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## Building momentum

The health and fitness industry in Europe is growing across the board as operators drive into new niche markets and engage wider customer groups, with new research confirming the biggest ever membership numbers

**W**e're celebrating some key milestones for the industry this month, both across Europe and in the UK.

On page 54, Deloitte's Karsten Hollasch outlines key findings from the *European Health & Fitness Market Report 2019*, which shows Europe is on track to reach 80m members by 2025 – a target set by EuropeActive in 2014.

Current membership numbers are on an upward curve at 62.2m – a penetration rate of 7.8 per cent and the highest ever recorded. With nearly 62,000 facilities in Europe, if we hit this 80m member target, a rough estimate shows there will be demand for at least another 10,000 facilities across the Continent – demand which will continue to fuel development.

Together, the top five countries in Europe represent nearly two-thirds of the entire European market in terms of both memberships and revenues. With penetration rates across these five sitting at between 9 and 15 per cent.

This puts the UK near the top of the list in Europe in terms of market penetration, with its current level of 15.6 per cent – a number revealed in the newly-published *The 2019 State of the UK Fitness Industry Report* from The Leisure Database Company.

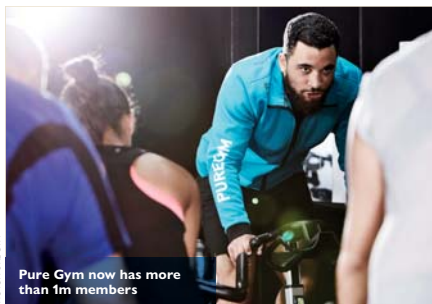
Breaking the 15 per cent barrier has long been seen as the real threshold for mass market adoption and the momentum which has been achieved by UK operators to break this barrier makes it a significant moment in the maturing of the sector.

The UK also passed two more big milestones in the last year – total memberships broke the 10 million mark at 10.4m and total market value broke the £5bn barrier at £5.1bn.

The number of health and fitness facilities in the UK also grew by a healthy 2.9 per cent, from 7,038 to 7,239 – a net number accounting for both closures and new openings, although this represented a slight slowing over the previous year (215 vs 275) in terms of new openings. The industry must continue to fight to ensure planners understand our value and facilitate planning applications to ensure the sector can thrive.

The market is holding up well in the face of growth in home fitness, app workouts and non-facility-based offerings, such as bootcamp. These are adding critical mass, unlocking demand and keeping more people engaged with exercise.

The success of the boutique, low-cost and local authority markets have played a major part in this growth.



Pure Gym now has more than 1m members

**The number of gym members has reached a record high and there are now more health clubs than at any time in history**

Deloitte identified UK operators such as Pure Gym and The Gym Group (TGG) as being some of the most successful in Europe, with Pure third largest, having increased its membership numbers by 85,000 in 2018 to break the million mark with 1.1m members and TGG close behind with 800,000 members.

Making fitness more accessible has breathed new life into a market which was stagnating just a decade ago.

It's fitting then that the company which started the low-cost revolution – McFit (now RSG) is now the biggest in Europe, with 1.95 million members across 288 clubs and growing.

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**GRIT**

**ATTRACTS**

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# NEW MEMBERS

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AMELIA TRUMP, STUDIO CO-ORDINATOR  
AT BH LIVE: MOUNTBATTEN CENTRE

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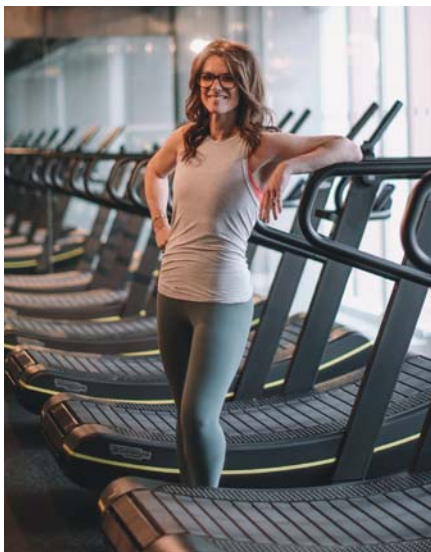


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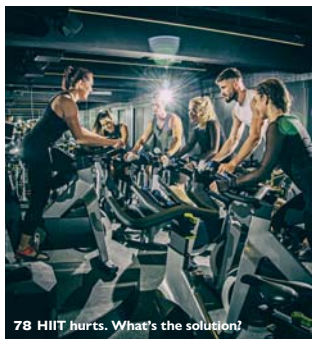
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# Write to reply

Fuel the debate about issues and opportunities across the industry.

We'd love to hear from you – email: [healthclub@leisuremedia.com](mailto:healthclub@leisuremedia.com)



1Rebel has built its business on an experiential offering

## Plenty of room for Rebels and Virgins

James Balfour, CEO, 1Rebel

**Two weeks ago** I had dinner with my father, Mike Balfour, founder of Fitness First. We were debating the state of the fitness industry in London and I suggested big box operators should be concerned about the rise of boutique gyms.

He scoffed, saying the likes of Fitness First had been around for a long time and were too big to be concerned by the likes of little old 1Rebel. I responded that there are 400 boutique clubs in London and I felt millennials are leaving big box clubs in in search for more experience-driven offerings.

We agreed to disagree, as is often the case.



James Balfour

A week later my phone started to buzz with screenshots of a paid advertising campaign by Virgin Active. To my horror, but perhaps also a little delight, the Virgin marketing team

had taken an ad in the *Evening Standard* subtly entitled "From One Rebel To Another".

The cleverly worded ad took a swipe at the pay-as-you-go model, comparing it to their "everything under one roof" offering. Thinking back to the dinner, I immediately felt justified. It was a badge of honor for 1Rebel – a small, London-based boutique chain of just five clubs – to clearly be on the radar of the goliath that is Virgin Active.

Mike tried to persuade me to go on the counter attack, however, that was not how I felt.

I could, for instance, have mobilised my team to point



Virgin Active's promotion ran in the London Evening Standard



**Boutique operator, 1Rebel, has five clubs in London with more on the way and plans to expand in Australia**

out the various inaccuracies in the ad. How they inflated our top price from £22 to £25. I could have mentioned that they were missing the point and should be talking about 'experience' as opposed to price. I could have thrown in a comment such as "Rebels aren't interested in working out with 40-year-old Virgins." However, deep down, I was just disappointed they felt the need to do this.



**1Rebel's Karl Marx tribute was lost on the social influencer**

The campaign leads with the line 'Pain is the remedy'.

With 50k Twitter followers, Alice tweeted: "Shitty messaging, has the fitness industry learnt nothing? Pain isn't the remedy. It's the surefire way to end up with a lengthy physio bill and injuries. Do better."

Now, I don't know Alice. I'm sure she's a nice person.

But I do feel that with a large following come certain responsibilities. Yet I'm not sure she took a second to really consider if a fitness chain was actually advocating injuring its customers. I'm no MBA, but I assume that being that in order to build character in the face of adversity we must overcome the mental fears we have.

We launched this campaign during mental health week, but rather than understanding this as a message of inspiration, we were now faced with being called a business which likes to injure customers.

### Pulling together

With inactivity rates at their peak, and obesity a national crisis, I want everyone to exercise, wherever they go.

There's plenty of room for us all to thrive and if I were to pick an opponent to attack, it would be fast food businesses or lack of government support or poor corporate fitness offerings – the list could go on.

But Virgin Active's ad in the *Evening Standard* isn't the only example of a lack of support we're giving one another in the fitness industry. In the same week, a social media influencer, @Aliceliving\_, took a swipe at our new marketing campaign for our Angel club.

**"If I were to pick an opponent to attack, it would be fast food businesses, lack of government support or poor corporate fitness offerings"**



**Balfour: Very happy member of Virgin Active Kensington**

We politely pointed this out, but got no response.

So why do I mention this? In my view, if you're passionate about the industry, you're hoping to inspire people to move, get active and overcome adversity and the many insecurities that often plague us. Our clubs and our communities can help facilitate that.

Fundamentally, I'm simply 'pro fitness', and if you happen to choose 1Rebel, then that's great, if not, that's also OK – maybe we just have to work harder to win your custom

– but as long as you're moving, it's a good thing.

The irony is that if Virgin Active wanted to embarrass 1Rebel, they only have to look at their membership list to find I'm a very happy member of their Kensington club.

I go because I live and breathe 1Rebel and occasionally need some space – and it's a nice club and a great brand.

There's plenty of room for both Rebels and Virgins in the market, and as Mike always reminds me, it all started with people wanting 'fitness first'. ●



With two instructors per class – one devoted to correcting form – we fix people, and this creates clients for life

# HANNAH LANEL

**FOUNDER: THE FORE**

**B**outique concept The Fore has opened in London's Kings Cross with a new signature class concept using bodyweight training and treadmills. The Fore promises two trainers per class, to deliver a personalised experience and check form and technique.

The boutique is the brainchild of Hannah Lanel who has a 'whole human' approach, designed to make everyday access to wellness so ubiquitous it becomes a natural part of daily life.

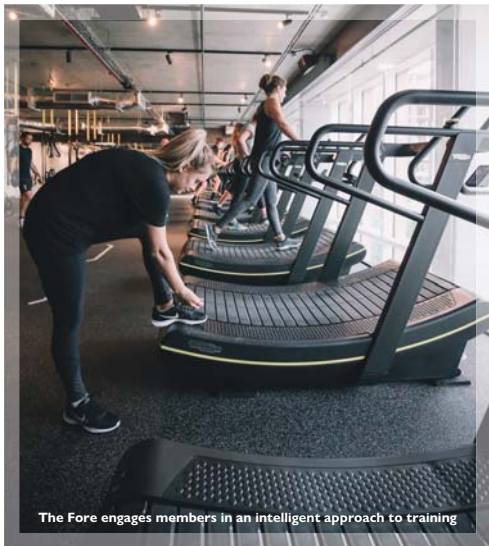
The destination boutique focuses on functional fitness and wellness and at 5,500sq ft over two floors, offers personal training, classes and access to alternative practitioners.

There's also a shared workspace, a café, juice, smoothie bar, retail area and workshop space for events and pop-ups.

## FIT FOR LIFE

Lanel has identified four pillars of wellness around which she's build the brand: physical, emotional, social and intellectual. "We deliver an inclusive and enriching shared experience that helps people get fit for life by making access to every day wellness so compelling that it simply becomes a way of life," she explains. "We break down barriers to exercise and get people moving properly. They get fit fast, and the strength this gives them confidence and peace of mind. This intelligent approach to training means people quickly come to know about training frequency, intensity, and functional fitness."

The signature class uses the Technogym Skillmill. Lanel says: "This combination allows us to train people through resisted rotation and proper posterior chain running. We designed the class so people understand the key elements of



The Fore engages members in an intelligent approach to training

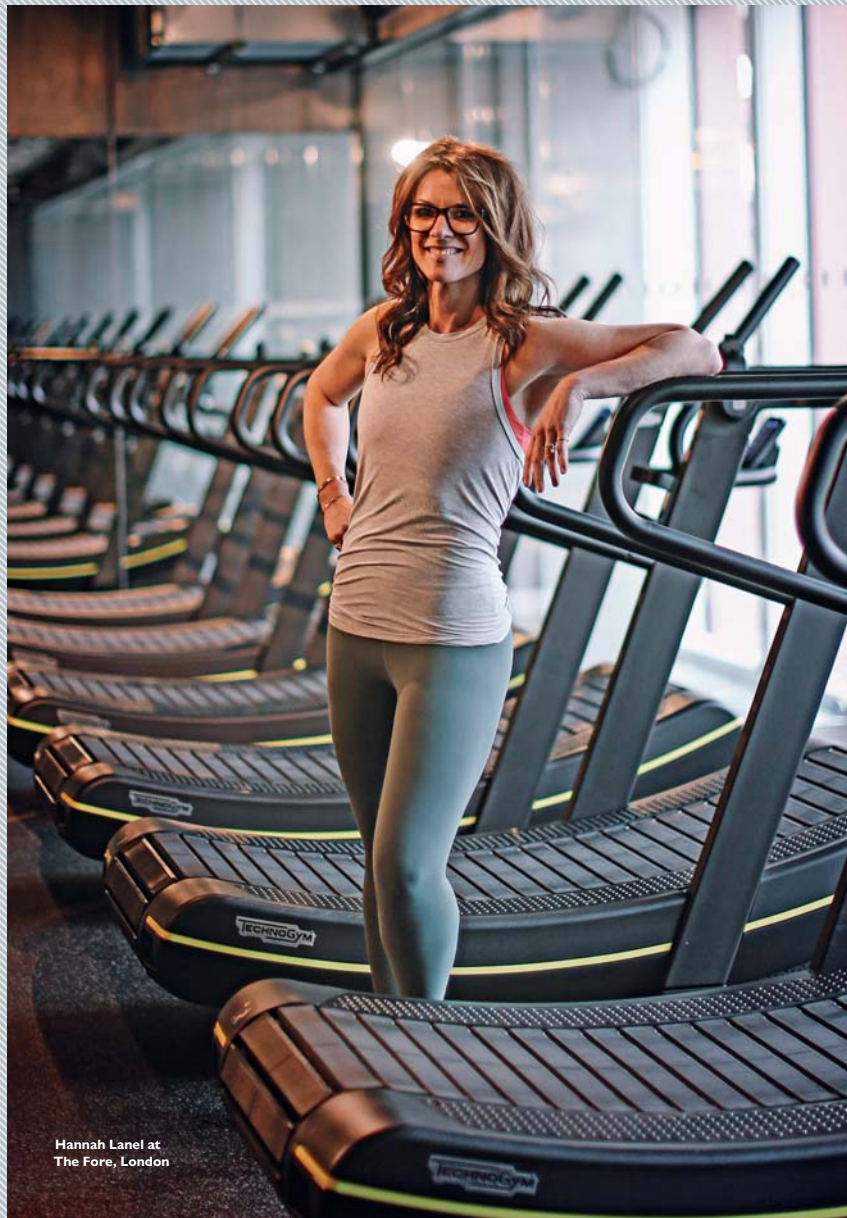
each move. They learn about individual patterns of movement, and can apply it to how they move in everyday life."

"We chose this treadmill for the quality of the movement," she says. "The long, steep curve means you run with a natural stride, using your glutes, hamstrings, and calves to drive the belt underneath you. You're actively running against resistance and this trains your true running style. It's different from a standard treadmill."

## PERSONALISATION

Lanel has extensive experience in the market and was previously involved with Equilibrium in West London, where she trained celebrities and pro-athletes.

"The boutique market is huge, and offers customers a lot of choice and variety," says Hannah. "But with that comes the risk of a depersonalised experience, where the customer feels like a number. At The Fore, we've set



Hannah Lanel at  
The Fore, London





**The Fore is part of the redevelopment of the King's Cross area of London**



out to offer the complete opposite to this. We treat customers as individuals. You'll be greeted by name, but we'll also remember how your most recent class went. We'll know about past injuries and any aches and pains. Our classes focus on the way the client moves, and we progress them from there."

#### **ACHIEVE THE IMPOSSIBLE**

"Nobody else has two trainers per class, with one devoted to correcting customers' form," says Lanel. "Once you train this way – with rotation, body weight, and resistance running – you'll build a better body."

"We're helping people achieve what they once thought impossible. And that gives them confidence and self-esteem," she continues.

"We fix people, and this creates clients for life. Our level of care and service breeds loyalty and community. People just want to be recognised, and that's what we do."

**Lanel (right) is building a community at The Fore, based on technical training**



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Much of the fitness industry branding is based on a no pain, no gain philosophy, but we didn't want to present Rabble like that, even though a session is ridiculously tiring!

# CHARLOTTE ROACH

## RABBLE: FOUNDER

### What is Rabble?

It's a high intensity team workout, based on modified playground games, such as dodgeball and catch the flag. We now have a library of around 500 games, some of which have been inspired by popular culture, such as *Game of Thrones*, while others bring in a number of different sports, such as Nesketball, which is a mash up of netball, basketball and American football.

We guarantee our sessions will be a great workout, that people will make friends and they'll want to come back. There are no pre-requisites – you don't have to be good at sport to play. The social element is key to the success, as it builds a community, which leads to retention. The original London group has led to seven weddings and three babies!



Roach developed Rabble after injury forced her to give up elite sport

to be something enjoyable, which I looked forward to and felt good after and that I could do with friends, which is how I came up with the idea of designing workouts based on childhood games.

### What has been the biggest challenge in growing the concept?

Education has been one of them. Because we are the first to create an exercise concept like this, it can be difficult to position them as an effective form of exercise. Much of the fitness industry branding is based on a "no pain, no gain" and "sweat is your friend" philosophy, but we didn't want to present Rabble like that, even though a session is ridiculously tiring! In our marketing, we try and project the idea that Rabble is predominantly fun, but also a great workout.

The other challenge has been dealing with people's negative experiences of school sport: childhood games can bring up the nostalgic fear of being the last to get picked for teams and the first to get caught in tag. So, we've had to put across that our approach is different – there is no team picking, no favourites and all the games are set up so that everyone contributes, regardless of physical ability.

### How did it come about?

While I was doing my degree in neuroscience and physiology I was a triathlete, competing at elite level and with my eye on the 2012 Olympics. But a near fatal bike crash in 2009 dashed my dreams.

Although I did go back to competing, I suffered from back problems – I could feel the metal pins holding my back together jarring when I ran. In 2010, after a second operation on my back, I started to question whether it was worth it.

After graduating, starting work as a construction manager and saying goodbye to my elite sport ambitions, I was looking

forward to having a more healthy relationship with exercise. As an elite athlete, your personality is so tied up with your sport and success. You are always pushing yourself to the maximum, on the borderline of it being sustainable and always on the edge of injury. I was looking forward to enjoying exercise, but found that without a goal I lacked motivation.

Exercise became a chore. I started to dread or avoid gym sessions and then experienced the guilt after. I realised that if I felt like that, a lot of other adults would feel like it too. I wanted exercise

### What does a session involve?

They are an hour long and include a variety of games, both to make it more interesting and also to stop people getting too



**Rabble now delivers more than 3,000 sessions per week across the UK**

good at them, which can then become intimidating for newbies. We approach the session as if everyone is new, so we give them three rules to play a game at the start and after every few minutes introduce another rule, so they can learn to play quite complex games very quickly.

There are lots of opportunities to bring in strength exercises as well. The extent of this depends on the instructor

and also the space – the smaller a space, the more strength exercises are needed.

#### **When and why did you decide to license Rabble?**

We launched the licence in 2018, as we wanted to make it more widely accessible, while keeping it affordable and non-exclusive. There has been a fantastic response, from fitness

instructors as well as people from outside the industry.

#### **How could health and fitness operators engage?**

We are very keen to work with more health and fitness operators and we believe we can bring a different dimension to their offering, attracting people who are disillusioned by the gym or exercise classes with repetitive movements. Sessions can take place in parks, sports halls, studios, car parks, tennis or basketball courts.

The best way for operators to engage with Rabble is to buy a licence and train an instructor. The training costs between £200 and £300, depending on whether it's done in person or online, and the licence is £25 a month.

#### **What plans do you have?**

We just want to keep growing the network and would love to do more work with health clubs, as well as to continue to support our instructors. Going forward, we will increasingly be looking at ways to mobilise inactive people, as well as to work within schools – we are keen to change the impact and perception of school sport early on.

#### **■ RABBLE – THE LOWDOWN**

- Since 2018, Rabble has grown to 120 territories and more than 3,000 sessions a week.
- A questionnaire-based study completed by Loughborough University's Department of Exercise and Health Sciences found 87 per cent of respondents said Rabble was good for their mental health and 94 per cent for their physical health.
- It appeals to people who find gym exercise tedious and want to meet new people.
- Sessions cost £5-£10, depending on location.
- The profile of classes depends on the instructor – young instructors tend to attract a higher number of young participants and older instructors attract older participants.
- The games need a minimum of four players and can go up to 40. The optimum number is 30.
- Minimal equipment is needed – balls, bibs and cones.



