

PROFESSIONAL EDGE

the web

The World of Fitness Education
in Our Hands, Literally

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flow

of fitness
education



Fitness instructors and personal trainers in the last century had a great number of challenges in the arena of certification and continuing education. We had to save money; find continuing education events within a radius we could afford to travel; and then invest in hotel rooms, meals and convention accessories. This author remembers feeling a great deal of stress when renewing certifications in the past because he was living on an island in the Caribbean where there was a limited amount of continuing education program availability. Furthermore, when searching out specialty education programming such as Pilates or BOSU®, ample options were not always within reach.

The Internet now blazes new paths for today's fitness professionals, however. It puts cutting-edge fitness research from the best course developers in the world literally right into our hands—onto our smartphone, pad or laptop. Viable Internet-based learning also provides continuing education options for certification renewal. Group exercise instructors wishing to fast-track their career growth in order to teach different modalities, incorporate different types of equipment, and improve their overall teaching and communication skills, now have a variety of courses available to them, right from the convenience of their home or work space. Personal trainers wanting to develop their own business skills, improve marketing skills and learn how to add different pieces of equipment to their training repertoire, also can choose from online courses given by reputable, successful organizations in the industry. Among the options available today are webinars, continuing education workshops, courses and certifications.

Webinars

A *webinar* is a live chat, with or without audiovisual accompaniment, offered in a particular language to anyone who signs up from anywhere in the world. The advantage of the webinar is that all participants enjoy the opportunity of interacting live with the panelist or panelists and share the “buzz” of being part of the live event. A further advantage of the webinar is that any participant missing the live option due to work schedule or inconvenient time zone, from any place on the planet can listen to the entire webinar as it was originally delivered. Webinars are always recorded for later viewing, and can be accessed as easily as downloading a song from the Web.

Workshops and Courses

Continuing education *workshops* and *courses* bring both baseline and in-depth knowledge for fitness professionals hungry to fast-track their careers and burgeon in both theoretical and practical knowledge. AFAA's new five-hour Live Online CEU Workshops do just that. They must be joined during specific times in order to take advantage of the live nature of the course. The upside to these live courses is that you can have real-time answers from subject matter experts via AFAA's patent pending LQA Education™ (Live Question and Answer) Workshops. In addition, all of these five-hour courses are archived for convenient on-demand viewing (live presenter interaction is not available during archived viewing).

Lyndsay Bobkova, an AFAA certified group exercise leader and personal trainer living in Moscow, needed to hone her Pilates skills at a time when such education was not available within a practical geographical perimeter for her. She says, “I signed up for the ‘Practical Pilates’ course at afaa.com, downloaded the PDF manual right to my iPad®, got 5 CEUs for the course, and learned what I needed while I stayed at home.”

Similarly, instructors and trainers from all over the world take advantage of such continuing education courses because they not only need to acquire knowledge that oftentimes proves difficult to locate, but also acquire continuing education credits applicable toward certification renewals. AFAA's Internet courses, forming its “e-AFAA” branch, offer a complete selection in its virtual campus for both personal trainers and group fitness instructors. Individuals interested in mind-body online courses can choose from different forms of yoga, Pilates and stress management, with and without props. More traditional group fitness courses exist from Group Resistance Training and Music Essentials to specific disciplines like Fighting Obesity, Perinatal Fitness and Golden Hearts: Active at any Age™ instructor training. Keli Roberts, owner of Keli's Real Fitness and online educator based in California, claims, “For me, the convenience of online continuing education units is a blessing of convenience and simplicity by having access to top educational content online.”

Certification

Finally, the online *certification* process totally revamps the old-fashioned method of traveling to a specific location to endure both theoretical and practical testing. Participants from anywhere in the world with a live Internet connection can log on and acquire AFAA's nationally accredited certification.

Manuel Velázquez, Group Fitness Instructor based in Tecate, México, at the Rancho La Puerta Spa, teaches and trains clients from all over the world. “In my geographic area, there are no certifications near me, as I'd have to travel all the way up to California and back. I recently went through the AFAA online Personal Trainer Certification, which let me stay home and still attend the live workshop with my Internet and camera. A third-party service monitored me while I took both the written and practical exam, and I never had to leave home.”

