

Social Media Craze

-Jayne Marascio

Gone are the days of stuffing mailboxes and placing expensive print ads. Social media has proven to be a more efficient and cost effective way to advertise your business.

We are in the business of keeping children active, introducing them to an amazing sport, and most importantly teaching them important life lessons. We are looking for toddlers, preschoolers and school-age boys and girls...we are looking for their parents. We want them to see the value in what we offer and we want them to register for our programs.



Our target demographic, as gym owners and managers, is women ages 25-44 years old. These are the people that are looking to sign their children up for activities. And, as you notice on a daily basis, these are the people with their noses in their phones, tablets and laptops. Constantly checking their social media accounts, even more than they check their email. There are crazy statistics about who owns a smart phone and how many many people, of all ages, have social media accounts.

With social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and SnapChat it has become easier and easier to get their attention. This is where they get their news. This is where they communicate with friends. This is where they find new businesses.

WHY?

By now you are asking yourself...Why use social media for your business? Sure, you have personal social media accounts, but what reasons are there to have them for your business?

*FREE ADVERTISING! Need I say more?

*BRING AWARENESS! When these social media addicts tag your business in the adorable pics and videos of their children it brings awareness to the amazing things your facility is doing.



WHO?

So, now that you have made a social media account for your business, who is going to be in charge? Use your discretion with who you give the passwords to and who you trust to post on your behalf. Owners, managers, team coaches and “social media managers.” If you have managers for other aspects of your facility, then you should definitely have one for social media. From contests to videos to advertising, this person will ultimately be responsible for a majority of your posts. It could be as little as an additional hour per shift for one of your younger instructors that is familiar with social media.

HOW?

When creating your business fan page one word comes to mind: **BRANDING!** The profile picture should be a recognizable logo and the cover photo should be engaging and of high quality. Be sure to include your website when you post for easy navigating, and of course don't forget the hashtags (more on that a little later). All minors **MUST** have a social media waiver on file. Believe it or not, there are some families who do not want their children photographed for a variety of reasons. **ALL** staff that have access to taking photos for your social media pages **MUST** know if a certain child is not allowed to be photographed. We have an indication next to their name on their class attendance sheets and we have even used the inexpensive paper bracelets for an easy visual.

WHEN?

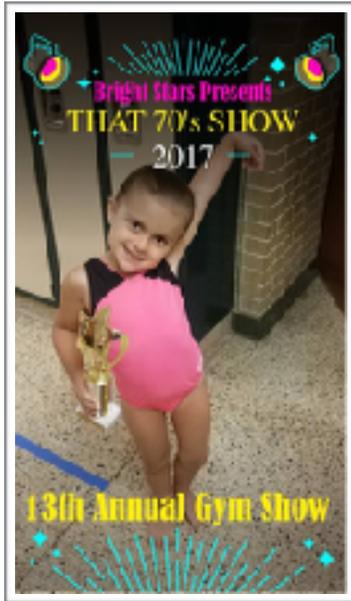
OK, now you need to know when the best time to reach your customers. I have found that the best time to post is early morning, mid afternoon and late evening. This is when we get the most traffic to our page. Pages like Facebook make it easy to schedule your posts ahead of time. This is definitely a must use feature. There are apps that also allow you to cross post to the various social media sites all at once. This is a great way to save time and streamline throughout your different pages.

ENGAGE YOUR PAGE VISITORS!

When setting up your pages, be sure to allow reviews of your business. This will allow your customers to let others know how amazing you are. Think of it as when looking for a great hotel or restaurant...the more stars the better! Allow comments. The more interaction you have on your pages, the more people they will reach.

WHAT?

*SPECIAL EVENTS! Be sure to post flyers of your upcoming events.



*DAILY HAPPENINGS!

*NEW STUDENTS! Take photos of new students welcoming them to your facility, but be sure to have that waiver on file first.

*BIRTHDAYS! This is the perfect way to wish your students and staff a very happy birthday each month. It just adds that extra special touch

*CONTESTS! We love to engage our social media page visitors with contests throughout the week. We have our "Win It Wednesday" and "Freebie Friday" just about every week. There are various contests that we use from post sharing, to guess the coach, to trivia. Be sure to mix it up

to keep it exciting. Prizes can range anywhere from swag with your facility logo on it, to gift cards to your facility, to extreme prize packs!

*RESULTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS! Does your team do well in a competition? Did a new student walk through your doors? Are there birthdays coming up? These are just a few things to celebrate on your social media page. Customers LOVE to see their little one's smiling face!

*STAFF ACKNOWLEDGMENTS! Did a staff member finish a certification? Did they have an educational opportunity? This is a great way to let your customers know how amazing your staff is and how they are not only dedicated to themselves, they are also dedicated to their career. It's also a nice touch to do a little staff highlight to introduce your staff members to you customers.

*NEW MERCHANDISE! Did you just receive a new shipment of leos or some cute new swag? Snap a photo, share it on social media and watch it fly off the shelves!

*NEW EQUIPMENT! Have you recently purchased a new piece of equipment? Big or small be sure to share that with your customers. They love to see that you are committed to making the facility better.

*PHILANTHROPY! Do you help out the local community? Maybe there is a charity that love and donate to. Your customers will love to see that you are out there helping others.

*PARENTING TIPS! Your posts don't always have to be about your facility. Share something new moms will find helpful. Share some healthy snack ideas. Share safety tips.

*PHOTOS & VIDEOS! Be sure to include some photos and videos of your students too! Remember, parents and grandparents love to see their little one's accomplishments and in turn love to share them. This is a great way to get more activity to your pages and more interest in your facility.

A good Rule of thumb when making posts is keeping the 80/20 rule in mind. 80% of your posts should be informative, entertaining and useful. The other 20% should be advertising.

HASHTAGS

Oh, the hashtag...what us "old timers" call the pound sign. The hashtag is a word or phrase preceded by a hash mark (#), used within a message to identify a keyword or topic of interest and facilitate a search for it.

So whenever a user adds a hashtag to their post, it is immediately indexed by the social network and searchable by other users. When used properly, hashtags are a great way to make your social posts more visible and increase engagement.

The key is to use hashtags sparingly and only when they add value. Use them too much, and they can be confusing, frustrating, and just plain annoying.

Be sure to keep your hashtags short, branded and specific. Your facility name is perfect as well as something like #newskill

BE CAREFUL...

*DON'T over post or overwhelm news feed. This is a good way to get fans to unfollow you.

*DON'T overdo the hashtag. One or two short, specific hashtags should do it.

*DON'T use last names of minors.

*DON'T post photos of minors without a signed photo release.

HELPFUL TIPS...

*Be sure to schedule your posts ahead of time.

*Boost posts for a minimal fee to reach more potential customers.

- *Pin promotions and other important information to the top of your page for easy access.
- *Use the help center, post metrics and analytical information provided to you.
- *Hire a social media manager.
- *Be sure to cross post to other social media sites.
- *Try sites such as woodbox.com and hootsuite.com for contests, social media management, etc.
- *Make custom photo filters.

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