

Norm Cates' CLUB INSIDER™

The Pulse of the Health and Fitness Club Industry



(L to R) Laurie Smith (SVP of VillaSport), Phil Galvin (GM of VillaSport Beaverton) and Megan McGregor (Assistant GM of VillaSport Beaverton)

VillaSport...

*The Only Place Where
Fitness, Family and Community All Come Together*

SEPTEMBER 2014

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The Pulse of the Health and Fitness Club Industry

VillaSport...

*The Only Place Where
Fitness, Family and Community All Come Together*

By: Justin Cates

I will admit that I am quite the movie fan. Watching movies at home is fun and enjoyable (especially if you have a nice home theater setup), but it is not the same as going to see a new release currently in theaters. From the moment you walk through the doors of a local cinema, until the time you leave, the experience has been tailored to make it worth the money spent for a ticket. The smell of the popcorn, the previews for upcoming movies, the sound and sights of the main feature... All of it strives to culminate into a worthy experience, making price irrelevant.

The parent company of VillaSport,

Syufy Enterprises, comes from this industry, where experience is everything. As the Founders of Century Theaters, they grew a chain of movie theaters, which was later sold to Cinemark. At that point, the company's owners wanted to delve into something new, and they chose the health and fitness club industry. Then, as could be expected, they chose the niche of the industry where experience is absolutely crucial in order to justify the higher prices charged.

With only its third location recently opened, VillaSport is quickly mastering this formula in the markets in which they have opened. That is only the beginning, as there are plans for even

more facilities in the future. To learn about VillaSport and the vision of Syufy Enterprises for the company, I had the opportunity to speak with Laurie Smith, Senior Vice President of VillaSport. I welcome you to read on.

An Interview With Laurie Smith, Senior Vice President of VillaSport

CLUB INSIDER (C.I.) - Please tell us about yourself. Where are you from, and where did you go to school?

Laurie Smith (LS) - I am originally from Endicott, New York, but I've lived in California for the last 23 years. I went
(See *VillaSport* Page 10)



Laurie Smith

The Power of Teamwork

By: Dr. Art Curtis

Part I

Have you ever wondered why a team with clearly superior talent could lose to teams with lesser skilled players? Well, just ask the 2004 U.S. Men's Olympic Basketball Team. The heavy favorite to win the gold medal with a team full of NBA All Stars lost 3 of 8 games to lesser skilled teams from Puerto Rico, Lithuania and Argentina. How could this happen? If you watched the U.S. team play in 2004, this group of "all-stars" played as a collection of very talented individuals, not

as unselfish collaborative members of a team. I am sure you can all think of many examples of talented teams in various sports that have underperformed as a team. It is certainly easy to see as you watch a game unfold on the field of play. But, what about in your business, how do you know if a team has what it takes to be a high achieving team?

A couple of years ago, one of the outstanding Keynote Speakers at the annual IHRSA Convention and Trade Show was Patrick Lencioni, Founder and President of The Table Group, a management and consulting firm specializing in executive team development and organizational

health. His presentation was very thought-provoking, and it ultimately lead me to read two of his books, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* and *The Four Obsessions of an Extraordinary Executive*, in order to dig deeper into the concepts that he presented. It also prompted me to reflect on past experiences as part of teams, both business and athletics and to follow the topic in several business publications. His thesis that, "Not finance, not strategy, not technology, it is teamwork that remains the ultimate competitive advantage, both because it is so powerful and so rare," is a pretty bold statement!

(See *Dr. Art Curtis* Page 16)



Dr. Art Curtis

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Norm's Notes

•**Hello Everybody!** This is your CLUB INSIDER Publisher and Tribal Leader Since 1993 checking in!

•**Is America a great country, or what?** Hmm... Hmm... Hmm! As I write this, it is September 11th, 2014, and I want to remember that awful 9/11 day and say a little prayer for the families and the souls of the 2,879 innocent people who were killed on that fateful day in New York City, the additional 126 killed at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. and the 40 people on Flight 93 that crashed into a field in Pennsylvania after some of the passengers revolted against the hijackers and caused the jet to crash rather than allowing it to be flown into the U.S. Capital, the White House or another American target. God bless them all and may they all Rest In Peace.

•**The "Last Rep"** is the title to the monthly writing that IHRSA CEO/President, JOE MOORE, closes CBI Magazine editions with each month. I want to Thank Joe this month for writing his "Last Rep" commentary partially about the efforts of my son, Justin, and I, to help people with CLUB INSIDER. And, I want to Thank CBI Publisher, CRAIG WATERS, for Publishing Joe's writing. Going back 34 years, 13 years before I founded CLUB INSIDER, I was very honored to Co-Found I(H)RSA with RICK CARO and 5 others:

the great and late "Mr. Enthusiasm" DALE DIBBLE, JENNIFER WAYT, "BROTHER" CURT BEUSMAN, TODD PULIS and PETER DONAHUE. The seven of us were at Rick Caro's New York City Office when we took Rick's idea and made it a reality. I was particularly honored when our new I(H)RSA Board (the word H for Health was not added until 1994) of Directors elected me to be the first President of I(H)RSA in 1981.

This month, to receive the honor of the kind comments in Joe Moore's September "Last Rep" writing is something I'll always cherish and appreciate. In particular, Justin and I were honored when Joe included comments about our efforts to help Augie's Quest over the past 8 years. Isn't it amazing what words can do, to and for your heart and your mind? I, for one, am very honored and blessed to be able to write and send words your way every month... words that we believe in our hearts and our minds will provide you with continued and ongoing value, while at the same time, providing you with the chance to improve the State of the Art of your club or clubs. To be clear, we believe, and we pray a lot that our work will help you and your family. When I think of how fortunate I was that fate caused me to resign from my hard-earned job as an airline pilot way back in the 1970s, I'm

amazed. I'm amazed because, even 34 years ago, I believed I could use my life for a much greater and higher purpose by being in the club business, instead of flying jet airliners. Since then, I've been very blessed to use my life for the purpose of serving YOU and your efforts to perfect your club(s). And, to properly express the pure JOY that I experience producing Club Insider editions each month, as a Partner and Teammate with my brilliant son, JUSTIN CATES, is beyond my pay grade as a Wordsmith. Thank you for this most wonderful honor of them all. Thanks again, Joe. You and Team IHRSA make us all proud!



Norm Cates

•**Planet Fitness** announced via a Press Release on September 10th that, for the 4th year in a row, the brand will serve as the national gym partner of NBC's hit show, **The Biggest Loser**, which premiered Thursday, September 11 (8-10PM EST). See the Press Release on Page #24.

•**The ALS Ice Bucket Challenge...** How many of you were challenged, like I was by my former partner, and great friend, RICH BOGGS, the Co-Founder of The STEP Company and MOSSA formerly known as Body Training Systems? Yes, I responded and doused myself with a bucket of ice water in front of over 300 of my friends at my 27th Annual Great

CHARACTERS of Atlanta Party I host here every year in Atlanta. While this group didn't know I was going to do it, I provided each of them with a brochure from Augie's Quest, and I told them they would be hearing from me and Augie's Quest in the future, and they will. In turn, I challenged my friends, RANDY IVEY, DARON "ROCKETMAN" ALLEN and JEFF RANDALL with the Ice Bucket Challenge, and so far, I've received a video of Jeff dousing himself. So, Thanks Jeffrey for your very well done Ice Bucket Challenge response at your neighborhood Yacht Club! And, to Randy and "Rocketman" Allen, I say: I'm waiting (See Norm's Notes Page 7)

About Club Insider

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21 Years and Counting!

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“Insider Speaks”

#WhyGetActive Reaches More Than 1 Million Twitter Users

By: Lilly Prince

How often have you walked in your club, glanced around and considered how unique and different all of your members are? The thought occurs to many club operators virtually every day.

That's because clubs excel at attracting people of diverse ages, backgrounds and fitness levels, and because each one of those members, regardless of the demographic details, has their own specific objective when it comes to exercise.

Why do they work out? One can only guess. Is that older man lifting weights so he can continue playing with his grandkids? Is that younger woman pounding away on the treadmill to shed her post-pregnancy weight? Do the members in that yoga class want to reduce stress, strengthen their core, manage their back pain... or all three?

One can only guess... Or, better yet, ask.

The motivations and the reasons that bring people to your club are endless. Some of them are clear and understood, and others are subliminal and barely sensed. But, in either case, none of the reasons have much impact on others unless they can be articulated and well aired.

That's precisely why IHRSA has launched a social media campaign called **#WhyGetActive**. Its Mission: To share one's personal motivations for exercising with the world.

"The goal of **#WhyGetActive** is two-fold," explains Joe Moore, IHRSA's President and CEO. "We want to create a community in which people inspire each other to get active and foster a movement to make physical activity a priority for every government and community. **#WhyGetActive** is our code word for this cause."

The program is simple, yet sophisticated and powerful.

Participants share their own personal reason(s) for being active, i.e., "To compete in a marathon," on their social media networks and include the hashtag **#WhyGetActive** to categorize their post. They can write their reason on a whiteboard, take a photo of themselves holding the sign, or a photo of themselves working out, and post it. They're also encouraged to share inspiring online content.

Creating A Dialogue

IHRSA soft-launched the campaign in March at its 33rd Annual International Convention and Trade Show

in San Diego, and since then, it's struck a chord within the industry.

Consider the response triggered by Twitter alone: Between May 21 and July 1, there were 772 related tweets by 191 contributors, which reached more than one million users.

You read that right... more than one million! Not only that, but there also were 4,094,619 "timeline deliveries," which represents the total possible number of times someone could have viewed a particular message, a measure of how broadly it's circulating (The number is calculated by adding the follower count of the person who authored the original tweet and the follower-count of those who re-tweeted it.).

#WhyGetActive is harnessing the power of social media to spread the word about the value of exercise in an efficient and effective way, suggests Moore. "For a long time, IHRSA and other physical activity advocates promoted the health benefits of exercise, i.e. reduced risk of diabetes and heart disease, but we've come to realize that, while the message of primary health prevention remains critically important, it hasn't been persuasive enough."

What is compelling, though, are an individual's personal reasons for getting and remaining active; those do resonate with others. "People have gotten the message that exercise is good for their health," says Moore. "Now, we want to shift the focus to why a person wants to be healthy and active."

The campaign has produced responses encompassing everything from, "To keep up with my kids," to, "Because I

love JIF peanut butter." That's the beauty of the concept, indicates David Van Daff, Vice President of Business Development and Public Relations for the National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM) and an early adopter of **#WhyGetActive**. "The reasons people have for becoming active are very subjective and personal. For instance, because they want to enjoy a particular food, just went through a divorce or want to fit into an old pair of jeans."

Everyone at NASM has jumped on board, especially on Instagram, reports Van Daff. "Our staff and trainers are running with it and having fun," he says. "It also helps fitness professionals seem more accessible to club members and potential clients. The **#WhyGetActive** campaign really brings out people's creativity." (The person who posted about his love of peanut butter was an NASM trainer.)

Engaging With Members

Another early adopter of the campaign is L&T Health and Fitness, a Corporate Fitness Works company in Falls Church, Virginia. Allison Flatley, L&T's Chief Operating Officer, and a member of IHRSA's Board of Directors, says L&T got involved because the new program expands the scope of what it means to be active. "**#WhyGetActive** goes beyond fitness," she observes. "It focuses more on movement and activity, not just being fit and looking good in a bathing suit."

