

Gym Owners Handbook

Everything You Need to Know About
Running a Successful Gym

CHRIS COOPER

GYM OWNERS HANDBOOK
Everything You Need to Know About
Running a Successful Gym
By Chris Cooper

Copyright © 2020 Two-Brain Business Inc.

All rights reserved.

ISBN: 9798566441900

CONTENTS

PREFACE - 1

INTRODUCTION - 5

PART 1: YOUR AUDIENCE - 15

Mission and Vision - 17

Sell More - 33

Get More Leads - 77

PART 2: YOUR OPERATIONS - 141

Improve Operations - 141

Upgrading Your Team - 171

Keep Clients Longer - 213

PART 3: YOUR PRIORITIES - 233

PART 4: YOUR MENTOR - 239

PART 5: YOUR GYM 2.0 - 247

PREFACE

The park bench on which I sat had no shade.

It was hot outside, and I could feel my skin beginning to burn. But I didn't care.

I had reached a financial rock bottom.

We were broke. My business—our sole income since my wife had decided not to return to work after her maternity leave—couldn't pay the rent. We were fighting over the grocery bill. I had been leaving the house at 4 a.m. and staying at the gym until 7 or 8 p.m., then working Saturdays until mid-afternoon before collapsing on the couch.

I was skipping meals, driving to and from work in a state of deep depression. I had just fired my only Sunday staff. And I couldn't see any way out. I could get a job, but I didn't have any skill set outside fitness; the gym was all I knew and all I had, and I had resolved to stay in business until it killed me. But now, sweating in that park, I realized that it was close.

I was working my hardest, but our debt was growing. My wife's patience was almost gone; our home was on thin ice. I'd tried everything, I thought. I wasn't going to outwork my mistakes. Nor could I outthink my mistakes. I left the park because I had a client booked for a workout, not because I had found any answers.

But that afternoon, a friend sent me an email that changed my life. Its subject line said only: "Mentorship Program."

A local CEO was selling out and retiring, but he wanted to leave a legacy behind. Under his care, our city's largest employer, a

steel mill, had gone from nearly bankrupt to thriving. Share prices had increased by a multiple of twenty during his leadership. He was a local hero—and he was offering me a chance to work with him 1:1 to fix my own business.

I was interested. The only problem: I didn't have any money. I tore a blank check out of the gym's checkbook anyway, folded it in my pocket, and drove across town to meet with this powerful CEO. It was winter, and my worn-out tires kept sliding on the icy roads on the way to his office. I told myself that I'd write out the check, and if his advice were any good, I'd make back the money before the bank had to clear it. But really, I was justifying my first fraud: writing a check on an overdrawn account.

I showed up sweaty. Before our first meeting, I had taken five minutes to prime my brain for retention: I skipped rope and did a few air squats, then I drove across town on icy streets. But that short workout didn't make me sweat; I was as fit as I'd ever been. The damp brow was caused by anxiety.

What if he told me my gym was broken?

What if I really wasn't good at this?

What if this wouldn't fix my problem?

I walked into the university boardroom where we were scheduled to meet. I wiped my palms on my jeans before I shook hands with Denis, my new mentor. We sat down, and he said, "Tell me about your business."

It took almost an hour to tell my story. I concluded with, "And that's why I just need more clients!" Denis slowly stood.

"No, that's not your problem," he said. He turned to the

whiteboard and picked up a marker. “Don’t buy any advertising yet.”

One of the meeting facilitators discreetly passed me a stack of blank paper and a pen. I accepted, embarrassed to have forgotten them. Over the course of that afternoon, Denis crammed a step-by-step strategy to build a business into my head. We didn’t talk about marketing once. By the end, my brain was so full that I felt like I was balancing an overfilled bowl of water on my fingers. I didn’t want to spill a precious drop.

After two hours of talking with Denis, I was exhausted. I knew I’d need a nap later, but before I left, I asked, “What do I owe you?” He looked at the ceiling for a few moments. I stood there, still sweating.

“Five hundred dollars,” he said, coming back to meet my gaze.

“I don’t have it,” I said. I couldn’t stop myself. After meeting Denis’s questions with honesty and transparency for over two hours, I just didn’t have the energy to lie.

“I know you don’t,” he said. “That’s why I’m so sure you’ll do your homework.”

He chose the price knowing that, if I hustled, I could just barely make it. And I did: three days later, I called him and said: “Cash the check.”

He replied, “I already have.”

Within a week, I was already forgetting the things Denis told me. I had a long to-do list, a long list of books to read, and I wouldn’t see him again for a couple of weeks. I also had a new fear: the fear of failure.

Luckily, I knew that I retain information best when I teach it to others. I didn't know anyone else who owned a gym, so I decided to "teach" what I learned from Denis online. I had a blog for my gym, so I added a new section and named it "DontBuyAds" to remind myself of his most important lesson: that I wasn't ready for growth yet.

Under Denis's guidance, I kept learning. When his mentorship program ended, Denis headed for Florida and I headed for the library. I soaked up an hour of education every day while I drove to and from the gym, and summarized what I learned on my blog. I kept learning this way for four years.

Slowly, my gym turned around. Slowly, my invisible audience grew online. Eventually, that blog became my first book, "Two-Brain Business," to describe the balance of consistency and care required to run a successful gym. It's the most popular fitness business book of all time. But more importantly, it's a vehicle for learning. My "invisible audience" now teaches me every day.

This book is about a gym. But it's really about the power of coaching.

INTRODUCTION

Your business has two parts: your operations and your audience.

“Operations” refers to the service you provide.

“Audience” refers to the people who trade their money for your service.

Each is a multiplier of the other: if your service is excellent, you’ll build a broader audience. And the bigger your audience, the more of your service you’ll sell. On the other hand, if your service isn’t as great as you think, your audience will shrink. And if no one’s heard about you, you don’t have a business.

In this book, I’m going to tell you how to maximize both sides of your business. First, we’re going to talk about delivering real excellence and measuring that excellence to ensure future growth. Then I’m going to tell you how to build an audience—the right kind, not just a bunch of cold leads from advertising.

What’s the benefit to you? Well, most gyms have to replace their clients every seven months. That means they’re spending a lot of time marketing, chasing, cold calling, and doing the hard stuff they didn’t really sign up for. And most gyms are also charging too little or selling the wrong thing to the clients they get. That leads them down a spiral of high churn and declining profit.

I want you to have the opposite result. I want you to:

- Need less marketing over time, not more.
- Attract better and better clients who value your service more and more over time.

- Regularly audit your processes and pricing and earn more in less time.
- Create meaningful career opportunities for your staff.
- Create wealth—the freedom of time and money—for yourself.

But you can't improve anything without measuring it first.

Measuring Success

This is a tactical book. I'm going to share specific actions you must take to grow your business. I know these tactics work because I've measured them on thousands of gyms. (And you'll need to measure how they're working for you as you do them.) I'll dig into these "metrics that matter" in great depth later in the book. But for now, the high-level metrics you should track are called ARM and LEG:

ARM is the Average Revenue per Member per month, or what the average client pays you, and a measure of how much your audience values your service.

LEG is the Length of Engagement, or how long the average client keeps paying you, and a measure of how consistent your operations are.

When you put them together, you get a third metric: "Lifetime Value" (LTV), the total value you receive from a client. It's also a reflection of the value they receive from you.

Improving both sides of your business is great for you but, more importantly, it's great for your client.

Now that you've created a measuring stick let's imagine where we want your business to take you.

How to Achieve Any Goal

The next step to making your business successful is to define what “success” means to you. Then we have to map the journey from your current point to that “success” point. Fitness coaches are great at this exercise, but few apply it to their fitness business. So let’s walk through it together.

Define Success

What is the ultimate goal of entrepreneurship? In the past, I’ve used both financial and subjective definitions. But the ultimate goal is freedom, the opportunity to build the lifestyle we want on the timetable we’re given. It’s the opposite of “trading time for money,” which is what most of our parents did in their careers.

I define entrepreneurial success as “the freedom of money and time.” In the fitness industry, that means a fitness business that pays you more money than you need and requires less than all of the time you have available.

That means a gym or studio that will run without your presence and still pay you. It’s the holy grail. While many of us got into this career because we love coaching others, we ultimately cannot be successful if our business is dependent on our presence.

Measure Your Starting Point

To own a gym that pays you whether you’re coaching or not, you have to have a solid business. You’ll need your staff to follow a clear vision, rise to their opportunities, and fall back on transparent systems. You’ll need an audience that’s willing to pay you what you’re worth, stick around long enough to get results, and grow. You’ll need a balance of stellar operations and

a trusting audience.

It's hard to get a clear picture of your strengths and weaknesses in your business, however. So before we start, we need to break down the "big picture" into smaller snapshots of each area in your business. Some business experts call this "getting into the weeds" or "getting into the dirt." The first step is to measure your starting point. We use a tool called the "Two-Brain Business Road Test" in our mentorship program. But if you want to do it yourself, simply look for opportunities to improve your business as you read this book. They won't be hard to find.

I've broken the big picture of success in the fitness industry down into small, actionable steps. First, I broke the business into two halves, operations and audience, then I broke those two halves into three sections each. I call them the Six Areas of Excellence.

The Six Areas of Excellence

We can break down the two sides to your business into six categories of business excellence. They are:

Operations

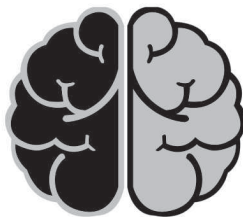
- Teach the Vision
- Improve Operations
- Upgrade the Team

Audience

- Keep Clients Longer
- Sell Better
- Get More Leads

OPERATIONS

- UPGRADE THE TEAM
- TEACH THE VISION
- IMPROVE OPERATIONS



AUDIENCE

- KEEP CLIENTS LONGER
- SELL BETTER
- GET MORE LEADS

Teach the vision: Give your clients and staff a clear picture of where you're all going.

Improve operations: Deliver excellence with consistency.

Upgrade the team: Create career opportunities and keep your coaches coaching.

Keep clients longer: Retain people long enough to change their lives, and build a stable revenue base for you.

Sell better: Show people the best path with confidence, and earn enough from a few clients instead of chasing an infinite number forever.

Get more leads: Save more lives, replace the clients you lose, and scale up.

So which one of the Six Areas of Excellence should you work on first? How do you prioritize? When a problem seems too big, it helps to break it down even further. We can take the Six Areas of Excellence and divide them into the tasks that will form your business roadmap.

What to Do First: The Gym Business Roadmap

We can further break down each of the Six Areas of Excellence into specific actions that a gym owner must take to be successful.

Each strategy that you employ to improve any of the Six Areas of Excellence has multiple steps. So in this book, I've separated each of the Six Areas into their own section with tactics to help.

Our team of mentors at Two-Brain Business uses a tool called the Two-Brain Roadmap to identify and prescribe the exact

actions a gym owner must take at the best time for them. Without a Roadmap, the work can be overwhelming.

For example, to upgrade your team, you must:

- Clearly define their roles and the jobs they perform in those roles.
- Have clear agreements with one another about expectations and duties.
- Create opportunities for them to grow on your platform.
- Pay them more as they create more value.

You must do all of these things. Many books and courses and speeches and podcasts exist to help you. These are requirements, but they're still not actionable directives. My job as a fitness business mentor is to say, "Do exactly this thing by next Tuesday." So we have to go further and break each of these actions down into steps on our Roadmap.

For example, if you want to upgrade your team and create opportunities for them to grow on your platform, you can follow ten specific steps:

1. Identify opportunities for your staff to create more value for your clients.
2. Choose one of these "intrapreneurial" opportunities by identifying the best fit for your business and clients.
3. Hold quarterly Career Roadmap meetings with your staff to put the best person in their best seat.
4. Launch one Intrapreneurial Opportunity and measure the outcome.
5. Decide whether to continue that same opportunity or choose another.
6. Build an annual plan for each staff person that includes these opportunities and the education required to build them.

7. Revisit your staff's career goals each time they level up.
8. Allow staff to launch their own opportunities without your oversight.
9. Create enough value to sustain the staff person full-time (if they want to be full-time).
10. Appoint one successful staff member to manage the rest, and help them achieve their goals.

Those steps are all big ones. And that's only one part of one of the Six Areas of Excellence!

Each of the Six Areas of Excellence contains a few requirements. And each of those requirements has at least ten steps. That's over 450 specific things to do to build a successful gym—pretty overwhelming! So, I mapped the process onto a visual called the Two-Brain Roadmap. You can see a few pictures at www.twobrainbusiness.com/handbook . Here's one shot:

Two-Brain Roadmap



The Two-Brain Roadmap exists to break all of that work down into specific actions at the right time. In our mentorship program, we can use the Roadmap to tell you which actions take priority and where you should focus. That's the purpose of mentorship. The Roadmap answers all of the *how* questions.

When? The Phases of Entrepreneurship

Imagine that we drew a timeline of an entrepreneur's growth. On the left end, we'd write the date they start their business. And on the right end would be the day they achieve wealth. As they move from left to right along the timeline, every successful entrepreneur passes through four phases. But most entrepreneurs get stuck somewhere in the middle, and that's why they're not successful. I wrote "Founder, Farmer, Tinker, Thief" to break the journey to wealth into four phases:

Founder Phase: You're a sole proprietor, coaching clients yourself. You might be working at another gym as a subcontractor, or you might own a private studio. But you're delivering most of the service.

Farmer Phase: You have staff delivering some or all of your service, freeing you up to grow your audience. You're managing people and money and delivery and marketing. Most gym owners are in this stage (and many never get out of it).

Tinker Phase: You have staff running all of the Six Areas of Excellence, and you're focused on building your wealth. You are diversifying your income, duplicating your business, and buying cash-flow assets.

Thief Phase: You are leveraging your platform to create a legacy for your family and your community.

Your entrepreneurial priorities will change over time. Some strategies will work when you're just starting out (Founder Phase) but not when you're successful. Conversely, as my mentor told me, entrepreneurs in the Founder Phase shouldn't waste money on advertising until they have systems in place to scale.

Of course, these changing needs add another layer of complexity. And at the beginning of this book, I promised simplicity. So far, I've delivered anything BUT simplicity. Instead, I've told you there are over 400 specific things you need to do to grow your gym! I said that you couldn't do them all at once and that you could take a test to figure out what to do first.

However, I'm going to tell you how to do each of them now. I'm going to walk you through each step in order. If you do the work consistently, you'll grow your gym. But if you fail to execute, you'll shrink.

Because, after all, knowledge doesn't make you successful.

Action does.

PART 1: YOUR AUDIENCE

If you want people to follow you, you need to draw a map.

You need to show them the North Star.

You need to lead them north.

And you need to make your tracks easy to follow.

In this section, we'll start with your North Star (your mission and your vision of success). Then we'll draw a map so that your staff can do things exactly the way you want them done. And finally, we'll talk about showing them how to follow in your footsteps.

GYM OWNERS HANDBOOK

MISSION AND VISION

Your mission is the reason you opened your business.

Your vision is your picture of success.

Sharing your mission and vision will help you gain clients and set the tone for the people responsible for carrying them out: your staff. When your team knows your intent, they can make decisions without you. No matter how thorough your staff playbook or how simple your systems, your staff will eventually encounter a new situation. They might think, “What would the owner do in this situation?” And if you’ve shared your mission and vision, they’ll know the answer.

But writing your mission down serves another essential purpose. As my gym became more and more successful, new opportunities and ideas began to distract me. To help me decide where to invest my time and resources, I learned to ask, “Does this drive my mission forward?” If the new idea wouldn’t advance my mission, I learned to set it aside, even if it would have made me money. It’s so easy to think about starting a custom line of T-shirts or grinding your own flour, but these will ultimately make you less money in the long run. We call chasing these ideas at the expense of your focus “shiny object syndrome.”

My gym’s mission is to extend the lifespan of 7,000 people in Sault Ste. Marie. My vision is of a business that guides people to better health through coaching. When I imagine helping people live longer, I see a picture of coaches teaching nutrition, guiding clients through workouts, leading meditations, and checking in on members regularly to keep them on track. I visualize a practical classroom that looks like a gym. I see local experts, the best available, guiding my clients to health. I see birthday cards

and home visits to the sick.

Writing your mission and vision requires time away from your gym. If you're starting from scratch, good for you; it's easier to build to your vision than to try to figure it out after you're open. But most of us do this exercise after the fact. If you already have paying clients, you need to make sure your vision aligns with the service you're already selling. Otherwise, you're in the wrong business. So let's start with what your customers are actually buying. That will help us clarify your mission and make sure it aligns with THEIR mission.

What Are They Hiring You to Do?

The best brands always come from the question, "What do our clients want?" The high-level insights here come from Clayton M. Christensen's classic book "Competing Against Luck." In the book, Christensen introduces the concept of "jobs to be done" with this story:

A couple of decades ago, Christensen was hired to help a fast-food chain sell more milkshakes.

The chain had tried making the milkshakes thicker; then they tried making them smoother. They had tried adding little chunks of fruit and chocolate. They had tried different temperatures. They had doubled their advertising spend. All their focus groups agreed their milkshakes were the best. But nothing they tried really helped them sell more.

Christensen set up his staff at the chain's drive-thru. Anyone who bought a milkshake was questioned while waiting: "Why did you choose a milkshake? Why this milkshake?"

Twenty-four hours a day for the entire week, the researchers interrogated milkshake buyers.

The research team was astonished to find that a third of all milkshakes were sold between 7 and 8 a.m. “Who bought milkshakes in the morning?” they wondered. So they started digging deeper.

It turns out that morning-milkshake buyers were looking for something that they could drink on the way to work, that would fill them up, that wouldn't leave crumbs on their work clothes. The buyers were “hiring” a milkshake to do those jobs. Fruit didn't fill them up; cereal was too messy; eggs took too long or would leave their hands greasy. So they hired milkshakes.

Christensen spent the next decade teaching businesses how to identify the jobs clients were hiring them to do. His “jobs to be done” concept is the subject of books from dozens of authors and many YouTube videos from other experts. Christensen's team charges hundreds of thousands of dollars to do client research. But there's a cheat code. Here it is: Ask people what they want. Don't guess.

Christensen found out that McDonald's was being hired to solve a breakfast problem for commuters. What problem are you actually being hired to solve?

It's probably not “high-intensity interval training” or “core stabilization.” These are your methods or tools. Instead, your clients are probably hiring you to help them lose weight as quickly or as painlessly as possible. Maybe they're hiring you to keep them accountable or to untangle the big mystery of weight loss.

This is the secret of the service industry: our mission is to help our clients achieve THEIR mission. So we need to get really clear on their mission first. The better we know it, the better we can build our service to help.

Most of us make a massive mistake: we assume we know what our clients want. We project what WE want onto our clients. But we are not our clients. We need to hear what they want, in their own words, and then incorporate those words into our mission.

Enter: The “Seed Clients” Exercise

First, identify who your best clients are. You’re going to build our mission around these clients. You’re going to serve them better than anyone else. You’re going to find more people like them. Why? Because you don’t want to duplicate your worst clients.

To identify your best clients, take out a blank sheet of paper. Draw a vertical line down the middle to create two columns.

At the top of one column, draw a smiley face. At the top of the other column, draw a dollar sign.

Start in the “dollar sign” column: list the clients who pay you the most money. Shoot for the top ten.

Then, in the “smiley face” column, list the clients who make you happiest. The people who never complain; who actually lift your spirits when you see them; who feed you energy. Try to list ten, but these should only be the people who come to mind right away. If you only have three clients who are obvious choices, stop at three.

Now circle the names that appear in both columns. These are your best clients: they pay you the most and make you the happiest. You’ll probably find three to five seed clients. We want more like them. We want to align our mission with theirs.

Take those people for coffee, one at a time. Ask them these questions:

1. What led you to my gym in the first place?
2. What frustrates you most about the fitness industry in general?
3. What's your greatest challenge outside my gym?

Note that you're not asking them survey-style questions, like "How would you rate your experience?" or "What could we do better?" The answers to those questions will leave you chasing your tail. What you're really asking with these three questions are:

1. What should I say or do to get more people like you to join?
2. What should I avoid saying or doing?
3. How can I serve you more?

When I first did this exercise at Catalyst around 2015, I was shocked by the responses. I thought my clients would say, "CrossFit attracted me to your gym." I thought they'd say, "The workouts are hard but feel like a game." I kinda hoped they'd say, "Because Chris is the best coach in town, widely renowned for his knowledge and spreadsheets." They didn't say any of those things. Instead, here's what they told me:

"I can turn off my brain when I come here. You tell me exactly what to do."

"I feel better when it's done."

"This is the only place all day where I hear 'good job!'"

They also told me how else I could serve them, such as adding a nutrition program, which has made me tens of thousands of

dollars since.

Performing the exercise was an epiphany for me. My clients didn't want what I wanted. They were hiring me for a different job than I thought they were. My mission, to sell challenging exercise that felt like a sport, was different from their mission. Without that alignment, I was losing clients because their mission wasn't being fulfilled!

I'm not good at guessing what others want (ask my wife and family). It's better to ask them, and then build my service—and my brand—to match. So, what job are your clients hiring you to do, really? If you ask them, they'll tell you. Then you can build your service around their mission. The closer your mission aligns with their mission, the more valuable you are to your clients.

How to Make Money in Fitness

Fitness is a \$94-billion industry. And not one dollar of that is for you.

Every dollar you earn in fitness is a dollar you have to create yourself. There's no giant pool full of money waiting for you to dip your hands into. You'll have to convince people to spend money on your fitness service instead of spending money on something else. You'll have to make your service their priority.

You create money by creating value.

You create value by making their mission YOUR mission.

Before we dig deep into your service or talk about money, we need to talk about value. I'm going to teach you how to think about creating and selling value differently.

What Is Value?

You create money by creating value. Your value is determined by aligning excellent operations with the right audience.

In my interview with Bob Burg, author of “The Go-Giver” series, he said that value has five parts:

Excellence: To charge what you’re worth, you have to be worth it. Unfortunately, many gyms simply aren’t worth paying more for. That’s one point in the “operations” category.

Consistency: You have to be predictable. People need to know how you’ll react, what your rules are, and that they can depend on you. If your 6 a.m. coach isn’t as good as you are or if your clients are saying things like “It’s not the same when you’re not here,” then you need to build your business differently. That’s another tick in the “operations” box.

Attention: Your clients must receive 1:1 attention from you or their coaches. They must have a 1:1 relationship with your brand, even if they only attend group classes. This doesn’t always mean personal training, but it does mean customizing your plan for their specific goals. One more point for “operations.”

Empathy: You have to demonstrate your care. When it comes to your clients, it’s not enough to keep your feelings to yourself. You must show you care daily. That’s a point for “audience.”

Appreciation: You must say “thank you” to everyone you can as often as you can—especially when you don’t feel like it. Grand gestures, like “100 WOD Club” T-

shirts, are really cool, but it's better to give meaningful thanks often than to buy someone a T-shirt after they've been a client for a year. So that's another point for "audience."

I'll add a sixth point: **you have to get the right people.** You cannot fulfill your mission if you try to deliver it to the wrong audience. After years of mentoring thousands of gyms worldwide, I've seen far too many motivated, caring coaches go broke because they tried to serve everyone. So that's three points for "audience" and three for "operations."

How Does All This Make You Money?

Any dollar you make is a dollar you'll have to create.

You create money by creating value.

You create value by helping your clients fulfill their mission.

You create your mission by knowing their mission.

How to Sell Your True Value

If you want to make money in fitness, you will have to create it by creating value. And that's all nice and good. But there's no sense beating around the bush: At some point, someone will have to pay you real money.

How much should you charge your clients for the value you provide? Here's the process for setting your prices according to the value you provide:

1. Determine your Perfect Day. How much time do you want to spend working? What else do you want to do? Where do you want to live?

2. Determine how much your Perfect Day will cost. Add up the expenses associated with that lifestyle.
3. Divide that total cost by 12 months.
4. If you own a brick-and-mortar gym, multiply that number by 3. Divide this new number by 150. That's how much each client will need to pay per month if you have 150 clients and a 33 percent profit margin.
5. If you own an online coaching business, multiply that number by 1.2. Divide this new number by 20. That's how much each client will need to pay per month if you have 20 clients and 20 percent overhead costs.
6. The number you just determined is your absolute minimum rate. That's your lowest rate, including all discounts, trades, etc.
7. Now double that number. This is your target rate.
8. Answer the Magic Question—see below.

For example, my Perfect Day is to work four hours and net \$100,000 per year. That's \$8,500 (net) per month. I own a brick-and-mortar gym, so I multiply that number by 3 ($\$100,000 \times 3 = \$300,000$). That's \$25,000 per month to make \$8,500 net if I can hold a 33 percent profit margin.

To make \$25,000 per month from 150 clients, I need to charge each \$166.67 at a minimum. Double \$166.67, and my target rate is \$333.33 per month.

Which brings us to the magic question.

The Magic Question

“What service can I provide that's worth \$333.33 per month?”

Forget “what the market will bear,” forget the average that other gyms charge in your area, forget that you're “in a lower-income area” (everyone says that). People will pay your target

rate if you deliver the value to match.

That doesn't mean running better group classes. It doesn't mean better programming. It really doesn't mean more letters after your name. It means excellence, consistency, attention, empathy, and appreciation. It means asking, "Who has a mission that is so important that they will pay \$333.33 per month to achieve it?"

Now build that service.

Other Key Questions

It all sounds simple, I know. But to really be worth the \$333.33 per month, I have to ask myself these questions:

- Am I really an excellent coach, or do I just know a lot about technique?
- Are my people actually getting the results they wanted when they signed up?
- Am I reviewing their progress to make sure?
- Are my coaches really as good as I am, or does the ship only run smoothly when I'm at the wheel?
- Can I count on a new walk-in getting the same experience every time, or would I be embarrassed if someone showed up in my gym right now?
- Do I count on long-term members to let me off the hook when the bathroom isn't clean, or I don't start their appointment on time?
- Am I counting on them to behave like a friend would... and then charging them money?
- Am I giving my personal attention to their goals? Not just 1:1 movement correction in the group—that's the bare minimum.
- Am I talking to them outside their workouts?

- Am I telling them why a particular workout is essential for them and what their specific goals are for that workout?
- Do I honestly care enough about my client to do whatever it takes to get results?
- Will I tell them they need more from me even if it's more expensive?
- Will I send them to another gym if that will help them more?
- Will I text them at 8 p.m. to say, “Go cut up some veggies for tomorrow’s snacks”?
- Do I thank my clients in person at least every month? Do I cultivate gratitude and teach my clients to do the same?

If you skip all of the above questions, ask yourself this one:

What can I sell that's worth \$333.33 per month?

If you're like me, you probably asked some of these questions when you started. But over time, you got overwhelmed by work or grew your client base and started delivering by the clock. I get it. But you can't scale up your business while you scale down your value. You must replace yourself with systems, people, and tools when you can no longer deliver these things yourself. And these are just the basics. They're not the extras.

How to Increase Your Value

You sell coaching. Your premium option is the service that delivers maximum value—that's usually the option that is most personalized to your client. At the other end of the value spectrum sits your group fitness class, the impersonalized, lowest-priced “budget” option.

General, inclusive programming, done in a group format, is the

option people choose when they can't afford personal care. The problem is that most gym/microgym owners only give clients one choice: "Sign up for our group classes!" And it's the choice with the least value.

Personal trainers and nutrition coaches don't have this problem. Their problem is that they're stuck trading money for time—they sell their life by the hour. They need to scale up the value of their time. You increase the value of your time by increasing the value of your service.

Here's how you increase the value of your service to your clients:

Step 1: Have a conversation about goals. We call this a No Sweat Intro, but you can name it whatever you like. Just sit and talk about clients' destinations before you sell them maps.

Step 2: Draw a map from the destination to where the client is sitting now. You're a coach. This is coaching. Include all the elements the client will need to get there, including exercise, nutrition, accountability, and sleep.

Step 3: Walk the client through the map, their personal plan or journey.

Step 4: Ask if the client agrees with the map. Say, "Does this look like the plan you described to me?" You're not shooting for "YES!" but trying to get the client to say, "That's right."

Step 5: Group the services that your client will need to fulfill their mission. Include 1:1 training; group training; nutrition coaching; habits coaching; mindset training; accountability; anything they need to achieve their

mission. Remember: their mission is not “to save money.” If their mission was to “save money,” they wouldn’t be joining a gym.

Step 6: Quote the price for this particular journey (or at least the first steps).

Step 7: Plan your next meeting to occur before the second step.

Step 8: Measure their progress. Change the map if you need to. Change the price if the plan changes. Schedule the third meeting.

Step 9: Repeat the process with the next client.

We call this the Prescriptive Model, but it’s really just good coaching.

This process establishes your value—in fact, every time you change the client’s plan, your value increases, even when the plan doesn’t work!

Your value as a fitness coach does not depend on your ability to write the perfect workout program or diet; it depends on your ability to change the plan over time.

When a client has an internal debate about your plan, or they doubt its effectiveness, they’ll ask themselves: “Is this really working for me?” And because they can’t measure themselves, and can’t see their progress because they’re too close to it, and don’t know how to change the plan... they’ll probably answer “No!”

As soon as they think, “This isn’t working,” they’re on the way out the door. They’ll start looking for an excuse to quit.

However, if you're the one asking, "Is this working?" and measuring, showing them their progress, and changing their plan... you'll build trust. Your value will increase.

Most coaches don't realize that people are more scared to lose something than they are eager to gain something. If you've been through a prescriptive process with a client, and you find they're not making progress, then you've made an important discovery.

If they quit your coaching to find something else, they'll LOSE that knowledge. They'll have to start over with a brand new coach and begin the process of trial and error from scratch. No one wants to do that.

Unfortunately, most microgyms sell access to group classes. That's their entire service. And they don't meet with clients to talk about goals or progress. They don't provide training options. They never change a client's plan.

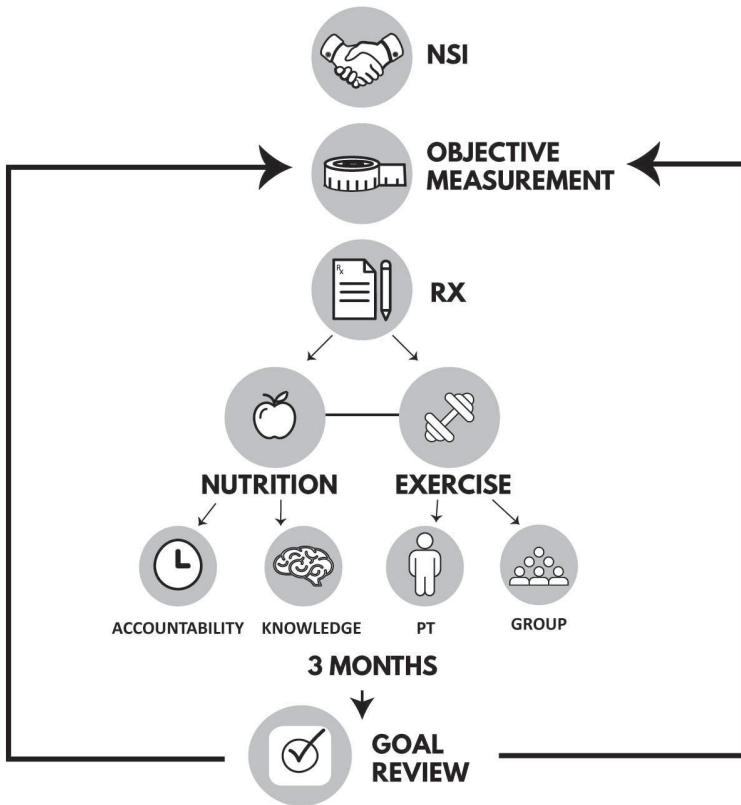
So clients come in and try their workout. They're forced to guess: "Will this solve my problem?" with no idea.

And even if they sign up, they have to keep guessing: "Is this actually helping?" And if they doubt the benefits, there's no one to say, "Let's change it!" Instead, they'll say, "I tried CrossFit, and it didn't work for me!"

Trust me: there are dozens of people in my city who tried a few classes with me a decade ago and who will never be back because "Catalyst didn't work for me." And they're right.

I didn't help them achieve their mission because I didn't ask what it was.

The Prescriptive Model for Coaching



How do you become valuable? Well, what do your clients need to be successful?

Remember: Value is determined by your clients, not by you. Asking your clients, “where do you struggle most in your pursuit of fitness?” is an excellent place to start improving your value. They’ll tell you where you can add value to their lives.

In general, we find that most clients need coaching in four areas: sleeping, eating, moving, and mindset. Your fitness prescription should include at least two of those four areas. After all, if you’re just selling workouts, you’re only addressing

3-5 hours out of the 148 hours in their week. No mission is accomplished in 3-5 hours per week.

Our first exercise was to identify your “seed” clients.

Our second exercise was to determine your maximum value to them.

Our third exercise is to sell that value (spoiler: the obstacle isn't the client).

Our fourth exercise is to deliver that value.

When we're trying to grow a business, we take an inside-out approach. We start at the center and work our way toward the fringes. That means starting with your best clients and then working through each layer of client affinity until it's time to talk to strangers. Let's start by providing more value to our current clients, and the elephant in the room: selling.

SELL MORE

Who is most likely to buy your service tomorrow? The people who are buying it today.

The strength of the connection between your audience and your service is called affinity. The stronger the affinity between your audience and your service, the more likely your audience is to buy.

There are different levels of affinity. People who are currently buying from you have the highest affinity unless you're actively making them angry or doing a terrible job on delivery. Then they're just looking for an off-ramp.

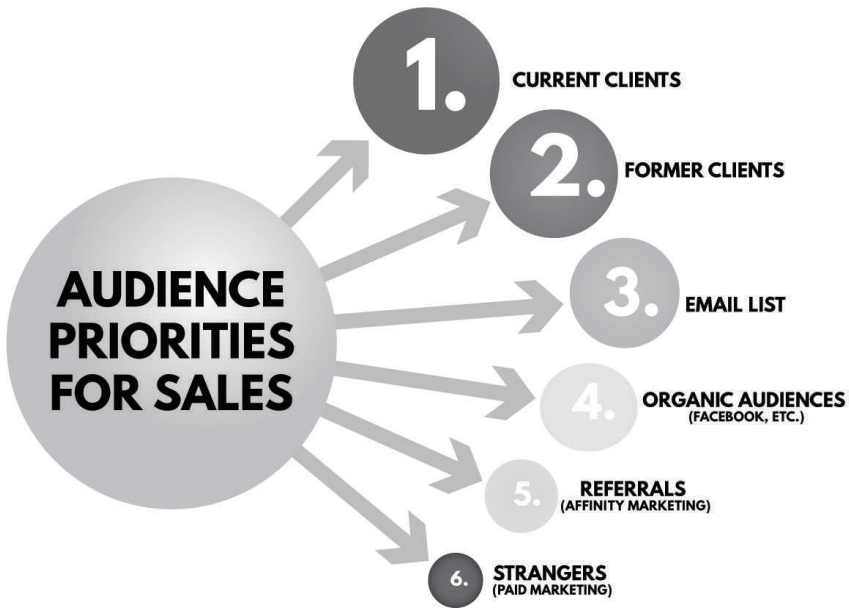
The second-highest level of affinity is the people who used to buy from you but stopped. It's easier to get them back than to convince a stranger to start using your service.

The third-highest level of affinity is the people who are paying attention but not yet paying you money. These are the people on your email list or subscribers on your YouTube channel. These are people who have taken an active step to listen to what you're saying. They've given you permission to tell them more.

Next is your connections, the people who know you but aren't yet interested in your service. We call these "organic audiences." You might use something like Facebook to reach them, or you might talk to them while you're watching your kids play sports.

The fifth is your clients' connections: referrals to their spouse or coworkers or friends.

Finally, the lowest level of affinity is strangers that you reach through advertising.



High levels of affinity don't require "marketing"—they just need you to sign them up. We call that process "sales."

Medium levels of affinity, like your email list and your organic audiences, need to hear more about why they **NEED** your service. And they've given you permission to tell them. We call that process "marketing."

And low levels of affinity, people who don't know anything about you or why they need your service, need to hear how you'll solve their problems. We call that "advertising."

Sales is talking to people who are ready to sign up. Marketing is talking to undecided people. Advertising is talking to absolute strangers.

What shifts someone from a lower-affinity audience to a higher-affinity audience? What moves them from advertising to marketing to sales? *Value*. The more you demonstrate the value

to them, the more affinity you build between your service and your audience.

High-affinity audiences already know your value. They're trying to figure out how to make your service fit into their lives. That's the "sales" process that I'll walk you through in a moment.

Medium-affinity audiences know that you're valuable to their friends or to others in your community. They're just not sure you can solve their problem (or if they even have a problem to solve.)

Low-affinity audiences aren't interested in your service. It holds no value to them because they don't think they want it or need it.

We're going to start with the high-affinity audiences. These are the "warm leads," the "low-hanging fruit"—you've heard the terms from slick sales types before. All you have to do is tell these people how and when to start. But if you're like me, that's easier said than done.

The Dark Side of Your Business: Sales

When you get a coaching job, you should try to be the best coach you can.

