

# CREATE THE

# WOW FACTOR

By Elizabeth Kovar M.A.

Local competition, Groupon deals and online fitness programs flood consumers' brains and bodies with limitless choices. With various options, businesses must find programs and marketing tools to communicate how they are different from competitors. To stand out from the crowd businesses and facilities must find a way to be unique and one-of-a-kind. How to do this? Through innovative programming, partnerships, reward efforts and community culture.

## INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

Programming depends highly on the facilities' mission, vision and clientele. As Americans become unhealthy, there is a population of need for specialized programs beyond the basic group exercise and individualized personal training programs. It is vital to look at your membership and participation demographics. Are they recreational athletes or health seekers? This will help you target programs for your current population and / or supply a solution for a population that needs health and fitness programs. Creative program ideas include:

- 10 Day Kick-Start Programs
- Health Coach seminars
- Small Group Training that pertains to a focus, theme or outcome
- Team Trainings - Train for local sporting event
- Feeder Programs - Challenges, Kick-Start programs, Competitions
- Partnered Programs (See below)

## PARTNERSHIPS

It is apparent that America's health is suffering from stress, to heart disease to diabetes. The new "trend" is to partner with local health care practitioners to create innovative programs that are exclusive in nature. The creative pursuits in this realm are limitless from health seminars to fitness programs. Partnered programs increase credibility and standing within the community. Ideas include:

- Back Strengthening Program with local Chiropractor
- Onsite Chair Massage Days

- Diabetes Program with fitness and educational classes taught by a Certified Diabetes Educator
- Health Coaching with Psychologist
- Nutrition Counseling as part of a weight loss program with a Registered Dietician

## REWARD EFFORTS

The incentive culture is popular in various businesses from grocery stores, gas points to credit cards. Although fitness businesses cannot survive on passing out free items, there are ways to reward efforts without breaking the bank. These high-spending individuals could be rewarded to keep the lifelong dollars rolling into the business. These small expenses, which can be charged as a marketing expense, are huge rewards for the business. Taking care of these people will lead to future referrals and program participation. The rewards can be something as simple as purchasing a free massage (hopefully from your local partnered therapist!) or a small gift basket with logo items. Some reward efforts include:

- Top 25 Annual Spenders
- Top 10 Monthly Gym Users
- Top 10 most participated in programs, group classes etc.
- Top Referrals

## COMMUNITY CULTURE

The YMCA is known for its stellar, uplifting culture. One of the main reasons for success is that the YMCA knows and properly executes community culture. However, is there an area that you can improve upon? Overall, the Y's have an umbrella culture of acceptance and being open to every-body. Is it time to create niche cultures within your facility? This can be a community of regular spin participants, triathlon training groups or senior volunteer club. Some cultures are organically created through program participation. For example, Diabetes groups are exposed to other individuals who struggle with diet and exercise. This community leads to dependency of being accountable to the program and future participation. **OSF**