

MARKETING

Equinox says no to 'new year, new me' memberships, consumers sound off

January 9, 2023



A letter posted to Equinox's Twitter on New Year's Day at 9:04 a.m. has managed to spark much controversy and conversation among members and nonmembers alike. Image credit: Equinox

By AMIRAH KEATON

Luxury fitness club Equinox is out with an aptly-titled experimental campaign exercise, as "We Don't Speak January" rubs some consumers the wrong way while proving to reach a level of resonance with others.

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The campaign a 24-hour period in which the luxury fitness player refused new memberships, in solidarity with a "no shortcuts" brand mantra was strategically timed against the New Year's arrival, and quickly made the rounds on social media. Regardless of stance, the effort has managed to spark conversation among members and nonmembers alike.

"We believe January is a farce, laden with mantras and affirmations that are pleasant for three weeks, but never push you further," said Will Mayer, vice president and executive creative director at Equinox, *The Drum reports*.

"Equinox is not buying in," he said. "Equinox exemplifies the belief that life is forged at the extremes, and because we are for people who constantly push themselves to those extremes, we can't in good conscience support the new year, new me' movement that happens every January."

Fitness frenzy

On Jan. 1, 2023, Equinox made its latest message loud and clear, releasing its largest out-of-home activation [yet](#).

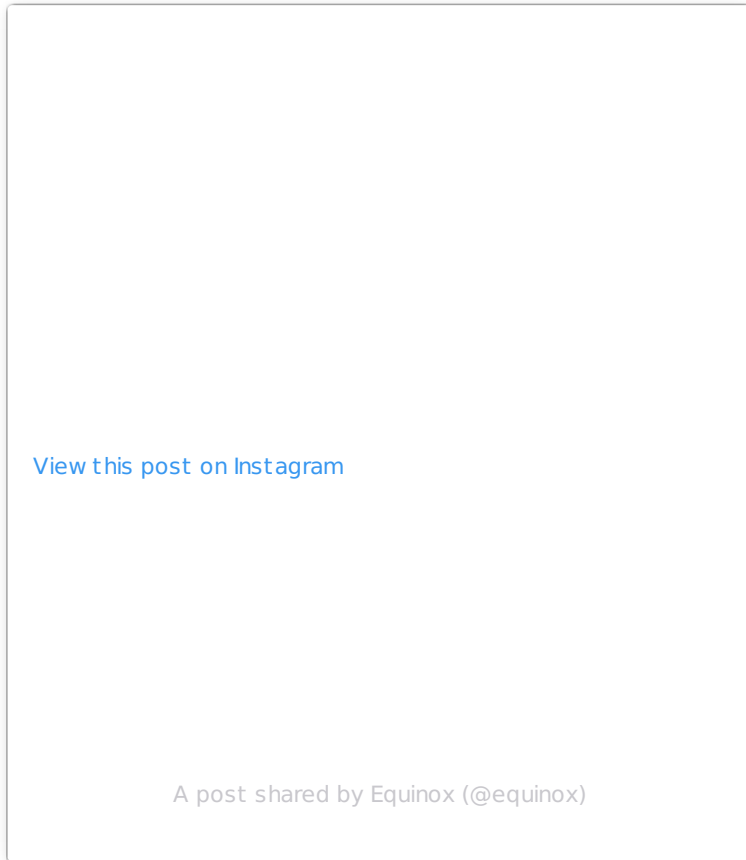
In a play on one of the most common New Year's resolutions Statista's [America's Top New Year's Resolutions for 2023](#) survey published last month found that 52 percent of Americans are hoping to exercise more in the new year, while 40 percent of Americans expressed wanting to lose weight the luxury fitness club blocked interested gym prospects from joining there's, placing new membership applications on a standstill for a duration lasting the entire day.

"January wants to find a shortcut," its website reads.

While the campaign remains live post-New Year's Day, the page has been updated, with a button prompting new member sign-ups positioned directly under the company's slogan.

