

health club management

MARCH 2015

No 222

AN ACTIVE SOCIETY

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science to get
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ON THE COVER

SAMANTHA MOYO

The co-founder of Morning Gloryville on getting the world to rise and shine



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Making activity normal

We want to get the nation fit and active, and to achieve this we must understand the environmental and social factors that reinforce certain behaviours at a subconscious level. We can't simply give people information and expect them to change their behaviour.

This is the topline finding of a paper published in November by Dr Stanley Blue of Manchester University. Blue explains: "Smoking, exercise and eating are fundamentally social practices. Trying to get individuals to stop smoking or to eat healthily overlooks this fact.

"Public health policy will have to find the courage to break away from its traditional mould if it's to stand a chance of confronting lifestyle disease. Current policy is dominated by the presumption that individuals are capable of making 'better' choices for themselves on the basis of information given to them by government or other agencies. This doesn't account for the fact that practices like smoking and eating have histories of their own.

"We need to re-shape what is deemed socially acceptable and normal in order to change these practices."

Research carried out by Ipsos MORI last year came to a similar conclusion. In the study, three-quarters of respondents underestimated the percentage of people in England who were meeting physical activity guidelines – and many saw this as an excuse to follow suit. "Our understanding of the social norm has a huge effect on how we act: if we think everyone else is doing it, we're more likely to do it ourselves," explains Bobby Duffy, MD of Ipsos MORI's Social Research Institute. "People think the norm in society is inactivity." (see p54)

So what can we do about this? Blue believes social practice should be placed at the heart of public health policy, with junk food, excessive consumption of alcohol and physical inactivity made socially unacceptable in much

the same way as smoking has been. He also believes making the 'right' decision – going to the gym or eating five portions of fruit and veg a day, for example – shouldn't be a matter of personal choice.

But that's a tough call to make, as it implies a legislative approach – similar to the smoking ban – that forbids people from doing anything unhealthy. Quite aside from the authoritarian overtones that jar with the fabric of our society, we also need to be practical about this: how can we possibly legislate against people sitting down?

Trying to get individuals to stop smoking or eat healthily overlooks the fact that these are fundamentally social practices

We need to turn this argument on its head. Making inactivity less socially acceptable would be no bad thing, but as behaviour change expert Dr Paul Chadwick says on p38, instilling a sense of shame can be counterproductive. If we're going to legislate, let it be for activity rather than against inactivity: making leisure statutory, making active design a compulsory part of urban planning, and creating a national exercise incentive scheme. And at a club level, let's learn from the likes of US yoga operation Brewasan (see p60), which accepts that people enjoy a drink. We need to follow its example and bring that together with exercise into one social experience; if we make it either/or, the pub will win.

Kate Cracknell, editor

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Cover image courtesy of Marc Sethi



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Buyers' guide

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



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People

PHOTO: CARYS LAMIN



Samantha Moyo co-founded Morning Gloryville in 2013

“We decided the world needed a revolution in conscious dancing... a wonderfully positive way to start the day”

Samantha Moyo,
co-founder, Morning Gloryville

What is Morning Gloryville?

‘Morning Gloryville ~ Rave Your Way Into The Day!’ is an immersive, sober dance experience that takes place on a Wednesday morning before work.

It aims to connect communities and empower people – you’ll leave with nothing less than a soaring spirit. We are each other’s motivation and in the safe space that is Morning Gloryville, people leave their roles and their judgements at the door. We come together, feel the music and let ourselves go. There are times when members spontaneously get on the stage and lead the crowd – the vibes of authenticity are transformational.

Morning Gloryville is the world as we’d like it: an inclusive, fun experience that challenges social norms, empowers people and encourages them to lead conscious, joyful lives. We are pro-people, pro-community and pro-play, and we’re trying to change how people feel about the word ‘rave’. We’re turning clubbing on its head and subverting morning culture.

Where did the idea come from?

I’d been producing events in the UK for a few years, including a boat party called Pirate Radio Boat Party, which in 2012

was voted the second-best party in London by Metro newspaper.

Not long after that, I was sprawled on the banks of the River Thames with my friend Nico Thoemmes, recovering from a huge night out, and we were saying to each other: “Gosh – how much fun, but this lifestyle isn’t sustainable... How can we revolutionise the fun?”

We decided the world needed a revolution in conscious dancing – a ravevolution. Even though we knew the city was full of morning-haters, we figured the morning was the perfect time for stressed people with demanding desk jobs – the ravers and ex-ravers and everyone else – to get into their bodies, energise and infuse some healthy fun and playfulness into the daily grind. It would be a wonderfully positive way to start their day.

The first Morning Gloryville (previously named Morning Glory) took place on Wednesday 29 May 2013 in Village Underground, Shoreditch, London. It has since evolved into a global social movement, with events in 17 different cities around the world.

How does it work?

‘Morning Gloryville ~ Rave your Way Into The Day!’ is diverse in its nature,

with events modified to suit the people of each area. Generally a session lasts four hours, 6.30–10.30am, and we use a ticketing tier system in the month leading up to the event: Early Birdie Ravers pay £12, Cock-a-doodle-doo-ers pay £16.20, and La-La-Last Chance! pay £19.20.

Attendee numbers differ from location to location, but in London we have about 600–800 people a month lining up outside Oval Space, our current east London venue, at 6.00am.

What sort of location do you need to host an event?

Our venues vary from gyms to churches to clubs. We love letting natural light in so we’re raving as the sun comes up. That creates a spectacular energy in itself. As long as there’s space for our bodies to groove – as well as for a massage station, yoga station and our healthy food and drink vendors – we’re all set to go.

Tell us about your global expansion

We’ve received over 1,000 emails from people around the world wanting to bring the Morning Gloryville experience to their city, and as we’re a franchise we do oversee each event to some extent.



Morning Gloryville taps into a growing desire for direct human experiences

We're excited to be able to say that Morning Gloryville is now available in 18 locations globally: in east and west London, Brighton, Liverpool, Leeds, New York City, San Francisco, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, Bangalore, Zurich, Sydney, Melbourne, Tokyo, Paris, Dublin and Montreal.

What lies at the heart of Morning Gloryville's success?

There's a global shift in consciousness towards mindfulness, and a growing desire for direct human experiences. That means there's a huge and growing appetite for the kind of authentic, healthy and fun experience that Morning Gloryville creates – something that softens the daily grind.

The words our citizens use are: 'buzzing', 'glowing', 'energised', 'full of joy', 'light', 'empowered', 'more motivated at work', 'a spring in my step'. In other words, after one of our events your day will be brighter and more joyful than normal. Challenges at work won't seem so mountainous and the people around you will feel and respond to your glow.

The desire to unplug from our increasingly tech-saturated culture and engage in a community will, we believe, only become stronger. As a company

The events help people start the day with a spring in their step

we exist to inspire, empower, connect and entertain people.

Do you have any plans to further develop Morning Gloryville?

Morning Gloryville will continue to expand globally – we hope to launch in a hundred or more cities worldwide by 2016. We've also hosted our flagship 'Rave Your Way Into The Day!' event at the Edinburgh Fringe, Bestival, Burning Man, Into The Wild and Wilderness Festival, and more like-minded festivals are on the cards.

We've also started bringing the Morning Gloryville energy into the world of work, with tailored corporate team packages.

In addition, in London, we've expanded our offering with Sail Awake Sunday. Check Yourself Before You Wreck Yourself, and Let's Go To Sleep Together and Wake Up Together.

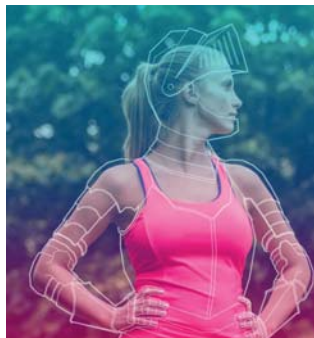
There are also some exciting new possibilities which relate to clothing lines, health retreats, and various healing modalities.



MAIN PHOTO: ALICE REPBELL. PHOTO RIGHT: ALISTAIR VERNARD

FANCY A RAVE?

Find out about your local events at www.morninggloryville.com
Or if you're interested in bringing Morning Gloryville to your city, email info@morninggloryville.com



“People love game mechanics. We want to use that to make running exciting to a new group of people”

Sam Hill & Ben Barker,
PAN Studio

PHOTO: VIV VADOLTA



Sam Hill (left) and Ben Barker (right) developed the Run An Empire app

Tell us about your new idea, Run an Empire

Run an Empire is a game that runs through a smartphone app. It uses GPS to record the paths players take when out for a walk or run – local neighbourhoods will become new arenas for strategic play.

To control a territory, a player simply has to sprint, jog or saunter around it. For a competing player to capture it from them, they need to do the same – either faster or more often. Territory can be better protected from invasion by encircling it multiple times.

The key to success is dedication. The game is designed for people like us, not naturally gifted athletes – a slow player can beat a faster opponent if they show more determination.

Rather than a gamified fitness app, we see Run An Empire as a strategy game with sports-like, real-world elements. While there's certainly a potential health benefit, which we'll enrich as best we can with player analytics, what we're really excited about seeing are the strategies players use to achieve victory.

What are your backgrounds?

PAN Studio is a design practice with a specific interest in developing enriching experiences that in some way impart intellectual, sensory or emotional value.

We make digital platforms and services that challenge how we live our lives and how we engage with existing systems. We believe that a collaborative, responsive approach leads to better results and products that audiences actually engage with.

Our background is in design and interaction, and game logic is something we try to apply to everything we design.

How did you come up with the idea?

The nub of the idea came in late 2012, while developing ideas for the first Playable City Award. We went on to develop Hello Lamp Post, but the theme of localised 'ownership', combined with play, came up several times.

Health and fitness apps, location and Quantified Self tools, and mobile games are three well-defined, heavily subscribed categories of smartphone

app. What was beginning to form for us was the idea of something that worked across all three categories.

What do you hope to achieve with Run an Empire?

Sports can be somewhat divisive. Though the global market is worth billions of pounds, in the United States something like 60 per cent of adults simply "don't like sports" at all (source: SIFA and ACTIVE Network, 2012).

But many sports possess an incredible culture, and playing them can tap a deep well of sensations and emotions – it's a shame not to feel more involved with them. Run An Empire is an attempt to reconcile with the intentions behind sport – application of skill, social mediation and play – and make them applicable to a gaming generation.

Our big idea is getting people who don't currently run, running. We know so many people love genuinely compelling game mechanics, and we want to use that to make running exciting to a whole new group of people.

At the same time, we hope we can show people who already run how powerful a strong game mechanic can be in rewarding them as players.

RUN YOUR OWN EMPIRE

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AMPY launched on Kickstarter and has since raised over US\$300k in funding



Just plug in your device to charge on the go



The three co-founders of AMPY met at Northwestern University in the US

“The average active person generates enough energy from everyday motion to power a smartphone for three hours”

Alex Smith, Mike Geier & Tejas Shastry – co-founders, AMPY

Tell us about yourselves

We – the three co-founders of AMPY – met during our PhDs in engineering at Northwestern University, US. We wanted to solve a problem we all had: our smartphones dying at the most inconvenient times. We all depend so much on our mobile devices, but we still have no convenient way of making sure they don't run out of power.

Since we were active people, we wondered if we could capture some of the energy from our daily activities and use it to power our phones.

We all had experience in clean tech start-ups focused on solar, fuel cell and battery technologies. Putting together our shared knowledge of energy harvesting, we came up with the technology advances for AMPY.

So what is AMPY?

AMPY is a wearable motion charger that captures energy from your movements and stores it. You can then use that energy to power your smartphone or any other USB-powered device: the

average active person generates enough energy from everyday motion to power a smartphone for three hours.

Inside of AMPY are our proprietary inductors, which couple to your motion and generate electricity that's stored in a battery inside. When you need it the most, you simply plug in your device to charge it from the energy stored.

But it's a dual mode charger too, meaning you can charge it either from your movement – which can offset the carbon footprint of your smartphone – or from the socket on the wall.

At what stage of its development is AMPY?

Over the last two years, we've prototyped AMPY and tested it with pilot users to make sure it's easy to wear and fits in your life.

Last autumn, we brought AMPY to the world by launching a Kickstarter campaign, where we raised over US\$300,000. Since then, we've been scaling up our manufacturing to get AMPY to customers by summer of 2015.

Do you have any plans to further develop AMPY?

We hope to not only scale and deliver the AMPY motion charger to our customers, but also to integrate our technology directly into wearable devices and power them.

One day, we envision self-charging smartwatches, fitness trackers and other crazy wearables that haven't even been invented yet – a future where you never have to plug in, because smartwatches and fitness trackers will be able to power themselves entirely from your movement. There's so much that we believe can be done. ●

WANT TO GET AMPY?

To find out more, or to pre-order your own AMPY, log on to www.getampy.com

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Glenda Rivoallan, Director
Healthhaus, Jersey

WRITE TO REPLY



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Tapping into playground 'downtime' could help boost activity in schools

School PE is failing to inspire people to future participation

I was reading the news on the HCM website recently and was not surprised to read about a survey in which half of people said their school PE experience didn't help them become more physically active. Those questioned are presumably adults, which proves that problems with school PE have persisted for decades.

Twenty years ago, I was a frustrated PE teacher appalled at the high levels of disengagement at school and, worse, the complete lack of physical activity during school holidays. I set up Fit For Sport, focusing on out of school activities – but it quickly evolved to meet the rising demand from schools needing help.

Our Lottery-funded Engage To Compete programme addresses many of the issues raised in the HCM news story. The scheme is carefully named: we must engage kids before they start to compete. But of course not all kids will compete

for their school, so our programme also ensures ongoing non-competitive activity to keep all the kids active. Engaging primary school children means they're starting on an active journey for life.

Ofsted is absolutely right that teachers don't have sufficient knowledge, which is why we work with teachers and support staff as much as the kids. Schools and teachers are hard-pressed to get more PE timetabled, so we tap into playground 'downtime' and train up non-teaching staff to maximise these resources.

If programmes such as this can be rolled out across the UK, I truly believe today's kids will enjoy a much more positive physical activity experience at school and will grow up with a healthier attitude to activity than their parents.

Dean Horridge
Founder and CEO, Fit for Sport

Training is key to excellent leadership

It was interesting to read your recent management feature (see HCM Jan 15, p88) which asked industry experts what makes a great leader. This raised key points including the need for organisations to change in order to thrive, and the importance of this starting with the leader.

The fitness industry continues to expand, with an estimated 400,000 new leaders needed yearly to satisfy the growth. These roles are often filled by promotions from within, with no leadership training, ignoring that leadership qualities are different from management qualities. Without the right training, you can't assume a great manager will be able to transfer their skills to become an equally strong leader.

Studies show that investment in leadership development improves bottom-line financial performance of a business, attracts and retains talent, and drives a performance culture. Active IQ has therefore launched a new range of active leisure qualifications designed to bridge the skills gap and resolve the shortage of leadership training.

Jenny Patrickson
Commercial director, Active IQ



Leadership qualities differ from management skills

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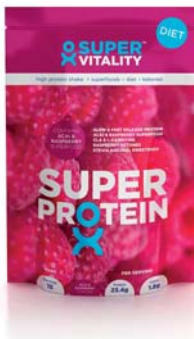
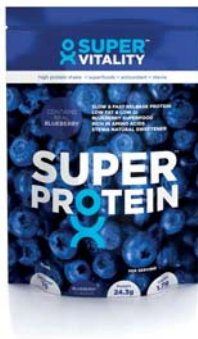
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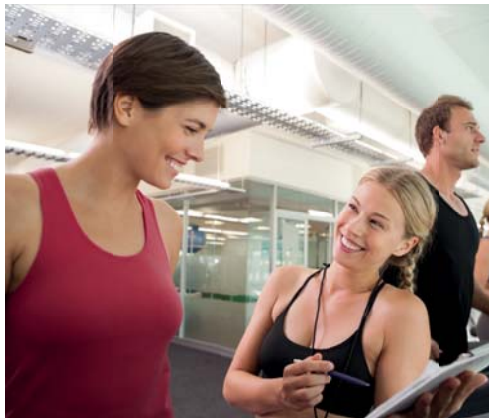
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PICTURE: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/WABERARVEDIA

PT is now about coaching people through changes to their whole lifestyle

We need to spread the word that we're professionals

I read with interest the news story on the HCM website in January, about Matt Roberts leading the new year fitness charge. I wanted to offer my thoughts.

I think it's important that high-profile figures like Matt are pushing the health and fitness agenda, and agree that the media focus on quick fixes is not conducive to a long-term solution. But of course this is because the 'slow and steady' approach doesn't make for attention-grabbing headlines.

To really make a difference and engage with the public, fitness trainers and coaches need to convey the message that fitness professionals are just that – professional. Personal training is no longer about teaching someone how to do a press-up, a squat or even an entire workout. It's about coaching people through changes to their entire lifestyle (nutrition, exercise, sleep, stress) to improve their health, fitness and wellbeing. Knowledge and skills in behaviour change are fundamental, in

addition to the conventional 'training and diet programme' approach.

We're working with clients on a higher level than ever before and that takes a considerable amount of education and development on the part of the trainer. If we can get the public to appreciate the level of expertise that they can access, and the significant impact it could have on their life, we will see a huge breakthrough. It will require collaboration across multiple agencies but the message is already filtering through and I would urge the media to support it.

Of course, this must all be backed up. We have to work hard to raise and maintain the standards of fitness professionals to ensure they're prepared for the ever-growing responsibility they carry; progress is in full swing here too. The future of fitness looks bright.

Paul Swainson

*Head of the School of PT,
Future Fit Training*

Operators must embrace wearable technology

I read with interest your interview with Maneesh Juneja, the digital health visionary (see HCM Feb 15, p66). He paints an interesting picture of how technology, and specifically wearable technology, could impact our public health system.

We already know from a YouGov survey in 2014 that penetration of wearable tech is forecast to more than double this year, with wearable devices for fitness seen as the most important area. And with 3 per cent of the global population currently owning a fitness tracker – which will no doubt rise dramatically later this year when the Apple Watch becomes available to consumers – the trend is showing no sign of slowing.

It's vital for operators to engage fully with this technology and embrace wearables: they will be much better placed to deliver true value to their customers if they can draw on fitness data from outside and inside their facilities. Combined with in-house systems, wearables can provide a wealth of information, allowing operators to build an accurate profile of a member's activity which can be used to target them more effectively and keep them engaged.

If operators embrace this digital revolution rather than fighting it, it need not be a threat to their business, but rather a way to engage customers further.

Leon Houseman

Marketing manager, Gladstone



PICTURE: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/BLAZE DINK

Technology can help improve club/member engagement



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UK news update

Southwark to pilot free leisure access for kids

Southwark Council has unveiled plans to offer free leisure access to under-18s and over-60s as the south London authority bids to make good on its pledge to one day provide free swim and gym access to all residents.

The council has been particularly proactive in promoting wellbeing among residents, investing almost £50m in leisure facilities in the borough over the past decade. It has also provided free school meals to all primary school children since 2011, in a move designed to encourage healthy eating habits from an early age.

For its latest initiative, the council will embark on a new pilot whereby residents aged 18 and under will be given free access to swim and gym facilities on Fridays and weekend afternoons from May.
Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Z5Z3y>

Industry mourns chair of Lifestyle Carl Gripenstedt



Carl Gripenstedt: 1955 – 2015

Moving tributes have been paid to Lifestyle Fitness chair and founder Baron Carl Gripenstedt, who has died suddenly aged 59.

Regularly referred to as a 'legend' of the health club industry, the Swede started Competition Line (UK) – the company behind Lifestyle Fitness – in 1982.

A Lifestyle Fitness tribute read: "Carl was a much respected, exceptionally talented business man and leader of people. He was a great motivator and humourist with a wonderful gift of being able to spread warmth and joy among friends, colleagues and strangers alike with his jokes."

Work was only one of Gripenstedt's passions, and his dedication to a raft of charitable causes – most notably homelessness – won him many admirers (see p52). He is survived by his wife Ullabritt and five children: Lovisa, Thomas, Eva, Ebba and Elsa.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=M3S8J>

Virgin partners Tough Mudder

Virgin Active has landed an exclusive three-year partnership with Tough Mudder that will see the gym chain offer tailored training sessions to legions of outdoor competitors.

