

## LEADING THE WAY IN MIND/BODY PROGRAMMING

*Mat-based Pilates programming attracts new members and keeps your existing client base coming back for more!*

By Carol Tricoche

Pilates mat-based programming is leading the charge with respect to attracting new members and keeping them. With numerous options to alter the programs, such as incorporating props or changing the dynamics of a particular move that is being performed, instructors are finding that they can assist more clients with a wide range of fitness needs and abilities. Mat based programming is one of the easiest ways to bridge the gap between what some call 'specialty Pilates' which includes large equipment or Reformer-based programming - and mainstream affordability. By incorporating mat-based Pilates programming into their membership fees at first, Pilates patrons can be introduced to Pilates without the cost of purchasing high-end equipment. You can also offer mat programs in your group exercise rooms without having to

establish a designated area.

"In this economy, some facility owners have been forced to take a more fiscally conservative approach, supplementing private sessions with group or Matwork-based programs," explains Lindsay G, Merrithew, President & CEO of Merrithew Health & Fitness™. "However some owners are still hesitant to implement Pilates into their facilities as a whole because of the perception that this can only be done with large, expensive equipment. But this is not the case."

Many facilities that implemented successful Pilates businesses have established their offerings as a specialty program by charging members extra for the classes outside of the Group



Exercise programs. With your own Pilates studio you can offer internal and external instructors part-time or full-time positions according to the studios' demand. Facility owners will ultimately increase non-dues revenue, while instructors have the ability to earn more income. Consider recruiting and training your existing quality personal trainers and group exercise instructors to be Pilates instructors. Personal trainers can subsidize their current client base with alternative training methods and grow their personal training clientele.

Much of the growth in the area of Matwork-based exercise is due to professional trainers gaining knowledge of and confidence in the results they are achieving with their clients. In fact, highly skilled instructors can bring a plethora of exercise variety to your facility and cater to those who may feel intimidated to try Pilates. Qualified instructors will also look out for the safety of your clients, which is pertinent to the owner and exerciser.

By implementing Pilates mat programming, a new method of exercise can be introduced to members. Even the most basic of moves can be intensified by adding props. High-quality Mat-based training appeals to a wide audience because they're affordable and can cater to various target markets. Courses can be tailored for Golf or Athletic Conditioning, Pre- or Post-Natal clients, Active Aging, or those looking for post-rehab with Pilates.

"We're seeing the trend that more and more facility owners are offering lower prices than their regularly scheduled programs in their Pilates studios so they can bring in more patrons watching their budgets and its working," adds Merrithew. "Such facilities are also realizing the benefits of creating extra attention to their location which is bringing more people through the doors. By offering mat-based programs, clubs are offering members something different with the opportunity to streamline their target demographics."

## MARKETABILITY

Pilates also makes a facility more marketable. Just as Pilates training enhances an instructor's professional skills and increases their client base - clubs benefit from the fact that their trainers are unique and in-demand. Offering Pilates also benefits your existing staff because Pilates classes provide instructors with the opportunity to teach without being physical themselves. Since many trainers conduct



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various classes it's beneficial for them to concentrate on other people's technique and focus rather than their own as is done when teaching aerobics classes. Pilates provides instructors with more opportunities to obtain high-caliber education and training so they can advance their career and qualifications in the marketplace.

Pilates gives clients a better self-awareness and understanding of their bodies and capabilities. That in itself is a great advantage from a safety aspect. As instructors we want to feel confident that our clients exercise safely when they're following the exercise programs we prescribe for them.

The beauty of Pilates mat-based classes is that they are suitable for every body: young, old, athletic, and so on. In contrast to other classes offered at most gyms, trainers are able to work with a wide variety of body types and fitness levels in the same class while they all enjoy a non-competitive form of exercise. Pilates also works the smaller muscles in the body that often get neglected in other forms of exercise. You create a better balance of muscle strength and endurance and reduce the risk of injury as the body becomes more efficient. By reducing the risk of injury not only will your client be able to continue their routines better, it will keep them coming to the gym for longer and more often. The more you see your clients, the better their performance. The longer they will keep their membership, the more they will keep coming to see you. It's a win-win situation. **OSF**

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