When you open a business, you have to sell.

Fitness is a hard business. No one is compelled to work out. Most people don't want to work out. No one wants to do meal prep on Sunday nights. Like it or not, you have to sell people on the idea of doing something they don't like. You have to sell the premise that your mission aligns with theirs. You have to sell them on the idea that they will like your service better than the alternatives. Sell them that your price carries equivalent value.

And then you have to sell them on continuing—every damn day.

In this section, I'm going to shine a light on the “Dark Side of Your Business.” I'll tell you:

- Why you don't need secret scripts (and what you actually do need).
- Why you don't have to feel like a slime ball to sell more.
- Why I write about “selling” more than anything else these days.
- The huge epiphanies I learned from my first (and best) sales coach.

Remember that your fitness practice has two parts: Operations and Audience. Most coaching businesses and certifying agencies don't tell you about the second part. They say, “Just be a great coach, and your clients will refer their friends!” or “Follow the path from Level 1 coach to Level 4 coach, and you'll make more money.”

Of course, they're selling certifications. But I don't need to give you my opinion on the value of this advice: Just ask yourself if it's been true for you. The truth reported to us by thousands of gym owners is this: It's not enough to wait and hope. Your clients aren't salespeople. You have to take control of the conversation and build your audience. As a business owner, that's your job.

How to Build an Audience

“Don't find an audience for your product. Find products for your audience.” —Seth Godin

First, you need to know what your “core” audience wants. Then give it to them. This almost always results in your clients paying

more (increasing their ARM) for longer (an increase in their LEG).

Tip: They don't all want the same thing forever.

Second, you need to know what the people closest to your clients want.

Tip: You can give these people what they want, too.

Third, you need to tell strangers how you'll solve their problems.

Tip: If you can't actually solve their problems, don't waste money on marketing.

Start from the inside (your best clients) and work your way out. Most gym owners don't actually know what their best clients want from them or how much they're willing to pay for it. Why would they start spending money on marketing before they figure this out? But they do. So our first step is to get really clear on what your BEST clients want. And then to keep asking them as their needs change.

Selling Without "Selling"

What do the most successful fitness professionals do that others don't?

They sell their service.

My biggest mistake—and probably yours—was believing that being the best fitness coach would make me the most successful fitness coach. So I studied planes of movement and energy metabolism. I drew graphs on the floor for my clients. I explained complex theories to them. Worst of all, I only read

stuff that confirmed my faulty belief. You remember these, right?

“If you just keep your bathroom clean, they will come.”

“If you just love on your clients, they will bring their friends.”

“Treat them well, build up an emotional bank account, and they will tell everyone about you.”

I wish those statements were true, but they're not. You can't be a successful business owner without selling your service. Maybe that made you shiver. It sure made me uncomfortable—until I realized that “sales” doesn't mean “trickery.” It doesn't mean “slime” or “fooling people.” It really just means “helping people.”

There's a lot of bait-and-switch in the fitness industry. There's a lot of slime. I hate that stuff. But that doesn't mean I can avoid sales. So I wrote the book “Help First” to explain how I learned to “sell without selling,” how to help your clients by extending your care and how to feel great while you grow.

In this section, I'll tell you how to do the same. But for the first time, I'll take it a step further and explain how to hire and train a salesperson to replace you. That's usually the final step in moving from the Farmer Phase to the Tinker Phase.

First: What Are We Selling? We sell fitness coaching. Fitness is achieved through the optimization of nutrition and exercise. Coaching is the process of filtering information and prescribing the most elegant solution to a client.

After filtering, some coaches choose CrossFit. Some coaches choose Pilates. Some opt for something else. We deliver our coaching one on one, in a small group session, or in a large

group session, depending on the client's needs.

After filtering, some coaches choose paleo. Some prefer the Zone Diet. Some choose something else. We deliver nutrition coaching one on one, in a small group session, or in a shorter-term challenge, depending on what fits our client.

We do not sell a method—like barre or CrossFit or HIIT or boot camp. Those are our tools. We sell results.

How do you choose? You match the client's needs to the tools you have available as a coach. We call this “The Prescriptive Model.”

The Prescriptive Model means building a 1:1 relationship with every client, regardless of whether they prefer personal training or group training. Every client starts with a No Sweat Intro. Every client is given a Nutrition Prescription and an Exercise Prescription, according to his or her needs. Every client is reassessed every quarter. And each gets a new prescription based on unique needs. The real “Rx” in your gym is the best plan for your client—not what weight to use in today's general group programming.

Good Selling Means Asking Good Questions

Every potential client asks themselves a series of questions before they find you. The questions sound like this: “I need to lose weight. But do I need to do it now?”

If the answer is YES, they move on to the next question: “What's the easiest way to do it?”

If they select “exercise” over “diet”—a big IF—they move on to the next question: “What's the best exercise plan?”

Now, “best” can mean many things: fastest, easiest, least boring, or something else. If they decide to join a gym over walking/jogging/buying an exercise bike, they start with a Google search. What are they searching for? It’s not “gym with the best community in Fort Knox.” It’s not “the happiest gym in Sault Ste. Marie” (much to my chagrin). It’s not “highest-certified coaches in Annapolis.” It’s probably “best gym for weight loss” or “cheapest gym in Boston” or “gym near me.” They probably won’t find your gym in those searches, will they?

Now let’s say they somehow find your site and are greeted by a long list of options: CrossFit, personal training, nutrition programming, Sweat Class, boot camp, Barbell Club... Which one will help them lose weight? If they don’t try to figure it out themselves, they’ll probably leave.

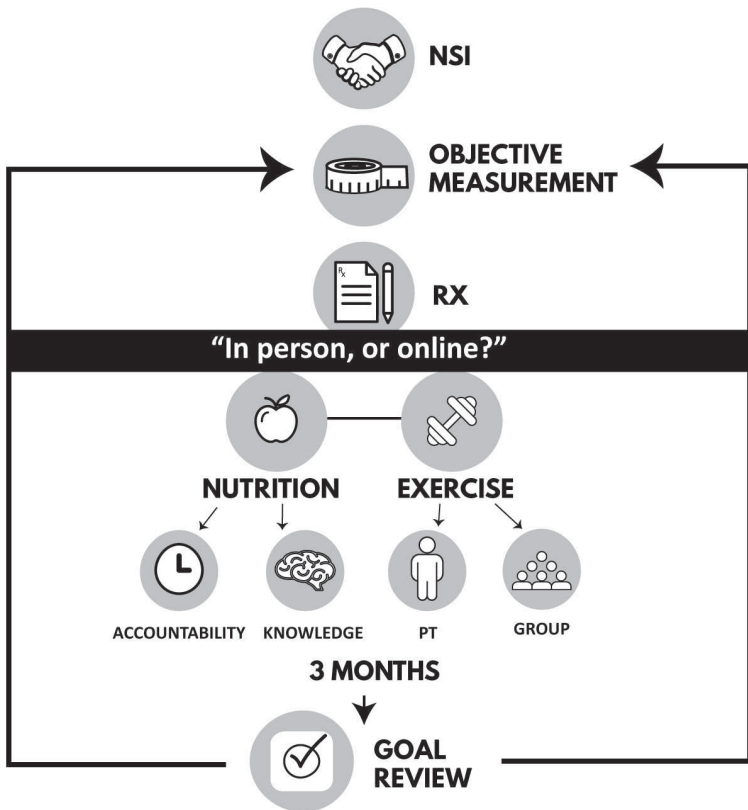
If they DO try to figure it out themselves, they might take your offer to try a free class. But if no one talks to them after class about their goals, they’re left to guess: “This hard thing that I just did—will it help me lose weight?”

Every time you make people guess, you filter them out. Because they don’t know what you know, their journey to find you started with questions. The next step in their journey will also be dictated by questions, but this time, you’ll be the one asking them.

Here’s how to talk to the people you want to coach:

1. Start with media. Don’t explain why you’re the best gym. Tell them how to lose weight. Tell them how to cure low back pain. Tell them how to start jogging safely.
2. Let your media lead them to your website. Your website should contain the solution to their problem and an easy way to take the next step: a private consultation.

3. Let your website lead them to a No Sweat Intro. (Call your consultation whatever you want.) You need to start with a conversation so you can frame your service. Use Motivational Interviewing to get to their “why.”
4. Let your conversation lead to a prescription. “Here’s how we can get you to your goal.”
5. Let that prescription lead to the next one. Never stop meeting 1:1 with your clients, measuring their progress, and asking if they’re happy with their results.



Motivational Interviewing

Top coaches in every field, from psychotherapists to plastic surgeons to tax accountants, use a technique called

“motivational interviewing” to dig into their clients’ psyche. It’s not a coincidence that these fields have the best long-term retention in the world. While this section is about “selling” your service, a good sales process really sets up the coach for long-term retention.

Motivational interviewing forges a deeper bond with the client. Rather than merely asking, “why do you want to join my gym?” coaches can get to the hidden reasons that lie below the surface.

Motivational interviewing requires the coach to ask a series of “Why” questions. It’s powerful, but it takes time, so I’ve always taught a No Sweat Intro (NSI) system, which is a shorter version—think of it as “the first why.”

NSIs are generally finished in 15 minutes, and they’re far better for retention or conversion than free trial classes or sales pitches. However, you *can* go a lot deeper if you want to. The NSI goes like this:

“What led you to our gym?”

“What’s your greatest struggle with that goal?”

Then we take an objective measurement of the thing the client cares about. After that, we give the client a prescription. This is the first step in the Prescriptive Model. From there, we ask some qualifying questions and sign the client up for our OnRamp program. But motivational interviewing goes deeper. For example, a coach doing a motivational interview at intake would start the same way:

“What led you to our gym?”

But the coach would then start asking “why?” to get deeper:

“Why do you want to accomplish that goal?”

“Why is that important to you?”

“Why will that make a difference?”

“Why will that matter?”

The coach’s next step isn’t to take an objective measurement with calipers or a scale; it’s to have the client subjectively offer their own scale for success. Then the coach plots the path to success, asks if the client agrees with the prescription, and signs them up. The key to success in motivational interviewing is simple: the coach must know what the client really wants to achieve and then show them a clear plan to achieve it.

If the Rx Fits, They will Commit

People don’t buy CrossFit or boot camp. People buy outcomes.

Your future clients aren’t impressed by your equipment list. They don’t care about your coaches’ bios, or how many square feet you have, or even your “community.” They care about finding an answer to their problem, and that’s it. If your media portrays the solution to their problem instead of a toes-to-bar demo video, they can skip a lot of their questions and come talk to you about it.

Many gym owners struggle to get new clients because they’re telling the wrong story. Others aren’t telling any story at all, so the client is left to guess: “Will this help me solve MY problem?” And no one is going to tell that story for us anymore. New clients will have to work down that decision tree, making wrong guesses until they finally make the right one. Unless you tell them the truth.

What About Marketing?

Marketing is how you talk to strangers. Sales is how you talk to friends.

Marketing can get you some attention, but sales will change their life.

There's no sense pumping "leads" into your business until you can effectively sign them up for your service. You have to be good at sales—and comfortable at "selling" in a non-slimy way—before you do any marketing.

When gym owners improve their sales conversations (we call this "conversion" rate), it improves their marketing spend exponentially. Then they can start running Facebook ads.

How Do You Sell More?

You sell more by caring enough to change your clients' lives.

Then you sell more by caring enough to change their environment. You ask, "How can I help your husband?" and "How can I help your friend Joanne?"

Then you sell more by caring enough to change their workplace. You ask, "How can I help your coworkers?" Then you sell more by caring enough by helping their acquaintances. Then by the people who are on your email list.

This type of selling requires emotional investment. It requires bravery. It requires being courageous enough to ask—instead of just waiting.

Waiting means death.

The Day I Overcame My Fear of Sales

He was here to have his leg cut off.

The private lounge was quiet. That was my favorite thing about it. My second-favorite thing about the lounge? The private snack buffet laid out at 4 p.m. every day. I was visiting Minneapolis to watch a nephew play hockey. Between games, my kids would hit the pool or the mall, and I'd wander down the hall to the secret lounge on the fourth floor to work. In the daytime, there were few people in the hotel, and I'd answer emails in quiet luxury.

The only other guests in sight were an older man and his wife. They visited the lounge most afternoons. He relied on a walker to keep him upright; she filled his plate with snacks as he chose them, and they made their slow progress back to their room. In the emptiness of the lounge, it would have been awkward not to say hello, so we made a bit of small talk. He was visiting Minneapolis with two legs but would be leaving on one. Long-term diabetes was claiming a quarter of his person. Sad, but ultimately none of my business: he selected his daily Pepsi and chips, and his wife dutifully carried the paper plate back to his hotel room.

As a lifelong fitness coach, I wondered: did they know the soda was the culprit behind his diabetes? Had they just given up? Did they believe his condition was unavoidable, irreversible... or were they willfully ignoring his doctors even at the gravest of consequences? These were probably caring people, maybe someone's grandparents.

But as an introverted, live-and-let-live guy, I didn't want to speak up. I worried about insulting their intelligence or embarrassing them. They were clearly at a low point; did they need me to highlight their obvious despair? Would their

embarrassment make me embarrassed? Would we spend the rest of the week avoiding each other? Would they get angry with me? Would I make the situation worse?

Finally, on Monday, I saw them for the fourth time. It was our last day of the tournament. My nephew's team would leave that night. I'd never see the older couple again. My internal debate had reached a crescendo: I was thinking about the old man's leg instead of paying attention to the hockey games.

I watched them select a small bag of nuts and candy and the usual Pepsi. I thought, for the thousandth time, about talking to them about sugar and high-fructose corn syrup and diabetes. But, for the thousandth time, I did nothing. Then a voice entered my head: "Chris, do you care enough about this human to overcome your own bullshit?" Just like that. *"Is this person more important than your own social doubt, your shyness, and your second-guessing?"*

I walked up, looked them each in the eye, and said, "You seem like lovely people. I might be able to help you." I asked questions. They answered. I didn't lecture, but they listened. They thanked me because my care was obvious. And that's the moment when I became great at selling my service. No money changed hands. I didn't send them a bill later. But this epiphany, *"I care enough to help this person,"* was larger than my doubt, my embarrassment, my awkwardness.

To be successful in business, you must be fully convinced that your service is exactly what your client needs right now. You must pursue it as a holy mission: as if it's too good NOT to share.

Who Sells?

You can't be a successful business owner without selling your

service. The next time you're in a staff meeting, look at the faces around you and ask, "Which of these people is in charge of sales?" If you can't name the person responsible for selling, I've got bad news: It's you.

Every gym owner wears about 12 to 15 different hats. But three "meta" roles really make any business run:

- Finance
- Operations
- Sales

Finance is the territory of your accountant and whoever sets your goals and targets. Operations is how you coach your clients and clean your bathrooms. Sales is how you keep your business alive.

"Sales" includes offering your services to past clients, current clients, and future clients. It means offering your service to your clients' families, workmates, and friends. In other words, sales means helping people with one degree of separation or less. Gino Wickman wrote about these "three chairs" (which I call meta roles) in his books "Traction" and "Get a Grip." We'll talk about operations and finance in the second part of this book, but here's what you need to know right now: If selling is "everyone's job," it's no one's job.

Someone in your business has to be or become good at sales. Now, that doesn't mean the person has to be dishonest or slimy or greedy. It means the person must do the client the ultimate service: The salesperson must discover how they can help the client first, then help most, and then help forever.

I certainly want someone to tell me what to do most of the time. I don't want to figure out how to change the oil on my new truck. I don't want to repair the roof on my cottage or

change the chain on my chainsaw. I want someone to say, “I’ll solve this problem for you. What’s your credit card number?”

If you own a gym, your clients don’t want to figure out their nutrition independently (they’ve probably already failed at it). They don’t want to figure out how to avoid an injury. They don’t want to figure out how to do a power clean correctly or climb a rope. They want you to solve the problem. That, my friend, is selling. And it’s your job.

You need to get comfortable at sales. But eventually, you need to train someone else to be in charge of selling. The move from Farmer Phase to Tinker Phase depends on your ability to pass the sales hat to someone else on your team. Until you hire someone else to make sales, it’s your job. But most business owners don’t hire salespeople; most gym owners hire coaches, just as butchers hire assistant butchers and chefs hire prep cooks. Instead of hiring to fill the holes in their business, they try to duplicate themselves. Then they’re trapped in Farmer Phase forever because no one else can sell clients—so their business can’t grow without their constant presence.

Having a salesperson is a critical step toward wealth. If you’re the only one who can sell your service, you’ll always be tied to your appointment calendar, and your gym will never have a secure foundation. Here’s how to find, train, compensate and manage a salesperson in your gym.

Finding and Hiring a Salesperson

You need someone to sell. In the Founder Phase, that’s you. Maybe in the Farmer Phase, you hire staff to fulfill your operations but keep the sales process to yourself. I get it:

- No one else is as passionate as you.
- No one else understands every facet of your service.

- No one else should see the money.

Right?

All those statements are false. And if you believe any of them, you're probably not great at sales. Here's how to find, hire, train, and compensate a salesperson at any stage of your business.

The type of salesperson you hire—and the compensation you offer—will depend on which phase of entrepreneurship you're in.

Founder Phase = You're It!

When you launch your gym, you have to do everything. The key is to keep time available for sales and to master the mindset of helping first.

You need lots of reps. And opening a gym is a great way to get them: You'll attract people in your area who are already interested just because you're new. We call these "warm leads," and your conversion rate should be very close to 100 percent.

Keys:

- Practice your sales process (like a "No Sweat Intro") on friends and family. You can't afford to blow it on a real customer.
- Doing a free demo or trial isn't selling. Selling is accepting payment.
- Ask for referrals. Don't just wait and hope they magically happen.

Compensation: You eat what you kill.

Farmer Phase = Train Others

As your team expands, you should have more time for sales and marketing.

We call this process, “climbing the Value Ladder.” And at the top of that ladder are the sales and marketing roles.

That means, as the salesperson, you should be the one with enough time to talk with potential new clients. It means you should educate yourself on sales the way you educate yourself on programming, practice role-playing the way you practice the snatch, and spend 20 minutes on sales for every one minute you spend on marketing.

But your coaches will also need to learn how to sell because they’ll be growing their incomes under your brand.

They’ll need to sell personal training, nutrition, or whatever their specialty programs might be. So training them to sell will also help them increase their incomes.

Those who come to us for mentorship track their sales and marketing metrics on the Two-Brain Dashboard.

Even if you don’t have access to this tool, you should track your Set Rate, Show Rate, and Close Rate for your leads. Then work to improve your Close Rate before you spend money on advertising.

Two-Brain Business Dashboard

Sales Metrics

	November 2019	December 2019	January 2020
Total Leads	-	69	45
Total NSIs Set	-	30 (43.48%)	20 (44.44%)
Total NSIs Showed	-	16 (53.33%)	12 (60.00%)
Total NSIs Closed	-	10 (62.50%)	6 (50.00%)
Total Close Rate	-	10 (62.50%)	6 (50.00%)
Total Ad Spend	-	90.00	130.00
Total Front End Revenue	-	3,300.00	1,800.00
Average Front End Offer	-	300.00	300.00

If your leads are organic, nearly every intro appointment will result in a sign-up. Your close rate should be close to 100

percent. So other coaches should run these appointments to get new clients for personal training. Their sales reward is a new client. Your greatest aid to them will be more sales training. But keep a close eye on the Close Rate: If it dips below 80 percent, either your staff needs help, or your leads aren't warm anymore.

If you're using paid lead generation (like Facebook ads), you might need to pay your coaches to take appointments. Start by providing them with a solid sales training foundation. Then role-play with them a lot. Then pay them a nominal rate to take intros if your schedule is filled.

Keep a very close eye on everyone's close rate: You can't afford to pour good leads into leaky buckets. Over time, optimize your process to guide the most paid leads toward the staff person with the highest close rate. If your close rate is highest among the staff, double staff training and practice. You must replace yourself in this role eventually, or your gym will never be independent of your time.

Keys:

- Time spent role-playing means you won't make expensive mistakes on real clients.
- Learn the Prescriptive Model and read my book "Help First."
- Track your metrics (and your staff's metrics!).

Compensation: You don't get paid directly for selling. But as your average revenue per member (ARM) and length of engagement (LEG) increase, you'll earn more through profit.

Tinker Phase = Replace Yourself Completely

Tinkers must build freedom of income and time. And if you're the only one in the company who can sell, you don't have the

time to move on to the next stage. Worse, your company can't grow without your constant hand on the pump. When your gym reaches this size, it might be worth bringing in a specialist. Good salespeople should more than pay for themselves.

Keys:

- Your sales team must report their KPIs every month.
- Your sales team should work very closely with your marketing plan.
- Your sales team should be proactive: Instead of blaming “seasonality” or poor ad targeting, they should seek opportunities to increase sales using the Affinity Marketing plan.

Compensation: Up to \$30 per closed sale or a commission (maybe).

Should You Pay a Sales Commission?

Short answer: you can pay your staff a sales commission, but you don't need to. The question you must answer is this: “What difference will an incentive make?” In other words, “What will my sales person do differently with an added incentive to do so?”

In a product business, like car sales, commissions are the norm. When a potential customer shows up on the lot, the salesman has to take them from interest to purchase, usually a long journey, requiring knowledge, skill and experience. Great salespeople make a much better living than poor salespeople, who usually go broke. Commissions are paid because very few clients are already “sold” on the product when they arrive on the lot. That means it takes a lot of practice to become a good car salesperson, and even the best experience far more misses than hits. This is the same rule of real estate and other large

ticket items, where incentives can keep staff interested while mitigating the owner's training risk. Salespeople are generally paid a minimal salary with an attractive bonus and either quit fast or succeed. The only way for them to make a living is to achieve the sales bonuses.

In the microgym business, though, things are different. No one who books an appointment is "just browsing." While car buyers have usually compared features between at least two models, gym clients are looking for The Answer. That means a potential client in a gym is far more likely to sign up, and conversion rate is determined more by the gym's sales process than by an individual salesperson's skill. Anyone who can listen and prescribe should close well over 70 percent of all booked appointments, compared to less than 10 percent of car sales.

And most salespeople in gyms also do other tasks. While car salespeople must eat what they kill, most microgym salespeople are also professional coaches or trainers. They are trusted authorities first. And they're probably paid whether or not the client signs up anyway; their only potential risk is time, and many gym owners pay them for their sales time anyway. (I don't—their "commission" is a new client.)

My suggestion: work with your sales staff to raise their close rate to 70 percent or above. When you approach the close rates of the best gyms in the world, tinker with your plan to try and do even better. But beware: if your sales staff improve conversions by 10 percent in exchange for a commission, I'd ask why they weren't doing their best work in the first place.

Thief Phase = Be too Busy to Grab Coffee

When you're focused on giving money away, you shouldn't have time for sales.

Here's an example: I regularly get requests on LinkedIn from software companies. They want to talk about partnerships, so I send them to our Partnership Coordinator. Sometimes they don't like the answer they hear from him (we say "no" to most partners because they don't meet the Two-Brain standard for partnership). So they come back to me and say this: "If I could just get 30 minutes to show you the platform, you'd love it."

But the best possible outcome of that 30 minutes—for them—is that I say, "OK, let me get involved and override my Partnership Coordinator." That's a horrible outcome for him and an awful outcome for me (because I'll be back doing his job again).

When gym owners write me back after reading a love letter, it makes my day. But if they want to get more information about mentorship, I send them to my sales department—because I don't want to waste their time. They shouldn't have to tell their story twice. They should just get on the right path now.

I also get requests from locals who want to talk about their fitness, so I send them to our gym sales department. If I grab a coffee with them, I take 30 minutes of their time and then send them to the gym to repeat the process anyway. Why not get them started a day sooner?

If you want to move forward as an entrepreneur, your business must run itself. That means completely replacing yourself in all roles, including operations and growth. Who sells in your business? Give them the training to succeed, especially if it's you.

The Secret Sales Script

The potential client is sitting in front of you. You've done some uncomfortable work to get the person here. You've asked a

client how you can help his or her friends. Or you've been sending texts and emails and double dialing to urge a person to show up for an appointment. Or maybe you've spent \$100 on Facebook ads just to get a good lead. Whatever the situation, there's a lot on the line. Now, what do you say?

That depends on the client. As you're about to read, no secret sales script, no memorized lines and no "gotcha!" close will solve all your problems. The best way to sell anything is this:

- Make someone comfortable.
- Ask what the person wants to achieve. Get a clear picture of his or her vision of success.
- Using your expertise, show a clear path to success.
- If you can, give the person the first step right away.
- State the price.
- Ask how the person would like to pay.

We teach this in a "tree" format: If the person gives X objection, ask Y question next, etc. But the core of a good sales process is care: If you care about the person, you'll be curious enough to ask the next question. The process should feel normal, not rehearsed. So the real secret to selling better isn't a script: It's reps.

The Real Game-Changer: Practice

In fall 2019, we tracked sales conversions in Two-Brain gyms. A few dozen did a "specialist" call with one of our mentors to focus solely on sales. And while every call showed a good return for a month, conversions actually dipped back to baseline after two or three months.

But why? The gym owners had the knowledge forever; they didn't magically forget the questions to ask or how often to follow up with their leads. I was happy to see the short-term

improvements in conversions, but I wasn't satisfied. So I started digging deeper. What I found was that it's not really the script that matters in the long term. It's not the knowledge of how to overcome objections. It's the reps.

When we assigned Two-Brain gym owners more reps at selling, their conversion numbers came up—and stayed up. If they stopped practicing, their conversion numbers dipped again. Like a tennis backhand, if you don't practice your sales process, you get rusty. To be effective at sales, you have to be comfortable selling.

Practice—Then Practice Some More

In 2008, when every client who came in the door at Catalyst represented money I desperately needed, I had a pretty low close rate—maybe 70 percent. Keep in mind: these folks were sold on my service *until* I talked to them. I was actually the barrier to entry for about 30 percent of them! Facepalm.

By 2018, I was so comfortable with selling that many new clients would say something like this while handing me a credit card: “Thank you! I was worried this was going to be a sales pitch!” The sales process felt entirely natural for me by then because I'd done it 1,000 times. The fastest way to increase your conversion rate is to practice doing conversions, and that means getting in your reps.

We now prescribe practice reps to gym owners in our mentorship programs. We make it fun—we have a scenario card deck so people can “play” at sales. They draw a card from our deck and then play through that scenario with their spouse, staff member, or dog. And they get better every time.

We also make gym owners practice sales before teaching them how to run ads because we don't want them to waste money.

We don't let gym owners run ads until they've practiced their sales process dozens of times. Just like there's no secret program or diet, there's no hidden sales script—only reps.

Getting Reps at Sales

When I visited Westside Barbell, an invitation-only training lab in Columbus, Ohio, a few years ago, I was surprised (and a bit disappointed) to find all the lifters doing sets of 50 reps instead of hitting one-rep maxes all the time.

After waiting around in the parking lot for over an hour, I wanted to see bleeding noses and bulging eyeballs and 900 pounds on a bar. That's the reputation these world-class powerlifters have built for themselves. But Louie Simmons, the founder of Westside Barbell, had everyone doing high-rep work that day. He told me he wanted to help his elite lifters “hardwire” the movements. I was familiar with the kid's concept, but this was new: Even the pros have to get a lot of necessary reps to progress. I thought of Louie again when a friend shared this statement with me: “Sales is a perishable skill.”

Joe Marcoux was my first sales coach. He's been in the fitness industry for a long time and has sold millions of dollars in products and services. He's the founder of the “Army of One” sales training. He helped me with this section of the book. We're going to give you scripts, templates and scenarios. But you're going to put in the practice reps.

Sell to Your Dog First

We've been tracking data on lead generation, appointments and conversions for over a year. Your ability to get people to join your gym comes down to one thing: your ability to get interested people to sign up. This is really the narrowest point in

the funnel. Lead generation, lead nurture and ads—that’s actually the easy stuff. The hard part is learning to say, “Would you like to join us?” And that’s where reps really make the difference.

Don’t get your reps on a live audience. It’s too expensive. Instead, practice on your coaches. Or your spouse. Or your dog. Or the mirror. But you must practice.

These are five sales scenarios from our Two-Brain Scenario Deck. I want you to practice the scenarios below five times each. If you’re shy, practice in front of a mirror—top salespeople do it all the time.

Practice Reps: Sales

1. A new client wants to lose 30 lb. in the next six months. Present your plan, including nutrition coaching and exercise. Tell the client the price and ask if he or she is ready to buy.
2. A new client says, “I know what I need to do. I just need you to hold me accountable for doing it.” Lay out your accountability plan.
3. A new client says he or she wants to sign up but has to check with a spouse. Help the client take action now.
4. A new client says he or she has to “think it over.” What do you say?
5. A client says, “That’s a lot more money than I thought I’d pay for a gym membership.” What do you say?

It doesn’t matter if these practice sessions go well. It doesn’t matter if you feel like an idiot while you’re practicing. What matters is that you start learning how to help people get the

results they want. And if you can't convince them to join your caring circle of fitness, they'll waste their money somewhere else. It's your duty to be good at this. Someday, you might hire staff to do this for you. But for now, it's up to you: Save them.

Getting Reps With Your Current Clients

In the last section, I asked you to practice your intake process (we call it the No Sweat Intro). But the sales process never ends: every day, you have to sell your current clients on fulfilling their prescription with you.

So now we're going to practice Goal Review Sessions.

Every quarter, you should meet with each client and review their progress. Then you should change their prescription if necessary. That's what coaching means.

Our data shows that the best gyms do this regularly. A regular system of feedback analysis and new prescriptions is the separator that microgyms need. More and more, the Prescriptive Model is becoming our actual job; the delivery of nutrition and exercise programs is just how we implement our prescriptions.

I want you to practice 10 Goal Review Sessions.

Practice on your mirror, on your dog or—best idea—on your coaches. Talk about their goals, measure their progress, and make a new prescription for the next three months. Then book their next Goal Review Sessions before they leave!

Start the Goal Review meetings with Bright Spots: What is the client most proud of achieving?

Follow with this question: “Are you happy with the progress

you've made so far?"

If they say yes: Move to the Affinity Marketing process (we'll cover that in the Marketing section).

If they say no: Work on a new prescription.

Writing Prescriptions

Start with the goal: What exactly would the client like to attain?

Next, measure the starting point. It's essential to measure the thing the client wants to improve.

For example, doing a Movement Screen on someone who just wants to lose weight isn't going to convince the person you can solve their weight problem.

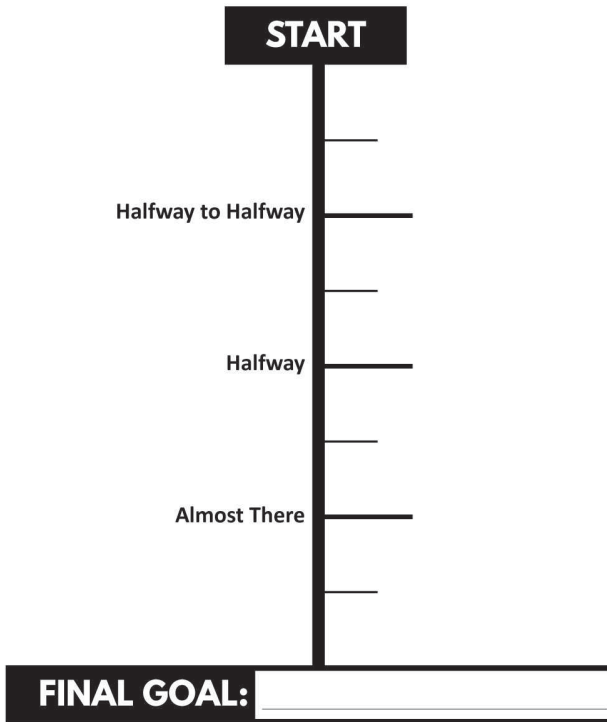
If a person wants to lose weight, measure his or her weight. If the person wants to improve their max deadlift, measure their max deadlift.

Now, break the goal down into smaller steps. What's the halfway point to the goal? What's halfway to halfway?

Show the client the larger plan using the template on the next page.

Identify his or her three-month goal and put it on the timeline.

GOAL TIMELINE



What will it take to achieve the first goal? That's your next prescription. Write the prescription on your prescription pad (we give you a template in the Growth Stage of mentorship, but you can make your own). Here's what comes next:

- Ask the client if he or she agrees with your prescription.
- Present the price.
- Collect the money.
- Schedule the next appointment.
- Set up a tracking process. Will you use an app? A spreadsheet? Pen and paper?
- Notify coaches to watch for a client's Bright Spots. Each one will reinforce the idea that the client has made the

right decision—a decision that will result in an accomplished goal.

- Repeat the process every quarter.

As you practice, this process will become a natural extension of your coaching business. As you make it the standard for your clients, it will become your coaching business's core. It's a great idea to become very good at it.

The Real Barrier to Entry

“Hi, tell me about your gym!” she said. She had just walked in off the street—but our street didn't have foot traffic. She'd driven across town, found us despite the poor signage and boldly walked up to the front desk. I was desperate for new clients. But still, I had no idea what to say.

“Well, we're a CrossFit gym,” I started. “Have you heard of CrossFit?”

“Just heard of it. How does it work?” she asked.

I went into the description of “constantly varied functional movement” and so on. She looked at her watch. I was losing her.

“Sorry,” I said. “I'm the world's worst salesman.”

“Well, sell me.” She replied. “I don't have much time.”

I told her about classes and gave her the rates. Miraculously, she signed up.

I was surprised: My usual “sales pitch” took almost an hour and didn't always result in new memberships. My “short form” bullets of price and schedule were actually successful. It was my

first inkling that maybe my standard “sales pitch” wasn’t the best. That meant that I was a barrier to new clients signing up.

Looking back over the years and data now, I can see that my fear of “sales” might have been the most significant barrier to entry to my gym. I thought I had to convince skeptics with facts and data. What I really had to do was say, “Here’s how I can solve your problem for you.”

Selling gets a bad reputation because it’s a tool often used for evil. When we think of a “salesperson,” we sometimes think of someone dishonest: a man or woman who wants to trick us. We think of a one-sided deal: a lemon that’s going to break down as soon as we leave the parking lot. We think of a character we don’t want to play: the poorly dressed shyster who will leave town as soon as we write the check.

But if you’re trying to convince someone to join your church, you’re selling belief. If you’re trying to convince someone to stop doing drugs, you’re selling sobriety. If you’re trying to change someone’s life through diet and exercise, you have to sell fitness. The uncomfortable truth in business is this: If you can’t sell them, you can’t save them.

All that money spent on Facebook advertising? It’s a total waste if you can’t convince them to sign up. Only Zuckerberg benefits. All that time spent researching advertising, listening to podcasts and even going to gymnastics clinics? A waste of time if you can’t get someone to pay you for your service. Sorry. All the world’s technical expertise won’t help your business if they don’t pay you for it.

Maybe you should get good at this part.

Maybe you should spend one-tenth as much time learning how to convince people as you do learning how to teach the clean.

Maybe you should get more reps in growing your business and fewer reps in the butterfly pull-up (or arguing about the butterfly pull-up in Facebook groups).

Maybe you should spend twice as much time selling as you do advertising (or, as we teach, 20 times).

Maybe you didn't think about this when you opened a gym. It's time to think about it now. Because the stuff that makes you a good coach doesn't really make you a good business owner. If you're not training your sales process, the biggest barrier to entry in your gym is you.

Increasing Your Value

Now that you know how to sell, let's talk about how to work with high-value clients. Value and sales go hand in hand; you can't deliver one without the other. Increasing your value starts with the question: What do they really need?

We sell fitness. Fitness is achieved through the optimization of exercise and nutrition. Fitness cannot be optimized without the inclusion of both. That's why the best gyms in the world sell exercise and nutrition together. Though this combo is still a new concept for many gym owners, personal trainers have successfully sold nutrition and training packages—or “hybrid” packages—together because a personal trainer's name is the brand. They know clients won't get results without nutrition coaching.

Somewhere along the line, gym owners got the idea that they were selling exercise classes or private workouts. I certainly fell into that camp. But mature owners understand that they're really selling results, so they begin to sell nutrition coaching with their exercise coaching.

Nutrition Programs in Your Gym

If I were starting a coaching business from scratch, I'd start with a nutrition coaching business. Nutrition coaching scales quickly; it doesn't require space or equipment or other expenses, and directly leads to exercise programs.

I often joke that if I'd known in 1996 what I know now, I'd open a nutrition coaching office with a squat rack in the back parking lot. But if you're just adding a nutrition component to your coaching practice (or even thinking about it), don't worry. It's not too late. I added nutrition coaching to my gym years after opening, and so can you.

In this section, I'll cover the:

- Differences between selling short-term nutrition “challenges” and selling ongoing nutrition coaching.
- How to sell “hybrid” packages, including exercise and nutrition (and why hybrids are the “new normal”).
- How to get people to follow your plan.
- How to get started, what to charge and what to offer.

Why Not Just Sell More Exercise?

