

health club management

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HI-TECH FUTURE

What will the digital club
of the future look like?

Up and at 'em

The alarm clock that
promotes active commuting

ON THE COVER

DR JOHN MORGAN

The GP who sings the
praises of exercise

2015 PREDICTIONS

What lies ahead for the fitness sector?



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Motivated members get results
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to?

Being socially useful

Has your organisation recognised the value of being genuinely useful to its community – not settling for ‘doing good by helping people get healthy’, but actually putting community interests at the heart of the business?

It's a way of thinking that's finally gaining traction in the fitness sector thanks to initiatives like *Gymtopia.org* – a website that curates life-affirming examples of gyms doing genuine social good around the world – and *The Fitness Sector Social Good Report*, published earlier this year by *Gymtopia* founder Ray Algar, which highlights the eight key attributes a business must have if it's to ensure long-term relevance with its stakeholders (download the full report at www.healthclubmanagement.co.uk/socialgood).

While altruistic, this approach also makes commercial sense, driving profits by building a truly loyal customer base. Algar's report makes it clear that customer engagement today is about far more than simply providing the nuts and bolts – people want to buy into your whole ethos and to identify with your overarching purpose, the consistency of your generosity and your authenticity.

So what does this look like in practice? On page 64, as part of our inspirational *Gymtopia* series, we tell the story of Franco's Athletic Club in the US, which has been giving back to its community for 26 years – a way of saying thank you for all the support owners Ron and Sandy Franco received when their young daughter was diagnosed with cancer. With a philosophy of ‘never say no’, the Francos made a pledge to always respond to requests from charities, schools and community groups; they've since directly raised more than US\$1.5m for charity and donated significantly more from in-kind use of the club's extensive facilities.

“It wasn't a conscious decision to start being community players,” says Sandy. “We felt an obligation. They were there for us and we want to be there for them.”

But it also makes commercial sense: located in the state of Louisiana – which has the sixth highest adult obesity rate in the US – nevertheless the penetration rate in the club's catchment area is almost double the national average. The club has also grown from 28,000sq ft when the couple bought it in 1988, to 250,000sq ft with 15,000 members today. “People who appreciate your efforts will want to be a part of your club and do business with you,” says Sandy.

Yet in spite of great examples such as this, the sector as a whole is falling short, as Reynir Indahl, chair of Health &



People who appreciate your efforts will want to be a part of your club and will want to do business with you

Fitness Nordic, explained in his *Health Club Management* interview earlier this year: “The industry has a huge potential to contribute to society, but to date I don't think it's been particularly useful. That should be the very purpose of business, but we've somehow forgotten that over the last 20–30 years. As a general rule, the sector has been far too focused on squeezing the last dollar out of every customer.”

We have an opportunity to enhance the reputation of the sector as a whole, drive genuine involvement with our clubs, and boost retention. We need more businesses to take inspiration from the Francos.

Kate Cracknell, editor

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For suppliers of products and services in the health club and spa markets, turn to p93



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People

“I wanted to show people how they could not only reduce pollution, but also improve their own quality of life through active travelling”

Sam Young, inventor, Act Alarm Clock

How did you come up with the idea of the Act Alarm Clock?

I studied sustainable product design at university, and the final year brief was to design a product for societal change. I decided to focus on air pollution and physical inactivity – both recurring themes in the media – and specifically on designing a product to reduce personal CO₂ emissions through active commuter travel.

I'm a keen cyclist myself and I appreciate the benefits of active travel: I enjoy it, it wakes me up in the morning, I feel energised when I get to work, it improves my sleep pattern, it helps me to keep fit, I save money and overall I feel it improves my quality of life. I wanted to design something that made it



easier for a wider audience to undertake active travel, and in doing this lower their personal CO₂ emissions and improve their levels of physical activity.

What's the concept?

Act Alarm Clock is based around one word: routine. The clock varies the time your alarm goes off according to the local weather and travel reports, waking you at an appropriate time to incorporate low carbon active travel if the conditions are correct. It also records weekly travel behaviour and uses this data to stimulate further change in the user.



The alarm clearly displays the benefits of active travel to the user



The alarm time varies depending on the weather forecast, allowing for active travel where possible

How does it work?

During the initial set-up of the Act Alarm Clock, the user is asked a series of questions. The device will then gauge an understanding of the user, their travel times and routine depending on their chosen travel modes. It currently covers cycling, walking, running, train and bus, as well as inactive modes of transport such as car and motorbike for when active travel isn't appropriate.

The user is asked for their work location(s) and home address, allowing the alarm to work out potential traffic issues and distance to travel, as well as gender, age, height and weight, so the device can calculate calorie count based on the travel modes chosen. The user's car type and engine size will also be required, allowing the alarm to work out financial savings. These questions will only be asked once, during the initial set-up of the device, but can be changed if required.

The user is also asked a series of questions to establish in what conditions they would be willing to travel actively; these can be reset at any point.

Questions include: would you active travel if there was 40 per cent chance of light rain in the afternoon, or if it's sunny but below 3 degrees centigrade?

When the alarm goes off, a brief display is projected onto the ceiling, allowing the user to assess the potential travel mode and act accordingly. The snooze button triggers the next possible mode of transport.

When setting the alarm in the evening, the user is asked what type of day they will be having in terms of attire: the device can factor out over-strenuous forms of exercise if you're travelling in a suit, for instance. The user also has to input when they need to arrive at work, allowing for the alarm to wake them with enough time depending on the travel mode.

How does it incentivise people to do what it says?

The alarm records weekly travel behaviour and displays the benefits of active travel, including exercise time, calorie count and financial savings.

Through research, I've discovered people tend to turn a blind eye to pollution, so I wanted to show them how they could not only reduce pollution but also improve their own quality of life through active travelling.

What are your plans for the product?

Act Alarm Clock is currently at concept level, and I'm now aiming to develop a fully working prototype to put through testing in conjunction with Loughborough University, focusing on how effective the concept is in driving behaviour change.

The next step will be to look for funding and start retailing the device to the mass market, with an RRP of £80-100. I also hope to link the clock to a smartphone and a calendar, to give future advice on travel modes depending on the user's movements, and would like to add a feature where the user can specify how many calories they want to burn or what financial saving they wish to make, for example. ▶

► People

“We’re able to give people the positive side of the calorie equation”

Helen Nuki, founder, StepJockey



StepJockey – the brainchild of Helen Nuki (below) – is based on the nudge theory that positive reinforcement changes behaviour

Signs explaining how many calories are burned by taking the stairs instead of the lift will be added to public staircases as part of a government-backed scheme to improve the fitness of UK workers.

The scheme was developed by a Department of Health-funded web start-up called StepJockey. Trials at three large office buildings, including the BBC in Manchester, found that signs advertising how many calories you could burn by taking the stairs increased the number of people using them by up to 29 per cent.

“The aim of StepJockey is very simple: mark the built environment for calorie burn in the same way we mark foods for calorie consumption,” says Helen Nuki, founder of StepJockey. “We’re starting with stairs because stair climbing is classed as a vigorous physical activity and burns more calories than jogging.”

The idea for StepJockey was born when Nuki showed her eight-year-old daughter a packet of biscuits with the calorie and fat content listed, and her daughter asked why labels only ever showed bad things.

“In that moment, the idea to label the world for calorie burn was born,” Nuki says. “In doing this, we’re able to give the positive side of the calorie equation.”

The service uses an app and website. Users will be able to scan ‘smart signs’



on the allocated stairways and track the calories they burn over time.

The scheme is based on nudge theory – the idea that positive reinforcement can change behaviour. “Because we can’t process all the information needed to make every single decision throughout the day, we rely on automatic behaviour to get us through. This behaviour is governed by many factors such as habit,

ease, salience and what we see other people doing,” says Nuki.

“We knew that if we wanted to change behaviour, we needed something that would be easy for people to do, would have salience (the posters interrupt habits at the point of behaviour), would be for everyone and would give an incentive for people to change.”

Details: www.stepjockey.com

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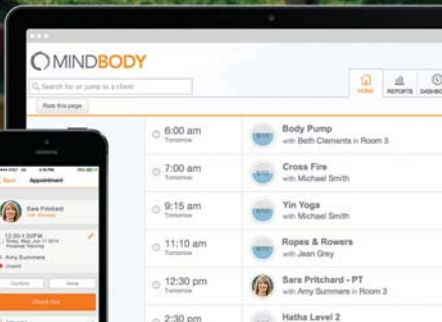
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► People

“Sport is one of the most effective and practical ways of planting the seeds of peace”

Tim Jahnigen and Lisa Tarver,
co-founders of One World Futbol



For every One World Futbol purchased, another is donated to an organisation using play and sport in a positive way

It wasn't until the age of 40 that Tim Jahnigen had a pivotal, life-changing 'aha!' moment. "I was watching a news story about the plight of children in Darfur," he says. "These acutely traumatised innocents were playing football with a ball of trash.

"I suddenly sat bolt upright with the complete and unwavering understanding of the fact that these children deserved better than that. I not only wanted to make a ball that would enable them to play, but had a vision for a new type of ball that would play like a soccer ball, but would never go flat."

Up until his revelation, Jahnigen had been involved in a number of different sectors and business ventures – including a career as a concert producer in the music industry. "I spent many years scrubbing, digging, washing, cooking and hammering – fulfilling other people's dreams and wishes," he says,



adding that it was his connections in the music world that ultimately made the indestructible ball a reality.

Jahnigen had got to know the singer Sting personally after being a part of the production family for the artist's bi-annual Rainforest Fund Concert. Soon after coming up with the indestructible ball idea, Jahnigen – alongside wife and business partner Lisa Tarver – mentioned his vision to Sting over breakfast.

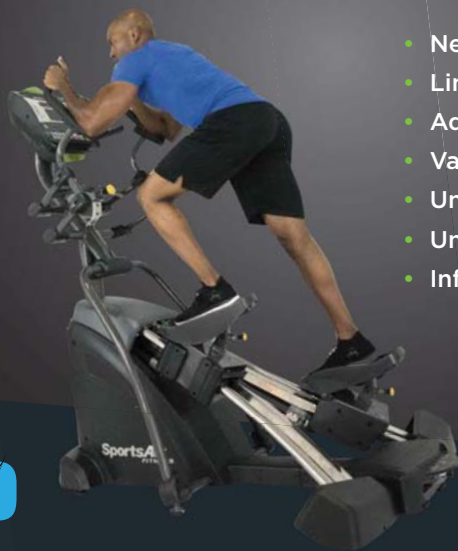
"He was telling us how he had just financed the construction of a football

pitch in Gaza," Jahnigen says. "I shared my idea for an indestructible soccer ball with him and he immediately offered to cover the R&D costs, provided I pursued the idea right there and then."

Sting's involvement carries on in the ball's name. "When the time came to decide what this new ball should be called, Sting simply said: 'One World', after his hit of the same name," says Jahnigen. Sting and his wife, Trudie Styler, continue to advocate and support the project.

Jahnigen's wife Tarver says the venture is a mission-driven company focused on the transformative power of play. "We sell the One World Futbol through a 'buy one, give one' model," she says. "For every ball purchased, we give a second one to an organisation using play and sport to teach health awareness, conflict resolution, gender equality and life skills." ●

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Gaining social and psychological support skills could benefit fitness workers

Creating a workforce able to handle modern day challenges

I was interested to read your recent news story reporting on the survey, conducted by ukactive and published by CYQ, which found that more than 55 per cent of UK fitness managers believe exercise professionals are under-skilled for delivering social and psychological support to inactive people.

As part of an organisation committed to ensuring our industry has a qualified, competent workforce, we're looking forward to the challenge of ensuring our sector can deal with modern day issues.

As recently as LIVV, I've seen the active approach employers are taking to reduce their skills gaps. I'm proud to say that SkillsActive, through its new Lead Provider offering, is right behind this. By acknowledging that bespoke skills are required from exercise professionals, we're connecting employers directly with

training providers who can meet their requirements. Through different learning platforms, exercise professionals can also access training that directly solves the shortages referenced in this report. But there's an understanding that this is an ever-developing agenda, and the door is open to further discussion on how we can offer employers and the public fully trained, work-ready professionals.

This report raises some interesting debates concerning the requirements of exercise professionals and the structure of National Occupational Standards. We look forward to helping ensure our sector can meet the needs of health, fitness and exercise in 2015 and beyond.

Tom Bell

Head of professional development,
SkillsActive

Equipment availability is the primary value driver

I read with great interest the recent retention article – Hassles and Uplifts – by Dr Melvyn Hillsdon (see HCM Sept 14, p42). Finally, a retention report which recognises that if customers have to queue for equipment in gyms, this is not only one of the most annoying hassles they face but also, if it happens frequently, significantly increases the likelihood of them cancelling their membership.

However, I question the article's final conclusion: that staff talking to customers is still more important.

I believe it's important to understand what constitutes a primary value driver for customers; while secondary value drivers are important, if you remove the primary value driver the secondary drivers mean nothing. For gym floor customers, the primary value driver is using gym equipment: remove all the kit from a gym floor and your customers will leave, regardless of how friendly gym staff are. Remove all the gym staff and what happens? It's been tried: it's called a budget gym, and it's the fastest growing sector of the UK gym industry.

Rory McGown

Founder, GYMtrix

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Frequently queueing for equipment raises members' cancellation risk

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We need a holistic approach designed to impact behaviour for the long term

Training teachers to get kids active: a sustainable solution

I was interested to read your recent feature on childhood obesity (see *HCM* Oct 14, p62). The key to tackling inactivity in children is finding solutions that are inclusive, engaging and scalable. A lot of projects focus on getting overweight children fitter, or on helping those already engaged in sport to be better at it, but I believe we need to take a holistic approach – one that engages every child with the aim of impacting positively on behaviour for the long term.

Funding comes and goes, so solutions that focus on sustainability are important. The best way of getting sustainability while impacting behaviour is by upskilling those who work with children every day: teachers. If we can provide teachers with simple tools to positively impact the exercise behaviours of the children they teach, we're on the road to a shift-change in the sedentary lifestyles of children across the UK.

In 2013, I partnered with childcare expert Chris Sharman and Lewisham

Borough Council to create a schools engagement programme called Fitness4Life. Its aim was to engage all children – overweight, underweight, active, inactive, sporty and not sporty – in 20 minutes of regular, fun, vigorous activity every day of the school week.

Fitness4Life area co-ordinators train teachers to deliver these sessions, which are combined with fun assessments covering various fitness attributes; children track their individual progress while also working together with other members of their class to compete against other schools. No one child is good at all seven assessments – perfect for ensuring all types of children achieve success.

Following a successful 18-month pilot across London, we're now looking for Fitness4Life area co-ordinators across the country to continue spreading the concept. Visit www.fitness4life.training

Matt Roberts

Founder & CEO, Matt Roberts PT

More active towns will aid health and economy

I was interested to read your editor's letter on active design (see *HCM* Oct 14, p5). Cycling the 20 miles to work last week, I was struck how the 18-mile climb over the Pennines was a doddle compared to the final two miles across town to my desk.

Right now, the task of creating active towns, with proper routes and facilities that promote walking and cycling, seems almost insurmountable. But this shouldn't deter us from making a start and creating a commitment that's enshrined in town planning. Cycling wasn't suddenly part of everyday life in Holland: it evolved into part of the infrastructure over 100 years. Without consistency, we will forever be stuck with cycle lanes that stop without reason.

As fitness providers, we can make changes to encourage physical activity in the working day: are we opening early enough, does our programming take working patterns into account? But only investment in a cycle-friendly transport infrastructure will achieve a sea-change in healthy lifestyles.

I can't help but feel the economic argument for increased physical activity will have the most chance of changing hearts and minds at a senior level. A more productive workforce and savings in health spend add up to a compelling argument, so let's focus on this to make the world a better place.

Stuart Lockwood

CEO, Oldham Community Leisure



PICTURE:WWW.STOCK-CONTRACT-WHITESEA

A cycle-friendly infrastructure will help drive healthy lifestyles

Enhanced club security AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

GANTNER's fingerprint ID stations can be easily retrofitted into clubs, eliminate the problem of card swapping, and provide extra peace of mind to members and operators alike



Biometric technology allows access via a fingerprint check, or a fingerprint can be encrypted on a member's card

As an expert in access control technology, GANTNER's range of contactless chip cards, wristbands and key tags offers members hassle-free entry to a leisure site, while providing a high standard of security to operators. However many larger clubs are now seeking further controls, and GANTNER has responded by developing its biometric fingerprint ID terminals that can be retrofitted into any leisure facility.

GANTNER's business operations manager, Alexander Egele, says: "In the past year we've seen more and more enquiries about our fingerprint ID systems from leisure operators. There are many advantages to installing this type of system, but it's important that clubs are aware of the pros and cons before deciding."

One potential barrier is that many people aren't comfortable with the idea of their fingerprint being stored on a company's central database. In addition, many members like the positive image that carrying a health club card conveys.

Card and fingerprint in one

GANTNER's fingerprint solution solves the common problems by allowing fingerprint data to be safely encrypted onto the member's existing card or

wristband. This data is extracted at a GANTNER enrollment station, which is not linked to any PC or external database. Operators can choose to just implement random fingerprint verification – for example, by checking every 10th member during peak times.

For people who refuse to enroll a fingerprint – and also the small percentage who don't have a readable print (e.g. workers with heavy manual jobs) – clubs can still offer a card-only mode, perhaps after judging how likely that member is to lend their card to a friend or relative. For example, the 16-34-year-old group may present a higher risk than the over-55s.

Greenvale Park Leisure Centre in Magherafelt, Northern Ireland, recently upgraded its GANTNER wristband access system to incorporate fingerprint biometrics, in an attempt to eliminate a card-swapping problem.

Fast and secure

Operations manager Robert Buckley says: "We'd noticed via social media that customers were able to use their friend's or family's wristband to gain access. Front of house staff were able to stop most of this but during busy times people were still getting through."

Now the RFID wristband is swiped to confirm it belongs to a paid-up

member, and then the club can check if the member matches the wristband by asking for a fingerprint check. This eliminates non-member access, and stops card swapping between peak and off-peak members as well.

Buckley adds: "The feedback from members has been very positive and so far we've only had nine people out of more than 10,000 members who refused to enroll their fingerprint."

"Since this is now a key part of our access control policy we had to address those memberships individually."

While there may be potential for a small amount of member loss by switching over to a biometric fingerprint system, it is far outweighed by the benefits of eliminating non-paying visitors to a leisure club. GANTNER's fingerprint terminals also replicate its existing card and wristband entry time of just one second.

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Brits 'don't feel fit enough' for workouts in public

One in five people in Britain say they don't feel fit enough to play sport or exercise with other people, according to new research.

The findings from Mintel show a reluctance from 22 per cent of people to engage with fitness and sport because of a fear of exposing their low levels of fitness.

The research has also discovered that a quarter of Brits say they find it hard to motivate themselves to play sport or get more exercise. However, data also suggests reasons for optimism in the fact that more a third of those surveyed say they would like to be more active to improve their health, with this figure rising to over 50 per cent among those who say they don't feel fit enough to exercise with other people.

Mintel also found that 36 per cent of consumers have not played or participated in sport in the past 12 months, rising to more than a half of those aged over 55.

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=B6q7S>

LIW ready to rebrand as fitness-focused event



Active leisure will be LIW's core focus

Organisers of Leisure Industry Week (LIW) have announced a rebrand that will see it become a health, wellbeing and fitness-focused event for 2015 onwards.

The announcement comes following a series of consultations, with further details of the show's new format expected to be announced in the coming weeks.

Having seen falling attendances in recent years, show organiser UBM Events recently teamed up with ukactive to survey more than 40,000 industry professionals for their feedback on the show.

This information, together with focus groups and consultations with key exhibitors and buyers, plus a suggestions hub at this year's event, has been gathered to explore how the industry's longest-running trade show can be developed to meet suppliers' and operators' changing needs. An active leisure focused event is the resultant format.

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=Z6w8R>

Pure Gym makes London push

Pure Gym has joined a number of UK gym chains in setting its sights on dominating the capital's fitness market by announcing a raft of new health clubs in the coming months.

Having opened in October, Pure Gym Hammersmith has become the chain's third largest gym in the UK and biggest in London, while four further openings will take the total number of Pure Gyms in the capital to 13 by the end of 2014. Pure's pitch for the potentially lucrative London market comes at the same time as rivals Virgin Active, Fitness First, LA fitness and Nuffield Health are all making moves to enhance their presence in the city.

Pure Gym's new Hammersmith location – to be followed by gyms in Finsbury Park, North Finchley, Greenwich and Bermondsey – covers a total of 2,194sq m (23,621sq ft) and features more than 220 pieces of gym equipment from longstanding supplier Matrix Fitness. The 24-hour health club is also offering 80 free classes a week, plus additional specialist sessions such as Zumba.