As clubs with swimming pools and health and beauty facilities, the low cost model wasn't going to work for us, but the clubs weren't as high-end as David Lloyd clubs either. Our first intervention was to win over the staff and encourage them to act as though it was a high-end club

# DIRK VAN DER FLIER

## GYM PLUS GROUP: CHAIR

### When did you first become involved with Gym Plus Group?

When the chain of eight clubs went into examinership in 2015, I was invited to come on board to try and turn the business around. Coming from the hotel industry and having previously been an active sportsman and rugby player, I approached the business from the customer's point of view.

Gym Plus was an estate of mid-market clubs that had been a victim of the recession and the advent of low cost clubs. They had lost their identity, needed investment and were discounting in order to get memberships.

### How did you go about turning the clubs around?

My first challenge was to find a model that could work. I teamed up with an old school friend, Sandra Dunne, who has years of operations experience, to determine how we could define the brand. It wasn't the 'what?' that I was mainly interested in, it was more the 'why?' and the 'how?' I wanted to create a community and make the membership sticky.

As meaty clubs, with swimming pools and health and beauty facilities, the low cost model wasn't going to work, but the clubs weren't as high-end as David Lloyd clubs either. Our first intervention was to win over the staff and encourage them to act as though it was a high-end club.

We introduced four core values on which to base our culture and staff attitude: to be passionate, personal, proactive and positive. Over the past four years we've drilled this into the team, so



they understand the member journey we're trying to create from joining to the first visit and onwards, so people feel welcomed and supported in their goals.

Investments were made in improving facilities, back of house, in terms of equipment and aesthetically and we've also greatly increased the class programme. Added to this, we negotiated the business out of an existing franchise, which allowed us greater flexibility to develop.

The prices were raised to reflect the improved offering – memberships now range between €45 (£39, \$50) and €59 (£51, \$66) a month and people can choose whether to join one club, or have a flexible membership, allowing them to visit all eight. We work hard at customer engagement, as well as getting feedback.

### Who are your members?

It is incredibly varied – we have the core following of 30- to 50-year-old



**The core membership of Gym Plus is 30- to 50-year-old professionals**

professionals, but we also have a lot of families and older adults. Some of the clubs are in areas that attract a very corporate market. It can be interesting trying to encourage all the different types of members to merge together.

#### **What has the impact been?**

We've had a 50 per cent increase in membership over the past three years and reduced the attrition rate down to 4 to 5 per cent. We're not quite there yet, but we're getting there. We have about another two years to carry on implementing our changes and then we might look to expand.

#### **What exciting trends are you seeing in the industry?**

Technology is a big thing at the moment, but I wonder how long it will go on for. It has its place and I like my Garmin, but sometimes I like to go fishing and leave my phone at home, or leave technology behind, take my shoes off and walk in the sand.

I was speaking to someone the other day who said that he didn't want to be told that he'd only had four hours of good sleep when he thought he had had a good night, so I think there might be a bit of a backlash and a return to nature.



**Facilities have been invested in and improved over the past four years**





## BKBX launches 'adventure gym' concept with recovery centre

**D**r Paul Juris, formerly the executive director of the Cybex Research Institute, is part of a team that has created BKBX, a 771 sq m "adventure lifestyle ecosystem" in Boston, US.

Geared towards athletes who regularly embark on high-intensity excursions, the new facility features a bouldering wall, an "adventure bar", and an integrated fitness programme devised by Juris.

The gym was designed by US-based design firm Arrowstreet's and is the company's fourth project with operator Brooklyn Boulders. It boasts an innovative recovery studio and a large training space equipped with a TRX system, weights, and monkey bars.

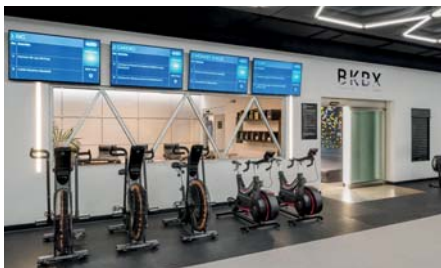
Theatre-style lighting illuminates the club's neutral interiors, helping to produce a dramatic atmosphere that corresponds to BKBX's adventure theme.

In a description of the space, the designers said the recovery studio was created



**Developing the BKBX programme was a year-long process**

Dr Paul Juris



The 771 sq m space invites gym-goers to 'HIIT with adventure'

"to extend the wellness continuum for the Brooklyn Boulders brand".

They added: "We designed this space to provide a digitally advanced spa-style experience, featuring

3D Digital Assessment, cryotherapy, infrared sauna, compression sleeves, recovery devices, and muscle therapy devices."

More: [http://lei.sr/K7e5s\\_H](http://lei.sr/K7e5s_H)

## George Foreman III expands EverybodyFights with Philadelphia site

**George Foreman III** – son of the heavyweight prizefighter – and Boston-based practice Studio Troika have designed the EverybodyFights boxing gym in Philadelphia.

Situated in the city's Rittenhouse neighbourhood, the 12,000 sq ft (1,114 sq m) space comprises a full-size boxing ring, multiple classrooms, and an open gym area with free weights and cardio equipment.

Other features include a steamroom, a yoga and meditation room, a sports shop, and custom graffiti created by Hailey Loonan (EverybodyFights creative director) and Studio Fresh.



EverybodyFights plans to have 20 studios in the US by 2020

Founded in 2013, EverybodyFights, which has venues in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Lexington, KY, is undergoing a

nationwide expansion and set to open 20 locations by 2020.

"We offer five classes that enable patrons to learn proper boxing technique

and sparring and there's also yoga, cardio and circuit-style strength and conditioning – the diversity keeps clients coming back," Foreman said.



**The diversity of our offer keeps people coming back**

George Foreman III

More: [http://lei.sr/m5P7t\\_H](http://lei.sr/m5P7t_H)

## Equinox introduces workspace across its club portfolio

**P**remium fitness operator Equinox will begin offering furnished office spaces adjacent to its high-end health clubs.

The company has signed a partnership with premium flexible workspace provider Industrious, which marks the launch of an entirely new category for Equinox.

Operating under the co-brand Industrious at Equinox, the first location will be at the 72-storey skyscraper 35 Hudson Yards – the same location as the first-ever Equinox Hotel.

Additional Industrious at Equinox locations are



“

**We're always looking for new ways to empower our community**

Jeff Weinhaus

expected to be announced in the near future.

According to Jeff Weinhaus, Equinox president, the concept is born out of demand for an all-encompassing



The first Industrious at Equinox will be located in New York

experience that allows members to live, work, play and work out in a “seamlessly designed property”.

“We're always looking for ways to empower our community to perform at their best, so we saw an opportunity to create workspaces that are as inspiring as our clubs,” Weinhaus said.

“With so many of our members already spending

significant time working in our clubs, our partnership with Industrious is truly a natural extension of our brand.

Memberships for the flexible workspace at Hudson Yards will include access to the Industrious national network of services and amenities, as well as the option for membership to Equinox Hudson Yards.

More: [http://lei.sr/7N6r8\\_H](http://lei.sr/7N6r8_H)

## Glofox raises US\$10m of funding to fuel US expansion

### Fitness software startup

Glofox has secured a US\$10m worth of Series A funding. Led by Octopus Ventures – and

supported by Partech, Notion Capital and Tribal VC – the funding round will be used to expand Glofox's US presence.

Glofox will continue to build out its Los Angeles HQ, as well as allocate funds to product development. The company will also use the funds to increase marketing efforts and fill key leadership positions.

“The fundraising is a really exciting step for the company,” said Glofox founder and CEO Conor O’Loughlin. “We’ve spent years optimising Glofox for boutique gyms.”

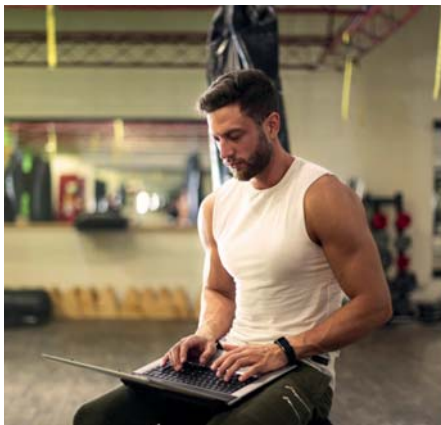
More: [http://lei.sr/V4j7Y\\_H](http://lei.sr/V4j7Y_H)



“

**We've spent years optimising Glofox for boutique gyms**

Conor O’Loughlin



The software is designed to assist boutique studios

## UK sector worth £5bn, penetration hits 15 per cent

**T**he UK health and fitness industry is healthier than it has ever been, according to *The 2019 State of the UK Fitness Industry Report*.

Published this month by The Leisure Database Company (LeisureDB), the report shows that the value of the market now exceeds £5bn for the first time. It also shows that the number of gym members has reached a record high and that there are now more health

clubs and gyms than at any time in history.

The total UK membership has broken the 10 million mark, resulting in a penetration rate of 15.6 per cent.

"As seen in the record-breaking figures from this report, the UK is enjoying a golden period of growth and exciting development across the fitness sector," said David Minton, director of LeisureDB.

More: [http://lei.sr/D8U8R\\_H](http://lei.sr/D8U8R_H)



The number of fitness facilities has grown by 2.9 per cent



The UK is enjoying a golden period of growth  
David Minton



## 1Rebel secures large studio site at London's iconic Post Building

**B**outique fitness operator 1Rebel has secured a 9,000sq ft site at The Post Building – the major mixed-use development which will transform the iconic former Royal Mail Sorting Office in the West End of London.

1Rebel will occupy a space covering parts of the ground and mezzanine floors, creating a showcase fitness club and retail space that "takes full advantage of the double-height space offered by The Post Building's industrial heritage".

Created by Giles Dean and James Balfour, the son of Fitness First founder Mike Balfour, 1Rebel, offers a no-contract approach based around three HIIT concepts – Reshape, Ride and



The Post Building is an extraordinary space for us  
Giles Dean

Rumble – for 'people who hate traditional gyms'.

The flagship studio will house the largest Reshape space in London and is the company's first West End club.

"The Post Building is an extraordinary space and, being located equidistant between Holborn and



1Rebel will occupy a 9,000sq ft site at the historic property

Tottenham Court Road (Crossrail) tube stations, heralds our arrival into London's West End," said Giles Dean, 1Rebel co-founder.

"Our customers want a unique experience in a premium environment. The Post Building, with its commitment to design

and heritage, enables us to deliver this and continue our commitment to design spaces for customers that are wellness destinations in their own right."

● See James Balfour's comments in HCM letters on page 10

More: [http://lei.sr/n7v8w\\_H](http://lei.sr/n7v8w_H)

## Brunswick sells Life Fitness to KPS Capital for US\$490m

### Manufacturing conglomerate

Brunswick Corporation is selling its entire fitness business to private equity firm KPS Capital Partners.

KPS – an investment firm which focuses on manufacturing and industrial companies across a number of industries – will acquire the entire Life Fitness estate, which includes five brands: Life Fitness, Hammer Strength, Cybex, Indoor Cycling Group, SCFIT and

Brunswick Billiards. Under the agreement, approved by Brunswick's board of directors, KPS will pay US\$490m (€437m, £374m) in cash to acquire the business and its brands.

The transaction is expected to be completed during the second quarter of 2019, following receipt of regulatory approvals.

The move comes just months after Brunswick announced plans to spin off



### The Life Fitness portfolio includes five equipment brands

its fitness business and to run the wellness brands under an independent, standalone, publicly traded company called FitnessCo. At the time, the company said the

move would allow the new company to "better address evolving commercial fitness marketplace trends".

More: [http://lei.sr/j5v8R\\_H](http://lei.sr/j5v8R_H)

## Newly rebranded Hussle partners with mobile provider, Three

**F**itness marketplace Hussle has revealed its first major deal since it changed its name and brand identity from PayAsUGym earlier this month.

Hussle has signed a partnership agreement with telecommunications and internet services provider Three UK, which will see Hussle offer more than 2 million Three

customers with flexible access to gyms, studios and health clubs.

In return, Hussle will benefit from Three UK marketing the campaign to their users this summer, providing the fitness company with access to a new customer base.

The campaign will be co-funded and promoted by Hussle and Three.

According to Lawrence King, the deal with Three is the first of a series of high profile, national consumer brand partnerships designed to reach new customer groups.

"With a gym in 96 per cent of UK postcode regions, Hussle is able to support the coverage requirements of companies like Three UK and create marketing opportunities for the fitness industry," King said.

More: [http://lei.sr/Q6a8r\\_H](http://lei.sr/Q6a8r_H)



Hussle has a gym in 96 per cent of UK postcode regions

Lawrence King

The deal will provide Hussle with access to a new customer base



## Sweat! goes bust – Debenhams-linked budget chain shuts its doors

**F**emale-friendly fitness operator Sweat! has closed its doors, just nine months after it revealed plans to roll out a network of in-store gyms at Debenhams retail stores.

Sweat! – which operated six locations – made a proposal to enter a creditors' voluntary arrangement (CVA) earlier this month, but the move was rejected. That led the company to begin the process of entering voluntary liquidation instead.

Sweat! was launched by Virgin Active co-founder Frank Reed in 2013 and had secured backing from investment manager Puma Investments.

The Sweat! format was focused on attracting a predominately 18-33 year-old female membership base.

In a statement, a spokesperson for Puma said: "Sweat Union Limited, the budget health club operator in which we invested some £3.4m, was experiencing trading difficulties.

"Following the rejection of a proposed creditors' voluntary arrangement, its directors have begun a process which may lead to Sweat entering voluntary liquidation."

Sweat! had agreed a potentially lucrative partnership deal with Debenhams and opened the



**Sweat! planned to roll out in-store gyms at Debenhams sites**

first in-store gym in Sutton in August 2018. The deal, a part of the struggling retailer's strategy to attract more customers and a younger female base to its stores.

The initiative was meant to be one of the cornerstones of Debenhams' strategy to deliver 'social shopping'.

More: [http://lei.sr/s5U7C\\_H](http://lei.sr/s5U7C_H)

## Cardiff doctors become first to prescribe cycling to patients

### Bicycles will be prescribed

on the NHS for the first time as part of a pilot campaign to tackle obesity.

GPs in Cardiff will be able to prescribe free bike hire subscriptions for overweight patients. The pilot, which is led by Cardiff and Vale University

Health Board (CVUHB), is the first of its kind in the UK and will start with two GP practices.

Patients will be given a six-month membership to Nextbike – a public bike-sharing system.

As part of the prescription, patients will be given a unique

access code which will give them unlimited access to 30-minute Nextbike sessions.

Dr Tom Porter, consultant in Public Health Medicine with CVUHB and Public Health Wales, said the pilot had the potential to help save lives – and that regular cycling could cut the risk of dying from heart disease by half.

"Cycling is a fantastic form of physical activity and riding your bike is one of the easiest ways to reduce your risk of ill health while building your cardiovascular fitness.

"Not only can cycling to work reduce your risk of death from heart disease by 52 per cent, but it's also a great way to get around the city without using your car. This makes it



**Cycling is an easy way to reduce the risk of ill health**

Tom Porter

good for both you and the environment around you, and helping to keep the air clean for everyone while reducing carbon emissions. Cycling is not only fun but can also fit into your regular routine."

More: [http://lei.sr/f8g6g\\_H](http://lei.sr/f8g6g_H)

**Len Richards, CEO of CVUHB at a Nextbike station in Cardiff**





## What's New:

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As seen at: **ELEVATE**

[matrixfitness.co.uk](https://matrixfitness.co.uk)

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## White paper: more needs to be done to promote group exercise

**G**roup exercise is being presented as a solution to two of society's growing problems – inactivity and loneliness.

A white paper published this week by EMD UK – the national governing body for group exercise – outlines the value and "far-reaching impact" of group fitness classes.

Entitled *Sweating Your Assets: The value of group exercise*, the report highlights the growing popularity of group-fitness training.

However, it also claims it is "widely undervalued" as a gateway to activity – not just by the public but also by the health and fitness industry.

According to EMD UK figures, around 4.86 million people take part in group classes every week, following rapid growth which has seen the number grow by one million participants since 2016.



**The benefits of group exercise are far-reaching**

Emma Forward



**4.86 million people take part in group classes each week**

EMD UK says that more needs to be done to promote the value of group exercise to wider society – and that the UK's health club operators have a key role to play.

"As an activity, the benefits of group exercise are far-reaching," said Emma Forward, chief operating officer of EMD.

More: [http://lei.sr/U5a5U\\_H](http://lei.sr/U5a5U_H)

## DCMS committee: use sports, not prison, to tackle knife crime

**Sports and physical activity** should be harnessed to help tackle knife crime and gang violence, according to a report by the DCMS Select Committee.

In its *Changing Lives: the social impact of participation in culture and sport* report, published this week, the cross-party group of MPs said sporting activities were being "overlooked" – and that custodial sentences do not always rehabilitate offenders.

The report is the result of an inquiry launched in January 2018, which looked at the positive social impact participation in sport and cultural activities can have.

Home Office figures show that the UK is currently in

the midst of a knife crime "epidemic", with nearly 300 people falling victim of knife-related homicides in the past 12 months. One in four of the victims of knife-related murders are men aged between 18 and 24 – a disproportionate figure.

The report suggests that a new approach should be adopted to tackle knife crime – one which involves communities and, ideally, the involvement of sports or cultural activities.

Responding to the report, ukactive director of children, young people and families Jack Shakespeare said: "This report rightly recognises that the impact of physical activity



**The impact of physical activity isn't confined to the purview of DCMS**

Jack Shakespeare

and sport is not confined to the purview of DCMS – it stretches across the entire society, from criminal justice and education to health and social cohesion."

[http://lei.sr/w8C2J\\_H](http://lei.sr/w8C2J_H)





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## Study: exercise improves memory in older adults

**A** study of healthy, older adults has shown that even a single session of exercise can increase activity in the brain circuits associated with memory.

Research by the University of Maryland – published in the *Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society* showed that exercise increased activation in the hippocampus, which shrinks with age and is the brain region attacked first in Alzheimer's disease.

"While it has been shown that regular exercise can increase the volume of the

hippocampus, our study provides new information that acute exercise has the ability to impact this



**Our study offers new info on how exercise impacts the hippocampus**

Dr. J. Carson Smith



**Brain activations were significantly greater after exercise**

important brain region," said Dr. J. Carson Smith, the study's lead author and associate professor of kinesiology at the University of Maryland School of Public Health.

The research team measured brain activity using fMRI of people aged between 55 and 85 years.

More: [http://lei.sr/P3h2b\\_H](http://lei.sr/P3h2b_H)

## Depression linked to obesity due to dietary fats entering the brain

**Researchers have linked** the consumption of diets high in saturated fats – which lead to obesity – with the development of depression phenotypes.

A study led by the University of Glasgow, in collaboration with the

Gladstone Institutes, showed that saturated fatty acids enter into the brain's hypothalamus region, which is related to the metabolic system and is known to be linked to depression.

Published in the journal *Translational Psychiatry*, the

research also showed that fatty acids affected key signalling pathways known to be responsible for the development of depression.

Another finding was that by decreasing the expression of a specific enzyme called phosphodiesterase, symptoms of obesity-linked depression could be reduced. The study could will finally shed some light on the widely accepted links between obesity and depression.

Previous clinical studies have found a strong association between the two conditions, but – until now – the exact mechanisms of how obesity affects depression and vice versa have not been fully understood.



