

ACSM's

Resources for the Personal Trainer



AMERICAN COLLEGE
of SPORTS MEDICINE
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FIFTH EDITION



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Career Track for Personal Trainers

OBJECTIVES

Personal Trainers should be able to:

- Discuss common client expectations of a Personal Trainer.
- Examine potential career starting points and career paths.
- Highlight options for continuing education and career development.
- Examine expectations of a career as a Personal Trainer.



INTRODUCTION

The iconic Jack LaLanne was undoubtedly one of the first professional Personal Trainers to bring personal training to the masses through television. He created the identifiable persona as an expert and motivated millions of people to exercise through the power of television. He then parlayed that success into a 74-year career that spanned from health clubs to jump ropes and juicers.

Although popularized in the late 1970s with the advent of celebrity Personal Trainers for stars of movie screens and tennis courts, personal training gained notoriety as a stand-alone business through the work of pioneers in New York City and Hollywood, California. These pioneers founded personal training studios that provided personal training in 30- or 60-minute bouts of strength and endurance training. They catered to the elite, including movie stars, tennis pros, television news anchors, business leaders, and ballerinas. The personal approach to fitness was so successful that professional athletic teams employed strength coaches (leading to the formation of the National Strength and Conditioning Association [NSCA] in 1978). Movie stars hired Personal Trainers to work with them on location. Financial firms brought trainers in-house to push their corporate athletes.

At the same time, in health clubs, training facilities, gymnasiums, and sporting arenas around the world, people were seeing and feeling the benefits of having an educated and dedicated fitness professional (1). Personal training evolved into a career that was waiting to happen. A career that allowed exercise experts, cajoling coaches, tenacious teachers, and master motivators to make a living by guiding their clients to a specific set of goals and objectives that would eventually lead to a better body but more importantly, better health.



Client Expectations of a Personal Trainer

Most evaluations of service professionals utilize the concept of how the individual performs in relation to expectations. If Personal Trainers do not know what clients expect from them, it is virtually impossible to meet, no less exceed, those expectations. The following are categories and examples of reasonable client expectations. The scope and scale of the service-level agreement with the client should clearly describe goals and an acceptable “range of results.” Chapters throughout this book provide background and information on how to assist clients to achieve great results (Fig. 2.1).



FIGURE 2.1. A Personal Trainer and client meeting for the first time.

Know the Goal

As defined by James Prochaska's transtheoretical model of behavior change (5), personal-training clients typically arrive in the "action" stage (see Chapter 7 for more information on the stages of change, processes of change, and decisional balance). They have decided that they will take their

Goals can be discussed as part of the intake process and serve as a foundation for the development of objectives.

physical activity behaviors to a new level, and they are employing the Personal Trainer as the expert to guide them to their vision of success. This is an important assignment and a very difficult one. Implementing lasting behavior change is difficult even under the best circumstances.

Goals can be discussed as part of the intake process and serve as a foundation for the development of objectives. The contractual business agreement Personal Trainers make with their clients reflects these objectives regarding the following:

- Number of sessions
- Cost per session
- Length of session
- Unsupervised training requirements outside of each session
- Length of agreement
- Cancellation policies
- Refund policies
- Performance guarantees

For example, if the Personal Trainer is training a client to compete in a marathon, a schedule should be created in reverse from the day of the race to the start of the training. One-to-one sessions may be more frequent in the beginning, at critical mileage differentiators, at low points in the client's motivational cycle, or at other junctures in the training when both parties agree are appropriate. Training for a 20-lb weight reduction might require a very different, regimented schedule that includes nutritional check-ups, weigh-ins, and disciplined combinations of supervised high-intensity training with partially supervised aerobic exercise bouts. Each situation is determined by the goal. After maintaining the safety and well-being of the client, attainment of goals is the next top priority.

Many clients have a goal or set of goals in mind when they hire a Personal Trainer. Some come to a Personal Trainer with an unrealistic and unfounded expectation for what they can reasonably achieve in a defined period of time. The Personal Trainer must manage these expectations in a way that encourages the path to success and does not further distort already unhealthy images of what can be achieved, especially in the area of body image and weight loss. For a much broader and in-depth description of goal setting and the achievement of goals, please see Chapter 7.

