

# Built to Serve: The Core Principles of a Great Trainer

*Discover how service, integrity, and excellence set apart fitness leaders who make a real impact.*

This guide introduces you to the values and habits that define great fitness professionals — from serving others with excellence to communicating effectively and leading with confidence. At Champions Certifications, we believe being a trainer is more than a career — it's a calling to serve and inspire others.

## Business Professionalism

This chapter will explore the essence of professionalism in fitness instruction, reviewing the vital principles that lay the groundwork for success in this dynamic industry.

*What is professionalism?* The true meaning of professionalism: it encompasses the highest standards of conduct, expertise, and ethics upheld by individuals in their respective fields. As future personal trainers, professionalism is significant as the linchpin elevates your practice from ordinary to extraordinary. Embodying professionalism establishes credibility and trust among your clients, inspires confidence, and fosters long-lasting relationships, ultimately creating a thriving and respected career in the world of fitness.

This chapter will delve into the crucial elements that define professionalism in personal training, focusing on exceptional service, punctuality, an unyielding commitment to safety, and others. As leaders, we must model the behaviors and disciplines we expect from our clients. These tools will shape you into an exceptional fitness professional poised to make a lasting impact on the lives of others.

*Be proactive in your commitment to what you teach, and success will come.*

# Service

*“The greatest among you will be a servant of all.”*

In the personal training business, service is the main factor determining success. A trainer's success is reflected in how they serve their clients. Three important aspects of service in personal training are:

- Maintaining a “people first” approach: Putting the client at the center of all interactions is paramount in delivering exceptional service. Understanding their needs, preferences, and concerns allows the personal trainer to tailor their training programs to meet and exceed expectations. A customer-centric approach fosters loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and a long-lasting relationship between the personal trainer and clientele.
- Being consistent and reliable: Consistency is critical to building trust and credibility. Clients value personal trainers who consistently deliver high-quality service, regardless of the time, location, or circumstances. Reliability in meeting commitments and promises instills confidence in clients, ensuring they return and refer others to the trainer.
- Communicating effectively: Clear and open communication is fundamental to excellent service. Listening actively to customer feedback, addressing queries promptly, and keeping clients informed demonstrates respect and consideration. Effective communication also plays a crucial role in managing expectations and resolving issues to the client's satisfaction. Connecting with your client creates a win-win situation for you and your client, and it starts with communication.

*Communication will be discussed in greater depth later in this chapter.*

As a personal trainer, you can adapt and individualize exercise workouts according to your client's distinctive background and goals. People vary widely in their health and fitness status, motivation, goals, age, needs and desires, education, occupation, health habits, and medical background. Developing an exercise program that best meets your client's needs safely and effectively requires a clear understanding of that person.

Champions Certified trainers must ensure the client has a great experience during each training session. The trainer must meet six Standards of Service to ensure the client has a great experience and is in the best possible position to achieve their fitness goals.

### **Champions Certifications Standards of Service**

- **Ensure your training area is clean and safe before starting the session.**
- **Have all equipment nearby before a session begins.**
- **Give clients your undivided attention. The client is paying you for time, information, and motivation—do not allow outside interruptions; turn cell phones off!**
- **Return all materials and equipment to their proper places as quickly as possible after use. This communicates that you are conscientious and considerate of others.**
- **Carry the energy. Do whatever it takes to manufacture energy for your client and yourself.**
- **Make contact with clients when they miss a session. They pay for accountability; an e-mail or call shows you care. Make no contact, and they will soon quit.**

## **Safety**

Safety is a critical part of the client experience. While working in a gym or another training environment, all Champions Certified Personal Trainers must observe the following safety precautions:

- Ensure the area is secure
- Ensure equipment is in good working condition.
- No horseplay allowed.
- Properly demonstrate each exercise, ensuring correct form in every rep.
- Always give the client your undivided attention.
- Be aware of the client's weight load when spotting.
- Always use progressive overload (*Will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7*).
- Know the muscle groups, residual effects, and potential hazards of all exercises.
- Do not perform contraindicated movements.
- Make sure the client stays hydrated; Keep water accessible.

*You should be aware of and understand the behavioral and environmental factors that can alter the response to exercise or predispose the client to an increased risk of injury or cardiovascular complications.*

## Promptness

Promptness is a matter of integrity. Don't steal time from clients. Be early, start on time, and end on time. Tardiness is inexcusable, especially when you are the person selling discipline. Remember that training is about leadership; no one will follow your lead if you cannot respect time. Clients should find you waiting, prepared, and enthused when they show up.

