

# Ten Marketing Tips for Successful Pilates Programming

*By Daniel Wilson*

A primary key to successful Pilates programming is having a marketing plan. Many clubs and studios begin a Pilates program without a plan in place and then wonder where the customers are. Here are ten things to consider in order to launch and maintain a flourishing Pilates program.

## 1. Educate internally

The key is communication. Particularly at health clubs and wellness centers where Pilates is just one of many activities, it is important that your internal staff - from administration to instructors of other activities - knows what is going on with your program and can answer questions from potential clients if they are asked. Conduct demos to acquaint staff with Pilates. Send emails on a regular basis updating them on your program. Invite them to attend and participate in a mat or equipment class.

## 2. Market to your members

This may seem obvious, but it is surprising how many facilities don't do it. If you have a newsletter for members make sure you tell them what is going on with your Pilates sessions. Print flyers to pass out to members that discuss the benefits of Pilates and why they should be participating. Invite them to an initial free group Reformer class, or give them special introductory pricing on group or private sessions to get them in the door.

## 3. Network Externally

This is crucial - especially for studios and wellness centers looking to grow their client base. Get out and meet the people! Visit local businesses, schools and churches. Give them a special introductory offer. For example, one of our customers conducted a free mat session at their club for the local high-school girls. The response was so positive that many of the girl's mothers became members after hearing how fun it was from their daughters.

You can also conduct external demos (this is where Balanced Body's portable IQ and Allegro Reformers can really come in handy) at a local office building, and offer limited time sessions on-site to pique their interest.

#### 4. Create Specialty Classes

Do you have members or clients that have a common bond or interest? Create classes that get them together! We have customers all over the country who offer specialty classes for a particular demographic. These include:

- Men only
- Skiers
- Post-natal mothers
- Cyclists
- Older Adults
- Equestrians
- Golfers

#### 5. Price Your Sessions Properly

Most group sessions are priced somewhere between \$20-40 and private sessions can range from \$50-100. But the important thing is to be familiar with where your club, studio or center is geographically. A club in Fargo, North Dakota is not going to be able to charge the same as a club or studio in downtown New York City. Call other local clubs or studios and get their pricing to better gauge how much you should charge.

#### 6. Reward Your Die-Hards!

If you are lucky enough to have a contingent of members who never miss a session, and are consistent with their patronage, reward them. Create Gold Cards that give them a reduced fee or a free class after attending so many sessions. Make T-shirts for your Gold Club membership as a way of thanking them.

#### 7. Drop-in Passes

On the flip side of the last tip, it is also a good idea to create a card or pass that allows non-members at a club, or non-clients at a studio or wellness center to drop in from time-to-time and take a class for a fee at a higher rate than what members pay. Chances are if they like what they see, they'll start coming back on a regular basis.

#### 8. Cross Promote Your Classes!

This can be done within your Pilates programming as well as with other external activities. Within your program you can do things like offer a free group Reformer session to your mat class participants, or a free private session to a group class member.

Externally you can create promotions for other programs like yoga or spin, and give them an introductory offer to come and try a free session before or after their class. This works particularly well with cardio or weightlifting programs, as the stretching they'll get in Pilates will improve their alignment and core control in their other fitness activities.

#### 9. Location, location, location

Because Pilates is a mind-body activity, it requires a lot of concentration and necessitates a serene environment. It should be a place where your clients can get away from their daily hustle and bustle for a while. For someone looking to open a studio this means making sure you pick a location that is not near a lot of noise. For a program within a club it means making sure you have designated space for your Pilates program, and that that space is not near another loud or boisterous activity like a spin class or basketball court.

## **10. Referral Program**

If you have a client or member that has referred a friend in to coming to your class or session, reward that person with a free or reduced-rate class.

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