

**Consider a newsletter with Bill Roach (Part 2)**

**John Macgowan:** Hi and welcome to another episode of the Indoor Cycle Instructor Pro Podcast. I'm John Macgowan your host and as always, I want to thank you for being supporting members of ICI/PRO. Without you, we would not be able to do the things that we're doing and one of those things is continuation of an interview I did with Bill Roach, and how we were discussing the importance of potentially creating a newsletter for your indoor cycling class or fitness studio. So, Bill is joining me again, Bill, welcome.



**Bill Roach:** Thanks John I'm glad to be back.

**John Macgowan:** Well I'm glad to have you back, because I promised everybody we would continue this and I would hate not do. So, Bill on the earlier episode and I believe that would be podcast number 133. We discussed really what you saw are the four main reasons why someone should consider a newsletter for their indoor cycling class or their fitness studio and we talked about the benefits to increase retention of members; we talked about you as an instructor developing authority and credibility with your class.

We also talked about it with an avenue for you to convey an additional teaching methods, so that you don't feel compel to try to tell them everything in the class. And your favorite as you described it was just the bonding, the connection, and the building of community that would come through that.

So, I have a newsletter, I know how the whole thing operates, but I'm going to guess that there are no shortage of Pro members who just by nature they wanted to have the best and most full class as possible, but they are starting to think, okay, how am I going to do this? And you have been very gracious to come up with bunch of ideas as to first what they need to say or what they could say and also how we're going to deliver this newsletter.

So, starting with what you say, you have laid out a couple of bullet points here, the first one you talk about is the news content from intercycleinstructor.com or other organizations that are somewhat accredited for you content, expand on that.

**Bill Roach:** I might even go a half a step back and say that I think it's important not to make this seem more difficult than it is you know, one page is plenty, it doesn't need to be written in a professional style, it should sounds like it's coming from you. You know, kind of get the idea out of your head that kind of any pre-conceive notions about what a newsletter has to be in terms of publishing art you know, it just needs to be some kind of a little regular communication

from you to your students in your own voice and I think that kind of demystifying it that way is probably the first important thing for people to begin with.

Having said that there is a ton of content out there, it's all over. And I think the two most obvious places to go for any of your listeners John is number one is ICI, I mean just go to the website I mean it is all over you know, you and Jenifer have done such a good job of collecting the best thinking on indoor cycle instruction and alternate points of view on some of it but certainly finding the consensus on most of it for things like periodization and lactate threshold training and you know, and it's the whole range of things that any one of which could make a short article in a newsletter and by an article you know, it could be as little as a paragraph or two.

So, number one use ICI I would say number two would be go to your own accreditation whether it's spinning or some other accreditation and use your accreditation materials and simplify what you find there and make it relevant to your classes you certainly don't want to just you know take something a page out of your accreditation manual and send it to your classes. But if you look through the accreditation manual through your student's eyes and say what here might be important for them to know, a list of counter indications for instance might be a good thing that could come right out of your spinning certification or other certification and could be shortened and summarized for your members.

Or hand positions or movement patterns and basically just share that information with your classes, so I mean two obvious sources are sitting right in your laps right now, in a course there are tone of others all over the internet and publications and everywhere there is no shortage of places to go for good information.

**John Macgowan:** Okay. And you expand on that where you talk about trusted public sources, what do you mean by that?

**Bill Roach:** Well yeah, there are all kinds of either by subscription or just go out on the web and find them kind of sources some of them are for triathletes some of them are for bike racers, some of them are just in the genre of health and fitness some of them are in the genre of nutrition and wellness and I think when you confined sources like those that work for you and are ventures to you then they can be certainly your ideas for things to share with your students.

No, I'm not suggesting that you just cut and paste and violate someone's copy right, but rather you know, that you just take that idea accredited as such and rewrite it in your own words giving credit for the original idea, but you know, simple internet search using sources that you know are credible other accreditations you might have certainly ICI certainly your own accreditation or the two most credible invest to start with, but there are ton of them out there and you know, my mail box gets you know, half-a-dozen of these everyday and some of them are frankly very may not be obvious I get a lot of ideas from newsletters by subscribing to the New York Times and looking for health and fitness articles there on current research and so

forth and I come up with ideas there, so it isn't just about the fitness world but really highly trusted good news sources as well.