"The demand for affordable fitness is still growing in London and we are continually on the hunt for more sites in the capital," said Pure Gym founder and CEO Peter Roberts. Details: <http://lei.sr7a=K2QZU>



Pure Gym founder and CEO Peter Roberts hopes to have 90 UK sites by the end of 2014

Burnet: 'Bake Off' to blame for obesity

TV shows like the hugely successful *The Great British Bake Off* are fuelling a culture of junk food ubiquity, resulting in soaring levels of obesity, according to the CEO of Les Mills UK Keith Burnet.

In response to a recent Cambridge University study which found that eating healthily costs three times as much as consuming unhealthy food in the UK, Burnet said shows like *Bake Off* are leading consumers towards unhealthy lifestyles.

"I would agree that we cannot blame the individuals for not being educated in cooking and preparing healthy meals and food ideas," he told *Health Club Management*. "Simply switch on the television and you'll be greeted



Bake Off presenter Mary Berry has sparked a cake revival

with hours of cookery programmes featuring calorific and unhealthy foods, cooked in a way that will see the pounds pile on; *The Great British Bake Off* is a classic case in point." Details: <http://lei.sr7a=q2T3t>

Fitness First eyes German sale



CEO Andrew Cosslett is leading Fitness First through an extensive transformation

Fitness First is in talks to sell its 80 health clubs in Germany as the business bids to hasten its transformation and Asian expansion.

Corporate finance firm Lincoln International is advising the Oaktree Capital-owned gym chain on disposal of its German arm – speculated to be worth around £200m (US\$323m E253m). Several parties have expressed interest in the portfolio, which has 300,000 members and EBITDA of around €30m (US\$38.3m £23.7m) per annum. A deal is expected to be concluded by January 2015.

The Germany clubs represent the company's last European portfolio outside of the UK

– following the offload of its 91 clubs across France, Spain, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands to Dutch operator HealthCity in 2010/11 – and their sale marks the final act in Fitness First's shift towards being a UK, Australia and Asia-focused business.

Capital from the planned deal will allow the chain to speed up its £270m global makeover, which has already brought encouraging revenue results to a number of its city health clubs. The funds will also serve to expedite Fitness First's major expansion in Asia, where it aims to open up to 50 new clubs in five years.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=F2j9m>

Burnham to headline ukactive Summit 2014



Labour's Burnham is the MP for Leigh

Shadow health secretary and respected activity advocate Andy Burnham will return as a headline speaker for the ukactive National Summit 2014, one of several high-profile thought leaders due to feature.

Having starred at last year's summit, Burnham is back for the London event on 13 November. He will offer delegates an insight into Labour's health plans and election manifesto, with an emphasis on how his party intends to shape its policies to incorporate physical activity.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=A9j9u>

PayasUgym and British Military Fitness team up



BMF has more than 140 outdoor venues

PayasUgym has teamed up with British Military Fitness (BMF) as part of a new push into the outdoor training market.

BMF joins firms like One Element and Swift, which have been recent outdoor training additions to the payasUgym marketplace – a network of gyms and health clubs totalling more than 2,000 UK establishments. With more than 140 outdoor venues, BMF is one of the UK's biggest fitness class providers and the deal marks a significant landmark in payasUgym's expansion into the outdoor sector.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=n5v8H>

Nuffield secures £330m expansion fund

Nuffield Health has signed £330m of debt facilities as the charity bids to widen its footprint in the UK health club market in a push towards integrated care pathways.

The business secured the funds – from a combination of banks and institutional lenders – to further its strategic development plans for an integrated approach to fitness, prevention and cure, across hospitals, consumer and corporate fitness, and wellbeing markets.

The expansion seems to be gathering pace with Nuffield taking over nine former Virgin Active health clubs in August – five of which are sited within five miles of Nuffield hospitals. It has also announced a strategic partnership



Nuffield CFO Greg Hyatt oversaw the investment deal

with Manchester Metropolitan University, which will see construction of a major facility in central Manchester, incorporating a hospital, plus wellbeing and rehabilitation services.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=B6p3a>



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UK news update

Algar: Big gyms under threat



Specialist microgyms like Athlete Lab in London are challenging the full service model

Traditional health clubs offering a broad selection of activities at a mid-range price are at serious risk of having their business 'salamoni-sliced' away by specialised competitors.

That was the view of respected industry analyst Ray Algar during his recent address at the IHRSA Europe Congress in Amsterdam.

He said activity providers must decide whether they wish to pursue the path of low-cost self-service gyms, which have been a big success story in recent years, or go-down the path of offering a high-quality support structure for their clients – as found in the new wave of microgyms – if they are to

survive and thrive in a changing marketplace.

The traditional mid-market gyms that are charging an average of £42 a month in the UK may find that small chunks of their members will be lost to low-cost competitors and microgyms specialising in the activities they most prefer – such as yoga, functional training or group cycling – until the business is no longer viable, Algar added, noting 120 private gyms are closing in the UK every year.

Whichever path traditional gyms choose, he concluded, they must be clear in their approach and embrace innovation if they are to succeed. Details: <http://lei.sr/a=v9k6X>

PHE launches inactivity framework

Public Health England (PHE) has published *Everybody Active, Every Day*, a framework for nationwide action to combat rising physical inactivity.

PHE's latest statistics place inactivity responsible for one in six premature deaths in England, costing the country an estimated £7.4bn a year.

The framework has been co-produced with more than 1,000 physical activity leaders, and PHE is calling for action from providers and commissioners in a range of sectors to help achieve its goals. The framework's four areas for action aim to:

- Change the social 'norm' to make physical activity the expectation
- Develop expertise and leadership within



PHE's framework aims to make activity the social norm

professionals and volunteers

- Create environments for active lives
- Identify and upscale successful programmes across the country

Details: <http://lei.sr/a=a6F8J>

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UK news update

Time for health delivery action is now, says Stalker



Stalker urged the physical activity sector to seize its public health delivery chance

UKactive CEO David Stalker has said now is the time for the physical activity sector to step forward and take action to become a 'central pillar of the public health strategy'.

During his keynote speech on the second day of Leisure Industry Week at Birmingham's NEC, Stalker said the industry must begin to lay the foundations for growth by harnessing the knowledge gained from a broad range of recent research projects.

Having established the extent of the UK's inactivity epidemic and the impact it is having on the NHS, Stalker believes the physical activity sector must now seize its chance to become a health delivery partner – an opportunity previously identified as being worth up to £8bn to the industry.

Stalker concluded that, if the activity sector can improve in key areas, it will be ideally placed to become the centre of health delivery at both national and local levels.

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=M5n7H>

Indie fuses fitness with physio



The décor maintains the club's urban theme through exposed timber and wall murals

A new independent health club in Christchurch, Dorset, is bidding to bring healthcare and fitness under one roof as part of an enhanced integrative offering.

Manoj Patel, a chartered physiotherapist, is the brains behind Urban Health and Fitness – a health club venture which aims to provide a joint package of care to members through qualified PTs and a team of physiotherapists and chiropractors. In addition to around 165 exercise classes a month, the facility – which opened at the start of September – offers specialised back care pilates classes as it bids to cater for as wide a market as possible.

"Our focus is on engaging people who want to change their lifestyle," said Patel. "At

some point, people will consider a more active lifestyle and we offer one solution to this. A small club such as Urban Health and Fitness cannot afford to target pockets of people. We must engage and be accommodating to any person that comes through the door."

The 297sq m (3,200sq ft) gym features a range of cardio machines (from Bodycharger in Taipei) and resistance machines (from Shanxi Yeekang Fitness products in China) which Patel sourced during his visit to FIBO 2013 in Germany. There's also a free weights section, a separate rooftop yoga and pilates studio, as well as specialist fitness equipment designed for rehab patients from the club's health clinic.

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=q5U2G>



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Training news

Industry is under-skilled: study

More than 55 per cent of UK fitness managers believe exercise professionals are under-skilled for delivering social and psychological support to inactive people, according to the results of a survey published by CYQ.

The study was conducted by ukactive – surveying 1,200 exercise and management professionals – in an attempt to identify current skills gaps in the active leisure sector.

Given that the findings have shown a lack of confidence in the skills of some professionals when looking at support frameworks for the inactive, fitness and leisure employers have called for definitive career pathways to be

established within the physical activity sector.

There have also been calls from the industry for a greater focus on counselling and motivational interviewing within training, to help the workforce cope with the growing number of inactive people across the country.

Another statistic shows 33 per cent of employers feel communication skills are not sufficiently covered by existing vocational training, while concerns were also raised by the ease at which young exercise professionals can enter the sector with minimal education and/or without a career development plan.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=C9U2u>



The survey was conducted among 1,200 exercise and management professionals

CIMSPA announces first HE partners

CIMSPA has announced the first wave of higher education (HE) partners – part of its new strategy to forge links between universities and industry for the benefit of students and employers.

The professional development body's strategy is particularly focused towards supporting students in making their first step into the world of work. The new HE partners are universities that have sector-endorsed degree courses, and that will also facilitate CIMSPA student affiliate status for their relevant learners.

The new higher education partners are Cardiff Metropolitan University, Leeds Beckett University, Sheffield Hallam University,



Ben Gittus, CIMSPA interim endorsement director

Southampton Solent University, University of Chester, and University of Portsmouth.

The deal enables CIMSPA to engage future industry talent from the start of their education.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=n5V2Y>

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Technology news

UK wearable tech uptake 'set to double' in 2015



Research suggests Christmas 2014 could kickstart more wearable tech purchases

The number of people who own wearable tech in the UK is set to double in 2015 – from 6 to 13 per cent – as products begin to make the leap from niche market to mainstream.

These are the findings from YouGov's recent analysis of wearable tech prospects, which suggests Christmas 2014 will be a key juncture for the sector. The research finds that currently 2.8 million people own a piece of wearable technology, and by the end of the festive season there will be 4.7 million.

This steady increase is set to continue over the next year and by September 2015, 6.1 million are likely to own one of the devices.

The research found fitness devices are the most popular wearable tech category, with 3 per cent of the population owning a fitness band. Despite hype around recent launches such as the Apple Watch, approximately one per cent of the population currently own a smartwatch, but this is expected to increase.

Details: <http://llei.sr?a=k5m6p>

Online giant Amazon eyes wearable tech push

Online retailer Amazon appears poised for a further push into the wearable technology sector, with the company set to increase investment and staff at its secretive hardware operations unit Lab126.

Recent reports suggest the retailer is looking to increase hiring by 27 per cent, by adding close to 4,000 people to its Silicon Valley-based division in the next five years, with US\$55m (£43.6m, £33.9m) in funding being poured into the lab.

Earlier this year, Amazon opened its own dedicated online store for wearables, with the UK's wearable technology shopfront offering a wide range of wearable devices, including activity trackers, smart watches, smart glasses and wearable cameras.

Details: <http://llei.sr?a=H2p7v>



Amazon is making moves in the wearable tech market

Microsoft device ready 'within weeks'



Tech pioneer Bill Gates founded Microsoft with childhood friend Paul Allen in 1975

Microsoft is reportedly weeks away from launching its own smartwatch with fitness tracking features, expected to challenge existing offerings from rivals Samsung and Apple.

The company founded by Bill Gates is said to be planning a quick launch which would see the device hit shops in time for the lucrative Christmas period, with wearable tech expected to top many a wish list this year. Microsoft will be hoping it fares better with smartwatches than it has in the smartphone sector, where Windows devices account for just 2.5 per cent of the market – well behind the offerings from Samsung and Apple.

According to 'sources close to the project' cited by *Forbes*, the Microsoft smartwatch will

track a wearer's heart rate and activity levels among other fitness functions, as well boasting a battery life of more than two days' regular use. Currently, Samsung's Galaxy Gear and Moto 360 smartwatches need to be charged every day, while Microsoft is also seeking to steal a march on Apple by making the device compatible with all phones, whereas the Apple watch will only work with iOS devices.

Further details are scarce at this stage, but with decades of experience in hardware and software launches – as well as the potential for tie-ups with the popular Xbox One console – Microsoft's smartwatch is expected to be a contender in the burgeoning market.

Details: <http://llei.sr?a=s6A5m>



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AltaFit franchise expands across Spain

Spanish health club franchise AltaFit is continuing to expand across the country with four new clubs opening in September – in Fuengirola, Coruña, Vista Alegre and Talavera – taking its total to 30 locations.

The low-cost operation charges €19.90 a month + VAT, which includes gym and group exercise classes. Equipment is supplied by Matrix, Tomahawk and Reebok.

The franchise will open a further four sites by the end of November, and has outlined plans to open 20 gyms every year to reach 100 gyms in 2018.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=x8N7p>

Growth for Georgia's Aspria Fitness chain

Aspria Fitness – a chain of clubs in Georgia, owned by Fitness Company LLC – has opened its latest club in the city of Tbilisi.

The new club, Aspria Vake branch, opened in September and has signed Star Trac as the sole supplier. It measures 1,156sqm and offers a dedicated Spinning studio and aerobics studio alongside the gym. Membership costs 99GEL a month (c £35) or a yearly fee of 799GEL (c £284).

With just four clubs, all in the capital city of Tbilisi, Aspria Fitness nevertheless reports to be the largest fitness chain in Georgia. All branches operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and members can use any of the four clubs.

The operator has plans to open more clubs in the area, as well as expanding beyond Tbilisi in the next 12 months. It also plans to refurbish its other sites with Star Trac.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=e9h6T>

Curves Girlfriends Walk for breast cancer charity

As part of Breast Cancer awareness month in the Netherlands, women-only fitness franchise Curves organised the Curves Girlfriends Walk. This event set out to raise funds for the Pink Ribbon Foundation – a charity that aims to raise awareness of breast cancer and raise funds for research.

More than 600 Curves members took part in the walk in Utrecht, donations from which went to a project run by professor Dr Aaronson, who is working to develop an exercise programme designed specifically for breast cancer patients.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=d3a4u>

Fitness First expands in Kuwait

Fitness First has announced the launch of its third health club in Kuwait.

The premium health club, located in the Sama Sulaibikhat shopping mall, offers separate facilities for men and women, with the men's club located on the second floor of the mall and the ladies' on the fourth.

The men's club offers a full CV and resistance gym complemented by extensive strength and freestyle areas. There's also a luxury relaxation area housing a spa pool and sauna, and a members' lounge with complimentary wifi and drinks. In addition to the above facilities, the ladies-only

club provides a variety of purpose-built group exercise studios.

Announcing the launch, Praveen Bhatnagar, CEO of Landmark Hotels and Wellness – which owns and operates Fitness First under licence in the Middle East – said: "Our studies show that obesity has been a growing health concern in Kuwait, which was ranked among the top 10 fattest countries in the world by *Forbes* magazine. We've ventured into this region with a mission to bring about a health wave among Kuwaitis and are confident that we will set the ball rolling."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=e7j6n>



Fitness First's latest Kuwait health club offers separate male and female facilities

Aura adds 11th facility to portfolio

Irish leisure centre operator Aura Sport and Leisure has unveiled the latest leisure centre to be added to its portfolio.

Grove Island Leisure Centre, in Limerick City, becomes the 11th Aura leisure facility.

The Aura Grove Island opening coincided with the completion of a €250,000 gym refurbishment, which included extending the free weights area, introducing new resistance equipment and enhancing the cardio area with new Precor equipment.

The 2,790sq m centre also offers a 25 metre swimming pool, kids' pool, sports hall and a health suite with sauna and steamroom. Aura will now extend the facilities further with the introduction of a group exercise studio and dedicated indoor cycling studio.

<http://lei.sr?a=m3Y7s>



The latest Aura site has received a €250,000 gym refurbishment

Health clubs for hospital brand



The club offering includes a running track, functional training area and a sports café

A new club, Acibadem Sports, has opened in Istanbul, Turkey. Owned by Acibadem, a leading brand in healthcare and hospitals, the 4,000sq m club is nevertheless operated as an independent site for the time being.

It's split into two separate sections: a FIFA-approved sports medicine centre, and a fitness club. The wide range of facilities on offer includes a large gym, which has been equipped by Cybex – including 40 pieces of 770 series CV, 20 pieces of Eagle Strength, Bravo functional trainers and free weights – alongside Concept2, Woodway and HUR's medical strength equipment.

Schwinn has equipped the indoor cycling studio, and there's also a dedicated pilates studio equipped by Balanced Body.

Other facilities include a group exercise studio, basketball and volleyball courts, a turf court, table tennis, running track, functional training area and a sports café. Treatment areas include a hypoxic training centre, cold room, spa and massage rooms.

Membership costs US\$1,200 a year, with Acibadem aiming to develop the high-end fitness offering to further enhance its position in the healthcare market.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=u6b4X>

Bloomingdale's in-store cycle races

Bloomingdale's, the famous US department store brand, has been involved in an innovative fitness venture.

On August 20, it hosted its Fashionable Fundraiser to support amfAR, the Foundation for AIDS Research, with a pledge to make a donation of US\$75,000 to the charity.

Bloomingdale's wanted to engage its customers in a physical competition to help raise money, and turned to Webracing to help organise an in-store cycling event. Cycles and screens were installed on 32 shop floors, with shoppers encouraged to compete against each other in virtual on-screen races. Four of the stores were even connected online, allowing



Cycles and screens were installed on 32 shop floors

the stores to compete against each other in real time. Bloomingdale's offered a large number of prizes and discounts for riders, and some 18,000 miles were cycled on a single day.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=N5c2x>

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Rutgers: A strong network of contacts

Rutgers appointed as new FIBO Ambassador

EuropeActive board member and fitness industry stalwart Herman Rutgers has been named new FIBO ambassador – the latest sign of the increasingly close collaboration seen between the industry body and the health and fitness trade show.

Rutgers has more than 35 years' international business experience and served as the first executive director of the European Health & Fitness Association (now EuropeActive). Working on behalf of FIBO, he'll contribute his expertise to strengthen the sector's international network.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=v2y9r>



Edmonds has 20 years' experience

Active IQ promotes Edmonds after 4 months

Sarah Edmonds has been promoted to director of quality and standards for Active IQ, just four months after joining parent company Premier Global.

Edmonds was announced in June as the new head of standards and compliance for Premier Global – comprised of both Premier Training International and Active IQ – having previously been interim head of CYQ at Central YMCA Qualifications. At the time, Edmonds was hailed as a valuable acquisition thanks to her 20 years' experience in the active leisure industry.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=E7K7G>

Rolfe appointed new Halo CEO

Halo Leisure's board of trustees has named enterprise mainstay Scott Rolfe as new CEO.

Rolfe joined the leisure operator 12 years ago as one of the founding members of its senior management team and has since been director of operations and managing director of its trading arm. Rolfe replaces Halo's founding CEO Jon Argent, who departed after 12 years at the helm to become national partnerships director over at GLL.

In his new role as Halo chief – overseeing 800 staff members – Rolfe is tasked with continuing the enterprise's growth as it delivers health, sport and leisure across Herefordshire, Bridgend County and Shropshire.

"Health and wellbeing is now recognised as a priority for local economies and communities – it has never been more important to make sport and fitness initiatives accessible to everyone," said Rolfe. "It has never been more important to see providers like Halo working in partnership with health practitioners to prevent health problems and to help more people get more active, more often."

He added: "Our mission is to build on our relationship with businesses, families, health experts, youth organisations, community groups and individual members of the community to ensure they benefit from the very best kind of sport and leisure offering."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=y6h8H>



Rolfe holds an MBA from Worcester Uni

Chris Brown swaps FitLinxx for PHS

Equipment supplier Performance Health Systems (PHS) has appointed Chris Brown as the new head of healthcare and medical for its Power Plate and bioDensity brands.

Brown is tasked with identifying opportunities and managing sales in the

corporate wellness, elderly care and medical markets. He is expected to expand distribution of the company's vibration training machine Power Plate, as well as introduce and sell the bioDensity osteogenic loading system – a piece of technology that helps rebuild bone density among people affected by osteoporosis – as it makes its debut in the UK market.

Brown joins from FitLinxx where he spent almost 10 years, most recently serving as director for its business development within international health and wellness markets.

"The technological advances achieved by PHS are very exciting and I believe we can ultimately deliver measurable health improvements to those who most need it," said Brown, who will be based at the PHS UK head office in London. "My job is to introduce these opportunities to healthcare and medical experts whose skills, combined with our products, can really make a difference."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=c3q9e>



Chris Brown joined PHS in early October

BMF names Mark Wood as head training tutor

Outdoor exercise provider British Military Fitness (BMF) has announced the appointment of Mark Wood as its new head training tutor.

Wood joined BMF five years ago as an instructor – having trained at Discovery Learning in West London – and has quickly

risen through the ranks. His new role will focus on the continuous improvement of the quality and consistency of instruction in a bid to ensure members receive high quality sessions every time they train.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=v5B5C>

Fit For Sport strengthens team

Children's activity provider Fit For Sport has strengthened its management team with two appointments to support ongoing expansion.

