



Garage Gym is Thriving After Adopting a Hybrid Fitness Model

The ongoing pandemic has caused a shift in the way we work out. Gyms and studios were ordered closed, and the industry moved along at a speedy pace. Although many have since reopened (with reduced capacity and additional safety measures), some workout warriors remain reluctant to return—and many businesses, including Garage Gym, are experiencing new levels of engagement.

For many, online workouts have become part of our “new normal”, and plenty of former gym rats are enjoying the flexibility and convenience afforded by digital options. This means that going forward, the ability for gyms and studios to provide a hybrid fitness experience that includes both virtual training and in-person options will be essential to success.

Garage Gym is a great example of a business that has adapted quickly to the changes in the fitness industry brought by 2020. We sat down with Casey Wright, a trainer at Garage Gym, to find out how he and his team were able to expand their business model online, with the help of ABC Trainerize—and why they have no plans to return to the status quo.

Improvise. Adapt. Overcome.

Garage Gym was founded in the home of Tony and Dani Smith, who both worked in law enforcement—Tony as a leader of the Tactical Response Unit, with 20+ years of experience in policing, and Dani as a police officer for over a decade. Both Tony and Dani were trained and taught at one of the most hardcore gyms in the world—Gym Jones, in Salt Lake City, Utah, which embraces outcome-based training that is preparation for the real thing.



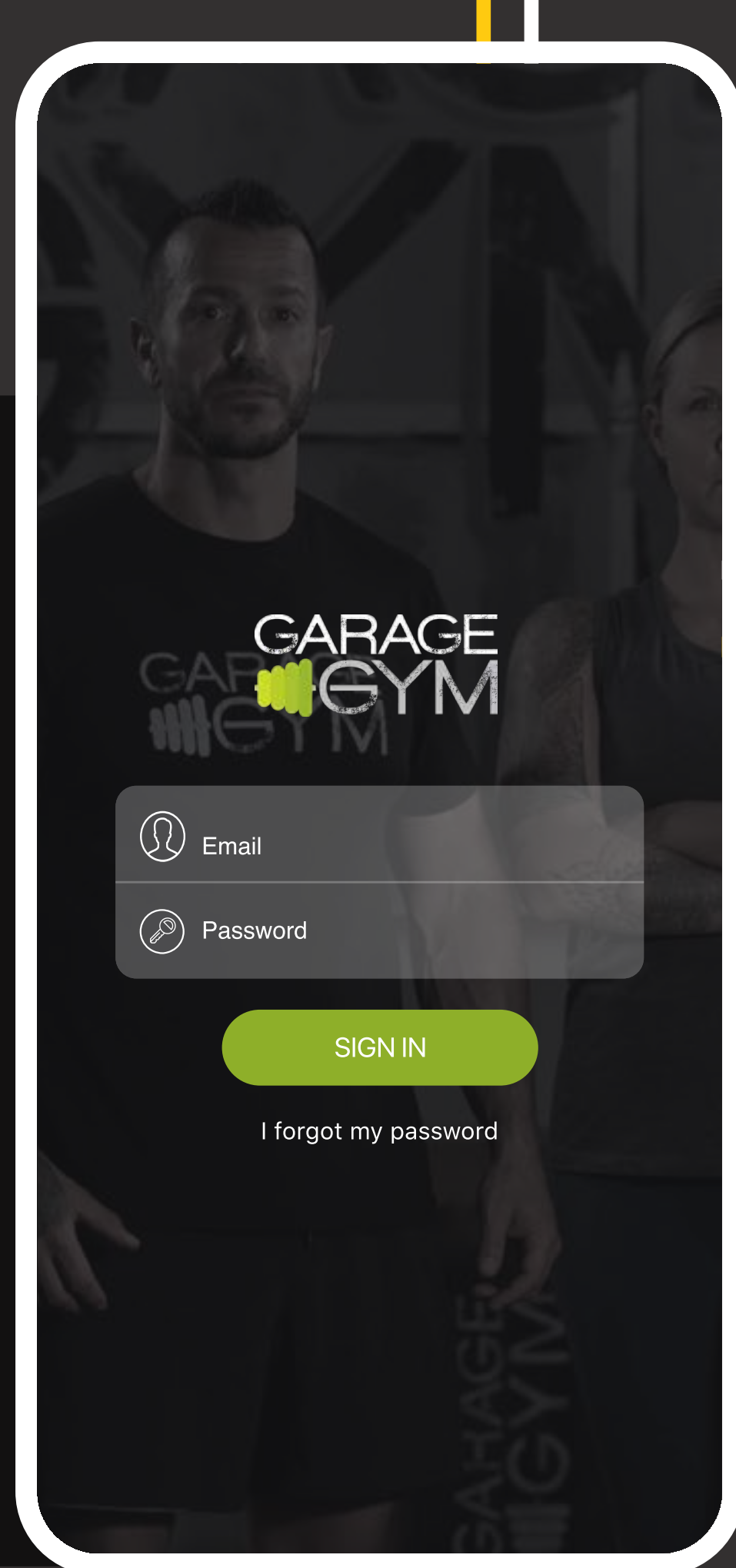
Tony and Dani have stayed true to their training, and according to Casey,

