



## Relentless Focus – How Top Strength Training CEOs Win With Less (July 2025)

**Lawrence Neal:** Welcome everyone to the July 2025 Masterclass for High-Intensity Business. We do this every month. We alternate between the science and application of personal training and business – today's more *business*.

Previous guests include – obviously Luke's done multiple Masterclasses for us – MaxStrength Fitness' Jeff Tomaszewski, Pete Cerqua, Dr. Doug McGuff, Dr. James Fisher, so on and so forth. I'd be here all day listing the generous people that have contributed to High Intensity Business over the years.

You can find all the previous Masterclasses in the Classroom in skool. The topic for today is "Relentless Focus – How Top Strength Training CEOs Win With Less" with [Discover Strength](#) Founder and CEO Luke Carson.

Luke's gonna do a short kind of presentation, but he's just gonna be speaking for the first kind of 20-25 minutes on his views on focus and time management. I may ask questions, I may not. I really just wanna let Luke share his latest thoughts about this, and then there'll be 30-40 minutes available for Q&A.

Feel free to put questions in the chat or the Q&A box, or you can raise your hand and I will allow you to speak. I would like Luke to first have the time in the beginning to just say his piece, and then we'll do Q&A after that.

Please keep the questions focused on the topic of *focus* and *time management*, which frankly I think a lot of people in our group struggle with. And what I want to do is, again, create a seminal Masterclass about this topic that's gonna be really valuable to you guys and future members.

And I guess maybe you've thought about this, Luke, already, but the avatar here is obviously the high intensity training studio owner. I think most of our members have, probably, no employees, but there are very significant cohort that have one or two trainers. So maybe you can make it apply to all of those different sort of *sub-avatars* as well.

Luke, thanks again for doing this and take it away. I'm excited to hear you thoughts on all of this.

**Luke Carlson:** It's my pleasure. Thanks for having me, Lawrence.



I think we probably should start off with working definitions: So, *focus* is one of these amorphous words that, people refer to – “I’m focused,” “I need to be more focused” – and my working definition is the *quality and quantity of the things that we say “no” to*. So that’s what focus is to me, the quality and quantity of the things that we say “no” to – and that definition for me has evolved and it’s been very much influenced by Alex Hormozi.

Now, I think focus becomes increasingly important if you actually want to grow. So, I’m gonna make the assumption that everybody wants to grow their business. And *grow their business* might mean grow from 50 sessions a week to 200 sessions a week; it might mean grow from 300 sessions a week to 600 sessions a week; it might mean grow from one studio to two; grow from \$200,000 in annual revenue to \$1.2 million.

I think focus becomes more important if we are trying to grow, and – I think this is my last caveat – focus is important for *everybody*. It is infinitely more important for entrepreneurs and owners because we wake up each day and we can essentially do whatever we want, all day long. So, we need focus where so many jobs have focus that is actually built-in: we know how to prioritize, we know what we should actually be doing each day because it’s built into the nature of the work.

So, I wanna walk through a few of the tools that I think are incredibly important to create focus on the *macro* and *micro* level. So, really, I’ll just go through four of ‘em and I’ll give a few examples of how they can be applied.

So, the first big tool is inspired by people like [Patrick Lencioni](#) and [Gino Wickman](#) of Traction, and it’s the idea that **you just have to know what your core business is**.

Patrick Lencioni says, “Understand what your core business is.” Gino Wickman would say, “Know what your strategic niche is.” And the best definition here is this is just the sandbox that you’re gonna play in.

And so, for us, for Discover Strength, that’s personalized *strength training*. We’re never gonna get outside of personalized strength training. *Personalized* to us means one-on-one and very small group; *strength training* means resistance exercise. We’re gonna say no to everything that’s on the periphery of that.



Let me tell you, our first couple years of operations, we did not have that strategic niche. We didn't have that sandbox. And so, every conceivable fitness idea that came to us, we really considered it. We thought about doing it. And now we say *no* to it if it doesn't. Fall within that narrowly defined strategic niche.

So, let me give you examples of things we say no to: we got Net Promoter feedback yesterday from a client saying, "I wish you added a nutrition component" – we're never gonna add a nutrition component. We have considered things over the years, like massage – we're not gonna do massage. In the old days we used to do cardio sessions, one-on-one kind of high-intensity cardio – we killed all of that a long time ago. If it involves anything related to recovery, we're just not gonna focus on it – and by recovery, [I mean] the *recovery trend* that exists right now on Normatec boots and cold plunge and contrast therapy and all of it – so we're gonna say no to all of those things.

I'll give you a very current example for us: Years ago, we bought... a MedX medical lumbar extension, and we were building out MedX medical therapy program – we are killing that completely. And it kills me personally that we're killing that, 'cause I love the tool so much, but we know we're just not gonna grow it.

And I will tell you, Discover Strength, anything that's outside of this strategic niche, this focus of personalized strength training, we're just not very good at.

I'm sitting in our room that has a BodPod. We're not good at BodPods. We do a lot of BodPods. We don't make much money off of BodPod. The people at BodPod told us we do more BodPod tests than any BodPod that they've ever sold. We still don't make much money off of it. It's not a good experience. Why is it not a good experience? Because we just don't... it's not our focus, so we don't take our staff through rigorous training on how to do it. That's strategic niche.

Now let me just tell you – most entrepreneurs that I know that are not large, they get outside of strategic niche or they don't have strategic niche and *they keep inventing new businesses*. And – this is inspiration from Alex Hormozi as well; he says – the guaranteed way to stay poor is keep launching new businesses.

And I'm around people all the time that will grow a business 'til it can make about a thousand dollars a month for them, and then they see an adjacency and they start another business, and they start another business, and pretty soon they have five businesses that are doing a total of



\$50,000 a year in revenue, where the reality is if they stuck with one business, they could easily build it to a million dollars in revenue.

So that's number one. Just understand what you call "business."

**Lawrence Neal:** That's the same as starting, spinning up new business units within the same business. Same problem, would you say, or is there some nuance there?

**Luke Carlson:** Absolutely. Absolutely. So, you could be outside your strategic niche in that you have all these different line extensions and offerings within your business, or you could be very quote-unquote *entrepreneurial* and launch new businesses, and either way, it's a distraction. Totally agree with you.

