

# health club management

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2017

No 252

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## EXCESSIVE EXERCISERS

How should operators  
best deal with members  
who overexercise? **p40**

## FOCUS ON GEN Z

The generation creating  
exciting opportunities  
for the industry **p46**



# JAN SPATICCHIA

*The énergie group's CEO reveals company plans for international expansion* **p30**

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## Building on the success of 2017

It's been a year of solid growth for the fitness industry, and forecasts suggest there's more to come. But what do the industry-wide events of the past 12 months reveal about the opportunities that lie ahead for our sector in 2018?

**R**eflecting on 2017 as it draws to a close, it's undeniable that significant strides have been made within our sector. In May, Leisure DB's annual State of the UK Fitness Industry Report brought news that UK gym membership, revenue and penetration rates are currently at an all-time high. While in September, the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA) kicked off an ambitious four-year strategy to transform and standardise the delivery of physical activity across the sector.

This month, a new report by ukactive, *Physical Activity: A Social Solution*, has, for the first time ever, quantified the wider social value of UK leisure centres. The findings, which were announced at the not-for-profit's annual National Summit, suggest that these facilities contribute more than £3.3bn to UK society, impacting not just health and wellbeing, but also crime, education and other key social factors.

These are just a few examples of the impressive progress that's been made over the past 12 months, but even more exciting is the potential 2018 holds.

In this issue of *Health Club Management*, we take a closer look at the areas of opportunity that are ripe for the picking. Following the release of the 2017 *IHRSA Health Club Consumer Report*, IHRSA's Kristen Walsh outlines how operators, developers and suppliers can benefit from tapping into the consumer preferences revealed by the report – preferences that include small group training, one-to-one sessions and family-friendly fitness activities for the often overlooked, yet highly loyal Generation X (p88).

And in *Introducing Gen Z* (p46), we explore the mindset and habits of the youngest generation in society – described by consumer lifestyle trend researcher Hayley Ard as “one of the most health-conscious demographics we've seen”. As more and more of these tech-savvy, health-focused under 21-year-olds come of age, we investigate the many opportunities they're likely to bring to our sector, both as employees and consumers.



Generation Z is set to bring new opportunities for the industry

“We're in an era of great change and with that comes unavoidable challenges, but also exciting opportunities”

So as we look ahead to 2018, both from the perspective of existing and future consumers, one thing is clear: fitness and physical activity are firmly on the public's radar. More people need and want the services of health clubs than ever before, and we've got the technology, data and global connectivity required to deliver. We're in an era of great change and with that comes unavoidable challenges, but also exciting opportunities.

**Dr Lauretta Ihonor, editor**  
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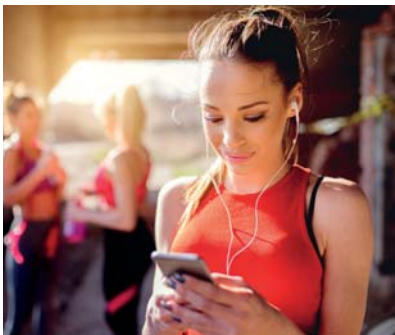
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# health club management

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# Write to reply

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The deconditioned need to feel welcome in fitness centres

## To effectively target the deconditioned market, fitness centres must be placed at the heart of the local community

Chris Johnson, managing director, The Pulse Group

I was interested to read your article on introducing the deconditioned market to fitness in the October issue of *Health Club Management* (First Step to Fitness, p34).

Another way in which those who feel they aren't ready for the gym can ease themselves

back into exercise is by first re-familiarising themselves with fitness environments.

At Pulse we aim to do this by positioning our fitness centres as community hubs. We believe the centres should be a part of creating an active, healthy lifestyle whether people are coming to exercise or not. Many of our centres have big open meeting spaces and café areas that are open to the public – even if they're not gym members.

Research into local demographics and latent demand is vital for creating leisure facilities that meet the overall needs of the community as well as the individual needs of anyone who wishes to use them.

***“We believe the centres should be a part of creating an active, healthy lifestyle whether people are coming to exercise or not”***

For example, we're in the process of transforming Deben Pool in Woodbridge into a state-of-the-art leisure centre, and the final designs have been influenced by evidence gathered from sociodemographic research we carried out. We made the decision to include a thermal suite in the build project because of the multiple health benefits it will offer, ensuring the

centre has an offering tailored to a deconditioned market. Members will be able to relax in the traditional wooden sauna, soothe their muscles in the steam room and cool down with an ice fountain to stimulate circulation, as well as the lymphatic and immune systems. This is just another example of how we provide local authority leisure facilities that rival those in the private sector.



Chris Johnson



Family zones have boosted Salt Ayre's visitor numbers

## Leisure centres must respond to the latest consumer trends to withstand competition from the private sector

Darren Clifford, Lancaster City Council cabinet member for culture, leisure and tourism

**The Active Leisure Trends** article published in the October edition of *Health Club Management* (p56) highlighted how local authorities are redeveloping their leisure centres to take advantage of the latest consumer trends.

I couldn't agree with its author, Dr Steve Mann, more. There are many benefits to be reaped from looking closely at the services leisure centres are providing and this is exactly why Lancaster City Council decided to invest £3million in the refurbishment of Salt Ayre Leisure Centre. The centre first opened its doors in 1992 as a traditional



Darren Clifford

'municipal' sports centre, with a fitness suite following in 1997. However, the next 10 years saw a swift decline in the popularity of some of the more traditional sports such as badminton and netball.

As a result there was a steep reduction in occupancy

rates and the growth of competition from the private sector – all of which boasted new and better facilities – impacted on the fitness suite.

The phrase 'innovate or die' became extremely relevant as the centre entered a spiral of decline, with decreasing income, mounting costs and a falling customer base. Fortunately, we also recognised that there was a great opportunity on offer if we could tap into the latest trends.

By investing in the centre and providing leisure-based facilities wanted by young people and families, including a climbing wall and soft play, we could create an offer that would benefit the whole community.

But we couldn't do this alone and needed the expertise of a development partner – Alliance Leisure.

This approach has already started to pay dividends with a 72 per cent increase in customer visits.

***"We recognised that there was a great opportunity on offer if we could tap into the latest trends"***

# PEOPLE

“

India has severe health issues due to poor diet, lack of exercise, and long working hours. If reports are correct, by 2020 more than 65 per cent of all mortality will be linked to chronic diseases

”

## DR SAMIR KAPOOR

MULTIFIT INDIA: CO-FOUNDER

### When was MultiFit India established and why?

Myself and my partner, Sally Jones-Kapoor, established the business in July 2015. We both had careers in banking, before retraining as personal trainers, and fulfilling our dream of launching a chain of health clubs. Our vision is to create a community of dedicated fitness trainers and reach out to more people all over India, introducing them to a socially engaging approach to fitness.

### What is the USP?

The Indian market has predominantly been an equipment-based market, but this doesn't lead to great customer engagement. We believe there are two components to running a great fitness club: the hardware, which is the equipment, and the software, which is the trainers. Our highly motivated trainers are the soul of our gyms.

Unlike the west, in India, there are hardly any formal qualifications after schooling to help a person study to

become a PT, which makes hiring staff a challenge. We work on hiring national and international athletes, and currently have more than 20 working with us as full time trainers, including Olympian, Arjun Awardees, and swimmer, Jeet Kune Do.

Many of our trainers are accountants, lawyers and engineers who have left their careers to become personal trainers, purely due to a passion for fitness. We've

also been joined by trainers from the UK.

### What does the concept involve?

Apart from strength training and functional training areas, we offer more than 14 classes a day, covering HIIT, yoga, looping (indoor cycling), calisthenics and intense functional interval training (FIT), using body weight exercises.

Our Palaeolithic workouts are often done outdoors and involve actions that mimic those of people living in the Stone Age, such as chopping wood with an axe or drawing water from a well.

Boot camps are also organised in the countryside and feature 48 hours of rigorous exercise in the form of cycling, swimming and trekking.

### How quickly are you expanding?

Within two years we've built up a chain of 15 fitness studios across four Indian cities: Pune, Mumbai, Delhi and Jaipur. A further 12 are under construction, in three new cities – Hyderabad, Salem and Mysore.



Dr Samir Kapoor and his partner Sally Jones-Kapoor





The couple has a vision to create a network of dedicated fitness trainers who can engage Indian communities

We plan to launch our first international studio in the UK before the end of the year. Sally is from the UK and understands the market well.

We run a unique franchise model in which the franchisee acts as a finance partner, while the gym is run by MultiFit. This maintains consistency across the brand. Every employee has to work with us for at least a month before he is shifted to a franchise, so we ensure the DNA of the gym stays the same.

#### What are the main challenges of operating in the Indian market?

The property costs and quality of talent. We're trying our very best to address at least the latter with the launch of the MultiFit Exercise Sciences Academy (MESA). Trainers who have studied and taught fitness and sports science are welcomed as our speakers and trainers, and we have a diverse range of people from the UK, Australia, New Zealand and, of course, India who manage the training of people who are passionate about the business of fitness.

#### What are the main trends currently in the Indian fitness market?

Functional fitness and yoga are growing in popularity, and people are becoming more serious about their fitness. However, India has severe health issues due to poor diet, lack of exercise, long

working hours and the overall lifestyle. If reports are to be believed, by 2020 more than 65 per cent of all mortality will be linked to chronic diseases.

This is a really serious issue that needs to be addressed by every individual and it's time for them to start making healthy choices. I hope that we're

able to achieve our aim of making fitness a lifestyle choice.

#### What are your future ambitions?

We would like to expand to other countries, starting with the UK. By the end of 2020, we aim to have 160 fitness studios across India, the UK and UAE. ►



In two years, the couple have established 15 fitness studios in India



You could offer me a million pounds to promote something, but if it isn't true to me or it's damaging to my audience, I'm not going to do it



## EM SHELDON

### SOCIAL MEDIA FITNESS INFLUENCER

#### ► What does being a social media influencer in the fitness space involve?

I started blogging in 2012 and I've steadily grown my audience since then. I now have around 200,000 followers across Instagram, Twitter, my blog and YouTube. I'm lucky to get approached daily by fitness brands who say they'd like to partner with me. However, I'm very protective of my audience and will only work with brands that I'm aligned with. So for every 20 companies that approach me, I only work with around three or four. You could offer me a million pounds to promote something, but if it isn't true to me or it's damaging to my audience, I'm not going to do it.

#### Tell us how the influencer-brand partnership works

It's a mix of paid and unpaid promotion. For example, if a brand

makes a specific request for me to do an appearance, a promotional post or video, I'll request a fee because they're asking me to do something specifically for them. However, if a gym comes to me and says: 'Come to a fitness class, we do not expect anything', that's organic and I (and other) influencers won't charge for that. Of course, the problem with this approach is that the gym runs the risk of getting nothing for its efforts because the influencer may not show up, or they may and not promote the gym or the class afterwards.



Fitness influencer Sheldon has 200,000 followers on social media

#### Which fitness brands have you worked with?

I do a lot with David Lloyd Leisure – they're an awesome gym, my family all go there and I genuinely love them. That started because I got in touch with them and told them how much I love the brand. My paid jobs with them have involved filming workout videos. Apart from that, I just go to their gym and tweet about it or naturally mention it in my posts. It's something I naturally write about, so it's a really nice win-win.

A lot of my followers have signed up to David Lloyd because they know I genuinely love them, and that shows the kind of return a brand can get from an influencer partnership – if it's authentic. I've also partnered up with Les Mills for their annual Les Mills Live event and I've done work with Adidas, Reebok and Nike.

#### How can operators get the best return from investing in influencer marketing?

Firstly I'd say to go for micro-influencers who have tens or hundreds of thousands of followers, rather than millions. The reason being that micro-influencers are more relatable and they have more engaged audiences. While they may not get 40,000 likes per post, the audience they do have trusts them. I talk to my followers every day and respond to them – it's

harder to form that type of connection with millions of followers.

Secondly, I think it's important to budget steadily over time. A brand that wants five Instagram influencers with 60,000 followers to do a post each, can expect to spend around £3,000 to £4,000 in total – although this can vary depending on the specific influencer's fees. However, companies can get better rates by partnering with an influencer over a long period of time rather than blowing £1000 on a single Instagram post. ►

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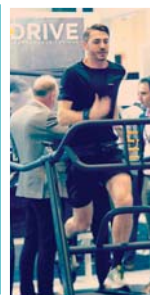


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For gyms looking to engage with this demographic, they need to make socialising part of the mix... they at least need to have somewhere where they can offer people a cup of tea after the class

”

## EDWINA BROCKLESBY

### FOUNDER OF SILVERFIT

#### ► What is Silverfit?

We're a charity offering a variety of exercise opportunities to the over 45s, including Nordic walking, tai chi, pilates and cheerleading. Our core message is that it's never too late to start exercise.

We go into areas of economic deprivation, where we know we can make a difference. Currently, we run activities in 13 venues in eight London boroughs. Last year we had 18,000 attendances, of these 17 per cent said they were completely inactive before they joined and 56 per cent were doing no more than 60 minutes of exercise each week. Now 60 per cent of our members exercise for 90 minutes or more each week.

#### Why did you start Silverfit?

I'm a former social worker who started running at 50. At the age of 72, I became Britain's oldest woman to complete an Ironman triathlon. I came to sport late, but then realised its many benefits in terms of health and alleviating social isolation.

Silverfit evolved in 2013, out of a fundraising marathon I used to organise. We started running events in Hyde Park and then Burgess Park in Southwark followed. So far it has just grown organically.

#### How are you funded?

We try and offer the sessions for free. Even our paid sessions never cost more than £3 as we don't want affordability to ever be a barrier to participation. We've received funding from various sources – the most significant coming from United Saint Saviour's Charity in Southwark for £45,700 over two years.

We've recently been chosen by the London Marathon as one of their charities to work with on their new initiative, The Big Half. We're hoping that it will yield sufficient income to fund a management post to take the charity forward.



PHOTO: SUSANNE HAUJUBA

**Brocklesby started running aged 50 and did an Ironman triathlon at 72**

Currently we're looking for people to take up charity places on our behalf: they can walk it or enter it as a team.

#### What is the key to engaging more with an older demographic?

Using older instructors and making the sessions fun and sociable. We always offer the opportunity to socialise before and after the session. We do a lot of data collection about people's motivation and overwhelmingly the aspect which keeps people coming back is the social element.

Although people don't tend to admit it when they first join, many older people are socially isolated and making friends is as important as the exercise to them.

For gyms looking to engage with this demographic, they need to make

socialising part of the mix. If the venue doesn't have a café, they at least need to have somewhere where they can offer people a cup of tea after the class.

#### How could the health and fitness industry engage with what you are doing?

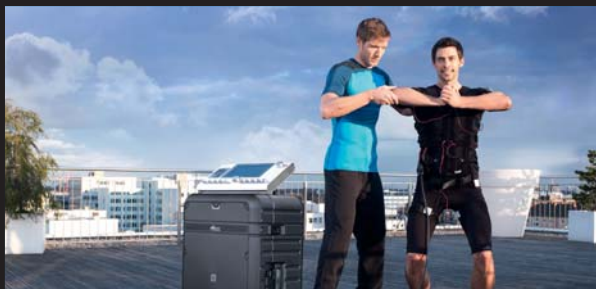
In the future we want to expand with more activities and more people, so it would be great to work in partnership with more facilities to promote fitness for older people. This is something that we're currently working on in south London, with Better, and will be expanding on going forward.

In the meantime, it would be great if operators could encourage their members to enter The Big Half to help raise money for us! ●





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## Fitness First Australia begins rollout of round-the-clock clubs

**F**itness First Australia will begin offering 24/7 access to its clubs this month (November), giving members the freedom to train when they want.

The round-the-clock gyms will be introduced at a select number of clubs in New South Wales and Victoria before being rolled out to the country's 59 sites.

As reported in *Health Club Management* in March, Greg

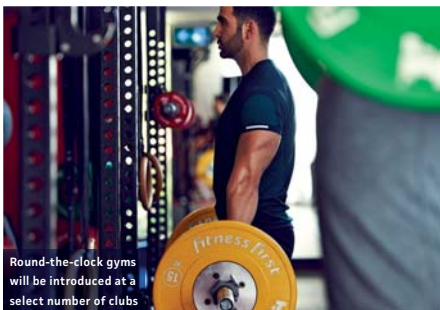
Oliver, chief executive of Fitness Lifestyle Group, which is the parent company of Fitness First Australia, announced clubs would eventually go 24/7, seven days a week.

Members wanting to train during extended opening hours will be provided with a 24/7 access card and security briefing.

"We know that life is not always as regular as clockwork. Everyone is different and for many, normal opening hours just don't fit within their lifestyle," said Fitness First Australia general manager David Aitchison. "Whether you work late, start early or find that you're most motivated late at night, Fitness First wants to provide a safe environment for our members to train at a time that suits them."



Fitness First CEO Greg Oliver



Round-the-clock gyms will be introduced at a select number of clubs

Michael Cunico, national fitness manager for Fitness First Australia, added: "Many people make decisions on when to train based on the 'science' behind circadian

rhythms, hormone levels and the body's temperature. But your preference of when to train is equally as important."

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=m9G2B\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=m9G2B_H)

## New clubs boost Basic-Fit memberships by 25 per cent

**I**ncreased memberships from club openings have boosted revenues at Europe's largest fitness operator, Basic-Fit.

In its Q3 trading update, the business reported that in the nine months to the end of September, membership numbers rose 25 per cent year on year to 1.47m and revenues increased by 26 per cent year on year to €238m (US\$277.7m, £211.8m).

The rise in members and revenues is the result of 78 club openings in the first three-quarters of 2017, including 62 in France, six in Belgium



Basic-Fit chief executive  
René Moos

and two in Spain – taking its total site number to 493. René Moos, Basic-Fit chief executive, said: "We're confident we'll grow our network by around 100 clubs in 2017."

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=6a4B5\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=6a4B5_H)

## VR gaming headset Icaros prepares for US rollout

**V**irtual reality fitness device Icaros is heading for the gym floor at YMCA's Minneapolis club in Minnesota, with 28 more locations set to follow.

Members will be able to use the VR headset from January, with YMCA personal trainers incorporating 15 to 20-minute Icaros sessions as part of fitness programmes, offering three games: Flight, Deep and Gravity.

Icaros, which was featured in the October edition of *Health Club Management*, is a gamification device coupled with a movement-sensing device that users lie on. Gaming options can be adjusted for different



Icaros merges fitness and gaming

abilities, from strenuous activities to relaxing yoga sessions.

Research into the device shows that users expend 30 per cent more energy and trigger two times more muscle activity than conventional core exercise.

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=7M9x3\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=7M9x3_H)

## Xercise4Less founder Wright scoops IHRSA accolade

**Xercise4Less founder** Jon Wright has been praised for his efforts in trying to help reverse the childhood obesity epidemic in the UK, winning the annual International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA) European Club Leadership Award.

The prize, which was presented during the association's 17th Annual European Congress (23 October), recognises a leader who has advanced their company and the industry through leadership and performance.

"Nine years ago, Jon Wright saw a gap in the UK industry.

