

HIT Business Membership: Gary Knight - The Importance Of Tracking And Communicating Client Performance For Increased Buy In And Adherence

Lawrence Neal: 00:01 Gary, welcome to The Membership.

Gary Knight: 00:05 How you doing, Lawrence? It's great to catch up with you. It's been forever.

Lawrence Neal: 00:08 It has been a long time. And I appreciate you taking the time to do this today. The focus of this content day, and I'm quite excited to talk to you about this because I think this is an area which I've definitely touched on before with previous guests and people in The Membership, but I think that there's always more to be said on this subject, to help people with it, and that is the importance of tracking and communicating client performance for increased buy-in and adherence, and I suppose ultimately retention. The goal is to be able to retain your clients over the long-term, and this is a really important piece of that.

Lawrence Neal: 00:48 Do you want to just start off by talking about why you think it's important to track and communicate client performance?

Gary Knight: 00:56 Well, I think the first thing to bring up would be the fact that most PTs probably don't it, and they probably don't even do a good job of it. What's really interesting is before you get into the minutiae of all the details, is when you look in a gym, I mean so many PTs just wait there at the counter. Their client comes in, they give

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them a kiss and a cuddle. Take them off, strap a workout together. They kind of patch it together from all the old conventional moves. And nothing's recorded. Even if you did a half-arsed job of writing down roughly what exercises people did, and stuck to a routine for a couple of weeks and assessed it at the end... Even if you haven't maybe got the accuracy that I might strive for, you're already going to be so far ahead of the pack.

Gary Knight: 01:47 The first thing with tracking and performance is you're saying to your client, "I'm watching. I'm paying attention. How you perform here today is important to me." It's really important just to show just that basic kind of human connection that you've got empathy with your client, your invested in their journey, and you're keeping notes about what's happening. That's just really, really important. For most people, and when running my own business, it was part of the pitch. It was just, "Listen, if you come here, I'm tracking you, and I'm tracking you the most accurately anyone can in a gym with free weights and machines." That's hypercritical to the process.

Gary Knight: 02:30 My dog is having a mental in the background [inaudible 00:02:32]. But yeah, so it's really, really critical, I think, to set that up from the start, that you're going to be watching the client. You've got a program, and you're

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going to be assessing what they're doing with the idea to be tactical. I always use these words. If we can measure the facts, we can be tactical about the information that comes back. If we don't measure the facts, basically we're just in this really gray area where we don't really know what's happening and we can't really go anywhere. You can't get anything from a PT who doesn't track you.

Lawrence Neal: 03:11

Great point. How have you done that? How do you do that? How do you track effectively?

Gary Knight: 03:19

I mean I've always kept it really basic. Log sheet. That's got their program written out, and that'll be a consistent program, whether they're one, two or three times a week. And they'll probably do it for six weeks before I change anything. They'll do the same grouping of exercises split across the body for maybe six, seven weeks. I write down the reps on the working set, and I only track one working set. I never perform more than one working set. Basically, because I'm using four four cadence with most things, I write down the specific cadence. I track for the number of reps. Work them from a rep range. Six reps to 10 reps for upper body, 12 to 15 or 12 to 20 on the lower body, something like that. And basically I'm outlining a game.

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- Gary Knight: 04:09 The word I'd like to use is decidability. It's knowing at which point do we add weight, at which point do we look at form if we stall, at which point do we look at whether this program or set of dietary protocols is serving our client? By tracking all of this information, you're basically able to make the correct decision for that person, and troubleshoot any issues, because it doesn't always go to plan. When clients are new for the first couple of weeks they usually go forward, no drama. But when you get plateaus, you need decidability. You need to see a run of information, that you've adhered a certain protocol so that you can guarantee accuracy at least across a certain timeframe, and be able to make those decisions.
- Gary Knight: 04:56 If you're not tracking anything, and a client says to you, "Oh, I just don't feel like it's working," well if you haven't tracked anything, well you don't know. You've nothing to say. You just can go, "Oh, you look bigger to me. Cute." That's not a great coach. A great coach says, "Let's have a look at your log sheet, and I mean, on all the basic exercises... We've tripled your leg press in six weeks, which was really common for me. The amount of little girls that were 5'4 to 5'6 and didn't weigh much at all, that would go from a 40 kilo to a 120 kilo leg press in a couple of weeks blew my mind. I've never seen that philosophy. And you could show them.