**It's the first time the effects of a high fat diet have been observed**

George Baillie

"This is the first time anyone has observed the direct effects a high fat diet can have on the signalling areas of the brain related to depression," said George Baillie, lead author.

More: [http://lei.sr/f3Z8k\\_H](http://lei.sr/f3Z8k_H)





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# Events calendar

## JUNE 2019

### 6 June | Active Uprising Conference Manchester Central, Manchester, UK

ukactive's Active Uprising event returns this month. Combining keynotes from leaders in business, politics and media with a varied agenda that includes the return of powerful keynotes, ukactive Kids, Sweat! North, ActiveLab as well as educational leadership workshops and many more key learnings and outcomes. Come along to meet the HCM team – ukactive's public affairs media partner – at Active Uprising 2019.  
[www.ukactive.com](http://www.ukactive.com)

### 26–30 June | IDEA World Convention Anaheim, CA, USA

Claimed to be the world's longest-running international fitness convention and featuring a programme of educational sessions, the IDEA World Convention attracts fitness professionals and suppliers. During the event, 370 sessions will take place, covering personal training, sports conditioning, group training, nutrition, business and marketing.  
[www.ideafit.com](http://www.ideafit.com)

Exercise professionals  
will converge on  
Anaheim this month  
for IDEA World



FIBO Africa is one of eight FIBO events worldwide

### 25–27 October | FIBO Africa Ticketpro Dome, Johannesburg, South Africa

FIBO Africa is an international platform that connects Africa's fitness industry to international development trends, and accelerates and promotes the healthy development of the industry.  
[www.fibosa.co.za](http://www.fibosa.co.za)

**FIBO** GLOBAL  
FITNESS

## AUGUST 2019

### 29–31 August | IHRSA Fitness Brasil Transamerica Expo Center, São Paulo, Brazil

The IHRSA Brasil programme is designed for all types and sizes of clubs – from established operations to those that are just starting out in the industry. The programme provides educational opportunities in a variety of interactive formats: traditional seminars, how-to sessions, and best practice.  
[www.fitnessbrasil.com.br](http://www.fitnessbrasil.com.br)

### 22–24 August | FIBO China National Exhibition Centre, Shanghai

FIBO China attracts operators and suppliers from within China and worldwide who want to do business in the rapidly growing Chinese health and fitness market. The event includes a full trade show and a conference which is scheduled in partnership with EuropeActive and features a global speaker lineup.  
[www.fibo-china.cn](http://www.fibo-china.cn)



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**WE ESTIMATE THAT WE HAVE  
110,000 CHILDREN IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS  
THAT HAVE INTRODUCED THE DAILY MILE  
AS PART OF THE EVERYDAY SCHOOL DAY.  
THAT'S 400 SCHOOLS, AND THE FEEDBACK IS GREAT.  
IT'S BEEN A REAL SUCCESS**

# ANDY BURNHAM

**Normalising physical activity and placing it at the heart of primary care.**

**The UK's former secretary of state for health, now Mayor of Manchester, UK**

**has big ambitions for the city. He speaks to Kate Cracknell**

*Physical activity never seemed just to be an agenda point for you, but more a personal passion*

It's very kind of you to say that, because it is a passion. It's been good to me all my life, not just keeping me physically well, but also the mental benefits of it.

I believe both are hugely under-played. My career brings with it a lot of stress – the same goes for many people – and being active helps you keep on top of things. It's good for young people and their development too.

I've always had a simple belief that activity is good for people and also good for society.

*Do we pay it enough attention?*

No, we've under-played the value of physical activity as a society. We've got into a culture of thinking pills and medication are the answer, and they might be in some cases, but they surely have to come after you've put everything else in place in terms of the way you live – including being physically active.

But the Whitehall system doesn't prioritise activity. For me, leaving that world and coming back to things here in Manchester – almost bottom-up through devolution – I've been able to try and put right everything that I saw was wrong in that old world.

*What's happening in Manchester?*

We're working to break down the silos between the different public services, getting them thinking differently about wellbeing and prevention.

That means physical activity in primary schools through the Daily Mile programme, and delivering it through primary care and social prescribing.

Our big target is to get three-quarters of people here physically active by 2025. We're working to make it mainstream – part of everyone's agenda – rather than it being an afterthought, which is often the way the physical activity agenda is seen by decision-makers in the Whitehall machine.

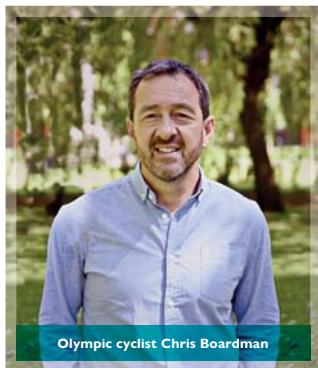
*Tell us more about the Daily Mile*

When I came to office, physical activity was one of the things I wanted to prioritise and the Daily Mile scheme was immediately available, because the team behind *GM Moving* [Greater Manchester's blueprint for physical activity] had already done some work with it before I was elected.

So, we put it at the heart of things, to build the right culture from the beginning, and had a big push to see if we could get more schools to sign up.

And it seems to be working. We estimate we have 110,000 children attending 400 primary schools that have introduced the Daily Mile as part of the school day. The feedback is great.

There isn't hard evidence from a study yet, but I've been out to schools, meeting with heads and teachers, and they talk about improved levels of attention and concentration in class, higher academic achievement, better friendship groups – kids mixing across their groups a bit more. ▶



Olympic cyclist Chris Boardman

- ▶ One teacher also told me the school had got better at after-school sport, because the general levels of fitness had risen: they'd started being more successful in some of the inter-school competitions.

So, it seems to be doing what we hoped it would do – delivering benefits across the board: health, educational benefits, sporting benefits, and also just general levels of happiness and wellbeing.

#### **Are you aiming to build further on this initiative?**

Some of the primary schools doing the Daily Mile have innovative mental health first aid going on alongside the Daily Mile – interesting stuff around looking after each other, talking about your feelings – it's ground-breaking.

We're now running another pilot called Mentally Healthy Schools. It's for primary and secondary schools and is focused around a culture of mental health and wellbeing. It's going to be working on counselling and providing independent support in schools – third sector organisations, based within schools that students can go to. But we can link this to the physical activity agenda as well: schools in the pilot are being encouraged to increase levels of physical activity, giving more opportunities to be active.

#### **Should we focus more on the mental health benefits of activity?**

These benefits are more immediate, aren't they? When you come back from a run, you feel mentally better than when you went out. The physical benefits may be more gradual and incremental, but mental benefits are instant.

I recently did the Boston marathon, and because of my diary, I had to get into a regime of going out on early morning runs. But I felt so much better for doing it. I'd got into the bad habit of doing my runs late in the evenings in the past, but when I forced myself to get out at 6.00am,

the feeling I then had during the day was great, I felt so much better at work. The challenge now is to try and carry on with the regime, now the marathon is over.

Also in this area of mental health, studies show that high levels of physical activity can delay the onset of dementia, or where there is early-stage dementia, can improve people's quality of life and responsiveness.

With mental health being the 21st century health issue, as I believe it is, it follows that physical activity has to be the first primary care offer for good mental health.

#### **You talk about making activity mainstream.**

##### **How will you do this in Manchester?**

This follows on from the Daily Mile, because that initiative works for many reasons – one of them being that kids are in their ordinary clothes and shoes. It's done in an informal way without any fuss.

The idea that you have to put on shorts and trainers to do physical activity is a barrier for some people. This is where Chris Boardman and the work he's doing comes in.

The figures Chris quotes are that 250 million journeys of less than 1km are taken across the Greater Manchester area every year by car. That's alarming, but it's a product of the fact that the car has shaped town planning for decades. If you look at our streets, there's a lot of pavement parking, but the pedestrian infrastructure is poor in comparison.

We have to make it easier for people to do more of these journeys of up to a mile by bike or on foot, so they build exercise into their day.

That's what Chris Boardman's work is about. If you put quality infrastructure in place at a community level, you lift levels of activity across the board. This won't only be people putting their trainers on and going for a run, but also people walking to the shops or local amenities rather than getting in the car as they are now.

PHOTO: GREATER SPORT



The Daily Mile sees kids taking part in activity in 400 schools each day





Wilmslow Road Cycleway, part of the Greater Manchester Bee Network

#### **What will that quality infrastructure look like?**

Chris is about to publish the updated Bee Network – a Greater Manchester-wide map of new, high-quality cycling and walking provision. We've backed Chris with a very big budget of £160m to make this happen.

The Bee Network is about creating a network of segregated, designated cycling facilities. The test Chris sets for the infrastructure is: Is it good enough for a competent 12-year-old? And importantly, would their parents be confident to let them use it without supervision?

Chris is also about to give his recommendations on a bike hire scheme for Greater Manchester, with an

emphasis on electric bikes. The geography of Greater Manchester is such that, once you get to our outlying boroughs, it's more up and down; electric bikes could give people that extra incentive to give it a try.

And then, in terms of walking, we have a flagship scheme on Oxford Road – the corridor that links the city centre and our universities. We're working towards a 'Streets for All' principle, whereby you separate out space for pedestrians that's distinct from that used by cyclists which in turn is distinct from road space for vehicles. We're doing a lot of work to come up with urban planning designs that give each type of road user their own designated, safe space. ►

THE ISSUE **HOLDING THINGS BACK IS NOT GPS' LACK OF BELIEF IN THE POWER OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY – IT'S THE LACK OF A QUALITY OFFER THEY CAN REFER TO. WE NEED TO LOOK AT THE SUPPLIER SIDE, SO ALL GPS HAVE ACCESS TO A GOOD QUALITY PROVIDER OF EXERCISE**



**Greater Manchester is transforming its streets to encourage people to walk or cycle rather than drive. Olympian Chris Boardman is leading a £160m investment in cycling infrastructure**

- ▶ Stockport is the most advanced in this regard: we have a dedicated pedestrian and cycling bridge planned that goes over one of the main roads. There's some really innovative thinking starting to take place when it comes to good design around public access and facilities.

We've also suggested a policy, through Transport for the North, that every transport-related project – be it road, rail or tram – should have cycling and walking provision built in.

One slight challenge is that, outside London, we don't have powers to penalise pavement parking in the same way. And it's unbelievable how big an issue this is in terms of the restriction it places on older and disabled people and young parents with pushchairs. It really limits people's mobility because they just can't get out and about. There's a lot of thinking going on around these issues.

We're also trying to knit these challenges into the broader regeneration agenda around town centres. We're working to move the burden of development away from green space and back to town centres, recognising that they won't be predominantly retail centres any more and that they need to be more residentially-focused, with more high-density properties. That's where we're going from a policy point of view, and Chris Boardman has then come in with a wide range of exciting ideas that can knit some of this together.

#### **What are the other key areas of focus?**

Our target is for three-quarters of the population to be active by 2025, and the biggest stimulus to get us toward this could be social prescribing [doctors prescribing exercise]. It could be the best vehicle to move the numbers.

We have devolution here with regard to the health service, so we potentially have more opportunity than anywhere else in the UK to make social prescribing part of the GP offer [ie, medical interventions offered by the UK government's National Health Service (NHS)].

What I mean by this is, can we get to a point where exercise referral – linked to a full package of nutritional advice and counselling – is the default option as a starting point, rather than us turning immediately to medication?

I'd like to think the 21st century NHS would offer lifestyle support before it offers anti-depressants or medication. The Daily Mile is a great programme, but obviously it only touches a certain number of people.

If physical activity was placed at the heart of primary care, we'd be in a different league in terms of health.

Just an example of that might be building on the Parkrun principle. Could we encourage a parkwalk? Could we create a culture of collective physical activity in our different localities? If Parkrun is – let's say, 9.00am on a Saturday morning – could we do a parkwalk at



Above: the Stockport interchange and cycling and walking bridge. Right, the Bee Network. The bee is the symbol of the city



12.00noon on a Tuesday for people who are over 60 or other target groups?

How can we build a culture of physical activity in our communities by creating achievable options, with doctors as the key referral point for people to get access to those opportunities?

### **How can we encourage doctors to act as a gateway to activity?**

The big breakthrough, I think, would be if we could amend the QOF (Quality Outcomes Framework) within the GP contract – the agreement between government and doctors – to give doctors a direct incentive to increase activity referrals – not just here in Greater Manchester through devolution, but nationally. I'm very clear about the physical and mental health benefits of activity, and it's frustrating that the National Health Service constantly wants a huge evidence base before it will do anything.

But I think the issue holding things back is not so much GPs' belief in the power of physical activity – it's more that there isn't a consistent, good quality offer that they can easily refer to in every locality. We need to look at the supplier side, so every cluster of GPs has a recognised, good quality provider of exercise that they can easily refer people to.

I think we need NICE to give us some clear guidance on exercise referral schemes too: which provide the best results and how are they organised? What do the best exercise referral courses look like – what characteristics do they have? Then, when you're commissioning at a local level, you know what good practice looks like.



At the moment, it's ad hoc. You never get the same focus on exercise referral as you do on psychological therapies, for example. It isn't seen as clinically critical.

### **Are you seeing any promising signs out there?**

The Health Secretary has spoken about social prescribing, so I feel encouraged by that. There's a growing focus on mental health too, particularly the mental health of young people. I also think the Clean Air Debate is an interesting one to watch, as that could give a real boost to levels of physical activity. And we're seeing encouraging statements being made by Ministers around cycling: they've certainly picked up on what Chris Boardman has been doing for us here in Manchester.

So, there are interesting things happening, but it needs to turn into real, practical support. Cycling and walking are still the last things on the agenda and they shouldn't be.

I do think, if everyone looks at all of the different issues, surely they have to ask themselves: 'What's the most cost-effective way of helping people?' And it has to





Greater Manchester now has some of the best sport and recreation facilities in the UK



- be a much more structured approach to physical activity offered within the NHS – it has to be. I live in hope that there will come a moment when the NHS wakes up to this in a very big way. It feels to me that the penny is nearly dropping, but it hasn't quite dropped yet.

#### **Does responsibility lie with government?**

That's such a good question, because the great thing about physical activity is that it avoids the Nanny State argument. OK, you're saying people should be active, but once they're on that path, they don't need to be told what to do – they're on their own journey.

I've always said you'll make better choices around what you're eating and drinking, and whether or not you're smoking, if you're physically active. You just feel more in control of things. I always used to ask the Department of Health why it would throw billions into smoking cessation but not physical activity. Because actually, if you put people on a smoking cessation course, their chances of completing it are much higher if they're physically active before they start.

The Health Service still goes for those treatment options, but it should be piling the effort into physical activity. I personally believe that moving from inactivity

to activity is an easier change to make than going from unhealthy to healthy eating, from excessive to moderate drinking, from heavy to light or no smoking.

The easiest change to make in your life is to become more active. It's a catalytic change: you'll probably then make better choices about eating, drinking, smoking and maybe other lifestyle-related things as well.

#### **Is it really that easy to go from inactive to active?**

I'm talking about things like the Daily Mile and the work Chris Boardman is doing. I'm saying: just make movement part of who you are and what you do on a day-to-day basis. And lo and behold, you will start to feel more in control, you'll be more on top of stress.

There was a policy idea pitched to me when I got elected and I don't think it's had the attention it deserves. The idea was for an explicit policy across Greater Manchester that people are allowed to wear their trainers to work, including in meetings. I'm not sure we've got as far as formulating it as a policy, but there's something in that isn't there? About saying it's fine to wear clothes at work that might make physical





**Before and after: Merchants Quay will make provision for cyclists, trams, pedestrians and vehicles**



**Before and after: Levenshulme will be transformed with improved streetscapes**



**I USED TO ASK THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH WHY IT WOULD THROW BILLIONS INTO SMOKING CESSATION BUT NOT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY. BECAUSE ACTUALLY, IF YOU PUT PEOPLE ON A SMOKING CESSATION COURSE, THEIR CHANCES OF COMPLETING IT ARE MUCH HIGHER IF THEY'RE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE BEFORE THEY START**

activity more doable. It's about sending out the message about dressing for physical activity every day. That's also a part of the culture change that's needed.

#### **How can health clubs and leisure centres help?**

I think they have a big part to play in this agenda, offering a structured introduction to exercise. If you've been inactive for years, gyms can provide a pathway back to activity using all the different facilities on offer – helping and guiding people and building their confidence.

Alongside this, how can gyms get in step with technology companies to create an offer that's partly around the gym, but partly around what people are

doing at home and outside of the gym, with great products that really work for people?

If we can get all that knitted together as a proven pathway to activity, gyms could then form a partnership with the NHS, creating that standardised approach to exercise referral. I was talking about – something the NHS recognises as a good, proven way of doing it. It's happening in patches, but it needs to be more structured. At the moment, we're still working in silos. We're not quite joining the dots, I don't think.

There's more that could be done to provide capacity too, to create better exercise referral options on the NHS. I'd like to see that happening across the country. ●



# Build Immersive Training Experiences with Technogym Club 4.0

Technogym's Club 4.0 concept helps operators innovate, with compelling content and all-new classes. We find out about how it's being put to use by operators

**A**t the heart of any successful fitness community is a brand that truly understands its people's goals. Technogym is committed to being that brand.

Technogym's Club 4.0 concept launched at IHRSA 2019 and by combining exciting equipment, digital innovation and complete training programmes, helps operators provide a different fitness experience to each and every customer.

## Training Formats

Technogym offers a range of training formats through its Club 4.0 concept, including: Skillrow, Skillbike and Skillmill (HIIT), other options are the new Biocircuit and Skillathletic concepts, as well as Skillrun classes and Bootcamp.

Trainers benefit from Club 4.0 too – with the professional licenses for each of the formats allowing them to create classes based on performance data as well as engaging training content.

## Evolution Of The Gym Floor

Personalised training experiences are a key way to attract and retain customers. But they now also provide a crucial opportunity to drive revenue and build communities around exercise.

Savvy operators are using Club 4.0 formats to transform the gym floor experience. The technology can help you create a dedicated space in your facility, or develop a standalone studio to maximise the use of your square footage. This flexibility means you can deliver personalised fitness experiences aligned with your business objectives.

## Get more competitive

Market competition from boutique operators means we all need to think outside the box to differentiate our offering. Club 4.0 formats do this by focusing first on the needs of your end user, then by helping you make more of your available staff, space, and time.

One of the unique aspects of Club 4.0 is its use of digital. Technogym utilises the mywellness cloud digital platform to offer class formats that connect all Technogym products and programmes.

This means your users can collect and access all their personal data in the same profile via a mobile app, whether they are in a class, using Technogym equipment in your facility, or outdoors.



The Biocircuit was installed as part of a Club 4.0 upgrade

## CASE STUDY 1:

### Innovation at Everybody Sport and Recreation

■ **Everybody Sport and Recreation** implemented a Club 4.0 format from Technogym to offer a new member experience.

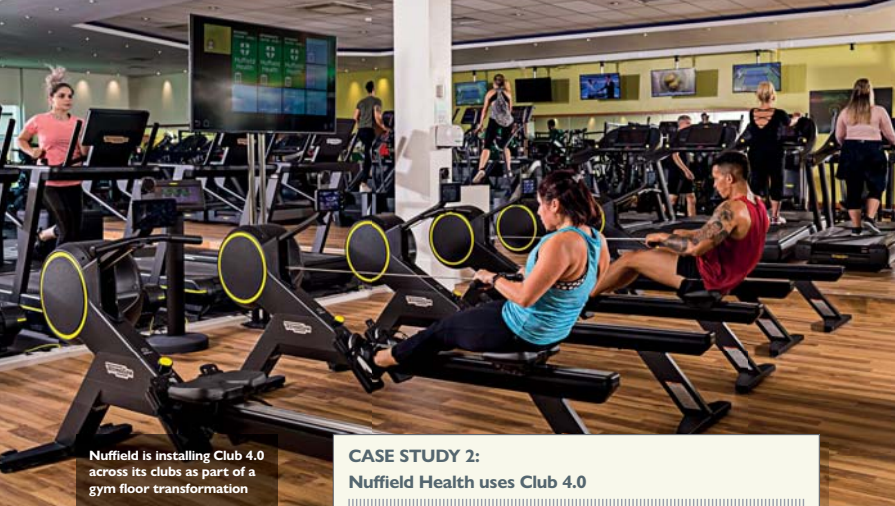
In April, they launched Biocircuit in a dedicated room at Macclesfield Leisure Centre. "Everybody's thrilled with the launch," says Paul Winrow,

director of sport and operations.

