

Using Your Software to Increase Sales and Retention

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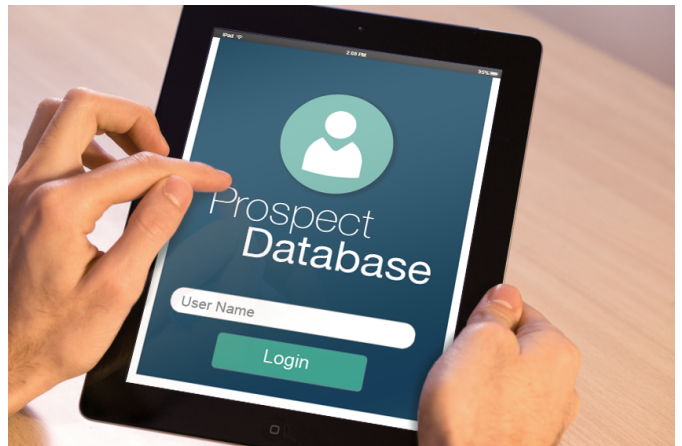
Club management software programs are built to be more than just a check-in system, and chances are you are not using your software to its fullest capability. At a trade show, I once had an owner tell me that he was looking for the best software to sell memberships. We ended up discussing that software is purely a tool to systemize information, and how we use that information dictates the effectiveness of a club's overall sales and retention plan. Software does not sell memberships; people do. How you use the tools determines your success.

The pre-holiday fall selling season is upon us, and now is the best time to implement a detailed sales and retention program. All platforms in the industry provide essentially the same tools, such as prospect, attendance and sales tracking, that are all vital for sales conversions and member retention. Before you craft a plan of action, make sure both you and your staff are up to speed with your current system. Do you have all the latest software updates? And have you completed all the necessary training with your provider? Once you're familiar with the program, create a sales and retention plan, and keep the following items in check at all times.

Prospect database. The prospect database is one of the best and most underutilized software tools in our industry. This one area is a wealth of information and can inform you who your prospects are, where they are coming from, how they heard about you, what they are interested in and more. Make sure that your sales staff enters every prospect that walks through your door and that all the contact information is filled out completely. From here, you can usually set follow-up reminders, next actions and run reports that will help you with marketing strategies, programming and referral sources. Follow-up from this point via a phone call, email or appointment is essential to help increase your sales conversions. Run your prospect reports weekly or daily, and verify that your sales team is consistently updating its follow-up notes in the system.

Attendance tracking. The key to better retention is servicing members at every level, including those who are not attending. When I managed a health club in San Francisco, I ran reports for my MIA members and divvied out the list to my sales team to reach out and touch base. Run your list and ramp up your retention initiatives with phone and email campaigns that offer pro shop discounts, group training passes and more to get members back in the club. Talking to these members also will give you useful feedback about your club. Are they not coming because of cleanliness? Is your staff providing mediocre service? Does your programming need help? Use your feedback to increase customer service, and that will transcend into better retention.

Check-in screen. The ultimate member retention tool you have is the level of service you provide in your club. Every member likes to be recognized in some way, and you can start from the minute they walk in the club. Ensure that your front desk staff greets every member by name when they walk in. This is another touch point to create community and build relationships from the moment your member walks in the door. Most check-in screens also provide appointment and account information,



so you can easily reference if a member is current on their payments, has a message waiting or is scheduled for an appointment. You also can have them check the last attendance date. If it has been a while since they have been in, follow up and find out why.

Member referral programs. Member referrals are the number one prospecting source in the club business, and most industry software systems offer built-in referral programs. If your software provides this service, be sure to use it. Most platforms have a built-in tracking system so you can see which members bring in the most referrals. Create a rewards system for your members and make sure you track their referrals in your prospect tracking module. Check to see if your provider integrates with any retention and rewards companies. If you want to get really clever, send out referral passes to your prospects. This will increase your prospect pool exponentially. Make sure you provide the same level of follow-up, communication, tracking and service.

Online membership options. Online options such as new member enrollment, purchasing training packages, scheduling appointments, and updating personal and financial information are essential in today's digital world. Verify that you have these features enabled and that they are easily accessible by your members and prospects.

Reports and email marketing. The meat of any software platform in our industry is the reporting feature. I suggest creating email campaigns for memberships that are about to expire, design data collection surveys for those who cancelled so you can make improvements, run attendance reports to assist with staffing to ensure you are providing the best service, analyze personal training reports to maximize your program and more. This epicenter of your software system will provide you the most accurate and detailed information about your club. Use that information to create a robust sales, marketing and retention program. Information is power, and your reporting will give you the data you need to make educated decisions about your business.

BIO

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