

THE PRODUCT ZONE



I gotta tell you, this stuff in The Product Zone is what I want when I grow up! Wish your company's product was in here for the world to see? Then be in touch with Gene Treacy at the GearTrends sales office: Gene@geartrends.com or 865-675-2052.



Introducing **Visor® Buff®**: Sun visor, cap and bandana—all complete with a peak to keep the sun off! This seamless polyester microfiber tube with a neoprene visor is endlessly versatile. A unique garment, available in a variety of colors (and custom prints too!), Visor® Buff® is perfect for **active living!**



Bongo Board & BoardRock



The Bongo Board and BoardRock are awesome trainers for skateboarders, snowboarders, wake-boarders, surfers or anyone who wants better balance and spinning skills. When you get on either of these boards and start spinning, rocking and rolling around, you'll quickly realize how the skills you're practicing and the confidence you're gaining will transfer over to all your other boarding sports.

Fitterfirst Classic Series



Fitterfirst's FUNctional line of products will improve your customers' balance, performance, and help reduce the risk of injuries.

Healthy customers buy more fitness products!



Fitter's products have been highlighted in magazines such as Time, Men's Health, SHAPE, SKI, US weekly, Outside, MAXIM & many more!



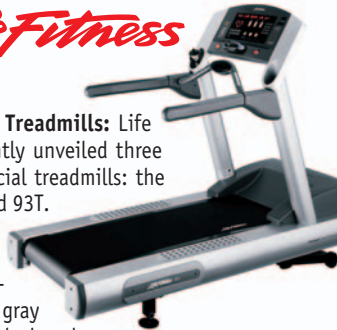
Elite Series Treadmills: The new Horizon Elite Series Treadmills offer a rugged frame and intuitive console, with an oversized ComfortZone™ deck that's stable and comfortable from warm-up to cool-down. This line also incorporates a FeatherLight™ dual hydraulic folding mechanism for easy transport and storage. For more on the new Elite Series line, visit www.horizonfitness.com.



Iron Grip eWeight Planner™: Iron Grip has partnered with fourteen of the top strength equipment manufacturers in the industry to take the guesswork out of planning your gym's free weights. Iron Grip's new program calculates the correct quantity and size breakdown of Olympic plates, bars, and dumbbells, using the quantity of your club's plate loaded and free weight equipment as a guide. For more information, and a complete list of participating manufacturers, visit www.eweightplanner.com. Call 800-664-4766 • www.ironrip.com

Life Fitness

Life Fitness Treadmills: Life Fitness recently unveiled three new commercial treadmills: the 97Ti, 95Ti and 93T. The units combine a mix of metallic silver and gray tones with a sleek and contemporary industrial design. For even more exercise variety and increased ease of use, the treadmills' software programming has been enhanced. New innovative features include integrated accessory trays and a CD/MP3 player holder. The new products keep all of the features you expect from Life Fitness treadmills like a 4.0 HP AC motor, the patented FlexDeck shock absorption system and the Everwax automatic wax lubrication system.



Protected by KINeSYS Performance Sunscreens Athletes have a lower incidence of most disease expect one—Skin Cancer. KINeSYS products are oil/alcohol-free, UVA/UVB protective and are water/sweat-resistant. Professional, Olympic and elite athletes everywhere use KINeSYS because of their ease of use (fine mist spray) and effectiveness. These are the best sunscreens on the market.



See www.kinesys.com or call 1-888-kinesys.

Protected by KINeSYS Performance Sunscreens

These extraordinary sunscreens are oil/alcohol-free, UVA/UVB protective and are water/sweat-resistant. An ergonomic bottle and spray format were designed specifically for active lifestyles. These products are all about "performance." Professional, Olympic and elite athletes everywhere use KINeSYS. These may be the best sunscreens in the world.



See www.kinesys.com or call 1-888-kinesys for more information.



Look for the NALGENE® name on the bottle. It's your assurance that you're getting the original NALGENE bottle with the Lifetime Leakproof Guarantee. For more information, visit www.nalgene-outdoor.com or call 1-877-523-0653 for a FREE catalog.



StairMaster® ClubTrack® 2100 LE/LC Treadmill
Experience StairMaster's legendary quality and performance in the new ClubTrack 2100 LE/LC treadmills.

