

How fit is your **brain**?

THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT IN EVERY INDUSTRY

the competition for the consumer's dollar is getting greater and greater. In this day and age, if you continue to do the same thing day in day out without progressing you're basically setting yourself up for failure. Those businesses that are able to thrive and survive are those where the decision makers are constantly challenging their thinking in order to find a new way to approach something. The old saying 'If you always do what you've always done, you always get what you've always got', is very appropriate.

The fitness industry has done a great job of bringing Australians a new level of health and fitness from the neck down. But what about the bit above the shoulders; i.e. brain fitness? If you work in fitness facilities of any description, you need to consider not only how fit your own brain is, but also what you can do to enhance the brain fitness of your members or clients. For optimal health, mental fitness is just as important as physical fitness. Members spend hundreds of dollars each year maintaining their bodies and physical wellbeing, but how much money, time and energy are they putting into the creative fitness inside their own minds? And how much do you invest in the wellbeing of *your* grey matter? What are we doing to exercise our imagination, our creativity, and our ability to approach challenges with a fresh perspective? Our challenge is to make ourselves creatively fit by routinely exercising our minds.

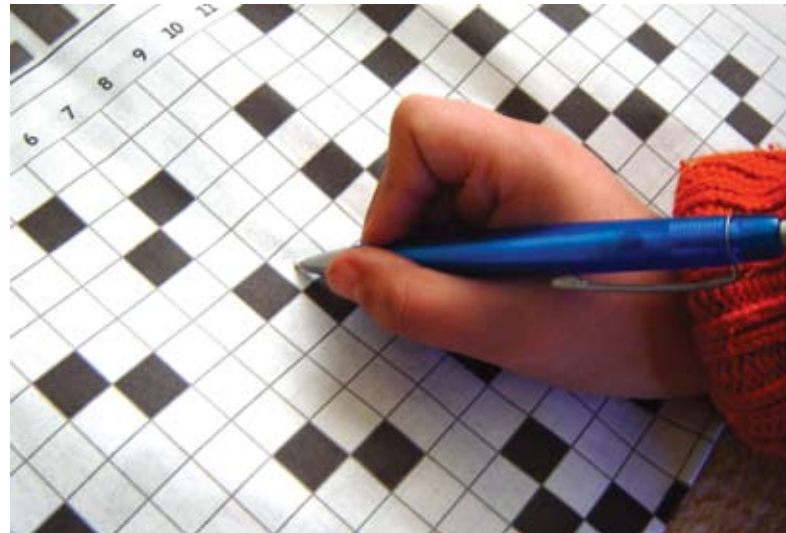
Einstein said that a brain that is stretched through thinking never regains its original size or shape. Becoming creative is no different to becoming physically fit – creativity is achieved through working our brains on a daily basis. How do you think your sport's heroes got to where they are? What about your favourite artist? Did they get that good without practice? Using your creativity and imagination needs to be done as regularly as you would hit the gym. And just like physical fitness, sometimes when you first start doing puzzles, reading, or learning a new language to stretch your mind, it can be a real challenge. But like getting fit, if you persist and put in the hard yards, before long you will start to see the results and suddenly the process will become much more enjoyable. Make a point of asking yourself each day; 'have I exercised my brain today?' This exercise should be something that you can approach easily and thoroughly enjoy. It can be as simple as doing puzzles, watching game shows, picking up a book on a topic that you know nothing about, or stretching

“

THERE IS NOTHING MORE POWERFUL ON THE PLANET THAN AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME.