He believed there was a need and demand for a low-cost gym with affordable, accessible facilities and a robust group exercise offering," said Derek Gallup, chair of the IHRSA board of directors, on presenting the award. "Xercise4Less – or the 'People's Gym' as it is popularly known – was born.

"In an effort to contribute to reversing the childhood obesity epidemic, Jon and his team launched the Xercise4Kids programme, for kids ages three to five, two years ago."

The company has also created a fitness app, which Wright says has helped with retention.



Jon Wright was recognised for helping to tackle childhood obesity

After winning his award, Wright told *Health Club Management*: "We have always looked to make fitness more accessible to the masses, whether it was rolling out our Xercise4Kids programme in a bid to tackle the childhood

obesity crisis, or launching an app to make interactions between members and PTs quicker and easier. We will continue to listen to members and bring more affordable fitness to the UK."

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=T8T9a\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=T8T9a_H)

## Holmes Place adds two Health City gyms to portfolio

**E**uropean premium brand Holmes Place has grown its portfolio to more than 90 clubs after closing a deal to buy two Health City gyms in Germany – hot on the heels of its acquisition of Virgin Active Iberia.

The purchase of Health City clubs in Essen and Düsseldorf, for an undisclosed sum, extends the Holmes portfolio to 13 sites in Germany, with more than 54,000 members.

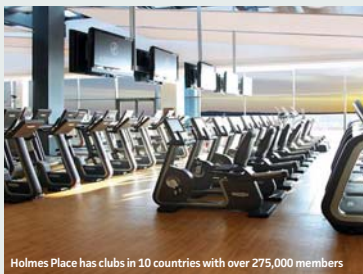
"We opened our first club in Germany in 2001 in Berlin. Since then, we have been continuously expanding and made a strategic decision last year to expand our offering by opening up other

clubs," said Dorone J Dickman, Holmes Place Europe CEO.

Financial details of that purchase have not been disclosed, but it consists of four clubs in Portugal and eight in Spain – taking Holmes' portfolio to 39 sites in the Iberian Peninsula.

"Acquisitions are now a key part of the growth strategy for the company and Virgin Active was always a clear opportunity as their culture and focus on member experience are very close to that of Holmes Place," said Josep Viladot, Holmes Place Spain chief executive.

A rebranding of the Virgin clubs is expected to be completed by the end of the



Holmes Place has clubs in 10 countries with over 275,000 members

year, with Holmes continuing "to develop its offering with exclusive group classes and a personalised relationship with the members, which includes nutritional services, physiotherapy and medical fitness."

Earlier this year, Virgin Active offloaded 14 clubs in the UK to

David Lloyd Leisure to focus its operations on metropolitan hubs in its key markets.

This latest sale by Virgin, which has 1.1 million members on four continents, is in keeping with that strategy.

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=a59sq\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=a59sq_H)

## Pure Gym sold to US investment firm LGP

**US buyout firm** Leonard Green & Partners has won a two-month bidding contest for Pure Gym.

The private equity shop, which jointly owns Topshop

with Sir Philip Green, announced on 3 November that it will acquire a controlling interest in the UK gym operator, replacing current majority shareholder

and US private equity firm CCMP Capital Advisors.

CCMP bought a majority stake in the business in May 2013 but will no longer retain an interest.

While details of the deal have not been disclosed, it has been confirmed that it is scheduled to be completed by the end of November.

The final round of bids followed a first round in September, when Goldman Sachs Private Equity, Pamplona and Providence were listed as interested parties.

The sale of Pure Gym, which has 189 clubs nationwide and

950,000 members, comes a year after the company abandoned an IPO.

"We're absolutely delighted to be entering into a new partnership with Leonard Green & Partners, whose investment confirms the growth potential of our business," said Pure Gym CEO Humphrey Cobbold.

"They have some big brands in their portfolio and an excellent track record of investing in the leisure and fitness industry," he added.

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=b7B8Y\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=b7B8Y_H)



The acquisition of Pure Gym follows two rounds of bidding

## Soho Gyms feels the heat from low-cost competitors

**O**valhouse Ltd, the parent company of Soho Gyms, has blamed aggressive low-cost operators and political uncertainty for a dip in its turnover.

In its latest filing to Companies House, the company reported that turnover fell by 3.7 per cent to £7.9m (US\$10.4m, €8.8m) in 2016, down from £8.2m (US\$10.8m, €9.1m) the previous year.

The filing states: "Budget operators (particularly Pure Gym and The Gym Group) are being aggressive with offers such as no joining fees, plus the introduction of group exercise."

It adds: "Political uncertainty is not helping consumer or staff recruitment" and the burden of costs is increasing "in particular with rents, wages and business rates".



**Membership numbers have risen at Soho Gyms**

Despite 2016 being a "difficult year at a few gyms, the business as a whole is still trading well," the report said.

Soho Gyms now operates 10 studios but profits after tax dropped 24 per cent last year.

Membership numbers were up 1.3 per cent but gym membership income was down by 2.5 per cent.

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=P8p8c\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=P8p8c_H)

## Barrecore targets new mums

**B**outique studio Barrecore has created a new class targeted at pre- and post-natal clients, and those returning to exercise from injury.

Signature Lite has also been created to appeal to a wider age demographic, providing a less intense alternative to the brand's Signature class.

Available at all 12 Barrecore studios, it uses slower movements so participants have more recovery time and

deeper stretching between sets, providing a better understanding of the moves before progressing to the next level of barre fitness.

Lite classes involve smaller groups than Barrecore's other sessions, allowing instructors to work more closely with each client, focusing on perfecting techniques and making modifications to accommodate any injuries.

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=R6y9U\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=R6y9U_H)



Signature Lite provides an option for expectant and new mums

## Make physical activity a 'national religion', urges Tanni Grey-Thompson

**B**aroness Tanni Grey-Thompson has called on the government to help make physical activity a "national religion" and harness its potential to tackle some of the biggest challenges faced by society.

Speaking at the ukactive National Summit on 1 November in London, Grey-Thompson said that urgent action is needed to combat the mounting physical inactivity crisis, which costs the country £20bn each year.

The crossbench peer, who won 11 Paralympic gold medals as a wheelchair athlete, described physical activity as society's 'golden thread' and outlined the impact it can have on issues such as Britain's ageing population and social care crisis, childhood obesity and economic productivity.

"Physical inactivity is one of the biggest crises we face," said Grey-Thompson, who is chair of the non-profit health body ukactive. "Every



Tanni Grey-Thompson made the plea at ukactive's National Summit

day, parents, grandparents, wives and husbands are dying because they live in a society that doesn't place enough emphasis on the importance of physical activity."

The speech followed the release of a new ukactive report, which shows that leisure centres have a social value of £3.3bn.

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=8F9V4\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=8F9V4_H)



Sweat! gyms will be trialled in three Debenhams stores in 2018

## Virgin Active co-founder takes gyms into Debenhams

**Debenhams is partnering** with former Virgin Active co-founder Frank Reed to launch in-store gyms as part of the retailer's strategy to attract more customers and to attract more female base.

Reed's Sweat! gyms are set to be trialled in three stores from early 2018 under a membership model.

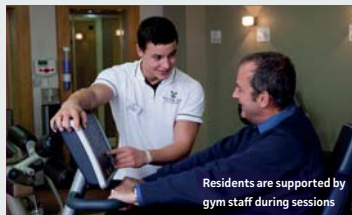
The deal is part of the Debenhams Redesigned strategy, which involves working with strategic partners to

deliver its plan of making the chain more appealing to shoppers. The struggling chain recently reported that annual profits dipped 44 per cent to £59m (US\$78m, €66m).

The relationship will see Debenhams broaden its reach to the Sweat! customer base with cross-marketing opportunities planned, such as enrolling each Sweat! member into the Debenhams Beauty Club.

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=P9U6d\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=P9U6d_H)

## Bupa retirement homes bring new fitness kit in-house



Residents are supported by gym staff during sessions

**A** group of retirement homes is installing specialist fitness equipment because residents find traditional gyms intimidating, according to healthcare provider Bupa.

Richmond Villages, owned by Bupa, has had specified fitness equipment installed at its homes in Witney, Oxfordshire and Aston-on-Trent, Derbyshire – with

plans to add more gyms at its properties across the UK.

"Many of our residents feel intimidated in a traditional gym environment, but in our facilities they're exercising alongside users of a similar age, with similar challenges and goals," said Laura Hoskin, Richmond Villages operations project coordinator.

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=A3q9s\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=A3q9s_H)



## Trauma-releasing exercises introduced to Triyoga classes

### Innovative trauma-releasing

exercises (TRE) are being introduced at Triyoga as it continues its London expansion with a new studio in Ealing this December.

TRE classes have been designed to help the body "let go of chronic stress" and "deep tension". Advocates report that regular practice can bring the body and mind into a more balanced state and help build resilience to deal with the stresses of everyday life.

Classes will be available to beginners through to more experienced students.

The 6,000sq ft (557sq m) Ealing studio will be the second site to open in the space of three weeks after Shoreditch launched in October. Triyoga also has studios in London's Camden, Chelsea, Covent Garden and Soho.

Ealing will also offer more than 60 therapies and healing treatments and offer

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=G7r2e\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=G7r2e_H)



The Ealing branch will offer more than 120 classes per week



Ealing's vibrancy and sense of community have become more and more apparent, so it felt natural to open in this area

Jonathan Sattin

## David Lloyd Clubs trials mood-enhancing fitness and wellbeing class

David Lloyd Clubs has trialled a multi-sensory fitness and wellbeing class for those with the winter blues, with the hope of taking the classes nationwide.

Vitamin Me, which was trialled at David Lloyd Hampton at the end of October, is a 30-minute mood-enhancing session designed to tackle Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

On arrival, guests are greeted to sun loungers, the scent of sun cream, the sounds of waves and a sand pit to dip their feet into.

Gentle stretches open the class, followed by 15 minutes of light therapy to help improve mood and energy levels. The class ends with a high intensity 10-minute cardio session.

According to the Seasonal Affective Disorder Association, about 21 per cent of the UK population experiences some symptoms of SAD, which can



Stretches and light therapy help improve mood and energy levels

cause a noticeable change in mood – known as the winter blues. For a further 8 per cent, SAD is a much more serious illness that prevents normal functioning if left untreated.

Linden Henson, David Lloyd Club Hampton general manager, said: "We're always looking for innovative classes that really benefit our members. When we discovered that 41 per cent of

people suffered from the change in daylight hours, we wanted to introduce a class that helped combat those feelings."

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=d5j5q\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=d5j5q_H)



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## Planet Fitness boosts team with digital and development leaders

**US-based gym chain** Planet Fitness has strengthened its leadership team with high-level appointments in its digital and development divisions.

Craig Miller has been appointed to the post of chief digital and information officer and Rob Sopkin as chief development officer.

Miller will be responsible for leading the company's technology innovation as well as managing its digital information systems. He has more than 20 years of experience in building technology systems and innovative customer-facing

applications, having previously held roles at Sonic Drive-In, Bank of America and PepsiCo.

Sopkin will lead the brand's strategic and aggressive expansion efforts. He has two decades worth of regional and national real-estate and development experience, having spent 18 years at Starbucks.

Founded in 1992, Planet Fitness has more than 10 million members and 1,400 gyms in 48 US states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Canada and the Dominican Republic.

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=W2j7p\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=W2j7p_H)



Craig Miller previously worked at Sonic Drive-In, Bank of America and PepsiCo



Seibold is likely to prepare Fitness First Germany for sale

## Martin Seibold named CEO of Fitness First Germany

**M**artin Seibold, former managing director of Fitness First UK, has been appointed CEO of Fitness First Germany.

Operating over 80 clubs, Fitness First Germany remains the only part of the global Fitness First estate that is yet to change hands: the UK clubs were sold to DW Sports late last year, while earlier this year, Fitness First Australia was sold to private equity company Quadrant, becoming part of its newly created Fitness & Lifestyle Group.

Fitness First Asia merged with local competitor Celebrity Fitness, to create fitness giant Evolution Wellness.

A sale of Fitness First Germany seemed imminent back in 2015, but the deal was scrapped after the euro fell in value and market competition grew.

While Fitness First Germany is not currently for sale, industry insiders say Seibold will most likely prepare the German business for this course of action.

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=W3Z6x\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=W3Z6x_H)

## Franklin tasked with driving global growth at Les Mills

**Martin Franklin** has been appointed chief operating officer of global markets at Les Mills, with responsibility for leading teams in the UK, Russia, India, the Middle East and Africa.

His will also be responsible for Les Mills' customer experience function CX, which will see him represent the club customer during internal projects.

Franklin, whose career in the fitness industry spans over 20 years, has worked for the brand since 2013.

In further news, Wendy Coulson has been promoted to CEO of Les Mills UK and Ireland. Coulson has worked in the leisure industry for 20 years. She worked for Warner Leisure Hotels before joining Les Mills in 2015.

"We want to provide more direction and support for our independent teams, while proactively driving faster growth in all our global markets, but particularly the exciting new territories of Russia, India, the Middle East and Africa," said Keith Burnet, global CEO of Les Mills.



Martin Franklin has worked at Les Mills since 2013

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=k8k9R\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=k8k9R_H)

## Wexer buys mobile app company Connected Fitness Labs

**V**irtual fitness provider Wexer has purchased London-based mobile app development company Connected Fitness Labs (CFL) for an undisclosed sum.

CFL – a standalone subsidiary of Fitness First – initially

entered into a partnership agreement with Wexer in May 2016 to create B2B mobile fitness app Wexer Mobile.

The acquisition means Wexer can take sole control of the app, fully integrating it into its digital fitness solution, which

covers virtual classes (Wexer Virtual), gym floor training (Wexer Trainer), live streaming (Wexer Broadband) and tracking of virtual participation (Wexer Count), as well as the app.

"Bringing CFL under the Wexer umbrella allows us to become a true one-stop shop for digital fitness," said Paul Bowman, Wexer chief executive. "It represents a new opportunity for operators to bring together all the facets of their offering into one seamless digital experience, broadening the reach and scope of their brands and helping them stay relevant in a rapidly evolving digital market."

The Wexer Mobile app was designed to expand a gym's



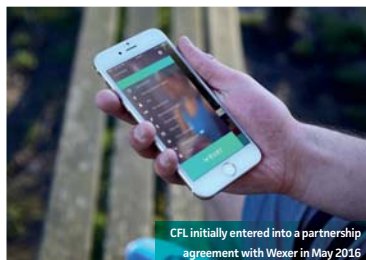
**Bringing CFL under the Wexer umbrella allows us to become a true one-stop shop for digital fitness**

Paul Bowman



reach beyond its four walls, allowing members to develop personalised workouts, set goals and track their progress.

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=K7t7N\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=K7t7N_H)



## Sports tech start-ups revealed for new London hub

**L**ondon Sport has revealed the names of the 16 innovative organisations it hopes will deliver the future of technology-supported physical activity and sport across the UK as part of its Sport Tech Hub.

Speaking at the launch of the new London-based hub at the House of Sport, Tove Okunniwa, London Sport's new chief executive officer, said the programme aims to cater for everything from mass participation and active travel, to social engagement, at-home fitness and unique immersive fitness experiences.

Following an extensive selection process, 16 SportTech, FitTech and HealthTech start-ups have been selected to form the inaugural cohort of the Hub.

There will now be a six-month incubation programme during which the start-ups will receive support from partners including Fieldfisher, London & Partners, HubSpot, Crowdcube, RLC Ventures, Sponge Marketing, and the Sport Industry Group.

Alex Zurita, London Sport specialist advisor in Technology for Participation, said: "Sport Tech Hub will be at the very heart of

**Tove Okunniwa, CEO of London Sport, opened the new Sports Tech Hub**



innovation for sport in the capital. We believe that harnessing the power of technology is vital to the future of physical activity and sport, and these 16 start-ups have an opportunity to be in the vanguard of that future."

The 16 selected start-ups include: AktivKidz, Batfast, Fitswarm, Flex TV, Makesweat, Rabble, Racefully, Return2Play, and Sport Heroes Group.

More: [http://lei.sr/?a=u7u4B\\_H](http://lei.sr/?a=u7u4B_H)





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## NOVEMBER 2017

### 22-24 | EuropeActive 2017 International Standards Meeting Rome, Italy

With an agreed global approach to improve education, recognition and social impact of exercise professionals and the fitness sector, this event brings together employers, training providers, suppliers, national associations and the representatives of national registers of exercise professionals from across Europe and around the globe.

### 28-29 | BASES-FEPSAC Conference 2017 Nottingham's East Midlands's Conference Centre, UK

BASES-FEPSAC Conference 2017 will be a joint conference combining BASES Conference 2017 with the 2017 FEPSAC European Sport Psychology Conference. FEPSAC is the European Federation of Sport Psychology.  
[www.basesconference.co.uk](http://www.basesconference.co.uk)

## JANUARY 2018

### 18 | FIBO Innovation Tour Lyon, France

FIBO's Innovations Tour starts in Lyon with presentations on the market situation, new developments in fitness, wellness and health, and the latest innovations from FIBO exhibitors. Next stop is Rome, Italy on 23 January; Birmingham, UK on 25 January; Madrid, Spain on 1 February and finally Malmö, Sweden on 6 February.  
[www.fibo-innovation-tour.com](http://www.fibo-innovation-tour.com)

## CHARITY CHALLENGE

### 6 May 2018 | Great Birmingham 10km, Birmingham, UK

If music is your motivator, the Simplyhealth Great Birmingham 10k is the perfect event for you. Strut your stuff across the start line to the most popular tunes from the 70s, 80s, 90s, Noughties or present day, then hit the streets for an electric party atmosphere that will keep you going as you walk, jog, run – or even dance – all the way from the start to your well-deserved finisher's pack!  
[www.greatrun.org](http://www.greatrun.org)

Each route of the Threshold Trail will highlight the great British countryside



## CHARITY CHALLENGE

### Various dates, June/July 2018 | Threshold Trail Series

The Threshold Trail Series is a collection of breathtaking ultra marathons. Each route is designed with precision to show off the very best of the great British countryside. Choose to walk, jog or run, and do it in one day, or stay overnight at the basecamps.

The series includes double marathons in the Cotswolds and South Downs Way, as well as a 100km route along Britain's oldest path, starting in the Chilterns and finishing at the 5,000-year-old stone circle at Avebury.  
[www.racetothetower.com](http://www.racetothetower.com)

### 30 January - 1 February Spatex 2018 Ricoh Arena, Coventry, UK

A dedicated event for the pool, spa and wellness industries across the UK, providing the opportunity to meet over 100 leading industry suppliers, from both home and abroad. The event will showcase the latest products and services, and present free daily workshops.  
[www.spatex.co.uk](http://www.spatex.co.uk)

## FEBRUARY 2018

### 11-14 | 2018 Active Living Research Annual Conference Banff, Canada

The 2018 Active Living Research Annual Conference will bring together active living researchers and champions to advance knowledge and action around active communities. The theme for 2018 is 'Future-Proofing Activity: Application Across Sectors'.  
[www.activelivingresearch.org](http://www.activelivingresearch.org)



Spatex brings together leading suppliers from the pool, spa and wellness industries

# JAN SPATICCHIA

**The énergie group is in the midst of a major rebrand that will see its low-cost and mid-market sub-brands consolidated. Lauretta Ihonor discusses humble beginnings, evolution and floating on the stock market with the man behind the UK's first fitness franchise**

“W

hen we launched in 2003, we had nothing other than one club and grand ambitions. We wanted to create the first UK fitness club franchise but had no idea whether it would actually work,” says Jan Spaticchia.

