FIVE
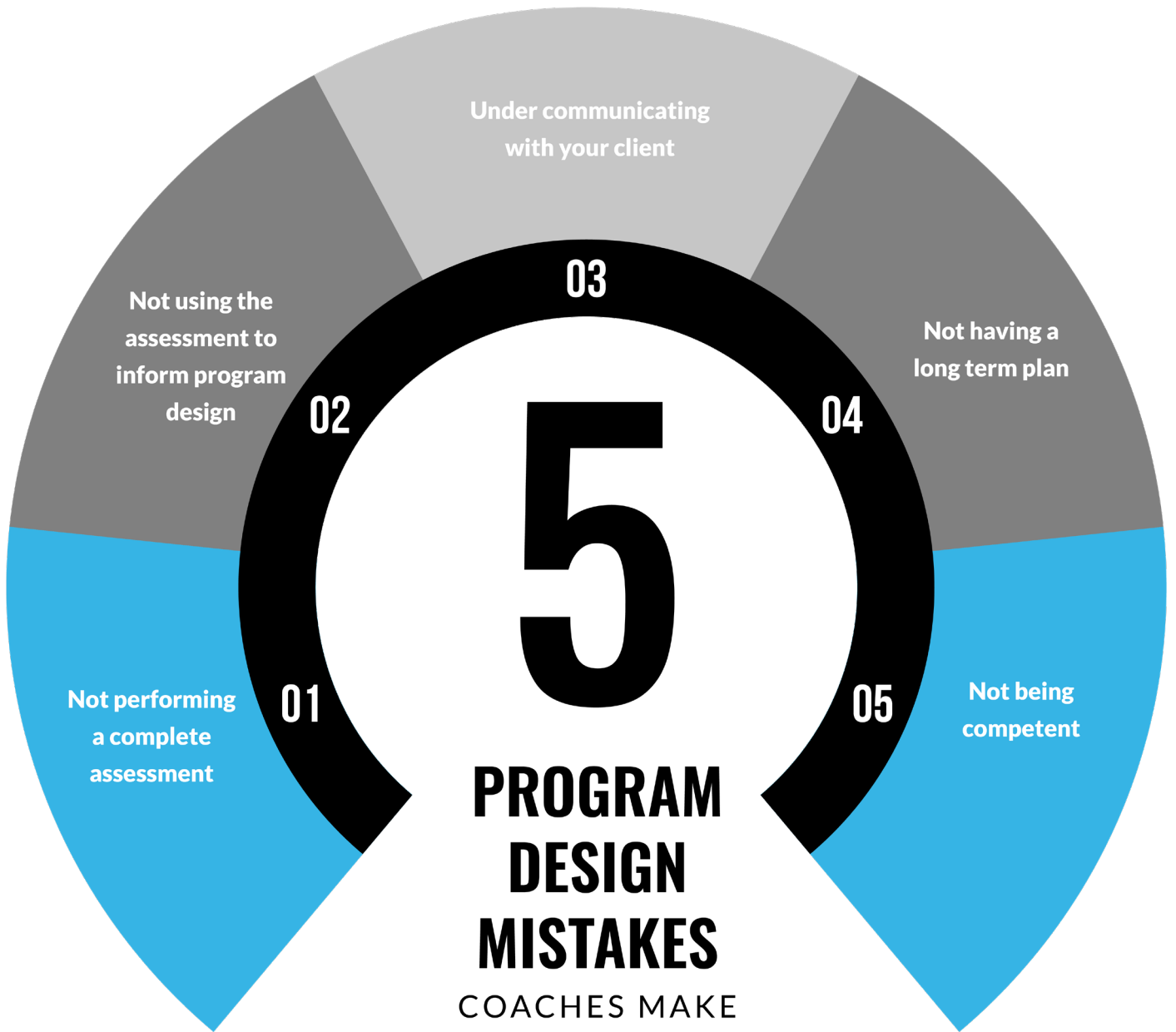# PROGRAM
DESIGN
MISTAKES
COACHES
MAKE

OPEX

INTRODUCTION

As coaches, our goal is to develop programs that will be effective and enjoyable for our clients. It's important that we are able to recognize mistakes in program design and use them to improve our own process. In this guide, we've identified five of the most common program design mistakes that we've seen coaches make over the years and solution for how we can avoid them.

