

THE SUCCESS STACK

A ROADMAP FOR
FITNESS COMPANIES
DRIVEN BY THE
DIGITAL MARKETING
HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

A PUBLICATION BY
 **ANGELSMITH**





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A Roadmap for Fitness Companies Driven By The Digital Marketing Hierarchy of Needs

Last Update: January, 2025

Introduction	2
An Overview Of The Digital Marketing Hierarchy Of Needs	4
How To Use This Guide	6
Foundation	7
Urgency: Essential Urgency	
Goal: Establish Visibility	7
Core	11
Urgency: High Urgency	
Goal: Drive Leads	11
Growth	14
Urgency: Moderate Urgency	
Goal: Scale Impact	14
Leadership	17
Urgency: Strategic Urgency	
Goal: Inspire Authority	17
More Resources	20





Introduction

I **hate** it when a marketing campaign doesn't work!

As president of a digital marketing agency that has been in business for over 20 years, I have worked with hundreds of companies, seen all manner of marketing campaigns, tested pretty much every new shiny marketing object that comes along, and seen a lot of what works and even more of what doesn't.

There are lots of ways to torpedo a marketing campaign, but probably the most painful one is this: **Doing the right campaign at the wrong time.**

I don't mean doing a Valentine's Day campaign in July. I mean launching an ad campaign before analytics are fully-tested and giving you the info you need. Or killing yourself trying to post on social media instead of making sure you're ranking well in Google first. Or doing lead gen without having a full CRM with Marketing Automation capabilities built. No matter how well they are executed, these types of well-meaning campaigns are doomed to diminished performance because they are being launched before the proper foundation is set in place.

But given the wide range of tactics, technologies, and options available to digital marketers, how do you know what you should be working on next?

I've seen too many companies struggle with this question. I've fallen victim to poor choices myself. In order to spare us all that pain again, I created this **The Success Stack** for fitness companies. Based on decades of experience, The Success Stack utilizes a digital marketing hierarchy of needs to make it easy to understand what you should have done and completed before moving on to other marketing tactics.

This makes it clear what you need to do *before* moving on to the next thing. Are you really excited to start advertising on Instagram? Great - do you have a conversion funnel built and





ready? Analytics installed? A good star rating and number of reviews on your Google Business Profile? Ranking well for critical search terms already? If the answer is no to any of those items, you know to hold your horses and do the fundamentals first.

I find that following this process saves everyone time, money, and heartache. It encourages getting things right before getting ahead of ourselves. Most importantly, it allows everyone to focus their attention on doing the **right campaign at the right time**.

I truly believe that this is the best roadmap for ensuring the success of your company and your individual fitness centers as well. I hope it is helpful to you and I look forward to your questions and feedback - send them my way at erico@angelsmith.net.



