

Norm Cates'

# CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 27 YEARS OF TRUST

## In Touch With Brent Darden, IHRSA's Interim President and CEO



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# CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 27 YEARS OF TRUST

## In Touch With Brent Darden, IHRSA's Interim President and CEO

By: Norm Cates

In the very beginning, nearly 40 years ago, IHRSA was launched without the "H" for Health in the name, making the acronym: IRS. The Association was and has continued to be a labor of love for my good friend, Rick Caro, and me. IRS was Rick's idea, and we are all very fortunate that Rick dreamed up this special Association.

At that time, in 1981, Rick was actually serving as a Board Member on two national Associations: the National Tennis Association (NTA) and the National Court Club Association (NCCA). So, via a phone call with me one night, Rick suggested the great idea of merging the two associations. I thought it was truly a genius idea, and I

told him so immediately. There we were! Founders of what is known today, worldwide, as the International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA).

Our other five IRS Founders, in addition to Rick and me, were the late Dale Dibble; the late Curt Beusman; Todd Pulis, NTA Board Member; Peter Donahue, NCCA Board Member; and Jennifer Michell, NCCA Board Member. Rick and I continue to stay in touch with, and we always try to help IHRSA anyway we can through Rick's always great work as our industry's #1 club consultant, and for almost 28 years now, my work on Club Insider with my son and partner, Justin Cates.

Importantly, Rick knew of John McCarthy as the Executive Director of the New England Racquet Sports Association

(NERSA). We hired John immediately to be our first IRS Executive Director, and he served in his IRS/IHRSA Executive Director role for 25 years before retiring where he's continued to work with Augie and Lynne Nieto with their Augie's Quest organization to help raise money to fight, and hopefully, someday, to defeat Lou Gehrig's Disease, a/k/a ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis). As we formed IRS, Chuck Leve, Executive Director of NCCA, was going to be without a job. So, I dreamed one up for him: Director of Associate Members. Both John McCarthy and Chuck Leve did fabulous jobs in their important roles for many years (25 and 27 respectively). After John McCarthy retired 14 years ago, IHRSA was blessed to have

(See Brent Darden Page 6)



Brent Darden

## October Cover Story Preview: Paula Neubert and Club Greenwood

By: Justin Cates

This year, 2020, has been a year of firsts for so many us. From our personal lives to professional careers, we have had to adapt like never before. The same has occurred for us here at Club Insider, especially over the course of the past two months as important industry news continues to break, day-in and day-out.

We are thankful to be a nimble publication, because it allows us to quickly change editorial direction in order to effectively cover pertinent news in near real-time (both online and in print). Our recent August and September Cover Stories have been a testament to that fact.

Our August Cover story honored the life of Lyle Ray Irwin, inventor of The

Step, who had recently passed away. Ray had defeated throat cancer, but sadly, he lost his battle with lung cancer. **May Ray Rest In Peace.**

Our Cover Story this month features Brent Darden as he takes the helm of IHRSA as its Interim President and CEO. Because of the importance of IHRSA to our industry, we felt that putting Brent on this month's cover was the prudent thing to do, so you, our readers, can be fully informed about what is occurring at IHRSA, why it is important to you and how you can help. Only together will we all emerge from the Coronavirus Pandemic with an industry we can continue to grow, protect and promote.

In the planning phases for each of these editions, neither Cover Story was

the original plan! As news broke around us, though, we adapted to the circumstances. But, I do want to tell you about the original plan.

The originally scheduled Cover Story Subject for August was Paula Neubert, President and General Manager of Club Greenwood in Greenwood Village, Colorado. As each story broke, she was kind enough to let us push her story back to the subsequent month. As the Author of the story, it personally pained me greatly to do so, but as Publisher of Club Insider, I felt it was the right decision to make in each circumstance. And, I am so thankful for the grace in which she put others in the industry ahead of herself. Thank you, Paula!

That being said, I do want to give (See Paula Neubert Page 6)



Paula Neubert

## Inside the Insider: Edition #321

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- The First Steps in Preparing to Finance Your Business - **By:** Paul Bosley
- The Golden Age of Health Clubs - **By:** Bruce Carter
- COVID-19 Waiver Considerations - **By:** Paul R. Bedard, Esquire
- "Non-Essential" Never Again - **By:** Eric Durak, MS and Dan Zeman, MS

- Three Keys that COVID Holds to Building Your Wellness Wealth - **By:** Donna Krech
- JLR Associates Announces Expansion of Services
- National Study Confirms It's Safe To Work Out At The Gym
- And, of Course, *Norm's Notes*

# Norm's Notes

■Hello Everybody! This is your Club Insider Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993 checking in with our 321st monthly edition! I hope this finds you and your family, your employees and your members ALL avoiding this dreaded Coronavirus! Our prayers have been with all of you every day.

■Is AMERICA a GREAT COUNTRY, or what? As I write this Note, it's Friday, September 11, 2020, the 19th Anniversary of one of America's most horrendous days in our history when the 9/11 attacks hit America in New York City, Washington, D.C. and rural Pennsylvania. I know we all probably remember exactly where we were on that fateful day when these terrible new reports on TV, radio and the internet began to be broadcast about 9AM. Let us all remember the nearly 3,000 Americans and others we lost that awful and day. And, may we all be vigilant in the future so anybody who's suspicious, as those hijackers definitely were, may hopefully be stopped from ever causing our beautiful America to suffer such a dastardly deed again!

■As I write this Note, I sit here today on Labor Day, September 7, 2020, watching the PGA Tour Golf Championship. I'm trying NOT to work on LABOR DAY! But, at the same time I can't beat my huge desire to write this Note as I watch this amazing golf tournament being played live here in Atlanta. It's being played at the fabulous and truly beautiful East Lake Golf Club, located in East Atlanta. In 1995, MR. THOMAS COUSINS purchased the East Lake Golf Club for \$4.5 million, and over the next five years, he in partnership with his lovely wife, ANN, restored it to its former glory. He also helped to establish East Lake as the permanent home of the PGA Tour Championship, which is the season ending tournament for the PGA Tour.

Cousins was my former landlord in two of my four clubs here 30+ years ago (my 46,000 square-foot **Downtown Athletic Club**, which was located in Atlanta in the Omni Complex, and my 26,000 square-foot **Wildwood Athletic Club**, which was located here in Marietta, Georgia in Mr. Cousins' beautiful 290 acre Wildwood Office Complex).

The Cousins folks are celebrating

their **20th Anniversary** of their fabulous East Lake Golf Club, so I want to send my very sincere **CONGRATULATIONS to Mr. Cousins**, who's now 88 years old, and by the way, the one man I think is arguably the most successful and prominent real estate developers in the history of the entire State of Georgia.

■Late Breaking News as we are going to press on Monday, September 14: Multiple news outlets report that **Town Sports International** has filed for **Chapter 11 Bankruptcy**. No club closures have been announced. **Stay Tuned** for more details as they are released.

■I'm very saddened to report that, on **September 8**, because of Coronavirus, both **Club Industry** and **SIBEC** announced they were **cancelling and postponing (respectively)** their Conferences and Trade Shows. **Stay tuned, Folks!**

■In **July of 2007**, **BRENT DARDEN**, along with his partner at that time, **EVERETT AABERG**, and their **Telos Fitness Center Team** in Dallas, Texas, were our featured Cover Story subjects. This month, we're very pleased to weigh in with a very special Cover Story about **BRENT DARDEN** and his new role as **IHRSA's Interim CEO and President**. Before Brent was honored by this appointment, he truly was already one of the *true greats in our industry*. Clearly, that FACT played into his hiring, and I'm **very happy about it**. While I was very saddened to see the departure of my good friend, **JOE MOORE**, on the other hand, I was very pleased to see that Brent Darden had been wisely chosen by our **current IHRSA Board of Directors**.

In this month's Cover Story, we're featuring an in-depth interview with Brett, who as busy as he has been, was very kind to give me his first interview since he took the job. Brent was very generous to spend a very special and important 45 minutes on the phone interviewing with me, and he graciously shared his many thoughts and well-informed ideas as he embarks on his epic new journey at IHRSA. **The magnitude of Brent's challenges are huge**, and they have arrived during a time in American history when our entire industry worldwide is at huge risk... because of the Coronavirus pandemic disaster.

Just in case you've not followed it and you're not up to date, I feel it's important to share with you a few details of what's been going on at IHRSA. There has been a real whirlwind of activity, starting on **August 12, 2020**, when sitting **IHRSA Board Chairman, JASON REINHARDT**, abruptly resigned his position. Then, on **August 19, 2020**, it was announced that **JOE MOORE** would be leaving his role as **IHRSA President and CEO**, where he had served 14+ years. Then, two days later,



Norm Cates

on **August 21, 2020**, it was announced by the **IHRSA's Board of Directors** that **BRENT DARDEN** had been selected to fill the vacancy created by Joe's departure, as **IHRSA's Interim President and CEO**. So, this month, we bring you an in-depth and very informative interview with Brent. Be sure to read this month's Cover Story starting on **Page #3** entirely... if you've not already. And, folks, be sure to **STAY TUNED** as we'll continue to stay in touch with IHRSA and other industry developments during the Coronavirus pandemic, and as matters develop, we'll keep you posted. **Stay Tuned!**

■Welcome to new **Club Insider Advertiser and Author, Gary Polic**, as he has launched a new consulting service called **Polic Consultants Group**. Check out his **Ad and Article on Page #16**.

■This month, I've got **two important apologies** to express:

■First, I want to apologize to **PAULA NEUBERT**, *General Manager of Club Greenwood* in Greenwood Village, Colorado. I'm making this sincere and heartfelt apology to Paula because we had to bump her fabulous Cover Story from our August Edition to our September Edition due to the passing of **Lyle Ray Irwin**, whose life we honored on our August Cover. Then, for a first in the almost 28 years of *Club Insider* publishing history, we had to make the very difficult, but appropriate decision to bump her story once more to our October Edition because of the magnitude of the challenge that now **IHRSA Interim President and CEO, Brent Darden**, faces, and the need, we believe, to put Brent's very informative interview front and center this month.

We owe Paula Neubert a **HUGE DEBT of gratitude** for being so understanding during what has happened with these unpredictable events. My son, and *Club Insider Publisher, JUSTIN* (See *Norm's Notes* Page 7)

## About Club Insider

### CELEBRATING 27 YEARS OF TRUST

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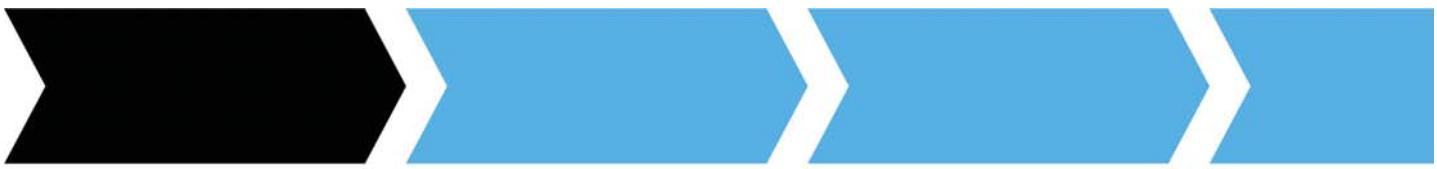
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## ...Brent Darden

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**Joe Moore** replace him. Joe served IHRSA for 14 years until leaving the Association last month. And, **Tom Hunt**, the young man who replaced Chuck Leve, has done a fine job, along with **Lynne Devaney**.

During these unique and tough times, I have stayed close to the recent developments in our industry worldwide, including the most recent happenings at IHRSA. The following is an in-depth interview with **Brent Darden**, *IHRSA's Interim President and CEO*.

