerely hope that Sheehan, formerly the Chief Operating Officer (COO) for **24 Hour Fitness**, will go ahead and do the hard work necessary to make Bally successful. Work such as:

1. Cleaning up their clubs and making club cleanliness a staff, and yes, member culture.

2. Eliminate retail installment contracts and switch to the monthly-dues model used by hundreds of very successful independent clubs and several big chains, such as the most successful and valuable chain in the business right now, **CHIN YI's LA Fitness**.

3. A new focus on actually hiring professional personnel, people who give good first impressions and behave as true professionals with service being as important as sales.

These 3 changes will take **Bally Total Fitness** to a new frontier where they have never been before.

• Word is, **24 Hour Fitness** will soon open its first **DEREK JETER 24 Hour Fitness Center** in New York City, and it will be located on **5th Avenue** near **Madison Square Park**. This event follows several other sports celebrity branded **24 Hour Fitness Centers** that have opened during the past bearing the names of **MAGIC JOHNSON, SHAQUILLE O'NEAL, LANCE ARMSTRONG, ANDRE AGASSI** and **YAO MING**. Check out the Court South settlement story on page #3. Stay tuned because **24 Hour Fitness** has a very similar issue afoot with unhappy members in the San Francisco Bay area.

• **THOMAS PLUMMER** and the **NATIONAL FITNESS BUSINESS ALLIANCE** continue to provide independent clubs with the single best traveling educational seminars in the business. Plummer is a mesmerizing teacher who tells it like it is to his students. Today, I



Norm Cates

received the following item from **Plummer's NFBA**, and many of you might want to consider it. It's about making fitness simple and easy, not complicated and hard. The NFBA email bulletin reads:

"It's too hard!" Newsweek published an article in January of 2006 about how simple fitness really can be. Clubs make it harder than it has to be for most people to get results. A de-conditioned woman may be thinking about dropping a few pounds for a wedding, but your trainers are talking to her about her first amateur bodybuilding contest in six months. Many club employees err toward the hardcore side of the fitness world, which isn't where most of your clients want to reside. You should talk often during the tour, in your ads and in your support materials about how simple fitness is when a person first gets started. Make the following points as often as you can: 'We want you to move a little each day. Walking, group exercise, some light workouts using a stability ball and a variety of other activities all count toward your daily movement goal.'" Check out the NFBA ad on **Page #31** of this 44-page edition.

• **America** is adjusting to the new **\$4+ gas prices** with some companies changing their work week to four days, Monday thru Thursday, 10 hours a day. This nationwide societal move will cut one commuting day for many and could begin to weigh in big time on gas demand, thus lowering gas prices over time. But, importantly for you... this will give many people 3-day weekends. To me, that provides a real 3-day membership marketing opportunity for clubs. Have (See **Norm's NOTES** Page 12)

Thank You

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- **Will Phillips** - Roundtables for Executives - www.REXonline.org

rev•e•nue•tionary *adj.*

of or relating to never-before-realized financial gains as a result of utilizing state-of-the-art, one-of-a-kind membership management technology;

syn see CheckFree Compete

Clubs of all sizes rely on the proven value and flexibility of our complete solutions approach to acquire members, grow revenues, manage costs and improve loyalty at every opportunity.

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The "INSIDER SPEAKS"

A Tribute to Tim Russert By Norm Cates, Jr. and a Lesson From Dr. John A. McDougall

America lost a really good man, Tim Russert, the long-time moderator of Meet the Press, on Friday morning, June 13, 2008. The cause of death was cholesterol plaque that ruptured in an artery, causing sudden coronary thrombosis, according to Russert's physician, Dr. Michael Newman.

In addition to being the backbone and star of NBC's Sunday political talk show, Meet the Press, Tim Russert was an NBC Senior Vice President and Washington Bureau Chief. Born in Buffalo, New York on May 7, 1950, he was a graduate of Canisius High School in Buffalo, John Carroll University and Cleveland-Marshall College of Law. He was a member of the bar in New York and Washington, D.C. Entering politics after law school, he served as a staff operative in 1976, working on the Senate campaign of Daniel Patrick Moynihan, D-N.Y. In 1982, he worked on Mario Cuomo's campaign for Governor of New York.

President George W.

Bush described Russert as "an institution in both news and politics for more than two decades." President Bush interrupted a news conference in Paris on Saturday, June 14th to pay tribute to Russert, saying the world had "lost a really fine American". He went on to say, "Tim Russert loved his country, he loved his family and he loved his job a lot, and we're going to miss him. We send our deepest sympathies to Maureen, his wife, and Luke, his son. I know they are hurting right now and hopefully the prayers of a lot of Tim's friends and a lot of Americans will help them during this time of difficulty."

To describe Tim Russert as "irreplaceable" would be very accurate. He was not only a really great TV news journalist and political talk show moderator every Sunday morning since 1991 on Meet the Press... he was a caring... giving... loving human being.

Earlier this year, Time Magazine named Tim Russert as one of the 100 most influential people in the world.

Jeff Zucker, President and CEO of NBC Universal, commenting on the devastating and sudden loss of Tim Russert said, "We are heartbroken at the sudden passing of Tim Russert. We have lost a beloved member of our NBC Universal family, and the news world has lost one of its finest. The enormity of this loss cannot be overstated. More than a journalist, Tim was a remarkable family man. Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Maureen, their son, Luke, and Tim's entire extended family."

This author says, "Thank goodness for TIVO! No matter where I have been on Sunday mornings, I have been able to watch Tim Russert on Meet the Press upon my return home.

"Having no peers" describes Tim Russert very well. There simply was nobody like him, and there was no TV political talk show moderator/host who was better prepared for his guests.

Walter Cronkite, the retired anchor and managing editor of The CBS Evening News said, "This is a tragic loss for journalism and for all who were privileged to know him."

Tim Russert's Meet the Press guests, principally conservative and liberal politicians, mixed in with the occasional luminary from outside the current political fray, knew upon acceptance of his invitation to appear on his show that he would be extremely well prepared for in-depth questioning and would be like a bulldog with his follow-up questions. Tim Russert's preparation gave any and all of his political guests the shivers in anticipation of his tough questions and his fact and quote-based follow-up. His follow-up questions were truly bloodhound like, follow-up questioning that made him so revered and different from all the others.

I can't count the times when some politician would make a statement that lacked truth or even stretched the truth and Tim Russert would be on them

like a dog on a pork chop. The next thing you'd see would be a graphic image with the guest's specific words quoted for them. Then, he would say something like, "Let me help you recall your statement about that on May 8th, 1998." He refreshed a LOT of politician's memories in his 17-year run at Meet the Press. His tenacity in follow-up questioning was legendary and had no equal. The way he stuck to it until he got the truth or admissions from his subjects on important matters was truly a great service to America.

Regardless of the fear, his guests might have in anticipation of Russert's scholar-like preparation and his follow-up tenacity, a visit to Meet the Press clearly was the most prestigious and important stop for any and all American politicians before, during and after their campaigns.

There was no bigger man than Tim Russert in his business.

There was no bigger man than Tim Russert in his business. He was the Godfather of Sunday morning TV political talk shows. He made Meet the Press one of a kind, a stand-alone weekly production. He interviewed politicians and other luminaries with equal preparation, fairness and vigor. In short, Tim Russert was an interrogator who took no prisoners.

In fact, the moment he died on Friday the 13th, 2008, he was preparing for his next show on Sunday, June 15th. Suddenly, he experienced a heart attack and died. Despite the efforts of the people at NBC-TV and Sibley Memorial Hospital to revive him, he was gone. Gone with the wind in a swift, summary and final fashion.

Russert had cut short a Paris vacation where he and his beloved son, Luke and his wife, Maureen, had gone to celebrate Luke's graduation from Boston College. So, he departed from Paris in time to prepare and produce his June 15th show. Ironically, among the last words his wife, Maureen, said to him



Tim Russert

were: "Give me a hug. I might never see you alive again." Sadly, her premonition was accurate, as she disclosed in the days after his death that she had expressed her fear of losing him as he departed for the United States from Paris.

"Big Russ", his dad, his son Luke and his loving wife Maureen were very proud of him, and Tim was very proud of his wonderful family. Raised by his Dad and Mom in Buffalo, New York, Russert never lost his roots. Even though he was a world class performer in his own work, he was an avid fan of the Buffalo Bills NFL football team and the Buffalo Sabres National Hockey League team. Tim was so proud of his dad that he wrote two books about their relationship: *Big Russ and Me*, in 2004, and *Wisdom of Our Fathers*, in 2006, and both New York Times best-sellers.

Tim Russert was, and always will be, a legendary figure in American history, and he was and always will be, loved by millions of Americans. A Sunday will never pass when Meet the Press goes on the air that his viewers, this author included, will not think of him and wish he was there on their TV.

Tim Russert's best friend, Tom Brokaw, a renowned NBC Newsmen, has now seated himself temporarily in Tim Russert's chair as NBC figures out and prepares for the future (See *Tim Russert* Page 8)

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Membership Responsibilities Make The Difference

By: Ray Gordon

I believe each club has something unique and special that can stimulate the interest of a non-exerciser. This message has to be packaged and very cost efficiently conveyed to the local market to create new members. These new members only represent true growth when they are successful in achieving their goal of a healthy lifestyle. It is imperative that we earn their trust, and therefore, their business and referrals for years to come. Make sure your membership accounting and tracking systems (including member retention and member referrals) is current and accurate.

When IHRSA was founded, it was fortunate enough to have the leadership of John McCarthy. A great leader was needed to build an Association as strong as IHRSA, but it wasn't just John McCarthy and his fantastic staff who made IHRSA great. The original, and small, group of people, club owners and operators built IHRSA early on. In my association with these original owners, I can say that 100% of them not only wanted to be

good profitable business people, but they wanted the industry to become more credible and to have a respected place in society. One thing about John McCarthy is that I never saw that focus change. He always wanted the industry to improve and be respected. That focus of values is one of the things that most impresses me about current IHRSA President/CEO Joe Moore. That core value of striving to improve is a crucial factor in the future of many current clubs.

The early pioneers of the industry really strived to make the health and fitness industry more valuable and successful. As our industry enters a new and challenging phase, implement systems of success that will bring value and trust to your organization.

There is more competition in today's market than ever before. Now, many people are worrying about a large chain that is coming (or has already arrived) in their market, low priced and discounted dues competitors, and how they will successfully compete with them. The fact is that 86% of your

market demographics do not currently belong to a club. Your club will be extremely successful by adding just a small percentage of that population.

If you've been involved with a club for any period of time, you already know the hot points that will indicate whether a member will succeed, fail or partially fail. What are you really doing that is that special to help someone who's joined your club improve their health... when statistics show they are going to start failing relatively soon? Rich Boggs, CEO of Body Training Systems, was telling me recently about a software system they are using in the U.K. to identify the high risk potential failures. How do you identify high risk members now without that software help?

Important questions you need to answer are:

- What are the employees of your club going to do to defeat the statistics of failure?

- How can you turn 15% to 25% or more potential failures into success stories?

- How will this affect your immediate and future bottom line?

Most industry experts agree that the majority of non-exercising new members fail because they do not make exercise a lifestyle habit within the first 60 days. Recent studies have shown that people opting to have gastric bypass surgery have had an average of 24 exercise and diet failures. Most of our new members have already failed to successfully change their lifestyle, a change that should have included regular exercise and nutritional modifications. Think of all the possible business that your club could generate when you help change them from an exercise failure to an exercise winner.

The membership sales department must take responsibility to keep motivating the new member to use and trust your club to provide them with results. Gather and record accurate information about the new members' motivation for exercise and all their previous experiences with exercise attempts. Make one more motivational phone call, send one more congratulatory e-mail and keep them informed of the health benefits they are achieving through proper and



Ray Gordon

regular exercise.

Work hard to make every new member a success story and you'll make your club more valuable and successful.

An extra 10 net memberships per month may not sound like a lot, but that's an additional 120 net memberships per year. Now, that's a number that will change your bottom line!

(Ray Gordon is the Founder of Sales Makers "membership specialists". Contact Ray with any questions or comments at: ray@salesmakers.com or 239-823-3769)

Wish you could turn back the hands of time? **Now you can!** **Sales Makers is available today at rolled back 1991 rates!**

Sales Makers has helped clubs through tough times for over two decades including the 1991 downturn and we're here to help you today! Much of our continued success can be attributed to our 'personalized strategy planning consultation'. We have consistently increased memberships in over 1,100 clubs nationwide and internationally.

What you get:

- ~ Personalized strategy planning consultation
- ~ Proven experience of today's leading membership sales and retention experts
- ~ All issues specific to your club & location
- ~ Your customized 'Proven Profit Procedures' Plan
- ~ Easy monitoring systems to 'inspect what you expect'

IHRSA has reported that membership is down nationwide while competition is increasing. This combination makes for very difficult times for many clubs. Overcoming this requires efficiency throughout your club, especially membership sales relating to earning referrals and retention.

Tell me what is going on at your club!



239-823-3769
SalesMakers.com

"Membership Specialists Since 1979"

Ray Gordon
ray@salesmakers.com

...Tim Russert

continued from page 6

of Meet the Press. I have always believed Russert's Meet the Press was by far the best Sunday morning TV political talk show and a better and more appropriate temporary host than Tom Brokaw, the Author of **The Greatest Generation**, could not have been found. But, even the vastly experienced and greatly talented TV news star, Tom Brokaw, struggled on the June 15th, 2008 "Meet the Press Tribute to Tim Russert" show.

I had the pleasure of briefly meeting and taking a photograph of Tim Russert and Tom Brokaw while we were attending the 1996 Olympic Track and Field event here in Atlanta. Nothing but a fan... both of these famous, yet fine and kind men, gave me their time and posed for a photograph shortly before the Atlanta event. They could have just said no thanks and moved on, but they didn't. They let a fan take their picture, and they both smiled patiently. Sadly, at this month's press time, I have not been able to locate that photo... as I would have dearly loved to have printed it on this page. May Tim Russert rest in piece.

A Lesson For Our Industry

As health and fitness club professionals... our industry has a duty... an obligation. That is to teach our members not just exercise, but proper nutrition, on an equal basis.

The following article, written by Dr. John A. McDougall of Santa Rosa, California, addresses the very important question, WHY did Tim Russert, a middle-age man of 58, suddenly die from a heart attack just a few weeks after he had passed a complete physical and stress test?

Dr. John A. McDougall wrote the following amazing article, crafted posthumously, as if Tim Russert was actually interviewing Dr. McDougall and asking important questions that might have saved his life.

A Posthumous Interview by Tim Russert, Former Host of Meet the Press with John McDougall, MD

McDougall: Thank you for visiting me in my office in Santa Rosa, California under these supernatural circumstances. I

am so sorry about your untimely death from a heart attack on June 13, 2008. I read that your end was quick, and hopefully, painless.

I am honored that you requested this interview. You are known for your hard-hitting questions and for demanding truthful and plain-spoken explanations from your guests.

Russert: The reason I am here is I have been gone for more than two weeks now, yet doctors, scientists, and the media, all seem baffled about the cause of my death. I have listened to the evening news and talk shows, read the newspapers and weekly magazines, and searched the Internet --but why my life was suddenly taken in my professional prime, at age 58, remain unanswered. In fact, my colleagues, who are the some of the best investigative reporters in the world, aren't even asking the right questions --so here I am.

I picked you to talk to, Dr. McDougall, because you are known as a "no nonsense doctor," who speaks the truth regardless of the economic consequences. In fact, in the media business, you are considered politically incorrect, and occasionally referred to as abrupt, and difficult, but always honest.

McDougall: Well, thank you, I guess, for those words. So how's "life" in Heaven?

Russert: Not bad except the food's terrible, nothing but rice, potatoes, beans, corn, fruits and vegetables. Everything's bland, but they say I'll get used to it.

When I was alive, I loved to eat. As a child, I ate hearty --the butcher, I recall, had a display case that perfectly evoked Buffalo's (New York) version of multiculturalism and good health, full of pork neck bone, smoked pork neck bone, jellied tongue, Polish bacon, slab bacon, double smoked hunter bacon, German-style wieners, Italian sausage, pork roll sausage, hot or mild beef sausage, barley sausage, beer sausage, double smoked hunter bacon... chopped ham, smoked hocks, turkey gizzards, smoked turkey parts, chicken feet, chicken liver, chicken fat, fresh ox tails, and ribs of every type. Boy did I like to eat at those tailgates. I used to fly in wings, Buffalo wings, from Frank and Teresa's in Buffalo because people in Boston couldn't do a good wing.

I miss my diet coke and licorice, "the breakfast of

champions." It was my secret for staying up all night and alert.

McDougall: And you say no one has figured out why you died of a heart attack? One look in the mirror should have given you a clue there was something wrong with your diet and you were at risk. For centuries, feasting like a king and a queen has caused people to become rotund and sick --why would you be any different?

Russert: My doctors did mention I should eat better, but they never were specific about what to eat. Mostly, they focused on overworking myself. Even if I ate better, don't you think all that stress I was under would have killed me?

McDougall: Stress is largely used as a scapegoat. It is non-tangible --so obscure that no one has the ability to change it, so it can be easily dismissed. Besides, you loved every minute of your challenging job. Take that excitement away from you and your life would have not been worth living. Stress, in itself, is not a toxin to the body. It is a normal natural part of life. It is a motivator to cause us to get things done and problems resolved. The major way that stress hurt you was by causing you to eat more fried chicken wings.

Consider, in times of unthinkable mental and emotional strain, like during the occupation of Western Europe by the Germans throughout World War II, people became healthier --heart disease and overweight (two of your most notable problems)-- essentially disappeared. People during these war years were being incarcerated, killed and displaced from their homes and families; yet, at the same time, common diseases were vanishing. The reason for all this improved health was the forced change in their foods --the butter, cheese and meat were no longer readily available during the war years in Western Europe. People had to eat vegetables.

