

# IDEA Industry 1999 Compensation survey

**A comprehensive look at current fitness salaries, hourly wages, benefits and other perks.**

To help you benchmark your employee compensation methods against those used by other businesses, IDEA has conducted a compensation survey every year since 1996. This year's survey shows that compensation for managers and practitioners working in health and fitness businesses is a fusion of consistency and directional trends.

IDEA's surveys of our business and program director members show that the definition of the term *fitness facility* is expanding. New types of business, such as personal training and hospital-based fitness facilities, have joined traditional facility models, such as health clubs and group fitness studios. Since traditional fitness facilities still represent the clear majority of sites where the industry operates, their practices tend to define industry compensation patterns.

## Consistent Areas

When comparing the results of the 1998 and 1999 surveys, certain consistencies appear:

- Fitness/program directors are primarily employees working 40 hours a week. Personal training directors and group fitness coordinators have employee status, but roughly half are paid by salary and half at an hourly rate.
- Staff positions (i.e., personal trainers, group fitness instructors, fitness instructors, fitness floor staff) are most often classified as employees, paid by the hour or class, and hired for fewer than 20 hours of work per week.
- Specialty instructors (e.g., those who teach yoga or martial arts) are most likely independent contractors who teach a few hours per week and are paid by the hour.
- Program directors and group exercise coordinators often teach classes in addition to performing managerial duties, and about half are paid separately for the classes they teach.
- Hourly wages for fitness floor staff, group fitness instructors and specialty instructors remained the same between 1998 and 1999.

## Trends in Compensation

- Employee benefits, such as health and liability insurance, were offered by more businesses in 1999 than in 1998; this applied to full- and part-time employees and independent contractors.
- Companies are paying for continuing education for staff through workshops or in-service training. Although the percentage of companies offering this education is not much higher than in 1998, it is definitely higher than in 1997.
- Personality, which implies the ability to work with customers, has increased as a criterion for compensation since 1997. (It just may be that personality is less a criterion for compensation than it is a consideration during the hiring process.) By contrast, the criteria of formal education or certification and continuing education have remained relatively stable.
- Fitness/program directors and personal training directors saw a slight (\$3) decrease in average hourly wages but no change in salaries compared to 1998.
- Group exercise coordinators' average hourly rate decreased \$3, but their salaries increased about \$5,000 compared to 1998.
- Personal trainers' average hourly rate decreased \$3, but their salaries increased \$4,000 compared to 1998. Salary figures for personal trainers, however, reflect very small samples and may not be representative.

## About the Survey

The survey was mailed in May 1999 to a random selection of IDEA business members and IDEA program director members in the United States. There were 150 responses, which constitutes a 15 percent return. At a 90 percent confidence level the margin of error is  $\pm 7.5$  percent. All percentages have been rounded to the next highest number. Except for demographic information, percentages do not add up to 100, because of multiple responses.

Questions regarding the number of hours worked per week, wages and salary figures were unaided; respondents were asked to fill in the blanks. When more than one hour or dollar amount was entered, the first response was used.

In response to a suggestion from IDEA program director committee members, this year the category of **fitness instructor** was added to the survey's list of job categories to reflect a position that is less specialized than **group fitness instructor** or **specialty instructor**. However, the survey instrument used by respondents did not attempt to define these three categories.

The survey was administered and tabulated by an independent research firm.

## Practical Applications for Trainers and Instructors

It's important to remember that a "compensation package" is a mix of dollars and benefits. The dollars are plainly visible in the paycheck. But it is easy to overlook the *monetary value* of benefits like paid sick time or insurance coverage. Another hidden benefit is provided when a company tracks and pays employees' social security tax and withholding tax. Independent contractors must record and pay these taxes out of their hourly earnings.

To get a truer picture of compensation, total all your discounts and benefits and add them to the amount shown on your paycheck. If the following items weren't part of your compensation, what would you have to pay for them?

vacation pay	\$ _____
sick pay	\$ _____
discounts	\$ _____
child care	\$ _____
company-provided	
continuing education	\$ _____
insurance premium	\$ _____

These figures will also give you a starting point when negotiating your future compensation. For example, if an hourly raise is not feasible, why not ask for free child care for your kids while you teach? Or you might request free use of the facility or certain product discounts. That translates into money in your pocket too.

## How Many Classes Do Instructors Really Teach?

Because the survey respondents were IDEA business members and IDEA program directors, the answers cited reflect only what occurs in a given respondent's own facility. Therefore, responses regarding the number of classes taught weekly by group fitness instructors, specialty instructors and fitness instructors do not necessarily take into account additional classes taught at other facilities. Yet it is not at all uncommon for an instructor to teach at several facilities simultaneously.