**John Macgowan:** And I know for – if you could dig into a little deeper, if you can setup alerts within Google for that matter where whenever there is something new published with the word fitness and or nutrition or indoor cycling or triathlon at the end of the week Google send you an email saying here these articles that relevant to your search request and then you can kind of pick and choose I honestly we find a lot of interesting content on our four ICI that we come up with that way, because you know the ideas that if it's interesting to me it's probably going to be interesting to my readers and the same as true for your participants.

**Bill Roach:** Yeah, that's exactly right, and you are right, I mean in terms of use a Google and so forth leave it to you John to find a way to use technology to help yourself here and you have done it again.

**John Macgowan:** Oh, I have to, I don't have a choice.

**Bill Roach:** Oh, you do a great job of that.

**John Macgowan:** Well, thank you. You go on to talk about understanding the needs of your students.

**Bill Roach:** You know, I think I have learned over the couple of years I have been doing my newsletter that some of my very best ideas come from students occasionally the student will just come up and say, hey, I think you should do a newsletter on buying shoes you have got a lot of you know, I was I have been on cycling and I have been doing my spinning classes in tennis shoes and I just bought some cycling shoe some proper shoes and the differences is so much more than I ever thought it would be, you should tell people that in your newsletter, yeah, okay, great idea, I can do an article on that, great idea.

So, sometimes it's obvious, but sometimes you know, it's just things they say that are meaningful that make you think one of my favorite student is grandmother who comes in and when she got starts going hard on her bike she kind of closes her eyes and I can and I remember I could tell that she was always thinking about something really hard and after class one time I asked her what are you thinking about when you are in that mode and she says I am thinking about my grandkids and how the hard work I'm doing is going to help me be around them longer. I said --

**John Macgowan:** What a wonderful thing.

**Bill Roach:** Wasn't that nice?

**John Macgowan:** Yes, what – incredibly cool motivation.

**Bill Roach:** Exactly and I said to her just instantaneously I said would you mind if I share that, though I have shared it with the whole world as well as with my newsletter readers I'm sure she wouldn't care, but I said would you mind if I share that with the newsletter, with the newsletter readers I think they would like to hear that.

**John Macgowan:** Well, especially within your own little community I think that would be really neat.

**Bill Roach:** Exactly it builds the community, it lets everyone in the community feel that they are part of it that we care about each other that we care about each other's motivations and also sends a message that the grandmother who wants to be with her grandkids longer as part of the community as well as you know the racer or the triathlete who that everyone is equal in this community and I think that's an important message.

**John Macgowan:** All right, well and I guess you could – as you say that I'm thinking it's also helpful to be appropriate with the content or with the articles that you are going to be publishing if you don't have any triathletes in your class, it doesn't make sense to talk about Ironman Triathlons.

**Bill Roach:** Precisely, exactly right. And individual instructor is going to have the feel of that and understand what is going to work the best for their class and who are the attenders and so, when you pick in through this material whether it would be from Google alerts or ICI or whatever you know, you know better than anyone else what your classes are going to be interested in and often times they will just tell you. If I get a student asking me a question just on their own behalf at some point in answering them I'll have the thought hey, maybe this is a question other people are asking or thinking and haven't brought to my attention yet and often times that could become a couple little paragraphs in the newsletter.

**John Macgowan:** Do you do things that are seasonal?

**Bill Roach:** Sometimes, certainly acknowledging the change in seasons and kind of what's happening in the spinning studio as a result, like you John I mean I'm in the Midwest here and you know, we kind of move indoors in the fall and we move back outdoors in the spring. And so, I'll do an article in the spring about road biking or I think this spring I'll do want to buying a road-bike and as a former serious road biker you know kind of my advice about kind of how to go about the steps and how about going to buy a road bike.

But in the fall it could be kind of a moving indoors and kind of rededicating to ourselves to the spinning and so forth, so seasonal definitely and part of it is just the community it's just you know wishing each other good wishes during the holiday times and some things like that in a simple way in a way that real and genuine, but none the less it's worth acknowledging.

