

Norm Cates'

# CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 26 YEARS OF TRUST

## URBN Playground *Lessons From the Field of Amenity Management*



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# CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 26 YEARS OF TRUST

## URBN Playground *Lessons From the Field of Amenity Management*

**By: Justin Cates**

During my time studying the art of management at the *University of Georgia's Terry College of Business*, one of my favorite thought exercises was to be assigned two companies that seemingly had nothing to do with each other and use one to develop ideas that could help the other. At first sight, we are blinded by the traditional product or service a company might offer. This is tunnel vision, and the remedy is to develop a wider view. Like zooming out on the microscopic cells of the human body or the stars of the cosmos, a much bigger picture is revealed. From

there, connections once unseen can be made.

Over the past 50 years, the health and fitness club industry has evolved immensely. However, that evolution has not occurred in a vacuum. The world around our industry has evolved, as well. This has spawned further change in our industry, and so forth and so on. Today, the health and fitness club industry has become a mix of many disciplines, and to that end, to learn and further develop ourselves, we cannot just look within for the next great idea.

This month's cover story hopes to assist in providing a snapshot of that wider view. **Jeremy Brutus and Amy**

**Blitz** are previous veterans of the health and fitness club industry. Today, their company is **URBN Playground**, and it is a young and innovative one in the amenity management space for residential and corporate developments. Once not even on the radar because the differences were so vast, today, the applicability of lessons from within the amenity management space are becoming more apparent.

To lead you through what some of those are and what some of them could be in the future, I welcome you to read on as we interview **Jeremy Brutus and Amy Blitz**, Co-Founders of **URBN Playground**.  
(See *URBN Playground* Page 12)

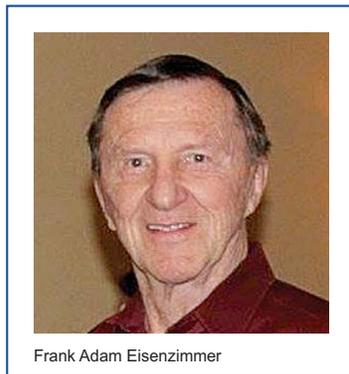


The URBN Playground Team

### Frank Adam Eisenzimmer *April 12, 1936 - August 1, 2019*

**Frank A. Eisenzimmer** passed peacefully, surrounded by family, on August 1, 2019, at the age of 83. Frank was born in Devil's Lake, North Dakota on April 12, 1936 to **Frank and Francis (Welk) Eisenzimmer**. The family moved to Oregon during World War II. He graduated from Gresham Union High School in 1954 and married his high school sweetheart, **Myrna (Houghton)** in 1956.

Early on, Frank found a love for health and fitness. Shortly out of high school, he created a workout space in his dad's barn. He actually made his own weights out of concrete in coffee cans. He  
(See *Frank Eisenzimmer* Page 6)



Frank Adam Eisenzimmer

### PTR Mourns the Loss of Dennis Van der Meer

**HILTON HEAD ISLAND, S.C.** - Professional Tennis Registry (PTR) is sad to inform the tennis world of the passing of its *Founder, former Chairman and President, Dennis Van der Meer*. After a lengthy illness, Van der Meer passed quietly with his loving wife, **Pat**, by his side. He was 86.

"Dennis was a mentor, friend, educator and advocate for countless tennis coaches around the world," said **Dan Santourm**, PTR CEO. "Dennis embodied the PTR manta; he truly Made a World of Difference."

Indeed, Van der Meer dedicated his life to tennis, and more importantly,  
(See *Dennis Van der Meer* Page 6)



Dennis Van der Meer

## Inside the Insider: Edition #308

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- Exercise IS Medicine! - **By: Mike Alpert**
- How Great Leaders Think - **By: Charley Swayne**
- How to Capture a Larger Piece of the Wearable Pie - **By: Ron Alterio**
- Maximize the Enforceability of Your Liability Waiver - **By: Paul R. Bedard, Esquire**
- How To Own A Gym Business - From Dream to Reality - **By: Jim Thomas**
- Key Pieces of Advice to Make Your Club Better - **By: Melissa Knowles**
- And, of Course, *Norm's Notes*

## Norm's Notes

### Let's All PRAY For America!

■ **Let's all PRAY for America!** Folks, I'm changing the format of this month's **Norm's Notes** by leading off with the suggestion that **all of us pray for America! Now!** The mass murders in **El Paso, Texas** and **Dayton, Ohio** made it *very clear* that our beautiful America has become a place of danger for all of us. How very, very sad that **fact is**. *If* you believe in **God Almighty**, like I do, **I beseech you to say a prayer now for all those killed and injured**, and not just for the folks in El Paso and Dayton, but way back to the beginning of this sick mania years ago. And, **we should pray for help from the good Lord to change the direction our great country is heading**. The answer will not be easy to find, but maybe with God's help, we can find it. Now, like all of you reading this, I'm going to press on with life with the **sincere and deeply heartfelt hope and prayer that God will help our great country, our great America. GOD BLESS AMERICA!!!**



Norm Cates

■ **Hello Everybody! This is your Club Insider Publisher and Tribal Leader Since 1993 checking in with Club Insider Edition #308!**

■ **Is America a great country, or what?** One of the things that makes America truly great is... and you may have guessed what I'm going to write here is **FOOTBALL!** This month, the college football season will kick off on **August 24** with the *Miami Hurricanes* squaring off against the **University of Florida Gators** in Orlando, Florida. My lawyer brother, whom I refer to as **GATOR DAVE**, went to undergraduate and law school at Florida. So, naturally, I must put up with his Gatorism, but I don't think I

can hold that against him on August 24th. I'm an **N.C. State Football Fan** because I went to school and played football there. Living in Georgia, and because my son, **JUSTIN**, graduated from the **University of Georgia**, I'm also a **Bulldog Fan**. But, for the upcoming *August 24th Miami vs. Florida game*, I'm going to root for the Florida Gators to beat the Hurricanes! When you finish reading these Norm's Notes, be sure to glance to the right to read my **"Insider Speaks"** editorial on **Page #5** entitled: **The JOY of Football!** And, **STAY TUNED, Folks!**

■ You probably noticed the **obituary** on **Page #3**, and I'm very sad to report that

**FRANK EISENZIMMER**, who was a great American, and one of our industry's greatest early club pioneers, the husband of **MYRNA**; the **Father of my friend, MARK EISENZIMMER**; daughters, **KRISTY WOODCOCK (MICHAEL)** and **KAREN BUTZER (ROD)**; **10 grandchildren** and **13 great-grandchildren**, has passed away. **Before Frank was a club man with his and Mark's three great Cascade Athletic Clubs in Gresham and Portland, Oregon and Vancouver, Washington, Frank was a fireman and a builder.** His story is truly an amazing one, and I sit here with sadness in my heart for his loss. See the **Obituary** starting on **Page #3. May FRANK EISENZIMMER Rest In Peace.**

■ **Thanks to BIG JOHN McCARTHY**, and the folks at the **Professional Tennis Registry (PTR)**, for informing us about the passing of **DENNIS Van der MEER**. I didn't know Dennis, but his reputation and fame in the tennis world preceded him, as he was the **Founder, former Chairman and President of the Professional Tennis Registry**. Dennis died with his wife, **PAT**, by his side. See the **Press Release** starting on **Page #3. May DENNIS VAN DER MEER Rest In Peace.**

■ **Speaking of Florida in my previous Note about football**, it was nice recently being in touch with my friend, **JOE CIRULLI**. Joe, (See *Norm's Notes Page 8*)

### About Club Insider

## CELEBRATING 26 YEARS OF TRUST

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# “Insider Speaks”

## *The JOY of Football*

By: Norm Cates

The game of football is *not* for the *faint of heart*. In fact, the game of football became what it became in America because it taught those like me, young American men who had started playing the game when we were 9 or 10 years old and played the game for 13 years, how to deal with adversity and pain. It also taught us all how to be very dedicated and determined when trying to achieve a goal in life. Football also taught all of us who played the game a deep work ethic that, in all cases I'm aware of, has lasted for a lifetime. These are work ethics that my son, **Justin**, my partner in **Club Insider**, and I learned and retained from our very valuable experiences playing football.

**The JOY of Football** is *real* and is *shared by millions of us* who've played the game. And, we share the **JOY of Football** with those like my brother, **Gator Dave**, who have not played it but *still love the game of football very much anyway*.

**The JOY of Football** has been made possible because of the men who've dedicated their lives to teaching the game to young men and coaching them to perfect their talents and efforts in the game. Coaches like the one and only late **George Flood**, my beloved *High School Head Football Coach at Rome Free Academy (RFA)* in Rome, New York. Coach George Flood was a former United States Marine, and if that doesn't mean anything to you, then consider the work ethic Coach Flood taught and instilled in us at RFA: Every Summer on or about August 1st, our Team would report for **3 - A - Day practices**. You read that *right*. For two long weeks, we would practice *three times a day... early morning, mid-afternoon and early evening*. To say that this 3 - A - Day practice ritual made men out of us pretty quick would be a real understatement.

In Rome, New York, I was blessed by a wonderful Italian family, the **Dominick and Loretta Marchione Family**, the parents of my best friend, **Russ Marchione**. Just before my senior year at RFA, my now late Dad was transferred in his job as a jet engine tech rep with Pratt & Whitney to Morehead City, North Carolina. When I found out about the news that, right before my senior year and my last high school football season, I was going to be forced to move to Morehead City, N.C., a tiny town on the coast of North Carolina which had a high school that was about 20% of the size of Rome Free Academy, which had 3,200 students, I was devastated. That meant that, during my senior year, I'd be playing football at a tiny school with a tiny football team, and the competition would not be good. When I told my best friend, Russ, about the devastating news, he thought about it and then suggested that I move into his home with him and his Mom and Dad for our senior year. He explained that his

sister, **Loretta**, was going away to nursing school so they had a spare bedroom.

I was thrilled and truly thankful for the opportunity, so I stayed in Rome, New York while my family moved to Morehead City. Remaining at RFA, I was *Co-Captain of our Varsity Football Team* my senior year. There, I was also honored by being named to the *All New York State Football Team*, and I earned a full football scholarship to **N.C. State University** in Raleigh, North Carolina for my efforts. A year later, I was also elected *Co-Captain* of my *N.C. State Freshman Football Team*. I played Offensive Guard, and during my senior year at N.C. State, I was honored by being named to the *1st Team All Atlantic Coast Conference Team* and was named to the *Honorable Mention All American Football Team*.

