

Learn From the Past

BY GREG LAWLOR

Recently during Remembrance Day ceremonies, I overheard someone say, "If we don't remember our past, we will have no future." I believe that this same sentiment holds true in the context of helping people with their fitness and lifestyle choices.

In the past three to five years we have seen more competition arriving and more business closings than ever before. Are the two linked? It would be naive to think they're not related at least to some degree.

Competition comes in many forms including Internet-based programs and the infamous TV infomercial. (Did you know the P90x program is a \$400 million annual business?)

In talking to many people across the continent, a few claim that decreased consumer spending is the reason for the decline of some fitness clubs. I think, however, that we need to peel the onion a little more thoroughly to better understand the past and how to use this information for the future.

Here are six strategies I believe we should employ for 2012.

1. Focus more on doing the right thing

Treat others as you would like to be treated and good things will happen. Word of mouth, referrals, social media and our reputations allow us to keep growing and being better. Implementing steps so your staff members are empowered to do the right thing will continue to be very important.



2. Raise the bar

There is a desperate need for our industry to mature. Sales and marketing probably represent the biggest areas needing additional skill development.

Ongoing development in the areas of operations, equipment purchasing and maintenance, program development, hiring and training and member/patron retention will also raise the bar and the status of our industry.

3. Connect with your target market

Incorporating additional revenue streams through services such as in-home fitness, equipment re-sale with fitness

programs, online fitness programs and providing education opportunities for the communities you serve will continue to grow your business.

4. Focus on nutrition

The demand for expertise in the area of nutrition is growing, and as fitness leaders we have a responsibility to be better at providing nutritional education. The better we are at helping with the 162 hours per week that people aren't in the gym, the greater their success will be.

5. Link to health care

One of the most successful fitness businesses models I have seen has a thriving connection to the medical community. More and more fitness lifestyles will begin here. How to grow an MD referral program is available for those wanting to learn.

6. Success recipe and programming will continue to grow

Most people still don't know how to incorporate activity into their lives. Providing how-to workout programs that cater to a specific population (like CrossFit, P90X and Curves), group and small group training, and short duration programs will continue to grow in popularity.

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