

Selling Personal Training in 5 Steps

BY JONATHAN GOODMAN

From setting goals with a client to getting buy-in, this guide will walk you through five best practices for selling your personal training services.

BONUS: At the end of this guide, discover the **BIGGEST MISTAKE** trainers make when trying to sell to a new client.

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Overview

It's 10:02am.

You wave goodbye to your previous client and swallow a gulp of air nervously awaiting your next meeting.

With a brief stop at the office to pick up new client intake and par-q forms you put on your happy face. Chest up and with a big smile you greet the potential client waiting patiently for you with a high quality handshake. The sales meeting has begun...

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 Xlbs?"

"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 they want. This article is a 5-step system for your sales meeting. It's tried and tested.

You're welcome to download the .pdf below for your training materials. I also suggest you take the 5 points and keep them in your office to refer to during the meeting itself.

Also, at the end of this article is the BIGGEST MISTAKE trainers make when trying to sell a new client. Don't miss that.

SELLING PERSONAL TRAINING STEP 1:

“What is it you want to achieve?”

The client has taken time out of their busy day to come see you. You are in the position of power and should be controlling the conversation, not them. 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 they will start back up but if they keep quiet ask if there is a specific reason why he or she is coming to you. While he or she is talking listen carefully to their emotional reasons for sitting in the chair across from you. Why do they want to lose 5lbs? Always remember that emotion is what drives action.

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

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

1. Any injuries?
2. What are your goals?
3. Have you been a member of a gym before?
4. Have you had a trainer before?
5. Why did you quit (or not achieve success) previously?
6. 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.

SELLING PERSONAL TRAINING 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 client in front of the client explaining 1-3 of the biggest steps. Explain why your plan is specifically suited to get them their results.

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 asked, "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 they say yes I'll explain a bit about Delayed Onset Muscle Soreness (DOMS) and how it works. If they aren't, 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 they don'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 them entails. They should already be imagining themselves in the gym working with you.

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SELLING PERSONAL TRAINING STEP 3:

Address objections.

Proactively deal with objections. Say something like, “What do you think about the plan?” and then listen to what he she 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. By being proactive at this stage the client will bring up an objection but, after already having been sold on your program, start to figure out solutions on their own. Shut up and let them talk through it.

Money 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.

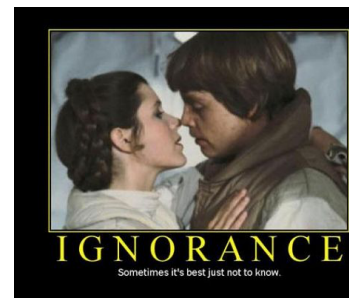
If a potential client asks what you charge before you talk about your value, I suggest gently changing the subject. If the person still demands to know the cost, tell him or her, but your chances of making the sale go way down at that point. There are some cases where you can’t do anything. Some clients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

Here are some other common objections that will get in the way to you selling personal training and how to address them:

1. LACK OF TIME. Discuss different types of workout routines suited to his or her goals that will work within their 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.

If you’re interested in expanding your repertoire, Jason Ferruggia has an Ebook with lots of great ideas on high intensity circuits and metabolic finishers. For more information on that go to www.theptdc.com/renegadecardio.

2. 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." I'll then take notes on the injury and do further research after the clients left to determine whether I can deal with it or who to refer out to.

Either way my goal is to have information in my file to print out give the client as a takeaway (with my card stapled to it of course). You should always be looking for ways to go the extra 10%. If you're looking for more tips like this and haven't already read 101 Personal Trainer mistakes go to www.personaltrainerebooks.com and download the 3 free Ebooks we've put together.

3. 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 him or 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.

Whatever the bad experience was, show that you're going to deal with it differently. Be specific and don't move on until you have shown them that you won't repeat the same mistake their previous trainer made.

4. A KNOW-IT-ALL ATTITUDE. A fair number of clients believe they don't need a trainer because they "know what they're doing" and they simply ask for a workout. When I hear something like this, I get a thorough understanding of a client's previous and current workouts and goals.

I love the shit sandwich approach (SSA) in this situation and wrote about it quite a bit in my book, Ignite the Fire (www.theptdc.com/ignite). I first learned this approach from a boss I had as a camp counselor. I was having trouble with a camper and the kid wouldn't listen to me. Instead of focusing on the bad, my mentor suggested that I sandwich the bad with two good attributes.

After hearing the clients program I congratulated them on something they did well, then follow with a suggestion on something they can improve, and finished with another piece of their self- directed program they did well.

While this person may not hire you immediately, the SSA doesn't hurt their ego and allows you to show your value. Clients with a know-it-all attitude are often A-types and need a softer approach.

*"Sell value
before you
bring up the
dollars."*

I've been amazed at the volume of these clients who have approached me in the weeks or months that follow for training.

5. "I NEED TO THINK ABOUT IT." This isn't an objection. What does the client need to think about? Ask them and be quiet. There's always a tangible reason behind this objection.

6. COST. 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. You may however have to be creative (see step 5) in your plan if money is an issue.

SELLING PERSONAL TRAINING 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. In *The Art of Choosing* by Sheena Iyengar she calls this the foot in the door technique. Getting somebody to commit to you on a smaller 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 option that's good value, and an expensive option with all the bells and whistles. Basic pricing theory suggests that 3 options works better than two if your goal is to sell people on your middle price. For example, if your options were:

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

If I just showed you the first two:

- 3 sessions - \$300
- 20 sessions and 2 assessments - \$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 precedent for personal training prices. The third package acts predominantly as a reference point. You will find more people will now buy the middle package. There's 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 3x/ 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.

SELLING PERSONAL TRAINING STEP 5:

Get creative if necessary.

If a client agrees to your plan in step 4 then all that's left is to sign the paperwork. They may balk, if they do step 5 comes into play. It's for when the client can't afford to train with you as often as your plan requires.

For example, instead of giving a client a workout each time he or she comes in, you might give her an hour-long lesson in the weight room so that he or 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. Provide your client with the tools to be successful, even if it's unconventional.

If the client's goals requires him or her to work out 5 times a week, be honest and willing to educate on why this is the case. I'm always surprised at how often a client will offer to train with me more frequently when I properly communicate what she needs to do to achieve her goals. If they can't afford to train every time with you learn to mold your programs to fit their budget.

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 3 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 7 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:

"I like to give two options because it makes for a softer sell, and gives the client a choice."

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

I included 4 or 5 exercises in each group and instructed Vlad to choose 1-2 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.

Vlad no longer trains with me but has referred me both his daughter and wife who ended up buying a combined 100+ sessions.

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 3x/wk 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 they were well off but had set a precedent of training them 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.

Resources Mentioned in This Article

Renegade Cardio (www.theptdc.com/renegadecardio) - Jason Ferruggia

The Art of Choosing (<http://amzn.to/Sry8in>) - Sheena Iyengar

Ignite the Fire: The Secrets of a Successful Personal Training Career

(www.theptdc.com/ignite) - Jonathan Goodman

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