

Club Network's

MANUAL

for

SUCCESS

Volume I • Number I

HOW TO RUN ~~AN OPEN DAY~~

*a health
expo.*

by Justin Tamsett

Provided as part of your Club Network membership



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About the Author



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With experience of founding and selling his own personal training business, managing fitness facilities, and owning clubs, Justin has a wealth of industry experience on which to draw when assisting others in the management of their facilities.

In 1994 Justin opened Active Fitness, a fitness only facility which was complemented in 2001 by Active Health Club. Finding that club owners around the world face a multitude of challenges, many of which he has faced himself, Justin developed Active Management to assist club owners in the successful and profitable management of their fitness businesses.

As President of the Fitness Centre's Association in 1993, and later of FitnessNSW, a role he served for two terms, Justin has spent a great deal of time planning the development of the fitness industry. An active member of the Australian Fitness Roundtable program, a graduate of the IHRSA School of Fitness Club Management, and regular FILEX presenter, Justin currently conducts the Golden Steps of Club Management training course in conjunction with Australian Fitness Network. He also finds time to lecture for Australian Fitness Network and Australian Institute of Fitness.

Justin now shares many of the lessons he has learned, and mistakes he has made, incorporating them into messages that you and your team can directly relate to your business.

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HOW TO RUN ~~AN OPEN DAY~~

a health expo.

In 1995 an IHRSA-sponsored study, conducted by American Sports Data and NFO Research (one of the world's largest market information companies), found that adults who had sampled a health club workout within the past 12 months were 4.6 times more likely to join a club during the coming year than those who hadn't.

So, a popular marketing ploy for many of us now is to throw open the doors of our facilities for everyone to come in and see how much we have changed. Come in and try an aerobics class, check out the child minding facilities, discover what Pilates is and even see how nice the change rooms are now! But without reasons to come along, your doors will be open and no-one will walk through them. So, how do you get people to sample your club?

Over the following pages we will go through the steps you need to make your Open House truly successful at acquiring and retaining members.

Changing Times

It's hard to believe that it's been nearly 25 years since the original Jane Fonda Workout book was released and since high-impact aerobics and the phrase 'Feel the burn' came into vogue. That's quarter of a century since the word fitness meant 'hard bodies', or since *Time* magazine featured 'The Fitness Craze' on its cover and observed that the quest for a perfect physique had become a 'national obsession' in the USA. A lot has changed. Today, fitness has a different face: it is that of a child, of a pregnant woman, of a middle-aged man confined to a wheelchair, of a very-senior citizen. As recognition of the benefits of exercise has become more widespread, so have the opportunities to increase membership to health clubs.

Club owners have responded with new, more appropriate, facilities, equipment, programs, and services. They've also responded with more sophisticated business practices, including imaginative and ever-more-effective marketing strategies. Twenty five years ago our marketing consisted of sexy torsos splashed across newspaper ads and \$299 specials. Today, the industry is embracing the 'community outreach' approach. This involves many aspects, but is mainly intended to enhance our local standing, prestige, and appeal within the community. The majority of the general public still sees 'hard bodies' and high impact aerobic classes as being what fitness facilities are about.

As gyms evolved into fitness centres, and fitness centres then became health clubs (the difference being the ambience and the services), along the way our consumers have evolved.

Thanks, in part, to the media, they are savvier in regard to what health clubs should offer, and have a greater thirst for knowledge on health, fitness and general wellbeing. Yet many are still too scared to come in and try out a facility.

Change the Name!

The 1980s were the heyday of the leg warmer and the head band. The 90s gave the g-string and the odd unitard their time in the spotlight. Today, shorts and t-shirts are de rigueur. Just as our work gear has evolved, so must our Open House or Open Day.

However, it is no longer 'cool' or 'hip' to have an Open House or Open Day. This is what schools, universities and even hospitals have, but not health clubs. An Open House or Open Day implies that people can come in and have a look at your health club, but the reality is that market that will respond will primarily be the fit and the healthy; maybe even members of other clubs. This is because no reason has been given to the interested de-conditioned market to come and check the facility out. Forget the idea of an Open Day and think 'Health Fair' or 'Health Expo' instead. By changing the name, a new reason arises to go and look around; a health fair or expo implies that there is more than exercise going on, and that an opportunity exists to learn something interesting that could benefit those who attend.

Straight away, the name indicates much more than simply visiting a gym, so you will gain the attention of more than the gym goer! Once you have the attention of the general public they will read on and see what a wide range of activities you have going on under the roof of your club.

Members, and the community, will realise that you are the 'hub' of activity and health information within their community. You will be elevated - or reconfirmed - as the expert in this field, and this, in turn, will guarantee you sales and retention.

But, you must now deliver a true health expo!

