

[Kieran Igwe – Franchise vs. Start-up: Which One Works for You? \(#225\)](#)

- Announcer: This is highintensitybusiness.com with Lawrence Neal, helping you achieve your health and fitness goals, become a great personal trainer, and build your high intensity strength training business.
- Lawrence Neal: Today's guest is Kieran Igwe. Kieran has been a personal trainer for over 13 years working mostly with clients over the age of 40. More recently, Kieran came across High Intensity Training and decided to partner with fit20 and transform his personal training business into a high intensity personal training studio. He now owns and operates fit20 in Leeds, West Yorkshire, in the United Kingdom.
- Lawrence Neal: Kieran, great to have you on the show. Been obviously looking forward to talking to you for a while. It's always nice to connect with someone in the UK who started a high intensity training business and even more interesting, the fact that you partnered with the fit20 franchise. We'd love to hear, how did you become a personal trainer? Talk us through your story and how you got into personal training in the beginning.
- Kieran Igwe: Okay, sure. My backstory, I guess I started out leaving college having no real direction in what I was doing and ended up just doing bar work, working from job to job, and then started to feel like there wasn't any direction or purpose in my life, so I started getting into fitness and then started feeling better. Obviously, when you start training, you feel healthier, you feel fitter, your brain start working better. I thought, "You know what? I actually want to be able to help other people experience what I have."

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Kieran Igwe: I did a personal training certification and started working with people in a normal gym environment. Then, within a few months of doing that, I'd built up my client base and was able to just become self-employed and no longer have to work for the gym and just started my journey in helping people transform their health and fitness from seeing the benefits that it gave myself to be able to share that with other people.

Lawrence Neal: Okay, so then you became self employed but then you set up your own studio. How did that happen?

Kieran Igwe: Working in the gym built up a client base and I had a couple of the trainers that were working with me to fulfill the amount of clients that I was working with. Then, the gym was a big corporate gym and they turned around and said, "Okay, we're bringing all personal training back in house now," which means you can either come and be a fitness instructor and then no longer be self employed or you can believe, so I said thank you very much for the time here and obviously left. It had always been on my mind to set up a personal training studio. I don't know why, I just felt like that's the thing that you should do as a personal trainer. You should always dream to have your own studio. That was just the push that I needed to really get off the ground and get it started.

Kieran Igwe: A number of clients wanted to continue working with me. They trusted me at that point in maybe five-plus years of training clients. Then, I found a facility, got turned down for a lease, got turned down for financing time and time again. and then eventually the

stars aligned and we got the financing, got the facility we wanted and just fitted it out with, at the time, more functional training type equipment. Battling ropes and free weights and a squat rack and that was the kind of training that I was absolutely into. That was in 2011, so a number of years ago now. That's how my personal training went from in a gym to then my own facility working with clients in that capacity.

Lawrence Neal: That's really interesting. You obviously had, as you said, battle ropes, you had other types of equipment. It sounds like, based on our conversation leading up to this, that you've gone through quite a journey in terms of... well, it looks like you may have changed your mind on what is considered effective exercise, what's safe, what isn't. Tell me about that. Firstly, is that correct? Have you kind of decided that that stuff is probably not appropriate? What's it been like to just transition from kind of the traditional health and fitness industry, shall we call it, to high intensity training?

Kieran Igwe: I think it's absolutely been a transition and a journey and one that I don't like to put myself in a category of, "This is what I do and this is what I don't do." It's just I guess what I come across is most effective and most appropriate. What I was doing at the time, I wasn't looking for another way of training. I was happy with the way of exercising that was working, minimal injuries, people were enjoying it. Then, just any time I stumbled across something that I feel is better and more appropriate for the clients I'm working with, I'm like "We're doing this. We've got to find a way to implement this into our approach." I wouldn't say that I hate the other stuff, I just

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have found a better way for the people that I'm working with and also as a business.

Kieran Igwe: As a business offering, I feel like it's a simpler way to be able to train people. A way that you can do more systematically and you can quantify the results that you achieve in a much clearer and faster... there was so fewer variables with high intensity training and with using the equipment that you use with the machines that we use, for example, the Nautilus.

Lawrence Neal: Tell me the moment when you discovered high intensity training.

Kieran Igwe: I was part of a business networking group called BNI and one of the guys in the group, he knew what I was trying to do with my business and how I was looking to improve. He said, "Oh, have you heard of fit20?" I was like, "No, I have not." He said, "You're going to want to have a look at this." I just thought, "Okay, great, another 20 minutes a week. It sounds like another fad. No thanks. I've seen it all." Despite this, he said, "Just go and check it out. Go and have a look at the studio and let me know what you think."

Kieran Igwe: I respected the guy who said for me to go and have a look, so I went over. I drove down to the fit20 UK down in Stocksbridge. I met with a guy named Niri Patel and he showed me the studio and I thought, "Okay, this looks like a nice environment to train in." A bit different from your average setup. He took me through a training session and it was based on a super slow protocol of high intensity training and I thought, "Do you know what? My muscles have never felt like this in my life of training." I've been lifting for 14 years-plus. I

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consider myself someone who trains hard and follows the best of what's out there information-wise.

Kieran Igwe: Here I am, five minutes into a workout feeling like I've wasted my life. I thought, "If it works", because I was still skeptical, "If it works, it's something that will have a huge impact on helping other people improve their health and fitness. For people people who don't have the time to spend three times a week, et cetera, et cetera." That was my first experience of high intensity training. I didn't know it was high intensity training at that point. I was just doing this slow lifting of weights, but I wasn't aware of high intensity training as a whole movement and a way of training.

