

A studio owner's guide to a *successful launch*

TOP TIPS FROM EXPERTS IN BOUTIQUE FITNESS



 xplor
mariana tek

Are you ready to open *your own fitness studio?*

There's no exact career path that leads to being a successful boutique fitness studio owner. The real common ground is *passion, tenacity, and eagerness to learn.*

The Mariana Tek team of former instructors, studio operators and marketers—*plus four successful studio founders* – have shared their top learnings to help you launch your new studio!

In the eBook, *you'll learn:*

- **The trends driving growth in boutique fitness**
- **Key advice from four successful studio founders**
- **The difference a customer-first mindset can make**
- **A checklist for getting started**





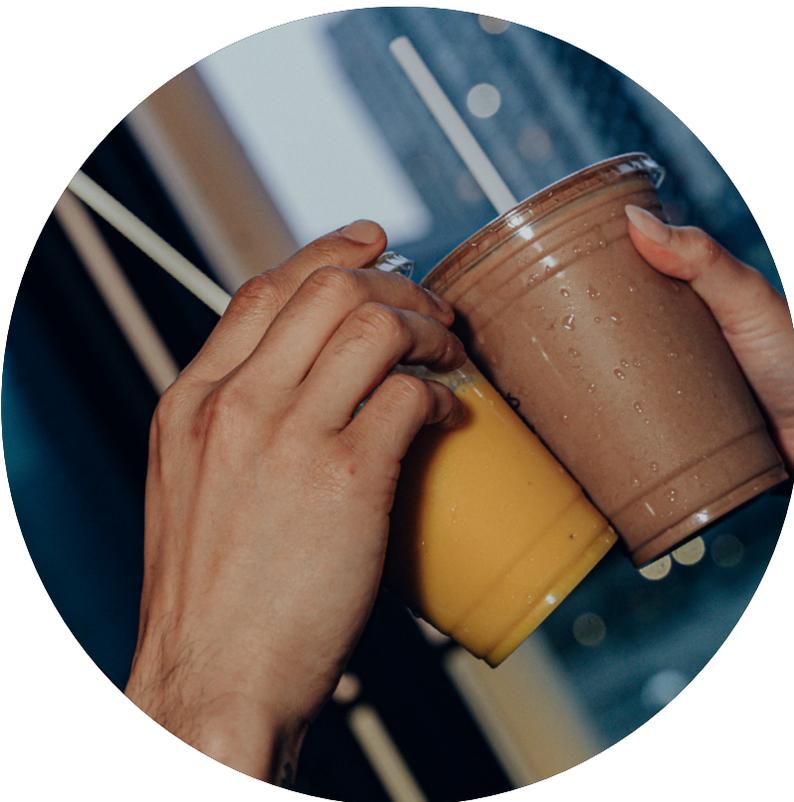
The boutique fitness industry *at-a-glance*

Boutique fitness studios offer specialized classes and experiences and represent an explosive category in the fitness industry. The boutique fitness industry is experiencing remarkable growth, with the global market projected to reach a staggering *USD 79.66 billion by the end of 2029, as compared to USD 48 billion in 2022*. This surge in popularity can be attributed to the unique and meticulously curated experience offered by boutique fitness studios.

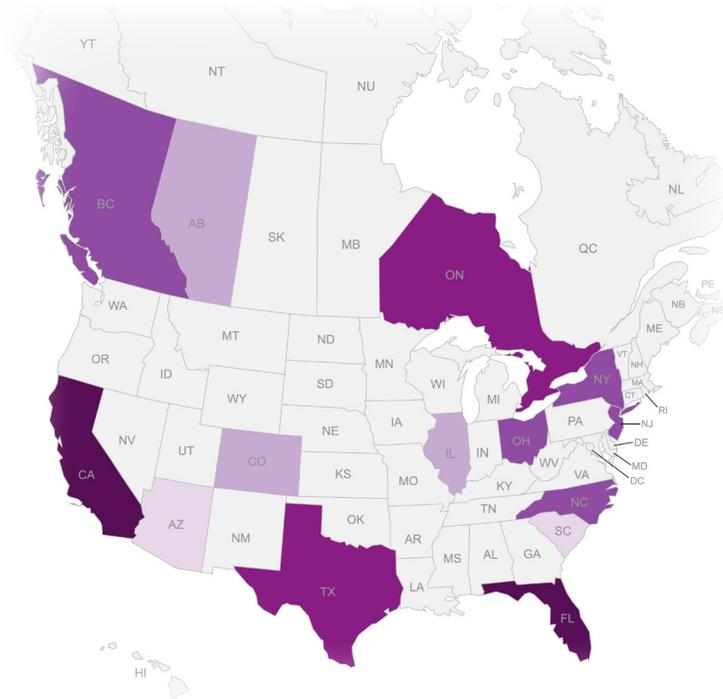
What's leading to *market growth*?

