

Norm Cates'

CLUB INSIDER

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Cover Story Classics:

Barry's: Inside the Red Room With CEO, Joey Gonzalez



JULY 2025

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Cover Story Classics:

Barry's: Inside the Red Room With CEO, Joey Gonzalez

By: Justin Cates

Publisher's Note: As June 2025 (*Pride Month*) came to a close, good news from a great brand run by a man who happens to be gay was announced. If you read our original cover story in July 2019, you might have missed the fact that the CEO of a major club organization was gay. **Joey Gonzalez**, then-CEO of Barry's, never mentioned it in our interview because it was public knowledge. His talk with *Club Insider* was just a normal day. It was business. The focus was on the brand.

Recently, the following news came after *Club Insider's* June 2025 Edition deadline, otherwise we would have covered it for that edition's *Club Insider Classic*: celebrating Barry's, celebrating

Joey and celebrating Pride in those doing great work for this industry.

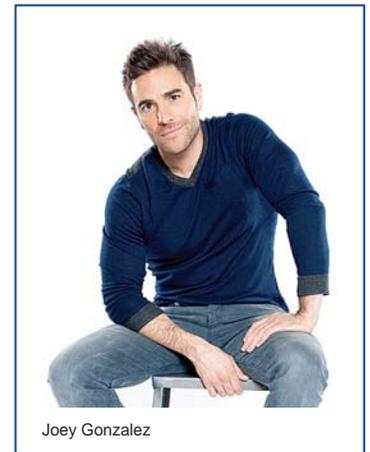
Okay, okay, enough with the tease... **Joey Gonzalez has been named Executive Chairman of Barry's.** In honor of that elevation, this month's Cover Story Classic is *Barry's: Inside the Red Room With CEO, Joey Gonzalez*. Folks, I invite you to read on, and I very much invite you to read my closing Note...



Having numerous friends who live in Los Angeles and New York, I've seen social media posts about Barry's for years. As an industry participant, it's also my job to know about the always expanding plethora of brands our industry has to offer. This

month, those two meet in the following cover story about Barry's. Within this story, you will hear from **Joey Gonzalez**, customer-turned-instructor-turned-CEO of Barry's Bootcamp and his incredible journey with the brand. You will also hear from **Jon Canarick**, Managing Director of North Castle Partners, about their investment/partnership in Barry's, what they look for in companies like Barry's and what they bring to the table in partnership (**Publisher's Note:** After weathering the pandemic, North Castle Partners sold their investment in Barry's to *Princeton Equity Group* in early 2025 - **See Page #12**). So, let's dive right in!

Barry's was a boutique before boutique was, well, anything... Founded in 1998, it would be more than a decade (See **Joey Gonzalez** Page 8)



Joey Gonzalez

Fitness Ventures Opens 60th Crunch Fitness Location, Marking Major Milestone in Nationwide Growth

DES MOINES, IA - *Fitness Ventures LLC*, one of the nation's fastest growing franchisee of *Crunch Fitness* and second largest franchisee, has officially opened its 60th Crunch Fitness location with a brand-new, 60,000-square-foot facility in Des Moines, Iowa. The new club is the company's second Crunch in Iowa and expands its footprint to 60 open locations across 28 states.

Built as a Crunch 3.0 model, the Des Moines location represents a \$5 million investment and introduces the latest in club design, layout and member experience. It reflects Fitness Ventures' ongoing commitment to innovation and member value.



"This milestone represents much more than just a number," said **Brian Hibbard**, CEO of *Fitness Ventures*. "Our expansion into new markets like Des Moines reflects the strength of our team, our model and our mission to make high-value (See **Crunch** Page 6)

The Health & Fitness Association's New Board Term Has Begun

BOSTON, MA - The *Health & Fitness Association (HFA)* has begun a new Board term, ushering in a fresh chapter of leadership for the global trade association. The new term marks the official start of CEO of *Discover Strength*, **Luke Carlson's** service as *Chairman of the Board*, along with three other recently elected officers and five new Board Members.

In its meeting preparing for this transition last week, the Board engaged in strategic discussions around strengthening member value, advancing global growth initiatives and ensuring long-term organizational sustainability.

"It's an honor to step into the Chair role at such a pivotal time for our industry,"



said Carlson. "I'm looking forward to helping drive this next chapter of the Association as we build on the momentum gained in recent years. The members of this Board bring a wealth of experience across all segments of the industry, and I am eager to collaborate with them to ensure all of our members --large and small, national and international-- have a seat at the table."

In this new term, **AI Noshirvani**, Managing Partner of *ALTA Technology Group* and Owner of *Method Gym*, will act (See **HFA** Page 6)

Inside the Insider: Edition #379

- The Power of Appreciation: How Gratitude Drives Membership Sales in Your Gym - **By:** Jim Thomas
- Cold Plunging and Older Adults: A Caution for Strength-Focused Fitness Professionals - **By:** Sara Kooperman, JD
- Sound Baths: A Harmonious Path to Profitability - **By:** Nancy Trent
- The Future of Fitness is Fun - **By:** Jeffrey Pinkerton
- Planet Fitness Awards \$250,000 in Scholarships to 50 Boys & Girls Club Teens
- And, of Course, *Norm's Notes*

Norm's Notes

■ **Hello Everybody!** This is your **Club Insider Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993** checking in with our **379th monthly edition of this 30+ year running club business publication** I refer to as: **A Labor of Love!** I'm very thankful that you've tuned in again for this iteration of **Norm's Notes**, as I proceed on my keyboard with my longtime habit of **"Telling-It-Like-It-Is!"** I'm really happy that you're reading this edition, and I want to **THANK YOU ALL** for sticking with us every month! As usual, we have a bunch of health and fitness club business news, **so please read on!**

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

■ This news out of Los Angeles: *Gold's Gym SoCal Opens the Doors to Serious Training at Beverly Center.* Marking a milestone in the brand's continued commitment to redefining the fitness experience at the epicenter of wellness in the region, Beverly Center's only gym was celebrated with an

exciting array of events and festivities for the whole community to enjoy. To celebrate opening day, the first 200 guests to check in received an exclusive Gold's Gym SoCal swag bag and were entered into a giveaway.

The new Beverly Center location introduces a modern, cutting-edge fitness destination to one of Los Angeles's most dynamic neighborhoods. It stands out as the only gym in the area to feature an *Atlantis Strength* workout area, designed specifically for advanced strength training. It also boasts the largest fully equipped signature playground turf area, ideal for functional and high-intensity workouts and a dedicated *Glute Factory Booty Training Zone*. Members now have access to dedicated cardio and free weight zones, a juice bar, steam and sauna rooms and complimentary two-hour parking with validation.

"We're excited to introduce our newest location to the Beverly Hills community," said **BRIAN MORRIS**, *Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing at Gold's Gym SoCal.* "The space is thoughtfully designed to cater to the needs of LA's diverse, wellness-driven community with top-of-the-line equipment, luxurious

amenities and expert trainers. We are excited to welcome everyone and share the Gold's Gym SoCal experience in a conveniently situated spot."

BRIAN PARENT, *General Manager of Beverly Center*, added, "Gold's Gym SoCal is a natural fit for Beverly Center."

■ This Note comes from our friends at **Augie's Quest:**

This month, we want to honor **DR. MONIQUE GREEN**, and every parent who fights for more time, more memories and a future without ALS. Her grit, love and unshakable will inspire us to push harder for a cure.

She states: "One of the most meaningful parts of my ALS journey has been witnessing Lola's resilience (Lola is a feminine name of Spanish origin, meaning sorrows). I waited a year to disclose my diagnosis when she was around eight. I kept it simple and age-appropriate, but she intuitively knew something had changed. As she matured, so did her understanding of the implications of my ALS diagnosis. She's pretty much rolled with the punches. As a teen, she's never been embarrassed by my diagnosis. She helps out a lot



Norm Cates

with care and will be the first person to translate or clarify what I've said when someone has a hard time understanding my speech. I often think about the legacy I want to leave for Lola. When I was working on my doctorate, I read *Grit* by **Angela Duckworth**, and it changed how I thought about perseverance. That's what I want to instill in her: a deep grit, a fearless heart and the courage to dream big, even if
(See **Norm's Notes** Page 7)

About Club Insider

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Thanks and Appreciation

At *Club Insider*, we are excited to be in our **32nd Year** of this home-based health and fitness club trade publication! The thought that this publication was *founded to serve an industry I truly love*, and so that *I could become a Mister Mom for my son, Justin*, is still *intriguing and amazing* to us. So, I wish to extend my most sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to everyone who has made this amazing 30+ year run possible.

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

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

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

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

Norm Cates, Jr.



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Planet Fitness Awards \$250,000 in Scholarships to 50 Boys & Girls Club Teens

HAMPTON, N.H. - Planet Fitness, one of the largest and fastest-growing franchisors and operators of fitness centers with more members than any other fitness brand, announces the recipients of its annual *Judgement Free Generation Scholarship*, which awards teens for their continuous support of promoting inclusion, acceptance and kindness in their communities. Fifty Boys & Girls Clubs high school seniors across the U.S. were awarded \$5,000 each toward furthering their education and will join the "JFG Squad," Planet Fitness' network of scholarship winners. Half of this year's Judgement Free Generation Scholarship winners represent first-generation college students.