Taking stock of how far the énergie group has since come, he adds: “There were just three of us back then: myself, Steve Philpott and David Beattie. We

worked from my dining room in Milton Keynes. Nobody was getting paid.”

Fast forward 14 years and things have certainly changed. Today, the énergie group has a network turnover of over £26m, just over 100 clubs across five countries, and according to its CEO Spaticchia, “we’re growing faster than we’ve ever grown before.”

This growth is something the brand is now focused on propelling with a group-wide rebrand of “76 UK clubs over a

twelve-month period, alongside 35 new site openings”, says Spaticchia.

“We currently have Fit4less – our budget operation – and énergie fitness clubs – our mid-market operation. We’re rebranding the entire portfolio under the new énergie fitness brand, under the strapline ‘where you belong,’ he explains.

“Effectively we’re on a mission to democratise fitness. Our core purpose is to empower people to transform their lives, and to do that we want to provide a ‘safe’ place where people really feel they belong... at an affordable price!”

## AN EVOLUTION IN PROGRESS

The current rebrand is just the beginning of the wave of change afoot.

“We’ve already launched and will be growing our group functional fitness product The Yard, as our new boutique division. We’ll launch a second premium product later this year and will offer alternative streams of franchising that fill a gap that currently exists within the franchise marketplace,” says Spaticchia.

“It’s a much smaller investment for a franchisee, and therefore opens up the opportunity to people who can’t afford a full énergie fitness club. The Yard allows them to franchise with us through a smaller format.”

So why boutiques, and why now? He explains: “We’ve been watching the market for around 12 months and have done a lot of work to ensure that when we enter the boutique sector, we’re doing it with a product that’s can lead the market. That’s what we’re going to be doing as we roll out The Yard over the next 12 months.”

Then there’s the introduction of a new



**Creating a fun and inclusive space for exercise is a priority for the company**



Spaticchia says the current rebrand will see a wave of new offers, including a concept for the boutique space

**“We’re on a mission to democratise fitness. Our core purpose is to empower people to transform their lives and to do that, we want to provide a ‘safe’ place where people really feel they belong”**

‘host’ role – to welcome and assist members – within all *énergie* clubs. Spaticchia says: “I don’t quite understand why our contemporaries in the sector have decided that staffing is the best place to cut costs. If I think about my experience of flying on low cost airlines, they don’t reduce costs by removing the pilot and the flight crew, they do so by carefully engineering the product to ensure there’s no fat in the system.”

“So at our clubs the gym floor is always staffed, and we believe that it’s very important that when somebody comes to one of our clubs they feel like they’re somewhere they belong. This is what our new host role will achieve.”

#### ACCIDENTAL BEGINNINGS

While the *énergie* group’s current rebrand plans follow years of planning, Spaticchia admits “the franchise model for *énergie* actually started quite by accident”.

He explains: “At the time, Steve Philpott and I were working on a project with Barclays Private Equity, who were looking at the fitness sector as being ripe for consolidation.”

“We worked with a group of analysts, looking at how we could bring together a group of 10 fitness operators, remove their separate head offices and create a single bigger group of around 100 clubs.”

It was Whitbread Beer Company’s ex-

marketing director, Philpott, who helped spark the franchising idea, says Spaticchia (see ‘About Steve Philpott’, p38). “Steve said: ‘This looks like tenanting’ as it was very much like the tenanting of pubs he’d experienced while at Whitbread. That’s really where the idea came from. We were the first to look at franchising in the UK fitness sector, but when we looked at the American and Australian markets, it seemed to work there, so why not here?”

Being first to the UK market gave the group a huge edge, allowing it to grow quickly from day one. “The business took off very quickly. By Christmas 2003, we’d secured our first five franchisees. ▶



► It was an absolutely astonishing success and it happened very quickly," Spaticchia says. "But back then, there were no other franchisors, no competition and we really had the market to ourselves."

Now facing stiff competition from the growing number of fitness franchises in the UK, the lifelong entrepreneur admits the company's approach to business has had to change significantly. "For the first three to four years of the business, we had the market to ourselves. If a person wanted to franchise a fitness club, we were really their only choice. While we were very good at it, we probably didn't have to be on our toes as much as we do these days," he says.

"Now many American and Australian franchisors have now come to the UK market, and although they've come in with a very specific brand, they're in our space and looking for the same people we are – those who've always dreamt of owning their own fitness clubs. So by default, they're competitors."

It's an observation that begs the question: is there enough space in the fitness franchise market? "We think it's wide open for development," Spaticchia says confidently. "While most of the franchise offerings out there are all the same, they're very successful models that have proved themselves overseas. Fortunately, having been one of the first in the value franchise space, we believe we have an advantage – an instinctive insight into this marketplace."

#### INTERNATIONAL EXPANSION

Although the *énergie* group is a UK brand, its international presence has been steadily growing for years. "Our main international interests are in Ireland. We have 11 sites out there right now, and another 15 to 20 sites will open over the next 12 months," says Spaticchia.

"We also have two sites in Latvia and one in Poland, with the latter forming a jumping off point for a major surge into the Polish market next year. We're also about to sign our first site in Africa – in Nairobi, Kenya – and we're planning to see real international growth over the next 12 to 24 months."

This undoubtedly eclectic mix of



**énergie wants to help customers of all types transform their lives**

#### ■ ABOUT JAN SPATICCHIA

Known as a lifelong entrepreneur, Jan Spaticchia explains: "I came up through the ranks like many others. I did my time on the gym floor during my late teens and early 20s: I was a fitness instructor, a personal trainer, a club manager and regional manager. I then worked as a head of department of a college for a short while before starting my first business in 1995. My friends laugh at me because I've only ever had 48 pay cheques from someone else. I've been paying myself since my early 20s."



international franchise locations prompts a question about the company's site selection process.

"It's becoming more scientific now," Spaticchia answers, although he admits that the company's Latvian site was created after a Latvian franchisee discovered the *énergie* brand online and asked to get involved.

"Now, we're a lot more scientific," he reiterates. "We're focused on deliberate rather than opportunistic international growth, so we're looking at the emerging markets, mainland Europe, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa – markets that are really starting to discover franchising."

#### FLOATATION RUMOURS

"It was my decision to pull the float at the last minute and I'm glad I did," says Spaticchia,

referring to IPO plans that were abandoned at the eleventh hour in early 2012.

He continues: "We were literally days before float, we'd done the whole book build and everything was looking very exciting, but it was the weekend of the Greek debt crisis, and over that weekend stock market sentiment plummeted. It showed the volatility of the marketplace, so we pulled the float and I'm glad we did because I think we would have under-valued ourselves."

So does the group have plans to float in the future? "Last year we sold a very small share of the business through the crowdfunding site Crowdfunder. It was just over 3 per cent and doing so allowed our franchisees to become shareholders. The Crowdfunder deal valued the business at around £15m," says Spaticchia.

"There will come a point in the next 12 to 24 months when you will see us look to crystallise the value of the business, this could be through an IPO or maybe the sale of some stock to a private equity company. It could be either, so watch this space."

**“ I don't quite understand why others in the sector have decided that staffing is the best place to cut costs. Low cost airlines don't reduce costs by removing the pilot and the flight crew ”**

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# THE ÉNERGIE TEAM

We talk to the key people in the fitness franchise group's management team



The team is based at the Milton Keynes head office



The Yard is the new group functional fitness concept from the company's boutique division

## GRIF SHORT

Head of operations  
(franchise division)



### How did you get involved with the énergie group?

I've been with the énergie group twice. My latest stint has been from 2014 to now, but I was also with the company from 2004 to 2009. The first time around I joined the operations team, fresh from LA Fitness and stayed for five years. During this time I helped to

build the processes, systems, manuals and ultimately the network. I left énergie to return to LA Fitness, but re-joined in 2014, and I've been here ever since.

### How has the company changed since 2004?

Back in 2004, there wasn't really a budget sector, so gym memberships were £35 and upwards. When the budget sector came in, it was relatively disruptive to the industry. I think we're now at a point where things will start to change again. Not that I'm saying that the budget market has run its course, but people are looking for something different within the industry.

### What's the most exciting about being in this industry, with énergie, at this moment in time?

Budget operators are now looking for ways to increase yield per member because they can't keep charging £16 per member and survive. It's interesting because it looks like the budget sector might start to morph back into a mid-sector. There's also a great opportunity to integrate boutique-style offerings into the value sector and create a unique sector within the industry. That's what we're doing with The Yard. At present we're putting it into clubs as a space, but we'll make it a stand-alone unit from the start of the next financial year.

## SIMON HAYES

Head of operations (equity division)



### Tell us about the énergie division

It was formed in October 2016, primarily to manage the transition of sites being brought back into énergie ownership before being put back into the general population. Some franchisees have gotten to the end of their business plan and they want to sell

a club that's performing well. We work with the franchisee to resell it. Then there's the other side of my role, which involves working with franchisees that aren't performing to plan. My team and I work to bring the franchise back in line with the operating systems and back on plan.

### What was your background prior to joining énergie?

I started in the industry working for Esporta – now Virgin Active – as a regional sales director. I was then given the opportunity to run Holmes Place's Czech Republic division. I did that for two years and then the founder of Fitness

First, Mike Balfour, asked me if I would go and join him to actually fix countries that weren't performing well. I went in, fixed them and then moved on to the next country. I covered 12 different countries in just under six years.

### How did that prepare you for your current role?

Having worked in clubs in so many countries, I've developed confidence in an approach that works exactly the same in every single country. This means that I can walk in and know what's wrong with a club straight away, and that's invaluable in my current role. ▶

**IAN RUSHBURY****Head of training, fitness & innovation****What attracted you to your role?**

The last two companies I've worked at over my 13 years in the industry – Virgin Active and 1Life –

prepared me immensely for my current role. One of the more recent projects I oversaw while at Virgin Active was building an academy for the fitness coaches and PTs. On completion, énergie asked if I could do something similar

for them and that brought me here. My current role as head of fitness is both challenging and interesting as I'm learning all about the franchise side of the industry, while still using my fitness background. I've always liked to attach myself to exciting brands and there's a lot you can do with the énergie group brand.

**What does your role involve?**

Once a franchise agreement is signed, my team and I look after the franchisee's journey to getting into business. On the fitness side, we look at the proposition offered to members at club level, from how they're engaged when they join, to how the gym floor is laid out

We're very aware that entering a gym can be quite intimidating, so we want to

break down that barrier by making sure the layout is recognisable when a person walks in. We've also been looking at the innovative products we can create to make the member journey seamless.

**What exciting projects are you currently working on as part of the énergie rebrand?**

In terms of training, we're rolling out something called 'Take The Stage', which is a staff engagement programme. My team is delivering four-hour in-club training sessions on our culture, service promise and member interaction. That training is already well on its way to completion and by the time the rebrand is finished, all clubs will be delivering the customer experience in a more unified way.



Small group functional training is taking off in the US, and énergie predicts such facilities will grow in the UK

**STEPHEN ROUGHT WHITTA****Head of property****What makes a good site for an énergie club?**

Several things, but largely a visible and convenient location – close to facilities such as a commuter railway station, big supermarket and free car parks if possible. Parking is a big problem – especially in major cities – but people expect to be able to park their car nearby when they go to the gym.

The type of building is also important. It needs to look appealing, have decent signage and a floor loading that's strong enough for weights and heavy machinery. It also needs a reasonable ceiling height, and if it's in a multi-occupied building, you've got to be careful about soundproofing.

**Tell us about how you ended up at the énergie group?**

I've been in the property business for over 30 years, doing acquisitions largely for retailers, including Blacks Outdoor Retail, Prêt à Manger and B&M Retail. I was then approached by Pure Gym and worked for them for a couple of years before joining Anytime Fitness, where I

worked for nearly three years. I joined énergie several months ago. I like the business and enjoy working with Jan.

**What are your predictions for the industry over the next five years?**

I think the boutique sector will continue to grow. I was in the States last year, listening to a talk by a guy who runs a small group, functional training facility, and I think this is a direction the boutique space will go in. It's really taking off in the States and I think that although the UK is behind in terms of trends, it'll catch on here. I also think the discount market is just going to continue to grow, as long as we can provide a good level of service.



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**énergie receives 300 enquiries about franchising per month**



## ABOUT STEVE PHILPOTT

The énergie group co-founder now serves as a non-executive director. He says "I helped Jan to start énergie, back in 2003, and then about a year into that I did a private equity-backed deal to buy DC Leisure – now Places for People. Three months after I started that role I left énergie, but remained a shareholder. We've stayed close over the years and I re-joined the group last year."

Recalling the birth of the company he says: "Jan and a couple of us got together in his dining room and said: 'Hey, there must be something new we can be doing in the sector'. That evolved into applying franchising to gyms and énergie was born. We then bought a few clubs, set them up, made sure they were running well and off the back of that started selling franchises."

Philpott's other roles include chairman at the personalised swimming tuition group Swimming Nature, non executive director at the trampoline park group Oxygen Freejumping, and chairman at Mosaic Spa and Health Clubs.

Explaining what led him to take up these roles at the same moment in time, he says: "I feel very lucky that I had 12 years or so running a sizeable business – DC Leisure. I've been in the fitness sector for so long that I'm in a really lucky position of being able to choose who I work with and what I do. Obviously they've got to choose me as well! But my basic philosophy is that I want to work in a business where I like the people, can be an investor and can make a difference – that's what I find exciting about all of the businesses I'm in."

## ROBIN CUNDELL

Finance director



**What was your background before joining the énergie group?**

I had mainly worked as an industry qualified accountant

in corporate roles. I started at Gregg's – the food retailers – and then moved to Hilton Hotels' international division. More recently I headed up the finance

department of Costa Coffee in China. In 2016 I moved to manage the finances for Costa business units spread across Europe, the Middle East and South-East Asia. I left Costa in October 2016 and joined énergie a few months later.

**Given your non-fitness background, what are your thoughts on the industry at present?**

I would say that the industry feels quite new and far from having reached its potential. It's still massively changing and there's lots of innovation coming through. The popularity of health and wellbeing is growing rapidly at the moment, and

that presents a huge opportunity for those of us in the industry.

**What are you most excited about?**

We've got a big rebrand in progress that's centred on communicating that we're a place or a space where everybody is welcome. I'm not someone who goes to the gym all the time, so I understand it's quite daunting when you go into a gym and you see ripped people standing in front of the mirror while doing complicated exercises. We're focused on creating a functional space where you can get together with other people and do a sport or exercise, where your skill level doesn't matter.

## PETER CRONEY

Head of franchise recruitment



**What does your role involve?**

The key role is marketing and identifying prospective franchisees. We get enquiries from more

than 300 prospective franchisees every month. We have a process that eliminates those that aren't a good fit and then we screen further in person – which is both in their interests and ours.

It's very important that franchisees understand exactly what it takes to be

successful. Franchising stacks the cards in their favour but we still have to make it clear that running a franchise is much more than paying a fee, sitting back and waiting for the money to roll in.

**Tell us about the road to your current role.**

I used to work for an insurance company and saw the opportunity to buy my own insurance brokers. A colleague and I raised £11.5m to buy it. We were able to increase the profits from £800,000 to just under £5m before we sold it five years later for £23.5m. I then had my own health club, which I started for my son, but then I met Jan and he was able to give me some incredible insights on how to run that club better. As a result of

that, I became an énergie franchisee and then invested in the main business.

**You've been with the énergie group for 10 years. How has the industry changed over that time?**

Franchising has expanded enormously. In the early days, we would get about 20 enquiries a month and we now get more than 300. Franchisees are also much more educated about fitness, franchising and business in general. In terms of the fitness industry as a whole, there's a great deal more competition today than 10 years ago. As the budget and fitness franchise sector have grown, we've had to adjust our position within that market in order to stand out and offer something recognisably different to our consumers. ●



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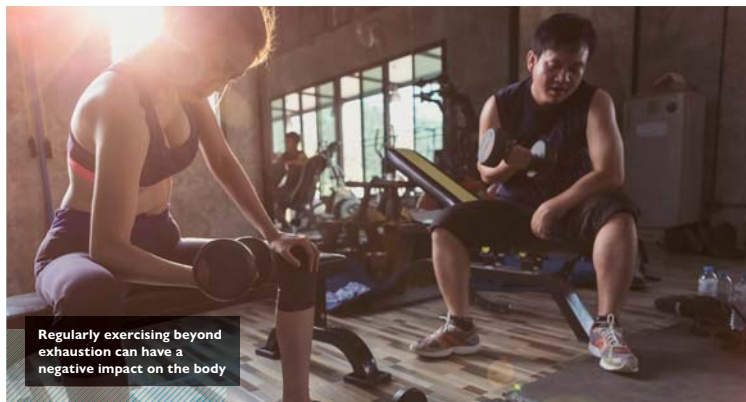
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# How should operators best deal with excessive exercisers?

With physical inactivity at worryingly high levels, committed gym members are to be applauded. But how should operators respond when members appear to be exercising excessively? **Kath Hudson** asks the experts if it's best to turn a blind eye or to intervene



Regularly exercising beyond exhaustion can have a negative impact on the body

**R**esearch has long shown that exercise has a wide range of benefits and can improve some conditions, such as depression and high blood pressure, more effectively than medication. Furthermore, many people successfully use sport and exercise as a positive tool to deal with grief, loneliness, divorce and other major life changes.

However, exercise can become addictive and have a negative impact on a person's body, health and life if carried out excessively. Writing in the *British Medical Journal*, physiologist Dr Cathy Zanker, who has obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), said that her condition drove her to work out in a very precise manner every day: the same treadmill, same cycle ergometer, same spot in the pool, come what may and to the point of exhaustion. With four degrees in biomedical science, she was aware that she was overexercising, but she was also fighting the "punishing voices" of OCD and anorexia nervosa.

Overexercising and undereating frequently thrive off one another, especially if someone is using exercise to burn lots of calories or achieve a specific weight. However, this is common practice among elite athletes. Speaking in the June issue of *Health Club Management*, former international rower, Zac Purchase, said that in order to maintain his race weight he was restricted to just 1,000 to 1,500 calories a day, despite training intensely for four or five hours each day.

Few operators would intervene if Zac Purchase was training tirelessly in their gym. But what if a member of the public is using your gym multiple times a day, has lost visible amounts of weight and/or seems to be punishing themselves through exercise?

Legally, gym staff are not obliged to intervene if they think someone is overexercising or has an eating disorder, but do operators have a moral duty of care? And if you do choose to broach this difficult subject, which team member should do it and how?

**Some highly motivated gym-goers may push themselves too hard**

## Sol Gilbert

Underground Gym: owner

**As a gym owner,** I feel it's a matter of ethics to intervene if I think someone is endangering their health by overexercising, undereating or performing an exercise badly. We're in the health business and I pride myself on ensuring people do things effectively. However, if an intervention is made it needs to be from someone in authority, or a PT who is working with the client.