So that's number one, that's the first concept: just *understand what your core business is*.

This is the easiest discussion and easiest audience ever to figure this out. I'm not telling anybody what to do, but I think all, all of your listeners' strategic niches could be personalized strength training, right? It could be something along that line, and of course you can wordsmith that or nuance that a little bit and maybe it's even narrower for you, but you gotta figure that out. And then you have to just have the discipline to say "no" to anything that's outside of it.

So I told you we're killing MedX Medical. I'm telling you, we're not growing BodPods to other locations. We have thought very hard for years about purchasing a large commercial exercise equipment company to manufacture equipment ourselves. The reality is that's outside of our strategic niche, right?

Our strategic niche is personalized strength training. We don't know how to manufacture. I'm excited about it. I love the idea of it. But people have told me, "You should do it," "You need to do it," "You'd be very good at it" – the reality is we'd be horrible at it; it'd be a horrific distraction!

And I, instead of having one mediocre business, I'd be ruining two businesses. And so that's the concept of strategic niche or being focused.

That's number one – and Lawrence, just pause or stop me if you want me to slow down – number two – and I just have five – is even as an owner...



**Lawrence Neal:** Sorry, yeah – just one quick follow up on number one: I think it just as important to say *why*.

You've mentioned studio niche is important in terms of focus, not being distracted. Do you wanna just mention also about perhaps the importance of brand and, your finite resources, which I guess is connected to distraction, like the importance of what's so important about strategic niche apart from what you've already said?

**Luke Carlson:** Yeah, from a focus standpoint, I mean there's all these different brand things like the strength of a brand is inversely proportionate to the scope of the brand. So, the more you do as a brand, the weaker your brand becomes; the less you do, the stronger the brand becomes.

If I ask you – this is probably a US example, but – if I say, “Macy's,” what comes to mind? Your answer is *nothing*; If I say, “Victoria's Secret,” what comes to mind? You say, “bras and underwear” or, “Intimate apparel,” “Women's intimate apparel.” And the reality is Macy's sells a lot of women's intimate apparel, but they sell 10,000 other things. And so, we don't think about them owning any particular space.

For this conversation, I think strategic niche is just more important.

You know every day when you come to work, when you're thinking about work, you should be spending all of your time just thinking within that strategic niche. “How can I make more money?” “How can I provide more value in this sandbox?” And you don't start daydreaming about getting outside of the sandbox and people who are quote-unquote *entrepreneurial* often get outside of the sandbox. Another way to describe *entrepreneurial thinking* is *people who lack focus*, right? That's all we're talking about here. So that's the first concept.

Second concept for me is **five key roles**.

Now this is straight from Gino Wickman in Traction. Owners need five key roles – it could be four, it could be six, but generally, five key roles – that high level, *tell-you-what-you're-supposed-to-do-when-you-come-to-work-each-day*. Now I even think of at Discover Strength, I have five key roles. And then when I think of our owners of our franchise locations who don't always work day-to-day in the business, we have key roles for them, and we didn't early on, and it was a problem because they were *entrepreneurial* and they would come to their general managers and they would be spinning up all these different ideas and creating distraction, and it's, “No, nope, stop



all of that. None of that is your job. None of that is important.” So, you could do that as a hobby. It has nothing to do with your Discover Strength business.

And I had an owner tell me, not too long ago, “I’m not putting too many additional things on my general manager’s plate,” and I said, “Hold on – *you* should be putting *nothing* on your general manager’s plate. The general manager has five key roles. You have five key roles. You should just focus on those five key roles.” Most of your day each day should be focused on those five key roles. So, that’s pretty straightforward.

Now, the third tool is this concept of **having a goal for the quarter**.

And the terminology that we use – and so many of the listeners are gonna be familiar with – are “Rocks”. So, a “Rock” is just a 90-day goal.

The idea of a *Rock* is what’s the most important one, two, or three things that I need to accomplish over the next 90 days? They’re gonna move me toward my one-year goal. And that one year goal should generally be revenue and profits. And then over the 90 days, you have to think, “What’s the most important thing I need to do?”

Now, this is different. For me, I used to come to the studio each morning and I would train clients and answer emails and answer phone calls, and train our staff, and have a staff meeting, and that was a great day – that’s what I did all day long. But I didn’t identify, “what’s one thing I need to elevate out of the business over the next 13 weeks, the next quarter, that I really need to focus on and complete so that the company can move forward?”

So, we all need rocks. We need focus. We need know what we need to work on. I’ll just tell you what one of my rocks is: I need to launch our Washington DC location, which opens in two and a half weeks with 75 free introductory workouts on the schedule in week number one, and I’m way behind on that. We’re two and a half weeks out. I think we have 42 free introductory workouts scheduled.

We generally see a lot of people’s schedule very close to opening, but man, that is the most important thing I need to do right now, and I’m gonna have a full-on day. I’ve been up early in the morning. My day’s gonna go ‘til late in the evening. I’ll be on a flight until 11:00 PM, the day’s gonna be a full-on day. But that’s what I have to pull out of the day and out of the quarter, because [it’s] the most important thing that moves us toward where we’re really going.



So, pick what 1, 2, 3 Rocks you have, the most important things you could do.

Now, let me just give you a little bit of a key on Rocks: Most of the time, for us, for any business, but definitely for people that own high-intensity training businesses – I can't think of a business where this is not the case, though – those Rocks are usually gonna connect or often gonna connect to the three potential constraints of a business.

Now, I'm not listing this as one of our four tools I want to go through – you could say it's a tool – I just think it's a way to move the other tools forward or utilize the other tools, and it's just *understand the current constraint*.

And as far as I can tell, there's generally three major constraints – the three major constraints are: I need new customers, I need leads; number two, I need to be able to close sales, so I need to be able to convert that lead to an actual customer; and then number three, I need to be able to retain customers.

And businesses of all just all different kinds, all different industries struggle differently across those three, but all three are incredibly important.

And you'll occasionally come across a business that seemingly has no problem attracting customers or leads. They can convert, they can sell, but they just can't retain. And those are wonderful businesses. I think they're pretty tough to manage 'cause they have to replace their customer base or their revenue every year. Like, revenue replacement is the challenge for that business.

