

# health club management

JANUARY 2015

No 220



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WORLD  
FOCUS

## PUT IT ON ICE

The man who  
built a gym in  
the Antarctic

## £5

memberships

Sports Direct makes  
its presence felt

A portrait of Arianna Huffington, a woman with blonde hair, smiling, wearing a dark top with a white collar.

ON THE COVER

## ARIANNA HUFFINGTON

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# A new call to action

**Y**oung or old, disabled or able-bodied, fit or unfit, the brief is clear: we should all be active on a daily basis. This is the unambiguous and very welcome message from Public Health England (PHE) in *Everybody Active, Every Day* – its recently published national framework designed to combat inactivity. Hear, hear PHE. In their bold simplicity, the four words 'everybody active, every day' become more than just the name of the framework – they become a rallying cry for the fitness sector as a whole.

"This is the largest and most significant piece of work on physical activity done by PHE since its inception in 2013. It's a great indication that physical activity is starting to climb its way to becoming a top tier public health issue," comments ukactive CEO David Stalker.

It's the simplicity of the message that's particularly refreshing: activity has to happen every day. That's infinitely easier to grasp than x number of minutes on y number of days a week. It's also more compelling – less about guilt-tripping people if they're not doing the minimum, more about inspiring them to do *something*, and to do it today rather than putting it off until tomorrow.

As PHE's Kevin Fenton explained at the recent ukactive Summit, it's about changing attitudes so physical activity becomes the expectation – the new social norm. That means implementing 'active design' principles in places where people live, so activity options are embedded into everyday lives. It means setting up exercise initiatives in the workplace, as *The Huffington Post* founder Arianna Huffington urges on page 32. And it means rolling out well-evidenced physical activity interventions on a national scale. All these are key prongs of the framework, which can be found at [www.health-club.co.uk/phe](http://www.health-club.co.uk/phe)

There's huge scope for the fitness sector to play a role in all of this, but club operators need to recognise the

important shift that 'everybody active, every day' represents. It can't be just about gyms any more, as ukactive CEO Dave Stalker explains on page 24: "As a sector, we'll see an ongoing redefinition of who we are and what we stand for, driven by an understanding that physical health clubs, leisure centres and activity providers are now part of a wider ecosystem working to get the world fit and healthy."

Other organisations have already embraced this 'all activity is good' agenda: Sport England's 'Get Healthy,



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*It's about changing attitudes so physical activity becomes the expectation – the new social norm*  
– professor Kevin Fenton

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'Get Into Sport' campaign has been rebranded 'Get Healthy, Get Active' and backed by £5m of funding.

Fitness must do the same. There are clear opportunities for fitness providers to latch on to the PHE agenda, including embracing partnership work in the community, developing links with corporates, and providing better evidence of the effectiveness of activity interventions.

If the sector is willing and able to embrace 'everybody active, every day' – focusing on getting people moving wherever they are, rather than concentrating exclusively on its own bricks and mortar facilities – it can play a huge role in turning the tide of inactivity.

**Kate Cracknell, editor**

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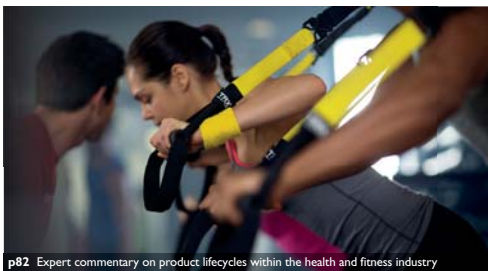




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### Buyers' guide

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## WRITE TO REPLY



Do you have a strong opinion or disagree with somebody else's views on the industry?  
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## Make PE fascinating and fun



In the School Gym 3T concept, games involve cerebral as well as physical activity

I read with interest the *HCM* articles on obesity (*HCM* Oct 14, p70) and increasing physical activity among children (*HCM* Oct 14, p62), and wanted to tell you about an initiative – School Gym 3T – that's impacting on both these important areas.

The concept is owned by Graham Evans of Dyffryn Taf secondary school, Dylan Blain of Leisure Lines, and myself. We wanted to find a way to make PE, exercise and training valuable for all, whereby not being sporty didn't make you poor in PE.

We've developed a lot of equipment that won't be seen in a commercial or high performance gym, because it's geared around young people and learning generally: we have things like giant dominoes for making mazes, alpha boards with lettering, bean bags and numbered tracks. Although

athleticism can help, many games require more cerebral approaches to succeed: thinking, mathematics, spelling, planning. We've also developed awards that can be achieved through consistent displays of certain behaviours: coaching, mentoring, motivating and so on are all recognised.

We emphasise the development of good movement, as this is important for everyone, and ensuring habits acquired are for life. We currently have a PhD programme examining the effectiveness of this project, but you just have to visit the schools where it's in place: pupils are engaging in large numbers, sporting success is high, obesity levels are low, and disengaged pupils are finding a way into education.

**Dr Mark Bellamy**  
Project manager, School Gym 3T

## Let's help GPs to make 'every contact count'

The recent article on Dr John Morgan and his 'exercise is medicine' philosophy was refreshing, and his references to the 10-minute consultation a useful reinforcement of the recent movement to make 'Every Contact Count'.

As Dr Morgan asserts, it's about focusing on key information with achievable goals for both GP and patient (see *HCM* Nov/Dec 14, p42).

If the fitness sector is to play a role, we must have a strong national and local evidence base to convince healthcare professionals of the merits of exercise interventions. Creating quick and seamless access to simple referral processes, so healthcare professionals can feed people into the appropriate services, is also crucial for time-pressured GPs, as is visibility of this information at all stages, so patient progress can be monitored.

Dr Morgan also highlights a role for private organisations in the fitness sector. I concur, but they do face a challenge in gaining access to surgeries. Strategies are required to support them, and they must have a clear understanding of what information is out there, as well as a clear picture of what's required, so they can convince healthcare professionals of the merits of their services.

**Stuart Stokes**  
Commercial director, Refer-all



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**Quick access to referral processes will help time-pressured GPs**

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# UK news update

## Active Training Awards 2014 winners announced

The activity sector's leading training providers gathered in December to celebrate top achievers at the Active Training Awards.

More than 150 training companies, employers, HE providers and commercial vocational providers were on hand to hail exceptional performance and commitment to vocational training and development.

There was a three-stage assessment process for the awards, comprising a submission and then feedback stage from employers and learners. The final stage included a presentation to a panel of experts.

"Training and development is rapidly changing to meet the demands of today's workforce," said ukactive CEO and CIMSPA chair David Stalker. "We've focused this year on driving a discernible shift in training standards and it's great to be able to recognise top players across the industry." See link below for the full list of winners. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=5X4f3>

## Serco to sell leisure arm in strategy overhaul



Rupert Soames: Heading Serco's revamp

Up to 70 UK leisure and sports facilities face uncertainty after operator Serco announced plans to sell its leisure arm.

Services giant Serco is looking to offload several of its 'non-core' businesses as part of a strategy overhaul, ahead of a planned £550m rights issue. One of these businesses is Serco Leisure, which manages 70 UK locations including Bisham Abbey and Lilleshall National Sports Centres, the National Water Sports Centre and Manchester Aquatics Centre.

Livingstone Partners is understood to be handling the sale of the leisure unit, which has 66,000 members across its facilities. A Serco Leisure spokesperson told *HCM* the process is ongoing and that it "wouldn't be appropriate" to timescale the completion of the sale at this stage. Leading the strategy overhaul is new group CEO Rupert Soames – the grandson of Winston Churchill. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Q8j4M>

## Burnham backs exercise drive

Shadow health secretary Andy Burnham has pledged that physical activity would be available on prescription from every GP surgery under a Labour government.

The respected physical activity advocate made the bold pledge at the recent ukactive National Summit in central London. In his keynote address, the MP for Leigh said Labour would make physical activity a national priority and ensure exercise can be prescribed by having an exercise professional on-staff at every GP surgery. There was also the promise of a more people-focused NHS under Labour, embracing physical activity to make healthcare

preventative and the organisation sustainable.

Burnham said that changing activity patterns is the easiest lifestyle change to make, but acknowledged that many still struggle and must be supported. "The message of physical activity should be all-inclusive so people don't feel intimidated," he added.

Burnham said healthy lifestyles must be instilled from an early age. He outlined plans to set new standards for food in schools – with targets such as reduced fat and salt – as well as ensuring that all children leave school with the ability to swim and ride a bike safely.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Z9z4v>



Andy Burnham delivers his keynote speech at the ukactive National Summit 2014

## JD Gyms reveals 2015 expansion plans

Retail megabrand JD Sports, which announced its entry into the gym market with the launch of JD Gyms in early 2014, has outlined its plans for expansion in 2015.

The operator opened its second club in December 2014, in Liverpool city centre – located within a Grade II listed, three-storey property – and expects to open a further two sites in Q1 2015.

"Following this, we're looking to roll out further sites during 2015. However, we're also open to expansion through acquisition," said JD Gyms MD Alun Peacock.

JD Gyms' clubs will generally be 15,000–35,000sq ft sites located in high population centres, with equipment from different manufacturers for a 'best in class' strategy.

"For the time being, the gyms will not be located within JD Sports stores, but this is not ruled out," added Peacock.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=k8D2n>



JD Gyms' Alun Peacock confirms the chain is open to expansion through acquisition



## LA 'premiumising' London sites



There will be 10 LAX clubs in London by the end of 2015, says CEO Martin Long

LA fitness has outlined plans for growth and future investment as the operator neared the end of its CVA process late last year.

Speaking exclusively to HCM, LA fitness CEO Martin Long confirmed that the remaining clubs – following the sale of the 33 sites earmarked in the CVA process – will be predominantly in London and the south-east.

He added that this core group of around 50 clubs has performed well, in spite of “significant disruption” to the estate since the CVA was announced in March, with joiners up 10 per cent and revenues up 4 per cent.

Capital will begin to be released to the

entire estate at the end of Q1 2015, with scheduled improvements including completing the roll-out of new Primal functional training zones and programming.

Throughout 2015, a further seven of the 13 central London clubs will be upgraded and rebranded to the LAX by LA fitness brand – the operator's premium offering.

“We’re ‘premiumising’ our London offering,” said Long, who envisions a total of 10 LAX clubs in the capital. “In 2015, most investment will be within the M25, but the entire estate will have had a facelift by January 2016.”

Details: <http://lei.sr/a=c3A5R>

## énergie targeting ‘biggest growth ever’

énergie Group CEO Jan Spaticchia aims to lead the fitness franchise company through its biggest growth phase yet, with a raft of new gym openings planned in the UK and Europe during 2015.

Having finished 2014 with 90 clubs open or in presale, the group aims to open 36 clubs between January and December this year, across its three core brands: Fit4Less, énergie Fitness for Women and énergie Fitness Clubs.

In the first three months of 2015, énergie will open two clubs a month, which will increase to three a month from April and four from October onwards.

“The fitness franchise market is at a confident high as we enter 2015,” said



CEO and chair Jan Spaticchia started the franchise in 2003

Spaticchia, whose group has a network turnover of £26m per annum. “2015 is set to be a pivotal year for the group as its looks to create a platform for unprecedented growth.” Details: <http://lei.sr/a=y9X4M>

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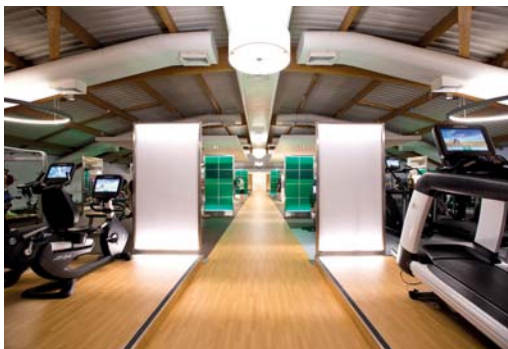
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# UK news update

## DLL kicks off gym innovation



The flagship Chigwell club in Essex has benefitted from a £3.4m facilities upgrade

David Lloyd Leisure (DLL) has launched a new gym transformation programme, which will see innovative design, technology and 'best in class' equipment installed at a number of clubs in its 91-strong network.

The TDR Capital-owned gym chain has incorporated the concept at its flagship Chigwell club, which recently received a £3.4m facilities upgrade. The revamped gym is piloting tablets and iMacs for members to access tailor-made exercise programmes, helping them keep on track with their fitness goals either in-club, at home or on the go. Other features include touchscreens demonstrating instructional

videos aimed at maximising workout efficiency. The gym also boasts a remodelled layout, designed to activate members' senses and featuring designated exercise zones.

The ongoing gym innovation project so far encompasses 13 gym sites – at an investment of £6m – and will continue across sites within the group's portfolio of 81 UK clubs and 10 in Europe. DLL is also ploughing £50m into its estate to upgrade clubs and general facilities.

DLL chief executive Scott Lloyd said: "We're always looking to invest in innovative and exciting facilities, products and programmes." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=A4g4y>

## No workout, no meeting, says Les Mills UK chief



CEO Keith Burnet wants active guests

Les Mills UK is calling on people in the fitness industry to put their pulse where their mouth is and commit to taking part in a workout if they're having a meeting at the company's London headquarters.

CEO Keith Burnet believes it's time for the industry to lead by example as it bids to turn the tide on inactivity. As such, all guests attending the Aldgate office for a meeting with members of the team will be asked to participate in a Les Mills class before or after the meeting.

"It still stuns me that so many people who work in the health and fitness don't exercise or have a go at the classes and programmes their members enjoy day in, day out," said Burnet. "So in a bid to inspire and motivate people to experience the power of group exercise, anyone who has a meeting here in our offices in Aldgate, London, will be asked participate in a Les Mills class. Anyone who can't commit will be asked to come back or donate to charity." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=9t9A8>



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## MMA indie gym packs a punch



The open-plan site spans two floors, with the gym kitted out by Life Fitness and Jordan

A mixed martial arts (MMA) themed independent gym in Kings Lynn is hoping to provide members with a knockout experience at its new 1,208sq m (13,000sq ft) site, which was formerly a laser quest centre.

Having launched two years ago, Heros Gym has moved to the larger premises to accommodate its growing member base, with owner Ben Tansley and his team largely carrying out the property renovation themselves.

As well as a fully-equipped gym area, the new club also offers a studio for classes, a group cycling studio, a dedicated high level boxing training area, supplement shop, a café

and on-site sports massage facilities. The gym area features an extensive range of Life Fitness and Hammer Strength equipment, featuring pieces from the Insignia, Integrity and Elevation ranges, including the new FlexStrider variable-stride trainer and PowerMill climber.

Members also have access to Hammer Strength Motion Technology Selectorised (MTS) equipment, HD Elite and Hammer Strength plate-loaded equipment. Jordan Fitness supplied the free weights, functional equipment, studio equipment and the first example of its brand new Ignite Rig.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=z7J3G>

## Cycling legend Brailsford launches Bangor centre



Sir Dave Brailsford tries the equipment

The new Canolfan Brailsford Sports Centre was recently opened in Bangor by local lad and former British Cycling chief Sir Dave Brailsford, who said he was "honoured" to have the facility named after him.

The centre, which is part of Bangor University, has undergone a £2.5m refurbishment programme to provide sports and exercise facilities for both Bangor University and the local community.

The new facilities include a brand new two-storey 8,500sq m (91,493sq ft) gym. As sole supplier, Life Fitness has installed over 100 pieces of equipment including items from the Discover range CV, Signature Series strength and Hammer Strength HD Elite. The university is also the first UK customer to offer workout tablet options for Welsh language speakers.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Y2y4f>

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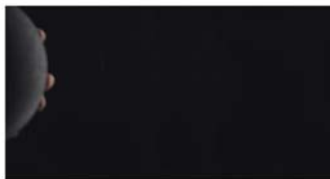
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February 28 - March 1	London	April 18-19	Glasgow
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# Technology news

## NHS to promote fitness apps



Smartphone fitness apps will be promoted to patients in a Department of Health initiative

The Department of Health has launched a "framework for action" to improve the nation's activity levels through the use of digital technology, with fitness apps set to feature.

In its *Personalised Health and Care 2020* mission statement, the department's National Information Board has set out a bold vision for how technology should work harder and better for patients by 2020. This will include promoting the use of NHS-approved smartphone apps to patients who could benefit from controlling their own activity regime.

Tim Kelsey, NHS England's national director for patients and information, said: "We must embrace modern technology to help us lead healthier lives, and take more control." He

went on to detail how, starting in 2015, NHS 'kitemarks' will be used for apps that meet specific standards, meaning app developers could "take advantage of the trust people have in the NHS brand". The move follows on from NHS Choices, a general health app store that was launched in 2013, and that's regularly reviewed to ensure clinical safety.

"Being smarter with data and technology has the potential to make a world of difference to patients, while ensuring best value for the taxpayer," said chief nursing officer for England, Jane Cummings. "Aside from the clear benefits for patient care, better use of technology will help create a more efficient NHS."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=w9C9u>

## New gadget helps user and phone to run all day



AMPY charges your phone on the run

No longer will your phone running out of juice be a problem: providing you're prepared for a quick run. New gadget AMPY converts energy from motion into a battery to charge any USB-powered device.

A 30-minute run, 10,000 steps or an hour's bike ride is enough to charge a smartphone for three hours. The battery can store about a week's worth of physical activity and stays ready to use for months.

An associated app tracks the amount of energy generated, calories burned and carbon footprint offset. Developed by a team of engineering PhD students in America, AMPY's co-founders say they hope the technology behind the device will be directly integrated into smartwatches, fitness trackers and other future devices, so they never have to be plugged in.

Wearable tech is predicted to hit the mainstream by 2016, with a forecasted 180 million units to be sold, driven by products such as the Apple Watch and Samsung Gear.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=t459h>

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# Supplier news

## Precor lands Health & Fitness Nordic contract

Precor has landed a major contract to deliver all cardiovascular and strength machine equipment for Health & Fitness Nordic Company (HFN), Scandinavia's largest health club operator.

HFN has more than 200 clubs ranging from high-end to low-cost, with 500,000 members. The company was born of a merger between the SATS and Fresh Fitness chains with Elixia – a process finalised in June 2014.

As the company continues to grow, Precor will be the exclusive supplier of CV equipment, as well as selectorised and plate-loaded strength equipment, for SATS and Elixia clubs, having previously impressed in its lengthy contract with SATS. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=e4X4a>

## Gladstone wins Sports Direct software contract

Sports Direct has selected Gladstone Health and Leisure to be its software supplier for the rollout of its health and fitness clubs. The contract runs for three years.

The network of Sports Direct Fitness clubs continues to grow, with the chain aiming to eventually reach 200 clubs.

As well as Gladstone's core Plus2 Membership Management software and Connect online booking tool, Sports Direct will use a wide range of the software provider's support systems. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=x2c3L>

## Matrix lands £25m Gym deal

Matrix Fitness has beaten off fierce competition from rivals to retain its supplier agreement with The Gym Group in a new deal worth £25m over the next three years.

Having provided fitness equipment to The Gym Group since 2008, Matrix was one of five leading suppliers to receive a request-for-proposal (RFP) as the growing gym chain sought to evaluate its equipment contract.

The tender encompassed the supply of over 200 pieces of new equipment – including resistance, cardiovascular, free weight and ancillary functional training equipment – to the 51 existing gyms, the four new openings

due between the completion of the tender process and the end of 2014, and the pipeline of new openings. Additionally, the contract covers new equipment to be installed as part of the company's programme of equipment refurbishments as gyms reach five years of age.

"It was an extensive review process involving the sector's leading suppliers, considering diligence on their products, supply and service credentials," said chief operating officer of The Gym Group, Jim Graham.

Matrix has now signed three consecutive supply agreements with The Gym Group. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Z7R5D>



Matrix Fitness has provided fitness equipment to The Gym Group since 2008



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# International news

## Snap Fitness: Plans for massive growth in India

In addition to its recent announcement that it's targeting 200 clubs in the UK, international fitness franchise Snap Fitness has outlined plans for major growth in India.

