

Losing Money to Become a Tycoon: Starting with Games

Chapter 499: I Knew I Had Chosen the Right Person

As far as the current state of Managed Fitness was concerned, Pei Qian had only four words for it:

Completely unacceptable!

He had already posted all the rules and regulations right at the entrance.

He had explicitly forbidden the trainers from soliciting customers.

He had set absurdly high prices and even bundled memberships together with Moyu Delivery.

Even the gym's original customers had already switched to other gyms.

So why were there still so many customers here?

Why?!

Pei Qian was deeply unconvinced.

He had to find Guo Licheng and get an explanation.

Guo Licheng had just finished helping a member. Seeing President Pei enter, he immediately came over.

“President Pei!”

His face was full of smiles.

And why wouldn't it be?

Previously, the gym had been completely empty and deserted. Aside from working out himself, Guo Licheng had little to do except sit around in the lounge area, bored out of his mind.

Now?

He actually had work to do!

For the first time in his life, Guo Licheng found himself genuinely happy to have work.

When he had worked at other gyms, his schedule had been packed from morning until night with personal-training sessions.

Yet instead of feeling fulfilled, he had only felt exhausted.

That exhaustion came from three major sources.

First, a personal trainer's primary role was often little more than supervision and companionship.

After designing a workout plan, the trainer merely watched to ensure the client completed a certain number of bench presses or exercise sets. Once the client became familiar with the routine, the trainer's job was mostly to stand nearby and observe.

It was largely physical labor rather than skilled work, offering little sense of accomplishment.

Second, personal trainers constantly faced the psychological pressure of selling additional classes and memberships.

Third, their schedules were so full that they rarely had time to train themselves. Most could only squeeze in an hour of exercise late at night when the gym was about to close. Maintaining a proper diet was equally difficult.

Over time, the fatigue accumulated.

But now, all of that exhaustion has completely disappeared.

Managed Fitness's model wasn't about ignoring customers entirely.

Instead, it emphasized flexible instruction.

When newcomers first joined, trainers would help them learn proper techniques and correct mistakes.

Once those newcomers became comfortable and independent, trainers no longer needed to stand beside them constantly.

As a result, trainers could use the time they saved to help other members, work out themselves, or simply take a short break.

At the same time, they no longer had to worry about selling classes.

There was no significant financial conflict of interest between trainers and customers.

The trainers could give advice without psychological burdens, and customers didn't have to wonder whether every conversation was secretly a sales pitch.

The relationship between the two became much more harmonious.

On top of that, Moyu Delivery provided healthy fitness meals, and Managed Fitness prohibited overtime work.

All the trainers were finally getting sufficient rest.

Work was no longer something they endured.

Instead, they could genuinely enjoy the happiness that fitness brought them while they worked.

As a result, both Guo Licheng and the other trainers were energetic and highly motivated.

Whenever they finished their own workouts and found themselves with free time, they naturally started thinking about how to provide better service and enthusiastically help newcomers.

Of course, Pei Qian couldn't see any of this.

He could only vaguely notice that Guo Licheng looked healthier than before and seemed to be in better spirits.

At the moment, however, Pei Qian was far more concerned about the gym's profitability.

“Why are there so many people in the gym?” he asked suspiciously.

“Didn't I tell you not to do any marketing or customer recruitment? Where did all these customers come from?”

“Don't tell me they just showed up on their own.”

Guo Licheng looked confused.

“President Pei, we really didn't do anything.”

“They genuinely came on their own.”

“Wasn't this exactly what you expected?”

Pei Qian blinked.

“?”

Guo Licheng explained, “The main reason is that signboard you put outside!”

“The signboard? What's wrong with the signboard?”

A sudden sense of foreboding washed over Pei Qian.

Guo Licheng became increasingly excited as he explained:

“President Pei, that signboard was absolutely brilliant!”

“At first, all of us thought it would drive customers away.”

“But unexpectedly, the exact opposite happened. Not only did it fail to discourage people, it actually attracted a whole new group of customers!”

