



## Kerry Silverstone

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## Club Scene: Finding Effective Pilates Group X Instructors

by Kerry Silverstone

Mind-body formats have grown to be the most popular classes in Group Exercise programming because they provide physical challenges as well as life balance and emotional awakening. Pilates Mat, Chair, and Reformer group fitness classes have continued to soar in the 21st century and the responsibility of managing this “business within a business” may put your club ahead of the competition, if you hire right.

It is the teacher who motivates, inspires, nurtures and retains the participants – and makes your Pilates program grow. So, hiring right will help you increase club revenues (and your own!), expand programming ideas and bring attention to this program in the eyes of your members and community. As a Director or Manager of Pilates group fitness, ask yourself what you can do internally and externally to seek, hire, train and retain the finest training staff. Your careful attention to detail with your staff will pave the way for a successful program, well-trained participants, and a positive ‘buzz’ both in and out of the club. Remember:

YOU are the engine that will drive the success of your program and your team!

As the Pilates Director or Manager of your club, find answers to these preliminary questions as a guide to helping you to successfully establish and maintain a Pilates program and team:

- Are you willing and able to put in the hours necessary to secure the finest trainers available to fit your club culture?
- Are you ‘networked’ in the fitness community, do you know your competition and do you understand outside opportunities which may help you strike gold?
- Have you ever managed people? How did it work out?
- Are you a leader or a follower?
- Will your ‘team’ respect you?
- Can you stay focused and communicate succinctly?
- Do you understand how to market your people as well as your programs?
- Can you identify instructor weaknesses and strengths, and work with them to improve where needed?
- Do you possess strong supervisory and organizational skills?

### The ‘Internal Hunt’

As a member of the club management team, you have a fast track opportunity to assess from within and identify club employees who may have skills and desire to develop into staff trainers of your Pilates programs. You

may be surprised to discover that Group Exercise Instructors, Personal Trainers, Physical Therapists, Chiropractors and even Massage Therapists can all be strong candidates. These staff members have already established themselves in the club, and may wish to expand their education, their working hours, and their earning potential.

- Identify Group Exercise Instructors who have already made a commitment to your club by teaching a variety of classes. These instructors 'touch' a large number of members, and have already established a relationship with them. Approach these instructors to determine any interest in becoming a Pilates Mat or Apparatus Trainer. Loyal members will generally follow their favorite instructors anywhere!
- Personal Trainers also have a broad client base. Pilates training is a perfect adjunct to strength training, and when trainers understand the value of Pilates, they can enhance their personal income and the success of their clientele by adding this mode of movement to their repertoires.
- If you have Physical Therapy and/or Chiropractic care available on site, many of these practitioners may have already integrated Pilates into their practice. With Pilates as part of their practice, they can cross-refer members as patients and vice-versa.
- Massage Therapists in your club have the most intimate relationship with their clients. They understand anatomy, biomechanics and how to touch their clients. They can make superb Pilates trainers, acquire more working hours and generate more clients into their Massage business.

### The External Hunt

Being a resourceful Manager can mean being creative in your ability to find or attract teachers. Whether you are building a new team of Pilates instructors, growing your team or making changes to your current staff, consider the following opportunities as part of your search:

- Create a good relationship with your competition. If you possess a very cooperative, diplomatic attitude, you may be able to establish and maintain a harmonious relationship with them. With that trust, you can share ideas and instructors and create a mutual support of each other.
- Determine whether there are training programs in your area. There may be a strong opportunity to identify strong instructors coming out of the training, who have had extensive experience in the fitness industry. You may wish to mentor them after they complete their training, and help them develop to be that much stronger. Maintaining a strong relationship with a local training organization will be extremely valuable in the future as your program grows and you need to add staff.
- Identify the needs of people inside and outside of the club who may be interested in specialized or "niche" Pilates training, and then seek those Trainers who have a specialty in those areas, i.e., Pilates for Golf, Pilates for Seniors, Pilates for Teens, Pilates for rotational Sports (tennis, golf, baseball, racquetball, swimming, etc.), Pilates for Pre/Post Partum, Pilates for Breast Cancer Survivors/Mastectomy, and Pilates for Men.

You might want to ask your trainers if they would like to research and develop these areas in order to build a specialty market for themselves for future growth of the programs and their incomes.

- Stay 'shifty-eyed'! You never know what might come your way. I was in line at Trader Joe's with my groceries when I saw a man open his wallet in front of me checking out. He had a card in his wallet that read, Pilates for Golf Coach. I asked him about it, he gave me the card (it turned out to be his wife!). I called her, hired her to teach Pilates for Golf at my club, and we are now very close friends and work together.
- Keep a file of new ideas and potential instructors. What may seem a bad fit at present might make a wonderful addition to a holiday program or a future schedule.

Preview a new instructor as part of a promotional event to give members an opportunity to give you feedback about their class before you put them permanently on the schedule. Provide a survey following each class.

## Be a Magnet! Why Join Your Team?

When your fitness community of Pilates instructors becomes aware of a program that is soaring, exciting, and run by an enthusiastic and hard-working individual, they naturally want to become a part of that success. What creates that magnetism for you? Here are some of the qualities a director or manager needs to attain a top-notch staff:

- An ongoing fairness and respect to all staff, i.e., qualifications, rates of pay, opportunities to teach classes and individual clients
- A pleasant, yet firm approach to managing staff, clientele and day-to-day operations of the program
- Recognition in the industry as a leader
- Skills to review, evaluate and train instructors to be better clinicians
- Creating and maintaining a beautiful space that is clean, orderly, and with equipment/accessories that are in good working order.
- Bonus incentives on a quarterly basis, or based on revenue goals for the team and/or individuals
- Training opportunities for continuing CEC's
- Helping drive the attendance numbers in their classes through internal and external marketing
- Remaining sincere, positive and hard-working. Your attention and energy can boost their commitment to the club, the way they inspire members and their ability to build up their classes.

You and your people are what will make or break your Pilates program. As with any type of learning, your teachers motivate, inspire, nurture and keep the members satisfied. And it is your responsibility to your club to maintain your passion of continuing to upgrade the caliber of your program not only through your curriculum, but most importantly, your people. The 'wave' of Pilates does not look like it will be slowing down any time soon . . . now is your opportunity to ride it, and drive it for a long time to come!

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