



balanced body™



## **Your Pilates Studio**

### **From Launch to Expansion: Advice From The Pros**

**In part 2 of our mini eBook we present a collection of articles from industry professionals that we hope will help to further your success as a studio owner.**

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## Ten Marketing Tips for Successful Pilates Programming

By Daniel Wilson

*As seen in the Balanced Body Pilates COREterly*

A primary key to successful Pilates programming is having a marketing plan. Many clubs, fitness facilities, and studios begin a Pilates program without a plan in place and then wonder where the customers are. Here are ten things to consider in order to launch and maintain a flourishing Pilates program.

**1. Educate internally** The key is communication. Particularly at health clubs and wellness centers where Pilates is just one of many activities, it is important that your internal staff - from administration to instructors of other activities - knows what is going on with your program and can answer questions from potential clients if they are asked. Conduct demos to acquaint staff with Pilates. Send emails on a regular basis updating them on your program. Invite them to attend and participate in a mat or equipment class.

**2. Market to your members** This may seem obvious, but it is surprising how many facilities don't do it. If you have a newsletter for members make sure you tell them what is going on with your Pilates sessions. Print flyers to pass out to members that discuss the benefits of Pilates and why they should be participating. Invite them to an initial free group Reformer class, or give them special introductory pricing on group or private sessions to get them in the door.

**3. Network Externally** This is crucial – especially for studios and wellness centers looking to grow their client base. Get out and meet the people! Visit local businesses, schools and churches. Give them a special introductory offer. For example, one of our customers conducted a free mat session at their club for the local high-school girls.



The response was so positive that many of the girl's mothers became members after hearing how fun it was from their daughters. You can also conduct external demos (this is where Balanced Body's portable IQ and Allegro® Reformers can really come in handy) at a local office building, and offer limited time sessions on-site to pique their interest.

**4. Create Specialty Classes** Do you have members or clients that have a common bond or interest? Create classes that get them together! We have customers all over the country who offer specialty classes for a particular demographic. These include:

- Men only
- Skiers
- Post-natal mothers
- Cyclists
- Older Adults
- Equestrians
- Golfers

**5. Price Your Sessions Properly** Most group sessions are priced somewhere between \$20-40 and private sessions can range from \$50-100. But the important thing is to be familiar with where your club, studio or center is geographically. A club in Fargo, North Dakota is not going to be able to charge the same as a club or studio in downtown New York City. Call other local clubs or studios and get their pricing to better gauge how much you should charge.

**6. Reward Your Die-Hards!** If you are lucky enough to have a contingent of members who never miss a session, and are consistent with their patronage, reward them. Create Gold Cards that give them a reduced fee or a free class after attending so many sessions. Make T-shirts for your Gold Club membership as a way of thanking them.



**7. Drop-in Passes** On the flip side of the last tip, it is also a good idea to create a card or pass that allows non-members at a club, or non-clients at a studio or wellness center to drop in from time-to-time and take a class for a fee at a higher rate than what members pay. Chances are if they like what they see, they'll start coming back on a regular basis.

**8. Cross Promote Your Classes!** This can be done within your Pilates programming as well as with other external activities. Within your program you can do things like offer a free group Reformer session to your mat class participants, or a free private session to a group class member. Externally you can create promotions for other programs like yoga or spin, and give them an introductory offer to come and try a free session before or after their class. This works particularly well with cardio or weightlifting programs, as the stretching they'll get in Pilates will improve their alignment and core control in their other fitness activities.

**9. Location, location, location** Because Pilates is a mind-body activity, it requires a lot of concentration and necessitates a serene environment. It should be a place where your clients can get away from their daily hustle and bustle for a while. For someone looking to open a studio this means making sure you pick a location that is not near a lot of noise. For a program within a club it means making sure you have designated space for your Pilates program, and that that space is not near another loud or boisterous activity like a spin class or basketball court.

**10. Referral Program** If you have a client or member that has referred a friend in to coming to your class or session, reward that person with a free or reduced-rate class.



## **Creating an Inspiring & Effective Working Environment** **by Ann Toran**

My studio, Pilates Reforming New York, has been growing steadily since its inception. One of the building blocks to its success has been creating a working environment that conveys the excitement we feel about sharing the Pilates experience. It's changed our lives - we want it to do the same for our clients.

