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# CrossFitJournal

### **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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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.

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Fast-forward a few years.

I now work for CrossFit HQ and handle (among other things) protecting CrossFit's trademark from the ever-increasing variety of poachers, thieves and ne'er-do-wells who want a piece of the action without having to pay to either:

- 1. Know what they're doing ("Hey, isn't CrossFit like Zumba?) or;
- 2. Become a legit affiliate ("Globo-MagnumGym now has CROSS-fitness classes along with your \$19.95 membership! Sign up now!").

CrossFit affiliates, I feel your pain more intimately than you know. This is the first of what I hope will be a number of articles regarding our community's need to protect our brand and trademark, how we do that, and other tips and items of interest to you, the affiliate owner or prospective affiliate owner.

But first principles first: community.

One of the more frustrating aspects of this job is mediating/arbitrating the occasional intramural firefights that happen between affiliates in the same geographical area. Let me return to some things that Coach Glassman taught me about being an affiliate and about clients. Coach has lectured about these things on numerous occasions.

## Those who chase excellence and virtuosity inevitably wind up with plenty of clients.

First and foremost, chase excellence, not clients. I know it sounds clichéd, but we see it over and over and over again: those who chase excellence and virtuosity inevitably wind up with plenty of clients. This means excellence both in your coaching and, even more importantly, in your personal relations with your clients, not just in grabbing a bunch of extra qualifications to put after your name. Be a great coach and mentor to your clients—in their workouts and their lifestyle choices—and you will not lack for clients. The existing friends and family members you coaxed into being trained by you will bring more clients. How does this relate to playing nice with others?



Integrity will go a long way, both inside and outside the gym.

Stop trying to undercut other affiliates. You don't have to like every other affiliate—we all have different personalities—but you should welcome the new guy to the 'hood. A good relationship with other affiliates inevitably generates buzz around CrossFit. You are not competing with each other; you're competing with all the other dreck that's out there—with diabetes, with sedentary lifestyles, with the idea that dietary fat (like cashews) makes people fat, with the paradigm that skinny women are sexy, etc.

Stop trying to fight over clients as if they're a dwindling, dying, finite resource. They're not: you make clients. Coach Glassman once told me how many of his clients were people he sort of "recruited." He didn't hand out flyers on windshields. He would run into people in his daily life (and I've actually seen him do this myself), and in casual conversation, when asked what he did, would say, "I'm a trainer. I train athletes, all kinds of folks. I would really like to train you. You should come by a few times and check it out." Boom. Sold.

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."