9 Critical Things You Must Know Before Buying Fitness Business Software

zenplanner

BETTER SOFTWARE FOR YOUR FITNESS PASSION

Congratulations!

You had a dream and you worked hard, took chances, and made sacrifices. Now you're seeing the fruits of your labor. Things are going well, and you're helping your clients realize their fitness goals. But, why do you feel like you need more hours in the day to do all the things you want to do so that you can build your gym? Why do you feel there has to be an easier way to get it all done?

Every successful gym owner reaches a pain point with continued business growth, and the adoption of business management software is the solution to maintaining sanity and enjoyment in the business. Fortunately, selecting and adopting a software solution doesn't need to be overwhelming, and we want to help guide you in your selection process.

Is it time for software?

We've surveyed thousands of fitness business owners to determine the point at which they felt they needed software to manage their business. About half of those surveyed decided they needed business software prior to opening their doors. For the remainder of fitness business owners, they decided to explore software once they had about twenty-five active members. When businesses get to about twenty-five active members, collecting payments manually and tracking attendance in spreadsheets becomes overwhelming.

We consistently hear that clients save an average of about ten hours a week once they implement a software solution. If you bill your services at $25 per hour, the very low-end for most fitness businesses, you can reasonably expect a gain in revenue of about $1,000 per month. Moreover, almost all of the business owners we surveyed say that they actually undercharged prior to using software because it was impossible to maintain accurate attendance records. That would explain in part why fitness businesses that use software grow at a rate of 88% annually, while those who don't, grow at only 2.3% annually. (Technology Institute, 2014)

In addition to saving money and time, many fitness business owners decide they need a software solution to stay competitive. Like it or not, you will be compared with your clients' prior experiences and your competitors' business practices. This is a key issue because it's estimated that 57% of affiliate or non-chain fitness gyms use some sort of scheduling software, and 36% of those who currently don't use software intend to purchase it in the next 2 years. So it's clear that those who don't adopt a software solution will be left behind. (Technology Institute, 2014)

Once you've decided it's time to evaluate fitness business software solutions, there are nine critical things you need to know in order for you to select the right solution. These questions will help you choose software that will allow you to spend less time on the administrative tasks and more time doing the things that matter most to you. You will also be able to better serve the members you have, while adding new students to your membership base. So please take advantage of the information we've gleaned from thousands of gym owners, key industry leaders, and countless hours in business education programs. Everything you need to know to select a software solution is contained in this e-book.

"It would be difficult for me to run my business without the Zen Planner software, which is so simple and easy-to-use."

—Cody Bishop, 181 Fitness

Adopting a new software solution can be a daunting task. For that reason, and many others, it's important to find a solution that is easy to learn and use. You and your team should be able to transition to your new software in a matter of hours or days, and you should be able to instantly see the positive impact a transition like this will provide.

For your members, ease of use is absolutely critical. Upon implementation, they should be able to intuitively perform the basics, like reserving a class and paying for their membership. Then, as your members begin to learn how to utilize the additional features, they should clearly be able to see that your software provides them a better service than they received before the implementation. And, these features should be accessible and convenient to use on all devices, including a tablet, laptop, desktop, or a mobile device.
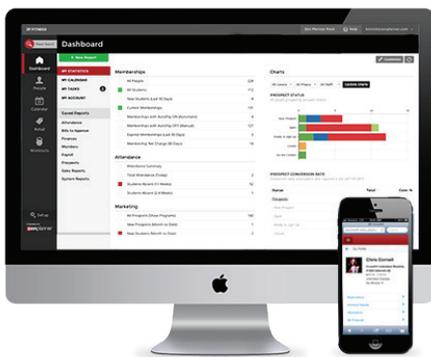
Your team should be able to quickly adopt your new software on multiple devices so that they can better serve your members.
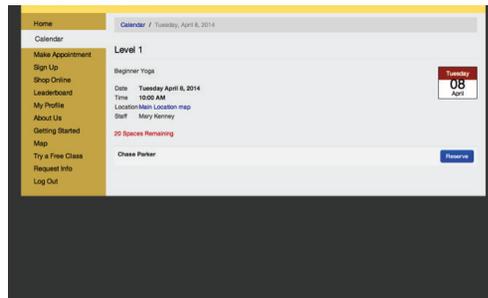
Your members should be able to intuitively use your new software to sign up for a class and pay for their membership. Here you can see the simplicity of reserving a class with Zen Planner.