I first experienced Pilates equipment when my husband, a Chiropractor, expanded his rehabilitative practice to include a Reformer. It ultimately led me to take a one-week Reformer course. From that point on I was hooked. A year later, I attended the First International Polestar Pilates conference in Miami, Florida. I decided that would be a great place to meet other teachers and find out more about Pilates. In early 2002, I took Brent Anderson's Allegro® class. I was instantly blown away by that group Reformer experience and had an immediate vision of students working in a group environment on the Reformer at affordable prices! By August my husband and I had taken over the space next door to his Chiropractic practice on the eighth floor of an office building in Times Square. We installed 10 Balanced Body Allegros and began our first classes.

### **Finding the right instructors**

Our first teachers were performers - Radio City Rockettes and former Broadway performers looking to enhance their off-season income - as well as a Physical Therapist who worked with my husband's practice and was going to use Pilates as part of his rehabilitation protocol. Believe it or not, performers make great teachers because they learned in a group environment as students and they are definite crowd pleasers. They often have been Pilates clients themselves for years, so have great intuition as well. They need the energy from the class as much as the class needs them!



I also look at our existing clients as future Pilates teachers. When I see a student display a more than typical curiosity, I try to nurture it and plant the seeds of a potential second career. Now I have several teachers on my staff that were originally students of mine!

### **Fostering a "sharing" environment**

To keep my teachers in top form, they take continuing education courses on a regular basis. They also attend each other's classes at no cost. This fosters both a sharing teaching environment and a generosity amongst the teachers. I often see them brainstorming together between classes or deep in conversation about a client and the client's protocol.

I have found that the teachers who have fuller classes are willing to share their tips. The successful teachers have made it a point to learn the names of all the clients in their classes. This, I have observed, makes a huge difference. Creating that personal feeling, even in a group setting, creates quite a following. Teachers search within themselves to figure out what works, and what within their personality they need to work on to enhance their classes. From the clients' point of view, we are not all the same and variety is the spice of life. The clients themselves gravitate to the teacher that suits them best!

### **Creating a fair compensation**

In my experience I feel that teachers should be compensated according to the number of students in their classes. This also allows for a payroll that responds to the ebb and flow of business. I believe that if the teachers are popular and have full classes, then they should be paid for that. It also encourages teachers to take the initiative to fill their classes. It takes a while for a teacher to have a following and as they mature, so does their income.

I have a guarantee that I pay for each class. Our studio requires a 2-person minimum for a class to take place. Teachers are paid a flat fee for privates and I allow them to "rent space" if they bring in their private clients from outside who are not clients of our studio.



This allows them to make extra money, as they can charge the client whatever they like, while the studio gets the rental fee.

### **Support staff is critical**

Teachers aren't the only ones with an important role. Our support staff is integral to our success. Our studio manager has the main responsibility of customer service. Using an amazing online scheduling software package has freed up our limited staff, which is centrally located in one studio, to answer and deal with issues in all locations, instead of having a huge team of people in each location to field an the incredible amount of incoming phone calls. It creates a uniformity and simplicity that allows is necessary for us to keep our prices affordable.

The studio manager also has the responsibility of making sure all the classes are covered. Maintaining a predictable and reliable schedule is tantamount to our success. While teachers attempt to find coverage for classes, our studio manager sends out emails to all staff as necessary to find coverage. I also compensate my front desk staff on sales they make to clients within 10 days of the clients Free Introductory Class. This commission gives them an extra incentive to follow-up and provides a higher level of customer service. We have found these follow up calls not only answer unasked questions, but also demonstrate that, although our specialty is group class, we care about each individual.

### **An improved client experience**

We've worked hard at creating an environment that rewards growth, learning and success and I feel that environment definitely affects our clients in a positive way. I feel that intelligently working in a group setting is empowering. The participation of the client in adjusting their Allegros, changing the springs, making sure the ropes are even heightens that empowerment. Our goal is to have the client participate in every aspect of the class.



We also offer modifications and choices as necessary, as they are crucial to successfully teaching in a group setting. I like to equate teaching group Reformer to being a conductor of an orchestra playing beautiful music. When the class works well together there is a huge energy that fills the room and creates an unbelievable endorphin release.

Teacher and students alike are energized! It is not uncommon for the class to burst into applause when the class comes to a close.

Also important is to provide a pleasant atmosphere. We found that music was huge. It is never so loud as to drown out the teachers, but loud enough that the students listen, their bodies respond and they are removed from their day-to-day thoughts. We find it enhances their focus to feel the music as well. We tend to gravitate toward the New Age genre, such as Buddha-Bar, Café del Mar, Afro Celt, B-Tribe and Café series. Teachers now bring their own MP3 players to plug them into our sound systems and customize their classes.