Lawrence Neal: Niri Patel is the master for the UK isn't he for fit20? He wasn't the chap in your BNI, he was a different BNI, I assume?

Kieran Igwe: He owns the franchise for BNI Yorkshire as well, so I was aware that if this is something that these guys are involved with, they've got a lot of credibility with me. It's worth having a look at just to say, "Thanks for introducing me and it never helps to network and expand your network." I was happy to go and have a look and see what they were doing, but was still convinced, "This was a fad. You can't possibly make any changes. Let me go and prove this concept wrong."

Lawrence Neal: That was going to be my next question. It was only after you felt it, the key word here, that you realized, "Oh, actually, this is really intense and really productive and effective and safe." That's when you were kind of partially convinced because, like you said, that you

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still had an amount of healthy skepticism from all of your years of doing this, which is completely understandable.

Kieran Igwe: I thought I knew the best way to achieve results, and as far as I was concerned, I was doing. After trying the high intensity training protocol I just thought, "If this is something that works, it's great for me, the number of people that you can help with this sort of approach to training", and also from a business standpoint, I thought, "It's a really good model if it works." You can never be sure if it would.

Lawrence Neal: Awesome. What was the turning point? You had the experience in the fit20 facility, you had this great workout. You were like, "Wow, my muscles have never felt like this even though I've been training for years", and clearly you've got a great physique and all of that. When did you decide that it was going to be the time for you? What made you decide that it made sense for you to transition from your existing business model to a fit20 franchise?

Kieran Igwe: I didn't have any intentions of transitioning. I had a reasonably successful business. It was working, it was helping clients achieve their goals, and I thought, "If fit20 is something that works, I'll just set it up as well." Basically, "Let me just this out", and I just gave it two months of me driving down to the head office, training there once a week. I gave up my normal strength training three times a week, squats, deadlifts, bench presses were off the menu. After two months I was like, "Okay, I'm as fit as I've been, I'm as lean as I've been. I actually feel more mobile and more flexible and I've got

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more time to do the things I love doing like getting out playing sports, playing tennis, going out hiking, spending time with my wife, doing the business. There were things that I would much rather do than just drag myself through the gym.

Kieran Igwe: It was like two months in I was like, "All right, that's it. I'm buying it this and I'm bring this up to my new work in Leeds," and we set up. Originally, there was a separate studio, so I had two studios running at the same time. The goal wasn't really wasn't to transition one to the other. It was a different offering, so in my mind a different group of people. With that said, over the last year and a half now, we have transitioned the two studios to be into one location. The high intensity training approach and the business model from high intensity training for me is the way forward just because I've seen what it can do and how much better it's been as a business and so for other people to experience that business.

Lawrence Neal: That's so interesting. I love that. Kudos to you for going, "Wow, that workout was really effective and interesting. I'm going to do this. I'm going to do a self-experiment and do it for a couple of months and see how I feel. You did that and kind of for you it was the proof is in the pudding. You got the results you were after and you realized how much time it gave you back and then that was the convincing I suppose you needed, so that's awesome to hear that.

Lawrence Neal: What's kind of interesting about you is you've obviously come from a traditional personal training background into a high intensity training business. What is better about this business? I guess I'm

asking that primarily from a financial point of view, but what are the sort of pros for you in terms of moving to this type of business over the other one?

Kieran Igwe: The pros for this type of business I think firstly is the appeal of the offering. If I tell you, "Okay, you're going to have to give up three hours every single week of your life, and you know those favorite TV programs? You can forget that. You're not watching them anymore. You know that time you used to spend with your wife? No, you can't do that anymore. You've got to come into my gym and sweat for an hour and then go home, have a shower, get changed, et cetera, et cetera." For me, it was the appeal of being able to achieve good results from training in a really short period of time without having to really change your whole life to be able to benefit from what strength training has to offer people.

Kieran Igwe: When I saw that, my marketing brain was obviously like, "Right, even if it's just the ability to offer a short intensive training that actually works, that has sold it for me." That benefit was the biggest one for me, and running a fitness business is like kind of pushing a huge boulder uphill constantly. I thought, "If you've got a better offering, it's going to be a little easier to run a business of it." That has kind of been proven for me that it's more now... it's still pushing a boulder, but it's downhill rather than trying to force it uphill all the time. That's been a lot easier to make it successful than when it was just competing with everyone else having the same offering in the fitness industry.

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Lawrence Neal: That makes total sense. You've got a huge differentiator of your competition because I'm guessing there's no one like you in the area.

Kieran Igwe: No, when I originally set up my studio, places with turf, there was no battling ropes, we just really wasn't around. However, now within a stone's throw there's probably three or four facilities that are very similar. Now, with the high intensity training studio that I have now, I only know of people in the UK doing it through your podcast, not through their marketing efforts or anything else that's been going on.

Lawrence Neal: It's still such a tiny community. It baffles me, really. You've got I think Simon over at [HITuni](#), you've Ryan Collins, and James Biddle, but there's a handful of guys in the UK. It baffles me to why there isn't more when there's just so much opportunity I suppose for more to pop up. That's really interesting. I guess you could talk about that in terms in maybe of number of clients. Maybe there's other factors. How successful is your fit20 business over your original personal training business?

