

4 New Post-COVID Trends in Fitness that Club Operators Should Know

COVID-19 has led to a paradigm shift. The future is changing. Social distancing is the new normal. This equilibrium-altering virus has pushed many businesses to the edge of extinction. Unless these businesses figure out a survival-strategy in the post-COVID world, they will succumb to the horrors of the economic meltdown that the virus has unleashed.

A Look in the Pre-COVID Trends in Fitness Industry

The 100-billion-dollar fitness industry is one of the worst-affected sectors. Before the pandemic, the story was all rosy. Things have changed dramatically due to unprecedented forced closures. [According to a study](#) conducted by the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association, premium clubs in the brick-and-mortar segment of the fitness industry were the primary drivers of the growth.

The study also revealed that boutique studios saw a whopping 120% growth in membership between 2013 and 2017 despite the very fact that people had access to virtually countless instructional videos on multiple online platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, etc. To top that, there were an estimated 250,000 fitness apps spread across Google Play Store and App Store and other such mobile application stores!

CEO of Mindbody – a fitness-booking app, Rick Stollmeyer said that on any typical day, the platform would book a million classes out of 2.5 million available classes.



The Post-COVID Scenario

According to Stollmeyer, the once-booming industry is now facing an existential crisis after the outbreak. For the Mindbody platform, online booking of fitness classes dropped, hitting rock-bottom.

He went on to say that some famous fitness clubs like SolidCore, with 72 studios and Flywheel Sports with 42 studios, saw a whopping 80 to 90% revenue drop and laid off 98% of its total workforce.

For some, the revenue loss has hit 100%.

It is a grim scenario for sure. Face-to-face interaction is no longer an option with social distancing in place. Though businesses are reopening, they will not return to the previous normal until there is a preventive vaccine or a curative medicine in place.

Big names like Gold's Gym International Inc. and 24 Hour Fitness Worldwide Inc. have both filed for Chapter 11 after both the gym chains missed out on membership dues after the pandemic-driven closure.

Some others like New York Sports Clubs and Lucille Roberts gyms' parent company have warned of potential bankruptcy in the future. Several smaller studios have already shut down completely.

So, what next?

Post-COVID Trends in Fitness that Club Operators Should Know

It has become increasingly difficult for club operators to stay in business because of the lingering fear and, of course, the social distancing standards in place. Despite the very fact that the unexpected economic shutdown has hit hard, there are ways in which club operators can stay relevant.

Here are four interesting post-COVID trends in fitness that every club operator should implement to prevent a complete shutdown.

Utilize Online Social Media Platforms and Virtual Workout Sessions

It will be unjust to say that people only resorted to online workout sessions only after the pandemic. There are many who have already adjusted to a new workout-from-home routine with various app-based solutions.

Some have purchased interactive equipment like Mirror, Hydrow, and Peloton. Resorting to such alternatives has helped them in many ways. Reduction in cost, personalized coaching, timing

flexibility are a few benefits that come to mind immediately when one thinks of a workout-from-home option.

With the pandemic hitting hard, many big brands were quick enough to offer online workout sessions through their apps and websites. It was possible for them because they had already invested long before the outbreak. This gave them the edge.

For instance, Gold's has a collection of 600+ audio and video-based workout sessions available through their app called [Gold's Amp](#). When the pandemic hit the nation and forced businesses to close doors, Gold's took advantage of its app and announced that all the workout videos would stay free until May.

They restricted the availability of those videos after May and started charging their customers, thereby opening an alternative income channel when their brick-and-mortar studios remained closed.

The problem with small studios is the investment needed for making such apps and websites. They can take the free route of social media platforms like Instagram TV, Facebook Live, YouTube Live Streaming, etc.

Streaming live with proper audio and visuals is now becoming a trend in the post-COVID world. It is true that there is no scarcity of such videos online. Many brands have struggled or don't have a proper follower-base. There are many reasons for this. Bad video and audio quality and no real foothold in the market are two primary reasons that can often be at heart.



Studios, on the other hand, can take advantage of their loyal customer base. Calling them or communicating through text messages, advertising their online channels makes an excellent way of garnering a dedicated follower-base quickly.