Know Your Target Market

The challenge many fitness facilities face when organising such an event, is deciding *who* they are trying to attract. Ask yourself; do I want my event to be a retention tool? Do I want it to be a member acquisition tool? Or do I want it to be both?

It can certainly be both. In fact, I would encourage it to be. You can market your event far more cheaply to your members than you can to the general public. And when

members know about it, they will tell their friends, which is critical, because in order to get a return on the time and money you invest, you will need non-members to attend.

Most importantly, when you cater for both exercisers and no-exercisers, ensure your activities can be enjoyed by both groups. Be sure not to make anything exclusive to members, as this is an expo for everyone to experience new things, gain information and experience exactly how much fun your facility can be!

You also need to be clear about who you would like to attend, based on the demographic of your club. For example, if the average age of your members is 40 plus, the activities, education and events will be very different to that of a health expo directed towards 20 to 40 year olds.

GOLDEN NUGGET: if the demographic of your club is 20 to 40 year olds, I suggest a one day membership sale will be more successful for generating income than a health expo.

What You Can Do At Your Health Expo

What your health expo involves is limited only by your imagination and the network of professionals in your community. The key link between each activity and piece of information needs to be health; everything you do must revolve around improving health, fitness and wellbeing.

1. Club Services

You must promote the exercise programs that you have available within your club. This will help reinforce the benefits to current users, and will allow new users to 'try' them in a less intimidating environment than that of a regular class. For example, you could run 15 minute 'teaser classes', allowing participants to try a class for 15 minutes to see if they like it.

You should also position yourself as the community expert in regard to any services you offer in your club.

Ensure that the personal trainers have a good display stand to work with to ensure they are adequately resourced to answer any exercise related questions. Equipment at the stand will enhance the appeal and look - try a rower, bike or Swiss ball. You may even like to conduct:

- blood pressure testing;
- flexibility tests;
- posture assessments; and or
- a simple cardio or strength test.

The more interactive your activities, the greater the appeal can be for visitors. Also remember, the stand and staff must appear friendly and welcoming, so visitors feel comfortable enough to approach them for a chat.

If you have an in house massage therapist, they should be giving free upper back and neck massages, while at the same time promoting on-going massage services within the club. If you have an in house dietitian or nutritionist, they should also set up an information consultancy stand, again with the goal of booking on going appointments, and promoting the services available at the club.

2. Community Services

Don't just think about promoting services you provide within your club; give information about other health services available in your community, so long as they do not compete or conflict with any services you offer.

If your club doesn't offer every exercise option available in your community, your health expo can allow smaller, community-based organisations to promote their programs at little or no cost. If they are available in your community, you could showcase these additional exercise options:

- Yoga
- Yogalates
- Tai chi
- Meditation
- Feldenkrais
- Bowen therapy
- Pilates
- Self defence programs
- Martial arts.

3. Educational Information

Your club will gain credibility if key health organisations are present at your event. Be sure to contact them in advance in order to guarantee their presence. Here is a list of health related organisations that could display at your event, or that you could hand out information about:

- Asthma Foundation – www.asthmaustralia.org.au
- Diabetes Australia – www.diabetesaustralia.com.au
- National Heart Foundation – www.heartfoundation.com.au
- Arthritis Australia – www.arthritisaustralia.com.au
- Quit Smoking – www.quit.org.au
- Cancer Council – www.cancer.org.au
- Local area health services.

If you can involve local medical and paramedical organisations, this will increase interest in your health expo. Plus, they may also promote the event to their patients. Here is a list of health and wellness practitioners you could seek in your local community:

- physiotherapists
- dietitians and nutritionists
- chiropractors
- massage therapists
- naturopaths
- osteotherapists
- podiatrists.

4. Natural Therapies

Just as the fitness industry has changed over the years, so has the way in which people view their wellness. Accommodate the demand for natural therapies by featuring people in your area who practice:

- acupuncture
- aromatherapy
- colour therapy
- feng shui
- homeopathy
- hypnotherapy
- iridology
- kinesiology
- polar therapy

- reflexology
- reiki
- shiatsu.

An excellent web site to locate your local practitioners is www.naturaltherapypages.com.au

5. Marketing

To market your health fair you need to use traditional and guerilla marketing techniques.

Your traditional marketing efforts will encompass local newspaper advertising and letterbox drops. See the templates in this manual for a Health Expo flyer that you may gain some ideas from.

Guerilla marketing comes from linking with the local practitioners and businesses, where you ask them to put your advertising posters in their places of business, or use their databases to advertise the event for you; this could be via e-mails or letters. The key to success is to sit with them and identify how you can help each other through this joint marketing approach.

