

25

BUSINESS
MISTAKES
TRAINERS MAKE

(THAT YOU SHOULD AVOID)

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Hey!

And thanks for attending my webinar. I put together this short manual for you so that you avoid the mistakes so many trainers make. To help, it's split into 3 sections: in the gym, personal, and business/money.

Feel free to save/print so that you can refer back to this later.

-Coach Jon



In the Gym

1. They Don't Follow-Through

If you say you are going to do something, do it. If you don't have the time, then don't commit to something you can't deliver on.

Often books on personal training will advise you to keep in touch with your clients outside of the session. You can do this via sending relevant jokes, relevant info, restaurant advice etc.

Most trainers that I would shadow on the floor only did half the battle. While speaking with a client they get an idea to send them a relevant article. The mistake? They tell their client about it.

When I used to get the idea to send a client a relevant article I would make a note on my clipboard and continue the workout. The next day, I sent the email without notice with the tagline:

“I thought you would enjoy this, it's what we were speaking about yesterday”

The surprise effect keeps you on top of your clients minds even in off days from the gym. It shows that you're thinking of them outside of the training hour.

You know that you've done well when they send you funny jokes, restaurant advice, relevant articles etc. on their off days. In addition to having them constantly thinking about you, you've provided them with material to send on to their friend and family.

And if you do forget to send along the information, no problem -- you never told them that you would in the first place.

2. They Don't Give Their Clients Ownership

You shouldn't make every decision. You should be training your clients to be self-sufficient. Don't ever worry that if you teach a client too much they won't need you anymore. This is a simply not the reality.

3. They Aren't Professional

Show up on time, be prepared, act like an adult, make ethical decisions, and treat what you do like a career, not a hobby. If it is a hobby, go find a real job. And please wash your dry-fit every once in a while. It stinks.

4. They Don't Admit When They Make a mistake

I make mistakes. They're not giant mistakes, but maybe I got a little aggressive, or made the wrong call on something. "The road to hell is paved with good intentions," as they say. Sometimes you do the wrong thing for the right reason. I'd rather just say I screwed up than have someone thinking it was entirely their fault.

5. They Take on the Wrong Clients and are Unwilling to Fire Clients

One year I took anybody, at any time, no matter what. I made pretty good money doing that. I also had terrible training sessions myself, was unable to deliver 100% to all my clients, and generally hated life and training. Sometimes you have to fire clients. You can only do so much. Always remember what your job is: to facilitate a sound training program. If a client is draining you, do yourself and them a favour, cut it off. It's not because you suck, or the client sucks. The dynamic sucks, and neither of you is benefiting. It happens.

6. They Don't Foster A Community Atmosphere

If you teach classes, make it a point to introduce people to each other.

7. They Don't Get Quantifiable Results

There are a lot of non-quantifiable results that can be achieved through training. I also think they are important. In fact, I write about them all the time. You will be more successful, and so will your clients, if you have some numbers to work with. After all, you are a business, and I don't think many businesses survive without producing more than what they started with. Take pictures, get measurements, and keep track of the numbers because these things don't lie. You can argue the means all you want, but I'll take the results every time.

8. They Don't Carry a Book With Them at All Times

You never know when a client is going to cancel and you're left with an hour block. Instead of wasting your time on Facebook or twiddling your thumbs why not get smarter? Even if you think you have a packed day always carry a book in your bag just in case.

9. They Bash Other Trainers

I understand the barriers of entry to become a personal trainer are low. This means that you will likely work alongside other trainers whose methods you don't agree with. First off, don't automatically assume they're incompetent.

Unless you know the detailed background of the client they're training it's hard to jump to any conclusions. More importantly nothing ever good comes from bashing other trainers. In fact it will make you appear unconfident. Keep your mouth shut and do the best job you can. If the trainer isn't doing a good job they won't be successful. You creating bad blood or saying things behind their back won't do any good.

10. They Don't Work With Other Trainers

Forget text-books or workshops. Your best resource is other trainers that work at your club or in your area. Arranging a 1hr block of time once a week with 1-2 other trainers for a communal workout is a great way to pick up new tricks and practice old ones. Pick a topic for the day and leave the workout open-ended.

Theory has it's time and place but nothing can replace practical experience from people already successfully using it. Building a local network of trainers is such a great idea that so few do.