### An Interview With Brent Darden

**Club Insider (C.I.)** - Brent, there was an announcement that **Jason Reinhardt** resigned as *Chairman of the Board* and has stepped down from the Board. I think this is a first. Does IHRSA have any plans to fill that vacancy and to have a proper election for a new Chairperson?

**Brent Darden (BD)** - The *IHRSA Board of Directors Nominations Committee* is discussing options to fill the position of the Chairman on a permanent basis. And, at the right time, they will make a recommendation to the full Board. Until that decision is made, *IHRSA Vice Chair, Carrie Kepple, Owner and CEO of Styles Studio Fitness* in Illinois, has assumed the role. And, I have to say she's doing a spectacular job. Really, the IHRSA Board of Directors has been doing yeoman's work over the past



**The IHRSA Board of Directors** - Back Row (L to R) - Michele Melkerson Granryd, Frank Lawrence, Steve Capezzone, Chris Craytor, Chris Smith, Brad Wilkins, Bryan O'Rourke and Chris Stevenson. Front Row (L to R) - Anastasia Yusina, Alan Leach, Greta Wagner, Jim Worthington, Jason Reinhardt (resigned), Carrie Kepple and Monica Marques.

several months. They've been sacrificing countless hours and energy for the good of our industry. Going forward, I hate to say it, but I expect even more from this dedicated

group. I plan to leverage their individual expertise and maximize their opportunities to contribute, beyond probably what's transpired before. In addition to that, I really

hope to actively enlist the aid of some of the other leaders in our industry. There's a lot of really intelligent people out there who  
 (See **Brent Darden** Page 10)

## ...Paula Neubert

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you all a quick preview of our October Cover Story. To me, the following question to and answer from Paula is one of the more beautiful takes on the importance of this industry in the lives of its members I have heard. And, it's especially so during these times.

### October Cover Story Preview

**Club Insider (C.I.)** - Paula, we have talked about so much already, and I am so glad I have gotten to learn about Club Greenwood. If you can boil it all down, what do you say truly defines Club Greenwood in your community and in the industry?

**Paula Neubert (PN)** - We talked about the amenities and everything we do, but if I really, truly was going to define what makes us different, it is a **sense of belonging**. And, that is part of the reason that we rebranded to make sure the very first thing in our name was *Club*. Because, if you look up the word 'club' in the dictionary, it is a place where like-minded people belong and gather. That truly is the definition of who we are, and it is probably the one thing that our members are missing more than anything because of the restrictions on our capacities and the physical distancing.

You can use a treadmill anywhere.

You can buy a treadmill and put it in your basement, or you can go to any single facility and get on a treadmill. Our treadmills are no different than the treadmill that you will find down the street or might find in somebody's home. But, what makes Club Greenwood different is absolutely the social component of belonging to this family. It is our reputation in the community. It is a reputation of who we have become over 33 years and a want and a need for a person in our community to say, 'I want to belong to that.' It really is what makes us different, it makes us unique, and it's why people seek us out.

We know that there are like-minded folks who belong to our club, and who we are and who we serve is well known in our community. The networking that happens at Club Greenwood is truly amazing, whether it is work-related or whether it is personal. The things that people share with one another here is in a family sense. And, when I walk by a closing room, and I introduce myself a new member, I always say, 'Welcome to our Greenwood family.' Because, we really are a family.

**C.I.** - I love it. That is beautifully said. That is what it is all about, right there. **PN** - It really is. As a side note, Justin, I will tell you that our members who are a little bit older and have not been able to come back into the club because they either are scared;

or their doctors told them they cannot; or they may live in a senior living facility that would not allow them to because they do not want to bring something back, are very sad. They call us regularly. They cry on the phone. They miss everything. It is not the fitness. I would love to say we have the best fitness around because I think that we have an unbelievable group of fitness professionals who provide the best, but it is not the fitness. That is not what makes us so different. It is the sense of belonging.

The two members I am thinking about right now are people who have lost their husbands in the last five years, and we have become so much more for them. They are depressed. They are upset. They cannot come in because their doctors have told them they cannot. It is truly killing them. It is absolutely hurting them not being here. I just cry when I talk to them. Our *Assistant General Manager, Barbara Lubbers*, will talk to them and she will say, 'Oh, my gosh, I just had to the nicest conversation, but they are so upset.'

We have actually created a program, for lack of a better term, called *Pen Pals*, where we call them just to check in. Many clubs have done this. We call to check on them and to figure out what we can do to make them feel better because they miss the club so much.

**C.I.** - Everything you just said is the absolute

proof of that sense of belonging. That is the human proof of it. And, beyond the loss of life, the saddest part of this entire pandemic has been that emotional toll on the most vulnerable of our population. It is so sad. **PN** - Yes, absolutely.

■ ■ ■

Thank you again, Paula. We look forward to sharing your story! Folks, **Stay Tuned** to our *October Edition of Club Insider!* You will be able to read all about it at that time!

*(Justin Cates is the Publisher of Club Insider. Having been born into a club business family in 1985, Justin grew up in the health and fitness club industry. He has lived and breathed this industry for 35 years, since his own day one, and he loves it dearly. Graduating from the Terry College of Business at The University of Georgia in 2007, Justin has run day-to-day operations of Club Insider for 12 years. Justin was elevated to Publisher of Club Insider on April 5, 2020. Justin's Dad, Norm Cates, continues to serve as Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993. You can reach Justin by phone at 423-314-4310 or email at [Justin@clubinsideronline.com](mailto:Justin@clubinsideronline.com).)*

**...Norm's Notes**

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CATES, had interviewed Paula for her cover story and has been really raving about how wonderful Paula was to work with and what an incredible story she had shared with him... a really great story we will present to you in our October Edition. Be sure to check out a quick preview of the story on **Page #3** of this month's edition.

With these thoughts shared with all of you, but **MOST IMPORTANTLY**, written here to Ms. Paula Neubert, we cannot **THANK YOU** enough, Paula, for first, sharing **YOUR** amazing story, and second, for being so wonderful to work with after already having your great story bumped one time.

Finally, all of you should know that Paula is a **long-time IHRSA Member** and a **strong IHRSA supporter**. And, she is the recipient of **IHRSA's 2020 Woman Leader Award in Honor of Julie Main**. So, she didn't hesitate to help *Club Insider* do what is best for IHRSA, and that is presenting this month's Cover Story to you. **Thank You Paula!** And, **Stay Tuned Folks!**

■ Second, my sincere apologies to our friend, **WILL PHILLIPS**, for this being a **note of belated best wishes** as Will entered his well-deserved and hard-earned years of retirement in May. I missed this story, because I did not see the press release at the time, as I was essentially blind in both eyes. **So, my sincere apologies, Will.** Folks, since 1989, Will Phillips has been heading up **REX Roundtables**, and for 12 years, he's been joined by **EDDIE TOCK**, formerly of **Sales Makers**, in a **REX Roundtable leadership role as a Round Table Facilitator**. Here's what Will's former partner, Eddie Tock had to say about Will when he retired:

"I am eternally grateful for the opportunity to work so closely with Will for the past 12 years! He has been a tremendous help to me, as well as to many leaders in our fitness industry and to others in 34 other industries. Will's high energy and enthusiasm always challenged the status quo thinking, and all us are better because for it. His willingness to share his skills, knowledge and expertise has developed some of our industries' top leaders and most successful entrepreneurs, by teaching all of us that, together, we can achieve so much more! Will taught me that, when you find a group of people who challenge and inspire you, spend a lot of time with them, and it will change your life forever. Thanks, Will for changing all of our lives forever."

■ **MEREDITH POPPLER** is **IHRSA's Vice President of Communication and Leadership Engagement**, and she has done great work during her **28 years** with IHRSA. Meredith's **28th IHRSA Anniversary** was **August 2, 2020**, so **Congratulations, Meredith!** This is perfect timing because today, I also want

to give **Kudos to Meredith** because she recently announced and launched a new weekly report from IHRSA they're calling: **From the IHRSA News Desk**. I asked Meredith if IHRSA's new weekly news thrust would only be available for **IHRSA Members**, and she said, "**No.**" So, **even if a club is not a current IHRSA Member Club**, they can receive these new weekly editions from IHRSA by contacting Meredith at [pr@IHRSA.org](mailto:pr@IHRSA.org). But, let me throw this in... **IF you're reading this, and you're making your living in the club industry as an owner, manager or supplier, and you are NOT a member of IHRSA, then I URGE you ALL to JOIN TODAY!**

■ Our friends at **Club Insider Advertiser, JLR ASSOCIATES**, **JEFF RANDALL** and **DENNIE NOECKER** announced the expansion of their services to now include recruitment for both **Personal Trainers** and **Group Exercise Trainers**. Heading up the new department and service is **LISA JOFFE**. Jeff commented, "Over the years, we have had many requests to fill these types of positions, and we are pleased to now provide this service to the fitness industry." Check out this month's **JLR Ad and Press Release on Page #8**.

■ On **August 19, 2020** in Sacramento, California, **The California Fitness Alliance (CFA)** announced the launch of an **Association Advisory Board** to support the efforts of the **CFA**. The three new Association Advisory Board Members are: **DORIS THEWS, AMY THOMPSON** and **JOSH LEVE**. According to Doris Thews, "The purpose of the new Association Advisory Board is to bring a holistic perspective to the cause, supporting the 180,000 employees and millions of members of California's gyms, health clubs and studios as CFA urges **GOVERNOR NEWSOM** to once again safely reopen gyms in California." Folks, **STAY TUNED** for more developments!

■ This very good news from **JACQUELINE BUCHANAN**, **Senior Manager of Public Relations, Communications and Social Media** at **In-Shape**, is that **In-Shape** has partnered with **Special Olympics of Northern California and Nevada** to provide free virtual fitness classes and sponsorships for **In-Shape's** virtual races. This very positive news is great, because in March, **In-Shape closed over 60 locations in California and laid off 95% of their workforce resulting in zero revenue. But, they remained focused on motivating their communities to stay healthy, fit and happy.** They were thrilled to partner with the **Special Olympics** and have their coaches host free workouts for the **Special Olympics' Athletes** via **Zoom** as part of their **Special Olympics' "Flex-it-Friday."** They also sponsored **Special Olympic Athletes** to participate in **In-Shape's** third virtual **5k/10k race** this summer.

■ Our friend, **GEORGE JACKSON**, the

co-owner of **San Diego's TG The Gym**, has announced they are celebrating their **35th Anniversary**, so we want to extend our sincere **Congratulations** to them on that great achievement. George also announced they have opened two new TG The Gym clubs in Chula Vista and Apple Valley, California.

■ The State of Maryland has formed a **Coalition of Health and Wellness Centers** to ensure the safe reopening of gyms and fitness Centers. The coalition will be dedicated to promoting and protecting the economic and political interests of

health clubs and wellness centers in Maryland. IHRSA supports the efforts of the Maryland Coalition Of Health and Wellness Centers to promote and protect the health and fitness industry in Maryland. As the trade association for the entire industry, IHRSA is advocating for clubs in Washington D.C. and in all 50 states, in concert with regional associations like the Maryland Coalition where possible. For more information about this coalition, please contact **KEITH RAWLINGS** at [keith@thearenaclub.com](mailto:keith@thearenaclub.com) or **MARK MILLER** at [mmiller@merrittclubs.com](mailto:mmiller@merrittclubs.com).

(See **Norm's Notes** Page 8)



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## JLR Associates Announces Expansion of Services to Include Recruitment for Both Personal Trainers and Group Exercise Trainers

DEDHAM, MA - JLR Associates announces the expansion of their services to now include recruitment for both Personal Trainers and Group Exercise Trainers. Over the years, JLR Associates had many requests to fill these types of positions, and the company is pleased to now provide this service to the fitness industry. Heading up this new department and service will be **Lisa Joffe**, an industry professional

with years of operational and staff recruitment experience.

