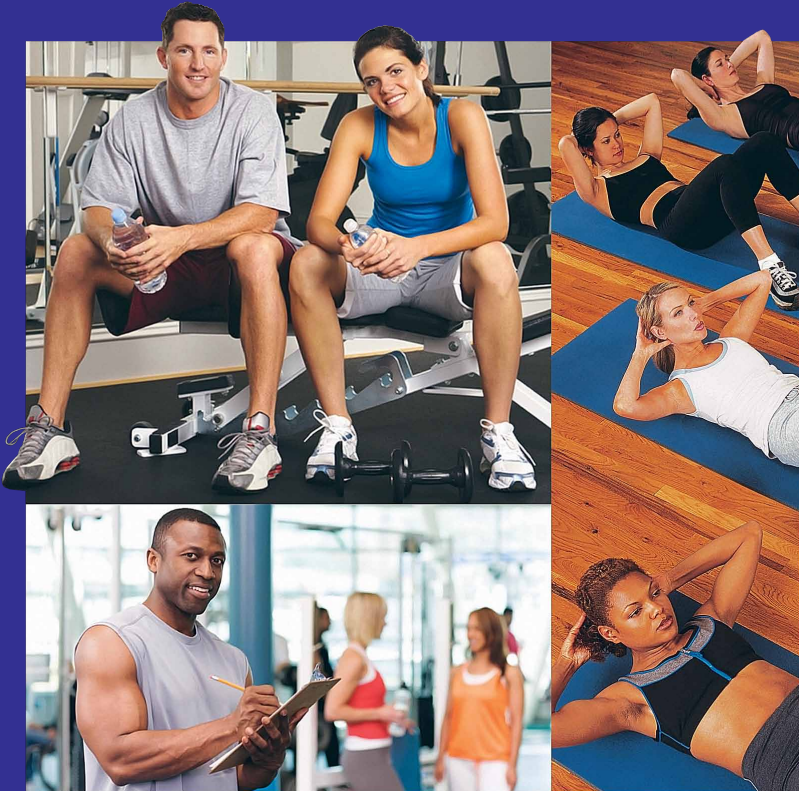


Open a fitness studio, health club, or gym!

FabJob Guide to  
**Become a  
Fitness Club  
Owner**



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## 1. Introduction

Congratulations! You have just taken an important step in your quest to open your very own fitness club, offering motivating and exciting fitness services that will help others become stronger, healthier and fitter. Every day, you will have the opportunity to provide the setting, resources and guidance for members of your fitness club to strengthen their muscles, increase flexibility, reduce stress and improve their health – and in many instances, lose weight until they are at an optimum size and shape.

More than likely, you already know the numerous benefits of exercise and are enjoying them yourself, thanks to your own fitness routine. You most likely enjoy helping other people to set and reach goals and are able to encourage them when they're unsure of themselves and to motivate them to reach their fitness goals.

Perhaps you've already worked as a personal trainer at an established fitness center, or perhaps you've taken a key volunteer role in encouraging the people with whom you exercise. Nothing compares, though, to owning your own fitness club, where you can offer your own unique mix of exercise equipment, fitness classes, and merchandise that reflect your personal vision of what a fitness club should be.

The guide will provide in-depth information on how to get your fitness center up and running. Let's get started.

## 1.1 Owning a Fitness Club

You're choosing a great time to start your fitness club, with the U.S. Department of Labor projecting that increasing numbers of aging baby boomers will join fitness clubs in the coming years in order to get fit and stay healthy. Businesses are also seeing the value of having their employees exercise. With fewer sick days taken in workplaces with fitness programs, businesses that facilitate exercise programs for their employees can receive reduced rates on health insurance.

Additionally, doctors will continue to advise their patients to participate in a regular exercise program. In fact, because of rising obesity in the United States and other developed countries, and the increasing recognition of how obesity can contribute to overall poorer health, doctors will most likely increase their emphasis on regular exercise. That's because one of the best ways to fight against obesity is safe, effective and regular exercise – and that's just where you come in.

## 1.2 A Growth Industry

Overall, the fitness industry has been growing and will continue to grow. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the outlook for the fitness industry is excellent, with the need for fitness workers increasing by 27 percent from 2006-2016, which is much faster than the average for all occupations.

The International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association (IHRSA), the global trade association for the fitness industry, reports that in 2009 there were 45.3 million health club members in the United States alone. Compare this to the 25 million fitness club members in the United States in 1999 and you can see that this projection indicates opportunities for well-run fitness centers that offer the products and services that people need and want.

In 2008, the fitness club industry globally kept expanding, with the number of health clubs increasing by 14% to more than 122,000 clubs. Revenues expanded by 11% during that time frame to a total of an as-

tonishing \$68.2 billion. In fact, IHRSA President & CEO Joe Moore has characterized the fitness industry as “historically recession-resilient.”

What matters to you, though, is what these numbers mean to your dream of owning a fitness center. Here’s one way to estimate how many people could theoretically join your club. According to the IHRSA’s Guide to the Health Club Industry for Lenders & Investors, people in suburban areas on average will drive up to five miles to their workout facility. So, if you determine how many people live within the five-mile radius of your fitness club, perhaps by consulting census figures, you can multiply that population by 15.7%, which is the national average for health club participation in an average demographic (IHRSA/American Sports Data 2007 Health Club Trend Report).

The number that you just calculated represents how many people in your target audience will most likely use a fitness club. How many would come to your fitness club would depend upon how many other fitness clubs are in that region and how well those clubs fulfill the needs of the members.

## Increasing Obesity

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), obesity has risen “dramatically” over the past 20 years. By 2008, in 49 of the 50 states, more than 20 percent of its residents were obese, with Colorado being the only exception to the rule. Thirty-two states had obesity rates of at least 25 percent – and six states (Alabama, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia) had obesity rates of 30 percent or higher.

### Health Consequences of Obesity

The CDC, [www.cdc.gov/obesity/causes/health.html](http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/causes/health.html), lists multiple significant health risks for people who are obese, including the following:

- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Osteoarthritis (degeneration of cartilage and its underlying bone within a joint)

- Dyslipidemia (high total cholesterol or high levels of triglycerides)
- Type 2 diabetes
- Coronary heart disease
- Stroke
- Gallbladder disease
- Sleep apnea and respiratory problems
- Some cancers (endometrial, breast and colon)

The CDC provides more information about these risks in their Clinical Guidelines on the Identification, Evaluation, and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults. You can find this information at [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/obesity/ob\\_home.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/obesity/ob_home.htm).

### **Solutions to the Challenges of Obesity**

The U.S. Office of the Surgeon General recommends a two-pronged approach for someone wishing to avoid or correct the problem of obesity: healthy eating patterns and regular exercise. They have created a report containing their recommendations titled “Overweight and Obesity: What You Can Do: Being Physically Active Can Help You Attain or Maintain a Healthy Weight.” You can read the report at [www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/obesity/calltoaction/fact\\_whatcanyoudo.htm](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/obesity/calltoaction/fact_whatcanyoudo.htm).

## **1.3 Benefits of Being a Fitness Club Owner**

*“Eleven years later I still LOVE what I do. It is my heart and soul. I have some clients who have been with me from day one. I can’t tell you what that feels like, other than totally satisfying.”*

- Marion Roaman, owner, Ride the Zone, whose clients include celebrities such as Alec Baldwin and Katie Couric

When you own a fitness club, you truly have the ability to transform the lives of the people that you meet, helping them to learn how to incorporate new routines into their daily lives, routines that promote good health, increase energy and make people look and feel better. Besides that, you'll be working in an environment that allows you to continue to incorporate mentally and physically healthy habits into your own day. Here are some more benefits to owning your own fitness center:

## Create Your Own Niche

*"When you own your own studio, you can implement your vision, your energy and ideas. You can change things on the spur of the moment based on what you think is the right direction. Owning your own studio gives you creative power to change anything you want at the drop of a hat."*

— Kathy Van Patten, owner,  
The Movement Center of Boston

As a fitness club owner, you have the ability to be creative and to offer a unique blend of fitness products and services to your community. You can also choose special markets as a focus. For example, some fitness professionals focus on providing services to older adults, which might include Pilates and Tai Chi courses that are tailored to the older body. These professionals find joy in watching older adults blossom and find renewed energy through fitness. Others might tailor intense classes and services for those entering the military or for professional athletes in their off seasons. Still others may design classes specifically for people with special physical needs, such as those with arthritis or multiple sclerosis.

