

Leanne Young and Vinny Mansi Entry

Creating more freaks and creating clubs within the community by going back to old school principles of the late 1980s and early 90s but staying faithful to the Les Mills code

Incorporating the following benefits

- Enhancing connection and retention through tracking the progress of our members in Les Mills BODYPUMP™
- Enhancing connection and retention further by listening to and understanding members through our Group Fitness Clinic
- Stopping a member from sliding down the commitment scale by creating a total freak through good technique.
- Atmospheric reciprocity through team teaching as a couple.
- The Group fitness Familython - Creating a club within the community through our exciting “Family Event”

Background

This entry is by us both because we have used our partnership not only in our personal lives but also in our working lives to create this successful story.

The late 1980s and early 1990s

We are both fitness teachers of a second generation. As children we grew up watching our parents teaching aerobics classes - when group fitness programs from companies such as Les Mills were not yet available in this country. According to them, instructors were of a higher standard when it came to connection and retention of members.

WHY?

Many Aerobics instructors of this era had no room for complacency; instructors like our parents hired village halls for the evening and had to pay a fixed rate. Having a club within a community was normal as many of the people who attended were your neighbours or friends or people you grew up with. In order to make money, the instructor held a class for beginners, an intermediate and even an advanced class; charging each individual a fee per class. This meant they, as the instructor, had hired the hall themselves. They were responsible for their own retention of class members. The more members or participants they retained, the more profit they made. NO MEMBERS MEANT NO PROFIT.

What methods did they use?

The main system they used was a series of tracker cards designed to monitor people's heart rates over specified period of time. The instructors would monitor the participants' heart rate at specific times within the class and also over time the participants would do it themselves. They would be able to monitor their fitness levels and gain a sense of improvement and achievement. Each week the participant would collect the tracker card at the start of the class

and by the end of the session they could see their progress. Sometimes the participant would see an improvement in their resting heart rate before the class even started and therefore would feel more motivated and encouraged the work that extra bit harder for that particular session. This was especially common in the beginners' class and essential for retaining members.

SO what's different now?

As the industry has progressed, getting yourself fit has become much more gym-based. As we all know, group fitness is now free with gym membership. This means that the instructors are no longer individually responsible for connection and retention of members - it is the gym as a whole.

Although some instructors are more passionate than others, it is very likely that if the instructor is half decent, members will attend a Les Mills session because they are so popular and globally recognised. However, if we were in the same situation as the instructors of the 1980s and 90s, would it be so easy for us to teach our session and not need to retain our members? Whilst we appreciate it is a necessary requirement for gyms to operate back to back classes and efficiently flow members through the timetable, the instructors are under pressure to vacate the studio area. This can give less of an opportunity at the end of the class to connect with members: likewise as instructors we are paid by the session, we are also under financial pressure to rush to several other gyms and that can occasionally result in us having to be brief in the time we give to our members.

We needed change! So how have we done this?

Back to the old school

Stage 1 Connection and retention

The introduction of tracker cards into Les Mills BODYPUMP™

Being a good performer and giving a high energy class is great and whilst we continue to try to emulate and be inspired by the phenomenal energy and enthusiasm of the Les Mills presenters on the DVDs, we also wanted to ensure that our communication was a two way thing by listening and understanding. We decided that it is important to remember we are here for the benefit of the members and not just our own. Being very passionate about our jobs, we wanted to go one step further and show our members that we wanted to invest some time into them as individuals by going back to old school principles rather than just us standing at the front and showing off.

Name Class.....
.....

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Weight in
Kg

Exercise	SW kg	Week 1		Week 2		Week 3		Week 4		Week 5		Week 6	
		R E	A C	RE	AC	RE	A C	RE	AC	RE	AC	RE	AC
Squats													
Chest													
Back/ C+P													
Triceps --- Bar													
Triceps --- Plate 1													
Triceps --- Plate 2													
Biceps													
Lunges --- Bar													
Lunges --- Plate 1													
Shoulders --- Plates													
Shoulders--- Bar													

RE- Recommended weight (given by Leanne or Vinny.)

AC- Actual weight lifted in session (to be completed by member at the end of the session.)

Often members would come to BODYPUMP™ and choose the same weights every week and sometimes not get the results they wanted. The Tracker cards were designed by us for the members so they would have a better understanding of what weights they should be using and how they could get stronger and increase their level of fitness over time. It was designed over a 6 week period to take them outside their comfort zone. For the first week all we wanted them to do was enter their starting weight. From there we would take the cards home and, using the recommended weight column, we would give those challenges all depending on their particular fitness goal. Our aim was to encourage individuals to return week in week out so they keep improving until as many members as possible became “total freaks.” Members would also have the added incentive of winning a small prize for the best improvers in each class.

Benefits

- The aims of the tracker cards are to make the experience more personal to the individual and help them feel a sense of achievement within themselves rather than competing with others in the class.

- They gave support to newcomers by again making the experience more personal whilst they familiarise themselves with the fantastic high energy system of Les Mills BODYPUMP™.
- A One on one at no extra cost. Like having a personal trainer but absolutely free.
- Helped us to remember the members' names so that we could connect with them during the class.
- They gave the members a chance to share their experiences with each other and to start to feel like they belong to a club.

Leanne and Vinny's Group fitness clinic

Listening and Understanding

In addition to the tracker cards we also set up a company email address where class members could email us and receive free and confidential advice regarding their own individual fitness goals. (lvgroupfitness@yahoo.co.uk). We found this beneficial for several reasons.

