

For Clubs



Don't Sweat The Summer Slump

Strategies To Keep Your Fitness Business Bustling

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The Dog Days of Summer

Summer. It has so many positive connotations. Warm weather, green trees, longer days, swimming, cookouts, fireworks, and even the oddly satisfying smell of freshly cut grass. But in fitness, summer doesn't always carry such pleasant memories. More often than not, summer means slow business. Very slow.

It's a two-part punch. First, the warm weather steals away your fitness center's less devoted members. Who wants to trod along on a treadmill indoors when it's so much more appealing to hike a nature trail or hit the pool? Second, the tidal wave of January membership sign-ups typically evaporates to a mere pond ripple by June. The majority of New Year's resolutions forgotten by Valentine's Day.

The seasonality of fitness is a frustrating reality in the market that can hamstring lasting business growth. This e-book examines strategies to break the cycle and keep your fitness center full throughout the summer season. We've broken the strategies into two categories:

I. Short-Term Strategy

Methods intended to affect an immediate boost in new member sign-ups as well as motivating member check-ins to your club.

II. Long-Term Strategy

Methods implemented over longer time frames which work to shift your members' perspective of both fitness and your club, resulting in higher retention and attendance rates.

Leveraging both short-term and long-term strategies can give your fitness center the edge it needs to avoid sagging business during the dog days of summer.



80% of people abandon New Year's resolutions within 30 days according to [Forbes](#).

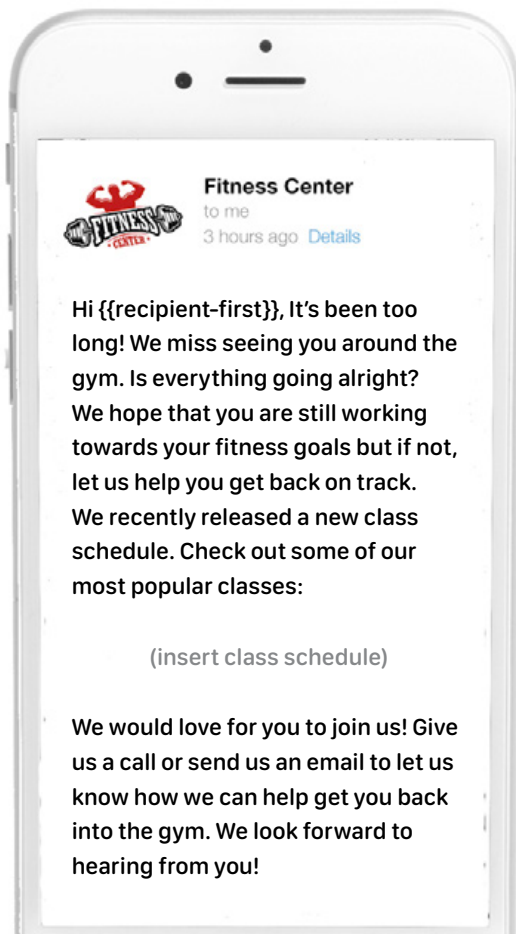


A. Member-Oriented Summer Campaigns

Promotional campaigns are the most direct way to attack the problem of dipping attendance. These example email campaigns are targeted at your current members with the goal of motivating club visits during the summer.

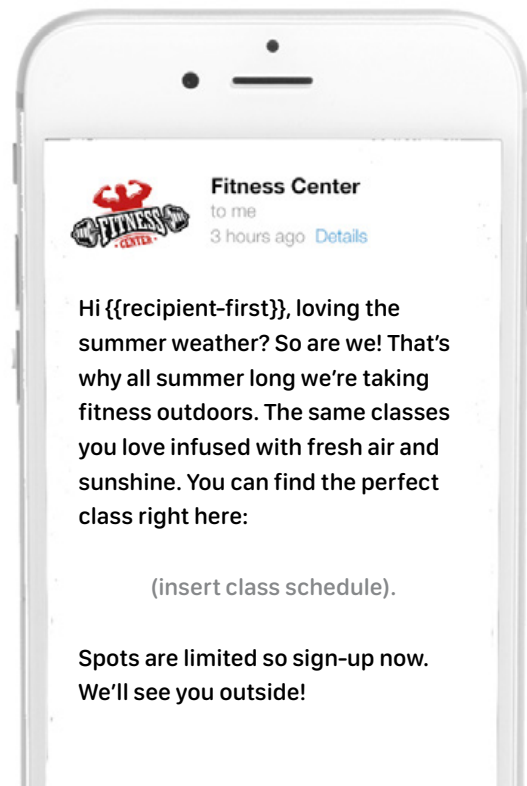
1.) We Miss You Campaign

The most direct way to get your members back in the club? Ask them. Use your CRM software check-in data to identify a recipient pool of members who haven't visited the club in a designated time frame, such as two months or 90 days.



