

Fitness & Wellness Franchise Outlook Report 2023



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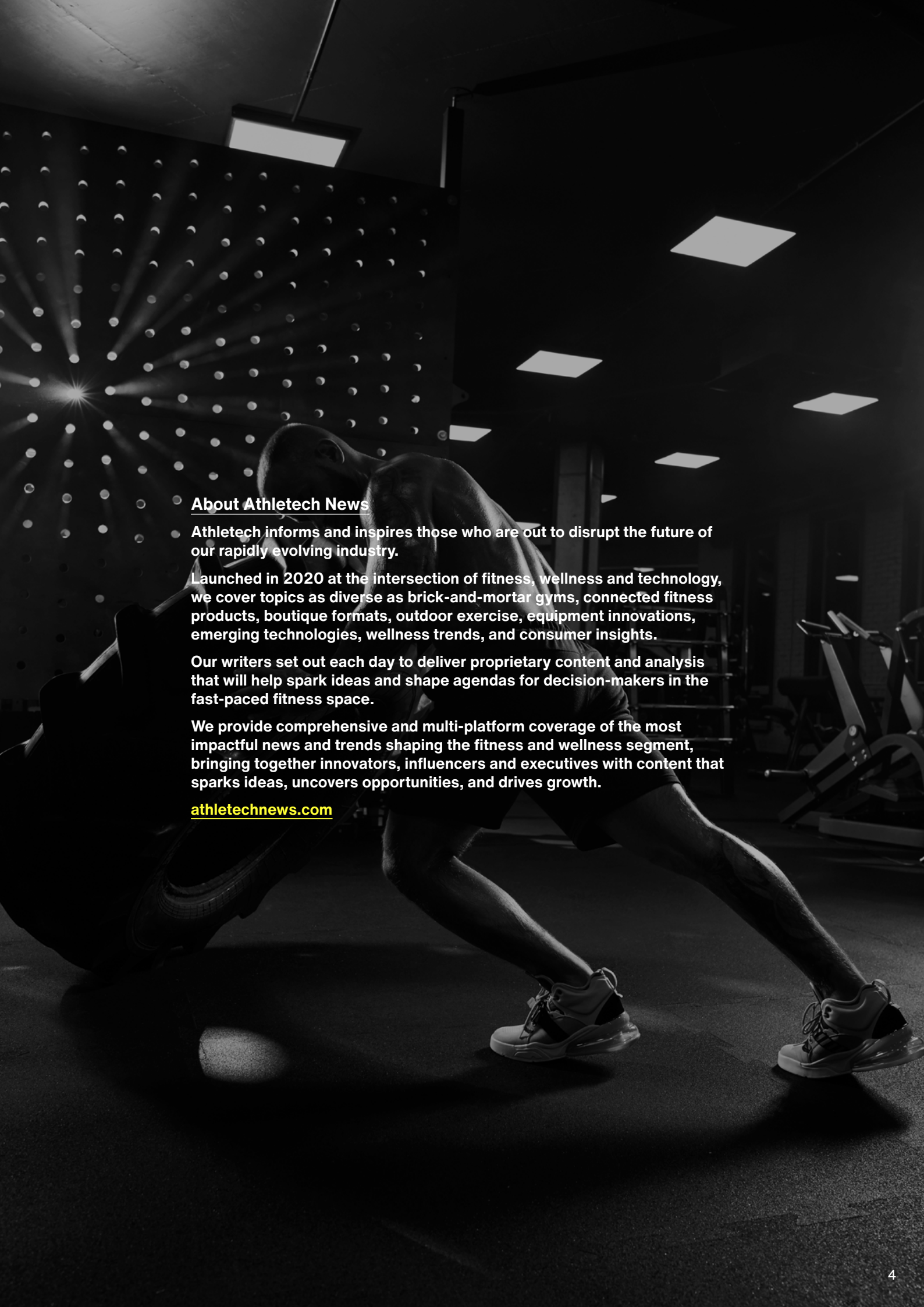
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About Athletech News

Athletech informs and inspires those who are out to disrupt the future of our rapidly evolving industry.

Launched in 2020 at the intersection of fitness, wellness and technology, we cover topics as diverse as brick-and-mortar gyms, connected fitness products, boutique formats, outdoor exercise, equipment innovations, emerging technologies, wellness trends, and consumer insights.

Our writers set out each day to deliver proprietary content and analysis that will help spark ideas and shape agendas for decision-makers in the fast-paced fitness space.

We provide comprehensive and multi-platform coverage of the most impactful news and trends shaping the fitness and wellness segment, bringing together innovators, influencers and executives with content that sparks ideas, uncovers opportunities, and drives growth.

athletechnews.com

Letter From The Editor



Dear Reader,

For Athletech's inaugural Fitness & Wellness Franchising Outlook report, we take a deep dive into what is still the lifeblood of this industry, the dynamic business of franchising, where innovators and entrepreneurs shape how, when and where individuals pursue their health and fitness goals, and what tools are available to them on their journeys.

We've had the privilege of speaking with CEOs and high-level executives from the top fitness and wellness franchises in the world, along with founders who are injecting new life into the industry – and making the established players get creative – with new takes on working out and what it means to be healthy. We also spoke with high-earning franchisees about what makes them successful in a notoriously competitive area.

Read more to learn how top boutique fitness brands like Xponential Fitness are driving growth, how gym chains like Crunch Fitness are re-thinking real estate amid post-pandemic retail challenges and how new, innovative brands like Pvolve, Restore Hyper Wellness and MADabolic are bursting onto the scene and expanding across the country.

We hope you'll come away from this report armed with a better understanding not only of where the big fitness and wellness franchising opportunities are today for your organization but also where the white space will be in 5 to 10 years as the industry changes and society evolves.

Be hungry and stay committed,

Josh Liberatore



Photo courtesy of OutFit Training

TRX Founder Randy Hetrick Has Big Plans for OutFit Training

By Josh Liberatore

Randy Hetrick knows a good fitness business opportunity when he sees one. He also knows how to build a company from the ground up.

Hetrick, a former Navy SEAL who started TRX from his garage and turned it into a functional equipment giant, believes he's found the next big white space in the fitness market: outdoor workouts enabled by modern tech.

A couple of years ago, Hetrick started OutFit Training, a concept that offers interval-style strength training workouts led by expert instructors, all staged out of vans parked in the great outdoors and packed with TRX functional training gear, flat-screen TVs and thumping sound systems.

"Think of OutFit as a world-class gym on wheels," Hetrick tells Athletech News about his new company, which just started franchising. "Each unit has enough equipment to train up to 100 people at a time, although most classes are similar to other group

fitness classes, so around 15 to 25 participants."

An Idea Long in the Works

Hetrick first got the idea to start a mobile outdoor fitness company around a decade ago, when he was still running TRX. Around that time, the equipment maker did a brand activation called "TRX On Tour" in which trainers drove a van around the country and conducted outdoor group fitness classes to promote TRX products and workouts.

"Every time we ran it, we had people coming up asking us if they could work on one of the TRX On Tour units or asking if it was a franchise," Hetrick recalls. "I was really intrigued by the opportunity, but if you think back 10 years ago, there was none of the tech that would be required to scale that kind of business."

Over the next decade, as direct-to-consumer apps proliferated and business software became ever more

impressive, Hetrick grew convinced that technology was advanced enough for him to run and scale his outdoor training idea.

When the pandemic came and caused outdoor fitness to become more popular than ever, Hetrick knew the timing was finally right to go all-in. He created OutFit in 2021 and spent much of that year forming a team and building out all of the assets needed to launch the business to the public, including, most notably, a highly sophisticated tech stack. OutFit's secret sauce is its sleek and functional consumer-facing app, which allows customers to find a training van in their area, book classes and browse workouts all on their smartphone.

"If you think about OutFit's tech, it's kind of a mashup of the capabilities of a rideshare service like Uber – that's the geolocation and mapping piece – and also something like Mindbody where you have online registration, scheduling and billing," Hetrick explains. "We've (also) brought some social engagement features into our app, although we're in the early stages of personalization."

OutFit plans to add features to its app including gamification, status rewards and the ability for users to look back at their workout history.

Proof of Concept

With the tech in place, OutFit went live in the South Florida area in 2022, launching a corporate-owned fleet of vans to test its outdoor training concept before opening it up for franchise sales.

"My feeling after having been in the industry for a long time is you can't be a great franchisor until you've been a franchisee and eaten your own dog food," Hetrick explains. "We ran the corporate market for about 18 months and it's been great, we have unbelievable subscription metrics. Our members are crazy about the service."

Encouraged by that success, OutFit started selling franchise licenses at the beginning of Q2 of this year, so it's still early days for the brand. Hetrick shared that OutFit recently sold its first multi-unit deal to a group in Atlanta and has several other agreements in the pipeline, including one with a group in Northern California.

The early success comes despite OutFit having yet to spend any money on marketing.

"I'm looking forward to ramping up our marketing spend as we begin to scale," Hetrick says.

OutFit's chief selling point to consumers is that it's an affordable way to engage in group fitness classes or personal training sessions in an outdoor setting while being coached by top instructors. OutFit's signature membership option features unlimited group classes for just \$100 a month.

"You could come 30 times if you wanted to and pay \$3.50 a class for expertly coached outdoor boutique group fitness," Hetrick notes. "Even if you only come a few times a week, you're looking at something under 10 bucks in class, which is pretty phenomenal for a boutique experience."



Photo courtesy of OutFit Training

“Most of the groups that own fitness franchises are investor groups with pooled capital from LPs. There's nothing wrong with that, and we certainly expect that we'll have some of those in our system. But I started TRX out of my garage after a career as a SEAL with no money, so I have a real affection and respect for entrepreneurs that want to build businesses for themselves and their families.”

— Randy Hetrick, Founder, OutFit Training & TRX



Photo courtesy of OutFit Training

OutFit also offers more expensive private memberships for small group training and personal training classes. It further offers a “custom” service where large groups like businesses, schools and sports teams can essentially rent out a van and engage in a workout of their choosing.

Accessible for Franchisees

For franchisees, OutFit is a relatively low-cost way to own a fitness business. Franchisees can get started with their own OutFit van for a total buy-in of less than \$100,000. That’s far cheaper than the start-up costs for most boutique fitness brands, which can stretch into the many hundreds of thousands and even top \$1 million.

Due to OutFit’s low-cost model, Hetrick anticipates that many of the company’s franchisees will be fitness professionals and/or veterans, who are often entrepreneurial but are usually priced out of modern-day fitness businesses.

“Most of the groups that own fitness franchises are investor groups with pooled capital from LPs,” Hetrick says. “There’s nothing wrong with that, and we certainly expect that we’ll have some of those in our system. But I started TRX out of my garage after a career as a SEAL with no money, so I have a real affection and respect for entrepreneurs that want to build businesses for themselves and their families.”

OutFit projects that each van has the potential to do around \$400,000 in top-line revenue a year, which would allow franchisees to quickly break even and start earning a profit given the low initial buy-in and what Hetrick says are relatively low operating costs.

“The economics are pretty incredible because the expenses are so low from buy-in to your monthly operating expenses,” he says. “It’s a relatively low-risk deployment of capital, rapid breakeven and then you’re investing in a unit that has impressive revenue potential.”

Another important aspect of OutFit’s mission as a

brand is to give back. Taking a page out of the TRX playbook – the functional equipment brand offers discounts and other deals for active and former military members – OutFit will offer free memberships for first responders and their families.

“It’s an organic, authentic way to get members of the police service, fire service and EMT out there working out with the citizens in the communities they serve,” Hetrick says. “It’s something we think is pretty special and we’re excited to continue it as we scale.”

As it looks to scale, OutFit plans to focus on growing its franchise footprint in the Southern and Western parts of the U.S. (and potentially Canada) for at least the next few years, where the climate is more hospitable to doing outdoor fitness year-round.

That’s not to say OutFit won’t ever expand to the Northeast and Midwest, but snow-heavy locales aren’t in the cards just yet.

“We’re going to start with everything south of the Mason-Dixon Line and then look north on the Western side of the country,” Hetrick says. “There’s a couple hundred million people in that area, so you can build a decent-sized business on that.”



Photo courtesy of OutFit Training

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Photo courtesy of Xponential Fitness

1:1 With Xponential Fitness President Sarah Luna

By Courtney Rehfeldt

Following two significant announcements during its recent Analyst and Investor Day, Xponential Fitness is amped over what's ahead, with the boutique fitness franchisor issuing new three-year operating targets that include opening 500 new studios and hitting \$405 million in revenue.

Sarah Luna, President of Xponential since 2021, spoke with Athletech News about what lies ahead for the company, including whether it intends to acquire another boutique fitness brand and its impressive international expansion efforts. Luna also touched on Xponential's recent collaborations with social media maven Gary Vaynerchuk and corporate wellness platform Gympass.

Post-Pandemic Rise of Boutique Fitness

Fitness consumers are eager to connect in a post-pandemic environment, seeking experiences, becoming more engaged in their communities and visiting Xponential's facilities. Connection is part of the allure of a boutique fitness experience, which often emphasizes community and is an atmosphere that Xponential has worked to refine.

"We just continue to see a really strong appetite for community, and that's one of our value propositions," Luna said.

In 2024, Luna forecasts that the current enthusiasm for connection will continue, with consumers looking for opportunities for community-building rather than following a specific fitness trend.

"I don't know necessarily that there is excitement over one particular modality versus the other, but I do know that people will continue to seek a fulfilling place to spend time – they can find that in our studios," she said.