"With Zen Planner's integrated payment processing, we ensure we automatically collect payments from our customers and we receive alerts if a customer's credit card no longer works. I don't have to chase my customers in order to get paid and I can just focus on improving my clients' health and fitness."

—John Hallett, Rocky Mountain Self Defense

Your software solution absolutely must make it easy for your students to pay you. Simply put, if it's not easy for them to do so, they will be more likely cancel their membership, maybe even moving to another gym. And intuitively, this makes sense. If payments are automatic, the monthly decision point doesn't exist. But if a student needs to swipe their card at your counter each month, they will unintentionally re-evaluate the benefits gained by the cost of their membership each and every time they hand you their credit card.

> *A recent study by Fiserv found that there is an average of 15% less churn when a customer utilizes automatic payments with electronic billing. For a gym with fifty clients and an average bill of $100 monthly, that amounts to $750 in monthly revenue with automatic payments. (Aspen Marketing Services, 2010)*

While you may need a payment processing option, you also likely can't afford to spend a lot in getting such a system in place. You need a payment processing option that is affordable for you. Unfortunately, some solutions are more expensive than others, especially in regards to processing fees. For example, if you've had early success with a solution like PayPal, you'll likely need to reevaluate the cost-effectiveness of this solution in the long run as your gym or studio grows. Studies show that once you have more than fifteen members, a payment processor like PayPal is no longer the best choice as it becomes cost prohibitive. Instead, you need a solution that will handle your business growth in a way that makes sense.
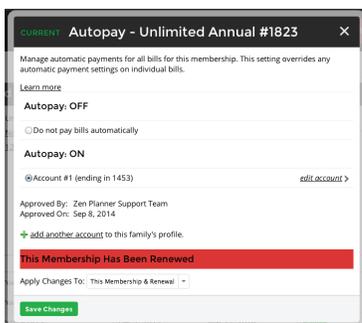
By utilizing an automatic payment processing system, you'll effortlessly grow your business and have more time to share your love of fitness with your clients.

*"Zen Planner lets us keep in touch with our members on
a regular basis, which improves member retention."*

—Steve Hartle, Backcountry CrossFit

A good software solution will make it easy for you to automate your daily business emails. This eliminates the need for you to sort through endless spreadsheets and take desperate measures to convey important messages to your students. Email automations should be integrated with your system so that they can be easily driven by all of the important member information you already have for your clients. For instance, automations will remind your clients when they need to pay their membership dues, encourage your students to take a new class or try a new program, and direct your team to reach out to members who need a little extra attention.

Email automations help you with your ever-important marketing needs. With fitness businesses popping up on each and every city block, business owners need to stay ahead of the pack with great marketing strategies. By using email automations, you can effortlessly reach out to students who failed to join your gym after signing up for a trial membership. You can also use automations to maintain contact with members who left your gym or needed to freeze their memberships. This also works for you when you capture prospects by allowing your web visitors to "request more information."

Quick Tip: Automated Marketing and Member Nurturing You Can Use

Problem: Your member hasn't checked in during the last two weeks.
Solution: Automate an email that checks in on them and tells them that you miss them.

Problem: You're looking for ways to tell your members they matter to you.
Solution: Automatically send an email that wishes them happy birthday or anniversary.

Problem: You're always looking for ways to encourage or applaud your members.
Solution: Congratulate the member via an email that notes improvements in body composition, performance and/or continued attendance.

"Zen Planner makes all of the admin and website work easy, leaving me a lot more time to train our students."

—Steve Milles, Five Points Academy

A great software solution should provide basic website tools and functionality so your customers can interact with you via the website you've already built. If you already have a great website, then your software should be able to easily integrate with it. This allows you to enhance your website with key tools and features like calendars and prospect forms. When evaluating fitness business software, you should expect this functionality and should not be required to pay extra for it.
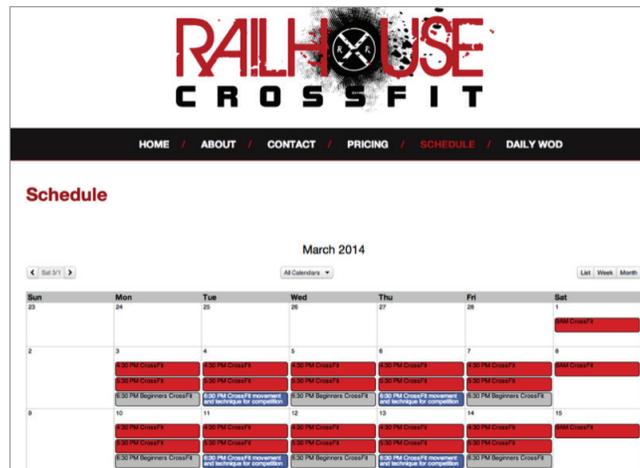
Zen Planner's calendar is integrated into Railhouse CrossFit's website. By clicking into a specific class, a student has the opportunity to log in or sign up for a new membership.

