

ALTR Your Experience

Capstone Research and Planning Report – Final

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Introduction

ALTR is an upscale fitness studio that opened in 2017 by former CorePower Yoga executives Kari Ament and Vincent (Vinny) Amendola, with a focus on high intensity interval training (HIIT). The workouts are a combination of group fitness and circuit training, delivered with the expertise of a personal trainer. The studio's first location opened in the North Loop neighborhood of Minneapolis and in 2020 it expanded by opening a studio in the 50th and France district of Edina. The organization is currently working to build back its business to pre-pandemic operating levels. Gyms have been hit particularly hard since the COVID-19 pandemic began with twenty-two percent of U.S. health clubs and studios closing permanently (Staff, 2021). ALTR remained nimble through these changes by switching up its services to offer online and reduced class sizes to its members (V. Amendola, personal communication). Now that ALTR can operate at its full capacity, the organization is facing the problem of inconsistent membership and studio session purchases, making it difficult for ownership to project revenue and future growth.

While new members are needed for growth, one of ALTR's strengths are its strong community of current members. ALTR refers to its member base as the ALTR Army (V. Amendola, personal communication). An interviewed member and recent Google review reflect this:

> *"I love the workouts and how unique they are. Every single one of them are different and keep me guessing! A lot of the workouts are hard, so it challenges me. I appreciate Vinny and how he's welcomed me into the ALTR family. I love that I have made friends at the studio + have accountability partners. I love that I leave class feeling strong and ready to seize the day."- Hillary, current ALTR member*

> *"Do I recommend ALTR? Definitely YES! That's even an understatement! BEST GYM YET! FOUND MY FAMILY AND THE ONE GYM IM STAYING AT!"* - Five-star Google review

Additional issues were discovered that contribute to ALTR's growth problem including a disconnect of its marcom efforts with its service and values, and the intimidation factor people have with new workouts. Also, the organization's focus on "awakened performance" and visual displays of fit, athletic individuals does not help combat the intimidation perspective studio members may feel. Finally, the organization needs to better communicate its points of difference over its competitors like Barry's, Orangetheory, Basecamp and Alchemy, by looking outside of the workout itself to persuade individuals to choose ALTR as part of their workout routine. Once chosen, it offers an unlimited membership or a variety of session

packages for purchase with no contract or commitment. Most of its sales come through session package purchases, making its sales priority sessions over full memberships. For ALTR to become a profitable organization again, it needs a strategic communications plan that can it help increase studio series sales by reaching new and returning customers. ALTR is a play on the word alter, which according to Merriam-Webster means to make different without changing into something else. How can ALTR keep its bold brand while stripping away some of its intimidation factors to align its values with its marcom efforts and differentiate itself from the competition?

Situation Analysis

Background

In opening its studio doors in 2017, ALTR was in line with the rise of boutique fitness. Up until COVID, 42 percent of all gym memberships in 2018 came from boutique fitness studios, the highest membership recorded in history (Volofit, 2021). The rise in popularity over the past several years has specifically occurred among Millennials and Gen Z as they like the focus studios have on creating unique and more intimate experiences (Volofit, 2021). These intimate experiences are referred to as experiential membership and include everything from the studio lighting, layout, equipment and technology (Volofit, 2021). However, starting in the spring of 2020, gyms in Minnesota were forced to close for two separate stretches - from March 17 to June 10 and again for a month from Nov. 19 to Dec. 19 (Perry, 2022). Capacity restrictions and mask mandates continued through this time and into early 2022. ALTR remained nimble through the lockdowns and restrictions by starting up an ALTR Livestream, following all social distancing policies, reducing capacity and changing from all natural cleaners to hospital grade cleaners (V. Amendola, personal communication).

Now that ALTR can operate at its full capacity it has an advantage of already having some of Minnesota's hot fitness trends coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic in practice. The trends include Functional Training, exercises that use multiple muscle groups with an emphasis on core strength and stability, a cornerstone on which ALTR was founded (Perry, 2022). Life Time's Steve Larson forecasts growth in demand for functional training, "we still offer static cardio options like treadmills and bikes, but a lot of people are moving toward functional, personal, and small-group training." (Perry, 2022). Hybrid fitness is an additional trend that industry experts predict many fitness enthusiasts will continue to combine the benefits of both in-person and online classes (Perry, 2022). ALTR's main competitors including Barry's, Orangetheory, Basecamp and Alchemy also offer these trends and have a larger studio footprint

and awareness (V. Amendola, personal communication). It is unique in its mission to create experiences that ALTR, resulting in awakened performance, mindset and lifestyle (ALTR Branding Guidelines). It offers an ever changing 50-minute full body, dynamic workouts and every signature class is designed around the science of High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) and imparts explosive cardio, strength, endurance, balance, and flexibility (ALTR Branding Guidelines). However, ownership believes that there is an awareness and intimidation issue for the ALTR (V. Amendola, personal communication). "There's an intimidation factor to workouts, and I get it. I've been intimidated by workouts myself," Amendola shares. "This really is a workout for everyone. We don't want anyone to feel they have to already be fit to come to ALTR and have to understand kettle bells or squatting, or rowing. We'll teach you." (Smelter, 2017). While ALTR has a strong visual identify and confidence in what it has to offer to fitness enthusiasts, it has yet to master how to tell its unique story through communications channels.

ALTR's Stakeholders include:

Primary stakeholders: owners, coaches, ALTR Army, studio staff, ClassPass members, potential new members

Secondary stakeholders: Other local business owners, other boutique fitness studios

ALTR's Value Proposition:

Welcoming and supportive experiences that ALTR for awakened performance, mindset and lifestyle.

"Encouraging staff that makes you feel very welcomed & motivated. The studio was clean, organized and very aesthetically pleasing!! Amazing workout that gets you trying new things and pushing your limits." – Google 5 Star Review

Original Research Methods

Interviews were and are being conducted with key stakeholders for ALTR including a co-founder, a coach, and current studio members. Additionally, survey responses were shared from a recent Instagram giveaway that was done in January of 2022.

Interview 1: Co-owner and co-founder, Vinny Amendola

Q: Have you seen the business grow as COVID restrictions have been lifted? Also, what are the business goals related to membership?
A: Yes, the business has been growing again. Our goal with memberships and package sales is to double the amount of revenue coming into our business by end of year.

Key Insight: The goal of doubling revenue can be used as a KPI in the evaluation section.

Q: What do you think sets ALTR apart from other fitness studios?
A: What sets ALTR apart is the quality of instruction - we have highly credentialed pros leading our sessions. Our workouts are more efficient and effective than Barry's, Orange Theory, Alchemy because we actually employ a true HIIT style following the science of HIIT. We have varied equipment and more than our competitors to keep the body from hitting plateaus.

