

PERSONAL TRAINER

NETWORK

The official publication for personal trainers & gym instructors
AUTUMN 2006

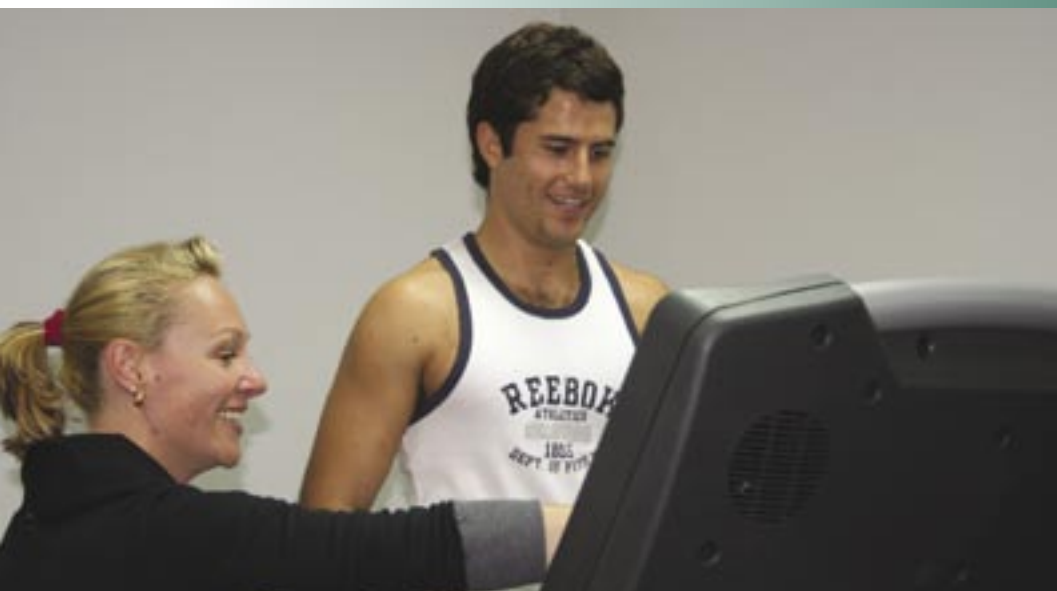


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PT: What does your business stand for – 'Professional Trainer' or 'Part Time'?

At the recent Network Business Summit I noticed a distinct lack of other personal training business owners. Which made me wonder - how serious are they about the business side of their profession?

Certainly more and more trainers are taking a professional approach to their training, but sadly this is not transferred to their procedures or branding. This is especially prevalent among independent and mobile trainers, who seem to forget that a trainer's image is often seeded in the minds of potential clients well before they've actually met the trainer.

Question: *How can you present on image of a Professional Trainer as opposed to part time?*

Answer: *Great branding and awesome processes.*

A few words on branding...

Remember, you have two to five seconds to create a first impression, good or bad. It's widely accepted that 'on person' branding is one of the most effective marketing tools, but what does your 'person' say about you? It's great to have a uniform but if you wear it badly, you probably shouldn't bother!

Remember, every time you step outside you are promoting yourself to potential clients. Therefore, always conduct a spot-check before you leave the house.

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PT: What does your business stand for - 'Professional Trainer' or 'Part Time'?

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- Is your uniform clean and ironed? Or is it faded out, wrinkled and scruffy?
- Are you clean shaven, with clean hair and hands? Or are you looking hung over?
- Do you smell fresh and clean? Or do you look like you've spent the morning running a marathon?
- Are your shoes clean and in good condition? Or do they look like the dog's favourite toy?

Little details make all the difference; wearing a name tag makes it easier for people to approach you. Always wear your smile; clients don't want to train with a sour puss!

A few more on processes...

Typically a potential client will contact you over the phone. How much thought have you put into how you answer an incoming call? A quick hello might be acceptable for your mates, but what does it say to a potential client about your professionalism? How about, 'This is John' or 'Thank you for calling XYZ Personal Training, this is John'?

If you are serious about being a Professional Trainer, how you respond to someone's first contact over the phone is critical.

Consider also, your voicemail message. Think about what you want to say, and speak clearly and with confidence. Listen to it from time to time to make sure it's up to date and ask for feedback from your friends. Never use a novelty recording, this screams unprofessional. If you have one of these currently take note of how many missed calls or hang ups you get. This is costing you money!

