

ON THE COVER

Evolution Wellness

Simon Flint is
leading the company
through a period
of radical change

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Hot for 2020, as
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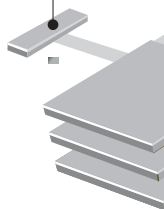
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2 – 5 April 2020



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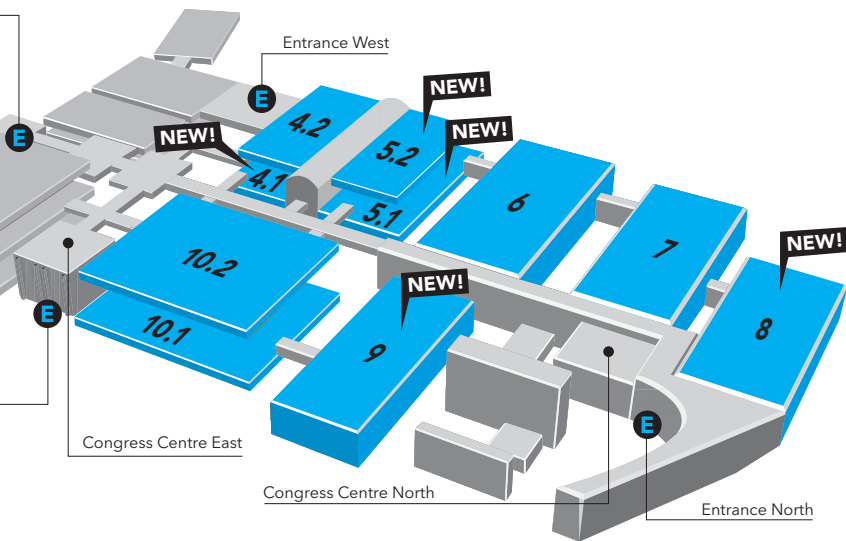
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| HALL | THEME |
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| HALL 4.2 | FASHION, BEAUTY, HEALTHY SPORTS NUTRITION |
| HALL 5.1 NEW! | FITNESS FUTURE, DIGITALISATION, INNOVATION & TREND, TRAINING EQUIPMENT |
| HALL 5.2 NEW! | FUNCTIONAL TRAINING, GROUP FITNESS |
| HALL 6/HALL 7 | CARDIO & STRENGTH, HEALTH TRAINING EQUIPMENT, EMS & VIBRATION |
| HALL 8 NEW! | HEALTH TRAINING EQUIPMENT, INTERIOR, WELLNESS & SPA |
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HIGHLIGHTS

Distributor & Networking Area, matchmaking Area

Catwalk, Instagram Area & Meet Your Stars Area, Late Night Shopping

Future Forum, VIP & matchmaking Area, Innovation & Trend Area, Europe Active

Group Fitness Stage, Functional Forum, Late Night Session

DFAV (Hall 7)

Body & Mind Area, Wellness Competence Centre, Meeting Point Health

DSSV

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Announcing Fit Tech

Leisure Media is launching a new platform for technology in the health, fitness, wellness and sports markets. Available in every media channel, Fit Tech is for you if you love fitness and are excited by all things digital

For some years now, we've been tracking and reporting on the explosion of tech innovation right across the health and fitness industry, from management systems to apps and from AI to tech-enabled equipment. Each day brings us news of fresh thinking and new start-ups.

The market is growing fast, with regular mergers and acquisitions, seed funding rounds and incubators enabling the development of a wide range of new products and services.

The sheer volume of content we've been producing in this area has now reached such velocity it's bursting out of the pages of HCM and the HCMmag.com website and so I'm delighted to announce we're launching a whole new platform for this exciting and emerging part of the fitness market.

Called Fit Tech, it will connect the community of people who are interested and invested in the fitness technology market via a daily news website at fittechglobal.com (live in Beta), a regular magazine, instant news alerts, video feeds and an ezine.

We'll also be active on social media, engaging in conversation on twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram as fittechglobal.

We hope you'll join the community as the new service gears up and that you'll sign up for the ezine at fittechglobal.com/signup.

HCM will continue to bring you key fitness technology news and insights each month, while Fit Tech will enable us to range more widely in our coverage and to go into more detail, for those who think digitally and want a deeper dive.

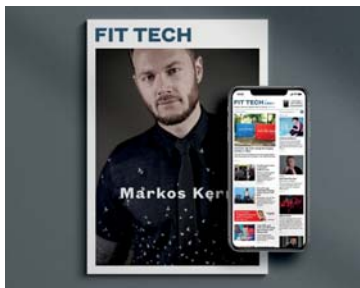
Essentially, Fit Tech will be a huge funnel for content relating to innovation and we'll then curate stories from this feed for HCM's website and for the print and digital magazine editions.

We see the HCM and Fit Tech brands as being entirely complementary and will run them side by side.

In this issue (page 38), industry thought leader, Rasmus Ingerslev, highlights the opportunity clearly, saying: "Health club memberships are seeing low double digit growth, while the growth in the digital space is 40 to 50 per cent."

This significant growth in fitness technology is bringing big investment into the fitness sector and we see the challenge for the market as being finding ways fitness tech and fitness-based brick and mortar businesses can thrive together.

As Ingerslev says: "Both areas will see significant growth, but health and fitness operators will be missing a macro trend if they don't also find ways to digitise their services."



Leisure Media is launching the Fit Tech media platform

We see the HCM and Fit Tech brands as being entirely complementary and will run them side by side

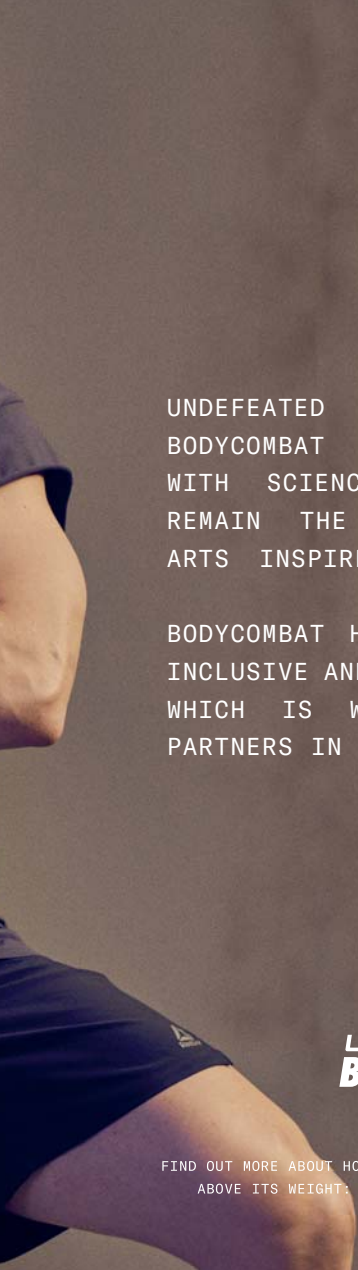
If you're an operator innovating around fitness technology in your business and with successes to share and you'd like us to report on your work for Fit Tech, please get in touch.

If you're a supplier of a tech-based product or service, please let us know if you'd like to be featured and we'll look forward to teamworking with you on this.

Just as our industry is broadening and extending its influence into health, wellness, sports-based activity and corporate wellbeing, so Fit Tech will also range across these sectors, bringing you all the technology news you need to engage and thrive in whichever part of this growing market you call home.

Liz Terry, editor
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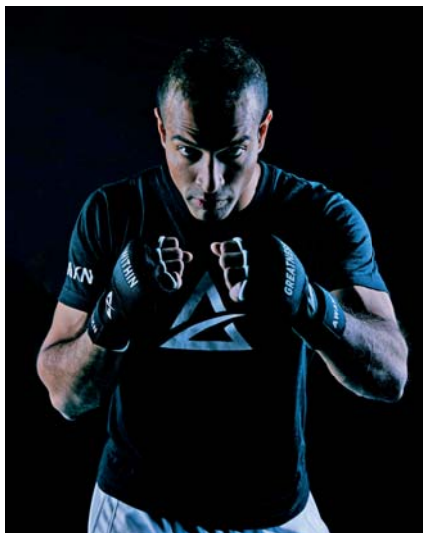
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Uniting the world of fitness

JANUARY 2020 No 275



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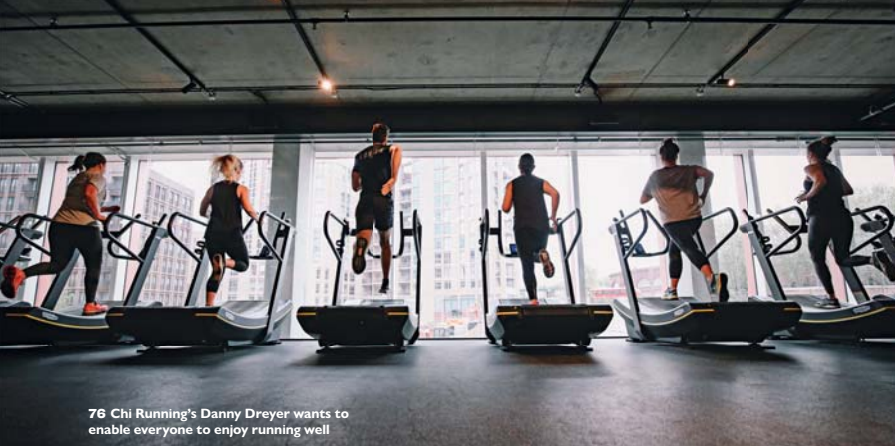
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Dip into the HCM directory any time to find suppliers of products and services for your gym or health club

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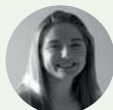
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Bouldering is more than a trend: it's fun and healthy, strongly aspirational, easily accessible, highly motivating and promotes social interaction

GRÉGOIRE DE BELMONT, STEVE GUILLOU, SAMY CAMARZANA & LYES MEKESSER

GROUPE ARKOSE: CO-FOUNDERS



In 2013, the group predicted that climbing would be a growing trend, and opened its first bouldering gym



Grégoire de Belmont answers our questions

When and how did Arkose come about?

The first facility opened in 2013, in Montreuil, near Paris. At the time this was a kind of empty area where the bouldering offer did not exist. The four of us predicted the climbing business was about to grow fast and we had to anticipate it by opening new locations. Two of us were dedicated to operating the gyms and two to developing new ones.

What's the background of the four partners?

We are complementary in terms of education, background and hobbies. Steve Guillou graduated from one of the most prestigious French engineering schools and has been a climber since the age of 25, as well as doing lots of mountaineering, ski touring, paragliding and kite surfing. He partners with me in taking care of strategy and development, as well as finance.

Samy Camarzana graduated from a business school and used to work in IT sales; he takes care of the front office, sales and HR. Lyes Mekesser is also an engineering school graduate, who has previously worked in IT and sales. The back office and restaurants are his responsibility.

■ BOULDERING

A type of climbing done without ropes on walls up to 4.5m, with thick mats to break falls, bouldering was born on the rocks at Fontainebleau at the start of the 20th century.

It started as training for mountaineering, but has developed into a sport in its own right. Walls are colour coded for difficulty, making it safe and accessible for everyone.



Grégoire de Belmont works on strategy and development as well as marketing and communications for Groupe Arkose

The Arkose gyms are targeted at urban individuals, age 20 to 35



► I have been a climber since the age of 16 and graduated from an engineering school in Grenoble, where I did a lot of rock climbing, ice climbing, skiing and mountaineering. I moved to Paris to do an MSc in marketing and economics and worked as a product manager in the consumer electronics industry for several years.

Previous to Arkose I had eight years' entrepreneurial experience as a marketing and operation officer at European level. As well as working with Steve on strategy and development, I take care of marketing and communication.

What is the Arkose concept?

We developed a unique concept of full stack blocparks, offering an innovative, ethical and fun sports and leisure environment aimed at urban individuals, mainly aged 20 to 35. Bouldering is more than a trend: it's fun and healthy, strongly aspirational, easily accessible, highly motivating and promotes social interaction. To us, it seemed natural to mix this with chill out spaces, a restaurant, bar and yoga classes. And it is! People love it.

What is on offer at the gyms?

Bouldering, yoga, collaborative libraries, art galleries, concerts and events, as well as restaurants with homemade food using solely local and seasonal products; bars offering organic juice, locally brewed beers and natural wines.



De Belmont says bouldering is so popular because it's a fun, social, easily accessible sport

LOCATIONS

There are now nine Arkose sites, three Mroc and two MurMur sites: Montreuil, Bordeaux, Massy, Paris (Nation), Pantin, Annemasse, Marseille, Tours, Lyon and Villeurbanne. Three more will open this year in Toulouse, Lille and Nice.

What made you believe it would be popular?

Climbing in general, and bouldering in particular, meet many needs of urban active people. It's a fun sport, inspirational, easily accessible (in terms of long opening hours and no equipment needed) and it is also good for meeting people.

We were confident the sport had a lot of potential, and that with the right marketing and communication, people would come and try. In today's market the offer generates the demand: the more gyms, the more climbers.

What have been the main challenges with setting up and expanding the chain?

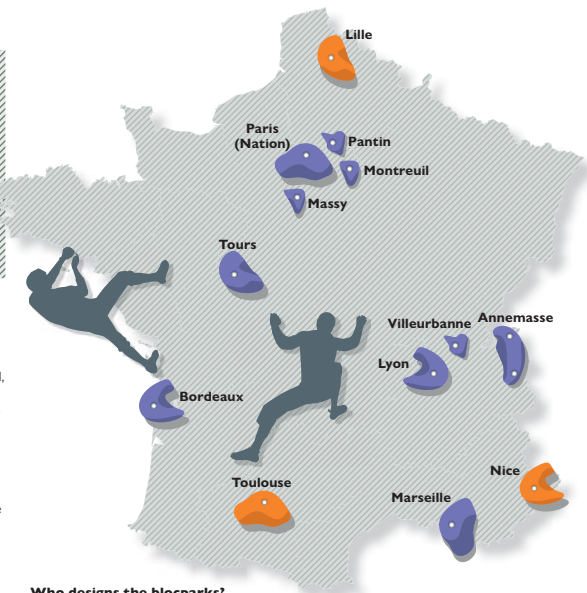
Numerous! Financing and fundraising has been the biggest challenge, followed by setting up an organisation where staff can grow and gain experience alongside the company. We believe being ethical with your company management is the path to follow, so we chose to hire people who are able to grow stronger with us.

Processing the operations with clear and efficient processes is another challenge, as well as keeping the finances healthy, which is even more difficult as expansion is accelerated.

Further to this, we have diversified the business, with a brewery in Paris which produces the craft beer we sell in our blocparks and also sell to external bars, restaurants and shops. We have also purchased a French gear and apparel brand, Snap, which we are reshuffling and pushing internationally with a full collection of dedicated to our customers: young, active urban dwellers who are looking for comfortable, trendy clothes for their daily life and sport activities.

What do you look for in a location?

Downtown locations in large cities, which are connected to a subway or tramway, or some means of green friendly travelling, and accessible by bike. The space needs to be a minimum of 1500sq m and 6m high for at least half the area.



Who designs the blocparks?

We do it ourselves. Although we've improved since the first one, the basics are the same. The main counter is also a bar, which optimises manpower. The restaurant is separated from the climbing area, but still within view, because this is what makes it so special. Flow is also very important, and as we mainly renovate old buildings we adapt the design accordingly, so each blocpark is unique. We now have four architects employed to work on blocpark designs.

How do you market new sites?

We always need to educate the market, but each year the awareness is bigger than the year before. So we use all the

usual marketing and communication methods: google, community management, online and off-line communication and PR.

What are your future plans for Arkose?

To expand outside of France: we already have two undisclosed locations lined up in neighbouring countries, as well as pushing our side brands – Mroc, Snap, Oskare and MurMur, our brand dedicated to lead climbing. We also want to work to lessen our impact on the environment and spread this message as largely as possible.

What do you predict will happen in this market?

There will be a consolidation, with big chains consolidating small and independent players. Since the quality of the new facilities is increasing, they will become bigger with more side activities offered. I believe the small and specialised facilities will suffer a lot and may disappear. Because the investment required to build a new facility is linked to the quality of the offer and the size, it will become more and more difficult for small independent to start, except maybe in small towns where big facilities are not profitable.

RATES

- €15 per adult visit (£14, \$16)
- €45 per month (£42, \$47)
- €495 per year (£460, \$554)
- €125 for 10 entries (£116, \$140)
- Children are discounted.
- There are also happy hours, courses available and couples memberships.



“

Years of studying the greats – Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant, Albert Einstein, Steve Jobs – combined with my own life lessons – led to the Awakn 7 pillars process and my goal to Awakn London

KAM PANESAR

AWAKN: FOUNDER AND CEO

Panesar worked at Goldman Sachs and JP Morgan before leaving to launch his own fitness studio



The trainers at Awakn aim to help members to become the strongest version of themselves

Why did you decide to launch your own fitness studio?

I come from a very humble background. Even though I grew up in a tiny house and went to an unknown school, I always believed that through hard work anything was possible. So, when I set my sights on working at elite organisations such as Goldman Sachs, I knew I had to sacrifice everything and outwork the competition.

While working at Goldman Sachs, I wanted to push further so I left to complete my MBA, passing with a distinction and started work in Canary Wharf, as a vice president at JP Morgan.