Planet Fitness has awarded more than **\$1.65 million** in scholarships to 330 teens across the country since 2017, contributing \$250,000 this year alone. While most traditional scholarships award athletic or academic achievement, the Judgement Free Generation Scholarship Program was created to recognize youth who exemplify values of kindness and acceptance and actively promote those principles in their communities. The scholarship recipients were selected from a pool of hundreds of applicants using a multi-tiered review process based on several criteria including a personal essay, staff recommendations and a video submission. The submissions were evaluated by how the participant

actively promotes kindness and inclusion by demonstrating Judgement Free values.

Read about how three of its inspiring JFG Squad members are making an impact in their local communities and opening the door to a more Judgement Free tomorrow:

Aniya A.: Despite facing homelessness at 13, Aniya was provided with a safe space to grow at her local Boys & Girls Club. Now, as a junior staff member and youth development intern, she's committed to giving back to her community because of all that they have given her. She plans to attend *East Tennessee State University* to study Psychology to continue promoting a judgement free future.

Jack S.: Jack's time at his Boys & Girls Club has come full circle, from growing up in the afterschool program to now being a Counselor, he has dedicated his time to community service and helping others. Jack plans to attend *Virginia Tech* where he will study Finance and continue to encourage others and volunteer locally.

Irina C.: From a young age, Irina was committed to destigmatizing mental health, and after losing a friend, turned her pain into purpose and co-launched a suicide prevention clothing line called 1 in 5. Alongside her peers, Irina raised \$10,000 to support the Wellness Center at her local

Boys & Girls Club. In her next chapter, she plans to study nutritional sciences at *New York University*, hoping to educate others on the importance of compassionate support systems.

"Planet Fitness strives to provide an environment where everyone feels like they belong," said **McCall Gosselin**, Planet Fitness' Chief Corporate Affairs Officer. "Our commitment to Boys & Girls Clubs of America and its youth is just one of the ways we focus on supporting younger generations, advancing their wellbeing and empowering them to promote kindness in their communities. We are proud to support these inspiring teens on their academic journeys as they continue to make a positive impact in the world."

"Each year, we are honored to collaborate with Planet Fitness to make these opportunities possible and to provide scholarships to well-deserving teens who positively contribute to their communities," said **Jim Clark**, President & CEO, Boys & Girls Clubs of America. "We remain committed to empowering America's leaders of tomorrow for years to come and are proud to work alongside Planet Fitness to offer generous scholarships that help teens take the next step in their journey of kindness and inclusion."

Since partnering in 2016, Planet Fitness, alongside its franchisees,



members and partners, has contributed over \$10.5 million to advance youth wellbeing and empower the next generation to create kinder communities through its Judgement Free Generation initiative. As part of this effort, the company has led the way in funding innovative social-emotional skill-building programs for Boys & Girls Clubs of America professionals. Rooted in a trauma-informed approach, these programs acknowledge the lasting impact of trauma on youth and provide meaningful pathways for healing, personal growth, and development. Planet Fitness has also established mini-Judgement Free Zones in select Boys & Girls Clubs and participated in volunteering activities across the country.

Make It Fun Every Day!

...Crunch

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fitness accessible across the country."

The club features top-of-the-line cardio and strength equipment including Olympic squat racks, a group fitness studio, dry saunas, various group fitness classes,

performance turf, *HydroMassage*, tanning, the innovative *HIITZone* and Crunch's welcoming "No Judgments" atmosphere.

Fueling this momentum is Fitness Ventures' strategic partnership with *Meaningful Partners*, a purpose-driven private equity firm that invested in the company in 2024. This relationship

has helped accelerate growth through a mix of new club development, mergers and acquisitions.

With more than 14 additional locations currently in presale, Fitness Ventures is on pace to reach 75 open clubs by the end of the year. Looking ahead, the company plans to open 20 new locations

annually, continuing its aggressive and disciplined growth strategy into new and existing markets.

"We're not just growing fast, we're growing with purpose," Hibbard added. "The Des Moines club is another strong step forward in a long-term plan to deliver value to both members and investors."

...HFA

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as Vice Chair, **Ahmar Azam**, CEO and Founder of *TriFit*, will serve as Finance Chair, and **Jeff Sanders**, Chief Growth Officer and Partner of *Energy Fitness*, as Secretary.

In addition to the new officers, the Board welcomes five new Directors:

- **Shafiq Ahmed**, Founder, CEO and Chairman, *NRG Gym Limited*;
- **Cory Brightwell**, Co-Founder and CEO,

Chuze Fitness;

- **Dimple Manghnani**, General Counsel and Vice President, *[solidcore]*;

- **Chyna Willman**, Founder and CEO, *Grit City Wellness*;

- **Mark Harrington, Jr.**, President, *Healthworks*.

These individuals began their four-year terms on July 1 and will serve through June 30, 2029.

Returning to the Board are directors **Richard Beddie**, **J.J. Creegan**, **Bill Davis**, **Debbie Fiorella**, **Maria**

Gonzalez, **Ori Gorfine**, **Richard Idgar**, **Mel Kleist**, **Erik Lindseth**, **Matthew Stevens** and **Barry Walsh**.

The organization recognizes and thanks outgoing Board Members --Former Chairman **Chris Smith** and Board Members **Aaron Moore** and **Loni Wang**-- for their contributions to a pivotal year of growth and advocacy.

"Each new Board term brings fresh energy and new ideas, and this group is no exception," said **Liz Clark**, HFA President and CEO. "We're grateful to Chris and all our departing leaders, and

we're excited to welcome a dynamic new class of Directors who reflect the values, innovation and leadership that will shape the future of fitness."

The HFA Board plays a critical role in steering the association's mission to grow, promote and protect the industry through its priorities of advocacy, education and research. With strong alignment and renewed momentum, HFA is well-positioned to continue leading the industry forward.

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...Norm's Notes

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failure is part of the process. I want her to value people's differences, their stories and to lead with empathy. These days, I try to create moments that will last a lifetime. When it was time for prom dress shopping, we went all out, 'Say Yes to the Dress' style. I completely blew my budget, but that day, that memory? It was worth every cent. I wasn't promised these milestones. Doctors said I had 2 - 5 years. That was twelve years ago. I wasn't supposed to see middle school graduation, let alone prom. But, I'm still here, and I cherish every moment. Even on the hardest days, Lola gives me hope. She is my greatest gift. Watching her grow, thrive and become her own person reassures me that my struggles with this disease haven't been in vain. What I want people to understand is that ALS doesn't discriminate. I was healthy, then one day, I wasn't. It deserves the same level of urgency and funding as cancer, because every 90 minutes, someone dies from this horrific disease. I may not live to see a cure, but I fight for the day when no parent has to sit their child down and explain that their body is breaking down, piece by piece. I believe in this fight. I believe that 'incurable is unacceptable.' Like **AUGIE**, I believe that, with enough attention, funding

and research, we can end ALS. Not just for me, but for Lola, and for every family navigating the impossible." - **Dr. Monique Green** - Mom, Nurse, Advocate and ALS Warrior.

Founded by the late **AUGIE NIETO**, *Augie's Quest to Cure ALS* is the unwavering force driving breakthroughs in ALS research, defying limitations, and empowering hope for a future without this devastating disease.

Folks, be sure to check out the **Augie's Quest Ad on Page #11**.

■ This news item was received from the *Athletech* folks in one of their regular e-blasts, so I quote the *Athletech* news item here:

"With plans to surpass 120 courts by 2027, **PADEL HAUS** is staking its claim as the U.S. leader in PickleBall, the fastest-growing sport. Padel Haus, the Brooklyn-born and fast-scaling U.S. padel club operator, has raised \$7 million in a Series B round to triple its national footprint and cement its position as the sport's premium U.S. brand. The raise values the company at \$33 million and brings total funding to \$18 million since its 2022 launch. Backers include institutional investors *Bolt Ventures (David Blitzer)*, *Vanquish Equity*, *Mario Gabelli* and *Epic Padel*, alongside athletes from the *NFL*, *MLS* and *NHS*. Several

existing angel investors and family offices also reinvested in the round. Founded and led by entrepreneur **SANTIAGO GOMEZ**, Padel Haus has grown from a single club in New York City to nearly six locations across four cities, including a Denver site slated to open this summer. The padel operator expects to operate 40 courts by year's end and is aiming to reach 120 courts and more than 20 wholly owned locations by 2027. Gomez's passion for padel runs deep. In *Athletech News* last year, Gomez shared that he grew up playing the sport in Mexico, where padel was first invented in 1969. 'I grew up with the sport in my blood - my family has been playing it for years,' he said. After a career in finance and a successful run in hospitality, Gomez returned to the sport during the pandemic and saw an opportunity to bring it to New York - a market he described as ideal given how many expats and international residents live in the city. Padel Haus opened its first location in Dumbo, Brooklyn in the summer of 2022. Beyond fueling expansion, the funds will also go toward completing three new club buildouts and elevating the Padel Haus club experience. 'It's been incredibly rewarding to see the impact we've made in every community we've entered,' said **ROGER GOMEZ**, who also added that the raise validates the company's leadership position in a sport that's quickly growing.

ROGER MORALES, CFO, added: 'As padel continues to explode across the U.S., this raise fuels our commitment to lead the charge, not just as operators, but as the premier national brand setting the tone for the sport in America.' Gomez added that the raise validates the company's leadership position in a sport that's quickly gaining traction across the country.