Marketed as the 'toughest event on the planet', Tough Mudder has become hugely popular since launching in 2010, with teams of fitness enthusiasts pushing their bodies to the limit through icy, fiery and electrified obstacles in the name of charity. The new tie-up sees Virgin Active providing in-club training designed to help competitors discover the strength, stamina and determination required to complete the challenge. As the official health

club partner of Tough Mudder, Virgin Active hopes the tie-up will lead to a new stream of members. Tough Mudder participants – of which there have been more than 1.5 million to date – will receive newsletters, social media messages and updates on the Tough Mudder-tailored activities Virgin is offering.

Using Virgin Active's 'The Grid' – a 30-minute class based on high-energy obstacle training – competitors across the UK will be able to access a full body workout, and receive training advice through Grid Active. The organisations are also collaborating on a new class.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=j8m4Z>



Strong growth: Tough Mudder has attracted more than 1.5 million participants to date

'Bad science' holding us back, say experts

The weak evidence base underpinning the effectiveness of exercise as medicine is holding the physical activity sector back at a time when it should be at the forefront of public health delivery.

That's the view of exercise experts from the Uklactive Research Institute, whose new academic piece brands the failure to demonstrate the clear health benefits of exercise in a real-world setting a 'serious concern'.

The article, published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, calls into question the methods currently used to judge whether exercise is an effective prescription for use in clinical medicine and public health. Research Institute principal investigator Dr Chris Beedie and his team posit in their new paper that too many researchers conduct studies in laboratories and their findings do not translate to real-world practice.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=CSK7U>



Dr Chris Beedie is calling for a stronger evidence base for real-world exercise

Boutique market 'coming of age'



Heartcore Fitness co-founder Brian Schuring has high hopes for the sector in 2015

The explosion of boutique gym sites across London demonstrates how consumers are waking up to the benefits of group fitness, says the co-founder of Heartcore Fitness.

Brian Schuring, whose chain of boutique studios spans seven sites across the capital, says the flurry of recent activity and investment in the market space suggests there's still plenty of room for growth.

This year has already seen the arrival of 1Rebel and the scaling up of brands like barrecore and Barry's Bootcamp, suggesting consumers are increasingly willing to pay a high premium in return for telling results.

Brian, who runs the business with celebrity personal trainer Jess Schuring, has also launched two new Heartcore studios in 2015 – in the City and Mayfair. He plans to launch two more by spring, and says the opportunities in the market mean there's potential for up to 15 Heartcore studios in London. He told HCM that 2015 looks set to be the chain's busiest year despite the new competition: "It's been interesting to watch well-funded, smart investors enter the boutique group fitness market and from our perspective, we're where we want to be."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=V3G7T>

GLL continues charge with another merger



GLL managing director Mark Sesnan

GLL has further expanded its territories beyond the enterprise's London heartland, through the recent acquisition of North Country Leisure (NCL).

NCL, which operates 12 leisure facilities in the north-east, has agreed to become a wholly-owned subsidiary of GLL. The move – which follows the recent win of six long leases from Swindon Borough Council and a separate merger deal with Carlisle Leisure Limited (CLL) – is a further sign of GLL spreading its wings across the UK.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=S6x2Q>

Xercise4Less to launch pregnancy fitness classes



Sarah Philp with her son Isaac

Gym chain Xercise4Less is aiming to help new and expectant mums to stay in shape by rolling out a range of dedicated services.

Spearheaded by 25-year-old health and fitness executive Sarah Philp – herself a mother to 18-month-old Isaac – the programme will start at the chain's head office site in Leeds, later becoming available at all its gyms. Philp is delighted that Xercise4Less has backed her proposal to develop this arm of the business, with the gym chain due to launch classes using baby-in-the-body weight exercises this year.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=r7y3T>

Lone Star takes over Club Company

US-based private equity firm Lone Star has been announced as the new majority owner of country club and golf club provider The Club Company.

Lone Star has acquired a 95 per cent stake in the business for an undisclosed sum. The Club Company was previously owned by investors and Irish private equity house Boundary Capital. Lone Star has confirmed its backing for the current management team and will be providing further funds to grow the group.

"We're looking forward to growing and further developing the business with the strong support of Lone Star," CEO Thierry Delsol told *Health Club Management*.



CEO Thierry Delsol has welcomed the financial backing

"The financial backing of our new partner will allow us to develop existing planning permission within the portfolio, as well as looking at acquisition opportunities."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=e3VgY>

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UK news update

BodyPower outlines LIW vision



BodyPower's Ollie Upton, 4X Mr Olympia Phil Heath and BodyPower CEO Nick Orton

The new team behind Leisure IndustryWeek have said they plan to revive the industry showpiece's fortunes by harnessing their knowledge gleaned from consumer shows to create an enhanced visitor experience.

BodyPower Holdings – the company behind popular fitness consumer show BodyPower Expo – recently acquired the longstanding industry event from United Business Media (UBM) for an undisclosed fee. Since launching in 2009, BodyPower Expo has grown into a three-day fitness event attracting more than 70,000 visitors, covering products, services and athletes. BodyPower marketing director

Ollie Upton confirmed the two events – both staged at Birmingham's NEC – would remain separate, serving their respective markets.

"LIW will stay as a trade event serving the leisure industry," he told *HCM*. "The format will change in terms of the layout, as we believe major events like LIW should inspire visitors, providing opportunities to be educated and entertained. LIW will therefore become a more interesting and rewarding visitor experience."

This year's LIW will run at the NEC from 22–23 September under a new two-day format, as announced late last year.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=M8p2v>

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Stalker to step down as ukactive CEO

David Stalker has confirmed he will be stepping down from his role as CEO of ukactive.

Stalker is to start up a chain of trampoline parks under the brand name Altitude. "It won't just be kids' parties," said Stalker. "We'll have indoor dodgeball, parkour, foam pits for slam dunking basketballs, fitness classes, rehab. It's already huge in the US and I'm really excited about the opportunity here in the UK."

The first site has already been secured and will open in Acton, west London, in June of this year. Plans are to open a total of four or five sites over the next year, and 15 or 16 over the next few years.

Stalker will maintain his executive role with ukactive until the end of June 2015 to ensure a smooth transition and will remain on the board for the next year. He believes his successor should be an "attention-to-detail person" from within the fitness industry. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=B7k2A>



David Stalker will continue to sit on the ukactive board for the next year

"Keiser UK made the sales process very easy for us. Their customer service throughout has been exemplary and the speed and efficiency with which they completed our order was outstanding. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved. They all went the extra mile."

Sara Parkin
Business Development Officer
Leicester City Council Sports
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Technology news

Google tech heralds age of virtual gym tours

A fast-growing virtual marketing tour developed by Google has the potential to transform the way leisure facilities like health clubs attract new customers.

Google Business View is a technology based on Google's established StreetView system that allows viewers to take a 360-degree interactive virtual tour of businesses – designed to allow potential customers to explore and interact with places before they visit. Users can explore facilities and locations before they arrive by virtually walking through buildings and can even interact with objects in the pictures – for example, a virtual browser could click on a class timetable that's visible in a tour of a gym and instantly make a booking. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=D8p9q>



Users can virtually explore entire gyms

Nike shifts to software strategy



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/DANIEL/NIKHAL

Nike is concentrating on developing the software side of its fitness tracking offering

Nike has continued its realignment with the fitness software market through a long-awaited link up with Apple HealthKit and a snub of its own Nike+ FuelBand hardware.

The first iOS update of the Nike+ Fuel app since September featured new connectivity with Apple HealthKit, new social sharing features, and the option to eschew the Nike+ FuelBand hardware entirely and track movement via sensors embedded in the user's smartphone. As if to underline the 'conscious

uncoupling' from its hardware device, the Nike fitness app has also dropped "Band" from its name. The move chimes with the general market shift away from fitness bands, whose basic features are being supplanted by increasingly powerful sensors in smartphones and smartwatches. Indeed, industry analysts believe the timing is designed to give the company breathing space ahead of its expected app for the Apple Watch – due out in April. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=b6w3b>

Under Armour targets app market with major acquisitions

Sportswear giant Under Armour has made a major play into the fitness tracking sector, acquiring popular apps Endomondo and MyFitnessPal.

The deal, which saw Under Armour pay US\$475m (€419m, £309m) for MyFitnessPal and US\$85m (€75m, £55m) for Endomondo, means Under Armour has acquired an extra 100 million users and the valuable health and fitness data that each of them provides – MyFitnessPal touts 80 million users and Endomondo has 20 million.

Added to the 31 million users Under Armour already has from its purchase of MapMyFitness, the move puts the company in a strong position in the fast-expanding health data market. Data from fitness tracking applications is seen as particularly valuable as readings are taken every day, and the recent arrivals of Apple and Microsoft to the fitness tracking market underlines the serious potential for profit.

"By combining three of the best teams in the world of connected fitness, we are now extremely well-positioned to create an unrivalled experience for our consumer and a multitude of new opportunities to drive our core business," said Under Armour CEO Kevin Plank.

"By combining a community of 120 million unique registered users, we're developing a digital ecosystem that provides us with unparalleled data and insight into making every athlete better."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=C9p9v>



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ASTON PRODUCTIONS

The company now boasts an enviable array of fitness apps

Independent news

Stoke Park splashes out on gym



The upmarket Stoke Park health club offers memberships for around £100 a month

Stoke Park – the luxury country club, spa and hotel which has starred in films such as *Goldfinger*, *Layer Cake* and *Bridget Jones's Diary* – has invested in a £500,000 upgrade to its gym.

Set within Stoke Park's 300-acre private parkland estate, the award-winning gym has received a full refurbishment with the installation of Star Trac Fitness equipment as well as new flooring. The 372sq m (4,000sq ft) gym now features Star Trac cardiovascular equipment with HD-embedded television screens, the Running Unlimited immersive Zone Dome, new resistance machines, plus an updated range of benches and racks.

The gym has also gained a new functional area for HIIT training, with equipment including the BoxMaster, prowler push/pull sleds, jump plyoboxes and battle ropes.

From a technology perspective, the gym now also features Boditrax – a cloud-based bio-composition tracker that allows members to scan and accurately measure their total body fat, lean muscle tissue, bone mass, hydration levels and metabolic age. "Our investment is part of our plans to be have the best health and wellbeing spa in the home counties," said Stoke Park head of comms Nick Downie.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Y7Y9t>

Clubs go on the market for £1 each

A Merseyside health club owner is giving 'budget gyms' a whole new meaning by putting his premises on the market for just £1.

Richard Birchall, owner of the ladies-only Hearts Ladies Health Clubs, is ready to retire and travel the world, but first wants to safeguard the jobs of his loyal staff. He's placed his two gyms – a 700-member site in Wallasey and a 1,200-member gym in nearby Crosby – on the market for £1 each and has unsurprisingly been inundated with offers.

Both clubs currently offer gyms, group exercise, personal training, sauna, spa, tanning and skin rejuvenation treatments, with a combined annual turnover of £700,000.

The business is debt free but currently loss making, while the clubs' premises are rented and new leases are available.

Anyone interested in the offer can contact Birchall by emailing richard@heartclub.co.uk
Details: <http://lei.sr?a=p7r8b>



Richard Birchall says he wants to safeguard the jobs of his loyal staff



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Supplier news

Precor leads University of Edinburgh gym refurb



(From left) Aitken, Auckland and Griffiths

The University of Edinburgh's Centre for Sport and Exercise (CSE) has raised the curtain on its extensive cardio gym refurbishment, which saw the installation of 102 pieces of Precor CV equipment.

The refurbishment is part of the university's pledge to ensure its members and guests have access to the most technologically advanced equipment. It saw the installation of 45 Precor next-generation Experience Series treadmills, as well as seven Adaptive Motion Trainers (AMTs) to add to the 30 already on offer across the university's cardio, myGym and circuit gym facilities.

The launch of the refurbished facilities was held in January with an opening ceremony jointly conducted by University of Edinburgh's Jim Aitken, Precor marketing manager Jonathan Griffiths, plus elite student cross-country athlete Rhona Auckland.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=C5j2S>

Agassi nets David Lloyd deal

Tennis legend Andre Agassi has led the official UK launch of his Bilt by Agassi & Reyes fitness range tie-up with David Lloyd Leisure.

The star showcased the gym kit – a line of fitness machines modelled on his own custom-made equipment honed over a 20-year playing career – at David Lloyd Leisure's (DLL) Chigwell club on 26 February. DLL is currently in the midst of a gym transformation programme which will see innovative design, technology and 'best-in-class' equipment installed at a number of clubs. As part of this, the Bilt range is being rolled out across DLL clubs in the UK and Europe.

The equipment was designed by Agassi and fitness coach Gil Reyes around the pillars of strength, conditioning and safety – three factors that the eight-time Grand Slam champion says kept him on the court during a largely injury-free career. "I'm delighted that the hard work and passion that has gone into many years of development has been recognised by David Lloyd Leisure," said Agassi.

The Bilt range, which is designed to provide strength and conditioning training for any sport, is being distributed in the UK by Concept Fitness International.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=V7E8w>



Andre Agassi developed the range with long-time strength training coach Gil Reyes

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International news

Linzenich encourages women to be LADYlike

German operator Linzenich Fitnessgruppe has introduced a new brand into its estate – a women-only offering called LADYlike.

The inaugural site opened on 1 January in Gummersbach. The 500sq m club has been equipped by Matrix, Life Fitness, milon, Hypoxi and TRX, with functional training and group exercise on offer.

Packages start at €39.90 a month on an 18-month contract, or €19.90 for group exercise only. Use of Hypoxi carries a supplement of €10 a month.

The group will also launch a further two Sportsclub4 gyms this year, with the first opening in Olpe in May and the second in Leverkusen-Lützenkirchen. It now operates five different brands: Family Fitness Clubs, low-cost TOPfit, full-service Sportsclub4, women-only group exercise clubs Kursboutique, and now LADYlike. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=d973b>

Zoning in on South African expansion

South African operator Zone Fitness opened three clubs at the end of 2014, taking its estate to 18 clubs.

The chain, which launched in 2002, is privately owned and managed by four partners. It operates primarily in Cape Town but now plans to open four to five clubs a year, with much of the new expansion focused on Johannesburg and Pretoria. Clubs typically measure 1,400–2,000sq m, averaging 6,000 members.

With a vision of fitness for all, at an affordable price, membership costs R165 (£9, €12) to R350 (£19, €26) a month depending on the package you choose: classes are available as well as the gym, where the lead supplier is Impulse. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=V7f6s>

Trainmore opens ninth 'train more, pay less' club

Dutch operator Trainmore, which charges members less the more they work out, opened its ninth club on 5 January.

Located in the centre of Groningen, the 2,000sq m club has been equipped by Technogym and offers gym, group exercise, virtual classes, CrossFit, boxing and physio.

Owner Han Doorenbosch also operates one club under the Clubsport brand. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=V7G4w>

Pure Group Asia: Hybrid site

Leading Asian operator the Pure Group unveiled its 12th location at the end of December: its first hybrid club that brings together the expertise of its existing Pure Yoga (six) and Pure Fitness (five) operations.

Pure South-The Pulse is located in Hong Kong and offers yoga and group fitness studios, with nearly 100 classes a week; new options include Aerial Yoga and Wall Rope Yoga. There are also special classes such as Spartan Training, Handstands, Tabata and Mobility, as well as outdoor training on the beach.

Fitness facilities include a gym with a 30-metre running track, dedicated boxing

and kickboxing area, a free weight area with Olympic platform, and a gymnastic movement training area with Erhard equipment.

In line with its holistic approach, lifestyle coaching is also available. An on-site juice bar offers organic refreshments, and a retail area sells the Pure Apparel active yoga wear.

The Pure Group is also one of the first to pilot Les Mills' new Immersive Fitness concept, installing a 270 degree, three-walled screen. In addition to this Hong Kong pilot, screens have been unveiled in Paris (CMG Sports), Los Angeles (24Hour Fitness) and London (DLL). Details: <http://lei.sr?a=k9zj>



The hybrid club in Hong Kong offers classes such as Aerial Yoga and Wall Rope Yoga

utimeFitness goes 24/7 in Hong Kong

utimeFitness opened its first health and fitness club, located in the Happy Valley area of Hong Kong, on 1 January.

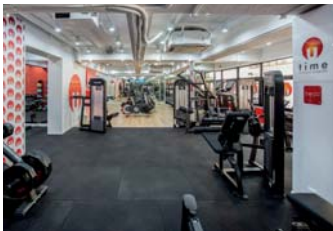
The new 230sq m (2,500sq ft) club is open 24/7, 365 days a year, with no contract.

It offers a gym with cardio, strength, free weight and functional training areas, with equipment supplied by Octane Fitness, Trigger Point, TRX, ViPR and Life Fitness.

Personal training is also available, as are diet plans and nutritional advice from experts.

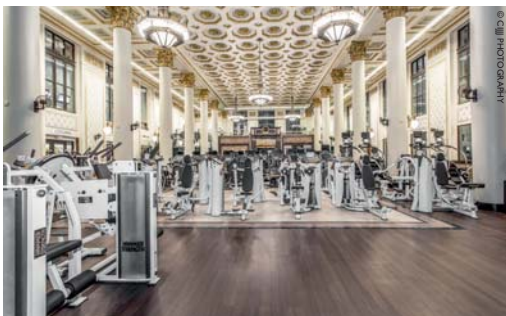
Standard membership costs HK\$649 (£55, €75) a month plus joining fee, or HK\$6,230 (£530, €710) a year plus joining fee.

The new operator plans to open 25 studios in Hong Kong, although it has not yet specified a timeframe for this roll-out. Other markets already on the radar include Indonesia (Jakarta), India, Malaysia and Korea. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=9F5y5>



utimeFitness plans to open 25 studios in Hong Kong

One in the bank for GoodLife



The club has preserved the marble floors and 35ft ceilings embellished with gold leaf

Leading Canadian health club operation GoodLife Fitness opened its latest club in downtown Calgary on 18 December, within the Bank of Montreal building.

The 1,858sq m (20,000sq ft) flagship health club is set amid the limestone and Corinthian columns of the historic building, main floor and basement. Great care was taken to protect the unique decorative features including 35-foot ceilings embellished with rosettes and 917

ounces of gold leaf, marble floors, decorative mouldings and original chandeliers.

Club amenities now include a large gym, group fitness – including group cycling and team training – personal training, massage chairs, and changing rooms with dry cedar saunas. Equipment suppliers include FreeMotion, Star Trac and Life Fitness.

GoodLife Fitness operates over 330 clubs across Canada, including 70 Énergie Cardio and EconoFitness Clubs in Quebec, and also encompassing its new Fit4Less by GoodLife low-cost brand.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=D9b2v>

Boutique cycling heads to Dubai

New independent cycling studio Souplesse Cycle opened in Dubai at the end of February.

Owned by Inga Frolova, the 223sq m (2,400sq ft) facility is equipped by RealRyder. There are 24 bikes in the studio, which also features a fibre optic ceiling, giving riders the impression of cycling under a starry night sky. Luminous textile panels to the sides of the stage are part of the lighting system; these are synchronised with the beat of the music.

The Performance IQ system allows riders to monitor their heart rate via a leaderboard in the studio, while the reception area features a bike chain counter and bike chain seats.

Souplesse not only claims to be the first boutique cycling studio in Dubai, offering functional indoor cycling, but also serves as RealRyder International's official education training centre for the GCC region, as well as its customer service centre in that market.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=q4M8P>



The studio is owned by Inga Frolova

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People news

Dillon named CEO of CIMSPA

Tara Dillon has been unveiled as the new CEO of the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA).

Dillon, who was previously executive director of IQL UK, has been on part-time secondment to CIMSPA since January 2014, leading the institute through its transformation programme as interim COO.

Her performance during this time has led to her landing the top job, after CIMSPA announced the beginning of its search for a permanent leader in October 2014.

"I'm excited to take up this post as CEO, as there has never been a more important time to be a part of the sport and physical activity sector," said Dillon. "I'm looking forward to working with the board of trustees and our partners to continue to professionalise our industry and give our members the best career development opportunities possible."

Dillon has worked closely with the board of trustees as part of the transformation, with chair David Stalker unequivocal in his view that CIMSPA has made



Dillon impressed as interim CIMSPA COO

the right appointment: "Tara brings a wealth of experience in the sport and activity sector and, through her highly successful secondment as interim COO, a strong understanding of how CIMSPA can continue to improve its offer to members. Her appointment marks the start of the next phase of CIMSPA's development."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=X252u>

Les Mills shuffles top team with double switch

Les Mills United Kingdom (LMUK) CEO Keith Burnet and customer experience director Martin Franklin have both been promoted as part of a top level reshuffle.

