



NFBA

Read

**NFBA EBook
For All Fitness Businesses**



Read

You don't seem to find too many financially successful owners who don't read. Reading is what separates the thick of head from the thick of billfold, and if you want to make money, you must begin the self-educated journey that will last the rest of your life.

Many of the people who own or manage clubs in this industry could be classified into four distinct levels of personal development. There may be a lot of interesting sub-classes to explore, but these levels seem to be the most common:

- I never read a book, and you can't make me.
- I read everything about fitness or sports, but nothing else, and you can't make me.
- I have been in business a long time, and I know everything, so there is nothing left for me to learn, so you can't make me read.
- I read as part of a life plan to improve myself.

Another interesting category in the southern states is worth noting. He is the one who always has the Bible on his back seat, but really hasn't read it, and who isn't afraid to threaten you with it whenever you tell him something he doesn't want to hear.

This is the guy, for example, who will preach to me about the wonders of his religion and why I will personally spend eternity somewhere really warm. Of course, the lecture starts at the airport and continues while we are riding in his new Caddy back to the club. At the same time, I'm looking at a folder of unpaid bills for work he ordered at the gym but hasn't ever paid, even though the club is profitable. If you're going to use it as a tool, read it and live it, but don't threaten me with it.

What the Classifications Really Mean

I never read, and you can't make me.

The last book this owner read was in high school. He has no books in his home. He has no books in his office. He attends seminars only for the party. He will fail in his first few years because he is the guy who believes almost anyone tells him since he has no other reference.

I read everything about fitness.

This owner speaks in trainer-speak because he lives at the peak of fitness and has read every fitness book out as well as attended every fitness workshop he could find. He doesn't read business books because he is a purist who isn't into fitness for the money (only poor people say stupid stuff like that).

His personal philosophy is that members and clients will seek him out because he knows more than everyone else in the area about fitness. He is wrong and will get his butt whooped by people who know how to charge, who are fun, and who can train without the techno speak.

I have been in business a long time, and I already know everything.

These people are stuck in the past. I worked with one owner, for example, who lived, breathed, and had the music to everything 1980 and earlier. He was frustrating to work with because he hadn't learned anything new since Journey had their last big hit. His references were always about the experience he had working at the big chain in 1979 for the big boss, who went on to be somebody who owned a lot of clubs.

What he believes worked for his hero, and he is going to do things exactly the same way he was taught in 1979 – no matter

what is going on in today's industry. This is the guy who still pressure closes, forces his team to do draw boxes (enter your name and win \$25 in gas or two weeks at the club), and keeps seven salespeople but has poorly trained counter-people working for minimum wage.

All his experience is 30 years old, but he just keeps applying the same techniques over and over again, even if they have stopped working. He never blames the techniques, though, just the people doing the work. It is sort of like blaming your bookkeeper for being so inefficient on that 1984 IBM computer she is working on, which you've had since they came out. It's not the worker who fails; it's the tools he was given to do the job.

This guy also doesn't read because any new ideas will directly conflict with what he learned three decades ago. Rather than trying to update and adjust, and be forced to think, it's just easier to keep on doing what you keep on doing.

I read to improve myself.

Reading doesn't guarantee you will make money, but it's hard to be successful if you aren't constantly working on yourself. The problem is that many people confuse personal development with formal education.

Formal education is what happens to you in school. Formal education might help get you a good job, but if you want to become president of the company, then you have to start a personal education program that begins where school left off. Think of formal education as something that happens to you, while personal development is something you do to yourself.

IHRSA (the international Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association) is a trade organization for the fitness industry. It attracts members from all around the world and offers many

services, such as governmental advocacy and legal help, to its members.

It is also interesting in that it attracts the best and brightest in the next generation of industry leaders. I had the privilege of being appointed to the IHRSA Silver Anniversary Commission by one of my personal heroes in the industry, John McCarthy, former executive director and industry legend.

There were about nine members of the commission who represented a variety of clubs from around the country. All of these members were bright, financially successful, and recognized as true leaders in the field, except for me; I was there to represent the independent guys and tell good stories.

A memorable point that sticks with me from a particular meeting was the discussion of books. Someone at the table mentioned a current business book that had only been out a few weeks. Every other person at the table had already read the book, even though it had been in the stores for about two weeks.