Key Insight: They're not looking beyond the workout when differentiating themselves.

Q: What local partnerships does ALTR currently have in place?
A: We partner with businesses that attract similar clients as us - Crisp and Green, Stalk and Spade, Capsule Pharmacy. We recently started partnering with Hines Properties to activate fitness classes in their office space fitness room. We are looking to grow this piece of the business.

Key Insight: Growth for this piece of the business could support the communications objective of creating experiences that ALTR in and outside of the studio.

Q: Do you have an editorial calendar for ALTR content like the newsletters and blog posts?
A: No

Key Insight: Weakness lies in consistent and cohesive messaging through external channels.

Q: Are you working with someone on proactive earned media? Or do you wait for local media to reach out to you?
A: No.

Key Insight: There is an opportunity for ALTR to be a thought leader in the local fitness industry.

Q: Do you invest in paid media like social media ads, print/digital ads? If so, who are you targeting with these? Also, who is your target demographic for new membership?
A: We have - we target people close to the studios who have some sort of fitness lifestyle, we've also marketed to look alike audiences. Our demographic for new membership is 25 to 40 professionals.

Key Insight: Weakness lies in how they're identifying and targeting potential new members.

Q: What activities do you have in place to convert trial members to paid members?
A: We have a set of customer journey emails offering a discounted rate for the life of the membership if they convert during the free week. Our studio lead team follows up with every new client too.

Key Insight: They appear to be focusing on cost discounts as the primary driver for member conversion. There could be an opportunity here to highlight the convenience and experiential offerings of the membership as a means of persuading trial members to convert.

Q: What is your most popular session that is purchased?
A: SHRED.

Key Insight: SHRED, a community workout challenge is the most popular.

Interview 2: Corterius Lubben, ALTR Pro (Coach)

Q: In your opinion, what sets ALTR apart from other Downtown & Edina fitness studios?
A: I would say one thing that sets ALTR apart from other studios is the community itself. I personally feel everyone in the ARMY—from studio leads to PRO's—even the clients that walk through our doors every day are very genuine individuals. I feel there are other fitness studios around the Twin Cities that aren't as…inclusive nor inviting.

Key Insight: The ALTR community continues to be noted as a primary factor that sets the organization apart from its competitors.

Q: Are you given a heads up when someone in your class is there for the first time? Or is this something you need to ask once in class?
A: When it's someone's first class with ALTR, we are notified on our online booking system (Zingfit) with a "star" next to the client's name on the roster, which then turns to a "heart" when the clients continues with the free week we offer for new members. Our founders are also notified via email when a client signs up for their first class/free week. We also send out welcome emails to our new members providing pricing on packages and FAQ's.

Key Insight: There could be an opportunity in the process for new member sign ups to ask some questions on experience level and goals to help make the classes feel more personalized.

Q: How do you keep your own energy high when coaching a class? Do you find this to be easy or difficult?
A: One way I keep my energy elevated throughout a class is getting involved with the clients while they're immersed in the workout. I like playing very upbeat music—which sometimes even leads to my own little dance party. When doing these things and seeing the smiles on the client's face, even though they may be out of breath or just tired from working so hard, gives me even more reason to keep the energy level high. Not only for me, but for them as well.

Key Insight: The upbeat music at ALTR is a common piece of positive feedback. There could be an opportunity to build off this with curated public playlists on Spotify for members to ALTR their own experiences outside of the studio.

Q: What is some of the most common feedback you hear from the ALTR Army?
A: I would say some of the most common feedback I hear is:
"Your studios are always so clean and inviting!"
"These are probably some of the toughest classes I've taken, but I absolutely love them."
"Thank you for always making class so fun."

Key Insight: While ALTR is a tough workout, people still find it enjoyable.

Q: How would you describe ALTR in 3 words?
A: Inviting, Special, Community

Key Insight: These could be great keyworks to use in brand messaging.

Interview 3: Rachel, Current ALTR Member

Q: What do you like most about ALTR?
A: I really like the vibe of the dark, club lights and loud music, you really get in the zone and focus on your workout. I also like how there is a lot of weightlifting and cardio mixed in with the circuits. You can choose your adventure in way with weights opposed to Alchemy where they kill you with HUGE rep counts (like 100 pull ups or 100 push press or something) I like how workouts are always a different format day to day to keep it interesting.

Key Insight: The overall experience, not just the workout is why she has an unlimited class membership. She trusts the coaches to build a workout that is effective and doable.

Q: Have you taken an online class? If so, what are your thoughts?
A: I haven't but I "make up" my own ALTR workouts to do on my own when I'm out of town.

Key Insight: There could be an opportunity to create content around how to ALTR your way.

Q: How important is connection and community to you in your workout experience?
A: Not as important. It's nice to see familiar faces and have the instructors remember me, but I don't need a strong community to show up and do the work.

Key Insight: The importance of community seems to depend on the drive and how comfortable the person when in the studio.

Interview 4: Hillary, Current ALTR Member

Q: What made you keep coming back?
A: Once I started coming to class more often, I started to realize just how much I loved coming to ALTR and that I wanted to keep it moving. I started to connect with Kari and Vinny and I got close with Vinny. As a local social media influencer, I have a partnership with ALTR and enjoy spreading the good word about ALTR. I have been able to bring people in for a free week trial and some of them have signed up for memberships.

Key Insight: The community and studio relationships are important, and she likes that she can help build them.

Q: What do you like most about ALTR?
A: I love the workouts and how unique they are. Every single one of them are different and keeps me guessing! A lot of the workouts are hard, so it challenges me. I appreciate Vinny and how he's welcomed me into the ALTR family. I love that I have made friends at the studio + have accountability partners. I love that I leave class feeling strong and ready to seize the day.

Key Insight: The classes alter her perception of what's she's capable of and that energy flows into the rest of her day.

Q: How important is connection and community to you in your workout experience?

A: It is very important! As a plus sized woman, it's intimidating going to gyms where nobody looks like me. And at times, I sometimes look around at ALTR and feel that way. However, there are all certain ages in class, which, I love seeing. I do wish there were more body types in class that look like my own. I always have to have internal dialogue during class that even if I can't do a particular exercise, I can modify and to just keep moving.

Key Insight: Community, connection and diversity is important. Members want to feel like they belong.

Interview 5: Johnny, Former ALTR Member

Q: How did you discover ALTR?
A: My sister told me about it, and I didn't know anything about HIIT classes, so she explained to me what it was, and I went with her once using her guest pass. I really loved the lighting in the studio, the music was fun, and a lot of the equipment was new for me. I feel like it did give me a really good workout. It was something that intimidated me but kept me interested

Key Insight: The experiential elements of the workout stood out to him and made a difference.