Mariana Tek's 2023 Trends Report went in-depth on trends fueling the growth of the industry:

- **Expansion into wellness:** 60% of boutique studios are growing their businesses by starting to offer wellness services (cold plunge, infrared sauna, etc.) within the next 1-2 years.
- **Gen-Z buying behaviors:** The growing Gen-Z generation values a sense of community and seeks personal experiences (two pillars of boutique fitness).
- **Social media growth:** boutique fitness studios are finding growth through social media community-building and influencer marketing. Our report showed that 28% of new leads for studios came from social media in 2023.



Regional markets experiencing growth

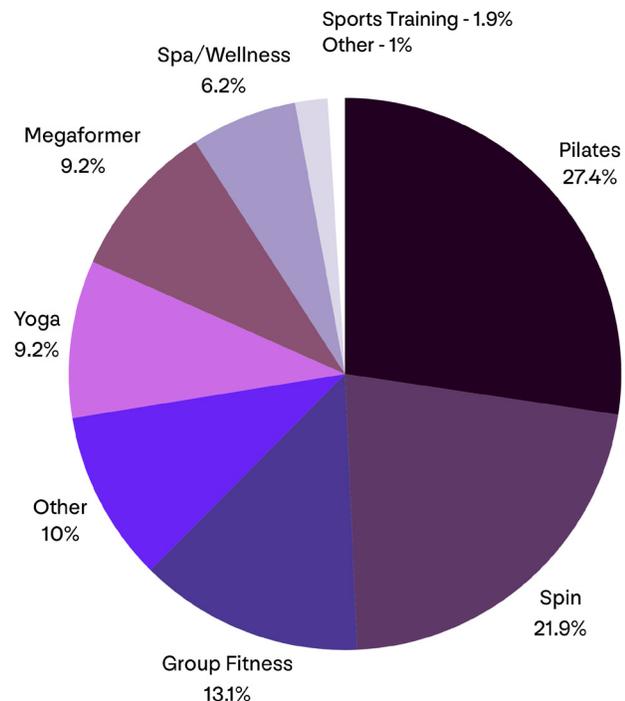


While new studios are opening all over the globe, there are a handful of regions in which Mariana Tek has seen boutique fitness grow rapidly.

According to Mariana Tek data, here are the top 15 North American states and provinces with the largest count of boutique fitness studios. The darker the color, the more studios.

New boutique fitness studios by *modality*

According to Mariana Tek data, Pilates studios are the most popular boutique fitness modality opened in 2023. Spin, Group Fitness and yoga were also popular.



Q&A: Yoga Studio Founder



Bobby Kittleman

RA YOGA

Southern California

RA YOGA WAS FOUNDED IN 2011 IN ORANGE COUNTY, CA. THE STUDIO NOW OFFERS 14 DIFFERENT TYPES OF YOGA AT THEIR 3 SOCIAL LOCATIONS AND ANNUAL YOGA RETREATS.

rayoga.com

Take us back to the beginning. What led to the founding of RA Yoga?

I was that kid who was devising a business plan for selling lemonade. Prior to Ra's formation, I was working in corporate strategy along with a side hustle working in music promotion. Add in falling in love with the community and practice of yoga in my early 20s, led to writing a business plan for a yoga studio. Luckily I found a business partner and we took our shot, throwing all our savings and life energy into it.

What was the process like securing a location for your studio?

This was a major business lesson right off the bat for us. The first lease we signed ultimately fell through before opening. During the lease negotiations, we had a feeling it was not a good fit, but it made great "business sense" so we signed the contract. Then two months and thousands of dollars later, everything fell apart. We were devastated. We resolutely searched for a new location and opened many months later in early 2011. Looking back now, if the original space had opened, we likely would not have been successful. Two lessons learned: trust your gut and sometimes what you think is a curse in the moment is a blessing in the future.

