



# → management matters

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## The Five Ps Of Promoting Fitness Programs

Many quality fitness products and programs are on the market. Why is it that some are successful, and others are not?

Chances are, the success or failure of a program lies in how it is marketed.

How well does the program sell itself? How well is it presented to potential participants? Are its benefits apparent? To successfully promote a fitness program, it is essential to consider the "Five Ps" of marketing: product, price, place, promotion and public relations.

*Everyone associated with a fitness program has an effect on its success.*

### Product

The first step in marketing anything starts with asking two questions: "What are you trying to sell?" and "To whom are you trying to sell it?" Simply marketing a product will not peak the interest of the targeted consumer unless you have developed something they want and need.

### Price

Price has a great, if not the greatest, impact on the success of any product or fitness program. It is often the most influential variable and can be perceived as an indicator of the quality and value of a program. While consumers customarily view low-priced programs/products as being of lower quality, and high-priced programs as being of higher quality, it is not necessarily wise to price a fitness program at a higher rate. The program's target market must also be considered. For example, consider a fitness facility near a college campus that brings in a highly paid, highly skilled instructor to lead a new series of classes with hip music and current dance moves. Because of the high caliber of instruction and the innovation of the classes, a premium is charged. The fitness facility is convinced that the nearby college students will

love it, so it is marketed accordingly. Unfortunately, it is priced too high, so the

students cannot afford it. On the other hand, the working professionals who can afford the classes do not perceive it as being for them. The end result is that the fitness facility has a great class that no one is buying.

Supply and demand also come into play. If there is a large supply of similar programs in your area, it will not be productive to charge a higher price. If your program is unique, there is more pricing flexibility. Similarly, on the demand side, if the expected demand for a particular fitness program is low, charging a premium may be difficult. If the expected demand is high, determining a price will be less restrictive.

