



STUDIO SUCCESS STORIES

*HOW FOUR
JCCs INCREASED
THEIR PROFITS
WITH PILATES!*

By Kerrie Lee Brown

With over 10,000,000 people in North America actively involved in Pilates, there's no wonder facility owners want to implement mind-body exercise into their fitness programs. More and more clubs are looking for ways to satisfy their members' needs – and as the demand for this form of exercise continues to rise, Pilates is a great way to attract new clients and increase revenue. The problem is that most facility owners don't know the first thing about incorporating Pilates into their busy clubs – not to mention a great majority of them don't even know what Pilates is to begin with.

During these particularly challenging economic times, Pilates continues to thrive, but it's an important time for the industry to accommodate changing needs by becoming more creative. With new innovations in the areas of programming and equipment, the business as we know it is reaching new heights as more recognize the benefits of alternative ways of exercise.

As a result, we caught up with four Directors from JCCs in Atlanta, Milwaukee, Greater Rochester and Newton, Massachusetts who have ample things to say about why and how they implemented Pilates into their locations. These locations are very excited about how they have increased their popularity locally, memberships and client retention by adding Pilates education and equipment. They now realize that Pilates is providing a new outlet for revenue and they look forward to expanding their offerings in the future. They've found the secret to success with Pilates – and so can you!

ADD VARIETY TO YOUR CLUB

Becky Devlin, Group Fitness and Wellness Director of the JCC of Greater Rochester, says her facility is always looking for new ways to serve the needs of their diverse population of members. By adding Pilates equipment to her facility, she recognizes the additional opportunities for her members.

“Last year we opened a new studio and expanded our class schedule to offer a wider variety of yoga and Pilates mat class. The logical next step for our program was to open an adjacent studio devoted to Pilates equipment. We decided that four Reformers were a great place to start,” Becky explains.

“The program has been huge success since our launch in January. In fact, we are currently running 13 weekly group sessions as well as several semi-private and private sessions – and due to the overwhelming interest of our current students to add a second group session and from our newcomers looking to begin a group, we are doubling our group offerings in the next session.”

Audrey Edwards, Group Fitness Director of LS JCC Gosman Campus in Newton, Mass, agrees as her JCC has done very well also. Over the

past two years they've been very pleased with the level of interest and participation in Pilates and also the increase in revenue.

"Our studio is 500 square feet and we couldn't be happier with the revenue we are generating in such a small space. We are always trying to find ways to generate more income and to also offer our members more with their memberships. Pilates has become very popular around our area - and we saw that our members were going to small studios outside of the JCC to participate in Pilates," Audrey explains. "We wanted [our clients] to be able to stay 'under our roof' and do Pilates."

Pilates also provides owners a variety of ways to help increase their staff's skill set and therefore bring more money through the doors. Michael Stinson, Total Health Director of Marcus JCC Atlanta, adds: "With the economy the way it is, I am [always] looking to diversify my centers' product offerings and continue to increase program revenue. I wanted to give my staff more opportunities to help increase their client base and overall income levels."

At the moment Atlanta offers private and semi-private training, but they are planning to expand their offerings to group sessions in the near future with emphasis on Pilates for sports conditioning in order to attract a larger client base. "Initially it was the aging population that was interested since Pilates is low impact. We now market to men and women of all ages to educate them on the benefits of Pilates," Michael adds. "Because [Pilates] is a very specialized type of personal training, tailored to individual needs, clients understand and accept the fact that this type of expertise comes at an additional expense."

SPACE REQUIREMENTS

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 training 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 to five units.

For facilities in which space is an issue, Carol Tricoche, Executive Director of Full Solutions™ for STOTT PILATES® suggests 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. "If you have an underused racquet ball court, it can be converted to a fully-equipped Pilates studio."

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.

EDUCATING YOUR STAFF

With a designated space in your facility, you will 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



Harry & Rose Samson JCC



LS JCC Gosman Campus

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.

The good news is that personal trainers can subsidize their current client base with alternative training methods and expand their personal training clientele, which ultimately will help your club increase profit. In fact, Pilates Education can be offered at your facility to train your staff.

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. Qualified instructors will also look out for the safety of your clients. "Pilates education doesn't stop after certification," explains Tricoche. "It is vital to make sure that your instructors are attending continuing education courses and workshops at specified fitness venues – or you can host workshops at your facility to keep your programming fresh. Appropriate certification combined with continuing education is important to a successful club program."

The success of any program comes when a "champion" is found. Carolyn Destache, Health, Recreation & Fitness Director of the JCC in Milwaukee found just such a person and, "she brought many clients with her and she has built the program to about 50 trainings a week with herself and two other instructors," she states. "The key to developing a Pilates program is to have a champion who will take your program and make it their own. Ideally hiring a full-time Director who trains and does administrative and marketing work would be great."

Acquiring the appropriate people to help you with your installation is key to your success.

INCREASE YOUR REVENUE

Crucial to the success of any facility or instructor is the ability to attract new clients and retain members. Audrey of LS JCC Gosman Campus says that by adding a Pilates studio to their facility they've not only increased their clientele numbers as a whole, but they now appeal to a wider demographic. "The youngest [client] in the studio is 13 - and the oldest is in their 70's, and the majority are in their 40's and 50's."

Group training can appeal to a wider audience because they're economical and there are infinite themes, specialty training 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 sessions may consider investing in lightweight stackable equipment if they have space issues and are reluctant to start new programs.

Facility owners are offering group sessions which are lower priced than private and semi private sessions in their Pilates studios in particular to bring in more patrons watching their budgets, and its working. Such facilities also realize the benefits of creating extra attention for their location.

Audrey says if she had to do it all over again, she would. "I love having the Pilates studio here at the JCC. It's created a real buzz around the center – and the fact that we're making money is always a good thing," she explains. One thing she says she would recommend to anyone thinking about adding a Pilates studio to their facility is to make sure they have the right amount of space. "We created a small but very pretty and very quiet studio with large windows overlooking our lawn. When you walk into the studio you can't help but smile. It's a beautiful peaceful place and our members love it!"

DECIDING ON A PROVIDER

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.

Audrey said her JCC did a lot of research regarding which equipment to purchase and also which training to implement with her staff. Look for partnerships that allow owners to implement high-caliber education and equipment and utilize them efficiently for maximum results. Training can bring your instructors a whole new level of excellence.

WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU?

One of the greatest aspects of implementing a Pilates studio is the fact that you are catering to all of your clients' needs. And as managers, watching your budget and getting ample use out of your investments is always top of mind. Audrey at the LS JCC Gosman Campus says "we have all types of people using the Reformers. We have seniors looking to regain lost mobility from injury and past surgery, to recreational cyclists and runners looking to relieve back pain, to mothers of young children looking to de-stress

and rebuild their core strength, to high school athletes preparing to play at the college level. You also don't need a big budget to launch a Pilates program."

All four of these JCCs are happy to share their success stories to help encourage other facilities to implement Pilates studios - and want others to know that they shouldn't be discouraged or worried about how to do it. The right consultants will help you no matter what size your facility or your requirements for equipment in order to allow for optimal movement in your space and room flow. **OSF**

Kerrie Lee Brown is VP of Communications for STOTT PILATES®, www.stottpilates.com