Anita De Villiers has joined the company as head of children's experience, tasked with ensuring Fit For Sport's programmes and activities, both in and out of schools, remain innovative, progressive and fun. De Villiers brings a broad range of experience from her previous role as national children's manager at Virgin Active where she worked for 13 years.

Meanwhile, Jack Shakespeare has been promoted to head of training and development to drive Fit For Sport's children's activity programming. He also leads the Fit For Sport training academy, responsible for the quality of delivery of its vocational training and CPD programmes. Shakespeare has been with the company for seven years, working from the ground up – initially as an activity leader in its schools and Kids Camp services – and more recently as national training manager.

"Anita and Jack combine to extend our resources with their respective valuable skills,



Anita De Villiers and Jack Shakespeare

experience and ideas," said Dean Horridge, CEO and founder of Fit For Sport, and the recently appointed chair of Compass. "We are pushing on several fronts to make children's activity a top priority in the UK and their fresh ideas and additional perspectives on our work will be crucial to our next phase of growth."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=d5c7E>

Talley swaps LA for Everyone Active

Everyone Active has appointed Mark Talley as its new group fitness development manager, with a brief of introducing new products, ideas and technology to aid customer retention and drive the company forward.

Talley will also work with Everyone Active's operational teams to ensure business objectives are met and implemented in a consistent way across the organisation.

With more than 20 years' experience in the health and fitness industry, Talley arrives from LA fitness, where he was fitness director and has subsequently been replaced by Sam Theyers (see right). Prior to LA, Talley held a variety of senior operational, product development and managerial roles at organisations including Marriott, Thistle Hotels, Holmes Place, Esporta and Fusion Lifestyle.

"We are very pleased to have Mark join our team and believe he has all the qualities to continue driving our business and success," said Everyone Active MD David Bibby.



Talley arrives from gym chain LA fitness

"Everyone Active is currently going from strength to strength and Mark's experience and proven track record of successful delivery will be key to supporting our continued development and growth."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=q6Y4U>

Jo Monkhouse makes the leap to Leisure-net

Leisure-net Solutions has appointed Jo Monkhouse as a data insight manager, a role that will see her supporting clients to maximise the outcomes of the data they generate.

Monkhouse has spent the last 13 years working with Everyone Active (SLM), initially

as a membership manager looking after the direct debits and membership for all sites. She went on to work in IT and later marketing, as well as being heavily involved in the User Acceptance Testing of online membership. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=M6v7n>

Cycling specialist Neil Troutman joins Keiser

Keiser UK has appointed Neil Troutman as new master instructor, tasked with building a team of master instructors to deliver Keiser's M Series and Air training courses.

He will also develop a portfolio of training and educational material with Keiser, as well as working with SkillsActive to gain REPs accreditation for these new courses.

Troutman has more than 20 years' experience in the health and fitness industry. He has worked as a global master trainer, with experience developing and gaining accreditation for training courses for other fitness equipment suppliers including Trixter and Lebert Fitness.

Keiser UK commercial director Nick Startin said: "By recruiting a master trainer of Neil's calibre, Keiser UK can enhance the quality of our training and education for UK instructors and serve to benefit their class participants and PT clients."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Q5h8p>



Theyers has worked in Dubai and NZ

LA fitness promotes Sam Theyers to head fitness

LA fitness has promoted Sam Theyers to the role of national head of fitness for the 47-club chain, filling the void left by Mark Talley's recent departure (see left).

Theyers, who has been with LA fitness since April 2013, took up his new role on 1 October, after enjoying a successful year as regional sales manager for the south.

He has been in the industry for nearly 15 years, starting as a PT and group fitness instructor with Les Mills in his native New Zealand. Theyers has a BA in Exercise Prescription, Management and Sports Science and several Level 3 diplomas.

He will lead the training team at LA fitness – reporting directly into COO Arthur McColl – and will also be managing the roll-out of key new product developments and classes across the chain. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=P7W6c>

Group Xcellence starts with Les Mills...



The Les Mills GRIT™ classes are usually sold out

90% of exercisers say they prefer to work out in a group, which is why operators need to ensure their group exercise timetable has pulling power

How can an operator tell they are doing a great job motivating people? It's simple – members attend more often! With more than 30 years of designing and developing group exercise programmes that really drive member motivation and attendance, Les Mills is the most trusted and respected brand in the industry.

Amanda Roberts, Health and Fitness Development Officer from Wrexham Waterworld talks about her partnership with the Les Mills. "It's been a ten year journey for us. When I first took over the group fitness offering our timetable had in excess of 20 different classes, all with different names, different descriptions and there was no structure. Something had to change!"

Wrexham Waterworld and Les Mills started a partnership in 2005 when the team delivered in-house training to a team of Les Mills BODYPUMP™ instructors. "This was the turning point for me. The professionalism and quality of the education that the Les Mills team provided was incredible, especially when compared to other brands we were working with," says Amanda.



Les Mills is a fitness brand that stands out from the pack

“93% of Les Mills users have recommended their current facility to friends or family”



The Les Mills GFX Series in 2014 welcomed more than 6,000 people to events across the UK and Ireland

Independent research shows that LES MILLS™ licensed facilities have 500 more members per club than the global average.

Since then Wrexham Waterworld has migrated the majority of its group fitness offering and training to Les Mills and now operates eight of the Les Mills programmes, with the view to launching further programmes in 2015 including its new children's solution – Les Mills BORN TO MOVE™.

Amanda adds: "It's not just my life that Les Mills makes easier – it's the members and users who benefit the most. They love the classes. The overall group fitness timetable is easy to understand and is built by applying the Les Mills tried and tested, and more importantly proven approach.

"We launched the new Les Mills GRIT™ programme earlier this year and the success is phenomenal. The classes are full to bursting with we are even hosting one of the Les Mills GRIT™ championships heats in the run up for GFX Liverpool.

"And that's what's great about working with Les Mills. We get far more value for money. We get support and interaction and the opportunity to be part of something amazing."



Les Mills has over 30 years' experience of designing group-ex classes

Keith Burnet, CEO of Les Mills UK says: "There are many 'copycat' products and programmes in the market which promise to deliver results for operators but in reality this doesn't happen. Consumers and instructors

want to be part of something bigger – a brand and a cause that they feel proud to support and to be part of. What we do works and that's why there are over 20 million Les Mills workouts enjoyed across the UK each year." ●

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Party Conferences



ukactive CEO
David Stalker
reviews the
themes and
comparative

moods of the recent Labour and
Conservative Party Conferences

The dust on the Party Conferences has settled and the election lines are becoming clearer ahead of next year's General Election. But how are the Parties faring following the conferences? Is Ed electable? Are the knives out for Cameron? What does the future of the health service look like?

The Party of the NHS?

Labour's line of attack for the General Election is clear: put the NHS centre stage, positioning 7 May 2015 as a "day of reckoning" for the UK's most treasured institution.

With Miliband's speech falling short of expectations, it was up to the Shadow Health Secretary Andy Burnham to inject life and energy into the Labour faithful. Burnham addressed contentious issues of the NHS: funding, keeping the NHS public, staffing levels and care of the most vulnerable members of society.

He made three key promises: to repeal the Health and Social Care Act; that NHS funding will increase by £2.5bn for each year of the next Parliament (generated without having to levy new taxes, except on 'mansion' owners and the tobacco industry); and free social care at the end of life.

With three standing ovations, the messages were well received. What's needed now is some meat on the bones of what could prove to be popular policies.

Common themes

The promotion of localism and regional shared services is a key trend that all political parties reinforced. There's an emerging cross-party commitment to give local authorities more power over major spending decisions. This would shift unpopular spending cuts away from Whitehall; influencers will be spending much more time in town halls post election.



Miliband's speech was 'lacklustre', while Cameron's was his 'best to date', say critics

The battle of the leaders

As Miliband finished his speech, there was a general feeling that it mirrored what was a lacklustre conference. We got a promise of more nurses, midwives and doctors, but we also had Miliband forgetting to mention the debt or deficit. There was the traditional slating of bankers, energy companies and payday lenders, but very little on how the country will be set up to support businesses to flourish under a Labour government.

Appearance in political races is often just as important, if not more so, than content. Memorising text and not using an autocue is viewed as a sign of a person who is speaking from the heart. But it's risky, and led to the Labour Leader giving a stilted performance, with key issues forgotten completely.

Can Cameron counter?

The Conservative conference could hardly have got off to a worse start with the Newmark sex sting and Reckless UKIP defection. Most thought these stories would overshadow the conference, but as one delegate said: "Cameron is usually at his best when he's in the sh*t, and he's really in



PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

the sh*t at the moment." This was proven correct, with what many commentators are calling his best speech to date.

He pledged to cut taxes for 30 million people if they win next year's election, raising the threshold for the 40p income tax rate from £41,900 to £50,000. There were promises to protect the NHS budget for England, and for everyone to have access to GP services seven days a week by 2020.

Despite this performance, some commentators believe Cameron's grasp of party reins is tenuous, with waning loyalty from his ranks, an ongoing divide between the Tories, working class, northern and Scottish voters, and continuing competition from UKIP. Although a change of leadership is unlikely pre-election, Boris Johnson and George Osborne are both well-positioned to take the helm in the future.

Want to hear more?

Regardless of how things pan out, our sector can gain insights into the nation's future physical activity policies and delivery mechanisms as key stakeholders gather to address ukactive's National Summit on 13 November. ●

Want to attend the summit?

The ukactive National Summit takes place in London on 13 November 2014, and tickets are now available. For information, please visit: www.ukactive.com/events/forthcoming-events/summit-2014

MATRIX HAS WHEELS IN MOTION FOR 2015 CYCLING SUCCESS

Olympic champion, Laura Trott OBE, signs for Matrix Fitness cycling team

Matrix Fitness is delighted that World and double Olympic cycling champion, Laura Trott OBE, will be joining the Matrix Fitness cycling team in 2015.

The current British road race champion will move to the team with effect from 1 January 2015, and will ride a program of key events that complement her track racing commitments and intended build up for the Rio Olympic Games in 2016.

Commenting on the signing, Jon Johnston, Managing Director of Matrix Fitness said:

"Laura brings a new dimension to the team in her role as ambassador for cycling and as a role model for young people. She is still only 22 years old, but she has already achieved so much. I cannot think of a better person to inspire youngsters to get active."



Dani King MBE launches IC7 Indoor Cycle

"The most relevant, smoothest, static bike I have ever trained on!"

Olympic Champion cyclist and 'Team Matrix' Ambassador, Dani King MBE, officially launched the power-based Matrix IC7 Indoor Cycle and Coach by Color® Power Program to the UK market at Leisure Industry Week.

The IC7 is the latest product in the Matrix Fitness portfolio to be 'Powered by ICG®', and boasts indoor cycling's first two-stage drivetrain, which enables the market's most accurate (+/-1%) direct Wattrate® (Power) meter. The bike's performance metrics are delivered to the rider via the patent-pending Coach By Color® Training Console, which vividly displays the user's effort and power in various coloured zones.

Another giant leap on the horizon for Matrix Fitness' cycling team

After five years' concerted effort to develop women's cycling, On The Drops – the management team behind Matrix Fitness-Vulpine – hopes to create a domestic professional team for British road riders to aspire to. Their ambition looks set to be rewarded with plans in place for them to become a full UCI pro team in 2015.

After working hard to secure superb elite riders, including Laura Trott MBE, and World Team Pursuit champion, Elinor Barker, the final team line-up has now been confirmed as: Laura Trott, Elinor Barker, Lucy Martin, Molly Weaver, Jessie Walker, Harriet Owen, Mel Lowther, Sara Olsson, Christina Siggaard, and Penny Rowson.

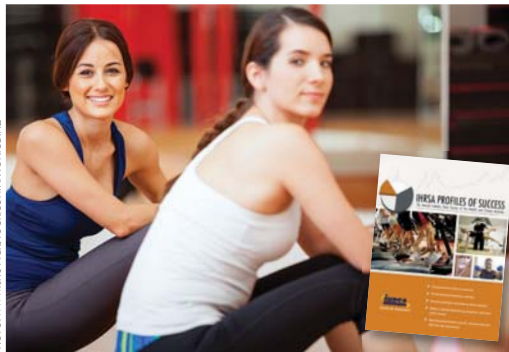
One to watch... Mel Lowther

Following two years on the British Olympic Development Programme (ODP), Matrix Fitness rider, Mel Lowther will be joining the ranks of the elite riders in 2015. The aggressive rider, known for her breakaways, has demonstrated superb form since joining the Matrix team in 2013, including securing an impressive 7th place at the recent Junior World Championships in Spain.



Profiles of Success

PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ANTONIODIAZ



Over 90 per cent of responding clubs offer group exercise at no additional cost

IHRSA has released its annual *Profiles of Success* report, which offers a detailed analysis of the performance of health clubs

In October, IHRSA released the latest edition of *Profiles of Success*. This annual report – now in its 33rd year – provides a detailed analysis of the annual performance of health clubs, including results in key metrics such as revenue and membership growth, payroll, member retention, non-dues revenue and EBITDA, with strong figures emerging this year.

“Leading clubs continue to record growth and improvements in revenue, membership and operational metrics,” says Jay Ablondi, IHRSA’s executive VP of global products.

Overall, clubs posted median net membership growth of 4 per cent and revenue growth of 5 per cent. Additional key findings include:

- Fitness-only clubs posted greater net membership growth (+6.2 per cent) than multi-purpose clubs (+0.8 per cent).
- Smaller clubs generated less revenue per individual member (US\$630.80) in comparison with larger clubs (US\$876.10).
- Total payroll claims a median 41.7 per cent of total revenue for all responding health and fitness clubs.
- Clubs reinvest nearly 2 per cent of total revenue into fitness equipment.

“This edition of *Profiles of Success* also contains a profit centre section that analyses revenue streams from personal and small group training, racquet sports, spas, pro shop/retail, food and beverage, children’s/youth programmes, and aquatics/pool,” says Melissa Rodriguez, IHRSA’s senior research manager. “Although all clubs offered a variety of ancillary services for additional fees, over 90 per cent of the responding clubs offer group exercise at no additional cost beyond membership dues. Recent research findings, as well as anecdotal data from club operators, support the important role group exercise plays in retaining members.”

Profiles of Success is based on 2013 and 2012 data, provided voluntarily by 186 club companies, representing 6,819 facilities. The report provides key performance indicators for several club types: fitness-only, multi-purpose, independent, and multi-chains. Performance is also analysed by club size. A snapshot of participation, demographics and psychographics is also included.

The *Profiles of Success* report may be purchased in full or in sections at www.ihrsa.org/profiles

The entire PDF can be purchased for US\$499.95 (US\$249.95 for IHRSA members). The three separate parts are available for US\$159.95 each (US\$89.95 for IHRSA members).

IHRSA calendar

Visit www.ihrsa.org/meetings for details and to register for these events

18–21 November 2014

ChinaFit / IHRSA China Management Forum
Guangzhou, China

4 December 2014

Increase club revenue and member retention through effective fitness programming (Webinar)

15 January 2015

Retention, Revenue & Results (Webinar)

11–14 March 2015

IHRSA 2015
Los Angeles, California, US



The Julie Main scholarship is open to female IHRSA members

Apply now for scholarship

IHRSA celebrates the legacy of past association president Julie Main, who passed away from breast cancer in 2009, by offering the Julie Main Woman Leader Scholarship to a female IHRSA member who exemplifies courage, perseverance, excellence and professionalism.

The scholarship includes a full four-day IHRSA 2015 registration, hotel accommodation, a US\$500 travel stipend, and lunch with the judging committee and past recipients. Visit www.ihrsa.org/mainscholarship for details and to apply by the 14 November deadline.

Award for Olav Thorstad

The 2014 European Club Leadership Award was awarded to Olav Thorstad last month, at the 14th Annual IHRSA European Congress.

Thorstad joined SATS in November of 2007 as country manager for Norway. Less than two years later, in June 2009, he was promoted to CEO for all activities in SATS Holding, which operates across the Nordics.

During 2013, a merger process between SATS and Elixia was initiated. This was finalised in June of 2014 and Thorstad was appointed CEO of the new joint company – named Health & Fitness Nordic – which now operates more than 200 clubs and caters for over 550,000 members. Not only has the company grown tremendously under Thorstad's leadership, but all markets the health and fitness company is operating in have grown as well.

"Thorstad is a visionary and has a holistic view on the industry," wrote Rasmus Ingerslev, CEO of low-cost operator Fresh Fitness – also part of Health & Fitness Nordic – in a letter to IHRSA nominating Thorstad for the award.

"Thanks to this holistic vision, he initiated operations in the low-cost segment, through Fresh Fitness, in 2010. This makes Health & Fitness Nordic one of the few cross-segment operators in Europe.

"In addition to the health clubs, Health & Fitness Nordic also owns SAFE, a company educating instructors for the fitness industry – another way of helping the industry grow.

"This complex operation requires great leadership, strong understanding of business cultures and the ability to attract and retain talent who share your vision. And that's what Olav Thorstad is – a great leader."



Olav Thorstad: "A visionary and a great leader"

More keynotes announced for IHRSA 2015

Three more keynote speakers have been announced for the 2015 IHRSA Annual Convention & Trade Show, which takes place in Los Angeles in March, joining futurologist Magnus Lindkvist (see *HCM* Oct 14, p29) in the line-up.

Arianna Huffington, president and editor-in-chief of the Huffington Post Media Group, will present 'Redefining Success: The Third Metric That Can Benefit Your Bottom Line'. She has been named on *Time* magazine's list of the world's 100 most influential people and the *Forbes* Most Powerful Women list.

Author and columnist Adam Bryant will present 'Quick and Nimble: Lessons from Leading CEOs on How to Create a Culture of Innovation'. Bryant has over two decades' experience as a reporter and editor at both *Newsweek* and *The New York Times*.



L-r: Arianna Huffington, Kelly McGonigal and Adam Bryant

Author and Stanford University lecturer Kelly McGonigal will speak on 'The Willpower Instinct'. In 2010, *Forbes* named McGonigal one of the 20 most inspiring women to follow on Twitter.

About IHRSA

Founded in 1981, IHRSA – the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association – is the only

global trade association, representing more than 10,000 health and fitness facilities and suppliers worldwide.

To learn how IHRSA can help your business thrive, visit www.ihrsa.org. Locate an IHRSA club at www.healthclubs.com



This year's Spa Life will take place at the new Center Parcs Woburn Forest

NOVEMBER

18-19 | Spa Life UK

Venue Center Parcs Woburn Forest, UK

Summary

The first day of Spa Life UK includes an invitation-only CEO Summit for spa operators in the UK, as well as a buyer/supplier forum. The second day will include a conference. There will also be a networking dinner as well as a supplier showcase and expo.

Web www.spa-life.co.uk

19-22 | SIBEC Europe

Venue Pestana Casino Park Hotel, Funchal, Madeira

Summary

This event will bring the UK and Europe's major operators from the private, local authority and trust markets in health, fitness and leisure together with top suppliers for a series of one-to-one meetings over two business days. There's also plenty of time for networking.

Web www.mcleaneventsinternational.com

25-26 | BASES Conference 2014

Venue St George's Park, Burton upon Trent, UK

Summary

This year's conference of the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences will be held at St George's Park – the new home of The Football Association – with its world-class meeting facilities. The two-day programme promises to focus on the hot topics relevant to sport and exercise scientists, with "engaging content including debates, keynotes and an invited symposium presented by experts".

Web www.bases.org.uk

JANUARY 2015

26-27 | The 35th Facilities Management Forum

Venue Radisson Blu Hotel, London Stansted, UK

Summary

The Facilities Management (FM) Forum is specifically organised for FM managers and directors who are directly responsible for the purchase of their organisation's FM products and services.

Web www.forumevents.co.uk

FEBRUARY 2015

1-3 | Spatex

Venue Jaguar Exhibition Hall, Ricoh Arena, Coventry, UK

Summary

One of the UK's largest dedicated pool and spa trade events, representing all sectors of the wet leisure industry, this exhibition is now in its 19th year.

Web www.spatex.co.uk

3-4 | ACSM Team Physician Course – Part 2

Venue Grand Hyatt San Antonio, Texas, US

Summary

This course by the American College of Sports Medicine aims to give primary care, speciality physicians and other healthcare providers core knowledge to care for sports teams in the community.

Web www.acsm.org/tpc

19-21 | FORUMCLUB

Venue Bologna, Italy

Summary

An international congress and expo for entrepreneurs and managers of fitness clubs, aquatic centres and sports centres.

