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Lawrence Neal: Lawrence Neal here and welcome back to highintensitybusiness.com. This is Episode 246. Today's guest is Thom Tombs. Thom is a former US Marine. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science from a California State University in San Marcos, California. Prior to opening the first supersize zone in Southern California with his wife, Sandy in 2006. Thom worked as a Senior Director of Information Technology for a fast growing contract research organization, and in 2005, Thom traveled to Florida to be certified as a SuperSlow instructor by Ken Hutchins, who was then part of the SuperSlow zone.

Lawrence Neal: Today, Thom operates Smarter Exercise an independent boutique strength training studio in Encinitas, California, where he provides an evidence based strength training services to clients of all ages and of all fitness levels. Thom's mission is to develop enduring relationships with his clients by providing the tools, environment and instruction to help them achieve and sustain strength and functional health throughout their lifetime. And over the past 13 years, Thom has personally instructed over 30,000 individual strength training sessions. Thom, welcome back to the show.

Thom Tombs: Hi, Lawrence. Thank you for having me. I appreciate it.

Lawrence Neal: You're most welcome. It's great to have you back on the show. You had a bit of a dodgy internet connection there for a moment. You

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sounded a bit like a robot, which was quite a funny way to introduce yourself, but we'll leave that in I think.

Lawrence Neal: So, I wanted to learn a little bit more about your Genesis story. I'm a big nerd for anything related to the military. I'm always watching videos on YouTube of SAS and Navy Seals and things like that. And I was just curious how was your time like in the Marines? What made you start off your career in that?

Thom Tombs: Well, actually that's a good ... That's a fine story. When I grew up in West Texas, a little place called Odessa, Texas. And I was, what? 18 years old, moved out of my house and into an apartment with a buddy of mine and was working just a regular job, but I think it was in a bookstore in a mall, a Waldenbooks to be exact. And I just looked at my wife and I said, "You know, what? Things aren't really moving in a direction I like, so I think I'm going to do something different." And one morning I woke up and joined the Marine Corps.

Lawrence Neal: How old were you at this point?

Thom Tombs: 18.

Lawrence Neal: And you were married at that point?

Thom Tombs: No, no, no. I got married a couple years after that.

Lawrence Neal: Oh, I see. Okay, so it would have been your girlfriend at the time.

Thom Tombs: Yes.

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Lawrence Neal: Yeah. Okay, got it. All right, and then so you joined up and then what happened then?

Thom Tombs: I think of myself as ... so you were talking about admiring the military folks and watching the shows on SAS.

Lawrence Neal: That's right.

Thom Tombs: Yeah. So I'm more like a, think of me as more of a marine lite, right? So I worked in an office I never had to ... Yes, I did go to boot camp and I did everything that Marines do but no, I was never in harm's way, you know what I mean? So I have a lot of respect for the guys that are actually putting themselves at risk, but I never had to do that, thankfully.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah, there's me waiting for some juicy stories of conflict.

Thom Tombs: [crosstalk 00:05:54].

Lawrence Neal: Although to be fair, most people that are in those situations don't like to really talk about it today, which is completely understandable, and so those conversations aren't often that fruitful anyway. Okay, so you were ... and I'm assuming if you were in that position, then is that how you then ended up developing a skill set in IT, and that kind of moved you into that that direction?

Thom Tombs: That's exactly right. Yeah, we started. So that ... let's see, that was way back, that was in '86, '87 when I went in and started with ... I

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was in an administrative office, and so we were, that was the, just the, I think the first machine that we had with the computing machine we had was called the Green Machine. It was just a ruggedized computer but we were using big eight and a half inch floppy disk going back and forth.

Thom Tombs: And yeah, it's I remember we ... sometimes later we got our first 286 computer. I mean, this is way back.

Lawrence Neal: Sure. Okay, so you were using those radio computers, go on, yeah.

Thom Tombs: Yeah. So, when I left the Marines, I started at a community college here and I actually started out as a math major. And when I went to Cal State Sam Marcus, I was working for the secretary of the computer science, mathematics and chemistry department. It was a small, the school was just starting up at the time. They have tens of thousands of students now but at the time, I think we were numbered in the just a couple of thousand. But anyway, it was a small school and we had a faculty search, or the school had a faculty search and I was helping bring resumes and organize candidate packets and all that stuff.

Thom Tombs: The mathematics department, they put these ads out and all the departments did put ads out for faculty. And the math department received like 600 candidates, the chemistry department received 150 resumes and the computer science department received like 25. And so I'm thinking, "Well, gosh there's a lot of computer

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scientists that are either happy where they are or there's just a big need for computer science." So, I changed my major from mathematics to computer science.

Lawrence Neal: Okay, so that explains it. So, okay, so then once you completed that what happened next? You then worked your way into the private sector?

Thom Tombs: Yeah, exactly. I had a couple of opportunities that came up while I was in school. I was a network administrator for a home health care provider, local. I knew there ... I think I was introduced by one of our faculty to a guy who was the vice president of the company, so I went and interviewed with him and they gave me my first job in the real world, I guess. And then after that, yeah, so then, while I was there, after I graduated from school and then I got a Microsoft Systems Engineer certification. And then a buddy of mine introduced me to the company where I eventually became the senior director of IT there and worked in that capacity for about eight years.

Lawrence Neal: And, was that like a ... it's funny because I know I'm forcing you to search into the recesses of your memories to try and [crosstalk 00:10:37]-

Thom Tombs: This is like 20 to 30 years ago.

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Lawrence Neal: Yeah, you did a great job because it's hard to sequence the events that long ago. I mean, I'll struggled to tell you what I did last week. So it's, I'm asking a lot of you. Now, when you were in that position, did that become more of a management role or did you still have quite a lot of technical responsibility as well?

Thom Tombs: A little bit of both. I had a great group of guys that I was working, or that was working for me. And we just had everything. So yeah, my role was management, but I also was doing quite a bit of programming as well.

Lawrence Neal: Cool, because the reason I asked that is fairly obvious to you. Since I've known you, I've seen some of your technical prowess. When we were at the resistance exercise conference earlier on this year, we were at the bar and I was talking about the challenges a lot of people are having trying to design the perfect app for high intensity training. And obviously [Lusco 00:11:42] have something on the go, and I know a number of people who are designing or having a go at designing something or have got something that they're fine tuning, and you would actually created your own. Do you still use your own in your own business as well?

