

Laura Warf

Describe for Can-Fit-Pro members what you do within the fitness industry.

I have worked actively in the fitness industry for the last 16 years starting while studying in university. I currently work full-time as the manager of Interclub des Laurentides in Piedmont, Quebec. I also teach classes and personal train within the club. In addition to work at club level, three years ago I assisted in creating and editing *Beyond Fitness* magazine, a publication which is circulated across Canada with 150,000 copies in print. I also present regularly at numerous conferences throughout the year.

How long have you been active in this role?

I made the move to Interclub two-and-a-half years ago when asked to consult them on restructuring the club. Prior to Interclub I managed another facility where I worked for 10 years climbing up the ladder of responsibility, starting as a trainer and fitness instructor, then as the fitness director, followed by the manager role then regional coordinator for three clubs.

What do you love about what you do?

Personally, I love having a good quality of life. The balancing act is not always easy but by working in the industry I am strongly aware of my own health, fitness and overall well-being. Feeling good is a high priority for me and allows me to do what I do well. Being a healthy role model helps inspire others. I am fortunate to create my own work schedule. Having flexibility is important and allows me to manage my time effectively to be able to juggle everything I do. Being highly organized is the key. We work in a unique industry that allows us to help transform lives in a positive way. I am happy to work in the field that I studied in; I did a three year



Do you know an expert in the fitness industry who deserves to be PRO-filed? If you or someone you know should be the next Can-Fit-Pro PRO-file, please send your nominations to georgia@canfitpro.com.

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business program followed by a B.Ed. in Fitness from McGill University. The best teachers continue to learn and grow themselves, both of which are very important factors for me. In turn, sharing what I learn with others is rewarding. Presenting at conferences certainly helps keep me current and up-to-date because it continuously challenges me to keep learning and growing personally and professionally so that I always have new things to share with my participants.

What is the most memorable career experience for you to date and why?

The highlight of my career to date is being awarded Can-Fit-Pro New Presenter of the Year in 2005. It is a wonderful honour to be recognized by the delegates who participate in my sessions year after year. It has been a stimulating experience working with Can-

Fit-Pro and its team of leaders.

I have had so many positive career experiences and have had the opportunity to work with and learn from several great people and leaders over the years. I think that memorable career experiences are created over time and begin first by developing certain leadership qualities. I am very focused and dedicated, I work hard, am perseverant and very passionate about what I do. It is normal to have varying periods of ups and downs but I try to keep the downs to a minimum by being positive and learning from them. By continuing on my path, opportunities are presented along the way and I try to seize each one. Each experience prepares us for the future by providing us with new skills. I am stimulated by challenges and although changes can be uncomfortable at times, it is through transitions that we learn and grow the most.

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PRO-file

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What is the biggest mistake you've made and how have you learned from it?

I reflect everyday on how I could do things differently and improve personally and professionally based on daily events. I am pretty analytical and tough on myself. I will always admit when I have made a mistake, though. My integrity is an important value. While I can't think of any major mistakes there have been small ones along the way. That is how we learn and grow and develop more wisdom! One mistake I have made in the past is not being decisive enough or making decisions quickly enough. An example of this would be firing employees from their position in the club. At times I am too soft and trusting and give too many chances because I was convinced I could coach people into changing their behaviours. I have learned to clearly define expectations when hiring and to follow up. “Inspect what you expect”. Our team is energetic and passionate and open to learning and sharing. Now, if someone doesn't meet the criteria of our club atmosphere I will make the change.

What do you believe sets certain people apart from the rest in the fitness industry? Why are some personal trainers for example, always in demand?

I think what sets people apart from others are their set of personal values and priorities in life. I have worked with a lot of people throughout my career. The people who I respect the most and who have had an impact on my life have several qualities that I appreciate. Some of those values and qualities are: how they showed they cared about me, being honest even if there were hard lessons to learn, encouraging me to continue on my chosen path even when the going got tough, providing guidance by helping me set goals, integrity (keeping your word or promise), good listening skills, intelligence and drive towards their own success, and those who have great energy and passion for life.

Every client wants to be heard and understood. They come to us because they are looking for help in some way. People sense if you truly care about their success or you just want to achieve your sales numbers. Be sure you are working in this field for the right reason. People buy from people they like, so take the time to develop rapport with them and ask questions to really understand their needs. Be honest with them if you feel they might be better suited with another trainer. People respect openness and honesty. Trainers who have a clear set of priorities and values will be in demand because they instill trust in the people they work with, they have fun with them, keep the sessions stimulating by being adaptable to clients needs or moods, help the client reach their goals and guide them to set new ones. In addition, the popular trainer will continue to learn new skills and share them with his or her clients, maintain a positive attitude and take pride in maintaining a high level of personal fitness and a healthy balance. They clearly love what they do and for them it is a pleasure to go above and beyond to keep a client happy. It's the little things that make the difference such as remembering birthdays, photocopying a relevant article or recipe for them or introducing them to someone else in the club who has similar interests. These characteristics will set you apart as a personal trainer.

What advice can you share to those new to the field in order to be successful?

Laura's Top Five Bits of Advice

1. Stay grounded and real. We all make mistakes; admit it, especially if someone else was affected in some way – it builds integrity and trust. Learn from your mistakes and move on.

2. Set personal and professional goals. Define what is important to you in your life and work environment.

3. Be open to learning. Ask questions and watch people that you admire. What makes them good at what they do? How did they get there? What could you learn from them?

4. Try many things in life and be open to all opportunities so that you can find out what you like and what you don't. I worked in every position in the club. As a manager, having experience in all areas of operations helped me so that I could lead by example by stepping in at any moment in all areas of the club and to be in a better position to offer feedback to all associates.

5. Attend conferences regularly to stay up-to-date and make time to read books for learning and growth.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

I would like to share a poem my mom gave me to hang on my wall when I was going through school. I still read it from time to time when I need the reminder.

Don't Quit!

*When things go wrong as they sometimes will,
When the road you're trudging seems all uphill,
When the funds are low and the debts are high,
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,
When care is pressing you down a bit...
Rest if you must – but don't you quit.*

*Success is failure turned inside out,
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt,
And you never can tell how close you are,
It may be near when it seems afar,
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit...
It's when things go wrong, that you mustn't quit. □*

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