This football experience at RFA and N.C. State changed my life forever. I will be forever grateful to Russ Marchione and his beloved Mom and Dad, Dominick and Loretta Marchione, for taking me in and giving me a home for nine months during our high school senior year. I will also be forever thankful to Coach Flood and his staff at RFA, as well as to **Coach Earl Edwards** and his staff at N.C. State for the lessons in life they taught me through football.

Thinking back on the lessons I learned as a football player, and yes, the **JOY** I received from having done so, I cannot put into words the **VALUE** and **TREASURE** that experience in football has meant to my life. **The JOY of Football** will **always** be with me, and here I sit on this *1st day in August* greatly looking forward to the first college football game between *The University of Florida vs Miami University on August 24th*.

### **A True JOY in Life! The JOY of Football!**

*If YOU don't have a true JOY in your life, I invite you to consider FOOTBALL, especially College Football, as a new source of JOY in your life.* Each year, you will be among an excited fraternity of millions and millions of American college, and yes, pro football fans, and yes, men and women, whose lives are enriched and made much greater and more **FUN** by their **LOVE** of the game and the **JOY** it gives them.

*(Norm Cates, Jr. is a 43-year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. Cates is the Founder and Publisher of Club Insider, now in its 26th year of publication. Cates was IHRSA's First President, and a Co-Founder with Rick Caro and five others, in 1981. In 2001, IHRSA honored Cates with its DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award, one of its highest honors. In 2017, Cates was honored with Club Industry's Lifetime Achievement Award. Cates can be reached by phone at 770-635-7578 or email at Norm@clubinsideronline.com)*

# Exercise IS Medicine!

By: **Mike Alpert**

For my article this month, I want to write about how I got started on this **Exercise IS Medicine** journey and also recognize some amazing people that inspire me to keep going.

Back in 1992, while I was serving as one of the Managing Partners of *The Athletic Club of Bend*, I was fortunate to be able to work with a little five-year-old boy who had Spina Bifida. His name is **Gabe West**, and today, he is 28 years old. Twice a week, his mother would bring him in to the club where I would take him into the warm water side of our 25-meter pool and work with him. The work was actually play time as I would help him do summersaults in the water and walk him around in the water where he felt buoyant and like he could move his hips. The happiness that this brought to him, and the way he would hold onto me, is something that I have never forgotten. He was the moving force that got me hooked, so to speak, on using a health club venue to serve other children who were dealing with chronic illnesses and chronic injuries. Every week, I saw the impact that was happening... not only for the children, but for their families as well. It seemed natural that, if this had such a positive effect on children, it would do even more for adults who struggled with chronic illnesses and chronic injuries. So, the journey began and continues today thanks to the hard work, passion and dedication of the managers and staff at our *Claremont Club*.

## People Who Inspire Me

Let's move on to the people who inspire me and make me grateful and proud that I know and work with them. I have written about **Zein Youssef** in previous articles, but now, I want to share Zein's own words about how exercise has helped him. Zein wrote:

*"Hello, my name is Zein Youssef, and I am 12 years old. I have been battling different cancers since I was five and a half. I was first diagnosed with stage 4 neuroblastoma, after which I was in remission, relapsed in my brain. After three long years of treatment, I was finally in remission from both cancers. But then, a new one showed up in 2017 and came back again after removing it surgically in 2018. My cancers were all aggressive, and their treatments were always so long. Some left me not able to move and extremely tired. When I started training with **Chris Fitzgerald** earlier this year, I was barely able to move, so he put together an awesome plan for me and helped me build my stamina every day. I can now lift weights and do a three-minute plank! I have always believed in myself, and I knew I had it in me since I'm used to pushing through difficult circumstances. But, it is awesome to have someone like Chris believe in you and work hard to make it happen for me."*

Zein also gets swim lessons and hopes to become a member of our swim team soon. **Coaches John and Tresa** love

his passion for swimming and his drive to make the team.

Then, there is **Linda Johnson** who I wrote about in 2017. Linda went through our *Living Well After Cancer Program* back in June of 2011. She wrote me a letter that still has a prominent place on my desk. Linda has stage 4 metastatic cancer in the pleura surrounding both lungs and in multiple locations throughout her spine and both hips. The following are excerpts from her letter:

*"The treadmill has been a challenge for me both physically and mentally. The whole time I'm walking, the word Cancer... Cancer... keeps playing over and over in my head. I feel like I'm trying to run away from it on the treadmill, but I know that I can't outrun it. I've been using the weight room and cardio room specifically to improve my shape and to give me a fighting chance at the next treatment. I want to be strong for this fight. I'm convinced that exercise can improve the survival of first-time breast cancer patients. I'm so thrilled that your club is giving so many women the opportunity to help themselves survive! I hope they understand the importance and the necessity of a lifestyle change. My own impending death has been a sure thing. I have an approximately 2% five-year survival chance, and I've learned to live with that every day. But, on that damned treadmill in your cardio room recently, I had a strange new thought... **What if I live? It had never occurred to me before. You gave me that sliver of hope with this membership.***



Mike Alpert

**What if I live?** You asked me if the program had changed my life. **What if I live?** Thank you so very much, Mike... I'm going to try."

These are some of my heroes. These are people who put everything into perspective for me and who make me thankful and grateful every single day. I look up to them, and I admire them. I hope their stories will inspire you to also take up the torch.

## Exercise IS Medicine!

(Mike Alpert is the President and CEO of The Claremont Club in Claremont, California, and he can be reached at [malpert@claremontclub.com](mailto:malpert@claremontclub.com).)

## ...Frank Eisenzimmer

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invited friends to come train with him... the start of a later career.

Frank worked for the Portland Fire Department for 17 years before chasing his passion for friends, fun and fitness. He actually left his fire department career and retirement to go all-in to pursue the creation of *Gresham Court Club* in 1977 with wife, Myrna. The club was later renamed *Cascade Athletic Clubs* as the facility grew

to a multi-sport campus and additional locations opened.

Frank always possessed a wide variety of interests and chased everything with excellence... an all-in level. He was a body builder, competitive racquetball player, wildlife painter, art collector, influential political figure for a season with a passion for helping small businesses in Oregon... and an inspiring leader of his ever-expanding family.

His leadership included the ability to build up others and trust their leadership.

Frank passed the fitness baton to his son, **Mark**, and son's wife, **Debbie**, which allowed Frank and Myrna to retire young and travel the world for many years.

Frank's was a life well-lived. His family feels grateful and so proud of him. Frank is survived by his loving wife of 63 years, Myrna, brother **Daniel (Sharon)**, sister **Darlene Lefevere**, son **Mark (Debbie)**, daughters **Kristy Woodcock (Michael)** and **Karen Butzer (Rod)**, 10 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.

Frank's family adored him and

learned to work hard, play hard and love Jesus through his leadership. Everyone gathered around to love him, honor him and thank him during his last moments on this earth. A Celebration of Life service will be held **August 28th, 3:00PM** at *Good Shepherd Community Church* in Boring, Oregon.

In lieu of flowers, please make a donation in memory of Frank Eisenzimmer to the *Portland-area Salvation Army*: 8495 SE Monterey Avenue, Happy Valley, OR 97086.

## ...Dennis Van der Meer

continued from page 3

to coaching. He was the teacher among teachers, constantly seeking information on biomechanics, methodology and techniques. As an innovator in the field of tennis education, Van der Meer believed in sharing knowledge.

During the early stages of PTR, known then as USPTR, Van der Meer found

that only limited educational materials existed for tennis teaching professionals. So, he set about to provide a series of handbooks and manuals by assembling the finest educators to write on their areas of expertise. To compliment the vast collection of written materials, he produced a large number of videos illustrating teaching techniques. Since the mid-1970s, hundreds of thousands worldwide have learned to teach tennis in ways developed by Dennis

Van der Meer.

"The industry lost a legend this week," said **Karl Hale**, *PTR Board President*. "Dennis did more for the growth of tennis and coaching education than any one individual in the history of the game."

Van der Meer also touched countless lives through his Standard Method of teaching, *World Class Academy* and *TennisUniversity*. The boy who grew up traveling through African villages with

missionary parents became a coach so renowned that **Billie Jean King**, **Margaret Court**, **Amanda Coetzer** and others, sought his expertise.

Although tennis lost an icon, he will live on in generations of tennis coaches and players to come. Known for his uncanny ability to remember the name of everyone he met, his name will live on in our hearts. Dennis Van der Meer's legacy will live on forever.



FitLife Club Network would like to thank our Associate Members for helping to make our 2019 Summer Conference a success! Your continued support will help us prosper for another 40 years!

## Thank You

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**FitLife Club Network 2020 Summer Conference and Trade Show**

July 19-21st, 2020 in Bend, Oregon.