Stay Tuned, Folks!

■ Out of London, *The Fit Guide*, the world's leading independent rating system for gyms and fitness clubs, has launched the *Five-Star Fitness Podcast*, a weekly show exploring what the fitness industry can learn from the world's top hotels and restaurants. The new podcast is hosted by **JACK THOMAS** and **MATT LAVENDER**, Co-Founders of *The Fit Guide*.

The Podcast is built for fitness leaders who believe the industry can match the world's best in service and experience. It's for those building standout studios, clubs, communities and those who see hospitality as the key to delivering exceptional fitness experiences. Lavender draws on his background as *Global Director of Evaluations at Forbes Travel Guide*, as well as his experience working with leading hospitality brands such as *Ritz-Carlton* and

(See *Norm's Notes Page 14*)

...Joey Gonzalez

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before the industry heard the word "boutique" and the ramifications that movement has brought. Being first to the party, though, does not mean one can rest on their achievements of old. Joey Gonzalez saw this and continued to evolve the Barry's brand into what it has become today. As boutiques have now popped up everywhere, Barry's has evolved to keep pace and remain a market leader. Utilizing a more conservative approach to growth than many, Joey is also ensuring Barry's will be a constant as others undoubtedly come and go.

The concept of Barry's is simple, but its execution of the concept is where the magic happens. This has created a loyalty among its users that can only be described with one word: **Family**. This month, inviting *Club Insider* into the *Barry's family*, I invite you to read on as Joey Gonzalez takes us into the Red Room and discusses what Barry's is all about.

An Interview With Joey Gonzalez, CEO of Barry's

Club Insider (C.I.) - Where did you go to school, and what did you study?

Joey Gonzalez (JG) - I went to *USC* and studied Humanities with an emphasis in Theatre. I had actually been an actor growing up. I joined *SAG* when I was 13 and worked in film and TV. I had a career all throughout high school then went to college to continue to pursue that.

C.I. - That's definitely a different route to eventually end up in the health and fitness club industry. When and how did that occur?

JG - I was at a crossroads in my life. I had stopped pursuing acting and tried a few different career moves. In that phase, I discovered Barry's as a customer and fan of the brand. I was going so often that **Barry** noticed and asked if I wanted to start teaching. I jumped at the chance and said, 'Yes, of course.' I had no experience in fitness, and I didn't have a certification. So, I did that as soon as possible and started teaching. About 9 - 12 months into the role, the *GM* position became available. I had caught wind of that, so I ran to *Gold's Gym* and got a job running sales over there to get as much administrative experience as possible. I then interviewed for the *GM* position at Barry's and got it.

I ran the L.A. business for a couple of years, and I kept asking the partners if they would let me invest and help scale the business around the country. It took a few years of us working together for them to be comfortable, but finally, they said, 'We would love for you to join the team.' So, I leveraged everything I had and just started investing in all the new studios.

C.I. - Wow, talk about believing in something

so strongly! Please tell us about **Barry Jay**, *Founder of Barry's Bootcamp* (along with **John and Rachel Mumford**). What did you learn from them?

JG - I always call Barry the mad scientist. He created this workout back in the mid- to late-90s. It combined high-intensity interval training (HIIT), cardiovascular essentially, where you are taking your heart rate up and down on treadmills, with circuit strength training with weights on the floor. And, this was long before most of these terms even existed, so he was really ahead of the trend and on the frontier. It wasn't just the workout he created but the courage he had to leave the gym he was training at and open a boutique studio, which at the time, didn't exist. There were big box gyms and some Yoga studios, but you really didn't have specialized fitness outside of that. Barry's was really one of the first, so talk about someone willing to take risks. Barry was never afraid to try.

Over the next two decades, science really proved why his method worked so well. People always ask why it has been so successful, and it's definitely because the efficacy of the product is like nothing else. It just works, and it works so quickly. And, there are also a number of other factors, such as the magic behind what we do with the red lighting, the sound system and some of the proprietary equipment we have. Our amenities, our locker rooms and showers, have *Oribe* hair/body products and *Dyson* hair dryers. We really love to spoil our customers with a great experience beyond any other fitness company.

Lastly, I'd say our unity is a big differentiator. People who do Barry's just love and feel like they have something in common. The brand is very work-hard, play-hard, so it attracts a Type A personality, someone who isn't afraid to do the work but wants to have fun while doing it.

C.I. - As you mentioned, you were a boutique before boutique was a thing. Now that the boutique market exists and other concepts have caught up, how do you

evolve to stay ahead of the market?

JG - We are a values-based organization, and *Innovation* is one of our core values. We take it seriously, so if you take a look at the business 15 years ago, it's very different. Back then, the space was around 1,500 square feet, one bathroom with minimal privacy, a very small lobby and no frills (laughing)... The workout was very much the same, but over the years, we've augmented the business and done so many things to improve it and 'premiumize' it. We obviously added locker rooms, showers and other great amenities. We were the first boutique fitness concept to add a fuel bar that has our customizable shakes, which are really there to serve as the nutritional piece of fitness and wellness. That's very important, so we have shakes that are designed for whatever the desired result is: there's *Carnitine* for fat burning, *Creatine* for muscle building, *Bromine* for repair, etc. So, we are able to deliver the nutritional piece and provide a second space outside of the red room where they can hang out and build community.

Another piece of the business is retail. We have a robust retail collection that is co-branded with *Nike*. We also have our own cut and sew fitness apparel line, which was designed specifically for the Barry's workout. For so many years, customers were complaining that the pants they wore would start to fall down while they were on the treadmill, but on the floor, they worked or vice versa. It's cross training, so it's really hard to find clothes that can react and respond to both types of training. So, with our *Barry's Fit* brand of clothing, every 6 - 8 weeks, we release a new capsule of our own workout clothing.

Outside of the standard Barry's, we have five studios in North America that contain a second studio space called *Flex*. *Flex* has two different class curriculums that we have experimented with. One is called *Release*, which is a myofascial stretch class for active recovery. The other is called *Lift*, and it's a 45-minute weightlifting class. We are always trying to think outside our own 'Red Box' and come up

with additional ways for our customer to work out. A lot of this comes from actually serving them and then asking them, 'What is it that you are not getting from us that we can deliver on.'

So, those are just a few ways that we continue to innovate.

C.I. - Everything you have mentioned are very specific, detail-oriented ways you are giving back to and better serving your customers. They provide feedback, and you provide more to them. It seems to be a great loop, so that's great to see. Please describe a typical Barry's facility today. What makes for an ideal location?

JG - Most of our locations are between 4,500 and 6,000 square feet. I would say that, for us, location is really important. We don't necessarily have to be on Main Street, but we love to just be somewhere really accessible. Our customers prioritize convenience over being next to a premium retailer, so we love to have ample parking and making sure getting in and out is easy. And, it's always helpful to have visibility so people know who you are.

C.I. - What are your customer demographics? How do you go about attracting them?

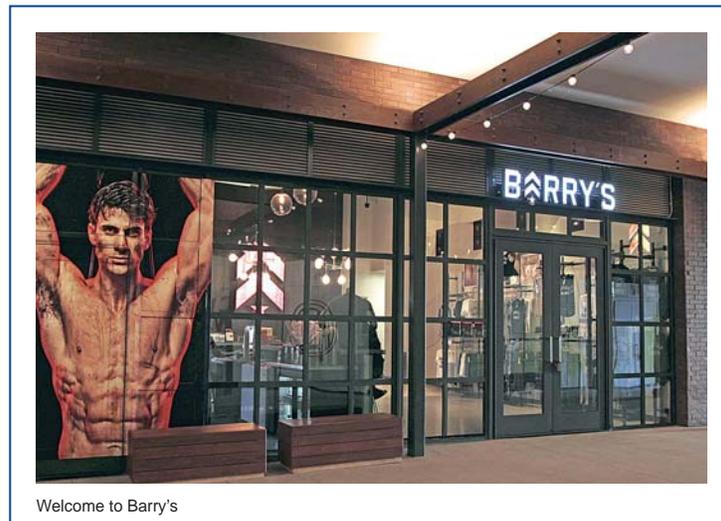
JG - For the most part, our members are 25 - 35 years old, but really, they go up to 50 and sometimes older. In terms of how we attract them, until recently, our marketing was 100% through our customer's word of mouth. Even the client acquisition campaigns we would run would actually invite our customers to bring in a friend who had never done Barry's before. It was something called *Friends With Benefits*, where if you come to Barry's and you bring a friend who had never done Barry's, you both get a class on us. It was our way to say, 'Thank you for referring them.'

What I didn't love about working at a Big Box gym was the 'turn 'em and burn 'em approach.' They always wanted us to sell memberships then hope people didn't come. Places like Barry's really rely on people's frequency to succeed, and you want to see people succeed. As you know, the best way to do that is to make sure your friends and important people in your life are holding you accountable, so we love to have people invite their own circle to Barry's because it becomes more fun and keeps them more engaged.

C.I. - That ties right back into unity, which you have already mentioned. What are your initiation fees and dues rates?

JG - We don't have any initiation fees. It's \$0 to join, and then, it's a class-by-class option. If you just want to come to one class, there's a headline price that anyone, anywhere is welcome to come to; we are very *inclusive* at Barry's. You can also buy packages. The more you buy, the less you will be paying per class. Alternatively, we do offer memberships, but they are sort of

(See **Joey Gonzalez** Page 10)



Welcome to Barry's

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Questions? Contact aseverin@healthandfitness.org.