What fueled you most during the early, difficult moments?

Ultimately remembering our 'Why' helped us persevere through the inevitable highs and lows of operating a new business. In my opinion, you have to like staying busy to succeed over the long haul. It was particularly critical early on when there was little money for employees. As an owner, you will likely find yourself having to clean, work the front desk, learn to be an audio expert, build benches, and become a semi-professional plumber. The life of a fitness studio owner is less glamorous than one might expect. But in the hardest moments, we kept putting the customer experience first. With the thought being if everyone who comes in the door has a great experience, everything will work itself out.

“ I kept putting the customer experience first. My thought was, that if everyone who comes in has a great experience, everything will work itself out.

BOBBY KITTLEMAN
RA YOGA



What's one of the biggest lessons you've learned?

So many! You must be 100% committed – whole heart, whole everything. And what that looks like on a day-to-day basis will change as your studio grows and changes. You must have faith that it'll all work out even if it seems impossible. You want to be logical about it, but at the same time, it's a tightrope and you can't look down. An optimistic attitude is critical.

Q&A: Group Fitness Studio Founder



Greg Hetherington

THE FUEL TRAINING CLUB

Toronto, CA

FUEL TRAINING CLUB WAS
FOUNDED IN 2013 AND IS LOCATED
IN TORONTO.

fueltrainingclub.ca

What led to you opening Fuel Training Club?

I came from a professional sports background where training with a group was standard practice. It was highly motivating and I looked forward to every session. However, the industry was still very much Personal Training dominant, so from a business perspective, I needed to develop an understanding of what the market was ready for. The big leap came when I realized that team sports training and team training for fitness enthusiasts could be one in the same. That led to the creation of Fuel Training Club.

What were some of the biggest challenges you experienced at the very beginning?

Our big opening weekend had a lot of buzz and all of our free classes were full. But by Monday, no one was a paying member. I hadn't slept in days and my stomach dropped - It was tough. But slowly and surely, the hard work began to pay off. We became profitable in the first year then opened our second and third studios within three years. What I adjusted for our subsequent location openings was to have a call to action right then and there during the free trial classes. You'll want to drive sign-ups right after the first class when emotions are high. We didn't have that for our first location opening, which was a miss.

Are there any tips you'd share for successful day-to-day studio operations?

Systems and their adherence will be the only thing that will help you stay balanced and sane. Establish communication policies and no-show policies, and stick to them. My favorite system I have in place is to wait 24 hours before addressing anything that isn't urgent but evokes an emotional response, no matter how big or little. This saves a lot of drama and personal sanity.

“ **What I adjusted for subsequent location openings was to have a call to action right then and there at the free trial classes, to drive sign-ups when emotions are high.**

GREG HETHERINGTON
THE FUEL TRAINING CLUB



What advice do you have for studio owners about the hiring process?

Non-owners can never love what you've built as much as you do. When you recognize that, you will stop micromanaging your staff and real progress can be made. I would also invest in recognition, appreciation, and milestones of your team. They are the backbone of your business, it can't exist without them.

How do you measure success? What are the metrics you look at?

It's easy to get stuck on membership numbers as the most important metric. But there's a nuance there that is studio-dependent. For instance, we have different membership tiers: 4, 8, 12 visits, and unlimited per cycle. If we look solely at membership numbers, we don't get a full understanding of the business's health. We look at members, total visits, and then deduce visits per member for a better idea of how things are going. We also, of course, look at revenue.

Q&A: Cycling Studio Founder



Andy Lin

RISE CYCLE

Toronto, CA

RISE CYCLE WAS FOUNDED IN 2021
AND HAS TWO STUDIO LOCATIONS.

risecycle.ca

What made you take the leap into studio ownership?

Music-based spin has given me a space to disconnect, reset, and learn to overcome. It's given me confidence and has made me stronger as an individual. I had a strong desire to share the experience with others.

What was the process like finding and building your first location?