To the club's point, 41 percent of Americans apparently make New Year's resolutions. By year's end, only 9 percent admit to achieving success with this group of goals, according to a 2016 study from The Society for Personality and Social Psychology, the world's largest organization of personality and social psychologists.

Accompanied by a definitive phrase, "We don't speak January," and hashtag, "#ItsNotFitnessItsLife," Equinox's polarizing campaign has since faced mixed reviews.



"I started my fitness journey on Jan. 1," says one user, in a comment posted under brand content displaying its black-and-white toned campaign message on a digital retail billboard in the wild.

"I lost 80 pounds and have kept going," she says. "Why put others down and take away their excitement of that first step."

"There's so much darkness in the world, let people have their own joy!"

"Healthy lifestyles require a healthy atmosphere and healthy language," declares another. Mikayla Bartholomew, who goes by the username "@carpeindiem" on Instagram, is an actor who played the role of Tunde Price in the film "King Richard."

To highlight the rate of engagement at hand, the verified talent's comment has garnered more than 60 likes and 7 replies alone at time of publish.

"Get your marketing & social team together," she goes on to say. "The exclusionary and elitist language is antiquated."

It's not you, it's January. [#ItsNotFitnessItsLife pic.twitter.com/Bg6lBnSUR2](https://pic.twitter.com/Bg6lBnSUR2)

Equinox (@Equinox) [January 1, 2023](#)

"This makes no room for folks who do want [to] come in hoping to change their lifestyle, be it on Jan. 1 or on August 22nd."

Some [local gyms](#) even clapped back at the campaign, getting in on the action by launching exclusive efforts of their own, their Achilles' heel, of course, being a lacking member perks department in comparison to the upscale fitness chain caught at the center of the controversy.

Equinox has become well-known for its extensive benefits offerings, which cross into the lifestyle category more readily as time goes on. The company counts state-of-the-art facilities, personal training sessions, spa treatments and personal care products among the deals it cuts its members, and for good reason, as individuals across its network pay up to \$5,220 per year for these base-level luxuries.

With stand-alone locations in San Francisco, and in New York City on Madison Avenue, members at the gym's elevated concept, "E by Equinox," shell out \$26,000 for its most exclusive health offering.

Conversely, a few social media members did not mind Equinox's choice of messaging.

"We don't speak January."

Equinox isn't accepting new memberships today.

Super bold, super smart, strategically aligned with their brand pic.twitter.com/abLjFNDjop

Jess Smith (@WarJessEagle) [January 1, 2023](#)

Company president Scott DeRue defended the effort during a *Yahoo Finance* [interview](#).

"This is driven by a core belief of who we are as a brand," Mr. DeRue said, during the broadcast segment.

"We all have results that we desire," Mr. DeRue said. "And the idea that our community really harnesses is that to achieve these goals and achieve our results that we desire, it's not a one day thing."

"It is an everyday thing."

Treading water

Lest one is mistaken, this is not the luxury fitness club's first taste of public outcry.

Ahead of the historic 2020 election cycle, the upscale fitness name attempted to distance itself from the actions of billionaire Stephen Ross, chairman of Equinox's parent company, The Related Companies, L.P. after reports of the investor's planned fundraiser for President Donald Trump triggered consumer backlash and calls to boycott ([see story](#)).

SoulCycle, a fitness company whose cycling workouts cost each guest \$36 a ride, falls under the portfolio of the Equinox Group, alongside a number of lifestyle brands including the luxury fitness club, its hospitality arm Equinox Hotels, and a few additional wellness businesses, including Pure Yoga and Blink Fitness.

The Group delivered an eventual public response.

"Many members raised their concerns about a political fundraiser taking place later this week," Equinox Group wrote, in August 2019.

"We want you to know that Equinox and SoulCycle have nothing to do with the event and do not support it," the Group said. "We believe in tolerance and equality, and will always stay true to those values."

"Mr. Ross is a passive investor and is not involved in the management of either business."