



Susanna Canon

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# LIVING THROUGH LOCKDOWN: A TRAINER'S PERSPECTIVE

Take a look at life during lockdown for Susanna Canon, a personal trainer running her own business in Queensland.



**B**eing a personal trainer during Lockdown 1.0 in the state of Queensland was probably the scariest yet most productive period of time within my company, and it highlighted a few sharable bites for business owners and operators within the fitness industry.

Despite financial and industry success plus being a leader within my field of specialised groups and disability support programs, if you had asked me to write something on business diversification and growth prior to COVID, I would have been the first to tell you that I was not an expert and deferred you to someone within my network far more qualified to assist with such things.

So what follows are four tips based on honest self-reflection, which can lead to real and immediate action and a successful build up of the only thing that mattered at the end of every day – my clients.



### TIP 1. Know your strengths

I have always been a relationship, engagement and retention guru – people first! So when forced to submit to restrictions that we could never have seen coming, let alone build forecasts for within a business that was on the cusp of major growth, my number one priority was communication.

In less than 24 hours, every client knew what was happening with his or her on-going training regime, despite the gym facilities being shut down. They also had my authentic and honest commitment that despite being just as anxious as they were about the unknowns we were heading into, together we would make it work. It was not an easy process and I had to swallow some bitter pride pills along the way.



### TIP 2. Diversify your delivery

In-home personal training under government-funded schemes such as the NDIS financially afforded me ability to take my next step for others that couldn't access gyms and other facilities where they usually trained. Despite popular opinion and literally the rest of the world doing this, Lockdown 1.0 was not UWCO's time to simply switch from face-to-face delivery into Zoom calls as a supplement – it simply does not work for everyone.

So in order to maintain the engagement of my existing clientele but also open up to a broader crowd of participation, I momentarily disrupted the

herd mentality and opted for a closed yet searchable Facebook group with free Facebook Live classes. This did not require clients to have a camera, but just themselves and a schedule tailored to the home environment. The word 'free' became a reality at this point and not some sales ploy, as this was platform was available to everyone, at zero cost for as long as the lockdown continued. The group swelled from a committed 25+ to over 210 in the final week before facilities in Queensland opened back up – daunting! But what did this group afford my business?



### TIP 3. Up-value your offering

Now that I had the attention of a group of like-minded and fully engaged individuals online, it allowed me to develop some income opportunities outside of the usual service delivery a personal trainer relies on (i.e., being there with your client whilst they exercise or train).

Throughout Lockdown 1.0 I was able to run three holistic lifestyle programs within the group with very little added time requirement on myself; therefore, maximising profit opportunity. To do this, all I needed was programming software with an app, a pre-packaged nutrition suite that I could tailor to still hold within my and my clients' health values; and finally, the courage to take a chance at elements of the fitness industry I had always resisted because they were "not my thing".



### TIP 4. Enable your business from the inside out

My website shows a diagrammatic representation of the multiple ways our clients engage with us, and this is largely a result of Lockdown 1.0. The fear of losing it all was exactly what I needed to elevate components of my business to the next level. The post-COVID version of my fitness business is completely online, with robust systems in place should isolation be required again. Our newly expanded client base trains and exercises confidently now, knowing that another lockdown will not entirely disrupt their health and wellness journey.

We did it, and you can do it too. Good luck. ♦