It has already opened 50 clubs in India since selling its first franchise in 2009, but Snap Fitness India CEO Dr Vikram BM has now announced plans to launch an additional 300 clubs by the end of 2017.

At present, Snap Fitness has more than 2,000 clubs open or in development worldwide across 15 countries.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=9U4j2>

## Total Gym expands its footprint in the US

Anastasia Yusina, the founder of Strata Partners in Russia, has opened her first club in the United States.

Located in Miami and opened on 1 December, the standalone GRAVITY studio is a boutique offering comprising PT area, Total Gym machines, Star Trac Spinner bikes, TRX and one treadmill.

The 200sq m club offers small group training and personal training, with classes that cater for a maximum of 20 people costing US\$25; packages are also available. Fifty founder memberships were offered at US\$169 a month for unlimited use.

Yusina plans to open two of her own GRAVITY clubs, and then become area developer for south Florida. The first US GRAVITY club, which is not owned by Yusina, opened in Atlanta in June 2014.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=s6v6G>

## Britannia to debut with broad wellness offering

Set to join the P&O fleet in March 2015, the new cruise ship Britannia will offer a wide array of wellness offerings at sea.

From a fitness perspective, Britannia will have four pools as well as a gym and dedicated sports space called The Arena for short tennis, cricket and football.

The Oasis Spa – to be operated by Steiner Leisure – will feature a hydrotherapy suite with heated loungers, waterbeds, a salt cave and a hydrotherapy pool. There will also be 17 individual treatment rooms and the fleet's first Oasis Villa – a private zone for couples or groups, offering an individual whirlpool and spa therapist.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=11CBY>

## Fitness First India: 30 new clubs

Fitness First Group has announced plans to spend more than Rs160 crores (US\$26m, £21m, £16.4m) on its expansion in India, to open 30 new premium fitness clubs in Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore in the next five years.

Based on PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) research, the Indian health and wellbeing market is expected to grow by 50 per cent over the next five years to hit one trillion rupees (US\$16bn, £13bn, £10.4bn) by 2015.

Fitness First India, which already has seven clubs, expects to increase its regional membership from 5,274 to 45,000, also adding 1,250 new professional fitness roles.

Every year, four or five clubs will be added across the three major cities, with the focus remaining on Delhi and Mumbai for the next three years. Delhi is projected to have the largest portfolio with about 15 clubs, while Mumbai will grow to host around 10–12 clubs. There will be an equal split between Premier and Platinum tier clubs.

Over the next five years, Fitness First India hopes to launch 12–14 compact clubs, eight to 10 mid-sized clubs and about 10 big box clubs. The venture is expected to boost revenues by Rs300 crores (US\$47m, £38m, £30m).

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=67R6Y>



MD of Indian ops Vikram Aditya Bhatia with Andy Cosslett, Fitness First Group CEO

## Vivafit continues its global growth

Women-only fitness franchise Vivafit has continued its global roll-out in dramatic style over recent months.

India has been a particular focus for the operator, with the first clubs opening in

Lucknow in the state of Uttar Pradesh, and Cochin in Kerala in October.

Also in October, a 450sq m club opened in Jakarta, Indonesia – the country's first Vivafit – while November saw the cutting of the ribbon of the first Vivafit in Oman, in the capital city of Muscat. A new site also opened in Singapore in November – a market the brand first entered in 2011, where the master franchisee holds an agreement to open 100 gyms.

Finally, October saw the signing of a master franchise agreement for Taiwan – with plans for 150 gyms by 2020 – while in November an agreement was signed for the territory of Bahrain.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=67Z5J>



Vivafit CEO Pedro Ruiz attends the Cochin club opening

## ELEMENTS heads to Frankfurt



Facilities at the new ELEMENTS club in Frankfurt include two group exercise studios

Premium health, fitness and spa operator ELEMENTS – operated by Migros Freizeit Deutschland, a subsidiary of Migros Zurich – has opened its fifth club, and its first in Frankfurt.

Located near the Eschenheimer Tower, the 3,500sq m club is spread over three floors and offers a spacious workout area including gym floor, a functional zone, electronic circuit training and two group exercise studios. Regular performance and body composition testing is available on request.

Outdoor fitness is also offered, including running and cycling clubs for expert advice to improve technique and performance.

Alongside the fitness offering, the new club offers a 600sq m hammam with relaxation pool, herbal steamroom and day spa offers including massages. The interior of the club was designed by architects KSP Jürgen Engel Architekten (Frankfurt) and interior designer Ushi Tamborriello (Rieden, Switzerland).

ELEMENTS already has three clubs in Munich and one in Stuttgart, with two further clubs in the pipeline for the Frankfurt area – one in Eschborn, scheduled to open in summer 2015, and a second site in the centre of Frankfurt that will open in 2016.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=6C6W6>

## SATS: Focus on cycling, yoga, running

SATS – part of the Health & Fitness Nordic Group – has opened a new club in central Stockholm, Sweden.

Opened on 6 October, the 1,700sq m club offers a wide range of group exercise with additional focus on yoga, cycling and running.

There's a group exercise studio, cycling studio and hot studio, as well as a dedicated area for equipment pilates classes. The club offers all of SATS' most popular classes: Hot MOJO, Yogalatesair, Indoor Running and Cycling Cinema.

In terms of the gym floor, the key suppliers are Life Fitness, Precor and gym80. Membership starts at SEK 505 (£44, €55) which gives access to just the one club,



PHOTO: JONAS BORG

Yogalatesair is one of SATS' innovative classes

up to SEK 675 (£58, €73) for Priority membership. SATS ELIXIA operates 160 clubs in the Nordics: 67 in Sweden of which 46 in Stockholm, 71 in Norway and 22 in Finland. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=n3m4a>



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# People news



New BMF head of events Alex Stanley

## BMF starts year with a double appointment

British Military Fitness (BMF) has added to its growing ranks with the appointments of new human resources head Gilles Paoli, and Alex Stanley as head of events.

Paoli, originally from France, brings a wealth of experience having worked in HR for both the public and private sector. He holds a Level 3 qualification in personal training and loves outdoor workouts.

Meanwhile Stanley joins from sports management firm IMG, where he managed large-scale events including Run to the Beat, UK Challenge and The Color Run. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=k6t3r>



Millward Snr (right) and his son Theo

## STA announces its next CEO as Millward retires

Swimming Teachers' Association (STA) CEO Roger Millward has announced he will retire next summer, with his son Theo set to take over at the charity organisation.

Millward senior announced that he would be stepping down at the STA's recent national conference, having spent 20 years at the helm. Millward junior joined STA full-time in 2011, after working for a number of international firms including IBM and Grant Thornton. He is the current operations director and said it was an "enormous honour" to be appointed CEO. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=r2Y3a>

## New CEO at Places for People

Places for People Leisure Management (PPLM) chief executive Steve Philpott is to retire this year after 11 years at the helm, with finance director Sandra Dodd set to take up the reins.

Philpott has led the company – which changed to its current name from DC Leisure last year – through substantial growth during his time in charge. PPLM, which won Leisure Centre Operator of the Year at both the 2013 and 2014 Flame Awards, currently partners with 36 local authorities, managing 112 leisure centres across England and employing more than 7,000 staff.

Philpott is thought to be stepping down to spend more time with his family and was thanked by the board for his dedication and "excellent leadership of the business".

Places for People Group CEO David Cowans said: "Following a competitive recruitment process, we're delighted to have appointed Sandra Dodd who has an impressive track record and in-depth knowledge of the business." Dodd has 20 years' experience in the company, including 12 years as finance

director. A chartered management accountant, Dodd hopes to continue to grow the number of leisure centres that PPLM operates, and at the same time increase the contributions that the company makes to the wider health and wellbeing sector.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=k4a4Y>



Sandra Dodd will be the new PPLM CEO

## Les Mills UK adds four new recruits

Les Mills UK has added four new members to its team over recent months as the fitness giant gears up for a busy year ahead.

- Justine Williams has been brought in as product manager to head up the new Born To Move programme. Williams has more than 20 years' experience in business development and joined from Lifetime Training. She is best known in the industry for creating children's activity training company SHOKK.

- Dave Alstead is Les Mills' customer experience manager for the north-west. Alstead has a wealth of experience in club operations, including time with David Lloyd Leisure, coupled with a solid equipment sales background from his most recent role with Matrix Fitness. A certificated Les Mills instructor, Alstead is tasked with helping Les Mills customers in the north-west increase the attendance of their group exercise programmes through a combination of club management education seminars, world class programmes and ongoing training.

- Natalie Prescott joined last year as head of product sales to further strengthen the customer experience team. After a customer



(L-R) Les Mills recruits Williams, Alstead and Prescott

relationship and business development role with Power Plate UK, Natalie has launched the new Les Mills products – Smartbar, Smartstep and Bodybike – into the UK market and is looking to further expand this offering.

- Finally, trainer Steve Tansey will occupy the newly created role of 'tribe trainee', based at the London HQ. Tansey will be working with the instructor experience and customer experience teams to improve standards and service to both instructors and club operators. Tansey became a Les Mills Instructor back in 2000 and quickly rose through the instructor and trainer ranks to his most recent role of technical coach for Les Mills UK BodyCombat. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=WST55>





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# The year ahead



Will 2015 prove to be a turning point for the fitness and physical activity sector?

David Stalker, CEO of ukactive, offers his thoughts

Every year the request from the HCM editor lands on my desk, calling on me to dust off the crystal ball and lend my thoughts on the year ahead. As regular as the seasons, it's confirmation that another great year is coming to an end, and once more we can look ahead with optimism to the future of the sector.

## Sector overview

So what do I think the future holds? The founding brands of the sector – those major private institutions on which the industry

grew in the 1990s – will either have to rediscover a purpose as we have seen with Fitness First, or else drift off into irrelevance. Meanwhile the proliferation of specialists will continue to explode, with yoga hotting up on even more high streets, enterprising PTs going wherever they are needed, and indoor cycling studios charging fees previously only dreamt of by mainstream operators. This brings a highly personalised service that's hard to match.

The entry to the market of Mike Ashley's Sports Direct and the continued success of low-cost operators will keep the heat on any organisation unsure of its purpose and the value it gives customers. Nonetheless, the UK's low-cost operators will reach a crucial point, where the pressure of

continuous growth will be joined by the imperative to retain or implode.

The public sector – spurred on by efficiency drives, enhanced service levels and greater competition – will thrive and drive growth. We will continue to see the growth of the major trusts and management contractors as more local authorities look to the financial comfort and stability that their economies of scale bring. Expect that to mean bad – or at least challenging – news for smaller trusts, who will find it hard to retain their contracts in a straight-out bidding war, with some opting for a peaceful life by entering into alliances with one of the big boys to ward off their threat.

2015 will also be the year that wearable technology gets a fuel injection, with the release of the Apple Watch heralding the start of the next evolution in the fitness tracking market. Who remembers what



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM / ANDREW BASSETT

Club operators must realise they are part of a wider ecosystem where it's all about getting active generally, not just in the gym



Specialist studios – the new breed of microgyms – continue to proliferate, with yoga hotting up on even more high streets

happened to MP3 players and digital cameras when mobile phones started getting involved... Will Apple do the same to the competition in this market?

Strategically as a sector we will see the ongoing redefinition of who we are and what we stand for, driven by an understanding that physical health clubs, leisure centres and activity providers are now part of a wider ecosystem working to get the world fit and healthy. Embracing this position and understanding our role within it will enable us to dramatically redefine the value and impact of our sector, with the growth in its importance to all stakeholders as a result.

### Health of the nation

Finally, I remain passionate about the role we can play in improving the health of the nation.

Within the health community, stakeholders will get even harsher in their appraisals of what we offer: show them your evidence or they'll show you the door, not only for health contracts but leisure contracts too. Turning the tide of physical inactivity will take many years, if not decades, to achieve. Nevertheless, in just a single year since we called for a national ambition to tackle inactivity head-on – as a top tier public health priority – we have made remarkable progress. Local authorities have doubled their investment

### **“Stakeholders will get even harsher in their appraisals of what we offer: show them your evidence or they'll show you the door”**

in both cash and in proportion to their other areas of expenditure. Public Health England has responded to the call for a national strategy with the publication of its new national framework *Everybody Active, Every Day*. Sport England has rebranded its 'Get Healthy, Get Into Sport' fund as 'Get Healthy, Get Active', and has allocated greater levels of funding towards it. And organisations the length and breadth of the country have been engaged in trying to understand their role in turning the tide.

### Expectation and integration

Yet we have so much more to do. Inactivity rates continue to rise; we're not going to correct a generational slide to sedentary lifestyles overnight. But with increased investment comes increased expectation: expectation that this investment will make a difference. Expectation that the physical activity sector can step up to the plate and improve health and wellbeing in a measurable way. I

believe that the positive steps we have taken in the past 12 months have been inhibited by a lack of robust, clinically relevant and sound evidence to show the value and importance of what thousands of organisations are delivering every day, in every community.

Can we take the next step in raising our game, evidencing our practice and living up to our potential as a key part of the emerging National Wellness Service that local authorities across the country are creating? As I look to 2015, I expect to see even more integration: integration of physical activity services within wider public health services such as NHS Health Checks, smoking cessation and weight management; integration of public health outcomes within existing contracts, such as those for leisure services; greater integration between public health and adult social care, in pursuit of shared outcomes of healthy, independent later life; greater integration between CCGs and public health teams in local authorities; and even more integration of public health in wider policy settings such as transport, planning and education.

These are exciting times for anyone with a passion for improving the nation's health by getting more people, more active, more often. ukactive has been championing this cause for over 25 years, and we'll continue to champion it for ever more. ●



# 2015 Diary

## JANUARY

### 26-27 | The 35th Facilities Management Forum

**Venue** Radisson Blu Hotel, Stansted, London, UK

#### Summary

For managers and directors who are directly responsible for the purchase of FM products and services.

Web [www.forumevents.co.uk](http://www.forumevents.co.uk)

## FEBRUARY

### 1-3 | Spatex

**Venue** Ricoh Arena, Coventry, UK

#### Summary

The UK's largest dedicated pool and spa trade event.

Web [www.spatex.co.uk](http://www.spatex.co.uk)

### 4-8 | ACSM Team Physician Course – Part 2

**Venue** San Antonio, Texas, US

#### Summary

The Team Physician Course gives primary care, specialist physicians and other healthcare providers the core of knowledge to care for sports teams in the community. This course runs in two parts, but participants are not required to complete courses in sequential order.

Web [www.acsm.org/tpc](http://www.acsm.org/tpc)

### 19-21 | FORUMCLUB

**Venue** Fiera di Bologna, Italy

#### Summary

The 16th international congress and expo geared toward entrepreneurs and managers of fitness clubs, aquatic centres and sports establishments.

Web [www.forumclub.it](http://www.forumclub.it)

### 22-23 | Professional Beauty London

**Venue** ExCeL, London, UK

#### Summary

Featuring hundreds of leading health and beauty brands, this is the UK's largest beauty exhibition.

Web [www.professionalbeauty.co.uk](http://www.professionalbeauty.co.uk)

### 25-27 | IDEA Personal Trainer Institute

**Venue** Alexandria, Virginia, US

#### Summary

Featuring conference sessions, lectures and workshops, this event brings together a limited number of personal trainers with world-class presenters.

A west coast institute takes place in Seattle on 16-19 April.

Web [www.ideafit.com/ptrainer](http://www.ideafit.com/ptrainer)



The IDEA PT Institute offers hands-on workshops

### 26 | Quest NBS conference

**Venue** Holywell Park, Loughborough, UK

#### Summary

As well as celebrating 20 years of Quest, this conference will look to the future, with a focus on the continued rollout of Quest 2014 and the launch of a new online platform for the National Benchmarking Service. With high profile speakers, workshops and awards.

Web [www.questnbs.org](http://www.questnbs.org)

### 19-22 | ECA World Fitness Conference / OBOW Show

**Venue** Marriott Marquis Hotel, New York City, US

#### Summary

ECA World Fitness is an international organisation representing the fitness and wellness sectors. The show highlights new products, ideas and concepts.

Web [www.ecaworldfitness.com](http://www.ecaworldfitness.com)

### 20-22 | International Fitness Showcase

**Venue** Winter Gardens, Blackpool, UK

#### Summary

For fitness instructors and enthusiasts, providing three days of dance, aerobics, step, combat, conditioning, lectures, workshops and mind-body sessions.

Web [www.chrysalispromotions.com](http://www.chrysalispromotions.com)

### 31 | April – BASES Student Conference

**Venue** Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, UK

#### Summary

Offering keynote presentations from internationally renowned sport and exercise scientists, expert-led workshops, and research presentations.

Web [www.bases.org.uk/student-conference](http://www.bases.org.uk/student-conference)

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

**Venue** Hyatt Regency, Phoenix, Arizona, US

#### Summary

Explores the full spectrum of the industry – from science to practical

## MARCH

### 9 | SMMEEX

**Venue** Wembley Stadium, London, UK

#### Summary

SMMEEX gives buyers and specifiers from sporting clubs and associations across Europe the chance to meet with premier suppliers of products and services in a relaxed, informal environment to meet all their merchandise and marketing needs.

Web [www.smmexevent.com](http://www.smmexevent.com)

### 11-14 MARCH | IHRSA 2015 Annual International Convention & Trade Show

**Venue** Los Angeles, California, US

#### Summary

The 34th IHRSA – International Health Racquet & Sportsclub Association – Annual Convention & Trade Show takes place at the LA Convention Center, with seminars, keynotes and educational sessions alongside a trade show.

