



BUILDING LOYALTY THAT LASTS IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

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Though the world as we know it has changed dramatically over the past few weeks, many fitness facilities and individual fitness professionals are finding innovative ways to stay engaged with their members. The truth is that in this time of uncertainty, members need their “gym families” more than ever. This includes trainers and instructors as well as other members and staff. In fact, this is an opportunity for fitness facilities to lead the

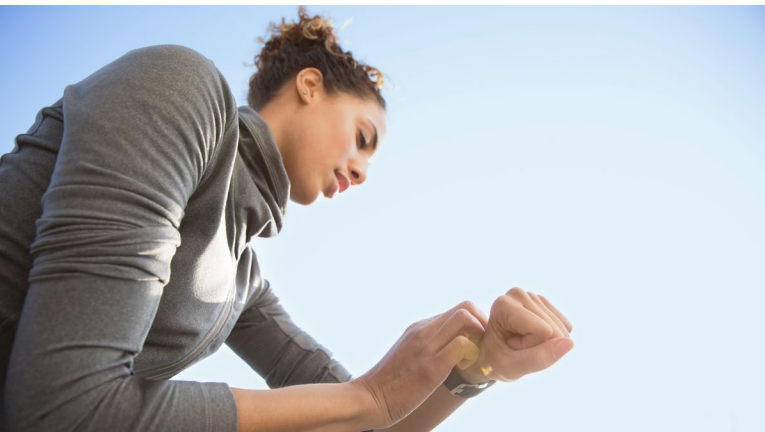
effort when it comes to keeping people connected and employees at work. As I recently heard Mike Leveque from MYZONE share, “we need physical distance while maintaining social connectedness.”

One powerful way the industry has managed to stay connected in the past couple of weeks is by posting virtual workouts online. There are many vendors who are providing content for the fitness facilities that are their customers to share with their members at no cost. There are also many clubs and individuals posting their own content. Unfortunately, this deluge of content also creates a lot of noise, and members can have trouble finding their way to the very best workouts and instruction. For your facility to produce content that matters to members, you’re going to have to provide an offering that meets all their needs during this challenging time — not just workouts, but education, information and opportunities to connect and share their stories.

**TRUTH:
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As a fitness facility owner or manager, your best strategy is a multi-pronged approach that lets members stay connected in a way that is comfortable for them. You can start by posting weekly

challenge groups that members can participate in if they so choose. You can also give members the chance to stay connected with one another by creating a private Facebook group where they can receive virtual content for workouts and education on nutrition. A private Facebook group is also an excellent place for members to share accountability posts and successes, and you can even encourage members to share by rewarding them for their hard work. These members will remember your efforts when you open your doors again, rewarding you with lasting brand loyalty. You can also make these offerings available to your community at large, making non-members that much more likely to join your facility in the future. To go even further, you should offer virtual solutions to help members maintain their appointments with their trainers. Keeping the human side of the fitness industry alive at a time when people are craving contact will benefit your business, your trainers, your facility staff and the community at large in important and lasting ways.



When putting together your content delivery plan, first consider the best platform or platforms for your needs. Both Facebook Live and Zoom can serve as dependable, easy-to-use conduits for the educational and motivational content that you and your team want to share. Facebook Live is proven to be able to handle large audiences and can be replayed later. This makes it an excellent choice for group classes, especially if you want to share them beyond your current members. Between participation during the live version and later replays of a class,

attendance for these kinds of classes often exceeds what a normal class would have drawn. For offerings where you want everyone to be able to see each other, Zoom is a great option. This app works very well for one-on-one personal training as well as small group training sessions, giving members the kind of face-to-face interaction that keeps them engaged.

Next, you'll need to think about your schedule. On the Fit-C podcast (episode 94, led by Bryan O'Rourke on dealing with the Coronavirus), Paul "The Retention Guru" Bedford shares that people need consistency during these troubling times. This means that if you have a group that is used to doing a particular class at a particular time, the best thing you can do is simply continue to offer the class at that time. This gives them something they can count on when so much seems uncertain and provides a fixed point around which they can organize their daily activities. When it comes to personal trainers, they should schedule virtual appointments as if they were live appointments. Most importantly, if you keep your members on track, they will be able to jump right back into their normal fitness routine once you are open again.

Developing a solid communication plan is also critical at this time. Proactively communicating what you have available to all members will engage a larger population in assisted exercise options than ever before. Those participating in assisted exercise (group X, SGT, PT) are 26% less likely to cancel than those who don't according to TRP (The Retention People). That makes a continued offering of classes and coached experiences a great investment. Also, by making this a community offering rather than just for your members, you have an opportunity to build a loyal base of new members as well. Strive to find a balance in communicating with your members and the community, providing neither too much nor too little, but just enough contact to keep them engaged.

Social media is another way you can keep your name at the forefront as a leader in helping people through the challenges



they are facing and providing valuable content. In addition to online offerings for your members, maintain a strong social presence that lets people know what your organization is doing. Posts pictures of staff cleaning equipment, trainers doing virtual PT sessions, front desk staff delivering groceries to members who are in quarantine and even staff doing their own workouts. All of these simple gestures will demonstrate that your organization cares about its community and the people who call it home.

“ Now defines our member relationships of the future. ”
 - Casey Conrad

Recently on The Fitness Business podcast, Casey Conrad said, “Now defines our member relationships of the future.” This quote embodies the attitude we must embrace during this

uncertain time. While this is an extremely challenging situation on many fronts, the fitness facilities and industry professionals who can view it as an opportunity to connect with current and future members in new ways will build loyalty that lasts and come out ahead in the long run.

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