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You could go, "Look, with a perfect controlled cadence, you've tripled your leg press in six weeks."

- Gary Knight: 05:41 I look like a pretty good coach. They've done bloody well. And everyone can celebrate and enjoy that. So that's why tracking's really, really critical, because you can celebrate and prove results. You can prove the process as it goes, which is showing your value. You have to do a great job, but you have to show that you're doing a great job as well. You have to have accountability for yourself as a trainer, and for the client, that this is bearing fruit, this is taking you from A to B. You're on the right track. [inaudible 00:06:14] a means of measuring those things, without any feedback, everyone's adrift.
- Lawrence Neal: 06:21 I love what you said there about... You're the first one who kind of brought the concept of gamifying training to me. Do you want to just elaborate on how you use gamification and gamifying to incentivize clients and motivate them?
- Gary Knight: 06:36 All things in strength training, I think when they're properly set up, are a game. I think one of the things, when you're an HIT guy, we're much more puritanical about that game. The reason we control for cadence and measure reps or we do time under load and rep

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ranges, which is a pretty common feature across the spectrum in HIT, rarely do people just go, "Go to failure, and that's enough." Everyone has a system of accounting for exercise protocols, and that just makes it really easy to make decisions, and it just treats it like a game where you get to level up. If you're a person who started off as a 40 or 50 kilo leg presser, you're pretty sad, but in a couple of weeks time, when you're over 100 kilos, well you've upgraded yourself. You can revel in that improvement.

Gary Knight: 07:34 That's really what's at the core of tracking, but also communicating performance increases in the gym, is to show someone like, "You've come with me. You've trusted in me and in this process. You've played this game I explained to you that would bear fruit, and look, you've got fruit here. You know what I mean? You've gone from A to B. You've worked really, really hard, and now you can revel in the pride of your achievements." That's kind of what's at the core of tracking, but also more importantly communicating that progress, to celebrate with them that this game has got you from A to B.

Lawrence Neal: 08:12 You talked a little bit about the tools there. Pen and paper, log sheets. Do you put that in a digital system? Do you have any tips around that?

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- Gary Knight: 08:21 Yeah. When I first started in London, I just printed everything out. You know what? Printed paper's pretty cool. It doesn't disappear on you. It doesn't have a syncing error. The internet doesn't go down at the gym. If you're starting out for the first time, it's a pretty cool way to do things. Little touches like I'd make purple colors for the girls and orange colors for the boys, or I'd ask, "What's your favorite color?" And then I'd come in with a log sheet in their favorite color. It goes a long way, you know what I mean? It says, "You care about my experience." Just those little touches that matter.
- Gary Knight: 08:57 I also have a really weird aesthetic kind of obsession. If you look at any of my log sheets, which I've shared on the internet before I think with your listeners, you'll notice a strong use of colors when it comes to how I construct log sheets. I love the orderliness of a good log sheet. I did switch to Google Sheets and ran it off an iPad for a bit. But I will be honest. I had a lot of syncing issues. I had entire sheets disappear on me. Sometimes they came back, sometimes they were just gone. It was a bit troubling, actually. I've since used Google Sheets for other things recently, and it's been super reliable, so I'm hoping that maybe that was just a temporary issue or not.

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- Gary Knight: 09:46 But it's something to consider. Pen and paper isn't going to let you down. But you can't do super creative things with pen and paper either. If you've got a Google Sheet, you can quickly whip up a formula, an algorithm that will show percentage changes and make graphs, if you want to go down that route. But there's plenty of software on your phone that will mimic it, I think, at the end of the day.
- Lawrence Neal: 10:11 Interesting what you said about Google Sheets. Yeah, I think maybe this will help avoid that, is by getting G Suite, which is like a paid Google subscription, which is like \$5 a month or something like that, and it gives you access to all their apps. I don't know whether that would make it slightly more secure and reliable. And also, I will link to... HIT [inaudible 00:10:32] has done a really good Google Sheet. You might have to subscribe with email or something like that in order to get access to it, but I've seen it, and it's very good. I will link to that if you want a template to use. I'll link to all our episodes we've done previously where I may have linked to your sheets as well. Especially some of the new trainers who might be looking for a template, that will be really useful.
- Gary Knight: 10:58 I'll give you the link, just to share it. You know how you can share documents via link. Honestly, I'm just open

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about all that stuff, because there's no magic in a protocol. There's magic in delivering it and making it happen and pushing someone. So I never really care about the [inaudible 00:11:15] nature of workouts, you know what I mean? They're worth nothing at the end of the day. It's how they're delivered, is just what's important.