During these years, I began to really invest in my own personal fitness, spending a lot of time working out in various gyms, but always feeling there was something lacking in the market.

I knew I could create something special, so in August 2017 I started work on a business plan. Two months later I left banking to make my wild dream of Awakn'ing the Wharf come true. I had no site, network, team or income, but had the motivating factors of a monster mortgage and a one-year old baby! Going back to banking wasn't an option, because once you've shown the desire to make your own way in life, banks blacklist you!

What is Awakn?

Awakn is a luxury, boutique fitness studio in the heart of Canary Wharf. Our superstar trainers take our customers on



Awakn is a 6,000sq ft site, which sprawls over two floors

a journey to awakn their inner power in order to become the strongest versions of themselves – both physically and mentally. I have always been obsessed with what makes someone elite while others fail to fulfil their maximum potential. Years of studying the greats – Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant, Albert Einstein, Steve Jobs – combined with my own life lessons led to me creating the Awakn 7 pillars process.

Tell us more...

In a nutshell, to achieve any substantial goal in life, regardless of whether it's a fitness or life goal, you journey through the seven stages of: focus, desire, belief, action, flow, reflection and rejuvenation. The seven pillars are reinforced in every Awakn workout via music, lighting and projected images. Classes are immersive

experiences carefully curated to guide our attendees into a state of flow where endorphins are elevated allowing new information and habits to be internalised.

Fundamental to the Awakn process is finding and overcoming the pillars that have become barriers to our customers achieving their goals. Overcoming a fundamental hurdle often leads to the flood gates opening and propelling someone on their journey to greatness. For example, the barrier may be discovering and verbalising 'desire' – the deep emotional reason why you want to achieve your goal. Working through one's personal pillars is the process of Awakn'ing. Each of our instructors, or mentors, undergoes a ten week Awakn'ing training programme to ensure they can use the pillars to find the 'greatness within' in our customers. ▶



Music, lighting and projected images reinforce Panesar's seven pillars



- At the end of each workout, there's time to reflect on the progress made and for people to thank their bodies. Then they head into the rejuvenation phase and prepare for the right rest, recovery, sleep and nutrition. We put as much focus on mental wellbeing and overcoming mental blocks as we do physical wellbeing and summarise this process as 'Mind Body Awakn'.

What facilities does Awakn have?

It's a 6,000sq ft site which spans two floors, with two studios: the Arena and the Zone. I wanted to create a luxury experience with a spacious feel, because people who work in Canary Wharf are boxed in all day. To achieve this feeling of space, we have high ceilings and plenty of personal space and freedom allowing our customers to 'Awakn Their Inner Power'.

Most people working in Canary Wharf sit down all day, so exercises focusing solely on fixed machines such as bikes, rowers or climbers only make already tight muscles and ligaments

more tonic. Therefore, the Arena focuses on functional movements making you feel powerful as you 'Awakn Your Inner Athlete'. There's nothing more exhilarating than working as a team to flip a 200kg tyre or riding on top of a tank with the music pumping and the lights ablaze!

The purpose of the Zone studio is to push our customers out of their comfort zones. This is where growth occurs. The Zone has beautiful leather boxing bags hand-crafted in New Zealand, Technogym SkillRun treadmills and custom luxury benches I spent two years designing in partnership with Escape.

To supplement our workouts, we will be offering rejuvenating activities, including meditation and yoga, allowing our customers to recover in order to make their workouts as optimal as possible. We'll also be hosting wellness talks around mental health in order to help deal with burn-out and depression – a common but hidden problem within the financial services industry.

Why Canary Wharf?

Awakn is a very personal project for me. I've lived and worked in Canary Wharf for ten years and know Wharfers are stressed out and have few outlets. My personal mission is to Awakn the Wharf and to bring back a sense of community that has been lost, as profit-focused

organisations have exploited the lack of competition in the Docklands.

What's the target market?

My fellow residents and employees who live and work in the Docklands. Those of us who have been let down by regular gyms and not achieved the desired results. Awakn is for everyone who understands the importance of fitness but finds traditional workout environments boring, intimidating or demotivating.

How much does it cost?

Awakn's pricing reflects the luxury offering, £22 per class with discounts for loyal and long-term customers. A handful of founding memberships for £250 per month for unlimited use are still available.

Will you open more sites after this one?

Though the flagship Canary Wharf club launched in mid October, I'm currently negotiating heads of terms for the second site.

Wheels are in motion to open at least five Awakns in London before expanding internationally. I'm closely monitoring developments in Manchester, but also have active leads for locations in mainland Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

We believe the world is certainly in need of some Awakn'ing.

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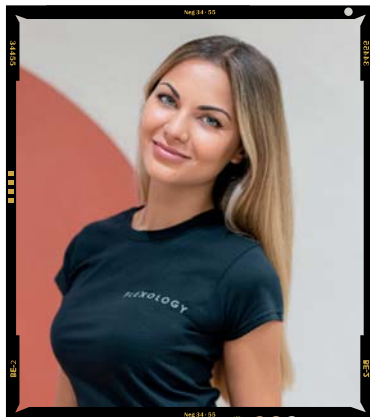


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Realising that people simply didn't understand how beneficial stretching is for your health, we started thinking about how we could bring stretching to the wellness industry in the UK



ALINA & ANNA EPEYKINA

FLEXOLOGY: CO-FOUNDERS

Can you explain the Flexology concept for us?

We're the UK's first dedicated stretch studio, using our own method of stretching, which is safe, well researched and backed up by science.

Our first site, which launched in London's Canary Wharf in October, is a wellbeing oasis offering a three dimensional wellness experience, combining assisted stretching with healthy snacks and smoothies at the on-site café.

The studio has a futuristic spaceship feel, combined with elements of nature,

to create an out-of-reality experience.

This offering is a new experience for most people so we wanted the space to feel different, while also keeping an organic and natural environment, because there are not that many relaxing spaces for people living in London.

For each of our stretch methods, we have a different smoothie. For example, to accompany our energising stretch, we have smoothies with ginseng and turmeric, while our fortitude range has chocolate and protein, which is good for recovery and building muscle.

Where did the inspiration for Flexology come from?

We are sisters with a background in ballroom dancing so, for us, stretching was second nature. When we came to London from Russia, we tried lots of different fitness classes, but found stretching was given a very low priority. Only about five minutes at the end of the class, and lots of people were in such a rush that they skipped it.

Realising that people simply didn't understand how beneficial stretching is for health, we started thinking about how



Alina and Anna knew from their background in ballroom dancing how important stretching is for overall health

we could bring stretching to the wellness industry in the UK. We spent one year researching different types of stretching and partnered with a movement specialist to develop the method.

What are the benefits of assisted stretching?

Assisted stretches work everything in the body – the muscles, nerves and tissues – and this has a positive impact on both physical and mental wellbeing. When you stretch nerves it impacts your whole body and how you feel. The combination of movements elongates joints and ligaments, unlocking the connective tissue and opening up the nervous system, helping to release muscle tension on a whole new level.

Who is your target market?

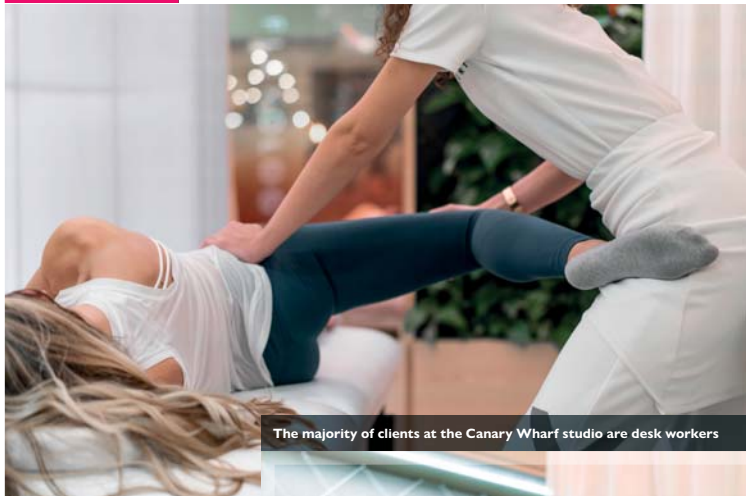
Everyone can benefit from stretching, but at our Canary Wharf site our clients are mainly office workers. Most of them sit



STRETCH MENU

Six different assisted stretches are on offer:

- 1 **Executive stretch for office workers**
- 2 **Re-energise to kickstart the nervous system, body and mind**
- 3 **Unwind – a relaxing session**
- 4 **Perform – for athletes**
- 5 **Build your own stretch – tailor made for the individual**
- 6 **Flex assess – a signature in-depth assessment which is complimentary with every membership or purchase of a bundle of 10 sessions**



The majority of clients at the Canary Wharf studio are desk workers

- for long hours in front of a desk, which causes back problems and a loss of flexibility and range of motion.

Also, we are working with those who exercise a lot – runners, footballers and athletes – who use assisted stretching to improve their range of motion, reduce the risk of injury and stop the build up of lactic acid. Yogis are also coming to us as stretching can help improve their practice.

We offer different programmes depending on the client's goals. For example, the performance stretch for athletes incorporates a lot of push and pull techniques, working with their nervous system and breath, it's very intense. The relaxation stretch involves holding stretches for a long time, which helps to release muscle tension.

What have been the main challenges with getting the first site up and running?

Educating the market has been the most difficult part, because a studio dedicated to stretching is an alien concept. People like the space we've created and assume we offer massage, or yoga, so our flexperts have to explain a lot about the benefits of assisted stretching and we have had to be proactive with the marketing, creating pop-ups in offices. However, we've found that people are open and excited to trying something new.

Lots of people ask why they can't stretch themselves, or why can't their





PT stretch them, but the truth is most people just don't do it! Flexology provides a real estate environment where individuals can stretch and push their boundaries. Our flexperts can safely push them to their limits.

Were you tempted to include other body work services such as massage or yoga?

Although all of our flexperts have a specialism in some type of body work – whether that be osteopathy or Pilates – we were clear from the outset that we just wanted to provide stretching, in order not to dilute the message or create unnecessary confusion.

What are your plans for the future?

I think assisted stretching will become very popular in the UK, as people start to understand that they need to take care of their bodies and then start to feel the benefits of assisted stretching. We have only been open a month and we still have lots of exciting opportunities to explore and enquiries to follow up.

One thing we are looking into is partnering with local health and fitness operators, sending flexperts into their clubs to offer sessions. Going forward, we are also planning to create a Flexology Institute, where therapists can do the training and become certified flexperts, even if they are not working with us.



Flexology offers different stretch programmes based on clients' goals

Our second London site will open imminently, and then we plan to open one every six months, focusing on London to start with, but eventually

going international. London is an ideal city to establish the concept, because it offers so much and people are always open to new ideas.

PRICING

Three treatment lengths are on offer: 15, 25 and 55 minutes.

● A single 15 minute session: £28

● A single 55 minute session: £80

● 10 x 15-minute sessions: £220

● 10 x 55-minute treatments: £700

● A number of secondary revenue generators have also been created: a non-slip stretch mat, water bottles, a loose fitting stretch outfit, fascia release balls and foam rollers, as well as a range of toiletries.

Build New Training Experiences with Technogym in 2020

Fusing great kit with tailored workouts and cutting edge technology, Technogym products create peak experiences for members

At the heart of any successful fitness community is a brand that truly understands its people's goals.

Club 4.0, which Technogym launched at IHRSA, helps operators innovate, with compelling content and all-new classes.

Combining exciting equipment, digital innovation and training programmes, Club 4.0 helps operators provide a different fitness experience for each customer.

Club 4.0 training formats

Technogym offers a range of training formats through Club 4.0, including Skillrow, Skillbike and Skillmill HIIT, as well as Biocircuit, Skillrun Class and Bootcamp.

Trainers benefit from Club 4.0, too, as the user-friendly app means they can quickly set up classes, and manage logistics, including scheduling classes and selecting music.

Club 4.0 formats focus on the needs of the end user, by helping you make more

of your available staff, space and time to create programmes which resonate.

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

Evolution of the gym floor

Personalised training experiences are still a key way to attract and retain customers, but they now also provide a crucial opportunity to drive revenue streams and build strong communities.

Savvy operators are using Club 4.0 formats to transform the gym floor experience. The technology can help you create a dedicated space in your facility, or develop a standalone studio to maximise the use of your square footage.

This flexibility means you can deliver personalised fitness experiences aligned with your business objectives.

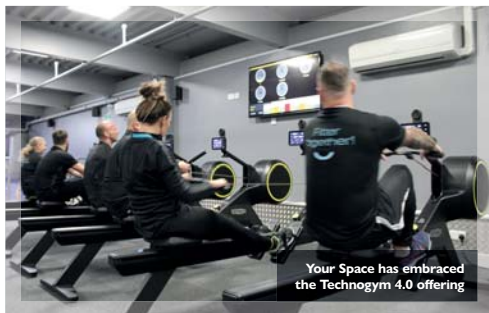
Make an impact with Club 4.0 from Technogym

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

Ready to launch a successful new club format?

Technogym provides support during the roll-out of any new format, so you can maximise its implementation and success.

To find out more about the many ways you could deliver a Club 4.0 experience, to your members, contact Technogym today on 01344 300236 or email www.uk_info@technogym.com



Your Space has embraced the Technogym 4.0 offering

CASE STUDY 1

Skillrow and Skillbike classes at Your Space

■ **Your Space** has transformed its offering at three of the clubs in its portfolio – Pontefract, Metrodome and Hoyland leisure centres.

"We wanted to create a format around two core pieces of equipment that are non-intimidating and innovative," says head of fitness, Tom Galvin.

"The Skill Line meets this criteria perfectly, as the athletic training capability means members are pushed to develop their skills and technique."

"Skillrow Class gives members the chance to row and compete together, while the gamification element offers enjoyment and enables training in a more interactive way.

"By creating a small group exercise format, we encourage community and being part of a team, while dedicated social areas bring out people's inner athlete, enabling them to perform a great workout on a piece of equipment they feel comfortable on in a fun, lively space."



Macclesfield Leisure Centre, run by Everyone Sport and Recreation, has introduced Biocircuit from Technogym

CASE STUDY 2

Macclesfield Leisure Centre

■ **Biocircuit at Macclesfield Leisure Centre** was one of the first UK sites to launch Biocircuit, introducing a workout that challenges and engages all members.

"Everybody at Macclesfield Leisure Centre is thrilled about the launch of Biocircuit," says Paul Winrow, director of sport and operations at Everybody Sport and Recreation. "The introduction of this new product has allowed us to offer something new and exciting to our members.

"As a charity, our aim is to continuously provide new and innovative fitness technology around our key mission, 'Leisure for Life'", he explains.

"Biocircuit is evidence of this, as whatever the goal of our members – from athletes looking to enhance their training, to people on our health and wellbeing programmes who are looking for a safe way to stay fit and active – Biocircuit has benefits for everyone and as a result, is proving to be hugely popular, right across the board."

CASE STUDY 3

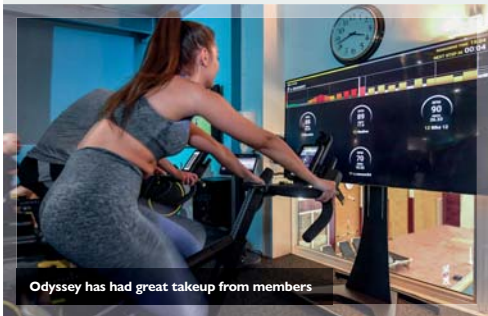
Skill Line Classes at Odyssey Health Club

■ **Odyssey Health Club** has undergone a gym floor transformation with the introduction of classes and gym floor zones, including, Skillbike Class, Skillrun Class and Skillrow Class.

"By creating pockets of activity around particular zones of equipment, we increased engagement for different demographics and member goals," says Ian Richards, director at Odyssey. "The introduction of Skill Line has also

prompted us to change the way we deliver inductions and feedback shows people appreciate knowing how much they can do on the equipment.

For example, Skillbike Class we run three different class types on the gym floor: Climb for strength and stamina, Intervals for high intensity and Race for competition. With Skill Line zones we can host classes, engage and demystify exercises, so more members give things a go."



Odyssey has had great takeup from members

1Rebel signs deal to open studios across Middle East

1Rebel has signed a deal to enter the Middle Eastern fitness market, as part of the brand's plans to grow its footprint globally.

The UK-based boutique studio operator has signed an agreement with Pulse Fitness & Sports Company, which will

see the development of the 1Rebel brand across seven countries: Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan, and Egypt.

Established in 2018, Pulse Fitness & Sports Co was set up to grow the boutique fitness segment in Saudi Arabia and across the Middle East.

The company was founded by Fahad Al Hagbani and Nathan Clute, both fitness industry veterans, with Al Hagbani having previously founded BodyMasters and Fitness Time, the largest chain of fitness centres in the Middle East with 150+ sites.

The collaboration between 1Rebel and Pulse offers future potential to also expand Pulse's own boutique fitness



Founders of 1Rebel and Pulse signed a deal for seven countries

brand, MAVERX, outside of the Middle East.

"When we looked to enter the Middle East market, we quickly realised that there was only one partner we wanted to work with," said

James Balfour, co-founder and CEO of 1Rebel. "The Al Hagbani family is the most experienced operator of fitness facilities in the region."