*Contact Neal Simpson: [neal@fitlifeclubs.com](mailto:neal@fitlifeclubs.com); 541-379-2743*

## ...Norm's Notes

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without a doubt, is one of the best health club operators in the world. Evidence of that is that **Joe has 28,000 members in his three clubs in Gainesville, Florida, a/k/a Gatorville.** Recently, **PETE MOORE of Integrity Square** conducted one of his **HALO TALKS** interviews with Joe, and I enjoyed listening to it. I think you will, too, so I invite you to go to **www.HALOTALKS.com** to check it. And, last month, Pete did a Halo Talks interview with my partner and son, **JUSTIN CATES** and I, and you

might find it interesting. It was definitely **FUN** for us! Pete also recently *Halo Talked* with our long-time friend and Club Insider advertiser, **DARON ALLEN, of Visual Fitness Planner.** Check it out at **www.HALOTALKS.com.**

■ **Speaking of Club Insider advertisers, PETE MOORE** has been our **Premium Page #5 Advertiser** for the past six months, and *he's renewed his ad placement in Club Insider for six more months starting in October. Thank you for your advertising investment, Pete!* So, this month, if you take a look at **Page #5**, you will see my

**JOY of Football** article. I hope you enjoy it. *Next month, Page #5* will be available for a **one-time ad placement in our September edition** before Integrity Square returns. If you want information about **placing this one-time Premium Page #5 ad in September**, contact me today at **Norm@clubinsideronline.com.**

■ In case you missed it, **FitLife** was our June cover story. This month, I'd like to **tip my black hat** and **send a heartfelt long distance THANK YOU** to **NEAL SIMPSON** and all the **FitLife Members** who celebrated the **Association's 40th Anniversary** at the **40th Annual Conference and Trade Show** and who appeared in the cool "**Thank You, Norm**" video of several hundred members that Neal made and sent to me. **Please check out the Page #7 complimentary full-page ad we've published for Neal and all of their FitLife Member Club Owners and FitLife Associate Members who helped sponsor this special 40th Anniversary event.** I hope you all will contact those **FitLife** sponsors and do some business with them. *Neal, making and sending that cool video was a very kind and thoughtful act, so sincere Thanks to you and the members for doing it.*

■ Whatever you do, **don't miss the Club Industry Show**, coming up at the **Chicago Hilton October 9 - 11, 2019** with the **Trade Show set for October 10 - 11th.** And, be sure to visit our **Club Insider Advertisers** who're exhibiting at the show, including, **ABC Financial (Booth #402)** and **Sports & Fitness Insurance (Booth #401)**, and of course, **JUSTIN** and I, here at **Club Insider (Booth #416).** **We look forward to seeing you!**

■ While you've got your calendar out booking the **Club Industry Show**, be sure to go to **March, 2020** and book your attendance at the **39th Annual IHRSA Conference and Trade Show!** For **IHRSA 2020**, I'm very happy and excited to tell you that we are heading back to the world class city of **San Diego, California**, and, I **URGE** you to be there! Folks, if you only attend two fitness industry events a year, make them **Club Industry** and **IHRSA!** **The IHRSA International Convention & Trade Show** is world-renowned for its vibrant trade show, motivational keynote speakers, expert educational sessions and buzzing networking events. **IHRSA 2020** will feature more than 400 trade show exhibitors from around the globe, as well as over 100 education sessions taught by some of the industry's most successful individuals. And, if you have a health and fitness products company, and you want to boost your sales big time every year, be sure to book space to exhibit at **IHRSA 2020.** Contact **TOM HUNT, IHRSA's Vice President of Exhibit Sales**, at **(800) 228 - 4772** or **(617) 951 - 0055, Ext.152.** **Join us and thousands of your peers March 18 - 21 in San Diego!** **We hope to see you there!**

■ **THANKS** and **APPRECIATION** to my friend, **CHARLEY SWAYNE**, for his article contribution this month on **Page #20** entitled: **How Great Leaders Think.** Thanks also to Charley for sending me a copy of his new book entitled: **How to Make Great Decisions.**

■ *What would you do if you awakened one day and you had nothing to do with your life?* Here in Georgia, they're building a fitness park sponsored by the **The American Association of Retired People (AARP)**, which may be a way for folks to avoid being faced with answering that brutal question. **But, I ask: What would YOU do if you had nothing to do with your life? Now that I've officially been a witness to a few of the trials and tribulations of becoming a **Geezer** for a few years now, I've made up my mind that I'm going to start writing an occasional **Norm's Note** with commentary on what I'm going through in the process of aging. Yeah, I know most of you are way younger than me. But, for clarity, let me explain that I'm writing this Norm's Note to my brethren who are 65 or older. **Getting old is no picnic folks. But, it's going to happen to all who are lucky enough to make it to old age. Surely, and importantly, we must all remember that none of us are getting out of here alive!** And, yes, you can quote me on that. **Haha!****

My purpose for dedicating an occasional **Norm's Note** to the experience you and I, people who're 65 or older, are going through with aging is to help anyone dealing with this life change. So, just in case you did not catch it, I wrote: "**you and I**" in the previous sentence. That is because I want this Norm's Note to be **something you contribute**, so you and I can team up to help others figure out how to navigate this geezer territory. By the way, as I write this, I'm giving thought to and seeking ideas of what we can **name this Norm's Note...** something like **A NORM's NOTE From Geezerville** comes to mind! That's a cute little name I just came up while sitting here writing this Note to y'all right now while wrapping up these Norm's Notes for August. So, starting with this edition, I hereby present the occasional **Norm's Note From Geezerville:**

In Geezerville, you start to have things go wrong with your mind and your body. There are lots of things in your mind and body that can go wrong and make your life less than desirable. For example, right now, I'm suffering from: **#1 - Being too damn fat.** That all started when I was in the 5th grade, and I have fought it all in my life. **And, when I say "fought it," I truly mean that I have fought it.** Over my lifetime, I've lost 100 pounds twice, and now, I'm working on the goal of losing 45 pounds. My hope is I will keep it off this time! Then, of course, I suffer from a host of things caused by item #1, which we will call it from now on.

A whole host of things seem to find their way from #1, such as back pain. *(See Norm's Notes Page 10)*

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*"I highly recommend Bill McBride/BMC3 on all challenges club operators face with their business. He relates well with the on-site team, ownership and is collaborative in delivering best practices. His expertise, authenticity, integrity and follow-through are beyond reproach. I trust him greatly."*

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...Norm's Notes

continued from page 8

**BACK PAIN ALL THE TIME!** And, here's a new one for me, one that is less than a year old... **hip problems.** This one is only on my right hip, thank God, but it is an absolute pain to endure. I dread when the left one goes, and I am hoping to avoid it by losing weight in time. My friends tell me to get a hip replacement, but I want to try losing the weight first! Now, enough about my problems with #1. Suffice it to say, I imagine I'm not alone. **So, let's talk about YOU! If you're 65 or older,** or you know someone

who is, why not pass this on to them and ask them to help us. Even if you are much younger, you can help humanity by joining this cause. What are the most pressing issues you feel that you face? Write to me about them at **Norm@clubinsideronline.com.** Share with me, not just your problems, but WHAT you are doing to cope with those problems. What we want to create here is a **"Geezerville Handbook for Survival of Old Age"** that will become a quick reference to help geezers like me from now until kingdom come! How does that sound!

**Now, if I can remember to do it, stay tuned for next month's Norm's Note**

from Geezerville! Haha!

■Folks, the timing of my receipt of the following **Norm's Note** from **my wise and experienced good friend, CECIL SPEARMAN** is amazing! Cecil is **88** (or he may be **89** by now). And, he wrote the following to me to try to help his fellow readers who face the LED Light challenge at their tennis clubs. Folks, this is the same kind of help I'm seeking from you in the world of aging issues if you are 65 or older.

■My long-time club business friend, and former IHRSA PRESIDENT, **CECIL SPEARMAN**, Owner of The Laguna Niguel Racquet and Sports Club in California, tells me he's located a source for LED tennis court lights that are made in the USA! Importantly, the lights pay off in six years because of utility savings. The foot candle power provided is twice the output as that of standard lights. For more information, Cecil says you can call him at his club. Call Cecil Spearman at (949) 375 - 3785 or email him at **ces-ceo@spearmanclubs.com**

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

■Let's all PRAY for America!

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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've served in Iraq, Afghanistan, and around the world. God bless America's Policemen and women and Firemen and women and keep them safe. God bless you, your family and your club(s). God Bless America! Laus Deo!

(Norm Cates, Jr. is a 43-year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. Cates is the Founder and Publisher of Club Insider, now in its 26th year of publication. Cates was IHRSA's First President, and a Co-Founder with Rick Caro and five others, in 1981. In 2001, IHRSA honored Cates with its DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award, one of its highest honors. In 2017, Cates was honored with Club Industry's Lifetime Achievement Award. Cates can be reached by phone at 770-635-7578 or email at **Norm@clubinsideronline.com**)

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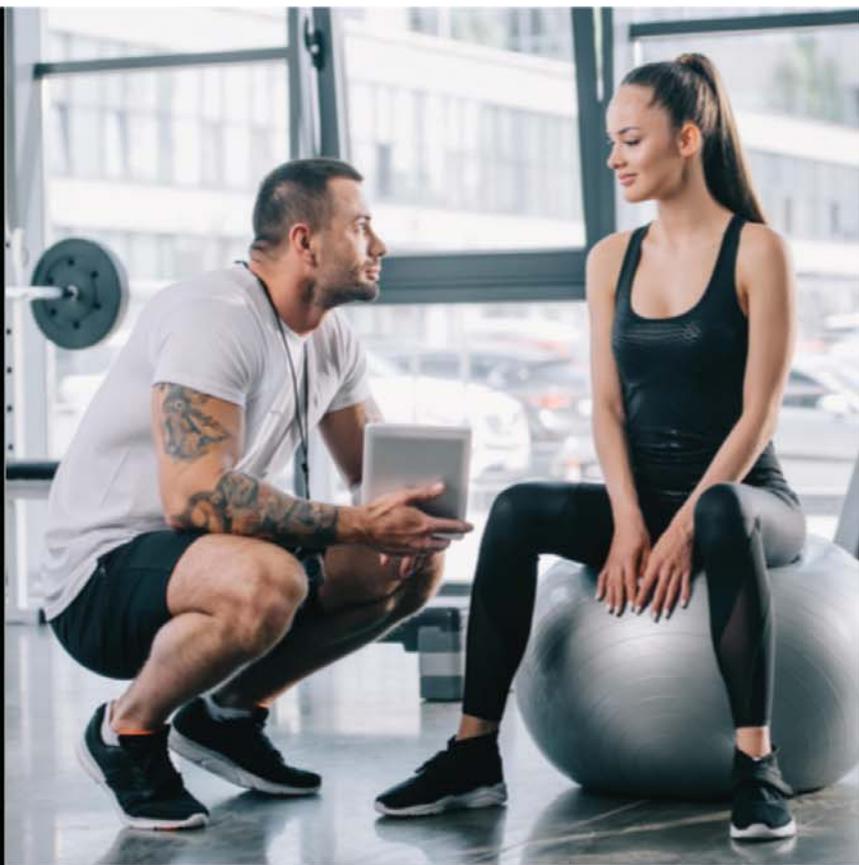
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## ...URBN Playground

continued from page 3

### An Interview With Jeremy Brutus and Amy Blitz, Co-Founders of URBN Playground

**Club Insider (C.I.)** - Where are you both from, and where did you grow up?

**Jeremy Brutus (JB)** - I grew up in New York City and am a lifelong resident.

**Amy Blitz (AB)** - I was born in Brooklyn and grew up in New Jersey.

**C.I.** - Where and what did you both study?  
**JB** - I went to *Queens College* and studied Political Science/Law.

**AB** - I went to *Trenton State College*, now called The College of New Jersey, and I studied Communications.

**C.I.** - Did either of you play sports? If so, what lessons did they teach that you apply today?

**JB** - I played football. It taught me perseverance and passion to a cause. In my third year, I hurt my knee so I really felt terrible being out of the mix and not part of the team because I wasn't able to play. So, I joined the swim team, and low and behold, I just fell in love with the water. I was really good at swimming, and then, I became a lifeguard. I got a job at a big hotel and that's how I got into fitness, really. I was a product of circumstance to some extent.

