



6 figure interview: Aaron Whear, Career Fitness

Aaron Whear was born in Melbourne, Victoria, and grew up living and breathing sport. After completing a Bachelor of Applied Science (Physical Education), he began his career in the fitness industry as a gymnasium instructor in 1992. Aaron now runs Career Fitness, a consulting company based in Melbourne. Aaron works with organisations to bring health and fitness into the workplace with health assessments, exercise sessions and seminars based on his philosophy of the “game plan”.

When he isn't working you can find him playing cricket, pumping weights in the gym, reading, or spending quality time with his family.

1. Can you please tell us about what you do and where you do it:

Health & Fitness consultant with my major roles being:

- Delivering and coordinating Certificate III & IV in Fitness courses and CEC/PDP courses
- Business mentoring and consulting
- Information product development
- Corporate speaking

2. How have you applied the PT Plus process to your business?

- Investing time in mentoring and personal development
- Letting go of some tasks - this frees up my time to work on the more strategic aspects of the business
- Spending less time on low value tasks like email
- Dedicating one day per week to work on the business
- Increasing my number of income buckets

3. What changes/mind shifts did you need to make?

- Realising that business mentoring is not an expense but is a true investment
- Letting go of some control over things and realising that other people can do tasks better than I can
- If I work one day per week on the business instead of putting out fires I will eventually have less fires to put out

4. Career Fitness is one of Victoria's leading fitness educators. What do you do that has made a real difference to the growth of your business in a highly competitive market?

Career Fitness partners with the Centre for Adult Education (CAE) to deliver the Certificate III & IV in Fitness courses. Points of difference include:

Our mission is to produce outstanding Instructors we do this via:

1. Passion of Presenters



2. Experience of Presenters - they have been there and done that and are still very actively involved within the fitness industry and have that passion to pass their knowledge onto others.
3. Customer service - we keep in contact with current and past students via an eNewsletter that contains information such as articles, new exercises, upcoming courses, social events and job opportunities.
4. Most students are delighted with their education experience which leads to our number 1 source of new business which is word of mouth referral which brings in more than 50% of our new students.

5. What is the biggest business mistake you've ever made? And most importantly, what did this teach you?

My biggest mistakes actually came during a period that also brought me the greatest joy - the birth of my first son, Kayden. Simone and I had just purchased our first house and started Career Fitness, and now Simone was not going to be working for the next 18 months!

There are always more expenses than expected with a new home, especially one built from scratch as ours was. There was turf to buy, a TV aerial, clothes line, letter box, shed, curtains, carpet and more. The list went on and on. On top of that, the new business had its own unending list of purchase needs.

All this put us in a difficult financial situation, but the biggest mistake I made was to pay for a lot of those expenses on credit. Eventually, with high interest mounting, the debt got out of control.

I am pleased to say this situation has now been reversed, but only through much disciplined effort. It also taught me some really valuable lessons that I now use in my mentoring sessions; lessons such as the importance of budgeting and recording all expenditure, living on cash, and of course, controlling credit card debt.

6. What new services or products have you implemented over the past 12 months?

Services:

- Business Mentoring and Consulting
- Corporate Speaking

Products

- PNF Stretching DVD
- Contributor to the Switched On Health Professionals Book
- Just about to launch the Career Fitness Membership Program

7. How much has your business grown in the past 12 months?

- Financially a 30% increase
- Database for the newsletter has grown by close to 50%
- We have had record numbers of students with a number of the courses having waiting lists - the pleasing thing about this has been that it has largely been driven via word of mouth

8. What are the 3 key areas you believe determine business success?

1. Clear Purpose eg. "A Game Plan for developing Outstanding Fitness Instructors"
2. Having a set of KPI's to measure yourself against, eg, income, number of sessions, referrals, etc.
3. Customer Service - the level of customer service in the fitness industry is often poor so you don't need to do that much different to be known as outstanding, eg, reminder calls, follow up calls, etc.

9. What strategy do you follow when you are increasing your prices?

We increase our prices annually for the Certificate III & IV in Fitness programs as a matter of course.