More: http://lei.sr/M9Q7R_H



The Al-Hagbani family is the most experienced operator in the region

James Balfour

PureGym to acquire European operator Fitness World

PureGym is set to become the second largest fitness operator in Europe, after revealing plans to acquire Danish chain Fitness World.

Fitness World is the largest fitness provider in Denmark and also has operations in Switzerland and Poland.

Founded in 2005, it has grown to become one of Europe's leading value-based fitness providers, with more than 230 gyms and around 600,000 members.

In addition to its international estate of gyms, Fitness World – which had revenues of €206m (£175m) and EBITDA of €45m (£38m) in 2018 – also has its own



The deal will give PureGym scale in continental Europe

sports nutrition brand, called Functional Nutrition.

The deal will give PureGym significant scale in continental Europe and rapidly accelerate

its international expansion, which includes plans for trial sites across the US.

"This transaction brings together two well matched,

successful businesses and the combination creates a powerful platform from which to accelerate growth," said Humphrey Cobbold, chief executive of PureGym.



These are two well matched businesses
Humphrey Cobbold

More: http://lei.sr/M6a6N_H

City of Portland invests in workforce-wide wellness

The City of Portland in Maine, US is investing in a customised wellness programme, which it will make available to its workforce.

The local government authority has appointed corporate health specialist Wellness Workdays to create the programme, which will include "integrated technology and a hands-on approach". It will provide each employee with a wellness portal that will provide one-on-one health coaching and an outcomes-based programmes.

The 1,000+ workforce will also be given opportunities



Our team is working closely with all City departments
Debra Wein

to participate in wellness activities and education related to preventive and self-care, nutrition, physical activity, resilience, sleep and smoking cessation.



Employees will receive outcomes-based programmes

A "robust and intuitive" portal provides personalised strategies, education and challenges, while allowing employees to track their progress, sync fitness devices, communicate with health coaches and access a wide range of wellness content.

It means that each city department – from the police

to City Hall staff – will have access to wellness initiatives.

Debra Wein, CEO of Wellness Workdays, said: "Our team is working closely with all City departments to design an approach that helps employee focus on the areas that are important to them."

More: http://lei.sr/A9a8r_H

Fitbit signs tech deal to help manage diabetes in Georgia, US

WellCare of Georgia has signed a partnership deal with Fitbit, which will see fitness trackers being used to manage the conditions of those living with diabetes.

The deal will see Fitbit devices being delivered to WellCare Medicaid members who take positive steps to manage their diabetes – such as completing their annual diabetic eye exams.

It is estimated that more than 10 per cent of adults in the state of Georgia currently live with Type 2 diabetes, a condition that can impact many areas of the body.

From 1 January 2020, WellCare is offering Georgia Medicaid members ages 18 and older with a diabetes diagnosis – and who are enrolled in the Fitbit Diabetes Program – a Fitbit Inspire.

Fitbit Inspire offers activity tracking, sleep tracking and activity reminders.

WellCare's Fitbit Diabetes Program is the first time Fitbit will be included in a Medicaid programme. The company hopes the devices will encourage those with diabetes to get more active.

More: http://lei.sr/j2u9v_H



Those with diabetes will receive a Fitbit Inspire device

ukactive urges government to invest in physical activity

Ukactive has urged the newly elected Conservative government to invest heavily in physical activity – in order to improve the nation's health.

In an open letter, ukactive CEO Huw Edwards called on Prime Minister Boris Johnson to correct the lack of focus from previous governments towards exercise and fitness and to use physical activity to tackle health issues.

"It is clear that the lack of attention from previous governments to physical activity has contributed to the current crisis in public health, with physical inactivity now recognised as the fourth greatest cause of disease and disability in the UK – linked to one in every six deaths and costing the economy £20bn annually," Edwards writes in the letter.

More: http://lei.sr/9S7Y2_H



PM Johnson – called on to back the physical activity agenda



Inactivity is now the fourth greatest cause of disease and disability in the UK

Huw Edwards



Life Leisure launches new boutique brand HIVE

Life Leisure is expanding its facility portfolio with the launch of an independent boutique fitness brand.

Scheduled to open this month, HIVE will offer group classes led by fitness

coaches and combine cardio, functional, strength and conditioning training.

The first HIVE will launch at the Stockport Sports Village (SSV). Life Leisure already operates 12 facilities in Stockport and HIVE members

will be able to attend classes, use gyms and benefit from swimming facilities at any of the venues.

HIVE will be managed and run independently.

"This will be a different breed of facility for Stockport



We have never been a business to stand still

Malcolm McPhail

and for the Life Leisure Group", said Group CEO Malcolm McPhail.

"We've never been a business to stand still and have a history of pioneering new approaches, from establishing one of the first ever activity self-referral schemes to diversifying into national fitness events."

More: http://lei.sr/t6F6z_H



The first HIVE will launch at the Stockport Sports Village

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Eco-friendly wellness Glass House Retreat opens in Essex

The Glass House Retreat, a new eco-friendly health and wellness retreat, has opened in Bulphan, Essex.

Located on several acres of countryside, the retreat offers an all-inclusive approach to health and wellness, working with guests to create tailor-made wellness programmes based on the guests' needs.

It was developed by Jarvis Development Group, a family-run construction firm based in Essex, and is the brainchild of co-founder and director Joy Jarvis. The eco-friendly retreat was purpose-built with the end-user in mind and features solar panels, a ground source

heat pump and rain water recycling technology.

It boasts a range of facilities, including a fitness studio and gym, outfitted with Matrix fitness equipment,



Being able to plan this from scratch allowed us to create a purpose-built site

Russell Jarvis



The retreat was created by the Jarvis Development Group

a spa with eight treatment rooms, a salt block sauna, pool, cryotherapy chamber and a communal dining area.

Russell Jarvis, co-founder, said: "Being able to plan The

Glass House from scratch has allowed us to create a building purpose-built to deliver a premium experience."

More: http://lei.sr/G6j3v_H

Active Lives study: children's activity levels on the rise

Almost half of children and young people (46.8 per cent) in England are now doing the recommended average of 60 or more minutes of physical activity a day.

The figure, from the second annual *Active Lives Children and Young People Survey*, shows

there has been a rise of 3.6 per cent in the number of active children over the last year.

In total, 3.3 million children are now meeting the new recommended Chief Medical Officer Guidelines – an increase of 279,600 when compared with 2018.

Crucially, the figures show that there has been a rise in children getting active outside school, with 57 per cent now doing an average of 30 minutes or more a day outside school hours (up 4.6 per cent in the last year), compared to 40 per cent being active at school.

Activities that have seen a particular increase in popularity outside of school include active play, team sports and walking.

At the other end of the scale, 2.1 million children and young people (29.0 per cent) are doing less than 30 minutes of physical activity a day. This means that the number of inactive children decreased by 3.9 per cent over the past year.



Increasing exercise opportunities outside of school is working

Jack Shakespeare,

Commenting on the figures, Jack Shakespeare, director of children at ukactive, said the figures show that increasing exercise opportunities outside of school "is working".

More: http://lei.sr/D8N3X_H

3.3 million children now meet the CMO activity guidelines



Gym Group reveals plans to open up to eight small box gyms in 2020

The Gym Group has confirmed plans to roll out a new small box format in the UK over the next 12 months. The format is a scaled-down version of The Gym concept and has been designed to open up opportunities to enter new markets.

The first small box site opened in Newark, Nottinghamshire on 11 November 2019.

The low-cost chain has set itself a target of opening

between five and eight small box gyms during 2020.

Describing the new format in August 2019, Richard Darwin, CEO, said: "The concept is pretty much a slimmed-down version of what we already do.

"Our traditional gyms are, on average, around 15,500sq ft in size. The small box sites will be between 5,000sq ft and 9,000sq ft.

"What it does is offer us the opportunity to go into towns



The first small box site opened in Newark, Nottinghamshire

that wouldn't previously have been on our target list, because they wouldn't have been big enough – towns where the overall population is between 25,000 and 60,000.

"While we don't have an

exact target number of sites for the model yet, we did a study with PwC which showed that there could potentially be 300 sites across the UK."

More: http://lei.sr/h9u5Y_H

LRG Fitness launches on-demand service

Online fitness company LRG Fitness has launched a new on-demand service.

LRG On Demand will offer access to a library of exercise videos, with each targeting different areas of the body.

The videos last up to 20 minutes – targeting "time poor" users – and include 10-minute HIIT sessions.

In addition to fitness routines, the library will also include mindfulness videos.

Operated by husband and wife team Ben and Nina Gambling, LRG Fitness On Demand will also target the family market, with videos that enable children to take part.

The on-demand service has been created in addition to LRG Fitness' other online-based fitness operations and services, which include weekly tailored exercise videos sent directly to members' inbox – alongside nutrition ideas and lifestyle tips.

"As people grow older and have families, their individual lifestyle choices – including diet and exercise – become equally as important to them as they are for their children," the couple said.

More: http://lei.sr/W6k3M_H



Lifestyle choices are equally as important to us as they are for our family

Nina Gambling



LRG Fitness is operated by ex-British Sports Aerobic champion Nina Gambling and husband Ben

Total Fitness acquires Pro-Fit Personal Training

Mid-market health club operator Total Fitness has acquired Pro-Fit Personal Training.

The deal follows a five-year partnership between the two companies and will result in 150 self-employed personal trainers being transferred to Total Fitness.

The operator says the move will provide its members with easier access to specialist

personal training services that “cater to a wider range of budgets and abilities”.

In return, the trainers will have access to a suite of benefits – including training courses to aid their professional development.

Total Fitness currently operates 17 health clubs across England and Wales.

“This is a hugely exciting acquisition for us,” said Sophie Lawler, CEO of Total Fitness.



This is a hugely exciting acquisition for us

Sophie Lawler



The deal will see 150 self-employed PTs transfer to Total

“We’ve spent the last year reclaiming our purpose and working to put the fitness offering back into the heart of the business. To now be working even closer with this

team of highly experienced PTs to strengthen our product offering was the perfect end to a productive year in 2019.”

More: http://lei.sr/H2J2H_H

Everyone Active launches new boutique format, Fortis

Everyone Active is piloting a new boutique exercise format, which it plans to roll out across its portfolio of leisure centres throughout 2020.

The operator has set up a joint venture with HIIT specialist and equipment

supplier Speedflex, creating a new workout called Fortis, Powered by Speedflex.

Three Fortis studios will open at Everyone Active centres in January, with at least seven more planned before the end of the year.

Each Fortis studio will be located in a newly created, bespoke space and will offer 30-minute HIIT workouts based on Speedflex machines, which generate personalised resistance. The studios will also include Fortis-branded functional fitness stations and workouts will be tracked using MyZone technology.

According to Duncan Jefford, regional director of Everyone Active, Fortis will play a “hugely important role” in the operator’s plans to diversify its offering and future-proof the business.

“We’re continuing to develop our third-party partnerships, but also felt it was important for us to



We felt it was important to create our own boutique product

Duncan Jefford

create our own product alongside this,” Jefford said.

“FORTIS will allow us to offer our members a premium boutique experience.”

More: http://lei.sr/V9m8t_H

Each Fortis studio will be located in a bespoke exercise space



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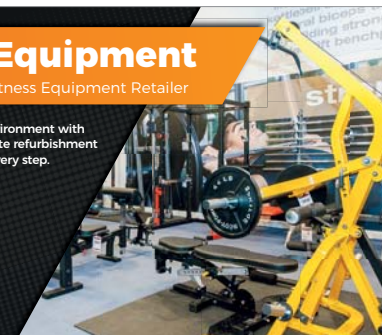
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FS **COMMERCIAL**
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Does timing matter to make HIIT more effective?

A study has suggested that high-intensity interval training (HIIT) is only effective as a means of improving fitness when performed at 60-second intervals.

Research from Liverpool John Moores University points to a "sweet spot" which exercisers need to utilise in order to make HIIT beneficial – with 60-second breaks being effective and 30-second and 120-second rests not.

Researchers compared two popular HIIT protocols (60HIIT and 30HIIT) performed for six weeks, three times per week,

in a sample of 26 previously sedentary men and women. 60HIIT means six to 10 60-second intervals with 60 seconds of rest, whereas 30HIIT means four to eight 30 seconds intervals with 120 seconds of rest.

They kept track of training adherence and intensity remotely via a heart rate monitor that fed direct info through a mobile app.

The researchers looked at three parameters of fitness: aerobic capacity, stiffness of arteries, and body composition (meaning how much muscle and fat they



Does the 60-second "sweet spot" make HIIT more beneficial?

had) during six weeks of HIIT.

Aerobic capacity increased after six weeks of 60HIIT but there was no difference for 30HIIT on any of the three parameters.

This potentially means that 60HIIT should be used over 30HIIT because the

former improves fitness whereas the latter doesn't.

Study author, Hannah Church, told HCM: "In order to get the most out of HIIT, people really need to get the timing right."

More: http://lei.sr/w9c2R_H

Being physically active reduces risk of prostate cancer

A large-scale study on genetics has shown that being more physically active reduces the risk of prostate cancer.

A study of 140,000 men found that those with a variation in their DNA sequence that makes them more likely to be active had

a 51 per cent reduced risk of prostate cancer, when compared to those who didn't have the variation.

Importantly, the findings related to overall activity, not just intense exercise.

Conducted by the University of Bristol, the

research is based on the largest ever study to use genetics as a measurement for physical activity and its effect on prostate cancer.

Of the men in the study, 80,000 had prostate cancer.

"This study is the largest-ever of its kind which uses a relatively new method that complements current observational research to discover what causes prostate cancer," said Sarah Lewis the study's senior author.

Published in the *International Journal of Epidemiology* the study was co-funded by World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) and Cancer Research UK.

Dr Anna Diaz Font, head of research funding at WCRF,



Similar methods can be applied to other factors

Dr Anna Diaz Font

added: "Up till now, there was limited evidence of exercise's effect on prostate cancer.

"This will pave the way for more research, where similar methods can be applied to other lifestyle factors."

More: http://lei.sr/f8P4h_H

Men who are more likely to be active have a reduced cancer risk



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/IGOR PALANICHUK



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Events calendar

FEBRUARY

19-21 | ForumClub 2020

Palazzo del Ghiaccio, Milan, Italy

The event returns with a gallery format to exhibit products and services for those who design, build and restore private, public and commercial fitness clubs, pools, wellness centres and spas. Marking its 29th anniversary. Last year's event attracted over 7,500 professionals and 150 exhibitors (20 per cent international) and featured 70 educational events.

www.forumclub.it

29-30 | Sweat! 2020

85 Brick Lane, London, UK

Ukactive's annual boutique fitness event returns, with keynote speakers giving insights into the development of the market and key issues for operators and investors

www.ukactive.com/sweat

27 | CIMSPA and Quest NBS Conference 2020

East Midlands Conference Centre, Nottingham, UK

This year's conference is being held at a completely new venue, within the grounds of the University of Nottingham. They'll be over 20 breakout sessions and keynote speeches by Tim Hollingsworth, CEO, Sport England, and behavioural change advocate David Thomson.

www.cimspa.co.uk

29-30 | Professional Spa & Wellness Convention

ExCeL, London, UK

The Professional Spa & Wellness Convention is for European spa professionals, with an international speaker lineup. The event runs alongside Professional Beauty, the trade event showcasing skincare, spa, beauty equipment, medical beauty and tanning.

www.professionalbeauty.co.uk

MARCH

5-8 | IDEA Personal Trainer Institute 2020

Alexandria, VA, USA

The event for personal trainers, fitness professionals, owners and managers aiming to ramp up the success of their fitness business. Choose from over 100 intensive workshops and lectures on the latest in exercise science, programme design, business management and marketing, online training, social media, nutrition and behaviour change.

www.ideafit.com/conferences



ACSM brings together sports scientists and operators

12-15 | ACSM International Health & Fitness Summit 2020

Hilton Atlanta, Atlanta, GA, USA

The ACSM summit features eight lecture tracks that integrate the science and practice of sports medicine for the health fitness professional.

www.acsm.org/acsm-summit



FIBO now has six dedicated fitness shows globally

2-5 April 2020 | FIBO Global Fitness

Cologne, Germany

FIBO is an industry summit, education programme, and fitness festival all in one. The long running event is the world's leading forum for the fitness industry and caters for both business to business and consumer attendees. FIBO Cologne was the first fitness event launched by Reed Exhibitions. Sister FIBOs have been launched in China, Africa, South America and the US. New for 2020, will be Singapore. Find out more at fibo.com

HCM is a global media partner of FIBO

HCM FIBO GLOBAL FITNESS

2020

What's in store?

As we begin a new decade, will boutiques extend beyond the major cities? Will the budget boom continue? How will digital fitness impact the sector? Kath Hudson speaks to some of the industry's big hitters to find out what 2020 could have in store

Rasmus Ingerslev

Director of REPEAT, Barry's Nordic, Lenus, Wexer and Playbook

We'll see continued growth of our industry overall in 2020 and five main trends will shape the coming year.

Firstly, there's still room for more growth in the low cost sector. This will be aggressive in immature markets and slower in the mature, where it's getting crowded, but not yet overpopulated.

Secondly, at the other end, I predict we'll see further expansion of boutique clubs in large cities and more premium health club brands introducing boutique style studios and workouts.