Every fitness coach sells exercise. If I look into your gym from the outside, it's hard to tell the difference between your fitness class and that cheap one at the YMCA. Sorry, but it's true: Your “free foundations” and “group on-ramp” courses are practically identical to the free versions offered by someone else. That means they're subject to downward price pressure.

You really sell results. You provide coaching to get people results fast and with the least effort required. More exercise isn't enough to get those results. It's not what your clients need.

More and more clients seek our services for weight loss. In the early days of personal training (25 years ago), only elite athletes and Hollywood stars had “personal trainers.” When I started my career, having a personal trainer was still a status symbol. But as HIIT group classes become a commodity, your clients need 1:1 attention. They need daily accountability. They need access to a coach more than they need three workouts a week.

You can still tailor a client’s experience if his or her membership is only for group classes. Following the Prescriptive Model, you can review a client’s goals and shift the client journey every quarter. But that journey has to include updates to a nutrition program. Clients won’t figure this out for themselves. And while they can find workouts for free on any app now, they can’t find coaching.

Nutrition Scales Faster

Nutrition coaching doesn’t require much space. It doesn’t require any equipment. And because most nutrition coaching is about accountability, you don’t need a degree to help people fix their diets. (In many countries and some U.S. states, you do require a licensed registered dietitian to prescribe a diet. But you can work with an RD to do it—or, even better, teach nutrition within the boundaries of the law with the Two-Brain Coaching program.)

A nutrition practice can scale up quickly: Most gyms in Two-Brain immediately add \$500-\$2,000 in recurring monthly nutrition coaching revenue just by offering the service to current clients. And unlike adding 10 new exercise clients, these clients don’t require more space or equipment.

Finally, nutrition coaching has a high effective hourly rate for coaches because they can serve many nutrition clients in the

same hour. While the coach should expect to answer questions at 9 p.m., he or she doesn't have to stand in the gym and watch a client perform reps.

Adding a nutrition program to your gym is great for revenue. It's a good potential position for a coach. And, most importantly, it helps your clients reach their goals.

Instead of pushing more heads into your group classes, adding a nutrition component should be the top priority of every gym owner. Then, when you start marketing hard later, you'll have more to sell—and more ways to help.

Hybrid Memberships Are the New Normal

Whenever we post a picture of a gym owner selling a \$600-per-month membership on social media, we get comments like this: “I'd never pay that for a gym membership!” and “There's no way that's true!” It is true, of course. But it's concerning that gym owners doubt their own value so much. The key to selling high-priced memberships is to know what your clients actually want and match your service to them.

And that's where “hybrid memberships,” a combination of personal nutrition coaching and fitness coaching, come into play. There are many ways to sell hybrid memberships:

- Personal nutrition and group exercise coaching.
- Group nutrition and group exercise coaching.
- Personal nutrition and personal exercise coaching.
- Group nutrition and personal exercise coaching.
- Nutrition “challenges” and group coaching.

Most gyms entering Two-Brain's mentorship program are selling exercise but not nutrition coaching. If you're just adding a nutrition component to your coaching practice, that's fine.

Below, I'll tell you what to charge for nutrition coaching, how to launch the program, how to determine who should deliver it and how to package it to create “hybrid” memberships.

What to Charge for Nutrition Coaching

Start by asking, “What do my clients need to adhere to a nutrition program?” The answer will be different from coach to coach, but remember this: A diet is never enough. Your client won't just read a diet book and follow the plan. You might; they won't. You need some kind of accountability in the program. That accountability could come through daily texts (“Send me a picture of your meal”), weekly check-ins, or bi-monthly appointments. That part's up to you (we help you build your system, with pricing, in our mentorship program).

In general, charge as much for a nutrition session as you would for a personal training appointment. Two half-hour nutrition check-ins should cost as much as two half-hour PT sessions.

Then add the time necessary to provide accountability. Many big chain gyms have an “accountability” option, where the coach checks in on a client list daily. Full disclosure, I have a nutrition coach, and my nutrition coach has a nutrition coach. We both know what to eat. I've been giving nutrition advice for over 20 years. She makes a living giving nutrition plans and advice. But we both need someone else looking over our shoulder—and we pay for it.

For example, your gym's “wellness” program might include two 20-minute check-in sessions over video chat or in person. Then, for clients who struggle with accountability, you might have a text-in option available for \$50 per month. I actually pay far more (around \$150 per month) because accountability will get me results far faster, and \$50 per month isn't enough to take things seriously. What your clients need might change over

time. Adopting the Prescriptive Model of client Goal Review Sessions will help you adjust to their changing needs.

A final note here: You can't just "give nutrition advice" for free. People won't take action. Real nutrition coaching requires as much time and planning as exercise coaching does.

How to Launch a Nutrition Program

Start with a 28-day or 30-day nutrition challenge for your clients.

Get them excited by selling a program with a clear beginning and endpoint. Then add ongoing nutrition coaching at the end of the challenge. Charge for the challenge to establish proper buying behavior and anchor your prices.

Who Should Deliver Your Nutrition Program?

While anyone with a passion for nutrition can learn to be a good nutrition coach, you have to be careful about what you prescribe. First, a good nutrition coach should understand how to change human behavior. Nutrition isn't sexy. It's easier to get someone to show up for a challenging workout than to get them to prepare meals for the week.

Second, some states actually require you to be a registered dietitian to tell people what to eat. There are all kinds of debate and litigation over these laws, but you should know your limits.

If you live in an area where you can't deliver nutrition coaching legally, you just need to partner with a registered dietitian to do so. And when you do, you can set up an agreement to provide exercise to the RD's clients, too.

You can also work with a program like Two-Brain Coaching to

have your nutrition coaches trained and mentored by registered dietitians. That's what I do at my gym!

How to Package Nutrition With Exercise

After you've determined your rates, add them together and put them into a printed pricing binder. Your packages might change depending on where a client is in their journey: New clients might need more accountability, knowledge, or both. The important thing is that you don't offer a discount for purchasing both services.

We've proven it in hundreds of gyms: Discounts don't help you sell more hybrid packages. They don't make people feel better about purchasing. Discounts only satisfy the gym owner's personal bias about money. Because most of your clients earn more than you do, discounting your service just shows you don't value it as much as they do.

Present your options at your first meeting after you make a prescription. Follow this format:

1. Goals
2. Measurement
3. Prescription
4. Package
5. Price
6. Purchase

After you've sold one "hybrid" package, you'll start to look at your other services differently. Gym owners tell me all the time that they now consider their exercise-only option to be an incomplete offering—an "a la carte" option for people who can't afford their real service. And they now consider their group memberships to be the "budget option" for people who can only afford the bare minimum, even though it was their

premium option less than a year ago!

As always, our value is determined by the change we make. Hybrid options, with nutrition and exercise coaching, create the most significant changes possible for our clients and the most value for our businesses. Soon, we won't call them "hybrids"—we'll just call them normal.

Clarity: The Greatest Gift You Can Give

All of your clients want you to be reliable: to do things the same way every time. They want you to be predictable: to apply yourself fairly to everyone. And they want you to be clear: to help them gain direction in their lives through your expertise. Here's how to do it.

Clarity With Your Clients

You need to provide the same excellent value to everyone. That means your operations must always be excellent—for everyone. We'll cover that in the second part of this book. That means your prices should be the same for everyone at each service level. No discounts, no special deals, no trades, no "I'll tickle you there if you kiss me here" deals. That means clear and even application of your policies, rules, and standards.

If your policy says "two weeks' notice for cancellations," you have to uphold that rule every time. Otherwise, you have no rule.

If your policy says, "class starts at 7 a.m.," you have to start at 7 a.m. Not 7:02. Because if you don't start at 7 a.m. every time, you don't start at 7 a.m.

If your standard is "squat below parallel," you have to squat below parallel every time for the rep to count. Every time. If

one rep is a maybe, then every rep is a maybe.

If a client is negatively affecting the experience of another client, he or she has to go. If you don't have clear values, you don't have values.

Clarity With Your Audience

Are you a coach, or are you a “functional movement specialist”? Everyone knows what the first thing is. No one knows what the last thing is.

Maybe you're trying to say, “I'm different from other fitness coaches!” And maybe other fitness coaches can tell the difference between a Core Vibration Expert and an Animal Utilitarian Movement Expert (Level III Certified). But other fitness coaches are not your audience.

Your audience needs to know, “that coach can help me lose weight.” Your audience doesn't need to figure out what your logo means, what your name means, what your certification means, what your philosophy means, what your religion means. When they look at you, do they see themselves? What they see (or hear) is your brand. Clearer brands are better.

Pricing: Be Expensive or Be Free

The most successful service providers online follow this maxim: Be expensive or be free. You can't compete with \$19 per month. Don't try to.

The fitness industry is being driven by technology, more and more. This creates new opportunities to reach mass audiences really quickly. In the tech world, they call this “scaling up”: building a product and then selling it to as many people as possible. This usually means the incremental production cost

goes to zero after the product is made (the first one costs a billion, but the second one costs nothing). Volume is the only play when it comes to product sales now.

That's not you. You don't sell a product. You sell a service. Your attention is finite. No one is making more hours or more focus or more care. That means coaches can't compete on volume. They can only compete on attention and care.

Their Plan

Yes, there are outliers: Some of the fit-famous are selling programming and skipping ropes for cheap and getting a broad audience to pay for it. But that's not your best move for three reasons:

1. They're selling a commodity. That means downward price pressure. A product that costs \$49 this year will cost \$19 next year.
2. Their stars are fading by the day—their reach declines when a new fit-famous person arrives on the scene—usually within a few months.
3. You don't have the audience to start with.

So what's your play? Be free or be expensive. Don't be in the middle. Don't be cheap. That means you give your knowledge out for free, but your coaching is expensive.

Your Plan

“On the one hand, information wants to be expensive because it's so valuable. The right information in the right place just changes your life,” Stewart Brand told Steve Wozniak at the first Hacker's Conference in 1984. He continued: “On the other hand, information wants to be free because the cost of getting it out is getting lower and lower all the time. So you have these

two fighting against each other.”

Several decades later, and Brand’s point has only become more true. You can build trust in your audience without asking for anything in return. It means you can be generous. And it means you can ultimately earn what you deserve. I’ll give you two examples from the fitness industry: CrossFit.com and TwoBrainBusiness.com.

CrossFit: CrossFit.com has offered a free workout of the day (WOD) every single day since 2003. All the information you need to get fit and healthy is right there on the site. Want to become a coach? That’s the most expensive certification on the market. Want to be coached by a CrossFit-certified coach? That’s expensive, too. CrossFit doesn’t sell the information; information is the tool. An informed audience is an advantage.

TwoBrainBusiness.com: Two-Brain Business has offered free information every single day since 2013, with a huge amount on our website. It’s all the information (and some painful stories) you need to build your fitness business. Want mentorship? We’re the most expensive (at least I hope we are). We don’t sell information; information is our tool. An informed audience makes our entire industry better.

There are a few more things I want you to keep in mind when you think about “free” and “expensive.”

Notes on “Free”:

- Your free information should still be valuable.
- Your free information should still be accurate.
- A bait-and-switch marketing promise doesn’t build value; it erodes value.
- Your free content doesn’t have to be perfect. But it has to be consistent.

Notes on “Expensive”:

- The value of your attention is what’s important, not the value of your time.
- The more 1:1 attention you provide, the more expensive your service should be. That’s true even if you offer more 1:1 attention online but spend less time coaching overall.
- In a physical gym, that means group training is your discount option.
- Before you can charge what you’re worth, you have to be worth it.

The key to great marketing is to find services for your audience, not an audience for your service. You must identify, cultivate and nurture your BEST clients for a long time, and let them anchor your value.

Before they can become your best clients, though, they must have a high affinity for you. They must feel as if they know you; they must like you, and most importantly, they must trust you. So how do you build trust and familiarity with an invisible audience of strangers?

You start a conversation from your platform of authority. You tell them great stories about yourself and your clients and your mission. You use email, and a blog, and YouTube, and the social media amplifiers they follow. Collectively, this is called content marketing, and it’s the best way to build trust with strangers.

GET MORE LEADS

Content Marketing: Your Foundation

I learned content marketing from Testosterone.net and its editors. No one had heard of Dave Tate or John Berardi before they started writing free articles on Testosterone.net (now T-Nation).

So I followed their lead and started publishing every day on the Catalyst Fitness site in 2005—and then a member told me, “You’re just like Seth Godin.” I started reading Seth and writing even more.

In 2009, I started a little blog about the gym business. In 2012, I was hired by CrossFit Media and invited to their Media Summit. The ethos of CrossFit Media, as explained by Tony Budding: “We publish every day.”

At the same meeting, Greg Glassman, the founder of CrossFit Inc., said, “Talk to the smart kids and they’ll tell everyone else.” I think the same thing about the caring kids. If we can help gym owners leverage their care better—and for decades instead of years—then we can have a meaningful impact on the world.

That doesn’t mean we sell mentorship cheaply or give it away for free. It means we provide information for free. It means we share enough “secrets” to actually help gym owners thrive. Many of those gym owners then use the profit from our free material to pay for mentorship—which is our real service. That’s our content marketing model.

The rule of content marketing is this: don’t sell anything cheap. Sell an expensive service, but give your knowledge away for free.

Being Expensive: How to Charge What You're Worth

Gym owners are stuck. They need more money to live a healthy lifestyle, run a sustainable gym and keep their members healthy for the next 30 years. On the other hand, they're worried about what clients will pay for their service. This fear is usually unfounded. But if a coach under-prices her value, she won't be teaching the air squat for long.

Here's a reminder on how to marry value with your service, and charge what you're worth.

1. Be worth it.

This sounds a bit backhanded, but the top reason many coaches can't charge more is that they're not worth more. Your value to a client doesn't come from what you know; it comes from how you make him or her feel.

Give every client 1:1 attention at every appointment and every class. You're coaching a room full of individuals, not one entity with multiple parts.

Review their goals in person several times per year. If you don't know where they're going, you can't lead them anywhere.

Look like a professional. Dress better than your clients are dressed. Wear a "staff" shirt. Don't sip coffee while coaching. Run to fetch the equipment. Smile, whether you feel like it or not.

Give them your undivided attention. Stay off your phone. Don't carry on a conversation with others while coaching a 1:1 client. Don't coach "the room," but each person within the room.

Establish your expertise—but don't barf all over them. Give your clients a taste of future knowledge in every session. Use one or two technical terms every class—no more, but no less.

Teach them to know more than any other coach in town, and they won't have a reason to leave. Call them on their birthday, and they'll have one more reason to stay.

2. Don't give discounts or have sales.

Price fluctuations erode trust and encourage price shopping. Consistency is more important than anything else. Your current clients are more important than any future clients. Everyone deserves the same excellent service; each person should pay the same rate for it.

3. Base your rate off your value, not your competition.

After over 2,000 one-on-one gym evaluations, I can promise you this: most fitness coaches have no idea how to price their memberships. Why place your business on the same shaky foundation by copying? Or, worse, by pricing yourself cheaper? The Two-Brain family is full of stories of gyms that are the most expensive in their area...but almost none started that way.

4. Know who your clients are.

You are probably not your best client. Your best clients come from the top 10 percent of professionals in your area. They make more than you do but have different constraints (schedule, family, stress). Your best clients have different goals (fat loss, stress reduction, "turn off my brain") than you do. The "average" household income in your area is irrelevant. What do your best clients want?

5. Stop projecting your own budget onto your clients.

They make more than you do (for now). They will pay more than you would (for now).

6. Know what establishes value and what erodes value.

Price anchors establish value. Classes starting on time establish value. Professional coaches establish value. Clear, attractive branding establishes value. A good website establishes value. Shiny equipment and floors establish value.

Dirty bathrooms erode value. No one looks for the gym with the cleanest bathrooms, but they'll quit the gym with the dirty toilets. The same goes for not answering the phone or returning emails. These aren't bonuses; they're foundations.

7. Set a limit.

The law of supply and demand applies to your business. You have limited supplies of attention, time and space. You can't take an infinite amount of clients. Know your limit. Don't chase infinity.

Build your prices, staff needs and purchases with that limit in mind. Recruit and reject clients and staff with that limit in mind, too. (150 is a great number to use in your calculations.)

8. Live up to it every second.

Clients' experiences are only as good as the last exposure. You're not married. You probably won't enforce the contract they signed (if you're still using contracts). They're not trapped. What you know doesn't matter. How you make them feel does. Fifteen minutes before an appointment or class, you're on stage. Put down the shaker bottle. Put your "coach" shirt on. Smile.

Sharing Knowledge: What Should You Do For Free?

Publishing content for free builds audience affinity. An informed audience is your best friend. The more they know about fitness and nutrition, the more likely they will choose you as a coach.

As I wrote earlier, your coaching should be expensive. But your information should be free because an informed audience is your best audience. Our media ethos at Catalyst (my gym) is this: “Teach our audience to know more than any of the other trainers in town.” The more my audience knows, the more likely they are to choose Catalyst.

Sharing Information

Almost every day, I get an email like this: “If you care so much, why are you still charging for your service during (insert crisis, pandemic, or a personal tale of woe)?”

Of course, the simple answer is that we’re not a charity—and your business shouldn’t be a charity either. But the deeper answer is that mentorship is more valuable than ever before.

Think about it: a successful gym owner who’s been in your shoes and can tell you how to avoid huge problems? A caring expert who can save you hundreds of thousands of dollars and many sleepless nights? Yeah, I’m not going to ask that mentor to work for free. The hard-won experience, backed by crazy expensive data, is most useful to the people who trade something to receive it.

But I will share our collective knowledge for free. I’ll share the data that cost me over \$1 million to collect and analyze. I’ll spend over \$20,000 per month on media we give away for free. I’ll do all that because knowledge helps everyone: A gym owner

who knows more than the other “gurus” is a good fit for Two-Brain.

How Much Is too Much?

All content producers ask themselves this question: “Am I giving too much away for free?” At least until they realize they’re not selling secrets. There are no secrets anymore.

Content paywalls and hidden knowledge are ineffective because your clients can always find the information somewhere else if they want to. The key is to provide the specific answer your audience needs. Give them the full map, and then sell your service as a guide.

I often give away templates and workbooks. You can see a mountain of them on TwoBrainBusiness.com. You don’t have to produce that much or give everything away if it makes you uncomfortable. But after almost a decade of giving information away for free every day, I promise you this: I’ve never given away too much.

Why You Can’t Provide Service for Free

Information should be free. Your coaching should be expensive.

It will be tempting to give away coaching for free. People will ask you for advice over text or ask to “get on a call” for more info. You have to know where to draw the line. And you draw the line wherever someone else is paying for the same service.

For example, sometimes people ask me to write their kids a program to make them better at hockey. That would be easy for me, but it wouldn’t be fair to my other clients who pay for coaching.

I've given scholarships to my gym before. And once, I even gave a scholarship to Two-Brain. You can guess what happened: people who don't trade value for value don't get value. Paying me a few thousand won't change my life, but if clients don't pay, I can't change their lives.

Nassim Taleb would call that “skin in the game.” My gym has waitresses who work an extra shift each week to pay for their memberships. They don't complain about value, and they don't ask for discounts.

That doesn't mean you can't help people, and it doesn't mean you can't be generous. You can do those things without destroying your platform. My online hero, Seth Godin, wrote this: “Gifts create connection and possibility, but not all gifts have a monetary value. In fact, some of the most important gifts involve time, effort and care instead.”

So we have daily blog posts. We have three podcasts per week. We spend over \$25,000 per month on creating materials and media that we just give away for free. You can get it all from my website. We also have the most valuable mentorship practice in the fitness industry.

The key to getting high-value clients, and keeping them for a long time, is communication. Start a conversation before you even meet and keep talking to them forever. Don't let their attention wander and never let them doubt your expertise or care.

But a valuable audience isn't defined as “the biggest amount of people paying attention” or “women aged 28-35 in Houston, Texas.” A valuable audience is measured by its affinity to your message. The best way to grow your audience is to get close—and stay close—to the daily challenges of your audience. And

the best way to start an audience is by focusing on one person at a time.

Building an Audience: Start With One

If you can't get your mom to believe, you won't convince your aunt. If you can't get your relatives to join your gym, you won't get your neighbor. If you can't get your neighbor, you won't get your town. And if you can't get your town, there's no sense in paying for ads.

When building an audience, you start with one person. Then get the second. Then get their friends. Then your neighbors. And only then do you start talking to strangers.

Work out From the Center

Where do your clients come from? The best clients come from a personal connection to you. The next best clients come from a personal relationship with your clients. That means you have to talk to people—real people, in person, one on one, before you do anything else. Eventually, you'll build an audience using the amazing tools available online. But you'll never be good at it until you learn how to do it in person first. The first stage of audience building is called Affinity Marketing.

An Affinity Marketing plan looks like a bull's-eye. Each ring or "loop" represents a new audience for your service. As we radiate out from the center, your audience size increases but its affinity decreases. You'll have to do more work to "warm-up" a potential client to get him or her to purchase, and then even more work to keep that client. The further from the center you get, the more education a prospective client will require before signing up for your service or buying anything from you.

In the Founder Phase, the personal connections used to grow a

business are the entrepreneur's own. The founder is at the center of the business's first Affinity Marketing bull's-eye. Later in this section, I will tell you how I built Two-Brain Business from a blog to the largest fitness mentorship practice on the planet. Yes, we used some paid ads and a little travel to do so. But the reason people stick around and pay attention is that we talk to one person at a time.

I don't write "sales letters" or "newsletters." I send love letters. And I tell everyone in my audience the same stuff I'd tell my mom if she wanted to open a gym (she doesn't).

I don't tell anyone how to run a physical therapy practice because I haven't done it. I tell everyone how to run a gym because I have one. And I've screwed it up in a lot of ways before making it run exactly the way I want it to.

I don't expect anyone to pay our mentorship team until after he or she has paid attention for a while. That's what audience building is: earning the attention of one person and keeping it.

When gym owners complain that their funnels aren't working or their new leads are "too cold" or their clients are "uncommitted," I know they need help building affinity with their audiences. First, they need information. Then they need a model to follow. Then they need reps.

In the next part of this section, I'll give you a model to follow and tell you how I used Affinity Marketing at my gym, Catalyst. As Seth Godin says, "Marketers make change happen." The world is our audience. Let's have a conversation.

Affinity Marketing

Affinity Marketing is the process of focusing on the part of your audience with the highest affinity first. Part of Affinity

Marketing is getting referrals from your best clients. But all of it is an active process—no waiting. And none of it is slimy or “sales-y.” I wrote the book “Help First” to provide clear examples of Affinity Marketing in practice.

We all know that the best new clients come from your current clients. When they refer their friends, you get someone:

- Who already knows your service.
- Who already knows your rate (and can probably afford it).
- Who already has friends in your gym.
- Who already knows what to expect.
- Who already knows, likes, and trusts you—all the stuff that’s very hard to buy, no matter how big your ad spend.

The problem is that waiting for your clients to refer their friends doesn’t work. It’s too passive. You can wait all year for the subject to come up in conversation. And your clients aren’t salespeople: They’re not going to convince their friends as well as you would.

Affinity Marketing takes the process from passive to active. You’re not asking for referrals; you’re asking how you can help. Done well, it won’t even feel like a sales pitch to your clients, just a caring offer to help from their coach. But you need practice. Here’s how to do it:

Let’s go back to the Goal Review from the Sales section. When you ask a client, “Are you happy with the progress you’ve made?” and the client says, “yes!” then your prescription should be “Let’s keep doing what we’ve been doing!” And then you turn to marketing.

Say: “That’s great. We’re so proud of you!”

Then pull out your camera and say, “What’s one thing you wish someone had told you about my gym before you joined?”

Next, ask, “Who’s been the most helpful to you on your journey? I’d like to send a thank-you card.”

Finally, turn to your Affinity Marketing cheat sheet.

Offer to help the client’s spouse, coworkers, or friends. Be very specific. Say, “I know you’ve mentioned that your wife is doing a Pilates class. How’s she enjoying it?” If she likes it, move on to the next opportunity. Say, “I know this is a stressful time of year at work for you. How are your coworkers managing the stress?” If you have a way to help, offer it.

For example: If the client says that his wife is enjoying the Pilates class but isn’t losing weight, ask about her nutrition. “Is she on a specific plan?” If she’s not, ask if the client will link you on email or bring her in at his next session to talk about nutrition. You can give her some tips, a free guide, a measurement... and then offer to help with your nutrition service. You’re solving her problem, not ambushing her with an “upsell,” though that meeting will often end with a purchase.

Or, to use a workplace example: “Susan, I know that all of the doctors at your clinic are super stressed out right now. I’d really like to help. What if I came in and gave a short talk on mindfulness or meditation? I have a five-minute exercise that REALLY helps me.”

I used this technique with onsite seminars, but online webinars to local audiences are just as viable. And, as a bonus, you’ll get their email addresses!

You can download a full Affinity Marketing guide, with dozens

of examples, from our site:

www.twobrainbusiness.com/handbook . I also wrote about Affinity Marketing in great detail in my book “Help First.”

Here’s a sample “cheat sheet” that you can use with your clients. Fill in the sheet before meeting with them. Use this as a thinking exercise. Then, when talking to the client, bring up the potential referral you’ve identified.



AFFINITY MARKETING CHEAT SHEET

Client	Family	Coworker	Friend	Hobby

Affinity Marketing isn’t complicated. It’s merely a matter of looking for ways to help, and then offering them. It’s taking a passive process (waiting for your clients to refer their friends) and making it an active one. It’s seeking opportunities to grow your audience by expanding your care, one degree of separation at a time.

Affinity Marketing—or any kind of marketing, really—makes

many gym owners feel uncomfortable. But marketing is really just building relationships. It's meeting new people and offering to help them. The question I ask myself is this: "Do I care enough to overcome my awkwardness and help this person?"

That's why most new clients at Catalyst come from the personal relationships I make, our coaches make, and our clients make. We didn't spend a dollar on Facebook ads in the last three years because we didn't have to.

The thing that stops most gym owners from succeeding isn't their knowledge: It's their fear. You overcome fear through practice. Go through Affinity Marketing at least 20 times in the next few days. Practice on your dog, your neighbor or your spouse, or in the mirror. Think of marketing as going fishing. Your 1:1 connections are how you catch fish with a rod and reel: you lay down a net with content marketing. That's how I build audience affinity in my city.

Back to Content Marketing (It's That Important)

Your current clients have a high affinity for your service. You increase affinity in strangers by publishing content. And I publish a LOT of content. 14,000 people read my emails every day. Not because they're forced to. Not because I trick them into it. Not because of a catchy title (if I use the word "throbbing," I could maybe get another 500 more readers—once).

My friends read my emails because they trust me to deliver relevant messages, with a "help first" ethos, from experience. They know, like, and trust me. You know that I sell mentorship. But you also know that I publish content every day for free. You already know that I'm not faking it, and you know that I do it because I care.

Two-Brain Business uses a content marketing strategy to grow. CrossFit uses a content marketing strategy to grow. Alexander Hamilton used a content marketing strategy to earn a spot in the U.S. government—he wrote letters to everyone, all the time. Every major religion follows a content marketing strategy, too: “Would you like to read our book?”

Content marketing is the foundation of all marketing because it creates the trust required to sell your idea. Seth Godin calls this permission marketing. He published his book of the same title just as spam emails were starting to become popular. And he was right: In the long term, it’s not the number of email addresses you gather that count but the trust you build. Seth says people pay attention before they pay you money. And online, attention is now more scarce than money.

In this section, I will give you the exact content marketing strategy we teach to gym owners—and it’s the same one we use ourselves.

These days, marketing is a conversation. It used to be a monologue. Marketing used to mean “advertising.” Now it means “trust-building.” You build trust by sharing your knowledge, your passion, and your vision. Together, those make your art. And the most beautiful part is that the more you publish for free, the more expensive your full service can be. Because value is rooted in trust.

I’m going to tell you how to start more conversations by publishing more content. Then I’ll tell you how to continue the conversation with your audience until people sign up.

I’m not going to tell you “the secret script” (because there isn’t one), or the super sales letter (those don’t work anymore) or how to place the perfect call to action at the end of your emails (because I don’t). But I will share, in full transparency, precisely

the plan that took me from a free blog in 2008 to a multimillion-dollar multinational platform that's the best in the world today. It's the same plan that built my gym.

How I Built an Audience for My Gym: Affinity + Content

I just gave you the step-by-step process of Affinity Marketing, which you must master before turning to paid lead generation. This process has been tested and refined over the last two decades of gym ownership and proven by thousands of gym owners worldwide. Of course, when I started Catalyst, there was no guide. So my approach wasn't optimized, but I still covered all the bases. Here's how I did it.

Starting around 2000, I realized that the path to becoming a superstar trainer was to get published on websites like Testosterone.net (it's called T-Nation now). There were other models at the time (I wrote for Bodybuilding.com and was actually offered an option to buy the site—which I turned down. Sad trombone.). I eventually realized that my training clients would come from our town, not the internet, so I emailed the three local newspapers and offered to write a column. Two actually took me up on it.

Because I wanted to train athletes, most of my posts were about athletic training. As crazy as it sounds, two online articles about linear periodization actually got me my first paying client: a soccer player named Nick. I worked in a treadmill store, and his dad marched him up to the desk to ask if I'd train him. Then he wrote me a check!

I trained Nick in the back parking lot of the treadmill store for a few months, using equipment that I stored in my truck and a "sled" that I'd built from a broken shopping cart. Nick got results, and soon a teenaged girl named Holly showed up in the treadmill store to ask about training.

What did they have in common? Both were multisport athletes, but both played soccer. And both were being shopped to NCAA schools by a local promoter. So I called him to ask how I could help his other athletes.

He showed up to make training videos, and he loved the unconventional training we were doing—sled pulls, barbell work, and sprints instead of the bodybuilding and distance running most athletes were doing in town. And I kept publishing. I was prompted to write about weight loss because the treadmill store was sandwiched between a Weight Watchers and a herbal weight-loss supplement store. I got angry about what my neighbors were selling, wrote about it in one online newspaper, and soon had my first weight-loss client.

So my first three clients came from publishing content, direct referral (one parent to another), and publishing different content. My next half-dozen came from the college recruiter because I took the time to find the common link between my current clients. Within a year, I had 34 clients.

I kept publishing everywhere I could and asking my clients about their friends and families. I told them how to help their husbands lose weight, advised them on home exercise equipment, listened to their frustrations with their kids' coaches. I eagerly sought out opportunities to say, "I think I can help." When my teenage athletes were competing, I went to their events. I set up a tent beside the track for my runners. I sat with their parents at hockey games. I was introduced to families and other future clients. I even got invited to their weddings!

It's important to note that I'm naturally introverted. I wasn't comfortable doing any of that. But I did it because I had to eat. It's also important to note that the other trainers at the studio did none of these things, and they grew their clientele much

more slowly. Same location, same equipment, same pricing, same Yellow Pages ads, and most of them copied my training plans. But after two years, I had a waiting list, and they were going hungry.

In 2005, I realized that I couldn't make enough money even with 10-12 hours of training per day. I decided to open my own gym to earn more. Now, I had around 45 personal training clients at that point. But there was no guarantee that any would follow me to Catalyst. I was still writing for local news blogs (and occasionally got something in a print newspaper), but in 2005, most people just bought ads in the Yellow Pages. Back then, everyone confused "marketing" with "advertising."

So when the Yellow Pages rep visited my gym, I expected to buy an ad... until I saw the price. I didn't have any money, and I needed to buy groceries, so committing thousands of dollars to marketing just wasn't possible. It wasn't a budget problem—I had no budget. I literally had zero dollars.

In the mail the next day, I received a local chamber of commerce guide. On the back cover, the guide printed the email address for every single chamber member. It was 2005. There were no "spam" filters. I copied and pasted every email address into the CC line in Yahoo! Mail and sent my first "newsletter" to around 45 people.

Two weeks later, I had to hire a second trainer. Not only had all my clients from the PT studio followed me to Catalyst, but I'd also signed up several from my first email. All these clients were busy professionals—lawyers, dentists, entrepreneurs. They were tactful and discreet, but when I asked one, "Why did you come to Catalyst?" he said, "I know more about training than the other trainers at your previous gym."

This was an epiphany that I've always followed to this day:

“Teach my clients to know more than any other trainer in town.” I think that’s a necessary part of audience building. But it’s not sufficient.

I kept writing in local news blogs for another year until both fired me on the same day. Luckily, I still had my (growing) email list. I’d simply add every email address I could find to the CC line of my monthly newsletter. Even when I bumped into Yahoo!’s send limits, I’d copy and paste 100 at a time. And it was already clear that every email I sent was worth hundreds of dollars.

By that point, I was hiring other trainers and filling their schedules. I remember filling our four private training rooms, and one coach—Tim—was training his clients in the stairwell because we were so jammed. But what I didn’t notice, and should have, was that all the clients were coming in from the work I did. Very, very few—maybe one in 20—were brought in by the other trainers.

Audience building was my job. I was the only one doing it for our business. And I didn’t even focus on it—I wrote blog posts at 4 a.m. before my clients got there, or on weekends.

A Few Mistakes and a Mentor

In 2007, we found CrossFit. I was trying to find a way to earn more per hour than I could as a 1:1 trainer. So I emailed my list and asked, “Who wants to volunteer for this eight-week trial?” I had 13 people reply before I even thought to put a cap on the group.

By 2008, CrossFit was all I wanted to do. We opened a second location because we couldn’t get out of our PT studio lease and couldn’t drop barbells there. My first member was the father of a PT client; my second member was her brother. Both heard of

me through the stuff I'd written, and their trust was reinforced by their peer group.

But by late 2008, I was almost bankrupt. I had plenty of clients and plenty of future clients who were paying attention to anything I did. But my product sucked; it was underpriced, and I was exhausted while delivering it. There was no joy in either of my gyms in 2008. The real failure was mine: I thought CrossFit would sell itself. I didn't think I had to build an audience for CrossFit. But no one in my town had heard of it, and its obvious appeal to me didn't work for anyone else. I thought I needed better marketing. But I was dead wrong; I needed a better product.

I kept publishing, and everything we introduced sold out right away: kids groups, running groups, barbell specialty programs. But I was still running out of money. Somehow, it never occurred to me to charge more, that my audience trusted me enough to pay what I needed to survive. And I was routinely killing the golden goose by pushing 1:1 clients into group training they didn't really want.

I found a mentor. I saved my gyms. He fixed my service and freed me up to do what I do best (build an audience.) Using what he taught me, I launched and sold two other companies in the next five years.

But sticking with Catalyst, we just kept publishing. We sent out a monthly newsletter. We wrote blog posts almost daily. When we finally got on Facebook around 2012, I shared our stuff there, and the algorithm didn't block it. My focus shifted to telling clients' stories on the site instead of just providing educational content. I put clients on a podium. They shared our blog posts with their friends (they were thrilled to be "on the internet"). I kept looking for opportunities to meet my clients' spouses and friends.

Today, Catalyst has still never paid for a Facebook ad. We have thousands of people on our email list, and our specialty programs fill every time (usually in less than 48 hours). We're the most expensive gym in town by a huge margin. But our audience trusts us enough to accept our guidance. The difference now is that we have excellent operations, processes, programs, and pricing. So we keep people for a long time!

My real skill is building audiences. And I built them, one person, at a time, following the now-tested Affinity Marketing strategy, plus consistent publication of good content.

Some of the best content on my website can help you build YOUR gym. If you're not sure where to start your marketing, download the free "Broke Gym Owner's Guide to Marketing" from our site at www.twobrainbusiness.com/handbook .

How to Start Conversations

Your relationship with a client is a lifelong conversation. Unless you start that conversation with screaming. Or a tantrum. Or you look like you're desperate for attention.

Good conversations start with the "help first" ethos: You find someone who needs help. You offer that help. You keep offering it until the person commits to you. In a romantic relationship, you might start the conversation with, "Hi, my name is Ellen." In a transactional relationship, you start a conversation with, "I think I can help."

Here's how to do it, step by step.

1. Clearly identify your audience. Your service will never be for everyone. You don't want it to be for everyone. The

- “seed client” interviews you performed earlier will make it easy for you to identify your best audience.
2. Follow your audience around. Where do they go for coffee? What do they eat after the gym? How many kids do they have? Which social platforms do they use? Where do your avatars congregate? (You don’t have to be a stalker. It’s also OK to take them for lunch and just ask them. That’s what I do.)
 3. Find the top questions your avatars are asking. If your top client is in a Facebook group for moms, what are the key topics of conversation in there? If your avatar plays professional baseball, what does he talk about in the locker room or in the dugout? Find problems to solve, and you’ll always have an audience.
 4. Publish solutions to your avatar’s problems. Put them on your website. Write them on a blog. Record them on video. Share them where your avatars and audience will see them. If your solutions are good, you’ll build an audience. If you can build an audience, you’re set for life.

Sometimes, I’ll identify a particular need that people in my community have. For example, during the COVID Crisis, I realized that many people in my city were homebound. So I produced a high-quality booklet (aka, a “lead magnet”) on training at home and mindset, and I traded that for their email addresses. I wanted the addresses so I could continue the conversation—not so I could spam them or pump “sales letters” into their inbox. I’ll tell you about “love letters” in the next section.