6. The Hidden Key

To maximise the marketing of your health expo, link the whole event with a charity. All forms of media love good news stories, so if you can raise money for a charity you will gain publicity prior to, as well as after, the event. Another advantage of working with charities is that they often have experts who can help guide you in the organisation of your event.

To contact the media, use the experts such as www.aap.com.au. These sorts of companies can help you write your press releases and can also be a distributor of the release for you. They have databases of all newspapers, radio and television stations. The cost is minimal but your return will be huge when the media pick up your story.

GOLDEN NUGGET: raise money for a local charity or organisation and people will flock to your event.

GOLDEN NUGGET: local personalities and politicians love to have their face in front of the camera and the community. Make sure you invite them to come along, and take lots of pictures of them.

7. Ways to Raise Money

There are a number of ways to raise money at such an event. One traditional way is to hold a raffle in which local businesses donate prizes or donations. Alternatively, you could charge the exhibitors at the event a nominal fee to be present. This fee could be anything from \$50 to \$500, depending upon any other costs that may be incurred, such as hire of tables and chairs. For them this will be tax deductible, and for you it will help cover costs and raise money for the charity.

You can also raise money through sponsorship of activities that you have in your club. At your health fair you could have a sponsored:

- indoor triathlon
- aerobathon, or

- exercise-based competitions such as body building, physique or fitness challenges.

GOLDEN NUGGET: when running an event or activity where there could be a winner, ensure everyone has a chance of winning. Have a 'lucky door prize' for all those who compete, as opposed to just rewarding the fastest, strongest or fittest! This will encourage greater participation.

8. Staffing

As with anything in business, your event will be as successful as your staff make it! So make sure you have them involved from the beginning. Establish a Health Expo team who will be responsible for the event, and allocate tasks to each member. This will take the emphasis off of you and spread the work load.

Your health expo will take a lot of work to be successful, and a lot of planning. You cannot afford to cut corners, so make sure your team is diligent and has great communication skills and channels in place. See the templates in this manual for a Health Expo Planner that you may find useful.

GOLDEN NUGGET: have champions on the team to help you. If they have some 'buy in' to the expo, or specific events, then they will drive it harder. In turn, this will make your job, as the organiser, so much easier.

9. Sponsors

Your health expo can be any size you want, depending on how much effort and expense you are willing to put into it. To help offset costs you can look for sponsors of the event. You could ask experts in areas that you may be weak in to be co-sponsors of the event. You could have differing levels of sponsorship, for example, a Gold Sponsor may contribute \$2,500 for which they get their logo on all printed and e-mail material and a free booth, whereas a Silver Sponsor may pay \$1,000 to be listed as a Silver Sponsor on the program and to receive a free stand.

Contra-deals can be really useful too. For example, try to get a printing company to co-sponsor the event. They can provide all the printed material for the event, with their logo appearing on everything they produce in return. You may even be able to come to a similar arrangement with local media.

Having Fun!

Have you ever seen a fair or expo that didn't look fun? Of course not! So, when planning your event, the bottom line is to create fun, excitement and a reason to attend. This will involve:

- colourful balloons, streamers and banners
- upbeat music
- guided movement through events and activities.

If you take this into account when designing your event, along with all the other factors we've discussed, then you will achieve your goals by having hosted a truly successful health expo. ■

SAMPLE PLANNING DOCUMENTS

HEALTH EXPO TEAM

Health Expo team	Jenny, John, Fiona, Joan, Peter
Charity	John
Health experts	Fiona
Sponsors	Joan
Marketing	Jenny
Media Liason/Spokesperson	Peter

HEALTH EXPO PLANNER

Item	Team Member	Date	Completed
Establish Health Expo team	Jenny	1-Mar	
Meeting #1 • Allocation of tasks • Design Health Expo Planner • Decide which charity you will be supporting • Determine which 'specialists' & 'health experts' you would like at the event • Make list of potential sponsors • Make list of VIP guests - celebrities & politicians	Health Fair Team	1-Mar	
Contact & meet with charity	John	15-Mar	
Contact the community groups, invited 'specialists' & 'health experts'	Fiona	15-Mar	
Ensure you have full commitment from community groups, 'specialists' & 'health experts'	Fiona	30-Mar	
Contact potential sponsors	Joan	30-Mar	
Invite local celebrities and politicians	Peter	30-Mar	
Meeting #2 - update on planning	Health Fair Team	1-Apr	
Draft of all marketing material	Jenny	1-Apr	
Meeting #3 - update on planning	Health Fair Team	1-May	
Sponsorship deals secured	Joan	1-May	
Meeting #4 - update on planning	Health Fair Team	1-Jun	
Meeting #5 - update on planning	Health Fair Team	1-Jul	
Meeting #6 - update on planning	Health Fair Team	1-Aug	
Marketing material fully finalised	Jenny	1-Aug	
Printing of marketing material	Jenny	1-Sep	
Allocate tasks for the day	Health Fair Team	15-Sep	
Ads in local paper booked: for 2 weeks prior to the event	Jenny	15-Sep	
Ensure community groups, invited 'specialists' & 'health experts' use their databases to promote expo	Jenny	22-Sep	
Posters up in local shops	Jenny	1-Oct	
Meeting #7 - practice the event	Health Fair Team	1-Oct	
Flyer distribution promoting event	Jenny	7-Oct	
Event	Health Fair Team	15-Oct	
Media Release of money raised	Peter	16-Oct	
Meeting #8 - evaluation	Health Fair Team	1-Nov	