We'll also see more adoption of aggregators and a fight between the aggregators to win markets. They've changed the way we book accommodation in the travel industry and I think we'll see them start to shape the fitness sector, which presents both an opportunity and a risk for operators.

The final two trends relate to digital fitness. Firstly, app providers are making it easy for people to consume fitness wherever and whenever they want by delivering workout programming as well as group class formats. Secondly, more app providers are offering online coaching. Both areas will see significant growth and operators will be missing a macro trend if they don't also find ways to digitise their services.

There's been significant growth in the use of paid fitness apps when compared to the growth of gym memberships, but this isn't coming from the brick and mortar operators who are well positioned to make the most of this space.

Health club memberships are seeing low double digit growth at best, while the growth in the digital space is 40 to 50 per cent. More than 120 million people now pay US\$5 or more for monthly fitness app subscriptions, while 200 million are members of health clubs.

The use of apps will become more sophisticated to support members in their fitness journey and we'll see a full range of app services from free (advertisement based) to US\$150 a month. The low cost apps are fully based on digital delivery and algorithms, whereas the more expensive ones offer strong technology with a high touch approach and expertise on top.

From an operator's perspective, this development makes it fast and easy for talented trainers to set up on their own, rather than working for a club. There are a growing number of online tools allowing them to do this, offering scalability without high capital expenditure, meaning that the fight for talent will become even more intense.



Health club memberships are seeing low double digit growth at best, while the growth in the digital space is 40 to 50 per cent



Digital fitness will continue to grow, following the rise of Peloton, says Barry

Emma Barry

Global fitness authority, author of *Building a Badass Boutique*

Gyms are now in the pocket, on screens and in the ears and this trend will grow. Following the rise of Peloton, the slew of fitness apps and platforms are poised to serve the biggest TAM (total available market), with triple digit growth.

Budget clubs are providing the lion's share of in-person, member growth and are preparing to clamber into each other's territories. Meanwhile boutique studios are on the move: heading beyond the big cities and into the communities, congregating in malls, entering traditional club-in-a-club spaces and meeting up in the digital marketplace of aggregators, like ClassPass, and digital platforms, like NEOU. Where budget clubs are adding headcount, boutiques are adding spend-per-month, bringing intense focus and up-leveling service touch-points

Emotional connection and community are key. Despite the AI, machine learning and algorithm frenzy we find ourselves in, people still matter, a lot. Companies which are not purpose-led, fuelled by positive people practices and authentically grown will not resonate with Millennial-minded purchasers today.

Wearables reign! The power of personalised data now sits with the user and offers warning shots to those touting "this workout will burn 1,000 calories."

The true hyper-personalised journey for optimal health is underway, as we all become our own human experiments and bio-hack ourselves to vital longevity.

Forget the club next door, operators need to look out for the 'big trucks' coming on the highway of health, such as Apple, Amazon, Google and major consumer wellness and medical brands. These will start utilising their deep pockets and data analytics to grab market share.

Recovery methods will start to reach beyond infrared saunas, cryotherapy and compression towards patches, pills, apps, injectables and other proven and not-yet-proven tricks to enhance personal performance. Telomere lengthening, mitochondria optimisation and genome editing will become table-talk. Lack of sleep is the new sitting.

Travel is the highest expression of luxury experience and resides at the sharp end of the experience economy. Operators such as Equinox, BLOK and a multitude of others indicate a tipping point as they combine fitness addictions with the immersion of a curated travel experience with like minded zealots (see our feature on retreats on page 54).

And, while the US and UK are focused on impeachments and Brexit, plenty of money and innovation is flowing into Asia.



Telomere lengthening, mitochondria optimisation and genome editing will become table talk. Lack of sleep is the new sitting



Stalker predicts Obstacle Course Racing will continue to grow in popularity, with opportunities for facilities to partner with providers

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

► Dave Stalker

Europe Active: acting executive director

Technology will be one of the top trends. Wearable tech will lead the way and a move towards gamification to promote activity that will appeal to younger generations. As they're so comfortable with technology and games, it's an obvious route to attracting them in and getting them active.

Digital fitness and streaming classes will also grow in importance. If we do hit a recession and people think about dropping their membership, reduced-cost club 'app memberships' will allow a continuing relationship with customers and help clubs remain the community deliverers of exercise both inside and outside the four walls of the club.

We'll see more innovation in public sector fitness. Leisure centres can no longer compete with the low cost sector on price alone, so they will need to be more forward-looking. They have the space to create boutiques within their clubs, which could take this metropolitan trend into less populous areas. Life Leisure is an excellent example of this, with the launch of H1VE – a premium concept within a local authority leisure centre at an affordable cost.

Climbing is an area I predict will boom. It's simple and fun, and really popular with young people, who like the fact they can climb indoors or outside. The under 30s are very environmentally conscious and keen to make a difference and I think this is an activity which resonates with them.

Another area I predict will continue to grow in popularity is obstacle course racing. Companies like Tough Mudder and Spartan are slick with their marketing and social media and these concepts appeal to young people looking for a fun, social and competitive outdoor challenge. The opportunity for facilities to partner with these types of operators will also grow.

Aggregators will continue to be an issue and I hope the industry proceeds with caution. They're here to stay, but it would be terrible to get to the situation where – in a client-facing business – we don't own our own customer database and are not in charge of pricing.

I'm reliably told that clubs in Spain and Portugal have largely stopped using them. If I was an operator, I would definitely be listening to these stories and thinking twice about jumping into partnerships.



We'll see more innovation in public sector fitness. Life Leisure is an excellent example, with the launch of H1VE: a premium concept in a leisure centre at an affordable cost

**The UK health minister
Matt Hancock supports
the concept of activity
prescriptions**

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



The industry will start to integrate into the NHS through social prescribing. We need to work together as a sector on this, alongside the new National Academy for Social Prescribing

Steven Scales

ukactive: director of client services

Enhanced data and segmentation will allow the fitness sector to thrive by better understanding consumer habits. There has never been a better opportunity for a customer-focused strategy and those who succeed in this area will increase retention and their revenue-generating offer.

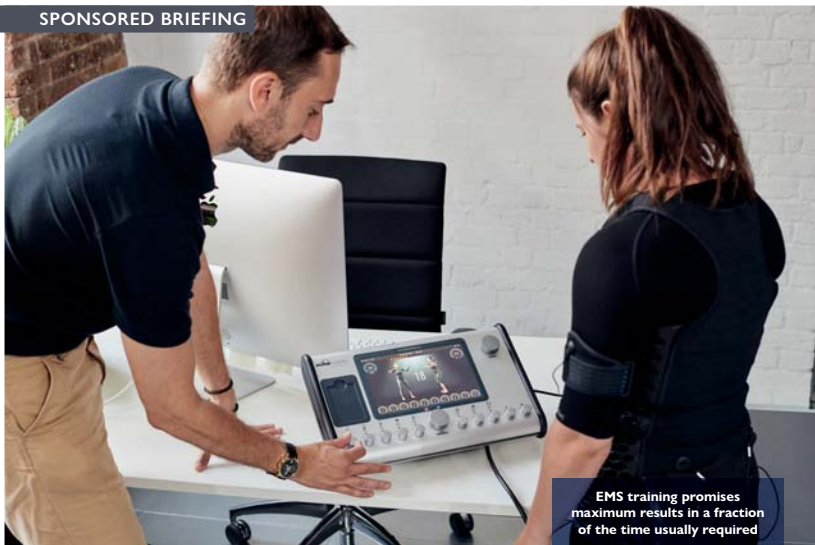
There's a trend across the consumer landscape of greater personalisation of services, driven by enhanced data and segmentation. The physical activity sector is no different and the early adopters are already demonstrating success. Sources of business intelligence and data-led insight in our sector will grow more powerful in 2020. Understanding customers' wants and needs and catering to them will increase customer retention and the likelihood of upselling – from premier memberships to on-demand content or a range of clothing.

Collaboration will engage new markets and collectively grow the sector. Fitness operators compete with each other, but to survive and prosper the industry needs to come together when we can influence sector-wide issues to obtain collective benefits.

ukactive, working on behalf of the industry, is lobbying to change the planning laws to make it easier to convert the use of premises on the high street and on reducing business rates in line with other sectors. We want our members to work together and share evidence to improve the position of the fitness sector. With a new government, now is the time to show how the sector can benefit public health, the economy and society as a whole.

The industry will start to integrate into the NHS through social prescribing – something our industry can get behind. It has the backing of the Department of Health and Social Care, with UK health minister, Matt Hancock, saying he supports ukactive's policy call for an "activity prescription" to be made available for anyone with long-term health conditions.

We need to work together as a sector, alongside the new National Academy for Social Prescribing, to show how activity prescriptions can increase footfall to our facilities in order to improve the health of the nation and reduce the burden of preventable disease on the NHS. ●



Electro Muscle Stimulation: MORE THAN JUST A WORKOUT

We talk to two high-end operators who've established a valuable USP by offering EMS training

In recent years, Electro Muscle Stimulation (EMS) training has grown in popularity as an effective, whole body workout system, promising maximum results in a fraction of the time. Yet originally, it's most common use was within the physiotherapy world, helping clients recover from injury, improving their posture and targeting particular areas of muscular weakness.

There are multiple studies showing the benefits of EMS for chronic conditions such as lower back pain – and examples of high-profile athletes, like Usain Bolt, using it as part of their rehabilitation.

High end studio

TwentyTwo Training has been running as a successful bespoke fitness and wellness studio in Kensington, London, for over ten years. Attracting clients who seek rehabilitation programmes and more holistic therapies, the studio specialises in providing EMS, hypnotherapy, restorative



With such huge competition in the industry, finding a USP in EMS has been key to helping us stand out and build a loyal customer base

Dalton Wong

treatments, nutrition and acupuncture, among other holistic wellness services.

We caught up with Dalton Wong, performance coach and CEO of TwentyTwo Training, to understand more about how he has incorporated tech-based therapies, such as EMS, into his offering to hone a unique and stand-out service in the capital.

Wong explains, "At TwentyTwo Training, we focus on delivering a holistic and scientific approach to fitness, specialising in the use of technology as an added tool for training and recovery. With such huge competition within the industry, finding a unique selling point in EMS training has been key to helping us stand out and build a loyal customer base.

"We'd incorporated many different technologies within our services, but as soon as I tried EMS four years ago, I knew it was the final piece of the puzzle. Results-driven and extremely effective, the technology is perfectly suited to supporting our clients with their goals –



If a client is recovering from an ACL reconstruction, we can use the quadriceps strap and spend 10 minutes working this area, to encourage the muscles to strengthen without putting any load on the joint

Josh Betteridge

whether that be rehabilitation or recovery from injury, muscle strengthening or weight-management," he said.

"EMS is so effective because it targets specific areas of the body, allowing the intensity to be increased or decreased, depending on the level of engagement required. Signals from the device bypass the brain and go directly to the muscles, allowing users to fire up muscles that the brain can't yet engage," explains Wong.

Highly targeted

Josh Betteridge, senior physical therapist, often incorporates EMS training into his client's one-hour physio sessions, spending 10-15 minutes with the machine, either at the beginning to activate the muscles, or at the end for relaxation and massage. He notes, "The equipment is extremely effective, accommodating all major muscle groups in the body and allowing us to work directly with each region independently.

"For example, if my client is recovering from an ACL reconstruction, we can simply use the quadriceps strap and spend 10 minutes working this area, to encourage the muscles to strengthen without putting any load on the joint. In effect, we can take the joint through its full range of motion without chance of injury."

Wong continues, "We've seen even greater success within the business since we incorporated EMS into our service.



EMS technology can assist with the rehabilitation process

We want to be the boutique that offers every form of wellness service under one roof. And with EMS, that's possible. It's a premium product which aligns perfectly with our mission statement and gives us something innovative and different to appeal to prospective clients.

"Our users love it because it adds a whole new element to their rehab process and enables us to tailor their session specifically to their needs. It speeds up recovery and gets clients moving around faster than may otherwise be possible.

"While 70 per cent of clients use it for rehab, we also offer it for weight-loss in conjunction with other forms of

cardio," says Betteridge. "The technology has allowed us to delve into a wider demographic and deliver fast, visible results to all of our members."

If you're looking for an innovative service to give your business that standout offering, get in touch with the miha bodytec team for more information.

miha bodytec

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Simon Flint has been CEO of Evolution Wellness since it was created in 2017

SIMON FLINT

New brands, new models and an eye on global reach.

The CEO of Evolution Wellness talks to Kate Cracknell



When HCM last interviewed Simon Flint a few years back, Fitness First Asia and Celebrity Fitness had just come together under the banner of a newly-formed parent group, Evolution Wellness, of which Flint was CEO.

Even then, this was touted as just the beginning, with the creation of Evolution Wellness foretelling further acquisitions and ventures into wellbeing – and so it has transpired. Here, Flint offers an overview of the current Evolution Wellness portfolio, and a sneak preview of growth plans moving forward.

Let's start with Fitness First and Celebrity Fitness. What has been the story here since 2017?

The big news for Celebrity Fitness has been its expansion into new markets: the Philippines in 2018, and then Thailand in 2019. These are both strong markets for Fitness First, but there are good opportunities for Celebrity too: the two

brands are quite different, providing distinct experiences for members.

Fitness First is more corporate, about 15-20 per cent more expensive, and offers slightly more expert support and science, with DNA testing and so on – perfect for exercisers who want to challenge themselves.

Celebrity Fitness speaks to the young, and the young at heart. It's about having fun



► while getting fit: we promise the liveliest vibe in town, with every class feeling like a party.

In addition to moving into new markets, over the last couple of years we've done some work across the Celebrity Fitness estate to enhance the brand and amplify its edgy attitude. That work has included major makeovers at the two biggest clubs in Malaysia, which has led to a 26 per cent uplift in new joining yield at those two locations.

Meanwhile, Fitness First has been about growth within existing territories. We have a new flagship location in Bangkok – a club called

Icon Siam – which is spread over three floors, with facilities including an infinity pool and the country's first dedicated Lagree Pilates studio.

We've also opened The F Zone in downtown Bangkok, which is a heart rate training, athletic performance club.

Both of these are Club Class locations, which is the tier above Platinum, as is our newest club in Malaysia. This one is actually a relaunch of a club we secured as part of the acquisition of CHi Fitness – a chain of 13 clubs in Malaysia – in 2018.

This particular club, located in the upscale

Fitness First has a new flagship location in Bangkok, a club called Icon Siam



neighbourhood of Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur, re-opened in November following a US\$500k rebrand of a high-end Fitness First club.

We've also spun off some of our more successful group exercise formats to create club-in-club, boutique-style studios. The best example is The Box, which is entirely dedicated to boxing, with two proprietary classes: Boom, which is boxing to music; and Hook, which is more of a technical class where you learn the basic boxing moves.

But we also have other concepts with their own spaces, although members can

also use those spaces when classes aren't in progress. Surge, for example, is centred around Technogym Skillmills, with three bodyweight or free weight stations sitting behind each treadmill. And then Burn is more cardio-based, using four different types of equipment, such as Aerobikes, Concept2s and Versaclimbers.

Does your multi-brand approach have any benefits for your members?

In Malaysia and Indonesia – markets where we already have a critical mass of both Fitness First and Celebrity Fitness clubs – we introduced a ▶

**Evolution Wellness
has launched club-
in-club boutique-
style studios**



► dual-brand membership in 2018, which allows members to enjoy access to locations across both brands. We're currently at 91 per cent penetration for that membership option.

Additionally, we acquired a small aggregator app a while ago, which we've further developed to allow us to become our own aggregator. As of last month, we're piloting member and non-member apps for Fitness First and Celebrity Fitness where – along with the usual features you'd expect in an app, from booking and tracking to challenges and 'invite a friend' – we can release some of the capacity in our clubs to non-members, as well

as allowing members to consume products and services in a pay-as-you-go fashion.

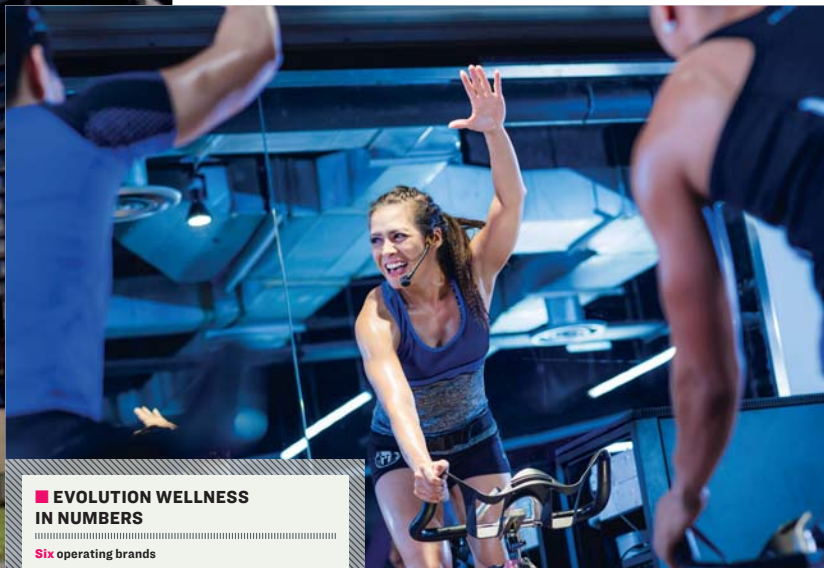
One day, as our estate continues to grow, it might even be that we create an Evolution Wellness membership and app – a way of aggregating across the total portfolio, allowing people to consume any of our brands by using credits from their digital membership. But for now, our aggregator app covers only Fitness First and Celebrity Fitness.

