

Diversified Instructors = More Profit for Club Owners

By Kerrie Lee Brown, VP, Communications STOTT PILATES®



Kerrie Lee Brown

The demand for Pilates is growing much faster than the number of certified Pilates instructors. Create your own trained Pilates staff and reap the benefits of increased revenue. Fitness club owners are discovering the value of cross training their existing fitness staff and instructors and are finally realizing that a pilates certificate means increased earning potential. Pilates instructors are the highest paid and most in-demand instructors in the industry.

“By adding Pilates to their current repertoire, fitness instructors and trainers can retain more clients, keep their interest in ‘personal training, and make more money in a method that is growing in popularity every day,” says Carol Tricoche, Global Sales Di-

rector, Full Solutions™ STOTT PILATES®. “Personal trainers can expand their business – and as a result, so will the club owners.”

According to the 2007 IDEA Fitness Programs and Equipment Survey, 68 percent of facilities surveyed have Pilates as one of their program offerings. This is a 49 percent increase from when IDEA first started tracking Pilates back in 1999. “The growth of Pilates has increased tremendously in fitness facilities in general, and as more and more children are exposed to Pilates through clubs, schools or other environments, the growth in Pilates programming for children will expand too,” says Kathie Davis, Executive Director of IDEA Health and Fitness Association.

The Big Picture

The main obstacle facilities face is finding qualified staff to implement a professional Pilates program. Club owners should evaluate what type of benefits they offer their trainers:

- Does the club offer continuing education courses and workshop opportunities offering advancement for their instructors?
- Do departments keep up with new programming options and implement them into their trainers’ curriculum?
- Does the club offer additional scheduling opportunities to trainers who instruct various programs?
- Is the facility equipped with the most updated equipment for high-quality Pilates instruction?
- Are there private, semi-private, or small group instruction opportunities?

Lindsay G. Merrithew, President and CEO of STOTT PILATES® supports the notion that personal training, Pilates, Yoga and dynamic fitness instruction for all ages are poised for substantial growth over the next several years. “Much of the growth in the areas of

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equipment-based exercise is due to professional trainers gaining knowledge and confidence in the results they are achieving with their clients. Facility owners are seeing the benefits of purchasing top equipment and hiring the best trained instructors and programming directors,” he explains. “Top-quality equipment and programming equals increased membership retention.” “Clubs that offer extensive programming options [and quality equipment] for members are more likely to retain clients and attract new members due to the increased interest in the mystique created by Pilates in the general public,” adds Merrithew.

The Key for Instructors

“Pilates is one of the fastest-growing forms of exercise that people of all ages, fitness abilities and levels are turning to for mind-body exercise, says Moira Merrithew, Executive Director of Education. “Ambitious instructors, who obtain professional instruction, can expand their knowledge base to include special populations covering the de-conditioned exerciser to the very fit. These skills are highly marketable.

If facilities support their instructors’ needs to learn more, it is likely that their instructors will stick around. Instructors can cross-promote their training abilities and integrate new and exciting fitness skills into their repertoire. Instructors have the opportunity to increase their client base with their newfound education – and as a result, will be able to offer core strength, functional fitness, muscle conditioning and mind-body exercise to enhance the lives of others.

Group exercise instructors are amazed at the increase in working hours they can actually put in consecutively by teaching Pilates. You can teach 3-5 hours of one-on-one Pilates sessions in a row. The transition from group exercise to Pilates can be quite natural considering all of the continual verbal cues in this format of teaching. Pilates can also be customized to suit every client’s needs – including rehabilitation, sport-conditioning, and pre- and post-natal exercise.

“One of the biggest obstacles that potential instructors come across when deciding whether to become certified or take Pilates courses is the cost,” says Mr. Merrithew. “Quality

training and the time needed to complete the certification are always a concern for instructors. The fitness world frequently looks for a quick fix, so instructors should keep an open mind and be flexible when approaching new learning. The best instructors are those who customize their teaching approaches so they have the ability to work with all walks of life, fitness abilities, ages, and levels in the mainstream public.”

Where to Train

Often people interested in a Pilates certificate and training are not aware of their options for professional instruction, programming and long-lasting education. However, there are many high-caliber Licensed Training Centers (LTCs) around the globe. These locations have been carefully selected to deliver this elite training curriculum and education and are staffed with top Certified Instructor Trainers and the best equipment on the market. These centers adhere to standards of operation that ensure consistent delivery of programs and services for those wanting to pursue a career in this exercise method. Certified Instructor Trainers trav-

el far and wide to offer programs from the basic fundamentals to advanced training and continuing education for ambitious instructors.

Unfortunately, many teachers are obtaining their certificates through one-time weekend programs which don’t require apprenticeship hours or proper qualifications of the attendee’s skills before giving them a certificate. Many of the people teaching one-weekend certification programs possess little to qualify them. There are a number of well respected certification programs specific to Pilates that always include observation, physical review, practice teaching, written and practical exams, and continued education after certification. It is important to research all of the options before making a choice for certification.

The End Result

There’s no doubt that dedicated, talented fitness instructors can increase their earning potential with additional professional Pilates training – and at the same time increase their

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MEMBERSHIP SERVICES... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

assent to the terms, such as entering a password or clicking on an "I Agree" button. The technology used should require the member to actually read or at least scroll through all of the terms of the agreement before accepting. Lastly, whether the agreement is online or handwritten, it must still comply with the Health Studio Services Act.

Many electronic agreements we review prepared by billing service companies are not in compliance. Before implementing a fully electronic agreement, consult with your legal counsel.

ENFORCING THE TERMS OF THE MEMBERSHIP AGREEMENT

As the economy struggles, clubs will likely find more and more members defaulting on their contracts. The question then becomes, should a club take legal action to collect delinquent fees if the member wrongfully cancelled? The answer is, it depends. Basic contract principles apply. The member agreed to pay and the must do so for the term of the contract. However, a club should consider collection costs as well as public relations issues.

Unhappy members tend to start internet weblogs or post their comments on opinion websites (e.g., www.yelp.com, www.insiderpages.com, and www.eopinions.com). The question is whether negative publicity is worth collecting a few hundred dollars. Check out the opinion websites to see what is being said about your club. Some sites

will remove unfair or unfounded derogatory comments. Whether you institute formal collection action or not, remember to be reasonable and consistent. Treat all members the same.

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clientele and expertise in the fitness industry. For club owners this means that their members are being taken care of and that means the potential for increased profitability. The good news is that once a client starts with Pilates equipment-based training – they are your clients long term.

Kerrie Lee Brown is the Vice President of Communications for STOTT PILATES®. Over the past ten years, she has enjoyed an exciting career in fitness journalism and is the former editor-in-chief of Oxygen: Women's Fitness and American Health & Fitness magazines. Kerrie holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies and Political Science from Wilfrid Laurier University, and a Bachelor of Applied Arts, Graduate Journalism Degree from Ryerson Polytechnic University. For more information on Pilates certification or courses near you, visit www.stottpilates.com.



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