“the purpose of Garage Gym is functional fitness. We encourage high intensity, but our goals are to get people healthy and able to go to work every day stronger; we’re trying to create a positive impact for as many people as we can.”

Despite being founded just five years ago, Garage Gym has since expanded to two locations (both in Ontario), and boasts over 350 members, many of whom are first responders like Casey, who works as a forest firefighter.

It was their members who were top of mind for Garage Gym’s trainers when the pandemic hit and stay-at-home orders were issued.

“In March, we had to make the decision to shut the gym down for the safety of our members. We spent that day creating a studio, and setting up a two-week free program of no-gear workouts on an old app that we used before Trainerize,” Casey shares. “We were able to provide that to our members within six hours, to encourage them to stay active while staying home.”

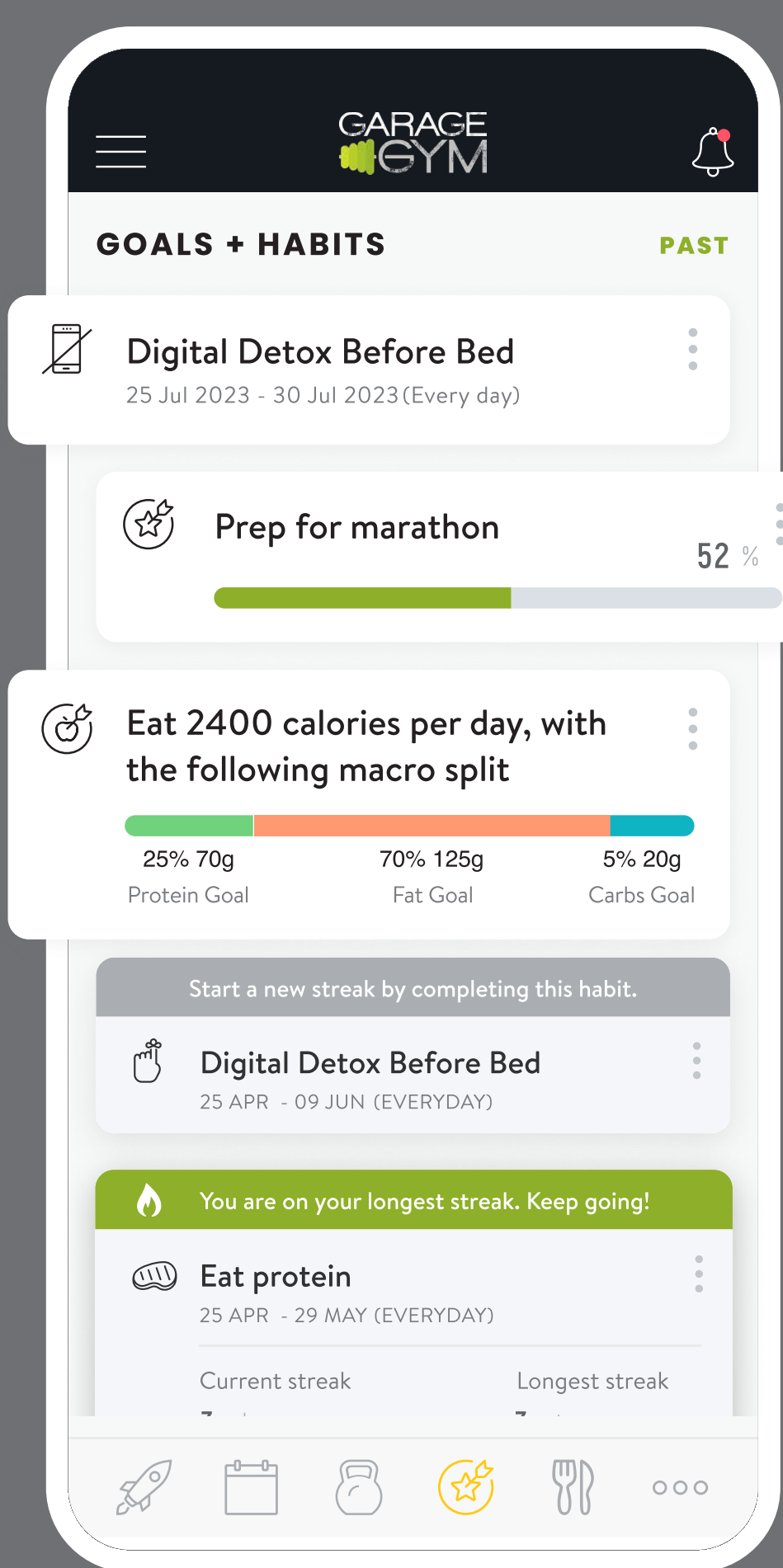


A few weeks later, Garage Gym was planning to launch a 30-day challenge as a way to **help members minimize stress through fitness**. After realizing that their old software program did not have the functions to support their 280+ online members, Tony and Casey quickly decided to make the switch to ABC Trainerize, after hearing positive feedback from other trainers.

“We had a two-week window to switch everything over and get up and running,” says Casey. “Luckily, with our old app we had started creating a lot of content and videos through YouTube, so we uploaded everything into ABC Trainerize, and from there we began building the programs for this 30-day challenge.”

Within a week, Casey and his team were able to create an individual challenge for each participant that included personalized workouts and nutrition plans. With the help of ABC Trainerize, they added custom how-to videos for workouts, nutrition and habit tracking. “Our main goal was just to provide something positive to our members during a stressful time. We ended up acquiring 50 new members through this challenge, and received so much positive feedback, all because we were willing to jump in feet first with ABC Trainerize, and give it our best shot.”

Cultivating a Virtual Sense of Community



One of the things that sets Garage Gym apart from its competitors is the sense of camaraderie that exists among its members.

“With our clients, we have that community kind of strength,” says Casey.

Through the ABC Trainerize platform, Garage Gym has been able to assemble, offer, and sell products in one app.

Despite the expansion, one of their non-negotiables was the ability to continue providing top-notch support to their members.

