

# IMPROVING YOUR PROFESSIONAL STATUS

Having increased his Monday night aerobic class from six to over 120 people, and his step class from four to 80, international presenter Lincoln Bryden reveals his secrets.

**D**o you dream of packed classes or becoming a local fitness celebrity, and earning more money from the industry that you love? Years ago, you could set up a class in your local hall, send out a few flyers and get 50-100 people jumping along, but with the advent of health club chains, this has been replaced with instructors being happy if they have 10-15 people in their classes.

I've taught in many gyms and health clubs so I am fully aware of the challenges of building class numbers in environments where initially it seems that you have no control. I must admit it's taken a lot of trial and error to succeed in increasing my class numbers, but when I sift through the strategies that did work there were three main areas, called the PEP formula.

**P** – being a good **P**rofessional

**E** – becoming your town's local **E**xpert

**P** – **P**romoting yourself

It's important to note that it was a combination of all three and not just focusing on one particular area that allowed me to have full classes. This article will give you practical tips to help you improve your professional status within your local community then we'll look at the other two strategies in the following issues.

## Being a good professional

There are many aspects to this – for example, being good at what you do (obviously) – but some that you may not have considered include:

- Deciding who you are and what your target market is.
- Creating your “elevator pitch” that allows you to confidently talk about your services in a clear, professional manner.

## Deciding who you are and who your target market is

We need to know who we are and what our strengths are before we can do anything else. Although we tend to get asked to teach classes in gyms and clubs that are supposed to cater for all levels and shapes and sizes, we can still have our “niche” that we specialise in.

Personal trainers seem to get this, which is why we now hear about loads of “fat-loss boot camps” and “strength and conditioning coaches”, but it’s a concept that is new to the freestyle group exercise world. For example, although I taught a wide variety of classes, I became known for my dance-style sessions, whether they were aerobics or step.

The key thing here is that although some people did not like my style, thankfully many more did, and came to me because of that. This then helped me market myself easily and people knew what they were going to get. As my aim was to make dance-style classes more accessible to people intimidated by dance, it was easy for clubs and myself to target those markets.

In addition to this, because I was known as the person that taught dance-style classes, introducing Ceroc modern jive into my business was an easy fit. People began to associate me with the style, which in turn helped it to become established more quickly.

# Personal trainers have niches – we hear about “fat-loss boot camps” and “strength and conditioning coaches” – but it seems to be lost in the freestyle group exercise world

To find out who you are, answer the following questions:

- Which is your favourite type of person to train?
- What is your exercise experience? Dance, athletic, triathlons?
- What are your teaching strengths? You explain stuff well, you have fun, you’re enthusiastic etc.
- What “problems” would you love to solve? Weight loss, fitness, self-empowerment etc.

Now that you have done this, you can now think about how you would find those people. You can do this by completing the grid (Left).

Once you have done this, you can start to establish yourself as a local expert and promote yourself based on your strengths and the people that you want to train.

## Creating your elevator pitch

Once you have worked out what your teaching strengths are and who your ideal market is, you can now create your elevator pitch. This is you telling someone what you do in the time it takes to ride an elevator. The good thing about this is that it helps you to describe what you do with confidence and ease, and it helps other people spread the word about you.

To create your elevator pitch, use this simple formula: I help X with Y. Doing this exercise helps you focus on what your passion is but also your future training and education. For example:

**For my website:** I help group exercise instructors with choreography ideas, business strategies and tools to help them succeed.

**For my classes:** I help people intimidated by exercise to lose weight with fun, dance-inspired exercise.

**For my Ceroc classes:** I help non-dancers learn modern jive moves in a fun, relaxed atmosphere.

It is important for me to reiterate that although I am suggesting that you have a specific target market, it does not mean that you exclude everyone else. You have to earn a living. But you will be surprised that being known for a certain skill or target group seems to attract a lot more people, and also people that are curious to see what you have to offer. **fp**

Read part two next issue: E – becoming your town’s local Expert.

