

Getting Started with your Personal Training Business

How to become a personal trainer and be successful at it.

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This book is dedicated to my great clients who over the years have taught me all of the things in this book and more. I cannot thank them enough.

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INTRODUCTION

Do you think you want to be a personal trainer? Are you already a personal trainer whose business is not growing at the rate that you want or growing at all and you really don't know what to do to make it better? Do you want to gain and retain more clients so you can train more, earn more and sell less? Is the search for clients making it really hard to think you can do this as a career? Believe me, I understand you. I have always been interested in fitness and it has always seemed natural for me to work out and to some degree, it has always been natural to train people. I served in the Marine Corps and in the US Army and I trained Marines and Soldiers in warfare but also in fitness, so training people feels very natural. Military training is all about readiness. I was in the Infantry, so it is even more geared toward battle readiness and a big part of battle readiness is fitness. Running and being able to road march while carrying a pack are critical skills because they improve the parts of your body that you will need in battle, but they are also important skills that help you stay alive.

During the time I was in the service, I learned that I enjoy the training as much as I enjoyed the personal benefits of exercise. Don't get me wrong, I greatly enjoyed how easy it was to do marathons and half marathons because I was running on a regular basis. But, there is a great pride that comes from watching people you train succeed with their goals and that is one of the things that drew me to personal training after I left the military. I wanted to find a business where I could turn all that fitness knowledge into a career that was fulfilling and flexible. At the time I started personal training, I had a small child who required me to work certain hours and also required me to have some flexibility so working for myself and being able to set my own hours was ideal. Not all personal training jobs will allow you to set your own hours but a lot of them will because there are people who want to train at all different times and a lot of trainers can usually find a very flexible schedule.

Training is also very personal, and a wide variety of people can be personal trainers. Do not let the overly pretty, ripped trainers of Hollywood scare you away from making this a career for yourself. You may not be as well-known or as beautiful or handsome as they are, but you may be more educated, and you may even be a better trainer. When I was in the military, I was young and fit and fitness came easy because it was part of my job but as I have aged, my health goals have changed dramatically and those changes have only served to help me with my personal training business. So, if you are not extremely young or super ripped, do not assume that you cannot become a personal trainer. Some Hollywood trainers are not even certified, and their jobs are very different, so they fit in better with Hollywood than anywhere else. That is not a slam to anyone who is a celebrity trainer but it is just to point out to you that just because you might not be gorgeous with perfect hair and teeth and ripped abs does not mean that you should be down on yourself. In fact, the stereotype of personal trainers being these super ripped men or

super fitness model women is not the norm. All shapes and sizes of healthy people work in the personal training industry.

CHAPTER ONE - GET OUT OF YOUR OWN WAY!!

The stereotype of personal trainers is not something you should aspire to. It is really best to “DO YOU” when you are a trainer. I have always “DONE ME” rather than followed anyone and I have always done well. I have had people suggest things that are downright ridiculous and here are just a few of them:

- Go talk to 10 people. Someone will want a trainer. This to me is like throwing glue at a wall and hoping something sticks. It is great to talk to people but make it natural and don't set a magic number for how many. Yes, you need to talk to people to get clients, but you don't have to make it unnatural. I have had tons of clients come from people who I just said hi to in the gym and even years later, they have started training or suggested me to someone so be professional and be nice. You don't need to talk to some set number of people like you are a telemarketer.
- “Here, use this script.” Again, what is it with the telemarketing ideas. This one is one of the dumbest suggestions. You will ALWAYS sound better speaking naturally like you do everyday than using someone else's words so be you and be natural.
- Do free classes so people can get used to your style. This can sometimes work a bit but teaching a class and doing a personal training session unique to a person are WAY DIFFERENT. You may get to talk to some people who need a trainer, but you should always be getting paid or you won't be a trainer for very long.

These dumb ideas are right up there with some things I see other trainers doing like posting the craziest extreme exercises on YouTube. Now, let me clarify. These things I see that are a bit nutty are not being done by successful trainers. Successful trainers are too busy training and running their business. A lot of these nutty things actually scare people away from training with you because they can't “see themselves” doing that so a super hard move like a pullup variation where you go back and forth is not going to appeal to your average person who is out of shape or who is older. Consider your audience and think about what things you are doing to appeal to them. Some other nutty things include taking really graphic photos of yourself and I don't mean a nice professional picture for your Facebook page or your biography. I mean snapping one in your bra or any other form of underwear or even one in swimwear when it is suggestive. You are NOT being hired as a model. You are looking for people to hire you as a trainer. Now if you are a trainer who specializes in bodybuilding, it is perfectly fine to use photos of yourself in your swimwear in a competition, but it is quite another to snap a photo of your butt in underpants in the bathroom (I mean seriously don't take any photos for your business in a bathroom) and then put a “call me if you want to start training” WHAT? You will not get paying clients from it

and the type of attention you may get is either going to be something you don't want and at the very least, not something that pays your bills.