Your introduction frames your conversation. Your conversations with potential clients frame your relationships with them forever. If you attract their attention with things of substance—useful help, meaningful motivation—you’ll earn their trust. If you attract their attention with fleeting giveaways and discounts, you’ll earn a fleeting client. You’re playing a

long-term game. Let's have long-term conversations. Here's how to have conversations that last for years.

Love Letters

“But what do I say?”

The content you publish is your side of the conversation. It should be guided by your audience's side of the conversation: the questions they ask, the problems they're trying to solve, and even the comments they make. For that reason, I call these blog posts and emails “love letters.” I'm writing them to my audience as a friend. You can't get people into your business if you don't let people into your life.

If you haven't heard the term “love letters” before, that's OK. Love letters are simply notes to your audience about the things they care about. They're helpful tips, answers to questions, and intimate details of your story. They're not “newsletters.” They're definitely not “sales letters.”

I write my love letters as answers to questions I receive from gym owners. Every week, I get questions from gym owners—by email, on social media, and so on. The questions are always good, and I always know others want to know the answers too. So I answer them on my blog. The best love letters I've written came from the best questions I was asked.

For example: Gym owners ask all the time about the best gym-management platform. So I spent over \$10,000 to answer that question last year... and the year before. The long love letter I produced was more than a side-by-side comparison of software platforms; it was an answer to a critical question many gym owners cared about. I know because they asked me.

Some other love letters that came from questions from my

audience:

“How to Build a Kids’ Program.”

“How to Sell Me Personal Training.”

“How to Pivot Online in 24 Hours or Less.”

“How to Add Nutrition Programs to Your Gym.”

And I’ve written thousands more. I don’t focus on the SEO values of a particular post. I simply ask myself, “What would I tell my best friend if she asked me this question?”

Sometimes, a blog post is so well-received that I write more on the topic. Those subjects turn into free downloadable PDF guides (you can download them on www.twobrainbusiness.com/handbook). These are high-quality guides, professionally edited, and produced. Each costs me between \$15,000 and \$20,000 to publish. Gym owners can literally take these ideas, follow the directions step by step, and make money from them. And we just give them away. That’s why we have enormous trust and affinity with our audience around the world.

The best content is the answer to your audience’s questions (especially those they’re afraid to ask.) The next-best content is stories. But no matter what you publish, consistency is more important than anything else. You must publish a lot of content over time.

Volume Is More Important Than Perfection

In a podcast interview, I was once asked, “What’s the most important piece of content you’ve produced? Which one made the biggest impact?”

A better question would have been: “What year of writing was your best?”

Between 2009 and 2012, I wrote over 390 blog posts on DontBuyAds.com. Then I wrote “Two-Brain Business.”

From 2012 to 2015, I had over 300 posts on a different website that I didn’t own. They’re gone. But most of them came from “Two-Brain Business 2.0” and “Help First.” From 2016 until now, I have published over 1,500 blog posts on twobrainbusiness.com. We’re nearing the 500th episode of my podcast, Two-Brain Radio. We’re on YouTube, and we post to social media constantly, both publicly and in private groups for our clients. How do we produce so much? How do we publish every day? How do we find so much to talk about?

The simple answer is we can’t *not* publish every day. We can’t *not* do free calls with affiliates who want to grow. We can’t *not* answer their questions. I can’t not care. And that means I have to share the answers. I’m literally compelled to do it.

When a gym owner asks a great question, I have to share what I know. I’ve skipped workouts, family time, and a ton of fun personal stuff to do so. That, my friend, is love. Not the love of writing but the love of The Movement, of your potential to change lives, and of service.

What Do You Need to Say?

What are you compelled to share with your friends? What will keep you up at night if you don’t tell them? Think of all of those times you’ve heard a friend say, “I’m doing this diet” or “I’m just going to do this walking program,” and you didn’t speak up. Think about Aunt Jane and her diabetes. I know you have something to say. Now’s the time to say it. Here’s your

permission.

Pull out your keyboard or your camera.

Spit out the answer.

Publish.

If you've never produced content marketing before, it's time to start.

When You Open a Business, You Become a Storyteller

Your story is the common thread that runs through your media. The public, your staff, and your clients don't see you—they see your story. Our brains are wired to remember stories. It's how we learn, how we judge, and how we trust.

The digital age promise was that we could reach more people and capture attention for close to free. But awareness is not enough. Your message needs to be believed, not just noticed. You can't out-yell everyone else. You can't be heard if you're saying the same things they are. You can buy ads, attention, and awareness—but you can't buy trust. And trust is what makes people choose you.

The path to success is littered with great ideas that failed because they were poorly marketed. Too often, our businesses fail because we haven't told the right story in the right way. Or we haven't told a story at all.

When I read Seth Godin's book "All Marketers Are Liars" back in 2006, it changed my life. I'd been writing blogs since 1998, and sometimes those blogs got me new clients. But when I found Seth, I started telling stories. That pivot took me from a scrounging personal trainer to the founder and CEO of a

multimillion-dollar global company. That is the power of good storytelling. Every story I tell is real, and that's what makes them powerful.

Telling stories is one of the most important things you can do for your business. In fact, you're telling a story whether you want to or not—your silence also tells a story (and not the one you wish to believe about yourself). Your business deserves to be successful, but you can't change minds without winning hearts. And you can learn to tell better, authentic stories—the kind that changes how people feel, and, in turn, what they do.

The Stories You Need to Tell

(Before you start this section, download our Storytelling Worksheet from www.twobrainbusiness.com/handbook.)

The most common question I get when I talk about storytelling is this: “But what should I say?” The stories you should tell first depend on what stage of the entrepreneurial journey you're in. If you're in the Founder Phase—the first stage—you should tell your own story first.

Write your story on a blog. Why did you start exercising? Why did you start coaching? What made you want to open a gym? You can also record your story on video if you prefer and upload it to YouTube. But then post it on your blog. Your website is your home base, the place you're trying to lead everyone online. That's where you should focus for now.

If you're in the Farmer Phase, you should tell your clients' stories first. One of Seth Godin's credos is “people like us do things like this.” Highlight your clients' stories (I've linked to some samples in the Storytelling Worksheet). Ask them questions in person:

“What brought you to my gym in the first place?”

“What would you tell the person you were one year ago?”

“What’s your favorite story about my gym?”

Publish the stories on your blog or on YouTube.

If you’re in the Tinker Phase, you need to tell stories about the mission.

Why do you care about getting people fit?

Why do you care about your city?

Why does this mission keep you awake at night?

The hardest part of all this is just starting. I’ve been telling people to publish their own media since 2012. Few actually do. But telling good stories improves your retention, makes your ads work better, helps your clients trust you more, and is the only way to build your own business in the long run.

How to Tell Better Stories

Strip searches were new for me. Standing in the waiting area of a maximum-security prison was too.

I was there for my first powerlifting meet—a skinny kid hoping to weigh over 198 lb. so that I could compete in the same group as my 270-lb. friends. I was scared to be separated from them, scared to get locked in there forever, scared to embarrass myself with my lifting.

Crossing an international border to reach the prison was the first barrier.

Two huge friends in the front seat of the truck. Me in the back. Border guard: “Where you guys going this early in the morning?”

Driver: “Kinross Prison. We’re doing a powerlifting meet with the inmates.”

The guard looked at the driver. You could see his brain ticking boxes: “Powerlifter.” He looked at the passenger. “Powerlifter.” Tick. He looked at me. And looked again. Asked the driver, “Where’s he going?”

“He’s the bait,” the driver replied. The guard laughed. Border guards laughed in those days. He raised the barrier. We drove through.

I almost wished he’d sent us home.

We cleared the prison security and passed through locked doors with warnings: “Don’t sweat off the stamp on your hand” and “Don’t get separated from the group.”

We got locked in the gym with 50 lifetime inmates.

Then the guards left.

There were only three barbells on which 50 men were to warm up in 10 minutes.

The terror of the prison, the terror of my first powerlifting meet, the terror of failure—all of it came to one sharp point when I stepped onto the platform. I felt the sharp knurling of the bar cut into my back. My last fear was, “Will this bar get bloody?” and then I started to sink with it.

Wound to my tightest point, I sprung up from the bottom of the squat so fast that my feet left the ground. I jumped with the weight and came back down with a thud.

Three red lights glowed: I had failed my first lift. But the hardest part of the day was over.

I relaxed. I laughed along with everyone in the room. My next squat was good. My final deadlift was great.

Inmates shared their workouts with me. When they were called to their cells for a headcount before lunch, I napped in the gym with my friends. Then we began the slow process of leaving prison. The jokes—“winner gets to leave!”—were funny now.

The Goal: Have Them Believe Your Message, Not Just Notice It

Good stories are:

- True.
- Relatable (people can put themselves in your shoes).
- Consistent (told in your own voice).
- Much shorter than you think they should be.

The people you’re trying to reach and resonate with are not persuaded by facts. You can’t argue someone into buying from you. “But it’s only the cost of a cup of coffee each day!” doesn’t work. They don’t just want to know about what you do, serve, or sell—they want to know why. They want to know your story.

Every successful individual and organization has figured out how to influence and inspire people and create the change they seek by telling better stories. Here’s how you can do it too:

1. Talk about the things people care about.

We all tend to suffer from “the technician’s curse”: We project what we know onto everyone else. But they don’t know what we do. What do people actually want to know?

Download our Storytelling Workbook from www.twobrainbusiness.com/handbook . Flip to the checklist on the last page, and you’ll see the top questions your clients are asking.

2. Tell stories instead of giving “the answer.”

You probably asked some of the same questions people ask you—even if it’s been a while. Tell people how you (or a client) overcame the obstacle or answered the question. Show, don’t tell.

3. Be truthful.

Lies are sticky, but they’re always uncovered.

4. Publish every day.

There’s no such thing as “writer’s block.” Plumbers don’t get “plumber’s block.” When you open a business, you open a media company. Show up.

5. Don’t try to convince anyone to do anything.

You can just facilitate what they already want. Arguments and rants don’t stick—but feelings do, and if you make people feel angry (or worse, dumb), they’ll stop giving you their attention.

6. Don’t be perfect.

I’m not. But I bury the bad with the better. Someday I’ll write a better book than this one. No one is flipping through your back

catalog and comparing things. Every day is an opportunity to tell a better story.

7. Forget the “likes.”

They don't matter. Publishing on social media doesn't make you money; it makes Mark Zuckerberg money. Your number one goal on social media is to get people off social media (and onto your site).

How to Change Your Story

Many fitness professionals reading this book aren't starting from scratch. Many have to change their story to grow their business.

When I opened my second gym, I wanted to cater to my powerlifting buddies. I chose an industrial location on purpose. I kept things basic. I hung a giant pirate flag from the rafters and set up chalk bowls on cinder blocks. It took less than a year to realize I'd made a mistake.

My powerlifting friends didn't want to pay the meager “open gym” rate I'd set. They were rough on the equipment. They were messy. They stunk. They were loud. And they stuck around ALL DAY. Worse, they scared away my best clients. Some of them just stopped showing up; the more patient asked if they could transfer “back downtown” to my old gym.

I had to change my story. And fast.

The story I was telling was more than the logo on the wall; more than my website's look, more than my T-shirt inventory. The story I was telling was my entire brand. And my brand said, “This is not for you” to my ideal clients.

When you open a business, you step onstage. Your website is your podium, and social media is your amplifier. What will you say? Will you share someone else's message—their brand, their story, their media? Will you publish your own message—your story, your clients' stories, your own knowledge? Or will you say nothing—and what will you say through your silence?

Everyday people looking for fitness don't stop paying attention or looking for answers to their fitness problems. What fills the vacuum?

Well, smart gym owners fill the vacuum themselves. They write blog posts and shoot daily videos about diet and exercise. Some bring in photographers and camera crews. The primary benefit of affiliation and franchising—professionally produced, shareable marketing—is now easy to create yourself. And it works!

But most gym owners don't follow that plan. Like me, most opened their gyms because they wanted to coach—not because they wanted to write blog posts or shoot YouTube videos about macronutrients.

But owning a gym and coaching are different jobs. Opening a gym forces you onstage. That means producing content. And if you need to start telling your story better, or changing the story you've been telling, then you need to start now. You probably won't be the first in your market to publish on YouTube. But you definitely don't want to be the last. If you're not publishing, you're invisible.

Here's how to get your message out:

1. Tell your story.

What made you want to open a gym in the first place? We're all

dying to hear that story—now more than ever. Write it down or sit in front of your phone and tell us. Post the blog or video on your website and link to it on your social media channels. That’s one rep. Thousands more to go, but you’ve done the first one!

2. Tell three clients’ stories.

Grab them after a session or meet up for a coffee over video chat. Ask them:

“Why did you choose my gym in the first place?”

“What’s your best story about this gym?”

“What advice would you give to the person you were a year ago?”

Post their stories. Use your platform to make them famous.

3. Teach something.

Write a blog or record a video that will help one person in your audience. Don’t overthink it (my first posts were all about linear versus conjugate programming—you can do far better). Write about:

- “What is protein?”
- “Why should grandmothers lift weights?”
- “How often should you run if you want to lose weight?”
- “Why abs are made in the kitchen.”

When in doubt, walk to the drugstore, look at the magazines, and steal ideas from the titles.

Remember: Your audience doesn’t know what you know. Not even a little bit.

Whether you're a CrossFit affiliate or an F45 franchise or an independent trainer, you need to tell your story, or you'll be invisible. The stories you tell are the cornerstone of your brand.

Let's talk about your brand: the picture your clients see when they think about your business.

Branding 101: Clarity > Art

Nobody understands you.

No one sees the world exactly the way you do.

No one has the same context, the same lens, the same internal dialogue.

No one can decode your artwork. In most cases, your creativity confuses people.

If you own a business, that means a lack of clarity is costing you money. This is the central message of "Building a StoryBrand," by Donald Miller, one of my favorite books on branding.

Now, I've made every possible mistake when it comes to branding:

- I had the black website with skulls on it.
- I had the pictures of ripped hands on my Facebook page.
- I flew the pirate flag above my desk.
- I had the one-day "free trial" class with 300 squats in it.
- I had the T-shirts with insider jokes and quotes (still do, because I couldn't sell any of them).
- I had blood on my bars.
- I had the offensive music blasting.

- I had chalk all over the floor.
- I had 30 different options on my website.
- I did my No Sweat Intros right after a workout.
- (If I don't stop here, I'll keep going for hours.)

Here are the hardest lessons I've had to learn about branding:

1. Your client is the hero of the story. You are his or her guide.

Your business exists to glorify your clients. Your job is to help them determine their goals, reach them, and help them celebrate their accomplishments. That doesn't mean a high-five after class; it means putting them on a podium, with cameras flashing and reporters asking them what they ate for breakfast. If you're not going way above and beyond to celebrate their success, they'll probably miss it.

2. You think people want what you want. They don't.

You are not your own best customer. Your best customers are probably a bit older than you are. They might earn more than you currently do. Their top priority isn't fitness. Their schedule is more important than their mobility to them (they'd rather get back to their desk after lunch than stretch for five more minutes). The top lesson you can learn about branding is this: Let your clients tell you what they like.

3. It's all about the story.

In the second part of this book, I'll tell you about "mapping the client journey." You need to share your clients' stories, but you also have to let them know what will happen next. You need to show them the next chapter in their development. For maximal long-term success, a client must know and feel there's a happy ending coming.

4. Clarity is more important than art.

Your website and your ads will convert better if they say “We Are a Gym” than if they say “The Unrelenting Pursuit of Excellence in Movement.” All your media should pass the “stranger” test: Can you show your website to a stranger for three seconds and then have the person tell you what you sell? If not, you’re unclear. Not because people spend three seconds on a website but because that’s how long it takes for them to form an impression of what you do and who you are. You want to communicate two things: How you can solve their largest problem and how they can get started. That’s it.

5. Consistency is more important than everything.

My teenage daughter jokes all the time about my behavior being “on brand” when I do a typical dad thing. She means, “You’re confirming your stereotype, Boomer.” And that’s okay: my predictability means she trusts me. Before people can give you their money, they have to know you, like you, and trust you. Trust comes from consistency and predictability. If clients know you’ll always treat them fairly, they’ll trust you. If they think you give “special deals” to some and not to others, or if you don’t always start class on time, or if one coach is far better than all the others, they’ll trust you less.

I write about these things over and over on my blog because I screwed them up. I don’t want you to screw them up. It’s my mission to make gym owners wealthy. You will never become wealthy if your branding doesn’t appeal to your audience.

The best brands in the world don’t reflect their owners’ tastes.

The best brands always come from the question, “What do our clients want?”

What's in a Name?

The stories you tell paint a picture of your business. Your gym's name is the frame for that picture. When you change your brand, you change your name. Here's where it gets complicated: The frame changes how people see the picture inside.

If your gym name is “Ed's Pilates Studio,” and I don't want to do Pilates, then I won't pay much attention to the picture, right? The frame told me everything I needed to know.

But changing the frame won't change my mind. Renaming the gym “Ed's Studio” might get me to look at the picture, but if the picture inside is all about Pilates, then I'll still move on if that's not what I want.

However, maybe the story I'm looking for is core stability and relief from back pain. Without the frame of “Pilates,” perhaps the story I see appeals to me. The frame and the picture work together to create your brand.

Changing your name is more than buying a new logo, though. The painful costs of a name change are:

- Loss of SEO.
- Loss of audience familiarity.
- Loss of story (who are you when you're not called Ed's Pilates anymore?).

You have to weigh these losses against your reason for changing. But if you do change your name, I'll give you three ways to change your frame.

The Grok Test

If you're a gym, call yourself a gym.

If you're a coaching business, say so.

If you sell CrossFit, call yourself CrossFit.

If you don't sell CrossFit, don't.

Clarity is more important than art. People can't decipher your meaning and won't try. You must pass the "Grok test": Can someone understand what you sell in two seconds or less after hearing your name?

Three Points of Contact

If you're changing your name, try to keep elements of the old name, if possible. For example, I went from "CrossFit Catalyst" to "Catalyst Fitness." That was easy, because people in my city just say, "I go to Catalyst." No change for them.

Follow the rock climber's mantra: Three points of contact. Only change one small thing at a time. If you're Ed's Pilates Emporium, you're better to go to Ed's Fitness than to Bulldog FTNS.

What Are People Looking For?

No one is searching for "functional movement" in your city. Your name should describe the benefit your best clients were seeking when they found you. I doubt many will do it, but calling yourself "Ed's Weight Loss" is actually a good idea—if your best clients all showed up looking to lose weight. Build your name around the benefit of your service, not the features. For example, "Ed's Barbell" isn't as good as "Ed's Strength Training."

The first sign on my CrossFit gym said, "Catalyst Athletic and

CrossFit.” I had a few athletes as clients, but my best clients were doctors, teachers, and lawyers. They didn’t want “athletic training” or CrossFit. So my name turned away most of the people who would have been my best clients. Duh.

Remember: Name your business according to what your clients want to achieve, not what you want to do when they’re not around.

Make Your Plan and Tell Your Tale

People buy stories. Stories paint a picture in their minds. Your name is how they frame that story. Will it encourage them to look deeper or look elsewhere?

Stories are your brand. Stories increase audience affinity. You must tell stories. You must tell them often enough to hold the attention of your audience. And you must amplify them on the NEW media: Social Media platforms.

The Story Amplifiers: Social Media

How Many “Likes” Do You Need?

How many “friends” do you need to make a living?

What’s your profit margin on “views”?

Social media is a fun toy that really does have practical business applications. It’s the most effective platform the world has ever seen to generate interest and communicate with people. But social media’s real mission is to keep you on social media. It can be a useful business tool, but it can also distract you into “ego traps”: likes, shares, and views. In this section, we’ll discuss what they mean, and how to avoid the traps.

But first, a bit on who's actually paying attention. In the Two-Brain Marketing Course, we teach three stages of audience interest:

1. Informed (very warm, ready to sign up)—they've decided to work out and are just comparing gyms.
2. Aware (warm, but not hot)—they know they “need to do something” and are actively seeking a solution to their problem, like weight loss.
3. Oblivious (cold)—they don't even know they have a problem; they aren't looking for a solution.

This is important to understand because your messages on social media reach all of these audiences at once.

For example: You post a before/after picture in a blog post about your nutrition challenge.

1. Informed: “That's cool. This gym has nutrition challenges.”
2. Aware: “Looks like I can lose weight through nutrition challenges. Add that to my list of options.”
3. Oblivious: “Person in swimwear!”

People in each audience might hit “like” or even share your post, but for far different reasons.

The point is that we really have no idea who's hitting the “like” button. If your picture receives fanfare from 100 people, it's entirely possible that none of them will become a new client.

It would be nice to have an algorithm that says, “If 100 people hit ‘like,’ one of them will sign up.”

But that's not true; there's no linear progression at all.

What Really Matters: Sales

A sale is when someone signs up for your service, with money.

A sale isn't a "page like." A sale isn't even a "free trial." A sale is a purchase.

A "view" means they're slow at scrolling their finger on the screen.

Again, there's no linear relationship between a person sharing your post and signing up for your service. How do we get people to the "sale" point? We start with the people closest to buying your service.

First, former clients. How can you reach them? Probably a phone call or email. This is a very warm audience because they've purchased from you before. Re-engaging former clients is a top priority for gyms in the Two-Brain family. It's so effective that when we give a gym owner an email to use, and they don't bring anyone back, we know there's something wrong with the gym's operations.

Second, people who have done an NSI or consultation but didn't sign up. They were ready to go, but something stopped them. How do you reach them? Consistent messages about how your service will solve their problem. You can trail them to their coffee shop every day, or put a sign in their yard... or send them love letters through email.

Third, people on your email list. These folks are paying attention and have indicated their attention by taking action (signing up for something). They're waiting for you to say the right thing. Luckily, they'll let you say a lot of "not-quite-right" things first. Some industry surveys in other services (like martial arts) show the biggest conversion rate on the 22nd email. Let

that one sink in. Email warms up a cold audience; the colder they are, the more emails they'll need to get from you.

If they're not on your email list, they probably haven't done much to indicate their interest. But let's say they've hit "like" or "follow" on your page—that's a sign they have at least a passing interest in you. Audience affinity is pretty low with this group, but you warm people up through constant conversation. That's easier through email because everyone gets the email. On social media, only 10% of your page audience will see your posts at any given time, and never the same 10%. So your top priority with people who like your social profiles should be to get them onto your email list.

If they're not followers of your Facebook page, at a bare minimum, they probably don't count as a future client at all. And if they're not on your email list, you're going to have to do a LOT of work to warm them up before they convert. The early adopters (*"Hey, that looks awesome, take my money!"*) are gone. Now you need to show people how you're going to solve their problem.

If you share the before/after pics from above and get 100 "likes," here's how it might break down:

- 55 – Your current clients who know the woman in the picture.
- 10 – Her family (if you've tagged it properly).
- 5 – Your coaches.
- 3 – Your mom. (She has secret accounts. She told me about them.)
- 1 – Your fourth-grade teacher. (To her, a 'like' is the new gold star.)
- 2 – Former clients who have moved away.
- 4 – Candidates running for office.
- 17 – Other gym owners who are 'liking' your Facebook

play.

1 – Person who has been thinking about your service. She won't see your next 9 posts, by the way, unless you get her on your email list.

That list is an over-dramatization, of course; it's a guess. But here's the kicker: it's just as likely to be true as false. Go ahead: hover over the 'like' button on your last post, and track who's paying attention.

Okay, What About Ads?

Advertising used to be about art. Now it's about math. Develop ads that show the benefit that your best clients are trying to attain. Talk about these benefits, not the features of your exercise method or your prices.

Target the ads at specific audiences, and test them for at least a week with minimal ad spend. We like to test three ads at a time. After your first week, drop the two lowest-performing ads and spend all of your money on the best ad. The refinement process has just begun, though. Very few people buy from the first ad they see. Retargeting is what improves your ad spend.

Start with an ad designed to get people onto your email list. I use lead magnets, in which people trade valuable guides for their email address. They trade their information for permission to continue the conversation. Then I upload my email list and show ads to the people on that list. This is one form of retargeting. The second series of ads only show to the people who were interested in the first series.

How do you know which ads will work before you spend money? Post links to your content on your personal and business accounts first. Let the "likes" and comments signal which pictures and messages will do well as an ad. THEN

spend money by targeting. Following the Informed/Aware/Oblivious model, our audience priorities for advertising should be:

- Current and former clients.
- Not-quite-conversions (they came in for an NSI but didn't sign up).
- People on your email list.
- People who like your social media profile.
- Lookalike audience of people on your mailing list.
- Lookalikes of people who like your page – but you're really reaching here.
- Demographic targeting – you might as well drop flyers out of a helicopter. The odds are better because you'll only drop the flyers over the neighborhoods where your best clients live. Right?

How Do I Get Leads?

Most gym owners don't actually need leads. They need sales to move the people on their email list toward a consultation or intake meeting or NSI. Of course, it's a lot easier to run an ad and get 400 more followers on your social media profile than to actually convert any of them, so that's what many marketing companies sell. Unfortunately, it's really easy to convince us that "likes = \$" because we're scared of the alternative (actually meeting people and selling them).

Is it possible to entice a cold lead into your gym for a free trial? Yes, it is—at least, it's possible to get someone from your "aware" audience into the gym for something.

Companies selling a six-week challenge have proven successful by putting a novel fitness "challenge" in front of thousands of colder leads in different markets. People signing up for the challenge are "aware" that they need exercise and are enticed by

novelty. But most haven't previously indicated an interest in your service. And the marketing plan doesn't attract warm leads: it simply fires a ton of bullets until someone gets hit.

The gym owner might be successful in selling their six-week "intro to jiu-jitsu" challenge to a newcomer. But if jiu-jitsu doesn't solve that person's problem, they're not going to continue when the challenge ends.

When I was 13, I visited Paris. Part of the tour involved spending an evening at the Notre Dame Cathedral. I met people from all around the world; my friends from home were with me in the tour group. I took pictures of myself in front of gargoyles and went away happy. But I didn't convert to Catholicism.

I was there for the tour. I wanted to say, "I did Notre Dame." I was an oblivious audience, a teenage boy on a trip with his friends. Decades later, I tried one jiu-jitsu class. I hated it. I never went back. I was there to say, "I did jiu-jitsu!" But if I thought it was necessary, I would have tried a few more times.

Skip ahead to 2016, when I embarked on a 12-month journey to finally "figure out social media marketing." I traveled extensively, took expensive courses, and took top experts to lunch. And what I learned comes down to this: The "trick" to social media is that we're all just a bunch of humans on there. The "magic" to social media marketing is understanding what people actually want... not what headline will make them want something different.

The real truth of social media marketing is that there isn't a trick. It's practicing, trial and error, and scaling. It's a lot of patience, like learning the air squat over and over for weeks and then finally adding a barbell.

And the real secret to social media success is simple: get people

off social media and onto the phone (or, worst case, your website). Because posting more stuff on social media doesn't make YOU money, it only makes the platform money. You need to lead people off Facebook and to your door.

And here's one more fun little story: After all these months of studying social media marketing, I was earning a good ROI. But I also learned that I hated doing social media marketing. I decided to hire someone else to scale my working ads.

But first, I decided to take a month off and just write love letters to my email list. No boosted posts on Facebook, zero ads, \$0 spent. My blogs auto-post to their respective pages, but that's it—most didn't even have pictures or headlines. I averaged 4-7 likes per blog post (you can check for yourself on the Two-Brain and Catalyst Facebook pages).

But I wrote my Informed audience a love letter almost every single day. It wasn't "marketing"—it was always about something I needed to tell them. Like this book: I'm compelled to tell you the truth. I can't not write this book because I see so many fitness pros wasting time and other resources.

The results? A \$6k revenue spike that August at my gym. It was the best August ever, in fact, and I had been open for 12 years at that point. Some of the "new members" were actually members a decade ago. All of them referred to one email or another. And at Two-Brain... Well, we keep selling out our mentorship spots.

Social media seems sexy because it strokes your ego with "likes" and "shares" and "views." It's designed that way. But it's a siren song: focus on the people closest to you. Tell them what you need them to know. You'll like the results. Social media amplifies your storytelling. It doesn't replace your storytelling.

Using Advertising to Trigger a Surge

Advertising's effectiveness really depends on audience affinity. Advertising to a warm audience of people who know, like, and trust you is effective. But the “colder” the audience, the less effective the advertising.

If you've never run ads on social media before, you'll probably see a surge of new business when you do. That's because advertising gives a short-term “push” to your audience. It temporarily boosts affinity because people just start seeing your brand more. Over time, of course, they become used to seeing your brand, and this familiarity benefit disappears. The benefits of advertising are short-term but still worthwhile.

In short: advertising can push people over the cliff. But only if they're already standing close to the edge.

Like many gym owners, I started using Facebook advertising to market my gym. I was late to the game (we weren't desperate for clients) and mostly wanted to try out this magic trick that other gym owners were raving about. So I ran a six-week challenge and, BAM—I got 32 new clients for the challenge!

It was a massive ROI in my first ads. But very few of these new clients stuck around past the six-week mark. That was really different for us; our retention back then was over 14 months. So we reran the same campaign. BAM—17 new clients! But a lot of this second cohort didn't even finish the six-week challenge. And when we ran the challenge for the third time, we struggled to get enough clients to run the program (maybe 8 or 9). So we stopped.

We found that Facebook ads were influential in creating some urgency. People who were already aware of Catalyst, and interested, took the step to join when urged by an ad. They saw

our message more often, got a novel offer they hadn't seen before, and signed up. But when that high-affinity, non-paying audience was used up, the ads became less effective.

In high-volume areas with a few hundred thousand people, you can run social media ads nonstop. And you should. But if you're in a smaller market, you can build audience affinity through 1:1 connections, referrals, and content publication for years before running a single ad. Then, if you want, you can run ads two to three times per year to create a sense of urgency.

The upside of a smaller market is simple: very few gym owners will be good at advertising. Your ads will be seen. You simply have to balance this novelty effect against familiarity.

Your advertising should follow a cycle. The larger your audience of strangers, the shorter your cycle should be. In a town of 1,000 people, you might run an ad once a year. In a city of 100,000, you might run ads every quarter. In a city of 1,000,000, you'll probably run ads every day.

Either way, here's how to maximize your ad spend.

Advertising: How to Limit Your Financial Downside

Earlier, I said that advertising used to be an art; now it's a science. The best advertising scientists haven't figured out a particular "secret"; instead, they constantly test and retest their ads. I learned this process from advertisers who are now part of our Mentoring Team at Two-Brain. Here's what Mateo Lopez, a Two-Brain Business Marketing Mentor, wants you to know.

Before you decide to launch ads for your business or your program, there are a few things you need to consider. First and foremost, you need to establish a proof of concept.

Here's an example: You are a gym owner who wants to build some additional revenue streams for your business. You know there is a large population in the town of people over the age of 50, so you decide to create a "Legends" or "Fit Over 50" program. You want to use Facebook ads to sell enrollments for this program.

Using ads at this point in the process would be immature. You need to first see if people in your network will buy this "Fit Over 50" service. If you can't sell someone who walks into your gym on that program, then the chances of you selling it to complete strangers on the internet are close to zero.

Even after you sell 5 people into your new program, you need to iterate on the service to consistently yield the results you promise. Only AFTER you establish that your program works and that there is demand (meaning you've been able to sell it without the aid of paid advertising) you can begin to make some hypotheses on how to increase sales with Facebook.

At this point, you'll need to make some educated guesses on the types of campaigns you want to run. Form a hypothesis on the message, the media, and the market. Meaning, you'll need to make a few guesses on what combination of ad copy and imagery will resonate with the audience you want to target, but you should have some preliminary data to start out. If you've successfully sold your program without paid advertising, then you've interacted with your potential clients, you know a little bit about their challenges and what problems they are looking to solve.

After you've made your message, media, and market

hypothesis, and you are ready to build out your ads, you can make an investment in Facebook ads. You do, however, need to treat it exactly as such, an INVESTMENT. You need to establish a test-budget and be completely okay with losing all of it.

The last thing you should do is put your final \$1,000 worth of savings on a campaign to try and resuscitate your business.

When advertising on Facebook, I always assume that I could lose 100% of the money I put in. If you are looking to get started with online ads, look at your business' cash-flows and determine the amount you can safely risk testing on your ads each month. When you assume that risk, you remove the emotion from the process. The worst investors bet their money on things that they NEED to work. When you establish your test budget, you identify your hard stop number, and you limit your downside.

Treat your ads like a professional investor. That's how you set yourself up for success with Facebook.

Going Deep: The Value of a Niche Audience

What if I told you people will pay five times what you're currently charging? You'd probably say, "This sounds like one of those sleazy ads, Coop!" Instead, let me tell you a story about one trainer in my city. This guy trains hockey players.

Every summer, a few dozen hockey players show up at this guy's garage. Or a local track or a big grassy hill on the outskirts of town. They lift weights, they sprint, they throw tires up the hill. The trainer has virtually no overhead. He doesn't have his own gym or any fancy equipment. He doesn't have a degree in

exercise science, and he's never played in the NHL. Last I heard, he had two barbells in his garage gym. He doesn't advertise. But every summer, he clears tens of thousands of dollars training hockey players. In fact, he probably profits more than any other trainer in town over those three months, even with 90 percent fewer clients.

How does he do it? He dominates a niche. He doesn't train people for fat loss. He doesn't train basketball players. He trains hockey players, and if you're a hockey player in Sault Ste. Marie, you train with this guy. Because he's GREAT at training hockey players.

Sure, I've had NHL players and high-level hockey teams in my gym. But they don't come back year after year after year. They pay my gym rates, not thousands of dollars for small-group training. If you're a hockey player in Sault Ste. Marie, you don't do CrossFit. You don't do bodybuilding. You train with this guy.

What's he doing differently? Not a thing—except he's not doing anything but training hockey players. That's his niche.

Scope and Focus

I once lost a client to another coach. My client was a sprinter, and he wanted a “sprinting coach.” The other coach didn't have my education, experience, or connections in the sprinting world. He'd never heard about periodization and probably couldn't tell you the role of ATP in a 100-meter race. He didn't know about disinhibitory stretching techniques or how to use petrissage, never effleurage, when massaging a track athlete. But he called himself a “sprinting coach,” so he got all the sprinters. I called myself a “personal trainer,” so I didn't.

The more you focus on one small audience, the more valuable

your service becomes. By narrowing your scope, you gain focus. And your clients perceive a higher value from focus.

This is why you see pro athletes doing wacky exercises on TV. This is why you see antiquated training techniques employed at the top levels of sport. Because they're not listening to the best trainers; they're listening to the people in their niche instead. And if "the football trainer" tells them to run with a parachute strapped to their back, they'll do it, even if the Ph.D. in Exercise Science says it's useless. As a trainer, this drives me crazy. But as a client, I totally understand it.

"Niche Down"

I'm a cyclist. I'm not competitive, but I consider myself a serious student of the sport. I spend around five hours per week on the bike in the offseason and double that in the summer. I spend over \$5,000 every time I buy a bike (my wife says that happens too often) and probably the same amount on gear every year (don't tell her).

With those price anchors, what do you think I'm willing to pay for coaching? You guessed it: around four times what I'd pay for coaching at my own gym. And what does my coach tell me to do outside of riding? Virtually the same workouts I'd be doing at my own gym.

Forget my personal coach. Let's say you're a cyclist and you want coaching from Tyler Hamilton, a former pro with a great book and a fantastic story. According to his website, Tylerhamiltontraining.com, pricing ranges from \$185 to \$395 per month for online programming. No in-person rides included—no contact with Tyler himself. Compare that with online workout programs for general fitness, which generally sell for \$19 to \$29 per month.

The smaller the niche, the higher the price. And small niches who spend a lot of money on their sport, like cyclists and golfers, will pay more. Because value increases as your message gets more personalized. The fewer the number of people in a niche, the more valuable your attention becomes.

There's never been a better time to build an online presence. What can you coach better than anyone else? What niches are wide-open opportunities? Where can you earn more money by going deeper instead of being broad, general, and inclusive?

How to Build a Niche Audience

“If you know how to build an audience, you'll never go hungry.” My mentor, Todd Herman, told me that.

My superpowers are all learned, not innate. I have three big ones:

1. The ability to make mistakes faster than anyone else (and learn from them)—that one's on my books.
2. The ability to break big problems down into little solvable steps.
3. The ability to build an audience from scratch.

I wrote about my first superpower in “Two-Brain Business,” my first book. I used my second superpower in “Two-Brain Business 2.0.” Here, I'll talk about the third one.

Audience Building in 6 Steps

When you're thinking about building a niche audience, follow these steps:

1. Be the world champion.

Look, if you're a Brazilian jiu-jitsu world champion, it's easy to sell jiu-jitsu workouts. It's not hard to get 200 people to sign up for your paid service if you have 25,000 followers on Instagram. But this is a shortcut most of us will never be able to take. If Tiger Woods decides to sell coaching for golf, he won't need this chapter (he won't even need to be a good coach). He'll already have an audience.