"Biocircuit has helped us offer something new and exciting to our members. As a charity, our aim is to continuously provide innovative fitness technology, and Biocircuit is evidence of this. It benefits all our members, whatever their goal."

## Fully connected studios

Operator Fitness Space embraced the opportunity to implement Technogym's digital innovation, with a rollout of 35 connected studios using Teambeats immersive heart rate training experiences. "Data is key to our model," explains Tim Benjamin, CEO and founder. "So this is an extremely powerful addition to our customer experience. It means our fitness coaches and members can make the most of their data, to create better classes and get customers more motivated."



Nuffield is installing Club 4.0 across its clubs as part of a gym floor transformation

## CASE STUDY 2: Nuffield Health uses Club 4.0

■ Nuffield Health's 2018 gym floor transformation project developed new class formats with four new zones, bringing a new dynamic based around each customer's individual levels of power, agility, speed and stamina. To date, 29 Nuffield health clubs have rolled out the new Skillbike, Skillrun, Skillrow and Skill zones. "Member feedback has been fantastic," says Chris Scragg,

regional fitness operations director. "Engagement has increased, but most importantly, the members are experiencing amazing results. This has paved the way for further rollouts of the new class formats" This year, Nuffield Health wants even higher levels of engagement, content and digital connectivity, and Technogym products will be underpinning the delivery of their Connected Health strategy.

"In a tech-driven world, people want to understand what they've achieved in the time they've invested in exercise. The Fitness Space app gives them all this and more. We've found it significantly aids retention and engagement."

**Ready to launch a new format? Technogym provides support during the rollout of any new format, so you can maximise its implementation and success.**

Find out more about the Club 4.0 experience by contacting Technogym on 01344 300236 or emailing [uk\\_info@technogym.com](mailto:uk_info@technogym.com)



*"Operators are using Technogym's Club 4.0 formats to transform the gym floor experience. The technology can help you create a dedicated space, or develop a standalone studio. This flexibility means you can deliver personalised fitness experiences that are aligned with your business objectives"*

## CASE STUDY 3: Inverclyde Leisure's sell-out classes

■ Inverclyde Leisure transformed facility space into a dedicated Club 4.0 Skillbike studio at Waterfront Leisure Centre, creating a concept that differentiates the Waterfront centre from its other facilities. After the 15 Skill bikes were installed, the timetable grew from seven to 30 cycling classes per week.

Class occupancy across the first six months was at 83 per cent. "The Skillbike product and studio has exceeded our expectations on multiple fronts," says CEO Kieron Vango. "These classes are now our most popular group fitness class, and member demand has led to us programming even more."



Skillbike class occupancy of 83% at Waterfront

# CHRIS HEMSWORTH

In the name of work, Australian actor Chris Hemsworth has undergone impressive physical transformations for film roles such as Thor in The Avengers and Marvel films. Inspired by the public's interest in his workouts, he's now created a health and fitness app called Centr that utilises the expertise of his team of world-class experts

*I believe we all have untapped potential. And we all need support to achieve our goals. Centr puts the world's best in the palm of your hand, to help you develop a healthier body, stronger mind, and a happier life*

CHRIS HEMSWORTH



The actor is known  
for his punishing  
cross-training  
exercise regimes ▶



The Centr app has been developed by Hemsworth and his wife, Elsa Pataky (right)



Chris trains with Navy SEAL trainer Joseph Sakoda AKA 'Da Rulk'



If anyone knows a thing or two about getting fit, it's the guy who plays Thor.

Chris Hemsworth has transformed his body to play the

Norse god of thunder in the Marvel films numerous times, reportedly gaining over 20lbs of muscle to play the role.

Audiences around the world have been so impressed with Thor's ripped body that Hemsworth's various workouts have become some of the most popular searches on Google.

Inspired by this overwhelming interest, the 35-year-old Australian actor is now capitalising on his reputation as a god in the gym with a new health and fitness app called Centr.

The app is a personalised digital health and fitness programme curated by Hemsworth, which offers content designed by and featuring members of his team of world-class fitness, nutrition and wellness experts.

"I believe we all have untapped potential," Hemsworth has said. "And we all need support to achieve our goals. Centr puts the world's best experts in the palm of your hand, to help you develop a healthier body, stronger mind, and a happier life."

#### Customised workouts

The Centr programme can be customised to suit any fitness level and a range of dietary or lifestyle needs. Accessible via iOS app, Apple Watch and online, it offers daily workouts, meal plans and meditation, as well as a 24/7 community where users can find support, extra tips and behind-the-scenes extras to improve their quality of life.

The training programme allows users to choose their trainer and set their goals and workout intensity. Workouts can be self-guided or coached, and users can train at the gym or at home in as little as 20 minutes. Workouts include boxing, HIIT, HIRT, functional training, strength training, MMA, boxing and yoga. ●



Centr features Hemsworth's team of world-class fitness, nutrition and wellness experts



Users can choose from three fitness options: 'build muscle', 'get fit and toned' and 'lose weight'



## ■ CENTR BY CHRIS HEMSWORTH

### WHAT'S THE APP ABOUT?

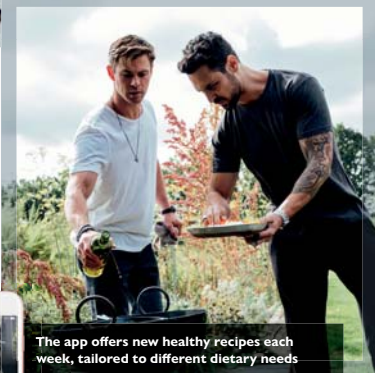
The strapline is Train, Eat, Live. It enables you to 'follow Hemsworth's regime' for between £15.49/m and £93.99/yr with a free seven day trial.

### WHAT ARE THE FITNESS ELEMENTS?

Three options are on offer: 'build muscle', 'get fit and toned' and 'lose weight'. New workouts are loaded every week. Centr's experts include meditation specialist Fabrice Midal; bio-hacker Dr Andy Walshe; Hemsworth's wife, mind body expert Elsa Pataky; trainer Luke Zocchi; stuntman Bobby Holland Hanton; black belt Tiffany Hall; Navy Seal Joseph Sakoda (AKA Da Rulk); boxing coach Michael Olajide Jr; yoga teacher Tahl Rinsky; vegan bodybuilder Torre Washington; pilates teacher Syliva Roberts; kickboxer Jorge Blanco; creator of Foundation Training Dr Eric Goodman; psychotherapist Alexis Naim; celeb trainer Gunnar Peterson; chefs Darren Robertson, Sergio Perera and Dan Churchill; organic farmer Palisa Anderson; yoga teacher Ally Bogard; and nutritionist Simon Hill.

### WHAT ELSE IS ON OFFER?

New recipes are published every week in four categories – vegan, pescetarian, vegetarian and regular, with accompanying detailed shopping lists.



The app offers new healthy recipes each week, tailored to different dietary needs



# POWERFUL PARTNERS

**Signing up members, giving great customer service and driving retention are key to a successful health club business. Ivan Stevenson explains how DFC can drive this process to underpin success**

## What service does DFC offer?

We're a leading payment solutions and revenue management company, which has been running for almost 25 years. Our main purpose is to make our clients' businesses easier by helping them to on-board members, manage and maximise customer revenue. We seek to create a true business partnership with our clients.

To this end, our value proposition has changed over the past few years to become more focused on the customer journey. Whereas we were primarily about revenue management, now we're more about a holistic and consultative approach to the entire customer journey.

## What is the difference between DFC's offering and a payment gateway?

Payment gateways offer a slick online joining process, but they don't offer any further customer service, credit control or reporting. Our value proposition is much more holistic. We're there for the full customer journey: from the birth of the member via the online joining process to credit control and re-engagement if they fall behind with payments.

Our service speeds up the signing-on process and increases the average length of membership by three months. Our call centres can handle thousands of member communications daily, which frees up stakeholders to spend more time on revenue-generating and customer-facing activities.

## What are the main ways in which you support clients?

There are five main ways. Firstly, we take the pressure off regarding billing and have worked hard within our partnerships to create a slick online joining process. An example being that we shaved eight minutes off the joining process for one

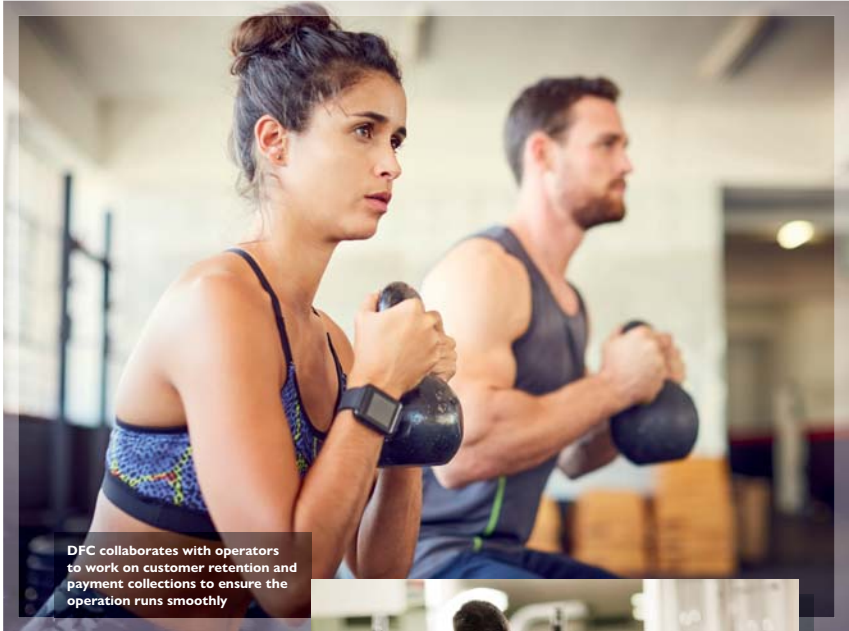


*"We pride ourselves on our full service, from joining customers at the front end, to stopping them from falling off the back end. We're constantly listening to clients, so we can continue to improve our service, working in partnership with them"*

Ivan Stevenson, DFC



The company supports fitness operators in onboarding new members



**DFC collaborates with operators to work on customer retention and payment collections to ensure the operation runs smoothly**

of our clients in the Trust sector, which allows them to sell more.

Secondly, we can take over customer service, dealing with the bulk of enquiries through our state-of-the-art-telephone platforms. Calls are dealt with quickly and efficiently, with answer rates in the high 90 per cents and more than 80 per cent answered within 45 seconds. Added to this, we can deal with the electronic communications, freeing operators up to spend more time on revenue-generating activities.

Thirdly, credit control. This can be a time consuming and not particularly pleasant job for operators, and is another service we can control. If a member hasn't paid, they receive an SMS within 24 hours and our MyPayments technology allows them to self serve and bring their account up to date. It's about re-engaging with them and getting them back – around 50 per cent of people who fall into arrears and use MyPayments come back.

Fourthly, reporting is another valuable service we offer, we hold a lot of data about our clients' commercial activity, so can provide them with valuable management information about their members, including good and bad payers.

Finally, we can integrate with operators'



chosen CRM system, ensuring everything is automated, freeing up their time and creating a smooth customer journey.

We pride ourselves on our full service, from joining customers at the front end, to stopping them from falling off the back end. We're constantly listening to our clients when it comes to what they want and how we can continue to improve our service to work in partnership with them.

# DFC

Revenue Management  
Solutions | a TSG solution

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# Instructor PAY

**With participation in group exercise growing fast, the role of the instructor has never been more important. Is this reflected in their pay, or does the industry need to up its rates? Kath Hudson opens the conversation**



**Great instructors can make people fall in love with exercise**

**D**riven by boutiques, the role of group exercise is growing in prominence, with many clubs recognising that classes are a great place to build community, engagement and retention.

The high level of skill involved in delivering a large class is being recognised and rewarded handsomely in the higher end of the sector, with some boutiques paying instructors up to £100,000 a year.

A new boutique studio – GRIT BXNG – which is due to open in New York later this summer, has announced it will pay US\$1000 an hour to world class, passionate, inspirational trainers who can provide a transformational experience.

The instructor experience director at Les Mills, Jean-ann Marnoch, is delighted that GRIT BXNG has recognised this is a skilful job: “Not everyone has the skill of working to music – 20 per cent fail our courses,” she says. “Instructors are the ones who can make people fall in love with exercise and lead healthier lives, and this should be recognised.”

While the business model of boutiques makes it possible to pay the best instructors high wages, what about public sector operators dealing with crushing budget cuts? And other parts of the industry where margins are tighter? How should clubs approach the pay issue? We ask the experts.



Good instructors create community – you can't do that with a treadmill, says Marnoch

[CLICK TO READ](#)  
Les Mills white paper on instructors

## Jean-ann Marnoch

### Les Mills UK: instructor experience director

**A Les Mills** white paper on instructors has just been released and covers everything to do with instructors, including qualifications, how operators can value them more, how involved they are in operations and, of course, pay – which led to some lively discussion.

Boutique operators absolutely understand how important their instructors are to the member experience and the impact they have on retention, and so are happy to pay them well – £100,000 a year in some cases. Conversely, many of the big chains haven't increased their rates of pay for many years. It appears that the reason for this is that wages are sometimes set by people who build the budgets and are not aware of the value, or importance, of instructors to their members.

Unless this changes, I predict these operators will start to find it difficult to recruit and are in danger of losing the good instructors, along with their loyal following of members.

One of the reasons Les Mills feels it's so important to invest in good

instructors – both in terms of pay and ongoing training – is that group exercise is such a good place to build retention.

Good instructors are able to create a community in their class, connecting members to each other and themselves, which in turn leads to retention. You can't build this type of community around



“Wages are sometimes set by people who build the budgets and are not aware of the value of instructors. Unless this changes, I predict these operators are in danger of losing good instructors, along with their loyal following of members”

a treadmill. Boutiques have recognised this, but many other operators have not.

There are currently two main remuneration models. The boutiques tend to pay a wage and then increase this according to how many people the instructors can draw to their classes, while chains tend to pay a flat rate whether the classes have three or 300 people in them. I don't think it's workable to introduce a standardised rate across the industry, because there are so many variables between clubs and their offerings, but I think a good model is to pay more to the best qualified instructors and those with the biggest appeal. Those instructors who aren't as popular should also be supported to improve their performance: Les Mills offers so much training, as well as a service offering personal feedback for videos.



## Mark Talley

### Everyone Active: group fitness manager

**The fitness sector** undoubtedly has a reputation for paying less than many other markets, but in reality, rates are broadly comparable with other leisure and hospitality sectors.

The industry has always given a lot of attention to the topic of instructor pay. Operators have previously teamed up with ukactive, CIMSPA and other auditing bodies to review instructor earnings and advise on appropriate remuneration. At Everyone Active we have always been mindful of these types of sector projects when reviewing our remuneration structures.

Everyone Active has made a number of internal policy changes in recent years to establish and promote clear progression pathways for staff, which in turn, lead to opportunities for higher pay. Level 2 instructors are supported to gain Level 3 qualifications and beyond.

The attainment of additional skills provides a wealth of progression opportunities, from personal training and instructing group fitness classes to supervisory and management roles. There's a natural correlation between

"Everyone Active's mission is to make activity accessible for everyone. Our instructor pay reflects market rates and demand for certain skills, while also ensuring consumer costs remain affordable across the organisation"



this development and an instructor's capacity to increase their pay.

Pay undeniably plays a part in an instructor's decision to stay with us. However, in our experience, pay is just one of several variables that affect our ability to attract and retain high quality instructors. There are other components that have a significant

impact: just like members, instructors are attracted to an organisation based on the quality of its fitness facilities and overall environment. They also buy in to the values of a business and select their employer based on job satisfaction and professional fulfilment.

Everyone Active's mission is to make activity accessible for everyone. Our instructor pay reflects market rates and demand for certain skills, while also ensuring consumer costs remain affordable across the organisation.

Operating our community-focused services with a commercial head ensures we're able to offer wages that compete with private providers, while successfully navigating the changing landscape of local authority leisure provision, which is increasingly characterised by tighter budgets and growing demand for services. ●

## Andy Tee

### V1be: co-founder

**Standard market forces** are in place, so on the whole I think the industry pays its instructors fairly. However, pay is only one factor in attracting and retaining the best staff: facilities, training, progression opportunities and how they are treated by operators are all strong factors in retaining the best instructors.

In my personal experience, the rise of boutiques has led to an increase in wages, as teaching at a boutique studio often requires many hours of studio-specific training, which a standard aerobics or basic dance-based class might not.

By definition, the best instructors are required for the top-end studios, as they drive the delivery of the product and this fact is reflected in the remuneration.

"Were wages to be pushed higher, studios might struggle to pay and it could lead to an increase in virtual classes. On the flip side, it might lead to more people entering the industry as instructors"



Were wages to be pushed higher, I think studios might struggle to pay and it could lead to an increase in virtual classes. On the flip side, it might lead to more people entering the industry as class instructors, as opposed to the recent surge that we've seen in people qualifying as personal trainers.

I do think it's important for operators to appreciate their instructors: a good instructor is worth their weight in gold; it's important to treat them as such and never take them for granted.





Power Plates can be used for group fitness in dedicated studios

## Discover the latest vision from Power Plate

Power Plate celebrates its 20th anniversary with a fresh perspective on product relevance, positioning and experience. New UK head of sales, Iain Murray, shares his thoughts on future direction from the unique perspective of a former operator and personal advocate

**W**ith 15 years of senior health club management experience with Fitness First, David Lloyd and Virgin Active, plus firsthand experience of healing a serious injury using Power Plate, Iain brings a new outlook to one of the longest-standing, consistently performing products on the market.

### What do you see as Power Plate's biggest challenge?

Power Plate isn't utilised to its full capacity in the industry – if it was, the results would be there to see.

That's because the product's biggest strength is also its biggest challenge.

As a total body solution that amplifies results, Power Plate can enhance any movement by working muscles harder than if the same movement were to be performed on the ground without it.

This means it can support any training style, application or goal and allow users to prepare faster, perform better and recover quicker.



*"Having been told I would never play football again, Power Plate helped me overcome my injury to such an extent that I'm still playing today"*

Iain Murray, Power Plate

This makes the product incredibly versatile, yet also creates barriers to use.

From my years in club management I'm aware that teams understand the concept of vibration training, but not always the application. Compounded with a persistent churn rate, training and education of staff can get left behind.

### How are you overcoming this?


We're working with customers to map out where Power Plate fits with each brand and customer journey. Giving the product its place within these helps frame what each club utilises the product for and then – importantly – where it fits into their story and experience.

This leads into the education and engagement aspect – our team offers both staff and member training designed to ensure operators have the skills, knowledge and confidence required to utilise Power Plate.

The strategy is all about activation – getting as many staff and members on the product (both old and new) to experience it for themselves and learn how to get the most out of it.

Once understanding increases, we see a rise in confidence. When staff and members are comfortable on a Power Plate, we start to see adherence and then the emergence of product advocates.