Do NOT waste your time on these things. If you like taking pictures or videos, then take some shots of yourself TRAINING PEOPLE. These can be VERY EFFECTIVE because they show you training, and people can imagine themselves being your client. But don't let your videos and photos interfere with your training. Your first priority is to give great training. You can have your clients do video testimonials (some will be happy to do this for you especially if you entice them with a free session for their time). These testimonial videos can be great because it helps your reputation. People can see other clients who loved you. (Do not get bogged down by doing too much of this.) You really do not need to do testimonials and videos all the time. Do a few and that will be all that you need. Also, don't give your money away to too many experts. There are always people who want to "teach you" how to sell personal training and give you scripts and workout templates and programs. Your personality and good quality training are all you need to build on and your certification material gives you more than enough templates. I am not going to say it will be easy but please do not waste your time on the silly examples above or giving your money away to "systems". I will give you some better options in a later chapter so don't worry but be aware that it will not always be easy to find new people so you should spend much more time on RETAINING clients because you already have them.

I don't know why personal training is attractive to some people when they are either not suited for it or they can't get out of their own way to have a successful business but there are lots of good-looking people who go into this business who flounder and flop and leave and it is a bit sad. I am sure you are now wondering why I said "good-looking" above. Well, sometimes, in my experience, that can be part of the problem. If you are attractive and have been able to increase that with fitness, you are obviously capable of training yourself. That does not mean you can teach anyone anything. It just means you can do it yourself so allow yourself to learn how to train. Your natural abilities or your natural attractiveness are not going to help you be successful. Your quality of training a variety of people to do a variety of things that THEY WANT is what will make you successful.

And going back to the photo example from before, this needs to be said again because in the age of social media, there are people who come into personal training who love social media and it can help your business but it has some limitations and location is one of them so, please don't assume you can post photos of yourself and get a base of clients from that. Your Instagram feed is followed by people all over the world. What you are trying to do is concentrate on people within a few miles of you who have a need for you and who have the means to pay you. People follow talent and if they do happen to train with you, it is your talent that will help you maintain clients. At the end of the day, clients do not care how much weight you can bench. Nor do they care that you run marathons or ultramarathons (I have run lots of them, so I speak from experience, nobody cares). They also don't care how you look in a bikini or your underwear (in case I need to say that again) Not only is it not professional, but it is your QUALITY that will

make them stay, so again, spend your time on knowing your stuff and doing good workouts delivered in a professional way for your clients.

Now, I am not saying that your personal appearance is not important at all. It still is in a way but not the way most of the trainers I see think it is. It is important to be CLEAN. It is important to not look like you just woke up. Your clients want you to be alert and attentive. They don't want you to look like a slob. Now I am SURE there is a sloppy dude somewhere with a HUGE personal training business and do you know why he is successful? Because he is offering quality training that gets the results his clients want. So focus on your quality, professional training more than anything else and when you are tempted to post your shirtless pics or your underwear pics or your butt pics – please stop yourself and ask if that is what you would look for in a lawyer or a doctor or a dentist. If your answer is no, then people probably don't want their trainer to do it either. Get out of your own way and be honest. Sometimes your ego and your pride tell you these things are a good idea when they really aren't.

And while we are on the subject of helping yourself and not hurting yourself, be sure to get the right certification for you, your clients and your needs. Cheaping out on certification hurts lots of trainers because they find they cannot find a job without having to take another certification, so I am not saying do the most expensive one but do your research. Make sure you are getting one that will allow you to work where you want, get the insurance you need and most importantly, give you the skills to train your clients in a safe, effective manner. It is important to check with places you might want to work BEFORE you start your certification and to take one that is popular in case you want to change jobs or work locations in the future.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Hansey served in both the USMC and the US Army as nuclear weapons security and infantry. He has 15 Years Military Service Training Marines, Soldiers and Navy for Fitness as well as Combat. He also has 15 years as a professional Board- Certified personal trainer. He is still an active personal trainer in the Atlanta area and has a wide variety of clients from 12-86.

David has always been athletic and a runner and has run 9 marathons (26.2 miles) and three ultramarathons (2 being 36 miles and one being 56 miles) in addition to many other relays, 10K, obstacle courses, etc.

He has written for several local magazines in the Atlanta area and one of the things he really enjoys is being able to inform and educate. He has two blogs, personaltrainingblog.com and 4fitbodies.com.

Certifications:

NASM Performance Enhancement Specialist – NASM-PES

NASM Corrective Exercise Specialist – NASM-CES

NASM Fitness Nutrition Specialist – NASM-FNS

NASM Weight Loss Specialist- NASM-WLS

NASM Women's Fitness Specialist – NASM-WFS

NASM Board Certified Personal Trainer * - NASM-CPT

*Board Certification by NCCA-BOC

BBA – Columbia Southern University, Sports Management

AA – Central Texas College

CPR/AED by the American Safety and Health Institute (ASHI)