Some of my members come to the gym twice a day. They do cardio in the morning and resistance training in the evening. So they are training

a lot and there is a correlation between overtraining and undereating. However, it's a tricky one because a lot of elite athletes do the

same, and some of my overtraining members are sports-specific athletes.

I spend a lot of time on the gym floor, to gauge what is happening. If I suspect people are showing unhealthy behaviours, I will approach them and ask questions about what they're doing, but in a friendly way. I'll base my advice on research and science about the importance of rest, recovery and good nutrition.



**I have had to tell overexercisers that I'm going to restrict them to one session a day and if they don't take my advice I will ask them to find another a gym that has a more relaxed approach**

People generally don't welcome the intervention, which is why you have to know your science. Occasionally I have had to tell them that I'm going to restrict them to one session a day. If they don't take my advice I will ask them to find another a gym that has a more relaxed approach.

Once had a member with a severe weight disorder, who was very frail. I engaged her in conversation and told her how many calories she should be eating. She didn't react well and I had to remind her

that I was coming from a good place, rather than a negative one. I referred her back to the doctor and said I would need a doctor's report if she was going to continue coming to the gym. She stopped coming.

I'm aware that dealing with eating disorders is beyond my professional capabilities, so I'm a big believer in referring on and telling people to seek appropriate professional advice. I'm aware I can't cure them, but from a moral standpoint, I won't enable their behaviour in my gym. ▶





**PTs can advise clients on the role of rest and recovery in an effective exercise regime**

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

## ► Dr Carl Lavie

John Ochsner Heart and Vascular Institute: medical director of cardiac rehabilitation and preventative cardiology

**As a doctor,** I don't think it's appropriate for a gym professional to intervene by offering advice where it hasn't been requested, unless the individual concerned is placing others at risk or having an acute medical emergency. However, if the person is working with a PT, they have contracted their services and are seeking their advice. In this scenario, I think it's appropriate to intervene.

If symptoms are acute this could call for a medical intervention or advising the person to see a physician for sub-acute symptoms. The PT may also talk to the individual about reducing their training time and intensity to lessen the potential harm that could come from overtraining – either for health reasons or to improve performance.

There is considerable scientific debate regarding the risks of overexercising, and although these risks are relatively small, I still believe there are risks, especially of developing atrial fibrillation. However, the risks of heart attack and dying are relatively low, so I don't tell patients that they have to cut down. Instead I explain the pros and cons of higher versus lower doses of exercise.

I try to emphasise that the maximum health benefits of exercise are typically achieved at quite low levels, so large amounts of exercise are not needed for good health. Of course, most people who do very high levels of exercise do so for non-health reasons, including competition, ego, fun, stress relief and friendships.



**If the person is working with a PT, they have contracted their services and are seeking their advice. In this scenario, I think it's appropriate to intervene**

**I would love all gym staff to be trained in the psychology of eating disorders and exercise addiction**

## Deanne Jade

National Centre for Eating Disorders: founder

**It's very difficult** for gyms to intervene in the case of an eating disorder for a number of reasons.

If someone is suffering from bulimia or compulsive eating, this is not always apparent. And if they think someone is under-eating this involves making a judgement about their size. Furthermore, most gym staff don't have any knowledge of eating disorders and are therefore unqualified to intervene.

The most far reaching thing a gym could do is to write into their mission statement and contracts that they have a right to intervene if they have a concern about someone's health. This would make it easy to raise issues and have a friendly chat, although it could deter potential members from joining a gym.

It would also be very useful to have literature, like posters and leaflets around, regarding eating disorders and to hold awareness raising talks. I would love all gym staff to be trained in the psychology of eating disorders, body image and exercise addiction, because gyms often have many people suffering from these illnesses as their members. Failing this, it would be great if a member of staff could call a hotline or signpost gym-goers to an expert if they have a concern.

Gyms also need to think about their own marketing material. Always using thin, lycra-clad people in promotional pictures and videos can be alienating and doesn't encourage people to make peace with themselves and food.





**A private and friendly conversation is best when discussing overexercising**

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

## ► **Matt Sanderson**

Triathlon Coach UK: co-founder

**As a former** health club owner and now a specialist triathlon coach, I have frequently seen both clients and members of staff show traits of overtraining and undereating. The easiest thing is to turn a blind eye, because people don't like to be challenged; however, from a moral point of view, I'm not able to do this.

If you do decide to intervene, it's important to have a private conversation with the person, and you need to be prepared to receive a negative reaction and potentially lose the member or the employee. It

isn't easy, but that's better than seeing someone put their health at risk.



As a triathlon coach, where people are specifically paying for advice on training and nutrition, it is much easier to broach the subject and for them to accept it. Our clients are all amateur triathletes with similar characteristics: responsible jobs, partners and families, high achieving and often analytical about data. Triathlon is an absorbing sport and it can bring out negative, compulsive behaviours, such as putting too much scrutiny on nutrition to achieve race weight, or feelings of guilt if

**If you do decide to intervene, it's important to have a private conversation, and you need to be prepared to receive a negative reaction**

they miss a session followed by playing catch up and then overdoing it. Our athletes keep food and training diaries, which show that some have to train at 4.45am, before going to work from 7am to 6pm and then training again in the evening. While this is possible on occasion, if done regularly, it often leads to overtraining as recovery time is reduced.

Fortunately, we usually have some stats to back up our comments – we can look at the client's performance as training sessions are automatically uploaded from their Garmin device. This provides detail on heart rate,

power and training time. We also commonly want to know additional data on their sleeping patterns. If there are noticeable changes, we directly tell the person that he or she needs more rest or to eat more nutritious food.

Our clients like the structure that triathlon and training gives them, and they feel fantastic when they are race fit. However, we always encourage them to back right off for at least one month a year – they can run, but leave the Garmin at home and they can have bike rides for fun with the slow friend who they drop when they're in serious training! ●

# SKILLROW

## Leading the race to a more connected world

Following the launch of SKILLROW in March this year the product continues its rapid growth and excellent market feedback. SKILLROW is changing the indoor rowing workout and creating a new type of group class

### ATHLETIC TRAINING

**SKILLROW** is the second product to be launched into Technogym's SKILL LINE, a growing range of equipment developed in collaboration with Olympic athletes and academic research institutes, bringing athletic performance training to the traditional gym floor.

SKILLROW is the first indoor rowing product capable of improving anaerobic power, aerobic capacity and neuromuscular abilities in a single self-powered solution. The product was developed with expert feedback from international Olympic rowers: three-time Olympic medalist Rossano Galtarossa from Italy, and Great Britain's Scott Durant, who won gold in the men's eight at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

### ROWING AT SWEATLIFE

Technogym collaborated with RowingWOD for Lululemon London's Sweatlife festival in July 2017, an event showcasing the best of wellness in London and bringing together experts from areas such as yoga, boxing, bootcamp and spin.

Using the RowingWOD training methodology, participants who attended Sweatlife were given the opportunity to train on SKILLROW. Thanks to SKILLROW's innovative MULTIDRIVE technology, class attendees were able to experience the quick switch function from traditional rowing with



Visitors to Sweatlife in London took SKILLROW for a spin

air resistance, to magnetic resistance for rep-based power training.

SKILLROW's connected app technology enabled users to row in synchronicity as a real crew, offering a new motivation. They weren't just rowing for themselves, but for the squad.

### A VAST OPPORTUNITY

British Rowing completed a quantitative and qualitative study undertaken by 2CV and supported by Sport England in April 2017. It identified that 15.8 million people would consider using a rowing machine, and that a good infrastructure for growth is already in place as 79 per cent of people with this intention already have access to a machine. But despite high access, only one-in-four gym-goers row indoors.

### SKILLROW SETS THE TREND

SKILLROW interactive rowing classes have successfully been launched across facilities including Gymbox, Everyone Active, Fitness Space and the University of Sunderland.

In 2018 Bannatyne Health Club will launch SKILLROW across multiple facilities following a successful trial. Technogym marketing director Craig Swyer said: "We are delighted with the response to SKILLROW from facilities and consumers alike. The connectivity, digital feedback, content and data tracking is at the centre of our solution-focused offering and brings something new, innovative and engaging to rowing."

Rowing is set to be the next big workout in boutique fitness. More than just a total body workout, Technogym's connected app can offer a whole new kind of training experience.

### GOALS TO GROW ROWING BEYOND 2017

- 1 Increasing awareness by promoting the benefits of indoor rowing
- 2 More training to educate fitness professionals and gym users
- 3 New offers including innovative classes and products
- 4 Technology with engaging challenges, tracking apps and leagues
- 5 Creating a community with tailored content and events

(Source: 2CV Indoor Rowing Market Segmentation - March 2017)



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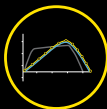


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## Introducing... **GEN Z**

The oldest Z-ers  
were aged 10 when  
Facebook went global

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Aged 21 years or younger, Generation Z are the next customers and employees of health clubs worldwide. Tom Walker asks generational researcher Denise Villa, PhD, how this tech-savvy and social media-driven generation will affect the industry

**T**he emergence of Generation Z, the cohort following the Millennials (also known as Gen Y), signals an important landmark. Never before has there been an entire generation unable to remember a world without the Internet.

"Born in 1996 or after, Generation Z is a very diverse and digitally entrenched generation, which is now taking the trend-driving mantle from the Millennials," says Denise Villa, PhD, CEO of the US-based Center for Generational Kinetics (CGK), one of the world's leading generation research firms.

Gen Z, or "Z-ers" is one of the largest generations ever and is eclipsing even the baby boomers in numbers. In the US, Z-ers now make up around 25 per cent of the population. But what can we expect from these youngsters who've

never experienced a world without social media – the oldest Z-ers being just 10 when Facebook went global?

### **BEHAVIOURAL TRAITS**

There's a small but growing volume of research into the mindset, priorities, habits, and behaviours of Generation Z. One of the first major research studies in the field was conducted by the CGK. It has now produced two publications on Z-ers: *Gen Z: 2016 National Study on Technology and the Generation after Millennials* and *The State of Gen Z 2017: Meet the Throwback Generation*.

According to Villa, the two studies produced some startling discoveries – one being that Z-ers are reverting to earlier ancestral characteristics.

"Z-ers are exhibiting attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours that combine their



***“Generation Z will know much more about healthy lifestyles, from a very young age, than any previous generations, which means a great future for the fitness and wellness industries”***

tech-saturated world with elements of generations past,” she says. “Gen Z are very conservative and careful with their money. In our studies, more than 10 per cent of Z-ers are already saving for retirement, because they have no expectations on social security or ever having a state pension – so they’re already putting together saving plans for old-age.”

This perhaps, suggests that while Millennials have become notorious for splashing the cash on fitness trends, heavily driving the growth of the boutique sector, Z-ers may be more cautious spenders, choosing to spend their money only with fitness operators they feel truly aligned with.

#### **FITNESS CONSUMPTION HABITS**

When it comes to health and wellness, Generation Z will have heard all about the benefits of an active lifestyle and regular exercise. Raised with the perception that wellness is about holistic balance, Z-ers could even be the

generation that reverses the worrying trend of expanding waistlines and soaring levels of lifestyle diseases.

“As our whole society begins to take more notice of health, wellness and nutrition, we predict that Gen Z will follow suit and start leading that trend,” Villa says.

“Generation Z will know much more about healthy lifestyles, from a very young age, than any previous generation. Having a health-aware generation means a great future for the fitness and wellness industries.”

Villa also passes on some concrete advice to those looking to attract Z-ers to their facilities. “Make sure you’re on Youtube,” she says. “I think one message we’re seeing is that if you’re not on Youtube, showing people what you do, giving people information and building

your following – be it as a personal trainer or a gym – then you’re totally missing this generation.

“As well as Snapchat, Youtube is where Z-ers go to search for information, to learn how to do things and to follow influencers they admire.

“So if a gym or health club has a particular trainer who’s charismatic, she or he needs to get on Youtube and start doing videos and giving people information in order to build that authenticity and to build that following.

“That’s what’s going to give you credibility with this generation. You have to give out information and be able to offer ‘how to’ experiences in order to get people develop a relationship with you.”



**Generational researcher Denise Villa**

#### **ENGAGING GEN Z**

As a generation that has grown up with the



**Generation Z-ers have grown up in a health-aware age and understand the benefits of an active lifestyle**

- internet at their fingertips, operators looking to capture loyal custom from Z-ers cannot just focus on having a strong presence on social media – they must make those social media channels accessible in their facilities. This means that services, such as free wi-fi and phone charging points will need to be available in gyms as standard, rather than as an exception.

Les Mills' CEO Phillip Mills believes that traditional clubs must indeed evolve to meet the needs of Gen Z. He says that, like Millennials, members of Gen Z are keen users of boutique fitness, which presents a key opportunity for operators – as long as they are prepared to make small changes to their facilities and marketing strategies to appeal to the

group. Experiential boutique studios within the club environment, cool marketing campaigns and new-generation group workouts are some of the features Mills suggests could help to engage Gen Z.

And there's good news for smaller operators, as according to Villa "Generation Z definitely doesn't look for – or immediately trust – a brand just because it is a big name," she says. "They have grown up in an environment which is saturated by advertising. They have a mistrust of adverts and aren't going for big brands, they're going for best value."

"Instead of brands, Z-ers are looking to online influencers to guide them: popular social media accounts, bloggers and real people – on youtube, Instagram, and snapchat – to tell them about products."

## Z-ERS AS A WORKFORCE

An analysis conducted by global research specialist Ipsos MORI for the BBC's *Newsbeat* programme, which questioned more than 1,000 Gen Z members (aged 16-22), found that they care most about family and education – not celebrities, social media and the pursuit of "experiences", as is the case with Millennials. Ipsos MORI also identified a generation wanting to fight back against the perception that they are lazy and social media-obsessed.

"Generation Z is a generation more optimistic about its future than older generations think it should be – and one that sees itself as hard-working and creative," the Ipsos/BBC study states.

With the view that hard work will pay off, Z-ers seem to abhor the "work hard, play hard" attitude. This, says Villa, means that employers, who might only just have learned how to create a culture where Millennials can thrive, must now adjust to meet Generation Z's different work ethic.

The studies also indicate that while the stereotypical Millennial is infamous for working for a "higher purpose" rather than a paycheck, the top motivators for Z-ers are fair pay and job security. Villa says that this attitude of Z-ers will make them loyal employees – ones who could outshine their Millennial peers.

"That hard-working attitude – give me a chance and I'll prove what I can do – is a very different attitude from what the Millennials had," Villa says. "As a result, we actually forecast that we'll see some big struggles between Millennials and Gen Z in the workforce, as more Gen Z will start coming through and taking up jobs."

"We predict Z-ers will begin to leapfrog a lot of Millennials on the career path, who've had very different expectations of worklife that have never shifted."

## GETTING READY

The entrance of Gen Z into the fitness industry – as consumers and employees – presents an exciting era for the sector. With predictions already presenting Z-ers as hardworking and loyal, the upcoming decade could bring with it a shift in work culture, from the gym floor to senior management level.

Gen Z also appears set to drive clubs firmly into the tech age. With offers like immersive technology already growing in popularity and most gyms active on social media, Gen Z presents an opportunity for clubs to capture the hearts of a group who, it seems, are willing to spend big with gyms they feel are aligned with them.

## Gen Z-ers have different needs from the Millennials who precede them



## GENERATION GAME

### THE SILENT GENERATION (born 1924-1945)

The "Silents" got their name from the tendency to be focused on their careers – rather than on activism – and people in it were largely encouraged to conform with social norms.

### THE BABY BOOMERS (1946-1964)

Named due to skyrocketing birth rates and economic growth following World War II, baby boomers are associated with a rejection or redefinition of traditional values.

### GENERATION X (1965-late 1970s)

Born during a time of shifting societal values, X-ers had reduced adult supervision compared to previous generations, a result of increasing divorce rates and increased maternal participation in the workforce. Generation X are characterized as cynical and disaffected.

### THE MILLENNIALS (GEN Y) (1980-1996)

The children of the baby boomers, also described as "Generation Me". Their attitude to work is characterised as having a need to producing meaningful work and finding a creative outlet.



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Z-ers favour a holistic approach to wellbeing and readily use digital apps to make healthy living easier

## A CLOSER LOOK AT GEN Z



**Hayley Ard, head of consumer lifestyle at innovation research and trends firm Stylus, explores how Gen Z's unique generational profile is already altering the health and wellness industry**

Gen Z is one of the most health-conscious demographics we've seen. Indeed, a report by cross-cultural marketing agency Sensis found that 78 per cent of US teens exercise at least once a week. And according to NHS data, smoking and alcohol use are at their lowest levels among young people in England since records began. This consumer group is weathering unpredictable times and its members are investing in many aspects of health to boost their resilience.

### MENTAL HEALTH

Increasing isolation means that members of Gen Z are much more likely to develop mental health problems than their predecessors. A 2016 study of more than 300,000 people aged under 25 showed that the number of US teens experiencing a major depressive episode has increased by 37 per cent since 2012.

Unsurprisingly, Gen Z is looking for empathetic engagement from brands, whether in digital or spatial form. Two key examples are Huddle, a video support group app for people suffering with mental health disorders, and Marks & Spencer-backed Frazzled Cafés, a safe space where people can voice their concerns.

### MINDFULNESS

Unlike previous generations, Gen Z takes a holistic view of wellbeing and sees mindfulness as a must-have. A trend report by J. Walter Thompson Intelligence suggests that a third of Gen Z-ers in the US consider mindfulness as important to health. "Gen Zen" is also powering the rise of mind gyms, as evidenced by digital content group Lucid Performance. The company has reported a 35 per cent weekly rise in users of its mental fitness training app, since launching in August.

### HEALTHY EATING

Teens now spend most of their money on food instead of clothing, with Piper Jaffray & Co's recent survey of 5,500 teens revealing that food makes up 24 per cent of their overall expenditure. This shift in buying behaviour is creating lucrative opportunities for food brands to renew their health focus. KFC has introduced a healthier menu at its K Pro concept restaurant in Hangzhou, China, replacing its fried chicken with fresh juices and salads.

### OPTIMISED PERFORMANCE

For wellbeing brands looking to target Gen Z, there's never been a better time

to invest in smart sustenance. The power players in the new performance economy are Four Sigmatic and LGND – two companies that are creating the brain brews Gen Z are craving.

Four Sigmatic makes 'mushroom coffee' using adaptogenic mushrooms, while LGND's energy drinks are packed with nootropics to support brain function without a sugar crash.

In short, health isn't a status symbol for Gen Z: they see it as an essential piece of armour. That means exercise is about lowering stress and enhancing cognition, not flexing muscles. ●

Hayley Ard leads the Consumer Lifestyle division of Stylus, an innovation research and trends membership service. She enables more than 500 global brands and agencies to stay relevant by alerting them to how people and technology are changing. [www.stylus.com](http://www.stylus.com)



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# JOAN MURPHY & PIP BLACK

Boutique operator Frame is on a mission to get people moving and feeling good about themselves – and a new £6m investment means it's perfectly placed to roll its feelgood model across London and beyond. Its founders talk to Kate Cracknell

**T**he fitness sector needs to move away from shaming people into exercising," says Pip Black, co-founder of Frame, one of the founding brands of London's boutique scene. "From the very beginning, back in 2009, our concept has always been about making people feel good about themselves. We don't have a 'Six-Pack Abs' class or anything like that. None of us need that extra pressure in our lives!