Now I'm gonna guess that almost everybody on this call, their revenue, excuse me, their revenue retention, their customer retention – big picture: we call it *revenue retention* – is probably really good. Even if you're bad at revenue retention on this call, you're still better at revenue retention than most other fitness concepts or most businesses in general.

And so that's probably not your constraint; your constraint is probably leads. And I'm gonna guess that there's a high percentage of people on the call, that's their number one constraint, and number two constraint is probably being able to convert that person. They come in for an introductory workout and they don't buy.



So, we should just be thinking about, “Could I set a rock that's gonna move forward one of these three constraints?” And if you could solve for that constraint, which of those constraints could you solve for that's gonna cause the most growth in the business?

And I'll tell you, [for] Discover Strength, it's not retention – retention is 86%, okay? So, we retain most of our customers. It is not closing – we close at about 75%, sometimes closer to 80%. Now, as we've grown more locations, we've realized we have some locations that are closing at 50%. So, that location may have a constraint that they need to focus on for sure.

But our constraint, generally, is *leads*. If we had more leads, we would close them generally not having a problem there, and we'd be able to retain them as well.

And some people listening might say, “Isn't that the case for all businesses?” It is not the case for all businesses. So many businesses can easily convert, but they just cannot actually retain.

So, maybe when you think about the rock that you set, try to focus on one of those constraints. And I just shared with you one of my rocks is, definitely, solving the constraint that we *need leads*.

And then, I'll tell you that we have a new vice president of marketing. One of her rocks is very much about *how we're attracting leads and what are we doing from a digital standpoint?*

So, you can generally connect a lot of your rocks back to one of those three constraints. If you are working on anything, if you're not training a client and you're working on anything, and you can't say, “This is the constraint that it really connects to,” I don't know what the heck you're working on. I just don't know.

You could say, “I'm creating a core process that's gonna allow my trainer that I'm about to hire to deliver a workout in a manner that's consistent to how I deliver a workout” – I would say that is connected to a constraint that is definitely connected to retention of a customer. So, you are focused on a constraint.

But if it's not focused on the constraint, we probably don't need to spend a heck of a lot of time doing it.



Let me give you an example: we'll occasionally talk to other fitness professionals of different businesses or even our own staff or franchisees that say, "Hey, we should buy another BodPod," "We should do an InBody," Okay? Or, "I just found someone that has a DEXA in my neighborhood," And my answer is, "What constraint is that solving for? Does InBody or BodPod or DEXA... does it drive new clients? Does it help convert a client? Does it help with client retention?" From my experience of owning a BodPod for a long time, absolutely not.

Now, it falls in the category of *fitness people are interested in bodies and BodPods and DEXA*, but it *doesn't* drive any of those three. We should spend very little time thinking about it.

Now... I'm gonna caveat that – let's just say there's someone that has a DEXA machine in your community and they wanna refer endless numbers of clients to you, would fostering a relationship with them be valuable? Yeah, absolutely. I've never seen that happen; It definitely could happen. So, you could foster a relationship that leads to referrals and then you have solved for the first constraint. That's *Rocks* and then using *constraint thinking*.

**Lawrence Neal:** Awesome. Do you have more?

**Luke Carlson:** Am I free to move on...?

**Lawrence Neal:** Yeah, I'll have a few points right at the end, but please keep going.

**Luke Carlson:** Sure. And then my fourth of the tools – so, let's just say the first tool was *understand your core business*. Second tool was, *have five key roles*. Third tool was, *understand what your rocks are for the quarter*, one, two, or three of them generally connected to a constraint, and then – my fourth tool is, day in and day out, **have a daily big three**.

This was inspired to me, first, by reading, old school Andrew Carnegie and Charles Schwab. I'm reading a thousand-page book on Carnegie's Life right now, and they call him Charlie Schwab, but that was one of his managers a billion years ago, and his productivity system was each day he just wrote down the three most important things he needed to do. And of course there's a long story of who he, who taught him this... and then he just focuses on those three most important things.

Today, in 2025, we see authors like [Michael Hyatt](#) has really popularized this. He sells a daily Big Three Journal. I bought it for years. And basically, you write down the three most important



things you need to do that day. And then I realized after years of buying it, I don't need to spend \$40 on a journal to write down the three most important things. I can write it down anywhere. I have it in front of me right now. This is the journal I buy. It's a notebook that I buy right now, and I write down my three most important things. I have my whole team do that. And then each morning, we share with those three most important things are.

Now, why is that important?

It's because so many entrepreneurs, so many business people, we have to-do lists, and I was always obsessed with the idea of having a to-do list of 25 things on it. And I would get through 18 of them during the day. And by the end of the day I said, "that was a great day, I accomplished 18 things." But the reality is, I never actually accomplished *the most important things*, and sometimes the most important things didn't even make it on that list.

And so, the idea of a daily big three is, in the middle of a whirlwind of the clients you're training and the other commitments that you have, you have to understand, "What are the three most important things I need to do today?"

And those are sometimes connected to your Rock, right?

And so, for me, my daily big three – this is nuanced – is going to be shaped by how much *white space* I have.

If you have a day where you're training 20 one-on-one sessions... you're with a client for 10 hours. You should have a daily big three, but they're gonna be very small, right? What's the one email, the one phone call, the one quick, whatever it is to do that you have for that day...

Now, we all have days where we have a tunnel of white space, when we sit down at a desk in between clients and we have a couple hours, how are we spending that time? Instead of just responding to email, which is being *reactive*, we should be *proactive* and say, what are the three most important things?

Now, my recommendation would be sort out your daily big three the night before or early in the morning. Set your daily big three for the day – that's best practice.



I've definitely had days where I haven't even identified my daily big three until 8:00 PM right? I've gone through the whole day. I finally sit down, I write out the three most important things I need to do, and from eight o'clock until nine 15, I'll get those three things done – that's on my worst day; I want to have 'em identified early in the morning.

So, right now, my daily big three – I'm just looking at the list – number one is I have a time block for working on the content for our owner's retreat. We have a retreat for all of our owners coming up. We're doing two of them next week, and then one in August. And so that goes live on Wednesday. And almost every day, the last two weeks, I've had a time block, one hour, on working on this owner's retreat. That's number one.

Number two is I need to identify a speaker for our upcoming leadership institute. We do that every quarter. And I have some speaker in leadership or management who's actually a leader. And so I need to get an invite out to that person. It's gonna occur on September 11th. I need to give them notice. That's two.