They say no life experience is ever wasted. Previously, I worked in commercial real estate as a negotiator, which benefited me tremendously. The lease negotiation process can often take months so start early. And location is everything, but statistics and reports can only tell you so much. Go walk the streets, sit at a local coffee shop or patio, and just observe. You need to get to know the community.

Is there anything you would have done differently? or advice you'd give new owners about this process?

My biggest advice to entrepreneurs is to just go and do it. It is easy to get stuck in analysis paralysis. Sometimes, looking for faults in your plan is just a delay tactic. If you believe you are ready, go and do it.

Do you have advice for new studio owners about pricing and packaging special offers?

As a new boutique studio, people won't have an understanding of your product or service. They are hesitant to buy when there is no brand behind it. So giving people flexibility in memberships is important to start to build that trust. Pop-ups can also help potential buyers to get to see and feel your product or service.

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ANDY LIN
RISE CYCLE



What is the best part of being a studio owner?

The best part is being able to share this magical experience with others. Being able to help and serve others is a privilege, even if it means putting a smile on someone's face. Hearing the feedback and the reviews make everything worthwhile. When you are driven by passion rather than profits, your perception is different.

What has helped you maintain work-life harmony?

It's a 24/7/365 job. But loving what you do helps make the long days feel more manageable. I am also learning to accept the fact that indoor group fitness can be a very seasonal business. So, taking time off during the slow season has helped.

Q&A: Pilates Studio Founder



Cassie Piasecki

THE FULL ROUTINE

Newport Beach, CA

THE FULL ROUTINE WAS FOUNDED IN 2023 AND HAS TWO STUDIO LOCATIONS IN CALIFORNIA.

thefullroutine.com

What made you take the leap into studio ownership?

After being in the fitness industry for the last 35 years, I had built some very cool programs and studios, but it was all for someone else. After a life-changing experience in May of 2023, I decided that at 55 years old, it was time to do it for me.

What did you learn during the lease negotiation process, or about finding a location?

I was very lucky. Finding studios zoned for fitness in Newport Beach, CA, is not easy. Studio number one fell into my lap by coincidence last year, and it was already zoned for fitness. When I started the intention for studio number two, another space came to me out of the blue. It was already zoned for fitness, too. So, it all was meant to be. I've had quite a bit of experience with leases from my previous roles, so I knew the questions to ask and the areas where I could negotiate.

What is the best part of owning your studio?

Looking at a full room of eager clients waiting to do the workouts I designed, and watching the instructors who have never taught group fitness become sell-out instructors.

What advice would you give new owners about this process?

Trust yourself and be confident in your decisions and your methods. If you don't believe in yourself and your concept 100%, your staff and clients won't either. BE CONFIDENT! At the same time, I accepted early on that I couldn't do it all myself. It was so beneficial to hire people to do the things I was not able to do, like building a website, setting up schedules, and overseeing construction.

I also invest a lot of time and energy into making sure that my instructors are happy. Happy instructors = happy clients!

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CASSIE PIASECKI

THE FULL ROUTINE



What has helped you maintain work-life harmony?

My own workouts are non-negotiable! I get up at 4:15 am to do my morning routine. No one gets me until I'm done. I also go to bed super early. Sleep is important!



Setting your studio up for *healthy revenue*

Let's talk dollars and cents. To build a successful business, you've got to have a plan for pricing and packaging, your revenue targets, and your growth goals. **Here are some tips from the experienced members of the Mariana Tek team that will help you build a healthy, profitable business.**

Boost *initial revenue* with a presale

A presale is a growing trend in the market where boutique studio owners offer special, select memberships at a steep discount before their doors even open. This strategy does a few things:

- **Adds a boost of early revenue**
- **Creates a sense of urgency around a special price**
- **Establishes founding members, to start your community building**
- **Fills your classes starting on day one**

HOW SHOULD I RUN A PRESALE?

Start with an exclusive group who you want to be your ‘founding members’. This should include active fitness influencers within your community. Offer them the deepest discount. Then, open the invitation to the public to join, but for a limited time.

WHO SHOULD I INVITE TO A PRESALE?

