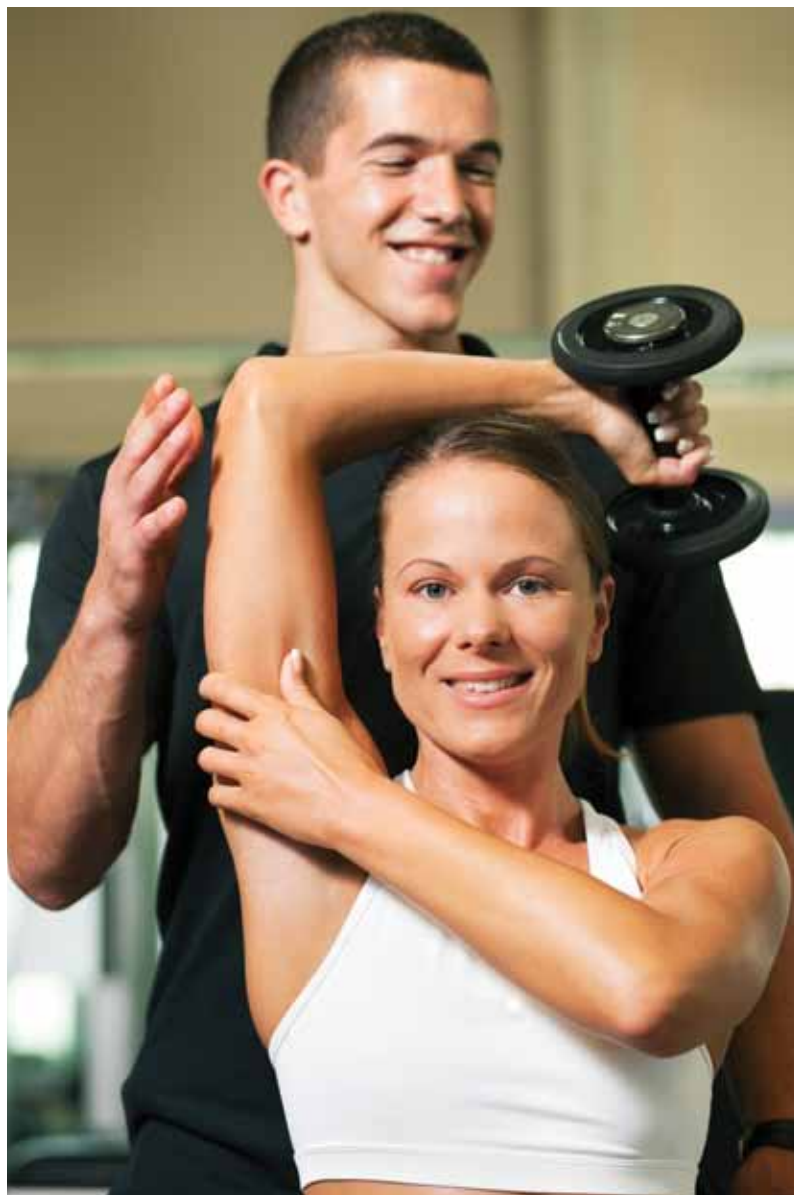


Retaining New Members Through Results

By: Heidi Stark



NEW YEAR – NEW YOU! THAT’S THE MANTRA THAT typically drives new members to your club each year. They want change – they want to look and feel healthier. The question is, how do you keep them coming back month after month and how do you help them attain their goals?

Education is key! Clients need to understand that health risks such as, diabetes, heart disease and stroke are all associated with high body fat percentage. You need to work with your members to set realistic goals that can be tracked over time. They need to understand that losing weight alone isn’t the answer. This

can lead to muscle loss with limited health benefits. Clients need to understand that weight gain after starting a regular exercise program isn’t necessarily an indication of failure. Showing that weight gain is a result of increased muscle mass and not increased fat is crucial. Clearly, a practical program of good nutrition, regular exercise and the ability to track body fat percentage, fat loss and muscle gain is needed.

Body composition analysis is an excellent way to measure overall health and fitness. Regular assessments that measure fat loss, muscle gain and track progress can truly motivate and keep members coming back. There are a number of body composition techniques available: X-ray Computed Tomography (CT) and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) provide highly accurate images showing changes in fat and muscle thicknesses. Unfortunately, the equipment is cost prohibitive and requires certified medical staff making it impractical in a fitness club. Air displacement and underwater weighing systems, while accurate, do not measure actual fat and muscle thicknesses. Again, the equipment is expensive, requires highly proficient personnel and requires special preparation by the client. This is not a practical option for most clubs.

Many fitness centers use bioelectrical impedance (BIA) devices or skin fold calipers to measure body fat percentage. While affordable, BIA results can vary based on the client’s hydration, alcohol and caffeine levels, and these devices do not provide measurements for fat and muscle. Skin fold calipers are definitely affordable, but to obtain consistent measurements one must be well trained. Calipers can only measure the fold thickness and not the amount of fat and muscle. Clients often find caliper measurements painful and embarrassing – not a great motivator. Portable, affordable, hand-held ultrasound imaging systems are available to measure total body fat percentage and provide assessment of fat loss and muscle gain. Ultrasound measurements are non-invasive, require no preparation by the client, are fast and simple for the club and provide motivating images. Clients can actually track their body changes over time as they see fat loss and muscle gain in target areas.

If your goal is to keep existing members and attract new members, you need to motivate and educate them with proven techniques that result in your clients successfully attaining their goals.

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