

Small Business **TRENDS**

Spotlight: Welcyon Helps Adults Over 50 Get in Shape

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For many people, the new year is a new opportunity to get in shape. Gyms are often overcrowded this time of year with people looking to maintain their resolutions. But for some, this type of environment isn't conducive to getting the best results. Welcyon, Fitness After 50 is dedicated to creating a better environment for some fitness enthusiasts to thrive.

As the name suggests, Welcyon is a health club specifically for adults over 50. The business creates exercise protocols specifically designed for the needs of people in this age group. Learn more about Welcyon's business concept and philosophy in this week's Small Business Spotlight.

What the Business Does:

Offers a fitness club for adults over 50.

The club includes one-on-one fitness and nutrition coaching for members, along with regular exercise equipment and wellness and social events throughout the year.

Welcyon uses a franchise system to reach potential customers around the country. Currently, the business has locations in a handful of states including Idaho, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Nevada.

Business Niche:

Catering to people over 50.

This means that the health club franchise focuses specifically on the needs of customers in its target age group. Welcyon also creates health and fitness plans specifically for its members. Co-founder Suzy Boerboom says:

“We cater exclusively to people over 50. That’s the obvious difference, but we make it a success by supporting our members with one-on-one coaching; safe and smart equipment; and a friendly, non-intimidating environment.”

How the Business Got Started:

After gaining years of experience in the health care industry.

Boerboom and her husband both worked in the health care business for years. And they also owned six successful Curves franchises before starting Welcyon. So they were very familiar with the aging demographic shift in America. They decided that a health club specifically for an older demographic could be successful and they went for it.

Biggest Risk:

Investing their own capital.

To launch the business, the Boerbooms and their business partner, Paul Contris, invested their own money. They didn’t take out a single loan, which allowed them to keep full control of their business. But it was a significant financial risk for the team.

Biggest Win:

Attracting high quality franchisees.

The business recently sold three franchises back-to-back. But the bigger triumph for them was attracting people who already had some knowledge and interest in the industry. Those types of franchisees, they say, can really help a business thrive.



Lesson Learned:

Make marketing a priority.

Boerboom explains:

“I would have brought a marketing expert on board, and partnered with a public relations firm right away. These two factors have made an outsized difference in our ability to get the message out, and connect with the right kind of investors.”

How They’d Spend an Extra \$100,000:

Building brand awareness.

In order for a franchise business like Welcyon to thrive, it needs to be able to reach as many markets as possible. Building brand awareness can lead to more franchisees, which can lead to more profits.



How the Business Got its Name:

Combining wellness with Greek mythology.

Welcyon (pronounced well-see-on) is a mix between the word wellness and the word halcyon. In Greek mythology, the halcyon bird has the power to calm rough ocean waters so she can nest. The idea of comfort, joy and energy mixed with wellness is what the brand stands for.