By making goals measurable (clearly quantifiable), the Personal Trainer demonstrates having listened to the reason the clients have sought the assistance of a Personal Trainer. The clients' goals must be translated by the Personal Trainer into achievable objectives and outcomes. The outcomes are a way to measure success. It is important to acknowledge that goal setting and behavior change in general are dynamic processes that vary from client to client and even from day to day within

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each individual client. Setbacks should be anticipated, and Personal Trainers should work with clients to reevaluate training and take the opportunity to improve the client's program rather than to simply view a setback as a failure.

Another long-term objective related to the client's training goals is to enable clients to exercise independently. The underlying, unspoken question "When will you be able to maintain your goals without me?" is often not addressed. The long-term objective of Personal Trainers is to prepare their

clients for the day when they can successfully become their own “expert.” Good teachers teach their students to succeed without supervision. Good coaches teach players to perform successfully with little or no supervision as the player becomes his or her own coach. In many ways, Personal Trainers combine the characteristics of a good teacher and a good coach. Specifically, a Personal Trainer can bolster a client’s self-efficacy and provide them with a high level of mastery of skills regarding their exercise habits. For more information regarding self-efficacy and behavior change see Chapter 7.

Be Knowledgeable and Experienced

In 2002, commercial health club’s largest trade organization, The International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA) persuaded the industry into rethinking how Personal Trainers would be certified for the betterment of their careers and the safety of their clients. Faced with literally hundreds of certification options, Personal Trainers and their clients were unsure which certification processes were well-designed, unbiased, valid, and reliable. IHRSA, in concert with most of the certifying organizations, crafted a position statement in 2004. This statement recommended that by January 2006, member clubs hire only the Personal Trainers who hold certification from an organization that was in the process of obtaining third-party accreditation of its certification procedures and policies from an independent and nationally recognized accrediting body. The goal was to ensure that the certificate held by Personal Trainers accurately and appropriately measured their competence and provided the industry with a means toward improving the growing business of personal training. With the new standard of accredited certification taking hold, certifying agencies felt comfortable establishing the high school diploma (or its equivalent) and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)/automated external defibrillator (AED) training as the prerequisite for their entry-level personal training certificate (1) (Box 2.1).

Experience is meaningful if the Personal Trainer is successful in documenting the outcomes, acquiring references from employers and clients alike, and building a resume to a stated career objective.

Experience requires time that is well-spent. The process of discovering a specialty, obtaining a degree, completing internship hours for certification, performing volunteer work, and actual employment will provide the Personal Trainer with many professional opportunities. Experience is meaningful if the Personal Trainer is successful in documenting the outcomes, acquiring references from employers

and clients alike, and building a resume to a stated career objective. Sometimes, these experience-based opportunities require the Personal Trainer to work for little or no compensation and seek situations that may be outside of the typical comfort zone. For example, a Personal Trainer may lack experience working with an older population. However, the demographic trends point toward a larger number of clients who are older and who may possess orthopedic and metabolic conditions as a result of their age. Therefore, the Personal Trainer may search out opportunities to work in retirement homes or assisted living facilities as most offer exercise therapy for their residents. Many of these facilities feature well-equipped fitness centers with robust programming, giving the Personal Trainer an opportunity to gain valuable experience with this market segment.

Box 2.1

For More Information

For the most up-to-date list of accredited personal training certification programs, go to the Institute of Credentialing Excellence (ICE; <http://www.credentialingexcellence.org>) (3). Note that ICE was formerly the National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA).

Present a Clear and Concise Plan

Football coach Vince Lombardi once said, “Plan your work and work your plan.” A simple-sounding strategy but it conveys one of the most important qualities for success in the art and science of personal training. The pretraining assessment, screening, and goal discovery phase with a client provides the foundation for the exercise prescription.

Once the mode, frequency, duration, intensity, and general components (e.g., warm-up, flexibility, balance, agility, strength, endurance, aerobic power, specific skills, and cool-down) of the exercise prescription are determined, a written plan is presented to the client. The plan includes the exercise session date(s), primary goal(s) for each session, exercise mode, the order of exercises, the name of the exercises, duration (in repetitions, sets, exercise time), and intensities (target heart rate, rating of perceived exertion, amount of resistance).