Tell us about your new brands since 2017...

The objective we set in 2017 was to build an ecosystem to service different price points,

In Malaysia and Indonesia, there is a dual-brand membership option for Fitness First and Celebrity Fitness

WE HAVE A NEW FLAGSHIP LOCATION IN BANGKOK CALLED ICON SIAM – WHICH IS SPREAD OVER THREE FLOORS, WITH AN INFINITY POOL AND THE COUNTRY'S FIRST DEDICATED LAGREE PILATES STUDIO. WE'VE ALSO OPENED THE F ZONE IN BANGKOK, WHICH IS A HEART RATE TRAINING, ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE CLUB



■ EVOLUTION WELLNESS IN NUMBERS

Six operating brands

400,000 members

6,000 staff

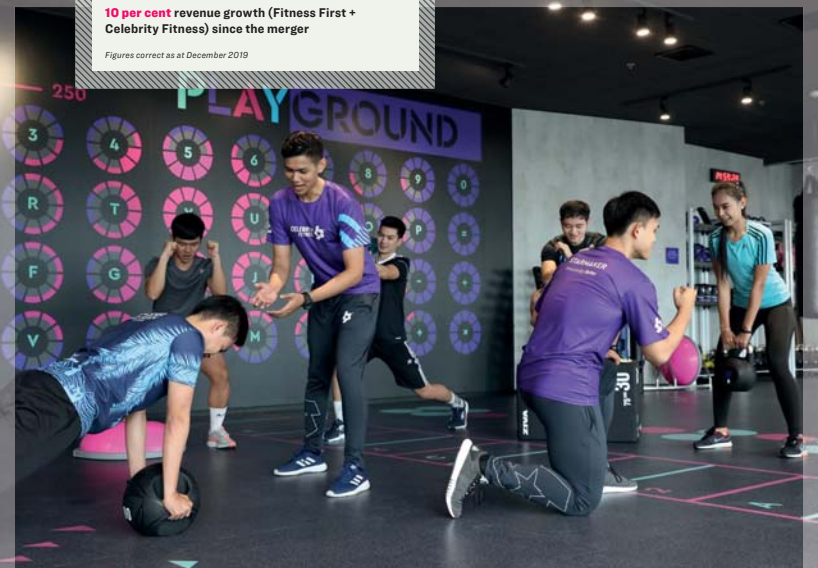
25 million workouts a year

175 clubs – and counting

10 per cent revenue growth (Fitness First +
Celebrity Fitness) since the merger

Figures correct as at December 2019

The Celebrity Fitness brand has been enhanced, with major makeovers at the two biggest clubs in Malaysia, leading to a 26 per cent uplift in new joining yield





Evolution
Wellness acquired
MembersFirst, a
club management
software, rebranding
it as Circuit

► different attitudes to fitness, different modes of consumption, with an ability to respond to the broadest range of locations and spaces. As a result, we've expanded our portfolio significantly over recent years.

I've already mentioned CHI Fitness, which we acquired in 2018, along with wellness retreat Fivelements. In that same year, we acquired MembersFirst – a club management software created, used and fine-tuned by Fitness First Group over the years – and rebranded it to Circuit. It's a very powerful membership administration tool which we're planning to monetise going forward.

Then, in 2019, we acquired Malaysian boutique brand FIRE Fitness, developed a new brand format – Fivelements Habitat – and launched our own low-cost brand, GoFit.

Can you share a bit more detail on each of these brands?

CHI is a well-run chain of health clubs with good, mostly lower mid-market locations in Malaysia. These will complement the existing Celebrity Fitness-Fitness First club network well, and in time will allow members to derive more value from a triple-brand membership. However, we first have a little more work to do to codify and cement its brand positioning.

Fivelements, when we acquired it, comprised one location in Bali – a wellness retreat – which we've expanded with 20 new rooms and a culinary school for plant-based cuisine. We have, as I say, also begun to develop new brand formats: Fivelements Habitat launched in Hong Kong in 2019 as the first example of Fivelements' urban wellness model. It focuses on yoga, sacred arts and plant-based cuisine. As a city sanctuary, it's a space for quality 'me' time – for physical, mental and spiritual 'maintenance' – and offers a safe haven to unwind, decompress and reconnect.

FIRE Fitness enjoys a leadership position in the Malaysian boutique segment, with class experiences including Ride, Strike, Stride and Force. These classes are all proprietary and created in-house by the Fire team.

Despite having only two sites at the point of acquisition, it commands a really strong community base. Six weeks after joining the Evolution Wellness family, we opened the



The company plans to grow **Celebrity Fitness** particularly in Thailand and the Philippines, and **Fitness First** in Thailand, Hong Kong and Singapore



The **Celebrity Fitness** brand has 60+ clubs across Asia

third site – Firestation 3 – which at 200sqm, and with a maximum 18 people in a class, promises to keep things intimate.

Then there's GoFit, a brand and concept we created completely from scratch, which offers a no-frills, fuss-free gym experience: it offers everything you need, and nothing that you don't, for about US\$20 a month.

Technology is an essential enabler to deliver this high value, low price product.

GoFit clubs will start from 350sq m, but our first site – which we opened in Malaysia



late last year – is a 1,200sq m flagship that showcases all the possible components of this model. That includes a ladies-only zone, accessed through the women's changing rooms and not even visible to the rest of the gym; our proprietary, automated, traffic-lighted Super Circuit; virtual group exercise; and spaces where you can plug in your phone and work out following your own content on a big screen. There are premium add-ons too, such as hydro-massage and FitQuest.

What are your plans for all these brands moving forward?

Starting with Fitness First and Celebrity Fitness, our focus will be on existing territories, with steady growth on the cards. In particular, we'll be looking at Thailand and the Philippines for Celebrity Fitness; and Thailand, Hong Kong and Singapore for Fitness First.

Fivelements is set to be a very exciting brand, and I'm interested to see what we can do with it as we grow. We're in negotiations at the moment for a second Fivelements Habitat site in Hong Kong, and as we go forward I can see ▶



The newest Fire site will feature a content delivery system designed to facilitate the new Fire Circuit class

► us having some smaller studios too, reaching further into communities to make the offering more accessible still.

We're also already mapping out other brand architectures – Fivelements Residences, for example, in response to a lot of inbound enquiries from developers and hotels interested in licensing the name and getting us involved in creating wellness components for their properties. It's easy to see how some of the Fivelements expertise and ethos could be incorporated into our more mainstream club businesses, too, either in person or via the app.

But the real focus for growth at Evolution Wellness will be GoFit and Fire.

Our fourth Fire site, which we're dubbing Fire Station 4, opens in Malaysia in March 2020 and this will already begin to ramp things up a bit. This new club will feature a new barre class, as well as a content delivery



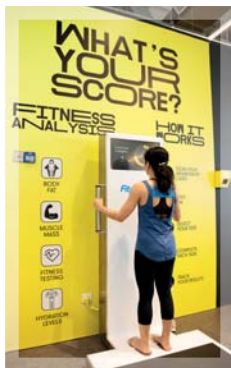
platform designed to facilitate our newly created Fire Circuit classes.

This set-up will allow us to expand quicker, with more easily replicable classes. The platform can help with instructor education too, quickly raising standards by letting instructors practise the content in their own time.

We expect growth of the Fire brand to accelerate as we go through this year. Even faster growth is planned for the GoFit brand.

We will ultimately operate Fire and GoFit in all our markets – Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and

ONE DAY, AS OUR ESTATE CONTINUES TO GROW, IT MIGHT EVEN BE THAT WE CREATE AN EVOLUTION WELLNESS MEMBERSHIP AND APP – A WAY OF AGGREGATING ACROSS THE TOTAL PORTFOLIO, ALLOWING PEOPLE TO CONSUME ANY OF OUR BRANDS BY USING CREDITS FROM THEIR DIGITAL MEMBERSHIP



Thailand – and our track record is already helping in this respect. When we're talking to landlords about GoFit, for example, we're already in a very different position than we would have been had the brand simply arrived from nowhere as a standalone business.

Do you have any plans to expand beyond your existing territories?

We do, yes, and again it will be Fire and GoFit that will drive new market expansion. This will be done through licensing.

Where previously, as with Fitness First, we were a division of a global business, now we can actually be the global business if we wish. We have the rights to GoFit and Fire, which changes the dynamic quite significantly from just being a south-east Asia player. We can play globally, and indeed have already had interest from as far away as Russia.

We don't really work to a five-year plan, and I don't want to pull numbers out of the sky,

but for example it's not unrealistic to think we could – through the franchise model – have a 1,000 GoFits in that sort of timeframe.

Are there any new initiatives planned to further grow your wellness reach?

Thinking out of the box – as our Evolution Wellness remit allows us to do – I envisage a next chapter that will focus on low inflammatory regimes and low oxidative stress lifestyles, encompassing everything from diet and the air we breathe to the amount of sleep we get and the kind of exercise we do.

I believe we must use the size of our platform to educate the market, helping people to understand that including a variety of exercise modalities in their life is likely the best path to optimum wellness.

We'll need to get some authoritative content to make sure we're really ready for this, but fortunately we already have the real estate and the space to be able to offer this kind of programme. ●

Flint says GoFit, a no-frills, budget gym chain, could grow to 1,000 clubs through franchising over the next five years



ON THE ROAD

Retreats are where boutique fitness is at in 2020. High-end operators are now designing packages to take their communities to inspiring locations, in order to escape everyday life and immerse themselves in exercise, mindfulness and relaxation. **Kath Hudson** reports

W

ellness tourism – the marriage of two multi-trillion dollar industries – is growing at a faster rate than the overall tourism market.

According to the Global

Wellness Institute (GWI) the industry was worth \$639bn (£577bn, £485bn) in 2017 and is projected to be worth \$919bn (£829bn, £698bn) by 2022.

This trend is being driven by the desire to use travel as an opportunity to maintain health, reduce stress and have authentic experiences. According to the GWI, there's a misconception that wellness travellers are a small, elite and wealthy group of leisure tourists, but in fact, this is a broad and diverse group of consumers with many motivations, interests, and values.

This cohort doesn't want a cookie-cutter experience: they want the retreat to reflect the destination, embracing the local culture, food and environment. The more discerning wellness travellers, particularly millennials, are interested in what destinations offer that's different from other places.

A CHANGE OF SCENE

Taking the HIIT class to somewhere sunny and beautiful, combining it with meditation, excellent food and some countryside hiking offers operators the opportunity to engage with consumers in a different way from in the studio - allowing them to create memories and form friendships, which will build brand loyalty and improve retention.

Canny operators have realised this: Third Space, SoulCycle, Digne

Third Space Escapes are run in partnership with luxury travel operator, Sunny Side Up



Third Space Escapes' first location was the Atlas Mountains in Morocco



Retreats and BLOK all launched retreats businesses last year with intentions to build on them in years to come. But retreats aren't a new thing. Independents have long been using them as a way to engage with their clients.

London-based PT and ChiRunning coach, Gray Caws, has been organising retreats for a number of years, as he realised taking his clients somewhere different for a few days is an excellent way for them to progress their skills.

"My 1:1 clients often arrive a bit stressed, with their heads full of work, or whatever else is going on with their lives and it takes them a while to focus on the session," he says. "But retreats literally give them the space and the time to learn a new skill or develop an existing one. Plus the change of environment and taking them out of their everyday lives is



"My 1:1 clients often arrive a bit stressed with their heads full of work, or whatever else is going on with their lives and it takes them a while to focus on the session"

Gray Caws

extremely beneficial and can result in meaningful transformations."

AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCE

This year Caws is taking groups to Spain, Portugal and Bali. Often he teams up with local operators to offer the experience, such as Mindfulness Travels or Run the World Adventures. Although people don't necessarily want luxury, and many will be willing to share a room with a stranger, they do have a checklist.

"Getting the location right is important, as this is part of the appeal," says Caws. "In Portugal, we're staying in the mountains, with good running trails, and in Spain, we have access to the Costa Brava, medieval villages and forests. Authenticity is also key. For example, in Bali accommodation is basic and the food simple, but it's traditionally Balinese." ▶



Nahid De Belgeonne, creator of The Human Method, ran her first retreat in Puglia last year and has three more planned for 2020



- The itinerary needs to be a balance of fulfilling activities, but include enough downtime for people to recharge and assimilate what they've learned. Finally, they need to feel some sort of transformation, whether that be nailing a tricky yoga posture, or having an epiphany during a mountain hike.

LIFE DETOX

Nahid De Belgeonne creator of The Human Method, has a high flying clientele of fashion editors, A-list actresses and city CEOs for her restorative yoga and breathwork classes. She ran her first retreat to Puglia last June, which sold out in 30 minutes of being announced, and now has three more planned for 2020 in Somerset, Oxfordshire, and Portugal.

"The speedier our lives become, the more it seems we need to detox from them," says De Belgeonne. "Wellness retreats are a great way to kick start your health goals or learn a new skill or discipline. They appeal to people who like to travel on their own, but like a structure to their travels, or those who



"I wanted to create something which cosseted my clients and their burned out nervous systems and remind them what it was to be in harmony with their bodies"

Nahid De Belgeonne

want a break from their families and partners, but don't want to feel lonely. They can also be a healthy holiday option when travelling with friends if you don't want to drink or overeat."

The Human Method retreats involve meditation, restorative and yoga nidra, swims, treatments or simply lying in a hammock. "I wanted to create something which cosseted my clients and their burned-out nervous systems and remind them what it was to be in harmony with their bodies," says De Belgeonne.

SOUL FOOD

Boutique fitness businesses are built on responding to customer needs, and operators which have launched retreat operations all say they've been driven to do so by feedback from members, who want ways to engage with the brand beyond the four walls of the studio.

SoulCycle has teamed up with luxury travel company, Black Tomato, to run Retreats by SoulCycle. Pilots were held last year in Austin and Texas Hill comprising mindfulness exercises, breathing workshops, spinning classes and stargazing by the campfire.

In launching the venture, then CEO, Melanie Whelan, said: "With Retreats by SoulCycle, we're giving



“Third Space Escapes will take what members like about the clubs to incredible destinations, allowing them to test their capabilities in challenging, fun environments among like-minded people”

Lauren Wilson



Digme Retreats are held in Crete and Sicily

our community another opportunity to devote attention to themselves and deepen their ties to one another over the span of multiple days in a beautiful setting, outside the day-to-day hustle.”

In a mission to extend the Third Space experience beyond its six London clubs, the brand launched Third Space Escapes last year, kicking off with a trip to Morocco in partnership with luxury travel operator, Sunny Side Up.

Led by two master trainers, the retreat was a mix of HIIT training and meditation

sessions, sunrise runs and hikes in the Atlas Mountains, all backed up by cultural experiences, organic food, nutrition consultations, treatments and classes.

“Having listened to members, the decision to take the brand into adventure travel outside the club seemed a natural next step,” says marketing director, Lauren Wilson. “Third Space Escapes will take what members like about the clubs to incredible destinations, allowing them to test their capabilities in challenging, fun environments, among like-minded people.

“By providing your community with all of their needs in one place, you will ultimately build loyalty and retention. Retreats provide an overall lifestyle experience to reboot the mind and body, while creating memories of a lifetime.”

TOTAL IMMERSION

Co-founder of Digme, Geoff Bamber, agrees retreats are all about building community and creating unique experiences for members. Digme – which has four clubs in London and one in ►

■ NAHID DE BELGEONNE'S TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL RETREAT:

- A great venue in a nourishing landscape – either near forests, mountains or water – allowing for guided walks and meditations in nature.
- An inspiring practice space, with clean equipment.
- Charming venue owners, who will offer lots of options to keep everyone happy.
- A good mix of people who will rub along nicely. It's important everyone is respectful and kind.
- Delicious, fresh food creatively put together and artfully served. Ensure you have plenty of food, served on time with a few options for everyone.
- Have a welcome chat after the first dinner so everyone has a chance to learn names and get an overview of the week. This is the best time to agree

on retreat etiquette, such as giving people space if they feel emotional on the mat, or restricting the use of mobile phones.

- Plan a schedule and keep to it. Let everyone know when the morning bell will go, when practice starts and ends, how many practices in a day, when the downtime is, when the meal times are and when there's a day off.
- Be clear on what you're teaching, why you're teaching it and how the week will progress. Give options, so everyone feels included.
- Make sure you mark the end of the retreat and pay attention to what changes they've noticed and what they'll take back home with them. Retreats are a time for reflection, so encouraging contemplation is a good way to affect change when they go back to their lives.



"Our retreat is about community and building skills. It's not a bootcamp or about weight loss. Last year people were eating Magnums by the swimming pool and drinking wine in the evening, but still learning to do a crow into a headstand"

Ed Stanbury

Oxford UK—sailed Digne Retreats last year, saying members had requested to take the workouts to sunnier climes.

