



## Global Network of Fitness Gyms Launches with the Help of Innovative Solution

### Overview

**Country or Region:** United States

**Industry:** Professional services

### Customer Profile

Headquartered in the San Francisco Bay Area of California, UFC Gym is a subsidiary of the Ultimate Fighting Championship, one of the most successful sports brands in history.

### Business Situation

To support the opening of a global network of fitness gyms, UFC Gym needed a club management solution that would be easy for new staffers to learn and would support multiple operations of the business.

### Solution

With the help of Windows Presentation Foundation and Microsoft Silverlight 3, developers created a powerful, flexible, and easy-to-use solution that supports new-member registration, facilities scheduling, program-results monitoring, and more.

### Benefits

- Strengthens the sales campaign
- Reinforces the brand
- Supports business expansion

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*Adam Sedlack, Senior Vice President, UFC Gym*

UFC Gym, which is owned jointly by the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) and New Evolution Fitness Company, was launched with the ultimate goal of building and operating dozens of fitness gyms worldwide. To support that endeavor, UFC Gym needed a club management solution that could be learned in minutes by staffers, would enable new members to monitor the results they were getting from fitness programs, and would fully support the administrative side of the business. With the help of partners Fit BPO Solutions and IdeaBlade, and by using the Windows Presentation Foundation and other rich-client technologies from Microsoft, UFC Gym created the Membership Access Support System (MASS). The solution is supporting UFC Gym sales campaigns, reinforcing the new brand, and helping support business.

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Fit BPO Solutions

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Bryn Morgaine, Vice President,  
Fit BPO Solutions

## Situation

Headquartered in the San Francisco Bay Area of California and with 221 employees, UFC Gym was created in early 2009 as the first major brand extension of the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC), the world's fastest-growing sports organization and the all-time industry leader in the field of mixed martial arts. UFC Gym opened its flagship facility in Concord, California, in late 2009 and is targeting the launch of four other gyms in U.S. and Canadian cities by early 2011. Depending on the success of those facilities, UFC Gym plans to eventually open many more gyms worldwide.

To support such an aggressive growth strategy, UFC Gym executives partnered with Fit BPO Solutions, a local technology consulting company, to create a club management solution that would be “second to none” in the fitness industry, as Adam Sedlack, Senior Vice President of UFC Gym, envisioned it when he and his colleagues first began planning the solution. Fit BPO Solutions is the development arm of New Evolution Fitness Company, co-owner of UFC Gym with UFC.

As Sedlack elaborates, the solution would automate and streamline activities ranging from the registration of new members in the club to online scheduling using the Web. In particular, the solution would support the most dedicated fitness buffs by helping them measure and monitor the results of their workouts and participate in premium classes and other highly specialized programming.

“Before or after a workout, enthusiasts could check a self-service kiosk located at the facility to see how they are matching up against other gym members in similar programs,” Sedlack says. “These individuals also could make changes in their program, register for new programs, register other

family members, connect with other members, and so on. Later, they could access and update the same information from home or anywhere else over the Web.”

Early on, Sedlack and his colleagues planned on first building a basic solution and later adding specialized support for the scheduling of premium programs. But when they began signing up new members for the first new gym, they had to rethink those plans.

“We had estimated that about one-third of the new memberships would be premium, but it turned out to be twice that high,” reports Matt Masteller, President, Fit BPO Solutions. “From the beginning, the new solution had to support both regular and premium memberships in a way that ensured premium members would have early access to programs, classes, and special events—an approach that could differentiate us in the highly competitive fitness industry.”

Perhaps most important, the club management solution envisioned by Sedlack, Masteller, and their colleagues needed a very intuitive user interface, one that was exceptionally easy to learn, because the fitness industry has a staff turnover rate exceeding 100 percent. “The user interface had to be visually intuitive and engaging, so that new staffers could learn it rapidly,” Masteller says. “This would help minimize training time, a huge dollars-and-cents issue in this business.”

A well-designed user interface also could help promote the business, adds Bryn Morgaine, Vice President, Fit BPO Solutions. “The right user interface could help members feel a closer connection to UFC Gym and appreciate the value of their membership,” she says. “This would be the

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Michael Davis, Vice President,  
IdeaBlade

case whether they were accessing the solution at the gym or away from it.”

### Solution

To meet their demanding requirements, UFC Gym and Fit BPO executives first considered using Windows Forms for development because of prior work the companies had done with that technology. Windows Forms is a set of classes in the Microsoft .NET Framework that enable the quick development of client applications for the Windows operating system.

The executives changed course, however, when they saw a demonstration of Windows Presentation Foundation and the Microsoft Silverlight 3 browser plug-in. “Because of our experience with Windows Forms, we felt it would be the safe choice,” Masteller says. “But after reviewing Windows Presentation Foundation and Silverlight, we figured right away that these technologies were best for providing the intuitive user interface we wanted for staff and other users and for supporting the extension of our brand.”

To expedite development, UFC Gym and Fit BPO Solutions enlisted the services of IdeaBlade. As a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, IdeaBlade came to the project with extensive experience using the Microsoft .NET Framework, and brought its own product as well, DevForce WinClient.

