

Hi Ali and friends,

Gyms, yoga studios and the like are facing a very real and serious threat to the survival of their business. Seeing friends that I've known most of my life hitting these times, I decided to put together a few things and thought that might help weather these times.

First off, I've had a life working in television and broadcast. Working for both Australian and American networks. I worked in Parliament House in Australia traveled the world with the then Australian Prime Minister film, editing and transmitting images around the world. After television I worked for corporations on the communications side of the business. Creating/evolving companies image, branding and channels to get their message out. I have a longer CV if you need, but maybe just judge the suggestion here by their own merits and take what will work for you and leave the rest.

Here I am putting together different technology I've used over the years, with budget in mind and to empower gyms, Yoga and personal training studios to self help them. I'll also offer to help troubleshoot while you transition to getting streaming online.

This is what I personally think will be the life saver for studios and gyms during this virus period. It's not a case of using video to make a new revenue stream, it's all about retaining your existing clients. You want everyone to keep paying their subscriptions and keep the cash flowing while your doors are shut. Post virus; what I'm proposing here can form the foundations for online content and different channels to engage customers or new revenue streams in the future.

People form habits as to what time they do their training, they've keep this life time slot available to train for years, this habit is already in place, the goal is to keep them in this habit till they can come back into the studio. With all the disruption to their lives already, it would be all too easy to lose this element of life as well, or you could be one of the few life consistencies.

As they can no longer travel to you, you must go to them, with live streaming you can keep them in their habit. The aim is to create the feeling they are still part of the family, the A team, that you are still the guiding light and things are as normal as can be. The idea is to retain the membership stream coming into your studio till things get back closer to normal.

The last thing you want is for clients to start using another online service. They might form a habit/trust with them and never come back to your studio to renew their membership.

Streaming is an amazing way to let your clients know you are still there by their side. The ideal aim is to keep all your classes and times as normal and predictable as they have always been. Keep that time they've made in their life for you. This might prove difficult to stream all classes but workout a compromise that will work for you.

I'm suggesting using a laptop, a camera or two, a microphone and streaming software so your members can logon from home and participate in their regular class with familiar people.

While it can be a case of how long is a piece of string, here I'm just trying to keep it very basic and get you online as soon as possible, if not today.

Just a point about those that think they have online content and are just telling their clients to just start using that till things are over. The online content user is not the same group of people that show diligently up to class each day or week. Completely different motivations at work here. Different group of people and mindset.

Online content has no immediacy about it and can be put in the to do list for later, forgotten. Streaming creates an urgency and must do part of their life, part of their already formed habit. I strongly think streaming is what could help you get through the hard times. Though the long you leave it the less effective it will be. Other studios that I have worked with here in Sydney have had zero loss of membership even when governments closed the doors. Though their transition was setup before they were impacted and their clients were informed and ready for the transition. Time seems to be crucial here.

Option 1#

The easiest option is to just use your phone and stream to YouTube Live. This is not a very professional looking setup and would only use it as a backup or just to get the ball rolling. Here I would use an external radio microphone so all the instructions are at least clear and understandable.

While an instructor/teacher/trainer could demonstrate the class by themselves. I'd suggest having two people demonstrating what the instructor is saying. This way the instructor can use the two to show corrections and help the flow of the class.

Periscope is another platform that seems to stream fast and reliably but ask me about that.

<https://www.periscope.tv>

Option 2#

Use your laptop with streaming software. Streaming software is a game changer. While there are a lot of software options out there I'm going to suggest sticking with one. It's free OpenSource software that has been around for years, solid and reliable with a heap of functions and features that you let you produce a very professional service that will grow as your skills get better at managing it.

<https://obsproject.com>

This software will let you stream a multiple camera or web cameras and microphones with graphics, titles and introduction themes etc.

To start with I'd just suggest you use it for a single camera operation to combine the instructors mic and video together for streaming.

For a camera, your family HandyCam or webcam might just do the trick, check the connections and that it will connect to your computer and you could be away. GoPros or the like work great as a wide-angle perspective.

If you have none of the above, I'd buy a Sony HandyCam as a camera of choice. I've used Sony cameras for years and they just keep working. All the Sony cameras I've ever brought are still working even if the technology is dated. I can't say that about other brand cameras I've brought. Though, if your camera has a connection with a computer it will most likely do the job.

<https://store.sony.com.au/videocamera> (or equivalent site in your country)

Sony have a large range of cameras. You just need to check that it will stream video through your computer. I'd be surprised if there were any new cameras that can't do this.

You don't need the top of the line, though one that is good in lowlight would be great to save having to light the studio. Getting a camera with a good amount of internal storage would let you record everything in a very high resolution for editing later that might be used in website content or for promotional videos and ads further down the track.

A tripod is a must. To start with just lock off the camera, this way the cheapest tripod can be used here.

It would be worth looking at Miller Tripods. They have a great range that are perfect for this situation and can be pan and tilted smoothly.

<https://www.millertripods.com/en/tripod-systems.html> (or equivalent site in your country)

I've used their products since I first started in television and can swear by them. Their factory is just up the road so I can go give them stick if you have a problem, but there are others out there that will do the job.

There are lots of radio mics out there, again I'll recommend a Sony one that I've used for years and outperforms all my top of the line radio mics in the \$10,000 bracket.

<https://store.sony.com.au/professional-audio> (or equivalent site in your country)

There are lot's of cheaper options out there. Again, I've taken my Sony ratio mics through hell and back and they just keep working.

The one feature I would insist on when getting a radio mic is "diversity" mics. This uses a system of two transmitter and two receivers built unseen into each radio mic. The receiver picks the best signal in milliseconds seamlessly missing all those crackles and pops often heard on cheaper brand with a bonus of doubling there range. I've used these mics over a kilometre away with perfect audio.

Your existing studio mics might work just as good and you already have them. Plug the output of the receiver into your computer input, select it in the setup and you're away.

Option 3#

Using the above software but incorporating multiple cameras and microphones to give a more professional look and sound. Starting to use the graphics and titles will improve the looks a lot. I am offering to help create the graphics/ titles and audio mixer setup to help you get things moving.

Option 4#

Adding a professional video mixer takes things to another level.

Here is one mixer from a fantastic company called Black Magic Design.

<https://www.blackmagicdesign.com/products/atemmini>

This is starting to get outside the realms if this brief. Call me for more on this.

Another thing to know is that if you want to broadcast your stream to more than one platform live, you will have to send your video stream to a re-streamer company like;

Streaming Shark

<http://streamingshark.com>

I've never used re-streamers but have heard good reports about Streaming Shark.

Another is;

Switch Board

<https://switchboard.live>

There are other software packages that can stream to multipart platforms, again contact me for information about them.

I hope this has been helpful and that you can keep your business up and running. I hope you could train staff that that would otherwise been laid off to run the video steaming side of the business.

I'd just love to see you guys able to get though this in-tacked both spiritually as well as financially.

I'm available to consult, build content (graphics/titles) and help get you started. My rate is \$150 an hour.

OBS Studio can be operated remotely so I can check what you are doing remotely or even control it remotely till you get the hang of it.

All the best,

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