**AB** - I was a theater nerd. For me, if you can get on stage in front of a lot of people, sing a song or act a scene, it always made me feel a lot stronger as a person. Though I loved to do it, I always had that little feeling of stage fright, and it was nerve-racking. So, to get up there and get it done is empowering.

**C.I.** - I'm sure now, being in leadership,

having that experience helps when you have a team looking at you for answers.

**AB** - It sure does. I feel very comfortable speaking in front of people and off the cuff. I also use a lot of those skills in how I deal with people because when you study acting, you learn how to really listen to someone and interpret physical and verbal cues. I really use that a lot in my daily life in how I relate to people.

**C.I.** - Please tell us about how you became involved in the health and fitness club industry, and specifically, please tell us about your time together at *American Leisure*. And, who were your mentors along the way?

**JB** - As I mentioned, I got into swimming and got a lifeguard job. Then, I worked at the Peninsula Hotel, which is a world class hotel. They are intense brand fanatics. Even now, 20 years later, they only have nine or ten hotels because they are really focused on the super high-end luxury customer. There, I was working with **Annbeth Eschbach**, and we were at the pool one day, just talking about life. At the time, I was studying political science, and I wanted to go to law school. We were talking about how I loved being with people and talking to people. She said, 'If you love what you are doing, don't worry about the money or anything else. Just do what you love and be happy with your life and career.' She gave me this sage advice, and I actually ditched law school and stayed in this business at that point. It was 20 years ago, so I don't know if she remembers it, but because of that advice, she impacted my life and changed the course of it. Another mentor of mine is **Rick Caro**.

**C.I.** - It's wise and it goes back to that old saying: If you enjoy what you're doing, you'll never work a day in your life. And, I'm sure you feel the same way.

**JB** - Yes, I do. That's definitely relevant today, but back 20 years ago, when I was young



Jeremy Brutus



Amy Blitz

and in school, it wasn't the common thing. You had to do what your parents told you to do. It was a different mindset. Then, Amy and I met at *American Leisure - Stuyvesant Town*. I was the *Executive Director*, and Amy was the *General Manager*. We had a very successful partnership there driving ancillaries and membership in a traditional commercial club setting.

**AB** - I was working for a nonprofit theater and needed extra income. Since I loved exercise, especially running, in my spare time, I decided to go to personal training school to earn extra income. I found my way to being a trainer, and subsequently, a manager for *American Leisure*. The rest is history. Jeremy was a very helpful mentor to me when I was starting out since I was brand new to the amenity management arena.

**C.I.** - When and how did you reconnect to create URBN Playground?

**JB** - I was working as the *National Director of Development* for a consulting firm, and Amy was running a boutique fitness training business. It became evident to us that we wanted more. We wanted to control the product in order to bring superior version to the market. Hence, URBN Playground was born.

### URBN Playground

**C.I.** - Please take us through a general synopsis of URBN Playground.

**JB** - Our original idea for URBN Playground was to change what the amenity management industry was doing. We were both working for staffing companies, and the industry had pretty much just become about staffing. We felt we could provide much better value. We could provide highly trained staff who know how to interact with people. We could deliver on the client's

goals by having people be part of a team instead of having a random person show up or not show up, thus potentially not making the schedule requirements on a day-to-day basis. We knew we could do it better.

Importantly, we were able to think about amenities in a different way and really run it like a club business. Some of our amenities charge \$3,000 a year for membership in a residential building. In large communities, some are paying a few hundred dollars a year. The whole membership model that has happened in the health and fitness club industry has moved right into residential.

**C.I.** - That's very important for health and fitness clubs when they consider who their competitors truly are now because that was not always the case.

**JB** - I think there is something to be said for residential. The convenience factor is so important for people that they are even willing to pay membership fees in their own buildings for a club, which was never the case ten years ago. Gyms were free where people lived; gyms were free in hotels, but you have to pay at many places now. So, the power of customer service and the power of understanding your customer lifecycle is so important.

More about our background, we have a specifically-defined *Vision, Mission and Ethos*:

**Vision** - To make a difference in the life of every resident or customer in the communities we serve.

**Mission** - To create unforgettable experiences through amenity and lifestyle design, focusing on creating connections and meaningful rituals within buildings, neighborhoods and cities.

**Ethos** - We take you seriously, and ourselves less seriously. We believe in the business of fun, and we believe in a strategic approach to Amenities that drives business and ensures utilization. We get excited thinking of ways to enhance your community, and to create connections

(See *URBN Playground Page 14*)



An URBN Playground Amenity



# 125 New Members Avg. Per Month, Who Would Never Have Stepped Foot Into a Gym Before!

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We'd built our boot camp to over 400 people, and then the oil field crisis happened. It just crashed, plummeted, and fitness was not something that people were willing to pay for.

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**"...in the first month, we made over \$250,000 just with the 20/30 program!"**

We had just gotten back from IHRSA. The week before that, Aaron was sitting in bankruptcy lawyer offices. It was very scary at the time. We didn't know what our future was going to be.

I was terrified. We didn't have the money to do this license, and then the home office wanted me to come and ask these people that didn't have any money, to drop this amount of money on a 30-day program, because

at the time I didn't know it was a long-term program. They wanted me to do this and I thought, "Who's going to work this stuff and we're going to run a boot camp and I have a son, and we have a marriage. I don't even understand. Where is your mind in all of this?"



Jennifer Stafford - 20/30 Fast Track Licensee

**"...now we have people that would have never stepped foot into a gym."**

I had NO IDEA how simple it all really was going to be.

**"Within the first year, we put over 1,500 people through the program..."**

You actually get to DO the program before you introduce it to your club. So, I said, "If I lose 15 pounds, it would be a win. The first week I was down 13 pounds and super excited, pumped! and They said to me, "Oh, you've only got two pounds to go and you'll be at your goal." Of course, I'm competitive, so I thought, "Oh no, we'll see how far we can take this!" By the time I got to training, I was already down 20 pounds in two weeks!

**"We produced 1.6 million the first year! It's just been phenomenal."**

From that point, we got introduced the 20/30 program and in the first month, we made over \$250,000 just with the 20/30 program!

Our clientele now is completely different than the clientele we had before. We had people that were

interested in fitness, and now we have people that would have never stepped foot into a gym. They would not have even considered it. It was the last thing on their mind. They wanted to lose weight before they got into the gym.

Within the first year, we put over 1,500 people through the program, and it's just continued to progress. We produced 1.6 million the first year! It's just been phenomenal.

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## ...URBN Playground

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between seemingly disparate people and spaces. We wear our hearts on our sleeves and believe in what we do. We are truly grateful for the people, communities and companies who have chosen us. We feel lucky to be given the chance to meet and work with brilliant people on their projects, on their dreams, and in their homes. We are proud of how hard we work to bring smiles to our customers. Happy faces are what matters most to us and keeps us going!

**C.I.** - How many properties does URBN Playground now manage?

**JB** - We have 35 properties currently being managed with eight more in the pipeline later this year.

**C.I.** - What are the legal arrangements with developers/ownership groups?

**JB** - There's really two key parts that we do for developers:

1. We do the design of amenities. It's really a program design; it's not an interior design or architectural design. We design programs that people want. For example, we helped a developer design the most dog-friendly building on planet Earth. We had an idea, built plans around it and basically sold the idea to the developer who is building a building around that idea in one of the urban corners of the United States. So, that's one part of it.

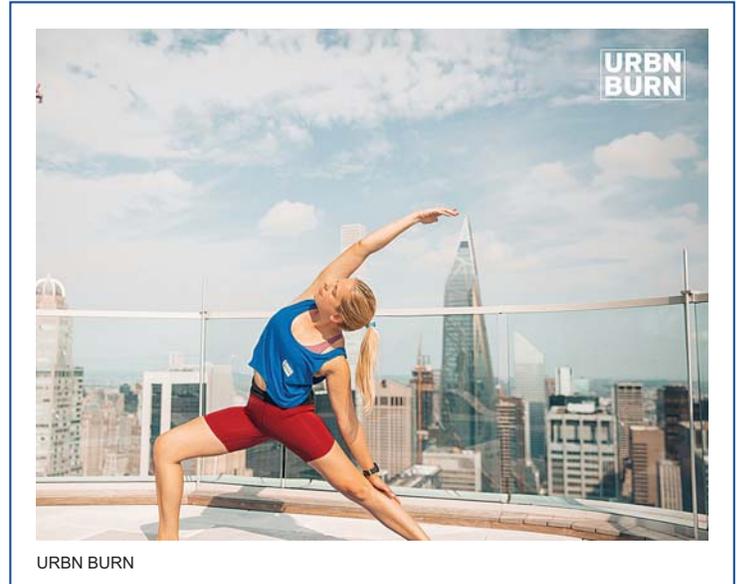
2. The other part of it is staffing. Nowadays, developers really want to focus on the leasing and sales of their buildings. They don't want to and sometimes don't have the capacity to focus on the relationships between customers and staff at a property. So, they are hiring specialty people to do that. And, this is a lesson for the health and fitness club industry. We've seen that having really great relationships with

customers is paramount. And, we've talked about it in the industry for so long, right? But, understanding what they really need and want is a whole different thing than saying 'Hello' and 'Goodbye.' It's a different level of relationship. What we have been able to do is find fun ways to build those bridges to get that information from customers. Some of it is just saving time; that's a real luxury for them.

For example, if we can create swim lessons at their home, or at the pool in their building or even a nearby commercial club during a slow time. That will bring a big value to a member, and that's ultimately what we do. Another example is that we've always wondered why services like dry cleaning doesn't happen in some of the commercial clubs. They don't have to do the dry cleaning. Find a partner vendor who does it and provides a cut as an ancillary revenue. In the morning, people are leaving the clubs in suits anyway to go to work.