Web [www.ihrsa.org/convention](http://www.ihrsa.org/convention)

**FIBO in Cologne expects to attract 116,000 visitors in 2015**

application – with educational sessions, group workouts, hands-on workshops and networking opportunities.  
Web [www.acsmsummit.org](http://www.acsmsummit.org)

## APRIL

### 8 | European Health & Fitness Forum

**Venue** Cologne, Germany

#### Summary

Leaders from the fitness sector, politics and healthcare will convene at the 2nd European Health & Fitness Forum to discuss the sector's future, focusing on the question of how the sector can motivate even more people to commit to fitness. The EuropeActive/Deloitte *European Health & Fitness Market Report 2014* will also be unveiled at the event.  
Web [www.europeactive.eu](http://www.europeactive.eu)

### 9-12 APRIL

#### FIBO 2015

**Venue** Cologne Messe, Germany

#### Summary

FIBO is the world's leading trade show for health, fitness and wellness, with the 2015 event expected to host 116,000 visitors and 700 exhibiting companies. The show encompasses fitness and training kit, wellness and beauty, health promotion, sports nutrition, equipment and services, plus music and fashion.  
Web [www.fibo.de](http://www.fibo.de)

### 10-12 | Australian Fitness & Health Expo

**Venue** Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, Melbourne, Australia

#### Summary

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

### 29-30 Active-net 2015

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

#### Summary

A networking event aimed at all suppliers and operators with a focus on the public



leisure sector. Educational seminars and a business-focused networking event take place alongside keynote presentations, development seminars and one-to-one buyer/supplier meetings.  
Web [www.active-net.org](http://www.active-net.org)

### Date TBC | Russian Fitness Festival

**Venue** Olympic Stadium, Moscow, Russia

#### Summary

Aiming to popularise and develop a healthy lifestyle in Russia, this festival claims to be the most significant event in mass physical education in Russia, the CIS and the Baltic states. It features presenters from Europe, the UK and US.  
Web [www.fitness-convention.ru](http://www.fitness-convention.ru)

### 26-27 | Scottish Beauty

**Venue** The Royal Highland Centre, Edinburgh, UK

#### Summary

A trade-only event bringing together products, equipments, services and training from the leading beauty, nail, tanning and spa suppliers.  
Web [www.beautyserve.com](http://www.beautyserve.com)

## MAY

### 10-11 | Holistic Health

**Venue** NEC, Birmingham, UK

#### Summary

Holistic Health continues to support the holistic and complementary therapy market, offering exhibitors the opportunity to showcase products, treatment launches, equipment innovations and training courses.  
Web [www.beautyserve.com](http://www.beautyserve.com)

### 10-11 | BeautyUK

**Venue** NEC, Birmingham, UK

#### Summary

Brings together products, equipment, services and training from leading beauty, holistic, nail and tanning companies, as well as offering seminars and workshops.  
Web [www.beautyserve.com](http://www.beautyserve.com)

### 15-17 | BodyPower

**Venue** NEC, Birmingham, UK

#### Summary

BodyPower is the fastest-growing consumer fitness exhibition in Europe, attracting thousands of health and fitness enthusiasts from around the globe. The show offers an extensive exhibition, visual displays and interactive feature areas.  
Web [www.bodypowerexpo.co.uk](http://www.bodypowerexpo.co.uk)

### 20-21 | SIBEC UK

**Venue** The Belfry, Wistow, West Midlands, UK

#### Summary

A one-to-one meeting forum bringing together suppliers and buyers in the leisure, health and fitness sectors from the UK's local authority, trust and education markets.  
Web [www.sibec.co.uk](http://www.sibec.co.uk)

### 26-30 | ACSM Annual Meeting

**Venue** San Diego, California, US

#### Summary

This comprehensive sports medicine and exercise science conference covers the science, practice, public health and policy aspects of sports medicine, exercise science and physical activity.  
Web [www.acsmannualmeeting.org](http://www.acsmannualmeeting.org)

# 2015 Diary

## JUNE

### 3-6 | SPATEC Europe

**Venue** Melia Villaitana, Costa Blanca, Spain  
**Summary**

A two-day forum of one-to-one meetings between leading UK and European spa owners and operators and around 70 leading international spa suppliers.  
**Web** [www.spateceu.com](http://www.spateceu.com)

### 24 JUNE | ukactive FLAME Conference

**Venue** Telford International Centre, Telford, UK  
**Summary**

Offering a programme of high profile speakers, ukactive's Annual Conference is the leading educational and networking event for senior level professionals and decision-makers. The event will culminate in the FLAME Awards 2015.  
**Web** [www.ukactive.com](http://www.ukactive.com)

### 22-25 | 4th Annual International Conference on Health Economics, Management and Policy

**Venue** Athens, Greece  
**Summary**

This conference brings together scholars, researchers and students from all areas of health economics, management and policy.  
**Web** [www.atiner.gr/health.htm](http://www.atiner.gr/health.htm)



National Fitness Day will take place across the country in September

### 29-30 | Facilities Management (FM) Forum

**Venue** Whittlebury Hall Hotel & Spa, Northamptonshire, UK  
**Summary**

This event is designed specifically for managers and directors who are directly responsible for the purchase of FM products and services.  
**Web** [www.forumevents.co.uk](http://www.forumevents.co.uk)

## JULY

### 9-10 | FitPro Live

**Venue** ExCeL, London, UK  
**Summary**

Targeting personal trainers, instructors and fitness fanatics alike, this convention and trade show offers product demos and group workouts, as well as masterclasses and seminars from top presenters. The event will be preceded by a one-day Meeting of the Minds event on 8 July – an invite-only event for the top trainers from each health club group. A Zumba festival will take place on 10-11 July.  
**Web** [www.fitpro.com/live15](http://www.fitpro.com/live15)

### 13-16 | 11th Annual International Conference on Kinesiology and Exercise Sciences

**Venue** Athens, Greece  
**Summary**

Organised by the Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER) in conjunction with the Pan-Hellenic Association of Sport Economists & Managers (PASEM), this conference is designed to bring together scholars and students from a wide range of applied and integrated health sciences.  
**Web** [www.atiner.gr](http://www.atiner.gr)

### 15-19 | IDEA World Fitness Convention

**Venue** Los Angeles, California, US  
**Summary**

Claimed to be the world's largest, longest-running international fitness convention and featuring a programme of educational sessions from industry-best presenters.  
**Web** [www.idealifeit.com/world](http://www.idealifeit.com/world)

## SEPTEMBER

### 11 | National Fitness Day

**Venue** UK-wide  
**Summary**

Following 2014's inaugural event, National Fitness Day 2015 will see

fitness providers across the UK open their doors for free to allow members of the public to try out a wide range of fitness activities.

**Web** [www.nationalfitnessday.com](http://www.nationalfitnessday.com)

### 17-19 | 16th Annual IHRSA / Fitness Brasil Latin American Conference & Trade Show

**Venue** Transamerica Expo Center, São Paulo, Brazil  
**Summary**

A key health and wellness event for Latin America, featuring three days of seminars, networking opportunities and a trade show, attracting 130 exhibitors and more than 10,000 attendees.  
**Web** [www.ihrsa.org/fitness-brasil](http://www.ihrsa.org/fitness-brasil)

### 17-19 | FIBO China

**Venue** Shanghai Convention & Exhibition Center of International Sourcing, China  
**Summary**

Last year's inaugural event attracted 55 exhibitors from 15 countries/regions, showcasing fitness equipment, training courses and wellbeing lifestyle products.  
**Web** [www.fibo-china.cn](http://www.fibo-china.cn)

### Date TBC | Health+Fitness Business Expo & Interbike Expo

**Venue** Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas, US  
**Summary**

Since 1997, this event has brought manufacturers, suppliers, retailers, buyers, press, industry influencers and fitness professionals together to conduct the business of fitness.  
**Web** [www.healthandfitnessbiz.com](http://www.healthandfitnessbiz.com)

### 20-23 | SPATEC Middle East

**Venue** Mina Seyahi Complex, Dubai  
**Summary**

This event will bring together the leading spa operators in the Middle East region – hotel resort, destination, athletic, medical and day spas – to meet with key domestic and international suppliers in a series of one-on-one meetings.  
**Web** [www.spatecmee.com](http://www.spatecmee.com)

### 29 - 2 October | SIBEC North America

**Venue** Omni La Costa, Carlsbad, California, US  
**Summary**

Operators in the health, recreation, sports and fitness sectors meet with leading executives from national and international supplier companies for one-to-one meetings and networking.  
**Web** [www.sibecna.com](http://www.sibecna.com)

## 22-24 SEPTEMBER | Leisure Industry Week

Venue NEC, Birmingham, UK

### Summary

Following a broad consultation process, Leisure Industry Week (LIW) will be relaunched for 2015 with a new fitness-orientated focus. This year's event will offer five new, distinct zones on the show floor: The Gym Floor, Young Fitness, Group Exercise, Pool & Spa, and Leisure Facilities Management. Web [www.liw.co.uk](http://www.liw.co.uk)

## OCTOBER

### Date TBC | European Fitness Summit (EFS)

Venue Barcelona, Spain

### Summary

This summit offers suppliers from the fitness, wellness and health industries the opportunity to enjoy face-to-face meetings with decision-makers from leading fitness studios and wellness centres in selected European markets. Web [www.european-fitness-summit.com](http://www.european-fitness-summit.com)

### 7-9 | Club Industry Conference and Trade Show

Venue Chicago, Illinois, US

### Summary

This independent event for fitness professionals will offer new education, events, exhibitors, tours, and an ideal environment for networking. Web [www.clubindustryshow.com](http://www.clubindustryshow.com)

### 19-21 | ISPA Conference & Expo

Venue Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas, US

### Summary

Three days of speaker presentations covering business strategy, customer service, leadership and management in the spa industry, plus an expo showcasing the latest spa products. Web [www.experienceispa.com](http://www.experienceispa.com)

### 23-25 | The OM Yoga Show London

Venue Alexandra Palace, London, UK

### Summary

The total yoga experience under one roof, including free yoga and pilates classes, a range of workshops, children's yoga and hundreds of exhibition stands covering all aspects of yoga, pilates, ayurveda and naturally healthy products. Web [www.omyogashow.co.uk](http://www.omyogashow.co.uk)



Leisure Industry Week will be relaunched with a fitness focus in 2015

### Date TBC | IHRSA European Congress

Venue TBC

### Summary

The 15th Annual IHRSA European Congress will offer presentations by executives from inside and outside the health club industry, providing thought-provoking commentary on trends shaping business in general, and the fitness industry in particular. Networking events and focus group discussions provide the opportunity to build relationships with colleagues from across Europe. Web [www.ihrsa.org/congress](http://www.ihrsa.org/congress)

Web [www.ihrsa.org/congress](http://www.ihrsa.org/congress)

### 18-21 | SIBEC Europe

Venue TBC

### Summary

Brings the UK and Europe's major operators in health, fitness and leisure together with leading suppliers in a one-to-one meeting forum. Web [www.sibec.eu](http://www.sibec.eu)

Web [www.sibec.eu](http://www.sibec.eu)

### Date TBC | BASES Conference 2015

Venue TBC

### Summary

The annual conference of the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences, the professional body for sport and exercise sciences in the UK. Web [www.bases.org.uk](http://www.bases.org.uk)

### Date TBC | ukactive National Summit

Venue London, UK

### Summary

The largest political event in the sector's annual calendar, bringing together key stakeholders from public health policy and beyond. It attracts senior influencers from across physical activity, health, policy, brand, media, research, the charity space and local authority commissioning. Web [www.ukactive.com](http://www.ukactive.com)

## NOVEMBER

### Date TBC | Spa Life UK 2015

Venue TBC

### Summary

Spa Life offers spa professionals a chance to see new product innovations, share industry insights, network and access high quality management education. Web [www.spa-life.co.uk](http://www.spa-life.co.uk)

Web [www.spa-life.co.uk](http://www.spa-life.co.uk)

## EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT ...

# One-to-one training

Both in the UK and internationally, the focus seems to be moving towards small group training at the expense of one-to-one personal training. Is the one-to-one model broken or still alive and kicking?

**F**or those who can afford it, the benefits of one-to-one personal training cannot be underestimated: as well as designing a tailor-made programme, PTs can help ensure their clients adhere to it.

However, there are vast swathes of the population who would love to have a trainer but simply can't afford one; others who sorely need the services of a PT, but who fall so far outside the demographic that they wouldn't even think of it.

Meanwhile, set against the high price tag and demographically limited appeal of one-to-one personal training, we've seen a surge of interest in small group training (SGT) recently – a format that still allows for personalised attention and

motivation, but at a lower cost. Matt Roberts, owner of Matt Roberts Personal Training clubs in London, comments: "At IHRSA last year, the big clubs were talking about having to regenerate their businesses. They've moved towards small group, bodyweight training exercise rather than lots of machines and racks which depreciate each year. This is in response to demand: gym-goers want more attention."

Writing in *The Huffington Post* last year, Jamie Walker, CEO of SweatGym, said personal trainers are going to have to change their approach if they're to survive: "The days are numbered for PTs who subsist simply by showing you how to work out in a gym." She argues that

trainers need to put the 'personal' back into personal training, evolving and adapting to accommodate the changing needs of clients; having a niche or a specialism is now vital, she says – a point with which Roberts agrees.

So how should operators respond? Is one-to-one training broken, and if so should they invest exclusively in small group training? Should they emulate freemium providers such as The Daily Hit, Fitness Blender and BeFit, embracing technology and offering PT online, dropping the price point and allowing PTs to work with more clients? Should they look at ways to offer PT and SGT at more affordable prices? We ask the experts for their thoughts....

DO YOU THINK ONE-TO-ONE PERSONAL TRAINING HAS A FUTURE? EMAIL US: [HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM](mailto:HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM)

## MATT ROBERTS

Owner • Matt Roberts Personal Training

**T**here's still an enormous appetite for one-on-one training, but really only in affluent areas in central London. From a cost point of view, it's prohibitive for PT to take off in suburban or rural areas; SGT has broadened the market and catered for those who want to work out with specialists but can't afford one-on-one.

Although the one-to-one model is not broken, trends and technology are changing it. The days of PTs going from house to house are limited as this is such a time-inefficient model, even in London. Although one-on-one PT will remain our core focus, we're diversifying with the launch of a SGT club this year. It will be in London, but not a prime central location. It will be a different space and a different brand is being created.

There's currently a staggering demand for home workouts, and we're also responding to this with the launch of an app via mycloudtag, which is like having an interactive trainer. This will allow us to reach a broader audience with an inexpensive price point. Also, we're launching an online TV channel in the next couple of months. This will offer live workouts with me and our other trainers. Users will be able to interact with the presenters and watch celebrity guests take part in the workout, as well as text and email questions."



## ARRON WILLIAMS

Special projects • Life Fitness

**I** don't think the one-to-one model is broken, but it is largely the domain of the affluent few in the conventional health club setting. Meanwhile the explosion of boutique gyms and studios has brought about an evolution of the personal training model, whereby it's geared much more towards small group and group training rather than one-to-one.

PT is typically the second largest source of revenue for most health clubs, and the recent IHRSA consumer report indicated that clubs have a great opportunity to more fully leverage PT services, as only 14 per cent of members are taking a PT session annually and only 2.5 per cent are regular users (50 or more sessions a year). Compare this to boutiques, where PT uptake is typically 35–60 per cent and driven mainly by SGT.

Going forward, I believe health clubs need to explore different ways to drive average revenue per member and review how they can enhance both their existing group training and SGT offering, perhaps with branded programmes around products or structured programmes. Alternatively, they could look to take a leaf out of the freemium providers' handbook by embracing technology and offering different forms of PT services and support for members online, 24/7."





PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/CATIAIN PETOLEA

**Although still in demand, PTs must adapt to survive; having a specialism is vital**

## DAVID MINTON

Director • The Leisure Database Company

**I** don't think the one-to-one business model is broken, but it needs tweaking. Everything changes all the time and it's important to evolve to ensure you keep offering the best service.

Everyone could benefit from a PT to provide motivation and stop boredom creeping in, but the current one-to-one model is flawed, as it's too expensive for most people.

I'd like to see the emergence of a new business model where PT is financed differently to make it affordable. I'd like to see it being offered as part of the membership, even if this means the membership price has to increase slightly. Nuffield has already tried this with its wellbeing membership. What the clubs lose in secondary income could be made up for by members getting better results, which leads to better retention and more credibility with the healthcare sector. For the big chains, just one month's extra membership across its membership base would be worth millions.

Operators could also offer PT more cheaply if apps and the internet were embraced to allow PTs to work with numerous clients at once. However, it's crucial that if PT is offered more widely, standards aren't compromised and the education and knowledge base of personal trainers is kept high."



## LUCY BIRCH

Head of training • The Training Rooms

**O**ur experience is showing there's still a huge market for one-to-one PT. We're seeing consistent growth in this area. At the moment we train 3,000 personal trainers a year, but we're looking to grow that to 10,000 a year by 2016, and this is driven by the fact that demand for individual PT sessions is strong.

Awareness about the impact of obesity, alongside 'fitspiration' posts on social media, is having a huge impact on the health and fitness industry, and our big name gym partners – both budget and premium brands – are taking on more personal trainers to meet this increased demand.

Although group training has grown in popularity recently too, there will always be a large proportion of people who want that intensive connection with an expert and are prepared to pay for it. Not everyone feels comfortable, or able to achieve their specific goals, in a group environment.

There's always the argument that not everyone can afford one-to-one sessions. While I don't think the cost of PT should be dropped or included in gym membership packages – as this devalues the service and the experience of the professional – I would like to see an expansion of GP referral schemes, where patients are referred for a course of one-to-one training."





# ARIANNA HUFFINGTON

The author, pundit, TV celebrity and founder of *The Huffington Post* will speak about the importance of wellbeing to business success at the IHRSA 2015 Convention in March. Jon Feld reports





PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/DIAKON IMAGES

Huffington's top tips include introducing five minutes of meditation into daily routines, building up to 15–20 minutes or more

## “If we don’t redefine what success is, the price we pay – in terms of our health and wellbeing – will continue to grow”

As one of the keynote speakers at IHRSA, you’ll be discussing the topic ‘Redefining success: The third metric that can benefit your bottom line’, which is based on your most recent book. Tell us more.

Earlier in my career, I operated under the common delusion that burning out was the necessary price one paid for accomplishment and success. However, recent scientific findings have made it clear that this couldn’t be less true. In fact, performance actually improves when our lives include time for renewal, wisdom, wonder and giving.

Things changed for me when I had a painful wake-up call in 2007. Sleep-deprived and exhausted, I fainted, hit my head on my desk and broke my cheekbone. Since then, I’ve arrived at a new phase that features breathing spaces, a deeper perspective and daily practices to keep me on track – and out of doctors’ waiting rooms.

**What are the components of the Third Metric, and how do they relate to personal, as well as professional, success?**

The Third Metric is about wellbeing, wonder, wisdom and willingness. If we don’t redefine

### UP CLOSE & PERSONAL See Arianna live at IHRSA 2015

For a lively, engaging and illuminating evening, Arianna Huffington will discuss ‘Redefining Success: The Third Metric That Can Benefit Your Bottom Line’ during IHRSA’s 34th Annual International Convention and Trade Show, which takes place in Los Angeles on 11–14 March 2015.

Her keynote address will take place on Wednesday 11 March, from 5.15–6.30pm. For more information or to register, log on to [www.ihrsa.org/convention](http://www.ihrsa.org/convention)

what success is, the price we pay – in terms of our health and wellbeing – will continue to grow. But when we include wellbeing in our definition of success, we begin to change how we deal with time, which leads us to the next element: wonder.

When we live a life characterised by what Harvard professor Leslie Perlow calls “time famine”, we rob ourselves of our ability to experience wonder – our sense of delight in the mysteries of the universe,

and the everyday occurrences and small miracles that fill our lives.

We also need wisdom to redefine success. Around the world, we see smart leaders – in politics, in business, in media – making terrible decisions because they lack inner wisdom. That’s no surprise. It’s never been harder to tap into our inner understanding, because in order to do so, we have to disconnect from all our omnipresent devices – gadgets, screens, social media – and reconnect with ourselves.

The last component of the Third Metric is a willingness to give, prompted by our empathy and compassion. When we have a wake-up call, and subsequently experience wellbeing, wonder and wisdom, we discover that we possess a natural willingness to serve – to respond to a wake-up call for humanity.

**People in the fitness industry already share your passion about many of these concerns. What more do you hope to leave with the IHRSA ’15 audience?**

I want to give them concrete ways to move from knowing what to do, to actually doing it. I describe 12 steps they can take; each person needs to pick the one that resonates most strongly with them.



Huffington has written 14 books, with her latest looking at redefining success – the topic on which she'll speak at IHRSA

Here are three of them. First, have a specific time at night when you turn off all of your devices and disconnect from the digital world, which is something Perlow suggests in her book, *Sleeping With Your Smartphone*. This will help you reconnect to your wisdom, intuition and creativity. And don't start your day by looking at your smartphone. Instead, take one minute to breathe deeply, to be grateful, and to set your intention for the day.

Next, introduce five minutes of meditation, and eventually increase that to 15 to 20 minutes a day, or more. Even a few minutes a day will open the door to developing a new habit, and provide many benefits.

Third, drop the things that no longer serve you. At age 40, I did a major life audit and I realised how many projects I'd committed to in my head: learning German, becoming a good skier and learning to cook. Most remained unfinished, and many had never been started. Yet these countless, uncompleted projects diverted my attention and drained my energy. Each one took a little bit of me away. It was liberating to realise that I could 'complete' a project by simply eliminating it from my to-do list. Why carry around unnecessary baggage?

**Most business leaders find that first step – unplugging, or battling**

## “Women are uniquely equipped to make leadership more fulfilling and sustainable. If we're ever going to redefine success, it will be women who lead the way”

### **'overconnectivity' – very difficult. How successful have you been at doing this?**

I have several rituals to help me unplug and enjoy some time away from my devices. For example, I have a specific time at night when I regularly turn off all my devices and gently escort them out of my bedroom. And when I wake up in the morning, I don't start the day by looking at my smartphone. I take one minute to breathe deeply, or to be grateful, or to set my intention for the day.

