

Norm Cates'
CLUB INSIDERTM
The "Pulse" of the Health, Racquet, and Sports Club Industry
Established 1993



Linda Fondren, Shape Up Sisters Founder, Winning the Vicksburg Weight Battle

Linda Fondren

Instituting The Local Shape Up

OCTOBER 2010

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Linda Fondren

Instituting The Local Shape Up

By: Justin Cates

From time to time, adversity can strike and change one's life. Sometimes, that change is for the better, if the difficulty of that time motivates someone to achieve better things. And sometimes, that change can be much worse if the difficulty prevents the ability to move on. Arguably, one's ultimate test in life is how true adversity is handled when it strikes. Several years ago, Linda Fondren met adversity when her sister, Mary Washington, passed away from cancer. Ultimately, obesity was a contributing factor. Maybe it wasn't the deciding factor, but it greatly affected the life lived by Mary. Her final words to Linda were, "I wish I had lived my life more for myself," and as you will see, those words and the difficulty of that time have motivated Linda to fight for the betterment of the lives of women in her community: Vicksburg, Mississippi. In her fight, she is truly helping those local women live their lives more for themselves.

In order to understand the change Linda has affected in others' lives, there are actually two stories to be told. They are both great in their own right and could be shared separately. Together, though, the full story of what she has achieved in her community can lend lessons to other club owners and operators wanting to make a true difference in their

communities. At the very least, it can certainly grant new motivation in continuing the mission of helping others in the health and fitness clubs of our industry.

The first part of Linda's story is that of her women's-only health and fitness club, Shape Up Sisters. It's opening only six months after the death of her sister is a testament to the love she had for her sister and the commitment to the goal of helping make other women's lives better. The second part of the story is that of a weight loss challenge called Shape Up Vicksburg that she proposed to her community. Though getting results by reaching out to women in the community through Shape Up Sisters, she wanted to extend that reach even more. The goal of the challenge was for the community to lose 17,000 pounds in 17 weeks. That may not sound like much for a town of 55,000 people, but as Linda will share, it's all about baby steps that result in a long-term commitment to change. A healthy life is not a sprint; it is a marathon.

The story of Linda Fondren has caught the eye of both local and national press, from the Vicksburg Post to CNN, ABC, CBS Evening News with Katie Couric, CNN, Essence Magazine and Glamour Magazine. Though by no means her original goal, she is now a Finalist for CNN's HERO of the Year Award. Originally nominated out of a field of 10,000, she is now vying

for the award in a field of only ten, another amazing accomplishment. It is the cherry on top of what she has already accomplished in such a short time, and it has brought national attention to the successful ways in which she is battling the national epidemic of obesity at the local level. Only within our local communities can obesity be beaten. In the end, it will not be top-down change that kills the beast, but instead, from the bottom-up with club owners and operators whose goal it is to help others live better, more healthy, lives.

We hope you find the story of Linda Fondren inspiring, and even more, hope you find the takeaways suitable for use in your own facilities and communities where appropriate. With that, we are pleased to present the story of Linda Fondren as she institutes the "Local Shape Up."

An Interview With Linda Fondren

CLUB INSIDER (C.I.) - Please tell our readers about yourself. Where are you from? Where did you go



Linda Fondren, Founder of Shape Up Sisters

to school? Are you married? If so, do you have any children?

born and raised in Vicksburg, Mississippi and went to school

Linda Fondren (LF) - I was

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Norm's Notes

•**Hello Everybody!** This is your **CLUB INSIDER Publisher** and **Tribal Leader Since 1993** checking in with **Monthly Edition #202!** Hold on to your hats for another **blockbuster issue!** Our cover story, by **JUSTIN CATES**, features a truly great American success story about **LINDA FONDREN**, owner of the **Shape Up Sisters Health Club** in **Vicksburg, Mississippi**. You're going to love what you hear from Linda and her Team, and I believe you'll find this report very beneficial to your club in the areas of weight loss programming and community trust and relationship building. Also in this issue, **WILL PHILLIPS** weighs in with **Step 13** of his **15-part Series, Fifteen Steps to Paradise**; **JEFFREY KELLER** writes about **Member RETENTION**; **CASEY CONRAD** weighs in with **Part I** of her series, **Why Every Club Operator Should Be Using Internet Marketing**, a precursor to her upcoming new book on internet marketing; **Visual Fitness Planner's** **MICHAEL SENA** writes about successful personal training best practices; **DONNA KRECH** previews this month's **Thin&Healthy**

Total Solution client video success stories (available at www.clubinsideronline.com); **JIM THOMAS** writes about increasing membership sales; and **SANDY COFFMAN** writes about club programming. Plus, we have the hottest news out of the **Club Industry Show** in Chicago right here in these **Norm's Notes**. Also, check out www.clubinsideronline.com/clubindustry2010 for our **Club Industry 2010 Slide Show!**

•**Is America a great country or what? Hmm... hmm... hmm!** If you do anything on **November 2nd**, please make your **#1 priority** that day to get out and vote, and please, between then and now, urge all your friends to show up at the polls! **Get out and vote! God bless America!**

•I'm happy to report that the **Club Industry Conference and Trade Show** was terrific this year and the **first day** of the trade show was busier than it's been in the last few years. The **second day** of the Trade Show, however, was a **different story**, and I'll tell you why in a second. First, let me mention that Club Industry's choice of the **House of Blues** for

the **Opening Reception** was, in my opinion, the best site choice ever! Now, to my explanation of why the second day of the Trade Show was a **different story**... That's because the Club Industry folks (like the IHRSA folks have been doing for the last 15 years) scheduled educational seminars in the afternoon during the same hours as the trade show on both days. You cannot be two places at the same time. So, naturally, the club owners chose to go to the conference seminars, which they had paid to attend, and many of them skipped the second day of the trade show. This is more than unfair to the Club Industry (and IHRSA suppliers and manufacturers) who support the Club Industry and IHRSA Trade Shows. Both Trade Shows have now been set up to be two-day events, wisely dropping what I used to call the "**wasted Saturdays**." If one day is well attended, and one day is not, because of the time competition from the seminars, what are the vendors or manufacturers going to do? Many of them are going to start to think long and hard about taking space in either Trade Show in the future, when the only day the trade show traffic is really decent is the first day. So folks, I'm going to offer a solution for both Club Industry and IHRSA. And then, I'm going to make a prediction.

My Solution: Both events need to look closely at their conference seminar schedules and eliminate the speakers who're there just to sell their services and products,

instead of sharing their expertise. Cutting back in this way would free up a lot of the afternoon hours for people to attend the trade show.

I Predict: Should such action not be taken soon, within five years, or less, the economic benefits of trade shows to Club Industry and IHRSA vendors and manufacturers will be gone with the wind. When this loss of the economic benefit happens, the trade shows will ultimately disappear. Frankly, I truly hope I am dead wrong. But, I see what I see, and I have an obligation to our entire industry to report it, whether it's good news or bad. **Stay Tuned!**

•**Congratulations to CURT BEUSMAN, Ph.D. a/k/a "Brother Beusman"** on his **Club Industry Lifetime Achievement Award** on **October 7th** in Chicago at the **Club Industry Show**. After receiving the beautiful trophy from Club Industry Magazine Editor, **PAMELA KUF AHL**, Curt flashed back in time to the days when he preached his **10 Commandments of Health Club Operations**, and he had the crowd in stitches. I can only say that I've been blessed to know and learn from Curt and his lovely wife, the late **JANE BEUSMAN** (May Jane Rest In Peace), and our industry has been blessed to have Curt as one of its greatest leaders! I'm also happy to announce that the cover story for our **November Edition** will feature Curt Beusman,



Norm Cates

and we'll get back into his mind for some experiences and situations not covered by **Club Industry Magazine's** **STUART GOLDMAN's** excellent article. So, **STAY TUNED!**

•**Thanks to BIG JOHN McCARTHY** as he passed on some good news to me that **Augie's Quest** has helped make progress with a new drug that appears to slow down the progression of the disease. Check out the following link for comments from **AUGIE NIETO's** lovely wife, **LYNNE NIETO**: www.youtube.com/watch?v=K5E11da010.

God bless you Augie and Lynne!

•Just a couple of months since **Planet Fitness partners, MIKE and MARC GRONDAHL** and **CHRIS RONDEAU**, walked away from over **\$100 Million** for a minority stake in their business, **Planet Fitness's CFO, JAYNE CONWAY**, announced that they've arranged a loan of \$40 million with **GE Capital** for expansion and have the capability, if needed, to bump it to \$50 million. Planet Fitness has also launched a new ad campaign targeting "normal" people seeking fitness. The ads feature a couple of major league muscle head guys, and naturally, they were used to reinforce Planet Fitness' long standing "No Judgment Zone" Policy. Check out these funny ads at www.clubinsideronline.com/planetfitness.

•**You could have fooled me!** All of these 25 or 30 years, I thought **RICHARD** (See *Norm's Notes* Page 6)



Alan Schwartz (L) and Curt Beusman Visit at Club Industry

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18 Years and Counting - Edition #202

CLUB INSIDER is published by Cates Media, LLC. in Marietta, Georgia. Those wishing to reproduce any portion of this publication may do so, provided it is not for resale in other publications. Reprints for commercial use are available for a fee by request.

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PRINTING AND MAILING SERVICES - Walton Press
www.waltonpress.com

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...Norm's Notes

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SIMMONS was silly... that is until his **October 7th** keynote speech at **Club Industry**. Right after **Brother CURT BEUSMAN** received his great honor, Simmons showed himself as being **truly real**. Congratulations Richard on a very *entertaining and illuminating* presentation. *Entertaining*, as you recruited *Under-30 people, Successful Weight Loss People, Big and Strong People* and others to come up on the stage for your little mini-group exercise sessions. *Illuminating* because you, with *tears in your eyes*, truly exposed the essence of your life struggles with obesity, how you fought back and how you've survived to go on and literally help millions of people by this time in your life.

Perhaps the most *illuminating* comment you made, Richard, was when you said, "I do not care if you are laughing *AT ME* or if you are laughing *WITH ME*. I just care that you are *laughing and having fun!*" Brother, take this from another human who's *fought his weight all of his life and who understands what you've been through and continue to go through*. You hit the nail on the head with your heartfelt presentation, and anybody in that room who was not moved to realize what we should be *thinking and doing in our clubs* was in a coma while you were speaking. **God bless you, Richard Simmons!**

• **IHRSA's 30th Anniversary Convention and Trade Show** is coming up in **San Francisco, March 16-19th, 2011**. **IHRSA's**

30th Anniversary Yearbook is also coming! **JAY ABLONDI, IHRSA's Executive Vice President of Global Products**, announced that **IHRSA** will produce a **30th Anniversary Yearbook**, and everybody is invited to participate! Check out www.ihrsa.org/yearbook, and be sure to take the time to fill out the online form so you'll be included in the yearbook that will be distributed to all registered **IHRSA 2011 Convention Attendees**. **Exhibitor Companies will also receive a complimentary copy**. All others will be able to purchase the yearbook on site. The deadline is **November 30, 2010!**

• **Congratulations to ALAN, RONNIE and STEVE SCHWARTZ** in Chicago, as on **October 16th**, they celebrated the **40th Anniversary** of their **Midtown Athletic Club**, formerly known as the **Midtown Tennis Club!** Alan has served the **USTA** for years and has served as a **Board Member and Chairman**. Alan told me that several tennis industry luminaries would be in attendance at their big **40th Anniversary Party**, including **BUD COLLINS, BRAD GILBERT, PAM SHRIVER and PATRICK MCENROE**. Great seeing you at **Club Industry, Alan!**

• **Belated Congratulations** to my friends **JOHN and JAN DOYLE**, in **Long Beach, California**, as they celebrated their **30th Anniversary** of business in their **Belmont Athletic Club** in August! Great seeing you at **Club Industry, John!**

• What may be the highest membership dues in America, **\$238 per month, plus court time**, is charged at the **San Francisco Tennis Club**, according to my friend, **LARRY KRIEGER**, who is the **General Manager** of the big club located in downtown **San Francisco!** Looking forward to a visit in March, Larry! It was so nice to see you and **GINNY** in Chicago!

