COVER NINJA IS LAUNCHING A NEW SMARTPHONE APP THAT ALLOWS FITNESS OPERATORS TO ORGANISE STRESS-FREE STAFF COVER AND GIVES FREELANCE INSTRUCTORS A PLATFORM THAT THEY CAN USE TO GAIN MORE WORK

Anyone that has ever worked in a fitness venue delivering a group exercise timetable will recognise this scenario; the dreaded 'I'm unable to teach tomorrow' WhatsApp message at 6.45pm from the class instructor that is teaching the scheduled 10am class the next day.

Panic sets in. Cancelling a class full of paying members is the absolute worst case scenario. So, the hectic class cover process begins. The longwinded, stressful process involves round robin phone calls, back and forth messages with numerous instructors and staff members, as well as desperate Facebook group messages. However, the process doesn't end at finding a cover instructor but continues with confirmations and insurance verifications, timetable updates, multiple questions between the cover instructor and venue staff and lastly head office administration of invoices and payment processing once the class has been taught.

Research has indicated that one single class cover can take over 35 contact touchpoints to complete and managing a venue's class cover can take up to 30% of a studio coordinator's time. This is time that should be spent on other aspects of their jobs such as raising class quality and member experience. Thankfully, this is all about to change with the anticipated release of Cover Ninja, the clever smartphone app that manages the class cover process automatically and drastically reduces time, effort and hassle for everyone involved.

THE PROBLEM VENUES FACE

People get sick, childcare lets you down, holidays happen and trains go on strike – that's life, it happens. But it happens a lot and on average, 280,000 classes every single month in the UK will need a cover instructor. That's a lot of classes and the industry is crying out for an improved way of dealing with the associated process.

In a bid to alleviate the stress and time with sourcing class cover, many venues make class cover the 'job' of the instructor who needs

the cover but ultimately the venue will always step in and help if needed to avoid class cancellations and unhappy members. Also, if an instructor is sick in bed, are they checking a cover instructors insurance prior to teaching? Do they know if the cover instructor is qualified? Or are they simply saying 'yes' to the first person who replies on a group Facebook page?

With the selection process of that cover instructor unverified, some venue staff feel that they have lost control over who is teaching in their venue and worry about the standard of class delivery to their members.

HOW COVER NINJA HELPS VENUES

Cover Ninja gives the fundamental control back to the venue in terms of who is chosen to cover but removes all the work behind it. When a venue enrols with Cover Ninja, they specify their instructor 'must haves' for each class. They detail the qualifications required, the level of insurance needed all the way to how many months/ years experience a cover instructor must have to teach a specific class in their venue.

So, when cover is needed, Cover Ninja will use its smart filter process; a clever algorithm that uses criteria set by the venue to match the best available candidate. This ensures that every instructor chosen for cover has all the correct qualifications, insurance and prerequisites that the venue requires, regardless of whether the post was completed by the venue or the timetabled instructor.

Venue staff are also able to view the cover instructors' profile on the app prior to the class so that they know who to expect as well as have all the insurance and qualification documents on hand if they wish to view or download.

Nicola Addison, Cover Ninja Co-Founder says "We don't just want to find a cover instructor, we want to find the best cover instructor who has the right tools to deliver the best class possible for the

venues members".

THE PROBLEM INSTRUCTORS FACE

It's not just venues that suffer. For instructors that require cover for their classes, or instructors that are wanting to gain further cover work, the process is a mess.

Instructors endure the same untargeted, unverified process of round robin messages while trying to find someone to cover their class, often with the added worry of a fine from the venue if they can't find someone. It can be extremely hard to find a cover instructor if the venue's 'cover list' simply does not have enough available cover instructors to choose from. Hence the need for venturing onto social media platforms to seek from a bigger pool of instructors, even if they are unverified.

Similarly, cover instructors have to be a part of these cover groups on varying messaging platforms but messages are sent and received at all times of the day and are often completely irrelevant and hard to keep track of. Cover instructors then regularly end up going into a class 'blind' with no knowledge of the venue or class and are expected to figure it out as they go.

Freelance Instructors are often thought of as the bad guys, the ones that cost the most, but let venues down at the very last minute. But, let's face it, sometimes venues need to hold their hands up too! Is every invoice always paid on time? Are all cover instructors welcomed by the duty manager? Does the cover instructor know where the head mic batteries are kept?

Cover Ninja feels this relationship needs some TLC. Claudia Newland, Cover Ninja Co-Founder says "We need to support our freelance workforce. Cover Ninja is a trusted instructor community which aims to curate a diverse community and drive industry standards."

HOW COVER NINJA HELPS INSTRUCTORS

When an instructor downloads Cover Ninja, they will follow a set of on boarding questions. This will allow the instructor to set when they want to be contacted, when they are available to work, what classes they teach and finally the pay rate they are seeking. They will also detail and upload their qualifications and insurance documents.

So, when a class cover request is pushed out, only relevant instructors, matching the request details will be contacted. That's not all, when an instructor has been confirmed for a cover, they will be able to access detailed information through the app about the venue and the class they are teaching.

Instructors can not only use Cover Ninja as a much more efficient and stress-free way of sourcing cover for their classes but they can pick up more cover and in turn make more money and increase their professional network.

OTHER GREAT FEATURES WE CAN EXPECT FROM COVER NINJA

Management software integration
API integrations mean that when a cover instructor is confirmed, the relevant information is updated live on venue timetables, so venue staff and members know who to expect.

One stop communication
All information about upcoming and past covers is within the app, accessed via a smartphone or through the desktop app. Venue staff can easily view who is about to cover in their venue and instructors have up to date lists of when and where they are covering so everyone is kept in the loop with simple up to date reporting.

Rating system
Cover Ninja aims to raise the quality of group exercise instruction with a rating system post class.

Favourites groups
When a cover instructor has done a good job, the venue is able to add them to a favourites group for future cover requests. Similarly, a venue can choose to remove or block an instructor from teaching a certain class if they do not feel they met the standard required.

Downloadable invoices
After every class cover, Cover Ninja will automatically generate an invoice for the cover instructor, which can be viewed and downloaded by both instructor and venue.

WHERE DID THIS GREAT IDEA COME FROM?

Co-Founders Claudia Newland and Nicola Addison have been heavily involved in the fitness industry for a number of years as both instructors and operators, and therefore experienced the stress that comes along with managing group exercise class cover first-hand. They believed that there just must be a better way of managing the process.

A couple of years ago whilst enjoying a glass of blush rose in the beautiful South of France, reminiscing on what a struggle finding holiday cover had been, Cover Ninja was born!

They have worked hard to create a solution that not only benefits the instructors, but the venues as well. From the early concept stages the app has been heavily backed and supported by fitness brands and has been shaped and moulded with the help of studio coordinators and instructors. The business is backed by investors that have founded huge, key leisure brands and together with the Cover Ninja Founders and their combined pool of knowledge and experience in the industry, they are a force to be reckoned with.

LAUNCH DETAILS

With sales channels established with leading UK leisure brands, Cover Ninja is fast approaching its pilot scheme ahead of the official launch early next year. Since launching the website, Cover Ninja has received fantastic support from instructors as well as operators with a large number of people signed up as early adopters to the app.

To find out more and to sign up to the app, visit www.coverninja.co.uk or contact stuff@coverninja.co.uk