

Research on Development and Management of Coaches in Commercial Fitness Clubs

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Abstract: The article analyzed the current supply and management of coaches in commercial fitness clubs and found out the major causes for the high turnover rate of coaches are the unstandardized supply channel and outdated management methods. Making coach resources the subject of study, the article introduces the human resources management philosophy and explores the development and management of coaches in commercial fitness clubs by applying theoretical knowledge of human resources management. The article concludes that four measures can be taken to keep the sustainable development of commercial fitness clubs, i.e. a) Standardize recruitment criteria; b) Establish good coach training system; c) Make good career plan for coaches and pursue harmonious development of coaches and fitness clubs; d) Establish effective appraisal and incentive mechanism; Improve service quality.

Key words: Commercial fitness club; Human resources management; Coach; Development and management

1 Introduction

By referring to the research materials of recent years, it is found that for commercial fitness club, the studies of both at home and abroad mainly focus on the management of the club, most of which involve the club's facilities, investment project, propaganda way, brand effect. It is reported that domestic and foreign research data are less in the development and management of commercial fitness club coaches. Foreign commercial health club started earlier than China, and it places great emphasis on human resources development. In order to retain the excellent coaches, foreign health club not only provide online training and different practice opportunity for the coaches, but also make the plan of stock rights welfare. On the contrary, domestic health clubs simply research on the coaches' skill standard, professional accomplishment and training mechanism. Coach is considered as one who only draws up the training program there. He directs the body builder to do exercise, establishes placatory relationship with the body builder, and explains the problems about health and diet. For a time, it neglects the coaches' value pursuit and fails to research the coach management as a part of human resources management. The core of human resources management is man. So, for the purpose of club development, it should connect the man's subjective initiative with the long-term development of the enterprise, and make the coaches feel a sense of belonging and a sense of responsibility and, arouse the coaches' own value pursuit.

Commercial fitness clubs refer to those business organizations that provide training and exercise facilities for their members. The difference between commercial fitness clubs and the specialized clubs is that the former is an enterprise that provides sport-related services.^[1]Coaches play a vital role in the service quality of a fitness club. Therefore, the profitability of the club is largely related to the coaches. Currently, the unstandardized training channels of coaches and the lack of qualified coaches have caused the overall low level of coaches. Meanwhile, the outdated management philosophy and method make it a hidden rule that fitness clubs poach coaches from each other. It is also very common for coaches to "sell" training courses without authorization. How to change the high turnover rate and talent drain as well as the proper management of coaches has become a bottleneck problem in the sustainable development of commercial fitness clubs, which should be solved quickly. This paper explores effective measures of managing the coaches in commercial fitness clubs by introducing the people-oriented management philosophy and taking reference to the relevant knowledge in human resources development and management.

According to the situation above, the article aims at analysing effective measures of development and management of coaches in commercial fitness clubs. The article takes some coaches of commercial fitness club in Wuhan into research. With the methods of documentary reference, questionnaire investigation, statistics and logic analysis. The article is based on resources and current management of coaches in commercial fitness clubs, analyses lagged behind management philosophy, out dated

management methods and insufficient training mechanism of coach resources have limited the subjective activity of the coaches and the development of clubs. The article introduces the human resources management philosophy and points out that the development and management of coaches should adopt the people-oriented management. A fine coach training system should be established by building a standardized recruitment criteria. Service provided by coaches should be improved by establishing effective appraisal and incentive mechanism. Clubs should consider personal development in order to arouse the enthusiasm and creativity of the coaches, clubs should also let their coaches to take part in its running and management, which will finally bring them both harmonious development.

2 Human resource management concept

The new economic era, wealth appreciation mainly comes from knowledge creation of the talents, the core competition lies in possession and development on human resources. Human resources is the first resource in modern society, which is the most important thing in the process of management. The scientific development outlook requires human resources management to strengthen the "people-oriented" concept which demands to take human as the starting point and the objective in all work, constantly meets the various demands of the people and promote the all-round development of the people in which to respect and protect the fundamental rights of people, produces natural environment and living conditions that is good for people's development which includes construction of impartial social environment, judicial system and reasonable political freedom to inspire people's enthusiasm and creativity by the ways of benefits encouragement, right incentive, responsibility motivation, culture inspiration.^[2] Therefore, it can be said that the core of Human resources management is to improve person's ability and to develop human resources.

