

5 tips for starting a successful CrossFit Affiliate

Sometimes the hardest part is just taking the next step. We have all heard the cliché, “With risk comes reward”. We want to help you overcome some fears and provide you with knowledge to make an informed decision when ready to start your CrossFit affiliate.

WHERE TO START?

1. Always start small and avoid overhead.

Too many gyms make the mistake of taking big loans finding large space, getting lots of equipment, and end up having a huge space with tons of gear and no one to use it. Even if you had the money to do this, it would create a poor environment for your clients and the reality is that it would be low energy and not very motivating.

2. When looking for space for your box, find something that will accommodate the class sizes you want to have.

Here are some general guidelines for a comfortable amount of space with clientele:

- 1,000 sq ft. can usually accommodate about 8 -10 people comfortably. Allowing for complex barbell movements in group classes, all their own gear, etc.
- 2,000-2,500 sq ft. is a good amount if you are having classes of roughly 12-18 people. Again, lots of room for people to move around and have an “area” to themselves.
- 3,000 sq ft. will allow for classes of 20+

* The important thing to remember is that this is dictated in large part on how your gym layout is. The square footage mentioned above is “useable” space. This would not include bathrooms, offices, locker rooms, etc.

3. Remember that you don’t need to start with “space”.

You could work out of a park, recreation center, or your garage. If you already have the clientele to cover rent then it may be something to consider. If not, don’t rush in, be smart, and build your base. If people work out with you in your garage or a park, they will probably be fired up to move to their own space one day. Doubtful that you would lose many clients, if any.

4. Try to secure a lease that will allow an exit plan.

Once you find out how much space you think you will need, work to find a lease that will allow you a plan to get out. Depending on where you live this could be difficult. Warehouses tend to be a bit more “friendly” with shorter term leases while “flex” space, retail, or even light industrial may be looking for up to a 5 yr lease. The only down side to this is that if your business has good growth and you need to move to a bigger box and can’t get out of the lease you have a problem.

5. Lastly, some box specifics that are very important to consider.

Location:

Lots of CrossFit affiliates are off the beaten path, but location is very important, so keep it in mind.

Neighbors:

Do you have them? If so, can you drop weight, play loud music, and actually run things the way you choose? You always want to have good relationships with those businesses around you.

Layout:

Are the ceilings high enough for wall ball, rope climbs, etc.? Ideally, the top of the ceiling would be a minimum of 15' for rope climbs, also allowing for a 10' wall ball target. Is the space sectioned off or wide open? Both are good and bad depending on if you would like to run one-on-ones while classes are being instructed.

Parking:

This can be a tough one for some locations. Typically those in the city struggle more with this. But even if you are looking at some other space options, you may be limited to how many spots you can use in your lease.

Modifications to the space:

Can you mount pull-up bars on the wall, drop weight, paint, install stereo systems, knock down walls to expand if it allows in the future? Find out if you can get some sort of "tenant improvement" taken care of from your landlord. This may include anything from installing the electric, heat, dividing wall, or expanding for more space. Just keep your options open and it doesn't hurt to ask before you sign.

Zoning:

This is a big one for some people. CrossFit affiliates aren't your typical "globo gyms". We know that, but most landlords and city gov. don't. Be careful what you are calling your "box". You might want to label it as a personal training studio, letting people know that it's not somewhere that people come and go freely (if this is how you run your gym). There are specific class times, sizes, etc. This can help avoid any confusion in the future. If you ever have any doubts, get in touch with your city officials to make sure you are good to go. Zoning is a pain to deal with if you jump the gun too early and are asked to even potentially move out in the future if you don't meet requirements.

Bathrooms/Showers:

How many do you want, or need? Showers can be optional, but depending on your demographic and class times it could be something that would make or break someone signing up. Bathrooms, yeah, you might need those. Affiliates have everything from locker rooms that look like Pottery Barn designed them to a glorified port-a-potty with some plants and Christmas lights in them. Both were very successful affiliates.