

2 SURPRISINGLY SIMPLE WAYS TO PUMP UP YOUR GROUP FITNESS PARTICIPATION

Two quick fixes to your group fitness room can make a dramatic impact on your members' success and increase participation. Just add a stage and reduce the number of mirrors.

For many years, it has been commonplace to make the group fitness room a dance studio with floor to ceiling mirrors and no stage. Because of complicated choreography, stages aren't used so the instructor, like a dance instructor, can face the mirror and turn his or her back to the participants, giving them a chance to follow along.



Since most people are visual learners, a stage enables participants from the front row to

the back row to view the instructor clearly so they can follow easily.

The stage also enables the instructor the ability to entertain, connect with and coach members. The truest and most effective form of communication is when the instructor looks into participants' eyes.

And no room is too small for a stage. Stages actually create space, as participants are more willing to move closer to the instructor because their personal space is not invaded due to different elevations.

Often in the group fitness room, you cannot escape your own reflection as every wall contains mirrors. For the super fit, coordinated and hardcore, that is fantastic. Unfortunately, for the average person this is not the case. Mirrors reflect negative information that just shows the participants how unfit, unathletic and uncoordinated they actually are, which often just demoralizes them. A recent McMaster University study supports this and suggests clubs should reconsider the use of mirrors.

Mirrors also divert attention from the positive source of information: the instructor. The instructor must have participants' attention so they can communicate, encourage and ensure success. Just remove mirrors from the front of the room and keep the side mirrors—this will enable you to keep everyone happy.

To truly maximize the potential of group fitness in your club, you need to have a controlled system of branded group fitness to ensure the highest quality, consistent experience. By including a stage and reducing the number of mirrors you'll further ensure your members' success and keep them coming back. ❖ CATHY SPENCER-BROWNING

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