That was my own experience of Power Plate. As a David Lloyd team



**In addition to working for all age groups and fitness levels, Power Plate is going back to its scientific roots in health and wellness**

member, I was introduced to the product many years ago and shown how I could use it for rehabilitation and ongoing maintenance of the knees after injury.

Having been told I would never play football again, Power Plate helped me overcome my injury to such an extent that I'm still playing today.

I moved my routine workout onto the plate, as well as my preparation and recovery, and the rest is history.

### **How can operators activate Power Plates they already have?**

PTs crave to deliver added value to their sessions and members are looking for unique or different training options. This can be achieved by simply creating more of an experience around after-session recovery in a dedicated space on Power Plate.

Preparation can also be done in this way, as indeed can an entire workout.

Delivering dynamic training, variety and progression leads to results and gets more clients interested in doing something different too. This in turn improves retention and overall profitability.

With millennials and Gen Z making up a huge proportion of health club members, but not being familiar with Power Plate and demanding different, experience-led sessions, we've developed a specific new suite of small group training programmes.

These have been designed with a variety of demographic groups and industry trends in mind and have been



developed based on research into the social, motivational and accountability drivers that determine exercise choice.

These include Burn, Strong, X and Zen programmes, with regular new content for a ready-to-roll solution.

We're seeing these small group training concepts being implemented as part of a total club or boutique solution, as well as in studios where Power Plate is the standalone product.

### **Where are the growth opportunities for Power Plate?**

We're having success in driving member experience, as the product is such a great tool for engagement. This is key to experience and Power Plate is the perfect platform for that – either for inductions, pre- or post-workout or for entire sessions.

We're also seeing clubs move their Plates to fit into a particular journey or experience they're delivering, either as part of the main gym, or studio or within boutiques dedicated to Power Plate.

They're starting to think about how to integrate what's admittedly a specialist product into their offering to help

differentiate, deliver on experience and drive retention and profitability.

Clubs are always focused on sales, and the feel of a product can really help when trying to sell to a new client. There's no better product than Power Plate to illustrate this, as it can demonstrate immediate results – a 30 second stretch is a simple but effective showcase.

We're also coming back to our scientific roots with more health and wellness applications. As these areas continue to grow, the lines between medical, rehabilitation and fitness are merging. Meeting the needs of these populations requires a new strategy not only from Power Plate but our whole industry. ●

**POWER**  **PLATE.**

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# EURO MILLIONS

The fitness market in Europe is entering a new phase of growth according to the *European Health & Fitness Market Report 2019* by EuropeActive and Deloitte. HCM reports



Five years ago, EuropeActive adopted its goal of the industry achieving 80 million members by 2025 – with about 46 million members reported at the time.

The industry is still on track to reach this target, as total membership within the European Union, Norway, Russia, Switzerland, Turkey and Ukraine increased by 3.5 per cent in 2018, to 62.2 million at the end of the year.

As Karsten Hollasch, head of consumer business at Deloitte Germany and co-author of the report, says: "The European fitness club market continued its growth trend in 2018, but significant potential remains, as only 7.8 per cent of Europeans have a fitness club membership."

"With the development and roll-out of innovative fitness concepts and the integration of new technologies, we expect membership to increase over the next years – towards EuropeActive's goal of 80 million members by 2025."

Depending on the development of the US market, which reported revenues of €26.6bn (US\$ 30.0bn) in 2017, according to the 2018 IHRSA Global Report, the European fitness market (€27.2bn) could again be the largest fitness market in the world.



*"With the development and roll-out of innovative fitness concepts and the integration of new technologies, we expect membership to increase over the next years – towards EuropeActive's goal of 80 million members by 2025."*

## MOST IMPROVED

Basic-Fit had the highest revenue growth in 2018, in absolute terms with an increase of

**€76m to €402m**

and in relative terms, with

**23.3 per cent** growth and a

move from **sixth to second** place in the European revenue ranking

At constant foreign exchange rates, the European market size increased by 3.4 per cent compared to 2017. At actual foreign exchange rates, year-on-year growth amounted to 1.2 per cent, driven by negative exchange rate effects from some countries.

While the low-cost segment continues to grow in most markets, there is also an increasing number of boutiques and growth in offerings such as functional fitness, personal training and small group training. Digitalisation and fitness intermediaries are increasingly shaping the fitness landscape.

## LATEST RANKINGS

Among leading operators, German discount chain McFit Global Group – recently rebranded as RSG – retained its top position in terms of membership, with 1.95 million members across 288 clubs.

These operate under brands McFit (253 clubs), John Reed (20 clubs) and High5 (15 clubs). The company attributes the increase of 220,000 members over the previous year to strong campaigns, as well as the introduction of live classes in January 2018 and expansion of its product offering and target audience.





Above and right: RSG (formerly McFit)'s range of fitness concepts has contributed to its number one ranking for size



**While Sweden (21.6 per cent) and Norway (21.4 per cent) have the highest ratios of fitness club members relative to the total population, Ukraine (2.9 per cent) and Turkey (2.6 per cent) have low penetration rates, which could indicate potential for growth**

Ranking second is Netherlands-based low-cost chain Basic-Fit (1.84 million members), which generated by far the highest organic membership growth of all operators, with 316,000 additional members. This was largely due to the opening of 92 new clubs in France.

British low-cost operator Pure Gym ranks third, after increasing its membership by 85,000 to 1.01 million in 2018, becoming the third European fitness operator to reach 1 million members.

After these three market leaders come UK-based The Gym Group in fourth, German operators Clever Fit in fifth and FitX in sixth place.

Seven of the top 10 operators by membership can be considered low-cost operators. In addition, two others in the top 10 – SATS Group and Migros Group – have a low-cost brand in their portfolios, while five low-cost operators (McFit Group, Basic-Fit, Pure Gym, Fitness World and Clever Fit) also rank among the top 10 in terms of revenue.

UK-based premium operator, David Lloyd Leisure (DLL), again tops the ranking in Europe, with revenues of €545 million – an increase of €62 million over the previous year. DLL further expanded its international presence in 2018

through the acquisition of the City Green Sports and Health Club in France near Lake Geneva, as well as the acquisition of Health City's Bad Homburg Club in Germany.

At the end of 2018, DLL operated 114 clubs in eight countries – including 99 clubs in the UK – with a total of 609,000 members, which places the company seventh in the European membership ranking. The company is also currently opening a club in India in partnership with Talwalkars (see HCM July 2019 for a full report).

#### LOW-COST, HIGH INCOME

However, revenue growth was primarily driven by the low-cost businesses. Dutch operator, Basic-Fit, had the highest revenue growth, both in absolute terms with an increase of €76 million and in relative terms, with 23.3 per cent growth and a move from sixth to second place in the European revenue ranking. Basic-Fit had total revenues of €402 million.

McFit/RSG moved from fifth to fourth place in the ranking, following a 7.6 per cent increase in revenues, while fellow low-cost operators PureGym increased revenues by 12.8 per cent, Fitness World by 19.2 per cent and Clever Fit by 22.0 per cent, solidifying their top 10 rankings with double-digit growth. ►



Pure Gym is now third in Europe in terms of membership numbers

- By comparison, premium operators such as the Switzerland-based Migros Group, with minus 1.2 per cent, Nordic market leader SATS Group at plus 0.3 per cent, and UK-based companies Nuffield Health with plus 2.9 per cent and Virgin Active with minus 4.9 per cent, displayed only slight increases or even slight decreases in revenue. This was also affected by negative exchange rate effects in Switzerland, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

### MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS

SATS Group, L'Appart Fitness, Keep Cool and SportCity/Fit For Free are just some fitness club operators involved in mergers and acquisitions in the European health and fitness market over the last calendar year. In fact, 24 major M&A deals were recorded in 2018, the highest number since the *European Health and Fitness Market Report* has been published and an increase of four transactions over the previous year.

"The consistently high number of mergers and acquisitions underlines the notion that health and fitness remains a highly attractive sector for strategic and financial investors alike," says Hollasch. "By supporting the innovation and expansion of fitness operators, these investors help the health and fitness industry to achieve further growth."

Regarding investor types, 18 of the 24 transactions represented a sale to a strategic investor – ie, another market participant. In addition, five businesses were sold to financial investors, indicating the interest of investors in the fitness industry, while one company was sold to a private investor.

The large number of transactions from founders to strategic investors indicates an increasing market consolidation. However, consolidation in the operator market remains low compared to the commercial fitness equipment market, where the four leading companies – Life Fitness, Technogym, Johnson Health Tech and Precor – account for an estimated 75 per cent of the global and 86 per cent of the European commercial equipment market.

### GERMANY – STILL THE BIGGEST

With a membership growth of 4.5 per cent to 11.1 million members, Germany strengthened its position as the country with the highest membership, ahead of the UK (9.9 million), France (6.0 million), Italy (5.5 million) and Spain (5.3 million).

## NUMBER CRUNCHING

### EUROPE TOTAL MEMBERS:

**62.2m**

### NO 1 COUNTRY:

Germany **11.1m** members

### NO 1 COMPANY:

McFit/RSG **1.95m** members

### EUROPE TOTAL REVENUES:

**€27.2bn**

### NO 1 COUNTRY:

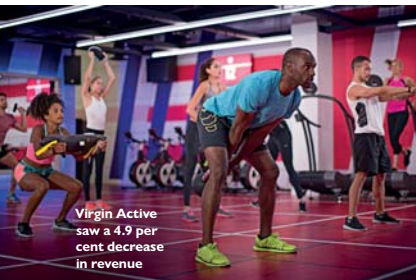
Germany **€5.3bn** total revenues

### NO 1 COMPANY:

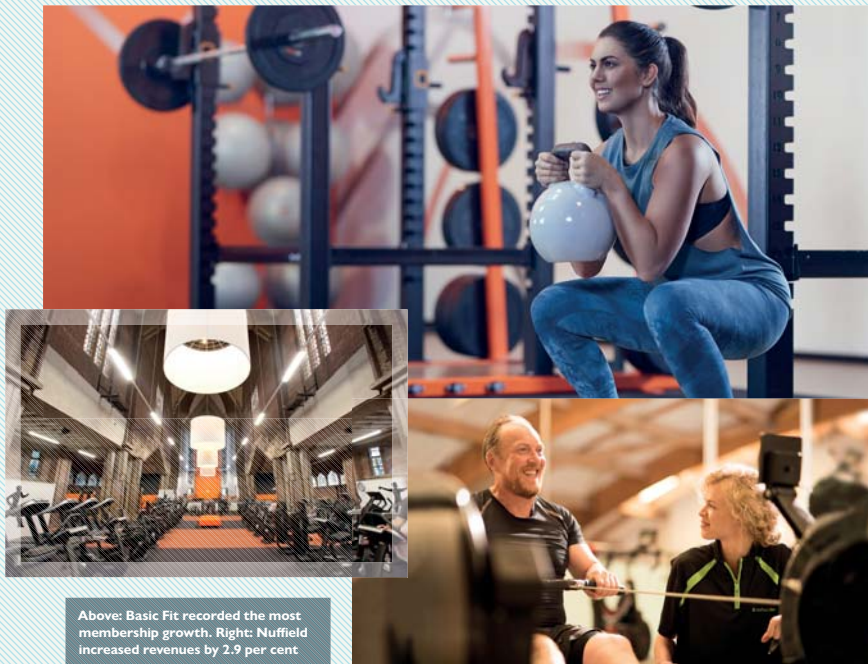
David Lloyd Leisure **€545m** revenue

### PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION

with membership: **7.8%**



Virgin Active saw a 4.9 per cent decrease in revenue



Above: Basic Fit recorded the most membership growth. Right: Nuffield increased revenues by 2.9 per cent

At the same time, Germany ranked first in terms of market size, with total revenues of 5.3bn, according to research conducted by DSSV, DHfPG and Deloitte. However, this was partly due to negative exchange rate effects in the United Kingdom, as the UK market grew by 4.3 per cent at constant currency, compared to a 2.5 per cent growth in Germany.

Together, the top five countries represent nearly two thirds of the entire European market in terms of memberships and revenues. With penetration rates of about 9-15 per cent, these countries generally offer further market growth potential and are expected to be major drivers towards the set goal of 80 million total members in Europe by 2025. While Sweden (21.6 per cent) and Norway (21.4 per cent) have the highest ratios of fitness club members relative to the total population, Ukraine (2.9 per cent) and Turkey (2.6 per cent) have relatively low penetration rates, which could – in combination with their large populations – indicate potential for growth.

## MACRO TRENDS

"Further growth in the fitness market will be driven by favourable macro-trends, such as increasing health awareness, but more importantly by innovative fitness concepts and business models that meet customer needs," explains Hollasch. "The definition of the industry as a purely stationary fitness market is over: existing fitness concepts are being augmented by digital offerings and new market participants are developing entirely new purely digital concepts."

Thus, technological innovations such as mobile fitness apps, wearables and online fitness as well as offline activities like outdoor group workouts, provide opportunities to be physically active outside a brick-and-mortar gym and continue to gain popularity in many European markets.

While these offerings might be considered a threat by some operators, many fitness providers also see opportunities and have started to incorporate these concepts into their business models.

With regard to EuropeActive's goal of 80 million members by 2025, Herman Rutgers, board member at EuropeActive and co-author of the report, remains optimistic, saying: "2018 was another year of growth. It was interesting to see positive developments across all market segments; value, premium as well as mid-market. Additionally, we saw more small- and medium-sized facilities opening closer to where people live and work, making fitness more accessible. We remain confident we'll reach the goal of 80 million members by 2025." ●



## READ THE REPORT

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miha's EMS workouts  
generate faster  
neuromuscular  
adaptation

# THE FUTURE OF FITNESS IS ELECTRIC

We catch up with Phil Horton, country director for miha bodytec in the UK to talk about the growth of EMS training and to find out what's next for the UK market

## **Why is Germany so far ahead of the UK and other European markets when it comes to the development of EMS training?**

With miha bodytec's roots in Germany, it's not surprising that EMS is an enormously popular training method there.

In fact, there are more than 250 EMS studios in Munich alone.

Our data shows that at the end of 2017, Germany had 1,064 EMS studios, amounting to 11.8 per cent of all German fitness facilities and growing.

When applied on a European scale, the potential is huge. This data translates into a potential for about 7,000 studios.

The market in the UK is really just beginning. If you look at historical growth in Germany, you can clearly see that the UK EMS market is following a similar trajectory. Up until the last 12 months, the core market for EMS in the UK has been mobile PTs, however, it's now expanding to boutiques and studios across the country. This is the exact same trend that occurred in Germany as the market there developed.

While the idea of working out in a specialised suit covered in electrodes is still

*"EMS training is a great opportunity to differentiate your offering in a crowded fitness market. The kit requires very little space and the business model can be extremely lucrative"*

Phil Horton,  
miha bodytec







**Only one 20 minute workout a week is needed, appealing to time-poor consumers who want to get or stay fit**

a new concept for many Brits, awareness is steadily increasing. Every major player in the UK is planning to expand in 2019 and we're starting to see international players enter the market. It's an exciting time!

#### **Why should the fitness industry pay attention to EMS training?**

EMS training is a great opportunity to differentiate your offering in a crowded fitness market. The kit requires very little space and the low start-up costs make it an appealing offer for many PTs and operators. The business model can also be

extremely lucrative. High performing EMS studios operate with just 100 people per machine, which is a very achievable target, compared to the 500+ members that most studios require to be profitable.

The retention rate is also remarkably high – more than 85 per cent. Backed by years of scientific research, coupled with irrefutable results, clients are quick to hand over their money when they see the results of this specialised form of training. And with sessions lasting just 20 minutes, you can facilitate more clients per hour, increasing your earnings dramatically.

#### **What sort of clients does EMS suit?**

EMS can work for a huge variety of people. It works beautifully for people who don't like the typical gym environment. Sessions are always one-on-one or one-on-two, so the personal training aspect is appealing to people who find the gym floor or group exercise studio intimidating. Similarly, it's a great form of exercise for unconditioned or sedentary people. It's low-impact and low-commitment. One 20-minute session once per week is all that's required for people to see results. For that reason, it's also a

## **■ ALL ABOUT ELECTRICAL MUSCLE STIMULATION**

EMS has been around for centuries. The earliest known use was by the Egyptians 2,000 years ago. They discovered the electrical properties of fish and used it to treat ailments.

It wasn't until the 1970s that EMS was used in physiotherapy, fitness and muscle strengthening and since then, the industry has evolved dramatically.

Today, modern EMS training equipment uses electrical impulses to stimulate muscles, causing them to contract harder for longer. miha says the result is a safe, ultra-

efficient 20-minute workout that delivers quick, noticeable results in a fraction of the time.

miha bodytec is leading the way with unrivalled technology that's growing rapidly across Europe. The name miha originated from Maschinen GmbH, a company which has developed and manufactured innovative products for the sports and medical industry for over 40 years. miha bodytec first launched in 2007 and has remained the world market and technology leader in EMS training ever since.

***"Modern EMS training equipment uses electrical impulses to stimulate muscles, causing them to contract harder for longer. The result is a safe, ultra-efficient 20-minute workout"***





EMS sessions are conducted on a one-on-one or one-on-two basis to ensure results



All equipment complies with the stringent DIN standard for medical electrical systems



- great option for busy professionals who can't make time for the gym.

On the flip-side, EMS can also be a great tool for recreational or elite athletes looking to gain an extra edge in their training. This is why many professional athletes have used EMS training to bring them into top form. Whether the sport of choice is tennis, triathlon, running or football, EMS training can be effective for any type of athlete.

It can also be effective for an older clientele. Despite the well-established benefits of physical activity for older adults, seniors age 75-plus are among the most sedentary of Brits. Most older adults won't participate in traditional forms of fitness for several reasons: physical limitations, the intimidating atmosphere, the noise levels and the lack of affordable supervision.

EMS training removes all these barriers, providing an efficient alternative to increase or maintain muscle mass and function. This low-impact workout is accessible, completely safe and it's also scientifically proven to reduce sarcopenia.

#### Is EMS as effective as it sounds?

Yes, EMS is scientifically proven and backed by numerous studies that prove that this type of training effectively targets fast twitch muscle fibres, increasing hypertrophy. Results show improvements in speed performance by 30 per cent over a 3-6 week period for elite athletes, as well as advances in maximal strength and

***"We're at the beginning of the journey with EMS training in the UK. The benefits and applications of this type of training are vast, and there's an enormous commercial opportunity for both PTs and operators"***

jumping power. Elite athletes like Usain Bolt have been known to use EMS as a safe, effective way to increase performance across strength, speed and endurance.

However, EMS isn't limited to the elite. A recreational runner training with EMS posted improvements in her 5km and 10km time of 45 and 90 seconds respectively in just 6 weeks. When EMS is combined with sport-specific training, like running, athletes benefit from the cumulative effects and generate faster neuromuscular adaptations.

EMS is a well-researched and established technology. Specially structured sessions are always led by a certified trainer to ensure a safe and effective workout.

All miha bodytec devices comply with the requirements of German standard DIN EN 6-601-1-10, the industry benchmark for medical electrical systems.

#### What's next for EMS?

We're at the beginning of the journey with EMS training in the UK. The benefits and applications of this type of training are vast, and there's an enormous commercial opportunity for both PTs and operators to develop business in this area.

Take Bodystreet, for example. The two latest EMS studios in Coventry and Edinburgh join Bodystreet's growing UK operation of six franchises, including locations in Worthing, Milton Keynes, Gibraltar, North London, Sutton Coldfield and Bristol. The Edinburgh location, which opened in April, is the only studio in Scotland.

The potential market for this sort of training is vast. As evidenced by the growth of EMS in Germany, the proven model provides fast ROI, which in turn, provides the opportunity for rapid expansion. We're seeing diverse applications of EMS emerging in the UK – from mobile PTs to shop-in-shop models. With new players like EMS Bodypower coming on board every month, the rise of EMS is really just beginning.

