

Personal Trainers

by Chris Dixon, M.Ed.

Personal trainers are crazy. Being a personal trainer however is complex. If you ask someone, “*why did you or do you want to become a personal trainer?*”, 9 out of 10 people will say they have “*a desire to help people*”. It’s this sentiment that is simultaneously noble and naïve. Noble in wanting to help others achieve, naïve in believing their help is warranted and/or welcomed. People who choose to earn a living helping others learn a lot about human nature. Many times, people think the job of a personal trainer is to know the best exercises and design fitness programs. That is part of it, but the larger part of this career path is the mastery of coaching.

To be clear, writing fitness programs can be challenging but the personal trainer is more than that. This is an individual who many times has devoted a portion of their life being educating and learning about the various systems of the body and coach individuals who desire to make change. Trainers educate themselves by vocational/college studies, certifications and in some cases

advanced education/degree(s). It is this knowledge they desire to share with people in their effort to make change.

Attempting to change is one of the biggest challenges we face in life. It’s easy to stay the way we are, to eat how we’ve always eaten, to continue the habits we’ve had our whole life. It’s difficult to change those things. Change our habits, change our diet, change who we are as a people. Personal trainers assist in this physical, mental and emotional change that is necessary to improve health.

Being in the fitness industry I have been fortunate to be around and learn from some great trainers. I try not to classify trainers as good or bad, but I’ve learned a great deal about the attributes of a successful personal trainer. Here are just a few things to pay attention to in the consideration of working with a fitness professional:

- **Personable:** Successful PTs love people. They enjoy meeting, connecting and

working closely with people. People energize them. In addition, successful trainers are capable of working with many different personality types.

- **Thirst for education:** The best trainers have an insatiable quest for knowledge. They are continuously learning, studying and expanding their skill set. They have many questions and are always seeking answers. They understand they can't ever know it all, but want to learn as much as possible.
- **Desire to help:** If you've ever read an amazing book or saw a movie that was exciting, then you know what its like to want to share that feeling. Successful trainers are the same. They have studied how the machine we call the "human body" works. They learned about exercise science, kinesiology, biomechanics, metabolism, nutrition and they want to share that information. The average personal trainer in my area earns about \$32,000-\$35,000 per year (Payscale.com), so this isn't a

job where many get rich. For most of them, the desire to help is rewarding far more than what money can provide.

- **Education & Experience:** Like in many professions, career success is not solely dependent on education. However, the time one spends educating themselves can be a key asset in the field. The time one has spent training/coaching others is also important. Successful trainers have a good combination of education and experience.
- **Humble:** The best trainers understand it's not about them. The success clients have is theirs alone. Though we may have contributed to the achievement, our joy comes in helping people succeed.

There are some amazing fitness professionals that have dedicated their lives to helping people improve health, fitness & nutrition. The most successful enjoy people, are continually educating themselves and above all hope to make a difference in the lives of the people they train. If you want to improve your health &

fitness or have goals you want to accomplish, you may consider working with a personal trainer. My hope is you will have a fabulous experience en route to your goals. Successful trainers not only desire to

help, but deep down they have a desire to change the world. Crazy, right?



Chris Dixon is a nationally-recognized health & fitness educator, certified strength & conditioning specialist and certified personal trainer residing in the Twin Cities, MN. Chris has held fitness certifications from ACE, ACSM, NSCA and USA Track & Field.