

Boutique Gyms and Drop-in Classes: Good or Bad?

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Travel enough, or jump around from gym to gym, and you'll hear the topic of drop-ins come up a lot. In a ClassPass era, drop-in seems in danger of becoming the norm instead of the rarity, and boutique gyms can be particularly vulnerable to the downsides.

What is a Drop-In?

Most boutique gyms have a set clientele, small classes, and membership fees that cover monthly batches of workouts or packages that allow a set number of workouts per bundle. Many offer both options - multi-session packages and monthly memberships - with the monthly clients getting extra perks.

Drop-Ins can be new to town, trying the competition, visiting with a friend, or trying to maintain their workout regimen while traveling or on vacation. Drop-Ins can bring in extra revenue, but they can also complicate your regular routine and disrupt established classes with regular members.

How to Handle Drop-In Classes

If you run a boutique studio in a certain discipline such as CrossFit, Spin classes, or other highly specialized routines, a partnership with similar gyms allowing a drop-in policy that is reciprocal may be a good idea. In most cases, a member from one gym is allowed to drop-in if class size permits as long as they can show their membership card from their home gym and they wear a tee-shirt from their gym showing they are dedicated to the discipline.

You can also make extra revenue off of low attendance classes by advertising a drop-in rate that is high enough to keep your regulars from feeling cheated (a feeling that ClassPass often evokes), and that demands respect from the drop-in. Low drop-in rates can bring in more clients, but they may not be the kind of clients you really want and they are unlikely to stay long term.

If you end up with an out of towners who knows they will only be in the area for a specified time, and they want to drop-in, sit down and discuss options. If they are only in town for a few days, offer them a free class or two if they buy and wear a tee-shirt, so they fit in with your existing clientele.

For those in town for a few weeks or months, consider offering a special package that allows them to drop in for specified classes that you know won't be at capacity. You could end up with a great review from a happy drop-in, but you don't want to bump a regular out of their spot.

Another Option - No Drop-Ins Allowed

Some boutique gyms find that it makes more sense not to allow drop-ins at all - especially those with a strong regular client base on monthly membership plans and classes that stay fairly filled up. The regulars will appreciate that the club is kept exclusive, with only those serious about the routines signing up for full membership perks.

If you do allow drop-ins, it's just another reason in a long list of reasons to update your [trainer insurance](#) policy to cover any chance of an over enthusiastic out-of-towner pulling a muscle trying to show off, or a newbie overextending during a new exercise!