Have you tried EMS? Get in touch for a free demo: [www.be-a-first-mover.com](http://www.be-a-first-mover.com)

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# WHAT A DRAG



**Currently a US trend, mainly among elite athletes, is parachute training something that could filter down to the mainstream in health clubs globally? Kath Hudson reports**

**R**eported to feel like running with a 20lb bag on your back, parachute training is a majorly effective workout, which offers a double whammy of resistance and cardiovascular training – normally done at intervals.

It involves running with a small parachute strapped around your waist – once you pick up speed the parachute deploys, causing drag, which makes running feel as though you're wading through mud.

Then, when the parachute is detached mid-run, it sends you sprinting into overdrive, making the average runner feel free, light, liberated, powerful and faster than ever before.

Popular with Olympic track runners, football players, basketball and baseball players, parachute workouts are

designed to improve speed, power, strength and explosive power. The resistance provided by the parachute – there are different sizes – helps to strengthen legs and core.

The explosiveness of a parachute workout builds the fast twitch muscle fibres, leading to faster run times and improved vertical jumping ability.

A gruelling workout, it also gets the heart rate up and burns fat, so combining it with intervals offers an extremely effective workout.

## **GETTING IT RIGHT**

Sounds fun? There are a few things to watch out for. Firstly, it can be technical and there are reports that it can cause problems with technique and sprinting biometrics, so should ►



SHUTTERSTOCK/JACOB LUND

Parachute training is mainly used to develop explosive power for sprinting, but can give distance runners a psychological edge, as they won't feel disheartened if they hit wind resistance during an event



***My clients want something different, so it's good training, at the same time as being fun***

Murat Gecmen, FitInFitness

- ▶ only be used by experienced athletes. London based PT, Murat Gecmen of FitInFitness sometimes uses parachute training with his regular one-to-one clients, but agrees you need to be a decent runner before you try it.

"You have to lift yourself up on your toes, get a really good push-off and accelerate quickly, so the parachute deploys and creates resistance," he says. "If you're flat footed or have a small foot strike, then the parachute might not deploy, plus you'll be more prone to injury."

"Sometimes the parachute can push you off course, so you need to be strong enough to cope with a change of direction, but if you can manage to control it, then it will definitely activate more muscles."

#### CENTRE OF ATTENTION

There are practical issues with outdoor parachute training, including having a large enough space to do it. It requires either an appropriate outdoor space in a health club – high-end operator Aspria offers parachute workouts in specially fitted-out outdoor areas, for example – or a running track, park or beach. Ideally a place without too many people around.

"I have to make sure the area's clear before runners set off, or they could sweep people up," says Gecmen. "And if there are dogs around, they chase the parachute!"

"It's not something you see every day, so people always stare, although I've found this to be good marketing," he says. "My clients want something different, so it's good training, at the same time as being fun. Parachute training is a niche methodology and likely to stay that way, but niche activities have appeal for avid trainers."

Running specialist, Lou Nicholetts, founder of The Cornish Physio, says the effects are very specific: "While parachute training can be effective for sprinting, as a way

**Parachute training offers accommodating resistance – the faster you run, the harder it resists – which is hard to achieve and optimises training time.**

**Below left: Technogym's Skillrun has been adapted to offer both sled and parachute training modes**

of increasing load, I can't see there being great benefits for distance runners – certainly none that can't be more easily achieved using a weighted vest or anti-gravity running."

Possibly not, but Gecmen argues that for people who like running, it's fun, motivating and a great thing to do outside in the sunshine. Also there's the argument that it can give middle- and long-distance runners a psychological edge, as they won't feel disheartened if they hit wind resistance during an event. For those who do a lot of running, it adds interest and motivation. And for those who love running, it means that they don't have to miss a run in order to do some strength training.

#### INDOOR PARACHUTE TRAINING

The main drawback to parachute training is that it can't easily be done in a health club setting. Or can it? Technogym is currently in the process of patenting technology which incorporates parachute training into its new Skillrun treadmill. This reproduces the feeling of parachute training in optimised conditions.







The resistance starts at null, but kicks in as the runner gathers speed and the “parachute” catches. Users can also choose the size of their parachute on the Skillrun to make it easier or more challenging.

Technogym’s Craig Swyer says this functionality was added in response to operator demand. “Operators told us that the Skillmill, our non-motorised treadmill, was a great offering for something different, but there was still a core market out there for traditional running for people who want a treadmill to do quick and easy intervals,” he says.

“This challenged us to reimagine the Skillmill. It already had a sled function, but we improved the way that function works so that it imitated real sled training more closely. Then we looked around at what else we could incorporate that would engage traditional runners and give them added results and motivation.

Parachute training is still in its infancy in the UK,” he explains, “but it’s popular in North America – especially at universities and with NFL teams.”

Initially Technogym thought the parachute training

would only appeal to facilities with a performance angle, such as Team GB and the top sports universities, however Swyer says it’s popular when it comes to engaging goal-orientated members. “Both Nuffield Health and London boutique Sweat It are offering successful treadmill classes which utilise the parachute function and are using it as a point of differentiation,” he says.

The Skillrun has been pre-programmed with three user-friendly programmes, which include coaching tips, intervals and video tutorials. They’re between 33 and 45 minutes long and promise better results than just running on the treadmill for this length of time, as they engage more muscles. Swyer says this also enhances motivation.

So, will parachute training go mainstream? Possibly not, but that doesn’t mean it won’t appeal to a lot of people and it could work well for clubs looking to offer something a bit different to get members motivated.

It’s also an effective form of accommodating resistance, as the parachute exerts more drag the faster the runner goes, so it’s a very effective way to train. ●

# RETENTION

## The importance of self-knowledge

There's no one thing that will fix your member retention, but clarity of mission, a strong culture and an eye for data will drive significant change. **Kate Cracknell** reports from this year's Retention Convention

**T**he fitness industry today is a place of blurred lines between a proliferation of business models," said Dr Paul Bedford at the recent Retention Convention. "Before you can define your customer experience, or create your customer journeys, you need to define who you are."

Bedford's message: be absolutely clear about who you are and who you're targeting, and build a company culture that reinforces this at every touchpoint. Only then will you be in a position to deliver the sort of compelling customer experience that will keep people coming back for more, and paying for the privilege.

### EMBEDDING A CULTURE

The first speaker, California-based Chris Stevenson – owner of Stevenson Fitness – took up the theme of culture.

"Your company culture must revolve around creating an unparalleled customer experience," he said. "Our mission statement is: 'Everyone leaves feeling better than when they arrived.'"

"We then live that culture; we wrap our purpose, mission and values around it; we promote it internally and externally. We want customers to know what they should expect, as well as our staff."

"We evaluate around our culture too. We don't look at basics like punctuality



*Be absolutely clear about who you are and who you're targeting, and build a company culture that reinforces this at every touchpoint*

**Dr Paul Bedford**

and appearance, but rather our employees' ability to uphold our core values. And we hire and fire by our culture, to demonstrate that creating an amazing customer experience is the most important thing.

"When we recruit, we actively seek the right people. If I have a great experience in another service-focused environment, I'll ask: 'Have you ever thought about working in fitness?' We approach our most passionate members too. They're

already part of our culture, so if someone is at the front of class every week, we might ask them to be a guest instructor. And we embrace employee referral: 'You're a great employee. Who do you know who's similar to you who might want to work for us?' With all of these groups, they might not be thinking about it until we suggest it."

### HELL YEAH!

He continued: "We've refined our hiring process too. The first interview is all about culture. We bring everyone together so we can see their interaction skills. We give them a job description that includes our mission statement; we ask a great deal of our staff and they need to know what we expect."

We ask questions that fit our company culture, such as 'tell us your top five'. That can be a top five of anything – whatever's important to them. It helps us understand their values.

"Then we do a Secret Interviewer – a tour of the club with a staff member – so





Retention Convention delegates got advice and insights from a panel of experts

we get a sense of the real person. And we give them homework: writing just a few sentences on why they'd like to work for us. If they don't do it, they're out. We absolutely need to know they'll do the little extras we ask of them.

"At the end, it has to be a 'hell yeah!' or a 'hell no'. If they're a 'maybe', it's a no."

Once recruited, culture and member experience training come before any of the job-specific training. "We tell them the story of our company – they need to feel part of it. We describe our core values in detail, bringing them to life and helping people visualise how to deliver them. We explain what our mission statement looks like in practice – how it shapes our decisions: 'If I do this, will our members leave feeling better than when they arrived?' If not, we don't do it.

"With member experience training, it's about understanding that everyone has their own story and things they're dealing with. If we want to be the best part of their day, we must understand that.

"And we continue this training on an ongoing basis, from monthly meetings to weekly emails – with face-to-face follow-ups to make sure they're being read – and on-the-spot coaching wherever we see things that aren't right.

"Ultimately, we aspire to the highest level of customer service where we

anticipate every member's needs. Where we go above and beyond, as with our free Mother's Day cards recently – members could help themselves if they'd forgotten to buy one. Where we don't just answer questions with directions, but go and help the member with whatever they need.

#### CONSISTENCY RULES

"But be warned, once you achieve this level of service, you have to do it consistently," he said. "Members expect it and are disappointed if you don't deliver."

He concluded with a few golden rules from Stevenson Fitness: "When a member is present, everything else stops. They are the most important thing. Then it's 'eyes and teeth' – smile and acknowledge, including a warm welcome and fond farewell. Use names 100 per cent of the time and introduce yourself to everyone you interact with. Introduce members to each other too – connections drive retention – and introduce prospects to members who love you. They'll do the selling for you. ▶



**Our mission statement is:**  
**'Everyone leaves feeling better than when they arrived'**

**Chris Stevenson**



Delegates heard about hiring and firing, anticipating members' needs and driving margins with hard data

- "Get your body language right: show you're engaged and you care. And choose your words carefully: we have a list of approved phrases. So, it's 'Let me find someone who can assist you' and not 'I can't help'. It's, 'What I can do is...' and not, 'Unfortunately...'. We also explain why we do things in a certain way, rather than just saying 'That's our policy'.

"The result? Posts from our members on social media with comments like: 'My club is cooler than your club'. And an NPS score that remains around 80."

#### TRUST THE DATA

Jose Teixeira of SC Fitness in Portugal – owner of the Solinca mid-market chain, Pump low-cost chain and Lagoas premium club – then wowed delegates with data from 100,000+ Solinca members that allowed him to assess retention by every imaginable variable.

"We know, for example, that if a member joins between June and August, they will leave earlier than if they join in January-February or September-October," he revealed.

"We also know they're more likely to drop out if they don't do an induction, or if they don't work out in the first 30 days of membership; 49 per cent of those establishing this early habit are still active at 19 months, versus 37 per cent of those who don't, so we incentivise it.

"Another factor, and I'm sure people won't like this, but one of the drivers of lifetime membership is contracts, period.

At Solinca, where we have 12-month contracts, 69 per cent of members are still active at 12 months. At non-contract Pump, that figure is 24 per cent. Pump is stable, but it survives on sales.

"Age matters too. At Solinca, millennials stay for 14 months, Baby Boomers for 27. We, therefore, pay our sales team different commissions for different member profiles, based on the



*To drive lifetime membership, you have to focus on usage. For each incremental average monthly visit, our contract length is extended by 1.26 months*

Jose Teixeira

predicted membership lifetime.

"But our primary driver of retention is group exercise. If a member does 12+ classes a month, they stay with us for 32 months. We have a loyalty points collection scheme to increase group exercise usage and members love it."

He continued: "Ultimately, to drive lifetime membership, you have to focus on usage. For each incremental average monthly visit, our contract length is extended by 1.26 months."

With its wealth of data, Solinca has been able to measure the drivers of increased usage and set targets around these. One such target – what Teixeira calls 'Key Ratios' – relates to instructor interaction with members.

The requirement is that, at a minimum, these interactions should lead to the member maintaining their visit frequency and ideally interactions should boost frequency. Solinca tracks which instructors achieve this.

#### MEMBER INTERACTIONS

Other Key Ratios include what Solinca calls 'interaction opening hours' – the number of staff hours available for member interactions each day. Here the required ratio is 1.5; if the club is open for 16 hours in a day, 24 man hours should be available for member interaction that day.

Other targets include a four-day lead time from joining to induction; four days from induction to first workout; staff interaction with ideally 100 per cent of members, but at a minimum 100 per cent of sleepers and high-risk members if they come into the club; and an average of 12 visits a month for every member.

"These form the basis of our instructor KPIs," Teixeira explained. "They earn commission based on member behaviour, which means they take the initiative to get members engaged. Sales staff are also expected to give a retention pitch, encouraging new members to start now and do their induction."

The wealth of data gathered by Solinca shapes the customer journey – a highly complex pathway of touch points that's continually re-assessed and redesigned. "We focus on data and the customer voice, not gut feel," Teixeira added. "Without data, it's just an opinion."

Data informs a journey for those who have left, too, based around a detailed exit interview with every departing member. To date, over 70,000 such interviews have been conducted.

Finally, said Teixeira: "Make sure you're interacting with those who need interaction. It isn't just about rapport. You need to do things that change the member lifetime."

And here he shared an interesting insight relating to retention by NPS category – that is, advocates, neutrals and detractors. Teixeira has added another category: those who don't respond at all. "These are the members you need

# retention ACADEMY

INCR  
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**Dean Hodgkin: Ragdale Hall has enjoyed year-on-year growth every year for 28 years**

to focus on," he said. "Don't just talk to detractors. The real problem lies with those who don't respond."

The combined result of the company's various initiatives? Against a 31 per cent global average retention rate, and a 27 per cent average retention rate in Portugal, Solinca boasts a 55 per cent rate – and rising. The proportion of members still active past 12 months has also risen over the last few years, from 47 to 57 per cent.

## MEANINGFUL INTERACTIONS

The final session came from Dean Hodgkin, speaking about his 28 years at Ragdale Hall. His key message was, create meaningful interactions.

"People come to Ragdale to create memories, not to consume products," he said. "We need to make it memorable."

"That starts with looking after our staff, because they then look after our guests better. And our staff do feel looked after: 139 of our 502 employees have been with us for 10 years; some have been with us for 30."

He continued: "Next up is getting the welcome and departure right. Daniel Kahneman's Peak End Theory suggests that, when people reflect on an experience, they make a mental shortcut. They remember the emotional high and the last thing that happened. If there hasn't been a high, all they remember is the final thing that happened – so get your farewells right."

"At Ragdale, we never just say 'goodbye'. We ask club members to

commit to a date when they'll next visit: 68 per cent then come back within the next seven days. And in general, interactions have to be meaningful. Our staff aren't allowed to just say, 'hi, how are you?' because the answer can be given in one word. They need to ask open questions. We also have a guest liaison department, whose job it is to walk around and talk to our guests. We put this in place 20 years ago and it's grown to a team of four.

"Most dissatisfied people won't complain, so be pre-emptive. If someone doesn't look happy, we get someone out there to talk to them before they even complain. Never underestimate the power of delivering personal advice that satisfies a personal need at the very moment it's needed."



**People come to Ragdale to create memories, not to consume products.**

**We need to make it memorable**

**Dean Hodgkin**



**Chris Stevenson's members post: "my club is cooler than your club" on social media**

"We also empower our staff to deliver great service whenever the occasion arises. If we think what they've done is particularly good, we make it our new standard. TNTs – tiny noticeable things – are the little touches that can be explosive. That's especially the case if they can be personalised, so build up a profile of every customer's preferences.

"The proof that all of this works? In 2018, our hotel rooms were at 98.7 per cent occupancy. In February 2019, 80 per cent of our guests were return visitors. In March, 33 per cent were on their 10th or more visit, while in January, 11 per cent were on at least their 20th.

"Meanwhile, in the club, we have 812 members, a waiting list of 295, and monthly attrition of around 0.5 per cent. We've also enjoyed year-on-year growth every single year for the last 28 years." ●



A man with glasses, wearing a dark suit, light blue shirt, and yellow tie, is sitting on a black stool. He is holding a glowing lightbulb in his hands. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

WHIS started in Cumbria and has gone global

# GARETH PRESCH

The World Health Innovation Summit (WHIS) founder talks to Kate Cracknell  
about his ambition to achieve good health for all via  
a global knowledge-sharing platform



### What's your background?

I'm from Dublin, Ireland, and have worked in the health system for 20 years. I'm grateful to the Irish Health Service because it gave me a fantastic education that allowed me to progress through the ranks. I'm not a clinician, but work well with clinicians – I understand what they need (time to treat) – and moved through the system, working in areas such as community care, health promotion and acute hospitals. My last role was chief officer of the National Haemophilia Council.

### How did WHIS come about?

My family and I left Ireland just over five years ago, moving to Cumbria, and I joined the NHS. I was shocked to see the pressures on the system and the consequent staff retention issues – people were constantly leaving.

My ethos is one of consistent, high-quality patient-centred care, and you're simply not going to deliver that if you're losing staff on a continuous basis. You'll also struggle to attract good people in the first place. I wanted to help Cumbria with its problems around recruiting and retaining staff.

People attract people, so I came up with the idea of a platform – which I called the World Health Innovation Summit (WHIS) – designed to attract thought leaders to Cumbria. The thinking was that we'd support them in disseminating their knowledge through the platform and peer-reviewed journals, and that in turn would attract good staff, showcasing it as a great place to live, work and invest.

That was the initial concept for WHIS, which we launched in 2015. However, very quickly after our first event we realised there was a lot more to it. There are so many challenges facing the health service: rising levels of obesity and other lifestyle diseases, and an ageing population, all set against a projected shortfall of 18 million healthcare workers globally by 2030

***WHIS is a preventative healthcare platform, which empowers people to improve their health and wellbeing by facilitating community engagement***

(source: BMJ). We realised WHIS had the chance to become a global preventative healthcare platform, supporting people around the world in improving their health and wellbeing.

### So, what is WHIS now?

WHIS has evolved into precisely this preventative healthcare platform. It aims to empower people to improve their health and wellbeing by facilitating effective community engagement. It's a preventative healthcare platform for patients, clinicians, managers, the voluntary sector, education and the business community. It's open and transparent and deliberately brings ►

- together people from other industries whose new ideas and different perspectives create new opportunities. It supports collaboration and breaks down silo working.

We're a social enterprise: we aim to generate income and reinvest money and value generated from our programmes back into the local communities where we work.

Our model is based on combining human, social and intellectual capital: a knowledge transfer platform that exists to support the NHS and other health economies globally.

We run events that attract people to a city, and we bring in experts to share their knowledge – people of influence who attract key decisionmakers. For example, we brought Roland Schatz, the special advisor to the UN director general, to Cumbria to discuss investment opportunities and job creation. When you bring in such people, that creates business opportunities. Our events and activities have boosted the local economy and created new jobs and opportunities for the region.

We also create programmes that organisations can tap into [see below], and we can help those who have a good idea themselves to get it off the ground. In turn, they can affiliate themselves with WHIS and use our platform to access the marketplace; we want to develop WHIS as a quality assurance mark for products and services which are available through the platform.

WHIS makes knowledge and good ideas globally scaleable. All the great social prescribing programmes that are already out there can be shared. All the products and services related to health and wellbeing suddenly have a means to elevate what they do. WHIS can take something from being a local initiative to having worldwide reach.

#### What initiatives has WHIS been involved in so far?

We've held summits and activities in cities across the UK, as well as in places such as Thailand and Greece. Meanwhile, our programmes and wellness activities have been tested in Cumbria.



One of our big success stories has been WHISKids – a programme for schools that focuses predominantly on mental health and wellbeing. We support children with physical and emotional wellbeing advice and explain the importance of a balanced diet and being active. We've had a couple of thousand children go through the programme in Cumbria over the last couple of years and the results are impressive: kids experience an average 20 per cent increase in their mental wellbeing as a result.

