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are the certification programs offered by nationally recognized organizations. Aside from the immediate benefit of certification status, your contact with such an organization can have some other longer-term advantages. "The most useful thing to me thus far has been my experience with the National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM)," claims fitness consultant John Platero, "because I was able to befriend two or three of the instructors and spend time with them as well as read the literature and videos they send out." John is a training veteran who holds every prominent American certification and has also developed a program for the health-club chain LA Fitness.

Trainer Tawni Graf, who entered the business in recent years, had to go back and learn the basics of anatomy, nutrition and biomechanics. She did it by taking both college-level classes and courses with LA Fitness School and different associations. "I'm continually learning," she says, "because the field that we're in changes. They keep finding new information all the time — new equipment, new technology."

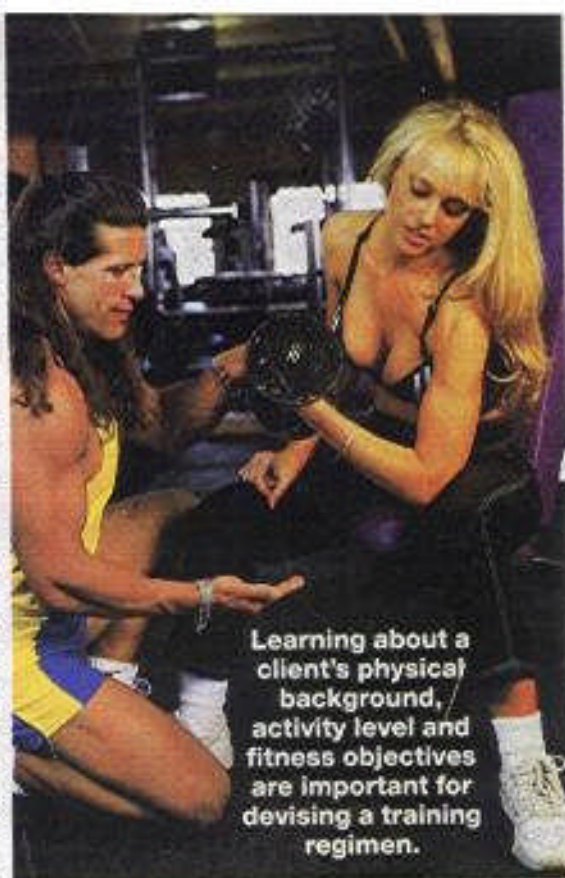
Documentation

Before you even begin offering personal training services, investigate

any business license requirements in your city, county or state. What do you need to carry as far as liability insurance? Do you have on hand a copy of your diploma or certification? Keep as many relevant references or testimonials as close by as possible. As Tawni Graf points out: "Documentation and referrals are essential — even a picture of yourself. References assure new clients that they can trust you, that you are practicing what you preach. You need to develop your relationship with these people and the first way to do that is to show them you are educated and this job is something you love to do."

Professionalism

Your professional profile in this business relies to a great extent on your ability to continually develop and maintain communication. Really understanding a client's physical background and lifestyle objectives is critical for your own recommendations to be truly relevant. John Platero explains it this way: "Is your client



Learning about a client's physical background, activity level and fitness objectives are important for devising a training regimen.

a visual, sedentary or kinesthetic learner? Learn how to communicate in these different idioms. Be systematic in your analysis in order to develop a program tailored to your client's needs. Have her complete a profile sheet. Have her thoroughly outline her lifestyle and eating habits. Do a postural assessment."

Client Relations

Communication is important even in dealing with such details as scheduling, fees or just exhibiting basic consideration. Clarify your cancellation policy with a new client at the outset of your working relationship. A 24-hour cancellation policy is normal, although you may find a 12-hour policy is equally sufficient. You may want to offer a free trial session. It's a common enough marketing approach in the fitness business. Do not discount the positive effect of gestures like occasionally calling a client to see how they feel after a workout, or to check up on a client who has been under the weather.

Before you start training others, you better know what you're doing. A college degree and certification are big assets.



Personal Trainer Resources

Most certification organizations offer not only CPT status but also ongoing benefits such as liability and health insurance plus professional membership events like further certification programs, seminars and conferences. Here are contact numbers for some of the leading fitness certification schools around the U.S.