**C.I.** - What makes URBN Playground unique among others in the amenity management space?

**JB** - Our business evolves around the entire lifecycle of the business. For us, it begins at conception and continues with end user satisfaction and then begins again with new properties being built and designed. We really do everything from design to staffing and technology on the site. Then, when we get into each of those components, we really do a lot within. When it comes to technology, we manage their outbound technology to customers via an app. We do their inbound technology in terms of ringing up sessions, etc. Our software is similar to Mindbody, and it's all focused inwardly to the customers at each property. We have taken a really broad approach to do that. Other providers may just do fitness, whereas we have a full spectrum approach to solving the problems the real estate industry has today.



URBN BURN

**AB** - I believe our brand is really geared towards the fun of it. Whenever I am explaining what we do to anyone who is not New York City-based, I just kind of say, 'Well, it's sort of like property management, except we are the fun part of the building.' We really try to keep that mindset in our approach to how we operate, as well as our marketing and branding. That's not to say we don't have an eye on luxury and customer service/hospitality. But, at the end of the day, these are the pleasurable things in life, and they should be fun and light. We try to bring that approach, and it sets us apart.

### Ideas and Lessons for the Health and Fitness Club Industry

**C.I.** - As I conducted research for this story, I noticed a few programs you have developed for your properties that health and fitness club industry facilities might be able to learn from. Please tell us about each of the following and what you feel can be learned from the things you are doing.

**JB** - As part of our ever-increasing value proposition to stakeholders, developers and users, we created a thoughtful approach to customer engagement. Some of those programs include:

**URBN BURN** - This is a digital workout that was created to bring customers into our fitness training department. There is no denying the impact of digital programs, and it was paramount to enter the space. In September, this program launches nationally for us. Much like commercial fitness, just having equipment, staffing

and space is not enough. The same goes for our end of the fitness business. Gym members want to change their lives, and at URBN, we have an obligation to help them regardless of training revenues. So, URBN BURN is a branded program that offers trusted advice to our users. The internet is amazing, but it's also the source of a lot of misinformation. Our customers, and to every extent, a commercial gym customer trust advice. So, why not help create programs for people to achieve their goals? Via the internet, 20-minute work outs will be available in the facility's group fitness room, on the mirror, and the staff will be trained on what each period's workouts consists of.

**URBN SPLASH** - Many facilities have pools. URBN SPLASH is a swim program for kids. We find the demand for swim lessons for kids as big as personal training. Is there a way to bring your members' families to your pools? At URBN, we've found a way to make it happen, and it's booming.

**URBN SPA** - There's been a change in the industry. People don't want massage rooms at the clubs anymore; they want to do it in their homes. We have been able to adapt and do that for people, and I don't see why a club couldn't send a massage therapist to someone's home. Club owners have the skillset to integrate this vertical into their business, as well as having a recovery program and incorporating things like Massage and even Hydro Massage onsite to bring potential customers into the club setting.

**URBN CONCIERGE** - We developed our own app to deliver personalized services on property to residents and members. Everything from dog walking to buying personal training to custom requests. Again, concierge services for your members may  
(See URBN Playground Page 18)



URBN BURN



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**...URBN Playground**

continued from page 14

or may not work, but if you think about your clients, let's say in a city like Dallas, there may be a way to partner with a dry cleaning provider and your club could benefit from members having their dry cleaning done by a vendor and delivered to your club. Plus, your members may visit more often, allowing your staff to have a stronger relationship, and your club saved the member time so they don't have to make another stop. At URBN, we always say time is the real luxury.

**C.I.** - This cover story is very much one of learning from another industry. For our health and club industry audience, please take us through some of the key points related to URBN Playground that you feel are applicable to health and fitness club owners and managers.

**JB** - The key points for us are as follows:

**Understand the lifecycle of your business and your customer** - We take a technology perspective with our customers and look at the end user and his experience throughout an entire amenity and even away from the amenity. Our relationship goes beyond the amenity walls. It goes into their homes. We've found ways of taking our brand, our level of service and the feel of luxury into their homes. I know a club won't do these things, but we clean their apartments, we walk their dogs and do other things for them that truly creates a strong bond in the relationship.

**Have the mindset to offer an ever-increasing value proposition** - You can't just stop where you are at. You have to continue to evolve. We've tried things in the last two and a half years that have been total flops. We failed at them. So, you then have to pull your team together, refocus, come up with new ideas and try something

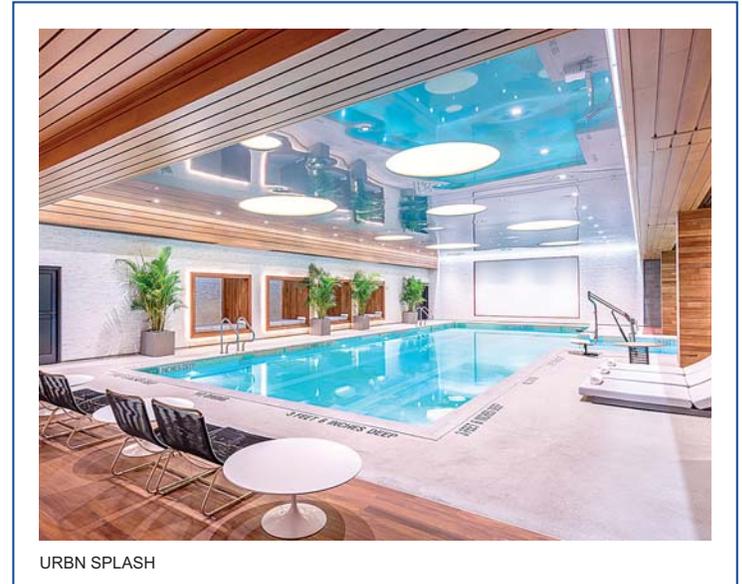
different. Or, we get help from outside. We use the slogan, 'No one of us is as smart as all of us.' If we can put our heads together, we can come up with great ideas. And, if we are truly focused at making a difference in people's lives, it's becomes really easy.

**Do the right thing and be known for finishing and executing at any cost** - We have committed to our clients. Sometimes that means following through even if you have to eat the agreement, so to speak. Even if you have to lose money, you do the right thing. I'll give you an example. When we started, we picked up a few clients really quickly. One of them we took for almost no profit because we wanted to break into the market. We had one club, and we wanted to get a second club. We undersold it. But, we did that agreement to the T for three years, and we just got a renewal on it with an increase. It's a substantial increase, and coming from a condominium, nonetheless, where budgets are restricted. We did the right thing for the entire three years. We didn't get it, then after a year say, 'we don't have enough money to do this' or 'we aren't making enough money.' We hunkered down, did the right thing and did right by our client. We made an agreement, kept our word and executed the service. In the long run, if you do the right thing and follow through, you will be rewarded by the marketplace.

**C.I.** - The key to that is that you just can't put a price on reputation. Then, eventually, that pays off, and it's well worth it.  
**JB** - Exactly.

**Corporate Wellness**

**C.I.** - You are currently developing a wellness program for 13,000 employees of J.P. Morgan. Please tell us how this deal came about and take us through the key components of what you will need to deliver.



URBN SPLASH

**JB** - Relationships and reputation. We have someone on our team named **Jay Shafra**n, and he's kind of a design legend. He designed the in-house Goldman Sachs fitness centers and other things like that, and when this project started, they didn't call the company he was at before and they didn't call us; they called Jay directly. Jay happened to be working for us, and that's how it happened. So, relationships and reputation brought that business to us, which is a great project for a startup like us.

The project scope is large and long-term. They are tearing down a skyscraper here in the city and building a new, super-tall skyscraper in its place for their world headquarters. If you look up JP Morgan 270 Park, you'll find plenty of information about it. The mandate from the firm is to develop a plan and program that not only anticipates what wellness is in 2021, when the project is slated to be done, but also in 2030, as the firm services and recruits new employees. It's about seeing what we see and not only designing for change but also for the changes that follow. From a scope perspective, we are working on fitness, a health center, a recharge/recovery zone, childcare, lactation, learning and other wellness areas. We are also anticipating additional functions as the project continues to develop.

**C.I.** - What have you already learned through the process, and what is left to complete the project?

**JB** - It is ongoing, and we are learning things every day. This is a multi-year project just in its infancy, and we are little more than past space allocation now. We

must continue to develop architectural programs, and then, once first plans start coming out, review those. Other tasks down the road will revolve around branding/marketing, budgeting, vendor interface and procurement, discussions around operations and program development, etc.

**C.I.** - From your experience with the J.P. Morgan project so far, and applied to some of the previous questions in the scope of health and fitness clubs, especially those that provide corporate wellness services, what lessons can you share?  
**JB** - There are a few:

1. We aren't delivering what we were in the past. We aren't trying to design fitness centers that mimic what commercial models do anymore. Instead, we are trying to design around corporate goals and corporate culture.
2. As an industry, technology is starting to make a difference beyond just entertainment. Wearables are a stepping stone to AI interface with the client.
3. As a company, we have never designed for the middle, for vanilla. We take the Baskin-Robbins approach to try to reach multiple populations.

**C.I.** - Across all your services, please tell us about the use of technology. Applied to the health and fitness club industry, how can clubs use technology to enhance current members' experiences and lives? Is your technology available to clubs in any capacity to help with this?

**JB** - As just mentioned, AI is the specter on the horizon. Based on wearables like the Apple Watch and anticipated changes to the AirPods, among other technologies, there is a democratization of health going on. The A-Fib function on the Watch not  
 (See **URBN Playground** Page 19)



An URBN Playground Resident Hike Through Central Park



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## ...URBN Playground

continued from page 18

only saves a trip to the doctor but will send warnings and data to you and him. At some point, your watch, AirPods and keyboard will tell you if you have a cold coming on, adjust your workouts and prescribe rest and fluids.

Additionally, we think that it's really important to understand this is a direct impact marketing business. It's really about people helping people. Finding ways that don't impact that relationship but are additive and not disruptive is the big lesson related to our approach to technology. When it comes to our app, people can select the services they want if and when they want them. It's never intrusive but always supportive. Now, we are experimenting with lightmapping and sensors but with the goal to be more human than digital... How many wellness and technology companies answer their phones with a live person 24 hours a day? We do, that I am sure of.

### Further Learning

**C.I.** - You have been a loyal member of IHRSA. Please tell us about the benefits you have experienced professionally and personally from membership?