Other programmes include WHISAtwork (stress management in the workplace) and WHISSeniors (falls prevention, quality of life and loneliness prevention).

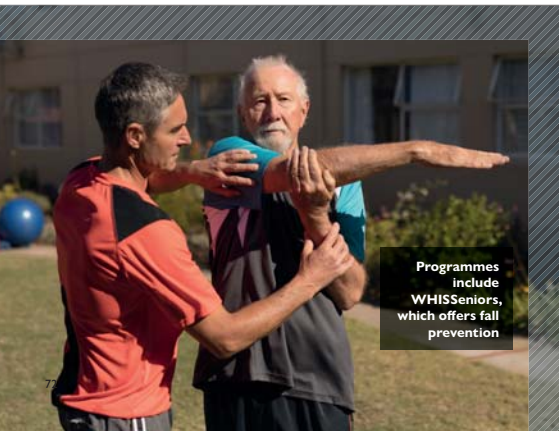
We're also collaborating to develop new programmes, including a cancer wellbeing programme and a global pregnancy wellbeing programme that's based on health education, health promotion and disease prevention. These will have a positive effect on people and communities over the short, medium and long term, and would never have happened without the WHIS platform.

#### How's it all funded?

Some of our events require delegates to purchase tickets; others have sponsors. Companies can also exhibit at those events. Organisations also pay to use our programmes: schools pay to use WHISKids, for example. Once overheads are covered, the profits are reinvested back into the community.

Other programmes might be funded: for example, the cancer programmes we've run so far have been funded through Macmillan and NHS Cumbria. Funding is out there, provided you're able to bring and develop value.

But ultimately, our business model is based on generating value and



Programmes include WHISSeniors, which offers fall prevention



**WHISKids is a programme for schools that focuses on mental health and wellbeing**

sharing it through a circular economy: we provide services, partnerships, sponsorships, CSR, impact investing and so on, and can be commissioned to deliver large-scale projects.

An independent report demonstrated that every £1 invested in our activities generates £36 in terms of social return on investment. We can stand up and say: 'You give us £1m and we'll generate £36m back to your local economy.' What mayor around the world is not going to want that sort of social return on investment?

Importantly, everything we do can be done in any community by them joining the WHIS federation. They write to us, outline their plans, and we share our experiences with them and help them adopt the WHIS model.

WHIS is a platform that supports people and communities taking positive action and our ultimate objective is to improve people's health and wellbeing while creating a new ecosystem through a circular economy.

#### **You're involved in the UN's SDG Cities project. Tell us more about that?**

The SDG 25 + 5 Cities Leadership platform is a very ambitious programme led by the UN and run through a foundation. At its heart are 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs), including no poverty, zero hunger, good health and wellbeing, quality education, climate action, clean water and sanitation and so on.

The project has identified 25 cities and five indigenous communities around the world to become lighthouses, where

experts in their field will come together and help those cities deliver the sustainable development goals by 2025.

In this project, I'm involved as an individual expert rather than specifically representing WHIS. My area of focus is SDG 3: good health and wellbeing. We'll be working with institutions, universities and city councils in the 25 cities to identify ways to implement the sustainable development goals and raising funding through the foundation via impact investing.

#### **How can the physical activity sector collaborate with WHIS and SDG Cities?**

Physical activity will play a huge part in all of our WHIS and SDG3 programmes: we disseminate information about healthy living and welcome support and knowledge sharing.

I see huge scope for collaboration with the physical activity sector. I believe we can work together to create a new ecosystem that supports community wellbeing, and that's also great for the local economy and local job creation. This is an opportunity to develop a strategy with long-term benefits.

Initiatives such as Parkrun, for example, could go into every one of our cities. We also plan to work with hoteliers, health and wellness clubs and so on as part of the Sustainable Development Goals 'Cities' initiative.

In addition to the 25 cities, we're also setting up what we're calling Hubs – cities that will become incubators for new ideas and new programmes that – once prototyped and proven – can be rolled out to the 25. We plan to bring in leading experts to work with us on creating these solutions, and we'll work



**The Cumbria team. From Left - Dr Neela Shabde, Krista Presch, Gareth Presch, Ken Herd and Dr Poonam Malik**

- with city officials to test them. As part of that, we want to develop next generation health and wellbeing centres, offering a mix of clinical, physical and emotional wellbeing services.

There are clear opportunities to partner with WHIS and SDG to develop solutions to support communities. We're looking to work with like-minded businesses that share the same values.

#### **Where do you see WHIS in the next 5-10 years?**

WHIS will become the world's leading platform for health and wellbeing, as it can be shared and scaled to support any community and bring value. We're already engaged in the UAE, Thailand, Nigeria, Kenya, Switzerland and the US.

We've built WHIS on trust and it grows by attracting people who understand what we do is for the common good. We provide the methodology and the value proposition. They take ownership and generate the income.

Our support for the SDG Cities programme also presents opportunities. I'm due to meet with the Pope in June, for example, and work closely with the EU and governments around the world to implement SDG goals. There are over 100 million people living in cities on the SDG platform, and there's funding to invest in initiatives that have been proven to work. WHIS is a front-runner with the opportunity to scale up its operations.

#### **What's your ultimate goal for WHIS?**

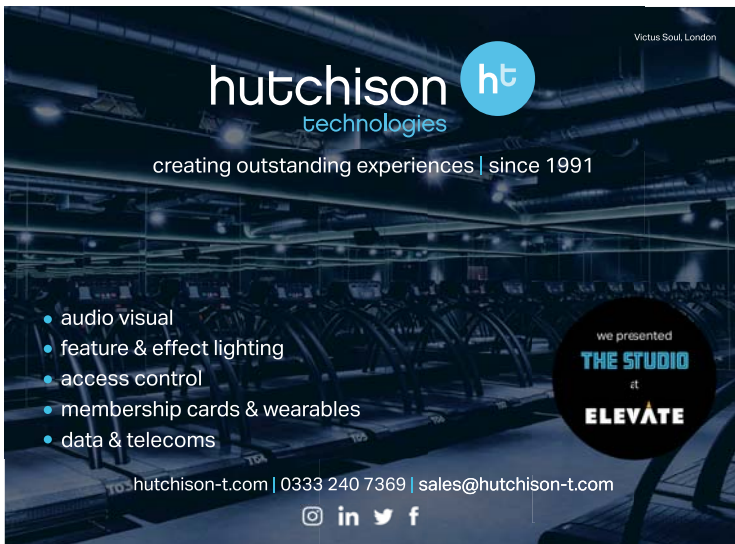
To support a new, preventative model of wellness, health and social care. We share knowledge as a way of empowering local people to improve their health and wellbeing.

We believe we have to take action so our kids can grow up in a world in which we can all thrive. We can't solve all society's challenges immediately, but we believe good health is a common denominator: if you're healthy, fit and well, you're more likely to be contributing positively to society.

We want to move from a gig economy to a knowledge economy, with a circular model that leaves no-one behind. ●

***We want to develop the next generation of health and wellbeing centres, offering a mix of clinical, physical and emotional wellbeing services***





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# JUSTIN MUSGROVE ON BANNATYNE & BRIGHTLIME

## Partnership puts software at the heart of an enhanced member experience

Bannatyne is the largest independent chain of health clubs in the UK, operating 72 sites and providing a premium offer to 215,000 members. The company has expanded through organic growth and acquisition and has created an enhanced member experience driven by software, as CEO, Justin Musgrove, explains

**B**ack in 2014, a period which saw the health club market polarise and many mid-market operators suffer, we recognised we needed to drive an upmarket offering at mid-market prices, through a strategy focused on being at the forefront of technology.

We were looking for advances that would allow customers to join online. Although commonplace now, this was cutting edge then – it's easy to forget how rapidly the market has evolved.

For the first 15 years, we'd used membership software that had been developed as a single site product, but we recognised we needed enterprise-level software suited for a multi-site brand.

In addition, we wanted a cloud-based solution and for the software to integrate with third party applications, including our Bannatyne App, which enables members to book classes on the go, monitor biometrics, track exercise routines and view personal records. Fundamentally, the software needed to help us evolve our business and drive greater sales, efficiency and member engagement.

Following a market review and tender process, we selected BrightLime, the web-based solution from Legend Club Management. First and foremost, it had the functionality we were looking for, was competitively priced, offered scalability and reliability, and, critically, strong data security.

### A STRONG PARTNERSHIP

We continue to be impressed with BrightLime's partnership approach to our relationship. In the last five years, we've not only developed online joining, but also have wristbands with RFID chips to allow members to access clubs via turnstiles, use lockers and make in-club payments to create a cashless environment. BrightLime underpins all this functionality.

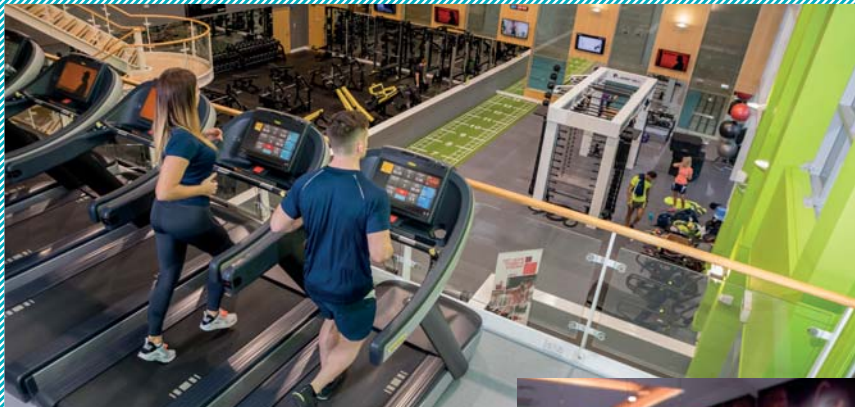
We've also evolved our customer engagement model through third party integrations, including with Technogym's mywellness cloud, MYZONE and our



*"Bannatyne is a demanding, disruptive organisation. We want to be market leaders and this aspiration needs a technology partner who has the same ethos and the same aspirations. Fortunately, we have found this partner in BrightLime"* Justin Musgrove, CEO, Bannatyne

Netsuite ERP back-of-house reporting. This has created an enhanced member experience driven by software, allowing members to benefit from integrations, while allowing us to be more efficient in our back-of-house analysis and management.

Results have been impressive. Since the beginning of 2015, we've seen membership grow from 163,000 to 215,000, half of which can be attributed to online joining. In addition we've moved from 100 per cent of bookings being



Bannatyne and Brightlime are developing a new Smart Start programme to drive long-term engagement with members



taken front-of-house or over the phone, to 98 per cent being made online.

### REDUCING ATTRITION

We're streamlining all aspects of member engagement. Our focus is on reducing attrition through a better understanding of members. Again, BrightLime is helping.

The team had previously developed an algorithm that gave gym floor staff an evaluation of when a customer's usage pattern was changing – an early warning they might be thinking of leaving.

This provided us with an opportunity to intervene when they were in the club, with anything from showing them new equipment, to offering a new training programme. However, we found that highlighting members declining attendance often led to a cancellation.

As a result, we learned that the focus has to be on the first year of engagement – in particular the first 16 weeks – and we're launching a 'Smart Start' programme to support this.

BrightLime will provide us with data on usage and integrate with our programmes and personal training. The intention is to give a fantastic start, so members reward us with long-term engagement.

In addition, we're in the process of exploring integrations between BrightLime and our spa offering, as well as with third party corporate partners.

The future lies in analysis and data mining, allowing us to provide a better fit of product for our members, so they're less likely to leave. We want to make sure they're achieving their desired results and their user experience is as good as it can

be. We want their interface with our team to be one you'd expect from a top hotel.

### MACHINE LEARNING AND AI

Software is key to this: there's the opportunity within the next five years to use BrightLime to develop our AI and machine learning capabilities and to employ specialists to evaluate our data, so we can re-sculpt both our products and services to maximise on-selling and customer retention.

We're a demanding, disruptive organisation. We want the best for our members and for ourselves and we want to be market leaders in our industry. This aspiration needs a technology partner who has the same ethos and the same aspirations. Fortunately, we have found this partner in BrightLime. ●



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# PAIN RESPONSE

**Are you optimising HIIT for your members, or are they put off by the pain? Abigail Harris looks at research into ways to better support members towards a positive outcome**

**M**ore than 40 years ago, way before HIIT became an 'in' word, exercise physiology expert, Michael L Pollock's 1978 research claimed 'high intensity exercise causes more injuries and drop outs than continual training'. In fact, he stated: "High intensity exercise appears to be neither enjoyable nor well tolerated by non-athletes who are training for general health and wellness."

It's a truth backed by retention specialist Dr Paul Bedford, who says the harder you work some members, the quicker they'll leave. So unless they're managed carefully, HIIT classes and workouts could have a negative impact on retention; particularly with new members.

## MASKING THE PAIN

Bedford discovered an issue with HIIT classes and retention while carrying out gym floor surveys for a multi site operator.

Members who'd been exercising for some time were keen to step up and try HIIT, but new exercisers, who thought it looked fun, discovered the discomfort they experienced was so great, some only did it once.

"Pain is the body's way of telling you something's wrong, and many people new to exercise don't recognise the difference between pain and discomfort, so may believe it's not how their body



**People who are new to exercise might be deterred by the discomfort experienced during HIIT**



**“Pain is the body's way of telling you something's wrong, and many people new to exercise don't recognise the difference between pain and discomfort, so may believe it's not**

**how their body should feel – Dr Paul Bedford**

should feel. They need to get used to the discomfort it brings,” he says.

Interviewing people afterwards, Bedford found there were two ends of the spectrum – those who enjoyed being challenged at one end and at the other, those who found the discomfort so great it put them off forever.

Group fitness specialist, Les Mills International (LMI), took all of this





**Les Mills' The Trip uses visual stimuli to lessen discomfort during HIIT workouts**

into consideration when developing its immersive indoor cycling programme, The Trip, by using technology to make the workout seem easier.

LMI's head of research, Bryce Hastings explains: "We conducted a study on perceived exertion during The Trip that demonstrates that visual stimulus can lessen the discomfort of exercise, while still maintaining high levels of intensity. Novice exercisers were so absorbed while working out, they barely noticed how hard they'd exercised."

The research, carried out by Penn State University associate professor Jinger Gottschall, involved both elite and novice fitness participants completing eight audio-only, group fitness cycling classes and eight immersive classes (music and digital images), over an eight week period to study their exercise intensity and perceived exertion.

The results showed the novice group's rate of perceived exertion (RPE) – or how intensely they thought they had worked out – was less when doing The Trip than when doing the audio-only class, despite their heart rate intensity being the same.

"It's ideal for relative newcomers as they're getting into a higher heart rate zone without feeling the discomfort



**“ We conducted a study on perceived exertion during The Trip that demonstrates that visual stimulus can lessen the discomfort of exercise, while still maintaining high**

**levels of intensity – Bryce Hastings, Les Mills**

of this intensity level," says Hastings. "The novice participants also rated their enjoyment and satisfaction higher than the audio-only class, which has a positive bearing on them keeping up with regular exercise."

#### **CREATING AN EXPERIENCE**

The overall perception of a class also holds valuable clues when it comes to members' responses.

Jeremy McCarthy, group director of spa and wellness at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group has developed a theory around 'last impressions', their impact on behaviour and how likely people are to repeat experiences. He says: "Many businesses spend a lot of time thinking about the first impression, but research shows the last impression is actually more important.

Daniel Kahneman coined the phrase 'the peak-end rule' to describe the fact people's memory of past experiences is driven by the peak moments of that experience and how the experience ends."

In McCarthy's book, *The Psychology of Spas & Wellbeing*, he references research by Kahneman showing that people's memory of the discomfort of a colonoscopy is driven by the peak moments of discomfort and how the treatment ends, without regard for the overall duration or total amount of discomfort they experience. These findings have influenced the way he thinks about delivering experiences.

He says: "Based on this, we ensure our treatments end in a pleasant way by avoiding a negative or abrupt ending. They finish with a soft chime and we bring tea to our guests without rushing ▶





**Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group aims to ensure treatments leave a positive 'last impression'**

- ▶ them straight off the table or out of the treatment room.

"Giving gym members something that's challenging but achievable towards the end of a HIIT workout could help in this way too," says McCarthy. "Flow" experiences happen when we are challenged but able to rise to meet the challenge. Towards the end of a workout people may be feeling fatigued and frustrated. Giving them a chance to feel strong and achieve flow could send them out with positive memories of the experience."

Bedford agrees, saying: "Lasting impressions are so important. If the member comes out of the class feeling like they've worked hard but they're not in pain, they're more likely to do it again. Instructors should consider backing off the intensity a little with new members, and be slightly preventative to reduce the pain they'll experience afterwards. Give them a really good cool down so they don't hurt so much in the following days too."

"At the end of the class get everyone to congratulate each other. Gather them together, high five them and reflect on what they've done. Talk about their effort, the intensity and their skill development; three things that help motivate people to exercise. They will feel more successful and are more like to return."



#### DAVID BARTON EXPERIENCE

US-based gym owner and designer David Barton also embraces this philosophy in the overall experience his health clubs offer, but with a different twist.

He explains: "Ultimately we're selling something people don't like. There are lots of ways to get them in on day one, but how do we make them want to come back tomorrow, when they like the outcome, but not the process?"

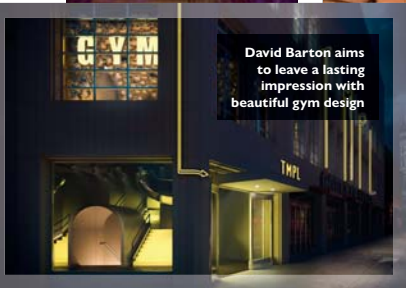
According to Barton, the gym's design is just part of a larger experience. "We have to find a pathway into someone's imagination. People appreciate beautiful things and like to be in a beautiful environment. It's not just visual, but what they smell, touch and hear too. All senses will be working to compete with their pain receptors because they are in an unfamiliar environment, so we use design, lighting, technology and exercise science to create the ultimate setting

**“Towards the end of a workout people may be feeling fatigued and frustrated. Giving them a chance to feel strong and achieve 'flow' could send them out with positive memories of the experience – Jeremy McCarthy**

and an emotional experience. My goal is to create the impression that they've entered into another world, a world so enticing it competes with the potential negativity; the process of exercise itself."

Barton admits gym design may not have altered the results of Bedford's study, citing HIIT itself as the challenge, as it triggers the fight or flight survival response, but, he says: "The environment has a massive effect on the imagination and can provide an experience so positive that it literally overwhelms the negativity of a hard workout."

Bedford points out that it's also important to remember HIIT is all relative to the individual: "For some people, HIIT may just be walking briskly, while to another it might be jumping in and out of a giant tyre. We observed there was very little adaptation to exercises based on fitness level; instructors expected everyone to kill



David Barton aims to leave a lasting impression with beautiful gym design

themselves doing burpees, without considering their experience.

"Whilst there's some naivety around new exerciser thinking they can do it, responsibility must also be taken by the instructor. We also witnessed insignificant warm ups and cool downs; people didn't have time to adjust – it was literally a 30 minute workout with an, 'I'm going to kill you' approach."

Hastings agrees and says LMI's research, in collaboration with Professor Gottschall, found that any more than 45 minutes working out at above 90 per cent of the maximum heart rate per week doesn't help achieve transformative effects anyway. "In fact, too much actually hinders," he says. "Pushing the body into its maximum training zone for short periods triggers a positive stress response, creating bio-chemical changes in the body that help build new muscle and improve fitness. Those doing more



Barton suggests grading HIIT classes so newbies aren't deterred from returning



**“ We’re selling something people don’t like. There are lots of ways to get them in on day one, but how do we make them to want to come back tomorrow when they like the outcome,**

**but not the process? – David Barton**

were unable to produce a positive stress response, so our recommendation is to balance weekly HIIT sessions with other, less intense cardiovascular and strength workouts.”