You have the download, now take it a step further and get the *free video lesson*. Join OPEX Coaches, Carl Hardwick and Georgia Smith for a more in-depth explanation of each mistake along with real life coaching case studies that deliver results.

SEE VIDEO

Under communicating
with your client

03

Not using the
assessment to
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PROGRAM
DESIGN
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Not performing
a complete
assessment

01

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Not being
competent

1 NOT PERFORMING A COMPLETE ASSESSMENT

The first mistake is not performing a complete assessment. Without a complete assessment, you do not have the necessary data to begin designing an individualized training, nutrition, and lifestyle program.

A complete assessment is broken down into four parts: understanding your client, measuring body composition, identifying movement capabilities, and assessing work capacity.

1. Understand your client

In this, you identify your client's goals, lifestyle practices, training and nutrition history, etc. A good way to do this is to have your client walk you through their average entire day on a whiteboard. The more details the better, from how many times they wake up in the night, to what oils they cook with. ***This is done in the initial consultation.***

2. Measure Body Composition

The second part of the assessment includes identifying your client's body composition. In the OPEX Coaching Certificate Program (CCP) we recommend using either an InBody or calipers and the Summation Scoring System (SSS). Body composition will provide you with guidance in program design and give you a starting point for check-ins, especially if the client's goals are relative to their body composition. ***This is the OPEX Body Assessment.***

3. Identify Movement Capabilities

The third part of the assessment includes identifying how your client moves. Movement ability, inability, and imbalance greatly impact what goes into the design, and what you must prioritize. ***This is done in the OPEX Move Assessment.***

4. Assess Work Capabilities

The final part of the assessment is testing your client's ability to do work. This assessment can range from testing their 10-minute max calories on the AirBike, too far more advanced assessments, depending on your client's goals and function. This information will provide you with insight into your client's capability and a starting point for program design. ***This is done in the OPEX Work Assessment.***

Once you conduct a complete initial assessment you will have the information needed to start designing a training program. Also, **remember to re-assess your clients and check in on their progress**. Learn how to conduct the initial consultation and assessments listed above, as well as when and how to re-assess, with The Free 7-Day OPEX Coaching Course.

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2 NOT USING THE ASSESSMENT TO INFORM YOUR PROGRAM DESIGN

The second mistake is not using the assessment to inform your program design. Performing an assessment is only the first step. By programming without the assessment in mind, you're either just guessing, ignoring the assessment, or don't truly understand the data you've collected.

Here is how to use the assessment to inform your program design

The initial assessment and consultation are extremely important to your program design. For example, if you identify in the initial consultation that your client is afraid of failure and they lose motivation when they do not hit their goals, you must take this into consideration when you decide how much to push it in the program.

For Example:

Take the same client above (the one that is afraid of failure) and assume they have a 200lb one rep max Back Squat, with an 85% score of 8 repetitions. **(These are the results of an advanced OPEX work test, learn more here.)**

Sample Program

Option 1: Back Squat, @31X1, 3-5 reps x 4 sets; rest 3 minutes

*Start @ 80% of 1 rep max, building tough

-VS-

Option 2: Back Squat, @31X1, 3-5 reps x 4 sets; rest 3 minutes

*80,83,86,89% 1 rep max

Based on the information from your assessment (85% score of 8 reps), you can be fairly certain that your client will get through the second option without a failed rep. Why is this important? Because in the initial consultation you identified that your client does not handle failure well, option 2 sets them up for success, whereas option 1 is open-ended and could result in a failed rep. This is just one example of one client and one exercise, but it shows us how using the assessment can lead to a better, more personalized design. The importance of the initial assessment cannot be understated. Learn how the initial assessment influences all parts of your program design, down to the exercise selection, in this *free course*.