“Some students from Handong University walked past our gym. The prices scared them away, sure—but they found the contents of the signboard incredibly interesting.”

“So they took photos and shared them with their classmates.”

“The gym's rules struck people as something completely fresh and different.”

“As a result, it quickly attracted the attention of a large number of young people!”

“Of course, the vast majority of people are just coming out of curiosity and have no intention of spending money. But there will always be a portion of customers who aren't particularly sensitive to price and are willing to give it a try. Those are the customers you're seeing right now.”

Pei Qian froze.

Only then did he realize that he had fallen into the trap of relying too heavily on past experience.

Previously, when Moyu Internet Café had put up a signboard at its entrance, it had indeed produced immediate results. For a long time, people would see the prices and simply leave, resulting in almost no customers.

Later, the café's popularity exploded mainly because of Chen Lei.

And Chen Lei had been attracted to become the resident singer primarily because of Zhang Yuan.

The signboard had nothing to do with it.

As a result, Pei Qian had always believed that placing a signboard at the entrance was an effective way to discourage customers.

But now he suddenly realized something.

The signboard at Moyu Internet Café and the signboard at Managed Fitness contained completely different information!

The café's signboard only listed prices—the cost of computer use and beverages.

Customers who saw it would have only one reaction:

Expensive.

There was nothing novel about it, and certainly nothing worth sharing.

The Managed Fitness signboard, however, explained the gym's business model.

It didn't merely emphasize high prices.

It also described mandatory fitness meal packages, compulsory workout plans, and other unusual policies.

When people saw it, their first reaction wasn't:

"This is expensive."

Instead, it was:

"This is interesting."

Because no other gym operated this way.

Such an unconventional approach naturally sparked discussion.

And once people became curious, some of them would inevitably come check it out for themselves.

In other words, the signboard outside Moyu Internet Café had worked exactly as intended.

The signboard outside Managed Fitness, however, was a disaster.

A very big disaster.

Realizing his mistake, Pei Qian's face turned slightly pale.

After a moment of silence, he said, "Take the signboard down."

Guo Licheng thought for a moment.

"President Pei, do you mean that since the information has already spread sufficiently, and we've achieved our goal of attracting nearby customers, now we should remove the signboard to avoid attracting even more people?"

Pei Qian: "..."

Leaving it up doesn't work.

Taking it down doesn't work.

Then what exactly am I supposed to do?!

Deciding not to dwell on the matter any longer, Pei Qian sighed gloomily.

"So... don't tell me the gym is actually about to become profitable?"

Guo Licheng was briefly stunned before immediately shaking his head.

"Profitable? President Pei, that's far too optimistic. We're nowhere near that point."

“What I mean is that Managed Fitness is currently in a much better position than when we started.”

“But profitability? That's still a long way off.”

“It might look busy right now, but don't forget—today is Sunday.”

“Sunday is naturally the busiest day of the week for gyms.”

“On weekday afternoons, the gym becomes extremely quiet.”

Hearing that, Pei Qian finally let out a long breath.

It felt as though a path to survival had suddenly opened before him.

Good. Good.

You nearly scared me to death.

For a moment there, I thought the gym was actually going to make money.

What a false alarm.

Pei Qian desperately wanted something soothing to drink.

Unfortunately, the gym didn't serve tea or coffee—only bottled water.

So he poured himself a cup and took a few sips to calm his nerves.

Thinking about it carefully, if the gym was only somewhat busy on Sundays while remaining deserted during the rest of the week, that was still acceptable.

After all, the facility was well-equipped and the trainers were conscientious.

Even with unreasonable pricing, there would always be a handful of customers who didn't care about the cost.

As long as there weren't too many of them, and revenue remained insufficient to cover expenses, everything would be fine.

Pei Qian relaxed slightly.

But almost immediately, his vigilance returned.

Even if profitability was still far away, having so many people show up on weekends wasn't ideal.

It could easily create the illusion that the gym was thriving.

And that was absolutely unacceptable.

Pei Qian felt that the gym's customer-deterrence system was still incomplete.

