



The International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association is a not-for-profit trade association open to investor-owned and member-owned fitness, racquet, and athletic facilities. Associate memberships are available to manufacturers or suppliers of products and services of use to IHRSA members.

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Health Clubs, Healthcare, and Media

Our industry is at a crossroads. A large number of players—healthcare providers, including state, local, and federal agencies; physicians; hospitals; alternative medicine providers; insurance carriers; and wellness companies—are grappling with the nation's obesity and healthcare crises. How can *we* make a difference?



Bill McBride
IHRSA Chairperson

As a unique and vital member of the health, fitness, and wellness community, we're in a natural position to provide part of the solution. Early detection, third-party payers, and outcome-based reimbursement will clearly play a role; however, at the end of the day, prevention and chronic-condition maintenance, via healthy lifestyle behaviors, will produce the most dramatic impact.

This is what *we* do!

The opportunity for our industry to develop and deliver profound solutions depends on our ability to understand and embrace how the world has changed over the last decade. We need to appreciate how people now access information, and accept the fact that a service-based, bricks-and-mortar business such as our own has to adapt to, and involve, technology if it wants to motivate people to improve their health and well-being.

Today, consumers want only the information that's relevant to their specific needs and wants. Because there's too much *noise* to filter, they're tuning out everything that doesn't apply to them.

Your members are discussing your club in brand-related conversations virtually every hour of every day. And your prospects, clients, partners, and others are researching your business online, instantaneously, and expect to be able to do so with ease. We need to make absolutely sure that our physical and online presence and operations work together seamlessly, as they're quickly becoming one and the same.

We also need to master social media. It's about so much more than simply having a Facebook or LinkedIn page, a YouTube presence, or a FourSquare account. It is, more importantly, about understanding your best customers and brand advocates, as well as those who harbor either negative or neutral attitudes about your club. It's about data collection, engagement, and segmentation. It's about delivering personalized messages to your members and qualified prospects—communicating *with* them, but not *to* them.

Clubs need to create a comprehensive, integrated marketing strategy that uses traditional and new media. If we do our jobs in this regard, the government, the healthcare community, and the general population will see us for what we are—*health* clubs—that hold many of the keys to solving the healthcare crisis that we all face. —