**John Macgowan:** And then the last on your list and we've touched on it briefly in the original podcast about communicating upcoming events.

**Bill Roach:** Yeah, you know, I think you don't want to bombard people's email inboxes with every little thing that's going on, but if you are sending out a newsletter and they are of course some upcoming events at the club for instance that might be of interest to them or even in the community that might be of interest to them, no harm and reminding them little short item and particularly if there is spinning events at your club that makes sense some kind of a special race day events or fund raising events or celebrity visiting or whatever it might be you know, remind your students about it let them know what's going on, it's just all part of the community.

**John Macgowan:** Well and of course, if you are kind of have an event it only makes sense to promote it.

**Bill Roach:** I would imagine so.

**John Macgowan:** Okay, so now, we have decided we need a news letter we've got some comfort that we're going to have something to say and just lay anyone's fears when I started this podcast two-and-half years ago my concern was am I going to run out of things to talk about, the answer is no, I have such a backlog and things that we could talk about once you start thinking about what am I going to talk about they all come to you. So, don't ever let that stop you there will be plenty and as long as you said some regularity and I think we're going to talk about this sort of frequency, so that you don't overwhelm yourself anyone listening this should feel very comfortable being able to figure out a few things that they can communicate, so --

**Bill Roach:** Let me second that John. That's a great observation and then I'll just second what you said.

**John Macgowan:** So, now we move into how you are going to deliver your newsletter or your product as you call it, because it does not have to be a newsletter I mean, it could just be a monthly email we just tend to call them newsletters, so don't be and anyone who is been on my email newsletter list that understands that I send out a very generic very plain pretty much text only email in this day and age most email clients are said not to display images and so, spending a bunch of time developing a very pretty email or adding a bunch of pictures and everything maybe added work that your recipients aren't going to appreciate as they won't ever see it and I might have stolen your thunder on one topics you built, but let's just keep going.

**Bill Roach:** Yeah, well, let me just endorse what you just said, I completely agree and I think anything like that that makes it more intimidating to do just don't do it, keep it simple. We knew have an audience that you know is already highly interested in your subject you don't need to grab their attention with flashy graphics and stuff like that you can you know, you can deliver a plain text only product that's easier for you to create you know, I don't think anyone it just not necessary, so I agree with you.

**John Macgowan:** Right and number of years ago somebody gave me some very wise advice they said if you want to see what the number one website in the world looks like go to google.com and they are using nothing more than a blank page and a search bar.

**Bill Roach:** Oh, that's great.

**John Macgowan:** And so, don't feel that you have to play Picasa with your email I mean, granted that's for some people they like doing that, but don't let that slow you down. So, we have talked about why you should doing newsletter and we have talked about what you are going to put in your newsletter and now we're going to talk about how we deliver it. Where do we begin with all this?

**Bill Roach:** Well, I start with a little bit of an understanding of the scope of your project is this an email that's just going to go out to the people that come to your spinning classes or is it going to be something more that's going to come to everyone who participates in spinning at your club or whoever – is everyone is a member at your club. I mean, there are different levels of involvement that you could approach here. I personally like the idea of a newsletter from a spinning instructor to that spinning instructor's students, but if you are going to do that you might want to let your management know that you are doing it.

They might have an issue saying for instance well what if everyone did that and we have all these newsletters flying around and I think the answer that is not everyone is going to do it, but you might want to just check in with your management and kind of have a little bit of a game plan for who you are going to reach and kind of what your purposes for doing it and just letting the ownership of your studio kind of know what you are about, I do that first I think just so your own basis or covered with your employer.

**John Macgowan:** You know, one point I want to add your bill, and it's a little contrarian but I think a lot of – it may resonate with few people and that is that your email list could become very valuable to you say your club closed or they decided they didn't want you anymore and yet you have a substantial email list that you developed on your own, so it's your list so that you could essentially re-communicate your new employment if that ever occurred.

**Bill Roach:** Yeah, I think that's right there may be a legal issue there involving your own contract with your employer and you know, work product fall into the employ and so forth, but certainly there is at least in many cases I think that would be the case.