The last line of each completed exercise prescription plan should be the Personal Trainer's signature. It is a sign that the Personal Trainer has developed the plan and has incorporated any pertinent observations, notes, adjustments, and comments from the client and the session for future reference. This can also be helpful in case another Personal Trainer works with that client in the future. More importantly, the signature reflects the work put forth by the Personal Trainer, similar to an artist signing a painting.

A good time to review the overall strategy and individual session plan with clients is during the warm-up phase, while they are walking on a treadmill or riding the bike. This is also an opportunity to get their general level of readiness for the day's exercises; check nutritional and hydration status; ask about any recent injuries, aches, or pains that may impact the plan; and set the stage for a great workout.

In addition to the exercise prescription, the Personal Trainer should include a communication plan; establish policies for late, cancelled, or abbreviated sessions; share health history data; communicate nutrition and hydration habits; and in general establish the ground rules for how the Personal Trainer and client will work together. Information on referring when needed is covered in Chapters 11 and 22.

Be Innovative, Creative, and Resourceful

Effective Personal Trainers demonstrate both innovation and creativity (1). An innovator is defined as one who continually introduces new methods and techniques. The personal training experience provides many opportunities for such innovation in ways that are simple to execute. Yet, it is imperative the Personal Trainer ensure the safety of any new methods and techniques before the use with clients. Safety of the client should be the most important aspect for any exercise prescribed.

Creativity is another behavioral trait of effective Personal Trainers. The opportunity for the Personal Trainer to be creative frequently comes when a piece of equipment or area of the

Box 2.2

Manual Resistance

One technique that seems to demonstrate creativity is when a Personal Trainer substitutes his or her strength to provide resistance to the client's exercise movement. This technique is called “manual resistance.” The client can push against a trainer, but a trainer should avoid pushing against a client. Another innovation is to manipulate speed of movement. Speed of contraction is as relevant a variable as reps, sets, and weight in the completion of a strength training exercise, so manipulating the speed of the pushing or pulling (or both) phases of a movement is an effective way to change the stimulus for the muscle complex and surprise the client in regard to his or her expectations of what action is coming next at the same time.



FIGURE 2.2. A Personal Trainer demonstrates the use of resistance bands.

facility is unexpectedly out of service. A creative Personal Trainer will always have a back-up exercise ready to accomplish a particular exercise objective. This is usually a substitution of a free-weight movement for a machine-based exercise or the same with a manual resistance exercise option (Box 2.2).

A competent Personal Trainer is also resourceful. Discovering new, cutting-edge equipment and adapting an ordinary device such as resistance bands to accommodate clients with orthopedic limitations convey to clients that the Personal Trainer is thinking about their goals well in advance (Fig. 2.2). Clients will see that the Personal Trainer is current with the profession and is always looking for the latest developments. Offering variety provides a level of stimulation that keeps the client engaged and less likely to be bored with the repetitive routine that exercise training can follow.

Educate

Good health is a lifelong journey. An important goal for any Personal Trainer is to teach clients the basic tenants of safe and effective physical activity so they can apply these principles for themselves and eventually teach others these same concepts. These concepts include the components of a complete workout, including warm-up and cool-down, flexibility/stretching, balance, agility, strength, endurance, and aerobic power. For example, when learning the progression of a properly designed program for developing muscular fitness, the client should learn progression from large muscle groups to small muscle groups. They should be familiar with the differences between pushing and pulling movements, proper breathing, effective stretching techniques, determination of exercise intensity (training heart rate, rating of perceived exertion or amount of resistance), various modes of exercise, and proper program progression (intensity, duration, and frequency of workouts) in accordance with established exercise goals. An appropriate and safe exercise mode is of importance to the effectiveness of a training session.

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A working knowledge of human anatomy, kinesiology, and physiology is essential for a Personal Trainer to describe what is happening inside the body through the bout of exercise. The ability to translate the science of exercise into terminology that the layman will understand is an important skill for Personal Trainers as they will work with a range of clients with varying backgrounds.

