



by Carole Oat

Promotions for the Holidays & New Year

Happy Holidays everyone. It's that time of year to make money and you have the tools to do it right at your fingertips. Ideally, you have three or more databases within your club management software to whom you can market. I'm referring to your existing member database, prospects and guest database, and your archived membership database – meaning all of your former members who are currently canceled or expired...Do whatever can be done to help in growing the monthly dues revenue line and generating revenue right now.

Promote to these various groups using in-house signage, email, printing labels for marketing postcards or other pieces. Telephone "call-a-thons" are also a positive way to reach people and leave a cheerful message with good wishes and a "by-the-way note" that there's a current club special they may want to take advantage of. Printing key reports to generate the right lists is really important. Utilize the mail merge aspect of your software to create pre-formatted, yet personalized, letters or emails.

At holiday time, there's all kinds of promotions that can be attractive to potential new members and those former ex-members. Some of the most popular and most successful include:

■ **12-25 Days of Fitness:** Do an in-house special every day of December. This could be very well-promoted in the club and even better promoted by doing an email blast everyday. Offer things like half-price shake day, free guest day, etc.

■ **Give the Gift of Health:** Allow members to add-on a family member or the entire family for a reduced price, or no enrollment fee. Send the Bring-a-Buddy marketing piece to all members in the database, it's got four perforated guest passes built right in and ready to go. Offer the member \$5 off their dues every month for as long as that new member remains a member.

■ **Trial Visits:** Invite all former members and previous guests back for trial visits to work off the holiday calories. Or, twist it by issuing a three- or seven-visit punch card with a January expiration date. You can track that in your prospects database.

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It's a great time of year for gift cards or gift certificates. These are very popular all year from other retail establishments, so why not your club? Your computer software will allow you to sell, track, and redeem these cards using the Point-of-Sale module. Cards can be printed with your club logo, etc. on them for about 50 cents per card, and members and guests can purchase them to be used for all of your services. A typical minimum order is 500 or 1000, but well worth it. Most software also allows the advantage of being able to "add" to the card as its initial value gets dwindled down. This can be very beneficial as a prepaid house account, and it will help those using it at the club juice bar, pro shop, childcare, tanning area, or the restaurant, if you have one.

The holidays and the New Year are also a good time to promote and kick-off Member Reward programs. These are programs where members earn points for:

- Participating in club activities or just using the club a certain number of times
- Reaching fitness goals and milestones
- Referring other new members
- Renewing membership

■ Celebrating a birthday, holiday usage, or a membership anniversary date

■ Purchasing club services such as personal training, massage, taking a lesson

■ Bringing in a guest to try out the club

■ Referring their company as a corporate account

■ Helping out at a charity event.

Everyone likes to be recognized and a points/rewards program is just one more way to do it. The key is that it encourages people to use the club which is vital to keeping them as active, paying members. Points can be redeemed for various club services or items. Programs like this can sometimes seem overwhelming and cumbersome but there's some good companies out there, IHRSA-endorsed, that really do most of the set-up work for you.

Lastly, have a Holiday Sale, End-of-the-year Blowout, Clearance on any and all club logo items, products, etc. It's a good way to clean up the shelves. It's also when all of your club's pricing should be re-evaluated. Look at membership costs and fees, and decide whether it is time to revamp before the New Year starts. "Last chance to buy at 2005 rates!" Inventory in the closet is not making money for you. This is also when you would run reports to show and promote usage of any unused service packages such as personal training sessions. Put an expiration date on them to avoid carrying over into the next year's unused deposits. Do the same thing for gift certificates in states where they expire after a certain amount of time.

Carole Oat is the National Sales Manager for Twin Oaks Software. She can be contacted at 860.829.6000, or by email at coat@tosd.com, or visit www.tosd.com.