

Martial Arts and the Fall.

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At this seasonal and festive time of year, martial arts schools, academies and clubs should be preparing their classes to ensure that they don't lose out over this season's duration. Statistics on our database from previous years reveal the drop in numbers and the number of students who fail to resume training as each Christmas period ends.

Unfortunately, the bills don't stop coming in to suit the season or how many students attend. Most instructors will be looking for ways to limit the seasonal effects on support and class numbers. This feature is to help give you as instructors some preparation time and ideas to motivate your members and limit the season's potential damage to numbers if left unchecked.

The first thing to understand is that all your students are different. That is obvious but what that means is that we can use one thing to motivate them. It won't work on everyone. This task is about using several things to appeal and motivate as many of your own group as possible so that they don't miss training and continue into the New Year.

Create a “reason’s list”. Basically, look at the time of year and look for any reasons that the students may leave or lose interest and write them down on the left column on a piece of paper. On the right hand column write a list of reasons why they will want to stay. The important thing to remember here is that you are trying to make your classes more than a room, the instructor and a syllabus. The secret is simple and it’s about how to take your martial arts beyond the dojo and add values.

Reason’s List

Negatives

Positives

Over eat and feel tired:

You can help them to lose that weight

Forget through a break in routine:

Remind them with a call or letter

Finances Low:

Free Lesson or Reduced Testing Fee

Low interest in classes.

Use events, competitions etc

Family Commitments:

Promote to Assistant Coach, Team Captain etc

No objectives:

Do a newsletter and calendar for the New Year. Feature your club’s members and let them know what’s in store when they return.

Applying the reasons list, making your members feel important and a valued part of a team and giving them as many reasons as possible to keep training and be loyal etc. Simply announcing what you are doing doesn’t count. It goes in one ear and out of the other because it’s not personal and has no importance unless you make it personal.

Having a member's party, using awards events and doing club presentations nurses egos and says 'thank you'. All these are also good for team building.

Grading tests should not be too early in the year so that people have time to recover financially. Don't forget to tell them how much they have improved and they should be getting their next grade etc.

For competitions, start taking names and asking your members if will they represent your club and be in the team. If they don't seem to be interested ask them if they would like to be a club referee or a member of the corner crew and be a key member looking after the club's team. Team building is so important so that individuals feel like they are an important part of it.

Using the events like the Black Belt International Awards or Action Martial Arts Magazines Hall of Fame can really nurse egos. Tell your "selected" member or members that you feel they are deserving of a national/international award for their dedication and support to martial arts. Fill in the form with them. Watch their confidence and support grow as their loyalty becomes stronger. Let's face it – there's no feeling like being appreciated, and nothing wrong with saying 'thank you'.

Seasonally most of us will over eat and want to get back in shape. This, therefore, is a good time to advertise through your membership. Perhaps a 6 week intro martial arts course starting early January appropriately named “get back into shape with xxx” or similar. Plan some humour with the classes and highlight that you will be doing this and its open also for their families just in case they swallow the Turkey etc. Use humour, leaflets and newsletters to make it stick. Give a deadline so that they respond now and book. The soft marketing to your students and their families could be supplemented with posters, leaflets and advertising to the general public. Having an innovative name and lighthearted approach to the campaign will be an asset and fit in at this fun time of year.

When you get these issues right it pays off and the dip in numbers is minimised. Make no mistake, there are so many more things you can do from billing through to mentoring. It’s all the little things that, when you bring them together, make the big difference. Success usually has a common feature that gives your members control. That is a little thing called “CHOICE”. To give choices you have to find options with good values for your students.

Finally this feature is not the be all and end all. It’s just a starting point to highlight the issues and help you develop your own success.