



NEVER LOSE A MEMBER AGAIN

THE TWO-BRAIN BUSINESS GUIDE TO RETENTION



TWOBRAINBUSINESS.COM



YOU OWN A BEHAVIOR-MODIFICATION BUSINESS

Whether you sell CrossFit, bootcamp, Pilates, nutrition coaching, personal training or something else, your primary products are diet and exercise.

What diet and exercise program gets the best results?

The one your client will stick with longest.

Your clients' success depends on their long-term adherence to your plan. More than anything else, your clients need to show up often enough—and long enough—or they will fail. And you will, too. Because when people stop showing up, you have to replace them.

Some call it “churn rate”: the speed at which people opt out of your program. I prefer to measure how long they stay. We call this metric length of engagement, or LEG. It's one of two key metrics we measure at Two-Brain Business. The other is average revenue per member (ARM).

While ARM is a measure of your sales skill, LEG is a measure of your operational excellence. Each is a multiplier of the other.

To have a successful business, you have to be great at more than marketing: You actually have to get results. You have to get people to show up. You have to change their habits. You have to modify their behavior.

In the pages that follow, I'll show you exactly how to do it.

Chris Cooper

RETENTION: DRIVEN BY DATA

Retention has nothing to do with feelings and hunches.
Retention is all about numbers.



FIRST: WHY WE'RE THE EXPERTS

I've been a fitness coach since 1996. I opened a gym in 2005 and opened a CrossFit affiliate in 2008.

But I backed into CrossFit: I actually first set out to prove CrossFit didn't work.

In 2006, I knew that I wanted my clients to show up for training more often. I wanted them to do their homework and get results, then tell their friends. I also wanted them to buy more training sessions with me.

"Adherence rate" is the number of times your client exercises in any given week. As a personal trainer, I knew the math was simple: I'd make more money if I could get every client to train with me one more time per week. My average client trained with me 2.3 times per week. By adding one session, I'd increase my revenue by almost 40 percent without having to find any new clients.

That sounded great, so I set out to determine how to increase adherence. I took 20 of my clients and split them into two groups.

One group got their homework in advance: I printed out a month of workouts, stapled them together and presented them as a workbook.

The other group had to check their email every morning. They didn't know what their homework would be in advance or when their rest days would be.

We tracked adherence: Who did the most workouts?

The results were published in the [CrossFit Journal](#) in 2009.

ADHERENCE RATE

The number of times your client exercises in any given week.



FIRST: WHY WE'RE THE EXPERTS

Here's what we learned:

1. Our clients did their homework more often when they didn't know what was coming in advance. We surmised this was the case because the delivery system allowed fewer opportunities for procrastination.
2. The "constantly varied" part is probably the most important aspect of the CrossFit prescription. Before 2010, most fitness "experts" agreed that random workouts would create inferior results. But now everyone uses constant variance in their programming. Because if people aren't bored, they'll show up. And if they show up, they'll train hard (there's no option to sandbag in a microgym). And if they train hard consistently, they'll get great results.
3. CrossFit works.

Since that test over 13 years ago, my primary area of focus has been client retention.

We have clients at Catalyst who have been around since 2001, when I was a personal trainer at other gyms. We have several clients who have reached the 10-year mark. Our LEG is just under 30 months, while the microgym industry average is just over 13 months. That means every client we get at Catalyst is worth more than double the average client at another microgym.

As a result, we spend less money on marketing, less time on sales with new clients and less time trying to enforce contracts or chase late payments.

Most important of all: Better retention means we can spend more time coaching without distraction.



RETENTION BY THE NUMBERS

When we teach metrics to entrepreneurs at Two-Brain Business, we keep it simple and prioritize ARM and LEG.

As explained above, ARM is really a measure of sales and marketing. LEG is really a measure of your operations. Each is a multiplier of the other.

ARM—AVERAGE REVENUE PER MEMBER

This key metric usually highlights an affiliate's weakness right away. If you catch yourself saying, "I just need 10 more members," stop and calculate your ARM.

Amazing operations with no sales? You're multiplying by zero. Great marketing with low prices and poor retention? Zero. Failure.

We work very hard on sales and marketing. But our specialty is retention, and good retention isn't about birthday cards and automated emails. Good retention is about systems.

LEG—LENGTH OF ENGAGEMENT

I want to keep clients for at least 10 years because I'd rather be a coach than a marketer.