### **You say that, while men currently drive the culture of power, women will lead the way when it comes to redefining success. How so?**

Women are uniquely equipped to make leadership more fulfilling and sustainable. That's why, if we're ever going to redefine success, it will be women who lead the way. Once men discard the notion that the only avenue to success is the Heart Attack Highway to Stress City, they'll join us – gratefully – both at work and at home.

We're already witnessing a global shift toward leadership values that, traditionally, have been considered feminine: flexibility, compassion, collaboration, empathy, nurturing.

### **How does all this play out in the workplace? What have you done for HuffPost employees?**

Since the news never stops, there's a temptation for editors, reporters and engineers to try to match the 24-hour news cycle. We therefore do a lot to prevent burnout, and to acknowledge that our employees have lives outside of work. We make it very clear that no-one is expected to check work email and respond after hours, or over the weekend – unless, of course, those happen to be working hours.

Everyone gets at least three weeks of vacation that they're highly encouraged to take, and I've implored our “HuffPosters” – without much success, I must admit – to eat lunch away from their desks. We also have two nap rooms in our newsroom.

# CYBEX®



For over 40 years, Cybex has proven itself a leader, innovator, educator, and partner to fitness facilities and their members across the world. Our commitment to providing premium quality, high-performance fitness equipment begins in the lab with the Cybex Research Institute and continues onto the fitness floor with training, education, and customised programming solutions that help you and your members get results faster.

While we are known for our durability and results, we'll continue expanding in 2015 with new products and programs that meet the ever-changing world of fitness.

Our goal is to help enhance your environment and create a better experience for your members, because we believe fitness should be fun, easy, and accessible for everyone.

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The Huffington Post launched in 2005; Huffington remains president and editor-in-chief

## ARIANNA HUFFINGTON IN A NUTSHELL

Arianna Huffington, 64, was born in Athens, Greece, and educated at the University of Cambridge in England. She moved to New York in 1980 and became a naturalised US citizen in 1990. Prior to launching *The Huffington Post* in May 2005, she had a varied career that encompassed acting, international punditry and, in 2003, a run for governor in California.

In 2011, AOL acquired *The Huffington Post* for US\$315m; Huffington remains the president and editor-in-chief of *The Huffington Post* Media Group. Today, the *HuffPost* boasts more than 800 editors and reporters worldwide, and 11 global editions, with more to come. In August 2014, the online news site had 115 million unique visitors, making it number one in the US.

During her prolific career, Huffington has written 14 books, including her latest, *Thrive: The Third Metric to Redefining Success and Creating a Life of Well-Being, Wisdom, and Wonder*.

## “Many political leaders are finally recognising that the wellbeing of their citizens depends on much more than their country’s quarterly growth rate”

### Nap rooms? What’s been the reaction to that?

Initially, when we installed them in the spring of 2011, they were met with scepticism and reluctance. Many employees were afraid their colleagues might think they were shirking their duties by taking a nap. We’ve made it very clear, however, that walking around feeling drained and exhausted is what should be looked down on – not taking a break to rest and recharge – and nowadays our nap rooms are full most of the time.

### You also make the case that healthy employees contribute to a healthy bottom line. Again, what are you doing at HuffPost to foster health and wellness?

Health and wellness is a huge priority for us. In our New York offices, we host meditation, breathing and yoga classes throughout the week, and our new offices in DC have dedicated meditation, yoga and nap rooms.

The benefits of standing and walking – as opposed to sitting all day long – have led us to provide a standing desk for anyone who requests one. We also have a gym, and we take part in the Virgin Pulse wellness programme, which allows employees to earn up to US\$500 a year by engaging in healthy practices. To facilitate such practices, we stock refrigerators with healthy snacks including yogurt, hummus, fruit and baby carrots.

All of these steps are ways we can help minimise the risk of burnout, exhaustion and stress for our employees.

### The fitness industry focuses on helping clients improve their health and wellbeing, but many of us are ourselves on that ‘Heart Attack Highway to Stress City’ you mentioned earlier. Any advice

### for club owners, operators and other fitness professionals?

It’s especially important that people involved in industries related to health and wellbeing take care of themselves. My advice: Take full advantage of your position. You’re on the cutting edge of science and medical research in terms of what it means to live a healthy life, and you’re part of a community that’s committed to wellbeing. At the same time, remember to make time for wellbeing practices and rituals that have nothing at all to do with your career.

### Finally, any bright spots that point to a genuinely healthier world in the future?

Fortunately, yes. Many political leaders are finally recognising that the wellbeing of their citizens depends on much more than their country’s quarterly growth rate, as important as that may be. This political epiphany could, hopefully, lead to significant policy changes – encompassing everything from family leave to job creation – that would reduce stress and improve overall wellbeing. Let’s hope that happens.

### Finally, tell us a bit about your own fitness regimen. Given your packed schedule, how do you stay fit?

I have several rituals that help me de-stress and unwind when I’m at home, as well as when I’m travelling. I start every morning with 20 to 30 minutes of meditation and exercise as often as I can. My favourite workout is a long hike in good company. I have a group of friends with whom I hike, and it’s our tradition that whoever is feeling the most energised that day has to talk on the way up the hill we’re climbing. The rest talk on the way down. Let’s just say I’m pretty well known as a consistent downhill talker. ●



This feature first appeared in the December 2014 edition of *Club Business International* (CBI), IHRSA’s magazine for the health and fitness industry.



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**PRECOR**

# DIRECT HIT

Sports Direct has announced that it will offer gym memberships for as little as £5 a month. Jak Phillips asks what the implications might be for the rest of the fitness sector



Mike Ashley  
founded Sports  
Direct in 1982

**R**etail giant Sports Direct sent shockwaves through the gym industry late last year, when *Health Club Management (HCM)* revealed the company's plans to take on the low-cost sector with an earth-shattering price plan.

The company's burgeoning health club arm – Sports Direct Fitness – announced it would offer memberships from as little as £5 a month and embed new health clubs in its retail stores as part of plans to build up a 200-club empire.

In addition to the 12-month, gym-only memberships being offered at £5 a month (plus a £10 joining fee), the aggressive price plan for the new model will see gym and exercise class combos available for £8 a month.

Embracing the ethos on which Sports Direct founder Mike Ashley built his retail empire, gym memberships will be sold at this low rate in a bid to capture market share and foster rapid growth.

Head of sales and products Mel Crossland told *HCM*: "We're expecting large amounts of additional spend from gym users, because of the convenience of the on-site store for impulse buys and the fact that they're the exact target market for Sports Direct products."

"The stores will also be busy in their own right, so the gyms will benefit from increased footfall. We're following the

Sports Direct model of focusing on becoming the biggest."

Crossland added that, despite the ultra low-cost strategy, the gym chain will avoid other traits of the growing low-cost sector, such as minimal staffing. "We want our gyms to have a personal touch – we won't follow the budget model and do everything in pods," she said. "We want to have a rapport with our members, so for every visit, staff will be there to say 'hi' and 'goodbye.'"

Precor will be the main supplier to the new gyms, with the contract for free weights and functional training kit under discussion at the time of going to print.

## Sparking debate

Sports Direct Fitness made an initial splash into the market by acquiring 23 former LA fitness sites. In addition, the new model of offering Sports Direct gym and retail outlets side-by-side was introduced with the launch of an Aintree site in mid-December, with openings in Keighley and St Helens hot on its heels. Four more new-builds – two in southern England, one in Wales and one in Scotland – are going through planning.

The masterplan for the new gym model was revealed to club general managers in November. The two-day conference presented the chain's vision moving forward, as well as the potential awards

## Sports Direct Fitness: Who's who

Founded by Newcastle United Football Club owner Mike Ashley in 1982, Sports Direct has over 600 sports retail stores in Europe, including 400 in the UK, and also owns sports brands such as Dunlop, Everlast and Slazenger.

The new gyms will therefore have access to a mammoth database of customers from Sport Direct's retail empire – which includes its own brand stores and website, plus those of USC, Lillywhites, Sweatshop and more.

The trio heading up the gym venture have all arrived from senior positions at DW Fitness. DW's former CEO Winston Higham is head of leisure, former head of membership Dean Hogan has become Sports Direct Fitness' head of operations, and Mel Crossland is head of sales and products.

available to staff through the company's highly publicised bonus structure.

This conference coincided with the official announcement of Sports Direct Fitness to the national press. The move garnered a swarm of headlines, but proved unpopular with investors as Sports Direct shares fell 2.7 per cent on the day of the announcement (11 November) amid fears the move would lead to less investment and focus on the core retail business.

The announcement – and most notably the price plan – has sparked lively discussions among health club leaders about what this means for the sector. *HCM* editor Kate Cracknell chaired a debate at SIBEC EU on the topic (see p80), while several influential figures have also shared their thoughts.

*HCM* editorial director Liz Terry said: "Sports Direct is treating gym membership as an additional driver of retail sales. This is a new approach for a club operator, but we know from the experience of existing operators that a £9 membership can turn a profit without the retail element, so this isn't a huge gap to bridge. It will be interesting to see how a company such as Sports Direct, with its expertise in consumer marketing, optimises the profit potential by upselling to customers."

Here, we present a round-up of the prevailing viewpoints...

► **JOHN TREHARNE**  
CEO, The Gym Group



*“Loss leading has a patchy record, especially where lack of investment and strategic focus can be a concern in the long run”*

**T**he entry of new competition keeps us all on our toes, and anything that increases accessibility to health and fitness is to be welcomed – after all, it’s what The Gym pioneered.

That said, it’s understandable that the market will wait to see what the product offering is, and whether the price is real, before reacting. Loss leading has a patchy record, especially where lack of investment and strategic focus can be a concern in the long run.

A few other questions on the strategy are also immediately clear. Will high quality staff engage with the market who they perceive their value-add isn’t recognised when it’s sold at a loss? How will customers react to the hard sell of being a retailer’s warm leads? Will consumers be able to square their expectation of customer service in the gym environment with the mass-market, low-cost retail service experience?

But of course, if £5 really is to be the new low-cost price floor, then the mid-market bracket just got redefined. Those already struggling to deliver value in this space could be hurt further, with other operators currently positioned as ‘budget’ being left in no-man’s land.

**RAY ALGAR**  
MD, Oxygen Consulting

**S**ports Direct has been a successful part of the British sports retailing landscape since 1982, the same year that David Lloyd opened his first club. Its core business I fully understand: through its 418 UK stores (at April 2014) and direct ownership of brands such as Slazenger, Lonsdale and Everlast, it offers a treasure chest of sports bargains with up to 70 per cent discounts. However, its strategy for the health club sector seems incoherent.

Having entered the health club market in June of this year with the acquisition of its first LA fitness site, I can currently buy a full membership at its Sale club for £35 a month, with no contract, while the most frequently used price is £36 a month across the 18 purchased clubs it now operates. The site in Aintree, Liverpool, is its first purpose-designed hybrid retail store and gym, but the £5



membership fee – which has generated significant press interest – is a limited offer promotional price, subject to a 12-month contract, £10 joining fee and missed payment fees.

There has been speculation Sports Direct will also embed gyms into some of its existing stores. This means it may be pursuing three distinct club formats at different price points, which feels as jumbled as its retail stores. My sense is the company wants to compete in the mid-market, but the Liverpool site sends a mixed message.

Sports Direct has enormous scale and influence and I would like to more clearly understand the big idea driving this new project, and how it intends to create a remarkable consumer experience that will support more people to become more active.

**TIM BAKER**  
Research director, Touchstone Partners

**T**he Sports Direct move into the low-cost gym sector is a potential game changer, with three key factors in its favour: using existing, known sites means there’s already an opportunity to win back those who left LA fitness on cost grounds; embedding the gyms within retail stores gives the best opportunity to upsell; and, of course, the genius that is Mike Ashley.

But at £5 a month, this is perilously close to – or even over – the financial edge. Also weighing against the venture is the probability that, even though they will likely have to walk through the store to get to the gym, members are unlikely to want to buy something each time they visit. This may be critical to long-term success.

Promising a higher level of service and layout than is often found in low-cost gyms, it will be interesting to see where Sports Direct Fitness is this time next year. If this were being done by anyone other than Mr Ashley, I wouldn’t expect to see it still here this time next year. I wouldn’t like to bet either way just yet.



*“If this were being done by anyone other than Mr Ashley, I wouldn’t expect to see it still here this time next year”*



Is £5 for a monthly gym membership a sustainable business model, or is it simply a headline-grabbing marketing tool?

### DAVE WRIGHT CEO, Creative Fitness Marketing

**T**his low membership fee, with a view to making revenue from auxiliary products, is not a new play. It's something JJB tried five or so years ago with its Mi-Gym brand, before the recession hit its retail business.

Sales are the only thing that can drive revenue to a business, so what Sports Direct will be working on very closely is the revenue per visit. In the same way that the fitness industry looks at selling supplements, these guys will be working on the retail play.

This will be a massive threat to other operators – particularly the budget operators –

because the rent will be low, the location will be convenient and they are saying that the service will be personable. (But we all say our service will be great!)

There's no doubt it will be busy, and if they're not going 24/7, then workout hours are going to be crammed into a shorter time period. This could lead to the sites being too busy – from the gym equipment all the way to the car park – which could negatively impact on the user experience. I think that will be one of the key issues to deal with.



### PETER ROBERTS CEO, Pure Gym

**T**he Sports Direct £5 gym membership is unsustainable if it wishes to make a genuine commercial profit. However, it's an attention grabbing marketing tool and will no doubt help sell its sports goods in-store, which are being overtaken by online sales.



### JAN SPATICCHIA CEO, énergie Group

**H**aving had direct insight into Sports Direct's plans for the fitness sector, and hearing it from Mike himself, I think the industry needs to take this move seriously. You only have to look at Sports Direct's history to see that, when it ventures into a new area, it does so in a big way. With substantial financial resources at its disposal, as well as international reach, it will hit the market hard and fast. Operators across the industry that are cynical should, in my opinion, think again: I wouldn't bet against Sports Direct!

From the énergie Group's perspective, as the UK's leading fitness franchise, we see Sports Direct's entry to the market being a bigger threat to the 'big box operators' than it is to us. For énergie, it's our locally owned clubs – operated by passionate franchisees – that really make the difference. Anything that shakes up the market and keeps operators on their toes is very welcome and we wish them all the best. ●



*“The Sports Direct £5 gym membership is unsustainable if it wishes to make a genuine commercial profit”*

The low-cost gym market has many established operators offering a wide range of facilities, and experience shows the members are looking for high standards in services and products; they'll walk with their feet if these are not provided. Service and standards, location and products will become the most important elements in customers' choice, rather than an obviously unsustainable low membership fee that cannot fulfil all these essentials or give a satisfactory return to the operator.

# WHO'S WITH US?



## Les Mills rocks out final Group Fitness Experience (GFX) event in Liverpool

**F**ollowing sell out events in London, Glasgow and Belfast Les Mills' GFX series took over the BT Convention Centre at the Liverpool Echo Arena in November for the final event in the GFX series and delivered a day-long festival of cutting-edge fitness, bringing together more than 2,000 fitness experts, instructors and enthusiasts alike. Hosting the hottest dance, high intensity interval training, martial arts, indoor cycling and mind body workouts, GFX demonstrated to the North-West what group fitness is all about in true Les Mills style!

Dave Kyle, UK head trainer for Les Mills UK says: "Liverpool was the biggest and best GFX event we have hosted so far. The atmosphere was electric and it was inspiring to see so many people taking part and really getting stuck in with the Les Mills programmes – it really showed

the power of group exercise. We often talk about the power of the Les Mills Tribe and GFX is the essence of this. We work in partnership with Reebok to bring the Les Mills party to the big stage, to host the show stopping productions and to captivate the audience and inspire both consumers and instructors. The feedback is incredible and the result of this day long festival of fitness is

Local charity, the Steven Gerrard Foundation received a £3,500 donation from the Les Mills Fund for Children, a charitable fund set up by Les Mills UK and the main man himself took time out of his busy schedule to come along and personally accept the cheque and learn about how Les Mills is creating a fitter planet. Steven Gerrard said: "It was great to see the event itself, and

the Les Mills Fund for Children is doing a fantastic job. Health and Fitness is definitely becoming more popular and events such as these are a fantastic opportunity to increase awareness of the benefits a healthy lifestyle

**"Liverpool was the biggest and best GFX event we have hosted so far. The atmosphere was electric"**

**Dave Kyle UK head trainer for Les Mills UK**

that consumers and indeed instructors (about a 50:50 split) return to their clubs feeling energised and engaged with the Les Mills programmes. GFX events inspire more people to move more often at their local facilities; morning, noon and night."

can have. We are very grateful to all involved with choosing my foundation to receive this donation."

To top off a truly amazing day local children from the Carmen Maria Academy staged a takeover in the middle of BODYATTACK™ and





**GFX is a high energy show on a big stage, featuring great trainers and instructors who are able to inspire the audience**

owned the stage with their electrifying performance showcasing the latest Les Mills 'BORN TO MOVE™' programme, an innovative and inspiring children's programme, which has recently launched in the UK.

GFX Liverpool also hosted the final of the Les Mills GRIT CHAMPS™; the ultimate challenge in fitness and endurance. Since March, teams from across the UK have been battling it out in regional heats in their clubs and other GFX events to secure their place in the finals. Teams from Wigan Warriors and Warrington Wolves joined the fittest of the fit GRIT-ers to face the ultimate in fitness endurance and strength in their quest to be crowned UK GRIT™ Champions and win a £10,000 studio make-over for their club. There could only be one winner and the team from Roko Portsmouth secured the title and will be benefiting from a brand new Les Mills studio in 2015.

Dave concludes: "We invest a great deal into making the GFX series big and bold but we ultimately do it to inspire our club partners to think outside the box when it comes to our programmes. Events like this, but on



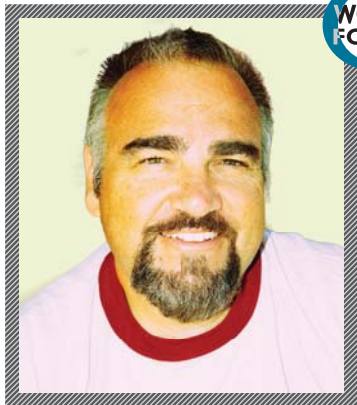
**Contestants battled it out to win a £10,000 studio makeover for their club**

a smaller scale can work in all clubs and every time we release our new choreography there's no reason not to host a Les Mills party and re-launch the programmes with a bang!"

GFX Liverpool may have been the last in the 2014 series but there will be more ground-breaking fitness for Les Mills next year...watch this space! ●

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# GROVER DALY

“**W**hen I first talk to prospective members, I ask them what their weight is limiting them from doing,” says Grover Daly, vice president of US-based Downsize Fitness and the owner of the chain’s Houston facility, which opened in August 2014. “You might lose 50lbs, 100lbs or 200lbs with us – and people will initially tell us weight loss is their goal – but it’s not their deeper motivation. The real reason people come to us is to be able to achieve something they couldn’t previously do because of their weight.”

“Our core philosophy is therefore functional fitness – getting people healthy and able to live their lives. Although celebrating a 50lb weight loss is great, we encourage people to celebrate what they can now do with their lives because they’re 50lbs lighter, because that typically is huge.”

He continues: “That said, by no means do we negate the importance of somebody losing 50lbs. You can’t understate the importance of a number to them – they might not have weighed under 300lbs since school, and as they

**The vice president of Downsize Fitness in the US, and owner of its Houston club, speaks to Kate Cracknell about transforming the lives of an overweight population**

pass that milestone there’s a lightbulb moment when they start believing they can do it, that they’re worth it, and that it’s something they will therefore do. And they begin to challenge themselves to get below 275lbs, below 250lbs.

“At that point they become a cheerleader for health, for living well – and fortunately for us as an operator, for Downsize Fitness too.”