Thom Tombs: Well, I don't so much use it in my own business. I made it ... So the idea for the app and it's only for Android users. Sorry all you apple folks [crosstalk 00:12:10].

Lawrence Neal: That's why I'm not using it.

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Thom Tombs: It's called the smarter exercise tool kit. And it's available on the Google Play Store. Anyway, yeah, so I ... A couple of things. First, I went to, it wasn't REC. It was another conference. I don't remember what year that was. But anyway, they were demonstrating the Renaissance exercise equipment, and they were doing the feedback from the forest gauges as well, up on the screen.

Thom Tombs: And so, basically there were, you'd push either into a static machine or they also had dynamic movements where they would register your performance and display it for you on a computer screen. And I just thought that was really cool. And I thought, "Well, how could we do this?" Or, "How could we bring this." Not everybody is going to be able to go out and purchase a \$30,000 piece of equipment. And so I was trying to figure out a way where we could increase the audience. So how else could we mimic, give some feedback based on your performance, and democratize that to spread it out a little bit so that everybody could have the opportunity to do that if they wanted to do that.

Thom Tombs: So that's where the Smarter Exercise toolkit came in, is I wanted people who maybe aren't, can't financially feel like they can pay an instructor or buy an expensive piece of equipment that they could go out and they could at least have a convenient place where they could have a workout designed for them, where they could design their own workout set up, have a place to store their machines

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settings and register their performance. So anyway, that's where the idea of the app came in.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah, that's great. And I do actually have an Android tablet that was kindly given to me by the makers of the app Joeri, spelled J-O-E-R-I, which is another high intensity training tracking programming app, which is very good actually. And I know that they're working on improving that as well. And so what I would do is I'll get that out and actually download yours and have a go. Is it free, or does it cost anything to download yours?

Thom Tombs: I think it's 1.99.

Lawrence Neal: That's nothing, okay. What's it called, again? Smarter Exercise.

Thom Tombs: The Smarter Exercise Toolkit.

Lawrence Neal: Okay, The Smarter Exercise Toolkit. I'll also link to that so people can check it out.

Thom Tombs: I've sold dozens and dozens of them.

Lawrence Neal: Have you found it, have you had traction outside of the HIIT community, or is it mostly high intensity training I guess advocates and business names?

Thom Tombs: No, it's pretty much high intensity because it's set up, it basically does what your instructor would do, right? Is it plans your workouts, it keep track of your performance. So there is ... So anyway, there's

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some nice bells and whistles on there. I'd like to get some more feedback on how that works for people.

Lawrence Neal: Sure. Okay.

Thom Tombs: That's been a while. I think I put that out about five years ago. And I saw, anytime Google forces an update, I have to go back and re-look at the code. So it's been fun.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah. And you've got obviously your own business to focus on too, so that could be a bit of a hassle to do that. One of the things I was really keen to talk to you about is you recently acquired a CAR.O.L bike for your facility. For those that don't know, CAR.O.L is, it stands for Cardiovascular ... Is it? No. What's the O and the L stand for again, do you remember?

Thom Tombs: I have no idea.

Lawrence Neal: That's bad for me, I should know that. I'm going to bring that out while we're talking. But basically, the CAR.O.L bike is probably the most intelligent high intensity interval training bike on the market at the moment. And it's pretty popular and it's fairly popular amongst some of the high intensity training/smart gym owners. And it's a pretty exciting tool that I think can be a good compliment to the facility. And, you told me you were interested in one and had acquired one, and you wanted some time to really test it in your

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market to see the type of reaction you would get from clients, results, things like that.

Lawrence Neal: So I'd love to start off just I guess, firstly, why do you decide to get one in the first place? Having come from a super slow high intensity training background, a lot of people would have an aversion to something like that in this particular niche.

Thom Tombs: Yeah, and I actually had a particular aversion to it in this niche for a long time. My wife for a long time has wanted to bring in a stationary bike or a treadmill or something and I just, for me, one, it didn't make sense from an exercise perspective. It didn't meet the definition of exercise and then-

Lawrence Neal: Do you want to elaborate on that from your point of view, why it doesn't meet the definition of exercise?

Thom Tombs: Well, like just a treadmill. I mean, walking or jogging on a treadmill. It's what, we have it, so, okay, yeah. So when I say it doesn't meet the definition, I'm looking at Ken Hutchins definition of exercise which is ... Let me just read it.

Lawrence Neal: Good idea.

Thom Tombs: Exercise is a process whereby the body performs work of a demanding nature in accordance with muscle and joint function and a clinically controlled environment within the constraints of safety, meaningfully loading the muscular structures to inroad their strength

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levels, to stimulate the muscular growth mechanism within minimum time.

Thom Tombs: So, a regular stationary bike, a treadmill, it doesn't meet that definition, because you're not meaningfully loading the muscular structures to a sufficient level. You know what I mean? Within the constraints of safety. So in order to ... It just doesn't meet the definition, sorry.

Lawrence Neal: I understand. Yeah, yeah. So, but I guess the, I hear you but I suppose, I think it was Fisher and Steele, so James Fisher and James Steele may have published some research on this recently comparing a bike versus some lower body strength training. I cannot remember the details of the study. But I believe it may have shown that there were similar outcomes with regard to things like strength and hypertrophy. Obviously, only on the legs, right? Because you're only, that's all you're really working, I suppose on a CAR.O.L bike for the most part.

Lawrence Neal: And so but then obviously, the trade off is potentially the lack of efficiency, and wear and tear issues that I guess some people in here have remarked about too. Which if we're being really just looking at Ken Hutchins definition, I suppose in my mind would be some of my comments about that. So I see why it doesn't fit the definition, but it is certainly ticks some of the boxes. Is that fair assessment do you think? What do you think?

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Thom Tombs: Yeah. I was actually talking about a standard stationary bike. I think the CAR.O.L bike does meet the definition because you are in a clinically controlled environment and you are on a stationary bike, but you are working the muscles in a demanding way within a minimum amount of time. And I haven't ... I'm sure we could find some YouTube examples of people getting themselves hurt on a stationary bike, but I think the likelihood of that happening is very, very slight.