"Our whole premise is simply to get people moving and feeling good about it – not feeling like they have to do it, but that they want to. We make sure everyone gets an effective workout, but we also make sure they have fun doing it."

She continues: "We did some research recently and 46 per cent of our customers said their number one reason for coming to us was because it made them feel good. That was a real 'yes' moment for us, because that's exactly what we were trying to achieve, but it isn't that common in the fitness sector. People will generally talk about things like weight loss."

Black's business partner and fellow founder of Frame, Joan Murphy, continues the story: "Our mantra is that coming to see us shouldn't be a chore. We're a lifestyle brand rather than a performance brand. We stay away from any reference to weight, calories, pushing yourself too far. Instead we're friendly, accessible, and we try to make things easy for people."

"That notion of making things easy is why we have a café: if you can get yourself up in time for a 6.30am class, you can grab your food as you run out of our door and still be at your desk by 8.00am."

"It's also why we have a retail offering, selling fitness apparel that's perfectly suited to the activities in our studios, as well as supplements like magnesium and other things that complement the lifestyle of the active Londoner."

**“** 46 per cent of our customers say their number one reason for coming to us is because it makes them feel good. That's exactly what we're trying to achieve **►**



The business duo has created a lifestyle brand



When it comes to building a community, you can't force it. You can't demand people's time. It's more about the small things we do to make people feel welcome

#### Joan Murphy and Pip Black wanted to create a fitness concept that made people feel good about themselves

"These offerings are all treated as separate profit centres, but revenue-wise – when compared to the income from the 750 to 800 classes we run each week – they're not hugely significant. They're primarily there to make life easier for our clients."

#### PICK 'N' MIX

Stepping back from the complementary services for a moment, what is the core offering at Frame and what do these 750 to 800 classes comprise?

"We have a number of different studios at each of our four locations, offering yoga, reformer pilates, fitness,

dance and barre," says Murphy. "It's good for our bodies to have variety in our training, so we've always offered lots of different types of class."

"In 2009, when we launched our first studio in Shoreditch, we had yoga, fitness and dance. We introduced barre back in 2011, reformer pilates is core to our offering too, and we have another brand called Mumhood which specialises in pre- and post-natal fitness." (See 'What is Mumhood?', p54)

This diversity in offering isn't the only way in which Frame differs from other boutiques; its pricing structure is also refreshingly good value, as Murphy explains:



The Frame brand has built a loyal community of followers who are known by the collective term 'Framers'

- "Prices vary depending on which genre of class you're doing – reformer pilates has a capacity of 10 people so it will cost more than, say, a yoga class for 20 people.

"The length of a class also influences the price charged. We've recently introduced 30-minute lunchtime 'quickie' classes, for example. But our price range is £9 to £20 per class – yoga, for example, costs around £12. That hasn't really changed much since 2009, when we first launched at £10 per class."

In fact, adds Murphy, Frame has stuck to its guns with its model across the board: "The market has evolved massively over recent years, and what people expect has changed drastically too as competition has increased. To put on a £10 class in today's market, you really have to look at the economics of what you can provide and balance this against rising consumer expectations... all the things people now want and expect from a studio.

"It's been a very testing time and we've done a lot of soul searching over the past few years, looking at our model, at where we wanted to take Frame, asking if there were any changes we needed to make.

"But in the end, we decided not to change anything. We came back to our brand ethos – being fun, approachable, making people feel good – and we realised we have our own niche in the market.

"We didn't want to hit that really premium, luxe territory that other boutiques have entered. We chose to stick where we were. I think it will be interesting to see, over the next couple of years, how that very premium end of the market plays out."

In the meantime, the Frame founders' strategy certainly appears to be working for them: Murphy and Black are set to launch studios number five and six in January 2018, with the existing four studios all performing strongly. In addition, in October 2017, it was announced that Piper – a UK private equity firm specialising in consumer brands – had invested £6m into Frame to support its roll-out.

## ARE YOU A FRAMER?

Given the feelgood factor created by Frame, I'm not surprised to hear there's quite a community being built up, with a collective term – 'Framers' – used by the business and its clients to describe loyal customers. But as most boutiques pride themselves on their customer communities, what has Frame done to promote this loyal sentiment within its user base?

"At the beginning, we had quite a lot of social events," says Black. "We used to have things like the Friday Night Club, with drinks after class, but, quite honestly, people don't have the time. They're just about managing to fit exercise into their lives.

"We realised, when it comes to building a community, you can't force it. There's no magic wand and you can't demand people's time. It's more about the little interactions, the small things we do to make people feel welcome."

Murphy continues: "Working with other brands has also been key. We're very, very picky about who we work with

## Frame has expanded into instructor training



and we're very genuine in our partnerships, and this builds a broader sense of community around what we do.

"Sweaty Betty is one of our long-standing partners and we do a lot of collaborative work with them: we might run workouts in some of their shops, or they'll come in and take over one of our studios for the afternoon, inviting their loyal customers in for a workout. It works very well."

In fact, studio takeovers aren't only limited to partnerships, as Black explains: "We get a lot of brand collaborations, where companies come in and we create bespoke events for them. We've worked with brands ranging from Bobbi Brown to Danone."

But the Frame founders are very keen to maintain control of these ventures; they aren't looking to grow the reach of Frame through 'outreach' studios in third-party locations. Black explains: "We've had quite a few approaches to do something like this, but it isn't something we're exploring at the moment."

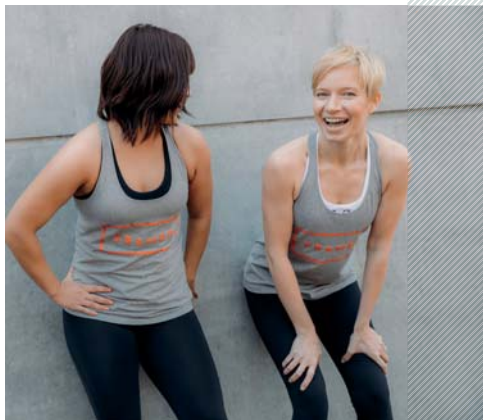
"It's all about the brand and the experience for us. We're more than just fitness. At the moment we feel like, while we could train trainers to deliver Frame-style classes in other places, you wouldn't ever get the whole Frame experience somewhere else."

## DISRUPTING EDUCATION

Nevertheless, with the launch of the Frame Academy earlier this year, Frame is expanding its offering into instructor training – not only to continue to shape high-calibre talent for its own growing portfolio of studios, but also to plug what it perceives to be a gap in the qualifications market as a whole.

Murphy explains: "The industry has changed a huge amount, but instructor training hasn't kept pace. We believe the qualifications that are out there now aren't fit for purpose for boutiques or operators with a strong focus on group exercise."

"Active IQ, our awarding body, has been really good, allowing us to create our own course manuals for fitness training, pre- and post-natal, exercise to music and pilates. What would usually be a one-day course, we teach over two days. We've added a lot of extra content to make ▶



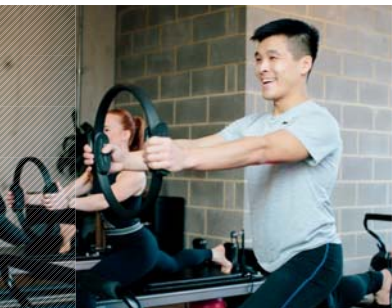
Frame attracts many popular brand collaborations

“ We believe the qualifications that are out there now aren't fit for purpose for boutiques or operators with a strong focus on group exercise



The company nurtures top teaching talent for its classes

## Reformer pilates is a premium Frame class





A recent investment injection of £6m will serve to fuel the expansion of the Frame studio empire beyond London

- courses more relevant, and we teach in a fun, Frame-style way. People who want to be in this industry are generally practical learners, visual learners, and we wanted to inject our Frame ethos into learning and education.

"It should also be up-to-date – guidelines are changing all the time and you have to keep up with this.

"So really, just as nine years ago when we came into the gym market as disruptors, we now want to give education a bit of a shake-up. We want to make sure that anyone who's invested their time and money with us, to take their first steps into our industry, is given the most up-to-date, relevant information possible."

### ALWAYS BE YOURSELF

In the meantime, Black and Murphy have their sights set on continued expansion of their studio empire, supported by the recent £6m injection.

"We'd like to open two studios a year for the next few years and see how we go from there," says Murphy. "We're looking outside of London – places like Manchester, Bristol, Sheffield and Leeds all have the beginnings of a boutique sector developing. We'd also never say 'never' to overseas development. But for the moment we'll stay in London, not least because we're both working mums with young families right now."

With this in mind, do they have any advice for other would-be boutique operators eyeing the London market? Black says: "I wouldn't put anyone off doing it – the market is still growing, so if you have a great concept and great location, you have a chance to succeed – but there's a lot more competition nowadays. You have to be very sure of who your client is and be very authentic to your message and your proposition. Some brands keep chopping and changing, adding elements and slightly veering away from what they once stood for."

Murphy adds: "The key is not to copy others. Do what you need to do, do what you believe in, make sure everything you do is thought through and truly represents you, so your offering stands the test of time." ●

### WHAT IS MUMHOOD?

With four children under the age of four between them, Frame founders Joan Murphy and Pip Black have very personal reasons for wanting to educate women on the importance of keeping fit throughout all stages of pregnancy.

Having themselves struggled to find no-nonsense information and workout programmes for the pre- and post-natal stages of pregnancy, and having seen so many mums become friends through classes at Frame, they came up with the concept of Mumhood – a community for women in all stages of pregnancy to share their experiences, benefit from tips and find like-minded women at this important stage of their lives.

Launched in 2017 as an extension of Frame's existing pre- and post-natal class offering, the Mumhood programme is built around the three trimesters of pregnancy, with specific yoga, pilates and barre classes for each trimester. There are also monthly 'modifications workshops', where women can learn to accommodate the changing needs of their bodies and still attend their favourite classes, as well as post-natal fitness programmes and an eight-week 'fit mums' programme.

There are Mumhood events and workshops – with guest speakers on nutrition, hypno-birthing and baby sleep – and the community is also accessible via an online platform.



The pair are both mums



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# NO PAIN NO GAIN?

While some people view delayed-onset muscle soreness (DOMS) as a sign of an effective workout, others consider it a good reason to stay away from the gym. **Kath Hudson** explores if DOMS-free exercise programmes are needed to get more people moving

**C** caused by microscopic tears that damage the muscle during exercise, delayed onset muscle soreness, otherwise known as DOMS, is the familiar dull ache we all know. Most common after a new, or more intense workout, I have known it to cause days of pain. The day after my first parkrun, I woke with an ache in my back. It gradually moved down my body to leave, via my feet, approximately four days later.

While some people – usually your confident and highly motivated members – may welcome DOMS as a necessary part of the journey towards a fitter, stronger body, it can act as barrier to those who are new to exercising.

If DOMS is the result of the muscle damage required to increase muscle size, is there a way to gain muscle mass without soreness? And if so, could this encourage more people to take out a gym membership?

**Dr Jinger Gottschall**  
Pennsylvania State University:  
associate professor of kinesiology

**Because DOMS** is caused by small muscle tears, rather than a buildup of lactic acid in the muscle, it can be a sign that muscle fibres are increasing in diameter or getting longer. However, daily muscle discomfort and soreness is not ideal as this suggests that adequate recovery – which is when muscle growth and repair occurs – is not happening. Conversely, a complete absence of DOMS for a long period of time is also far from ideal and should be taken as an indication that you can switch up your routine or increase workout time or intensity. It's a tricky balance, especially as genetic differences mean that not everyone feels the effects of muscle breakdown in the same way:

some may be more sensitive to pain, and therefore DOMS, than others.

While mild DOMS can be seen as positive reinforcement that a session was successful and muscle training is occurring, for those who want to avoid it, soreness can be minimised by starting slowly and adding thoughtfully.

Complicated routines and equipment are not vital. Simple strategies, namely

beginning with 10 to 15 minute sessions and gradually building up over a six week period, significantly reduce the chances of soreness. PTs can also help gym-goers to minimise DOMS by advising them to avoid increasing time or intensity by more than 10 per cent each week. Strength training should not be done on consecutive days and one day per week should be a complete rest day.



*"A complete absence of DOMS for a long period of time is also far from ideal and should be taken as an indication that you can switch up your routine"*

## THE PHYSIOLOGY OF DOMS

♦ Scientific studies have shown that eccentric action, defined as muscle lengthening during contraction, is the main cause of DOMS.

♦ Activities such as downhill running, horse riding and the 'down' phase of squats or bicep curls, are eccentric in nature.

♦ A 2004 study published in the Journal of Physiology showed that when participants were assigned to treadmill running uphill, downhill or on a level surface, only those in the downhill group experienced DOMS up to 48 hours after exercise.

♦ Further studies have shown that people who focus their training on concentric exercise (contractions that shorten the muscle) are more susceptible to experiencing DOMS after doing eccentric exercise.



**The severity of DOMS does not always correlate with how hard a person has exercised**

### Leon Popplewell GLL: community sports manager

**Muscle soreness may** not act as a deterrent to exercise for bodybuilders, but it certainly does for our target market – members of the general public who are new to exercise. People generally have jobs, responsibilities or children, so they don't want what they do in the gym to impact on their ability to carry out their everyday life. With this in mind, minimising DOMS is something we take seriously, in order to create an inclusive environment.

Firstly we make it clear to members during their inductions that they may ache after exercise. We also go to great lengths to try and minimise their aches and pains. As well as information charts on the walls in our centres, which explain warm-up techniques and effort levels, all new members have an initial screening



*"It can be harder to avoid DOMS in a class environment, as people often feel obliged to try and keep up"*

with an instructor, going through a lifestyle questionnaire, as well as fitness testing to identify weaknesses.

All members are given a foundation programme: an introduction to the machines, using lighter weights and getting them used to the technique. This allows them to get used to the equipment, work on their weaknesses and improve their flexibility, before starting a more intensive programme. The length of time taken to adjust varies according to the individual, but for someone in their 40s who is new to fitness, a month is usually enough if they're coming twice a week.

It can be harder to avoid DOMS in group classes, as people often feel obliged to try and keep up. However, we screen people before classes and also offer introductory classes, where they can learn the technique and understand the concept before embarking on the full class – as well as ensuring classes include extensive warm-ups and cool-downs. ▶



Speedflex was designed to provide an effective DOMS-free workout

## ► Matt Bolam

Speedflex: head of training

Many regular fitness sessions are high impact, and this can leave the average person feeling both sore and like they don't belong. When I worked as a PT, some of my introductory sessions would leave clients with DOMS and I could see this was a barrier in terms of getting people to adhere to an exercise programme. It definitely put some people off and I even lost clients as a result. But over the years I have learned it's possible to get an effective workout with little to no muscle soreness afterwards, and this keeps people coming back.

Speedflex, for example, offers a resistance machine-based high intensity circuit training session that leaves participants without DOMS. It was designed specifically with this goal in



"When I worked as a PT, some of my introductory sessions would leave clients with DOMS. It definitely put some people off and I even lost clients as a result"

mind, and achieves this by delivering concentrically focused exercise. When you do a bicep curl, the muscle shortens and contracts to lift the weight, which is the concentric movement. When the weight is lowered, the muscle performs an eccentric movement as the muscle lengthens and takes the stress of the weight. It's the eccentric movement that causes DOMS. For this reason, those seeking to avoid DOMS would do well to adopt training strategies, such as dropping weights rather than lowering them during strength training and running uphill instead of downhill.

With Speedflex, the machine takes the load off the muscle as it lengthens, so opposing muscle groups are used to complete the movement in its entirety. As a result, even though Speedflex sessions burn lots of calories, and improve CV fitness and body composition, the workouts do not cause DOMS, which is what many of our clients want.

## Jill Brown

Jill Brown Fitness: founder

Soreness is not necessary for improving cardiovascular fitness; however, it is often a side effect of the process by which new muscle is built. This means that those who are very focused on avoiding it can require more time and patience to achieve fitness goals that involve gaining new muscle.

Nonetheless, everyone is different and the presence of DOMS doesn't guarantee significant muscle growth. Some people have more sensitive nerves and experience more soreness than others who may have worked harder, but feel less sore the day after. The severity with which DOMS is felt can even vary depending on the medication a person is taking. In short, I don't think someone



As long as a member is regularly increasing their volume or intensity of their training, he or she doesn't have to worry

must feel sore to increase their muscle mass. What is needed is to overload the muscle. As long as a member is regularly increasing the volume or intensity of their training, he or she doesn't have to worry.

There are a few protocols that people can do to help safeguard against muscle soreness. Foam rolling before or after the workout, can help to minimise soreness by stopping muscle fibres from knotting and contracting. A good workout-specific warm-up and post-workout stretch helps, as do hot and cold plunges or a sports massage. Some protein before and after the workout can help the muscle repair process.

DOMS doesn't have to be a deterrent to exercise or actively prevented to keep members coming back, so long as newcomers are informed that when the body is moved in a new way and muscles that haven't been activated before are used, there may be some soreness. ●



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Brondie McNamara, Project Manager

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**David Higgins**  
BodySPace co-founder



**Stephen Price**  
BodySPace co-founder

# FITNESS MEETS WELLNESS

Luxury London spa ESPA Life at Corinthia has launched a new hybrid fitness service, BodySPace, which promises a “revolutionary” approach to fitness.

**Lauretta Ihonor talks to its founders about how the concept works**

**K**nown as London's largest urban spa, 3,300sq m ESPA Life at Corinthia has gained a reputation for providing a comprehensive wellness experience. Conventional services, such as massages and sauna, sit alongside more unusual services, including gut analysis and brain power optimisation sessions.

But its focus is not solely on relaxation and rejuvenation. Fitness plays a prominent role in the spa's offerings, and has done so since its opening in 2011. Last summer mindful fitness sessions, held alongside the River Thames and in St James' Park, were added to its mindfulness services. And earlier this year, it upgraded its fitness centre with the installation of Technogym's state-of-the-art Artis range.

Building on this momentum, ESPA Life at Corinthia has now partnered with the new UK company BodySPace to offer a bespoke hybrid fitness concept that combines exercise, nutrition and innovative technology to help guests improve not only their physical fitness, but their overall quality of life.

“Clients often say ‘I want to lose 15 pounds,’ but when you dig deeper, this evolves into ‘I want to be fitter, feel better, have more energy and have more time for my partner,’” says BodySPace co-founder Stephen Price. “Once you nail it down, it's really all about quality of life.”

And ESPA founder Sue Harmsworth appears to agree. She says the concept's focus on maximising quality of life via technology and multiple treatment modalities perfectly complements ESPA

Life's “philosophy of creating next-generation experiences.”

## THE BIRTH OF BODYSPACE

BodySPace is the brainchild of wellness consultant Price and David Higgins, the man behind the London Pilates brands Ten Pilates and Bootcamp Pilates.

Price, who founded the health, fitness and medical wellness consultancy SP&Co in 2001, has worked in wellness consulting for 16 years. Prior to that, he spent six years overseeing the development and execution of luxury hotels in Africa and Asia.

