

TOP 7 SECRETS OF SUCCESSFUL FITNESS PROFESSIONALS

(Includes their fitness business secrets too!)



ASSOCIATION OF
FITNESS STUDIOS

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IMAGINE, FOR A MOMENT, THE FIRST DAY OF YOUR FIRST JOB.

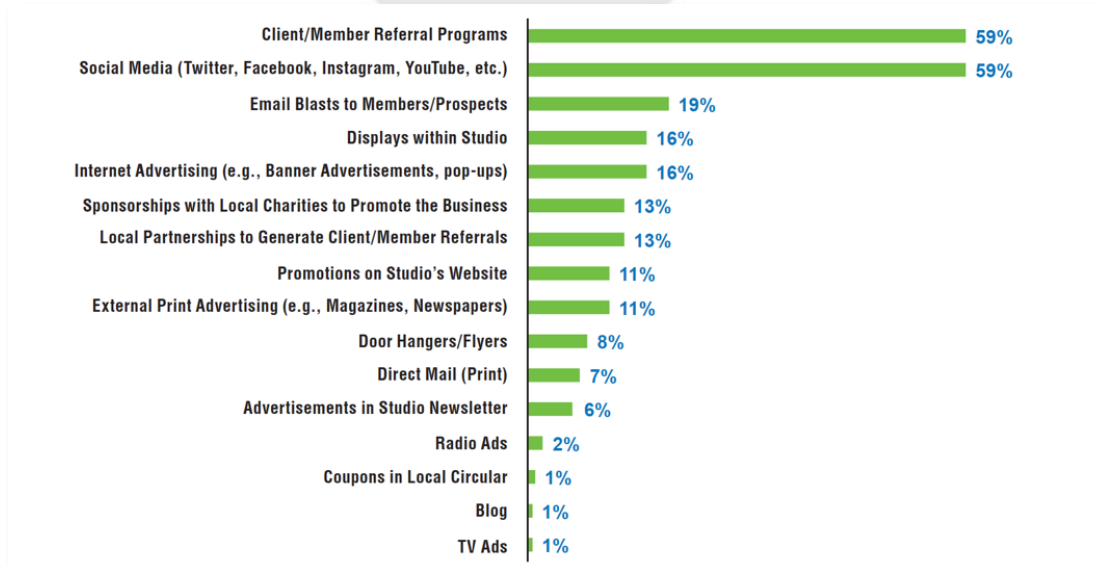
Were you nervous? Anxious to get out there and prove yourself? Did you wonder which fellow co-workers were going to become your friends? Were you afraid to make a mistake?

In all the AFS research we've compiled, one thing remains constant – nothing great is built overnight. It takes perseverance, time, attention to detail, and the ability to adapt and pivot your strategic thinking when necessary.

The following 7 Secrets have been pulled by AFS after diligently speaking to thousands of the most successful fitness professionals, studio and gym owners. We trust the information will be incredibly valuable to you now and in the future.

SECRET #1 BUILD A COMMUNITY THAT GOES TO WORK FOR YOU

In the chart below, from AFS' industry leading [Marketing Best Practices Research Report](#) (free with AFS membership), it was found that the most successful marketing strategies are built around referral programs. And what better way to gain referrals than by providing an experience that breeds the feeling that together we can accomplish anything!



Developing community begins on Day One. Make sure you really get to know every single person that trains with you. Your clients are a representation of your skill set. What do they do for fun? What

motivates them to be the best? As they say, “begin as you wish to proceed.” Begin building community from the minute you begin your training session or teaching a class.

Develop Your Community with Regularity

In order to set the expectation that community is important, consider [scheduling team-building events](#) with regularity.

For example, let those you train or teach know that every week at a designated time you will workout together! This time will provide you an opportunity to share ideas and for friendly competition. While you may find that those you train workout together anyway, you should still schedule regular, weekly group workouts to show that you believe in the power of community.

Be Present and Pay Attention

A quick compliment goes a long way, and keeps people engaged. Designate a few key classes to do meet and greets before and after class. This is a great way to get new clients as well and to get to know the instructor. You can take it a step further and take the class and have the instructor introduce you to everyone there!

Survey Your Clients

Generate a client satisfaction survey, and poll them in person. While the content of your survey may not be life-altering, it should generate follow-up points that your survey collectors are trained to respond to. The goal here is not to survey clients as quickly as possible; leverage the conversation starter to have a lengthy, meaningful discussion.



“The best way to grow a business is by developing a fanatical culture filled with raving fans,” says Todd Durkin, Owner of Fitness Quest 10 in San Diego. “And the way you do that is by focusing on extraordinary results, a phenomenal experience, and a culture that breeds family, fun, and positivity.”

