

professional >

Get Your PT Business *as Fit as Your Clients!*



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For the over 65% of Australia's personal trainers who operate as solo, independent business owners it can be a long and lonely road to financial and personal success. Lack of support and lack of knowledge are just two of the things that hold them back from running a successful business.

In this article Brad Sheppard looks at a few key components for personal trainers who are currently running their business as sole proprietors and offers some suggestions on how to think more like the owner of a successful company, not just a "personal trainer".

You've obviously worked hard with your own training regime, explored numerous nutrition programs, gained advice, experimented with supplementation and

(of course) studied hard to gain your cert IV in fitness to become a qualified personal trainer. Everything you did in relation to health and fitness in the lead up to becoming qualified (and everything you do now and in the future) all contributes to your becoming a better technically skilled PT.

Now generally speaking, the majority of personal trainers in Australia have got that part (the technical side of personal training) sorted. But what about the business side... how do you grow and develop that?

Unfortunately many personal trainers do not get too juiced about some of the details of running a business. "What?" I hear you say, "I didn't sign up to be an admin person."

Well, the fact of the matter is that if you want to run a slick operation, then you need to have an efficient back end to your business whether it's just you, or a team of 20! But if you would rather be training clients than managing the admin for your business, don't fret there are lots of easy things you can do that will really make a difference:

Billing - sign up with a direct debit company immediately.

The fees for using a direct debit company are low and can (we recommend) be passed onto the client, so the service becomes free for your business. Move away from selling single PT sessions, 3, 5 or even 10 packs and look at selling a longer term solution for the people that train with you - here's why.

Let's say you've just sold a 10 pack for \$790, yippee, you have collected nearly \$800 of cash revenue for your business. If your client is training with you for a 45min session each week, you now have 10 weeks to service them. But what happened to the income, did you bank it and budget it, or did it seem to disappear? Then what happens at the 10th session for this particular client? You probably guessed it - you'll have to re-sell them all over again.

Alternatively, you could have signed that particular client up at a \$79 per session ongoing rate paid through an external direct debit company. The client will wear the minimal costs associated with using this service, and better still you will be receiving a regular (typically weekly or fortnightly) payment from them. There is no need to re-sell this person every few weeks. As long as they are happy, then they continue. The client gets to pay-as-they-go which helps their budgeting and you get to receive regular cash flow into your business. It's a classic win-win.

Note: we calculated years ago that our average personal training client stayed with us for 2.6yrs, so selling them short term solutions is inefficient for us and our clients.

Database - use a broadcast email system.

Build a **database**. Really, in many ways it could be argued that if you don't have a database, then you don't have a business. But if you haven't got one yet then let's just start with the basics. A name, email and phone number generated in an Excel spreadsheet is what you'll need. As your business grows you might choose to use a more detailed system, however, I have seen successful personal training businesses with high turn-over operate like this.

An Excel spreadsheet can be imported into virtually any email based marketing program. So do yourself a favour and make sure that you sign up to a reputable and robust email broadcast system - from just a few bucks per month they're a powerful asset to your business. And don't waste your time attempting to email a large number of people from Gmail, Hotmail or your Outlook account. As your database grows, you will need a professional service that won't get you blocked as a spammer.

Expert Advice - be known as the best

In terms of providing valuable **content**, you'll want to be recognised as the undisputed number one PT in your local area or chosen niche. How do you do that? Well, you need to become an information expert. What this means

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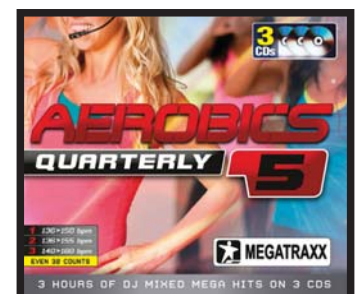
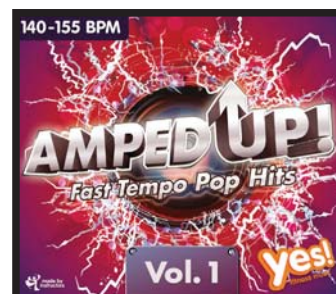
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is that you must take the time to deliver, on a consistent basis, valuable information that makes a difference to your clients and potential clients.