In contrast, Higgins entered the health and fitness industry as a pilates trainer before going on to co-create Bootcamp Pilates and Ten Pilates. After being asked to run Fox Studio's fitness and



Higgins (above left) is the man behind the London Pilates brands Ten Pilates and Bootcamp Pilates



wellness programs for the cast of the film *Kingsman: The Secret Service* in 2013, Higgins turned his attention to working as a cast trainer and exercise rehabilitationist for film studios worldwide.

Looking at the career path of the two men, it's clear that both have vastly different working histories, but they say it's this amalgamation of expertise that

sets BodySpace aside from anything else on the market today.

Price explains: "Having consulted on health, fitness, wellness and medical wellness for 16 years, I have built up extensive knowledge of the industry.

SP&Co is focused on medical wellness and we also have a strong offering for oncology patients. To keep standards

high, we use a lot of technology and everything is evidence based."

Describing the birth of BodySpace, he adds: "David and I have consulted in the hotel industry for years and we wanted to put our experience together and launch BodySpace. So we brought in health technologies from medical wellness clinics and from sports, and added them to



Sometimes how you feel and the condition you're truly in are disjointed, so having an objective measure is useful - **Stephen Price**

► David's vast Pilates and body movement experience, and it worked perfectly."

The BodySpace brand was created in early 2017, and its first project, Kingwood – a state-of-the-art gym and wellness complex in a residential development in Knightsbridge, London – opened in June. "We were approached by Finchatton, the brilliant developers of Kingwood. They felt that there were synergies and asked us to work alongside them to create a fantastic training/spa space for the residents of Kingwood. It was a great experience and we are very proud of the space," says Higgins.

ESPA Life at Corinthia is the duo's second BodySpace project, which according to Higgins arose from "a longstanding relationship with ESPA Life at Corinthia and ESPA founder Sue Harmsworth, so it was a natural evolution to launch our flagship hotel BodySpace concept here."

### UNIQUE SELLING POINT

While traditional fitness services focus on metrics, such as fat percentage, weight and VO2max, BodySpace is centred on heart rate variability monitoring.

"Heart rate variability is probably the biggest physiological marker for those interested in reaping the benefits of personalised training for fitness and overall wellness," explains Price. "It's a great marker of things like hydration and sleep, as they all affect variability."

To achieve highly accurate heart rate variability monitoring, BodySpace utilises technology from Firstbeat, a physiological analytics company, to provide hotel guests and visitors with personalised insights on stress, exercise and recovery – all calculated from heart variability data.

"This technology times the heartbeat. We then look for the time between the beats and use this information to personalise the effect our training is having on you," says Price.

But training effect is not the only outcome the duo has prioritised in its concept. Heart rate variability data is also used to determine clients' heart coherence – a measure of the pattern of the heart's rhythm. Research conducted



ESPA Life at Corinthia opened in 2011

### ■ ABOUT ESPA LIFE AT CORINTHIA

- Located in the heart of London, ESPA Life at Corinthia is spread over four floors, covering 3,300 sq m.
- The spa, which opened in 2011 offers lifestyle programmes that incorporate complementary and alternative medicine, targeted fitness and injury rehabilitation.
- Offers include treatment pods, sleep rooms, Technogym's Artis range, spa lounge and large thermal floor area that features a swimming pool, vitality pool, glass amphitheatre sauna, steam room and heated marble loungers.
- In June 2016, ESPA Life launched a suite of six mindfulness therapies for the restoration of mental and emotional wellbeing: mindful breathing, mindful meditation, mindful sleep, mindful fitness, mindful facial and mindful massage.
- In November 2016, the Corinthia Hotel and ESPA Life launched a year-long Neuroscience in Residence programme, led by US leadership coach and MIT lecturer, Dr Tara Swart. Its aim is to examine the mental resilience of the spa and hotel's staff and guests. The resulting data will be used to create a special brain power study at the end of 2017.



The spa has a strong focus on mindful therapies



Clients often say 'I want to lose 15 pounds', but when you dig deeper, this evolves into 'I want to be fitter, feel better, have more energy and have more time for my partner - Stephen Price





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# BODYSPACE

AT ESPA LIFE AT CORINTHIA



The BodySpace concept uses heart rate variability as a monitor for health

## HOLISTIC WELLNESS

These bespoke programmes – which cost from £750 (US\$995, €848) to £4,400 (US\$5,840, €4,973) and last between 10 days and 12 weeks – combine tailored fitness training with gut health and nutrition services, recovery, regeneration and compression treatments, and myofascial release therapy, alongside the other therapies on offer at the luxury spa.

But as hotel users, many BodySpace clients are undeniably busy, highly-pressured and on-the-go. “To allow for this, we have drop-in one-, two- and three-day programmes where people can come in, get the information they need and make use of the technology. We’ll develop a programme for you that you can keep up with at home,” says Price.

“Because we have the high-tech monitoring equipment, clients can re-test every three to six months and see how they’re doing, what their lifestyle is doing to their health markers and make any changes needed. Sometimes how you feel and the condition you’re truly in are disjointed, so having an objective measure is useful.”

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Price and Higgins are firm in their vision for BodySpace. “It’s very important for us to create a platform where a positive evidence-based message is used to promote long-term health and wellness,” says Higgins.

“We aim to deliver this to clients so they can understand their bodies and minds better, and function at their most optimal across all aspects of life.”

So what does the future hold for the duo? International expansion – and soon, according to Higgins.

He says: “The BodySpace concept was specifically designed to fit seamlessly into luxury hotels, spas, resorts and private residences anywhere in the world, so over the next five years we are planning to open more BodySpaces around the globe.” ●



- by the US HeartMath Institute has shown that coherence is an indicator of harmony between the cardiovascular, respiratory and nervous systems, and as such, the ultimate measure of total body health.

Price explains: “We want to help clients gain a better idea of their current state of health and wellbeing, measuring how this improves as they progress through various programmes.”



**“We aim to deliver this to clients so they can understand their bodies and minds better, and function at their most optimal across all aspects of life - David Higgins**



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# CONNECTED SOLUTIONS

Members of Ingrebourne Links can now benefit from a cutting-edge, personalised and engaging workout following the recent groundbreaking development of the Essex-based Golf and Country Club

After seven years of planning and construction, extensive earthwork movements and considerable investment, the Ingrebourne Links golf club is now open.

As well as state-of-the-art health club facilities, the building also features a modern, vibrant clubhouse, along with a spectacular inland links golf course – wholly constructed with soil excavated from various London projects.

Along with top of the range Matrix fitness equipment, the club is also the first in the UK to have the Matrix Workout Tracking Network and Personal Trainer Portal installed. These are Matrix's most connected solutions and they enhance the company's 7xi experience.

The Workout Tracking Network enables the club – via its own unique branded app – to achieve higher levels of member engagement, increased club revenue and a seamless, connected club experience. The app allows Ingrebourne Links to communicate with, engage and build loyalty with members.

The app is free for members to download and includes a social sharing feature, which resonates with millions of users regularly sharing status updates.

Using exclusive technology and an intuitive dashboard interface, the easily customisable Personal Trainer Portal allows trainers to create signature exercise programmes, assign workouts and check progress to help members stay on track and reach their goals, leading to better results and higher retention.

**Commenting on the extraordinary development, Dominic Eagles, general manager at Ingrebourne Links said:**

"As a prestige golf club we've understandably been selective about who we've partnered with. Matrix have proven themselves as a Total Solutions Partner, not only through unsurpassed service, but also because their equipment is at the leading edge of technology – right where we need to be.



**"Matrix have proven themselves as a Total Solutions Partner"**

*Dominic Eagles, General Manager*

"We're delighted with the new Matrix fitness equipment in the gym – even more so as we're the first to sample the company's Workout Tracking Network and Personal Trainer Portal – both of which have been such a huge success when it comes to engaging our members.

"We also have a great relationship with our account manager who's extremely knowledgeable, and responsive, ensuring that if we do have problems, they're resolved quickly."

**Paul Nugent, Strategic Business Development Manager for Matrix Fitness comments:**

"Matrix's connected technology, combined with the Ingrebourne Links golf club, truly sets the benchmark for fitness club owners who wish to be at the forefront of the fitness industry with the latest innovative digital offering available."

The new clubhouse is now fully open and membership is available.

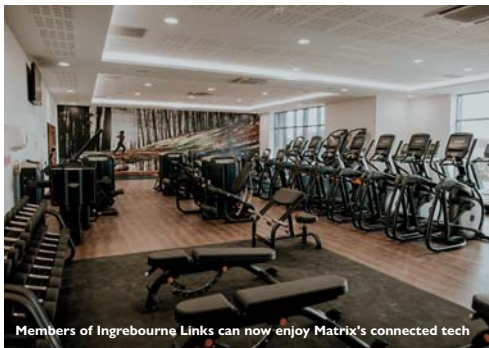
● Ingrebourne Links has launched the first North 9-hole golf course. The East 9-holes are expected to open in 2018, with the final South 9-holes opening in 2019.

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Members of Ingrebourne Links can now enjoy Matrix's connected tech

## CONNECTED TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

Matrix has a whole host of enlightening connected solutions designed to fit in with everyday life.

They are easy to use and familiar to members, functioning in the same ways as phones and tablets. All designed to support health and wellness in the gym, and beyond.

“The whole Matrix cardio offering now allows input, data capture and activity. Whether you need motivation, encouragement, guidance or support, Matrix’s connected solutions cater for all.”

“The real value of our connected technology solutions is they save time and improve communications for gym owners, PTs and gym members.”

Rob Knox, Product Director at Matrix Fitness

To find out more about the Matrix Workout Tracking Network, Personal Trainer Portal, Asset Management, and other connected solutions that could boost your offering and transform your members’ fitness experience, call us on 01782 644900 or visit [matrixfitness.co.uk](http://matrixfitness.co.uk)



# STAYING LOYAL

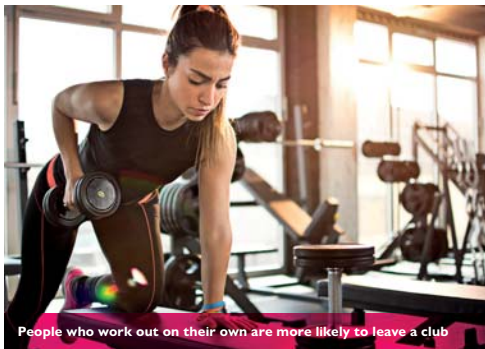
Member retention is often a challenge, with operators typically losing 50 per cent of their membership annually. But a close look at the habits of clubs with impressive retention rates suggests that how you communicate with members significantly impacts their loyalty

**“P**eople crave a great experience, yet not enough companies deliver this,” says Chris Stevenson, retention consultant and owner of Californian health club Stevenson Fitness. He adds: “Great customer experience comes through small interactions that ultimately have a big impact.”

When the industry's first Net Promoter Score (NPS) study was carried out five years ago, the US had an average score of 44 and the UK just 22. Stevenson Fitness scored a whopping 77 – the highest in the whole of North America. The club now maintains a score well into the 80s. But how does it do it?

## ENGAGING CHATTER

“If you work out on your own and leave on your own you are more likely to leave the club too,” continues Stevenson. “So we create a ton of systems to encourage members to engage with other areas of the club; anything from group exercise classes and personal training, to our social media channels, happy hours and holiday parties. If you're interacting with



People who work out on their own are more likely to leave a club

a club on so many different levels, even if you try a class elsewhere you're more likely to come back because you don't want to give up those other things.”

Stevenson, whose retention rate is consistently above 75%, also has a clever way of getting members to commit to their next visit. As each member leaves,

staff simply say ‘see you tomorrow’. Whilst most won't be in the next day, stating when they will return cements that they are indeed coming back.

Globally-recognised retention expert, Dr Paul Bedford agrees that such ‘nudges’ towards how you want a member to behave are vital, but he's



**“If there isn't a culture of interaction in your club, it's going to take time for both staff and members to get used to it and results won't come overnight”**

Dr Paul Bedford



Members value interaction more when it's at the place where they exercise



*"If you're interacting with a club on so many different levels, even if you try a class elsewhere, you're more likely to come back because you don't want to give up those other things"*

Chris Stevenson

keen to point out that members value interaction more at the place of their activity than anywhere else.

"If the front of house staff say: 'Hi,' it's valued," he explains. "But a group exercise instructor that says: 'Hi, how are you?' has an even bigger impact." However, be mindful not to interrupt people's workouts, he says. "Only use rhetorical questions if they're working out. You don't want them to answer, just to know you're prepared to speak to them.

"Introduce colleagues to the members you've spoken to. It's much easier to start a conversation with someone you've been introduced to. The customer will also feel as though they

know more than one person in the club." But, Bedford warns, don't be too ambitious to start with. He says: "If there isn't a culture of interaction in your club, it's going to take time for both staff and members to get used to it and results won't come overnight."

#### MEANINGFUL INTERACTIONS

Training staff to make the most of in-person discussions is, for Bedford, one of the most vital aspects of retention. "You don't want staff rushing up and forcing themselves on customers just to show they've interacted," he says. Instead, staff should be encouraged to create natural topics of

conversations. For example, if a member is leaving the pool, an effective interaction could simply involve asking: "How was your swim today?" Staff need to be specific, but not appear as if they're trying to become best friends."

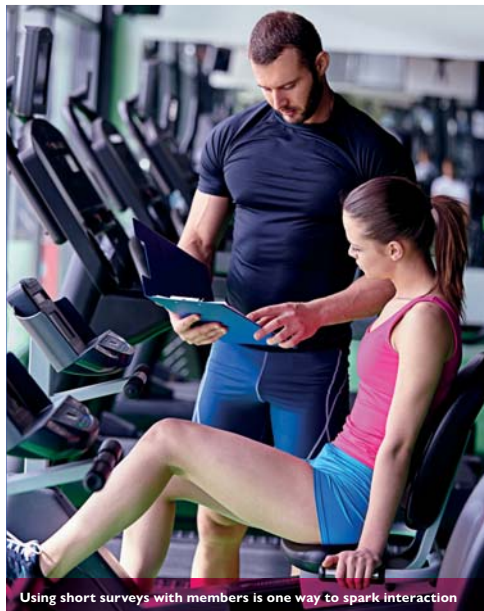
Midway through training with Bedford is Suffolk-based trust, Abbeycroft Leisure. Its health, fitness and physical activity development manager, Matt Hickey, says he's seen the impact of trying to do too much too soon.

"One of our fitness apprentices was determined to work all of Paul's advice into his next client induction. He was convinced it would be the best ever, but it turned out to be his worst as he was



***"We believed technology would be a game changer, but it perhaps dehumanised our service because it was a system telling us who to talk to"***

Matt Hickey



**Using short surveys with members is one way to spark interaction**

## The value of retention

There's no doubt the battle for retention is one worth fighting. Insight from the Social Value Calculator of sport and leisure data repository DataHub found that a core member generates six times more social value, across improved health, reduced crime, increased educational attainment and improved life satisfaction, than a casual non-member. Added to this, says Bedford, an active member of nine months or more generates at least 40 per cent more revenue via secondary spending than a new member.

► trying to remember too many different things," he explains. "Reflecting on what went wrong, he moved forward by adding one piece of advice at a time until he was confident in his delivery. By breaking it into chunks he has really progressed and it's now impacting on the customers he's working with."

Bedford also suggests establishing hot spots for interaction, so people get used to being spoken to in particular areas.

"Surveys are a great way to kick this off," he says. "The purpose is simply to initiate interaction and no more than five questions should be asked. Start with: 'Can I take two minutes of your time?' so members know how long it will take and are also reassured for next time."

### FROM THE TOP DOWN

Bedford insists that training should empower everyone from managers and fitness staff down to front-of-house and cleaning staff to have positive conversations with members. "Most operators think of retention as a gym-specific activity," he says, "whereas the entire building and every member of staff should be seen as a retention resource. Create a culture where everyone contributes in different ways".

Previously, Abbeycroft's fitness team was solely responsible for the customer journey, with other departments unaware of their role in it. "One of big changes is the whole centre approach," says Hickey. "Everyone has an active part to play."

Hickey's team were also big advocates of using technology to demonstrate and justify their retention activities. "We always had a culture of speaking to people, but it was focused around the fitness team and using technology to drive those conversations."

"We believed technology would be a game changer, but it, perhaps, dehumanised our service, because it was a system telling us who to talk to."

"Our challenge has been to believe in the intangible stuff, we're spending more time making meaningful interactions without tracking and waiting to see if it



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## Case study - Hertfordshire Sports Village

Hertfordshire Sports Village, part of the University of Hertfordshire, has seen its NPS score jump from 29 to 69 since focusing on member interaction.

"With increased budget competition, we realised that to differentiate without reducing our pricing we had to deliver a superior service," says director of sport, Dave Connell. "We were great at training staff on the skills we hope they'd never need, such as first aid, but poor on the skills they need to deliver service every hour of every day."

The Sports Village worked with Dr. Paul Bedford to understand customer behaviours and the impact of interactions

and within 12 months its NPS score has more than doubled.

One big change has been creating a back office function for answering phones, so receptionists don't have to choose between talking to people or taking calls.

"It's reduced our call drop rate from 30 per cent to just 2 to 3 per cent," says Connell. "We only take calls between 10:30 am and 6:30 pm and have introduced an online booking app, so front of house can interact proactively with everyone as they enter."

The site also introduced a daily interaction survey to ask customers when they were last spoken to and by whom.



**Dave Connell, director of sport, Hertfordshire Sports Village**

"It's just like secret eaters on TV," explains Connell. "Staff think they are doing it, but often it was the customers saying hello to us. The survey puts just enough pressure on staff in the right way and our NPS results speak for themselves. Around 90 per cent of people giving a 10 mention the staff in some way. Any detractor comments are always about the facility or processes, such as booking."



**Hertfordshire Sports Village implemented a daily interaction survey**

- relates back to a tangible number of members staying longer.

"It makes sense that if four people say goodbye to you when you finish your workout, you'll feel more connected to the site, part of a community and not just a number. But it doesn't happen overnight."

Stevenson agrees and says that staff training is vital to ensuring every touch point is as positive as possible.

"There are seven points of contact to create awareness," he says. "So we issue

posters, emails and flyers for our holiday party, but then require every member of staff to personally invite a minimum of five people.

"We've coached our staff in how to invite people, and not just for social events. Group exercise instructors arrive early, check members in at reception, ask what they're about to do and invite them to the class, creating a personal relationship. If you create relationships people will stay."

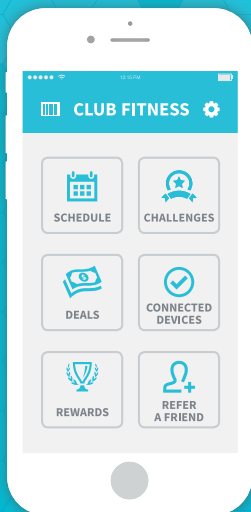
This tactic is backed up through the club's use of FORD (Family, Occupation, Recreation, Dreams). Each month staff are expected to create a relationship with two members with the aim of reporting back two FORD aspects about that person.