• The cover story for our **June, 2009 Edition** was entitled, "**TRUST!**" The cover story emphasized the importance of the citizens of your community trusting you and your club. We shared ideas on how to build trust and provided some examples of individuals who are great trust builders in our industry, including

RED LERILLE and MIKE MINTON. This month's cover story about **LINDA FONDREN**, owner of **Shape Up Sisters** in the historic little town of **Vicksburg, Mississippi**, is truly a great story of trust building, and you should not miss it. Do take the time to read it and study it. Recently, **CLARK HOWARD**, the talk radio business guru on **WSB 750AM** radio in Atlanta has been extremely hard on our industry, as he has been for many years. One of his latest commentaries was on **September 13th**, and it was about **Bally Total Fitness** refunding membership dues they *allegedly had illegally collected* in Texas. Clark doesn't hold back. Here is a synopsis of Clark Howard's radio show comments, posted to his website (www.clarkhoward.com):

"Bally's to send refunds to 1,000 customers. Bally's Total Fitness has agreed to issue refunds to former customers who wrongfully paid when they received bogus "past due" notices from the health club in the mail.

Texas Attorney General, Greg Abbott, has gotten the health club to agree to refund money for some 1,000 state residents. Rather predictably, Bally's has not admitted any wrongdoing in the whole episode, and in fact, denies any allegations about alleged wrongdoing.

This is a company that has twice filed bankruptcy and still seems to be ripping off customers like it's business as usual. In fact, Clark calls Bally's "**public enemy No. 1**" for his listeners based on the number of complaints he's received about them over the years.

The consumer champ has long trashed the beleaguered health club over their suspect business practices. Bally's is known to use high-pressure sales tactics to get you to buy a membership. Once they have a contract, they do what's called "moving paper." That's where the club sells off the contract to a finance company that will take the paper on and pay them pennies on the dollar. That creates additional incentive for the club to sign up more members and hope none of them ever show up and all try to exercise at once!

There is, of course, a better way for health clubs to do business. It's where you pay month-to-month or quarterly with no real contract. That creates an incentive for the club to help keep you on a healthy regimen so

you'll keep coming back. They win, and you win!

By contrast, Bally's disclosed in a recent SEC filing that the average member visits the club one-half of one time per week. You'd be hard-pressed to find any fitness expert who recommends a workout once every two weeks!

Look around for ultra-low cost, no-frills fitness centers that tend to price out at around \$15/month. But, beware they may not even have showers for you to use; they simply offer the use of exercise equipment at rock-bottom prices."

• Nice to see **MICHAEL SCOTT SCUDDER** at **Club Industry**, and I want to send best wishes to his lovely wife, **PHYLLIS**, as I'm pulling for her and praying for her full recovery from her current medical issue. **Get well and God bless you, Phyllis!**

• **PHIL WENDEL** has announced that his **Atlantic Coast Athletic Clubs (ACAC)** organization is opening a new 57,000 square-foot club in **Richmond, Virginia** in the **West Broad Village**. Congratulations to Phil and his Team as ACAC was honored in Chicago with **Club Industry's Best of the Best Award for Non-Member Programming**. You can also give credit to Phil and his Team, and you can give credit to **The Medical Fitness Association (MFA)** as ACAC was certified by MFA a while ago. Check out the **MFA Ad on Page #24** this month.

• **Congratulations** to the other **2010 Best of the Best Club Industry Award Winners** in Chicago which included:

• **Best Member Appreciation Program - HealthQuest** in Flemington, N.J.;

• **Best Community-based Program - Greenwood Athletic and Tennis Club** in Greenwood Village, CO.;

• **Best New Member Integration Program - Club One Fitness** in Pittsburgh, PA;

• **Best Behavior Modification Program - Chesapeake Energy Fitness Center** in Oklahoma, City, OK;

• **Best Children's Program - Right Fit Sports Fitness Wellness** in Willowbrook, IL.

• **MIKE MOTTA, Plus One Founder, former IHRSA Board** (See Norm's Notes Page 7)

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Member and CLUB INSIDER Cover Story Subject, just keeps on keeping on in New York City! For the fourth consecutive year, Plus One Health Management, Inc. was selected as one of the fastest-growing private companies in the country by Inc. Magazine. Plus One is a leading provider of comprehensive employee wellness solutions.

•Don't miss DONNA KRECH's client video testimonies introduction on Page #25 and online at www.clubinsideronline.com/thinandhealthy.

•It was great to see KAY APLIN, owner of the Family Fitness Center in Lake Jackson, Texas, and her Program Director, KARI

CHUPP, at Club Industry. Kay's been in business for 16 years in Lake Jackson, a Houston, Texas area suburb. She and her staff still seek new knowledge and ideas, and we wish them all the best!

•Sports&Health announced on October 7th that they had acquired the Club Golf Performance Center at its Rio location in Gaithersburg, Maryland. Clubgolf, a year-round performance center focused on a personalized combination of evaluation, fitness training and instruction, shares Sport&Health's mission by striving to improve golfers' game, break bad habits and achieve golf goals through improved fitness techniques.

•Never a dull moment in Chicago during Club Industry 2010! For starters, RAHM

EMANUEL, formerly President Obama's White House Chief of Staff, and now, candidate for Mayor of Chicago, was spotted in the swimming pool at the East Bank Club on Wednesday morning, October 6th. Then, on that same day, a small airplane, with a pilot and passenger on board, crashed into an XSport Fitness Club! Miraculously, neither the occupants of the plane nor the club were killed. And, last but not least, President Obama came to town Thursday night for fundraising, jamming up traffic for everybody. God bless America!

•Well, the obesity battle in America rages on with Rear Admiral, JAIMIE BARNETT (U.S. Navy Retired), recently stating "Obesity rates threaten the overall health of America and the future strength of our military." On top of that, recent studies indicated that obesity costs women \$4,879 per year and men \$2,646 per year in extra medical costs, according to a Cornell University study recently released. DAVE RAMSEY, syndicated financial guru, says, "Obesity is the greatest cause of health problems in America today!" So, it's needless to say that our industry could not be more poised for serious growth... right? WRONG! According to a recent study just released, an amazingly low, and actually unbelievable, 2.5% of the American population actually exercises on a regular basis!

•The very low percentage of 2.5% of the U.S. population who exercise on a regular basis (4 or more times per week) shocked me, and I'd imagine it is shocking to all of you. In fact, I don't really believe it. If it's true, then there are at least two ways to look at it:

1. Our industry has a huge opportunity in front of it, to the tune of 97.5% of the population to attract in the future!

2. Our industry is spinning its wheels and needs to find many new ways to do what we've been doing.

I still say a national door-to-door knocking campaign on the First Saturday of every month is the way to go. By knocking on doors, you can meet Americans who've never been in a health club and invite them, face to face, to come to your clubs. If they don't answer the door, you can leave a printed door hanger on the door

inviting them to come to your club. I dare you to print up some nice glossy door hangers and get out there on the First Saturday of every month, starting at 11AM. You and your people can knock on doors, meet new people and invite them to your club. Let's do something different for a change! This campaign could grow and grow and grow into a huge way for our industry to meet new people and get them into our clubs. Just do it! I dare you! If you take me up on my dare, I invite you to report your results to me at Norm@clubinsideronline.com, and I'll share your experiences with our readers, with or without mentioning your name (your choice).

•I rarely comment on new products in the industry and usually leave that to my glossy friends. However, after the difficulties of Expresso Fitness a little while ago, an opportunity came along and a fellow named JOHN FORD came up with a solution and teamed up with Matrix to bring it to market. The solution: Virtual Active. Virtual Active is a system, like Expresso Fitness, that provides a treadmill or bike or other cardio machine user with a video trek through the countryside or through one of over 20 other terrain scenes. So, Stay Tuned, as Ford and his Team roll this out.

•Well, while I'm on a new product tear, let me tell you about ROY SIMONSON, whose last creation was Ground Zero Free Motion Equipment. He's launched a new line of fitness machines called Resolute PhysioSport, and after viewing the videos shared by industry veteran, HILLIS LAKE, Resolute Eastern Region Sales Director, I'm impressed. Stay Tuned!

•Old friend, RUDY FABIANO told me he's teamed up with Cybex to develop hotel fitness centers. This is from a recent press release provided by Rudy:

MEDWAY, MA - Cybex International, Inc. (NASDAQ: CYBI) announced that it has partnered with Colarossi Consulting and Management and Fabiano Designs to launch Hotel CYBEX, a customizable, high-end, pre-packaged fitness solution created specifically for the full-service and luxury hotel and hospitality markets.

Best of luck to Cybex, Rudy and Glenn Colarossi in this new venture! Additionally, Fabiano Designs, best known for their high-end architecture and interior design work in fitness, spa and sports Clubs, has turned their attention to designing for smaller, budget-minded clients. Anytime Fitness, with a global franchisee of 1,400 locations and counting, recently hired Fabiano Designs to develop their new Brand and Design Manual. Part of the project was to develop an extreme makeover of an existing unit incorporating one of the three color schemes the Franchisee's can choose from. This makeover only had a two-and-a-half week window to be completed, and the budget was less than \$50,000! Fabiano Designs completed the project on time and on Budget.

•LARRY GURNEY's RUSH Fitness Complex has opened its 21st location, and this one is in Dalton, Georgia! Gurney, a previous CLUB INSIDER cover subject, is one of our industry's greatest branders and marketers, and we wish him well as he grows Rush Fitness across the country!

•In Chicago, it was reported to me by a friend that an Urban Active Club in Cincinnati, Ohio had closed. So, I Googled: Urban Active Cincinnati Closing, and boy oh boy, did I get an eye full! If you would like to learn about the real story on Urban Active and what they have been doing for years, just go ahead and Google: Urban Active Cincinnati Closing.

•PETE BROWN's Athletic Business Conference and Trade Show will be held in San Diego, December 2nd-4th. Additionally, the Medical Fitness Association Conference and the ICA Conference will be held simultaneously at the San Diego Convention Center, clearly the best conference location in the United States. As part of the Athletic Business Conference and Expo, the 16th Annual MFA Medical Fitness and Healthcare Conference is the only conference dedicated to the medical fitness industry. Check out the MFA Ad on Page #24.

•Following the lead of Cybex and their Pink Treadmill Campaign to fight Cancer, the folks at LifeCenter Plus in Hudson, Ohio are encouraging (See Norm's Notes Page 8)

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...Norm's Notes

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all their employees to wear specially-designed pink t-shirts or sweatshirts during the month of October to support local breast cancer survivors and to call attention to the need for finding a cure for the disease. October is **National Breast Cancer Awareness Month**. The shirts bear a "Think Pink" logo that was designed by LCP front desk employee, **AMANDA KIRDZIK**.

•Our apologies to **Visual Fitness Planner's SAM LANASA** for misspelling his name last month.

•Don't forget to check out www.clubinsideronline.com/clubindustry2010 for our **Club Industry 2010 Slide Show!**

•God bless our troops, airmen and sailors in the Middle East and around the world as they protect America's freedoms and liberty. **God bless you, your family and your club(s). God bless America!**

(Norm Cates, Jr. is a 36-year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. Cates is the Founder and Publisher of CLUB INSIDER, now in its 18th year of publication. Cates was IHRSA's 1st President, and a Co-founder of the Association with Rick Caro and five others, in 1981. In 2001, IHRSA honored Cates with its DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award, one of its highest honors. Cates may be reached by phone at (770) 850 - 8506 or email at Norm@clubinsideronline.com)

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...Linda Fondren

continued from page 3

here. I have been married to my husband, Jim, for 26 years, soon to be 27 years in December. We have one daughter named Christina.