- The facility gave extra support to newcomers who may not have felt comfortable approaching us within a class environment
- If we needed to rush to another class it still left us open to communication with members.
- Being contactable by email also removed other problems such as a member not having time to stay after class and ask us questions class because of their various other commitments such as picking up the children from the crèche. Also having both a man and a woman's advice available helped the members mind feel at ease.
- This gave us another avenue to find out their needs and incorporate specific targets into their tracker card programmes according to their individual fitness goals.
- Gave us an avenue to recommend other Les Mills programmes depending on their individual goals.

Example of promotional leaflet

Group Fitness Clinic

What are your Goals that you wish to achieve through Les Mills BODYPUMP™?

Are there any aspects of your fitness that you would like to improve through your group fitness classes?

Are there any unanswered questions that you have about your group fitness class?

For free and confidential advice please email Leanne and Vinny at lvgroupfitness@yahoo.co.uk

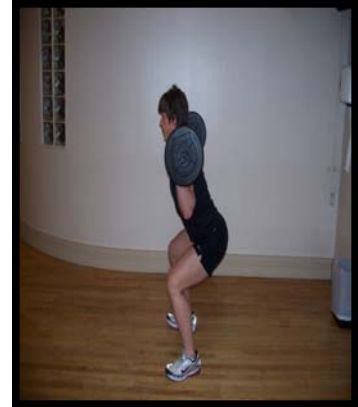
Creating a total freak from technique and stopping them from sliding down the commitment scale!!!!

A Simple manual of Body Pump technique and the use of technique classes



Squats:

- Feet wider than hip width
- Toes slightly turned out
- Chest lifted
- Knees in line with toes
- Heels to floor
- Bend to 90° parallel to shins



Whilst we would always try and make ourselves available after class to answer questions, in order to enhance retention even more, team teaching technique classes and giving a simple BODYPUMP™ manual with examples using photographs were designed for the members to help them feel at ease with all the teaching points used for the technique aspects of the class. This helped them not to feel overwhelmed by gradually acclimatising to the high energy environment and encouraged them not to slide down the commitment scale. This also helped the more experienced participants gain a better understanding of technique which, when combined with the tracker card programmes, helped them achieve even better results.

Here some a couple of teaching points we give in our Squat Track

The Instructor says - “OK everyone show me a 3/1... Are you ready? SINGLES! OK BOTTOM HALVES, STAY LOW!”

Sound familiar? Of course it does but we have all had classes where no matter how many times you gave teaching points to your members they still did not actually do what you asked them to do?

Technique classes and providing a simple manual helped to remove this obstacle and gave the following benefits:

- Helped the teaching points register with the participants during the class by giving them another way to absorb this information so they would have better understanding of technique.
- This meant they could work to their maximum potential within in the class, turning them into total freaks.

- The newcomers did not feel overwhelmed by all the fitness jargon.

Once all these steps were put in place only then could we work on atmospheric reciprocity within our classes.

Stage 2 - Combine the Old School with the New School to make

Atmospheric Reciprocity

The Benefits of Team Teaching as a couple

By using the old school teaching methods mentioned above to create a challenging and personal environment for our members, we were then able to combine it the new style of teaching that we are so inspired by and familiar with to create atmospheric reciprocity. Being a couple it may have given us a slightly advantageous position when it has come to giving a high energy class to our members. It is very obvious from watching the Les Mills DVDs that working as a team is very important and that connecting with each other can be just as powerful as connecting with the audience.

As a team

- We have been able to support and motivate each other as well as the participants during the class which has helped to provide an atmosphere charged with energy.
- Little things such as us both wearing matching Les Mills attire gives us the appearance of being a professional outfit and we have found that members are much more willing to listen and feel more inspired during the session.
- It is much easier, as stated by Mark Sinclair, “to always give a class as if it was your last” week after week when you help and support each other.
- We share a part of our lives with the class. We recently got engaged to be married so being able to banter with each other about things like Vinny’s bad living habits has created a special connection with the class and gets everyone involved in the fun of the moment. This has been an important step in creating a club within the community.

Stage 3 Creating Clubs within our local gym Community

The Group Fitness Familyathon Event

Inviting our members to be part of our fitness family

- The last stage of our journey was to invite members to become part of our fitness family for the afternoon by raising money for our chosen charity - Breast Cancer Research.
- This was very personal to a few of the members who had been affected by the disease in some way. Donating to a good cause was obviously the main objective for this event as the members felt they had pulled together to raise some money for a good cause.

- We held a series of back to back classes in which members could either pay to stay the whole day or just participate in however many classes they liked.
- In addition to both of us teaching, we also invited Leanne's father to come and teach with us who has had 12 years of teaching experience to help further enhance atmospheric reciprocity for the special event.
- We also held a raffle to raise some extra cash

How was the event a success in creating a club within the community?

We believe the community feeling amongst the members was enhanced by the unique fact that all the instructors who were teaching were part of the same family and they felt part of this. Les Mills BODYPUMP™ was the main event due to fact there were 3 instructors of 2 different generations present.

- If the members stayed for the whole day, they felt a sense of achievement and shared their experience with friends and other members about how much they ached the next day from all their hard work.
- Due to the fact that we had spent more time than usual on enhancing retention and connection beforehand, we found that the event was much easier to promote as members already felt like part of a club and wanted to bring their friends and non-members
- We also held the BODYPUMP™ challenge class (the one in the back of the BODYPUMP™ manual) and pitted pairs of men against pairs of women. This gave members the chance to have some fun within their own family. Most of the female members brought along either their sons or husbands, many of whom had joked by saying “that BODYPUMP™ looks really easy.” The best pair of men or women with the most repetitions on the board won a prize. Obviously the Men lost.
- Finally, each member received a group photo of each particular class that they had participated in as souvenir of how this gym community came together to raise money for a good cause. This was displayed in a collage at the gym.

Our Contact details

Thank you for reading our entry we would really value your feedback.

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Photos from classes:

