



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on April 10, 2024

Planet Fitness Founder: Company “Destroyed,” Knowingly Hired Convicted Pedo as CAO

The founder of Planet Fitness is disgusted that “transgender women” have invaded the gym chain’s women’s locker rooms, and not just because company stock tanked by almost half-a-billion dollars after the scandal unfolded.

And the company has distorted former CEO Mike Grondahl’s signature catchphrase — “Judgment Free Zone” to bring in business.

And disturbingly, Grondahl said in a 12-minute interview with Libs of TikTok’s Chaya Raichik, the company to which he sold the business in 2012 fired him after he disclosed that its newly hired corporate administration officer was a convicted pedophile.



AP Images

Grondahl said the notorious sex, rape, and alcohol scandal that involved the company’s headquarters personnel in 2018 was inevitable given the culture the new owners created.

His company, he said, is all but “destroyed.”

What “Judgement Free Zone” Really Meant

Contrary to the meaning it now has — that grown men can join little girls in the ladies’ locker room — “judgment free” meant something entirely different when Grondahl founded the company in 1992.

Noting that what’s been done to the fitness chain he created is “unfathomable,” Grondahl explained that he wanted to create the gym that was “aimed at the beginner, and the people who were intimidated by fitness centers,” along with those who couldn’t afford a pricey alternative.

“Judgment Free Zone,” he said, meant a “comfortable place to come to” for those beginners.

But “fast forward to what’s happening today,” he continued. “Now the term means that if you’re a man, you can use the women’s locker room. Just insane.”

As well, he continued, “It’s devastating to me. Planet Fitness was like another child for me and I put my heart and soul into building that company. And it’s been pretty much destroyed.”

Worse still, he said, despite the bad publicity, “they’ve quadrupled down to make [him] feel comfortable,” meaning the man caught in the women’s locker room in Fairbanks, Alaska. [The gym expelled](#) the woman who complained about it. She photographed a man, who claimed he was “queer,” shaving in front of a frightened 13-year-old girl.

Days later, Libs of TikTok learned that the company [lied to](#) potential customers about it.



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After the scandal, which wasn't the company's first, [it lost](#) \$400 million in value.

But beyond the financial loss, Grondahl called [the policy](#) on locker rooms "extremely dangerous":

I have a daughter, and had I been in the facility and heard what was going on, I'd wanna go in there and freaking take the guy by the neck and throw him out in the parking lot. And that's the way that things would have been done a while back. But now, you know, we're controlling the whole gym atmosphere based on less than 1 percent of the population.

Pedo Exec

But perhaps more disturbing than the company's locker-room policy is what Grondahl divulged about its former CAO and general counsel, Richard Moore.

In 2000, when he was a teacher and North Carolina state legislator, [Richard L. Moore, then 29, pleaded](#) guilty to a felony and two misdemeanors for having oral sex or attempting to have oral sex with three high-school dropouts whom he was helping get GEDs. He was originally charged with six felonies.

After he sold the company on November 8, 2012, "I discovered that the lead council for Planet Fitness was the self-admitted pedophile," Grondahl said:

He was a North Carolina assemblyman, and he was forced to resign there. Somehow ... he [becomes an attorney](#). He gets inserted to Planet Fitness. He starts messing with me. I get a dossier done from a private investigator on Richard Moore's background, who's the chief administrative officer at Planet Fitness at the time. It says that he's a pedophile who abused multiple young boys. I bring it to the private equity company that just bought us. And they basically showed me in the door....

He pleaded guilty to sexual crimes. And we found more people when I sent investigators down to Kannapolis, North Carolina, we found more people that he had abused.

Most Planet Fitness board members knew Moore was a pedophile, Grondahl said. Hiring Moore helped create a sex-and-alcohol culture in which a woman employee was "roofied and raped."

In 2018, Casey Willard, a former manager, sued the company. She claimed the headquarters "organized drinking activities such as 'Fireball Friday'" and that employees "competed regarding the number of shots they could consume in the least amount of time." Vodka-laced gummies were also on the drink menu.

[Continued an Associated Press](#) report about the lawsuit:

Willard, who was new at the time and followed managers' direction, "sometimes found herself drunk at work by 11:00 a.m.," the lawsuit said.

Willard also claims in her lawsuit filed in September in Rockingham County Superior Court that she was drugged and raped on a business trip in September 2017 to California by a company manager and his friends....

Willard also said that a manager initiated a sexual relationship with her, in violation of an



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anti-fraternization policy, and that she was concerned she might lose her job. She eventually notified the company earlier this year that she was unable to return to work, the lawsuit said.

“The work environment at Planet Fitness’ corporate offices was, to say the least, debaucherous,” according to the lawsuit, adding that senior management consisted of men “whom openly made sexual comments, sexual innuendo, and engaged in pretend sexual contact toward female employees.”

The [company settled](#) with Willard in 2021.

“A pedophile attorney will do anything and they look at what they do to children,” Grondahl continued. “So imagine what they’re going to do to the business.... It ended up costing me hundreds of millions of dollars.”

As for the “queer” man in the locker room in Fairbanks, “he’s getting off on it,” Grondahl averred. “You can see it in his eyes. He’s getting off on making women feel uncomfortable. And to be honest, I really gotta say, where are the men, you know, where are the men in America?”

Grondahl’s X feed [bills him](#) as “Ex PLNT CEO before the pedophiles took over!”



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