Burnet has accepted a role as global markets COO with Les Mills International.

The global markets role will see Burnet provide strategic leadership to all of the Les Mills International global distributors, including its wholly-owned subsidiaries in the US, UK, Nordic, German and China markets. The role was previously based in the Les Mills International head office in Auckland, New Zealand, but will now be based in LMUK's London office as part of a strategic aim to move closer to customers.

The LMUK chief executive role will be filled by Franklin, who has impressed through his work leading the 13-strong customer experience team.

Les Mills International CEO Phillip Mills said the changes are being made to strengthen the organisational capability of the global business. He added: "Keith and Martin are both standout performers and important as we progress our business."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=q5m4X>

Mel Spooner goes solo with new business launch



Spooner's new network has six brands

Former FitPro head of commercial operations Mel Spooner has launched project management firm The Project Network.

Having spent more than 12 years in the commercial fitness market working for the likes of Technogym, PTA Global and TRX, Spooner decided the time was right to harness her experience in the form of a new challenge with a private company.

Spooner's business is a portfolio of six brands, providing bespoke project management for the global fitness industry. The network will specialise in handling fitness industry projects including business development, strategic development, training and education, events management and sales marketing.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=T9A6s>



Keith Burnet will remain in London

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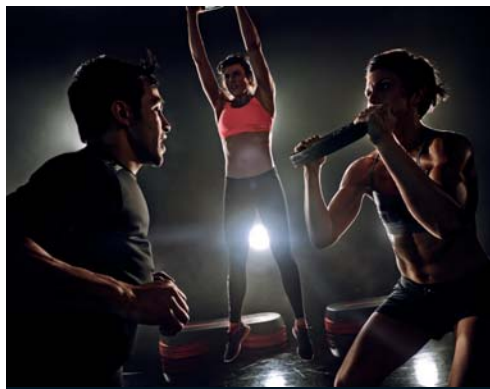
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HOW TO MAKE GROUP EXERCISE A HIIT IN YOUR CLUB

90 per cent 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



The trend for high intensity interval training is set to further explode in 2015

WHY CHOOSE GRIT™ ?

- HIIT is HOT – people want short, sharp intensive work outs that deliver results FAST! And has been included in the American Council of Exercise (ACE) top ten fitness trends for the past three years.
- (HI)IT works – Scientific research shows the transformational power of HIIT training. Replacing one hour of 'regular' training with 2 x 30 minute GRIT classes deliver results quicker
- It's a magnet for millennials
- Remain competitive – hold on and increase your market share by offering something new
- It can drive additional revenue if you operate a paid for programme
- It can feed your personal training model

High intensity interval training (HIIT) is a trend that is set to continue and explode further in 2015. The fact that as a society

we are time poor and want to see maximum results in minimum time has further enhanced the desire for HIIT. Les Mills launched the GRIT Series™ over a year ago and has seen the programme challenge group fitness norms and deliver commercial results for partners. Here's how it worked at Blantyre Leisure Centre.

Gerry Campbell, general manager of South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture says: "Initially we launched Les Mills GRIT Strength, Plyo and Cardio in the summer of 2013 (will still operate all three) with an understated 'FREE come and try sessions'. We liked the small team training model and spread the word that GRIT was a fantastic results driven group PT programme."

Ian Thompson, assistant manager and Les Mills GRIT™ Coach, says: "I was naturally nervous about jumping in with both feet with such a new product and my own team members who had not been tested with regards to the sustainability of sessions.

"We kept it low key and allowed customers to market it through word of mouth....(every gym punter loves a good gossip) and I am pleased to say they did a pretty good job... most of the free sessions were taken within the first afternoon of opening!" Marketing and PR at its best!

Blantyre Leisure Centre started with a number of programmed sessions at £6 for members and £9 for non-members and also added private additional bookable sessions at £36 per session.

All the Les Mills GRIT™ groups have a maximum limit of 8 customers but much of the sessions at Blantyre are driven by customer demand on a



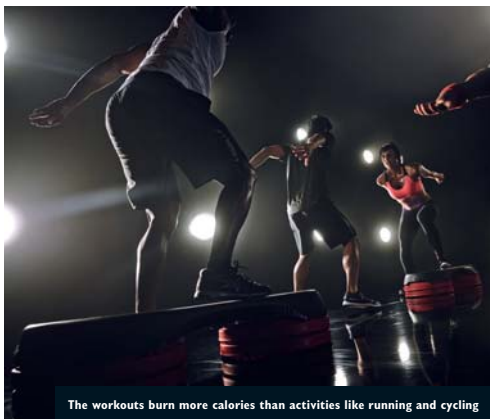
GRIT is a powerful, results-driven group PT programme

private basis (£36 per session – max 8 people) bookable through the gym supervisor. In 2014 the centre was running approximately 37 sessions per month a monthly profit for GRIT sits comfortably at about £1,000 (target was £500 per month).

Ian adds: "What I love about the Les Mills GRIT™ effect is not only the boost to my bottom line, but the fact it's the customers have taken ownership of it and are responsible for creating the buzz within the club."

Martin Franklin, customer experience director at Les Mills UK, says: "The Les Mills GRIT™ Series is perfectly suited to a number of different operating models as it can be tailored to you and your club. Some operators, including two national ones, decide to just offer it as part of their group exercise timetable and another uses it as a feeder to its personal training offering. Although traditionally, GRIT is seen as small group training it also translates perfectly to larger classes and we have seen some operators draw in crowds of 50+. As with all our programmes, there's never a one size fits all approach and it's our job to work with you as partners to apply the correct solution to your business."

For details about Les Mills GRIT Series™ please email: lmuk.busdev@lesmills.com or call +44 (0)20 7264 0200 ●



The workouts burn more calories than activities like running and cycling

FREE HIIT INSIGHT SERIES EVENT

Les Mills is hosting free insight seminars nationwide during March and April. These will share best practice and look at how, as club operators, we can capture the imagination of the millennial market and offer the right

solution to retain members. The seminars are designed for group fitness managers, club and general managers and those who want to unlock the power of group fitness. To register, email: lmuk.busdev@lesmills.com

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 **FACILITIES NEWS**



FIBO 2015 in Cologne is expected to attract around 116,000 show visitors

MARCH

20-22 | International Fitness Showcase

Venue Winter Gardens, Blackpool, UK
Summary

Providing three days of dance, aerobics, step, combat, conditioning, lectures, workshops and mind-body sessions.
Web www.chrysalispromotions.com

31 - 1 April | BASES Student Conference

Venue Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, UK
Summary

Offering presentations from renowned sport and exercise scientists, expert-led workshops, and research presentations.
Web www.bases.org.uk

31 - 3 April | ACSM 19th Health & Fitness Summit & Exposition

Venue Hyatt Regency, Phoenix, Arizona, US
Summary

Explores the full spectrum of the industry, with educational sessions, group workouts, hands-on workshops and networking opportunities.
Web www.acsmsummit.org

APRIL

8 | European Health & Fitness Forum

Venue Cologne, Germany
Summary

Leaders from fitness, politics and health will attend this annual event, with EuropeActive/Deloitte's European Health & Fitness Market Report 2014 unveiled.
Web www.europeactive.eu

9-12 | FIBO 2015

Venue Cologne Messe, Germany
Summary

FIBO is the world's leading trade show for health, fitness and wellness. The show encompasses fitness and training kit, wellness and beauty, health promotion, sports nutrition, equipment and services, plus music and fashion.
Web www.fibo.de

10-12 | Australian Fitness & Health Expo

Venue Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, Melbourne, Australia
Summary

Australia's largest health and fitness event, showcasing products and services in areas such as fitness and training equipment, nutrition and supplements, apparel, music and business solutions.
Web www.fitnessexpo.com.au

29-30 | Active-net 2015

Venue imago Burleigh Court and Holywell Park, Loughborough, UK
Summary

A networking event aimed at all suppliers and operators with a focus on the public leisure sector. Educational seminars and a networking event take place alongside presentations, development seminars and one-to-one buyer/supplier meetings.
Web www.active-net.org

26-27 | Scottish Beauty

Venue The Royal Highland Centre, Edinburgh, UK
Summary

A trade-only event bringing together products, equipment, services and training from the leading beauty, nail, tanning and spa suppliers.
Web www.beautyserve.com

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STAFF SKILLS



ukactive CEO
David Stalker
outlines plans to
drive the skills
agenda back to
the top of the priority list

We all know that the activity sector is one of the best assets we have in safeguarding the health of the nation. Ahead of the NHS, ahead of the GP surgery, it's the work that goes on in leisure centres, gyms and health clubs up and down the country every day which is the first, proactive line of defence against ill health.

So if our sector is an asset, the people who deliver our services – the group exercise instructors, personal trainers and health club managers – should be a prized part of the healthcare community.

Having worked in the physical activity sector for many years, I don't doubt the professionalism, dedication and impact of personal trainers and fitness instructors in motivating and inspiring active and healthy lifestyles. But as a sector, we've often let the skills agenda slip down the ladder.

Driving the agenda

Now that seems to be changing. The activity sector's Trailblazer is nearing completion and will rewrite apprenticeship standards, assisted by the Chartered Institute and the Professional Development Framework. There's an appetite for improvement from public and private employers, and training providers and awarding organisations, who want to get this right. All of this work has fed into an increased interest – from big operators and suppliers – for a wider discussion on skills, qualifications, funding and so forth.

We hosted the Active Training Awards in December 2014, which laid the foundation for a very open discussion on where this debate would lead us. To follow on from this, we'll also be hosting Active Training 2015 at the end of March, which will continue to develop this conversation and bring some new elements to the fore: there will be a step-by-step guide to the funding reforms for large employers, as well as a funding map presentation for small employers.

We'll also be hosting one of the first sector-wide discussions on the role and scope of further education and colleges.



We need to ensure the public see fitness professionals as credible, expert sources of info

Building trust

We must always keep in mind that we're continuing to develop the activity sector and its role in our society. Traditional healthcare models have a long history of workforce development and standardisation. We trust our doctor to be up to the job because we know they've been to medical school. Now we're in the process of making sure fitness professionals are viewed within the same context of expertise and credibility.

WANT TO BE PART OF THE DISCUSSION?

Active Training 2015 takes place on 26 March. We look forward to seeing you there. For more information, contact the ukactive events team at events@ukactive.org.uk, or visit www.ukactive.com

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in print
& online



HEALTH CLUB MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK 2015

The 11th edition of the Health Club Management Handbook will be a comprehensive guide and reference tool distributed to industry operators, buyers and suppliers and available at leading industry events, LIW, IHRSA, FIBO & SIBEC.

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- Features and reference material
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- Consumer and industry trends for 2015
- Industry statistics
- Diary dates – a guide to all industry events, shows and networking opportunities

**The Health Club Management Handbook
is available to purchase at £50**

EASTERN PROMISE

The new IHRSA Asia-Pacific Report shows potential for growth across the 13 markets. Kristen Walsh offers an overview of the findings

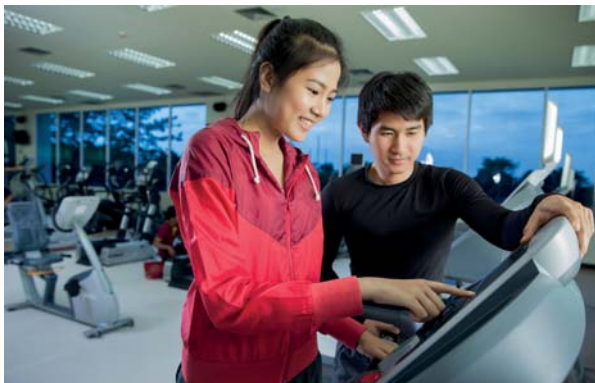


PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/TOMWA PHOTO

The Asia-Pacific region's 13 markets serve more than 17 million customers at around 28,000 clubs

Last month, IHRSA released *The 2015 IHRSA Asia-Pacific Health Club Report*, produced in co-operation with Deloitte China. This new research publication focuses on the health club industry in 13 markets in the Asia-Pacific region, containing profiles of leading club companies as well as analyses of the competitive landscape, fitness trends, and an economic overview for all markets observed.

"This report is the most comprehensive examination of the Asia-Pacific health club industry available anywhere," says Jay Ablandi, IHRSA's executive vice president

of global products. "It's the ultimate reference on the industry in the Asia-Pacific for club operators, developers, analysts, and lenders and investors."

Growth potential

According to the report, 13 markets in the Asia-Pacific region combine to serve some 17 million members at more than 28,000 health clubs. Total revenues for the region are an estimated US\$14.3bn.

The report shows room for growth, as the average market penetration rate for the region is 3.8 per cent – although Australia

and New Zealand lead the way, with health club penetration rates at 14.8 per cent and 11.4 per cent respectively.

"Japan, Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan – as well as some large cities including Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, Jakarta in Indonesia, Beijing and Shanghai in China – belong to maturing fitness industries with gradually professionalising players and maturing consumers," says Alan MacCharles, partner at Deloitte China. "However, health club industries in the remaining Asian markets that were observed are still in a comparatively early stage due to economic development and awareness factors, and robust future growth can be expected."

"This market report provides country-specific insights and quantitative data, enabling business leaders to make fact-based decisions about the future," says Jack Trummer, regional business director for Asia-Pacific at Precor, which sponsored the report. "We hope it will spark new ideas and directions, and ultimately help people live the healthy lives they desire."

For a topline overview of the report's findings – size of the individual Asia-Pacific markets in terms of revenue, number of clubs, number of members and penetration rates – please see Figures 1–4.

IN A NUTSHELL

The report is divided into the following sections:

Asia-Pacific market

overview: Summarising statistics like club count, number of memberships, market size, penetration rates, and market potential by market.

Market reports:

An in-depth look at individual markets in the Asia-Pacific region: Australia, China, Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Taiwan, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines,

Singapore, South Korea and Thailand.

Appendix: Details on sources, definitions and abbreviations, and exchange rates applied.

Company profiles:

Leading club companies in the Asia-Pacific region.



The report shows room for growth, as average penetration rates are 3.84 per cent

Table 1 Market size in millions US\$*

Japan	5,158
Australia	2,555
China (Mainland)	2,078
South Korea	1,880
India**	669
Hong Kong	373
Taiwan	369
New Zealand	354
Singapore	288
Thailand	192
Indonesia	187
Malaysia	153
Philippines	133

All numbers above are estimates only based on the industry data that has been obtained through market research and calculated using the following methodology: sum of [(annual membership sales) + secondary income] of all retail gyms. The value considers only commercial clubs in the

calculation. Secondary spending has been included.

* The exchange rate in October 2014 is used for converting the local currency in each market into US\$.

** The market size of India is calculated excluding mom-and-pop / small independent clubs, most of which measure less than 2,000 sq ft (200sq m).

The Asia-Pacific Health Club Report: Size & Scope of the Fitness Industry can be purchased in PDF format at www.ihrsa.org/research-reports – priced at US\$299 for IHRSA members and US\$599 for non-members. It will also be available at the on-site IHRSA Store at IHRSA 2015 (11-14 March) in Los Angeles, California, US. Related questions may be directed to research@ihrsa.org



Table 2 Number of members in millions

Japan	4.16
China (Mainland)	3.88
Australia	3.48
South Korea	2.03
India	0.95
Taiwan	0.58
New Zealand	0.5
Indonesia	0.32
Thailand	0.31
Hong Kong	0.298
Malaysia	0.25
Singapore	0.23
Philippines	0.23

Table 3 Membership penetration rates (commercial only)

Australia	14.81%
New Zealand	11.38%
Hong Kong	4.2%
Singapore	4.09%
South Korea	3.99%
Average Asia-Pacific*	3.84%
Japan	3.28%
Taiwan	2.5%
Philippines**	2.26%
Malaysia	0.83%
Thailand	0.46%
China (Mainland)***	0.40%
Indonesia	0.13%
India***	0.12%

Source: Deloitte Analysis; Economist Intelligence Unit

The penetration rates consider only commercial clubs in the calculation.

* Simple average Asia-Pacific penetration rate.

** In the Philippines, the rate is measured using the population in Metro Manila.

*** The penetration rates for India and China markets apply to country population within the age bracket of 15-64.

Table 4 Number of clubs

South Korea	6,839
Japan	5,979
India	3,800
Australia	3,351
China (Mainland)	2,670
Indonesia	1,716
Thailand	1,241
Philippines	783
Malaysia	744
New Zealand	712
Hong Kong	338
Singapore	328
Taiwan	185

Source: Deloitte Analysis

EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT ...

Promoting activity

Physical inactivity is a large contributor to lifestyle diseases such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes. But how can we get people moving – and is it time for a top-down intervention?

A fresh approach to public health is needed to tackle the lifestyle diseases caused largely by smoking, drinking alcohol, physical inactivity and obesity – so says a recent paper by leading academics published in *Critical Public Health*.

In the report, *Theories of practice and public health: Understanding (un)-healthy practices*, the authors explain how social practices reinforce each other. For example, getting a takeaway on a Friday night is often coupled with watching TV. Similarly having a cigarette on a tea break.

The report criticises current behaviour change models, which presume individuals are capable of making better choices on the basis of information they receive. The

authors – claiming that humans respond to their immediate environment more strongly than they do information – argue that public health policy should focus on how social practices interact to inform behaviour (see also p3).

For example, although smoking continues to be a problem, the report points out how the 2007 ban on smoking in public places successfully decoupled the relationship between smoking and eating out in restaurants, in turn helping break the habit for many smokers.

If we really want to get people active, do we need to look for the fitness industry's equivalent of the smoking ban – something to help ensure being active becomes the new habit? It's an attention-

grabbing notion, but as Kate Cracknell asks on page 3, is it realistic to think we can ban people from sitting down?

In line with the report's findings that humans respond to their immediate environment more strongly than they do information, Cracknell instead suggests: "If we're going to legislate, let it be for activity rather than against inactivity: making leisure statutory, making active design a compulsory part of urban planning, and creating a national exercise incentive scheme."

What more can the fitness industry do to change behaviour and promote active lives? Is it in fact time for a top-down intervention – and if so, what are the options? We ask the experts....

DO WE NEED TO USE THE CARROT OR THE STICK APPROACH? EMAIL US: HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM

DR PAUL CHADWICK

Consultant clinical and health psychologist
• Momena

"Behind the idea of making it 'socially unacceptable' to be physically inactive is the notion that creating a stigma about being inactive will motivate people to do more. In reality, stigma inhibits behaviour by invoking the emotional experience of shame. Stigmatising health-related behaviours can be counterproductive: when overweight individuals are exposed to negative comments about their size or eating habits, this results in a chain of behavioural, emotional and thought processes that usually lead to increased weight gain, as well as poorer physical and emotional health.

Behavioural science suggests a more successful strategy to increase physical activity would be to help people connect with reasons for wanting to be active, as opposed to making them feel bad about failing to be so. This may require more than simply endlessly reinforcing the health benefits of being active. Helping people to identify how being active helps them achieve other valued personal goals, such as being a good parent or member of their community; exposing them to a variety of credible role models; and ensuring they have easy access to a diverse range of activities will all contribute to a positive and shame-free cycle of greater engagement."



DAVID STALKER

CEO • ukactive

"I don't think we should be waving a stick to make people be active. For so many people, engaging in physical activity is heavily linked with their emotional state: many sedentary people find it difficult to exercise because they suffer from low mood. We need to find a way to encourage them into the virtuous circle of feeling good and wanting to exercise, thanks to the endorphins and serotonin released by physical activity.

Stealth is a good way of getting the physical activity requirements in without having to wave a stick. For example, the majority of commuters in London hit minimum physical activity requirements via commuting and getting about on the tube. Most don't even realise they're doing it. Transport for London has the evidence to back this up and it's fascinating.

The other thing is incentivising people. What if Oyster cards were embedded with a chip which read your steps, so every time you scanned it your steps were logged and converted into money off your ticket? Meanwhile, the average Brit will spend almost 50 hours a week at work, so employers have a role to play in ensuring activity becomes a natural, easy choice: offering age-appropriate fitness tests, as well as programmes and incentives for staff to reach the physical activity requirements."



Even the daily commute to work can help city workers hit minimum activity requirements



DR JUSTIN VARNEY

National lead for adult health and wellbeing • Public Health England

“The reasons people are inactive are complex, so demonising inactivity is not the most effective approach to encourage people to make positive choices.

Past practice shows it takes a trio of actions to change activity levels for the long term: nationally sustained leadership over different parliaments; social and public sector action to engage communities with community development initiatives; and changing our built environment so being active is the easy choice.