*"Brethren, join in following my example and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us." Philippians 3:17 NASB*



## Appearance and Hygiene

As a Champions Certified trainer, you must be a great model for your clients and the general public. You are your business card. As a fitness professional, your appearance is your introduction. People want to be associated with attractive people. Part of being attractive also involves our training attire. To help you achieve this professional look, Champions Certifications is partnered with COGI Apparel to create an entire line of quality training apparel to help our trainers offer their best appearance daily.

A critical part of maintaining a professional appearance is hygiene. Ensure you have access to showers, deodorant, and a change of clothing throughout the day. Brush your teeth after each meal,

keep mouthwash and sugarless gum handy, and limit teeth staining products, like coffee and hot tea, and foods that may cause gas.

*“Wise men and women are always learning, always listening for fresh insights.” Proverbs 18:15*

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## **Effective Communication**

According to Dr. Carle Hunt, “Effective communication is “the passing of information from one person to another that is mutually understood and results in the receiver behaving in a manner that demonstrates his/her understanding.” (Dr. Carle Hunt, 2001, Christian International Business Network, Communication I Student Manual). Business success is to be 20% knowledge and 80% communication. Personal training is no different; communication is your most essential tool. Mutual communication must be present for the client and trainer to succeed. When you become great at receiving and delivering necessary information interpersonally and publicly, the sky's the limit to your potential as a trainer.

*“The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.”*

*Proverbs 10:11 NIV*

A personal trainer must exhibit the following:

- Interpersonal communication skills.
- Information gathering skills.
- Behavioral change skills (feedback, contracting, modeling, etc.)

## **Building Rapport**

Building Rapport in client-trainer relationships is a fundamental part of communication. Rapport with a client creates a foundation of trust and credibility. When clients feel a connection with you, they are more likely to believe in your capabilities and the solutions you provide. They are also more inclined to share their needs, concerns, and expectations, give honest feedback, and address conflicts. This trust is the cornerstone of a client-trainer relationship and can determine your success as a personal trainer.

You can build rapport by:

- Showing genuine interest in what your client is saying. Give them your full attention, maintain eye contact, and provide verbal feedback to show your engagement in the conversation. This is called active listening.

- Showing empathy. Put yourself in your client's shoes and show understanding of their circumstances while they navigate through them.
- Showing respect. Everyone is different. Recognize and respect the differences in your client's communication styles and preferences.
- Being consistent. Follow through and deliver on your promises and commitments to your clients.
- Exhibiting positive body language. Pay attention to your nonverbal cues like facial expressions and posture. So smile, maintain eye contact, and give firm handshakes!
- Remembering the little things. Whenever possible, remember details about your clients, like their birthdays, things they enjoy, etc. This shows you value them as a person.
- LISTEN and be a servant. If you listen carefully and prayerfully think through what the client shares with you, in most cases, you can formulate a near-perfect game plan. Even more significant, you will start with an opportunity to be successful because your client will view you as someone who cares. Listening is essential to help clients reach their next level; talking a lot is not. Always think before you speak.

*"When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable. He who restrains his lips is wise."*

*Proverbs 10:19 NASB*

One important thing to remember:

Do not share your baggage with clients. They are here to receive energy from you. Keep the setting POSITIVE. Keep your conversation relative to their training program or their interests as best you can

## **Gathering Information**

When onboarding a new client, different paperwork allows you to assess different criteria and gather information. The Client Personal Survey (See *Chapter 2*) helps you to identify your client's attitude and approach to taking personal responsibility for their health. A client willing to take personal responsibility for changing the trajectory of their health will be more willing to listen to and receive the information you share with them during sessions or via text and email. Additionally, you can gather information during sessions with clients. Through observation and conversations, you can discover your clients' preferences, etc. This information can help you tailor effective programs that align with your client's preferences and can help improve client adherence.

## **Fostering Behavioral Change**

A personal trainer's relationship with a client is the helping relationship of an educator to a student. You are the helper or teacher. Through education, you can help clients change their behavior and mindset to make the lasting change they desire. The goal is to educate them so that they understand what they should be doing even when they are not working with the trainer.

Clients who can afford personal training are generally more educated. They believe in and will pay for a good education. The more knowledge and understanding we can deliver, the easier it is for them to pay us. We want to educate our clients so they fight to maintain the relationship for as long as possible because the trainer continues to help them grow.

You are responsible for explaining new concepts and skills to the client. Guiding the client through hands-on training can encourage them to become more motivated. Clients are naturally more inclined to pursue activities they find interesting but resist learning in areas they don't; this is when a little affirmation can go a long way toward a client's motivation.

There are two things to consider for effective communication:

- 1) Did I give the information or demonstration in a way that the client can receive it?
- 2) Did my client comprehend it?

## **The 3S Principle**

The "3S Principle" is a way of communicating new information to your clients so they have multiple opportunities to become familiar with the exercise quickly.