The broader shift toward fitness and well-being is working in Xponential's favor, with consumers embracing healthy habits as part of their identity now more than ever before.

"You see t-shirts all the time that say, 'I work out, I sleep, I eat, I work out,'" Luna points out, adding that having a gym or fitness membership has become incorporated into the everyday life of a growing number of consumers, as much as going to school

or work — which is good news for Xponential. The company currently has over 690,000 members, a 55% increase since 2021.

“It’s a part of people’s daily lives,” Luna said of fitness. “And it’ll just continue to get stronger, especially as



Photo courtesy of Xponential Fitness

we continue to grow our footprint.”

Will Xponential Acquire Another Brand?

Although Xponential currently has ten boutique fitness brands in its portfolio, acquiring an eleventh or twelfth brand is something that the fitness franchisor talks about “all the time,” Luna revealed.

“Throughout COVID, we were able to be opportunistic and keep eyes on many different modalities,” she reflected. “There’s a lot that goes into acquisition decisions, but essentially it boils down to the right time, right place, right economics...and then, of course, the right fit for Xponential — and sometimes you don’t get all of those things to line up perfectly. But at the end of the day, we’ve got our eyes on a lot of different modalities and a lot of different opportunities.”

While Xponential has been focused on fitness, the boutique franchisor is intrigued by the blossoming wellness sector, with Luna confirming that Xponential has had conversations with various companies.

“We already have StretchLab, which has done very, very well for us,” she said. “We are entertaining ideas of how we broaden our portfolio to go a little bit more into the wellness category and what that would look like.”

Why Franchisees Trust Xponential

One area that Xponential says sets it apart from its competitors is its relationship with its franchisees and the support infrastructure the company has set up for them.

“I think the support that we provide our franchisees is second to none,” Luna said. “I owned a franchise in a different concept, so I’ve seen firsthand what other franchisors are offering. When we work on franchisor

panels or we go to different trade events and swap stories on best practices — we’re always a leader.” Luna also credits franchisees for providing a polished experience for members with a ‘white glove’ approach to service that includes great talent, clean facilities and exceptional customer service.

“Our franchisees are continuing to toe this line of being best in class, not only in boutique fitness but all things that roll up to a boutique fitness experience,” she said. “It’s not just having a great product, but it’s every step of the way that we touch the customer, that we interact with the customer that we continue to be top notch.”

The Power of Gary Vee

Xponential recently tapped entrepreneur and social media star Gary Vaynerchuk’s media agency to oversee its marketing and content efforts across all of its ten brands. The deal will see Vaynerchuk directly lead Xponential’s marketing plans effective October 1, 2023.



Photo courtesy of Xponential Fitness

“ We already have StretchLab, which has done very, very well for us. We are entertaining ideas of how we broaden our portfolio to go a little bit more into the wellness category and what that would look like.”

— Sarah Luna, President, Xponential Fitness

“He did an incredible job on Wednesday,” Luna said of Vaynerchuk, who spoke at Xponential’s Analyst and Investor Day on September 6. “What I loved about what he reiterated was the fact that his team is going to be looking at digital marketing and consumer trends on a daily basis.”

As Luna explained, many professionals who are welcomed into the Xponential franchise family come from various backgrounds, with some learning about marketing, networking and grassroots efforts for the first time.

Although Luna says Xponential’s teams do an excellent job of educating franchisees on the importance of marketing, Vaynerchuk’s expertise will enable the boutique fitness franchisor to concentrate on supporting franchisees in other areas.

“What Gary’s team will bring to the table is that they’ll be able to single-handedly focus just on using digital marketing to acquire new leads, and that’s what they’ll be thinking about each and every day,” Luna shared.

Behind the Gympass Deal

As corporate wellness becomes a major part of the employee experience, Xponential also announced last week that it has partnered with Gympass to further solidify its position as a fitness and wellness leader.

“It’s the right time and it’s the right deal to do and to bring to our franchise partners,” Luna said of the Gympass partnership. “And it just makes sense as we continue to open 500 studios on a yearly basis. That will continue to enable us to be the dominant player for boutique fitness.”

The post-pandemic hybrid work models are favorable to Xponential’s ambitions.

“Most employers have to offer all of their employees the exact same benefits and experience whether they’re remote or they’re in-office,” Luna pointed out. “What you saw before COVID (because everyone was in-office) was that corporations could do small-scale deals with maybe a five-unit gym or a local operator because they knew that all of their employees were in the area and would have equal access.”

Now, with more national and global companies adopting a hybrid or semi-remote model, Xponential can offer a full portfolio of fitness and wellness offerings, ensuring that there is something for everyone.

“Employees can now choose whether they want to do yoga, Pilates or cycling, and don’t all have to love one particular modality,” said Luna. “That’s ultimately what we bring to Gympass and what we’re going to further bring to corporate employees as well.”



Photo courtesy of Xponential Fitness

B2B Partnerships Are a Key Focus

Xponential has had success with numerous B2B partnerships, forging deals with brands including Perfect Bar, LA Fitness, Princess Cruises, LG, Aktiv, Celsius and Territory, all of which are designed to attract new members and increase brand awareness.

It’s an area Xponential will undoubtedly continue to tap into as it looks to the future.

“We’re in conversations and we have a huge lead list of companies that we’re talking to,” Luna confirmed. “We’ve already filled out our domestic aggregator partnerships. In terms of where our focus and our attention is going to be, it’ll be on finding products or services that are like-minded and would fit naturally into our offerings to bring additional benefit to our end consumer.”

International Expansion Plans

As Xponential celebrates domestic success, it’s also steadily focused on international expansion, with Australia, Europe and Japan identified as key, emerging markets.

“I think that international expansion often gets a little lost on some people, but it’s kind of like this growing snowball,” Luna said. “Talking to our master franchisees and looking at the numbers on the sheet and going, wow — internationally we’re getting bigger each and every day.”

Earlier this summer, Xponential signed a master franchise agreement in France for Club Pilates to license a minimum of 75 studios in the country over the next ten years and celebrated the opening of StretchLab in Sydney, Australia. Xponential has also entered into master franchise agreements for StretchLab, AKT and Rumble in Japan.

“Every day, we’re opening new businesses and we’re leveraging the knowledge and skill set of what we’ve done here domestically,” Luna said. “When you look at all of our growth domestically, it’s impressive and it’s exciting, and then you look at our global growth and it’s just even more exciting.”



Photo courtesy of MADabolic

MADabolic's Unique Approach to Fitness Drives Growth

By Athletech Studios

The boutique fitness space is hyper-competitive and dynamic, but it can also be highly repetitive, with a seemingly endless string of Pilates, yoga, spin and bootcamp brands that are often hard to tell apart.

MADabolic, the barbell-free strength and conditioning concept founded by former professional hockey players Brandon Cullen and Kirk Dewaele, is many things, but it's certainly not a knockoff or offshoot of an already established group fitness modality.

The brand bills itself as the only strength-driven interval training franchise in the fitness industry; a typical MADabolic workout features full-body fundamental movements performed with tools like kettlebells, dumbbells and medicine balls, relatively short rest periods and expert coaches that are drilled on the finer points of human movement.

If that sounds intense, it's because it is. According to Cullen, MADabolic primarily targets a specific demographic: 25 to 45-year-old "high-performing

professionals" who enjoy strength training and want to push themselves to the limit. MADabolic's male members tend to span the 30-45 age range while females skew around five years younger.

"It's not an athletic capability, it's more of a mindset," Cullen says, adding that the typical MADabolic member is someone who "demands a little bit more out of life."

"They're conscious of their eating habits, their sleeping patterns, they're drinking the best coffee in their neighborhood and they enjoy all the great things life has to offer," the MADabolic co-founder adds. "They're chasing something more than your average consumer."

MADabolic's target demographic is smaller than many of its competitors, but Cullen believes that gives his company an advantage over boutique fitness brands that tend to go after the same "very crowded pool" of customers.

“Taking more of that sniper approach versus a shotgun approach has worked very well for us,” he says. “That niche is easier to prioritize and once you identify it, you can cater your entire offering toward that specific population.”

The strategy is paying off. Buoyed by a strategic investment from ZGrowth Partners in 2019 as well as the rising popularity of strength training, MADabolic currently has 27 units up and running with another seven to eight set to open by the end of the year. An additional 70-plus franchise units are under contract or in development.

“By the end of next week, we’ll probably have even more deals in that pipeline,” Cullen says, adding that much of the brand’s growth has come recently.

“Taking more of that sniper approach versus a shotgun approach has worked very well for us. That niche is easier to prioritize and once you identify it, you can cater your entire offering toward that specific population.”

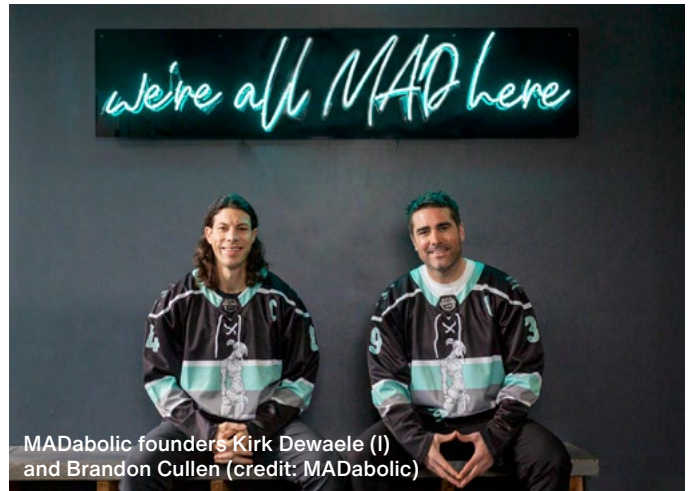
— Brandon Cullen, Co-Founder and Chief Concept Officer, MADabolic

Finding a ‘Sweet Spot’ in Boutique Fitness

Cullen and Dewaele started MADabolic back in 2011 after the two were searching for a way to put the strength and conditioning expertise they gained during their time as hockey players to use in their post-playing careers.

Cullen said that when he and Dewaele were deciding which modality to pursue, they noticed a void in the boutique fitness space. On one end of the spectrum, there was barbell-heavy, sport-specific training featuring movements like Olympic lifts and powerlifting exercises. On the other, there was the bootcamp-style approach popularized by big-box gyms and at-home fitness companies, which includes cardio, bodyweight exercises and some light weights, but not the type of high-quality strength training movements that lead to serious results for serious people.

“There was a sweet spot right in the middle, for people that wanted a little bit more and were open to strength training,” Cullen explains. “They may or may not have been intimidated by the barbell, but they wanted more out of their fitness experience, meaning they craved results.”



Cullen isn’t inherently against the barbell, but he and Dewaele feel that it carries an unnecessary risk of injury for non-athletes and is significantly harder to scale in a group fitness environment than training that includes kettlebells, dumbbells and explosive bodyweight movements like jumping. It’s part of what MADabolic dubs its “fitness for life” approach to training, rather than “fitness for sport,” the latter of which is suboptimal for people who are no longer playing or competing, the company believes.

“If you look at a complex movement like a barbell snatch, essentially you’re trying to demand explosive hip power,” Cullen offers as an example. “We can safely do that in any environment with a well-taught kettlebell swing.”

Another important part of what makes MADabolic unique is its trainers. Cullen explains that, rather than typical group fitness classes where instructors are there more for the motivation and “cheerleading” aspect than to actually coach movement, MADabolic’s trainers offer something more akin to “one-on-one personal training,” albeit in a group setting, usually of 20 to 25 people.

MADabolic’s trainers undergo a rigorous, weeks-long education program. They’re coached on aspects including how to help members perform the brand’s strength-training movements with proper form and how to spot and prioritize class members who need the most help.

“At times I get frustrated being looped in with our competitors (in the group fitness space) because what we do on the training floor doesn’t really have an equal,” Cullen says. “Our trainers are charismatic, but ultimately they’re there to train you and make you better physically. They’re not there to entertain you.”



Photo courtesy of MADabolic

Inside MADabolic's Expansion Plans

MADabolic's type-A approach to fitness and wellness extends beyond program design and influences how the company presents itself to consumers and prospective franchisees.

"People might say, 'Oh, those guys have a chip on their shoulder,'" Cullen says. "We do a little bit, but it's because we're marketing to people that relate to that. If our tone is off-putting, it's okay, we're not marketing to you."

Cullen believes that approach will help MADabolic grow, not slow it down. Despite catering to a relatively niched-down customer base, Cullen can see MADabolic getting at least as big as 200 locations.

"Our primary goal is to isolate the top 50 markets in the United States or even maybe North America," he explains. "If we were to drop two to five units in each, based on our psychographics, that gets us to 200 very conservatively."

Right now, the company is seeing the most success expanding into what Cullen calls "powerhouse B-plus markets," up-and-coming cities with slightly smaller populations than huge metro areas like New York, LA, Miami or Chicago.

In addition to a strong presence the brand already has in areas like Charlotte, Austin and Raleigh,

MADabolic is set to open studios in similarly sized cities including Denver, Philadelphia and Tampa.

Not only are those secondary markets growing in popularity amid post-pandemic migration patterns, they also tend to be highly receptive to MADabolic's unique approach to training. Bigger cities, by contrast, tend to be more celebrity and influencer-driven and less focused on results, Cullen has found.

That's not to say MADabolic won't look to gain a foothold in America's top cities— it already has a studio opened in Brooklyn – but the brand will be deliberate and strategic about its expansion plans in those areas.

"If you're going to do Manhattan, you want to do Manhattan right, with Mr. or Mrs. Manhattan," Cullen says. "LA, Chicago and Miami are no different. Part of that requires capital and celebrity, in my opinion."