HEALTH & FITNESS
ASSOCIATION

...Joey Gonzalez

continued from page 8

wired the same way and reward frequency. We recognize it per week, so it's a monthly membership that may give you three classes a week, four classes a week or a class every day. Those are priced similarly so that you pay less per class during that 30-day period. The pricing does differ from market to market, so it is hard to give exact numbers.

C.I. - Given your product structure, I'm going to use the word 'users' instead of 'members.' If you can share, how many users do you have system-wide?

JG - This past week, we saw just over 110,000.

C.I. - The Barry's concept is high energy, but it's the instructors who bring it home. Please tell us about the instructors Barry's hires. How do you find them? How do you onboard them to the concept? Is it hard to keep them if they develop a user following?

JG - One of the legs up that Barry's has is that it was instructor-founded and continues to be instructor-run today. Obviously, Barry came from that background, and I have that background. Our 'Talent,' as we call them, is always top-of-mind for us as we grow. We have really talented recruiters on our curriculum team who travel to new markets looking at potential new hires. And, I actually fly to every single new market and meet each person during an interview before they are hired. So, we really take the instructor piece seriously.

For onboarding, in new markets, we have something very special called the *Instructing Founding Program* where they actually live in New York for a week, they live in Los Angeles for a week, and we fully immerse them into the culture while they receive all of their academic training, so to speak. They just have the time of their lives, and it's a bonding experience. In terms of in-fill, most don't live in New York or Los Angeles, but they have the same text manual and academic approach as to

how to teach a Barry's class.

Related to retaining talent, in the past, it has been hard. One of the changes we have made in the past two years is that we have become very values-driven, so it's much easier now. With potential trainers, we start by laying out the expectations of how we need them to behave and how they can expect us to behave. That plays into all of the day-to-day decision making as well as the hiring. So, now, if we sit down with an instructor who could be the most successful fitness trainer in the city, if we feel they are out of line with our values, they won't even get a second interview because we put that above all else.

C.I. - How does Barry's go about creating 'community' among users within a market? Along the same lines, how does Barry's go about giving back to the communities in which they operate?

JG - We actually have a facet of the marketing team that are called *Community Marketing Managers*. They are tasked with that exact thing: building and maintaining community in their respective territories. That includes finding different corporates to bring in; hosting charity classes; going out to different school districts; donating to auctions; as well as making sure, internally, we are hosting events and having employee bonding moments. So, we have a whole department that is actually dedicated to that. If you work at Barry's, you know that the most important thing is people, so making sure that we have hired great people and making sure that those people feel connected to something is always a priority.

C.I. - In 2015, *North Castle Partners* strategically invested in Barry's Bootcamp. As best you can, please tell us about that deal: How did it come about? What was the amount invested? Is there a set timeframe? What do they bring to the table?

(Publisher's Note: After weathering the pandemic, North Castle Partners sold their investment in Barry's to *Princeton Equity Group* in early 2025 - See Page #12).

(See *Joey Gonzalez Page 12*)

An Interview With Jon Canarick

Club Insider (C.I.) - What does North Castle look for in a potential business to invest in/partner with?

Jon Canarick (JC) - We look for many things when considering a business for investment. First, we're looking for a strong entrepreneur who is running the business. Second, we're looking for meaningful proof of concept. In the case of a retail concept like Barry's, we're looking to see that the business works in multiple locations and multiple geographies. For example, we get calls regularly on businesses succeeding in New York City, but that does not mean it will succeed outside the city. Third, we're evaluating the brand. We're looking for an authentic brand that really resonates with consumers. Fourth, we're trying to get a sense for the company's culture and how employees feel about the business.



C.I. - How did Barry's Bootcamp get on North Castle's radar? What were some things you saw in them before doing your due diligence? What were some other things you saw in them while doing your due diligence?

JC - Barry's first got on our radar when I was having breakfast with a friend, **Jay Galluzzo**, Founder and at the time CEO of *Flywheel Sports*, a spin-studio business based in NYC. We were talking about Flywheel and the fitness industry in general, and Jay told me I had to check out Barry's, which had one NYC store in Chelsea. As a side note, Jay then joined the Barry's Board and signed on as an advisor to NCP. Two years later, he joined full time as one of our partners!

Before doing diligence, we were impressed by the brand and what people were saying about the workout. Some of the PR the company got was very impressive. We had the opportunity to meet **Joey and his husband John**, and we were very impressed by each of them and the way they talked about their respective businesses.

While doing diligence, we were very impressed by the results of each store. Barry's was consistently achieving a very strong return on capital. At the time, many stores were franchises, but we were able to approximate the income statements of the franchisees and the capital invested in each of the stores. Many people thought Barry's could only work on a small scale in NYC and LA, but we saw it was working in San Francisco, Boston, San Diego, Miami, London and Bergen, Norway! And, just as importantly, we were very impressed by Joey, who at the time, was the COO but really the *Founder of Barry's NYC* and the *Barry's 2.0 concept with Fuel Bar and full locker rooms with showers*. We grew excited to partner with Joey and the Founders to build on what they started.

C.I. - I'm sure it's different with every deal, depending on the needs of the company, but what does North Castle strive to bring to the table for the companies it invests in/partners with?

JC - Yes, it is different for each investment, but there are certainly repetitive themes. We work closely with the CEO and team upfront to establish an *'Operating Blueprint'*, which defines our goals and where we are collectively planning to take the business. Those goals have strategies, and those strategies have tactics. From that, we determine, in partnership with management, what the primary needs of the business are.

Very often, there are additional team members needed, and we work with the CEO to help identify key hires. At Barry's, for example, we had an aggressive growth plan which could not be achieved without a head of real estate. We hired this position immediately. We also added talent in finance, marketing and other areas over time.

We often focus on brand, really understanding the brand and consumer perception. We often do consumer research to aid in this process. At Barry's, this was an area that did not require tremendous focus from North Castle as the brand was already so strong, and Joey and team have done such an incredible job building the brand over the years. We put in place new reporting packages and identify KPIs. We also try to improve the supply chain where relevant as well.

C.I. - Over the years, we've done several stories on companies that have been involved with North Castle. The feedback about North Castle as a partner is always immensely positive. Please tell us why that is. Is striving for that positivity part of your company's culture when approaching a deal/partnership? How does North Castle go about manifesting this?

JC - Wow, first let me say thank you for the kind words and for the question! Yes, striving for this outcome is a core part of our culture and approach to business. We have a phrase we use internally that really defines what we are all about: *value and values*. The idea is a simple one. We have investors and have been in business for over 20 years because we create value for our investors, our management teams and ourselves. But, we were founded on the idea that you can create value while living and acting in accordance with a set of values. They are not just words on a website or coffee table, but ensuring our values guide everything we do. **Integrity, Development, Respect, Balance, Excellence and Partnership**. We believe CEOs and management teams are our partners, not our employees. We work together to solve problems, discuss the undiscussable, hear each other's perspectives, and hopefully, together, make the best decisions we can make. So, it's manifested in everything we do, internally and externally.

C.I. - For those smaller, regional brands that are making strides to go national, what advice can you give them to get noticed by a firm such as North Castle?

JC - In the category of fitness, we tend to discover brands via either social media or our network. I often get an email or a call that there is a brand I need to check out. PR really matters; that helps investors discover and learn. So, if the goal is to get noticed, provide a great experience and people talk about it. Focus on your social media presence and PR.



Inside the Red Room



INCURABLE IS UNACCEPTABLE



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venmo

...Joey Gonzalez

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JG - Since we are private, we can't disclose numbers in terms of the investment. But, I can tell you that, prior to North Castle's investment, Barry, John and I were the exclusive owners, so we brought them in as majority partners. They brought in a skillset that we didn't have... scaling a business as well as building an infrastructure. Prior to 2015, it was basically I and a few other employees in the basement of our Barry's Chelsea, New York location making some pretty massive business decisions. So, they helped me build a pretty robust Executive Team of about 50 really talented people that we have headquartered in Los Angeles. They've also helped us navigate some of decision making about where to go, when and how, as well as build a

strategy for international expansion.

Something I hear that is unique to North Castle is that they also happen to be really great guys. We have an amazing relationship with them. We've gotten to know who our partners are, and they have been very trusting and supportive. It has been a really incredible relationship.

C.I. - I'm glad to hear it, and that sure sounds like North Castle. We have done several cover stories on companies who have had been involved with them, and the comments about them have always been positive. It's great to hear that reputation continuing as they continue making big moves in this industry.

JG - Yea, they're great!

C.I. - The investment is now fueling the growth and expansion of the Barry's brand

worldwide. Please tell us about that strategy. **JG** - We are at 59 globally. This year, we have 30 studios slated to open. So, we will go from about 50 to 80 studios. We had been more on the domestic side, but none of us anticipated the interest we have seen internationally. The strategy there has been a combination of joint venture and franchising. It just serves us well to have local boots on the ground, based on what I already described about how important community is for us and how key local nuance is to our success. It really serves us and this type of business to align with partners who are *there*. So, that has been really incredible. And, selecting those partners is arguably the most important thing we can do. North Castle has been by our side, and we've built the strategy of where we go, when and why, and how that has to do with partnership opportunities.

