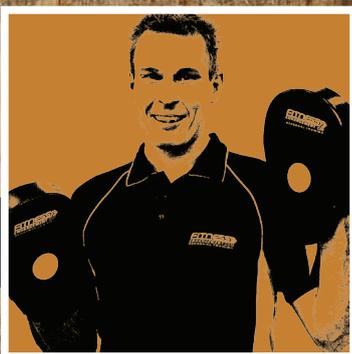


YOUNG GUNS: MEET SOME OF AUSTRALIA'S YOUNGEST OPERATORS



By Toni Krasicki

Be inspired by the achievements of some of Australia's youngest fitness operators.





a client who had a fractured foot and wanted to run the New York half marathon.

We also have a client who has a serious brain injury and is able to walk by herself on this machine, and an extremely overweight client who can walk pain free.

The Challenges: Finding the right staff has been tough, as we knew that finding the right people for our business is critical to its success. We interviewed over 28 candidates until we found two great trainers to join our team.

The endeavour was a huge risk as the set up was costly, and quite scary, as we still had to support our family. But if you don't take risks, you don't achieve your dreams.

The day we opened our doors was very exciting but very deflating, by the end of the first day we didn't have one client but every day from then on our client base just keeps growing (mostly by word of mouth/referrals), which is fabulous and encouraging.

Top Tips for Success:

- Business plans are critical – be passionate about what you want, know what you want to achieve and set SMART goals.
- Make sure you know your budget and look at all the options for finance.
- Find your niche market. There are over nine gyms in Bowral and everyone kept saying "not another gym," so we decided to make that our tag line as we are 'not another gym.'
- Have a "hit by the bus file", which means that if anything happens to any of the staff, there is a file that explains everything that needs to be done to keep the business running smoothly.
- Always be consistent in everything you do – whether it is training clients, coaching staff, discussing fees.
- Be able to change, adjust and adapt and never be complacent as everything always changes, nothing stays the same.

www.auroraactive.com.au

Background: I had been running a successful small fitness studio in Sydney's CBD since 2006, but since having our little girl in 2013, we knew it was time for a "tree change".

My wife and I met in the Southern Highlands and this was the obvious choice for us to start our new venture. The Southern Highlands has a great community spirit and we knew that our vision for fitness was what the Highlands needed.

This also fitted in with my passion to help people be more active and live a healthier and fitter life.

The Business: Aurora Active is a small premium group-training studio (maximum four clients) where every session is run by one of our expert fitness coaches – it's like personal training every session without spending the big bucks.

We opened in January and have equipment no other gym has in the Highlands, giving our clients results no other gym can. Every session (30 or 45 minutes) incorporates the VibroGym.

The Highlands has a large retiree population and with our AlterG treadmill we can help clients with hip, knee, ankle

injuries and/or surgery, walk and/or run pain free. It is also ideal for overweight clients as we can unweight them safely by up to 80 per cent.

We also specialise in ski conditioning, and are the only ones in the highlands that have the Skier's Edge and SkiERG for lower and upper body SkiFit exercises.

The Motivation: I was 23 years old when I started my Sydney studio, which was only 20sqm, but I managed to do a lot in that space.

Not having windows or fresh air for seven years took its toll on me and I wanted something more, I wanted my next challenge, so we decided on a tree change.

The Highlights: Seeing our vision come alive has been incredible – we have dreamt about it for so long and now we are living it.

We are training a range of clients from as young as seven years old through to our most active senior who is 87 years old.

Our clients love what we do and it is so reassuring we did the right thing, as we love helping our clients be more active, healthier and fitter. On the AlterG we have helped many clients, including



Background: After six years in finance, I knew that I was called to play a more active role in my local and wider communities. After overcoming a lifetime of challenges from obesity, right through to bulimia and exercise obsession, instead of looking at these as negatives, I saw that I could use these experiences to help empower others.

Since then I have obtained a Double Diploma in Fitness Business, an Advanced Diploma in Business and have a broad range of experience working in the fitness industry.

The Business: Ours is a health and wellness centre where we strive to provide a safe space and opportunity for everyone to achieve optimum health and ultimate vitality. Founded in 2012, our intention is to develop our team to be skilled, professional and customer focused, who share common values and are committed to assisting our community achieve their ultimate goals for health and happiness.

With over 10 years collective industry experience, our leadership and professional team stand by our quality guarantee motto, 'If it's not exceptional, its not acceptable', as we aim to raise

the bar of professionalism within the fitness industry.

The Motivation: After working in a number of health clubs previously, we identified a gap in our local market and really wanted to deliver a quality health service to our community. We used the information gathered from our different experiences to develop our own strategies.

The development and implementation of our programs and services reflect what we are trying to achieve for our community and why.

With Freedom Health and Fitness encompassing and delivering a strong personal training culture, we have the belief, knowledge and testimonies that prove personal training is our most effective way of being able to deliver on our intention for our clients. We also wanted to provide other options for clients who are unable to invest in personal training to achieve their ultimate health and fitness goals.

