

IGOR KLIBANOV

'the result hound'

B.A. (Specialized Honours) – Kinesiology and Health Science
Canadian-Fit-Pro Personal Trainer Specialist (PTS)
Ontario Kinesiology Association (OKA) Certified Kinesiologist
CPR C, First Aid

<http://www.torontofitnessonline.com/>

igor@torontofitnessonline.com

647.271.8672

RESULT-DRIVEN , PROFESSIONAL, PERSONABLE

QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT

Do you believe in protein supplementation? If so how do you respond to those apprehensive of taking protein for fear of gaining weight?

Each case is different, so whether I will advocate my clients taking protein supplementation or not largely depends on the client's goals, lifestyle and other factors.

For generally good nutrition, I like for my clients to get 20-40 grams of protein per meal. If they can do it through food, then protein supplementation is unnecessary. But if they're a very busy client who barely has time for breakfast, I'd rather have them take a protein shake than the alternatives (which can be no breakfast at all, or a coffee from Tim Hortons).

For clients who are apprehensive of taking protein for fear of gaining weight, I let them know to select a brand that is high in protein and low in carbs, so the total number of calories is fairly

low. I then run through the numbers with them to show them that they are not likely to gain weight with protein supplementation. I show them that 1 scoop of protein powder typically contains 80-90 calories. In a 2000 calorie diet, this is less than 5% of their total calories.

Furthermore, protein suppresses appetite, which makes them feel fuller, and less likely to overeat later in the day, which often more than makes up for those extra 5%.

Are the size, formation, and pronunciation of abdominals attained strictly by working out or do you think a lot of it comes down to genetics?

Love this question!

Just like most things, both training and genetics play a role. But how much of a role is highly individual. It is my belief that anyone can get pronounced abdominals. But the level of effort that each individual will have to put in will vary very significantly. For instance, if there is an ectomorph with a naturally high metabolism, he may get pronounced abdominals without too much effort. Just some minor dietary changes, combined with the correct training approach, and he can get there.

But for the person who has struggled with the weight their whole life (especially if it's a woman), getting pronounced abdominals will require a much stricter approach than the aforementioned ectomorph. Also, it will take a much longer time. At this point, the client has to evaluate for his or her self whether the effort required to reach pronounced abdominals is worth it, or whether they are happy to just be extremely lean, but without pronounced abdominals. After all, it is much easier to go from being 50 pounds overweight to 10 pounds overweight than it is to go from a 2-pack to a 6-pack.

Most important advice you would give to another trainer?

I would tell other trainers two things: the foundation for being a successful personal trainer is threefold. Firstly, you need to have the technical side taken care of. You should know your anatomy and physiology cold, and be able to apply it to get results. Second, you must be personable. You must be a fun, motivating, positive person to be around that actually looks like you exercise. Social support is tremendously important for goal achievement, and unfortunately, many times clients don't get the social support necessary from their friends and family, so you have to be that social support. And the third pillar of the foundation is professionalism. You have to be organized, you have to show up on time, you have to meticulously measure and track results.

The second thing I would tell another trainer is to be results-oriented. I see too many trainers doing things that are for lack of a better term, "cute." Things like TRX, kettlebells, bosu balls, etc. There is nothing inherently wrong with these pieces of equipment, but if they don't get a client to his or her goals, you have to re-evaluate your approach. Don't be married to any one

philosophy or methodology. Do whatever it takes to get results, as long as “whatever it takes” is safe, effective, and practical.

I believe that every trainer should use these 3 criteria (safety, effectiveness and practicality) to evaluate what they're doing. Any given methodology has to match all 3 criteria in order to be used (not just 1 of the 3 or 2 of the three). After all, what's the point of doing something that's effective and practical, but not safe (an example would be steroids?). Or what would be the point of doing something that's safe and effective, but not practical (like a vibration machine), and what would be the point of doing something that's safe and practical but not effective?

What is the major difference between you and the other trainers around you?

Although there are several differences between me and other trainers, I would say the biggest difference is individualization. I think too many times a trainer only has 1 methodology that he or she is married to, and uses it with every one of his or her clients, regardless of the goal. I see each methodology as tools in a toolbox. One method of training may be extremely effective for one goal and one person, but very ineffective for another goal or person.

I take individual differences into account, and adjust a training program to a person's unique anatomy, their unique physiology, their unique time constraints, preferences, health history, etc. Every single variable in training is carefully scrutinized while the program is being designed. It takes me a good 1-1.5 hours to design an exercise program for a client. That's how much thought I put into each and every training program.

I greatly rely on biofeedback to let me know what a given client can handle on that particular day. If I just look at a piece of paper that say that today we have to do 3 sets of 10 reps, on some days, that will be too much (if they have a lot of stress in their life, or if they didn't sleep well, or for any number of other reasons), on some days it will be too little (when they feel like a million bucks), and on some days it will be just right. By paying attention to a client's biofeedback, you maximize the number of training sessions that are “just right.”