Russert: I had no chest pains, no previous symptoms of heart trouble. I thought I was healthy. How could such a catastrophe happen so suddenly to me without any warning?

McDougall: A tiny plaque ruptured in an artery, your left anterior descending coronary artery.

That is the one that

supplied the front of your heart. Think of this plaque as a "festering sore," or as an inflamed "pimple" filled with fat, cholesterol and white blood cells. When a plaque ruptures, "products of injury" are released. The response to injury that follows causes the blood flowing inside the artery to suddenly clot --just like when you cut your finger, a clot forms around that injury. In your case, the blood clot completely plugged your artery lumen, the blockage suffocating the heart muscle it had once supplied. As the muscle died, your heart became an ineffective pump and you died. According to your autopsy report, your entire blood vessel system was in serious trouble --filled with atherosclerosis containing probably thousands of tiny volatile plaques. You were a walking time bomb.

Pharmaceutical companies, like the makers of the blood-thinning drug Plavix, have produced animated videos for the consumer that show this plaque rupture and clot formation. YouTube also has a shocking animation of this event.

Knowing about volatile plaque rupture and clot formation is essential to understanding how your diet caused your death, why the drugs did not save you, and why more aggressive treatment with heart surgery would have been unwise and unhelpful. So, take some time to look at these animations. Simply search for **"HOW A FATAL HEART ATTACK HAPPENS - TIM RUSSERT"** on YouTube.com

The reason you had no warning was because there are no pain-sensing nerves in the arteries --thus, there was no feeling from the festering sores invading these tissues. This is a completely silent disease. However, the heart muscle has nerves, and when it is injured, the pain is often described as an elephant sitting on your chest. I hope you didn't feel that kind of pain in your final minutes.

Russert: I ate a well-balanced diet. I ate no worse than a lot of people. I don't understand. Why me?

McDougall: You ate the American diet, and these days, most Americans over the age of thirty have outward signs of illness --they are overweight, on medication and/or have elevated risk factors for future illness.

Why you? You were

not singled out --1.2 million other Americans also have heart attacks annually, and half of them, like you, never realized they had a problem beforehand. Furthermore, half of heart attack victims die within a few hours--this is not a forgiving disease. Based on what you told me, it appears you ate meat, and other rich foods, with extraordinary enthusiasm.

Your sick arteries were caused by malnutrition. A deficiency of proper nutrients from plants weakened your arteries. Your diet was almost devoid of vegetables and fruits. At the same time, toxic substances, like oxidized cholesterol and saturated fat, from all the animal foods you ate damaged your arteries. Think of pouring corrosive acid on your inner artery surfaces at breakfast, lunch and dinner. The result: thousands of volatile plaques, as small as the size of a pinhead; yet the explosion of just one of them took down a giant of a man like you, Mr. Russert.

Russert: But my doctors said I was a medical success: my blood pressure and cholesterol were well controlled for more than 20 years with medication. My last blood pressure was normal at 120/80 mmHg. My total and "bad" LDL cholesterol and C-reactive protein were all normal. I was near perfect... on paper!

McDougall: People (even doctors) falsely believe that the elevated blood pressure and cholesterol are damaging the arteries and the total solution is to knock these numbers down with drugs. In plain-spoken truth, these elevated numbers are not the problem. No one dies of high blood pressure or cholesterol. These were "signs" pointing to the real problem --your rotten arteries filled with festering sores. But, no one was paying enough attention to your underlying disease, as was so clearly demonstrated by your fatal outcome, Mr. Russert. Millions of "well-treated" Americans suffer a fate similar to yours, and we accept this as "the best medicine can offer."

Doctors and drug companies treat signs of disease, the blood pressure and cholesterol numbers, also known as risk factors, with highly profitable medications, *because they can* --they do sell expensive pills that reduce these signs. They do not treat the underlying sickness, (See **Tim Russert Page 10**)

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...Settlement Disputed

continued from page 3

where members paid hefty up-front fees to secure contracts that never had to be renewed, are being honored.

Upset Court South members filed suit in November 2005 against John and Helen Captain, who also own National Fitness Center and bought the Court South properties from Joe Hollingsworth. The case received class-action status last July.

Attorney Lewis Howard, who represents the Captains, said none of the purchase documents or sale disclosures mention "renewable lifetime contracts."

The intent of those contracts was to provide membership at a low cost for a specific time. Hollingsworth, who bought Court South about 14 years ago, allowed people to continue to renew at the low rate so they feel like they have a lifetime contract, he said.

Court South Centres LLC has a cross claim for fraud pending against Hollingsworth, which is not being settled as part of the class-action settlement.

Howard said Hollingsworth misrepresented the renewable lifetime contracts as being one-, two- or three-year contracts with no guaranteed renewal rights. Court South is seeking to recover expenses it incurs as a result of the settlement, which Howard estimates could be in excess of \$1 million. He called the settlement "very fair."

"It's going to cost Court South a lot of money to honor these contracts at a reduced rate," Howard said.

Members will be notified by letter about the settlement and a final hearing will be held in about 60 days.

Barbara Judd, who has been a lifetime member since 1994, paying \$10 a year, said she felt both options favored Court South.

"I'm not happy with it," Judd said.

Elizabeth Presley, whose \$8 a year contract expires next month, said she likely won't take either option.

"If that's all they're going to do, I won't do it," Presley said. "I understand it's a business, but I have a contract. It's not fair."

- *Carly Harrington - KSN*

...FBN Suspended

continued from page 3

was also confirmed prior to the email via a telephone call. **CLUB INSIDER** wishes Rick Rector and all parties formerly involved in Fitness Business News, particularly Editor, John Craig and Managing Editor, Brian Davison, all the best in their futures and congratulates them on a job well done during their 14-month Fitness Business News publication run.

Dear Norm, June 27, 2008

Many thanks for your email and your kind words about FBN. Your sources are as good as ever, as we have, in fact, suspended publication.

While the publication received excellent acceptance editorially, the advertising support we sought just wasn't there. After making a substantial investment over our first 14 issues, we were forced to rethink our strategy when John Craig resigned as editor. John lives more than an hour from our office and was offered

an excellent job at Planet Fitness only 10 minutes from his home. Rising gas prices and an excellent salary made it an offer he couldn't refuse.

While Brian Davidson is more than capable of stepping into John's shoes as editor, United's Board and our CEO finally persuaded me that our resources would be put to better use elsewhere. I'm happy that we were able to offer positions to all who wanted to stay at the company.

The suspension is a disappointment to me both professionally and personally. It was a pleasure to meet many outstanding people in my short time in the industry, you among them. There's a great spirit of camaraderie in the fitness business, and we all made many friends. I hope people will keep in touch. Perhaps I'll see you at IHRSA next year!

Thanks again, Norm. It's been a pleasure, and if you're ever in Maine, be sure to stop by the office so I can buy you a lobster roll.

Best Regards,

Rick

...Tim Russert

continued from page 8

because they can't. The only way to fix those rotten arteries is by correcting the malnutrition with a diet based on whole starches, vegetables, and fruits.

Russert: Many doctors now say, after I'm dead, that I should have been treated more aggressively, like with heart surgery? But, I had a negative stress test April 29th, one and a half months before I died.

McDougall: "More treatment" seems to be the answer given for every medical problem; even when those very same treatments kill the patient. The families feel: "The doctors did everything possible. My loved one got every surgery and pill they could possibly prescribe." The doctors talk of "sound medical care."

Medical experts who have suggested that you should have had an angiogram followed by angioplasty, and/or bypass surgery before you died are ignoring the dismal scientific records for these treatments. Angioplasty has never been shown to save lives, and the benefits from bypass surgery are only slightly better, maybe. The reason for this failure is obvious to you now that you understand the underlying cause of your heart attack --the tiny volatile plaques, the festering pustules, the pimples on the verge of popping. These killers are so small you cannot

even see them with an angiogram, much less eliminate their threat with localized surgery.

The angiograms show shadows of large bulges inside the arteries. These are the old, large, fibrous, calcified plaques --disease that is as stable as a rock. These bulges do not rupture, they do not cause a blood clot to suddenly form inside the artery and they do not cause a heart attack. They are non-lethal. But, because of their visible prominence, they do lend themselves to surgery. So, why do cardiologists and surgeons operate on this stable disease? *Because they can.* Why do they not fix the pinhead-size killing pustules? *Because they can't.* At least, they can't with drugs and surgery. *But they could,* if they seriously considered their patients' diets.

A stress test will only detect very large blockages --maybe after a hard, fibrous plaque narrows 70% of the artery. Based on your recent negative results, you had none of these big ones. Now you understand --this test is too insensitive to identify the tiny potentially lethal pustules lining your arteries. The stress test provided you and your family with false reassurance. I hope you didn't have a celebration feast after hearing the results.

Russert: I exercised 40 minutes a day on my stationary bike. Why didn't that save me?

McDougall: Exercise does not heal the inner-artery festering sores

caused by your meat-centered diet. Exercise can aid in developing a trim muscular appearance and has some health benefits, but it has been overrated when it comes to warding off premature death. People have said exercise is such a powerful preventative that if you ran a marathon race you would be immune from heart disease. Jim Fixx, author of *The Complete Book of Running*, and the person credited with helping start America's fitness revolution, died at age 52 from a heart attack after his daily run. Cemeteries are filled with young men and women who put too much faith in exercise --ignoring the prevailing role of food.

Russert: Could I have been saved?

McDougall: I believe so. Even as late as a week before you died, you could have avoided this tragedy if you had made a serious change in your diet. Within hours your volatile plaques would have begun to quiet down, reducing their tendency to rupture. As soon as you had eliminated the animal (saturated) fat from your diet, your blood would have "thinned." Then, even if a plaque had ruptured, the risk of forming an occluding clot would have greatly diminished. Saturated fat makes the blood platelets sticky and the blood-clotting proteins very active --all leading to the easy production of a deadly blood clot. Over the following weeks and months of

healthful eating, your diseased arteries would have healed, with some measurable reversal of the gross plaque. With the same diet, you would have lost weight, and lowered your risk factors. Likely, I would have recommended you stop your blood pressure medication immediately; and over time, reduce and eliminate your cholesterol-lowering statin.

With this simple change, you would have regained your lost health and appearance. But, the determining factor was not whether a healthy diet would have saved your life over the short and long run. The question is: even if you had known better, would you have changed?

Russert: I would have eaten cardboard to be alive and with my wife and son. I looked forward to every Sunday to my show "Meet the Press," and the upcoming presidential election. I loved life!

McDougall: That's what everybody says --after an event.

But change is difficult, and we have a natural tendency to feel invincible. Sometimes a life-threatening event will wake people up. Unfortunately, you were not given a second chance. If instead, you had suffered a non-fatal heart attack on Friday, June 13th, I believe, as one of the world's top investigative journalists, you would have tracked down that killer.

What amazes me is that, over the past two weeks, none of your colleagues have asked the

tough questions and demanded truthful and plain-spoken explanations from doctors and scientists. The published scientific research is clear about the cause of your death. Your best friend, Tom Brokaw, could solve this crime in an afternoon by reading this research at the local medical library.

But then, the hard part would be writing an unpopular story about how the food everybody loves to eat is killing them and how the quick-fix medications and surgeries don't really work that well. I'm certain the food and pharmaceutical sponsors of newspapers, magazines and evening news programs would not be pleased with these truths either.

If you still have any influence on current events on earth, please get the media to do their job and seriously investigate the diet that killed you, and how modern medicine failed you, so that others can have a chance to avoid a similar fate. If any good could come of your untimely death, it would be that people learn the truth --after all, isn't that the duty of responsible journalists, like yourself?

Publisher's Note: Thanks to Dr. John A. McDougall for granting permission for this reprint of his amazing article. You may want to view, subscribe to and pass on to your members, Dr. McDougall's free website: drmcDougall.com.



All of us at Greenmaple Wellness Inc. would like to say thanks to the many U.S clubs that have subscribed to our services over the past year. We'd like to showcase our services to the rest of you, and for the month of August are offering \$200 dollars off our one time set-up fee, from \$599 to \$399. As a bonus to all who mention this Club Insider ad when they call to book their over the phone demonstration, where we can better show you the many advantages to subscribing, we'll also give you the first month free. We can't wait to say, 'Welcome Aboard!' to many more of you.

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...Norm's NOTES

continued from page 4

any of you created a Friday, Saturday, Sunday membership to respond to this opportunity caused by the American gas cost crisis?

• A really nice guy, **ANDY GRAHAM**, has signed on with our friends **JIM BOTTIN** and **PAUL SCHALLER** at **ABC Financial Services**. Andy was formerly with **Free Motion Fitness** and helped me when I acquired and donated two Free Motion machines to my son **JUSTIN's Walton High School** athletic program about 8 years ago. Best of luck Andy! Check out ABC Financial's ad on **Page #13** this month.

• **NESTOR FERNANDEZ** has been promoted to become the **Western Athletic Club Vice President of Operations!** Nestor is one of our industry's brightest

veterans. He spent thirteen years as the Regional Manager of Western Athletic Club's (WAC) four North Bay clubs prior to his promotion. This transition began over a year ago, with the formation of **WAC's Executive Operations Team** and with Nestor as the Chairman. In his new position, he will supervise the WAC Clubs' General Managers, plus the food and beverage and pro shop operations. Nestor has been a leader and innovator on all fronts, from marketing and programming to operations and facilities. He is perhaps best known for his marketing expertise, which is particularly important in San Francisco's ultra-competitive marketplace. This, combined with his focus on long-term strategic planning, has allowed **The Bay Club** to significantly increase its membership level year after year. Nestor earned his bachelor's degree in business administration

from San Francisco State University, his M.B.A. from the University of San Francisco and has worked in the health club industry for more than 25 years. He is well regarded for his keynote speaking on business and motivational topics. He has also been featured on television and in publications, such as San Francisco magazine and Club Business International. From 1996 through 1999, Nestor served on the Board of Directors for the International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA). He is currently a faculty member at **IHRSA's Institute for Club Managers**. **Congratulations Nestor!**

• **JOHN AGOGLIA**, formerly the Editor of **Club Industry Magazine**, now called **Fitness Business Pro**, just signed on to be the General Manager at a boutique club/spa in Boston called **Equilibrium**. Check out www.theeq.com. Best of luck, John... See you at the **Club Industry Show**, October 15-18th in Chicago.

• Speaking of Conferences and Trade Shows, don't miss The **IHRSA Club Business Entrepreneur Conference** and **National Fitness Business Journal Trade Show** in Las Vegas, September 8-11th. This event will be held in conjunction with the **American Council For Exercise (ACE)** and the **Medical Wellness Association Conferences**. Former **World's Strongest Man**, **BILL KAZMAIER**, will be honored with the NFTJ's annual **Lifetime Achievement Award** and **TERRY BROWN**, **CHRIS CLAWSON** and **FRANK TRULASKE** will receive **Distinguished Service Awards**. And, as always, the fit, beautiful and fiery ladies will compete for the **Ms. Fitness USA** and **Ms. Fitness World** titles. For information go to: www.nationalfitnessradeshow.com. Hope to see you there!

• And, in Chicago October 15-18th, **DR. KENNETH COOPER** will be honored by **Club Industry** with its **Lifetime Achievement Award**. **Congratulations Dr. Cooper!** This annual event is another great learning experience for club owners and staff, and the Trade Show is always full of new equipment, products and services, so my son, Justin, and I hope to see you there!

• **JOHN and HELEN CAPTAIN**, the owners of Knoxville, TN.-

based **National Fitness** recently purchased 5 **Total Fitness Systems Clubs** out of bankruptcy in Nashville. The former owner was **MANNY BUTERA**. This brings to mind the class action lawsuit brought against the Captain's Court South in Knoxville. Check out the article on **Page #3** by **CARLY HARRINGTON** of the **Knoxville Sentinel News**.

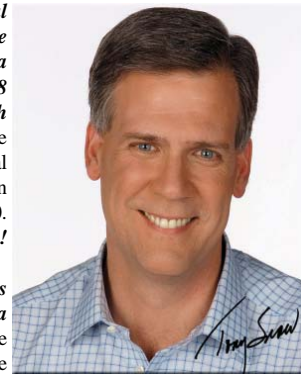
• **ADAM FEIT** and **JOHN METZGER** won the **National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM)** and the **California University of Pennsylvania 2008 Pursuit of Excellence in Health and Fitness Scholarships**. These two scholarships bring the total awarded since the inception of this program to \$150,000. **Congratulations Adam and John!**

• More motivation for **Americans** to lose weight... A recent **Atlanta Journal Constitution** article reported that some airlines are now requiring really big, and yes, fat passengers to buy TWO tickets. On July 11th, nationally syndicated radio show talk show host, **NEAL BOORTZ**, spent close to an hour sharing his opinion and I quote, "It is only appropriate that fat people pay more than skinny people to fly." He even went so far as to suggest that passengers, like cargo, be weighed and that they pay more if they are over a certain weight. YO... I can clearly remember my days as a really biggie and the looks on some passenger's faces when I was heading down the aisle of a jet plane looking for my seat! I mean, after all, it takes a whole lot more JP4 (jet fuel) to fly a plane that is heavier. Don't be too surprised when one day you are booking a flight online or on the phone, and either the website or the operator asks the question, "How much do you weigh?" **Stay tuned!**

• **RICHARD BRANSON**, the man I believe is the **#1 entrepreneur in the world**, has launched **Virgin American Airlines**. If you live in the Las Vegas, Los Angeles, New York, Washington, D.C., San Diego, San Francisco or Washington, D.C. areas, you might want to check out www.VirginAmerica.com, as I'm pretty sure Branson is going to be offering some great deals. I just happened to see him on the **ELLEN DEGENERES TV Show** a minute ago while I was tuning into the evening news. With a big smile on his face, Branson gave

the entire audience of about 300 people free roundtrip tickets from Los Angeles to New York City. Hope you save some *moola*!