Effective Personal Trainers are patient, are prepared, know the knowledge level of their clients, provide handouts and background reading/research notes, and use questions to elicit thoughtful answers. These teaching techniques, when used effectively by the Personal Trainer, apply to facts, theories, and concepts (cognitive learning) and acquisitions of exercise movements (motor learning).

Box 2.3 For More Information

Simon Sinek describes in his video “Start with Why — How Great Leaders Inspire Action” (6) that although most people can deftly describe what they do and how they do it, the thorough conviction, the passion, and a “dream” of WHY a person became a Personal Trainer are what will really stand out to a potential client.

Inspire

For many people, exercising regularly at a level that will yield visible results is difficult. One of the reasons why personal training has been so popular is because of the customized, concentrated, safe, and effective elements that the person in the Personal Trainer role provides to the client.

Personal Trainers who have taken up the profession because of their personal, positive experience as a personal training client have a built-in story for inspiration. If they have overcome a physical challenge themselves, the empathy they can convey to clients who are in similar situations is also a very powerful source of inspiration for prospective clients and clients in training especially when the compassion is delivered at just the right moment of need (Box 2.3). This oftentimes happens when a client is stuck at a certain training level or cannot easily attain the goals they seek.

Each and every training client is motivated to succeed for very different reasons. Personal Trainers can take their time to discover what the driving force is for each client on an individual level and then customize the appropriate levers to accelerate this success. For example, some clients like the competitive challenge and respond to the desire to excel over and above others. The Personal Trainer could assemble a group of clients, categorized by sex, weight, and training experience and provide each member of the team with unique identifiers to protect each client's privacy (often referred to in experimental settings as blind coding). The Personal Trainer ranks the clients by a select category of performance, for example, a personal record (PR) on a bench press one repetition maximum (1-RM). At periodic intervals or when the client needs a “competitive” push, the Personal Trainer posts the team rankings and thus uses the client's internal competitive spirit as a motivator to work harder to achieve a new PR (Fig. 2.3). If the Personal Trainer knows that a client is motivated by competition, using a competitive game to leverage that knowledge and help that client succeed is an example of

how a trainer becomes personal. Individual enjoyment is especially employed in training programs that are long in term and duration. Mixing in specialty classes, team sports, individual sports, or partner sports can provide a welcome relief and a quick dose of motivation to endure and eventually succeed in the long-term training objective such as a triathlon, half marathon, or marathon. More about motivation and adherence is discussed later in Chapter 8.

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FIGURE 2.3. A Personal Trainer using a team ranking chart to show the client her latest position after the last posting of their personal record.



Focus

When it comes to personal training, one of the most important features of this service is individual attention. Undivided, undistracted, unencumbered, and eye-to-eye focus on their form, speed, posture, grip, stance, breathing, and even facial expressions may help differentiate an easy exercise from one that is pushing the client to the highest levels of exercise intensity.

Preparation is the first step in creating an environment, which indicates to the client that the Personal Trainer is focused. If the session is well-planned and the Personal Trainer has reviewed the elements and sequences, then there is no worry what will be done next, so the concentration can center on the client's performance. "Now and how" is a great mantra to replay as preparations are made mentally to launch each set of exercises for the client.

The Personal Trainer should set the ground rules for clients on distractions during the session. Alert clients that the Personal Trainer will not answer their questions while training another client. Personal Trainers should give clients their contact information (e.g., e-mail, phone number) so clients can easily contact them if they have questions. The client being trained should also be restricted from taking phone calls, texting, and checking e-mail, especially during key sets/reps in the training session.

The Personal Trainer should have charts, stop watches, small exercise equipment, towels, and water set up in advance so that stocking the training area during a workout is not necessary. This is part of the overall session preparation.

Clients want Personal Trainers to have a proactive awareness and be able to anticipate a client's needs. Hospitality will become a part of the unique selling proposition, the feature that makes individuals different from the competition and that provides added value (Box 2.4). In addition to hospitality, Personal Trainers can make their services distinctive by specializing in one or several niche markets (e.g., Personal Trainer who specializes in working with female triathletes). Creating unique markets within an overall business model can help to set on Personal Trainer apart from others.

