

Diluting the Brand?

Passionate CrossFitters have questions about the growth of the movement. Alec Hanson believes existing affiliates need to spend less time worrying and more time pursuing excellence and virtuosity.

Alec Hanson



Chris Warden/CrossFit Costa Mesa

The following open letter was posted Oct. 7, 2009, on the [CrossFit Discussion Board](#) as part of a thread titled "[Huge Decline in Quality](#)." It is reformatted and reprinted here with the author's permission.

An Open Letter Regarding CrossFit

I don't normally respond to various letters, articles, blogs, posts and comments regarding CrossFit as a national movement simply because I am too busy growing my humble CrossFit gym and thriving. But today is different for me for some reason, and I feel compelled.

My partner and I have always wondered about the future of the CrossFit movement as we find ourselves progressing forward from days of underground garage gyms to warehouse “boxes” and eventually moving into massive fitness facilities in the tens of thousands of square feet. This is the future of CrossFit as I see it.

We have pondered the topic of hundreds of new “certified” trainers being pumped out every weekend and watched in curiosity as subsequent affiliates began popping up all over the nation. We had the same questions about the ability of these “certified” trainers and new affiliates, at times thinking the same things a lot of people think.

Things like:

1. These people are diluting the brand.
2. They are causing destruction to what CrossFit really is.
3. They are injuring people.
4. They don't know what they are doing.
5. They don't know how to program, they are bad trainers, they suck.

The list goes on and on. I have watched affiliates try to harm other affiliates, steal clients and trainers, and rip other CrossFit marketing out of the ground or off walls and buildings. I have watched verbal sparring on forums and blogs as people try to show how such and such is superior or inferior, all in an effort to cover their own insecurity.

It all leads me back to the same consistent foundation CrossFit was built on that has been a major building block to the explosive growth: Excellence. People train with trainers who provide excellence.

When the first WOD was posted on CrossFit.com and the request was made to “post time to comments,” the world of fitness was changed. Our old fitness ideas were challenged and old mind frames refuted—all with the underlying foundation that we will back it up. And CrossFitters have been backing it up for years now.

Drop your insecurity and inferiority complex and get some confidence in your product and what you do.

Staff/CrossFit Journal



The face of CrossFit has changed since Greg Glassman started the first box in Santa Cruz, Calif., but the constant pursuit of training excellence remains the same.

If a “new” trainer affiliates after getting certified and starts and gym and grows it through passion and enthusiasm to hundreds of clients, and if those clients are gaining strength, improving their gym times, dropping fat and lifting heavier every quarter ... guess what? That is a good trainer.

Now are they are good as you are? Do they know more about exercise physiology than you do? Are they creating superior athletes like you are? Maybe not. If they are unsafe or not knowledgeable, their clients will all eventually leave them and find you. If they are creating massive success for their clients and setting new PRs all the time and they still keep growing and expanding and loving their success, then guess what? They are *great* trainers. Those who complain that these people don't know enough, are not good trainers, etc., are whiney, whiney victims and need to shut up or go away.

Don't you get it? A great trainer is someone who inspires those they train. They create new opportunities for their members. They push them and encourage them and are invested in their lives and their success. If they are bad trainers, their clients will either get hurt, hit plateaus or realize they don't really know anything and leave. What are you afraid of?

Focus on the foundational truths our community is built on. Love the fact that we are open-source affiliates versus carbon-copy franchises.

That's why I don't care if 100 new CrossFit gyms open up blocks apart from me. I spend every day improving my ability to train people, deepening my knowledge in all areas around fitness and nutrition, and learning and adapting to become better each day. If I lose a client to another gym because that gym does a better job training them or inspiring them, I don't cry about how unfair life is—I learn and I get better. I'm more interested in helping those new gyms grow effectively, train better and have massive success like I have.



Dave Werner's CrossFit North became the first affiliate in 2002. It was the first step to making CrossFit a global movement.



Level 1 certs add more people to the CrossFit movement every week—and Alec Hanson believes this is a very good thing.

"But, Alec, the brand is being diluted. People are thinking they are getting trained at 'CrossFit' when they are not."

I don't give a shit. Why would I? People have been getting trained by "personal trainers" who know nothing about fitness for years and years now. Talk about a diluted brand image. The title "personal trainer" means just about as much to me as "life coach." I don't know what the hell you do!

So, my open letter to the CrossFit community can be simplified into several succinct points:

- Get over yourself. Focus on becoming excellent in what you do and help those around you become excellent as well.
- Drop your insecurity and inferiority complex and get some confidence in your product and what you do.
- Focus on the foundational truths our community is built on. Love the fact that we are open-source affiliates versus carbon-copy franchises.
- Stop complaining about how unfair life is and own up to the reality you have created in your life. Your ego is not that special.

Oh, and one more thing: Show some damn respect and appreciation to CrossFit HQ for fighting through the BS it took to bring this revolution to the world and for helping fill your damn gym with clients simply through their "brand" and placing your link on their website.

Alec Hanson
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About the Author

Alec Hanson owns and operates CrossFit Costa Mesa with his friend and partner Steve Dugger. He has been CrossFitting for a little over two years. Alec is 28 and married, with two bulldogs: an English bulldog named She-Ra and a French bulldog named He-Man. Alec lives in Costa Mesa, Calif., and posts regularly to his blog, [The CrossFit Gamer](#). He is an avid gamer, a fantasy nerd and a CrossFit addict, and his super power is irrational self-confidence (so he's been told).



Staff/CrossFit Journal

People all over the world are discovering what athletes in Santa Cruz found out years ago: the magic is in the movements.



Chris Worden/CrossFit Costa Mesa