Thom Tombs: So, no, I think the reason I brought that CAR.O.L bike in is because I believe that it does meet the definition. And it also matches the philosophy that we have, and it also matches the time constraints that I wanted to have for people coming into strength train.

Thom Tombs: So to me if we're going to bring in something like a stationary bike, this is the one that met the definition for me.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah. By the way, it's Cardiovascular Optimization Logic.

Thom Tombs: Okay.

Lawrence Neal: That would have been my guess. Not my guess, but my memory was telling me to say, and I just wasn't 100% confident about it. So I just checked online. It's funny, their website doesn't really say that maybe it's not that important, but I had it on my blog post for when I interviewed [Raul 00:22:42], who's the Director of Sales and Marketing, I want to say, for the organization.

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Lawrence Neal: Awesome. So yeah, I agree. I think it has utility for sure in high intensity training business. So, when you acquired it, you were not sure about what reaction you were going to get. Did you, just out of curiosity, did you ask your clients what they thought for or anything like that? Or did you just think, "I want one of these, I'm going to get one." [crosstalk 00:23:10] You had your wife give a comment, but apart from that.

Thom Tombs: Well, we actually ... So we actually heard about the bike from your podcast, and then that piqued my interest. So I contacted Raul to find out if there was something I could ... if there was a bike nearby that I could go on and ride and see what it was about.

Thom Tombs: And so, my wife, and I drove up to Beverly Hills, which is the nearest one to us, which is, I don't know 70, 80 miles away, but so yeah, when I tried it and immediately, it was exactly what I expected based on the conversation I heard from you, it was exactly what I expected and I was very happy to purchase one.

Lawrence Neal: So what made you, specifically were you happy about when you tried it out? What made you go, "I like this," and what was the thing that convinced you to purchase one?

Thom Tombs: That it's you can do in a very short amount of time, you can do a lot of hard work. So that's, it's a nice clean design, it was pretty easy interface, and it was very adjustable as far as different body types. So it just made sense.

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Lawrence Neal: And how have your clients responded? How many are actually using it?

Thom Tombs: So I've got anywhere between eight and 12 rides per week. So I usually have somewhere between 55 and 65 sessions, strength training sessions per week, and I'd say eight to 12 rides per week. So not everybody is jumping on to try it out, but I think that's pretty decent.

Lawrence Neal: What's the average session price for those eight to 12 sessions a week. I know it's different in packages I understand that but what's the average?

Thom Tombs: Yeah, so what I did for my existing clients. So with the CAR.O.L bike there are six introductory rides where the rider is learning how to perform on the CAR.O.L and the CAR.O.L is learning about the rider. Because every rider has their own user account, you know, so they can kind of keep track of progress.

Thom Tombs: And so what I did is I just in order to introduce the bike to my existing clients, I just said, "Okay, for those six introductory rides, those are complimentary." And then if you want to continue with the CAR.O.L rides, then basically it works out to \$10 per ride. And then, so it's I didn't want to overprice that and I'm sure it's under-priced compared to a lot of the other gyms, at least the ones in Beverly Hills.

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Lawrence Neal: Well, yeah. Thom I understand about the cost of living there. Why did you decided to have prizes so low?

Thom Tombs: Because with the ... so that's going to be half. That's basically I want to give, I wanted to find a price point where existing clients wouldn't feel gouged because it's something that I'm bringing in, and it's I'm adding this to the gym but they're already paying for strength training.

Thom Tombs: So I certainly didn't want to feel like gouging any of my existing clients and then new clients coming in. So, if for example, I haven't done any advertising with this yet, but that's coming up very soon. But new clients coming in, there's a potential for having CAR.O.L only clients, right? So those prices are going to be \$20 a ride basically. So, strength training clients get a break on that ride.

Thom Tombs: It's also because it doesn't take a lot of my time. So it's pretty simple for somebody to, you know, once we get them signed up with a user account and they start writing it, it really doesn't take much or any of my time to get them set up and get going. And so it doesn't, it just seemed like a fair price.

Lawrence Neal: And is it a case of after you have that initial session and maybe set someone up with an account and showed them how to use it, after that is it really ... Do you literally have people just walk in and they might say hello and then they just kind of self supervise on it or do you still have to get involved?

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Thom Tombs: No, I let them self supervising, and the way ... What I do is I have on my calendar, on my appointment system I have a column for myself, and then [Carol](#) has her own column, right? So they book an appointment, somebody will book an appointment with the bike, right? That makes sure that I'm here and that the bike is available. And then before they come in, I'll run over and put their settings on that bike for them. So when they walk in, it's all set up and ready to go. They just get on, ride for eight minutes and 40 seconds and then they're on their way.

Thom Tombs: Now that's the idea for the [CAR.O.L](#) only. What I was hoping for my existing clients was that they might work out on a Monday, come in and ride the [CAR.O.L](#) on a Tuesday or Wednesday, maybe ride the bike a couple of times a week. And then, in addition to their regular strength training sessions. But what most people seem to be doing is combining their [CAR.O.L](#) ride right before their strength training session.

Thom Tombs: So it's working out a little differently than what I had anticipated, but that's why you do things on a trial basis, you know?

Lawrence Neal: Yeah, absolutely. So that's interesting. So people seem to be more interested in using the bike before they strength train. Do you see that impacting the results when people actually strength train, like does their performance drop? Not that it really matters, but go on? Yeah, sorry.

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Thom Tombs: It absolutely drops.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah.

Thom Tombs: It probably drops 25 to 30% as far as time under load, but that [inaudible 00:30:59] temporary. So after about six weeks they're returning to their regular time under loads after. So, they'll come in, they'll do the [CAR.O.L](#) and then they'll come back and do the workout and they're back where they were. So would they have been stronger anyway after six weeks? I don't know the answer to that.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah. And I guess that's because they're adapting to the doing the [CAR.O.L bike](#), so they intend to [crosstalk 00:31:32].

Thom Tombs: Yeah. Which is what we want, right?

Lawrence Neal: Yeah, exactly.

Thom Tombs: Unfortunately, I don't have anything in my life where I can really put any of that to the test as far as my own activity, because I don't really have any. I don't run marathons. I don't run, so.