In terms of domestic, we have a Development Department and a really amazing team of analysts who pull data on who the Barry's customer is, and we run reports every time we are considering a new market or expanding in an existing city. Then, we make a decision about whether or not it's worth investing. We base everything on an underwriting model, so we lock in cost and revenue projections, press Enter and see if it works. If it doesn't, then we don't do it. It's a fairly conservative approach to growth, but what I am

interested in is building a company that has longevity and being around for a lot longer than we already have been. Barry's is the original, and I really don't want to mess that up (laughing).

C.I. - As an admitted numbers guy, I'm glad to see such a methodical approach being used. There are some out there who shoot first and ask questions later, and it does not always work out well.

JG - Exactly. It's scary to see. There are companies out there that have only been around a few years and have hundreds of units already. I get that there are different strokes for different folks, but continuing to build this thing that is, I think, really organic and amazing, is a legacy that I take seriously.

C.I. - Speaking of that, you have a legacy already. From customer to CEO, I think it's a fascinating story. Along the way, can you share a few key lessons you have learned over the years?

JG - For me, I think the biggest lesson has been related to fear. The reason why I have been able to have success in this world is because I haven't let fear stand in my way. Conversely, the moments in my life that have been hardest and most challenging were because I let fear get in the way. It's easier said than done, but *if you replace fear* (See [Joey Gonzalez Page 13](#))

Update: Barry's Announces New Strategic Investment Partner Princeton Equity Group

NEW YORK, N.Y. - Barry's, the global leader in boutique fitness, announces a new strategic investment from *Princeton Equity Group* ("Princeton"), a private equity firm focused on investing in and growing franchisor and multi-location companies. Founded in 1998 by **Barry Jay, John Mumford** and **Rachel Coxton**, Barry's has become synonymous with premium fitness experiences. With a shared passion for service excellence and franchise model innovation both domestically and internationally, Princeton's investment will allow Barry's to expand its unparalleled fitness experience to more communities, enhancing the health and wellbeing of individuals globally. The fresh funding will also support the continued growth and consolidation of the UK and Canadian markets, as the brand remains focused on the core principles and hospitality that have made it a cultural phenomenon since its inception.

"Barry's is a brand that has consistently withstood the test of time, thanks to its unique, results-driven workout and an extraordinary community that has supported us over two decades," said **Joey Gonzalez**, *Co-CEO of Barry's*. "Our ability to adapt and innovate, especially through the challenges of the pandemic, has been critical in keeping our members engaged and motivated. With Princeton's investment, we're poised to share the magic of Barry's with even more people, while staying true to what makes us special."

Barry's is known for its innovative approach to fitness, combining a high-energy, full-body workout programmed with a mood-boosting sensory experience that has turned each studio into a vibrant local community hub filled with camaraderie and shared purpose. Thanks in large part to a strategic investment from *North Castle Partners* in 2015, the brand has since seen exponential growth, solidifying its position as a global fitness leader. Currently with 89 studios globally that saw more than seven million visits in 2024, Barry's has identified a significant pipeline of new locations with strong demand and now plans to open dozens more in the coming years. Through this partnership, Princeton is not only backing the brand's future but reinforcing its commitment to Barry's signature experience.

"At Princeton, we believe in brands that have built a foundation of authenticity, passion, and a commitment to the community," said **Jim Waskovich**, *Managing Partner of Princeton*. "Barry's has successfully combined world-class fitness with an incredible sense of belonging, and we are excited to support the team as they bring this experience to meet the demand of clients around the world."

"From our signature Red Room to our vibrant, supportive community, we want to make sure that every new studio we open feels like our first," said **JJ Gantt**, *Co-CEO of Barry's*. "This strategic partnership will allow us to strengthen the foundation of what makes us unique and continue to provide clients with the high-quality fitness experience they've come to love, no matter where they are."

"Princeton has long admired Barry's unique fitness program and the brand's incredible growth achieved over the last 25-plus years," said **Jack Nagle**, *Principal at Princeton*. "Barry's unwavering commitment to quality, excellence and its dedicated global community has set the brand apart in the fitness industry. We look forward to working with the Barry's team to continue to build upon its legacy and support its continued growth and success worldwide."

Barry's has always been about more than just fitness; it's about creating a transformative, inclusive space where people feel empowered, motivated and connected. With Princeton's support, Barry's is committed to investing further in its product and operations, ensuring that the power of its workout and community can continue to thrive in new locations while staying true to its roots.

With a shared vision for the future, Barry's and Princeton look to inspire more people to transform their lives through fitness while deepening the impact of the Barry's community. Together, they plan to bring Barry's to even more towns, empowering individuals around the world to push their limits and lead healthier, stronger lives.

J.P. Morgan Securities LLC served as exclusive financial advisor to Barry's. *Greenberg Traurig, LLP* served as legal counsel to Barry's. *Piper Sandler & Co* served as capital markets advisor to Princeton. *Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP* and *DLA Piper LLP* served as legal counsel to Princeton.

Update: Barry's Co-CEO Joey Gonzalez Named Executive Chairman and Co-CEO JJ Gantt CEO

MIAMI, FL - Barry's, the original boutique fitness trailblazer, announces a leadership transition as it enters a new phase of global expansion: Current Co-CEOs Joey Gonzalez and JJ Gantt will take on new roles, with Gonzalez becoming *Executive Chairman* and Gantt assuming the role of CEO. The brand plans to more than double its global footprint over the next four years.

"This new chapter is deeply personal," said Gonzalez. "It gives me the opportunity to spend more time in the field, listening, learning and staying closely connected to the soul of our business: Our studio teams and clients. While I'll continue to partner with the leadership team on Barry's vision and strategy, I'm eager to be back on the ground... where I can hear the music, feel the sweat and witness firsthand the impact Barry's has on lives every single day."

During Gonzalez's 21 years with the brand, Barry's expanded to 92 locations across 16 countries and four continents, redefining boutique fitness and cultivating a powerful global community. As Executive Chairman, he will partner with the leadership team in the brand's long-term vision and innovation, while CEO Gantt will assume leadership of the company including strategy execution, team development and scalable growth. *Gantt joined Barry's in 2018 as CFO then assumed the title of President in 2022 before being named Co-CEO in January 2024.*

"I am honored and grateful to be named CEO at this inflection point in Barry's history. I have tremendous respect and admiration for this iconic brand and the global Fit Fam," said Gantt. "My Barry's journey first began in 2015 when I walked into the Barry's Chelsea studio for my first class. From that first sweat, I was hooked. I know the transformational power of this workout and community because my life was transformed. I am eager to build upon the strong foundation built over the past 27 years while continuing to partner with the incredible Barry's team as we strive to achieve our vision of transforming lives worldwide."

With a new strategic investment from Princeton Equity Group, Barry's growth strategy reinforces its commitment to intentional expansion while preserving its premium workout and experience. Studio launches are planned in key U.S. markets including Charleston, Hoboken, Williamsburg and Salt Lake City, following the recent opening of Barry's Navy Yard in Washington D.C. Internationally, the brand will launch new locations in Switzerland, Kuwait, and Greece, expanding on recent successful openings in Madrid and Dublin.

With more than 8 million visits in 2024, Barry's is scaling with purpose. "We are growing globally, but never at the expense of what makes Barry's special," said Gantt. "We're expanding with intention, ensuring every location delivers the amazing Red Room experience that has defined Barry's since its inception. We build more than just structures; we build communities. We are excited to continue to open new studios in markets across the globe."

As Barry's continues to grow, it remains rooted in the core values that launched a movement: Connection and Community. From Los Angeles to Singapore to Switzerland, every Barry's studio delivers on the same promise: to offer The Best Workout in the World™ in an environment that inspires both physical and mental transformation.





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"I highly recommend the HWLS team. They've provided us invaluable guidance regarding membership marketing and fitness programming."
 - Mary Thomas | Owner and General Manager | Western Racquet & Fitness Club | Green Bay, WI

...Joey Gonzalez

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with focus, you can accomplish anything.

C.I. - I love it! That's a quote. To close this interview, I was going to ask: what can the industry expect to see from Barry's over the next 3 - 5 years? You've already answered that. But, how about you personally, Joey?
JG - I guess more and more with Barry's. This company isn't going anywhere, and this company is my family. We wear it on our T-Shirts, and we really think of each other as family. I'm just really excited to be along for the ride.

C.I. - Well, we look forward to seeing where that ride goes. *Club Insider* will be there to cover it in the future.

JG - Thank you so much.



Thank you to **Joey Gonzalez** and **Jon Canarick** for their time interviewing for this exciting cover story. Thank you also to **Lindsey Cohen** and **Mariel Householder** of *hunt&gather* for their assistance throughout the process. And, thank you all for reading!

Publisher's Note: I want to again thank Joey Gonzalez... this time for showing me I can be out, proud and very much involved in this industry...

Yes, I am gay. Married in 2016, I have been with my *Husband, Aaron*, since 2013. Very select industry friends have known this for years, as well as everyone in my personal life. Like Joey, personally, I have been open about it, but professionally (unless you knew what to look for), I have been quiet. It was just a normal day. It was business. The focus was on the brand.