**JB** - I used to go to IHRSA all the time, every year. The past few years, it has been Amy going. Going to the annual event, though, is

super inspiring. It really gets you motivated. Amy hasn't gone as long as I have, but she has gone the past few years, so I think she can speak to it as well.

**AB** - Yes, Jeremy is right, and I feel the same way about Club Industry. It's always very inspiring to be around people who are really achieving and are really excited about what they are doing and where the industry is going. It's always a good refresher to be in the mix with people like that because we are all in our own bubbles, but it's always great to get out of that bubble and see what is going on. It's very inspiring, and it's just fun. I enjoy going and seeing all the new technology, equipment, who's developing what, and it's something I can take to clients when it's time to revamp their fitness spaces. I think they appreciate that insight as well.

**C.I.** - I completely agree with you both. Being the son of an IHRSA Co-Founder, I grew up around the Association, and every year, I just come out of there completely pumped. One of my favorite things is that you will see competitors, laughing, joking and talking, and they share things with each other. Maybe not everything, not all the secret sauce, but you will see people you might not expect working together because it's for the betterment of their members. That's a beautiful thing.

**JB** - It is. We really appreciate everything

IHRSA does. We have a lot of old friends, and we've made a lot of new friends as well.

**C.I.** - Jeremy, you have also participated in the CEO Summit in Chicago. What are the benefits and takeaways for you and your company?

**JB** - It was interesting to hear about how the latest technology is going beyond making processes simpler but really trying to get to know the user's habits in the club setting and using that information to enhance their experience.

**C.I.** - What does the future hold for URBN Playground?

**JB** - Currently we are expanding nationally, leading with our technology. As mentioned, we have several very exciting ideas for fitness-based classes using technology, light mapping and the latest sensor and AI advances and look forward to releasing them! At the end of the day, it's all about service, and we feel we were born to service our customers and our industry.

**C.I.** - To close this interview, can each of you please share your top three general business lessons?

**JB/AB** - We've combined our lessons:

- 1. Reputation** - Always do the right thing.
- 2. None of us is as smart as all of us** - Listen to every team member and

incorporate their feedback.

**3. Innovate** - Find new ways to provide value, even if they fail, keep going forward.



Thank you very much to *URBN Playground* Co-Founders, **Jeremy Brutus** and **Amy Blitz** for their time interviewing for this month's cover story. We sincerely appreciate them sharing their story and cross-industry lessons to you, our readers. And, thank you for reading!

*(Justin Cates is a Partner and the Assistant Publisher of Club Insider and grew up in the health and fitness club industry. Justin was born into a club business family in 1985, and from the age of eight, he spent his non-school and sports hours in a home that doubled as Club Insider Headquarters. He has lived and breathed this industry for 34 years, since his own day one. Cates graduated from the Terry College of Business at The University of Georgia in 2007 and then went on to two years at The Art Institute of Atlanta, where he studied Interactive Media Design. Now, he is an integral part of the "Story" of Norm Cates and Club Insider. Justin can be reached by phone at 423-314-4310 or email at Justin@clubinsideronline.com)*

# How Great Leaders Think

By: Charley Swayne

18th hole at the Masters. Tied for the lead. You are the greatest golfer in the world. What goes through your mind as you step up to the tee? Relax? Visualize your swing? Focus on your drive? No. The greatest golfer sees the ball going across the green into the cup. Then, he sees the putt he must make to get the ball into the cup. Then, he sees his approach shot. Finally, he sees his drive off the tee.

That's exactly how great leaders think. They use this "green to tee" thinking. First, they see what they want to accomplish, and then, they work backwards to figure out how to get it done.

I'm going to describe a model which is the common thread I've found among great leaders. It is called the **GOST matrix**, and it uses terms we are all familiar with:

- Goals;
- Objectives;
- Strategies;
- Tactics.

Leaders may not have heard of this model, but if you were to analyze their thought process, you'll find everything fits. It can be used for your personal, professional, social or spiritual life. It works.

As we go through this model, you may find you call a goal what I say is an objective. Or, you call a vision or mission what I say is a goal. Semantics. Academic parsing. The exact terms are not important. What is important is to make sure everything is covered.

First, there is the *General* and the *Specific*.

	General	Specific
What		
How		

Then, there is the *What* and the *How*.

What	
How	

Together, they form a matrix.

	General	Specific
What		
How		

The first thing is to create a goal: *one goal, one audacious goal*. What would be your goal if you knew you could not fail?

Your goal is a *General What*. It is a broad statement of what you want to accomplish: "To make the world's information universally accessible and useful." "To become a world-class sports agent." "To make Gainesville the healthiest city in the U.S." "To become a Navy fighter pilot."

	General	Specific
What	Goal	
How		

	General	Specific
What	To become a Navy fighter pilot	
How		

Sure, I've heard the, "I have several goals," line often. Loser talk. People or organizations with several goals get nothing done. If you have more than one goal, put them in order. Which is most important? Laser focus on that goal. You can move on to another goal after you have reached your most important one.

**Take a few seconds at the start of every day and handwrite, with a pen, your goal at the top of the page. Not on**

**your computer, not with a keyboard. Your handwritten goal. If you think of your goal, you only activate one half of your brain. When you write it down, it triggers the other half.**

Here's what happens. Your mind goes on autopilot. It becomes selective in perception, exposure, comprehension and retention of information, which will help you reach your goal. You become aware of and spend time with people who will help you achieve it. You disregard information and people that are of no help. Our mind thinks in pictures. You need to see your goal every day. Seeing it activates the subconscious, builds motivation and reinforces where you are going. Our pilot might have a picture of an F-14 on the ceiling above his or her bed.

Once we have the goal, we now create an objective. The objective is a *Specific What*. Specific means it must be measurable, quantifiable and/or time sensitive. Our young fighter pilot creates the objective, "Be accepted into Navy flight school within seven years of today."

	General	Specific
What	Goal → Objective	
How		

	General	Specific
What	Goal → Be accepted into flight school within 7 years	
How		

Your goal may only change a few times during your lifetime. "Joe Cirulli has made Gainesville, Florida the healthiest city in the U.S. one person at a time." The objective will change more often. As with the goal, one and only one objective is best. When you chase two rabbits, you catch neither.

Now, we move to *General How*, not the one from the Revolutionary War. These are the strategies we use to accomplish our objective. They are essential in converting the *abstract Goal and specific Objective*



Charley Swayne

into concrete action.

I always tell my clients to create no less than ten strategies. Every strategy is prioritized from most important to least important.

At this point, the size of our organization comes into play. If it is an individual, he is in charge of everything. If it is an organization, the leader, and perhaps, the Board determine both the goal and the objective. But, they don't tell their people how to accomplish it.

A CEO normally delegates to the best management teams the task of creating strategies needed to accomplish the objective. Organizational strategies often take the form of what we think of as traditional processes, such as marketing, budgets, operations, hiring talent, structure, policies and procedures.

One strategy for our pilot could be, "Have a superior education to all previous Navy fighter pilots." Another might be, "Be in better shape than all others in the program." And perhaps, "Gain pilot experience." Nothing specific here, just the general ways of how we are going to accomplish our objective.

You are going to find the right things to do, then with the next step, do them right.

	General	Specific
What	Goal → Objective	
How	Strategies	

(See Charley Swayne Page 23)

# Stop Doing These Two Things Now: How to Capture a Larger Piece of the Wearable Pie

By: **Ron Alterio**

According to Steven Musil from **cnet.com**, wearable usage in the United States more than doubled from 39.5 million Americans (or 12%) back in 2015 to over 81.7 million (or 24%) in 2018. Moreover, according to *Gartner*, a leading U.S. research firm, the wearable category is set to grow year-over-year by another 26% in 2019. There is no denying it... Americans love their wearables.

One of the reasons why we are so hooked on wearable technology is the real-time and immediate feedback these devices can provide. Many wearable products on the market today can monitor and communicate back to the end user in real-time a variety of data points including but not limited to heart rate, steps, calories, blood pressure and sleep. In essence, wearables provide the instant validation and gratification we competitive humans crave.

Not only does the end user love wearable technology, but scores of

personal trainers and fitness professionals alike are adopting and incorporating the technology into their fitness and exercise prescriptions. Wearables, for the fitness professional, act like a built in "tattle-tale" or "truth serum" of sorts and eliminates the tough conversations about what is really happening with the client during and in-between each session, leaving more time for a more meaningful and relevant programming experience.

Yet, despite all of the wearable fervor circulating in consumers' minds, and an ever-increasing adoption rate by fitness professional and trainers alike, health club operators continue to struggle with driving wearable sales and engagement within their four walls. Why?

One of the biggest reasons (*and it's not that your members already own a wearable device. Remember, only 24% of the U.S. population owns a wearable device as of 2018*) is the unintentional devaluing and decoupling of the wearable from the programming itself. This can happen via delivering the wrong narrative

or messaging (*diluted value proposition*) as well as using an ineffective pricing strategy. Let's unpack each one for deeper clarity.

## The Wrong Narrative or Messaging -

This happens when you unintentionally and verbally devalue the wearable technology and decouple it from the programming to a point where the wearable seems optional. The great operators see the wearable as an integral part of the overall solution to the member goal and communicate and present the value accordingly. If the member's goal was weight loss, then he should be buying a complete weight loss solution that includes both programming by the trainer plus a wearable solution to eliminate guess work, validate the effort and streamline the results process. In other words, to lose that weight, the wearable device is just as important as the coach and the programming, and that should be communicated as such. For example: *"Mr. Jones, in order to help you lose those 20 pounds as quickly as possible, you are going to need a combination of a coach,*



Ron Alterio

*the right programming and our wearable technology. Let me explain."* Unfortunately, many operators focus on promoting and selling the programming and the trainer, and then in a separate and fragmented conversation, try to communicate the value  
(See **Ron Alterio** Page 23)

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## Maximize the Enforceability of Your Liability Waiver

By: **Paul R. Bedard, Esquire**

The rise in legal claims against health clubs over the years has been staggering. At a minimum, every health club must have a sound risk management strategy to address key areas of legal liability. However, although a well-developed risk management strategy will dramatically decrease a club's legal exposure, unfortunately, it is a given that even the most well-managed health clubs have been or will be on the receiving end of a lawsuit at one time or another.