Human resources are the most valuable resources in the current society. Under the background of knowledge economy and globalization, the key questions faced by all enterprises are how to attract, explore, train and retain talents. In the operation of fitness clubs, coaches are the ones that interact with customers directly and frequently. They are the "face" of the clubs, and their professionalism is vital to the safety and exercise results of the customers as well as to building the customers' confidence and remain their interest in exercising. Therefore, the exploitation of coach resources is directly related to the operation of the clubs and growth potential. Optimizing the coach resources is the key to solve the imbalanced development of "hardware" and "software" of fitness clubs, and also the main reason why this article makes it a subject to study thoroughly.

3 Current Situation of Coach Resources in Commercial Fitness Clubs

3.1 Supply channels of coaches in commercial fitness clubs

At the moment, most coaches in fitness clubs were retired athletes, teachers and students from sports universities and art schools, fitness enthusiasts and graduates from short-term training courses in fitness clubs. The author has conducted a survey with 79 coaches in 12 fitness clubs in Wuhan. The supply channel as table 1

Table 1 The Survey with the Supply of Coaches in Fitness in Wuhan

Supply channel	Retired athletes	Sports university	Dancing and art schools	Club members	Sports and dance enthusiasts	Total
Number	8	40	11	12	8	79
Percentage	10.1%	50.7%	13.9%	15.2%	10.1%	100%

From table 1, It shows that over 60% of coaches are retired athletes and teachers and students from sports universities. They have studied the sports theories systematically with rich experience and are able to guide exercises scientifically. However, more and more professional dancers also choose to be coaches as there is a strong demand for diverse and trendy training programs. Ex-members of the clubs as well as sports and dance enthusiasts account for more than 30% of the coaches. Before they become professional coaches, they only take less-than-one-month training courses at the expense of RMB 4,000 to RMB 5,000 to get the certificate. The "fast-food" training system will not equip them with sufficient sports knowledge. Most of them can only accumulate their experience while working and they can hardly have any innovation in their teaching.

3.2 Current coach management status in commercial fitness clubs

Firstly, fitness clubs are not fully conscious of the importance of managing the coaches, which are reflected in three aspects: incomplete recruitment mechanism, unstandardized recruitment process and unreasonable recruitment criteria. Fitness clubs have 100% say in hiring the coaches they like. However,

most of the clubs ask the candidates to give trial lessons to their members on the spot and hire those good-looking candidates that can teach well. Some clubs hire coaches without any qualifications simply because they ask for less pay and the clubs can cut down their cost. Some even simply hire their senior members to be coaches. All these show that fitness clubs in China has not attached great importance to the recruitment of coaches and their management philosophy is far lagged behind.

Secondly, the management methods of coaches are out dated. Most fitness clubs do not have specialized personnel to manage the coaches but appoint senior coaches to supervise the other coaches. However, the senior coaches can only take simple tasks such as scheduling training courses, making adjustment to schedule and recording the attendance. They are not able to use scientific theories to manage the coaches with people-oriented philosophy, not even to mention to arrange training courses for coaches in line with the clubs' long-term goal. Therefore, the turnover rate of coaches is high and the conflict between clubs and coaches are intensified.

Lastly, fitness clubs provides very few chances for coaches to further improve themselves. Only a couple of fitness clubs have established their internal training system due to the high turnover rate of coaches.

In conclusion, the current management status of coaches in fitness clubs can be summarized as: simplified and incomplete recruitment process, lack of effective measures in managing and retaining talents and insufficient training mechanism. Compared with the rapid enhancement of the "hardware", the management system of fitness clubs need more improvement, especially in managing the coaches, which has become a bottleneck problem that hinders the sustainable growth of the clubs and needs to be solved quickly.

4 Managerial Countermeasures in Coach Resources Development and Management

Fitness clubs should have their own principles in the development and management of coach resources by taking into consideration of their own strategic goal. Once the coaches join the clubs, their value and potential have to be fully explored as they are the valuable assets of the clubs and the core competencies of the clubs.

4.1 Standardized recruitment criteria

At the beginning of coach recruitment, fitness clubs should fully understand the importance of the recruitment process so as to recruit highly qualified and easy-to-manage coaches. Prior to the recruitment, fitness clubs should carefully study the coaches capital needed and the reserves needed, come out with a clear recruitment criteria. Certificates and diploma will not be the only determinant factor in the process. Fitness clubs should make their judgment by combining theory with practice. For example, a written test will help assess the theoretical knowledge of coaches, while a face-to-face interview will test the candidates' service consciousness and flexibility. Fitness clubs can even ask the candidates to make a customized fitness plan for their members on the spot. It is worth mentioning that during the recruitment process, fitness clubs should explain clearly to the candidates the growth space they can provide to coaches and fully respect the candidates' choice based on the people-oriented philosophy. It has to be borne in mind that the recruitment process is a two-way selection process for both fitness clubs and coaches.