2.) Outdoor Summer Classes Campaign

One of the biggest reasons members dry up in the summer? After a long winter huddled inside trying to stay warm, it's a relief to ditch your coat and leave the house. Summer draws people outside to their favorite grilling or swimming spot, pushing your fitness center from their mind. Introduce special outdoor summer classes to give your members the best of both worlds.





Short-Term Strategy (cont'd)

B. Prospect-Oriented Summer Campaigns

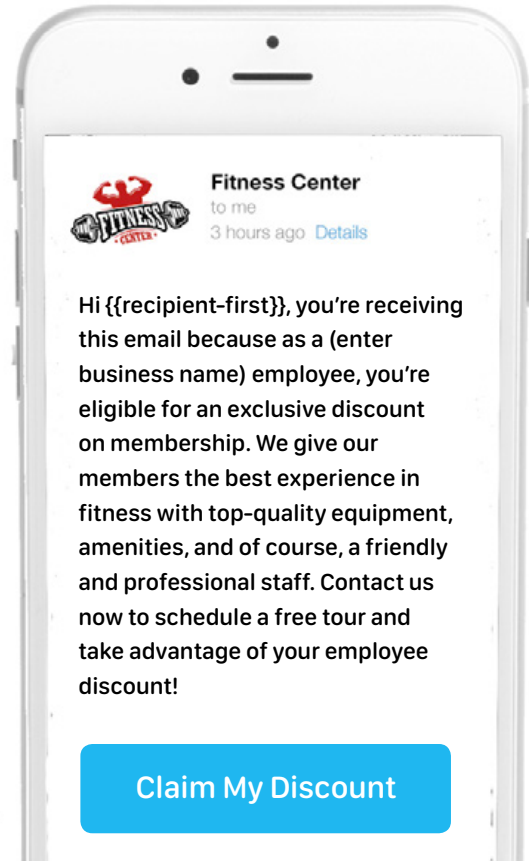
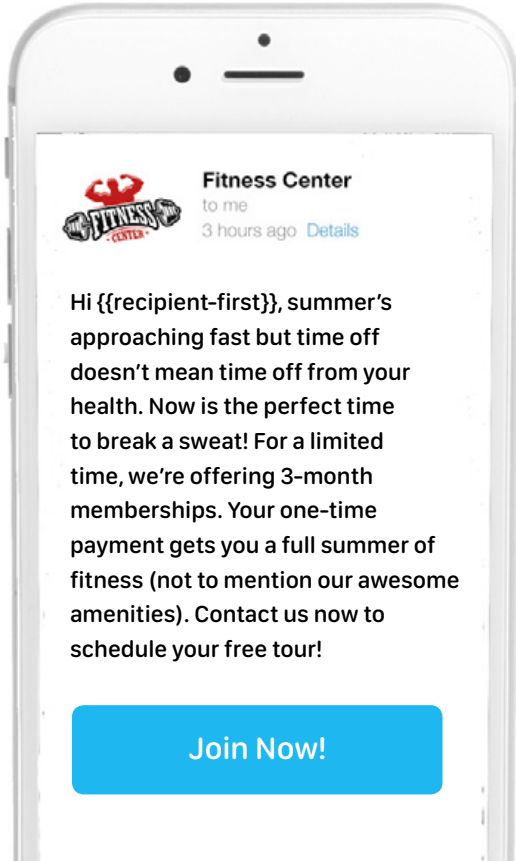
Just because sales tend to slump in the summer season doesn't mean you shouldn't actively prospect and advertise your business. These prospect-oriented email campaigns are aimed at creating fresh lead sources.

1.) 3-Month Membership Campaign

The summer brings a lot of schedule changes, especially for school teachers, professors, and college students. They often find themselves with a sudden abundance of free time. You can zero in on this temporary prospect pool with short-term memberships that fit their altered schedules.

2.) Business Partnership Campaign

With shrinking numbers of prospects, competition with competitors becomes even fiercer. Give your fitness center the upper hand by partnering with a local business. Offering the employees of your partner businesses exclusive discounts makes your fitness center the obvious choice over your competitors.