2. Get in the trenches.

If you want to build an audience of golfers, you have to play golf. You don't have to be good. If you can't be the best in the world, it's not a huge advantage to be second-best. In fact, the opposite is true: if you're bad at golf, you'll find a lot more to talk about, write about, and help with as you improve your game.

For example, My audience is 90 percent gym owners. I own a gym. I used to be really bad at owning a gym. That gave me lots of problems to solve, so I had lots to talk about. My first four years of blogging were filled with my own issues and mistakes.

If you want to help people with weight loss, you need to lose some weight. If you've never needed to lose weight, this might not be the niche audience for you. You need to get close to their pain (that's another Todd Herman quote).

3. Think about the biggest problems YOU have.

Then start producing content about them.

Approach content marketing with this mindset: "If this can help just one other person" Then share your story and your struggles. Don't try for perfect; try for consistency. Publish every day.

4. Win an existing audience.

Figure out where people in your niche congregate and start sharing your stories with them. Social media is the greatest gift to our generation for this reason: Never before have we had an amplifier this powerful. Never before have we been able to have a two-way conversation with the people who hear about us. Billboards, TV, and the Yellow Pages were a monologue. Now we have a conversation.

My audience skyrocketed when I found Facebook groups full of gym owners. But even before that, I attracted an audience by helping and sharing on message boards, Yahoo discussion groups, and Reddit.

5. Build an audience from scratch.

Publish every day. Share your stories on your personal social profile. Add people to your audience one at a time. Before social media, this took decades. Now it takes a few months, but only if you have real content to share. Instagram videos, Facebook posts—these don't count. You need long-form media, like blog posts, YouTube videos, or podcasts.

6. Pay for it.

I spend \$10,000-\$15,000 per month on Facebook and Instagram ads. The ads don't convince people to spend money on mentorship. The ads put people on my email list so we can have a conversation. You can do this, too—but start with the free stuff first. I made my first few millions doing only the free stuff.

The Wrong Ways to Build an Audience

1. Steal it.

Believe it or not, people “steal” audiences all the time. Sometimes, they leave a job and copy your email list before they go.

Maybe they copy your Facebook lists, or simply swipe all of the business cards from your desk. These are all illegal acts. Your business’ Intellectual Property is as real as its physical equipment, and laws protect your client lists as Intellectual Property. But the real penalty is the backlash: no one wants to receive unsolicited email. When you steal an email list and begin spamming them, you’ll lose potential clients forever.

2. Bait it and trap it.

Believe it or not, some industry “consultants” actually advise people to attack others online. We’re sometimes trolled by newcomers trying to attract our audience. They try to bait us with ridiculous attacks. Some members of our audience are actually curious enough to click on their profiles, and they invariably tell us they regret paying attention to the attackers.

This is an inferior long-term strategy. If you want to make a quick buck, it might work to be “not them.” But you can’t build an enduring business by tearing another business down.

3. Buy it.

Yes, you can pay for 20,000 Instagram followers. But it’s a waste of money. You’ll dilute your message in a vast ocean with no fish.

Pain and Proximity

The best way to build an audience? In the words of Todd Herman again, “You have to get close to the pain and stay close

to the pain.” Todd doesn’t need to be an entrepreneur anymore. But if he’s going to keep speaking to entrepreneurs and mentoring entrepreneurs, he can’t just try to “find their pain points.” He has to know their pain to be powerful. That’s why I still own a gym.

Unexplored Niches

Let’s recap: There’s a direct correlation between how much you specialize and how much you can earn per hour. Going deep into a group of specialists—instead of going broad and trying to appeal to everyone—is more valuable, especially online.

“Weight-loss specialists” charge more than “online fitness trainers.” “Sport performance specialists” charge even more. “Executive trainers” charge even more.

Sure, some celebrity plays into it. But you can build your own stage. And yes, niches can be hard to crack if you’re an outsider. But you can always become an insider. Here, just for fun, I want to give you some sample niches you might not have considered.

Riders Only?

First, I’ll use a cycling example, because that’s my niche.

Dynamic Cyclist (new.dynamiccyclist.com) is an amazing example of the power of a niche audience. Take a look at its programming and exercise library. Then look at its backdrop—it’s clearly in a boot camp-style gym and a yoga studio. Dynamic Cyclist is not prescribing unique stretches. It’s not using any special techniques or exercises. Its foam rollers aren’t different from yours. But it can sell the program to guys like me because the company says, “This is for cycling.”

To use Seth Godin’s phrase, “People like us do things like this.”

In other words, “Out of all the stretches you could do, these are the ones for cyclists.” And, “Out of all the exercises you could do, these are the ones for cyclists.”

What else is sold to cyclists like me, who regularly spend over \$5,000 on a bike (and as much again on gear)?

- Nutrition coaching
- Yoga
- Supplements
- Workouts

Let’s be clear: These are often the same nutrition tips, yoga poses, supplements, and workouts that other people do. But because they’re “for cyclists,” they’re more valuable. I’d pay more for them because they feel special. And most people are far less skeptical than I am.

We don’t pay for exercising. We pay for coaching. We want our coaches to filter all of the options and say, “do exactly this.”

That’s what a niche is: the exclusion of everyone else EXCEPT a narrow group.

Need a Niche?

Now, as promised, here are some unexplored niches:

1. Referees

Professional referees are practically professional athletes. They’re out there skating or running beside the best in the world. The average NFL referee was paid \$205,000 in 2019. But studies show that fit referees make better calls in every sport. Why wouldn’t they train to be better?

2. Equestrians

I remember training a client who owned a horse. She always showed up at the gym straight after the barn. She was one of my favorite clients ever, always happy and smiling, always compliant, always quick to pay for sessions in advance—such a wonderful person.

And she loved to talk about her horse. When she told me that her new horse bed cost \$10,000, I almost choked. But when she showed up one day carrying a “Pilates for Dressage Riders” DVD, I gained a life lesson. Dressage is a niche within a niche: It’s a style of horseback riding. There are other styles (and there are Pilates DVDs for those, too). You can find clips on YouTube—you’ll see no special exercises, just niche dominance.

After listening to my client talk about horseback riding for two years, it finally occurred to me to ask her: “How can I help you get better at riding horses?” and “Is there anyone else you know who wants to get better at riding horses?” By the end of the week, I had three more clients from her riding club.

3. The Religious

Your niche doesn’t have to focus on performance. Some people will be attracted to messages like “family-friendly” or “faith-driven.” Check out *Shaped by Faith: Pilates for the Soul*. In the CrossFit world, look at *Faith Rx’d*. These are great people who have identified a niche and found a way to help.

4. Autism

Even as the definition and scope of autism broaden, the opportunities to help become clearer. IgniteGym was a company I founded to help; now Ty and Hilary Krueger are working in this niche at Behavior Change Collective.

Opportunity abounds if you have the mindset for it.

5. Golf

Rob Connors is slowly taking over online training for golfers. It took months, not years, and he's building his platform on a strong content foundation. But this is a super valuable niche, with local groups everywhere.

6. Entrepreneurs

As I wrote in “Founder, Farmer, Tinker, Thief,” I think that training entrepreneurs is a massive opportunity. Sometimes we need hard HIIT workouts to clear our brains. Sometimes we need long, slow aerobics to focus and get into “flow state.” And sometimes we just need to calm down.

This niche is full of people with time flexibility, income flexibility, and the desire to make fewer decisions. They're the most likely people to say “just tell me what to do” and then be willing to pay for it. If I were looking for a niche in my town for bricks-and-mortar training, I'd start with entrepreneurs. But that's just me.

How to Find More Niches

Look at your best clients. What do they do when they're not at the gym? Where do they work? What are their hobbies? What are their kinks? (Not sexual, necessarily—but what are the things they “nerd out” on? How can fitness help with their butterfly-catching passion, and who else needs help catching more butterflies?)

This is an excellent thought exercise, but it's also a powerful opportunity. Think narrower and go deeper instead of trying to appeal to everyone. Start with high audience affinity and exhaust

those opportunities first.

From Affinity to Infinity

Every business needs marketing. We all agree on that. But what is marketing? Is it a team of 13 Facebook experts tweaking landing-page scripts and generating ClickFunnels reports? Or is it one mom saying, “come with me!” to her best friend at the book club?

It’s both, of course. And while everyone agrees that word-of-mouth marketing is a powerful force, it’s too passive for most businesses in the Founder and Farmer phases. We can’t afford to wait. At Two-Brain, we split our marketing into two parts: Affinity and digital.

Sales Without Slime

First, we train entrepreneurs to be good at sales. After reading the “sales” section of this book, you know that you don’t have to feel like a slimy salesman, but you do have to sell.

Removing barriers to entry, learning how to ask people to pay, and simply coaching people to the best result are all skills that can be mastered with practice. But few spend time practicing their sales skills. You should hone your sales skills because they are a marketing multiplier.

For example, let’s say two personal trainers each spend \$100 on a Facebook ad. They use one of our templates, so they have pictures and text ready to go. Let’s say each of those ads generates 10 leads for each trainer.

If Trainer #1 is trained in sales, he knows to call potential clients after filling out their forms. He makes sure they’ve booked appointments and tells them what to expect. He helps

ease their transition into his gym. This means seven out of 10 leads show up to talk with him. And because he's good at the Prescriptive model, he knows how to recommend the service they actually need instead of selling another six-week revolving-door challenge. Four out of seven convert and purchase a high-value entry point for \$499. His ROI on the Facebook ad is \$1,996, with \$100 in ad spend—nearly 20X.

If Trainer #2 isn't trained in sales, she doesn't call potential clients after they fill out a form on her site, even though they've indicated their interest. She doesn't want to seem "pushy," so she doesn't help them over their fear threshold. Three out of 10 leads show up for their appointments, and because the trainer can't clearly lay out the best paths, only one signs up for an intro package of five sessions for \$199. Trainer #2's ROI on the Facebook ad is \$199 with \$100 in ad spend, or around 2X.

A 2X return on any marketing investment is still great. But sales training makes it far more rewarding; it's a multiplier.

Got Any Friends, Family, Or Coworkers?

The next audience in a marketing plan is the people with one degree of separation: the best connections to your best clients. Earning referrals and building authority through content is called Affinity Marketing.

Remember: to summarize Affinity Marketing, imagine a bull's-eye with your best clients in the center dot. Surrounding that dot is the people closest to your best clients (their families). Moving out from the center, the next circle represents your best clients' coworkers, and the third circle represents their friends. As the circles grow in size, they move farther away from the center.

The people closest to the center dot are just like your best

clients. They can afford your service, they already understand its value, and a person they care about is in love with your service. They know, like, and trust you already. It's your responsibility to help them. The Affinity Marketing process helps entrepreneurs identify these high-affinity clients, create a proposal to help them, and then convert them to clients.

These people don't need filtering; they need someone to say, "Come with me. I'll show you." They don't need an ad; they need a hand. Affinity Marketing is also a multiplier for digital marketing to come later because every new client is the center ring of a new bull's-eye. Affinity Marketing is also an accessible, natural offshoot of regular goal reviews, which is a critical part of your retention plan.

Breadcrumbs

The third priority in your marketing plan is called "lead nurture." When people indicate interest in your service but aren't ready to sign up right away, what do you do?

Well, you write them love letters. You make them mixtapes, podcasts, YouTube videos, and other presents to show them you care. You tell them how you're going to solve their problems, and you prove your skill by telling stories of others. Two-Brain entrepreneurs produce a lot of content in a caring, engaging way because no one gets married on the first date.

And Now, Digital Marketing

Finally, your last priority is to speak to strangers. This is called advertising, and the most potent advertising is digital marketing. The power of storytelling amplifiers like Facebook and Instagram are incredible. Consider them the top of your marketing funnel: They're the way you meet strangers and start a conversation.

Top-of-funnel marketing used to mean billboards and radio ads. Now it means Facebook, YouTube, and Google—and it might mean Strava or Amazon (bank on it) or geofencing micro-targeting in the future. But the key to success is practice. It's not the secret ad copy; it's reps. I'm a better salesperson than I used to be, for two reasons:

1. I've done "sales" so many times; and
2. I know that my service works.

That means I have confidence in my operations. Before you can truly scale up your business, you have to have a business that can run with excellence.

PART 2: YOUR OPERATIONS

IMPROVE OPERATIONS

Operational Excellence, or How to Survive a Bus Crash

I sat on the edge of our staircase, trying to put on my socks—and failing at it. Every time I tried to lift my foot, or bend at the waist, the pain in my back froze me solid. I'd never imagined pain this intense before.

It didn't help to know the source: I'd torn a muscle deadlifting without a proper warmup. In a rush to set up a booth for a trade show, I'd quickly built to a one-rep max and then started carrying equipment up and down a staircase to the car. My quadratus lumborum tore while I was hauling a television up a long staircase. And now my spine felt like a bunch of balls balancing on one another: completely unstable, and one tiny movement away from falling to the ground.

But I had to go to work.

I had clients booked, and my other coaches couldn't take them. If we canceled the appointments, the business would lose a few hundred dollars. If we lost a few hundred dollars, the business couldn't pay my wage on Friday. So I squeezed the tears out of my eyes, popped another Tylenol, and tried again to put my socks on.

When I got to work, I cinched my powerlifting belt around my midsection. I cranked it as tightly as I could against my skin and pulled my loosest polo shirt on over the top. I didn't want my clients to see me hurt—because exercise doesn't cause injury, right?! No way!—and I fought through the day, one hour at a

time. I probably did some long-term damage, but I got paid.

This should never happen. You are not your business.

Most of us opened a gym to buy ourselves a coaching job. We figured we could make more money if we kept all of it. But most of us were unprepared for the “business side”: managing people, collecting money, paying taxes, making exhausting decisions...

Most of all, we were unprepared for the highs and lows. Working for someone else, you don’t realize how sheltered you are from the exhausting work of planning, the stress of risk, and the constant burden of carrying others’ problems on your shoulders.

When I found my first mentor, I thought he would give me a secret marketing tip, or some kind of silver bullet to make more money. He didn’t. Instead, we started our conversation with systems.

He said, “Chris, what happens if you get hit by a bus?”

I thought about it. “The business would close,” I eventually said.

“What would happen to your staff?” he asked.

“They’d have to find other jobs. Probably in another industry.”

“What would happen to your clients?”

“They’d find other trainers. But those other trainers wouldn’t be as good as we are.”

He leaned in. He wanted me to know he took the next question

seriously: “What would happen to your family?”

I couldn’t imagine. My wife would have to find a job, I guessed. My daughter would go into daycare or get shuffled between relatives. We’d probably have to sell our house. And the insurance money we’d receive wouldn’t cover the cost of my funeral.

My mentor painted a very dire picture of the worst-case scenario. Still, a less dramatic accident could have the same effect: I was very lucky (and pretty dumb) to be able to keep all of my appointments with a back injury. I’d come very close. Missing a day of work would have put my paycheck in jeopardy; the 48-hour flu could have been fatal for my business. I kept trudging forward because I couldn’t afford to take a single step backward. The problem was, I wasn’t really going anywhere.

My mentor said, “Let’s make sure you’re worth more alive than dead, to start.” Because he knew it: I couldn’t keep pulling this train forever. Merely showing up and delivering my coaching every day took all of my time and energy. Before I could work on marketing or sales or the other things that scaling demands, I needed to make my business run without me. I needed to pass the “hit by a bus” test.

This section of the book will probably be less popular than the first part. But if I had to choose, I’d tell you to prioritize this part over the first. Many gym owners, just like me, want to talk about marketing and sales all day long. But without systems to run their gym, they won’t keep the clients they gain. They’ll be forced to talk about marketing all the time because they’ll always need more clients. Instead of making forward progress, they’ll find themselves on a constant spiral of client acquisition and client churn: one step forward, one step back, repeated over and over until they wear a rut into the ground.

Every business goes through periods of expansion and contraction. You take a few steps forward, and then you take a few backward. That's natural.

Most business owners worry they're not taking forward steps quickly enough. But it's the backward steps that can kill businesses. While you'll never avoid the backward steps altogether, the key is to make them smaller and happen less often.

How do you stop the backsliding? With systems. A business rises to the level of its audience. But it always sinks to the level of its systems.

What Are Business Systems?

Business systems are clear instructions that allow your team to operate your business as if you were there, even when you're not. Business systems mean that you do things the same way every time. For example, you charge the same rates. And those rates are written down.

You run your classes the same way. And that process is written down. You educate your coaches to the same level. And that process is written down. You have a plan for client onboarding, for client sales, and for client retention. And all your coaches know it. These plans are all written down. If staff people don't know the answer to a question, they know where to find it without calling you.

The ultimate test of systematic excellence? You're entirely replaceable in your business (at least for as long as you want to be). Because if your business requires you to show up every day, be available to staff and clients at all times, and never get sick or take a vacation, you don't own a business. It owns you. Consistency is more important than anything else.

How Do You Know You Need Systems?

I'm sure you've heard this comment: "It's just not the same when you're not here." Or this one: "We miss your coaching in the six a.m. class!" Or you've had this question from staff: "Hey, we're out of toilet paper. When can you get some?" And I'm sure you've thought this: "I'm always putting out fires!" If any of the lines above sound familiar, you have a systems problem.

I used to hear all those lines and have all those thoughts. But when my first mentor had me spend an entire weekend hunched over my coffee table, writing step-by-step instructions for running Catalyst, I wasn't excited about it.

My mentor told me that I had to make my business turnkey. He explained the value of replacing myself perfectly. I didn't understand the importance of the exercise at the time, but after writing down instructions for everything—systemizing my gym—here's what happened:

- I stopped looking over everyone's shoulder.
- I stopped doing jobs for people.
- Everyone did a much better job.
- My staff became more relaxed because they knew what to do.
- My stress level came down a ton.
- I had more headspace because I was no longer "putting out fires."
- I had more time to apply to marketing and sales.
- I stopped working Saturdays and Sundays.
- I stayed in the hospital with my wife when my son was born (that didn't happen with my daughter because I thought, "No one else can run my gym as I can, so I have to be there!").

- I started to scale up my gym.
- I duplicated the systems to scale my next business—and the next. Because once you learn how to do this, you’ll find it works on any business. I used the same process to build my massive worldwide mentorship practice later.

Recording and perfecting my systems didn’t mean my gym became “corporate.” It meant my gym became professional. None of my current success would have happened if I hadn’t spent that one weekend writing everything down, step by step. I’d still be in the gym, coaching all the classes, training all the clients, and hating my life.

If you were hit by a bus, would your business run the same without you? The real truth is that my life before I systemized my business, *was* the bus crash. If I hadn’t made myself replaceable, I wouldn’t have survived.

Consistency > Everything Else

Systems make decisions simple. Systems mean your staff knows the answers without asking you. Systems mean you don’t have to justify, apologize, or feel guilty with your clients all the time.

Systems mean you have the headspace to tackle big projects—or the calendar space to tackle your kids in your backyard instead of working every hour of the day.

Systems remove distractions. Systems keep you focused.

Systems tell your staff and clients exactly how to do things the way you want them done. Systems keep you from looking over their shoulder and feeling like “no one can do this like I can!”

In this section, I’ll tell you how to build consistent systems. First, I’ll tell you about the power of consistency. Then I’ll tell

you the one thing I consistently do that's made me successful. I'll teach you the three primary systems you need in your business. Then, before we move on, I'll give you a present.

Systems Are Your Methods, Put to Paper

One of the first things we teach entrepreneurs is to get their systems out of their heads and onto paper. Then they consolidate these checklists, guides, policies, and best practices into playbooks. Every operational procedure, every policy, every best practice goes into the playbook—because your staff can't read your mind but they can read a book.

Your staff won't make decisions on their own. That's understandable. But the secret to entrepreneurial traction is to make decisions once instead of several times. So you have to write everything down. This is the foundation for growth.

Next, you have to repeat the same actions over and over again. Doing things the same way every time makes you predictable and trustworthy to your staff and clients. Excellence isn't one brilliant performance; it's performing at a high level every time. Inconsistent excellence isn't excellence at all. Making the little decisions in advance will also clear up your brain space for the bigger stuff.

Steve Jobs famously wore the same turtleneck and ate the same breakfast every day. Jobs was avoiding “decision fatigue”: the exhausting toll that little decisions take on our brains, weakening our clarity and resolve. Jobs knew our capacity for making decisions is finite. We have a daily limit. And even little choices, like what to wear to the office, eat away at that capacity. So when big, important decisions have to be made, we're not playing with a full deck.

Here's one example from my business: I used to offer some

clients a discount to train with me. I didn't like offering the discount, but I wasn't confident in my real value. The problem is that discounts are a slippery slope: when you offer 20% off to one person, you start wondering if you should offer 20% off to the next person, and then the next. Every new client adds a critical decision to your daily load: Should I offer this person a discount or not? What are the pros and cons? What are other gyms doing? How will this affect my sale? Isn't some money better than nothing? And on and on, with all kinds of emotion piling into the choice.

When I learned how to write policies into a playbook, I wrote, "We don't offer discounts." I didn't justify the decision; I just wrote it down. So when the next client came in and asked for a discount, I said, "We don't have discounts." They said, "Ok. Will you take a credit card?"

Putting a policy on paper makes it permanent. Decisions don't count while they're still in your head.

"That Decision Has Already Been Made"

Here's another example: a client says, "I didn't show up last month. Can I get a refund?" If you have a written refund policy, your answer is simple: yes or no. No agonizing, no apologizing, no deliberating, no stressing about it later. If you don't have a written policy, you'll spend all day worrying about the decision instead of thinking about bigger opportunities.

Another example: A staff person says, "Can I get a raise?" If you have a written policy on staff wages, your answer is simple: "Yes, you've met the conditions for a raise" or "Not until you achieve these conditions." No late nights worrying, no hard conversations, no loss of authority, no apologizing. Such is the power of black and white

Consistency Is Greater Than Everything Else

We want entrepreneurs to make decisions once, get these decisions out of their heads, and free up focus to solve bigger problems. Here's how to make decisions once and move on to other things:

1. Record your standard operating procedures in a business operations manual or playbook. This is a long process, and we break it down into steps in the Two-Brain mentorship program. But you can do it yourself—I did, the first time—it will just take a lot longer.

Your goal is to write a book that could replace you: Your staff should be able to refer to the playbook instead of asking you questions about how to do things. A great ops manual would make your business turnkey: If you were hit by a bus, someone else could read the manual and run your business exactly the way you do.

2. Make your procedures as simple as possible. Reduce every rule to black and white. Remove exceptions and shades of gray.

3. Train your staff to refer to the playbook to find answers first. This requires discipline on your part: It's easy, in the short term, to just answer their questions. But this trains everyone around you to ask questions instead of finding answers in your playbook, which makes the whole process redundant.

4. Make yourself unavailable. Close your door. Go away on vacation. This is the only way to find the holes in your ops manual. People will make mistakes while you're out that they wouldn't make when you're there to correct them. This is the point of being unavailable: to identify these gaps and mistakes and fix them forever. Write them down and add them to the playbook.

5. When faced with a new situation, make your decision, and record it in the ops manual. Having new choices to make is part of being successful. But making the same decision twice is lousy leadership. You'll continuously take two steps forward and two steps backward.

6. As your business grows, hire someone to manage the day-to-day operations of your business. This could be a general manager or a COO. The person should wear the playbook on his or her belt: The job is to ensure compliance and not make decisions for you. The GM or COO doesn't need to figure anything out: He or she just needs to keep things black and white and follow your manual. This saves them time and stress and makes them more successful. The best managers are the people who can implement the playbook best, not the mini-entrepreneurs who spit out new ideas like a gumball machine. Your job is to pull the business forward; their job is to stop it from sliding back. Review changes to the playbook with your entire staff every quarter.

Here's the great news: You'll always need to make decisions. You'll still face challenges. The business will always be tough, but it won't be impossible. You'll make progress if you record your decisions. The key is to continually make new decisions and face new challenges. Most gym owners don't do this. Many who have owned a gym for a decade don't actually have ten years of experience; they really have one year of experience, repeated ten times. I don't want that for you.

Every decision you make is a little bit of grit under your tires—but only if you write the decisions down and ensure the rules are rigidly applied in the future. If everything's in your head, you'll always be taking a step forward and then a step back again.

Now for the gift: here's a special guide to help you add systems and work on higher-value work, step by step. Go to www.twobrainbusiness.com/handbook and download the "Two-Brain Business CEO Book."

Systemize, Optimize, Automate

In the last section, I told you the value of systemizing your business and how that process changed my life. The first step to changing your trajectory is systemization. If you're going to master a craft, you must become a master of the basics.

We see this in other crafts, too—not just painting and storytelling. Take baking or golf, for example. Everyone can learn to bake. But if you want to master the craft, nothing is better than baking school and learning the fundamentals of baking. Even professional golfers who plateau break their swings down to the basics (grip, stance, ball position) and rebuild them to generate more power and, most importantly, create more consistency. Your business systems aren't static. You must continuously audit your systems and ask, "Is this still the best way to do this?" That's called optimization.

The second step in changing your trajectory is optimization. After you've tested your systems and proven them to be replicable every single time, you can edit them. I say "edit" because editing your systems is like editing a book: You look for ways to deliver the same service with less effort. You look for efficiencies and cut for clarity.

For me, this usually means asking something like this: "If I put this instruction in the first email every client gets automatically, will it save me having to answer a question individually every time?" When I scaled Two-Brain Business from 10 clients to 50, I asked myself, "What are the most common things I'm telling everyone?" And then I put those lessons into video form. When

new clients got on a call, most of the “teaching” was already done, and we could work together on implementation.

For you, this might mean recording movement demos or sending instructions to set up an account in your software. It could also mean removing things that aren’t absolutely necessary. I used to send every client a six-page PDF on the Zone Diet. Now I just say, “Here are your macros. Here’s the benefit of eating this way.” They take action faster and make gains sooner.

Your staff playbook is the repository for your systems. You must build your staff playbook and totally systemize your business before it can grow. And every year, you’re going to go through your staff playbook with your team. You’re going to tell them, “Friends, this is open for feedback. But when we leave here today, we will all agree to do things exactly the way we’ve committed them to this book.”

Every quarter, you’re going to go through the staff playbook by yourself. You’re going to ask, “Is this still the best way?” You’re going to upgrade your systems to the industry’s new gold standards or just change them based on your experience.

Finally, every time you do something new, adopt a new process, come up with a new policy, or encounter a new problem, you’re going to put everything in your playbook. For me, this often means that every time I screw something up, I write down my mistakes. I make a lot of mistakes. But I have permission to make mistakes because I know they won’t be wasted. I use them to create new systems or optimize old ones.

Systemize, optimize, automate—these are the steps to growing without constantly slipping backward. Without systems, you’re going to always take one step forward and one step back. Optimizing your systems allows you to make giant strides ahead

with fewer and fewer steps backward.

The third phase of building systems is automation. Automation is a wonder. It can take work off your plate. It can ensure that repetitive tasks aren't skipped. And it can help you work on new stuff. But many gym owners treat automation like abdication: They allow the software to manage their client relationships on their behalf. Or they outsource their marketing to an uncaring agency. Or maybe, instead of understanding the process themselves, they simply tell someone else, "You're responsible for this! Figure it out!"

Only after testing your processes and optimizing them should you choose to automate parts of your business. Don't bring in an automated "solution" until you've walked the path yourself. Set deep tracks for others to follow. And automate the right processes. For example, many coaches lose clients because they rely too much on automated texts, emails, and prebuilt programs.

Instead of sending a personal text, they set up automation: "Hey, it's me. Checking in on you ..." This is sometimes playing with fire. If you send a text about "top tricks to lose weight this weekend" and your client doesn't care about weight loss, it's going to become quickly apparent that he or she is not getting your personal attention. Don't let automation make you lazy in relationships.

Human Automation

In 2010, it was briefly popular for gym owners to give their staff a share of the business but require that the staff members find new clients and sign them up. Gym owners weren't automating a proven process; they were simply saying, "I don't know how to do this. Maybe you don't either, but figure it out, or you're fired!"

Hundreds of gyms adopted this practice. I don't expect many to remember this system because the gyms who tried it are mostly gone now. The founders tried to succeed by automating a broken system.

Automation can sometimes mean using the software. There are certain instances where you can automate your client's experience: housekeeping items ("Here's your waiver!"), program introductions, FAQs, and weekly reminders for routine tasks ("Don't forget to take a picture of your meal today!").

Automation can also mean routine tasks for humans instead of software. For example, write a process for your staff: "Text 20 former members every Friday to see how they're doing." The task is automated—you don't have to tell anyone to do it—but not computerized. See the difference?

When automating through a human, you want to put the best human for the task in that role. Not everyone is great at communicating through text, for example. If your coach can't send a text without spelling mistakes, he or she is not a great fit. I'm not great at using emojis or GIFs, so I have others do the texting for me.

The key to all of this: Don't jump to automation too fast. Telling a staff person to "text everyone every day" won't work; you need to test the system yourself, record what works, optimize your delivery, and then hand it off.

Software Automation

Now, there are some systems where software really does help. Tracking attendance, tracking progress, and billing your clients—those are great examples. But which software is best for managing your gym and taking these automated tasks off

your plate?

Every year, we run an objective review of gym management software. You'll find it on our website. But you have to make your own selection. Most of the opinions you'll find in Facebook groups and websites aren't backed by data and testing. The user hasn't tried any other options, so $n = 1$. We want to hold each platform against the same set of tests and rank them.

Is your software working? Here's a test. Open your gym management platform and start a stopwatch. How long does it take for you to determine your:

1. Length of client engagement (LEG).
2. Average revenue per client per month (ARM).
3. Total revenue.
4. Profit (if your platform allows you to do so).
5. New members.
6. Lost members.
7. Net membership.
8. Lifetime value (LTV).

If you're a Two-Brain client, use the Two-Brain Dashboard to track your metrics and see growth over time. If you're not a Two-Brain client yet, download a free spreadsheet for tracking your metrics at www.twobrainbusiness.com/handbook.

Record your time to get all these numbers. If it takes less than 10 minutes, record your system for tracking your metrics. Use a screen-capture tool to record your process for pulling your metrics out of your gym management system. Try to do it faster next month. If it takes longer than 10 minutes, that's not ideal. But ask yourself: Can you do it faster next time now that you know how? If it takes longer than 30 minutes, consider switching software platforms.

Gym Business Systems: Your Foundation

Your business is the sum of its systems. The best follow the path of systemizing, optimizing, automating. We walk gyms through this step by step in our mentorship program.

The worst gyms require their owners to always fight fires, jump from idea to idea, and eventually surrender their businesses to software platforms (and pay thousands for them every month). The best gyms rely on systems that are frequently audited and revised. And some of them are automated. That allows the owner to increase efficiency, improve service, and focus on building a long-term personal relationship with each client.

Software accelerates systems. If you have a broken system or an incomplete one, or if you don't have it written down, no piece of software can help you. If you depend on software to retain your clients for you, then you're in trouble. But if you use software this way, it's great. Take the time to get it right:

- Write out an operating system.
- Test the system for a few months to make sure it works.
- Replace specific steps with software automation.
- Systemize, optimize, automate.

Look, I get it: you're busy. You don't have time to sit by yourself for a couple of days and write checklists. Right? When I did it, I didn't have time either. This process killed a whole weekend that I could have spent playing with my daughter. But until you get your business out of your head, you'll never have more time. You'll never make forward progress.

If you haven't done this before, start with a simple opening checklist. Write down the process, step by step, to open your gym. Pretend you're writing it for a brand new staff member, so

you don't skip steps. Start with "get out of your car." Remember: There's no such thing as "common sense." Assume no one knows anything. Then write down your closing checklist. Then write down a 10/10 class experience in your gym, and you'll find more and more things to systemize.

No one in your business is as good as you are—but everyone should be. Systems allow them to deliver at your level.

Consistency Is More Important Than Perfection

A final note on consistency: it doesn't mean that you do things perfectly, just that you do them the same way every time. Of course, you'll always seek to optimize your systems. But if you aren't operating perfectly now, write your systems down anyway.

My father-in-law is 75. He spent his life in a steel mill, raising five kids on a small salary and running a small farm in the valley. When he retired, he started working on old cars. Restoration is his vocation. If you've ever heard Johnny Cash's "One Piece at a Time," that's Russ.

Russ doesn't build "kit cars." His Model A has been chopped down, souped-up, and customized from head to toe. Most of the pieces don't match the original design. He dropped a larger engine inside. He changed the initial seat configuration. When he was younger (age 70), he used to spin the tires at the end of my driveway on his way to car shows. Russ's cars are fantastic because he builds them with imperfect but continuous action. He works a little bit every day—usually less than an hour.

Russ's cars aren't perfect. They don't completely match the original specifications. But they run. They go fast. They look cool. His grandkids play in them. Neighbors complain about the noise. In short, Russ builds cars for all the reasons you really

want to own a classic car. Consistent, imperfect action is the recipe for success—in relationships, in business, and in fast old cars.

I write “love letters” to my mailing list almost every day, and, well, they stack up. Russ’s story reminded me of how my first book, “Two-Brain Business,” was published in the first place.

In a nutshell, I was invited to speak at a gym owners’ gathering in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. I knew the other speakers would have some useful material, so I put my top 20 blog posts from my personal blog into a self-publishing platform and shipped 30 copies to the host. It was the cheapest way to print them. There were no page numbers or chapters, and no table of contents.

I’ve changed the cover since then—but nothing else. And it’s sold over 30,000 copies. In fact, it’s the bestselling fitness business book of all time.

There are about 40 reviews on “Two-Brain Business” on Amazon. Most are five stars, but a few buyers gave it a mediocre review. Some were legitimate (“There is some good information in here, but you have to dig for it.” “The book is poorly organized with no table of contents, chapters or index.”). Some are even funny: “This book is too specific!”

The critical thing to realize is that none of my critics have ever published anything.

“Two-Brain Business” is wildly popular because it works. The stories leave the reader with actionable lessons. While I think “Two-Brain Business 2.0” is actually a superior book because it provides step-by-step instructions, the original is more popular precisely because of its rawness. It took years to write because it took me years to fix the mistakes I’d made in my gym. But the successful gym Catalyst became—like the book—resulted from

consistent, imperfect action.

Catalyst is not the cleanest gym you'll ever visit. It's more than clean enough, but it's not perfect. The ceilings are 14 feet, not 15, so our rope is a foot shorter than spec. But it's incredibly fun, the hugs are genuine, and we make people fit and happy every single day.

My staff playbook doesn't have a beautiful cover. There are no page numbers. But my staff members know what to do, and they do it consistently. My website isn't artistic. But people can book a free No Sweat Intro in two clicks or less. And they consistently do.

Strive for excellence. But when you can't be excellent, know this: You're more than good enough already. Publish anyway. Consistent, imperfect action will carry you further than brief moments of perfection. You can polish the headlights again, or you can go out and spin the tires.

Metrics

Building systems is how you move forward down the path of success. Writing your systems down has a ratcheting effect: you roll the heavy rock forward, and then you click a wedge into place to stop you from sliding backward again. Then you rest, and then you push, and then you wedge. Push, wedge. One step forward, stop. One step forward, stop. No stepping backward every time.

Now it's time to move forward, faster. To go faster, you have to know how quickly you're moving. You have to know what's slowing you down. And you have to know where you're headed! How do we know those things? We measure the things that matter. These are your business metrics.

Metrics That Matter

Every popular business book, every consultant and guru, and every podcast guest tells us to “know our numbers.” But highly successful gym owners don’t know every possible metric of measurement in their gyms. Instead, they focus on the few metrics that matter.

For example, “How many members does your gym have?” is an irrelevant question. The answer doesn’t matter because a gym can have 300 members and not be profitable. Profit is what counts. A profitable gym with 20 members is a better gym than an unprofitable gym with 200 members.

Off the top of your head, you should be able to answer these questions:

- How much revenue came in this month?
- How much revenue can you expect next month?
- Is your business profitable?
- How much can you afford to pay yourself as the owner?
- What are your expenses?

We teach you how to get these metrics—and then take control of them—in our mentorship programs.

Most gym owners can list their max deadlift, fastest mile run time, and best Fran time. But most can’t tell us their profitability or how long their members stick around. And those numbers determine success. When you know the metrics that matter in your business, you can make informed decisions. You’ll have less stress and more confidence. You won’t feel tired all the time. You’ll have an objective view that allows you to say, “this is the thing to do right now.”

Numbers tell the truth. You must know how your business is doing, month over month, and chase progress in the key

metrics that matter. At the beginning of this book, I introduced you to three metrics: ARM, LEG, and LTV. But there are a few more. Here they are, as a refresher, with the rest of the metrics you need to track every month:

- **Revenue:** The grand total of all money coming into your business.
- **Expenses:** Recurring costs. This excludes staff pay or new purchases but includes loan payments and monthly bills.
- **Staff Pay:** All staff-related costs, including payroll, employment taxes, and health care.
- **New Members:** The members who joined (or rejoined) since last month's count.
- **Lost Members:** The members who quit since last month's count.
- **Paying Members:** Every member who is paying a recurring fee or buying your service in packages.
- **Total Members:** All members, including free clients or "trades."
- **LEG:** Length of engagement.
- **Set rate:** How many sales appointments were set by prospective clients.
- **Show rate:** How many prospective clients showed up for their sales appointments.
- **Close rate:** How many prospective clients signed up.
- **Profit:** the margin left after expenses and staff pay. **The minimum goal here is 33 percent of gross.**

For now, we'll focus on reaching an operating profit of 33 percent. This means daily profit; your pay comes from this margin, as does new equipment, savings, etc. It's a starting point for an owner/operator service. And 22 to 25 percent of your gross revenue should be enough to cover your expenses—the unavoidable and recurring monthly costs such as rent, loan payments, and electricity.

