



# INSTRUCTOR-TO-OWNER DECISION CHECKLIST

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Nick Gullo was a head instructor at someone else's gym when he decided to open Monarch Jiu-Jitsu Academy. Work through what his story says to settle before you start making calls.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Current gym: \_\_\_\_\_

Target opening: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

## 1 Where You Stand Now

- ☐ **Count your week:** classes \_\_\_\_ + privates \_\_\_\_ + your own training \_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_ hours. Nick was teaching 10 to 13 privates a week on top of classes, and near 40 hours of jiu-jitsu.
- ☐ **Good money, but are you at the ceiling?** Write down what would have to change for this schedule to last another five years.
- ☐ **Content, or happy?** Nick says being content keeps you where you are. Decide whether you'd rather make the move yourself than wait to be pushed.
- ☐ **Know what you're leaving:** any promise of co-ownership or a share in a future gym. Is it in writing? Nick's plan to co-own a new gym ended the day he was fired.

## 2 Who You Call First

- ☐ **Your family.** They carry this with you. Nick's calls started with his.
- ☐ **The coach who promoted you.** Ask straight out whether they think you have it. Jason Rau, who gave Nick his black belt, answered: "Dude, do it. You're more than capable."
- ☐ **An owner who has already opened a gym.** Nick called Frank Rosenthal, who runs Phantom Jiu-Jitsu Academy in Herndon, Virginia.
- ☐ **Write down every "what if":** what if nobody signs up, what if the students don't come.
- ☐ **Then ask the other one.** What if it's more successful than you could have imagined? Nick hadn't thought of it until someone asked him. What would you need then?

## 3 Where Is It Gonna Be? What's the Name Gonna Be?

- ☐ **Can people see it from the street?** Nick's case for Malverne was visibility.
- ☐ **Can they park?** His other reason.
- ☐ **The name:** \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ **Room to grow:** is there space for the programs you'll add later? Kids' kickboxing at Monarch depends on knocking down a wall.

#### 4 What You'll Teach on Day One

- ☐ **What does a brand-new student start with?** Monarch is no-gi dominant, and Nick still steers newcomers to the gi so they feel like they're doing jiu-jitsu sooner.
- ☐ **Does every program have a beginner path?** Muay Thai at Monarch is jump rope, shadowboxing and pad work, and it's hard on new people. Keeping them is still an open problem.
- ☐ **Programs on day one:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### 5 The First Three Months

- ☐ **Line up help before you open.** Who covers a class when you can't? Nick was "killing myself a little bit" and had to find more help fast.
- ☐ **Say what kind of room you want, in one sentence:** \_\_\_\_\_. Nick's: not a thousand students, but a place where people come, learn, and are happy.
- ☐ **Decide how you'll handle cliques.** At Monarch the members mostly check their egos at the door.

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