Two are planned for next year: Crete in April and Sicily in October. "The retreats are being curated to appeal to everyone with a keen interest in health, wellbeing and being outdoors," says Bamber. "There will be cycling – for both experienced cyclists and those looking to build confidence – running, hiking, swimming, yoga and Gyrokinesis – or simply relaxing by the pool for those who just want to unwind."

There is no pressure and no expectation, only that you'll relax and have fun with others."

BLOK also piloted a retreat concept at a former French cognac estate last year. It will run again this year and eventually be grown into a sizeable arm, with 10 to 20 retreats a year and a permanent base.

Co-founder, Ed Stanbury, says it's a great opportunity for members to immerse themselves in a new experience and meet new friends: "Our retreat is about community and building skills. It's not a bootcamp or about weight loss."

"Last year people were eating Magnums by the swimming pool and drinking wine in the evening, but still learning to do a crow into a headstand."



BLOK piloted a retreat at a former French cognac chateau



The format involves a few hours of exercise every day – starting with a run and meditation, followed by yoga and a fitness class – and complemented by delicious, plant-based food, designed by a nutritionist to complement the training.

BUILDING A COMMUNITY

Stanbury says revenue is not the driving force behind this decision, it's about building loyalty, as well as engaging with those who live too far from the clubs: "Realistically it will not be a huge revenue generator – we would need to run about 150 retreats a year for it to be as profitable as our Shoreditch club running well – but the retreats reward loyal customers and allow us to engage with people who don't live close enough to come to the clubs."

Is this a trend that's here to stay? GWI figures point to this being the case, plus the retreats model is flexible enough to be pitched to a range of budgets: a rural field with yurts could work if done well.

Global fitness authority and author of *Building a Badass Boutique*, Emma Barry, cites retreats as a top trend for 2020 and *HCM's Fitness Foresight 2020* trends report also confirms this.

"Travel is the highest expression of luxury experience and resides at the sharp

end of the experience economy," says Barry. "Combining your preferred fitness addiction with the complete immersion of a curated travel experience, with zealots just like you is an intoxicating mix." ●

PRICE GUIDE

Packages tend to include food, accommodation and exercise but not flights, or add-ons such as massages or cultural activities.

● Six days in Portugal, with The Human Method, costs £1,195 (\$1,574, €1,421).

● Four days in Costa Brava with ChiRunning is £1,195-£1,395 (\$1,838, €1,658).

● Digne's week in Crete costs £1,100 (\$1,449, €1,308) for a shared room.

● BLOK prices start at £1,415

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IS YOUR BUSINESS FIT FOR 2020

Paul Bedford eases us into the new year with a look at how to tackle the competition





Focus on increasing the lifetime value of your members

In today's competitive market, when another operator opens up nearby, you can expect to lose 20-50 per cent of customers for a period of 6-18 months.

What can you do to survive, thrive and maintain a profitable facility, by planning for and responding to this kind of challenge?

BLURRED LINES

The fitness industry used to consist of big clubs and small clubs; it was very linear, but now we have brands with no physical club at all, such as Gympass, ClassPass and Huggle and options for consumers are now so broad it's no longer enough just to have a good location.

Add to that the diversity we're seeing with the development of facilities, such as Clip 'n Climb, Bear Grylls Fitness, table tennis concept, SPIN and relaxation and meditation centre, CH/LL and with streaming of fitness now so readily available, anyone and everyone can have access to exercise and guided workouts.

With the industry evolving, diversifying and niching as it matures, health and fitness operators need to defend their market and make significant gains in both member acquisition and retention in order to survive. We'd advise concentrating on three areas:

"Operators need to defend their market and make significant gains in both member acquisition and retention in order to survive"

Paul Bedford



- Create a differentiated proposition from the competition in order to sustain the business in the long-term by standing out from rivals.
- Consolidate and increase your gross membership base – being the dominant operator in your market and location will help to maintain and increase your market share
- Increase the lifetime value of each member – not just by increasing the length of their membership or the amount they pay each month, but also by increasing the amount they pay out as secondary spend in areas such as on F&B, supplements, food deliveries or retail. With the right strategy, you could have members who spend a considerable amount in your club in a short period of time

SOLID BUSINESS

If you watch programmes like *Dragons' Den* or *Shark Tank* you'll have realised there are ten main questions investors ask to understand if a company is a solid business or something that's ill conceived, not scalable and won't stand the test of time.

● What's your idea, business or concept?

This is your elevator pitch. You need to be able to deliver it in less than a minute, explaining what your business does, why you're doing it and how it can help other people; what problems does it solve?

● What's your route to market?

Different businesses use different ways to attract customers. If you have a physical club it's likely to be face to face walk-ins, flyers, digital marketing and your impact sales team. For a digital brand it will be online and media-based. You need to identify how you're going to find and attract customers.

● What do you sell and for how much?

What's your sales forecast? How do you work out your pricing? This is the most difficult step because, as you've seen on *Dragons' Den*, people always think their

business is worth more than it actually is when it comes to establishing value.

It's finding that balance – the sweet spot between what you believe it's worth and what others think it's worth. It's also about cost of delivery. What does it cost you to deliver your product or service?

Going through this process will give you a solid understanding of what business you're in. One of the biggest challenges we see in the industry is operators getting sidetracked by trends, thinking 'we could do that too', which often takes away from the core product.

I truly admire John Treharne. He came up with The Gym Group concept and hasn't changed it fundamentally.

Sure he's tweaked, evolved and improved the product, but he decided to do one thing and do that really well.

● Differentiate or Die

As we've said before, the fitness industry offers consumers an endless number of choices that range from wildly different to virtually identical.


Understanding your position in the market, by identifying who you're looking to attract and delivering solutions to meet their needs, is key to understanding how you can differentiate yourself from the competition. This is the only way to retain and gain customers in this increasingly competitive environment. ▶



Dragons' Den – how do you measure up to their key questions?



John Treharne had a clear vision in building The Gym Group



Brand like 1Rebel stand out because of the way they teach classes

10 THINGS TO DIFFERENTIATE YOUR BUSINESS

Each will enable you to stand out from your rivals. Mix them up to create your positioning

1

Establish your brand positioning – where do you sit within the market?

2

Be first to market – just as Hoover is synonymous with vacuums, so Spinning is commonly used for indoor cycling

3

Aim for attribution ownership, think Les Mills for structured workouts, Mercedes for engineering, Ferrari for speed

4

Focus on leadership – are you a respected in your market? Do people admire and follow what you're doing?

5

Reference your heritage – think Gold's or David Lloyd Leisure. Can you trade on being well established?

6

Market a speciality – focus on developing a niche product, as Concept2 and Soul Cycle have done

7

Be preferred – are you the product that people choose over all the others?

8

Be great at what you do. Brands like 1Rebel stand out because of the way they teach classes

9

Create the latest trends – get inspired by something up and coming

10

Look back as well as forwards: think Dr. Martens, which were popular in the 70s and are now back as a trendy brand

HOW TO WIN IN A COMPETITIVE MARKET

Defending yourself against competition by working where it's coming from and what the new competitor's differentiator and proposition is. This is the only way to effectively manage the impact of increased competition.

- **Do your homework: find out who you're competing against**
- **Plan your response carefully**

Work out what it would mean to your revenue if you lost 30 per cent of your customers. Don't forget to factor in staff you may lose to the competitor too.

Decide what you'll do to differentiate and position yourself to stand out. Establish what budget you'll need to cope with the impact of lost members/staff and additional marketing. Calculate what you can sustain and what you'll have to drop.

CREATE A TIMELINE

Working backwards from when the competitor is due to open, establish how long you've got to collect information about them and what you need to find out and devise a plan.

Set a date for when you'll start to implement these tactics and create a realistic timeline for action.

ACTION

Decide if you're going to change your membership offering. If so, train all staff so they can explain why it's changed. Be honest and use a consistent message throughout your PR and marketing. You need one frictionless approach.

REVIEW, REVISE, RENEW

Keep track of what you've done and how numbers are changing in response. How many people did you lose last month? How quickly are people coming back? Measure sales and attrition and keep an eye on what customers are saying via an effective feedback mechanism.

Magna Vitae says it has fought off a competitive threat by focusing on service



CASE STUDY: MAGNA VITAE

If your numbers aren't changing, sometimes that equals success.

Two years ago, the operating landscape around some of the centres run by leisure trust, Magna Vitae, changed dramatically; they were no longer competing in the same market, and developed a plan to protect themselves from competition.

Working with Paul Bedford they undertook a retention review, concentrating on their mission and

vision statements, core values and expected staff behaviours and setting minimum service standards to be practised on a daily basis.

With a broad range of facilities on offer, staff were encouraged to think similarly around the quality of their interactions with customers; to improve their understanding of how they could persuade them to do what they wanted, increase visit frequency and help them achieve their goals.

Evaluation and feedback tools meant Magna Vitae could also monitor improvements in customer satisfaction within all areas of service.

With low cost competitors coming into play, Magna Vitae forecast to lose 4,000 members over a two-year period, but following the programme, memberships has remained steady, and with a new centre on the cards and a refit underway, Magna Vitae is confident business will remain stable.



We wanted to make the whole experience feel theatrical

WORKING IT

Fitness giant Les Mills has launched three new studio spaces at its Auckland City Gym in New Zealand



Former track and field athlete Phillip Mills is the founder and CEO of Les Mills

The new spaces were designed by New Zealand architects Monk Mackenzie and interior designer Rufus Knight, working in partnership with Auckland-based design studio Alt Group.

According to Les Mills Jr, who led the development of the new studios and workouts, a key objective of the project was to partner with New Zealand's best designers to create spaces that work at both a practical and aesthetic level.

"We've put an intimate focus on design to create the most incredible end-to-end experience for members," Mills Jr said.

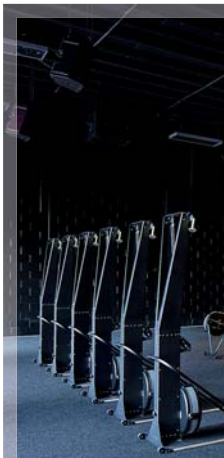
"We want people to get excited about being in these spaces, so we've designed them as a sensory experience. They look good, smell good, and are places they feel they belong. We want to be a cultural hub for members."

The fresh additions include a "highly tactile" functional studio – which hosts a newly-developed training workout called Ceremony – and a design-led boxing studio created around the needs of a new boxing conditioning workout called Conquer.

LARGEST IN THE WORLD

The third new space is an immersive indoor cycling studio – which the company says is the largest of its kind in the world – featuring a 100-bike terraced theatre environment. It is accompanied by a wall-to-wall curved screen and a five-projector, cinema-quality audio-visual system that delivers Les Mills' immersive bike workout, The Trip.

"We've designed the space so that the atmosphere is intimate as you walk into the room, the lights are low and the workout is completely your own," said Les Mills product innovation team member Adam Lazarus. ▶

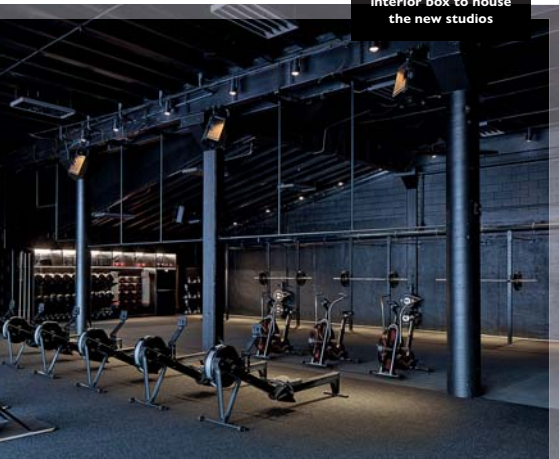


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Architects Monk Mackenzie created an interior box to house the new studios



THE LOWDOWN

Project

Les Mills Auckland City:
Boxing, functional and
immersive cycle boutiques

Location

Auckland, New Zealand

Client

Les Mills

Architecture

Monk Mackenzie
Dean Mackenzie,
Hamish Monk,
Mark Craven,
Yiqiu Hong

Interior

Knight Associates
Rufus Knight, Nathan Varga

Branding

Alt Group
Rei Konza, Dean Murray



We've designed the space so that the atmosphere is intimate

- “You can be a professional boxer, or never have thrown a punch, and you will always get a great workout.”

As well as acting as the ‘laboratory’ space for the new training styles, the new workout spaces are the first stage of a long-term project to transform the home of Les Mills in Auckland – which in its long history has been an industrial building, a nightclub and a boxing gym.

ARCHITECTS

Rather than completely renovate the original space, architects Monk Mackenzie have designed an interior box, essentially creating a boutique gym inside a gym.

The new studios are a response to changing demographics and exercise trends, as well as an aesthetic makeover of a tired area of the gym.

The design of the space has been led with the expectations of the Gen Z and Millennial demographics in mind – due to the two generations currently driving much of the global fitness spend.

The box-like structure containing the new Immersive Cycle studio is designed like a mini-building, with its own roof and its own acoustics.

“Rather than being about gyms, it was about creating something experiential,” said Monk Mackenzie partners Dean Mackenzie and Hamish Monk.

“We wanted to make the whole experience feel kind of theatrical, in terms of when you walk in, as well as the spaces we’ve created and the sub-spaces. The Immersive Cycle studio is theatre-like; when you are in the functional studio and the boxing studio, the lighting is calibrated to be moody. The spaces feel intimate.

“It’s an inclusive space, not trying to be masculine, like many gym spaces. The brief from Les Mills was very clear about that, moving it away from being an intimidating space. The ‘materiality’ plays into that, making it feel less ‘sweaty and grumpy.’” ●



The architects Dean Mackenzie and Hamish Monk



The three new studios have brought drama to previously tired areas of the Les Mills gym

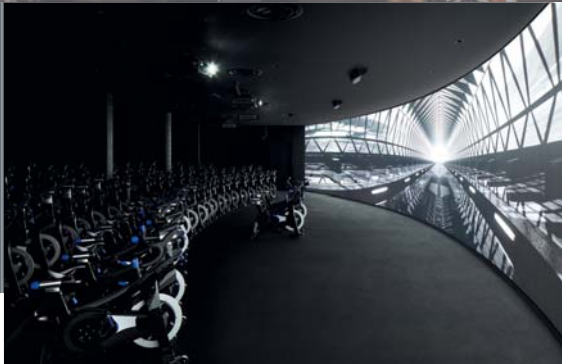




Interior designers
Knight Associates
clad the cycle
studio in mirrored
stainless steel



The immersive
cycling studio is
designed to be like
a theatre, with 100
bikes and a curved
screen



WELL AT WORK



Corporate wellness is getting on to the agenda of a growing number of companies, who appreciate the fact their employees are their number one asset. Kath Hudson reports

There's never been a more important time for employers to step in and take an active hand in supporting the health and wellbeing of their workforce. Weight, mental health issues and stress levels are rising as we struggle to keep all our plates spinning in our noisy, permanently on, social media-driven world.

As work is a big cause of stress for many people, anything employers can do to reduce that is very welcome.

Added to this, corporate wellness programmes can be a great way to activate hard-to-reach groups, and be the first step on the ladder to better health, potentially feeding a new audience to health clubs.

The opportunity exists for health and fitness operators to go one step further than just offering discounts, by reaching out to employers to help deliver workplace wellbeing initiatives.

Many aspects of workplace wellbeing programmes require expertise, ►

Healthy, active employees are
more productive and engaged



hero CEO Joe Gaunt put together a corporate wellness strategy for Romero Insurance Brokers, which reduced staff attrition by 70 per cent

- facilities and programmes which the industry is ideally placed to deliver, such as running clubs and on-site yoga classes.

GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

Software company hero is working in this space, creating intuitive technology and solutions to help organisations support employee wellbeing.

CEO Joe Gaunt is eager to collaborate with the health and fitness sector, calling for operators to reach beyond their facilities: "This is a golden opportunity to create genuine partnerships between operators and tech specialists, such as hero, to offer something unique, which delivers on member/consumer health outcomes and improves the health and wellbeing of our communities," he says.

hero worked with Romero Insurance Brokers to put together a corporate wellness strategy which includes measurable and commercial outcomes.

It incorporates a network of wellbeing champions as well as a list of interventions, such as bi-annual health checks; on-site wellbeing workshops; quarterly wellbeing challenges; employee health cashback scheme; pilates and mindfulness classes; weekly walking and running clubs and weekly fruit deliveries.



We now see a more focused and energetic workforce who can switch off when they need to, which leads to healthier and happier employees both at home and in the workplace

JOE GAUNT
HERO

"Romero Insurance Brokers has a strong employee wellbeing focus and we were delighted to work with them to enhance and elevate all they were doing," says Gaunt. "We implemented the hero Navigator platform to ensure the senior leadership team had complete visibility over the activity and could monitor and track the impact on the business."

The insurance industry is notorious for being highly pressured, with a high level of staff turnover, but the wellbeing programme has reduced staff attrition by 70 per cent, as well as helping to attract a higher calibre of applicant, which also has a positive impact on the bottom line.

"We now see a more focused and energetic workforce where people can switch off when they need to and this leads to healthier and happier employees, both at home and in the workplace," says Gaunt. "The turning point for the business was when middle managers were trained to understand how to manage pressure and stress more effectively and how to best help and support their team members.

"The impact good health and wellbeing has on them both professionally and personally has also been a major factor."

