



License to DRILL

Sammie Richards' profit-sharing business model creates success for trainers across Canada.

BY RACHEL DEBLING Photos: Mike Young

What's perky and pink and profitable all over? It's Sammie Richards, creator of Booty Camp Fitness, clad in the company's standard issue, blush-coloured camo. With her profit-sharing business model, she is spreading her rosy outlook about fitness across Canada, one boot camp drill instructor at a time.

The idea for the company was born in early 2007 during a conversation between Richards and her marketing hubby, J.P., at their Toronto condo. By the end of the month, several advertising campaigns were in effect, and by May the first boot camp had commenced.

After running a few camps, it became clear that the overwhelming response was too much for Richards to handle alone. With so many dedicated participants, she decided to expand by licensing the company to qualified women. In less than two years, Richards had 29 locations rolling across her home province of Ontario. This year, there will be 66 camps

across the nation each licensed to a woman hand picked by Richards and her business partner husband.

Hire carefully and slowly

Richards takes pride in selecting only the best candidates to take on the role of licensees. Only two types of women can take the reigns of a Booty Camp: experienced personal trainers and former recruits (participants) who show the gusto required to lead a group of women to fitness success and, of course, the willingness to pursue fitness certification. Of the hundreds of applications that Booty Camp receives, only five to 10 per cent are considered potential instructor material.

to invest in the licensees because we know that when their boot camps start we'll make the money back."

The payoff for the licensees is simple: the entire operation runs on a profit sharing model with instructors typically earning \$127 an hour. Little is required of the licensees/instructors aside from leading their camps.

The seven employees at Booty Camp's Toronto headquarters – including a business manager, HR coordinator and marketing coordinator – take care of everything from promotions to finance. Because most camps run outdoors and use exercises that employ body weight instead of dumbbells, there is minimal overhead

she added another session. Two days and another round of emails later, the second camp was sold out.

With the expertise of her marketing-savvy husband, Richards has brought Booty Camp to the forefront of the digital world. The company's informative, easy-to-navigate website boasts an amazing 4.9% conversion rate, which means that for every twenty browsers who stop by, one will sign up. Richards has hired a full-time web designer to keep the company on top of the technology game. (Booty Camp is one of the top results when Googling for "boot camps in Toronto.")

All of these efforts have paid off. In 2008, the business brought in \$660,000 in revenue. After expanding by a projected thirty more locations in 2009, Richards is confident that the company can hit its projected \$2.3 million target.

Big plans are always on the horizon for this ambitious entrepreneur. Richards hopes to launch a DVD program and an iPhone application to reach the lucrative U.S. market.

Branding is king

Above all, Richards looks upon branding with the highest esteem. She believes that every media appearance and magazine quote (all facilitated by a publicist) is a chance to reinforce the strength of the Booty Camp name. In fact, her company's brand is so important that headquarters has its own version of a swear jar. "Whenever someone says the 'c' word ('classes'), they have to put a dollar in the jar," she laughs. "Gyms run classes, we run boot camps." FBC

cost for the licensees. In the case of wintertime camps, however, Richards does request the help of the licensee to find an indoor venue.

Online visibility and optimized website pay off

While Booty Camp advertises with posters and word-of-mouth, it is in the interactive world that the company truly shines. When she launched her first camp, Richards emailed contacts from her early personal training days. Within 24 hours, the boot camp's 20 spots were filled. Excited at the results,

"We're looking for superstar trainers who deserve to be compensated like the superstars they are," she says of her pickiness. Richards advises others to "hire slow and fire fast." She argues that if an employee or licensee isn't performing well or improving quickly, it reflects badly on the entire company.

The price is right

Offering a low licensing fee of \$197 made sense to both business partners. "I didn't want to give someone a license just because she could afford it," explains Richards. "We're willing



Sammie Richards

Booty Camp Fitness, Toronto, Ont.
www.bootycampfitness.com

Years in industry: three

Qualifications: CPTN Certified Personal Trainer; Can-Fit-Pro Pre & Post Natal Fitness Specialist; Fitness Kickboxing Canada Level 1 certified; currently studying to be a Registered Holistic Nutritionist