Q: What made you keep going back?
A: It gave me a really good workout and it was exhausting but rewarding. At the time I started going it was something where I was driving in from Eden Prairie to the North Loop studio for class. Even though it was a long distance I really appreciated the experience and at the end having a nice drink of nitro coffee was a fun aspect along with the socializing with other people. I met my partner Robby at ALTR. It was fun to have a space where there were people my age that were active and social. It was something that kept me interested by maintaining a high standard of my own physical fitness but also keeping me challenged and guided through the practice. Tyler one of the instructors did a really good job of giving me some ideas on how to improve or adjust positions foe the best workout.

Key Insight: Found a fun social experience along with the workout which allowed him to create connections and feel like part of a community.

Q: Are you still attending classes? If not, why did you stop? Any plans to go back?
A: No, I am currently not attending classes. I stopped because during the pandemic I just wasn't going. I don't plan on going back because my new apartment has a gym. I would be interested in going with my sisters or some friends if they wanted to go, but it's hard to justify the spend at this point. I really loved the space. It matched well with what I was looking for and it was very modern. Also, the instruction was well thought out and I felt that it was a great use of my time. It was the best workout I could possibly do in a 50-minute period with minimal instruction. I was easy to dedicate yourself for that set amount of time in the studio for a really good workout.

Key Insight: Although he is not currently attending classes, he views ALTR as a social outing. There could be an opportunity to position ALTR as a type of third space, a place outside of home or work where active, health-conscious individuals can relax and hang out.

Instagram Survey

116 individuals responded to a survey that was conducted in January 2022. Notable questions and answers are outlined below:

Q: Why do you like working out where you do?

- I live two blocks from the North Loop studio and the coaches are great. I like that I can slip out of work from home for a noon class.
- I like being led by a skilled instructor to make sure I'm getting a good workout, my form is correct, etc.
- I love the motivation that going to a class gives me. Seeing other people push themselves give me so much more motivation to keep trying rather than if I was working out by myself.
- Group Fitness classes where I don't have to create my own workout. It's high intensity workouts where I know I'll get the best bang for my buck. They're physically hard so I know I'm getting both strength and conditioning in.
- I love the atmosphere! I also absolutely love the instructors. They make you feel welcome and noticed as well as push you to your full potential. The workouts are also challenging and always new!
- I LOVE the classes and energy at ALTR, and it's really nice to not have to think about what my workout is going to be each day. Working out at home is nice because I can do it whenever.
- I like being able to just focus on showing up and trusting the pros to guide me through the rest of the workout! I always know it will be worth my time and it's one less thing for me to plan or figure out myself.
- This is going to sound weird but lighting. The lighting is why I work out at ALTR.

Q: Do you have any feedback for ALTR? (Positive, negative - we want to know)

Notable answers:

- I love the coaches at ALTR - they are all amazing and encouraging. They really make you feel welcomed every time you come.
- One of the hardest workout classes in the cities. I feel so amazing after and try to come as much as possible. Really pushes me to the limit!! The coaches are all amazing too and I love the community.

- I've tried a lot of different gyms and ALTR has my favorite classes. All the machines and equipment are the best and there's always enough weights for everyone to use what they want.
- Wish that coaches were a little more understanding when modifications are necessary.
- Overall great - would be nice to have more instruction first few times to not feel lost in the big groups!
- I love working out at ALTR because it feels like a club, the trainers are encouraging but push you, and it's always super clean. I've brought three friends so far and they all loved it!
- I have truly loved my time at ALTR! The friendly atmosphere made me comfortable when I started and seeing major improvements in what I'm capable of doing has kept me coming back!
- LOVE this gym! Every single instructor is amazing and pushes you to your max while showing how to correctly perform certain exercises. I would recommend ALTR to anyone looking for a great atmosphere to work out where they can grow greatly in their fitness journey and be surrounded by awesome people!

Secondary Research Findings

How COVID-19 Has Changed the Fitness Industry in Minnesota (Perry, 2022)

- Starting in the spring of 2020, gyms were forced to close for an average of two to five months. In Minnesota, Gov. Tim Walz ordered gyms closed for two separate stretches that year—from March 17 to June 10 and again for a month from Nov. 19 to Dec. 19.
- Minnesota's hot fitness trends:
  - Hybrid Fitness: Industry experts predict many fitness enthusiasts will continue to combine the benefits of both in-person and online classes.
  - Functional Training: Life Time's Steve Larson forecasts growth in demand for functional training—exercises that use multiple muscle groups with an emphasis on core strength and stability. "We still offer static cardio options like treadmills and bikes, but a lot of people are moving toward functional, personal, and small-group training. We're building more dedicated spaces for folks who want that kind of coaching."

- Life Time has found that members prefer livestream classes over on-demand options. "People missed the energy of the club, and even from home they want to feel like they were part of a live experience."
- Alchemy 365, leaned into online offerings and found that live online classes gave members a reason to show up and not put their workout off.

"Two Ways Boutique Fitness Studios Have Adapted Post-COVID" (Volofit, 2021)

- Boutique fitness has seen a big rise in the past several years specifically among Millennials and Gen Z. Studios focus on creating a unique and more intimate experience — and Millennials and Gen Z like this.
- These intimate experiences are referred to as experiential membership. Everything from the studio lighting, layout, equipment and technology provide consumers with a more unique offering than bigger facilities often can provide.
- Up until COVID, about 42 percent of all gym memberships in 2018 came from boutique fitness studios, the highest membership recorded in history.
- One key lesson boutique studios have learned post-pandemic is that there is a need for a digital or at home offering, and they are the ones that can provide it.
- Sense of community is one of the biggest attractions of boutique studios and of their live stream workouts.
- Boutique studios leaned on the use of social media to both nurture their current membership base as well as garner new leads. This momentum has picked up steam post- COVID. You will notice a lot of organic content designed to attract leads and referrals.
- The smaller membership base allows boutique studios to build a tight-knit community through social. This is a lesson that boutique studios learned and continue to practice with much success post- COVID.

"22 Percent of Gyms Have Closed, $29.2 Billion Revenue Lost Since COVID-19 Hit" (Staff, 2021)

- Twenty-two percent of U.S. health clubs and studios have closed permanently since the COVID-19 pandemic began, and the U.S. fitness industry has lost $29.2 billion in revenue, according to findings by the National Health & Fitness Alliance.
- The fitness industry had experienced 10 years of revenue growth prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Ninety-four percent of people who are active exercisers say they will return to their gyms.

***"Motivation Monday: ALTRfit puts community first*" (Insley, 2017)**

- Co-founder Vincent Amendola says everything at ALTR was "designed to fit into busy lifestyles."
- A spacious lobby encourages lingering, with tables and charging stations to get work done.
- The studio is community driven- a place where people can meet and hang out with friends.