She says the effort also is compelling because, "it employs motivations people think about frequently, not just once or a few times a year in the doctor's office."

Like NASM, L&T staff and members were eager to participate, and results have already accrued. Anthony Scaglione, L&T's Vice President of Marketing and Sales, notes that, thanks to the campaign, the company's Twitter account tripled its highest-ever monthly total. "When we reviewed our key performance indicators for May, our most viewed post on Facebook was the staff **#WhyGetActive** video, which, as of right now, has reached 475 viewers."

While it's too early to tell if **#WhyGetActive** has had an impact on L&T's bottom line, Flatley points out that "Anything that generates engagement with our members is good for our business."

Jay Ablondi, IHRSA's Executive Vice President of Global Products, emphasizes that, while **#WhyGetActive** provides value for the public, it also produces business benefits. "Health clubs can use the hashtag and campaign to increase retention and attract new members," he proposes. "In the case of current members, it reminds them why they're at the gym and inspires them to keep using it. And, at the same time, it showcases the fun, energetic and passionate community that exists in the club, helping to attract new members."

Christine Thalwitz, Vice President of Marketing at ACAC, in Charlottesville, Virginia, is another active promoter of **#WhyGetActive**. "People always respond to stories about other people on social media," she advises. "The stories create a tangible community. This new IHRSA initiative is fun and really easy to do."

Storming Capitol Hill

#WhyGetActive also has proven a valuable tool in IHRSA's efforts to network with, educate and influence health promotion advocates and government bodies, in particular the U.S. Congress.

In June, the Association was the chief sponsor of *Coming Together to Fight Inactivity*, a fitness fair held on Capitol Hill, in Washington, D.C., to promote the campaign. The 1-day event was hosted by the Congressional Fitness Caucus, a legislative committee formed to raise awareness about the importance of physical activity. Members of the caucus extended an open invitation to other members of Congress, legislative aides and the media.

The fair included remarks by Co-Chairmen Ron Kind (D-WI) and Aaron Schock (R-IL); interactive exhibits by a number of IHRSA associate members and others; and a light workout led by VIDA Fitness, an IHRSA-member club company

(See "Insider Speaks" Page 8)



...Norm's Notes

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to see your Ice Bucket Challenge videos!

•On another front, with more about the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge, Joe Moore and Team IHRSA all participated in the Ice Bucket Challenge to benefit ALS research. This from IHRSA about that:

"IHRSA Accepts the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge! - IHRSA won't shy away when the gauntlet has been laid down in front of us. When the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge was issued to us by Chris Clawson and Life Fitness, we gladly accepted. The organization is no stranger to supporting ALS research. We host the BASH for Augie's Quest at the Annual International Convention and Trade Show every year and support other endeavors by participating, sharing on our blog and by social media to help spread the word. Augie Nieto, the co-founder of Life Fitness, was diagnosed with ALS in 2005. Ever since, he and his wife, Lynne, have partnered with the MDA for Augie's Quest, which supports fast-track, innovative research seeking effective treatments, and ultimately, a cure for ALS. So, as IHRSA President and CEO Joe Moore says, 'We challenge the health and fitness industry to accept the challenge!'"

•BILL HIGGS, one of the top General Managers in our industry, a 33-year veteran and long-time friend, has announced that his club, Shula's Athletic Club in Miami Lakes, Florida, is pleased to celebrate the grand opening of an expanded personal training area while introducing Thrive Functional Training, voted the #1 training program in America by Men's Health Magazine. During the 3-day grand opening event, visitors can tour the facility, try out all group fitness classes, experience a free Thrive Workout and enjoy enrollment specials. There is no admission fee, and everyone is welcome, (all club rules apply). Thrive's Functional Training System was created by world-renowned strength coach MIKE BOYLE, who trained the 2013 World Series Champion Boston Red Sox and the 2014 Silver-Medal Winning U.S. Women's Hockey Team, as well as hundreds of NFL, NBA and NHL athletes. The Thrive Functional Training System employs the very same principles that Boyle uses to train world-class athletes. But, it's 100% personalized for any age, fitness level or goal.

"It's a very special day for the Miami Lakes fitness community," said Bill Higgs, "Our priority has always been to maintain the best fitness training facility in the area, offering the most cutting edge training methods. I'm excited to see what

new fitness heights our members will reach as we deliver the nation's leading performance program at our newly expanded training area!"

•Total Gym, a leading manufacturer of functional and bodyweight training equipment, has expanded its sales team with the addition of industry veteran, MICHAEL MELLOR, as Commercial Sales Associate. Good luck, Michael!

•Speaking of equipment sales, DO NOT MISS the Club Industry Show in Chicago, October 22-24th, where in addition to the always terrific Trade Show, on Thursday morning, October 23rd at 9:15AM, the Club Industry folks are going to honor our friend, the great JOHN MCCARTHY, now retired IHRSA 25-year Executive Director with its Lifetime Achievement Award, an honor that's been bestowed on the following legendary industry greats over the years, starting back in 2003 going forward: JOE WEIDER, JOE GOLD, JUDI SHEPPARD MISSETT, RICK CARO, ALAN SCHWARTZ, DR. KEN COOPER, the late JACK LaLANNE, CURT BEUSMAN, RED LERILLE, JOE CIRULLI and DANIEL LEVIN.

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•THOMAS PLUMMER is a giant in the field of teaching club owners and operators how to make and keep a buck. He's also one of, if not THE, most prolific book author in our industry with six books in print targeting club owners and operators with volumes of industry wisdom accumulated during his 30+ year career in this business. And, he's also just released a new book called: 5 Minutes of Sunshine. In this very special collection of letters written for his young granddaughter to read when she's older, Plummer shares the lessons he's learned in his own life and from more than 30 years of coaching young people in the fitness business. This book will make an outstanding holiday gift or birthday present, as it's a very well-done, full-color, hardcover book designed to be a personal resource that helps guide readers, people from their 20s to parents of young adult children and everyone in between, toward making their own discoveries on who they are, what they want from life and how to live a life of value and happiness. Each letter includes a full-color illustration, well done by JEFF CAMISH, as well as journaling pages where readers can write down their own thoughts plus guiding questions that will help readers focus on the letter's important messages. To learn more, and to order copies for your family, friends and your club pro shop, go to www.healthylearning.com.

•DR. KEVIN STEELE, the Vice President of Education and Programs for Mad Dogg Athletics, informed me that they've launched a Spinning Nation initiative with the American Heart Association and their "Go Red for Women" campaign to raise awareness about heart disease in women. Kevin explained that they are currently recruiting clubs and studios to participate in their 4-hour event on Saturday, February 15. Since February is National Heart Month, there'll be a lot of media attention and engagement. He also explained that Mad Dogg Athletics is looking for sponsors that want exposure and involvement within their community. For information, contact Dr. Kevin Steele (See Norm's Notes Page 8)

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...Norm's Notes

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at KSteele@maddogg.com.

• **PRIDE** is the *best word this wordsmith* can come up with to share the feelings of yours truly, and our **Rome Free Academy Class of 1964**, at our **50th High School Reunion in Rome, New York, August 15-16th**, when during the week of our reunion, it was announced that **one of our Rome Free Academy graduates of the Class of 1976, ROB MANFRED**, was named to be the new **Commissioner of Major League Baseball**! So, it's with great **PRIDE** that

I say **"Congratulations Rob!"** to this new leader of the great game of Major League Baseball. And, it's with great **AFFECTION** that I say to all of our **Class of 1964 Classmates** (about 150 of us who showed up counting husbands and wives) **that it was just GREAT seeing you all!** I also want to write a note of **THANKS** and **APPRECIATION** to the **Reunion Committee**, who put in a lot of work to make this **FUN** two-day event a **real blast!** **Thanks and Appreciation to Committee Members RON TOWNSEND, FRAN and RON D'AMORE, RON BARRY, EILEEN DeRUBY and TERESA GUILANO STANWIX** for all you did

to make the events a great success. I also want to remember our classmate, and another RFA football teammate, **BRUCE "MOOSE" TOWNSEND**, who passed away from **ALS on July 25th**. **God bless Moose and our RFA Class of 1964 in Upstate New York and around the world!**

• **Welcome to DR. ART CURTIS and JOE IMBROGNO as new Contributing Authors** with their articles presented on **Pages #3 and #21!**

• **If you are a texter in your car, or if you have a wife, children or friends who are texters in their cars... this one's for you!** I was watching TV the other day and a very important **Public Service Commercial** came on. It was about texting in your car and was entitled as is the website it was promoting: **www.itcanwait.com**. The message on the website is: **"Before you drive... text: #X which then lets your friends know you're about to drive and can't respond until you arrive at your destination."** There's an App on there for you, too! **5,231,609** people have **made the pledge!** Will you?

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• **God bless all of our troops, airmen and sailors and keep them safe. Thank you, Congratulations and Welcome Home** to all of our troops who have served in **Iraq, Afghanistan** and around the world. **God bless you and your family, your club staff, your members and your club(s).** **God Bless America!**

(Norm Cates, Jr. is a 40+ year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. Cates is the Founder and Publisher of CLUB INSIDER, now in its 21st 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 first ever DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award, one of its highest honors. Cates may be reached by phone at 770-635-7578 or email at Norm@clubinsideronline.com)

JLR Associates Announces the placement of

Neil Hodgson
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...“Insider Speaks”

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based in Washington, D.C.

Representative Kind, an IHRSA ally and champion of pro-physical-activity public policies, endorses **#WhyGetActive**. “I’m always looking for new ways to promote good health and fitness, especially among the younger generations,” he explains. “This campaign is a fun way to get people thinking about their health at an age when healthy habits and routines can really take hold. Promoting good health is something we all can do to help young people succeed in school and in their communities.”

The 60 members of Congress and/or their staff members who participated filled out whiteboards and posted their **#WhyGetActive** photos to Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

The outreach effort assembled a broad range of stakeholders in the physical activity arena. Joe Moore concludes it was definitely a success, “People were excited, and engaged, and we had an opportunity to raise a very important issue on Capitol Hill.”

The briefing portion of the event included presentations by Kind and Schock, which highlighted key public policy proposals to promote physical activity, among them the **Personal Health Investment Today Act (PHIT)** and the **Fitness with Integrated Teaching Kids**

Act (FIT Kids). The first would allow Americans to pay for club memberships via pretax accounts, such as health savings accounts (HSAs) and would also cover fitness equipment purchases and youth sports league fees. FIT Kids would make grants available to states to implement programs that promote nutrition, fitness and physical activity efforts in schools.

“I think the legislators and Congressional staff left with a better understanding of the efforts the Congressional Fitness Caucus is making to promote physical activity and learned about what various groups are doing to support these efforts,” reflects Helen Durkin, IHRSA’s Executive Vice President of Global Public Policy. “The event also fostered a dialogue between the groups themselves, helping to improve advocacy coordination and strengthening efforts to advance the physical activity promotion agenda in Congress and on Capitol Hill.”

Ultimately, improving cooperation, interaction, coordination and action among all of the advocates of increased physical activity is the key to making the world healthier, fitter, and hopefully, happier. That, of course, is **#WhyGetActive’s** defining goal. “Together, our voices are louder, stronger and more influential,” says Moore. “Together, we can really push the dial toward a more active world.”

