

PERSONAL TRAINING

An Informative Newsletter

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By John Platero

E.L.E. (Extinction leveling event)

LA FITNESS is the last chain of sports clubs that allow trainers to work as independent contractors. Bally's, 24 Fitness, Sports Club LA and Spectrum all participate in the current trend of keeping the personal training "in house." We are the last of the Mohicans, the last of the dinosaurs. However, I'm sure you'll agree this program benefits the trainer immensely. It allows for the entrepreneurial spirit and the freedom to be an individual; to charge, train, dress, advertise, promote and work when you want and as much as you want. This is the American way ; free enterprise, capitalism at its finest. For \$10 a day you have 28 locations to choose from and over 400,000 members to solicit! The amount of money you can make is only limited by desire, ability and ingenuity. I've seen trainers make up to \$15,000 in a month!

However, there is a problem. Although this program might seem successful in some clubs, there are many clubs where the program is not very strong at all. I'm telling you this because I need your help. Many of you haven't seen me lately because I've been trying to focus on the slower clubs. Now, I need your help in order to preserve this one of a kind program.

This company although large is relatively small compared to the other health club chains. 24 hour Fitness is about 4 times and Bally's is about 6 times the size of LA FITNESS! This company is now in a growth period. It's expanding, which is a good thing. The bigger and nicer the clubs, the better it is for the Personal Trainer.

Whenever you grow you must take a risk and spend money. We are in the process of building brand new state of the art clubs with full court basketball, racquetball, Hammer Strength Cybex equipment, huge Day Cares and tons of cardio equipment.

The company is spending too much money on staff trainers and now needs to tighten it's belt. Most

companies feel bringing the Personal Training in house or letting a private company come in and take over the Personal Training is more cost effective. In the case of LA FITNESS, this would help lower expenditures and the added risk in this growth period.

Unfortunately, this would mean the end or a large reduction of "intros" for you, the independent trainer.

I have argued, that the independent trainer would not be able to survive without intros. If that is true, why do we need to staff "intro" trainers? We all know why and how the intros work. But remember, the company needs to have a program that works in all the clubs, not just some of them.

So, I need to lower the amount of money the company is spending on staff trainers. With your help, we can show the company how valuable independent trainers are to their new memberships as well as membership retention.

This is how we can accomplish this:

1) If every trainer could allocate just 2 hours a week in the intro appointment book I would be able to eliminate a lot of staff trainer payroll. In a 40 hour week that is only 5% of your time. Yes, I know sometimes they don't show or sign up, but that's the same for any business. *I've driven from Culver City to Anaheim to sign a trainer up and they didn't show.* Use that time to work out, do paperwork or work the floor.

Remember, even if the person you're training doesn't sign up, there could be someone watching who might solicit your services later.

2) Please put your weights away. I'm not asking you to put anyone else's weights away. Just take care of your own. *It's amazing that I'm even writing this but I can't believe how many trainers complain about this problem.*

3) Bring in referrals. This is huge! This alone could make the largest impact of all. If every trainer brought in just one referral a month that would be over 160 new memberships a month! Plus, it lowers your rent!

I've heard the sales people are giving you some flak on this referral program. Here's how to deal with them. They are comparing apples to oranges. When you bring in a referral it only takes 10 minutes to fill out the paperwork. When they give you a referral, it can take you hours, weeks or months to service that client. You will have to call them, remind them, train them, make records, work on their nutrition and sometimes baby sit, to earn your money. Your job is so much harder !

That's not the worst of it. Explain to the salesperson that without you filling out that referral, LA FITNESS has no idea you were responsible for that new member. It's not the money you need, but the proof that a trainer brought in that person. This validates our program! This is imperative. We must, at all costs, get the credit for these referrals!

Besides, do you really think the salesperson is going to care when you have to go work for 24 Hour Fitness for \$12 an hour or that intros are no longer available to you?

4) Look professional. That means no ski caps or bandanas, cut off t-shirts, jean shirts hanging out, old sweats or construction boots. Wear a name tag, or a shirt that identifies you as a trainer. I can't believe I still have to say this. Please pitch in.

All the picture frames should be up by the end of June.

5) If I send you a notice about insurance, EFT, parking or using the phone, respond within 24 hours. Do not make me chase you around. Be professional. Many of you move and don't even bother to give us your new address, then complain that you don't know what's going on. Read your newsletters. Remember, the more time I spend chasing you around, the less time I have to work on other positive aspects of this program.

6) Stop using the phones and sales desks. Always ask first!