Kieran Igwe: The original personal training business, it took me probably between three to four years to build it up to a point where it was generating a reasonable profit. The number of clients that we were working with at any one time might have been 30 to 40 clients with a goal of edging up towards 50. They were training two to three times per week, whereas with the fit20 business, we're just over 18 months in and already we have high 90s, so I think as of last week

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closed out with 98 clients that we're training every single week. In terms of growth towards being able to help and impact more people and oversee the revenue that comes to the business as a result of helping those people has been much quicker and the scalability of it is much higher as well because there's more people who will get involved in fit20 than ever would with my previous personal training offering.

Lawrence Neal: How many of your existing clients have moved over the fit20 way of doing things?

Kieran Igwe: Most of them, just because if I believe in something, then there's no way that I'm not saying you need to try this, that you need to do this. I've explained why we've set this studio up and explained why it's a good thing for people to do as the foundation for their training and that actually doing other things is absolutely fine. Having something that you can do consistently, week in, week out for the rest of your life and will only have positive benefits on your health and your strength and your overall... just how well your body works is something to me that is important to do. Why wouldn't I tell the people I care about that they should be doing this?

Kieran Igwe: The majority of them transitioned over and then a handful of people were like, "No, we want to jump about and do all of that sort of thing." I said, "That's fine." We're doing things differently now, so I can recommend them to another facility who does that.

Lawrence Neal: That's so interesting. You obviously had the self-confidence to say, "Appreciate why you want to do that. I've made a conscious

decision to stop offering that kind of service." Then, you've been confident enough that you know you backfill those clients and attracts new clients who will be a better fit for you. I think it's interesting because a lot of personal trainers would struggle with losing people, so they almost try to do everything so they can cater for everyone, but long term, that can obviously hurt your business. It's also not ideal if you're advocating things that might be harmful to people over the long term, such as anything... if you're jumping around a lot, there's impact on the joints, things like that. Was that difficult for you at the time? Or were you quite so confident in the model that you were like, "No, that's fine, you guys go elsewhere, that's totally cool"?

Kieran Igwe: I'd say it was a gradual transition, so, "I made the decision, this is where we're headed in the future." Having been in business for a number of years, I very rarely have just made a cut and said, "This is it now. We're doing it this way only exclusively from now on." The other way just had the two paths running together at the same time to test and make sure one is going to work and be successful, and then when I've got confidence in, "This is the right thing to do", and I've made many mistakes where we haven't done that, then it's been easy enough for me to say, "This is my decision. This is what we're doing and if you're onboard with that, great. I'm looking forward to helping you as we're very much focused on the way of doing things high intensity that we're doing now."

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Lawrence Neal: What about yourself? Are you still doing the 20-minute workout once a week yourself? Tell us about your current workout. How has that evolved as you've got into high intensity training?

Kieran Igwe: Yeah, so my training has definitely been based around the high intensity 20-minute training session on our fit20, and then it's just probably been over two years now where every single week I've done that as the foundation for training. Just in the last couple of months, I have had a little bit more time because the business has become more successful. My team here now, they're looking after more of the clients and I've had the desire to do more training.

Kieran Igwe: I've actually been experimenting with that in the second training session based on high intensity principles for a second workout to see what that does for me. I've been enjoying it rather than like enduring it like it's been something I had to do. Only in the last couple of months I'd say have I started doing that, and that's where my training is at at the moment.

Lawrence Neal: Have you seen any changes? Is that being more productive for you at all? I'm curious as to what you've found.

Kieran Igwe: Yeah, so adding the second training session has been... it hasn't been the only thing that's changed so it's hard to say whether it has impacted my results. For example, because I've got more time, I'm able to eat more consistently, eat the right amount of food rather than grabbing stuff on the run. Those two things have changed. I've been able to eat the right amount of food and the right quality of food, and then the second training, but I'd say, yeah, I've probably

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gained a few pounds of muscles and my physique is kind of how I want it to be. It wasn't not while I was doing fit20, but I would say I've definitely added muscle with the second training session, but I've been eating as well, so it's hard to say which is doing it.

Lawrence Neal: What kind of diet do you eat?

Kieran Igwe: Simple and high protein I would say is probably the best way to describe it, so a lot of protein and veggies. That's the foundation for it, and then I have a reasonable amount of carb as well, like brown rice, pasta. Having low body fat, that's my genetics is that I don't have to do very much to maintain a low body fat. I do have to eat regularly and I do have to eat a good amount of protein if I want to maintain any sort of decent muscle.

Lawrence Neal: What's your height and weight roughly?

Kieran Igwe: 6'2" and I'm probably about at the moment 80 kilos.

Lawrence Neal: Obviously, I've seen pictures of you. You look fantastic. It's always good to understand someone's height and weight to know kind of where they're at, but that's really interesting. Cool. Just jumping back a second to the business, you mentioned you've got a team, so I was going to ask you that. Tell me, what's the team look like at the moment?

Kieran Igwe: The team right now is myself and I've got two colleagues who work part time delivering the fit20 training in the studio as well. At the beginning, launching the studio, it was me delivering all of the trainings, running the business, doing everything to do with fit20.

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Just the beginning of this year, 2019, is when I onboarded the first two members of staff and they picked up I'd say over half between them of the remaining sessions, which has really freed up my time hugely which was a big part of why I thought as a business model fit20 was a great fit because it's a really strong system.

Lawrence Neal: Absolutely. I know Graham and Walter quite well. We've had a few conversations and really impressed with their passion for high intensity training and their passion to obviously find a business model that works very well and they seem to have done that. The numbers kind of speak for themselves in terms of the number of locations and the speed of growth. My episode with Walter will actually come out before this one, so look out for that in the show notes for this. What I really like about what they've done at fit20 is it seems like they've really embraced as any franchisor should, they're really embraced kind of a systems approach where it's like, "Look, here's the rails. We're going to put you on the rails. This is the checklist. These are the actions you have to do in order to achieve your goals."

