



# Tony de Leede

CEO, Fit n Fast  
Sydney, Australia

By Craig R. Waters

**Recently, when I looked up the definition for “serial entrepreneur,” I found your name. In terms of clubs, you’ve done Australian Body Works, Fitness First Australia, and, now, Fit n Fast. What drives you?**

My two previous club businesses, Australian Body Works and Fitness First Australia, were very successful. However, I think the brand I was involved with that inspired the most change was Cardio Theatre, which introduced entertainment to our industry. I joke that, even though I’ve been in this business for 35 years, I really don’t like to exercise. Part of the rationale for putting Cardio Theatre in my clubs in the late ‘80s was to “make the medicine taste better.”

What drives me? I’m always looking ahead to see what’s coming. As the great ice hockey player Wayne Gretzky used to say, “I skate to where the puck is *going* to be, not where it’s been.”

**Now you’re in the process of rebranding your Fit n Fast budget gyms in Australia as YogaBar studios. What’s your thinking?**

We grew Fit n Fast from one to 18 facilities over the first three years, but, more recently, the high-volume/low-price space has become crowded. Today, there are approximately 2,000 such operations in Australia. However, the number of people exercising hasn’t grown as fast as the number of clubs. Big middle-market groups such as Genesis, Goodlife, and Fitness First have all seen their market share erode, and Fit n Fast has, too.

**How did yoga wind up being a part of the new mix?**

A few years ago, I visited Pure Yoga in Hong Kong to learn about yoga brands that have a number of rooms beneath one roof. Pure Yoga does it quite well, combining three to five studios with a retail activewear area and an organic whole foods café. As we move ahead in Australia, we’re looking at developing many hybrid models with a strong

focus on yoga, barre, Pilates, and meditation. We’ll continue to develop other brands around fighting/boxing, functional/cross-training, cycling/functional-dance, and many other exercise genres. Fitness fusion is here, and there are no rules as to what type of exercises you can blend.

**In terms of other club opportunities, is there anything else you find tempting?**

I’ve been exploring virtual concepts, and, about two years ago, I developed my first outline for a virtual-only, activity/wellness center aimed primarily at women over 40, many of whom have never experienced exercise in a traditional club because they find clubs intimidating. Over the last year, I’ve created another program, Move 123, which provides content in 10-, 20-, and 30-minute segments, and I’m about to launch Learn 123, which will be 5-, 10-, and 15-minute educational segments designed for the screens of treadmills and bikes.

These brands will be the foundation of my women’s club, Club W.

We’ll be supplying our Move 123 content to Wexer Virtual for launch to the global market in the near future.

**Finally, you’re the owner of the Hotel Komune Resort and Beach Club, and the co-owner of the Gwinganna Lifestyle Retreat. How do these ventures fit into your game plan?**

I launched Hotel Komune three-and-a-half years ago as, primarily, a surf resort, because it sits beside one of the most famous surf breaks in the world, but, since then, it’s also evolved into a destination for weddings. As for Gwinganna, I bought the property 13 years ago, and we’ve just celebrated our 10th anniversary. I believe it’s one of the most unique offerings in the lifestyle-retreat space on the planet. It’s my pride and joy, I intend to spend a lot more time there when I slow down.

**We find that—your slowing down—hard to imagine. —**

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