Sincerely,

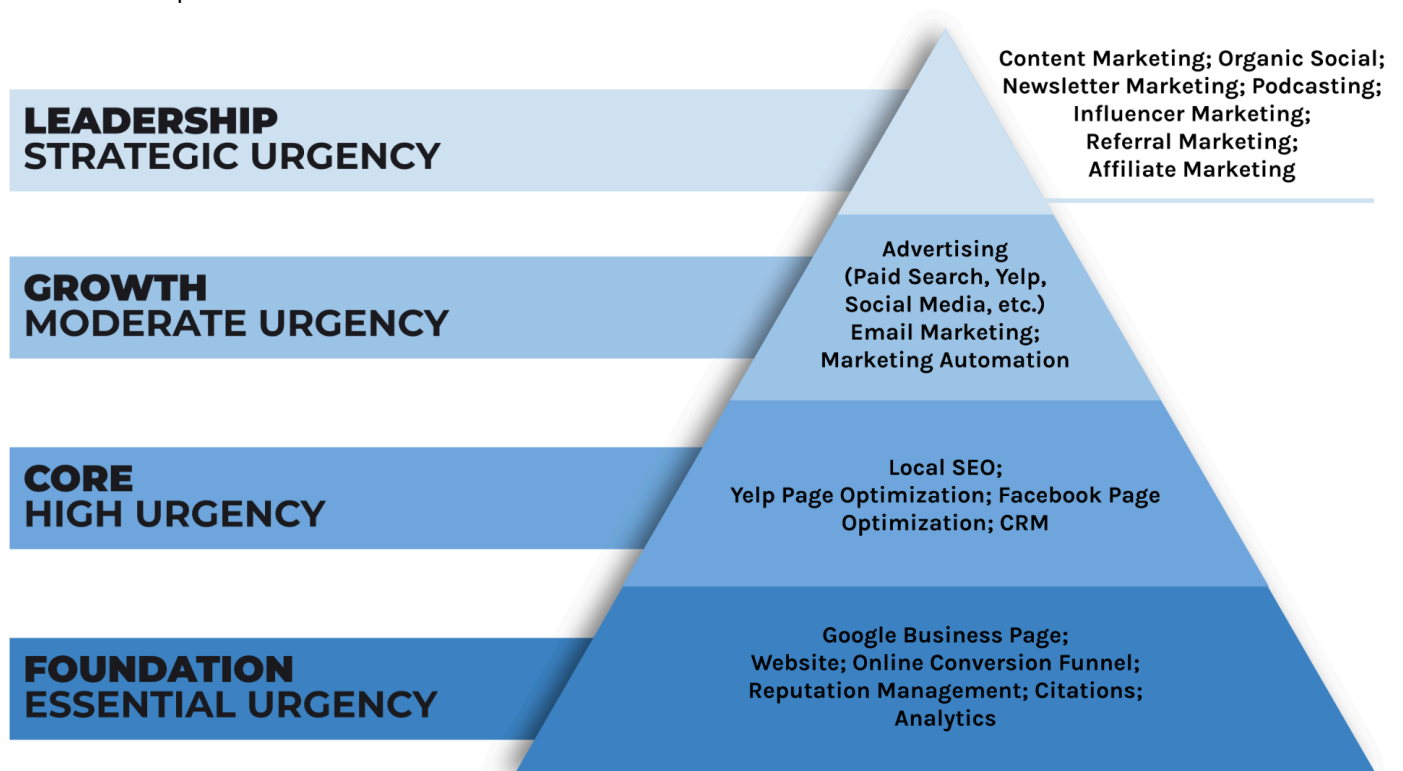
Eric Oliver, President
Angelsmith, Inc.





An Overview Of The Digital Marketing Hierarchy Of Needs

In order to assess what digital marketing a company needs, **The Success Stack** organizes digital marketing into a pyramid of four distinct levels—Foundation, Core, Growth, and Leadership:



1. **Foundation** elements are critical and are the foundation upon which all other marketing tactics depend. They are essential, and if missing should be considered the first priority to implement.





2. **Core** elements are also extremely important. They can not be implemented without the Foundation in place, but they should be considered the “basics” that should be covered before doing other tactics.
3. **Growth** elements drive more traffic and leads to the conversion mechanisms established in Foundation and Core. This phase is where you start pouring gasoline on the fire!.
4. **Leadership** elements go beyond Growth, lead gen, and immediate sales/conversions in order to expand the brand and create leadership in your chosen market. Not all companies will go into a Leadership phase, nor is it required for a company to be successful. But for those companies that have the resources to invest in this, it can yield dramatic results.

Each phase depends upon the previous phase. In most cases, you will not want to employ tactics from a higher up phase until the tactics used in the phases before it are fully implemented. For example, many companies rush to advertise without making sure that their analytics are in place, which diminishes their advertising since ad platforms can't optimize for delivery without conversion reporting in place. Other companies rush to post a bunch of social posts thinking that it's an effective way to generate sales, whereas more foundational items like Local SEO and Marketing Automation are often easier to implement and more effective at generating immediate sales.

By organizing the digital marketing options available to you in this way, the Digital Marketing Hierarchy Of Needs helps clarify exactly what you should be working on in your stage of development. It can save you time and money by allowing you to focus your efforts on the next right thing to do. In most cases, we have found it to also generate more revenue faster for those companies that follow it.





How To Use This Guide

We have organized this guide so that it covers each stage of the pyramid. For each stage, we include the following:

1. The **name** of the stage
2. **How urgent** this stage is. This is to help you understand the importance of completing the items in this stage.
3. The **goal** of the stage. This is to help you understand the overall focus of the stage.
4. **Key components:** These are the tactics, channels, or actions that make up this stage.
5. **Gating actions:** These are the items or benchmarks that you **MUST** achieve in order to consider this component “complete” in this stage. We present these gating actions in a “checklist” format for each key component. You should complete all the gating actions within a given stage before moving on to the next stage.

We recommend that you read each stage, examine each component, and check off whether its gating actions are completed or not. If all of them are NOT completed, we suggest prioritizing their completion before moving on to the next stage. Sometimes this means waiting longer than you'd like. For example, many companies want to be advertising rather than spending their time improving their local SEO rankings. But we have structured these stages this way for a reason: too often, we have seen companies spend time and resources on Growth or Leadership, only to find that the ROI isn't working out because users are turned off by reviews, the user experience on the website, difficulty scheduling, and so on.

