

So You Want to **Be a Fitness** Convention Presenter?

Three Practical Ways
to Make it Happen
BY LAWRENCE BISCONTINI, MA

a program or piece of equipment? Knowing your expected outcome is necessary because sometimes fitness presenting opportunities do not contribute to all of these aforementioned goals.

Nevertheless, this author has heard a “yes” to each of the preceding questions at various times, and they are valid for different reasons. Regardless of one’s rationale, the key question future presenters must be able to answer is, “What is remarkably unique about both my content and my delivery?”

Packaging your concept, product or message has to be distinct in order to gain attention and stand apart. Shannon Fable, recipient of the 2013 IDEA Instructor of the Year Award and certified *Book Yourself Solid*® coach, reminds all hopefuls in her mentoring company, Sunshine Fitness Resources, that “when you have an outstanding presenting idea, it’s most probably true that someone also has a similar idea, so your branding and messaging have to be as important as *what* it is you will try to sell.”

Method Two: Pay to Play

The second method for appearing at fitness shows is to consider paying a “presentation fee,” which is offered by some conventions. Those such as IDEA World Fitness Convention usually add promotional sessions during lunch and evening time slots to allow delegates the opportunity to experience even more types of sessions. Conventions reveal in full disclosure that these resemble “paid advertisements” in magazines or television commercials because they usually involve showcasing at least one piece of novelty equipment.

A related method for securing a presenting session at a fitness convention is to consider becoming a sponsor or purchasing a booth at the exposition section of that event. Oftentimes, booth rental and/or sponsorship come(s) with the privilege of showcasing products or programs within the convention. The actual number of educational or promotional time slots of sessions within



CONSIDER THESE PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS:

1. Gain experience: Book yourself doing workshops in your area in as many different ways as possible: for charity, fees and promotions. Every time you finish a workshop, go back to your outline and make it better.
2. Evaluate: Always distribute anonymous evaluation forms after workshops so people can evaluate you on both your delivery and content. Take all comments as constructive feedback if they offer you ways to grow professionally, and hone your craft.

Think about including the following:

- a. This content was valuable and new for me.
 - b. This presenter's delivery was appropriate for the material and audience.
 - c. I received many takeaway items to implement with my clients and classes.
 - d. The course length was appropriate.
 - e. What I'd suggest to improve content, delivery, or both would be _____.
3. Attend: Visit major conventions and meet presenters. Network and give out your business card so people know you are interested in growing your career.