One thing's for sure, high intensity training is here to stay, and Bedford's advice is to offer newbies exercise alternatives or to grade classes so people can build up the intensity over time. ●



# Can a floor do more?

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 **PHYSICAL**

# More than a FLOOR

With the increase in popularity of functional training, the floor is increasingly becoming a piece of equipment in itself. **Kath Hudson** investigates

## ECORE

**With the trend** towards functional training, people are increasingly using their bodies and the floor to train, which requires the surface to be interactive. Ecore surfaces feature vulcanised rubber, which helps to protect members' bodies, as well as providing acoustic dampening to cut down noise.

GymNation recently opened its first 40,000sq ft fitness facility in the UAE, in Dubai, and CEO Loren Holland said the floor was considered to be as important a piece of gym equipment as any of the other kit. A total of 14 different flooring zones were used in the gym, corresponding to separate activities – for example speed and agility turf was installed for footwork drills and sledwork.

[www.ecoreathletic.com](http://www.ecoreathletic.com)

**GymNation Dubai – a  
40,000sq ft fitness facility**



**Create balance  
workouts with the  
The Reax Board**

## REAXING

**The Reax Board** by Italian company Reaxing is a smart floor that has been developed to generate sudden balance interferences, destabilising any movement performed on it in order to increase neuromuscular intensity and improve reactions and proprioception. It's an unpredictable, fun and effective way of training, which requires the user to stay focused and reactive at all times.

Multiple training moves are possible, such as squats, press ups and lunges, while equipment like balance boards and balance balls can be used on it. All muscles are activated and the user focus must always be kept high and steady.

The Reax Board is controlled via a tablet and a dedicated app: the user or the PT can select difficulty levels and choose among several pre-configured training programmes. In the live programme, the PT can alter the movement through real-time interferences, adjusting the intensity,

speed, direction and frequency of the interference and freeze the board in the position they choose.

The product has been introduced into elite sports clubs such as AC Milan and Juventus as a dynamic and engaging tool to help support rehabilitation post-injury, as well as strength and conditioning for a variety of targeted training techniques.

Neuromuscular responses are fundamental to the development of athletes to allow them to react in real-time and respond to changes in direction, elevation or movement. The Reax Board supports this development.

Yorkshire-based health club Fit 26 is using the Reax Board to support personal training during one-to-one sessions and also as part of group exercise. The Reax Board is housed within a tailored functional training area.

**Reaxing's UK distributor:**

[www.physicalcompany.co.uk](http://www.physicalcompany.co.uk) or  
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**Pavigym's Prama flooring can be custom-built to include a variety of interactive elements**

## ► PAVIGYM

**Looking more like** an arcade game than a gym, Prama by Pavigym is an interactive fitness concept designed to inject fun into a workout by offering an engaging, immersive space that enables exercisers to play while they are working out.

The floor, and sometimes walls, are programmed to enable participants to do a range of exercises including sprints, squats and jumps.

"Don't mistake fun and play for an easy workout," warns Pavigym's Steve Shaw. "Prama is an extremely effective workout, with exercisers burning up to 1,000 calories per class. The training itself also hits elements of fitness that are frequently missing on the gym floor. Participants work every muscle in a functional class with a focus on speed and agility."

Prama is gaining traction all over the world, including with operators such as 1610 Fitness and Leisure Trust and David Lloyd Leisure, both of which offer a range of classes for all demographics at their multiple studios. Elite football clubs, such as Barcelona and Boca Juniors, are also integrating Prama into their training.

For a full experience, a space of 60 to 150sq m is ideal, but also smaller interactive units are now being installed on the gym floor, to enable PT and small group training.

[www.pavigym.com](http://www.pavigym.com)

## TVS

**TVS was tasked** with designing a versatile, multi-functional training area to be rolled out across Xercise4Less sites. The brief was to include an area for sledge work, along with floor demarcations for activities such as lunges, sprinting and battle rope exercises.

TVS sports carpet was bonded to substrate to create a central lane for the sledge, with a black recycled rubber floor covering installed around the outside of the area to form a two-lane running track, with one metre markings. The workout

areas are being used for personal training, as well as small group training.

At a new Sports Direct gym in Derbyshire, TVS provided a statement floor that complements the brand's colour scheme. An elastic underlay, designed to absorb impact shock in the weight lifting areas was also used.

A stencil of Everlast's logo was applied to part of the floor area in the functional training zone and a bright yellow sled track is an eye catching feature.

[www.tvs-gymflooring.com](http://www.tvs-gymflooring.com)



**TVS designed multi-functional training areas at Xercise4Less sites**

## FLOORING

### ► EXF

**At Third Space** Canary Wharf, London, EXF has worked in partnership with the club to transform the site's former sports hall into a dedicated 745sq m flexible training space called The Yard.

It features bespoke flooring solutions throughout, including functional performance flooring, strength flooring and a 15m three-lane indoor track.

EXF strength flooring has been installed in areas that require protection. This was important for the Third Space team, as the Yard features an extensive range of cross-training and strength equipment.

The EXF functional performance flooring range has been installed to reduce the chance of injury during sporting activity, by integrating the EXF Control SD underlay system.

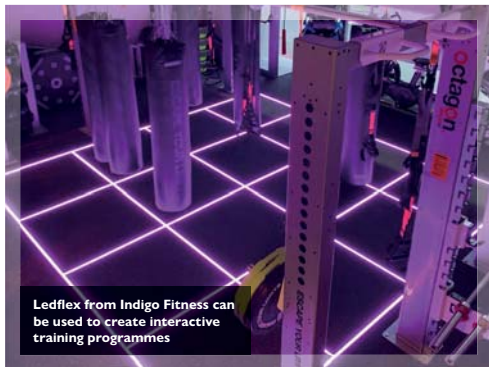
This makes it suitable for use in functional training areas: the range includes shock absorption and anti-slip properties, as well as noise reduction, which was important in this case, as the area is above the spa.

The team also installed a running track, to allow for sprint training and prowler-sledge work. The agility turf track was designed in terracotta and white to stand out from the industrial black and grey aesthetic.

"There's a huge demand for flexible training. Our vision was to create a dynamic space for strength and conditioning, functional training and combat arts," says Third Space fitness director, Rob Beale.

[www.exf-fitness.com](http://www.exf-fitness.com)

**Third Space Canary Wharf, London, has created The Yard, a flexible training space**



**Ledflex from Indigo Fitness can be used to create interactive training programmes**

### INDIGO FITNESS

**Ledflex from Indigo Fitness** is an interactive fitness system that allows operators to take fitness rooms to another level with a simple technology.

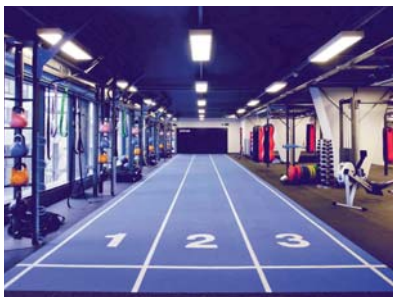
With Ledflex, LED lights are inserted into PaviFlex flooring and walls. They have proximity sensors, allowing them to be used with feet, hands or sport accessories like balls and boxing gloves, enabling PTs to create and save interactive training programmes. Installation is straightforward – PaviFlex flooring is puzzle interlocked and the lights are inserted, then connected to Wi-Fi via a router. The system can then be used with an app on a tablet or smartphone. [www.indigofitness.com](http://www.indigofitness.com)

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**SAFE SPACE**

THE CHANGING ROOM EXPERTS





The aim is to exceed customer expectations in the new spa and the refurbished leisure centres



# Exceeding expectations

Safe Space Lockers is collaborating with InspireAll to create first class facilities

Work starts this month on the refurbishment of Furzefield Leisure Centre in Potters Bar and Bushey Grove Leisure Centre, as part of a large investment programme to provide first class health and fitness facilities for the community, with InspireAll (previously Hertsmere Leisure) investing over £4m.

## INVESTING IN QUALITY

The popular centres will be significantly redeveloped, with each benefiting from a host of new facilities, including:

- A full gym refurbishment
- Brand new gym equipment
- Immersive indoor cycling studios
- Spa with a range of thermal experiences, treatment rooms and relaxation zones
- XHeight climbing facility
- Multi height softplay area
- Café, reception and changing room refurbishment

One of the key factors was improving the member experience in all areas and this particularly included upgrading the finer details in the changing rooms, to improve the quality of the user experience.

The head of operations for InspireAll, Jon Mann, chose to partner with Safe Space Lockers on the project, having worked with them for many years when

fitting out high-end private corporate health clubs. He said: "If you want a reliable and honest partner to work with you on your changing rooms spaces and to deliver a high quality outcome, then I would definitely recommend the Safe Space team. The solution they've provided for our luxury spa is looking really great and has given us that quality detailing that



*"I've worked with the Safe Space Lockers team for over 10 years now. They always come up with the solutions we require, are great at turning around drawings and quotes and always deliver on time"*

Jon Mann, head of operations, InspireAll

has enabled us show to our members we really care about improving their member experience when using the facilities.

"With our previous experience of working together, Safe Space was the obvious choice and perfect partner to supply and fit out the luxury spa area's changing rooms with lockers and cubicles.

"Safe Space also provided a lock solution that's more effective for the operator and allows members a much better experience in the changing areas – it also future-proofs the installation.

"I've worked with the Safe Space Lockers team for over 10 years now, they always come up with the solutions we require, are great at turning around drawings and quotes, revising plans and changing scopes at the last minute and will always deliver in the time frames specified within the project plans."

## TEAMWORK PAYS OFF

"It was a pleasure to work with Jon again," said Dominic Hyett, MD of Safe Space Lockers. "He always delivers an innovative project that exceeds the expectations of the users. These two projects were operationally challenging, but Jon ensured that the member experience was never adversely affected and that we were focused on a great outcome."

[www.safespacelockers.co.uk](http://www.safespacelockers.co.uk)



# PRODUCT INNOVATION

Lauren Heath-Jones rounds up the products and services launched at FIBO 2019

New Wattbike products offer 'complete indoor cycling solution', says **Richard Baker**

Wattbike has expanded with two additions to its range of indoor bikes.

The first – the Atom X – is billed as a game changer. Built on the back of Wattbike's Atom cycle, the Atom X is a



*"Our mission is to continue leading the market with our advancements and technology"*

**Richard Baker**

smart bike designed to give riders a 'fully connected, immersive cycling experience'.

It features in-built interactive workouts, tests, training plans and a climb mode that enables riders to follow structured workouts, simulate gradient changes and mimic real climbs from around the world, all accessible via a touchscreen monitor. It also has third party connectivity.

The second launch, the Wattbike Icon, is described as an evolution of the Wattbike Pro/Trainer, designed to elevate the user experience. It features a touchscreen with HD display that delivers performance feedback.

Richard Baker, Wattbike CEO, says: "These new



The Wattbike Atom X has been billed as a game changer

products offer the market a complete indoor cycling solution. We now have indoor bikes that cover both home and commercial fitness sectors, and user groups

from general health and fitness to elite sport."

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

**WATTBIKE**

**Matt Pengelly** unveils new Matrix Glute Trainer

At this year's FIBO, fitness equipment giant Matrix debuted a host of new products and innovations, including the Glute Trainer.

Designed to emulate biomechanics, the trainer maximises the activation of the glutes and hamstrings and mimics the movement of bar-hip thrusts without the need for free weights.

The Glute Trainer, which debuted on the stand at FIBO, offers comfortable user positioning and an efficient machine layout, making it easily accessible, while floating hip pads are designed to accommodate users of all shapes and sizes and an angled non-slip foot platform



*"FIBO is the perfect event to connect with our key accounts, initiate new opportunities and showcase our latest products and innovations"*

**Matt Pengelly**

offers stability, to enable glute engagement.

Matt Pengelly, MD of Johnson Health Tech UK, says: "FIBO is the perfect



The Glute Trainer from Matrix launched at FIBO

event to connect with key accounts, initiate opportunities and showcase our latest products and innovations, such as our Glute Trainer and Target Training cycles."

Other products showcased at FIBO include Matrix

Ride education, a training programme that complements the new Matrix Training Cycles, and which is designed to teach trainers how to lead group cycling classes.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

**MATRIX**

Funxion's experiential multi-screen solution 'engages members', says **Ernst De Neef**

Interactive digital fitness creator Funxion launched the Funxion Experience Multi-Screen Solution.

The system, which debuted at FIBO, is designed to enable



*"We recognise that every workout space is unique. To reflect this, our offer provides multiple content delivery options to suit a wide array of environments and budgets"*

**Ernst De Neef**

the digital delivery of multiple exercise demonstrations to numerous screens, which are programmed to run concurrently.

It was nominated in the FIBO Innovation & Trend Awards in the digital fitness category, and consists of a series of digital displays connected to a host.

It offers personal guidance to users as they make their way through the different zones. This frees up PTs' time, particularly in class situations, which enables them to spend dedicated time with individual members.

Additionally, it allows operators to create immersive, boutique experiences by integrating music and lighting controls.



**The Funxion system can replace or support instructors**

Ernst De Neef, CEO at Funxion, who launched the system, says: "We recognise that every workout space is unique. To reflect this, our offer provides multiple content delivery options to suit a wide array of environments and

budgets. Funxion delivers fitness content to the gym floor, creating motivating, virtually-instructed workouts that engage members and support trainers."

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

**FUNXION**

eGym innovations encourage high motivation and higher retention, says **Christin Goerlach**

Fitness kit and software specialist eGym chose FIBO for the launch of its new Vision system.

Present on all of the brand's smart electric strength equipment, Vision is a 15.6" HD console/screen offering a high-resolution training interface designed to transform the training

experience and drive motivation among exercisers.

Additionally, the brand has also upgraded its open-cloud platform, eGym ONE, to include a standard API that enables suppliers, including Precor, Pulse Fitness, Matrix and Life Fitness – among others – to offer users individually

tailored workouts on all connected partner machines.

Christin Goerlach, eGym's country director for Germany, Austria and Switzerland, said: "It's our mission to make facilities more successful on every level. We aim to connect all suppliers from the training floor – strength, cardio, mobility or others – to



*"It is our mission to make facilities more successful on every level"*  
**Christin Goerlach**

**The open eGym Cloud connects all suppliers from the gym floor**



our new open eGym Cloud for the benefit of all.

"We need to make sure that members achieve their goals and have fun while doing so. Eventually, these drivers lead to higher motivation and a higher retention rate.

"This is why we've developed our smart equipment, as well as our apps for trainers and members," Goerlach added.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

**EGYM**



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- M2O CEO **Jinkil Kim** says: "The Myo Mirror allows fitness clubs to provide smarter and more diverse services to its members and will become essential equipment for operators"

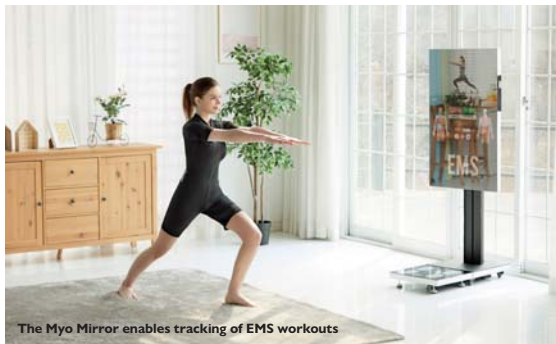
**M**2O Ltd, an EMS equipment manufacturer based in Seoul, South Korea, exhibited the Myo Mirror, an EMS workout platform that enables users to track their fitness journeys, at FIBO.

Billed as the 'future of fitness', the mirror offers a range of high-tech features, including body analysis and



*"M2O will lead the future fitness equipment market by creating devices that collect health data and developing them to become unmanned systems"*

**Jinkil Kim**



The Myo Mirror enables tracking of EMS workouts

EMS training options, as well as a workout video library and a weight scale, that enables users to track changes in their body, based on training information, weight and body composition analysis, via the smart touch mirror display.

Additionally, a mobile app enables users to track their workouts, monitor their progress and check their body composition results via their smartphone.

Kim said: "M2O aims to lead the fitness equipment

market by creating devices that collect health data and developing them to become unmanned systems to further support clubs."

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

**M2O**

MZ-Bodyscan promotes 'a feel-good fitness experience', says **Dave Wright**

**M**yzone has expanded its portfolio to include the MZ-Bodyscan, a new feature that offers users a visual representation of their fitness journey.

Designed to keep users motivated, the Bodyscan, which debuted at FIBO,

creates a 360-degree avatar of the user, showcasing before and after images. Users can then access these images in the Body Metrics section in the Myzone app.

Myzone CEO Dave Wright says: "MZ-Bodyscan is designed to help members



*"It's a unique feature enhancing the Myzone family of products, producing visually stimulating results direct to the user's Myzone app"*

**Dave Wright**

see and monitor their progress and is ideal for trainers to help evidence the work they do, motivating clients and providing a

rewarding and feel-good fitness experience".

To capture scans, trainers log in to the MZ-Bodyscan app on a portable device and use the mobile scanner to capture images of the member by moving it 360-degrees around the body.

"It's a unique feature, enhancing the Myzone family of products, producing visually stimulating results direct to the user's Myzone app," Wright adds.

MZ-Bodyscan is available to existing Myzone facilities at no extra cost – they will simply need to purchase the scanner.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

**MYZONE**



- CrossClimb combines cardio and strength training, says **Richard Sheen**

Billed as 'the first ever cross-trainer and incline stepper hybrid', Pulse's CrossClimb combines cardio and



*"We are passionate about creative versatile and high performing fitness machines that will appeal to a wide variety of fitness levels from the deconditioned to the elite"*

**Richard Sheen**

strength training and is designed to maximise lower body muscular engagement.

Requiring a larger range of motion than a typical cross trainer, the CrossClimb engages more muscles and burns more calories than a traditional cross trainer.

It also supports minimal impact to the lower body and reduces pressure on the knees, hips and ankles, making it accessible to users of all fitness levels.

Richard Sheen, commercial sales director at Pulse Fitness, says: "We are passionate about creative, versatile and high performing fitness machines that will appeal to a wide variety of fitness levels from the deconditioned to the elite."



"The CrossClimb combines the very best of cardiovascular training alongside resistance exercise, providing users with an all-round workout. The CrossClimb is perfect for both those new to exercise as it feels easier than other

equipment while offering greater benefits as well as those looking to strength train without putting additional strain on the joints."

**fitness-kit.net KEYWORD**

**PULSE**

Ladder Barrel redesign saves instructors time and effort, says Basi Systems' **Ceylan Ucgun**

Basi Systems, a company specialising in pilates equipment, debuted a redesign of its Ladder Barrel apparatus at FIBO.

Combining ladder rungs with a curved barrel surface, the Ladder Barrel is designed to assist with stretching, core

strength and flexibility during pilates classes.

The new look combines comfort and functionality and features a curved orthopedic cushion to add comfort and support, while linear slides, offering manual adjustability, connect the barrel to the ladder.

New additions also include an expanded width and standing platform to make

the barrel more accessible, while the upgraded F2 system, a spring system unique to the company, provides a range of resistance levels.

Ceylan Ucgun, founder of Basi Systems, says: "It was our priority to change the adjustment system of the

Ladder Barrel to save instructors both time and effort during lessons."

"We are proud of the newly engineered one hand operating system," she adds. ●

**fitness-kit.net KEYWORD**

**BASI SYSTEMS**



*"It was our priority to change the adjustment system of the Ladder Barrel to save instructors both time and effort during lessons"*

**Ceylan Ucgun**



**The Ladder Barrel is designed to assist with stretching, core strength and flexibility during pilates classes**



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