Such online channels have monetization options available. However, the club operators can always build a new online business model that fits them the best. YouTube, for instance, has a subscription option, IGTV has advertisement options that generate revenue streams for content creators.

The key, however, will be to stand out from other services. Highlighting those services that can be effectively used through online platforms is one of the main tricks.

Live Consultations and One-on-One Virtual Private Sessions

A slight modification of the above trend, many club operators are resorting to live consultation sessions. This is where they meet with individuals over a video call using apps like Zoom.

Live consultations and one-on-one virtual private sessions are a great way to grab attention because customers get the feeling of exclusivity. The option of live consultations and one-on-one sessions can be a major draw. Those who are interested can pay upfront through an appointment booking app or service.



[Appointmentlet](#) is one such service that club operators can use free of charge for the base membership. Operators can enhance the features and functions by paying as little as \$8 a month (paid annually) or \$10 a month (paid monthly).

Appointlet and other appointment booking apps and services come with integrated payment options like Stripe, PayPal, etc. that the club operators can use for payments. However, customers need to pay upfront to complete their booking process.

Partnerships and Profit-Sharing Via TeleHealth

The COVID-19 crisis has shown us how underprepared the entire global healthcare system has been. It is a sad reality, and healthcare providers across the world are dealing with an exponential rise in demand that they are increasingly unable to meet. This is where services like TeleHealth, DoctorOnDemand, etc. are coming in.

With legislators removing restrictions on the ability of physicians to work across state borders, online health consultations are becoming increasingly popular.

Club owners can get in contact with nutritionists, physicians, personal trainers, etc. to get referrals or give referrals. These collaborations work best when club owners can offer specialized services like caring for chronic back pain via mild exercises or yoga for a specific ailment, or quick fat loss for a specific part of the body, etc.

It is just a matter of identifying the right niche in which the club owners can provide reliable solutions backed by experts that they collaborate with.



Finding people to collaborate with should not be difficult. Digging into services like TeleHealth can show possible partners for collaboration. However, the big problem here is actually going ahead and communicating this to consumers.

Not only is it a tedious and time-consuming affair, but many expert health care professionals will not agree to such partnerships unless the club owners offer something. This 'something' can be anything from a certificate of excellence for the club to a professional certificate ascertaining that the trainers of the health club are certified, and they know what they are doing.

No reputable healthcare professional wants to be associated with anyone embellishing their credentials, even for money. After all, why would anyone want to put their career at risk?

However, if you can land one of these partnerships, the involved parties should consider an agreed-upon profit-sharing model.

That said, partnerships like this can be extremely helpful in the growing sector of digital healthcare advice. Club owners must expand their footprint outside the borders of their local area and create a dedicated following, which can lead to an extra revenue stream.

Focus on Preventive Care over Reactionary Measures Through Social Media

COVID-19 has shown us that reactionary measures are not prepared to handle an unseen enemy with surgical precision. Vaccines, for instance, can take up to two years to develop. In the meantime, those who are vulnerable, those with pre-existing medical conditions like Hypertension, Diabetes, Cardiac issues are the ones most likely to succumb.

This has shifted the limelight onto preventive care. The question is, can medical conditions such as Hypertension, Diabetes, Cardiac issues be prevented, and if yes, how?

Exercise, yoga, etc. are short and straightforward answers to that question, so club owners should start focusing on them more. It is a known fact that keeping the body healthy and fit

increases the ability of the body to combat illnesses.



Fit and healthy people have a better chance of survival in the face of medical issues. Club owners can advertise their services through various social media channels, stressing fitness goals as a means of bolstering your bodies defense.

Organizing quizzes, Q&A sessions, etc. can increase awareness among customers. Needless to say, when people have important information in front of them, they tend to make the right decisions.

Club operators should focus on how their workout regimens can help people to combat not only the common health conditions but also any unforeseen challenges that await us. Staying prepared is the goal.

Motivating customers will not only allow club operators to build a loyal customer base, but also a steady income stream.

Conclusion

Are you a club operator facing an existential crisis in the face of this COVID pandemic? Do you think any of these ideas could help you? Which one of these post-COVID trends do you think is the most prevalent? Which one will you like to implement first, and why? Do you have other ideas to share, something that you think can work but has not yet gained traction? Tell us about your experience in the comments section. We'd love to hear your story!

