

Membership validation



Looking around your club, how confident are you that everyone there is a fully paid up member? Even if they are a familiar face, it could be that they've just cancelled their direct debit, are running late with payment or that their membership is about to expire. If they are actually in the building, what better time to get that sorted out?

If you don't have an entry system linked to their payment record, you could miss that vital opportunity and let someone use your facilities without paying or you could fail to secure a membership renewal.

Without falling into the trap of 'analysis paralysis', having an up-to-date window into each member's payment and attendance record when they arrive could reduce your default levels, improve your renewal rates and prevent invalid entry. Also, knowing specifically if they are a new member could allow you to tailor your greeting accordingly.

Ashbourne Membership Management has just introduced a Membership Validation system, available to all its customers. Please email us to request more information.

Retention: the first 3 months of membership are critical:

- Ensure members have an induction which explores their reasons for joining and sets realistic expectations.
- Tailor a personal exercise programme that the new member feels comfortable with.
- Monitor their attendance closely and as soon as there is a two week gap in attendance at any time in the first twelve weeks, then make contact.
- Ensure that the new member is spoken to by a member of staff on every visit in the first 12 weeks.
- In the third month, set an appointment to discuss progress to date, review their programme and check for any issues affecting continued membership.
- Research shows that if all these steps are taken the likelihood doubles of membership continuing beyond the initial joining period.

Useful links



Trade

Fitness Industry Association (FIA):
www.fia.org.uk

Ashbourne Membership Management is a member of the FIA. Sign up for their useful daily media review email.

Fitness Professionals Association (Fitpro):
www.fitpro.com

Work Out magazine, aimed at the independent sector: www.workout-uk.co.uk

Health Club Management magazine:
www.health-club.co.uk
Sign up for their weekly Health Club Management Report email.

Sourcing leisure industry products: www.leisure-kit.net. Again, a regular email newsletter is available.

Consumer

Men's Health magazine:
www.menshealth.co.uk

Men's Fitness magazine:
<http://info.mensfitnessmagazine.co.uk>
Muscle and Fitness magazine: www.muscle-fitness.co.uk
The Times Health Club: www.timeshealth.co.uk
Largest 'social fitness site', worth looking at.

Diary dates

LIW 2008 23-25 Sept 2008
NEC Birmingham www.liw.co.uk



Ashbourne Membership Management will be exhibiting for the first time at LIW 2008.

Don't forget to plan programmes around these key sporting events in 2008:

- Euro 2008 football, Austria/Switzerland June 7-28
- Wimbledon tennis June 23 - July 6
- Tour de France July 5-27 (unfortunately, no stages held in the UK in 2008)
- Mazda London Triathlon August 9-10
- Olympic Games, Beijing August 8-24
- Paralympic Games, Beijing September 6-17



THE
ASHBOURNE
ADVISOR

Issue 3

Welcome to the new edition of The Ashbourne Advisor, a regular newsletter from Ashbourne Membership Management.

As we move into the summer, this may be the time when you can complete some tasks that you have been putting off. A task that is vital in promoting your club effectively is gathering and publishing testimonials and success stories. We provide you with all the information you need to undertake this effectively.

In addition we underline the value of conducting validation each time members visit your club, and the importance of handling the first three months of membership correctly. We also give you a reminder of all of the key sporting events taking place over the summer.



Please send us your comments by posting a comment on our website or emailing:

memberships@ashbournemanagement.co.uk

Ashbourne Membership Management is a leading provider of membership management services for gyms and health clubs across the UK, for more information please visit:

www.ashbournemanagement.co.uk

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The power of testimonials and success stories

Nothing is more powerful as a way of promoting your club than members saying how good it is.

It's so much more convincing to prospective members to hear real people providing specific information about how much they enjoy visiting your club; the great attitude and expertise of your staff; and recounting their success stories since joining.

Having testimonials and success stories from members adds real personality and warmth to your marketing activity. The large chains just don't do it, underlining how impersonal they perhaps are compared to local independent clubs.

Take the area local to Ashbourne as an example. In Solihull there's Virgin Active, Fitness First, Bannatyne's and David Lloyd. On their websites is the option to go to separate pages about their Solihull clubs. On these four websites there is not a single testimonial or comment from an actual member, either nationally or on their Solihull club pages.

If your club has a website it should have a dedicated 'Success stories/testimonials' page, with quotations from at least four or five members. Key 'one-liners' should be on your home page ie "The Pilates' classes are fantastic, and now I bring my friends along to them" with a 'click here for the full story' link that goes through to more detailed comments on a 'Success stories/testimonials' page.



Success stories achieve two things.

In themselves they are testimonials for your club, for the tangible value it brings to members' lives.

They are also inspirational to other members, encouraging others to participate more fully.

A success story can be obtained from any member who is:

- **Achieving weight loss through exercise**
- **Getting results from using a personal trainer**
- **Conquering illness through exercise**
- **Making new friends through the club**
- **Charity fundraising via fitness activity at the club**
- **Gaining bodybuilding results**
- **Winning a club 'challenge'**

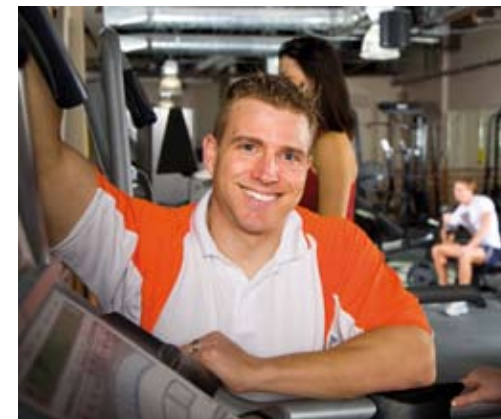
The obvious way to obtain testimonials and success stories is to ask members for

comments when they are in the club. The danger is that you may just get an endless series of "great thanks" comments from people who feel a bit embarrassed telling you how wonderful you and your club are to your face.

Think about using a local telemarketing company to phone members on your behalf, and to write up members' comments into a complete story. Using a third party to conduct the interviews ensures you obtain more rounded comments and can also in fact unearth concerns that you may not be aware of. Better to find out a painful truth while you can still correct it, rather than it being the reason someone leaves the club.



Ensure the testimonial comments you gather reflect all aspects of your service. For example, interview a broad cross-section of your membership, young, old, male, female, new and long-term members; obtain comments about the facilities, the personal trainers, the classes, even about details such as the quality of the coffee you serve; and identify candidates



for success stories. Prospects will have different reasons for joining, so ensure your testimonials and success stories strike a chord with everyone.

Some other tips:

Always gain permission before publishing comments.

Never use 'Customer X' attributions, only use named testimonials.

As well as written comments, try using audio clips or video testimonials.

Don't offer incentives for testimonials, this knocks their credibility.

This is not a one-off process; keep adding more, you can never have too many.

Use success stories on your website, in newsletters and in local media.

If you need help, Ashbourne can recommend a marketing consultancy which can undertake the whole process, please contact us for details.