**John Macgowan:** Now I see people have to make that decision on their own, but yes.

**Bill Roach:** Yeah, we can't give legal advice about that, potentially that's right. That it is something the list itself is has value and you certainly have custody of it, who has the rights to it, becomes a legal question, but you have custody of it and it maybe something that you can use.

**John Macgowan:** So, we've gone through the process we've gotten approval internally for you to do this, how do you began collecting your names?

**Bill Roach:** You know, it's real simple at the club where I teach there is a sign in list that everyone signs when they come in to class so that we keep – keep track of attendance for each class and I just put a pad next to that saying you know, give me your email address clearly printed if you would like to receive a spinning newsletter from me. And people have signed for my – that way. Now I have – I'm starting to approach 400 people who taken my spinning classes that are on my newsletter list and I just picked them up one at a time as people have signed in and given me their name.

By the way you might also want to ask for their phone number because I find about one time out of four or five there are some part of the email address I can't read even when I tell them to write clearly and being able to call them and clarify is sometimes a savings.

**John Macgowan:** I do need to ask does your studio maintain a list of customers or do they have an email newsletter that they are sending?

**Bill Roach:** Yes, but they use it very infrequently, I would say only two or three times of year and when they do it's very corporate and not focused on spinning at all, it will be focused on sale of some product or a promotion for new year's resolution people or memberships or something like that. So, the only spinning information that goes out from my club at this time goes out from me.

**John Macgowan:** And that would have been I would have add that our initial list of why you should have your newsletter, because you can't depend on your own club to promote your class.

**Bill Roach:** That's right.

**John Macgowan:** All right. So you have amassed list of emails, what do you do with them?

**Bill Roach:** So, you got them loaded in some kind of a some place on your computer in some kind of a list or something and that's a technical question that I don't think we need to go into right now. But I think you need to decide you need to make some decisions about your newsletter in terms of frequency and some format and so forth and I think what I would start with is just not promising very much at first, let it go naturally and don't put pressure on yourself to and have to create something every two weeks or have to create something on some regular schedule. I would just be bold about saying it's you know I send one out when I feel like I have enough content and I have time to write it and I probably would have a goal a personal goal, an unstated goal, an unpromised goal of doing it maybe once a month or so, it might be end up being a little bit more often than that, but basically sending out one page or a page-and-a-half once a month is enough to have a product that is out there and yet not so much that is going to overwhelm you.

And then if you really get into what you got more content you want to do it more often you don't know one's going to complain about that, but I think a little bit about delivery schedule next that would be my next piece and then I go on from there to think a little bit about just what do I

wanted to look like, it would be nice to have a little bit of consistency even if you are just using a simple word processor to create it, just a little bit of consistency about what you call it, how you handle what topics look like, kind of just kind of – so that there is some recognition of it in your readers mailbox from time to the next.

**John Macgowan:** So that they begin to see the reputation and that is very crucial there is reason we have never change the introduction to the Indoor Cycle Instructor Podcast for the free podcast is first I always love having Amy, but when people recognize that it's just like a theme song to some TV show you know, we all know who Gilligan and the Skipper are or were, well most of us know anyways. And so, but based on their theme song, so anyways --

**Bill Roach:** Is that what the picture is of you and Amy on the beach?

**John Macgowan:** That --

**Bill Roach:** Is that, Gilligan's Island?

**John Macgowan:** It could have – yes, it could have been, yes. That was just some random picture I took on one of our working fitness vacations and --

**Bill Roach:** Okay.

**John Macgowan:** So, and one of those takes – you know, hold the camera point to back at ourselves when doing all since the day we were married, so --

**Bill Roach:** There you go.

**John Macgowan:** So you develop this formatting and there is nothing wrong with changing at as you get establish though, right?

**Bill Roach:** No, of course.

**John Macgowan:** Don't have to be perfect.

**Bill Roach:** No, absolutely I think you know one of the main messages I would want people to hear about this is that perfection is the enemy of good here, just get something out make it as good as you can make it, improve it as you go, but don't get hung up what I'm having to be perfect or else you just end up not doing it. And I think this kind of a project people get intimidated and then just don't do it.