• **JOHN CRAIG**, now with **Planet Fitness/World Gym**, informed me of **PAM TRADER's new World Gym 1440 All Access Gym** selling 400 memberships in presale! **Great Start** for a 5,000 square-foot gym! Check out the **1440 All Access** ad on **Page #2**.



Tony Snow

• Last Friday, July 11th, as I was just finishing writing my tribute to **NBC-TV News** journalist **TIM RUSSERT** (See **Page #6**), it was announced that **TONY SNOW**, former **White House Press Secretary** who worked for **PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH**, and most recently, for **CNN**, had died after a long battle with colon cancer. From all accounts, here was another great fellow, and for him to pass away at age 53, leaving a loving wife and three children is really sad. May Tony Snow and Tim Russert rest in peace.

• **God bless our troops, airmen and seamen** as these brave men and women risk life and limb everyday for us in the Middle-East. **God bless their families** for the sacrifice they make for us. **God bless you and your family. God bless America!**

(Norm Cates, Jr. is a 35-year veteran of the health, racquet and sports club industry. Cates was the Founder and is now celebrating his 15th Anniversary as the Publisher of **CLUB INSIDER**. He was **IHRSA's 1st President**, and a Co-founder of the Association with Rick Caro and five others, in 1981. In March, 2001, **IHRSA** honored Cates with its **DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award**, one of **IHRSA's** highest honors. Cates may be reached at: 770-850-8506 or email: Norm@clubinsideronline.com)

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It all begins and ends with you.



...The Marsh

continued from page 3

untapped wetlands behind the facility in the quiet community of Minnetonka, Minnesota. The Marsh is about 15 minutes West of downtown Minneapolis, and it competes with over 46 Twin-City-area health/fitness facilities. The gathering place, The Marsh, received the highest of consumer ratings by Twin Cities Consumers' CheckBook Magazine, and The Marsh shows no complaints registered with the Better Business Bureau.

The Marsh provides a true oasis for its members and the community. Marsh Membership Director, Cece McCan, describes it this way... *"The Marsh is a unique facility. We are one of a kind, stand-alone island in a sea of fitness centers."* The Marsh is a second home for many members from the Minnetonka community and the surrounding Minneapolis/St. Paul Metro area. At the same time, because of the *Inn at the Marsh*, it is a destination resort for those souls wishing to refresh and invigorate their mind, body and spirit.

The Marsh oasis provides many indoor and outdoor activities including: wellness programs, health and fitness facilities, equipment and services, a clinic, a conference facility with full catering, a full-service Spa, The Shop featuring unique gifts, clothing, cards, jewelry, exercise wear, and accessories, as well as educational books and resources. The Marsh Restaurant and the Moon Terrace Dining Room, and The Inn at The Marsh that provides six cozy overnight rooms for family and friends of members or the public who have retreated to this world class Mecca.

Ruth Stricker and The

Marsh are all about caring, giving, teaching and yes, oh yes, loving one another. They are all about what all of us seek: peace and relaxation. They are all about tranquility. They are all about perpetuity. They provide a true oasis where one may go to refresh and change of one's mind, body and spirit for the better.

Giving is a way of life for Ruth Stricker. Giving to her family. Giving to her community. Giving to her staff. And, giving to her members and others who may come to her oasis.

Were Ruth Stricker a soldier, her uniform would bear four stars and would be decorated with many ribbons. In reality, Ruth Stricker is a legendary soldier in the battle for health, fitness, relaxation, lifestyle change, peace and tranquility. Her ribbons are the recognition she has received in her life, including the 2004 Humanitarian of the Year Award by the International Spa Association where she serves as a foundation Board Member, service to the University of Minnesota's Center for Spirituality and Healing as an honorary chair and advisor, service as a Trustee at her alma mater, Macalester College, where The Ruth Stricker Dayton Student Centers is named after her. Additionally, Ruth and her husband, Bruce Dayton, are the Co-founders of the Bravewell Collaborative, a Minneapolis-based philanthropic organization that exists to bring about optimal health and healing for individuals and society.

The Marsh website: www.TheMarsh.com says this on its first page: "With a 67,000 square-foot structure located on scenic marshlands, The Marsh is a place, a business, a staff and a philosophy committed to providing an environment which

inspires a healthy attitude toward life. Our mission at The Marsh, A Center for Balance and Fitness, is to provide an environment and a philosophy that inspires, challenges, educates, and supports a healthy approach to life through professional care and guidance. The Marsh integrates architecture and aerobics, nutrition and nurturing to help you balance the mind and body. All facilities are accessible for people with limitations. The Marsh is open to the public, and for those who choose membership"

CLUB INSIDER asked Ruth Stricker and four of her most tenured Marsh Team members to share secrets of their success with you. The following interview with Ruth Stricker truly shows what she is made of, and in sidebars on the pages that follow this cover story, we present responses to several questions posed to Tim Mortenson, 23 years with the Marsh; Cece McCan, 23 years; Colleen Hagerman, 10 years; and Liz Anema, 10 years.

An Interview With The Legendary Lady Ruth Stricker

CLUB INSIDER (C.I.) - Ruth, please share with us when, how and why you became involved in creating The Marsh.

Ruth Stricker (RS) - Hi Norm! I think it may be appropriate to give you a bit of my background in order to answer your questions. I grew up the daughter of a Presbyterian minister in Southern Minnesota. I graduated from Macalester College in St. Paul in the 50's with two majors; physical education and religion. My next 28 years were all devoted to health/fitness in various activities. I served as the Health Education Director and then Camp Director in a YWCA. During two sabbaticals at Dartmouth and University of Massachusetts, I had the opportunity to work with Bonnie Prudden in her Mind/Body Institute and work in the first Fitness Department in this country (UMass). Returning to the Twin Cities in the mid-sixties, I started Fitness Unlimited, Inc. teaching and assembling a team of 16 teachers. While we worked with many populations, men, women, children, physically challenged, physicians, Y's, and schools, we were centered in a studio in St. Paul and in a local Minneapolis health club. During those years, in the 60's and 70's, my classes consisted of warm-up, endurance (aerobics, but Ken Cooper hadn't



The Marsh Entrance

named it yet) yoga, tai chi, floor exercise and a cool down interspersed with sharing my life experiences, the illness and death of my children, etc., or events in the community.

It was during those years that I came to understand that something else was happening. People were lingering after classes for hours just wanting to talk about their lives, the joy and pain, the ups and downs. They wanted to talk and to be heard. There was more to fitness and wellness than just exercise. It opened up their souls and hearts! This was the birth of The Marsh in my head --supportive and social activities around physical activity in a gathering place for real people.

The problem was I didn't have a dime and was a single mother with two teenagers. This is where the fairytale begins. After giving a speech in the basement of a local church on the Mind/Body Connection, a local businessman approached me and said, "I don't care so much about fitness, but I want to provide a platform for your philosophy." That was the beginning. We traveled to Europe and Asia to study health and wellness in 1983, a year of construction in 1984, and we opened in May of 1985.

That was a long answer, but I must give you another "why" response. In the 70's, I was saying that "my fear for the next decade is that we will have tight abs and pecs and vacant hearts and minds." And, it happened with narcissism, lifestyle changes, eating disorders, and compulsive exercisers. My profession was declaring who were eligible human beings based on a rigid fitness formula. "Get fit, and it will change your life" didn't work. There was still

heartache, loneliness and anxiety. It was imperative for me to put the word "Balance" in our name. Balance of mind/body of passive/active of self care versus reaching out to others... of addressing the whole person, the emotional and spiritual as well as the body.

I also deliberately called it a center rather than a club. I was dismayed at the integrity and ethics of health clubs in those days and vowed that it would be an institution in the community that wouldn't use pressure sales or close the doors without notice and never reopen. I believe that answers the when, how and why with some passion thrown in.

And of course, one final thought about how The Marsh began, that businessman is now my husband of 20 years!

C.I. - Your website describes The Marsh as:

- A staff and a philosophy committed to inspiring a healthy attitude towards life.

- A place with doors wide open to the community, members and guests whether it is for a day or an extended stay.

- A unique combination of offerings including: full service spa, retail shop, conference center, guest rooms and restaurant.

Given this description, what was your original vision for The Marsh and how does that vision then match The Marsh today?

RS - The original physical building turned out pretty much like I drew it on the back of an envelope. In 1994, we doubled the space, and of course, added more program components. At the risk of sounding smug, our philosophy and mission statement have remained the same but always with a futurist eye, resilient and

(See *The Marsh* Page 16)



Mental Gym at The Marsh

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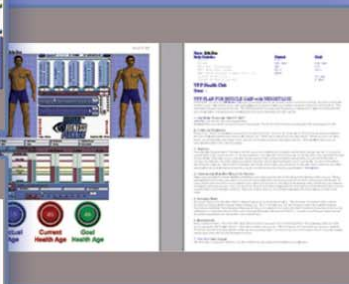
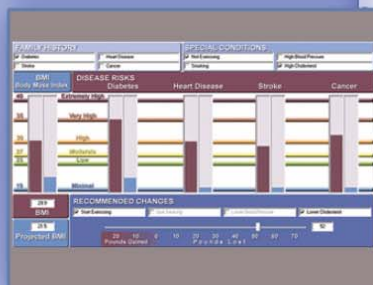
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...The Marsh

continued from page 14

responsive to change.

We published my statement of purpose and instructions to our architect in my monthly newsletter we call Balance Bylines. Here is the essence of our purpose as published: ***"We resolve to maintain the warm and bracing culture of The Marsh – the social glue which fortifies us for the societal strains we face."***

C.I. - How many acres and how many buildings does The Marsh property entail?

RS - The primary building is 67,000 square feet. The footprint resembles a village of buildings hugging the marshland. We own 6.5 acres but have the view of 65 acres of federally protected wetlands.

C.I. - How many full-time and part-time employees do you have at The Marsh?

RS - We currently have 70 full-time and 112 part-time staff members serving our current number of 2,450 members. We are proud that the 182 staff members of The Marsh offer an overall ratio of one staff member

per 13.5 members. I also might mention that about half of our services are open to the public. It is important to me that everyone in the community is able to enjoy The Marsh in one way or another. This is another reason we are a center, not a club.

C.I. - Ruth, according to your website, the Mission of The Marsh is: ***"To provide an environment and a philosophy that inspires, challenges, educates, and supports a healthy approach to life through professional care and guidance"***. The site goes on to say, ***"The Marsh integrates architecture and aerobics, nutrition and nurturing to help balance the mind and body"***. So, my question is, please expand on your view of the importance of this philosophy and how you try to help your members adopt it.

RS - When we opened, we had a fair-sized following as charter members. In the early years, we used a one-month trial membership with the message, ***"If this fits your lifestyle, or if it is right for you at this stage of your life."*** In recent years, people join on an outright full membership immediately because they know about our philosophy through

word-of-mouth and embrace it. They are already committed when they join. Other ways we help our members would be the approachable, caring and loving staff, the ambience (a liberal arts approach to health), and in a monthly column in our newsletter, I write about "the stuff of life" which they relate to. (See The Marsh Newsletter on **Page #18**)

C.I. - The Marsh offers an unusual mix of classes, services and facilities. Please describe what The Marsh product mix was when it first opened, how it has evolved, and what it has done for your members.

RS - Much of our programming is the same but has expanded greatly since we doubled the space. We tripled the size of our Training Center (gym), enlarged the spa, added a second restaurant, a conference center, a mental gym, an art gallery, a clinic with five physical therapists, and two acupuncturists, and we've added more health professionals. We do more partnering with other agencies, such as the Alzheimer's Association, the Heart Institute, etc. Socialization is so important, so we have bridge, knitting, book groups, wine dinners, etc. Our product is the integration of all of our services under one roof.

C.I. - Your personal philosophy and professional experiences around the world based on your philosophy are numerous. Please explain how your philosophy and your experiences have helped you with The Marsh.

RS - This is key in my estimation. A basic value of ours is to offer activities that don't cut folks off from life or make that activity just one more thing to work into their life. ***"To bring life lessons to the gym and gym lessons to their life."*** We urge our staff to read the front page of the newspaper rather than the fitness manuals, to know what people are thinking, dreaming or worrying about. We do a great deal of thinking outside the box. My travels, participation on international boards, and my colleagues around the world all add texture and stimulation to the staff and members. I hope this isn't bragging, but I have had wonderful opportunities and mentors along the way.

C.I. - How do you encourage your staff to practice the philosophies you teach at the Marsh? How does this affect their performance on the job and personally?



Tai Chi at The Marsh

RS - Most of the staff come to The Marsh or stay because of the philosophy. They are each a part of our integrated approach rather than merely filling a slot. I could never pay them what they're worth, but because of their own interaction, they feel the rewards and are personally recognized. There is also a tremendous learning curve if they are self starters and have great training opportunities.

C.I. - Because of excessive work schedules (including arduous commutes), family obligations, and the literal exhaustion from the two, exercise and personal serenity have moved to the back burners of most American citizens' lives. How do you attract busy, exhausted people to The Marsh? Once they take the step to make their lives better in some way (physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually), how does The Marsh help them?

RS - I believe that it is our integrated approach. People want to pull their life together in this segmented and stressful world. They feel the supportive caring atmosphere whether they are celebrating or grieving. They like the human scale environment, they love our staff and they like each other. They know that it is a safe place for their body and their emotional life. They trust our professional staff. For some, The Marsh is their front porch, backyard and their family. Some are here because of medical referral, intellectual stimulation, hope for Stage 4 cancer, stress, depression, getting ready to climb Mt. Everest or simply being heard or called by name.

C.I. - Where is The Marsh headed in the future? What has been working? What hasn't? What will you try that you haven't already?

RS - The future - I think about that a great deal. I'm 73, so we're working on sustainability of The Marsh. Andrew Weil says the future is in small community centers comprised of a health club, a spa and a hospital. We are in line to be that model in a day of large institutions and when people yearn to belong in a community. For programming, we will expand our Aging Program (Purposeful living in the second half of life). We will do even more for Brain Health (i.e., dementia and Alzheimer's), even more rehab and balance work, mental health and further develop life coaching and age-sensitive training. One of our challenges is keeping the balance of young and the aging as our median age is 57.

C.I. - Ruth, this **CLUB INSIDER** cover story was about helping clubs build TRUST in their communities. What tips could you give readers with respect to TRUST building in our industry?

RS - I like your ideas on trust in the last issue of **CLUB INSIDER**. Credibility has been my mantra from day one. For instance, I opened in '85 with a cardiologist right next to an acupuncturist. In other words, in order to do holistic therapies, I firmly anchored our staff with Western medicine. There must be congruency between what we say and what we do.

C.I. - You have an excellent staff of dedicated individuals. How have you gone about recruiting them, and what do you specifically seek when hiring new employees for The Marsh?

RS - Recruitment isn't much of a problem for us, and we have an active intern program. We look for pristine credentials in our professional staff. And for all staff, personality and capacity to (See **The Marsh** Page 18)



The Studio at The Marsh

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...The Marsh

continued from page 16

care and interface with members is important. At our place, good service is implied. It's all about an experience and building relationships. Annually, we close The Marsh and host a Staff Appreciation Dinner where we do a "State of The Marsh" program and award the coveted "Spirit of The Marsh" Award, which is based on one's seamless spirit rather than longevity or produced revenue.

C.I. - Please name your staff members with the longest tenure and comment on those key people as you might care to.

RS - I believe you have interviewed four of them, and that will speak for itself, but I must mention that members totally identify with these staff people. The Marsh buzz in the community is always about their trainer, teachers, etc. They call them by name and know if they're getting married, having a baby or going on vacation. They also take note of the staff longevity and take pleasure in familiarity.

C.I. - Ruth, I know The Marsh has been a long-standing IHRSA Member Club. Tell our readers the value you and your staff have received as IHRSA Members for many years.

RS - I believe my first conference was in 1983, and it was an excellent resource for my building design and equipment purchases. I quickly became a member of Vanguard and thoroughly enjoyed the special meetings. I'll never forget a wonderful entire day on Leadership. I miss the "Association of Quality Clubs" and have watched the association grow under the wonderful values of John McCarthy, whom I admire so much. In recent years, I have been out of the country during conference time, but I always send a number of my staff who enjoy the networking. Bear with me as I mention that I think the programs could use more depth and inspiration... more whys than how-to's. Inspired people are empowered people!

C.I. - If you could boil your success at The Marsh down to three key things and would offer those three things as advice to our readers to enhance their success, what would they be?

RS - I must preface this with the fact that I had a most unique opportunity to build The Marsh

and not have to compromise my ideas and passions. Many people have great knowledge and ideas but can't have their dreams realized. I say this with great modesty and with the realization that much of what we do at The Marsh is impractical or impossible for others. I built The Marsh as a model in hopes that bits and pieces could be used in our industry. Every club or chain is viable -- just know your purpose and mission and do it well-- and perhaps, warm it up a bit.

The three tips I could offer are:

1. Know the demographics and warm up your culture to invite other populations into your club --the aging, the lonely, the de-conditioned, and those with chronic conditions with a "come as you are" welcome.

2. Work with your staff in seeing the big picture --purposeful work.

3. Give credence to the resilience of the human spirit and understand that health and fitness are not the chief goals in life, but rather, the potential to be good citizens in our relationships, community, and the world.

Let me close this fantastic cover story by explaining why I chose to feature Ruth Stricker and The Marsh for this particular month's cover story.

