



Which Watch Works With Your Members?

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The new generation of heart rate monitors, wrist top computers or other monitoring devices can drive your members to better results, increase your revenues and allow you to provide more frequent and personal "touch" on your members. They also can help you increase sales of traditional and non-traditional services.

While the accuracy or efficacy of heart rate monitoring has been debated, one study shows that more than 87 percent of fitness professionals believe that monitoring workout intensity through heart rate is one of the top three "must haves" in a well-rounded program. The bottom line is that heart rate monitoring of any kind, when used correctly, provides an excellent tool for trainers and clients to monitor progress and improve adherence to exercise.

Around for more than 20 years, heart rate monitoring devices are now so ubiquitous that hardly a bike, treadmill or elliptical trainer in your club is without some type of heart-rated monitoring interface.

Monitoring heart rate is a valuable and simple way to measure progress, maintain motivation and provide feedback whether for a member looking to know how many calories a workout has burned or a triathlete wanting to fine-tune his or her program. The real value in these new devices is the variety, sophistication and ability that they provide using a multitude of feedback measures.

However, technology for the sake of technology is not useful for your members. A high percentage of your members have limited time and patience for processing more information. Exercise frequency, intensity and time are critical and should be made simple. Using a heart rate monitor should not be an exercise in patience or in one's ability to memorize an owner's manual.

We asked exercisers (our clients) from around the country what they liked and disliked about the process of using heart rate monitoring devices. Here is what they had to say:

First and foremost help me set up my monitor quickly so that it can give me the information I need to reach my goals. I can't do it alone.

I want a trainer at my club to help me determine not only how to use a monitor, but also to set it up so that it reminds me how intensely and how long I should exercise. I then want follow-up to know if I am doing too much or too little.

I want a large, readable display that can be viewed while using any machine.

I want a short learning curve with as few button pushes as possible to get the information I need.

I want alarms that tell me when I'm in the right training zone for my goal and how long I should stay there.

I want to know how many calories I'm burning.

I want some way to share or download critical information so that I can use it to get fitter and/or share the information with my trainer.

I want the ability to quickly learn and use only the features I need and not bother with those that I don't.

I want functions that I can use when I'm not in the health club but outdoors, e.g. temperature, distance ran, biked, etc. and an altimeter in some cases. (Nearly half of those surveyed preferred a wristop computer/monitor that was sporty looking enough to be able to wear outside of the gym.)

I want chest receiver straps that are anatomically correct and comfortable to use.

Overwhelmingly, the clients we interviewed had some knowledge of heart rate and its importance, but not enough that they were able to translate this knowledge into useful adherence or actionable progress. Interestingly, this was the case even with clients who were familiar with sophisticated personal technology devices such as handheld computers, multi-use phones and other devices. Manufacturers of monitoring devices tend to create feature-rich models that, although helping to drive sales, are difficult to program and use, and are often misunderstood. This creates an opportunity for trainers and group instructors to educate

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