And I think it's really important to just dive in and start. You know, you can also do this on a blog and you know, you know as much about that as me, but what I'm doing is I send out the newsletter to everyone that I have in email address for, but lately I have been also posting it on a blog and that just gives me particularly when I have people I find that I have people now asking for back issues and rather than have to dig around and so forth I can just refer them to

the blog for back issues. So, might not, if you just getting started it might not be bad to just take that step and slap it on a blog which even for someone like me with fairly limited technical skills didn't prove to be very hard.

**John Macgowan:** Bill I like the whole concept of tying it into a blog of some sort, but the instructor could also start a blog which and then just reference that post as the newsletter, correct?

**Bill Roach:** Yes of course.

**John Macgowan:** Right, because that's really what I do is that you know, we're sending a recap there tends to be some additional information at the top of it, that maybe timely in some manner, but the remainder of it is the excerpts of you know, the content from the previous week. And so, but it doesn't even have to be multiple pieces you could literally send out an email saying I've got my new post up which essentially takes the place of the email itself, correct and then just send a link to it.

**Bill Roach:** Yes, absolutely.

**John Macgowan:** And then you also have the benefit of people bookmarking it coming back checking it and having a link that they can also forward to others. What I find is because you created a blog then you could create the format of it again it doesn't have to be pretty, but from a context standpoint of it you know, your information your class schedule you know those kind of things can easily be added to it and they possibly may – or it may only frequently change so that there was so the only thing that we're doing is adding small articles and links to other articles and developing it from there all right.

**Bill Roach:** Yeah, the other nice thing about a blog is if you decide to implement it that way you know, you can have ongoing discussions with your students that are posted and let everyone can read as you know, as you do with ICI you know, there is you can also do it, if you want to go that direction you can do that.

**John Macgowan:** Right, well that's maybe an entirely another topic that I have always thought it would be interesting to get into so you know, whether an instructor should have a blog, we don't want to overwhelm everybody, but --

**Bill Roach:** Yeah, it's just a thought to put out there, but it kind of does dealt with the idea of newsletter at least enough that it's worth recognizing.

**John Macgowan:** Right. And the idea being that you are going to what they would call syndicate your content meaning that you are going to make it available in multiple formats the same content that it would be on your blog in your newsletter, so you are not doing things twice you are just using the same content two different delivery mechanisms like we talked about earlier multiple touch points to help convey your message.

**Bill Roach:** Precisely.

**John Macgowan:** So, and then lastly you talk about replies.

Bill Roach: Some of this we have already touched on, but basically that I find that when I have send out a newsletter and that start to I'll get students who write back to me just they will hit reply and come back to me with thoughts and comments and so forth and that in itself is an interesting dialogue with students. They will tell me what's going on if they are racers they will tell me about the latest race time, things that they would necessarily think to tell me if they haven't have the email from me there might not be time to tell me a class, but they will take a minute and just write a few sentences to me.

So, it really increases my communication with my students, it helps me understand what's going on in their lives and once again it comes back to the very first idea we talked about which is bonding that it really just creates a community it strengthens the little tribal community of people that do indoor cycling together and go and sweat together and work together it just strengthen those bonds which I think is good for us on every level. And ultimately that's the reason that I stated this whole venture, because I felt like it was a way to make the linkages between people in my class is stronger and I think it's succeeded with that.

**John Macgowan:** Well, Bill Roach, thank you, this is been wonderful. I have learned a little bit here myself and I'm going to guess our listeners have as well. If they have a question can they contact you?

**Bill Roach:** Sure, just my email would be great. It's bill.roach R-O-A-C-H @mchsi.com and feel free to send me an email I would love to – I'm all about talking with people about this kind of stuff.

**John Macgowan:** In the post for this podcast I'll be – I'll have some PDFs with the outlines that we've been working off of so – something to reference and I also provide a couple of copies of Bills newsletter for those to see. So, Bill, again thank you, I have enjoyed it and I hope our pro members have enjoyed it. And if you have any questions or comments you can email Bill or send me an email, john@indoorcycleinstructor.com. And so, until next time, we here is hoping that your classes are full and you are enjoying them.

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