FINANCE

Pricing the Gap

Why the affiliate pricing model is broken — and how to fix yours.

The affiliate model is the most defensible business structure in the fitness industry.

Its pricing model is one of its greatest liabilities. This piece traces how affiliates drifted from selling solutions to selling memberships, why that shift costs them more than revenue, and three concrete steps toward a pricing model that actually matches what you provide.

Tony · FitFilliate · 2025

The affiliate model is perfect. Its pricing model is not.

In fifteen years of working inside this space, I have seen maybe one percent of affiliates priced correctly. Not uniformly — correctly. Priced in alignment with what they are actually providing. And what they are providing is not a membership. It never was.

Why the Model Was Never Standardized

There has never been much pricing guidance from CrossFit HQ, and that was by design. Not laziness. Not indifference. A deliberate choice rooted in something Greg understood that most people still don't.

If every affiliate were identical — same design, same pricing, same programming — it would take only one systemic failure to bring the whole thing down. Consider the biological parallel: if every human shared an identical immune system, one pathogen ends the species. Species survive through diversity. Affiliates survive the same way. The "CrossFit isn't safe" rhetoric has never stuck precisely because no two affiliates are the same. What you can say about one, you cannot say about all.

That diversity is the model's greatest defense. It is also the permission structure for what follows.

Where the Pricing Model Broke

Greg and Lauren started with personal training prices in a group class format. That was the original equation — and it was correct. The why was always the same: help the right people, the right way, solve real problems. The what and how — CrossFit methodology — were simply the tools.

Somewhere in the scaling from garage to global, affiliates flipped the equation. The pitch became "We do CrossFit here, it will help you" instead of "What's the problem you're trying to solve? We can help with that." Those sentences sound similar. They are not. One sells a method. The other sells a solution.

The pricing model followed the pitch. Unlimited classes for a flat monthly rate. Discounted bundles. Memberships — the same word, and the same logic, used by every globo-gym CrossFit declared war on.

The globo model is built for low utilization. Gyms profit when members pay and don't show up. The affiliate model requires the opposite. We want our clients in the door as often as possible. The more they come, the better they look, the longer they stay, the more people they bring. A membership structure — designed to reduce perceived cost in exchange for commitment — actively works against that. And most affiliates removed the one thing that made it viable: the contract. So now you have discounted access, no back-end return, and a client who paid a bargain rate for a high-priority problem. You had the chance to make them feel like a priority. Instead you made them feel average.

You are not selling memberships. You are selling solutions.

Solutions to performance goals. Vanity goals. Health goals. Life goals. You are, without exaggeration, saving people's lives inside those four walls. Your pricing should say something about that.

Three Steps to Pricing What You Actually Provide

Step 1 — Get to know every new person.

Regardless of their background, their experience level, or how straightforward their goals appear. We love to recite the adage: the needs of an Olympic athlete and a grandparent differ only by degree, not by kind. Almost none of us act on it.

Whether Matt Fraser walks through your door or a first-timer who can't do a pushup, take the time to understand what they are running from and where they are trying to go. Everyone is escaping some version of pain and trying to arrive somewhere better. That context is not optional — it is the foundation of every pricing conversation that follows.

ACTION STEP

Build a structured intake process for every new prospect. Not a tour. A conversation. What are they struggling with? What does success look like for them? Document it.

Step 2 — Eliminate standardized pricing.

If you take the time to understand someone's problem and then respond with your standard package menu, you've told them you weren't actually listening. You listened to respond, not to understand. That gap — between the problem they shared and the product you presented — is where the relationship fails before it begins.

Selling solutions means pricing varies by person. That feels uncomfortable until you realize it's exactly what every other professional service does. Lawyers, doctors, consultants, architects — none of them quote a flat monthly rate before understanding the scope of the problem.

ACTION STEP

Remove standard pricing from your website. Replace it with a prompt to book an intro. Let the conversation happen before the number does.

Step 3 — Charge what the solution is worth.

If a mechanic did three hundred dollars of work and charged you fifty, he'd go broke. If he charged three hundred and did fifty dollars worth of work, you'd never go back. The exchange has to be honest in both directions.

Discount your rate and one of two things happens: you discount the perceived value of your service, or you go under trying to deliver more than the math supports. Neither outcome serves your client.

There is also a retention argument here. People who make regular reinvestments in their health — session packages, quarterly commitments, structured progressions — achieve more, stay longer, and refer more people. Recurring memberships do the opposite. One investment, auto-renewed, deprioritized, cancelled when motivation dips. The package model creates engagement. The membership model creates churn.

ACTION STEP

Calculate your actual cost of delivering a transformative result for one client. Price from that number — not from what you think the market will bear or what the gym down the road charges.

The Point

The affiliate model gave you the most defensible, most diverse, most individual business structure in the fitness industry. You have permission to price like it.

Stop pricing like a globo-gym. Stop pricing like a commodity. Price like someone who knows exactly what problem they solve and is confident enough to say so.

You are not selling access to a facility. You are selling a way out of something that has been holding someone back — sometimes for years. Price it accordingly. Then go deliver it.

FitFilliate Journal · journal.fitfilliate.com · Information is free. Always has been.