4.2 Establishment of good coach training system

To provide training for employees is an effective way to enhance the human capital value of an enterprise and an important part of human resources management. Commercial fitness clubs should establish a regular and standardized coach training system to explore the potentials of the coaches. The training courses will keep the coaches abreast of the latest developments in the industry and provide more services for customers. By optimizing the coach resources, the competitiveness of fitness clubs will be greatly enhanced. Currently, there are three kinds of coach training modes among fitness clubs in China. The first is internal training courses provided by human resources department of fitness clubs, such as CSI-Bally Total Fitness, Nivana Fitness & SPA, etc. The second is to hire external specialists from various professional training organizations and auxiliary educational institutions to train their coaches. For example, Tera Wellness Club in Shanghai will hire lecturers from Institute for Systems Theory and Automatic Control (Germany) to train their coaches regularly. Some fitness clubs with a strong financial support will purchase advanced training courses from abroad and build their own internal training system. In this way, the clubs can not only improve the management of coach resources, but also provide coach training courses for other fitness clubs. On one hand, the high-quality training

system will inject “new blood” to the entire club and optimize the coach capital; on the other hand, it will also expand the revenue channels for fitness clubs and benefit the clubs economically. Megafit Fitness, Sport and Wellness is a good example for the third practice. Megafit has collaborated with the National Strength & Conditioning Association (NSCA) in the US and introduced the NSCA-CPT Personal Trainer Training Courses. Established in 1978, NSCA is the worldwide authority on strength and conditioning. It has more than 30,000 members and its personal trainer certificate is recognized by 52 countries worldwide. In China, it has also won recognition by the Chinese Olympic Committee and All-China Sports Federation.

4.3 Good career planning of coaches and harmonious development of coaches and fitness clubs

The process that employees set the goal for their career and the path to achieve the goal by taking into consideration of the need of both themselves and the employers is called career planning.^[3] Fitness clubs should help coaches with their career planning based on people-oriented philosophy and the sound development of coaches themselves so that the clubs and coaches can grow together. Coaches would show great commitment and make contribution to clubs if the management can satisfy the coaches' physical and social needs as well as other needs such as safety, respect and self-fulfillment.

4.4 Establishment of effective appraisal and incentive mechanism; Improvement of service quality

Appraisal and incentive mechanism are important components in the management of coaches. Effective appraisal mechanism will provide good support for senior management to make decisions related to coach resources, and also a good reference for reward allocation. Performance appraisal will also help find out the aspects that need to be improved so as to amend the training courses of coaches accordingly. Effective incentive mechanism will enhance coaches' enthusiasm to work. Fitness clubs should also regulate coaches behavior at work by giving incentives to good conduct and punish bad conduct, which will keep the consistency of the services coaches provide. The following five aspects can be used by fitness clubs to evaluate the performance of their coaches:

- (1) Mastering of latest industry standards and skills
- (2) Being client-oriented
- (3) Commitment to work
- (4) Team work
- (5) Resourcefulness and ability to solve problems^[4]

In the meantime, fitness clubs should establish an incentive system of good credibility and appeal. Apart from material rewards, clubs should also take other measures to inspire and maintain the enthusiasm of coaches so as to improve the service quality. Stock option is one of the effective incentive measures. It is advisable to allow good coaches to be minority shareholders so that they would feel that they are also owners of the club as their interest is closely related to the profitability of the club. Thus the coaches would actively take part in the operation of the clubs and expect to be rewarded accordingly. Those highly qualified good coaches can also be appointed as mentors in training other coaches and even in the management team of the club.

5 Conclusion

The diverse supply channels of commercial fitness clubs make the coaches rather a mixed bunch. The fitness clubs do not attach great importance to the recruitment of coaches, scientific management and investment in proper training, which leads to the low quality of coach resources. To solve the bottleneck problem that hinders the sustainable development, commercial fitness clubs should adopt the people-oriented management philosophy and let coaches make the best use of their potentials by strict recruitment process, regular training, scientific assessment and long-term incentive measures. Only by doing so can the clubs and coaches achieve the common goal of sound development.

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