



ADDING VALUE TO TRAINING PROGRAMS

▲ A VASA Fitness trainer helps members sign up and schedule future training sessions.

Three club operators share how they're improving their training programs and serving their communities.

by KYLIE WULF

Training programs are a cornerstone in the industry in large part due to the relationship piece. “Members appreciate a connection to a coach or personal trainer,” said Gini Grimsley, the director of fitness product at VASA Fitness. “They understand they can get great workouts online or in the gym, but it’s the connection to another human that makes the biggest difference.”

However, as the industry and member needs have changed, operators are finding ways to adapt and improve this sector of their club.

Many gyms, like VASA, are turning to offering three forms of training varying in the level of individualized attention clients receive. Offering personal, small group and Group X programming helps VASA connect with more members with different lifestyles and levels of comfort in the gym.

Furthermore, strong connections are formed when a trainer understands a member’s needs and interests and can recommend the best type of training to meet their goals. “VASA offers three different spaces for members to find a training program that makes sense for their goals and schedules,” said Grimsley. “The smaller the setting, the more individualized programming can be. Those who have very specific goals are encouraged to work with a personal trainer for more in-depth health and fitness knowledge.”

Another way VASA is furthering connection is through the implementation of StrengthPortal, a digital personal training tracking tool. Both trainers and members can use the technology to keep track of programs and progress over time. “Our technology enhancements are allowing VASA’s personal trainers to extend their

▶ Small Group Training sessions provide unique opportunities for members to learn from each other while receiving individualized attention from trainers at VASA Fitness.



influence beyond in-person sessions which will have a more robust impact on client results,” said Grimsley. “Moving from paper tracking to a digital tool drives more accountability for both trainers and clients. Our clients are better able to see tangible results and leave each session with renewed confidence in their ability to make positive changes in their life.”

Members can input in-person and at-home workouts, and trainers can see where they’re improving on StrengthPortal. The platform also features reference videos to help clients improve their form and understand exercises their trainers assign them. As such, VASA has seen an increase in personal training sales.

Along with modernizing your training program, investing in trainers is another key to success. Doing so improves the value of your team and program and increases trainers’ buy-in and engagement. “Your personal training team will only be as good as the time and energy you spend develop-

ing them,” said Grimsley. “They will be hesitant to learn sales skills since they typically don’t get into the industry to sell. Once they have good experiences with the sales process and understand how it helps both them and their clients, they’re much more open to embrace the process.”

Investing in and understanding trainers can also be a solution when exploring other types of training – including specialty classes and age or group-specific programming. However, finding staff open to these opportunities is challenging.

Ann Marie Caprio, the regional program director for The Workout Club, noted how it can be difficult for trainers to deviate from what they know. Hiring trainers with an open mind or open to working with different groups and exercises can help if you plan on expanding your training program or reach.

For example, The Workout Club offers children’s training – including Ninja and

Aerial fitness – for children 4 to 14 years old. Planning programming for this specific age group presents challenges. For example, ninja training requires unique equipment which the gym sources from DGS Ninja and Rogue Fitness. While working with parents can be difficult, being a gym for the entire family is a cornerstone for The Workout Club.

“With these programs in both locations, members and their children or grandchildren can participate and feel part of the gym community,” said Caprio. “Children need a place to have fun while working out in a safe environment. Also, parents will pay for their child before they pay for themselves.”

While some gyms like The Workout Club are focusing on youth programming, others are seeing more popularity and opportunities in connecting with older crowds. Doug Steiny, the owner at SimplyFit, noted his primary demographic is 50 to 80 years old which affects



▲ (Left) Doug Steinly leads a member during a personal training session. (Right) Group Fitness classes promote community at SimplyFit.



MAKING TRAINING FOR EVERYONE

“I have the mindset that not everybody is comfortable in an exercise environment,” said Doug Steinly. “I’ve been in the industry 30 years and was an athlete growing up, but that’s not normal for a lot of people. What’s top of mind for me is to remember not everyone knows how to or enjoys working out. So while they’re working hard, I have to make sure they’re enjoying the experience. Training sessions aren’t just about the exercising but the communication and connection.”

the club’s programming. While the club offers personal, small group and traditional group fitness classes still, many sessions focus on balance, mobility, strength and other areas of concern for seniors.

“With an aging population where people are living longer, they’re looking to be active,” said Steinly. “People are interested in being able to move and live a healthy lifestyle. With training, they’re not only looking for a way to stay fit but also improve their level of fitness. They may not be sure how to do that as they grow older, so they’re looking for trainers to help guide them.”

Because the older demographic is a large portion of SimplyFit’s clientele, Steinly ensures trainers are prepared to work with this population. Reminding them to keep exercises and regimens simple makes the training sessions accessible, but he also helps trainers figure out how to relate to their older clients.

Other ways Steinly supports his personal trainers include furthering education with online videos, resources and certifications from organizations like AAAI/ISMA Fitness and NASM. As such, trainers are best prepared to teach members, provide top-quality training ses-

sions and focus on connecting with their trainees, especially older adults.

According to the CDC, one-third of adults 45 and older feel lonely, and social isolation can pose a serious risk for chronic disease and other medical conditions. For SimplyFit, small group training provides a solution that combines the best aspects of personal training and Group X classes.

“We recently started offering small group training for two to four individuals a session for a couple of reasons,” said Steinly. “We can accommodate more people but there’s still a sense of group exercise and accountability. In this training, individuals can connect with each other in addition to the trainer and build a stronger bond. They’re not just showing up to be with the trainer; they’re showing up to see other people. They’re making friends.”

In an industry where personal connections are paramount, ensuring your training program and evolving to meet the needs of your members plays a big part in lasting success. Remaining thoughtful and intentional when it comes to understanding the needs of trainers and their clients can help cement your club as a great place to be healthy physically, mentally and socially. ●