TrainWithMe



# 7 WAYS FITNESS CHALLENGES CAN GROW YOUR GYM

Practical strategies to attract new members, increase revenue, and build a stronger fitness community.

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# Introduction

## Make Every Challenge a Business-Building Opportunity

Fitness challenges are a great way to motivate members, encourage healthy habits, and bring people together. But their value can extend well beyond the fitness results participants achieve.

When planned with intention, challenges can also help gym owners introduce members to additional services, attract prospective customers, generate word-of-mouth referrals, and strengthen relationships that keep members coming back.

And it doesn't have to mean adding more work for your team.

Simple activities built into a challenge can encourage members to explore your facility, interact with coaches, invite friends, and share their experiences.

The key is to think beyond the workouts themselves.

**What else could your challenge help your business accomplish?**

This guide explores seven practical ways to make fitness challenges part of your business growth strategy, with ideas you can adapt to your facility, services, and members.

1

# Turn Your Members Into Your Best Marketing Team

## Encourage authentic sharing that introduces your gym to new people.

Some of the most effective marketing for a fitness business comes from its own members.

A photo after a great workout, a personal achievement, or a team celebration can give friends and family a glimpse of the experience your gym offers.

Challenges naturally create moments worth sharing. By encouraging participants to document their experiences, you can help generate authentic social content while giving members an opportunity to celebrate their progress.

### Put It Into Action

Consider incorporating activities such as:

- **Celebrate a workout:** Share a post-workout photo or story and tag the gym.
- **Show your team spirit:** Take a group photo with teammates after a class or training session.
- **Share a personal milestone:** Celebrate a new personal best, improved consistency, or another meaningful achievement.
- **Highlight your gym community:** Share a favorite part of the challenge experience.

Participation in public social sharing should always be optional. Members who prefer not to post publicly can be offered an equivalent activity.

### Make the Most of Member Content

With permission, member-created photos and videos can also provide authentic material for your gym's social media channels, website, and future promotions.

Instead of relying entirely on staged marketing photos, you can showcase real people enjoying real experiences at your facility.

## The Business Opportunity

Member-generated content can increase awareness of your gym among local audiences and introduce your community to people who might not otherwise discover it.

**REMEMBER:** The goal isn't to turn every participant into a promoter. It's to create experiences people genuinely enjoy and may want to share.



2

# Introduce Members to Additional Coaching Services

## Help members discover more of what your facility offers.

Many gym members settle into a comfortable routine. They attend their usual classes, work with familiar coaches, and may not explore the other services available to them.

A challenge offers an opportunity to introduce members to experiences they might not have considered.

For facilities offering personal training, semi-private coaching, assessments, or specialty programs, these introductions can create opportunities for additional revenue while helping members find services that support their goals.

### Put It Into Action

Consider incorporating activities such as:

- **Try a different training format:** Attend an introductory small-group or semi-private training session.
- **Meet with a coach:** Schedule a short goal-setting consultation.
- **Learn more about your fitness:** Participate in an optional movement or performance assessment.
- **Explore a specialty program:** Attend a workshop or introductory session focused on strength, mobility, conditioning, or another area your facility offers.

These activities work best when they provide genuine value, even if the participant never purchases an additional service.

### Turn the Experience Into an Opportunity

After a participant tries something new, coaches can follow up with a simple conversation.

What did they enjoy? Did the session help them identify a new goal? Would additional coaching be useful?

A personal recommendation based on a member's interests and needs is more meaningful than a generic sales pitch.

## The Business Opportunity

Challenges can help members become more familiar with your coaching expertise and services, potentially leading to additional training packages, specialty programs, or longer-term coaching relationships.

**REMEMBER:** Let the experience demonstrate the value. The goal is to help members discover services that are genuinely relevant to them.



3

# Generate More Revenue From Services and Retail

## Introduce members to offerings they may be overlooking.

Many fitness businesses have additional revenue opportunities beyond memberships and training.

These might include recovery services, workshops, nutrition education, merchandise, or a pro shop.

The challenge isn't always getting members to buy more. Sometimes it's simply making sure they know what's available.

A fitness challenge provides a natural opportunity to introduce these services and products through educational activities and experiences.

### Put It Into Action

Adapt activities to the services your gym offers.

#### Recovery and Wellness

- Attend a guided recovery or mobility workshop.
- Learn about the recovery services available at the facility.
- Try an appropriate introductory recovery session, if interested.

#### Nutrition and Education

- Watch a short educational video about hydration or sports nutrition.
- Attend a nutrition workshop with a qualified professional.
- Participate in a healthy meal-planning activity.