For most owners, opening a gym is the first time they've owned a business. They see only black and white—expenses and revenues—and as long as the latter is greater than the former, they're happy. But this leads to a huge blind spot. If expenses are too high, one of two things is happening: Either the coaches are underpaid, or the business is underpaid. You can be sure the landlord and the electric company won't be underpaid for long! The money has to come from somewhere.

Let's be very clear and cut through all the chatter in the industry: Your business must turn a profit. That number matters more than gross revenue, the number of members, and other metrics.

Here are the metrics that are most closely tied to profit. You've seen them before.

ARM: Average Revenue Per Member

A six-figure profit is possible in a gym with 150 clients. This depends on controlling fixed costs and paying coaches properly, as mentioned above. But it also relies on a high average revenue per member (ARM).

If the gym's goal is to earn a \$200 ARM, that doesn't mean every client pays \$200 and receives identical service. After all, different clients have different needs, and those needs will determine the value they ascribe to your service. If a client prefers privacy over a group's enthusiasm, the gym should provide an option for privacy. That option will be more expensive, of course.

Some clients—your very best clients—pay more than the average revenue per month because they use many of your services. Other clients will pay less per month. ARM is the mean average of all your clients.

LEG: Length of Engagement

A high ARM is much easier to achieve with long-term clients. Clients who have been around for a full year have much more trust in their coaches. They're more likely to know where they need more work to round out their fitness, and they'll know where to get help.

Long-term clients increase in value if you can keep them engaged. For this reason, retention is my favorite area of study. It's easier to keep a client than gain a new one, but every athlete's needs change over time. You can use that knowledge to find ways to motivate long-term clients and provide the services they want. That's the Prescriptive Model.

Track Your Numbers—and Trust Them

I can remember when I didn't want to check my bank balance because I was scared to see the number, literally preferring ignorance to problem-solving action. But data is the truth: If you're tracking your numbers, you'll have clarity. If you're not, you'll be running blind.

Most gym owners open a business to feed themselves (or their families). They sell some memberships and make some revenue. But revenue isn't the point. The number of clients you serve isn't the point. Profitability is the point. Profit pays the bills at home. Profit buys groceries. Unfortunately, many gym owners lose all of their profits. It leaks out as expenses, or it's paid out to staff first, leaving the owner with the scraps.

Are You Kicking Your Profitability Away?

“I'll let people try my service for free, and then make it up on the back end.”

“I’ll pay my staff a salary and then pay myself when we’re profitable.”

“I’ll take some money out of the business when we reach 100 members.”

Entrepreneurs open a gym for all the right reasons: they want to help people. They want to share the gift of fitness. And they want to tear up the old myths about health and food. They’re passionate. And they’re usually generous to the point of hurting themselves.

They tell themselves that “leaders eat last” and that they’re “playing the long game.” They keep kicking their success down the road. And most never, ever catch up. I was that way too.

Here are some of the methods we teach to help owners get profitable NOW:

1. “Profit First.”

This is an accounting strategy created by Mike Michalowicz. My friend John Briggs made the strategy applicable to gym owners in his book, “Profit First for Microgyms.” Both are required reading for our mentorship clients. Here’s the nutshell version:

Paying yourself first means you’ll pay yourself, period. My favorite “profit first” analogy is the toothpaste tube. When the tube is new, you’re pretty loose with the paste. If you spill some, it’s no big deal. If you use more than you need, no problem. But at the end of the tube, you’re squeezing every last drop out. You’re rolling it up, folding it, pressing it against the sink. That’s how money works, too. If the rent is due, you’ll hustle to pay it. But if it’s your own pay on the line, you won’t. Pay yourself first, and you’ll always have the money.

2. The 4/9ths Model.

Every staff person should generate 2.25x their pay. That means your staff costs should be, at most, 44% of your gross revenue. How you achieve that goal is up to you, but we teach a directive model called “The 4/9ths Method.” Two-Brain gyms create intrapreneurial opportunities for their staff to grow on the gym’s platform without weakening its cash position. The gym owner shields the team from the real risks of entrepreneurship, provides an audience for their idea, covers the costs of facilities and insurance, and makes the idea viable.

The staff person delivers their program and keeps the biggest share of the revenues (44%). The ratios and percentages for staff costs line up with the Profit First strategy, and other accounting authors support the ratios (for example, Greg Crabtree’s “Simple Numbers”). Paying the staff 4/9ths of the revenue they generate is a simple, effective way to hit your targets. Pay your staff 4/9ths on group classes, PT, and specialty programs. Show them the opportunity to make more money. Slowly move other roles onto their plate and pay them separately for those roles, but keep your total staff costs under 44% of your gross revenue.

3. Collect Up Front but Pay Staff on Delivery.

Some owners sell personal training packages and immediately pay their trainers their share before service. This is very demotivating because the money will be spent long before the sessions run out. What happens when the trainer wants to take a vacation? They keep the money, and the owner provides the service for free. What happens when the trainer does a lousy job? The owner is forced to keep them around... at least until all of the sessions are fulfilled. What happens when the trainer leaves or just stops showing up? It’s always the owner who gets caught in the middle. Collect from your clients in advance, but

never pay ahead of delivery by your staff.

4. Build an Annual Plan.

If you've been tracking your metrics, you'll know where the peaks and valleys are in your business. Bridge those valleys with specialty programs, events, or other cash spikes.

5. Don't Be Scared to Borrow Money.

Many gym owners think it's wise to bring every credit card to zero every month; to buy things only with cash; to impoverish their business instead of carrying a loan balance. It's not wise; it's a starvation diet. Years ago, when my bank account hit rock-bottom, I made maximal payments on my loans and paid off my credit card balance every month. Finally, when I couldn't starve my family anymore, I reached a point where I didn't have enough money to cover payroll. I called the bank and asked them to refinance my little \$15,000 loan.

The loan officer said, "Yeah, sure. You've never done this before? Everyone does this!"

I spread my loan balance out over 5 years, cut my payments in half, and breathed easier. Of course, I paid off the balance before it was due. But giving myself that little breathing room helped me sleep at night, be less distracted with my clients, and keep my staff paid on time. I needed that short-term win to get me through the bigger battles ahead.

Finally, **remember** that your business exists to serve your family first, your clients second, and your staff third. You didn't open a business to be a fundraiser for the government or the bank or your brand. You did not open a business to take a vow of poverty. You opened a business to eat. People who don't own successful gyms don't often understand this: your

martyrdom doesn't make your clients fitter. Your starvation doesn't keep them around longer. You're not helping anyone by working a 15-hour day, and you're definitely hurting your family. Keep that perspective at all times.

Nothing changes until you change. You tell it to your clients, and it applies to you too.

The most important metric in your business is **profit**. The most important metric in your entrepreneurial career is your **Effective Hourly Rate**.

Effective Hourly Rate

Big Nick didn't laugh often, but he was sure laughing now. His big belly shook as he roared at me. Leaning back against a stack of dirty tires, he held his cigarette at arm's length so he wouldn't burn himself. I felt dumb, but I loved watching Nick laugh and I knew there was a valuable lesson coming.

We were standing just inside Nick's auto shop. The summer sun was beating down hard outside, but the concrete floor kept everything cool. The smells of motor oil and Nick's cigarette mingled in the dark space. My first unpaid mentor ever, Nick Palumbo, was laughing because I'd just told him what I earned per hour at my gym.

"Never, ever ..." he cracked up again before he could finish. Then he pushed his curly gray hair back from his forehead with greasy fingers as he got control of himself again. He took a deep breath. "Never, ever figure out your hourly rate." He said. "You'll quit!" Then he pushed off the stack, shaking his head as he walked deeper into the garage. "You have the worst boss in the world!" he yelled over his shoulder. "And so do I!"

Nick was my first business hero. But he was wrong. You should

know your value. You should calculate what you earn in the time you spend. Nick belonged to that older class of entrepreneur: the kind of people who live above their bakeries, the kind who are happy just to have bought themselves a job, and the kind who accept the 70-hour-work week for 30 years as a fair trade for money.

I don't.

Your time is worth more than money. But only if you invest it properly. Some gym owners earn more than enough. They have freedom of time and money. Many gym owners would actually make more money driving an Uber and paying for their own gym memberships.

In this section, I will tell you how to grow your business by spending your time better. Everyone knows what “ROI” means; here, I'm going to tell you how to maximize ROT—return on time spent. We're going to start with the bad news: a calculation of what your actual time is worth right now.

Calculating Your Effective Hourly Rate

One of my business mentors, Dan Martell, uses a formula he calls “effective hourly rate” (EHR) to determine where an entrepreneur should be spending time. He told me:

“The easiest way to get your Effective Hourly Rate is just to take the gross revenue in your business and divide it by 2,000. That's about the hours that you work in a year. Figuring 100,000 in revenue divided by 2,000, that's \$50 an hour. Once you know your EHR, and if you're doing a million, it's 5,000 an hour. There are real numbers involved.”

Don't worry: This is only a starting point.

Start by totaling the hours you worked last week. Include all your “work” time:

- Cleaning at 4 a.m.
- Opening at 5 a.m.
- Closing at 9 p.m.
- Scrolling Facebook groups about gym ownership on the weekend, programming—even include the parts you enjoy. If you’re at work, it counts (even if you’re exercising). If you’re on a laptop, it counts.

Now, look at your paycheck for last week.

Divide your total take-home pay by the number of hours you worked. Cover one eye and squint if you have to. For example, you made \$700 last week, net. And you worked 54 hours. $\$700 / 54 \text{ hours} = \12.96 per hour . *Gulp*.

“But it’s a labor of love,” right?

Maybe at first. But as you mature as an entrepreneur, your business has to grow up with you. Spraying down barbells at 9 p.m. when your kids are going to bed loses its luster pretty early.

Or maybe your hourly rate is excellent: You paid yourself \$2,000 last week and worked 30 hours. Great! That’s \$66.67 per hour. Pretty good. The challenge now is to focus only on the work that pulls you forward instead of sticking your hands in the machinery. Either way: This is just your starting point. You’re moving on up!

After you’ve systemized your operations and started tracking your progress, you can grow your business by investing your time better. That’s what entrepreneurship is all about. Better entrepreneurs have a higher EHR than beginners because they’re getting better at entrepreneurship.

Take a moment to calculate your EHR. Do it now. The answer might be scary—it might even be tempting to go find a minimum-wage job instead of plugging away at your business—but we need to know this number so we can build on it.

You might recall, from the beginning of this book, that wealth is our goal. Wealth is the freedom of money and time. But you don't just jump from your current level to wealth: you have to climb a ladder.

You improve your EHR, moving closer to wealth, by climbing up the Value Ladder of tasks in your business and focusing on the things that make you the most money in the time you spend. One rung at a time, your value increases by working on higher-level tasks. But you can't work on higher-level tasks until you've completely replaced yourself in lower-level work. That's why you hire staff. And that's why one of the six ways you can grow your business is to Upgrade Your Staff: as you climb the Value Ladder, they'll climb behind you.

UPGRADING YOUR TEAM

The people who got you here might not be the people who get you there. Whether you're hiring new staff, changing staff to reach the next level, or mentoring your staff to reach their own career goals, you must continuously upgrade your team.

As entrepreneurs, we spend a lot of time training ourselves to be better leaders, thinking about our wins and losses and learning from them. But we don't spend much time teaching our staff to be leaders. So when it's time to grow, we promote someone into a management role, and we're surprised that the person doesn't know how to lead people.

Or maybe we're surprised he or she doesn't take the initiative like we do, look for problems to solve before they occur, or possess the knowledge needed to succeed in the new role. In businesses everywhere, we promote people to the level of incompetence and then fire them.

In a gym, this could look like:

A friendly athlete is hired as a part-time coach. That person quits another job to go all-in on coaching. You promote the person to general manager. But he or she isn't really interested in enforcing your late-billing rules or restocking your inventory. The new GM isn't great at selling memberships. You have two choices: Fire or look over the person's shoulder and do the job for him or her.

If you drew this staff ascension process on a piece of paper, it would look like a staircase to nowhere! But that's what most of us build.

In this section, I'm going to tell you:

- How to ascend your staff using the Career Roadmap tool.
- How to train your staff for new roles.
- How to find new staff for higher-level roles.
- How to part ways with staff who won't be part of your next chapter.

Let's face it: The CEO job is one that you probably weren't prepared to take when you opened a gym. You've had to learn an entirely new skill set. No matter what new roles your staff members fill, they'll have to learn how to do them, too.

How to Hire Coaches (Without Hurting Yourself)

The number one reason gym owners don't hire more staff members? "I can't afford them." But if you upgrade your staff the right way, it isn't actually an expense. Here's the rule you must follow:

Every staff person generates at least 2.25 times the revenue he or she is paid.

Front-line staff, like coaches, must create the revenue that pays them—that covers your bills and leaves the gym profitable. Back-line staff, like cleaners, must create time for you to upgrade your own sales and marketing skills so you can generate the revenue that pays them.

Some staff generate revenue. Some staff generate time for the owner. Remember: the measure of your success as an entrepreneur is your Effective Hourly Rate. Every person you hire should improve your Effective Hourly rate by creating more revenue or more time.

There are two ways to do this:

1. Hire people. Take the risk. Hope they work out. Let them try to read your mind. Micromanage them because you can't afford mistakes. Pay them even when you're not being paid. Ruin your relationship while they run you out of business. Get mad that they don't appreciate the opportunity you've given them, and then fire them and say, "I'll just do this myself!"

2. Follow the Intrapreneurial Model. Make every staff person an asset instead of an expense. "Intrapreneurship" means allowing your staff to pursue their ideas without taking the risks you've taken. They can start mini-businesses on your platform without risk, and share the upside with you.

Give them the opportunity to build the career they want through intrapreneurship. Do the thing they can't (build an audience.) Pay them a percentage of the value they create. Pay them more as they produce more value. Help them by mentoring them through Career Roadmap sessions.

- A mentor will guide you through this huge topic step by step. But if you want to try and figure it all out for yourself, you can download all the resources you'll need at www.twobrainbusiness.com/handbook .

There, you'll find:

- Free Hiring Plans and Job Descriptions.
- The Intrapreneurialism 101 Guide.
- A Career Roadmap worksheet and instructions.

Those guides will tell you how to pay coaches and ascend them to great careers.

But let's start with how to find, then train, new coaches.

How to Train New Coaches

Often, the best coaches come from within your community of clients. These people understand your vision and align with your values. It's easier to hire for attitude and train for skill than vice versa. And now, doing so is easier than ever.

Josh Martin and I built the Two-Brain Coaching Degree programs to teach the Two-Brain approach to coaching: technical components and human care. Instead of sending a potential coach away for a weekend seminar for \$500 to \$1,000 and hoping the person will retain as much as possible, you can now train coaches in stages, make them insurable, AND get them some mentorship with successful coaches around the world. And, best of all, they're insurable when they finish!

I don't believe in the "learning through memorization/pass the exam/get a job" approach to career education.

Instead, I believe education should be a balance of practical application and knowledge with feedback. That's what Two-Brain Coaching is for. We put those courses on www.twobraincoaching.com. But you can build this system yourself if you really want to.

In my first books, I wrote about our Advanced Theory Course. This was a program I ran once or twice every year for eight weeks. Coaching prospects would attend classroom sessions on Saturdays, do book reports and presentations for the group, and coach each other. Then I'd "graduate" all of them and cherry-pick the best leaders in each class. I'd ask if they wanted to coach and then send them for certification somewhere.

If this sounds appealing to you, it's all in "Two-Brain Business 2.0," which you can get on Amazon. But if you'd rather have my team do it for you, that's an option too.

How to Find New Coaches

All right: You don't have any happy people with extra time at your gym. No problem! You can still find caring experts in your community who want to work on your fantastic platform.

1. Find coaches who are underemployed at other gyms.

They want to build a living with no ceiling, but they don't want to start their own gym and deal with all the pains. So go to their gyms and talk to them.

Some Two-Brain gyms even share coaches between them! Each gym invests in the coaches' ongoing education, and each provides the coaches with a different audience for their services.

2. Find future coaches at local schools.

You know how I got my first coaching job back in 1996? An Illinois program called my college and asked, "Got any good seniors who want a job?" My department said, "No, but I have a junior who's great with kids." They said, "We're desperate! We'll take him." (Or so I imagine.) Anyway, I lived in Illinois by that weekend, building a new fitness program and teaching kids to inline skate.

There are pros and cons to hiring students, of course. But with a straightforward training process, it's sometimes easier to find a passionate kid who's a blank slate and train him or her to follow your vision.

3. Find great coaches on the TwoBrainCoaching.com job board. It's free!

Post your job (or your resume). Browse the first few jobs we

have on there. Find coaches who are already steeped in Two-Brain values and education.

To grow your business, you need to buy yourself time. That means replacing yourself in front-line delivery roles, at least for a while. Make sure that person is as good as—or better than—you.

4. Advertise online.

You can use the Job Descriptions from the downloadable guides at www.twobrainbusiness.com/handbook .

How to Pay Coaches

How much CAN you afford to pay your coaches? How about yourself?

Earlier, I said that your staff costs should be 44% (or less) of your gross revenue. Think of 44% as your “salary cap.” To hit that number without going over, we teach the 4/9th Model at Two-Brain. We pay our coaches 44% of the gross revenue created by groups, classes, personal training, and specialty programs. Sometimes, coaches launch a program so extensive that it becomes a separate company (like IgniteGym or UpCoach).

The model is supported by data from other industries and accounting strategies like “Profit First.” There are other models: paying coaches a referral bonus, but not teaching them how to sell; paying a flat rate for classes, even when the box owner is losing money; paying a flat salary, rewarding people for being busy instead of getting important things done. Or they might pay a higher percentage for personal training but expect coaches to run classes for free. The point is to reach a salary cap of 44% or less.

I consider the 4/9ths Model to be the most effective model for gyms because:

- It's better pay than a trainer will ever find at a Globogym.
- It creates opportunities to be entrepreneurial, without risk (we call that "intrapreneurial").
- It allows the gym to cover costs and prioritize paying the owner.
- It places real value on the time spent building an audience (which is really the HARD part of gym ownership).
- It removes the ceiling effect created by salaries.

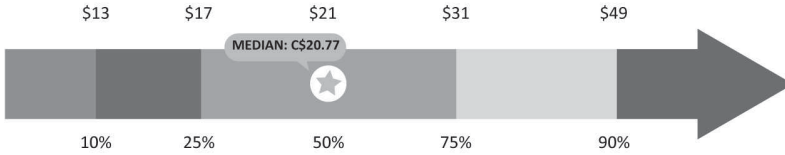
Here's another way to think of the 4/9ths Model that doesn't sound so "mathy": Think of your team of coaches like a sports team, and your mentor as the league commissioner.

By league rules, you're allowed to spend 44.4% of your gross revenue on the payroll. This doesn't include YOUR pay as an owner or your profit. Those payroll expenses include taxes, healthcare, and all other costs associated with paying your staff. This is why I prefer to have contractors instead of employees when possible: I want my crew to have the same taxation opportunities I have, without the entrepreneurial risk. But that's another subject.

Want to hire an admin staff? Excellent, as long as the expense of their wage fits under your salary cap of 44.4%. The average salary cap in the fitness industry is below 25%. If you call a local franchise gym and ask, "how much do you pay your trainers?" they'll give you a number between \$15 and \$25 per hour. That's while they charge over \$80 for personal training, in most cases, and don't pay at ALL for group coaching. See the pictures on the next pages for average pay in Canada and the U.S.:

Personal Trainer Salary Canada

On average, a personal trainer in Canada is paid \$21.04 an hour. Nutrition skills are associated with higher rates of pay. After 20 years of experience, most people move on to other jobs. Salary for personal trainers is strongly influenced by experience.



Hourly Data	\$0	\$49
Hourly Rate	C\$13.03-C\$48.75	
Hourly Tips	C\$0.25-C\$9.93	
Overtime	C\$10.50-C\$44.90	

Data from PayScale.com

Personal Trainer Salary

In the U.S., personal trainer pay is around \$18.55 an hour.



Hourly Data	\$0	\$49
Hourly Rate	\$9.99-\$49.03	
Hourly Tips	\$0.13-\$5.69	
Overtime	\$10.19-\$41.46	

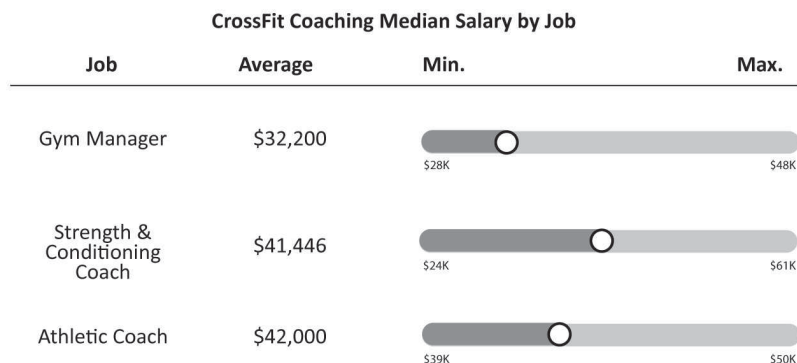
Data from PayScale.com

On the next page, note the average pay for a “gym manager,” “strength and conditioning coach,” and “athletic coach.”

In this survey, “gym manager” seemed to mostly mean “sales manager” on a commission basis. “Strength and conditioning coach” appeared to mean a CSCS-certified employee of a sports team, and “athletic coach” seemed to mean an employee of a university.

The interesting part here is that these numbers haven’t changed since I was in college, twenty years ago.

Average Salary for Skill: CrossFit Coaching



Data from PayScale.com

CrossFit’s REAL benefit to the fitness world has been the opportunity for passionate coaches to make a real living. I know dozens of Two-Brain family members making more than double the \$40,000 ceiling paid to our industry employees. There are too many coaches at *successful* gyms (that’s key) making more than these numbers on the 4/9ths Model to name.

The real opportunity in fitness now is to work at a successful gym. And successful gyms pay their owners well, pay their coaches well, and pay their bills on time. But they don’t start by saying, “I need to make more money before I can pay my coaches.” They start by segmenting their revenues and leveraging their time. Then they start climbing the Value Ladder

toward higher-EHR tasks. And as they ascend, their staff rises behind them.

Ascending Your Staff

Your team needs different training as they ascend in your business. (That includes you.) But most bosses promote people to the level of their incompetence.

For example, let's say you find a great coach. One day you promote her to head coach. She's great. Then you promote her to your only "full-time" role: general manager. For the first time, she's managing people and money. And she's terrible at it.

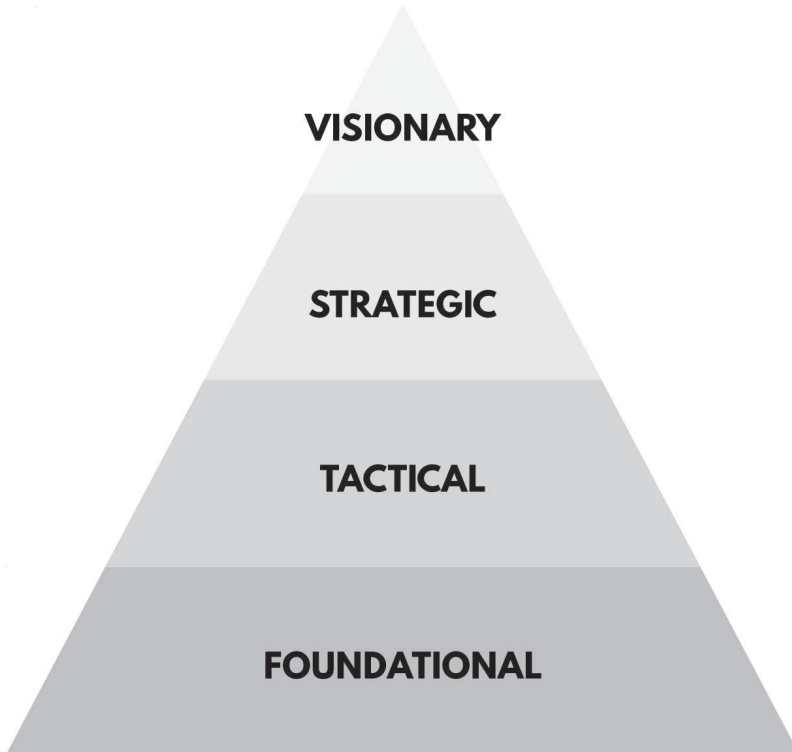
This is a remnant of the old industrial system: The best worker becomes the other workers' manager. The best manager becomes the boss of the other managers. Everyone retires happy at 65. But it's never really worked.

This situation is common with fitness entrepreneurs: We open gyms because we're really great at coaching fitness. But then we realize that 14-hour days are unsustainable, and we hire people—and immediately become managers without management skills.

Some of us instantly realize we're in over our heads and start trying to learn to be leaders. We screw it up over and over. We say the wrong thing or hire the wrong person. We delay doing the hard stuff, and then they blow up when we wait too long. Finally, we get mentors or implode.

Then we promote certain staff people to be managers, and we're shocked when they're bad at it, too. We hire people for one skill, and then we're surprised when they don't immediately develop their other skills. And sometimes that hire is us.

There are four primary levels of work in your business. If you plan to promote from within, you have to train staff members to have their new level skills. Here are the levels:



Foundational

Let's start at the bottom: the foundational skills are non-client-facing. These are the cleaner and the bookkeeper. These skills are best learned through repetitive delivery through a checklist. Because the process is the same every time, excellence occurs through evaluation.

Do this:

1. Write out a clear set of expectations—right down to the most basic checklists, if possible.
2. Review the work quarterly based on the checklist.
3. Upgrade the staff person's knowledge or replace the person as needed.
4. Pay an hourly rate that's consistent with their role. Cleaners' wages don't change much from company to company. Neither do bookkeepers' rates.

Tactical

Next are the tactical skills. These are the client-facing roles that can make or break your business. These are your fitness and nutrition coaches, your client success manager, and anyone else who has regular contact with your clients in a gym.

Tactical skills are hard to develop and even harder to measure. Teaching a coach the technical parts of fitness (biology and physiology and mechanics) is easy. Teaching a coach to represent your values in a happy, caring way is more challenging.

In general, you should hire these people for personality and train them for skill. You don't need a doctorate to be a great coach, but you certainly have to smile.

Measuring your coaches' skills should come through 1:1 conversations with your best clients. Forget client surveys: They're useless and misleading. Talk to your best clients and upgrade (or downgrade) your team as necessary.

Do this:

1. Hire for personality and train for skill.
2. Evaluate every quarter.
3. Seek feedback from your best clients every year or so.

4. Pay them based on the value they create for your business.

Strategic

The third level is strategic. These are your management-level employees. In a gym, that probably means either a general manager or head coach, or both. It could also mean your sales staff if you have a separate role for sales.

The manager's job is to make strategic decisions that follow your vision for the gym. For example, should you raise rates? Run a six-week challenge? Discount your memberships? Base your rates off 200 members or 20 members? These are strategic decisions. And you'll probably make most of them yourself at first. It's the manager's job to adhere to these decisions, implement them consistently, and achieve excellence in delivery.

Now, if you haven't written these decisions down anywhere, then they might as well not exist. Your manager will be forced to try and read your mind. He or she will make guesses. Most will be wrong. You'll get mad. You'll micromanage.

A strategic-level staff person should be given key performance indicators (KPIs) to track and assist in making decisions about delivery. The person should be evaluated based on the delivery of your KPIs.

Do this:

1. Break down KPIs to measure the manager's performance (we give you these on the Two-Brain Roadmap).
2. Mentor the manager to succeed.
3. Provide external leadership training (like mentorship) to your leaders.

4. Add a fourth layer of accounting to your business: management labor.

Visionary

Finally, the top level of your business pyramid is the visionary role. There's a reason I wrote about mission and vision at the beginning of this book.

You have to have a very clear vision of what you're trying to build. And you must teach it, over and over, to everyone around you until they can repeat it verbatim. It must be clear. You'll get tired of hearing it before they will. But it's absolutely critical to do this hard work. If you don't, everyone on your team will be playing a different sport with different rules in different playing fields.

Do this:

1. Find a mastermind or mentor to get some outside perspective.
2. Think about your vision.
3. Write about your vision.
4. Talk about your vision.
5. Lead the leaders on your team.

Of course, no one figures this stuff out by himself or herself. No one is a "born leader." I'm sure not. If my staff is reading this section, I'm sure they're laughing out loud right now. Just remember: people can't read your mind. They all think they're doing really well. If you really care about them, help them ascend.

Here's how you climb the ladder first and then pull them up behind you.

The Value Ladder

Your role as an entrepreneur is to invest your time in the highest-value roles. That means removing the less-valuable things from your plate. But most entrepreneurs don't do this well. They say things like:

“No one can do this like me!”

“It's faster to just do this myself!”

“I can't afford any screw-ups!”

“No one cares as much as I do!

I've been there. The tug-of-war between “I know I should delegate!” and “I can't turn my baby over to my staff!” is an internal battle between logic and emotion. But it's a battle you can win.

Here are the steps to figuring out how to best spend your time and then actually create the time to grow your business.

1. Break down your day by the hats you wear.

If you were to duplicate yourself into 12 clones, and each clone could only do one job all day, what would those jobs be? Cashier? The maker of the doughnuts? Purchaser or supplies? Decorator? Cleaner? Make a list. We call these “roles.” Break yourself down into the smallest indivisible roles.

2. Now program your clones: Make a step-by-step list of everything you do in each role.

For example, the cashier is responsible for entering client sales correctly, processing refunds, collecting money, closing the

batch at the end of the night, balancing receipts with collected funds at the end of the shift (and end of the day), depositing funds at the bank, and so on. Make the checklist as simple as possible. We call the items on the checklist “tasks.”

3. Assign an hourly value to each role.

What would it cost to replace yourself?

- Cashier—\$13 per hour?
- Baker—\$18 per hour?
- Purchaser—\$20 per hour?
- Cleaner—\$11 per hour?

We call these costs “replacement value.” You will hire valuable people to replace you in each role eventually. And you will pay them what the role is worth. That’s the value they bring to your company. You will NOT pay them based on your friendship or how good their hair looks at the interview.

4. Next, do a time valuation on yourself.

How much time do you spend in each role? Record your total time spent (in hours) for one week.

- Cashier—10 hours
- Baker—20 hours
- Purchaser—3 hours
- Cleaner—5 hours

Then, multiply the total time by the replacement value of each role.

Cashier—10 hours x \$13 per hour = \$130 replacement value

Baker—20 hours x \$18 per hour = \$360 replacement value

Cleaner—5 hours x \$11 per hour = \$55 replacement value

5. From your list of replacement values, find the lowest. Hire a person to fill that role.

Give the person a three-month contract that clearly spells out the role and every associated task. In other words, provide a checklist.

6. Climb the Value Ladder.

Here's the critical part: You, the owner, **MUST** reinvest the time you save by working in a higher-value role. We call this "climbing the Value Ladder."

If you bought yourself five hours by hiring a cleaner, you must show a positive return on that purchase. You can either replace the baker for five hours (\$90—five hours x \$18), or you can jump a few rungs up the ladder and spend time in a new role, like marketing.

7. After a month, evaluate your staff's performance.

Assign a scale from 1 to 10 for each task. Review performance with the staff member. What can he or she improve? Now review your performance in your new role. What can you improve? Are you seeing a positive return?

8. After three months, repeat steps 5, 6, and 7.

Buy yourself more time. Climb to the next step. Measure your EHR.

Building a Real Business

Most entrepreneurs never build a business: They buy themselves a job instead. But if they want to scale, sell their

business someday, or just take a holiday, they must eventually replace themselves in all roles. The Value Ladder is the directive approach we teach entrepreneurs. It's virtually risk-free and far less scary than the usual "ready, fire, aim" approach to hiring.

The Case for Part-Time Coaches

In discussions on gym management and staffing, the argument has long been made that a fitness professional must be a full-time coach. The purported benefits:

1. Their full attention is devoted to coaching.
2. Full-time coaches are better educated.
3. Full-timers can serve clients 40 hours per week.
4. All of their time is dedicated to the thing they're most passionate about.

But are those the real benefits of a full-time coach? And are they exclusive to full-timers?

In this short section, I'll share why a coach doesn't have to work full-time to meet any of those requirements, and, most importantly, why part-time coaches might actually make your clients happier.

What Makes a Great Coach?

I'm a part-time coach, but I spent many years as a full-time coach. I coached kids as a job in 1996, began personal training in 2000, and opened my first gym in 2005. I was as "full-time" as it gets: 16 hours per day running the gym and over 10 of those hours coaching clients (my record was 14 in a row without a break).

I thought I was the best in town and, therefore, irreplaceable in my business. I had a university degree. I studied more than

anyone else. I spoke to other coaches every day. I had a “coaching column” in three local newspapers. But none of that made me the best coach in town. The best coach is the person who provides clients with the best results—period.

Do full-time coaches necessarily get better results for their clients? Let’s examine the above criteria in depth.

1. Their full attention is devoted to coaching.

Full-time coaches might have a job that takes 40 hours per week, but most don’t spend all that time coaching. It’s tough to maintain engagement and energy for eight hours of coaching every day.

Instead, coaches’ weeks are often backfilled with other roles—and they might not be great at those roles. Just because someone is great at coaching doesn’t necessarily mean they are great at billing people or sending cards to congratulate a client on a PR.

Instead of paying for a full-time coach, most gym owners wind up paying for 20 hours of coaching excellence and 20 hours of mediocrity at everything else.

2. Full-time coaches are better educated.

Full-time coaches might be better educated if they have time to dedicate to continuing education and if they choose to study things that will actually make a difference. Reading blogs or watching slow-motion weightlifting videos don’t provide the greatest growth opportunities.

On the other hand, part-time coaches might not have any time to pursue professional development. If a gym gives its coaches dedicated time to study, access to resources, and a clear growth

path, then the full-time coach has a slight advantage here.

The caveat: If the coach's technical knowledge is a 9 out of 10 and his or her people skills are a 3, more technical knowledge is a waste of time.

3. Full-timers can serve clients 40 hours per week.

Full-time coaches can work predictable schedules. For the gym owner, this is possibly the most important reason to have full-time staff.

Predictability and consistency are more important than anything else. It's the gym owner's job to leverage that predictability and use their time to build the business. If you take yourself off the coaching floor, do so with a purpose. Level up into CEO roles like sales, marketing, and relationship building. Climb that Value Ladder!

4. All of their time is devoted to the thing they're most passionate about.

It's a noble purpose for the gym owner to provide meaningful career opportunities for passionate staff. But the owner's primary responsibility is to provide for family first, clients second, and staff third. So if the owner hires a full-time coach but can't pay himself or herself a good wage, the business' priorities are backward.

In some cases, coaches want only to coach. And that's great! These are the coaches who should work toward a full-time career with the 4/9ths Model.

In these cases, the gym owner builds a Career Roadmap with coaches to help the coach generate as much work and income as they want from the gym. They start with a class schedule,

then determine how many personal training sessions, nutrition coaching sessions, small group sessions, and specialty clinic sessions the coach will need.

Finally, they fill the coach's time with other roles—but only if the coach wants more. They only add roles at which the coach will excel but at the pay rate designated for each role. It doesn't make sense to pay a coach \$30 per hour to clean when you can hire a better cleaner for \$15.

This process will include lots of work in passion areas, but it's important to remember that it's very hard to be a great coach for eight hours a day. Many great coaches find they're spent after four or five hours and need to fill the rest of their time with other roles.

The other thing to remember: The fastest way to ruin a hobby is to make it your career.

Do Part-Time Coaches Get Better Results?

Years ago, I was visiting another city to write about fitness. The first gym I found on Google was run by a guy just like me: a subject matter expert in fitness who coached every class and ran his gym from open until close. But he was resentful when I showed up early, he kept his hood pulled up for the entire class, and he clearly didn't want to be there. I left feeling like I had to apologize for showing up.

The next day, I went to a different gym in the same city. Every single person greeted me with a hug and smiled warmly at everyone else. The gym was packed. "This is the real magic of community," I thought. I left feeling great about myself.

When I wrote about the second gym for my article, I realized I had no idea what the coach's credentials were, or how long

she'd been coaching. Then I traveled home and looked at my gym through different eyes. I'd been coaching my morning classes tired and cranky, a lot like the coach at the first gym I had just visited. I looked at my morning class schedule and wondered, "Would these amazing people be better served by someone who was less tired and distracted than I am?"

I put a young, bubbly coach on the 6 a.m. class. People loved her. Adherence went up. Then people started coming back. She had a fraction of my knowledge and experience, but people showed up and worked harder for her, so they got better results.