If we want to change the nation's attitudes to activity, it's about facilitating activity rather than legislating against inactivity. We need to make activity the easiest option so it becomes the default choice, facilitating ways everybody can be active every day.

The health and fitness industry should be providing high quality support through trained professionals who have qualifications in behaviour change. We need to break down social barriers that may prevent people from being active, and we need professionals to bring exercise into the community, conducting classes in community centres and building relationships with partner agencies that understand specific issues, such as diabetes, or barriers facing certain groups such as ethnic minority communities.”



DR MARK UPHILL

Senior lecturer sport & exercise psychology • Canterbury Christ Church University

“I believe the carrot is more effective than the stick when it comes to encouraging healthy behaviours, so I don't think we should be looking for physical activity's equivalent of the smoking ban.

I think the current health message is already too aligned to the stick approach. It's important people aren't made to feel guilty about not exercising, because this promotes negative behaviours. If people are choosing the pub over the gym on a Friday night, maybe they could simply be persuaded to walk to and from the pub?

In terms of messaging, while 'exercise as medicine' works for some, it doesn't work for all. To complement this and reach individuals not persuaded by the 'exercise pill', health and fitness operators could emphasise the short-term and immediate benefits of exercise, such as psychological restoration, better sleep, less stress and time out of hectic schedules.

What could be done at a government level would be to appoint a national physical activity co-ordinator – someone responsible for long-term strategic development of promoting physical activity and the co-ordination of all ongoing initiatives. This would need to be backed up by cross-party agreements and take a strategic and long-term view.”



STREET SMART

The streets offer a great opportunity to encourage incidental exercise. What more could the health and fitness industry do to get people active when moving from A to B? Kath Hudson reports



CicLÁvia in LA was inspired by an initiative in Bogotá, Colombia, where streets are closed to cars on Sundays

Whenever I walk anywhere with my kids, it seems to take an age: they insist on swinging on bars, leapfrogging bollards and testing their balance by walking along walls. Now I realise that instead of telling them to hurry up, I should be joining in.

This instinct we all have when we are young – to turn our environments into playgrounds – quickly gets socialised out of us. It's not helped by the fact that towns and cities have generally been planned with cars in mind, leading to car dependency and very low levels of

physical activity among not just the UK population, but populations worldwide.

If we're serious about engaging hard to reach groups, we need innovation and a change in mindset. Fitness operators need to think beyond the four walls of the club: taking activities to the public rather than waiting for the public to come to them; encouraging people to travel to the club in an active way; and taking the initiative in talking to community groups, local authorities and other relevant parties to drive change and help remove barriers to activity.

Some health and fitness providers – such as Parkour Generations and StreetGym – are already adopting

this approach, teaching people to find exercise opportunities in their environment. If the wider health and fitness industry got on board with this thinking, taking to the streets to inspire people to run and jump in their everyday lives, this could have a considerable impact on the health of the nation.

And it's not just parkour and StreetGym: a growing number of initiatives are aimed at inspiring people to approach the streets with a sense of fun – getting people moving almost without them realising. So how can the fitness industry embrace this trend and encourage people to be more active on the streets? We ask the experts...



▲ Parkour is like play, but with a bit more focus



Dan Edwardes

Parkour Generations: Founder and director

▼ Parkour is on the verge of being recognised as an official sport

Trying to get people to utilise spaces is at the heart of what parkour does. We'd like to see the health and fitness industry promote and encourage people to use the spaces they live in and break down the segmentation of only using spaces for certain purposes.

Parkour is a joyful extension of what we all do naturally – move! And it uses infrastructure already in place on the streets. We run both indoor and outdoor sessions and find that, once people pick up the basic concepts and the training paradigms, they naturally start to train outside because it's fun: it's play with a bit more focus, direction and progression.

Health clubs could run more programmes to encourage people to get out and use their local environment. The club could be the meeting point and the place people return to collect bags and use showers, but the classes themselves could take place outside.

Outdoor sessions are a great way of getting all the family involved. That



means children are moving more, but it also removes the issue of childcare which can prevent adults from exercising.

Sport England is at the point of recognising parkour as an official sport due to our work over the last

decade in the UK, which we anticipate will encourage a huge rise in take-up. Participation is already growing very quickly: there are currently estimated to be around 40,000 people taking part in parkour in the UK. ▶



John Allison
StreetGym: Founder

Street-based exercise, such as StreetGym, is a growing trend. It's a convenient way to exercise and is time-efficient, cutting out travel time: people can step out of the office and they're automatically in the 'gym'.

These workouts have a unisex appeal, give an endorphin rush and are empowering, as people learn skills they can use everywhere.

I encourage people to take a 3D view of the streets – to look at what they can use from the ground up, to really explore the city, all its hidden alleyways and iconic street furniture. It's about making an urban trim trail. In London, for example, we do interval training on the various ramps and gradients along the Thames.

Fitness operators should be holding more outdoor classes: people like being out in the fresh air if they've been in an office all day. For those who need inspiration, I'll be running one-and-a-half-day StreetGym instructor training courses, which will earn SkillsActive CPD points and allow operators to conduct StreetGym training in a safe and effective manner, as it can be dangerous.

Operators could appeal to planners to think about exercise when designing spaces. I've spoken to Garden Bridge designers about putting patterns on the ground for co-ordination training, and incorporating multi-functional street furniture for bodyweight exercises. So often, new spaces aren't functional – but with a few modifications, such as using non-slip surfaces, they could be.



Cllr Jane Edbrooke
Lambeth Council: Cabinet member for neighbourhoods

At Lambeth Council, we acknowledge that sport doesn't just take place in leisure centres, and we're endeavouring to support the informal gym activity taking place outside. We've just agreed a £9m capital investment programme for our parks and open spaces, which will include the provision of new equipment. We know outdoor gym equipment is popular because, when it's starting to reach the end of its lifespan, we're hearing from user groups that they want it refreshed.

Fitness operators, and especially PTs, are now using our parks and open spaces on a more regular basis, but we've

noticed that this is focused on the high end rather than reaching the groups we'd like to target. We'd like to see operators begin to run affordable classes and activities on the streets and in parks, including sessions such as walking groups. Going forward, we expect to see more of this type of activity as outreach from our own leisure centres.

Lambeth Council is also looking at other ways in which we can support people being active in the streets, such as 20mph speed limits for safer cycling, free 'return to cycling' lessons, and a Street Play initiative which closes the streets periodically so children can play safely.



There's an opportunity for fitness operators to go out into their neighbourhoods to run inclusive games and events



Holly Gramazio
Independent game designer

People like playing, running and jumping around, and experimenting with different ideas. In the 19th century, people regularly played parlour games that involved crawling around and being active, but then we lost the knack and bought into the idea that games are only for kids.

Recently we've started to shift from this idea though, which offers an opportunity: if you can get people to play, they don't realise they're being active.

By the time people get to high school, they've decided whether or not they are sporty. By framing exercise as a game, you're more likely to capture people put off by sport.

I think there's an opportunity here for the fitness industry to go into neighbourhoods to run games and events, and to highlight physical play opportunities. Games work best when they're frivolous, social, inclusive and experimental. Providing silly props means no-one will be particularly good at it, so no-one will feel particularly bad either – which in turn helps stop people feeling so self-conscious.

If you point out opportunities for play, such as walking along a wall, then you can help to change the way people think about the places they go to all the time. Help them to see the world as a potential playground.

ORGANISING A ROAD CLOSURE

If roads are filled with cars, many people will naturally be put off walking or cycling... but Bogotá, the capital city of Colombia, came up with a great idea that provides inspiration to anyone wanting to give the streets back to people to be active.

"CicLAvia first started in Los Angeles, US, in 2010. It was inspired by the tradition in the city of Bogotá, Colombia, of closing the streets on Sundays to allow walkers and cyclists to use the area safely. Over the past

40 years, this idea has spread through South America," says Robert Gard, director of communications and marketing at CicLAvia.

"CicLAvia is growing each year. This year we're holding four events. Routes span a six- to 10-mile radius where the roads are closed, allowing people to come out on skateboards, bikes and on foot. As well as encouraging people to be active, it's very sociable.

"Initially it was hard to get people to understand the benefit of leaving their

cars at home, but now it's taken off in a tremendous way. Depending on the route, between 50,000 and 100,000 people participate.

"It has encouraged people to explore where they live: lots of people say they had no idea they could walk to a subway station from their house, or that it was so easy to cycle to a store. Long-term, we're hoping people will stop using their cars as much."

Could your club help organise something like this in your local area?



▲ The Pop Up Parks concept was designed to create playful, social interactions on people's everyday journeys



Tom Doust

Pop Up Parks: Founder

Our project, which has been going for just over a year, came out of an innovation programme looking at the health and wellbeing of under fives. With one-fifth of children starting school already overweight, we're looking for early interventions to change behaviours.

We noticed that children living in urban areas get very little exposure to the outdoors, while the parents of young children in deprived areas often feel isolated and suffer from toxic stress. The journeys they make tend to be from home

to a transport hub, to go to pre-school or nursery or to a shop. We wanted to see if we could create interactions on those journeys, providing a sense of play and of community.

Pop Up Parks are small, colourful, imaginative spaces: we adapt benches with ramps either side to create a play space, create obstacle courses and use street tiles and chalk to gamify the street.

The fitness industry is very contained, but operators could come out into the community and share what they do with demos, activities and temporary installations, ideally providing the opportunity for families to exercise. We've had to take parks to people, and fitness providers need to do the same: tap in to where people work and live and show them what they could achieve in their daily routine.



Lucy Saunders

TfL and Greater London Authority:
Public health specialist

Walking, running and cycling are the easiest activities for people to incorporate into their everyday routine, especially in towns and cities as they can combine exercise with getting around, so supporting these activities is a good place to start.

Fitness operators could look at how both staff and members get to their facility: could the club help people travel to the club in an active way, for example, by adding bike lockers to the car park?

Lots of people are put off cycling because it doesn't feel safe: if the

speed limit can be changed, or a cycle lane could be added, they're more likely to do it. Start a campaign to lobby for this if you need to.

People are more inclined to spend time in an interesting and well looked after environment, so open conversations with the local authority about how the streets look and feel. What could be done to make them more appealing? Maybe health club members could even help with this, such as getting involved with tree planting or landscaping schemes. ●



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SIBEC 2014 was the defining, pivotal moment where Universal Pictures Fitness Division emerged as a major player within the European Health & Fitness Industry ”

Jim Semple – European Sales Director, Universal Pictures



SIBEC enables a succinct way of meeting with key suppliers to ascertain the viability of future working partnerships. It saves time and effort from both sides of the table as it would take me 6 months to meet with that many companies. ”

Chris Scragg – Head of Fitness, Serco Leisure

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SMART MOVE

A look at a new app to help users book and pay for classes and activities on the go

Over the last few years, smart phones have become an essential feature of our daily lives. According to a report by Deloitte, more than two-thirds of adults in the UK – that's 35 million people – now own one. About a third of smart phone owners look at their phone within five minutes of waking up, rising to almost half within 15 minutes, and one in six looks at it more than 50 times a day. Crucially, more than a third have made an online purchase on their phone.

Faced with figures like that, it's clear why savvy leisure operators are investing in pioneering products such as Gladstone's MobilePro to attract, engage and retain customers. A tiled app that enables users to book and pay for classes and activities on the go, MobilePro is compatible with iOS and Android smart phones and interacts with Gladstone's Plus2 software in real time, ensuring that members receive all their usual pricing and booking benefits.

What's more, operators can customise the app, adding an unlimited number of information pages to market their sites to prospects, while also keeping members up to date with news and promotions. Available to download from the Apple and Android stores, MobilePro also interfaces with social media sites, allowing customers to share information with their friends and giving operators even more exposure.

"The smart phone might just be the most powerful sales and service tool for today's forward-thinking leisure manager," says Tom Withers, sales and marketing director for Gladstone. "As well as a great communication tool, a member's smart phone is both a social media portal and a mobile shopping basket. That's why we created MobilePro to help operators stay connected to their customers and boost online transactions."

"The app has been hugely popular since we launched it last year, and while the earlier version focused on group exercise bookings, demand has been so great that our newest version incorporates an activity booking module, enabling customers to book and pay for a wide variety of leisure centre activities."

"Online group exercise bookings have increased by 200 per cent"

Rebecca Sawtell, head of marketing and communications, 1610

We launched MobilePro just over a year ago in four of our 19 sites across Somerset, Dorset and Devon, with fantastic results. To date, there have been over 4,000 downloads and this continues to grow at a steady rate as new customers join our facilities. One site – Trinity Sports and Leisure in Bridgwater – has had an especially enthusiastic response, with close to 2,000 downloads.

What's more, online group exercise bookings have increased by an average of 200 per cent across all four sites. At Castle Sports Centre in Taunton, online bookings have risen by an incredible 1,300 per cent, and last December 83 per cent of all bookings at that site were made online. At the same time, our front-of-house teams have reported taking far fewer phone bookings, freeing up their time for other important duties.

In addition, the app's push notification feature is proving to be an invaluable tool for improving communication with customers, as well as helping centres to promote upcoming events, offers, new classes or special opening times.

There is also some great functionality within the app for customers to share information on Facebook and Twitter. This is certainly a development area for us, as it has great potential for improving retention and brand loyalty with our online audience, as well as generating new custom by social referral.



The new version of MobilePro allows customers to book not only group exercise, but a wide range of leisure centre activities

“Customers love being able to book on the go, even when sites are closed”

Stuart Fairbairn, ICT manager, Edinburgh Leisure

Our customers had been asking us if they could access our website and book fitness classes on their smart phones, so we knew that if we wanted to stay competitive, it was vital for us to offer this flexibility.

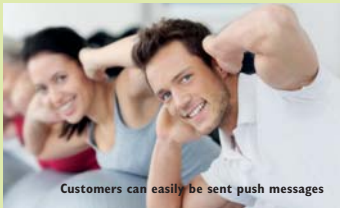
We soft-launched MobilePro in 15 of our 30 sites during February last year, and started to actively promote it on 3 March via our website and social media channels. The results have been incredible. During the soft-launch period we had 1,000 downloads; just over two weeks after the official launch those numbers had topped 3,500, and they're now at over 13,500.

The fitness class booking module has been by far the most popular with our customers, and we are on target for more than 30 per cent of class bookings to be made via the app this month. Feedback from customers has been terrific. They love being able to book and cancel classes on the go, even when the sites are closed, and they also like how easy it is to access information about how many spaces are left or where they are on a waiting list.

As well as having a real impact on customer satisfaction, the app is great for sending push messages to inform people of maintenance/downtime issues on site or time-limited

promotions. This is in addition to dedicated News and Offers tiles on the home screen, which can be updated.

Overall, we're delighted with the results we've seen from MobilePro. Looking ahead, we'd like to incorporate bookings for activities – such as golf, tennis, badminton and squash – into the app, and we're currently in the late stages of testing this functionality with a view to rolling it out in the next few months. ●



Customers can easily be sent push messages

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INTERVIEW

SANDRA DODD

The new CEO of Places for People Leisure talks to Kate Cracknell about becoming a social enterprise, rolling out a private community gym brand, and how she feels about being one of the only senior women in fitness



“

We ended up in a ‘if you can’t beat them, join them’ situation, and specifically looked for a buyer that could give us not-for-profit status

”

Places for People Leisure has won 12 new local authority contracts in the last 18 months

“I don’t think anybody can compete in this sector now if they’re not a trust or a social enterprise,” says Sandra Dodd, the new chief executive of Places for People Leisure.

“You can bid selectively, as DC Leisure was doing before we were acquired by Places for People. We were mostly winning PPP contracts – design, build and operate – because the trusts historically haven’t had the expertise

to do that. But our hands were tied behind our back because most of our competitors had the VAT advantage. Our win rate had dropped quite dramatically and the trusts had really started to become a force in the market.

“It seems very unfair that we were at such a huge disadvantage to the trusts, and I sympathise with private sector complaints about the lack of level playing field. We tried every route we could to convince the government that the VAT

benefit should be removed from the bid to give a more accurate picture of value for money; we were being beaten on price, but that was being funded by central government. We spoke to barristers and HMRC, but there was really no interest in changing the rules.

“So we ended up in a ‘if you can’t beat them, join them’ situation, and when we came to sell the business, we specifically looked for a buyer that could give us not-for-profit status.” ▶

A PASSION FOR PEOPLE

Sandra Dodd has worked for DC Leisure – now Places for People Leisure – for 20 years. She was promoted from finance director to CEO in January 2015, replacing Steve Philpott who retired after 11 years at the helm. She says: “I’ve had a lot of very interesting projects to work on, from management buyouts and sale of the business to raising debt for PFI, and it’s been a period of huge growth. That’s kept me fully engaged with the business.

“But at the heart of it, I think I’ve stayed with the

business this long because I love what it does – it’s easy to feel good about improving people’s lives in the community – and I love the enthusiasm of the people who work here. I’m not the only one who’s been here such a long time: the management team has remained pretty much steady throughout that entire period.”

In fact it’s clear that, for Dodd, the people management aspect of leadership is something she feels very passionate about. “It’s our ambition to be the employer of choice in our sector,” she explains.

“The best piece of advice I was ever given was: ‘It’s nice to be important, but more important to be nice.’ As a senior member of any team, you sometimes need to make fast decisions, but that shouldn’t stop you from taking an interest in people.

“It goes a long way if you take a personal interest in your staff, sympathise with them when they need it, encourage them when they need encouragement, know when they’ve been on holiday and ask them about it. It’s basic stuff really, just to show that you have a human side – that you might

be the company CEO, but you’re just another person at the end of the day, with your own life and your own aspirations, just as they have.

“We always strive to uphold that ethos with our clients too. We sign a contract with a local authority, but we very much hope we don’t have to refer to it on many occasions. It’s all about a partnership approach. Many clients have said we’re really nice to deal with, and that’s something we want to maintain even as the company gets larger. It’s very important to me that we maintain our culture.”



Places for People Leisure operates facilities across the UK, including Gosport (above left) and Godalming (above right)

GIRL POWER

“We do still seem to be a very male-dominated profession and it's hard to change that,” says Sandra Dodd when I ask her why she thinks she's one of only very few women at the top of the fitness industry.

“The majority of our general managers are male and I suppose it starts there, as that's the starting point of a career through to senior management. We need to do more to attract female general managers. At Places for People Leisure we try to do that through our Rising Stars programme, but I don't believe in positive discrimination – people have to succeed on their own merits.

“We appointed a female head of finance recently, which is nice because there's now a second female on our operating board. I've been the only one for the last 15 years. Meanwhile, among our senior managers – group fitness manager, group sales manager, group food and beverage manager, group IT manager and so on – 50 per cent are female.

“So it is slowly changing – I think all professions that are male-dominated are gradually moving in the right direction – but it's taking a long time.”

► Stronger together

Hence the acquisition of DC Leisure by Places for People in 2012, with a subsequent rebrand as Places for People Leisure and a new status as a social enterprise. So how much of a difference has this made?

“We've won 12 new local authority leisure management contracts over the last 18 months, because we're now competing on a level playing field.

“The financial standing of Places for People has also helped: it has £3bn of assets on its balance sheets, and that's enabled us to tender for contracts where there's a higher capital investment requirement. That's important, because local authorities don't have the money nowadays. We might need to put a couple of million pounds into a contract, and as a result we're given longer contracts – often 15, 20, even 25 years – because we need more time to achieve the necessary financial returns.

“Coupled with this capital investment, we also invest more in staff. All of this helps us drive more revenue through the facility, and that's how we make the saving for the local authority. And of course our procurement is more efficient as well, thanks to our economies of scale.”

But beyond the obvious financial advantages, have there been any additional benefits of becoming part of the Places for People Group?

“It's still early days, but we're already looking at opportunities to work with Places for People where they think there could be significant benefit in having a leisure project within their own development. There are some other projects already on the go as well – we

have leisure centre staff going into a care home operated by Places for People Group and delivering services to the residents, for example. We try to exchange ideas and make sure all parts of the Group know where we're already working and where the opportunities lie.

“In addition, although less quantifiable, I think there's something about us being a social enterprise now, rather than being owned by a VC, that makes us more politically and philosophically acceptable for some authorities. The perception of what we stand for has somehow changed, even though the way we conduct our business is really the same as it always has been.”

Organic growth

With this acquisition now bedding down, will Places for People and its leisure arm consider following the lead of trusts like GLL – which has joined forces with a number of other trusts across the UK to grow its presence nationally – and expand through further acquisitions?