## A safe haven

Downsize Fitness started life in November 2011, founded by Francis Wisniewski who remains chair of the company. Daly explains: “Francis weighed approximately 350–360lbs and

had battled weight his entire life. He was working with a trainer and was getting frustrated by the lack of results, as well as feeling intimidated and judged and overwhelmed because of his size when he went to a traditional gym.

“He felt there was a need for a place, a gym facility, where larger people could go without feeling intimidated or judged – a safe haven in which to work out. So he created Downsize Fitness in Chicago, which is now our headquarters.”

The business has since grown to five sites – in Chicago, Naperville, Dallas and Houston in the US, and Ontario in Canada. Of these, two – in Ontario and Houston – are what Daly calls “hybrid” sites, part company-owned and part franchised. “They’re classified as company-owned, but we’re partners and in our day-to-day operations it’s just like a franchise, with the club being independently owned and operated. In Houston, I own the controlling interest – 90 per cent of the business – and Downsize Fitness retains 10 per cent.”

He adds: “Downsize Fitness is now looking to start offering franchises, and as part of that we’ll probably convert Houston and Ontario into full franchises.”



Downsize Fitness is designed for people who have significant amounts of weight to lose, typically at least 50lbs

“ We have empathy because we’ve all been there, but that allows us to push members a little harder. We’ve earned the right to hold them accountable ”

### The ‘a-ha’ moment

So who exactly does Downsize Fitness appeal to – who is the target market?

“Our clubs are limited membership facilities for people who have a significant amount of weight to lose. ‘Significant’ will be different in different people’s eyes – it might be 30lbs or it might be 400lbs – and we won’t turn anyone away on this basis, but typically people have at least 50lbs to lose.

“In the US, 60 per cent of people are overweight and 30 per cent obese, so potentially we could appeal to a huge number of people. However, until people have had an ‘a-ha’ moment – where weight loss moves from being priority number 30 on their everyday list to a priority of one or two – we’ll never convince them to join.

“Everyone’s ‘a-ha’ moment will be different. Mine was that I hadn’t seen my mum in over a year and she walked by

me because I’d gained so much weight she didn’t recognise me. For me that was huge, but also very motivating.”

Daly continues: “Each Downsize club only has about 120–150 members, with a typical footprint of 3,000–3,500sq ft, and everything is done in semi-private sessions or classes. We have a maximum of 10 people in each class, and every time members will interact directly with the certified personal trainer. It’s effectively small group personal training, giving you personal attention but without the high price tag of PT.

“Pricing varies slightly from location to location, but it’s about US\$89 a month for our Weight Loss 101 package, which gives you five visits a month; US\$139 a month for the Weight Loss Journey, which gives you 10 visits a month; and US\$199 a month for Weight Loss Transformation, which allows for unlimited visits. People have to be

in it for the long term though, as our approach is about weight loss that lasts. We don’t talk about contracts – we sell 12-month and 18-month ‘commitments’.

“And if members are committed, this price is just unbelievable for them. They know a standard ‘train on your own’ gym won’t work for them, because they need accountability, and if they’ve had their ‘a-ha’ moment they will already have done their research and will know that personal training will cost them probably US\$60–95 a session.”

### Modification & progress

Daly continues: “We focus on three key elements: fitness, nutritional advice and weight loss coaching, under which falls accountability, structure, support and also camaraderie.

“In terms of fitness, everything we do is dynamic resistance, weight bearing. We don’t use machines, although we ▶

## INTERVIEW

► do use some equipment like kettlebells, resistance bands, TRX and Bosu balls. In a way it's like the TV show *The Biggest Loser*: if you take the cardio equipment out of the equation and don't yell as much, that's kind of our game plan.

"There's a huge variety in our timetable and each session is different, with the instructor deciding what they're going to do that day. A cardio class might be Zumba, for example, or step aerobics. Our most popular class in the Houston club is total body conditioning, because members know they'll get a full body workout – but again the class itself varies depending on what trainer they have, what they did the week before and so on. We also listen to what our members want – we're looking to introduce self-defence and jiu jitsu to the schedule, for example.

"One key point is that our trainers modify exercises for each individual in the session – that's crucial. Other facilities don't typically do that: people just follow the trainer and try to keep up. But our members can't do that. In addition to weight-related issues, they might also have joint issues, back issues. Some can't get down onto the floor. So you have to modify everything, but also keep moving members on to the next level as they progress.

"When it comes to tracking results, we use body composition analysis, focusing on fat pounds lost versus weight pounds lost, because just looking at weight on the scales can be misleading. If someone weighs 350lbs, it's fair to guess that they don't usually exercise, and they're looking for an excuse not to come back to your gym. If they get on the scales and have only lost 4lbs, it's demoralising and they'll leave. But if you can show them that in fact they lost 15lbs of body fat and gained 11lbs of lean muscle tissue – and that's why the scale only shows 4lbs – it's different. In reality they've changed

their body almost 30lbs, and that's huge – enough for their clothes to fit differently and their health to improve."

He continues: "People may ultimately 'graduate' from Downsize, leaving when they've reached their goal and feel ready to exercise elsewhere, but we never force them out. If they want to carry on exercising with us, and with the friends they've made at Downsize, that's fine. They're our success stories and they can inspire other members.

"And people do reach their goals.

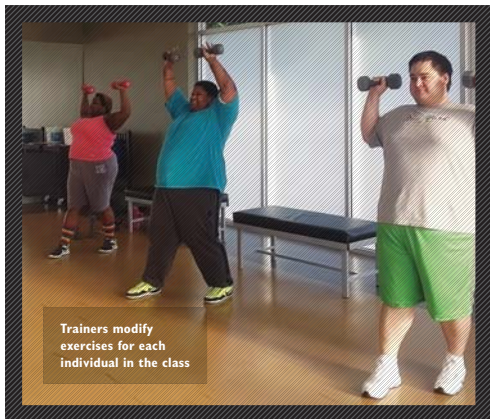
We know physiologically that, if you follow all of our recommendations, it's impossible for you not to be successful – to the point that, although there's no company-wide policy on this, at my club I offer a money back guarantee."

### People like us

He continues: "In terms of the design of the club, all the windows at the front are opaque. Our members feel comfortable

that only the people inside the club can see them, and those people are either members such as themselves – because we're growing a community here – or the trainers and general managers who have also gone through what they're going through. So there's almost a deep sigh of relief when they walk in, and members often hang around after their class and talk too. The club is probably one of the few places, besides their home, where they feel comfortable being who they are, not feeling judged."

Indeed, many of the trainers at Downsize Fitness were previously members themselves, and 90–95 per cent have their own weight loss story. As Daly explains: "My biggest criteria when I'm looking for staff is, do they get it? Have they been there? Do they have their own personal weight transformation story? Mostly it's their own personal weight loss, but it could also be that they grew up in a household where everybody was



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Downsize Fitness focuses on creating a community of like-minded people who support and train with each other

“ I wish more mainstream facilities would focus on sensible eating – getting away from supplements and just teaching people to eat clean and whole ”

► overweight, for example. They have to be able to understand where our members are coming from. Our trainers have to be certified through a national accredited association, but once that box is ticked it's the least important thing – it's about understanding the members' mindset.

"Importantly though, that doesn't mean we're a pushover. It can be a double-edged sword for members, because they can't look at the trainer and say 'I can't do this, you don't know what it's like for me to try and do this push-up' – because we do know. So while we have empathy because we've all been there, it's not a 'get out of jail free' card for members. In fact, it allows us to be a little tougher, to push members a little harder. In a sense we've earned the right to hold them accountable."

That accountability extends to attendance too: "If you don't turn up to a class you've booked into, we'll call you. We'll check first of all that you're OK, but if you are then we'll discuss the reasons for your non-attendance."

"For those who find it hard to get to all their sessions, we do offer Downsize at Home – live classes streamed into your home. That's available both as a complement to club visits and as a

standalone membership for those who don't have a local Downsize club. We still call people if they don't turn up to online classes – they're still held to account in that respect. But I don't even mention Downsize at Home if people live near one of our clubs, as nothing takes the place of walking into a facility and having those personal, one-on-one interactions.

"Once you get that group camaraderie going, that's what keeps you coming back. Members have each others' phone numbers and they text each other, decide what time they want to come to class, and they come as a group."

### Expansion plans

So could mainstream health clubs apply this same framework and cater for the obese market? "Maybe, and there are some smaller chains trying, but it will only work if operators' mindset changes. It can't just be about revenue and getting as many members to sign up as possible. You have to actually care about getting members healthy – and healthy enough whereby they might eventually leave."

"Because although we love our members to stay with us when they hit their goals, if they walk out of the door 150lbs lighter, infinitely healthier and

with smiles on their faces, we're happy. We did our job. We saved a life. And we now have a spot for another person."

"There's always going to be a segment of the population that feels insecure about walking into a gym facility because of their size, and I don't think the mainstream clubs will ever get around that, but if they can change their mindset it will be a great start. I also wish more mainstream facilities would focus on sensible eating, nutrition, the importance of food diaries – getting away from supplements and just teaching people to eat clean and whole."

In the meantime, Downsize has its own plans to reach more of the people who would benefit from its services. "Our goal is to have 20–25 franchises by the end of 2015. We think that's aggressive but not too aggressive. Those sites will be in the US and Canada, but we'd love to launch in the UK too, and in fact we have interest being shown around the world – Qatar, Australia, Europe..."

"Long term, it would be great to have thousands of locations, because we could reach so many more people. We'd need the right, genuinely passionate franchisees on board, but if we can do that I'd say the sky's the limit." ●



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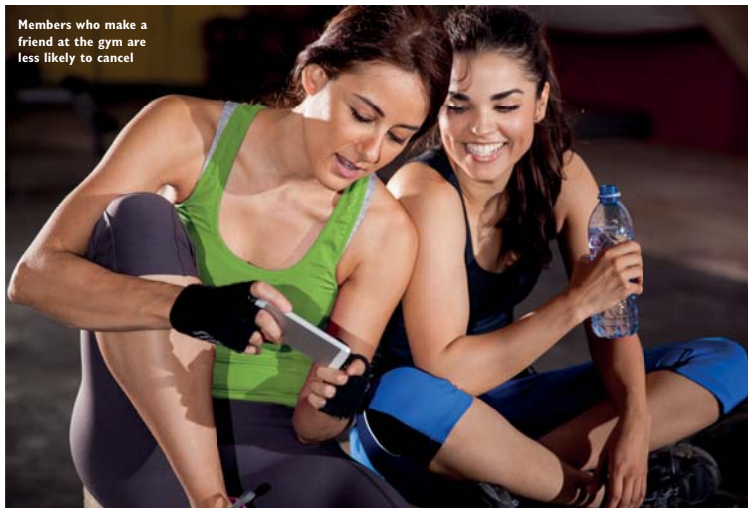
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# NEW YEAR, NEW STRATEGY

Targeting older members, focusing on interaction and friendship, reducing queueing and incorporating group exercise. Dr Melvyn Hillsdon offers his top five new year's resolutions for clubs looking to improve member retention levels

Members who make a friend at the gym are less likely to cancel



**W**hat will your club do differently when it comes to member retention this year, and how might this impact your bottom line?

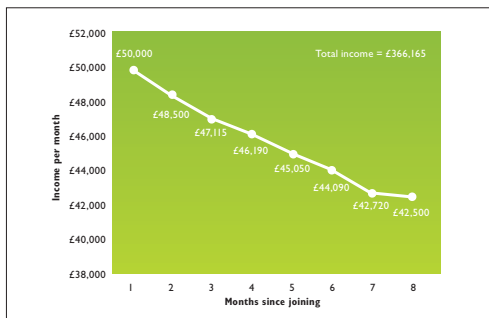
During 2014, *Health Club Management* published a number of articles reporting on the results of the TRP 10,000 study – a longitudinal study of 10,000 members, conducted by myself in conjunction with The Retention People, which was designed to understand member behaviour at all points of the member journey, and how different factors influence retention. In the *HCM* series, we highlighted a range of factors that are positively associated with membership retention – including motivation, progress, group exercise, hassles and uplifts, and communication.

In this article, we'll pull together the lessons learned so far into a strategy for 2015. The focus will be on the financial gain from improved member retention and potential memberships saved.

### Data and analysis

To estimate income from member dues, we'll model the effect of retention on 1,000 members over the first eight months of membership (the follow-up period of TRP 10,000). To standardise fees, we will assume all members pay a monthly fee of £50. All members pay

**FIGURE 1** Estimated income over eight months based on TRP 10,000 retention data, from a sample of 1,000 members paying £50 a month



the first monthly payment, yielding £50,000 ( $1,000 \times £50$ ), and from then on we can plot the income for every other month by multiplying the £50 monthly fee by 1,000 and then by the proportion of members still paying in the given month. So if 90 per cent of members survive the second month, the yield from membership dues would be  $£50 \times 1,000 \times 0.9 = £45,000$ .

### Overall yield from 1,000 TRP members?

Eighty five per cent of TRP 10,000 members retain their membership for at least eight months. Figure 1 shows that the total yield from a sample of 1,000 members over the first eight months of their membership, based on the TRP 10,000 retention rate, would be £366,165. So how can this be improved? ►

**Sticking with it: Over-35s have a 50 per cent lower cancellation rate compared to under-35s**

► **Resolution 1: Develop a marketing strategy that attracts more members aged 35 years and older**

Members aged 35+ have a cancellation rate that's 50 per cent lower than members aged under 35 years. Over the first eight months of membership, based on 1,000 members aged 35+ versus 1,000 members younger than 35 years, this translates into a difference in income of £27,035 (see Figure 2).

If all members were aged at least 35 years, 30 per cent of membership cancellations would be avoided, lowering demand on sales by the same proportion. This does not, of course, mean turning new members away – rather it's about making sure your message, imagery, offer and member experience is more attractive to this older demographic.

**Resolution 2: Help members set realistic goals focused on enjoyment and friendship, and help them to achieve these goals**

In previous articles, we've reported that members who are motivated by appearance, and who perceive they are not making progress, have a high cancellation rate, whereas members who have social motivations and report making a friend have low cancellation rates.

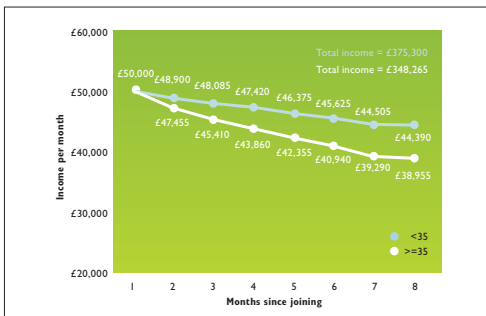
Figure 3 estimates the eight-month income for these two scenarios. Over eight months, the socially motivated members yield an additional £32,335 compared to 1,000 members who fail to achieve a goal of improved appearance.

Further, if all members who were motivated by appearance, but who failed to make progress, had been 'replaced' by socially motivated members who made a friend, 28 per cent of all membership cancellations would have been avoided.

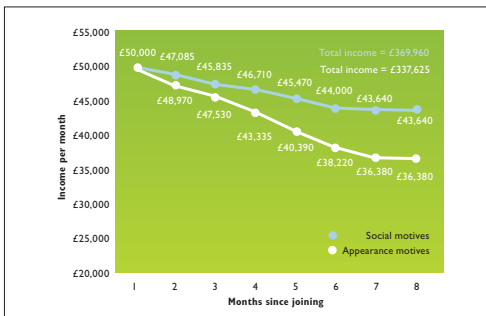
**Resolution 3: Encourage and assist members to include some group-based exercise into their routine**  
Members who include at least some group-based exercise in their routine are 30 per cent less likely to have cancelled over the eight-month follow-up period compared to members who never do any group-based exercise. If all members included some group-based exercise into their routines, there would be 18 per cent fewer cancellations. ►



**FIGURE 2** Estimated income over eight months, based on TRP 10,000 retention data, from an initial sample of 1,000 members – by age group



**FIGURE 3** Estimated income over eight months from appearance-driven members who made no progress vs socially-focused members who made a friend – from an initial sample of 1,000 members





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**Chris Scragg – Head of Fitness, Serco Leisure**

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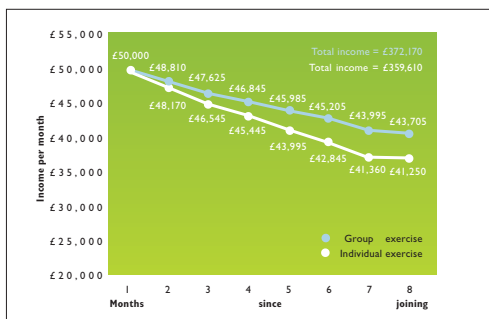
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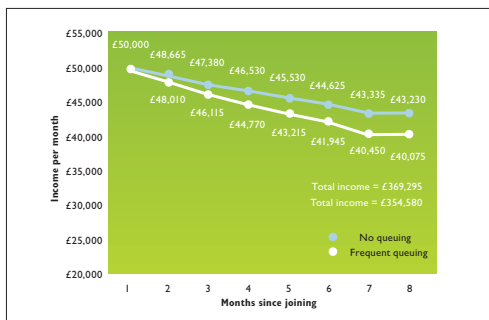
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## RETENTION SERIES

**Figure 4** Estimated income over eight months, based on TRP 10,000 retention data, from members who participate in group exercise versus those who don't, from an initial sample of 1,000 members



**Figure 5** Estimated income over eight months, based on TRP 10,000 retention data, from members who frequently have to queue for kit versus members who don't, from an initial sample of 1,000 members




- ▶ Based on 1,000 members paying £50 a month, and the TRP 10,000 retention levels, the members who report at least some group-based exercise would yield an additional £12,560 in income over eight months compared to members reporting no group exercise (Figure 4).

### Resolution 4: Minimise the time members must queue for equipment

Along with staff failing to talk to members, the most annoying hassle that members report is having to queue for gym equipment.

Health club and leisure centre members who say they frequently have to queue for equipment in the gym, and who find it annoying, are 50 per cent more likely to cancel than those members who do not. If no members had to queue for equipment, 5 per cent of TRP 10,000 cancellations would have been avoided.

One thousand members who never have to queue for equipment would yield £14,715 more over eight months than 1,000 members who have to queue frequently (see Figure 5).



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

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The image shows a woman with blonde hair wearing a white t-shirt, using an X-Force machine. She is looking towards the camera. The machine is a large, blue and silver piece of gym equipment.



► **Resolution 5: Develop a strategy to ensure both reception and fitness staff speak to members on every visit**

TRP 10,000 has consistently found that both reception and fitness staff have an important role to play in helping retain members. Members who report not being spoken to by either reception or fitness staff are more than twice as likely to cancel as members who are always spoken to by staff.

If both reception and fitness staff always spoke to all members, it's estimated that 44 per cent of cancellations would be avoided. For every 1,000 members who are always spoken to by reception and fitness staff, an additional £23,495 would be yielded compared to members who are never spoken to by staff (see Figure 6).

PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/KZENON



Interaction with reception and fitness staff has a significant impact on retention

### Combining resolutions

The data presented in this article highlight the significant financial benefits of relatively small improvements in member retention – and as yet we only have eight months of follow-up in the TRP 10,000 study; the true financial gains will be even greater when taken across 18–24 months.

All of the proposed retention resolutions can be achieved at relatively low cost and are primarily operational and management issues. Therefore, the return on investment for these retention strategies will be substantial.

Of course, the effect on club-level retention of each of these five

resolutions is a function of how big the risk of cancelling each resolution presents, combined with how many people experience the risk.

