

Title:

Health Club Owners: 4 Ways The Personal Training Department Can Improve Your Bottom Line

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Summary:

A well designed personal training department should be the "engine" of any health club. Not only should your personal training department be a profit center, but it should also promote member retention, drive referrals and lower the barrier of entry for new prospects.

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Article Body:

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In most health clubs the personal training department is viewed as a source of some additional cash flow and is focused on the affluent component of the club's member base. Typically trainers will offer an assessment to new members and will only impact the club's bottom line by selling packages to those members who can afford one, two or even three sessions per week training. Unfortunately, this is very shortsighted. A well-structured personal training department can be much more than a profit center impacting only a small segment of your club's member base, it can be your club's customer service center, referral and retention center and a source of as much as 25% of your club's gross revenues all rolled up into one. You just have to look for ways to maximize your trainers' impact in your club. Here are four tips to get you started.

1. Generate Higher Usage Rates Among Club Members.

If you're maximizing the role your personal trainers play in your club, invariably your usage rates will climb. By offering a complimentary personal training and program design session to all new members you will ensure that everyone that joins your club will feel more comfortable and have an initial "game plan" to get the results they're looking for. When they feel comfortable in your club and feel they're on the path to their desired results, regular attendance is a foregone conclusion. And that's going to result in:

- Increased likelihood of them remaining a member of your club longer.

- Increased likelihood of them referring new members to your club.
- Increase the lifetime value of that member via peripheral purchases like cooler drinks, nutritional supplements, tanning sessions, fitness apparel and services like personal training and weight management coaching.

2. Improve Club Member Retention Rates.

In this market where there are new health club franchises popping up almost every other month, and new clubs opening at a break-neck pace, holding on to the members you already have has to be your first objective.

It's much easier (and also much cheaper) to retain a current member than it is to gain an entirely new member.

You'll have a much better retention rate if your members:

- Feel a sense of community in your club, which can begin with the personal trainers.
- Are consistently using your club. We discussed this in tip number one. If they are utilizing the services of a personal trainer or at least using the initial plan laid out during their complimentary session, their attendance will dramatically improve.
- Are getting the results that lead them to join your club in the first place.

3. Improve the Rate of New Referrals From Your Members.

If your members are getting all the things listed above, they are going to willingly provide more referrals to your club. And if your trainers are working with them on a one-on-one or small group basis, they are going to experience great results.

Your trainers can also systematically facilitate referrals by inviting clients to bring a friend, family member or co-worker to a session. This will allow the guest to experience the club as a member would rather than on a tour or by wandering around on their own during a trial membership. The guest will feel comfortable because they're with a friend and in turn be far more likely to join your club.

4. More Clients = More Money.

If you want to reap the benefits listed previously, you need to have a higher personal training penetration rate among your members. In most health clubs the penetration rate is 2-4%. 2-4% of members utilize a personal trainer, therefore only 2-4% of those members are maximizing their results, being coached to make peripheral purchases and are great "referral champions."

If you don't already, begin offering one and two session per month personal training programs to members where the clients will receive monthly program design, body composition testing and goal setting. Consider offering small group personal training to bring the price point down and make it a viable option to more members. By implementing just these two strategies you should be able to push your penetration rates above 10% and start taking advantage of the benefits associated with a well-managed personal training department.

Obviously, this is not a comprehensive list of the numerous ways you can use your personal training department to improve your club's membership and your profits, only a starting point. Take these tips, modify them to fit your club and add you own ideas to them. Before you know it, you'll be viewing your personal training department as "control central" in your health club.