

group exercise pull-out

team training

THE GLOBAL FITNESS INDUSTRY HAS NOTICED A SIGNIFICANT SHIFT IN THE WANTS OF THE GENERAL GROUP PARTICIPANT

Simplicity, variety and, most importantly, effectiveness have determined the longer-term success of group class formats. New formats are abundant on an almost monthly basis as we strive to keep the interest levels high on the studio front. Increasingly, these new studio-based concepts draw on small and not-so-small equipment for success and variety. Seemingly gone are the days of the step and aerobics pioneers, replaced with GRAVITYGroup teachers, BOSU and kettlebell trainers and Flexi-bar instructors, not to mention GYMSTICKS, gliding discs, ballast balls, hula hoops and, well, you get the picture.

Is group fitness, with its connotations of choreographed routines and dance-based movement, such a relevant term for what we do, or would “group training” more accurately sum up the bulk of what we find in studios around the country? Across both titles, the generated response among participants as to the desired effect is common. They want to be able to achieve the class, improve their fitness levels and probably lose a few pounds in the process. Does group fitness in its current form best provide answers to these criteria, or do we need to find new ways because the old are proving not as useful as they could be?

bringing strength into group

The fun factor, for those who choose to utilise it, remains the distinguishing feature between the gym floor and the group exercise studio. It's the music, the movement, the sense of an experience that is shared, often among total strangers, that makes it so great. It still remains so, but we have adapted the idea of taking very strong athletic-based workouts and put

them into the group setting to get the very best of both worlds. Fun was great for a while, but too often we were losing out on the results – part of why people came to the gym. Ask anyone who has a body and a level of fitness you truly admire and the answer as to how they achieved their great results won't have been through group fitness. It might have played a part, but it won't have been the sole factor. People have needed to add additional training to their schedules to get truly lasting results. My question is: why can't we combine the modes of training to add value to our workouts?

BODYPUMP™ was possibly the first successful example of bringing strength into group fitness en masse. History has shown it has now spawned a series of simple and athletic workouts that replicate more of a “training” session than what we previously knew of group fitness. Taking it a step further, we have now evolved into using much of what we would see a personal trainer doing one-on-one with their clients and moulded this to the group scenario. If doing it by yourself is considered “personal training”, then surely doing it with others would be considered “group training”.

group fitness vs group training

Semantics, some might say – what's the difference between the two? You ask the bulk of the male population and increasingly much of the female gym-going population what their preferences are in gym usage, and I guarantee most will say “training” as opposed to “group fitness”. They will want to get fit, no doubt, but they won't necessarily want to participate in “group fitness”



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classes to get it. They don't equate their circuit or indoor cycling workouts as group fitness – they think of it as group training. We can further exploit this thinking to get them more active in using the group fitness studios, but only when we change our current approach to the types of classes we offer and how we market them within the centre.

Group fitness in the UK only accounts for around 20% of the total number of members that use a gym. In order to get that number up to make the area more viable for health clubs, they have had to meet the demands for harder classes that deliver real results, often at the expense of “fun” classes. The idea of keeping the same class formats for years on end, hoping to reverse the steady decline in group numbers, can only be linked back to the saying that to “keep doing something over and over hoping for a different outcome is the very definition of insanity”.

For group fitness to survive as a viable method of training, it had to get harder. That's why we have introduced equipment into these formats and reverted back to class formats that haven't been seen much since the early 90s – to make them harder, more useful, but most of all more achievable to the general membership demographic. Circuits, indoor cycling, studio resistance programmes and meaningful conditioning and cardio classes are thriving because they tap into the idea of “group training” within the group fitness studio. Add to this list new formats of “group personal training”, such as GRAVITY, Power Plate and kettlebells, and we really get serious when it comes to results-based training within a group. Everything you do within group training has the potential to be “fun” if it's delivered by

the right instructor, but the difference between that and group fitness is that you are now giving your time spent in the gym a greater sense of purpose.

the next step

Evolution is a necessary process and you have two choices – change and move with it or be left behind. The question is: are clubs and instructors willing to invest in this new era of group training? There is a chargeable element to some of the new group training and group personal training formats available to members that would allow a return on investment and a higher pay scale for instructors. To charge one person £50 an hour for a PT sessions or to charge five people £30 for a group personal training session is easy math.

Instructors, don't panic! As a fully qualified group instructor, you can use equipment designed for the subject you teach without requiring further education. However, the discerning instructor will always seek guidance, advancements and updates to further their careers – something that will come to distinguish them as the newly evolved group trainers of the future that will carry the industry forward. *fp*



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