What's at stake here? An extra \$45,000 per year for you without attracting a single extra client or taking on one more dollar of cost.

That's not a made-up number. In 2018, the average gym owner who filled out our Gym Check-Up would have earned an extra \$45,000 that year simply by increasing average retention by two months. (Read the entire article [here](#).)

But let's make it simple: If you charge \$200 per month and keep a client for one month, then your marketing efforts were worth \$200. If you keep that same client for two months, your efforts were worth \$400. If you keep that same client for a year, your efforts were worth \$2,400. If you keep the client for 10 years, your efforts were worth \$24,000.

In every case, the cost to acquire the client was the same.



NUMBERS DON'T PLAY FAVORITES

We work 1:1 with around 800 clients from every continent in the world, and standard metrics such as LEG give us critical, unbiased insight into each gym. If a gym's retention score is low, we know right away that it has an operational problem.

Every one of us thinks his or her gym is nearly perfect. We think our systems are amazing, our clients "get us," and we're building some kind of emotional bank account with them. That's fantasy. If your service is bad, your clients will leave. And they should.

We're blind to operational problems because we think our kid is the most handsome in school. We're biased.

That's why we need objective data, like LEG. And we need to track it over time to see the effect of any changes we make. We're also totally enamored with our own ideas. But is the new idea having any real effect?

Objective measurement with ARM and LEG removes personal bias from your business and gives you clarity. And it helps a mentor prescribe action and build your profit.

Sales are fun, but without retention you won't have a LEG to stand on.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RETENTION

People don't stay because you have a cool logo, the best coaching or a floor scrubber. Here's why your clients actually come to your gym every week—and why some will ghost you.



FOUNDATIONAL KNOWLEDGE: HOW THE BRAIN WORKS

Every coach knows to start with a client's goal and work backward to build a program. It's the foundation of coaching.

But your clients' adherence to that program is ultimately what determines success. Above, I mentioned that adherence was the first metric I tracked as a coach because no program works if the client doesn't do it.

Here's what you should know about goals, motivation and adherence:

1. The closer you are to a goal, the more likely you are to stick with the plan.

George Lowenstein is a researcher at Carnegie Mellon University. His research focuses on desire: your brain's attraction to an action or product.

Let's call your goal Point B and your current spot on the plan Point A. According to Lowenstein, the smaller the gap between A and B, the more irresistible the goal becomes.

This is why no one puts a book away with two pages left or walks out of a movie in the last five minutes. Completion is irresistible when it's close.

That means you must break a client's goals down into the smallest steps possible: from a monthly goal to a daily goal, from a daily goal to a workout goal, from a workout goal to a "do this right now!" goal.

BRIGHT SPOTS

Celebrate every win no matter how small.

2. Bright Spots: A never-ending series of achievements and celebrations.

Chip and Dan Heath are researchers at Harvard University. They write books about progress, habits and achievement.

Most people in the fitness industry don't understand motivation. In fact, we have it backward: "Get someone motivated and then he or she will succeed," we think. But the truth is that if we get someone to succeed, he or she will be motivated. That means celebrating small goals. It means going out of your way to find "wins" for your client.

Deadlift an empty bar for the first time? That's a win.

Show up for two appointments in a row? That's a win.



FOUNDATIONAL KNOWLEDGE: HOW THE BRAIN WORKS

Drink more water than coffee? Win.

Smile during a tough workout? Win.

Remember: As a coach, you see this stuff every day. It's routine to you. But it's novel to clients. Every new movement, every tiny PR is an opportunity to rewire your client's brain to help him or her love you more and show up tomorrow.

3. In the course of human evolution, inclusion has always meant safety; exclusion has always meant danger.

While our brains have grown over the millennia, every thought first passes through those same primitive filters.

To an insider, a group means safety in numbers. To an outsider, a group is a threat.

That means a client's first interaction with your gym should always be 1:1. We start with a No-Sweat Intro to talk about goals. We never put a new client into a class setting on the first visit.

4. Most people are looking for reasons not to use your service right now.

People already know they need to exercise. They already know they're fat or weak or sick. But we're wired to take action on urgent things, not the most important things.

That means a client who calls you to ask about your service is looking for an urgent solution. He or she has had some revelation that caused a thought: "I need to find a gym now."

Motivation is at its peak even if you don't know the reason yet.

Two days from now, the client's motivation might be gone again. The urgency will disappear. He or she will be lulled back into complacency by the comfort of the daily routine.

