



Kate Dumas

## Increase your Revenues Through a More Efficient Front Desk

**Y**our front desk is a profit center — help make it more organized; provide faster service to your members, and make more money with some easy-to-implement changes.

Having visited clubs throughout the U.S., I've witnessed widely varying levels of efficiency and customer service. As a former club manager, I know how staffing the front desk, as well as the level of staff training and the quality of systems and procedures contribute to this variance. In this article, I will discuss what I have learned over the years to make the front desk more effective.

### Use Staff Time Wisely

■ **Use On-line Appointment Booking.** Is your front-desk staff still booking all personal training, massage, tanning, spinning and yoga classes? Why not use a software package that includes online booking functionality? Your clients could book classes from any computer with Internet access. You could even set up a dedicated PC as a kiosk on the exercise floor for your members to book their next appointment or class. Imagine the impact on your front desk if even 50% of members used the kiosk or the online booking feature instead of having front-desk personnel do it all. Your staff wouldn't be on the phone constantly and lines at the front desk would decrease — freeing up your staff to manage additional functions for which they never used to have the time.

■ **Install a Touch-Screen Monitor.** Using a touch screen at the point of sale easily cuts the time of processing a transaction in half. For high retail and membership sale areas, especially juice bars and pro shops located at the front desk, this is a must have. Be sure your software is programmed to allow for touch-screen point-of-sale (POS) transactions before you move forward with this worthwhile upgrade.

■ **Use Your Management Software to Sell and Redeem Series Packages and Gift Certificates.** Get rid of the binders at the front desk! Sell and redeem packages of personal training, massages, tanning and other types of sessions through your point-of-sale system. Your software system should be able to manage these “series of items” sales and redemptions and allow you to track them for commission purposes. Using your touch-screen POS system, series and gift certificates can be sold and redeemed in one step, eliminating the need to record the item in a binder for future reference. The information is stored electronically, and can be accessed via reports or right through the POS system.

Remember the kiosk suggestion? Personal training series could be redeemed at the kiosk by your trainers with their client at the time of the appointment, eliminating the need for the front-desk staff to handle these redemptions at all. Again, this is another great method to free-up the front-desk staff.

### Increasing Revenues

■ **Train Front-Desk Personnel to do More than Just Check-in Members.** As the health club industry becomes more and more competitive, an attitude of “everyone sells” should be prevalent in your club. Most health clubs can't afford to have just a warm body at the front desk. Maximize your investment in front-desk staff by training each of them to become a competent team player who is empowered to make decisions in a manager's absence. A well-trained team member should be able to speak intelligently about your class and program offerings, or know to whom the member should be referred for additional information. Front-desk employees could be trained to sell memberships; solve member problems; handle emergencies and up-sell services to your members. Now that's efficient!

■ **Maximize Intentional Selling at the Front Desk.** Train front-desk staff to make up-selling suggestions regarding purchasing. For example, the front desk employee could suggest to a member that buying a ten-pack of personal training sessions would save them money per session over a five-pack of sessions. Your staff could routinely suggest the purchasing of gift certificates for special occasions including Valentines Day, Christmas, Mother's and Father's Days and birthdays. Accompanied by specific signage at the front desk for each holiday, your members will be reminded of a solution when they don't have time to shop for a gift.

Members may also be unaware of some of the services and products your club can provide. Put a system in place where you provide front-desk staff with a different message for members each day. Use this opportunity to call attention to a new beverage, bar, smoothie, pro shop item, gift certificate, or any of the other great products and services you offer.

■ **Hire the Right People to do the Job.** Hire wisely. No matter how great your club programs and training are, they are only as good as the people you hire. We have all hired under the gun and lived to regret it. Make sure you have a sound hiring system in place that you follow every time you look for new personnel. There are resources available today with practical advice and interview questions that will assist you with this process.

Once you have the right employees on board and trained, be sure you are utilizing club management software that combines everything necessary to enhance the efficiency of your front desk. The front desk is the constant point of contact with your members. If it's a friendly, convenient, no-wait kind of place, it can greatly add to the overall success and revenue of your club. **CS**

*Kate Dumas is a Sales Associate with Twin Oaks Software. She can be contacted at 866.278.6750 x 296, or by email at [kdumas@tosd.com](mailto:kdumas@tosd.com), or visit [www.tosd.com](http://www.tosd.com).*