

What your new gym doesn't want you to know

By Ana Swanson, Washington Post

If you're thinking more these days about your fitness regimen – or lack thereof – then you're not alone. It's the time of year when many Americans realize they are a little pudgier than they ought to be and resolve to slim down. In other words, it's a money-making time for the gym industry.

Every year, Google searches for gyms spike in January, and membership purchases and foot traffic soar. According to Gold's Gym, its traffic jumps 40 percent between December and January. But just wait a few weeks – it won't be long before all those good intentions die.

In fact, the gym industry depends on it. Perhaps the most vivid reminder came in a 2014 episode of the podcast Planet Money. Planet Money visited Planet Fitness, one of the biggest gym chains in America. The gym had capacity to hold only about 300 people but had signed up 6,000 total members. Half of the Planet Fitness members don't ever go to their gyms, Planet Money says.

It might seem like kind of a weird business model – a business that succeeds when its customers don't set foot in the door.

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