And then number three I'm creating all of these one-pagers for our franchisees on the foundational tools that we use. And so I'm gonna just finish one of those one-pagers on a foundational tool today.

So those are the three most important things I need to do. I'll do all of them at the airport tonight or on a flight tonight.

So those are those are the four tools that I wanted to go through that help me stay more focused.

Now, I still have a to-do list on the notebook, but if I don't get to the rest of the to-do list, I'm okay with that. I wanna make sure I get the three most important things done. They generally move the business forward. Sometimes, they're urgent, like if it's someone I need to get back to and it's just rude if I don't get back to 'em, they'll be on that list for sure, like, "I have to send this one email. I have to respond to this one email today."

**Lawrence Neal:** Awesome. Thank you so much Luke. And just a couple of things to say before we get into questions is... obviously we have finite time today and we wanna make sure we get plenty of time for Q&A and so we didn't go through the entire Vision section inside Entrepreneur Operating System, but this is absolutely critical guys.



If you go to the [High-Intensity Business Blueprint](#) inside the Classroom and you go through **Module Two, Strategy**, it gives you all the modules for how to implement vision from EOS into your business. [It's with Luke, it's an audio class](#). It's amazing, thanks to Luke. And it goes through like how to come up with your [Core Focus](#), how to come up with your 10-year target, 3-year picture, one-year plan – so, your goals, marketing strategy, your rocks.

So, this... everything else that Luke said is almost not gonna help you or be as effective if you don't have that stuff organized, 'cause you don't know what to do for your big three or what your five key roles are, unless you really know what your focus is on your business and what your goals are for that particular quarter.

And Luke, just before we go into... yeah, go ahead.

**Luke Carlson:** So, let me make one more comment on... so those were tools for *focus*, but what I've learned is if you don't have clarity on what you're focused on, this is one of the greatest drivers of burnout.

And so, this could be burnout for everybody listening, but I've definitely seen it in burnout in managers.

And so, we'll have a manager, a general manager that says I'm really burnt out and I think it's humanly impossible for you to be burnt out – your entire studio is doing 45 sessions per week, and you have an exercise physiologist working with you. There's not enough work to be burnt out. And what I've realized is, the burnout is not knowing how to use your time throughout the day or when you're engaged in an activity, not knowing exactly what you're trying to get from it.

So, if the if you think that day, one of the most important things you can do is try to drum up some new business and do some local area marketing or some guerilla marketing, that will drain your energy tank, okay, especially if you're introverted – I'm introverted – unless there's focus on *how* to do it.

If it's “No, go to this networking event and get five email addresses,” Okay, I can handle that. So, the more focus you have I think the less likely you are to burn out. And burnout is generally not due to a volume of work; It's lack of focus of how you spend your time during the day, if there's any ambiguity and how you spend your time, that burns a person out, from my experience.



**Lawrence Neal:** 100%, yeah.

And just what we see is when someone's really clear on like their... for instance, that if leads is the constraint, and they need to generate more free introductory workouts, it's like when you figure out exactly what that number is, like what you need to do for the quarter? Then that's where all the focus goes and it becomes so straightforward, 'cause you look at the number and you're like, "that's actually not that hard to achieve." And then obviously you focus on those activities that are gonna drive the free workouts.

Great, okay... So, let's get into questions – we've already got the Q&A is filling up. And guys, you can raise hands and add questions to the Q&A as we go. So, here we go. So, Jeremy's been super patient.

Jeremy asks, "what are the signs that a strategic niche is too limiting?"

**Luke Carlson:** Yeah, I don't know if that actually exists. Clearly, you wanna make sure that there's a market that's big enough... the more niche you get, the more money you're probably gonna make.

Jeremy, this is not a good answer, but I just don't know if that's, if that exists. We can get into the nuances. If you had a resistance training business that was only for Parkinson's patients, that's really niche, but I don't know. That might be a goldmine. So, I don't know if you could go *too niche*.

Not probably the level of specificity you wanted in an answer, but I don't know if you could go too niche.

**Lawrence Neal:** And related to that, he asks – Jeremy again – Virgin (the brand)... has multiple different services: flights, mobile, gyms. What makes a transition out to multiple strategic niches, a viable path? What has to happen or be in place, if that assumption's right?

**Luke Carlson:** The problem with teaching strategic niche is that everyone says what about Richard Branson and what should... what about Google? And what about Amazon? We can come up with four companies that got outside of their strategic niche and it worked.



My advice would be: Assume you're not Richard Branson. Assume you are not Steve Jobs. Just assume that you are not. And generally, if we really track the roots of those companies, they grew because they had insane strategic niche for about a 20-year period.

Google's may be a great example where they were so focused only on search for so long as a strategic niche, that they were allowed to move into some other areas.

Just in the annals of business history, we just see very few examples of getting outside of strategic niche causing growth. And we generally see the inversion of that.

And then I'll throw my final caveat on it – It's this: if you can grow the business to \$1 billion, then I think you should think about other businesses or getting outside a strategic niche. And by, "if you can," *if you have*. So, I don't think and if anyone just calls at a billion, I think you can start thinking of other things. I just don't think you should think about it until you're at a billion. And I think we've generally seen that from the luminaries that we've... that I just mentioned, so, whether it's Bezos or Branson or whoever.

**Lawrence Neal:** Great answer. Guys, just to remind you, let's keep all the questions focused on time management and focus – the ones that aren't will get pushed to the bottom, 'cause I just really want to make sure we get everyone's questions around focus and time management answered first.

Abe, I'm gonna unmute you, just give me a second. There you go, you should unmute yourself, you're good to go.

**Abraham Williams:** Hey. Yeah. I've got EverStrongSF and I am guilty of multiple areas of focus for sure.

And one of them is... I've got InBody 570 in there. And it's actually causing me a lot of extra work and it's not really making me money. And in fact, I don't even wanna charge for it. I just wanna make it part of the measurement service for retaining customers. And it really is causing more and more problems because I can't control what's happening outside of EverStrong and I want to go take it out like immediately. And so... you're keeping your BodPod? People expect it? You're not adding it to new ones?