Lawrence Neal: So what about, did you have any personal issues with this regard ... Did you ever feel like it was redundant? Because, we know we're getting a good cardiorespiratory workout from strength training, especially the way we do it in high intensity training. So did you feel like this may be a little bit redundant, or did you accept that it is

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potentially, but it's more of a well, you know what, just some people don't want to do strength training, and they would rather do this. How did you reconcile that or think about that?

Thom Tombs: Well, even after ... I've been doing this for 13 years, excuse me, and I still get the question, what else should I be doing for cardio? And it kills me to tell people well, what you should be doing for cardio is work harder in your workout session, but nobody seems to like that answer. So now if somebody asked me, what else should I be doing for cardio, I can point to a bike, which meets the definition of exercise, and I can say you should be doing this.

Lawrence Neal: And so do you think .... So, is it, so in your experience have you found most of your clients really struggled to get to muscular failure? Is that what you're saying? Because if they did, they might look at that and go, "There's no way I've got any additional energy to do that as well." Because that's how I feel after my workouts. I remember when I used to train at Keys of Training in London, and I was doing a big free at one point, pull down, chest press, leg press. And I couldn't even talk at the front desk when I would chat with people to kind of ... I would hang around there before I left because I became quite good friends of a lot of the staff, and we'd chat about exercise and that. And it's when I started the podcast, so they were always interested in that.

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Lawrence Neal: And, yeah, there's absolutely no way I'm doing anything else after that. I remember once trying to sprint to the bus, because I had to get this bus and it was going and I knew I'd have to wait if I didn't get it and I broke into a sprint, but I forgot that I'd just done a leg press, and I almost fell over because my legs just couldn't do it. Anyway, I'm digressing now.

Lawrence Neal: But I'm curious, is that the issue you're seeing then? Perhaps some people are struggling to [train to failure 00:34:27] and therefore, they're able, they've got more left in the tank and the [CAR.O.L bike](#) just helps them get there in a sense.

Thom Tombs: Yeah, well, yes and no. Yes, I do have anyone who ... I think anyone who supervises strength training sessions is going to have, will have clients who struggle to achieve momentary muscle failure, that's true.

Thom Tombs: As far as the people who are more, who are willing to experiment with [CAR.O.L](#) are often the people who work hardest in their workouts also. So it's I don't know exactly how to answer that question.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah, I hear you. It's funny, isn't it? It's almost like the you wanted ... Well, you may have had the opposite intention. And it like, it reminds me of, I remember talking to David Allen and he's the inventor of Getting Things Done and the GTD productivity system. And it's the, you kind of, in your head you think common sense

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would tell you the ideal person for this is someone who's totally disorganized and all over the place and has really bad time management skills and organizational skills. But the people that flock to something like GTD are the people who are already obsessed with productivity, already have their shit together and are looking for that incremental improvement in their systems in how they manage their own time and things like that.

Lawrence Neal: And people like me, and I consider myself fairly good at stuff like that and then [Kyle Rockier 00:36:12], who's the COO at The Perfect Workout. And it's funny, those types of individuals that are drawn to it, are not perhaps the people that need it most. And it sounds like almost a similar thing with regard to your experience of your clientele. It's like these people already getting a great workout, the [CAR.O.L bike](#) is just probably not going to provide any greater value aside from maybe a feel good, I did more, "psychological benefit," perhaps.

Thom Tombs: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Which is also okay.

Lawrence Neal: Sure.

Thom Tombs: That's totally fine.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah, absolutely. So, okay, let's see here. So I've got a whole bunch of questions around that I wanted to ask you. So in terms of programming, can you, because I'm thinking there's people

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listening to this who are like, "I might buy one of these bikes. I'm interested in hearing about how someone else is in integrating it into their high intensity training studio and their training plans." So can you elaborate on how you're integrating it in terms of number of sessions, you might say to someone, this is the maximum number of sessions you can do per week and when they do it and things like that.

Thom Tombs: So I don't say that there is a maximum number of sessions. What I am doing is for existing clients I'm packaging, basically they have a [CAR.O.L package](#) so they can just. And that basically allows them to come in and do two of the short high intensity rides. Plus, there's also some longer rides on the [CAR.O.L bike](#). So there's like a 30 minute ride where you're, you've got twelve seconds of easy riding, followed by eight second sprints, and you do that 30 times or whatever it is.

Thom Tombs: So, there's a package that they can just add on to that onto their monthly auto payment, and then they can just basically ride as much as they want. So it's practically unlimited. But nobody, even the people who are coming in twice a week haven't been coming in a third time to ride the bike. So, it's they have it available if they want to use it, but not everybody's using it. And then [crosstalk 00:38:57].

Lawrence Neal: Sorry, go on, yeah.

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Thom Tombs: I was just going to say and then there's an ala carte menu where if you want to just pay as you go type thing, that's fine too. You can come in 20 times a day if you want.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah, well, that would be pretty good, wouldn't it? Well, at least for us, maybe not for them. Yeah, we'll link to your Instagram because I know that you posted a picture on Instagram, some of the pricing and so people get a view on how you've set that up.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah, it's interesting because I guess like you said, some people are really only using it when they're coming in. Well, I know you're yet to do a marketing campaign to new people. But those who you sold it kind of like an adjunct to their existing strength training. They're just coming in and doing the bike, like you say, usually, either before or maybe after their strength training session.

Thom Tombs: Yeah, for the most part, yeah.

Lawrence Neal: And I guess that maybe answers the question around programming, but have you found that there's a sweet spot in terms of the intensity? I mean, have you find yourself trying to find optimal programming for people in that sense at all, can you comment on that?

Thom Tombs: Optimal program as far as ... Yeah, we haven't ... All I can say, I haven't been able to do that because I'm just-

Lawrence Neal: You need it for longer [crosstalk 00:40:28].

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Thom Tombs: ... Going with the flow or going with what's working right now. So, how to optimize that, I'm not sure yet. It's still, I know, I've had it for several months, but it's still relatively new to me.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah. And just to, I guess, summarize that bit about what you're seeing people just naturally want to do. Am I right in saying so people are coming in, and they're like, "You know, I want to do my [CAR.O.L bike](#) workout before I do my strength training workout." And they're doing that, what? Twice a week. Like every time they work out or once a week. What are you seeing there?

Thom Tombs: Yeah, depending on their schedule. So, yeah, so my twice a week clients are riding, they're doing the [CAR.O.L ride](#) before their workout, but my once a week work, people are doing that as well.