The planning and hard work it took to establish a good working dynamic between the studio owners, instructors, support staff and clients has paid off for us. Today we have 3 studio locations, 20 plus teachers and about 175 (approaching 200) classes per week total, plus privates as requested, and continuing education sessions for educators as well. Our client base has grown to over 5000 strong. We have come a long way and I can say with confidence we've only just begun. Pilates is here to stay because it works, and we are here to stay because we make it affordable and fun!

*Ann Toran is the Co-owner/Director/Teacher of Pilates Reforming New York. She made Pilates her career after reaping the benefits of Pilates as an injured ballet dancer, and experiencing its effectiveness in both rehabilitation and her improved fitness. Ann has been certified through both Polestar Pilates and IM=X Pilates and continues to further her Pilates education. Her goal is to make the Pilates Reformer experience available to everyone.*





## **Pilates: Fact Dispels Fiction**

**By Ken Endelman, CEO of Balanced Body Inc.**

*As published in the June 2005 issue of Club Solutions magazine.*

Pilates continues to soar in popularity. Yet some of your members may not believe Pilates can benefit them personally. Educate them by dispelling some common myths about Pilates:

### **Myth #1: Pilates is not for men.**

Mistakenly stereotyped as exercise for women, Pilates was originally designed by a man, for men. Joseph Pilates developed the regimen during a career that included stints as a boxing coach, martial artist and athletic trainer. Despite this history, Pilates has gotten off to a slower start with men. “In general, men don’t try things until they see other men doing it,” says Gerard Hinderlich, owner of Spectrum Bay Club’s Pilates Revolution studio in El Segundo, CA, “I have a class with guys in it and now others are asking about it. It’s the best exercise for men because it increases their strength, flexibility and agility.”

Tell your male membership that Pilates will greatly enhance their athletic performance, by improving their strength and flexibility. Golfers will hit the ball farther. Runners will run longer and they’ll do it without pain. Professional NBA and NFL sports teams — including the New Jersey Nets, Minnesota Timberwolves and Tampa Bay Buccaneers — now use Pilates as an essential part of their conditioning.

Valentin, owner of The Pilates Body by Valentin in Pleasanton, CA, has taught a men-only Pilates class for the past year. “I have cyclists, skiers and other athletes in my class,” she says, “They’ve seen improved performance in their specialties and in other sports, too.”



The truth: More men discover the benefits of Pilates every year. Market Pilates classes to your male membership. You'll increase your program's momentum, and spur positive word-of-mouth among your male club members.

**Myth #2: Pilates is not challenging enough.**

For decades, a traditional workout consisted of lifting weights, running hard, and getting sore —the classic “no pain, no gain” mentality. Pilates is different, focusing on quality and precision of movement rather than the quantity of repetitions. Nonetheless, it's a thorough full-body workout that'll challenge even your most fit members.

“It's tremendous conditioning, but different than people are used to. Pilates demands that you concentrate on each movement,” says Stacy Sims, owner of Pendleton Pilates in Cincinnati, OH, “If you like to ‘check out’ mentally while exercising — for example, with headphones on the treadmill — it may not be for you. But if you focus on performing the exercises correctly, you'll definitely feel like you've had a good workout.”

The truth: For members willing to rethink the “no pain, no gain” approach, Pilates provides no-nonsense, full-body strength and agility training. It delivers results, often with decreased potential for the strains and soreness that inhibit progress.

**Myth #3: Pilates is too hard.**

This misconception stems from the fact that many clubs offer free mat classes as a springboard to fee-based Reformer classes. This can create an incorrect perception that matwork is an introductory form of Pilates. In reality, Reformers provide support and resistance for the exercises, so matwork can be more difficult.



Ensure that your mat classes aren't overly difficult for beginners, which can turn them off to Pilates entirely. Your instructors must be well-trained in modifying exercises appropriately for various fitness levels. Two possible approaches:

1. Offer a mat class geared to beginners, rather than just offering open-level classes. Beginners will be comfortable with their peers and your instructor can modify exercises appropriately for the group.
2. If you can't offer beginner classes, instructors must ensure that no participant is discouraged, and that everyone is having fun. "If you lose people in mat classes, it's because the instructor hasn't grasped how to modify the exercises to meet each participant's needs," says Valentin, "If taught right, mat classes are enjoyable and effective."

The truth: With proper training in modifying exercises to meet individual needs, your Pilates instructors can increase member satisfaction and enjoyment, and improve retention rates.

