

Keep Your Customer Base: Loyalty In Indoor Climbing Gyms

September 8, 2023

in [CWA Blog](#)



What keeps us going to the same coffee shop again and again? Or wearing certain brands of shoes? Or how about rooting for a particular sports team?

Loyalty is a strong magnet that affects the workings of society and is an important aspect of operating an indoor climbing gym.

There are many factors to retain climbing gym members and to keep climbers loyal to a gym.

Price, location, quality of routesetting, and additional offerings such as workout equipment or yoga are basic components of creating loyalty amongst your clientele. What are exceptional climbing gyms doing to go the extra mile to keep climbing gym members loyal even if there is another gym nearby?

Many gyms offer discounts for members. [The Brooklyn Bouldering Project](#) offers 50 percent off all climbing classes for members, while [Momentum Indoor Climbing](#) provides free access to their yoga classes, and [Movement Climbing Yoga & Fitness](#) gives discounts on gear and apparel, and additional fitness classes at some locations.

Some of the nuts and bolts of a loyalty program may keep members coming back, but there's more to loyalty than perks and benefits.

Creating loyalty to a gym comes down to establishing an atmosphere and a setting that climbers want to keep coming back to again and again. According to Rich Johnston, the founder of [Vertical World - America's First Climbing Gym](#), "You have to be really good at creating a place that people want to be."

Creating a place that people want to be involves creating community. There's a reason it's one of

the buzzwords of the indoor climbing industry. Creating a place that is bigger than the activity you do at that place will ensure your members want to come for more than climbing, and that will set you apart from your peers.

How does a gym create that community and an atmosphere of comfort and belonging? There is no cookie-cutter answer. For me, **each climbing gym has a strong vibe, a feeling that comes across almost immediately** upon entering the facility, making me want to be there or causing me to wish I hadn't shown up.

It starts with the front desk staff. How engaged are they when I enter the gym? Are they helpful, welcoming, and accepting, or are they distracted by their buddies and putting off a too-cool-for-school vibe? A common problem with indoor climbing is that it can feel intimidating to first-time climbers, and if the staff pushes this feeling, it'll push customers out of the door.

After I've gotten through the paperwork and waiver and have gotten further into the gym, I notice the facility. Are the walls fresh, colorful, and modern? Is there dust and dirt everywhere? Is it clean and open, full of light, or dark and dungeon-like?

I'll start noticing the way other climbers are interacting. Is it lively, fresh, and full of young people, or is it filled with crusty climbers sticking to themselves, earbuds in and heads down.

What is the music like? Is it engaging and fun or intense and moody?

READ ALSO: [Employee Recognition Hacks to Keep Your Staff](#)

Further, in the depths of the gym, the locker room plays an important role. Does it provide enough privacy? Is it clean and easy to store things, or cramped and uncomfortable?

Above all, on my first day at a new gym, I notice the staff and the other climbers. The staff hugely affects how a gym feels. If I'm one of the only climbers in the gym, say in an early morning session, do I feel eyes staring at me in the back of my head, judging my climbing performance? Do the staff only seem interested in conversing with each other or their long-time climbing buddies, or are they interested in new climbers?

The way other climbers interact says a lot about a gym. Of course, climbing gyms can't control their members, but creating a place where climbers want to be brings out the best in climbers.

When I'm at a gym I like, I notice other climbers encouraging each other, fist-bumping after a hard send, or giving a good lead belay instead of passively paying attention. At a gym I don't care to be at, I sense other climbers are competing against each other, or trying to prove how hard

they can climb.

Creating a climbing gym with a loyal following comes down to inclusion.

Shouldn't we all feel welcomed in the gym no matter our skill level, gender, race, socioeconomic status, or sexual orientation? While this may seem obvious, the gyms that stand out are the gyms that are the most welcoming.

It doesn't matter how good the routes are, how many perks and add-ons the gym has, or how cheap the membership is **if the climbers don't feel comfortable and like they can be themselves.**

Is it simple to achieve this? Certainly not— but I know the feeling of being welcomed when I walk into a gym, and I suspect most climbers do too. That's the type of gym I want to commit to.

More Coaching Content!

Stay on top of the latest in coaching tips and tricks by subscribing to communications from the CWA.

About the Author



[David Gladish](#) is a freelance writer, copywriter, and expert storyteller. He helps businesses and brands tell powerful and impactful stories by intimately knowing their products, leveraging marketing messages, and creatively sharing unique content. A former mountain guide and climbing instructor, he's most at home while climbing pristine Cascade granite.



**GYM OWNERS & INDOOR
CLIMBING'S BOOM: PART 1**

September 22, 2023

**DUTIES OF CARE IN INDOOR
CLIMBING GYMS: REVISITED**



September 7, 2023