***"Get Ready for a Sweat Fest"* (Smelter, 2017)**

- ALTR is the brainchild of Kari Ament and Vincent Amendola, two fitness gurus who cut their teeth at CorePower Yoga (Ament as the chief operating officer for eight years, and Amendola as director of operations, also for eight years), helping the brand grow to more than 160 studios nationally. That experience was an invaluable asset to the duo when they decided to make the leap from their lofty positions to one where they had to build their vision from the ground up.
- Have opted for the pay-to-play model. Visitors have the no-strings-attached freedom of choosing from one session at a time all the way to a monthly pass where they're entitled to one session per day.
- "It's a science," Amendola says. "There's a certain amount of work. You've got to work your body at a high level of intensity, and then you need to have some active recovery periods. And what happens during that is your muscles are fighting for oxygen, you give them the oxygen, and then you go back into that period of high intensity work again. And it boosts your resting metabolism. So, you're not only burning calories during the class, you're burning calories up to 48 hours after class."
- There's a spot for you on their custom-engineered, spring-loaded floor (designed for energy return and to help keep your joints happy).
- "There's an intimidation factor to workouts, and I get it. I've been intimidated by workouts myself," Amendola shares. "This really is a workout for everyone. So, if you're a fitness enthusiast and you want to come in here and go balls out, you totally can. Likewise, if you're new to fitness, we have an option to take every single movement we do to a place that gets you to the next level. We don't want anyone to feel they have to

already be fit to come to ALTR and have to understand kettle bells or squatting, or rowing. We'll teach you."

- The custom light system flashes and pulsates to the rhythm of the music.

"How cafes, bars, gyms, barbershops and other 'third places' create our social fabric" (Low, 2021)

- Healthy societies depend on continuing interaction among people who are different in a multiplicity of ways. Third places are prime venues for such interactions because our shared enjoyment of its services – a love of coffee, music, or for working out – assures that even strangers have at least one thing in common.
- Third places provide the daily glue that binds us to a particular location and to the people who frequent it. With them, we construct a chosen community, a broader public realm.

"The Third Place: Fitness Connection's High-Value, High-Volume Model" (Zabonick-Chonko, 2018)

- Fitness Connection strives for its clubs to be a "third place" for members. As Howard explained, a customer's usual social environments include their home — or first place — and work — or second place. "A 'third place' provides another space to connect and grow with others."

SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis below provides further insight into the current situation at ALTR.

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
- Still open and operating after the closures and restrictions of COVID-19 - Unique, experiential membership - Strong community of current members - Desirable studio locations - Established visual brand identity - Live stream classes - Energetic and knowledgeable coaching staff - Locally owned and operated - Free week trial - Owned by fitness industry veterans - No commitment membership model - Partners with other local brands for member experiences ex: Crisp & Green, Bauhaus, Stalk & Spade - Efficient and effective, science-based workout - Members trust the coaches - The ALTR experience includes two of Minnesota's hot fitness trends: hybrid fitness and functional training - Designed to fit busy lifestyles	- Do not have a persona to target new membership efforts - Awareness of the studio and offerings - No cohesive brand voice throughout channels - No content strategy or plan in place - Has stopped its cold brew and kombucha on tap offering - The workout alone is insufficient to draw in new members - Does not often appear in media about local fitness with a POV - Not looking beyond the workout when differentiating themselves
Opportunities	**Threats**
- Virtual class offering - External content strategy across paid, earned and owned channels - People focusing more on health and wellness after COVID-19 - Support local movement - Partner with other local brands for member experiences - Community, connection and diversity to make sure members feel like they belong - Lean on social media to both nurture current members and garner new leads - Define industrial luxe offering and awakened performance commitment - Position the studio as an inviting third place	- Local boutique studio landscape is vibrant and competitive - Intimidation factor of new workouts/gyms - Constraints of getting to the studio if driving: potential traffic and lack of street parking - Rise in boutique fitness offerings means increased competition - Premium cost for sessions and membership - A workforce in flux: companies are still creating policies for employees to work from home, remote or in office

Communications Goal

The goal of my capstone communications plan is to align the values of ALTR with its marcom efforts to drive its business goal of doubling revenue through membership and package sales by the end of the year.

Communications Objectives

1. Develop an authentic voice and viewpoint for ALTR that establishes the studio as a source of authority within the local and regional fitness industry. This will be done through brand storytelling across owned channels and engaging in thought leadership practices for founder visibility of Vinny and Kari in earned channels. Success would be measured by earned media placements and speaking opportunities for the founders with media or at events. Efforts start in August and would be assessed on a bi-monthly basis to ensure stories are resonating. The communication here would help build awareness of ALTR's purpose and establish the groundwork to help shape opinions.

2. Building off the first objective, a content strategy will need to be developed to ensure ALTR's external communication is consistent and engaging across channels to both current and potential members. Additionally, to showcase its experiences that ALTR inside and outside of the studio, it will partner with local influencers with diverse backgrounds, interests and body types. Planning would begin in July with content going live in August and continue monthly. Efforts will be measured by social media growth and engagements along with click though from newsletters and time spent on the website. The communication would educate and entertain to build brand engagement behavior and shape attitudes.

3. Decrease ALTR's intimidation factor by working to position the studio as an inviting third place, a space outside of home or work where active, health-conscious individuals can relax and hang out before or after a workout. Healthy societies depend on continuing interaction among diverse people and third places are prime venues for this (Low, 2021). A shared enjoyment of services, such as an ALTR workout assures that even strangers will have at least one thing in common. The studio has been community driven since its inception, but after years of quarantines and social distancing, there's an opportunity to encourage additional social interactions outside of the workout. Both studios offer spacious lobbies that support lingering with tables and charging stations to get work done, which is likely to appeal to the growing number of remote workers. They're on tap cold brew and kombucha offerings are currently paused but bringing them back would give another reason for

members to stay in the studio space longer. Finally, personalization of workouts would be a great layer to foster the third-place concept with quick surveys to convey skill level and needs when signing up for a class. Efforts will be measured by in studio drink purchases, sessions and memberships purchase increases and by observation of how full the studio remains before and after classes. The objective would change attitudes and strengthen the ALTR Army community.

Planning

Sender-Message-Channel-Receiver (SMCR) Analysis

Based on Hovland's SMCR framework that was taught during JOUR 5251, I performed an analysis of the SMCR model against ALTR.

Sender: ALTR is the source, also known as the sender in this analysis. Its current characteristics as a source include expertise and likability. ALTR is an expert in the practice of High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) and it's likeable through the community its built, the partnerships its created. I believe there's an opportunity for ALTR to become a source of authority once it finds its voice and establishes itself as a local thought leader through the recommended storytelling objective by levering its founders Vinny and Kari as spokespeople.

