

Do You Know Your Percentage?



Could this be the secret? Could it be this simple? Can this one percentage impact retention, referrals, membership sales and profit? Do you mean to tell me that it makes a difference *HOW* I service my members – either through memorable group fitness or on machines?

IHRSA's Guide to Membership Retention is quite clear on this impact as it states, "Retention rates are higher for 'group fitness' members than for 'machine members.' Every club has hundreds, and sometimes thousands of machine members, i.e., members whose only interactions with their club are with the particular exercise machines on which they exercise. Such members tend to be deficient in both member-to-member connections and member-to-staff connections. Their only connection to the club is the connection that they have to the cold metal machines on which they perform their exercises."

"Machine members are by definition, high-risk members. They belong, as it were, in every club's 'intensive care.' The loyalty of such members is paper-thin. For them, their club is no more than a place that stockpiles exercise machines."

Dr. James Annesi explores further in his book, *Enhancing Exercise Motivation*, by saying, "While most new exercisers cite health and fitness gains as reasons for entering exercise programs, they usually cite *SOCIAL* aspects as primary reasons for staying."

Wow! Some great research that supports getting people in groups and making your club a *SOCIAL* club – which will make you more profitable!

Unfortunately, the industry average is only 10 to 15% of a club's total visits serviced in group fitness. What if it were 25%, or 40%, or even 50%?

Some club owners such as Gordon Johnson, owner of three Gold's Gyms, and John Bonica, co-owner of two Global Fitness Centers, have achieved 50% group fitness participation in their clubs. This has resulted in group fitness being their unique selling position, enabling them to compete and thrive against vicious low-cost competitors and big box chains. They were vulnerable with their "machine members", but not with their "group members."

By increasing this percentage, they keep more members longer, it costs less to service them, they get more referrals because at least half their members are in the "social" fabric of the club, these members come more often, spend money in pro-shops and juice bars, all which makes their clubs more profitable.

Do you know your percentage? You should. **CS**

Terry W. Browning is President of Body Training Systems®, a division of The STEP Company. He can be contacted at 800.729.7837, or by email at twb@thestep.com.