



# HOW TO START A FITNESS STUDIO

Your powerhouse guide to **success**

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# Opening a fitness studio: your powerhouse guide to success

The boutique fitness industry has experienced some extraordinary shifts in recent years. After two years of lockdowns and restrictions, the future for studios is looking bright. However, the post-COVID landscape is a little different.

While fitness, health and wellbeing has never been more important, fitness consumer expectations have changed. Today, more than ever, members want to feel connected, safe and in control. And, if you don't respond to these needs, you'll struggle to get out of the starting gate.

Creating an exceptional member experience, from the very start, is the key ingredient to successfully opening your fitness studio. Based on this insight, this guide takes you through all the elements you need to address and all the ducks you need to line up - to launch a successful and sustainable fitness studio.





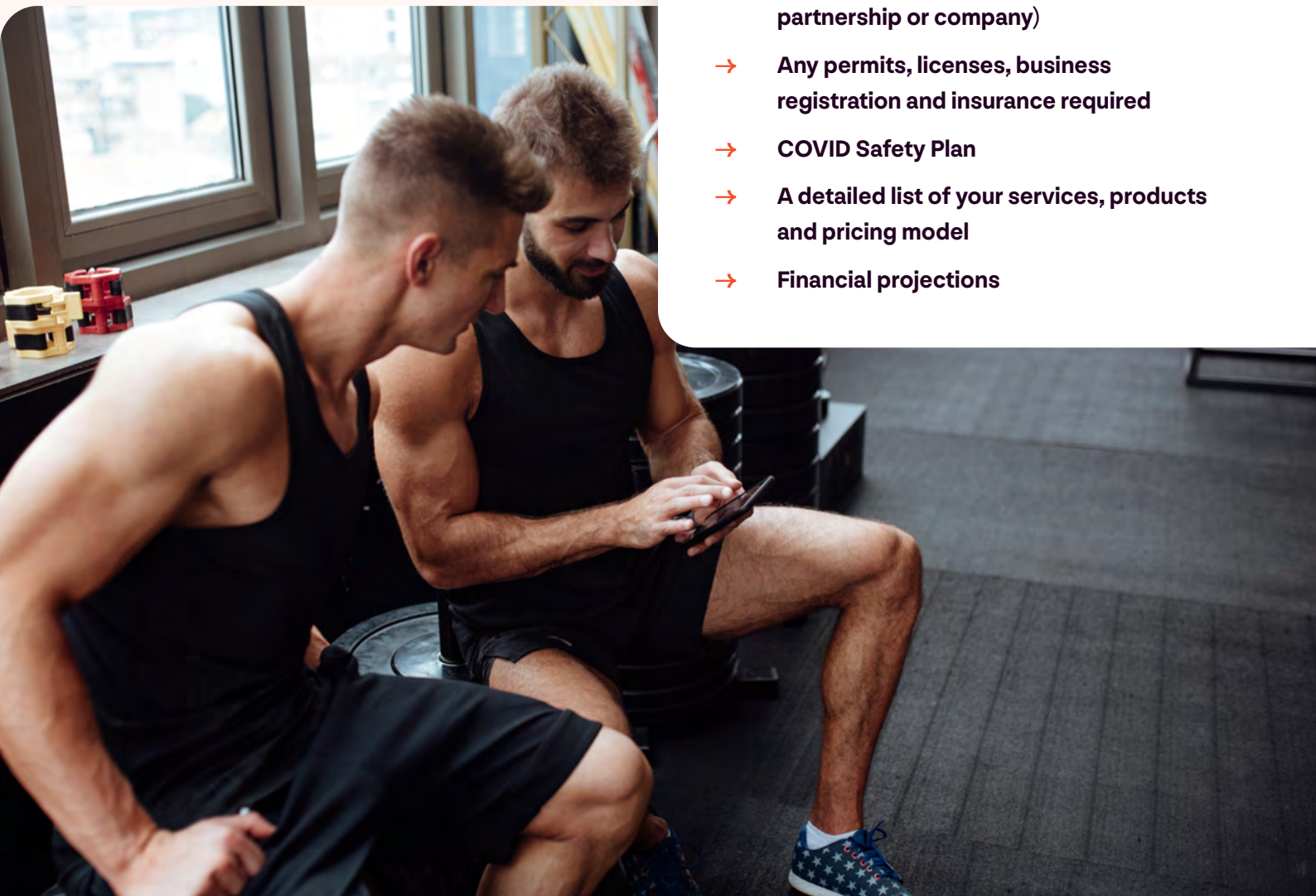
# START WITH A BUSINESS PLAN BOOTCAMP

**Developing a strategic business plan is the first thing you need to do before opening a fitness studio. It's your roadmap to business success.**

Keep it simple and straightforward - it needs to be a document that provides value (not overwhelm). Its purpose is to give your business direction, define your objectives and lay out how you'll achieve your goals.

Here's what you should include in your business plan:

- **Your business goals**
- **Your mission statement, long-term vision, brand identity, brand promise and how you'll differentiate your fitness studio from your competitors**
- **A company profile**
- **Market analysis, identifying your target audience**
- **Your business structure (sole trader, partnership or company)**
- **Any permits, licenses, business registration and insurance required**
- **COVID Safety Plan**
- **A detailed list of your services, products and pricing model**
- **Financial projections**



# LOCATION IS YOUR CORE STRENGTH

Deciding where to locate your fitness studio is a big decision. You have a range of competing factors to consider, such as market demand, visibility, foot traffic, parking, noise restrictions and the big one... budget.

