

The Community Events **Playbook.**

How gym owners run events that move retention
and acquisition at the same time.

Built with three gym owners who run signature events every year:
Traie Miles of Rushmore CrossFit, **Nick Johnson** of CrossFit Liminal,
Aimee Moller of Swift River CrossFit

Hosting events at your gym builds the kind of community that keeps members for years.

The right event deepens loyalty with members who already love your gym and creates a low-friction first touch for prospects who aren't ready to commit yet. Done consistently, they're one of the few things that move both retention and acquisition at the same time.

REAL NUMBERS FROM THREE GYMS

3-10

new members converted per Wine & WOD event

SWIFT RIVER CROSSFIT

~90%

of active members attend their annual party

RUSHMORE CROSSFIT

~\$9k

raised at the annual Ruck for Refugees event with 50/50 member-to-community turnout

CROSSFIT LIMINAL

Most gym owners either skip them entirely or underestimate what it takes to pull one off well. Poor planning shows up fast: low turnout, a chaotic day-of experience, no follow-up with guests who actually showed up. The event happens, but the benefits never materialize.

The gym owners who run great events consistently aren't working with bigger budgets or more staff. They have a repeatable process. This playbook breaks that process down, with real examples from **Traie Miles** of Rushmore CrossFit, **Nick Johnson** of CrossFit Liminal, and **Aimee Moller** of Swift River CrossFit woven throughout. Each owner contributed the actual details behind their signature events so you can take what works and run it at your gym.

The type of event you run should match what your gym needs right now.

A gym struggling with retention needs a different event than one trying to generate referrals. Running the wrong format for your current goal is one of the most common reasons events fail to move the needle, even when execution is solid.

01 Member Appreciation Events

These are purely for your existing community, giving members a reason to show up outside of class and feel recognized. Members who feel connected to their gym beyond their workouts are more likely to renew and refer more naturally. If retention is your priority, this is where to start.

EXAMPLES · End-of-year party · milestone celebration · member awards night

Rushmore CrossFit hosts their annual party every April at an off-site venue — open bar, DJ, photo booth, candid photographer. Sponsors are service-based businesses owned by members (liquor store, landscaping, home organization) plus product donations from brands like FitAid. Nearly 90% of active members attend.

02 Referral Events

The goal is acquisition, but it doesn't feel like it to the people attending. Members bring guests, the format is beginner-friendly and low-pressure, and the event does the selling by letting prospects experience your culture firsthand. A warm referral who's already had a good time at your gym is more likely to sign up than someone who clicked an ad.

EXAMPLES · Happy hours · bring-a-friend workout · open house · competition simulations

Swift River CrossFit hosts an annual evening event where members invite friends to join a team workout followed by wine and snacks. Converts 3–10 new members each Wine & WOD.

03 Fundraisers

These give your community something to rally around beyond their own fitness goals. A cause deepens member commitment, raises your gym's profile locally, and tends to attract sponsors and outside attention a standard gym event won't. The members who show up to raise money for something they care about are also your most loyal.

EXAMPLES · Charity ruck · rep-a-thon · community challenge

CrossFit Liminal's annual Ruck for Refugees raised ~\$9,000 in 2026 while funding free fitness classes for the Afghan refugee community in Clarkston, GA.