Todd Durkin
Owner, Fitness Quest 10

AFS Benefit: Through our exclusive live Webcasts with highly successful studio owners, roundtable discussions, private Facebook group, CEC/CEU courses, and a dedicated mentorship rep - no question goes unanswered through the AFS community. [Learn more!](#)

SECRET #2

MAKE YOUR TRAINING EXPERIENCE PERSONALIZED

What makes you a great trainer? Odds are it's not about you – it's about how you make your clients feel about themselves. This is the personalization that led them to leave the big box, impersonal, less expensive environment to become one of your people. They're will to pay a premium to be trained by you – as long as you continue to deliver the personalized experience.

Creating this sense of belonging may seem like a daunting task, but it's not really. Be sure you're hitting these notes with your clients:

1. Use Technology Wisely

Technology, the most impersonal of inventions, can ironically, be used to enhance the personalization of your business, when done properly. Be helpful, in a non-intrusive way. Stay in touch, remind, encourage, and motivate. Texting, with permission of course, puts you inside your client's circle of intimate acquaintances. It's where you want to be.

2. Personalization Means Personal

Clients will often let you into their lives in a special way. This is a trust component, something never to be taken lightly. As clients share personal information, stories, and anecdotes about spouses, children, their workplace, etc., take notes, stay in touch, show you care. Birthdays, get well notes, graduation congratulations – all show you care.

3. Results Are the End Game

Nothing is more personal than that compliment your client receives from family or friends about how he or she "looks better," or "seems to have more energy." So for all the building of community, personalization, and other strategies for interaction, the bottom line is – make sure your client is making progress toward their goals.

4. It's Always About The Client

You may be the expert, but without clients you have no business. [Keeping clients means keeping clients happy and feeling good about their experience with you.](#) This means, no phone, no wandering eyes, no divided attention. This period of time is all about the client – nobody else.

5. Clients Are Like Teeth

Nothing is more personal than the feeling of being special. Every encounter with your client is an opportunity to inject good feelings into their day and their lives. Referrals are word of mouth marketing and nothing makes word of mouth more likely than a client who leaves your encounter on a "high." Remember the old adage, "Clients are like teeth. If you don't take care of them, you'll lose them."

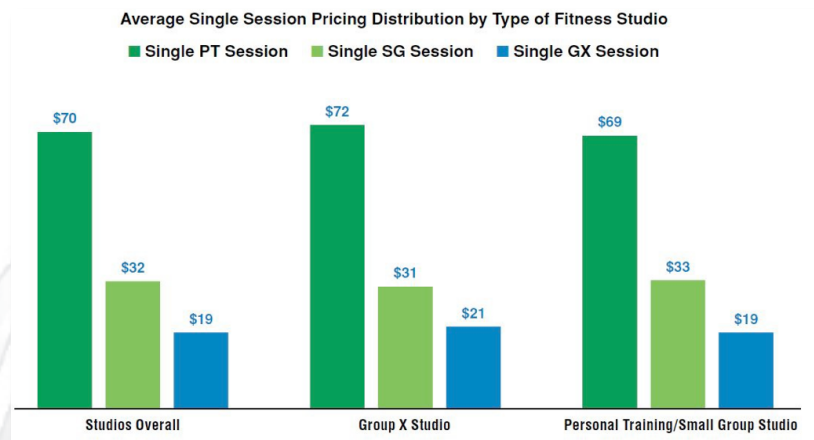
AFS Benefit: Save time by finding everything you need through AFS - the hub of the fitness studio community. Save money on everything from fitness accessories, events, workshops and certifications from the top companies in the fitness industry. [Learn more!](#)

SECRET #3

ESTABLISH THE PROPER PRICING FOR YOUR SERVICES

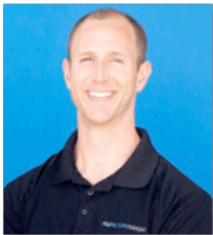
As shown in the graph below, from AFS' industry leading [Financial and Operating Benchmarking Report](#) pricing is as much art as it is science. Pricing is highly dependent on your brand's value proposition and the prospective client's perception of that value proposition. Furthermore, pricing is influenced by the competitive landscape, and how well your studio's product is differentiated from its competitors.

What you set as your pricing framework also influences the consumer's perception of the quality they will receive. If your value proposition is based on delivering a "premium" experience but you price the experience below market rates in an effort to generate traffic, then consumers will believe that your offering is average; counter to how you have positioned your studio.



In addition, when your price speaks to a lower value proposition than what it actually is, you are in essence creating a new value proposition for the business, which in turn could prevent you from reaching the audience your business originally targeted or prevent you from generating the necessary revenue from the customers you do create.

A great example of this, though not from the fitness industry, is Apple. While its competitors frequently discount their products, Apple maintains its rather high price points as a reflection of its value proposition and unique market position. Apple does not sacrifice its value proposition just to generate sales volume, and in doing so they are able to maintain and even build on it.