## Market demand: are your ideal customers here?

Before deciding on the best place to set up your studio, it's important to first do your research. Look at the geographical and demographic data in your local area, specifically these factors:

- **The number of households**
- **The age range of residents**
- **The gender balance**
- **Family structure**
- **Average household income**

Once you've gathered and reviewed your data, there's one key question for you: is this where your customers are? If the answer is no, then you need to relook at your business strategy. If it's yes, then happy days - give location a big green tick!



## (Let's get) Physical Location

Next, let's look at physical location. Is it better to set up in a retail space, industrial unit or a place that gives you access to both indoor and outdoor training options? Here's our comparison breakdown:

### Setting up your studio in a retail premise

- PROS:**
- ✓ High visibility
  - ✓ More foot traffic
  - ✓ Convenient access

- CONS:**
- ✗ More expensive
  - ✗ Fewer parking spaces
  - ✗ Limited opportunity to expand
  - ✗ Potential noise restrictions

### Setting up your studio in an industrial premise

- PROS:**
- ✓ More space for less \$\$
  - ✓ More parking spaces
  - ✓ Often more flexibility to customise the space to suit your requirement
  - ✓ Potentially more outdoor space (giving you the flexibility to offer outdoor training)

- CONS:**
- ✗ Reduced visibility
  - ✗ Less foot traffic
  - ✗ Not as convenient for customers

# Think about what services your premises need to accommodate

[Recent research](#) conducted by the Xplor team found that **44% of survey respondents want their studio to include more wellness services**. Before deciding on a premises, assess whether you have the space to accommodate a nutritionist, massage therapist, sauna or even a juice bar?

While these services may not be in your budget now, it's important to look at future opportunities and make sure you have the space to expand.

Crowds are also a key consideration for fitness consumers, especially post-COVID. Now, more than ever, it's crucial to consider density and space within your premises. There are actually **two big questions you need to answer here**:

1

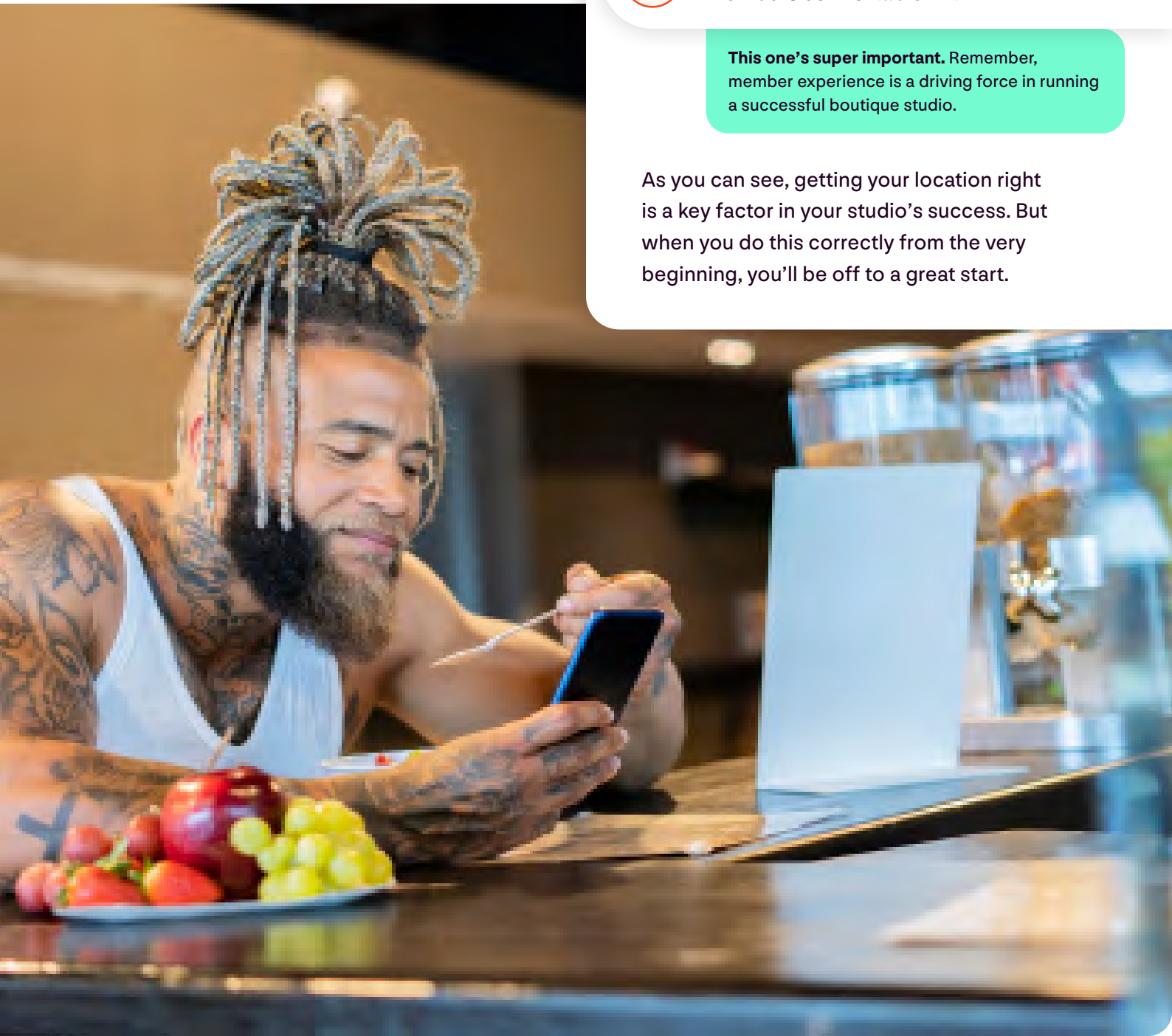
**What is the maximum number of people you can have in a space?**

2

**How many people in a space are your members comfortable with?**

**This one's super important.** Remember, member experience is a driving force in running a successful boutique studio.

As you can see, getting your location right is a key factor in your studio's success. But when you do this correctly from the very beginning, you'll be off to a great start.





# CRUNCH YOUR NUMBERS

The start-up costs for boutique fitness studios vary considerably.