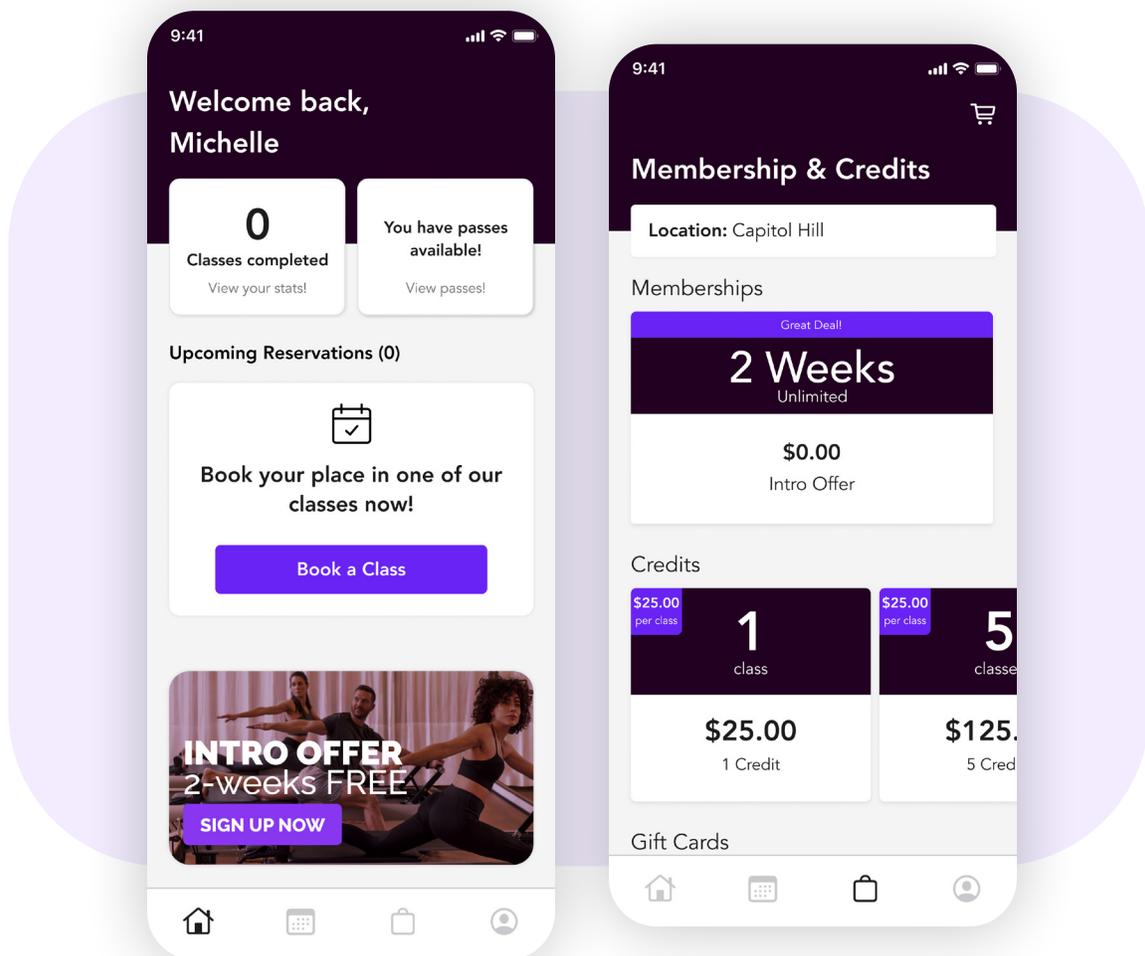
Your first focus should be on your network connections, influencers, and a target list of folks most active in fitness in your community. Offer them founders discounts. Once you’ve tapped that well, move to an open presale, at a different rate for a limited time. Having members sign up ahead of time is a great thing - but you do want to have a reasonable cutoff to switch to regular pricing.

HOW DO I BUILD A LIST TO INVITE TO A PRESALE?

This is where you really need to get out in the community! Attend fitness events, partner with other studios, and host free pop-up classes. Attend local community events or town meetings.

Determine your membership and packaging

Offer longer trials - rather than a single free class, our team recommended 2-weeks unlimited so customers can test a few different classes or get a better sense of the community.



Match the market - do your research into competitor pricing so you know what's realistic. *Keep it simple* - start with a few different packages and see what your customers are drawn to.

Make conversion to paid easy - as Greg Hetherington learned, *make registration a clear call to action at the end of free trial classes*. People are fresh off a new fitness experience and emotions are high.