While reaching the 200-location number would be nothing to sneeze at, Cullen says there's a chance MADabolic could become even bigger than that if it's successful in building itself into a brand name among fitness enthusiasts.

"That might give us the runway to start exploring markets outside of the initial goal," he says. "If you look at some of the bigger brands, they can open anywhere and people know they're coming. We're still creating that storyline."

RECRUITMENT SOLUTIONS



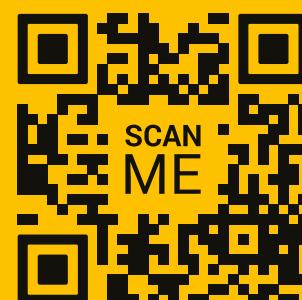
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Photo courtesy of Crunch Fitness

Crunch Fitness CEO on Franchise Growth, Real Estate Strategy

By Elizabeth Ostertag

Crunch Fitness has been redefining the gym experience since 1989. Starting as the original “No Judgments” gym, Crunch has carved a distinctive niche for itself in the fitness landscape. Since the pandemic, Crunch has been expanding rapidly; the company already has 430 gyms open worldwide and is on pace to open 65 this year alone.

Crunch Fitness CEO Jim Rowley spoke with Athletech News about how Crunch drives growth for its franchisees, its approach to evaluating real estate and its push into hybrid fitness.

The following conversation has been lightly edited for clarity and length.

Athletech News: What differentiates Crunch from other gym chains?

Jim Rowley: Crunch has always been different. We started in 1989 as the original No Judgments gym, and our offbeat brand has a fun, diverse offering that includes awesome group fitness classes, miles of cardio, tons of weights and rockstar personal trainers.

We knew our success during our first 20 years could be adapted to work in the growing high-value, low-price space that would make us unique and special in that extremely competitive and crowded place. Since launching our model in 2009, we’ve been among the fastest-growing concepts in the country. Crunch Fitness offers a different model than its competitors – more reward, training and ongoing support for our franchised club owners and the best value for members, including proprietary classes, group training and personal training included in one membership.

ATN: How does Crunch support franchisees with signing leases?

JR: Crunch was named one of the nation's top retail tenants signing new leases in 2021 and 2022 by CoStar. This growth will continue to pick up speed in the coming years. Crunch supports its franchisees in the lease process in several ways. We have an internal support team that provides lease opportunities through our real estate network, we help evaluate sites for excellence and we work with several third-party vendors (including Buxton) to supply the franchisees with an arsenal of information to help support their decision. If there are specific lease questions, we provide experienced feedback as well. Ultimately, the selection, evaluation and final decision rests with the individual franchise owners.

ATN: How does Crunch support franchise growth overall?

Photo courtesy of Crunch Fitness

“Landlords and developers are looking to rebuild these emptied retail spaces. This is an opportunity for Crunch as fitness centers not only successfully fill these vacant spots but drive an impressive amount of foot traffic to the surrounding areas, making them a sought-after tenant.”

— Jim Rowley, CEO,
Crunch Fitness

JR: Once leases are signed, Crunch continues to provide actionable training, development and support to the franchise network. We aim for as many check-ins or touch points as possible once a franchisee signs a lease, including when they move into pre-sale and buildout and when running a fully operational gym.

We offer a training program called The Crunch 10 Protocol, a comprehensive, 10-step training process for new franchise owners and executives to all systems, policies and procedures leading up to the opening of their first gym. Through Crunch 10, franchisees learn about real estate, financing, equipment, gym development, group fitness, personal training, training and development, sales, and gym operations and policies. The Training Protocol includes over 200 hours of training delivered through a variety of learning methods like eLearning courses delivered through our world-class learning management system, Crunch Connected, webinars, in-person classroom-style training and hands-on, in-gym training designed to deliver content at the appropriate time and increase retention. Topics cover real estate, financing, equipment, gym development, marketing, branding, pre-sale, group fitness, personal training, training and development, sales and gym operations.

Additionally, there is a social community platform where franchisees can connect and learn from other Crunch team members and content experts throughout our international network.

Moreover, we recently invested in our National Training Center in Jacksonville, which significantly increased the support offered to our franchise partners and teams. As part of the Crunch Harbour Village location, the Training Center provides an in-depth curriculum covering gym operations, including planning, pre-sale, construction, marketing, sales, operations, group fitness, personal training and fitness education.

ATN: What are Crunch's biggest areas of opportunity?

JR: Crunch has a solid track record of club openings, including more than 430 gyms worldwide, currently in 37 states, the District of Columbia, Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Portugal, Puerto Rico and Spain. Crunch is rapidly expanding across the U.S. and around the globe with commitments to open an additional 1,000+ franchise locations.

With the state of the economy and major retail closures like Bed Bath & Beyond, in addition to thousands of businesses that have already sadly closed due to the pandemic, landlords and developers are looking to rebuild these emptied retail spaces. This is an opportunity for Crunch as fitness centers not only successfully fill these vacant spots but drive an impressive amount of foot traffic to the surrounding areas, making them a sought-after tenant. In fact, according to CoStar,



Photo courtesy of Crunch Fitness

gym visits were up 17.6% last summer compared to 2019 — the biggest increase of any retail or business establishment type in the survey.

ATN: What have been Crunch’s biggest recent successes?

JR: Crunch is a leading fitness brand and one of the fastest-growing companies in the industry. In the three-and-a-half years since the start of the pandemic, we’ve seen our membership base grow by more than 76%. To see this growth during a challenging time is a testament to the great offerings and service provided by Crunch and the ongoing support, enthusiasm and engagement of all franchise owners.

This member growth, a compounded annual growth rate of 17.4%, is unmatched in the category. And we’re on pace to open over 65 clubs this year. Our growth hasn’t gone unnoticed. Entrepreneur named us to their Franchise 500 10+ Club honoring an elite group of franchisors. Additionally, Entrepreneur listed Crunch at number 30 on their Top Global Franchises list among those successful franchises with international opportunities.

Last year, Crunch was named by CoStar as one of the Top Retailers Signing New Leases.

ATN: What’s next for Crunch?

JR: Crunch is continuing to grow in membership and gym locations across the world and we’re always exploring ways to bring our unique fitness programming and classes to everyone, everywhere — especially as the world has moved into, and will remain operating, in a hybrid world of virtual and in-person fitness and work. With this in mind, we elevated our online platform this year with the introduction of Crunch+, a new platform to access on-demand and live-streamed workouts at any time and on any device. It brings to life our expertise in creating “Entertainment Fitness” with HIIT, Sculpt, yoga, Cardio Tai Box, stretching, Pilates and meditation, in addition to episodic content that follows a storyline format allowing users to build upon new skills week by week.

We are continuing to build out Crunch+ and will look to other ways to keep our members connected in a world of hybrid fitness.

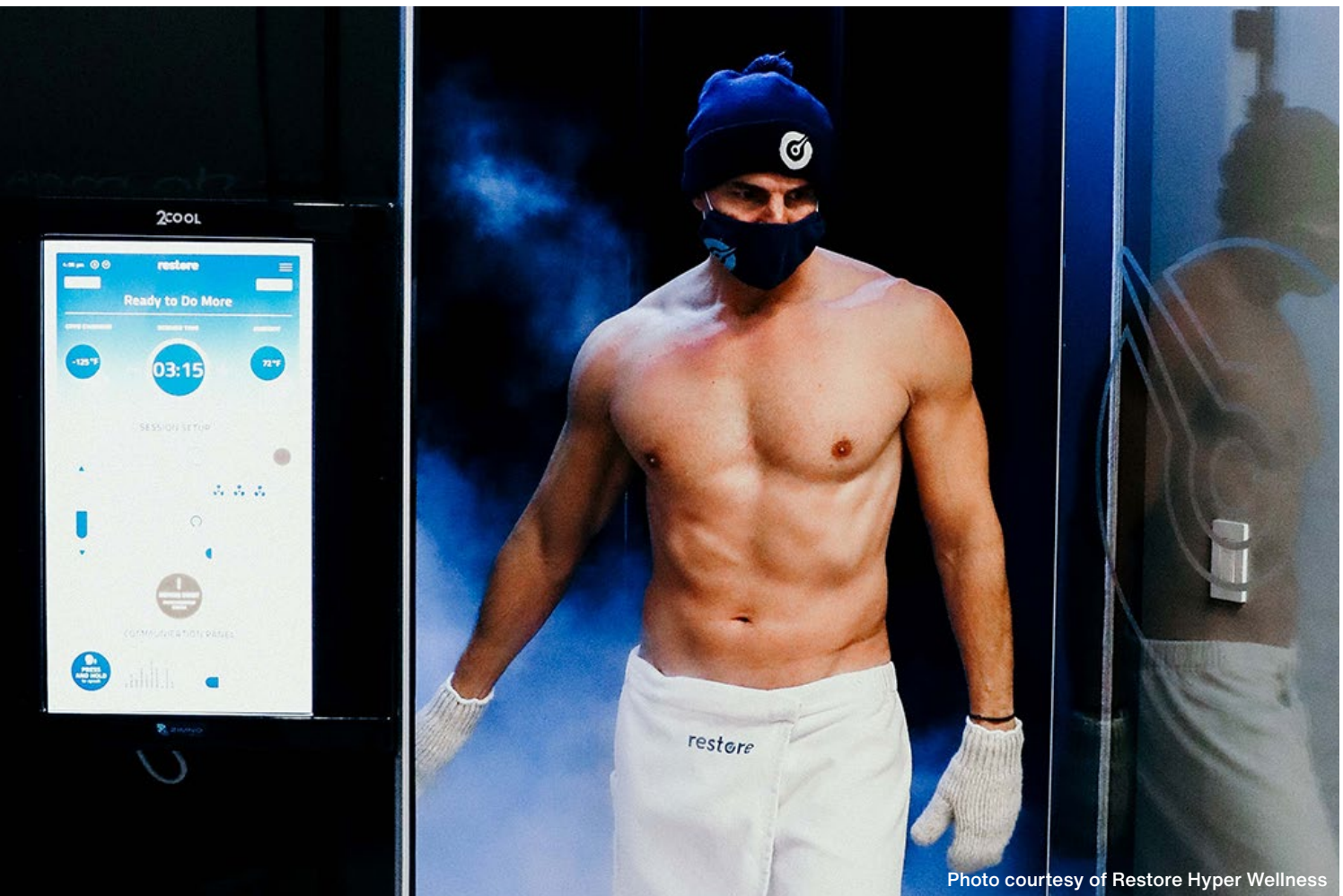


Photo courtesy of Restore Hyper Wellness

Restore Hyper Wellness Expands the Limits of Personal Wellness

By Athletech Studios

Restore Hyper Wellness has created a category of care all unto its own, offering a vast menu of personalized wellness therapies that range from IV Drips to Cryotherapy and everything in between. Restore is rapidly scaling its footprint nationally and beyond, as its mission is to expand the limits of personal health and performance to help people do more of what they love.

After securing a \$140 million investment led by General Atlantic to accelerate growth and innovation in 2021, Restore continues to expand, recently opening two new studios in League City, Texas and Nashua, New Hampshire. The brand currently has over 225 locations across 40 states.

Leaning into the reality that while consumers can't

outrun life's ticking clock and that discomfort and aging are universal truths, Restore provides proactive solutions through its advanced therapies like Infrared Sauna, Red Light Therapy, Mild Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (mHbOT), Compression Therapy, Biomarker Assessments, Skin Health services and more.

Restore Franchisees Are Passionate About Wellness

Encouraged by the blossoming health and wellness industry, which sees consumers seeking ways to feel their best, Restore's franchising model has proven attractive to those who are dedicated to serving their community and positively impacting the health and well-being of its clients.

“(Restore franchise owners) realize that we’re in a place and time where health is first and foremost on people’s minds and they want to be a part of that,” said Steve Welch, Co-Founder and interim CEO of Restore. “They want to be a part of bringing that to their local communities.”

“We’re seeing a tremendous amount of success from our owners. Their passion and belief in the results truly allows them to outperform,” Welch said of Restore franchisees. “Their clients can see their enthusiasm and that has a big effect on us. If you talk to Restore owners, they’ll tell you they just absolutely love that part of the business. Beyond that, we really are on the cutting edge.”



Photo courtesy of Restore Hyper Wellness

“Cryotherapy and Compression Therapy can really help manage discomfort and allow people to live the lives that they want to live. The reality is most people, myself included, tend to have less energy as we age. Part of the reason we have less energy is we’re missing the micronutrients and the elements the body needs at a cellular level to be successful.”

— Steve Welch, Co-Founder and interim CEO, Restore Hyper Wellness

Worldwide Consumer Interest in Wellness & Longevity

As Restore sees impressive domestic growth, the wellness franchisor is confident its therapies can meet the demands of overseas consumers looking to feel their best.

“The exciting thing about our business is the need states we’re addressing are universal,” Welch said. “This is not an American problem or a Canadian problem. This is worldwide.”

While overseas opportunities are ample, Welch says Restore is currently “focused like a laser” on the U.S. market and is taking advantage of its domestic opportunities before expanding beyond.

Americans Are Willing To Spend on Wellness

Welch sees the health and wellness industry as in its third wave, with Americans thinking deeply about health care. As he points out, the first wave resulted in an understanding of food’s impact on health. The second wave saw the rise of gyms and fitness facilities, with Americans discovering that exercise can impact long-term health. The third wave — wellness and longevity — is one that Restore is prepared to ride.

“We’re taking that to the next level in Restore by helping people realize that they can invest in their health today, and that’s going to really impact them — not just today, but also in the long-term, as well,” Welch said.