So, why now? Because it is THE weight on my shoulders I must release in order to continue doing what I do with *Club Insider* and for this industry. To my knowledge, we have done exactly two cover stories on known out industry leaders (**David von Storch**, *VIDA Fitness*; **Joey Gonzalez**, *Barry's*). But, I can assure you this... there are more out there than you think. The reason each project themselves professionally as they do, I understand. It's a subject not talked about in our industry as often as it should be. But, to those of you I am talking about and reaching now, I welcome your voice in confidence. You are not alone, and you can reach me anytime.

Thank you for reading, and see you next month!

(Justin Cates is the Publisher of Club Insider. Having been born into a club business family in 1985, Justin grew up in the health and fitness club industry. He has lived and breathed this industry for 40 years, since his own day one, and he loves it dearly. Graduating from the Terry College of Business at The University of Georgia in 2007, Justin has run day-to-day operations of Club Insider for 15+ years. Justin became Publisher of Club Insider in April of 2020. Justin's Dad, Norm Cates, continues to serve as Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993. You can reach Justin by phone at 863-999-2677 or email at Justin@clubinsideronline.com.)



Justin Cates and Aaron Rogers

The Power of Appreciation: How Gratitude Drives Membership Sales in Your Gym

By: **Jim Thomas**

In the world of independent gym ownership, boutique studio operation and personal training entrepreneurship, it's easy to get caught up in the numbers: the sales goals, the membership quotas, the session bookings. But, if you ask any seasoned gym leader what truly fuels consistent high performance, you'll find it's not just about strategy or systems. It's about *people*. And, more specifically, it's about **appreciating** those people. Appreciation isn't a bonus; it's a business strategy.

A Lesson From the Sales Floor

Let me take you back to a turning point early in my career.

By this time, I had risen to become the top salesperson across four clubs. I was producing consistently, I understood the process and I was dialed in. But, one night stands out like it was yesterday.

It was a Thursday, late, 10:00PM. The gym was closed. It had been a long, grueling day with no sales on the board. Zero. Not a good feeling for someone who prided himself on performance.

But, for some reason, I just didn't want to leave. Maybe it was pride. Maybe it was grit. Maybe it was just stubbornness. I waited around until the manager left.

Then, lo and behold, a prospect walked in. He said, "Hey, I know you're closed, but I'd love to take a look around." I told him, "Happy to help."

I gave him the tour, made the presentation, answered all his questions, and he signed up. He didn't just buy

a membership for himself. He bought a **\$3,000 package** for himself, his spouse and his son.

One sale. That's it. But, it was a *big* one.

Here's the part that stuck with me... When it was all said and done, the manager walked over, looked me in the eye and said: "Jim, I know it was a long day for you. It wasn't just the sale. It was the **recognition**. That appreciation made me want to work even harder. It made me feel seen. It made me feel like I mattered."

That moment changed something for me. It wasn't just the sale. It was the **recognition**. That appreciation made me want to work even harder. It made me feel seen. It made me feel like I mattered.

Why Appreciation is a Sales Superpower in Your Gym

As a gym owner or operator, you're juggling a thousand tasks: leases, payroll, programming, marketing. But, if there's one thing you must *never* overlook, it's the power of showing appreciation to your people, your staff *and* your members.

■ **Appreciation Fuels Staff Motivation:** Your salespeople, trainers and front desk team aren't just cogs in a machine. They're human beings with lives, challenges and aspirations. When you recognize the **extra mile** they go, whether it's staying late, making one more follow-up call or simply showing up with a great attitude, you create **emotional buy-in**. People don't just work harder because they have to. They work harder because they *want* to, especially when they feel appreciated.

■ **Appreciation Encourages Ownership:** When your staff feels appreciated, they begin to take ownership of the gym's Mission. They act like owners. They solve problems. They protect the brand. They sell *because they believe in it*, not because they're pressured to.

■ **Appreciation Retains Members:** The same goes for your members. A simple "thank you" at the front desk. A handwritten note after a milestone. A shoutout on social media. A free shirt on their anniversary. These things cost almost nothing, but the impact is massive. When members feel appreciated, they stay longer, spend more, and refer others.

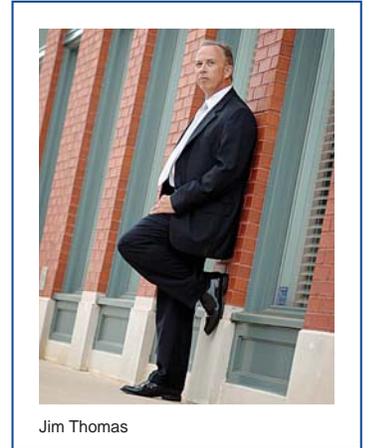
How to Build a Culture of Appreciation That Drives Sales

Want to boost your bottom line without spending more on ads? Start by implementing appreciation into your **daily culture**.

■ **Catch People Doing Something Right:** Make it a habit to catch your team doing *something right*. Praise effort, not just results. Whether it's a thoughtful follow-up, a clean weight rack or a kind word to a new member; acknowledge it.

■ **Celebrate Wins, Big and Small:** Don't just celebrate monthly top producers. Celebrate:

- First memberships sold by new staff;
- Most improved performers;
- Great attitude awards;
- Highest follow-up rates.



Jim Thomas

The more you celebrate, the more momentum you build.

■ **Thank Members Frequently:** Create a "thank you" rhythm:

- **At Sign-up:** Send a thank you card or email;
- **After 30 days:** Celebrate their first month;
- **At Milestones:** Recognize every 3-month, 6-month and 12-month mark;
- **On Birthdays:** Send a gift or discount;
- **After Referrals:** Thank both parties with something meaningful.

■ **Train Managers to Lead With Gratitude:** Your leadership team must understand that appreciation is a tool, not fluff. Train them to say thank you, to write notes, to praise in meetings. It's simple. It's powerful. It multiplies performance.

(See *Jim Thomas Page 16*)

...Norm's Notes

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Four Seasons. Episodes alternate between hospitality deep dives with Matt and Jack, and interviews with founders of award-winning clubs featured in *The Fit Guide*, all with the goal of helping fitness businesses deliver Five-Star experiences.

Matt Lavender commented: "When we look at the 150,000 data points collected in our first two years, it's clear that many hospitality fundamentals still aren't being delivered consistently in gyms." In today's competitive market, hospitality is the true differentiator, and I'm excited to share some of the same techniques I teach the world's top hotels, spas and restaurants."

Jack Thomas added: "Hospitality is what turns a good fitness experience into a great one. Data from our first 400 anonymous gym visits shows that fitness

still lags behind the world's top hotels and restaurants. This show is our way of helping to close that gap."

Folks, check it out by going to www.thefitguide.com/podcast.

■ **Congratulations to HABIN KWON,** the *AAU National Champion!* Habin Kwon, who is a member of *TEAM JJT*, which is associated with *JEON'S JUDO and TAEKWONDO* in my hometown of Marietta, Georgia, became the first Team JJT member to join *Team USA*, marking a proud achievement for their dojang! As a Team USA Member, Habin gains National Team selection, Junior Olympic trial invites, registration fee refunds and well-deserved recognition. **CONGRATULATIONS to HABIN KWON and TEAM JJT!**

■ I must sadly report the passing of one of my **N.C. State University** college football

teammates. His name was **PETE BAILEY.** My Wolfpack football teammates, and I, called Pete "**MAD DAWG**" BAILEY. The One and Only, Pete "Mad Dawg" Bailey passed away on **JULY 4th.** May **PETE BAILEY Rest In Eternal Peace.**

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

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

(Norm Cates, Jr. is a 50+ year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. He is the Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993 of *Club Insider*, now in its 32nd year of monthly publication. In 1981, he was *IHRSA's* First President, and a Co-Founder of the Association with *Rick Caro* and five others. In 2001, he was honored by *IHRSA* with its *DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award*, one of its highest honors. And, in 2017, he was honored with *Club Industry's Lifetime Achievement Award*. You can reach Norm by phone at **770-635-7578** or email at Norm@clubinsideronline.com.)

Cold Plunging and Older Adults:

A Caution for Strength-Focused Fitness Professionals

By: **Sara Kooperman, JD**

Cold plunging, also known as *Cold Water Immersion (CWI)*, has become a go-to recovery method for athletes, weekend warriors and wellness seekers alike. From Instagram influencers to professional athletes, everyone seems to be singing its praises. It promises faster recovery, less inflammation, better sleep and even mental clarity. But, for fitness professionals working with clients over 50, it's important to look beyond the hype and evaluate the full picture, especially when strength gains are a primary goal.

While CWI can be beneficial in certain scenarios, its impact on muscle growth is worth closer scrutiny. With aging clients, where building and maintaining lean muscle mass is critical to preventing falls, improving metabolism and maintaining independence, fitness pros should carefully consider how and when to implement cold plunging into a client's routine.

The Promise of Cold Plunging

Cold plunging has been shown to reduce delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS), improve circulation, support joint health and decrease inflammation. When clients are stiff, achy or returning from a hiatus, cold exposure can offer immediate relief that gets them back in motion. It can also enhance mental resilience; many report a feeling of accomplishment, reduced stress and even a "natural high" from the experience.

The mechanism is fairly simple: cold water causes blood vessels to constrict, which reduces swelling and dulls pain signals. After exiting the cold, the body warms back up and blood flow increases, flushing out metabolic waste products from muscles and tissues. This process can help clients feel more mobile and capable, especially after high-impact or endurance activity.

