Boutique fitness is a booming industry, thanks to a growing number of consumers who will gladly pay $34 and more for a single class.

One man is largely influential in that category.

Eric Villency is the designer behind the iconic SoulCycle bike, Peloton's at-home bike for livestreamed cycling classes, equipment for Barry's Boot Camp, products for Equinox, and apparel for the barre workout Physique 57.

He just says he's doing his job.

"I think it's the same for any designer [within a] design firm," he said to Business Insider. "Wellness is something that I've always personally been interested in, so it's great to have those
two worlds intersect."

SoulCycle riders.

Villency, who is a New York native, essentially found himself as the go-to guy for products related to expensive workouts. His company, Villency Design Group, has been around since 1932 — it was owned by his grandfather — and it started out primarily focusing on furniture. He's also done projects at airports and Citi Field.

Villency's first project with SoulCycle was designing and developing a mall in Long Island with wellness as its focal point — it featured a SoulCycle, Bar Method, and an Organic Avenue, amongst other top tier fitness boutique (Villency's website notes it features a Kidville and a DryBar as well).

In 2011, SoulCycle commissioned him to design their newest, revamped bike, which he delivered 6 months later.

SoulCycle allows customers to purchase the bike for their homes, an opportunity it says could drive profits ahead of its initial public offering.
The secret sauce is in the design.

"I think everything starts with a really good design," Villency said to Business Insider. "And a really good design isn’t just a function of how it looks — you know, for example, indoor bikes ... [are] in one of the most harsh environments you can possibly be in with the humidity and sweat and just a number of riders ... so you know, I think our approach to fitness is — I think different than a lot of the company’s traditionally making equipment."

There are challenges with designing these products — for instance, think about how many people ride a bike at a cycling studio in particular — like the number of riders.

"They’ve [SoulCycle] recently published on [the] number of riders they have and the number of riders week — month — it’s just a staggering amount of usage, so you really have to design for that." Considering the proper cleaning products is also critical when designing equipment.

Which means considering sweat. "You wouldn’t believe," he said, but "sweat is a super corrosive element."
Ultimately, Villency is excited to continue in this category.

"We really enjoy the space, we think its really fun to work with these companies, and it's fun to see them explosively grow in the past few years," he said.

"I think wellness is explosively growing," he said, "and I think as a category, it's going to continue to grow."

He thinks boutique fitness has really changed the game when it comes to working out — people find it fun.

Villency offered his theory as to why people will shell out to work out.

Exercise used to be "basically about just getting it done," but boutique fitness "has made it fun has made it an engaging experience that distracts you from some of the more unpleasant parts," he said.