

YMCA's Leap to Frictionless Security



Case Study: Fitness & Community Centers

About

The YMCA of Northwest Florida has been strengthening the community in the Florida Panhandle for over 145 years. The YMCA of Northwest Florida's mission is to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all, serving as a community-centered organization that welcomes everyone. The Y works side by side with other local nonprofits, businesses, and organizations to address critical community needs through programs focused on youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility.

The Problem

YMCA of Northwest Florida recently renovated its Gulf Breeze facility, providing the perfect opportunity to implement Alcatraz's technology. The goal was to curb a growing issue: non-members using the facility or tailgating behind paying members to gain unauthorized access. At the same time, they sought to enhance the overall experience for members.

"We always expected that most people entering our facilities were members, but we needed to verify our assumption for security reasons since we were transitioning to a 24/7 location," said Michael Bodenhausen, CEO of YMCA of Northwest Florida. *"Traditional barcodes can be easily shared, so we needed a more reliable way to confirm member identity—leading us to Alcatraz facial authentication."*

Beyond revenue concerns, unauthorized users also impact member experience. *"One of the leading frustrations for members is being unable to utilize their favorite equipment,"* Bodenhausen explained. *"If non-members are utilizing our equipment, it contributes to overcrowding and can lead to cancellation, while also creating liability concerns."*

The Solution

Alcatraz's advanced facial authentication and tailgating detection capabilities made it the ideal solution for the YMCA's needs. A significant problem was unauthorized and unidentified individuals using the facility, either by sharing of barcode or following in with other members known as tailgating. The Alcatraz solution's ability to recognize and verify each member as well as notify us of tailgating incidents became a key factor in the YMCA's decision to deploy it.

“We integrated Rock X from Alcatraz with a Gunnebo turnstile to authenticate members and control facility access,” said Trenten Kawas, Engagement Director at YMCA of Northwest Florida. “This ensures that every individual entering is a verified paying member, and the combined solution effectively prevents tailgating.”

The enhanced security measures were immediately noticeable to members. *“With Alcatraz in place, we know which members are entering our facility,” Bodenhausen noted. “This has improved the overall sense of security among our members. Our members also have taken more ownership in monitoring access, often reporting any unauthorized entries.”*

Another major benefit was the improved experience for YMCA staff. *“Before Alcatraz, our team had to act like security guards, constantly monitoring the entrance,” Bodenhausen added. “Now, they are engaged in meaningful engagement with members instead of worrying about who might be sneaking in.”*

Rapid Mobile Enrollment: 1,000 Members in Just Days

The YMCA deployed Alcatraz's Mobile Enrollment feature to ensure a seamless transition. This allowed members to enroll remotely via a simple, secure, web-based application.

“We were able to enroll 1,000 members within just a few days,” Kawas said. “The process was fast and efficient. Almost all members were able to enroll independently at their convenience, and for those who needed assistance, our staff quickly guided them through the process.”

“We’ve seen improvements in addressing tailgating, security, and access in general,” Bodenhausen said. “This has not only enhanced security but also improved member satisfaction and operational efficiency.”

With Alcatraz, the YMCA has successfully implemented a frictionless, secure entry experience that ensures only authorized members gain access while enhancing the overall facility experience. By combining advanced facial authentication with seamless mobile enrollment, Alcatraz is redefining access control for fitness and community centers.



Schedule a free demo and learn how Alcatraz can strengthen your access control: alcatraz.ai/contact/demo

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sales@alcatraz.ai

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