Lawrence Neal: 11:26

I know Discover Strength have got an app they're testing on iPads at the moment. They've had it designed. I'm sure it's pretty fantastic, because I know that the team would've put a ton of effort into making it ideal for them. I know they do plan to white label that potentially to the [crosstalk 00:11:45] market. I know members listening to this... Plenty of people ask me, "What's going on with that app, and what apps are available generally?" There are a couple of others, but they're again, still kind of in the beta phase. I will obviously let you know as soon as I know, because I know that a lot of guys here are going to be interested in... Once Discover Strength have their app mainstream and available, because they would've done a lot of the hard thinking that goes into creating something that's going to work. But in the meantime, I think, like you say, pen and paper, log sheets, Google sheets is fine, absolutely.

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- Lawrence Neal: 12:26 You mentioned it earlier, that obviously when you've been working with someone for a while, their progress is going to start to flatten out. They're not going to have that tremendous improvement that you see in the beginning after a certain amount of time. How do you ensure that they are still bought into what they're doing, and don't lose motivation at that point?
- Gary Knight: 12:50 I always explain from the start and try to be as honest as possible and manage expectations. If someone's getting really good results at the start, which they normally should when they're so new to strength training or new to high intensity strength training especially. Good results at the start are a given. But you also should explain to them the journey will be... You should get fast results at the start, because this is a new, intense stimulus to the body. You're going to be marshaling resources very, very fast, because you're essentially going from a really low baseline to something really hard. And there will just be a point of diminishing returns. You just admit from the start that those things are governed by genetics, and we can modify them with a sensible training protocol that adjust to you over time for your recovery abilities, and we adjust nutrition essentially to make sure our goals are in line with our actions.

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- Gary Knight: 13:50 But for the most part, I mean I've rarely had anyone stall for more than a week or two. The worst case scenario is they might dribble out one or two extra reps per week on each exercise when everything slows down, which is still really good progress. You can explain to them that if you get one extra rep on a free weight, well that's an extra eight to 10 seconds of time under load. That's still awesome progress. And you just explain it to them in those terms, that that rep, because we're going so slow, was a very significant improvement, and everything's tracking fine.
- Gary Knight: 14:29 If you have a bad workout... This probably might be the next logical place to go, is how do you manage expectations when the information isn't so good. Let's not just even go with a plateau. Let's go with the workout was F-ing terrible. Everything went backwards. It was a nightmare. You're standing there with the log sheet. They're not having a great time. What do you do in that situation? It's usually just an understanding that those sort of events usually have a reason. You just kind of ask the check box of questions. How was your sleep last night? Did you drink enough water before you came today? Those two questions knock out like 90% of what was probably the cause. The only thing left after that is you're going to get a cold in a week, because log sheets are predictive of flus. I swear they

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are. I can always see a week ahead of time when I'm about to go down with an illness. It's just like a bloodbath in my numbers, and a week later, scratchy throat, and I'm down. I've observed that for a very long time.

Gary Knight: 15:32 With a client, it's usually just, "Mate, not your best workout today, but just to check a few things. How's your sleep been lately? Any work stress? And are you drinking enough water?" I often tell a funny story to people, that I don't train unless I piss clear. I always make sure that I have a clear urine before I do a workout, and that's just a weird idiosyncrasy I've always had. But I'll explain to clients that HIT training is peak performance. We're measuring you for your very best, the best you've ever done. That's what we're trying to unlock at each and every workout, which is very different to the industry norm. The industry norm is wave you up and down, change parameters all over the place, and you kind of don't really know whether you're ahead or not. The workout's hard-ish, and that's all you get out of it.

Gary Knight: 16:22 With HIT, we're boiling things down to very precise measurements, hopefully, and it's a double-edged sword. At one end, when things are going great, the client is in full knowledge of it and can enjoy it, but

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when things aren't good, you need to manage expectations really well. You need to cover your bases in terms of what may have caused this. And also remind them that listen, you're not going to have a perfect workout every week. You're not going to always have forward momentum. That's no one's history ever. It's not like that.