Lisa has worked as a Personal Trainer, Group X Trainer, Director of Fitness Facilities and Human Resource Manager. Most recently, she has worked extensively with the fitness boutique franchise sector. Lisa understands the importance of hiring the right person the first time, and her objective will be to help club owners find

the perfect fitness staff.

JLR Associates had been providing executive search specific to the health, fitness and wellness industry for over 20 years, primarily for senior level management and executive level positions. With the addition of these new services, JLR Associates will become the most comprehensive search firm dedicated to health fitness professionals and will be able to offer more expedited searches and more opportunities for both clients and candidates. Lisa can be reached at (609) 903 - 5818 or [lisa@jlrassoc.com](mailto:lisa@jlrassoc.com).



Lisa Joffe

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### ...Norm's Notes

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■ I hope and pray that ALL of you, your family, your staff and your members are all doing well and have not been afflicted with the Coronavirus.

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

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■ God bless our troops, airmen and sailors worldwide and keep them safe. Thank you, Congratulations and

Welcome Home to all of our troops who have served around the world. God bless America's Policemen and women and Firemen and women; keep them safe. God bless our EMTs, first responders, nurses, doctors, lab technicians and anyone who is helping make Coronavirus a thing of the past. You and your families are our warriors. Finally, God bless you, your family, your club(s) and your members. God Bless America! Laus Deo!

(Norm Cates, Jr. is the Founder of Club Insider, now in its 27th year of publication, and its Tribal Leader Since 1993. He is a 45+ year veteran of the health, racket and sportsclub industry. As IHRSA's First President and a Co-Founder of the Association with Rick Caro and five others, in 1981; the 2001 DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award, one of IHRSA's highest honors; and Club Industry's Lifetime Achievement Award Winner in 2017, Norm Cates, Jr. is a highly decorated veteran who cares about you. And, he wants to hear from you. Norm can be reached by phone at 770-635-7578 or email at [Norm@clubinsideronline.com](mailto:Norm@clubinsideronline.com).)

### Thanks and Appreciation

At Club Insider, we are excited to be in our 27th Year of this home-based health and fitness club trade publication! The thought that this publication was founded to serve an industry I truly love, and so that I could become a Mister Mom for my son, Justin, is still intriguing and amazing to us. So, I wish to extend my most sincere Thanks and Appreciation to everyone who has made this amazing 27-year run possible.

A very sincere Thanks and Appreciation go to Rick Caro, the late Dr. Gerry Faust and the Faust Executive Roundtable #1 for helping me decide in 1993 what my home-based business would be. Thanks and Appreciation to my long-time friends, Ron Hudspeth and Cathy Miller, of Atlanta's Hudspeth Report for the tremendous assistance they provided. Thanks and Appreciation to all of the folks at Walton Press in Monroe, Georgia. They've done an absolutely excellent job for us all these years and have printed every one of our monthly editions! And, of course, Thanks and Appreciation to the United States Postal Service for sending those editions to our readers! Thanks and Appreciation to all of our READERS. Sincere Thanks and Appreciation to our Club Insider Advertisers, past and present, for their kind and dedicated support of this publication. Thanks and Appreciation to all of our Club Insider Contributing Authors, past and present. Thanks and Appreciation to IHRSA for all it does for all of us. And, sincere Thanks and Appreciation to my son, Justin, who has become our Publisher and is a truly great partner. Now, you name it and Justin does it each and every month!

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

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

*Norm Cates, Jr.*

# **100K in New NET Profit through Wellness, Weight Loss & Essential Health With Zero Financial Risk**

**Sounds too good to be true, right?  
Yeah, well, try us! Because, we don't promise results...  
we prove them!**

Our clients see instant income of \$11,000 in the 1st 30 days and, instant net profit of \$5,000 in that same amount of time. Plus, they're creating residuals, to net profit over \$100,000, annually. AND, while you were shut down, our clients were still making money.

If you live anywhere on the planet, you know the following is true... if you're in the fitness industry, you REALLY know the following is true... we're living in uncertain times and experiencing uncertain income as a result. However, essential health and wellness business systems, like we provide, create certainty. We know this because we've owned companies in this arena since NINETEEN EIGHTY SIX and are the BEST at bringing you new net profit through wellness and weight loss.

So, we made it our #1 focus to create a new model with NO financial risk! It comes with a fully refundable investment, that allows anyone who wants to do well in wellness the guaranteed ability to do so.

Additionally, in that first 30 days, we do all the work for you.

Again, it sounds too good to be true, right? Like we said, TRY US! We don't promise results, we PROVE them!

Why are we offering this No Risk Model? Because your club needs to be one that doesn't lose money during disastrous times. Your club needs this system and we decided to make it as easy as humanly possible to get it to you.

In a time where it can feel like so much is out of our control, this is something you CAN control... building essential health for others, and creating an increased income for yourself, due to providing essential health.

**→ Text NO RISK MODEL to 903-277-2709 ←**

**for a FREE Wellness Business Strategy call with a Predictable Profit Coach and to talk with clients who use our system to increase profit every day. We get it, you're in crisis mode. But crisis mode will not get you results. It's time to operate with the certainty of offering Essential Health.**

**→ Text NO RISK MODEL to 903-277-2709 ←**

**...Brent Darden**

continued from page 6

have been graciously volunteering to offer assistance. I want and feel we need to allow them the opportunity to help chart the course for a re-imagined future for the industry and for IHRSA. We would be doing ourselves a disservice not to take advantage of the expertise that is so readily available.

**C.I. - Joe Moore** left IHRSA as *President and CEO* after 14 years. You were appointed Interim President and CEO. You have had a rich history in the health and fitness club industry and a deep relationship with IHRSA. What is it like to assume this role? What are the first things you are going to focus on?

**BD -** Truly, and I mean this as sincerely as I can possibly say it. It's just humbling knowing the legacy that began with John McCarthy and was continued by Joe Moore. It's a very short CEO list. And, even though it's an Interim position, I just couldn't be more pleased that people think I can do the job at hand. I'm overwhelmed with the support I've received from so many colleagues, both club operators and suppliers. I want everyone to know, and I've said this from the beginning, I really didn't raise my hand for this responsibility. I wasn't clamoring to get this role or pursuing it in any way. Frankly, I really was enjoying a pretty good life with the perfect balance of rewarding work and purposeful relaxation.

So, I made it really clear, that yes, I feel called to serve. I feel a responsibility to serve. And, that's why I'm here. But, it's only on an interim basis until we can identify the right person to take us forward.

After just a few days on the job, I'm admittedly in the *research and discovery* phase. I'm trying to learn everything I can as quickly as I can. I'm immersed in the operations and listening to, not only the Board, but the IHRSA Team here internally, the European Council, the Global Federations, the ILC and all the IHRSA Members. So, I've been drinking from the fire hose, as they say, over the last several days for sure. As a consultant, I remember, over the years, one of the things I attempted to do when working with clients was to uncover the really important but sometimes unaddressed or ignored issues that lurked under the table or were hidden in the closet, if you will. One of my jobs as a consultant, I thought, was to bring those issues out into the open and get them on the table so they could be dealt with courageously and proactively. As Jim Collins would say, 'Face the brutal facts of reality.' I, along with the IHRSA Team and the Board's assistance, really are going to be revisiting virtually everything we do and how we do it going forward. While the circumstances at hand dictate a real sense of urgency, that calls for action and decisiveness, I hope that I can balance those with a thoughtful, intentional, purposeful and long-term approach, so that as we come out of this crazy pandemic better positioned for everything that

lies ahead.

I'd also like to point out that I really appreciate that relationships, both personally and organizationally, are built on **TRUST**. *And, this has to be one of our guiding, non-negotiable values.* I firmly believe that's one of the reasons the Board tapped me on the shoulder. There's not many people that would say, 'That Brent... he's the brightest Crayon in the box.' But, what they will say is, 'You can count on Brent; he is who he is. He's genuine, and he's going to show up.'

**Immediate Challenges**

**C.I. -** What are some of IHRSA's immediate challenges?

**BD -** Much like clubs and suppliers, the first order of business is getting through the pandemic and crisis. IHRSA is suffering, much like all of our constituents and members through the shutdown. I know our industry is hurting, and IHRSA is trying to make sure that we come out of this as strongly as we can. That's really the *first* order of business. Analyzing our financial position, as well as contextually all the programs and offerings, and how we want to incorporate these going forward. Another is to continue maximizing the resources that we're providing to the industry to help them survive and prepare for the revival, not only right now when some of them are just beginning to reopen, but after opening.

**C.I. -** IHRSA has been challenged

worldwide with the industry being closed for a period of time. Most of it is re-opening but often with governmental constraints. What are some of the ways IHRSA can help the industry in these current moments? Also, internationally?

**BD -** Honestly, that's *everything* that we do, from public affairs to advocacy and having the lobbyists at work trying to get positive attention and respect for our industry, to all the webinars and educational resources, this answer is truly what IHRSA is all about. During a crisis, especially one that's as prolonged as the pandemic, there is a tendency to adopt what I would call a, 'Scarcity Mindset,' and perhaps, justifiably so. However, we have to maintain an outlook and attitude, I think, of *abundance*... at all costs if we hope to unify the industry across all boundaries, including internationally. To affect the changes we want in public perception, we have to not only collaborate but cooperate like never before.

**C.I. -** Brent, there has been a lot of negative PR about the industry and its unsafe environment during this pandemic. What is IHRSA planning to do to help the industry going forward?

**BD -** Just last week, the team here launched a series of articles with doctors speaking well about health clubs and why they are essential. And, the team is working overtime with **Blair McHaney** of **MXM (Member Experience Management)** to get the word out about how safe health clubs actually are. You'll see the article, *National Study Confirms It's Safe to Work Out at the Gym*, just about everywhere (See Page #22).

**Publisher's Note:** Please view and examine the graphics on **This and the Opposite Page!** Print them out, and provide them to your Staff Members so they have the facts and can provide them to prospective and current club members.

**C.I. -** What are some of the major focal points for IHRSA in the next 3 - 4 months? **BD -** As I've said from the very beginning, when I was first asked after accepting the position, we **HAVE** to **re-imagine ourselves!** IHRSA's done a lot of great things. Now, we have to re-imagine ourselves going forward so that we stay relevant and continue to galvanize the global community of fitness. In concert with the Board, we're looking at virtually everything that IHRSA does to chart the course, not just for recovery, but for an epic comeback. This includes our presence on the global stage, extending our partnerships with like-minded organizations, enhancing our engagement with members, reevaluating our strategy with the ILC and everything else that we're doing. Of course, on a fairly urgent basis... we're also preparing now for the **Virtual Innovation Summit** coming up on **September 17**. We're excited about that, and we think this will be a real opportunity for people to get some great education and

(See **Brent Darden** Page 14)

## THE GYM IS A SAFE PLACE FOR FITNESS

**2,873 GYMS**

across the industry took part in providing their data

**49.4 MILLION MEMBER → CHECK-INS**  
over three months

NO EVIDENCE THAT THE POSITIVE CASES ORIGINATED IN GYMS

Infection Rate  
**.0023%**

SOURCES: **IHRSA** **MXM**

## FITNESS IS ESSENTIAL IN KEEPING AMERICA HEALTHY

**1 IN 5 AMERICANS**  
experience mental health illness  
and people with mental illness have

**40% HIGHER RISK** ←  
of developing cardiovascular and metabolic diseases than the general population

SOURCE: **CDC**  
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

Physical activity has long-term mental health benefits as well, including reducing the risk of stress and depression

Yet, ONLY about  
**23% OF ADULTS**  
are hitting the federal physical activity guidelines for adults according to the **CDC**



# Check the Data:

## Health and Fitness Clubs Following Risk Mitigation Procedures Pose No Extra Risk

The assumption that health and fitness clubs are sources of new coronavirus infections or high-risk environments does not stand up to the data.

