

Want to increase your profits? Add Group Reformer Sessions to your studio!

By Lindsay G. Merrithew, President and CEO, STOTT PILATES®



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During these particularly challenging economic times, Pilates studios are continuing to thrive, but it's an important time for the industry to accommodate changing needs by becoming more creative. The International Health, Racquet & Sports Club Association (IHRSA) reported this year that 47 states are currently facing budget deficits and taxing services such as health clubs, so it's no secret that club operators are feeling the wrath of financial struggle and looking for new ways to make up for lost revenue.

With over 10,000,000 people in North America actively involved in Pilates, demand for affordable sessions continues to grow. One solution is for clubs to add more group sessions to their schedules to meet the demand for lower prices and more convenient time schedules. This serves the dual purpose of retaining the membership of people requiring budget-conscious options, and of concurrently increasing the club's bottom line.

Personalized training with instructors is vital to a successful Pilates training regimen. Pilates participants continually train to keep healthy. Many are keeping their private sessions, but will add additional group sessions to their schedule if the price is right. In this economy, some

participants have been forced to take a more fiscally conservative approach by supplementing fewer private sessions with group sessions.

If you've been considering creating or expanding your Pilates program, now may be the ideal time. Pilates Reformer Group Training can generate incremental revenue ranging from \$75,000 to \$215,000 per year! So whether you're a facility that offers Pilates equipment training or whether you're only thinking of alternative ways to boost your income, consider, for example, that ten group sessions with four participants might provide additional revenue to a club in excess of \$6,000 per month.

With a designated space in your facility, you now have the ability to offer Pilates career opportunities to your staff. A studio for private, semi-private and group training allows instructors to work together in the same space while training clients up to five or six hours at a time. Instructors can be offered part-time or full-time positions according to the studios' demand. You may also want to consider recruiting and training your existing quality personal trainers and group exercise instructors to be Pilates instructors. Personal trainers can subsidize their current client base with alternative training methods and expand their personal training clientele.

Pilates education doesn't stop after certification. It is vital to make sure that your instructors are attending continuing education courses and workshops at specified fitness venues – or host workshops at your fa-

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cility to keep your programming fresh. Appropriate certification combined with continuing education is key to a successful club program.

Carol Tricoche, Global Sales Director Full Solutions™ for STOTT PILATES®, explains, “Highly-skilled instructors can bring a plethora of exercise variety to your facility and cater to those who may feel too intimidated to try Pilates at their age. Qualified instructors will also look out for the safety of your clients.”

Crucial to the success of any facility or instructor is the ability to attract new clients. Group classes can appeal to a wider audience because they're economical and there are infinite themes, specialty classes and unique programs to attract a larger following. For example, courses can be tailored for Golf or Athletic Conditioning. Studios that offer private or semi-private classes may consider investing in lightweight stackable equipment if they have space issues and are reluctant to start new programs.

Facility owners are offering lower prices than their regularly scheduled classes in their Pilates studios to bring in more patrons watching their budgets. Such facilities also realize the benefits of creating extra attention for their location.

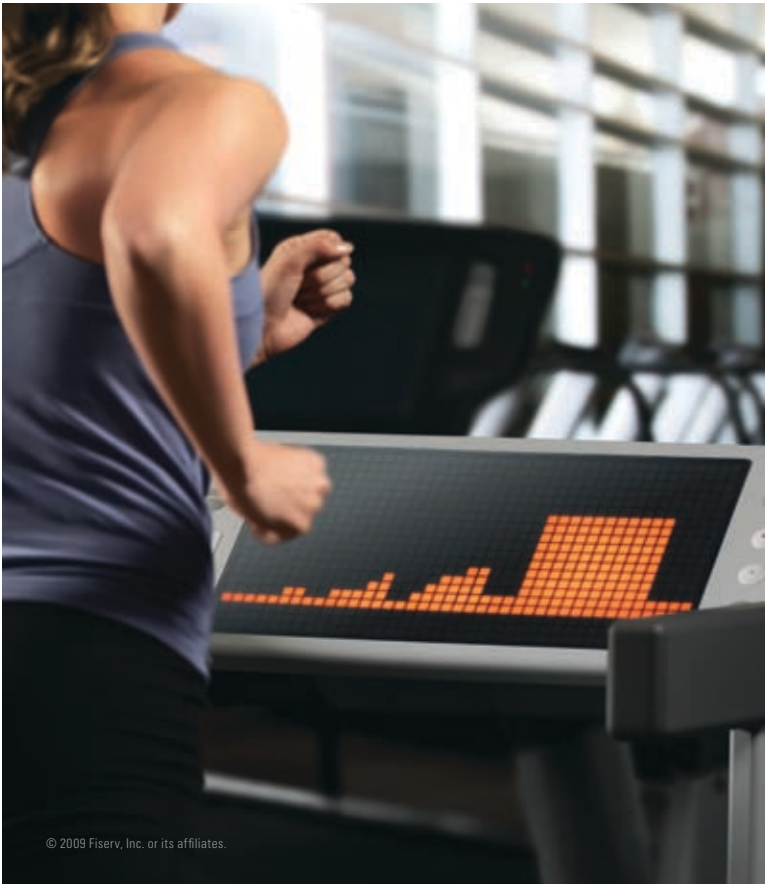
“By offering teacher training courses at my location, I have generated local buzz that sets me apart from the competition, and the equipment that was recommended to complement my existing equipment has become the most popular within my studio. Classes fill in absolutely no time,” states Gina Santangelo, Owner, Callanetics and Pilates Studio Inc., Tenafly, NJ