Shape Up Sisters

C.I. - When did you open your women's-only health club, Shape Up Sisters, and what was the inspiration for doing so?

LF - I opened Shape Up Sisters in June of 2006 to help women like my sister, who passed away when she was just 54. She was less than five feet tall and weighed about 260 pounds. Of course, cancer took her life, but obesity robbed her of really living that life. Her last words to me were, 'Linda, I wish I had lived my life more for myself.' Six months later, I opened up Shape Up Sisters for women like her. She would not go to a traditional gym because she was too big. She was embarrassed, had no confidence and a lack of motivation to exercise.

C.I. - Please tell us about your facility; size in square feet, number of members, differentiating features, etc.

LF - It's a ladies' only facility, especially for those who would not feel comfortable in a traditional gym. One of the things I wanted to do was give it a pleasant atmosphere. It is done in soothing colors of pink, light pink and burgundy. We have a juice bar by Performance Food Group, free lockers, free towel service and of course free fitness classes. More than anything else, I wanted an environment for women looking to lose weight and gain more self confidence. And, I wanted a way for them to pamper themselves, so we have massages, fitness and

nutritional workshops and even bra sizing. All of these amenities help them attain their fitness goals. The square footage is a little over 5,000 square feet, and we have about 600 members.

One of the things I think that separates us a little is what's called, 'We Work Out With You.' We have seven personal trainers, including myself, and fitness motivators, so when women come into the gym, they do not have to work out by themselves. A fitness motivator will work out with them. Most women who come into the gym do not know what they're doing, or even if they are making the best use of their time. Women work one, sometimes two jobs, especially here. So, their time is valuable, and they need to make the best use of it. No matter how many times they come into the gym, we show them how to work the machines and how to properly get their heart rates up because, if you're not doing that, you are wasting your time. I really emphasize that. You really have to get your heart rate up. And, one of the other things that women like is strength training. They want to tone up. We also have Zumba. That's a fun fun class, if you know Zumba. We also offer Group Active, Group Centery and Group Grove by Body Training Systems. We have yoga, weights and striptease on occasion. Women love that one (striptease). They also love Step, Kickboxing and Pilates. Yoga, though, is my favorite. I teach it. When women come to my class, they don't realize they're not flexible. They say, 'Wow, I can't even do that.' And, their balance is off, so that's a great class for them. We have a lot of great classes.

C.I. - On Saturdays, you do something that is simply great...

You open the doors of your club to the community for free so anyone who wants to work out can. Please tell us about this.

LF - The free Saturdays started from the Shape Up Vicksburg challenge. At that time, I went to all the gyms in the community, and I asked them to let the community work out one day a week for free during the 17-week weight loss challenge. They all agreed, which was great, and they also served as weigh-in stations. The challenge was only for 17 weeks, but I continued with the free Saturdays because it was a way to reach and help many more women. With today's bad economy, many simply cannot afford a gym membership. It can help with the hard times. Women come to the gym on Saturdays, and they tell me they feel like someone cares. They tell me it makes them want to do better for themselves.

C.I. - Another great thing you do is personally-lead nutrition classes for your members and then join them on 'field trips' to the grocery store. Please tell us about this.

LF - Shape Up Vicksburg again. I know that nutrition and physical activity go hand-in-hand. I had been looking for something to offer members of the community and at my gym. I had been to seminars, and I came across a program called BodyWorks (www.womenshealth.gov/bodyworks). It was developed by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, and it's designed to help parents improve their family's eating and activity habits. It's such a great thing because what I have always wanted to do with my members is develop them into role models so that they can help someone else. It became a perfect tool to educate the women and the community about nutrition. The program is free to members of my gym and to the community. We give them hands-on tools. I also have a registered dietician that goes with us to the store. What a difference it makes. Women are just elated. They didn't know the difference between a serving size and a portion size, how many calories to take in or how to read a food label.

There is a lot of information out there and trying to understand it all is hard. You have to learn in simple terms. Being in a class with other people with the same problem really helps them with their own problems. So,



Shape Up Sisters Strength Area

that's the nutrition program. It's a perfect opportunity, and I just love this program. We even cook. We have someone that comes in for cooking demonstrations. It's the simple things. For your family, instead of the stuff they eat, we show them simple solutions. It's hands-on, which makes it much more memorable. Right now, I have a waiting list for these classes, and I've just taken this to the school districts. It's a community effort.

C.I. - In a March, 2008 article by the Vicksburg Post, you commented, 'we work out with you; we educate you on exercise and nutrition and, most importantly, we make it fun.' We have talked about the first two, but please elaborate on the final one, 'we make it fun.'

LF - When I talk to most people, exercise is 'bad word.' They see it as another form of stress, which is really really bad because it's supposed to be something you

(See Linda Fondren Page 12)

Comments From Member, Evelyn Weaver

Since my second child was born, I have struggled for over 20 years with my weight. I tried everything, all the different diets because it worked on the commercials, but I was always disappointed with the results. I have always tried to eat right, and I have always exercised, but the results were always the same; weight off for a little while and then back on. At one time, I had gotten up to 160 pounds after a surgery, and the weight would not come off. Imagine how that felt. I always stayed down on myself. I had no self confidence. I never thought I was pretty enough. I would not go out because I thought people would be staring at me and saying, "Look at her." I would watch what I ate in restaurants, so people would not think I was a pig. I never felt sexy enough. I was never really happy with myself.



Evelyn Weaver

I joined Shape up Sisters, and at the end of February 2009, after many days in the gym and a boot camp, I had lost 15 pounds and 11 1/2 inches. I struggle every day with my weight because it is an ongoing process, but every day, it seems to get a little easier. I wanted to participate in Shape Up Vicksburg because I am proof of what sticking with a program and having people like Linda and her staff motivating you all the time can do. I am 137 pounds, and still in my size 8, instead of my size 12 one year later.

I have the support of my family and the staff of Shape Up Sisters always encouraging me. With all that, how can a person not stay motivated? If one woman can learn from my experience, then she too will know what it is like to feel good about themselves.



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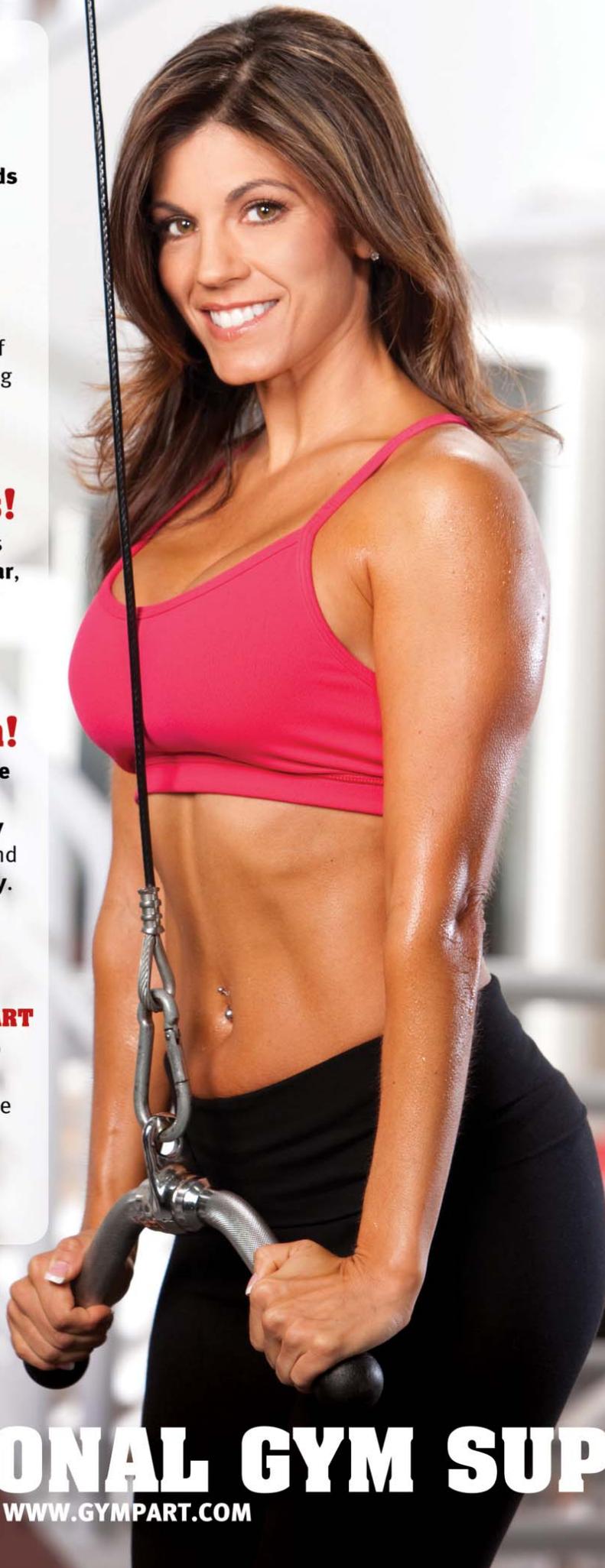
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...Linda Fondren

continued from page 10

don't have to think about. So, we make it a social environment. When you come in from your day of work, you are able to come in, have a conversation and stay around. We let the members talk. We also have great uplifting music, with everything from Hip-Hop to Country to Motown. The classes are fun. My instructors are fun. We are not a gym where 'you have to do this' and everything is monotone. We are absolutely excited and overly passionate. My staff knows that it's about friendliness and fun. The women are coming in from a stressful day, so we make them laugh. We do silly things, and we have them do silly things when they are working out. They laugh; they just love to laugh. So, we make it fun. Many people think exercise is boring, so when you have them doing things like Zumba or the Merengue and the Cha Cha Cha, they really get into it. They've seen *Dancing With The Stars*, and they all want to do that. We offer a lot of encouragement, too, so they will participate in activities. Take balance, which I teach. The women are trying to balance, and then, they are kind of tipping over and catching their balance. They are laughing, but they are determined to get there.

Shape Up Vicksburg

C.I. - When and how did your mission to 'Shape Up Vicksburg' begin? What were the results?

LF - It came about from observing the members of Shape Up Sisters. As part of membership, we analyze each member's body composition. We get their weight, BMI, % of fat, fat free muscle, etc. This is a computer print out, so

they get a copy. We keep a copy, and once a month, they come in and do the same thing to know where they are. In analyzing this, I realized that many women did not know they were obese. Part of the problem is that being overweight is so common place that it is 'normal.' When you are in an environment where everyone looks like you, you think that it's normal. But, when you actually have measurements taken, you find out that you are actually overweight or obese. This is shocking to women. Women start expressing this when working out. 'You know, it would nice if I could get the help of my husband,' or, 'You know, my child is nine years old, and she is three times a normal weight.'

So, I knew I needed to reach more people in the community. Last October, I challenged the community to lose 17,000 pounds. They had to do that within 17 weeks, but what it was really about was taking baby steps. I only asked them to lose half a pound. Well, first, stop the weight gain, then lose only half a pound. They did well. The community lost 15,000 pounds, and I was so happy with that. When I started it and announced it on radio, television and went around challenging the community, my telephone was ringing off the hook. People in the community were asking how to sign up. It was unbelievable. They wanted to be better, but they just did not have the tools or opportunities to do it. Then, people started losing weight and invited friends to join them. That's one of the things I said, 'Get a friend.' They are the extra motivation to keep you going. People got committed, which is exactly what I wanted to see happen. I have many stories of

people who have dropped weight. Some may have only dropped five pounds, but as you know, some weight dropped is better than none.