Lawrence Neal: Are you seeing, are people ... I mean, I'm guessing for the longer rides people are sweating right?

Thom Tombs: No.

Lawrence Neal: Really?

Thom Tombs: Really. So, I do keep a couple of fans right next to the bike. But because the [bath 00:41:38] of high intensity are so brief. Again, as long as you're not allowing somebody to overheat then they're not going to sweat and so we just keep them cool and keep the air flowing and yeah, they can ride the bike ... I mean you don't have to dress up for it but you can.

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Lawrence Neal: Yeah, it's interesting because I've actually started embracing, because I used to, if I, when I work out, I'll sometimes not have a shower or maybe work for a few hours and then usually work out late morning just before lunch, maybe something like that. And then I would shower afterwards.

Lawrence Neal: But since, I mean, I've done workouts [inaudible 00:42:25] showered, or showered the morning, and then I've worked out, whatever, in the evening and or in the afternoon and just still got on with my day because you're training for such a brief period of time, that you're not usually sweating and you don't usually smell any different.

Thom Tombs: Yeah, I totally recommend that people shower before they come in.

Lawrence Neal: Well, you don't have showers I assume, right? Your?

Thom Tombs: No.

Lawrence Neal: No. So yeah, okay. Yeah, it makes sense. I mean, in fact, I was talking about the membership asking people about showers, their thoughts because Sean and I who, I think you met Sean at the conference this year. We're opening a studio probably around January 2020. One of the things we were thinking about is do we install showers or not? And we've arrived at the conclusion that we won't, and Luke shed some light on that.

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Lawrence Neal: And I actually reported that in the membership, but I think Luke talks about that more. I've run a membership episode on an upcoming podcast, as you know he doesn't because I talked about it off air, so yeah, you're going to have to access the membership if you want that one. But it's, but the ... well I'll give a little comment on that now, which is just like we're talking about here, you're not going to sweat profusely if at all. In fact, you probably won't sweat at all during your high intensity workout. And showers can be, can cause liability issues. There's some crazy stories about showers and locker rooms and things, but also that can be very expensive to run and maintain and install. So, sorry you're the ... Your experience one, Thom. What was your rationale for not having showers at your facility?

Thom Tombs: It's not needed. People don't perspire, and you really, why have the expense and the headache of maintaining a shower and for people who don't ... I mean nobody, hardly anyone uses my ... I have a little room for changing clothes and that maybe only gets used once a week. You know it's it doesn't ... People come in they know what to expect. They know that they're not going to perspire and they just, they work with it.

Lawrence Neal: Do you have people come in, in like professional attire, who'll use the [CAR.O.L](#) and also use the strength training stuff?

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Thom Tombs: I do. I have people that come in right after work. They're wearing whatever they're wearing. And yeah, they'll ride the [CAR.O.L](#) and then we'll do the workout and they're on their way.

Lawrence Neal: But you have a very, like you said there, you have a very cool environment, don't you? You've got all the fans blowing, which is really important because I couldn't do that without the fans. Like I wouldn't feel comfortable, yeah.

Thom Tombs: Yeah. Well, there are a lot. My average client's age is about 60 years old. And, some probably 33% don't like the fans blowing on them. And I don't understand that at all, but they don't like it, so I turn them off.

Lawrence Neal: Fair enough. So, one of the things I wanted to ask you about is have you found ... Well, I suppose you don't know yet because until you do the new marketing campaign, you won't know how effective this will be as a gateway drug for people.

Thom Tombs: Right.

Lawrence Neal: In terms of people coming in and going. I'm coming there for the [CAR.O.L bike](#) and that's all I'm interested in. But then obviously they get exposed to the other things you have in a gym, and then maybe they end up being a strength training client, which is ideal because it's a bit more of a holistic approach to improving someone's health, in my opinion.

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Lawrence Neal: Is that what you're hopeful for? And I guess it's also a good upsell too, right? They're taking more of your, purchasing more of your services. Is that what you're hoping for?

Thom Tombs: Yeah, I mean, I'm hoping for ... So, yeah, I'm hoping that the [CAR.O.L bike](#) is very busy, right? I'm hoping that I need to get a second one. Because people are coming in and taking advantage of that. And if I get more clients as a result of that, that would be great too, from the strength training perspective. But yeah, I'm a really open person as far as I'm not a pushy sales guy or anything like that. No offense. Not that you're a pushy salesman.

Lawrence Neal: I don't know, some people might think otherwise.

Thom Tombs: Well, I think good salesmen aren't necessarily pushy salesman, so.

Lawrence Neal: I agree. I let this, people are going to do whatever they want to do, right? I just want to give them a place where they want to do something that's better for them than what they might find somewhere else. It's a nice place to come in and work out, and I want to make sure and maintain that environment for my existing clients. I don't want things to change. And for new people coming in, I want them to discover that, "Oh, wow, this is right here in my neighborhood. That's cool."

Thom Tombs: Do you have much competition of [CAR.O.L bikes](#) in your neighborhood, or are you the only one?

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Lawrence Neal: Well, I had to drive to Beverly Hills in order to try it out. So I'm pretty sure I'm the only one around.

Thom Tombs: That's great. Cool. Yeah, take advantage of that for sure until some more are available. So, one of the things you mentioned, one of the challenges you had though, is with the user experience and getting people set up and the accounts and things. How's that ... That sounds like that's not too much of an issue for you now, but it was perhaps at the beginning?

Thom Tombs: Well, yeah, it's funny, because it's always the technical things, right? I mean, you would, so I thought that nowadays, that setting up a user account is no big deal, right? You set up another, one more user account, and you get an email, and then you have to press the confirm button that, yeah you're really you. But that's been really one of the biggest hurdles is to just get people to go on to their website and create the user account. It takes five minutes but it takes an hour. It takes me about a minute because I've done it several times so I just walked people through it now, so.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah, I was going to say just have them do it there so that you can make sure that they complete it. Can you do like a single opt in so they don't have to confirm the email, that would also be less friction if that was possible?

Thom Tombs: No.

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Lawrence Neal: Have you tried[inaudible 00:49:25]. Yeah I actually did that myself because I was noticing that a lot of people would sign up for my emails and they would not hit confirm. And I thought to myself, "Well, I don't get many people sign up for my email list who aren't real people." I don't get many fake emails. And so I'm experimenting now with single opt in and obviously the opt in rates have increased dramatically since then. But we'll just have to keep a close eye on that and see how many fake emails go in too.