(Lilly Prince can be reached at lilly.prince12@gmail.com)

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...VillaSport

continued from page 3

to high school in Pennsylvania and then attended Springfield College in Massachusetts, where I got a degree in Commercial Recreation and Business. Eight years later, I returned to graduate school and got my MBA at Duke University.

C.I. - When and how did you first get involved in the health and fitness club industry?

LS - After graduating from Springfield, I was hired as the Tennis Activities Director for Natick Racquet Club in Massachusetts. Aside from the 2-year break to attend graduate school, I have been in the health and fitness club industry my entire career. In the 1980s, I also worked for Babson Recreation Center and for Tennis Corporation of America (now Midtown Clubs). In 1991, I was recruited to be the General Manager of ClubSport Pleasanton in California. I also managed ClubSport's Oakland facility and was then promoted to Vice President, and later, Senior Vice President at the Leisure Sports corporate office. In 2011, I accepted an opportunity to join the VillaSport Athletic Club and Spa team.

C.I. - After 20 years of experience at Leisure Sports, what brought you to VillaSport? How has that experience translated to what you now do at VillaSport?

LS - I had met Elizabeth Puccinelli, the Senior Vice President of Development for Syufy Enterprises, the parent company of VillaSport, and we would occasionally chat about the club industry and share ideas. In early 2011, Elizabeth let me know that VillaSport was looking for a Senior Vice President of Operations and asked if I would be interested in applying. I thought it was a great opportunity to join a new and exciting company with two high-end, resort-style, family-oriented clubs and a plan to add 20 more. The VillaSport clubs

were gorgeous, and with a plan to build from the ground up and do it right from the start, it seemed like a great fit. I felt I could be of value to the company. I had a wonderful 20 years at Leisure Sports, and I have nothing but good things to say about that company. I left on great terms, and I stay in touch with the leadership team, sharing information across companies.

C.I. - With the recent opening of the Beaverton, Oregon location, VillaSport now has three operational facilities. But, let's go back to the beginning. When and where did VillaSport's first location open? And, please tell us about that club (size, amenities, services, programs, etc).

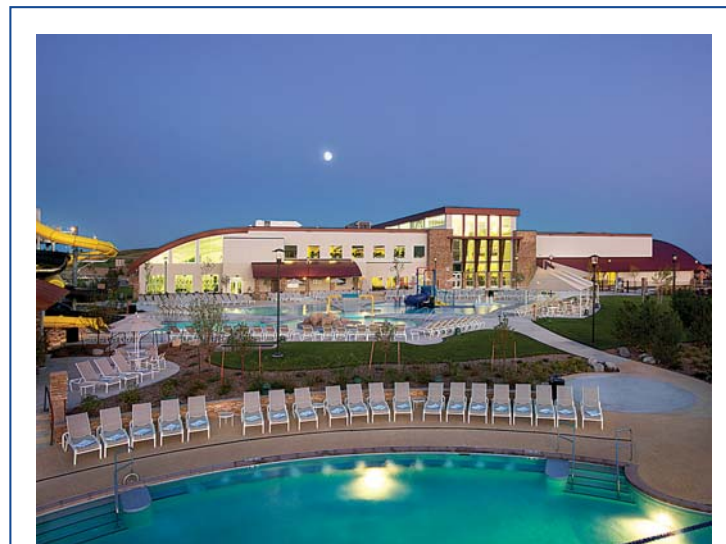
LS - The first VillaSport Athletic Club and Spa opened in Colorado Springs, Colorado in December 2007. This location's total square footage is about 175,000, including all indoor and outdoor spaces. Some of the hallmarks of our facilities are:

Aquatics - Indoor and outdoor recreational pools with water slides, water play structures and a lazy river (Colorado Springs), plus indoor and outdoor lap pools and whirlpools;

Group Exercise - Five studios, with 180+ complimentary classes per week on the group exercise schedule;

VillaKids - A club-within-the-club for kids ages 6 weeks to 12 years, VillaKids offers 12,000 square feet of space just for kids. The facility includes a 3-story climbing maze, a sport court gym, birthday party room, art studio, dance studio, open play space, outdoor playground and an outdoor turf field.

Fitness - At VillaSport, friendly, professional fitness advice is included in every membership. Our Fitness Advice Center is staffed by Fitness Advisors during all hours of operation, and members can ask questions, get advice and learn about our



VillaSport in Colorado Springs, Colorado

training programs at any time. We want every member to feel 100% comfortable using all the equipment available in the club.

Our brand statement is, 'VillaSport is the only place where fitness, family and community all come together.' Our memberships at all three clubs are 60-70% families. While fitness and exercise are our foundation, we are more than just a place to work out; we want to be the 'third place' in our members' lives, along with home and work. We hope our members choose to come to VillaSport, whether they are working out or not. We've developed a lot of social programs, both for individuals and families, to create additional reasons for people to come to the club. We have wine seminars and beer tastings, and every holiday, there is a major family event, from *Breakfast with Santa* to our *Labor Day Luau*. We actively support local charities and participate in community events. So, we really live and breathe our brand statement.

C.I. - When and where did the next location open? Was this one similar to the first? What were the differences?

LS - Our club in The Woodlands, Texas opened in May 2009. Given that we opened in the height of the recession, the ramp-up of memberships took a little longer than expected, but the club is incredibly successful now. In terms of size and features, the Texas club is very similar to the Colorado Springs club. We had a little more land to work with in Texas, so our outdoor aquatics center is more spacious, with plenty of grassy areas between the outdoor adult lap pool and the family recreation pool.

C.I. - Let's talk about the newly opened Beaverton location. I'm going to guess this is your little baby.

LS - Yes, Beaverton is the first club I have opened with the company since coming on board. Hopefully, it's the first of many more to come.

C.I. - When did the planning for this location begin? When did it open, and how many members were there on opening day?

LS - The planning began over two years ago. As you know, the entire development process, from securing the land, to getting all entitlements, to designing the building and then constructing it takes a long time for clubs of this size. We had our groundbreaking ceremony last September, and then, it took about eleven months to complete construction.

We opened on Monday, August 18th. We pre-sold 2,000 memberships, and 70% were families, so we opened our doors with over 4,000 members if you count all the spouses and children. On day one, we had 2,500 member visits, so we hit the ground running. In Oregon, you have a limited summer season, and our members had waited 'patiently' all summer for us to open, so we knew people were chomping at the bit and couldn't wait to come and go down our waterslides and play on the water structures.

The feedback overall has been very positive. The Mayor of Beaverton was our first official member, and he spoke at our ribbon-cutting event. He is thrilled that a facility of this type has opened in his city.


C.I. - Please tell us about the club (size, amenities, services, programs, etc).

LS - VillaSport Beaverton has 89,000 square feet of indoor space and a total of 130,000 square feet, including our outdoor aquatics center. A few of the design differences between Beaverton and our first two clubs include: (1) larger group exercise studios; (2) the full fitness center (See VillaSport Page 12)



VillaSport in The Woodlands, Texas

VillaSport
ATHLETIC CLUB AND SPA



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...VillaSport

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is on the second floor (in Colorado and Texas, the weight equipment is on the first floor, and the cardio equipment is on the second floor); (3) the addition of relaxation lounges in the men's and women's locker rooms; and (4) more manicure and pedicure stations in VillaSpa and two less treatment rooms.

We also redesigned our outdoor pool café so that it straddles both the indoor and outdoor aquatics centers and will remain open year-round, so members can enjoy lunch or a beverage by the pool no matter the season. Our main café features a large brick fireplace with an 80" flat screen TV, plus comfy outdoor seating around a fire pit. An important design feature in our clubs is the creation of gathering spaces within the facility where people can just sit, relax and socialize. VillaSport is not just about coming to the club, working out and leaving. Our members might come take a class and then relax in the spa lounge, sit around the fire pit with friends or have a glass of wine or beer at the café.

C.I. - There are relatively vast distances between VillaSport's facilities. Please tell us about this: What challenges and opportunities have these distances presented? What has it been like for you and others in the corporate office to deal with three locations in three different states?

LS - For me, especially, it has meant a lot of time in airports and hotels. Certainly, there is a challenge. Operating in three different states means we have to know the labor laws, state laws and local laws of three different areas. That adds a bit of complexity. Our fourth club will be built in California, so we're adding another set of laws and regulations with which we need to become familiar. One club feature that helps us manage from afar is our security camera system. Each club is outfitted with

over 30 security cameras that we can view on our desktop at any time back in the home office.

The goal moving forward is that we would only consider a new demographic area if we thought there were opportunities to add a second or third club in that area and develop a broader brand identity. So far, in our short history, we've had to introduce VillaSport to each new market and explain what we are all about, how we're different and what we offer. Lots of time, effort and dollars are spent educating the market. Soon, we will be doing it again in our fourth market. Our focus after that will be identifying potential new sites in the greater Portland, Houston, Colorado Springs-Denver and northern California markets.

C.I. - Does the company own its own real estate, and is that a key part of its club financing?

LS - Our parent company, Syufy Enterprises, has self-financed the construction of our first three clubs, and we own the real estate. There may be future properties as we ramp up growth where we elect to obtain outside financing.

C.I. - What are the key market differentiators for VillaSport?

LS - I would say that what differentiates us is described perfectly by our brand statement that I mentioned earlier, that, 'VillaSport is the only place where fitness, family and community all come together.' We've put our stake in the ground as a high-end, resort-style, family-oriented, community-minded club that offers a wide variety of programs and services for all ages and interests. That is the niche we have chosen to occupy. We have a training program for our employees called WE SERVE, and every new hire attends a WE SERVE workshop as part of his orientation. Then, collectively, we all live and breathe the WE SERVE principles every day, focusing on the goal of making price



VillaSport in Beaverton, Oregon

irrelevant. We want people to have such a great time at VillaSport that they can't believe how much we care about them, how friendly we are, how spotlessly clean the club is and how good they feel after each visit, that will make price irrelevant.

Being family-oriented, we consider VillaKids one of our most important differentiators. Those with a family membership receive two hours a day of complimentary childcare in a 12,000 square-foot space created just for kids. During those two hours, the children rotate activities every 30 minutes, so they stay active and engaged throughout the visit. They might start with arts and crafts, then go play games in the VillaKids gym, then go to reading and story time, then go climbing in the three-story climbing maze. It's an organized and well-orchestrated visit. This provides great peace of mind for parents, knowing they can have some time to themselves and get in a great workout while their kids are happy and having fun in the VillaKids program.

C.I. - Please tell us about VillaSport's membership. Do you have an enrollment fee? If so, what is it and what are your membership rates?

LS - Our enrollment fees vary by club. They average \$250 for an individual, \$100 for the second adult on the membership and \$50 for each child. Each club has different monthly dues rates based on local market demographics. For individuals, the rates currently range from \$81 to \$108 per month.

C.I. - Who are your key staff members?

LS - I am blessed to work with a fantastic team of people, both at the home office and in the field at the clubs. At the home office, we have Syufy Enterprises team

members who support VillaSport as well as all the other company divisions, in the key areas of marketing, human resources, accounting, analysis, purchasing and legal affairs. We also have a core team of people who are 100% focused on the VillaSport business. They include:

Kim Sanders - VP of Operations;
Bob Hemati - Senior VP of Construction;
Anthony Slayen - Club Programs Director;
Ross DePencier - Project Director;
Mickey Stout - Marketing Director;
Kayla Van Komen - Administrative Assistant;
Samantha Evans - Member Account Rep;
Gloria Barrera - CSI Software Specialist;
Damien Manuel - Senior Staff Accountant.