"Our profitability is driven by maximizing our capacity and usage as well as number of members per session. The more we maximize these components and keep our expenses under control, the more profit we have. Plus, as you keep the clients you have and slowly add more new members, your NET client base and profitability should increase as well."

John Heringer,
Owner, Fast Action Training

AFS Benefit: AFS members gain access to all the AFS industry leading market research reports to leverage the data and make more sound decisions related to pricing, marketing, key performance metrics and much more! [Learn more!](#)

SECRET #4

LEARN TO OVERCOME OBJECTIONS

Convention wisdom says that fitness professionals hate sales. They're in the training business because they are about people, want to help society, and peaches 'n cream. If that's you, if you hate sales, then you either have to figure it out, or try another career, because no business can long survive without sales.

1. Don't Sell Them Anything

One of the best salesmen I ever knew used to say, "I never sold someone anything they didn't want." The point he was making is that the concept of "selling" implies that you are forcing, tricking, or otherwise coercing someone to purchase something he or she really doesn't want. Remove that thought from your head. You are providing a valuable service to your community and ALL valuable services have a price. People EXPECT to pay. Let them.

2. They Already Know

Another smart person said, "You may be a fitness professional today, but as soon as you sign that lease, you're now an entrepreneur." Nothing could be truer. And if you're an entrepreneur, for your sake and the sake of those who may have invested in your business – sales is the name of the game. But that's not a problem because your potential clients already know they have to pay.

3. Sales Is Easy – Compared to Marketing

Once the potential customer is in the door, on the phone, or connected to your website, the sale will come a lot easier than the task of getting the potential client to that point. Is the customer even aware of your business? Does the client-to-be understand how you train? Have you communicated why you and not them in a compelling manner? Listen to the experts when they say that converting a customer is a lot easier than finding him.

4. Know Your 'Pitch'

Another ugly word from the sales vernacular is the "pitch." Like "sales" it seems to imply "tell them anything, absolutely anything to get them to sign up." In fact, when you "present your value proposition" in a clear, understandable, direct manner, the process will go smoothly. In order for that to occur, you need to be able to identify the right time and then easily move the conversation exactly where your customer expects you to go – it's time to consummate this deal.

AFS Benefit: Connect and get your answers from a team of over 20 influential leaders in the fitness industry. All compiled to bring AFS members the education and knowledge critical to success. [Learn more!](#)

SECRET #5

GETTING THEM IS GOOD. KEEPING THEM IS BETTER

The old adage here is that it costs a lot more to acquire a customer than to keep one. And thus the fitness industry's never-ending emphasis on retention. The golden ticket to retention lies in delivering the incredible customer experience. That deliverance will determine your fate in the loyalty game. How, exactly can you be sure you're top notch?

1. Deliver

Nothing sells better than results, so the key to retention is delivering on this promise. Once you've established yourself as the trainer who delivers, many of the other challenges will diminish, if not disappear entirely. Delivering, of course, goes well beyond knowing form and content – it's understanding the person you're training and delivering not only tangible results, but the experience as well.

2. Thank You Very Much

Everybody loves to be recognized. Everybody likes to be rewarded. When you check into a hotel and you're upgraded automatically, somebody's saying, "thank you, we appreciate your business." Similarly, you can create rewards, challenges, small gifts, outings, and other recognition items to send the message that your client is special.

3. Know Your Clients

Fun, fun, fun would be the central mantra for most trainers, but be careful. While most people prefer fun to punishment, the fitness industry is home to plenty of people who equate punishing their bodies to fun. But not most. If you misread the objectives of your client and play the drill sergeant role to somebody looking for a lighter touch – you've just thrown retention out the window.

4. Work your Community

If you've successfully built your community (as in Secret #1) then working the community is a great means of enhancing retention. The more interaction that you can foster between your community members, the better the chances of them making new friends, feeling that great feeling of camaraderie, and generally "buying in" to their membership in your community.



I deliberately focus on listening and understanding where my clients are coming from. From there I can develop a thorough understanding about the way my clients' think about their health, fitness and realizing positive change in their lives.

Cris Dobrosieski
President and Head Coach, Monumental Results

AFS Benefit: Access a full library of marketing and retention knowledge. Learn the right strategies to increase your client base today.
[Learn more!](#)

SECRET #6

PROFESSIONALISM IS KEY

One of the industry's most successful fitness professionals has a theater background. When asked if he missed his acting days, he said, "You kidding? Every time I train somebody, I'm on stage!" And so it is – that special uniform, t-shirt, or jersey that labels you "Instructor," "Trainer," or "Coach" puts you on stage at all times. How then, do you ensure you are perceived to be "professional?"