Long-Term Strategy

While short-term strategy looks for immediate results, long-term strategy works to shift both your members' perspective of health and your club's role in their lives. These strategies require patience but potentially can break the seasonality of the industry, so your fitness center stays busy and profitable year round.

A. Advocate Year-Round Health

A major problem with summer fitness is that it often circulates around achieving a beach body. But what exactly qualifies as a beach body is surprisingly vague. Typically, it just means slimmer than whatever body you currently have. The problem with the concept of a beach body? It's completely opposite of the mission of the fitness industry. It feeds into a culture of temporary fixes like crash dieting.

Fitness isn't a fleeting goal, it's a whole life change. It's important to reshape your members' view on wellness so they understand it's a year-round pursuit. This can be accomplished in four actionable ways.

1.) Achievable Goals

We all have the friend who declares at 11:48 p.m. on December 31st that next year, they will be a different person! They vow to run a marathon, go vegan, work out twice a day, and give up cigarettes cold turkey, no problem. Except, it is a problem. Quick fixes — typically — breed quick failures.

Implementing new member evaluations with trainers is a proven way to assess health and roadmap achievable fitness plans right from the beginning of a membership. Trainers can map out a simple workout plan that fits each member's starting health and gradually ramps up to a more rigorous routine over time.



“A report by Dr. Paul Bedford, the Retention Guru, found that only 67% of health club members in the U.S. and Canada retain their memberships for at least 12 months.”

- [IHRSA](#)



Long-Term Strategy (cont'd)

2.) Thinking Long Term

Sustainable change comes from introducing permanent healthy habits into a member's life. While shorter programs like an "8-week burn" can give members results, they don't provide lasting health if the practices aren't continued past the final class. Make sure you offer long-term options in your fitness club like affordable personal training or ongoing group fitness classes. While the conventional wisdom is that it takes 21 days to form a habit, there's no hard science behind this. The safer approach? Each member should take their time and keep at it!

3.) Accountability

Consider starting optional accountability programs members can join in which participants receive weekly check-ins from club staff. Not meant to shame members who fall short but rather motivate them to stay focused on what they want to achieve. For a more direct approach, you can use your fitness center or studio's CRM software to verify a member's check-ins to the club that week. To foster encouragement, consider sending weekly texts with tips and motivational content.

4.) Whole Health Changes

Health goes beyond a solid workout. In addition to staying physically active, we have to examine what we eat, how we rest, and our mental well being. Give your members additional resources by hosting events centered around other health areas like workshops on nutritional cooking or improving your sleep habits. With the average gym membership costing \$58 a month, these services can make a huge difference to members who can't afford additional health resources.



Group Training's Impact on Retention

"A Nielsen study of more than 3,000 participants of group fitness classes around the world highlighted that more than 85 percent of class members visit their facility twice a week specifically to engage in group classes."

-Club Industry



Beyond exercise: The [CDC](#) warns habitually sleeping less than 7 hours a night puts you at greater risk for high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity.

B. Create A Community

Community. Sure, it's a buzzword in fitness but it still is important. People instinctively gravitate toward people and places that give them a sense of belonging. From churches to community groups to local bars, people find community. Why not in your fitness center? Cultivating a community gives your members cause to keep coming back, 365 days a year.

Hire The Right Staff

The high rate of employee churn in the fitness industry can quickly establish a cycle of “quick hires, quick fires”. Two ways to hire better:

- 1.) Define your club's mission. Taking the time to articulate your vision will help you uncover the characteristics you're looking for in a team.
- 2.) Don't rush. Allow a position to remain vacant in the short term so it stays filled by the perfect candidate for the long haul.

Free Guest Weekends

Want to boost your fitness center's community? Let your members bring their community with them! If your club is looking like a ghost town in the summer, implementing a free guest weekend is a win-win. For your members, it gives them a reason to check-in with a friend in tow. While for you, it fills your club and likely nets a few new member sign-ups from the visiting guests.

Host Events

Make your fitness center a gathering point by hosting both fitness and non-fitness events. Events give your regular members a chance to connect for longer than a break between reps. Schedule a recurring event throughout the summer, like hosting food trucks every Saturday, to make your club a must-visit each week. Host special events like fun runs, competitions, or charitable events to draw in a crowd of potential prospects who otherwise would never set foot in your fitness center.



Does community matter in fitness?

“It's the difference between ‘I like my gym’ and ‘these people are my family.’ Without community, a gym is just a bunch of expensive heavy things. The people are what make it great.”

- Chris Marhefka, founder of B3, [Peerfit interview](#)

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