Be sure to intermittently check out your competitors and their processes; you'll be surprised at how inefficient or ineffective many of them are, and this goes for studios too. Don't just assume people operate successfully; always strive to refine your processes and continually streamline and improve them.

Some tips on selling yourself...

How do you present your services to potential clients? Do you launch into the spiel without even asking their name or what their interests are? Consider developing a procedure for how to handle every enquiry you receive. For example:

Step 1: How did they find you? Use this information to track your marketing results and client referrals.

Step 2: Where are they located, where do they want to train, how often?

Step 3: What results do they want to achieve?

Step 4: Do they have any injuries you need to know about?

Step 5: Present a little bit about yourself and how you can help them.

Step 6: Present your price – keep it simple!

Step 7: Ask them when they want to start and book them in, collect all their details.

Step 8: If they don't commit on the spot, make a time to follow them up.

Step 9: Get back to them when you say you will!



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Remember...

The public are educated enough to understand that you get what you pay for, so being cheaper than your competitor does not necessarily mean you will have more clients than them. Remember, by charging a higher rate, you need fewer clients to be successful! Consider offering 30 minute sessions if you want to provide a more cost-effective option for clients.

Free sessions can be an effective way to promote yourself if you are good at following up. Do avoid offering too many though, as this can devalue your services.

What about marketing...?

How good is your promotional material? Is it professional and well laid out? Do you use good quality stock or a super cheap paper? Enlist the help of a print house or an e-marketing solution specialist such as Gymlink or The Good Gym Guide; source out the experts who will make you look good!

Work to your strengths...

If you don't have the time or inclination to set all this up for yourself then consider working with a strong existing brand. There are companies and franchises available that can provide the security and benefits of being part of an established team, yet still allow you a lot of freedom to train and operate how you wish. In this situation, effectively you are outsourcing the activities that you are not skilled at or don't enjoy doing to specialists. These might include:

- Sales, marketing, branding
- Billing, bad debt recovery
- IT, web site development
- Client service and scheduling.

This type of arrangement can be ideal for trainers who wish to focus on providing an awesome training solution to their clients, but who want to leave the rest of the business operations to the experts. The other advantage of joining an established brand is that you can leverage off existing brand awareness in a marketplace that is becoming filled with new businesses all the time.

Summing up...

In the end, the key to presenting a Professional Trainer image is looking at everything you do from the client's perspective. If you appear to be a big company, even if it's only you, you will be much more successful at attracting potential clients and converting them into paying customers. Look at the biggest players in other industries and assess it honestly - would your current image and processes stack up against them? If not, be prepared for a Part Time career forever! ♦



Summer Nelson

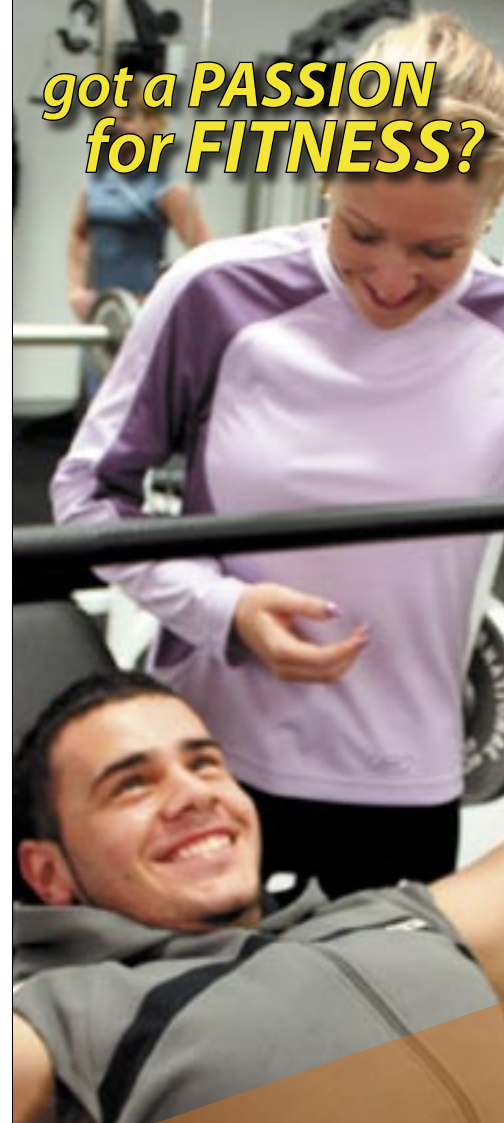
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