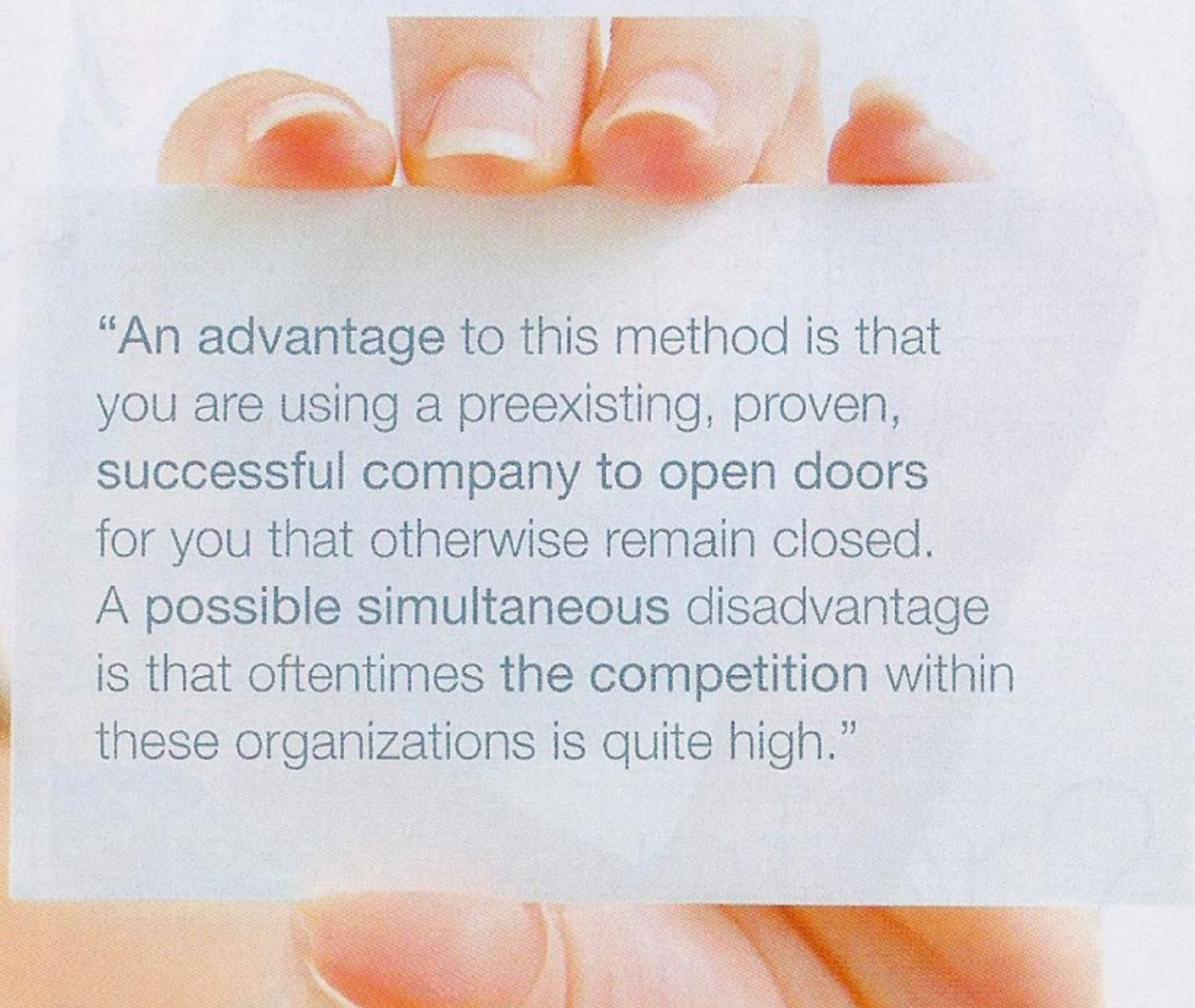
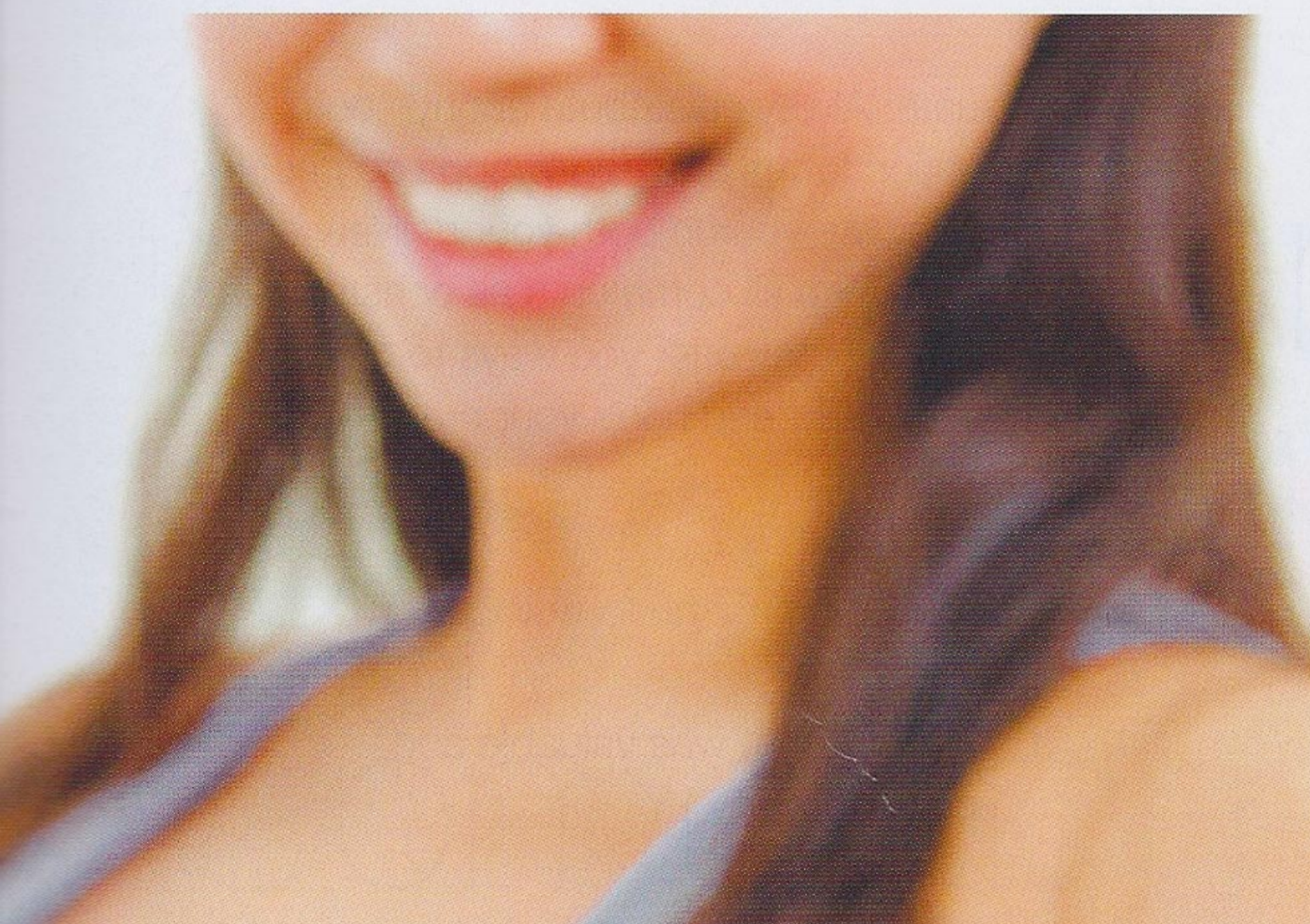
the convention depends on the total price paid and other contractual arrangements.