**Luke Carlson:** No one truly expects it. We're gonna keep it, largely 'cause we spent \$60,000 on it, when we originally bought it. And it's still making money, but we are not going to scale it anywhere. It's not gonna grow. We're not gonna put it in other markets. And I'll tell you, our leadership team often says, "We should just get rid of it."

I'll tell you this: the conversation that comes up with my leadership team every two to three weeks is, "Luke, you need to buy or build a house so that we can take all of these misfit toys and you can put 'em in your house."

So, this would be MedX Medical, this is our Woodway treadmill, this is our BodPod – I love all these things. And they're like, "Just get a house..." – I have a small condo – "...get a house and put them in there and then we can move forward." So that's our personal look at it.

I think being interested in all of these toys is awesome. I think if you're gonna collect cool toys, this is awesome. I just don't think it drives the business. And I think we have to get better at workouts.

I knew that we had a franchise location that was in big trouble when I went to visit them two years ago, and we let them try out an InBody. I got there and the general manager – this is my first ever visit there – talked to me for the entire visit about the InBody. And I walked out there thinking, "We are in big trouble. Because if we spent that much time thinking about the InBody, I know we're spending very little time thinking about the quality of the workout." And there's one thing that I know about our business is if we don't think about the workout and try to improve the workout every single day, the workout will not be good.

So, for us, it's workouts, for some other businesses, it's sandwiches. We are trying to make a *perfect sandwich*, and the second we stop thinking about it, then people forget to put pickles on the sandwich and there's too much mayo and we have all these issues. So, that's our experience with the BodPod.

**Abraham Williams:** Thank you.

**Lawrence Neal:** Abe, do you have a follow-up? Feel free to ask a follow-up if you do.



**Abraham Williams:** Oh, well, I mean... there's just all kinds of problems that come with all the measurement because you can't control what's out the wild. So, then you have extra work to do. That's what I'm finding is happening and is taking away from the actual work.

'cause people will then say, "Oh, I can, I know I'm getting stronger. I can see all the results and everything like that." And it just adds questions and takes away from the experience. So, I think I'm gonna go take it out and I'm gonna tell folks that's... have it serviced.

**Luke Carlson:** That's so true, Abe —that's another reason why we don't love body composition testing is when we talk about Net Promoter Score. If you want to reduce your Net Promoter Score as a company, buy a BodPod or InBody because people will say, "Ugh, this is not a great experience." And why? Because they found out they had more fat than they thought. And no one wants to hear that. I do a BodPod myself, every single week. I BodPod tested this morning. Ugh. It was one of my worst BodPods ever. I am upset. With that BodPod, right? And I know we can make a client's day when they come in for a workout; I don't know if we can make their day when they come in for a BodPod. Thank you.

**Lawrence Neal:** Thank you everyone.

**Luke Carlson:** And I know we can ruin a few people... we can ruin a few people's day with the BodPod.

**Lawrence Neal:** All right. Fred, I just wanna say I'm really grateful for all your questions. They're really great, but I just need them to be focused on the topic, right? On *focus* and *time management*. I know that was a sort of a little bit off topic or that was related to, trying to stay focused.

So Megan, I'm gonna allow you to talk next. Fred, if you've got questions related to specifically time management and focus, please bring them here. We can answer those other questions. Definitely in the community. Megan, you should be able to talk now.

**Megan Costilow:** Okay. Hello. I am very ADD and all over the place. So, when I try and focus on, setting time aside to do something, if I don't finish it in that amount of time, I tend to almost have to start over when I go back to it. How do you handle when you set aside time, you don't finish a task, and rolling it into the next time without really having to start everything over?



**Luke Carlson:** Okay, here's one of my favorite tools: it's called an 80% approach. Okay?

So, a lot of times the biggest cause of procrastination for ADHD, ADD, just entrepreneurial people, okay? Or maybe even busy people, is they don't wanna start a task because they're not gonna completely finish it, and they're not gonna finish it to their standard. And because they're not gonna finish it to their standard, they don't even start it.

So, this 80% approach says just be scrappy for a block of time. Give yourself 15 minutes on something, give yourself 30 minutes, time block it, and a short time block. Try to sprint, taking it 80% done. And 80% done is probably good enough to ship or it's good enough to turn over to one of your people if you have any staff for them to bring it to 100%.

And so, once I learned this tool, it is empowered me so much to say, I mean I used to procrastinate stuff forever 'cause I'm like, I'm gonna need to sit down for half of a weekend to really dive into this project. And the reality is, if you give me 15 minutes, I will get it 80% of the way there and then one of two things can happen.

One of three things can happen: It's good enough and we can run with it. That's number one. Number two is I can turn it over to one of my team and say it's 80% of the way there, I want you to finish it. Or number three, I can come back to it. And now With probably 20 to 30 minutes, I can put the finishing touches on it.

But have your goal, Megan, be, "I'm gonna sit down and I have to get to 80% and having the time block of, I got 15 minutes to get it there, or I have 30 minutes to get it there." You will probably be able to get it there.

**Megan Costilow:** That's a great point. Thank you so much... thank you, that's really helpful.

**Lawrence Neal:** Thanks Megan. Yeah, so Fred, to answer your question, it was to do with core focus, right? So, you're talking about, what to focus on in a business and Luke gave the example of the BodPod – designing the business around that or having that in the business was probably a bad decision.

But I'm gonna ask you, you've gotta, you've reframed your question – I appreciate it – related to time management: Fred is struggling with spending too much time getting instructors to follow



certain tasks as part of the job so that Fred doesn't have to do it – how do you get instructors to follow the rules when there are no consequences?

**Luke Carlson:** Oh man, that is the toughest, most important question.

So, I like the question. The way I interpret it or the way we deal with it is we have checklists for... let's say, a manager of all the things they're supposed to do. And I love checklists and there's 7 million books written about checklists. And physicians or surgeons use checklists and pilots use checklists. Checklists are important.

But what if someone's not doing the checklist? And then David and I – David's, our VP of operations – will always talk about am I really gonna spend my whole career, my whole life auditing whether or not someone did the checklist, but that's what he sometimes feels like he needs to do. And this also feels babysitting. But the reality is, if I don't audit whether or not they're doing the checklist, then the checklist might not get done, and then we don't drive performance in the business.

So, which one is worse? I have no idea how to answer your question, Fred. I think that you need – this is what I would say, and this comes from Danny Meyer in New York City – *constant, gentle pressure*.