Lawrence Neal: Now, I'm guessing that you are following so to speak a checklist as you grow your business. Correct me if I'm wrong, but there's a process you went through before you knew it was the right time to take on more people. Is that how it's going for you? Is that kind of the support they're providing you with?

Kieran Igwe: Yeah. Within a year or two of being in the fitness industry, I'd read a book called The E-Myth, and that just changed my mind about what

a business should be and how it should work. "Yeah, it would go to that. Perfect." It really set up my frame for how organized a business should be. I was always trying to create that in my own business to varying degrees of success. Then, part of when I saw fit20, I was like, "Do you know what? They've just done everything that I'm trying to do, but they've done it better and better quality with more experience." I thought, "I'm never going to be able to do that to that standard, and I don't want to do it to that standard. I'll buy it and I'll use it."

Kieran Igwe: I saw the systems and the checklist that they had in order and when I launched the studio, they have step-by-step for, "Here's how it is set up. History. Here's how to do the launch. Here's how you to promote it. Here's all of the equipment that you need. Here's the detail of the declaration in your studio." When it comes to marketing and growing as well, same. "When you have this number of clients, this is when you figure that out for your first member of staff. Here's where you put the ad out, and here's what the ad should say." All of those elements, they're kind of taken care of and that is evolving all the time, like it's continually improving and different parts of that system is just getting built out and refined over time. Makes it really easy for me as a business owner to just focus on doing the things I like and excel at.

Lawrence Neal: That's so interesting. This is a good moment to kind of ask you about some of the pros and cons. There are people listening to this who might think, "Oh, I don't want to buy into a franchise. I want to have my own HIT studio. I want to do everything the way that I want

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to do it. I want total freedom and flexibility." Obviously, as you stated, that does come with somewhat of a cost because those individuals then have to learn how to create a successful business. Not to say you don't if you buy into a franchise, but a lot of the templates are provided for you, right?

Kieran Igwe: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Lawrence Neal: Unless, obviously, people decide to join the HIT business membership, in which case there's a very systematic approach to that, too, where I provide systems for people to implement in their business should they not want to franchise, although to be fair, digressing here, it's valuable to both franchisees and also people that own their own studio who aren't franchisees. I'm curious. What would you say to those who are kind of in the middle thinking, "I'm thinking about starting a studio. I really want to do it my own way, but I'm also really attracted to the idea that fit20 will help take a lot of the load off in terms of coming up with all the systems and all the help that they give." How do you think about that?

Kieran Igwe: Well, I think if it was me seven, eight years ago prior to starting my first business, I wish I wouldn't have had the same idea about opening a franchise because I want to just do it my own way. That's what personal trainers want to do. I want to write my own programs. I want to do my own marketing and design my own logo, et cetera, et cetera, which is cool. I think sometimes maybe that's what you need to get started and sort of get the ball rolling with running your business. For those that really don't want to deal with

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the minutiae of every element of business that you don't know about before you start, then having a franchise there makes it huge to really help you with all of the detail of hiring, recruiting, managing. They've just got experience and expertise to be able to help in that.

Kieran Igwe: Having run a business already myself and had my own studio where I could do every single thing my own way, I thought I would probably be the least likely to buy a fitness franchise because I've had a business, it's been successful. Why would you buy a franchise? Then, when I saw the way they were doing it and how it was better than what I was currently doing even though I'd put a hell of a lot of time and effort in, then yeah, I'm going to buy this and be part of it rather than just butt up against it because if you're not onboard with it, you're competing with it. When I see something like that, I can't compete against that. It's a better offering, so for me being part of it is a huge way to not be competing against something that I know is better.

Lawrence Neal: Absolutely. Good answer. How much harder would it have been for you to continue growing your traditional, for want of a better label, personal training business to the level that you have with fit20? Without all of the help?

Kieran Igwe: The business that I was running, I'd got it to the stage that I could. It was okay, but I was like, "There's got to be more than this. There's got to be more to it. I've got to be able to help more people and I've got to have a more successful business." It wasn't particularly scalable because it had required quite a high skill set of trainer

because we just needed to write our own programs and then to be able to teach our trainers how to write those programs and then to monitor and progress then. It was really hard and I couldn't scale it to the degree that I could see scaling something like with fit20 training, which it's not simple, it's just a really straightforward program to be able to offer people.

Kieran Igwe: I'd taken my business as far as I could and without taking on another location, which is thought, "No, I don't think I want to do it with my previous business", then it wouldn't have really grown. It would have just stayed at the same level, whereas here with fit20, as I got into it I realized that the possibilities and potential of it was far greater than my traditional personal training business, which was people had grown it and scaled it. I spent a lot of money with a lot of people who have helped people grow businesses. I've implemented and done every single thing that they've said, and yet still it got to the same place where I was just treading water at the same level I roughly knew, same number of clients who never really managed to move the needle beyond that, me personally. Somebody else might have been able to, but I felt I'd done all I could.

Lawrence Neal: No, that's understandable, and do you think that there's an element of ego here? A lot of people who become entrepreneurs, they want to become an entrepreneur because they want to everything their own way. It's like doing a fit20 franchise might feel like antithetical to what they actually want, right?

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Kieran Igwe: Yeah.