When someone says "I'm interested," the greatest favor you can do is call right away and get the person into the gym.

It's not high-pressure sales. It's answering a call for help.

5. Your messages must be consistent with the people you're trying to attract.

Seth Godin says marketing all boils down to this phrase: "People like us do things like this."



FOUNDATIONAL KNOWLEDGE: HOW THE BRAIN WORKS

If you want stable clients who can afford your service, you should dress and act like those people.

What do your best clients wear to the gym? Match their wardrobe quality.

How do your best clients speak? Match their language.

How do your best clients behave on Facebook? Live up to that standard.

When in doubt, it never hurts to be the best-dressed, most polite or friendliest person in the room. But it always hurts to be the worst.

Everything you say or publish will make your retention better—or make it worse.

6. People need to win.

Your brain quickly becomes addicted to two chemicals: serotonin and dopamine.

Dopamine is secreted when the brain encounters novelty. Serotonin is secreted when the brain solves a puzzle. That's why constantly varied functional movement performed at high intensity works: Constant novelty grabs the brain's interest, and tiny little wins keep it interested long term.

It's why no one gets excited about doing farmer's walks—unless you make it a race.

Want to heighten the effect? Put your people on a podium.

Most people don't think about your gym very much when they're not in it. They have busy lives, jobs, families and a bunch of other priorities. And they probably never get to "win" most of the time.

But at your gym, people can win. They can be the best versions of themselves. Sometimes they can be the best in the tribe. Whenever they win, you need to have a podium ready. You need to shine a big spotlight on them. You need to put their picture in the newspaper.

Luckily, you own the podium, the spotlight and the newspaper. Broadcast every Bright Spot and make your clients feel like superstars.

IMPROVED LEG THROUGH MENTORSHIP

Two-Brain Business mentors teach entrepreneurs how to retain clients for years. Remember that increasing retention by two months can create \$45,000 in revenue. What if you increased retention by 12 months?



6 STEPS TO RETENTION

Here's how certified Two-Brain Business mentors help business owners keep clients longer:

- 1. We clearly define roles**—We want one person responsible for tracking clients. This ensures the person has a clear focus for a few hours every week.
- 2. We clearly define success**—We measure success by increased LEG. Are you getting better at retention or not? If not, we give you follow-up actions.
- 3. We discuss industry gold standards**—What are the best gyms in the world doing?
- 4. We map the client journey**—What happens and when? And how can we make sure clients get what they need when they need it every time? Listen to our podcast about the client journey [here](#).
- 5. We set up automations along the client journey**—Automations include flags, emails, actions, rewards, badging and so on. Really, all the talk about 10-year gifts and birthday cards is irrelevant without a system behind it. Gifts and cards are good ideas, but you must make sure retention strategies are implemented consistently. Imagine sending only half your clients a birthday card or PR text. For automations to work, we strongly recommend you have a reliable person in a clearly defined role (see No. 1 above).
- 6. We track LEG long term**—We want to know your LEG score every single month. Some platforms (like Wodify) are getting really good at providing this information.

DIRECTIVES: 5 WAYS TO INCREASE LEG

A LEG measured in years is earned every day. In this section, you'll find step-by-step instructions to start building long-term relationships immediately.



1. HIRE A CLIENT SUCCESS MANAGER

You need your best coaches coaching, your best salespeople selling and your happiest person keeping clients tied to your brand.

No, your coaches won't do a good job at this stuff. Well, some might—but your LEG is only as good as the weakest link in the chain. If one coach can't deliver on these strategies as well as the others, your retention will fall to the level of poorest delivery.

That's why we say that LEG is a measure of operational excellence: If one facet of your business is weak, people will leave.

Client success manager (CSM or joy person) is a part-time role. When you're starting out, the CSM role will probably require around two hours per week. My first CSM called herself the "Joy Girl," and the name stuck: I referred to the Joy Girl in my books, and in this [blog post](#), where I share the full job description.

CLIENT SUCCESS MANAGER

The CSM is responsible for improving each client's relationship with your brand. In the early stages of a business, the job requires about two hours a week.

The CSM role has evolved over the years. Here's a podcast in which Two-Brain's CSM, Eden Watson, shares the benefits of having a world-class CSM in your gym: [Two-Brain Radio](#). She also explains exactly what the CSM should do to make you money.



2. START A BRIGHT SPOTS BOARD

Your clients aren't good at celebrating their own successes, your CSM won't be at every class, and your coaches will probably need a tool to help them identify and celebrate wins.

