



How to start your own fitness business

Our complete guide to starting your own sports and leisure business, from creating a business plan to top marketing tips.

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**At Protectivity, we support
thousands of individuals and
organisations in the fitness
industry every year.**

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1

Introduction

Starting your own business can seem like a mammoth task, but with the right amount of planning and foresight, you can give yourself the best chance of success.

The UK is becoming more and more health focused, with many turning to fitness professionals to help improve their wellbeing. Therefore it's no surprise that a career in the leisure industry is a popular one.

Whether as a personal trainer, sports coach or yoga instructor, running your own fitness business can be a rewarding, and ultimately profitable enterprise.

But, with many steps to take and hurdles to overcome, setting out on the right path can be the difference between success and failure. Our in-depth guide aims to give you a basic understanding of the considerations you need to make along the way.

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Benefits of starting your own fitness business

In the UK, over 660,000 new businesses are created every year. Some will be successful, others won't. With careful planning and consideration of the potential bumps in the road, you can put yourself in a good spot to succeed.

Starting a personal training or sports coaching business can be fairly straightforward, if you have the right qualifications. But it's not just the ease of getting off the ground that makes this such an attractive proposition.

There are a range of benefits to setting up your own fitness business



- **Flexibility** – As a self-employed personal trainer or sports coach, you control when you work and for how long, giving flexibility to decide your own hours and schedule.



- **It's Rewarding** – One-third of Protectivity customers said that the major reason for starting a career in the fitness industry was for the feeling of achievement when helping a client reach their goals.



- **You Can Stay Active** – Naturally if you are starting a fitness business, it's likely you like to stay fit yourself. By becoming a personal trainer, for example, you would need to keep yourself in good shape too.



- **Become Your Own Boss**– You control the direction in which your business goes. You choose what to specialise in, how you advertise, when to work, and ultimately, whether it is a success or failure.



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What services will you offer?

There are a number of different activities and services you could offer to potential clients, each with a different set of requirements.

Deciding on the activities you will be coaching will come down to a range of factors, from your expertise level to the amount of competition in the area.



Personal Training – One-on-one personal training is by far the most popular option for Protectivity customers, with 60% saying they operate by providing plans, fitness tuition and coaching to individuals.



Boot Camps – Sometimes, it is better financially to offer group work-out sessions such as boot camps. If you have a space where you can operate, often this can deliver more income in a set period of time.



Specialist Instructor – Whether you choose to specialise in yoga, aerobics or zumba, focusing on one niche in the fitness industry can be a profitable way to stand out in an often crowded marketplace.



Nutritionist – As well as guiding clients to their fitness goals, helping them achieve a good diet can be an option. To be a nutritionist, you need to be aware of the qualifications required to offer such advice.

There is, of course, the option to combine two or more of these activities within your business. In fact, 70% of Protectivity customers currently offer more than one different fitness-based service.

“Great service. Very easy and efficient. I’ve been with Protectivity for seven years and I’m extremely pleased with them.”

- Deborah, February 2019



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Creating your business plan

Even before you have chosen exactly what activities you are going to specialise in, it's a good idea to put together a business plan. This will form the backbone of your business and outline what you are going to offer, why you are choosing this specialty and how you will execute your ideas.

Having this in place will ensure that each decision you make will be for a reason, rather than taking unnecessary risks and making it up as you go along.

Consider the following:

What are your objectives? Think about where in the market you see your business sitting? Does it fill a void in the market and address a need of local consumers? Perhaps you are looking to offer something different to what is already on the market.

Is there a demand? If your local area doesn't have a wealth of people looking for fitness coaching or personal training, then why start up a business in the area? You can get an idea of the local demand by creating a Google Adwords account and investigating the number of searches in your region, or by speaking to friends or asking local groups on Facebook, for example.

What's the competition like? Who else is out there in your target space? Investigate what is already on offer, both in terms of price and service. You will need to distinguish yourself from existing businesses.

What are your USPs? Having a Unique Selling Proposition determines why your company is a better option than others. Think about whether you can provide a more personal service, do you want to offer discounts or provide a free gift? Maybe you will be price-driven and deliver the cheapest service of your kind on the local market.

Having a clear idea about the direction your business will go can help to plan for the future.

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Types of business set-ups

There are a number of different ways you can operate your business, each with different responsibilities and considerations for the owner.

The taxes you have to pay, and the financial overheads associated can vary depending on how you are set up, so is a big decision with your business's future in mind.



Sole trader: You are operating on a self-employed basis, working for yourself and no one else, with no members of staff. You take care of everything from creating the training plans, delivering the service, marketing, taxes and administration. A good option if you want to retain complete control of your business, but the responsibilities can add up.



Limited company: As a limited company, the business is treated as a separate entity to yourself. Therefore any legal liability that the business faces, will be on the company itself, rather than it's directors as individuals.

It is worth bearing in mind that it is possible that your business could change from one type of set-up to another in its lifetime.

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Thinking about finances

Essentially, the vast majority of businesses are set up with the sole aim to make money. Running your own fitness business may have other benefits, but it is likely that the provision of revenue is to be your main concern. Here are a number of things to consider when it comes to finances.

What will you charge?