Strength Training vs. Cold Exposure: The Hidden Conflict

However, strength training operates on a different set of principles. To grow stronger, muscles must undergo small, intentional damage. This microtrauma triggers inflammation, which signals the body to begin the repair process by activating satellite cells and ramping up protein synthesis.

Here's the problem: cold plunging can suppress that inflammatory response. Emerging research shows that, when CWI is performed immediately after resistance training, it may blunt the adaptive muscle-

building response. Essentially, it tells the body, "We're done here," too soon.

For younger athletes, this might mean slightly slower gains. But, for older adults, who already experience anabolic resistance (the body's reduced responsiveness to muscle-building stimuli), this could mean no gains at all. Since muscle mass naturally declines with age, fitness professionals should be extremely cautious not to unintentionally interfere with the very adaptations they are trying to elicit.

Why Strength Is Non-Negotiable After 50

Sarcopenia, the age-related loss of muscle tissue, begins around age 40 and can accelerate rapidly if not addressed. This loss affects more than aesthetics; it compromises balance, increases fall risk, decreases metabolism and leads to frailty and reduced independence.

Strength training is one of the most powerful interventions we have to slow or reverse these effects. That's why every decision we make for older clients, from exercise programming to recovery strategies, should support this mission.

Men vs. Women: Cold Plunging Responses Differ

Interestingly, men and women may respond differently to cold water immersion. Men typically have greater muscle mass and a higher basal metabolic rate, allowing them to generate heat more efficiently and recover slightly faster from cold exposure. As a result, their tolerance for cold plunging is often higher.

Women, on the other hand, generally have a higher percentage of subcutaneous fat, which may offer some thermal protection, but they tend to experience a greater drop in core temperature during cold exposure. Hormonal fluctuations, particularly in postmenopausal women, can also impact cold tolerance and vasoconstriction. This means women might experience stronger cardiovascular effects and should be closely monitored.

Moreover, some studies suggest that estrogen may influence thermoregulation and recovery, which may lead to slightly altered effects of cold plunging on inflammation and muscle repair in women compared to men. Fitness professionals should take a personalized approach, considering not just age but also gender when advising on recovery strategies.

When to Use Cold Plunging with Older Clients

So, how can you integrate cold exposure without interfering with strength gains?

1. Time it strategically: Don't use cold plunging right after resistance training. Wait at least 4 - 6 hours before introducing cold therapy, giving the body time to begin the muscle repair process.

2. Skip it on heavy lift days: On days focused on strength, opt for other recovery techniques like foam rolling, massage or light stretching.

3. Use it after cardio or mobility work: Cold plunging is best paired with low-resistance activity. It can help reduce general fatigue and enhance mental wellbeing without interfering with muscle hypertrophy.

4. Start slow: For older clients, cold immersion should begin conservatively (1 to 2 minutes at 50 - 59°F) is a safe starting point. Monitor for signs of discomfort, dizziness or shivering.

5. Don't rely on it daily: Like any tool, overuse can backfire. Use cold therapy sparingly and with a clear purpose in the training cycle.

Final Thoughts for Fitness Professionals

Cold plunging is an exciting wellness trend, but fitness professionals must remain grounded in science and stay client-focused. For clients over 50, where strength training is not optional but essential, interfering with muscle growth is a risk not worth taking.

Encourage thoughtful application: time cold exposure away from strength sessions, consider individual tolerance and always prioritize long-term muscle



Sara Kooperman, JD

health over quick relief. Cold plunging can remain part of a balanced recovery toolkit, just not at the cost of building strength, independence and vitality in aging clients.

As always, education is key. Help your clients understand how their body responds to different recovery strategies. Empower them to choose options that support their strength goals and long-term quality of life.

(Sara Kooperman, JD, CEO of SCW Fitness Education, WATERinMOTION, and S.E.A.T. Fitness won the Most Innovating Fitness Pro by Fitness Industry Technology Council. Sara is the best-selling author of FIT FOR BUSINESS, an inductee into the National Fitness Hall of Fame, an Illinois State Businesswoman of the Year, esteemed host for NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS Monthly Talk Show and sits on the ACSM Communication & Public Information Committee. Kooperman sits on the Gold's Gym Think Tank and the canfitpro Advisory Panel and was a founding board member for the Women In Fitness Association (WIFA). Plus, Sara was recently nominated for the IDEA Fitness Leader of the Year Award. Learn more at www.sarakooperman.com.)

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Sound Baths:

A Harmonious Path to Profitability

By: **Nancy Trent**

In today's wellness-focused world, fitness clubs are constantly seeking innovative ways to elevate their offerings, attract and retain discerning clientele. One of the most exciting trends in luxury wellness is incorporating sound baths as a standalone offering or as an add-on to another service. These healing, immersive experiences, which harness the power of sound vibrations to promote relaxation, healing and rejuvenation, are not only enhancing guest experiences but also driving profitability.

The Power of Premium Instruments

At the heart of the success of these sound bath experiences are high-quality crystal singing bowls. However, not all singing bowls are created equal. To deliver the resonance and power required for an elevated healing journey the premium hospitality industry leaders and innovators are insisting on using the "Steinway" of crystal singing bowls. These bowls are handcrafted from the finest quartz, precious gemstones and earth metals and hand-finished, giving each bowl a unique look, feel and healing sound.

Experienced practitioners and wellness enthusiasts exclusively use *Crystal Tones* which is recognized as a leader in this space with over 30 years of experience innovating Alchemy Crystal Singing Bowls. Their proprietary processes result in exceptional tonality, resonance and a transformative sound that enhances vibrational wellness. Each and every instrument has a unique tone and resonance imparted by the alchemization of quartz, rubies, platinum and gold resulting in the most sought after and highest quality vibrational instruments in the world.

The Benefits of Sound Therapy

Sound therapy, a practice rooted in ancient traditions, has been shown to have a myriad of benefits for both physical and mental wellbeing. Studies have shown that sound vibrations can reduce stress, alleviate anxiety, improve sleep quality and boost overall mood. By incorporating sound baths into their offerings, wellness establishments can tap into the growing demand for holistic wellness experiences. This is an exceptional opportunity for forward-thinking spas and wellness centers to connect authentically with clientele and build their business consciously at the same time. Vibrational Sound Therapy (VST) sessions can serve as a valuable add-on to existing services, increasing

revenue potential and revolutionizing the wellness industry.

Maximizing Profitability

Sound baths can be a lucrative addition to any wellness business. By offering a variety of packages, including individual sessions, group experiences and corporate retreats, wellness providers can cater to diverse clientele and maximize revenue potential. Moreover, partnering with experienced practitioners who are skilled in using crystal singing bowls can ensure a truly transformative experience for guests.

Elevating the Brand and Enhancing the Guest Experience

Incorporating sound baths into the hospitality suite of services and sensory experiences is a strategic move that can elevate the brand image and drive customer loyalty. As more and more people seek out unique and effective ways to relax and rejuvenate, sound therapy is poised to become a staple in the luxury wellness industry. By embracing the power of sound and investing in high-quality instruments like those from *Crystal Tones*, spas and wellness centers can position themselves as leaders in the field and reap the rewards of increased profitability. Prestigious establishments like the *Four Seasons Bali* and the *Fontainebleau Las Vegas* have successfully incorporated sound baths, attracting a discerning clientele and reaffirming their commitment to luxurious wellness experiences.

Introducing sound baths as a new service is easy and requires minimal investment in training or modifications to existing spaces. Facilities can smoothly integrate VST into current offerings, such as yoga or meditation classes, during a massage, in a salt cave or simply as a welcome when guests arrive. When partnering with a reputable singing bowl, it should go hand in hand with comprehensive training, including in-person, remote and self-guided options, ensuring staff are well-prepared to deliver outstanding sound bath experiences.

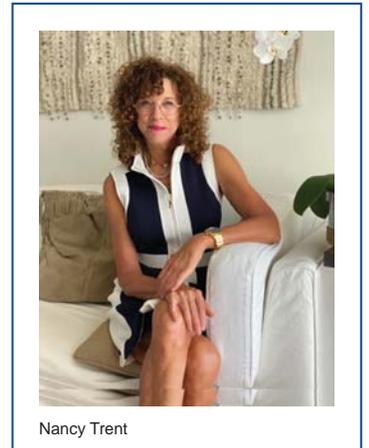
Additionally, properties that offer curated sets of bowls for retail sales present an opportunity to further boost revenue. For example, *The Lodge at Blue Sky* has introduced a unique welcome ritual featuring a single practitioner bowl for each guest, allowing them to experience the soothing effects of VST right away. This creative approach enhances the guest experience and opens the door for upselling additional services.

The luxury wellness market thrives on distinctive experiences, and sound baths are a perfect fit. Many clients are eager for new experiences, and sound baths offer a non-invasive, effective method of relaxation that resonates with guests. By combining quality staff training with attractive retail displays, facilities can unlock a significant path to increase profitability while providing clients with a genuinely transformative experience.

Incorporating crystal singing bowls and journeys into the selection of services enhances client wellbeing and positions the venue as a leader in the luxury wellness sector. With minimal investment and maximum impact, it's time to embrace the healing power of sound and watch profits soar.