A strategy I have used previously as a Personal Training Coordinator is to write to all clients one month before the increase and invite them to pre-purchase as many personal training sessions as they like at the old price. This has proved very successful.

10. What do you do outside work to relax and recharge?

- Working out most days
- Enjoy playing and watching sport
- Weekly massage
- Regular holidays with my wife Simone and 3 year old son Kayden

11. How do you balance between working and having a life?

This is difficult and something I constantly have to work on. Brian Tracy once said that the first 7 years in business is the hardest. He describes like an aeroplane taking off that you need to generate momentum through hard work initially.

I am currently working on the concept of an ideal week which has time for business development, presenting, marketing, sales, etc. AND family time, like blocking off certain times to play with my son, or take my wife to a movie.

12. You teach corporate clients the concept of having a 'Game Plan'. Explain the 4 step process that you teach and how you discovered this?

Learning - personal development and business development are directly linked, so address your ongoing education. After all, the more you learn the more you earn.

Earning - focus on the areas of sales, marketing and client retention as well as developing and refining your business-specific systems. Attention to these areas will contribute to increased cash flow.

Conserving - regardless of your income, the key to wealth is spending less than you earn and investing the rest. Have an organised savings and investment plan, allow for tax, and understand the difference between profit and cash flow.

Preserving - preserve both your mental and physical health. Put in place strategies for relaxation, getting adequate sleep, taking regular holidays, and optimising the results you get from your physical exercise program.

13. It took us a while to discover your master message of 'Game Plan'. How has this changed your business having a much clearer message that differentiates you from other service providers?

The Game Plan concept evolved from looking back over my business and life experiences and pinpointing the common thread running through all the successful times. I found that whenever I had achieved success there was always a plan in place that has allowed it to occur, and whenever things had not gone well it was often the result of poor planning. I believe this is true for most people. We all know that "if we fail to plan then we plan to fail", however planning still remains one of those things we don't do enough of.

14. What are your thoughts on new trends that will shape the health and wellbeing industry over the next few years?

The wellness revolution will continue as more and more ageing Baby Boomers realise there is a product on the market that not only makes them feel younger, but also look younger too. That product, of course, is exercise. I also see greater recognition from both the medical fraternity and governments of fitness professionals and the role they can play in preventative health. Australia is in the midst of a health care crisis across all age categories. The World Health Organisation even believes we are faced with an obesity epidemic. I think we will see employer incentives, and tax and insurance rebates, to encourage us to maintain our health and fitness in the future. This



will mean greater acceptance and respect concerning what fitness professionals can offer in terms of optimising health.

Longer does not always mean better in the eyes of the client, so time efficient workouts will become critical. Many clients who use a personal trainer are willing to pay as much or more if they can get similar results in less time. In fact many clients who use a personal trainer don't really want the training itself, they just want the results. This concept is similar to a home loan. Not too many people wake up one morning wanting to put themselves into debt for 25 years but they do want what a home loan offers - a house of their own.

Lastly, the internet is here to stay so rather than fight technology the fitness industry needs to embrace it. Online personal training is one example of how this technology can allow many people to experience the benefits of personal training at a fraction of the price.

15. Now's the time for what we call the Turbo 10. Ten quick questions...

1. What is your favourite song? Better Man - Robbie Williams
2. Band? U2
3. Movie? The Pursuit of Happyness
4. Food? Homemade beef casserole
5. Holiday destination? Port Douglas
6. Most recently read book? From Entrepreneur to Infopreneur
7. What really annoys you? Red tape
8. If you could do anything you wanted, what would it be? Professional cricketer
9. The one thing you'd like to change in the world right now? Less violence
10. Where would you like to be in 5 years time? Financially independent

16. Any final thoughts or advice you'd like to give our members?

Reinforce the power of mentoring as an investment - to quote Brian Tracy 'it is like stepping on the accelerator of success'.

Thanks Aaron. You can find out more about Aaron at www.careerfitness.com.au