LOG EVERY VICTORY

A Bright Spots board provides a way for coaches to celebrate achievements in every hour of the day.

With a Bright Spots board, your coaches can take one simple action that will help your clients recognize their small wins and make it easy for your CSM to follow up. Tell each coach to find two to three Bright Spots in every class and put them on the board.

The coaches should make time to take a picture of each athlete at the Bright Spots board. There's literally no better story to share on social media.

Remember: No clients signed up for your gym because they wanted to work out. They signed up because they wanted the workout to produce a particular result, like weight loss. And while they're waiting for that result to occur, their Bright Spots are the breadcrumbs on the trail.

But those breadcrumbs aren't obvious if you're not looking for them.

So it's the coach's job to say "you did something you've never done before!" and offer a high five for a personal achievement.

The coaches do this as part of your retention strategy, not just because that's the routine at the end of class.



3. CALL PEOPLE WHO HAVE BRIGHT SPOTS

Every Friday, your CSM should take a picture of the Bright Spots board and call every client whose name appears there.

The purpose of the call is to reignite the conversation about the client's goals. Here's the script:

"Hey, Jane! I saw your new record for double-unders on the board. Seven double-unders—that's amazing! What are you going to do next?"

All the important pieces of the retention puzzle are in that call: a reminder of progress, a celebration of a win and identification of the next step toward the client's goal.

Newer clients will obviously be on the Bright Spots board more often. And that's the way it should be, because it takes a lot of chemistry to cement a habit into place.

PICK UP THE PHONE

Bright Spots calls are a reminder of progress, a celebration of victory and an opportunity to re-engage the client to set more goals.



4. START BRIGHT SPOTS FRIDAY IN YOUR FACEBOOK GROUP

It's important for your coaches to identify and celebrate your clients' wins. But over time, it's critical for clients to learn how to identify their own progress.

That means teaching clients to look inward with gratitude instead of judgment. Clients are always prone to asking, "Why is this so hard?" or "Why isn't the weight coming off faster?" You can change their mindsets so they skip the negatives and think, "Here's what went right this week."

That's Bright Spots Friday.

Every Friday, each client should post wins for the week in your private Facebook group. The group should contain only your current members. And coaches should list their Bright Spots first to encourage the rest.

Here's the post I used in my gym to introduce BSF:

Motivation means desire.

The science of motivation is the science of success. That's why I study motivation more than I study exercise technique. After more than 20 years as a coach, I know the selection of exercises is secondary to your desire to perform them.

Here's what we know about motivation:

- 1. Success has to happen before you'll become motivated.*
- 2. Success has to keep happening.*
- 3. We don't always recognize success when it happens. We're pretty hard on ourselves.*

BRIGHT SPOTS FRIDAY

Weekly celebrations teach clients to cultivate a positive mindset and offer support. Your tribe becomes stronger as its members congratulate and motivate each other.



4. START BRIGHT SPOTS FRIDAY IN YOUR FACEBOOK GROUP

Good gyms provide access. Great gyms provide success.

That means we prioritize our PR board over our scoreboard, we track our progress in SugarWOD, and we need to take five minutes every week to reflect on the good in our lives.

The practice of thankfulness doesn't come naturally to anyone. That's why we call it a practice: It's hard and we don't feel like doing it. Then we feel better once we have.

Bright Spots Friday is our practice of thankfulness. Every week in the Catalyst group, we'll post our Bright Spots: things that went right, things we're celebrating and little wins from the week.

Bright spots aren't always directly workout related, but practicing gratitude and thankfulness is an exercise.

The first time, you'll be reluctant to post your Bright Spots.

"I don't really know these people that well. They don't want to hear about my life." Or "I don't want to share all my personal stuff."

So I'll go first. And I encourage you to follow with one tiny little Bright Spot. Make it workout related to start if that's easier.

What did you do right or do best or do for the first time this week? Share in the Catalyst Members Facebook Group.

We're all family here. It's a safe place. Look within and start your weekend happy.



5. GOAL REVIEW SESSIONS

Meeting with each client 1:1 every quarter has a huge benefit.

First, it allows you to coach the person better. Second, the meeting lets the client see progress, set goals and plan the next steps. That's most important for retention. But it also gives you the opportunity to talk about their friends and family (Affinity Marketing) and your other services.