(Nancy Trent is a writer and speaker, a lifelong wellness activist, a globe-trotting trend watcher and the Founder and President of *Trent & Company*, a leading wellness PR firm. *Trent & Company*, which launched many health and beauty brands, grew out of Nancy's personal and passionate commitment to helping people live longer and healthier lives. A



Nancy Trent

former journalist for *New York Magazine*, Nancy has written seven books on healthy lifestyles, serves on the editorial boards of several magazines and travels around the world speaking at conferences and trade shows on trends in the marketplace. She is a recognized expert in PR with more than 30 years of experience creating and managing highly successful campaigns. Learn more at www.trentandcompany.com or contact Nancy at nancy@trentandcompany.com.)

...Jim Thomas

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Final Thoughts: The Sale After the Sale

In gym sales, we often talk about the "sale after the sale..." what happens after the paperwork is signed? The same is true in leadership. Appreciation is the *sale after the sale* of every interaction. It's how you build loyalty. It's how you get that extra effort. It's how you inspire a culture of champions. Just like that manager did for me at 10:00PM on a Thursday. And, that's a moment I've never forgotten.

Bottom Line: If you want your team to sell more memberships, serve more clients and drive more referrals, show them you see them. Say thank you. Every day.

Because the best motivator isn't always a bigger commission. Sometimes, it's just being appreciated.

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

Make It Fun!

The Future of Fitness is Fun

By: **Jeffrey Pinkerton**

Publisher's Note: For years, each month, we have published small ads that simply say, "Make It Fun." This month, we are excited to see Jeffrey's Article on the subject of *Making It Fun!* Read on folks!



The future of fitness, cliché, I know. Every few days, another marketing email or industry newsletter shows up in my inbox promising that the riddle has been solved, the solution discovered, the code cracked. From new tech to ultra-personalized workout plans, to a new thing with a new screen that gives new insight, all promising to change your life and your business. However, as historically proven by *group* fitness, and more recently proven by pickleball, connectedness is not a reference to wifi or wearables, and being social has nothing to do with social media. It is about the people and the experience. It is about the fun. Dare I say, the *future of*

fitness is... fun.

The Formula for Fun

In her book, *The Power of Fun*, **Catherine Price** discusses the ingredients of what she terms "true fun," an experience more meaningful and impactful than just frivolous amusement or enjoyment. As an author whose personal mission is to "help people scroll less, live more and have fun," she defines "true fun" as the "confluence of three psychological states: playfulness, connection and flow." When combined, as her research suggests, these three ingredients have the power to not just shape our experiences but to change our lives.

A Fun-Do Attitude

Price defines playfulness as an attitude and perspective. It's about "having a light-hearted spirit – of not taking yourself too seriously. It does not require you to be silly, or childish, or to play games (unless you want to); it's all about your attitude."

The group fitness experience, when designed intentionally and delivered inclusively, is a safe space for adults to learn, laugh, and (prepare for my second cliché) work hard and play hard. The power of together, the motivation of the music, the coaching of the instructor, and banter among members can be the perfect place for playfulness.

Connection is Key to Fun

While Price contends that it is possible to have fun on your own (connecting with your surroundings or with yourself), the vast majority of "true fun" experiences are shared with others. Person-to-person, face-to-face connection elevates our experiences and enriches our lives.

The group fitness experience is the best place under your roof for building a world-class, shared member experience. Even pickleball has morphed into a now segmented sport with certain courts for certain skilled players (and if you're an



Jeffrey Pinkerton

avid pickleball player like me, most of your play is now coordinated by *GroupMe* group chats with friends of similar skill). By contrast, in *Group Ride*, the indoor cycling workout that I teach, my experience isn't impacted by the fitness level and skill of
 (See **Jeffrey Pinkerton** Page 18)



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...Jeffrey Pinkerton

continued from page 17

other participants. The experience is one-size-fits-all.

Finding the Flow for Fun

When you're in a "flow state," a term originally coined by psychologist **Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi**, you are focused and locked in. Price differentiates from the active and focused flow state (an athlete in the zone) as compared to the passive state of being distracted (watching Netflix) and suggests reducing digital distractions is one key to finding flow. Another one of her books, *How to Break Up With Your Phone*, is on my must-read list.

The group fitness experience purposely helps people focus only on the task at hand. They can disconnect, ditch the distractions, get lost in the music, and stay engaged in the experience. And, it's worth discussing, if your group fitness experience includes scoreboards and screens, they might just be having the opposite effect.

Forced Fitness Fun

To build more meaningful "true fun"

experiences – ones that drive playfulness, involve connection, and invoke flow – you need a plan. And, I believe that plan should focus on getting as many members as possible into group fitness. I'll save you the sales pitch of how we do it, but I invite you to give me a call, shoot me a text or send me an email. If I don't respond right away, I'm either on the pickleball court or doing a workout at MOSSA HQ, having fun. True fun.



Off the bike and pickleball court,



my workout go-to is Group Power, full-body strength training that – to borrow again from Price – has the power to change experiences at your facility and truly change lives. Also, it's the most fun way to strength train and MOSSA's most popular workout at our partner facilities. If busy rooms sound like your brand of fun, get in touch any time by email (jeffreypinkerton@mossa.net) or give me a call: **(678) 488 - 5159**.

In the meantime, here's a deeper dive into Catherine Price's research on fun, first in a 12-minute TED Talk and then in a series of shares from people having fun,

often in surprising circumstances:

Why Having Fun Is the Secret to a Healthier Life, Catherine Price, TED Talk: bit.ly/clubinsider164

What IS Fun, January 5, 2024, Catherine Price substack: bit.ly/clubinsider165

(Jeffrey Pinkerton is the Business Development Manager for MOSSA. Jeffrey can be reached by phone at **770-989-4737** or email at jeffreypinkerton@mossa.net.)

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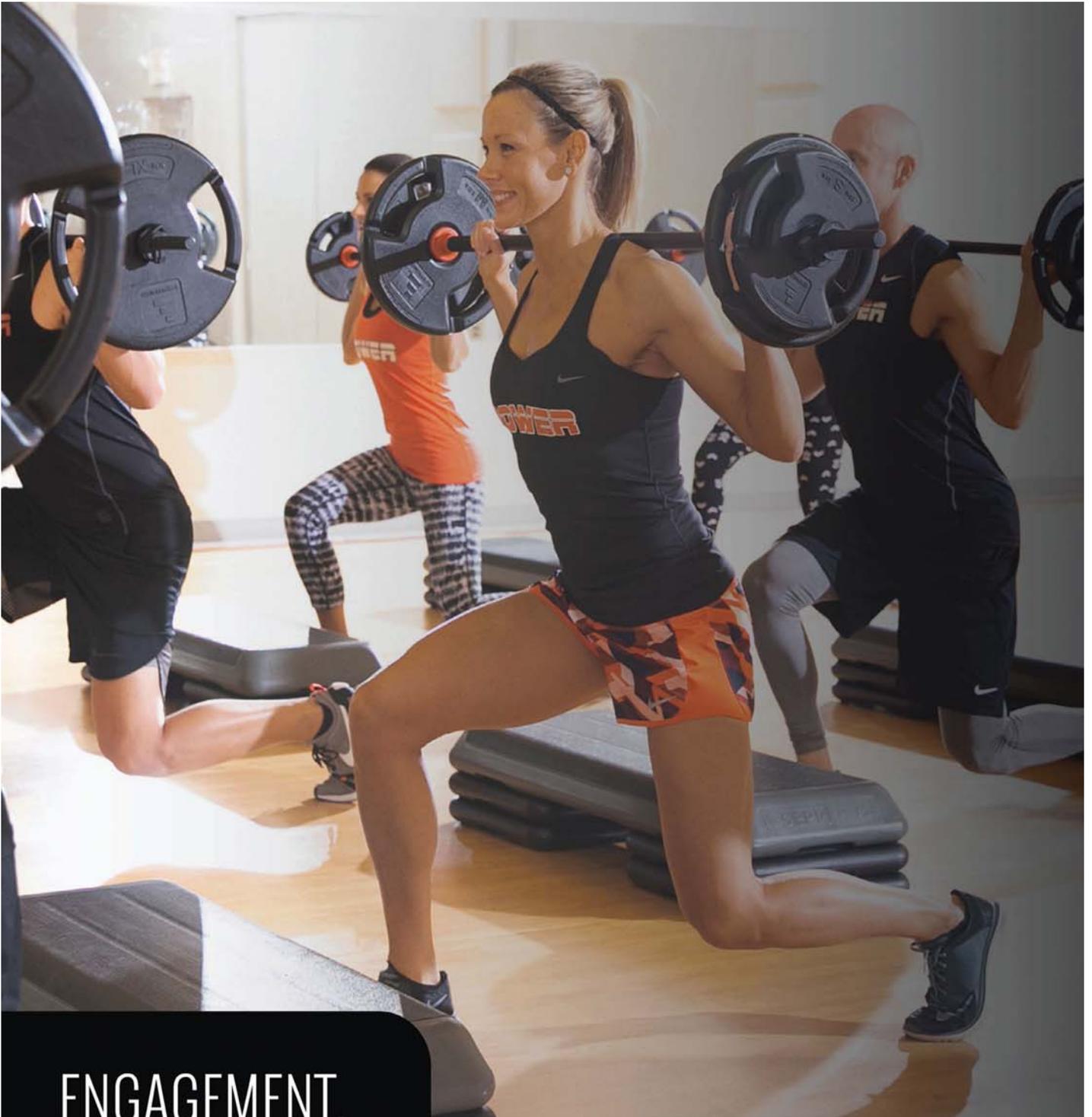
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