Perhaps a more accurate reflection of the number of classes taught each week is reflected in the latest IDEA Readership Survey. Here are the average numbers of classes taught weekly as reported by the instructors themselves:

- group fitness instructor: 6.4 classes
- specialty instructor: 8.1 classes
- fitness instructor: 7.5 classes

## Practical Applications for Managers and Owners

Compare your company's benefits and wages to those in the industry. If your payment structure is less than the averages reported, it may be a good time to sit back and reevaluate your package. Are you able to retain the caliber of management and staff that will enable you to move your business forward?

Offering benefits is clearly the way many businesses are rounding out compensation. If you offer a benefit package, are you giving your staff an accounting of the monetary value of their benefits?

You may feel hard-pressed to raise compensation when the business does not support a higher payroll. One area you *can* influence is revenue streams. For example, many facilities charge extra for specialized programs (see the "4th Annual 1999 IDEA Fitness Programs Survey," October 1999 *IDEA Fitness Manager*). Added-fee special clinics and lectures can cost little if you use existing staff and marketing materials or split expenses and revenues with an outside provider. These are viable ways to shift expenses to revenue on the balance sheet.

### Terminology

**Percents** show the percentage of respondents giving each answer.

**Mean** is the average of the respondents' information.

**Median** is the point above and below which there are an equal number of respondents.

## Survey Demographics

### Geographic Region

northcentral	26%
west	26
northeast	24
south	24

### Location of Business

small city or town	38%
large city	32
suburb	24
rural area	6

### Type of Facility

health club: multipurpose	26%
personal training studio	13
group exercise studio	9
health club: fitness only	8
hospital fitness center	8
college/university	7
corporate fitness center	7
YMCA/YWCA/JCC	7
no facility, satellite classes	6
country club/resort/spa	2
parks & recreation program	2

### Number of Facility Members/Clients

under 150	26%
151-700	23
701-2,600	22
over 2,600	23

### Approximate Size of Facility (in square feet)

mean	26,911
median	7,000
minimum	325
maximum	750,000

## Fitness Program Director

### Employment Status

employee	79 %
independent contractor	10
company hires both	11

### Payment Methods

salary	75 %
per class/hourly	19
per participant	1
salary plus per hour/participant	4

### Criteria Used to Determine Pay

degree/certification	63 %
continuing education	42
years' experience	57
years in organization	46
personality	41
type of class	9
other	6

### Average Pay by Hour or Class ( $n = 45$ )

	Hours per Week	Hourly Rate
mean	24	\$17
median	25	\$15
minimum	2	\$6
maximum	50	\$60

The highest number of respondents (29%) reported 40 hours, and the highest number (17%) reported \$15 an hour.

### Average Pay by Salary ( $n = 73$ )

	Hours per Week	Salary
mean	40	\$29,610
median	40	\$30,000
minimum	8	\$4,800
maximum	70	\$53,000

The highest number of respondents (44%) reported 40 hours, and the highest number (14%) reported \$25,000.

- | 91% of program directors/group exercise coordinators who also teach classes
- | 48% of program directors/group exercise coordinators paid separately for classes taught

## Personal Training Director

### Employment Status

employee	80 %
independent contractor	10
company hires both	9

### Payment Methods

salary	60 %
per hour	27
per client	5
salary plus per hour/client	7

### Criteria Used to Determine Pay

degree/certification	60 %
continuing education	42
years' experience	49
years in organization	33
personality	40
other	9

### Average Pay by Hour ( $n = 34$ )

	Hours per Week	Hourly Rate
mean	22	\$18
median	18	\$19
minimum	2	\$7
maximum	60	\$30

The highest number of respondents (24%) reported 40 hours, and the highest number (17%) reported \$20.

### Average Pay by Salary ( $n = 37$ )

	Hours per Week	Salary
mean	38	\$24,782
median	40	\$25,000
minimum	15	\$4,800
maximum	60	\$40,000

The highest number of respondents (41%) reported 40 hours, and the highest number (16%) reported \$20,000.

## Group Exercise Coordinator

### Employment Status

employee	79%
independent contractor	11
company hires both	10

### Payment Methods

salary	48%
per class/hourly	43
per participant	3
salary plus per hour/participant	6

### Criteria Used to Determine Pay

degree/certification	45%
continuing education	38
years' experience	51
years in organization	36
personality	35
type of class	8
other	5

### Average Pay by Hour or Class (n = 46)

	Hours per Week	Hourly Rate
mean	16	\$16
median	10	\$15
minimum	2	\$7
maximum	40	\$60

The highest number of respondents (24%) reported 10 hours, and the highest number (21%) reported \$15.

