



by Len Bell

Build Your Business by Unlocking Your Software's Potential

Regardless of your business model, the two most important factors to a successful fitness facility are selling new memberships and retaining current members. There is no easier way to accomplish these tasks than to have a simple and efficient contact management system in place to help you track leads, build your database, and easily communicate with your prospects and members, as well as provide inspection tools so you can track the sales process.

But this doesn't mean you need to go out and buy more software. A good club management software application should have the contact management system you need already built into it.

Attracting New Members

In terms of increasing new memberships at your facility, a contact management system will provide the tools to:

- Make marketing easier and more efficient
- Focus on target markets and design marketing programs for specific groups
- Lower marketing costs
- Increase opportunities and maximize closing percentages.

However, software alone won't accomplish any of this unless you capture the correct information and use that information effectively. Here are some valuable tips for using your contact management system efficiently and effectively:

1. Enter as much contact data as possible into your software (email, address, phone numbers). This gives you numerous ways to contact prospects, increasing your contact rate. Good club management software will give you direct email, mail/email merge, label generation, and call-list generation capabilities.

2. Have a "tickle" system in place to schedule the next action to take with your prospect. It should be able to schedule mailers, emails and phone calls. You should be able to easily view these appointments to inspect your staff's

activities and ensure proper follow-up.

3. Capture specific details of each contact such as their fitness needs. Information gathering techniques like this will help you personalize your follow-up contact and increase your closing success. Capturing detailed information also helps improve your sales training. For example, if the captured information reveals the most common objection is, "I have to think about it," you could easily train staff members on how to overcome this objection.

4. Create a coding system to focus mailers on areas of interest, original marketing sources, or degrees of readiness. This will help you generate reports to see what marketing programs are working.

5. Create lead-tracking reports to discover what appointments your sales staff is generating, as well as closing percentage and referrals obtained. This will enable you to efficiently manage your sales people or cross-train your entire staff to take advantage of sales opportunities.

Retain Current Members

To increase revenues, you must not only attract new members but also retain your current members. Once again, a contact management system can provide you with valuable tools to:

- Track member satisfaction
- Increase retention
- Improve internal marketing (increasing fitness and program revenue)
- Improve referrals (lowering marketing costs).

Here are ways you can effectively use your contact management system to retain your current members:

1. Designate codes for specific groups (e.g., corporate accounts, high-risk groups, etc.) or members with specific areas of interest (e.g., weight loss, body building, etc.) to help you target mailers.

2. Capture detailed conversation notes about any issues that come up so you can provide quality customer service and handle the situation effectively.

3. Develop a "tickle" system to follow up

with members on things like goal review with a fitness technician or member surveys. This will ensure that they are having a good experience at your center.

4. Analyze usage reports to find your high-risk members (low usage usually will result in membership termination) and proactively address problems before they cancel. For example, suggest personal training or a new fitness class like yoga to get them motivated. In this way, you can increase your program revenues while ensuring your members do not cancel.

5. Perform periodic surveys to monitor member satisfaction with things like operating hours, cleanliness, or customer service. This will provide you with ways of improving your facility.

6. Acknowledge high-use members or "top spenders" with rewards and incentives.

7. Provide referral credits for members that can be applied to their dues. A good club management program should be able to apply referral credits directly to a member's monthly EFT.

The importance of a good contact management system can not be stressed enough. It will improve your internal and external marketing efforts, increase sales, improve the sales process, and give you a barometer of your club's current situation so that you can proactively address problems.

Talk with your software vendor and ask them how to take advantage of this component of your club management software. And if you don't have club management software with lead tracking application built in, then you are missing out on a huge opportunity to increase your revenues dramatically and build your business for long-term success.

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