With a comprehensive menu of therapies, Restore clients can select the modalities they feel will help them meet their goals. While many clients come to Restore to improve athletic performance, Welch reveals that a significant portion of clients are focused on longevity and energy management.

“What we’ve done is put together a group of therapies that we really believe you can utilize regardless of what your interest is,” Welch said. “We can help you find a path that is custom for you and is dependent on your own objectives.”

As Welch puts it, consumers aren’t immune to age-related discomfort and energy depletion but are willing to invest in therapies that enable them to return to the things they love to do.

“Cryotherapy and Compression Therapy can really help manage discomfort and allow people to live the lives that they want to live,” he said. “The reality is most people, myself included, tend to have less energy as we age. Part of the reason we have less energy is we’re missing the micronutrients and the elements the body needs at a cellular level to be successful.”

Welch points to Restore’s IV Drip Therapies, which

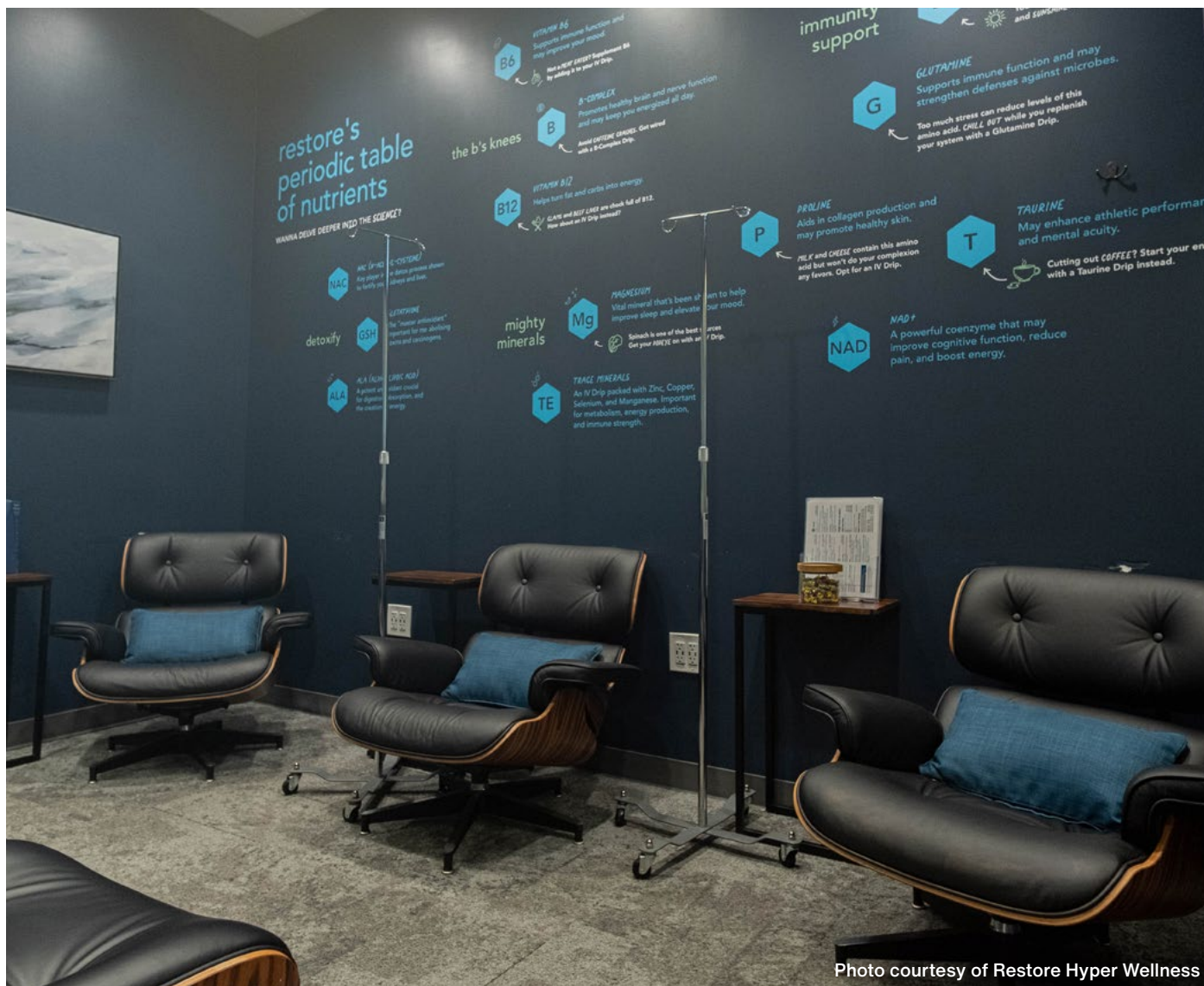


Photo courtesy of Restore Hyper Wellness

he says have a tremendous impact on delivering nutrients directly into the bloodstream.

One of Restore’s newest offerings, a Weight Management Program developed with its Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Rich Joseph, focuses on metabolic health to help clients create personalized plans to help them achieve and sustain a healthy weight that addresses their weight loss goals.

Supporting Franchisees With Expert Knowledge & Tech

As Restore scales, Welch says franchisees have the support and benefit of a full legal and compliance department, both of which are helpful in a highly regulated environment across various states and differing medical, nursing and pharmacy boards. It’s an aspect Welch says often gets missed as people consider different franchises to invest in.

“I think what we’ve done so well as an organization has been to build that infrastructure that enables our studios to compete across the U.S. and have the tools they need to ensure they’re successful in their local geographies,” he said.

The health and wellness provider looks for owners who are fully engaged in the business and play an active role.

“Our owners that have multi-units are outperforming those that have a single unit,” Welch said, adding that the more units an owner has, especially if they’re in the same region, the simpler it is to manage the franchise since they can pool resources.

Restore also has an app to meet clients where they are – which is typically on their phones, which Welch says is just the beginning of the investments Restore is making, all designed to help franchise owners.

Just as Restore is laser-focused on the U.S. market, the franchisor is similarly focused on helping its franchisees succeed.

“That is a critical part,” Welch said. “It often gets overlooked by people when they’re trying to decide which franchise to go with: culturally, what is this company focused on? And for us, we know our success is tied to the success of our franchise owners.”

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Photo courtesy of ISSA

ISSA Helps FitPros Become Franchise Owners

By Courtney Rehfeldt

The International Sports Sciences Association (ISSA) is known for providing education and certification services for fitness and wellness professionals, but its best-kept secret is how it supports students in seeking franchising opportunities.

With over half of ISSA students expressing interest in becoming gym owners, the organization is steadily focused on creating a pipeline to franchisors.

Although becoming a franchise owner doesn't require certification, having a fitness education and accreditation will likely lead to increased success, as owners can connect with their team on a deeper

level, said Johnny August, ISSA's Senior National Sales Manager.

As ISSA supports the education of its students, it's also helping them carve a path on what's ahead for them in the fitness and wellness industry.

"As we look at our global ecosystem of students, we're seeing upwards of 65% of our students expressing interest in owning a business one day," said August.

The Franchising Pathway

To meet the needs of students and set them on a path to success, ISSA has created a funnel, identifying students interested in franchising. The organization gathers information, including the capital capabilities of interested students, before connecting them with a franchise model that may be an ideal fit. Franchisors then present their value proposition to students interested in owning a fitness or wellness franchise.

“More than anything, what I think we’re doing uniquely is we’re taking an interest in who our students want to be at the end of their journey,” said August.

ISSA currently has 125 brand partnerships, including F45 Training, Orangetheory Fitness, Camp Gladiator and Anytime Fitness.

“We sit in a really unique position, right in the middle of the franchisors and the students who want to become franchisees, and we’re essentially playing matchmaker,” August says. “We are referring the student to the franchisor as a preferred applicant and we’re referring the business to the student as a preferred partner.”

Students Find Franchising Appealing

While a background in business, fitness and wellness is important, to succeed in franchising, the most important thing students need is to be passionate, according to August.

“I think business acumen is important, but I wouldn’t put that above passion because you have to be passionate about helping people,” he said.

August reflects on COVID, which he says caused many to develop an entrepreneurial mindset, such as fitness enthusiasts who may have launched a garage-based gym servicing neighbors and clients. However, many of those grassroots business owners have begun realizing they’d prefer more structure, such as a franchise model.

As August points out, franchising offers a playbook for aspiring business owners to take their passion for helping others and turn it into a branded service.

“With such a high interest level from our students to own their own business, I view it as our job to seek out partnerships with brands who have a compelling value proposition, and proven track record of successfully supporting franchisees,” he said. “Getting as many of those opportunities as possible in front of the ISSA Community is the goal.”

The appeal of franchising for aspiring fitness and wellness professionals can boil down to one simple fact: “It’s been proven to work, or they wouldn’t be selling additional franchises,” August, said, adding that having support is crucial to a franchisee’s success.

August explained franchisee hopefuls are also encouraged by brand recognition, as working with a well-known name organically creates marketing just from its logo on the outside of a building. Additionally, having a recognized brand is a great way to ensure a level of success.

As for franchisors, those that provide a structured balance provide the ideal environment for fitness professionals, leading to a win-win for both parties: business owners receive the support needed to be successful but have enough freedom to run the operation as they see fit.

“That is the ideal relationship of franchisee to franchisor,” August believes.



Photo courtesy of ISSA

“ We sit in a really unique position, right in the middle of the franchisors and the students who want to become franchisees, and we’re essentially playing matchmaker.”

— Johnny August, Senior National Sales Manager, ISSA



The Recovery Space Is Booming

As for fitness franchise trends, August identifies the recovery space as the fastest-growing health and wellness franchise sector, acknowledging the successes of franchises such as Restore Hyper Wellness and StretchLab.

“With consumers taking more of an interest in how to maximize efficiency and lifespan, the industry has quickly responded with a variety of solutions,” he said. “With recovery being such a crucial component to achieving results, I anticipate this trend will continue with aggressive upward mobility.”



ISSA's Commitment to Ongoing Support

In addition to its student-franchise matching services, ISSA also provides a career pathways newsletter and helpful resources such as reports, trends, articles, blogs and other material that supports a student's vision and ambitions of owning a business.

Testimonials are also provided, giving students a first-hand look at others who have completed ISSA's franchising pathway and ended on the other side of the finish line as franchise owners. The support doesn't end, which August says is what sets ISSA apart.

“That's by far the biggest differentiator with being an ISSA student: from day one of joining us in any capacity, we are with you in providing lifelong support,” he said. “We're still the best-kept secret in terms of how we're supporting our students on the franchise side of things,”

As part of ISSA's ongoing support, the organization has hosted job fairs with commercial partners, webinars with F45 and Camp Gladiator, and virtual hiring fairs.

Students who go on to launch their own businesses can rely on ISSA's assistance years down the line, even hiring other ISSA graduates and bringing them into the franchise fold, creating an ecosystem.

“What ends up happening is that graduate who opens the business then comes back to us and says there are more people like me in the ISSA community and I want to hire them,” August explains. “We see a steady flow of former students reaching out saying ‘I want to hire ISSA trainers.’”



Photo courtesy of Xponential Fitness

Rumble Boxing Is a Hit With Female Franchisees

By Athletech Studios

If you think of “Rocky,” “Creed,” and old-school gyms filled with testosterone when you hear the word boxing, it might be time to update your view on the sport, especially as it relates to group fitness.

Boxing has quickly become a favorite fitness activity of women across the U.S., especially among those in the Millennial age range. More and more, women are making the once-male-dominated sport their go-to workout routine, shattering long-held notions of what’s masculine and feminine.

Rumble Boxing, the boxing-inspired group fitness brand acquired by Xponential Fitness in 2021, is emblematic of this cultural shift. A whopping 73% of Rumble’s fast-growing member base is made up of women. Perhaps even more notable, approximately 40% of Rumble franchise owners are female, higher than the national average of 31%.

A Rumble workout is challenging but accessible, featuring 10 rounds over 45 minutes divided evenly between boxing drills like shadowboxing and

bag-punching and resistance training including bodyweight circuits and dumbbells.

There are a few reasons why Rumble has become so popular with women: part of it stems from the growing popularity of boxing itself, part of it is due to the increased interest in group fitness post-pandemic, and some of it is thanks to the franchising might of Xponential, which has ten boutique fitness brands under its umbrella including giants like Club Pilates and StretchLab.

“Boxing and HIIT are hot modalities in the boutique fitness space and with the right team in place, we’ve been able to rapidly expand through franchising the concept in 2021,” Shaun Grove, Rumble’s President, says of the brand’s growth. “We’ve also been able to capitalize on the heightened consumer demand for community-based fitness as more and more people are dedicating more time to their health and wellness, especially as people are defining ‘wellness’ in broader terms since the pandemic.”

Rumble's blend of boxing and group fitness not only offers a great workout, it presents an accessible entry into strength training, which has become ultra-popular post-pandemic. For women who understand they need to strength train for better overall health but may have trepidation about jumping into the weight room at their local gym, boxing at Rumble presents a fun and relatively easy way to get started.

"Trends have shown that females, and not just athletes, are starting to understand the importance of weight training for overall health and wellness, but they want a program that's fun and that they can stick to," Rachelle Dejean, Chief Marketing Officer at Rumble, explains. "At Rumble, we take that up a notch with the unique pairing of boxing and strength for killer results."

It helps that boxing also offers many cardio benefits, so Rumble members get a lot of bang for their workout buck.



Photo courtesy of Xponential Fitness

“ Trends have shown that females, and not just athletes, are starting to understand the importance of weight training for overall health and wellness, but they want a program that's fun and that they can stick to.”