Features like the improved TripleFlex™ shock absorption, 3rd generation AC-Hyperdrive system, and the new C50 console provide a superior workout experience. This new treadmill has a natural walking/running feeling with a minimum of shock, and is quiet and very smooth.

For more information on any of our products, contact The Nautilus Health & Fitness Group
1-800-864-1270.



PRECOR^{USA} move beyond™



C846 Recumbent Cycle: New design features superior back support and touch heart-rate sensors on seat handles. Steel tube frames, rigid steel crank and new seat, handlebars and pedals. Self-powered with drive based on Precor EFX®. 15 courses, with Watts, heart-rate and fitness test. 25 resistance levels. Touch-sensitive displays and accessory holders. CSAFE compatible. www.precor.com • 800-786-8404

PRECOR^{USA} move beyond™



C846 Upright Cycle: New design features durability and comfort: steel tube frames, rigid steel crank, new handlebars and pedals. Seat height changes without dismounting. Self-powered with smooth, low maintenance drive based on Precor EFX®. 15 courses, with Watts, heart-rate and fitness test. 25 resistance levels. Touch heart-rate sensors, touch-sensitive displays and accessory holders. CSAFE compatible. www.precor.com • 800-786-8404

PRECOR^{USA} move beyond™



C842 Recumbent Cycle: Simpler, economical option without giving up durability or comfort, C842 upright features C846 construction: Steel tube frames, new seat with superior back support. New handlebars, pedals, rigid crank and drive drawn from Precor EFX®. Six courses and 25 resistance levels. Touch-sensitive displays, heart rate telemetry and SmartRate® feedback. Accessory holders. www.precor.com • 800-786-8404

PRECOR^{USA} move beyond™



C842 Upright Cycle: Simpler, economical option without giving up durability or comfort, C842 upright features C846 construction: Steel tube frames, rigid steel crank and new seat, handlebars and pedals. Self-powered with smooth drive drawn from the Precor EFX®. Six courses and 25 resistance levels. Touch-sensitive displays, heart rate telemetry and SmartRate® feedback. Accessory holders. www.precor.com • 800-786-8404

SPORTSART
THE LOOK OF A NEW LEADER



C51 Recumbent: One look at the all-new C Series cycles from SportsArt will tell you that their reputation for innovation is well deserved. These cycles, which are new from the ground up, will essentially re-invent indoor cycling. From the easy, step through access to the infinitely adjustable 4-bar linkage (an example of SportsArt's uFit technology), these units are chock full of thoughtful and innovative features that all users will appreciate.

SPORTSART
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C51 Upright: This all-new product offers bold styling and several thoughtful user features. The low profile enclosure allows easy mounting/dismounting. The display features programs, a dot matrix, large LED's, and oversize water bottle/CD/cell phone storage. This, and the premium build quality, set the C51u apart from other similarly priced products.

SPORTSART
THE LOOK OF A NEW LEADER

C52 Upright: Both SportsArt C52 Series cycles feature a self-generating power supply and the unique Personal Cardio Advisor (PCA). This feature allows users to maximize their heart-rate training even if they are not in an HRC program. Once the rider enters their age, PCA automatically displays their weight loss and cardio training heart rate goals during their entire workout. If the rider wears a chest strap, their real time HR will display during the workout and they can monitor how close they are to their target HR goals.



C52 Recumbent: This breakthrough product features step through design and the Personal Cardio Advisor heart-rate training system. In addition, SportsArt's uFit technology takes center stage. The infinitely adjustable 4-bar linkage is augmented by the outdoor style recumbent mesh-style seatback. This ultra-comfortable seat back is enhanced through an infinitely adjustable seat back actuated by a convenient outdoor bike style grip.



As the demand for women's-specific socks increases, Wigwam continues to expand the Women's line to meet consumer demand by adding several new key styles. Wigwam's new **Women's Coolmax® Quarter** sock is made of the moisture management and quick drying characteristics of DuPont® Coolmax® and Stretch Nylon for the optimum fit. These soft, cushioned socks are offered in two women's specific sizes and available in fashion-colored cuff accents.

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• **Leverage your influencer network:** We're not talking celebrity or guru endorsements. Instead, consider who influences your target: Trainers? Friends? Instructors? Many times the expert is right on the sales floor. Ensuring that everyone in the sales chain, from your own salespeople, to distributors, to retail staff, completely understand your positioning, and how to clearly articulate it is a sure way to increase sales. It's what the brand experts call Systemic Branding.