### 0.002% CLUB CHECK-INS LATER REPORTED TESTING POSITIVE

*Note: Positive check-ins does not mean the virus members contracted the virus at the club, just that a member checked-in and later found out they were positive.*

Source: [MXM Industry Survey](#) (as of August 7, 2020)

2,877  
locations  
tracked

49.4  
million  
check-ins

1,155  
confirmed  
cases

### LESS THAN 0.2% OF ARKANSAS RESIDENTS VISITED A GYM PRIOR TO TESTING POSITIVE

Arkansas Governor Hutchinson reported that of 5,063 active cases in the state, less than 0.2% had visited a health club before testing positive.

### ONE STUDY FOUND NO CASES OF COVID-19 AT TRAINING FACILITIES

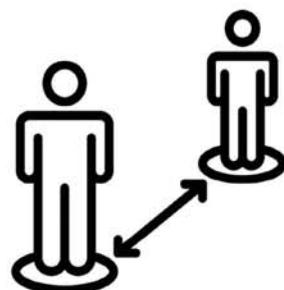
These facilities were operating under appropriate guidelines, good hygiene, and social distancing measures.

Source: [University of Oslo Independent Study](#)

### SOCIAL DISTANCING MEASURES INCLUDE:

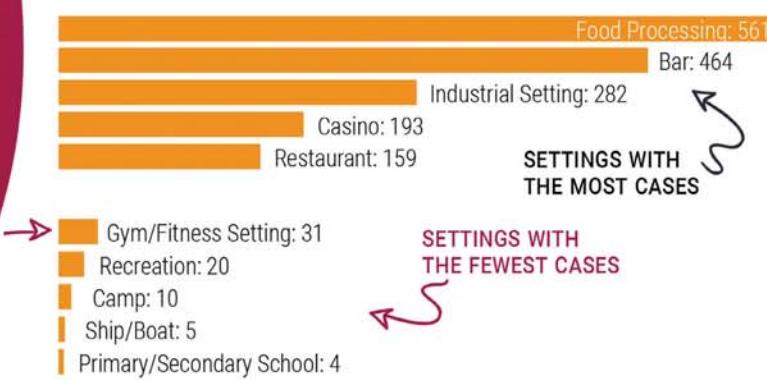
1 METER  
FOR FLOOR  
EXERCISE

2 METERS  
FOR HIGH  
INTENSITY



### GYMS IN BOTTOM 5 IN COVID-19 CASES BY SETTING

Louisiana has begun releasing tracking data on COVID-19 cases by setting. Source: [Louisiana COVID-19 Outbreak Tracking](#) (as of August 7, 2020)



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- ✓ Analytics Dashboard
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- ✓ Financing Options Available

\*New clients only. Valid on any \$1k+ campaign. Contact UpSwell for details.

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Mobile Geofencing

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Website Design

Display Ads

Paid Search / PPC

Reputation Management

Guest Passes

Analytics Dashboard

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Grassroots Marketing

Brand Development

Call Tracking

Promo Items

Key Tags

Lead Boxes

....and more!



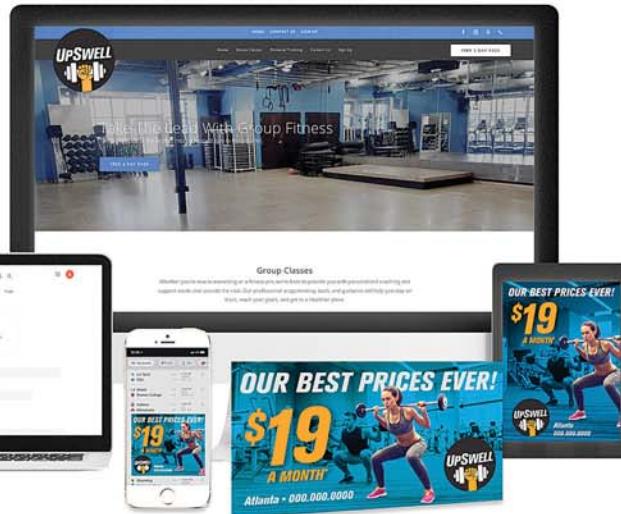
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25,000+

high-performance  
fitness campaigns



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## ...Brent Darden

continued from page 10

inspiration virtually. Shortly thereafter, we'll make a decision on the **Virtual European Congress** that is set for this Fall. And, very soon, we need to make a final decision on the **IHRSA 2021 Convention and Trade Show**. We expect to have a decision made on that no later than October.

**C.I.** - Brent, that's a significant series of timeframes you've got to deal with very soon, especially that very important one in Las Vegas in March of 2021. Reflecting back, that's where, in 1981, Rick Caro, Big John McCarthy and I launched what we then called IRSa, back before the "H" for Health. Truthfully, it's hard to believe that was almost 40 years ago now! I wish you the best as you and your Teams on the IHRSA Board and the Staff make these very crucial decisions for our Association that we all love. Were I to have one, my vote would be to find out some way, come hell or high water, to **HAVE the IHRSA Convention and Trade Show in Las Vegas in March, 2021 (or later in 2021)**... but don't let this one be cancelled like what happened to the 2020 event. But, as you know I don't have a vote anymore, so all I can do is to use the power of this keyboard, to try to influence this crucially important decision.

**C.I.** - Brent, you've already answered most of the following question. There is real concern that, without a readily available vaccine and COVID treatments, the 2021 IHRSA Convention and Trade Show may have to be cancelled. Obviously, that would be an awful situation to have it cancelled two years in a row. Any idea when you think such a decision has to be made? Any early thinking of postponing it to later in 2021?

**BD** - We're currently evaluating all the options for **IHRSA's 40th Anniversary Celebration in 2021**. As I mentioned before, we'll be announcing details soon, once plans have been finalized. It's really interesting, I think, that it's the 40th Anniversary Celebration in 2021. Not only will everyone be excited just to get back together, after all the isolation and separation and the cancellation of last year's event, but there's even more cause for celebration because it's celebrating something really significant in our industry and that was the birth of our beloved IHRSA, some 40 years ago. We're certainly looking forward to that.

### Advocacy, Alliances and Public Relations

**C.I.** - IHRSA has been trying to help the industry deal with governmental legislation. What is it focusing on now?

**BD** - While nothing is certain in Washington, D.C. these days, we're operating under the assumption that Congress passes a **4th COVID Relief Bill** in September. The Advocacy Team working with the D.C. Lobbyists are doing all they can to ensure the industry is well positioned in that event. At this time, the focus is really on four things:

1. A continued push for public relations and media coverage in Washington, D.C., as well as the media markets of key Senate members.

2. Direct lobbying to influential Congressional and Senate Committee members, such as the Senate and House Small Business Committees, the Senate Finance Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee.
3. Boosting support for the Re-Start Loan Act by actively recruiting co-sponsors and promoting inclusion of the measure in the next relief bill.
4. Getting industry specific relief legislation introduced. Those are really our focus right now as far as advocacy is concerned.

**C.I.** - There are a lot of state Alliances that have been formed. How can IHRSA serve the 100 - 200 clubs in each? Even after they re-open?

**BD** - It goes without saying that IHRSA wants to support and is happy to work with all these new alliances, with hopes that they continue to be active after this crisis has passed. They're getting a lot of support from fitness providers in their State because people are wanting to Affect change within the State, especially related to reopening and all the guidelines that are being passed or 'handed-down' if you will. Right now, IHRSA is supporting the alliances by providing templates, examples of communication pieces, being a repository of information and just introducing them to each other so that they can learn from each other. There's a lot of work to do at the State level as we all appreciate now. Really, more than ever before. A lot of the decisions that are affecting the clubs through the crisis are really occurring at the State level. So, kudos to the alliances that have been formed because it's in their back yard. Hopefully, they'll continue to be very strong once the crisis has passed because we'll need strong alliances to work with to impact state level legislation. And, as an outcome of this, too, we hope that going forward support of the ILC and Advocacy becomes a heightened awareness for everybody because we need to keep it going as we come out of the pandemic.

**C.I.** - Brent, this is a perfect place in your interview to mention the terrific new **IHRSA Weekly News Bulletin** that **IHRSA's Meredith Poppler, Vice President of Communication and Leadership Engagement**, launched last week. We received the first edition, and I found it to be very informative. So, my hat's off to IHRSA and Meredith, and the rest of Team IHRSA who were involved in this new idea development and launch. Meredith told me that her weekly news eblast, *From the IHRSA News Desk*, may be received by all IHRSA Members, or not, by emailing [pr@IHRSA.org](mailto:pr@IHRSA.org) and sending her your email address. Let me add: **JOIN IHRSA today if you're not already a member!**

### The Future

**C.I.** - If we were to fast forward to early 2021, what would be your hope for the future of the industry at that point?

**BD** - I wish I had some really lofty adjectives to use to describe the future of the industry. But, I think the reality is that, at this point, it boils down to just a few things. The first one is that most health and fitness businesses have survived the shutdowns and the pandemic. We know that a lot of businesses are not coming back outside of our industry. And, within the industry, we know there's going to be many that don't reopen. For those that do reopen, I hope they can reclaim the energy and sense of community they had with all their members before the shutdown happened. Also, I hope that there's a collective resurgence with a renewed focus on the concept that *Exercise is Medicine*, something that we've been promoting for years. And, I hope it is realized that we are all an integral part of the solution to reverse the trend of obesity, physical inactivity and unfulfilled wellbeing. The pandemic has laid open the reality that we haven't been effective in positioning ourselves in this way with public perception. We simply have to change this.

**C.I.** - There was a mention of a search process for the permanent IHRSA CEO position. Can you elaborate?

**BD** - I've been asked that quite a bit. Especially since I've re-enforced that I only intend to be the Interim CEO. Before we actually begin the search in earnest, collectively, the Board and Staff agree that we really need to address some of the urgent issues at hand. Then, in short order, begin the search for that person to lead IHRSA for the future. We're not prolonging it or postponing it unnecessarily, but we just need to get a handle on where the Association is, take the necessary steps to secure its financial future and also make sure that we're continuing to provide all of our constituents the support they need. Then, we can wrap our arms around how to begin the search. Obviously, that's going to be an extremely important decision, given the history of IHRSA with both John and Joe. It's a critical position and one that deserves the utmost care in selecting the right person for the job, because hopefully, they will be in it for quite a while.

**C.I.** - As you mentioned, IHRSA has created many webinars and is working on several large Online Summits. Any idea of what its future educational programs will be like?



Meredith Poppler

**BD** - IHRSA's been doing webinars for years. These are free to IHRSA Members. They are very popular, and we have no plans to discontinue those. In fact, we just partnered with *Club Solutions* and *REX Executive Roundtables* on a weekly webinar, now on its 22nd edition, that I'll continue to moderate. People have really responded to it quite positively. New this year is the IHRSA Innovation Summit on September 17th. That's coming up very shortly. There are a lot of great speakers, information and I think it will be very inspirational. One thing I believe that we've all learned, and we can expect, is that these future events will become hybrid events... with in-person experiences combined with virtual experiences so that those who may not be able to travel or are more comfortable not traveling or are just unable for physical or other reasons to travel, they can still participate. But, that's NOT going to replace getting to see your colleagues in person. We had small team staff meetings here in the IHRSA office this week, and that's the first time many of them have seen each other since the office was shut down in March. It was just really encouraging and uplifting to have everyone in the same room, with proper physical distancing of course, and feel a sense of togetherness.

**C.I.** - What are some of IHRSA's products and services that are continuing during this period (CBI, research studies, webinars, legislative support, etc.)?