"We consider that building a relationship, and we use FACE (Focus, Ask, Connect, Execute) as a way to remember members' names too," Stevenson says. ●



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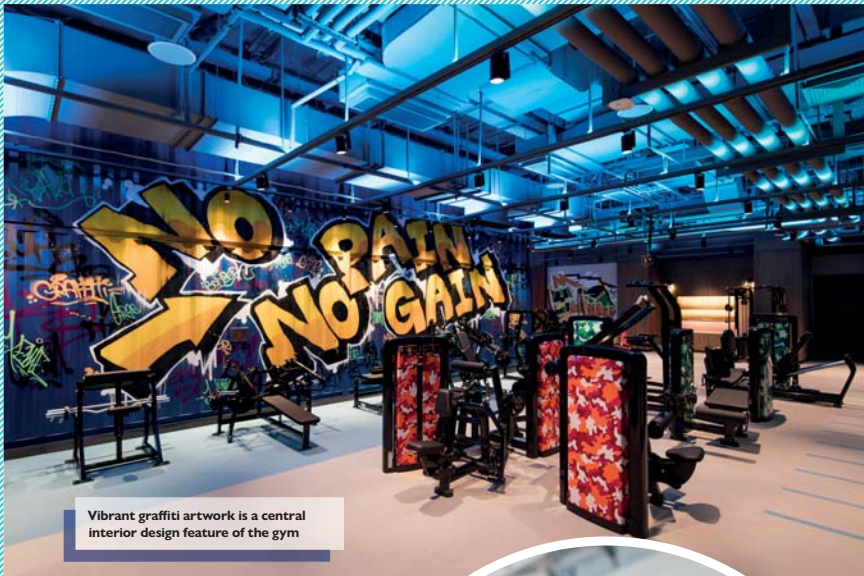
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# DESIGN SPOTLIGHT

We take a closer look at Trainyard Gym, the stunning street-art inspired, recently opened 3,500sq m Shangri-La health club in Hotel Jen, Beijing

Floor-to-ceiling windows offer panoramic views of the city



Vibrant graffiti artwork is a central interior design feature of the gym

In summer 2017, the 450-bedroom Hotel Jen Beijing launched in the Chinese capital's central business district. And with this launch came a gym unlike any other in the city. Spread over two floors is a 24-hour fitness facility that boasts an ultra-modern interior design, vibrant graffiti artwork and floor-to-ceiling windows that offer breathtaking panoramic views of Beijing.

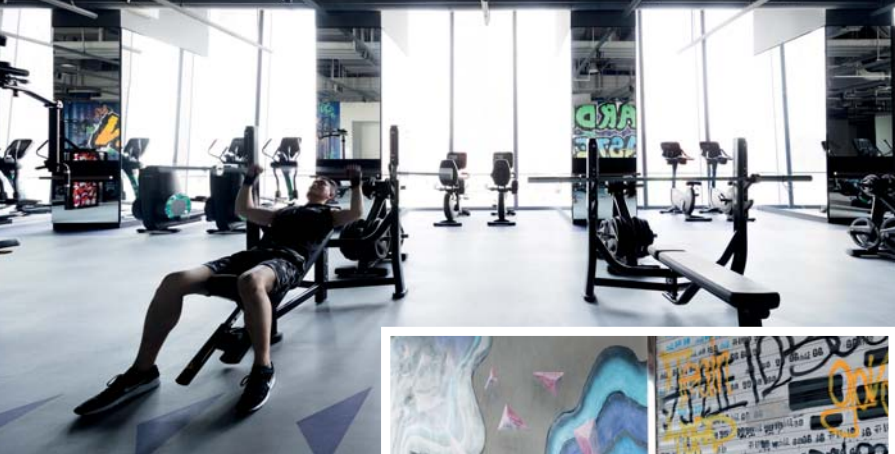
Conceived by Stickman Design, the Trainyard Gym features 11 dedicated workout zones, a 25m heated lap swimming pool with skylight, a Mixed Martial Arts area, sauna, steamroom, whirlpools, juice bar and several studio spaces – including a 30-bike spinning studio and a Pilates room.

Clifford Weiner, general manager of Hotel Jen Beijing, says: "There is no other fitness space like Trainyard Gym in Beijing and we are proud to be bringing this world-class health club experience to the city.

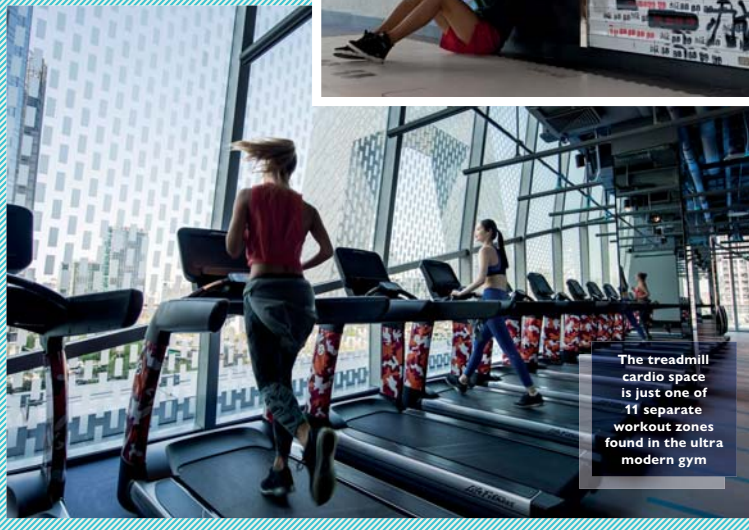
"It will be a place for local residents and foreign guests to connect, workout, push limits, and break boundaries together."



The Trainyard Gym also features a Mixed Martial Arts area, complete with a boxing ring



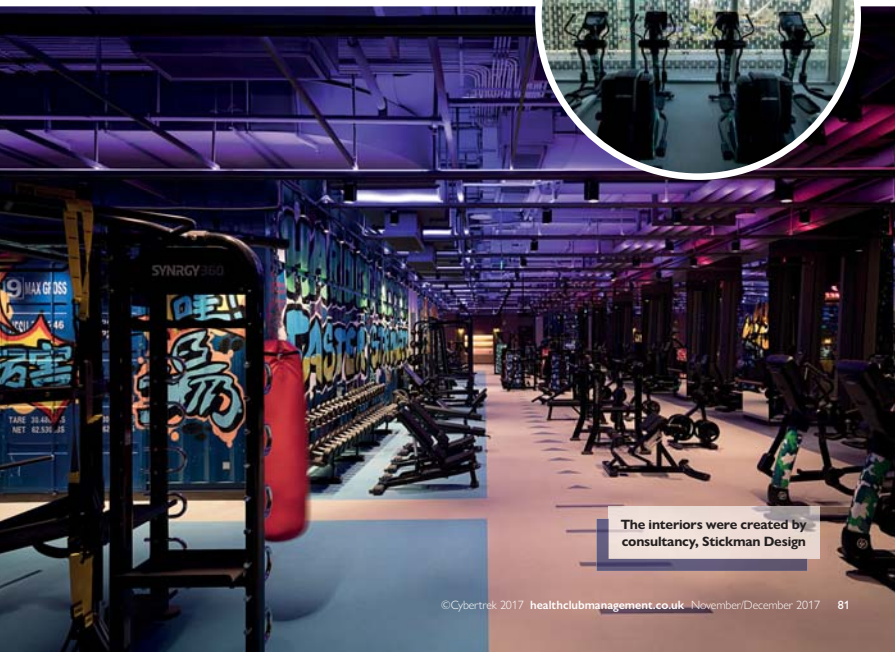
The gym offers 11 dedicated workout zones, a 25m lap pool, an extensive wet area, several studios and a juice bar



The treadmill cardio space is just one of 11 separate workout zones found in the ultra modern gym



The gym is spread over two floors at Hotel Jen Beijing and is open 24 hours



The interiors were created by consultancy, Stickman Design





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# Cohesive integration

DFC provides integration solution for Oldham Community Leisure's facilities

**B**usy leisure facilities will understand the importance of an exceptional customer relationship management (CRM) system. Adopting a joined-up approach for all operational functions is the key to a streamlined business, and this is often the catalyst that encourages fitness organisations like Oldham Community Leisure (OCL) to partner with leading Direct Debit collection bureau DFC.

## SLEEKER ADMINISTRATION

OCL is responsible for the operation and development of seven leisure facilities across Oldham. Its team continuously works hard to improve the health, wellbeing and activity levels of the town's population.

OCL partnered with DFC almost three years ago – a decision based on DFC's cohesive integration solutions that dovetailed nicely with OCL's CRM operation. Managing information, such as membership signups, changes and cancellations, from one central hub has made their administration process much more efficient and has reduced the number of different avenues from which information is received.

Beyond this, having DFC manage its entire direct debit collection process has



*It's so helpful having everything automated. DFC collects our money and everything is automatically updated to our current system*

**Peter Howson, OCL head of CRM**



Oldham Leisure Centre is one of seven facilities managed by OCL

taken a weight off OCL's shoulders and given its busy internal team the time to work on the parts of the business that truly matter to the organisation.

Peter Howson, head of CRM at OCL, says: "It's so helpful having everything automated. DFC collects our money and everything is automatically updated to our current system. It's allowed for a really unified approach and has saved a lot of time front of house."

## WORKING SUSTAINABLY

Howson continues: "If you don't have online joining for members in this day and age, you're missing out." Indeed, access to this service was the final encouragement OCL needed to join forces with DFC.

Howson describes DFC's online joining portal FastDD as the most effective OCL has encountered. He says: "It has allowed us to provide joining opportunities 24/7. We can also promote this channel, which encourages more people to sign up. We offer different monthly promotions and can add these to the portal really easily."

FastDD has been fully integrated into OCL's current website, allowing

members to easily access it, and to be able to do so at their convenience. This organised, paperless approach to onboarding members has proved highly beneficial to OCL's administration team.

Member retention and credit control have also seen significant improvements. Since working with DFC, they've noticed a considerably positive upward trend in their collection rate and debt recovery.

Howson says: "DFC also does all the chasing for us, so there's no need for our staff to spend time on this. They are really efficient and very quick. The biggest change we've noticed in terms of targets is that our collection rate and debt recovery efficacy has improved. As far as the bottom line goes, they've made a massive difference."

With 70 per cent of all online direct debits coming through DFC's online joining portal, OCL's next move is to allow DFC full management of all their incoming memberships. They are currently working with DFC to transfer all processes across and look forward to DFC's continued support. ●



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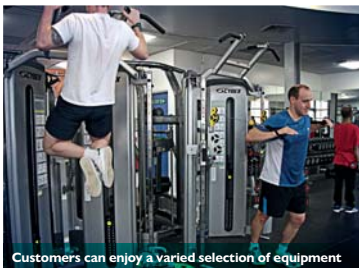
BRUNSWICK

# Tailored fitness

Life Fitness partners with Edinburgh Leisure for Leith Victoria Swim Centre refurbishment



The refurbished gym's layout maximises floor space



Customers can enjoy a varied selection of equipment

With more than 30 first-class venues and 15 fully equipped gyms in its portfolio, Edinburgh Leisure is the biggest physical activity provider in Edinburgh. And for more than 10 years, the not-for-profit organisation has partnered with Life Fitness to help Edinburgh become a more active and healthy city.

July 2017 brought the two organisations together again for the refurbishment of the gym at Edinburgh Leisure's historic Leith Victoria Swim Centre – a unique property combining 19th century features with cutting-edge fitness facilities.

Key aims of the project, which is part of a five-year programme across 15 sites, included the implementation of a clear digital strategy designed to drive marketplace differentiation and significantly enhance customers' workout experience with a compelling offering.

The investment at Leith Victoria has seen the addition of 25 pieces of Life Fitness CV and strength equipment.

## CONNECTED FITNESS

David McLean, Group Fitness Manager at Edinburgh Leisure, explains: "We believe in providing customers with the choice they need to create their own tailored fitness solutions. The partnership with Life Fitness has always been hugely collaborative and the Lfconnect open platform reflects the true meaning of 'connected fitness'. Expert advice from Life Fitness has allowed us to keep abreast of

the latest digital innovations and develop a strategy for responding to emerging trends and meeting customer demand.

"Lfconnect delivers the most open and versatile technology available. It empowers customers with wearables to take control of their own data. The seamless digital solution also provides an exceptional user experience and through the Discover SE Consoles, customers can explore everything from entertainment apps and courses to progress tracking."

In addition to advising on digital strategy, Life Fitness provided valuable

insight and attention to detail to ensure Edinburgh Leisure maximised gym floor space. McLean says: "During the planning stages Life Fitness demonstrated they could respond to our customers' needs as well as enhance their overall gym experience. We deliver our services and products to a wide and diverse customer base and our equipment provision has to reflect this as well as help grow retention rates and drive new membership sales."

## PREMIUM EQUIPMENT

The result has been a gym that offers an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere, thanks to its thoughtful design, layout and selection of equipment. Leith Victoria boasts a comprehensive range of premium equipment from the Life Fitness Elevation Series including Treadmills, Recumbent Lifecycle Bikes, Upright Lifecycle Bikes, Elliptical Cross-Trainers and PowerMill Climbers. Customers can also enjoy an extensive range of strength equipment from the Life Fitness Insignia Series, including the Chest Press and Leg Extension, and the Linear Leg Press and Chin/Dip/Leg Raise from the Life Fitness Signature Series.

McLean concludes: "Making a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of the people of Edinburgh is at the heart of everything we do. Life Fitness has been instrumental to the success of Leith Victoria and their support has been invaluable in making our vision become a reality. It feels like a true partnership which is helping us get the best results for our customers." ●



*Life Fitness demonstrated they could respond to our customers' needs as well as enhance their overall gym experience*

**David McLean, Edinburgh Leisure group fitness manager**

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# Sporting ambition

Technogym brings high tech kit to University of Birmingham's Sport and Fitness Club

In May 2017 the University of Birmingham opened its new Sport and Fitness Club, featuring a 50m swimming pool, multipurpose arena and sports hall, climbing wall, six squash courts, high performance centre and comprehensive gym – housing over 200 Technogym stations.

Boostered by a £55m investment, the facility underlines the university's commitment to encouraging sports participation at all levels by catering for a wide variety of users, including students, staff, local community and the university's elite athletes and sport teams.

"We chose Technogym's ARTIS equipment and SKILLMILL performance training solutions because we wanted the very best equipment on the market for our members," explains Lee Costin, health and fitness manager, University of Birmingham Sport & Fitness Club.

## STAYING ENGAGED

With interactive digital screens boasting the latest UNITY 3.0 software, the ARTIS cardio equipment provides members with a full range of entertainment options to keep them motivated during their workout. Engaging features such as the RACES mode on treadmills also allow more competitive members to challenge friends in the facility to a race over their preferred distance and location.

The University of Birmingham consistently finishes in the top 10 of the British Universities and Colleges Sport



**We chose Technogym's ARTIS equipment and SKILLMILL performance training solutions because we wanted the very best equipment on the market for our members**

**Lee Costin, health and fitness manager, University of Birmingham Sport & Fitness Club**

(BUCS) league, so providing athletic performance-focused training solutions for their teams was important. With this in mind the Sport and Fitness Club team invested in eight SKILLMILL Connect products to offer power, speed, stamina and agility training options in one solution. Costin explains: "SKILLMILL offers more than a different running experience; it is a versatile conditioning tool for our athletes."

The comprehensive range of Technogym equipment is fully integrated with Technogym's open cloud platform, *mywellness*, giving the gym team the opportunity to engage with members on a deeper level and allowing members to easily track all their health and fitness data. With over 3,800 *mywellness* accounts created so far, the team has had great feedback from members.

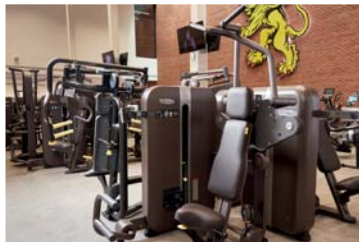
## NEW ATMOSPHERE

"mywellness has been taken up quickly by our members," explains Costin. "They use it to track their gym activity, but also love that it syncs with other apps, such as Runkeeper and Strava, so they're able to manage all their activity in one place."

The Sport and Fitness Club also has a dedicated Group Cycle Connect studio that houses 28 bikes and offers 39 classes per week. "The Group Cycle classes have been very popular with our members as the screen visuals are excellent and help to create a fantastic, energising atmosphere," says Costin.

"Five months since opening and the facility is already well-loved with an excellent atmosphere."

New Jones, Technogym sales director for health, corporate and performance concludes: "Technogym is delighted to be a partner of one of the top sporting universities. Our latest product innovations are focused on sports performance, making them the ideal choice for helping students and athletes perform at their best." ●



The new Sport and Fitness Club features the latest kit



Students improve performance with SKILLMILL

# STATESIDE GROWTH



The newest research on US health club consumers paints an encouraging picture of the market. IHRSA's **Kristen Walsh** outlines the opportunities identified and how they outweigh the potential challenges

In 2016, 57.3 million US people belonged to a health club – up from 55.3 million in 2015, and yielding a new penetration rate of 19.3 per cent, up from 18.8 per cent. In all, 44 per cent of members used their club at least 100 times during the year and 22.1 per cent belonged to more than one facility. All are record-breaking figures revealed by *The 2017 IHRSA Health Club Consumer Report*.

The new report acknowledges that challenges lie ahead, but these have more to do with intensified competition and determining how best to continue growing, than with a declining market or an absence of opportunities. The sector now involves more clubs, more countries, more members and more business models than ever, yet it is still expanding.

Two major research organisations – IBIS World, and Research and Markets – have both charted the rising curve, with the latter estimating that the global industry will enjoy a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.14 per cent between this year and 2022.

The trend is being driven not only by corporate ambitions and entrepreneurial aspirations, but also by shifting societal conditions that produce problematic physical and psychological effects. There are more people in general and there are more people who need the services of health clubs. And while the fitness-services market grows ever larger, the increase in the number of clubs and suppliers within the sector means that the slices of available 'pie' grow thinner.

Based on more than 24,000 interviews conducted in 2016 and early 2017, the 132-page *2017 IHRSA Health Club Consumer Report* provides a wealth of detailed information on current market opportunities, US membership trends, member demographics and attendance patterns, membership fees, personal and small-group training users, and many other topics. For the first time, the report also contains a special section on core consumers.

"This year's report is loaded with insights on how clubs can profit from current consumer tendencies and preferences," says Jay Ablondi, IHRSA's executive vice president of global products. Indeed, the intimate portrait it paints of the contemporary club consumer serves as a well-informed game plan for those contemplating and crafting the industry's future.

US health club memberships rose from **55.3 million** in 2015 to **57.3 million** in 2016



**“The sector now involves more clubs, more countries, more members and more business models than ever, yet it is still expanding”**



Operators should find new ways to appeal to the older market

## INSIGHT FROM THE REPORT

How club operators, developers and suppliers can apply the consumer research findings

**1** Opportunities abound within the youth market. The under-18 group is underrepresented among health club members, relative to the overall US population. Club operators are well positioned to provide offerings to complement the unique exercise goals and needs of the youth market.

