

**Inc.**

# How BurnAlong Is Pioneering a New Approach to Wellness (That Actually Sticks)

Failed resolutions beware



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This new year, an estimated [45 percent](#) of Americans resolved to get in shape. And by February, approximately [80 percent](#) of them will have reverted to their old habits and abandoned their efforts toward greater [health and wellbeing](#).

Daniel Freedman and Mike Kott are out to change dismal wellness stats like these with a new approach toward empowering personal and social change. They're the co-founders and co-CEOs of BurnAlong, a video and social [motivation platform](#) that helps people who struggle to achieve their [health and wellness goals](#).

Companies using BurnAlong include leading retailers, healthcare companies, and universities from all around the world. The platform serves all manner of users ranging from children with cancer to professional athletes, the elderly, and people with diabetes or Parkinson's disease.

This widespread adoption is a reflection of BurnAlong's remarkable [engagement](#). "Engagement in BurnAlong outperforms traditional wellness programming," Freedman says. While the industry standard is anywhere from four to eight percent engagement, BurnAlong averages 20 percent.

Freedman credits BurnAlong's unique social features--which enable users to invite friends, family members, and coworkers to work out with them live and online--and its holistic approach to wellness for these stats. Far from being exclusively a fitness platform, BurnAlong also offers video trainings on everything from nutrition to mindfulness, parenting, [insomnia](#), addiction, and financial wellness. Here's a closer look at how the platform is pioneering a new approach to health and wellness.

## **An Unlikely Path to a Wellness Startup**

At first glance, neither Kott's nor Freedman's background seem all that relevant to the fitness space.

Kott started his career at Black & Decker doing branding and product development before being recruited to then-financial services startup Bill Me Later. That startup was acquired by PayPal for a billion dollars back in 2008, after which Kott helped lead the integration of PayPal and eBay. He met Freedman after moving to the Baltimore area, and the two quickly found they were similarly connected to the idea of improving health outcomes for people most in need.

Meanwhile, Freedman spent half a decade working at an intelligence consultancy with colleagues from the likes of the FBI and CIA. (He's also worked for the United Nations and U.S. Senate.) And he believes these experiences uniquely equipped him to develop wellness programming that actually works.

"One big thing that we focused on was rehabilitation programs," he says. "[I] traveled everywhere from Belfast to Singapore, and one of the fascinating things I learned... is the role that social circles play in changing people's behavior. So when someone comes out of prison or jail, one of the things you want to focus on is changing their social circle... [that's] how you set them on a different path. You see so clearly the role that family and friends have in shaping behavior for good or bad."

These observations were affirmed by Freedman's personal experiences with his now-late grandmother, who developed cancer and other health issues during the last decade of her life. He observed that his grandmother wasn't feeling well mentally or physically, but she would only exercise if her family members showed up to take her to a gym. Freedman found himself asking: "Why when you're at home and you most need the support of others, are you cut off from them?"

Together, these experiences inform the premise on which BurnAlong is built. The video platform focuses on making healthy choices social and accessible by bridging offline and online experiences. And it does so by utilizing the same principles that Freedman observed in earlier iterations of his career.

## **Making Wellness Intimately Social**

The BurnAlong platform most distinguishes itself in two ways.

First, by offering unparalleled choice. "Users can take thousands of classes from hundreds of instructors across 30 different categories, [and they] can take them from any device they want," Freedman says. "What we see in fitness and wellness is, the more choice that we offer you, the more you're likely to find that instructor that works for you."

Baked into those choices is the principle of authenticity. Instead of featuring hundreds of 25-year-old instructors with washboard abs, the platform enlists participation from instructors of all different shapes, sizes, ability levels, and backgrounds. "It is very much about an emotional connection," Freedman says. "Seeing someone like you who modifies for you is so inspiring... It's not the glitziest videos that are the most popular; it's all about that connection to an instructor."

Additionally, BurnAlong offers a unique component in the form of socialization. "You can also take classes live with friends or family members [or coworkers] whom you invite," Freedman says. This bakes community and accountability into the platform and increases the odds of users' success. "The key to initiating change [and] sustaining it is social support."

In order to help users sort through the platform's thousands of classes, Kott says BurnAlong is [utilizing sophisticated AI](#) to track what people search for and the classes they take in order to provide personalized recommendations.

"We try to understand what's leading to the next level of engagement, so that we are constantly elevating the right choices... based on [users'] behavior and the community's behavior," Kott says. "The social aspects of this go beyond just seeing and inviting your friends to take a class. You get to see what the community is taking and what they think of those classes. We want your curiosity to pull you beyond just what you're used to."

## **Uplifting Partners**

Another core facet of BurnAlong's user experience is the opportunities offered to partner studios, gyms, and instructors.

Users are encouraged to seek out their favorite instructors in person (provided they live or travel in the same area), and instructors can assign "homework" on BurnAlong in order to build relationships and foster ongoing accountability.

Not only does this improve the user experience, but it also serves as a recruitment tool for instructors both on- and off-line. "For instructors, this means they're reaching more

people--getting more in-person clients and corporate bookings through BurnAlong," Kott says.

Because the platform is so appealing to instructors, this also increases the number of trainings available to its users.

"The amazing... result of that is the youngest person that you'll see in a BurnAlong class is 6 weeks old [as part of Mommy and Me classes]," Kott says. "On the other end, the oldest person you will see is 97 years old. Because of our partnership with all these amazing local health and fitness instructors, there's really something for every age and level."

By expanding its scope beyond standard conceptions of fitness, offering unique opportunities for social engagement, and providing resources for all manner of wellness-related topics, BurnAlong is working to remain relevant to people at every stage of their lives.

"We don't want to be with you for one piece of your life's journey," Kott says. "We want to be with you across your life's journey... We evolve with you over time... providing that programming, social support, [and] guidance so that people can lead their best lives."

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