



Grand (re)Opening, Phase I



1000 Hills Fitness

Highly successful fitness operations are not constructed in a vacuum. Group fitness schedules, personal training promotions, staff development, marketing... these aspects of running a well oiled fitness center are built upon numerous variables.

You consider your membership base: their age, their work, their limitations, their lifestyle. You consider the industry: the trends, the fads, the local interests. You look at regional, national, and worldwide benchmarks and reports. You consult with colleagues and industry experts.

When the time comes to reopen your fitness center, you will be pulled towards doing things as they were previously done.

But the times have changed; your members have changed; the world has changed.



“Without a compass bearing, a ship would neither find its port nor be able to estimate the time required to get there.”

Peter Drucker

About This Guide



This guide helps map the new norms in fitness. It is intended to help you to understand how the business of fitness could transform for individuals, consumers, professionals, entrepreneurs, and managers.

The guide was developed via a combination of listening to podcasts, reading reports, and digesting articles; Talking to colleagues and industry experts; And reflection on decades of experience managing and consulting for private club fitness operations.

The Milieu

If you don't know where you are, you can't get where you're going.

When you return to your fitness center, the equipment will be the same, the staff will look the same, and the members will too. But that couldn't be further from the truth.



Both your members and your staff (and you!) are coming into the fitness center with a different perspective than when you saw them last. Consider these possible Phase I New Norms about your members and staff:

1. New stressors (a changed world, death of a loved one, quarantine)
2. Weight gain
3. Unhealthy vices with ample air to breathe (e.g., alcohol consumption)
4. Limited social engagement
5. Loss of income
6. Increased savings (for people on fixed incomes, for example)
7. Hesitation to be in crowds and virus prone areas
8. Anger, frustration, disappointment
9. Sadness, disengagement, despondence
10. Stronger (or strained) family bonds
11. Reconnection with loved ones and friends
12. Yearning for health and wellness
13. Disappointed/embarrassed about self-care during quarantine
14. Companies realize work work from home works (and saves money). Workers continue working from home.
15. Large fitness chains require months to restaff, retrain, and regroup
16. Another outbreak, at a prominent fitness center, is going to happen



What Are You Going To Do About It?

1000 Hills Fitness is not just another consultant reflecting on past experiences. We manage private club fitness operations too. We are in the trenches dealing with the same challenges as everyone else. Our recommendations, like this guide, are our strategic plans. We have shared our strategies on important management topics like [staff development](#), [operations](#), and [trend spotting](#).

Here's another one out of the playbook.

The new norm, as previously outlined, should be considered before outlining your Grand (re)Opening plan. The list above is incomplete, no doubt. We have not considered everything and every angle. It is intended to open your eyes to the new reality though, and inspire you to be proactive to overcome the obstacles that lie ahead.

While reading through the list, one cannot help but think of the many threats and opportunities that will emerge. For example, if the work-from-home phenomenon becomes a new norm even after businesses reopen, then near-work fitness center memberships will decline in favor of near-home memberships. That's good news for private club fitness centers where members usually live close by. Those members who used to attend classes over their lunch hour or work with trainers, are now coming to you to have their fitness and wellness needs met. Do you have programs and promotions ready to speak to those members?

However, and this is a BIG however, fitness centers managed by 1000 Hills Fitness are not thinking of programming first. To do that would tie a department into knots trying to be everything for everyone in every situation.



“I’m as proud of what we don’t do as I am of what we do.”

Steve Jobs

Apple used to brag about how their entire product line could fit onto an office table, versus competitors whose product line would require a warehouse to fit every version, style, and spin-off of their products. Mr. Jobs was focused on quality, not quantity; he was focused on the consumer, not the bottom line (which, of course, turned out to be a pretty healthy approach).



Who Are You?

If you don’t know who you (i.e., your department) is, then just ask your members. And to be clear, I am talking about your brand. Orangetheory, 24 Hour Fitness, YMCA, Planet Fitness, Equinox... they all have a brand. From the time you walk into the front door to the time you exit, you make judgements as to “who” the fitness facility is, and if it blends with your values. Some operations are intentional about their brands (e.g., Equinox), others not so much.

Your department has a brand—and it is critical to manage it during Phase I of the Grand (re)Opening.

How do you want your fitness center to be branded? Fun, social, affordable, exclusive, inviting, dirty, expensive, friendly, intimidating, inclusive, old school, not very helpful, clean, salesy, lazy, innovative—these words, and many more, may describe who “you” are. As stated above, the times have changed, and so should your brand.





(re)Branding

We are recommending private club fitness centers adopt new (temporary) brand positions:

Brand Position #1: We are not assuming everything will return to normal, and that clients will come running back, and that programs that used to be popular will bounce back. We need to work hard to (re)gain members' trust, (re)demonstrate value, and (re)engage everyone. We are shifting into Grand (re)Opening mode.

Brand Position #2: The perception and reality of your cleanliness standards will be a make or break situation. If you are lax, then members will notice and lives could be lost. It could take months to years, if ever, to rebuild trust. Be proactive, not reactive, about new cleanliness standards. Be an over-the-top/paranoid person when it comes to members' and staff's safety.