STEP 2 STEP TWO: INDUCE TRIAL—Now that your prospect knows your name and has some understanding of your brand, it's time to get them to buy. The forgotten link in brand-based selling is often this last mile. There are three components to consider:

Inspire sales staff: Especially at retail, salespeople hold huge influence in the purchase decision. Unfortunately, they are often the last on a manufacturer's list. Instead, make them brand advocates by immersing them in your brand. Arm them with the passion and tools they need to catapult sales. You say you have this covered? Think again. Retailers' back rooms are filled with unused fixtures, sales materials and promotional items. Get into the field more. Sit down with buyers, managers and folks on the floor. Ask exactly what is needed to drive sales. And then listen.

Owning the point of sale: Point-of-sale (POS) materials can be as simple as shelf cards or as elaborate as a home-gym concept shop. The point to remember is that POS materials are one part brand builder, two parts salesperson. They should inform and inspire the customer on their terms, speaking of what is most important for them, not just laying out the features and tech specs. And POS materials also need to work on their own. Customers may want to take material and look at it at home before—or if—buying. POS also helps keep sales staff on message with "cue cards," so to speak. One note: Before spending big money on POS, be sure to discuss needs with your sales staff, as well as retail partners to get an idea of what they really need, and the details of how it should be designed.

Consumer promotion: The last step in branded sales is driving the customer into the store. The most common form of consumer promotion is couponing. But be careful: dollars-off coupons may spike sales, but they erode margin. Do the math and make sure the numbers add up. Better still; develop programs that are less costly, such as in-store clinics, gift-with-purchase, and even events at local gyms or sessions with


trainers. Conspire early and often with retail partners or distributors, then get the word out early enough using store databases, local advertising, fliers in gyms and press releases. Most promotions fail because people just didn't know about it. And one quick note on sweepstakes come-ons: Research shows that people are driven less by one big grand prize, and more by the odds of winning. Instead of awarding a costly prize to one in 10,000, consider many less expensive prizes and offers that more people can win.

STEP 3 STEP THREE: REPEAT THE SALE—Once you've sold one machine, it's time to sell the rest of the gym. Too many companies talk to customers only if something goes wrong. Instead, look at the people who have purchased your goods as your best prospects for future sales. Think how they will progress: Will they want additional equipment? Are there add-ons, accessories, and maintenance materials and programs? Have a plan before they buy, and then keep in contact with a light touch; you don't want to sour the relationship by being overly aggressive. But make sure they know you're there when they need you.

One great way to cultivate repeat sales is to work with promotional partners. Identify complementary manufacturers, and team up on offers and marketing programs.

Other ways to drive repeat sales include:

Loyalty programs and direct communications: Perhaps the best example of a loyalty program is airline frequent flier memberships: The more you fly, the more you get. Treat your customers the same way, both in the trade and with end-users. Delve into your database to see who is truly your best customer, and reward them through an elite program with benefits. It's a self-governing tactic: Only if participants reach pre-approved sales goals are they awarded; the cost is built into the system.

The pivotal role of customer service: An important element to creating loyalty is customer service. It's easier to lose customers than to gain them. One superior or horrible interaction with customer service can be the difference. In fact, in the case of recalls, broken equipment and even a company crisis, those companies that go the extra mile often create customers for life. A terrific example is Tylenol. When the tampering scare threatened to destroy the entire organization, Tylenol, through an extreme devotion to its customers' safety, turned the situation around. It was that handling of a grave crisis that helped the company maintain its No. 1 position. 

Len Cercone, a marketing specialist, is available at lcercone@cerconebrown.com.

(Retailer Survey continued from page 19)

- » The industry definitely needs that “next new thing” to get it growing again. Currently, there are too many specialty fitness stores, too many manufacturers, too many look-alike products and not enough fitness participants and specialty store customers. Elliptical trainers helped for awhile, but now the industry needs something new.
- » The next big thing is not that important. The fact that people are becoming more aware of the importance of fitness is all that is necessary.
- » No, I think manufacturers need to put more money into promoting the benefits of training at home. If manufacturers would promote the products they currently offer on a wider (national TV) scale, it would help retailers more than a new gadget.

How much of a role does brand name play in a purchase? Do consumers generally know (or care about) fitness equipment/accessory brands when they come in? If so, how do they know (advertising, friends, health clubs, etc.)?