Track and Recognize Progress

A Personal Trainer determines all the appropriate metrics of success for each and every individual client in the intake process. As described in the SMART goal concept (see Chapter 7 for more details), while establishing key success metrics, the Personal Trainer sets critical benchmarks used to evaluate whether or not the training programs are effective. These metrics are also used to motivate the client to forge ahead toward these very important goals. Clients are often after "big-impact" results (e.g., lose 20 lb [9 kg], reduce body fat by 7%, serve a tennis ball at 75 mph [121 kph], or hit a golf drive 275 yards [251.5 m]). The Personal Trainer's challenge is to lead clients toward their long-term goals through attainment of several smaller ones. The Personal Trainer's job is to make clients aware of the small advances they are achieving and how they all contribute toward their desired endpoint.

Simple charts and graphs are very effective in demonstrating client progress toward a desired goal. The simplest example of how this works is usually seen when working with clients who have a weight loss goal. Clients set weight loss goals that are too high and too fast. Safe and effective

Box 2.4

For More Information

To become an expert in hospitality, study service organizations that are best in delivering customer service. Hotels and internet retailers are two examples of organizations that thrive as a result of the highest standards when it comes to servicing their customers. Successful examples of organizations that have achieved legendary levels of customer service are well-documented in *The New Gold Standard* (4) and *Delivering Happiness: A Path to Profits, Passion and Purpose* (2).

Box 2.5**Client Spotlight**

Have a small budget for incentive rewards to use with your clients. Free training sessions, 30-minute massage gift certificates, training gear, a motivational or instructional book, and training diaries are all effective rewards. Regardless, your recognition of their accomplishments is the most effective strategy.

weight loss strategies typically recommend 1–2 lb (0.5–1 kg) of weight loss per week, although this can vary depending on the initial body weight of the client. If a client wants to lose 20 lb (9 kg), this may take up to 20 weeks and that does not account for any muscle weight gain that may occur as a result of the training regimen. Twenty weeks equals 5 months. Because clients read advertisements on the Internet and listen to late night television that claims weight loss of 20 lb (9 kg) in 1 month without exercise, getting clients to acknowledge a 5-month wait for a weight-loss goal is a challenge. Educate clients on the safety of slow weight loss and chart their weight weekly or every other week on the same day to display slow and steady progress and keep the client focused and motivated that the long-range goal is in sight, one small step at a time.

Recognition and positive reinforcement is also part of the Personal Trainer's responsibilities and expectations. The Personal Trainer has to respond and react to clients when they do their job as well. Keep them motivated by pointing out their successes and accomplishments, whether small or large, that they may overlook in order to bolster self-efficacy. Establish a pattern of noting PRs for critical exercises. Set rituals for recording and then celebrating the big accomplishments such as losing not only the first 10 lb (4.5 kg) but the second 2 lb (1 kg) as well (Box 2.5).



Where Do I Start My Career?

Background

The prerequisites for employment will depend on the employer, job description, and types of clients' serviced while performing the scope of work. Many employers in commercial health clubs expect a personal training certificate from an accredited organization. *ACSM's Health/Fitness Facility Standards and Guidelines* indicates that facilities should hire trainers with demonstrable competence as evidenced by, among others, holding certification from a recognized organization. Facilities (*e.g.*, medical wellness centers and rehabilitation clinics) that serve clients with multiple risk factors and orthopedic limitations typically require both a degree (graduate or undergraduate) in a health- or fitness-related field *and* a certificate that is related to their scope of responsibilities.

First Find Your “Why”

Most trainers start their careers as a result of personal experience, direct or related. Trainers with direct experience include the athlete who has been positively affected by a coach, Personal Trainer, teacher, or even a highly regimented and effective self-imposed routine. They can be sport athletes on any level, cosmetic athletes who are performing a total body makeover, or corporate athletes who are sold on the concept that their bodies are as important as their minds for success in their business pursuits. The success and even the disappointing failure of those experiences serve as a catalyst for the future as a Personal Trainer. Someone who works in the health, fitness, or medical field as an allied professional (*e.g.*, registered dietitian, physical therapist, clinical exercise physiologist, athletic trainer, licensed massage therapist, occupational therapist, and physical therapy aide) or a support person (*e.g.*, receptionist, maintenance person, membership sales person, or administrator, such as

operations manager, office assistant, bookkeeper, accountant, or human resources administrator) can also use their proximity to and familiarity with the personal training profession as a springboard to their entrance as a career Personal Trainer.