— Rachelle Dejean, Chief Marketing Officer, Rumble Boxing

Susie Grobler, who opened the first Rumble franchise location, was encouraged to become a studio owner due to her love for the workout more than anything else.

"Cardio is important but I can't say I personally love running," notes Grobler, who opened her Rumble location in Anchorage, Alaska, on New Year's Day 2022. "I fell in love with boxing because it gives me the cardio push I need. Rumble takes it to the next level by also adding in the strength component. The mixture of rounds on the bag and rounds on the floor is amazing and the results speak for themselves."

Importantly, Rumble classes can be taken by people with no prior boxing experience. That's an intentional choice on the part of Rumble and Xponential to promote inclusivity and attract a wider clientele.

"We always aim to be accessible, and our 'don't take ourselves too seriously' brand approach helps us maintain a fun energy," Dejean says.

Another key reason for Rumble's growth is the power of community. The boutique fitness brand has been able to combine the fitness benefits of boxing with the allure of group fitness, which has become even more desired post-pandemic as people seek to regain in-person connections they lost out on during lockdowns and social distancing.

"When Rumble propelled into the NYC market in 2017, it was really one of the first of its kind to offer boxing-inspired group fitness," Dejean notes. "Everyone can benefit from community and connection, and even more so after years of on-demand and virtual workouts."

Rumble's popularity among female franchise owners has been the result of organic growth rather than any strategic decisions on the part of Xponential; the boutique fitness franchisor seeks capable business partners regardless of gender.

"We simply look for energetic individuals who want to own their own business and ideally, are passionate about fitness," Grove says. "Someone who has business acumen, sufficient financial resources, the ability to manage and motivate a team, and the ability to follow our proven systems."

For Grobler, the decision to open a Rumble studio was a natural choice, driven by her love of the brand's boxing-inspired workouts as well as Xponential's famous "playbook" for franchise owners.

"Xponential provides guidance in all departments. The sales and marketing team work very hard to provide a play that works," Grobler says. "This frees up a lot of time to work on how to execute the play. The training team has been invaluable in providing not just a great workout but truly being mentors."

Grobler, who also owns a Pure Barre franchise that

she bought in 2017 before Xponential acquired that brand, believes franchising can be very rewarding – she left a career as a mechanical engineer in the oil industry to gain more control over her schedule – but it’s not without its share of challenges, like any business.



Photo courtesy of Xponential Fitness

“ I’ll have to quote (franchise expert and author) Scott Greenberg and say, ‘If you don’t like roller coasters, you probably won’t like franchising.’ A big part of my success is that I’ve just kept going through all the ups and downs.”

— Susie Grobler, Rumble Boxing franchisee

“I’ll have to quote (franchise expert and author) Scott Greenberg and say, ‘If you don’t like roller coasters, you probably won’t like franchising,’” she says. “A big part of my success is that I’ve just kept going through all the ups and downs.”

Overall, Rumble has over 65 studios open and 375 franchise licenses signed as of Q2 2023, impressive growth given the brand only started franchising after being acquired by Xponential in 2021. As Rumble looks to continue opening studios across the country and world, it will focus on markets that meet its

criteria in terms of demographics and real estate.

But more than anything, where Rumble heads next will be driven by franchisee demand.

“While we do target key markets in our marketing approach, our expansion strategy is driven by where our franchisees want to open a studio,” Grove says.

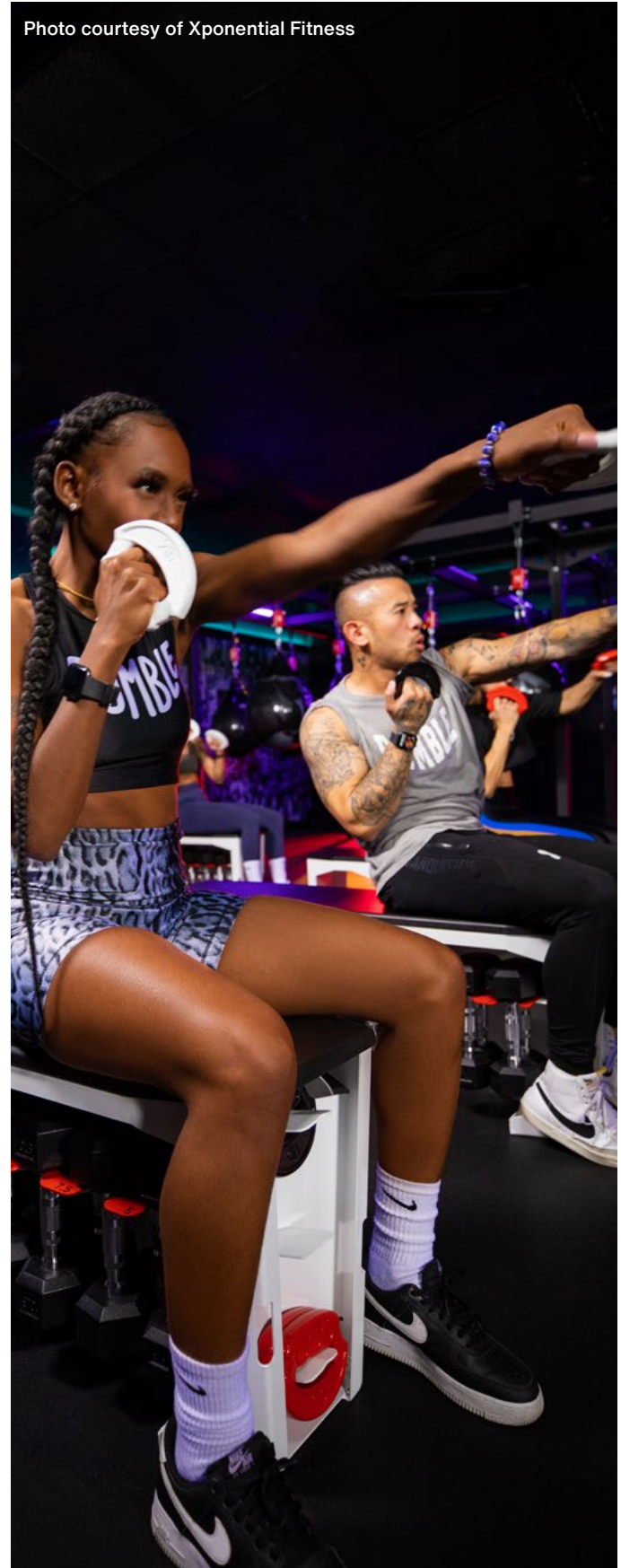


Photo courtesy of Xponential Fitness



Photo courtesy of BODY20

How BODY20 Became the Top EMS Fitness Franchise

By Athletech Studios

When Christopher Pena got started with BODY20 back in 2017, electrical-muscle stimulation (EMS) workouts weren't popular in the United States. In fact, the concept of EMS itself wasn't well known in America outside of a select few in the medical community and a handful of hardcore fitness enthusiasts and brave entrepreneurs.

By the summer of 2023, BODY20 celebrated the opening of its 30th EMS fitness studio, with just under 300 franchise locations sold and more in the pipeline. The vast majority of that growth has happened over less than two years.

"We just started scaling the brand," Pena, BODY20's president, says of the expansion.

The fast-growing boutique fitness concept puts members through 20-minute long workouts while wearing an FDA-cleared EMS suit. EMS works by using electrical stimulation to create frequent muscle contractions, mimicking the natural action potentials your body sends to your muscles to tell them to move. Essentially, BODY20 takes your brain out of working out.

The whole-body EMS technology used by BODY20

produces over 150 times more muscle contractions than a conventional workout. That allows users to build muscle and burn calories in a fraction of the time, all while promoting better recovery through increased blood flow and other advantageous physiological responses.

"It's biohacking you and your body," Pena says. "That's where we get our tagline, 'Every.Body. Unleashed.'"

During a typical BODY20 workout, members perform compound strength-training movements like squats, without weights, while wearing an EMS suit. BODY20 offers some cardio as well, but it's primarily designed to replace lifting weights, not your weekly spin class.

Among several benefits, BODY20's whole-body EMS workouts are designed to increase blood flow and circulation in the lymphatic system. That helps you recover quicker from the body's natural inflammatory response to strength training. Whole-body EMS has also been shown to increase the amount of testosterone and human growth hormone (HGH) your body produces in response to strength training, which has muscle growth and recovery benefits.



Photo courtesy of BODY20

Persistence Is Key to Growth

If BODY20 today stands as a pioneer in the burgeoning EMS space – the fitness concept was listed on Entrepreneur Magazine’s Top New and Emerging Franchises list – it wasn’t always smooth sailing for the franchisor.

In the years between his first foray into EMS workouts and BODY20’s current status as a leader in the modality, Pena and the BODY20 team have been hard at work building a business infrastructure from the ground up to support its growing list of franchisees.

That started with Gregory Breitbart buying out Pena’s original partners and becoming BODY20’s CEO in 2019. Pena and Breitbart knew it was important to start slowly and methodically, putting the right procedures in place and hiring the people that would position BODY20 for the explosive growth it’s now enjoying.

“Using the skyscraper analogy – we dug down first,” Pena says. “Greg and I have always had the idea that we should be over-prepared for scaling this brand.

Despite the careful approach, BODY20 proved to be a hit with franchisees faster than either Pena or Breitbart expected, with prospective partners from around the country lining up to get in on the recovery and muscle-building benefits of EMS.

The brand experienced some early growing pains, but the BODY20 team stayed the course, and to great effect. BODY20 ranked as the 292nd fastest-growing private brand in the U.S. on the prestigious Inc. 5000 list for 2023, better than any other franchisor in all industries, not just fitness.

“The first few years were tough, and we had just about everything thrown at us, including a once-in-

a-100-year global pandemic, which surprisingly was probably our easiest challenge,” Breitbart has said of scaling the brand. “We didn’t have overnight success, but our patience and determination to do things the right way, even if it meant going slower, ultimately paid off.”

Pena and Breitbart stuck by their original plan of building a solid base before focusing on growth. BODY20 recently appointed Lisa Donohue as its Chief Marketing & Experience officer and has hired several other fitness and franchising industry vets.

“We were really focused on getting the right executive team in place,” Pena says of the additions. “We’ve hired people who understand not just fitness but how to work with franchisees, because franchising is a very specific industry.”

The Future Is Bright

Fast forward to 2023, and BODY20 is all-in on growth, looking to continue to sell franchise licenses across the country and support its existing franchisees with best-in-class resources.

Expect to see more BODY20 studios pop up in spots around the country soon. The EMS brand is on pace to have 100 locations open by the end of the first quarter of 2024, with specific plans to expand or increase its presence in locations including New York, Chicago, Seattle and throughout California.

“The first few years were tough, and we had just about everything thrown at us, including a once-in-a-100-year global pandemic, which surprisingly was probably our easiest challenge. We didn’t have overnight success, but our patience and determination to do things the right way, even if it meant going slower, ultimately paid off.”

— Gregory Breitbart, CEO, BODY20



Photo courtesy of BODY20

While BODY20's core customer base is approximately 70% women – the average member is a 40-plus-year-old female – EMS training is proving popular with people of all genders, ages and fitness levels.

“We walked into our studio in Boca Raton one day, and there was an NFL pro athlete training next to a 92-year-old woman, and they’re getting the exact same workout, doing the exact same movements,” Pena notes. “Where else can you find that?”

What Franchisees Should Know

As it continues to expand, BODY20 is looking for franchisees with strong business management experience. Having a strong sales background is also a plus for potential franchisees.

“Ultimately, fitness will always be a sales business,” Pena says. “You’ll always have turnover and you’ll always have to generate more membership.”

Franchisees who join the BODY20 family can expect support from a corporate team that has created a system, or “playbook,” it knows will help business owners grow their EMS studios.

The BODY20 team is constantly working the numbers to give franchise owners helpful business insights based on data. Pena shares the example of he and his team pouring over KPIs in a recent quarter to figure out what top-selling franchisees did better than their lower-selling counterparts. While most would assume the top-selling studios were simply better at closing deals, Pena said the numbers told a different story: the best and worst-performing studios during that quarter had a less than 2% difference in their closing ratio, but their difference in following up with leads was 20%. It wasn't that the higher-performing studios were naturally better at selling, they were just more persistent.

“When you're a franchisor, you have a responsibility

to not make things arbitrary or emotional,” Pena says of BODY20's numbers-first approach. “If you're a franchisee at BODY20, you'll find that we focus heavily on providing proof first.”

That said, the BODY20 team is more than willing to listen – and take action – to help franchisees who need it, especially when pain points or weaknesses in the current system are brought to light.

“If you're following our playbook completely and you come to us and say something doesn't work, we have more time, effort and resources to throw at that problem than you do, and we're going to,” Pena says. “Chances are if you're in Sacramento and something doesn't work, there's a place in New Hampshire that's going to run into the same problem, so we need to figure it out.”

“ We walked into our studio in Boca Raton one day, and there was an NFL pro athlete training next to a 92-year-old woman, and they're getting the exact same workout, doing the exact same movements. Where else can you find that?”

— Christopher Pena,
President, BODY20



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Photo courtesy of Pvolve

Pvolve Primed for Growth After Transformative Year

By Elizabeth Ostertag

Pvolve, the functional fitness company, has made waves in the fitness industry this year with its rebranding, the launch of its first franchise studio in San Diego, and a high-profile partnership with Hollywood star Jennifer Aniston. The Pvolve workout, which couples low-impact functional movement and proprietary resistance equipment to strengthen, sculpt, and restore, is ideal for traditional fitness but also mobility and recovery.