Web www.forumclub.it



It's RNLI red noses all round

NOV & DEC 2014

Reindeer Run

This year there are five Reindeer Runs organised across the UK and Ireland in November and December, to raise money for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) – a charity that saves 23 lives a day. The Reindeer Runs consist of 5k and 10k courses, with every participant receiving a free set of antlers. Some events also include complimentary Rookie the RNLI Reindeer T-shirts. Entry costs £18 for the 10k and £16 for the 5k, and children can join in the fun for £7.50. Mince pies and hot drinks are usually served on the finish line. Details: <http://rnli.org>



Runners get a free Santa suit

DECEMBER 2014

Chase the Pud

Take part in this short run, in which participants wear Santa suits to chase the Christmas pud – all to raise money for the British Heart Foundation. There are 16 events planned in December in the UK. The entry fee includes a free Santa suit for runners – and whoever catches the pudding this year gets to take their place in 2015. Details: www.bhf.org.uk

fitness fx



ALL NEW!

- New fitness fx® app to access music and videos
- New subscription model
- New programmes
- New release - v14.2



NEW FITNESS APP

Our all-new, state-of-the-art app allows certified fitness professionals to access the complete library of releases from v13.1 onwards. No more CDs. No more DVDs. Download the app from the Apple App Store and the Google Play™ store, log in and enjoy.



NEW PROGRAMMES

We're thrilled to announce 3 new T3 programmes – T3 shred™, T3 swing™ and T3 sprint (visit our website for details). T3 programmes are released every 8 weeks and certified fitness professionals gain instant access via their subscription.



FREE UPGRADE

Free upgrade onto the new T3 workshop for all instructors with an existing fitness fx® qualification (conditions apply).



NEW SUBSCRIPTION MODEL

All fitness fx® and T3 releases are now available on subscription only. From as little as £4.99 a month (inc. VAT) certified fitness professionals will have access to all video and music releases from v13.1 onwards for the programme(s) to which they subscribe. They'll receive instant access to new releases as soon as they become available. Subscribe to all 4 fitness fx® programmes or all 6 T3 programmes for just £19.99 a month (inc. VAT).



NEW RELEASE

v14.2 is out now. This great new release includes cutting-edge exercise programming for studio resistance training, bodyweight conditioning, kettlebells, metabolic circuits, martial arts inspired conditioning and much more.

T3 blast
— & —
blast fx

T3 pump
— & —
pump fx

T3 sprint
— & —
swing

T3 shred
— & —
stomp fx

groove fx
— & —
T3 fight

To book your place or to find out more, visit www.fitness-fx.com or call 0845 257 8573

EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT ...

Predictions for 2015

As we gear up for 2015, what looks set to drive growth of the sector? What will be the challenges and opportunities over the coming 12 months, and how should we respond?

After a prolonged recession, 2014 has been brighter for most, with the economy finally turning a corner and both consumer confidence and the housing market picking up.

In the fitness industry, the low-cost sector had another strong year, growing 21 per cent according to the latest Mintel research. But will the improvement in the economy mean the affordable clubs will lose their appeal, with people trading up to more expensive brands? Not at all, according to CEO of The Gym Group John Trehan. "I would expect the market to at least double and for there to be some new entrants in 2015," he says. "I think – as has happened in other

markets such as airlines, hotels and retail – there will be more growth at the premium end but also significant growth at the low-cost end of the market.

"Research shows value for money is here to stay: people don't automatically go for a more expensive brand in good economic times."

Another feature of 2014 has been the growth of boutique clubs – the so-called microgyms – where members pay premium prices for a small, personal, high spec club that focuses on one discipline. Will we see new entrants into this sector? How will the products evolve and will more niches emerge?

The obesity crisis has never been far from the news headlines this year.

Despite health club penetration levels nudging up very slightly, the nation – and indeed the world – is getting fatter. Will we start to see some progress with this problem next year, with new ideas brought forward on how to effect behaviour change on a mass scale?

Last but definitely not least, on the back of growing consumer interest in wearable technology, the Apple Watch will go on sale in 2015. What impact will such products continue to have on the industry? Will tech-savvy consumers take workouts into their own hands, bypassing the expertise of gyms – and maybe even gyms themselves – or will operators learn to take advantage of the technology? We ask the experts....

WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL HAPPEN IN THE SECTOR NEXT YEAR? EMAIL US: HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM

ARRON WILLIAMS

Special projects • Life Fitness

"Last year we had 13.2 per cent penetration, which was deemed a good year – but this only represents 1.4 per cent growth since 2007, so the industry is relatively stagnant. The *Turning the Tide of Inactivity* report vividly highlights the extent of chronic disease and inactivity throughout the UK, which suggests the current model isn't working and something has to change.

The most buoyant section of the market is the boutique gym sector. This is a very urban trend, but next year we might start to see them expand into the suburbs. So far we've identified 23 different types of boutique gym, in the main HIIT-based, highly functional, group exercise-based, social and communal. As this trend evolves, we're likely to see more developments such as the fitness mall model, or the 'multiple' boutique model where health clubs are deconstructed and then reconstructed along the lines of a series of specialised packaged boutique gym offerings. With boutiques offering pay as you go and bulk buy, and low-cost clubs offering no contract memberships, the days of being a 12-month contract prisoner have all but gone.

I think club locations will change and, as retail struggles on the high street, we'll start to see studios and boutique clubs move in, as is already happening in the US and Asia."



BRYAN O'ROURKE

CEO • Integris

"It has been a robust 2014 and I think 2015 will continue in the same vein. Economic indicators suggest it will be a good year. I think memberships will continue to rise, with more formats, opportunities and content-based programming.

Several developed markets will see further consolidation: I predict a couple of blockbuster transactions in Europe, the US and Asia Pacific. We will see continued growth in India, Asia Pacific, Australia, the US and Eastern Europe, with Poland and Hungary in particular being active.

Digital technology will have an impact: there will be a proliferation of digital competitors related to advancements in wearable technology, apps and smartphone adaptations. This will put pressure on clubs to utilise the technology for payment and engagements. However, although the digital delivery model will grow, there's no research to suggest this will negatively impact on the bricks and mortar participation.

There will be continued growth in niche format models, both boutiques and low-cost. However, I think we might see some middle-tier players tweak their business model to offer a bit of each, and some hybrid concepts will emerge which can offer a 'best of both worlds, club within a club' approach."





Way of the future: The Apple Watch marks an evolution in fitness and activity tracking

DAVID MINTON

Director • The Leisure Database Company



“Next year the industry is going to have to adapt or lose out. New technology is making the consumer more powerful and clubs are going to have to react. Innovations like the Apple Watch and the iPhone 6 with iOS 8 – which includes the new Health app – will become the most useful repository for all sorts of health and fitness data, with some collected automatically by the barometer inside the new phones.

Harvard has just released a report saying that US waistlines are getting even bigger. The UK is close behind and the industry needs to do something radical – like offering free PT to help people get results – if it's to be taken seriously.

As the economy picks up, I think the growth of the low-cost sector will slow. People like to pay for a bit of comfort, luxury and broader facilities, otherwise everyone would stay at budget hotels. Microgyms are adding value to the industry with a good product and these will continue to grow as people value unique experiences. However, the biggest growth will come from the public sector, which is embedded in the community and puts the customer first in a way that private sector clubs cannot. Usage of public sector facilities is going up enormously: the top seven operators had almost 100 million visits last year.”

DAVE STALKER

CEO • ukactive



“In 2015, wearable technology will get a hot Apple injection, as the Apple Watch heralds the start of the next evolution in fitness and activity tracking.

The major private institutions on which the industry grew in the 1990s will either have to rediscover a purpose, as we have seen with Fitness First, or drift off into irrelevance. Driven by efficiency drives, enhanced service levels and greater competition, the public sector will continue to thrive and drive growth. The pressure of continuous growth in the low-cost sector will be joined by the imperative to retain, or else implode. Meanwhile the proliferation of specialist microgyms will continue to explode, charging fees previously only dreamt of by mainstream operators. Within the health community, stakeholders will get even harsher in their appraisals of what we offer: show them your evidence or they'll show you the door, for both leisure and health contracts.

Finally, health clubs, leisure centres and activity providers are now part of a wider ecosystem trying to get the world fit and healthy. Embracing this position, and understanding our role within it, will enable us to dramatically redefine the value and impact of our sector, with a continued growth in our sector's importance to all stakeholders as a result.”



DR JOHN MORGAN

He's hit the headlines recently for being the GP that recommends walking to his patients. Kate Cracknell finds out more about his 'exercise is medicine' philosophy, and why he thinks more GPs should follow suit



I've been put down as the doctor who prescribes walking for the treatment and prevention of disease, but I'm fairly shocked

about the response I've had to this. I don't really do anything differently from what I think every GP should be doing," says Dr John Morgan, commenting on the recent flurry of media interest in his exercise referral practices.

"I believe GPs should speak to all their patients about exercise. I see 280–300 NHS patients a week, and about 200 private patients, and I mention exercise to probably 80 per cent of them in one way or another. My view is that, if you mention it at every single point of contact with a patient, it will encourage them to incorporate activity into their daily lives."

Exercise is medicine

He continues: "I mean, the evidence is irrefutable isn't it – the benefits of exercise for so many different diseases. However, there's evidence to suggest that, if you try and medicalise exercise

to a whole population group, it can put them off. I therefore approach it from an individual patient basis – talking about exercise to each of the 40 patients who sit in front of me each day, about how it can help their general health as well as the problem they've come to see me about.

"If they've come to see me about something like high blood pressure it's a natural fit, but even things like recurrent chest infections or some other minor condition – you encourage them to exercise, which improves and strengthens the heart and lungs, which means they don't get the same infections next time. They see the health benefits themselves and it encourages them to keep exercising."

But how does he squeeze it all in to a 10-minute consultation? "To be honest I don't find it that difficult – I think we get too hung up on this 10-minute consultation model. In my mind it's about using your time to the best effect. It's having the mindset that exercise is a treatment from the word go.

"If the best effect is giving the patient a prescription for an antibiotic for a sore throat or a prescription for an anti-hypertension medication, all well and good. However, if you look at the studies, any tablets I might give them for their blood pressure are beaten hands down by losing weight and physical activity. So I tell them that. I show them graphs and charts that prove how combining physical activity with weight loss beats any kind of medication I can give them.

"Some patients won't end up exercising for various reasons – I hear the usual excuses and I'll try and come up with methods of overcoming those – but about 50 per cent of my patients will take me up on the offer of exercise, on the encouragement of exercise. Because honestly, the vast majority of patients don't want to be on medication for the rest of their lives. They don't want to be diagnosed with diabetes or hypertension in their early 50s and require medication every day for the next 30-odd years. So actually talking



Morgan talks to 80 per cent of patients about exercise, including talking to parents about their kids



My patients cost the hospital £8,000 per 1,000 population, compared to £12,000–13,000 per 1,000 population for another local GP surgery of similar size and standing



to them about that and giving them a real life option – the choice between taking medication and using exercise to treat and prevent disease... I find most of them want to take responsibility for their own health. Some will want the easier solution of a pill, but the vast majority are willing to give exercise a go."

Integrated healthcare

Morgan has been practising what he preaches for many years, based out of Wigan's Pennygate Medical Centre. "Back in the day, when practice-based commissioning was starting – which was probably about 10 years ago – I built a gym in our practice. I used two fairly sizable rooms in our new building, one into which I put cardiovascular equipment and another where I mirrored the walls to use as an aerobics studio; we employed a REPS Level 4 trainer to come in and deliver exercise classes for us. That meant I could refer people directly into our own gym.

"The rationale was to try and make exercise inextricably linked with

health – physically putting exercise facilities into the building to create a true health centre rather than a disease centre. I think too often the NHS concentrates on treating disease rather than promoting health.

"And it's still going strong: ours is one of the few general practices in the country that has a cardiovascular gym and aerobics studio inside it. I walked past literally an hour ago and there were people using it.

"We offer 12-week programmes, free of charge, after which we encourage people to progress into local facilities – especially the Active Living in Wigan scheme – to continue their exercise. And we've seen great results, including among genuinely sedentary, obese people and right through the age ranges.

"I remember one lady in her late 60s/early 70s who had never exercised in her life, and she turned up for her first exercise class in twin set and pearls. There are so many anecdotes like that. But people soon get used to it and the whole thing has ballooned: we have

walking groups now too, which the patients have taken over and organise and lead themselves. Those are excellent for their social aspect too, and for the fact that people don't really feel like they're exercising – they enjoy it.

"The whole programme has really enhanced the physical and mental health of our patient population."

Weight of evidence

And there's data to prove it, including a 2012 audit of Morgan's 12-week programme by students at Manchester University. So what were the results that most excited him?

"It was probably the self-reported change in mood: 92.5 per cent of participants said they'd experienced an improvement of mood. Also, 94 per cent of people reduced their blood pressure, independent of any medication.

"Meanwhile 81 per cent had decreased hospital admissions and GP consultations in the 12 months after the exercise programme compared to the previous 12 months. Not only that but ▶



"So yes, it's simple data, but if a health club were able to offer me similar data on their own programmes – for example, showing me a measurable improvement in a range of health markers – I'd be happy with that. And I think other GPs probably would be too. So I'd really encourage gyms to liaise with their local GPs and start this sort of programme."

GP resistance

But therein lies a big part of the problem, as other GPs don't seem as keen as Morgan to embrace physical activity. Why does he think that is?

"There's always the issue of training, and the fact that medical schools focus on disease and treatment of disease rather than health and prevention of disease. Junior doctors need to be trained in the benefits of exercise and how to talk about it to their patients."

"Another big difficulty is where funding for 'exercise as a benefit to health' now sits. It would generally sit in the public health department, which is separate from the funding for general practice-commissioned activity. And that makes for a grey area, because although I fundamentally believe telling the whole population to exercise is a good thing, nothing beats sitting in front ▶

▶ my patients cost the hospital £8,000 per 1,000 population, compared to £12,000–13,000 per 1,000 population for another local GP surgery of similar size and standing. That's a huge argument to prove the cost-effectiveness of exercise.

"Weight loss was also positive: 61 per cent of those doing our 12-week programme lost weight from exercising. I think that's very interesting, because the lack of media advocacy with regard to exercise has been a problem over the years. Diet has been the only thing that's been pushed, but exercise is also key.

"The other key finding was that 85 per cent of people changed the amount of exercise they did away from the class – they were continuing to exercise independently.

"The one thing the study didn't do was look at a control group of people who hadn't attended the exercise class, which would have made it a bit more robust. The quality of data therefore wouldn't stand up in front of a medical conference – they could argue that the weather was nice that year and everyone went walking.



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Morgan's patients organise and lead their own walking group



You need GPs with a strong work ethic. I've gone into surgeries to promote exercise and frustratingly they put nurses in front of me, but the GPs say they're too busy



► of the patient, explaining the benefits on a one-to-one basis.

"I personally think monies need to be transferred from public health into general practices with an attitude like ours. But of course there's the issue of evidence, perceptions and quantifying the impact of your intervention. If you prescribe an anti-hypertension drug, for example, it's generally accepted that any resulting reduction in blood pressure will be down to the drug. But if you don't prescribe a drug and prescribe exercise instead, did you actually do anything to reduce that person's blood pressure, assuming it reduces? Or has the person done it themselves?"

"That's always been the argument in terms of where the funding goes. Personally I'm not bothered about the funding though. From my point of view, it's the patient who's in front of me at the time who matters."

He continues: "I also think you need GPs with a strong work ethic. I've gone into various GP surgeries to teach and promote exercise, and frustratingly what

I've tended to find is that they'll put some nurses in front of me, but the GPs say they're too busy. It can be a bit soul-destroying when you're giving up your time to try and educate people."

I mention ukactive's pilot scheme in Essex, where exercise professionals were put into GP surgeries to act as an integrated part of the team. "Brilliant! That would be a fantastic model to roll out. But even if a full-time placement weren't possible, health clubs could send instructors with behaviour change expertise into local GP surgeries to talk to GPs or even the patients themselves."

"We already work quite a bit with our local council facilities, but there's no reason why private sector health clubs couldn't get involved too. Maybe they could come to some agreement with the GPs to say they'll charge half price for three months once people have finished their referral programmes. If they can give the GP some data – blood pressure before a three-month programme, blood pressure after, weight before and after – that could be a way forward."

Exercise for all

So what would Morgan's overall advice be to other GPs? "Push exercise at every opportunity – not only to those who need exercise referral for a specific health condition, but to everyone. Push exercise whenever you have a patient in front of you, particularly if a mum comes in with an obese kid, because it starts with that age."

"People need to see that exercise is important. That means education of the individual patients, but the professionals also have to engage with that education in the first place. I want to push the message far and wide that exercise acts on a cellular level in the body. It's a natural treatment with huge benefits for your heart, lungs, mental health and so on. It combats stress too – something that causes the body to produce free radicals, which eventually cause cancer – by stimulating the body to produce antioxidants to quell free radicals. It's not just in your head that you'll feel better – it's happening on a cellular level, and everyone can benefit." ●

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HI-TECH FUTURE

In August, Virgin Active announced plans to launch two technology-focused clubs where digital technology will be intrinsic to the experience. HD interactive screens will allow members to book classes, view which PTs are on the club floor and provide virtual workout advice. There will also be access to web-based services, so users can connect to the internet and use social media networks while exercising. In addition, the operator is working towards a contactless solution in which members will receive an interactive wristband, doing away with the need for membership cards and locker keys.

Virgin Active's chief information officer, Andy Caddy, says the changes are all motivated by the desire to make it easier for members to personalise their workout and get as much out of it as possible. "There's a growing demand

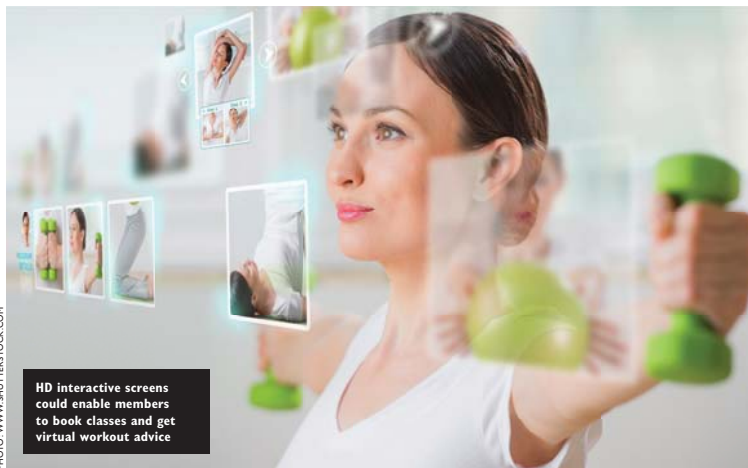
Next year we're likely to see further digitisation of health clubs. So what innovative technology is available, what's in the pipeline, and what will be the new must-have for clubs? Kath Hudson asks the experts

from our members to have the latest technology at their fingertips, which lives up to their increasingly connected and digital lifestyles," he says.

Will other operators be encouraged to follow Virgin Active's example, or will some decide to keep an old school, low-tech experience as their USP?

"Technology offers the ability to service the customer better, drive retention, market offers, gain data and insight, monetise the relationship, encourage impulse buys, and streamline joining and class booking, says Bryan O'Rourke, CEO of Integrus and president of the Fitness Industry Technology Council. "However, incorporating technology is expensive, and it can be dangerous to be an early adopter unless you think carefully about your business model and are mindful of how technology fits into your strategy."

If you're thinking of adding some technological spice to your club experience, what should you go for? We ask the experts how they envisage the digital gyms of the future...



HD interactive screens could enable members to book classes and get virtual workout advice

PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

"2025 will be a different world. Robots may be applied to things like cleaning, and possibly even equipment maintenance, which would make the cost of running clubs cheaper and hopefully drive down the cost for members"

Technology is a significant threat, but also a very real opportunity. The old adage has it that we dramatically overestimate what impact technology will have over a two-year horizon, but dramatically underestimate the impact over a 10-year horizon.

During the next two years, I think we'll see more of the same. Consumer technologies will continue to come into the club, and I'd like to see better integration with all the wearables. The Apple Watch will be a game changer in terms of awareness of health and activity levels, and I'd like to incorporate that into our plans and offering at GoodLife.

However, 2025 will be a totally different world: lots of people think that, by then, there will be more robots than cellphones and tablets. Robots may be applied to things like cleaning, and possibly even some equipment maintenance, potentially reducing these ongoing costs. This would make the cost of running clubs cheaper, and hopefully drive down the cost for the members.

STEVE GROVES

GOODLIFE FITNESS:
VP AND CHIEF
INFORMATION OFFICER



For now, technology is focused on the entertainment side, and here the industry is playing catch-up with consumer trends. In my opinion, the real opportunity lies in taking advantage of some of the technologies that are commonplace in the home, such as Xbox Kinect, and repurposing them for the industry. This is a relatively low-cost technology, but the cameras can detect how active individual muscles are during exercise, which could be of huge benefit to personal trainers for example.

