

A look at personal training that goes beyond the textbooks.
— MUSCLE & FITNESS

IGNITE THE FIRE



*The Secrets to Building a Successful
Personal Training Career*

JONATHAN GOODMAN CSCS

With a foreword by Lou Schuler, author of the
New Rules of Lifting series

Sample

TESTIMONIALS

Sure you know the art and science of fitness. But, do you know the business of fitness training? I've seen it a thousand times; Great trainer—Bad business person! Running a business is not unlike designing a program... You have to understand fundamental business strategies and you have to be able to implement them together into a comprehensive plan for success. Except your certification course never taught you that part!

Put simply, Jon Goodman's book "Ignite the Fire" tells you everything you need to know (and nothing you don't) about how to become successful at the business of Fitness Training. He's provided you with the simple to understand and immediately applicable strategies proven to help you find your niche, how to become the trainer who everyone wants to train with, and how to build a waiting list of clients beating down your door!

— NICK TUMMINELLO, OWNER OF PERFORMANCE UNIVERSITY

A look at personal training that goes beyond the textbooks.

— MUSCLE & FITNESS SEPTEMBER 2012 ISSUE

Goodman shares the secrets of how to land your dream job in fitness, build a client list, and make money in the fitness game.

— LIVESTRONG, RATED ONE OF THE 21 MUST-READ HEALTH, FITNESS,
AND NUTRITION BOOKS

This book comprehensively covers everything you need to know to be successful in the field. All you need to do is apply the information and you'll be well on your way to a prosperous career.

— BRAD SCHOENFELD, PHD, 2011 NSCA PERSONAL TRAINER OF THE
YEAR AND BESTSELLING AUTHOR

IGNITE THE **FIRE**

*The Secrets to Building a Successful
Personal Training Career*

Jonathan Goodman

REVISED AND EXPANDED SECOND EDITION

INTRODUCTION

It's now 5 years since I decided to write *Ignite the Fire*. There was no shortage of books on thriving as a trainer back then and there certainly isn't now.

So why did the book resonate with so many? I believe that there are two reasons. The first is that it was written in an easy-to-understand manner. The second was the focus on the “soft sides” of training. A program is only as good as your ability to get a client to do it. I believe that understanding psychology and being able to build strong relationships with clients – so that you can encourage a client to *want* to adhere to a program is your first priority as a trainer. Learning how to build a program is your second.

In the three years that have passed since *Ignite* was originally published, a lot has changed.

I no longer train clients. Since I published the original version, my focus has been on learning everything that there is to know about building efficient business systems and the intersection between fitness, business, and behavioral economics – which you will learn about in this updated version. (Even if I don't specifically mention it, almost every system and technique I discuss herein is deeply rooted in psychology.)

In the three years since *Ignite's* original inception, much has changed in the fitness industry as well. One-on-one training has taken a back seat to high-quality small group training programs,

trends like CrossFit have become a staple, and options for where and how to train have increased exponentially.

Perhaps the most notable change is that simply providing information is no longer good enough to succeed today. If you want to have an amazing, successful, and fulfilling career, you must learn how to position your material and communicate effectively not just in what you say, but what you write and how you present yourself as well.

As a result, this revised, expanded, and updated version is a completely different book. The flow is the same in that I'm writing it for you, my reader, not to impress other fitness writers with numbingly-obscure jargon. My only goal is that you enjoy, understand, and are able to apply everything that I say.

I still talk about finding the right job *for you*, identifying your place in this crazy fitness world, selling techniques, and developing beginner programs. In addition, you'll find either overhauled or brand- new sections on everything from creating multiple revenue streams to using social media to grow your business to living a fulfilling life as a trainer. I'm here to help you find the right balance for you.

Here's the unfortunate reality: obesity rates continue to rise around the world. Fitness is preventive medicine but without countless strong providers who operate with passion and integrity on the front lines, rising health care costs could cripple society in the not-so-distant future.

Personal training is the most satisfying, exciting, gratifying, and fulfilling career in the world. I aim to make it one of the most profitable as well. I'm here for you, bros and "bro-ettes." Let this be your guide.

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1

SO, YOU'RE A PERSONAL TRAINER – WHAT'S NEXT?

“When the student is ready, the teacher will appear.”

— BUDDHIST PROVERB

It starts with passion.

Passion is what makes the difference between a successful (and wealthy) personal trainer and one who fails in this business. I mean not only passion for training, but the ability to instill that passion in your clients as well.

Let me explain. New personal trainers sometimes think that their primary goal will be helping clients reach challenging athletic performance goals, or to get lean, or shredded. And it's true that some of your clients will fall into this group. But the majority of trainers (myself included) work with a much broader range of clients. They're not amateur or competitive athletes and they're not striving for perfect, enviable bodies. They are striving not for perfection, but for fitness. They work out to be healthier: to manage their stress, to lose weight, and to add muscle. They work out to be vital and counteract the effects of aging or chronic health conditions.

