

Internship Experience Summary

For three years prior to beginning my internship at Mercy Fitness, I was a member of their Acceleration program. I trained there for three summers in preparation for football at Cornell. The time I spent there allowed me to see things from the outside looking in. I knew what Mercy Fitness had to offer and got to know quite a few people that were a part of the fitness center.

The first two blocks of this year I spent working on the inside of Mercy Fitness and it really opened my eyes to how everything comes together. My prior experience as a member of the fitness center and the opportunity I had in front of me was something I was really looking forward to.

The intern position that I held was one that Mercy had only used once before. So prior to the start of first block, I spent a lot of time talking with my supervisors about what types of things I would like to accomplish and what things they had in mind for me.

The first project they had in mind for me was to be a secret shopper. I was going to go around to different sports enhancement facilities in the area and inquire about the different programs and then compare them to Mercy's Acceleration program. Due to an injury I suffered two days before the internship began, I was unable to do the secret shopping.

At the time I was beginning my internship, Mercy was beginning a number of marketing schemes to try an increase membership in all the programs and services they offered. Because of my "lack of mobility," my supervisors felt I would be able to help with promoting the new marketing ideas. These ideas ranged from an informative folder detailing all the services offered at Mercy, discounts for new members, refer a friend discount program, free trial workout with Acceleration and promotional giveaways for massage therapy.

When these new promotional ideas were brought up, I was asked to help create fliers, brochures, coupons and ways to log the use of the different ideas by the members. The benefit I gained from this was that I was able to see how a fitness center identifies a need, in this case a need for increased membership, and targets ways to fulfill these needs. In order for these promotions to reach their full potential, a target audience had to be identified and ways to appeal to this audience must be effective. Certain services offered at Mercy are often geared toward different age groups, though not always the case. Being able to identify the overlap in target groups was very important in creating a successful marketing plan.

The biggest promotional program I was involved in was with the Acceleration program. Acceleration generates a large amount of revenue for Mercy and increasing membership in this area was a big priority. The new ideas for adding athletes to the program was to either reach the athletes directly or through their coaches.

The first way involved cold-calling local high school and club coaches. A majority of my time was spent on the phone contacting coaches and explaining the benefits of the acceleration program and to offer free trial workouts to the athletes. Although most of the time, a one-on-one conversation rarely took place, we were able to at least put the idea of Acceleration into the coach's minds. Follow-up emails were then sent out to coaches that were contacted.

Initially, we weren't having much success hearing back from the coaches and we felt that many of the athletes weren't being informed. The next step was to find a way to directly contact the athletes. Twice a week, the local paper publishes the local prep athlete statistical leaders in many different sports. With hundreds of names published every week, we compiled a database of the names and all the accomplishments and either sent a letter to their home or their respective schools. In this letter, we congratulated them on their recent success and explained how Acceleration could help improve their performances. We also talked about the refer-a-friend offer that for every new member they are able to bring into the program, they receive \$25 off their membership costs. By the time this new marketing plan took off, my internship was over and I was unable to see how effective this idea was.

Aside from promoting what Mercy Fitness had to offer, I was involved in other projects that made my time at Mercy more beneficial. Mercy has been in contact with a local shopping mall about beginning a morning mall-walking program offered to local residents. I was asked to research what it would take to begin a mall-walking program, from staffing needs to any costs associated with such a program.

Another project I was asked to help with was creating a comparison of costs, benefits, capabilities and requirements of installing a large rehabilitation pool. I was given many different brands and style of pools and asked to do side-by-side comparisons of each pool. Because this will be a very expensive project, every aspect of benefit vs. cost must be looked at. What I realized is that there are many things that can be overlooked when making these comparisons. After I completed what I thought was a thorough comparison, I sat down with the director of the fitness center, and she showed me that are many things that I failed to notice. These details ranged from maintenance requirements, warranty details, delivery costs and set-up requirements.

So what did I really benefit from my experience at Mercy Fitness? There is more than what meets the eye. As a member of the fitness center, I was able to see all the great things that were available for the members. What I failed to notice was just what it takes to put together a successful fitness facility. The planning, analysis, preparation and research that go into every idea is much more than I ever expected. By no means am I ready to go take on the role of running a fitness facility, but I am now better prepared to take the steps towards that type of career.