#### **Myth #4: Pilates is too expensive.**

Mat classes are usually free with club membership. And, although the average cost for private Pilates sessions is similar to personal training (\$50 to \$100), the advent of group Reformer classes has made equipment-based Pilates much more affordable. Group Reformer classes average around \$20 a class, but it can be lower. Hinderlich's studio offers a package for multiple sessions that lowers the cost to \$13 per class. In addition, group Reformer sessions (4-10 participants) feel like semiprivate classes. Participants get plenty of instructor attention — more "bang for their buck" than in other group classes.

The truth: Pilates mat classes are typically free, and group Reformer classes are becoming much more affordable. Emphasize the extra attention participants get in small Reformer classes, and offer creative package deals to your members.



## **Getting Your Instructors Certified**

**By Nico Gonzalez, Mercy Healthplex, Cincinnati, OH**

*As seen in our 2009 catalog*

Your club owner approaches you with a new initiative: create a successful revenue-generating Pilates program within the club! This exact same situation happened to me about 5 years ago. After the panic dissipated and reality set in, I realized I had no choice but to make it all work! With only two certified Pilates trainers on staff my first goal was to recruit.

Although we recruited highly skilled Pilates professionals from the Cincinnati area, I needed more. Being a Balanced Body (BB) Faculty trainer myself, I quickly scheduled an onsite Reformer Level 1 training within the following 60 days. Between the great online marketing that BBU has and word of mouth, I gathered a group of 10 interested individuals for the training. Among the registrants were personal trainers, physical therapists, and group fitness trainers. Potentially all great candidates for teaching Pilates!

### **Starting the training**

During the Reformer Level 1 weekend training, I reviewed the certification process and the BB philosophy of teaching with the participants. Many registrants come to a Level 1 training with different expectations for the weekend. BB welcomes all registrants to take Reformer (or Mat) Level 1 trainings with required prerequisites. Many of the prerequisites are standard requirements throughout the Pilates community. At the beginning of the training I told all participants that Reformer 1 is simply one of multiple modules a registrant must complete before being considered a fully certified Pilates professional. BB understands that there are multiple reasons for taking trainings; one of which is to start teaching or assisting right away.



I explained to each participant that after a weekend training BB considers each participant a “student teacher”. Some facilities allow student teachers to actively teach in programs while they continue their education. I have also acquired this philosophy when my facility needed additional Pilates teachers. To accommodate the student teacher and clients, I matches the “apparently healthy, no limitations” client with the new student teachers. With continued supervision, practice, and further BB trainings, these student teachers became wonderful additions to my staff.

### **Working with time and budget issues**

For those individuals looking to have a comprehensive training in Pilates, BB offers a 450 hour training spanning eight weekend modules, practical hours, personal hours, and examinations. Proudly, all of my trainers at Mercy HealthPlex have completed or are in the process of being fully trained through the BB Pilates training. I’ve had a few trainers complete the entire training in about one year, but others have paced themselves over three years. The entire process requires dedication but also a financial investment. Each module is priced between \$250 to \$450, depending on the topic covered.

However, the reward of gaining invaluable knowledge and recognize far surpass the financial commitment. And BBU does recognize the financial investment involved and allows registrants to take as much time needed to complete all the modules. Additionally, BBU provides specified certifications that require less investment and modules to complete. For example, mat certification requires only completion of Mat Level 1 and 2 – which is only a total investment of roughly \$600.



### **The benefit of student teachers**

Student teachers are a great addition to any staff as they are full of excitement and want to learn! Many BBU student teachers at Mercy HealthPlex have created “mock” group classes where they sharpen their skills on staff members. Through this method, they accumulate practical hours. More importantly they are exposed to group training which can be daunting at first. At Mercy HealthPlex we allow the student teachers to observe and participate in group sessions with another fully trained Pilates professional. Not only experience is gained, but the new student teacher gets exposure to members for future referrals.

We recuperated our capital investment of Pilates equipment in six months. We focused on providing more group sessions as opposed to privates. Because of the manner in which we priced our program, revenue was exponentially higher when groups were being conducted as opposed to private sessions. We still offered private sessions for special cases, but only with our experienced Pilates professionals.

The program has been grown tremendously since our first year. When we started we had only 5 Allegro® Reformers. We then purchased 5 Tower units to be attached to our existing machines. Our third year and fourth year of growth allowed us to purchase 5 Combo Chairs, a Cadillac, a Ladder Barrel, and 10 Pilates Arcs. Needless to say BBU trainings have been a blessing for our growth and client retention. Many thanks to the dedicated trainers who see the value in education!

Nico is a Balanced Body faculty trainer and the Area Wellness Manager for Mercy HealthPlex, a hospital based wellness facility. At Mercy he manages the Pilates program, Group Fitness staff, and Wellness program.