The discussion turned to what everyone was reading, and the education was powerful. All these people at the table, who had already made it in the eyes of so many other people in the fitness industry, were a group that devoured books on a weekly basis. One guy had three in his briefcase while another national-chain owner mentioned a book that inspired her and that she was reading again. All had favorites, and all were daily readers.

Were they successful because they read and were still reading at least a book a week, or would they have been successful anyway? It's hard to say, but the case was there that all were successful and all were avid readers who constantly read to improve themselves and to learn new things that would help their business.

Reading for Balance

Reading for balance means you spend time working on the complete you. Good reading should include books on personal development, business/fitness education, biographies, and personal pleasure reads, such a good novel now and then.

Personal development books you might consider.

- *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill: Read this once a year for the rest of your life. When you first read it, go through the entire book, and then come back a week or so later and do the exercises. This book is the original that many of the latter-day personal-growth books copied. Get the new edition that is completely restored to the original wording. The book was first written in 1937, and there were copies issued that tried to update the language. New editions are available in oversized books that are restored, easy to read, and bring back a lot of the original feel. Keep a notebook handy, and do all the exercises.
- *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie: This is another classic that is worth a read once a year. It was written in 1936, and it still is a great read on how to interact with people and present yourself.
- *The Psychology of Winning* by Denis Waitley: I first read this in my formative years in San Francisco and got so excited I went out that week to see him. He showed up in a tux, spoke with a glass of champagne in his hand, and I knew I had found my hero. His books are written as simple reads but the style almost masks how good the content is.
- Any of Larry Winget's books: An entertaining style custom-made for a fitness business owner, get your employees his book entitled *It's called work for a reason!*, and get your kids (and nonperforming friends

and relatives) the one entitled *You're Broke Because You Want to Be*.

- Any of Jim Rohn's books: He has had a long career of changing lives, and anything he has written is worth reading.
- *See you at the top* by Zig Ziglar: This title belongs on the bookshelf of anyone who is working on his life and career. The stories are Zig-Southern cornball and seem dated, but the content is still a classic.

Business Books if you don't read a lot of business books.

You are better off finding a few business books that mean something to you and then reading them several times each. There are a lot of business books out that simply don't have any real application to small business. A few I recommend:

- *The E-Myth Revisited* by Michael E. Gerber: This volume is the best small business book ever written. If you only read one business book in your life, read this one- and then read it again until you get it.
- *Overcoming Underearning* by Barbara Stanny: She hits us where we live in the fitness business – and that there is no need to give away our services at a too cheap of price
- *Change Your Questions, Change Your Life* by Larilee G Adams and Marshall Goldsmith: This book may not make the classic list in the future, but it will help managers and owners to start listening to understand rather than listening to respond – therefore, talking too much and limiting your employees and relationships.
- *The Seven habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey: This could have gone in the personal development section as well. Change your core, and you can change your life. This is already a classic that needs to be on the once-a-year read list.

- *Good to Great* by Jim Collins: If you're leading people in any capacity, read this several times slowly over a few weeks. There is a lot to think about in this book, and it is a powerful read, but you need time to absorb and relate the material to who you are and what you are doing. He talks about big companies, but his material is very easy to relate to the small business world.
- *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* by Robert T. Kiyosaki and Sharon L. Lechter: I tried to hate this book because it is too simplistic and suffers from too much what to do about not a lot of how to do it, but I found myself buying copies and giving them to young friends to start changing how they think about money. It's worth buying and passing on.
- Any book by Jeffrey Gitomer: He puts a lot of stuff out but when you start with him, read them in the order he wrote them. He builds upon previous ideas, even if he doesn't intend to, and there is a lot of content. Again, read slowly, keep a notebook handy, and do any exercises he gives you.

Personal Reads

- *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand: It's philosophy in the form of a great story. It makes a lot of lists as one of the most influential books ever written in this country. I read it about every two years, and I always find new thoughts as I age and think about money in different terms. If you only read two books on this list, read this and *Think and Grow Rich*.
- The Bible, and any number of books on other perspectives, such as Buddhist theory and other religions: There are many ways to the top of the mountain, and it's good to understand someone else's path even if it is not your own.

Reading will enrich your life. Reading will help you reach your goals. Reading will help you find your goals. Reading will keep you sane in an insane world. Reading keeps you from wasting your life in front of a television. Reading will open things to you that were never imagined. Read, my friends. Read and enjoy.