Message: Most of the messages sent by ALTR are considered non-routine messages. Co-owner Kari posts frequently on the organization's social channels with messages of encouragement, specials and partnerships. The messages are brief and tend to lack detail. I think that ALTR should implement more routine messaging through the recommended objectives of storytelling and content strategy planning. This will allow ALTR to send messages of value that will resonate to their target audiences. Building off this new key messages should include the following:

- Showcase what is unique and experiential about attending an ALTR session. Expand on the organization's offering outside of the workout itself.
- Educate audiences on the science of HIIT and what to expect when attending a session in person or online.
- Capitalize on the power of connection and community that ALTR has built by highlighting coaches, members and partners.

Channel: Looking to media richness theory (Daft and Lengel, 1986 and Lippmann, 1922) ALTR's richest communication channel is face-to-face due to the personal focus it allows. This channel has allowed ALTR to build a supportive community of members that welcomes new individuals. Coaches and front desk workers help deliver the messages in studio to members. Its leaner channels include Facebook, Instagram, website, phone app and emails that members are subscribed to once they sign up for a class. There is currently no way to sign up for the newsletter without signing up for a class. As outlined in the objectives, ALTR can look outside of its owned communication channels for an added focus on earned media channels through media and influencer relations and brand partnerships. This added focus would change attitudes and increase awareness all while helping to decrease its intimidation factor.

Receiver: The receivers of ALTR's routine and non-routine messages through the channels identified above are typically those who already have experience with the studio. To achieve its goal of doubling its memberships and package sales revenue by the end of the year ALTR needs to expand the receivers of the messages its sending. The recommended target audience for ALTR include:

1. ALTR Army:
    - Current members and session package holders who have attended a class in person or online within the last 30 days
        - Messages can be sent across channels
2. The Boomerangs:
    - Previous members and session package holders who have not attended a class in person or online within 60 days
        - Messages can be sent primarily through email
3. The Recruits:
    - Millennial aged (25 – 40)
    - Men and women
    - Established in career with disposable income
    - Lives a busy lifestyle
    - Resides or works near downtown Minneapolis or the inner suburb of Edina
    - Tech savvy, relies on online recommendations and reviews for discovering new experiences
    - Seeks community and connection
    - Values efficiency
    - Interested in health and wellness

- Supports local business
- Prefers a unique and intimate experience compared to a gym
    - Messages can be sent across channels

Implementation and Evaluation

Communications Objectives 1: Develop an authentic voice and viewpoint for ALTR that establishes the studio as a source of authority within the local and regional fitness industry.

Tactic 1: Engage in brand storytelling across owned channels about how ALTR offers a unique experiential membership to attract new members to give the studio a try through its free week trial. Stories should address elements outside of the workout itself to showcase how ALTR differs from its competition including its local ownership, coaching staff and studio amenities.

Budget: $375 a month, $75 per hour up to 5 hours a month.

Staffing: Freelance content writer, ALTR can continue posting and community management.

Timing: Planning for messaging and story identification begins in July with content going live in August.

Evaluation: This opinion shaping tactic should be assessed on a bi-monthly basis to ensure stories and information are resonating and receiving engagement. Performance will be measured using Google Analytics and social media dashboards.

Tactic 2: Increase founder visibility for Vinny and Kari by identifying relevant stories and creating thought leadership platforms for earned media coverage. This will establish the founders as experts in their space and make ALTR an overall source of authority for HIIT based workouts and experiential studio offerings.

Budget: $375 a month, $75 per hour up to 5 hours a month.

Staffing: Freelance public relations specialist

Timing: Done in tandem with brand storytelling work. So, story mining and thought leadership platforms built in July with outreach starting to media in August.

Evaluation: This awareness building and attitude shaping tactic will be evaluated through secured earned media placements and impressions on a quarterly basis.

Tactic 3: Leverage the expertise the studio has with their ALTR Pro coaching staff and amplify their voices across owned channels through a "Pro Tip" content series.

Budget: $0

Staffing: No additional staff needed, have the ALTR Pros package the information they would like to share on behalf of the studio.

Timing: Done in tandem with brand storytelling work.

Evaluation: This brand engagement tactic will gauge the entertaining and educational performance of the content bi-monthly by measuring impressions, engagements and website views through Google Analytics and social media dashboards.

Communications Objectives 2: Building off the first objective, a content strategy will need to be developed to ensure ALTR's external communication is consistent and engaging to both current and potential members. External communication channels to meet these audiences need to be identified along with local influencer partners of diverse backgrounds, interests and body types.

Tactic 1: Develop content pillars and a monthly editorial calendar to ensure consistent and engaging communication across channels that speaks to both current and potential members.

Budget: $0

Staffing: Co-founders can own the development of the pillars and calendar.

Timing: Planning would begin in July with content going live in August and continue monthly.

Evaluation: To evaluate the types of content and information that interest its current and potential members ALTR should send out quarterly surveys through its social channels and email subscriber list. The learnings can inform the pillars can future calendars to ensure content is relevant and engaging.

Tactic 2: Current member emails will expand to an Awakened Performance newsletter that will be distributed when news and discounts are available. Once the content strategy is built out and more content is available the newsletter can help amplify blog content. An option to sign up for the newsletter will be added to the website.

Budget: $0

Staffing: Director of client relations can own

Timing: Planning would begin in July with content going live in August and continue monthly.

Evaluation: Performance will be evaluated within their newsletter platform MailChimp. Metrics for monitoring will include subscribers along with open and clickthrough rates.

Tactic 3: The music during the workouts was a common piece of positive feedback that was received in the research stage. ALTR can allow members to enjoy the music in or out of the studio with custom Spotify playlists. The studio currently has a public profile that is unorganized with some outdated playlists. As part of the new content strategy, it can clean up and create some fresh playlists organized by ALTR Pros, seasonality or special occasions. The playlists can be promoted on owned channels.

Budget: $0

Staffing: Founders and ALTR Pros can own their own or contribute to seasonal playlists.

Timing: Launch June 21 to celebrate World Day of Music with efforts ongoing

Evaluation: This tactic can be measured by profile and playlist follower growth. Engagement can also be evaluated by doing “this” or “that” survey style questions on Instagram to inform play list genre and artists while gauging interest in the content.

Tactic 4: To showcase its experiences that ALTR inside and outside of the studio, the studio will partner with local influencers with diverse backgrounds, interests and body types. The creators chosen shouldn’t just be fitness influencers. To promote its experiences that ALTR value proposition, the studio should partner with people that are influential across a variety of categories like DIY, wellness and cooking. The influencers will create and contribute bedrock content in the form of blogs, short form videos and photographs that will support ALTR’s content pillars and help the studio reach new members. The content generated from these partnerships can be amplified across owned channels including the brand’s blog and social channels and used as part of the overall content strategy.