Shape Up Vicksburg was really about encouraging and challenging a community to get better. When we come together and help each other, I think we can be successful. We proved it. We lost 15,000 pounds, and this whole community came together. The State of Mississippi, over and over, has been the most obese state. We have held that title for so long. Another thing is we are number one in high blood pressure, diabetes and a lack of physical activity. We are very sedentary here. Nowadays, it's reinforced with the growing rate of obesity in children. That is why communities must come together and help one another. It can be done when we all work together.

C.I. - Please tell us about the different components you and local businesses provide to participants to help them achieve their goals.



Linda Fondren Leads Shape Up Vicksburg Warmup

LF - I went to a number of places. I went to elected officials, churches, restaurants, civic groups, businesses like Wal-Mart and Kroger, our local hospital and medical centers, and the casinos and asked all of them to be partners. They all jumped at the opportunity. This was a community effort. No one put money into it. They put their time, their effort, their employees, and

everybody worked together to make it happen. This was the way it had to happen. It had to be the community coming together to do it.

The 17,000-pound weight loss challenge actually ended in February, but I extended it to reach a lot more people. We added a walking club and more nutritional education. It is more than a weight loss challenge.

(See **Linda Fondren Page 14**)

Comments From Trainer, Trophia Robinson

CLUB INSIDER (C.I.) - I'm told you were a member of Shape Up Sisters before becoming a trainer. Please tell us about the results you saw in yourself as a member and why you decided to become a trainer.

Trophia Robinson (TR) - I was actually not a member of Shape Up Sisters at first. I decided to train on my own before becoming part of the Shape Up Sisters family. With the help of a physical therapist and a registered nurse at a local center in Port Gibson, I was taught about proper nutrition and how to exercise effectively. I dedicated myself to working out five days per week for at least an hour per day. Within a month, the scale slowly began to drop. I finally became the person that I wanted to be inside and out. Within months, I decided that I, too, could help people who are struggling with their weight by telling them my story and my struggles. This is when I became part of the Shape Up Sisters family as a part-time aerobics instructor. I wanted people to know that, with hard work and dedication, they could become the person they want to be. This is my sole reason for becoming a fitness instructor and trainer.



Trophia Robinson

C.I. - Having been in the 'member's shoes,' how does being able to relate to them in terms of losing weight and becoming fit for the long-term help you in training them?

TR - It has really helped me be able to relate to people. When someone says, 'I can't do it,' I always tell them about how I used to be, and then, they see me in a whole new light. I am more compassionate and caring toward obese people because I know what it feels like. I know how it feels to be viewed as fat or overweight! It has truly helped me become the best trainer I can be.

C.I. - What is the greatest challenge of being a personal trainer?

TR - My greatest challenge is getting people to see that losing weight has to be a lifestyle change! Most people just want this overnight fix, but it is heartbreaking to see them give up and slip back into old habits of overeating and not working out. It is really discouraging to see them step on the scale after having worked so hard to see either one pound or no weight loss at all. Then, I have to go through the counseling aspect and let them know that weight loss takes time. You have to incorporate healthy meal plans and exercise to achieve the desired weight loss.

C.I. - Conversely, what is greatest reward for being a personal trainer?

TR - My greatest reward is to see the smiles on their faces when they do the unthinkable, whether it be completing an entire boot camp, losing weight, increasing their endurance or just achieving the overall fitness results that I promised them they would achieve.



Linda Fondren Leads a Walk Through Vicksburg



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...Linda Fondren

continued from page 12

What I want people to take away from this is that this is a life transformation challenge. I continue to seek the help of our hospitals. They still come out and do free health screenings. That is what is so important. People need information about where they are. They do not know their cholesterol or their blood pressure is that high. Even our Mayor, Police Department, the Sherriff and Fire Department are here. They are at the walks. This is good because the community gets to see that they are supported by elected officials and community leaders. Also, our walks are to places the participants didn't know existed. On our last walk, we walked on brick-lined streets, went by beautiful homes and even our historic courthouse. We have walked along side and over our Mississippi River, which people just drive by. People learn to love their community and to love themselves. It just gives you that 'feel-good' so you want to do better. That's the aim of what we are doing now. It's a life transformation

challenge, and we are giving them the tools and opportunities to make positive changes.

C.I. - You were recently one of 10,000 people nominated for CNN's HERO Award, and now, you're one of ten people who are the finalists for the Award that will be given in Hollywood on Thanksgiving Day. What does this mean to you?

LF - Well, I feel someone is paying attention, and I am extremely honored. This challenge got the attention of the local press, national press and international press, but I also think that we are all heroes when we are responsible, I really do. We are heroes when we serve as role models to help each other. I just think that's so important. I also think it's important to be a community standing together, because these are tough times.

C.I. - Obesity is a national epidemic, but it can only truly be fought at the local level with 'battlefield generals' such as yourself. What message or advice would you share with other club owners who are fighting to save their communities from the

obesity epidemic so that they may see success in that battle?

LF - Gyms really need to focus on the 80% of the population who don't go to one. We need to focus more on education about exercise, and I also think there needs to be more weight loss programs focused on prevention. We need to make exercise a permanent solution. We need to market that. You don't just start it and stop it. We need to focus on talking about ways to help make exercise permanent. We also need to get more involved in communities. We need to reach out to schools, businesses, the medical community, elected officials, and we need to talk about how gyms can help fight obesity. There are communities with no safe places for children to play or adults to walk, jog or ride a bike. A gym can provide a safe environment and offer all the programs I already mentioned. I think that gyms should focus more on the communities because they are part of these communities.

C.I. - Your club is an IHRSA Member Club. How long ago did you join IHRSA and why? How has your membership in IHRSA

helped you as a club owner?

LF - I joined IHRSA back in 2007. I was new to the fitness world and wanted to educate myself. I went to fitness seminars, but IHRSA had information, tools, ideas and strategies. That's what I needed to grow. I even participated in *I Lost It At The Club* twice. That was so much fun for our gym. I had gym bags and t-shirts made, and it was so great. I feel like IHRSA is a personal lobbyist for me. It's researching and analyzing the tools that I need to make my gym a success. So, I love IHRSA. I go on their website all the time looking for new ideas.

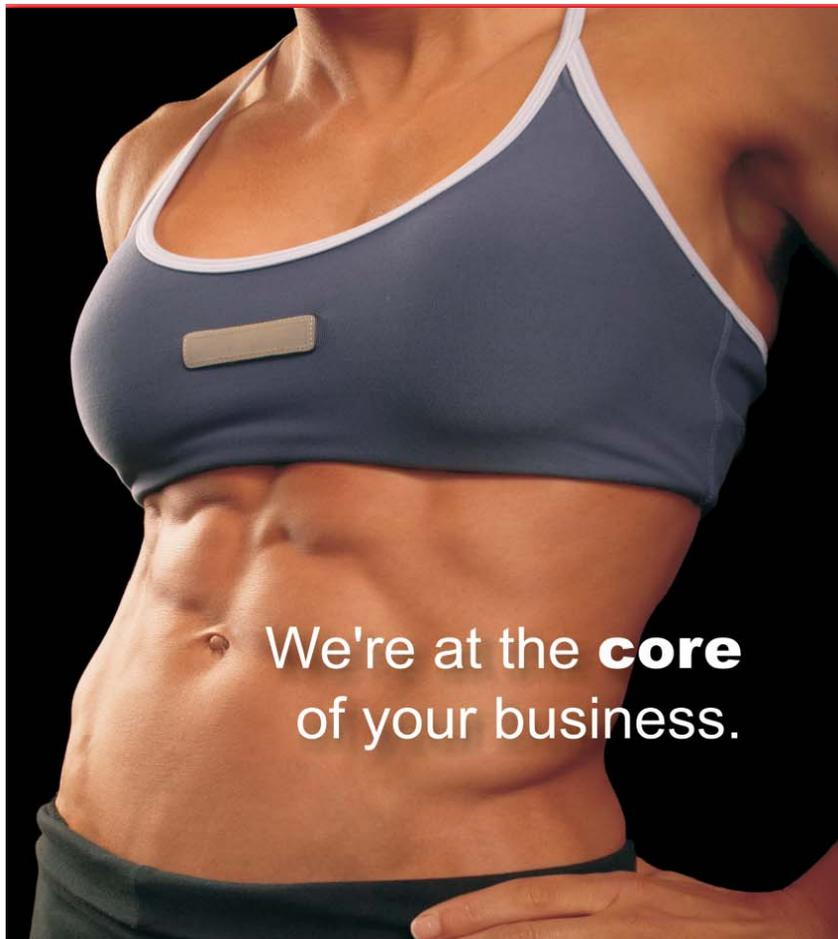
C.I. - Looking forward to the future, what would you like to accomplish?

LF - I'd like to have more programs out there that educate communities about exercise. I think exercise is really the key. I would like to have more gyms in the community giving back and showing how they can make a difference. With Shape Up Vicksburg, I want a healthy future based on exercise as prevention. I think exercise is such an important component.

• • •

We hope you found the story of Linda Fondren and what she is doing in Vicksburg, Mississippi to combat obesity inspiring. We also hope it provided a plethora of ideas you can employ in your own clubs. A special thanks to Linda for her time, making this article possible, as well as to others who contributed. To vote for Linda to receive CNN's HERO Of The Year Award, go to www.cnnheroes.com.

(Justin Cates is the President and Assistant Publisher of CLUB INSIDER and grew up in the health, racquet and sports club industry. Justin was born into a club business family in 1985 and from the age of eight, he spent his non-school and sports hours in a home which doubled as CLUB INSIDER Headquarters. He has lived and breathed this industry for 25 years, since his own day one. Now, he is an integral part of the "Story" of Norm Cates and CLUB INSIDER. Justin may be reached by phone at (770) 595 - 6086 or email at Justin@clubinsideronline.com)



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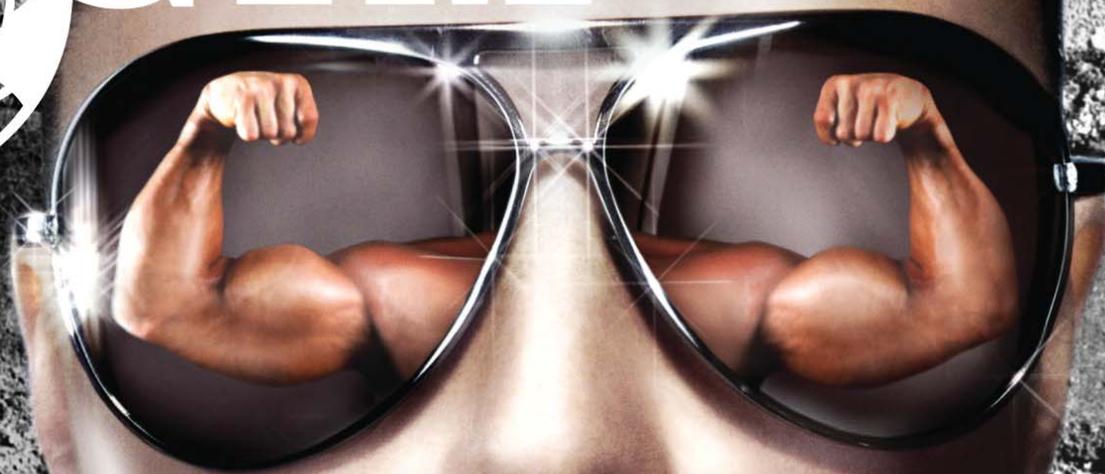
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3 Guaranteed Ways To Make Sure Your PT Department Makes Money!

By: Michael A. Sena

Part I Recruit & Hire Properly

In the following series of articles, I will present three key ways to guarantee your Personal Training Department will make money, as well as some action steps for you to follow. When done correctly, these steps will not only insure greater profits, but they will help reduce staff turnover, increase company morale and

produce steady cash flow that can carry your facility even during tough economic times.

