

The Benefits of Reformer Training



By Tracey Harvey,
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Pilates has grown exponentially over the past decade in and around the club scene – fulfilling the needs of regular exercisers, athletes, rehab clients and even children. Basically anyone who desires a leaner, stronger, healthier body for a lifetime can participate in Pilates. Fitness facilities everywhere are taking note.

According to the 2007 IDEA Fitness Programs and Equipment Survey, 68 percent of facilities surveyed have Pilates as one of their program offerings. This is a 49 percent increase from when IDEA first started tracking Pilates back in 1999. As a result, most clubs are rigorously trying to incorporate Pilates classes into their regular programming – often by only scratching the surface with basic

training and equipment. However, for those clubs wanting to incorporate Pilates programming into their facility – there’s more to this form of exercise than simply matwork.

Pilates is not just a bunch of exercises you can do on a mat. The true basis of Pilates is the piece of equipment called the Reformer. The Reformer is generally the first piece of equipment that Pilates instructors and enthusiasts gravitate toward for a stellar, body-sculpting workout. This machine is unlike the typical Stair Climber, Bike, or Treadmill – it’s designed to leverage specific Pilates movements to improve the overall mind and body connection. It also helps exercisers develop lean muscles overall, without adding bulk.

One of the biggest barriers to club members getting in shape is that they are often intimidated by the equipment. You see these people wondering around the facility aimlessly – wanting to approach certain pieces of equipment, but not knowing the first thing to do once they get there. This creates a huge prob-

lem for club owners trying to incorporate well-rounded Pilates programming because members are simply not using the equipment.

Ironically, it’s often the club that hasn’t marketed, trained or informed their members of the benefits of Pilates equipment. It’s up to the facility owners and general managers to learn about the appropriate training and equipment necessary to run a quality Pilates program.

The Reformer Road Map

Most clubs are already familiar with the benefits of Pilates and that’s why they’ve decided to incorporate this popular form of exercise into their program offerings. The first strategy is to treat Pilates equipment like any other piece of large equipment you’d consider buying for your club. Research all that you can about the various manufacturers and the benefits of the apparatus. Talk to other club owners about what they have in their facility and what their members like. Ask your fellow instructors and even club members what they like.



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Talk to the manufacturer of choice and find out the various features and different programming options available for each piece of equipment. Are certain pieces of Pilates equipment all-encompassing? Are they for all fitness enthusiasts of all ages and abilities? Do you need to purchase several pieces in order to satisfy all your members' needs? Do you have limited space available? What are your options if you want to incorporate a well-rounded Pilates program? When you've answered these questions, you're on your way to determining the right Pilates equipment for your facility's needs.

What are my options?

The Reformer is the first piece of equipment for anyone serious about Pilates. Depending on which type of Reformer(s) you choose, your clients will benefit in different ways. For instance, the Rehab Reformer is higher off the ground and therefore accessible for older clients and sports rehab; the Professional Reformer is ideal for all client types and suitable for both in-club and boutique Pilates studios; the Rack & Roll® reformer is easily

stacked and stored; and the Group SPX™ reformer is lightweight and very economical. So again, it depends on what your needs are to run your business. But either way you look at it, Reformer training is essential for reinforcing proper form and function, and can help with rehab and sports conditioning, as well as cross training regimens.

The Thrill of the Ride

Nothing in life comes easy – and the same holds true for Pilates workouts. After your members use the reformer a few times, they will notice a difference. Those passionate about Pilates also quickly learn that when you are successfully working your core muscles, you become more aware of what you put in your body, thus your diet improves along with the fitness gains you experience.

Pilates is a kinder, gentler exercise for your body with all of the benefits of strength training. No matter what age, fitness ability or goal – there's not one club member that can't reap the benefits of reformer training. Pilates makes your whole body feel great without the aches and pains of higher impact

exercise. Once you have successfully implemented your Pilates program for your facility, it is important to create an education road map that will evolve over time and provide your Pilates professionals with the necessary tools to coach and involve all of the special populations your facility caters to.

Things to remember when seeking quality Pilates equipment and instructors:

- Does the equipment allow instructors to teach to seasoned citizens and active adults to help emulate the movements of daily life?
- Are you offering Injury Prevention classes or Sports Conditioning classes on your schedule that will increase athlete participation?
- Is the "STUD" of the club involved in your program? This will be sure to increase awareness of Pilates with the men at your facility.
- Do your instructors provide simple, achievable goals to your members so that they can be achieved in the first three initial sessions, in order for repeat to occur?

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you can take the bus back to this side after changing." He was so close to salvaging the situation and he blew it. The manager missed his opportunity to make a bad situation right by waiting for me to change and driving us back. He needed only to wait two minutes to entirely erase a bad experience.

The moral of the story is that countless wonderful deeds can be undone by the lack of empathy, consideration, and gray interpretation of policy. It's not the "rules" that cause disdain - it's the delivery of the message. No one should ever be made to feel wrong even when they are not right. When our members are not right, they should never leave the encounter feeling wrong.

I have experienced a great number of clubs that set up their program and then "hope for the best." They hope everything goes the right way... they hope nothing goes wrong and when it does, sometimes they recover nicely and sometimes the member's misery is exacerbated. Usually it is depending on which staff

member interacts with the situation. In a new world of flat-lined memberships and competition just blocks away, maybe we should put more effort into the interpersonal training of the staff rather than worrying about the next piece of equipment or if we have the hippest program running. Because in the long run, I would much rather find a home where I was respected, where exceptions were allowed, and mishaps were creatively accommodated for in my favor. Perhaps our retention secrets lie in the beauty of gray.

Bill is a health club industry veteran who started his full time career in 1986. He has worked in virtually all aspects of club sales, management and operations. He is currently Chief Operating Officer, Club One, Inc. Bill is a national presenter and industry recognized expert in sales, sales management, retention, club operations, service and leadership. Attend Bill McBride's presentation at IHRSA on Wednesday, March 5 8:00 – 10:00 AM "The Laws of Member Connection – Enrollment Through Lifetime Loyalty".



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• Do your instructors draw upon parallels between regular fitness activities and movements on the Reformer?

By offering quality Pilates Reformer classes as well as diverse programming in your facility, you will be able to offer your members a timeless activity that bonds them to your facility. Doesn't everyone want a method of exercise that provides true results? Pilates is for everyone and your "Pilates Champions" must have the knowledge base, and equipment, necessary to orchestrate superior training programming.

Contact Tracey Harvey, fullsolutions@stottpilates.com or call 1.800.910.0001 ext. 202. Tracey Harvey brings 25 years of experience running sales/management teams to STOTT PILATES®, including work with Nautilus, Schwinn Fitness, Stairmaster, Quinton and Bowflex. She has built fitness education programs, focusing on selling strategies and programming that add value to the commercial customer – while emphasizing the importance of quality trained professionals.



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