- L.A. Fitness School: (800) 778-6060
- American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM): (800) 486-5643
- National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA): (402) 476-6669
- American Council on Exercise (ACE): (800) 825-3636
- Aerobics & Fitness Association of America (AFAA): (800) 923-2346
- National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM): (800) 656-2739

Image and Self-maintenance

Are you in the kind of shape that presents a positive statement about your profession? Even if you are genetically gifted, your own personal dedication to active exercise will send the right message. John Platero finds time to integrate his fitness needs into his work schedule by daily cycling miles between different business locations. "The key word is to be organized," he emphasizes. "You have to schedule your day. It has to be written down." Your day planner or electronic organizer will be your guardian angel. Graf, a single mother with a young daughter, fits her workouts in at least four days a week. "As a personal trainer I am also working out seven days a week with my clients, no matter what," she says. "However, I arrange it so that I get off early to spend time with my daughter every day. Personal training is a field that allows a mother to have a career and spend a lot of time with her family. You can still make good money even though it doesn't demand eight hours a day."

Marketing and Pricing

The best starting point for marketing yourself will always begin with your own personal realm. "I almost grew up in a gym," says Platero. "My father was a weightlifter and I was always someone who asked questions. Eventually people started asking me questions." Graf's story is much the same. "My ex-husband was a bodybuilder. That was my introduction to the world of the gym and fitness."

For newly-certified trainer Neva Roberts, finding that personal connection into the world of fitness began with having a baby, then losing 55 pounds when she went to the gym. She decided to take her new love of training a step further. "Most of my personal training since has been with female clients who've had babies because I was around other moms and they were fascinated by how I lost the weight. They couldn't believe that I had a baby. So I specialize in that - helping women who have just had babies lose weight and get back to an ideal diet."

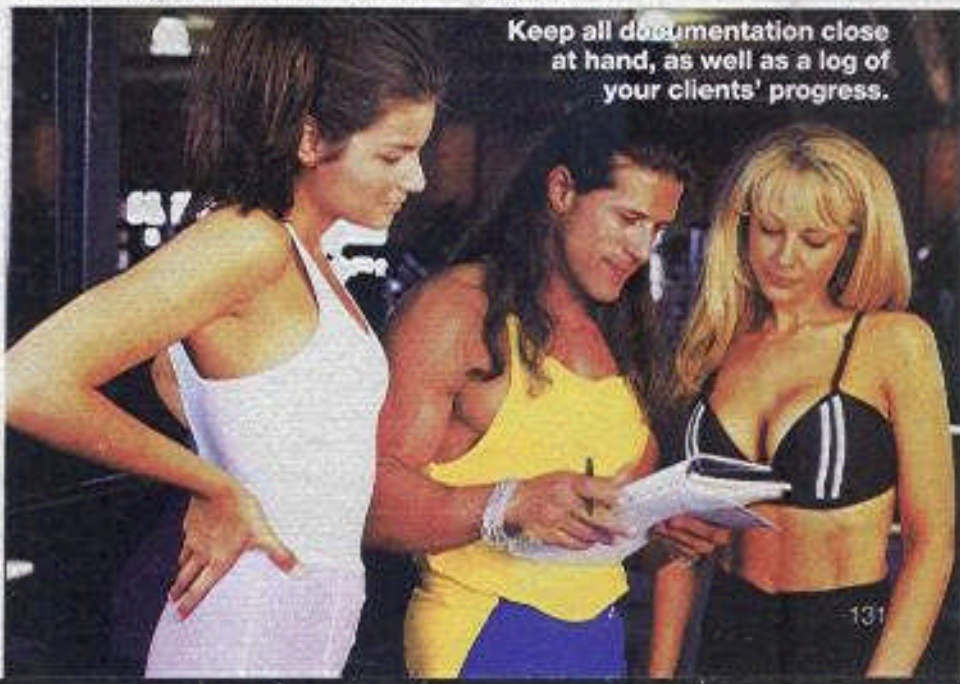
As far as pricing, all three advise newcomers to research as much as possible the going rates for trainers in the area and in equivalent training facilities. After you have sufficiently



Good trainers like John Platero stay in great shape. It not only proves his dedication to fitness, it's motivational as well.

enticed a potential client with an initial free session, it makes financial sense to calculate your ongoing services on a discount basis.

In conclusion, besides simply striving to increase your client load, you should aim to achieve a lasting relationship with every client. It will prove to be mutually productive for both of you. The outstanding shape you can guide someone toward in a long-term relationship is the living picture that tells 1,000 words about your abilities as a trainer. 



Keep all documentation close at hand, as well as a log of your clients' progress.