



PRECOR WHITE PAPER

Building Community in the Gym

Increasing Engagement Among Your Members

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Creating a sense of community and belonging in your gym is one of the most important assets to your business. If your current members feel like they're part of the community, they'll keep coming back, and they'll be more likely to recommend your facility to co-workers, family, and friends. A strong sense of community makes your gym more than just a place people go to work out; it creates a supportive and teamwork-oriented culture.

Precor cardio and strength equipment as well as the Preva® networked fitness software solution are designed to facilitate those goals by encouraging personalized experiences and ease of use. There are a number of effective methods you can employ when inspiring your members to connect and engage with one another in a meaningful way.

Personal Training

So what about travelers who don't exercise? Evidence suggests they may be partly influenced by the age of the equipment in your fitness center. Exercising and non-exercising guests share their opinions online at an impressive pace.

Job opportunities for personal trainers and fitness instructors are on the rise and are expected to grow at almost a 15 percent rate until the year 2022^[1]. If you're looking to attract and retain existing members, make it a priority to hire the best trainers for your gym. Not every member will



utilize personal training services, but you can take action to increase their reach. For example, offer a complimentary session with a trainer to each new member, or discount certain classes and services. Those simple gestures can help make training accessible for exercisers who may not otherwise consider it and can foster a sense of caring and community in the gym.

According to a survey conducted by IDEA Health & Fitness Association in 2013, the five top activities that personal trainers employ for clients are bodyweight training, functional resistance training, classes for seniors, balance training, and interval training^[2].

In research conducted by Precor during the same year, 60 percent of gym-going individuals declared strength training to be very important but reported that they spent 40 percent or less of their workout time doing it^[3]. Emphasizing the importance of strength training and strength machine workouts for overall fitness through personal training could entice members to spend more time on strength training and adopt more holistic workout routines.

Classes



Most gyms and training facilities have very similar class offerings: boot camps, nutrition seminars, Pilates, spinning, weight loss workouts, yoga, and Zumba. Those classes are common because they're popular and interactive, but it's worth looking beyond the norm to find some ahead-of-the-times ideas that may engage significant subsets of exercisers, such as:

- How to Better Utilize Free Weights
- Five Steps to More Flexibility
- Working Toward a Pull-up
- Personalize Your Workout with Preva
- Intensify Your Bodyweight Training
- How to Stay Strong As You Age
- Women in the Weight Room
- Programming a Better Cardio Workout
- Using Machines for HIIT

When you design upcoming class offerings, make use of information from the Preva Business Suite^[4]. The portal can tell you which of your machines are used most often, how usage differs depending on time of day, and how equipment is used in real time. Capitalize on that knowledge and train instructors to offer classes that target those resources. Partner classes, such as those that offer guided partner yoga, Pilates, stretching, or strength exercises, are another way to get more people into the gym and establish a greater sense of community.

Events

Events in your facility are unique types of programming that are distinct from classes and regularly scheduled sessions. They might include:

- Lectures by industry professionals
- Guest workshops
- Q&A sessions
- Group introductions to new Precor equipment or Preva features
- Food drives
- Holiday gift collections
- Social get-togethers

Offering a wide variety of events gives you the opportunity to appeal to a broad cross-section of members. But keeping their priorities in mind is vital when you attempt to schedule programming. For example, someone may not feel motivated to make time to attend a two-hour lecture by a leading nutritionist, but he or she might want to stop by a flexibly-timed “after photo session” that provides a professional photographer to take pictures of members’ results from steady gym work.



Mentorship programs or small group mentoring sessions are other methods to engage your community that may fall under the umbrella of special events. Mentorship groups can work toward a common goal, meet regularly to work with specific equipment, pair members with personal trainers who share their interests, or simply provide support and encouragement in an effort to build a stronger gym community.

Contests

Cardio Challenge Accepted: Precor Helps Arizona State University Students Compete

ABOUT PREVA
Preva software enabled ASU to connect all of its machines across the four campuses into one fitness network. This integration allows students to track their workout data on each machine console or on their mobile devices, across multiple campuses.

ABOUT ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY
72,000 students
4,500 staff members
275 networked pieces of Precor 880 cardio equipment
4 Sun Devil Fitness Complexes
Largest networked fitness installation in the world

A FRIENDLY COMPETITION: HIGHEST AVERAGE MINUTES PER STUDENT WINS

PRECOR CARDIO EQUIPMENT

[Click here to see full infographic](#)

People who like to be active often thrive in an environment that is simultaneously competitive and supportive. Fitness trackers and comparison apps such as Microsoft HealthVault^[5] encourage that spirit of friendly competition.

