

## SO, YOU WANT TO BE A PERSONAL TRAINER!

**Y**ou love being fit and you like the idea of helping others achieve better health. You might even have considered becoming a personal trainer but you're not sure whether it's the right career for you.

To find out more about what it's like working in this industry, we spoke to personal trainers Rachelle Bittar, Shaun Everington and Tom Livingston. Each came to the industry from different paths, but have in common that they work in a fitness centre and know that personal training is the job for them.

### RACHELLE BITTAR: A PASSION TO SUCCEED.

Rachelle Bittar remembers when she first discovered that personal training could be a lifetime career. "I was in year 10 when a personal trainer came to our school to give a presentation. When he spoke about helping clients

make their goals and dreams come true, I was sold straight away!"

After completing her HSC last year, Rachelle enrolled with the Australian Institute of Fitness. Within eight weeks she had graduated with a Master Trainer Certification, enabling her to take on a full time personal training position with Fitness First Parramatta, Sydney.

"I love that my job is never dull—that every one of my clients has a different personality and a different goal," says Rachelle. "It's a great motivation for me that I can help make a difference in their day."

Rachelle recounts the story of one of her clients who was overweight and suffering from stress. He was having trouble losing weight so Rachelle focused on ways to reduce his stress and inject as much fun as possible into his training.

"My reward came when he told me how much he looked forward to our sessions because not only was I helping him get fit, but also taking his mind off his problems. Once he had lowered his stress levels, the weight just fell off."

Aged 18, Rachelle has a strength and passion to succeed well beyond her years. As one of the youngest females to successfully compete in power-lifting for her country (achieving a ranking of 17), Rachelle is no stranger to challenges. Only six months into her personal training career, she has already set herself the goal of working her way up until she reaches the top of the industry.

Each morning as soon as she wakes, Rachelle sends an SMS to all her clients greeting them for the day and reminding them about their PT session. She understands the importance of customer service and client care for building her reputation in the club.

"You need to take a genuine interest in your clients and try to make each and every one of them walk away from your session with a smile."

### SHAUN EVERINGTON: A LIFESTYLE THAT SUITS.

Shaun still can't believe his luck. A personal trainer at Genesis Doncaster, Melbourne, he is amazed that he can make a living doing something he loves.

"It is one of the best lifestyles you can have. I wake up in the morning excited about going to work—I get to train, hang out with my mates at the gym, and meet loads of new people," explains Shaun.

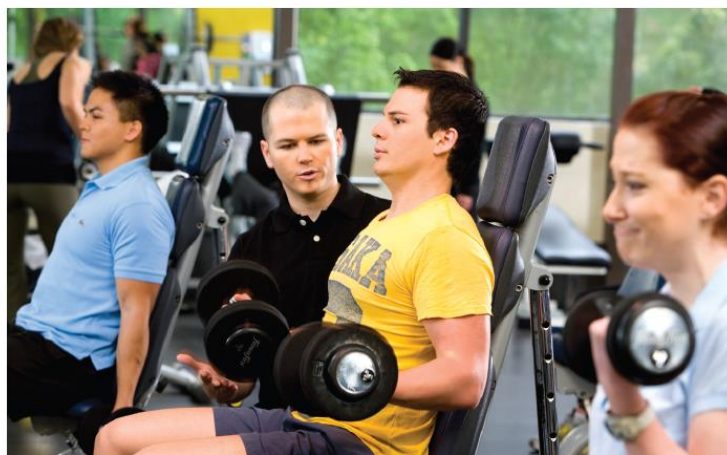
"When my clients get results from our sessions and thank me for it, it's a great feeling."

Shaun came across the vacancy at Genesis while completing his Master Trainer Certification at the Australian Institute of Fitness. "I saw the position advertised on the Institute's job board and it caught my eye. I had always wanted to start out working in a gym as I thought this would be a good way to learn the ropes before I moved out on my own."

"I was given the option of working either as an employee of Genesis or an independent contractor, which means you have to set up your own business and pay rent to the club. Setting up on my own was nerve-racking because I would be completely responsible for finding clients, but I decided it would be the better option in the long run for making a good income."

Shaun started out doing gym floor shifts and writing programs for new members that joined the club. It was from here that he picked up his first few clients—by explaining how he could further their fitness goals and offering them a free PT session.

A year into his business, he has a client base of 17, including a mother and daughter team who have been with him since the start. Together they have lost 75 cm of body fat and 14 kilos, and are



fitter and happier than ever before.

"The daughter plays netball and tells me how much quicker she can move on court; and the mother—who has had a hip replacement—is really noticing the improvements in her functional movement."

### TOM LIVINGSTON: UP FOR A CHALLENGE.

Tom was already firmly established in one career before he decided to give personal training a go.

A printer by trade, he decided that he needed a new challenge in his life. As an avid gym goer, it made perfect sense that his new career should be doing something he enjoyed.

"My job as a printer is very robotic—I go in, do the job and clock off. It's the opposite as a personal trainer—I don't know what each day will bring and who I'm going to meet," Tom explains.

"Of course it was a big step giving up a comfortable job and wondering in the back of my mind about whether it would work out, but I had to at least try. There is no point in going through life wondering 'what if'—I decided it was better to embrace the challenge and have fun with it."

Fun is definitely what Tom has been having since he graduated in February this year from the Australian Institute of Fitness. After completing his Master Trainer Certification part time over 16

weeks, he started his own company: Physi-Fit Personal Training and Fitness Solutions.

His first couple of clients were generated from a flyer he designed and personally delivered around the St George-Illawarra area, Sydney. Still working as a printer, he trained his clients at his home gym before and after work.

Five months into his business he decided to take a position with Fitness First Wanda Platinum as a one-on-one personal trainer. He has scaled his printing job back to part time and now juggles his Fitness First clients with his clients outside the centre.

"To grow my business I decided it was a wise move to align myself with a pre-established name, like Fitness First. It's tricky to fit my clients around each other, but it is manageable. The flexibility of my hours is a great advantage—it is up to me to come into the centre as often as I need to be able to afford to pay my rent and make an income."

"If you are at a successful stage with your business, you could be doing 20 one-hour sessions a week and that would be enough to pay your rent at the gym and your living expenses, with enough to put away for savings. The fact that you can earn the equivalent of a conventional 9am-5pm job but with less hours is in itself a huge motivation as a trainer." ■

