



# HOW TO DIFFERENTIATE YOUR PT PRACTICES FROM YOUR MARKET COMPETITORS

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WITH BILLY POLSON

INDUSTRY INSIDER | #004

FITNESS **SG**

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FITNESS CONVENTION SINGAPORE



## BILLY POLSON

Billy Polson is a three time fitness entrepreneur, international presenter, and business performance coach for pioneering fitness business owners. Men's Journal magazine named Billy one of 'America's Best 100 Trainers', while he has appeared in and contributed to numerous publications including Fortune, Inc, Women's Health, Kiplinger, The Huffington Post, and CBS Small Business Pulse.

In 2004, looking to build an unparalleled training facility and a community of San Francisco's leading fitness specialists, Billy founded DIAKADI Fitness, awarded The Bay Area's 'Top Trainers/Gym' for 14 straight years. The DIAKADI community currently houses the practices of 90+ of the Bay Area's leading practitioners from the fitness and health industries. The Business Movement, DIAKADI's fitness entrepreneur education program, has helped hundreds of personal trainers with gaining the skills and confidence to leave their corporate training jobs, develop their own brands, grow their private practices, and find great financial success as fitness business owners and independent personal trainers.

## WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT?

In 2003, I was operating my independent training practice out of a basement gym in San Francisco, where the ceiling was so low that we couldn't even jump rope. I had a vision of building a world class fitness facility, which would offer all of the benefits and amenities that staff trainers and their clients receive at a five star membership gym, but in a facility designed solely for independent trainers.

After much research, I could find no other business model of this kind, much less on a large scale, but I was confident that it represented a missed opportunity in our market. So in 2004, my husband and I opened DIAKADI Fitness, which today, fifteen years later, has grown into a community of over 100 of San Francisco's most educated independent trainers and has been awarded the 'Top Trainers/Gym' in San Francisco for 14 years. I am incredibly proud to call DIAKADI my work, my family and my home.



# WHY IS DIFFERENTIATION AND POSITIONING WITHIN THE FITNESS INDUSTRY THE HOLY GRAIL OF SUCCESS?

Our industry is wildly saturated with multiple fitness business options of all types for potential clients to choose from. There are countless group and small group fitness options on every corner, with virtual group fitness (i.e. Peloton) quickly gaining traction. Then, there are the unlimited private training, hybrid training and online training options available to consumers in all sizes of facilities or even in their own homes. In the city of San Francisco alone, if you search for a 'personal trainer' on Yelp, our leading social proof platform, 1300 options come up in the search listings. Search for 'gyms' and 3300 options will come up. These countless choices are overwhelming our potential customers and the brands which do the best job of differentiation are the stand alone businesses that rise to the top.