## **Finding Effective Pilates Group X Instructors**

**By Kerry Silverstone**

*As seen in the Summer 2007 Balanced Body Pilates COREterly*

Mind-body formats have grown to be the most popular classes in Group Exercise programming because they provide physical challenges as well as life balance and emotional awakening. Pilates Mat, Chair, and Reformer group fitness classes have continued to soar in the 21st century and the responsibility of managing this “business within a business” may put your club ahead of the competition, if you hire right.

It is the teacher who motivates, inspires, nurtures and retains the participants – and makes your Pilates program grow. So, hiring right will help you increase club revenues (and your own!), expand programming ideas and bring attention to this program in the eyes of your members and community.

As a Director or Manager of Pilates group fitness, ask yourself what you can do internally and externally to seek, hire, train and retain the finest training staff. Your careful attention to detail with your staff will pave the way for a successful program, well-trained participants, and a positive ‘buzz’ both in and out of the club. Remember: YOU are the engine that will drive the success of your program and your team!

As the Pilates Director or Manager of your club, find answers to these preliminary questions as a guide to helping you to successfully establish and maintain a Pilates program and team:

- Are you willing and able to put in the hours necessary to secure the finest trainers available to fit your club culture?
- Are you ‘networked’ in the fitness community, do you know your competition and do you understand outside opportunities which may help you strike gold?
- Have you ever managed people? How did it work out?
- Are you a leader or a follower?



- Will your 'team' respect you?
- Can you stay focused and communicate succinctly?
- Do you understand how to market your people as well as your programs?
- Can you identify instructor weaknesses and strengths, and work with them to improve where needed?
- Do you possess strong supervisory and organizational skills?

### **The 'Internal Hunt'**

As a member of the club management team, you have a fast track opportunity to assess from within and identify club employees who may have skills and desire to develop into staff trainers of your Pilates programs. You may be surprised to discover that Group Exercise Instructors, Personal Trainers, Physical Therapists, Chiropractors and even Massage Therapists can all be strong candidates. These staff members have already established themselves in the club, and may wish to expand their education, their working hours, and their earning potential.

Identify Group Exercise Instructors who have already made a commitment to your club by teaching a variety of classes. These instructors 'touch' a large number of members, and have already established a relationship with them. Approach these instructors to determine any interest in becoming a Pilates Mat or Apparatus Trainer. Loyal members will generally follow their favorite instructors anywhere!

Personal Trainers also have a broad client base. Pilates training is a perfect adjunct to strength training, and when trainers understand the value of Pilates, they can enhance their personal income and the success of their clientele by adding this mode of movement to their repertoires.

If you have Physical Therapy and/or Chiropractic care available on site, many of these practitioners may have already integrated Pilates into their practice. With Pilates as part of their practice, they can cross-refer members as patients and vice-versa.





Massage Therapists in your club have the most intimate relationship with their clients. They understand anatomy, biomechanics and how to touch their clients. They can make superb Pilates trainers, acquire more working hours and generate more clients into their Massage business.

### **The External Hunt**

Being a resourceful Manager can mean being creative in your ability to find or attract teachers. Whether you are building a new team of Pilates instructors, growing your team or making changes to your current staff, consider the following opportunities as part of your search:

Create a good relationship with your competition. If you possess a very cooperative, diplomatic attitude, you may be able to establish and maintain a harmonious relationship with them. With that trust, you can share ideas and instructors and create a mutual support of each other.

Determine whether there are training programs in your area. There may be a strong opportunity to identify strong instructors coming out of the training, who have had extensive experience in the fitness industry. You may wish to mentor them after they complete their training, and help them develop to be that much stronger. Maintaining a strong relationship with a local training organization will be extremely valuable in the future as your program grows and you need to add staff.

Identify the needs of people inside and outside of the club who may be interested in specialized or “niche” Pilates training, and then seek those Trainers who have a specialty in those areas, i.e., Pilates for Golf, Pilates for Seniors, Pilates for Teens, Pilates for rotational Sports (tennis, golf, baseball, racquetball, swimming, etc.), Pilates for Pre/Post Partum, Pilates for Breast Cancer Survivors/Mastectomy, and Pilates for Men. You might want to ask your trainers if they would like to research and develop these areas in order to build a specialty market for themselves for future growth of the programs and their incomes.



