How Equinox Monetizes Attachment

Idea In Short

Equinox built a $4,000-a-year gym habit into a luxury business that charges up to $40,000 a year for its top membership tier. The company does not sell workouts; it sells identity, then upsells that identity through personal training, longevity testing, hotels and branded residences. Optimize by Equinox, launched in 2024, bundles biomarker testing, sleep coaching and a health concierge for members willing to pay clinical-grade prices for wellness. The strategy works because it targets a customer segment that keeps spending regardless of the broader economy, a wealthy cohort chasing measurable health rather than square footage or equipment. But the same concentration that gives Equinox its pricing power also removes any cushion if affluent spending ever slows, leaving a model that is powerful on the way up and exposed on the way down.

What Equinox Actually Sells

Equinox does not compete on equipment, square footage or price. It competes on identity, delivered through curated lighting, hospitality-style service, boutique classes and addresses that signal a member can afford the bill. The gym is the entry point. The profit lives in what that entry point lets Equinox sell afterward. This positioning inverts the low-cost fitness model, in which chains recruit millions of members and count on most of them skipping visits. Equinox does the opposite: fewer members, higher dues, heavy usage encouraged and a relationship built to deepen over years rather than lapse quietly. Once someone reorganizes a morning routine and a social circle around a club, that person stops being a member paying monthly dues and becomes a prospect for everything else Equinox can attach to that identity.

A Spend Ladder, Not A Price Point

The base membership functions as customer acquisition, not the profit center. What matters to Equinox is average revenue per member and the company has built a ladder designed to push that figure up continuously. A single-club member paying about $3,000 a year is one personal-training package away from doubling that spend; training in New York runs $150 to $250 a session, so three sessions a week turns a $3,000 relationship into roughly $25,000. Add spa treatments, nutrition coaching and recovery services and the commonly cited $4,000 habit becomes a floor rather than a ceiling for an engaged member. At the top of the ladder sits Optimize by Equinox, launched in 2024 at roughly $40,000 a year. It bundles personal training, nutrition, sleep coaching, massage, a health concierge and twice-yearly testing of more than 100 biomarkers through lab partner Function Health. Executive Chairman Harvey Spevak has pointed to a waiting list of more than 1,000 people as evidence of demand1.

> Equinox's $40,000-a-year Optimize membership has a waiting list of more than 1,000 people, reflecting insatiable appetite among wealthy consumers for premium health and longevity services

The Longevity Wager

Optimize is the aggressive edge of a larger bet that Equinox can shift from selling fitness to selling measurable health outcomes. The global wellness economy reached roughly $6.8 trillion in 2024 and is forecast to approach $10 trillion by 2029 and Equinox is positioning itself as a premium entry point to that spending2. The rise of GLP-1 drugs such as semaglutide has added an unexpected tailwind. Rapid weight loss on these drugs also causes muscle loss and premium fitness operators have introduced muscle-preservation training tracks that reposition the gym from a weight-loss venue to a metabolic-maintenance service. That reframing supports higher, clinical-grade pricing and ties high-net-worth members to their own health data, a stickier retention mechanism than a well-appointed locker room.

Hotels And Branded Residences

The most capital-intensive layer of the model is hospitality. Equinox opened its first hotel in 2019 inside 35 Hudson Yards in Manhattan, a 212-room property that took years to turn a profit and now serves as a proof of concept. The company has outlined plans for roughly 33 properties over the next decade, spanning urban clubs and resorts, with locations confirmed or in development in Nashville, Saudi Arabia's Amaala development on the Red Sea and a marina resort in Anguilla. Related Companies, the real estate developer behind Hudson Yards, has been the majority owner of Equinox since 2006 and that relationship increasingly leans on branded residences to make hotel economics work3. Equinox-branded apartments sell the lifestyle as real estate, generating development margin and a permanent membership base tied to the building, the same recurring-access logic that private clubs such as Soho House have applied to residential space.

Where The Model Meets Its Limits

Equinox is private and discloses no financials, so outside estimates of its revenue range from a few hundred million dollars to several billion depending on what analysts count. The cleanest public comparison is Life Time Group, the other major premium operator, which reported close to $3 billion in 2025 revenue and adjusted EBITDA above $800 million, up more than 20% from the prior year, built on a suburban, family-oriented model that Wall Street can underwrite directly4. Life Time shows that premium fitness can compound profitably. It also shows that Equinox does not own the category by default. The broader economy currently splits along income lines, with affluent consumers still spending on wellness while budget-conscious consumers pull back, which helps Equinox today but leaves it without the cushion a lower-cost operator has if that top tier of spending ever slows. The operational record carries some friction too. Equinox's budget chain, Blink Fitness, filed for bankruptcy in 2024 and its assets were sold to PureGym for $121 million. In 2025 Equinox paid a $600,000 settlement to New York state after regulators found its memberships were difficult to cancel5.

> New Yorkers should be able to cancel a membership they no longer use or want without breaking a sweat

Each stumble draws more scrutiny than it would for a lower-priced brand, because Equinox charges a premium partly on the promise of a smooth, high-service experience.

