



## A 7-Step Guide on How to Develop Private Club Fitness Professionals



As fitness and wellness amenities continue to grow in importance for private clubs, ensuring fitness professionals are appropriately oriented and developed becomes mission critical to the success of the department.

Development needs to cover many bases from exercise programming to professional responsibilities, client education to client management, and more. [The American College of Sports Medicine](#) identifies four domains that must be mastered in order to be certified.

The primary source of staff development is through national certifications. However, it's the wild, wild west out there. Becoming a personal trainer requires three things: a computer, access to the internet, and a credit card, and you could be certified by no less than six organizations.

Once certified (even through reputable agencies like the [ACSM](#), [NSCA](#), or the [NASM](#)) the process of keeping the certification current requires just those three previously mentioned assets (computer, internet, credit card). And to top it off, continuing education courses very rarely advise on the business of fitness, and *never* talk about subjects related to the private club fitness industry.

**Ensuring your fitness professionals are private club oriented and developed is **mission critical**.**



# Staff Development

1000 Hills Fitness started its own staff development program nearly ten years ago because high performing fitness professionals had trouble transitioning their skills into the private club market. They might be service-oriented, but lack applicable marketing skills; They may have the knowledge base, but fall short of being able to build a business.

With over a decade of teaching and refining staff development for private clubs, here is a rare look into the 1000 Hills Fitness program called “Service-Marketing”.



## Step zero: hire for personality

Before peeling back the layers on Service-Marketing, it is worth taking just a moment to underscore the importance of hiring. Scarcely can training transform a mediocre employee into a super-star. Hire slowly, right?

The thrill of the hunt for a great hire is exciting. However, private clubs sometimes over emphasize pedigree. They prefer to hire fitness professionals who have worked at one prestigious club or another (if they were hired “there” then they must be good). 1000 Hills Fitness is not immune to such temptations, but we have learned to look for other selling points instead.



## Characteristics of a successful private club fitness pro

For every ten fitness professionals you hire, maybe one will become a top performer. That's frustrating, certainly, because every fitness pro we hire is hired for the expressed purpose of being a top performer. But something always gets in the way—ambition, inability to connect with members, fear of failure, intimidation, competing interests, etc. At some point you realize that hiring is really, really hard. Wouldn't it be great if you had a crystal ball and you could see a candidate's future *before* making the job offer?

You sort of can...

If you have a large enough staff then you have a top performer or two. If you have a small staff of maybe four or five fitness pros then it is more difficult to say that the top performer among them is exemplary.

1000 Hills Fitness identified this crystal ball, and polished it off. We embarked on a six-month process to interview, analyze, and categorize the characteristics of our fitness pros. We were looking for characteristics that separated top performers from the rest with the hopes that we could someday use this guide to inform hiring decisions.

Think of all of the characteristics that you look for in a hire. [Live Bold & Bloom](#) identified 600! Here is a small sample:

<b>Curious</b>	<b>Adventurous</b>	<b>Balanced</b>	<b>Scholarly</b>
<b>Friendly</b>	<b>Polished</b>	<b>Empathetic</b>	<b>Kind</b>
<b>Creative</b>	<b>Diplomatic</b>	<b>Experienced</b>	<b>Genuine</b>
<b>Agreeable</b>	<b>Self-sufficient</b>	<b>Leader</b>	<b>Deep</b>
<b>Energetic</b>	<b>Witty</b>	<b>Attractive</b>	<b>Intelligent</b>
<b>Honest</b>	<b>Loyal</b>	<b>Principled</b>	<b>Athletic</b>
<b>Adaptable</b>	<b>Humble</b>	<b>Charming</b>	<b>Passionate</b>
<b>Cooperative</b>	<b>Courteous</b>	<b>Dynamic</b>	<b>Personable</b>

1000 Hills Fitness identified seven characteristics of successful fitness pros (success was defined as number of sessions completed per week over a 3-month period). These qualities are considered fundamental in top performing fitness pros:

<b>Goal setting</b>	<b>Persistent</b>	<b>Strong work ethic</b>
<b>Passionate</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Magnetic personality</b>
<b>Good listener</b>		

If you want to take this conversation even further, then you can develop interview questions that get to the heart of these characteristics. For example, if you want to know if the candidate is responsible then ask about a failure in his/her career. Listen to what the candidate attributes the failure. If the candidate blames a coworker, the economy, or some other variable that has nothing to do with him/her, then that is a sign s/he doesn't take responsibility for results, and a possible red (or at least yellow) flag.