In early 2014, Precor integrated Preva with HealthVault to make it easier for all exercisers to log and access their personal health information.

That means members who use any Preva-enabled piece of equipment in the gym can seamlessly transfer the tracking information from that workout to their HealthVault account.

Fun internal contests you could use to take advantage of these features include awarding the member who logs the most time on a piece of equipment, the member who visits the gym most often during a 30-day period, or the member who attends the greatest variety of classes and activities. Preva allows users to immediately log in and track workouts both in the gym and at home, making it a valuable tool in friendly competitions and goal-setting.

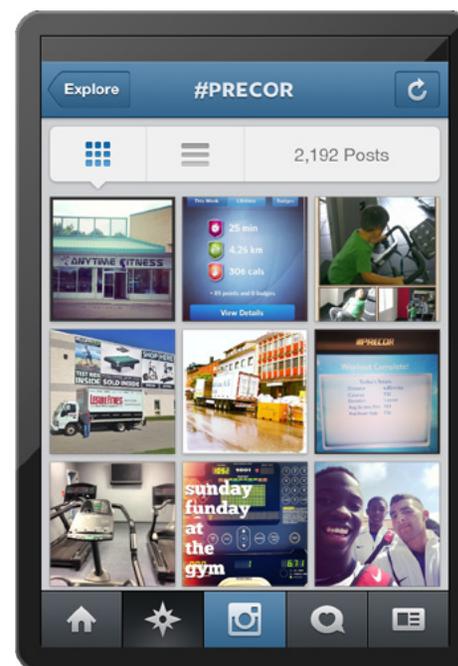
If your gym has multiple facilities or buildings, you can also pit them against one another in a contest to increase overall engagement, as Arizona State University did in 2013^[6] after extensively revamping all of its fitness complexes. The project involved the largest-ever incorporation of Preva-enabled equipment, increased traffic at the ASU fitness complexes by almost 20 percent, and brought the campus community closer together through a cardio challenge.

If you hold a contest or challenge promotion in your gym, make sure to widely publicize the contest, have clearly designated start and end dates, and offer prizes that you feel will best motivate your members to take part.

Social Media

Social media is a powerful tool for fostering a sense of community, caring, and responsiveness in the gym. It's also a great platform for calls to action, spreading information, projecting your gym as a thought leader,

and increasing awareness around events, classes, contests, and other happenings that you already have scheduled.



Start by making the links to your facility's social media pages clearly visible on business cards, web pages, and flyers within the gym. This way, members can stay in touch with the gym even when they're not working out. Consider offering exclusive content via social media, such as Precor expert webinars, blog posts, training tips, instructional videos, or downloadable workout routines to keep gym-goers checking your social media accounts regularly.

To really harness the power of social media, you need to have relevant content to promote. People see a lot of information online every day, so make sure your e-newsletters and social media accounts are offering fresh, updated information that will grab and hold their interest. Creating relevant, engaging content regularly can be time consuming, and one way to ease this process is to provide links to other knowledgeable sources. For example, you could take advantage of sharing the frequently updated information on the Precor website and blog, which includes fitness tips and various workouts.

Technology



Technology can be either a boon or a bust in the fitness industry. Log-in screens that take forever to load, equipment that provides inaccurate calorie-burning counts and apps that freeze or crash are annoyances

you want to avoid. However, well-functioning tech features that accommodate your members are great assets.

One major benefit of Precor equipment is that they're compatible with Preva RFID tokens^[7], which allow users to immediately sign in and access their accounts. Moreover, the Preva Business Suite system allows you to customize a user's sign-in screen and the "feed" the exerciser sees during their workout. Taking the time to choose content for those displays on Preva-enabled equipment gives you the opportunity to promote personal training services, upcoming classes, contests, gym events, and more.

Putting it Together

Implementing community-driven ideas doesn't happen overnight, but steady work can produce serious improvement. Your gym members and employees will be your best asset while attempting to boost engagement, so don't be afraid to invite their feedback and listen carefully to their interests, questions, and concerns. If you can figure out how to enhance their experience, you'll be well on your way to building a better sense of community in your facility.

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