One of the biggest mistakes I have seen over the years within the personal training industry has been when club owners and/or personal training directors recruit and hire the wrong people! When I say this, it's because I have witnessed PT departments who've often hired a "trainer" who can merely "fog a mirror," show a pulse just to fill a position and meet an

immediate need, or even, so that they can check it off of their to do list as soon as possible. Many of the candidates that operators end up interviewing may indeed have the scientific credentials (certificates and or degrees in the PT field), and many of them will even say that they have lots of PT experience (Training your buddies back in High School and/or your Uncle Louie, by itself, does not qualify for experience). Additionally, many of the candidates will even say that they "love" sales! "Yeah, no problem, I can sell ice to an Eskimo." Well, since we aren't in the ice business, but rather the service business of getting our members fit and healthy, I would want to eventually put that to the test!

Hiring a personal trainer correctly takes hard work, and the first step starts with recruiting candidates through the right channels. Reliable referrals are always a good source, as well as generating qualified candidates from well-written advertisements or internet postings that tell your future employees *exactly* what you are looking for in them, and specifically, what your company's *production expectations* are. You can't be vague here, and you are not just looking to generate leads in this process. In my opinion, you cannot simply convert a PT lead into a good trainer, like you can convert a sales lead into a good client. It just doesn't work that way with personal trainers, partly because we have all seen so many candidates just looking for part-time work, or to make some extra cash, or even, because they have nice looking biceps and think they are destined for greatness as a personal trainer. Candidates like these will not help your business grow the way you need because they aren't going to be around for long. They will end up giving you too few hours in the day to generate high level production, which is what you need from your trainers. Now, don't get me wrong, part-time trainers are vital to every PT department, but only in the right balance. 70-80% of your personal trainers should be full-time (30 billable hours/week plus), and the balance, part-time.

This is best to serve the client/member's schedule, which is your first priority, as well as keep your service consistent with your members, trainers and business for sustained profitability.

You must be clear with your communication and to the point when recruiting and hiring trainers. This will help get you more of a *qualified candidate*, one who wants to be in the business as a career, not a pit stop. Unlike so many other businesses, personal training does have a vocational core to a large degree. Years ago, when I first started as a trainer, it was because I wanted to help people get results like I was getting for myself. You should look for the same when hiring for your department. Once you think you have those qualified candidates and their resumes in your pipeline, then move to the next step, which is a telephone interview. Have pre-determined questions that are focused on getting the answers you need and not just what you want to hear. There is a difference. I always try to interview over the phone first to screen and qualify along the way. Remember, be clear and specific to what you are looking for and let them know you are only hiring candidates that will fit the bill. Qualify, Qualify, Qualify! Get rid of the dead wood right away.

Once the phone interview goes well by your standards, the next step is the in-person interview. Here, you will review the candidate's previous telephone interview and can ask some additional questions as well. Also, observe how they carry themselves. Do they dress like a "Pro" or a "Joe?" Are they chewing gum while talking to you, and are their pants hanging half way down? If you like what you hear and see with the candidate at this point, it is a good time to introduce other staff members to the candidate to see what they think. Making a group decision is often better than just one person making this crucial hire by themselves. But, make sure everyone is on the same page regarding the criteria you are looking for. If all goes well, the next step is the practical exam.

Here, the candidate takes you out on the floor to show you how they perform certain exercises and movements and to make sure they know how to exercise and use the equipment properly (Have key selected exercises and movements prepared on a form with an area to take notes and rate them from 1-10). Then, you want to *listen* and *observe* how they explain and demonstrate the movements/operate the equipment. Do they really know exercise science, and do they actually know how to exercise and work out properly themselves? Are they a potential risk to injure your members, and can you trust them with Mrs. Jones?

Remember: It takes months, and sometimes years, to gain a new member... and only minutes to lose them. Do your homework to save your members.

Finally, as part of the final step, you also want to see how much ice they can sell if your membership base is heavy with Eskimos in need of ice... if you know what I mean. Ask them to approach you on a cardio machine and see if they can strike up a conversation with you about fitness, or at least to see if they can establish some immediate rapport. Also, role play a situation where you want the candidate to present a sensible PT program to you based on specific goals. If you have gotten to this point of the interview process, performing this last step is a must, or you may end up hiring the wrong candidate for sure. Put them in the hot seat right away and see if you are going to be able to make money with the candidate and their abilities right out of the box, or not. How much training and developing will they need? Can you afford that time and investment? These are crucial questions that you must ask and answer before hiring any candidate. Otherwise, as the expression goes, "they will die on the vine."

If you are in business to have your trainers make a consistent living at your facility, (See *Michael Sena Page 21*)



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"I Paid Off My Investment In The First Two Weeks AND Had Money In The Bank!"

Before I got involved with Thin&Healthy's Total Solution, we were the biggest club in town, with a big overhead and a lot of employees. This facility has been here over 20 years and in that time, we've gotten more and more competition.

We were worried about a complex coming in and in one of the nearby cities, that's just what happened. We knew we had to do something to kick up our numbers. With a new club opening up on every corner, it's hard to raise rates, so we realized we had to go another route. That's when we looked at Thin&Healthy's Total Solution. It gave us the opportunity to keep the rates up high. In fact, we were able to double our dues without actually having to raise the rates.

Before Thin&Healthy's Total Solution, we charged standard dues of \$39/mo. Our expenses kept going up but we couldn't raise our rates because of all of the competition. We couldn't compete with the price the smaller clubs were charging.

We'd try to kick our prices up but people wouldn't join because the smaller club down the street was charging \$35/mo. Our area only has a population of 25,000 people and no one was going to pay much more than \$35/mo for a fitness membership.

We needed something that could raise our dues without raising our dues. We needed some kind of profit center that would bring in money. We invested \$10,000 for a license and \$50,000 on building a juice bar. It did well, it just wasn't raising the income level we were looking for.

We knew weight loss was the direction we needed to go. We had members who've been here 20 years with the same 30 pounds to lose. We made deals with dietitians to come in. It was very popular as a member benefit/retention tool, but it didn't generate any income and it didn't impact member results as we'd hoped.

When we first looked at Thin&Healthy's Total Solution and saw the numbers, I was a bit reluctant because the numbers looked too good. It was very impressive and my first thought was, "It's never going to happen. I can't charge those kinds of prices in Benton Arkansas. We've tried to get over the \$100/mo mark in fitness for years. It won't happen." I was really skeptical that people would pay that much money for weight loss.

It took me a while to take the plunge but it exceeded everything I thought it could do and now I believe the numbers. One of the best things that happened as a result of Thin&Healthy's Total Solution is something I wasn't even told about, which is what my club has gained from it.

Our personal training went off the charts. Taking the systems Thin&Healthy's Total Solution has taught us and doing the 2-point presentation instead of selling them a \$39 membership, we're selling 2 programs at a time like personal training and boot camps. We're getting \$100-\$120 memberships in fitness now, even if they don't buy weight loss. We're getting better quality memberships, the members are happier and they're getting more results.

When everyone else was struggling during tough economic times, we were booming. It makes a big difference when you are getting \$100/mo (or more!) over \$39/mo.

Return on investment? We signed up so many people during the first 2 weeks that I made my money back. We didn't do any marketing, we only sold directly to our members we already had. We charged a large enrollment fee and we charged a discounted monthly rate to get people in.

We closed 97% of our presents and 100% of them bought a starter kit so each person wrote a check for \$250 a piece! Our drafts went up and our up-front money went up too. I just wish I would have done it when I started looking into it, instead of putting it off. I'd have been making this easier money a whole lot longer.

In the 20 years we've been here, we've seen that most of the people who walk in our club want weight loss. If you don't offer weight loss in your club, your members will go somewhere else for it. X

GLENDA PIGUE,
of Fitness Unlimited

The systems we learned from Thin&Healthy's Total Solution doubled and even tripled our dues... even if the member didn't buy weight loss!



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Execution

Step Thirteen in the Series: Fifteen Steps to Paradise

By: Will Phillips

A plan without execution will not succeed. A solution without implementation will not solve the problem. Successful organizations not only have a great mission and plan, but they also have the systems and discipline to get things done. Too many clubs seek new solutions when their salvation and success may lie in executing what they already know.

Good execution requires a sense of urgency. The notion of investing for the future can become a trap. This is not to say that the company does not take time to plan, but it clearly recognizes that execution is fundamental to its success and is wary of spending too much time planning. Put another way, planning is always going on in the minds of the leaders, who both see the big picture and engage in the day-to-day. Or, adopt the mantra, "plan at night and execute all day." Delays or failures in execution because more time is needed to plan or think is a typical bureaucratic rationale to avoid all risk. As Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan say in their book *Execution*, "we do not think ourselves into a new way of acting; we act our way into a new way of thinking."

The Leader's Role

Since leaders get the

behavior they exhibit and tolerate, it's helpful to know the leadership qualities that foster execution with no excuses.

1. You must really know how things get done, from the bottom to the top. Be engaged at every level. Work with managers and alongside the managers. Engage the workers. And, do all this without micro-managing, but rather, ask, listen, coach, appreciate and encourage. Do this in a way that helps people understand the business.
2. Set high expectations of yourself and others. Make your goals and their goals clear and simple, three or four at the most. Tell the workers what results you expect. Then, explain how their results fit with the overall goals of the organization. Discuss how to get the results, helping the workers come up with efficient and effective work processes.
3. Track the results with timely data which is widely shared so everyone knows the score and their score.
4. Use rewards and appreciation for the people-producing results. Coach those who come up short or give them other jobs or let them go. Hanging on to non-performers lowers the standard for the whole club.

5. Be honest with yourself and

insist on honesty from others. The worst thing is denial. Make sure that managers know that the consequences of not telling the truth will be worse than telling the truth. Be open to discussions of weaknesses and failures without defensiveness and blaming.

6. Think about failure, before it happens. Play out "what if" scenarios with your managers and anticipate your responses when results are threatened.
7. Promote a culture with a bias toward action and results. Follow through, and make sure that action follows decisions. Delegate, then verify.
8. Practice continuous improvement by always asking: "How can we improve service?" "How can we be more efficient?" "How can we reach more people?" Now, let's look at a few details on some of these qualities.

Engagement Is The Heart of Execution

Consider the spectrum of interaction between a manager and workers, from micro-management at one end to totally hands-off at the other. Micro-management leads to inefficiencies, bottlenecks and frustration on the part of the workers, who feel they are not trusted. Hands-off management sends a different message; the manager does not care about the people or the results. The hands-off approach also distances the manager from the real work, so he does not understand how things really get done. At the middle of the spectrum is the engaged manager, who is in frequent contact with the workers and the work and serves as a coach for solving problems and creating efficiencies. There has been much discussion recently in the business journals on what exactly it means to manage.

Management is very different from being the expert professional who heads a department. Management includes two distinct areas. The first is anticipating change. The second is integrating all the various

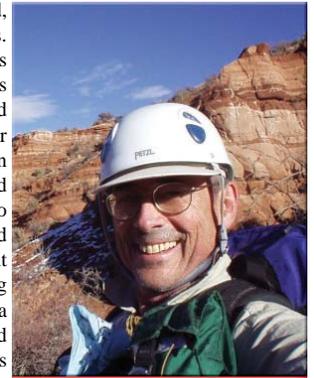
departments into a coordinated, caring and focused business. Doing either of these requires being engaged on the frontlines to absorb knowledge and build respect or fellowship with your staff. Erwin Rommel, the German WWII general who was admired by his enemies, was known to regularly leave his high command and visit the troops on the front line to see what it was like living in a trench. He would share a trench meal with the troops and curse the food quality! His troops would follow him anywhere and do the impossible for him. He was a master of execution. Engagement should take place at every level of the organization, from the CEO to the frontline worker. Obviously, a CEO cannot engage with everyone every day, but engagement should be frequent enough to ensure that he understands what is going on and that the workers know that he cares.