**BD** - At this point, IHRSA's continuing all the programs and services members have come to expect. With that said, we are, as I've mentioned, *evaluating all of the offerings* and the value they contribute to the IHRSA platform overall. *CBI Magazine*, research projects, webinars, legislative support, sponsoring state bills, the advocacy, the international components and all of the services we provide.

**C.I.** - What message would you give to current IHRSA members regarding their continued loyalty to the Association?

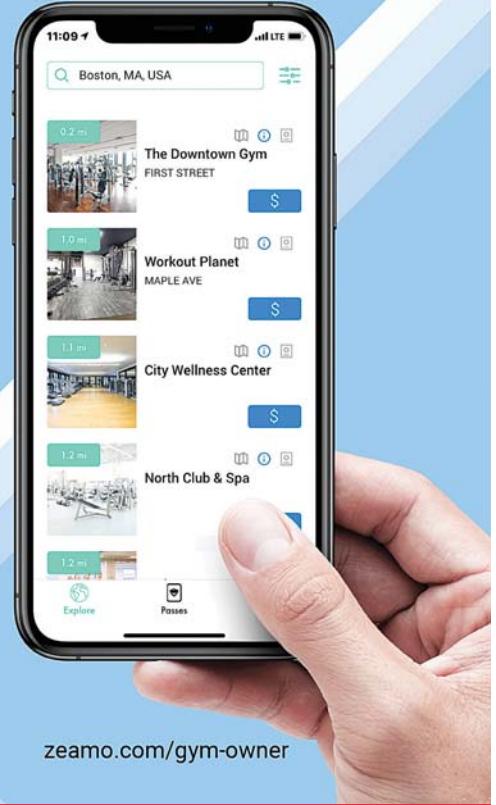
**BD** - First, I would just like to remind them that **IHRSA is a Member Trade Association**. From the conversations I've had with colleagues and supporters around the industry, I think that, sometimes, we unfortunately just forget that. IHRSA is not a 'for-profit' trade show company that does trade shows in a lot of different venues and industries. We are an Association of members, and therefore, are only as strong as the membership that supports it. Unequivocally, we would not even be in existence without them, nor can we continue without their support. I sincerely also want to ask, if I could, for the members' patience, understanding and grace as we continue to work through this crisis and all that it entails. The pandemic is hopefully a once in a lifetime catastrophe. We are intimately aware that our industry is hurting, not only from the shutdowns, layoff of employees, cancellation of members, reduced purchases of equipment, change in consumer behaviors and all the financial implications associated with the crisis, but perhaps even more so, from the *negative* (See **Brent Darden** Page 15)



## Reach the Unreachable

Zeamo makes it easy for gyms and clubs to attract employees and health plan members with money to spend on fitness via their company-sponsored wellness subsidies and reimbursements

- A secure platform that generates additive revenue from users who are not joining gyms
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- Seamless check-in experience for the end-user and the club staff
- Total transparency-access user information to market to them for membership



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### ...Brent Darden

continued from page 14

*public portrayal of clubs as non-essential and irrelevant.* That pains me deeply, and I know it does all of us in the industry when we're lumped in with bars, entertainment and other things when we so badly want to scream from the rooftops... We're part of the solution! We can help! We need to be open! So, together, we need to cross that threshold to where we want to be. Like so many of our constituents, we're taking this opportunity to reset and set the stage for collective growth going forward.

**C.I.** - Brent, what would be key reasons for a non-member of IHRSA to join now?

**BD** - It's a 'no-brainer!' Clubs and suppliers need help **NOW** more than ever before, and we're here to assist them in any way that we can! IHRSA's been a savior to hundreds of member clubs struggling to make it through the pandemic and help position themselves for a successful future. There's so many genuine and heartfelt stories of members that are thankful for all that IHRSA has done to help them. *If there was ever a time to be a part of IHRSA, NOW is the time!* Also, the Association really needs them to help us be successful going forward.

**C.I.** - Let's close out this excellent and very

illuminating interview with a couple of items. First Brent, what can IHRSA Members and Non-Members do to *HELP IHRSA NOW?*

**BD** - Well, to the non-members, I would say: **Please really consider joining your industry's trade Association.** There have been discussions about the effectiveness of the public affairs and advocacy of our Association. And, with respect to that, one of the truly *limiting factors* when you compare us to the automakers or the hospitality industry, the retail industry or the restaurant industry... those trade associations are really built on the backs of their members, which are in the *hundreds of thousands*. At IHRSA, we really need to reach out and get more members across the different spectrums of the health and fitness industry. So, that's what I would say to non-members.

Then, to our Members, how can they help us **NOW?** I would say quite directly: **Continue to be members!** If you are members, continue supporting us. As your membership comes up for renewal, whenever that might be, *please re-enlist with us*, just like you want your club members to *re-enlist with you*. Then, beyond that, as I've said before, we're going to be listening to the customer voice, which is not only our club members but our suppliers in a *more intense and purposeful way than ever before*. Don't be afraid to

share your thoughts and your feedback. We want nothing more than to be recognized as the greatest resource for health and fitness businesses, literally in the world.

**C.I.** - Brent, to close this world-class interview with you, let me ask you to answer this one last question: What can Justin and I do at *Club Insider* to help IHRSA and YOU?

**BD** - Well, Norm, you're already doing it... right now. You're reaching out to help tell the story, and you're going to share some of the things that are going on. That's a big piece, I think... To garner the support and the trust of customers, you have to make sure you're communicating with them. Your vehicle has a reach and an audience that has always been tremendously supportive of IHRSA, and we appreciate you helping us reach out to those individuals to share our story.

■ ■ ■

Folks, I want you all to know this. To close this very informative interview with Brent, I want to provide the following information to you all now. Brent is *totally swamped with emails* right now, and he is trying to respond as quickly as he possibly can. So, *IF* you have comments, questions or feedback for Brent after reading this, please forward them to me at **Norm@clubinsideronline.com**.

**clubinsideronline.com**. I'll make sure Brent receives them when there's a little bit less on his plate. But, *importantly*, if you want your comments to Brent or about IHRSA to appear in our *October 2020 Edition of Club Insider*, please indicate that desire in your email to me.

Thank you to **Brent Darden** for his time sharing this important information about IHRSA, as well as for his service to this industry, now as *IHRSA's Interim President and CEO*. We wish him, the IHRSA Staff and the IHRSA Board all the best as they work through these times! And, thank you for reading, folks!

*(Norm Cates, Jr. is the Founder of Club Insider, now in its 27th year of publication, and its Tribal Leader Since 1993. He is a 45+ year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. As IHRSA's First President and a Co-Founder of the Association with Rick Caro and five others, in 1981; the 2001 DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award Recipient, one of IHRSA's highest honors; and Club Industry's 2017 Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient in 2017, Norm Cates, Jr. is a highly decorated veteran who cares about you. And, he wants to hear from you. Norm can be reached by phone at 770-635-7578 or email at Norm@clubinsideronline.com.)*

# Bounce-Back Strategies

By: Gary Polic

We are in unprecedented times, and we do not know what the future will bring. It is natural to be discouraged at this time, but our industry WILL BOUNCE-BACK. WHY? Because our industry has too many stellar leaders spearheading the effort, coupled with the fact that, "exercise is the most significant factor contributing to the health of the individual," stated by the American Medical Association. People will continue to seek out clubs to work out in, because there is an inherent motivation that comes while working out with others that no online virtual fitness program available can compete with.

## An Opportunity to Begin Again

When you first open a club, every member is treated like gold, and the customer service is spot-on! The desire for customer service being held to a high standard exists at most club companies. Always bringing it to fruition daily, though, is where many clubs fail. Inevitably, this is due to the focus on new member sales always being at the forefront. Enter COVID-19, and the biggest commodity we have are our current members.

After the numerous phone calls I've made throughout the industry before beginning this article, the clubs that are hanging in all say the same thing, "Our members love us." Retaining them is

literally essential for a club's survival. What is happening in the world right now with the pandemic is new territory for all of us, so we must adapt and change. Even after the miracle of a vaccine is here, we must never take our current members for granted ever again.

## How Do We Begin?

We need to team up with our departments to mastermind a "new paradigm shift," and subsequently, create a new Mission Statement. Begin by creating a **Proud Ownership Theory** by corroborating with your teams through **group decision making**. It needs to be a **BIG DEAL**, because it is a **BIG DEAL**. It also needs to be a *group decision*, because **people will give their all when they are a part of the solution!** I learned this valuable method of leading teams from my mentor/COO, **Doug Cash**, when I was the *National Sales Director* at *TCA*, now *Midtown Athletic Clubs*.

In addition, if the leaders from the top down are *not* spending time in the trenches, then what *are* they doing at this critical juncture!? Do not get me started about this... The "boss" tells you what to do but cannot do it himself? There were too many "ivory tower" leaders before COVID. Well, guess what? Those days are over. We are all responsible to **WALK THE TALK** and get back in the trenches with our teams from the top down!

## Sales Department Musts:

1. Every new member receives a follow up every 30-60-90 days by call or text. Each call or text must be specific to the members "needs" by "providing solutions." During this correspondence, the club provides complimentary services to educate (possible upsell). This needs to be tracked and followed up on by management DAILY! Also keep in mind, **each new member should be scheduling a 14-30-day appointment** with the sales rep to guarantee their expectations have been met at Point of Sale (POS)! This is another opportunity to present referrals and potential upselling depending on their goals, AND it is the best way to truly SERVE.

2. Referrals from the current members need to be supported by "internal sales promotions."

3. Referral presentations at POS need to be adhered to, tracked and followed up on by management DAILY. Now, you may be saying, "We know this and do this already!" Most clubs I visit have the standard implemented; however, there is no "inspecting what you expect DAILY!" The follow-up by management in these respects are in reports supported by the software. It sounds good, but having your referral sheets presented at POS or to a current member needs to be manually tracked DAILY and inspected as well! Entering names in the computer is essential, but again, the manual inspection of the sheet's written referrals is paramount in the inspection process. In addition, think about this: If the same enthusiasm were presented at the POS referral presentation as it is to sell PT or a new membership, how many more referrals would be received?

4. Utilize a current "Member Survey Engagement" sheet by "walking the floor" daily. Would your team be able to answer the following questions when you walk into your club and ask them while you are pointing to a member on the floor? Again, have this manually tracked for follow up DAILY.

■ What is that member's name?

■ Do you know how long has he been a member?

■ Is he aware of the new protocols that have been adopted since COVID? Does he feel safe?

■ Do you know what his goals are?

■ If there was one thing he would change regarding exercise results, what would that be?

■ Where does he work, socialize or worship?

■ Would he recommend the club to a friend?



Gary Polic

5. Call Cancels and Freezes. Cancels receive a 30-day trial. Freezes receive a 60-day trial. Call all check-ins. Personal training sold at the POS.

## Some Questions to Ask Yourself:

■ Are you listening to your employees and empowering them to push forward? Are you allowing them to vent, and are you providing inspiration and direction?

■ Is your business pivoting for the present and the future because the future is now? Virtual fitness is here to stay!

■ Is your senior leadership team *building confidence with your team*? Are they involved in every member and non-member interaction when possible?

■ Is your Senior Leadership Team providing "mastermind solutions" daily or weekly on scheduled assigned conference calls or in person? Or, are the calls all about the negatives? **THIS IS A BIG ONE!** Leaders need to be encouraging and hands-on in the clubs DAILY! It is AMAZING when a Senior Leader must be in the trenches for a week (bell to bell) how much more they are willing to listen and provide *hands-on "quantified" solutions!*

## Is Your Team Understanding and Supporting the Ownership's Needs?

With the draft, new member, PT and ancillary revenue at an all-time low, the team MUST understand the "crunch" the owner is in considering cash flow. No, they do not need to know the actual numbers. However, they MUST understand that their position is a blessing and that ATTITUDE and EFFORT is essential to the wellbeing of the future of the business and their employment. If the employee is (See Gary Polic Page 18)



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# Business Finance Depot Video Series:

## *The First Steps in Preparing to Finance Your Business*

By: Paul Bosley

Preparation when launching a new privately held business or a franchise is key to the success in securing the financing needed to properly capitalize a new business enterprise. The following video series outlines the key steps to prepare for financing a new business.