This is why it's essential to understand your numbers and establish your financial goals before you start a studio. Questions you need to consider include:

- **What are your start-up costs?**
- **What are your ongoing operating expenses?**
- **Do you need to secure funding?**
- **How much will you charge per membership?**
- **Can you create supplemental revenue (think personal training, massage services, meal plans, etc)?**

You need to also understand that new fitness memberships are highly cyclical. For instance, memberships typically rise in January (hello New Year's Resolution to get fit) then drop off in the winter months. These membership peaks and troughs are important to factor into your financial projections (forecast of future revenue and expenses).

## Need to secure finance to open your fitness studio?

If you need to secure finance to open your studio, you will need a concise and strategic business plan (remember that business plan we were talking about earlier?).

This will help investors understand your business, including your goals and long-term vision. It also shows them that you've taken the time to assess the feasibility of your business.

## When it comes to equipment - choose quality over quantity

When opening a fitness studio, many business owners are restricted by budget. And, while cheap equipment may be a more attractive short-term option, in the long term it could cost you. Bad equipment is not only more expensive to maintain and replace, but it also increases the risk of injury for members. Seriously, equipment is not a cost you should cut corners on!

So, instead of trying to fill out your studio immediately, invest in the necessary equipment only. This strategy will pay off over the long term.

## Get your pricing on point

When it comes to pricing, we have two words for you. Flexibility and value.

When developing your pricing strategy, make sure you consider a range of membership options. We're talking monthly, annual, in-person, online or an onsite/digital combo. With each option set at different price points, this gives your members choice - which is something they really value. It could also be a great point of differentiation for your business.

Also important, are new member offers and promotions. Adding value or incentivising with a discount is a great way to attract new members. You also need to look at ways you can cross-sell and up-sell your services in the future.





# ACTIVATE A COVID SAFETY PLAN

[Our research](#) indicates that **53% of fitness consumers in Australia are concerned about the COVID risk in boutique fitness studios.** This means you need to go the extra mile to show new and potential members that their health and safety is your priority.

While in many states it's no longer essential to have a COVID-19 Safety Plan, it's imperative that potential members can see that you are proactive in keeping your studio clean and hygienic.

Before you open your doors, make sure you have the operational capacity to keep your studio sanitised. You also need to have the room to give members ample space to move, sweat and breathe.

# PLAY TO WIN: GET TO KNOW YOUR TARGET CUSTOMERS

We touched earlier on making sure you have a market in your local area that would be interested in your services. Now, let's take this a step further and talk about getting to know your potential customers. Aside from their geographical and demographic data, here are some questions you need to answer about your target market:

- **What do they value in a fitness membership?**
- **How has COVID affected the way they now work out?**
- **How do they see themselves working out in the future?**
- **What payment options do they prefer?**
- **What don't they like about other studios?**

Accessing these insights enables you to formulate an offer or promotion that your target market is unable to resist.

While it's important to get to know your niche, broader research suggests that fitness consumers are after:

- **More variety in their workouts**
- **Increased flexibility to start, stop, change and choose their wellbeing activities**
- **Financial flexibility, looking outside restrictive contracts and direct debit plans**
- **Fewer crowds, more space**
- **A personalised member experience, from go to whoa - where they are more than just a number**

**Getting to know your target market and what they value, is your key to being able to give them a holistic health, fitness and wellbeing experience.**





# TURBOCHARGE YOUR MARKETING... BEFORE YOU LAUNCH

As a start-up studio, you may not have a big budget for marketing. So, this is where it pays to be focused and strategic.

Start with creating a website. It doesn't need to be ultra-fancy - you're going for professional, welcoming and inclusive. Your focus is on the benefits you offer, the value you provide, and the difference you can make to people's lives.