Budget: $3,750 per quarter for partnership fees

Staffing: Freelance public relations specialist

Timing: Launch a Q4 campaign in October ahead of the holiday. Efforts will be ongoing on a quarterly basis.

Evaluation: The influencer program will be evaluated by the performance of the partners content on their own channels including reach, impressions and engagement.

These metrics will be delivered to ALTR by the influencer partner. ALTR can measure the content performance on its end by creating unique UTM codes that drive to the "New to ALTR" page of the website to promote the 1-week free trial. The organization can use Google Analytics to track how many page visitors came from a partner's content. Finally, ALTR can measure content performance on its own channels through social media dashboards and blog page visits through Google Analytics.

Communications Objectives 3: Decrease ALTR's intimidation factor by working to position the studio as an inviting third place, a space outside of home or work where active, health-conscious individuals can relax and hang out before or after a workout.

Tactic 1: The studio's on tap cold brew and kombucha offerings are currently paused. However, bringing them back would give a reason for members to linger in the studio space longer when attending a workout. Or provide an excuse for members to meet up or get some work done over a drink. Both studio locations offer spacious lobbies that support lingering with tables and charging stations to get work done, which is likely to appeal to the growing number of remote workers.

Budget: Initial investment of $350, cost of drinks should be priced to make a small profit.

Staffing: No additional staff needed; current studio attendants can provide the service.

Timing: Starting in July as warmer weather is a great time to offer iced drinks with service continued throughout the year.

Evaluation: This community building tactic will be measured by in studio drink purchases and observation of how full the studio remains before and after classes.

Tactic 2: In comparison to most of its competitors, ALTR is locally owned and operated. The organization can lean into this point of differentiation by partnering with other local like-minded organizations to deliver on its value proposition of experiences that ALTR by hosting pop up events that feature local makers and service providers. Some examples of event partners could include Mixly Cocktail Company, for a mocktail class ahead of holiday entertaining, and The Center for Movement for massage and cupping therapy after a month of SHRED. While at the event, the vendors can sell their products and book appointments for services making the event a mutually beneficial occurrence.

Budget: Ideally partners will offer products and services as part of the event. A budget of $200 should be planned for any items not covered by partners.

Staffing: No additional staff would be needed as partners would send their own representatives to attend events.

Timing: Events should start quarterly and grow depending on attendance and interest.

Evaluation: Events will be evaluated by attendance

Tactic 3: Personalization of workouts is a great layer to creating an inviting third place. When signing up for a class online, attendees will be given the option for workout personalization. This will be part of the class reservation process after securing a spot in the studio. Members will be able to rate how confident they are in the workouts and if they feel that modifications would be helpful. This will take the form of a short survey and help both the director of programing and ALTR Pro staff anticipate the needs that members may have in class. It will also help address the intimidation factor that comes with new workouts to help make new members feel prepared and comfortable. The feedback given in the surveys can also identify customer journeys for relevant content marketing.

Budget: $0

Staffing: Director of client relations can own. If there isn't an option for data collection in the current CRM used for the site, a Google Form can be implemented to manage the survey and data collection process.

Timing: Work to have the process set in July and implemented in August.

Evaluation: The importance that personalization plays will be evaluated by the number of members that opt in to provide feedback. Additionally, ALTR can survey its members to gauge if the added feature is seen as a benefit to their workout experience.

For an overall evaluation of meeting the communications goal, a bi-annual engagement survey should be implemented to better understand how the ALTR Army is feeling about connection, engagement, and support as part of their membership offering. The first version of the survey could be sent out in February to evaluate 6-months of the above being implemented. The learnings from that survey would help inform the planning for the next 6-months of marcom activities and beyond.

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Appendix:

Original Research Methods

Interview 1: Co-owner and co-founder, Vinny Amendola

Q: Have you seen the business grow as COVID restrictions have been lifted? Also, what are the business goals related to membership?
A: Yes, the business has been growing again. Our goal with memberships and package sales is to double the amount of revenue coming into our business by end of year.

Q: What do you think sets ALTR apart from other fitness studios?
A: What sets ALTR apart is the quality of instruction - we have highly credentialed pros leading our sessions. Our workouts are more efficient and effective than Barry's, Orange Theory, Alchemy because we actually employ a true HIIT style following the science of HIIT. We have varied equipment and more than our competitors to keep the body from hitting plateaus.

Q: What is the sales process at ALTR?
A: Our sales process happens online at our website, through newsletter campaigns and customer journey marketing in MailChimp. From time to time we engage with Instagram campaigns to boost our funnel of new students.

Q: How did you pivot the business during the lockdowns of 2020 and the restrictions of 2021?
A: We started up ALTR Livestream, we followed all social distancing policies, reduced capacity, changed from all natural cleaners to hospital grade cleaners

Q: Do you have someone in-house that runs the ALTR social media channels? Or do you contract that work out? How are ALTR's social channels performing? What is your average engagement rate? Do you have consistent follower growth?
A: Kari does it. The channels are fine - in my opinion they can be much better however Kari is somewhat controlling over them.

Q: What local partnerships does ALTR currently have in place?
A: We partner with businesses that attract similar clients as us - Crisp and Green, Stalk and Spade, Capsule Pharmacy. We recently started partnering with Hines Properties to activate fitness classes in their office space fitness room. We are looking to grow this piece of the business.

Q: Do you have an editorial calendar for ALTR content like the newsletters and blog posts?
A: No

Q: Are you working with someone on proactive earned media? Or do you wait for local media to reach out to you?
A: No.

Q: Do you invest in paid media like social media ads, print/digital ads? If so, who are you targeting with these? Also, who is your target demographic for new membership?
A: We have - we target people close to the studios who have some sort of fitness lifestyle, we've also marketed to look alike audiences. Our demographic for new membership is 25 to 40 professionals.

Q: What activities do you have in place to convert trial members to paid members?
A: We have a set of customer journey emails offering a discounted rate for the life of the membership if they convert during the free week. Our studio lead team follows up with every new client too.

Q: What do you want the ALTR brand to be known for?
A: Best in class workouts and trainers.

Q: What is your most popular session that is purchased?
A: SHRED.

Q: Are there any upcoming programs/workshops on the horizon?
A: We've put our workshops on hold for the moment as we build our team. I'll keep you posted. Our next major events will be Summer SHRED - July 15th to August 15th and ALTR Summer Games - date TBD.

Q: How does ALTR promote the "Team Building" offering?
A: We haven't put a lot of effort into our team building offering however our success typically comes through clients and team members who want to offer an ALTR session for their friends or work mates.

Interview 2: Corterius Lubben, ALTR Pro (Coach)

Q: How long have you been an ALTR Pro?
A: I have been an ALTR PRO just shy of two years.