When a person quits your gym because he isn't losing weight, that's not a failure of your programming. It's a failure of your ability to talk with him about his plan and provide the resources that will help him succeed. Same deal with a woman who wants to do a pull-up but doesn't have a chance to tell a coach.

HELP FIRST—AND GROW

Goal Review Sessions are an opportunity to help the client and grow your business. Everyone wins.

If you don't know the client's goals, you'll never have the chance to present the right plan. Goal Review Sessions aren't an upsell. They're a right-sell: They're your opportunity, as a coach, to give the right advice at the right time, set some goals and provide the client with the right service to match those goals.

In fact, Goal Review Sessions are your duty unless you just want to sell group classes, compete with lower-priced group-class facilities and constantly chase more clients because your retention is bad. But if that's you, you probably wouldn't have gotten this far.

Goal setting can also re-engage absent members who might be on the verge of leaving. The key is to remind them of their goals and their emotional connection to them. If a client has been absent for two weeks, have your CSM call and say something like this:

"Hey, Mary! Hope you're doing well. I'm just calling to see if you're getting closer to your goal of three double-unders. How about the goal of running 5 km in under 30 minutes?"

This approach doesn't work all the time, but it works more than half the time.

A typical call is less than five minutes. But the return on the time investment is huge. If the ARM of your gym is \$200, for instance, and 50 percent of the AWOL clients don't cancel after you make 12 calls in an hour: $\$200 \times 12 \times 50\% = \$1,200$ for an hour of work. That's huge!



5. GOAL REVIEW SESSIONS

Similarly, a client who cancels a membership isn't your enemy. He or she is the most likely person to join your gym next month—if you handle things properly. To read more about re-engaging your departed members, click [here](#). Then work even harder to retain them when they're back.

Checking in with Bright Spots calls and scheduling Goal Review Sessions can be worth thousands of dollars every year.



BONUS: PRIORITIZE A CONSISTENT EXPERIENCE

The most important characteristic a coach can possess is consistency. It's a key element of successful businesses, too.

Imagine going to a gym where an erratic coach is bubbly one day and surly the next. Payments are sometimes processed on the first of the month and sometimes on the eighth. Sometimes the doors are open 15 minutes before class, and classes start on time about half the time. The bathroom usually has toilet paper—but not always. The floors are clean—except when they aren't.

Aside from the day-to-day irritation inconsistency causes clients, it creates an overarching feeling of unease. That erodes the confidence of your clients and creates a retention problem.

As much as variance is great for retention when we're talking about fitness programming, consistent delivery of service is critical when we're talking about operations. Clients want the same great service they signed up for each time they walk in the door.

Here's the key to creating this consistency: roles, responsibilities and accountability. We teach mentoring clients all about this. In short: You must have documents in place that tell everyone how and when everything should happen. And you need evaluations to ensure these procedures are being followed. That creates long-term consistency.

For example, if all coaches know classes must start on time, there's no grey area. If all front-end staff know how to handle an appointment booking, no steps are missed. If your cleaner knows you need three extra rolls of toilet paper in each bathroom, everyone is happy. Regular staff evaluations allow you to ensure things are happening as they should or take steps to make improvements.

BE GREAT EVERY SINGLE TIME
Inconsistent businesses can expect inconsistent
length of engagement.

If you don't have your roles and responsibilities documented, and if you don't evaluate your staff very regularly, you have some obvious ways to improve the client experience.

Consistency develops over time. You must work toward it, and doing so will improve retention. Don't give clients any excuse to change their habit of coming to the gym and leaving satisfied every time.

The key questions to ask yourself now: "Is each client having the same great experience every time he or she trains? If not, what can I do to make every single interaction great?"

YOUR DUTY

Your duty as a coach isn't to write the best programming. It's to get your clients results. And no one reaches a goal in a day.

Your duty as an owner isn't to get more heads through the door. It's to keep people around long enough to build some stability into your business.

Your duty as a human isn't to sell. It's to care. And when you care about something, you keep it.



CULTURE AND RETENTION

Your culture is the sum of your 1:1 relationships.

Your gym culture is the sum of your 1:1 relationships with your clients.

Your staff culture is the sum of your 1:1 relationships with your staff.

Your “culture” is not how often your clients visit a bar together. It’s not how long they stick around after a workout or even what they’ll wear to get bonus points in the Intramural Open. Your culture is relationships, and every relationship is 1:1.

You measure your culture by LEG. Great culture keeps clients longer.