Personal Trainers face a challenging profession, including long hours, starting early in the morning and extending into the evening; focusing attention on individual clients and their needs for 45 minutes at a time and more than 8–10 clients per day; hours of reading, researching, and attending webinars and conferences; and keeping in a healthy physical condition required to meet the demands of training and to serve as a positive role model for current and prospective clients. Understanding why this career is appealing is the first step. After uncovering the compelling “WHY” for entering a personal training career, the next strategy is to get ready for the first experiences in the field training clients. The most effective strategy is multidimensional, and although occurring at the same time, the degree of emphasis depends on the personal life stage, budget, and time constraints of the Personal Trainer.

Next: Start Your “How”

The next steps include certification as well as finding a mentor.

Certification

Start by identifying two to three accredited certification programs and do some background research on each.

1. Do you meet their eligibility requirements?
2. Are their fees within your budget?
3. Are the logistics required to obtain their certification reasonable for you to achieve (*e.g.*, travel, Internet access, time, internship requirements)?
4. Does the certification match with your prospective field of training specialty or is it a general Personal Trainer certificate?

Whether working for a national health and fitness chain, a specialty franchise, a small privately held studio, or opening up a private practice, attaining certification is the most important first step to be accomplished.

Whether working for a national health and fitness chain, a specialty franchise, a small privately held studio, or opening up a private practice, attaining certification is the most important first step to be accomplished. When applying for a personal training position, it is important to ask if the employer requires a particular certification. The requirements may have been established based on the certifications held by

the employer or those recommended to him or her by others in the industry.

What if you are already certified? Make sure that the certification is current as most require some level of documented continuing education. Next, make sure that the certification matches the requirements of the job openings. Many certifying agencies are offering multiple levels of certification with subspecialties in weight management, wellness coaching, health coaching, and behavior change. Great Personal Trainers are lifelong learners. They adapt to the need of the clients in the markets they serve, and they make sure to be current with the techniques required to serve those clients safely and effectively. Lastly, remember that most personal training facilities require a CPR/AED certification in order to train clients.

Find a Mentor

A mentor invests time, energy, and personal experience into another’s career development. Find a mentor that most closely matches the background and experiences needed. It is in the best interest of an effective Personal Trainer to have a mentor who has been in the business of personal training.

The mentor can provide a Personal Trainer with the guidance necessary to avoid both training and business mistakes. Make sure that expectations from a mentor are clearly defined, including the estimated time required, right from the beginning. Find a mentor who is working with the types of clients in your preferred Personal Trainer practice specialty, although a signed nonsolicitation agreement with them, if their business is within your catchment area, may be required. One hour every 2 weeks is a reasonable amount of time to ask from a mentor and make sure that questions are written in advance and that plenty of time to respond to the inquiries is provided. In today's electronic communication environment, mentorships can be accomplished effectively via text and e-mail. This capability greatly expands the universe of prospective mentors.



What Are Some Examples of Rewarding Career Paths?

There so are many types of clients, working venues, schedules, and unique opportunities in the personal training field today that a Personal Trainer can extend a career over many years and even more geographies. The next logical step in a career path, especially if working in an environment that employs many other personal training professionals, is personal training management. This path generally can consist of two distinct elements: administration and clinical. Administration requires a Personal Trainer to hire staff, manage and evaluate performance, set schedules and policies, interface with clients, and oversee the sales and financial performance of a personal training department. On the clinical path, Personal Trainers with specialty expertise (e.g., yoga, Pilates, sports-specific training) are often responsible for the education, certification, and programming in specific areas.

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In these situations, a Personal Trainer may be required to evaluate staff's clinical capabilities and even deliver (or at a minimum coordinate) the continuing education curriculum for the team. Depending on the size of the organization, these roles may be combined proportionally to individual expertise.

Although Personal Trainers work as commissioned employees in some commercial health and fitness centers, they may also serve as independent contractors. As a result, Personal Trainers may seek the career path of an entrepreneur. Being your own boss is rewarding and has many advantages, but it also has challenges and responsibilities. Of course, the easiest way to this path is to train clients privately in public facilities, in their own homes, or even your own home gym.