Pricing By Engagement

A club owner noticed that there were very few family memberships sold in his club, which was in a suburban, family market. He went to the front and sold memberships for a day. It was immediately apparent to him that \$79 for a single and \$99 for a couple was accepted by the prospects, but another \$14 for each child turned off most family prospects. By executing a price change to \$79 single and \$99 for a family, the club added hundreds of families in the next twelve months.

Building 100% Commitment

One aspect of strong execution is 100% commitment by everyone to do the right things all the time. Here are guidelines on how to build 100% commitment. Whenever a problem arises, involve all who are touched by it, not individually, but together. Now, go to the scene of the crime, just as a CSI does in order to get the facts. What happened, when, how, who did what and so forth. No blaming is allowed! No solutions yet. First, create consensus on facts by all who are touched by the issue,



Will Phillips

then create solutions together and choose a good one. When you implement this solution, it will be owned by all who are touched by the problem. You don't try to get *buy in*; you build it in for 100% commitment.

Creating a Culture of Getting Things Done

Most efforts at changing an organization's culture fail because they are not linked directly to improving the organization's results. There should be an explicit link between better culture and better results. The culture of an organization is manifested in what Bossidy and Charan call the Social Operating System. This includes the mechanisms for social interaction, formal and informal meetings, memos, emails, etc. If you want to create a culture of getting things done, you need to pay attention to the Social Operating System. This is where beliefs and behaviors are practiced. Ensure that discussions of problems or opportunities, in meetings, at the water cooler, or in emails, have a tone that says "what will we do about this?" Do not let conversations drop without some decision or assignment for a next step, leading to action.

Assessment

REX has prepared an Execution Assessment to help you improve and develop your leadership and your organization's performance and health. It is available from the author.

(See Will Phillips Page 21)

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...Michael Sena

continued from page 18

add profits to your company's bottom line and grow your facility and brand within your community, then you want to dot your i's and cross your t's when hiring and recruiting personal trainers. Do not skip any of these steps; they are all vital to making the right long-lasting decision for your business.

Next month, in Part II, I'll cover "How to train and develop your personal training staff for maximum results!"

(Michael Sena is the Visual Fitness Planner Regional Director of Sales for the Midwest and may be reached at michael@myvfp.com or 219-707-6113)



Visual Fitness Planner
Sales Fusion

...Will Phillips

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Further Reading:

Execution Without Excuses, Harvard Business Review, March 2005.

Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done by Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan (2002)
Rommel: Leadership Lessons from the Desert Fox (World Generals) by Charles Messenger, Klaus Naumann, and Wesley K. Clark (2009)

(Will Phillips is the President of REX Roundtables for Executives. REX chairs eighteen club owner Roundtables in the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, Brazil and Italy. Apply now for admission to one for you. The newest REX Roundtable will focus on Small Giant businesses in all industries. Your comments and inquires are welcome at Will@RexRoundtables.com. Will's blog is www.HealthClubGuru.com)

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Retention Starts at the Start: The Factor 6 Sequence to Improve Member Retention

By: Jeffrey Keller

You've spent a couple of months prepping a big membership campaign. You spent a lot of money on mailers, put up the Facebook ads just like they told you in the online webinar, Tweeted the promotion like your buddy told you to do, scheduled the staff and prepped everyone for several long days. You launch the promotion, have tons of traffic, sign up the new members and pay the commissions and overtime for the sales staff to be there. You're excited, until you sit down at the end of the month and do your reports. Low and behold, you have almost as many cancellations as you signed up on the promotion, and you ended up losing money on your campaign. You're ready to cry, or at least, throw something at the wall out of frustration.

It happens a lot, a *whole lot*. Trust me when I say, this sort of thing happens frequently in the health club industry. It's part of the reason why we're trading members back and forth and not making any headway with getting a better market penetration. So, if you're serious about making a success of your club, you need to pay attention to the other side of the coin... the retention side.

Sure, you've read the articles and probably know that retention is important, but have you really put a pencil and paper to the problem? For example, let's say you spend \$3,000 on a membership campaign. It's successful, adding 100 new members to your club at \$50 per month in dues, so you're thinking, "Fantastic!" because at \$50 per month, that's \$600 per year. Multiply that by 100, and you added \$60,000 to a rolling year's revenue. But wait, we're in September, and you only have three more months in this budget year to collect dues. So really, you're only going to collect \$15,000 for this budget versus the \$3,000 you spent. Still, that's a \$12,000 gain, so you're not ready to panic yet. But, let's also assume you've lost 50 members this month. "Not so bad," you think, because you just added 100. But, when you look

at it, you spent \$3,000 for the promotion and lost \$7,500 from lack of retention, so now your net gain is \$4,500. That's just the cost of poor retention and what you spent on the campaign. That doesn't include the soft expenses like employee morale and club branding in the community. This is why retention is so important.

So what's a club to do to prevent losses like this? Well, retention is a multifaceted part of managing your membership, but there are some simple things you can do to integrate your members into your club's culture and make them feel important. This will make an impact, and if you follow through on your mission of delivering a great health club experience, you'll keep a lot more members than you have been. Okay, without further adieu, here is the **Factor 6 New Member Integration Sequence** you can implement immediately to improve member retention from the very beginning.

Factor 6 New Member Integration Sequence

Step #1: Put a *Quick Start PDF download and video on your club's website using an auto-responder (within 24 hrs)*. You can win in multiple ways with this. First, many new members are a little intimidated with asking staff about your club's inner workings. If you have a video to go along with the PDF, that's even better. Make it whatever you want it to be. It can be a review tour of the facility. It can be introductions to your department staffs. It could even be a basic starter workout. The idea is to get them feeling comfortable with the club. Second, if you set this up on a double-opt-in auto-responder, you can circumvent email filters. Just because you ask for their email when they join doesn't mean you're going to end up in their inboxes. If you use an inexpensive auto-responder and collect their emails this way, you can ensure that your emails will reach them. Plus, the auto-responder is going to come in handy on **Step #5** and **Step #6**.

Step #2: Send them a signed

Welcome letter from the General Manager or Owner (mail out the next day). Nothing says, "We value you as a member!" more than thanking them for their business from the very top. Members like to know that they count more than just to keep your lights on. A personally signed *Thank You* letter from the top creates a *WOW* for new members. The fact that someone at the top took the time to sign a letter means a lot to a customer.

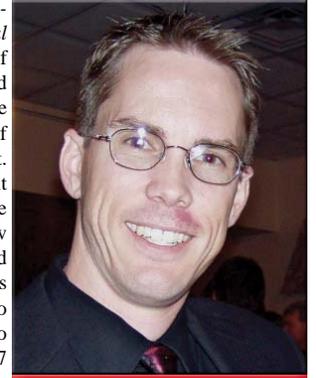
Step #3: Make a follow-up *Welcome to the Club* phone call from the General Manager or Owner (within the first week). The Welcome letter is great, but you really want to start things off right, so you need to ensure they are happy with the experience. You can't get feedback from the *Welcome* letter, so calling the new member and asking about how he or she likes the club thus far is, in my opinion, essential. You want to know if things are going well because 9 times out of 10 members don't speak up, especially new members. You want to correct this from the start and make sure the new member is incredibly happy. The last thing you want is a new member falling off the wagon immediately.

Step #4: Send a follow-up *How Are You Doing?* letter with a gift card specific to your club (sometime during the second week). People like gift cards. The best part of this is that if, it's an ABC Club-specific gift card, then the dollar value of the card is only the cost you incur on your end. For example, if you send the member a \$50 gift card as a "Thank You," and he or she spends the \$50 on protein powder at your Pro Shop, you really only gave that member the cost of stocking the protein... probably \$25. Pretty cool how that works, right? Best of all, the member gets to experience something in your club that he or she may not experience otherwise. Maybe he or she may spend it on Personal Training or a massage or swimming lessons. Whatever the case may be, they'll love you for it, and it didn't cost you nearly the amount as the dollar value on the gift card.

Step #5: Use your auto-responder to send weekly helpful hints for getting the most out of his or her new membership (send out each Monday starting the Monday after he/she enrolls). Of all the steps, this is the simplest. Why? Because once you set it up, it does the work for you. The auto-responder sends your new member an email at designated times from when he or she signs up. Now, don't get me wrong. Do not use this as an opportunity to sell. Rather, use a series of 5-7 emails to help this new member get the most out of his or her membership. Possible things to include are:

- Be reassuring about why he or she joined your club. Why do you think the automotive companies spend so much money on Customer Assurance programs? Because it works...
- Give him additional weekly tips for being healthy.
- Tease him with special things about your club to make him want to be there. If new members don't show up right away and create an exercise habit, they'll fall off the wagon, stop coming and cancel their memberships. We're trying to prevent that, right?
- Ask them for testimonials, or better yet, offer them a referral prize for sending a new member.
- Send online links to news that is pertinent to their being healthy and how that news relates to something they can take advantage of in your club. If this news/information is in the form of a "download" on your website, you can track how many of your new members are downloading the information and determine whether what you're offering them is worthwhile.

Step #6: Track your customer service (ongoing). If you're not surveying your membership on a regular basis with regards to how happy they are, you're setting yourself up for failure. Too often, clubs do not realize that an ounce of prevention is worth a whole lot of discounts on the backend of a membership when the member is getting ready to cancel. The trouble most clubs run into is knowing what they



Jeffrey Keller

need to do as "prevention." Use the auto-responder you've set up to send a very simple (and very short) survey to your members to reinforce the idea that you are indeed listening. Ask them for open-ended comments. You'll be amazed at how appreciative your members will be that you care to ask for their opinions. Just remember to respond to the comments because you'll do more damage than you know if your members take the time to respond and you don't acknowledge them.

Using the "Factor 6" sequence consistently will create an experience for your new member that virtually none of them anticipated. Ever heard of "pay it forward?" Well, this is a classic example. *Pay it forward* in this way and your members will pay you back in the form of staying as members and bringing you more business in the process. Of course, you still need to deliver the club experience they expect, but this strategy will set your club up to have long successful relationships with all your members for years to come. Now, go forth and retain!

(Jeffrey Keller, MS, MBA, is the Assistant General Manager of VillaSport Athletic Club & Spa in The Woodlands, Texas. He's also the President of the Independent Health Club Networking Association (IHCNA). ANY and ALL comments regarding his articles are appreciated. He can be reached by email at jeffrey_keller@msn.com, or on LinkedIn and Twitter)

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Increase Health Club Sales (Starting) Today!

By: Jim Thomas

That's what everyone wants, right? Do you have a plan in place to get this done?

Would you like to dramatically increase your sales in your health club starting today? Well, you can start to focus some of your club sales efforts on enticing your current club members to buy again. Now, that is not to say you should stop your focus on driving new membership sales; this will always be a membership driven business. With that said, though, your best sales prospect is a member that's already in your club, one of your current health club members.

If you start focusing your club sales efforts on your existing members, you'll be able to increase your health club sales dramatically. These ideas to increase health club sales will help build member loyalty, too. We have taken these ideas from

a sampling of clubs across the country... try some of these ideas to increase your health club sales:

1. Set up a sales incentive program. Give your club sales staff a reason to get out there and sell, sell, sell. Why do so many health clubs that rely on their membership sales staff to drive sales have incentive programs in place? Because offering their sales staff the trips, TVs and electronics for hitting sales numbers works.

And remember, everyone is in sales. Have all club staff participate in a sales incentive program. Don't forget to include all club staff in sales training programs as well.

