

Connecting with your leisure club Members

by Carl Donnelly

Fit for now or fit for the future - Just what or who are leisure clubs competing against?

The competition for the consumer's leisure pound is not just your neighbourhood leisure clubs - you can add to the mix the growth some of the following

- Affordable luxury day and residential spa sector
- High end & spend hobbies such as cycling and a variety of outdoor pursuits
- Leisure Learning - the consumers desire to combine their leisure time to learn a new skill or pastime - residential cookery, photography, music, poetry appreciation courses.....

The consumer's essential desire to stay connected.....

One of the biggest changes in consumer spending is the amount they are prepared to commit to their *media expenditure*, be it their mobile phones, internet and TV channel subscriptions. Their essential need, indeed their dependency on such *connectivity* products and services, is a large part of their disposable income. The reality is that they will choose to protect their media expenditure, perhaps at the expense of leisure club fees.

The need for the combination of leisure, exercise and relaxation is still there, perhaps even more so in tough economic times. Spending may well be transferred from one leisure activity to another.

Five key recommendations to ensure you 'stay connected' with you leisure club members.....

1. ***Innovate and invest wisely in marketing initiatives*** - leverage all the services and products you have to offer, are they distinctive enough? Package and promote them well - choose your distribution channels with care, there are plenty of retailers out there looking for joint marketing opportunities.
2. ***Ensure your service delivery is top notch - especially*** in the 'flash points' such as changing rooms and operating equipment. Tired stressed club members, faced with inconsistent service delivery, will seriously consider making a dash to your competitors. *Retention, retention, retention of members* via outstanding service delivery must be the mantra.
3. ***Invest time and funds in training, coaching, encouraging and recognition of your team -*** Devise distinctive, customer focused service delivery, and ensure consistency. Big smiles, eye contact - 'walk about and talk about' - get from behind the desk! - talk to your members. Be creative with incentives for your team - its not all about cash

rewards, genuine praise and recognition for outstanding performance is one of the best motivators.

4. ***Manage the money*** - check the basics such as direct debit transactions and make sure you are capturing all your income. Manage costs as opposed to cutting them - define your top ten KPI's and manage them rigorously.
5. ***Remember this - The real assets have legs!*** Your customers and your staff will walk away when dissatisfied. Retention of these assets is the name of the game.