FITNESS, HEALTH AND WELLNESS

A playbook for personal trainers, studios, gyms and wellness services: memberships, retention, space and staying within your scope.

TYPE: PLAYBOOK REVIEWED: NOVEMBER 2026 TIME: 12 MINUTES LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE

AT A GLANCE

- Fitness and wellness businesses run on **memberships and repeat clients**. Keeping members matters more than signing them up.
- Start small: **personal training, outdoor classes, or rented studio time** before opening your own space.
- Know your **scope of practice**. Health-related advice, massage, nutrition counseling and medical services may need licenses.

WATCH OUT

Licensing rules apply to massage therapy, physical therapy, nutrition counseling, mental health services and many other wellness fields. Check your state's rules, and have clients sign waivers reviewed by a lawyer.

Business models

Model	Startup cost	Notes
Mobile or online personal training	Low	Train clients at home, in parks or online
Rent space in an existing gym or studio	Low to medium	Pay rent or a share of income
Boutique studio (yoga, cycling, boxing, dance)	Medium to high	Group classes, memberships, community
Full gym	High	Large space, equipment, staff
Wellness services (massage, coaching, recovery)	Varies	Often requires licensing

How the money works (illustrative, boutique studio)

Line	Share of revenue
Revenue (memberships, class packs, training, retail)	100%
Instructors and staff	25% to 40%
Rent and occupancy	15% to 25%
Software, marketing, insurance, utilities	12% to 20%
Equipment and maintenance	3% to 6%
Profit before owner pay	**Often 10% to 25%**

Memberships and retention

> EXAMPLE
>
> **Andrea's** boxing studio has **180 members** at **$149 a month**: about **$26,800** in monthly recurring revenue. Monthly churn was **8%**, so she lost about 14 members a month. She added a 30-day onboarding plan with check-ins and a goal session. Churn fell to **5%**, saving about 5 members a month, worth about **$750** in monthly revenue that would otherwise have been lost.

Ways to keep members:

- A strong **first 30 days** with personal check-ins
- **Community**: challenges, events, member spotlights
- **Track attendance** and reach out when someone stops coming
- **Clear, fair cancellation policies**

Numbers to track

KPI	What it tells you
Active members and monthly recurring revenue	Size and stability
Monthly churn	Retention
Average visits per member	Engagement (low visits warn of cancellations)
Class fill rate	Schedule and demand
Trial-to-member conversion	Sales effectiveness
Revenue per square foot	Space efficiency

Funding

- Savings and equipment financing. See **R-07 Equipment Financing and Lines of Credit**.

- Pre-sold founding memberships before opening. See **I-06 Testing Your Idea Before Spending Big**.
- Microloans and community lenders. See **R-05 Microloans and Community Lenders**.
- Landlord buildout allowances. See **B-13 Renting Your First Space: Leases Explained (Main Street)**.

Ways to grow

- Online classes and hybrid memberships
- Corporate wellness programs. See **G-07 Landing Big Customers and Partners**.
- Retail: apparel, supplements (with care about claims), equipment
- Additional locations once one runs smoothly. See **G-04 Opening a Second Location**.

Common mistakes

- **Opening a large space before building a client base**
- **Focusing on new sign-ups and ignoring churn**
- **Working outside your license or scope**
- **No waivers or insurance**
- **Making health claims** you can't support

Launch checklist

- ☐ Confirm certifications and any licenses for your services
- ☐ Start with clients before committing to a big space
- ☐ Sell founding memberships
- ☐ Set up booking, payments and attendance tracking
- ☐ Get liability insurance and lawyer-reviewed waivers
- ☐ Plan a 30-day onboarding for new members

Where to go next

- **M-09 Unit Economics: What Each Customer Is Worth**
- **L-11 Customer Service That Brings People Back**
- **B-06 Business Insurance Basics**

IMPORTANT
This guide is general education from the Project Underdogs Founder Library. It is not legal, tax, accounting, immigration or investment advice, and it is not an offer of investment or a promise of funding. Figures are general examples and ranges, not quotes. Rules change and every business is different, so check your situation with a qualified professional. Full terms: LIB-03 Disclaimer and Terms of Use.