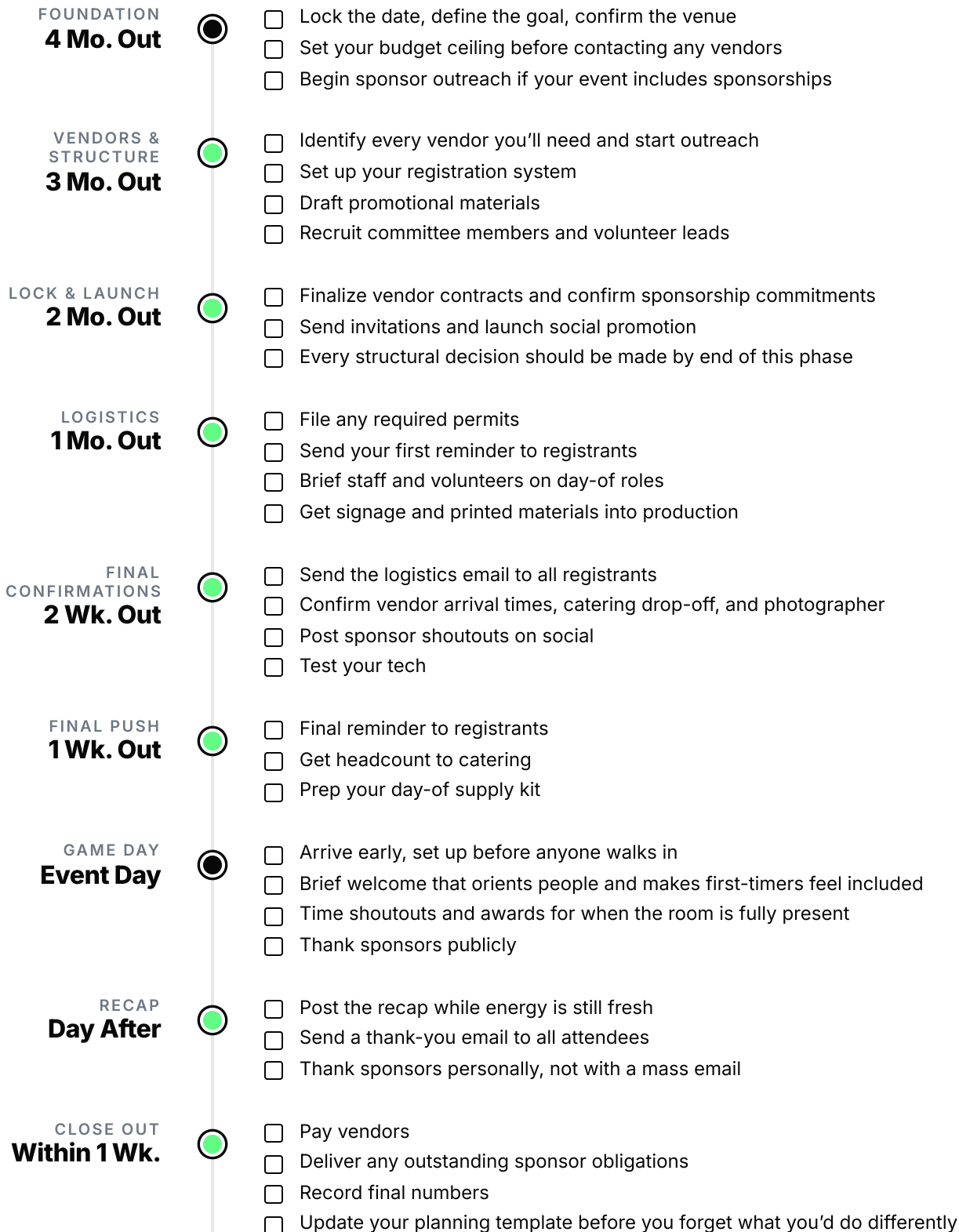
04 Themed Workouts

These are the most flexible format and the lowest lift to organize. Themed workouts can serve retention, acquisition, or both depending on how you position and promote them. They're a good entry point if you're new to running events and want to build the habit before committing to something bigger.

EXAMPLES · Holiday WOD · anniversary workout · partner throwdown

Start earlier than you think you need to.

Adapted from a real planning template built by **Traie Miles** of Rushmore CrossFit. You can access Traie's template [here](#). Start earlier than you think you need to, so you're not scrambling the week before.



Start outreach early. Lead with a conversation, never with the packet.

Sponsorships can offset a significant portion of your event costs and add legitimacy in the eyes of your community. The gyms that land them consistently start outreach early and lead with a conversation before they ever send a packet. Before you reach out to anyone, define what you're offering. This is the four-tier structure **CrossFit Liminal** uses for their annual fundraiser — adjust investment amounts to fit your event size.

TIER	INVESTMENT	WHAT THEY GET
● Presenting	\$2,500+	Logo on shirt, signage, website, dedicated social post
● Anchor	\$1,000	Logo on shirt, signage, website, dedicated social post
● Community	\$500	Logo on signage, website, dedicated social story
● Supporter	\$250	Logo on website and thank-you materials

BEFORE Outreach

- Start with your member base — they know local business owners and can open doors faster than a cold email
- Lead with a phone call or in-person conversation, not the packet
- Set a deadline for introductions so follow-up doesn't stall
- Track every sponsor lead and their status in one place

AFTER Fulfillment

- Post dedicated sponsor content on social within the agreed window
- Thank sponsors publicly at the event by name
- Follow up personally after the event — a call or direct email, not a mass note
- Deliver everything you promised before you close the books

A registration link posted once to Instagram is not a marketing plan.

Most gym events are underattended because promotion starts too late and stays in one channel. Consistent visibility across multiple touchpoints, built over several weeks, is what actually fills the room.

4 WEEKS OUT · ANNOUNCE

Open every channel at once.