Last month, the **CLUB INSIDER** cover story was entitled: **"A 100 Year Perspective On The Health and Fitness Club Industry" -- Will Our Industry Gain America's TRUST or will we just be another brick in the wall of American History?**

I gave much thought about the one person and organization I wanted to feature in the **CLUB INSIDER** edition that followed our June "100 Year Perspective" edition, so I chose Ruth Stricker and The Marsh. I chose Ruth and The Marsh because I had concluded that out of the 30,000 U.S. commercial operations... I could have thought forever and not found anyone better than Ruth Stricker... when it comes to building and maintaining consumer trust in the community.

So, I reached out to Ruth, and thankfully, she was able to fit in the time to give her responses to my questions. Thank you, Ruth. I am pleased to have also shared the thoughts of four of Ruth's key and most tenured people on the following pages: Tim Mortenson, Cece McCan, Colleen Hagerman, and Liz Anema. Thanks to Tim, Cece, Colleen and Liz for their

work and the time it took out of their busy schedules to participate. Last, I would like to thank Sharon Ruhland, The Marsh Community Relations Director, and nice lady who orchestrated all that was necessary to bring this cover story together.

I am very proud to have been able to share Ruth Stricker's story about The Marsh at this particular point in time. I had wanted to produce this cover story years ago but believed it would be better after a personal visit with Ruth at The Marsh. I have yet to work out plans for that trip, but then, along came

the need to find one of America's greatest community trust builders for our July edition. So, I am grateful to Ruth and her entire Team for making this important report happen.

I now challenge you to learn from Ruth Stricker, her team and The Marsh. I challenge you to pattern your operations to help your club build TRUST in your community and use what you've learned here to do it. I am confident that as time passes, the changes you might make in your operation(s) that were inspired by this report will begin to happen and... you will advance the state

of your art.

(Norm Cates, Jr. is a 35-year veteran of the health, racquet and sports club industry. Cates was the Founder and is now celebrating his 15th Anniversary as the Publisher of CLUB INSIDER. He was IHRSA's 1st President, and a Co-founder of the Association with Rick Caro and five others, in 1981. In March, 2001, IHRSA honored Cates with its DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award, one of IHRSA's highest honors. Cates may be reached at: 770-850-8506 or email: Norm@clubinsideronline.com)

the Marsh Monthly

Volume 23, Issue 7 July 2008



Balance Bylines By Ruth Stricker

Now that summer has finally arrived in Minnesota, I hope you are taking care of yourself, having fun and drinking "lic". And while you are relaxed, let me brag a bit about the value of your Marsh membership.

Many of you have seen and called our attention to an extensive study and survey of health clubs in our metropolitan area. This is a multi-year project done by the Center for the Study of Service in Washington, DC who regularly survey local customers and Consumer Reports subscribers for their feedback. Their publication, *Checkbook* is a non-profit semi-annual magazine, free of advertising, free of outside influence, and is "dedicated to helping Twin Cities consumers find the high quality, reasonably priced service they deserve." The Marsh received the highest rating (superior) of ALL 46 health clubs evaluated in the following categories: "Quality of Instruction", "Quality/Maintenance of Facilities and Equipment", "Cleanliness", "Availability/Convenience of Group Activities" and "Friendliness."

Some things to remember; we are not a club, we are a center, and offer many additional amenities and services. Three years ago we received the same top rating but we are not complacent... always a work in progress, responsive to current and future issues of wellness and lifestyle. Knowing that there is no way to compete with many of the fine larger clubs, (tennis, racquetball, outdoor pools, quantity of equipment, etc.) we take it as a true compliment in scoring so high in our unique core values—offering our members a total experience.

To further crow about our place, listed below are complaints mentioned by members of other health clubs which are notably absent from comments about The Marsh.

- Facilities – rundown, broken equipment or unsafe conditions – mentioned as a concern by 40% of respondents of other clubs.
- Customer Service – lack of responsiveness by club management, poor communication or rude treatment by staff, failure to deliver on promises, pushy sales staff – 29%
- Cleanliness – the lack of – 22%
- Instruction – not enough personnel available for instruction or help – 16%
- Overcrowding – wait to use equipment too long – 15%
- Classes – not enough variety – 11%
- Noise – way too noisy – 4%

I hesitate to conclude with these negative notes – but sometimes we forget the positive features of The Marsh and how good we have it. Hats off to all of us – staff and members alike! There are reprint copies of the study available at each of the desks around the building if you wish to join the braggers.

On another note, our summer lute, took on a heavy caste recently with the sad and untimely news of Tim Russer's death. While our nation has publicly grieved his death and celebrated his life, I find it interesting to review some life lessons learned from this NBC Washington Bureau chief, the revered Mr. "Meet the Press".

You have heard them all, Tim's attributes reflecting the many good things he represented.

He loved his work, he loved his life, he was passionate, he lived each day to the fullest making every minute count, he was genuine, he was fair, he was generous with his time, he was a loyal friend, he was a devoted son, a proud father, a loving husband, he believed in hard work and struggle. He loved sports, or a good joke and laughter. He was an optimist, he was grounded and proud of his roots, he lived his deep faith in God and he loved his country. Tim's wife, Maureen, was quoted as saying "Tim was a happy man. He realized all his dreams." What a legacy...

Tim's heart attack at the age of 58 was tragic and, of course, raised some questions. With a previous diagnosis of coronary heart disease, the medical community is at odds on whether this could have been averted. Ten to fifteen percent of heart attacks have no symptoms and perhaps "it was his time", they say, but let us review the lessons in the form of suggestions and reminders for ourselves. Let us know our numbers and our risk factors through regular screenings, let us know our genetic factors if possible, let us pay attention to symptoms, let us avoid being overweight, let us watch our stress level and balance our schedules, let us know that medications can protect us only so much and the rest is up to us to live a healthy lifestyle. Tim was fond of saying "In the question – is the answer". We are grateful to Tim for the life lessons and now let us ponder our own questions regarding our health.... and live each day to the fullest.

Happy July and enjoy the friendliest health club in the Twin Cities,

Ruth Stricker

advice, etc.

“Since adding Thin&Healthy’s Total Solution we’ve quadrupled our business, tripled our EFT’s and increased our product sales by over 200%!”

After being in the club business for 20 years, we were able to attract some of the more overweight clientele. But we realized we needed to get into the weight loss industry to attract the 67% of the population that were not interested in joining a fitness club.

While researching different weight loss models we found Thin&Healthy’s Total Solution and we were very impressed with the Life Success part of the program as well as the Metabolism Retraining part of the program that encourages movement. Some of the weight loss brands don’t encourage movement at all (which we really believe in, being in the club industry for so long) so it was good to find a program that knows the importance of movement. We were also impressed with the Thin&Healthy Kids program, so we decided to try out the Total Solution.

Since adding Thin&Healthy’s Total Solution to our club we’ve seen amazing results in our members and in our business.

Some of our members that have been coming to our club for the past 5 or 10 years may have lost the normal 5 or 10 pounds here and there, but they never reached

their goal of losing 30 or 40 pounds. Most of them have participated in other weight loss programs without seeing results, and now, in just a few months on the Thin&Healthy program, they have reached their goals! They can’t believe the results they are getting with the Total Solution. They tried it all before and nothing worked, but now they’re seeing it; they are happy, they are excited, they are spreading the news and it has been great.

Our members are seeing great results, which has a huge, positive impact on referrals for not only Thin&Healthy’s Total Solution, but for our club memberships as well. Adding the Total Solution has energized the atmosphere and people who would NEVER have walked through the club door are in here and loving it!

One of the newest offerings from Thin&Healthy’s Total Solution is the Never Ending Motivation Coaching Certification. The Total Solution isn’t just about eating healthy and regular movement; it’s about the motivation. The Total Solution helps people handle the life stress that causes them to make unhealthy choices about their physical health. Helping people on such a deep level is very exciting and rewarding.

As club owners we didn’t deal with the emotional aspects like we are with weight loss. After going through the Never Ending Motivation Coaching Certification, we are so much better at helping people without making any mistakes, without giving bad advice. We are not just coaching, we are doing it right and we feel very confident with that. Plus, a Never Ending Motivation Coaching Certification provides another

business model for an additional revenue source in our club.

Since adding Thin&Healthy’s Total Solution we’ve quadrupled our business, tripled our EFT’s and increased our product sales by 200%!

As club owners in the industry for 20 years, we have tried every program you could put into a club, from group fitness to mixed martial arts to cafés and juice bars to chiropractic to personal training, and we have not seen results like we have with the Thin&Healthy program. It has absolutely saved our club. We took a chance, evicted some tenants out of our building, occupied that space with a Thin&Healthy, and our EFTs tripled.

Another great component of the Thin&Healthy program is the business systems. We were doing our best to manage our club and we were just getting along. When we brought in the Total Solution we learned valuable sales and marketing techniques as well as awesome accounting procedures. It’s not just the name and the products they offer that make this so worthwhile; the systems they already have in place are 100% guaranteed to work if you apply them correctly.

If you are thinking about adding weight loss to your facility, my advice is to go with Thin&Healthy’s Total Solution. It’s the motivation component that makes it successful and there is no other program out there that brings that motivation component. It truly is amazing. It’s an unbelievable program. X

MAYRA & DENNIS CICCONES,

In our 20 years of experience in the fitness industry we’ve tried everything from group fitness, mixed martial arts, cafés and juice bars to chiropractic and personal training. Nothing has provided results like the Thin&Healthy program. It saved our club!

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The Marsh Staff Interviews

Tim Mortenson Director of Operations

CLUB INSIDER (C.I.) - Tim, as Director of Operations for The Marsh, what are the three greatest challenges you face on a regular basis and how do you handle those challenges?

Tim Mortenson (TM) - **1. Balancing office/meeting time vs. "face time" with members and staff** - They are all important, but I try to get out of the office and travel the floor to talk with members and staff every hour.

2. Becoming more proactive and less reactive - For special events and programs, we anticipate every situation or scenario. As a team, we do a pre-event walk-through to visualize the process and what is expected and needed from each area in order to present a flawless experience to our members. In addition, we regularly review our Marsh building with "Fresh Eyes" pretending as though we are new to the building in order

to gain perspective on what we present to our guests and make improvements and enhancements as needed.

3. Prioritizing capital improvements - We are very fortunate to have the facility Ruth built for us to conduct our business. It is gorgeous! We opened the original building in 1985, and doubled its size in 1994. The architecture is anything but "big-box like". Wood siding, vaulted ceilings, flat roof with a cedar deck on top, custom windows and skylights, and several intimate spaces rather than a few large rooms --all can present challenges in where and how to allocate funds for capital improvements. Especially when we would prefer the improvements to be visible to our members, we ask ourselves, "How will this investment improve the value of a membership?" Obviously, there are situations where this will not apply, but it is a good exercise nonetheless.

Cece McCan Membership Director

C.I. - Cece, as Membership Director for The Marsh, please describe the three greatest challenges you face on a regular basis in your role and how you deal with those challenges.

Cece McCan (CM) - Challenges are opportunities to better serve our members and community. Ruth has taught me and our entire organization to take risks, which in turn, gives us an opportunity to grow and set new goals.

The Marsh is a unique facility. We are one of a kind, "a stand-alone island in a sea of fitness centers." The Marsh has established a culture that has embraced the whole person. Making sure people understand our vision and our brand is essential.

C.I. - Cece, you've been working

Colleen Hagerman Program Director

C.I. - Colleen, as Program Director of The Marsh, please describe the three greatest challenges you face on a regular basis in your role and how do you deal with those challenges?

Colleen Hagerman (CH) - **1.** The Marsh has a long history

with Ruth at The Marsh since it opened in 1985. Please give us an overall picture of how the Marsh has changed and evolved since you began working there.

CM - Our mission statement, philosophy and culture have remained consistent during our 23 years. We realize one size does not fit all, and we customize our approach to programming, special events, speakers and developing relationships with our members. Our members have a story to share; they are not just a check-in number. In addition, the staff is here for more than a paycheck. We all invest our time and our hearts into the success of our members and their goals.

The minute you enter The Marsh, you "feel" the warmth and authenticity of our culture. The ambiance and energy create a valuable exchange and bond, giving our guest a total experience.

of innovative programming. We introduce six to twelve new programs to our members each month. They range from nationally recognized guest speakers, such as Dr. Gary Small, author of several books on brain health, to member retention activities, such as our recent Marshopoly game. Keeping programming fresh can be a challenge, but there are two

C.I. - As the original Director of the Training Center, compare how the Center has evolved and changed since 1985.

TM - In 1985, a trainer's main function was to show members how to use the exercise equipment correctly in order to keep members safe and to optimize results. Financially speaking, this was an expense to the facility. However, it was a great value to the members. With the growing popularity of personal training since 1985, our Training Center is one of our best contributors to our bottom line. It really has been an exciting transformation, and one of which, I am proud to have had a part during the growth period.

Our member focus has evolved over the years as well. Our initial efforts were based on improving fitness. Now, at The Marsh, we focus on keeping people active and helping them stay balanced and well. We have specialized opportunities for our members and guests. For example, we have programs for

those with health challenges such as musculoskeletal and chronic conditions. In addition, we strive to hire highly educated professionals for our training center, individuals who can deliver these top rate training services and programs to our members.

C.I. - Tim, please summarize your feelings about how Ruth Stricker has influenced you over the years and how you feel about your work because of her influence.

TM - Coming from a competitive athletic world in my early years, to working for Ruth, I don't think I had a whole understanding of the value of "balance" as it is stated on the Marsh sign in front of our building (The Marsh, A Center for Balance and Fitness). As the years go by, I understand it more and more. As Ruth says, "I don't think anyone ever achieves optimal balance, but it is more about the journey to become balanced". I believe I am now



Tim Mortenson

on track with this concept at this point in life.

Ruth motivates the Marsh staff to think of ideas and situations from different perspectives. Instead of thinking in a linear direction, Ruth urges us to analyze a decision from all angles, to gain a more complete perspective and enable effective decision making.

We doubled the size of our building in 1994, and we worked hard to keep the same family feel. I am proud of who we are and the reputation we have earned. People feel safe and welcomed here. Ruth wanted our membership to grow slowly since we are looking for long term committed members who call The Marsh their second home. With a wide front door, we are inclusive, not exclusive.

C.I. - CeCe, please summarize your feelings about how Ruth Stricker has influenced you over the years and how you feel about your work because of her influence.

CM - How do I summarize 23 years of influence? Ruth shares her heart, knowledge and wisdom daily. I am not sure she realizes how much she influences everyone in different ways each and every day. Ruth leads by

examples that make the challenge manageable, even enjoyable:

A. We have a creative, engaged professional staff who contribute their ideas and programming content on a daily basis.

B. We are recognized as pioneers in the health and wellness community, both locally and internationally and are fortunate

example and is side-by-side with all of us. She allows me to be myself, no such thing as a wrong answer or bad idea. Ruth guides me to levels that enhance me both personally and professionally. I am not afraid to think outside of the box and I enjoy expressing myself creatively and openly. She leads The Marsh with the same approach that she applies to directing her staff --through her knowledge, confidence and life experiences in travel, art, culture, etiquette and even grammar!

Ruth is the pulse of the Marsh! The building feels different when she is not present. Ruth is always extremely prepared, well read and highlights important information to share with me. Her attention to detail is unsurpassed. I enjoy watching Ruth as she mingles with members and colleagues. I learn more in 5 minutes with Ruth than I could at a week-long conference. Ruth is

that many health and wellness authors and thought-leaders want to speak at The Marsh. They have an audience of 200-300 people who have an active aging mindset. In fact, in the 23 years since Ruth Stricker opened The Marsh, we have had over 180 nationally and internationally renowned speakers including: Greg LeMond, Carl Lewis, Billie



Cece McCan

a first class woman inside and out. I look up to her with love, respect and gratitude. As a person who works in membership, creating relationships every day, I aspire to be the people magnet I see in Ruth. I have learned from the best and am continuing to learn each and every day.

Jean King, Herb Benson, M.D., Mimi Gaurneri, M.D., Carolyn Myss, Earl Bakken, Christiane Northrup, M.D., Brent Bauer, M.D., Kay Redfield Jameson, Ph.D., Andrew Weil, M.D., and Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D (See sidebar with other prominent speakers at The Marsh).

2. Another challenge I (See Staff Interviews Page 22)



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Gary Borgatede, GM - Elmwood Fitness Center

referrals

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Bill Deitz, GM - Auburn Racquet & Fitness Club

retention

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Mike Revere, Manager - Sentara Hampton Health and Fitness Center



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"Never miss the opportunity to recognize or reward members. Recognition and rewards are a crucial part of every successful retention management strategy."

John McCarthy, former Executive Director of IHRSA

...Staff Interviews

continued from page 20

have is finding enough time to be with our members... We often say that "love is in the details", and we strive to give all of our programs the love and attention they deserve to be successful, which can be very time consuming. So, I try to participate in as many group exercise classes as I can each week, and I write all of our "Member Spotlight" articles for The Marsh member newsletter so that I can get to know our members more completely.

C.I. - Colleen, programming has always been a key ingredient in the great clubs of America, and your role as Programming Director for The Marsh clearly must be one of the key ingredients in its success. For those club

Liz Anema Studio Director

C.I. - Liz, please describe the three greatest challenges you face on a regular basis in your role as Studio Director and how you deal with those challenges?