We have a little group called "Fitness Toronto" on Facebook and everybody invites trainers they meet to it. It's simple, but we can share insight, job opportunities, or just get to know one another. When I have a fitness expert in town, I'll invite anybody from the group to dinner. Some members have gone so far as to form a mastermind group that meets every few weeks to talk shop. There's no reason and no excuse for you to be alone in this business.

11. They Don't Understand that Feelings are More Important Than Knowledge

No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care.

12. They Veer on Their Plan

Financial situations differ. In a perfect world every client would be able to train as much as they need to accomplish their goals. The reality is that very few clients can afford to train more than 1-2x/week. During an initial sales meeting assume that the client will train as much as they need to. Figure out their goals and perform the assessment before deciding on their plan.

When it's time to present the plan the objection will often come up that they cannot afford to train with you that much. (However many times a week it is.) This is the crucial step where many trainers fail. Your plan is the plan. It's what they need to do. If they need to train 4x/wk to accomplish their goal but can only afford 2 then don't change the plan. Figure out a way for the client to train twice by themselves and twice with you. Sometimes it takes a little creativity. Just don't change the plan to two workouts a week.

It makes you appear weak and your plan loses all value.

13. They Don't Have a Great Inter-Professional Team

Perhaps the greatest strength you can have as a trainer is your network. The best trainers know enough about all different disciplines to recognize when to refer out and to whom. I advise you to set out and find the best chiropractors, massage therapists, naturopathic doctors, physiotherapists, rolfers, Graston practitioners and whatever other professional you feel you want to add to your team in your neighbourhood.

Keep their cards in your desk and be ready to refer out. Send these professionals Christmas cards and follow up monthly with emails saying hello and asking how their business is doing. This simple task will make sure that your clients are looked after and may act as a great source of referrals in return.

Personal

14. They Don't Celebrate Their Own Achievements

I learned this early on. Celebrate the little things. When a client hits a weight loss goal – take your girlfriend out for dinner, when you hit your goal in terms of hours trained in a month – take the night off and see a show with your boyfriend. Whatever the achievement is big or small celebrate it. Never forget that it's the journey that matters.

“Stop pacing the aisles and counting the miles. Instead, climb more mountains, eat more ice cream, go barefoot more often, swim more rivers, watch more sunsets, laugh more and cry less. Life must be lived as we go along. The station will come soon enough.”

– Robert J. Hastings

15. They Don't Celebrate Little Victories

Frame your clients to LOOK FOR victories in their day-to-day life (e.g. “I binged on the weekend, but then went for a walk the next morning and ate half an apple.”), and then focus exclusively on those victories. You'll attract more of what you focus on.

16. They Don't Read Enough

Spend an hour a day reading a training or business book, or watching an educational DVD. (And no, blog reading doesn't count.) How are you supposed to get smarter if you're just training clients all day? Apply what you read when appropriate.

17. They Don't Know How to Say no

Have a objective filter for when you say yes or no. Your emotive gut can lead you astray and have you committing to things you either don't want to do, won't benefit you, won't benefit others, or are simply not a good use of your time. Create an quick objective filter that all requests go through. Mine is quite simple. When asked to listen about a new software, investigate a partnership, have my brain "picked" for coffee, or anything else I run the request through my 2-step filter:

- Will this benefit my business?
- Will this benefit the greater good?

If the answer is no to both, I say no, no matter how much I like the person or want to help.

18. They Smell Bad

Haha, this is funny to say but it's amazing how common bad smelling trainers are. I get it, you work out and sweat all day. Take lots of showers, wash your face, brush your teeth, put on deodorant, and have a few changes of clothes with you.

19. They Don't Use Humor

Comedy goes a long way in building relationships with clients. Your people will come in for workouts frustrated, stressed, and tired.

Being able to lighten the mood early on will help them disconnect and adds additional value to your service. I like to start each session with a funny anecdote to lighten the mood. Often I'll "shock" my client by saying something like: "I'm having a terrible day!". When they ask me why I explain that I forgot my favorite socks at home and have to wear these cotton clunkers.

Funny cues can also be more memorable. For example, "squeeze your butt like your cracking a walnut between your cheeks" is more memorable than "Flex your glutes". Humour can also act to create long- standing effective cues. In the example above anytime I want my client to fire their glutes I'd just say "walnut". Immediately they understand the specific cue I'm giving them and it adds some enjoyment to the session.

At an NSCA conference I spoke at Hollywood trainer Gunnar Peterson said that he took a stand up comedy class early on in his training career. Gunnar understood that it was important to connect with his clients on a level other than pure fitness to set himself apart.

