

INCREASE YOUR BOTTOM LINE WITH MINIMAL INVESTMENT: DOING MORE WITH LESS AND HANGING ON TO WHAT YOU HAVE

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IN THIS ECONOMY, EVERYONE IS TRYING TO FIND a way to hang on to the business they have and generate more – without spending more.

MEMBER RETENTION

Retention is an important focus in the health club industry. Keeping the members you have is just as important as generating new ones. Some suggestions for boosting retention:

Acknowledge Special Events in Each Member's Life

Don't just call members when you are trying to sell them something. Send meaningful correspondence for special events like birthdays and anniversaries. And always thank the member for being a part of your club. You could even give a free personal training session as a gift. This could lead to additional sales – helping both you and the member at the same time.

Keep Your Eye on the Details

Implement ongoing surveys, and post the responses. Then take action on suggestions. Empower your staff to quickly and efficiently respond to member service issues. Left too long, an unhappy member can affect your club negatively.

Award Members for Continued Loyalty

Set up an easily managed, low-cost program to reward spending. The POS system in club management software will often track member purchasing history. You can also use your loyalty program to encourage more spending if a member's purchasing volume drops or becomes atypical. Good loyalty programs are personalized to take into consideration the member's likes and dislikes.

Show Your Care

Offer meaningful, ongoing events for your members and involve your staff directly. By creating a closer relationship with your member, you will continue to understand what aspects of your club they liked when they joined and why they stay. These events can be as easy as having members work out with their favorite staff member, or a staff and member "mixer." If you build a personal connection with your members, they will never think of working out anywhere else. Members want to know you care about them.

MEMBER ACQUISITION

While you are working on retaining members, look at the potential for attracting new members.

Email Campaign

An email campaign is a fast, cost-effective communication method widely accepted as everyday correspondence. Some club management systems or email services have a built-in mail merge program that allows your club to send out mass emails to select groups whenever you want. So how do you create an effective email campaign? Here are some suggestions:

- First, decide to whom you want to communicate. Prospects, existing members or former members, members interested in certain things, certain age groups, etc.
- Create a template and stay with that format. Include your club logo and contact information on all correspondence.



- Determine your desired message. Will it be an educational piece? Will it promote (advertise) a service or event at the club? Do you want to announce a special offer?
- Keep your message short. People are inundated with emails daily and tend to open them and scan them quickly. Create easy-to-read content.
- Monitor your email for replies, and respond quickly to all inquiries.
- Keep your email list up to date. If you get returned emails, ask your member for a new address. And always be sure to get permission from members or prospects — you don't want to be considered a "spammer."

Bring-A-Buddy Marketing

Your current members are your best source for finding new members. Your members are a captive audience; tap into that resource and incentivize them to do the marketing for you.

- Encourage members to reach out to their family, friends or coworkers using a "Buddy Program." This involves providing free passes for members to share with their "buddies." Mail a customized marketing piece with bar-coded passes to members and watch your referrals grow! Or better yet, email it and save on postage.
- Once the program is running, use the email campaigns to reinforce the Buddy Program message.
- Post flyers in your sales areas, and areas where members congregate or frequent. Ask your trainers and instructors to reinforce the program with each member interaction.
- Introduce the program to each new member when they sign up. Knowing that your marketing efforts continue after they sign on shows that your customer service doesn't stop when the ink has dried!
- Track your member referrals and award for them. This can be tied to your loyalty program. If you know what your members like, you can create an appropriate award, or let them choose for themselves by offering a menu of choices.

Marketing during an economic slowdown is just as critical, if not more critical, as marketing during the good times. Your club needs members, and there are lots of ways of retaining and adding them without breaking the bank. Get creative – you'll find that building marketing campaigns and reaching out to members can be a lot of fun!

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