

Industry New Year's Resolution Needs To Be: *A Revolution In the Way We Think And What We Offer the Consumer*

By: Ed Trainor

With the New Year and New Year's resolutions on top of everyone's mind, this year's economic concerns will certainly influence how both consumers and businesses focus on the promises they make. The good news is that improving one's health and fitness is usually one of the first promises made by many consumers. The bad news is that many of those efforts are short lived. It's not, however, always the consumer's failure, but the lack of opportunity for a successful solution. The fitness industry itself needs to take a look at itself in one of those large mirrored walls and ask the following questions:

Question: Should health clubs continue to build the same box that FIT people go to for their training needs? Or, should health clubs reverse their strategy and scale down to meet the needs of the yet-to-be-fit (YTBF)? Gym owners should answer the following question... What percentage of their members lift 120-pound dumbbells? The answer is the answer to what's wrong with the current fitness model. We allow the few vocal intimidating members to rule, and as a result, the rest of the population stays at home on the couch in their comfort and safety zone. And so, the industry keeps churning and competing for the

same fitness enthusiast. The good news is, until 2008, this was a successful business model. Post-2008, the industry needs a new business model, a revolution for change and a resolution to reach out to the YTBF population which is a much larger market and potentially greater industry.

Next Question (a rhetorical one for the industry to address): In billions of dollars, who's larger, the fitness industry (\$18 billion) or the weight loss industry (\$48.8 billion)? The answer is obvious and leads us to ask the next question. How could that be? How could the fitness industry not be where consumers go for guidance, supervision and motivation on weight loss? The answer is the fitness club/center industry is unprepared to meet the needs of the consumer. We are undertrained in offering programs and services that reach out to address that market. The biggest loser here is the fitness club/center industry.

The Next Question: Besides the overweight population, what is the next largest segment of the population under served by the fitness industry? The answer is the Baby Boomers. And, how has the fitness industry addressed this opportunity? They haven't. If you ask them, they will deny that allegation and cite several initiatives that are being discussed. But, in reality, they as

an industry haven't stepped up. If not addressed by the fitness club/center industry, they will ask themselves the same question they have about weight loss: How'd that happen?

So what are the recommendations and actions that need to be taken?

Leave the industry box with the 120-pound dumbbells as is. Let them service the population they attract with whatever successful business that is. However, build a new industry for the YTBF population. It will capture the two largest markets in the world today; the overweight and the Baby Boomers. It will grow twice as fast as a new industry, and the good news is that it will eventually feed and grow the Pre-2008 industry with a new group of fitness enthusiast.

And one last recommendation: hire and train only people who have never seen a 120-pound dumbbell to service both those groups. The current trainer description only wants to service their active clients. The trainer of the new 2009 industry will manage, with assistance of technology, a client base much larger.

Publisher's Note: Ed Trainor is a Vice President of Town Sports International. His article reminded this author of my 2006 writing where I described what I called

a "Fat Friendly Health Club" (FFHC). The FFHC is a place envisioned and described in my 2006 book, "Leaving FAT City." The FFHC would be a special place where *mind training would happen before body training*, and members would have to qualify for membership by being a minimum of 20 or more pounds overweight. Once the overweight member had achieved his weight loss goal, he would 'graduate', i.e. he would be moved out of the FFHC and referred to an affiliated local and traditional health club for maintenance of his weight loss. At the heart of the whole idea is that new members would undergo an educational process to prepare them for success before they would be subjected to ANY physical activity. This paradigm shift would achieve two things:

1. It would cause high utilization and retention rates among those new members seeking renewed bodies because those overweight people would be taught up front that the process would be slow, would take serious dedication, commitment and regular attendance and that weight loss would come at the pace of 1/3 to 1/2 pound per day maximum and a maximum of 3½ pounds per week. The new member's projected "graduation date" would be established during the initial training.
2. This plan could ultimately



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become a mass feeder of new members to traditional health clubs. The FFHC could be built and operated within the walls traditional health clubs and marketed as such clearly explaining the "graduation" process. The FFHC could also be built and operated as a free standing model by club owners with multiple locations and could specifically serve as marketing tools for those clubs... for the first time, diving seriously into the vastly untapped 200 million overweight or obese U.S. population.

Think About It...
 -Norm Cates

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Amy Simpson Hired as Visual Fitness Planner Vice President of Operations

Fort Worth, TX - Amy Simpson has joined The Visual Fitness Planner as Vice President of Operations; it was announced by President/CEO, Daron Allen and Founder, Mario Bravomalo. The Visual Fitness Planner, celebrating its 10th year anniversary, is a completely customized technology platform, creating a unique, visually powerful and successful sales and retention process for facilities in the Health and Fitness Industry. Currently, the Visual Fitness Planner is serving more than 600 clubs in the US and Canada.

"Amy is a woman with a mission," said Allen, "and her mission fits ours perfectly. Amy has an undeniable passion for

the health club industry, club operators and front line teams. In addition to her vast club level experience at the Health and Fitness Connection and as Area Manager with Spectrum Clubs, Inc., her proven ability to conceptualize a vision and create a marketplace presence will help VFP clubs maximize their ability to sell memberships and grow ancillary revenue streams. With her experience, Amy will bring tremendous industry-specific expertise that club operators can count on to improve their business."

Before joining VFP,

Simpson was Area General Manager/General Manager of Spectrum Clubs, Inc, operating clubs in San Antonio and Los Angeles. Simpson joined Spectrum to open their flagship club in San Antonio, introducing a new, high-end fitness concept to the marketplace. The success of Spectrum's, Rogers Ranch helped set the stage for the company (with a 30-year history of mid-tier clubs) to re-brand, re-price and re-position itself in Texas. "Over the past few years, we have watched Simpson lead with style, professionalism and finesse

in a highly competitive industry," added Allen.

Prior to heading to Spectrum, Simpson was the General Manager for the Osteopathic Health System affiliated, Health and Fitness Connection in Fort Worth. In 1999, Simpson was awarded IHRSA/Cybox Fitness Director of the Year.

"Bringing Amy onto our amazing team is another step in our long range vision for the Visual Fitness Planner," concluded Allen. "Amy impressed us ten years ago when we worked together to develop the concept of the Visual Fitness Planner. She is even more impressive now with her extensive experience... and in her commitment to the Visual



Amy Simpson

Fitness Planner's goals. We're thrilled to have her back on the team and are looking forward to the great value she brings."

