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THE EXCLUSIVE

WE CHAT WITH

DAVE PINCO AND TOM LANGTON

OWNERS OF

THE STRONGHOLD

INTRODUCING

**ANVIL FITNESS CLUB
MOSCOW**

**EVOLUTION OF THE
FITNESS INDUSTRY
A BRIEF HISTORY OF
THE PUBLIC GYM**

**MEMBER
ENGAGEMENT**

HOW TO MAKE
MEMBERS MORE
'STICKY' AND PAYING
SUBS FOR LONGER



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TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOU?

Tom: I'm 31 years old, husband to my childhood sweetheart Holly and Dad to 3-month-old Sophia. I grew up in a small countryside town called Winchcombe and spent most of my childhood riding horses - my Mum was an amateur jockey and ran a livery yard, so my sister and I were always helping train the youngsters up.

Eventually, I found rugby and preferred that to the horses, it's such a sociable hobby which I love (and I really didn't want to be bucked off the back of a horse anymore!). I ended up going to UWIC to study for a Sports Coaching degree, before returning to Cheltenham where I later met Dave. And so The Stronghold dream began!

Dave: I'm 28 and was born in Canada. We moved over to the UK when I was 5 and eventually ended up in Cheltenham, which is where I ended up meeting my fiancé Louisa. I left Cheltenham to go to Leeds University and whilst I was there studying Physical Education, I was also working in (and falling out of love with) commercial gyms. At the time I knew that I wanted to come back to start my own business. It's lucky that Tom and I ended up in the right place at the right time.



HOW DID YOU GET INTO THE FITNESS INDUSTRY?

Tom: I studied Sports Coaching at University and loved playing Rugby. I started to train in the gym to improve my performance on the pitch and when I saw the benefits it made me think about how I could help other people too. After that, there was no turning back!

Dave: Whilst doing my degree I played Basketball, which is where I really got exposed to the concept of strength and conditioning for performance. I started training friends and introducing them to strength and fitness methods. I really enjoyed it, thought it was fun but never really expected to become so obsessed with movement and for it to end up being my career. Whilst I was studying, I got qualified as a coach and worked all the way through my course. Looking back, although my lecturers weren't so happy, it was the best way for me to learn rather than just being in a classroom.





HOW DID YOU MEET?

Tom: We met at an independent gym in Cheltenham where we were both Personal Trainers and taking some of the group classes.

Dave: Tom was so tuned in when it came to coaching powerlifting, and I loved the gymnastics side of things. We noticed straight away that we had the same movement philosophy and standards when it came to coaching.

Tom: We really did! I used to walk around telling everyone, even my own clients, that Dave was the best PT I've ever met.

Dave: Eventually we got together to align our class programming and realised this was something we wanted to do together. Having been in a lot of other gyms, and worked with a lot of people, Tom is one of only 3 people in all this time who has the same philosophy, standards and level of commitment to that as I do.

Tom: Match made in movement heaven!

WHAT LESSONS HAVE YOU LEARNT SO FAR?

Dave: Ooof ALOT!

Tom: Don't work with people who aren't compatible. It's ok to meet a client and then pass them on to someone else who is better suited. Trust your gut. What people are looking for might not be what you offer - don't try to fit a square peg in a round hole. It'll be a waste of time for the client and for you.

Dave: Interpersonal skills are 100% just as important as fitness knowledge. Always try to improve on the way you communicate and never assume. Sessions or movements might make sense in your mind and to 90% of the people in the class. But the 10% who don't quite get it are arguably the most important people to focus on and where you can make the most impact.

Tom: Trust in your knowledge. You are the expert, not the

client. Be confident. I didn't do that enough at the start. I let people tell me that they wanted to try out the latest movement fad they'd seen on Instagram even though it didn't fit with my philosophy or their goals.

Tom: This job has really taught me to be more empathetic. You meet so many people, from different backgrounds, and different lifestyles who all have stuff going on. You become such an integral part of their week so taking the time to bring the energy or listen a bit more based on their needs is so important.

WHAT CHANGES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN YOUR INDUSTRY?

Dave: Definitely some regulation into the coaching qualification process. Now you can go online and do a 1-week virtual course and start coaching which is crazy. After 4 and half years of a degree and my level 3, I know I still needed to up my game so I know one week is not enough to be coaching excellent movement standards.

Tom: It's so true. People put a lot of faith into a coach, and I don't think as professionals, we should be learning at the risk of someone else's health.

Tom: Also, misinformation. Or advising on topics when not qualified. It's such a huge pet peeve for me. Now with social media, it's so hard to control and for people to know what's true and what's false. But if I could rid the fitness industry of anything it would definitely be that.

Dave: And people who position themselves at such binary ends of the scale for online engagement. Crazy diets, crazy movements. People can hugely improve their quality of life without only eating one food group or having to perform crazy balancing acts in the gym. That's why we're so keen to educate people on functional fitness.





THE FUTURE OF THE FITNESS INDUSTRY?

Dave: I'm going to sound biased now, but I really do think it's small coached classes. Lockdown meant people bought lots of kit for home and have since realised it's hard to work out alone. They need to be part of something bigger.

Tom: 100%. You really can't deny the benefit of being accountable to someone. Or even to a group of people like your classmates. A supportive and welcoming culture has a lot to do with people's performance in and out of the gym. I think in the coming years we're going to see people who've previously been too intimidated to train in a gym before, joining in.