Brands, schmand, a lot of customers don't know a Parabody from a Paramount from a Precor from a Powertec. They want features, size and price to fit their needs. But the Internet and research on the Internet is starting to make brand a little more important. Still, that doesn't negate the import of the knowledge of the salesperson and his or her ability to tap into the customers' needs and steer them toward that product. Customers also know brand from exposure at health clubs—assuming they pay attention to the name plaque. We know someone who has worked out for years on an elliptical trainer and when we asked her what

brand it was, she said she didn't know and would look. Her answer back to us: “Precursor.” So much for brand awareness. Comment excerpts:

- » Brand name is not as important in specialty fitness. Our brands do not advertise consumer-direct. We advertise our business and essentially we—the store—are the brand. Anything we carry also comes with our “brand identity” and a certain amount of endorsement. Word of mouth, great customer service, and support build “our brand!”
- » Brand name is important to a point. How you talk about brand is more important. I think Life Fitness, Nautilus, Schwinn, Precor are brands most people know.
- » Yes and no. Everyone knows Lifecycle and StairMaster. People ask for a stairmaster, not a stairclimber machine. Most people don't care about the brand name as long as the product does what they need.
- » Compared to other industries, brand name is still very weak. We brand our business, not the items.
- » Brand plays a role but the performance of the equipment is more important and the presentation of the fitness consultant.
- » Active exercisers definitely know brands. It is the mass market of users which do not know brands until they see them in stores or media. Active exercisers are simply influenced by experience, referrals, etc. Mass is influenced by floor space and media.
- » Brand awareness is not a significant factor with the majority of our customers. However, it becomes very significant if the customer has had either a favorable or unfavorable experience in their health club.
- » Brand recognition is playing a larger role with the proliferation of Internet use. People see brand names in their clubs and research these brands on the Net. The names are not all-important now but are becoming more so each day.
- » I've noticed that over time most of the companies that spent a lot of money on building a brand name ended up going bankrupt—Nautilus, Schwinn, StairMaster, and NordicTrack. It seems that when a customer does know of a brand it's because of a late-night infomercial (Bowflex) or because of their health club (Life Fitness or Precor).

(Association Report continued from page 37)

Newsletter, the watchdog known as the Nutrition Police (remember Fettuccine Alfredo being called a heart attack on a plate?). No reason why the country shouldn't have a Fitness Police, and we think ACE can do it.

and credible resources, ACSM continues to reign in that realm. Its brand screams trust. Now that brand may reach beyond the professional to the consumer in promoting physical activity. We like what we have heard and look forward to more.

ACSM

American College of Sports Medicine

Long known for its gold-standard certifications of trainers, physiologists and exercise technicians, the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) is now raising the bar higher. This year, ACSM won a leading role in developing the first-ever standards for college degrees in exercise science, according to Cathy Stewart, national director of certification and registry programs. The result? A graduate in a fitness or exercise specialty might have the same institutional cachet as, for example, a surgical assistant. Meanwhile, ACSM is continuing to produce scientifically sound information about fitness to both professionals and the public through its website, periodicals and books. But wait, there's more. With the scientific arm and the application for the professional now in place, the group is beginning to dabble its toes in the third and last corner of its triangle: consumer education. Look to see campaigns promoting fitness broadly that will grow in the next few years. “The bigger picture is, we're looking for all kinds of ways to outreach directly to the public,” Executive Vice President James Whitehead told GearTrends. www.acsm.org

GT VIEW: A long-time go-to Rock of Gibraltar for non-biased, scientific

FISA

Fitness Industry Suppliers Association

Only three years old, the Fitness Industry Suppliers Association (FISA) represents commercial equipment manufacturers and suppliers of information technology. The group, which has grown from 12 to 30 members, provides a members-only global market study, as well as reports on how health clubs are grappling with information technology. Executive Director David Dinerman said FISA is “blue-skying” several ideas, including a specialty fitness publication to update professionals on market trends. He's also working on a program to help commercial suppliers—something that might be an answer to the growing burden and expense of trade shows. www.fisana.org

GT VIEW: FISA operates with a secrecy bordering on the paranoid, which is odd for an organization that is small enough to be overlooked in the first place. As a young group, it is still finding its footing and, because of that, we wish it would take the opportunity presented to it to become a broader fitness industry group, not just one for commercial suppliers (been there, done that). If it's going to make a mark, FISA will have to take a stand one day. And be willing to talk about it.