



Fit for a Career

For some, personal training means riding the train to work by themselves each day. But for these characters, it's much more interesting than that. *Smart Start* investigates Rachelle Bittar and Tom Livingston. Each came to the industry from different paths, but have in common that they work in a fitness centre and know that personal training is the job for them.

Bittar not bitter about choice career choice

Rachelle Bittar remembers when she first discovered that personal training could actually be a long-term career.

"I was in Year 10 when a personal trainer came to our school to give a presentation," says Rachelle. "When he spoke about helping clients make their goals and dreams come true, I was sold straight away!"

After completing her HSC last year, Rachelle enrolled with the Australian Institute of Fitness. Within eight weeks she had graduated with a master trainer certification, enabling her to take on a full-time personal training position with Fitness First in Parramatta.

"I love that my job is never dull – that every one of my clients has a different personality and a different goal," says Rachelle. "It's a great motivation for me that I can help make a difference in their day."

Rachelle recounts the story of one of her clients who was overweight and suffering from stress. He was having trouble

losing weight so Rachelle focused on ways to reduce his stress and inject as much fun as possible into his training.

"My reward came when he told me how much he looked forward to our sessions because not only was I helping him get fit, but also taking his mind off his problems. Once he had lowered his stress levels, the weight just fell off."

Aged 18, Rachelle has a strength and passion to succeed well beyond her years. As one of the youngest women to successfully compete in power-lifting for her country, Rachelle is no stranger to challenges. Only six months into her personal training career, she has set herself the goal of working her way up until she reaches the top of the industry.

Each morning as soon as she wakes, Rachelle sends an SMS to all her clients greeting them for the day and reminding them about their PT session. She understands the importance of customer service and client care for building her career reputation.

"You need to take a genuine interest in your clients and try to make each and every one of them walk away from your session with a smile."



You will need ...

- a good level of fitness
- to be enthusiastic, outgoing and a bit of a go-getter
- great communication skills and an empathy with lots of different sort of people
- an understanding of what makes people 'tick'.

Livingston lives for the challenge

Tom Livingston was already firmly established in one career before he decided to give personal training a go.

A printer by trade, he decided that he needed a new challenge in his life. As an avid gym-goer, it made perfect sense that his new career should be doing something he enjoyed.

"As a personal trainer, I don't know what each day will bring and who I'm going to meet," Tom says.

"Of course, it was a big step giving up a comfortable job and wondering in the back of my mind about whether it would work out, but I had to at least try. There is no point in going through life wondering 'what if'. I decided it was better to embrace the challenge and have fun with it."

Fun is definitely what Tom has been having since he graduated in February from the Australian Institute of Fitness. After completing his certification part-time over 12 weeks, he started his own company: Physi-Fit Personal Training and Fitness Solutions.

His first couple of clients were generated from a flyer he designed and personally delivered around the St George-Illawarra area in Sydney. Still working as a printer, he trained his clients at his home gym before and after work.

Five months into his business, he decided to take a position with Fitness First Wanda Platinum as a one-on-one personal trainer. He has scaled his printing job back to part-time and now juggles his Fitness First clients with his clients outside the centre.

"To grow my business I decided it was a wise move to align myself with a pre-established name, like Fitness First. It's tricky to fit my clients around each other, but it is manageable. The flexibility of my hours is a great advantage – it is up to me to come into the centre as often as I need to be able to afford to pay my rent and make an income.

"If you are at a successful stage with your business, you could be doing 20 one-hour sessions a week and that would be enough to pay your rent at the gym and your living expenses, with enough to put away for savings. The fact that you can earn the equivalent of a conventional 9am-5pm job but with less hours is in itself a huge motivation as a trainer."

Pathways

Personal training is unique in that it can be an entry-level job as well as an advanced job – it depends on where you take it, and where you want it to go.

Gym management and expanding your own business can be ways to go, as can personal training to the rich and famous.

To get started, TAFEs and private providers offer a range of courses that go under different names: from certificates to diplomas in things like fitness, training, health & leisure, instruction. A university degree in anything from exercise science to applied fitness is going to be a big help too.

Perhaps personal training might be a good way to get yourself through uni? There's many ways to approach it.

Cousin careers

- Coach
- Lifeguard
- Outdoor adventure guide
- PE teacher
- Sports admin
- Sports community development officer
- Weight-loss counsellor

