

Pilates for all People

CLUB PILATES - SAN DIEGO , CALIFORNIA

Allison Beardsley knows what it is like to feel constrained by the pocketbook.

"I came from a very poor upbringing. When I discovered Pilates in 2002 I totally fell in love with it. But I couldn't take an equipment-based class because I couldn't afford it. I actually never worked out on a Reformer until I started my instructor training."

That experience led Allison on a mission to get everyone she could involved with Pilates. "This is something incredible that absolutely everybody can do for their health," she says. "Not just 'can' do but 'should' do."

From a Duplex to Multiple Studios

After a successful stint as an instructor in several area clubs, she began her own business teaching classes out of the duplex she rented in San Diego in 2007. Many of her club clients followed her.

Later that year her clientele had grown to where it became clear that it was time for her to move on. "There were so many people coming in and out of the house at all hours I thought people might start thinking it was a brothel," she recalls, laughing.+

She rented a 900 square foot space just down the street and developed her own teacher training; combining her fitness and Pilates educational backgrounds to bring more instructors with a like teaching philosophy under the fold. Her clientele continued to grow.

When the economy turned some of the neighboring businesses closed, so she rented those out; eventually expanding her studio to its current square footage of 3000. How did she succeed when others couldn't handle the recession?

"We adapted our business model," she says. "I had so many clients say to me 'I don't think I can come anymore - my husband lost his job.' Pilates is one thing you shouldn't cut back on. So we created a business model where they didn't have to quit."

Allison's model made sessions affordable to people of all incomes. Classes - even Reformer classes - were priced as low as \$10 per session, far below the general average. They made up for the low prices by volume. "We do teach a lot of classes per week," she agrees.

She also became a savvy marketer and started using online couponing vehicles like Groupon. "Online couponing was a huge boon for us," Allison says. "We've been able to retain about 80 percent of responding clients with those. As an example, one of our campaigns netted over 1400 respondents - and, well you can do the math - we added a ton of customers."

Allison credits her teachers as the biggest reason so many clients are retained at Club Pilates. "They make it fun and interesting for all kinds of body types. It has really paid off. And we pay them very well. The better they do the more they get."

Franchising

Club Pilates had established a reputation for providing quality sessions at a very low cost. In 2011 she had to open up another Club Pilates in San Diego's North County to handle the demand. And soon that location was full with clients.

Not long after that another idea hit her - franchising.

"My goal is to bring Pilates to all people. I want school teachers and social workers and others who maybe can't afford equipment-based classes to be able to work on a Reformer. Franchising is the way to do this."

Thus, Club Pilates Global was born. She worked out a licensing agreement for another location in Encinitas with a respected colleague. Per the agreement the franchisee got use of the Club Pilates logo, access to her teacher training program and courses, videotaped



A Club Pilates group Reformer class in session.

lectures, business and marketing support, and access to their Groupon contacts.

Soon the Encinitas studio was overflowing with clients and it was time to grow again. In 2012 Allison opened another two locations in the San Diego area.

Currently Club Pilates Global now has five studios, 30 instructors who switch locations when needed, over 400 classes offered weekly, and over 9000 clients. That is not a misprint. "Every studio is packed to the gills with clients," she laughs. "We need more teachers!"

Allison is also in the midst of starting Club Pilates Global franchises outside of California, currently negotiating with interested parties in Michigan, Washington DC, Washington state, Wisconsin and more.

"I know that eventually we will have thousands of locations across the globe. If I didn't think this, I never would have started. The franchising makes it easier for other studios to be successful using our business model."

"The bottom line is that Pilates is too important to be financially exclusive."