# WHAT ARE SOME KEY COMPONENTS EXERCISE PROFESSIONALS SHOULD CONSIDER TO STAY AHEAD OF THE COMPETITION?

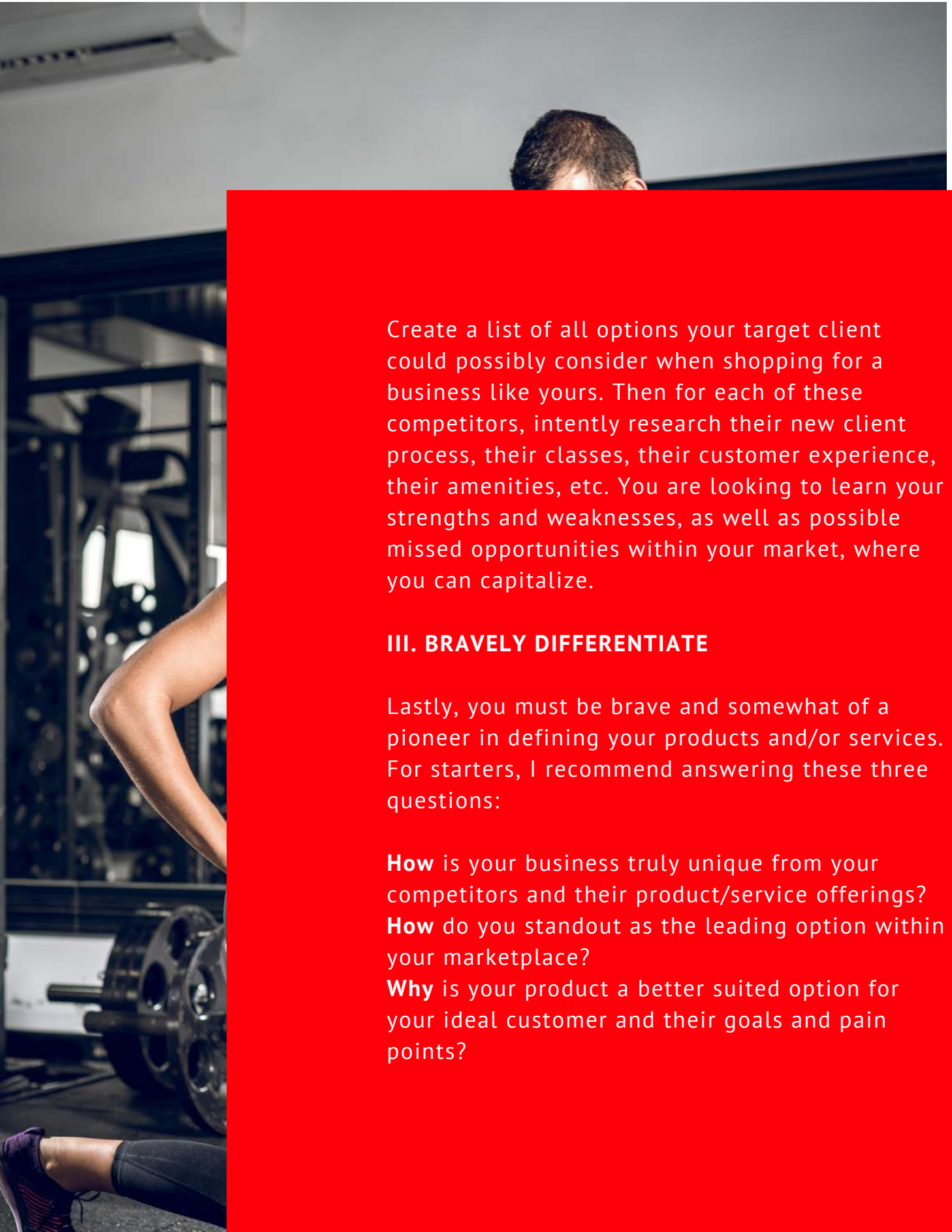
There are three steps which every fitness business owner must follow in order to guarantee that they will stand out amongst this tidal wave of options:

## I. CLEARLY DEFINE CLIENT + PRODUCT

First, you must have a clear understanding of the specific target customer your business will serve, their exact health/fitness goals and pain points, and how you will help them with addressing these issues and upgrading their lives. Secondly, you must be clear and specific with the products and services which you will provide and exactly how you will provide these services to your customers.

## II. THOROUGH RESEARCH

In order to guarantee that you rise above your competitors as the leading option in your market, you must know these competing businesses as well as you know your own.



Create a list of all options your target client could possibly consider when shopping for a business like yours. Then for each of these competitors, intently research their new client process, their classes, their customer experience, their amenities, etc. You are looking to learn your strengths and weaknesses, as well as possible missed opportunities within your market, where you can capitalize.

### III. BRAVELY DIFFERENTIATE

Lastly, you must be brave and somewhat of a pioneer in defining your products and/or services. For starters, I recommend answering these three questions:

- How** is your business truly unique from your competitors and their product/service offerings?
- How** do you stand out as the leading option within your marketplace?
- Why** is your product a better suited option for your ideal customer and their goals and pain points?

# WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO DEFINE A SPECIFIC NICHE CLIENT AND IDEAL CUSTOMER, INSTEAD OF MARKETING MY SERVICES TO EVERYONE?

