



[Home](#) : : Gregory Florez, August 2007

Technology is My Friend. Repeat: Technology is My Friend.

By Gregory Florez

In the past decade a debate started that still continues among personal trainers. It deals with the efficacy of technology as a tool or replacement for live personal training.

Millions of dollars have been spent developing everything from online personal training services to logging, tracking, and monitoring devices that take individual feedback, then create "customized personal training programs."

Let me first state that, in my mind, technology-based personal training that requires no face-to-face time with a certified personal trainer will never produce the kind of physical results, behavioral-based change, or overall experience that we as personal trainers provide.

That said, I am a strong believer that the right technology, used skillfully by all of us, can greatly leverage our time and provide benefits to our clients.

As an industry observer, I've watched as the first generation of technology-based personal training solutions (that take personal trainers out of the equation or greatly reduce their interface with clients) have missed the mark.

These included everything from expensive kiosk-based systems providing goals and even some biometric information, crunch the data, and then spit out "custom" programs, to PDA-based systems that provide workouts and diet information.

Most of this technology failed to address the fundamental challenge: Assessments and programming that can be executed by software and is developed by credible fitness professionals.

Moving clients toward long-term behavioral change requires the skill of personal trainers who listen to their clients and respond and can help adjust to their clients' fluctuating lives and needs. Part of this equation involves understanding clients' often changing barriers to success.

If you are not using technology as an aid to your training business, you are likely not accessing powerful tools that can keep your clients on track. There are literally hundreds of programs from iPod-based workouts to devices that allow individuals to manage and track a day's workout in a club. It is important to investigate these evolving programs, test them whenever possible, and most importantly, for you to figure out how they might enhance your business. Your personal training business is highly individual, but here are some tips, and also some programs worth considering:

Tips:

Use e-mail as a powerful communication and motivational tool between sessions.

Incorporate a logging, tracking, and training system software that allows you to customize workouts can be a huge time saver.

Gather and disseminate data from a system that tracks workouts and lifestyle information to give you a more complete picture of your clients, particularly as you're expanding your business.

Partner with a club-based system gathering practical information you can use in your business is invaluable and can save you precious time and money.

Ideas:

Read reviews of publications from your certifying body, use search engines to find out what technology is available, and then test it yourself.

Contact personal trainers and club owners using these systems to get real feedback from individuals you can trust.

Attend technology lectures at fitness conferences to see what's been shown to work in the real world.

If you find a tool that you like, negotiate the ability to "test" it on a small number of your clients.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, there are literally hundreds of technology systems and programs on the market now. A few worth examining include: www.PodFitness.com, www.Fitistics.com, Personal Training on The Net (www.ptonthenet.com),



www.LifeSpan.com, and [SPRI Products \(at www.spriproducts.com\)](http://www.spriproducts.com), specifically their digital exercise programs).

Also, visit www.continuaalliance.org, an initiative started by Intel's Digital Health Group to see what the future may look like. These are not meant to be endorsements. Rather they are meant to merely provide a sampling of the types of available programs.

Technology can be your friend. Make time to determine how it can help you help your clients and grow your business. Mr. Florez is the founder and CEO of First Fitness, Inc., a personal training and fitness consulting company that has been in business since 1988. Read his full bio [here](#).

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