



Getting it right

In the first of two features, Toni Krasicki investigates successful gym-based weight loss programs

Fitness Australia statistics show that 10 to 15% of the Australian population belong to a fitness centre or health club. Of these members, one of the key reasons of joining is weight loss. But are members getting the weight loss results they want? Are fitness businesses delivering what members need to achieve their goals?

Over the past few decades, the fitness industry has evolved considerably, particularly in the areas of weight management and nutrition. The majority of fitness professionals agree that the 'eat less and exercise more' approach no longer stands.

Dietflex founder Jamie Hayes, says the theory is littered with failure.

Hayes believes that if members do not have an effective dietary intervention, then they will have difficulty reaching weight loss goals.

He explains "I'm all for increasing exercise in our community. If you help somebody lose weight, they are more likely to exercise and thereby become an exerciser for life!"

Hayes believes that the problem lies in the community and its belief that exercise, promoted by the fitness industry, is a road to weight loss, commenting "unfortunately science doesn't support this and the opposite is true. However, if you help someone lose weight through successful dietary intervention, they'll be more inclined to exercise."

Considering such a high proportion of members join to lose

weight, it's a no-brainer that fitness businesses should address weight management solutions that include more than exercise alone.





Measuring Program Success

Whether offered as a stand-alone weight management solution or as the nutrition component of a fitness challenge, how do we determine the effectiveness of a weight loss program? Measuring success is more than counting kilograms lost. So how do we deem a program successful, beyond members reaching weight loss goals?

Long-term success is multifaceted and goes outside the discernible.

Matt O'Neill, Director and Nutritionist at the SmartShape Centre for Weight Management, says "people say the whole weight management area is not rocket science: just calories in and calories out, but when you take into account outside management, cravings, social support, mental health issues and all that sort of thing, it's far more complex."

Successful weight loss programs should promote the importance of reaching and maintaining a healthy weight long-term (such as over 12 months), rather than just on the weight lost during the program. Alongside promoting healthy eating habits, O'Neill says to focus on the basics: choosing a simple way of eating rather than the latest diet fad; providing face-to-face coaching sessions to hold clients accountable; and providing 24/7 support via access to an online platform to create a strong support network.

Are Fitness Businesses Delivering?

Fitness professionals without a background in nutrition or who don't have an affiliation with a dietitian or nutritionist may struggle to get impressive results with their clients. In turn, this could signal the end of the working relationship if they can't deliver what clients are asking for.

O'Neill fears "there is a trend to over promise and under deliver."



As the creator of the Metabolic Jumpstart program he says most clients want weight loss, but in reality, fitness businesses are just selling exercise.

"When people start exercising it increases their appetite, so if you are promising weight loss and only providing exercise, then you can't deliver on that."

The Australian Fitness Network believes that health clubs and fitness professionals are doing a fantastic job on the ground. Network Learning & Development Manager, Alisha Smith, says that when it comes to levels of, and attitudes towards fitness professional education, the Australian fitness industry is considered to be one of the most forward thinking and switched on.

Smith advises "we have incredibly high standards of entry level qualification and that's absolutely a result of having a regulated system.

"The interesting dichotomy lies in the fact that the very regulations that got us to this standard in the first place, could now be considered to be restrictive when it comes to our ability to service our members and clients in the area of fat loss/weight management and nutrition.

"They're inextricably linked; even the best program in the world can't out-train a poor diet."

The annual FILEX fitness convention is testament to the standard of education offered to fitness professionals and club owners. Interestingly, the nutrition and fat loss strand covers a range of topics that fitness professionals can apply to client programs without actually prescribing a weight loss dietary plan.

In the past three to five years, coaching and mindset skills have become a 'must-have' skill-set for personal trainers (PT) and coaches to help support positive health behaviours. Smith says the industry offers extensive education in this field and should take the same approach with nutrition.

From the perspective of someone who has one foot in both camps, Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) and qualified personal trainer, Ashleigh Feltham is adamant that the only health professional who has the qualifications to create a nutrition program or give sound dietary advice, is an APD. "Each person is different and has different health backgrounds, and a dietitian has the training to provide the support and advice for individuals." She says for weight loss, always seek a fitness professional for exercise, and a dietitian for diet and nutrition.

Fitness Australia and nutritional advice

As of September last year, Fitness Australia introduced guidelines for registered exercise professionals (AusREPs) to follow when giving nutrition advice to clients, through the release of a Nutrition Advice within Scope of Practice for AusREPs.