“With the expertise of IdeaBlade and DevForce WinClient, we would be able to employ a single domain model to support two different clients: one based on Windows Presentation Foundation, for use on the gym premises, and another based on Silverlight, for access over the Web,” Masteller says. “This would enable us to avoid duplicating work and give us a better chance of meeting our aggressive deployment time frame.”

Over a period of five months, a team of four developers created a single data object model to drive the clients for the solution. For coding, the developers used the Microsoft Visual Studio 2008 Professional Edition development system and the Visual C# programming language, and for the database they used Microsoft SQL Server 2008 data management software, SQL Server 2008 Integration Services, and SQL Server 2008 Reporting Services.

Through its Windows Presentation Foundation-based client, MASS supports sales, registration, event scheduling, member management, and other enterprise resource planning and customer relationship management tasks by integrating with administrative applications supporting UFC Gym operations. Through its client for the Silverlight browser plug-in, MASS supports external-facing member services such as facility and program scheduling and registration, member accounts, and training records. In future releases of the software, MASS will provide a platform for social networking by supporting e-mail and Short Message Service (SMS) communications among members and instructors.

### Benefits

With MASS, UFC Gym is enhancing its ability to open new gyms and reach out to prospective members. An innovative user interface helps new staffers learn the solution rapidly, engages new members, and reinforces the brand. Because it is based on the Windows Presentation Foundation and Silverlight, MASS was built rapidly and cost-effectively, and provides scalability and flexibility for supporting new gyms as they are opened worldwide.

### Building a Successful Sales Campaign

UFC Gym and Fit BPO executives were more than pleased to see that developers were able to create the unusually



The MASS Class Scheduler makes it easy for UFC Gym members to find favorite activities among a wide selection of offerings.

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Ward Bell, Vice President of Product Management, IdeaBlade

compelling, intuitive user interface that would be crucial to success—especially after that user interface was put to the test.

“Response to the announced opening of our Concord gym was so great that a handful of brand-new salespeople faced a crowd of prospective members when we opened the doors,” Morgaine reports. “Because the young staff members were able to learn and use the solution in just 10 minutes, they were fully prepared to sign up new members smoothly and rapidly. This helped make the sales campaign a resounding success.”

#### Reinforcing the Brand

The Windows Presentation Foundation-based user interface not only helped UFC Gym salespeople to register new members more easily, but also helped reinforce the UFC Gym brand among those new members. This was possible thanks to a decision that Morgaine and her colleagues made early on regarding the physical arrangement of the sign-in setting.

“Most on-premises fitness registration systems require a salesperson to sit across a desk from a prospective new member and enter data into a registration system

that only the salesperson can see—with the back of the PC monitor facing the new member,” Morgaine explains. “We decided, instead, to have the salesperson and new member sitting side by side so that both could see the user interface of the registration system. This can reduce data-entry errors, as the new member can see how his or her registration information is being entered. And, thanks to the innovative and attractive user interface of MASS, it also can reinforce our brand as a forward-thinking organization.”

#### Supporting Growth

As Michael Davis, Vice President of IdeaBlade, explains, UFC Gym and Fit BPO Solutions were able to bring the desired benefits to the UFC Gym initiative rapidly and cost-effectively, thanks in large part to the developers’ use of Windows Presentation Foundation and Silverlight.

“Because Windows Presentation Foundation and its Silverlight component use the same XAML [Extensible Application Markup Language] strategy and the same .NET Framework programming languages and platform, there was no need to develop separate expertise sets to create the two clients,” Davis says. “Instead, the team was able to concentrate on building functionality, customization, and the overall user experience.”

The flexibility of developing with Windows Presentation Foundation is equally valuable, Masteller points out. “Halfway through development, we wanted to change the look of the user interface,” he explains. “With Prism [the Composite Application Guidance for Windows Presentation Foundation], we were able to change the appearance of the solution without having to touch the business logic, and do this far more rapidly than we could have working in another environment.”

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For more information about Fit BPO Solutions products and services, visit the Web site at:

[www.fitbpo.com](http://www.fitbpo.com)

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For more information about UFC Gym products and services, visit the Web site at:

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Masteller's observations are supported by Ward Bell, Vice President of Product Management, IdeaBlade. "New deployments of the MASS solution are coming online one after another as new gyms open in the United States and Canada, and ultimately worldwide," he says. "Having the solution based on Windows Presentation Foundation means that developers can tailor each new instance of the software for each gym and the needs of that gym's staff and members—and do it for a lower cost than they could have using another infrastructure."

That flexibility will be especially valuable in the future, when UFC Gym and Fit BPO pursue plans to enhance the community-building capabilities of MASS through support for popular social-media technologies and Web sites. And that, according to Sedlack, is where MASS will play a very significant role in the ultimate success of UFC Gym.

"Because it is based on Windows Presentation Foundation and Silverlight technologies, this solution will help UFC Gym support a more engaging social-networking model than anything yet seen in the fitness industry," Sedlack says. "This will help us to redefine the gym experience."

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- Microsoft Visual Studio
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### Technologies

- Microsoft .NET Framework 3.5
- Microsoft Silverlight 3
- Windows Presentation Foundation

### Third-Party Software

- IdeaBlade DevForce WinClient

### Partners

- Fit BPO Solutions
- IdeaBlade

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