Liz Anema (LA) - Three areas of continuous improvement:

1. Providing inspiration and motivation to staff - I strive to bring motivation and inspiration to my instructors to ensure The Marsh continues to offer the most energetic, safe and effective classes to our members and guests. I have a team of amazing instructors who specialize in various areas of fitness... from Tai Chi and Yoga to Muscle Conditioning and Step. I believe that keeping my staff informed of industry news, articles, trends and inspiring information (much of this comes from Ruth) provides our guests with a dynamic, professional and well-educated team and also inspires new class ideas. I also work extremely hard to bring the staff together regularly, as a team for meetings, workshops and simple social time together. Lastly, I encourage my staff to stay integrated and active throughout the entire Marsh. We attend each other's classes, participate in special programs and promotional events, dine in the restaurants and love to take advantage of our spa and shop offerings. We need to walk the walk to be who we are.

2. Scheduling of classes and instructors - We schedule classes a little differently at the Marsh. Our weekly class schedule stays the same with

owners out there who do not employ a Programming Director, please explain why having such a key person on board will improve their club operationally and financially.

CH - A Programming Director can help improve a club's performance operationally and functionally if she has the following two or three characteristics or skills:

• **Business acumen** and analytical abilities - I think of myself as our programming staff's "business coach". In an industry filled with creative, caring individuals who give 110% to their clients and programs, it may be easy to lose sight of the fundamentals of business, which is profitability. Sometimes, the extra 10% results into a loss. Making sure that you capture all 110% of the program's activities will ensure profitability (Again,

3 seasonal changes during the calendar year. The difference is that our instructors float between different class formats each week. Taking into account each instructor's skill set and availability while continuing to provide a diverse schedule could be viewed as a difficult task. However, the variety of formats and instructors is highly valued by our membership, keeping them motivated and inspired. The variety each of the instructors brings to the class keeps the formats and experiences fresh for our members.

The scheduling technique also diversifies the studio team; keeping staff challenged by learning and teaching multiple class formats while avoiding instructor burnout (imagine teaching the same class, same time, same day, day after day). It allows for a strong team to develop as they work together to create a non-competitive atmosphere. Group Exercise is a team sport when it comes to staffing at the Marsh.

3. Creating a balanced schedule of class offerings for our diverse population - I work hard with my instructors to keep the schedule balanced in offering various types of classes and difficulty levels. Our entry level classes can be more inviting to the new member, the de-conditioned or someone with chronic conditions. These individuals enjoy attending a Gentle Yoga Class, Ai Chi in the water or Gentle Tai Chi. Our moderate classes such as Flo Motion, Nia and Cardio Balance provide a pace that can be varied for our intermediate members

back to "love is in the details").

• **Creativity** - especially at The Marsh, where innovation is a fundamental tenet of programming, is important to the success of the organization. Open to members and non-members alike, we develop programs that have a broad interest within the community. As we all know, the profitability comes in filling each program to their capacity.

C.I. - Colleen, please summarize your feeling about how Ruth Stricker has influenced you over the 17 years you've been with The Marsh and how you feel about your work because of her influence.

CH - I came to The Marsh in 1991 as a marketing intern, and here I am today, the Programming Director. Ruth, more than anything, is an inspiration for me... she inspires

and guests. Our more advanced offerings, such as Cardio Bounce, Step or Body Pump, allow an intermediate/advanced participant to obtain an optimal and safe workout. Even with our various levels, it is a priority to have **all** class participants feel welcome to attend any class they wish... meaning even our advanced classes offer varied levels of intensity that allow us to connect with member's diverse fitness abilities.

C.I. - How do you go about choosing the classes The Marsh provides, and how do you assure that your instructors are providing safe, enjoyable and productive studio classes?

LA - This is a wonderful part of our industry. We keep creating and changing to meet the demands of our members and guests. I am grateful to be in a setting like The Marsh that continuously provides great educational opportunities and the ability to attend major industry conferences, such as ISPA, IHRSA, IDEA and Inner IDEA. Being able to experience cutting edge programming is the beginning. The next step is introducing the new programming to the Marsh while keeping our Marsh mission and a balanced schedule in mind. A couple of our newest offerings have been Laughter Yoga (experienced at Inner IDEA 2007), Nia and Drums Alive, all of which are classes experienced at conferences and adapted to the Marsh.

Other specialty classes and programs often come about through our staff's experiences and background. We sometimes

me to keep learning, to keep moving and to continue to be curious about everything (she is a voracious, well-rounded reader). I've been given the opportunity to learn a great deal from Ruth Stricker, all of which help me to be a better Program Director.

Ruth is an extraordinary visionary who opened The Marsh in 1985, blending Eastern and Western philosophies and modalities to create a community resource where anyone could come to find balance and fitness. I was exposed to all kinds of new programs and services: acupuncture, Alexander Technique, Pilates and meditation, to name a few.

I learned about the importance of building relationships with members and staff... marketing and good design principles... Ruth challenged

fuse classes together, allowing us to create new and unique offerings. Guided by stats, instructor feedback and conversations with or between members, I am able to direct and guide our instructors in providing class formats that our members are seeking.

Staff is included in educational opportunities at The Marsh, as well as having access to music, training DVDs and outside workshops to keep them updated with industry standards and guidelines. Our staff is on board when it comes to bringing a sense of community into the studio and outside the studio as well. We achieve this through taking the time to communicate with our members before and after classes... really getting to know our members, and they, in turn, begin to know us. We stay connected to each other through name tag weeks and our retention programs which offer the opportunity to socialize and motivate together. We work to weave a connection among our members and staff to build upon a sense of belonging and at-home comfort.

C.I. - Liz, please summarize your feelings about how Ruth Stricker has influenced you over the 10+ years you've been with The Marsh and how you feel about your work because of her influence.

LA - It is an honor and a privilege to be guided by Ruth and her mission at The Marsh. Being a part of The Marsh provides an outstanding opportunity to grow and learn and allows me to guide and share great life experiences with my staff, members and



Colleen Hagerman

me to be a better writer and to think differently... the lessons I've learned from Ruth go on and on... even reminding me recently that she opened The Marsh when she was 50 years old.



Liz Anema

guests.

I have learned to pay close attention to detail with Ruth's guidance, whether it's listening to a Marsh member, preparing for a class or motivating the studio staff. Ruth nurtures a sense of belonging to the Marsh --one family. Ruth has taught me to read much and share. We have read books such as *Good to Great*, by Jim Collins and Franklin Covey's book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, as well as taking time to question who we are and how we can keep striving for purpose and to meet our mission. Ruth's vision is a not a diffused light, but a sharp beacon that really guides me to be the best I can be. She instills a passion of wellness for all. I tend to view my position as a Director of the Marsh... not just the studio. The Marsh has been created as a special place of wellness through integration... it is the whole package that creates a sense of balance and provides members and guests a place to live the best, healthiest and most fulfilled lives they can.

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Driving Growth and Profit

By: Will Phillips

Sales Are Spotty

Sales have been spotty the first half of 2008, as reported by over 100 clubs who participate in REX Roundtables. Some clubs are up in net membership, many are flat and lots are down. Interestingly, many of the flat and down clubs are showing increases in profits. This improved profitability is due largely to two factors, aggressively pursued over the last three to five years. First, regular attention to reducing costs without cutting service and value. In over 80 clubs involved in this project over the last three years, the average annual savings per club is \$100,000. Over three years, this amounts to \$300,000 more profit per year.

The Power of Cost Savings

When you think about how many sales it takes to generate \$300,000, it puts costs savings into perspective. Let's assume you charge a member about \$50 a month, yielding \$600 a year (To keep it simple I have not taken out the cost of sales). Thus, \$300,000 to your bottom line can be generated by selling 500 memberships or reducing costs \$300,000. Your choice.

The coolest thing about reducing costs (without reducing service and value to members) is that the costs you save this year will be saved every year going

forward. There is no attrition of cost savings as there is with new members. Of course, you can let costs creep back into your budget, but you, as the owner, and your managers are 100% in control of COST CREEP.

The Power of Non-Dues Revenue

The second big contributor to profitability is NON-DUES REVENUE. Every industry learns that focusing on the best customers is more profitable than always focusing on the next new customer. The research by Fred Reicheld on customer loyalty shows that such a focus can increase profits on average by NINE times, and this was true across a dozen different industries (See Reicheld's books on loyalty and his Harvard Business Review articles for more info). The best REX Roundtable clubs are generating 50% of their revenue from non-dues sales. That is a reasonable target for you to aim at.

There is no question that a larger percentage of the dollars from a new member sale drops to the bottom line than does from selling personal training. But, if your sales are below double digit growth year-after-year, it is time to WAKE UP to non-dues revenue.

Here Is an Iron Clad [To Date] Rule of Club Growth

New clubs will have a period of rapid growth in their

first two years and then begin to plateau. If you capitalize on this *newness* factor, you can orchestrate pre-opening sales that will produce 1,000 to 2,000 members before you even open. After three years, clubs do not produce double-digit, new member increases unless:

1. You refurbish and have a grand re-opening.
2. You have a disciplined, driven and aggressive sales manager leading a sales force of 3-5 per club.

I have rarely seen a single club with such a strong sales process. Usually, such sales processes show up in a chain which can afford a full time professional Sales Manager.

Non-Dues Revenue Producers

You have many choices for generating non-dues revenue. The best will be the ones your members want and will pay for. Here is where a little market research can go a long way in helping you start on the right non-dues services and products.

The best choices are those which, by their very nature, lead to repeat business over and over. These include: tennis, group exercise, small group training and personal training. In some clubs, personal training accounts for 25% of their revenue. You will need coaching to get to that level. Small group training can cover everything from personal training to treadmill classes to abs of steel to several levels of Pilates to yoga and the list goes on. In every case, the class size is best at about six to seven participants for close instructor contact and keeping the fees low enough to be attractive. Finally, I believe too few clubs charge for group exercise. One club had an over-crowded spinning class and started taking \$5 for class reservations. Now, every spinning class is \$5.

Next, for non-dues revenue is merchandise sales, if you merchandise well and promote it. And finally, some sort of juice/smoothie bar/cafe. It seems the most profitable are either a franchise or renting space to an outside provider. Choose one or two NDR sources and explore their feasibility with your members. Then get going.

When To Stick With Dues Only

If you have a low-price and low-cost club, do not mess up your business model with non-dues revenue. A low-cost model means you have zero to one staff person on site giving you extremely low labor costs. This would be the Planet Fitness model. Normally, labor is the largest single item in the club budget. In this case, you have a service model. Of course, many clubs have high labor costs and do not deliver much service. That is a very dangerous position to be in since customers don't feel you have a high enough service to warrant your monthly dues.

The Power of Promotion

The sales challenge for smaller clubs is to build the discipline of daily sales management and coaching. Unless the owner is so inclined, it seems such systems rarely stick for long. Then, sales become reactive with sales people generating very few leads. In my REX Roundtable experience, with clubs of all sizes and types in several countries, it seems that a good sales person in a good sales system will produce 40 sales a month. Exceptional sales people will do twice that on a regular basis and much of it by referral.

But, the sales sword has two sharp sides. One is *reactive sales* where the results are modest at best; the other is *proactive sales* with good results and high turnover of sales people. High turnover where you are replacing sales people all the time has its own costs.

So, when sales tend to be successful, they are aggressive. This nurtures the public view of club sales people being similar to cell phone and used car sales people. Aggressive sales are very likely to add members who really were not ready to be members, so they drop out sooner.

In case this sounds discouraging, it is. This means, it's time to switch gears and try another approach. This approach is based on the fact that most sales people are drastically underemployed with two to three appointments a day vs. the six to seven they could handle. The only way to move to that level is



Will Phillips

to improve your lead channels, and that is the responsibility of the owner.

Managing Lead Channels

Here are some guidelines on how to manage the many lead channels available to your club so that they produce a waterfall of sales.

1. Spend more to get leads. Suppose I could give you 100 new members a month forever. What would you pay me per member? Remember, each new member will deliver \$600 in fees each year.

2. Pay higher commissions to get better sales people who stay longer. Some positions in your club can drive performance much, much more than others.

For example, if you double the performance of accounting, how much does its improvement impact the club's overall financial performance?

Now, double the performance of sales. Does that impact overall club's financial performance? Yes, you betcha! Several other industries have identified such critical positions and have experimented with methods of differentially treating those positions and produced dramatic improvements. This is called *STRATEGIC DIFFERENTIATION*.

Here is what they did:

A. Manage the recruiting pipeline to get much higher quality people.

B. Give them much better ongoing training.

C. Give them much better rewards.

In one club that did this, inadvertently, their lowest (See Will Phillips Page 28)

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Re-package, Re-brand and Re-launch? Or Do We Need To Dig Deeper?

By: Ed Tock

Quality is the number one reason people will support your brand and be loyal. In our industry, it is the quality of the relationship that the member has with the club and its staff that will affect their loyalty.

Leading consumer-products companies are investing to revitalize their products and their brand packaging sooner than ever, and with more frequency.

If you want to hold the leadership position in your market, you must invest in and strategically differentiate yourself. It is not enough to *appear* to be different, you *must BE different*. Those who don't understand the fundamentals of your brand would have you believe that image is everything. When, in reality, image is only skin deep. Remember what Tom Peters famously said: "Perception

is reality."

The overwhelming number of possibilities to get healthy through ideas and products on the internet, along with the 52,000+ available fitness facilities (commercial, residential, etc.), complicates and exhausts the buying decision of joining one of our clubs. Add to that the stressed out lifestyles we lead. We wind up feeling very overloaded and confused.

To compete strategically, your club or corporate brand image must be powerful, its culture engaging and its vision determined. In short, for your company to succeed to its full potential, your brand must be absolutely focused.

Detecting that sales are beginning to be flat, or even slump, is generally symptomatic of a brand disconnect. Will rebranding and repackaging fix the problem? Will launching

a new advertising campaign? Conversely, will cutting some of the advertising spending help with this challenge?

Or, will these exercises just put a bandage on a deeper sore that's beginning to fester? If that is the case, then rebranding, repackaging, and new ad campaigns will only result in fruitless exercises and wasted investments.

It's far less painful to assess lagging sales in a superficial manner than it is to dig deeper into club practices, customer-service issues, the actual product mix being offered, not to mention, how customers are experiencing the brand and whether that brand is delivering on its promises.

When things are down, CEOs look to consultants and marketers to re-think, re-brand or re-package whatever it is they are selling. I believe the challenge is to get clubs to reconnect with the

member and to turn their attention inward. Clubs that really want to dig for the truth ought to seek answers to these questions:

●What is our brand in the eyes of the consumer?

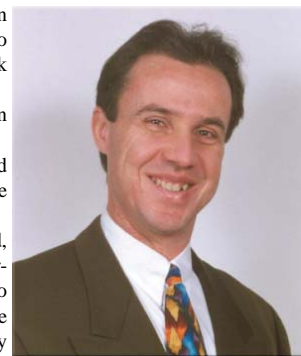
●Where does our brand miss the mark in the eyes of the consumer?

●Have we innovated, altered, or "improved" our services and facilities to respond to competitors or new ideas in the marketplace—to the point that they aren't what the consumer has come to expect and demand from us?

●Have we listened to the consumer and responded to their needs?

●Has our customer service interaction been impeccable or has it fallen below consumer expectations for some time now? If the latter, where are the problems and what do we need to do to fix them?

●Do our services deliver



Ed Tock

on our core brand promise?

●What kinds of experiences are members having with our club & our services?

●Are they positive overall, are they mixed and are aspects of these experiences negative?

Maybe, just maybe, it's time to get back to basics. In the scramble to innovate faster

(See Ed Tock Page 28)

Eddie Tock

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...Will Phillips

continued from page 24

performer became their highest performer out of 5 clubs in 6 months. This is a specific, out of the box, approach. Other clubs have not done it. If you did, you would be a leader! Significantly differentiated.

3. Forget home run promotions. Base hits win games.

4. Instead of thinking of who is ready to sign up now, start thinking of how to connect and engage who is getting ready to join, but is not ready to sign now. Plan on multiple contacts via multiple mediums to build traffic.

5. The goal is for each sales person to produce 40% of their leads, i.e. appointments.

The club produces the other 60% through inquiries and walk-ins. Use a guest register with non-removable, numbered pages. Ask each prospect to indicate if they have an appointment. You can easily see how much individual production is being done by sales staff. When appointments are low, you will know the sales staff is not proactive.

6. Design at least half a

dozen promotional channels that individual sales people can use such as: point of sale referrals, calling former members, referrals from members, lead boxes, birthday cards referrals, etc.

7. Now, select ten promotional programs for the club to support. Assign a champion to each program. This person is responsible for driving the program and tracking its results. You should create a file folder for each promotional program and ALWAYS record on the folder: (1) What you did. (2) What you got in terms of sales. And, (3) What it cost per sale. Never throw these out. They become your promotional database for building better promotions.

Next month, I will describe over 100 lead sources. Between now and then, get the ideas in this article underway.

(Will Phillips is a veteran and excellent facilitator/moderator for club owner/operators and the Founder of REX Executive Roundtables. See the REX ad on this page. Will may be reached at: Will@REXonline.org)

...Ed Tock

continued from page 26

and faster, to jump on the latest social-marketing craze, to launch a new advertising campaign, and finally, to re-brand, re-vitalize and re-package sooner and sooner, maybe we're all missing the point.

Getting feedback from the consumer is a vital aspect of conducting an internal audit. Developing a clear point of differentiation is also critical. If done thoroughly, spending time, capital, and human resources on these exercises is never fruitless or a waste of money. It's the best bang for your marketing buck.

From the perspective of your brand, your Point of Differentiation is the catalyst that your club or company needs to reduce competition and rejuvenate your sales staff. It is important to determine how to develop your Point Of Differentiation and explore examples of how it can be rolled out into your marketplace.

It is a good idea to form a team of key managers, front line staff, members and even other business owners to embark on a discovery of the brand from

their unique perspectives. Each one brings a different dynamic to the discovery. The solution to differentiation is typically right in front of you. But, we are so used to viewing our clubs from one perspective; it is often very easy to ignore key processes or developments that truly make us different than our competitors. Our goal is to draw out these experiences and determine as a team its potential as a profit generating advantage.