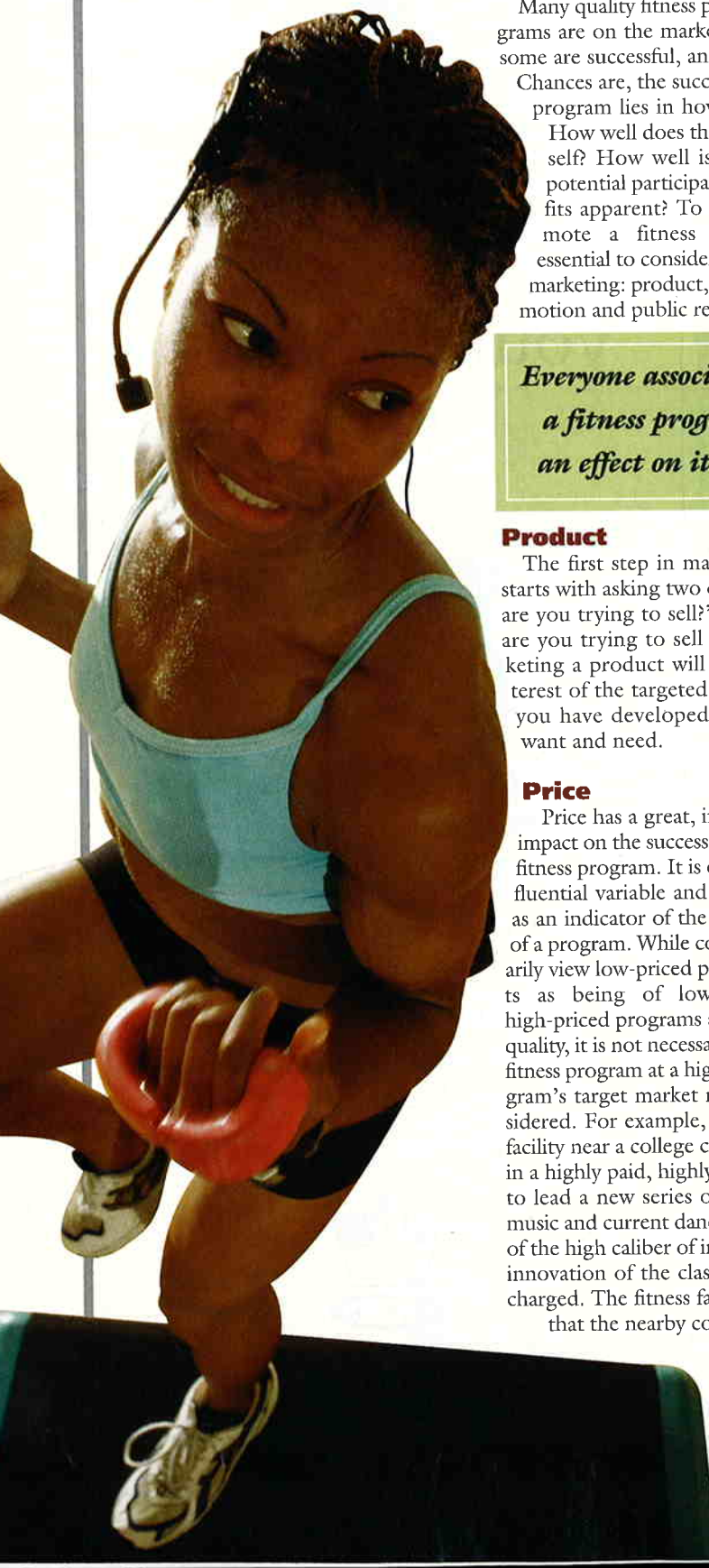
### Place

The perception of the physical environment, or the facility image in which the program will be held, also plays a role in marketing. Is the facility clean, equipped with up-to-date equipment, and staffed with upbeat and competent staff? Fitness consumers generally expect to pay higher prices for better facilities. Programs that are offered in newer buildings with sophisticated equipment and appealing décor are able to charge higher prices and still capture a large share of the target market.

Offering your program in multiple locations may help to sell it. A health promotion program for older adults that is offered at your facility could also be held at a senior or community center, and in an assisted living residence. Making the program more accessible increases the number of potential participants by offering the program to those who may not have been able to get to your facility, or afford the cost of membership to make them eligible for the unique program. Holding a program in multiple locations also offers convenience. Offering an onsite fitness program to a company's employees is one example. Not only is the convenience likely to attract more participants, but they will be more likely to pay for the convenience.

### Promotion

The success of a program is also dependent on the use of the appropriate formats and media for promotions. Using classified ads to promote a women's health and fitness program is probably not the most effective choice.





Placing an ad in the women's section of the local newspaper, or running a radio ad on a station during a time slot that has a higher percentage of women listeners is a better strategy.

Additionally, your promotional mix defines the program's position. In the earlier example, the new fitness program being marketed to the college crowd could be advertised on



a main college radio station and in the college newspaper. (The fitness facility missed the mark to position the class, since the ad campaign influenced consumers who were not in the position to buy this type of program.) Effectively promoting a program is the key to whether your target participants find out about it.

### Public relations

Public relations goes beyond advertising the program. Everyone associated with a fitness program has an effect on its public relations and success. The most obvious example of this is the conduct of the instructor, teacher or leader of the program. One irritable moment or late arrival of the instructor can have a negative impact. Instructors who do not practice what they teach can also be detrimental to the program.

Never underestimate the impact of a favorable or unfavorable public relations image on the promotion of your program. An example of the positive effect of public relations: The weights used for fitness walking received publicity in the 1988 presidential campaign because Democratic nominee Michael Dukakis used them. The publicity the product received was incomparable. The company could not have purchased better, more effective advertising at any price. A public relations image can make or break any fitness program or product.

All of the elements presented in the marketing mix are interdependent. Price, place, promotion and public relations all affect the success of the product, and each has the ability to influence the others. Price is affected by the place where the program is being held. The success of promotions is influenced by positive or negative public relations. When you are gearing up to launch your next program or product, examine the five Ps, and consider making the necessary changes to your marketing strategy. **FM**

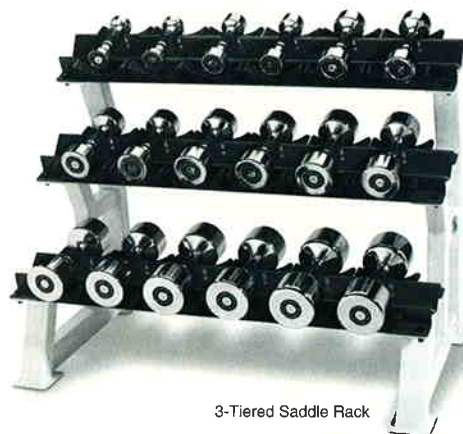
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