Years later, when I was coaching far less, people began to look forward to my classes again. I was a part-time coach in my own gym because I was working on other projects. But when I showed up to coach the occasional noon group, I was pumped to be there. I did the best coaching of my life when I coached the least—and not because I knew more, but because I had more to give. Today, I coach entrepreneurs. I only work with four or five per year because I want to give them everything I can. I'm a part-timer.

How to Use Part-Time Coaches

Part-time coaches bring a lot of benefits to your gym.

First and foremost, they're fresh and eager and don't work enough to become burned out. Second, every situation is new to them. Part-time coaches don't whine about teaching the front squat to the same client over and over again. Part-time coaches aren't ranting in Facebook coaches' forums, sharing memes about clients who "just don't get it" because they're not burned out. It's often wise to hire a happy part-timer.

Their educational development might suffer because they don't have as much time to learn, but let's face it: Suzanne Somers

and Richard Simmons changed a lot of lives. I don't remember seeing their certifications listed on the outside of their DVDs. The key is having enough education to make a difference, not maximal education to make a resume.

Almost every question in your business comes back to this one: "What's the best thing for my best clients?" And in this case, the best coach is the happy, energetic trainer who can brighten the client's day.

How Many Classes Should a Trainer Lead?

The answer is different for each coach. But the best question to ask is this: "How many classes can I coach before the client experience dips?" In other words, is the client in the 9 a.m. class receiving the same amount of energy and care that the client in the 7 a.m. received? If the answer is no, a part-time trainer could supercharge the hour and produce happier, fitter clients.

How Much Education Is Enough?

For most coaches, a certification or weekend is enough education to change a client's life. Your business then gives them the systems ("show up on time, wear this"), the opportunity ("here are 12 clients who will do anything you tell them"), and the tools (kettlebells or boot camp or spin or Pilates or your method of choice).

You should also provide continuing education on group management, empathetic coaching, and corrective cues. It should be part of their paid compensation plan, and the training should match the Career Roadmap you build with each coach.

Do they need additional coaching credentials? Maybe. But first, they need to master the application of current knowledge.

How Many Coaches Do I Need? What's the Right Mix?

In a profitable gym with 150 members, this mix seems to work well:

- 1 owner working on sales, marketing, and business growth.
- 1 half-time coach, half-time admin, or GM/operations manager. These are two separate roles, and they might be spread across two people, depending on skill sets. The staff person who is a good coach and good manager is the exception, not the rule. The person in this role should spend time coaching and reviewing programming and leading the other coaches.
- 3 part-time coaches, each with different areas of passion, all with sparkling personalities. Hire for enthusiasm and train for skill.

In a gym with 250 members, those roles might change a bit.

Here's one example that's working really well:

- 1 owner working on growth.
- 1 full-time coach who spends 50 percent of time coaching, 25 percent doing intros, and 25 percent doing goal reviews.
- 1 full-time coach who leads classes and takes PT clients. This coach can also have a role in programming or building specialty groups.
- 1 GM or admin person whose roles can include lead management, marketing, and Client Success Manager (CSM) duties.
- 3-8 part-time coaches. They are led through evaluations and continuing education supplied by the full-timers.

The Best Coaches in the World

The best coach is the person who gets his or her clients the best results—period. The hours of work are irrelevant. It's true in fitness and true in business mentorship.

I still coach many hours per day: I coach my staff toward their career goals, I coach my mentorship clients to the upper levels of entrepreneurship (Tinker and Thief in the Two-Brain Business system), and I coach my kids' sports teams. Methods and areas of specialty differ, but the truth never varies: It doesn't matter how many hours you put in. What matters is your clients' results.

How to Spend Your Time

The steps to achieving entrepreneurial freedom, or wealth, are vertical, not horizontal. You have to start by calculating your effective hourly rate (EHR). Then you climb the Value Ladder. Here are the steps again:

1. Break down your day by the hats you wear (your "roles").
2. Program your clones (write "tasks" for each role).
3. Assign an hourly value to each role.
4. Do a time valuation on yourself.
5. Replace yourself in the lowest-value role first.
6. Reinvest your time into one higher-value role.
7. Evaluate staff performance in the lower-value role.
8. Repeat the process.
9. Recalculate your EHR and hire the new lowest-value role.

This is the secret to entrepreneurship that Michael Gerber, John C. Maxwell, and dozens of others write about: moving from "doing the job" to "owning the business."

You don't need to hire a full-time employee to free up time. You can move from role to role incrementally. Keep in mind:

- You must replace yourself in each role completely. That means identifying the tasks to be done, codifying those tasks, setting a "gold standard" for each task, and evaluating success.
- You must have a clear plan for the higher-value work you'll do. Otherwise, you'll be sucked back into minutiae.
- Finally, even if you don't have a great idea right now, you need to be ready for the next one. A huge reason my companies grow so fast is that I don't have a permanent role in any of them; I can quickly replace myself when a new opportunity comes along.

This is how you give yourself a promotion as an entrepreneur.

If you want to grow your business faster, spend more time on the roles worth more than your current EHR. If you want your business to go backward, fire the cleaner and mop the floors yourself. You can't cut your way to growth. And there's one more step, too: move the roles you hate doing, even if you're good at them. You're better at things that make you happy.

Love It or Lose It

You first improve your effective hourly rate (EHR) by moving low-value roles off your plate. These are the tasks that can easily be described in a checklist or "if-then" document, and these are the roles that can be quickly filled without much expense.

But replacements become more expensive as the roles become more complex. Specialists work for generalists, and as the tasks performed by your specialists rise in value, so does the cost of replacement. Eventually, two roles of a comparable cost will

emerge as the next to be removed from the entrepreneur's plate. Or an owner might hesitate to make a next-level hire because of the expense. For example, if a software developer earns \$80 per hour and the owner's EHR is under \$50, they might wait to hire the specialist and muddle through themselves. The EHR equation is earned revenue over time, but there's really a third dimension: energy.

As the entrepreneur matures, time becomes more valuable, and energy becomes scarce. Decision fatigue, stress, and long hours all sap the entrepreneur's energy. Lack of focus, lack of fitness, and an increased daily volume of distractions all draw from the energy bank.

The entrepreneur must be aware of energy levels and protect them. For that reason alone, it's often essential to hire staff to replace you in the work that drains you, leaving you free to pursue work that energizes you. How do you know which is which? Do an energy audit.

Energy Audit: Step by Step

I learned this technique from my friend Trevor Mauch at Carrot.com. Trevor runs a vast company that generates leads for real-estate salespeople. On any given day, he can be pulled in a thousand different directions. But he's an influential leader because he spends his time working on tasks that provide him with energy, and he delegates everything else.

He told me, "We become entrepreneurs because we want four things: freedom, flexibility, finances, and impact. "When you're doing work that zaps your energy, and also when you're doing work in a business that has a boom and bust business model, you could be making great money, but you're stressed out during the year. You lose your flexibility. You might have the finances, but you don't have the mental capacity or time to

make the impact you want to make.

“This exercise literally 10X’d my income. It 10X’d my net profit well into the seven figures—that’s my net taxable income today. I’m not saying that to sound cool. I’m saying it because this process unlocked all of it.”

Here’s how Trevor taught me to do it:

First, take a blank sheet of paper. Draw a vertical line down the middle. At the top, in the left column, write, “Gives Energy.” In the right column, write, “Drains Energy.”

Now take your list of roles. Copy the roles that supply energy into the Gives list. If they don’t actively fire you up, copy them to the Drains list.

If you want to get really deep, do the exercise with tasks instead of roles (that list should contain hundreds of tasks instead of the dozen or so roles). Any job that doesn’t excite and energize you should be placed on the Drains list. The functions associated with that task should be delegated out first.

As you approach hiring managerial or specialty staff, first eliminate the roles with an EHR of less than \$50. Then replace yourself according to the Drains list, retaining only the roles and tasks that fall on the Gives list. This is a step toward the Tinker phase of entrepreneurship—the third stage.

But even if you’re still in the Founder stage and running everything yourself, it’s always a good idea to outsource the work you hate. It will free up your mind and—more importantly—your energy. Then you’ll have more enthusiasm for the relationships that matter, and you won’t spend your time dreading the drudgery you dislike.

Before you can hand off any of the work on your plate, you have to tell people exactly how you want it done. If you don't, you'll always have to look over their shoulder, and they'll never do it exactly the way you would—because they simply don't know how you want it done.

The Greatest Gift You Can Give Your Staff: Clarity

You have to sell your staff to follow your vision, build their careers on YOUR platform, and deliver to the best of their abilities. That means you have to be clear with your staff, too. First and foremost, you have to get everything out of your head and onto paper.

No one can read your mind. No one sees things the way you do. There's no such thing as "common sense."

If you've been unclear with your staff, you have some detangling to do. You'll have to edit the things you've told them before—or maybe stuff they've tried to figure out on their own—and put them on the right path. That should come as a relief to everyone. But change is tricky: If you need to radically edit what they're doing, you must have honest conversations even when it's hard. This is my weakness, but I'm training hard to make it my strength. Here's what I've learned:

I hate confrontation. I build things up to be too big in my mind. I'm a "people pleaser," and I want everyone to like me. And I know that arguments usually distract me from doing the real work; I can't resist them when they happen, so I try to avoid them. But as I grew from Founder to Farmer to Tinker, hard conversations became more critical. And they just got harder.

As a Founder in the gym business, firing a client was very hard. There were hundreds of dollars at stake, which was big money back then. But, more important, I worried about the client's

reaction: How would she feel? How would she react? What would she say in my gym? What would she tell people on Facebook?

In the Farmer Phase, I had to start managing staff. That meant evaluations and correcting their actions—and even firing a couple of people. Those conversations were harder by order of magnitude: The decisions affected the staff people and their families, and sometimes my clients, too.

And in Tinker Phase, every conversation sets a precedent for the company, hundreds of clients, and dozens of staff. Most decisions were made with tens of thousands of dollars in the balance; some literally had hundreds of thousands of dollars sitting in the balance. And some were more important than any amount of money.

I chose one of my mentors, Marcy Swenson, specifically to help me with leadership. And leadership means having hard conversations. On our first call, Marcy told me: “Chris, sometimes you’re being tactful. But sometimes you’re just hiding.” And it’s true. Sometimes I avoid tough conversations and tell myself to “cool off for a bit” or “phrase this politely.” Both are wise—but not when they’re avoidance techniques.

Thanks to years of experience, dozens of hard conversations, and Marcy, I’ve learned a lot about hard conversations. Here are some things to keep in mind for context before you start:

1. Anticipation is always worse than the event.
2. Every tough conversation you have is just practice for a tough conversation in the future when the stakes will be higher.
3. People aren’t really paying much attention to you. You might be staying up all night worrying about The Big Talk, but they probably aren’t.

4. The greatest gift you can give the other person is clarity. Respect him or her enough to say what you mean.

Here are my action steps:

1. Hold the conversation at the highest possible level of the communication hierarchy.

Face to face is best. If that's not possible because of geography, use a video call. If that's not possible, call on the phone. Email is poor for having hard conversations because it's very hard to read intent into the written word. And text isn't an option at all.

2. Be sure but act quickly.

Get the facts, but be aware of procrastination strategies like "I need more information" or opinion gathering. This isn't a democracy.

3. Avoid emotional language.

"I feel like ..." and, "I think you should ..." completely dampen your message. They say, "I'm unsure."

4. If you're talking to a staff member, client, or friend, you'd like to keep around, work through this next step. If you're going to end your relationship, skip to No.5.

Let the person release emotion first. Picture the person's anger, frustration, or sadness as a giant black balloon that's floating between your faces. You can't really see each other while that balloon is there, so let the air out of it—slowly. Get right to the heart of the concern by asking a pointed question: "So you're worried about this rate increase?" Then let him or her vent all the emotions.

When the balloon is a little deflated, poke it again. You want it completely empty. “You’re concerned you won’t be able to afford the gym anymore?” You might have to poke it a third time. Only when the emotional content of the speech is gone can you begin working on a solution. This was outlined in Chris Voss’s excellent book, “Never Split the Difference.”

5. Then, lay out your case clearly.

“More words don’t make people feel better,” Seth Godin wrote in “This Is Marketing.” If you’re breaking up with the person, start the conversation with, “We’re breaking up.”

If you’re removing the person as a client, say, “I’m so sorry this isn’t working out. We do our best to please every client, but we’re just not a good fit.”

If you’re firing the person from your staff, say so. Don’t do him or her the disservice of hiding behind stock language like “we’re going another direction.” Say: “I can’t have you coaching anymore because you haven’t corrected X and Y.”

6. Give the person a cool-down period.

“I’d like you to take a day or two before you respond. Think about what we’ve said. Then, if you want to talk some more, we can set up a phone call. In the meantime, I promise to be discrete about this conversation and trust you’ll do the same.”

There’s a lot more to it, and nothing beats practice. You’ll get better as you go. Luckily, you can practice on your loved ones or your staff (we made a deck of cards called the Two-Brain Scenario Deck for this express purpose). You’ll feel funny asking others to role-play with you, but it’s worth practicing, and practicing on neutral parties will save you painful and expensive practice in real life.

Clarity takes practice. Even though you're just being honest, you must also consider the other person's feelings. The sum of your interactions with your team is called "Staff Culture." And a positive staff culture depends on three things:

- Having the right people
- Honesty
- Care

Sometimes that means caring enough about a person to be honest. Sometimes it means caring enough about your team to remove the wrong people. Culture is created deliberately, but when it's good, it feels like you're lucky.

Staff Culture and "Who Luck"

"Heartily know, when demigods go, the gods arrive." — Emerson

I've always had great "who luck." The right people seem to find their way into my life at precisely the right time.

I met one of my mentors, Dan Martell, at the Archangel Summit. He spoke at lunchtime; my wife and I stood up to get a sandwich, but his first two minutes were so compelling that we didn't leave the auditorium. Here's the crazy part: My phone died before his presentation. When I charged it up a few hours later, I found texts from Dan on it. It turned out that he was a CrossFitter, and his CrossFit coach told him I was in the audience. We had a bond. I missed his invitation to come backstage, but I enrolled in his mentorship program less than 48 hours later.

My next mentor, Marcy, showed up at a dinner Dan hosted in San Francisco. My seat was across the table from hers.

I met Mike Warkentin through CrossFit Inc. I was hired as a one-time writer at a competition. He was their editor-in-chief. We were fast friends, and now he's my partner in Two-Brain Media.

The list goes on and on. Once, at a book signing, an attendee asked me, "Do you attribute a lot of your success to just showing up and meeting everyone you can?" Back then, I probably said, "Yes, that's definitely it." But now I think differently.

According to Dunbar's Law, we can all maintain around 150 relationships. Not all of those relationships are positive. Some are negative (but we hold on to them anyway!), and most are just neutral. We keep up relationships out of a sense of duty, or just for the sake of keeping the 150 seats filled.

But, as Emerson wrote, "when demigods go, the gods arrive." He meant that some mediocre people are probably sitting in the seats of great people. And until they're gone, the amazing people won't sit at your table because there are no vacant seats.

The weaker members on your team are occupying a seat that could be held by a better teammate. They might be great people. They might be your first cousin. But that doesn't always make them a great part of your staff. What effect does one bad apple have on your culture? Catastrophic. Usually, we only see this in hindsight. I've heard this 500 times in the private Two-Brain Facebook group: *"I knew Nancy wasn't doing a great job, but I thought I was the only one. But as soon as I removed her, people started thanking me!"* Because people are smart. Your clients are savvy, and so are your staff members.

Removing a weak link sends a message. The message isn't "do this or I'll fire all of you!" The message is that you will do the very hard things to benefit the team, that you care enough about

the mission and the good teammates to have tough conversations on their behalf—to say the things only a leader would say and do the things only a leader can do.

In my book “Founder, Farmer, Tinker, Thief,” you’ll find a section called “Apples.” Apple trees try to feed their own dead limbs. They send water and nutrients to branches that are already dead. This splits the tree’s resources and deprives the living branches of their rightful share. When apple trees are pruned, all the water and minerals go to the branches that bear fruit—and the tree thrives. The fruit is better, and the tree is more resistant to windstorms and drought.

*Heartily know, when dead branches go, new branches grow.
When demigods go, the gods arrive.*

Who is adding to the conversation at your table—and who is just keeping a seat warm?

How to Measure Your Staff Culture

Your culture is the sum of your 1:1 relationships.

Your gym culture is the sum of your 1:1 relationships with your clients.

Your staff culture is the sum of your 1:1 relationships with your staff.

Your “culture” is not how often your clients visit a bar together. It’s not how long they stick around after a workout, or even what they’ll wear to get bonus points in the Open. Your culture is relationships, and every relationship is 1:1. You measure your culture by the LEG (Length of Engagement) of your clients. Great culture keeps clients longer.

In the Founder Phase, your culture is the sum of your relationships between yourself and your clients. You're delivering your service yourself; if you build trust and empathy with your clients, you have a good culture. A good relationship is a balance between friendship and objectivity. Your clients are not your friends, but your relationship must be friendly. You must stay professionally distant enough to charge money for your service; you must remain close enough to demonstrate your care. It's not easy.

In the Farmer Phase, your culture is determined by your clients' relationships with your team and your team's relationships with you. Your team must understand your vision (we call this "The Owner's Intent"). They must also know that you care about their career and have a plan in place for them (we use the Career Roadmap exercise in Two-Brain.) They must see the horizon and know they can achieve their career goals on your platform.

Then your team must deliver 1:1 relationships with your clients the same way you would. This is the most challenging part of being a Farmer: handing over the responsibility for client relationships. Every staff person will have different personalities, strengths, and weaknesses. For example, one might be incredible at creating workouts for clients but might not have a strong sense of empathy. Or one might be creative but not quite organized enough. For this reason, we always build a safety net into the Farmer Phase: we add a Client Success Manager role for two to four hours per week.

In the Tinker Phase, your clients' relationship should be with your brand. This means they have to align with your company's values and vision. Now you have six relationships to manage:

1. Your client's relationship with your staff.
2. Your client's relationship with your brand.
3. Your staff's relationship with their manager.

4. Your staff's relationship with your brand.
5. Your relationship with your direct reports.
6. Your relationship with your brand.

In the Tinker Phase, we tell entrepreneurs to build a managerial layer (usually a COO or general manager, a CFO, and a CSO or sales lead.) These should be the owner's three direct reports. In turn, they translate the owner's intent, vision, and mission with staff. Good Tinkers should be removed from daily operations, but still available to staff who have unique situations. For example, the CEO shouldn't be the one with the key to the supplies cabinet, but should always be available to listen to a staff member with concerns about their career.

The Tinker must clearly define their brand's values. She must answer questions like:

“How does our service fulfill our goal?”

“What will we NOT do?”

“Who is our perfect client?”

“What is the perfect delivery of our service?”

“How far will we go to solve a customer's complaint?”

She must also define the language and behavior used by the brand. For example, the Tinker must have:

- Staff playbooks.
- A quality control or evaluation process.
- A style guide for brand media.

It may seem like the Tinker is too far removed from client interactions to influence company culture. But that's not true:

the Tinker's role is to define and teach the company culture to their key staff, who reinforce the culture by tracking client and staff relationships.

At this level, companies must track LEG as a measure of their client-facing culture; they must track employment length as a measure of the corporate culture. Many businesses make wild guesses about "employee culture," adding pinball machines and free breakfast cereal. But they fail to measure the effect of their action on employee retention. That means they're not taking their culture seriously; they're just trying to look as cool as Google.

Like everything else in your business, culture is measurable. That means, no matter how poor your current culture, you can improve it. The key is to focus on one relationship at a time and measure your progress. Maybe monthly pub crawls DO build a better culture in your business. It's possible! But unless you're tracking LEG, you'll never know what's actually helping your business.

Your Cause Is Even More Important Than Your Culture

The members of the tightest teams in the world don't always like each other. But they work together and succeed because their mission is more important than anything else. Church ladies squabble. SEAL teams argue. Both groups get the job done and consider their work to be a critical piece of their lives. Neither would quit. They believe in their cause.

In "The Infinite Game," Simon Sinek lists five keys to success. They are:

1. A just cause.
2. A worthy adversary.
3. An open playbook.

4. A vulnerable team.
5. Courageous leadership.

Your culture is built on your people, but it's more than the sum of its parts. To have a great culture, you have to have great people. But you also have to actively measure and improve your culture. Design your culture through your own actions and clear the path for the right people to show up.

And without a cause, your culture doesn't produce anything. You just sit there holding hands, uninspired. Eventually, people will leave a great culture in pursuit of a noble purpose. But if you have a noble purpose—or a just cause—people will follow even if they're unhappy. Their belief in the purpose will override temporary unhappiness.

In “Happiness by Design,” Dr. Paul Dolan tells a story of a friend who works at a not-for-profit and “hates her job but loves the work.” She thinks she's underpaid, often argues with her coworkers, and dislikes her boss. But she'd never quit because she believes in the mission.

What Is Your Mission?

You must feel compelled to serve your mission, whether you're going through good times or fighting for your life. If you started a gym, I know you've got this one covered. You didn't do it to get rich; you did it to help people become healthy. That's why I mentor gym owners to wealth: your “just cause” is so inspiring that helping you achieve it is my “just cause.”

When you lead with a just cause, your culture will follow. Then you apply the rest:

- Getting the wrong people off the bus.
- Teaching people how to treat you (and one another).

- Improving retention among your staff and clients.

This is why I opened this book by talking about clarifying your mission. Everything flows from a just cause.

When clients know your cause, they'll find it easier to talk about you. Forget your "elevator pitch"; when people are inspired by what you're trying to do, they'll talk about it. They don't need to memorize "constantly varied functional movement something something something" because they can say, "Chris is trying to save our city."

Why are you in this?

Does your staff know?

Do your clients know?

Tell them. And tell me, too. I love hearing about people's great dreams.

Great culture in your business, and a great team, has a huge effect on your bottom line. A happy staff keeps your clients longer. People want to be around other happy, successful people. No one wants to join a gym with high staff turnover or a poisonous atmosphere. No one wants an unhappy coach. Keeping clients longer is the name of the game. Culture is one way to win that game.

KEEP CLIENTS LONGER

Here's what it all boils down to:

- Sound systems and great culture keep clients around longer.
- Clients who stick around longer get better results.
- Clients who stay longer make more marketing unnecessary.
- Clients who stay longer refer more friends.
- Clients who stay longer pay more.
- Clients who stay longer create a more solid base for intrapreneurship.
- Clients who stay longer require less time, and drive up EHR for you and your coaches.

Client retention is measured in LEG. LEG is a multiplier of ARM.

Every new client increases a gym's revenue incrementally. But every month of LEG increases a gym's revenue exponentially.

You need to keep clients longer. That means you need a plan.

Since your business revolves around your clients, we call building a retention plan "Mapping the Client Journey."

The Client Journey: Design and Deliver



Client: John Thompson

Trainer: Jen Smith

**PT 3x a week
1 at-home mobility session
6-mo. nutrition plan
Biweekly check-ins**

J. Smith

To succeed in the new era of gym ownership, you have to go deep with every client.

Each client carries more value than ever before. Every client must maintain a 1:1 connection to you. So your Client Journey should start with a motivational interview. As I wrote in the sales section, we call our motivational interview process a “No Sweat Intro.” Then, I told you how to design a client’s program based on their primary need and then deliver it with excellence, the prescription. Finally, we reviewed the most important (and almost-always overlooked) part of the Prescriptive Model:

refining a client's journey with you through goal reviews. But how do you, as a coach, deliver the client's nutrition and exercise prescription?

First, start with an objective measurement. After determining a client's real "why," you must find Point A. Measure what the client cares about. If they want weight loss, measure their weight. If they want fat loss, measure their fat. If they want to gain flexibility, measure their flexibility. If they want to gain strength, measure their strength. You already know their Point B, thanks to your intake interview.

Next, good fitness coaches map the path backward from Point B to Point A. This is the Client Journey. After they've mapped the process, great coaches prescribe the fastest path to their clients. Like this:

"Well, Alice, here are the steps you'll need to take to reach your goal. You'll need to exercise five times per week and follow a clear nutrition plan to get there quickly. How does that sound?"

Next, great coaches tailor the delivery of their service to a client's preferences. Like this:

"OK, Alice. Would you prefer to do your workouts here at the gym or at home on your own—or would you prefer a combination?"

Great coaches guide their clients by presenting one option at a time instead of overwhelming them with choices:

"OK, Alice. You prefer to work out with us at the gym. That's fantastic. Would you prefer to do your workouts one-on-one with me or in a small group?"

Then great coaches overcome barriers, such as price objections or injuries. Like this:

“No problem, Alice. If you can’t afford to train 1:1 with me all the time, we can move you to our budget option of training in a group. We use the most effective group workout strategy on the planet. It’s called CrossFit—have you heard of that?”

Or like this:

“No problem. If you can’t afford to move that quickly, we’ll take it a bit slower. With the budget you just gave me, I’d say we should train twice per week and really focus on that nutrition plan.”

Or like this:

“No problem. Your back is tight from work. We’ll take it a bit slower at first. With the limitation you just gave me, I’d say we should train three times per week and have one specific mobility session per week instead of four workouts.”

Then great coaches motivate clients by reminding them of their wins, showing them their progress, and calling them when they don’t show up.

Along the way, they track progress and adjust the plan—because no plan survives first contact with the enemy. And the enemies (Big Sugar, Netflix, and cortisol) are pretty good at this game. Staff at Two-Brain gyms meet with their clients every quarter to adjust their plans, but no one loses sight of the goal. The coach can’t afford to because the client never stops thinking about it. Clients don’t do your workouts for the sake of being good at your workouts; they do them because they want

to achieve their real goal. And they're willing to trade short-term pain to get there—if they trust their coach.

Great coaches don't sell group programming. Great coaches sell 1:1 relationships, sometimes delivered in a group. What's included in that solution? Think about the cornerstones of your business: nutrition coaching, personal coaching, group coaching, and online (habits) coaching.

Show the client your plan. Ask, “how does this look?” and then prescribe the solution using your pricing binder. The last step before you get started on programming: Book a review three months later.

Reviewing Their Progress

Deeper conversations lead to deeper relationships. Now we're going to talk about the conversation after your No Sweat Intro—because more conversations lead to longer relationships, too. One in-depth talk isn't enough, even if tears are shed (and they often are).

The Two-Brain Coaching approach to client progress is to learn, design, deliver, refine. In the Two-Brain Coaching courses, we teach the “design” and “deliver” pieces with excellence. But the most important part, for your clients' progress and for your business, is the fourth step. It's also the step that most coaches and gym owners skip: Refine.

Goal Reviews: The Great Separator

Every quarter, you should meet with each client and review progress. That's what coaching means: evaluation and optimization. Anyone can follow any program for three months. Your job is to guide a client to the right program for

the right amount of time and maximize success with that program. That means a quarterly goal review with every client.

Our data shows that the best gyms do this regularly. A regular system of feedback analysis and new prescriptions is the separator that microgyms need. More and more, the prescriptive model is becoming our actual job; the delivery of nutrition and exercise programs is just how we implement our prescriptions.

Here's the step by step:

Start the Goal Review Session with Bright Spots: What are they most proud of achieving? Then pull out their personal roadmap: How would they rate themselves in each category now?

Follow with this question: "Are you happy with the progress you've made so far?" If they say yes, move to the Affinity Marketing process. If they say no, work on a new prescription.

Try to balance clients' strengths with their weaknesses. Rather than simply "attacking weaknesses," tell clients to "keep going" with their strongest attributes but prioritize their lowest scores.

Here's the key: The programming you choose isn't the most important part of this strategy. Retention is predicated simply on the act of reviewing client progress and changing plans; it's not about what the new plan contains. It's not the workouts. It's the care.

If you claim to care about a client but never ask how they're doing—well, your actions and your words don't match. If you ask how they're doing but never change their plans, your actions and words don't match. If you ask them for referrals but don't optimize their plans, you're begging for favors. If you ask how you can help the people in their environment after proving that you can do it, you're helping everyone.

Update their personal roadmaps. Identify their next opportunities for personal growth. Get deeper every time. Learn, design, deliver, refine—and build a relationship that lasts.

How to Motivate People Through “The Dip”

How do you know when someone has recently started working out? Don’t worry: They’ll tell you.

New exercisers and dieters are quick evangelists: They feel great and want everyone around them to feel the same way. Kudos to them. In the beginning, gains come quickly, and PRs are everywhere.

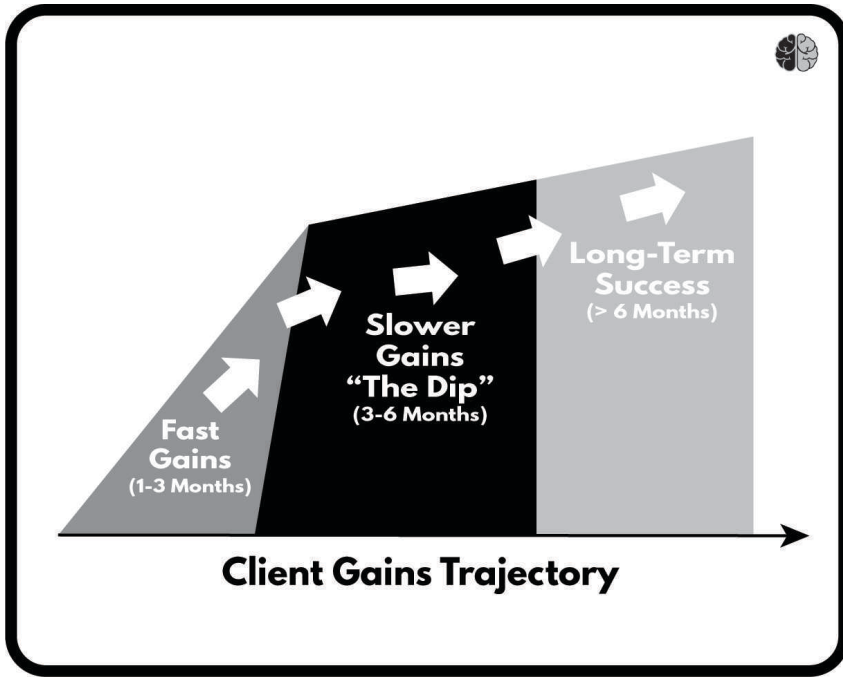
But then—you know what happens next. Within three to six months, PRs don’t come in every workout.

“What do you mean we can’t just bench press three times per week?”

They start cherry-picking the workouts, then they start finding “hacks” to their diets (remember paleo brownies?). Then they start looking for novelty (“I found this crazy workout online! Can we do it tomorrow?”).

It’s frustrating for coaches because results compound exponentially instead of incrementally. Clients don’t really improve their fitness by one percent at every workout; instead, results come quickly at first, then taper down, but, over time, their tiny marginal gains snowball into long-term change.

This is “the dip,” or really just a transitional period from rapid to slower improvement.



We all know what it's like to watch a client hit the dip. The honeymoon is over, but the long-term gains haven't really begun. Here's how to get clients through the dip and why it's worth the extra effort.

The Dip and the Data

We're all addicted to novelty. This is why six-week or 75-day challenges are so popular and so effective when they start. It's also why people often fail to complete the challenges or why they fail to convert to a long-term gym membership after the challenge ends. Two years ago, the average microgym kept a client for 13.1 months. Today, that number is more like 7.8 months.

There are several reasons why the number has changed, but the most significant factor is the rise of the short-term challenge. Clients sign up for a gym's six-week challenge and then leave

when it's over. Six-week challenges also push out long-term members who have to share coaches and resources with a constant flow of newbies in their classes. This is really important because it costs a lot to get new clients, and that local pool of clients is limited.

Here's the kicker: Our data shows that if you can get the client past the eight-month mark, you'll probably keep them for 14 months. That's an additional six months of revenue for the same cost of acquisition. More importantly, that's six more months of compounding results for the client.

And if you can keep them past that 14-month mark, you can probably keep them for 24 months!

The Math

Let's say your average client pays \$150 per month. You pay \$50 in ad spend to attract them and sign them up.

$\$150 \times 7 \text{ months} = \$1,050 \text{ lifetime value (LTV)}$.

But if you can keep them around through the dip, that multiplier goes up to 14 months—with no additional marketing cost.

$\$150 \times 14 \text{ months} = \$2,100 \text{ LTV}$.

And if you can get them past the 14-month mark, their LTV usually shoots up to \$3,600 ($\$150 \times 24 \text{ months}$).

That's an extra \$2,550 per client—and more if you're a Two-Brain gym because your average revenue per member is a lot higher!

There's a lot on the line here.

Surviving the Dip: Your Action Plan

Data proves this is the best way to set up a client for success, get them through “the dip, and keep them long term:

1. Adopt the Prescriptive Model.
2. At a client’s No Sweat Intro, break goals down into the smallest steps possible.
3. Set up the client’s first four to six weeks as their own personal “challenge.” Not a group challenge, but you can include group attendance in the challenge if you want to. This is your onboarding process or on-ramp or whatever you want to call it. But it’s far more than just teaching people how to squat.
4. Set up a meeting to occur a week before the end of their personal challenge. This is their first Goal Review Session.
5. At that meeting, highlight their successes, find Bright Spots, measure progress, and make the next prescription.
6. Sign them up for the next phase before the current phase ends. Build a bridge before you reach the dip.
7. Book their next Goal Review for three months out. You should have completed three meetings (the No Sweat Intro and Goal Reviews 1 and 2) before the seven-month mark.
8. Measure your retention and revenue improvements in the Two-Brain Dashboard. Track your progress and compare it against other gyms.

Yes, there’s money involved. But the truth is that you can’t change anyone’s life in seven months. You must keep clients around for years if you want to dramatically change their health.

That's why it's so critical to get them through the dip: If you don't, they'll just keep starting and failing forever.

The Dark Secret of Motivation

We care more about losing something we have than gaining something new. This is the dark secret that many marketers use to hook people into their products. Like this:

“Act now! Offer expires in 20 minutes!”

“All your friends have already done this!”

“255 gym owners have already committed—only 45 spots left!”

Our brains exist to protect us. When we sense we're about to lose something, especially money or relationships, we panic. But, as with every superpower, we can use this secret for the power of good instead of evil.

FOMO: The Fear Is Real

We need to use every power we have to keep clients engaged and save their lives. That means using the “threat of loss” to keep them going. Fear of loss is the reason so many of us succumb to:

- “Streaks” on Snapchat.
- “Feeding” Tamagotchi pets so they don't “die.”
- Copying and sending an email forward so you don't “break the chain” (yes, old-school!).
- Hitting the day Strain leaderboard on WHOOP.
- Watching “Lost.”

We're all scared to break the chain because... something will happen. And it might be something terrible. We might *lose!*

The best way to keep your clients motivated through “the dip” is to have them complete simple tasks, check the tasks off a list and post the list on their refrigerators. When we issued the Virtuosity Challenge in 2020, we kept the workouts very simple. We kept the nutrition goals basic. We used short mindset videos or easily accomplished “management” tasks. The reason? We wanted people to win most of the time.

We skipped the software platforms and gave people a printable spreadsheet. It had green boxes, yellow boxes, and red boxes. We want people to tape the spreadsheet to their refrigerators and start checking boxes. We want them to get addicted to checking green boxes. We want them to fear the day when they have to check a red box.

“I’m on a Heater and Can’t Quit Now!”

This fear—of breaking the chain, of losing my workout gains, of failing to keep my streak—it has made me do hard things.

- I once got out of bed at 11:55 p.m., dead drunk, to write. I had a 400-day streak going on 750words.com and didn’t want to break it.
- I also drove to work in a blizzard—the roads were actually closed—because my 6 a.m. class had never been canceled before. I went off the road and had to be rescued by snowmobile, but I used the last of my cell-phone battery to call in a coach instead of calling for help. So I sat and froze for four hours before anyone realized I was missing.
- More than once, I left a family party to lift weights because I was scared that all my progress would disappear if I bench-pressed a day late.
- On the other hand, I’ve never missed my kid’s birthday or the first day of school.

Streaks can be positive or negative. We're wired to avoid loss more than we're motivated to seek gain. You can use this to keep people around, but you have to keep it simple. Checklists, printed pages, and easy wins are more powerful than complex programming, running a new challenge every month or even hitting PRs.

How to Help Your Clients WIN

Only you can put your clients on a podium. Their bosses aren't writing their names on the wall after a good week in the office. Their kids aren't giving them a round of applause after they mow the lawn. No one else is celebrating them. But you can.

You have a daily opportunity to delight your clients. Not just to deliver a good class with individual scaling and cheerleading. Those are the basics. The best gyms put their clients on a podium. Here's how to do it.

Find opportunities for “podiums” within your scheduled workouts. For example, in this workout:

“Jackie”

For time:

1,000-meter row

50 thrusters (45/35 lb. bar)

30 pull-ups

...there are at least four opportunities for a client to do something they've never done before:

1. Row 1,000 meters faster than ever before.
2. Do 50 unbroken thrusters.
3. Do 30 unbroken pull-ups.
4. Finish the workout in a PR time.

And I'm sure you already see more opportunities, right?

