

Why some trainers steal and think its ok?

By Robert Raymond

“YOU CAN NOT LET PEOPLE LIKE THIS BRING YOU OR YOUR BUSINESS DOWN BECAUSE THEY WILL DO IT WITH A FURY AND HAVE A NUMBER OF UNTRUE REASONS FOR THEIR ACTIONS. THEY WILL LITERALLY TALK THEMSELVES INTO DOING THE WRONG THING AND PUT BLAME ON YOU AS THE BUSINESS OWNER!”

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If you are considering entering the fitness industry as a business owner you need to consider many things. Luckily if you have great partnerships and learn how to incorporate revenue streams you can do very well in our industry. Even within that as you grow any fitness business and hire independent contractors or employees you will have on major issue to deal with which is;

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I have personally owned a mobile, corporate and studio fitness training company in Denver Colorado since 1994. My biggest obstacle has not been managing money, hiring employees, marketing, or finding quality managers as are some of the biggest obstacles with many businesses. My biggest obstacle has been finding trainers who do not steal from me.

In our industry it is very easy for a trainer to join Gary's training systems, pick up a full client base through Gary's business plan, marketing efforts and then begin to convince themselves that it's ok to go to the clients and ask them to pay them personally rather than the company.

“The trainer at this point has developed the relationship with the client so why would the client not say OK, since Gary's training system charges me \$65 a session and Gary is offering me \$55 to pay him and I don't care about Gary's training systems I will keep my trainer happy and save some bucks”. This is a very well known experience among unethical trainers in our industry and sometimes the trainers don't even know what they are doing or the harm they are causing to the company.

Trainers in many situations think it is OK to do this because they feel they have done the work to develop the client base. In personal training it is just that (PERSONAL) so the trainer has to develop the relationship and in most cases that brings client loyalty to the trainer and not the company. Although that company spent the money necessary to help that trainer grow, provided them training, opportunity, clients, and the location to train and in some cases much more.

I see in many cases the trainers begin to talk themselves into stealing clients and begin to justify that it is OK. I have had a couple of the best trainers who were even friends of mine steal clients and sometimes even entire client bases because they feel they deserve it.

I ask those trainers to try marketing themselves on their own, try taking some financial risk, try buying equipment to open a studio, try to develop networking relationships that work and even try to run your own accounting. When most trainers try this they

understand the effort it takes and they fail.

A horrifying example you need to avoid?

I have a story that brings a chill to a lot of fitness business owners spines that I would like to share with you. "In 2007 I owned a nice studio system and I had a rent program with an equipment store. Yes, I had a studio right inside of an equipment store and we provided each other valuable assets. Mine being space and there's being access to my trainers, more traffic, referrals, and we did free training sessions for anyone buying equipment. It was a complete win-win until a national chain came in and bought the local equipment store out and took over operations.

The new store had huge turnover in employees, we could not keep up with there changes and the referral program was much less because they had no organization system. Within this system I had a trainer who had started with me 10 years earlier, did his internship with me and had trained with me for years. He became not just a trainer but a friend. I had a relationship with his mother and father as the mother did some training for me years earlier and the father was a contract attorney who did some of my contracts and I worked hard to provide both of them business and my referrals as I believe strongly in the referral process and taking care of those who take care of you.

Now for the fun stuff- When my studio deal with the equipment store turned south and we moved out it took me 3 months to get a new location. My managers including this one trainer voted and said lets get out and move on. I was as excited as everyone was very loyal and I felt it was due to the huge amount of loyalty and opportunity I had provided my trainers over the years. I provided 2 temporary studios's while I searched for the new location.

Just 39 days into the transition I received an email from this trainer and one of his friends which was a lady who was a trainer with me. Both said sorry I am terminating my relationship and I will be keeping all clients. I was shocked and looked through the books and my company had provided the male trainer with 92% of his clients and the female with 80%. I earlier that year had a trainer who had been with me for years quit to go to the fire academy and I transferred that trainer's entire client base over to the male trainer basically giving him \$4000.00 in clients immediately that created about a \$1000 profit for our company.

After I did the math for the total between them both I would take about a \$24,000 a year loss not including what I had invested in them within time. \$24,000 might not be a lot for a major corporation but feel what this would do if it was your company. You work so hard to gain clients and trainers and then they have the ability to take it right back from you. That 24k is used to grow the business along with there opportunities and boy did I give both of these trainers a lot of opportunity. More opportunity then both will probably ever have.

Due to the situation although both trainers agreed we should leave the studio they begin making excuses to get out and take that extra \$12k a year. Unfortunately both were under contracts that were created by the male's father (go figure) and my new attorney had told me that he could not defend that agreement because it was outdated.

Throughout the year after losing both of these trainers I have been slandered by the male trainer consistently and my attorney is beginning to take action. One of the morals to this story is make sure to not put to much stock into one individual or trust.

When something goes wrong (as can and will happen with any business) insecure

trainers will turn south on you and the good ones will fight not just with you but for you and I am glad to say I have had a great number of trainers fight with and for me. I have actually had trainers provide depositions and written statements for me to give to my attorney of things the male trainer who ripped us off has said without me even asking for them. People like this will solidify the reason you work so hard to grow your business when you have people like this in your organization.

How to fight and avoid these trainers?

One thing I do have is a very expensive non-compete agreement, I have spent over \$10,000 on legal contracts, having them updated yearly and I have even learned how to put some of the legal responsibility on the client which has provided us great success and many trainers or clients would not even consider stealing clients, business or money now. My business has almost recovered and it is (1) year later to the day as I write this article. I have also learned a very valuable lesson and that is to trust not even your best friend when it comes to your business. This is a sad and very disturbing statement.

I have always put too much trust and faith into people and I will always continue to do this in my personal life but I will not be doing that anymore within business. Although I will trust I will do it with one eye open. If a trainer can do this to me who went thru his internship with me, who was given a rent free studio to try to make successful and grow, was given a full load client base more than 3-4 times over a 10 year period by me and I continued to press clients his way through my money and marketing efforts and opportunities and even worst – I considered him a friend who I mentored and looked out for. There were many situations when managers wanted to get rid of him and I continuously fought for him over 10 years.

If I would have had one eye open I would of probably seen this coming. His un-stability in his life, in his client base and in his behaviors should have been wake up call number one to me. Because I was blinded by trust and I expected it right back from him my business had a (1) year downturn which will never happen again. I am writing this article because I do not want this to happen to other hard working people in the fitness industry. Although this individual has caused great harm to my companies I am not about slandering his name although he is about slandering mine although the only real success he has ever had is with me and he and I know that. All this does not matter. What matters is as a business owner I have learned my lesson and am now sharing it with you so you can avoid a like situation in the future.

Although we are all in what I consider the best industry in the world it truly takes a very dedicated effort to become successful in our industry ; **“YOU CAN NOT LET PEOPLE LIKE THIS BRING YOU OR YOUR BUSINESS DOWN BECAUSE THEY WILL DO IT WITH A FURY AND HAVE A NUMBER OF UNTRUE REASONS FOR THEIR ACTIONS. THEY WILL LITERALLY TALK THEMSELVES INTO THEIR ACTIONS.”**

I have dedicated myself to the Business of Fitness and am in the process of publishing fitness business books and mentoring other business professionals through the incredible Achieve Fitness USA program. My dedication to the fitness industry will over the years come in the form of helping others grow their businesses to new rewarding levels. If this article helps one person avoid a like situation it has done its job.

Robert Raymond is a dedicated fitness professional and author. If you are interested in Robert Raymond's mentor or company business programs see him at

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