And ideally, they want to have fun.

These clients often lack clearly-defined goals. And that means they're not as motivated to train with you as you'd like them to be. They're often teetering on the fence of deciding whether to continue working out with you – or to quit. Advanced loading schemes, periodization, and/or complicated programming are unlikely to help you keep these clients, irrelevant of how good that programming might be. Let me tell you something. For the majority of your clients, **the quality of the program that you design pales in comparison to your ability to make your client *want* to do that program.**

Surprised? The fact is that the best and most successful trainers have a good understanding of physiology, anatomy, and biomechanics and they apply their knowledge to workouts. But more importantly, they instill *passion* in their clients every single day. That passion is what sets them apart.

In the best-selling book, *The Talent Code*, author Daniel Coyle describes what constitutes a great coach for children. The coaches that produce the best athletes from the grass roots level are not the best at teaching skills – they are the best at instilling passion in kids. Walter Gretzky, Wayne Gretzky's father, didn't have the knowledge to address the biomechanics of Wayne's slap shot from a young age. He made Wayne love the game, and that was more important.

Beginning exercisers may not be children, but the same lesson applies. As a trainer, your primary job is not to teach your client to activate their glutes. It's not to have you client perform 3 sets of 12 reps. And it's definitely not to "block-periodize" a training regime. That is the job of physiotherapists, strength and conditioning coaches, and athletic therapists. *Your* primary job is to make your client excited to work out and to have him or her love every single workout. That means doing everything you can to help them identify the *real* reasons behind why they're exercising, a concept we'll be discussing in detail later on. What might surprise you is that these reasons often have nothing to do with the goals they often

name at first, like losing 10 pounds or running a 5k race.

With these kinds of clients, you're not only in the fitness business. You're in the customer service business. **The best training regime is the one that will work for each client** – and the one that will make clients feel great so they keep coming back.

TUNING INTO YOUR PASSION

To help your clients find their own passion, stay tuned into your own. Ask yourself questions like:

- What was your initial motivation for working out?
- How did you start working out? Did you go to a gym? If so, describe the first gym you ever joined in detail.
- What kept you going?
- What obstacles did you face? How did you overcome them?
- At what point did you start to feel successful in the gym? How did that impact your vision of yourself?
- When was the first time somebody noticed the changes in your body? What kinds of comments did you receive? How did that make you feel?
- When was the first time you gave workout advice to somebody else?
- Did your motivation for working out change over time? If so, how?
- What made you decide to make personal training your career?
- What kinds of obstacles did you face to become a personal trainer? How did you overcome them?
- How do you maintain your passion for fitness today?

4 YOU'RE IN SALES NOW

The Art of Selling //

“I find it useful to remember everyone lives by selling something.”

— ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Ask any new personal trainer about his or her biggest challenge, and it's likely to be selling. Few trainers start out knowing how to sell, let alone sell effectively. But once you understand what selling really is, and how to go about it, I promise you'll feel more confident – and more importantly, make more sales.

THE ART OF SELLING

At its heart, selling consists of two things: understanding your potential clients and making your skill set meaningful to them. If you can do that, they will want to work with you, and nobody else.

As a new trainer, you have to be able to market the skills you have. As you gain experience, you also market the results that you've helped your clients achieve. So, the first step is to identify what sets you apart from other trainers, which you learned about last chapter. You need to know why you're a better choice than the competition, and to highlight that for potential clients.

Complete this sentence: *I differ from other trainers in that: _____*. List at least three attributes that make you special. Have you received training to work with specific groups of clients? Have you lost fifty pounds and kept it off through lifestyle changes? Are you knowledgeable about a particular medical condition?

Then think about the benefits you can provide clients. Be as detailed and thorough as possible, and don't worry about whether those benefits are unique to you as a trainer. For example, you can help clients lose weight, become more toned, add muscle, and perform better at sports. The more benefits you can explain to a potential client, the more likely a client will respond to one or more of those benefits.

When I was working fulltime as a trainer, I kept a poster on the wall at my office that read:

WHY USE A PERSONAL TRAINER?