Lawrence Neal: Obviously, that's not the case. You're still a business owner, but you're just following a proven system. Do you think there's an element of those individuals or some of those people need to kind of put their ego aside and seriously evaluate this type of opportunity?

Kieran Igwe: I don't know what they should do. Part of me feels like they should do it themselves because you learn a hell of a lot and then when you've learned that and then when you see something like fit20 and the franchise opportunity, you know it's good because looking at it at the beginning, you don't know if it's good or not. You just think, "Oh, surely I can do this better myself", and many people can perhaps do it better, but having learned the lessons that I've learned and thought, "Okay, I know where I want to be with my life and what I'm looking to do", and fit20 was the best vehicle to help achieve that rather than continuing to go it alone. Don't get me wrong, running a fit20 studio is still hard work. You still have to run a good business, you've just got a lot of the elements taken care of that you just don't have to worry about when you're trying to think of all the elements of the business.

Lawrence Neal: You mentioned earlier about how you spent your time doing the things you enjoy. How are you spending your time on the business now?

Kieran Igwe: Well, time on the business is primarily on marketing, on managing the team, on helping disseminate the education that comes from

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these excellent podcasts that you're putting out, and then [crosstalk 00:27:08]-

Lawrence Neal: Thank you, sir [crosstalk 00:27:09]-

Kieran Igwe: Sharing that information with the team and then implementing how are we going to help our clients train better through this information. Then, having a better vision for, "Okay, what's the next three, five years looking like?" Whereas, when you don't have the time, all you're doing is like, "Right, my next appointment is coming in. Train that client. Next appointment, train that client." You can't think about the bigger picture, so just looking at second location, where was a great site for that studio, and kind of looking into the future of the business rather than just being stuck in the present moment of, "This is all I can get my head around is this number of clients that we're working in with now." Marketing and managing is where I'm spending my time I guess.

Lawrence Neal: Cool. Do you still train some clients yourself as well?

Kieran Igwe: I do, yeah, and for two years before I started fit20, I wasn't training any clients. My personal training team were looking after all the clients which is why I even had the headspace to be able to look at fit20 as an opportunity. When I launched fit20, I was training everyone for the first year, and then just coming into the second year is when I took on the two part-time members of staff. They're taking care of about 50% of the clients and I'm looking after the 50, so I'm still spending maybe four three-hour blocks a week training clients, which is just nothing in terms of amount of hours spent

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training. Every hour, I'm training six clients, so I see a lot of people but don't have to do a lot of hours to see all those people and impact their week.

Lawrence Neal: Even though that is, as you said, very minuscule, will you still scale that down over time?

Kieran Igwe: Yeah, it's not eating into my days very much at the moment, but to be able to grow the business on to the next stage, yeah, I would probably need to bring it down by half again. We're currently going through the process of recruiting the next trainer to join us and that'll probably take up 50% of my workload, so I'll be down to doing maybe one or two shifts per week.

Lawrence Neal: Cool. I do want to ask about your goals, but before I get there, I want to kind of go back a second because you were talking about the support that fit20 provide, which is so interesting to me. You mentioned how they helped with the marketing, the ad copy, the launch, all of that stuff. Tell me, can you walk me through? When you first started the business, what were the steps... Just talk me through like when you started it. It sounds like they gave you a lot of confidence and they gave you a lot of support and I'd just really like to hear from your perspective what the steps they supported you with were from the beginning.

Kieran Igwe: The steps initially were coming to terms with the formula of fit20, what the offering is, and that is delivered by you going through the fit20 training and understanding it and being trained as a client, and that builds your belief and confidence in the actual system itself.

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Learning how to do this type of training is great, and then the next steps were looking at a territory, looking at what makes a good territory to set up your studio, what makes a good location. Then, once you've got what makes a good location, the actual site and building itself, like would it kind of work for customers?

Kieran Igwe: Things that having set up a studio previously, I've got experience finding a site and actually setting it up, but having a different set of eyes on it other than just my own is so crucial and fit20 have obviously got a lot of experience of finding what makes a successful studio, what doesn't make a successful studio and they provide a lot of guidance around how to become one of the successful ones. That was the start of the journey really, and then everything going through their training academy for fit20 about learning in depth about the high intensity training method and how to apply it with clients to the actual spec or the fit of our studio.

Kieran Igwe: Once you found your site, they script for fitting out your studio, what equipment, what flooring, what décor, the details which I don't really care what flooring is in there, but they've just done a great job of creating a space that people want to be. I was like, "Yeah, I'm happy to go with their recommendations because it looks better than anything else that I've seen. Then, once you've got the studio and they start doing the countdown for like, "When's your launch date? Here's the steps that you need to take up to that launch date to make sure that you have a successful launch and you kind of hit the ground running.

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Lawrence Neal: Awesome. It's like... I'm pretty impressionable, so I have to be careful. I'm easily sold, but to me it sounds like such a no-brainer. Just for me personally, as a lot of listeners will know, I'm working with someone to set something up here and we are still so early on in the process. It's a long, long story as to why it hasn't started sooner, much longer than we can talk about in this podcast. Something like fit20 or something similar is very, very attractive and probably if I was doing this alone, I think I would be very convinced to look into doing a fit20 franchise.

Lawrence Neal: From what you said, it just sounds like it makes a ton of sense, and it's funny because I think when you're an entrepreneur or you have entrepreneurial instincts and you don't know much about franchising, from my perspective, I was always very skeptical of the idea of franchising. It just sounded unattractive, and maybe that's because we associate franchising with... McDonald's is probably the most famous franchise and maybe a lot of people, certainly listeners of this show aren't going to be big fans of McDonald's probably, but just have maybe a negative outlook on franchising. Not sure if that's just me, but I think this is really kind of enlightened my perspective on that stuff for sure.