The guidelines are designed to help AusREPs find the balance between providing the appropriate level of nutritional advice to the client, without providing information beyond their professional scope of practice

Fitness Australia sees the introduction of the guidelines as an important step for the fitness industry in providing quality services to clients Australia-wide. As part of the guidelines, AusREPs are encouraged to provide basic healthy eating information and advice through the application of nationally endorsed nutritional standards and guidelines - in particular, the Australian Dietary Guidelines.

The document gives AusREPs clear guidelines as to what services they can (and can't) provide in the nutrition space, and when it's most appropriate to refer clients on to an Accredited Practising Dietitian.

The guide is developed and endorsed by Fitness Australia, Dietitians Association of Australia and Sports Dietitians Australia.



Healthy Inspirations - NSW, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand

The women's only weight loss and fitness centre franchise is designed to create a comfortable space for women over 40 to improve their health and wellness, and lose weight in the process. Most centres are stand-alone, while a couple are a 'club within a club' - a Healthy Inspirations centre within an existing fitness centre. Each member starts out on the Healthy Inspirations ICT Reset program, which is identical to the carbohydrate tolerance based Dietflex program.

Members receive a weekly one-on-one coaching session, or opt for thrice weekly contact sessions if necessary, especially in the early part of the program. The fitness component follows a more strength-based circuit and Pilates style resistance, rather than traditional cardio options, so there are no treadmills or bikes.

Jamie Hayes explains "it's really ground breaking when people who have struggled with their weight for decades, not only lose weight, but improve their health and energy."

healthyinspirations.com.au



Weight Loss and Fitness Centres

Essential Body Personal Training - Gladstone, Queensland

Personal trainer and lifestyle facilitator, Angela Larose introduced Ultra Lite, a ketogenic diet and weight loss program, to her business in 2009. Used as part of a 12-week Lifestyle Program, clients may purchase three or five week Ultra Lite programs, depending on how much weight they wish to lose.

Larose says the program is successful with her clientele, who are mainly peri pausal and menopausal women, as it's easy to follow, the recipes are simple and quick to prepare, and results are seen and felt within the first week, commenting "the back up support at Ultra Lite headquarters is also phenomenal, we have access to a naturopath and nutritionists.

"The food in the plan is generally what clients eat, and all ingredients can be bought at the supermarket.

"They simply need to be educated about the balance of macros and portion sizes.

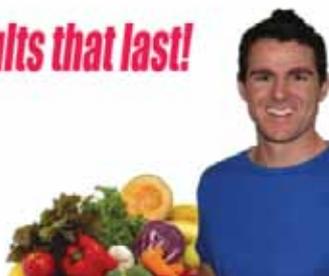
"The Ultra Lite program has done all the hard work, clients simply have to follow the menus provided."

essentialbodytraining.com.au

Re-program your metabolism & your eating habits

Breakthrough results that last!

Matt O'Neill's
metabolic™
JUMPSTART



Squashbrook Fitness & Leisure - Mount Gambier, South Australian

Personal trainer and Metabolic Jumpstart coach Simon Brooke advises "members constantly remark at how easy the Metabolic Jumpstart program is to integrate into their lives."

Having a strong personal training department, and after trying many nutrition programs, Brooke says that Metabolic Jumpstart has been the most successful tool in providing long lasting results for members. Key markers such as the simplicity in implementing the program, the 24/7online support; access to recipes, motivational tools and educational resources, make this a practical program to use in the health club setting. The weekly coaching sessions review challenges, address roadblocks, and provide possible solutions, while keeping clients accountable for their weight loss goals. The centre promotes Metabolic Jumpstart in their membership presentation, and implements it as the nutrition element in their Fitness Challenge.

squashbrook.com.au



Vision Personal Training – Australia and New Zealand

Vision Personal Training founder and Managing Director, Andrew Simmons state "Vision is known in Australia as the place to go for losing weight because we know what works.

"Among the clients who walk through the doors, 80% of them want to lose weight."

Vision's scientifically backed nutrition and exercise program is modified based on the individual, and encourages clients to take a holistic approach to health and wellness.

Vision cites that its dietary program is developed and designed by nutritionists, with its program tracking macronutrients and calculated from a client's current weight, goal weight, timeline, body type, body composition and lifestyle. Implemented and managed by each client's designated personal trainer, goal setting and a nutrition plan are implemented before an exercise program is discussed.

visionpt.com.au

Toni Krasicki is a tourism, health and fitness writer with over 27 years' experience in the fitness and recreation industry.