

The Mark of a True Professional

Let your professionalism help you stand out on the training floor | By Jeff Rosenblum

You are one of several personal trainers at your fitness center, and you want members to notice and, ultimately, train with you. Some of the other trainers on the floor include bodybuilding champions and fitness competitors, and members cannot help but be drawn to them. You, on the other hand, are also certified, educated, fit and knowledgeable. So how do you stand out?

There are many things you can do to set yourself apart on the training floor, even if you don't have biceps that pop out of your shirt, and it can be summarized in one word: Professionalism.

Wear your personal trainer uniform proudly

Professional athletes wear uniforms on the playing field. As a personal trainer, your playing field is the training floor. In order to appear professional, you must wear the trainer uniform that was provided to you by the fitness center. Depending on where you work, this may include a trainer shirt and possibly even a name tag. Your trainer uniform allows members to clearly recognize you as a personal trainer and not just someone else who is there to workout. In addition, it is the first indicator to them that you are a professional, care about your appearance and are there to help them reach their fitness goals.

Be well-groomed

When you are on the training floor, it is essential that you are well-groomed. What member would want to work with a personal trainer who looks like they just rolled out of bed, did not have time to shave, or whose breath leaves something else to be desired? As a personal trainer, you are not only representing yourself, but you are also representing the fitness center. Show respect for yourself and your employer as well as the members by taking care of yourself like a professional. This is a direct indication of how you will take care of the clients that you train.

Show up early for client sessions, be prepared and greet them with a smile

Your clients have busy schedules, and they don't have time to waste. If their training session with you begins at 6 PM, be at the fitness center no later than 5:45 prepared and ready to train. The first thing they should see when they arrive on the training floor is you there to greet them with a smile. If you were already at the fitness center training your previous client, that's great. Just be sure to complete that session so you can begin the next one — on time. This is the sign of a true professional, one that is conscientious enough to be prompt and organized enough to be prepared. A warm smile goes a long way, too!

Don't have anything in your hands other than a pen and clipboard with your client's exercise routine

During a training session, the only things you should have in your hands are a pen and clipboard with your client's program. This shows your client that they are your top priority. They are paying you to train them, so they deserve 100% of your concentration. Eat or drink before or after their session, but never during. Also, do not make or accept phone calls or check voicemail messages or emails while training a client. Doing this is not only unprofessional, but unsafe.

Stay focused on your client

At most fitness centers, there are many things happening on the training floor at the same time. Members are exercising, trainers are working with their clients, staff is cleaning equipment, people are talking to each other, music is playing, and there are multiple televisions set to various channels. As a result, it is easy for a personal trainer to become distracted when training a client. Do not let this happen to you. Always stay focused on your client and the task at hand. Taking time away from your client's training session to talk to other members, trainers or staff, or to check the score of a game, is not what your client is paying you for. Other members see this, too, and it will prevent them from ever wanting to train with you.

Be enthusiastic

Some clients come to the fitness center after a long day at the office, staring at a computer screen and dealing with all kinds of corporate challenges. Others come to take a break from their family responsibilities. They all look to you, their personal trainer, to train them with enthusiasm. This is their time to have fun and reinvigorate themselves. Your attitude is contagious. If it is positive and uplifting, your client will inevitably share that emotion. If you appear disinterested, they will feel that way, too.

Thank your client, provide honest feedback and confirm their next session

At the end of each session, remind your client how much you appreciate training them... and they will most likely thank you, too. Remember, they have chosen to train with you among all of the other trainers at the fitness center. Share your thoughts about their session and provide them with honest feedback regarding the work they are putting in and the progress they are making toward achieving their goals. Finally, be sure to confirm the day and time of their next session to make sure you are both on the same page as you move forward.

The bottom line: personal training is a competitive industry, and more trainers are entering the field than ever before. The things you do, and in some cases do not do, to set yourself apart as a professional, is what will ultimately determine your success. Any trainer can just show up and go through the motions on the training floor. Not all trainers will be disciplined enough to learn, grow and apply the principles that will attract members to become clients and clients to become fans. As Penn State's legendary football coach, Joe Paterno, once said, "You have to perform at a consistently higher level than others. That's the mark of a true professional." ■



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