



Building Your Business— 140 Characters at a Time

By the Merrithew Health and Fitness™ Team

As the health, fitness and wellness industries continue to grow exponentially, there are thousands upon thousands of personal trainers, group fitness instructors, studios and facilities flooding the marketplace, satisfying consumers' insatiable appetite for a better body and improved quality of life. Of course every trainer and gym has something unique to offer, but how can you ensure that your personal message is heard?

More likely than not, you already participate in social media, whether that's having a profile on Facebook or being active on Twitter. Rather than using them exclusively as a good way to stay

connected to your friends, leverage these platforms to build your visibility and entice prospective clients to want to work with you.

Social media presents a unique opportunity for instructors and businesses to connect with consumers and engage in a two-way dialogue. In quick, easily-digestible content that can be robust with videos and images, you can instantaneously connect with your current and prospective audience, offering them value and enticing them to invest in your personal brand.

Put yourself in the mindset of a prospective client—what would make them want to work with YOU over everyone else? To arouse interest and pique curiosity, offering content of value on any social media outlet, rather than constant shameless self-promotion, is a sure way to turn heads.



Actively Engage with Fans. One of the best things that you can learn from top personalities and big brands is that they're constantly communicating with their customers. The point of businesses (and yes, as a fitness professional, you are a business!) using social media is to encourage communication between brands and people. If people are commenting on your photos and you're NOT replying to these comments, they'll eventually realize that you're not that in touch with your audience. Reply to every post, tweet, etc. showing that you're actively involved and that you value the perspectives and opinions of your community. On social media, not all of your members will already be clients—many may be individuals who are interested in learning more about fitness from a professional like you or have an interest in your specific philosophy.

Consistent Delivery. Share regular fitness tips and information for your clients! This information can be a great way to keep in touch with clients, add value and maintain motivation. People like consistency and knowing what they can expect from your brand. For example, Merrithew Health & Fitness™ STOTT PILATES® page on Facebook always begins the week with a Mindful Monday video and finishes the week off with a Friday Funny.

Balance Thought Leadership with Promotional Content. Social media marketers sometimes make the mistake of constantly pushing and selling their latest offerings rather than establishing themselves as thought leaders. More often than not, community members have a keen interest in your unique perspective, observations of current trends, and industry insights—not necessarily what programs and packages you may have to sell them. As a general rule, make 80 percent of the information you share informative and engaging, limiting 20 percent of shared content to promotional subject matter.

Multiple Platforms. Not all of your community members will follow you, or catch your message on every social network out there. To disseminate your information, share a consistent message in multiple ways on multiple networks. When you share an update on Facebook, mirror the message on Twitter. There are a number of tools (many of them for free) that will allow you to schedule content and even target it to a particular audience. Many people get overwhelmed by the amount of time they *could* be spending on social media, but if you plan carefully and use these tools, you can potentially take just a few minutes a day to plan and schedule content across multiple channels.

Current Content. Not enough time to always write a new blog post or film an informative video? The internet is full of valuable information that you can share (while giving credit, of course!). Become the go-to resource for fit- and health-minded clients by sharing the best articles, images and videos that you've found online. Sometimes spreading 'link love' can result in other sites linking to you, increasing your traffic and visibility.

Interactive Social Media Marketing Tactics

Here are some quick tips on how fitness professionals can use social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Google+ and Instagram to build both personal and business brand awareness and connect with clients.

Start Highlighting a Client Success Story of the Month.





Increase the "share-ability" of your facility's content, by shining the spotlight on a 'Member of the Month'. Every month, select one of your dedicated clients, write up a quick bio, take their picture, and share it on your social networks. You can be sure that at the very least, the person who was chosen is going to share that post on their own profile, thus introducing your services to all of his or her friends.

Post Visual Content of Workouts and Clients.

(With their permission and knowledge, of course!) One of the easiest ways to increase your studio's visibility on social media is to increase the photo and video content being posted. Sharing visual content is more than sharing visuals of clients, it's about sharing content in different mediums to reinforce a point or bring greater impact to what is being shared. For example, a new exercise you've created as a fitness professional will have way more impact if demonstrated in a short video rather than describing it only in words. If you start sharing visual media of people that attend your gym too, they are likely to "like", "share" or retweet that content on their own profile, thus increasing your visibility.



Need some insight getting your social media strategy started? Check out Merrithew Health & Fitness' networks for a dose of inspiration:

-  Facebook: www.facebook.com/STOTTPILATES
-  Twitter: www.twitter.com/STOTT_PILATES
-  Pinterest: www.pinterest.com/merrithew/
-  YouTube: www.youtube.com/user/STOTTPILATESBrand