(Ed Tock is a top speaker for the Club Industry Shows, IHRSA Conventions and has been a faculty member for IHRSA's Institute for Professional Club Management. Ed is a veteran industry leader as a marketing and sales training

consultant, specializes in on-site seminars and 90-day performance and profitability programs by delivering the highest quality of staff training, proven systems and innovative marketing programs. He has worked with over 800 clubs worldwide including 142 PRE SALES since 1983. Over the past 5 years, Ed's clients have averaged a 10 to 23 % increase in sales! Ed has recently sponsored and authored the latest IHRSA Video on Sales. Ed was a partner in Sales Makers for 21 years. During that period Sales Makers was IHRSA's Associate Member of the Year and holds a place on IHRSA's Associate Member Wall of Fame! Ed can be reached at eddie@eddietock.com or at 845-736-0307)



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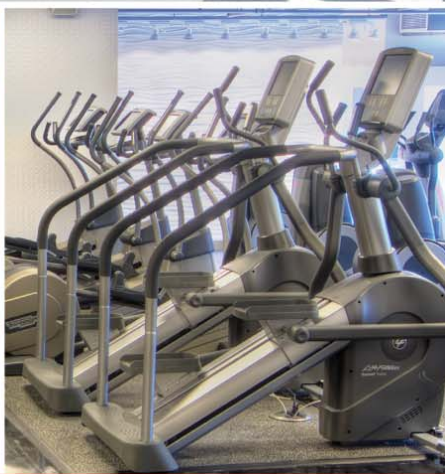
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The Clubs for the Cure/ Augie's Quest Team Completes Its First Six Months With Momentum and an Exciting Plan For The Future



The Clubs for the Cure/Augie's Quest Team Initiative launched January 1, 2008 has completed its first six months and will be launching the next phase of "The Power of One" Industry Effort on August 1st.

The Clubs for the Cure/Augie's Quest Team has been very active over the past six months and has developed outstanding relationships with many in the Health and Fitness Industry which has contributed to the solid platform that has been built for the upcoming plan of action for our Team.

In the first six months of the program, The Clubs for the Cure/Augie's Quest Team was successful in gaining the support of hundreds of Club Owners-single operations to the major Health and Fitness chains! In addition, we were very fortunate to also be provided excellent coverage by our industry publications with articles by The Club Insider, CBI International, Club Industry-Fitness Pro, Athletic Business and Fitness magazines. The Clubs for the Cure/Augie's Quest Team also participated with The Muscular Dystrophy Association at The IHRSA Trade Show, Club Industry Expo as well as recently at The IDEA International Conference which is shown in the picture. There are additional plans to also be involved at The Athletic Business Conference in December.

"Our goal for the first six months," states Pat Laus-founder of Clubs for the Cure and Owner of The Atlantic Club, "was to raise awareness for Augie's Quest and ALS by informing, inspiring and enrolling Health and Fitness Clubs across The United States to become part of our team. It was also important for members in our industry to be aware that 100% of all the monies raised from their events are provided to TDI Research Laboratories located in Cambridge, Massachusetts whose mission is to identify the cause and find the cure for ALS. Lastly, it would be essential for The Clubs for the Cure/Augie's Quest Team to establish promotional partnerships within the industry that would further expand our message focused on "One Club Owner Making a Difference".

Laus continues, "these objectives were achieved with the strong support of the Press, our visibility at the Trade Shows as well as the tireless work of all the members of The Clubs for the Cure/Augie's

Quest Team. This team, which was comprised of Atlantic Club managers and staff were involved in the solicitation and coaching calls to thousands in the industry. The results achieved in the first six months are testimony that we will be successful in achieving our goals for the first year of The Clubs for the Cure/Augie's Quest Campaign. To-date, we have raised nearly \$200,000 for ALS and have involved over 400 Clubs in conducting One Event on One Day for One Hour to Achieve One Man's Quest to find the cure for ALS.

The Clubs for the Cure/Augie's Quest Team received outstanding input from Clubs that were involved in the initial fundraising effort as well as others that are committed to run an event in the next phase of the program. Their ideas have been incorporated into the new plan that will be presented to all Clubs on August 1st.

The Clubs for the Cure/ Augie's Quest Team has expanded its reach and will be involving over the next six months the entire industry which includes for-profit and not-for-profit Health and Fitness Clubs, Colleges and Universities as well as Personal Training and Group Exercise Studios that have the potential of involving their members in a special simple fun-raising initiative that will link our entire industry working as ONE to find the Cure for ALS.

There were many great stories and comments expressed by Club Owners and Group Exercise Directors and Staff regarding the event they conducted at their Clubs:

- 1) Members and Staff want to help!
- 2) Members appreciated the Club's involvement and enjoyed the event
- 3) The Staff rallied together in creating an event that showcased the individual club's creativity
- 4) "The Power of One" was a clear message that every member as well as dollar raised will be making a difference in identifying the causes and finding the cure for ALS.

You will be able to read their comments by visiting our website www.clubsfortheCure.com. In addition, we will be acknowledging on our website all the clubs that were involved in our first six months as well as all the Clubs that are committed to the next Phase of The Augie's Quest efforts.



Pat Laus and The Clubs for the Cure Team at
The International IDEA Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada, July 2008.

"Our Team realizes how busy Club Owners and managers are in today's environment," states Kevin McHugh, C.O.O of The Atlantic Club, "therefore it is also important to provide Club Owners with the proper lead time to allow for this event to be placed on the schedule and planned properly to bring not only the highest possible amount of monies raised for ALS but also a great Connectivity/Relationship building event for the staff and members. Lastly, The Clubs for the Cure/Augie's Quest Events have been designed to harness the power of your members which does not require a Club Owner to make a financial donation-simply One Event that will increase awareness for ALS and raise the funds that support the research needed for finding the cure."

"I would like to thank all the Club Owners as well as all the other individuals within the industry who worked with our team in causing the initial successes accomplished in our first six months. Lynne and Augie have expressed to me their heartfelt appreciation for all that the industry is doing to rally together as One to finding the cure for ALS. I would also like to thank Norm Cates for his continuous coverage as well as our other industry publications in keeping this effort present to members in our industry."

The Clubs for the Cure/Augie's Quest Team has identified the month of February to be Augie's Month. Listed below are the proposed options for the Clubs involved with The Clubs for the Cure/Augie's Quest efforts:

- 1) All Clubs and Studios will be asked to participate in a simple and powerful united effort that will provide opportunities for

national and more importantly local press coverage for this upcoming phase for Clubs for the Cure/Augie's Quest

2) The Clubs for The Cure/Augie's Quest Nationwide One Hour Indoor Cycling Event is being targeted for Saturday 2/7 and our goal is to have 50,000 members "Riding for Augie" on this day to find the cure for ALS. Be part of the team!

3) The Clubs for the Cure/Augie's Quest Nationwide "One Step Closer for Augie's Cure" is targeted for Saturday 2/14. Yes, Valentine's Day. This offers Clubs and Studios without indoor cycling the opportunity to create an event to be part of our team. It also allows members and staff that are not involved in indoor cycling to participate with this effort. The goal is 50,000 members committed to being "One Step Closer for The Cure."

4) There have been requests for The Clubs for the Cure/ Augie's Quest Team to provide materials for Trainers and Instructors to donate their income from sessions or classes conducted and send it in to help Augie find the cure. Therefore, we have established the week of February 7th - February 14th as "Trainers for The Cure Week" and will be providing materials that Clubs can download on-line and use in their clubs.

5) Lastly several Clubs have created "The Power of Enrollment" marketing programs for Clubs for the Cure/Augie's Quest that have been successful in raising large donations for Clubs for the Cure/Augie's Quest efforts as well as building their membership base. We will have materials and ads developed for your use that will provide new

members the opportunity to join your club with a donation of your enrollment fee or percentage of the fee being provided to Augie's Quest.

The Clubs for the Cure/Augie's Quest Team understands that this schedule may not work for all Clubs and there are no limits when you conduct your event for The Clubs for the Cure/Augie's Quest Team. If you are not able to schedule your event on the proposed dates, our request is that it be conducted anytime from August 1, 2008- February 28, 2009. "Our goal," states Jessica Hayes, Logistics Coordinator for Clubs for the Cure/Augie's Quest "will be to have all of the promotional materials and program outlines available for your use in early August. Myself and the entire Clubs for the Cure/Augie's Quest Team are here to help in any and every way possible. We will customize your flyers and posters if necessary and forward them to your Club. All you need to do is let us know your needs and we will make it happen for you. It is our way of thanking you for joining us in taking a stand for finding the cure for ALS."

"The mission for The Clubs for the Cure/Augie's Quest Program," states Pat Laus "is to provide the entire industry the opportunity to work together as ONE, showcase the power of our staff and members in working together at each Club/Studio/College or Park across the United States in building a movement that will not stop until we find the cause and cure for ALS. It is still all about "The Power of One Industry, Conducting One Event, on One Day for One Hour" that will not only benefit Augie's Quest but also create opportunities for others to make a difference."

***We need your
Help! Join The
Clubs for the Cure
Team Today and
be part of this
exciting effort.***

If you would like to learn more about how you can join The Clubs for the Cure/Augie's Quest Team, please contact:

Jessica Hayes at
Jessicah@theatlanticclub.com
or call Jessica at
732-219-5333.



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Sustaining Independent Value

Part 3 in a Series of 3 on Building Value In Independent Clubs

By: Jeffrey Keller, M.S., M.B.A.

Sustaining something can often be much more difficult than actually getting there. Just ask any Olympic Gold Medalist. Once you're at the top, staying there is really tough. But, when it comes to sustaining value, an independent health club really shouldn't have that tough of a time. That is, providing, they (1) pay attention to their members and (2) they have mechanisms in place to monitor the variables that determine value.

Last month, Mr. Norm Cates presented his "100 Year Perspective" of the health club industry. His article is worth

noting at this point because it is "trust" that comes from "value" and ultimately creates "loyalty". His poignant analysis of the state of our industry is incredibly pertinent to independent clubs wishing to survive the next 10 years. "Why is that?" you may ask. Well, the great Zig Ziglar said it best in his book *Selling 101*.

Notice the words in Mr. Ziglar's passage below and how incredibly similar they are to those in Mr. Cates' article in *CLUB INSIDER* last month and the components of "value" presented in Part 2 - Creating Independent Value. It is no coincidence that the International Health, Racquet, and Sportsclub Association

(IHRSA) reported recently that in 2007 our industry had a drop in memberships. In all fairness, IHRSA did state that this drop was "non-significant", but this is a sign of things to come. "Non-significant" can become significant in a heartbeat, and everyone should keep that in the forefront of their minds. But, if a club puts "value" first, "trust" will follow and so will member "loyalty".

Sustaining Results

As was discussed in Part 2, "results" are different for each and every customer who comes in the door. Though the majority of new prospects are looking to lose weight, this does not describe the entire buying public. In order to sustain "results" for your members, you must have an established follow-up mechanism that does more than just ask the member if they are enjoying his or her membership.

There are a variety of creative ways to accomplish this, but the simplest way is to implement a standard of

measurement from the healthcare system called *outcomes*. Outcomes are measurements used to show what happened during the course of treatment for a patient. As a health club, how can outcomes be used to demonstrate "results" to a member and help the club's management determine whether it is delivering its Unique Value Proposition (UVP)? Believe it or not, a club probably has all the assets necessary to accomplish this with stunning accuracy and doesn't even know it.

So many clubs have gone through the effort of purchasing a fitness assessment tool for their personal training departments to use to sell packages. But, by charging for it, clubs create a barrier for themselves to demonstrate that a member is getting the "value" wanted when he or she joined. This happens because members rehearse in their minds, "I'm fat. I know I'm fat. Why would I want to pay to have someone tell me I'm fat?"

However, by simply taking this tool and customizing it to evaluate the new member's baseline "results" expectations and not charging for it, a club now has a means by which to demonstrate to a member that "results" are being achieved. This is your "outcome".

Personal trainers do this everyday, from a health-related viewpoint, but how many clubs are using it to demonstrate that a "customer" is getting "value"? Free follow-ups to the baseline fitness assessment are very important to demonstrating "value" that almost no valid argument can be made against providing free follow-ups to members at 6-month intervals.

Better yet, given the drop-out rate for new exercisers being at its maximum in the first three months of starting, creating a results-focused member retention process that emphasizes "results" achievement in the first three months could turn a club that is



Jeffrey Keller, M.S., M.B.A.

hemorrhaging memberships into a successful, growing facility.

Sustaining Process Quality

Here again is an opportunity for creating and sustaining enormous "value" through documentation. However, in this case, the documentation isn't for the member, but rather for the club to constantly assess itself.

Developing an individualized assessment tool to measure a club's focus on "process quality" can be difficult, but surely not impossible. First of all, without an assessment of a member's "results" expectations as described above, a club will have a very difficult time determining whether it is doing well. Why is that? Well, let's review again the components of "process quality":

- **Dependability** - Did you deliver the expected result?
- **Responsiveness** - Was the result delivered in a timely manner?
- **Authority** - Does the club deliver the result with credibility and believability?
- **Empathy** - Does the club listen to the customer's point of view to deliver the result?
- **Tangible evidence** - Does the club provide evidence that the result was delivered?

(See Jeffrey Keller Page 34)

"The one thing that customers have always rated highest in the sales world is trust, which is a direct reflection on the integrity of the individual. The primary reason people will choose not to buy from you is lack of trust. When you make a serious promise to the prospect or a "casual comment" involving a promise, the prospect takes both as gospel. This is especially true if there is any difficulty during the sales process and even after the sale. If the person has any trouble in any phase of the relationship or use of the product, there is a distinct possibility that any "lack of follow-through" will be blown completely out of proportion. Even the tiniest matters become deal shattering."

-Zig Ziglar - *Selling 101*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003.

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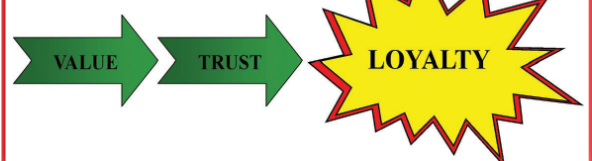


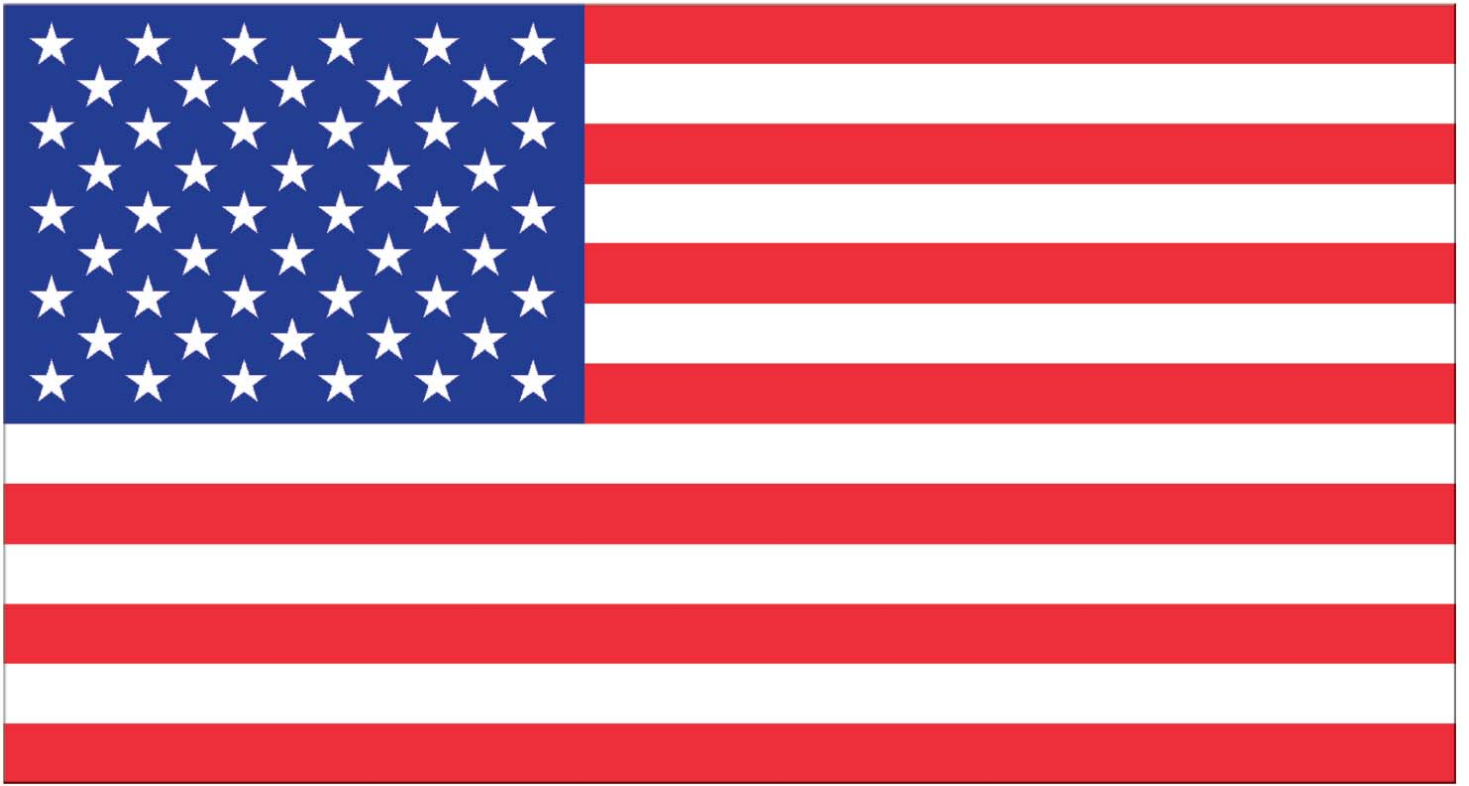
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Marketing Trends Positive at Susan K. Bailey Advertising

July 15th, 2008 - Susan K. Bailey Advertising, marketing specialist to the fitness club industry is pleased to welcome MaryBeth Bradley as a new member of its expanding marketing team.

