

Hotel Online

News for the Hospitality Executive

Boulder woman's on-demand fitness programs air in hotels, cruise ships (Daily Camera, Boulder, Colo.)

By Alicia Wallace, Daily Camera, Boulder, Colo.
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Feb. 22--Leah Garcia has been a bit of a road warrior.

Working as a television commentator for various sports networks, she spent more than 200 nights per year in hotel rooms.

Garcia, a certified fitness trainer and former professional cyclist, soon became restless.

"I saw a huge, glaring need for something to help me stay fit and healthy," said Garcia, who currently travels across the country as a sideline reporter for the Outdoor Life Network.

So last April, Garcia launched Boulder-based Naturally Caffeinated Inc., which produces the Zone Workout Series, a group of fitness programs sold through video-on-demand programming in hotel rooms. The video-on-demand technology allows viewers to pay \$6.99 to \$8.99 a program from their television and have the cost billed to their hotel statement.

After partnering with Denver-based On Command Corp., an interactive in-room provider of video-on-demand programs, the programs launched in 120,000 hotel rooms.

Since then, distribution has grown steadily after additional partnerships that include Georgia-based InSystcom Inc., the Hospitality Network, and most recently, Fitness Suite.

The Zone Workout Series is expected to be in more than 700,000 hotel rooms by this April.

Along with hotel chains, such as Days Inn, Hilton, Holiday Inn, Marriott and Sheraton, Garcia's Zone Workout Series also is available in guest rooms in some Las Vegas casino and resort properties, and cruise lines such as SilverSea Cruises and Oceania Cruise Lines.

The videos, filmed in a hotel room setting with instructors all hailing from Boulder, were designed for people to exercise in a limited space without the need for having special equipment, such as a yoga mat or barbells.

Garcia said she saw three trends that motivated her to start the business: the growth of video-on-demand, adults of all ages balancing many priorities in their daily lives and an increase of in-room fitness offerings at hotels.

"If I didn't (do this), somebody else would," she said.

Recently, two of the nation's largest hotel chains -- Hilton Hotels Corp. and Marriott International Inc. -- announced in-room fitness options. While guests can check out equipment at both hotels, people also can sign up with a Bally Total Fitness personal trainer at some Hiltons.

"Hotels are just wrapping their arms around, almost frenetically, the fitness arena," she said.

But the video-on-demand medium, she said, also will allow her business to grow.

Forrester Research, an independent technology research company based in Cambridge, Mass., estimates more than half of all cable systems in the United States have video-on-demand.

"Based on our interviews with cable operators, (video-on-demand) will be available to nearly every U.S. digital cable subscriber in the next year-and-a-half," wrote Josh Bernoff, a Forrester analyst, in a June research note.

Garcia said the growing and easily adaptable platform will allow for the addition of updated content and the possibility to feature various sponsors.

But most importantly, she said, it allows her to bring exercise options to a larger population.

"Really, I just want to make what I am doing inspire people to make fitness a priority," she said.

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