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# THE CrossFit JOURNAL

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## If the Shoe Fits ...

Reebok opens a CrossFit box in Massachusetts as the first step in a growing partnership with CrossFit. Kevin Daigle reports.

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By **Kevin Daigle** CrossFit New England

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All photos: Kevin Daigle

Canton, Mass.—In late 2010, the garage door rolled up and the very first athletes set foot in Reebok's CrossFit box, a brand-new, top-notch facility built right on the campus of Reebok's world headquarters in Canton, Mass.

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## If the Shoe ... (continued)

The stage was Reebok's annual global marketing meeting, which gathers together its top managers from around the world. The new CrossFit box is a direct result of collaboration between CrossFit Headquarters and Reebok. Reebok CMO Matt O'Toole plans to leverage this experiment to bring CrossFit to all 20,000 of Reebok's employees worldwide. Going forward, the face of Reebok is fitness, and CrossFit is one way that fitness will be created and defined.

"Where it goes from here ... is the same way that CrossFit has gone," O'Toole said. "Once people understand what CrossFit is about and how it can impact your life, I think we're going to start a fire in the Reebok organization."

Having just launched a new box, Reebok set out to expose managers from around the planet to CrossFit, most of them for the first time. Throughout the day, these athletes were bused in from their hotels to hit a WOD. For most, like Maximiliano and Paola from Chile, it was the first time they'd ever heard of CrossFit. Their reflection post-WOD: "We loved it!"

These lucky Reebok employees received top-notch coaching from the likes of Andy Stumpf, E.C. Synkowski, Ben Bergeron, Heather Bergeron, Melissa Ockerby, Jenna Gale and Mat Frankel. Reebok's employees were introduced to the concepts of CrossFit by Stumpf, warmed up with Synkowski, then learned the movements and went over the WOD with Heather Bergeron and the rest of the coaches. After cleaning up some mechanics and learning technique, the employees got to thrash a WOD in a facility most of us only dream about.

Reebok's CrossFit box is indeed stunning. As Coach Greg Glassman put it: "It's epic. There's not a nicer gym anywhere in the world."

The facility is everything you'd want in a box: it's big enough for 20-plus athletes to have private sweat-angel spots on the floor post-WOD, and it features a giant pull-up structure, wall-to-wall rubber flooring, 20 Concept2 rowers, rings, bars, plates, boxes, med balls—all CrossFit's tools. It's a dream facility with a beautiful glass front and plenty of light, and it was built in less than four weeks. Rogue provided all the gear.

### The Future

So what's going on? According to Reebok's Mike Kratochwill, this venture is the result of research he did with colleague Chad Whitman to determine the future of fitness.



**Reebok's new CrossFit box is equipped with all the tools needed to create fit employees.**

"We feel like CrossFit really fits our DNA in terms of workout experience that's based off of community, based off not (just) taking from the community but giving back to the community ... . It's based off making people fit for life," Kratochwill said.

He added: "What we want to do is get back to what our roots are as a fitness and training brand."

The company's goal is to bring CrossFit to Reebok's corporate culture and build community around that culture.

"(Reebok's) goal is the same as what CrossFit's goal is: we want to bring a workout experience and a better quality of life to people," Kratochwill said.

It's impressive: a global corporation adopting for its employees the principles and methodology CrossFitters have so thoroughly embraced. And not only is Reebok



***Your office gym is probably less cool than this.***

applying CrossFit ideals to its workforce, but it's also adopting the no-bullshit, prove-it-with-hard-numbers, never-say-die-attitude as part of its business model.

On top of that, Reebok is committed to bringing CrossFit to the world outside the United States on a scale previously unimaginable. Full details are still unavailable, but Jimi Letchford, head of business development for CrossFit, says Reebok will be looking to move CrossFit into 12 key countries where there is currently no significant CrossFit presence to speak of.

Reebok is also in alignment with CrossFit on philanthropic fronts such as Amazing Grace and will be aiding the community in furthering those endeavors.

So what does this mean for the CrossFit community at large and for affiliates? Well, a lot actually. First of all, expect Reebok to develop some gear for the community. O'Toole said CrossFitters will be working with Reebok's experts to create shoes and apparel specifically designed for the rigors of CrossFit. Letchford said affiliates can expect a high level of positive, professional, CrossFit-driven marketing to take place on Reebok's end to the enormous benefit of the individual affiliates around the globe.

And why Reebok? Reebok actually spent two years studying CrossFit, and the company gets the program. There was a plan in place at Reebok that was an exact fit for CrossFit's values, which, of course, were at the core of Coach Glassman's concern. There's also an earnest effort on the part of Reebok to immerse itself in the CrossFit culture, which is why this partnership will be synergistic.

Through this pairing, Coach Glassman believes CrossFit will gain international business clout and know-how that couldn't possibly be attained otherwise. The examples he

gave were India and Russia, where Reebok has around 1,500 and 1,000 stores, respectively. CrossFit currently doesn't have a large presence in those areas, but Reebok clearly has the necessary acumen and could help forge new inroads there.

And what does Reebok get out of this? To be at the forefront of changing how people think, love and move. CrossFit's reputation for elite fitness and edginess is what's going to authenticate Reebok's commitment to the fitness world.

"They're going to elevate us; that is, accelerate our growth ... and we're going to authenticate them," Glassman said.

When asked of the ultimate goal for this alliance, Coach Glassman was clear:

"We have a destiny. This is going to get us there quicker."



#### About the Author



*Kevin Daigle is a 29-year-old football player and coach turned CrossFitter from Dracut, Mass. He trains at CrossFit New England under the tutelage of Ben and Heather Bergeron and competed in the 2010 New England Sectional and the Northeast Regional. Kevin was a roving reporter for the **CrossFit Journal** at the 2010 CrossFit Games and runs the blog [Daigle Breathes Fire](#).*