

Turning your passion into a lucrative business



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Andrew is the director of Vision Personal Training Franchises Pty Ltd. He is currently franchising personal training studios throughout Australia, and has locations across Sydney in Caringbah, Randwick, Bondi Junction and Mosman. With more than 15 years business experience, Andrew's goal is to provide trainers with rewarding long term fitness career opportunities. To find out more, visit www.visionpt.com.au



Having lectured for the Australian Institute of Fitness for over 10 years now, I have witnessed an amazing increase in the number of people wishing to become personal trainers in recent years. One reason for the growth is an increase in demand for these services, perhaps as a result of the alarming rise in our obesity levels.

However, this said, without expanding or establishing a viable business venture, the average career span of a hands-on personal trainer is estimated to be around two years. I'm sure that many of these trainers would prefer a longer career, but if they don't diversify, but instead, opt to deliver session after session all by themselves, then unfortunately the estimated statistic tends to apply.

The challenges

Common reasons behind stunted career paths often include:

- Trainers attempt to start their own business with few business skills and/or fitness experience.
- Trainers spend too much time working in their businesses rather than on their businesses.

- Trainers struggle to generate a consistent or stable income.
- Trainers feel isolated due to a lack of support from their peers.
- Trainers burn out due to the long working hours, lack of business planning and lack of opportunities for growth.
- Trainers do not have the necessary sales skills to attract clients.

The solutions

A number of simple strategies to ensure business success include:

- Attend as many fitness conventions and workshops as possible to further your knowledge and keep you motivated.
- Work under another personal trainer to gain valuable experience before you start your own business, or team up with a number of trainers to share ideas and experiences.
- Use the services of a personal trainer yourself, so that you can understand and remind yourself of the needs of a client. To truly believe in the importance and benefits of having a personal trainer, we should all use a trainer ourselves!

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- Read business management books and attend business management courses. Start with books such as *The E Myth* by Michael Gerber and *Rich Dad Poor Dad* by Robert Kiyosaki.
- Sell packages of personal training sessions to help stabilise your income.
- Work with a business coach or mentor to help guide you.
- Train your clients to retain them. That is, continually set new goals for them so they continue to improve. Unfortunately, many clients tend to fall back into old habits unless they are held accountable. This will not only help your clients but will also help to stabilise your income.
- Develop sales skills by attending workshops, reading books and listening to CDs on the topic. www.briantracy.com is a great web site. Impact Training also provides some fantastic sales training workshops.
- Consider the benefits of purchasing a franchise system, if you feel you'd benefit from established business support and structure for your business.

Franchising

As outlined in a great article titled 'Franchising for PT success' by Stuart Evans in the Winter 2005 edition of *Personal Trainer Network*, franchising in the fitness industry has become extremely popular. This includes franchise opportunities within existing fitness centres, personal training studios and outdoor training programs.

Many reports suggest that the success of franchised businesses far outweigh the success of independent small business operations. A statistic often cited about small business failure estimates that over 80 per cent of independent small businesses fail in the first three to five years. A recent study conducted by Edith Cowan University in Western Australia, in fact, revealed that franchisees are 2.5 times *less* likely to fail than independent small businesses.

However, that does not mean that you are guaranteed success when you purchase a franchise. When researching a franchise to work in or purchase, ensure that:

- You are provided with extensive operational systems, including programming, administration, staff training and assessment, customer service, sales and marketing.
 - You are provided marketing materials to help promote your franchised business.
 - You are given extensive support and ongoing education to grow your business.
 - You talk to as many existing trainers and franchise owners as possible about their own business success.
- You have the ability to contribute to the ongoing development of the franchise system as a whole.
 - The franchise provides a sense of belonging, where individuals support each other and have common goals.

Other points to consider include:

- If you are looking to purchase a franchise, you should consider whether the business could be operated without you actually being there all of the time. My business coach continually reminds me that the true definition of a 'business' is a 'profitable corporate identity that operates without you'.
- If you are looking to work in a franchise, investigate whether you have the ability to grow and ultimately run your own franchise (if that is something you desire for your future).
- Check that you will be provided with a fair, non-compete clause or territory so that your business is protected from market over-saturation. This can be an issue with franchise systems, where the franchisor opens more franchises in a particular area, or takes on more trainers without taking into consideration existing franchisees and trainers. A good franchise system will help you achieve your goals as well as their own.
- Suppress your emotions. Never buy a franchise based upon the sizzle of the brochure or the salesmanship of the franchisor. Base your decision on the quality of the investment and on the available facts. Make certain, before you invest in a franchise, that it will benefit you both personally and financially. ♦



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