Lessons From The Ladder

Equinox is not really a gym company and treating it as one misses the point. It is a luxury brand that uses fitness as an efficient way to acquire customers, then monetizes the attachment those customers form through training, longevity services, hotels and residences. The brand carries real pricing power, a large and growing wellness market and a plausible route to recurring real estate revenue, together forming a genuine flywheel. Two limits temper that story. Optimize remains a brand halo more than a financial pillar, since 1,000 members at $40,000 a year is roughly $40 million against a revenue base likely in the hundreds of millions. The hotel expansion is slow, capital-intensive and dependent on outside real estate partners, with only one proven property so far. Operators studying Equinox should copy the spend-ladder logic, which travels well beyond fitness, while recognizing that a model built entirely on affluent discretionary spending is powerful in good times and exposed when that spending slows.

Key Partners

Related Companies, the real estate developer that has been Equinox's majority owner since 2006, anchors the partner structure and finances new hotels and residences. Function Health supplies the biomarker testing behind Optimize. Hospitality and real estate partners in Nashville, Saudi Arabia's Amaala development and Anguilla extend the club-to-hotel pipeline into new markets. Equipment makers and wellness technology vendors round out the operational partner base.

Key Activities

Running high-service clubs with boutique classes, personal training and spa services is the core daily activity. Selling members up the spend ladder, from base dues into training packages and longevity programs, drives revenue growth more than new member acquisition does. Developing and operating branded hotels and residences extends the brand into real estate. Testing and monitoring member biomarkers under Optimize adds a clinical layer to what was once a fitness-only offering.

Key Resources

The Equinox brand, built over three decades around exclusivity and service, is the primary resource. Club locations in prime urban addresses signal status and drive foot traffic among affluent professionals. Trained personal trainers, nutritionists and health concierges deliver the higher-margin services that make the ladder work. Member health data collected through Optimize creates a retention asset that outlasts any single club visit.

Value Propositions

Equinox sells belonging to a high-performance, high-status community, not just access to equipment. Members get hospitality-grade service, curated class programming and a location that signals achievement. At the top tier, Optimize offers clinical-grade longevity testing and coaching once available only through private concierge medicine. Branded hotels and residences extend that same identity into travel and housing.

Customer Relationships

Equinox builds relationships designed to deepen over years rather than lapse quietly, unlike low-cost gyms that profit from inactive members. Personal trainers and health concierges create ongoing, high-touch contact that pulls members further up the spend ladder. Biomarker testing under Optimize turns the relationship into a recurring, data-driven service rather than a one-time sign-up. Waiting lists for top-tier programs reinforce exclusivity as a retention tool.

Channels

Flagship clubs in dense, affluent neighborhoods serve as the primary channel for recruiting and retaining members. Equinox+ digital content extends the brand to members who train outside the club. Word of mouth among a status-conscious clientele drives referrals more than paid advertising does. Hotels and branded residences act as a physical channel that introduces the brand to travelers and residents who never hold a club membership.

Customer Segments

The core segment is affluent urban professionals willing to pay a premium for status and service. Optimize targets a narrower, wealthier segment willing to spend $40,000 a year on longevity testing and concierge health coaching. Hotel guests and residents of branded apartments form an adjacent segment introduced to the brand through real estate rather than a gym membership. Corporate and executive wellness clients add a smaller but growing segment.

Cost Structure

Real estate, prime-location leases and clubhouse buildout account for the largest fixed costs. Staffing costs run high given the ratio of trainers, concierges and hospitality staff needed to deliver personalized service. Hotel and residence development adds capital-intensive costs shared with real estate partners such as Related Companies. Biomarker testing and lab partnerships add a newer, variable cost tied to Optimize membership growth.

Revenue Streams

Base membership dues, roughly $3,000 to $4,000 a year, form the acquisition layer of revenue rather than the profit center. Personal training, spa and nutrition services push average revenue per member several times higher for engaged clients. Optimize membership fees, at $40,000 a year for a still-small but growing base, add a high-margin layer. Hotel revenue and development margin from branded residences represent the newest and most capital-intensive revenue stream.

- 1Equinox's $40,000 membership waiting list
- 2Global wellness economy nears $10 trillion
- 3Stephen Ross and Related Companies own Equinox
- 4Life Time reports 2025 financial results
- 5Equinox settlement over hard-to-cancel memberships

Summary

Equinox's real business is not fitness; it is the monetization of identity. The club membership converts into training packages, spa services and biomarker testing, then into hotel stays and branded apartments, each step lifting average revenue per member without adding many new members. That ladder gives Equinox pricing power few operators can match and a credible link to a wellness economy approaching $10 trillion. It also means the model rests on one narrow customer segment: affluent professionals who treat health as their next luxury purchase. Life Time proves premium fitness can scale profitably with a broader customer base, a gap Equinox has not closed. The strategy rewards Equinox handsomely while that top tier keeps spending and offers little protection if it ever pulls back.