1. Be Who You Say You Are

If there's an undercurrent in the fitness industry that's going to come back to bite us, it's non-credentialed fitness professionals. These are the folks who acquire their certification but never bother to keep it current. They are a legal and ethical disaster waiting to happen – and one that can literally bankrupt you. By all means, maintain credentials. [CECs and CEUs](#) are available at almost every fitness event, coming soon to a venue near you. Do it.

2. Know the Law

Fitness can be an intimate experience. It's almost impossible to properly train somebody without touching them, so be sure to ask permission. Know and abide by the appropriate laws, especially sexual harassment. And keep your language clean and your politics at home. Think of training like being invited to someone's home for dinner – no swearing, off color jokes, no politics.

3. There's Still a Line There

No matter how friendly you become with your clients, they are not your friends. There's still a line there as long as they are paying you for a service. Acting like friends is fine. Being friendly is fine. But the professional still keeps his or her distance. It's almost always better that way.

4. You Are On Stage

As mentioned above, when you're training, you're on stage. Always. You're actually auditioning in front of dozens of "directors" who might be looking for a fitness professional. Like it or not, they're judging you. "Would I want her to train me?" is being asked countless times every day. Know it. And act like it.

5. Full Attention

Full attention means always. No phone calls, texting, no "I'll be right back," no interruptions. This is the client's time. He or she has purchased your time. Focus on the client and ensure that you are delivering what you've promised – your best efforts to deliver the experience they expect.

6. R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Respect means many things and the professional fitness professional has them all. Start with punctuality – always, always be on time. Your overall demeanor/body language is key – be happy, lively, excited about working with this client. Your language is appropriate, your manner is supportive and inspiring, your voice volume doesn't intrude on others you're not training.

AFS Benefit: Showcase the AFS Proud Member logo to instantly provide further credibility to your own brand of training. Plus, access client educational resources to set goals, increase engagement and stay on top of your client's progress! [Learn more!](#)

SECRET #7

MANAGE CLIENT EXPECTATIONS

You know best. You know the reality. You meet and interview a client to understand his or her goals and objectives, and gauge their commitment to achieving those goals. You know what it will take. It's not unusual, in fact, it's likely that your clients don't really know what to expect, and if they think they do, they're often wrong. But misguided expectations can wreak havoc on your business, so be sure to implement these strategies:

1. Keep your Relationships Strong

It will take a while to create and there's plenty of nourishing necessary, but the bottom line is that you have to become a strong, important person in your client's life. By being supportive, inspiring, and stimulating, you will create a bond that will enhance the relationship and put "leaving you" out of your client's mind.

2. Get your Clients to Buy In

You're special and you make your clients feel special. Or do you? That, of course, is the question. The most effective strategy to secure client buy-in, is to communicate before, during, and after workouts. Make sure your clients understand the program, and why you're having them do certain things.

3. Technology Is your Friend

As the world of technology becomes more and more a factor in everybody's daily lives, it's time for us all to embrace technology and apply it's positives to our lives. For a fitness professional, there are apps and other means by which you can stay connected with your clients between sessions. This is a marvelous tool to help ensure their activities away from your studio or your sessions are not impeding progress.

AFS Benefit: From our industry connections, marketing webinars and webcast series, eBooks, and exposure to millions of consumers – AFS has every tool and resource necessary to help you generate more clients. [Learn more!](#)

Closing Statement



Josh Leve
AFS Founder & CEO

Whether you're a trainer or instructor in a health club, YMCA, JCC, fitness studio or elsewhere - how you carry yourself, how you train, and even what you wear are all elements that make up your personal brand.

You're already running your own business, just within the four walls of your current facility! These “7 Secrets” are all sound principles - that if mastered - will help [make passion your career](#).

About AFS

The Association of Fitness Studios (AFS) is the professional association that provides business-specific products, services, and benefits to studio owners and entrepreneurial fitness professionals, supporting their efforts and giving them the platform to effectively manage and grow their businesses.

With over 13,000 members and 60+ partnerships in the fitness industry, AFS is the resource you can't go without.

There's a lot of noise out there. We're keeping tabs on the trends and issues affecting YOUR business. It could be a new app, a new law about to be passed, or a company that's having a negative impact on client loyalty and retention. We inform you about why you should care, how it could impact your business, and what we can do about it – together.

With AFS, your membership stands for something. You're able to leverage our research, our team of industry leaders through our advisory council, and the combined real-life experiences of our members to reduce your business risk and get you to success faster.

When you belong to AFS, it's more than a membership; you're becoming part of a movement - with AFS, we're stronger together.

Learn more at www.afsfitness.com



The real question is why wouldn't you become a member? Where else can you find the credible data AFS provides that allows you to easily focus on exactly the areas necessary for growth? Plus with the support they provide through mentorship, roundtables, CEC courses, and more – this is truly a no-brainer.

*Pia Hamilton, Owner
Intrigue Health and Fitness*