- Optimize your workout time
- Ensure proper form
- Accurate assessment
- Exercise safety through proper form and adequate rest
- Accountability
- Everybody benefits from a trainer. The top athletes in the world still use trainers, so "knowing enough" to work out on your own is not an excuse.
- A trainer will push you beyond your comfort zone while staying within your limits. You won't push yourself beyond your comfort zone.
- Personalization
- Motivation
- Niche specialties
 - Cardiac rehab
 - Older adults
 - Post-rehab for an injury
 - Body fat loss
 - Muscle gain
 - Improve athletic performance
 - Chronic illness (training with Parkinson's etc.)
 - Pre/post natal training
 - Post-menopausal training (staving off osteoporosis)
- Improve flexibility with assisted stretching
- Easy access to a community and support system

I gave potential clients a copy of this list so they can see the benefits of training and what I can help them with. I suggest you create your own handout with your own specialties to share with potential clients. The more reasons you can give people to hire you, the more likely they are to do so.

COMMUNICATING YOUR VALUE

I started working at Body + Soul wanting nothing to do with the business end of training. Like many trainers, all I wanted to do was train clients. I figured that an appointed salesperson would handle the business aspect and I would stick to what I did best. Fortunately I quickly realized that sales are integral to being a successful personal trainer, and that selling doesn't mean tricking someone into buying an overpriced product. Selling meant getting a client to want to work with me – in other words *I* was the product.

I was selling myself, and I wasn't overpriced. I knew I offered value. Selling consisted of educating the client on that value. That didn't mean I was effective at the beginning. As a new trainer, I bombarded a potential client with everything that I knew about the body and training. Take a client I'll call Jeff. My manager had booked a meeting for me with Jeff because he had inquired about training but wasn't quite sold. He told me that he wanted to lose some weight, specifically around his stomach.

In response, I described my credentials and also noted that his posture could use some work – a point that I harped on, adding that I was well-trained in fixing posture as well. Jeff didn't hire me and I don't blame him. Instead of listening to what he needed and responding to that, I was too eager to talk about myself – why I was awesome, in my own eyes. In retrospect I did this because I lacked confidence.

Fortunately, one of my mentors explained that I was working too hard to try and impress clients, and suggested instead that I focus on educating clients about what *specifically* I could help them with.

So let's talk about a client I'll call Veronica, who was referred to me by another client, Suzanne. When Suzanne first told me about Veronica, I probed her for more information. Particularly I wanted to know any reservations that Veronica might have before meeting with me and any potential limitations.

When Suzanne came into the gym I met her at the door with a smile and offered her a bottle of water. We went into my office to talk even though I already knew what she was going to say. Veronica had shoulder pain and loved to play tennis. She wanted to lose a bit of weight. She lived 25 minutes from the gym and didn't want to make the drive after work multiple times a week. She had a trainer before who didn't follow up so she had fallen off the training wagon.

Before we met, I'd pulled two articles on shoulder pain for her from my file. Veronica and I talked about Suzanne and another client I'd trained who also loved to play tennis. I also educated her about how I have weekend checkups with program design clients, which is convenient for clients who live a bit far away, and we talked about the importance of a weekly email check in on Sunday night to make sure that she had all materials that she needs for a strong week.

With a bit of proactive thinking, I was able to communicate my value to Veronica in a way that was specifically meaningful to her. In less than 30 minutes all of her reservations were addressed, and she hired me.

But in order to communicate value to a potential client, you need more information about that person. In order to know how to convince them that you can help them, you need to first know precisely what they're struggling with. Knowing that and then showing them how you can help them is the secret.

So to convince a client of your value, you must gather as much information as possible about him or her. Find out about past struggles, injuries, goals, and issues, and tailor your services specifically toward that client.

If the client has an issue or injury that you've dealt with before,

tell him about your experience with his issue and how you've helped somebody with a similar problem. If the client has an issue that you don't know a lot about, I recommend you research the condition and send him information about it to show that you'll go the "extra 10 percent". (Don't tell him you'll send reading material – surprise him. It's more memorable.)

Clients increasingly want to train with somebody who knows about their specific issues, and by highlighting your unique qualifications (e.g., experience helping slow the decrease in bone density in post-menopausal women), you may attract clients who otherwise would be reluctant to walk through your door.

Keep in mind that after you've established your reputation as a trainer, communicating your value becomes less important. Once you've successfully worked with a number of clients, they'll go out of their way to tell friends about you. At that point, new clients will already be aware of your value and closing the sale becomes much easier.

✓ **TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

Understand your clients and the role you play in their lives. Educate them about your value using specific examples and describe how you can help them.

Dean Somerset is an international public speaker whose main area of expertise is injury and medical dysfunction management through optimally designed exercise programs. He is also the medical and rehabilitation coordinator for World Health Clubs.

Growing up in Western Canada, Dean worked as a sous chef, delivered pizzas, and had the biggest paper route in town (his words, not mine). Dean studied kinesiology with the intention of becoming a physiotherapist. After 3 years of kinesiology, he realized he wanted to work with

the full gamut of clients and decided to become a personal trainer.

