

Beyond Boot Camp

Emerging Trends in “Extreme” Fitness

by Alaina Brandenburger



Ten years ago, when people wanted to get into shape quickly, they turned to classes such as boot camp, spinning, Yoga, Pilates, Yogalates (a fusion between the two disciplines), and equipment such as resistance bands and stability balls. These days, people are beginning to turn to more challenging fitness regimens. In the past two years, programs such as P90X®, Tough Mudder®, CrossFit®, and even Hardcore Yoga have been drawing participants from all over the world. So what is extreme fitness all about, and what should you know before you try a program or consider implementing it in your agency?

P90X®: This home-based workout program is a 90-day regimen that utilizes cross-training (a combination of weight training, martial arts, yoga, and calisthenics) in a progressive, cycli-

cal manner, combined with a nutrition and dietary supplement plan. The program works by capitalizing on a circuit training method that works out different muscle groups in intervals. This is a common technique for obtaining faster results and minimizing weight loss plateaus caused by the body’s ability to adapt to a workout routine.

What to consider: At this time, P90X® is primarily a home-based workout. Owned and licensed by Beachbody®, any center that wants to offer classes has to sign an agreement with the company, and all trainers must go through their certification program. This fitness program is intended for people who are already in good shape. In fact, the DVD series comes with a fitness test to determine if the workout is right for the person. It is not intended for beginners or people who do not work out on a regular basis. This limits the potential user-pool from your agency.

Tough Mudder®: Think of Tough Mudder® as a marathon, mixed with a boot camp class, mixed with American Gladiators. “Designed by British Special Forces to test your all around strength, stamina, mental grit, and camaraderie,” Tough Mudder® is a hardcore, 10-12 mile obstacle course. Events are similar to marathons and triathlons in that they are typically held once or twice a year per city, and participants must register in advance. However, Tough Mudder® courses are fraught with difficult obstacles, such as electrical wires, fire, ice-cold water and many more. These are designed to test your endurance. Tough Mudder® really offers a chance to bond with buddies and share bragging rights after completing the course.

What to consider: Common venues for Tough Mudder® courses include ski resorts, outdoor resort destinations, motorsports parks, off-road parks, and other venues in which outdoor activities are popular. Since these events attract participants from all over the world, they can be a great opportunity to bring visibility and additional revenue to smaller, resort communities. These events can be a great way to increase off-season traffic. However, they should be managed like any other large event in an agency. Consideration should be given to potential issues such as lodging, traffic, restrooms and any other issues that are commonplace. Additionally, this event brings a high risk of injury, so medical personnel may need to be prepared.

CrossFit®: At first glance, CrossFit® appears to be geared toward elite athletes and people who are generally fit to begin with. CrossFit® classes include activities such as Olympic-style weightlifting, gymnastics, plyometrics, and

“Since its debut in 2010, Tough Mudder® has become perhaps the most popular event in a growing category of obstacle races, unorthodox and often mud-caked runs strewn with additional challenges to your strength and toughness. These events attract up to 17,000 participants a weekend.”

Craig Ballantyne. LiveStrong.com
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other activities designed to develop strength, stamina, agility, strength, speed, flexibility, and other attributes. While it may seem daunting to participate in a class that involves flipping semi-truck tires, CrossFit® trainers customize the workout for people of varying fitness levels. Beginners will not be asked to complete the difficult tasks, rather they will start more simply and work up. CrossFit® works by concentrating on different muscle groups with different types of workouts. It is great for people who are easily bored or simply want to try something different.

What to consider: There are Parks and Recreation Departments in the United States that offer CrossFit® classes to the community, including Ojai, California; Watertown, Wisconsin; and Alpharetta, Georgia, among others. However, CrossFit® trainers need to be trained and certified through the CrossFit® certification program, and you must pay an annual fee to



use the name, which is licensed. Level 1 Certification is required before becoming an affiliate. CrossFit® may also fall into the category of alternative provider, as there are several private CrossFit® gyms in the United States. Rather than trying to provide this service in your agency, there could be an opportunity to partner with one of these private locations.

Hardcore Yoga: For fitness buffs who are interested in yoga, but want more cardio and less chanting, there is “Hardcore Yoga.” Based on more vigorous asana yoga practices, Power Yoga provides more of a cardiovascular workout than the gentler meditative stretches performed in traditional yoga practices. The primary goals of Hardcore Yoga are to build strength, increase endurance, release tension, and build flexibility. This activity is great for people who want to develop different muscle groups and help prevent injuries when par-

ticipating in other athletic activities. It is also good for those who would rather focus on the workout properties of yoga rather than the meditative properties.

What to consider: Much like CrossFit®, there are a number of private Harcore Yoga studios in the United States. Some people who practice yoga attempt to perform beyond their skill level, thus leading to injury. For this reason, it is important to have certified yoga instructors to help correct posture or encourage people to practice at their own pace. Certification requires a minimum of 200 hours, and can be costly to complete. This is another activity in which forming a partnership with private providers may be a viable option.

If you are thinking of adding a program or multiple programs such as these, GreenPlay can help you by analyzing current alternative providers and suggesting partnerships where appropriate. Fitness trends come and go. We can also utilize our trends expertise to help you determine what may or may not be viable for your agency to consider.

“If you still think of yoga as a relaxing, ‘stretchy-feely’ discipline, you might want to consider joining the 15 million Americans (twice as many as five years ago) who have realized what an incredible workout it can be.”
Shape Magazine “Power Up Your Yoga” 4/23/2009