

MAKE YOUR WEB SITE A DESTINATION MEMBERS WANT TO BOOKMARK

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YOUR WEB SITE IS FREQUENTLY THE FIRST impression a prospect gets of your club, and is a key location for information, schedules and services for your members. The front desk used to be the first point of contact for a prospective or current member seeking information about your club — the popularity of the Internet has changed that. To keep up with the times, it's good business practice to provide visitors to your Web site with the same great impression they would get in your club. Be sure your site is informative, easy to navigate, timely and visually appealing. Here are four key areas that will help you accomplish these goals.

THE BASICS

The ability to easily navigate your site is paramount — no one wants to be frustrated when they visit! The use of appealing colors; professional design and lay out; tabs and links that actually work; the absence of annoying pop ups, and educational and entertainment value all matter too.

Frequently and accurately update your site. Assign a member of your team the responsibility of maintaining fresh content on a weekly, biweekly or monthly basis — better yet, have this task in their job description. Always have someone else proofread all content, since we rarely catch our own mistakes.

Supply email links to your key employees on your “contact us” page, clearly labeling the name and title of who will receive the correspondence. Your members will use these links if they know the email will be read and by whom. All emails need to be answered in a timely fashion.



APPEAL TO A BROAD BASE

Variety on your Web site is a must. An article concerning swimming may not appeal to a group exercise enthusiast. Include something for everyone by featuring all the profit centers and areas of your club. Entice your members with compelling home page articles. Keep your articles concise and well-written to whet their appetite to learn more, and then provide working links to more-detailed information on the topic and an email link to the appropriate employee with knowledge on the subject.

OFFER PRACTICALITY

The importance of an online member portal cannot be overstated. Here members can view and update billing information, book appointments, and purchase Personal Training sessions and classes. Your members lead busy lives and supplying them with this functionality shows your appreciation of their time. They want flexibility and convenience and if you don't offer it to them, the club a mile away will.

Online scheduling is one of the time-saving tools you can offer through your portal. Emails can be generated from the site to the member and trainer verifying the booking. Consider displaying classes and featured events in a this-month/next-month format. Offering new classes is important! Some members enjoy consistency; others want to try the newest thing. It is easy to get caught in a cycle of repetition from year to year — keep things fresh and make all of your members happy.

OFFER ENTERTAINMENT, EDUCATION AND FUN!

Engage your members by offering “free” guest passes and classes, contests and trivia questions that will bring them back to your site week after week. Other ideas:

- Supply healthy recipes from the Fitness team. Devise a contest to promote member submission of recipes, and allow members to vote for their “favorite recipe of the month.”
- Create an exercise move of the week/month with variations for members of diverse fitness levels. Demo it on the exercise floor throughout the week.
- Create employee biographies including education, experience and interesting tidbits showcasing their personalities. (Members often choose trainers based on common interests as well as experience.
- Present member stories. Remember that success comes in many forms, not just weight loss. Feature a member with a disability, or an elderly member with arthritis who maintains his mobility at your club, or a group of new moms who work out together for social and fitness benefits. And don't forget to include photos to draw in your reader.

Keeping these four points in mind, review other fitness Web sites and compare and contrast with your own. Ask a trusted friend or non-member to evaluate your site and give you unbiased feedback. Investing your money and time in this endeavor will give your Web site a whole new look and feel, showcasing your club as the interesting, informative, professional and fun atmosphere that members want to be a part of. Then sit back and watch your Web site traffic increase!

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