At each club, we have a General Manager (GM) and an Assistant General Manager (AGM) who are responsible for managing all club operations. At VillaSport, we have certain brand standards for how we operate our clubs, promote our clubs and so forth. But, within those brand standards, we want the GMs to own their business and run their business. We have a great club leadership team, with many years of successful club industry experience collectively.

Beaverton:

GM - Phil Galvin
AGM - Megan McGregor

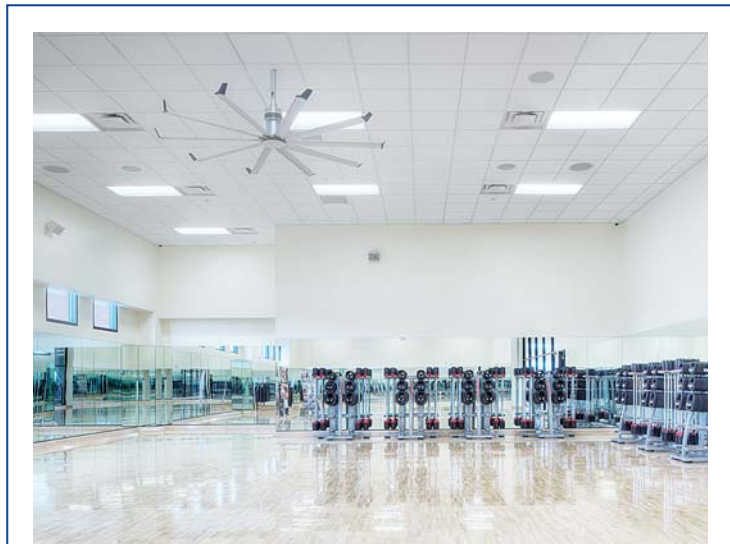
The Woodlands:

GM - Alan Veenendaal
AGM - Scottie McDowell

Colorado Springs:

GM - Carolyn Carter
AGM - Glen Roseboom

C.I. - Please tell us more about Syufy Enterprises, the principal owners of VillaSport.
(See VillaSport Page 14)



Group Exercise Room at VillaSport Beaverton

VillaSport
ATHLETIC CLUB AND SPA

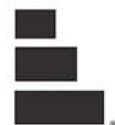


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STEPFITNESS

...VillaSport

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What is their vision for the company and future growth plans?

LS - VillaSport is a division of Syufy Enterprises, a privately held, family-owned business based in San Rafael, CA. The company founded Century Theaters over 60 years ago and sold that business to Cinemark in 2006. Syufy Enterprises currently operates several businesses, including VillaSport, Tomatina restaurants, West Wind drive-in movie theaters and public markets, Peacock Gap Golf Club and SyWest Development. The primary vehicle for VillaSport's growth is new construction, at a pace of up to two clubs per year. We would also consider acquisition opportunities that are inline with our target markets and niche in the industry.

C.I. - Please tell us about your IHRSA Board service and what you would say to anyone considering serving.

LS - That was a fantastic period in my club career. Spending four years on the IHRSA Board was an invaluable experience. I was at a point in my career where I wanted to give back. Serving on the IHRSA board is one way to do so. I believe I was fortunate to be selected to serve and to have the opportunity to meet and work with so many great people, both fellow Board members and IHRSA staff members.

C.I. - Please tell us about your thoughts on the value of IHRSA to VillaSport.

LS - Our VillaSport clubs are IHRSA members and participate in the IHRSA Passport program. We take a group of ten or so managers to the annual conference

each year, and it is a valuable experience for everyone. We find all the IHRSA resources, from CBI magazine to the various publications to the website content, very useful and relevant. This past March, the Trade Show was incredibly valuable in helping us finalize our fitness equipment selections for the new club in Beaverton. We postponed making final decisions until we went to the show so we could see the very latest equipment. We made a lot of changes after going to the trade show, and they were for the better. We are very happy with everything we bought for Beaverton.

• • •

Thank you very much to Laurie Smith for her time interviewing for and assisting with this article. Thank you also to Tony Maniscalco for assistance with photos and graphics.

(Justin Cates is the President and 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 29 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)

VillaSport
ATHLETIC CLUB AND SPA



VillaKids at VillaSport Beaverton



Outdoor Pool Complex at VillaSport Beaverton



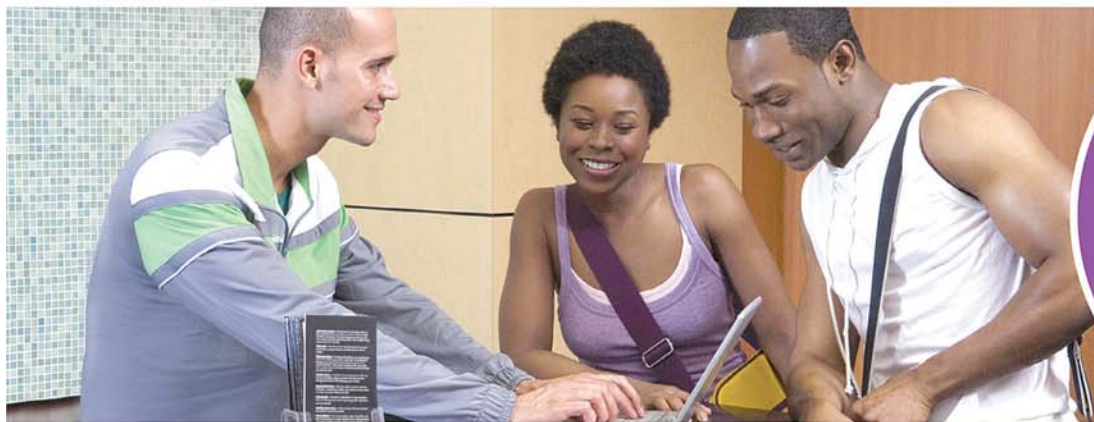
Locker Room at VillaSport Beaverton



Men's Spa & Lounge at VillaSport Beaverton



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...Dr. Art Curtis

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Now, I am always skeptical of the use of the adjective *ultimate* when used to describe any solution to a set of complex challenges, whether it is weight loss, fitness or developing competitive advantages for an organization that will enable it to be successful over an extended period of time. What I have come to believe is that teamwork within an organization is a critical component to an organizations success and sustainability. Without teamwork, success will be limited and short-lived. It is a powerful force multiplier, meaning that the

collective accomplishments working as a team will be greater than the sum of the individual accomplishments that can be achieved working independently.

While most business leaders would agree with the value of teamwork, relatively few organizations think enough about building their team. All too frequently, they think of team building as an event, i.e., a management retreat, rather than an ongoing process. Assembling outstanding teams takes a lot of thought and hard work. Maintaining great teams takes constant attention. Hopefully, you will find some of the information in the following series of three articles helpful and will allow you to

develop more effective teams within your organization. This first article will focus on the characteristics and behaviors needed for teams to perform at high levels over long periods of time, followed by some of the behaviors that can lead a team to become dysfunctional, and finally, some suggestions on selection and development of teams.

Characteristics and Behaviors of High Performing Teams

Think of one "real world" example of when you were part of a successful "Team." How did you feel being a part of that team? How did the team communicate with one and another? Was there ever any internal conflict? If so, how was the conflict handled by the team? Can you identify the critical elements that lead to the team's success? How did those elements that lead to success on one team differ from those of another team that you may have been on that was less successful?

In my experience, the following are the key ingredients that make up the chemistry of successful teams:

Shared Vision and Values is the foundation upon which any team is built. The vision comes from the organization's leader and expresses the leader's vision for where the organization should be heading. Shared values, such as integrity, commitment to serving others, collaboration and respect for the individual are genuinely shared by all within the organization. While individuals may differ in many ways, it is their shared values that are the glue that holds teams together when things get difficult. By having a shared vision and values, teams can develop mutual goals that will move the team and organization toward the organization's vision in a way that is also consistent with the organizations and the team member values. Without a shared vision and values, any road will lead to where you are going. You have a group of wonders that will move in individual directions.

Mutual Respect for team members, regardless of the divergent viewpoints and perspectives of individual team members is another foundational characteristic of effective teams. Mutual respect allows teams to work in collaboration because team members respect the perspectives and talents that individual team members bring to the team. Effective teams do not tolerate destructive personal behaviors that sap the team strength and energy. Issues can be discussed based on the merits without becoming personal. Team members understand and appreciate the value of contributions made by all team members, and often times, will establish team rules and boundaries to prevent destructive behaviors from developing.

Complimentary Skills and Styles are sought out when building a team. Different

skill sets are recognized, valued and used by effective teams. Having teams composed of individuals who look at issues similarly, who have been products of comparable educational backgrounds and who have experiences with similar track records and approaches is not a sound basis for success. Perhaps, one of the greatest mistakes made when assembling a team is to find a group of people who think and act like you. The best teams that I have ever been a part of had a good mix of diversity of individual strengths, work styles and experiences. They took more time and effort to manage, but the results were always worth the extra effort.

Non-Insular Thinker is one of the most important roles to have represented on a team. This person can challenge others to think "outside the box," or to look at problems and opportunities from different perspectives, i.e., the member perspective vs the operator's. If you do not have someone who is a non-insular thinker on your team, you may want to consider using a skilled facilitator that could serve in this role and challenge your team.

Constructive Conflict is a sign of a healthy team. If you assemble a team with divergent skills and styles, you should expect conflict. That is how you will get the best out of a team. Few opportunities have only one way to approach a solution. The strongest teams will not be satisfied until they find the best possible solution from among the possible solutions. What determines if the conflict is constructive or destructive are the two foundational elements: Shared Vision/Values and Mutual Respect. Without a strong presence of both, conflict will either be avoided, and as a result, you will not get the best out of your team or the conflict will be destructive and tear the team apart. Teams that have high degrees of shared Vision/Values and Mutual Respect will consider a broad array of solutions, debate the alternatives to find the best course of action. Be suspicious of any team where there is not conflict, if decisions are made without debate or if one or two people can dominate the team.

Commitment to Group Decisions is made once the course of action is determined by the team. Everyone commits to the team's decision. Strong teams do not have team members who selectively commit to "their" ideas or the decisions they agree with. Constructive conflict allows everyone on the team an opportunity to be part of the debate over a particular course of action. It is critical that all team members contribute to the debate, but once a decision is made, it belongs to the entire team. You should never hear a team member refer to a decision made by the group as someone else's idea.

Accountability for Behaviors and Results is implicit to being part of a high performing (See Dr. Art Curtis Page 17)

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...Dr. Art Curtis

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team. Results matter both individually --each team member is carrying their own weight-- as well as collectively. On the most successful teams, team members hold themselves accountable individually and collectively as a team. They push each other to be better.

Finally, strong teams **Celebrate Team Wins**. These celebrations are a way of bonding and reaffirming the team's identity. Always take the time to celebrate.

How do you think your team would rate on these characteristics? Try this exercise at one of your leadership team meetings:

Step 1: Set aside some quiet time before your meeting with the team. Using the chart on **This Page** as a guideline, rate how you think your team performs across each of the characteristics. Be honest and as objective as possible.

Step 2: Explain the concept and have each member of your leadership team complete the chart. How did you do?