For example, the likelihood of an individual member cancelling in a given month if the fitness staff do not talk to them is approximately 3 per cent, or 3 in 100. However, because so many members report fitness staff not talking to them, removing the risk by ensuring all members get spoken to has a much larger effect on overall retention than implementing a resolution which only affects a small

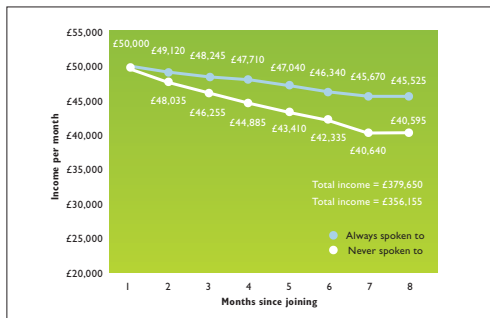
number of members, even if the risk of cancelling among those individuals affected is higher.

For example, club members who report frequently queuing for equipment have a monthly risk of cancelling of around 4 per cent – but in TRP 10,000, far fewer members report experiencing this risk factor, meaning removing it saves fewer members.

When developing retention strategies, managers should therefore consider how likely the strategy is to reduce the risk of a member cancelling and how many members will be affected.

Nevertheless – while the five resolutions described in this article are independent of each other, and it's important to prioritise the biggest wins – there's no single 'silver bullet'. If you're serious about making significant and sustained improvement, the power lies in combining all the resolutions together over time. ●

**Figure 6 Estimated income over eight months, based on TRP 10,000 retention data, from members who are always spoken to by staff vs. those who are never spoken to, from a sample of 1,000 members**



**Dr Melvyn Hillsdon** is associate professor of exercise and health at the University of Exeter, where he researches physical activity and population health. Since his landmark retention report in 2001 (*Winning the Retention Battle*), his research into retention and attrition has led to the development of appropriate measures of retention, attrition and longevity that provide data for operators that can directly inform business decisions. In partnership with TRP, he has published numerous reports into the determinants of membership retention.



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# On the Pulse

Pulse is one of the most versatile organisations in the fitness industry. We discuss how the British based company offers so much more than just kit

**P**ulse is one of the most versatile organisations in the fitness industry, comprising four divisions – Pulse Fitness, Pulse Select, Pulse Soccer and Club Pulse. The British-based company is best known for its world class Pulse Fitness equipment, but the company offers so much more than just kit.

In addition to developing, supplying and servicing equipment, Pulse designs and builds centres within its Pulse Select division. The organisation also operates entire leisure venues within its Club Pulse branch and helps other facilities operate more efficiently by looking after direct debits, sales and marketing, training and IT support systems.

Within its Pulse Soccer arm, Pulse provides a sustainable franchise platform for grassroots soccer facilities. The organisation also acts as a strategic leisure development consultant to a number of local authorities and partners, advising them on how to exceed objectives, be sustainable, drive revenue and increase participation.

Pulse's unique mix of services – coupled with the fact that it has all that experience in-house at its UK HQ in Congleton – puts the company ahead of the game. With such strong foundations in place, Pulse is looking at how technology and innovative business models can continue to grow the sector, participation and revenue. Managing Director Chris Johnson tells us more...

**Do you think your experience with design-and-build and in operating fitness facilities gives you an industry advantage?**

Absolutely! We've worked with a diverse array of sites across a range of market sectors, from private health clubs to educational institutions and not-for-profit facilities. As such we've learnt a great deal about best practice, member motivation and commerciality.



Pulse founders Chris and Dave Johnson lead innovation at their UK-based headquarters

Our experience of managing facilities has given us a unique insight into what customers want: motivation, feedback and results. From an operator's perspective, we've learnt about the importance of durability and the role of small details such as layout, lighting, colour schemes and artwork in enhancing the member experience.

We also really understand the importance of seeing a return on investment and are able to demonstrate ROI through our own clubs such as Pulse Health and Fitness in Carshalton, where the four-and-a-half-year-old equipment is currently exceeding latent demand by 25 per cent.

Our operational clubs are key to the R&D process of our products as

we get constant, honest, first-hand feedback from members and staff which we communicate with our British based design team. In turn, managing entire facilities has helped us to develop inspiring and effective sales and marketing strategies.

We use our experience of operating leisure venues – along with our extensive knowledge of the latest trends – to present our partners with business plans to facilitate their growth and help them achieve their objectives. This could be anything from converting an under-performing squash court into a more fruitful functional training zone or providing an innovative sales and marketing package to drive new customers into a facility. We have a proven track record delivering such services, with 75 per cent of our customer base working with us for over 10 years.

**Tell us more about the new innovations you have just brought to market.**

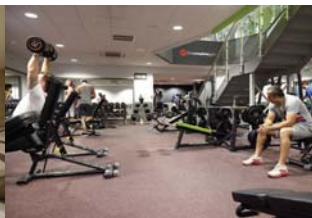
As our name suggests, we aim to keep our finger on the 'pulse'! Our British-based in-house design team work constantly to update and improve our existing products and develop exciting new innovations. 2014 was no exception.

Just to name a few, we released our free iOS- and Android-compatible mobile fitness tracking app as an enhanced communication tool for UK operators, and to make tracking in-gym and external activity easier for consumers.

We unveiled our touchscreen Cirrus Console and took our SmartCentre gym management system to the cloud at smartcentre.com. The online solution, which is free to SmartCentre clients, allows members to view, access, track and update their fitness data anytime, anywhere, and is designed to provide operators with an additional tool to keep members engaged and motivated.



The Cirrus Console gives access to digital TV, the internet, workouts and fitness data



### Technology is at the heart of your new offerings, is this something you hope will become synonymous with Pulse?

With more consumers becoming increasingly tech-savvy and using wearable devices, our goal is to help operators utilise such technologies and other cloud-based systems to motivate customers, improve engagement and ultimately aid retention. We strive to be at the forefront of fitness technology and become market leaders in this field.

Our portfolio of products has been engineered over 34 years and as such are well tried and tested with the best components and materials. In more recent years we've focused on developing the technology found in our

### Pulse presents its partners with business plans to facilitate their future growth

kit so it matches the prestige of the equipment and exceeds the growing expectations of consumers.

For example, our state-of-the-art Cirrus Console encompasses technology that allows gym users to access digital TV, radio and bespoke workout programmes, as well as enjoy full internet browsing with social media access while they workout. The functionality of such technologies is uniform across our entire product range so customers of all ages and

abilities become familiar with the devices and can enjoy using them.

Technology doesn't stop with our equipment. We incorporate it into many other aspects of our business as well such as our service and maintenance arm, front of house management systems, CRM member management systems and sales and marketing initiatives through email campaigns, interactive websites and our mobile app.

### What difference has the Trixter acquisition made to Pulse?

Acquiring Trixter was part of our aim to become the leading innovator of technologically advanced fitness equipment. Trixter is a well-known brand with great credibility and the



► partnership has given us a new perspective on customer engagement, as well as the role of interactive innovation in inspiring consumers.

The partnership has brought a vast array of opportunities for Pulse. We've recently been named exclusive distributor of Keiser products to the Education, MoD and Local Authority sectors and have exclusive distribution of the world-leading M3x Indoor Cycle, a product winning M3 Indoor Fitness Cycle and Tritrix's popular patented X-bars. In turn, we've been able to tap into Tritrix's strong connections in the UK and globally which has helped enhance Pulse's contacts yet further.

From an operational point of view, the bikes have been very popular among our members. Even more importantly perhaps, the technologically advanced kit has helped bring our customers closer together and created a sense of community across our sites by encouraging competition among members, and between facilities as well.

**You are one of the only companies to design equipment in the UK. Is this important?**  
We're proud to say that we are one of very few companies to design fitness equipment here in the UK.

#### The acquisition of the Tritrix brand has further enhanced Pulse's connections globally

Being British-based is important to us as it allows our clients – or potential clients – to visit our head office, meet our in-house product design team, trial the products and even work closely with them to modify pieces of equipment to suit their needs.

We've done this with the MoD in recent years, adapting several pieces of kit to make them more suitable for the fitness needs of the armed forces. The MoD and the RAF like the fact that we're a British company supporting British troops.

In addition, the feedback that we receive shows that fitness facilities overseas like the fact that we're British-based as our standards are high and reputation is strong.

#### What does the future hold for Pulse?

We have clear goals within each of the four strands of our business and are expecting to see significant growth right across the board.

We will keep working with our existing partners to further

develop their health, fitness and leisure solutions in order to grow participation and profitability to ensure they continue to see a ROI.

We've got lots of exciting, flagship design-and-build projects in the pipeline of our Pulse Select division. Going forward we will continue to seek out more partners for Club Pulse and Pulse Select by demonstrating that even a minimal investment – whether that be in kit, graphical artwork, a new gym layout or operational support services – can really result in significant savings in the long term.

We will continue to develop our Pulse Fitness arm by updating products with new features based on extensive market research, customer feedback and changing criteria.

We're also aiming to become the leading innovator of technologically advanced fitness equipment and will also invest in new personnel to aid our growth in this field.

We'd like to develop our partnership with Keiser, as well as seeking out other innovative equipment providers so we can offer customers even more complete gym packages.

Finally, with our export business showing good growth, we're also looking into ways of offering additional support to customers overseas. ●



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# FROZEN

Ray Algar reports on a gym that's been built at Antarctica's front door

**F**or this month's Gymtopia story you will need your coat, because we're off to Antarctica, the Earth's southernmost continent and officially recognised as the coldest place on the planet: during 2010, a temperature of minus 94.7C (-135.8F) was recorded.

This is an extraordinary project involving Megatlon – a leading Argentinian health club chain – alongside the Argentinian Air Force and scientists who were putting on weight as fast as the local elephant seals.

## Good science, bad lifestyle

Marambio Base is a permanent year-round base founded by Argentina in 1969. Located on Marambio Island, Antarctica – which lies around 1,167km from the southern tip of Argentina – the base acts as a strategic hub for Antarctic scientific missions, as its runway can accommodate aircraft using conventional landing gear. For this reason it's known as 'Antarctica's entrance door', supporting over 100 intercontinental flights each year.

Operated and maintained by the Argentinian Air Force, Marambio Base

## Gymtopia – a place where clubs do social good

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

Read more stories and submit your own: [www.Gymtopia.org](http://www.Gymtopia.org)



is home to 200 permanent crew and scientists undertaking a diverse range of geological and atmospheric experiments, with missions usually lasting a year.

For those living in Antarctica, their lifestyle is tipped on its head. With less than three hours of daylight during the winter, and 120km/h winds, the tendency is to hunker down and 'fuel-up' in the 24-hour kitchen and 'Casino' – a recreation room complete with bar, smoking area, card and pool tables.

Consequently, physical activity levels plummet, while bodyweight balloons.

## Enter Megatlon

Megatlon operates 23 clubs across Argentina, as well as 10 corporate workplace centres. Arturo Dewey, who heads up the corporate division, was contacted by an officer from the Argentinian Air Force asking for advice on improving the wellbeing of Marambio Base members. The big idea was a fully operating gym, but there was neither the money nor the obvious space at the base.

At this point Fernando Storch, Megatlon's CEO, became involved and committed to supporting the project. Hitching a ride on the next available Hercules, Storch and a senior officer surveyed the base for potential gym locations, eventually deciding to use part of the Casino. Storch then committed to funding the entire gym fit-out, providing programming input and maintaining all of the equipment. The vision was to create a 'mini Megatlon', offering the same look and feel as if people were back home in Buenos Aires.

I asked Storch why he agreed to finance the gym, and he explained: "Because our mission as a company is to improve the quality of life of people through physical activity, and we knew we could contribute to the daily lives



Megatlon CEO Fernando Storch visits the base



### IN A NUTSHELL

**Project by:** Megatlon, Argentina  
**Website:** [www.megatlon.com](http://www.megatlon.com)  
**Project status:** Ongoing and long-term  
**Impact:** Marambio Base, Antarctica  
**Gymtopia keywords:** Health & Wellbeing

Programming support is offered via email to encourage gym use

of our compatriots. They spend a whole year at the base, rarely venturing outside, and we had the opportunity to make their time there a little better."

Discussions took place about where in the Casino the gym should be located. Space was eventually secured with large windows facing the Southern Ocean; this gym may have one of the world's most remarkable views.

Storchi and his team continued to work closely with members of the Argentinian Air Force, co-ordinating the complex transfer of fitness equipment from Argentina. Precious space on Hercules aircraft was negotiated to transport an array of strength and cardio machines, which was flown piecemeal over several trips.

In March 2010, the Marambio Base gym opened and is now a core part of enriching the Marambio Base experience; operating 24 hours a day means there's now an alternative to the temptations of the always-open kitchen.

Megatlon looks after the gym as though it were one of its mainland sites: as well as financing the initial gym fit-out, it provides programming support via email and maintains all of the equipment.

In addition, a few Megatlon staff have been invited to visit the base, flying out just two at a time as space is so precious. The staff are there to encourage use of the gym, but also so they can

experience first-hand the role their company is playing on Marambio, a place of significant global scientific importance.

### Deep sense of pride

I asked Storchi how he and his team feel about playing a part in a base that acts as a gateway for the world's scientific community. "We feel a deep sense of pride that the base authorities trusted us to collaborate on this project," he answered. "It triggers strong emotions because we never imagined having a connection with Antarctica. Projects like this simply allow us to be closer to our compatriots who are doing great work in inhospitable conditions."

### What's your business story?

What I find interesting about projects like this is that they make the business, well, interesting. With the world awash with vanilla and mediocre fitness offers, it's refreshing to share stories about a brand that cares about more than just the value of next month's direct debit run.

If you need a better reason to begin re-writing your own organisational story, here's one. Deloitte Consulting has just published its 2014 *Global Human Capital Trends Report*. The report discusses how to engage a 21st century workforce and focuses on Millennials – those born since 1980 (aged under 34). Look



The gym offers jaw-dropping views over the Southern Ocean

inside your organisation and it will be brimming with Millennials who are projected to make up 75 per cent of the global workforce by 2025. Yes they will turn up for a pay cheque (for a while), but what truly motivates them is the chance to be part of something with real meaning and purpose. Megatlon is leaving its mark in Antarctica – where will you leave yours? ●



## EXPERT CREDENTIALS

Dr Rachel Pryke is a part-time GP and a trainer with particular interest in the areas of childhood obesity, adolescent health and women's health.

She's the Clinical Champion for Nutrition at the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP), establishing the RCGP Nutrition Group in 2013 and leading the recent call for a Child Obesity Action Group.

Pryke contributed to the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges Obesity Steering Group 2013 report, entitled *Measuring up: The medical profession's prescription to the obesity crisis*, and to the 2013 RCP Action on Obesity: *Comprehensive Care for All* report, which looks at how the NHS should adapt to meet the needs of an increasingly obese nation.

She is also the author of two books – called *Weight Matters for Children* and *Weight Matters for Young People* – and has completed a research project in conjunction with Warwick University, examining the practicalities of offering a child obesity prevention intervention in a primary care setting.

# TEAM EFFORT

Dr Rachel Pryke, GP and clinical lead for nutrition at the Royal College of General Practitioners, talks to Kate Cracknell about a co-operative approach to combating obesity

## Q How did you come to focus on nutrition and obesity?

When I started, I was just interested in writing. At the time I had young children, so childhood nutrition was very relevant. As I read more about it, I found there was an information gap: there was some lovely research, but it didn't seem to be translating into mainstream messages.

I wanted to find ways to broadcast those messages, so I wrote *Weight Matters for Children*, which looked at eating behaviour – both under-eating and overeating. We have to understand how a behaviour develops in the first place, otherwise we'll struggle to influence that behaviour. Specifically it looked at people's understanding of food hierarchy and how we use foods in our daily lives.



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/HONEY BUSINESS

GPs aren't trained in nutrition or exercise, so need support to be 'on message'



Messages such as 'eat your five-a-day' can backfire if people feel they can't meet the standard and become demoralised

## Q What do you mean by food hierarchy?

With the advent of mechanised food production, the cost and ease of preparation are no longer limiting our access to very rich foods. They've just become everyday things. People no longer recognise what a 'celebration food' is, nor is there a clear idea of what the staple diet is in the UK – what constitutes an ordinary meal.

## Q The national media focuses a lot more on health now – is this helping educate people?

Not always. Often we find the academic bullet points are delivered in the opposite way from what was intended, and somehow the message ends up being used as a weapon rather than a motivator. People start beating themselves up: "I'm supposed to eat five a day, or is it seven or nine a day – but I just feel a failure because I'm not even managing three."

The recent debate on sugar is another example, making people feel as though there's a massive threat to the point where they feel overwhelmed with food advice and like they aren't allowed to eat anything any more. I think we have to take a lot more care in how our

"It isn't clear who things like weight and fitness sit under, so health professionals try and wiggle out of them and pass the buck to somebody else"

academic research findings are conveyed to the public, so the messages aren't twisted into headline grabbers rather than constructive messages.

## Q So should people turn to their GPs for advice instead?

Nutrition isn't something most GPs know a huge amount about. It's never been part of our training, although we've made big steps over the last few years to try and address that. Because

of that, GPs have always been very wary of getting involved.

However, nutrition is so fundamental to health that we want to move the agenda forward. The quality of the consultations needs to mature, factoring in more subtle motivational and behaviour change messages.

The RCGP has set up a nutrition group to develop resources and to challenge any old-fashioned, slightly dismissive or judgemental attitudes GPs might have had in the past.

We've also set out to show that it's not a case of taking on additional work – it's simply fundamental knowledge that will help GPs do their job. GPs are very nervous that, by showing enthusiasm for weight management, they'll be landed with responsibility that isn't supported by good evidence and that they're not trained to offer. There are more appropriately suited and qualified people who already run weight management services, and GPs should therefore focus on their signposting role. GPs should also undertake tasks those people can't provide, such as assessing and treating the health risks arising from obesity, and helping patients deal with low self-esteem and depression, so they're in the right emotional state to begin helping themselves.

- I can see many barriers preventing GPs from engaging more in this area, so I'm aiming to break each barrier down one by one and see what happens.

### Q Where does physical activity come into all this?

It's an equal half of the story and tremendously important to health in general, not just for weight. But once again, the level of confidence among many doctors is very low when it comes to talking about exercise.

There's also a perception that it's somebody else's job. One of the things I've become increasingly interested in is how we divide up these complex agendas that actually relate to lots of different health professionals. If you had a heart problem, it's very obvious you would be under a heart specialist. But it isn't clear who things like weight and fitness sit under, so health professionals try and wiggle out of them and pass the buck to somebody else.

### Q What can be done about that?

I think sharing the agenda is our real next step forward, and that's one of the

reasons why I recently called for the formation of a Child Obesity Action Group (COAG). There are a huge number of health professionals who interact with children in all sorts of ways, and they're all relevant and all do a little bit. Rather than hoping somebody will take responsibility for child obesity in its entirety, we all need to join forces and recognise how we link together.

We need to recognise if somebody else might already be doing a bit of our work, for example, but unless we convene and discuss these things, we're not going to know.

For instance, dentists do a huge amount of health messaging about sugar and not eating between meals, which is hugely relevant to childhood obesity. And what about midwives? They have that important window when parents can't wait to get more information on how to do things well. So we have this wonderful shared agenda. Why aren't we sitting around the table together and making sure it's all joined-up?

### Q What is COAG hoping to achieve?

One big ambition, aside from getting the collaborative group working together in

the first place, is to explore how services can be developed to support the national child measuring programme. It's currently just about measurement, and it's a postcode lottery as to what child obesity services will be available in your area, if any. Since the Health and Social Care Act devolved responsibility to different localities, nobody has a handle on the national picture of child obesity services up and down the country, so it's very difficult to co-ordinate approaches or establish a minimum standard of care.

### Q Shouldn't physical activity providers be involved in COAG?

They probably should be, yes, but I think that has to come from Public Health England (PHE). Not everyone can afford to join a health club, so PHE needs look at how much we involve commercial activity groups, how much funding could be made available through the NHS and so on. There are some difficult topics to explore there.