The Pvolve methodology is centered around moving the body through biomechanics that mimic

people's everyday life. Pvolve integrates a distinctive functional fitness approach with its own patented and exclusive equipment. Its primary emphasis lies in comprehending the body's biomechanics and enhancing muscle strength to support everyday natural movement patterns, including lateral, forward and rotational movements. In contrast to conventional workout regimens that concentrate on repetitive, static exercises, potentially leading to strain and muscular imbalances, Pvolve emulates real-life actions such as sitting, standing, walking, running, reaching, and twisting.

The program is carefully crafted to elevate overall strength, coordination, mobility, balance, improved posture and the sustainability of movements.

“What sets us apart from other brands is that we focus on multi-planar movement, not just moving in the sagittal space, front to back like you would with running or spinning,” Antonietta Vicario, Pvolve’s Chief Training Officer, tells Athletech News. “We move in all directions, including lateral and rotational movement.”

Alongside its physical studio locations, Pvolve offers a digital platform that delivers live and on-demand classes through its website and app.



Photo courtesy of Pvolve

Pvolve Goes Hollywood

In June, Pvolve made waves by officially partnering with Jennifer Aniston, who will advise on the brand’s marketing, product, and programming strategies to fuel the omnichannel fitness company’s growth, as well as star in ad campaigns.

Aniston first heard about Pvolve from a friend, who transformed her body physically and gained better energy levels by using the method. After a serious back injury, Aniston became a “secret streamer” of Pvolve, which led to the eventual partnership. Soon after Aniston joined the Pvolve family, the fitness brand reported a 125% increase in franchise inquiries. It also experienced a remarkable 650% increase in branded searches, reflecting the significant impact of Aniston’s involvement.

“(Aniston) expressed how appreciative she was to have found a method that respects your body and works around your limitations,” Julie Cartwright, President of Pvolve, tells ATN. “Experiencing the results and the philosophy behind the method firsthand, Jen was interested in bringing awareness to things that make a difference in her life, and Pvolve has become an essential part of her routine.”

Franchise Plans Heat Up

Pvolve opened its very first franchise studio earlier this year in San Diego, and more recently, its second location in Carlsbad, California. More locations are slated to open, including Nashville, Fort Worth, Texas, Algonquin, Illinois, Calgary, Canada, Columbia, South Carolina, and two studios in Bergen County, New Jersey. Other studios are planned for San Diego, Salt Lake City, Atlanta, and Arlington, Virginia.



Photo courtesy of Pvolve

“ The fitness industry is only going to continue growing, and with how rapidly our franchise business is expanding, there’s no better time to consider investing in a Pvolve franchise studio than right now – especially on the heels of (Jennifer Aniston) joining us to help lead Pvolve into its next chapter.”

— Julie Cartwright,
President, Pvolve

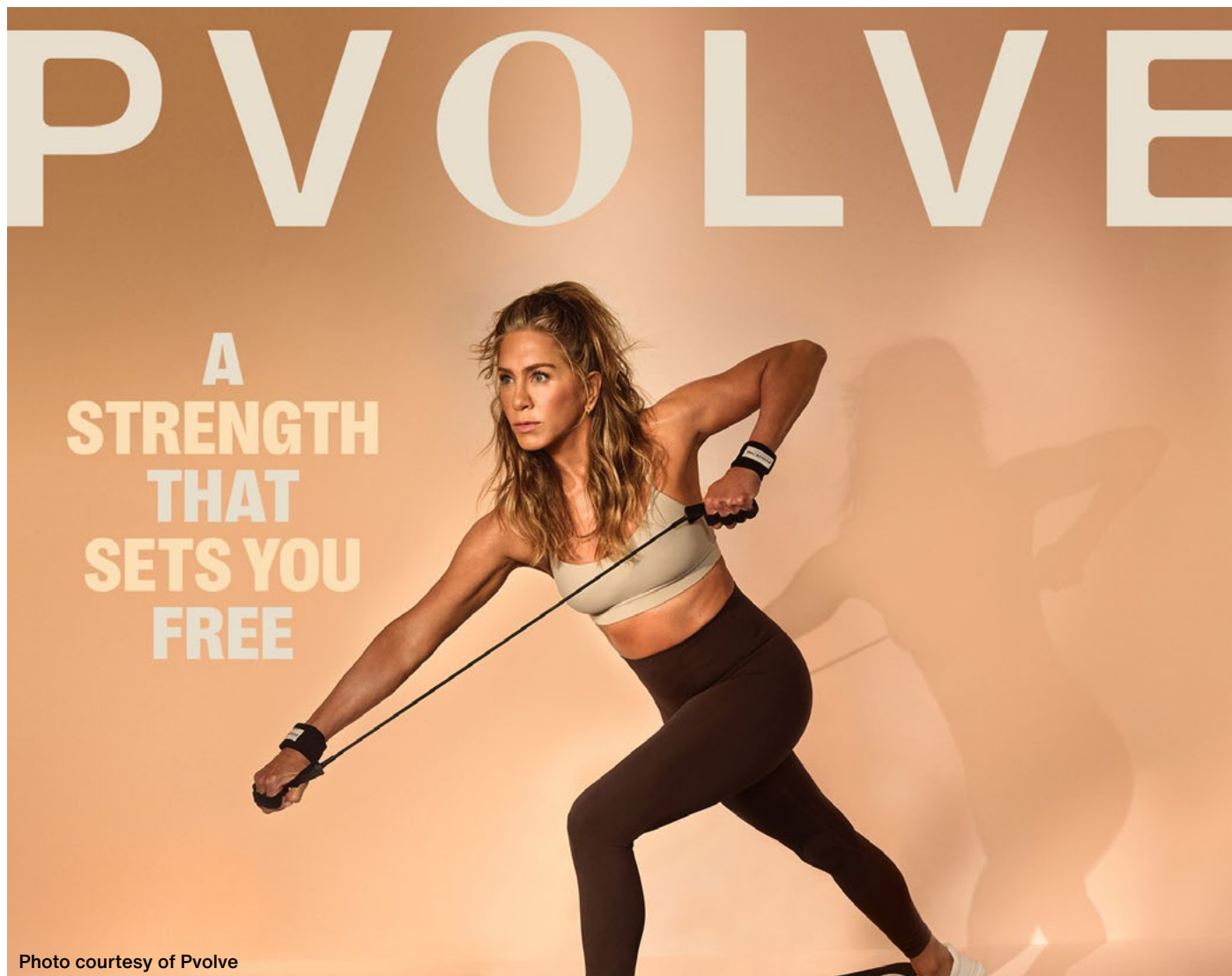


Photo courtesy of Pvolve

The brand has a larger goal to open 250 franchise studios by 2025 across the U.S., U.K. and Canada.

Aniston's first ad campaign for Pvolve, which launched earlier this year, was called "A Strength That Sets You Free." The campaign aims to change how society perceives strength and fitness, and highlights Pvolve's focus on sculpted results and a mind-body connection without strain or imbalance. In a voiceover during the ad, Aniston states, "With this workout method, I'm stronger than I've ever felt before. I sweat, I sculpt, I bend, but I don't break—how liberating."

Vicario has spoken about her process of building a routine that works for different demographics.

"One thing that makes Pvolve unique is our understanding that fitness is not one size fits all," she says. "Depending on where you are in your life cycle and what your hormonal environment is like, your workout will look different. A pre or postnatal person's hormones are fluctuating, so their workout will be different than someone in their 20s or 70s. However, the basis of our method is functional movement, which applies to everyone."

As the fitness industry continues its rapid growth,

Pvolve's primary challenge is staying engaged with current and prospective members amid the plethora of fitness options available.

"Pvolve's commitment to our members will always be at the core of who we are as a company," Cartwright reassures.

This September, Pvolve extended a 20% discount for streaming workouts to military members and seniors, after having offered the discount to students, first responders, and healthcare workers. By recognizing these communities, Pvolve is building connections with different demographic groups, which should translate to franchising success down the road. In particular, its focus on low-impact workouts has resonated with older fitness enthusiasts.

Cartwright believes the brand still has a ton of room to grow.

"The fitness industry is only going to continue growing, and with how rapidly our franchise business is expanding, there's no better time to consider investing in a Pvolve franchise studio than right now—especially on the heels of Jen joining us to help lead Pvolve into its next chapter," the Pvolve president says.

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Photo courtesy of Fulcrum Fitness

Fulcrum Fitness Changes the Game for Personal Trainers

By Athletech Studios

It's hard to stand out in the crowded boutique fitness space, but every once in a while, a new brand comes along that truly challenges the status quo.

Fulcrum Fitness, a community-oriented functional fitness concept based in Portland, Oregon, separates itself from the pack in two ways: a unique approach to personal training as well as how it's building its brand through a combination of traditional franchising and licensing its model to other gyms.

David Levy, a teenage bodybuilding champion turned personal trainer and rehab specialist, created Fulcrum back in 2008 to improve on what he saw as a shortcoming in his preferred functional fitness method at the time, CrossFit.

"I loved the energy and the community but not the injuries I got, so I knew I had to create something that everyone could actually do for life," Levy explains. "All that went into a blender and voila, Fulcrum Fitness was born."

Fulcrum describes its approach to functional training as "a comprehensive fitness method for all levels

and all body types." While specific movements vary depending on the fitness coach designing the program, a Fulcrum workout includes some combination of strength, conditioning and high-intensity interval training (HIIT). Fulcrum workouts feature full-body movements like calisthenics, dumbbell, barbell and kettlebell exercises, and movements performed using functional equipment such as battle ropes, plyometric boxes and medicine balls.

Fulcrum workouts are meant to be challenging but they're also designed to help people progress safely under the careful supervision of expert coaches.

"Our focus is creating optimal health, which means meeting people of all backgrounds and fitness levels exactly where they are and giving them what they need," Levy explains. "This focus positions us well to serve a more mature demographic (educated 30-65 years old looking for long-term fitness benefits) compared to other, more hardcore brands. We end up serving a lot of people who got hurt doing other things."

The Future of Personal Training

The Fulcrum method is built around the brand's unique approach to personal training. Fulcrum's approach solves what Levy sees as fundamental flaws in the two dominant personal training business models currently used at most gyms and studios.

Under the "legacy training model," as Levy puts it, gyms rely on personal trainers to build their own books of business. That's great for the gym, until a top trainer leaves (to join a competing club or start their own business) and takes their entire client list with them out the door, depriving the gym owner of once steady-flowing revenue.



Photo courtesy of Fulcrum Fitness

“We’re in the middle of what happens when you either stick a bunch of personal trainers in a room and say, ‘you’re certified, go build your own little business,’ and something like the more cookie-cutter (group) workouts you get where the coaches are basically cheerleaders encouraging people to watch screens.”

— David Levy, Founder, Fulcrum Fitness

“On the flip side, you have boutiques which want to retain great talent but often use a cookie cutter model of pre-programmed workouts,” Levy says of the other model.

Fulcrum coaches are encouraged to bring their own knowledge and personality to training clients and designing programs, but they do so within the larger system of the Fulcrum method. That’s a win-win for FitPros since it allows them to do what they’re passionate about while at the same time getting help from an established brand.

“Talented coaches are gratified through creative expression and like to be recognized for it,” Levy says. “The Fulcrum method balances the creativity of expert coaches with the scalability of a system, which they have a part in the evolution of.”

Fulcrum offers three types of training sessions: one-on-one personal training, small group training of up to four clients and team training featuring groups of up to 20 people. The difference between a Fulcrum team training session and the typical boutique group fitness class, Levy says, is that Fulcrum trainers are dedicated to actually teaching rather than serving as eye candy.

“We’re in the middle of what happens when you either stick a bunch of personal trainers in a room and say, ‘you’re certified, go build your own little business,’ and something like the more cookie-cutter (group) workouts you get where the coaches are basically cheerleaders encouraging people to watch screens,” Levy says of what makes Fulcrum different.

Functional Fitness for Everyone

Another way Fulcrum is changing the personal training game is through its philanthropy foundation, which creates fitness coaching mentorship and internship opportunities for young people from less-advantaged socioeconomic backgrounds.

The foundation harkens back to one of Levy’s reasons for creating Fulcrum in the first place – to democratize access to high-quality personal training for functional fitness.

“There are droves of people out there who either don’t know about functional fitness or who think it’s just not for them because of how they look or how much money they have,” the Fulcrum founder says. “The foundation provides a way to reach out to those communities by inviting youth into the gyms to experience functional training but even more importantly, to show them a path to a career in fitness and a future in business ownership they never dreamed possible.”

Graduates of the foundation are encouraged to become Fulcrum coaches and even become franchise owners one day.



Photo courtesy of Fulcrum Fitness

An Innovative Approach to Franchise Growth

Fulcrum is gearing up to rapidly expand beyond its Portland roots, and it's doing so in two ways. First, prospective partners can franchise their own individual Fulcrum studio for an initial investment of between \$172,000 and \$350,000 plus a \$50,000 franchise fee, which are modest entry costs compared to most fitness studios.

"We come in at around half the cost of competing brands and are offering generous incentives as we ramp up the program," Levy notes.

Aside from Fulcrum's unique take on personal training, Levy says a key selling point of the business is that franchisees have significant flexibility in how they choose to build and position their Fulcrum studio.

"We have a modular system that allows for add-ons like a wellness or recovery suite, along with the ability to be adapted to a variety of different environments, from bare-bones industrial spaces to existing gyms looking for the next upgrade," he notes.