All three of those words are key. *Pressure* means you gotta apply some pressure, Okay? *Gentle* means it's just a constant nudge. Okay? And, or it's a nudge. And then *constant* means it's every single day, right?

It is on an ongoing basis having your people execute the way you want them to, whether it's a checklist, whether it's actually delivering a session it is never a “set it and forget it;” it is now done, and I can move on.

I work with a consultant who a lot of times likes to say, “you'll crack the code on this and then you'll be good.” And I'm like, most of the stuff, you don't crack the code. You have a plan or a process, but it's *constant, gentle pressure* around... whatever the topic is. So, that's my best answer.

**Lawrence Neal:** Just to add to that – hopefully that was helpful for you, Fred – do you not think it's also probably important to make it as easy as possible through *less is more*, right?



...having a really simple checklist? I'm curious whether there's things like that or other tips you have that just make that job a little easier. Luke, I think that might be helpful to people to hear your take on that.

**Luke Carlson:** Yeah, I think it's gotta be as simple as possible. I think at every stage of growth in the business, you have to continue to simplify.

And I've probably talked with you, Lawrence, about different variations of simplicity for, I don't know, ever since we've met and ever since I've joined you. But we're in this new... in the last two weeks, it's all we're talking about as a leadership team is, "Holy cow, we need to find a new level of simplicity, we're just too complex."

And so, right away, I went out and bought... there's a book written – it's not a new book, but – it's written by one of the agencies that, that did most of the work for Apple, like when they created the "Think Different" campaign and things like that. So, it's a leader at that agency. And basically the book is about Apple's insane approach to simplicity. And I'm like 20% in the book, so I haven't... I can't comment on it.

But yeah, simplicity is so incredibly important in a process and the steps that you're taking and in the system that you're creating. And I even think about in the delivery of the workout! Sometimes I think, "Oh man, we've made our workout way too complicated!"

We use what we call *overload protocols*. So, our overload protocol is just how we're gonna do the rep. And here's an example of some of our protocols: One-By-Twelve, which means two seconds up, four seconds down; Fab Five, which means five seconds up five second hold, five seconds down; Crazy Eight, two seconds up, hold for eight seconds, down for four seconds; Reverse progression – which is a cluster set – 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1; Three Strikes, which is basically going to failure three times in a row; A breakdown set; A drop set. Like we have a billion of them, and the chances that someone's always gonna do them correctly, right?

And then we have all the machines in our facility, and then we have probably about 50 other exercises we do that aren't on the machines. And so, all of this is layers of complexity where an exercise physiologist might not perform any of this well. And sometimes I think if we had half the machines and half the protocols and half the other exercises, we could perform all of them with excellence – that's what we battle with every single day.



And the same is true on a checklist: how do you have the checklist *simple enough* where people are actually gonna do it and execute on it? What's the 80-20 approach to the checklist? It doesn't have to be entirely comprehensive, but what are the most important things?

Our biggest breakthrough in our business, literally in 19 years, is [when] we came up with last quarter, what we call the *Main Thing* model. So, we just pulled out, "What are the five most important things that matter in the business?" We have all these operation manuals and hours and hours of learning management system – there's five elements of the *Main Thing*, and this is really where we should obsess.

And so, what we realized is our owners of our franchises *didn't know* what the *Main Thing* was. Our people, our employees didn't know what the *Main Thing* was. So, we have five things that are the *Main Thing*, and then we have what we say, "take action" – how would you actually move the main thing forward? How would you improve the *Main Thing*?

So that's a level of simplicity for us that's so incredibly powerful – I should have mentioned this as the first thing out of my mouth.

I just went to Nashville and gave a keynote on this topic. I said, "You cannot focus as a business, unless you've achieved a degree of simplicity." I think simplicity drives focus. We can't tell our general managers and our owners, "You gotta be more focused" – it just doesn't work. You need simplicity in order to drive focus. Another way to say it is *simplicity leads to focus*.

And let me tell you, when we develop this *Main Thing* model where there's only five things to really be obsessed about, that automatically of course created simplicity, but it started to drive focus.

**Lawrence Neal:** You can't *not mention* the five things – there's all the questions are about the five things. Luke, can you elaborate?

**Luke Carlson:** Yeah. Pretty simple. So, I'm not gonna name all of 'em, but one of 'em would be what we call *A Six First Principle* workout. So, six first principles. The six first principles are how we deliver the workout, but let's just say awesome workouts. And for us, it's not awesome workout. It's a workout that includes six things.

And let me just tell you, one of those six things in that workout is *intensity*.



And intensity doesn't just mean you gotta bury someone; it means you have to push that person appropriately hard.

One of them is *form*. I think the greatest driver of referrals in a business is how strict are you on forms? That would be two.

One of them is *safety*.

And safety... the key to safety is not, "is it safe?" 'cause largely what we do is safe — [it] is can you *communicate to a customer why it's safe?* And if they feel unsafe, can you put them at ease?

If someone comes to you and says, "I'm having knee pain, do you know how to handle that conversation?" You can't just say, "This is safe for your knee;" If they don't feel like they are safe, then it doesn't matter.

So those are some of our first principles for a great workout.

So, number one is *great workouts* — one of them is one of the main things is what we call *right person, right seat*.

And this comes from Jim Collins and Gino Wickman. You have to be ruthless around building a great team. You just can't have five exercise physiologists or personal trainers and two or three of 'em you don't feel great about.

The litmus test here is one of your friends or colleagues says, "Hey, I'm gonna come in for a workout at your studio. Who do you recommend I work with?" And you're like, "Oh, dear God, don't work with Lawrence. That's not gonna be a good experience. I hope you end up working with Fred" — that's not good. They all need to be at that level. And the second you don't feel that way, you gotta either upskill somebody or you gotta move them outside of the organization.

We always say, "We are trying to have the SEAL team six of exercise professionals." We're not trying to have the entire infantry of the US Army or Marine Corps, okay? Respect the infantry, they matter; but we're trying to have an elite group and we only need a few of 'em. So that would be one of our five main things.

Do you have the right person in the right seat? So that, that's an example.



I'll give you one more: one of them is the *lead nurture*. When leads are coming in, if you do not call, text, email, the leads... doesn't matter, right? The more contacts and the speed to lead is incredibly important. So, if you're not nurturing your leads... that's incredibly important.