This is definitely a tough lesson, because it can feel very scary to focus your business and marketing on a smaller population of customers and consequently limit the size of your 'fishing net'. However, I have two important reasons for being brave in defining a specific target audience.

## I. IMPROVED CLIENT RESULTS

The more specialized you become as a business owner, the more specific your education will become, leading to a much more advanced skillset in your field. Therefore, you will have much greater success in helping clients achieve their goals. Think of it this way. When you have a specific knee injury, you don't go to your general practice doctor for help, you seek out the smartest knee specialist that you can find. Be the specialist and find the most success!

## II. REDUCE THE VOLUME OF COMPETITORS

If you search for 'Personal Trainer' online, you get a giant list of items in the search results. When you adjust the search to 'Female Personal Trainer', you get a slightly smaller list. Then try 'Female Personal Trainer to Lose Body Fat' and you again reduce the volume of the results. You see where I am going with this. The more specific you are with your target customer, the smaller the field of competitors you will come up against.

# HOW CAN ONLINE MARKETING BE BEST UTILIZED TO ACHIEVE PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS?

Once you have defined a powerful list of differentiators for your brand, you must use these in calibrating every area of your online marketing so that potential customers are immediately aware of why your businesses is best suited to meet their needs. I recommend focusing on three main areas:

## I. WEBSITE + SEO

When a potential client arrives on your website for the very first time, you have less than 10 seconds to capture their interest and convince them to stay on your site.



Therefore, it is critical that the content (text, photos, badges, press, etc) at the top of your homepage clearly expresses your leading differentiators. To test this, pull up your homepage on your phone and ask a stranger to tell you their first impressions about the services which your business provides to clients. If they name one of your differentiators, you know that you are on the right path. I also recommend using the tool SEO Minion, to guarantee that the search engine indexes are recognizing your differentiators as well.

## II. SOCIAL MEDIA

The same rule applies for all of your social media platforms. Make sure your descriptions, photos, and posts consistently circle back to the most important defining qualities of your brand.

## III. SOCIAL PROOF

Social proof is a representation of the influence your business has on customers and it often describes their experiences while using your products and services. This includes testimonials, reviews, endorsements, customer counts, and awards. Statistics show that over 80% of customers trust what your customers are saying about your business, more than they trust your marketing statements. So I highly recommend the use of social proof throughout all of your online marketing.



## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MAIN FACTORS LIMITING THE POTENTIAL OF ASPIRING EXERCISE PROFESSIONALS?

For the majority of my clients, both personal trainers and gym owners, there is usually one main factor which limits their progress in building their ideal fitness business vision - they do not set aside time on a weekly basis for growing their brand and for new business development. As a business owner, you can create a list of spectacular plans and ground breaking action items a mile long, but until you coordinate that list with the appropriate amount of work hours necessary, and then calendar in the exact dates and times to get the work done, you will simply be running in place.

Start by setting aside time in your calendar, ideally a minimum of one hour a week, where you organize yourself, your priorities and your focus. Protect this time at all costs, adding additional business development time each week as you are able. Secondly, being as specific as possible, create a clear three year vision of the business and brand you are looking to build. From this three year plan, develop a clear

strategy of what you need to achieve within the next 12 months to get you one third of the way to your dream goal. Then, set quarterly goals of what you want to get done this year. Lastly, calendar a 'board meeting' with yourself every 3 months to assess your progress and adjust the deadlines for the next quarter.

## TOP TIP TO PASS TO OUR EXERCISE PROFESSIONALS

**SET THE BAR** - At EVERY opportunity, work to go above and beyond expectations in every way. From your education and skillset to your customer experience and gratitude, your entire business brand should perform at levels far beyond the 'norm' for your industry in order to truly differentiate from your competitors and guarantee your emergence from the pack.

**GLOW!** - As my coach and mentor Todd Holcomb explains, build your career so that you'll "show up to life every day in a way that lights you up and changes everyone around you." Our business is the business of helping people find their GLOW, and there is no way you can help someone GLOW without brightening your own GLOW. Have a positive mental focus and walk into every day, every session and every interaction shining brightly! The rest will come naturally.



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