I can no longer do this alone. I'm doing everything I can and now the ball is in your court. It is now up to all of you.

I'm not saying this program will end tomorrow, but the future really does depend on you. If you see trainers that are not acting professionally, and you feel they are detrimental to the program, then speak up. Tell your head trainer or me. The parts really do affect the whole. Disdain or indifference will do us no good.

I'm confident that with everyone pitching in with the intros and referrals, we'll be able to show how valuable we really are.

EFT FOR YOUR CLIENTS?

While I was attending the IHRSA convention this spring, I found someone that would allow Personal Trainers to bill their clients through EFT. As you well know this is the success of all the major health club chains. You can call Steve Krause at ASF (American service Finance) at 800-227-3859 ext. 707.

There is no start up cost and the percentage is 4% which is similar to AMEX.

HOW TO USE THE GUEST REGISTER

Find the guest register from the last month. Make a list of the people that have joined over the last month and call them up.

Try this: Hi, my name is _____. I am calling to see if you will qualify for a free, one hour personal training session. This session will include a body fat test, measurements, a nutritional consultation and a workout evaluation. I will review your fitness goals and your current workout program to determine the most effective way to reach these goals.

Are you satisfied with your current progress in the gym?

Have you been consistent in your workouts?

Are you over 25 years of age?

Do you work over 40 hours a week?

Do you stand or sit while you work?

These are just some of the questions you could ask. If they are interested, schedule them using closed ended questions. Are morning or evenings better for you?

How is _____ morning at _____ am.?

This is negative selling. The idea is to accentuate the value of the service and entice them to "qualify" for this service.

BUDDY REFERRAL PROGRAM

Don't forget to walk your referral over to the salesperson and print your name and ID number at the bottom of the contract. You might want to write "trainer" next to your name.

Make sure and record the contract number on your referral tracking sheet and get the salesperson or GM to sign your tracking sheet. Then fax in your referral tracking sheet to Accounts Payable at (800-600-2530) by the 15th of each month. This will insure you get the credit on your next month's rent.

For any trainer who brings in 30 referrals or more in a 3 month period beginning May 15 - Aug. 15 will receive their September rent free, in addition to their commission!

TRAINER PHOTOS

If you want to display a 8 x 10 inch headshot at the clubs you must go to Staples and buy an 11 x 14 inch black frame for \$3.99. If it costs more than \$3.99, it's the wrong frame. After you buy the frame, purchase some black poster board and a blank 3 x 5 index card. Do not buy the index cards with lines on them. Remove the grey cardboard that comes with the frame, mount your 8 x 10 photo on the black poster board along with your printed 3 x 5 index card (use a typewriter or computer; not by hand) under your picture and insert the picture into the frame. Check the other pictures that are already mounted in the clubs and copy them exactly. Please do not put your business cards inside the frame.

I suggest you include your "bio" on the index card and don't forget a contact number. Do not use the phone number from the club. When you have that done, call me, and I'll get the frame up for you.

All the pictures should be up by the end of this month.

IMPROVEMENTS

Do not use the LA FITNESS name or logo on any of your flyers without the prior written approval from LA FITNESS. Also, the statement "**Independent Contractor not affiliated with LA FITNESS**" should be on all of your flyers, cards, price sheets or advertisements. If you need stickers, let me know

CLUB POLICIES

If you want to change your EFT, you must do so a month in advance.

Go to the front desk and get an EFT form, fill it out and fax it to me at 310-287-0801 or Chad Abramo at 714-509-2507 if you want to make any changes.

- Please show your card to the front desk at least once a day.

- In the event of an accident where someone is injured, please go to the front desk and ask for an "incident report". Fill it out, make a copy for yourself, fax a copy to me at 888-287-0801 and give the other to the front desk. This way, you're covered.

- If you have not received a "trainers card", this newsletter or you have moved, call 800-600-2540, ext 561 and ask for Jim Irwin. Give him your correct address, so you can be sent a card.

- This is a reminder; you will be charged a 10% late fee plus a \$10 bank charge if your rent comes back to us. We will also deny you entry to the club until you pay the balance. If your rent is \$300 it

will cost you \$340 to get back in to the club. THERE WILL BE NO MORE EXCEPTIONS.

UPCOMING EVENTS

FUTURE FIT

PERSONAL TRAINING SCHOOL

Sat. and Sun. 8:30 am - 6:00 pm,

June 13 - 14 Diamond Bar

909-860-2774 (for directions)

\$159

1-800-778-6060 to register

* I would like to thank Rachel Rose for editing this newsletter.