As imaging technology advances, we need to work out how to make the most of this opportunity, using it to supplement what PTs are doing already: helping clients visualise what the PT is explaining to them, for example, and at the same time allowing PTs to work with half a dozen clients at once.

Heart rate monitors stitched into clothing is another fascinating technology, which again presents opportunities for PTs to create more personalised exercise programmes.

ARRON WILLIAMS

LIFE FITNESS:
SPECIAL PROJECTS

From an operator's perspective, I haven't seen any new technology that's essential apart from developments in social media. In fact, I'd argue the club of the future is far more likely to be low-tech and high touch, personal and communal, using existing social media technology and with consumers bringing in their own fitness wearables.

New wearable technology will provide highly specific insights into our metabolic health and fitness, in ways we've never been able to identify before. The ability to look precisely and objectively at what you've been doing while working out will allow us to become a lot smarter about what works for each individual, and our choices will be driven by this new frontier: the Internet of You. This represents a seismic shift in how we add value to our daily lives and wellbeing through regular exercise and activities to benefit us 24/7.

The club of the future will probably be the home gym and the great outdoors, supported by fitness wearables and freemium platforms like Befit, Daily Hit and Fitness Blender, and excellent free apps like the Johnson & Johnson seven-minute workout.



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/KODYWHEELER

Williams: "The club of the future will be the home gym and the great outdoors"

REYNIR INDAHL

HEALTH & FITNESS
NORDIC: CHAIR

Our primary aim is to help members achieve their goals; in order to do that, we'd like to track everything they do, analyse that data, make something intelligent out of it and use it in a customer-friendly way.

Our technology strategy is very much about convenience for the member, so we'll incorporate it where it helps the

member – for example, class booking, entry systems, informing programmes, providing PT and building relationships.

We're currently looking at several options for taking information from activity trackers to create a virtual personal training programme: the PT will design a programme and the machines will automatically register what members have done. PTs can then go into the app and view what members have completed. We're not quite there with the seamless integration, but this is what we're aiming for.

It's important to be device-independent, because consumers want to have choice about which device they use. We're working with major vendors to achieve this, so we can capture



information from any device and then serve it back through the interface we've chosen. We already have an app that can track basic activity, food eaten and that can take class bookings. Although it's a fairly advanced function, we haven't yet gone as far as big data: where everything about what you did yesterday, including pulse and heart beat, is downloaded.

PHILLIP MILLS

LES MILLS:
CHIEF EXECUTIVE



“You have to be careful with technology, as over-technicalising can remove the enjoyment and the social factor”

Technology can be most useful on the motivational side: making exercise fun and adding a social aspect, as well as setting goals – which is shown to be motivational for adherence – and mapping progress.

You do have to be careful with technology though, as over-technicalising can remove the enjoyment and the social factor. We’ve experimented with setting up leader boards in cycle studios and people tend to find it interesting once or twice, but it can become a tyranny, taking them away from the right brain enjoyment and into left brain analytical. A Japanese

chain went from 950,000 members to 600,000 not very many years ago because it digitised the workout environment and made it too scientific.

Operators should incorporate technology that makes the club interesting, entertaining and social: it’s great to look at YouTube while you’re exercising, for example, and communicate with friends and do email. By using technology to create immersive, highly experiential environments, people can expend a lot of energy without realising it. It becomes fun and addictive.

I think virtual will be the next big thing, as it brings something cool to clubs and

helps the bottom line. It doesn’t make economic sense to employ an instructor for all classes if you’re a 24/7 operator, but if you can fill off-peak hours with virtual classes, it’s great for the operator and convenient for members. Lots of suppliers are experimenting with virtual at the moment, so it’s likely that some interesting products will come on-line.

Beyond this, I think it’s important that clubs start to make good use of technology for convenience, such as booking systems. Educational technology, like online links illustrating how to use equipment, is also good because it’s a great form of motivation.



Les Mills’ immersive technology: An experiential workout environment

BRIAN WANG

FITOCRACY: CEO

Operators need to adopt technologies that support people outside of the club, bringing services such as PT to end users via digital and mobile. The traditional health club model is based on

a monthly membership, with clubs then trying to upsell a PT package – but most people can’t afford it. It’s not a great model. Even for those who see PTs once or twice a week, there’s a gap in regards to what’s happening in between, when the PT isn’t in touch with the client.

By using the internet for PT, clubs could eliminate overheads, speak to multiple people and have efficient interactions: providing a fitness plan, tracking using an app and motivating between sessions. Unless clubs adopt this type of technology, PTs will move away and clubs will lose business. ●



Only the best for David Lloyd Leisure, they choose Gerflor!

Whether the priority is durability or an eye-catching design, Gerflor has a flooring product for all areas of your club

Over the years, the David Lloyd Leisure brand has become synonymous with health, sports and leisure. It has played a significant role in increasing the nation's awareness of how important fitness is to our overall health and wellbeing. Today, David Lloyd Leisure (DLL) exists to provide exceptional service and unrivalled facilities that enable members of all ages to enjoy active, healthy, satisfying lives.

A number of key areas within the business would need different flooring solutions and DLL turned to international flooring specialists Gerflor to supply a UK-wide solution for four very specific member areas within the brand's business.

Choosing a flooring solution for these four very distinct areas would normally be a huge challenge for most companies, but by specifying Gerflor products the

challenge was easily met. A David Lloyd Leisure spokesperson commented: "The range and quality of material which Gerflor provided enabled us to effectively deliver our design concept whilst guaranteeing performance. We are overjoyed with the final results"

One of the specific member areas included the kid's area at the clubs; these would need to sustain some tough treatment from the children as they enjoyed a vast array of sporting activities as well as arts and craft sessions.

Gerflor's Taralay range would be the perfect choice for this busy area. Gerflor has taken the best-selling designs from Taralay Impression, Taralay Uni and Nera Contract wood to combine them into one high-performance, hard-wearing range. Taralay Impression was chosen for its R10 slip performance and acoustic insulation of up to 19dB. With a Group

T wear rating, low-maintenance, low-overall lifetime costs and is 100 per cent recyclability. It was an ideal robust and reliable flooring solution for DLL.

Taralay is treated with Protecrol rendering acrylic polishes obsolete and is fungistatic and anti-bacterial protected to MRSA (3) ISO 22196, inhibiting growth for maximum hygiene. Backed by a 10-year warranty Taralay does not contain any heavy metals, is 100 per cent compliant with REACH and emission levels are < 70 µg/m³.

A new flooring product for their group exercise areas within the clubs was also required and again Gerflor were able to supply the perfect flooring product - Taraflex™.

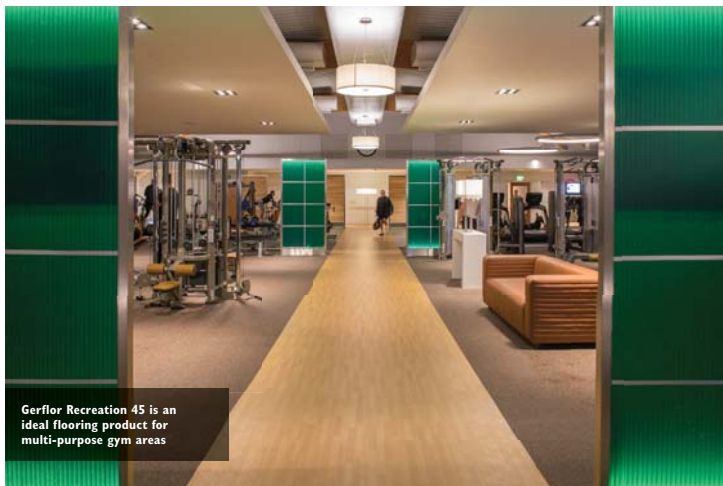
Taraflex™ has been used in every summer Olympics since 1976 and is available in 17 colours and two wood-effect designs. The Sport M Evolution product offers a very high PI category shock absorber which exceeds 25% and meets the EN 14904 Standard for indoor sports surfaces. Taraflex™ is recognised for providing durability,



Bespoke designs are created by water cutting, HD printing or line marking



Colourful Taralay is ideal for children's areas



Gerflor Recreation 45 is an ideal flooring product for multi-purpose gym areas



Gerflor's Insight LVT is ideal for high footfall areas



The Taraflex range offers 45% force reduction

safety and comfort without impairing performance. The range also offers greater than 45% force reduction, making it unrivalled in the marketplace in terms of offering comfort for users.

Bespoke designs are also available by either water cutting, HD printing or line marking. The Taraflex™ product also meets the EN Standard of 22196 for anti-bacterial activity (E. coli - S. aureus - MRSA) (3) returning >99% levels of growth inhibition. The product is also treated with ProtecSol®, which renders polish redundant.

The new café areas would see Insight LVT from Gerflor as the preferred choice because of its technical performance as it's highly resistant to medium/high footfall and commercial

traffic (European class 33/42). It comes in a large palette of mineral designs to suit all interior styles, has a R9 slip resistance with a group T wear rating and a 10-year warranty.

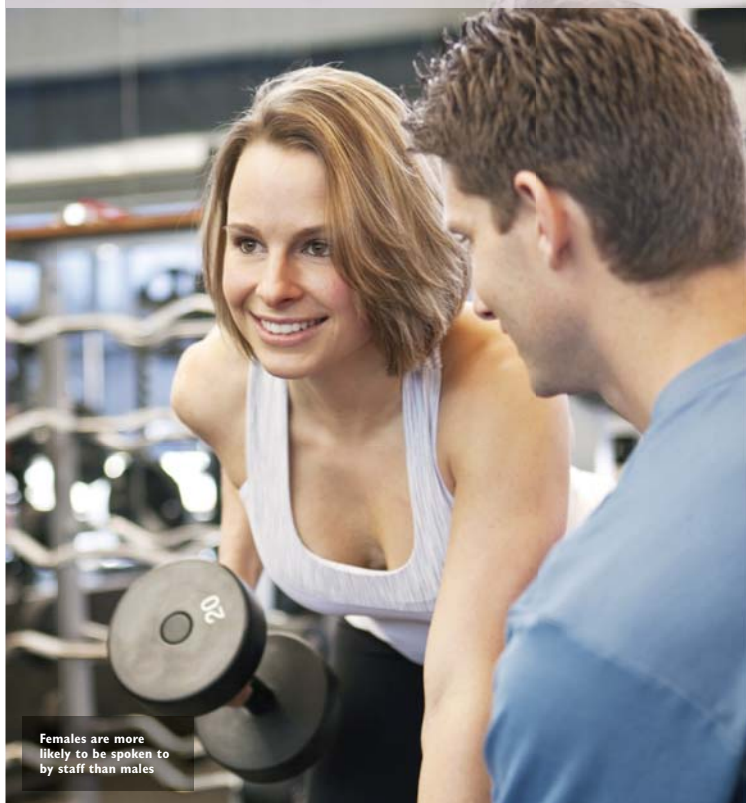
The fourth and final areas that would need Gerflor to supply the flooring solution were to be the gym facilities and Gerflor Recreation 45 was the specified product. Recreation 45 is an ideal solution for multi-purpose use and it is highly recommended for light recreation activities and multipurpose use areas and gyms. It provides cushioning for children together with easily handling everyday sports and recreational activities. This is also a product that reduces the danger of skin/rug burns and also meets the EN

Standard of 22196 for anti-bacterial activity (E. coli - S. aureus - MRSA) (3) returning >99% levels of growth inhibition. The product is treated with ProtecSol®, the noise reduction qualities are at 17db, it is floor score certified and has comfort / shock absorption of ≥ 22% meeting ASTM F2772 for safe sports and play and is 100% recyclable. ●

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Interaction = progress = retention

Can fitness staff alter member progress, and does this improve retention?
Dr Melvyn Hillsdon reports, in the fifth part of his TRP 10,000 series



Females are more likely to be spoken to by staff than males



Research shows a link between frequent staff interaction and making friends at the club

About TRP 10,000™

Conducted in partnership with The Retention People, TRP 10,000™ is the biggest and most comprehensive survey of member behaviour ever carried out in the health and fitness industry: 10,000 health and fitness members completed a baseline survey of their exercise habits and membership behaviour between July and September 2013. During regular intervals over the coming years, they will be followed up to measure changes to their habits and membership behaviour.

The respondent profile was:

- Average age 41 (16 to 85 years)
- 56 per cent female
- Half of members had been a member for at least 12 months, 25 per cent less than six months and 25 per cent more than three years
- First ever club for 25 per cent
- 24 per cent had been a member of the current club before
- 67 per cent of members used their club less than twice a week

We already know that members' progress towards their goals is an important determinant of retention (see part three of this series, HCM July 14, p48). For each goal that members reported making progress on, their risk of cancelling in the next month fell by approximately 10 per cent.

We've also highlighted the beneficial effects of fitness staff interaction on membership retention (see HCM Sept 14, p42): even when members experience hassles in their clubs that increase the risk of them cancelling, the risk can be reduced if fitness staff regularly talk to members.

In this month's article, we'll look at the combination of fitness staff interaction, member progress and subsequent retention.

Data and analysis

Members were asked how much progress they had made in the last three months against a list of 10 possible goals, including losing weight, feeling fitter and making new friends.

The number of goals members said they had progressed on were summed to make a score between 0 and 10.

"Fewer than one in 10 members who report no staff interaction say they have made a lot of progress, versus more than half of those who are spoken to on each visit"

The scores were then classified as high or low progress, with the high category representing the top 25 per cent of members' scores.

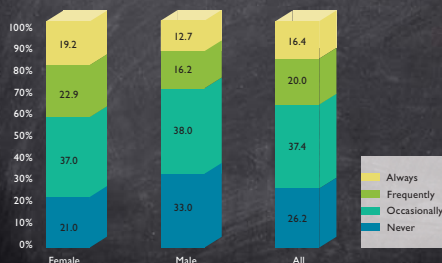
Members were also asked how frequently fitness staff spoke to them by ticking one box: always, frequently, occasionally, or never.

Member-staff interaction

So how often do staff speak to members, and who do they speak to most?

Figure 1 (see p56) shows that, overall, over a quarter of members say fitness staff never speak to them, and over 60 per cent say they speak to them less than frequently. Females are more likely to be spoken to than males.

Figure 1.
Proportion of members reporting the frequency of fitness staff interaction, overall and by gender



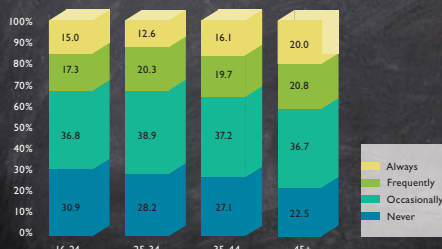
“For members who report either high or low progress, the risk of cancelling reduces with the frequency of fitness staff communication”

- The chances of being spoken to at least frequently increase with age, with two-thirds of members aged 16 to 24 saying fitness staff only speak to them occasionally or never (Figure 2).

Long-standing members experience greater fitness staff communication compared to new members, with 50 per cent more of the longest standing members reporting at least frequent communication compared to new members (Figure 3).

The Retention People (TRP) has shown many times that younger members and new members are at greater risk of cancelling their memberships compared to older, long-standing members. It's therefore the most at-risk members – the people who would benefit most from fitness staff interactions – who are least likely to receive them.

Figure 2.
Proportion of members reporting the frequency of fitness staff interaction by age group



Interaction, progress and retention

Meanwhile, Figure 4 shows there's a very strong association between members' recent progress towards their goals and the frequency of fitness staff interactions: fewer than one in 10 members who report no fitness staff interaction say they have made a lot of progress in the last three months, compared to more than half of members who are spoken to by fitness staff each time they visit.

Interestingly, the relationship between staff interaction and member progress is strongest for social and enjoyment progress. Members who report frequent interactions with fitness staff are also much more likely to report they have made a new friend at the club and to say they have enjoyed exercising in the last three months (data not shown).

So does recent progress and fitness staff interaction also affect risk of

Both younger and newer members are among the most at risk of cancelling



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/PETER BEERNIK



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ANTONODIAZ

Members who interact with staff are more likely to make progress against their goals

cancelling? Yes it does: for members who report either high or low progress in recent months, the risk of cancelling each month reduces with the frequency of fitness staff communication (see Figure 5, p58). However, the impact of fitness staff communication is greatest among members who report lower levels of progress. Members who report lower progress but who are always spoken to by fitness staff are half as likely to cancel each month compared to members who report low progress and who are never spoken to by fitness staff. In fact, if all low progress members were spoken to at least frequently, 10 per cent of cancellations each month would be avoided. This is equivalent to 16 saved memberships each month for every 1,000 members you have.

The risk of cancelling and the chances of making good progress with goals are strongly related to how long people have been a member and how frequently they use the club – so it's possible these two factors are what explain the reduced risk of cancelling, rather than fitness interactions and progress alone.

However, Figure 6 shows the absolute risk of cancelling during the seven months following the completion of the TRP 10,000 questionnaire, after taking account of how frequently members visit and their length of membership. For members who report high progress and always being spoken to, there's approximately a one in 10 chance they will cancel, compared to a more than one in five chance of cancelling among

Figure 3. Proportion of members reporting the frequency of fitness staff interaction by length of membership

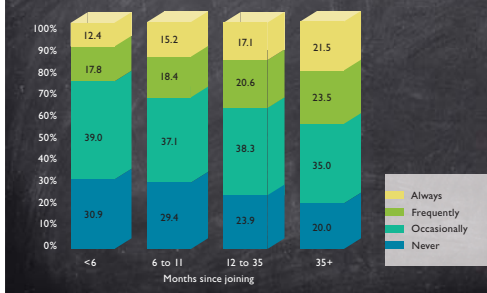
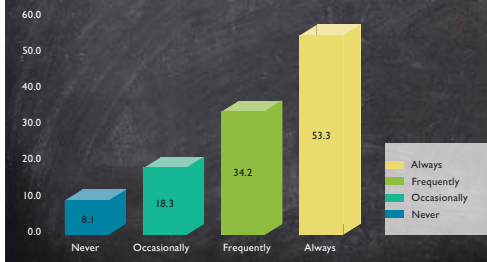


Figure 4. The proportion of members reporting high progress in the last three months by frequency of fitness staff interaction



- members who report less progress and never get spoken to by staff. In other words, the negative effect of making only low progress is nearly completely cancelled out by always speaking to members when they work out.

Summary

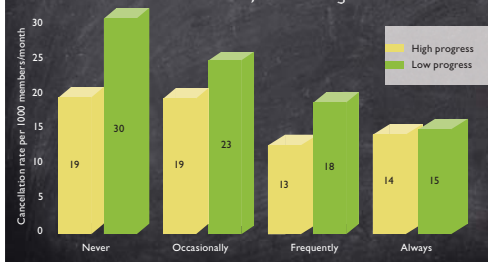
The amount of progress members make towards their goals and the frequency with which fitness staff talk to members are both related to the likelihood of a member retaining their membership. However, these two things are interlinked and have an additive effect on the risk of cancelling.

When members receive frequent communication from fitness staff, they are more likely to make progress that in turn reduces their risk of cancelling. Members who receive more fitness staff communication enjoy the exercise more and are more likely to meet new friends at the club. Frequent communication plus high progress roughly halves the risk of cancelling compared to no communication and low progress.

Unfortunately, the members at the highest risk of cancelling are least likely to receive any communication from gym staff. Staff are most likely to talk to older, long-standing members who are making good progress. This is somewhat understandable, as these members have been around long enough for fitness staff to get to know them and are in the club more regularly than newer, younger members. Also, the older, long-standing members are just as likely to initiate a chat as staff are with them.

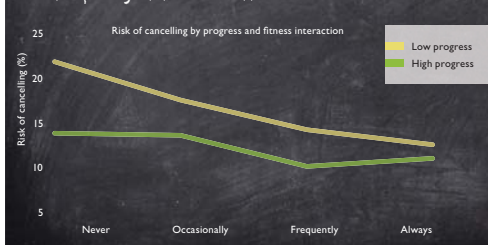
But the 'at risk' members need targeting more to ensure they don't miss out on essential communication with fitness staff that could help them make progress and extend the life of their membership. This needs to be systematic and not ad hoc, as a small effect on a lot of members will save the most memberships. ●

Figure 5.
Interaction between recent progress and fitness staff communication on the risk of cancelling



"Frequent communication plus high progress roughly halves the risk of cancelling compared to no communication and Low progress"

Figure 6.
Seven-month risk of cancellation by level of progress and frequency of fitness staff communication



"If all Low progress members were spoken to at least frequently, 10 per cent of cancellations each month would be avoided"

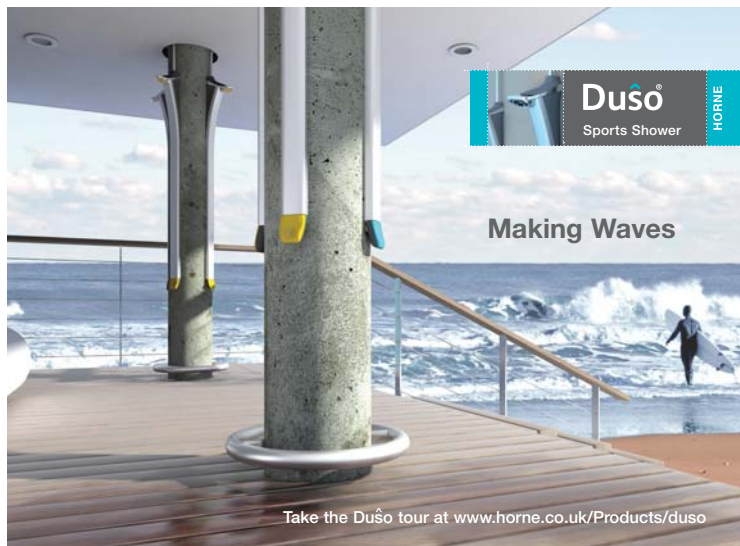
So what should operators do?