Gary Knight: 16:53 In many ways, clients have a much better velocity of improvement than I would have personally, because I'm there pushing them. I didn't have a coach when I was training myself. I didn't have someone to get on top of me and motivate me. I had to go with the ebb and flow of my personality. In many ways, clients have a pretty dream run when it comes to results. But if it does go backwards, just manage expectations. Ask them the three questions. How's your sleep? How's your water intake? Are you feeling sick or any stress in your life? Half the time that opens up a conversation where they might need to tell you something. They might be stressed at work, having trouble at home. It's a good opportunity to display empathy in a very genuine way, and see if there's some things there you need to solve.

Gary Knight: 17:45 Half the time it's like, "I didn't drink enough water today." You wouldn't believe. People will wake up at 5:00 in the morning, and come see you at 5:30 or 5:40,

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and they haven't had any water. And then they wonder why their workouts are shit. Come on, bro. If you're paying great money to come here, do the very basic things that set you up for success. That's a great conversation to have at the back end of a shitty workout. To go, "You need to complete these things. You need to set yourself up for success." And instead of walking out there feeling a little bit dejected by not getting great results, they understand that they have a part to play, and they can manage it and control it, and then next time they come in, we're like, "Oh, getting some big reps today. What's going on?" They're like, "Oh, I actually drank some water today."

Gary Knight: 18:31 But that happens all the time, you know what I mean? So really important that when things aren't going so well... And don't just have an answer. Don't always just reach for a way to blame them for why it didn't go right. Ask questions. Listen for the answers. Find out. It might be, "No, I'm feeling good. Drunk plenty of water. Not stressed. I've had the week off work." Okay, where do we go from there? Hopefully the next workout goes good.

Lawrence Neal: 19:03 That's interesting, that last example you gave, because I mean that must happen sometimes, where you just don't know. I'm thinking about myself when I train

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people. It's like well, I sometimes say what Skyler said to me before, which is that sometimes in life, when you're doing HIT over a lifetime, which we should be, right? We should be doing strength training forever. Sometimes it's not necessarily about making crazy gains. It's just about keeping the table set. Putting stress on the muscle, and delivering all of the benefits that we know HIT stimulates in the body. I don't know whether that would clash with your mindset a little bit, because you're like, "No, there's always a reason why someone isn't improving."

Lawrence Neal: 19:46

But are there times where you're just with a client and say, "Look, you turned up, and you gave it everything you could today, and you should be pleased about that. You should be trying to improve, but at the same time, you turned up, so that's sometimes enough." What do you think?"

Gary Knight: 20:01

I've said to clients before. To be honest, speaking to the client, I would say, "You're enjoying more regular progress than I think I've had in years." The last five years of my life are like pretty much pushing the exact same way. You know what I mean? I might be slightly better form, but I haven't tripled my numbers or even doubled my numbers, or even increased my numbers by 20% probably in the last two, three years, because it

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just doesn't happen at this late stage of the game. You know what I mean? It's like you fight for these tiny, tiny increments of change, these tiny increments of change.

Gary Knight: 20:45 For most of your clients that come to a PT, they rarely come to you as already elite, in-shape HIT trainers, like trying for the extra bit with you. They're always just regular folk trying to get in shape, and basically you've got to smack the donut out of their mouth, get them to lose a bit of fat, and get them muscled up. For the most part, their journey is a good experience, and they'll get results for the good part of the first year without too many hiccups. And usually like I said, they just didn't sleep right or not enough water. And you've just got to find the words and the empathy to make sure that they don't take it too hard or get over-invested in a bad workout, and suit up for the next battle. That's really all you have to do, and they'll forget it.

Gary Knight: 21:30 Then when the next workout comes along... Usually, if they've had a workout that's slightly off the mark, it usually gives them a bit of breathing room, so they come back with vengeance, and usually get back to where they were and then some anyway. So that's just the natural ebb and flow of the body. And your stress and your focus and your concentration doesn't run on a clock the way that you might program their training. It

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doesn't run on a clock. If you go Monday, Wednesday, Friday, every Monday workout will represent full recovery and full super compensation of your muscles. Sometimes, it doesn't line up that way, but your schedule has to line up that way. All those things come into play. So you've just got to learn to duck and weave and manage expectations. Then at the end of the day, motivate them to take whatever steps they can to make sure it's a better outcome next time.