Lawrence Neal: Okay, interesting. So not been a huge issue for you. So, does it come up, does it come with an app as well so people can check the app on their phone and see that progress and things like that? Is there anything like that available?

Thom Tombs: Yeah, sure it does. So they probably even have an app for Apple phones too. Let's see. They sure do.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah, yeah. And I guess that's just a free download, isn't it? [crosstalk 00:50:23].

Thom Tombs: It is. Yeah, they just use that user account, yup.

Lawrence Neal: That's cool. That would be a big one in today's world, wouldn't it? In terms of people have to be able to track their progress and things like that, even though it's over the long term, is obviously not hugely meaningful if I've understood that correctly.

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Thom Tombs: Well, you know, I don't even know that anybody's asked about that. And I haven't pointed that out, but I should. When you come in and you pedal fast, against resistance for 20 seconds a couple of times. It's amazing how little, you don't have to convince anybody, they just have to come in and do it. And it's like, the first time on the leg press, you don't have to convince them that it's going to be effective. They know intuitively, that they've just experienced something. So yeah, there aren't a lot of questions after that first ride.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah, I bet, I can understand that. Interesting. So, yeah, I was just thinking, my first thought was, "Oh, you're 60 plus year old clients aren't going to be interested in the app because they're too old, right, to understand it." But the reality is I look, I see people of all ages these days on their phones all the time.

Lawrence Neal: I was on a flight coming back from the UK, and I saw people in their 60s to their late 70s, addicted is the word I would use, like hooked on their phones. I try to be quite mindful when I'm ... I really try and limit my phone usage and I'm definitely not perfect and I'm still probably on my phone more than I should be. But it's crazy, and not to go on too much of a tangent, but I've, I guess, I can sit here and say, "Oh, the older people aren't going to use the app but you never know, right? They're becoming more [versatile 00:52:35] and more intelligent with technology.

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Thom Tombs: Yeah, stereotypes are just that. They're just, that's a stereotype. You might expect that but chances are you're wrong about an individual. So, it's I cringe every time somebody talks about millennials, it's like, "Uh, 20 year old..." They're not all the same, stop saying that.

Lawrence Neal: Well, does it generally start with or end with millennials are all entitled. Is it that whole thing? That whole chestnut?

Thom Tombs: That whole thing, yeah. And it goes for all the generations. It's just, yeah, you might see some trends there, but really, on the individual basis, people are people, they're all different. They had their own preferences, just treat them well, be respectful.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah.

Thom Tombs: It's not that hard.

Lawrence Neal: I agree. That's a good way of looking at it. It's a healthy perspective. So just going back to the [CAR.O.L bike](#) then, in terms of what have you done in terms of, how have you marketed it to your existing clients? Is it just a case of they come in and you say, here's the [CAR.O.L bike](#), would you like to try it out? Or have you been more proactive with marketing campaigns and other online tactics, at all for that.

Thom Tombs: When I first got the bike I sent out an email to all my clients and had them just to provide them with some information. So when they walk through the door and they see it, it's like, "Oh, that's what that

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is." And but I haven't really been doing much after that. I've got a sign up on my counter. So anybody who comes in they see that there's a menu of CAR.O.L pricing. And then yeah, it'd probably be a good idea for me to send a reminder email now that I know what I'm doing better with the user accounts, maybe just not have them do it. Just have them come in and I'll take care of it for them.

Thom Tombs: So yeah, I haven't ... Again, I'm not a pushy guy. I think just having the bike here over time, people start to ask questions. I noticed something a long time ago. I would put up a sign, or I would move a sign or something on the wall in the gym, and it took about six months, but then people would say, "Oh, is this new?" And it'd be like, "Well, yeah, it was six months ago, but it's new to you." So yes, it's new. But yeah, it takes I think it takes a little bit of time for people and maybe I'm just, maybe I'm projecting but it just takes time for people to recognize the things that are in front of them, and express some interest and have enough familiarity that they're willing to try something different.

Lawrence Neal: And in terms of a cost, can you remind me what ...? Do you mind talking about, what you paid for the bike and the upkeep monthly?

Thom Tombs: Sure. So, I think I paid like 3200 I think [inaudible 00:56:19] after tax and delivery and all that.

Lawrence Neal: That's US dollars, isn't it?

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Thom Tombs: Yes.

Lawrence Neal: [crosstalk 00:56:23] a wide audience, Thom.

Thom Tombs: Yeah, it came in a very heavy box and put it together. Gave it a WiFi password and away we were.

Lawrence Neal: How long did it take you to put it together?

Thom Tombs: Probably longer than it should. I wasn't in a big rush. I took my time, but I probably ... I don't know, maybe an hour over a two day period.

Lawrence Neal: Okay. And it's that, there's also these software as well, right? So how much does the license cost for you per month?

Thom Tombs: That, I think I'm still on a six month trial. So I haven't gotten a bill for that.

Lawrence Neal: No worries. So, yeah, I mean that's what I was going to come onto. Is if people listen to this, if you're interested in learning more, and ordering a CAR.O.L bike for your facility. **If you use the code, "HIB". You can get \$250 off and six months free software**, which I believe is what Thom did, and hence why he hasn't paid software fees yet? I mean that's right, isn't it?

Thom Tombs: That's right.

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Lawrence Neal: Yeah. Awesome. Good. I'm pleased. All, right, so look, I feel like I've asked most things I wanted to ask you about regarding the [CAR.O.L bike](#). Is there anything else, any kind of things, that I didn't trigger you to say that you want to share about the experience you've had with the bike, any kind of, I don't know personal testimonial about it, or anything you want to share that we haven't touched on?

Thom Tombs: The only thing I can say is there is something to it. So, I think, the first if you ride the bike, and then you work out there is a, it's kind of a strange feeling. So I used to, back in my Marine Corps days, right? I'd run up these hills and I would be spent at the top and it would be I'd be huffing and puffing for breath and sweating profusely and just feeling like I just ran up a long Hill.