In the Founder Phase, your culture is the sum of your personal relationships. You’re delivering the service yourself; if you build trust and empathy with your clients, you have a good culture.

A good relationship is a balance between friendship and objectivity. Your clients are not your friends, but your relationship must be friendly. You must stay professionally distant enough to charge money for your service, but you must stay close enough to demonstrate your care. It’s not easy.

In the Farmer Phase, your culture is determined by your clients’ relationships with your team and your team’s relationships with you.

Your team must understand your vision (we call this The Owner’s Intent). They must also know that you care about their careers and have a plan in place for them (at Two-Brain, we use the [Career Roadmap](#) exercise). They must see the horizon and know they can achieve their career goals on your platform.

Then your team must create 1:1 relationships with your clients the same way you would. This is the most challenging part of being a Farmer: handing over the responsibility for client relationships.

Staff people will all have different personalities, strengths and weaknesses. For example, one might be incredible at creating workouts for clients but might not have a strong sense of empathy. Or one might be creative but not quite organized enough. For this reason, we always build a safety net into the Farmer Phase: We add a CSM for two to four hours per week (see Page 15).

YOUR CULTURE AFFECTS RETENTION

Culture is measured by LEG.
Great culture keeps clients longer.



CULTURE AND RETENTION

In the Tinker Phase, your clients' relationship should be with your brand. This means they have to align with your company's values and vision. Now you have six relationships to manage:

- Your clients' relationships with your staff.
- Your clients' relationships with your brand.
- Your staff members' relationships with their manager.
- Your staff members' relationships with your brand.
- Your relationships with your direct reports.
- Your relationship with your brand.

In the Tinker Phase, we tell entrepreneurs to build a managerial layer, usually a chief operations officer (COO) or general manager, a chief financial officer (CFO) and a chief sales officer or sales lead. These should be the owner's three direct reports. In turn, they translate the owner's intent, vision and mission to staff.

Good Tinkers should be removed from daily operations but still available to staff members who have unique situations. For example, the CEO shouldn't be the one with the key to the supplies cabinet but should still be available to listen to a staff member with concerns about his or her career.

The Tinker must clearly define the brand's values. He or she must answer questions like:

- "How does our service fulfill our goal?"
- "What will we not do?"
- "Who is our perfect client?"
- "What is the perfect delivery of our service?"
- "How far will we go to solve a customer's complaint?"

He or she must also define the language and behavior used by the brand. For example, the Tinker must have staff playbooks, a quality-control or evaluation process and a style guide for brand media.

It seems like the Tinker is too far removed from client interactions to influence company culture. But that's not true: The Tinker's role is to define and teach the company culture to key staff, who then reinforce the culture by tracking client and staff relationships.



CULTURE AND RETENTION

At this level, companies must track LEG as a measure of their client-facing culture, and they must track length of employment as a measure of corporate culture. Many businesses make wild guesses about “employee culture,” adding pinball machines and free breakfast cereal. But they fail to measure the effect of their action on employee retention. That means they’re not taking their culture seriously; they’re just trying to be as cool as Google.

Like everything else in your business, culture is measurable. That means, no matter how poor your current culture, you can improve it. The key is to focus on one relationship at a time and measure your progress.

[Founder, Farmer, Tinker, Thief? Click here to find out what stage of entrepreneurship you’re in.](#)

Maybe monthly pub crawls do build a better culture in your business. It’s possible. But unless you’re tracking LEG, you’ll never know what’s actually helping your business.

What about pub nights?

“Jane is a great client, but she’s never really been part of the community. I don’t think she’s ever come to a single event outside the gym.”

I hear that complaint all the time. Here’s why Jane doesn’t care about your pub night and why it doesn’t matter: The “culture” of your gym can aid retention. It can help pull people closer and feel like a family.

It can also drive people away. It can divide people, create “cliques” and tell some people they really don’t belong.

How do you create the culture that binds people together? By reinforcing the story people tell themselves about your gym family and by leveraging the internal phrase “people like us do stuff like this.”

This is called cultural synchronicity—when people belong to your gym because the base of their self-identity is in your tribe. They’re more closely aligned with your group than with any one thing your group does.