After completing his degree, Dean worked as an independent trainer out of community centers and people's houses for 2 years. For the last 7, he's worked in a commercial facility primarily with injury rehabilitation and medical management clients.

Dean markets through third party endorsements, mostly referrals from medical professionals, and previous clients. He also maintains a popular blog.

DEAN'S 3 KEYS TO SUCCESS IN THE FITNESS INDUSTRY ARE:

- ① **Take care of yourself.** You're no good to anyone if you run around like a chicken with its head cut off and wind up burning yourself out. Your quality will decrease as the quantity of your sessions increases. Take time to make sure you work out, rest, eat, and de-load your stresses regularly.
- ② **"Sales" shouldn't be a scary word.** Every professional service available has a fee associated with its delivery, and personal training should be no different. Build the value far beyond the cost and you will never have to worry about people objecting to spending money on you and what you can do for them.
- ③ **Always learn and implement.** The ability to transfer knowledge to your clients is the essence of training. It will help to empower them to take ownership of their fitness program and make you incredibly invaluable to them as a part of their health care team. If you know more about something than any other trainer and you put it into action, you will get better results for your clients, which will translate into more referrals and a bigger bank account.

◆ DEAN'S WORDS TO LIVE BY:

"If you care about this profession, show it. You have to treat it like a business, which means staying organized with scheduling, marketing, programs, invoicing, and taking care of yourself along the way. Take regular vacations, get hobbies, and make sure you live a balanced life."

You can learn more about Dean Somerset
at www.deansomerset.com

THE 5-STEP SELLING PROCESS

After some requisite small talk, almost every meeting for selling personal training starts with a variation of one of the following questions:

- “How much does it cost?”
- “How often do I need to see you?”
- “What do I need to do to lose ‘X’ pounds?”
- “I just want a program to do on my own. Can you do that?”

Don’t answer the question. Doing so will decrease your chances of making the sale or disable you from selling a bigger package than the client initially thinks he wants. Instead, use the 5-step Selling Process, described below.

Step 1: Ask, “What is it you want to achieve?”

The client has taken time to come see you. You are in the position of power and should be controlling the conversation, not him. Immediately after small talk ask him or her, “what is it you want to achieve?” and shut up. It shifts control and focus to put you in the driver’s seat.

Listen to what the person tells you and take careful notes. (Have a pad of paper and pen ready. Active note-taking is important in making the client feel that you care.)

When the client stops talking wait for a count of 5, in silence. Usually he will start back up but if he keeps quiet, ask if there is a specific reason why he is coming to you. Listen carefully for his *emotional* reasons for sitting in the chair across from you. *Why* does he want to lose 5 pounds? Always remember that emotion is what drives action and logic justifies it.

Once you know what the client wants to achieve, you can sketch out a path for him.

It’s important during these initial meetings to be quiet and let the

GATHERING AND USING TESTIMONIALS

Want to get more clients? Then you need testimonials. Every trainer should have a binder of testimonials from past and current client that you continually add to ready to showcase at any point in time.

In an industry rife with dishonesty and associated distrust, it's important for you to have as many "proof elements" as possible *before* making a sales proposition. Getting testimonials for personal training is the best way to do it.

Imagine the power of having a full binder sitting in the waiting room for potential clients to flip through as they wait for a tour, complimentary session, or sales meeting.

One of the factors of self-efficacy (or the belief that you can achieve a particular goal) is what's called social modeling. This is a large contributing factor to whether a client will make the decision to purchase your services. You can enhance this belief by being able to show a testimonial specific to your potential client.

Ideally you'll first identify your target client types (or "avatars") as detailed as possible. For example:

A 26-year old African-American woman who is 30 pounds overweight. She's never used a trainer and is finally looking for some direction after numerous failed attempts at the gym. She's a nurse, so shift work makes regular sleep and food habits hard to come by.

The above is just an example, but I urge you to create 3–4 of your ideal client avatars. Include details about their gender, age, fitness goals, occupation, and challenges. Then you'll know which aspects of the testimonial that you want to highlight with your potential clients who have similar goals and limitations.

Here's an example of a great testimonial that I would show to the client above:

When I started to train with Jon I wasn't obese, but definitely had some weight to lose. It's funny, you know, I'd been in the gym on and off for a few years without much to show for it. I didn't believe that a trainer would really be able to help me until I had "worked my way up to it". I also work shifts – sometimes nights – and don't sleep well.

What I particularly liked about Jon was that he looked at me as a whole as opposed to giving me some exercises and counting the sets and reps. It took a bit of time but he first helped me establish better sleep habits. Not one to diet, Jon took a look at what I ate and helped me identify what foods I really loved, and which ones that I could live without. The result was an almost immediate weight loss that I've kept off. I'd recommend Jon to anybody.

