

The Prejudging Predicament for Gyms in January

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There's a direct correlation between gym sales experience and prejudging the membership sale. The more gym sales and prospecting experience you have the greater the tendency to prejudge your members and club prospects.

January is around the corner. It will soon be the busiest time of the year for gym sales traffic. This could mean more membership sales for your gym. It could mean a lost opportunity... if you start to prejudge your club guests.

Workouts will be up. Guest traffic will be up. Phones will be ringing. There will be lots of activity. It's that time of year. But success is guaranteed to no one.

Years ago, when I was first learning the fitness business, I remember sitting in a manager's meeting and being told "to only work with those who are interested." I remember immediately saying, "That's prejudging." And it is.

Here's the rule: 1) have a winning attitude, 2) work hard, and 3) follow a proven system

Just because it's January... Just because you're busy... Don't start to cut corners and don't prejudge. Treat each club guest like it's the only one you're going to have that day.

Do not put labels on prospects. "Most people don't have the money . . ."

Don't assume you know anything about your guest if you haven't asked any questions.

Don't assume your members and guests all have similar needs i.e. to save money and time. In the end, your prospects that you to provide a solution to their problem – do that and you'll make a sale.

Here's the pure definition of prejudging... thinking you know what the outcome will be before you even start.

From a member or guests perspective, imagine how they feel when you jump to conclusions about their fitness objectives, personal challenges, and concerns.

Instead of assuming all members and prospects are similar... find out what makes them different. Asking questions uncovers more than basic needs, it reveals what is unique about the different people you meet each day in your gym. Once you know what's

unique you can zero in on what's best for them based on what they said, not what you assumed. Get the picture?

Avoid prejudging – Goals, desires, budgets, priorities, problems, challenges, decision criteria, decision process.

Asking provocative questions makes you look and sound professional. If you're asking really good questions – you should hear your members and prospects say "That's a good question." If you're not hearing that compliment often it means you're not asking really good questions.

No matter how busy your club is in January, remember the key steps to a successful membership presentation:

1. Get your guest to register (you'll have plenty of follow up in January).
2. Pre-qualification. Don't find yourself rushed and trying to do this at the front desk. Find an area of the club that is quiet, comfortable and where you can sit down with your guest.
3. Qualify. Use a Needs Analysis Sheet or Lifestyle Fitness Questionnaire. No matter how busy you might become, this will allow you to stay on course and be sure you are asking the right questions. It's the professional thing to do. Plus it works.
4. Tour. Don't just go on autopilot on the tour. I know you'll be busy, but be sure and treat each guest like it's the only one you'll have that day. Don't simply point out the machines and facilities... tie it back in to their goals, what they want to accomplish and the benefits they can receive.
5. Membership presentation. Don't just show prices. It will be tempting. Take the time to offer a professional presentation. Do a review. Show your standard membership rates. Give them a reason to get started today (other than simply a price discount). Show your rates with the savings and with plenty of decent boldness... ask them to buy.
6. Overcome objections. Most prospects won't say yes right away. Be prepared to answer their questions and concerns. Continually go back to the benefits and results they can receive by getting started now.
7. Point of sale referral process. Don't use the excuse that you were too busy to get referrals. This is where your next sale will come from.

When you prejudge, you misjudge. Now, go have a record breaking January.

Jim Thomas is the founder and president of Fitness Management USA Inc., a management consulting, turnaround and brokerage firm specializing in the fitness and

health club industry. With more than 25 years of experience owning, operating and managing clubs of all sizes, Thomas lectures and delivers seminars, webinars and workshops across the globe on the practical skills required to successfully overcome obscurity, improve sales, build teamwork and market fitness programs and products. Visit his Web site at: www.fmconsulting.net or www.jimthomasondemand.com.