

Article reviews

Don't have time to read all of those business publications that keep landing on your desk? Fear not, *Club Network* has done the work for you. Following is a summary of the key points of three must-read articles that have been published over the last few months.

'You've got to think well ahead of your customers'

By **Tim Connor**, *Fitpro Business*, October/November 2006, pp42-43

To be read by: Management and all staff

Defining customer service as a philosophy shared by every single member of an organisation, this article criticises businesses who merely pay lip service to customer service. After addressing the factors which prevent businesses from embracing a customer-driven philosophy, Connor shares his '12 Laws of Effective Customer Service'.

These laws start with 'the customer is not always right', which concerns itself with locating the source of incorrect client beliefs and empathetically correcting them. This said, customers, even when they are wrong, can be useful learning tools for facility managers as sources of incorrect information can be nipped in the bud before other clients also 'get the wrong idea'.

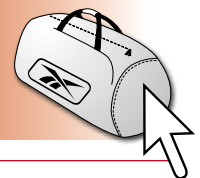
More obvious issues are explored, along the lines of the customer deserving your best regardless of whether you are stressed, overworked or distracted, but Connor also expresses the opinion that your employees should be treated similarly as their treatment in turn affects how they treat your members. The laws also state: be interested in clients, always give them time, honour promises, keep problems private as not doing so is very unprofessional, think ahead of clients and develop a problem solving attitude. ♦

'Renovation mayhem: A retention catch 22'

By **Linda Mitchell**, *Club Success*, July 2006, pp6-7

To be read by: Club owners and managers

Full articles available online at
www.fitnessnetwork.com.au/gymbag
(remember to log in).



Reinvesting in your business, says Mitchell, is important for keeping it strong. In addition to new equipment and programs, occasionally a partial or complete premises renovation is necessary, especially if your facility has been operating for twenty years or more. Mitchell outlines a plan to minimise disruption and retention fallout during such a time.

Firstly, she says, ask members for feedback about your renovation plans and give them options, explaining costs, outcomes and the effects on members. After a plan has been established, install a display showing how the renovated area will look; this allows for feedback and creates anticipation. Tell your members the quoted start and end dates for the renovation – even if the construction overruns, the provision of information is essential. Provide running project updates to members to ensure the project itself doesn't eclipse your primary concern – your members.

Mitchell emphasises the importance of making your staff ambassadors who can offer information updates and sympathy for the disruption experienced. Finally, the article concludes, throw a 'thank you for your patience' event party for members and staff when the renovation is completed. These steps, and the newly improved facility, should ensure a happy membership and staff. ♦

'Personal training client communication'

By **Alex and Sherri McMillan**, *CanFitPro*, May/June 2006, pp20-23

To be read by: Managers and personal trainers

The authors identify areas of communication on which most training business should focus in order to raise client expectation and business professionalism. 'Client scheduling communication' explores the re-scheduling of personal training clients. Using several examples of the right and the wrong way to go about this, the authors emphasise the importance of choice for clients, as opposed to suggesting one option which may be in your best interest rather than theirs.

'Trainer to trainer communication' looks at the way in which trainers should pass on detailed, up-to-date information about a client who they are temporarily passing over to a colleague for training. Clients dislike a change of trainer, so if it must happen, an interest and genuine awareness of their goals and progress should be apparent in the new trainer.

Finally, the authors acknowledge the importance of being friendly, but not getting carried away and giving away too much personal information about other clients, trainers and the business. This use of 'emotional intelligence' is essential in maintaining a professional business. ♦