



Luke Carlson - Why Discover Strength Decided on 1-on-1 and Group Training



1. Introduction

This is a companion PDF to the membership podcast, Luke Carlson - 1-on-1 Personal Training Vs Group Training Vs Unsupervised Training.

This PDF provides Luke Carlson's high level thought process used to price and package the existing service portfolio at Discover Strength.



2. Personal Training is the Centre of the Business

When Luke first came to Gainesville Health and Fitness (GHFC), he was intrigued by their personal training operation. GHFC have large lines of MedX and Nautilus machines and thousands of members. They could run clients through personal training all day long.

Inspired by this, Luke set out to launch his own version on a smaller scale, but pulled out moments before because he realised that it would be very difficult to finance open personal training lines without the guaranteed client demand throughout the day. This would be a high risk strategy since he would have to figure out how to compensate trainers during quiet periods, which are a certainty in the beginning for strength training business.

After some re-evaluation, Luke settled on appointment-only 1-on-1 personal training and 3:1 group training (group training has since evolved but the client to trainer ratio is never greater than 3:1 - [learn more here](#)). Luke decided to offer group training as well as personal training because it would be highly profitable and efficient:

- 3:1 Group Training = \$33 per client = \$99 per 45-minutes
- 1-on-1 Personal Training = \$54 per client = \$81 per 45-minutes

The scientific literature supports the efficacy of personal training supervision.

Discover Strength have found that greater client to trainer ratios beyond 3:1 decrease the efficacy of personal training. Discover Strength will run group training ratios of 5:2 and 7:3, but seven is the maximum number of clients in any group.



Group training has enabled Discover Strength to somewhat democratise personal training. Clearly, \$33 is still expensive to some of their local population, but it's far more affordable than a \$54 1-on-1 30-minute personal training session.

Luke believes that quasi-supervision (open fitness facilities where clients can train themselves with trainers present to help adhoc or offer advice) face similar problems to on-demand personal training services, since the business still needs to staff both busy and non-busy periods. Secondly, if the client is left to their own devices, it will be difficult to create a consistently great workout experience, which is elaborated on in Chapter 3.

Basic Training in Scottsdale are an exception to this rule and are a very profitable single-location strength training business who provide both 1-on-1 personal training and quasi-supervision. Learn about Bill's journey and business on the podcast and in the membership.

3. The Importance of Meeting Expectations

As it stands, Discover Strength decided not to provide any type of on-demand training service. All clients must schedule 1-on-1 personal training or group training. Luke's concerns about on-demand training, in addition to the uncertainty around the efficiency as previously noted, is to consistently meet client expectations and replicate a great training experience. For example, if the client arrives for an on-demand workout and there is just one other client in the group, they're likely to have an intimate personal training experience. However, if during the following session, the same client encounters 10 clients in a group training, it is difficult to ensure they will have the same service experience. It's important to note that Luke explains that he may not have figured this out and that other businesses may find a way to make this profitable and successful. For example, MEDFitness



adopt on-demand training and it seems to work well for them, which you can learn about here.

Discover Strength were confident that with appointment-based 1-on-1 personal training and group training, they would be able to replicate the client experience and consistently meet expectations to improve customer satisfaction, retention, and increase client referrals. Moreover, Luke felt that ad-hoc training may reduce the client discipline inherent in a fixed commitment, which would help clients adhere to training over the long term and thus improve results and client retention.





4. Final Thoughts

One of the big takeaways from this members podcast is to demonstrate to you why you should design a business that not only makes financial sense, but aligns with your core values and mission. Luke acknowledges that it's OK for businesses to hire personal trainers on relatively low wages with the view to support trainers as they climb the career ladder. However, he wanted to take an entirely new approach and put the personal trainer at the centre of the business and reward them as they further develop their experience and personal training skillset. This core value made other decisions easier, like becoming a premium priced provider of personal training services, which helps attract and nurture great personal trainer talent. [Learn more about core values from The Perfect Workout](#) (the largest high-intensity personal training business in the US).

Lastly, If you decide to focus on providing 1-on-1 personal training and/or group training, Luke's demonstrated that a single line of a limited number of machines can be effectively utilised to facilitate multiple simultaneous 1-on-1 and group training sessions. Use creativity when programming workouts to get the most out of your investment before investing in additional machines. Luke and I will create more specific content on this last point soon.