There's also the big issue of how we measure what public health might have funded. With physical activity, we don't have any good way of demonstrating ►



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/WAVBEAKMEDIA

Tackling obesity needs a collaborative approach, working with dentists, for example, who already encourage eating less sugar



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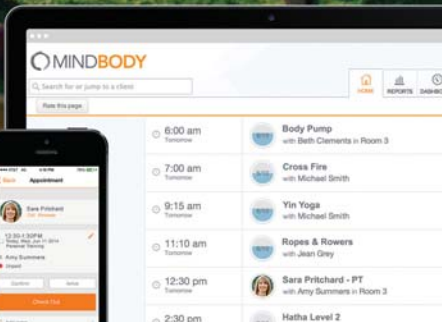
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Yin Yoga

6:00 am

Tuesdays

Body Pump

with Beth Clements in Room 3

7:00 am

Tuesdays

Cross Fire

with Michael Smith

9:15 am

Tuesdays

Yin Yoga

with Michael Smith

11:10 am

Tuesdays

Ropes & Rovers

with Jean Grey

12:30 pm

Tuesdays

Sara Pritchard - PT

with Amy Summers in Room 3

2:30 pm

Tuesdays

Hatha Level 2

with Jean Grey



Health and fitness clubs  
tend to focus too much on  
weight loss instead of the  
wider benefits of exercise

PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/CLAIRE5



► what the health service got out of it. We could say getting fitter is going to reduce your risk of a heart attack – which it may well do, but are we going to wait 15 years to see what happens to the heart disease rate?

We don't have any easy measures, and that's one of the areas I think the fitness industry could explore much more: finding different, really simple tools that show what people have gained in the short term.

But overall I'm a huge fan of people being in charge of their lives. Losing weight and getting into shape is so empowering, so I do believe health clubs have a big part to play.

### Q What can gyms do better?

There's too much focus on weight, which is the hardest indicator to change from a lifestyle approach: BMI is very tough to alter. In the meantime there are other health gains that people do achieve, but they usually go unnoticed and unmeasured.

We see a rapid drop-off in gym attendances between January and

"We have to take a lot more care in how academic research findings are conveyed to the public, so the messages aren't twisted into headline grabbers"

February because gyms use the wrong measure – indeed, a commonly unhelpful measure – which is BMI change. People think they've achieved nothing so they stop going. Gyms should encourage more specific measures to track progress and show the real health gains people are achieving, such as improved stamina, muscle strength and sense of wellbeing.

They could also better manage expectations. Ensure people have realistic goals. Give them an understanding of the timescale over which they may get benefits. Help people understand what to expect from activity – that they will ache, feel breathless and so on.

The really important thing is to make sure they're giving comprehensive advice – not getting embroiled in the very specific health messages but just teaching basic principles. For example, there are plenty of people who do one thing to compensate for another – who starve themselves because they don't exercise, or who exercise and then stuff their faces – and health clubs could help them understand and change these behaviours. They could teach people to eat to appetite, to respect their sense of fullness. They could help parents understand how to get variety into their children's diets, which basically starts with eating that same variety yourself and looking like you're enjoying it.

It's about helping people create simple structures for healthier living, and health clubs are in a great position to do this. ●



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## RESEARCH ROUND-UP

# Memory upgrade

A small trial suggests wellness interventions, including exercise, may help reverse memory loss in Alzheimer's sufferers

Since it was first discovered more than 100 years ago, Alzheimer's disease has been without an effective treatment. Alzheimer's is the most common type of dementia, and as the ageing population grows, so does the number of people with brain disorders. The Alzheimer's Society estimates that next year, 850,000 people in the UK alone will suffer from dementia, and this number is set to rise to 2 million by 2051.

However, the outlook may not be quite so depressing if the findings of a small US pilot study are anything to go by. Scientists at the Buck Institute for Research on Aging and the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) have discovered that lifestyle and wellness interventions have reversed memory loss in patients with Alzheimer's disease for the first time. Although the results are anecdotal, the findings are "very encouraging", says study author and neurology professor Dr Dale Bredeisen.

### Individualised intervention

As part of the trial, a group of experts put together a 36-point plan for 10 patients with Alzheimer's. The plans included daily exercise, meditation and yoga. They also followed a strict diet, in some cases including fasting, taking supplements and obtaining an optimal seven to eight hours' sleep a night.

Each plan was personalised, based on extensive testing to determine what was affecting brain signals in each patient. Although the programmes were complex and difficult to follow – none of the participants were able to fully adhere to them – Bredeisen believes a multiple-component approach is key. "The existing Alzheimer's drug affects



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/REDONKATOS

The 36-point plan included daily exercise, as well as meditation and yoga

a single target, but the disease is more complex," he says. "Imagine having a roof with 36 holes, and your drug patched one very well... You'd still have 35 other leaks, and so the underlying process may not be affected much."

### Promising results

The results were promising, with nine out of 10 patients seeing improvements in three to six months. The only patient not to gain any benefit had been diagnosed with late-stage Alzheimer's.

Such were the benefits for some participants that six people who'd been struggling at work, or who had to stop work due to cognitive issues, were able to return to their jobs. Those who stayed in employment showed improved performance. Bredeisen adds: "It's noteworthy that the major side-effects of this therapeutic system are improved health and BMI – a stark contrast to the side-effects of many drugs."

### Further research needed

Overall, the results suggest that memory loss may be reversed, and even improvements sustained, by following a therapeutic plan. Yet Bredeisen cautions that further research is needed.

"The current, anecdotal results require a larger trial, not only to confirm or refute the results reported here, but also to address key questions raised, such as the degree of improvement that can be achieved routinely, how late in the course of cognitive decline reversal can be effected... and how long improvement can be sustained," he explains.

Prior to these findings, other research studies have alluded to the benefits of exercise for cognitive function. Studies have found that physical activity can delay cognitive decline by as much as 10–15 years (see *HCM* Feb 10, p28); while short bursts of exercise can have an instant impact (see *HCM* Jan 13, p55).

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# ENTERING A NEW CYCLE

*Cycling microgyms are bringing a buzz to fitness markets around the world. Kath Hudson rounds up some of the different offerings and business models*

## ATHLETE LAB

LONDON, UK

**“R**eal bikes. Unreal results!” is the strap line, and with British Cycling’s performance director Shane Sutton consulting in the design of the pro-level training sessions, data and sports performance is high on the agenda.

**FOUNDERS:** Michael Flynn and Neil Franks

**SUPPLIER:** Adjustabikes, which replicate the experience of a real road bike

### FINER DETAIL:

- Designed for those who want to improve their cycling performance
- Power-based training for quick results
- Expert coaches who have competed at a high level themselves
- A scientific, data-based approach to training



Performance focus: Athlete Lab offers power-based training for quick results

PHOTO: CRAIG HENGER/REACTIVATIONPHOTO.COM

**“Our Shane Sutton Method is the same as the pros ride, enabling you to push yourself to your limits and know you’re improving with every visit” Anna McKay, manager**

## CADENCE PERFORMANCE

LONDON, UK

**A** cycling microgym above a cycling shop in south London, Cadence Performance offers everything a cycling enthusiast could want under one roof. Services include childcare, a café, and bike repair and maintenance. Expansion in greater London is on the cards in the near future, and potentially further afield within five years.

**FOUNDER:** Frank Beechinor

**SUPPLIER:** Wattbike

### FINER DETAIL:

- Sessions available for silver riders (over 60s), mums (with child-minding available), sportive road riders, competitive cyclists and triathletes
- Classes provide a pathway into outdoor cycling, helping riders gain confidence and fitness
- Yoga and pilates classes also available, as these offer benefits for cyclists – helping to prevent injury by stretching muscles, improving posture, balance, power and limb alignment



The cycling studio is located above a cycling shop in south London

**“As cyclists ourselves, we’d spent time in bike shops, bike fitting centres and coffee shops after a ride, but never had we been anywhere with all this under one roof” Frank Beechinor, founder**

**“Not only is it a great workout,  
but you really get results and  
you protect your body”**  
*Esther Gauthier, founder*



PHOTO: FREDERIC PIETRE/AQUASTUDIO.COM

## AQUA

NEW YORK CITY, US

**A**QUA claims to be New York's only cycling studio that offers underwater cycling classes. The bikes are immersed in a pool and you pedal against the water resistance, with water up to the waist. Single classes cost US\$42, with packages also available.

**AQUA primarily targets female exercisers, with bikes immersed in the pool to add resistance and remove pressure from people's joints**

**FOUNDER:** Esther Gauthier  
**FINER DETAIL:**

- Primarily targeting women, with women-only classes, there's also a men-only Men Special class
- Candle-lit pool area

- Temperature of the pool and room kept at optimal levels to warm up the body and give exercisers the best workout
- High levels of attention to pool maintenance and cleanliness

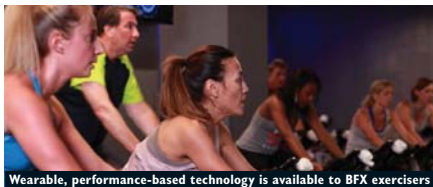
## BFX

NEW YORK, US

**T**he first high-end fitness concept from US operator Town Sports International, BFX Studio offers three boutique fitness offerings in one club – indoor cycling, PT and group exercise – meaning the club is able to fuse classes for greater variety, such as 30 minutes on a bike and a 30-minute barre class.

**SUPPLIER:** Star Trac  
**FINER DETAIL:**

- Boutique-style intimacy but with the variety that's missing in single modality studios
- Three-dimensional scans of the body incorporated in fitness assessments
- Incorporates wearable, performance-based technology within the classes
- Fully immersive audio and visual component



**Wearable, performance-based technology is available to BFX exercisers**

**“Clients can come in and mix up their workouts, which we believe is critical for them to stay engaged and see results from their long-term fitness programmes”**  
*Marcy Spaulding, director*





The Fitness Mosaic has no gym – just five studios with highly targeted fitness offers like cycling, barre and boxing

## ► THE FITNESS MOSAIC

LONDON, UK

***“The appeal isn’t limited to women: boot camps and boxing in particular are also attracting men”***

**Joe Proops,  
co-owner and GM**

Cycling is just one option at The Fitness Mosaic, which has no gym but five studios, positioning itself as the group exercise specialist. It’s aiming for the standard of instruction you’d expect at a cycling microgym, but across the board of group exercise – and with the convenience of having all this in one place.

**FOUNDER:** Joe Proops

**SUPPLIER:** Schwinn

**FINER DETAIL:**

- Around 100 classes are offered each week – from boxing to barre to boot camp, equipment pilates to suspension training... and of course indoor cycling

- All classes designed in-house
- Partnerships with industry experts to create premium sub-brands and product training centres – The Fitness Mosaic is one of Schwinn’s Training Centres for Education
- Flexible payment options: pay as you go, bundle packages, or unlimited

## PSYCLE LONDON

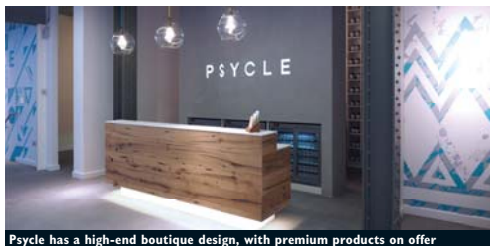
LONDON, UK

Psytle London focuses on the psychological benefits of exercise – the ‘feelgood’ factor – and emphasises the importance of the energy, confidence, stress release and inner strength that come from exercise.

**SUPPLIER:** Star Trac

**FINER DETAIL:**

- Staff on-hand to help everyone set up and get settled
- High-end boutique design
- Club changing rooms are scented to be uplifting
- Premium hair and body products are provided free of charge
- Cold pressed juices and a healthy choice of snacks on offer



Psytle has a high-end boutique design, with premium products on offer

***“As soon as our members walk through the door, our team makes extra effort to ensure they feel part of the community and we love championing the success of our riders” Rhian Stephenson, MD*** ►

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SoulCycle welcomes 10,000 riders a day in the US, and offers 'a healthy nightclub' atmosphere

## SOULCYCLE

32 LOCATIONS ACROSS THE US

**T**he workouts are as much mental/spiritual as they are physical, with inspirational coaching and carefully curated music. Classes are held in candlelit studios, making riders feel like they're partying in a healthy nightclub. The exercise programme focuses on rhythm

and the energy of the pack, which creates a strong bond between riders.

Still investigating a UK launch, SoulCycle has built up a solid following in the US, with 10,000 riders taking SoulCycle classes every day. SoulCycle was one of the top 10 NYC Google searches in 2012.

***"We have an on-staff doctor of physical therapy who has helped us craft the programme to ensure its efficacy, strength and safety"***  
**Julie Rice, co-founder**

## CYCLE RHYTHM

ESSEX, UK

**Y**oga and cycling is the formula at this club, giving clients the option of two approaches to fitness. Cycle Rhythm was added to the established hot yoga club, Bikram Yoga Essex studio, in May 2014.

**OWNER:** Steve Mucklow, along with his son Sam and daughter Billi, a yoga teacher and former star of ITV series *The Only Way is Essex*

**SUPPLIER:** Keiser – M3i bikes

**FINER DETAIL:**

- Nightclub-worthy music
- Tiered studio so everyone can clearly see the instructor
- Recovery room for members to stretch and cool down after a workout



Cycle Rhythm offers a recovery room where exercisers can cool down after class

***"What you will experience is an intimate and exciting environment, with knowledgeable staff who take pride and have passion for their professions"*** **Steve Mucklow, owner**

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Classes take place in a candlelit basement, with curated music from DJ decks for a modern nightclub feel

## ► BOOM CYCLE

LONDON, UK

**B**OOM Cycle was launched by Hilary Gilbert in October 2011, when she returned from the US and couldn't find an indoor cycling club to her taste.

It offers an uplifting nightclub-style experience, taking place in a candlelit basement, and with carefully curated music

from DJ decks setting the mood. Each instructor has their own style of music and uses the beat to drive the intense interval training, which uses Schwinn bikes.

There are sites in Shoreditch and Holborn, and the company has investment to open more. Gilbert's aim is to open one or two new clubs in London this year.

***"We believe this concept can spread to suburbs and other cities in the UK, as well as internationally"***

**Hilary Gilbert,  
founder**

## VICIOUS CYCLE

BONDI BEACH, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

***"I took all the things I enjoyed in a cycling class and added what I felt was missing to deliver the ultimate fitness experience"***

**Tanya Weekes, founder**

**V**icious Cycle was the first indoor cycling studio to be set up in Sydney's Bondi Beach, and offers regular special events to provide an alternative to outdoor activities. These include marathon ride events where

live DJs spin tracks, themed rides, different music sessions and 90-minute endurance classes.

Equipped with Body Bikes, the primary focus is on building a community of like-minded people. ●



Instructors encourage riders to train to their own comfort level



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# QUESTION TIME

**SIBEC Europe in Madeira opened with an industry debate. Chaired by editor of *Health Club Management* Kate Cracknell, the discussion covered wearable tech and Sports Direct's £5 memberships**



L-R: Graham, HCM editor and panel chair Kate Cracknell, Leonie, Vesey and Wright

## MEET THE PANEL

<b>Jim Graham (JG)</b>	COO, The Gym Group
<b>Sarah Leonie (SL)</b>	Group fitness manager, Places for People Leisure (PfPL)
<b>Diane Vesey (DV)</b>	Director of European operations, Anytime Fitness
<b>Dave Wright (DW)</b>	CEO, CFM and MYZONE

**Kate Cracknell (KC): Sports Direct has announced that it will be offering gym memberships for £5 a month. What impact might this have on the rest of the market?**

**JG:** It's difficult to comment until we see whether £5 really is the new low-cost price floor, or if it's a pre-sale marketing tactic. If Sports Direct really is offering memberships for £5, then the mid-market bracket has been redefined again.

It's impossible to make a profit charging £5 a month, so this would clearly be a loss leader to drive retail sales. A key challenge will be finding quality staff who are happy to work for a loss-leading product.

**DW:** This could redefine what we consider affordable fitness. A few years ago that space was occupied by Fitness First and LA fitness. In the US, Planet Fitness has 838 clubs and 4 million members enjoying memberships as low as US\$5 a month. If anything, this Sports Direct play could be a fantastic marketing play from Mike Ashley, who is looking to make waves in the industry.

**KC to SL: Would you consider competing on cost?**

**SL:** Half of our centres now offer gym-only membership and can be reactive on price when low-cost competition opens up on the doorstep. That said, we recognise the need to differentiate our product from the budget clubs.

We're family orientated and offer much more than just gym and classes. We operate with the wider view of being perfectly placed in the community and able to respond to the health agenda. Rather than go head to head, our plan is to differentiate and not just drop prices. We need to focus on our services and be confident in our strategy. We certainly won't be throwing all that away to compete with a £5 membership.

**DV:** You could take the view that anything that gets more people engaged in exercise is a good thing. But I would question, for this price, what the member experience will be like, the service levels and so on.

**Tara Dillon (floor):** The whole sector needs to stop acting like a shop – we're selling fitness on the cheap, but

ultimately you get what you pay for and I don't think it will work.

As a sector we're diversifying, but we need to do more if we're to expand from the 13 per cent of the population who currently go to the gym. We need to look at the health agenda and consider how we can truly make an impact. We need to grow up as a sector and take ourselves seriously.

**SL:** My concern is the quality of service people will receive in these budget clubs. If they haven't been to a gym before and have never used equipment, and they join a gym for a short amount of time with no interaction, will we lose them forever?

**JG:** When I joined the sector, the one thing that really surprised me was the lack of understanding that we're in the hospitality and service industry. We put relatively low-paid staff in front of customers, many of whom would rather not be buying the product, find it painful to consume and find the environment intimidating. It's a complex emotional situation – and that means we need to work even harder to deliver good service.

**Robin Gargrave (floor):** A gym in a retail store with very low prices could

Should clubs own their members' data or allow them to bring their own devices into the gym?

certainly reduce cultural barriers to exercise and potentially engage the hard to reach inactive audience.

See also page 39 for further discussion on this topic.

**KC:** With the likes of Apple entering the fitness tech market, and wearables getting smarter all the time, we're set to see a massive growth in individuals tracking and monitoring their own health and fitness. How will the gym sector be impacted by this?

**DW:** I believe operators need to own the data of their members. Many clubs have no choice but to allow members to BYOD – 'bring your own device' – but that data then sits in the silos of the users' personal accounts, invisible to the facility unless it invests in an integrated solution.

**DV:** The wearables sector has seen huge growth, with lots of diverse offerings all creating more awareness of physical activity levels and personal

health, which is a positive thing. We're embracing this technology and infusing it into our brand, which we believe will increase our value proposition. Our device of choice at the moment is the Fitbit, which we're trialling, and we're also working on integrating Map My Fitness into our customer app.

**KC:** As these wearables get smarter, is there still a role for the club?

**DV:** You can't beat social interaction at the club level. We don't sell fitness – we sell motivation.

**SL:** We're looking at the wider health agenda and public health's constant need for data. These devices can be powerful tools to help us manage, monitor and track. Data is certainly key to cementing our relationships with GPs and the wider health community.

**KC:** How close is wearable tech to really going mainstream, providing the sort of data that makes it an invaluable part of daily life?

**DW:** The ability to measure and record complete types of health data – glucose levels, cholesterol, blood pressure and so on – is there in various formats, but it will be at least

five to seven years before that data is captured in a device that's a totally frictionless, palatable and commercial proposition for the consumer.

**KC:** Is wearable tech something every health club must embrace?

**JG:** We're not yet rushing into the digital space just yet. When we do, we will be platform agnostic and let members choose their own wearable devices and apps. The real question for me is that, although people love measuring stuff and sharing it on social media, how can we help them use their data to improve their fitness? I'm not sure we'll ever get to take the expertise of the personal trainer out of the loop.