With over 23 years of experience in the club industry, Bradley is a former general manager of several clubs ranging from smaller fitness-only operations to

large multi-sport facilities in the Colorado, California and Boston areas. Among her many accomplishments in the club business, Bradley has served on the board of the California Clubs of Distinction and Western Association of Clubs and is a five-time presenter at IHRSA conventions and at various regional IHRSA conferences.

As an ACE-certified

personal trainer and operator of a weight management coaching business for youth and adults in the Colorado-area, where she currently resides, Bradley is excited to make the move to SKB: "I continue to have a tremendous amount of passion and enthusiasm for this wonderful industry and can't think of a better career than assisting clubs with their marketing. I'm thrilled to

be working with the professionals at Susan K. Bailey".

Since 1984, Susan K. Bailey Advertising has worked with hundreds of health clubs in North America, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and beyond to give total marketing and advertising support to any type of fitness business. General Manager, Chris Russo comments: "MaryBeth's

professional expertise, wealth of experience and a shared passion for the club industry present an exciting opportunity that will greatly contribute to the growth of Susan K. Bailey and the marketing success of its clients".

For more information call **888-349-4594**.

International Fitness Acquires Edmonton-based Fitness Club Chain Club Fit

Greenwich, CT - July 10, 2008 - International Fitness Holdings, Inc. ("World Health Club"), a leading fitness club operator in Alberta and a portfolio company of North Castle Partners, announced today that it has acquired the assets of Club Fit, Inc. an operator of 5 fitness clubs in the city of Edmonton. The terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

North Castle Partners acquired the assets of World Health Club in March 2008. Doug Lehrman, Managing Director

at North Castle, stated, "We are excited about the opportunity to acquire a strong operator like Club Fit. The acquisition represents an important step in achieving our long-term strategic vision of establishing International Fitness Holdings as the leading fitness club operator in Western Canada."

As a result of the transaction, International Fitness Holdings, Inc. currently operates 19 fitness clubs under the World Health Club and Club Fit brand names across the province's

two largest cities, Calgary and Edmonton, with 9 clubs and 10 clubs located in each city, respectively. The Company provides health clubs services to approximately 65,000 members offering fitness memberships and other ancillary services including personal training and group fitness classes. The member value proposition is based on three key competitive drivers: value, convenience and loyalty.

"The combination of these two market leaders will significantly strengthen our

presence in the Alberta market. We look forward to implementing best practices from both World Health Clubs and Club Fit throughout our organization and improving upon our business model as we continue to expand into the marketplace," said Rob Leach, CEO of International Fitness Holdings, Inc.

David Hardy, President of Club Fit has maintained a significant portion of his investment in International Fitness Holdings, Inc. and will serve as a consultant to the

Company and assume a position on its Board of Directors. Blake MacDonald, COO of Club Fit, will continue with his responsibilities running the Club Fit operation in Edmonton.

This is North Castle's fifth investment in the past year. In addition to the World Health Club and Club Fit investments, North Castle has acquired a controlling interest in Cascade Helmet Holdings, Inc. and Performance, Inc.

...Jeffrey Keller

continued from page 32

Without a baseline, how is a club going to assess any of these? But, even more difficult, is the focus and dedication of upper management to constantly assess whether the club is delivering high "value" process quality. This is why clubs can fail when they think they're doing everything right. Never miss an opportunity to assess performance. These are words to live by.

Sustaining Price

Sustaining a high "value" pricing strategy is a simple, but constant, process. Pricing to provide "value" is a cost-related action that involves first understanding what your Unique Value Proposition costs you and second, leveraging your resources to lower your cost and increase your margins. The balancing act comes in understanding the relationship between how low you drive your costs versus the quality of the product you deliver. For example, you can demand that your Personal Trainers do fitness assessment hours at minimum wage in exchange for the privilege of being able to train in your high "value" club, but how many of them are actually

going to put 100% effort into those fitness assessments? The likely result is that those fitness assessments that you were using to demonstrate "results" to your members now hurt the "process quality" variable. So, you have to be realistic about the relationship between your costs and pricing. Be careful how low you push your costs.

Likewise, you have to be aware of competitors encroaching on your Unique Value Proposition. Although they may not be delivering the same "results" or "process quality" you are, they may be offering their memberships cheap enough that customers are enticed to join. This then becomes a decision for the club to either (1) lower prices, or (2) increase the "customer benefit". Both will increase "value", but in different ways. Being a regular secret shopper and reviewing competitor advertisements will keep you on top of what the club down the street is doing. You can then step up the "process quality" to provide even more "value", rather than go straight to lowering prices. It's a constant process, but it's simple.

Sustaining Access Costs

"Access Costs" is analogous to convenience. In actuality,

it describes how difficult it is to do business with your club, so the more difficult doing business becomes, the more "value" goes down. With this in mind, constant assessment of your location, parking lot, club equipment configuration, ease of joining process, selection of billing methods, communication with management and other convenience factors, as they relate to your members' preferences, will be essential. If certain factors fall out of good grace with your target customer, one of the other "value" variables will need to be adjusted to compensate, unless that "access cost" can be adjusted directly, which might not always be possible. Benchmarking some of your factors of "access cost" against that of your competition will help understand whether adjustment at your club is necessary to extend your market share or retain your current membership.

Sustaining Value

Creating and sustaining "value" is a systematic process. Much the same way a personal trainer assesses and progresses with a client, a club's management has to do the same using financial indicators and member surveys to assess the club and decide how

to progress it. Lack of attention to any of the "value" variables is a sure fire way to lose to the competition. So, assess, modify, reassess, and compete. It's the only way to provide "value".

(Jeffrey Keller is part of a new breed of young visionaries in the health and fitness industry. In January 2007, he founded to the Independent Health Club Networking Association (IHCNA) in an effort to bring independent health club owners and managers

together to share their successes and push the industry to the next level in a collaborative way using the web. He currently manages a rapidly growing 60,000 square-foot club east of Houston, Texas in addition to being President of the IHCNA. He regularly writes for local magazines and newspapers, as well as health and fitness industry publications, but mostly he writes to freely share What Works for him so others will share What Works for them. He may be reached jkeller@montbelvieu.net)



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Make Your Club the Centerpiece of the Community

By: Bonnie Patrick Mattalian

During any economic downturn, or when there are pricing wars going on, the clubs that will thrive are those that have become a mainstay in the community. They are the types of places that members say they couldn't LIVE without, no matter what else is going on in their lives.

Do your members say that about your club? If not, let's look at some ideas to help your club become more rooted in your community:

1. KNOW YOUR MEMBERS

- Identify who your current members are, their likes and dislikes. Identify those you would

also like to target. Then, every decision you make should be based around these customers.

With one club, we identified every segment of the member population, hypothesized characteristics and behaviors as well as the support they would need. The member experience and programs were then designed around each of those core groups and with many new targeted groups in mind.

2. PROVIDE HEALTH EDUCATION SERVICES -

Where do most people go now to learn more about health related topics? Physicians? No, they simply don't have the time and sometimes don't have the knowledge. Hospital community education programs?

Sometimes, but then, you have to go to a hospital, which may or may not be the best experience.

The place people go to look for health information now is the internet. There is a wealth of information on health topics. However, it's not all credible, and it can easily become information overload.

Here are some important steps for clubs when providing health education and informational services:

- Capture information from members and prospects on what topics are of interest to them. Update this annually. Also, capture information on likes, dislikes, personal goals and other details. Keep this carefully protected in your database and proactively communicate and build the relationship based on this information.

- Set up targeted programs for those members. Communicate with them electronically, via mail, by phone and in person about upcoming events and programs. A flyer taped on the locker room door just won't cut it anymore. Come up with a grid that details health conditions and goals and cross match those with each service in your facility. I can send you an example if you email me at info@clubsynergygroup.com.

- Identify members of your staff who can specialize in working with people with certain health conditions or fitness goals. For example, determine who on your staff is most adept at working with older exercisers who might have multiple health needs or determine who is best at golf conditioning for another segment of the population, etc. Highlight this, make them the champions and let them run with the programs.

- Integrate all health education workshops and programs into every membership. This should happen at the point of sale and during member communications every single month. If no one speaks with or communicates with a member, they will leave. It's a pretty simple formula. It's everyone's job to speak with their specific members every month. If you don't have a consultative approach via these communications for introducing programs and ancillary services, it won't be successful.

- Be sure the programs

are effective and well thought out. Members will be willing to pay more if they get more. In one of our clubs, we developed an effective high-intensity training group program led by an outside fitness specialist. Members were allowed to try the classes which were offered 8 times each week free for two weeks. After the first week, they were hooked. For an extra \$69 per month (on top of their regular membership dues), 10% of the members participated in this program, which is ongoing throughout the year.

3. BUILD COMMUNITY

RELATIONSHIPS - Get involved in every committee you can in your community. Take other business owners out to lunch and talk about their business and how things are going. Work together on solving issues.

Work with local physicians, hospitals, physical therapists and alternative therapy providers. Invite them to a health fair to benefit your members and the community. They will all show up and return the favor with additional invites for your club with their businesses or practices.

4. MANAGE THE MEMBER EXPERIENCE -

I've talked about this more than anything in all of my workshops. But, this is the most important aspect to building relationships with the members and keeping them engaged in the club.

Your member can't NOT have an experience. If it is deliberately managed every step of the way, with processes defined, barriers removed, a trained staff and rewards/accountability, the experience will be what you want it to be. It takes an awful lot of work to be consistent in strong member service delivery, but the ROI is a very high member retention rate with constant new membership referrals. Now that's a great value!

The members at Pat Laus' Atlantic Club in Manasquan, N.J. are downright evangelists for



Bonnie Patrick Mattalian

the club, and with good reason. The facility is impeccable, the programs are very well promoted and led by enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff. Pat has assembled an unbelievable team who she continues to lead with unique opportunities. Augie's Quest has helped Pat, her members and her team touch millions of people around the world while helping to raise funds for ALS research. Who wouldn't want to be a part of such a world class organization?

Find out your staff's strengths and build on them. Coach them. Meet them where they are and move them to where you need them to be. Let them be the inventors and innovators.

No matter what the price point of your facility, every single club is unique in its environment, its people and its programs. The question is, "How do you manage and deliver the experience?" That's how your club will differentiate itself and thrive despite anything happening in the economy or your target area.

(Bonnie Patrick Mattalian is President of the Club & Spa Synergy Group Consultants, a nationally recognized group of industry specialists helping to improve performance of fitness centers around the world. Call 732-236-2273, email info@clubsynergygroup.com or go to www.clubsynergygroup.com)

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Supersizing Your Membership Market Share

By: Andrea Sobotka and
Lehni Garza

Between the current state of the nation's physical health, and today's questionable economy, it is now more important than ever to find ways to reach the portion of your marketplace that falls beyond the typical "fitness membership prospect pool", according to IHRSA statistics. The keys to success are creativity, a social consciousness, strong leadership and, of course, perseverance.

The truth is, you have to create opportunities for you and your sales team to literally, "go get 'em", in addition to your regular marketing efforts. Look for and create opportunities to provide service and information in the community, followed by special invitations and incentives to visit your facility. Here are some effective ways to supersize your membership market share.

Leverage Your Staff

One of the first things



Andrea Sobotka

we recommend you do to reach outside your regular marketing campaign efforts is to engage ALL staff in every membership drive! Definitely include membership and marketing information at each and every staff meeting, a weekly management meeting is recommended for larger facilities. Be sure to train all staff on how to answer membership questions when "off the clock", and DO include some kind of incentive

program for successful referrals from the staff!

Conquer Staff Communications! Employ staff newsletters, memos, bulletins, both hardcopy and by regular e-mails, etc. Also, include a staff button on your website which leads to updated staff information. It is MUCH more effective to get your team together personally if you can, but always back it up with electronic communication.

A team that is treated well by owners and managers is definitely more willing to assist in marketing efforts and talk positively about the facility. It is also critical to provide your staff with ongoing training to enhance their skills so that they feel confident and proud of what they do at the club. In fact, your staff can be one of your most positive or negative influences in the community, depending on their relationship with managers, owners and co-workers. Strong leadership and providing a positive work environment will go a long way to make your staff WANT to encourage friends, family



Lehni Garza

and neighbors to visit the club.

The Old Standby: Corporate Sales

When it comes to the big plan to boost the bottom line, how many times have you heard "Corporate Sales!"? Truly, most fitness facilities see corporate sales as the gold at the end of the rainbow, the treasure that they can never quite get their hands on. It

seems like it is within reach, yet we can never quite reach it! Well, yes, there are several techniques and methods for corporate selling which work... and beware, several that don't.

To do well with corporate membership sales, you must realize one very important thing: you need to create opportunities to reach out to corporate employees with services and sell memberships **one at a time**. Once a corporation's decision maker agrees to the idea of a "corporate membership", don't rely on that person to sell memberships for you. It is **NOT** going to be their priority in any given day. But, it **IS** your priority every day! Your goal is to personally get in front of the employees. **YOU** are the expert.

Target corporations within a 10-minute driving radius from your facility and offer them free services. For example, offer to come in and do a free seminar on "core strength" or "strong backs" or possibly "healthy walking". When you arrive at the facility, (See *Market Share* Page 37)

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...Market Share

continued from page 36

be sure to:

- Provide seminar worksheets to hand out along with your current membership offering as well as a free guest pass.

- Make sure a Membership Sales Representative is on hand to make appointments for participants to come in and get their free fitness analysis (or whatever free service you choose), tour and visit!

- Provide a special gift to those participants signing up for an appointment.

- Let them know there is a special incentive for them to visit the facility, to pick up their New Member Starter Kit, which could be anything, but a great one includes a gym bag, water bottle, towel and a \$5 gift card to the facility. The bag should also include membership info.

The information should be professionally put together, thorough, to the point, and useful immediately. Offer decent, but not deep, discounts on facility dues (let's say 5% to 10% tops!), enrollment fee waivers and a gift (the gym bag mentioned above) if they become members on their first visit.

You need to be creative in order to get your foot in the door. Begin by talking with

your existing members. Most of your members will work or live within that 10-minute drive time to your facility. Find out where your members work and then ask whom you should contact as well as what types of topics in which they may be interested. Warm calls are *always* easier than cold calls. Be sure to join your local Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Lion's Club, Women's Business Groups, etc... and attend and network at organized meetings and events!

Don't overlook the smaller businesses. Since smaller businesses don't tend to have large employee meetings or places for you to come in and hold a fitness seminar, consider holding a free seminar at your facility. Invite all of the nearby businesses to attend at no charge. These work great over the lunch hour, before or after work. If you provide food, it works even better!

Whether you are targeting large OR small local businesses, be organized, familiarize yourself with the businesses, be courteous, and above all, be diligent. Physically go into the businesses and talk to people *in addition* to sending out notes, mailers and flyers. You truly need to be proactive when it comes to booking and filling "corporate wellness" seminars. Follow up!

Have patience! A successful corporate sale requires relationship building and hitting the right hot buttons. Continue to create reasons for area businesses to come in to your facility or let you into theirs.

Community Involvement

There are so many ways you can choose to get involved in your community. There are two goals:

1. To foster a good reputation for your facility as a community supporter.

2. To attract more interested traffic to your facility.

Volunteering, fundraising, mentoring, sponsoring and hosting special events are all ways to get involved in the community and reach and touch people who otherwise might not respond to your regular marketing efforts, much less voluntarily walk through your front doors. It is no secret that "what goes around, comes around", and in this case, we are focusing on the good in life. If you give freely, you will receive abundantly.

By tapping into your local churches, schools and business groups you will learn about opportunities for mentoring programs, sponsoring teams and high profile events, and you may even offer to host an

annual community event such as the Turkey Trot or Run For The Cure. Food banks, senior centers and other charitable non-profit organizations are always looking for volunteers. Choose a cause that interests you and has an opening for something you are good at and will fit into your time schedule.

Fundraising can come in many forms. No doubt, you are regularly approached to donate money to various causes or to donate memberships for raffle prizes. Consider turning your next open house event into a fundraising event that will draw in the whole community. Again, choose something that you "feel close to" and be sure it has a community branch or representative. One idea is to coordinate with your local Goodwill or Salvation Army and run an Open House where your offer is: "Bring in your old fitness equipment and we'll waive initiation on any membership!"

Be sure to include food, refreshments, entertainment of some sort, prizes and advertise both internally and in the community 5 to 7 days out from your event. Get all staff involved! Make it fun, but be sure staff are prepared and ready to tour and sell to visitors that are *not* members!

There are also other very organized ways to participate in

community fundraising activities that are not so much preparation for you that are produced, packaged and supported by third parties. Fitness Fundraisers™ has a program that is ideal for medium to large full-service fitness facilities. More information is available through our public website: www.fitnessclubsuccess.com.

Whether through your staff connections, corporate sales efforts or being very involved in your community, the point is to think beyond your regular target prospect who is already *thinking* about joining a facility and think about the person who has never belonged to a facility, or for some reason, will never visit your club for the purpose of "wanting information" all by himself. You need to find those people in other ways: through their interests, daily activities and passions. Be creative, think outside the box, involve your staff and members and have a plan that spans the entire year.