Stay 'shifty-eyed'! You never know what might come your way. I was in line at Trader Joe's with my groceries when I saw a man open his wallet in front of me checking out. He had a card in his wallet that read, Pilates for Golf Coach. I asked him about it, he gave me the card (it turned out to be his wife!). I called her, hired her to teach Pilates for Golf at my club, and we are now very close friends and work together.

Keep a file of new ideas and potential instructors. What may seem a bad fit at present might make a wonderful addition to a holiday program or a future schedule.

Preview a new instructor as part of a promotional event to give members an opportunity to give you feedback about their class before you put them permanently on the schedule. Provide a survey following each class.

Be a Magnet! Why Join Your Team? When your fitness community of Pilates instructors becomes aware of a program that is soaring, exciting, and run by an enthusiastic and hard-working individual, they naturally want to become a part of that success. What creates that magnetism for you?

Here are some of the qualities a director or manager needs to attain a top-notch staff:

- An ongoing fairness and respect to all staff, i.e., qualifications, rates of pay, opportunities to teach classes and individual clients
- A pleasant, yet firm approach to managing staff, clientele and day-to-day operations of the program
- Recognition in the industry as a leader
- Skills to review, evaluate and train instructors to be better clinicians
- Creating and maintaining a beautiful space that is clean, orderly, and with equipment/accessories that are in good working order.
- Bonus incentives on a quarterly basis, or based on revenue goals for the team and/or individuals
- Training opportunities for continuing CEC's



- Helping drive the attendance numbers in their classes through internal and external marketing
- Remaining sincere, positive and hard-working. Your attention and energy can boost their commitment to the club, the way they inspire members and their ability to build up their classes.

You and your people are what will make or break your Pilates program. As with any type of learning, your teachers motivate, inspire, nurture and keep the members satisfied. And it is your responsibility to your club to maintain your passion of continuing to upgrade the caliber of your program not only through your curriculum, but most importantly, your people.

The 'wave' of Pilates does not look like it will be slowing down any time soon...now is your opportunity to ride it, and drive it for a long time to come!

***Kerry was the Group Exercise and Pilates Director at Walnut Creek Sports and Fitness Club in Northern California from 1999 to 2007. She is currently a Business Consultant for Pilates programming, instructor training and site development. A certified Group Fitness professional since 1988 and a popular presenter at several IDEA and IHRSA conventions, she is also excited to be a Pilates Master Trainer for Balanced Body.***



## **Tips for Your New Pilates Instructors**

**By Ken Endelman, Founder and CEO of Balanced Body**

*As originally seen in the December 2007 issue of Club Solutions Magazine*

For many clubs implementing a Pilates program, the best solution for finding instructors is to train existing staff. It is usually a great fit, as they already know your members, your club dynamic and your club philosophy. And new on-site educational programs get them trained and class-ready more easily and quickly than ever before. It is important to realize that although extremely effective, Pilates is a complex and nuanced form of fitness. Pilates has many layers that take practice to thoroughly understand. It's definitely different than teaching a group spin or step class. Your new instructors will be dealing with different body types, equipment and will need to know how to modify the exercise to best meet the needs of each participant. Not doing so can lead to member dissatisfaction, or worse, possible injury.

That can seem a little daunting for a new instructor. So I asked Nora St. John, our Education Program Director for Balanced Body University®, if she had any tips that she could give club management to help their fledgling instructors. Here are some of her suggestions:

### **1. Get a Mentor**

"When they complete their instructor training program they're at the beginning of the learning journey, not the end," says Nora. "If they have the opportunity to work with more experienced teachers, have them do it. They'll learn so much from those who have been instructing for long period of time." Ask your instructors to find a mentor that they can ask questions of or problem-solve with. If you have more senior Pilates instructors on staff pair them up with your new instructors. The key is not to make them feel like they are all alone out there.



## **2. Pre-screen class participants**

The beauty of Pilates is that the exercises can be modified to meet the needs of each and every participant. But with a class full of different body types, conditions and abilities, that can be tough. "Your instructor should meet with your participants before they start a class to see if they have any physical conditions or limitations that they should be aware of," Nora says.

"It's also a good idea to have group participants, particularly group Reformer participants, take a private session or two before starting the class so that the instructor can gauge that member's ability, and the member can become familiar with the equipment."

## **3. Learn how to market your classes**

"I've seen many instructors - new and old - just come to a class, teach, and then leave. For any Pilates program to be successful in the long run, that won't cut it," says Nora.

"Instructors are ambassadors to their program and they need to be active in that role. As such they need to learn how to retain their current members and attract new ones."

This means getting feedback from class members and using that data to create sessions that keep them coming back. It also means learning how to conduct effective demos both inside and outside of the club to get new members interested.

