

5 Steps to Build Your Pilates Business

We're so much more than Pilates instructors. We're teachers, friends and entrepreneurs! Peak Pilates® MI Zoey Trap offers five steps for building your Pilates brand and growing your client base.

Your brand is essentially what your clients say about you, not what you say about your brand! With this in mind, it's vital to align yourself to your message. Let's take a look at five steps to help you define your message, and align your brand to it, so that you will ultimately attract and retain clients. We will also look at an example of how to do each step misaligned, and better yet aligned.

1. Define your Brand Message

This begins with answering key questions such as: Why do I teach? Who do I want to teach? What is my story? What distinguishes me from other instructors or studios?

Once you have answered these questions, it's time to develop your brand identity. Everything must align to this message in order for it to come across as strong and relatable.

Misalignment: I want to bring the benefits of Pilates to every body. What an awesome action, and what an inspiring message. But then when you look at your studio, ask yourself if it is appealing mostly to female clients with soft colors, pictures

of flowers? Are your ads and posts centered on “body beautiful” images? Sometimes, the hardest part of Pilates is walking in the door the first time, be sure you are aligned with your message at the door and beyond!

Alignment: Your studio is appealing to both sexes in terms of color and décor. You post and use ads that offer a wide variety of body types, ages, colors and you openly celebrate all student success stories.

2. Live the Life

Be a role model! We all want our clients to come to Pilates 3-4 times per week ideally. What about our practice? It’s important that you stand with good posture, move with grace and awareness and complete Pilates classes yourself. If you won’t spend money on at least one private lesson a week, why should your clients?

Misalignment: You are too tired from teaching to practice. You complain about how much you teach. You lack energy and slouch, or have a lot of orthopedic issues. This is not inspiring for your students to say the least.

Alignment: You are enthusiastic about your workouts, and you post pictures of yourself actively engaged in fitness (not just Pilates). You are motivating to be around and wear your Pilates as a business card. You work out where you can be seen in the studio and with other teachers. As Isaac Newton once declared, “We stand on the shoulders of the giants who went before us that we might see into the future.” In other words, you give credit to your teachers and their teachers.

3. Educate

This starts with educating yourself. As Pilates Elder Mary Bowen noted, “Pilates is a lifelong journey.” Attend CEC workshops, read articles, stay current on trends and research,

and attend conferences so you can communicate factual knowledge and not just your opinion. Let people know why they should do Pilates, what they can expect in classes, how Pilates works to change the body and mind, and help them dream? If I did Pilates three or four times a week, what would that change? Package your education in an entertaining way, and tie it to their personal goals. Let them know how they can supplement studio time with at home workouts and online classes. Inform them about good ways to cross-train, improve nutrition, decrease stress, and any other factors that impact their health and well-being.

Misalignment: You are certified, but you have not done much since completing your course. You don't have the time or money (fill in the blank) to attend workshops or conventions. Unaware of your students' learning styles, you teach in a one-size-fits-all fashion. You don't ask your clients what they are interested in and don't think beyond Pilates.

Alignment: You stay current and let your clients know interesting things you have learned and share tools you have honed during sessions. You pay attention to what they are interested in and try to tie Pilates to other passions in their lives such as gardening, running, golfing, etc.

4. Create Community

Build rapport with one person at a time. Relate to your students. Learn about their lives, their families and their goals. Teach the individual and keep them engaged and know what you are working toward together. Celebrate the big victories (like first Teaser) and the small (like coming to three classes in a week). Find ways of bringing your clients together. This starts with simple things like introducing your students to one another when times abut, or introducing new students to the class. Go beyond just the mere sharing of names; share things they have in common.

Build energy by offering free holiday classes, organizing a fundraiser, hosting a Pilates-and-pinot social, or creating a quarterly newsletter. There are so many ways to bring people together and make them feel like a part of community. You are only limited by your creativity! The more your students feel like they belong, the more likely they are to stay.

Misalignment: You talk a lot about yourself, but you don't ask enough questions or listen patiently enough for sharing to occur. You seem to always be in a rush. Your students come and go without getting to know each other.

Alignment: The words you say, the tone of voice you use, and your body language are in congruence. You are aware of the communication that happens before, during and after a session, and use those times accordingly. As Karen Ingram shares in her book, *Thrive Don't Just Survive*, you are a friendly professional, not a professional friend!

5. Challenge your Students

Help your clients do more than they could do alone. This can begin with knowing very specifically what their goals are. For example, one of my previous students had a goal of "getting stronger." I asked her what that would look like. How would we know when she was stronger? She said when she could complete 10 push-ups, it would be a success. The smile on my face said it all, because I knew that was an easy victory. We set a goal of six weeks, which she did it in three! Of course, the key was learning to do them properly and connect to her powerhouse, things she wasn't getting in her personal training sessions. So on to the next challenge!

Misalignment: You impose your goals and definitions of success on your students. You only measure progression in the number of advanced exercises being performed.

Alignment: You work with your private students as a journey,

always knowing there is another step ahead. You aren't afraid to gently push them. You check in to see if their goals have changed. You keep them focused during their lesson. In groups, you use themes to help them learn more deeply about Pilates, movement and their bodies, and you provide multi-level options that include challenges for the stronger or more experienced students.

When putting a plan together to build your business, remember these ABCs...align your message, build with intention, and create. Keep those in mind, and watch your business grow one student at a time!



This article was contributed by Zoey Trap, MS. With over 35 years of teaching experience in mind/body/spirit exercise, she leads the Peak Pilates® MI Team and is the co-author of the Peak Pilates® Instructor Education program.

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