#### Retail and Pro Shop

- Visit the pro shop to learn about products or services offered.
- Attend a product demonstration.
- Learn how to choose appropriate training equipment or accessories.

## Focus on Education and Discovery

The activities should help participants learn something useful or experience a service.

Purchases should remain optional, and activities involving supplements, assessments, or recovery treatments should be appropriate to individual needs.

When members understand the purpose and potential value of an offering, they're better equipped to decide whether it's right for them.

## The Business Opportunity

Introducing members to existing services and products can increase awareness, encourage trial, and create opportunities for additional purchases without relying on constant promotions or discounts.

**REMEMBER:** Build activities around what your facility actually offers. A gym with personal training and group classes will have different opportunities than a studio with recovery services or a retail shop.



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# Bring New Members Through Your Doors

## Make it easy for existing members to introduce friends to your gym.

Your members already have relationships with people who may be interested in improving their fitness.

But for someone unfamiliar with your facility, walking into a new gym can feel intimidating.

A personal invitation from a friend can make that first experience much more comfortable.

Fitness challenges create opportunities to welcome nonmembers through activities that feel social, approachable, and fun.

### Put It Into Action

Consider activities such as:

- **Bring a friend:** Invite a nonmember to an eligible group workout or community fitness event.
- **Find a challenge buddy:** Encourage participants to invite a friend to participate in an introductory activity.
- **Attend an open gym event:** Organize a community workout or special event that welcomes guests.
- **Train toward an event together:** Invite friends to participate in an appropriate introductory session connected to an upcoming DEKA, HYROX, running, or community fitness event.

### Make the Guest Experience Count

Getting someone through the door is only the beginning.

Make sure your team is prepared to welcome guests, introduce them to coaches and members, and help them feel comfortable.

Afterward, provide a simple opportunity to learn more about memberships, classes, or other services.

Any follow-up should respect the guest's preferences and permission to be contacted.

## The Business Opportunity

Rather than relying entirely on advertising or cold outreach, challenges can generate introductions through existing member relationships.

Guests experience your coaching, atmosphere, and community firsthand, creating opportunities to turn interested visitors into long-term members.

**REMEMBER:** The best guest activities give people a positive introduction to your gym, whether or not they decide to join.



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# Strengthen Your Online Reputation

## Give members experiences worth talking about.

Before visiting a new gym, many prospective customers look online to learn what they can expect.

Reviews, testimonials, photos, and member stories can help communicate what makes a facility different.

Fitness challenges can create memorable experiences that members may choose to share, from achieving personal milestones to feeling welcomed into a supportive community.

### Put It Into Action

Focus on creating positive experiences and gathering useful feedback.

- **Celebrate member accomplishments:** Recognize progress and achievements throughout the challenge.
- **Ask for feedback:** Invite participants to share what they enjoyed and what could be improved.
- **Collect testimonials:** Ask willing participants whether they would like to share their experiences for future marketing.
- **Make reviews accessible:** Provide a simple way for customers to leave genuine, unbiased feedback on platforms that permit review requests.

### Turn Feedback Into Improvement

Not every comment needs to become a public testimonial.

Participant feedback can also help you improve future challenges, strengthen the customer experience, and identify opportunities to better serve members.

### The Business Opportunity

Authentic customer feedback, testimonials, and positive experiences can help prospective members understand what your facility offers and feel more confident about visiting.

**REMEMBER:** Build testimonials into the challenge. Add a “share your experience” activity near the end so collecting stories becomes part of the plan, not an afterthought.

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# Build Stronger Relationships That Support Retention

## Give members more reasons to feel connected to your gym.

Members may initially join a fitness facility for the workouts, equipment, or coaching.

But relationships, encouragement, and a sense of belonging can become equally important reasons to stay.

Challenges create opportunities for participants to interact with one another and connect with coaches outside their usual routines.

These small interactions can make the gym experience more personal and memorable.

### Put It Into Action

Consider activities and practices such as:

- **Create team connections:** Encourage participants to meet teammates they don't normally train with.
- **Celebrate consistency:** Recognize members who regularly show up and complete activities.
- **Encourage peer support:** Invite participants to congratulate teammates on their achievements.
- **Build in coach check-ins:** Have coaches acknowledge progress and offer encouragement throughout the challenge.
- **Recognize different kinds of success:** Celebrate improvement, effort, teamwork, and personal achievements rather than only the highest scores.

### Pay Attention to the Quiet Participants

Not everyone naturally participates in group conversations or social activities.