“At the moment, our strategy is to develop the business through organic growth – i.e. by winning contracts. That's our number one priority and focus. That doesn't mean to say we wouldn't look at an opportunity in the future, but for the time being we have a clear direction from the Places for People Group that we should grow the business organically.

“We've had great success in that over the last year, and I want to continue to drive the business and win new contracts. We're already up to a turnover of £120m and I'd like to take us to £200m within the next five years.

“Our mission statement is to create active places and healthy people, and



PPF Leisure is developing its wellbeing agenda, and wants to build facilities in communities other operators might not consider

the more local authority contracts we can pick up, the better we can deliver on that aspiration.

"We're winning a lot of design, build and manage projects: we opened West Bromwich Leisure Centre in May 2014, and in January we signed a contract with Wyre Forest District Council to build and run a facility for them. We've also been awarded a new-build PPP contract at Sparkhill in Birmingham. We can design leisure centres at high quality and at much lower cost than if the local authority were to undertake the design itself – plus the council is transferring the risk to us as well."

She continues: "But there are other projects I'm excited about too. I'm very keen to roll out our private community gym offering, for example, which operates under the Places Gym brand. We currently have one in Sheffield and we're opening our second in Corby next month. These clubs are owned by us rather than on behalf of the local authority, but they're still operated within the not-for-profit model.

"It's not an exact like-for-like for the budget clubs because our gyms aren't open 24/7, but you can only sign up online, there's a slimmer staffing structure with no receptionist, it's gym only and it's much lower cost – membership is less than £20 a month.

"We're calling them community gyms though – we're not competing with the budget clubs or the rest of the private sector. Our VAT advantage means we can go into areas that might not be commercially attractive to other operators. We're trying to improve people's health by putting affordable fitness facilities into communities that might not otherwise have a gym at all.



We're already up to a turnover of £120m and I'd like to take us to £200m within the next five years



"We're really just dipping our toe in the water though – we'd like to get three sites up and running within this calendar year and then take stock. That said, at some point in the future it may be that we can place our community gyms into Places for People housing developments, to improve the general health of those communities.

"We have a few possible locations for our third site, but of course we don't want to compete with ourselves. We won't open a Places Gym in an area where we already operate a leisure facility on behalf of the local authority unless we have their permission – should their gym already be up to capacity, for example."

Demonstrating value

Dodd continues: "We also want to continue to develop our health and wellbeing agenda. We've recently won a contract in Rotherham for weight management services – not just for

children, as we previously had, but also for adults. There's a question mark over whether we'd tender outside of an area where we operate the leisure facilities, but certainly where we operate facilities we'd be interested in doing more."

So is this move towards health and wellbeing a result of public health climbing higher on the agenda, as local authorities get to grips with their new responsibilities? And if so, is this meaning a need for better data to evidence the effectiveness of programming?

Dodd says: "It's taken a few years to really begin to take effect but yes, we're seeing more demand for these sorts of service. And more and more, we're being required to demonstrate results and provide evidence – particularly for public health spending.

"We're one of the first companies in the country to engage in a Knowledge Transfer Partnership with the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills. It's funding a placement in our contract in Wandsworth, with research being done by the University of Kingston to make sure our evidence and one of our projects – the Swim for Health project – are robust.

"As a sector, we've been guilty of not demonstrating the benefits of health and physical activity, and I think that will change going forward.

"In fact, I think the biggest challenge for us a sector is to continue to demonstrate the value of our products in every way, both healthwise and politically. What we provide is not a statutory service and because of that, we have to keep banging on the doors of our local authorities, demonstrating how important what we provide is to their particular communities." ●



Baron Carl Gripenstedt, chair and founder of Lifestyle Fitness

LEAVING A LEGACY

Ray Algar reports on the gym chain giving young homeless people a future

This month's Gymtopia story pays tribute to Baron Carl Gripenstedt, chair and founder of Lifestyle Fitness, who died suddenly in January of this year aged just 59. It's a story of inherited privilege and wealth, generosity and homelessness.

A noble upbringing

Gripenstedt was part of the Swedish nobility and was raised at Bystad mansion, an imposing estate in Kilsmo – a locality of just 263 people, 200km south-east of Stockholm, Sweden.

The family owned Brevens Bruk AB, a large family estate comprising swathes of forestry, agriculture and real estate. By normal standards, it was a life filled with abundance; if we were all issued with a ticket at birth, Gripenstedt's would have been golden. So how does this privileged upbringing shape your

view of the world and the lives of others less fortunate? Let's take a look.

A passion for wellbeing

Of all the industries available to him, Gripenstedt chose fitness, starting Competition Line (UK) in 1982 – a company that distributed an extensive range of fitness equipment that was manufactured in Sweden.

The company also moved into club operations with its Lifestyle Fitness brand of low-cost gyms, which are now spreading across the UK. I find it interesting that a member of the Swedish aristocracy chose to offer affordably priced gyms rather than premium clubs for the more affluent.

Compassion for others

I was first drawn to find out more about Gripenstedt and Lifestyle Fitness after

reading an article on *The Sun* newspaper website in 2012 entitled: 'Homeless man given new chance by gym'.

Lifestyle Fitness discovered 40-year-old Dean Saunders sleeping rough in a building it was converting into a new gym in Barnsley, South Yorkshire. Work could not commence until the man was moved on.

Gripenstedt was informed of the situation and made an extraordinary suggestion: that his company pay to re-house Saunders and, when was he able, to employ him at the club.

Speaking to the local newspaper in 2012, Gripenstedt commented: "He was going to be kicked out straight away, but I've been working with homeless people for a long time and I said to staff: 'No, no – we do not do that.' If he wants, we will help him. With a little determination he will get through his problems. I would be really proud if we could turn him around."

The promise was kept and Saunders was found a local home, funded by the company. Saunders was conflicted over this random act of kindness, saying: "I have slightly mixed feelings about it all, but I'm going to do it. I think it could be the worst or best day of my life, but I won't know until I go for it."

I would like to write that this story opened a new and positive chapter for Saunders, but it didn't; homelessness isn't just about shelter. There can be very complex reasons why people sleep rough and a warm bed is not the cure-all.

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





PHOTO: GILLY HARRIS

Enter Centreport

But Lifestyle Fitness stuck with its commitment to help homeless people, and entered a partnership with UK charity Centreport in 2012.

Since 1969, Centreport has been pursuing a long-term vision to end youth homelessness. Its everyday immediate mission is to give homeless young people a future, which begins with offering them a warm, safe room.

But think of this as just the first 'room' they require – others are labelled 'life skills', 'education', 'health and wellbeing', 'employment' and critically 'rebuilding self-esteem'. The Centreport journey is to move someone from being a homeless and vulnerable person to become a flourishing and independent adult. So you can see that Saunders was at the very beginning of this big journey.

Centreport currently supports around 8,400 16- to 25-year-olds each year. However, this is scratching the surface in the UK, as the charity reports that up to 80,000 young people experience homelessness every year. This number would fill every seat at Manchester United's stadium and still have people standing.

Centreport currently supports around 8,400 young people a year

Long-term partnership

The partnership between Lifestyle Fitness and Centreport continues today. The company has pledged to raise a minimum of £100,000 towards the charity's work and keeps a running total on its website for visitors to see. As I write in early February 2015, £52,253 (US\$80,000) has been raised through a combination of club member challenges and direct company donations based on new members joining.

So what difference can these funds make to Centreport's mission? Well, it costs Centreport around £15 a day to provide a warm and safe room for a young person. This means Lifestyle Fitness and its members have already raised sufficient funds for 3,466 room nights, and this will increase to 6,666 when it reaches its funding milestone.

Of course, we know a simple room does not solve homelessness, but it's a vital first step to providing young people with a brighter future.

Leaving a legacy

Gripenstedt leaves a thriving business spanning 57 clubs across the UK, with more than 109,000 members, but these are not the things that truly define a lasting legacy – the sum of all the things we leave behind. An enduring legacy is more about impact than size, and I believe what Gripenstedt leaves behind is a compassionate business that recognises it has the capacity to do more than simply serve up a great low-cost fitness experience.

The late Anita Roddick of The Body Shop summed it up succinctly: "If I can't do something for the public good, what the hell am I doing?"

IN A NUTSHELL

Project by: Lifestyle Fitness, UK

Web: www.lifestylefitness.co.uk

Charity supported: Centreport

Project status:

Ongoing and long-term

Impact: UK

Gymtopia keywords:

Clothing & Shelter, Education, Health & Wellbeing

INFECTIOUS INACTIVITY

People across the UK believe the public as a whole is inactive – and many believe that's justification for following suit. Ipsos MORI's Bobby Duffy reports on new research

England is facing an epidemic of inactivity, according to Public Health England (PHE). We know from official figures that physical inactivity has been widespread in the UK population for years, and that inactivity in the UK is one of the highest in the world – higher even than that popularly-held beacon of sloth, the US.

And the impact of physical inactivity? A PHE report released in November notes that the effects of physical inactivity are so damaging that it's a contributory factor in one in six deaths in the United Kingdom.

And yet physical inactivity is not the first thing that comes to mind when we ask people about public health threats. It's not even the second, third or fourth thing. When we surveyed

adults about public health issues they were concerned about – without giving them a list of issues to choose from – cancer was mentioned most frequently. Physical inactivity did not come out in the top 10, despite one in five expressing concern about obesity.

But it depends how we ask the question: while physical inactivity is not a top-of-mind response, when you give people a list of threats to select from, 37 per cent of adults consider lack of exercise to be a big threat to the health of the population (see Figure 1).

And most importantly, when asked what the biggest threat to their own health is, lack of exercise comes top, above every other item asked about (although stress comes close). This is a key point, and may give some insight

“When asked what the biggest threat to their own health is, lack of exercise comes top”

into why inactivity may not get the attention it deserves as a health threat: people think it's a problem they face alone, and they don't generalise from that to the population as a whole as much as they do with other issues.

The same is true for stress – and again this fits with a view that mental health is under-emphasised in health policy, because people are less aware of how many people it affects.

Following the herd

This is reflected in our misunderstanding of what the 'norm' on exercise is: we have a very shaky understanding of how much activity other people do, which can in turn affect the amount of activity individuals undertake themselves.

One way of measuring this is people's engagement with national activity guidelines. The Chief Medical Officer recommends that adults should do 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity each week in bouts of 10 minutes or more. Perhaps unsurprisingly, when presented with several alternatives, ▶



If we think everyone else is exercising, we're more likely to do it ourselves

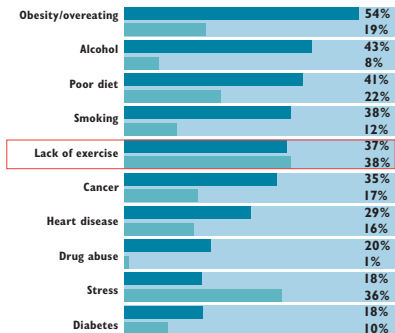
ALL PHOTOS WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



People believe inactivity is a problem they face alone

Figure 1 Lack of exercise is seen as one of the top threats to people's own health

Which of the following, if any, are the 3-4 biggest threats to the health of the British population/YOUR HEALTH? (Prompted) Top 10 mentions shown



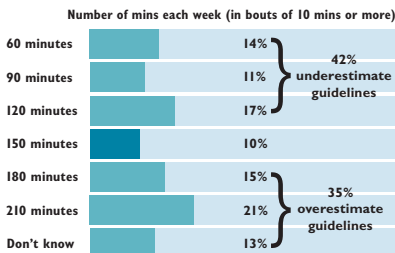
Threats to your health Threats to health of British population

Source: Ipsos MORI

Base: 2,010 GB adults 16-75, 2014

Figure 2 Only one in 10 people know the activity guidelines, with almost as many overestimating as underestimating the guidelines

Health experts recommend we should complete a minimum amount of moderate physical activity each week. Which of the following options do you think is the recommended amount?



Base: 992 GB adults 15 and over, Nov 2014

Source: Ipsos MORI

“People think the norm in society is inactivity – and given a choice between official guidelines and perceived normal behaviour, they opt for the norm”



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Currently only 1 per cent of people would ask a PT for information on staying healthy

▶ most people got the guidelines wrong. More surprisingly, nearly as many people overestimated the guidelines as underestimated them (see Figure 2).

But when we compare awareness of the guidelines with levels of moderate intensity activity, it seems that overestimating the guidelines is a good thing. Over half of those who meet or exceed the activity guidelines believe the guidelines to be higher than they are. Conversely, 55 per cent of those who fall short of the guidelines believe the guidelines are lower than they are. So overestimation may be a good thing.

We can't unpick cause and effect in a survey like this, but we know from broader lessons from behavioural science that our understanding of the social norm has a huge effect on how we act: if we think everyone else is doing it, we're more likely to do it ourselves.

And there are important knowledge gaps on these norms – in a dangerous direction. Nearly three-quarters of us underestimate the percentage of people in England who meet the guidelines. This demonstrates that people think the norm in society is inactivity and, given a choice between official guidelines and perceived normal behaviour in society, people seem to opt for the norm.

A personal threat

Aside from setting guidelines, is there anything else that can be done to lift the norm to a healthier level? Our research has shown that Britons tend to be fairly averse to government interfering in people's lifestyles: 35 per cent think government shouldn't interfere, while 30 per cent think it should.

More favoured sources of influence come in the form of health professionals,

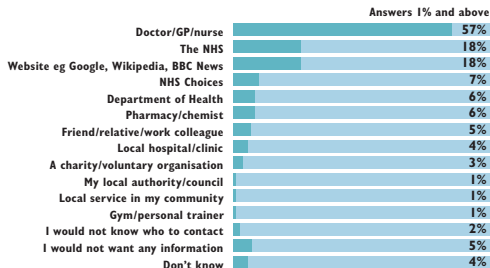
who are our most trusted sources of health advice. Without being presented with pre-set options, people also mention websites and friends or relatives more readily than they mention gyms and personal trainers (see Figure 3).

This is probably not a huge surprise, given our contact tends to be more with health professionals – but it points to two key messages: that health professionals need to be on board and equipped to give advice on activity, and that we need to keep finding ways to broaden the group of professionals who people will go to for healthy living advice.

These advocates have a role to play in ensuring people have the capability and opportunity to live an active lifestyle. PHE has said that, as a nation, we need to “embed physical activity into the fabric of daily life” and part of this will involve challenging social norms (see p38). Sport and leisure professionals have a key role to play here, raising awareness of the inactivity epidemic but mostly connecting the dots for individuals – inactivity is a very personal threat. ●

Figure 3 Health professionals come top on advice to stay healthy

Who or which organisation, if any, would you contact if you wished to get information on how to stay healthy (unprompted)



Base: All respondents (1,625)

Source: Ipsos MORI

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bobby Duffy is MD of Ipsos MORI's Social Research Institute and the global director of the Ipsos Social Research Institute in more than 25 countries.

Ipsos MORI's Social Research Institute – a leading UK-based market research company – supports politicians and decision-makers through well-researched analyses of a range of societally relevant topics, including in the healthcare field.

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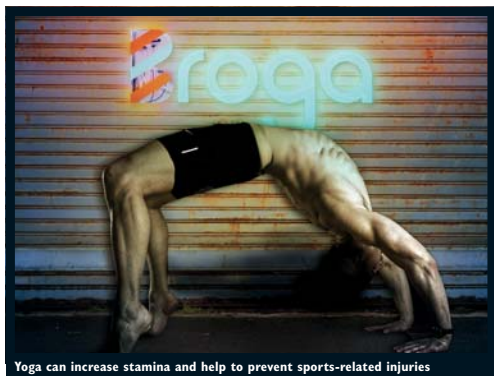


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YOGA FOR MEN

Men can gain as much from yoga as women, but so far they have been slow to sign up. Kath Hudson reports on how clubs can position the discipline as a more male-friendly activity

**WORLD
FOCUS**



Yoga can increase stamina and help to prevent sports-related injuries



Matthew Miller

● Broga UK: Founder



Felicity Wright

● Cadence Performance:
Yoga instructor

There's a massive latent demand for yoga for men, but it hasn't been pitched in the right way in the past. However, now is an exciting time because yoga is moving away from the domain of bendy, vegan women. Sports teams are putting it into their schedules to keep them injury free and prolong their careers, which is raising the profile and making it appear more masculine. It's no longer cool for a bloke to be inflexible. Flexible strength is the buzzword, and yoga fits that brief perfectly.

Introducing yoga to men through small group exercise classes in the functional training space is a good way of introducing the discipline to them under the radar. Play with the concept and come up with fresh approaches and sequences.

Broga has been inspired by insights into the male psyche and is built on two principles. Firstly, men like to know what they're getting into – they want to know the goal and action, so we raise a number of syllabuses such as back, chest and tricep. Secondly, we take baby steps to work up to the more difficult asanas. Classes always end with partner work to break the barrier of individual space and build a sense of community.

The classes are 70/30 men to women. The marketing was initially aimed at the male athlete, but this made women feel they couldn't come. That wasn't the intention, so we've modified it to appeal to women as well.

Marketing yoga as a way of boosting performance in their sport of choice can be a draw for men. Our cycling studio, Cadence Performance, added yoga to the mix last September because we realised it could offer tremendous benefits for cyclists.

As well as increasing flexibility and lengthening muscles, yoga can help increase stamina, prevent injury and work on some of the muscles that are neglected in cycling, especially the core and muscles that support joints. The breathing aspect of yoga is also good for building focus and concentration, which is useful in a race setting: the breath can become like a metronome and can be useful in a pressure situation.

Going forward, we'll be looking to market those benefits more clearly to our audience and run specific half-day yoga workshops which cater for male athletes who want to work on the upper body, back and core. We're also launching some cross-promotions with our Wattlebike cycling classes: we're expanding our current timetable to cater for a growing demand for specific yoga classes for cyclists and triathletes.

As clients, men tend to be less flexible than women, but fairly strong. Sometimes they can get frustrated and impatient and have trouble managing their egos. Teachers need to use more humour when teaching men and be kind to them, as many will feel they are in an alien setting in a yoga class.

“
To attract men
to your yoga
classes, focus
on the physical
workout aspect
”



Dean Pohlman

● Man Flow Yoga: CEO and founder

People won't come to a yoga class simply because you give them a list of reasons telling them why they should. There needs to be an automatic association in the marketing. To appeal to men, you need to use imagery showing a guy who looks like they want to look. Guys want muscles – they don't want to look like the stereotypical skinny yoga guy.

The marketing material should show men in powerful positions like warrior, plank, push-ups or squats – definitely not splits or something that looks painful and that they're not bothered about being able to do anyway.

People who aren't currently into yoga probably aren't interested in the culture or the way yoga has been traditionally taught. Rather, they want to know

about specifics, such as if yoga can help deal with the pain in their shoulder or improve recovery after an injury.

Clubs should be making an effort to bring yoga to men rather than trying to get men into yoga. There's too much focus on flowers and Kumbayah. Make it a different class: use poses they can do, with modifications and an instructor who can work with men. Focus on the physical aspect of the workout and take out the fluff. Make it as close to the gym experience as possible. Women are drawn to this side too.

The traditionalists might not like it, but you don't have to live a certain lifestyle in order to do the poses – and judging is a very non-yogic attitude. ►



If you want to attract guys into yoga, your marketing material needs to use photos of men, advises Chris Freytag



Chris Freytag

● Founder:
www.GetHealthyU.com



Adrienne Rinaldi

● Brewasanans: Founder

The way you advertise is key: if you want to attract guys, your marketing material needs to use photos of men. Studies show that yoga appeals mostly to women; men tend to think it's feminine, new age or hippy.

You need to educate your members that yoga is not gender-specific, so consider doing a little introduction or offering a demo to take some of the mystique out of it.

Changing the name can be effective too – for example, Vinyasa for Sport can make yoga seem relevant to a broader range of people. Another option is to engage with sports coaches: lots of young men who play hockey and basketball come to my classes through these channels, and they are very open to yoga. I talk to people in the health club and explain that if they do sport, yoga is their friend. You have to ask the right questions: are your hip flexors tight? Do you want to avoid injury? Do you want to improve performance in your sport? Then you explain how yoga can help.

After I qualified as a yoga teacher, I wanted to appeal to a different audience: to people who wouldn't normally do yoga, perhaps because they found it too spiritual or were intimidated by a studio, or because they felt they were too inflexible.

I live in Colorado, US, where we have 225 breweries. I had connections with some local breweries so I teamed up with them: we hold a yoga class at the brewery and, included in the price of the class, participants get to have a beer afterwards.