Kieran Igwe: Would it be okay to answer why you shouldn't consider a franchise? I didn't [crosstalk 00:32:39]-

Lawrence Neal: Go for it [crosstalk 00:32:39]-

Kieran Igwe: Once already. Just why you wouldn't want to consider a franchise, I think the only reason why I wouldn't consider a fit20 franchise is the

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fear of paying someone royalties to set up, and while we might not necessarily go into that today, I think just the fact that if you go alone, then you don't have that franchise fee. You can get the equipment, you can get the facility, and you set up, and great. Whereas with a franchise, you better believe you're going to be paying someone else [crosstalk 00:33:04]-

Lawrence Neal: Sure.

Kieran Igwe: For all of the equity that they've put in and the brand they've built up, but with a good franchise, when you run the numbers, you're like, "It's a no-brainer. I would still make more profit and more money because more people will buy this than if I had my own PT offering." Yes, you have more costs to do it, which is why someone might not do it, but I think with a good franchise and one that's been prove over and over again, then, absolutely you make more money back from offering that way of doing it than you would if you didn't have that franchise fee. Does that make sense?

Lawrence Neal: It does. It makes a lot of sense and I appreciate you saying that because my podcast, it's my intention to always provide the warts and all. At some stage, I'll have someone on who talks about the counterargument, who elaborates perhaps on that to talk about the counterargument way. They don't think a franchise is a good idea and scenarios, and I totally respect that. Are you to elaborate on the fees at this stage? If we can go there for a second in terms of what it costs to start a fit20 franchise? Is that something that you can talk about? Or-

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Kieran Igwe: I can tell you what it was for me, but that doesn't mean that it's necessarily the same right now-

Lawrence Neal: Sure.

Kieran Igwe: For someone new coming in. At the time, there was no fit20 franchises in the UK, so I was the first one to step up and say, "Yeah, let me do this." I don't know if the deal when I did it is the same deal now, but my franchise fee was 15K to begin with, and then each month there's monthly royalties that go onto fit20 per customer, and that's just built into your pricing and packaging. If you know that you've got this much going out for every customer that you have, then I know that I need to put on this much to the client's bill to make sure that the business is still going to grow at the right sort of rates.

Lawrence Neal: Can you give us an idea of what the percentage is for that per session?

Kieran Igwe: For me, it's 15%, but it's rather than them take 15% of whatever someone's customer payment is, they've just set a fixed fee of I think it might be £12.50 for every customer that is working with us at fit20.

Lawrence Neal: I appreciate that. I think an important thing to know, and we'll talk about the work half that people have absolutely no idea what high intensity training is. I always forget that there's going to be people that listen to this who haven't listened to any of the other episodes who have no idea what the hell we're talking about, but they would

hear that and think, "Well, Christ, that's a fair percentage or amount of money per session". What they're not realizing is the context. You've got people coming in as the name suggests for 20 minutes and they are paying a reasonable fee for that because they're getting much more value for their 20-minute session. I imagine it's priced at a good level. Do you mind me asking? What is it per session for 20 minutes at your place?

Kieran Igwe: Everyone is just on a monthly subscription, so it has a monthly membership and they pay a monthly fee I would say on average £100 a month, so the thing that is so good about... yes, it's great for clients. Come in for just 20 minutes once a week, but for the business as well, to be able to service six people every hour, so you have six people paying £25 for that training session, so as a personal trainer for an hour, we charge previously £50 an hour. That's 45 minutes, but you're definitely spending 15 minutes chatting and talking before and after the session. That £50 as a business model, it made more sense to be able to train more people to train six people in an hour. You're getting £150 for that same hour, so you've tripled the revenue per hour that you can deliver, and that goes from 8 AM until 8 PM.

Lawrence Neal: Thank you. You articulated that much better than me, and I appreciate that. That is an important point I wanted to get across as to why this business model is so attractive. For those who are tuning in and like, "What the hell is high intensity training? What is the fit20 version of that?" What does it look like if you could

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describe it in terms of a typical client, the workout they go through, the protocol, that kind of thing?

Kieran Igwe: A typical workout for a fit20 client is driven by high intensity principles, which I understand as being high intensity of effort. Someone comes in and our training session is going to consist of five exercises typically, working on compound movements, so typically a chest press pushing movement, a lat pulldown, a leg press, a back extension, and an abdominal crunch movement so that all the major muscle groups in the body are going to be trained in that 20-minute training. The biggest difference I would say in this training approach is that it's one set to muscular failure and that set might last for a minute and a half to two minutes tops.

Kieran Igwe: Within that set, we want the client to have muscular failure and no longer be able to move the load anymore, which is what characterizes it as high intensity of effort because it's the maximum effort that they can produce. Then, within 15 to 20 minutes their body is going to be shaking like it has never done in any other form of exercise. Their muscles are going to be exhausted and they're going to be booking their next training session for the next week before they know it.

Lawrence Neal: Again, for those new to this, it might sound a bit scary but what Kieran didn't say there is that it's incredibly safe. You're not loading the joints at the extreme ranges, you're not doing anything ballistic or explosive, it's generally very slow. It's super slow and well controlled and obviously they've all got supervising personal

trainers watching you as you train. You must get as we all do in high intensity training, you must get a fair few objections. How do you answer the cardio question at this stage?