Martin Luther King

”



your mind by taking on an experience that you would never have dreamed of doing before. I am constantly amazed by how little people read, given the fact there are so many wonderful books, magazines and online resources available to us to help us grow and enhance our thinking. Here are five tips for a fitter brain:

- 1. Ask more questions.** Even when you know the answer to something, ask the question. The easiest way for you to exercise and stretch your brain is to always ask yourself for options. Don't accept one way of doing things. If you have something that you've always done in the same way, now is the time to slay that sacred cow and try something new. You never know – you may discover a better way.
- 2. Stimulate your mind.** Get outdoors, read, listen to new music, go to the supermarket, explore a new street, walk or catch the train, talk to a stranger, see a type of movie you wouldn't usually watch, or grab a magazine you've never seen before. A lot of your great ideas will come to you when you are out of your usual confines of the club, fitness centre or training environment. In order to stimulate your mind you need to find new stimulants. Colour, movement, sound, people watching and unique environments will all help to stimulate your mind and your thinking. Give your subconscious something to hook onto by providing it with a wealth of new surroundings away from your desk and computer.

No. 1 in
**Lead
 Generation**
 ...and we
 guarantee* it!



Over 500 Health
 Clubs & Personal
 Trainers use the
**Lead Maximiser
 Program™** to
 generate leads for
 their business.

Make GymLink
 part of your
 marketing mix.

**Now with a 10% Network
 Member Discount**

*If your investment is not returned within the minimum 12 month campaign period through new membership or client sales, GymLink will refund your listing fees in full.

 **GYMLINK**
 1300 854 991
 www.gymlink.com.au

3. **Exercise your brain with new creative activities.** Paint, draw, try your hand at writing poetry, write a short story, do a crossword, watch a quiz show. Consider what your passions are away from your work, and how much time you are spending on them on a weekly basis. Think about the things you used to do when you were a child that made you lose track of time. Quite often those passions are your most creative endeavours, yet they're the first things to go when you're pushed for time. In order to exercise your brain and get creatively fit you need to make time to spend on these passions. Your creative spirit is like a small spark. It needs to be fanned to make it into a small flame, and fanned further to make it into a raging fire.
4. **Relax.** Spend quiet time relaxing, contemplating and writing ideas and thoughts down as they come to you. Meditating is an excellent way to stimulate your creative mind. In this day and age of multitasking, multimedia, and mobile communication we often appear to have less time to sit and think. Make sure you set aside relaxing, quiet, contemplating or problem solving time each day in your diary. If it's not in your diary, it won't happen. Don't be distracted 24/7 by mobile phones and electronic personal organisers.
5. **Break your habits.** Do something different every day. Go to work a different way, do something different at lunch time, read a newspaper with a different political stance, do a different class, go to the theatre, or take a day off to explore a new area. Breaking habits is a very important part of breaking routine. You wake up in the morning and go through the same routine to get ready for work. Most people go the same way to work, to the same office, the same desk, the same computer, the same meetings with the same people in the same boardrooms. They then have the same thing for lunch, go through the same routine in the afternoon, go home and sit in front of the television and follow the same routine until they climb back into bed. It's important to change your habits each day. You wake up in a box, you shower in a box, you eat breakfast from a box, you drive to work in a box, you work all day in a box staring at a box, you drive home in a box, to your box and you sit at night and watch the box, and when you leave this world, you leave in a box... and people wonder why we can't think outside the square. Break out of the routine!

Thinking about, and implementing these five points will help you become more mentally fit, unlock your great ideas and give you the keys to your creativity to benefit you and your business. ■



Gary Bertwistle

Gary is the founder of Blue Moon Creative at the Vault, Australia's first creative thinking venue. He devotes his time to teaching people how to unlock their imaginations and engage their creativity. Gary is a key-note speaker and is the author of the book, *The Keys to Creativity*, available from all good bookshops.

Visit www.bluemooncreative.com.au for more information.



20-22 April 2007 ♦ Sydney Convention Centre

Discover how marketing can transform your business at Gary's brilliant FILEX 2007 session:

♦ Six cylinder marketing (B3A)

For program information see page 10 of your FILEX brochure, or visit www.fitnessnetwork.com.au/FILEX where you can also register online.

REMEMBER – you'll save \$\$\$s if you register as an Early Bird by 5 March!