

# get what you pay for

**L**iving in Chicago, there are literally hundreds of health clubs for customers like myself to explore. Everywhere from hole-in-the-wall places to boutique studios wants your business.

What's the difference? Perceived value. I work a few nights a week at one of these higher-end indoor cycling and rowing studios charging \$23 per 45-minute class — thank goodness I work there. I also belong to a gym that charges \$40 per month and has a discount or promotion going on seemingly every day.

These two businesses will never compete on price, but instead on quality and experience. Sound familiar?

GoCycle/GoRow has a tight-knit feel. You check in at the front desk, have help finding shoes and getting set up on the machines, and can get answers to your questions and easily provide feedback.

My experience at the other, much larger gym has been quite the opposite. I've complained about the same broken machine on a regular basis for the past six months — it's still broken. I've tried to call its billing department dozens of times for the phone to continue ringing, no answer or answering machine.

It's a good thing I don't expect as much from this "big box" fitness experience or else I would have already ran the other way. People who want a better experience are willing to pay more for one.

What do your customers come to you for?

## the IGC advantage

Unique products are certainly one component of the equation. This issue is

chock-full of products, many of which are brand new for 2016. Try adding just a couple to your lineup that catch your eye. Your customers will thank you.

Are shoppers willing to pay more for a brand they recognize? Bridget Behe is doing extensive research on perceived value of branded plants at Michigan State University. Flip to page 18 to discover these findings.

Different groups of people value different things. Consumer research, summarized on page 42, has found a unique market of married couples under age 50 with children under age 12. The "Homegrown Healthy Gardeners," as they call them, are more likely to look for organics and, I would say, pay more for them.

At any business, employees play a crucial role in creating an experience where customers are willing to spend more. The first step, however, is making sure you're hiring the right people. Turn to page 76 for nine steps to help you hire right.

If I complain about a broken machine (or a poor product), I want someone to actually get it fixed. If I pick up the phone to call a business, I'd like to talk to a friendly person. If I have absolutely zero knowledge about gym equipment (or plants), I want a knowledgeable staff member to help me.

These people should be your employees. They will take your business from the store that gets the job done to the store that people want to make a part of their lives.




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