To minimize some of the risks of entrepreneurship, Personal Trainers can explore the option to become franchisees. Entering into a contract with a franchise has many branding, marketing, and operating advantages, but they come with a cost and commitment to the franchise. Good legal advice is always recommended when considering this career path.

The boldest entrepreneur opens up his or her own personal training business. Finding, renting, and renovating or, alternatively, buying the land and then building the physical location are obviously the most expensive journeys on this career path. Searching the newspaper or on the Internet for an existing business to buy and place under management is also an option worth exploring and may even come with a built-in client base.

Personal Trainers can also seek to set up a business inside another service facility such as a commercial health and fitness center, spa, medical office, hospital wellness center, salon, nutritional consultation practice, or physical therapy practice. They most likely have clients in need of a Personal Trainer's service, locker/shower rooms, equipment, and a comfortable operating environment so the Personal Trainer can focus on building a business.

In every case, the Personal Trainer who is going to create a new business needs a very capable team of real estate agents, lawyers, construction professionals, accountants, information technology

professionals, and sales and marketing consultants and a high tolerance for risk. Risk decreases and reward increases in proportion to every celebrity or professional athlete that a Personal Trainer has on a client list. It also helps to have approximately 30% more startup cash on hand than the most conservative estimate (1).

Career paths for Personal Trainers can also take very successful detours down the related professional paths requiring higher levels of education. Personal Trainers who have an interest in clinical work and who are academically inclined enter the allied health professions. The careers most closely aligned with personal training are physical therapy assistants, health promotion professionals, nutritional counselors, and health/wellness coaches. Other potential allied health professional paths include physician assistants, nurses, occupational therapists, clinical exercise physiologists, and physical therapists. Most allied health careers require an advanced degree, additional certifications, a state license, and/or extensive internship hours.



What Are My Best Options for Continuing Education and Career Development?

The best way to a long, successful, and fulfilling career is to establish a disciplined strategy for reading, research, clinics, conferences, conventions, and course work right from the beginning.

Reading and Research

The Personal Trainer must consistently read professional journals to stay current on the research in the field. The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) has several publications that will provide a wide range of information, from the more practical in their *Health & Fitness Journal* to the newly launched *Translational Journal of the American College of Sports Medicine* and the latest peer-reviewed research published in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*. The *American Journal of Health Promotion* publishes an excellent peer-reviewed research journal every 2 months that is focused on health and wellness. The Institute for Health and Productivity Management publishes a quarterly journal that explores the effect of health on all aspects of employee productivity. Most professional organizations (e.g., International Dance and Exercise Association [IDEA], the American Council on Exercise [ACE], IHRSA, the National Academy of Sports Medicine [NASM], ACSM, the National Business Group on Health [NBGH], NSCA) offer frequently updated electronic publications including newsletters, articles, blogs, and national professional organization position papers (Box 2.6). Access to information varies for members and nonmembers. Many very reputable publications and organizations will provide quick and easy access to their latest articles via Twitter. The Harvard Business Review and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are two examples of organizations that will deliver information to a smart phone.

Box 2.6

For More Information

Learn how to use the U.S. National Library of Medicine's PubMed at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/>. This free resource comprises more than 20 million citations for biomedical literature from MEDLINE, life science journals, and online books. Citations may include links to full-text content from PubMed Central and publisher Web sites. The resource also provides updates of the latest research by keyword to e-mail accounts.

Clinics, Conferences, and Conventions

There are many opportunities on the local, regional, national, and international level to attend (in person and virtually) educational sessions held over a one-to-several-day format, sponsored by professional membership organizations, certifying agencies, suppliers, customers, government agencies, and academic institutions. Membership in a relevant professional organization such as ACSM or a trade association such as IHRSA allows you to stay informed about these opportunities. Annual conferences or conventions typically provide a broad curriculum, including keynote speakers, poster presentations of research studies, topical lectures and demonstrations, and supplier trade shows to showcase products/services/software and networking/recruiting opportunities. Regional clinics are shorter in duration (from 1 h to 1 d) and are typically focused on a specific issue or topic. Many are available via teleconference, using WebEx and Skype platforms.

