

5 TIPS TO REDUCE MEMBER ANXIETY

With clubs looking set to start reopening around the country in less than a month (hooray!), now is the time to start implementing the things your members will need to feel safe and less anxious around returning. Workplace wellness and dispute resolution expert, **Edwina Griffin**, shares these tips to help you minimise anxiety among your returning members.

TIP 1. Communicate with your members prior to opening

This is a really important step because it forewarns your members that things will look, feel and be different when they come back – which many of them will be expecting and hoping for. By eliminating the element of surprise, your members can adjust their expectations before they step through your doors. Items to address in your pre-opening communications should include:

- ▶ Your planned approach to sanitisation and hygiene
- ▶ New layout to comply with the restrictions
- ▶ Expansion of product offering including digital products
- ▶ Your revised codes of conduct for within the gym/facility based on government guidelines – and remember to share those guidelines
- ▶ Requests for members' signatures to confirm their agreement to follow the new codes of conduct while attending the gym/facility. This collaborative approach should help to reduce the likelihood of non-compliance amongst members which will also reduce the chance of conflict between members and staff over cleaning procedures.
- ▶ Any changes to your timetable and the reasons behind the changes.
- ▶ Depending on the demographic of the gym, you can also conduct surveys with your members to encourage their input into timetable changes. Additionally, you can conduct surveys to identify specific concerns members may have about returning to the gym and the level of anxiety around those concerns.



These important pre-opening communications can be delivered in various ways such as email, social media, telephone calls and printed materials in the gym/facility.

TIP 2. Continue with regular communications to your members

Your regular comms should continue in all forms – online and offline, and should typically include updates to any health department and government recommendations, and how your club/facility will be implementing them.

TIP 3. Listen to your staff

Have open and honest conversations with all your staff members, to ensure they feel safe and happy to be working back at your facility. Listen to any concerns and aim to address those concerns first, as any anxieties your staff have are likely to be felt by members too. It's critical that all staff feel confident and safe to ensure consistency and congruency in the delivery of in-club experiences so that your members also feel equally safe.

Your strategic vision is likely to have changed as a result of this situation. As such, you need to ensure all levels of management have absolute clarity on the strategic vision for the business. Harvard research has found that including middle management in the strategic vision is an important step to ensure greater success in change management and many change management projects fall down when this step is missed.

TIP 4. Train all staff prior to opening

Once middle management are on board with the new strategic vision, then there is the potential to encourage new career development for existing staff with training and mentoring programs under the new business model.

Training on the new business direction, business operations and communications to members to ensure a positive, congruent member experience. Role playing with all staff around the questions that members will ask, is a great idea. This will ensure that the answers are well-rehearsed and consistent throughout the team.

Businesses need to ensure staff are trained on hygiene and PPE procedures as required by the government such as the



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Safework Australia website or the online training offered by individual state health departments. With Worker's Compensation claims now allowing for COVID-19, it would be a good idea to have staff sign a contract to confirm their commitment to responsibly follow the new agreed protocols.

TIP 5. Make your commitment to cleaning visible

To ease anxiety among members, make sure you have all cleaning products and equipment visible throughout the club, with the cleaning schedule printed out and visible for all to see.

As Thomas Plummer mentioned in his article in this issue, trust will be a key factor for successfully attracting and retaining your members once lockdown restrictions ease. By following these tips you'll be well placed to ease some of the anxieties in your members (and staff), which will reaffirm their trust in your brand as one that will keep them safe. ♦