If the scores for all the categories are 9s & 10s, you probably have a pretty strong team. Areas that score below 9

identify areas for improvement. How did your scores compare with the scores from your team? Were they consistent? How did the scores compare among the team members? Were they consistent, or did they vary substantially among team members? Consistently high scores are good. Inconsistent scores among you and/or with your team need to be explored further to identify areas where there may be a lack of alignment.

(Dr. Art Curtis earned his B.S. in Business and M.S. in Exercise Physiology from Bowling Green State University and his PhD in Exercise Physiology from the University of Maryland. He has taught courses in the graduate schools of the University of Maryland and the American University in Washington, DC. In addition to his consulting work, Art has been serving as a mentor to students at the Dallas Hamilton Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership in the College of Business Administration at Bowling Green State University. Curtis Club Advisors LLC was formed in 2011 to serve the Global Fitness and Wellness Industry. Currently, Art serves on the Board of Advisors of CYBEX, one of the world's largest fitness equipment manufacturers. He is also a member of the Board of Managers of Taymax Holdings, an investment by ClearLight Partners in one of Planet Fitness's largest area development companies. From 2008 to 2013 he was a member of the IHRSA Board of Directors, serving two terms as Chairman from 2010 to 2012.)

Teamwork Survey

Characteristic/Behavior	Criteria	Current Score 1-10
Shared Vision and Values	Can you articulate the vision and values? Can your team members articulate the same vision and values?	_____
Mutual Respect	How do team members talk about one another to others? Are the descriptors positive, neutral or negative?	_____
Complimentary Skills/Work Style	How diverse are your team members' personalities, work styles, backgrounds, etc?	_____
Constructive Conflict	Does the team debate issues? Do all team members participate in the debate or do a few individuals dominate? Do the debates become personal or do they focus on the merits of the issues?	_____
Non-Insular Thinking	Is there someone in the group that frequently challenges the conventional wisdom that is willing to play the "devil's advocate?"	_____
Commitment to Group Decisions	What pronouns do group members use to describe its decisions? (i.e., Our/we vs his/her/them)	_____
Accountability - Behavior/Results	Is there a system in place to measure results and accountability?	_____
Celebrate Team Wins	How do you celebrate successes?	_____



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30-Minute vs. 60-Minute Sessions *Trainer Discretion is Advised!*

By: Ron Alterio

I am often asked what type of Personal Training (PT) product is better to sell: a 30-minute or 60-minute session? The answer will often depend on your club, the space or niche that your club operates in, as well as the overall financial objectives of your club. However, if you are looking for a tool that helps capture greater long-term PT revenue, increases PT member penetration, improves PT client retention and helps you build a larger EFT PT draft in the shortest period of time, the hands down winner is the 30-minute session.

I know, I know... your trainers, upon hearing these dreadful words, will immediately throw their arms up in the air and scream, "Blasphemy, there's no way I can deliver a quality workout for my client in just 30 minutes!"

Unfortunately, this attitude typically stems from a very narrow and limited lens, a trainer-centric lens. If we truly want to engage more members and grow our PT business, we need to start examining things from a different set of lenses, a consumer-centric and business-centric lens. Having said that, let me make this clear right now, I am in no way saying that the 60-minute session should never be sold. In fact, there are a few cases in which a 60-minute session may be a more appropriate product to offer, such as with an extremely deconditioned exerciser, an individual with increased health risks and/or certain physical limitations or any other member that may require more supervised instruction. However, pound for pound and dollar for dollar, the 30-minute session is the hands down winner. Let's examine some of the "whys" a little more closely.

Greater Member Penetration - This should be the goal of any club operator in the new economy. Once a member joins, getting that member into some form of programming is essential, and affordability is the key! Shorter PT sessions allow you to lower the cost of entry into training. Hence, training is now more affordable to a larger percentage of your membership base. **Bottom Line:** 30-minute sessions allow you to reach and touch a greater percentage of your total members.

Greater Member Service Efficiency - Not only can you sell more training with a 30-minute session, you can service more clients as well. Think about it, you can train twice as many members in the same given hour with the exact same labor cost using a 30-minute session vs. a 60-minute session. Outside of group training, there is no better way to increase your member service efficiency rate. **Bottom Line:** 30-minute sessions allow you to double the number of



Ron Alterio

members serviced in any given hour.

Greater Client Engagement - This is one of, if not the most important objectives or KPIs to strive for and measure. The more times a trainer touches his or her clients, the higher the retention rate of those clients. Since the cost per session is lower with a 30-minute session, your members can now afford to work with their trainers more frequently each week. The 60-minute session, in almost every case, is just too cost prohibitive to achieve maximum client engagement. **Bottom Line:** 30-minute sessions are one of the best ways to increase client retention.

Better Product Alignment - The most common excuse people give for not exercising is time. Why do we as an industry continue to ignore this when it comes to the products we offer? We would help more people and sell more training if we simply gave the consumer what they wanted: results in less time! 30-minute sessions are ideal since they allow the client to get in and get out. I know, I know... I have heard it a million times, "My job as a trainer is to give them what they need, not what they want." Well, let me ask, how's that approach working out? Only 5-10% of members actually use PT as a solution, and the needle on that number hasn't moved in years. As trainers, we need to better understand the human condition. Lasting change takes place when the person needing to change can do it in smaller and more manageable chunks, not with the "no pain, no gain" approach. **Bottom Line:** You can attract, keep and impact more clients over time with 30-minute sessions.

(Ron Alterio is the National Sales Director for the Visual Fitness Planner. His area of expertise is building and driving successful EFT draft PT business models using the full suite of The Visual Fitness Planner products. He can be reached 717-645-3899 or emailing him at ron@vfp.us)



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The Cycle of Growth Starts With Change

By: Karen Woodard-Chavez

Whenever there is a change to be made in a business, there will be some who fully embrace the change with zeal. The ones who embrace it are typically the people who have bought in from the beginning and feel a sense of ownership with the change. There are also the others who like things the way they are now, do not see a need for change and drag their feet.

There may also be some anarchists who try to undermine the change. NO ANARCHISTS allowed; they must go. That will be another article.

The first stage in the cycle is **Mastery**. Mastery presumes that we have reached a level of doing something well, which is typically a very comfortable place for us to be. We are doing something so well that it becomes automatic for us. It does not require much effort because we are so adept at it.

Then comes a **Need for Change**. Perhaps, we are looking at growth, and our current systems will not support that growth. Perhaps, we have new competition

coming into our market, and we need to enhance how we are doing business either in one area, several areas or many areas.

Ahhhh, the pit in the stomach feeling of change for some, or the exhilaration of change for others. I am speaking about this from a business organizational sense but this certainly is applicable to our personal and professional development as individuals. Once we have defined the need for change, we then need to define what the **New Behaviors** will be that will allow that change to occur. This is the part that requires in-depth thought, thinking things through to the end, timelines, definition of desired outcomes and vision so that we can communicate those expectations to the staff who will be carrying out these new behaviors. This is typically where the resistance sets a foothold because people are concerned about whether or not they are capable of these new behaviors and whether or not it is worth the effort. After all, we have been successful doing things the way we have always done them, why should we change?

In the new behaviors stage, I encourage you to start with a key group

of management and leadership to define, think things through, create timelines, etc. Then, I encourage you to develop what I call an "elite group of dissenters." The purpose of the elite group of dissenters is for you to choose a group of committed staff other than key management who will be behaving with the new behaviors and to share your plans with them before rollout to the entire staff so they can tell you what will fly, what will not fly, what needs to be adapted, etc. This is so that we can achieve the desired outcomes we expect.

Please understand, you will go through with the changes you need to make, but it will be a lot easier if you have perspective from the staff that will largely be behaving the new behaviors on what will work and how to modify so that it will be received well from the entire staff.

If you do this early in the process, you will have fewer changes to make in the adaptation stage. In this stage of new behaviors is where you will be training staff on new systems, equipment, products, services, values, etc. This will take time; thus, it is important to think things through and really begin with the end in mind when



Karen Woodard-Chavez

you are planning so you cover all bases.

This stage is followed by the **Adaptation** stage. The adaptation stage is where we are in the thick of training for the new behaviors to make the desired and defined changes. In this stage, we will make progress, and we will make mistakes. We will make revisions to make further progress, and this stage requires patience (See *Karen Woodard-Chavez* Page 21)

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Drunk Under a Table

a/k/a Content People Want to Share

By: Joe Imbrogno

Like most things, Facebook can be used for both good and evil!

Well, the other day, when I woke after a late night of drin... I mean *sophisticated conversation over a great bottle of wine* with friends, I immediately panicked when I found that I had 59 Facebook notifications! There it was (names have been changed to protect the innocent!):

"John Smith, Kelly Jack and 57 other people like a photo you're tagged in."

Barely able to open my eyes, but wide-awake, I hesitantly clicked to explore this alleged photo that I'm tagged in.

My suspicions were true. Once more, *the wine* I had the evening before had eventually got the best of me, and I wandered off to find a comfy place to rest my eyes (translation: pass out).

My friends all know to expect this from me. I've ended up under coffee tables, behind sofas (don't ask) and in bathtubs. It's kind of my "thing" I guess.

There it was... for all of the world to see; well at least the world of my "friends" and "friends of friends."

Well boys and girls, there's a lesson here! One that we all know but rarely keep in mind as we go about marketing our gyms, health club, yoga studios, CrossFit locations, etc.

SOCIAL CONTENT THAT IS SHARED and TAGGED BY INDIVIDUALS GETS MUCH MORE ATTENTION and ORGANIC REACH (than content that is shared by a brand).

Those "friends of friends" on Facebook, Twitter followers, Instagram followers... They are the objective!

Why? Again, something we all know but seem to forget when it comes

to marketing: Walk-ins are the "cheapest" types of gym members to obtain, no matter what your target new member acquisition cost!

So, the key is to generate "in-club" content that can be shared and interacted with by your members.

You want them to tag themselves, to share your pictures and videos, to add comments, to retweet, to repost and to post their own pictures and tag you so you get organic access to their networks (presumably made up of a large percentage of "non-members").

This is Word-of-Mouth Marketing on steroids. Your brand is front and center: **Top of Mind.**

People who are in the latter stages of the buying cycle may be prompted to check out your facility because "their friend Bobby works out there."

Or, maybe, they aren't ready to join at this moment. When they are, chances are pretty good that you'll be top of mind, and they will check you out if they are consistently seeing you in their news feeds, Twitter feeds or Instagram feeds!

The trick here is to follow a process of consistently generating and promoting shareable content. Here's how:

1. Identify the social networks that make sense for your business. Facebook? Twitter? Instagram? Pinterest? It all depends!

2. Create a detailed content calendar listing each day, content needed, how it's to be generated and the intended MVC (minimum viable conversion) i.e., the minimum acceptable outcome you expect from the generated content. Shares? Downloading a Guest Pass? Clicks? Visits to your facility? Leave nothing to chance!

3. Create templates for repetitive components of your content calendar to keep production costs to a minimum (e.g., #WorkOutWednesday images to be shared on Instagram or #FridayFitness images to be shared on Facebook).

4. Get your members involved! This is the secret sauce: **Make It Fun!** Create content people WANT to share, tag and interact with. You might even consider designating a "Social Media Ambassador," someone on your team, a real "people person" who knows all of your members and whose role it is to promote "social sharing."