This month's video can be watched by going to [bit.ly/clubinsider99](http://bit.ly/clubinsider99).

This video provides an overview of the upcoming videos listed below and outlines important initial steps to take:

**How to properly complete your personal financial statement** - The personal financial statement is required for all SBA loans and most lease applications. The form provides the lender a snapshot of an applicant's assets, liabilities, net worth, and family income on a specific date.

**How to properly complete the sources and uses of funds form** - The sources and uses of funds form is required by most lenders because it lists where the money is anticipated to be spent, including organizational costs, franchise fee (if any), construction costs including a percentage contingency for cost overruns, equipment, closing costs and working capital. It also lists where the money is coming from, including the owner(s)' equity injection, gift letters, money being transferred from retirement accounts and debt financing.

This month's video also reviews the following additional information in the initial state when preparing for financing a new business:

**Update Your Resume / Bio**

Most lenders are seeking appli-

cants with industry experience and/or a degree in a related field of education. For example, when applying to open a fitness center, a degree in exercise science or when opening a restaurant, previous experience in restaurant management is highly regarded.

If the applicants do not have direct industry experience or degree, it is critically important to highlight your portable skills, which include finance, management, sales and marketing.

It is also very important to list industry events, trade shows that you have attended and industry-related certifications that have been earned to demonstrate the applicant's commitment to learn the industry and to become active in the industry trade association.

### Take a Hard Look at Your and Your Partners (if any) Credit Reports

There are three credit reporting agencies, and the agency most used by SBA lenders and equipment leasing companies is *Experian* ([www.experian.com](http://www.experian.com)). Since all partners owning more than 20% of any company must personally guarantee the repayment of a loan and/or lease, the lender will eventually pull the credit report of the owners. Consequently, it is best if you take a hard look at all owners' credit reports in advance. The goal is to submit

applications with all partners that have 700+ credit scores.

Any partners with credit scores significantly below 675 should NOT be listed on the corporation documents, building lease and franchise documents. An alternative is to create a separate agreement with partners with less than 20% equity and lower credit scores to avoid these individuals inhibiting the ability of the company to secure financing, yet providing incentives and compensation for their participation.

### If Buying a Franchise, Request a Copy of the Franchisor's Franchise Disclosure Document (FDD)

Financing institutions look favorably on franchisors with over 100 franchises open and a low closure percentage rate. Franchisors must complete and submit an FDD annually to all states that it intends to sell franchises. The FDD lists the number of franchises open, sold, closed and transferred ownership. Securing financing for new businesses that are purchasing an established franchise is much easier than securing financing for a start-up business or for a new franchise brand.

If you are planning to apply for financing a business that is not a franchise or is a franchise with less than 100 franchisees open, the lender will be



Paul Bosley

strongly considering the owners' industry experience, educational background and the level of activity within the industry trade associations.

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For more information, contact Paul Bosley at [paul@businessfinancedepot.com](mailto:paul@businessfinancedepot.com) or visit [www.businessfinancedepot.com](http://www.businessfinancedepot.com).

(Paul Bosley is the Managing Member of *Healthclubexperts.com* dba *Business Finance Depot*. Paul can be reached at [paul@businessfinancedepot.com](mailto:paul@businessfinancedepot.com).)

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# The Golden Age of Health Clubs

By: Bruce Carter

The beginning of 2020 was a positive time for health clubs. According to the *IHRSA 2020 Global Report - The State of the Health Club Industry*, the industry's future looked bright. The industry was excelling in its sincere desire to help people improve their lives, and the number of clubs, memberships and health club visits were at an all-time high. Multipurpose clubs had reached new levels of services, facilities and inspiring design. Thousands of quality low-price clubs had lowered the barrier to joining to as low as 35 cents a day. Exciting boutique facilities with memorable environments provided a wide range of engaging physical activity options. All of this contributed to the enormous positive impact the health club industry provided to populations fighting to stay healthy and active in a world where technology (with its wonderful advancements) often has a significant downside... less physical activity in day-to-day life.

Then, early in 2020, COVID-19 hits. Like nothing before, people's lives are turned upside down. People cannot get together, affecting most businesses in a dramatically negative fashion. Clubs close, and then, here and there, they are allowed to open with a variety of restrictions.

Surprisingly, many articles, blogs, news reports and "studies" started to appear. We read that clubs are very dangerous and "dripping" with the COVID virus. Concurrently, there appears to be a dramatic shift to so many people exercising at home but also with hearing such things that COVID and the closing of clubs proves

that clubs were never needed in the first place. Or, anywhere from 40 - 75% of members will never go back to a club.

Is the assumption that the virus has somehow strangely motivated more people to be more physically active without clubs? Has the virus motivated people to better watch what they eat?

One thing can be perfectly clear. The total physical activity output of the country has gone down, not up since COVID. So many are always looking for motivation to be more active, but COVID has not been that missing solution. In addition, millions of pounds of weight have been gained during COVID, and sadly, the amount of stress has also soared.

Yes, there has been a shift from club exercise to home exercise. However, those that were regular with exercise at a club were the first to be regularly active at home (and outdoors). Home equipment sales and virtual fitness have soared, and one reason is the 64 million club members (IHRSA report) no longer had a club to go to. Yet, exercising at home has always been an option for anyone wanting to exercise, and COVID has now motivated clubs to provide virtual fitness as one of their many offerings, and this will continue as an ongoing value-added service.

As a result, we are seeing exercising at home as another opportunity for clubs to be the leader of fitness in their community. Whether at home or in a club, the more people who exercise, the better for all in the fitness industry. It's not as if there are not enough inactive, out-of-shape people to help make a difference in their lives. The fitness industry seems to

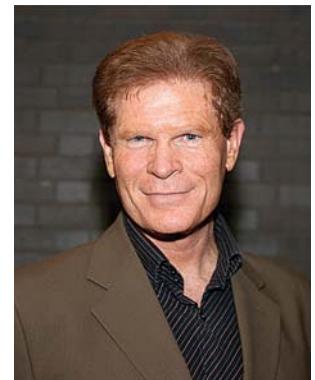
have an ever-expanding market with two-thirds of adults in the United States being overweight or obese, and children are growing up out-of-shape more than ever.

Then, the question would be, what does this all have to do with the *Golden Age of Health Clubs*? During the fears and uncertainty of COVID, it is human nature to look at the "now" as the foreteller of the future. Yet, COVID will become a thing of the past. 2021 will be a transition year with many uncertainties. Many clubs won't make it, but many of those clubs will be picked up by others. Other clubs will recover slowly.

Some of the general population will still have fears about their safety even after COVID is successfully dealt with, but most people will want to get on with their lives. People will want to become empowered again, and this is a great opportunity for clubs in a post-COVID world. *The Golden Age of Health Clubs* can happen when a population goes through an unsurpassed drastic challenge of health, emotional and financial stress, and the club industry rises to the challenge with its best effort (facilities, interiors, programs, services and positive human interaction) to cater to the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of the population. No other industry is positioned to do this like the club industry.

Quite simply, demand for clubs will be stronger than ever. The term, "absence makes the heart grow fonder" will apply. Home exercisers will get bored working out at home, often in cramped inconvenient spaces. People will crave personal interaction and support again.

This is how clubs will be better than ever:



Bruce Carter

■ With design, more clubs will reach new levels of "environmental psychology," creating interiors that make the club experience uniquely inspirational and enjoyable. Spaciousness will be appreciated more than ever. The creative process of using a variety of materials, finishes, architectural features, natural elements, music, colors and lighting will become even more of an "art and science." The old club concept of "equipment in a room" will fade away even quicker after COVID.

■ Because of COVID, clubs will be cleaner and safer than ever. Many of the practices incorporated for sanitation and cleaning will become the norm for most clubs.

■ Clubs will incorporate technology more  
(See Bruce Carter Page 19)

## ...Gary Polic

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not COMMITTED, then changes need to be made. ONLY PASSIONATE, SELFLESS, DEDICATED PEOPLE NEED BE EMPLOYEED! On the other hand, EMPLOYERS MUST treat their people like GOLD! It is the lifeblood of their existence and survival at this point!

### Now is the Time to Engage and Bring Your Community Together

Now is the time to absolutely LOVE OTHERS while expecting nothing in return! Also, consider there is strength in numbers by pulling people together! Become your corporate's and community's "GOOD-WILL SOLUTION!"

It is time to get out into your community and *meet all the local merchants* in a half-mile radius of your club. Meet the Mayor, Police Chief, Fire Marshal and your Congressperson. Now is NOT the time to

stay sheltered in your clubs and wait it out.

Make a list of the influential people in your community and call, email or visit them. Bring them all together in your club and have a press release promoting your brand and allowing the community to see that you are being part of the solution. Join the Chamber and Rotary Club. Your places of worship and corporations would love to provide a trial membership pass or virtual fitness programs to their members and employees, respectively.

**Of course, you have thought of these things, BUT ARE THESE ACTIVITIES BEING TRACKED, COACHED AND INSPECTED DAILY?**

**Here are examples of what you can start doing immediately:**

- Creating an APP for any member social group or association.
- College and HS athletic programs have NO place to work out.
- Corporate "build your immune system"

program.

- Loan out equipment.
- Social media FACEBOOK groups cross-promoting with other local businesses and tying into each other's database.
- Focus on nutritional guidance at this time of slow club traffic.
- "Healthy Habits" virtual coaching.
- Allow your club to be the central hub in your community to support businesses and the people. For example, your club could become the distribution center for a local food drive or flu shots.

Create an excel spreadsheet of all your contacts with detailed information. In time, these connections and the "giving back" to the community will pay off big dividends! Do not dismiss the people who are unemployed. Now is the time for them to focus on their physical wellbeing and to better prepare themselves to interview and get the job. Do you have a membership specifically designed for them?

### The Law of Reciprocity

All throughout history, we have seen that it was during the toughest of times that we found out WHO WE WERE AND HOW DEEP OUR RESOLVE CAN BE. It is a perfect time to "give back" and allow the seed of the Law of Reciprocity to be planted for tomorrow's gain!

Remember, THIS TOO SHALL PASS, and when it does: Will your clubs be SET-UP to capitalize? It is all about engagement and service in the community! Timing is everything! NOW IS THE TIME to guarantee your future success by truly applying the LAW OF RECIPROCITY!

(*Gary Polic is the Owner of Polic Consultants Group, LLC. Gary can be reached by phone at 630-410-1120 or email at gary@policconsultantsgroup.com. You can also learn more by visiting www.policconsultantsgroup.com.*)

# COVID-19 Waiver Considerations

By: Paul R. Bedard, Esquire

As health clubs continue to operate with a focus on minimizing the COVID-19 health risks posed to members, guests and employees, many clubs have implemented COVID-19 waivers --or are otherwise deliberating the employment of these waivers-- as part of their overall COVID-19 response. However, care must be taken to evaluate the enforceability of these waivers while weighing any negative ramifications associated with their use. More importantly, clubs must first focus on the policies and procedures that must be implemented to keep people safe, which will likely also result in the ability to defeat a negligence claim based on COVID-19 exposure.

In addition to the health club's underlying liability waiver, a COVID-19 waiver can play an effective role within the club's risk management strategy. However, some unique considerations must be evaluated, including but not limited to the health club's actual COVID-19 response, the governing state law and whether a COVID-19 waiver will tarnish the health club's brand.