Coursework

The first place to look for continuing education opportunities is the employer. Today, almost every organization has an internal training department that offers formal and informal courses that assist in performing day-to-day responsibilities and also to prepare for advancement within the company. In conjunction with maintaining a professional certification, certifying agencies require continuing educational credits (CECs). To achieve the required CECs, the agencies, either directly or through affiliated suppliers, offer courses that upon completion award CECs. Identifying, planning, and scheduling the courses needed to receive the number of CECs required to maintain (or attain) a certification is the most efficient path to follow for coursework.

Specialty courses are also available from schools and organizations that specialize in continuing education like IDEA, ACE, and the Cooper Clinic, and even some suppliers like Nike, Adidas, and Cybex (exercise equipment). For subject matter outside of the health and fitness disciplines, continuing education courses can be found at local colleges and universities, commercial organizations that offer education.

What Can I Expect from a Career as a Personal Trainer?

The evolution of personal training as a career has been very rapid and dynamic. With less than 30 years of existence in the modern day, the profession experienced a major change for the better with the requirement of accredited certification. This requirement has drastically changed what a professional must expect as a result of pursuing personal training career. The increased requirements of certification have promoted a “better” (more qualified) Personal Trainer who can provide a safe and improved experience for clients. Although national certification has helped, there are only a few states that have attempted to mandate certification or licensing requirements. This can often be frustrating for the certified trainer if competing for positions with others without certifications.

The Satisfaction of Seeing Healthy Results

Working with a Personal Trainer has always provided clients with quicker and more effective results (1). The most satisfying part of this career is that the Personal Trainer gets to see and be an integral part of positively affecting the clients' health. Client responses vary depending on initial fitness and individual goals; structuring a regular exercise routine can promote higher energy levels, increased levels of aerobic capacity, flexibility, and muscular fitness.

Exceeding Client Expectations

The opening chapter objective delineated in detail what clients expect from a Personal Trainer. Realize these are the baseline expectations. Clients will want the Personal Trainer, and the trainer should aspire, to exceed these expectations.

If a Personal Trainer is successful in knowing the clients' goals, the likelihood of success for the client increases. Fine-tuning the program in relation to the actual results will have the most significant impact on the real reason for using a Personal Trainer in the first place—efficient, effective, and relevant attainment of individual goals. The more a Personal Trainer works with a particular client and understands the client's readiness to change and ability levels, the greater will be the potential to inspire and motivate the client.

Planning exercise sessions and documenting workouts are minimum expectations. Charting and graphing results and using them as motivational and educational presentations to clients are a plus. Expect to work long hours at either ends of the day (morning and evening). Most clients train either before the start of their work day or after. Weekends are popular as well. Some markets can be contained to a normal daily schedule but will always mirror the peak usage times for a health and fitness facility, fitness center, or other training facility.

Entering the World of Lifelong Learning

As a certified Personal Trainer, a higher level of education is now expected. This will require that the Personal Trainer devote much more time and effort into reading, research, and continuing education. The Personal Trainer will be expected to put this time in on a regular basis. As summarized earlier in this chapter, reading and research can take considerable time. The Personal Trainer should plan on attending at least one major conference every year or every other year at a minimum. This is a 2- to 4-day commitment away from clients, and travel, hotel, meals, and registration expenses need to be included in the annual budget. Local conferences are an option minimizing travel and eliminating some other related expenses. The Personal Trainer will have to maintain a certification, and this will require a minimum amount of course work to obtain the necessary CECs.

SUMMARY

Personal training is now well established as a viable professional career option for those interested in helping clients experience healthy results efficiently and effectively. The Personal Trainer's job description is based on a foundation of expertise that is relevant to the client's goals and on the ability to exceed the client's service expectations. Successful Personal Trainers combine the qualities of a good teacher with those of a good coach. Gaining certification and eliciting the assistance of a mentor are two important first steps. These steps are best achieved concurrently. Fortunately, the most rewarding aspect of embarking on a personal training career is the act of personal training itself. The personal satisfaction that comes with empowering clients to achieve their health goals is well worth the effort and hours required to stay up on the latest research and plan the most effective exercise prescriptions. A personal training career requires a strategy of lifelong learning combined with the rigors of facilitating individual behavior change.

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