(Andrea Sobotka is Co-Owner and Business Development Manager for both Fitness Club Success and Fitness Fundraisers. Lezni Garza is Director of Education. Andrea and Lezni may be reached at 1-866-855-5484 or email: info@fitnessclubsuccess.com.)

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SYMMETRICAL FITNESS

By: Dr. Jack Scammahorn and
 Jim Scammahorn

Foreword: This is the third article of a three-part series produced by *Symmetrical Fitness, LLC*.

In our first article, **The Hidden Agenda**, we portrayed what all too often happens in commercial fitness centers: The guest or client is toured around a beautiful, well equipped fitness center. During the tour the sales associate establishes a positive relationship with the guest and at the same time, establishes why the guest is looking at joining this club. After the tour, all that remains is to establish the affordability of the club and to convince the client that this fitness center has everything that anyone could ever want to meet or exceed their fitness goals.

Our second article, **A True Story**, illustrates what happens when a member is exposed to factual information about what their physical proportions could look like and how that information leads to prescribing a fitness program that truly helped them to realize their long sought after goal - to look better.

The Construction of the Symmetrical Fitness Program: For almost two decades, the Symmetrical Fitness project lay dormant. One day, while visiting with my brother, I asked him if he would be interested in



Dr. Jack Scammahorn

helping me resurrect this project. His degree is concentrated in physics, science, and math, and his vocational knowledge and experience is in computer programming. With his expertise in computer programming, and with my experience and education in exercise science and the commercial fitness sector, I felt we could finish the original project in our spare time. That was almost four years ago.

With a yellow pad, we roughed out an outline of what the Symmetrical Fitness program should look like. Since then, the project has developed along the following areas of emphasis:

- A visual of an ideally proportioned body alongside a representative proportioned body of the client, using girth measurements.

- A concrete comparison of the client's current body with the projected ideal body alongside

a list of their measurements in inches compared to realistic attainable measurements of the ideal body.

- The interactive ability of the client to adjust their goal measurements within acceptable range perimeters of their own body type.

- Maintain and display historical measurement information so that each client can perceive progress toward their goals.

Exercise prescription:

Once the measurement goals are identified by the client, we decided to incorporate a menu of exercise programs that incorporate both aerobic and anaerobic (and various combinations of the two) components out of which the client is allowed to choose from. This menu of exercises is based on the equipment made available to the client. For example, the more comprehensive the fitness facility is, the more extensive the equipment options will be to the client. Once the client has chosen the equipment and/or programs they desire, a comprehensive exercise program is determined that will move the client as safely and quickly as possible toward meeting their goals. The design format of the exercise program factors each individual's current health status, body composition, strength, and cardiovascular test results in producing the final exercise program.



Jim Scammahorn

Exercise duration and frequency:

Designed in the Symmetrical Fitness Program is an awareness of the client's time constraints. Essentially, this program will allow each client to determine how many days and how many minutes each workout day they can devote to an exercise program. This information will allow the Symmetrical Fitness Program to make informed decisions in designing an exercise program that will be attainable within the client's time constraints.

Exercise intensity: One of the really comprehensive components of the Symmetrical Fitness Program is the ability to recommend the level of exercise intensity the client should do based on their general strength and aerobic tests results. Test protocols are also designed into their fitness program.

Body composition determination: The Symmetrical Fitness Program also determines the body composition of the client using his or her girth measurements. This information is useful for several reasons. First, the amount of body fat will help the Symmetrical Fitness Program to determine how much aerobic exercise the client should have designed in their exercise program. And just as importantly, this information will also help determine potential health risks of the client.

Future forecasting: As the client progresses through their prescribed exercise program, we felt they would like to know how well they are doing in reaching their goals. We do know knowledge is a powerful component of change, and tied to knowledge is a strong motivating factor: The continuous and regular measurement information with the client is a key to motivating

them to continue their exercise program. We have even designed an athletic body-builders proportion for males who desire to develop beyond the more obvious chest, hips, and legs format. This body builder's format identifies ideal proportions of the neck, arms, and lower legs.

Ultimately, the Symmetrical Fitness Program will become a Personal Fitness Trainer/Instructor for each individual that uses it. Each client will achieve their appearance goals, improve their fitness level, and have a better overall experience while working out at their health club.

The Product: We understand that everyone who works out wants to improve the way they look. That fact is a given. However, missing from that fact are three important pieces of information for the client:

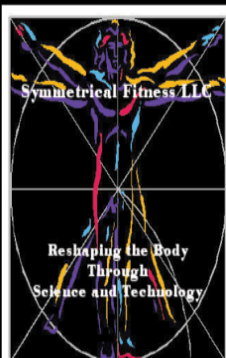
1. What can they look like - what is realistically possible given their specific body type?

2. An exercise prescription program that is uniquely tailored to meet the client's goals.

3. A health screening component that will allow the client to know how healthy and fit they are throughout this program. We believe these three additional pieces of information will be a strong motivator for the client to continue their exercise program toward completion. The end result is a satisfied customer who walks out of their club confident in knowing they are receiving the best possible program - a program tailored to their individual needs.

If you are interested in more information concerning how *Symmetrical Fitness* can benefit your club, go to www.SymmetricalFitness.com

(Dr. Jack Scammahorn's education is concentrated in Physical Education, Psychology and Social Sciences. Jack has worked extensively in the commercial fitness center sector, having owned and operated several fitness centers and has worked administratively with a large fitness center corporation. Jim Scammahorn's degree is concentrated in physics, science, and math and his vocational knowledge and experience is in computer programming. Contact Jack at: jack@symmetricalfitness.com or by calling: 913-708-0550)



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The Thoreau Club/Camp Thoreau Receives Prestigious Massachusetts Family Business Award

CONCORD, MA - July 1, 2008 - The Thoreau Club/Camp Thoreau, Inc., a third generation, family-owned business based in Concord, MA, announced that it has won the prestigious 2008 Marshall Paisner Massachusetts Family Business of the Year Award. The Thoreau Club was one of three Massachusetts-based companies recognized for its achievements in the community and business success. The awards ceremony was held at the Royal Sonesta Hotel in Cambridge on May 8th and included businesses from across the state.

Led by The Northeastern University Center for Family Business and the Family Firm Institute New England Chapter, the Massachusetts Family Business of the Year awards program was created to promote and highlight the most successfully run and managed businesses in Massachusetts that have more than one family generation. The

award is presented to companies that exhibit positive business practices and have significantly contributed to their communities.

"We are thrilled that The Thoreau Club has received this honor. It is a great tribute to the employees who have worked hard to make us a success and to the community at large, which has shown us enormous support over the years," said Faith Pulis, President and CEO of The Thoreau Club/Camp Thoreau, Inc. "We will continue to strive to make Thoreau a top destination for the community, from our expansive fitness center and successful summer camp to incorporating all the latest innovations from the wellness industry to help people attain their personal best."

Camp Thoreau, Inc. was established in 1951 by Click and Dot Pulis. The Pulis family had a passion for nature and a desire to share their love of the outdoors and their camping

expertise with the children of Concord and surrounding towns. In the seventies, Click and Dot's son Todd introduced tennis and swimming into the business. In 1998, The Thoreau Club and Camp Thoreau moved to its current location at 275 Forest Ridge Road in Concord. The business sits on 70 acres of land and has eleven tennis courts, two large swimming pools, an interactive splash park, fitness center with Pilates, and exercise classes and programs for all levels. The most recent addition to the Club, a full service day spa (Spa at Thoreau) was developed by Faith Pulis, third generation, and current President/CEO of Camp Thoreau, Inc. The spa focuses on relaxation and mind/body awareness. Faith has also launched a successful wellness program that uses coaching as a way for clients to attain the best life possible.

For more information



Three Generations of the Pulis Family With Dog, Camper
 (L to R): Kathryn Marshall, Faith Pulis, Sandra Marshall, Steven Evans and Todd Pulis

on The Thoreau Club and Camp Thoreau, Inc., please call 978-369-7349 or visit www.thoreau.com for more information.

Cholesterol Drugs Recommended for Some 8-Year Olds

CHICAGO (AP) - For the first time, an influential doctor's group is recommending that some children as young as 8 be given cholesterol-fighting drugs to ward off future heart problems.

It is the strongest guidance ever given on the issue by the American Academy of Pediatrics, which released its new guidelines Monday. The Academy also recommends low-fat milk for 1-year olds and wider cholesterol testing.

Dr. Stephen Daniels, of the Academy's Nutrition Committee, says the new advice is based on mounting evidence showing that damage leading to heart disease, the nation's leading killer, begins early in life.

It also stems from recent research showing that cholesterol-fighting drugs are generally safe for children, Daniels said.

Several of these drugs are approved for use in children and data show that increasing numbers are using them.

"If we are more aggressive about this in childhood, I think we can have an impact on what happens later in life... and avoid some of these heart attacks and strokes in adulthood," Daniels said. He has

worked as a consultant to Abbott Laboratories and Merck & Co., but not on matters involving their cholesterol drugs.

Drug treatment would generally be targeted for kids at least 8 years old who have too much LDL, the "bad" cholesterol, along with other risky conditions, including obesity and high blood pressure.

For overweight children with too little HDL, the "good" cholesterol, the first course of action should be weight loss, more physical activity and nutritional counseling, the Academy says.

Pediatricians should routinely check the cholesterol of children with a family history of inherited cholesterol disease or with parents or grandparents who developed heart disease at an early age, the recommendations say. Screening also is advised for kids whose family history isn't known and those who are overweight, obese or have other heart disease risk factors.

Screening is recommended sometime after age 2, but no later than age 10, at routine checkups.

The Academy's earlier advice said cholesterol drugs should only be considered in

children older than 10 after they fail to lose weight. Its previous cholesterol screening recommendations also were less specific and did not include targeted ages for beginning testing.

Because obesity is a risk factor for heart disease and often is accompanied by cholesterol problems, the Academy recommendations say low-fat milk is appropriate for 1-year olds "for whom overweight or obesity is a concern."

Daniels, a pediatrician in the Denver area, agreed that could include virtually all children. But, he said doctors may choose to offer the new milk advice only to 1-year olds who are already overweight or have a family history of heart problems.

The Academy has long recommended against reduced-fat milk for children up to age 2 because saturated fats are needed for brain development.

"But now, we have the obesity epidemic and people are thinking maybe this isn't such a good idea," said Dr. Frank Greer of the University of Wisconsin, Co-Author of the Guidelines Report, which appears in the July edition of Pediatrics, the group's

medical journal.

Very young children are increasingly getting fats from sources other than milk, and Greer said the updated advice is based on recent research showing no harm from reduced-fat milk in these youngsters.

With one-third of U.S. children overweight, and about 17 percent obese, the new recommendations are important, said Dr. Jennifer Li, a Duke University children's heart specialist.

"We need to do something to stem the tide of childhood obesity," Li said.

Li said that 15 years ago, most of her patients with

cholesterol problems had an inherited form of cholesterol disease not connected to obesity.

"But now, they're really outnumbered" by overweight kids with cholesterol problems and high blood pressure, she said.

Dr. Elena Fuentes-Afflick, a Pediatrics Professor at the University of California at San Francisco, also praised the new advice but said some parents think their kids will outgrow obesity and cholesterol problems and might not take it seriously.

"It's hard for people to really understand" that those problems in childhood can lead to serious health consequences in adulthood, Fuentes-Afflick said.

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Programming Tip of the Month:

The Program Director! - Profitable Programming Ideas for YOU

By: Sandy Coffman

ATTENTION!!! Summertime goes by very quickly, and although it is often considered a downtime in our business, the

best clubs get busy preparing for the beginning of the programming calendar, *September 1st, every year*. It is time for you to be on top of your game and have your staff in tip top shape. You will be

receiving new members into your club, reactivating the summertime dropouts, re-energizing the existing members and actively pursuing potential members to join your enthusiastic world of exercise, fitness and fun. Your most important employee will be the person who is well trained, creative and prepared to deliver the programs needed for all these members. He or she may be the deciding factor in your success for the coming year. It all starts now! My book, **SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS FOR FITNESS AND HEALTH CLUBS: 101 PROFITABLE IDEAS** suggests 101 programs to offer your members. They are unique, tried, and proven, but success all starts at the top of the leadership pole. Here are some considerations for you.

Is a Program Director necessary for your business? Many club owners and managers debate this issue, but a look at the numbers should convince you that a Program Director will increase retention and decrease attrition. The real question may be whether you can afford *not* to have a Program Director in your club.

A Program Director has many responsibilities, some of which include the following:

- Integrate new members into the club. Every new member must be contacted, interviewed and invited to a program that offers immediate and easy entry.

- Set up a calendar of events and programs for a full year following the logical progression of programming.

- Schedule programs to accommodate all the time frames of a club during the day.

- Create promotional pieces and marketing plans for all programs.

- Help existing members diversify their workouts.

- Reactivate inactive members.

- Provide programs to meet the needs of all the niches of the club.

- Track participation of members in the programs.

- Meet programming budgets.

- Be accountable for the growth and profit structure for all programs and program leaders, measuring the percentage of enrollment in programs.



Sandy Coffman

members, diversifying existing members and motivating potential members to buying memberships. A Program Director must have a genuine appreciation for every program and every member.

The qualities of a Program Director include leadership capabilities and communication skills on a management level as well as the ability to relate to all your members on a service level. Telephone skills, teaching skills and selling skills are important. Hire right in the first place, but be prepared to offer a professional training program to ensure success for you, your business and your members.

(To order Sandy's great new programming book: "**Successful Programs for Fitness and Health Clubs**" 101 Profitable Ideas go to: www.humankinetics.com Contact Sandy: SLCoffman@aol.com or www.sandycoffman.com)



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All who have advertised, purchased subscriptions, read and pitched in as Contributing Authors. We are now in our 15th year of publication! All of you are on the "Team" that makes CLUB INSIDER, and we will be grateful to you forever.

I appreciate and LOVE 'Ya!
 Very Sincerely, Norm Cates, Jr.

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 Club • Suburban Athletic Club • Superior Athletic Club • Superior Athletic Club II • The Edge • The Sports Center •
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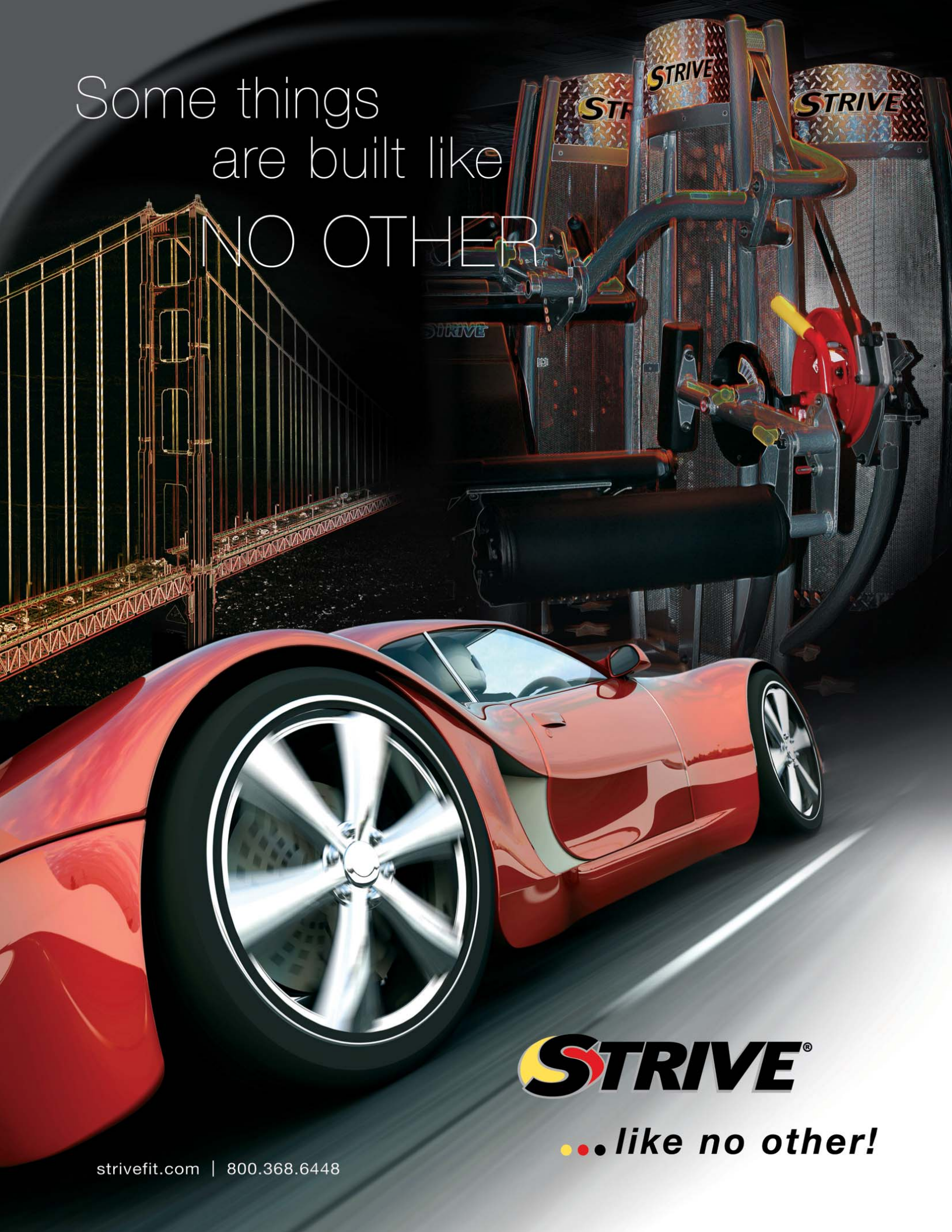
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