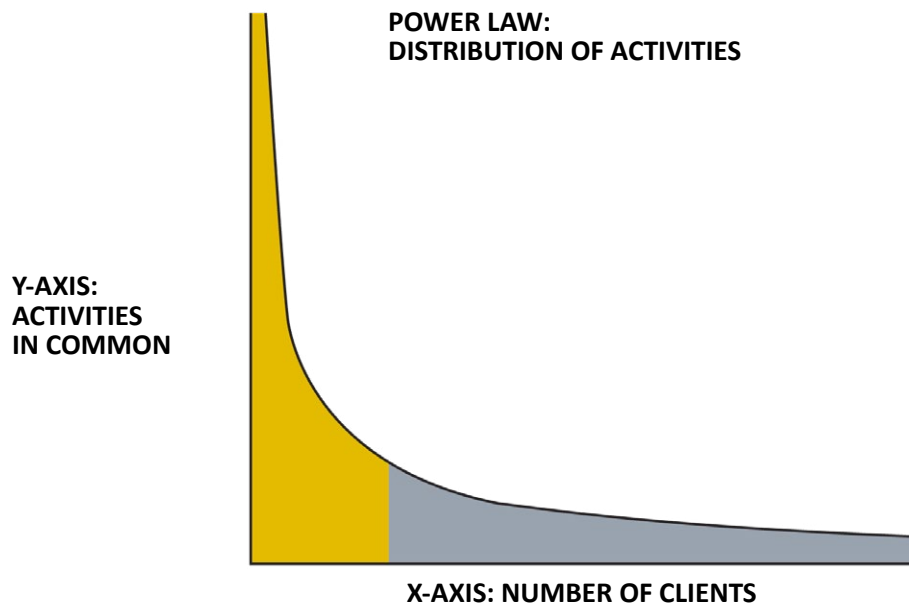
Want to test your cultural synchronicity? If your gym family stopped doing CrossFit and started doing something slightly different—like obstacle-course-race training—for three months, how many of your members would stay?

The people who would stick around are more closely aligned with your culture than with any one activity (CrossFit). You want more people like that. Here’s how to get them, pull them close and keep them.



CULTURE AND RETENTION

First, consider this graph of your clients' behavior:



Obviously, every client you have does CrossFit or some other form of high-intensity training. They have that in common, and the pursuit of CrossFit reinforces their place in your culture.

But what else do they have in common? That's what you should pursue next to build your culture. Perhaps almost all your members enjoy watching the local college team play. If so, that presents an obvious way to strengthen the bonds of the tribe.

In some gyms, the whole membership goes out for drinks on Friday—except, maybe, the 10 percent who don't. What do you do for those people?

Maybe you're happy to leave them. If so, carry on.

If only 10 percent of your gym goes out for drinks every Friday, what are you doing for the 90 percent who don't?

I'm not recommending that you have 10 special events every month. I'm saying that if you want to buttress your culture, choose the extracurriculars that attract the most people.



CULTURE AND RETENTION

We're not a long-tail business; we don't make a living off the 10,000 people who visit the gym one time. We're an extremely short-tail business. It's important that people in your gym say:

"People like me do something like this."

As always, thanks to Seth Godin for the sentence.

START TODAY

Marketing is sexy, but acquiring clients is more expensive than retaining them.
Put retention first, then bolster your business with great marketing.



EVERYBODY WINS

The best gyms we work with can tell you the length of engagement and lifetime value of a client.

They can also tell you what it costs to acquire a client.

That data underpins all their efforts.

They know that a small increase in wages paid to a CSM can result in thousands of dollars when length of engagement goes up.

They know \$50 in birthday cards for clients is a great investment.

They also know exactly what they can spend on marketing. When they have amazing retention systems in place, businesses can invest wisely in client acquisition because they know they'll more than recoup initial costs through length of engagement.

How much confidence would you have in marketing spends if you knew each new client would stay for three years on average?

Ensure you're doing everything you can to increase LEG, then focus on adding more high-value clients. Don't reverse the order.

Retention is critical because it ensures stability and sustainable growth for the business, and it allows key staff people to focus on coaching, not scrambling for clients.

Clients benefit from retention, too.

They came to your gym to solve a problem they won't solve on the couch. If you can keep them coming to the gym, they'll accomplish their goals. It's your duty to do everything you can to help them cross goals off their list and make plans to accomplish new ones. If they keep coming to your gym, they'll also be healthier—a primary goal for some but a great thing for all.

Everyone benefits with increased retention. So take action to improve your length of engagement today, and start tracking your metrics.

To get access to more great resources and learn from other gym owners, join this private Facebook group:

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OWNERS
UNITED**

To learn more about how mentorship can help you grow your business:

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