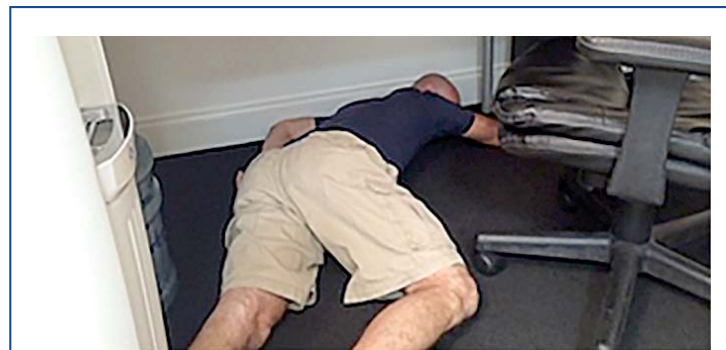
If you complete Steps 1 to 3 but



Joe Imbrogno

don't get to Step 4, you're just "Posting on Facebook" (which is becoming less and less effective these days as Facebook continues to push paid advertising), rather than "Generating New Member Leads." It's that simple.

(After graduating from the Wharton School of Business, Joe spent the first 15 years of his career in Corporate America, leading marketing teams around the world in market expansion activities. In 2007, he left to start Exakt Marketing's parent company with co-founder Derek Lee. At Exakt, he leads the fitness marketing practice team that delivers the group's three-phase intensive lead generation program dubbed "Kinesis" to bolster sales and marketing efforts geared toward energizing the lead generation and membership sales activities for health clubs. Additionally, he consults with health clubs across the country on everything from online lead generation to membership sales training. Joe can be reached at joe@exaktmarketing.com or 888-949-5487 x701. More information can be found at www.exaktfit.com)



Drunk Under a Table

...Karen Woodard-Chavez

continued from page 20

on all parts. In this stage, we start to lose the "why do we have to do it this" and adopt the "this is going to work really well --we are excited about this-- this will work." This is where we start to turn a corner, and the staff starts to see improvement. More staff will be recognizing the new way of operating and forgetting the old way.

I encourage you to also define what the small victories are for your organization with whatever change you are working toward. For example, our end goal may be to have all staff performing

consistently with (*define a goal*). But, our intermediate goals may be smaller bits of that, defined stages of progress toward the overall results. It is important to define these for the staff so they see that they are making progress. It is also important to celebrate these intermediate goals so they are unified by their progress.

A fair amount of time will be spent in the **Light at the End of the Tunnel** stage before we complete the cycle of growth with mastery. The Light at the End of the Tunnel stage is where you and the staff will really start to feel more comfortable with the new behaviors and things start to work very smoothly. Then, TADA, you are

there, right back at the Mastery stage with the new behaviors and the transformation has been made.

What will help to make change in any organization easier is to utilize this model in the planning stages as well as utilize this model in the introduction or presentation to the staff when you are sharing your plans with them. Go through the entire **Cycle of Growth Model** as has been outlined in this article. Only you will have your specific defined points for each stage.

Do this with them so they know what to expect. If they know what to expect, then change does not feel as much

of a surprise to them, and they are prepared to deal with it more effectively. Then, your organization will achieve the desired outcomes within the defined time frame.

(Karen is President of Premium Performance Training in Boulder, Colorado and Ixtapa, Mexico. She has owned and operated clubs since 1985 and now consults with and trains club staff throughout the world. She provides her services on-site, online, by phone and through her books, CDs, DVDs and manuals. She can be reached at 303-417-0653 or karen@karenwoodard.com)

How Do You Mix It Up?

By: Deneen Laprade

Today's highly competitive fitness landscape challenges even the most savvy, time-tested veterans in the industry. What's really exciting is that the fitness industry has grown to reach every corner of our planet, and today's consumers have endless choices in type, style and location of their workouts. It seems that the benefits of regular

exercise and proper, balanced nutrition have finally reached the masses in real, tangible, measurable ways! So, what does this mean for your brand?

How do you, the owner/operator of a health and fitness business, market your brand? What, if any, method do you use to establish your unique position and marketing message? How do you know which blend of marketing vehicles to use to share

this message?

Determining a dynamic and effective marketing mix can be a daunting task, so let's take it in two parts. We'll begin with how to establish your unique position and will follow that up with an understanding of which vehicles to use to communicate that distinction.

One of the traditional concepts used in the marketing world is known as the 4Ps. Its purpose is to establish the keystone of an organization's marketing mix. Any business can use this principle as the basis for determining its unique marketing platform. In the context of the fitness industry, the 4Ps should look something like this:

Product - Describe the tangible and intangible product or service in specific features and benefits that satisfy consumer needs and wants.

By now, we understand that the number of pieces of cardio and strength equipment in the facility isn't a compelling reason for prospects to inquire about membership. A better approach is to sell the benefits, using features as supporting reasons:

"Come experience the 'Club X' difference. Our members lose weight, feel great and are living their lives to their fullest! Our dedicated, professional staff will support your fitness goals with safe, effective, fun programming and all the latest equipment and technology."

Price - The value of your products and services in dollars.

Place - State where prospects can make their purchase with a call to action that includes: Stop In, Call or Click to Get Started Now!

Prioritize the actions you want them to take in that order. Most club operators tell me they average a 70% closing rate when prospects are in front of them. So, encourage prospects to Stop In! A phone call is your next best option, and of course, always include a 'click' option at minimum on your website, ideally a landing page specific to the offer that captures prospect contact information for you to follow up in the future.

Promotion - Declare your offer. Where does your business need prospects to spend their time and money? Create offers that clearly state the cost and what's included. Again, focus on the benefits using features as support.

Trial Offers are an ideal promotion. They encourage prospects to give you a try without initially being obligated to anything more than short money and a few weeks. They feel empowered by this choice and are more willing to try the trial!

This tactic distinguishes your brand as one with the confidence to let people 'try before they buy' with the



Deneen Laprade

ability to walk away, unencumbered if they aren't satisfied. Your advantage is in the low-pressure approach your team uses to bring them into the fold over the course of their trial.

I'm compelled to add two more Ps to the above. In my research for this article, I found several marketing mix concepts that expounded upon the original 4Ps that broaden the application of the concept to the consumer level.

Position - Tell your community who you are with a brief statement that expresses your reason for being in existence and *what you can do for them*.

"We help people like you achieve their fitness goals with fun, safe and effective programs. We improve the quality of life for our members by helping them make regular activity a part of their everyday lives. Our primary goal is to ensure that each experience you have with us is the best part of your day, every day!"

People - Connect with prospects at an emotional level.

Use real life success stories from you, your staff and your members to express their challenges, reasons and achievements. Images and stories of people "just like you" resonate with prospects and inspire them to want to do the same.

Spending time with this concept should net you a variety of messages that speak to the member experience. The next challenge is in establishing the right combination of marketing vehicles to effectively express the previous 4 [+2] Ps with the various segments within your market.

There exist conflicting opinions as to the relevance of print in an increasingly digital world. Beyond that argument, there remains the perpetual challenge of blending the marketing vehicles you've chosen in such a way as to maximize brand awareness and

(See Deneen Laprade Page 23)

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...Deneen Laprade continued from page 22

and guarantee a healthy ROI. So, how do you know what to choose?

In my experience, the first step to establishing the best marketing mix is in knowing your market intimately. Do your due diligence to learn about those that live within that 3 - 5 mile radius from your facility. You would be wise to learn their average household incomes, ages and if they have children. These key pieces of data help you envision the folks you're appealing to, and therefore, help you understand the best way to say it. Most likely, your choices will include a mix of families, seniors and singles, ranging in age from their 20s to their 50s. Using the results from your work with the 4Ps, you know which of your services appeal to these market segments and have specific messages for each that you serve.

The remaining steps include knowing where your current member base lives, repeating what's worked in the past and diversifying the mix to include new methods:

- Knowing where your current members live and work helps determine where to focus your marketing. The 'like-mindedness' shared by neighbors and co-workers is powerful. Target the areas in which you already have a strong presence, with the goal of increasing your market share and on a smaller scale, introduce your brand into similar areas where you have a lesser presence.

- Use historical data to select the marketing vehicles that have proven to have the greatest return for you, and using your budget as the benchmark, incorporate these successful strategies into the mix.

- Using the demographic data you collected, decide what new elements you can add. A dynamic mix includes traditional print ads and direct mail, with matching digital elements such as Internet marketing, eblasts and social media. Other aspects to fold in are Guerrilla marketing tactics that engage and inform your community of your unique Position (see the 5th P).

By following the steps in this article, you now have clear messages that support your brand in the market segments you serve using an effective mix of marketing vehicles that empower your brand and generate leads. Great work, everyone!

(Deneen Laprade is a Marketing Coach with Susan K Bailey Advertising, and she can be reached at deneenmax@gmail.com.)

The Secret is Out...

By: Donna Krech

An Interview On The Industry's Next BIG Thing!

Last month, I discussed how paying attention to trends and innovation in the club business brings about enormous success. I also shared what I believe to be the next big thing in our industry. We have been offering a hormone-balancing, 4-week, fast weight loss plan in our facility. It's bringing members fantastic results and bringing us an incredible new income stream with very high net profit... without any additional overhead or staff needed.

It's one thing for us to have success with our own plan, but in this candid interview, our secret beta tester reveals the impact this new business model has made in her club.

Why did you want to be a beta tester? I follow you on Facebook and saw the amazing results people were getting. Our weight loss department needed a shot, plus I wanted to try the program for myself, because I was struggling.

Does the concept of selling this as a group parallel conceptually to the idea of small group personal training? Yes. If you don't close a one-on-one appointment, you've spent money for an hour and a half for someone to sit there and do a presentation. When you do it as a group, and you have 20 people in the room, even if you only close ten, you've just done that in an hour, and you've made ten sales as opposed to one maybe, or none. It just makes so much more sense to do this in a group setting. The other thing that is so different about this is that you are selling weight loss, kind of not selling weight loss. It's the whole hormone thing. You are hitting weight loss from another angle. A huge part of what we talk about is everyone's results in weight loss, but we also talk about other health benefits and hormone balance. We're rebalancing hormones, so when you put all of that together, it doesn't sound like just another weight loss program. I have been in the weight loss/fitness business for 18 years, and I haven't seen anything that has gotten people off meds faster than this program. That is powerful!

What surprised you the most about the concept? I knew people could get really fast results with other plans, but I didn't believe in those because I'd heard of many health problems and had talked to many people that couldn't finish those programs and felt horrible. That has not been the case at all with this. Everybody has felt great! People have been much more likely to stick to this because we are

giving them what they want, fast loss. They are motivated by that, but they are also feeling great! So many diets make you feel terrible. Who wants to stay on something that makes you feel yucky, right? So the fact that you feel good on it and the fact that the health benefits have been amazing are the two things that blew me away. The thing that is blowing my mind with this is the fact people are getting their meds cut in half in a week!

I have a member who was on the program for eight days, and when she checked her blood pressure (BP), her doctor said, "Stop taking your BP medication. What you are doing is making your BP go down, just stop the prescription." Again, that was within eight days! In all the years I've been doing this, I've never seen anything like this!

Plus, this is changing people's mindsets like nothing I've ever seen. My husband did this and still gets on the scale every morning and still does not eat the foods he used to eat. He is in the zone. I don't think he'll ever go back to the way he was before. He lost 65 pounds in 4 1/2 months, and it's changed his mindset. Once you take your body into a natural balance, you see how food can trigger how you feel.

