UNLEASHING THE GROUP FITNESS REVOLUTION IGNITED BY SOCIAL MOVEMENT

by Mel Tempest

GROUP MY JOURNEY IN FURNESS

FROM AN EMPTY HALL TO A THRIVING FITNESS EMPIRE — POWERED BY GROUP WORKOUTS, FUELLED AND IGNITED BY PASSION.

December 1999, I started my journey in the fitness industry as a hydraulic circuit instructor with nothing but a passion for movement and a vision for change. I only joined a gym for the first time later in life 1997 "Melton Waves' I joined on a **shop a docket** deal, 21 days for \$21.

Jump forward to September 2003 opening day Ballarat Body & Soul Health and Fitness Studio, it sounds glamorous - NOT. I didn't have a state-of-the-art facility, a big team, or a foolproof business plan. What I did have was an empty church hall, a handful of people looking for a workout, and an unshakable belief that group fitness could change lives.

BOOK MEL FOR HER FULL KEYNOTE PRESENTATION ON THIS

Fast forward to today, and that simple idea has transformed into a thriving fitness business that has not only stood the test of time but has evolved with the industry's biggest shifts. I've seen fads come and go, technology disrupt the way we move, and consumer expectations push gyms to rethink their business models. Through it all, group fitness has remained the heart of my success.

Let's face it I opened Body and Soul so I could teach BodyJam after my GFM told me I couldn't teach it where I worked! I had a two dollar cash tin and a carbon copy receipt book.

THIS BOOK...

This book isn't just about my journey. It's about what works when it comes to running a successful group fitness business. Whether you're a gym owner, studio manager, or instructor, this book is designed to give you real-world strategies to build, grow, and sustain a thriving group fitness program.

AND YES...

Yes, I have moved out of that church hall and now own a 1500m² freehold with three group fitness studios, two gyms, wellness studio and so much more. All built on a business model called group fitness. As I said everything else was just an accident.



THE EVOLUTION OF GROUP FITNESS

20 YEARS OF CHANGE



Step aerobics 120bpm with hand weights, Flashdance based workouts, basic circuit training, leg warmers, head bands and lycra up your backside! Take a bow ladies and gentlemen.



Strength-based classes, hybrid and on-demand workouts, and specialised training like Hyrox, Spartans Deka and Tough Mudder. Enter more fashion brands, a different outfit each day, grocery shopping in your leggings, muscle tops, Low socks, high socks, hi impact bras and Skins!



Gym-based group fitness as a secondary offering, walking groups and Aqua classes. It was all about the weights down the back, mirrors, chalk and T.Back singlets. Oh and someone hand me a red bull.



Group fitness is a core business driver for any fitness business. Aqua is a must in any venue that has a pool. Group workouts are where people come not to be judged but to share a love for health and living longer.

THEN:

No tracking or tech integration. Just sweat and pop your fingers under your chin and count for sixty seconds and then calculate your heart rate.

The NOW of group fitness is personalised, technology-driven, and community-focused and in the following pages, I'll show you how to fuel and ignite your community with a deeper sense of passion and loyalty.

NOW:

Wearables, live performance tracking, and gamification make workouts interactive and engaging. Challenges create community and conversation, live performance creates accountability and competition. People aim to sleep better and drive stress down all with little trackers we once watched on Star Trek and The Jetsons.

INSIDE THE GROUP FITNESS SUCCESS THE CLUB, THE TEAM, OUR COMMUNITY

From an empty hall to a thriving club—how group workouts built a business, a community, and a movement.

Over the years, I've tested and evolved my club's group fitness offerings, always staying ahead of trends while keeping the core focus on engagement, results, and retention. These programs have been instrumental in shaping my business. Keep in mind I am big on variety and I am always on the lookout for new innovative programming and so should you. I don't conform to what the media says or what the club down the road is doing.

O CIRCUITS THE GAME-CHANGER

Why? Off beat workouts, all levels of fitness and no coordination can attend. A vast number of gyms already have equipment in their group fitness rooms they just need help in putting content together. Take stock of what you have and then drag a rower and a bike in.

- A fun energy station-based circuit workout blending strength, cardio, and functional training.
- Circuits adapted over time to include wearable tech tracking and gamification. But the objective remained the same. Inclusive, non intimidating and achievable.
 - Boosted member referrals and retention due to its inclusivity and energy. Everyone feels welcomed. Look around your GF room you have the tools. You can market these classes to every demographic including school groups for during the day and sporting club training nights.