2. Encourage your sales staff to up-sell. When I say sales staff, what I mean is "all staff." Essentially, up-selling involves adding related products and/or services to your health club

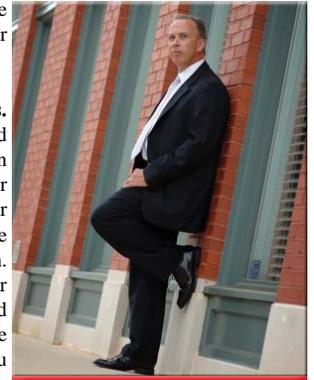
menu and making it convenient and necessary for club members to buy them. Just placing more products near the front desk isn't going to increase your sales much. To up-sell successfully, the club member has to be persuaded of the benefits they will receive.

3. Give your members the inside information. Recently, I was shopping at a big box electronic store. I had picked out an item and was deciding whether to buy it or not when a salesperson came up to me and said, "I see you're interested in that TV. We're having a sale next week and all our TVs will be 20% off. You might want to come back then." Guess what? I did and bought the BluRay and WiiFit as well. The lesson here? If you have a promotion or special sale coming up, tell your members about it. They'll come back and probably bring some friends with them, too. And don't forget, you

can give your club members the inside information by emailing or calling them.

4. Tier your club members. There should be a clear and obvious difference between regular club members and other members, a difference that your regular club members perceive as showing that you value them. How can you expect member loyalty if all members are treated as "someone off the street?" There are all kinds of ways that you can show your regular members that you value them, from small things, such as greeting them by name through larger benefits, such as giving regular members extended credit in the juice bar or discounts in the pro shop.

5. Set up a member rewards program. We're all familiar with the customer rewards programs that many large companies have in place. But, there's no reason



Jim Thomas

that a health club (large or small) can't have a member rewards program, too. It can be as simple as a free smoothie on a member's birthday or as complex as a points system that earns various rewards, such as discounts on gifts and merchandise. If done right, member rewards programs can really help build member loyalty. (See Jim Thomas Page 25)

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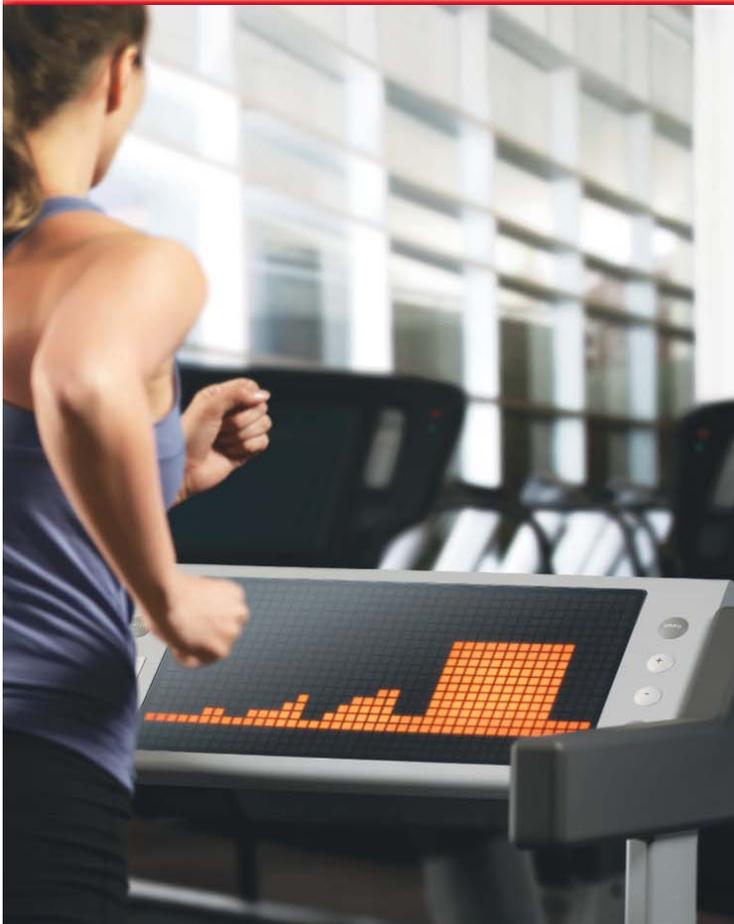
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Club Members Winning the Weight Loss Battle

By: Donna Krech

Again this month, I bring you a video history of Thin&Healthy's Total Solution Members of the Month. Meet four members that changed their lives with the secrets you and I live every day. Enjoy these stories and use them to feed your passion to help the world become more healthy, happy, successful and whole.

Erin hated exercise! She wouldn't get out of bed to work out if her life depended on it. Then, one day, the message of Thin&Healthy's Total Solution brought her to the gym to enroll. She loved that she could have her favorite foods and lose weight too, but then, there was the exercise. How was she going to consistently exercise, when she hated it so much? With the help of a trained staff, Erin began to move, and she began to realize that she loved it! She now calls herself a "gym rat." Exercise is one of the first things she plans for the day now! She actually gets out of bed at 5:00 AM to meet with her trainer. She has lost over 50 pounds and is excited to see what the next 50 pounds off will be like.

Stephanie, a 3rd-shift worker and full-time student, watched fifteen pounds fly off her body in only four weeks. Due to her weight loss, her clothes no longer fit so she went to the store to pick up something for a special event. She was totally shocked when she slid on a pair of pants *four sizes* smaller than usual! With total excitement, she began to scream and dance right there in the changing room! She was able to enjoy her favorite foods, while losing weight, even on her crazy 3rd shift schedule. Not only is she gaining her old body back after eight years, but she is seeing a whole new confidence beginning to emerge!

Tim is probably like many members in your club. For eight months

working out faithfully at the gym, he had zero results to show for his efforts. After realizing this was something he couldn't do on his own, he joined Thin&Healthy's Total Solution. He's happy to report that he has now lost 57 pounds! He gives high credit to the fact that, if he was struggling, the staff would find the perfect solution for him through weight loss coaching, getting him into the right group fitness classes and personal training sessions. He was able to trim his body from a size 46 waist to a 38!

Sonya has seen her health restored. This breast cancer survivor struggled with her weight, like most do after chemo takes a toll on their bodies. With a loving and caring staff putting her success as a top priority, she was able to lose the 25 pounds she was struggling to take off on her own. The last report from the doctor has Sonya now off high blood pressure medicine, off high cholesterol medicine and she is no longer considered borderline diabetic! Not only is she rocking on the inside, she is now in a size two, something she has never experienced before! That's right! No more 10s in her closet! This mom of two is rocking the 2s!

It's not about taking away favorite foods in order to lose weight. Eating favorite foods in a healthy way is the key to permanent weight loss. Meeting a member where they are enables them to progress at an exercise pace they can live with, and thus, he loses the weight and keeps it off. Visit www.clubinsideronline.com/thinandhealthy to meet these members personally and hear their stories.

If we can help in any way, please call us at (866) 260 - 8446 or email bhammond@thinandhealthy.com. If you don't put Thin&Healthy's Total Solution in your club, please put in some kind of weight loss program; there are lives to save!

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...Jim Thomas

continued from page 24

loyalty and increase sales volume.

6. Distribute free samples to members. Why do so many health clubs include free samples of other products when you join their club? They do it because it can increase sales in many ways. As the member who just joined your club, I might try and like the sample of the product and buy some of it, too. Or, I might pass on the sample to someone else who might try the product, like it and buy that and other products from the club. At the very least, the original member will be thinking good thoughts about the health club, and hopefully telling other people about the facility and products.

Attracting new members is a good thing, but attracting new members is not the only way to increase your sales. Shifting some sales focus in your club to enticing your current members can make increasing your sales easier, and best of all, build the member loyalty that results in repeat sales.

Now, go increase your health club sales, today!

(Jim Thomas is the President of Fitness Management USA and may be reached at 800-929-2898 or by email at jthomas@fmconsumting.net)

Make It Fun!

Get On-Line Or Get-Out of Business!

Why Every Club Operator Should Be Using Internet Marketing

By: Casey Conrad

Part I

Yes, the title of this article is bold, but I won't back down from the statement. As someone who has been in the health club industry for over 25 years now and who specializes in sales and marketing, I predict that, if you don't immediately begin to embrace and utilize the Internet as a significant element of your marketing plan, you will be out of business in the near future. Therefore, when speaking and consulting with a health club operator who is resistant to using Internet tools, my advice is very simple, "get out before you go out!"

In my opinion, there are many reasons why this "do or die" prediction is a reality. First, consumers are using the Internet more and more to locate products and services. When polling a room of 100 seminar attendees, I ask, "Who has used the phone book in the last thirty days?" Maybe two people will raise their hands. Asking, "Who has used Google in the last week," I almost always get a resounding "Yes" from everyone. This trend of locating products and services via the Internet will continue as time goes by and more businesses begin using the many Internet marketing tools that are available.

Second, consumer buying-patterns have changed. Not only are people using the Internet to find items, but they are also spending a considerable amount of time researching before they either call or visit a business. Whether it is time spent on your website, doing Google searches on your company or visiting one of many social networking sites where other customers are talking about you, consumers are empowering themselves with information so they don't have to talk to a "salesperson" before making an initial buying decision. This means that, if you don't get yourself engaged in all the areas of the web where customers are visiting, you will miss out on valuable prospects.

Third, traditional marketing is becoming less and less

effective. In part, this is due to Internet use, but it is also a reality of an "over-advertised to" consumer. People have hundreds of television stations to choose from, posters and ads are displayed on everything possible, heaps of junk mail is delivered to mailboxes and technology is bombarding us with messages 24-7. As a result, people tune many advertisements out. On the other end of the spectrum, you have things like satellite radio, TIVO and on-demand movies that allow people to simply turn off all advertising. Compound this with the fact that newspaper readership continues to dwindle and the reality is that many of the ways health clubs effectively advertised are either dead or dying.

Using Internet marketing helps battle all three of these factors. For most club operators, the challenge isn't in understanding the "Why" behind Internet marketing; the real challenge lays in the "What" and "How" categories. This is the first of a four-part series of articles that will help you --the club operator-- learn the psychological strategy behind all Internet marketing and outline which tactics and tools you should be using for maximum effectiveness.

Let's start our discussion with getting clarity on the goal of all Internet marketing. Regardless of what you do on the Internet, **your goal is to build a prospect list.** Sure, your ultimate goal is to sell more memberships. Unfortunately, unless you are the lowest priced club in town, selling memberships online won't replace the consumer buying process (If it were that simple, everyone would be doing it by now). Therefore, you must turn a web visitor into a prospect by capturing his information. You can then build a relationship with that individual so he likes and trusts you. Once those two things are accomplished, only then will you have the opportunity to turn that prospect into a paying customer.

We refer to the above mentioned process as the CBAs of Internet marketing (yes, opposite of the ABCs). "C" stands for "capture," which refers to your ability to obtain at minimum an

e-mail address from a web visitor. "B" stands for "building trust," which is exactly what it means, building a relationship with someone and not angering him by filling up his inbox with a bunch of junk he doesn't want. Finally, "A" stands for "action offers," which means providing your list of prospects with "soft offers" (not necessarily membership offers) for products, services or events at your facility.

In order to fully appreciate the CBAs process, it is important to understand how Internet list building is vastly different than traditional list building. The latter focuses on building lists of highly qualified individuals for the purposes of direct mail or perhaps telemarketing. Often, these lists were built from prospects that inquired about membership, people who phoned into the club for information and former members. Basically, the goal was to generate a higher quality list because that would mean higher response rates for direct mail and less waste on postage.

With Internet marketing, list building requires an entirely different approach. Because communicating via the Internet is so inexpensive, marketers have the luxury of building a list of both qualified and less qualified prospects. The intent is to motivate the more qualified to buy sooner while simultaneously getting the less interested to be more interested. This strategy is consistent with the scientific behavior change model.

All behavioral change, whether it is to stop smoking or to start an exercise program, follows 6 phases:

- Pre-contemplation
- Contemplation
- Preparation
- Action
- Maintenance
- Termination.