Kieran Igwe: Usually we do a leg press, and then I don't need to answer the cardio question. No, it depends on what someone's goals are. If they want to feel like they're heart is racing and that they're sweating during the workout, one of the things with fit20 is it's designed to be done as part of the workday. People come in in gym clothes, people come in in everyday clothes and they do 20 minutes of high intensity training. The studio is kept super cool, but people don't generally sweat when they do it, which is one of the most bizarre things I've found out about it, but it's made it so much more appealing to so many people that never would have come and trained in the gym. I've forgotten your question here, Lawrence. What was it again?

Lawrence Neal: You get so many, and let's say they haven't got on the leg press yet and they say, "Kieran, this looks great, but I don't just want to build muscle. I want to improve the health of my heart and lungs." How do you respond to that?

Kieran Igwe: The question that typically comes I guess along that vein, "How is this making me fitter?" That's what they want to know how they're going to become fitter from it, and depending on the person asking it, I might explain a little bit about how by training the muscles, that's what drives their cardiorespiratory system as well. I will generally give a brief overview, but actually the experience of

training hard and then feeling what your body feels like and how your heart is racing and your lungs are having to suck in air rapidly to help you recover is usually the best kind of answer to the objection.

Kieran Igwe: Is it going to help them run a marathon? I think no. They need to get out and do marathon training, but for most of the clients that fit20 are helping, they're not. They're doing very little exercise and they're just looking to move one step forward on their kind of exercise journey, or they're doing a reasonable amount but they're not doing any strength training, so they're already doing cardiovascular stuff. They're riding their bike and they want to do something to help strengthen their muscles that's not going to kind of cane their joints as well.

Lawrence Neal: That's awesome. It sounds like you really focus on meeting them where they are and kind of like individualizing that type of answer. One thing that did concern me a little bit about fit20 is I know it's quite a lot of the videos show people coming in and training in full suits or professional attire, and I can't imagine doing that myself. I wouldn't be comfortable. I would feel too hot I suppose unless the room was really... the temperature was really well regulated, which I'm sure it is. Do you have that at your place? You have people come in in like suits and stuff like that to work out?

Kieran Igwe: More people come in everyday clothes than come in in their gym kit and it's bizarre. It's absolutely bizarre for me coming in the fitness industry. If someone came in in their jeans and t-shirt, I would be

like, "We can't do anything with you." However, having trained myself in everyday clothes, not sweating, and then being able to just go straight back into what I'm doing is like it's changed my mind about training and exercise. More people come in their everyday clothes. People that are working... I'm on a site where there's, I don't know, very posh businesses. People in on their lunch break, train, go straight back to work and they're not having to go through the hassle of... Now, the idea of getting changed to exercise for me sounds like a hassle, which is just crazy, but some people don't want to come in everyday clothes. They come in a gym kit.

Kieran Igwe: They might think that it helps with the mindset of, "I'm bright and changed. I'm coming to do business here." Also, if people do sweat when they train, then come in gym kit, it's fine, but after a while, they see other people training in everyday clothes and then they're like, "I'm going to at least try it at once." I always recommend people do, and then once they try it, most of the people are like, "Right. This is going to make it even more convenient because you can do it on the way to or the way back from somewhere rather than it having to be an event.

Kieran Igwe: If you're about trying to help as many people train and exercise as possible, just removing all of the barriers is what I think fit20 has done and the whole process of fit20 has done for strength training and exercise that you can have some hardcore people that are like, "Everyday clothes? No. No, I wouldn't even dream of it." Which is just fine. You can certainly come in gym kit and still have a good

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high intensity training session, it just makes it more accessible I guess.

Lawrence Neal: Okay, but let's say I come in in a suit. You're still going to have to take off the suit jacket, right? I'm just thinking like a suit jacket, especially if it's well tailored, you won't have the range of motion in a suit jacket.

Kieran Igwe: My suit, I have definitely trained because I was like, "Let me test this. I don't believe fit20. I'm going to sweat. My back is going to hurt after using gym machines because I've just down free weights my whole life. I don't believe in machines." As part of my two-month test protocol, I absolutely [crosstalk 00:42:50] went in tight shirt, tight trousers, and just I was like, "Damn, now, I'm not even sweating [crosstalk 00:42:55] I haven't even broken anything. My seams are intact."

Kieran Igwe: I think if someone comes in in a really tight-fitting jacket, they would take their jacket off and just do it in the shirt. That's fine, but people have come in, they've really pushed the limit of what they can do and yet they've had a better training session than if they hadn't, you know what I mean? They've made it happen because they haven't had to get changed. They can just nip in, train, and it's been quicker than having a cup of coffee at the coffee shop next door.

Lawrence Neal: It's interesting because I'm thinking about when I used to work in Corporate London before joining Kieser Training, which once I discovered Kieser I was totally committed to traveling across London to use their studio, but before that I was using Fitness First

in Holborn in Central London. I would go on my lunch break and I would change and think how stupid and funny it would be if you just went full suit into somewhere like Fitness First and just started like lifting weights. It would just look totally absurd, wouldn't it?

Kieran Igwe: Absolutely, and listening to this you're going to this is crazy training in your everyday clothes. I would have thought it was absolutely crazy. I did think it was crazy and it's only through seeing it and seeing what it... I don't even recommend people try and train in everyday clothes, but seeing the environment, it's a private studio that people are like rocking up in, it's just normal to me now. I've been seeing it for two years, people coming in and training in everyday clothes.