**This article is intended for educational purposes only. It is not intended as legal advice. Widely varying laws specific to each jurisdiction prohibit one-size-fits-all recommendations. Please consider these comments as an educational guide to assist you when you consult your own attorney for specific direction.**

A liability waiver is a fundamental tool designed to protect against these claims. Liability waivers are also known

as exculpatory agreements. However, the enforceability of an exculpatory agreement is state-specific. Some courts will enforce such an agreement unless it releases a party from wanton or willful conduct. Other courts focus on whether the language within the waiver is clear and unambiguous. Certain jurisdictions hold that these clauses are simply invalid; others enforce them reluctantly while subjecting the agreement to close judicial scrutiny while construing the language against the drafting party.

A judge will typically decide the validity of the exculpatory agreement in question. However, in some places, the validity of an exculpatory agreement is constitutionally required to be a jury question. As can be seen, the many jurisdictional standards and variations involved make it painfully apparent that it is critical to understand your club's governing law and to engage counsel when drafting your liability waiver.

Although a liability waiver provides no guarantee against legal liability, the lack of a liability waiver is almost

certainly guaranteed to increase a club's legal exposure. At a minimum, your liability waiver should bar claims due to negligence, identify the activities and inherent risks within your facility, describe the assumption of risk on the part of the guest or member, and contain clear and conspicuous language.

However, excessively broad waivers barring claims for any and all injuries are typically found to be against public policy, and are therefore, unenforceable. Although a liability waiver may protect your club from most claims arising out of sudden or unforeseen accidents, it will likely not protect against claims stemming from intentional acts or gross negligence. All of this will, of course, be subject to your state-specific standards.

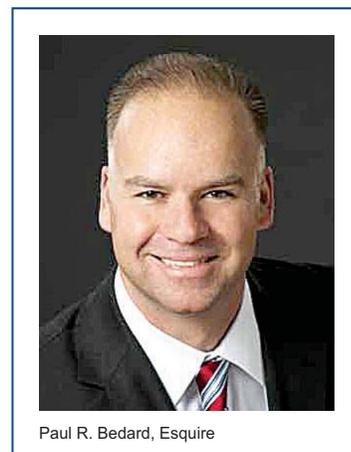
**Bar Claims Due to Negligence** - In a nutshell, negligence is the failure to use reasonable or appropriate care under the circumstances. The fundamental goal of any liability waiver is to protect the drafting party from liability claims arising out of claims of negligence. Therefore, it must be clearly expressed that the member or guest agrees to bar any claims due to negligence on the part of the health club. It is important to note that negligence is different than gross negligence. Gross negligence is a conscious and voluntary disregard to use reasonable care. Gross negligence on the part of a health club will most often lead to legal issues regardless of the waiver in place. However, where jurisdictionally supported, gross negligence should also be referenced.

### Identify the Risks Within Your Facility and Describe the Assumption of Risk

- Inherent risks are those risks that are integral to an activity. Health clubs are full of inherent risks including but not limited to safety risks surrounding machinery and weight equipment and the prospect of overexertion while using these elements or while participating in a class or training session. Your waiver should detail the inherent risks within your facility and include language indicating that the member or guest was apprised of these inherent risks, understood these risks, and nonetheless, voluntarily participated within the activities involving these risks while expressly assuming the relevant risks.

### Clear and Conspicuous Language

- A strong liability waiver is void of legalese. Your waiver should be written clearly and presented conspicuously. The agreement's intent to exculpate your health club from liability for harm resulting from negligence on the part of the club should be conveyed without ambiguity. It should reference all parties to whom the member or guest is contracting away their ability to file a claim,



Paul R. Bedard, Esquire

such as the business entity, principals, shareholders, employees, heirs, assigns, independent contractors, etc.

**Additional Provisions** - Many types of legal agreements include a severability clause. Severability refers to a provision within an agreement where, if some of the terms or aspects of the agreement are held to be illegal or otherwise unenforceable, the remaining terms will still apply independently of those found to be invalid. The concept of severability should also be incorporated into your liability waiver. Finally, your liability waiver should specify the governing jurisdiction and the venue where any legal action will transpire. Although this can be limited depending upon the location of the incident and the domiciles of the parties involved, this allows the health club to stipulate the governing law while also being able to defend against a lawsuit close to home rather than leaving the applicable law or court location to chance when more than one possibility exists.

*(Paul R. Bedard, Esquire has nearly twenty years of management, leadership and operations experience in the health and fitness industry. As a practicing attorney, Paul's health and fitness industry experience provide him with a unique perspective when advising health clubs regarding employee training, handbooks, policies, contracts, disputes or premises liability claims. When not practicing law or spending quality time with his wife and daughters, Paul strives to be active in his local community. Paul serves as the current Assistant Town Attorney for the Town of Southington, Connecticut, and has previously served on the Southington Zoning Board of Appeals and the Board of the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency. Paul is also a partner at Sheffy, Mazzaccaro, DePaolo & DeNigris, LLP, in Southington, Connecticut. You can reach Paul at pbedard@smddlaw.com or 860-620-9460 x109.)*

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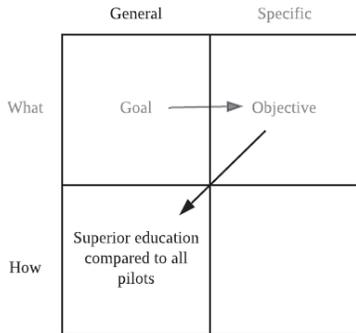
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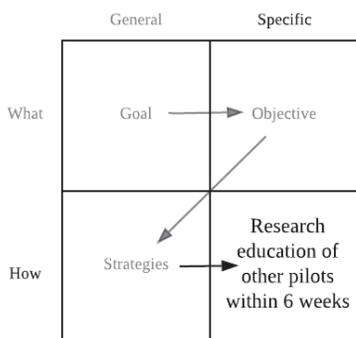
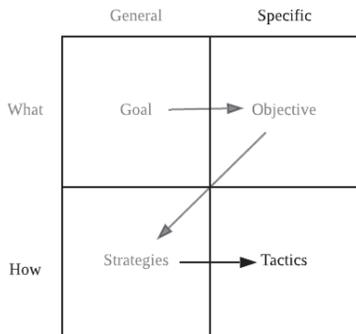
**...Charley Swayne**

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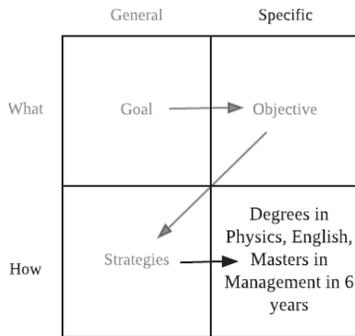
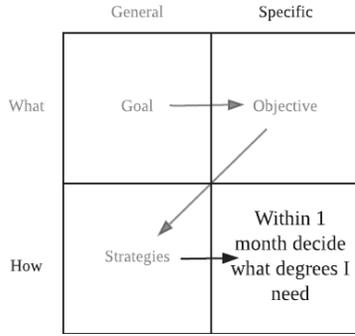
For every strategy, *Specific Hows* are created. These are *Tactics*, the actions taken to execute a strategy. For each strategy, several tactics and sub-tactics are created. As with the objective, these are measurable, quantifiable and/or time sensitive, including fixing responsibility. It is a checklist. What gets measured gets done.

If our pilot's strategy is to have a superior education, the initial tactic might be, "Research the education of every previous fighter pilot within six weeks."



When one tactic is complete it usually results in the creation of a *sub-tactic*. And, that sub-tactic often leads to another sub-tactic.

**Make It Fun!**



We work on or complete at least one tactic or sub-tactic on our checklist every day. Sometimes, we find a particular strategy or tactic isn't working how we thought it would. No big deal. Move on to the next most important strategy or tactic.

This summarizes the entire process.



Swayne's GOST Matrix

Simple? Yes. Easy? No. No one ever goes from A to B in a straight line. We

all run into disappointments, obstacles, brick walls, bankruptcy, losing the person we care about most in life. The strongest steel must go through the hottest fire. If you want the rainbow, you've got to put up with the rain.

Google has made the world's information universally accessible and useful. One of my former students is a world-class sports agent. A good friend has made Gainesville the healthiest city in the U.S. My son did become a Tomcat and Super Hornet pilot. The Little Engine That Could was right all along.

*(Charley Swayne is a former IHRSA Board Member and was a frequent speaker at IHRSA Conventions and the IHRSA Institute. He currently teaches marketing at Virginia Tech. The GOST matrix was first introduced in his latest book, How to Make Great Decisions.)*

**...Ron Alterio**

continued from page 21

of the wearable in the form of an upsell or add-on. When you opt for the latter vs. the former, the message to the member is the wearable is more of a "nice-to-have" and not a critical tool for success. Think about it; how many parents try to sever the toy from the McDonald's happy meal to save money? It just doesn't happen. The value is crystal clear. Your kid will be "happy" when they get it all, the meal plus the toy!

**The Wrong Pricing Strategy** - The wrong pricing strategy many times stems from the wrong narrative. If you are communicating the wearable as an add-on, or it's optional, then in many cases, your pricing strategy will reflect that. Typically, this takes the form of one price for the programming and a separate price for the wearable. This particular pricing strategy only fuels and begs the unwanted question: "Do I have to buy the wearable?" Instead, you should highly consider bundling the price of the wearable into the overall cost of the training and then present one total price for the complete solution. For example (please note this is just an example, and it truly depends on how you are viewing the wearable; either as a revenue stream, retention tool or a combination of the two), let's say your hard cost for a wearable is \$35 and you are aiming for a typical markup of 100% (revenue-focused), then the total cost that you would need to build into the programming fee would be \$70. Covering that increase could take shape by incorporating a one-time joining or initiation fee of \$69 or more, or you can spread that \$70 fee over time simply by creating a slightly higher monthly price for the programming. If you are a retention-focused facility and are viewing the wearable as a way to extend the lifetime value of the member and better protect your recurring monthly payment, then you may only be interested in covering the original \$35 cost.

If this is the case, you would simply use the aforementioned example, but your recovery efforts are now \$35 instead of \$70. In either case, bundling the programming, the coach and the wearable sends the message that all three components are needed to achieve the desired outcome.

♦ ♦ ♦

There you have it. The lack of wearable sales and engagement in your facility is more likely a result of self-sabotage rather than a result of an oversaturated market.