Thom Tombs: But, when you're ... There is something a little different, I don't know if it's just the amount of, the number of muscle fibers that are in use over that time that extended workout time. But there is a different feeling, than not riding the bike and doing a workout. And that may just be that I've adapted to the high intensity, strength training. And now I'm just, this is something else I need to adapt to, but it's a different feeling. And I don't know how quite to describe that. Something's happening. Something's a little different.

Lawrence Neal: Interesting.

Thom Tombs: I don't know that I like that feeling, but it's-

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Lawrence Neal: And how are you ... So you're using it in your own workout regimen as well at the moment?

Thom Tombs: I do. I generally don't do that together. Again, I don't like that feeling. So I usually will do like a CAR.O.L ride on a Monday and then like, I'll be working out later today.

Lawrence Neal: Okay, and so, right. Okay, so you're doing strength training sessions on a Tuesday afternoon or whenever on Tuesday.

Thom Tombs: Yeah. And is it just a one session or how often do you workout, how often do you do strength train at the moment.

Lawrence Neal: You know, recently it's been once a month, or once a week. Sorry, not once a month. I always shoot for twice a week, but I'm always happy with once a week, and that's how I sleep at night.

Thom Tombs: Okay, so and I do well twice a week, and then one CAR.O.L session as well. Is that right?

Lawrence Neal: Yes.

Thom Tombs: [crosstalk 01:00:54] I just, if I have 10 minutes to kill, I'll jump on the bike, just for just giggles.

Lawrence Neal: Just for shits and giggles. Awesome. So, we touched on obviously, how inspired you are by Fred, [Fred Han 01:01:15] during REC in terms of his physique and the approaches taken to get there. And I had Fred back on the show recently to talk about the program and

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the [inaudible 01:01:25] in some detail, which was a lot of fun. And I'm just curious, have you kept that up since I spoke to you last night, what's happened there?

Thom Tombs: Yes or no. So right after REC I dropped like 14 or 15 pounds very quickly with intermittent fasting. And I wouldn't call, probably what I was doing is low carb compared to the standard American diet, but I didn't want to try very hard, right? So, I wanted to make sure I was getting adequate protein which after your last conversation with Fred, I listened to your podcast and I don't think I've been getting enough protein which might explain some of the lean body mass that was lost at that time too.

Thom Tombs: So I was shooting for a gram a day, Fred this last podcast was saying a gram and a half per pound of lean body mass. It's just really hard to eat that much protein in a short window. But anyway, yeah so I've been sticking with ... I still, I do intermittent fasting but I haven't been very careful with carbohydrate intake and alcohol consumption.

Lawrence Neal: Thom.

Thom Tombs: I know, well like he says it's the killer of the fat loss dream, right?

Lawrence Neal: Alcohol is.

Thom Tombs: But anyway.

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Lawrence Neal: Yeah.

Thom Tombs: So I've kind of maintained. So before I went to Iraq, I think I was like 214 pound, 211 pounds. I'm down to ... no, it must have been 211 because I'm down to about 196 and 16% body fat. My goal is to peak for REC 2020.

Lawrence Neal: I love it.

Thom Tombs: I didn't want to peak too soon, you know what I mean?

Lawrence Neal: That's it. That's it. You don't want to make everyone ... Well, you want to make everyone look bad, that's it. And you're quite, what are you? 6'3"

Thom Tombs: 6'2".

Lawrence Neal: 6'2". Okay, so quite to give people some perspective on the weight you gave. But yeah, I mean look when I saw you, I thought you looked in great shape, and you sent me a picture over the other day on email and you look even leaner there. So, yeah I know.

Lawrence Neal: As I've been saying on this podcast, and I sound like a broken record, I'm tentative for REC 2020 because I've got a baby coming into this year, and I have absolutely no idea how my life is going to change in the new year and whether or not I'm going to be able to make it. So we'll have to see and I'll keep everyone posted via the podcast. But otherwise I'm going to ask you to send me some

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pictures, Thom of the latest results when you're at REC. That'd be good to see that.

Thom Tombs: Well, hopefully you're going to be able to make it.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah, I love it, yeah.

Thom Tombs: Yes, babies will change your life.

Lawrence Neal: Do you have kids?

Thom Tombs: Yes. So I have a son from my first marriage and then I have a stepdaughter and stepson from my current marriage. They're older.

Lawrence Neal: Any tips, words of wisdom for babies?

Thom Tombs: They're just, they really demand a lot of time. But they're easier than a puppy. So there you go.

Lawrence Neal: Easier than a puppy. Well, I don't have a puppy, but I have a small Jack Russell. She's actually a Rateria, but I just say Jack Russell because people don't know what Rateria is normally. And she's a rescue, and we have no idea what her past has been like. And she's a little bit unpredictable sometimes. But she's, we've got a good routine with her and she's very well behaved and rarely barks aside from when there's fireworks, and we're putting all the right measures in place for the baby obviously. You can never really trust the dog around a baby. You've got to be super vigilant about that stuff. So we're all over that.

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Lawrence Neal: But yeah, I guess it would be, I mean, one of the things that's happening is as I was saying it started the show, it's me and Sean are likely to open a facility early next year. And it's like the worst timing ever. But it's an amazing and an incredible opportunity and a dream of mine to be involved with something like that. And so, you just go for it, and then you just, I guess we just figure out as we go.

Lawrence Neal: I mean, the podcast is fairly easy to manage, and the membership, and the website fairly easy to manage, and I have no issue about that. It's more taking on this additional project and in managing to obviously make enough time to be there for, Ash and to be there as much as possible for the baby as well. But hey, it's you figure it out, don't you and you adapt. So we'll see.

Thom Tombs: Yes you do. But yeah, it should be an interesting time, absolutely.

Lawrence Neal: So, anything else you wanted to talk about on the training front. Is your training ... Okay, so you talked about your training, you've fallen off the wagon a tiny bit, in regards to [inaudible 01:07:01] approach to diet and drinking and all of that. And so you're really now motivated by REC 2020 and getting into peak physical shape.

Lawrence Neal: I think that's a good thing about REC because then, I don't know if you listen to my podcast with Celeste, but she, this made me laugh so much. She said that she wasn't even happy enough in how she, in her appearance to go to REC. And I said, "You realize you're probably in a better shape than everyone else there." And

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everyone's in really good shape. So it's, that's saying something and ... I actually find that so amusing.