In addition to its traditional franchising efforts, Fulcrum offers an "in club" program that essentially allows established fitness brands to open a Fulcrum studio within their existing facility.

Levy says that for big box gyms, installing a Fulcrum training suite can give them an in-house boutique fitness experience that rivals smaller, more intimate studios. With Fulcrum, large gyms can better engage "sleeping members," or those people who sign up for a membership but don't come to the gym often or purchase any additional services.

"Installing a Fulcrum training suite adds another

touch point for marketing for clubs," Levy explains. "It's like an amenity, so immediately you open up the possibility for upsells with a 50% profit margin depending on the operation."



Photo courtesy of Fulcrum Fitness

As Fulcrum looks to expand, the hottest areas for the functional fitness brand right now in terms of franchise interest are from states in the West and Southwest regions of the U.S. Fulcrum is also looking to open a corporate location in Honolulu in 2024 and is in ongoing talks about potentially expanding Asia.

Levy is understandably optimistic about Fulcrum's growth potential, but he doesn't want to lose sight of why he created the brand in the first place as it grows.

"My biggest fear is being acquired by a firm that ends up corrupting the brand down the road," he says.



Photo courtesy of Self Esteem Brands

How Self Esteem Brands Drives Boutique Studio Growth

By Josh Liberatore

Self Esteem Brands (SEB) is best known as the parent company of Anytime Fitness, a highly popular gym chain with over 5,000 locations worldwide, but the fitness franchisor is also building a burgeoning portfolio of boutique fitness and wellness brands as part of an ambitious global expansion plan.

The Chuck Runyon and Dave Mortensen-founded Self Esteem Brands has set itself the lofty goal of opening 10,000 fitness, health and wellness clubs worldwide by 2030. Part of that plan will include scaling SEB's boutique studio brands including The Bar Method, Waxing the City and Basecamp Fitness (along with Basecamp's Australian sister brand, Sumhiit Fitness).

Basecamp, which offers HIIT-style group fitness classes, has 21 locations already opened along with nearly 70 franchise licenses sold in the U.S. as of August. Basecamp is in what Self Esteem Brands

calls "a high-growth phase," recently becoming the first of SEB's studio brands to offer franchising outside of the U.S. The Bar Method, meanwhile, has around 80 open locations; SEB plans to restart its expansion efforts for the Barre-inspired group fitness brand, which is now fully recovered from the pandemic.

On the wellness side, SEB had much success with Waxing the City, which offers waxing services along with skin and beauty care products. Already the second largest waxing franchise in the U.S., Waxing the City has more than 150 locations open across the U.S. and is on pace to end 2023 by opening twice as many locations as it opened the previous year.

As Self Esteem Brands looks to build its boutique brands into household names, the company will lean on the power of its already established brand: Anytime Fitness.

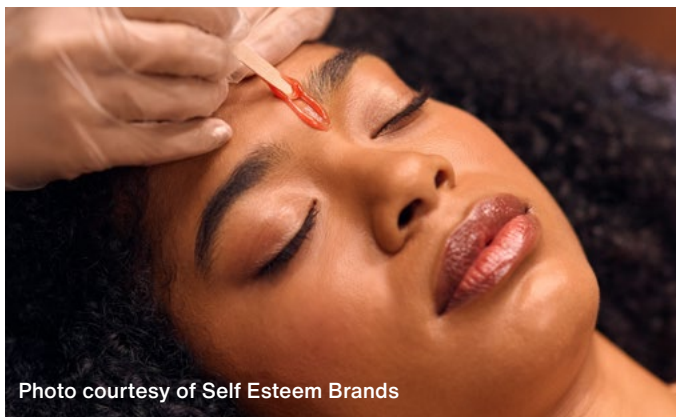


Photo courtesy of Self Esteem Brands

and gender distribution, among other demographics. The advantages of franchising with a big brand like SEB extend across the board, Herrild notes, including marketing, development, real estate and even preferential access to vendors.

“We can get better pricing and better technology opportunities because of our scale,” he says.

Brands Are Complimentary, Not Competitive

As SEB looks for ways to continue growing its boutique fitness and wellness brands, expect the company to lean on its already established network of Anytime Fitness franchisees.

SEB is starting to see interest from established Anytime Fitness franchise owners who are drawn to the community-driven atmosphere of boutique studios and want to get in on the action.

The SEB Franchise Network

Nick Herrild, President of Studio Brands for SEB, tells Athletech News that a key differentiator between other boutique fitness and wellness franchises and brands like Waxing the City, Basecamp Fitness and The Bar Method is that business owners under the Self Esteem Brands umbrella have access to the resources of one of the biggest franchise companies in the game.

“One of the things that’s great about being a franchisee of any of our brands at SEB is that you have access to our global franchise network, which includes many resources across all of our brands,” Herrild says.

While some larger boutique fitness franchisors may also have several brands under their corporate umbrella, they don’t have access to the data of Anytime Fitness, a big-box gym with thousands of locations and nearly three million members spread across the globe.

“We really are a unique platform in that way,” Herrild says. “Because of the size and scale of AF and the resources of SEB, we have a level of sophistication each of the brands couldn’t have if they stood on their own.”

Self Esteem Brands is actively investing in offering its boutique franchisees access to the same data and insights Anytime Fitness franchise owners have. For example, SEB has compiled robust consumer segmentation metrics that it uses to help inform its franchising strategy for each individual brand. That data helps SEB and its franchisees evaluate the opportunities and likelihood of success for different boutique brands in different areas.

“Basecamp may tap into that segmentation differently than The Bar Method, but the segmentation is still consistent, so we know where there’s overlap and where there isn’t,” Herrild says.

SEB also offers “analytical scoring sites,” giving franchisees intel on how potential locations would perform based on attributes like population, income



Photo courtesy of Self Esteem Brands

“ We have Anytime Fitness franchisees who are highly interested in the studio concepts. ... There’s a lot of opportunity, particularly for brands like Basecamp and The Bar Method, to target sophisticated owners that want to look at a multi-unit portfolio.”

— Nick Herrild, President of Studio Brands, Self Esteem Brands



Photo courtesy of Self Esteem Brands

“We have Anytime Fitness franchisees who are highly interested in the studio concepts for that reason,” Herrild shares. “There’s a lot of opportunity, particularly for brands like Basecamp and The Bar Method, to target sophisticated owners that want to look at a multi-unit portfolio.”

Right now, most cross-company franchising interest is between Anytime Fitness and Basecamp, Herrild says, but he expects interest to grow among franchisees who want to try other SEB combinations.

For franchisees looking to get adventurous, there are benefits of owning two different boutique brands under the SEB umbrella, since concepts are complimentary in terms of the types of customers they attract but not competitive in the services on offer.

“A Waxing the City and Bar Method location could literally be sharing a wall yet have complete insulation from each other in terms of what they’re offering,” Herrild notes. “But they would still have access to each other’s consumers because they’re similar.”

Sharing Best Practices

Operationally, having multiple brands under the same umbrella allows SEB to test new things, finding what works for one brand to bring those learnings over to the others.

SEB has been rolling out several new tech innovations at Waxing the City, including mobile POS systems, geofencing and automated check-ins and check-outs for members. Herrild says it’s all part of the company’s overall philosophy of leveraging tech to lower labor costs and streamline operations at its studios, which makes things easier for franchisees and customers alike.

The team at SEB chose Waxing the City to pilot those innovations because of the brand’s relatively large size with 150-plus locations, but it’s transporting those same tech learnings to Basecamp and The Bar Method.

“Using Basecamp as an example, we’ve re-worked how we coordinate the start of the workout with the lighting, the music and the monitor, so each member knows exactly which group they’re in and which workout they’re doing,” Herrild notes.

Inter-brand collaborations are important, but the team at SEB also works hard to ensure it’s supporting its franchisees down to the individual level, including monthly conversations that are specific to the franchisee.

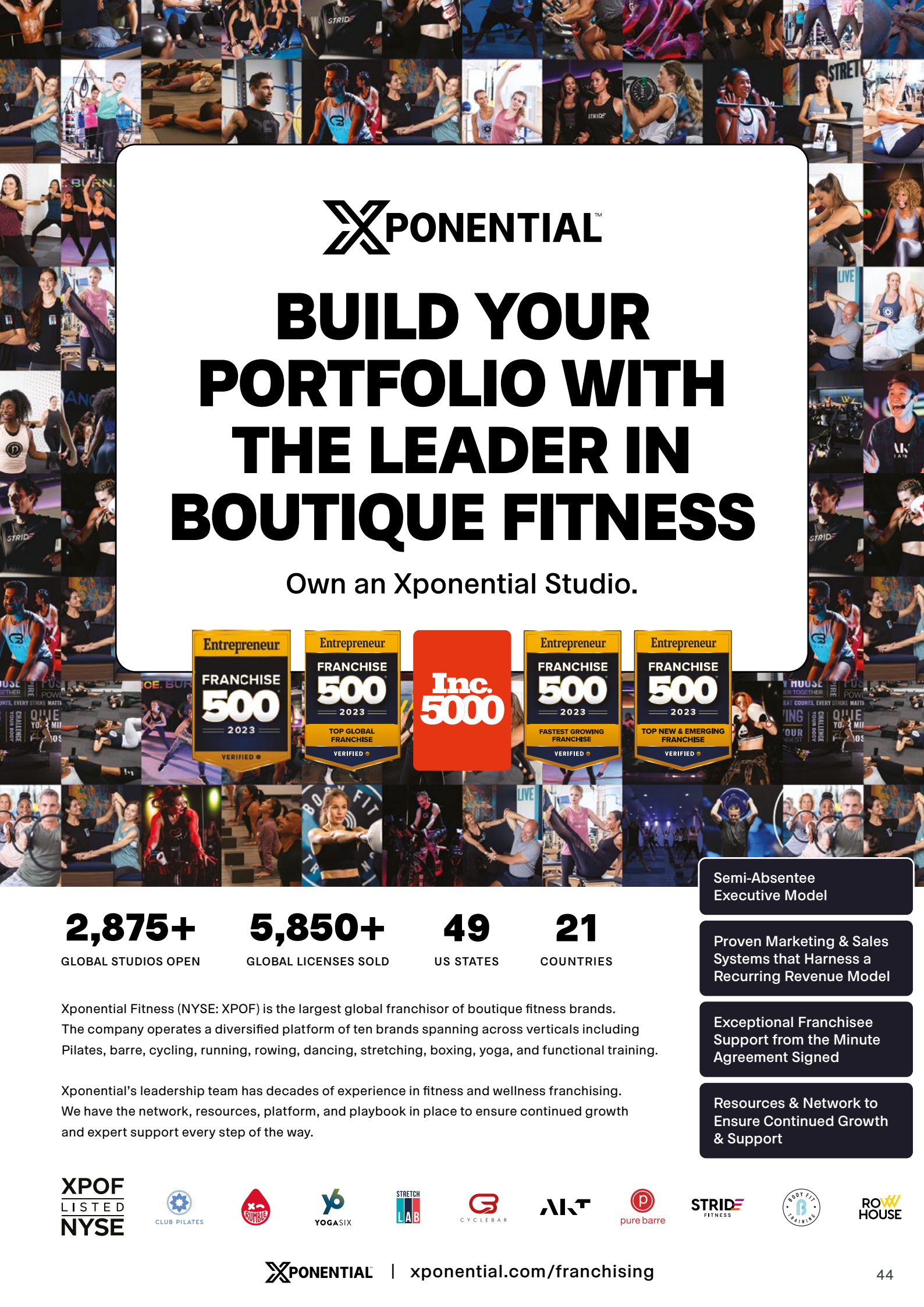
“By brand, we have franchise business consultants and franchise business coaches,” Herrild says. “They work with franchisees to help them look at their business and benchmark different pieces of their P&L to help them understand where they have the opportunity to drive profitability from the top line to the bottom.”

The robust approach to the business of franchising is likely why the team at SEB feels confident it can meet its goal of 10,000 clubs by the end of the decade. Post-pandemic, the company assures it’s doing better than ever, with a healthy franchise culture to match.

“We’re having a really great 2023, and we had a really great 2022 fiscal year,” Herrild says. “Our brands are all in the process of looking for ways to bring franchisees the best performance they can and grow, so we’re excited about where all of our brands are and where they’re going.”



Photo courtesy of Self Esteem Brands



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Photo courtesy of SweatHouz

SweatHouz Eyes Boutique Wellness Empire

By Athletech Studios

SweatHouz creator Jamie Weeks knows a good fitness and wellness franchising opportunity when he sees one.

Weeks founded Honors Holdings, which is now the largest Orangetheory Fitness franchisee in the world with over 140 studios.

Weeks, who likes to call himself a “serial operator of franchise businesses,” got a new business idea after regular trips to the infrared sauna helped him get better, longer sleep at night while lowering his resting heart rate from 63 beats per minute down to the low 50s.

“Here I am getting older, when it should be getting

harder to sleep, and I’m sleeping longer, with a lower resting heart rate,” Weeks, now 48, recalls. “It’s crazy to think that just 30 to 45 minutes in a sauna is what’s doing that.”

Inspired by that experience, Weeks created SweatHouz, a chain of infrared sauna and cold plunge studios, in 2019.

SweatHouz currently has 13 studios up and running and plans to have 25 to 30 opened by the end of this year. The company didn’t start franchising until the summer of 2022, but things are already moving fast, with more than 100 licenses sold in territories across the country.

“We hope to get 100 studios opened by the end of 2024,” Weeks says. “In 2024 and 2025, you’re going to start seeing SweatHouz locations pop up everywhere.”