The above example client and testimonial are made up but meant to showcase how important it is to have testimonials specific to your avatar. Notice how my testimonial shows how all-major reservations have been solved with my training.

Collecting Testimonials

You can simply ask for testimonials. But there are strategies that will result in you getting more effective ones. First, always get permission to use the testimonial for promotional purposes either in writing or via email, and keep that on file. Better to be safe than sorry. If you give the client a form to fill out, a simple "check box" and place for a signature with a line allowing permission of use should suffice.

The more specific the questions you ask, the better the chance that you'll get higher-quality answers in your testimonial. I recommend creating a simple document with questions and spaces to fill out the answers that you simply print and hand to clients. Be detailed not just in the question, but also in the length of response that you want. I also recommend including 3 questions for improving your business taken directly from Scott Stratten's book *UnMarketing* (the first 3 questions below):

Here's an example form that you might hand out:

- *What's one thing that you'd like me to start doing?*
- *What's one thing that you'd like me to stop doing?*
- *What's one thing that you'd like me to keep doing?*
- *In 3 sentences or less, can you describe any reservations that you had before we started working together?*
- *In 3 sentences or less, can you explain how I was able to help you with your reservations?*
- *Can you describe your 1–2 top goals when you started?*
- *In point form, can you list your achievements with training thus far?*
- *Is there anything else at all that you'd like to add?*

You can ask for testimonials at any time, but ideally it should be after at least 2 months of training with you. After a client registers for training, why not set a reminder in your phone for 2–3 months away to ask for a testimonial? This way you don't have to think about it. Once your phone beeps, you hand them the form that I just described. [I prepared a template of this form for you to use. Download a free copy at www.theptdc.com/ignite-worksheets/]

client speak. Often, all that I'll do is ask questions and paraphrase their answers. Make sure you ask every potential client the following before moving on:

- Any injuries?
- What are your goals?
- Have you been a member of a gym before?
- Have you had a trainer before?
- Why did you quit (or not achieve success) previously?
- What are your expectations of me?

Pause for several seconds when you think the person is finished before you begin talking. The air in the room will be more awkward than when Luke Skywalker found out that Leia was his sister. When people feel awkward they speak about the first thing that comes to mind. Usually the result is for them to give you their deeper purpose for wanting to exercise.

Step 2: Sell results, not packages.

Once you know what the client hopes to achieve, give them an idea of a plan. You're doing it on the spot, so it doesn't need to be perfect and you can fill in the blanks later. Physically chart out the plan on a piece of paper in front of the client explaining 1 – 3 of the biggest steps. Explain why your plan is specifically suited to get them their results. The plan acts as the logic that will help a potential client justify his decision to train with you.

Be brief. Start to paint the picture but the details don't matter yet. Let the client lead you in terms of how much detail you provide. I found that some clients were more interested in the physiology behind adaptation than others. It was impossible for me to gauge upon first meeting. So I would ask something like, "Do you want to know a little about how soreness works and why it is not a great indicator of how hard you worked?"

If the client says “yes,” I’ll explain a bit about Delayed Onset Muscle Soreness (“DOMS”) and how it works. If she isn’t interested, I’ll leave it and move on. Remember that you’re an expert when sitting in a sales meeting. If you say that soreness isn’t a great indicator of a good workout and she doesn’t question you, then there’s no need to explain. Move on.

By the end of stage two make sure the client has a good idea of what your program for her entails. She should already be imagining working with you in the gym.

Step 3: Address objections.

The next step is to address any objections the client may have. Say something like, “What do you think about the plan?” and then listen to what he says.

It’s rare to make a sale without dealing with objections. Try your best to tackle them *after* the client is already picturing working with you. When you bring it up now, the client may mention an objection but, after already having been sold on your program, will start to figure out solutions on his or her own. Shut up and let your client talk through it.

Money (or lack of it) is the biggest objection. Sell value before you bring up the dollars. The cheapest trainer in the world is too expensive if the client isn’t yet sold on your value.

If a potential client asks what you charge before you talk about your value, I suggest gently changing the subject. If the person still demands to know the cost, tell him or her, but your chances of making the sale go way down at that point. There are some cases where you can’t do anything. Some clients will end up at the cheapest facility; shrug it off and rack it up to experience.

Here are some common objections or issues clients have and how to address them:

- Lack of time. If a potential client lacks time to train, discuss

different types of workout routines suited to her goals that will work within her timeline. For example, if you have a client who wants to lose fat, discuss metabolic workouts and how much more “bang for your buck” these workouts will get your client as opposed to steady-state cardio.