3 UNDER COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CLIENT

The third mistake is under-communicating with your client. Creating a personalized program is a two-way street. There is an onus on the coach and the client to effectively communicate with one another. Even the best program based on a great assessment will falter without proper communication.

For Example

You could have a great design written, but if there is a lack of communication between you and your client, that design can lose its effectiveness:

WEEK 1

B: Strict Pull-Up, @21X1, 10-12 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 seconds

Client's notes to coach: (11,10,6) Got to set 3 and could only perform 6 reps, my neck has been killing me the last few weeks and I think it's affecting my pulling strength.

WEEK 2

WITHOUT COMMUNICATION

B: Strict Pull-Up, @21X1, 11-13 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 seconds

-VS-

WITH COMMUNICATION

B: Seated Lat Pull-Down, @3111, 10-12 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 seconds

Coach's notes to client: *Focus on keeping the traps down and pulling through the lats, let me know how the neck feels here*

Notice that if the client didn't communicate with the coach or the coach did not pay attention to the previous week's results, the program may have progressed incorrectly. The second option demonstrates how communication helps a coach personalize the program for the client and continue the progression with an appropriate dose-response.

To ensure communication with your clients you should have multiple touch points with them throughout their training week:

▸ **On the gym floor**

▸ **In monthly consultations**

▸ **Within the training program itself**

Communication is the backbone of personalized fitness coaching. Proper communication skills either make or break the program. Learn how to enhance the coach-client relationship and develop your communication skills with *The Free 7-Day OPEX Coaching Course*.

4 NO LONG TERM PLAN

In order to keep a client for a lifetime, you must have an idea of the end goal of their design. This leads us to the fourth mistake, not having a long-term plan. It is easy to design cycle after cycle of work and end up with 12 months of design not focused on a goal. But professional coaches create programs with the long term in mind.

This mistake is easily avoided by taking the time in the beginning to design a solid plan for your client. Depending on your style and experience and your client's needs, this could be very granular or very basic but will help you stay on track from cycle to cycle.

An example long term plan

January-February: : Accumulation 1

March-April: : Accumulation 2

May: Intensification 1

June-July: : Accumulation 3

August-September: Accumulation 4

October: Intensification 2

November-December: Accumulation 5

Above is an example of periodization, the act of devoting specific amounts of time to specific training phases. Learn how you can create a long term plan for your clients in this *free course*.

5 NOT BEING COMPETENT

The final program design mistake we see coaches make is not being competent. To design an effective training program, there is a level of competency you must possess.

You must be competent in:

▸ **Consulting your clients.**

▸ **Understanding your knowledge and ability.**

▸ **Assessing your clients and understanding what that assessment is telling you.**

▸ **Planning, prioritizing and periodizing your programs.**

▸ **Principles of strength and energy system training for proper progressions.**

▸ **Reassessing and adjusting the plan when applicable.**

Stick to what you know and principles that are tried and tested. As coaches, sometimes we can be our own worst enemies. Although we have good intentions, we can overthink and "over program". This is especially true when you do not have a solid education of principles to rely on.

The Solution

An Education Based on Principles

A proper education based on principles is the best investment a coach can make. If you are feeling lost, don't know where to start or are struggling to progress your client, you will have a proven system to fall back on.

This is exactly what we strived to develop when we created the OPEX System of Coaching. Based on James FitzGerald's 20+ years of coaching experience, our education covers every aspect of professional coaching, including the best business and marketing practices, how to conduct consultations and assessments, and how to design personalized fitness and nourishment programs for any client. Get an introduction to the OPEX System of Coaching in The *Free* 7-Day OPEX Coaching Course. Sign up today and take your next step to becoming a professional coach.

SIGN-UP FOR THE FREE 7-DAY COACHING COURSE, TODAY.   **SIGN UP**

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