

STRONG BODY, STRONG WILL, STRONG BUSINESS

Long-term goal setting and a robust on-line presence lead Top Form Fitness straight to success.

BY RACHEL CROCKER



The buzz phrase of the day may be “functional fitness,” but not all top trainers see merit in the popular approach. While Josh Hewett, owner of Toronto’s Top Form Fitness, may concede that his training style is based on a back-to-basics format, he steers clear of dropping the FF bomb.

“I’ve probably used the term more than I should have,” he laughs. “Trainers describe everything now as ‘functional,’ but it can be extremely hard to define.”

Hewett prefers tried-and-true moves that use body weight or free weights versus machines. Old-school moves like deadlifts and farmer’s walks have endured for decades because, as Hewett points out, “they stimulate a lot of muscle fibres, activate our nervous systems, burn tons of calories and have a huge carryover to our daily activities.”

Strength for all

As an avid strength athlete and competitor, Hewett recognizes that simple, dynamic movements using one’s own body weight benefit everyone from top performance athletes to stay-at-home moms looking to lose a few pounds.

“Some people believe that the equipment and moves I incorporate, like sled dragging and tire flipping, are strictly strongman exercises,” he says. “But to label them as such alienates entire groups of people who could really benefit from these exercises.”

From hobby to career

Hewett’s journey into the fitness industry began at age 17 when he decided to transform his six-foot, 145 lb. body into something he could take pride in. He found himself so hooked on working out that by 19 he had already earned two personal training certifications. At the young age of 18, he had the foresight to register the name “Top Form Fitness,” the name of his future business.

After graduating with a kinesiology degree and working for a large gym chain for several years, he realized that he had the passion for fitness, the business know-how and the self-discipline to make his living more independently. Today, he works with clients in his home studio, in their own home gyms and with post-rehab clients at a sports medicine clinic. He typically sees five to eight clients per day, six days a week.

Control your online destiny

Hewett has tapped into social networking to expand the scope of his business. His robust online presence is the result of several websites, a blog, numerous video training segments, an e-newsletter, a Facebook page and inclusion in online fitness directories.

“When you’re online, the world becomes your market,” he explains. “Some people are intimidated at first because they’re unfamiliar with internet marketing. It takes an initial time investment, but with a little digging you can get a solid understanding of what works.”

It’s important that all of your online content is high quality, advises Hewett. Don’t just concentrate on quantity. And always link back to your home site to be sure web browsers can easily find you.

Last year Hewett created his *Building the Complete Soccer Athlete: Train Like A Pro* DVD in collaboration with soccer coach Clayton Rosario. The DVD was the result of tremendous feedback from a youth soccer training video that Hewett posted on YouTube. Within weeks, the clip was viewed tens of thousands of times, and Hewett was bombarded with comments and questions from inquisitive soccer players looking to improve their games.

“I realized that while I couldn’t answer all of their questions by email, I could produce a tool to help them,” he recalls. Soccer’s world-wide popularity has made the DVD the perfect medium for those who can’t train with Hewett in person. To date it has sold over 300 copies with little or no marketing.

Plan for success

Today, Hewett is a happy father to baby Kaitlyn, a devoted husband to wife (and Top Form Fitness web designer) Olga and looking forward to many business projects in the upcoming year. These include writing a strength training ebook and DVD system and a nutrition and weight loss program with nutritionist Trionne Moore.

Hewett credits much of his business’s success to planning. “I consider myself successful, but there’s still a lot I want to accomplish,” he says. “If I didn’t have long term goals written down on paper, it would be hard to get to where I want to be because I wouldn’t know which direction to take.”

He also strongly believes that being passionate about your work is

the key to inspiring others. “Simply trying to figure out where the largest demographic is and working within those confines won’t work,” Hewett explains. “Incorporate what you love into your business, and success will follow.” FBC

Rachel Crocker is a Scarborough, Ont.-based writer and exercise enthusiast. You can reach her at rachel_debling@hotmail.com.



Name: Josh Hewett

Company: Top Form Fitness, Toronto, www.top-form-fitness.com, (416) 931-0800

Years in the industry: 20+

Qualifications: BA (kinesiology), NSCA Strength and Conditioning Specialist, ACE Certified Personal Trainer, Can-Fit-Pro Personal Training Specialist, Emergency Medical Care Attendant

Favourite resources:

Essentials of Strength Training and Conditioning by NSCA; *Supertraining* by Mel Siff; www.straighttothebar.com