Lawrence Neal: But I think it's these milestones are helpful, right? In terms of motivating you. Like most people have, I'm going on holiday or as you guys would say, vacation and I want to be in good shape for that. And whilst training and eating well should be a lifelong habit, these things still can be helpful in terms of keeping us motivated over short periods of time when we need it.

Thom Tombs: Yeah, I would agree with that.

Lawrence Neal: Cool. So what's the best way for people to find out more about you, Thom?

Thom Tombs: Well, the best way would just be to email me [thom@smarterexercise.org](mailto:thom@smarterexercise.org). And you can visit the website. I've got a blog on there that I will even occasionally add a new entry from time to time, but I don't think I've done anything lately.

Thom Tombs: But yeah, that's the best way. I don't really post anything on Instagram or Facebook very much. So, I'm trying to eliminate social media from my life as much as possible.

Lawrence Neal: Good for you.

Thom Tombs: Even though that's probably not. Even though that may not be the best business move, I don't care.

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Lawrence Neal: I think that's a great idea. And I don't think you'll probably hurt your business all that much, which is-

Thom Tombs: I don't think it will.

Lawrence Neal: ... which is a controversial thing to say, but few people use social media properly anyway, and waste time on it. But one thing I do like about your social media is you've got a great video on your Instagram, which gives a walkthrough of your studio which is such a ... You've got exactly what I want in terms of studio. Like you've got this really nice furnished, nice looking facility and then you've got ... It just got like a real homely feel to it. You've got a nice office. And clearly I'm guessing it's kind of like your church, Thom.

Lawrence Neal: I mean, I'm not sure if you're a religious man or not, but it's somewhere you go just to, it's like your own private place. Is that fair thing to say? Is that how you feel about it?

Thom Tombs: Yeah, you know, I spend a lot of time here, and I want it to be nice, and I want ... There are so many reasons for people to make an excuse not to work out, right?

Thom Tombs: You can think of many, many excuses. I don't want the facility, I don't want somebody with you know, I don't want ... I just want to eliminate any excuse people might have to skip a workout. And by making a place where they are welcome, and they feel like it's a nice place, and it's comfortable. And they can come in, they can

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work hard. Tell me about their day and then go on and live their life for the rest of the week.

Thom Tombs: So I just want to make it a little escape for people to come in, work really hard, and then go about their business. And I think that's what we've created here. It's kind of a special little spot. So I'm very pleased with the way it turned out.

Lawrence Neal: Is it just you do you have any staff or does your wife get involved at all or?

Thom Tombs: No, my wife has a real job. And, I do have ... So, I do have Anna Nieto, she is a trainer. She came, she moved out here from New York, and she trains a few of her clients in the facility. But she just pays a little rent.

Thom Tombs: And then I have actually, Brett Cammisa who is he was my original SuperSlow instructor. So when I was in IT, he had a strength training studio called Turtle Reps Fitness. And that's right, that's actually where I got my introduction to SuperSlow. And he has since closed his studio, went back to the Engineering world but he's back in town now and he's actually training me this afternoon and he's going to start hopefully seeing some clients in here, same kind of deal, just pay a little rent and then you can run his business out of here.

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Thom Tombs: So yeah, basically it's just me but then we have, we also have a little variety with the other instructors and their clients which is nice.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah, and I guess in hours where it's pretty quiet it's kind of like your man cave, right? It's your escape. So, your wife just can't walk in.

Thom Tombs: Oh, she's got a key. Anybody's welcome. I have a, so I spent a lot of time here, right? So I don't necessarily want to spend more time than I already spent here. And I've got a pretty good life. So I try to get out and live it as much as I can. So, yeah, as much as I like being here, I like being home even more.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah, I respect that. That's awesome, yeah. Now, I always get that vibe from you, Thom like you just seem like a very happy, peaceful person. And I certainly got that vibe when we were talking a lot at the conference. And, yeah, just very glad we got to connect in person. And obviously, I appreciate everything you've done in terms of supporting the membership, being a part of that and all the help. For those that don't know, we were talking about some side projects and Thom's just really keen to use what skills he has to really help the high intensity training community and I'm sure there's probably things we may do in the future around that.

Lawrence Neal: But you contribute a great post on sales, so if anyone's listening to this who's interested in converting more sales and more prospects in their high intensity training business then I really encourage you

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to read that post which I'll link to in the show notes. I can't remember exactly what was called now, Thom. Do you remember what it was called? If people said your name, it will come up, yeah.

Thom Tombs: I don't sorry.

Lawrence Neal: That's all right, I don't expect you too. So, if you searched, Thom, T-H-O-M, Tombs, T-O-M-B-S it will come up on the blog. And, for everyone listening to find this episode on the blog, please go to [highintensitybusiness.com](http://highintensitybusiness.com) and search for episode number ... Where are we? 246 and until next time, thank you very much for listening.

Lawrence Neal: This episode is brought to you by the Resistance Exercise Conference. Would you like to learn from the top strength training professional and researchers, network and connect with other exercise professionals from all over the world and get inspired, rejuvenated and focused on your strength training business. I certainly do and that is why this will be my third appearance at REC. It's my favorite weekend of the year, and I'm so excited to attend again in March 2020.

Lawrence Neal: So why else should you attend REC? Well, firstly, there'll be keynote presentations from exercise icons like Dr. Bente Klarlund Pedersen, Stuart Phillips, PhD, James Fisher, PhD and Luke Carlson. As a studio owner, you will learn business tactics and strategies on how to grow your business from the CEO of discover strength, the highest revenue producing strength training company in the nation.

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[Link to episode: 246 – Thom Tombs – How to Generate More Revenue with CAR.O.L HIIT Bikes](#)

Moreover, you will grow your network by connecting with other strength training business owners from around the world. As a personal trainer, REC will provide you with tangible training techniques to take back to your clients to implement right away for better results. And REC is approved by ACM, NASM, ACE and NSCA for continuing education credits.

Lawrence Neal: The conference will be held on the 27th and 28th of March 2020 at the gorgeous Graduate Hotel in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Join me and register now over at [resistanceexerciseconference.com](http://resistanceexerciseconference.com). If you want to take your strength training business to the next level, and build a world class, personal training and business network you must attend. Please register now over at [resistanceexerciseconference.com](http://resistanceexerciseconference.com).

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