# Service-Marketing

Building a successful personal training department has very little (if anything) to do with selecting complex exercises for members, bombarding them with information, or smashing them into physical oblivion.

Exercise requires motivation to overcome uniquely individual obstacles, which requires the fitness pro to develop an understanding of what the client will find emotionally pleasing and what training experiences they will prefer so you can design and deliver sessions that your clients will look forward to repeating time and time again.

This resource takes you through the seven fundamental components of the 1000 Hills Fitness Service-Marketing staff development program, namely:

- 1. The importance of a conversation**
- 2. How and why to offer complimentary sessions**
- 3. What to do with pro hours**
- 4. Commitment to diverse programming**
- 5. Peer-learning**
- 6. Strategic planning**
- 7. CRM**



## #1 The importance of a conversation

It is unlikely that a member hires a personal trainer because of a flyer, or a poster, a newsletter article, a social media post, or even a promo. Personal training sales are personal. Members do not feel compelled to hire a trainer (as opposed to seeing one's doctor). Nor do they generally want to hire a trainer (due to the cost and the overwhelming number of ways to get fit these days which do not require personal training).

Members hire personal trainers they know, trust, and enjoy. Thence arise the importance of a conversation.

Convince your fitness pros that they need to talk to/connect to/get to know your members. Leave sales out of it. Teach rapport and the virtues of connecting with people (e.g., understanding, familiarity, and trust).

Rapport-building should be the central goal of every private club fitness pro's work day. Every top performer we have seen at private and luxury commercial clubs is able to connect with people and befriend people very quickly. Some do it naturally, while others do it because they have been through this Service-Marketing program, but all top performers do it.

## #2 How and why to offer complimentary sessions

Fitness pros may argue this point, but top performers know better. Making it as easy as possible for a member to try something new is crucial to not just building a pipeline of prospective clients, but also to delivering a service that exceeds members' expectations.





Service and sales go hand-in-hand in this program. Giving is a great service, and just so happens to be great marketing too. Fitness pros who are worried about giving away “too much”, must not have much to give. A talented fitness pro could spend all day with a client and still have more to teach.

“ Giving is a great service, and just so happens to be great marketing too. ”

### #3 What to do with pro hours

When a personal trainer clocks-in between sessions, it is usually referred to as a floor hour. The trainer is expected to offer fitness advice (which no member in a fitness center really wants), clean machines (which no trainer really wants to do), or complete other mindless tasks (e.g., fold towels, restack weights, tidy up the fitness center, etc.). 1000 Hills Fitness banned this job description many years ago, and replaced it with what we call “pro hours”.

A pro hour revolves around Service-Marketing. It is an opportunity for the fitness pro to meet people, build rapport, and maybe offer fitness advice that is of value to the receiver (unsolicited fitness advice is a solicitation, and not welcome in the Service-Marketing program).

# BIKE + BREW

10AM Saturday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>

FREE! Group Ride up Deer Creek Canyon with Fitness Pro, Lisa Fountain, followed by an optional brew at the Club!

Register Online in Fitness Calendar

*It's the most wonderful time of the year, but it can also be hectic and cause stress on your body! Don't let your hard work from the spring and summer fall by the wayside.*



**HOLIDAY KICKSTART NUTRITION ASSESSMENTS**

Get ahead of the holidays with a **Quick Nutrition Assessment!**  
Book Your 30 Minute Appointment Online in Fitness Calendar:  
Monday, 10/29: 8-11AM  
Tuesday, 11/6: 3-6PM  
Thursday, 11/15: 3-6PM  
Monday, 11/19: 9-9AM  
*Available for a limited time only for \$25*

**Special Event!**  
**Ski Strength + Excursions**  
An Evening with Chris Anthony

Come out for a FREE 30 minute Ski Conditioning Class, with film from Warren Miller Professional Skier and Colorado Snow Sports Hall of Famer, Chris Anthony!  
After class, Chris will have an informal meet and greet to share some upcoming ski adventure offerings both local and abroad for the upcoming season!

