

Creating community magic

AS A FITNESS PROFESSIONAL you are in a great position to become a community leader, with the ability to rally people in your area to a common cause while helping them improve their quality of life. In addition to the sense of contribution you will feel by running a community fitness program or class, by being seen as a health and fitness leader in your community you can generate new clientele and promote your business through word of mouth, thereby enjoying loads of free advertising!

It is important to establish exactly what it is that you are passionate about and which of your skills you could most effectively utilise to improve the lives of members of your community. To create community magic you need to have a great cause to rally around and a product or service that addresses the needs of your community.

What is community?

Community ultimately means 'common unity' and may be based on location, cultural background or spiritual beliefs. A community may be formed to do something, address something, change something or share something and may take the form of an organisation, corporate workplace, recreation group, sporting team or neighbourhood. It is a group of people who share a common ground or interest.

Create a win-win situation

Take a moment to consider the needs of the people in your local communities. Countless groups of people could benefit from an inspiring and motivating fitness professional offering to help them improve their physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. The initiative should be mutually beneficial, of course, so you need to target communities that will create a win-win situation, i.e. the members of the community benefit from your expertise and you benefit from their community by networking and generating leads for future clients and participants.

Do some research and seek out communities in your area which could benefit from your products or service. Existing communities you could tap into include facilities you already work at, your local neighbourhood, local council, community centres, Rotary or other service clubs, networking groups, schools, universities, retirement villages, day care centres, hospitals, cancer support groups, surf clubs, sporting clubs and fitness centres.



Getting started

As a fitness professional and group fitness, mind body or aqua instructor you will already possess the skills needed to work with groups of people, namely, communication, motivation, positive reinforcement and a passion for health and fitness. When you set about creating community magic, you reap what you sow; and by investing in your community the benefits returned can be tenfold. Do some brainstorming and establish the plan of action that will be best for your community and best for you.

Having foresight

Start with the end in mind and acknowledge that it could take a little time before you start seeing the financial return for investing time into the community, but also acknowledge that the rewards will be worth it if you have a long term vision and that there are other benefits you can start enjoying immediately. Helping community members improve their health, fitness and quality of life is one of the greatest gifts you can experience and will give you an extra boost of passion and energy that you can take into your regular classes.

The benefits

Do you know anyone who wakes up in the morning wishing they were sick, injured, stressed, overweight, unhealthy or unfit? Nobody wants to feel this way, but many people

do. By going out and letting people know you have a way to help them you can build their trust and generate new business for yourself or your facility.

Getting involved in community is a great way to create publicity for whatever it is you want to address as a fitness professional, business or a facility. It lets people know you exist and helps to publicise your products, services, your expertise and the issues at hand. It also builds credibility for you as a fitness professional and as you build relationships with different organisations, communities and individuals you also build trust.

The more you work in your community the more you will become positioned as an industry leader and expert. The beauty is that you will learn so much along the way as well, and as you become the expert you will gain more influence within the community, enabling you to help more people improve their health and fitness. This will also naturally begin to generate word of mouth referrals.

Be passionate

What issues out there really get you fired up? How do you want to improve people's lives? In what areas do you want to make a difference? Wherever there is a problem there is an opportunity. What is yours?

Few communities lack a choice of issues and areas to address; obesity, stress, heart disease, diabetes, lack of confidence, joy, wellbeing, strength, peak performance and injury prevention to name but a few. Alternatively you may have a particular affinity with a certain demographic, such as youth, women, seniors, corporate groups or athletes. Issues that you have had some personal experience with, whether directly or indirectly, will usually present themselves to you as the most powerful candidate for your attention.

It is important that you build a vision you are passionate about, because if you are not truly passionate about what you are doing, people will see straight through you. Genuine passion naturally inspires and influences others, and community magic will start to generate opportunities and momentum in your life.

Get active

Now it's time to get active and start creating that community magic. Personally, my passion for helping people to live, love and laugh motivated me to start a weekly laughter group which is open to my local community. Running this free community session has been an incredibly rewarding experience for everyone involved, and has given me a great sense of joy and contribution.

On a professional level, running this session has led to free publicity through newspaper articles and other media, generated thousands of dollars worth of bookings for my

stress management presentations and created many raving fans and advocates for me and my fitness services within my local community. All this within nine months of starting the weekly laughter sessions!

7 WAYS TO CREATE COMMUNITY MAGIC

1. Instruct a weekly community class
2. Run sessions at community events
3. Run your own community event
4. Write a regular column in a community publication
5. Write articles on various aspects of wellbeing, health and fitness
6. Deliver 20 to 40-minute presentations on health and fitness to local groups
7. Offer your expertise to existing community groups

Remember you're there to help make the community better. As you help them, in turn, they will help you. By being passionate, creative and professional you can create magic which will establish you as a leader in your local community and an outstanding leader in the wider fitness world. ■



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Kathy is an experienced mind body and stress management specialist qualified in yoga, laughter and fitness. She is the owner of Vibrance, a business which helps people to transform stress into wellbeing naturally. She also facilitates laughter workshops and teaches yoga on the Central Coast and in Sydney CBD. To find out more visit www.vibrance.com.au or call 0405 147154.



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