Bottom Line: Use this guide to understand the key components, goals, and tactics at each stage of the pyramid in order to effectively allocate your resources and achieve success.





Foundation

Urgency: Essential Urgency

Goal: Establish Visibility

The Foundation stage is all about setting the groundwork for your digital presence. Without these fundamental elements in place, it becomes nearly impossible to grow your online visibility or attract potential customers. This stage focuses on ensuring your business is discoverable, trustworthy, and equipped to convert leads effectively. It involves critical tasks like claiming and optimizing your Google Business Profile, building a functional and engaging website, and managing your reputation online. These efforts create a solid base, giving potential customers a clear and positive impression of your business while making it easier for them to find and engage with you. Addressing these elements immediately is essential for any fitness business aiming to stay competitive in the digital landscape.

Key Components and Gating Actions:

1. Google Business Profile:

a. **Description:** Your Google Business Profile acts as a virtual storefront on Google Search and Maps, giving potential customers critical information like your location, hours, and reviews. It's one of the most important tools for local visibility and credibility. An optimized profile ensures that customers find accurate and appealing information about your business, driving both traffic and trust. Google places a heavy emphasis on profiles in its ranking algorithm, making this a foundational necessity.

b. Gating Actions:

- Claim and verify your Google Business Profile.
- Complete all fields with accurate information: business name, address, phone number, hours, and business category. We have built a [Google Business Profile Corporate SOP Generator](#) which will help you define your corporate guidelines for Google Business Profiles. You can either give this to individual location managers for them to complete or you





can hand it to your internal team. Either way, it will help you optimize these profiles.

- Upload a minimum of 10 high-quality photos showcasing the business.
- Have a system (preferably automated) in place that ensures you respond to all customer questions within 24 hours. This system needs to be in place for all locations.

2. Website:

a. **Description:** Your website serves as the central hub of your digital presence, where visitors can learn about your offerings, engage with your brand, and take specific actions such as booking a session or making a purchase. It's essential for the site to be visually appealing, easy to navigate, and reflective of your brand's personality. A poor website experience can deter customers, while a well-designed one builds trust and encourages conversions.

b. Gating Actions:

- Mobile-friendly, fast-loading website with clear navigation.
- Include essential pages: Classes/Services, Location Finder, Individual Locations, etc. Note that we have an article which covers common mistakes fitness companies make when building individual location pages: [Top Ten Fitness Center Webpage Mistakes](#).
- Implement clear CTAs on every page (e.g., "Free Intro," "Book Now") that lead to your conversion funnel (see below).
- Install SSL for security and trust.
- Ensure ADA compliance for accessibility and reduce your liability.

3. Online Conversion Funnel:

a. **Description:** An online conversion funnel is a step-by-step process designed to guide visitors toward taking a desired action, such as booking an appointment or purchasing a membership. Basically, you want to move users from your website, through booking/purchasing, to a "thank you." Simply a phone number or a contact form is not enough - consumers will want to actually complete the process. Having a clear and functional funnel ensures you're effectively capturing leads and moving them further into your sales process. In





today's digital-first world, customers expect seamless and intuitive pathways to conversion.

b. Gating Actions:

- Enable online booking or lead capture forms for your primary lead capture offering (a “free intro”, “intro tour”, “intro class”, or whatever you’re using). Additional funnels are optional at this stage (general class booking, membership sales, etc.).
- Create a seamless process from initial page to thank-you page.
- Ensure tracking is set up (e.g., Google Tag Manager, conversion events in Google Analytics - see Analytics below)..

4. Reputation Management:

a. **Description:** Reputation management involves actively shaping how your business is perceived online by maintaining high review scores and responding promptly to customer feedback. Basically this is all about making sure you have lots of current, positive ratings. Positive reviews increase customer confidence, while timely responses demonstrate that you value your customers. Google also uses reviews (quantity, quality, and how quickly you respond) as a ranking factor, making reputation management crucial for both trust and visibility.

b. Gating Actions:

- Establish a system or process for regularly requesting reviews (e.g., post-visit email or SMS). Ideally, this should be automated, but you could have dedicated staff tasked with this.
- Establish a system or process for responding to all reviews (positive and negative) within 24 hours. Ideally, this should be automated as well, but you could have dedicated staff tasked with this.
- Achieve a minimum of 20 reviews on Google Business Profile for your locations.
- Achieve and sustain a 4+ star rating for your locations.
- Ensure the latest 10 reviews have responses.