HEALTH EXPO FLYER

This and other sample flyers can be seen in full colour in the online version of this manual at www.fitnessnetwork.com.au

Member Appreciation Week

October 23-28

Sunday October 23
 10:15am-11:15am BODYPUMP® Team Teach Class Favorites
 11:30am-12:30pm Intro to Yoga Clinic, Kathy Senecal

Monday October 24
Dental Hygiene Day • Babysitting Craft: Color Halloween Pictures
 9:00am-11:00am Chair Massage, Paul Rice
 5:00pm-6:00pm Spice up your Workout, Kim Foster
 5:00pm-7:00pm Blood Pressure Screening

Tuesday October 25
Breast Cancer Awareness • Babysitting Craft: Pom Pom Pumpkins
 10:45am-11:30am Nutrition Q & A, Kelly Morin-Irwin
 5:00pm-6:00pm Mary Kay Demo, Rosanna Barry
 6:00pm-6:45pm Nutrition Q & A, Kelly Morin-Irwin
 6:00pm-10:00pm Volleyball Tournament, Carina Alfano

Wednesday October 26
Children's Health Day • Babysitting Craft: Halloween Wreath
 10:00-3:00pm Physical Therapy Assessments by VPT
 11:00am-11:30am Relaxation Class, Lorie Bernard
 1:00pm-3:00pm Blood Pressure Screening
 5:00pm-6:00pm Intro to Jr. FIT, Gino Caro
 5:15pm-5:45pm Group Cycle Clinic, Carolyn Rivers
 6:00pm-7:00pm Swim Lesson Testing, Deb Vynalek

Thursday October 27
Healthy Lung Month • Babysitting Craft: White Ghosts
 8:45am-9:15am Group Cycle Clinic, Lorie Bernard
 10:30am-11:30am Personal Training Circuit
 5:15pm-5:45pm BODYPUMP® Technique Class, Rick Daversa
 6:00pm-7:00pm Personal Training Circuit
 6:15pm-7:15pm Aqua Master Class, Sarah/Sharon/Pam

Friday October 28
Babysitting Craft: Trick or Treat Bags
 8:15am-8:45am BODYPUMP® Technique Class, Ray Shaw
 9:00am-11:00am Blood Pressure Screening
 9:30am-10:30am Aqua Cuff Clinic, Sharon Fagan
 10:00am-11:00am Spice up your Workout, Kim Foster

American Red Cross Blood Drive
 Friday, October 28th
 1:30pm to 6:00pm

The New England Athletic Club

Where healthier lives begin.

newenglandathleticclub.com

Club Network Membership

Australian Fitness Network's Club Network membership provides fitness facility owners and managers with all the resources they need to ensure business success. Your Club Network membership provides you with awesome resources including:

- Three quarterly publications aimed specifically for fitness industry professionals and club owners/managers (*Network* magazine, *Club Network* and *Manual for Success*)
- Pre-written media releases
- Fitness puzzles and member newsletters for your members
- Retention letters
- Member waiver
- Birthday cards
- Inspirational posters, bookmarks and postcards
- A place to advertise your job vacancies and to find new staff
- Discounts on products and training aids.

PLUS through the Club Solutions Network, your Club Network membership is your one-stop shop for all the turnkey solutions you need to take your facility to the next level of success. Through the Club Solutions Network program, you receive thousands of dollars worth of massive and exclusive discounts on:

- Print Marketing Solutions, through Active Management (www.activemgmt.com.au)
- Direct Debit and Financial Solutions, through Ezypay (www.ezypay.com.au)
- Footwear, Apparel and Equipment Solutions, through Reebok (www.reebok.com.au)
- Continuing Education Solutions, through Australian Fitness Network (www.fitnessnetwork.com.au)
- Sales and Customer Service Training Solutions, through Impact Training Corporation and the National Sales Academy (www.impact-training.net and www.nationalsalesacademy.com.au)



This *Manual for Success* is provided as part of your Club Network membership. For more information contact:

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