Before the workout, **ask each client which podium they'll aim for** (or their personal goal in the workout).

Coach the client toward that goal when the workout begins.

When they hit the mark, **write the goal on a small whiteboard and take a creative picture of the person holding it up and smiling**. Stand the member on a plyo box with a small whiteboard listing PRs and use the #podium hashtag.

Post on your Facebook business page and your personal page. Tag the athlete. Make sure the post is "public" so the person's friends can see it. You're probably already taking pictures of your clients during workouts, right? Uploading and tagging them? That's not new to anyone.

But context matters: a sweaty heap of Henrietta on the floor isn't as appealing as a beaming Henny, standing on a plyo box, holding a banner that reads, "I DID IT!!!"

This is also helpful to your gym in other ways:

- It gets your coaches thinking about celebrating success and delighting your clients.
- It teaches the habit of internalizing small wins.
- It presents a new way to approach old workouts.
- It puts small wins in context ("the growth mindset").
- It allows for mucho celebration. If you're using an app or social platform, the fist-bumps and likes will fly.

Checklist:

1. Review your programming with coaches a week before. What are the best opportunities for podiums?
2. Get 10 to 15 small whiteboards and a lot of whiteboard markers.
3. Allow two minutes at the end of class for podium celebrations, pictures, and hashtag time.
4. Post one image from each class to Instagram and auto-feed to Facebook.
5. Create a Facebook album on your page for the other photos.
6. Tag every person in every picture.
7. Host a Podium Week every year.
8. Smile.

Our business isn't "based on service." It *is* a service. The best way to service your clients is to show them the path to success—and help them celebrate when they get there.

Your best programming doesn't matter nearly as much as celebrating success does. When your clients celebrate success, they're more likely to internalize joy and gratitude. That is the definition of delight. Put them on a podium.

Measuring Success: Adherence and Retention

Seventy clients showed up for your classes today. Seems great, right? Until you remember that you have 200 clients. What did the OTHERS do today? Why didn't they work out?

Adherence—not attendance—is what you actually need to track. Adherence is a leading indicator of retention.

Adherence is a measure of how often the client completes the workouts you've provided. **Retention** is a measure of how long

the average client remains a paying member (we measure it in months and call it the length of engagement, or LEG).

Retention is a lagging indicator. We can only tell what works after it's worked. Adherence is a leading indicator. You can measure it every day. You can use it to predict retention reliably well—but maybe not in the way you think.

Here's the crucial point: The client who buys your “unlimited” package isn't more likely to stick around than the client who buys your “8x per month” package. Instead, the client who shows up for the sessions he or she has purchased is the one most likely to stay long term. Your clients don't mind spending money, but they hate wasting it. Let's take two clients:

Mary signs up for 16 classes per month at a rate of \$200 and shows up 10 times per month.

Bill signs up for eight classes per month at \$150 and shows up for all of them. Mary is more likely to quit because she missed the most classes out of her package. Her adherence is lower than Bill's, even though he shows up less often. He's maximizing his package.

The data says this: What matters is not how many sessions they buy. What matters is how often they show up for those sessions. When you think of your client base as one unit, 70 percent adherence sounds great. That's a B+ grade, right? But when you think of your clients as individuals, a 30 percent non-attendance rate is disastrous. Because if they're not showing up, they're not going to keep paying. Can you afford to lose 10 percent—or 20 or 30 percent—of your client revenue?

Don't ask, “What percentage of my membership is doing group workouts?” The question you should ask is, “Where's Mary?”

Prioritize Personalization

You have to talk to every one of your clients in person. You have to customize the workouts to their goals, to the things they care about. If you don't do this, someone else will. Group coaching still requires 1:1 attention, accountability, and frequent pivots in what you're delivering—even if you're coaching them online.

If Mary needs help establishing habits more than she needs help on her snatch, then help her with her habits. If she knows how to eat but can't stay out of the “carb cupboard” at home, then coach her on that.

This is why we don't want you to bet your business on classes alone, especially online. When adherence slips, retention slips next. And without the Prescriptive Model as your safety net, the client sends in their cancellation before you even ask, “what's wrong?” Can you afford to make that bet?

Don't Skip “LEG” Day

When I described the Metrics that Matter in your gym, I kept it simple: ARM (average revenue per member per month) and LEG (length of engagement). These are Two-Brain terms, but their simplicity makes them popular with others, so you'll see them on software platforms and dashboards everywhere soon.

ARM is really a measure of sales and marketing. LEG is really a measure of your operations. Each is a multiplier of the other. Exceptional operations with no sales? You're multiplying by zero. Great marketing with low prices and poor retention? Zero. Failure.

What's at stake here? An extra \$45,000 per year for you without attracting one single additional client or taking on one more

dollar of cost. A gym with 150 clients and \$150 ARM will earn an extra \$45,000 per year by keeping the average client two months longer. That's all.

Let's make it simple: If you charge \$200 per month and keep a client for one month, then your marketing efforts were worth \$200. If you keep that same client for two months, your efforts were worth \$400. If you keep that same client for a year, your efforts were worth \$2,400. If you keep the client for 10 years, your efforts were worth \$24,000. And the cost to acquire the client was the same in every case!

We work very hard on sales and marketing. But our specialty is retention, and good retention isn't about birthday cards and automated emails. Good retention is about systems. Here's how we improve LEG through mentorship:

1. We clearly define roles. We want one person responsible for tracking clients. This gives the person a clear focus for a few hours every week.
2. We clearly define success. We measure success by increased LEG. Are you getting better at retention or not? If not, we give you follow-up actions.
3. We discuss industry gold standards. What are the best gyms in the world doing?
4. We map the client journey. What happens and when?
5. We set up automation along the client journey. This automation includes flags, emails, actions, rewards, badging, etc. Really, all the talk about "10-year gifts" and "sending birthday cards" is irrelevant without a system behind it. Those are all good ideas but start at #1 to make sure you can do them consistently. Imagine sending half your clients a birthday card or PR text but not the other half.

6. We track LEG long term. We want to know your LEG score every single month. Some software platforms are getting really good at this.

We work 1:1 with gym owners from every continent in the world. We can't visit every business in person. But using metrics like LEG gives us critical, unbiased insight into their gyms: If their retention score is low, we know there's an operational problem.

Every one of us thinks our gym is nearly perfect. We believe our workouts are amazing, that our clients “get us,” and that we're building some kind of emotional bank account with them. That's a fantasy. If your service is bad, your clients will leave. And they *should*.

We're blind to operational problems for the same reason every parent thinks their kid is the most handsome in school. That's why we need objective data, like LEG. And we need to track it over time to see the effect of our changes. Because we're also totally enamored with our own ideas when we start something new—it's the best idea ever!—and we tell everyone about it. But is this new idea having any real effect? Unless we're measuring LEG over time, we don't know.

Objective measurements like ARM and LEG help remove personal bias from your business and give you clarity. It helps us prescribe action and build your profit. Sales are fun, but without retention, you won't have a LEG to stand on. (*Groan.*)

PART 3: YOUR PRIORITIES

This book is full of tactics that you can use to improve your gym. Completing every tactic in this book would take years—but don't let that deter you. The most valuable skill any entrepreneur can possess is focus.

In this section, I'm going to tell you how to set your priorities, what to do first and how to actually do it all.

Know Your Priorities

First, let's start with the hierarchy of your business priorities.

THE BUSINESS HIERARCHY 🧠



The largest misconception we see among gym owners is that advertising is the biggest puzzle to solve. But it's actually the last problem they need to solve. Many gyms don't even need advertising.

I made the same mistake when my gym was in trouble. I thought ads would solve my problem. (Old folks: Please explain to the under-30s what the "Yellow Pages" were.) When I learned the truth, I started writing a blog with my mistake in its title because it was such a colossal error. I called the blog "DontBuyAds.com" because I wanted to remind myself every day that ads weren't my problem.

Referrals, using Affinity Marketing to connect with the people closest to you—these aren't alternatives to advertising on Facebook. They're prerequisites. Solid systems, playbooks—these aren't things you build after you make money. They're the things that allow you to make money.

Now, that doesn't mean you can't start marketing until you've completed a vision quest in the desert for two weeks. It just means that if your vision is a C+, your marketing will never be worth a B-. Your competence in each level of the graphic above produces or limits success in the next level up.

If you want your ads to work to an A+ level, you must earn an A+ in sales first and always.

Last note: Nothing in the pyramid is "one-and-done." You can't check "affinity marketing" off the list once and move on. If some part of the pyramid erodes or becomes outdated, the levels above will become unstable.

These levels make up your business. Coaching is just your service, and you're replaceable in the delivery of that service. Still, nothing—not even Facebook ads—can replace you when

it comes to the growth of your business.

Take One Bite at a Time

Every fitness coach knows that the best way to achieve any goal is to set the milestones and work backward to the starting point. The purpose of your business is to create wealth.

That means you might not have to climb the pyramid to the top to be successful. But you will need marketing to extend your influence. And without a good sales process, your marketing is useless; without solid retention, your sales process is just a hamster wheel; without consistent delivery of excellent operations, retention is impossible. And without a clear mission, your operations won't make sense because no one will know what you're trying to do.

So build your business in this order. Here's a summary of the material in this book:

Mission

Mission: have a clear picture of what you're trying to do. My mission for my gym is to extend the lives of 7,000 people in Sault Ste. Marie, Canada. My mission for Two-Brain is to make gym owners wealthy.

Operations

Operations: Spell out exactly how you want things done. Set your standard and tell everyone how to meet it in every aspect of the business. My operations are guided by our playbook. I have systems and checklists for everything, from where to park your car to how to sell memberships. My staff delivers to my standard of excellence and has completely replaced me in the gym. They don't have to guess. If they're not performing

something at a 10/10 level, we can take remedial steps to fix it. I rarely have to fire anyone.

Retention

Retention: keep people long enough to change their lives and stop marketing all the time.

My retention plan features a client journey that begins with 1:1 training and then follows a Prescriptive Model. We install client Goal Review Sessions at our most common drop-off points.

Sales

My sales plan uses a motivational interview leading to a Prescriptive Model. Conversion rates are over 80 percent, even with clients who aren't referrals. High-value first purchase of over \$500.

Marketing

My marketing plan includes referrals, love letters and Affinity Marketing every month, increasing the value of my best clients over time.

Advertising

My advertising plan: Actually, I don't advertise. I've been creating content and building my ecosystem for 20 years in my city of 65,000 people, so asking for referrals every month is enough to meet my goal of 150 clients.

But in higher-traffic areas or for gyms that need more clients, Facebook is still the best option by a huge margin.

Mentorship

Yes, I advocate mentorship, because mentorship is all about clarity and accountability. As every fitness coach knows, the best way to achieve a goal is to set the milestones and work backward, step by step. That's how huge goals are reached.

PART 4: YOUR MENTOR

You feel alone. But you aren't. You don't have to invent a solution to every problem. Someone has solved that problem before you. Who? A mentor will know. A mentor's job isn't to know everything but to find the right answer right now.

A mentor asks:

Who has already solved this problem?

Who can teach us how to implement the solution best?

How fast can we teach that knowledge to the gym owners in our care?

Just as I will always have a fitness coach, I will always have a business mentor. After discovering the power of coaching on my performance, I look for opportunities to be coached wherever I can find them. I found my first mentor out of necessity. After realizing I wasn't going to simply outwork starvation or magically "figure it out," I found someone to help me turn my gym into a business. His superpower? He got me to focus.

The Power of Focus

Getting referrals isn't hard, but focusing on getting referrals is almost impossible. Meeting new people isn't hard, but finding the time to leave the gym and take coffee to the neighbors is hard.

That's why a mentor's job is really to get you to focus. A mentor helps you build a plan and stick to it.

A Business Mentor: Your Filter

Entrepreneurship is cool now. Guys like Gary Vaynerchuk and Elon Musk make the dream of being your own boss sexy.

That means we have more information, more help and more ideas than ever before. Access to information is no longer the problem. Everyone has enough good ideas. The new problem is overwhelm.

We fail to take action because we're paralyzed by too many opportunities. We don't see how each idea or tactic or habit fits into a larger plan, so we take a shotgun approach to improving our businesses.

And we don't have filters for the sources of our information, so we trust that everything on the internet is true even when we know it's not. We want to believe.

A mentor's role is to help you sort ideas—your own or the great ones you found elsewhere—and build them into your plan.

Then a mentor's role is to help you stick to your plan or shift it to match your strengths.

If you're trying to build a plan without a mentor, the graphic on the next page might help. It's a hierarchy of business knowledge and actions.

Where should you find new ideas?

Which should you choose? When?

What are your priorities?



Let’s start at the bottom: the lowest value use of your time and attention. We all love motivational memes about business, but unless they clearly say “do this one thing right now,” they’re useless. And even if they do say “take this specific action,” you’re better off investing your time in something more valuable if there isn’t a clear path to increased revenue.

The next layer (ideas, tips, tactics and episodes) has value but also carries a huge potential for overwhelm. A mentor’s job is to help you identify where you’re strong and keep you focused on those tactics. A mentor who simply throws ideas at you isn’t helping (and is probably slowing you down).

The next layer of value for your time and attention is peer support. Online groups, masterminds, chambers of commerce and business mixers all have value. The best groups are curated for quality people and moderated for quality discussion. But it's almost impossible to tell the difference between opinion and advice, and it's definitely impossible to spot outright lies. Any entrepreneurs group, online or in person, is only as good as its filters.

More valuable than peer support is actual education. Presumably, lectures and books and seminars are created by people who have actually been successful and are willing to share their tactics. This layer is more valuable because of the higher-level filters: editors, publishers and "stages," like TED Talks. Presumably, someone who knows something is filtering out the bad ideas and noise. But many good business books would make a great blog post (there's not much past the first chapter), and the filters are poorer than ever.

The next layer is a two-way education: a dialogue. These are courses, seminars and workshops in which the hosts help the attendees apply the content to their specific challenges. I no longer run two-day seminars where I get up and lecture because they don't help. Instead, we run action-based summits, where a speaker introduces a topic and then attendees apply it to their businesses on the spot. One of the best tactics I've learned is to leave a seminar as soon as you learn one good thing and spend the rest of the weekend in your hotel room working on that thing. That's far more valuable than amassing ideas and then taking action on none.

All these things, put together, form a plan. To make an effective plan, you need some distance from your current situation. You need an objective eye. That's where a mentor comes in. A mentor is there to identify what you really need and to help you

identify the best tactics, to provide the best support, and to supply the right amount of accountability.

For example, many new Two-Brain clients say, “I need more members.” Then they’ll cite a tactic they saw in a Facebook group. But then they’ll say, “I don’t have time to do it.” So the mentor guides them through the work that will get them more time first. That’s part of what we call the “RampUp” phase of mentorship.

Then the mentor says, “Let’s determine how we’re going to spend your time.” That’s part of building an annual plan, which comes at the start of the Growth Phase. If the tactic will actually generate more clients, the mentor builds it into the plan. From there, the mentor’s role is to help the entrepreneur fill time with the best courses, support and tactics for him or her at that moment.

You can try to do All The Things. Or you can invest your time and budget wisely—doing the right things at the right time to the exclusion of all the noise and overwhelm. You can spend next year the same way you spent last year: making guesses, trying to do everything and feeling overwhelmed. This is actually what most people do. And the result they get? Instead of seven years of business experience, they get one year of business experience repeated seven times.

Or you can get a mentor. This is what I realized in 2008, when I found my first mentor. And it’s why I have a mentor today. As you become more successful, the choices just get bigger. We have a diverse team of nearly 40 mentors worldwide. They’re not all like me because not everyone needs someone like me. We pair the best mentor with each gym owner. And just as not every person is right for your gym, not every gym owner is right for Two-Brain. Many are surprised to learn that only three of every 10 people who book free calls with Two-

Brain are invited into our mentorship practice. We have a lot of love to give, but we can't give it to everyone.

The Most Important Thing: Action!

In our mentorship program, we teach you everything you need to know—and then you get on a call with a mentor to implement it. Change is hard. You need guidance and help. It's one thing for me to say, "Write a playbook!" But I know this: If no one is waiting to see your playbook at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, you won't write it. It's also easy for me to say, "Your rate should be \$225 per month!" It's another thing to untangle the complicated history and emotional connections you have with your members. That's what mentors do: They walk with you.

We don't sell courses. We are a mentorship practice. Even our massive Roadmap isn't a course. It's a collection of 450 lessons on various topics—but you need a mentor's help to determine when you need which lesson. Not because it's a bunch of secrets but because everything on the Roadmap is important.

You're going to get pitched on marketing courses, sales courses, coaching courses—everything you can imagine. Trust me: Courses don't create action. And action is the only thing that counts.

A mentor helps you apply knowledge. Without application, all the knowledge in the world won't help you. That said, it's okay if you don't run right out and hire a mentor after reading this book.

I write these books for one reason: to help gym owners take one step closer to wealth. If you take action on one tactic in this book, you'll see a great return on your investment.

But if you've read this far and haven't made a single change yet, I have one more tool to share with you: a step-by-step exercise to model your new gym. I call it "Your Gym 2.0," and you'll find it in just a few pages.

Whenever you're trying to change someone—including yourself—it's critical to have a clear picture of your goal. You want to see the goal clearly, and even experience the desired outcome in a sensory way. To that end, I want you to build the gym of your dreams. I want you to start in a visionary way, and then add the strategic elements, and finally the tactical plans. But as you do the exercise, I want you to imagine the outcome, too. Walk around your new gym in your imagination. What does it smell like? Feel the knurling on the barbells. In your mind's eye, move the chalk bucket around the room. Put yourself **IN THE ROOM** where your dreams will come true, where part of your Perfect Day will occur.

You're in this to help people. I hope this book has helped you.

PART 5: YOUR GYM 2.0

Books are about teaching. Usually. Early in my blogging days, I got some feedback that changed how I approach my business. An anonymous responder posted:

“Yeah, yeah...but what do we DO about it?”

And I immediately stopped writing descriptive blog posts and started writing directives. Thousands of daily love letters later, I’m proud to say that I never present a problem without a solution. And most of the time, I do a good job of saying, “Do exactly this.”

So I don’t want to end this book after giving you a ton of tasks. Even with the worksheets and instructions (as clear as my editors and I can make them!), I want to give you a series of exercises to imagine and then build the gym you want to own.

I call this “Your Gym 2.0” because most readers of this book already own... a different gym. Their 1.0 version. The first gym, the one they’re using for practice before they level up to the gym they COULD build, the gym of their dreams.

Here’s how to do it, step by step.

Start With Your Vision

Who will your business be when it grows up?

Because this process is step by step and requires a lot of note-taking, I’ve created a worksheet to help you. Download the “Your Gym 2.0 Worksheet” from www.twobrainbusiness.com/handbook .

Your Perfect Day

Since 2012, I've been asking gym owners, "What is your Perfect Day?" Using that exercise to paint a picture of business success for them. Most said something that amounted to "freedom of time and money." Many of us actually got to test this "perfect day" back in 2020. Because of the coronavirus shutdown, we were at home 24/7, we had complete time freedom, and most of us kept some kind of income.

Many others would describe their "perfect day" as "spending all day in the gym" ...until they do it. And then their perfect day changes. That's natural. But before we start reimagining your gym, let's take the time to ask, "Is this the life I want?"

First exercise: knowing what you do now, how would your Perfect Day change? Would you still stay home in the morning, or go to the gym? Or would you prefer to have somewhere to go in the morning? Would you live where you are? With whom? Paint the clearest picture you can. Leave nothing out.

Second exercise: Using your Perfect Day as Point B, start to map the path back to where you are now—Point A. Follow the vision-strategy-tactics model: You have your vision. What are the big things that have to change in your life to get you there? These are your strategic moves. Then, how will you execute each of those strategies? These are your tactics.

For example, some gym owners love staying at home with their kids. Their Perfect Day has been updated to "run the gym, but take more time off and spend it at the park!" Their strategy might be to shift mostly to online training, move up the Value Ladder, or focus on retention and spend less time marketing.

Other gym owners have different definitions of their Perfect

Day. Some want to spend no time in their gym; some want to spend all their time in their gym. Most are in between. You have to do the exercise for yourself. What kind of Perfect Day do you want to create for yourself? Now we're going to talk about the steps to get there.

WWCEOD?

So now what? We've broken all the steps down in our Two-Brain Roadmap, and we employ successful gym owners as mentors to guide you to your Perfect Day. But here's the DIY version in case you want to try this yourself. I created this resource to help you: Your Gym 2.0 Worksheet. Download from www.twobrainbusiness.com/handbook .

First exercise: The Premortem

Imagine your gym died yesterday, and you're at the funeral. Then answer these questions.

Question 1: What WAS your business?

If you've ever had to describe a loved one in three column inches or less, you know what it's like to distill someone down to their essence. How would you want your business to be remembered? What WAS it, really, at its core—without branding or labels? What did it look like with its clothes off? What will it be remembered FOR?

Question 2: What killed it?

Let's be really, really clear about your biggest problem. This exercise should reveal your Achilles heel, and therefore your greatest priority for action. Was it exhaustion? Complacency? Cash flow? Coaches becoming competitors? Maybe take a strong dose of medicine NOW to prevent the fatality later.

Question 3: What survived?

You're training to be an entrepreneur. If your business goes bankrupt, you'll have learned something really valuable... and you'll continue to be an entrepreneur! No one can fire you from this job. You'll keep many hard lessons learned, many transferable experiences, and maybe even some money.

I hang around with some very successful people. We're a tight group. And many of us have the "clean slate" fantasy: the wish to start from scratch with what we know now. What survived that shouldn't? Did the plague continue to haunt your family after the body was gone? Take steps to quarantine the poisons now.

Second Exercise: WWCEOD?

Imagine you get fired as CEO of your gym. The board of directors hires a new CEO to run it. What's the first thing the new CEO would do?

This story comes from "Good to Great" by Jim Collins: a CEO and COO found their company in trouble. So each fired the other. Both walked out of the boardroom, and they re-hired each other in the hallway. They re-entered the room as if they were brought in to fix an ailing company from scratch.

The value of the exercise is in removing the emotional filters that stop us from taking hard actions. Deep down, we might know that we should cut back on staff or reduce our gym size—but our ego and our relationships stop us from taking the necessary steps. Even knowing that the tree will die if we don't cut off some imperfect limbs might not be enough to take action. So we need to act from a place of objectivity. This is where a mentor's guidance is priceless.

Third Exercise: What Are Your First “Rocks?”

As the new CEO of your business, what must you change immediately to save it? Do you need to restructure your debt and extend your loans? Do you need to get out of your lease? Do you need to build something or take something away? How will you deploy your resources—your time and money—to make these changes? What would a CEO do? Write everything down.

The AAR

First 1, I had you establish a crystal-clear vision of what you wanted from life. Then, I had you identify the strategies you’ll need to get there (and the parts of your business you’ll want to keep). Now, we’re going to identify the elements of your business you can shed, and then we’ll paint a picture of what your new business will look like.

First Exercise: The After-Action Review

Pretend your business closed its doors forever. You’re reviewing the business before you make plans for the next one. What went right? What would you do differently next time? What will you never do again? What will you miss? What will you not miss? What can you survive without?

And finally, how did that surprise you?

Second Exercise: What Remains?

After dropping the stuff you don’t need onto the cutting-room floor, what’s left?

If you had to start your next business with only the things that

went right, the stuff you enjoyed, and the things you'd miss, what would those things be? These are the cornerstones of your new business.

For example, you might have determined that you don't need as much equipment as you believed when you started your gym. So "equipment" isn't the necessity you thought it was. Maybe you found out that the daily group workouts were essential, but you determined that you don't have to run six classes per day; three were enough. If you were starting over, you might keep the new schedule with fewer classes on it.

Maybe you determined that 1:1 accountability was important. On the other hand, maybe it interfered with your schedule because you couldn't "turn off" and were always answering client texts. What can you keep from that experience, and what will you do differently? How does this change the definition of "unlimited" memberships? Make a shortlist of the elements you want to keep.

Third Exercise: Put the Blocks Together

Review your shortlist. These few elements will determine the foundations of your new business. What will you sell? What were you best at delivering? What did your Seed clients value most? Was it:

- Workouts?
- Nutrition coaching?
- Habits coaching?
- One-on-one time?
- Accountability?
- Group exercise?

Don't worry about labels like "CrossFit" or "Paleo." These are methods. Stick with principles for now.

Fourth Exercise: Name It

What would you call this new service?

Is it still a “gym” or something else? This new service is your 2.0. In the months after reading this book, your job is to map the path from your “1.0” gym to your “2.0” service. This is an opportunity for rebirth. Many of us will have the same two cornerstones, exercise and nutrition, but it’s crucial to bring tech into the conversation.

Online coaching, wearable tech, and virtual classes are all tools. They might be different from the tools you currently use—rubber flooring and barbells and a bricks-and-mortar gym—but they don’t change your business. Your business is coaching. A year from today, you will probably deliver that business differently than you do now. Technology will find you even if you don’t find it. So I’m including “online coaching” as an example.

Consider it as a placeholder. You might deliver personal training, group training, accountability, mindset, meditation, nutrition, or something else online later—but you’ll probably be delivering something that none of us can see yet.

Your NEW Gym: The Four Cornerstones

Your coaching business is like a building with four cornerstones: nutrition coaching, group exercise coaching, personal exercise coaching, and online coaching. I’m going to tell you how to rebuild your gym using those four pillars.

First, we’ll talk about how to move away from your previous model. Then I’ll tell you how to identify which of the four pillars your clients really need. Finally, I’ll let you know how to

package and price your new service.

First: The Four Pillars

Nutrition coaching: Depending on where you live, you might not be able to write diet plans for your clients. But that's OK: You can help them with healthy choices, habits, and self-regulation. In a worst-case scenario, you can partner with a local dietitian, but the prescription to include nutrition in the client's overall fitness plan should come from you.

Group exercise coaching: Most of your clients will prefer to exercise in a group. Group coaching serves as a lower-priced option for people who can't afford 1:1 attention, but it also provides the immeasurable benefits of motivation and community. These clients follow general programming without customization in groups of four or more.

Personal exercise coaching: This is 1:1 or personal training, with personalized workouts tailored to the client's needs on that particular day. Ten to 20 percent of your clients will want personal exercise coaching long term, but every client should start 1:1 even if they plan to move to groups or online training later. This is the fastest path to progress for your clients. It's your premium service.

Online coaching: You're providing accountability and daily customization of your general programming, fun activities, and challenges you can't offer in the gym setting (like trivia night or video workout classes), online courses, and mindfulness and habits training. This is the service that keeps your clients on track when they're not right in front of you.

Now, maybe your "old" coaching business didn't use all four pillars. Perhaps you just had one or two. And perhaps you're worried about change. So before I guide you through the next

steps, I want to warn you about “sunk costs.”

You might feel as if you’ve worked years to get to where you are. You might be reluctant to give up on the work you’ve done to this point or write off the time you’ve invested in the “old” model. But I promise you: You haven’t come this far to only come this far. The true value of the work you’ve done thus far is the preparation it’s given you for the future. Your work to date has set you up for this opportunity, nothing more. You aren’t shackled to your past. You can change.

And if you’re going to change your business, you might as well build the new business around your clients.

What Do People Need?

You are not your own best client. To build a client-centric business, you need to really understand what your clients want, what problem they’re trying to solve, and why they’re coming to you for help. Until you understand each of these things in the client’s own words, you don’t understand them well enough to support your business. Here’s how to see things through your clients’ eyes:

Exercise 1: Seed Clients

Perform the Seed Client exercise from the first chapter of this book.

Exercise 2: Client Goals

Flip the Seed Client paper over. Draw two vertical lines down the page to create three columns. In the first column, write the clients’ names. In the second column, write each client’s goals. In the third column, write the primary reason each one wants to achieve those goals.

If you don't know their goals, book a Goal Review Session with them. If you don't know their reasons, ask them, "Why is this goal important to you?" Get as deep as possible (Use "motivational interviewing" to get to the root of things with your clients).

Exercise #3: N,G,P,O

Now look at each of the Seed Clients on your list in turn and ask yourself a question: "Does this client need nutrition coaching to reach this goal?" If yes, write a big "N" beside the name. Then ask yourself, "Does this client need group coaching to reach this goal?" If yes, write a big "G" beside the name. Then, "Does this client need personal coaching to reach this goal?" If yes, write a big "P."

Finally, "Does this client need daily accountability, supplemental work, mindset help, or knowledge to reach this goal?" If yes, write a big "O" (for online) beside the name.

Exercise 4: Rocks, Pebbles, Sand, and Water

One of my favorite analogies for setting priorities is the "rocks in a jar" story:

A high school science teacher held up an empty jar for his class and asked, "Is the jar full?" The class said, "No, it's empty." So he picked up a few rocks from the counter in front of him, and put them in the jar. He could only fit three inside; the fourth wouldn't fit. He asked again, "Is the jar full?" This time, the class said, "Yes!" because he couldn't fit any more rocks inside.

The teacher set the jar on the counter, and pulled a handful of pebbles from the pocket of his lab coat. He slowly poured the pebbles into the jar, turning the glass so the pebbles flowed between the rocks. When the pebbles had filled the gaps

between the rocks, he held up the jar again.

“Is the jar full?” he asked. “Yes!” said the class, because the pebbles had filled in the gaps.

The teacher set the glass on the counter again. From another pocket, he pulled a plastic baggie of sand. Even more slowly, he poured the sand into the jar. He shook the jar to allow the sand to sift into the tiny cracks between the rocks and the pebbles. It took a few minutes, but eventually he fit all of the sand into the jar. He held up the jar and asked, “Is it full?” “Yes!” said the class, because the sand had filled even the tiniest holes between the pebbles, and nothing is smaller than a grain of sand.

The teacher lowered the jar and carried it across the room to a sink. He turned on the water and let it slowly pour into the jar, soaking the sand. Air bubbles rose to the top and disappeared. When the jar was absolutely filled to the brim with water, he raised the glass and said, “NOW it’s full.”

Your clients are holding their empty jar up to you. Your job is to fill it with your service.

Go back to the top of your Seed Client list. Of the four cornerstones (N, G, P, O), which is most critical to that client’s progress right now? Circle that.

That first cornerstone represents the rocks in your client’s jar. It’s their top priority.

Which is the second most critical? That cornerstone represents the pebbles in your client’s jar.

Which is the third most critical? That cornerstone is the sand in the jar.

And finally, if the fourth cornerstone will help your client, it becomes the water in the jar.

Here's how my jar would be filled as a client (age 45, aiming for performance on the bike, dealing with a massive workload and above-average stress):

Rocks: daily accountability and mindset work (meditation and “flow state” exercise).

Pebbles: personal coaching (my workouts on the bike).

Sand: nutrition coaching (I should tighten up a bit, but it's not a priority right now).

Water: group coaching (I like to train in a group and will get back to it eventually).

My plan should include daily accountability and mindset work, as well as workouts on the bike. When things are more stable, that plan should change to include nutrition coaching. And maybe, if needed, it should change again to include group coaching when I get bored. My coach will make that determination after talking with me.

Exercise 5: NGPO for All

- Print off a list of your clients.
- Write down their goals beside their names.
- Write N, G, P, and O beside each goal, as required.
- Count up all the N's, G's, P's, and O's.

Which cornerstone has the greatest need?

That's where you should focus first.

Exercise 6: Get Qualified

“What if I’m not qualified/not an expert/not an authority—or what if I’m scared?” Now’s your chance! Get qualified. Take a course. Become the coach your clients need you to be.

Or hire someone. Or rent someone (hire short term). Or get a mentor (pay for knowledge and share it with your audience). Or partner with someone.

But fill your clients’ glass—whatever it takes.

Packaging and Selling Your 2.0 Service

You’re the authority, coach. It’s your job to get your clients what they need to improve their fitness. And that starts with the Prescriptive Model. You know this drill by now:

The Prescriptive Model starts with a free consultation (we call it a No Sweat Intro). You’ll use a motivational interviewing strategy to find out what the client is really trying to accomplish. Then, using your wisdom and experience, you’ll determine the client’s needs. These will include sleep, eat, move, and manage needs. Then you’ll match your services to those needs. The services in my example were N, G, P, O: nutrition, group exercise, personal exercise, and online training.

Nutrition solves the “eat” problems. Group and personal exercise coaching solve the “move” problem. The “sleep” and “manage” problems are solved with online services. You make the client a prescription like this:

“Your goal is to lose fifteen pounds.”

Followed by:

“You said that your underlying problem is that you have too much free time right now, and you said you procrastinate all day. Plus, the cookie cupboard is between your office and your bedroom.

And then:

“Our best course of action is to start you moving and build some habits around nutrition before we make any specific plan. Do you agree?”

When the client agrees, you’ve identified the “rocks” in their glass and the “pebbles” (I’ll let you decide which is which).

So you build the plan to include online work and exercise—but you have two exercise options. So you ask, “Would you prefer to do your physical training in a small group setting or one-on-one with me?” And while you’re at it: “Would you prefer to do all your exercises at the gym, or would you rather have the flexibility to do some at home?” Note the answers, then flip to your pricing binder and quote the rate.

Finally, book a follow-up appointment for a month later. You’ve already identified that needs will change over time (they’ll need a nutrition plan when their habits have been firmed up). In a month, you’ll assess progress with motivational interviewing and make a new prescription.

Pricing

Build your prices based on the value to your client, not on the time required to deliver the service.

Many coaches underprice their online accountability program because it doesn’t take them much time to deliver. Or they believe the client values the in-person experience more than a

daily video text. But the opposite is actually true. The more personal your service, the more valuable it is.

Here's the hierarchy of your pricing model:

- Top Tier: in-person, 1:1 exercise coaching (your full attention for a set amount of time).
- Second Tier: in-person, 1:1 nutrition coaching (your full attention for a shorter amount of time).
- Third Tier: online customization of your group exercise coaching (around 2-3 minutes per client per day).
- Fourth Tier: online customization of a group nutrition program.
- Fifth Tier: in-person group exercise coaching (your discount in-person option without the customization).
- Sixth Tier: online Zoom classes.
- Seventh Tier: online delivery of a general program with no customization and no communication. This would be selling your programming or setting up email automation. The key isn't the value of the program but the lack of customization or conversation.

(Note: though this is only an example, many gym owners sell only the bottom three tiers I've listed here in real life.)

Now, you should already have your rates for personal training, nutrition coaching, and group coaching. These rates don't change even if you're delivering the service online instead of in person.

Selling

The Prescriptive Model is your "secret sales pitch." There's no secret script; just reps.

- Prepare a pricing binder. List your options on different pages.

- Write your prescription on a notepad (we put templates for Rx pads in our mentorship program. They're great.)
- Present the options to clients; show them the sales binder.

If he or she says, "I can't afford it," that's fine. Ask what they can afford, then say, "If that were my budget, I'd start with this," and then flip to the page featuring the priority service (the big "rock" in the glass).

Some gyms are reporting success with weekly pricing instead of monthly. Though not a familiar concept in North America, this is common in Australia and New Zealand. Think about it: There's no reason to charge monthly outside of convention (most subscription services and bills charge monthly). It's just tradition. You don't have to stick to it. Break your price down into a weekly rate and sell that way if it helps your clients. This might sound overwhelming, so let me make it easy for you:

Ask your clients, "What will help you most right now?"
Have a price ready. Know what that service is worth. Provide it if you can. Have a partner if you can't.

Let your business rebuild itself based on what your clients want instead of what other gyms are doing (or not doing).

Follow your clients to success.

Find a service for your audience, not an audience for your service.

Solve their problems.

Win.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chris Cooper believes hard-working business owners are the heart and soul of the economy, and he's dedicated his life to supporting them through mentorship. His goal: help 1 million entrepreneurs find success.

After starting Two-Brain Business on Feb. 13, 2016, Chris grew the company into the largest gym mentorship practice in the world. The businesses these clients own consistently grow faster and outperform their peers by a wide margin because of one-on-one guidance delivered by Certified Two-Brain Mentors.

Chris owns several other businesses, including a gym, a fitness coaching practice and a media company. He's the author of dozens of ebooks and four other books, including "Two-Brain Business"—the best-selling fitness business book of all time—"Two-Brain Business 2.0" and "Help First." His fourth book, "Founder, Farmer, Tinker, Thief," reached bestseller status on Amazon in six categories.

Chris is a prolific blogger and sought-after speaker, both in person and online.

As he worked with more mentors and grew his companies, Chris discovered his true superpower: the ability to break large, complicated problems down into a series of small, solvable issues.

After more than 20 years of research and millions of dollars in investment, he used this superpower to create the Two-Brain Roadmap—a one-of-a-kind, data-backed, step-by-step progression to help entrepreneurs solve problems and find success fast. The Roadmap includes everything Chris learned

over two decades in the fitness industry, as well as researched and tested strategies that stood up to Two-Brain's rigorous evaluation process.

Today, Chris leads a worldwide team of certified mentors who are helping him accomplish his vision of helping 1 million entrepreneurs find success.

He lives in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, Canada, with his wife and two children. He enjoys cycling, flooding his backyard hockey rink and drinking a beer by the woodstove.

Website: www.twobrainbusiness.com