Q: How did you become an ALTR Pro? What was the interview and training process like?
A: I was asked to become an ALTR PRO for a couple of different reasons. One of them being for my involvement with the clients. Another reason being my love and dedication I had put into each and every class. In short: my hard work did not go unnoticed in this situation.

Q: How would you describe being a member of the ALTR team?
A: Being a member of the ALTR team has been an uplifting experience. I can confidently say we are there to support each other when it comes to helping out around the studio, subbing in for classes throughout the week, and even when you just need someone to talk to. We're all one big family.

Q: If someone asked you what ALTR is, how would you answer them in your own words?

A: If someone were to approach me inquiring what ALTR is, my answer would be: we are a High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) gym where the workout is like no other in the Twin Cities. 50-minute functional, full body workout that combines interval training and strength work in one of the most motivating environments around.

Q: In your opinion, what sets ALTR apart from other Downtown & Edina fitness studios?
A: I would say one thing that sets ALTR apart from other studios is the community itself. I personally feel everyone in the ARMY—from studio leads to PRO's—even the clients that walk through our doors every day are very genuine individuals. I feel there are other fitness studios around the Twin Cities that aren't as…inclusive nor inviting.

Q: Are you given a heads up when someone in your class is there for the first time? Or is this something you need to ask once in class?
A: When it's someone's first class with ALTR, we are notified on our online booking system (Zingfit) with a "star" next to the client's name on the roster, which then turns to a "heart" when the clients continues with the free week we offer for new members. Our founders are also notified via email when a client signs up for their first class/free week. We also send out welcome emails to our new members providing pricing on packages and FAQ's.

Q: Do you help plan the daily workouts? How do you prep for the classes that you teach?
A: I, personally, do not write the workouts. Tyler Larson who is the director of programing and client relations curates the workouts weekly. All of the PRO's have access to the website where Tyler links the workouts for the upcoming day/week.

Q: How do you keep your own energy high when coaching a class? Do you find this to be easy or difficult?
A: One way I keep my energy elevated throughout a class is getting involved with the clients while they're immersed in the workout. I like playing very upbeat music—which sometimes even leads to my own little dance party. When doing these things and seeing the smiles on the client's face, even though they may be out of breath or just tired from working so hard, gives me even more reason to keep the energy level high. Not only for me, but for them as well.

Q: What is some of the most common feedback you hear from the ALTR Army?
A: I would say some of the most common feedback I hear is:
"Your studios are always so clean and inviting!"
"These are probably some of the toughest classes I've taken, but I absolutely love them."
"Thank you for always making class so fun."

Q: Do you teach any of the virtual classes? If so, what is that experience like?
A: At present, I don't teach any virtual classes. When they were offered during the 2020 pandemic, I did teach about 5-6/week. The overall experience was great. I say that because I/we still were able to connect without ARMY even though we wouldn't physically be able to see each other in real life. All clients who participated in the livestream classes were the utmost appreciative that we were offering online classes to "keep sane" (was the expression I heard most).

Q: How would you describe ALTR in 3 words?
A: Inviting, Special, Community

Q: Is there anything you would like to see ALTR do that it isn't?
A: One thing I would love to see ALTR do is expand into different areas of the US. We often have clients that visit the city from out of town who come and take class. Visitors from out of town will inquire if we have locations in/near their hometown (New York City, Chicago, Dallas, etc.). I know there is much potential to grow the business. I can confidently say that we are on the track of doing just that. As they say, “all in good time”.

Interview 3: Rachel, Current ALTR Member

Q: How did you discover ALTR?
A: A friend I was going to Alchemy with knew about it and wanted to check it out.

Q: What drew you to the studio?
A: I was told the workouts were more high intensity and weightlifting (opposed to yoga at alchemy).

Q: What makes you keep going back to ALTR?
A: Workouts at 45 mins, time efficient and go by so fast! To get a really good workout in under an hour is super nice so that I’m not wasting a lot of time. The instructors are also super nice and cool and remember your name and get to know you. They also play great music in class and each instructor has a "vibe" which keeps it interesting. You also don't know what the workout is until you get there which sometimes, I would look up the alchemy workout and see that there were 100 pull ups or something so I wouldn't go.

Q: What time of day do you attend class?
A: Sometimes over lunch at noon or at 530 after work.

Q: Do you have a membership, or do you work out by series or ClassPass?
A: Membership, the unlimited membership is kind of pricey, but I was able to get a discounted price in COVID.

Q: What do you like most about ALTR?
A: I really like the vibe of the dark, club lights and loud music, you really get in the zone and focus on your workout. I also like how there is a lot of weightlifting and cardio mixed in with the circuits. You can choose your adventure in way with weights opposed to Alchemy where they kill you with HUGE rep counts (like 100 pull ups or 100 push press or something) I like how workouts are always a different format day to day to keep it interesting.

Q: Have you taken an online class? If so, what are your thoughts?
A: I haven't but I "make up" my own ALTR workouts to do on my own when I’m out of town.

Q: Do you follow any of ALTRs social channels?
A: I do not.

Q: Subscribed to their newsletter?
A: Yes.

Q: Are you currently working out at any other studios or through an at home platform?
A: Nope.

Q: How important is connection and community to you in your workout experience?
A: Not as important. It's nice to see familiar faces and have the instructors remember me, but I don't need a strong community to show up and do the work.

Q: Have you or would you recommend ALTR to others?
A: Yes, and yes.

Interview 4: Hillary, Current ALTR Member

Q: How did you discover ALTR?
A: I discovered ALTR thanks to a friend, JC. We had connected via social media and he is big in the fitness community. He hops around from gym to gym and tries different classes, so one time, he invited me to ALTR. I was a little apprehensive and intimated at first, and the first class was hard, but I loved it and kept wanting to go back.

Q: What drew you to the studio?
A: JC is the person who drew me to the studio (I believe it was over 4/5 years ago now!). I love high-impact workouts, and workouts that will cause me to be out of breath and sweat – I always feel like you must be doing something right if you're tired, ha! I've tried yoga in the past at different studios and it didn't give me the adrenaline high like ALTR did.

Q: What made you keep coming back?
A: Once I started coming to class more often, I started to realize just how much I loved coming to ALTR and that I wanted to keep it moving. I started to connect with Kari and Vinny, and got close with Vinny. As a local social media influencer, I have a partnership with ALTR and enjoy spreading the good word about ALTR. I have been able to bring people in for a free week trial and some of them have signed up for memberships.

Q: Are you still attending classes? If not, why did you stop? And any plans to go back?
A: I am still going to classes. At one point, I was going 3-4 times a week. I need to get back to that but have in a sort of rut!

Q: What do you like most about ALTR?
A: I love the workouts and how unique they are. Every single one of them are different and keeps me guessing! A lot of the workouts are hard, so it challenges me. I appreciate Vinny and how he's welcomed me into the ALTR family. I love that I have made friends at the studio + have accountability partners. I love that I leave class feeling strong and ready to seize the day.