- Ensure members frequently receive support, encouragement and motivation towards their goals from fitness staff
- Ensure staff recognise the importance of goals that are not just around physical and physiological objectives – enjoyment or social goals, for example
- Ensure members receive regular reviews of their progress and subsequent programme updates
- Develop a strategy for identifying high risk members that fitness staff should prioritise for interaction
- Encourage staff to talk to all members, not just those at lowest risk of cancelling

Melvyn Hillsdon is associate professor of exercise and health at the University of Exeter, where he researches physical activity and population health. Since his



landmark retention report in 2001 (Winning the Retention Battle), his research into retention and attrition has led to the development of appropriate measures of retention, attrition and longevity that provide data for operators that can directly inform business decisions. In partnership with TRP, he has published numerous reports into the determinants of membership retention.



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Pavlok delivers a short, sharp shock to users who stray off plan

WEARING IT WELL

Jak Phillips rounds up some of the latest innovations in health and fitness wearables – a market that's expected to be worth US\$2bn by 2018

Tech giants such as Apple and Google are pouring millions into what's frequently dubbed 'the next big thing', while the wearables market is also courting innovation from a host of exciting start-ups. The wearables market is expected to represent at least US\$2bn in revenue globally by 2018, with health and fitness trackers currently representing around 61 per cent of the sector.

The ramifications for health and wellbeing are huge. Medical institutions are already using the technology to monitor patients' vitals – aiming to identify problems early – and there's potential for spas and health clubs to monitor customer biometrics as well.

Wearables are infiltrating corporate wellness programmes too, as US employers harness information from health trackers to determine employees' health insurance premiums. And many feel this is just the start for wearable tech, which has the potential for seamless integration with the Internet of Things – the advanced connectivity of devices, systems and services – as it gains momentum.

We look at the latest innovations in health and fitness wearables, to assess which ideas could leave rivals stuck in the starting blocks.



Jak Phillips is head of news at Leisure Media
Email: jakphillips@leisuremedia.com

PAVLOK



Be it sleeping in or skipping the gym, everyone wishes they could kick those bad habits that hurt productivity and prevent physical activity. Now, a new wearable is bidding to not just track activity, but use pain and shame to ensure users have no choice but to reach their goals.

Due for release in 2015, Pavlok is a fitness tracking wristband that also serves as a behavioural conditioner, with a pre-order price of US\$149.99. Aside from the usual tracking of steps, activity and sleep, this wearable has the ability to give away your money, shame you on social media, or even deliver a 340v static shock if you slip back into bad habits. It also offers rewards – as yet unspecified – as well as posting encouraging social media posts if you stay on the straight and narrow.

Triallists have mainly been using the device to help programme their body to wake up earlier and exercise more, although there's clearly potential for such technology to be applied to diet control and smoking cessation as well.

RALPH LAUREN POLO TECH T-SHIRT

From 2015, tennis enthusiasts will be able to record metrics and data from recent performances to improve their game, thanks to a movement tracking shirt from fashion designer Ralph Lauren.

The luxury brand's Polo Tech T-shirt uses sensors knitted into the fabric to read heartbeat, respiration and other biometrics. Data collected by the shirt is stored by a 'black box system', which

also captures movement and direction metrics.

These findings, along with data related to energy output and stress levels, are sent to the cloud and are viewable on a tablet or smartphone.

Meanwhile, Sony is preparing to launch its attachable Smart Tennis Sensor early next year. The US\$200 device attaches to rackets to record up to 12,000 shots of swing and serve data.

The T-shirt's sensors can read heartbeat

The headphones will collate and audibly relay health and fitness metrics to the user



FREEWAYS EARPHONES

FreeWavz is creating a set of earphones that will collate health and fitness metrics and audibly relay this information to exercisers – particularly useful for cyclists and joggers, who won't have to take their eyes off the road.

Designed by otolaryngology specialist Dr Eric Hensen,

the earphones will operate without the need for any other wearable tech, also offering wireless connectivity to music streaming, a step counter, plus heart rate and oxygen saturation monitoring.

Hensen was frustrated by poorly-fitting headphones that can disrupt workouts

by falling out, or worse still cause injuries when the wires become entangled – hence his invention.

The product will allow exercisers to change or pause music through voice commands and will connect to a smartphone to collate health metrics.

The earphones also feature an extra speaker above the standard earbud, which allows users to listen to music while at the same time keeping ears alive to the sound of passing cars.

The first production run of the headphones is due to commence in January 2015.



The Bite Counter can help identify over-eating

BITE COUNTER

While many of the wearables featured in this article focus on health from an exercise perspective, the Bite Counter bids to remedy the developed world's obesity crisis by discouraging overeating.

The counter has been designed as a wristwatch that's able to detect, count and display the number of bites its wearer takes each day, thereby serving as a visual red flag against over-indulgence.

It uses wrist-motion tracking to count bites and estimate calories, while an alarm buzzer can be set to warn users when they're near their daily bite count.

Developed at South Carolina's Clemson University in the US, the Bite Counter tracks consumption levels over long periods. It creates a log from which users can analyse when they're eating most and least, allowing for changes to be made to manage weight.

WEARABLE TECHNOLOGY



The device is priced from US\$359

APPLE WATCH

Apple debuted its long-awaited smartwatch offering in September, featuring a host of health and fitness-related functions.

Due to ship in early 2015, the Apple Watch features photo-sensitive sensors to record pulse information, while connectivity with an iPhone allows for wifi and GPS usage to track movement, pace and distance travelled. An accelerometer measures total body movement, as well as the quality and intensity of movements made.

The Watch includes two specific health and fitness apps: Fitness and Workout. The Fitness app tracks all types of activity goals, with a series of visual 'rings' signifying daily progress. Workout facilitates fitness plans and displays workout metrics in real time on the watch.

With so many apps tracking aspects of wellbeing, Apple has also moved to unify the fragmented market by launching its Healthkit platform (compatible with the watch) that pulls in data from third-party health apps and presents the data in one manageable dashboard.

The Muse meditative headband rests lightly on the ears, rather like a pair of sunglasses



THE MUSE HEADBAND

The Muse headband by wearable tech start-up InteraXon helps people meditate, and is marketed as a product to help manage stress.

It reads and measures the user's brainwaves to paint a picture of how brain activity is affected by emotions. It also comes with an integrated brain

health application that teaches meditation.

The device rests on the ears like a pair of sunglasses and teaches users how to calm their brain via computer-guided meditation, in the form of cranial training app Calm. The benefits of decreasing brainwave rhythm using meditative techniques

include the production of endorphins and dopamine, better memory, attentiveness and empathy, according to InteraXon.

The device uses a rechargeable battery and is compatible with iOS, Mac and select PC operating systems, retailing at approximately US\$299.

GOOGLE GLASS / SMART LENS

In addition to its Glass product – which functions like a hands-free smartphone, with information displayed in the user's sight line – Google is developing smart contact lenses.

Announced in January, the lenses look set to be able to monitor blood sugar levels via an antenna smaller than a strand of human hair. This will open up new methods of self-management for chronic diseases such as diabetes, as well as tracking uses applicable to fitness.

With a camera potentially being used



The lenses could have virtual reality applications

in the lenses, people's vision could be corrected much like the auto-focus on a camera. This could create new interactive opportunities for the visually impaired in terms of sport participation and

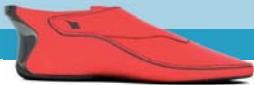
health and fitness, as well as VR applications.

Google is partnering with pharmaceutical company Novartis to take the project forward, aiming to come up with a prototype in 2015.

LECHAL TRAINERS

While much wearable technology has so far focused on wristwear, a company from India wants to get to the heart and sole of fitness tracking through its Lechal wearable tech trainers.

Ducere is currently taking pre-orders with a view to a late 2014 release for its interactive haptic feedback footwear. The shoes are built with bluetooth-enabled insoles (which can also be bought separately)



The shoes have bluetooth-enabled insoles that connect to a smartphone

that connect to a smartphone and provide user feedback through insole vibrations. They can be connected to Google Maps, enabling directions to be

disseminated without the need to look at a screen – handy for running in busy streets – while the usual pedometer/calorie counter is also present.

The company has indicated the insole will be priced at US\$100, with the cost of the shoes likely to be similar. The creators were initially developing a shoe designed for the visually impaired, before realising the concept had broader applications. ●

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NEVER SAY NO

Ray Algar reports on the remarkable health club that's been giving back to its community for 26 years



Franco's Club donates the use of its facilities to local special needs children

Last month, I discussed how for-profit business TOMS (www.TOMS.com) was leveraging the power of generosity through its 'one-for-one' business model, to compete in the fiercely competitive shoe and eyewear industries (see *HCM* Oct 14, p46). This month, I want to share the story of how Franco's Athletic Club, located in the US state of Louisiana, is using generosity to become one of the world's most admired health clubs.

Community engagement

I first met Sandy Franco, one of the co-owners, when she was presenting at the 2013 IHRSA European Congress in Madrid. Her message was a simple one: invest in your community and the community will invest in your club. Sandy and Ron, her husband, have pursued this strategy for 26 years.

The Francos acquired the 2,600sq m (28,000sq ft) racquetball and social facility, originally known as the Bon Temps Club, in 1988. Two years after the acquisition, their world fell apart when their two-year-old daughter was diagnosed with cancer.

The Francos had already made a big impression in the small city of Mandeville and received an outpouring

of support – even from people they had never met. As Sandy recalls: "Friends, family, members and the wider community rose up and supported us. They were writing us letters, they were supporting us, they pretty much carried us through this time and it's something we'll never forget. It wasn't a conscious thing when we said 'let's start being community players' – we feel an obligation. They were there for us and we want to be there for them."

"Our precious daughter, thank God, has grown to become a vibrant young woman, but we're constantly striving to fulfil the promise we made at that time – to give back to the community that gave so much to our family."

For the past 26 years, the Francos have therefore been reciprocating: the more their club has grown, the more they give. Today, Franco's has grown to more than 23,225sq m (250,000sq ft) of indoor and outdoor space for fitness, sports and recreation, with approximately 15,000 members.

Creating long-term value

When it comes to requests from charities, schools and community groups, the Franco mantra is, and always has been: 'Never say no.' Why so generous?

Crucially, they do not see these requests through the lens of random acts of charity, but as investing in a community that creates long-term value for their business. "We believe that, by giving back to our community, we have grown our facility and our membership," says Sandy.

Of course, saying yes doesn't always mean writing a cheque – it also includes offering the club's courts and studio space to schools, dance clubs and sports teams, and donating use of the pools for mental and physical stimulation therapy for special needs children.

Sometimes the club just needs to act as the catalyst and mobilise its army of members, employees and

GYMTOPIA – A PLACE WHERE CLUBS DO SOCIAL GOOD

Gymtopia was conceived by founder and chief engagement officer Ray Algar, who believes the global health and fitness industry has enormous influence and potential to do good in the world, beyond its immediate customers. The idea of Gymtopia is simple: to curate and spread remarkable stories in which the fitness industry uses its influence to reach out and support an external community in need. It was created with the generous support of five organisations: Companhia Athletica, Gantner Technologies, Les Mills, Retention Management and The Gym Group. Gymtopia received an Outstanding Achievement Award in the ukactive Matrix Flame Awards 2014.

Read more stories and submit your own: www.Gymtopia.org





500 tickets were sold for a recent fundraising gala dinner, raising US\$185,000 for charity – more than double the target

WHAT'S YOUR LEGACY?

Each year, IHRSA selects one club from across the US to receive its Outstanding Community Service Award. The award is presented to a club committed to making a difference in, and beyond, its community.

Franco's was the deserved recipient of the award in 2013, but it was Ron Franco's comments during the acceptance video that revealed their driving motivation: "Everyone in life wants to leave a legacy. I think getting

involved in the community, doing good things for your community, reaching people, touching lives – that's a legacy you want to leave. It's not how much money or how many clubs you have, but the effect you have had on people."

So how would you sum up the legacy of your business over the past five to 10 years – and more importantly, what's the core story that others are saying about your brand right now?



Leaving a legacy: The Francos

supporters. A recent demonstration of this compassionate activism involved fundraising for a local cancer centre: organising a gala dinner for the first time, the club set itself a target of selling 300 tickets and raising US\$75,000, but instead sold 500 tickets and raised US\$185,000. Will this drive short-term membership sales? Probably not, but the club's reputation has just been given a steroid-like boost.

Franco's has now raised more than US\$1.5m for a wide range of non-profit organisations and donated significantly more from in-kind use of its facilities.

Respecting your club's ethos

During Sandy's Madrid presentation, she shared the story of the time Franco's was looking to expand into a second site, explaining that they faced tough competition from a much larger national chain seeking the same property.

The property landlord couldn't decide between the two businesses, so a representative visited Franco's to better understand its operating philosophy. A tipping point came when, during the visit, he was captivated by a studio class for local children with special needs. Franco's was awarded the lease to operate the new club, leaving the larger rival with a far stronger balance sheet surprised and perplexed.

Sandy summed it up: "People who appreciate your efforts will want to be a part of your club and to do business with you."

Beating the odds

Something remarkable is occurring in the Franco's catchment area where, according to a local report in 2009, more than 26 per cent of the population belonged to a health club. The US national average at the time was 14 per

cent, not to mention the fact that Louisiana as a whole has the sixth highest adult obesity rate in the United States (source: *The State of Obesity: Better Policies for a Healthier America*).

So what's driving this remarkable level of engagement? I'm not sure I know, but what is clear is that the team at Franco's have spent the past 26 years getting out of their club and into their community. ●

IN A NUTSHELL

Project by: Franco's Athletic Club

Website: myfrancos.com

Project status: Ongoing and long-term

Charity supported: Various

Impact: US

Gymtopia keywords: Clothing & Shelter, Education, Food & Nutrition, Health & Wellbeing, Helping Children, Medical Research

RESEARCH ROUND-UP



Fasting can help the body regenerate its immune system

Fasting find

A groundbreaking study has found that fasting can help regenerate the immune system and could have a role to play in healthy ageing

Abstaining from eating for periods of two to four days at a time not only helps to protect the immune system from damage, but also leads to cell regeneration, according to a groundbreaking new piece of research*.

Scientists at the University of Southern California (USC) in the US say this is the first time a natural intervention has been found to trigger stem cell-based self-renewal of an organ or system. And the findings could have major implications for healthy ageing.

As people age, their immune system declines, making them more susceptible to disease; being able to prevent or reverse this process could help prevent illness in this group. It could also potentially benefit those with autoimmune disorders, and cancer patients whose immune systems are weakened by chemotherapy.

Flipping the switch

Over a course of six months, the scientists looked at the impact prolonged

fasting cycles had on mice as well as patients undergoing chemotherapy. Both the mice and the people went without food for two- to four-day periods.

In both cases, not eating initially lowered the white blood cell counts – the cells that defend the body against disease – as the body started getting rid of old or damaged cells. “When you starve, the system tries to save energy, and one of the things it can do to save energy is to recycle a lot of the immune cells that are not needed, especially those that may be damaged,” explains lead study author Valter Longo, a professor of gerontology and biological sciences at USC.

Eventually, however, prolonged periods of fasting in mice then “flipped a regenerative switch” which kick-started the stem cells into producing brand new white blood cells. This essentially rebooted the whole immune system.

The PKA enzyme

Importantly, the scientists also found that, when people don't eat for long

periods, levels of the enzyme PKA are lowered in the body. In previous studies, PKA has been linked to the regulation of stem cell self-renewal and the potential for one cell to develop into many different cell types.

“PKA is the key gene that needs to shut down in order for these stem cells to switch into regenerative mode,” clarifies Longo, who's also the director of USC's Longevity Institute.

“It gives the OK for stem cells to go ahead and begin proliferating and rebuild the entire system. And the good news is that the body got rid of the parts of the system that might be damaged or old, the inefficient parts, during the fasting. Now, if you start with a system heavily damaged by chemotherapy or ageing, fasting cycles can generate, literally, a new immune system.”

Additional benefits

Other results from the study, which was published in the *Cell Stem Cell* journal in June, showed that long periods of fasting lowered levels of IGF-1, a growth hormone that's associated with ageing, tumour progression and cancer risk.

In another pilot clinical trial on a small group of chemotherapy patients, Longo discovered that fasting for a 72-hour period before treatment protected the body against toxicity.

*Longo, V et al. Prolonged Fasting Reduces IGF-1/PKA to Promote Hematopoietic-Stem-Cell-Based Regeneration and Reverse Immunosuppression, *Cell Stem Cell*, June 2014

X-Force Training Concept is Redefining Strength Training. Strength gains are maximized not by how much you can lift "concentric" positive phase of movement, but by how much you can lower "eccentric" negative phase of movement.

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It is thanks to the body's muscular composition and basic function. The muscle is naturally stronger in the eccentric phase or more frequently called "NEGATIVE" face of the movement, when lowering the weight. And by overloading the Negative, it is also strengthening the Concentric phase or frequently called "POSITIVE", the lifting portion of the movement.

This strength curve has been well known for many years, and many different methods of strength training and sometimes awkward techniques have been used to try complete accentuated Negative training effect.

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LEISURE INDUSTRY WEEK 2014

Nicky Jobson reports from this year's event on the new products, networking and show floor buzz

Leisure Industry Week (LIW) returned to the Birmingham NEC from 30 September to 2 October, providing a packed three days of networking, live demonstrations, educational seminars and new product launches from across the six core leisure sectors: Health & Fitness, Pool & Spa, Play, Eat & Drink, Leisure Facilities and Sport.

EXHIBITOR NEWS

This year's show welcomed over 80 new exhibitors and unveiled over 150 new products from across the sector. This included a number of big launches from the fitness industry, with a notable emphasis on the growing popularity of functional training and indoor cycling.

Amid a buzz of ambassadors, demonstrations and celebrity activity on-stand, **Matrix Fitness** launched a range of exciting products at the show. Dani King MBE was on the stand to officially launch the IC7 Indoor Cycle, with colour-coded training zones and highly accurate measurement of watt output. Meanwhile the Wigan Warriors helped launch the Magnum strength range, incorporating the Magnum Double Rack and Ziva Functional Trainer into their 'Train like a Warrior' session. Other ambassador appearances included England Rugby Union player Ben Morgan, and Marco Sorenson and Alex Albon of the Lotus F1 junior team.

Also in the area of cycling, **Keiser** showcased its new Bluetooth-enabled



Gladstone launched its latest version of MobilePro

M3i Indoor Cycle, which allows user feedback to be wirelessly projected to a big screen from the on-board computer.

Wattbike launched Power Cycling: Studio Edition – group cycling software that allows each member to train at the correct intensity based on their fitness level. And **Star Trac** showcased its Spinner NXT Black Belt, as well as its new air-driven Turbo Trainer.

The Stairmaster/Schwinn stand showcased **Schwinn's** new AC Performance Plus bike with Carbon Blue technology. Meanwhile, **Stairmaster** cardio products the Gauntlet and FreeClimber were joined by the new TreadmillClimber and Air Fit.

Life Fitness launched a record number of products to the market, including PowerMill, FlexStrider, the Insignia Series of selectorised strength training products, and SYNRGY BlueSky, its first small group training system designed specifically for outdoor use.

Cybex launched the new Eagle NX, a 12-piece strength range showcased on-stand alongside Cybex's Big Iron rack and lifting platform, Bravo functional trainer and 790T treadmill with enhanced speed and incline features.

SportsArt used LIW to present the Pinnacle, a cross-trainer that combines

Sally Gunnell (left) represented the Women's Sports Trust





Above: Life Fitness launched a record number of new products at this year's show

Top right: TRX was one of the supplier stands hosting the LIW Early Morning Workout sessions

Right: The show floor was busier than ever, with over 120 live demonstrations



both linear and lateral motions, adjustable stride width, variable foot positions and unique handle settings. Users can simulate all forms of climb or short stride intervals.