Deciding on how much you will charge potential clients comes back to your business plan and the market research you carried out. The amount of money someone will be willing to pay you will vary depending on the services they are asking for and the area in which they live. It's worth investigating what your competition are charging for similar services.

Consider your outgoings

The money that you spend running your business will also vary depending on your size and specialty. You may have to purchase expensive pieces of gym kit, maybe you'll need to pay to hire a sports hall, and maybe you'll have a big advertising budget. Just remember to take everything into account.

Contingency plans

Even the most organised business owner can come unstuck sometimes. It is worth dedicating some money to go into a contingency fund. That way, if something unexpected were to go wrong, a sudden downturn in business perhaps, your business finances may not suffer too much.

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Qualifications and learning

It's highly likely that whatever activities and services you offer, you will be required to undertake some form of training and obtain a number of qualifications.

Not only will holding a separate qualification in the subject help you deliver your training within your professional limitations, but it could also add kudos to you as a trainer.

Qualifications needed

Which qualifications you need will depend on which services you are offering. As a Personal Trainer you will need to achieve a Level 3 Diploma in Fitness Instruction and Personal Training to meet the requirements of many insurance providers.

It's best to seek out a course that is nationally accredited and REPs approved to not only ensure you are covered by your insurance, but to also hold more sway with your potential clients.

If you are offering more than just personal training sessions, it's worth investigating the wide range of courses out there that specialise in specific training methods, from aerobics to boot camps to aqua zumba.

Ultimately, qualifications are not only needed when operating a fitness business, they can also be a massive help when it comes to attracting customers.

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Marketing your business

Once your business is set up, it's time to market it to your potential customers. 20% of start-ups don't make it through their first year, so having a good plan on how you will attract customers is vital.

There are so many ways to get your business in front of people, so consider a range of potential avenues to go down.

8a

Digital marketing

Online advertising is a great way to get your name out there. That could be by setting up your own website, creating a dedicated Facebook page or by sharing your services with local groups on social media.

Spending some money advertising on Facebook could be one avenue to investigate. While nearly half of all Protectivity-protected personal trainers say they do some form of paid advertising, less than a quarter use Facebook's advertising software.



Facebook Advertising offers personal trainers, fitness instructors and sports coaches the opportunity to specifically target those potential customers in their area who are more likely to be looking for their services.

A nominal spend and some creativity could be all it needs for your business profile to start snowballing.

8b

Traditional methods

Although it is wise to investigate the power of online media, sometimes the more traditional methods are the best.

Not all businesses will thrive off the back of more modern marketing techniques, so some more classic approaches are worth investigating.



Hand out flyers in your town centre, ask to display some leaflets in your local gym or sports shop, or simply ask your current customers to recommend you.

Most people will trust a business more if they are recommended to them by an acquaintance, so encouraging them to spread the word is definitely in your interest.

A 'Refer A Friend' discount or scheme is well worth investigating. If a current customer recommends you to a friend, and they sign up, consider running a monthly prize draw or give them discounts for their help in spreading the word.

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Public Liability

Insurance cover is a hugely important aspect of running a business. Operate while unprotected and you could find yourself in a tricky situation if things go wrong.

Public Liability and Professional Indemnity are likely to be the two main insurance benefits you need to consider when setting up a fitness business.

What your insurance can cover

Public Liability will protect you if a client, or any other member of the public was to be injured by you or your business's actions. For example, if you fail to correctly set up a weight machine which causes injury to a client, you could be subject to legal action.

In the event your business is sued, Public Liability will ensure that the costs associated with defending yourself in court and any subsequent compensation settlement will be covered by your insurance policy.

With your business dealing with the health and fitness of your clients, it's worth considering what would happen if they were to be hurt because of advice you give.

For example, Professional Liability would cover you if you explained to a client how to do a certain exercise. If they were then to get injured and claim that you told them to perform it in an incorrect manner, they could choose to take legal action. In this instance, you would be covered.



Protectivity also include £250 worth of equipment cover as standard on all Personal Trainer Insurance policies, ensuring you are protected against damage, loss or theft of the items you rely on to run your business.

There's also the option to include Personal Accident protection on your policy which would safeguard you and your finances if you were to be seriously injured at work and unable to train your clients.

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Next steps

The opportunity to start your business in the fitness industry is a truly exciting idea for many people, especially those who love to keep in shape themselves.

And with the foundations in place, you're almost ready to enter the personal training or coaching world.

- **Conduct some market research** – know what businesses are around and where you can spot a gap in the market.
- **Speak to others in the industry** – while they may eventually be your business rivals, there is no better person to speak to than someone who runs an enterprise similar to yours.
- **Draw up your business plan** – think about the services you want to offer, your USPs and your costings.
- **Take out a Personal Trainer Insurance policy** – things do go wrong, so protecting yourself and your business is vital.
- **Continue to learn** – investigate the range of courses and qualifications on offer. With every new idea comes a potential way for your business to stand out from the crowd.

About Protectivity

Protectivity have been providing insurance to niche businesses and enterprises for 25 years and are one of the UK's leading Personal Trainer Insurance providers. We aim to make the process of buying insurance quick easy and straightforward, with no confusing terms and conditions or clauses.

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