Your members will absolutely engage with your offering if your messaging and pricing strategy is clear. Driving more wearable sales and engagement starts when you go back to the drawing board and redefine what your product is and what it will include, then make sure everyone on your team is conveying the same message every time and that your pricing strategy is perfectly aligned with those product messages.

*(Ron Alterio is the Vice President of Operations for XGT Fitness. He can be reached at 833-TEAMXGT, Ext. 803 or ron@xgfitness.com.)*



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## How To Own A Gym Business From Dream to Reality

By: **Jim Thomas**

Is owning a gym business in your future? At one time or another, nearly every employee dreams of owning a gym. Perhaps you're tired of all your hard work ending up helping someone else achieve his entrepreneurial success, or you may fear losing your job in a weakened economy. Whatever your motivation, the compulsion to own a gym is strong in many people, but the risk involved in turning that dream into reality has, all too often, acted to derail even the best-laid plans.

### How to Own a Gym

Every prospective gym owner is forced to wrestle with many different kinds of questions. Concerns about money certainly lead the pack, but knowing what kind of gym best suits you is even more important. The best place to start is by examining the reasons why you want to own a gym. Here are some benefits to ponder:

- Take advantage of all those years of work experience for your own benefit, not for the sake of others.
- A flexible schedule allows you to spend

more time with your family.

■ Enjoy greater wealth and control your own destiny.

■ Self-employed people typically express greater satisfaction with life.

**Important Steps to Take** - Your three primary choices include buying an existing gym, starting one from scratch or purchasing a franchise. Each selection has its ups and downs, its pros and cons, and its tradeoffs between cost and the immediacy of success versus long-term profits. Choose wisely, as owning a business is a decision you only want to make once.

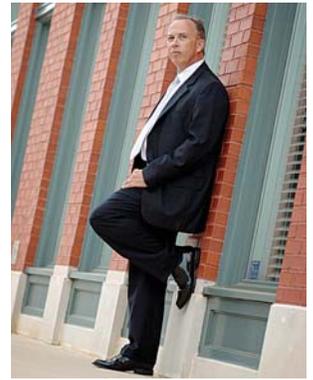
**Show Me the Money** - Almost no one these days has tons of cash lying around, so you will probably need to secure some sort of financing in order to own a gym. Begin by talking to a banker or the person who runs your credit union. The SBA guarantees certain loans for people who cannot qualify for standard bank loans. If you're contemplating the acquisition of an existing gym, the seller may be willing to finance some or all of the purchase. Friends and relatives can be a good source for investment, depending upon how well you

get along. And, there is always the option to take in a partner, either someone who will actively work alongside you to build the gym or a "silent" partner who will invest personal funds in return for a share of the profits down the road.

**Wake Up and Smell the Opportunity** - Owning a gym does not need to be a dream, but the planning you put in at the beginning will return a thousand-fold over the ensuing years. First, understand yourself and your capabilities. Second, do your research and decide which type of gym suits you best. Third, research how much you will need to get your gym up and running. Fourth, find the funds you require and make sure the gym revenue you realistically expect to generate will cover all your expenses. Fifth, delay your dream no longer; get out there and become an entrepreneur!

If you had started your own gym five years ago, or even two years ago, where would you be TODAY?

(An Outsourced CEO, Jim Thomas is the Founder and President of Fitness Management USA Inc., a management consulting, turnaround and brokerage firm specializing in the gym and sports industry.



Jim Thomas

With more than 25 years of experience owning, operating and managing clubs of all sizes, Thomas lectures and delivers seminars, webinars and workshops across the globe on the practical skills required to successfully overcome obscurity, improve sales, build teamwork and market fitness programs and products. In addition, his company will buy gym equipment from gyms liquidating or closing. Visit his websites at [www.fmconsulting.net](http://www.fmconsulting.net) or [www.jimthomasondemand.com](http://www.jimthomasondemand.com).)

## Key Pieces of Advice to Make Your Club Better

By: **Melissa Knowles**

Over the years, some of my most read articles have essentially been lists of key pieces of advice. Whether it be a list of mistakes to avoid or a collection of to-dos, it seems that fitness business owners love a good checklist. In this article, I've asked for key pieces of wisdom from several members of my team and fellow leaders at ClubReady. These leaders have years of experience working with top industry brands like 9Round, UFC GYM, Club Pilates, Pure Barre, CycleBar, The Max Challenge, CKO and many others! Several of them have also owned gyms, nutrition coaching or fitness consulting businesses. Here are their answers when asked, "What's the #1 piece of advice you'd give a studio/club owner?" As you will see, it was nearly impossible to narrow it down to just one thing!

"Understand the tools available to you and how they can help your business. Choose the best ones for you and take the necessary time to learn how best to use them." -Adam Faris, Director of

### Customer Success

"Actually be there, either physically or virtually. Look at the reports that are at your fingertips. Keep an eye on your payroll. Understand that personal training sessions are like tiny piles of cash waiting to be picked up. Use your club management software's tools to prevent fraud and develop processes to identify and prevent theft (weekly emails, calling/SMS members to verify sessions, review member data for missing/duplicate emails, fingerprint scanning, control permissions, expire sessions for relocation or medical cancels). Finally, stay in your wheelhouse. Most gym owners are FANTASTIC sales and fitness people. They tend to be HORRIBLE attorneys, accountants and administration people. Get professional help where you lack experience BEFORE it's a problem." -Judy Prince, Client Relationship Manager

"Hire a great manager if you cannot dedicate the time yourself. Develop a process and stick to it! Figure out your daily, weekly and monthly marketing and internal

tasks. Keep an eye on your draft reports to ensure all members are paying, and follow-up when they don't. Take the time to understand your local and state sales tax. Don't assume anything when it comes to taxes! Find out for yourself what should be taxed, and set up your sales packages and POS accordingly." -Rick Pomygalski, Sr. Account Manager & Current Gym Owner

"There's a fitness studio or health club on every corner nowadays. People can get a good workout anywhere they go. Be better than just a good workout. Get to know your members; make a connection. Be authentic and humble. If you can give your members a great workout, and they feel connected, they'll come back." -Fred Elias, Vice President of Business Development

"New fitness concepts hit the market frequently. Spend time identifying what makes your business different and then double down on that uniqueness. Partner with vendors that align with your vision and have a proven track record of supporting others in your space." -Matt LaCaprucia, Sr. Account Manager



Melissa Knowles

"Everything is marketing... from the way your studio or club looks to how your employees act. Your current members are your best resource to get new members, so take advantage of social media and reward programs." -Marc Roeder, Client Relationship Manager, Xponential Brands  
(See Melissa Knowles Page 26)



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## ...Melissa Knowles

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"Create a culture that shows you care about the experience of every member as well as the employees who support them. Know your members and focus on making the experience uniquely enjoyable for everyone." -**Walter Watson, Customer Service Manager, GYM HQ**

"Pay attention to your payroll. Make sure that you have a well-thought-out compensation plan. Many new owners pull numbers out of the sky. It's not that simple. You should consider employee compensation as an investment in your business. Planning your strategy and developing the proper budget for compensation is essential to being able to recruit and retain talented employees that you will need to grow your studio."

-**Stephanie Maddox, Sr. Manager, GYM HQ**

"Success, and for that matter, sales and retention, for a class-based business predominately hinge on the instructors who deliver the workout experience. From the psychology of handling new and prospective exercisers to the delivery of a workout experience that delights and retains members, the power is in their hands. The most successful store owners ensure a consistent class delivery, relentlessly engage and train their instructors as a critical piece of the member experience and track class attendance and revenue metrics in their management software to help deliver class to class excellence."

-**Chris Gallo, Vice President of Sales**

"I believe with any business that it is important to understand all roles. An owner

of a small business should take time to work all aspects of the business and get to know their tools inside and out. That means the equipment, the member management software (from the perspective of each position)... all of it. If you build a community within your gym, members will forgive the little things. Build the best overall experience for your members and staff. Training is also key for new staff members. Ensure they're thoroughly trained on their position as well as your club management software." -**Brett Rowley, Client Relationship Manager**

"Owners need to be hands-on in the studio and know how to run their business in every aspect. It is important they, as well as their teams, know and build a relationship with their clientele. For owners buying into a franchise, it's also very important that they utilize the tools, guidance and best practice

business operations they are provided by the franchisor." -**Kali Henderson, Director of leadSPEAK**

■ ■ ■

If you're picking up on a trend here, it all comes down to people and process! I'll leave you with my two cents on the subject: Stay fluid and stay involved. Your ability to learn, pivot and adapt is paramount. No process or person in business is forever. So, even if you have a great staff, don't check out. We ask our clients to be open to discomfort and embrace change; we must be willing to take our own advice.

(Melissa Knowles is Vice President of GymHQ, A ClubReady Company, and she can be reached at [mknowles@gymhq.club](mailto:mknowles@gymhq.club).)

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## Thanks and Appreciation

At **Club Insider**, we are excited to be in our **26th 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. I wish to extend our most sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to everyone that's made this amazing 26-year run possible.

A very sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** go to **Rick Caro, 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**, of **Atlanta's Hudspeth Report** for the tremendous assistance they provided. **Thanks and Appreciation** to all of the folks at **Walton Press** in Monroe, Georgia. They've done an absolutely excellent job for us all these years and have printed every one of our **308** monthly editions! And, of course, **Thanks and Appreciation** to the **United States Postal Service** for sending those editions out to our **10,000** readers! **Thanks and Appreciation** to all of our **READERS**. Sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to our **Club Insider Advertisers**, past and present, for their kind and dedicated support of this publication. It's amazing to know that we have several advertisers with over a decade of continuous advertising with us. We also want to say sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to all of our **Club Insider Contributing Authors**, past and present, who've contributed *thousands* of excellent articles to help our readers with their Best Business Practices. **Thanks and Appreciation** to **IHRSA** for all it does.

Sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to my son, Justin, who started working part-time for **Club Insider** when he was just eight years old (helping with mailings). This young man, pretty much behind the scenes for 26 years now, has truly been a fantastic partner for his Dad in **Club Insider**. Justin does our editing, publication layouts, all of our website design and maintenance, all of our bookkeeping and subscription processing work, as well as archive management and anything else that needs doing, including writing a majority of our cover stories each year.

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 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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*Neesh and Zelly Wesson, Owners  
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