5. Citations:





- a. **Description:** Citations refer to mentions of your business's name, address, and phone number (NAP) on other websites, such as directories sites like Yellow Pages, Citysearch, and so on. Consistency across these platforms is essential for building trust with search engines, which use this information to rank your business. Accurate citations also make it easier for potential customers to find and contact you.
- b. **Gating Actions:**
 - List your business on at least 50 local directories (e.g., Yelp, TripAdvisor).
 - Ensure consistent NAP (Name, Address, Phone) data across all platforms.
 - Pass a citation audit ([Moz offers a free tool](#) that is adequate for testing).

6. Analytics:

- a. **Description:** Analytics are the foundation of data-driven marketing, allowing you to track your performance and make informed decisions. Tools like Google Analytics and Microsoft Clarity provide insights into how visitors interact with your website, what channels are driving traffic, and where improvements are needed. Without analytics, you're essentially flying blind.
- b. **Gating Actions:**
 - Set up Google Tag Manager for analytics management.
 - Set up Google Analytics and ensure events are being tracked appropriately.
 - Ensure all conversion events (bookings, purchases, etc.) are tracked.
 - Set up Google Search Console.
 - Optional: Set up Microsoft Clarity.
 - Create a monthly performance report tracking at least 3 key performance indicators (e.g., conversion rates, revenue, keyword rankings, etc.).





Core

Urgency: High Urgency

Goal: Drive Leads

The Core stage takes the essential visibility established in the Foundation stage and shifts the focus to actively generating leads. At this level, the priority is to optimize your digital presence to attract and capture potential customers effectively. This includes strategies like improving your Local SEO to appear in the top search results for location-based queries, enhancing your Yelp and Facebook profiles for lead generation, and implementing a CRM to track and nurture customer relationships. By focusing on these areas, businesses can start turning visibility into actionable leads, ensuring their marketing efforts result in measurable growth. This stage is critical for moving beyond basic presence to creating consistent, predictable opportunities for customer acquisition.

Key Components and Gating Actions:

1. Local SEO:

- **Description:** Local SEO focuses on optimizing your online presence to attract customers from relevant local searches. By targeting keywords like “fitness center near me,” you can drive highly qualified traffic to your business. Local SEO strategies often include optimizing your Google Business Profile, acquiring local backlinks, and ensuring consistent NAP information across directories.
- **Gating Actions:**
 - Rank in the top 1-3 positions for at least 5 high-priority local keywords.

2. Yelp Profile Optimization:

- **Description:** Yelp is a trusted platform for discovering local businesses, especially service-oriented ones. Yelp is one of the top three sources (with Google and Facebook) that users turn to for business reviews while making decisions, making it a critical channel for visibility and lead generation. By optimizing your Yelp profile page, you can ensure that customers find





compelling and accurate information about your business.

- **Gating Actions:**

- Claim and optimize your Yelp page.
- Upload a minimum of 10 high-quality photos.
- Utilize the review solicitation and response system established in the Foundation phase to ask for reviews and respond to reviews within 24 hours.
- Achieve a 4+ star rating.
- Achieve a minimum of 20 reviews.
- Ensure the latest 10 reviews have responses.
- Pay for Yelp's Upgraded Listing in order to remove competitor listings.
(You do not need to advertise further at this time)

3. Facebook Page Optimization:

- **Description:** Facebook serves as a multi-functional platform for building awareness, engaging with customers, and capturing leads. Facebook is one of the top three sources (with Google and Yelp) that users turn to for business reviews while making decisions, making it a critical channel for visibility and lead generation. A well-optimized Facebook page acts as a secondary website where potential customers can explore your offerings, read reviews, and interact with your brand.

- **Gating Actions:**

- Complete all page details, including contact info, services, and About section.
- Utilize the review solicitation and response system established in the Foundation phase to encourage reviews (in accordance with Yelp's Terms Of Use, of course!) and respond to reviews within 24 hours.
- Achieve a 4+ star rating.
- Achieve a minimum of 20 reviews.
- Ensure the latest 10 reviews have responses.

4. CRM Implementation:

- **Description:** A CRM system organizes and tracks customer data, enabling





personalized marketing efforts and streamlined follow-ups. If you have established your foundation and are now planning on capturing leads, you must have a system that allows you to capture the customer's information, track where they are in the process, and support moving them through the sales funnel. It's essential for businesses looking to nurture leads, land members, and maintain strong customer relationships over time.