02 OFF-TEMPO STRENGTH TRAINING THE "WHY SO SLOW?" WORKOUT

- A controlled, slow-tempo strength workout designed for muscle endurance.
 - Helped increase male participation in group fitness and strengthened PT sales. Male members who attended cycle classes were prompted to follow the cycle instructor into their off beat classes. This created a non intimidating experience. In saying this the cycle members were educated for approximately four weeks in the lead up to the launch. They weren't thrown in cold, they went in together as a group, supporting each other and thriving.

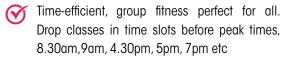
U3 HYBRID TRAINING REVOLUTION THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

- Live + Virtual workouts for members to join in person or via an app.
- Running virtual classes inside your club gives you the ability to attract mums and prams, shift workers, those returning from injury and beginners.
- Facebook virtual classes retained members during lockdowns and provided flexible training options. Many members in CV tried new classes (no one could see them) when the doors opened they attended live classes. Never be afraid to repurpose a CV FB class and drop it on public holidays for your members to workout from home. The fact they are working out with trainers they know makes it that more special.

HYROX & SPARTAN-STYLE TRAINING A COMPETITIVE EDGE

- A high-intensity program featuring sled pushes, rower sprints, and obstacle-based training. Many clubs have these pieces of equipment from the days gone by when functional studios were opening everywhere. Now it's all about training in your club for outdoor fitness races. Your community don't need to join a competitors venue. They can have it all with you.
- We have a spartan Deka build a tribal, teamlike atmosphere that drives member social interaction. It also gives your community recognition for their efforts. You can be running similar races at your own venue. Different age groups, families, kids, it's all opportunity.

EXPRESS 20 OR 30MINUTE CLASSES THE ULTIMATE WORKOUT FOR BUSY PEOPLE



Increased attendance during off-peak hours. Not everyone has to do the school run these people are available beforehand, not everyone wants to jump on a cross trainer or treadmill before a class! You will be surprised at how many people will come for a quick weights workout for 15 or 20 minutes before their traditional class starts. You can even add on a 15 minute weights workout after a 30 minute class! Stay or go let them choose. All extra value to the timetable and membership.

WOMEN'S STRENGTH & EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM

- Create a 4 or 6 week "Weights and Wellness Challenge"
- A women-only strength class focusing on technique, muscle and confidence.
- Encouraged more female members to embrace resistance training. End result more women now lift weights outside of weights classes.

THEMED & SEASONAL SPECIALTY CLASSES

- Fun energy not necessarily high energy, limitedtime seasonal classes (Halloween, Easter, Xmas in July, etc. Tell members to bring along kids, partners and family!
 - Created urgency, reactivated inactive members, and boosted social engagement.

BUILDING A WINNING GROUP GROUP FITNESS BUSINESS BUSINESS MODEL



Choose programs that marry up with your demographic, don't launch programs because the club down the road has or the media portrays you will fail if you don't.



There are many group fitness program providers who all offer group fitness models with online training, in club training, online marketing studios, quarterly updates for music and choreography. Some suppliers give you the flexibility to change the choreography to suit your demographic.

Meaning you might teach the same class Monday 9.30am and 5.30pm same music but different moves! Success comes from knowing the people in your room. We are there for them not us.



When and how to structure classes. Use public holidays, Easter and Christmas breaks to test out different programs and time slots, better to test and try in these periods than to launch a full on timetable that you need to change six weeks in.

Though you may think, people will be away, those that attend will give you enough feedback to make decisions. Your timetable is built on all members not just the front row.





INSTRUCTOR TRAINING & RETENTION

Building a high-performing team. On going education is paramount to success, in saying that it's not always about getting the choreography correct or knowing the words to the song, its about getting the class from A to Z. Your communities love the realism of an instructor, it's not the five star polished performance that they seek, they chase connection and humans, they chase fun and entertaining.

Nobody cares about the runners you wear or that your elbow sits at correct height. Imagine if we critiqued our members that way before they joined. Club owners do need to put finances aside to assist in ongoing training each year, this is highly recommended and a no brainer. Your group fitness instructors are the gold of your business. They stand on a stage and sell your brand to a large group of people in a short period of time.



Attendance tracking & feedback. Don't be afraid to put feedback boxes into your group fitness, be open, don't take it all personal, it's tough I know! But feedback is character building for both you and your team. As business owners we give it in our personal lives, cafes, shopping - be prepared to take it on board. Don't be afraid of surveys. Encourage group fitness instructors to team teach.

MARKETING 3 BRANDING

YOUR GROUP FITNESS BUSINESS



BRANDING GROUP FITNESS AS A KEY DIFFERENTIATOR.