Can you easily get a snapshot of your business?

"Zen Planner has not only allowed us to make more money but to better understand where that money is coming from."

—Tim Thackery, CrossFit High Voltage

Can you easily get a snapshot of how your business is performing? Relying on spreadsheets to track all your important business and client information can become overwhelming fast. You need to be able to easily run reports and perform functions that you simply can't do using spreadsheets as your business platform. Reports that allow you to analyze your membership base, monitor member attendance, and track referral sources all take you to the next level and help you achieve so much more than you could without a software solution.

Quick Tip: Metrics You Need to Know

Financial
- Revenue
- Revenue per client
- Past due payments

Membership
- Conversion
- Customer trends
- Prospect status
- Retention

Attendance
- Past attendance
- Missed classes

With easy to run reports like this profit and loss statement, Zen Planner makes it simple for you monitor your business performance.

"We use Zen Planner to track individual athlete performance so that we can see changes over time."

—Skip Morrison, Front Range CrossFit

If you are a fitness business owner, you're passionate about helping your members transform their lives and enjoy better health. Whether it's functional movement, strength, or flexibility, you're providing the coaching needed for your clients to achieve their fitness goals. Because of this, you should have a software system that supports you by giving you the ability to create custom workouts or skills tests that can be used for tracking each client's progress toward their goals.
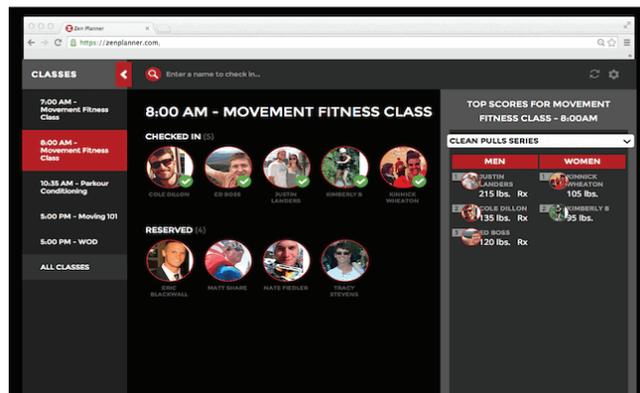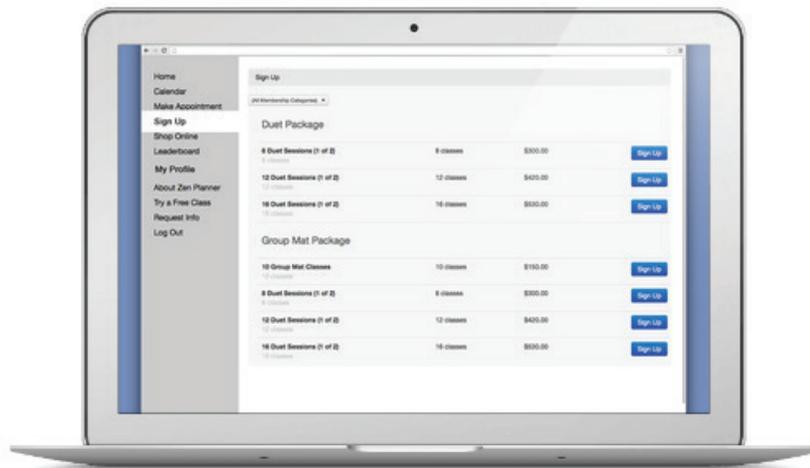

Zen Planner enables you and your members to track workout results.

"Our members tell us that Zen Planner is super easy to use."

—Mark Montoya, Factory X

Make it easy for your members to register for a class with online reservations.

You members expect a certain level of self-service when it comes to scheduling classes and buying memberships. They want to be able to go online, see your schedule, and determine on a day-to-day basis which of your classes best fits their needs. Members also want to be able to sign up for special workshops and programs online. Fitness business owners need to be sure all of these things are easy to do. For that reason, ease of use for your members is a top priority. If a system is too complex or difficult to navigate, members will become frustrated and eventually begin considering a move to another gym.