- A previous injury. Make sure you understand the injury. I keep a database on the most common injuries I come across. (When I come across a new injury, I make sure to add it to the database.) Contained within that database are papers varying in complexity describing the injury and rehabilitation protocols. If I’m familiar with the injury, I proceed to pummel the client with knowledge, so to speak. If I’m not familiar with the injury, I use the line “I can help you with that.” Either way, I print out some information for the client on the spot and hand it to her. That shows again that I’m willing to go the extra 10 percent.
- A previous bad experience with a trainer. Don’t bad-mouth anybody. Always give a former trainer the benefit of the doubt, but educate the client as to how you would treat the situation differently. Say the client didn’t feel the previous trainer listened to her; I would tell her I was sorry about that but that as a client, she can call me during the day or email me any time. I also remind her that during our sessions (or anytime she sees me in the gym – as long as I’m not with a client.), she’s welcome to speak about anything. Whatever the bad experience was, show that you’re going to deal with it differently.
- A know-it-all attitude. A fair number of clients believe they don’t need a trainer because they “know what they’re doing.” When I hear something like this, I get a thorough understanding of a client’s previous and current workouts and goals. I will then highlight several points where she can improve, and if I can, I provide the person with research on whatever her goals are (like hypertrophy, fat loss, or toning). While this person may not hire

you immediately, I suggest you stay in contact with this person. She may wind up approaching you and asking you to train her.

- Cost. Cost is a different type of obstacle. If you have demonstrated your value to a potential client, cost should not even be an obstacle. Yes, some people can't afford a trainer, but the fact that you're a little cheaper or more expensive than another trainer shouldn't matter. If \$80/hour is too expensive, so is \$70. But if a client understands your value, she won't balk at \$80/hour versus \$70/hour. Other than setting up payment plans when necessary, I'm against negotiating the price of training. It's important to stick to your value, but you can be creative in making a plan that will work for a client who can't train with you as often. (I'll give you some examples later in this chapter.)

Step 4: Get the buy-in.

Before bringing up price you should book the person into your schedule according to the plan you've sketched out. Having clients commit to training times and dates makes it harder for them to balk at the sale. Author Sheena Iyengar calls this the "foot-in-the-door" technique in her book, *The Art of Choosing*. Getting somebody to commit to you on a small decision increases the chances they will commit to whatever you propose next.

Now it's finally time to discuss money.

I suggest you have a professional sales sheet with 3 options: A cheap option, a middle "good-value" option, and an expensive option with all the bells and whistles. Basic pricing theory suggests that 3 options works better than 2 if your goal is to sell people on your middle price. For example, let's say your options are:

- 3 sessions – \$300
- 20 sessions and 2 assessments – \$1,800
- 50 sessions, 3 assessments, and 5 massages from the therapist down the street – \$4,800

Compared with the first two options only:

- 3 sessions – \$300
- 20 sessions and 2 assessment – \$1,800,

\$1,800 now seems like a lot of money. The addition of the third option in my first example makes the middle price-point seem a lot more reasonable.

There isn't a set precedent for personal training prices. You (or the gym you work for) set your fees. In this example, the third package acts predominantly as a reference point. You will find more people will now buy the middle package. There are also people who want to buy the most expensive thing. So you may as well have a high-cost option, just in case.

When presenting the packages you can reference back to the workout you suggested in my second selling personal training step. I usually give 2 options to the client but show them the sheet with the 3rd so they can see the reference point. The conversation would sound something like:

Sally, you mentioned that you really want to give this your all and we've set some pretty lofty but attainable goals of X, Y, and Z.

In order to hit these goals by the date you mentioned, I'm going to need you training with me 3 times/week and twice on your own, where I'll give you a full plan of what to do. The most cost-effective option is the 50-pack of sessions and it will take our training over 3 months to finish. This is more than enough time to get measurable results.

If that's too big of a commitment for you off the bat, we also offer a 20-session package. Please also remember that our

sessions are fully refundable so you don't need to be worried about getting stuck with a larger package if something happens.

I like to give two options because it makes for a softer sell, and gives the client a choice. I also remind the client that she can get a refund if she decides not to pursue training with me.

Step 5: Get creative if necessary.

You won't always need to use step 5, but you will have clients that can't train with you as often as your plan requires. That's when you get creative to help your clients reach their goals.

For example, instead of giving a client a workout each time she comes in, you might give her an hour-long lesson in the weight room so that she is comfortable working out once or twice a week on her own. Or you might not even be in the weight room. I've taken clients into our conference room to go over their workout plans. The idea is to provide your clients with the tools they need to train on their own, if necessary. If your client travels frequently or has a hard time getting into the gym, consider making online training a part of your client's training package.