They needed additional safeguards before he could feel truly secure.

The problem was that he had run out of ideas.

So he decided to consult Guo Licheng.

"Is there any way," Pei Qian asked, "to reduce the number of people who come to the gym on weekends?"

Guo Licheng blinked.

“President Pei, do you mean optimizing customer traffic according to the gym's capacity so that resources can be utilized more efficiently and customers can enjoy a better experience?”

Pei Qian was silent for two seconds.

“...Something like that.”

A surprised expression appeared on Guo Licheng's face.

“I'd actually been meaning to report this issue to you. I didn't expect you to bring it up yourself.”

“It seems you really do have a deep understanding of gym operations!”

“The truth is, this problem is extremely common in the fitness industry.”

Pei Qian became curious.

“Oh? Then how do other gyms solve it?”

Guo Licheng replied, “They don't. That's why I've been hesitating about whether I should even bring it up.”

“Most gyms stop caring the moment they've convinced customers to buy memberships. They don't pay any attention to the gym's actual capacity.”

“During peak periods—weekends, for example—the entire gym can become packed. You have to wait for equipment, wait for treadmills, and sometimes even wait for a shower.”

“At that point, they rely entirely on customers to ‘self-regulate.’ Either people stand in line and wait, or they try to come during less crowded hours.”

“But even then, most customers don't really have a choice. They're only free on weekends.”

“Some customers get frustrated by the crowds and stop coming altogether—which is exactly what the gym wants. After all, they've already paid for their annual membership. The gym would actually prefer that they stay home.”

“So this is a widespread problem throughout the industry.”

Pei Qian nodded.

“Then what do you think should be done about it?”

Guo Licheng hesitated.

“To be honest, I have thought of a solution.”

“The problem is that it would be somewhat expensive, and customers might not accept it...”

Pei Qian's eyes immediately lit up.

You had a solution like that and didn't tell me sooner?

“Go on,” he said, struggling to maintain a calm expression.

After a brief pause, Guo Licheng continued:

“A gym's capacity is ultimately limited. That's something we can't change.”

“So if we want to guarantee a good experience for customers, the only option is to control attendance.”

“I think we could develop an app.”

“Customers would reserve workout times in advance according to their schedules. Once a time slot reaches capacity, no additional reservations would be accepted.”

“This wouldn't work for traditional gyms because they sell annual memberships. If customers are prevented from coming whenever they want, they'll feel their rights are being violated and will certainly object.”

“But our gym charges by the day, and we already create detailed workout plans for each customer.”

“When designing those plans, we can distribute people across different time periods based on their availability.”

“If all the weekend slots are already full, we simply stop accepting customers who can only work out on weekends and focus on people who can come during other times.”

“Of course, developing an app would cost money. An outsourced app might not be reliable either. What if it ends up full of bugs and difficult to use?”

“And customers might not understand the policy. They could end up criticizing us instead.”

“Furthermore, we'd need dedicated staff to coordinate everyone's schedules and arrange workout plans properly. Otherwise, customer dissatisfaction would be inevitable.”

Pei Qian suddenly raised a hand.

“Alright, that's enough.”

Guo Licheng assumed President Pei had concluded that the idea was impractical and immediately fell silent.

However, President Pei's eyes were shining.

“Do it.”

“Start immediately!”

“It's just an app, isn't it? I'll make the arrangements!”

Pei Qian absolutely loved this proposal.

Building an app meant spending more money.

Forcing customers to use the app and make reservations before they could visit the gym would drive away another group of people.

Hiring dedicated staff to coordinate schedules and manage workout plans meant paying additional salaries.

And after all that effort, all the gym would accomplish was slightly redistributing peak-hour traffic, saving customers a little bit of waiting time and improving their experience by a tiny amount.

The cost-effectiveness of the entire project was practically nonexistent.

It was gloriously inefficient.

As Pei Qian looked at Guo Licheng, his gaze gained an extra measure of appreciation.

This man definitely had potential.

I knew I hadn't made a mistake choosing him as the gym manager.