Do you see yourself training in 5 years/ in what capacity?

Yes, I see myself training in 5 years. Right now, I am a one-man operation. My vision for the next few years is to create a personal training company that is the “Rolls Royce” of personal training.

It is unfortunate, but in the past, when I applied for jobs in gyms or in other personal training companies, during the interview, I was asked maybe 1-2 questions about training, and probably 15 questions about how good I was at sales. Call me crazy, but doesn't a client-centered approach matter too?

At the moment, there is no single company that is known primarily for its fantastic personal training. Sure, there are isolated personal trainers in some gyms that are extremely good, but

they are a needle in a haystack. In 5 years, I want to be at the head of the company that is known first and foremost for its phenomenal personal training.

What I believe will make it phenomenal is a much more thorough screening process. I understand that sales is important, so I do want people who are good at sales, but first and foremost, I'll be looking for those needles in a haystack and hiring them. In addition to that, I would like to enhance the personal training with complementary networks of holistic nutritionists, naturopathic doctors, massage therapists, and rehabilitation specialists. This way people not only do people get the fitness results they want, but they get so much more.

Do you feel that trainers should hold scholastic certifications or be required to complete 2 courses per year?

This is a very interesting, multi-faceted question. I myself have scholastic certifications. Do I believe that that's what makes me a good trainer? No, I don't. I can honestly say that in 4 years of university, I learned very little about personal training and fitness, even though my Bachelor's degree was in kinesiology.

At the same time, do I believe that completing 2 courses per year makes a good personal trainer? Not necessarily.

I believe in continual professional development. To me it matters very little how many certifications a trainer holds, or what courses he has attended. I'm more concerned with what he or she does on a continual basis to enhance his/her knowledge.

I know of a few people that have no certifications whatsoever, yet are phenomenal trainers.

I know of other people who have an amazing number of letters after their name, yet are average or below average trainers.

Myself, I have only 2 personal training certifications (in addition to my Bachelor's degree), but what I pride myself on is that my education didn't stop when I graduated university, or got my personal training certifications. I spend 5-10 hours every week of my free time learning new things that will enhance my skill set. Multiply those 5-10 hours by the years that I've been doing this, and I have a lot more knowledge than what you'd see on paper.

How would YOU personally screen trainers coming into the industry?

I would screen trainers by looking at their values. I put a lot of thought into how I will screen trainers when I start to hire other trainers, and I've come up with a few criteria.

First and foremost, they have to get results. I would put a 3-month probation period. I would measure their clients at the beginning of training, and at the 3-month mark. If after 3 months, I haven't seen any results, or disappointing results, I would discuss why that may be. If it's just

happening with 1 client out of 10, I would understand that it's probably the client's fault, but if 9 out of 10 clients aren't seeing results, I would have to look at the trainer's abilities.

Second, I would intensively question the trainer's knowledge of various training methods, not just their ability to sell. I don't necessarily have to agree with everything they say, as long as it's not completely "out there", but if they seem knowledgeable, I would hire them.

Lastly, I would look at willingness to learn. This is tremendously important. I want a trainer that seeks to continually enhance his or her skill set, and even a trainer that I feel like I could learn something from. If I have a trainer with multiple certifications, and he seems to be a know-it-all, that's a deal breaker. I would much rather have a trainer with no certifications, but extremely hungry for knowledge. And ideally, that hunger doesn't go away, no matter how much knowledge that person gains. For me personally, the more I learn, the more I want to learn.

Do you believe it possible for an individual to achieve 'strength' without actually lifting weights?

Absolutely. There is no question that a person can achieve "strength" without lifting weights. Case in point, look at gymnasts. They don't lift weights at all, and yet they are some of the strongest athletes on the planet.

Simply knowing how to manipulate the body's leverages, you can create progressive overload through your own body weight.

Additionally, strength can also be developed through isometrics. There are various options of developing strength without lifting weights.

Would you say that there is a difference between training men and woman?

I know that it's very in vogue in the fitness industry to say that if the goal is the same, a man and a woman should train the same way. To a large extent, I agree, but women have some unique concerns.

For one thing, there is the menstrual cycle. During the progesterone-dominant phase of the menstrual cycle, joints and ligaments tend to relax a bit due to the secretion of the hormone relaxin. These structures loosen because progesterone prepares the body for pregnancy, and if a woman is about to give birth, she wants a pelvis that has a bit of "give" to it. But relaxin doesn't just target the ligaments and joints of the hips and pelvis. It has systemic effects (all joints are affected), and they happen regardless whether a woman is pregnant or not.

So during the progesterone-dominant phase, heavy lifting is out and other exercises putting great demands on stabilization are out. The risk for injury during this phase is higher than during the estrogen-dominant phase.

During this phase of the menstrual cycle is actually a good time to use machines instead of free weights because they reduce the stabilization demands.