This approach has attracted lots of beginners and lots of men. Although it's a tough workout and I get people sweating, it's a light-hearted, social class. It's non-intimidating and we hang out and drink beer afterwards. If health clubs want to attract men to yoga, I'd suggest they make it more of a social event.

There have been some negative comments from yoga traditionalists, but others have supported our concept as it's succeeding in getting different people into yoga.

Strong body, strong mind: the benefits of yoga

There are many benefits that men can derive from yoga. It improves flexibility, which is very important for sporty men who have tightened their hamstrings to snapping point; more flexibility will help prevent injury.

By working the whole body, including muscles that support joints,

yoga can also improve performance in their chosen sport. There are many yoga poses that are great for developing upper body strength.

Overall, yoga poses are designed to open and strengthen the body efficiently, while the breath work and focus on the present moment helps

clear the mind and let go of stress, which in turn can help treat anxiety, high blood pressure and insomnia.

By putting oneself in a challenging pose, holding it, breathing deeply and staying calm, it trains your mind to be grounded and calm, which will help you face life's challenges. ●



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RIDING HIGH

WATTBIKE DRIVES DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY
INNOVATION WITH NEW PRODUCT LAUNCHES



Live data can be displayed on a mobile device via a Bluetooth connection



▲ Users can view data on their heart rate, cadence and power

Using technology to measure, test and track performance has become an essential consideration for many health club operators. Whether it's members using their own wearable tech to monitor performance, or the expectation that a facility will provide this service, operators understand the power of continual feedback to motivate exercisers and to boost retention.

Ensuring Wattbike remains at the forefront of technology for exercisers, this spring sees the launch of the new Wattbike powerapp, a system that will enable users to view and analyse their workouts on iPhone and Android mobile devices (now available on Google Play store and Apple App store).

Coinciding with the launch of the new app, which will be unveiled at the FIBO convention in April, Wattbike will also launch the powerhub, a revolutionary new digital platform which will serve as a cloud-based session log and provide

the opportunity for users to analyse extensive data from their training session via hub.wattbike.com, track their improvements, both in terms of pedalling effectiveness and fitness in order to aid performance.

The launch of these new technologies follows a huge surge in demand for Wattbikes across the fitness and sports sectors. Leading fitness operators such as Virgin Active, David Lloyd Leisure and Nuffield Health now include Wattbikes on the gym floor across venues, with international sports organisations such as England Rugby and the UCI World Cycling Centre recognising the powerful features Wattbike offers athletes in elite sport due to bike's unique accuracy, reliability and capacity to track and report on an extensive range of physical measures including power and VO₂.

As well as displaying live session data on a mobile device via a Bluetooth connection, the new app and powerhub technology will also allow users to save

and review data from each individual session. Whilst via the powerhub cloud system, the open API will allow data to be shared across personal tracking apps such as Strava or the Apple Health app. Operators are also recognising the benefit, with Virgin Active and Nuffield Health already planning to share data across their digital platforms.

The Wattbike powerhub, which will be separate to the Wattbike website, allows users to log, analyse and share their Wattbike sessions. This 'hub' will hold an overview of user history, a historical log of all the sessions that have been uploaded and a zone records page including details of an individual's training zones, which are based on MMP and MHR statistics.

Keen to hear directly from customers and tailor future product developments, Wattbike have also included a 'feature request' option, where users will be able to view and vote on requested features or suggest their own.



Also on display at FIBO will be the updated Wattbike Power Cycling Software, ground-breaking free software that transforms individual training, group training and indoor racing. The system allows users to display accurate performance data on a screen including heart rate, cadence and power – all tailored to their specific heart rate training zones. Perfect for group training, the software calculates the correct training zones for each cyclist, so that a group of varying abilities can all work out together.

Once an individual's data is entered into the software, the Wattbike Power Cycling Software stores all their sessions, and applies their personal training zones to each subsequent session. This makes the system incredibly versatile for all users, whether that's personal trainers and coaches looking to track each client's progress, facilities looking to offer exciting, engaging cycle classes based on each individual's training zones or for members who just want to get started with a private 'free ride' session, a new option recently introduced.

Commenting on the new launches, Richard Baker, commercial director at Wattbike, said: "The introduction of the

powerapp and powerhub will have a significant impact on Wattbike users – both consumers and leisure facility operators. The new software takes tracking and analysis of individual data to another level and will help riders build social bonds as well as adding some healthy competition.

"This unique digital training solution will significantly enhance the experience of any rider of any ability. These developments will also further enhance Wattbike's reputation as a highly effective, and accurate diagnostic tool, which is often marketed by clubs as a complete fitness test."

Recently voted 'Best Training Product' at the Sports Technology Awards, Wattbike's appeal extends beyond the cycling and triathlon markets, reflected in the product's extensive usage across a variety of sports including Rugby, Football, Rowing and Athletics. UK Sport and the English Institute of Sport were early adopters of the Wattbike, which also has a very large presence in the military.

Head to the Wattbike stand at FIBO to try the new powerapp and powerhub, speak to the team, experience the 'real ride' feel of the Wattbike and discover your individual training zones.

▲ There's been a huge surge in demand for Wattbikes in clubs

▼ Wattbike is a highly effective, diagnostic fitness tool



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Age inclusivity

As the world's population ages, health and wellbeing facilities need to respond by adapting their products and services. But how? Katie Barnes asks a global panel of experts from the spa, fitness, wellbeing and hospitality sectors for their advice

WORLD
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PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/IGOODULZ

The Baby Boomer generation tend to reject the idea that they are 'old'

The sheer number of Baby Boomers makes them one of the most influential generations in the world. Born between 1946 and 1964, these 51- to 69-year-olds represent some 450 million people worldwide according to the AgeLab research organisation at MIT university in the US. They've shaped the world as we know it today and their numbers are increasing faster than any other age group as a result of longer life expectancy and declining fertility rates.

They're also a prime market for health clubs and spas, both thanks to their higher levels of disposable income than other population groups and

"I can imagine a time when there will be legalised impositions for the hospitality and leisure industries to make changes" – Kim Walker

their loyalty: in his *White Report*, which monitored club member retention levels over a period of 48 months, Dr Paul Bedford found that 22 per cent of those aged over 55 were still members by the end of the four years, compared with just 5 per cent of those aged 16–24.

But as people age, their biological, psychological, social and economic characteristics, needs and expectations change. "Global consumer product and service companies that start now to assess, adjust and update their

product offerings to best serve this evolving and increasingly influential 50+ market will be far more likely to grow their consumer base and to reap great rewards," says the 2008 Deloitte study *Wealth with Wisdom* (see p66).

Are gyms and spas really ready for this demographic shift? How can they adapt their design, programming and service style to make them age-friendly? Given that Boomers reject the idea they're 'old', how can changes be made without singling them out? We ask the experts.



Bosalavage believes water-based activities will become even more popular, as they cause less impact on the joints



Wendy Bosalavage

President, American Leisure, US

American Leisure has been operating recreational amenities and spas for more than 30 years and we're seeing the growth of the ageing population first-hand. We manage close to 80 locations in the US and I'd say 40 per cent of our customers fall in the 50-plus category. We also oversee an active adult community, Four Seasons at Great Notch in New Jersey, for people aged 55 and above.

These people want to age healthily and they're clamouring for information on how to do this. I believe the wellness industry has the wherewithal to deliver that information and to offer the appropriate services: health clubs and spas offer a great teaching space in a non-threatening environment, unlike a doctor's office.

However, this age group doesn't want to be cast as 'senior citizens'. Our spa menu, called Your Well-being™, weaves in age-friendly services, but they're not exclusive to older adults – they're intergenerational. For example, our hot sand therapy treatment at the new Island Spa Catalina – an island off the coast of southern California – addresses joint pain for older people as well as deep relaxation for anyone else. We also developed a Cat Nap sleep therapy treatment that everyone can enjoy, but we know it will benefit older people who have different sleeping patterns.

On the fitness side, we believe water-based activities will become even more popular, because they cause less impact on the joints.

Other things that spas and health clubs might want to pick up on are balance, which is very important as you age and become prone to falls, and skincare – not just anti-ageing/aesthetics but the health of skin, which thins as you get older.

Going forward, health and wellness facilities will need to think about accessibility and age-friendly design. Socioeconomics comes into play too – what happens when people don't have deep pockets? There's a big opportunity for affordable age-friendly spas, which could emulate proven franchise models such as Massage Envy. They could offer condition-specific therapies for active adults and interweave them with education about the importance of spa services in whole body wellness.

American Leisure designs, brands and operates spas, residential lifestyle, sport and recreational facilities across the US.

Details: www.americanleisure.com



PHOTO © LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY, UK

The Third Age Suit simulates the physical limitations of older adults

WEALTH WITH WISDOM REPORT

Deloitte's 2008 report *Wealth with Wisdom: Serving the Needs of Aging Consumers*, presents a framework for thinking about the changes confronting over-50s consumers. It highlights issues businesses must understand in their product and service design and delivery. Below is an outline of points that might be of interest to clubs.

Biological changes

As consumers age, biological changes occur in their mobility, flexibility, strength, vision and hearing. Deloitte suggests managers "walk a mile in the customer's shoes". Take a group of guests aged 50-plus through the club and ask what's going through their minds. Better still, experience it first-hand by wearing the Third Age Suit, which simulates the physical limitations of older adults. The suit, designed by researchers at Loughborough University in the UK, is already used by firms such as Ford and Boeing.

Psychological changes

Deloitte identifies memory and information processing as two of the main cognitive functions that deteriorate with age. Mood, emotion and attitude formation also change.

In terms of information processing, older adults aren't as able to block out noise or irrelevant stimuli – whether aural, visual, tactile or language-related. While they still have the ability to learn new information, they process details more slowly. Health clubs that want to attract this market should eliminate distracting stimuli and make messages clear and easy to remember, say the report's authors at Deloitte.

The report also suggests that businesses sensitise and train staff to the needs of older adults. Such training could focus on how employees provide a sense of comfort in new situations to put older adults at ease.

Social changes

The Deloitte report indicates that as people mature, their networks – familial, professional and social – become increasingly complex, overlap and impact on consumption patterns. It suggests businesses "provide opportunities for individuals to connect with their family and friends in multiple contexts".

It underlines the importance of offering an experience, service or product that has personal relevance. People aged 50-plus are often bundled together into one group, even though socioeconomic status, cultural and religious outlooks, where they live, and of course their actual age beyond 50 all impact how they pick services and products to meet differing needs.

"Influencing these consumers with the right message depends on 'speaking their language' to communicate in a personally relevant way," says the report. Deloitte advises companies tap into older adult social networks to uncover consumption patterns.

Read the report: www.health-club.co.uk/deloitte



Kim Walker

Founder & CEO, Silver Group, Asia

In the Asia-Pacific region, most spa and health club development is about ultra-design: facilities are modern, built using the latest materials and imagined by hip designers for trendy, rich Millennials. But this consumer is a rare breed. On the other hand, the older population is the fastest growing, wealthiest and least contested consumer sector. Yet they're simply not being properly addressed, and this is where there's a huge opportunity for businesses, including clubs and spas.

We help companies understand the needs of older consumers by evaluating the customer experience through the lens of an ageing body, mind and senses using our age-friendly AF Audit™ tool. We help teams understand the issues and ideate the changes via workshops.

At 50, the body begins to creak and groan. Muscle mass, strength and flexibility start to deteriorate. Cognitive impairment starts as early as 45 years, and around the same time people begin to need reading glasses. Nearly half of those aged 65 and over struggle to take the lid or cap off bottles, and a third have some form of hearing loss.

The AF Audit covers 25 effects of ageing including sensory, cognitive and physical issues. We measure these across an entire customer journey: there are 350 steps in our hotel audit covering communications, online, the property and support services.

We've evaluated a lot of wellness facilities in hotels and generally they're not age-friendly because they just haven't given thought to it. You can get

surfaces that are non-slip, but they also need to look as if they're not slippery, because cognitively people will change the way they walk if they sense a change in the floor – which means there's still the same level of potential for a fall.

It will be up to an individual spa or health club to judge how far to go. It's probably too much to design everything for people of extreme ages, although I can envisage a time when, just as with disability laws, there will be legalised impositions for the hospitality and leisure industries to make changes – especially as the demographic grows.

You certainly don't want to turn a hospitality or leisure business into a hospital. Nobody wants assisted rails everywhere, least of all older adults because they don't want to be stigmatised or grouped together in one homogenous '50-plus' age bracket.

The key is to make the experience age-friendly for all ages. One of our favourite expressions is that if you design for the young, you'll exclude the old, but design for the old and you'll include everybody.

Take Apple as an example. Fifty per cent of Apple products are sold to people over the age of 50 (it's a common myth that ageing consumers aren't tech-savvy). Its advertising, website, retail environment and product interface is simple, which makes it easy for both younger and older people to use. It doesn't actively exclude the older person.

The other critical thing is staff training. Employees need to be sensitive to older people's needs. What equipment would be easiest for them to get on and off?



Staff training is key: Employees must be sensitive to older people's needs

They have weaker bladders, so can you factor short breaks into a workout? How can you make everything simpler to understand? (When you enter a health club or spa, you're usually bombarded with instructions that most people would struggle to remember, let alone older adults who may have cognitive issues.)

At the end of the day, design and infrastructure changes will be useless if you can't anticipate a customer's needs.

Launched in 2009, Silver Group works with a number of leading product and service companies in Asia-Pacific including Accor, GSK and Swiss Re.

Details: www.silvergroup.asia



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The age-friendly spa and fitness facility at Richmond Letcombe Regis is now used by 60 per cent of residents



Sharon Hunt

Spa manager,
Richmond Letcombe Regis, UK

There's a growing need for wellness-focused facilities that cater to older adults, because people are living longer and want activities and facilities that will help them achieve a happier, healthier life in old age. Such facilities also bring generations together and offer a chance for socialising, which is important for wellbeing.

We've seen the benefits of age-friendly facilities first-hand at Richmond Letcombe Regis. Our site launched in 2010 with a £1.75m spa and fitness facility that was designed by Sparcstudio with older people in mind, so they feel comfortable and don't feel conscious about their age or disabilities. It's now used by 60 per cent of residents, who are aged 75–80 years on average.

To ensure spa treatments are age-friendly, we offer a wide range to suit all needs: not only massages, facials and reflexology to boost a sense of wellbeing, but also physiotherapy, chiropractic and chiropody services.

It's the same with our fitness classes: we offer easy, intermediate and hard sessions. Many of them involve stability and core balance exercises to help reduce the risk of falls. Most importantly, we're not afraid to offer more modern classes such as Zumba, t'ai chi and 'posture perfect'; just because our residents are old doesn't mean they don't want new things. We also have specialised yet less complicated gym equipment, which means more people are likely to use it.

An age-friendly design also ensures safety, and one of the most crucial elements is having handrails in the shower cubicles. Other not-so-obvious features include raised seats that are easier to get in and out of and a lower reception desk for people in wheelchairs.

Richmond Letcombe Regis is one of seven high-end retirement villages in the UK which are owned by healthcare specialists Bupa.

Details: www.richmond-villages.com



Graham Wilson

Chief marketing & distribution
officer, Accor Asia Pacific

Today's older demographic are younger in spirit, more technologically-minded and more active than many generations before them. They also value wellness – they want to feel healthier and look younger – which makes them a key audience for health clubs and spas.

How do we attract them without specifically advertising the fact that we're age-friendly? We do this by appealing to things that mature people find important: the reassurance and trust of a global brand, value for money, and especially conscientious staff who genuinely care about guests' experience.

We've introduced several programmes to train our staff to be more attentive to mature guests, who prefer closer interaction and appreciate it when employees spend more time with them and ask questions to get to know their specific needs better.

As part of our policy of diversity and inclusion, Accor also employs many mature and older staff, because we've found that older guests feel more comfortable around these more experienced employees.

Where would we draw the line in catering to older customers? There's not much we'd say no to, unless it meant alienating younger guests – we have to cater for all ages.

Accor has over 600 hotels in Asia under brands such as Sofitel, Mercure and Pullman. It works with the Silver Group to ensure its properties are age-friendly.
Details: www.accor.com

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Podium 4 Sport has embarked on an exciting new equipment project with the manufacture of their own sport and fitness brand, **NXG**. In June 2014, **Podium 4 Sport** introduced a full range of **NXG** products which line up with the company's already extensive range of sports and fitness equipment.

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EMPOWERING WOMEN

Engaging women in strength training could be the key to attracting and retaining female gym members, according to Pete Borchert, Precor's senior product manager, strength.

This strength of conviction led Precor to commission a white paper, *Enticing female exercisers: increasing engagement in your facility*, specifically looking at ways to encourage women to include resistance in their workouts.

"Our research had some surprising results, showing that 68 per cent of women aged 35–54 felt strength training was very or extremely important – higher than the number of 18- to 34-year-old males. It seems that, as women get older, the messages around the health benefits are starting to seep through," explains Borchert.

"But unfortunately interest doesn't equal action, as people in this group allocate less than a third (29 per cent) of their workout time to strength training.

Women tend to avoid weights for fear of looking like a bodybuilder, but it should be a key part of their exercise routine. Abigail Harris speaks to operators who have succeeded in getting women into strength training

Sadly misconceptions – such as the belief that strength training will make them look like a bodybuilder – still play a big part in this. Given how many female members cite weight loss and toning as their goals, it's imperative that we work harder to arm them with the truth about how strength training can aid their success."

Also among the top five reasons for skipping weights were "it's boring", "no-one has shown me how to use the equipment" and "I'm happy doing cardio". These findings are backed up by

an IHRSA survey of women aged 18 to 55+, which found that while 72 per cent of female gym members participate in group exercise, only 47 per cent make use of weights and resistance equipment.

Precor maintains that initial orientation, on-the-spot guidance and drop-in workshops – along with demonstration videos and easy-to-understand instruction placards on the equipment – will all help to build women's knowledge and confidence about using strength equipment.

"Sadly interest is not currently leading to behaviour change, and this represents a huge opportunity for the industry, from programming and the gym environment to the equipment they use," continues Borchert. "So much science backs up the benefits of strength training, particularly as we age, and members' understanding of these connections will ultimately lead to greater retention."

We take a look at a number of clubs that are successfully engaging female members in strength programmes.



UEL's SportsDock introduced a women-only weights platform

RACKING THEM UP

Operator: UEL SportsDock
Supplier: Precor and Hoist

University of East London's SportsDock moved its power rack and lifting platform onto the main gym floor for the exclusive use of women in a bid to boost the number of female members doing strength work. John White, manager at the £21m sports complex, explains: "Our strength and conditioning room tended to be a male dominated area, but it's important for women to build lean muscle tissue to metabolise fat. To encourage them to use the platform and the Precor Discovery Line Strength machines as part of their fitness routine, we moved the platform and labelled it 'women only.'"

Member Jasmine Wing says: "Having a female-only weights platform is perfect for women who aren't confident lifting weights. The platform and the Precor machines have really encouraged my friends and I to incorporate weights into our sessions."

White continues: "The fitness team offers weight lifting inductions and programmes to ensure exercisers use correct technique, and the members' monthly newsletter explains the benefits of resistance and weight training to help women understand why it's so important."

SportsDock has also started a 'Women in Sport' campaign aimed at increasing participation levels of female students in sport, both at the university and at SportsDock.



PROMISING POWERLIFTERS

Operator: Freedom Leisure

Supplier: Multiple

Crowborough Leisure Centre is championing women's strength training via three Female Strength small group training sessions a week. This includes a beginners' class, designed to teach women the correct technique for a deadlift, squat, bench press and more.

The sessions use Olympic weights and bars, dumbbells and kettlebells, as well as Olympic lifting platforms; most classes run at full capacity. A number of staff have specific weightlifting coaching qualifications, so they can deliver first-rate strength training sessions for women and men alike.

"Holding the sessions on the gym floor is effective, as other women training in the gym often end up getting involved," says Richard Merrick, Freedom Leisure's group fitness and wellbeing manager.

Several women have enjoyed the sessions so much that they have taken up Olympic lifting and powerlifting. A group of ladies also took part in Crowborough Leisure Centre's first in-house powerlifting competition in October 2014.

The success has led Hailsham Leisure Centre and K2 Crawley to follow suit. "We're considering rolling it out across the entire group," adds Merrick. "Strength training has lots of health benefits. What's more, the psychological benefits of improving your physique and strengthening your body are enormous. We've found that many women who take part in the sessions grow in self-confidence."

