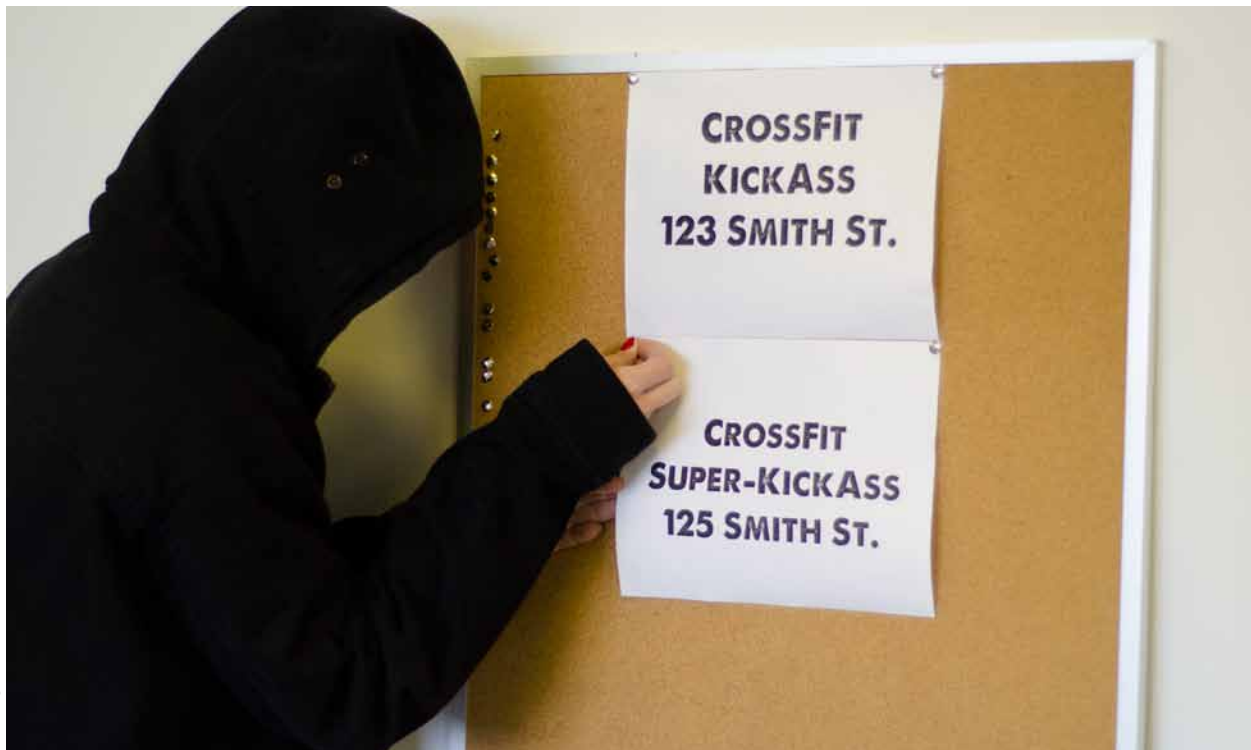

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Play Nice With Others

Dale Saran explains how courtesy and hard work trump piggyback advertising techniques.

By Dale Saran CrossFit HQ General Counsel

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All images: Staff/CrossFit Journal

So, you wanna be a CrossFit affiliate, eh?

I remember the salad days of being a CrossFit affiliate, circa early 2008. There were maybe a few hundred affiliates. I was the first—and only—CrossFit affiliate in Rhode Island. I didn't have to worry about competitive advertising, Google AdWords, website metatags, being undercut by another affiliate, Globo Gyms ripping off the mark and stealing my clients (such as they were), or any of that crap. I was it, baby: the only (CrossFit) game in town.

The strength of the CrossFit movement is the community. As this movement grows and explodes, your commitment to community will be increasingly important. That means leading the newcomers, showing them how CrossFitters treat each other. It's not just a gym. It's your corner of the universe, and it's a chance to make a huge impact on lives, earn a good living and have a blast, all at the same time. The most powerful form of leadership, however, is example.

So, back to my original point about AdWords, metatags, and being a good steward and custodian at the vanguard of this movement.

You make clients.

The Golden Rule: Before you rationalize your actions to buy Google AdWords for the terms "CrossFit" and "Your Town Name"—where you know that "CrossFit Your Town Name" is the name of an existing affiliate—ask yourself how you would feel about it if the roles were reversed.

Metatags present a similarly sticky problem. While there's no "right" to be first in the Google search rankings, some personal ethics go a long way toward getting a referral from your fellow CrossFit affiliate when they meet a client they think would be better suited for you. Yes, that really happens. And it should.

I was recently presented with a situation where Affiliate A is named "CrossFit Smartville" (the name has been changed, but I've seen this on a number of occasions in several countries). CrossFit Smartville has been there for a while and is successful. There are now about seven to 10 other affiliates in Smartville, all in pretty close proximity. One was once named East Smartville CrossFit and changed its name, while others have completely different names not related to Smartville or geography at all. Yet all of them were using "Smartville CrossFit" in a variety of ways on their websites, advertising and metatags—ultimately going a long way toward pissing off the owner of the actual CrossFit Smartville.

How should this play out? If you're not CrossFit Smartville, you should use only "CrossFit in Smartville" in your advertising, AdWords and metatags. And the minute you start saying "hey, wait a minute" and thinking about business, advertising and other arguments to justify why you ought to be able to purloin another box's name and goodwill, please re-check yourself:

Community. Leadership. The Golden Rule.

You make clients.

Finally, it's worth noting that if you've got 150 clients, you're probably pretty darn successful. More than that and you're rolling. Think about those numbers for a moment. Some clients might come and go, but all you need to find is 150 people in your community—one hundred fifty—to be successful. Unless you're training on an oasis in the middle of the Sahara, that is a very, very obtainable number for any good trainer.

As always, we're here to help, and if you've got a concern about someone misusing or abusing our trademark, or another affiliate's goodwill, please send it to us at IPTheft@CrossFit.com. Soon, we hope to have a submission page so I don't have to keep asking you to send me proof, photos and other stuff like that (known in my world as "evidence") in order to help us investigate.



About the Author

Dale Saran is CrossFit HQ's General Counsel. The CrossFit Trademark Team are the "Defenders of the Faithful."