- Send a full announcement email to members with all key details and a registration link
- Create a Facebook event page and invite all members
- Post the event announcement on social with a clear CTA
- Announce at classes in person — verbal reminders outperform digital every time

3 WEEKS OUT · REFERRAL PUSH

Make it personal.

- Shift messaging to the community angle — why this event matters, not just what it is
- Introduce any referral incentive and tell members what they win for bringing guests
- Start asking directly: “Who are you bringing?”

2 WEEKS OUT · MOMENTUM

Show last year. Tag sponsors.

- Post social proof — a photo or testimonial from a past event if you have one
- Send a reminder email with shirt deadline or any registration cutoff dates
- Post dedicated sponsor shoutouts, one per sponsor tier as agreed

1 WEEK OUT · FINAL PUSH

Daily reminders. Logistics email.

- Daily social stories counting down to the event
- Send a logistics email: what to bring, what to expect, where to park
- Last chance registration reminder to your public list

EVENT DAY · LIVE COVERAGE

Document while it's happening.

- Post live coverage to stories throughout the day
- Tag sponsors in real-time content where relevant

DAY AFTER · RECAP

Post inside 24 hours.

- Post the recap within 24 hours while energy is still high
- Send a thank-you email to all attendees with the impact number if you have it

Swift River CrossFit starts Wine & WOD promotion 4 weeks out across every channel: Facebook group invite, daily whiteboard brief built into PushPress so coaches are required to mention it, email, and QR code posters throughout the gym. Coaches ask every member directly: “Who are you bringing?” The member who brings the most guests wins a pair of CrossFit shoes.

If the planning was done right, event day shouldn't feel chaotic.

The decisions are already made. The job now is presence.

FOUR PRINCIPLES



Set the atmosphere before doors open.

The experience starts the moment someone walks in. Music, lighting, signage, a staffed welcome table — these details signal that this was planned and that guests are expected. A room that looks ready feels different than one that's still being set up when people arrive.



Make first-timers feel like they belong.

Your members know each other. Guests don't. Pair them intentionally during any workout or activity, introduce them by name, and make sure staff are circulating and talking to new faces rather than clustering with people they already know.



For referral events, timing is everything.

Introduce your membership offer early, while energy is high and people are engaged. Reinforce it throughout the event with QR codes and staff available to help with booking on the spot. By the time you make the closing ask, it shouldn't feel like a surprise.



End with intention.

The last thing people feel is what they remember. Announce totals raised or winners when the full room is present. Thank the people who made it happen. Send everyone out on a high note.

Swift River CrossFit introduces a first-month offer at the start of Wine & WOD and reinforces it throughout the evening with QR posters, handout cards, and coach-assisted booking.

Treat the 48 hours after the event as part of the event itself.

The event is over. Most gym owners breathe a sigh of relief and move on. The ones who get the most out of their events treat the 48 hours after as part of the event itself.

WITHIN
24h
While energy is fresh

- Post your recap on social — photos, total raised, thank-yous
- Send a thank-you email to everyone who attended
- Review your sign-in sheet; identify guests who didn't book a next step
- Send personalized follow-up texts to unbooked guests — individual messages, not a mass blast

WITHIN
48h
Close the loop

- Attempt a phone call to any guest who didn't respond to your text
- Enter all attendee details and follow-up status into your CRM
- Thank sponsors individually — a call or personal email, not a group note

WITHIN
1wk
Close the books

- Pay all vendors
- Deliver any outstanding sponsor social obligations
- Record your final numbers: total attendees, revenue, new leads, conversions
- Note what you'd do differently and update your planning template before you forget

Swift River CrossFit mails a thank-you package to every attendee within 48 hours including a handwritten card and a reminder of their new member offer.

THE DEBRIEF

30 minutes.
Three
questions.

- 01** What worked?
- 02** What didn't?
- 03** What would we do differently next time?

THE BOTTOM LINE

“What you do in the **7 days after the event** — that’s where the retention and the referral payoff actually lives.”

PushPress handles the logistics so you can focus on the experience.



Event Booking

Schedule your event in PushPress and it appears in the Members App automatically. Manage your schedule, attendee list, and mass communications all in one place.



Staff App

Coaches see the event roster before they walk in. Create a dedicated chat thread for the event so everyone stays aligned without the group text chaos.



Committed Club

Events are a natural moment to recognize members who’ve been showing up consistently. Celebrate milestones publicly, on screen and in the app.



PushPress Grow

For referral events, every guest who registers becomes a contact. Automated follow-up goes out the same day, while your gym is still top of mind.

[Book a 30-minute demo →](#)