**2** Don't overlook the Gen X market. The percentage of members between the ages of 35 and 54 has remained steady over the past five years, encompassing 33 per cent of the total share of membership. Attract and retain Gen X consumers with programmes that appeal to them and their children.

**3** Appeal to older age groups by catering to their unique health goals. The over-54 group is tied with the under-18 segment as the fastest growing age bracket. However, like the under-18 population, this older segment is underrepresented relative to the overall US population. It's important to consider the unique characteristics of this age cohort.

**4** Maximise Millennial market potential. Rather than placing the emphasis solely on facilities and amenities, consider how all aspects of your club, including staff, can work together to create the customised training and experience the Millennial consumer is looking for.

**5** Bridge the income gap with affordable and inclusive options. Health club consumer research findings reveal opportunities to serve lower income consumers: affordably priced clubs, small group training (SGT) and community programmes can all help to boost the likelihood of lower income households joining clubs.

**6** Personal training and SGT can benefit clubs, developers and suppliers. Operators: use PTs that serve your target market's needs. Developers: position your company as a training specialist for a specific niche. Suppliers: *The IHRSA Health Club Equipment Report* shows that over 80 per cent of clubs use equipment in training programmes.

**7** Embrace multi-club users. In 2016, more than 12 million health club members belonged to more than one facility, representing 22 per cent of total memberships. Savvy club operators can embrace this phenomenon as an indicator of consumers' willingness to invest significantly in their health and fitness.

**8** Equipment manufacturers must look beyond the sale of traditional kit and traditional clients to prosper in the future. Build upon equipment technology to facilitate social engagement. Envision your business not as an equipment manufacturer, but as a fitness experience and digital entertainment provider. ●

### GET THE REPORT

The 2017 IHRSA Health Club Consumer Report is available at: [www.ihrsa.org/consumer-report](http://www.ihrsa.org/consumer-report)  
The price is US \$99.95 for IHRSA members, and US \$199.95 for non-members.



### ABOUT IHRSA

IHRSA is the global trade association which represents 10,000 health and fitness facilities and suppliers. Locate an IHRSA club at [www.healthclubs.com](http://www.healthclubs.com)  
Learn how IHRSA can help your business at [www.ihrsa.org](http://www.ihrsa.org)



# Workplace mental health



Following the release of a new report on mental health in the workplace, ukactive's public affairs director **Huw Edwards**, highlights physical activity's role in workplace wellbeing

**T**here has been a lot of fanfare and attention on the much-needed new report into mental wellbeing in the workplace, *Thriving at Work*, led by Paul Farmer, CEO of the mental health charity Mind, and Lord Dennis Stevenson. The attention is fully merited as the report thoroughly sets out the occupational impact of mental illness and proposes solutions that employers are able to implement.

## THE FINANCIAL IMPACT

According to the report, the annual cost of poor mental health to the UK economy is up to £99bn, of which about £42bn is borne by employers. The authors found that approximately 15 per cent of people at work have symptoms of an existing mental health condition, suggesting that, given the right support, they can thrive in employment.

The report also links current failures to the UK's relatively poor productivity. An analysis by Deloitte, examining existing workplace mental health interventions, identified the potential to generate a return to business of between £1.50 and £9 for every £1 invested.

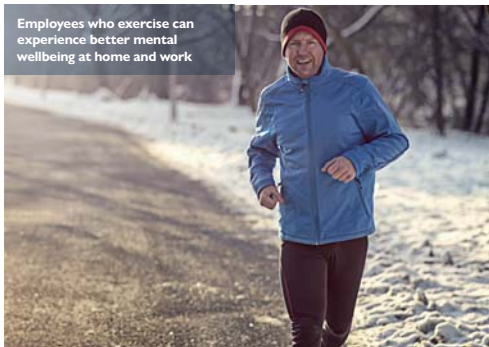
## MAKING A PLAN

This is a comprehensive piece of work and should be welcomed. It comes up with worthy suggestions for change: open conversations about mental health in the workplace, monitoring employee mental health and wellbeing, and developing an effective mental health at work plan.

It also wants to make Statutory Sick Pay more flexible to help with a phased return to work for those who are starting to recover from an illness, and for employers to accept sick notes from mental health nurses as well as doctors.

One observation is that the weight of expectation does fall heavily on the employer, so can the government do more by providing a better landscape to encourage employers further?

Employees who exercise can experience better mental wellbeing at home and work



**Evidence shows that people who exercise regularly have improved self-esteem and reduced stress and anxiety**

## THE ROLE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

What the report doesn't address is the role of physical activity in this vision, which is surprising given that the government has already acknowledged the significant part our sector has to play in this agenda. *Sporting Future* outlines the government's clear commitment to "work with others to establish a network of employers that will bring together organisations keen to support and encourage their staff to be more physically active".

Two years on, we await news on the development of this network, knowing that both the physical activity and business sectors remain keen to support its development. Furthermore, the government has the ability to use the tax system to create incentives that help

workers access gym membership and home equipment deals, a case we at ukactive continue to make to it.

The connection of this commitment back to the report is clear: evidence shows that people who exercise regularly have improved self-esteem and reduced stress and anxiety, something that has been recognised within NICE guidelines. The workplace should be no different.

It's time for the government to show greater emphasis on delivering a partnership between the business community and our sector, so the role of physical activity in supporting mental wellbeing is fully recognised and utilised. ●



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# DATA MATTERS

With the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) on the horizon, Paul Simpson, chief operating officer of Legend Club Management Systems, explains why it's vital operators take action on how they store and secure all member data

Rarely a week goes by without news of a data security breach hitting the headlines, with issues such as the global WannaCry ransomware attack – which crippled parts of the NHS – and our own industry-specific PayAsUGym attack in December 2016 heightening fears for the wider industry.

Unfortunately, this increased awareness isn't leading to action to improve matters. Furthermore, ignorance about basic data security principles and obligations is placing the industry at significant risk of everything from accidental misadventure to financial fraud, with the repercussions ranging from regulatory fines and brand damage to business failure.

## DATA VULNERABILITY

Leisure and gym operators are custodians of a huge volume of detailed personal information about members and customers, making our industry not only a soft target, but also an attractive one.

To safeguard valuable information, think about your data assets. What information do you hold on your customers? Where is it stored? Is it up to date? Is it still required? Is it digital, or are paper records



**Paul Simpson, Legend's chief operating officer, is responsible for Legend's ISO27001 Information Security Management accreditation. Simpson makes his expertise available to those who have industry GDPR/ information security concerns. He can be contacted at:**

[gdp@legendware.co.uk](mailto:gdp@legendware.co.uk)

still in use? Are your employees accessing information via their own mobile devices?

Data breaches occur in many forms, including password theft, physical attacks and the biggest threat of all – user error.

Common user error breaches include obvious examples, such as incorrect handling of credit card data, and less obvious examples, such as paper-based customer information being stored in unlocked filing cabinets.

Routine tasks undertaken by front of house staff are often conducted without data safeguards in place and in many cases, too little staff training is provided on data security protocols and their importance, leaving operators vulnerable.

This situation is complicated by the nature of the industry. For example, staff turnover makes it challenging to ensure training is given to all staff who are handling customer data. The result is inadequate security, which jeopardises both the customer and the operator.

## BETTER GUIDANCE

In our unregulated industry there has historically been little or no guidance provided to staff regarding the safeguarding of information.

In addition, although existing legislation – such as the Data Protection Act (DPA), and the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI DSS) – requires adherence to very specific data security processes and policies, many in the industry would be hard pressed to demonstrate compliance, leaving them in a highly vulnerable position.

The situation will become even more challenging in May 2018, when the EU's new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) comes into effect,

**“Leisure and gym operators are custodians of a huge volume of detailed personal information on members, making our industry not only a soft target, but also an attractive one”**

*Paul Simpson*



New laws about how you hold your data come into effect in 2018 and demand attention now to avoid regulatory fines

bringing with it higher penalties and even more stringent requirements regarding information security, as well as the need to inform any individual affected by a data breach within 72 hours.

In short, GDPR demands the attention of all businesses and operators who hold customer data of any kind.

### BUSINESS IMPLICATIONS

The UK Payment Card Industry Security Standards Council (PCI SSC) has warned that UK businesses could face up to £12bn in penalties for data breaches when the GDPR comes into effect. It has also stated that fines are likely to be dwarfed by the reputational damage incurred by data breaches.

If customers lose confidence in an establishment's ability to safeguard personal data, then the online portals and payment processes that have streamlined our businesses so effectively over recent years will be put at risk.

**CREATING A NEW ETHOS: CONFIDENTIALITY, AVAILABILITY & INTEGRITY**  
So now is the time to take action. Only by considering every piece of information

in line with three guiding principles – confidentiality, availability and integrity – can you begin to protect your data.

#### ● CONFIDENTIALITY

Assurance of data privacy is achieved by ensuring it's only accessed by authorised individuals and that excellent access controls and good internal processes are in place for the use of paper-based documentation.

#### ● AVAILABILITY

This demands that data is available whenever it's needed – a ransomware attack, for example, denies this.

#### ● INTEGRITY

Achieving data integrity is all about ensuring it's accurate and up to date.

There are two areas of GDPR where focus is needed. One is consent, which imposes robust criteria on you to obtain permission from individuals for the processing of their data. The second is data retention, and the individual's 'right to be forgotten'.

These two areas need careful assessment to ensure there's a clear case for holding data for specific time periods and that consent has been given to do so.

### NEXT STEPS

The coming of the GDPR is a real opportunity for leisure and health and fitness businesses to embrace the chance to make huge improvements to the way their extremely valuable data is stored and handled.

It's also the time to expand the current view of information beyond that which is held electronically to include all information assets in the business, both digital and paper-based. Finally, it's time to embed best practice into all daily operations. This includes improving physical infrastructure and creating a robust, ethical security culture, that protects customer data, for the long-term.

To learn more about how Legend has helped its customers get ready for the arrival of the fast-approaching GDPR legislation, please visit our website at: [www.legendware.co.uk/accreditations](http://www.legendware.co.uk/accreditations)



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# PRODUCT INNOVATION

**Lauren Heath-Jones** rounds up the latest health and fitness products and services

**Paul Ferris** introduces Speedflex individual training pods

Speedflex has expanded its offering of functional training equipment with the launch of individual pods.

Measuring just 3.09m (10.1ft) by 1.8m (5.9ft), the pod is designed to make HIIT training more accessible by bringing it to the gym floor.



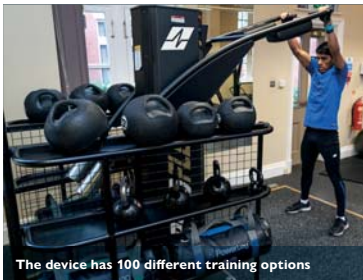
*"We want to show that functional training can be accessible to anyone, regardless of age or ability"*

**Paul Ferris**

Using Speedflex's hydraulic technology, a unique innovation that allows users to generate personalised resistance levels, the pod is designed to deliver the benefits of HIIT training while reducing the risk of injury and enabling users to perform at their optimal level.

The device offers users more than 100 different functional training options and includes a wraparound racking system for storing kettlebells and medicine balls – giving users easy access to all the equipment they need.

Paul Ferris, MD at Speedflex, says: "We're delighted to launch the new pod and believe this will be a real game changer in the functional fitness market."



The device has 100 different training options

Ferris adds: "We want to show that functional training can be accessible to anyone, regardless of age or ability. With our individual pods, users will still be performing all of

those same functional training movements and getting a great full body workout."

**fitness-kit.net KEYWORD**  
**SPEEDFLEX**

Life Fitness' IC8 trainer is the 'new standard in power training' says **Bernd Perschel**

Commercial supplier Life Fitness has launched the IC8, a new indoor power trainer for cyclists.

Developed in collaboration with Life Fitness' sister company Indoor Cycling Group (ICG) and Peaks Coaching Group founder Hunter Allen, the IC8 is ergonomically designed to deliver the drive and feel of both a road and triathlon bike.

It claims to deliver superior tracking and fitness results, and features the WattRate Direct Power Meter, with patented photocell technology to measure power with less than one per cent of error.



*"The IC8 has greater power accuracy and wattage than any trainer available in the market today. It is the new standard in power training"*

**Bernd Perschel**

Other features include the WattRate TFT Computer, with more than 40 performance metrics, a PRO handlebar

designed to enhance performance and enable cyclists to ride as they would outside, and magnetic resistance that delivers up to 3800 watts and gives users instant control of the resistance levels.

The IC8 is also Bluetooth and ANT+ enabled so users can access workouts, create training programmes and analyse workout data via the ICG app.

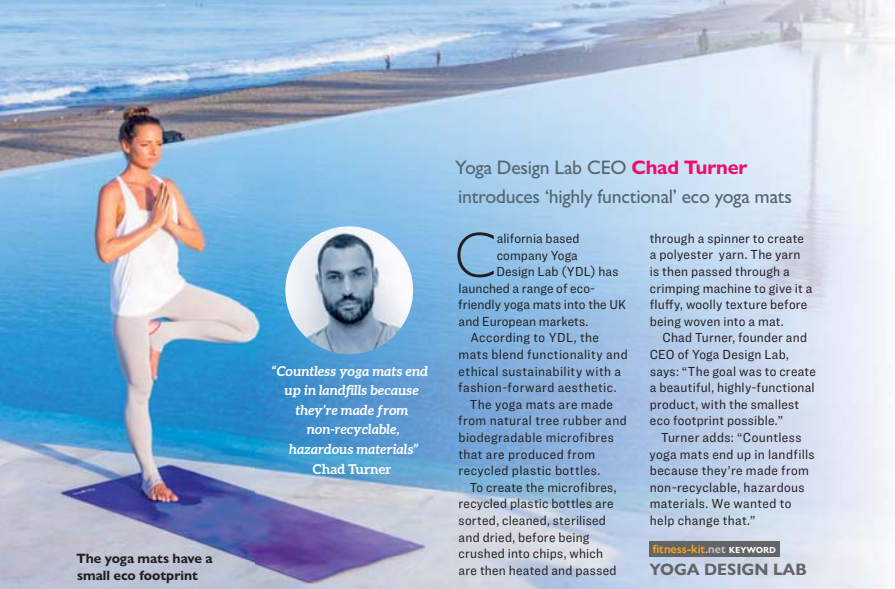
Bernd Perschel, vice president of ICG, says: "We worked closely with athletes to create an authentic indoor experience. Inspired by the movement of road

cycling, triathlon and athletic performance training, the IC8 has greater power accuracy and wattage than any trainer available in the market today."

**fitness-kit.net KEYWORD**  
**LIFE FITNESS**



The IC8 power trainer



*"Countless yoga mats end up in landfills because they're made from non-recyclable, hazardous materials"*  
Chad Turner

The yoga mats have a small eco footprint

Yoga Design Lab CEO **Chad Turner** introduces 'highly functional' eco yoga mats

California based company Yoga Design Lab (YDL) has launched a range of eco-friendly yoga mats into the UK and European markets.

According to YDL, the mats blend functionality and ethical sustainability with a fashion-forward aesthetic.

The yoga mats are made from natural tree rubber and biodegradable microfibres that are produced from recycled plastic bottles.

To create the microfibres, recycled plastic bottles are sorted, cleaned, sterilised and dried, before being crushed into chips, which are then heated and passed

through a spinner to create a polyester yarn. The yarn is then passed through a crimping machine to give it a fluffy, woolly texture before being woven into a mat.

Chad Turner, founder and CEO of Yoga Design Lab, says: "The goal was to create a beautiful, highly-functional product, with the smallest eco footprint possible."

Turner adds: "Countless yoga mats end up in landfills because they're made from non-recyclable, hazardous materials. We wanted to help change that."

**fitness-kit.net KEYWORD**

**YOGA DESIGN LAB**

**Jorge Serrano** introduces Bkool smart trainers

Spanish sporting goods company Bkool has launched two new smart trainers, the Smart Pro 2 and the Smart Air, for cyclists.

According to Bkool, the Smart Pro 2 delivers a quieter, more realistic and more powerful workout. It is designed reach up to 1,200 watts and is capable of simulating slopes with a gradient of up to 20 per cent. It also features telescopic legs for greater rider stability, as well as a fan cover designed for a quiet workout – noise levels are only 68 decibels at 35 kph.

The Smart Air is a direct drive smart trainer that features a side-to-side rocking movement designed to offer riders a realistic pedalling motion.

Both trainers offer a sleek design, ANT+ and Bluetooth Smart capabilities, and Bkool's simulator software, which tracks riders' stats. It also replicates cycle routes – reacting to hills and descents –



*"We're extremely excited by the reaction our new Smart trainer has received from cyclists and the fitness industry"*

Jorge Serrano

and real-world weather, while allowing users to experience riding in a virtual world.

Jorge Serrano, Bkool marketing director, says: "We're extremely excited by the reaction our new Smart trainer has received from cyclists and the fitness industry. At Bkool we're always looking for new ways to innovate indoor training."

**fitness-kit.net KEYWORD**

**BKOOOL**



Bkool's smart trainers feature simulator software

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# Heart healthy exercise

Yoga can be as good for the heart as aerobic exercise

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

**A new study has shown that combining yoga with aerobic exercise is twice as effective at reducing heart disease risk factors in patients than either done alone**

**D**octors and scientists all agree that regular aerobic exercise is good for the heart as it can improve high blood pressure, obesity, diabetes and other key risk factors for heart disease. And while this form of exercise is often championed as being best for cardiovascular health, an extensive 2014 review of 69 studies has demonstrated that yoga can be just as good for the heart as aerobic exercise – or cardio, as it's more commonly known.

#### A COMBINED APPROACH

New research presented at the 2017 Emirates Cardiac Society Congress in Dubai – in association with the American College of Cardiology's Middle East Conference – now suggests that a combined approach may be best. Their study, which has not yet been published, found that heart disease patients who did both yoga – specifically Indian yoga – and aerobic exercise achieved twice as much reduction in body mass index

(BMI), blood pressure and cholesterol levels than those who did aerobic exercise or Indian yoga only.

As reported by the authors, Sonal Tanwar and Naresh Sen, both from HG SMS Hospital, located in Jaipur, India, the study involved 750 patients with coronary heart disease.

Of these patients, 240 were assigned to three six-month sessions of Indian yoga only, and 225 patients did aerobic exercise only, over that period of time. A final group of 285 patients did both yoga and aerobic exercise.

#### IMPROVED RISK FACTORS

At the end of the study period, the researchers found that blood pressure,

total cholesterol, triglycerides, LDL, weight and waist circumference all fell by similar amounts among the patients who did only yoga or aerobic exercise.

But when the results of the group that did both forms of exercise were assessed, these markers of heart disease were found to have fallen by twice as much as the other groups.

"Heart disease patients could benefit from learning Indian yoga and making it a routine part of daily life," said study authors Tanwar and Sen.

They added: "Combining Indian yoga and aerobic exercise reduces mental, physical and vascular stress and can lead to decreased cardiovascular mortality and morbidity." ●

“Heart disease patients could benefit from learning Indian yoga and making it a routine part of daily life”

\* Tanwar, S and Sen, N. Yoga and Aerobic Exercise Together May Improve Heart-Disease Risk Factors. Emirates Cardiac Society Congress, 19 Oct 2017



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