Crowborough's female strength training sessions are held on the gym floor to encourage greater female participation

IN THE ZONE

Operator: Corby Health and Fitness

Supplier: Matrix

At Corby Health and Fitness, one of the key goals is to help more women integrate effective strength training into their routines. With this in mind, the operator partnered with Matrix Fitness to develop its Lodge Park Sports Centre. A former aerobics studio was transformed into a new zone – complete with functional rig, Olympic platforms, plate-loaded resistance and suspension training equipment – to enable the fitness team to deliver increased support for functional training, strength and conditioning via small group sessions that educate on concepts such as effective lifting, calisthenics and how to chin-up.

"Through this increased investment of time into the 'face to face' member experience, we've created a clear pathway from induction to education, and group exercise to workshops, to empower female members and ensure they feel comfortable in their technique and their environment," says health and fitness manager Gemma Lynch. "The combined development of equipment and service has seen an increase in female gym usage of 30 per cent."



Corby: Boosting women's confidence



IFBB athlete Nina Ross runs seminars at Sole Fitness

BUILDING CONFIDENCE

Operator: Sole Fitness

Supplier: Cybex UK

Leicester-based Sole Fitness has seen a significant rise in the number of female members not only starting to incorporate resistance training, but making it integral to their workouts.

Owner Simon Sole and his staff, many of whom come from a strength training background, have been key to this. "For a lot of women it's all about confidence," says Sole. "Showing them how to use the strength equipment – what exercises to do and why – and dispelling the usual

misconceptions about weight training has been critical to this. We've now created an environment where women feel comfortable in the weights area – as it should be in all gyms – and seeing female members using strength equipment has given other women the confidence to try it themselves."

Sole Fitness has also held a number of female-only seminars, which have been led by International Federation of Bodybuilding and Fitness (IFBB) bikini fitness athlete and Cybex UK ambassador Nina Ross.

"Nina's boot camps have been popular with members of varying fitness levels and abilities," says Sole. "Focusing on training and nutrition for fat loss and building muscle, they reinforce what our members learn on the gym floor, as they understand and see first-hand the benefits of weight training."

WORKING ON AIR

Operator: Gymophobics

Supplier: Keiser

Gymophobics ladies-only facilities are designed for women who have never exercised, offering a non-intimidating environment with no mirrors. The gyms all feature Keiser's Air resistance circuit – 10 exercise stations designed to tighten and tone each body part.

The Gymophobics 30-minute Resisted Tension programme integrates four different exercise modalities: isotonic (resistance exercise), isometrics (muscle contacting and squeezing), callisthenics (free movements using body weight) and cardio (aerobic conditioning).

Each Gymophobics member is prescribed their own programme, which tells them what they should be doing at each station – including the exercises to be performed, the number of repetitions and resistance



The ladies-only clubs feature an air resistance circuit

settings – with a traffic light system showing them when to move on to the next station.

Richard Hubbard, Gymophobics MD, says: "We like air rather than weights. Our customers are female and mainly new to exercise, so the smoothness and quietness of pneumatic resistance rather than weight stacks is ideal."



Breeze's Gym trains promising weightlifters aged 11 and over

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Operator: Breeze's Gym

Supplier: Technogym

British weightlifter Michaela Breeze MBE set up Breeze's Gym in December 2012 after retiring from competitive weightlifting. The gym, in a former church in Aberdare, includes a floor dedicated to strength and conditioning – the largest free weights gym in Wales. With eight Olympic lifting platforms, two Technogym half racks and other lifting accessories, the free weights gym is one of three Welsh centres of excellence for weightlifting.

Leveraging her status as a sporting inspiration in Wales, Breeze set up Team Breeze, a club to train promising lifters aged 11+, and holds strength and conditioning classes for local sports teams, as well as women-only sessions. She's also created a school outreach programme to get young people involved. To date, more than 15 young women form part of Team Breeze, with six on the Welsh Performance and Talent Programmes. Five weightlifting and strength and conditioning classes are held each week, with about 15 lifters – most of whom are women.

To inspire her team, Breeze came out of retirement in 2014 to compete in the Commonwealth Games with her protégé Christie Williams, achieving bronze.

LITTLE AND OFTEN

Operator: my35

Supplier: milon

my35 in Horsham works exclusively with milon equipment, which is said to deliver a 30 per cent more effective strength workout than conventional equipment due to the increased eccentric load that's applied to all exercises.

Susan Little, 60, joined my35 in June 2014 with several health issues: she needed rehab for her lower back and knees, and had type 2 diabetes and sciatica. In the space of just six months, she recorded a strength increase of over 280 per cent. She says: "milon is so different from other equipment and the results for my health have been amazing. I feel fitter, gardening is so much easier and my back is almost normal."

Stuart Davis, UK distributor for milon, says: "Women often ignore strength training as they think they will get big muscles, but the health benefits are huge. milon's electronic resistance means we can reduce increments to just one kilo, making it easy for women to progress. We look to increase resistance every second or third session; this close attention to detail gives great results." ●

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A PICTURE SPEAKS 1,000 WORDS

Video can ignite your social media, but you need to know how to use this medium to its best effect. Manraaj Sunner offers his practical advice on how to maximise its impact



Brands and businesses are using video, but few are realising its true value as the ignition point – the spark – of a targeted social media marketing campaign. Likewise, many brands and companies are embracing social media, but not getting as much out of the experience as they could.

With a videocentric approach, video serves as the centre of conversation from which layers of additional conversation evolve across social networking channels, blogs and forums – often extending into traditional publications and beyond.

This conversation goes from being about the video, to being about the brand or business behind the video, and then to the products and services offered by that brand or business. It then evolves into a conversation about the fans of the brand, to the people behind the brand, and so on...

As with any successful marketing effort, this requires proper planning and execution. I'll explain how our agency goes about attacking this process, from start to finish, and will offer some fresh ways for marketing executives, gym managers and fitness entrepreneurs to look at video as a crucial piece in the social media puzzle.

Step one is not 'go shoot a video'

Too many campaigns fall flat, or flat out fail, because they start with a video and end with a plan of what to do with the video. That's retrofitting, and that can be more costly than doing something the right way the first time.

We start off by establishing objectives that can be measured against hard goals – like more website traffic or increased sales – as well as soft goals like a greater number of blog mentions, retweets and interviews.

Next we identify the target audience. Who is the ideal customer and where are they online, right now?

Then we establish what the video will be about, what will be the bigger conversation surrounding that video, and where and how that conversation will happen. The time to figure all that out is not after you have posted the video.

Content is king – so be creative

The video should be engaging, and above all shareable. Make it funny, shocking, quirky, confounding... whatever adjective you choose, make sure it's something worth talking about.

The video itself is not, and should not be, enough to tell or sell the entire story. This is where a lot of marketers go wrong, packing too much into one video or making it into an out-and-out advertisement.

Online videos don't always require insane production values, but they do need to be valuable. Three questions we ask before writing and shooting any video are: Firstly, how will this video add value to people's lives? Secondly, should the video be funny or entertaining, shocking, controversial? Which genre if any will best fly with our client's audience? And thirdly, how likely will people be to share the video if given the opportunity? Why should somebody care about it enough to watch it? After that, we outline and write the script, then plan the shoot.

Understand the medium

Unlike other forms of media including TV, radio, print and billboard, social media is not a broadcast channel intended to reach the masses, but rather an interactive channel intended to mingle with the masses. As such, time and attention need to be given to setting up the right channels and building relationships.



Will your video be funny, shocking, quirky? Decide what reaction you want

“The video should be engaging, and above all shareable...
Make sure it's something worth talking about”

Is your audience mostly on Facebook? LinkedIn? YouTube? Twitter? How much time do you have to spend on social media marketing each week? These factors will help determine which and how many channels are selected and developed.

One last thing to consider before locking down a video shoot is integration. Will the video be part of a larger marketing strategy including TV, radio, banner, video pre-roll, website integration, PR? This is an important thing to consider, especially if you're working with multiple agencies. As mentioned above in regard to retrofitting, integration is much easier and more cost-effective the first time around.

Long live the video

Shoot and edit the video – including pre-production, casting, crewing up and executing – according to the script and objectives. After post-production, the video is encoded for the places it will live online for a very long time.

To establish the video as the originating medium, we upload to YouTube. Remember, your video shouldn't just be used once for a short stint campaign – it should be used constantly from the point of creation forward.

Video search optimisation is very important at this point, so research is always key.

Starting a conversation

Now we have a video link or two to work with. Just a few of the things we can do to help that link see the light of day include: sharing the video with your new YouTube community, inviting new friends and emailing the link; posting the video story and a link on Twitter; embedding the video on Facebook – sparking conversation whenever possible; posting the link on

Run a small ad campaign on YouTube

YouTube announced as long ago as 2012 that it reached 4 billion video views a day and one hour of video uploads per second. That's the equivalent of more than half the world's population watching one video every day. Yet as an advertising opportunity for gyms and health clubs, it's largely ignored in favour of Google Adwords.

In a campaign we did recently for a client, the average cost per view for the YouTube advertising campaign was between £0.02 and £0.04. Compared to many other forms of advertising online, it's extremely cheap. The £100 budget delivered around 2,400 views.

In addition, with YouTube advertising you can include a lower third message – the text box under each video – with clickable links. You can set up a YouTube advertising campaign through your Google Adwords account.

LinkedIn status updates and starting a few discussions based on the bigger story surrounding the video.

The final step is to start building a genuine conversation surrounding the video. Outreach is a very important part of this process and includes reaching out to relevant influencers; launching local, topical and/or industry-related press releases; and contacting relevant online and offline publications. Just be sure the story is compelling, the video is engaging, and the product or service is sincere.

Have you made a promotional video for your fitness business? We'd love to see it. ▶

“Too many campaigns fall flat, or even fail, because they start with a video and end with a plan of what to do with the video”



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

YouTube has a huge global audience, with over 4bn video views a day

The DOs of video marketing

DO make your video entertaining and shareable. Ensure the content of your video grabs the attention of your desired audience and keeps them engrossed until the very last second. Creating something too corporate or advertisement-based gives the viewer the same experience as sitting watching an ad break on TV – something we know leads to channel hopping. Click here for a great example: <http://youtu.be/dLfUgXcvq4g>



DO have a strong call to action. A video without a prompt to take further action at the end of it, or simply a fadeout of a logo, is wasted energy and money. Ensure you conclude your video with something for the viewer to respond to: clicking a link, subscribing to something, a free trial or to watch another video, for example. Make it clear and unavoidable. Click here for a good example: <http://youtu.be/SRIuWCGTpa>



DO keep it short and snappy. Videos that drag on lose people's attention quickly and undo all the work you did to attract them to your video in the first instance. Share your key points in a concise and efficient manner. Give just enough information away to generate an enquiry. Click here for a good example: <http://youtu.be/FmEsDFRvDY>



The DON'Ts of video marketing

DON'T talk at the camera and nothing else. Unlike a face-to-face conversation, it's almost impossible to hold someone's gaze in an online video. The longer you do nothing but talk at the camera, the quicker you lose a viewer's interest. Mix in visual graphics to highlight key points as well as cut-away shots to other visuals. There's too much unedited face-to-face here: <http://youtu.be/XsY4NNdkD7Q>



DON'T take too long to get to your point. In truth, if your video's 10 minutes long, unless you have amazing content (and we're not talking about shots of your shiny gym floor), then very few people will watch the entire length of the video. Keep your clip to around the two-minute mark – its only job is to attract attention and incite a reaction. I'd argue that this one's too long: <http://youtu.be/nhS4VyGwM0U>



DON'T wing it. Ensure your content is scripted and organised. As much as we each like to believe we possess the improvisational skills of Robin Williams, and the directive prowess of Spielberg, most of us don't. Organise what you want to say, practise and then deliver. There's a bit too much improvisation going on here: <http://youtu.be/kHERrMXKh7Q>



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Manraaj Sunner has worked in the health and fitness industry in a marketing capacity for the last 10 years with a number of multi-site operators. He founded 3one5 Marketing, a full-service agency dedicated to working with clients from the health, fitness and

leisure industries, with a focus on integrating modern marketing techniques for optimum response.

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MATRIX

HERE COME THE GIRLS...

Women have been making waves in the fitness industry for years – who could forget the lycra-clad fitness guru of the '80s, Jane Fonda, or the BBC's 'Green Goddess', Diana Moran?

But what of the 'real' women, both in front of, and behind the scenes in the fitness industry? As Sport England's 'This Girl Can' campaign continues to gather pace, we talk to Tracey Thake, Marketing & Communications Manager at fitness equipment supplier, Matrix Fitness, to discover what else is being done in the spirit of 'girl power'.



Tracey Thake, Marketing & Communications Manager

With government investment in projects designed to tackle physical inactivity said to be in excess of £1bn, it's hoped that campaigns specifically targeting the female population will make a measurable difference, but is promotion of 'real' women the way forwards?

The scale and impact of physical inactivity among women in the UK is well-documented; with over a quarter classed as inactive¹, and so any action designed to tackle this issue is to be applauded, but it goes without saying that it's not the only answer.

As children we are encouraged to emulate positive heroes, and there is a great deal of merit in having female sporting role models to aspire to, which was the basis for our 'Team Matrix' ambassador programme.



Team Matrix: a group of elite and up-and-coming athletes and ambassadors who work in collaboration with Matrix to inspire and motivate people to participate and achieve their goal; whether that is general fitness, weight loss, or winning competitions.

As a stakeholder in the fitness industry, we have a commitment to helping to engage people in physical activity, and with 2 out of 3 young people believing that top sportswomen are better role models than other celebrities², we were quick to realise the positive impact that sports sponsorship could have on this end goal.



'Team Matrix' Ambassador – Sally Gunnell, OBE

Our first venture into the sponsorship arena came through investment in the 'Vision 1' female cycling team back in 2009. Former Commonwealth, Olympic, and World Road Race champion, Nicole Cooke, headlined, providing inspiration for younger riders like future star Dani King.

We continue to support the cycling team – which was awarded pro status in January 2015 – and its current squad, including Laura Trott, MBE, (a 'Team Matrix' ambassador in her own right), in addition to female talent including Sally Gunnell, OBE and Dani King, OBE.

We receive many requests from sports stars and teams who wish to become part of 'Team Matrix', but we are very clear that we're not just looking for poster boys and girls. A key element of the programme is for our ambassadors to be accessible to our customers and the wider community, working with us to 'normalise' sporting activity and inspire others to pursue their own sporting goals.

¹ Statistics on Obesity, Physical Activity and Diet: England 2014

² Women in Sport, Say Yes to Success, 2014

"Fabulous to see a sponsor's commitment making such a huge contribution to female participation in sport. Let's hope many other companies choose to follow their great example..."

Sue Anstiss – Women's Sport Trust



'Team Matrix' Ambassador – Dani King, MBE

SO YOUR FOCUS IS ON THE CREAM OF THE CROP?

Far from it; we remain steadfast in our support for grassroots activity too, as not only does this help the athlete at a crucial point in their career, but over the long-term has the potential to demonstrate how success is part of a journey, which in itself is inspirational. Dani King, MBE is a case in point. As a young rider, Dani joined the Matrix Fitness sponsored 'Vision 1' racing team, honing her craft with subsequent Matrix Fitness development squads before progressing to the world stage. Olympic and World Championship titles followed, plus recognition from the Queen for her services to cycling. As a 'Team Matrix' ambassador, Dani regularly gets involved with community projects that seek to inspire the public to get on their bikes.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR THE AMBASSADORS?

Obviously there is a financial reward, and that's important. Women have a considerable way to go before their earnings are on a par with their male counterparts, due to the disparity between commercial investment in men's and women's sports.

"Following a slight increase in the number of sponsorship deals for women's sport around London 2012 to 5.4%, by 2013 the number dropped down to a mere 2%.³⁴"

Too many elite sportswomen are forced to juggle their sporting career with a full-time job, but how can we expect to engage young girls in sport if we're sending out the message that we don't respect their talent enough to let them pursue it?

Female athletes need commercial investment both to enable them to achieve their potential, and also to ensure the existence of role models for future generations, and we are proud to play our part in that.

"It's no exaggeration to say that the boom in women's racing in the UK has much to do with the support of Johnson Health Tech and Matrix Fitness..."

"Without their support, women's racing wouldn't be where it is today."

Guy Elliott – SweetSpot

WHAT ABOUT THE NON-FINANCIAL REWARDS?

Research suggests that "women's sport accounts for just 7% of total sports media coverage – for television this figure is 10% and for national newspapers it is 2%.³⁴" We're working with our partners to increase representation through the media – a prime example being our activity to support women's cycling by securing coverage of the Matrix Fitness Grand Prix Series on ITV4.



MATRIX

HERE COME
THE GIRLS...

Matrix Fitness is an advocate for female equality in sport, in terms of media exposure, funding, and opportunities to compete.

www.matrixfitness.co.uk



WHAT IS YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH THE WOMEN'S SPORT TRUST (WST)?

We entered into a partnership with the Trust in 2014, as their work is very much aligned with our own ambitions to raise the visibility, and increase the impact of, women's sport. The Trust offers a platform for strong, diverse role models to help realise the value of sport; something that our newest ambassador, Laura Trott MBE, will be lending her support to.

As part of our involvement with the Trust, we are proud to be sponsoring the 'Ambassador of Women's Sport' accolade in their forthcoming #BeAGameChanger Awards, and we are delighted to announce that Matrix has been nominated in the 'Sponsorship of the Year' category, which recognises the vital role of sponsorship in raising the profile, and increasing the impact of, women's sport.

THE **UK LEISURE INDUSTRY** HAS A
STRONG FEMALE PRESENCE WITH



OF **MANAGEMENT POSITIONS** HELD BY WOMEN AND
THE MAJORITY OF THE WORKFORCE BEING FEMALE⁵.

DOES YOUR SUPPORT FOR WOMEN EXTEND TO FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN THE MATRIX WORKPLACE?

It certainly does. It's not just sporting bodies who are increasing the number of women on their board; we now have equality for men and women in our top team following the promotion of Sarah Hitchcock to Chief Operating Officer, and Jo Rich to Director of Key Accounts. In addition, our senior management team is dominated by females; many of whom have risen through the Matrix talent pipeline.

SARAH HITCHCOCK – CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER

Following three year's employment with Nautilus, working in various internal sales and operational roles, Sarah joined the Matrix team in 2009 to assist with the development of the Internal Sales department during a period of rapid company growth. After proving herself in a number of roles, Sarah has recently stepped up to the position of Chief Operating Officer, with responsibility for overseeing both strategic and day-to-day business operations.



JO RICH – DIRECTOR OF KEY ACCOUNTS

With an operational background including roles with Holmes Place and Livingwell, and European Key Account Management experience with Cybex, Jo Rich was able to offer a wealth of industry knowledge and experience when she joined the Matrix team in 2011 as a Key Account Manager. Jo has since progressed to Director of Key Accounts, overseeing a team of strategic account managers.



SAY "HELLO" TO OUR NEW NATIONAL ACCOUNT MANAGER... CAROLINE RICHINGS

Caroline joins the Key Accounts' team after amassing over 20 years' experience in the health and fitness sector, with roles ranging from PT at premier London facility, the Broadgate Club, to National Account Manager for Forza. Most recently, Caroline managed the leisure and membership teams of 5* hotel and spa, The Grove Hotel, before taking up her new post, where she will be supporting the growth of our Key Accounts.



⁵ State of the UK Leisure Industry:
A Driver for Growth

EXERCISE is medicine



Exercise referral offers operators a great opportunity to grow membership and at the same time get more people active

The world of exercise referral can be a confusing place for fitness operators. The basic principle was established in the early 90s, and since then a raft of qualifications and competencies have been developed to ensure safe and effective programming for clients with a range of medical conditions.

But setting up an effective exercise referral scheme is a complex, detailed task. So what are the key points operators need to consider before embarking on such a scheme?

Establish a relationship

Stuart Stokes, commercial director at Refer-all – which specialises in software solutions for exercise referral – comments: “It’s crucial to maintain contact with key organisations all year round. Councillors are increasingly important in terms of influencing funding.

“From October until the beginning of January, local authorities will be thinking about their main budgets. If you’re contemplating setting up a scheme, you need to have your evidence in place so you can ‘battle’ for funding.

“There are two crucial documents: PH54, the public health guidance; and the *Standard Evaluation Framework for Physical Activity Interventions*, downloadable from www.nice.org.uk.”

What do fitness providers need to know before committing to an exercise referral scheme?

