

# Mission Possible: Driving Sales Revenue With Group Fitness



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**I**n a world of the low-price model and what seems to be a health club on every corner, differentiating your club is no longer a priority, it is a necessity. Sales and Service are what we preach to our staff day in and day out with the certainty of knowing that if you fall short on those two categories you will quickly fall short on the club's bottom line. Retention is a word we mumble and show interest in often, but we ultimately don't know how to accurately track it, don't know what to do to improve it; therefore, we do nothing about fixing it.

A few years ago I attended a Group Fitness Management Seminar, and they presented a statistic that was reported in CBI's June 2000 issue. It stated that "90% of all exercisers report that they prefer to work out in a group." There it was. The magic bullet that was right under my nose: Group Fitness. I am not talking about any Group Fitness classes – by introducing Branded Group Fitness Programming I now had access to consistent programming, marketing and coaching support which helped to lay the foun-

ation of my Group Fitness Success.

Branded Group Fitness is the Ultimate Differentiator to the low price clubs. It's a Retention tool that provides members and guests with a scheduled workout, a great and consistent fitness experience, and results that keep them coming back for more. It's a Service tool that puts members and guests in daily contact with well trained club staff. It's a Sales Tool that can drive revenue to any club that has the awareness to seize the opportunity. With challenging economic times, sales revenue is needed and always welcome. Here is how you and your team can benefit from more sales revenue from the greatest club amenity you can offer.

## THE OLD SCHOOL PARTY

The pendulum always swings back. Everything that once was is now again. Remakes of old movies, retro products, and even 80's fashion are all the "IN" thing today. History does repeat itself. In the fitness industry, functional training was popular in the 20's

and 30's, out in the late 70's, 80's, and early 90's but now back in full force. Even Jane Fonda has a new exercise DVD coming out next year.

In my past college experiences, everyone loved the classic fraternity party. A Luau, a Cinco de Mayo, a Mardi Gras, a St. Patrick's Day, and a Casino Night Party were the way we unwound and enjoyed our college experience. Every event we hosted 100's and sometimes 1000's of people attended and in flowed the revenue. In our industry Midnight Madness, Fitness Parties, and Open Houses are all the "been there done that" fitness events of yester-year. But it's time for the repeat. The people go where the people are.

### MARKETING THE PARTY

First, you need total staff involvement. The key to throwing a good party and generating memberships on that day requires having your staff excited and ready to work. Selling is nothing more than the transfer of emotion, and enthusiasm brushes off on everyone you come meet. Get them involved in every aspect of the event from planning, decorating, prospecting, telemarketing, referring friends and telling members. About a week prior to the party, every conversation you have with your staff should include how much fun it going to be and what the expectations and goals are.

Second, all great parties start with a good theme. Just for the record, the cheesier the better. So, bring the cheese! The more fun and even silly the theme gets the more your staff will get behind it. When deciding on a theme, create it around group fitness music, upcoming holidays, movies or anything that just has a ring to it. Examples are: "Stomp the Yard" Step Party, "Ghost Rider" Spinning Class, "Fight Club" Kick Party, "Back to Fitness" Retro Group Fitness Party, "Poker Face" Casino Night, and a Wild Wild West Gold's Gym Member Round-up.

Third, you must promote the event one week prior to the big day. Any earlier and you will affect the sales before the party. Having a big open house is not to catch your sales up for the month, but to help put your club sales above your monthly goal. Internal marketing should include fliers (posted in club and passed out to members), announcements over the club intercom, instructors making announcements to their classes, e-mail blasts to members/prospects, and telemarketing to any phone numbers you can get your hands on. External marketing can be costly, so

outside of fliers and bag stuffers there's only one sure fire thing that has been proven to work: It's as easy as getting your staff to invite everyone they come in contact with outside of the club. Tell the world to come and ask them to bring a friend!

Fourth, all you need is some decorations. Balloons, fliers, and just a \$100 at your local party supply store and you got it covered. And don't forget the art of trading out. I've had an ongoing trade-out with a local dj for over two years. He spins it up in the club every other month and it provides an unbelievable fitness experience. As your staff buys into the themed open house, they become walking decorations themselves with Disco attire, Western outfits, and Hawaiian shirts. Get creative. We have had casino parties with roulette wheels and black jack tables and a western party with a mechanical bull.

Finally, the budget is next to nothing. We keep ours from \$250 to \$750 dollars per party. Let me give you an example: Wild Wild West – Member Round-Up Party: Fliers \$100, E-mail blast \$0, Mechanical Bull from local bar \$0 (1 comp membership), DJ \$0 (Trade-Out for 6 Events per year), Decorations from Party City \$100, Hay Bales \$100, and here's the big one - 400 BBQ Chicken breasts, baked beans, and salad to serve for members and guests for free (local BBQ restaurant provided grill and griller) only \$450. Total Expenses \$750. Huge success and out of this world fitness experience for everyone, and fed 400 members! Priceless!

### NUMBERS DON'T LIE

I know sometimes talk is cheap, but here are some numbers that show why having an open house can directly help achieving those ever elusive monthly sales goals. Within a 12 month timeframe the parties that we have thrown involving our Branded Group Fitness programs have generated over \$150,000 in annualized revenue. Here's how we did it:

"Back to Fitness" Retro Group Fitness Party: We went back and structured all the music in the classes to be retro or old school music tracks. We printed lots of retro music posters for decorations and some hideous old school workout wear. 42 memberships (49.99 per month) sold in one day. Cost \$250

"Ghost Rider" Ride Launch: A great beautiful fall day outside and we took 75 spin bikes outside for class in the parking lot. To play off the movie, Ghost Rider, we mixed in original chopper motorcycles from a

local motorcycle dealer with our spin bikes and put skeletons on each one. Staff and instructors in costumes, Halloween decorations, balloons, and we sold 33 memberships (49.99 per month). Cost \$300

St. Patrick's Day Party: Just lots of green everything! Green balloons, green shakes from juice bar, lots and lots of clovers, a few fliers, a lot of telemarketing, some old fashioned word of mouth, and hard work scored us 63 memberships (average \$35 per month memberships). Cost \$150

"Wild Wild West" Member Round-Up: This was our best party we have ever thrown to date. Lots of hay bales, dj in club, western outfits for staff, a mechanical bull riding competition, and grilling free BBQ chicken plates for our members and guests. Internal and external marketing was as creative as we have ever implemented. The results were outstanding! A well prepared and eager club staff enrolled 122 new members in a single day. Cost \$750

### MISSION POSSIBLE

I was talking to a club owner the other day that was complaining about his clubs lack of membership sales. After listening to him blame everyone from

his competitors to his cleaning crew, I shared with him the success that we have had with themed fitness parties and open houses. He said that he had done huge midnight madness parties about ten years ago. I simply asked, "Why did you stop?" There is no substitute for hard work. We all know that attitude is everything and positivity equals profitability. Complain less and do more. The so-called old school fitness party is back! So wake up, take pride in your club even if it's a cardboard box, and draw a line in the sand today to improve the sales revenue. Right here, Right now!



*Jason West is the General Manager of the largest Gold's Gym location owned by American Club Systems (ACS) located in Columbus, GA.*

*ACS owns and operates 7 Gold's Gym franchise locations in Auburn, Huntsville and Dothan, AL and Columbus, GA. Prior to working for ACS, Jason was the General Manager of North Columbus Athletic Club (NCAC) where he gained his experience with group fitness. He can be contact at [jfwest19@hotmail.com](mailto:jfwest19@hotmail.com).*

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