



Olympic Tune Up? Address The Most Common Deadly Sins (part 1)

In mid January, my wife, Penny, and I were invited on a four city speaking tour downunder, hosted by the four Australian state gymnastics organizations. We found dedicated gym club owners, managers and coaches in an industry that appeared to be about 10-15 years behind ours. Congratulations USA Gym Clubs -- many deserve great accolades for their current sophistication and professionalism, a far cry from yesteryear. Unfortunately, many still have a long way to go.

From the Deadly Sins below, take stock of your club. Consider these Deadly Sins essential business basics for ALL clubs. Fail in these and you fail big. May I point out, you will not find anything below that could be classified as a 'quick Olympic fix.' My mind does not work that way and neither should yours. Any steps you take to get ready for an 'Olympic rush' should be the same infrastructure-strengthening steps you should be taking on an ongoing basis. On the other hand, if the Athens Olympics serves as the catalyst you need to address these sins, then that is a good thing.

Failure to have your phone answered by a skilled, friendly, caring person. People want to do business at THEIR convenience, not yours. Not convinced? I can quantify that the cost of a ringing phone, left unanswered, is \$8.20! Think: have you ever had to wait in line at a restaurant to pay your tab? Maddening for you and maddening for your clients.

Believing in Theory X rather than Theory Y. Get a copy of Douglas McGregor's *The Human Side of Enterprise*. Distilled into one sentence Theory X Managers believe that people are basically lazy and seek to avoid responsibility and must be coerced into acting responsibly. Theory Y Managers believe that people are basically self-directed, self-motivated and will exercise good judgment and initiative to accomplish tasks to which they are committed. OK, so which Manager is right? Both are. Think about it.

Failure to brand programs. Are your preschool classes called 'Gymnastics Classes for 2 yr. Olds' or do you have a 'branded' program with a special name, mark and identity? Proctor and Gamble would not think of marketing 'P & G Diapers' (instead of Pampers) or P & G Toothpaste (instead of Crest) and you shouldn't either. Give your clients something to wrap their minds around and identify your product by. BRAND everything.

Valuing talented children more than non-talented children. Notice I didn't say "paying more attention to teams over classes." It goes deeper than that. Some clubs just don't care about non-athletes. Even their lip-service about every child a winner can't hide it and it shows through. Not only does this make for a lousy business model, it is harmful and downright wrong.

Failure to have adequate, appropriate, bright, neat, clean, inviting amenities for parents. Stay stuck in the 80's and ignore this reality and you will cut your potential business down in a way that cannot be measured. 18% of our total square footage is public space and we have devoted great resources to making it inviting.

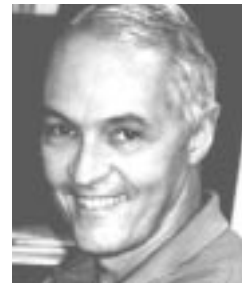
We'll discuss more Deadly Sins in the next issue of *Technique!* Have a great month!

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