

# How To Execute A Brand-Name Win

By Larry Gulko

When you think about it, Ralph Waldo Emerson really understood, back in 1840, the concept of brand marketing. His philosophy focused on being a leader, defining your point of difference, and doing something truly remarkable. His mantra: "Do not go where the path may lead; go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

Now, isn't that precisely what brand marketing is all about? Go where there is no path and leave a trail. Create a new category, capture mindshare, dominate the market, and be the best-selling brand in your category.

To prevail in today's ever-changing, ever-more-competitive landscape, you have to cultivate a compelling persona, a mental image, that draws customers and drives revenue. You have to invent a new category that separates your club from all of the "me-too" operators. Then capture mindshare, dominate your category, and "own" it in the minds of the public.

Think about what you're really selling. You're not just selling square feet of space, lots of exercise equipment, and a plethora of fitness programs. Most of your competitors offer much of the same. You're selling something much more important, much more *grand*. But you have to step back, identify exactly what it is that makes you unique, and then refine, package, and present it with intelligence and flair.

Your club needs to promise a specific value; it needs to deliver an exceptional experience.

The sum of customer experiences creates your brand. Every little step, every touch-point, is a test that you

have to pass to make good on the promise of your brand. You have to specialize in something, remain focused, and make sure that every aspect—both external and internal—delivers on your brand's pledge if you want your club to become known as the "first" in the market with respect to a certain product, service, or program.

In the final analysis, you will win the battle by making your brand relevant to your customers' lives. Ask yourself: How will your product make their lives better? In what ways can you enhance, or add to, the benefits that it provides? And not just for the individual club member, but, rather, their entire family.

Why do people buy anything? They purchase a product for both rational and emotional reasons. The factual details are, of course, important, but it's the emotional component that helps you to bond—really connect with—the customer, driving trial, preference, sales, and loyalty in a significant way.

So, generate new ideas that will provide your club with a clear, unique, and compelling identity—one that will boost revenue and ensure long-term success. Remember: the ultimate goal is to make your brand "their brand." ■

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Brand-man Gulko

how easy it is for someone with a rudimentary knowledge of fitness to obtain "so-called" credentials by filling out an online questionnaire, but it also spotlighted IHRSA's response: i.e., the recommendation that clubs hire personnel certified by agencies that have been accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCAA).

By doing so, the TV station pointed out, clubs help ensure that their trainers are well-qualified to work with members safely and effectively.

The NewsCenter 5 team went on to identify the five personal-training associations that are currently accredited by the NCCA: the American Council on Exercise (ACE); the National Council on Strength and Fitness (NSCF); the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA); the National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM); and the National Federation of Personal Trainers (NFPT).

For additional information about NCCA accreditation, please log on to [www.ihrsa.org/accreditation](http://www.ihrsa.org/accreditation). ■

## Correction:

> The March issue of *CBI* (see "The 'Next' Wave of the Future: the Subsidization of Physical Fitness," pg. 58)

listed an incorrect e-mail address for Harvey Lauer, the founder and president of American Sports Data, Inc. Lauer's correct e-mail address is: [sportsdata@optonline.net](mailto:sportsdata@optonline.net). *CBI* apologizes for the error. ■