That said, while we have 100 per cent accurate data on usage of our gyms, we have a big gap in terms of knowing what individual members do when they're working out. That blind spot reduces our ability to craft the most engaging proposition. In the future, the network-enabled gym will help us close that gap, and that's a critical element of the tech roadmap for any fitness businesses. But the technology isn't quite where we need it to be yet. ●

# STATE OF PLAY

Where does the UK fitness sector currently sit within its product lifecycle, and what comes next? Kate Cracknell asks the experts for their thoughts

**W**here does the health and fitness industry currently sit within its product lifecycle? After years of maintaining more or less the same level of population penetration, are there any signs of green shoots that mark a possible turning point for the sector – a point at which it will leave its plateau behind and grow once more?

The product lifecycle theory states that there are four key phases in a product's life. The introduction phase involves researching, developing and then launching the product. This is followed by the growth stage, when sales are increasing at their fastest rate. Maturity is characterised by sales being near their highest point, but with the rate of growth slowing down due to factors such as market saturation and higher levels of competition. Decline is the final stage of the cycle, when sales begin to fall, but this may be avoided if the product is revitalised through innovation; not all products will reach this stage.

While different sectors of the UK fitness industry are at different stages of their lifecycle, the overall picture is of an industry in the stage of maturity: high levels of competition, with some viewing the market as already saturated, and overall population penetration rates holding steady. So what comes next? Do we decline, hold steady, or grow through reinvention?

Some sectors of the fitness industry are already in a growth phase – budget clubs, for example, and the microgyms – but for now the overall sector holds steady. However, at the recent IHRSA European Congress, industry consultant Ray Algar explained how the sector had now lost its “temporary monopoly”, with competition arising not only in the form of other gyms but also from other fast-evolving sectors such as technology. And Christophe Andanson, stalwart of the fitness industry in France, warned that the health club model is genuinely at risk for the very same hi-tech reason.

So might we actually hit the final stage of the cycle: decline? Or is there anything else that might fall in alongside the low-cost gyms and slingshot us into growth – the continuing emergence of the microgyms, new partnerships with organisations both in and outside of our sector, or perhaps harnessing the fast pace of technological innovation to help us move outside of bricks and mortar facilities altogether?

Alternatively, will the sector simply opt for gentler reinvention to ensure it remains relevant – thus steering clear of decline – but remaining within the maturity phase? We ask the experts.

**Are clubs now in direct competition with technology?**



Fitness First is investing in its product to ensure it remains relevant

## Nigel Bland

Partner, corporate finance travel & leisure  
Deloitte LLP



**A**s far as the concept of health club membership goes, I believe there's no product lifecycle in the classic sense: Romans had baths and Victorians had running clubs.

There may be a tech revolution that we can't yet imagine, and there's already a risk of substitution as technology impacts the market: almost two-thirds of adults now own smartphones, which has led to an increase in the number of health and fitness apps available, many of which don't require the use of a health

club. However, my guess would be that, in 2100, there will still be gyms with members – they will simply offer more advanced machines and classes.

The sector has also seen a new generation of specialist operators emerging that specifically concentrate on classes, such as Cyclebeat and Barry's Bootcamp. These allow for a more flexible membership approach, with consumers only paying for classes attended.

However, although recently the budget operators have grown at the expense of the mid-market, I believe

there's room for everyone going forward if they provide a clear brand proposition, have the right locations and are value for money. Although the UK health club market is forecast to grow at a slow rate (around 1 per cent a year), I believe the established operators can re-group and begin to grow their businesses, for four key reasons.

Firstly, health and fitness is an established, mainstream market that's here to stay, with many macro factors underpinning demand. Second, while the growth in memberships may be modest, the improving economy will allow membership pricing to increase, giving a much greater growth in the value and profitability of the sector.

Third, this is not retail, which is suffering long-term online substitution by online shopping. Operators can respond to technology innovations by incorporating them: DLL and Pure Gym among others have started to do this, creating mobile apps offering exercise programmes and dietary advice.

And finally, the sector was overbuilt in the 90s and the noughties, but capacity has gone out of the market through restructurings. In addition, with most balance sheets now much stronger, ongoing investment is being made (eg Fitness First) to keep the groups relevant and competitive.

But while there is a case for investors to re-engage, management will need to work hard to make those cases, as investors will be wary given the recent history of the established businesses. ►



Specialist brands like  
Cyclebeat offer flexibility



The rapid number of entrants into the budget sector has fuelled competition

## ► Jacques de Bruin

COO  
Pure Gym



**P**enetration rates across the UK health and fitness market will remain stable at their current levels, averaging between 12 and 13 per cent, for the foreseeable future.

The mid-level and high-end sectors of the market will remain fairly consistent in their current penetration levels, with the potential for a very

slight decline in membership numbers as the budget operators continue to grow over the next 12 to 24 months. Any decline will be minimal, though, with the businesses operating in these sectors offloading the poorest performing clubs and consolidating into fewer, but more profitable, clubs.

The major shift within the industry will be the number of operators within

the budget sector of the market. Lower financial outputs and operating costs have reduced barriers for entry into the affordable sector, which in turn has rapidly increased the number of operators within this sector – and consequently competition levels.

With expected overall market penetration levels remaining stable, the affordable sector cannot sustain the continued growth across different operators for a long-term period. The next 12 to 24 months will be a critical time for budget operators as the affordable sector begins to consolidate.

During this consolidation stage, business success within the affordable sector will be determined by two factors: differentiation through innovation, and the successful entry into new markets and locations, specifically London.

Budget operators who correctly identify the changes in consumer demand and strategically tailor a business model to meet more niche requirements, while still following a budget operating model, will continue to expand their membership base by creating a new market for the affordable sector to operate in. Crucial to this success is early entry into new market opportunities. Microgyms that meet consumer demands are central to this niche offering, as they will allow financially viable diversification into markets that have no affordable operator presence.



The next 12–24 months could see consolidation within the affordable sector





## Martin Seibold

MD  
Fitness First UK



**T**o better understand the market, we need to differentiate between fitness and gyms. Fitness in the UK is still in a growth phase, but the traditional gym concept is at risk of saturation, with more and more new chains and clubs popping up all the time.

The majority of these clubs, however, tend to look the same – just boxes full of equipment – so all have similar offerings, just in different price brackets. Club operators face a choice: to continue this trend or make a change. It's through embracing change that individual operators will be able to take advantage of the growth phase fitness finds itself in and grow themselves. The challenge is how to re-invent the model and create an offer that goes beyond the traditional gym. Create a product, a proposition and a way of dealing with people on their own terms, and create new trends inside and outside of the gym to engage and excite people into fitness.

There's a huge opportunity to get a fresh breeze into the industry by joining all the dots and truly understanding consumer needs rather than competing over price. Fitness overall is still quite a young sector. We have an ageing population, growing knowledge about the benefits of exercise, and activity high on the government agenda. So we know that more people than ever want to get active, maintain their health and feel happy and confident. New insights can unveil the key to maintaining, and indeed growing, the appeal of and the demand for the industry. A better understanding of the consumer enables us to offer products and services on their terms. This can come in various forms, whether it's new partnerships, an integrated digital experience or exclusive in-club programmes and services.

Most importantly, it's about the connection with members. Understanding true needs and being more agile in addressing them, as well as setting the trends, is the key to building stronger relationships for a flourishing future, adding to the 'traditional' gym and enabling the industry to grow far beyond a 12–13 per cent penetration. ▶

While the gym concept is at risk of saturation, 'fitness' is still a young sector



Operators need to be the lynchpin that connects the online space to the club

### ► Neil Harmsworth

Co-founder  
PayasUgym.com



**T**here's little doubt that the fitness industry has occupied the 'mature' phase of the product lifecycle for some time – a period during which market share has been won and lost by individual operators, but overall market value has hardly changed. At the same time, however, the demands of our customers have evolved more rapidly than at any time in the previous 20 years.

This is great news for the sector, as it represents a real opportunity for innovative operators to develop effective extension strategies and deliver genuine market growth. But to achieve that, more must be done to understand and influence the factors that will drive that growth.

At PayasUgym.com, we've been working to understand what these factors may be, and our analysis repeatedly shows that the two biggest factors that genuinely influence the decision-making process of a potential customer remain price and convenience of location, in that order.

On that basis, it's easy to see why the budget sector has grown so rapidly through a strategy of modest price points and intense competition for prime locations. It's also encouraging to see just how many operators have started to embrace technology in order to minimise costs for the customer, and to reach them regardless of their location. This can be delivered through something as simple as improving website user experience, or the integration of expensive wearable devices.

These factors also explain the rise of 'single experience' venues, which focus on being famous for one thing rather than average at a lot. These venues require less space and can therefore be innovative with the locations they select. By focusing on one activity, they also minimise wastage and reduce costs for the customer.

Price and convenience of location will be the factors that grow our industry once again, with winners and losers emerging over the coming years based on the willingness and ability of operators to recognise and influence these growth factors.



### Arthur McColl

COO  
LA fitness



**I** often compare health clubs to the hotel sector, where the landscape has changed over the past 15 years, with an emerging low-cost market including brands such as Days Inn. Mid-market has turned into 'midscale' and 'upper midscale' in order to differentiate, and the boutique and luxury market has prospered.

A key difference for the health club sector is the emergence of technology. Nearly 75 per cent of regular exercisers use technology in their workouts, and 69 per cent of participants in the US are now self-tracking. That makes it hardly surprising that there was an expected growth of 25 per cent in the fitness tech market in 2014.

Member experience is key. In a consumer-focused, technology-savvy world, we can no longer rely on traditional routes to consumption. We need programmes and interaction to engage, educate and motivate our members. These need to be convenient, fun and motivational to get the disengaged active, fit and healthy. The emergence of microgyms, albeit gradual, embraces the changing requirements of the consumer for more convenient, personalised, social interactions. We must adopt these principles and offer the 'microgym' experience in our clubs.

We're in danger of becoming too insular, focusing too much on each other to notice the changes around us. We're also guilty of being led by manufacturers and often fit out our clubs based on untested assumptions, with new machines that prove unpopular.

We need to put members at the heart of our product and service and extend our reach beyond just bricks and mortar. Look to adopt the use of new technology to create a 24/7 service for members. This could take the form of virtual classes, Skype PT sessions, online goal tracking, online nutritional and fitness support. We must encourage our members to embrace devices that will support a healthier lifestyle, but vitally we need to be the lynchpin that connects the online space with the in-club experience.

The future is bright for the industry. The 20%er's will always thrive in the gym environment, so we need to continue to develop products and services to appeal to the remainder of the population and be open to change. We need to be willing to embrace new technology to ensure we can deliver a motivational, highly personalised and educational service. ●



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# LEADING THE CHARGE

What does it take to be a great leader? Kath Hudson asks the experts

## STEPHEN THARRETT

Club Intel: Co-founder and principal

Leaders have to be agents of change. In today's business world, with everything changing so quickly, every organisation wants to thrive, not just survive, and in order to do this they have to change. Sometimes the change is evolutionary and sometimes it's revolutionary. Most organisations fail at change because they don't take all the steps necessary, but change always begins with the leader. They effect the change and then they have to be a pitbull to lead that change throughout.

As part of this, risk is required and leaders have to be prepared to take the jump.



*"We must walk consciously only part way towards our goal and then leap in the dark to our success" – Henry David Thoreau*

## GEORGINA FORD

CK Academy: Director

Emotional intelligence is recognised today as a scarce but highly prized skill that's critical for leadership, particularly as we now live in a world where sound technical skills are a business given and we have 24/7 access to overwhelming information resources.

Leaders have to be able to understand their strengths as well as those areas that require improvement, and then actively seek out ways to improve.

They also need to be able to put themselves in the shoes of those they lead: often the higher up people move, the more removed they become from those they seek to lead. Leaders should focus on influencing people and gaining alignment to inspire and motivate.



*"No doubt emotional intelligence is more rare than book smarts, but my experience says it is actually more important in the making of a leader" – Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric*



Good leaders must have a strong presence, communicate well with their team and engage hearts and minds

## TARA DILLON

CIMSPA: Acting CEO



*“Bad leaders, people revile; good leaders, people praise; but great leaders are those for whom the people say, we did it ourselves” – Lao Tzu*

Leaders have to be believable. This goes beyond credibility. If you're credible you can be a good manager, but to be a great leader you have to be believable. It's about having a passion that can inspire your team to follow you to the end of the earth.

It's ever so hard to capture: believable leaders empower their team to own the vision as much as they do. Believable leaders speak with such passion that people naturally follow them and get behind the cause, so the passion turns into action. It involves walking the walk, so the leader is part of the team, knows the issues and gives the team the opportunity to be part of the solution. People will buy into an idea or vision if they feel involved and part of it.

Believable leaders behave professionally and work for the common good.

## FRANK FURNESS

International speaker



*“Treat people as they were what they ought to be and you help them become what they are capable of becoming” – Johann Wolfgang Van Goethe*

I think the most important thing for a good leader is to find the right balance between fun and motivation, and discipline and hard work. If you run a company just on discipline and hard work, it will lead to burn-out among employees and a high turnover of staff. If you run it just on fun and motivation, it will go bankrupt.

A company that gets this absolutely right is Gainesville Health and Fitness in the US, owned by Joe Cirulli. His approach combines old-fashioned management with a new style of leadership. Cirulli sets the boundaries for his staff in an 85-page manual that covers everything from dress code to how to treat clients. He treats his staff well, nurturing talent and promoting people. There's always a great atmosphere in the clubs – and Cirulli is happy to get his hands dirty and muck in and help staff, and he shares the credit with his team. ▶



Everyone's a winner: Happy employees lead to happy customers, which leads to a happy business outcome

*"Giving people self confidence is by far the most important thing that I can do, because then they will act" – Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric*

#### GRAEME HINDE

LFX network: Founder

Presence is one of the most important qualities in a leader working in the health club environment. Staff and members should know who they are and feel happy to approach them. Too many managers hide away in their office and communicate by email.

Leaders should be available to everyone within the club, so that employees and members feel respected. Leaders should listen to feedback and issues and take action where possible. The mere fact that they are involving themselves in real issues is extremely powerful and helps build a strong reputation.

Where staff are concerned, those leaders who have presence are able to pass their vision on to their team.



#### PETRA WILTON

Chartered Management Institute: Director of strategy and external affairs

It's important that leaders can create an environment where others can succeed: this includes developing both the team and the culture of the club. To do this, leaders need to be self-aware and able to self-manage: the core

attributes are understanding others and bringing out the best in them.

Leaders need to be able to engage the team with a sense of purpose as well as engaging their hearts and minds. This involves communicating well, using a variety of tools, and empowering others.

For example, rather than telling someone to do x, y and z to complete a task, they should tell them the end outcome and support them to complete the task on their own.

This isn't throwing people in at the deep end, but rather delegating effectively. Happy employees lead to happy customers, which leads to a happy business outcome. ●

*"The role of leaders is not to get other people to follow them, but to empower others to lead" – Bill George, True North:  
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**The Health Club Management Handbook  
is available to purchase at £50**



# STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

We take a look at what's hot in the world of group workout programmes



## MOVING CAMPAIGN

Zumba has launched 'Zumba with Bursts', an online training programme that allows instructors to add high-intensity athletic intervals into the Zumba formula for a cardio-boosting fitness workout.

It has also launched a multi-media campaign that invites and inspires people to move physically and emotionally. The campaign encompasses TV, digital, social media and PR, and its theme – 'Let It Move You' – will now also serve as Zumba's official tagline.

"Our number one goal is to support our licensed Zumba instructors and inspire millions to get off the couch and get moving," says Zumba CEO and co-founder Alberto Perlman.

**fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS** Zumba Fitness

## EXTREME WORKOUT



Physical Company's latest group fitness class provides a 50-minute, high intensity workout combining functional training with cardio in a team training environment.

The BOSU 3DXTREME class is based on the concept of 'triplex training', which mixes cardio, conditioning and core with the aim of achieving a lean and strong physique.

Physical is also launching its BOSU Elite product this month – an updated version of

the BOSU Balance Trainer – for use in the 3DXTREME classes. BOSU Elite is made with a much firmer dome, which intensifies core exercises and offers enhanced spring-loading for a more efficient force transfer.

Instructors can also create unique classes by logging on to the 3DXTREME website.

**fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS**

Physical Company

## TO THE LIMIT

The new Tabata Cycle workout comprises a 20-minute exercise regime that extends the four-minute Tabata protocol.

Tabata has partnered with the Indoor Cycling Group (ICG) for the release of the new class. The class begins by warming the muscles and raising the heart rate in preparation for a high intensity, four-minute burst of cycling that pushes participants to their limits. This is followed by a sequence of strength and recovery movements.

The 'Tabata Cycle – Powered By ICG' workout is said to offer an effective method of increasing both aerobic and anaerobic fitness.

**fitness-kit.net KEYWORD** Tabata



## TRAIN, TRACK, TRANSFORM



An abbreviation of the motto 'Train. Track. Transform', fitness fx's T3 series of programmes are 30-minute workouts that can be delivered by group exercise instructors. Six-time national 100m sprint champion Dwain Chambers and Muay Thai world title holder Daniel Sam recently joined the company's development team for the T3 series.

Chambers will lend his athletics experience to T3 Sprint, which uses sprint-based conditioning, blending strength-speed, speed-strength and power-endurance exercise complexes. Sam will assist with T3 Fight, a martial arts-inspired programme featuring fight sequences and conditioning drills designed to strip fat and amplify power.

**fitness-kit.net KEYWORDS** fitness fx

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# Supplier showcase

We report on the impact MYZONE is having on member motivation and retention at Velocity Aberdeen



Setting the standard: Velocity Aberdeen opened in December 2014, and is the flagship site for Village Urban Resorts

## MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

Client: Village Urban Resorts  
Supplier: MYZONE

**M**YZONE plays a starring role at Village Urban Resorts' flagship Velocity health & fitness club, which opened in Aberdeen last month.

In addition to a 20m swimming pool, steamroom, sauna and whirlpool spa, the premium club features the latest equipment and technology to provide members with an unrivalled fitness experience. Velocity Aberdeen is one of the first clubs in the UK to be entirely equipped with Technogym's ARTIS range. It also features the latest MyRide indoor cycling video experiences, interactive flooring from Pavigym, and Les Mills Virtual studio classes.

"MYZONE is the key link – it brings all of these elements together," says Chris Southall, director of leisure and spa at Village Urban Resorts. Included in the cost of membership, each new member receives a MYZONE belt and can use the technology throughout the club – as well as outside the facility – with screens in the studios and across the gym floor.

It's all part of the group's strategy to cement MYZONE in the DNA of each of its clubs: it rolled the technology out in all 25 Velocity sites in January 2014.



The Aberdeen club has MYZONE screens in the studios and across the gym floor

Already, 22 per cent of its approximately 80,000 members are users of MYZONE.

"MYZONE is completely embedded in our facilities, but it only works if we get staff completely behind it," says Southall. For this reason, all staff receive a belt and are expected to do MEPs (MYZONE Effort Points); sales staff even wear a MYZONE belt while they conduct tours.

And staff have bought in to the concept, says Southall: "MYZONE is such a great engagement tool and has so many touchpoints that it makes it much easier for staff to interact with members. In fact, our PTs say it's such an effective way of measuring workouts, giving direct feedback and motivating people, that they feel quite lost when not using it when they train people elsewhere."

Each Velocity club runs regular MYZONE competitions in addition to

the quarterly inter-club challenges that take place throughout the group.

"I'd say about 10 per cent of our members get involved with the challenges, and those who do absolutely love it," says Southall. "But the beauty of MYZONE is that it's a great personal motivator. We have a broad mix of members, with an average age of 41 to 45 years, and it's actually been the Average Joes rather than the elite exercisers who have most taken to MYZONE and are feeling the benefits in their workouts."

And this is having benefits for wider retention, he says: "We're finding that the people who take up our flexible membership option and use MYZONE are staying for longer. So for us, as well as being a great USP, MYZONE is proving to be a key retention tool."

For more information: [www.myzone.org](http://www.myzone.org)



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