INVESTING IN STAFF

Law firm Chadwick Lawrence has also noticed staff retention has been one of the first areas to bear fruit with its wellbeing programme, which is now into its second year. The company worked with Westfield Health to create a wellness programme which gives employees access to a portal,



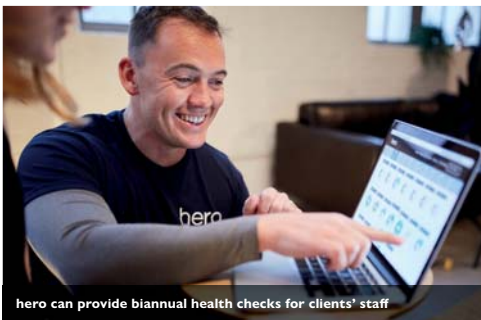
The early adopters were already health conscious, but as time goes on, harder-to-reach groups have got involved

LISA BAILEY
CHADWICK LAWRENCE

empowering people to take responsibility for their health.

"Our staff are our greatest asset, so we were looking for ways to invest in them," says head of human resources, Lisa Bailey. "We wanted something which encouraged staff to take responsibility for their own health, and be inclusive, but which was also optional and not in any way preachy."

The programme is designed around a monthly topic which might link to a national event, such as Mental Health Awareness Week, or the season, such as combatting fatigue in February, or getting in shape for the summer, and there is



hero can provide biannual health checks for clients' staff

■ WELLNESS CLASSES FOR WEWORK

Reset LDN has announced a collaboration with workspace provider, WeWork, to deliver a full service on-site wellness programme to the company's London offices. Around 40 classes a week are being offered as part of a bespoke fitness programme for WeWork's 6000 employees.

Held in the new state-of-the-art, on-site wellness studio, a range of classes, including HIIT and yoga, are being offered along with other wellness resources, such as educational seminars and collaborate workshops.

Reset LDN founder Kira Mahal says her service offers employers a direct way to tackle workplace stress, cultivate employee happiness and build loyalty, and allows employees a place to release stress and build community.

"We know from experience how demanding office-based roles are and the effect this can have both mentally and physically on employees," she says. "Our passion at Reset LDN is to encourage

companies to invest in the wellbeing of their employees and we believe that by creating a wellness-under-one-roof option for employers, we can remove some of the barriers restricting a positive work-life balance."

Community manager for WeWork Daisy Anderson-Perrin says: "We want to give our members a better day at work and we're excited to offer this programme. It is great to feel the positive impact these classes are having on our community."



Kira Mahal



We want to give our members a better day at work and we're excited to be able to offer this bespoke fitness programme. It is great to feel the positive impact these classes are having on our community here

DAISY ANDERSON-PERRIN
WEWORK



Chadwick Lawrence asked employees what activities they wanted



- activity to support this. For example, in January there was a giving tree, for employees to bring in their leftover or unwanted chocolates from Christmas and exchange them for fruit.

"The starting point for the programme was to invite staff to fill out a questionnaire to say what they wanted from the programme and how we could support them," says Bailey. "And we also offered one-to-one health checks.

"We found the early adopters were the people who were already health conscious, but as time goes on, the harder-to-reach groups have started to get much more involved."

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

A wide range of wellness initiatives have been introduced to support the body and mind. All line managers in the

company have been trained in mental health first aid and a buddy system has been put in place to encourage people to adopt a better diet. Wellness Wednesdays were introduced, where fruit is distributed to staff.

Employees are encouraged to get more active in a number of ways, including being prompted by signage to take the stairs, walking across the office to see colleagues personally as opposed to sending an email; having both standing and walking meetings; standing desks and the launch of a walking and running club. All employees have also been given a pedometer, whether they joined these clubs or not.

"In the questionnaires, sleep came up as an issue which people wanted to get help with, so we got the Sleep Geek into the office for four sessions to

As companies grow, it's easier to forget that employees should always come first. Helping members of staff achieve a healthy balance between work and their personal lives is truly inspiring and aligns well to our mission of creating a better society by helping employees succeed, in life and at work

TOM O'CONNOR
PERKBOX

advise people on getting better sleep, which many staff have reported to work really well," says Bailey.

As the wellbeing programme moves into its second year, it's gaining momentum and more elements are being added all the time, including bringing instructors in to run lunchtime sessions focused on mindfulness, meditation and yoga.

Experts in nutrition talk about diet and financial experts advise people on how best to manage their money. There will also be an on-site smoothie-making bike.

"It is still early days when it comes to measuring the impact of the programme at Chadwick Lawrence, but the first thing we noticed was that it has really helped with recruitment and we've gained a reputation for being a good employer," says Bailey.



**Employee programme
Stepathlon aims to break
the cycle of sedentary
behaviour and help people
take responsibility for their
health through nutrition
guidance and challenges,
including taking
10,000 steps a day.**

**According to Perkbox,
61 per cent of the
UK's workforce
is disengaged
and the resulting
absenteeism, employee
turnover and retraining
costs the economy
£340bn a year.**

In response to its annual colleague health survey, supermarket giant Tesco is offering all staff from head office to delivery drivers discounts to health and fitness facilities through the Gympass platform. This will be supported by wellness events to encourage staff to get more active.



Accenture has worked with mental health charity, Mind, to train more than 1000 members of staff to be mental health allies, which intends to create a culture of openness regarding mental health and normalise the conversations.

PERKS OF THE JOB

Although health and fitness operators can help businesses to deliver these programmes, it's also important to make sure your own workforce is supported, especially as being a PT or instructor is a high energy job and helping others can be draining.

Low cost gym operator, The Gym Group, has been motivating its employees through its partnership with Perkbox, an experience platform set up to engage employees, and make them feel valued, by offering discounts to a range of products and services.


This initiative has been enthusiastically embraced by The Gym Group employees, with a log-in rate of 95 per cent and more than 6,000 perk redemptions, including for free coffees, discounted cinema tickets and savings on Apple products.

Added to this, The Gym Group employees receive free gym membership for themselves and a family member or friend, a cycle to work scheme and employee share scheme.

As a result of this partnership with Perkbox, the gym operator has been recognised on several occasions

including in *The Sunday Times* 'Best Small Companies to Work For' report, and become the first fitness operator to achieve the Investors in People Gold Standard accreditation.

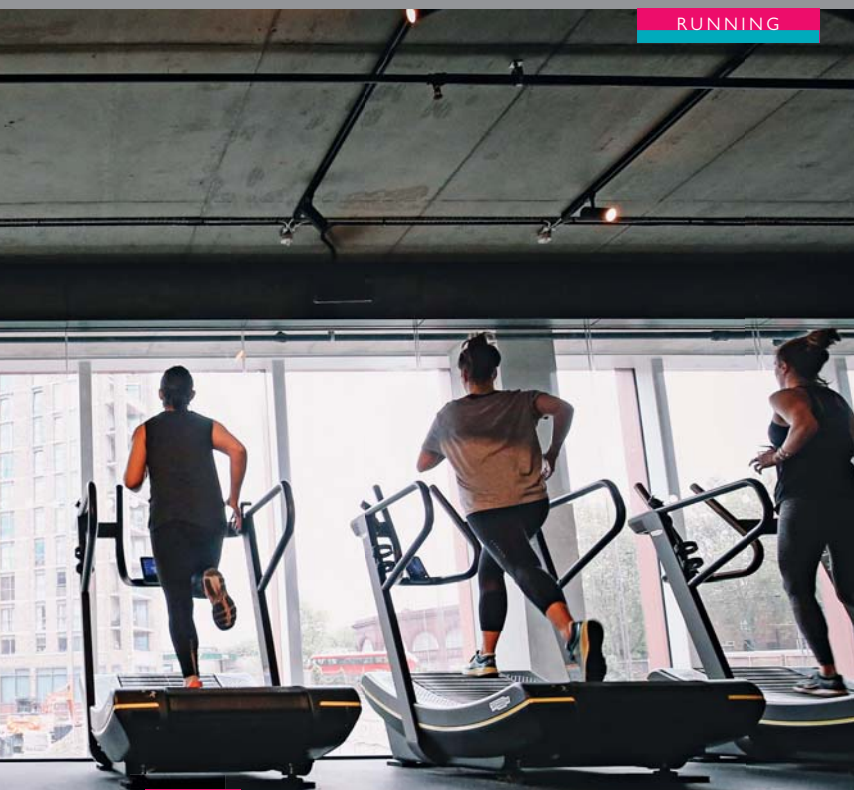
Enterprise customer success director at Perkbox, Tom O'Connor, says: "As companies grow, it's easier to forget that employees should always come first. Helping members of staff achieve a healthy balance between work and their personal lives is truly inspiring and aligns well to our mission of creating a better society by helping employees succeed, in life and at work." ●

A photograph of three people running on treadmills in a modern gym. The gym has large windows in the background showing a city skyline. The runners are seen from behind. The woman on the left is wearing a grey tank top and black leggings. The woman in the middle is wearing a black tank top and black leggings. The man on the right is wearing a black tank top with 'LONDON' on the back and black shorts. The gym has a concrete ceiling with exposed pipes and lights.

Running is one of the most popular activities in the gym. But are your members running effectively?

RUN RIGHT

How many of your members pound the treadmill with poor technique, risking injury and hating every leaden-legged second of it? It doesn't have to be this way according to Danny Dreyer, founder of ChiRunning, who says he can turn anyone into a runner. **Kath Hudson** discovers how



“I

teach people how to run without using their legs,” says veteran ultra distance runner Danny Dreyer, who has created

an efficient system of running which incorporates principles of t'ai chi and physics. “Imagine, if instead of running, all you have to do is pick up your feet to keep up with your forward fall.

“Instead of using your legs to push you forward as most people do, you engage your core and harness gravity while running. So, rather than using your own muscle power, your forward momentum

**Danny Dreyer**

comes from engaging the pull of gravity as you let the road move your legs rearward.”

Running without any effort may sound too good to be true, (especially to those used to slogging it out) but Dreyer says everyone can master this effortless way of running, because it's what we all did when we were kids: before age and sitting down for long periods of time brought in stiffness and inflexibility, and height created a fear of falling.

“I wish I had a video of everyone who said “I can't run” and then six weeks later



Dreyer brings principles from Tai Chi into running, harnessing the power of the core and postural alignment

► are running and loving it," says Dreyer. "Or triathletes who come to me because they love the swim and the bike, but hate the run, but then it becomes their favourite element. Or people who can step up from a half marathon to a full one without any significant increase in effort. "ChiRunning really changes people's perception of how they can move their body. I've taught all sorts of people, including those with prosthetic legs, hip and knee replacements and those who have a BMI in the 30s... It doesn't matter what condition you're in, we start slowly, make progress in small increments, start with ChiWalking and gradually build confidence."

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Dreyer was a seasoned ultra runner when he started bringing the principles of t'ai chi into his running practise and says it was a complete game changer, because he would still feel fresh at the end of a marathon.

Like t'ai chi, ChiRunning involves harnessing the power of the core, so the individual learns to move from the

“

If your body is falling forward, because it's being pulled by gravity, it can relax and you don't have to push yourself forward

DANNY DREYER
CHIRUNNING

centre, rather than relying on the weaker extremities. It's basically the same as how toddlers learn to walk.

"When we're learning to walk we find our centre of balance and start to tip forward, with gravity, which is when we take a step to balance ourselves. So it's about finding the sweet spot where you fall forward, but not so much that you

fall," says Dreyer. "If your body is falling forward, because it's being pulled by gravity, it can relax and you don't have to push yourself forward."

Postural alignment is the key to getting this right and the technique can take a while to nail. Dreyer says the quickest anyone has grasped it is 30 minutes, and the longest three months. But like a yoga practise, or tai chi, it's something which you work on forever. "I'm still working on my technique after 20 years. You never perfect it, you just get better at learning," says Dreyer.

FOLLOW THE KENYANS

The correct position for ChiRunning is to have the body in a straight line from the ankles to the head, but slightly tipped forward – from the ankles, not the waist. It's how the Kenyan distance runners move and Dreyer says this is a cultural, rather than a genetic, method.

Dreyer warns against taking long strides out in front of the body. Although this is a common way of running, it is inefficient, leads to heel striking, jarring and injury risk.



ChiRunning is mindful movement, the intention is to bring consciousness to whatever you're doing, so you're never not paying attention

People who run like this might be fast and consider themselves good runners, but their success will come from hard work, not an effortless flow, and they will likely get injured at some point.

ChiRunning follows the Kenyan style, where the foot naturally hits the ground beneath the body with a mid-foot strike, followed by a long stride behind. Propelled by gravity, the heels then come up high as a by product of everything else.

CONTINUAL RUNNING

Holding this forward position correctly takes core strength. Although some people need to take some time to strengthen the core before they can progress to ChiRunning, holding the correct postural alignment in every day life makes even the weak muscles stronger and speeds up progress.

"This is neural training - the mind tells the body how to move and if it's moving incorrectly the neural pathway has to be changed," says Dreyer. "But the more you train this way, the faster the old pathway will dissolve, which is why it has to be done repetitively, consistently and often."

Dreyer says he likes his clients to practise all day every day – thinking about postural alignment while standing in line, or working at a desk and whenever they walk. "ChiRunning is mindful movement, the intention is to bring consciousness to whatever you're doing, so you are never not paying attention," he says.

"You're not practising your running style just when you're running; sensing your core and relaxing your arms and legs can happen all day. It's a very different way to approach running than simply following a programme, it's a completely holistic approach."



Dreyer encourages his clients to think about posture at all times

DANNY DREYER

● Dreyer has raced every distance from 5k to 100 miles and has completed 43 ultra marathons with podium finishes in all but three.

● In 2004 and 2005 he was the national age group champion (50 to 54) at the USATF National 50k Championships.

● His fastest 50k (31.1miles) is 3:41!

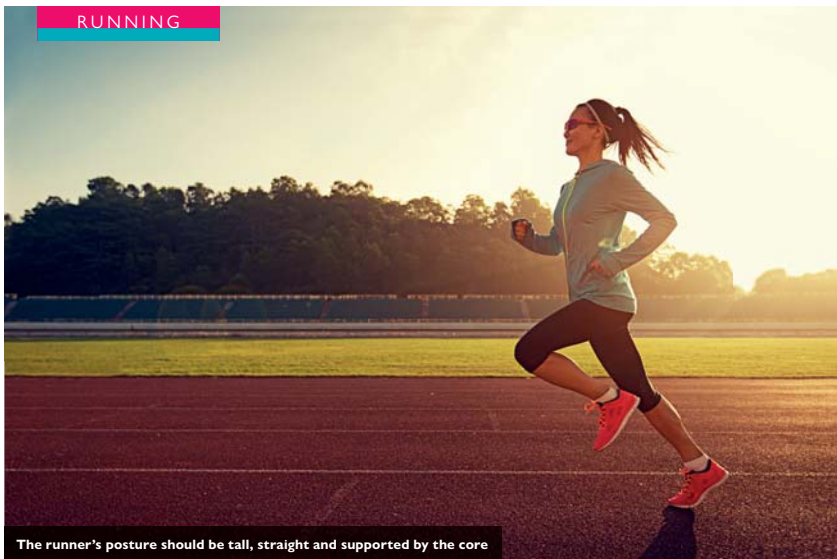
● He has written three books:

ChiRunning: A Revolutionary Approach to Effortless, Injury-free Running

ChiWalking: Five Mindful Steps to Lifelong Health and Energy

ChiMarathon: The Breakthrough Natural Running Program for a Pain-Free Half Marathon and Marathon





The runner's posture should be tall, straight and supported by the core

► CHIRUNNING IN A NUTSHELL

This method is based on straight postural alignment, around the centre line and working from the core. So every time the foot hits the ground, the runner's posture stays tall, straight, and supported by the core. The body is tipped forward, which allows gravity to provide the momentum for the movement, rather than the muscles having to generate it.

Arms are used as a counter balance to the forward pull of gravity and swing rearward to control that balance point. It's all about efficiency of movement, so arms need to cooperate with the legs, otherwise the legs will have to work harder.

The body must be as streamlined as possible and all parts moving in the same direction. Cadence should fall between 170 and 180 steps per minute, with the legs acting like pendulums swinging from the hips.

ENGAGING WITH CHIRUNNING AND CHI WALKING

If you have members who believe they can't run, find it a struggle or want to improve their performance to take part in a distance run or triathlon, pointing them in the way of ChiRunning

would be to their benefit and to yours, as they won't wind up injuring themselves and having to cancel their membership.

There are a number of ways to engage with the concept. Firstly, you could train one of your staff up to be an instructor and then run individual or group running classes, or guided walks.

The instructor training courses take four to six months to complete. Most of it is home study with a four day workshop at the end. There are now some 200 instructors in 23 countries. Go to www.ChiRunning.com or www.ChiRunning.co.uk to find out about your nearest course.

If you would like to empower your members to go on their own ChiRunning journey, there's an online subscription to The ChiRunning school, where subscribers can access one lesson a week, with a 10 minute video to watch and an audio download to talk you through the lesson while you run.

There are a number of coaches around the world, or if people want to deal with Dreyer himself, he offers virtual coaching. People just have to send him a video of them running and he will critique it via a Zoom call.



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Swim England research found that GPs have many patients they would like to refer to aquatic classes

MAKING A SPLASH

Water-based health and rehab classes have been shown to be a popular and effective way to get inactive people and those with health issues into beneficial physical activity. We find out more from the people and groups leading the way...