20. They Burn Out

Sure it sounds like a good idea to work as much as possible. That way you make the most money right? Wrong. Schedule your clients in bunches. Figure out the times you want to work during the week and only put clients within those slots.

If you feel like you need a break and aren't excited to go into the gym then take a long weekend.

Disconnect and get some rest. Exhaustion creeps up on trainers. The money lost while taking a short rest will come back ten-fold.

21. They are Self-Absorbed

Don't identify with one type of training. An example of this are trainers who identify as TRX-trainers. This is self-absorbed. Instead refer to your as a trainer who enjoys using the TRX as a tool.

22. They Don't Have a Great Network of Other Trainers

The more people you know the better off you'll be. Work to meet and keep in touch with trainers both close and far to you. You never know where your next referral is.

I keep a separate group on in my email account for trainers. Every week I send an email to 5 trainers asking how they are and how their business is going. This method of keeping in touch strengthens relationships and keeps me at the top of their mind.

23. They Get Absorbed in Trends

This is one of the biggest mistakes I see with new trainers. It's easy to get excited by new equipment or workout trends. I get it. Learn the basics first. Prioritize your learning the same way that you do your training. Fitness manufactures make money when they put out a new product and convince trainers to buy it in addition to sign up for the certification course. They don't make money convincing you that teaching your client to control their own bodyweight before suspending them in the air is the right way. Remember that when you go to trade shoes and watch fitness videos.

The equipment may look fun for you to use but take an inquisitive look as to it's benefits and drawbacks before purchasing it. Learn where to place it in your training and focus on what matters.

Business & Money

24. They Recommend Overpriced Supplements and Equipment to Get a Commission

My client wanted to buy a treadmill for her home. I sent her to the store that didn't offer me a commission. Why? Because the treadmill was \$1500 cheaper than the store that offered me 10% on the sale. It's not uncommon practice for stores to mark up equipment 15%, give the trainer 10% and pocket the extra 5% for themselves.

Your reputation is your biggest asset. If a client finds out that you knowingly sent them to the more expensive store so you could get a commission they'll be upset. I wouldn't blame them for firing you.

25. They Devalue Their Services

Don't discount. This was a lesson I learned early and have clung to. I've never offered a % off of my services. If I want to do something special for my client I offer a free session and value it at the whole session price. The minute you offer discounts your value goes down.

If I have a valued client that's renewing a package and I want to show them how much they mean to me as a client I add 2-3 sessions at the end of their package or give them a gift. I don't offer to train them for less money per hour. That would lead to my other clients becoming upset if they found out. To add to this point, if I'm raising my prices I raise them for everybody, the changes just may not take effect right away for existing clients. No exceptions. The clients who have been with me for a long time may get a session for free as a thank you to help offset the cost.

****BONUS****

26. They Aren't Open to Learning Opportunities

Napoleon Hill's book *Think and Grow Rich* taught me that there's something I can learn from every single person on this planet. Since realizing that I stopped trying to learn one thing new every day, instead I started learning 10+ new things every day.

Whether it's your clients giving you business advice, a co-trainer teaching you a new exercise, a manager giving you sales tips, or the PTDC dropping knowledge bombs on you always be open to learn. Never be afraid to ask questions. In Jewish culture the wise child isn't the one who knows everything. The wise child is the one who isn't afraid to ask when he doesn't know anything.

27. They Aren't Linchpins

The linchpin, according to Seth Godin, is somebody who is indispensable. Becoming indispensable is a sure fire way to be successful. Do this by going the extra 10% and solving problems before they become problems or helping out without being asked. Pick garbage up off of the floor even if it isn't your job and arrange a workout with the new trainer to get them comfortable without being asked.

28. They Don't Put a Value on Their Time

Understand the difference between assets and liabilities and learn to buy time. Idea of understanding that if an hour of your time is worth \$"X" then you can buy back your time for less than that as an investment. Once I realized this I paid somebody to clean my apartment, shopped at the more expensive grocery store, and moved closer to the gym to avoid the longer trip. This gave me a few extra hours of study time per week.

Attribution notes:

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Many of the tips included in this book come from the following sources:

47 Random Personal Trainer Tips

97 Rules To Live By For Personal Trainers: A Code Of Ethics

Ignite the Fire: The Secrets to Building a Successful Personal Training Career

Personal Trainer Pocketbook: A Handy Reference for All Your Daily Questions