

# Selling Experiences



by Terry Browning

**P**roblem: “Feature selling” appeals to the smallest market and creates a price sensitive, disloyal member. The results? Low prices, low retention and low profits.

Solution: “Experience selling” appeals to the largest market and creates a non-price sensitive, “raving fan”<sup>1</sup> member. The results? Higher prices, higher retention and higher profits.

American Sports Data has identified that 17 percent of the population are “hard-core fitness participants,” the majority of whom already belong to clubs. A whopping 63 percent is identified as “low hanging fruit” because they are convinced of the virtue of fitness and are ready to join health clubs. The “low hanging fruit” should be the most important marketing target for clubs.

However, even though they are ready to join, they still do not. Looking more closely, we find that these people are unhealthy, overweight, un-athletic and may be self-conscious about their bodies. Considering their psychographics, referring to them as “fragile eggs” may shed more light on how we should service and sell them. Think about how you handle a fragile egg.

To sell experiences, you have to deliver experiences. Let’s face it, we are selling exercise, and to most people, especially the fragile egg, exercise can hurt, is boring, is embarrassing, is inconvenient and, worst of all, you have to commit to it for a lifetime. When group fitness is simple, fun, and effective, it is your most viable means of creating memorable experiences. In group fitness, the music, instructor and group environment come together to motivate, build relationships and create a sense of “safety in numbers.” This memorable group fitness experience can only be created with a system of branded, consistent, high-quality programming that is kept fresh and dynamic.

## Bad Sales Habits and How to Break Them

Questioning long-standing practices can be a very powerful tool.

*How do you pitch and close a deal?*

Maybe the ripped, 26-year-old, smooth sales-membership consultant, attempting to close the sale after a feature-rich tour of the weights, treadmills, stationary bikes and locker room doesn’t really connect with the fragile egg.

What if you allowed a fragile egg to try a memorable group fitness experience prior to closing the sale? Would this make them more apt to “buy” your facility? Remember, the fragile egg has not been successful with exercise. Getting through a memorable group fitness experience first enables them to build greater value in their mind.

How about Saturn, the auto manufacturer, who now allows for a 24-hour test drive to enhance the purchase experience for their fragile eggs?

Maybe the six-tiered multiple price options, coupled with the “this is your lucky day, join now and take advantage of this one-time deal,” strategy only gets the fragile egg thinking about price. Maybe this strategy actually encourages them to visit other facilities to get the best deal.

What if you only offered one price? No price presentation. No haggling. No overthinking.

How about Saturn creating a no-haggle price to enhance the purchasing experience for the fragile egg?

*How do you retain the members you acquire?*

Maybe long-term contracts are intimidating to fragile eggs since they have yet to be successful with fitness. This is a nightmare for most operators since retention, which is an indicator of how happy and successful your customer

is with your product, is so poor.

What if you only offered a month-to-month alternative to annual contracts? By doing so, you would force yourself to create or increase a retention budget and focus on “how” you service your members.

*How do you generate more referrals?*

Maybe trying to bribe the fragile egg for referrals with t-shirts and water bottles, while they are “completing the paperwork” and before they have had a memorable experience, is not the most effective method.

What if referrals came from happy, satisfied members who have had memorable group fitness experiences and have told their friends about the club without being prodded?

Assume you went to a fantastic restaurant that your friend recommended. As you entered the restaurant, the hostess asked you for three names of your friends that she could call, at home, to invite them to the restaurant. Before she seated you, before the waiter took your order, before the waiter served your food, before you ate your meal, before you ate your desert, before you paid for your meal...Not a chance.

By investing in a system to deliver memorable group fitness experiences, you will be able to convert fragile eggs to “raving fans” by experience selling. These “raving fans” will change your facility and the face of the industry. Attend a free group fitness management seminar to learn more.

### (Footnotes)

<sup>1</sup> “Raving Fans: A Revolutionary Approach to Customer Service,” by Ken Blanchard, Sheldon Bowles.

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