Kieran Igwe: Now, it doesn't seem strange to me, but definitely it was laughable and people still now when we put a Facebook post out, people say, "Why would you train in clothes that you could go on a night out in?" Then, I don't really say anything because I don't get involved in social media so much, but I've seen my clients that come and train say back, "Oh, it's better to do it like this than not do it at all", they kind of fight the battle for it and other people are kind of like, "Oh, fair enough." It's a bizarre concept and until you've seen the whole context of fit20 and the sort of people that are coming in and training and the environment that it's in in business environments, then it's just going to sound strange and it will continue to.

Lawrence Neal: It is a great benefit of high intensity training is that you don't sweat or necessarily get very dirty, so you don't necessarily need to

shower afterwards as well. I typically train in the morning and I will train before I shower anyway and I'm one of these people that I practically have to shower every day, otherwise I don't feel right. I know some people shower every few days or whatever. I don't judge them. I've noticed that when I have rarely trained in the afternoon or evening, I don't necessarily feel the need to... Well, I actually typically won't shower afterwards for just a 10-minute high intensity training session.

Lawrence Neal: Like I've been saying how I won't work up a sweat and I'll just get home, have some tweets, get ready for bed, and that's it. It's a benefit which has only become apparent to me through this conversation. It's another one of those reasons why high intensity training makes a lot of sense for some people.

Kieran Igwe: Absolutely. I think back to the gym. I'd get up, I would actually shower just to wake up first thing in the morning and I'd go and train at the gym, sweat, and then shower again and then start a day. It was a two-shower day and not just... Like now looking back, as I say, just even putting my trainers on sometimes I'm like, "This is hard work, putting trainers going to train", whereas you can just wear shoes, wear normal trousers and like I say, you don't necessarily... If you don't sweat from high intensity training or if you're in the right environment as you work out, sometimes I've seen 15 minutes, then it is a huge benefit also to people who like for ladies that have got hair and makeup and all this other stuff that goes along with getting ready.

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Kieran Igwe: It makes it a lot more accessible for them to do good strength training, whereas if they had to go to the gym, they wouldn't be able to fit it in or they wouldn't make the time to fit it in. Whereas, if it's 20 minutes, it's fine. They can do it if they don't have to their makeup and do their hair, et cetera, et cetera, after. They're going to stick to it for longer as well.

Lawrence Neal: That's a really valid point from a woman's point of view. I didn't think about that. That's true. That's a huge timesaver. As we start to get to the end of this podcast, tell me, what's kind of happening with regard to fit20 in the UK right now? I'm just thinking about obviously fit20 are growing globally and Walter is telling me about your goals that you have. I think it's like a million workouts a week by 2025 or something like that. I can't remember the exact figures, but very, very impressive goals and impressive growth to date. What's kind of the climate like in the UK? What's happening there with fit20 at the moment?

Kieran Igwe: The fit20 in the UK, if I think back to just even a year and a half ago when there was no other fit20 franchise used in the UK, and then I took on fit20 and then I might have been training 30 customers within the first three months or so. Then, fast forward to now, and we're close to a hundred customers. My own studio has now fit20 Exeter, fit20 Norwich, fit20 Chiswick in London, which is the big [crosstalk 00:47:43]-

Lawrence Neal: Oh wow [crosstalk 00:47:43]-

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Kieran Igwe: Into the mix, so that's just launched in the last month or so. fit20 Peterborough has been sold and there's a number of people in the [inaudible 00:47:50] behind that are now stepping up and getting involved in the fit20 movement in the UK, which means the high intensity movement as well is going to be growing and people are going to understand more about this way of training. It's been great to see the kind of there being no other fit20 studios to now there's a handful and that will only continue to grow.

Kieran Igwe: I think the best part I haven't talked about, the plans for fit20 on the UK level would be Mr. Niri Patel. He'll have dialed in what his goals are, but he's absolutely ambitious, and I'm hopefully setting a good example for what can be done with a fit20 studio and that would make it appealing to people who are like myself or starting from scratch that are like, "Yeah, I absolutely want to do a fitness business or I want to do a business." It makes high intensity training an appealing business, like not even if someone is into fitness. If they just wanted a good business it's something that can absolutely work.

Lawrence Neal: I think there's plenty of people out there who, like you say, you don't necessarily have a passion for fitness, but I can see a great business opportunity and so that's absolutely true. I think you've been a... I think you're doing great. I think you're an enormous inspiration to not only people to start a fit20 franchise, people to get into this business full stop, which is really cool to see. What is the best way for the listeners to learn more about you, Kieran, and your studio?

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Kieran Igwe: The best way to learn about me would be... the place that we post the most would be on social media or Facebook, so if you just put "fit20 Leeds Farsley" in there, that's my particular studio, and then just going on the fit20 website, fit20.co.uk. There's often posts and updates on there as well. It's almost a connect to chat with me about how it's worked and how the journey has been like for me. I'm more than happy to have a conversation and often get people calling me up that are interested in fit20 as a franchise just to see what my experience has been, and I can give it, like you say, with warts and all. The best way would just be to email me, so that's kieranigwe, I-G-W-E@fit20.co.uk.

Lawrence Neal: For everyone listening, to find the blog post for this episode, please go to highintensitybusiness.com/kieran, K-I-E-R-A-N, and there you will find all of the resources, things that Kieran and I mentioned, including a link to express any interest you might have and learn more about the franchising opportunity and apply for that. For all episodes, please go to highintensitybusiness.com/podcast, and until next time, thank you very much for listening.

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