- **Gating Actions:**

- Set up a CRM to track all leads and customer interactions. For many of you, this will be your store software system (ClubReady, Zenoti, etc.). However, be sure to assess its automation capabilities to make sure it has what you need. If not, consider integrating your store software with a third-party CRM.
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Growth

Urgency: Moderate Urgency

Goal: Scale Impact

The Growth stage is where businesses begin to scale their marketing efforts, using advanced tools and strategies to amplify their reach and impact. This stage focuses on targeted advertising and automation to maximize efficiency and results. By running campaigns on platforms like Google Ads, Meta, and TikTok, businesses can reach highly specific audiences with tailored messages. Additionally, integrating email and SMS marketing ensures consistent communication with leads and customers, while marketing automation simplifies and personalizes engagement. This stage is essential for businesses aiming to grow sustainably, as it builds on the foundation and core strategies to expand reach, improve efficiency, and drive higher returns on investment.

Key Components and Gating Actions:

1. Advertising Campaigns:

- **Description:** Paid advertising is a powerful way to rapidly scale your marketing efforts, reaching new audiences and driving conversions. Platforms like Google Ads, Meta, YouTube, TikTok, and Yelp allow you to target your ideal customers with precision. Advertising campaigns can be tailored to focus on immediate lead generation or broader awareness, depending on your goals.
- **Gating Actions:**
 - Set up ad accounts and start campaigns on Google Paid Search, Meta, and Yelp at a minimum. Also consider YouTube, TikTok, and Google Display Network depending on your target audience and budget.
 - Ensure that you include retargeting campaigns in the above.
 - Establish an internal process for monitoring and optimizing campaigns weekly for ROI and CPA.

2. Email Marketing:

- **Description:** Email marketing nurtures leads and keeps your audience





engaged, helping you maintain top-of-mind awareness. By providing valuable content, promotions, and updates, email campaigns drive repeat visits and customer loyalty. It's an efficient way to communicate directly with your audience at scale. Additionally, this is the time to include email automation in your marketing, so that you have established email campaigns and workflows that will nurture leads and retain customers (see Automation below).

- **Gating Actions:**

- Establish a system and process for regular email campaigns, which should be a minimum of once a month. Preferably sync these with the SMS campaigns.
- Achieve an open rate of at least 20% and a click-through rate of 5%.

3. SMS Marketing:

- **Description:** SMS marketing delivers time-sensitive offers and updates directly to customers' phones, often with higher engagement rates than email. It's particularly effective for flash sales, appointment reminders, and exclusive deals. This should be done in tandem with email marketing, should often be powered by the same system, and should reinforce messaging in email. SMS Marketing should include automation designed to nurture, convert, and retain customers (see Automation below).

- **Gating Actions:**

- Establish a system and process for regular SMS campaigns, which should be a minimum of once a month. Preferably synchronize these with the email campaigns.
- Maintain an opt-out rate below 2%.

4. Marketing Automation:

- **Description:** Marketing automation streamlines repetitive tasks like email follow-ups, SMS alerts, and customer segmentation. By using automation tools, businesses can ensure timely and personalized communication with leads and customers, maximizing engagement and efficiency. These should complement the Email and SMS marketing you're doing.

- **Gating Actions:**

- Enable automation in whatever CRM you are using





- Establish automated workflows for lead nurturing, such as follow-ups once a user has signed up on your site and if they do an intro but do not immediately convert.
 - Establish automated workflows for free intro abandonment (user starts the free intro process on your website but abandons before completing it).
 - Optional: Add other automations, such as upsells and re-engagement.
 - Utilize both email and SMS in your automations.
 - Personalize automated messages based on customer behavior.
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Leadership

Urgency: Strategic Urgency

Goal: Inspire Authority

The Leadership stage represents the pinnacle of the Digital Marketing Hierarchy of Needs, where businesses focus on establishing themselves as thought leaders and trusted authorities in their industry. This stage is about going beyond visibility and lead generation to create deeper connections with customers and the community. It involves strategies like content marketing, organic social media, and podcasting to share expertise and tell your brand story. Additionally, leveraging influencer partnerships and referral programs can enhance credibility and foster loyalty. By excelling in this stage, businesses not only solidify their reputation but also inspire trust, attract a loyal following, and create lasting relationships that drive sustained growth.