Swim England's 2016 research highlighted a significant need for aquatics-based GP Referral offerings; health professionals said they would have, on average, three people each month to refer to aquatics, with some suggesting they would refer up to 50 a month. Ninety-two per cent also said they would recommend self-referral if it were available.

The benefits are clear to see. The properties of water, particularly buoyancy and resistance, make exercise accessible to people who may struggle to exercise effectively on land, where bearing one's own weight could cause significant discomfort. The water's natural buoyancy supports a person's weight, reducing the amount of stress that's placed on joints, enabling them to exercise more efficiently and with less pain.

But how does delivery of aquatic activity for health differ from an aqua-aerobics class, and how is it uniquely positioned to help people with specific health issues? HCM investigates

ALL BUOYED UP

Aquatic activity for health should be specifically tailored for people who suffer with pain, have a disability or are weakened due to injury. Aquatic activity has proven value in helping with conditions including back pain, fibromyalgia, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, hip and knee replacement (both pre and post-surgery), other musculoskeletal conditions, including amputees and people who have had a stroke.

It's also ideal for people with mental health issues, such as anxiety and/or depression, and perfectly

suited for conditions where overheating is a symptom, including the menopause and pregnancy.

However, Swim England's research found there was a lack of specific training for fitness professionals, with 84 per cent of leisure operators expressing a need for an aquatic element to GP referral courses.

In answer to the research, Swim England worked with its partner, the Institute of Swimming, and the Aquatic Therapy Association of Chartered Physiotherapists to develop an aquatic exercise qualification for GP referral instructors to upskill the sector.



Fitness instructors can take the Aquatic Activity for Health qualification

► **NEW QUALIFICATION**

Following a Swim England Water Wellbeing pilot scheme, the Aquatic Activity for Health qualification (AAFH) was launched in April 2018, and has since been taken up by over 100 instructors.

Rebecca Cox, managing director at Institute of Swimming says: "Aquatic rehabilitation is uniquely positioned to offer physical activity that is accessible to all. Our Aquatic Activity course is a bolt-on qualification that builds on the Level 3 GP Exercise Referral qualification, bridging the gap between dry and water-based exercise. Once qualified, instructors can create tailor made exercise plans for referral patients; this isn't an aqua fit class, the highly knowledgeable instructors assess a person's individual needs and develop a customised exercise programme for them.

"Suitable for a range of mild to moderate health conditions, the qualification allows fitness professionals to take land-based fitness knowledge and skills into aquatic environments, making best use of available space in pools and supporting people to get the best outcomes in terms of their health."



Aquatic rehabilitation is uniquely positioned to offer physical activity that is accessible to all.

**REBECCA COX
INSTITUTE OF SWIMMING**

Sarah Cox is a chartered physiotherapist who specialises in rehabilitation and aquatic physiotherapy, and one of Swim England's approved tutors for the two-day, face-to-face qualification. She explains: "The qualification's challenging content focuses on teaching instructors to understand the principles of exercising in water, and what happens to the human body in water. The aim is to allow instructors to take referral

customers from being a 'patient' to being an active participant. Standing upright in water alone has a physiological effect on the body that increases cardiac output, so the water helps with fitness before tailored movements and exercises are even introduced."

The Institute of Swimming's Level three Aquatic Activity for Health qualification is suitable for instructors already holding a Level three exercise referral qualification or for physiotherapists who want an introduction to water.

TAKING THE PLUNGE

Active Nation's Bitterne Leisure Centre in Southampton took part in Swim England's Water Wellbeing pilot. Karen Tillyer, health and wellbeing lead for Active Nation says: "There are a lot of people who cannot exercise dry side because they can't weight bear or their movements aren't symmetrical – they may have had a stroke, so they're prone to falling. When I saw there was an opportunity to bring functional exercise into the water I just thought, why wouldn't you? There are a lot of people

who need to be moving more, and currently can't; and this gives them the opportunity to be physically active.

"We design a customised exercise plan for each of our referral patients, so even though you might have half a dozen people in the water at one time, all appearing to do the same thing, everyone is actually doing something completely different, which has been uniquely tailored for them."

One of Active Nation's aqua-referral patients, Paul, says: "Since I was a child I've had a long term, chronic back condition called Ankylosing Spondylitis. This affects my spine and gradually fuses it if I don't keep active. The sessions at Bitterne Leisure are fantastic. Since starting the aqua functional training I've managed to reduce the drugs I'm taking. With a back condition, at the end of the day you get tired and the pain kicks in, so it's very difficult to get to sleep. By doing these exercises I can get a good night's sleep and at the same time reduce my drugs, it's a winner all round. The staff are great and informed and the exercises build up too, so you are gradually growing your confidence."



The qualification's challenging content focuses on teaching instructors to understand the principles of exercising in water, and what happens to the human body in water

SARAH COX
CHARTERED PHTSIOTHERAPIST

ALL IN THE MIND

Active Luton operates a 'Total Wellbeing Luton Scheme', including Hydra Health, which can be accessed by GP or self-referral and has proved

successful in getting people with long term conditions, injuries and mobility problems active through water sessions.

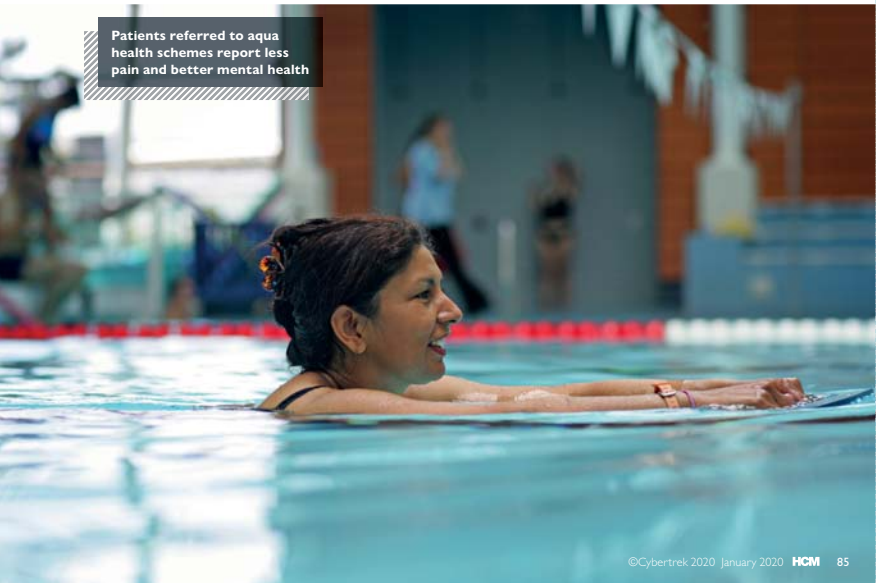
Matthew, 33, is bi-polar and suffers from an anxiety disorder which caused him to become agoraphobic. He was shut away in his home day after day, with little or no contact with the outside world and was referred to the scheme after a routine appointment with his GP.


Matthew says: "I was in a very bad place, both mentally and physically. My GP diagnosed me with type two diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol – and this was when my referral was made. I was inspired to try the Hydro Health scheme as I used to scuba dive and thought it would remind me of this. I can now walk to the supermarket, my range of movement has improved and I've dropped 25kg. My diabetes, blood pressure and cholesterol are within the normal range. My mental health has also vastly improved. These classes mean the world to me."

MAKING WAVES

Other operators offering a variety of health-related aqua programmes include Trafford Leisure, which launched its

Patients referred to aqua health schemes report less pain and better mental health





Whereas aqua aerobics classes are dominated by women, aqua health classes are also popular with men

- Water Wellness Class in April 2019 at its Altrincham Leisure Centre. Trafford Leisure's Swim Well manager, Lee Pickford, says: "What's so fantastic about aquatic activity is that participants don't need to be able to swim to get benefit from the class. The exercises are performed in a very controlled environment, so they feel safe and not out of their depth. Our customers tell us how liberating coming to the pool is. It's also very sociable. Since the launch we regularly have over 30 people in the



What's really positive is the number of men, particularly the over 60s, that have taken these sessions

**JASON BAILEY
HEALTH AND WELLBEING
OFFICER, OCL**



class, all with a variety of health conditions including diabetes, knee injuries and even a gentleman with a broken back. It really is the missing piece to our referral fitness offerings."

Altrincham Leisure Centre also holds weekly pregnancy aquatic physiotherapy and midwife-lead pre-natal classes, run by Sarah Hill, women's health physiotherapist at the Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust. The drop-in sessions, part funded by the NHS, are designed for women from 14 weeks pregnant to full gestational term. Anyone can join, but

local midwives particularly recommend them for pregnancy related pain.

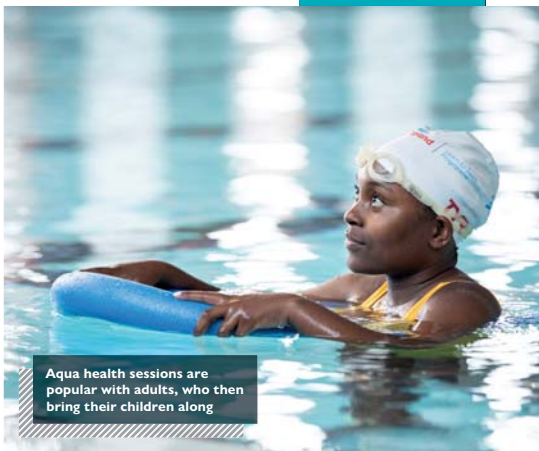
Hill says: "The sessions are extremely rewarding and the highlight of my week. They're really beneficial for both the pregnant women and their babies. Pregnancy puts a lot of additional stress on a woman's body, and many women suffer with pelvic girdle pain, sciatica and aches in the upper back, lower back and ribs, as well as the swelling in hands or feet and water retention."

The classes concentrate on muscle strength, flexibility, cardiovascular fitness



The sessions are extremely rewarding and the highlight of my week. They're really beneficial for both the pregnant women and their babies

SARAH HILL
WOMEN'S HEALTH
PHYSIOTHERAPIST, PENNINE
CARE NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



Aqua health sessions are popular with adults, who then bring their children along

and pelvic floor exercises. Tailored to each woman's bespoke needs, the exercises can help reduce gestational diabetes, improve ease of labour, flexibility, movement and sleep, and help prevent pregnancy-related constipation.

Hill continues: "The classes have a positive influence on the women. During pregnancy a woman's body changes a lot. This can affect concentration, energy levels, physical ability and an individual's confidence. We've worked hard to create a safe and judgement-free space, where women can enjoy a structured class and feel confident in the water and

in a swim suit. There's a lot of work in pairs and groups to help build friendships and create a social peer network. Another exciting outcome is the women intending to bring their babies to swimming lessons once they're born, reinforcing the belief that exercise and aquatic fitness is beneficial at every stage of one's life."

ALL EQUAL IN THE POOL

Oldham Community Leisure (OCL) has been running three Aqua 4 Health circuit-based sessions a week across its sites since September 2018; designed for

those new to exercise and those returning to exercise after a break. They are also suitable for people with long term medical conditions and for people that have come to OCL through the Oldham Exercise Referral Scheme or the Reach Exercise Referral scheme through their GP or other medical professional.

Jason Bailey, health and wellbeing officer at OCL says: "As participants have a variety of health and movement complications, we restrict the size of classes to ensure everyone is given sufficient guidance. What's really positive is the number of men, particularly men over 60, that have taken these sessions. Our traditional aqua-aerobic classes are dominated by women, whereas Aqua 4 Health engages both men and women equally. We've also found Aqua 4 Health to be a gateway to swimming, which is fantastic."

Ali Noyce, health and wellbeing manager at Swim England concludes: "It's vitally important that the pool isn't seen as off limits to anyone, and so it's encouraging to see leisure operators embracing a positive and inclusive culture around poolside activity. From running disability sessions or pool time for people with dementia and their carers, to keeping changing rooms clean and welcoming, having trained staff to use hoists and providing towel hooks at the pool side, we must remove barriers, both physical and mental, to people accessing water, as being in water just makes you feel better." ●

Participants don't need to be able to swim to get benefit from aqua classes

PRODUCT INNOVATION

Lauren Heath-Jones rounds up the latest product launches in health and fitness



Auro democratises personalised training, explains **Anta Pattabiraman**

Auro, a fitness tech start-up, has developed a motivational app that delivers audible on-demand workouts and classes.

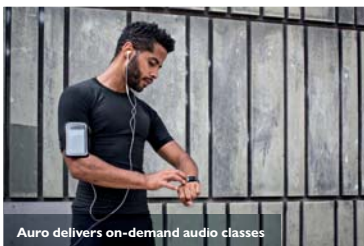
Developed by a team of personal trainers, the classes, which can be

carried out both inside or outside the gym, range from outdoor running, walking, treadmill, X-trainer, strength training, spinning, rowing, yoga and stretching.

Workouts are designed to be delivered audibly, so that users don't get distracted by having to look down at a screen during their workout, although it does feature images and gifs to demonstrate form and technique of exercises.

Auro features patented AI-based algorithms that analyse multiple input streams in order to 'hyper-personalise' the experience.

Auro CEO and co-founder Anta Pattabiraman says: "There are 9.7 million gym



Auro delivers on-demand audio classes

members in the UK, yet only 250,000 use PTs because of the cost. Without personalised instruction, many people get demotivated and don't make the most of their gym membership.

I fundamentally believed this could be changed and wanted to make personalised instruction available to all."

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

AURO



"I wanted to make personalised instruction to one and all"

Anta Pattabiraman

Pavigym's WEXO flooring works for people at all levels of fitness, says **Kenny Wattam**

Flooring specialist Pavigym has developed a new cross training flooring concept that enables operators to offer different types of circuit training, such as weightlifting, athletic, metabolic and functional exercises, in a single space.

Called WEXO, the concept features different 'zones' for different exercises, with each fitted with one of three Pavigym flooring solutions; weightlifting, S&S and turf.

Kenny Wattam, sales director for Northern UK & Ireland at Pavigym, says: "Wexo is durable, strong and feels good to the trained athlete, while the average user really likes the



"Wexo is durable, strong and feels good to the trained athlete"

Kenny Wattam

simplicity of the markings and the ease of being able to see where they need to go next and perform different exercises on the floor."

The weightlifting and strength zones – located at the centre of the concept – are fitted with S&S

and weightlifting flooring to provide stability and resistance, as well as reduce noise and vibration without the risk of splitting or warping, says Wattam, while the functional, athletic and

metabolic training zones are carpeted with turf, which offers both impact and dragging resistance.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

PAVIGYM



Functional, athletic and metabolic zones are turfed

FunXtion's Online Coaching Tool offers 'results-focused support', according to **Ernst De Neef**

FunXtion has created a new online platform for personal trainers.

Called the Online Coaching Tool, the new platform is designed to enable personal trainers to work more effectively by increasing their contact time with their clients.



"Being able to stay in contact with your members 24/7 is a necessity and no longer an optional extra"

Ernst De Neef

The platform offers high-quality content and personalised advice that can be tailored to members' goals. Using it, trainers can monitor clients' progress, adapt their training plans to ensure improvements are made and keep members engaged by identifying areas on which to focus and offering support.

Other features include a chat function, allowing for 24/7 connectivity, as well as a training plan editor, which enables trainers to manage, edit and share training plans to groups and individual members. There's also a recipe database.

Ernst De Neef, FunXtion CEO, says: "In this modern world, where connectivity is king, being able to stay



Trainers can monitor clients' progress using the platform

in touch with your clients 24/7 is a necessity and no longer an optional extra."

"With this tool, clubs can now deliver a superior service by providing more efficiency at a lower cost. Clients across all demographics are more demanding when it comes to their exercise experience.

They want professional, personal support that's affordable, results-focused and delivered digitally at their fingertips. This tool also provides an additional revenue stream and is a strong retention tool."

fitness-kit.net **KEYWORDS**
FUNXTION

Vitapure BodyShake system generates extra revenue for gyms, says **Ian Webb**

The Vitapure Drinks Company, creator of the Vitastream system, has developed BodyShake, a drinks machine that dispenses protein shakes.

Designed to complement the Vitastream system and create additional revenue streams for clubs, the BodyShake system offers low sugar, low calorie protein shakes in a number of different flavour options that users can mix to create their own customised shake.

The shakes are also free from fat, aspartame and sweeteners, as well as allergens such as soy, wheat, eggs and milk.

The system, housed in a touchscreen unit, was developed to reduce the number of single-use



"We wanted to help gyms and health clubs eliminate single-use plastic water and drinks bottles"

Ian Webb

drink bottles sold in gyms. It has a small footprint, needing just 1 sq m of space, and requires only a power supply, water supply and internet connection, enabling operators to track stock levels and solve any technical issues remotely.

Vitapure founder and MD Ian Webb said: "The beauty of this combined hydration and protein concept is that it helps gym members achieve their fitness goals and rewards forward-thinking gyms with additional revenue.

"We want to help gyms and health clubs eliminate the use of single-use plastic water and drinks bottles. The touch screen-operated Vitastream Drinks Station delivers a positive environmental message, reducing carbon footprint through removing the need for packaged drinks."

fitness-kit.net **KEYWORD**
VITAPURE

The machine dispenses a range of protein shakes



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