The Highlights: The past two years have been ones of great celebration for Freedom, which has been both very humbling and rewarding as a relatively new business in the fitness industry and

our community. We've had innumerable results from our clients and members in the past 12 months, measured through testimonials and through our 12-week challenge. I also had the opportunity to present at FILEX on the Successful Regional Clubs Panel and was asked to speak on business success to fitness business students at Max International College for Fitness Professionals Brisbane, and also to students in New Zealand.

Some of our key business achievements in the past 12 months include:

- 2013 Young Business Person of the Year (Scenic Rim)
- 2013 Fitness Australia Silver Quality Award
- 2014 Employer of Choice (Scenic Rim)
- 2014 Fitness Australia Gold Quality Award.

The Challenges: One of the most challenging aspects of running a fitness business in Beaudesert is penetrating the market. We generally find that the most daunting part for new prospects is actually gaining the courage to walk through the door in the first place – this is usually based around F.E.A.R. (False Evidence Appearing Real) through media portrayal about gyms and fitness centres, and or past poor experiences.

Once they meet our team and see that we're all real people looking out for each other they are so excited to get started, and often change their life as a result. But it's just getting them over that initial step in the first place that is the biggest hurdle for both them and us.

Quality fitness professionals aren't exactly 'thick on the ground' in our area.

Due to our extensive recruitment and selection process that helps us identify the exact right person for the job, it is often a lengthy process to hire a new team member and can be a little stressful. However, we always stick to our values and wait for the right person (rather than just any person).

Top Tips for Success:

- Ensure your circle of Influence is solid and supportive.
- Be open to feedback.
- Ensure that you spend time working ON the business, not just in it.

www.freedomhealthandfitness.com.au



expanding interstate. I've also won the Fitness Australia Gold Award and been a finalist in the Gold Coast Young Entrepreneur of the Year Awards two years running. As a trainer it's been the success of our clients. The biggest highlights would be the huge amount of clients we've had for over 10 years or that have done over 1,000 one-on-one sessions, in particular for some of them that have never lasted at exercise for more than a few months prior to Fitness Enhancement. Our biggest weight loss highlight is a client that lost over 100kg with us.

The Challenges: Up until recent years it's definitely trying to wear all the hats of a small business owner while still training clients on a full time basis. For a long time I used to do the bulk of running and building the business by myself, I learnt a lot of great business skills which have certainly helped us be successful today, however it's certainly challenging time, skill and stress wise to do it all yourself. Nowadays I can leave the day to day running and training of clients to my team and certain other areas to other professionals that work for us so I can focus on delegating to them and growing Fitness Enhancement Australia wide. Of course at the time I didn't see it as a challenge as I love my job, but looking back at everything I used to do back then, and how much easier and better we can do it now, I realise how challenging the early days were.

Top Tips for Success:

- Realise that you're a small business owner, not just a personal trainer, so you need to have the skills to run a business.
- Develop your niche and make sure everyone knows what you are the 'expert' at. Catering to anyone who wants to get fit makes you a 'jack of all trades and master of none.' A niche means you can stand out amongst the countless number of trainers out there and can compete against the bigger names with huge marketing budgets.
- Stick to it and live the dream. All business owners start with a dream of building a business that's rewarding, not just financially but also personally, yet very few go on to achieve their goal. The dropout rate in the personal training industry is especially alarming and I think all too often trainers throw in the towel as soon as the going gets tough.

www.fitnessenhancement.com

Background: I've always been entrepreneurial and passionate about thinking outside the box and doing things better, so I always knew from a young age that I'd be my own boss. I got hooked on fitness, gyms and Muay Thai in my mid teens and could see so many opportunities to combine my hobbies with helping people and being my own boss.

The Business: I opened Fitness Enhancement Personal Training in 1999 when I was 19 years old. I was still at Uni and set the business up on \$400 but always had big plans to be where we are now. We've steadily grown over the last 15 years, and a lot more rapidly in recent years, and are now the third largest personal training company in Australia.

Most of our trainers work directly for us, which offers them a secure career with no rent or overheads, and we have also just franchised to expand Australia wide and provide a more profitable career to trainers who want a real business for a fraction of the cost of the likes of a 24/7 Gym franchise. We're now in every Gold Coast and Brisbane suburb as well as many Melbourne suburbs and Sydney.

For a similar long-term cost to gym rent, franchisees get a real business with unlimited growth potential to take on staff and open studios etc., as opposed to just buying a job with gym rent. Our franchisees get an exclusive marketing territory of 40,000 plus people, a sales team that books new clients into their diary and answers their calls, and every single dollar of marketing spent on getting clients that want an expensive personal trainer, not a cheap gym.

The Motivation: My niche back when I started out was the same as it is now; 100 per cent private personal training catering to people who hate the gym scene, or simply don't have time for it. The vast majority of people that fail at gyms fail because of the crowds, the posers, the lack of personal attention and generic programs that they don't have time for. I was motivated to start a business that solved these problems, and considering most of our success stories have failed at a gym prior to us, I'm proud of having achieved this.

The Highlights: As a business owner it would be getting my first client, opening my studio, and getting busy enough to take on staff and more recently selling franchises and