

PILATES

The Balanced Body® Newsletter

CORETERLY



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THE PILATES MARKETEEER

Systems and Service

by Erin Weston-Myers

Over the past few years I've had many conversations with Pilates studio owners and Pilates teacher trainers around the country about the inefficiency of Pilates studios. They've confessed hiring managers they couldn't afford, stopped teaching so they could manage their poorly run studio, and were so burnt out with doing 60 hour weeks they were about to leave the Pilates world all together. There is no need for any of that to happen. Since many of the problems I've encountered surround marketing and client communication, the key is to set a system in place, and let the systems do the rest.

Once set up, systems are consistent, efficient, and cheap. Save yourself money - forgo hiring a manager or full-time front desk employee who could potentially make costly mistakes, whether it be in scheduling or customer service. If someone calls inquiring about Pilates group classes, private classes, or teacher training, there is no reason why they shouldn't be retained as a customer. When I say "retained," I don't mean it will take only an initial phone call to get a client on the books. Sometimes it takes days, months, or maybe even years before that client will be in the studio. So, how do you get the client in the studio? This is where systems come in.

The 4 Touch Rule

I use a system called "The 4 Touch Rule" at my studio's front desk. Every client that calls into the studio will be "touched," or communicated with, at least four times. This may seem like overkill, but we've consistently heard from clients that we have the best customer service in town. Instead of feeling solicited, they feel taken care of. Here's how The 4 Touch Rule system works:

1. Initial conversation.

This is the first opportunity you have to get a life long client booked. When the potential client says, "I think I'm interested in Pilates," my response is usually, "So, what's your story? Why are you interested in Pilates?" Instead of immediately telling them our pricing structure, I let them control the conversation and get to know a little bit about them. Often what happens is ten minutes later, you are still on the phone with them and know some specific details of their life. You then have the knowledge to specifically direct them to the right instructor or group class, thus giving them service with a highly personal touch.

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At this point, offer to book them in the class. I can't tell you how many studios I've called and they've never asked me if I wanted to book a lesson!

If a voice message is left from someone inquiring about Pilates classes, they must be called back within the next 24 hours -absolutely no later. They need to feel like you care about them.

2. Follow-up email.

Whether or not you booked the potential client on the initial phone call, a follow up email needs to be sent within the same 24-hour period. Have an email template that tells them about the studio and a pre-designated area where you can insert a personal note to them in the beginning. Give them an opportunity to email or call you back with any questions they may have about Pilates or the studio. This is also a wonderful way to ensure you have a correct email address, so you can send out monthly newsletter emails.

3. Follow-up phone call.

Two days after the initial phone call is made and email is sent, another phone call is made to the client if they haven't booked a lesson yet. This time, it's very quick. You are simply following up with them to see if you can answer any questions for them. Often they will be pleasantly surprised you called to check up on them. If they choose not to book a lesson, they know where to find you when they choose to do so. They also know you have wonderful customer service.

4. Free monthly e-newsletter.

Every month a newsletter is sent out from the studio. The topic is very light and fun. It'll give a few little exercises for them to do at home and may have a few bullet-pointed "happenings" of the studio. Maybe you congratulate a client who just had a baby or mention some clients who just finished a marathon. Keep it light and client centered. You'll "touch" all of your clients and potential clients every month by doing an e-newsletter. It may seem like the newsletter isn't doing anything, but it is retaining clients. Trust me.

About four months ago I was teaching a client her first private lesson. As I do with all clients, I asked her how she heard about the studio and why she was in for a private lesson. She said, "Well, I started receiving your great monthly newsletters about three years ago and I finally decided it was time for me to start Pilates." Wow! It took her three years to get into the studio, but she came in when she was ready! Get your systems in place and you'll get those clients coming through your doors.

Having systems in place to make advertising and client (and future client) communication more streamlined will not only help you make more money, it will also free up time for you spend more time doing what you love about Pilates: teaching.