

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.

'Bringing in sales through physician referrals'

By Michele Bell, *Club Success*, Nov 2006, pp12, 13, 22

To be read by: Club management

While still praising the effectiveness of more traditional fitness marketing techniques, the author advocates the benefits of affiliating your club to a physician or medical practise.

A referral from a trusted source such as this lends your facility great credibility and can provide you with a regular stream of genuine prospective members.

Bell addresses the problem faced by many clubs in building such a relationship; i.e. the perceived credibility of the facility, and asks whether your club offers the high quality operation expected by medical professionals (service, highly qualified staff, specialist programs, health screenings, nutritionists etc).

Before attempting to link your club to a hospital or GP, Bell recommends firstly ensuring that your club ticks as many of the above boxes as possible, and secondly that you identify staff members who possess the skills to work with special populations (obese, rehab, older people). She suggests that these staff create training protocols and class descriptions to help market your services.

Thirdly, she suggests creating a specific brochure for medical practitioners highlighting your facility's specialist services. Additionally, a staff member with strong sales and personal skills should be designated as your physician outreach to sell your club to the medical community.

Bell also advises creating a program of physician-specific events, including dinners, workshops and lectures, all of which help elevate your facility in the eyes of the medical community and your members. ■

'Soothing solutions'

By Kerry Silverstone, *IDEA Fitness Manager*, Jan 2007, pp12-14

To be read by: Club owners and managers

When creating or revising your group fitness program, Silverstone advocates including extensive mind body formats which will help your club to be perceived as a 'resort' within your community where people can 'get away from it all'.

Fee-based programs such as Pilates reformer, wellness coaching and spa services should complement yoga, Pilates, tai chi and other popular class formats to increase income

streams and create a local, full-service retreat. This can put you ahead of your competition, offer more to members, attract new members and maximise use of time slots. Listening and responding to members can help fulfil their fitness and their emotional needs. Silverstone recommends listening not only to members though, but to the wider community by empowering your sales and marketing team to initiate an outreach program.

The article includes a list of tools for helping you to build a 'destination resort' team, and also advises on the benefits of establishing reciprocal business agreements with massage therapists, salon specialists and other local businesses. ■

'Criticism: address the problem, not the person'

By Tristan Loo, *fitpro business*, Dec/Jan 2007, pp20-21

To be read by: Club management

The author asserts his belief in correcting other people's mistakes in order to enhance their personal success – but in such a way that their ego is not dented. All criticism, he says, should be coupled with a suggested solution, and by aiming this solution at the behaviour rather than the individual, the ego remains intact.

Loo proceeds to list his top strategies for giving constructive criticism, a useful tool for all club managers. He kicks this off with 'Never criticise while you are angry with the person', as this can inadvertently lead to personal attacks; far better, he says, to distance yourself and regain composure before addressing the behaviour that needs correcting.

Among the other useful strategies, Loo includes empathising with the person's position, focusing on the future and the improvement tactics, and using 'softening' words to pad your criticism. This point, Loo says, can assist greater persuasion and conflict avoidance, and as an 'interpersonal communication expert' at the Synergy Institute, he should know.

Constructive criticism should allow the person you are critiquing the opportunity to correct their behaviour.

Loo acknowledges the difficulty of constructive criticism, but highlights its various positive aspects, even going so far as to describe it as a 'sign of compassion'. ■

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