When teaching a new exercise to a client (especially a new client), state the name of the exercise, demonstrate the exercise, and finally state the name of the exercise again. Return to the given exercise within three minutes, and have the client write it down and make notes.

## **Coaching Clients and Getting Feedback**

During sessions, trainers should always tell clients why they are doing a particular exercise or drill, explaining to the client what areas of the body the exercise targets helps them to understand why it is important.

For example: "Now, the supine march is a great exercise for..."

Telling clients the reasoning behind a particular exercise can help change their mindset.

Additionally, always ask for feedback, particularly with new exercises or new clients. Knowing where your client feels the exercise can help you better cue the exercise to ensure that the client is working the intended muscle group.

Example: “Where are you feeling it?” or “Do you feel any tension in your neck?”

Improving your coaching and delivery to ensure that clients understand and see the intended results helps inspire change within the client. It shows the client that their goals are achievable, which compounds your client's trust in your ability to guide them toward their goals safely.

## Continuing Education

*“A wise man is strong. And a man of knowledge increases power.” Proverbs 25:5 NASB*

Clients pay you for information. Keep studying and growing in knowledge, new technologies, and applications. The more you feed your brain, the more relevant information you will have to give to your client. The more information you can communicate, the more valuable you become in your client's eyes.

You can formally continue your education by obtaining specialty certifications, like the Champions Stretch Professional Certifications, or informally by reading articles from reputable journals or blogs from credible sources. Champions Certifications provides bi-weekly emails (articles and continuing education text) that help equip our trainers with the most up-to-date information in the fitness industry. Champions Certifications also publishes bi-weekly blogs on various health and fitness topics.

Read an article or text subject relative to your profession daily. It will keep you up to date with current information to share with your clients and help them grow. Clients pay you for being smart. Researching information relative to their challenges is another way to continue personal growth. They will feed off what you, the trainer, have to offer them.



# Inspiration and Motivation

*“Encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called today, so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.” Hebrews 3:13 NASB*

People may be inspired in many different ways. Sometimes, it's by witnessing others do what they thought was unachievable. Often, it's through watching how someone else applies themselves. Champions Certified trainers lead by example, and clients will usually respond with extra effort when we exhibit consistent discipline. Try to participate in exercises as often as possible without compromising your ability to observe the client's form.

Setting appropriate exercise goals is a significant factor in client motivation. It is essential to have big goals and small goals. The big goal is ultimately what your client is working toward. When the client has determined the specific big-picture goal, the next job is to work with the client to set appropriate, realistic, and flexible goals, which will serve as checkpoints along the way to the big goal. Realistic goals are essential to avoid injury and maintain the client's interest.

During the first 6 to 12 weeks, the client needs to focus on simply showing up, especially if they are not motivated to exercise. Alternatively, for the zealous, overachieving client, the goals must aid efforts to diminish overexertion and injury. The important thing is to ensure the goals match the needs and preferences of each individual. Remember that you are working to inspire and motivate, not to entertain. Participation in a session places you in the position of actively leading and motivating the client. Other great ways to keep your clients moving toward their goals include:

- **Make contact** (especially when you have “no-shows”). The client hired you for accountability. Call or e-mail and check up on your client.
- **Give homework.** This is another way of keeping your client in touch with you.
- **Show personal discipline:**
  - Be in place ahead of time.
  - Have a written plan.
  - Use proper protocols.
  - Keep good records.
  - Put every item in its proper place immediately.
  - Look sharp!

People are inspired when they see others in the position they'd like to be in.

# Marketing

Personal Training is a “word of mouth” business. The best thing you can do to help your business grow is to give your clients a great experience with you every time they come. If your clients leave saying, “I need to tell my friend Jane about this,” then it’s game, set, match for you. People who can afford to work with a trainer generally associate themselves with others who can afford to work with a trainer. In essence, these people will likely tell their friends about places where they know they get excellent service value for their hard-earned dollars.

## **Inexpensive and productive ways to let the world know you are available to help:**

- Keep a professionally designed business card handy. Bonus if you are the visual representation of your business card. People are going to ask what you do. Be prepared to let them know how to reach you.
- Conduct fitness demonstrations or classes as a part of other community events.
- Conduct a seminar or workshop.
- Write articles for a local publication (or start an email newsletter). You may submit articles to Champions Certifications for newsletter or website publishing.
- Send informative or motivational e-mails to your clients (ensure each client has your contact information).
- Use social media. Share posts and videos to communicate training tips.

You were built to serve — now it’s time to lead others with purpose.  
Begin your certification journey with Champions and make an impact that lasts.

[Enroll in the Champions Personal Training Certification today!](#)