**This article is not intended as legal advice. The laws in this regard are many and varied. This is a new and murky area of law that is just beginning to develop. Furthermore, unique facts and circumstances in each case prohibit blanket recommendations. Therefore, please consider the following information as an educational guide, and please consult an attorney for specific direction.**

## Policies, Procedures, & Related Efforts Forming the Club's COVID-19 Response

The best legal defense begins with a strong offense long before any claim arises. Health clubs should continue to operate with a heightened duty of care throughout this public health crisis. Safety procedures and cleaning protocols consistent with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and local health authorities must be consistently adhered to. These practices must be documented and archived for at least the length of the statute of limitations within the governing jurisdiction. Employee handbooks, training manuals and training procedures must be revised and updated fluidly as this crisis evolves. Regardless of whether a COVID-19 waiver is signed, a claim of negligence due to COVID-19 exposure will likely prove difficult to prevail upon in the face of a defense that can point to consistent safety and cleaning protocols that meet or exceed all legal requirements.

## Understanding Governing Law

State law governs the enforceability of liability waivers. These State laws vary widely. Liability waivers effectively hold

no water in some states, whereas other states take these waivers very seriously. In addition to this varying enforceability, the devil is often in the details. Some states require specific statutory language that must be inserted verbatim within the waiver to avoid having what would otherwise be an enforceable waiver fall flat. Therefore, understanding the applicable state law is critical.

Although a liability waiver will generally not protect against claims resulting from intentional conduct or gross negligence, the waiver should expressly bar claims due to negligence, identify the assumption of the risk related specifically to COVID-19 and specifically waive claims for harm due to COVID-19. The waiver should be posted conspicuously and contain clear and readily understandable language. A clear and conspicuous waiver is more likely to be viewed by a court as a waiver that was read and understood by the person who signed it, thereby increasing the odds of enforceability.

## Consider What Impact, If Any, the Waiver Will Have on the Health Club's Brand

Given that the best defense against a negligence claim alleging harm caused by exposure to COVID-19 is a strong COVID-19 response, coupled with the varying enforceability of liability waivers, it's worth assessing to what extent a COVID-19 waiver will minimize your specific club's legal exposure versus create any harm to your club's brand. There are many variables to assess here including the level of enforceability within the jurisdiction, the club's confidence in their COVID-19 response and to whom the waiver is being presented.

An argument can be made that a club has minimal risk to COVID-19 claims when it can be shown that safety and cleaning protocols meeting or exceeding all local and federal guidelines have

been diligently followed. Additionally, the causation component that must be met within any successful claim of negligence may prove elusive given the likely difficulty of pinpointing exactly when and where a person became infected with COVID-19. Therefore, it is worth weighing whether more harm than good will result from a COVID-19 waiver after evaluating the strength of the club's overall COVID-19 response versus whether such a waiver is likely to be upheld within that environment in the first place. Although, it can also be argued that, at a minimum, a COVID-19 waiver may help to fend off frivolous lawsuits. Either way, the legal landscape in this regard is largely untested at this point.

There are even greater concerns to evaluate in terms of the value of a waiver when considering having employees sign these waivers. Waivers for employees are enforceable in very few scenarios. Courts typically find unequal bargaining power when employers present waivers to employees, and waivers cannot supersede or eliminate rights under workers' compensation statutes nor can they override Occupational Safety and Health Administration's legal requirements. Furthermore, this limited applicability may be coupled with reduced morale when employees are presented with a mandatory waiver of their rights. Care must be taken if this is a path of consideration.

The bottom line is that health club owners and operators must understand all variables at play when considering whether to implement a COVID-19 waiver. If it is decided that a COVID-19 waiver will play a part in the club's overall risk management strategy, the same provisions that constitute any good liability waiver, such as a severability clause and declaration of governing law and venue, should be included. However, the club's COVID-19 waiver should be utilized in conjunction with a consistently outstanding COVID-19 response effort and certainly not in place of



Paul R. Bedard, Esquire

this heightened duty of care.

*(Paul R. Bedard, Esquire has nearly twenty years of management, leadership and operations experience in the health and fitness industry. As a practicing attorney, Paul's health and fitness industry experience provides him with a unique perspective when advising health clubs regarding employee training, handbooks, policies, contracts, disputes or premises liability claims. When not practicing law or spending quality time with his wife and daughters, Paul strives to be active in his local community. Paul has served as the Assistant Town Attorney for the Town of Southington, Connecticut. He has also served on the Southington Zoning Board of Appeals and the Board of the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency. Paul is a solo practitioner at The Law Office of Paul Bedard, LLC, in Southington, Connecticut. Paul can be reached by email at [AttorneyPaulBedard@gmail.com](mailto:AttorneyPaulBedard@gmail.com) or phone at 860-414-0110.)*

## ...Bruce Carter

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than ever for better mechanical systems, virtual fitness, fitness programming and tracking.

■ Fitness programming and health options will reach new levels of conditioning and "user friendly" effectiveness. Mind-body programming will expand offering better solutions to mental, physical and spiritual health.

■ Virtual fitness will become a norm for clubs as part of their offerings. Members have grown to like the option of exercising at home, and this will not be an "add on" but an actual separate brand for clubs wanting to excel at virtual fitness just as they do with fitness in the club. In turn, this also creates the need for clubs to have special interior

environments with branding for streaming virtual classes. Also, note that more people than ever will want to "check out" a club virtually before they decide if they want to visit, so exciting interiors filmed by a professional will bring the best results.

■ Clubs will have cleaner air than ever before with HEPA air filters and UV-C irradiation lights added to advanced HVAC systems. Clubs will be built with more antimicrobial materials than ever before.

■ Clubs will take bigger steps in aligning with the medical community and furthering the principle of "Exercise is Medicine." This has been a slow process, but COVID should be a catalyst for more change.

■ ■ ■

Recently, Jerry Seinfeld was

quoted about New York and its future. It applies so well to clubs. He explained that he read an article on how New York is over because everybody will remote everything. He said, "Guess what... Everyone hates to do this. You know why? There's no energy. Energy, attitude and personality cannot be 'remoted' through even the best fiber optic lines. Real, live, inspiring human energy exists when we coagulate together."

COVID is a "game changer." First, painfully so; it has been bad for people's physical and emotional health in countless ways. Yet, in a post-COVID world, clubs will be more instrumental in more people's lives in helping them to take positive steps in getting the most out of life.

*(Bruce Carter is the owner of Optimal Design Systems, International. Bruce can be reached at [bruce@optimaldsi.com](mailto:bruce@optimaldsi.com).)*

# "Non-Essential" Never Again

By: Eric Durak, MS & Dan Zeman, MS

Many in the health club industry are reeling as to the temporary and some permanent closings of health clubs and studios across the United States. They are blaming a virus or city/state officials who have imposed a quarantine on their livelihoods and forced some out of business. The mantra of this dystopian situation is because health clubs were classified as "non-essential" service providers by those in public health, city government and state bureaucrats early on during the national shutdown.

According to those in the business, it's because government doesn't understand the power of exercise in promoting health and reducing the burden of disease. This, of course, is true, but how has it been conveyed by the profession to medicine, public health and government? In most cases, it hasn't. Many people in cities, big and small, see health clubs as a place where you rent time on exercise machines or in a group exercise class, period. The case for making health clubs stay open during any situation of this type was never considered, because health clubs never positioned themselves as the lifestyle enhancer, or the remedy for those with medical conditions, or the answer for a healthful active aging process, or as a competitor to other allied health programs that manage pain, improve function and work synergistically with doctors.

So, when the hammer came down across the nation in March of 2020, health club owners, fitness centers and membership organizations had no proof that they could or should be deemed essential. Keep in mind, they didn't doubt any of the medically-proven health benefits of regular physical activity; they simply didn't believe daily attendance to health clubs or fitness centers guaranteed health benefits.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been called the great "reset" in American society. But, that "reset" button has not been shown to prioritize those who offer a solution to those at risk of acquiring the COVID-19 virus. Specifically, improving immune function, reducing co-morbidity rates of obesity, hypertension or coronary heart disease. Anyone with any powers of observation will see that fast food restaurants and coffee houses were the first to "re-open," followed by higher-end dining establishments who had the luxury of outdoor seating. Professional sports teams have defaulted to a "bubble" approach to playing while also forcing limitations to the number of fans in attendance. All of these industries figured out a method of re-opening which allowed them to begin to get back to their normal of providing entertainment and socialization.

But, what about the health and fitness industry? Well, in most people's eyes, they are still a "non sequitur" in that, if

they do open their doors, they will be seen as the place where a handful of community members go to sweat and train for a 10K or lose those pesky 20 pounds. They haven't figured out that, after 40 years, they should be seen as one of the nation's leading purveyors of health promotion, disease prevention and risk management. They haven't been able to because they have not provided the one thing that medicine, behavioral health, physical therapy and chiropractics have been able to provide, and that is *outcomes*.

You see, the first phase of medically-based fitness came in the late 1970s with practitioners such as **Dr. Neil Sol** developing some of the first medically-based cardiac rehab programs. By the mid-decade, those programs affiliated with medical centers were receiving reimbursement for up to three months of supervised exercise. On the downside, most exercise professionals had to wear lab coats. This was followed in the late 1980s with programs for exercise in diabetes, pregnancy and hypertension. In the 1990s, obesity, cancer care and neurology came into clubs. One of the big boosts for the industry was the work of **Dr. David Nieman** from Appalachian State, looking at conditioning programs and the immune system. This gave a lot of credibility into the physiological adaptation of exercise to improved medical conditions. Today, the application of exercise and the lengthening of the chromosomal telomere again shows the impact on exercise on our biological systems. Exercise may really enhance our ability to live longer.

But, where were the pre- and post-diagnostic criteria? Outside of body fat and 1 RM max lifts, most in the industry were not that keen on developing programs based on criteria such as blood labs, pain levels, postural defects and neurological efficiency. Over the last 30 years, individual programs have been developed, and health clubs do have their share of programs for post rehab and metabolic wellness, but since there are very few outcomes-based studies, there is little attention given by medicine and public health to health clubs as "providers" of quality medically-based exercise and health promotion services.

A recent study, **Marshall, Groves, et al.**, looked at outcomes for supervised exercise for six sub-categories of exercise (bariatrics, cancer wellness, cardiac exercise, diabetes, MoveWell joint replacement and Parkinson's Disease) with over 380 participants over a multi-month standardized exercise program. Results yielded improvements in health assessments (body composition, submaximal exercise testing and self-reported behaviors). What is interesting about this program is: it is in health clubs, it is performed by trainers, and each subset of medical patients had specific outcomes tailored to their conditions.

This is considered the first



Eric Durak, MS



Dan Zeman, MS

population health study to come from the health club environment. **Dr. Jay Groves** and colleagues should be applauded for their great work. Most in the health club world didn't notice. Other studies looking at cardiac rehab, cancer care, diabetes and exercise and cellular repair have all happened in the health club setting. There are thousands of dedicated trainers and coaches performing post-rehab programs daily on clients that have no bearing on healthcare, because they have no method to publish their findings.

This scenario recently changed with the launch of the *"Healthy Stats" Outcomes Platform* from **Well Health Corporation** in Charlottesville, VA ([www.wellhealth.com](http://www.wellhealth.com)). This platform looks at a variety of health assessments, including nutrition, biometrics, and behavioral. It includes a simple daily exercise routine that can be plugged in by trainers and patients in less than a minute, and it offers a post-program assessment that includes the above mentioned and includes data entry for blood labs.