If your client can't work out with you as often as you'd like, tell her what she'll be responsible for on her own, and get her to buy into it. Remember how to manipulate price. This may involve creativity on your part to make the sale but be careful not to prejudice a client and always start high. If the client's goals require her to work out five times a week, be honest and educate her about why this is so. I was always surprised at how often a client would offer to train with me more frequently when I had properly communicated what she needed to do to achieve her goals.

For example, Vlad was a member of the gym who would often ask me questions but he never asked to train with me. I always answered his questions, and was surprised when he finally asked me to be his personal trainer.

Vlad was recovering from rotator cuff surgery and didn't have much money. Having completed physiotherapy, he wanted an exercise routine that he could do three times/week with a focus on continual strengthening of the shoulder and functional strength. He couldn't afford to work with me this often, but wanted a program that constantly changed to keep him interested but still focused on his problem shoulder.

After educating Vlad on the necessity of progression, we agreed to meet once a week for seven weeks. Vlad's form was already pretty good, and I was confident that I could show Vlad a movement and he would be able to emulate it the following week. He also knew that he could contact me with any questions. I devised a workout plan for him that included 7 categories:

- Pull
- Push
- Mid-back/shoulder stability
- Core stability/anti-rotation
- Core rotation/flexion
- Legs (hip dominant)
- Legs (quad dominant)
- Arms

I included four or five exercises in each group and instructed Vlad to choose one to two exercises from each category per workout, focusing on shoulder stability and core strength. Our sessions consisted of making Vlad comfortable with the given exercises, and to make sure that he knew when the weight was appropriate and when it needed to be increased.

When we were done, Vlad had the freedom to choose from a large assortment of workouts. The exercises I included were specific to his needs and he knew how to progress. I gave Vlad the freedom and knowledge to make his own workouts within certain

parameters, and he got much more value from this plan – yet he was still able to afford it. He was so happy with his results he wound up referring his wife and daughter to me for an additional 100+ sessions.

✓ **TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

Be creative. If a client has financial constraints, find a solution that will work for him and help him reach his goals.

With another client, Lisa, I had to overcome the negative experiences she'd had with other trainers. When I asked her about her history, I learned that she'd always trained using low weights in a circuit. She'd been told that it was the best way to fat-burn since her heart rate would be up the whole workout. Second, none of her previous trainers had given her detailed instruction, so Lisa was clueless about how to work out on her own. She'd meet with her trainer once or twice a week, and then tried to work out on her own, but she hadn't achieved the results she wanted.

I developed a plan for Lisa that would enable her to meet her goals. Her initial goal was to lose 25 pounds, but I wanted her to put on muscle and get stronger. I educated Lisa on the difference between absolute weight and body composition, and told her that if she was going to train with me, she was going to train like a power lifter. I explained that the added muscle would increase her BMR ("Basal Metabolic Rate") and that the workouts would have a greater TEE ("Thermic Effect of Exercise"). The stubborn weight would come off as a byproduct.

In addition, I told Lisa that I didn't want to see her every week. I was going to force her to be self-sufficient. I therefore proposed an arrangement to Lisa where we would meet three times in one week. This would enable me to teach her enough to feel comfortable for the next month. I wanted to make sure she never left another

gym feeling disoriented again. I was always available for questions, so she knew from the minute she walked into the gym she knew what she had to accomplish and had already acquired the requisite self-efficacy to complete the task.

I gave Lisa a power workout that contained fewer exercises for her to master. In short, I wanted Lisa to feel great doing 8 exercises in a workout as opposed to feeling confused trying to master 20+ exercises. So what happened?

In her first year, she got unbelievable results. She reached her goal of losing the 25 pounds while eating more than ever (I did get her to keep a diary and worked with her on making proper food choices). She's also incredibly strong, and most of all, Lisa is a much more confident person in and out of the gym.

All it took with Lisa was a minor push in the right direction. I listened carefully to what didn't work and made sure not to repeat the mistakes. I then devised a program that was completely different, that she could afford, and that I knew she could master. By helping Lisa become confident and knowledgeable in the gym, I gained a lifetime client until I left the hands-on training field.

I shared these stories to remind you that no two clients are the same. Often it takes a little creativity to sell clients on training and retain them. While it would be great if every client wanted to train with you three times a week for life, that's not realistic.

✓ **TRAINING TAKEAWAY**

Educate and empower your clients. You can create a client army that will go out of their way to spread the word about how amazing you are. That's the key to being a career trainer.

THE BIGGEST MISTAKE TRAINERS MAKE: PREJUDGING CLIENTS

Trust me. Go through my five steps for every client and present whatever option you think is best irrelevant of the appearance, age, or anything else you know about the potential client.