**Lawrence Neal:** Okay. And just... sorry, just for yourself, Fred. Sorry to hear that, checklist isn't working out for you. What I would suggest is perhaps posting it in the community post the actual checklist. We'll weigh in and review it and see if we can help you improve that.

Just... guys, send more questions. Again, keep 'em relevant. I'm deliberate on asking questions if I don't feel like they're super relevant.

Luke, can you elaborate on the five key roles that you mentioned? That's not the same as the *Main Thing*, is it? ...or is it? 'cause that's an EOS...?

**Luke Carlson:** No. The *Main Thing* is just, the main thing is just, this is the most important thing in the business.

And let me just say, if you wanna run a great studio – for us it's Discover Strength, but it's very similar in a lot of businesses – one of the main things is, *are you delivering awesome workouts?* I said that.

*Do you have awesome staff?* There's more to it than awesome staff, but do you have awesome staff?

*Do you follow leads?*

I just went through three of the five main things. Those are incredibly important.

Now your key roles are, what do you own each day? What are you supposed to do each day?

So, for our general managers, one of their key roles is *deliver world-class workouts*. For our franchise owners, one of their key roles is *not* delivering world class workouts; they don't deliver workouts. We have two owners in our system, or maybe three owners in our system that actually deliver workouts. So, we just need clarity on what we're supposed to be working on each day.



**Lawrence Neal:** [I] completely understand if you'd rather not share. Are you able to share like the, what a GM's five key roles are in completeness? Or what an example might be for someone on this call?

**Luke Carlson:** Yeah. One of them would be like, *deliver world class workouts*. One of them is – and you can wordsmith this however you want, but – it's *make sure the whole team is delivering world class workouts*.

So, we use the terminology “FBA,” which is, “Followed By All.” So, we want world class workouts. And for us, it's *Six First Principle workouts*, FBA. So, you gotta make sure your whole team is delivering workouts along those six first principles followed by all. Okay?

And then how we deliver customer service – we call it *Service Excellence*. That's our terminology. So, one of the key roles for a general manager is *Service Excellence*. FBA. And so, part of service excellence [is], you can decide what your service experience looks like but one of ours is, “If we haven't met you before, we wanna introduce ourself first – shake our hands, right? Or shake hands. We're gonna train everyone how to do that. FBA means *Followed By All*. You cannot walk into one of our studios and not have someone deliver a professional greeting to you. So that's three of the key roles.

A fourth key role is *retention*.

And let me tell you, that's number one – we always list retention as the number one key role. Like, you *have to retain customers*. That's the obsession: retain customers. So, those are examples of what our general manager key roles look like.

I'll tell you the last one is to manage our sales team.

Our sales team is just a couple of the exercise physiologists at a location that deliver all of our free introductory workouts. That general manager is gonna manage that sales team, and we are specific: *it's manage the sales team to a 70% close ratio*. So, they have to be closing at 70%.

And if you think about it, that's what a manager does: deliver some workouts. Make sure the rest of the workouts are good. Make sure we have great service experience, right? Make sure that we're closing those leads and make sure we're retaining customers. That's pretty comprehensive.



**Lawrence Neal:** Yeah. And all the questions regarding retention guys as a whole, [there is a [Masterclass from Luke in HIB on exactly how they retain customers](#) – go check that out, it's in the High Intensity Business Blueprint, it's under [the] module “Retain” – there's a whole Masterclass from Luke there.

Another question here – so, this again comes back to a strategic niche: do you think you can incorporate a tool like a Woodway treadmill in someone's workout and still state in your strategic niche, for example, not offer it as a separate service, but program it as part of the workout?

How do you think about that, Luke?

**Luke Carlson:** So, I think, okay Woodway treadmill, [CAROL Bikes](#), things like that, I definitely think so. I definitely think you could say, “Hey, this is what we do: our workout's 30 minutes long,” or, “...it's 20 minutes long, and we go 15 minutes of intense strength training, and we get on a bike and go all out for five minutes” – love that. I think if that's your approach to training and that's what you're offering, that's fine; what I don't think is a good idea is to say we're all about strength training and then hear from your customers that what about cardio? What about cardio? What about cardio? And *then* you decide to add cardio into the workout, like, “Hey, the last five minutes, it's some cardio.” So, we're touching on that because that client's gonna be like, “the strength training is pretty good, cardio's really mediocre” – and I just think it ruins the brand.

I just think I would tell my customer, “Yeah, cardio's important. Go do it somewhere else,” or I would say, “Hey, do you know the study that was just published two weeks ago? High-Intensity Interval Training, like running on a treadmill or rowing or biking versus just lifting weights only – guess which one drove VO<sub>2</sub> max better? It was a tie, right? So, the strength training we're doing is driving VO<sub>2</sub> max.”

And of course, people on this call understand that. So, I don't think it's the end of the world if you have a Woodway treadmill and you include it in the workout. I don't think that's getting away from strategic niche. And maybe in that case, your strategic niche is just personal training and you'll include both of them, and I think that's probably okay.

**Lawrence Neal:** Cool. Great answer, Luke. Let's see here... what else do we have?

Any other thoughts coming to you, Luke, things you wanna share? Anything else related to focus or time management that you think is really important before we wrap up here?



**Luke Carlson:** I will say this, that everyone on the call has to get excited about saying *no* to something that's a distraction, okay?

I got a email late last night, a phone call that I missed an email from a guy that I was in. A program called Strategic Coach with, he was in my cohort and he is like, "Hey, I just wanna get on your calendar and just catch up and have conversation," he said. [He's] a really smart guy, [a] business consultant. really interesting dude. And I emailed him back early this morning and I said, "No, I can't do it. I'm not taking any meetings that are not mission critical. I'm working like around the clock for the next, few weeks and months and when my schedule, when I have some white space, I'll reach out to you."

I said *no* to him and I felt like a jerk, but it's the right thing to do.

I know he just wanted to talk, and I think he hoped someday I'd become a customer of his in some way, and he just wants to shoot the shit and I feel horrible. And I know what his response might be is, dude, just do a phone call with me while you're driving somewhere. But the reality is, every time I drive somewhere – which is a lot – I get a list of six other phone calls I'm supposed to be making during that time. So, I just know it's never gonna be the most important thing.