Drive growth through automation

When your studio opens, your database of customers and potential customers will grow every day. Automation available through Mariana Tek makes it effortless for studio owners to communicate with this ever-changing client list. All it takes is a bit of setup, then you can focus on the day-to-day in-studio activities and see your business grow.

We asked our team: *‘What are some “must-have” automated communications for new studio owners can setup along the customer journey?’*

HERE’S WHAT THEY SAID:

- **A welcome/get ready for class email:** *“We’re excited to meet you! Here’s what you need to know.”* Everyone is on a different phase of their fitness journey, so this message must be warm, welcoming and detailed.
- **A first-class follow-up text:** A simple personalized text after their first class asking *“How was it?”* is the top-performing text we see owners implement. It gets the highest response rate and drives a lot of great engagement and feedback. And through Mariana Tek, it can be customized and can come from you, even though it’s automated, so it truly feels personal.

Michelle! Your first class is in the books! It was great meeting you today. Did anyone have the chance to share our new-client special?

- **Reminders at critical conversion points:** Map out the entire customer journey and look for key touchpoints you can automate for everyone. This could be triggered by a date (i.e. trial expiring) or a package quantity (i.e. one visit remaining). Be sure that when your customer needs to make a decision, you're one step ahead of them.

Built-For-You: Lean on proven marketing experts!

Built-For-You by Mariana Tek is a monthly subscription service for customers who need additional support for their marketing efforts! Through 1:1 strategy calls, performance audits, document templates, a network of trusted service providers and more.

👏 **I'm blown away by the attention and support from Built-For-You. We have learned so much and have improved our business greatly in such a short amount of time!**

HOTBOX FITNESS

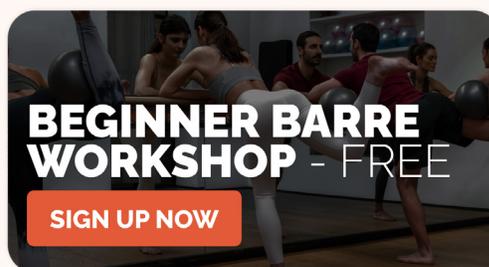
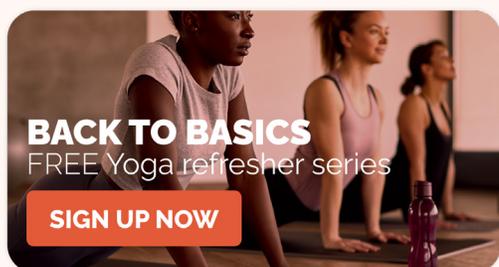
BOOK A DEMO

Embracing the *customer-first* mindset

Reflecting on his first few months as a studio owner, Bobby Kittleman said the customer first mindset was a key factor to his success. *‘I kept putting the customer experience first. My thought was, that if everyone who comes in has a great experience, everything will work itself out.’* We couldn’t have said that better ourselves.

Here are some simple tactics you can deploy in your first few months to help your customers feel supported and right at home at your studio:

- **Give away swag** - everyone loves a new workout ‘fit - and it’s free advertising!
- **Host a community event** - invite your new members to socialize and meet each other; invite your clients post-class for coffee
- **Offer free classes** - to show your gratitude just because



- **Invest in their goals** - show encouragement and help with accountability.
- **Set up a feedback loop** - whether online or in-person, ask for feedback.

Customer-first advice from our team...



You have to adapt to the industry and incorporate trends to provide what your community wants. For example, a HIIT focused gym can have a day dedicated to mobility or yoga to provide members variety.

ELISA POGU CADIZ

Sales Team



Go above and beyond to get to know your clients. You have to show up for your people. A successful studio owner I used to know used to take clients out for coffee during his breaks.

CRYSTAL GIORGI

Sales Team



Allowing for free guests can be a fantastic community builder and customer acquisition tool.

MOLLIE NAVARRO

Customer Success Team

There are many things to consider when opening a new studio. Choosing the right partner will be critical for a *smooth, successful start* and a *bright future*! Mariana Tek is the number one choice for seasoned entrepreneurs and those just starting out.

Book your custom demo today to see how your software can set you up for success before you even open your doors.

BOOK A DEMO



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