I've trained high school students 3 times/week because they begged their parents after speaking with me. I've also made the mistake of prejudging an older client and sheepishly presenting a cheap option. I found out later he was well off, but had set a precedent of training him once every two weeks. It was impossible to get them back to training multiple times a week after that.

You are the product. Believe in its value and learn to communicate it to a client. Selling personal training is about confidence; never miss an opportunity again.

SELLING IN ACTION

Not every sale takes place on the gym floor. I'd like to share an example of how you can find clients anywhere – if you know how to sell to them.

Several years ago at a party, I met Jeff, who suffered from chronic pain. It appeared that he'd been injured working with a personal trainer months before. Jeff hadn't gone back to the gym after that, but because he worked in construction, he'd been forced to constantly medicate himself. I asked Jeff about what had happened since then, and he told me that he'd quit working with the trainer and had tried acupuncture and massage therapy on a weekly basis but that the pain always returned. In addition, Jeff wasn't able to go mountain biking and was afraid to drive his motorcycle. His quality of life was severely compromised.

Normally I would take notes while talking with a potential client, but since I was at a party I didn't have that luxury. I already had valuable information that I could use to make a sale, though, as he revealed the following emotional triggers:

- He couldn't do activities that he loved such as mountain biking and riding his motorcycle.
- He'd had a motorcycle accident in the past, which left him with permanent shoulder and knee damage in addition to his lower back pain.
- He was well-educated, and appreciated well-researched health and fitness information.
- His view of trainers had been tarnished as he viewed his previous trainer as being responsible for his injury. In addition, that trainer didn't follow proper programming and Jeff never saw any results.
- Jeff didn't want to pay any more money for acupuncture or massage therapy because it only helped the symptoms, not the underlying problem. He wanted to address the problem and get back into shape.

Keeping these factors in mind, I spoke to Jeff about his previous experience. I made sure to avoid criticizing the trainer but highlighted the importance of proper exercise choice and progression. We talked about the importance of a building from the bottom up and having a full dynamic warm-up and mobility work to prepare for exercises like the deadlift. We also talked about the benefits and limitations of disciplines such as acupuncture and massage. In combination with a proper exercise program, they can be effective treatments, but they won't create proper movement patterns or develop muscle. Finally, we talked about how he would feel when he would be pain-free and could get back to activities that he loved. I wanted to make our conversation emotional for him.

We didn't talk about goal-setting – and because his goal was to get back to mountain biking, not to bench-press a certain amount, conventional goal-setting may not have been effective at the time. I couldn't give him a timeline because he had not completed an assessment, and I needed more information about his shoulder

and knee issues before I created a plan for him. At the end of the conversation, I gave him my card and told him to contact me if he wanted any more information, and asked him for his email address.

At no point did I ask him to train with me or even mention the gym I worked at. When I got home that night, I forwarded him a review article on lower back rehabilitation and told him to call if he had any questions about the article. (Note that I never mentioned during our conversation that I would send him any info. I made a note in my phone to send the study to him when I got home.) It was the extra effort that refreshed his mind about our conversation the following day and showed him that I was a different breed of trainer willing to go the extra 10 percent.

Three days later, Jeff called to make an appointment to train with me. Without selling, I had a committed client. The cost of the training sessions didn't matter because he understood the value. When clients understand your value, they'll be happy to pay whatever you charge. On the other hand, if clients aren't sold on your value, you could be the cheapest trainer in the world and still be too expensive.

I wouldn't have said that I could have helped him with his back pain if I wasn't qualified to do so. After a complete assessment (and getting medical clearance), we started a plan that included showing him how to stand, sit, and carry objects properly to reduce pain while at work and followed that with a focus on getting him strong in the gym. Within five months, he was pain-free and stronger than he'd ever been – and I had another committed client who spread the word about me.

Without one word concerning sales, I was able to take a client whose view of trainers had been seriously tarnished and I converted him into a great client and an inspiring story. After we trained together, he wrote a testimonial that I used to sell myself to other clients with lower back pain.

About the Author



Jonathan Goodman loves exercise, hates bad socks, and considers himself a key lime pie connoisseur.

He is the creator of the Personal Trainer Development Center (thePTDC) a site that reaches over 2.45 million trainers a year, sold tens of thousands of copies of his books, training programs, and courses, and has been featured in Men's Health, Schwarzenegger.com, Muscle & Fitness, and Forbes amongst others. Originally from Toronto, Jon spends his winters exploring the World.

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"The Highly Practical Approach to Personal Training is Here"

"By 23 he'd [Goodman] become the head trainer at a boutique fitness studio. But even at that young age, Goodman noticed a few key inefficiencies that caused him and his colleagues worlds of grief. So he set out to find answers, interviewing dozens of fitness professionals to nail down the solutions via what he calls "actionable systems." [...]

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