## **4. Keep programming fresh**

In the same vein as the last point, one of the best ways to keep your members interested is to keep your programming fresh and fun. "You can't keep doing the same routines over and over. Eventually people will get bored," states Nora. "Your instructors will need to keep things fresh and that's why it's so important for them to continue their education."

Some simple programming tips include adding props like balls or resistance bands to a class, or creating classes for specific member demographics like Pilates for golfers or Pilates for runners



## 5. Trust in the system and have fun

Nora has seen a lot of new instructors come out of their training program and then suddenly think they need to change everything. She suggests staying the course: "Pilates is commonly structured is a system of exercise. Tell them to trust both the method and themselves. If they have been well-trained they will have a good structure or base in which to start, and if they follow what they've been taught their class participants will leave having had a good and effective workout."

Above all she says, tell them to have fun. "That's key - make sure they are enjoying what they are doing. Suggest that they find something to like in each task they are performing that particular day."

*Ken Endelman is Founder and CEO of Balanced Body Inc. Ken began his career as a designer and craftsman of fine custom furniture - a background apparent in every piece of hand-finished equipment the company makes. Since the early 1970s, Ken Endelman has updated Joseph Pilates' equipment with state-of-the-art engineering, materials and technology, many of which have become industry standards. The company has been awarded twenty-four U.S. patents, with more pending. Balanced Body Inc. continues to actively promote Pilates to the fitness industry, the medical profession and the media.*

*This article was originally seen in the December 2007 issue of Club Solutions Magazine.*



## **Hiring and Retaining a Crack Pilates Staff**

**by Ken Endelman, Founder and CEO of Balanced Body**

*As originally seen in the April 2007 issue of Club Solutions Magazine*

Pilates can be an important source of non-dues revenue for health and fitness clubs, as has been well documented in previous articles in this magazine. To achieve that profitability, pay careful attention to the key elements of hiring, and retaining, a high-quality instructor staff.

For pointers on how to successfully staff your program, we turn to an expert: Elizabeth Larkam, Director of Pilates & Beyond for Western Athletic Clubs in Northern California. She is also the on-site manager for the Pilates staff at the largest WAC facility – The San Francisco Bay Club. Now in her seventh year,

Larkam has put together a top-notch staff of eight instructors – some of whom have remained throughout her entire tenure. How has she done it?

### **Know Your Clubs Style and Demographics**

“When hiring an instructor, it is so important to make sure the potential employee is in sync with your club’s philosophy,” says Larkam. “A person may be very qualified from an experience standpoint, but if they do not fit in with your club’s style and dynamic, it is not in the best interest of the individual and the organization.”

Larkam also recommends matching your hiring prerequisites on the demographic of your clientele: “I receive many resumes since we have reputation as a top-quality facility with a strong managerial commitment to provide outstanding Pilates programming. I have very specific criteria that I look for in an instructor.



First, the person must have received training from an internationally recognized training organization. Next, I require a minimum of three years of professional experience. And finally, I look for them to be experienced in all the different aspects (e.g. mat, Reformer, group/personal) of delivering Pilates instruction, and they must be in tune with our client demographics. For example, we have many older adults in our membership as well as a wide variety of people who come to the program as post-rehab referrals. So my staff must be familiar with modifying the exercises to benefit different populations like those with osteoporosis, post-rehab clients, and pre and postnatal mothers.”

### **Keeping Your Staff Interested**

Once you assemble quality staff, how do you keep them? Larkam says that one of the big keys in her ability to retain her staff is the fact that San Francisco Bay Club management understands and values what she and her staff provides. “They stand behind us and appreciate what we bring to the club, and have invested in a great facility, equipment and education for us. That makes it a great place to work,” says Larkam.

Another key is keeping the program innovative and fresh. “I always encourage innovation and creativity within our program,” says Larkam. “If one of my staff has a suggestion that may make the program better, I’m all ears.”

One example of that creativity came when Larkam asked her staff to teach a specialty Pilates class based on a sport that the instructors enjoyed. As a result, the club now features unique and unusual specialty classes like Pilates for squash players and Pilates for sailors.





### **Rewarding Continuing Education**

Pilates offers great health benefits and is a very interesting form of exercise. Despite that, no matter how much a member may like the exercise, they will eventually lose interest if they are repeating the same things over and over in a class. Continuing education is a must for instructors to keep their Pilates classes fresh and keep members coming back.