On the **Precor** stand, visitors to LIW were the first in the UK to try the latest Experience Series treadmill, which incorporates a new motor drive system and an Active Status Light to alert facility staff of its operating condition.

Physical Company unveiled the Total Gym Elevate Line – a range of bodyweight resistance, single-station machines – as well as the SandRope from Hyperwear, which acts like a battle rope but features sand inside that moves freely to further challenge the user.

Gladstone Health & Leisure launched the latest version of its smartphone app, MobilePro, which allows customers to book activities on the move. It also showcased eyeQ, its new analysis and business intelligence tool.

Also in the technology field, **Pulse Fitness** launched a range of connectivity solutions, including a web and mobile app initiative to monitor members' fitness, with the new SmartCentre.com allowing members access to view, track and update this data any time, anywhere.

And **Performance Health Systems** showcased its latest Power Plate products and new integrated fitness concept, which combines the use of Power Plate with ViPR, kettlebells and TRX Suspension Training.

DEMONSTRATIONS

The show floor was busier than ever this year, with over 120 live demonstrations and the LIW Early Morning Workouts, which took place on exhibitor stands: TRX, Jekajo Dance, Power Plate, Cybex, Star Trac, Pavigym, Life Fitness, FitPro, Octane Fitness, Wattbike and Matrix.

Highlights in the Star Trac CPD Masterclass Arena included a number

of Star Trac Spinning workouts led by international Spinning instructor Sandro Morelli. From 'James Bond 007' – an action-packed ride – to 'The Pulse', an aerobic interval training session, there was a workout to suit any training mood.

The Tabata Group Exercise Arena introduced the new Tabata Body and Tabata Cycle workouts, powered by ICG. Meanwhile the FitPro Functional Zone saw Dan McDonough, TRX senior manager of group training and development, across from the States to run a range of workouts including TRX Group Rip Performance, a high intensity, time-based group training session. ViPR was also in action with ViPR Athletic, a metabolic conditioning class that trains the body as a whole in an explosive fitness workout.

The Outdoor Area of this year's LIW saw a range of demonstrations and displays from Parkour Generations, which was at the show to launch MOV', ►



- its new range of Parkour-based group exercise programmes.

The LIW Live Stage played host to demonstrations from Piloxing, Clubbercise, CobraFit, UniKurve, Wild Training Systems and D2F battle ropes. And Matrix Fitness was celebrating Women in Sport, supporting the Women's Sport Trust with LIW Live Stage presentations from Sally Gunnell OBE, Dani King MBE and the Matrix Fitness Vulpine cycling team.

The STA hosted the Swim Zone for the second year running at the show, and this time the pool was a central feature on the show floor. Demonstrations included a synchronised swimming display from Zoe Cooper, former British Champion and star of

The Matrix stand hosted a number of celebrity ambassadors, including members of the Lotus F1 junior team

Britain's Got Talent and *ITV's Splash*, performing her pool solo routine.

EDUCATION

This year's Leisure Industry Week included 252 free education sessions. New to 2014, the programme took a 'silent disco' approach, with delegate headphones ensuring talks were uninterrupted by the show floor activity.

The Life Fitness Keynote theatre hosted a range of interesting discussions, including presentations by ukactive

CEO David Stalker, who provided an overview of the current levels of physical inactivity in England. Stalker presented key trends for the sector and put forward recommendations on how we can turn the tide of inactivity, highlighting the importance of activity being at the heart of the community, as well as the need to look at collaborative data and statistics to show what exercise can offer.

Complementing this, IHRSA European director Hans Muench used his educational session to outline what's hot internationally, and why. Key points included improving sales processes, focusing on supplementary spend, identifying new target groups, and differentiating through technology. ►




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LIW Evolution Hub: Delegates were asked what the industry looks like now, and what it should look like in the future

Hazel was followed by Olympic weightlifter Zoe Smith, who was joined by her KBT Education colleague and coach, Sam Dovey, to present a workshop discussing the essential factors to consider when developing a programme to ensure athletes peak at the right time for competition.

Samuel continues: "We want to continue to reach out to new audiences with market-leading products, high quality educational content and networking opportunities." ●



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THE WINNERS HEALTH CLUB AWARDS

énergie takes national crown at the members' choice Health Club Awards

The énergie Group took the much coveted National Chain title at this year's Members' Choice Health Club Awards, with its brand énergie Fitness For Women. It's the first time since 2011 that the title has been won by a private operator, with Everyone Active dominating the category for the last two years and Nuffield Health winning the inaugural title in 2011. énergie also took the Best Budget Chain Gold with its Fit4less brand, beating last year's winners Fitness4less into silver spot. Jan Spaticchia, chair and CEO of énergie, said: "This has been an amazing year for us and we're proud to have won

so many awards – testament to the effort we put in to looking after our customers.

"The Members' Choice Health Club Awards has become hugely beneficial to énergie and each of the franchisees, as it positions the winners as award-winning clubs or gyms in their communities – all voted for by their members. I'd like to say well done to each club that achieved excellence this year."

Focus on people

The fourth annual Health Club Awards – this year sponsored by Physical Company, USN UK and Les Mills in partnership with *Health Club Management* magazine – took place on the first night of LIV at the National Motorcycle Museum.

The black tie affair was attended by 250 guests and hosted once again by TV presenter Mark Durden-Smith, who

kept the audience entertained with his unique brand of humour throughout the evening. Meanwhile Steve Bernstein, director of sales from sponsor USN UK, gave one of the highlights of the night when he stepped on stage to show off his skills as a Frank Sinatra tribute singer.

Durden-Smith spoke about the importance of the awards. "Getting your hands on one of these trophies says an awful lot about your club," he said. "It sets you apart from the competition and sends out a clear message that you're passionate about what you do and have your members right at the heart of all your thinking and planning."

"You all have the one secret weapon that's key to the success of any club, and that's really good people. It's people who make the difference, it's people who really connect with customers, and that's what we're here to celebrate tonight."



The team from Westwoods Health Club in Edinburgh celebrate taking gold in the Premium Club category for Scotland



Rick Thompson and his team from i-motion Gym collect the gold for Best Budget Club in Yorkshire



Left: Avalon Leisure are presented with their Silver in the Best Small Chain category – one of the evening's national awards – by sponsor USN

Right: Emma Edwards and Steve Bradley of Fitness4less receive the Best Medium Chain Gold Award from sponsor Physical Company





John Halls, Physical Company's sales & marketing director, addresses the audience

Sponsor Physical Company, which was celebrating 25 years in the industry, agreed. John Halls, sales & marketing director at Physical Company, said in his speech: "In 25 years, one thing hasn't changed: to be at the top of your game in an industry that works with people, you have to put your customers at the forefront of everything you do."

Word from the winners

Alongside *énergie*, other big winners on the night included Fitness4less, which took gold for Best Medium Chain among its haul of 17 awards. Director Emma Edwards said: "The most important thing for us is that entering these awards allows us to gain valuable feedback from our members. Although we're a very small fish in a big pond of gyms, we've received some very motivational endorsements from our members, as well as some incredible feedback on where we can do better. Seeing our managers so delighted at the awards ceremony is so worthwhile – it brings our team closer together."

Trusts and independents

There were some notable successes in the regions for independent clubs,

including Westwoods Health Club based in Edinburgh, which won gold for the Best Premium Club in Scotland. General manager James Matthew said: "Westwoods Health Club was delighted to take part for the first time as a genuine, audited means of assessing our club against many others in both Scotland and the UK. I think it's great that the awards are based solely on members' feedback and ratings, which provide a clear insight into what we do well and what we can improve upon. It's fantastic for our staff and our brand to be recognised as Scotland's Premium Health Club 2014."

Also picking up gold in its region was first-time entrant i-motion Gym, based in Rotherham. The club beat off strong competition from other budget operators to take the Best Budget Club title for the Yorkshire & Humber region.

Rick Thompson, club manager, said: "While building our brand, we've based our core values on delivering outstanding value and encouraging our staff to deliver top rate customer service by developing real relationships with members."

"The fact we've won based on their votes proves to us that we're on a good track, and the award gives us greater exposure in the market. It's great to say

our Rotherham club is the best in its sector for the entire region."

Meanwhile Avalon Leisure picked up a regional silver, as well as silver at national level for the group. "We're delighted by the success we've achieved in these high profile awards," said Bob Buckingham, membership manager for Avalon Leisure. "Recognition of our efforts at both a national and regional level is a testimony to the drive and enthusiasm our teams display each day to achieve excellence in all that we do. It's really gratifying to have such a strong endorsement from our members – our ultimate judges."

Will you win in 2015?

Awards owner Simon Brown added:

"We're absolutely thrilled with the way this year's competition has gone: 400 clubs took up the challenge and 35,000 members voted for their club. This competition is about getting out on the shop floor and engaging with customers, and that's exactly what the shortlisted and winning clubs did very well." ●

For a full list of this year's winners, visit www.healthclubawards.com. Entries for the 2015 competition open on 1 November 2014.

SHOW ME THE MONEY

Gyms and health clubs rise or fall on the strength of their financial control and keeping the confidence of stakeholders and shareholders. Katherine Selby asks two industry experts for their advice

MEET OUR EXPERTS

Duncan Jefford, south-east regional director at Everyone Active, has 15 years' experience in the leisure industry and has worked as a fitness trainer, group development manager and area manager. He currently looks after 41 sites within the south-east region and has accountability for over £50m.
Email: duncanjefford@everyoneactive.com
Web: www.everyoneactive.com



Nick Harding, group finance director at énergie, has over 12 years' accountancy and finance experience. Over the last three years at énergie, he has provided a valuable contribution to redesigning the company strategy into what it is today. The énergie network now consists of 79 clubs with nearly 100,000 members.
Email: nick@energiehq.com
Web: www.energiefranchise.com



The iconic scene in *Jerry Maguire* where Tom Cruise's sports agent character is forced to yell "show me the money" to keep his demanding athletic client happy is perhaps extreme – one hopes finance directors of health clubs and leisure centres don't have to be quite so loud or humbled to keep stakeholders, shareholders and members on board. But they are nevertheless accountable to clear a profit and invest wisely.

Here, two leading operators speak frankly about financial control and share key insights. Duncan Jefford, south-east regional director of public sector operator SLM, trading as Everyone Active, has spent all his working life immersed in the health and fitness business. He started out as a PT and worked his way up through the ranks, supplementing this hands-on knowledge by completing various financial courses with the Institute of Directors to ensure SLM's continued success.

Nick Harding, group finance director for énergie, has a Plc background and

When SLM wins a new ► contract, Jefford starts with a three-year budget, giving the facility time to mature



ALL PHOTOS: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



Social interaction and communication across the business are key to financial transparency and control

has worked in the fitness and leisure industry with *énergie* for just over three years. His accountant's perspective and experience outside the health and fitness market allow him to bring a highly professional approach to *énergie* and a fresh perspective to its business.

Setting the budget

Budgeting is the backbone of financial control: if you get that right, all other aspects of the financial jigsaw can fit together. Budgets are drawn up in different ways for different facilities. Jefford favours using historical financial data as a platform on which to plan and build the next year: although zero-based budgets – which start with a blank sheet for the coming year – can give you a sense of a clean sweep and new broom, the reality is whatever has happened in the previous year will follow you into the next year.

But when it comes to the clean sheet that comes with building a brand new facility or winning a new contract, Jefford always starts with a three-year budget, recognising that it takes this length of time for a new facility to mature and go into profit.

He explains: "We have to take a longer-term view than many private

The problem is people see budgets as a paper exercise to put in the drawer and not look at again. Our managers check their budget weekly and analyse performance daily

sector operators, as a typical new contract will be managed over a 10- to 25-year term. However, in reality as the facility beds in and the membership matures, things are often very different from what you initially imagined, so we keep checking the budget remains suitable and alter it if necessary."

Harding agrees that budgets must be flexible year to year, but likes to invest the time in setting a realistic annual budget that's both stretching

and achievable. "My finance team spends up to three months in advance of the budget year working with the operations team and franchisees. That means they're fully involved and take responsibility for the budget," he explains. "That three-month period can be quite intense as we go back and forth on what we think is realistic and achievable, but once the budget is agreed, the year ahead is then very clear, with specific KPIs in place to monitor performance against that budget."

"The biggest problem with budgets is that people see them as a paper exercise to put in the drawer and not look at again. Our managers and franchisees are all required to check their budget weekly and analyse performance daily."

From the ground up

To enable the network to manage their budgets, Harding runs interactive training days specific to the health and fitness industry to ensure they understand the financial aspects. "Making accountancy understandable to your workforce is of huge importance, and helps control the finances from the ground up," he explains.

While he believes every leisure facility or group should have a commercially- ▶



Managing membership income and payroll are key to the success of any business, whether private or public sector

► focused finance director to drive through the analysis and maintain an overview across the chain or group, he's clear that 'top-down' budgets agreed at board level and handed down to local managers who have had no say in the matter rarely work: "Put simply, this practice doesn't make people accountable. Anyone operating like this should take a step back, regroup and consider how they can turn this system on its head. It takes a little getting used to, but it really works."

Jefford also requires his centre managers to take control of their budgets, and believes they pay more attention to finances as a result. "Each site has specific requirements and considerations, so a 'one size fits all' budget handed down from the management team will not be helpful," he says. "Every centre manager must put in for what he or she thinks is needed. Once it's agreed, they head up the implementation and I offer guidance where necessary."

Profit & loss

Income streams differ between private and public facilities, with the latter

Many businesses run scared of giving P&L responsibility to their centre managers, but my view is if you can't trust them on this, you don't have the right person in the job

generally having more emphasis on casual exercise lines. However, managing membership income and payroll are the key to a successful business across the board, says Jefford. Both sectors are also equally accountable to their stakeholders and members and both need to be profitable, including 'not for profit' clubs which are obliged to invest their profit into improving their business.

As with budgeting, Jefford hands his centre managers the responsibility for their profit and loss accounts. "Many businesses run scared of giving such responsibility to their centre managers, but my view is if you can't trust them on this, you don't have the right person in the job," explains Jefford. "That doesn't mean all our centre managers have accountancy skills. Instead we have bespoke software, so all they need to do is input sales and purchases accurately as they happen. The software will do the rest. Very quickly, a good centre manager will learn how to interpret the outcomes clearly and look to address any losses that are showing. Any problems, come to me and I'll help, but they save a lot of my time by keeping an eye on the day-to-day income and expenditure of their centre."

Real-time tracking

Gone are the days where month-end could bring unpleasant surprises, as there's now plenty of software available to track income versus expenditure in real time.

Jefford requires a daily income check to ensure any discrepancies



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In a nutshell

- Budgets:** Budgets are the backbone to financial stability. A balance must be struck between setting ambitious but achievable budgets, and at the same time allowing for flexibility. Crucially, budgets must be checked regularly to ensure you're on track.
- Accountability:** A finance director can maintain an overview, but every centre/gym manager must be involved in setting the targets and must be accountable for their own budgets and P&L.
- Software:** A wide range of software is now available to assist staff in the financial aspects of running a club, but a commercially-focused financial team is crucial to identify human / PC-generated glitches in data.
- Forecasting:** This isn't about long-term crystal ball-gazing, but a flexible "extension of your daily and weekly checks", with a view to keeping all stakeholders comfortable with the business.
- Collaboration:** Financial control isn't just about the figures – it's about the people, with communication across the whole business key to success.

PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



A strong balance sheet isn't just about selling memberships, but about controlling costs

► or negative trends are identified and acted on early. "As with any issues, the sooner you get to them, the easier they are to solve," he explains.

To ensure smooth running of all énergie clubs, Harding is able to access what he calls 'fingertip information' minute-by-minute. "énergie has built a bespoke piece of software called ORA, which tracks membership sales across the network," says Harding. "At any given time, I can check ORA and see how the clubs are performing against their sales targets, which are obviously linked back into the budgets."

With controlling costs just as important as selling memberships – and harder to track, as there are so many different variants – Harding also invested in software to manage the purchase order system and keep a tight rein on expenditure.

Automated systems have certainly transformed the way profit and loss are managed, but as the familiar saying

goes: 'To err is human, but to really foul things up you need a computer.' Health and fitness clubs therefore still need a finance director in place, supported by a commercially-focused finance team analysing and assessing progress – and staying alert to any oddities created by computer (or user) error.

Forecasting

Forecasting is incredibly important to ensure the long- and short-term viability of any business. This is never more so than in the fitness sector, with its cyclical income of membership subs coming in just once a month.

"People assume forecasting is long-term crystal ball-gazing, when in fact I think it should be seen as an extension of your daily and weekly checks," says Jefford. "Forecasting should be flexible and allow for changes that happen during the forecast period."

"Forecasting is essential to keep our shareholders and stakeholders up to

speed with our future development plans," adds Harding. "With our future growth funded through reinvestment of our profits, forecasting is key to giving stakeholders ongoing comfort in the business."

Collaborative approach

With the right tools, well-trained staff and strong leadership from the finance director, clubs have more scope to track and control their finances than ever before. However, training people properly and maintaining a flexible, open door policy between the finance department and the rest of the business are key to success and security.

The days of the company accountant being shut away and unreachable are numbered, with financial control not just about the figures. It's about the people behind the figures, with social interaction and communication across the whole business key to bringing financial transparency and control. ●



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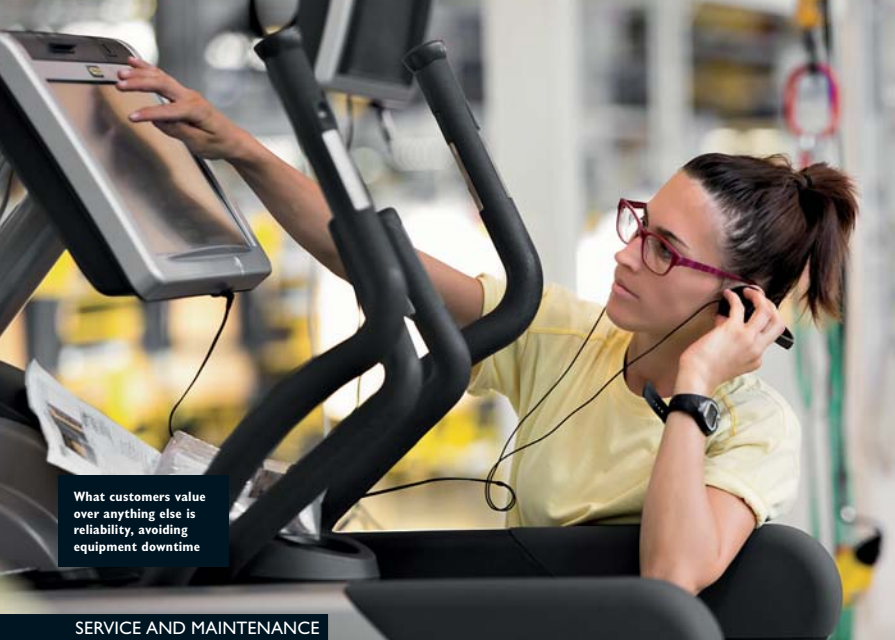
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What customers value over anything else is reliability, avoiding equipment downtime

SERVICE AND MAINTENANCE

KEEP ON RUNNING

Innovations in service and maintenance can keep frustrating 'out of order' signs from appearing in your club. Kate Langrish reports



The last thing any club wants – either aesthetically or in terms of customer satisfaction – is an 'out of order' sign on one of its machines.

"We conducted an extensive study of operators, exercisers and service technicians – across five countries – around using and servicing equipment, and found that what customers value over anything else is reliability," says Adam Hubbard, director of product management at Precor.

"Out of order signs can have a significant impact on member recruitment, retention and ancillary revenues, so you want machines that are designed with dependability, longevity and ease of service in mind."

Any machines that do break down should be back up and running in ideally no more than 48 hours.



Systems should be put in place to ensure machines are fixed within 48 hours

Here's how the latest innovations in service and maintenance – as well as in product design itself – could save your club time, money, and above all frustrated members.

How to reduce downtime...

"Asset Management automatically reports equipment faults directly to the service department"

Rob Thurston, commercial director, Cybex UK

"Cybex's new feedback system, Asset Management, allows customers to register each product online using the product's unique serial number. Once registered, customers are able to automatically report equipment faults directly to our service department, and view the service history log for each piece of equipment.

"It also allows staff to track equipment usage, so they can swap machines around if, say, one spot in a row of treadmills is more popular. This ensures even usage, increasing equipment's lifespan.

"Another function sets and tracks tasks for gym staff – which can



include cleaning or maintenance checks – to ensure each piece of equipment is being managed correctly and efficiently."

"The Active Light Status shows at a glance when a service is needed"

Adam Hubbard,
director of product management, Precor

"Our extensive survey revealed it's all about reliability, so the new Precor Experience Series treadmills incorporate a new motor drive system that draws fewer amps and improves internal cooling, which in turn increases the reliability of electronic components by four times.