The space you allot to your Pilates studio can be relatively small if you choose to only have one or two items of equipment. Some owners opt for 200-300 sq ft. for one-on-one training or semi-private classes to start. On the other hand, if you want to offer small group Reformer training, you would need about 400 sq ft. to house four units. For facilities in which space is an issue, consider a lightweight, stackable or portable reformer-tower combination. This allows for the option of offering Group Reformer programming in a mat or mind-body studio or even in an open racquetball court. If you have a racquet ball court, it can accommodate a fully-equipped Pilates studio, including four Reformers, two Cadillac Trapeze Tables, four Stability Chairs, two Ladder Barrels and other accessories,” says Tricoche. Pilates today is flexible, portable, and can be made affordable.

Once you find the perfect space to implement your in-house Pilates studio, make sure to remain realistic about the amount of equipment that you can fit in the area. Choose equipment that is versatile and offers maximum programming to keep your Pilates program fresh, challenging, and adaptable to your changing member's requests.

If you can't afford large pieces of equipment right now, consider the Stability Chair™ which is a great option for clubs that want to offer their members fresh programming while working within space constraints. This compact and easy-to-move piece of equipment provides different options for a unique full-body workout that will challenge your member's core stability and leave them wanting more. It's extremely versatile and allows for all levels of exercisers from athletes to rehab clients.

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LOOPS... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

The businesses that are successful today, empower employees to close as many LOOPS in real time as possible. In other words, they give employees the tools to close LOOPS when they need to be closed. Each time a LOOP is handed off to somebody else there is a risk that the LOOP may not get closed which results, once again in unhappy customers and dissatisfaction. This weakens the entire organization. The closer you are to the original source to closing the LOOP, the more likely it will get closed effectively and in a timely fashion. Let's go back to our original rules 1) LOOPS are either open or closed. 2) Close the LOOP as quickly as possible. 3. Get the LOOP closed right the first time.

Mike Chaet is co-author of the book *LOOPS*. He is also founder of CMS International and Loop4biz.com. You may contact him at 406-431-4320 or mike@loops4biz.com



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Increase Profits... INCONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

Once you have designated a space for your new Pilates studio in your facility, and have agreed that equipment-based Pilates programming is essential to satisfy all of your clients' needs – all you have to do is make it happen. The STOTT PILATES® Full Solutions team are seasoned fitness industry individuals who assist and consult with facilities on complete Pilates implementation; staffing, education, studio equipment needs, timeline proposals, studio operations, marketing and on going support. They can assist you in making the best decisions for your facility to increase profits and maintain a consistent clientele for years to come.

For more information on the world of Pilates and how we can help you build a program ideal for your facility, call our STOTT PILATES® Full Solutions™ team at 1.800.910.0001, extension 203 or email fullsolutions@stottpilates.com. Our mission is to help facilities large and small increase reach their goals financially with smart Pilates businesses.

Lindsay G. Merrithew has been the driving force behind the growth of Merrithew Corporation, and its premier brand, STOTT PILATES®. He has been instrumental in designing, producing and marketing the company's extensive equipment and DVD lines. To date, he has developed dozens of commercial products and has executive produced over 120 DVDs for both the professional and retail consumer markets.



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