Furthermore because of women's wider pelvis than men, and usually greater anterior pelvic tilt, they tend to have a wider Q angle, and greater quad dominance than men. Both factors contribute to an increased risk for ACL and MCL tears as compared to men. This is why I include more posterior chain exercises with women than with men.

Another issue is that women tend to have a greater dominance of slow twitch muscle fibers as compared to men, so they respond better to higher reps. So if the classic "hypertrophy range" for men is 8-12 reps, for a woman, it's probably closer to "10-14 reps."

So overall, yes, there are differences between training men and women, and in the interest of individualization and effectiveness, it is important to take these differences into account.

Greatest mistake most trainers make?

Lack of measurement. Measurement should be done very consistently and at regular intervals. Measurement keeps both the client and the trainer accountable. It allows both client and trainer to see if their efforts are paying off or not. There is a saying that "if you're not assessing, you're just guessing."

It is important to measure the factor that is relevant to the client. If a client's goal is to lose body fat, I like to measure their total weight, take circumferences and refine that with 10-12 skinfold measurements. This gives the best picture of what's going on.

Many trainers who look just at weight will see the weight go up, and tell the client he or she is gaining muscle because muscle weighs more than fat. But if they're not assessing, they're just guessing. It could be that muscle has in fact increased, or it could be that fat increased, or it could be that both muscle and fat increased, but unless the measurements are more refined than just the weight, they won't know.

The same applies to using just circumferences. That's simply not enough. If a circumference measurement goes up, trainers tell their clients they've gained muscle in that area. If a circumference measurement goes down, trainers tell their clients they've lost fat in that area. But unless the circumference measurements are refined by calipers, you just don't know. It could be that when a circumference goes up the client has gained either muscle or fat or both. And it could be that when a circumference goes down, the client has lost muscle or fat or both. But again, "if you're not assessing, you're just guessing."

So it's not just about measuring consistently, but also measuring the right things.

This was an example when the goal is fat loss, but the same principle applies to muscle gain, strength improvements, speed improvements, etc.

How do you stay above and beyond the rest?

Professional development is tremendously important to me. I'm naturally curious, and have a hunger for knowledge.

For one thing, when I want to learn something new very quickly, I read a ton about it, and in addition to that, I find somebody who is extremely good at what I'm trying to learn, and intern for them anywhere from a few weeks to a few months until I feel like I've gained competency in that area.

Furthermore, every few months, I ask my clients for feedback on how I am as a trainer, and I emphasize that I want them to be brutally honest with me. Sure, it's great when I get compliments that I'm a great trainer, but the feedback that I find most valuable are their suggestions for improvement. This is gold to me, because the client tells me precisely how I can serve him or her better, and most of the time, I incorporate those suggestions.

Rather than put them on the spot and make them think of suggestions right then and there, when they might feel under pressure and not have a lot of time, I formalize the process. I give a real form that they fill out on their own time asking what they like about training with me, and what I can do to serve them better. I let them know that I take this form very seriously, and it allows me to make their training that much more effective.

The feedback I get is very invaluable.

Do you work in conjunction with any other professionals for the benefit of your client, is it done enough, do you think more trainers need to do the same?

Yes, I work in conjunction with other professionals for the benefit of my client. I believe that it is tremendously important to know the limitations of your scope of practice, and to know who can address the concerns that you can't.

I have a very rigorous process in selecting who I refer to. On my own time, I visit a good number of professionals in a given field (for example, chiropractors), and interview them in detail to see their personality, to see their approach, and to see how good of a fit they would be for my clients. After interviewing anywhere from 5-10 professionals in a given field, I choose one to refer to.

I have done this with chiropractors, naturopathic doctors and holistic nutritionists. So right now, I have one extremely good professional from each of these domains that I refer to, and the clients greatly appreciate that I take the time to screen out the good professional from the great.

I don't believe that it is done enough, and I believe that doing it more would enhance the results even more.

It is important to identify during the initial assessment what are the client's problems that are outside of your scope of practice. I have a detailed questionnaire that I give about the status of the hormonal system, the neurotransmitter system and the digestive system. If the questionnaire identifies any red flags, no matter how good the training is and how good the nutritional advice that I give, the results will be suboptimal or nonexistent.

All training and nutrition programs have one underlying assumption and that's hormonal balance and a healthy digestive system. This is the condition that has to be met for training and nutrition programs to work. But what if it's not met? The training and nutrition won't work as well or it won't work at all. So it's important to get it taken care of.

After the questionnaire, I do a musculoskeletal assessment to identify any red flags. Since I'm a kinesiologist as well as a personal trainer, I can go a bit beyond the scope of practice of a personal trainer, but if I come across something that I can't address even as a kinesiologist, I refer out. Musculoskeletal balance is tremendously important because it opens up exercise selection. But if a client has limited functionality in one or more of his or her joints, it really narrows the options for training, and again brings suboptimal results.

So yes, I do believe that it would be fantastic if more trainers developed a network of professionals to refer to.

WORDS TO LIVE BY...

"Insanity is doing the same thing and expecting a different result."

Albert Einstein