**Monday, November 12<sup>th</sup> from 5:30-6:30PM**  
Class Instructed by Jenn 5:30-6, Chris Q + A to Follow



**Family Boot Camp Series**

Every OTHER Saturday, Starting September 29<sup>th</sup>  
9:30-10:15AM  
With Coach Tom, \$10/solo or \$20/family  
Reserve your spot online!

SS PASS CLUB

**Pilates Reformer Class Pass**  
10 Packs, 10% OFF  
\$225 the month of January, regularly \$250  
Get your Punch Card TODAY!

## #4 Commitment to diverse programming

There are as many excuses to not exercise as there are people who do not exercise. Each member's reason is unique to him or her. If you want to compel your members to overcome their excuses, then a diverse program calendar is a great way to do it. Your programs should vary in:

- |                                             |                                     |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Time commitment</b>                      | <b>Price</b>                        |
| <b>Experience required to participate</b>   | <b>Education v. action</b>          |
| <b>Size of audience (i.e., intimacy)</b>    | <b>Location (onsite v. offsite)</b> |
| <b>Leadership (staff v. outside expert)</b> |                                     |

Think of it like fishing. The more lures you put in the water, the more likely you are to catch a variety of fish.

## #5 Peer-learning

Fitness pros, the good ones, are dedicated to fitness. They study the body's systems, exercise modalities, strategies for motivating people, and so on. Top performers also focus on the delivery of the service.

Working with a fitness pro is a personal experience, and not always does a member decide to hire a fitness pro because of education or experience. The decision can be affected by the member's perceived assessment of the pro's fitness level, rapport, sociability, or even silly stuff like odor or appearance.

Having your personal trainers train each other (train once a month, be trained once a month) is invaluable. They will instantly see the value of being on the other side of the equation. It is usually a very eye-opening experience, one that your members will also benefit from greatly.



## #6 Strategic planning

If personal training were easy to sell, then the turn-over rate would not be so high. According to [the Personal Training Development Center](#), the career span (career, not job) of a personal trainer is about three years on average.

Improper planning is a key factor in the demise of many would-be-successful personal trainers. Without a plan, trainers' businesses wax and wane with the tide. It doesn't have to be that way.

Here are six simple guide posts all clubs should install for their fitness pros:

1. Talk to at least 20 members per day
2. Have a conversation about fitness with at least 5 members per day
3. Lead no less than 3 fitness-related events per month (e.g., a seminar, an orientation, a workshop)
4. Complete 10 or more complimentary sessions per month
5. Get 1 or more of your events per month published in the club's primary marketing outlet
6. Complete 1 event per quarter where inter-departmental collaboration is required—like tennis, golf, or aquatics



It's simple, yet many personal trainers do not even have this level of plan put together.

## #7 CRM

If your fitness pros are committing to #6 of the 1000 Hills Fitness Service-Marketing development program, then after a month they will have talked to over 400 members, led 3 events, and completed 10 complimentary sessions. That is a lot of face time, and who could remember all of those conversations?

A basic CRM, even a simple Excel spreadsheet or journal, makes all the difference. Fitness pros *must* get into the habit of tracking their conversations. Plus, when done correctly, it is a great service for the member—hence the name, Service-Marketing!

## Develop your staff

There is a great quote about staff development that made its rounds on LinkedIn recently. It goes like this:

**CFO asks CEO, “What happens if we invest in developing our people and then they leave us?”**

**CEO: “What happens if we don’t, and they stay?”**

This inside look into the 1000 Hills Fitness Service-Marketing staff development platform hopefully inspires you to develop your fitness staff. You have nothing to lose, and everything to gain.





**1000 Hills Fitness**

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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.