Key Components and Gating Actions:

1. Content Marketing:

- **Description:** Content marketing builds authority and provides value to your audience, enhancing brand reputation. It involves creating and distributing high-quality, informative, and engaging content tailored to your audience's interests. This might include blogs, videos, whitepapers, or infographics that position your business as a trusted expert.
- **Recommended Actions:**
 - Publish a minimum of 2 high-quality blog posts or videos per month.
 - Focus on long-form, value-driven content (1,500+ words for blogs, 30-60 minutes for videos).
 - Implement a content syndication system, where your high-quality content can be broken down into smaller content pieces and different media which are more appropriate for Organic Social, Newsletters, etc.
 - Incorporate SEO strategies for each piece.

2. Organic Social Media:





- **Description:** Organic social media strengthens your brand's connection with your community through authentic engagement. Platforms like Instagram, LinkedIn, and Facebook allow you to share stories, updates, and promotions that reflect your brand's voice and values. Consistent, high-quality posting fosters loyalty and encourages interactions. Usually, organic social media is most effective when paired with content marketing.
- **Recommended Actions:**
 - Establish a system where you post minimum daily on at least 1 platform (e.g., Instagram, LinkedIn).
 - Develop a content calendar for each quarter with planned postings.
 - Engage with all comments and messages within 24 hours.
 - Run monthly performance analyses to refine content strategy.
 - Optional: Set up and utilize a social media scheduling system.

3. Newsletter Marketing:

- **Description:** Regular newsletters keep your audience informed, engaged, and connected to your brand. They provide a platform for sharing valuable insights, exclusive promotions, and updates about your business. A well-crafted newsletter fosters loyalty and repeat business. This also works most effectively when paired with Content Marketing.
- **Recommended Actions:**
 - Send a regular newsletter with valuable content and updates. Monthly at a minimum, more frequently as appropriate.
 - Maintain a 25% open rate and a 6% click-through rate.

4. Influencer Marketing:

- **Description:** Influencer marketing leverages trusted voices to expand your reach and build social proof. Partnering with influencers who resonate with your target audience can boost brand visibility, generate leads, and drive conversions effectively.
- **Recommended Actions:**
 - Partner with at least 3 local influencers with a combined reach of 50,000+ followers. Test the campaigns, monitor performance, and refine





your influencer marketing strategy based on the results.

- Track ROI through unique promo codes or affiliate links.

5. Podcasting:

- **Description:** Podcasting builds a dedicated audience by providing in-depth content and showcasing your expertise. Podcasts allow businesses to engage listeners on a personal level, sharing stories, insights, and valuable discussions that reinforce authority.
- **Recommended Actions:**
 - Launch a branded podcast with at least 10 episodes in the first season.
 - Maintain a regular publishing schedule (e.g., monthly, bi-weekly).
 - Use cross-promotion to grow listenership.
 - Get at least 20 5-star reviews on Apple and/or Spotify
 - Optional: Record video of your podcasts and post on YouTube

6. Referral and Affiliate Marketing:

- **Description:** Referral and affiliate programs incentivize loyal customers and partners to drive additional business. By rewarding referrals and collaborating with affiliates, businesses can expand their reach while building stronger relationships with existing customers.
 - **Recommended Actions:**
 - Create a referral program with clear incentives for both referrers and referees.
 - Track referrals and conversions monthly.
 - Recruit at least 5 affiliate partners within the first year.
-





More Resources

Hopefully this ebook is helpful for you. If you'd like more assistance, here are some additional resources:

Boost Your Fitness Centers' Lead Gen With This Free Generator

This is a free tool which allows you to generate a Google Business Profile corporate policy document, customized to your specific company, which you can use as a guide for your internal marketing team, external vendors, location managers, or for your franchisees to ensure that your Google Business Profiles are optimized to create maximum leads for your business.

<https://angelsmith.net/boost-your-fitness-center-locations-lead-gen-with-this-free-generator/>

Top Ten Fitness Center Webpage Mistakes And What To Do About Them

In over a decade of working with multi-location fitness companies, we've reviewed countless location microsites and learned what drives success—and what leads to costly mistakes. This ebook breaks down the ten most common pitfalls we see on fitness center microsites, helping you avoid the errors that waste time, money, and opportunities.

<https://angelsmith.net/top-ten-fitness-center-website-mistakes-and-what-to-do-about-them/>

Get A Free Strategy Session

If you need help implementing any of the elements described in this ebook, schedule a free strategy session with Eric Oliver, President of Angelsmith.

<https://go.angelsmith.net/widget/booking/Wap8uXshF67cIBPafnoB>

