



Goal oriented adventure fitness: a supplementary business model for personal trainers

DO YOU EVER WAKE UP WITHOUT A SPRING IN YOUR STEP? Psychologists say we need three things to be happy: something to do; someone to love; and something to look forward to. Adventure fitness gives you and your clients that 'Something to look forward to', so you can bounce out of bed every morning and seize the day with the enthusiasm and energy of a gold medal winner.

The secret

A goal oriented adventure fitness program will excite and motivate both you and your clients and leave them begging for more. It provides a goal so powerful that clients will commit to their training like never before – they will literally climb mountains to conquer the challenge. The added bonus with these adventures is that achieving the goal is so rewarding that both you and your clients will be champing at the bit to go on the next one! The secret is to find the right goal; the following adventure fitness model shows you how.

Finding the goal

Passion is paramount to success. If you are passionate about a challenge, then your clients will be too. They will be drawn to your enthusiasm and follow you to the ends of the earth. Your job then is to convince them that they can achieve their goal, and that you will show them how. You then employ your professional skills in

exercise prescription to train them for the challenge which you can achieve together. So, here's an adventure fitness goal: climb Mt Kilimanjaro, the highest freestanding mountain on the planet at 5,989 metres. How easy is it to excite a small group of your clients to join you? If you're passionate, it's a breeze.

Requirements of the goal:

- Must be in an exotic, remote location
- Must be achievable but very challenging
- Must be an individual and team activity
- Must require skills that you, as a fitness professional, can teach or access with your clients.

Examples of adventure fitness goals include:

- Mt Fansipan: Highest Mountain in Vietnam
- Mt Kinabalu: Highest Mountain in Sth East Asia
- Cradle Mountain: World famous Tassie trek
- Milford Track: World famous New Zealand trek
- Mt Kilimanjaro: Highest free standing mountain on Earth
- Mt Elbrus: Highest mountain in Europe
- Ice Climbing in NZ

My experience

A few years ago, one of my group personal training clients handed me a Lonely Planet guide to trekking in Africa

and said; 'Let's climb Mt Kilimanjaro' and a couple of other clients in the group then voiced their enthusiasm. I took the book home and read the chapter on Mt Kilimanjaro and started to get excited. As most of my clients were middle-aged working mums with young children I was a little sceptical, but this scepticism was fighting a losing battle with my sense of adventure.

I sourced a travel company that specialised in this type of adventure and they put together a unique trip for our two week time frame. To get our own customised trip though, we had to have a group of ten people.

My 'team' started with two women and after hosting a slide night grew to six. We got stuck into training, learning about Mt Kilimanjaro, and finding out about the technical gear, how to deal with altitude, malaria, arctic temperatures, torrential rain and blizzards. Within three months the group had increased to 8, and by the time we departed for Nairobi nine months later, we were a group of fifteen Aussie mums on a life changing adventure.

In the intervening period we'd;

- trekked long distances and carried packs together
- camped out under the stars and in caves in the mountains
- learned rogaining (team cross country navigation)
- climbed Australia's two highest mountains in one day
- been in a blizzard with 100kmph winds on Mt Kosciusko in the Snowy Mountains
- slept out in a kids playground and got up at midnight to walk 50kms from Manly to Sydney and back before lunch
- raised \$70,000 for an Australian run Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia
- walked 100km in 22 hours for Oxfam Trailwalker
- been featured on national television
- and bounced out of bed with a spring in our step every single day!

We went to Africa on safari, climbed a mountain with a Masai elder, jumped and danced with the Masai women and visited their homes and schools. We saw lions, zebras, hyenas, flamingos, hippos, tigers, wildebeest, giraffe, buffalo and ostrich in the Ngorongoro crater.

Then we re-wrote the record books by being the first team of mums to climb Mt Kilimanjaro and get every single team member to the top. We all cried at the summit as we contemplated the magnitude what we had achieved: scaling the world's highest free standing mountain.



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Goal oriented adventure fitness is for everybody

If you decide that you want to assemble a group of clients and do something amazing with them, you can do what I did and work out how to plan and execute it for yourself, or you can contact an adventure fitness company who can provide you with detailed training programs for the sort of adventures listed above. These companies will show you how to break down the task into small steps so you can guide your clients, every step of the way, through the preparation for the challenge.

Presentation and slide show of adventure

Drawing on experience and using media from recent expeditions that they have planned and carried out, adventure fitness companies can provide audiovisual presentations to excite your clients about their adventure and motivate them to commit. You can then be equipped with a sequential progression of workouts for a six month coaching program leading up to your planned adventure. In much the same way as you supervise a circuit training session or conduct a step class, you will use your professional fitness knowledge to supervise your adventure fitness coaching program.

Training assessment and wilderness experience

After you have been conducting your adventure fitness coaching program for a couple of months, the adventure fitness company can usually offer a day training camp to test your client's adventure fitness levels in the field and discuss gear and other concerns about your adventure challenge. This also gives clients the opportunity to ask any questions they might have about the trip, gear, vaccinations, altitude or technical skills. These preparatory camps also allow each client to be assessed for physical and mental toughness and to be given advice on future training.

After another two months these companies will offer your clients a weekend trek to further assess their training and readiness for the challenge. These treks involve taking your clients into the wilderness and seeing how they respond to the challenges of remote trekking and camping out in the Australian bush. In addition to the necessary skills, the adventure fitness company will also advise you and your clients on selecting technical gear including gortex rain coats, back packs, boots and trekking poles, and can show you how to use the gear in training. You

will also be shown how to break down the training into small steps so you can guide your clients, every step of the way, through the preparation for the challenge.

Why use an adventure fitness company?

Remember, you do what you're trained to do. You are the fitness professional, with expertise in physical fitness training. Your job is to prepare your clients for the physical and mental tasks they have chosen. Unless you take outdoor industry courses in trekking, mountaineering, abseiling, rock climbing, vertical rescue, bushwalking, bush navigation, bush survival and bush first aid, you will not be qualified to navigate, guide and keep your clients safe in remote wilderness locations.

It is recommended therefore that you book your clients onto a professional tour with a reputable company and let the travel company worry about the trip, so you can focus on the training. Don't underestimate the skills involved in being a guide, even on straightforward treks. Experience has shown me that it takes several years, or several outdoor education courses, to gain these skills and unless you wish to specialise in this, you're better off employing the services of a professional. Some companies will take the cost of your own trip into consideration when you book your team of clients on the adventure challenge, thereby ensuring that cost does not prevent you from joining your team for the culmination of all your, and their, hard work. ■



Diane Westaway, Bed PE and Grad Dip Journalism

A highly qualified fitness professional, Diane is a former National Gymnastics and Aerobics Champion, Fitness Leader of the Year and current National Masters Bouldering Championship runner-up. She is the director of Fitfa Adventure and is trained in trekking, navigation, mountaineering, abseiling and rock climbing. If you're interested in finding out more about Fitfa Adventure Challenges check out www.fitfa.com, call Diane on 0419 612 704 or e-mail diane@fitfa.com



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