And the biggest challenge here is you have a time in your entrepreneurial life where you do have time for all of those calls and all of the extra stuff. And then, as you grow, you don't have time for it anymore, or as you increase your focus, you don't have time and you feel like a jerk. And so, you start to say *no* to those things, and you feel bad.

And so that's... one for me is, you gotta get excited about being *respectful* in saying *no* to certain things.

And then the other hack that I have is when your schedule really starts to fill up, you're like, "How do I fit all this stuff in?" I have a block in my schedule – not every day, but – multiple times throughout the week called "save for something more important."

Now, I have an assistant that does all of this. Heather's our chief of staff, and she books my calendar all day. And then suddenly, I'll have an important, *something* that comes up, right?

Right now, I'm the chairman of the board of the HFA, the [Health and Fitness Association](#)... and I know I need to do a performance review with our CEO, right? I need to lead that, and I need to do



it soon. And my calendar is booked from 6:00 AM until 8:00 PM, seemingly for the next... however long.

Heather will put these blocks in called "Save for something more important," where something comes up quickly, she can drop it in right there. So, I know I'm going to get to it. So, I love that as a hack, where you have that last-second emergency that you need to get to and you can just put it in that time block. And of course, if something doesn't fill in that time block, well great. You got an hour and a half, or whatever it is.

So that's one of the things that I've utilized because when I don't utilize it, the whole calendar fills up, I need to do something relatively important, and it's literally impossible to do it.

And I've had the conversation a hundred times with Heather. When am I supposed to do this? I'm fine doing it at 9:00 PM, but it usually involves someone else and they don't wanna do it at 9:00 PM.

So, having some blocks saved for something more important, I think, is important.

**Lawrence Neal:** Yeah, so true. I think we always overestimate what we can get done in a week.

I literally had this problem this week where I time-blocked every day and I gave every minute a job, every single day and gave myself practically no white space. And then my kid got sick... and then it just completely for a wrench in the whole thing. And then it's also the summer, so I'm driving kids to camps and all this...

And I think that you're better off when you don't... when you're first starting this type of stuff and you're trying to get organized and starting to do time blocking and this kind of thing, just assume that you're gonna spend more time on something and just create more white space and just do less things overall. And then as you get better at this, you can probably add more.

Luke, final question... go ahead.

**Luke Carlson:** Yeah... and let's just be real: you need downtime, too. And people on the call need downtime and have families, and have kids and have spouses, and my goodness, you need that!



This is *know thyself* – know when you need downtime, and just know what your work cadence is gonna be like.

And I don't work on Saturdays – I like to do a long run on Saturdays, and I do three hours of reading every Saturday, but I'm not going to work on a Saturday. I'm fine working on Sunday and I'll work the rest of the days, but I'm not gonna work on Saturday.

You need to know what your cadence is like and when you're gonna do work and when you're not gonna do work, you need some kind of guidelines or bookends to that. Because as entrepreneurs, we could work all the time. And I know tomorrow night, Friday night, I'm gonna fly home from a visit to Texas to a bunch of locations in Texas.

And that flight's gonna be later in the evening. It's gonna be, 7:30 'til 10 o'clock at night. And I know, I will do about one hour of work and I'm gonna stop working and I'm gonna watch a movie and just relax. I just need to know when is my work done on that day?

Sorry for the interruption there.

**Lawrence Neal:** No, that's great. Thank you for sharing that.

Yeah, I'm just thinking about there's a lot of people in our community who have a relatively simple or very simple business model they might be the only trainer, they have a studio and they've got Imagine [Strength] equipment or whatever... and when I really boil it down, like what are the things that are most important? It's deliver great workouts – that is obviously the most important thing and that's gonna solve a lot of the problems, as you talked about before, in terms of retaining customers, getting referrals – but I almost feel like for most of them, it's just getting great at the workout, always getting better, honing the craft, and then the second activity is just marketing.

But here's what I see quite a lot: a lot of [are] just people doing too many different marketing activities. This comes back to the idea of focus. And I think we're way better off just focusing on like one thing and just going all in on that one thing.

It's a famous Bruce Lee saying, “I don't fear the man...” – I think this is Bruce Lee – “I don't fear the man who's practiced a thousand different kicks; I fear the man who's practiced one kick a thousand times.”



And it's if we pick that... and that's why we're so crazy about warm outreach — 'cause it's the probably the *lowest hanging fruit* marketing. And it is proven to work over and over again now space.

So, I'm just curious what you think about that, whether I've got that whether you have a different view on that and how you also think about marketing in a way of focus, too.

**Luke Carlson:** Yeah, I just couldn't agree more. And then part of focus for marketing is tracking the data. So, to me, it's implicit in focus is if you're gonna do one or do two and go deep on 'em, you better track your results.

I think every business owner, every HIT business owner most of our franchisees will say things like, "The marketing's not working," or, "I wish the marketing worked better," and we say, "Whoa. What did you expect it to do?" And they say, "I don't know what I expected it to do, and what is it currently doing? I don't know."

Okay. We can't have a conversation unless you know what you expected from it and what it's currently doing. How do you know if it's working or not working?

And so *implicit* in what you said is you gotta track the data and obviously start simple, but you gotta understand, "Where am my leads coming from and how am I converting those leads?"

Because otherwise... and I did many years of just doing marketing stuff. Like, I would show up at the event, we'd have a table, we'd pass out cards, I would go to the BNI group and I'm doing the stuff, but I just wasn't tracking any of it. And so... I felt exhausted because I'm like, "This doesn't work."

But... *it doesn't work?* I don't have any data on it!

**Lawrence Neal:** Yeah. Thank you for sharing that. I've [gotten] more bullish about data and just being really mathematical about my work. Yeah, it's such an important point. I'm really glad you said that.

Sorry guys, for... I know you've got more questions and... thank you Abe. I hope you guys found this useful. I always find it extremely beneficial to talk to Luke.



Luke, thank you so much for making the time. Really appreciate it. We'll do our best to answer of your questions in the community guys but thank you for attending, appreciate it.

We'll have a Masterclass next month on Training and Application, so watch out for that, and I'll get the news about that out soon.

And yeah... have a great rest of your rest of your day and rest of your week. And same to you Luke. And yeah, we will talk soon.