## Financial Rewards

If you were to ask people in the fitness industry why they chose this type of work, their answers would often reflect the passion that they have for good health and for helping others achieve the goals that give them a better life.

In addition to these factors, there is also the potential for a very good income. In general, the amount that you can earn is largely based upon the number of memberships and fitness services that you sell. Accord-

ing to the Fitness Business Pro annual “State of the Industry: Go Fish” report of 2007, single fitness club owners in that year expected to average nearly \$600,000 in revenues. Based on industry statistics from The Fitness Industry Council of Canada, average fitness club revenues in Canada in 2007 were \$340,000, the most recent figure available at the time of publication.” Those are just the averages. Some large fitness chains earn in the hundreds of millions of dollars each.

*“One of the main benefits of owning a personal training studio is that you get to make money while helping people by doing something you love. It is very rewarding watching clients transform both mentally and physically as health and fitness becomes a sustaining part of their lifestyle.”*

— Kevin Betts, Chief Operating Officer,  
fitness club chain Fitness Together

## **Be an Important Part of Your Community**

Perhaps you love working with teenagers. If so, then you might consider partnering with local high schools to provide additional fitness classes and training for the school’s athletes, members of the ROTC, dancers and so forth. If you’re able to offer those services at a discount for the schools, you would in fact be helping to sponsor those important youth activities. By doing so, you would also be helping to make your community a better place to live and work.

Or, if your community is sponsoring a walk or run for a great cause, perhaps you could donate an hour or two of your time to present a class on how to safely warm up and then train to participate in these charitable events in your community.

## **1.4 Inside This Guide**

The *FabJob Guide to Become a Fitness Club Owner* will walk you through the steps needed to open the fitness center of your dreams. The chapters are organized as follows:

Chapter 2 (“*Fitness Club Basics*”) will provide you with information about fitness club basics – traits that most fitness clubs have in common – along with information about a variety of types of fitness clubs, so that you can start to decide which niche is best for you. Information

found in Chapter 2 will describe upcoming trends in fitness and discuss a trend that has grown over the past decade and a half: fitness clubs for one gender only. You'll also find useful information about products you might offer and services you might sell; about your role as fitness club owner; about the types of employees you might hire and their roles in your dream of a fitness club.

Chapter 3 ("*Getting Ready*") takes an in-depth look at some of the skill sets – interpersonal, business and motivational – needed and how they are important to you as a fitness club owner. Discover how you can learn more about the fitness industry on your own. Plenty of resources about obtaining certifications are included, along with ideas for self-study.

Chapter 4 ("*Starting Your Fitness Club*") is packed with information about different ways to make your dream of owning a fitness club a reality. The chapter starts out with an overview checklist that you can print out for reference and then provides guidance about how to choose the best niche. You'll read all sorts of terrific information about the advantages and disadvantages of buying an established fitness club, buying an existing building and modifying it into a fitness club, buying a franchise, or creating a brand new fitness club. Chapter 4 also provides information about creating a business plan and a start-up budget, finding resources for your business plan and gathering the financing needed to get your business up and running. You'll also find helpful advice about which business structure to choose for your business, what insurance to buy and where to find information about insurance.

Chapter 5 ("*Setting Up Your Fitness Club*") helps you to find the best location for your club by providing you with information about permits and zoning, space requirements and more. Included is a comprehensive check sheet that allows you to compare properties that you have seen. Chapter 5 also provides information about signing a lease and the pros and cons of various types of leases; design options, both inside and out; floor layout ideas; supplies to buy and which suppliers to consider; and how to obtain your fitness equipment.

Chapter 6 ("*Running Your Business*") offers advice you can use when creating your procedures manual and checklists for your various procedures, including opening and closing procedures; member check-in procedures; and more. In Chapter 6, you'll also find information on

setting your hours; maintaining a hygienic facility; choosing membership and billing software; managing appointments; managing inventory and pricing; determining what types of payment you will accept; understanding financial statements and reports; building wealth; and hiring and paying staff.

Chapter 7 (“*Getting and Keeping Customers*”) puts the final touches on opening your fitness club! Here, you’ll find information about marketing your business, which includes the ever-important grand opening. Discover more about advertising; free publicity tools, including the press release; promotional tools that you’ll use, including your website; networking; customer service and making the sale. Plus, you’ll find guidance on bringing in repeat business — which is a key component of growing your business.