Amanda Baker reports

Assess local provision

You also need to know what’s already in place. Existing local schemes can be identified via the public health team at the local authority. If there’s already an exercise referral scheme in the area, it’s important to ascertain the level of

provision, as other facilities can often be added to enhance the local offering to patients. If no scheme is in place, it’s essential to review the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for the local authority – a report that highlights the council’s priorities. Once you’ve researched this, contact the public health team to discuss your proposed scheme.

“Where NHS funding is involved, the service has to be free at the point of service,” says Stokes. “Also, make it clear that there’s a commitment to sharing information and data with them, as this is crucial for evaluation and monitoring.”

Data is king

Stokes continues: “Data collection is paramount. Why would you run a programme where it isn’t possible to evidence what you’re doing? It’s vital to make patients aware that data is required prior to the start of the schemes, otherwise it can’t be adequately evaluated: to perpetuate schemes and help them thrive, patients need to provide data before, during and after their participation.



Instructors can use exercise data to hold members accountable for their health and fitness journey

"Data from exercise referral schemes is changing constantly: it needs to be current and readily available so it can be used for frequent reporting. This must include the ability to show increases in activity levels, changes in behaviour and also, although not essential, any improvements in wellbeing.

"Standardised and validated questionnaires are key for this. The *Standard Evaluation Framework for Physical Activity Interventions* gives examples of questionnaires and means to monitor activity levels.

"This data must be made available to the commissioner, but it's also important it's made available to fitness instructors, so they can reinforce improvements with patients, empowering them and enhancing patient retention."

And this is increasingly possible thanks to the networked technology that's incorporated into gym equipment from a number of leading manufacturers. This allows instructors to keep track of a member's progress and provide them with

THE 'HOW TO' GUIDE

In a bid to demystify the exercise referral process, ukactive and fitness equipment manufacturer Precor recently collaborated on a comprehensive *Five step guide to public health commissioning* guide. The booklet identifies key authorities and organisations, offers practical guidance on the commissioning of services, and provides insight into local commissioners' priorities.

Jonathan Griffiths, marketing manager for Precor UK, explains the rationale for developing the guide: "With two-thirds of the population not meeting recommended levels of activity, exercise referrals are increasing. Operators can seize the opportunity to grow membership while playing a significant role in encouraging more people to be active. Precor's aim is to help operators understand how they can become a referral scheme provider, and the involvement required."

The guide can be downloaded in full at www2.precor.com/public-health-report-2014

goals to achieve – all of which means the member can be held accountable for their health and fitness journey, and helps ensure they're invested in their own improvement or recovery.

Invest in your staff

Nigel Wallace, client services director at Lifetime Training, says: "Within the fitness industry, our technical qualifications are relatively good – but these are less relevant when supporting individuals who have not exercised previously. It's not about telling them what to do in a prescriptive sense. We need to help steer them to rationalise their decisions –

a very different process which, if performed well, has a massive impact on a client's motivation to buy into exercise.

"It's a completely different style of conversation from the industry's standard approach. However, the good news is that these skills are very trainable, and have the potential to be the game-changer we've all been looking for. ▶

THE COMPLEXITIES OF DATA

Over the last five years, Camden Sport & Physical Activity Service (CSPAS) has received nearly 6,000 referrals into its exercise referral scheme.

Phillip Gill, exercise on referral lead at CSPAS, says: "Our programme is funded by Camden and Islington Public Health and has been set up to meet local health needs. This includes the broad aim of managing and preventing health conditions. Increasingly, we work in conjunction with other lifestyle services to offer a broader provision, including weight management, cardiac rehab, smoking cessation or substance abuse services."

Data collection

Gill adds: "Camden and Islington Public Health prescribes the data we need to collect, alongside the NICE guidelines on data collection. This includes everything from conditions our patients present to their weight, height, BMI and blood pressure. We evaluate the success of the scheme in terms of how many patients complete it, how many leave early and how many were unable to start."

"Patients' levels of physical activity are assessed at the start and the end. An exit strategy is also included to assess what physical activity they will continue after concluding the scheme, as well as a 12-month follow up to see if they are continuing to meet their targets."

"Other data includes postcodes – which may illustrate if they live in a deprived area – age, employment status and ethnicity. This allows our funders to see if we're meeting the priorities of the scheme, whether that's to offer it broadly or to particular hard-to-reach groups."

"The amount of data we need to collect is a challenge, particularly in relation to our patients who often perceive they have to provide a lot of personal information. It's crucial they understand that we need this data to evaluate what impact we have and to continue to secure funding."

Changing behaviour

Using Refer-all's online exercise referral management system, the team has been able to share performance information with senior management and public health. This includes the number of referrals received, how quickly patients are contacted, how many start the programme, when they begin exercising, how long it takes them to complete the programme and whether they are being contacted if they aren't attending. Follow-up is also completed to see how many patients are continuing to exercise, and how often, after completing the programme.

Gill says: "Our purpose is to help people who live with long-term medical conditions to increase their levels of physical activity. If, once the intervention has ended, we haven't changed their behaviour, we won't have met our goal. So a key element is to help patients understand how exercise can be beneficial for them."

"It's not just about going to the gym. We look holistically at our patients to increase their levels of physical activity generally. We also look to correct any misapprehensions they might have around this and to build their confidence. By engaging in physical activity, our patients improve their health, both physically and mentally, but we need to support them to meet their wide range of needs."



Lifetime's certificate teaches skills to engage the less active

"This is why we developed our Certificate in Physical Activity Coaching, which is currently in pilot phase, to equip health and fitness professionals with the skills to engage less active people in person-centred motivating and supportive conversations about becoming and staying more active."

"Crucially, it's underpinned by robust scientific theories such as self-determination and self-efficacy, and is informed by the latest research findings from behaviour change and proven physical activity interventions."

"This approach will create the opportunity to become more aligned with the way the healthcare sector operates, and this will really raise the bar – not only in terms of the fitness sector's credibility, but crucially the number of people we support to be long-term active."

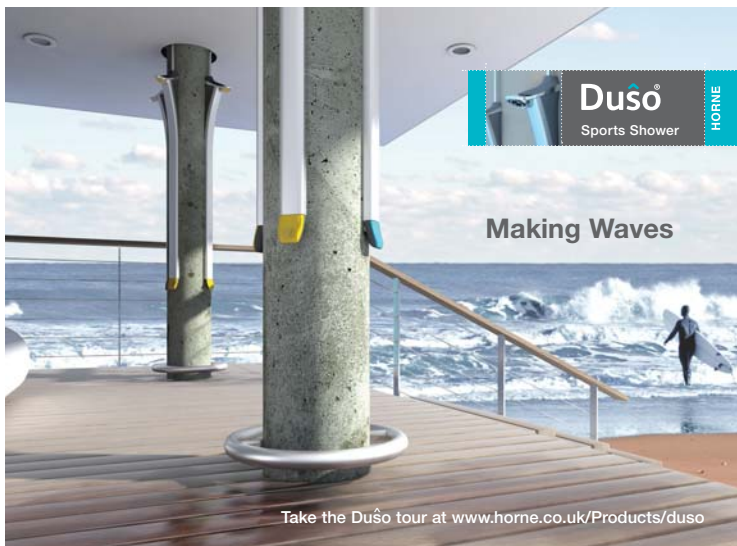
We need to standardise programme delivery and data collection across the UK, so the same things are being measured, collected and reported on

Accessing funding

Stokes concludes: "The face of leisure is changing, with health playing more of a role than ever before. To truly secure the future of exercise referral, I believe we need to standardise programme delivery and data collection across the UK, so the same things are being measured, collected and reported on. This could enable us to bring down mainstream funding in a similar way to smoking cessation and weight management programmes."

David Stalker, the outgoing CEO of ukactive, concurs: "As an industry, we must continue to build the evidence base that proves the benefits to patients."

"It's crucial to collate clear and quantitative evidence that proves exercise referral delivers the promised results and leads to health improvements. This will lead to increased funding and a stronger validity for our profession." ●



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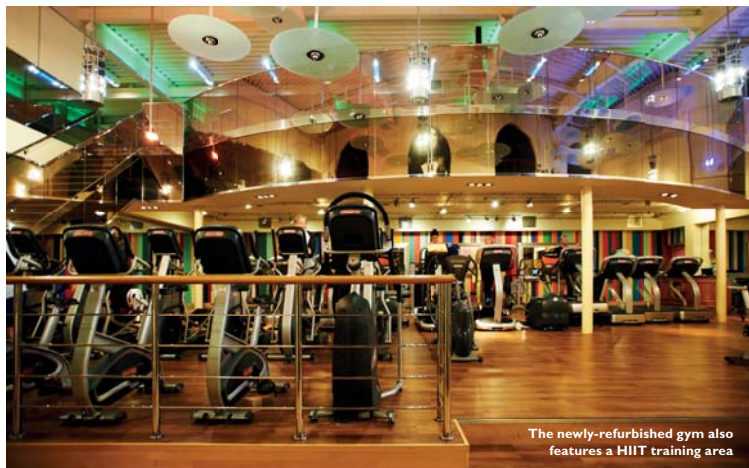
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The newly-refurbished gym also features a HIIT training area

Supplier showcase

We take a look at recent installations by Star Trac, Technogym and Safe Space Lockers

PROJECT
PROFILE
PROMOTION

With a reputation as Europe's leading five AA Red Star hotel, spa and country club, Stoke Park offers an unparalleled immersive guest experience. When the time came to upgrade the fitness facilities late last year, the challenge was therefore clear: to create a fitness centre befitting the Stoke Park reputation as a worldwide sports and leisure destination.

And the newly refurbished 370sq m (4,000sq ft) gym doesn't disappoint. There's a clear commitment to innovation and elegance across its cardio, strength and Spinning offering, paired with other amenities like tennis, swimming, golf and a full-service spa.

Star Trac was selected to equip the gym, with its product range offering open platform technology to accommodate other third-party technology suppliers and fitness wearables. The manufacturer provided a consultative approach encompassing design and layout, equipment selection, programming, flooring and service.

HOME COUNTRIES' BEST

Client: Stoke Park
Supplier: Star Trac

The gym features E Series CV equipment with 39.6cm embedded HD television screens and USB connectivity for maximum member engagement. As a hi-tech touch, the E Series E-TRxe offers the Star Trac Coach virtual personal trainer, with more than a million unique workouts to motivate members to achieve their fitness goals.

Stoke Park also selected the TreadClimber by Star Trac, which combines the motion of a stepper, treadmill and elliptical into one low impact workout, and the StairMill for a true-to-life stair climbing experience.

A new high intensity interval training (HIIT) area offers plyboxes, sleds and

battle ropes alongside the BoxMaster, a complete boxing system with spring-loaded pads that offers a safe workout for users of any size or ability.

To address a growing member demand for functional training, the strength area features the wood-trimmed HumanSport circuit, which is designed to reflect human body mechanics for maximum core stabilisation and multi-planar movements.

Rounding out the fitness facility is a complement of benches and racks from Star Trac, as well as the Max Rack 3D Smith machine.

"We're absolutely thrilled with the gym refit," says Jules Baker, head of fitness at Stoke Park. "Not only does our new equipment offer a far better user experience for our members and guests, but the interface behind the equipment will also allow us to embrace new technologies that are hitting the market, such as fitness apps and cloud systems."

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 **SPINNING**

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PROJECT
PROFILE
PROMOTION

Members can check in to their Technogym mywellnesscloud accounts via TGS key, QR code or password entry

Operated by Harlow & District Sports Trust, Harlow Leisurezone is a leading leisure centre in the Harlow community. As part of its commitment to give members the best training experience, in May 2014 Harlow Leisurezone migrated from the Wellness System customer management platform to mywellness cloud, Technogym's open online platform.

Wellness System data from all users, including their workout history and current programmes, was migrated to the mywellness cloud platform. The centre immediately saw a difference in member engagement: total member log-ins to mywellness cloud increased by 322 per cent year-on-year compared to Wellness System log-ins.

Fourteen per cent more members now track their workouts on mywellness cloud compared to the Wellness System, with over 9,000 activities logged online to date, and in June–July 2014 members accessed their mywellness accounts 4,241 times via the website and 3,412 times via mobile phone.

Kimberley Cowler, health and fitness manager at Harlow Leisurezone, says: "The new modular mywellness platform is flexible, accessible and intuitive enough to keep pace with current training methods and needs. The

CLOUD
TECHNOLOGY

Client: Harlow & District
Sports Trust
Supplier: Technogym

training was delivered in a way that got huge buy-in and engagement from both the team and our members. It has also resulted in overhead cost savings of more than £2,000 a year."

Members check in to their personal mywellness accounts via multiple channels – through their TGS key, QR code or password entry – to access all their training history and preferences and automatically track each session in the gym. They can also track their physical activity via third-party apps such as Runkeeper and MapMyFitness, allowing the facility to stay connected with members beyond the gym walls.

Cowler adds: "Online tracking is becoming the norm, and mywellness is allowing us to stay part of that trend. The synchronisation of third-party apps means we get a wider reach of people using the system."

Harlow Leisurezone also uses mywellness cloud-based professional

applications to personalise and optimise the member journey. As part of the induction process, each new member takes the Aspiration Finder, a simple web-based questionnaire, to establish their training motivations. Based on each customer's Aspiration profile, trainers then use Prescribe to create and edit online training programmes for members to access whenever they log in to mywellness.

Members who prefer to exercise on their own can use the VisioSelf pedestals to select a preferred workout from a predefined library of programmes, while the Challenge app allows trainers to organise regular digital challenges for all members, motivating them to train harder to win a prize. Participation in challenges has grown from 20 to 150 people per challenge.

Cowler concludes: "mywellness has really made a difference to Harlow Leisurezone, enhancing how we relate to and communicate with our members instantly, without the need for appointments. By giving them a personalised, interactive experience, we've been able to grow member retention and keep people engaged.

"Feedback has been phenomenal and we're confident that this technology has future-proofed our facility."

Details: www.technogym.com

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PROJECT
PROFILE
PROMOTION



Lockers are fitted with Ojmar's OCS digital lock



The white, high-gloss lockers are part of a £45,000 fit-out

**LONDON
LUXURY**

Client: Limehouse
Marina Elite
Supplier: Safe
Space Lockers

When London's latest luxury health club opened its doors in December 2014, it set out to deliver an incomparable experience and premier service as standard. The club has capped its membership to make sure this level of service isn't diluted, ensuring an optimum experience for all members, from the changing rooms to the gym.

Situated between the two financial hubs of the capital – the City and Canary Wharf – Limehouse Marina Elite (LME) is owned by the Mayfair Sporting Club, which is best known as a boxing events organiser and promoter. Mayfair Sporting Club is in turn owned by the directors of business services company OISG, allowing them to indulge their love of sport – and boxing in particular.

The new health club is designed to give members the best service in London, whether they are new to fitness or a professional athlete. Alongside the fitness centre is a sports medical centre and a pro boxing gymnasium – a total wellbeing offering that caters equally for professional boxers through to professional people working in the local area who want to lose weight and improve their everyday fitness.

Meanwhile the changing rooms are fresh, light and modern. The contemporary, white, high-gloss lockers



The luxury changing rooms feature corian surfaces and soft uplighting

– part of a £45,000 fit-out by Safe Space Lockers – are top of the range. These two-tier bespoke lockers have also been fitted with the Ojmar OCS digital lock for extra security and ease.

The fresh, modern feel continues with the vanity units, used towel cabinet, cubicles and wardrobe finished in contemporary, high-gloss white.

The high quality finish of every detail helps reinforce the club's high-end status, from the corian surfaces to the clever use of uplighting that gives a soft edge to the changing space.

Changing room expert Safe Space Lockers carries out an in-depth consultation with every client, making sure that from beginning to end everyone has the same vision and everything is perfect.

As standard, Safe Space offers a free 2D and 3D interior design service. This provided LME with a precise graphic of its high spec changing rooms after the first consultation. Within weeks, a fuss free fit-out was carried out, and the result is an innovative and inspirational space.

Details: www.safespacelockers.co.uk ●

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ON A PEDESTAL

We round up the latest news from the world of vibration training

SPOILT FOR CHOICE

With smart applications and an upper body training device, the VibroGym Evolution (VG Evo) platform has just launched in the UK.

Training software is embedded in the machine's touchscreen display, providing hundreds of videos and exercise choices for every fitness level.

Newly developed VG Vibrating Handgrips offer an upper body workout; these can also be detached and used independently as vibrating dumbbells, on or off the machine. Integrated Cardio Colour Control software accurately monitors training intensity, and the information can be displayed in colour on-screen when using a Bluetooth heart rate belt.

VG Evo is built entirely from precision cast aluminium and is distributed in the UK by React Fitness. The machine can be viewed and tested at FIBO 2015, taking place in April in Cologne, Germany.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **React Fitness**



POWER TO THE PEOPLE

The latest Power Plate launch in the UK is a whole-body vibration system for group exercise.

Designed for small and large group training, the Power Plate pro6+ features an interactive 4.3-inch touchscreen monitor that's easy to use in instructor-led classes. It also includes Power Plate's embedded proMotion cable system for an enhanced upper body work.

The machine was launched to the global market at FIBO 2014 and was unveiled in the UK at LIW in September 2014.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **Power Plate**

TRANSFORMATIVE EFFECT

Power Plate Integrated Fitness can transform functional training zones and help people view vibration training in a new way, according to Michael McLaughlin, gym supervisor at Edinburgh Leisure's Craiglockhart Leisure and Tennis Centre, which installed the programme in 2014.

The Integrated Fitness concept combines Power Plate with other training modalities such as ViPR, kettlebells and suspension training to create a new programming solution. The centre has seen a notable increase in people using Power Plate since setting up the integrated fitness zone in the gym, which features a compass mat and a freestanding exercise banner to show members what to do on the equipment.

"Power Plate is a great piece of equipment, but members can settle into doing the same exercise routines," says McLaughlin. "The Power Plate Integrated Fitness concept provides the tools to show people the versatility of the vibration training and encourages them to try it."

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **Power Plate**



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RESEARCH ROUND-UP

Changing our DNA

Regular exercise has the power to change our DNA, according to researchers at the Karolinska Institute

Scientists in Sweden have made what looks to be a significant breakthrough in the quest to establish exactly how exercise leads to better health and fitness.

It's an accepted principle that exercise helps us attain better levels of fitness and reduce the risk of many cardiovascular diseases, but the biology behind this has long remained unclear. Now, researchers at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm believe they may have cracked the case, concluding that regular exercise has the power to change the shape and functioning of our genes by altering our DNA.

"Through endurance training – a lifestyle change that's easily available for most people and doesn't cost much money – we can induce changes that affect how we use our genes and, through that, get healthier and more functional muscles that ultimately improve our quality of life," the study's lead researcher, Maléne Lindholm, told *The New York Times*.

The results of the study, which was published in the journal *Epigenetics*^{*}, may have future implications for the prevention and treatment of obesity, diabetes and heart disease.

One-legged cycling

The small study recruited 23 young, healthy men and women who performed supervised, one-legged cycling, where the untrained leg served as a control. The participants took part in a 45-minute training session, four times a week over the course of three months.

Performance was measured in both legs before and after training, and after the three months there were clear physical improvements evident in the exercised leg that were not present in the idle leg. Scientists were then able to home in on the changes at cellular level.



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Endurance training can induce changes that affect how we use our genes

Gene altering

By using cutting-edge genomic analysis, the researchers found that exercise has the ability to change the methylation patterns on the genome of muscle cells, altering the proteins these genes express. This, in turn, affects the physiological responses elsewhere in the body. A large majority of these genes play a role in energy metabolism, insulin response and inflammation in muscles – regulating how fit these muscles, and in turn our bodies, can become.

Dr Carl Johan Sundberg, a pharmacology professor at the institute who also worked on the study, adds: "We found that endurance training in a co-ordinated fashion affects thousands

of DNA methylation sites and genes associated to improvement in muscle function and health.

"This could be of great importance for the understanding and treatment of common diseases such as cardiovascular disease, but also for how to maintain a good muscle function throughout life.

"Interestingly, we also saw that there were epigenetic differences between male and female skeletal muscle, which may be of importance to develop gender-specific therapies in the future."

Lindholm says another focus could be looking into whether these genetic changes would remain if someone were to stop exercising, as well as the impact different types of training have on genes.

^{*}Lindholm ME & Sundberg CJ et al. An integrative analysis reveals coordinated reprogramming of the epigenome and the transcriptome in human skeletal muscle after training. *Epigenetics*. December 2014



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