“There’s a million online workouts you can buy, and we know that people are paying good money for a membership,” says Casey. “We felt like it was a no brainer to include personalized videos of how to perform each exercise and with the ABC Trainerize app, it just kind of snowballed. We ended up creating so much content that can be used in the future, and it allowed us to personalize the experience for our members who we couldn’t see face-to-face.”

Garage Gym has started recording in-person classes, and allows members to login from home, so that they still feel like part of the community. Members also have the option of following workouts within the app, and choosing between different workouts to suit their goals.

As gyms have reopened with social distancing measures in place, Garage Gym has also begun training private groups in their facilities. “A big selling point for us, especially with our trainers who have advanced certifications in different specialties, is creating these small action groups, that come in, and we do more of a strength set, you get on a strength program and a strength set nutrition plan...ABC Trainerize’s in-app messaging has allowed these groups to have even more communication with our trainers, and they’re seeing incredible results.”

A Hybrid Approach is the New Normal

While COVID-19 vaccines are beginning to be rolled out around the world, it’s unlikely that in-person visits to the gym will look the way they did pre-pandemic anytime soon. Mass distribution will take time, and many of us have become accustomed to the convenience of virtual workouts, which cut out the need to commute.



We don’t know everyone’s story, and some people may not want to come back to the gym,” notes Casey. “What we want to do is to continue using ABC Trainerize to provide virtual services to our members. It’s become an extension of our gym, and it’s allowed us to streamline our processes while expanding our service offerings and improving communication for virtual clients and those who are back in the gym.

Adopting a hybrid model provides value for clients, and is a good way to differentiate your business from competitors, but it also helps pandemic-proof a fitness business by providing flexibility.

“No one knows what’s going to happen next,” says Casey. “If you haven’t established this base, you’re starting from scratch, and all these other progressive companies are going to have their online platforms ready to go. ABC Trainerize helped us build our resiliency, so that whatever happens next, we’re ready to go without skipping a beat.”