Challenges can help coaches notice when someone becomes less engaged and may benefit from a personal check-in.

A short message asking how things are going can help a member feel noticed without putting pressure on them.

## The Business Opportunity

Stronger relationships and a greater sense of community can support member satisfaction, ongoing participation, and retention.

Challenges also create opportunities for coaches to learn more about members' interests, goals, and experiences.

**REMEMBER:** Every participant should have opportunities to feel successful and included, regardless of fitness level or competitive ranking.



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# Turn Member Success Into Word-of-Mouth Referrals

## Give people experiences they genuinely want to recommend.

Personal recommendations are powerful because they come from people we know and trust.

When members enjoy their experience, feel supported by coaches, and recognize progress toward meaningful goals, they have more reasons to talk positively about their gym.

A well-designed challenge can bring those experiences together.

Unlike a bring-a-friend activity, this approach isn't about asking members to invite someone on a specific day. It's about creating an experience that naturally generates enthusiasm and recommendations.

### Put It Into Action

Build activities that help members recognize and celebrate their progress.

- **Track personal milestones:** Help participants see improvements in consistency, fitness, or performance.
- **Encourage manageable habits:** Include activities related to training, recovery, hydration, or other appropriate wellness behaviors.
- **Recognize individual progress:** Celebrate achievements that matter to each participant, not just leaderboard rankings.
- **Create a memorable finish:** Bring participants together to celebrate their challenge experience.
- **Share success stories:** With permission, highlight members who accomplished meaningful personal goals.

### Keep the Momentum Going

At the end of the challenge, help participants identify their next goal.

For some, that might mean continuing their training routine. Others may want to prepare for an upcoming event, participate in another challenge, or try a new service.

The important thing is to build on the relationships and progress established during the challenge.

## The Business Opportunity

Positive experiences, strong relationships, and meaningful progress can increase customer satisfaction and encourage word-of-mouth recommendations.

**REMEMBER:** The goal isn't to manufacture referrals. It's to create an experience members value enough to recommend.



# Put These Ideas to Work

## Build Your Next Challenge Around Your Business Goals

You don't need to incorporate every strategy into a single challenge.

In fact, trying to accomplish too much can make the experience unnecessarily complicated.

Instead, identify one or two business priorities and choose activities that support them.

| YOUR BUSINESS GOAL | CHALLENGE ACTIVITIES TO CONSIDER |
|---|---|
| **Increase local awareness** | Member milestone posts, team photos, shared celebrations |
| **Introduce coaching services** | Introductory training sessions, consultations, educational workshops |
| **Increase secondary revenue** | Recovery demonstrations, product education, service introductions |
| **Attract new members** | Bring-a-friend workouts, community events, partner activities |
| **Strengthen your reputation** | Participant feedback, testimonials, memorable experiences |
| **Improve retention** | Team activities, personal check-ins, milestone recognition |
| **Encourage referrals** | Meaningful progress tracking, success celebrations, post-challenge follow-up |

# Your Challenge Growth Worksheet

## 1 What are your top two business goals?

Goal 1: _____

Goal 2: _____

## 2 Which services, experiences, or opportunities could you introduce through your next challenge?

_____

_____

## 3 What three activities could help support your goals?

Activity 1: _____

Activity 2: _____

Activity 3: _____

## 4 How will you know if these activities worked?

Select the measures that matter to your business:

- ☐ New guests introduced to the facility
- ☐ Personal training or specialty service inquiries
- ☐ Member participation and engagement
- ☐ Member feedback and satisfaction
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ New memberships
- ☐ Additional service or retail sales
- ☐ Testimonials or member-created content
- ☐ Referrals and recommendations

## 5 What will you do differently for your next challenge?

_____

_____

_____

# The Bigger Picture

## Think Beyond the Challenge

A fitness challenge doesn't have to be just a few weeks of workouts, points, and prizes.

It can be an opportunity to introduce new people to your gym, help existing members discover additional services, create memorable experiences, and strengthen the relationships that support long-term growth.

The most effective strategies aren't necessarily the most complicated.

A personal invitation, an introductory coaching session, a shared accomplishment, or a few words of encouragement can create meaningful connections between your business and its members.

And those connections can extend well beyond the challenge itself.

**The takeaway:** When you design challenges around both your members' needs and your business goals, every challenge becomes an opportunity to build a stronger fitness community—and a stronger business.

## Ready to grow your business?

TrainWithMe helps gyms, studios, and coaches create and run challenges built around their business goals, without the spreadsheets.

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