### Average Pay by Salary (n = 37)

	Hours per Week	Salary
mean	35	\$22,607
median	40	\$25,000
minimum	8	\$3,500
maximum	60	\$40,000

The highest number of respondents (41%) reported 40 hours, and the highest number (14%) reported \$25,000.

| 91% of group exercise coordinators/program directors who also teach classes

| 48% of group exercise coordinators/program directors paid separately for classes taught

## Personal Trainer

### Employment Status

employee	62%
independent contractor	24
company hires both	14

### Payment Methods

salary	8%
per hour	60
per client	29
hourly plus per client	3

### Criteria Used to Determine Pay

degree/certification	70%
continuing education	45
years' experience	58
years in organization	26
personality	41
other	13

### Average Pay by Hour (n = 91)

	Hours per Week	Hourly Rate
mean	13	\$22
median	10	\$20
minimum	1	0
maximum	80	\$100

The highest number of respondents (15%) reported 5 hours, and the highest number (16%) reported \$20.

## Fitness Floor Staff

### Employment Status

employee	85%
independent contractor	10
company hires both	5

### Payment Methods

salary	12%
per hour	85
per participant	3
salary plus per hour	3

### Criteria Used to Determine Pay

degree/certification	46%
continuing education	25
years' experience	40
years in organization	24
personality	35
other	6

### Average Pay by Hour ( $n = 72$ )

	Hours per Week	Hourly Rate
mean	18	\$9
median	15	\$7
minimum	2	\$5
maximum	40	\$30

The highest number of respondents (18%) reported 20 hours, and the highest number (20%) reported \$7.

## Group Fitness Instructor

### Employment Status

employee	60%
independent contractor	23
company hires both	17

### Payment Methods

salary	3%
per class/hourly	88
per participant	7
per class plus per participant	3

### Criteria Used to Determine Pay

degree/certification	60%
continuing education	40
years' experience	58
years in organization	29
personality	47
type of class	27
other	5

### Average Pay by Hour or Class ( $n = 101$ )

	Hours per Week*	Hourly Rate
mean	5	\$17
median	3	\$16
minimum	1	\$6
maximum	40	\$35

\*See "How Many Classes Do Instructors Really Teach?" on page 59 for more information on this item.

The highest number of respondents (38%) reported 3 hours, and the highest number (19%) reported \$15.

## Benefits or Discounts Offered

	Full-Time Employee	Part-Time Employee	Independent Contractor
discounts	79%	77%	54%
free/discounted child care	58	55	38
health insurance	85	23	2
liability insurance	88	60	40
paid sick time	80	20	2
paid vacation time	84	27	2
profit sharing or incentives	52	21	7
retirement plan	65	18	2

## Specialty Instructor

### Employment Status

employee	39%
independent contractor	43
company hires both	18

### Payment Methods

salary	2%
per class/hourly	85
per participant	8
per class plus per participant	5

### Criteria Used to Determine Pay

degree/certification	51%
continuing education	35
years' experience	54
years in organization	23
personality	40
type of class	33
other	4

### Average Pay by Hour or Class (n = 91)

	Hours per Week*	Hourly Rate
mean	4	\$23
median	2	\$20
minimum	1	\$7
maximum	40	\$55

\*See "How Many Classes Do Instructors Really Teach?" on page 59 for more information on this item.

The highest number of respondents (42%) reported 2 hours, and the highest number (15%) reported \$20.

## Fitness Instructor

### Employment Status

employee	70%
independent contractor	17
company hires both	13

### Payment Methods

salary	6%
per class/hourly	87
per participant	4
hourly plus per participant	2

### Criteria Used to Determine Pay

degree/certification	58%
continuing education	38
years' experience	57
years in organization	31
personality	41
type of class	19
other	3

### Average Pay by Hour or Class (n = 57)

	Hours per Week*	Hourly Rate
mean	11	\$14
median	5	\$12
minimum	1	\$5
maximum	40	\$40

\*See "How Many Classes Do Instructors Really Teach?" on page 59 for more information on this item.

The highest number of respondents (16%) reported 4 hours, and the highest number (13%) reported \$10.

## How Staff Members Receive Continuing Education

	Company Pays	Staff Pays
in-service training	62%	17%
workshops	67	61
association membership fees	26	21

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