"Zen Planner has transformed our business."

—Josh Newman, CrossFit NYC

An alert is a notification that something is not working correctly or an action needs to be taken. This is much the same as getting a notification on your iPhone telling you that you have a meeting in 5 minutes. Alerts let you keep you focused on what is important for your business.

One way you can use alerts is when you are handling payments. Ideally, you'll automate all your member's payments, but an alert would be beneficial if a payment doesn't go through correctly. Additionally, if someone has a membership that is expiring in the next month, you may want to be "alerted" so that you can proactively show that client the improvements they have made over a specific period of time. Then, you can inspire them to renew their membership and begin setting new goals. This type of tool keeps you proactively in front of your business rather than reacting after something goes off track.

You can also use system alerts to communicate with your staff. For instance, if you have a new prospect coming in, you can let the team know about specific needs or concerns to look out for when caring for that student. Likewise, if payroll is due to be processed, you can remind your team to enter hours worked or the number of classes taught.
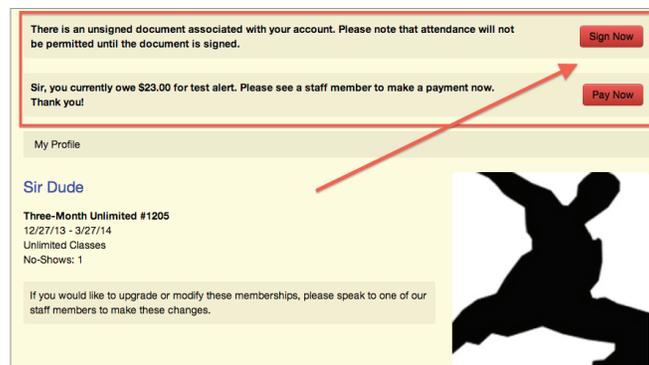
System alerts can automatically let your members know when a payment is missed or if you need additional information from them.

"One word about Zen Planner support? Amazing!"

—Jennifer Searles, THE WORKS Personal Training

Make sure your software system offers support articles, along with a way to contact and speak to support staff if needed.

Customer service and support are arguably some of the most important factors to consider when selecting a software solution. We all know the positive impact good service makes. Especially when the customer service you deliver completely relies on the support and service you receive from one of your vendors. A worst-case scenario can ultimately mean the loss of business for you. Conversely, knowing you can reach a team of dedicated and knowledgeable people, who genuinely care about your business, absolutely makes a world of difference. In other words, do not settle for a software solution that provides mediocre support and service.

Summary

Making the decision to adopt a fitness business software solution can be one of the best decisions you will ever make for the long-term health and success of your business. However, being sure to select a system that is right for you and your members is key to your success. An easy way to begin this process is by considering the critical features you'll need to manage and grow your business, as outlined in this e-book. If you want additional advice or information, we always welcome you to reach out to one of our knowledgeable software sales specialists. Our team is made up of passionate fitness enthusiasts who understand what it takes for you to easily grow your business, thereby allowing you more time and resources to change lives through fitness and wellness.

About Zen Planner

Zen Planner's all-in-one software gives you everything you need to turn your passion into a successful business. With integrated payment processing, scheduling, membership management, email and website templates, you have everything required to develop and grow the fitness community you worked so hard to create.

Not only does Zen Planner provide you with tools that enable you to grow, nurture and retain your members, it is remarkably easy to use. While some software providers require paid training over weeks and months, Zen Planner makes it easy to get up and running. Every customer gets three free one-hour sessions with a personal coach, so you can take advantage of Zen Planner's rich features right from the start.

Zen Planner is backed by a team of like-minded fitness fanatics. Our team is made up of affiliate gym competitors, yoga instructors, black belts, dancers and gym owners. When you do need help, we combine our software know-how with our expertise in your community to help you and your business thrive. Our passion for fitness and your success is apparent in our consistently high customer satisfaction score of 99%. And one out of every two customers refers another happy customer to us.

For more information on how Zen Planner can help you better manage your business, visit us on the web at http://zenplanner.com or give us a call toll-free at 866-541-3570. You can also sign up for a free trial at http://zenplanner.com/try-now

Sources:

Aspen Marketing Services (2010) Research Study on the Impact of Bill Presentment and Payment on Retention and Profitability for Qwest Communications.

Technology Institute (2014) PwC Global 100 Software Leaders. The growing importance of apps and services.