Method Three: Apply to Teach

The third method for securing a session at a convention is to “be discovered and accepted.” All of the major international fitness conventions offer an online presentation application. An advantage to this approach is that there are no fees to pay, products to sell, or expo hours to invest in order to be chosen, although the competition is always high. A disadvantage to this approach is that, without any previous presentation experience on the international convention circuit, new names can get lost in the shuffle amidst the dozens of individuals who also want to be fitness presenters. Bear in mind that it is quite customary for conventions to offer absolutely no compensation to such first-time presenters at their events.

Lilli Koppelman, event director for East Coast Alliance (ECA) events based in Long Beach, N.Y., claims, “First-time presenters have to be strong in their own geographic area, be recognized continuing education providers with organizations such as AFAA, and have experience giving workshops and collecting evaluations from their peers. A fitness convention is not the place to ‘try out’ your craft on hungry fitness professionals paying for, and expecting to learn new things.”

As Koppelman states above, since convention delegates would like to receive continuing education credits for the sessions they take, a presenter who can offer such credits proves to be far more appealing than one who isn’t a provider. To access online provider packets for specific organizations, websites will reveal the necessary paperwork. To receive the AFAA Continuing Education



“An advantage to this method is that you are using a preexisting, proven, successful company to open doors for you that otherwise remain closed. A possible simultaneous disadvantage is that oftentimes the competition within these organizations is quite high.”

Because the third approach can prove to be the most difficult, Smith recommends securing the services of a mentor early on. “This can be someone who doesn’t even teach what you teach, but who represents *who* you want to be in the industry.” A veteran fitness presenter can, she says, “write letters of recommendation, make phone calls, and open doors that otherwise would be impossible for you to do alone.”

Those trying to make successful applications should consider the following suggestions. Inner IDEA Programming Director Marcia Hayes, based in Encinitas, Calif., believes that “the best applicants are those that have a refreshing, research-based theme on a valid discipline. Some part of the presenter’s approach has to be new and innovative for me to take a chance on a new, unknown name.”

Panos Balatsinos, CEO of BASE Training and European Fitness Conventions, in Athens, Greece, notes, “I like when a *new* applicant comes with a referral from a *current* presenter so I have an opinion I trust from the outset.”

Faculty Provider Packet electronically, visit www.afaa.com and find the “CE Provider Application” to the left side of the home page.

Summary

Becoming a fitness presenter in today’s world has three basic routes. Choosing the best one is important, but not as important as ultimately knowing the reasons why you are entering into the fitness world career as a faculty expert in your field. AF

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LAWRENCE BISCONTINI, MA, has been mentoring fitness presenters for more than 20 years. With a master’s degree in Education and in Spanish, he continually strives to help conventions fill the right slots with the most appropriate fitness presenters for their topics. Lawrence has been on the Selection Committee for IDEA, and is an integral part of choosing talent at events like SCW Fitness and Asia Fitness Convention. Find mentoring tips with Lawrence at www.findLawrence.com.