Next, develop a standout introductory offer for new members, tailored to their needs (that you discovered from your research). This could include:

- **A free 7-day studio pass**
- **Free PT sessions**
- **New member giveaway**
- **Free nutritional session/meal plan**
- **Hosting a 6-week challenge**
- **Special lifetime rate for founding members**



Some ideas to help you promote your offer include:

- **Organic social media posts - be sure to select one or two channels where you can connect with your target audience**
- **Influencer marketing - collaborate with affiliated influencers to get people in your door**
- **Networking - join local business groups, offer to talk at events, etc**
- **Google and Facebook ads - these can be expensive and a little complex to set up so it's a good idea to source professional advice**
- **Distributing flyers - yes, we're talking an old-school letterbox drop**
- **Encouraging people to join your email list - this way you can market to them directly**

Establishing your marketing strategy early on allows you to build excitement about your business amongst your community. So, when you're ready to open your studio, you already have a number of very keen prospects.

# HIRE THE BEST STAFF TO GIVE YOUR BUSINESS A FULL RANGE OF MOTION

Whether you plan to employ full-time staff, engage trainers on a freelance basis, or mix it up with both - it's crucial that you hire wisely.

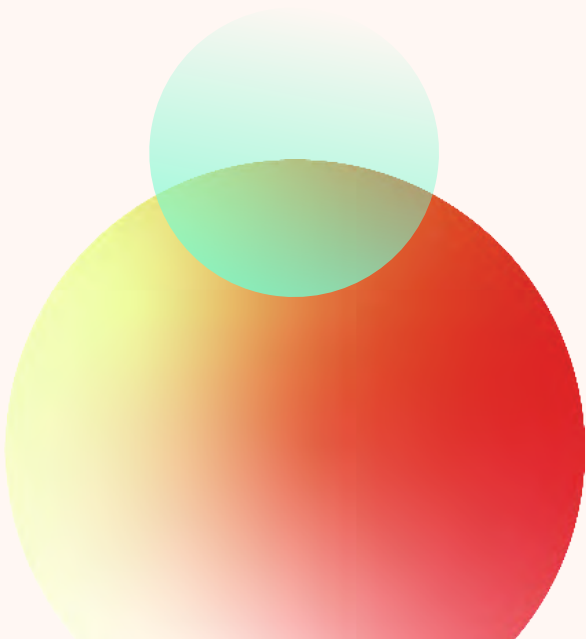
First, you need to make sure that each staff member has the right qualifications for their role. And, if you're using independent contractors, be sure to check they have the right insurance.



Next, it's important that your staff, particularly your teachers and trainers, are the right fit for your members. For example, if you run HIIT classes, you'll want a trainer who pushes members. For a yoga class, your teacher needs to be calm and patient.

When you're interviewing candidates, try to take the perspective of a member. Will this potential staff member's approach optimise the member experience? Do they know when to challenge members and when to provide gentle guidance to help them reach their goals?

Taking this all into account, hiring the right staff is key to your members achieving long-term transformational results.





# STREAMLINE YOUR BUSINESS PROCESSES

Work smarter, not harder - from the get-go - with **Xplor Studio**, an all-in-one fitness studio management software solution. Saving you valuable time and money and empowering your members to take control of their health and fitness:

- Enables you to manage your studio through one user-friendly platform
- Provides members flexible payment options
- A comprehensive app for members & staff
- Automates your payments and marketing
- Delivers key data and members insights, enabling you to identify inefficiencies and capitalise on opportunities
- Streamlines staff operations, giving them more time to connect with members
- Gives you the tools to provide an exceptional member experience

**Xplor Studio** is your superpower. Doing all the heavy lifting for you, it gives you back more time to plan, grow and build a sustainable studio.







# IT'S NOT A RACE TO THE FINISH... RATHER A JOURNEY TO LONG-TERM SUCCESS

As with any business, planning is key to successfully opening a boutique fitness studio. You need to get all your ducks in a row, but most importantly... you need to understand the needs of your potential members. Speak to them, ask questions and get to know what it is they value. The insights they provide will be pivotal, not only for a powerful launch but for your future business growth and longevity.

Learn more about opening a studio and how **Xplor Studio** can supercharge your success

[Go to our website](#)