Larkam stresses to all her instructors that they must continue to learn and refine their craft, and makes sure they are rewarded for doing so. “Last year we had the Pilates Method Alliance certification examination coming up, which is a requirement of our educational curriculum,” says Larkam. “I made an agreement with them that they would get a raise if they studied for and passed the exam. They all passed.”

### **Pay Them What They’re Worth**

Instructors are the lifeblood of any program, and should be compensated accordingly. This is especially crucial when your instructors are a profit center for your club. Larkam bases her instructor compensation on what comparable clubs in the area pay. Although this will differ depending on your geographic area, a good rule of thumb is to establish a pay rate equivalent to what you pay your personal trainers – another source of non-dues revenue for clubs.

Pilates is one of the programs in your facility for which some of your members will expect to pay extra. Make sure you reward their investment, by providing a high quality staff that keeps them signing up for more.



## **Demos: A Key to Your Pilates Success**

**By Ken Endelman, Founder and CEO of Balanced Body**

*As originally seen in Club Solutions Magazine*

Whether you are trying to attract new clients into your Pilates program or transitioning mat participants into Reformer classes, an effective demonstration program is a crucial component to your success. In talking to many of our commercial customers we've found that an effective Pilates demo program can generate an 80 percent success rate in getting clients to sign up for their Pilates program.

Here are some keys to creating a successful Pilates demo.

**1. Connect with the person you are teaching:** Understand your perspective client's needs. Take some time, ask a few questions and customize the demo to best suits their specific requirements. These questions might include:

- What is their current fitness program if any?
- What are their fitness goals?
- What sports or activities are they interested in?
- What do they want to change about their body?
- Do they have any injuries they are recovering from?

**2. Discuss the benefits they will receive from doing Pilates at your facility.** Tailor the benefits to their particular goals and interests:

- Improved power and performance – particularly if they participate in a specific sport like golf or tennis
- Better flexibility
- Stronger core
- A more toned body
- Feel better



**3.** Provide an exciting, dynamic and motivating workout/demo Most club members expect to be challenged, so your demonstration should include challenging exercises. Exercises should allow a variety of clients to successfully feel results with, and select a workout that is appropriate and in relation to their overall fitness level. Perhaps most importantly, your demonstration should be well-paced – choose exercises that can transition quickly from one to the next and avoid staying with one exercise for too long.

**4.** Sign them up right then and there! Have everything you need right there to complete the sign-up. Don't send them to another area of the gym to complete the process, unless you have time to take them and do the follow through. Suggest a program you think would work for them as a starting point. Considering a specific time of day, instructor and program package that you think will pique their interest as well as give them the health benefits they are looking for. If a particular package is too expensive then move down to the next program level.

**Example:**

*"I think you would really enjoy taking Lauren's Monday and Wednesday class. If you combined that with one private a week you could really make some progress on your (insert benefit you have identified). The Gold package gives you unlimited classes plus one private session a week for only \$.\$\$ per month. This is a big savings over buying the sessions individually"*



**5.** Shake hands and tell them what a great time you had. Touching helps create an important connection. If the client does not sign-up, but was not opposed to the idea, give them a follow up call in the next week to say how much you appreciated working with them and to ask them if they had any additional questions about Pilates. Keep them on your list of potentials and e-mail or call on occasion to let them know about new classes or schedule changes.

**6.** Meet with your staff before starting Before starting any demo program it is a great idea to meet with your Pilates instructors to discuss which exercises would be the best to include. Then market the demo program to your existing membership in your club's newsletter or other available avenues and see if you can get people to start signing up before the program even begins. With a proper planning and a well-paced repertoire, there's no reason your program can't be successful.

**7. Overcoming Objections** In any sales demonstration or presentation you are going to come across objections – it's just the nature of the business. It is important that you determine what the real objection is when you hear it and do your best to overcome it. Here are some of the more common objections you might come across and suggested tactics for overcoming them:

A) "I don't have time right now" Ask about their schedule and see if you can suggest a good fit they might not be aware of.



B) “I only have time to do cardio” Let them know that strength and flexibility training are just as important as cardio for overall fitness. Suggest trying Pilates as an alternative to their cardio workouts once a week and let them know that changing their workout routine can help to improve fitness gains.

C) “I can’t afford it” Make sure they are aware of all your available program packages and suggest one of the least expensive. Also mention any specials and promotions you might be running.

D) “I don’t think I need this right now”

Answer this in terms of the benefits you think they can get out of Pilates. Use their interests to answer this objection. Whether you close the sale or not, be polite and friendly and keep the door open.

Remember that they are a lot more likely to come back and sign up when their circumstances change if they are left with an impression of you as a warm, welcoming person.



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