Use images that define your business, use your members in your marketing, grab video testimonials, allocate a special day to do them. When seeking out stock images ensure you use diversity, all nationalities, genders and ages.

We all deserve to be fit and healthy - thats your message to your market. Do not exclude. Include all.



SOCIAL MEDIA & DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES.

The world is full of experts, some are real some are fake. Before you hire a strategist get testimonials off their clients, stalk their work, Google them.

- Are they purely fitness orientated or do they work across other industries?
- Do they understand the lingo?



LEVERAGING SOCIAL PROOF & TESTIMONIALS.

Social media is your one shop tool to reach everyone out there looking in.



CREATING BUZZ THROUGH EVENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS.

Events win hands down - run at least one event a month.

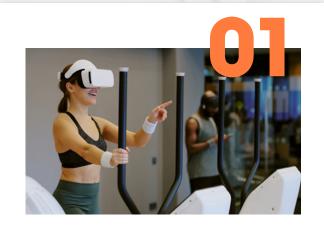
- Members Day
- Open House
- Family Night
- Stress Seminars
- Nutrition Workshops
- Posture Sessions
- Beginners Discovery Day and so many more.

MAKE SURE YOUR FRONT DESK TEAM HAVE TRIED ALL THE CLASSES, THEY CANT SELL WHAT THEY HAVEN'T EXPERIENCED.

Get your members to create your social media ads. Create a competition around it.

FUTURE IN GROUP FITNESS TRENDS [2025 & BEYOND]

HOW TO STAY AHEAD OF INDUSTRY TRENDS



Al-driven workouts, VR fitness, and gamification of group training. We cant ignore this.



The rise of flexible, hybrid membership models. Don't understand its value? Get educated.



Circuits are back in a big way. Make them simple, less thinking more movement. Think of ways to drive men into these classes.

Friday night is mens night. "Ditch the pub"

- Run more education on women's health and which classes they should be attending, create cheat sheets to collect from the desk.
- Are you running sensory classes? 12noon - 3pm or 8pm onwards.
- Are you conditioning yourself as a club owner before doing your homework? (e.g.: Oh no I'm not launching that I heard it was expensive - when in fact it's not and your competitor down the road just launched and gained 50 new paying members.)

BOOK MEL →

POPULAR GROUP FITNESS CLASSES & THEIR IMPACT

STRENGTH DEVELOPMENT (LES MILLS)

This progressive strength-training class is designed to build functional strength and lean muscle. Its simplicity and clear progressions have significantly boosted male and female participation in strength training. When marketed intentionally, this program can attract less coordinated participants into the group fitness room, particularly men who regularly attend Sprint and Cycle classes.

PILATES (LES MILLS)

Focuses on core strength, posture improvement, and flexibility. It is highly successful due to its low-impact nature, attracting diverse demographics, including seniors and athletes recovering from injuries.

FUNCTIONAL STRENGTH (LES MILLS)

Integrates strength, balance, and agility training through dynamic movements, appealing widely to younger demographics and active professionals. The unique selling point (USP) for this program is the introduction of bands attached to bars, as well as freestyle band work.

STEEL TONIC (STEEL PROGRAMS)

A step workout combining simple moves, participants work one side of the body and then the opposite, with the third round combining both sides. It is an excellent class for beginners who prefer simplicity on the step without complex dance routines. Members can adjust the intensity to suit their needs, making it highly effective for muscle toning. Choreography can be customised to suit the demographic of the class.

STEEL TRAINING (STEEL PROGRAMS)

Structured resistance training sessions focusing on fundamental movement patterns. This class attracts fitness enthusiasts looking for structured strength progression. Each body part is worked three times, with weight added to the bar each time a new song commences, creating a progressive workout. Choreography can also be adapted to match the demographic of participants.

STEEL COMBAT (STEEL PROGRAMS)

A high-energy martial arts-inspired class, extremely popular for blending cardio intensity with stress relief, featuring empowering moves achievable by everyone. The choreography is straightforward and adaptable to the class demographic.

SPRINT (LES MILLS)

A high-intensity interval training (HIIT) cycling workout. Popular among time-conscious fitness enthusiasts seeking maximum calorie burn in minimum time.

ZUMBA

A global dance fitness phenomenon integrating Latin rhythms and easy-to-follow moves. Widely successful for building community, appealing broadly across all age groups.

GROUP FITNESS SUPPLIERS

- SH1FT
- FUNXTION
- SOUL BODY
- FORTE
- A STATE OF RIDE
- STEEL PROGRAMS

MOTOSUMO

- LES MILLS
- BODY TRAINING SYSTEMS
- SCW MANIA EVENTS

CLUBERCISE

A nightclub-inspired workout blending dance and fitness routines. Particularly successful with millennials and younger demographics seeking a fun and social fitness experience.