Q: Have you taken an online class? If so, what are your thoughts?
A: During COVID times, I did take online classes. I did not like taking online classes because I prefer the energy of an in-person class. I also found that I wasn't pushing myself as I was in-class. I am happy that there are in-person classes again.

Q: Do you follow any of ALTRs social channels?
A: Yes.

Q: Subscribed to their newsletter?
A: Do you mean the emails? If yes, then yes!

Q: Are you currently working out at any other studios or through an at home platform?
A: I am only going to ALTR at the moment.

Q: How important is connection and community to you in your workout experience?
A: It is very important! As a plus sized woman, it's intimidating going to gyms where nobody looks like me. And at times, I sometimes look around at ALTR and feel that way. However, there are all certain ages in class, which, I love seeing. I do wish there were more body types in class that look like my own. I always have to have internal dialogue during class that even if I can't do a particular exercise, I can modify and to just keep moving. This probably doesn't answer your question, but I wanted to share that!

Q: Have you or would you recommend ALTR to others?
A: I will continue to be a proud ALTR ambassador and get out the good word. Vinny and Kari are amazing, and I hope that the brand continues to grow.

Interview 5: Johnny, Former ALTR Member

Q: How did you discover ALTR?
A: My sister told me about it, and I didn't know anything about HIIT classes, so she explained to me what it was, and I went with her once using her guest pass. I really loved the lighting in the studio, the music was fun, and a lot of the equipment was new for me. I feel like it did give me a really good workout. It was something that intimidated me but kept me interested

Q: What made you keep going back?
A: It gave me a really good workout and it was exhausting but rewarding. At the time I started going it was something where I was driving in from Eden Prairie to the North Loop studio for class. Even though it was a long distance I really appreciated the experience and at the end having a nice drink of nitro coffee was a fun aspect along with the socializing with other people. I met my partner Robby at ALTR. It was fun to have a space where there were people my age that were active and social. It was something that kept me interested by maintaining a high standard of my own physical fitness but also keeping me challenged and guided through the practice. Tyler one of the instructors did a really good job of giving me some ideas on how to improve or adjust positions foe the best workout.

Q: Are you still attending classes? If not, why did you stop? Any plans to go back?
A: No, I am currently not attending classes. I stopped because during the pandemic I just wasn't going. I don't plan on going back because my new apartment has a gym. I would be interested in going with my sisters or some friends if they wanted to go, but it's hard to justify the spend in going at this point. I really loved the space. It matched well with what I was looking for and it was very modern. Also, the instruction was well thought out and I felt that it was a great use of my time. It was the best workout I could possibly do in a 50-minute period with minimal instruction. I was easy to dedicate yourself for that set amount of time in the studio for a really good workout.

Q: Do you follow any of ALTRs social channels
A: I do follow ALTR on Instagram and I get their emails, but I don't pay attention to them as I'm not good at reading emails that aren't extremely important like something from the Army or work. Those are my email priorities.

Q: Are you currently working out at any fitness studios or using an at home platform?
A: I'm running more now that the weather is nicer and I'm planning to do even more running. I have a bike and I'm going to be biking. I'll be working out at my home gym of my apartment and that's where I'm currently at. I'm not going to be getting a membership anywhere else.

Q: How important is connection and community in your workout experience?
A: It's very important to me. I think it helps get people motivated and to encourage each other. I enjoyed getting to know some of the instructors at ALTR and the fact that they knew who I was. And since they knew me, they knew the days that I wasn't on my A game and they would give me encouragement to push harder, which I liked.

Q: Have you or would you recommend ALTR to others?
A: I have recommended ALTR many times to my friends and family. Though I think it has an age limit to it. I'm not going to recommend that my father or mother go to ALTR as both are in their 70s so it's probably not for them. However, I was surprised to see some of the older classmates that were able to keep up so I might be totally wrong in that. But most of the people I was recommending were looking for instruction during a short workout session that they could attend, and I gave ALTR high praise because it really did ware me out each time I went – in a good way.

Secondary Research Findings

"COVID-19: Gym & Fitness Impact Report" (Insights, n.d.)

- The emergence and growing popularity of boutique fitness has further fueled fitness interests.
- Growing popularity of health clubs and boutique fitness studios has allowed consumers to reduce stress, exercise, socialize, and improve their overall well-being. Many of these clubs and studios also provide us a change of scenery and the added motivation we need to achieve our goals.
- Foot traffic at exclusive boutique gyms, which are often frequented by higher-income members, are recovering at a faster rate than at value-priced gyms.
- At a price point averaging $159-$260 per month for a membership, boutique fitness and premium gyms are not only more exclusive and appointment-based, but generally less crowded in terms of class size and attendance than value gyms.

- The clientele frequenting boutique fitness and premium gyms are mostly made up of higher-income earners who may have the option to work from home, giving them the additional flexibility to attend classes during off-peak hours.
- Boutique fitness brands like Orangetheory and Pure Barre are heavily "class" focused, which is hugely beneficial: having the ability to control class sizes, enrollment, and block schedules make it easier to mitigate exposure by managing cleaning procedures between classes in contrast to traditional gyms with open formats.

***"State of Sweat"* (Nachbar, 2021)**

- Vinny Amendola, owner of ALTR, a local chain of studios whose model enforces full-body training by blending strength, circuit, and cardio workouts, says, "People want to be back in a space where they feel like they can connect with the community, be with live instructors, and feel encouraged by their peers to work harder and reach goals."

"Whatever Your Workout, ALTR in Edina Has a Place for You" (Bedingfield, 2020)

- Sarah Manneh was one of the first ALTR clients; she stayed with the program because she says it has had the biggest impact on her body. "Unlike many programs out there, it is well designed, each day is very different than the previous," Manneh says. "Using vertical skiers, rowing and assault bicycles as the core of the cardio, it effectively integrates with the strength portions, to include all muscle groups for a total body work out." And when she talks about muscle groups, she knows what she's talking about—she's a doctor.
- Before they launched the business, Amendola and Ament traveled all over the country looking at fitness centers and gyms. "We tried to put ourselves in the user position," Amendola says. That research led them to understand that a certain level of pampering goes a long way. "We talk about industrial luxe," Ament says. "And we deliver that."
- Ament says they recognize there are a lot of choices in their field. "It's a vibrant and competitive landscape," she says. "We work to eliminate the intimidation factor … we're easy in, easy out." There are no long-term contracts—they offer single drop-in classes and online workouts with different pricing tiers if you decide to make a commitment.
- The thing that Amendola wants you to know about ALTR is that their highly trained pros are there to help you. "We meet you where you are," he says.