For both personal and group certifications, AFAA offers accredited certifications known for blending both theoretical and practical aspects of testing, with the convenience of students being able to remain at home. Thanks to the technology of Virtual Network Computing (VNC), candidates allow a third-party service to monitor and access their computer screen while taking exams, as well as watching via webcam for theoretical and practical examinations.

Leading the technology in worldwide Internet fitness education for such aforementioned courses and certifications is AFAA's Multitraining Live®, which is an advanced, technology driven, live study group resource with the goal of uniting aspects of *all* the

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aforementioned Web-based learning possibilities into one seamless experience: video chat, webinar training, voice instant messaging, group videoconferencing, Powerpoint presentation with document sharing, and live, online study groups.

Valerie Grant, a Philadelphia-based AFAA certified instructor teaching Feldenkrais and Pilates, claims, “What I love most about using AFAA’s Multitraining Live is that I not only can stay at home and still be a part of a live experience, but I also get to see other classmates with me as we interact, question and learn! I remember a time when I had not even a cell phone, and am thrilled that our technology has reached such heights that the university and gym unite and come right into my home when convenient.”

Benefits

All of these Internet-based learning options offer a plethora of benefits. To any critics claiming that the effects of being in a “live” training are lost, Melissa Baumgartner, Founder and President of Wellness Speaks and International Training Specialist for AFAA, based in Missouri, clarifies the evolution of what this means today. She says, “Thanks to evolving technology, this word ‘live’ has changed over the years. ‘Live’ training is now being ‘in the same space’ with others, be it on the phone, computer, or sitting across from one another in the same room. ‘Live’ means being able to learn and share ideas in real time.”

To be sure, other advantages of such live, Internet-based learning exist. First, with the ability to log onto the Internet from home without the need to travel, more time for both study and learning immediately becomes available. Without the stress of showing up at a specific location and taking a test, there is additional emphasis on learning in a more familiar, relaxed environment of one’s own choosing. With the usual monetary burden of travel, hotel and meals now removed, the financial benefit also becomes an incentive for distance learning. Finally, the availability of online review sessions before taking examinations decreases stress, improves performance, and heightens the overall learning experience, which results in better overall career enjoyment.

Deborah Puskarich, Group Exercise Director for the renowned Cooper Fitness Center at Craig Ranch in Texas, says, “Before I took the Primary [Group Exercise] Certification, I signed up for a convenient Primary Group Exercise Certification review course online for only \$20USD, and that hour really helped me be sure

I was ready to take the written and practical exam. Because there was a camera as well, I was able to see as well as hear answers to my questions about practical movement skills.”

So you may be wondering how online learning will benefit the various providers of fitness education. It will ultimately allow top presenters and training companies a way to reach out and share their materials and education regardless of where in the world they may be. AFAA’s Director of Distance Education, Kathy Stevens states, “We have only just scratched the surface of what can and will be via the World Wide Web when it comes to affordable, quality education. You can be sure that AFAA will lead the way in this new medium. Our three AFAA studios were created with this purpose in mind and are booked steadily with exciting new programming and partners in distance education. Soon, AFAA providers from around the world will be able to contribute to our growing selection of top-notch Live Online Workshops, by delivering their own workshops utilizing AFAA’s production capabilities.”

Get Connected

Given the Internet’s current, expanded role in the field of fitness education, today’s fitness professional cannot afford to be without connection to the Web. Whereas in years past fitness specialists had to travel to continuing education events, now the quality of those same teachers and trainings comes right onto everyone’s palm or computer screen. Given the international trend of all businesses to use Internet-based learning for the dissemination of education, today’s fitness options are unprecedented. With the plethora of AFAA’s cutting-edge technological advancements such as the LQA Education™ Workshops and Multitraining Live®, AFAA sets a high standard in the field of Internet-based education with its complete, virtual campus, thereby revamping how the fitness world thinks—and will continue to think—about online education. AF

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