Supply content in various formats—written content, success stories (testimonials) and short instructional clips are a great place to start. If you have a block with writing or getting in front of your iPhone to shoot a quick clip, then learn some skills on how to at least get started. Even practice in front of a friend, it's amazing how quickly your confidence will grow.

Note: you are the expert here and being in the gym and teaching a new exercise or technique variation is something you do all day, so that is the perfect place to start. I always ask myself when filming an info clip, "Do I feel that people watching this would get value out of it, could it make a difference to them and does it help me build a stronger relationship with them?"

When you build a stronger relationship through your database, then you position yourself as the expert and you become the obvious choice when someone on that database is ready to start training. Additionally, the people on your database may forward your content on to others or share it on social media, effectively promoting your business for you.

What happens if the administration side of your business starts to take over?

Sometimes people start to feel overwhelmed that the "back-end" part to their business is taking over all their time and energy. Unfortunately if your business model is set up in a way that you only make money when you turn up to train a client (i.e. you swap time for money) then you could start to view the administration side of your business as more of an inconvenience and a headache. This is especially the case if you have the mindset that you are not getting "paid" for time spent in this area.

In the worst case scenario, you might then neglect this part of your business altogether. Although your business might survive for a time, it's unlikely that you will ever experience significant growth in either your business or your income. You might even struggle to keep afloat, which could mean that you quit the industry that you love

and go back to doing a job that you hate. I doubt that you want that!

If you fall into this category, here are a couple of suggestions for you:

1. Change Your Mindset

If you view all of the back-end part of your business as not exciting, or a drag, or a time when you aren't earning money, you can start by simply altering your attitude. View the time spent in this area as an opportunity to generate you more business and a way to help create a sustainable income.

Allocate a set period of time (say 5hrs per week) when you will work wholly and solely on the back-end part of your business. When it's time to do so, do it with the same energy and passion that you deliver to your PT sessions. Become totally committed to the process.

The more you value this time spent, the more you will value your role as a fitness professional. And as your experience and the demand for your services increase, so too does your ability to charge more for what you do.

2. Outsource

Start thinking more like a business leader and an entrepreneur and start to get people that can help you reach your business vision and income goals. Believe it or not, there is someone who can do the back end part of your business better than you can. Not only that, but this person can most likely do this job more efficiently, in less time and absolutely loves doing it!

Let's say you were to outsource the administration side of your business, you might pay someone \$20 per hour to do that job for 5 hours per week. The concern for many solo PTs is that they need to somehow come up with an extra \$100 from somewhere. If you would rather not spend an extra \$100, then you might just dive back into that work and do it begrudgingly without energy or enthusiasm (not to mention a possible lack of skill or efficiency!).

Alternatively, if you were to free up those 5 hours of time by outsourcing then you could, if you wanted to, actually take on some extra PT clients. And if your charge out rate was \$80 per session, then you

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would only need to take on one extra client to pay for most of that investment. If you did two extra PT sessions, then you would be well in front financially and have gained yourself an extra 3 hours of time!

Conclusion

Being in business as a solo, independent business operator does not mean that your personal training career has to be a lonely, unrewarding one. These are just a few of the dozens and dozens of ways to streamline your operation enabling you to create more time and money for yourself. **UFM**

Brad Sheppard B.Ed (Phys.Ed) runs Peak Physique in Brisbane, building it over 17 years to a team of 13 PTs and 200hrs of PT/week. Brad also runs Create PT Wealth – Australia's largest and most successful PT Business Coaching program and co-authored the best-selling book "A Personal Trainer's Guide To Wealth Creation". >