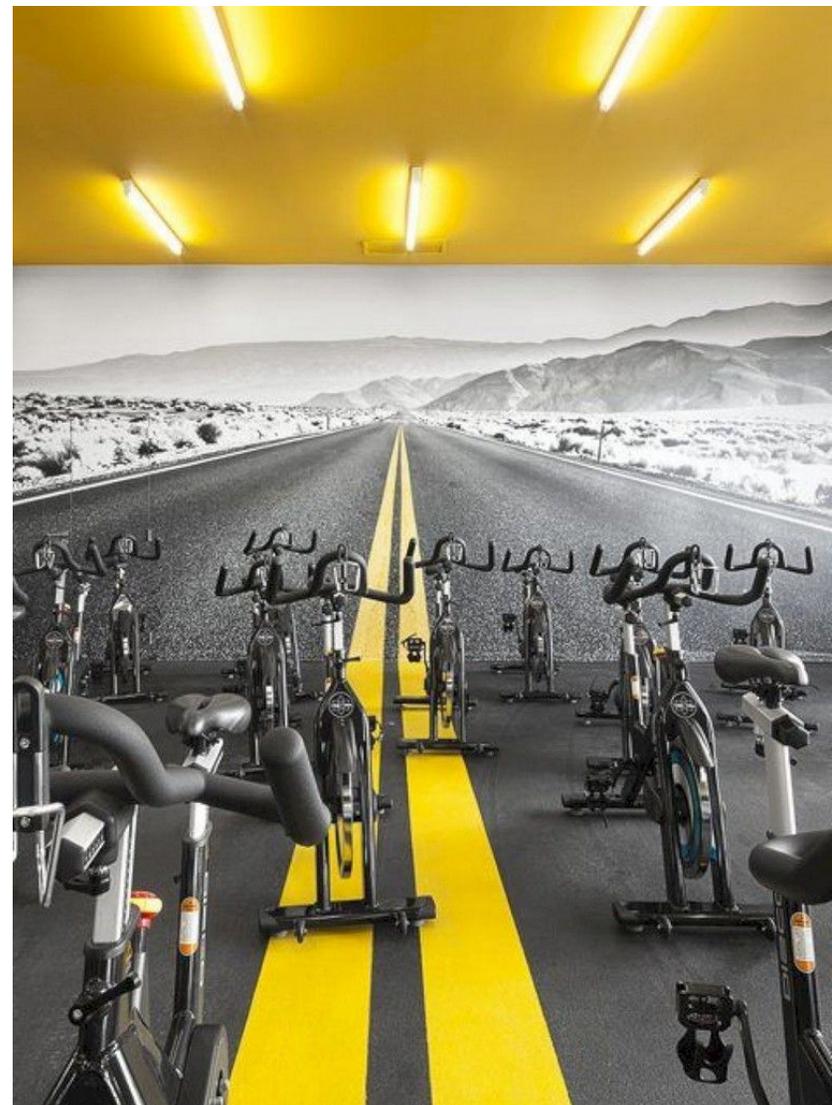


Grand (re)Opening

While this reopening is not a full opening ([click here](#) to read about a true Grand Opening), it does feel grand. After a month or more of quarantine, around the clock reporting of the infection and death rate, it is a relief to see a (pin)light at the end of the tunnel. It's not a grand Grand Opening, but it is an opening. Phase One is, in our estimate, the first of multiple phases, including a one-step-back phase later this summer or fall. Phase I should include:

1. Update member policies to keep them safe (e.g., social distancing required, avoid high intensity training, personal towels not permitted)
2. Update employee policies to keep them safe (e.g., social distancing required, put on clean work clothes at work, utilize body weight exercises when possible instead of equipment)
3. Update facility policies to keep everyone safe (e.g., utilize infrequently used club spaces as new workout stations for at risk members, keep work areas clutter free (clutter looks dirty), use disposable wipes only to clean)
4. Offer new programs, new classes, new specialty packages, and new consultations.
5. (re)Introduce your staff—bios, specialties, new offerings
6. Spotlight equipment, processes, policies
7. Communicate what you did, communicate what you're doing, communicate what you're about to do to both members and staff
8. Foster a culture of innovation (when mistakes are made, how quickly do you recover, and what lessons did you learn?)
9. Get a (re)Grand Opening budget approved (e.g., more pro hours will be required to rebuild momentum.
10. Spend LOTS of time talking with members

Most importantly: know who you are (your brand) and commit to it.





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This is your once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to welcome members back, for the first time in history, from a worldwide epidemic no less. Not one of your members, or staff, is coming back the same person. They all have different feelings and expectations now. Proceed accordingly. Factor in your new brand positions before making policy and programming decisions, as you would in a Grand Opening.

Above all else, stay safe and be well.

For more educational resources, including guides, position papers, original articles, conference presentations, and case studies, visit <https://www.1000hillsfitness.com/news-insights>

To learn first-hand how 1000 Hills Fitness can position your private club fitness operation for success, schedule a call today at <https://www.1000hillsfitness.com/contact>, or give us a call at 303-325-2640.