HIIT CIRCUIT CLASSES

Highly varied, intense workouts combining cardio and strength exercises. Popular due to their versatility, rapid results, and high retention rates. Circuit classes can utilise various cardio equipment, boxing gear, ropes, bodyweight exercises, kettlebells, and more. Most gyms already possess the necessary equipment to accommodate all age groups, making it especially appealing to sporting clubs and school groups. Members often attend these classes to train for outdoor fitness races.



OLDER ADULT CLASSES

Gentle fitness sessions focusing on improving mobility, balance, and overall health. Consistently well-attended, fostering strong community connections. These classes effectively utilise existing group fitness equipment and can be marketed as low-impact sessions, encouraging new participants or those in rehabilitation.

NEURODIVERGENT SPECIAL CLASSES

Specialised inclusive classes that provide safe, sensory-friendly environments. These sessions significantly enhance community integration and accessibility and present opportunities to utilise offpeak hours effectively.

VIRTUAL CLASSES WITH FITNESS ON DEMAND & COACH WELLY (WEXER)

INDER

Provide flexible and accessible workouts at any time. These classes are exceptionally popular during off-hours, appealing particularly to shift workers, busy members, and parents with young children, significantly expanding the gym's reach and retention.

EFFECTIVE FOR GROUP FITNER **INCENTIVES** ENGAGEMENT

THESE PROVEN INCENTIVES FOSTER COMMUNITY SPIRIT, LOYALTY, AND SUSTAINED MEMBER ENGAGEMENT.

01

REFERRAL REWARDS

Offer membership discounts or merchandise to members who bring friends or family to classes.

02

ATTENDANCE CHALLENGES

Create monthly attendance-based challenges with rewards such as gym merchandise, complimentary personal training sessions, or gift cards.

03

SOCIAL MEDIA CHECK-INS

Reward members who frequently post check-ins or class photos on social media, increasing organic marketing and community buzz.

04 MILESTONE REWARDS

Celebrate class attendance milestones (e.g., 50, 100 classes) with branded apparel, recognition on social media, or a 'wall of fame' in the gym.

05

SPECIAL-THEMED CLASSES

Host fun-themed events around holidays or special occasions, encouraging community interaction and increased participation.

06

FREE WORKSHOPS AND SEMINARS

Provide educational workshops (e.g., nutrition, wellness, menopause, mental health, stress management) exclusively for regular attendees.

07

LOYALTY PROGRAMS

Implement point-based systems rewarding attendance and participation, redeemable for discounts or exclusive benefits.

80

MEMBER SPOTLIGHTS

Regularly feature members on social media, celebrating their commitment and success stories, enhancing motivation and community spirit.

09 GROUP CHALLENGES

Organise team-based fitness challenges or competitions with attractive prizes, fostering community spirit and teamwork.

10

EARLY BIRD AND OFF-PEAK DISCOUNTS

Offer special pricing or added benefits to incentivise members to attend during less crowded times.

FINAL FORMULA FORMULA TAKEAWAYS



VARIETY IS KEY

Keep workouts fresh and engaging. Change your timetable up every season, you don't have to do a complete overhaul but you can make changes.

Experiment!



BUILD A COMMUNITY

Strong connections = strong retention. Use social media to recognise your whole community not just a few.



USE OLD STYLE MARKETING WHERE AFFORDABLE.

Radio, TV, do more emails and SMS. Consumers want to read and hear WIIFM. **`What's In It For Me**' Experiment!



CREATE AN EXPERIENCE

Every class should feel like an event. We don't expect perfection from our members let your group fitness instructors feel free to create fun.



MAKE SURE YOUR TEAM IS ON BOARD, IF NOT, MOVE THEM ON.

Ensure each year they visit other clubs to experience different programs and different teaching style. Group fitness instructors like club owners are only as good as the day just worked.



LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY

Tracking tools and apps enhance engagement. Ask for trials from suppliers.

In closing over the years I have used many recommended group fitness suppliers to create a successful group fitness business model. I'm happy to recommend them to you.

It has always been about my members, my community and creating a niche thats different from every other venue. I am an early adopter, creative with content for group fitness programming and can create concepts and ideas to give you the same success. I have hired, fired, been sued and rebuilt. I understand the day to day successes, failure and just tough gigs in running a business.

I have had the privilege to teach all over the world. I understand the business of groups. I want the same success for you.

If you don't mind unfiltered conversation, let's connect.



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