Lawrence Neal: 22:21

Awesome. This has been awesome, Gary. I'll just summarize some of these points quickly. I guess one of the most important reasons why it's really important to track and communicate client performance is measuring progress. You cannot manage what you don't measure. You can't really show a client how they're improving, and ultimately, that is what is going to help you retain that client over the long-term, and get them to adhere to this type of training. How to do that? You've talked about the way you communicate that to people. But also the tools that you use, so the work sheet, the log sheet, which you can do with pen or paper or Google Sheets. I guess in the future there'll be tools like other apps that we might be able to take advantage of as well.

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- Lawrence Neal: 23:06 And when progress gets flat, I think well, you covered that quite well there, which is just looking at the client and asking the right questions, being a great listener. I think that's really, really important. A lot of people talk way too much in these interactions. But ask, "Have you drunk enough water? Are you stressed? What other stresses are there in your lifestyle? Are you getting enough sleep?" And addressing those things first and looking at progress, looking at the work sheets to actually see what variables you might need to change in order to continue to help that client progress. But also understand that, like you were saying there, that sometimes due to the ebb and flow of life and training, and depending on where they are in their journey, that they will have shit days. It's just being able to communicate that, so that they expect that is going to happen sometimes, and then I guess holding their hand a little bit through that to make sure it doesn't diminish their motivation and want to continue.
- Lawrence Neal: 24:01 Is that a fair assessment of your-
- Gary Knight: 24:04 Yeah, no, that's wonderfully summarized. Well done.
- Lawrence Neal: 24:08 I was a bit nervous about doing that.

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- Gary Knight: 24:09 Yeah, no, it's very, very good. On point. Good to show you're a good listener. But I guess, no, that's all very, very true.
- Gary Knight: 24:18 Another point I'll make about all of this is, especially when communicating good results, is you're trying to be enchanting. Like you're trying to make this a process where it just gives them joy, you know what I mean? They've set aside time to see you a couple of times a week. They've paid good money. And it's meant to be a happy thing. It's meant to be them taking the time out of their day to look after themselves, to prioritize their health and fitness, and they've put that in your hands. So be really enchanting when it comes to celebrating good results. Don't overindulge in it and be fake about it. But be like, "Look, across these last six weeks, you've tripled your leg press. I couldn't be more proud of you. That's a really excellent result. Really well done. You're really applying yourself here, and it's starting to show."
- Gary Knight: 25:11 You say that to someone at the end of a workout or the end of a block of work, they're going to love it. They're going to be like, "This is for me. I'm glad I did this. I want to keep doing this. This is one of the few things in my busy, stressful life where I achieve something and I

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feel good about it." You want to facilitate that at every opportunity.

Lawrence Neal: 25:33 Just to echo that, Michelle Seager who's a writer on Exercise Motivation, she talks about how important it is to... I mean people think it's the results that motivate people, and saying, "Oh, you can get a six pack," but it's actually the feeling they get that is the main motivator. The feeling they get during and after, and by giving them that sort of recognition and praise where appropriate is so powerful in terms of making people feel motivated to want to come back and continue to train. So that's really cool. I appreciate you saying that.

Lawrence Neal: 26:02 One other thing I will mention is we've talked a lot here about obviously tracking, communication, how to get clients to adhere long-term. I've talked about something called the proven process, which Discover Strength have a circular process where you're selling an entire workout journey as opposed to a single workout. It's incredibly important for, again, helping return clients over the long-term, and also just demonstrating a high value to what we do in high intensity training. Rock Solid Fitness Florida do a similar thing, and I'll link to both of those in the show notes to this, if you want to learn more about how to create a proven process in your own business.

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- Lawrence Neal: 26:36 Gary, thanks so much for today. What's the best way for members to find out more about you?
- Gary Knight: 26:42 I mean I've recently shut down my Facebook page just to have a break, I guess. But you can probably get me on intensegainsgary@gmail.com. If anyone's already a Facebook friend, they can probably contact me through messenger. But yeah, is the email is a perfectly fine way to contact me, and I think Intense Gains, the Instagram account, you can add me there and chat to me there if you like.
- Lawrence Neal: 27:10 Great, awesome. I'll link to that. People will be able to see that in the show notes to this.
- Lawrence Neal: 27:14 Gary, thanks so much for joining me today. Really appreciate it.
- Gary Knight: 27:17 Pleasure.