What did you learn while you were on the plan? I really understood the science. The program really changed my mindset about food. People are finding what foods their systems are sensitive to and what gives them results. I myself found out that gluten caused me to cough for years, but until this program, I never would have known that.

What have you invested in marketing costs? Zero, I've promoted through my Facebook page and email blasts to my members.

What kind of results are you seeing? Phenomenal! We're in the third week of our official launch... we've seen 23 pounds in 17 days down to 16 pounds in eight days.

What's the total gross dollar amount it's produced in the three weeks you've been in beta? We're at about \$7,200... without anything spent on marketing.

Has it generated any upsell or cross sell to the gym, personal training or other department? Yes! I already had someone enroll in our other program, which generated \$2,200 alone. That's \$9,400 in 3 weeks with 70% profit!

How would you sum up your experience as a beta tester? It would be more fun if everything was all done (laughing), but that is part of the testing. When I'm

passionate about something, it's easy for me to sell it; this has been easy for me. It needs someone with passion for changing lives and making money.

People are beating down our door asking us to let them be a beta tester. What advice would you give me when considering others to be a beta tester? Stop beta testing and launch, Donna! If I had what you have, I would start offering it! I think you've got a marketing thing here that is like nothing else. Between what you've done and what I've done, there's proof you have a solid program here. You've put enough people through the program, and there haven't been any negative health issues. I just don't understand why you don't just offer it.

What would the person looking to offer this need to be willing or prepared to do in order to make it a successful business for them? Make money, change some lives, work it, be passionate about it and treat it like a business.



Donna Krech

There you have it; we're beta testing this in a few of our other clubs and the results are equally impressive! I truly believe this is going to be the next BIG thing in our industry. If you have any interest in our research or in being a beta tester, please contact Shelley at our office at (419) 991-1223.

Planet Fitness Partners With NBC's "The Biggest Loser" For 4th Year

NEWINGTON, N.H. - Planet Fitness, the innovative health club franchise known for its Judgement Free Zone and affordable prices, announced that, for the 4th year in a row, the brand will serve as the national gym partner of NBC's hit show, *The Biggest Loser*, which premiered Thursday, September 11 (8-10PM EST).

Planet Fitness will fully equip the gym on *The Biggest Loser* ranch in support of 20 former athletes who are looking to regain their health as new contestants on the show's 16th season, themed "Glory Days." Planet Fitness will also be featured with a past *Biggest Loser* contestant highlighting the brands' pe @ pf program, a *Biggest Loser* Tip by trainer, Dolvett Quince, and select episodes will feature contestants working out at Planet Fitness clubs near their homes.

The contestants will work with new trainers Jessie Pavelka and Jennifer Widerstrom, as well as veteran trainers Dolvett Quince and Bob Harper. Alison Sweeney will return as host. Season 16 of *The Biggest Loser* will also feature trainer Bob Harper in an exciting new role, giving contestants a second chance at life on the show. Just when the eliminated contestant each week thinks they are headed home, they will actually be whisked away to

a secret location called "Comeback Canyon." There, they will be trained by Harper, competing at a separate secret weekly weigh-in for the chance to return to the competition and a shot at *The Biggest Loser* title and the \$250,000 grand prize.

"We're excited to be a part of *The Biggest Loser* for the fourth season in a row as an important part of the contestants' transformation process," said Dawn Sullivan, Director of Marketing at Planet Fitness. "With our affordable prices, non-intimidating Judgement Free Zone and national presence, Planet Fitness is the perfect place to help people take that first step on their fitness journey."

People can join Planet Fitness for just \$10 or \$19.99 a month and enjoy a variety of benefits, including state-of-the-art cardio and strength equipment, fully equipped locker rooms, flat screen televisions, unlimited small group fitness instruction by a certified trainer through the pe @ pf program and much more.

The Biggest Loser, which debuted on NBC in 2004, attracts more than 7 million viewers a week.

With more than 800 locations nationwide, nearly 6 million people have embraced Planet Fitness' Judgement Free Zone philosophy.

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- 2. Imbalance in what your club offers is why you're not making the money you could.***
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Health Club Consumer Behavior Sheds Light On Industry's Future

The 2014 IHRSA Health Club Consumer Report

By: Stephen Tharrett and Mark Williamson

IHRSA, with analysis and insights provided by ClubIntel, recently finalized the *2014 Health Club Consumer Report* (to be released by IHRSA in September and can be acquired at www.ihrsa.org/consumer-report). The *2014 Health Club Consumer Report*, like its predecessors, delves into the attitudes and behaviors of health club consumers, seeking to understand the impact these current practices might have on how club operators shape their business in the future. This year's report took a deeper dive into consumer behaviors and choices not mined in previous reports. Consequently, the data and insights from the 2014 report provide some new and exciting insights into how consumers and members use health clubs.

In 1919, Marcel Proust, author of *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, was quoted as saying, "What we call our future is the shadow that our past projects in front of us." Well, in the case of the health club industry, the health club consumer behaviors brought forth in IHRSA's *2014 Health Club Consumer Report* convey a vivid story of the recent past and present and serving as a GPS for club operators and manufacturers to follow for 2014 and beyond.

The 2014 report offers an exhaustive look at how consumers and members use their clubs, examining a host of variables ranging from what members practice to how they spend their discretionary income in the health club environment. Similar to last year's report, IHRSA has taken stock of how health club consumer behavior tracks against larger national demographic and economic trends. In the report's last section, IHRSA brings forth eleven key insights accompanied by six strategic plays that operators might consider in leveraging the report's insights.

The first insight brought forward by the report is the fact that the health club industry continues to show all the signs and symptoms of a mature industry, an insight first brought forward in the 2013 report. These signs and symptoms of maturity include industry membership levels growing at approximately the same rate as the U.S. GDP at 1.86% over the last three years (See Figure 1 on Page #27), average price points for membership remaining relatively flat (prices have swung up and down the last few years), club supply outpacing membership growth, and finally, increasing market segmentation (See Figure 2). Being a mature industry brings enormous challenges, but also exciting

opportunities, and like other industries before us, the health club industry seems to be embracing these opportunities. Membership has reached slightly over 52 million and represents 18% of the U.S. population, an all-time high. This is a clear indication that membership growth continues to move forward. In 2014, just over 20% of consumers pursued their fitness aspirations within boutique fitness facilities (e.g., in the report, they are referred to as studios of various segments, including yoga/Pilates/barre, sports-specific, indoor cycling/rowing, etc.), a clear indication that niche offerings with unique value propositions offer an appealing alternative to the "conventional" business models that have fueled the industry's past growth.

A second insight, one that has considerable implications for the industry, has to do with the continuing emergence and influence of boutique fitness offerings. As highlighted in the previous paragraph, close to 21% of health club consumers indicate they are members of a boutique fitness club, and based on our calculations, contribute an estimated 23% of the industry's dues revenue. The influence of these boutique facilities goes well beyond their penetration of our industry's consumer base. Boutique fitness facilities generate significantly higher price points than the average health club (See Figure 3), yet members visit them less frequently than the average health club member visits their club. This behavior puts an entirely new spin on what consumers equate as a value, and it's not a low price. Furthermore, members of boutique fitness clubs are far more likely (2x to 4x) to have a second membership when compared to the standard commercial health club models (e.g., fitness only and multipurpose). This practice may indicate a desire for members to leverage multiple tailored fitness experiences rather than stay with one less personalized experience.

A third insight, one that has numerous implications for the future success of the health club industry, relates to the demographic polarization of the health club industry, not unlike what we are seeing on a more global scale. Our industry appears to have staked out the most affluent and well-educated citizens of our nation (See Figure 4), to some extent ignoring the majority of citizens whose household income levels fall below \$50,000. It is not just the income and educational inequality trends that speak to the larger demographic polarization of the industry's consumer audience. Women continue to represent an ever-increasing percentage of club



Stephen Tharrett



Mark Williamson

members (women now represent 52% of all club members and nearly 80% for some of the boutique fitness clubs). From an age perspective, clubs continue to thrive on appealing to adults between the ages of 25 and 44, a trend that disproportionately represents what is happening on a larger scale in the U.S.

A fourth insight, one we imagine many health club operators already are aware of, is the challenge of member participation and member tenure in the health club industry. Over the past five years, the number of times a club member visits their club has remained stable, ranging from 99 to 103 times annually or approximately twice weekly (See Figure 4). While the average number of visits witnessed in 2014 (103 times) was the highest in the past five years, it is not statistically different than it has been over the past two decades. In essence, we are not seeing the general membership engage more frequently with their club. Furthermore, membership tenure for the industry has remained relatively constant over the past five years, with approximately 75% of all members never reaching their sixth anniversary.

The average tenure of a health club member is approximately four years. Demographically, men have longer tenure than women (in 2013 tenure for men was nearly 1.5 years more than for women) and older adults, especially those over the age of 55, have tenure that is double that of the average health club member. The participation and tenure numbers (club usage increases the longer one is a member) brings forth two interesting questions that we have yet to answer. First is, "does increased participation drive tenure or does longer tenure drive increased participation?" Second is, "do those who remain members longer and

workout more frequently, have a healthier lifestyle to begin with and consequently its more about their attitude than their behavior?" What we do know is that as tenure increases, especially beyond five years, club usage increases.

Another captivating insight, one that speaks to the industry's response to slowing membership growth, is the data on personal training, which has become the industry's primary member monetization strategy. In this year's report, IHRSA looked at member behavior for various forms of personal training: individual, duet and small group training. The most enlightening fact, one that demonstrates the upside potential of personal training as a monetization strategy is that only 4% of health club members can be classified as "Core consumers" (use personal training 20x or more annually) and even fewer can be classified as "Super Consumers" (use personal training 50 or more times annually).

The points shared in this article are but a few of the eleven "future shaping" insights documented in IHRSA's *2014 Health Club Consumer Report*. The IHRSA report not only provides great insights, but it offers a wealth of suggestions on how club operators can leverage the insights to grow their business. We would encourage any club operator interested in evolving their business to thrive in the future to acquire a copy of IHRSA's *2014 Health Club Consumer Report* by visiting www.ihrsa.org/consumer-report.