In February, SweatHouz partnered with Hyperice. As part of the agreement, SweatHouz studios now feature Recovery Rooms outfitted with Hyperice products like the recovery brand’s Normatec air compression sleeves, portable Hypervolt massager and Venom, a heat and vibration wrap.

According to Weeks, the early success of the SweatHouz brand is a function of a few things: the benefits of hot and cold therapy, his team’s expertise as franchise operators and a strategic influx of private equity money to fuel growth.

The New Wave in Wellness

Scientists, doctors and influencers alike have extolled the many benefits of sauna sessions and cold plunges, including their abilities to promote recovery, help manage chronic pain and even improve mental health.

There are some encouraging findings from the medical community to support those claims.

Regular sauna use can increase healthspan and has been linked to a 30-50% decrease in cardiovascular disease and related deaths, according to a 2021 study. A meta-analysis conducted in 2022 showed that cold plunging was an effective recovery tool after high-intensity exercise, reducing muscle soreness, speeding up perceived recovery and even lowering inflammatory markers.

“The growth is not going to slow down any time soon, because it’s more than just recovery,” Weeks says of hot and cold therapy. “For some people, it’s recovery from working out. For others, it’s just being able to go into a sauna and meditate for 30 minutes after a long day, or cold plunging and feeling the endorphins and the dopamine rush. It’s all those things.”

The many benefits of hot and cold therapy allow SweatHouz to attract members from all walks of life, from the hardcore fitness enthusiast to the novice looking to unwind from a stressful day at work.

“It’s for the young CrossFit-er who’s doing muscle ups seven days a week and needs all the recovery they can get, but it’s also for the person who does very little working out and they’re getting their Zone 2 cardio workout while they’re sitting in an infrared sauna for 45 minutes,” Weeks says.

An Operator at Heart

Weeks knows what it takes to operate successful fitness and wellness franchises, as evidenced by his success with Orangetheory. Part of Weeks’ vision is for SweatHouz to have a limited number of

franchisees, but who control multiple units, similar to his own experience with Orangetheory.

For example, Weeks and his team are in talks with a group that would bring up to 20 SweatHouz locations to New Jersey.

“We’ve sold just over 100 licenses, but we’ve done it with only 15 franchisees,” Weeks noted.

Franchisees should have confidence in Weeks’ vision for SweatHouz because he’s putting his own time and money on the line. Weeks is planning to open at least 100 SweatHouz studios himself, through Legacy Franchise Concepts (LFC), a company he co-created alongside private equity firm Prospect Hill Growth Partners, because he’s so bullish on the concept.

“If Corporate LFC is going to open 100 SweatHouzes, that should tell you everything you need to know from a franchisor standpoint,” he says. “At the end of the day, we’re operators and my team is made up of entrepreneurial people who know how to operate businesses.”



Photo courtesy of SweatHouz

“We hope to get 100 studios opened by the end of 2024. In 2024 and 2025, you’re going to start seeing SweatHouz locations pop up everywhere.”

— Jamie Weeks, Founder, SweatHouz



Photo courtesy of SweatHouz

Private Equity Support

Weeks partnered with Prospect Hill Growth Partners in February 2022, a firm he had an existing relationship with through Honors Holdings. The sides combined to form LFC, which operates the global rights to SweatHouz.

The support from Prospect Hill has helped SweatHouz scale up over the past year and a half, improving the quantity and quality of wellness services it can offer to customers.

“There aren’t many recovery brands out there that are able to offer an infrared sauna, cold plunge, Hyperice Recovery Rooms and a Vitamin C shower,” Weeks said. “[In May], we did 7,200 cold plunges in 13 studios. We’re leading the cold plunge industry in the United States.”

SweatHouz plans to keep innovating with new services in the years to come.

One of those services could be bringing on coaches who work with SweatHouz members on guided stretching and flexibility routines, Weeks said. The wellness brand may also look to add coaches certified in breathwork who can help members employ breathing techniques to lower their resting heart rates.

“We want to always be evolving and keeping with technology,” Weeks says. “Having a private equity partner that allows me to have that vision and go do those things is really important.”

In the fitness industry, as in life, evolution is the key to long-term success.

“I’ve seen fitness concepts that just do one thing for 5 or 10 years and they don’t change anything,” Weeks cautions. “Those brands struggle to continue growing.”



Photo courtesy of SweatHouz



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Photo courtesy of UBX

UBX Boxing + Strength Plots US Expansion

By Athletech Studios

2023 has been a huge year for the boxing and strength fitness franchise UBX, with launches in four new countries, an exciting partnership with Warner Bros Pictures and Universal for the release of “Creed III,” a global deal with Adidas Combat Sports and now plans to reach 1,500 locations across the U.S.

Following its success in Australia, New Zealand and Singapore, UBX (pronounced You-Box) has brought its boxing and strength concept to New York, Tokyo, Manchester and Dublin this year alone and is on track to hit over 500 locations by 2028. Looking ahead, the brand plans to achieve at least half of its overall global footprint in the US.

“1,500 gyms in the U.S. and 1,500 gyms rest-of-world is the current goal. Currently, we have over 500 gyms contracted to open, which makes us, on paper,

3 times larger than the biggest boxing provider in history,” says Tim West, Co-Founder and Managing Director of UBX.

The UBX team is confident their unique model will succeed in the U.S. market through the brand’s ability to offer members access to one-on-one boxing padwork within its group training format that also offers flexible start times where no bookings are required and removes the need for a class timetable altogether.

“Boxing as a sport is massive,” West notes. “Boxing as a fitness modality has and always will be here. It’s popular, it’s effective and UBX is making it more accessible than ever. We strongly believe that there is infinite scale for our product in the market.”



Photo courtesy of UBX

Franchise interest has been strong to date, with the UBX team actively recruiting across fitness professionals ready to step into an owner-operator role through to business investors looking to add a low-capital, high-return boutique gym concept to their portfolio.

The UBX model came to life when West and Co-Founder Danny Green, a former professional boxer with four world championship titles, saw a gap in the fitness landscape and sought to re-imagine how boxing could scale as an uber-flexible, disruptive challenger in the marketplace. The idea was to achieve a boutique format that offered group training and an authentic boxing experience combined with a science-based strength program that was suitable for all fitness and skill levels; those new to fitness as well as seasoned fitness enthusiasts.

In 2016, the first location launched in Brisbane, Australia and through the overwhelming advocacy of the product, the brand grew to 60 locations in under three years, with many of the first territories bought by existing members, or friends and family of members.

Today, the brand has expanded on the value offering, placing co-founder Green as Head of Boxing alongside Brad Harrington, former strength and conditioning coach for Australia's national rugby union team, the Wallabies, to lead programming of the workouts, which change daily. The boxing and strength workouts are also via an app, with a selection of body-weight and equipment-based exercises that members can access whenever and wherever they want.

Innovation will continue to be a driving force behind the brand with further new developments to be announced soon for even greater convenience and value for members. The UBX team looks forward to achieving its vision of becoming the largest boxing community in the world.

“ Boxing as a sport is massive. Boxing as a fitness modality has and always will be here. It’s popular, it’s effective and UBX is making it more accessible than ever. We strongly believe that there is infinite scale for our product in the market.”

— Tim West, Co-Founder and Managing Director, UBX



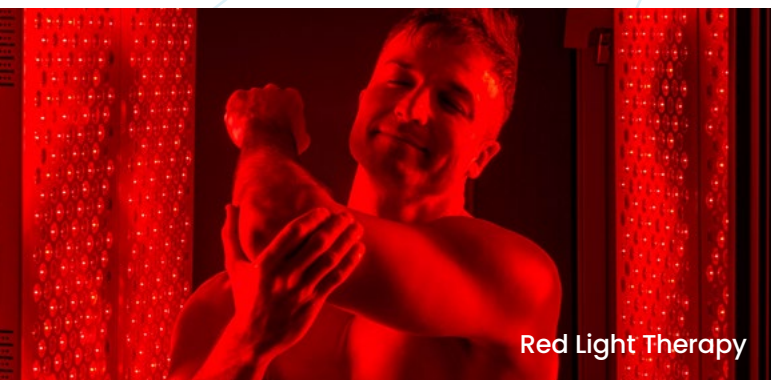
UBXCo-Founders Tim West (l) and Danny Green (credit: UBX)

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Assisted Stretching: The Next Big Thing in Wellnes

by Courtney Rehfeldt

In a world where consumers are increasingly focusing on fitness and wellness, one new sector is quickly gaining popularity: assisted stretching.

This growing new sector has led to stretching franchises like StretchLab and Stretch Zone popping up across the country, while gyms and fitness operators, including Life Time and GymGuyz, are rapidly adding assisted stretching to their services.

Tony Zaccario, president and CEO of Stretch Zone is in the middle of the assisted stretching craze, with Stretch Zone having launched over 100 new locations this year, boasting a compound annual growth rate of 58% over the past four years.

“I think what’s fascinating is that the general public is starting to prioritize their overall health and wellness a lot more than they have in the past,” Zaccario said.

While those who may have initially been attracted to

assisted stretching are routinely physically active, like weekend warriors or collegiate athletes, Zaccario sees that all people are beginning to realize the benefits of basic steps to improve overall well-being, whether through assisted stretching or simply going for a walk.

“Combine that with an aging population and I think there’s going to continue to be ample opportunity in the health and wellness industry and the assisted stretching industry,” Zaccario said. “The ceiling is still yet to be seen when it comes to the assisted stretch industry,”

The Stretch Zone Approach

The goals of Stretch Zone clients are taken into account in order to deliver the optimal assisted stretching routine, which is paramount to the franchisor.

“We always strive to design programs unique to the individual because it’s understanding that longevity means completely different things to every single individual, depending on what your goal is,” said Zaccario. “That’s why we’re adamant for our franchisees and their team members to understand why a person is even interested in a stretching routine and what are the differences they want to make in their life.”



Photo courtesy of Stretch Zone

Fully confident in the life-changing service it can provide to guests, Stretch Zone offers a complimentary assisted stretching session for those new to its studios. While the “first stretch free” concept may go against the grain, Zaccario says it’s been a big piece of spreading the word early on.

“People could see the difference firsthand immediately,” he said of the complimentary stretches. “The other big piece is that it’s such a great service.”

As Stretch Zone continues to grow, Zaccario shares that the process has been very organic, with stores as far as Anchorage, Alaska.

“We’re well on our way and pretty close to the 350 mark as far as open locations by the end of the year and 500 open locations across the country next year,” Zaccario said. “It starts with finding good people with good human characteristics.”

Aside from passionate franchisees, Stretch Zone is relatively easy to launch.

“We’ve developed a really robust and proven business model,” he said. “We’re not necessarily looking for people to reinvent the wheel. We just want people that want to take the playbook and run with it.”

According to Zaccario, the process comes down to good people doing good things.

“When you find good franchisees who are good human beings and care about the service and care

about the communities, they’re likely to attract good individuals within their respective communities who are going to take and give the utmost care of their clientele,” he says.

For those looking to enter franchising, Zaccario advises prospective franchisees to find something they are passionate about, while also keeping one thing in mind: “As much as you are buying a product, you’re buying a business model,” he explained.

Zaccario also advises franchisee prospects to do their own research and talk to existing franchisees.

“A franchisor should never shy away from having you talk to existing franchisees or even old franchisees if it’s a good brand and a good product,” he points out. “I think that that level of transparency has been paramount to our growth and a big reason why we have 300+ stores, because we’re not going to shy away from any of that because we try to run everything the right way and stay on the up and up.”



Photo courtesy of Stretch Zone

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— Tony Zaccario, President and CEO, Stretch Zone

Xponential Hits it Big With StretchLab

Another assisted stretching behemoth, StretchLab, one of Xponential Fitness' most valuable and successful brands, has opened over 350 studios in the U.S. and internationally, looking to hit 400 by the end of the year.

“That seems like a big number, but it’s still not in the grand scheme of where we know we’re going to be in the next few years,” Verdine Baker, StretchLab president, has told Athletech News.

The brand is looking to make assisted stretching as familiar as booking a massage, hoping to win over consumers by proving that assisted stretching trumps getting a massage in terms of lasting health effects.

“Massage therapy is a fantastic modality, but a lot of our members will say, ‘I’ll get a message and I’ll feel good immediately after the massage, but a few days later I may not be getting the long-term effect,’” Baker explained.

The clientele at StretchLab ranges from athletes to active seniors eager to feel the benefits of assisted stretching.

As for franchising, Baker explained that Xponential is able to get partners to open their doors “already in the black, or as close to it as possible.”

“We start our presale process quickly, so while a studio is getting built we’re able to generate memberships,” he shared. “That also means getting our franchisees prepared for presale. What we’re doing in our franchise training and general management training is less about trying to teach somebody a whole entire playbook, when they’re going to need a quarter of the playbook in the next three to six months.”

StretchLab also leverages digital advertising to acquire members, with a strong correlation between the number of leads in presale and how strong a studio opens.

“We’ve also added automation as part of our communication, so potential members are able to get the right information about who we are and what we do at StretchLab even before that franchise owner has labor that can execute those communications,” Baker noted.

The assisted stretching brand looks for franchisees who are accountable leaders who can follow the famous Xponential playbook.

“We’re going to give you people, real industry experts, who are going to help you every step of the way, but you have to execute as a franchise partner,” Baker said. “I can’t have my vice president of sales and operations come out and sell memberships for a partner long term or my vice president of training

and experience come out and stretch somebody long term. Our partners have to be able to set the right expectations and hold their teams accountable.

Like anything else in fitness, it’s about “building the right culture,” Baker says.



Photo courtesy of Xponential Fitness



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