Someone in pre-contemplation isn't even considering a change in behavior. In contemplation, the individual begins to think, "Maybe I *should* change." In preparation, the person intends to change, and he

begins saying and thinking "I am going to do X." Action is where he actually makes a change, although it may be temporary (someone quits smoking--action--but succumbs five hours later). Maintenance is where he needs to consciously work at maintaining his new habit, and termination is when the change is an integrated part of his life.

Smart marketers understand that this model of behavioral change mirrors the buying cycle; a consumer is unaware of a product or service (pre-contemplation) but then hears or reads about it and thinks, "I *should* look into that, it may help me" (contemplation). Over time, the consumer may learn more about the product or service from information or perhaps word of mouth. If the product fills a need or want, he begins to think, "I'm *going* to get that when... I have the money, the time," etc (preparation). Of course, action is when he buys.

What is interesting is that most marketing is designed to attract buyers who are in preparation ("I'm going to begin an exercise program"). This is very evident with the majority of health club advertisement providing a discount or incentive to buy by a certain date in the near future. This type of ad is great for attracting those who are ready to buy, but it ignores all those who are beginning to think about it and simply want more information.

Internet marketing allows you to expand your reach to attract not only prospects that are in preparation but also those that are in contemplation and even pre-contemplation. Once you have attracted a prospect onto a list, you are then able to better educate, inform and generally communicate with them, answering their questions, alleviating their fears and earning their trust. Over time, the goal is for you to either motivate them to get involved with your product or service or at least be on their "top of mind" when they are ready to get involved with an exercise program. The CBA strategy is a direct result of this behavioral change process.

Now that you understand



Casey Conrad

the underlying psychology behind Internet marketing, it becomes easier to embrace the mechanical elements of the strategy; capture names, build trust and action offers. Full embracement is important because, in an effort to get quicker sales, many club operators mistakenly attempt to force a "Capture-Action-Offer" approach; the results are disastrous. Simply follow the steps, and the results will be realized. So, to quickly re-cap:

- With consumers using the Internet more and more and traditional marketing becoming less effective, club operators must use Internet marketing to survive.
- The goal of ALL Internet marketing is to build a prospect list.
- The three steps to Internet marketing are CBA; capture names, build trust and action offers.
- Internet marketing allows you to build bigger lists of prospects that are in different stages of the buying cycle, giving you more opportunities for future sales.

The nice thing is that technology and automation allow the CBA process to occur with little reliance on the human element! What this means is that, once Internet systems are developed, they work for you, 24-hours a day, at an insignificant cost. In Part II, next month, we will focus on the three most critical website strategies you must employ for capturing list information.

(To learn more about free resources on sales and marketing visit **CaseyConrad.com** or email her at **Casey@CaseyConrad.com**)

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World Gym Buys Fitness Chain

TAIWAN - World Gym Fitness Centers (Taiwan) announced it would officially take over the operations of California Fitness in Taiwan and expects to go public in three to five years' time.

The fitness chain refused to reveal the acquisition price but said its revenue could grow about 50% following the deal, while its market share would expand to 10% from 6% currently.

"The deal enables us to extend World Gym's footprint across Taiwan," company President, John Caraccio, told a media briefing in Taipei. "After the completion of the deal, World Gym will enjoy the economies of scale in terms of both locations and memberships, allowing us to operate more cost-effectively in Taiwan."

World Gym will acquire all six California Fitness outlets

and related facilities in Taiwan, expanding its number of outlets to 18 across the nation, with more than 90,000 members.

"The deal was part of the US-based company's plan to take over California Fitness' overseas branches," Caraccio said.

He said the company had no plans to acquire other fitness clubs in Taiwan in the near future, adding that it intends to operate a total of 30 full-service fitness clubs in Taiwan by the end of 2012 before applying to be listed.

"World Gym will invest over NT\$100 million [US\$3.22 million] to renovate some of the older clubs," Caraccio said.

He declined to share how much the company plans on investing in the local fitness industry in the short-term.

Following the acquisition, the entire staff of California Fitness in

Taiwan will be able to stay in their current positions and the rights of its members will remain intact.

To further protect consumers' rights, World Gym has set a special two-month renewal period for members who previously failed to renew their memberships --the so-called lifetime memberships-- under a special promotional package offered by California Fitness.

"From October 1st to November 30th, affected members can re-subscribe to the special privilege at their respective clubs," Caraccio said.

Representatives of California Fitness in Taiwan told reporters that it would now focus on its businesses in Hong Kong and other places in the Greater China market.

Insider Rewind

October 2000

David Patchell-Evans - "Living the Good Life!"

By: Norm Cates

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 Taking Your Marketing Efforts to the Next Level - By: Casey Conrad
 Handling theirate Caller - By: Nancy Friedman
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 Who Are the True Fitness Professionals? - By: Carrie Morrow
 Make It Fun For Thanksgiving! - By: Sandy Coffman
 Technology Delivers Sales & Retention
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Kim Kenyon & Bill Austin
With Gold's Gym Hudson Valley

Programming Tip of the Month: Professional Communicators or Fitness Center Sentries?

By: Sandy Coffman

Last month, **CLUB INSIDER** featured the Courthouse Athletic Clubs' Fitness Coach Program, which I was proud to have been part of in their beginning stages of development. Step number one was when I identified a situation that I call "Fitness Center Sentries." The Courthouse Athletic Clubs took action and developed their fabulous Fitness Coach Program. It is strong and professional.

My book, *Successful Programs for Fitness and Health Clubs: 101 Profitable Ideas*, offers many leadership tools ready to be downloaded for you to use when hiring and training your fitness center staff.

Here is a beginning exercise to help you with the first step, *evaluating* your fitness center. Do you have professional communicators or fitness center

sentries? Let's look at your fitness center at 6:00 PM on a Monday. You probably have a high number of members working out on the equipment. This should be a wonderful opportunity for your trainers to be introducing themselves to members, introducing members to other members, asking questions, answering questions, promoting programs, giving compliments, making corrections and offering suggestions. Does your scene look like this?

- You can't find the trainers.
- One trainer may be behind a fitness desk.
- Two trainers may be behind a fitness desk.
- Two or more trainers may be on the periphery of the fitness center. They are engaged in conversation with each other. One of them is bouncing a basketball.
- One trainer is in front of the

fitness desk, leaning on it.

- One trainer is sitting on a piece of equipment talking to a member, his or her workout partner.
- One member is obviously confused with programming a treadmill, but the only trainer on the floor is a personal trainer, and he or she is totally engrossed in his or her client. He is neither aware nor interested in anyone else.
- None of the trainers are smiling or laughing, except the one bouncing the basketball.
- None of the members are smiling or laughing.
- One or more trainers are standing against a wall, almost at attention, arms folded across their chests, ever ready to answer any questions that a member would have, if any member would come up and ask one.

You recognize them. They are the "fitness center sentries" of a club, fully knowledgeable and qualified. This scene doesn't change after five minutes of watching. The scene doesn't change after you come back an hour later. **Or**, does

your scene look like this?

- The trainers are interspersed throughout the fitness area.
- Each trainer is actively engaged in conversation with one or more members.
- One trainer may be giving hands-on attention to members by making corrections in their posture or technique.
- One trainer may be shaking hands with members.
- Some trainer(s) may be giving fliers out promoting programs and offering information about them.
- One trainer may be introducing one member to another or one member to another trainer or other staff employee.
- One trainer may be taking a picture of one or more members.
- One or more trainers are smiling or laughing with members about something.
- Each trainer (except personal trainers) moves to other members after a reasonable period of time, making sure that everyone is connected with at least a greeting.
- Personal trainers, although focused with one client, are aware



Sandy Coffman

of other members and gesture, smile and greet others when possible.

Hopefully, you are doing a quick evaluation of each of your staff members right now, or at least visualizing how you would like to see your fitness center in action. Which scene has the type of professional personalities that are most likely to grow your programs?

(Sandy Coffman is the "Dean of Club Programming." To order Sandy's great programming book, *Successful Programs for Fitness and Health Clubs: 101 Profitable Ideas*, go to www.humankinetics.com. Contact Sandy at SLCoffman@aol.com or visit www.sandycoffman.com)

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Jason West
Owner, Gold's Gym Elite

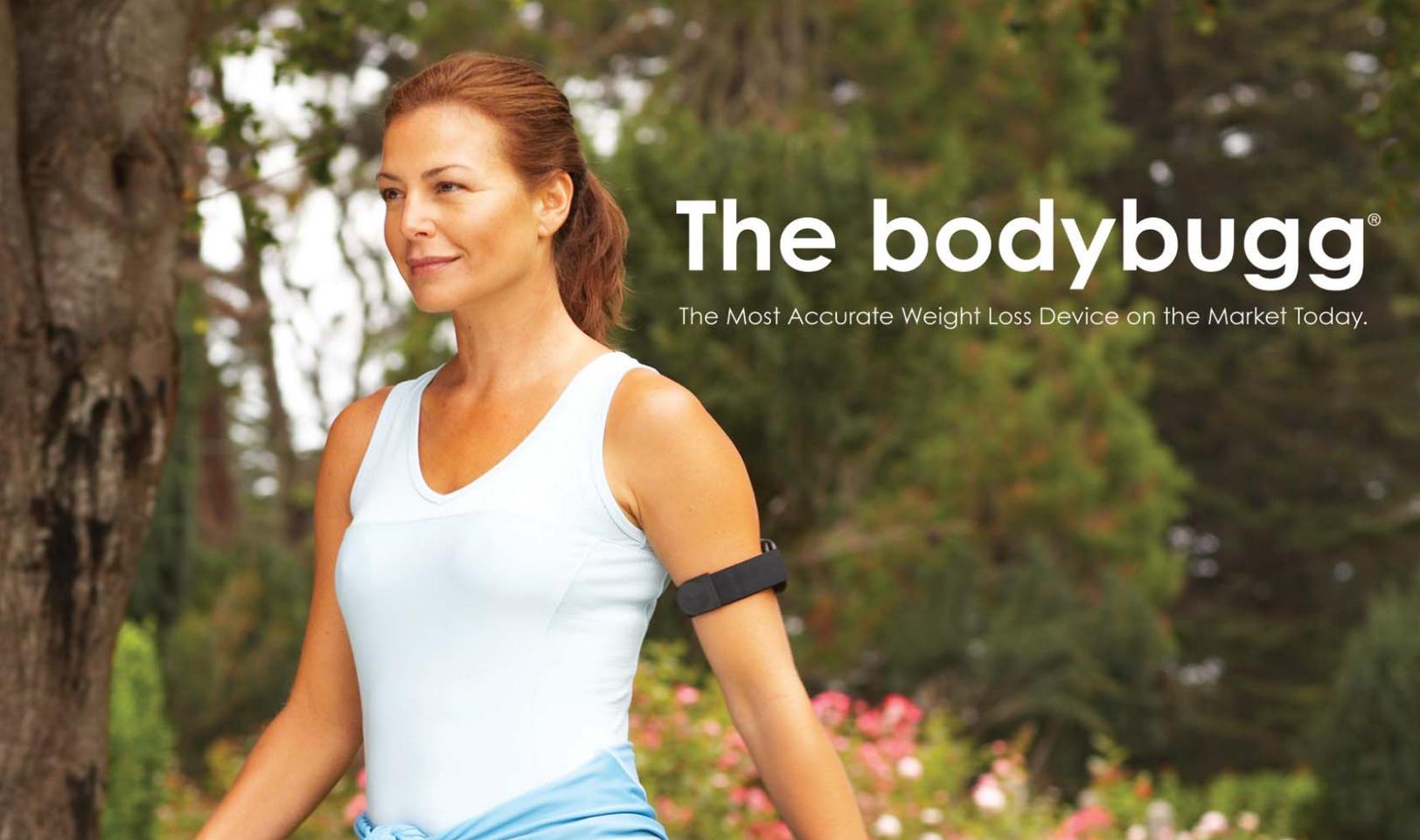
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