This portal has the ability to change the course of the industry because trainers on many levels of instruction (personal trainers, health coaches, Pilates and yoga instructors, and exercise physiologists)

can use the portal to glean data on single person outcomes and log onto data for entire populations for research and outcomes purposes. This platform is also a large step forward for exercise science departments at universities in which graduate students can now tackle data on a large scale. The collaborative and research purposes for any subset of exercise (from HIIT training to medical yoga, exercise equipment to pool conditioning) can now be used in an outcomes-based fashion for submission to high impact medical journals and strengthen the ability of health clubs to provide medically-based exercise for an industry that needs to get back on its feet quickly and find its legs within a healthcare paradigm in the U.S. that is in desperate need of an overhaul. I see no better overhaul than a quality exercise program.

A recent report by Hank and colleagues also looks at the use of precision wellness modalities (in this case, cellular repair technology using Nano Vi equipment) to enhance the wellness status in Alzheimer's disease. The use of precision tools such as hypobaric chambers, cryotherapy and compression therapy will add yet another positive dimension to the mix of wellness services that can be applied within the health club setting, thus boosting their status as a bona fide provider in the industry, both fitness and medicine.

Our current national situation may yield unprecedented opportunities, but health clubs need to look at not just having clean clubs but also look at using Well's national outcome platform to allow them to perform their own "electronic wellness records" on patients coming into their program. The exercise profession has been involved with clinical exercise and testing for decades. We have seen improvements in the industry but also some foot dragging because "we are not in the medical business." The time has come to make the decision regarding outcomes, otherwise the status of your facilities may be permanently "non-essential."

To view the list of References for this article, please go to [bit.ly/clubinsider101](http://bit.ly/clubinsider101).

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(Dan Zeman, MS is a 40-year clinical exercise physiologist who has worked for sports medicine centers, hospitals and fitness/wellness facilities. He has serviced as a consultant to numerous professional sports teams and created programs for all levels of sports and physical activity. He is the author of "You're Too Old to Die Young." He resides in Scottsdale, AZ.)

# Many Clubs Thrived While Your Club Was Shut Down: *Three Keys that COVID Holds to Building Your Wellness Wealth*

By: Donna Krech

It's true. While you were closed (or maybe even still are), there were clubs that were thriving because they were producing results for their members, such as blood pressure being completely normalized, diabetes-related numbers being turned back to healthy and weight being dropped rapidly and safely.

Read that again. High BP normalized, diabetes-related numbers put into check and weight back at a health number. An essential health business provides these results and is what is needed in order to keep a person at this high state of health. Your club can be that business.

I get it, times are uncertain and your brain probably feels like mush. Your body is tired, and you're not exactly sure what to do. You're most likely doing everything from running the front desk to cleaning toilets to selling memberships. You don't have time to waste, so you'd like to know, right now, what the three keys are. Let's address that first. They are simple:

**1. Be aware of what the facts are concerning COVID and how those facts can increase your wealth from wellness.**

**2. Believe there is a solution available that allows you to become an essential business, build new net profit streams and produce your wealth from wellness.**

**3. Provide the solution to your members and community so that your wealth from wellness can begin, immediately.**

While much is still unknown about coronavirus, some things have remained consistent. Deaths and severe illness have been more rampant in older populations and among those with *underlying conditions*.

The term "underlying conditions" is slightly vague, and it encompasses a wide range of health issues from heart disease to COPD to diabetes to high blood pressure. But, according to the CDC, one underlying condition is emerging as a top indicator of severe effects from coronavirus: overweight and, especially, obesity.

According to the CDC, 72% of Americans are overweight or obese, meaning their BMI is 25 or higher. And, 42% are obese with a BMI over 30. Obesity is known to cause a slew of health issues, but being overweight is looking like a major reason people under 65 are having a more severe reaction to COVID-19.

## Obesity was the Top Underlying Condition of Younger Patients Hospitalized in March

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention's report on hospitalization rates and characteristics of patients hospitalized with COVID-19 from the month of March showed that obesity was the number one underlying condition of patients ages 18 to 64.

For all ages combined, obesity turned out to be the second most common underlying condition among hospitalized COVID-19 patients in the study, but among the 65 and over set, it was second to high blood pressure.

Being overweight or obese often accompanies, or is the cause of, other health issues, including high blood pressure, heart disease, certain cancers and diabetes, according to the Mayo Clinic, but people under 65 are reportedly being admitted to hospitals even if obesity is their only health issue.

For patients who are diabetic, which is often linked to weight and diet, there is also emerging information that diabetes is turning out to be a common factor in patients that succumb to the virus. *The Guardian* reported that one-out-of four patients who died of COVID-19 in hospitals in England had diabetes after the National Health Service released new findings.

Professor Partha Kar, the organization's specialty adviser on coronavirus told *The Guardian*, "It is clear that people with diabetes are more at risk of dying from COVID-19. More detailed analysis is currently underway to understand the link between the two, although initial findings indicate that the threat in people under 40 continues to be very low.

You've heard that you're at high risk for severe symptoms from COVID-19 if you're 65 years or older, and now you know overweight or obesity is a key factor as well. And, maybe you already knew that chronic lung disease or diabetes or anything that has rendered you immunocompromised puts you at risk. Well, now another study shows one other underlying condition, previously known to make symptoms worse if you contract Coronavirus, can actually increase your chances of death: high blood pressure. And, a new study shows that high blood pressure is rising all across America, in an alarming way.

So, how, exactly, do you utilize the three keys? How do you take this awareness, that overweight, obesity, high BP and diabetes are high risk factors and then find the solution and apply it? My

answer is "Intentional Growth." There's a universal growth tip that I like to live by... it's called "Stress and Release." Ralph Waldo Emerson put it this way...

**"The mind, once stretched by a new idea, never returns to its original dimensions."**

You're a fitness pro, so you of course know that, when you work out, you actually tear your muscle. And, every trainer knows that you've got to give your muscle time to rebuild. *Stress and release...*

Every engine can only burn so long before you have to release the pressure, change the oil, and only then, can you run it again. *Stress and release...*

You and your business can only withstand so much stress before you need to pull back and rejuvenate. *Stress and release...*

There have always been times when I've liked to *cause Intentional Growth* in my business. I force my business to stress, challenge my marketing, set a goal and increase the pressure so that, **when the pressure is released, my business grows.**

Now is a time, **MORE THAN EVER BEFORE**, that you need to embrace what's happening in the climate around you and *cause Intentional Growth* from the stress that's occurring. If you'll embrace this concept, I promise you, you will be able to release once again. You will be able to unwind, rejuvenate and relax. Yes... relax. You will be able to relax, because you'll be experiencing the profit and the purpose that comes from answering the Essential Health needs of your customers and your community.

That's how clubs that we work with continued to produce profit during shut down. How can you *cause Intentional Growth* in your membership?

One method is to add a system to your facility that provides proven and measurable wellness benefits, proven and measurable weight loss results and residual income streams from custom-blended products that customers sign up to purchase. I'd consider this not only a system with a solution, *I'd consider this a*



Donna Krech

*perfect way to create Intentional Growth.*

Cause *Intentional Growth* so that, by the end of a consultation with someone who specializes in these systems, you already have a plan. If you want to get healthy, you work out your body. You eat and do healthy things. If you want to get your membership growing in a way that will thrive, even during shutdowns, you've got to get the tools you need to make it happen.

With a *Wealth of Wellness* plan, you'll get those tools. You'll get proven marketing tools, based on wellness, to get more members!

We need to be honest with ourselves; time is running out. How much longer can you keep doing everything? It's time to step out of crisis mode and into solution mode. It's time to add the wellness component you know you need to add.

So, before you release for the weekend, really consider this... It's time to act. It's time to thrive, again. It's time to add wellness. We are here to help if you have questions.

**Publisher's Note:** See *Wealth of Wellness' Ad* on Page #9 of This Edition.

*(Donna Krech is the Founder and Owner of Wealth of Wellness, and she can be reached at by phone at 903-277-2709 or email at [Donna@DonnaKrech.com](mailto:Donna@DonnaKrech.com).)*

## Make It Fun!

# National Study Confirms It's Safe To Work Out At The Gym: Current Data Shows No Evidence of COVID-19 Spread in Gyms

**BOSTON, MA** - After analyzing millions of member's check-in data across 2,873 gyms, sports clubs and boutique fitness centers over the course of three months, The International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association (IHRSA) and MXM, a technology and knowledge transfer company specializing in member tracking within the fitness industry, conclusively found that fitness facilities are safe and are not contributing to the spread of COVID-19.

From May 1 through August 6, 2020, IHRSA and MXM closely examined and compared member check-in data (number of gym visits) from a number of fitness facilities, such as Planet Fitness, Anytime Fitness, Life Time, and Orangetheory, across the country with self-reported infection rates. After nearly 50 million check-ins over that three-month period, the study found that a nominal 0.0023% tested positive for COVID-19. Gyms nationwide have robust COVID-19 safety measures in place, and there is zero evidence that the positive cases originated in gyms themselves.

"As recently as a few months ago, the data correlating fitness facility visits and mitigating risk was practically nonexistent. All that's changed, and for the better," said MXM CEO, **Blair McHaney**. "It's become abundantly clear that the safety measures gyms, sports clubs and boutique fitness centers have in place are not only incredibly effective at keeping their membership safe but also curbing any potential spread of COVID-19 during a time when we all need access to exercise facilities to stay healthy."

The fitness industry's only trade association, IHRSA, along with MXM, invited all health and fitness clubs in the United States to participate in the long-form study. Over the course of the study, fitness centers provided their total check-ins and number of locations across all states in which they have a presence as well as self-reported on the total number of positive COVID-19 cases documented between employees and members who have been in the club. MXM previously conducted a study surrounding the lack of concentrated outbreaks in fitness facilities with affirming

results just last month.

"The check-in data proves that health clubs, when following strict cleaning and safety protocols, are safe," said **Brent Darden**, *IHRSA interim President and CEO*. "At IHRSA, we have a responsibility to educate and inform people that they should feel comfortable and confident going into fitness facilities throughout the country right now. The data shows that, with proper sanitization protocols in place, people can safely return to their workout routines. Working out has never been more important to help boost immunity and improve mental health. It's time to acknowledge that gyms are safe."

Access to fitness centers is key to keeping Americans healthy. Physical activity plays an important role in not only maintaining a healthy immune system but reducing COVID-19 risk factors, such as obesity, heart disease, lung disease and diabetes. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) notes that 42.4% of U.S. adults and approximately 18.5% of children and adolescents in

America are considered obese. Physical fitness has long-term mental health benefits as well, including reducing the risk of stress and depression. Notably, one in five Americans experience mental health illness, and people with mental illness have 40% higher risk of developing cardiovascular and metabolic diseases than the general population.

"Fitness centers are needed now more than ever to help us stay active and maintain a healthy immune system," added **Robert Sallis, M.D.** with Kaiser Permanente. "COVID-19 risk factors haven't changed since the pandemic began; obesity, heart disease, lung disease and diabetes put you at much higher risk for both short- and long-term complications. It's imperative that we all make real change now to stay healthy given that exercise is an essential part of life."

For additional details on the study and how the fitness industry is committed to keeping its members safe, healthy and moving, visit [IHRSA.org](http://IHRSA.org).

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# FROM FOOD TO FITNESS

## Aaron Davis's story...

Aaron is a serial entrepreneur and experienced multi-unit franchisee, owning 17 Little Caesars. He was looking for an opportunity to diversify his portfolio and has always been a fitness nut, so branching out into the fitness franchise segment was the logical next step. Food service operators know firsthand the challenges of the restaurant industry, which include high labor costs, extensive employee turnover and skyrocketing operating costs. Aaron was very impressed with the ease of operations and the need for only 3-4 employees to operate the club. After speaking with Workout Anytime franchisees, he was equally impressed that 73% own multiple units. Aaron leaned on Workout Anytime's proven franchise model to 'hit the ground running' and opened two locations within one year with a third on the way. Workout Anytime has more than tripled their club count over the past 5 years and have averaged 38% growth in new club openings.

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