(Stephen Tharrett and Mark Williamson are the co-founders of ClubIntel, www.club-intel.com, a brand insights firm. Together, they have over 50 years of experience in the club and hospitality business. They can be reached at stevet@club-intel.com and markw@club-intel.com)



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Figure 1

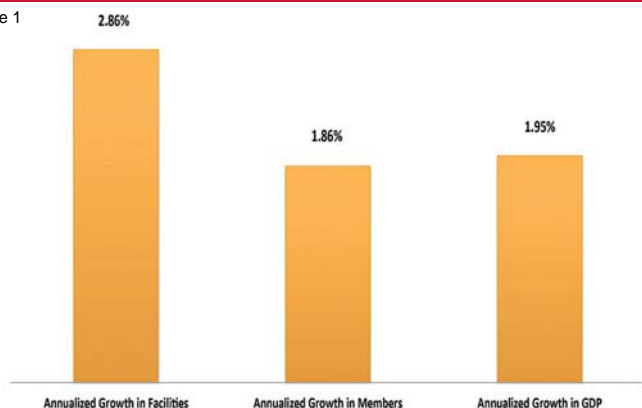


Figure 2

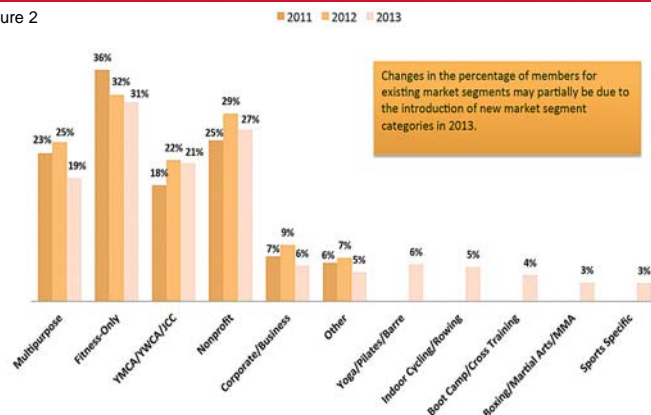


Figure 3

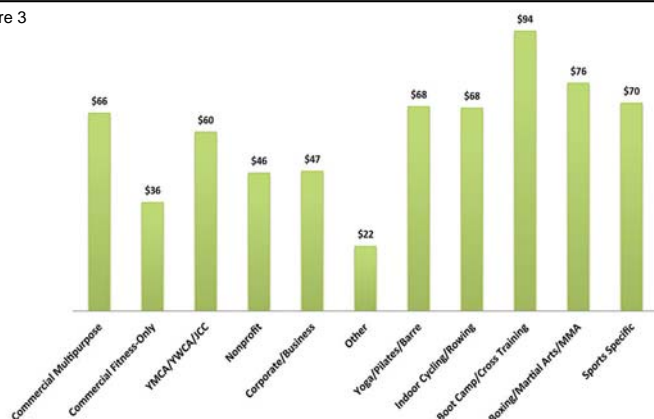
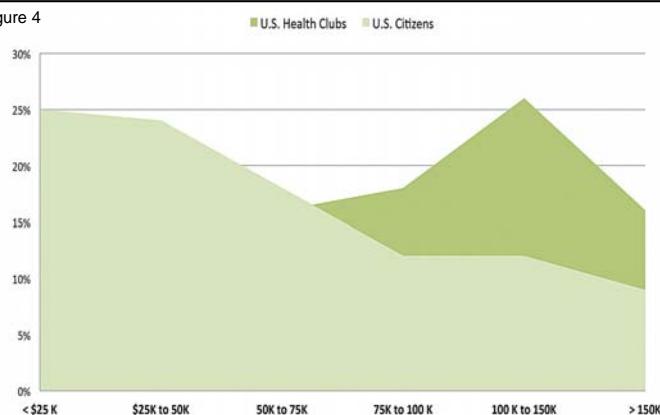


Figure 4



Send a Message: *Causes and Community*

By: Robin Schuette

As I'm writing this on September 2, 2014, the ALS Ice Bucket challenge has raised millions of dollars. No doubt that number will rise even more as individual videos continue to go viral on social media. Since July 29, the organization has garnered 2.1 million new donors in its efforts to strike out Lou Gehrig's disease. This is a fabulous communications success story continuing to play out months later on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, etc. While it's not easy to predict what will go viral, it is easy to connect your mission to your community by sending a consistent message. To create a true win-win event-based marketing success, it's also important to leverage all communication channels, both traditional and digital.

Many health clubs support a number of local and national not-for-profit organizations to build trust in their communities and demonstrate their leadership roles in philanthropy. Another way to extend your business's goodwill and raise awareness among prospects includes planning new member promotions with charities seeking goods. We have had successful sales promotions with Toys for Tots, local food pantries and international organizations that collect shoes such as Soles4Souls.

Our *Share a Pair* campaign is an example of a community relations promotion we developed to build awareness for a spa. This 4-month campaign started

with booth displays at community events. Spa professionals attending summer fairs handed out coupons for pedicure savings tied to a donation of a pair of gently worn shoes. Some words of caution about shoes: Try to work with a group that provides free pick-up or has drop-off locations near you. Avoid shipping. Another tip of advice for your shoe collection: Be sure to communicate the type of donation the organization is seeking as well as the condition of the items.

During the holidays, consider a sales promotion with a gift donation for Toys for Tots. By starting in early November and running a special to early December, you have a month to bring in new members during a typically slow time.

One of the biggest challenges with organizing any type of promotion is to plan early and develop consistent messages for all communication channels. Plus, don't forget in-house signage and displays. Here are six tips for content management:

1. Plan Ahead: To achieve maximum results, we recommend starting at least four to six months before the actual date. Ideally, your promotions plan is created at the beginning of the fiscal year and adjusted through the year.

2. Win-Win Messages: Create a compelling message to describe your promotion, and how individuals can feel good about supporting a worthwhile cause while also saving.

3. Cross-Promotions on Digital Media:

Add an event on your Facebook page, and ask the organization you're sponsoring to do the same as well as to share any videos or photos. Creating a YouTube channel linked to your Google+ business profile is fairly straightforward with a Gmail account. Posting on your own YouTube channel helps your club land higher in search results on Google.

4. Publish Video Testimonials:

For new members who join on a promotion and want to send a message to the charity, have them explain why they support the cause. It's simple to create a Flickr page to show photos of your promotion or event and how others may benefit from the donation.

5. Budget For Success:

Don't leave it up to free publicity to ensure successful results. With so many communication channels, planning paid advertising to reach your target market is critical. Or, consider boosting sales promotions on Facebook and setting a maximum budget for the estimated amount of people you can reach. The other choice is to reach friends of people who like your page, or target by gender, age or location. In any case, be sure to understand the demographics of who likes your page. If you have a small amount of fans, an event promotion can begin to build an audience.

6. Measure Your Results:

Not only do you want to track the number of prospects who become members, you also want to track responses from each communication channel for future planning.

To extend your club's brand to non-members, consider holding athletic (or non-athletic) competitions at your club. While a 5K race takes considerable advance planning, other activities, such as a Couch Potato Triathlon, pull-up challenge or a day of Zumba to showcase your facility may be organized in less time. However, the communications budget and planning for a new member tie-in still requires setting goals and objectives, then executing consistently.

Many successful events are built around national health promotions, such as Heart Health and Breast Cancer Awareness months. These national organizations



Robin Schuette

offer plenty of planning ideas and support materials, but it's important your staff brainstorm about ways to make your club's program stand out. The Pink Glove Dance produced by Providence St. Vincent Medical Center in Portland, Oregon, has had more than 13 million views on YouTube since it debuted four years ago. This is a professional produced video, but that and other memes create buzz and team building and may be produced very simply with an iPhone (and good lighting).

In our experience, the best community relations promotion involves developing your own branded annual event that targets a specific need in the market. For many years, we planned and organized a Choose to Lose event, which created awareness among the healthcare community and generated referrals.

If you haven't taken the time yet to create your community relations plan for the year, get those iPads out or your pens and plan some quarterly events now to get more people into your facility.

Will You Be at the Club Industry Show in October? Join me at my session: Take Charge: Building a Credible Referral Network on Thursday, Oct. 23 at 8:30AM. As a medical fitness communications executive with demonstrated results in managing and enhancing brands, I look forward to helping your business enhance its message in the community.

(Robin Schuette can be reached at rschuette@medfitpartners.com or 847-475-2185)

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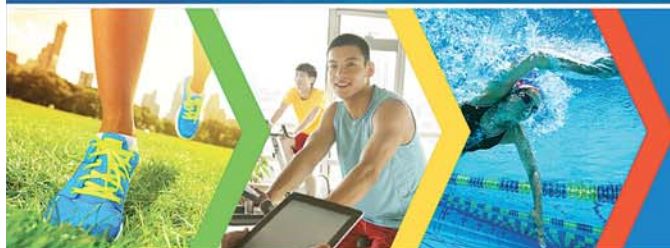
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LEADING, CONNECTING AND INSPIRING THE FITNESS COMMUNITY

Programming For The “Fun Of It!”

Connecting People to Programs

By: Laurie Cingle, M.Ed.

Typically, a program's success is measured by (1) amount of profit for fee-based programs and (2) number of participants for no-fee programs. Ultimately, no program succeeds without participants. Oftentimes, people are unaware of the programs offered. Traditional marketing and social media avenues are noticed by a small percentage of members and clients. In both cases, it's the member's responsibility to notice your marketing and take steps to enroll.

Here's something to think about... **improve your program participation by implementing a structured tool that reliably and consistently connects more members to the programs you offer.**

This can give members their best chance for success at your club. The more success members realize, the more they will be motivated to participate in programs and services. The more they participate, the higher your non-dues revenues and member retention will be.

Connecting people to programs is in reality “selling” people a program, whether that program is for a fee or not. It is a fact that the majority of fitness professionals, personal trainers, fitness directors, fitness floor specialists, program coordinators are not very skilled at sales (it's true).

A structured tool that provides fitness professionals a flow and a framework to work from will tremendously improve your program participation, and it serves as a training tool for staff. The

more structured the better. It should be educationally-oriented so members do not feel like they are being “sold.” Whatever you implement, it should be a valuable service all by itself regardless if they enroll in a program. You can develop a system like this on your own; many clubs have. Or, you can implement an existing system available for purchase or subscription. An example is Visual Fitness Planner (VFP). I have implemented VFP in several clubs, all who rave about how they have seen an immediate impact on their program participation and revenue.

Be sure that the staff who present to members are *great* at building rapport. They must be good listeners, excellent verbal communicators, have a credible background in fitness/health and embrace the structure of the tool you've invested in.

These “member integration specialists” must be knowledgeable about all programs and have no bias toward any one program. Group exercise instructors and membership staff do very well as member integration specialists as they possess all the necessary skills with none of the program bias.

Schedule members for an appointment



Laurie Cingle

ment above and beyond the traditional fitness assessment where they can privately share the emotional reasons they have chosen your facility, be educated by your staff and presented with programming options that will guarantee their success!

(Laurie Cingle, M.Ed., is a fitness business success coach, club consultant and a member of the Leadership Team at Akron General LifeStyles. Contact her at laurie@lauriecingle.com.)

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Thanks and Appreciation

At CLUB INSIDER, we are excited to be in our 21st Year of this home-based health and fitness club trade newspaper! The thought that this newspaper 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 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 during our first 8 years of publication. **Thanks and Appreciation** to all of the folks at Walton Press in Monroe, Georgia. They've done an absolutely excellent job for us all these years and have printed every one of our monthly editions! **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 15 years of continuous advertising with us. Plus, we have one advertiser, National Gym Supply, with over 19 years advertising with us and one, Affiliated Acceptance Corporation, with over 20 years as they have advertised in every single edition of CLUB INSIDER since the first month that we sold advertising in June, 1994! We also want to say sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to all of our CLUB INSIDER Contributing Authors, past and present, who've contributed *hundreds and hundreds* 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 8 years old (helping with mailings). This young man, pretty much behind the scenes for 20 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 eight cover stories per 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. 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.

3 million Xbox One consoles sold.
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Mike Grondahl

I know a little bit about today's industry, where 80% of usage comes from treadmills, bikes, ellipticals and arc trainers. Where I used to work just hit 5 million members and 700 units. Everyone in the fitness industry, from independents to chains and manufacturers, needs to show financial support.

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