"Another key addition is the brand new Active Status Light, which alerts

facility staff and service technicians, at a glance, when service or maintenance is needed. It flashes yellow every 1,000 miles to indicate that maintenance is required.

"The new machines are simple to install and very easy to clean, avoiding small cracks that are difficult for the cleaning crew to reach. By incorporating feedback from service technicians, we've also ensured our new treadmills are even quicker to service, with common maintenance jobs such as replacing the belt or deck achievable in just 20 minutes or less."



"Tablets allow engineers to view and update service history"

Joe Riley, operators manager, Pulse

"We've seen a decline in direct calls to the office thanks to the implementation of our online service portal in August 2014. This allows customers to log in to a website and view a stock asset list, raise service calls, view progress of service calls, request parts and export KPIs.

"Our in-house service engineers have also been issued with tablets giving access to the new service/stock management software, so all calls, service history, parts and availability are viewed and updated seamlessly. As a result, we've seen an improvement in the speed and efficiency of service calls.

"Each customer is given a digital and hard copy handover pack, including details on how to access and use the online portal."



"Preventative maintenance will save money"

Susie Marriott, commercial director, Servicesport (UK)

"As an independent service provider, the more we know about what our customers have, the more predictable our parts stock can be.

"Our engineers have a hand-held device linked to our management system, and this allows them to capture data relating to the condition of the equipment – right down to detail like wear and tear on belts. Our parts stock is adjusted every time we start a



new service agreement with a customer.

"We provide our customers with a service manual that shows them how to regularly clean and preventatively

maintain their equipment in between their preventative maintenance service: it never costs as much to maintain equipment properly as it does to have a high number of reactive call-outs and a shortened life of equipment that hasn't been looked after." ►

"Customers will be able to use Live Chat to get advice"

Jeremy Jenkins, MD, SportsArt UK

"Service is one of the major reasons customers choose SportsArt. They can take delivery of equipment on the basis that, should any replacement parts be required, they'll be delivered within 24 hours, and if an engineer needs to fit them, they'll arrive within the following 24 hours.

"Our new warehouse has spare parts for every piece of equipment, so they can be shipped within hours of a client needing them. Most importantly, we've developed the SportsArt Customer Service Portal, which will shortly be launched on the UK website. The portal allows customers to order parts, book an engineer and use Live Chat to get advice."



"The more problems you fix first time, the more engineers you have to respond to other calls"

John Gamble, managing director of EMEA, Star Trac

"Equipment will break down, so it comes down to the speed of response. Our first-time fix rate is regularly at 95 per cent and our standard call-out time is just over 24 hours – well below the average of 48 hours in the UK. Our engineers have a critical parts list and appropriate spares on the van.

"The more problems you can fix first time, the more engineers you have to respond to other calls.

"Equipment quality is also vital. Take something like the bracket the pedals are attached to – a common thing to break. We produce 60,000 bikes a year and



we haven't had a single breakage to that part on any of them. If you get the quality right, then it frees up your engineers."

"Service performance data is particularly valuable"

Margaret Vane,
UK service manager, Life Fitness UK

"A poor experience can come at any stage within a process, so at Life Fitness we monitor all of our internal and field-based staff, the way in which they perform their roles and our overall service operating procedures.

"We've found that using service performance data in a more investigative manner has been particularly valuable, as it helps to highlight underlying factors that may exist within a customer's own operating procedures. We're then able to discuss these and work with customers to help ensure these issues can be minimised. This may involve offering simple documents for staff to use, setting up temporary courtesy visit schedules or giving additional maintenance instructions."



"USBs have the potential to break, so we've used wireless technology"

Alastair Watson, vice president
Europe, Keiser

"We're constantly testing and updating so our equipment continues to be highly durable and maintenance-free. Most indoor cycles are designed to last around three years, but our M3 Bike easily surpasses that average by years.

"A big challenge facing clubs is the ability for them and their customers to download information, so with the new M3i, which launched earlier this year, we looked at a number of routes. That included USBs, but we discounted them because of breakage potential. The M3i is the first group-exercise cycle with a Bluetooth wireless display, so it can be 'partnered' wirelessly with either a phone or tablet."



"Companies that offer efficiency and dependability have the advantage"

Howard Swinyard, network and
services director, Technogym UK

"With customers increasingly looking to keep their assets for longer, service and maintenance and cost of ownership are bigger priorities than before. Service providers that can offer efficiency and dependability, as well as in-depth product knowledge, have the advantage.

"Recognising this, Technogym underpins all its service contracts with agreements that promise best-in-class time to service and first-time fix rate. We also invest heavily in product development to increase product reliability and durability.

"Clients can phone, email or book services round the clock through TG Direct, our online customer portal." ●





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LOCK IT UP

New products and new installations. We take a look at what's hot in the world of lockers

MOOD AND AMBIENCE

Two "markedly different yet personalised" changing areas for male and female members have been created by Craftsman Quality Lockers at Goodwood Health Club.

The company aimed to provide a specific mood and ambience rather than off-the-shelf solutions at the club, which is part of the Earl of March's Goodwood estate in West Sussex.

The women's changing area has been designed with a beach hut effect, using cool pastel shades, in contrast with the more 'muscular' black upholstery and metallic hues in the men's changing room, according to Craftsman.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD Craftsman



WRIST ACTION



EasyBand is a new low-cost, waterproof RFID wristband that can integrate with locker systems.

Launched by Glasgow-based Authentic8 ID Solutions UK, the wristband uses a NXP Mifare 1K chip and is made from silicone. Each band is laser-engraved with a unique serial number. Authentic8 says no hardware changes or upgrades are required if contactless or proximity Mifare smartcards or keyfobs are already being used.

The wristbands come in adult and junior sizes, and are available in a range of colours. They can also be customised to a club's requirements.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD Authentic8

ALL CHANGE

Launched at Leisure Industry Week, Safe Space Evolution is a wooden locker from Safe Space Lockers constructed from MFC (melamine faced chipboard) with a timber-based carcass and laminate doors.

It can be positioned in any tier configuration and comes in a variety of widths (300mm, 350mm, 400mm). The locker also features 6mm toughened glass, and many colour options are available. All lock types can be added.

Daniel Jones, sales director at Safe Space, said there had been "plenty of interest" in the new product at LIW, which was held at Birmingham's NEC.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD Safe Space



WINNING COMBINATION

Lowe & Fletcher has launched a range of contactless digital combination locks, which allow the user immediate and simple keypad access without the need for a key. The battery-operated locks can either be used independently or paired with existing wireless systems using RFID.

Users have the flexibility to set and change their personal entry code, while a preset master code ensures that supervisor access is always available.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD Lowe & Fletcher

Oxfordshire's Heythrop Park has begun the process of upgrading 250 key and coin-operated lockers in its clubhouse changing rooms, moving to Codelocks' KitLock digital cabinet locks.

Designed to be as robust as possible, the locks are fitted in place of standard key cam locks, with customers needing

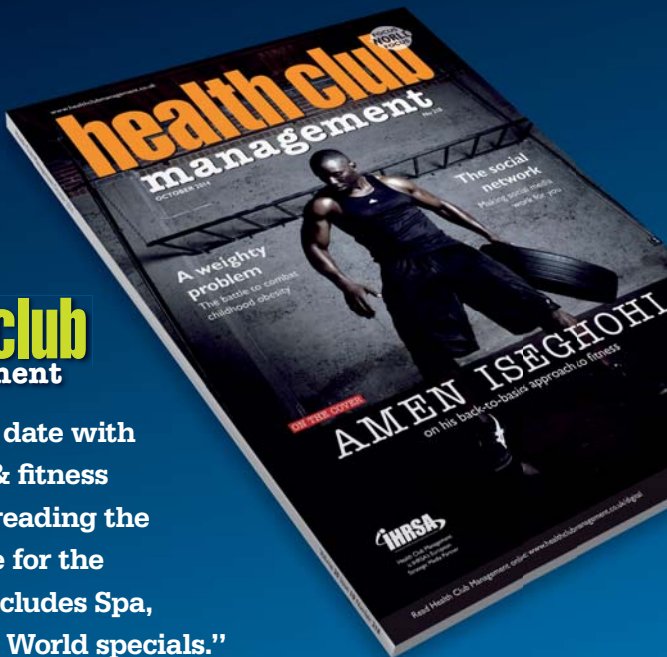
only to enter a four-digit code on the keypad, lock the cabinet, and go. A six-digit technician code ensures that supervisory access is available if customers forget their code.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD Codelocks



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Supplier showcase

We take a look at recent projects by Precor, Life Fitness and Prospec

NETWORKED PARTNERSHIP

Client: Goodwood Hotel and Health Club
Supplier: Precor

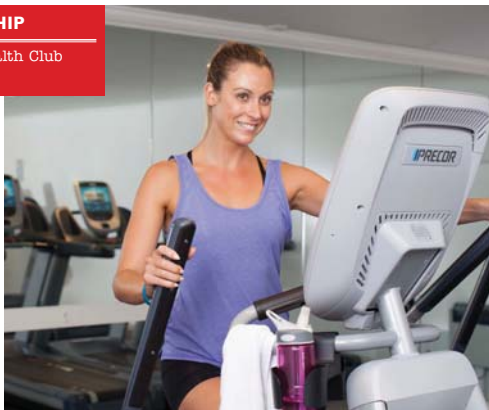
The Goodwood Hotel and Health Club on the prestigious Goodwood Estate, amid the stunning Sussex Downs, has a TripAdvisor 'Certificate of Excellence 2014' and a rating of four stars. Renowned for its two PGA (Professional Golfers' Association) championship courses, it also features state of the art fitness facilities.

In 2013, the 160sq m (1,725sq ft) gym was refitted with Precor CV equipment, all offering Preva networked fitness. Since then, the hotel's satisfaction ratings on TripAdvisor have been higher than ever before, with a consistent score of 82 per cent and above.

Kathryn Gard, operations manager (leisure) for Goodwood Health Club, comments: "We were confident from the start that Preva would add clarity, aiding us in understanding our 2,000 members more and therefore positively impacting on retention and sales."

"When we talk to prospective members about what Preva and Precor can do to support them in achieving their goals, they are always blown away and their own confidence in the product, just from the short demonstration, is very visible and very real."

Leisure manager Jen Evans adds: "Precor equipment and Preva is incredibly intuitive and easy for



Preva's goal-setting capabilities are an asset to the hotel's wellness consultations

members to navigate. The Preva app is a wonderful addition, ensuring workouts done outside the gym are included in an exerciser's programme and contributing to rewards given within goal-setting."

With Preva now playing an integral part in goal-setting and motivation, the hotel is launching a wellness consultation scheme that encourages a well-rounded lifestyle, taking into account swimmers, runners, cyclists, fitness enthusiasts and class-goers.

The hotel also uses Preva's personalised messaging and club feed functionality to build the business, and has concentrated on two main areas: promotion of services such as personal training, and boosting class occupancy in low attendance classes. As a result, personal training revenue reached over £30,000 in 2013 – a continuing trend in 2014 – while class occupancy levels reached 71 per cent.

But Preva is about more than just what's visible in the gym. "Preva also impacts the member and guest journey without them even knowing," continues

Gard. "The networked equipment is centrally tested every 15 minutes to ensure full functionality, which seriously reduces machine downtime."

"Prior to installing Precor, we often had to wait over three days for a call-out to malfunctioning pieces, and factor in a two- to six-week wait for parts. With the Preva network pre-reading the machines, the engineer can come prepared with tools and parts to correct the problem. It's a tremendous benefit, substantially improves the customer experience and promotes retention with a greater perceived value in membership."

Retention levels have reached record levels, which the club attributes to the installation of Precor and Preva.

Gard adds: "Precor was an obvious choice for us. Not only did the equipment tick all the boxes in terms of functionality, but the support – from sales, service and software through to maintenance – also delivered above expectation."

Details: www.precor.com



The hotel and club has a TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence 2014



GOING STRONG

Client: Life Leisure
Supplier: Life Fitness

Stockport leisure provider Life Leisure has extended its fitness centre at Houldsworth Village, adding a new functional training suite with over 100 pieces of high performance Life Fitness and Hammer Strength equipment.

An indoor five-a-side football pitch was converted into the new functional training/strength and conditioning area, where members now have access to the complete Hammer Strength Range including HD Elite power racks and platforms, Hammer Strength plated equipment, Hammer Strength MTS, benches and racks.

Life Leisure decided to install the new area in recognition of the growing popularity of strength training – increasingly viewed as an essential part of a complete physical activity programme for all members, whatever their fitness level, ability or gender. Strength training features in the top five 2014 ACSM (American College of Sports Medicine) fitness trends, along with body weight training and HIIT (high-intensity interval training). Life Leisure's new installation acknowledges both the popularity and the importance of these training methods.

The centrepiece of the new facility is the Life Fitness Synrgy360 XM – a versatile exercise system designed for group training that offers six training spaces incorporating six-rung monkey bars. A huge range of functional and bodyweight exercises are possible on and around the Synrgy360, which also offers the perfect introduction to strength and conditioning for all demographics and populations.

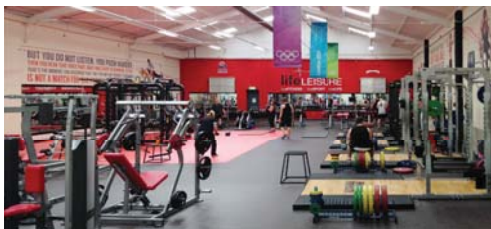
In addition to this successful installation, which was completed in July, Houldsworth Village has been working with British Weightlifting and plans to

offer the facility as a venue for Hammer Strength Clinics in the future.


Chris Finnigan, account manager at Life Fitness, says: "The latest expansion at Houldsworth Village has underlined its position as an elite training facility in the north-west. With demand for functional training and strength and conditioning training growing, members now have access to the latest innovative equipment for the ultimate workout."

Malcolm McPhail, chief executive of Life Leisure, says: "Providing accessible, affordable and inclusive fitness is an essential requirement for Life Leisure facilities, and the new-look training area at Houldsworth Village is no exception. Through our partnership with Life Fitness, members can enjoy best-in-class fitness equipment that clearly sets us apart from our competitors."

Details: www.lifefitness.co.uk



The new functional training area was converted from an indoor football pitch



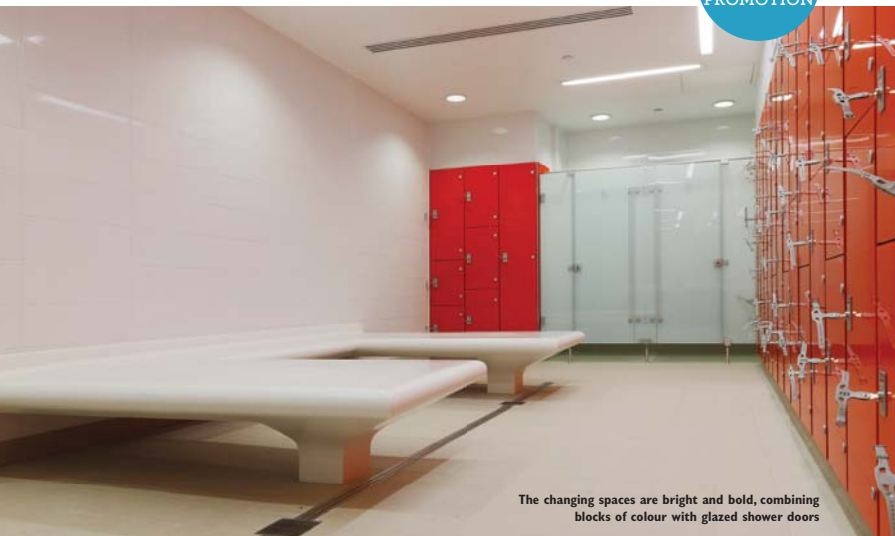
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WHAT WE **LIVE** FOR



The changing spaces are bright and bold, combining blocks of colour with glazed shower doors

BEYOND LEISURE

Client: London Borough of Camden
Supplier: Prospec

5 Pancras Square is a new community building located in the heart of London's King's Cross, with public facilities including a leisure centre, relocated modern library, café and a customer service centre. It's set to be one of the greenest buildings in the UK after achieving a BREEAM Outstanding sustainability design rating, with features like a bio-roof, solar panel and solar fins.

Prospec was specified and installed a range of its products – from lockers and cubicles to duct panelling and vanity units – not only within the new leisure facility, but also throughout the building. Working hand-in-hand with the project architects – experienced leisure facility firm LA architects – the team at Prospec developed the leisure centre specification to include premium systems and high quality finishes to provide a truly modern changing and shower facility.

"The changing and shower facilities at Pancras Square Leisure are designed with the user at the heart of the design," says a spokesperson for LA architects. "The spaces are both bright and bold, which was especially important in this project as they're located in the basement of the building. We specified glass lockers and cubicles to best achieve this. The block colour of the lockers provides impact and vibrancy, while the translucent glazed shower cubicles subtly contribute to an added sense of spaciousness."

The use of glass throughout the changing rooms was in fact a key part of the specification, with the use of toughened and laminated locker and cubicle doors being particularly important for wet areas.

The Cabrillant system – which has been consistently improved and updated to maintain its status as a premium shower and changing room cubicle

for demanding leisure centres such as Pancras Square Leisure – has been installed at the new building, which is expected to have 500,000 users a year. Prospec also installed its Marathon Glass lockers, complete with KABA lock cylinders, into the leisure facility.

Ease of cleaning is assured with curved internal radius and sloping shelves that allow compartments to be hosed down with the assurance that the water will drain.

Working closely with the main contractor, Kier Major Projects, Prospec was also specified and installed in all the toilet facilities within the 10-storey office space.

"Over the last 22 years, LA architects have acquired a vast amount of experience in the design and delivery of highly successful leisure centre facilities," concludes the LA architects' spokesperson. "During this time, we've worked with Prospec on a considerable number of projects and we're confident in specifying Prospec's products. They provide the quality, robustness and aesthetics that are required for the demanding environments of leisure centre facilities."

Details: www.prospec.co.uk

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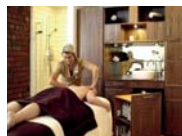


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LIGHTWEIGHTS



WELLNESS ON A SHOESTRING AT SWISS HOSTEL

A youth hostel in Saas-Fee, Switzerland, has opened with 1,900sq m (20,451sq ft) of wellness and sports facilities, declaring itself the first "wellness hostel" in the world.

The 168-bed dormitory operation, WellnessHostel 4000, has already attracted a varied clientele, including ski teams, mature holidaymakers and young people seeking cheap accommodation: beds start at around CHF50 (€41, £32).

The spa has a Finnish sauna, bio sauna, herbal steam bath, whirlpool, relaxation room, a phone/tablet-free area and 25m indoor pool. There's also a gym with personal training available. Single admission to the wellness, fitness and swimming pool costs CHF41.50 (€33, £27) while a 60-minute massage starts at CHF95 (€77, £62). Other treatments are available. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=x6N9d>

'RUNNING MATES' AVAILABLE FOR RENT IN CHINA



Students in China have found a novel way to earn money: by renting themselves out as "running mates" for out-of-shape office workers.

According to China's *Global Times*, some students are earning up to 3,000 yuan (US\$490, £306) a month as professional running partners who provide a "little old-fashioned encouragement" to their clients. Clients typically either feel they need the additional motivation of having a training partner, or else are comforted by the safety aspect of not running alone outdoors at night.

Cycling hotel opens in Japan

A five-star hotel dedicated to cyclists has opened in Onomichi – a coastal city in Japan – allowing guests to check in while still on their bikes.

Masterminded by Suppose Design Office, Hotel Cycle has 28 suites and is the first of its kind in the country.

All guest bedrooms have bike racks – displaying the guests' mode of transport as a piece of art and keeping it secure. The public areas offer airy

repair spaces with tools available for rent and there's specialist bike shop, bar and restaurant on-site as well.

The city, with its waterfront routes, is a popular cycling hub, and the hotel is the centrepiece of the bike-focused resort. Onomichi U2, also by Studio Design Office, includes a giant bike shop, rental and maintenance store and Yard Cafe with a 'cycle-through' system. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=t8D6S>



FITNESS FOCUS: MIAMI SCIENCE MUSEUM

Health and fitness is making its way into the world of attractions as part of a new museum that's being built in Miami, US.

The Patricia and Phillip Frost Museum of Science, which is due to open in 2016, will have a gallery dedicated to teaching people how to make healthy lifestyle choices.

The 836sq m (9,000sq ft) gallery will use technology to show the science and psychology behind eating, meditation, body language, brain function and technology for prosthetics and surgery. It will have an energy dance floor, virtual restaurant and science bar for cooking demonstrations. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=E3x0E>



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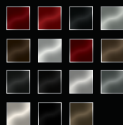
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