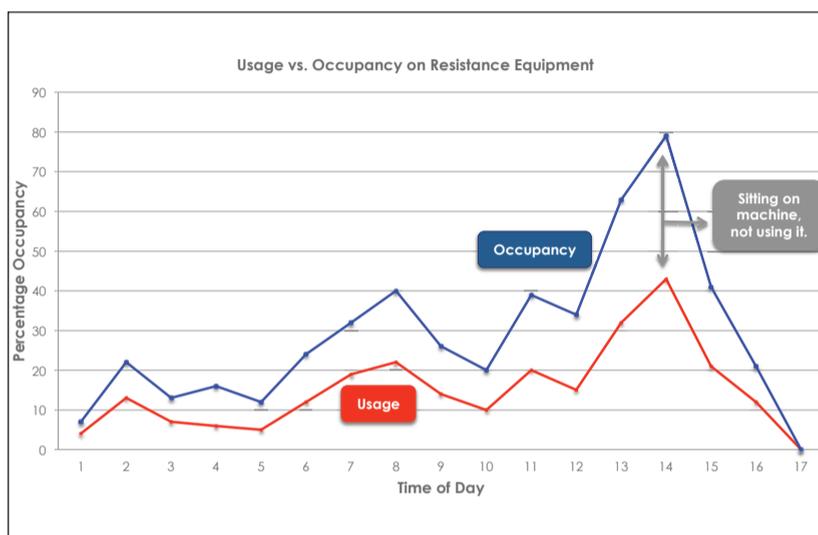
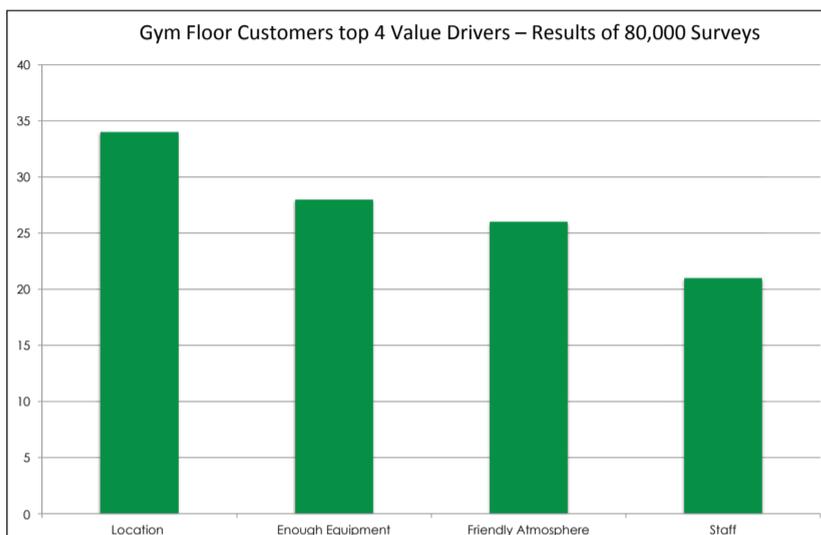


'Setting in' – why it makes sense ...



Rory McGown

What is it?

Setting in is when a customer of a gym lets another customer use the equipment when they are between sets of exercise. Essentially, they are sharing the equipment.

Why does setting in work for a gym?

Well, it expands the capacity of the facility. GYMetrix can measure the amount of time a piece of gym equipment is occupied (ie how long someone is sitting on it) as well as how long it is physically being used. Our research shows that most gym users spend one half to two thirds of their time sitting on equipment, but not actually using it. Instead, they are resting between sets or on their phone, which is highly annoying for other customers waiting to use the equipment.

Busy gyms that don't have the ability to increase their range of equipment can encourage customers to 'set in' with each other to expand their capacity. In theory, by changing the way customers use the equipment, gyms can almost double their capacity for equipment on which customers usually rest in between sets.

Another less obvious benefit of setting in is that it benefits retention by helping customers to interact with each other on the gym floor.

To date, GYMetrix has conducted more than 80,000 face to face surveys

with gym floor users asking them what they like about their gym. When customers say they like the friendly atmosphere of a gym, we ask if it is the other customers who are friendly or the staff. Interestingly, there seems to be a correlation; friendly staff appear to encourage members to be friendly.

However, what is most interesting is how many people find this to be a very important value driver. In fact, it is regularly cited as what customers like most about their gym.

- 1) Location
- 2) Having enough equipment of their choice
- 3) Friendly Atmosphere
- 4) Staff

Much has been written about how group exercise improves retention with people making friends with others in the class and feeling a sense of belonging. I have not seen anything written about the positive impact of encouraging customers on a gym floor to be friends with other gym floor users. Setting in would encourage this.

And we've all read about how retention can be improved by encouraging staff to talk to customers. However, our research shows that customers value chatting to other customers even more.

The beauty of this is that it doesn't cost operators anything to encourage get customers to talk to one another, but there are costs associated with getting staff talking to customers.

Many operators fear encouraging a setting in culture and worry that it will be a cause of conflict. Having now worked in hundreds of gym, I can say that gyms with a culture of setting in are by far the friendliest.

Personally, I don't like waiting to use equipment. It annoys me. So, I ask the person using equipment if I can set in with them. I'm very friendly and polite, I put a towel over the equipment to keep it clean, and I remember the weight the customer was using and make sure I re-set that

weight when I'm finished. Although that customer and I may have ignored each other, in some instances for years, I find that after this initial interaction, we give one another a little nod in acknowledgement next time we meet or even start up a conversation. Over time, this can develop into a friendship.

Much is talked about boutique fitness classes and the tribes that form within them. I believe retention could be improved by encouraging gym floor users to interact more with each other.

Most gym floor users are indeed their own tribe, they live/work in a

similar area, are of a similar socio economic class and all have one thing in common – they are interested in going to the gym. Setting in is the perfect ice breaker.

To encourage a culture of setting in, operators need to be proactive.

They should put up signs encouraging the practice throughout the gym, install boards next to particularly popular pieces of equipment detailing how much time is spent sitting on equipment not using it (see above graph), and could even get staff to wear T-shirts advertising with the message.

It's time to set in.

