

CREATING A CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

by Chantal Laporte

Excellence: *Very great merit, quality or ability. (The New Webster's Dictionary.)*

The part that is not mentioned in any definition of excellence is our infinite quest for it. Facilities and individuals strive for it, yet 'excellence' remains difficult to achieve. Careful program planning and proper staff training, however, are key components in helping you and your team, turn a facility into a 'center of excellence'.

PROGRAM PLANNING AND PROGRAM EVALUATION:

Some of the factors that influence your program schedule are more obvious than others. Demographics, pool size and type, and number of certified instructors are some of the factors to consider when planning an aquafitness program or simply changing some of the classes on offer.

Also, look at other programs and consider the current trends. The fitness industry is rapidly evolving and disciplines such as Yoga, Tai Chi, dancing, and boxing are 'begging to be incorporated into fitness programs' as they arrive on the scene. Once you have completed research and compiled all the necessary information, list specific target markets, program and schedule options that may suit the facility.

ADDING SPICE TO YOUR SCHEDULE:

Take the time to speak to the participants and instructors at your facility, and find out how they feel about the current schedule in terms of meeting their needs and keeping them motivated to come back for more.

ATTRACTING PEOPLE TO YOUR POOL:

Add the concept of cross-training to your schedule and educate 'land-based' fitness members about the benefits of aquafitness programs. Plan a CALA Water Running and Aqua Jogging class designed for the running group, a CALA Liquid Muscle class for the weight-room users, or a CALA Aqua Spinning class for the cycling clients, and prepare to advertise the new programs.

TAKING STEPS TO ENSURE A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM:

Start investing in your greatest strength: your team of certified instructors. Their face to face contact with members gives them a wealth of knowledge about participants' needs. When adding or changing classes, keep your team of leaders motivated by encouraging them to take part in the decision-making process.

Some instructors might be interested in teaching a new type of class, and will immediately take up the challenge.

Investing in your instructors also involves giving them the training they need to teach a variety of class types — and to do it well. Arrange for instructors to meet at least twice a year to discuss trends, schedules, safety and other current issues. Follow these meetings with a Master Class, taught by a different instructor or a team of instructors, each time: the instructors will get to experience a variety of teaching styles and techniques. They will also notice the strengths and get to know their fellow instructors. This type of interaction will solidify your leadership team.

INSTRUCTOR EVALUATIONS AND STAFF TRAINING:

Evaluations ensure that instructors maintain a high level of skill and safety. Participants expect a CALA Liquid Muscle class to be a CALA Liquid Muscle class — no matter who is leading the workout. The instructor's teaching style and personality may be different, but the components of the class are similar. This criteria can be met by offering a training session on that particular topic or by setting up a mock lesson plan. Take the time to watch a full class, and offer the instructor in-depth one-to-one feedback. Show you care and value their contribution to the team.

**"A COMPANY IS ONLY AS GOOD
AS ITS EMPLOYEES."**

If we focus on the needs of the individuals, success is bound to follow. With careful program planning, a good communication and feedback system and a solid training plan, excellence is attainable.

Join me and a panel of experts as we discuss some of our techniques for keeping participants and instructors motivated, and take you through successes and challenges we have encountered in our own search to build a 'centre of excellence' at our facility.

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