

health club management

FEBRUARY 2018

No 254

FITNESS FORESIGHT™

We reveal the trends set to transform the industry **p46**

A NEW MIDDLE MARKET?

Will independent operators change the face of the mid-market? **p62**

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Meet the woman taking boutique fitness in the Netherlands to new heights **p56**

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MEN IN CLASS

How can operators get more men into group exercise? **p40**

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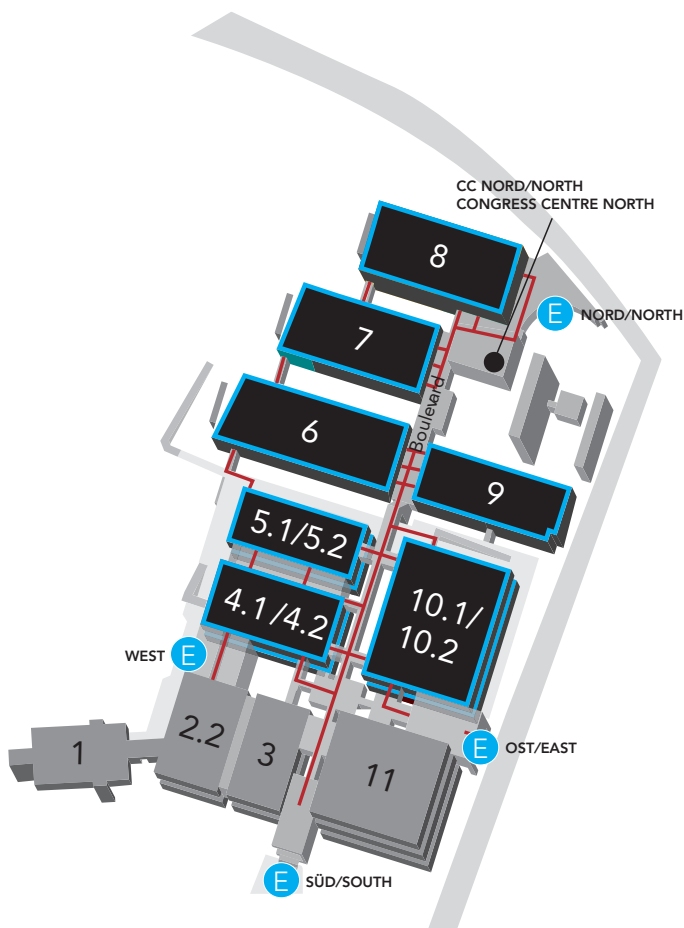
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Maintaining choice while embracing change

Health clubs are increasingly adapting their offerings to become more wellbeing-focused. But as the case of a US gym chain at the centre of a recent media frenzy shows, making wellbeing-centred changes brings new challenges for operators

Last month, US gym chain Life Time Fitness made a controversial decision. It removed cable TV news from all of its clubs without warning – leaving many members confused and unhappy. Taking to Twitter to defend the move, the company cited member feedback and the belief that gym-goers cannot truly improve their health and wellbeing while surrounded by negativity as the key reasons for the sudden change.

It's a decision that triggers debate about censorship, interfering with personal choice and the impact of news on wellbeing. And whether you agree or disagree with the logic behind it, Life Time Fitness' news ban makes one thing clear: gyms are no longer viewed as places to simply work out.

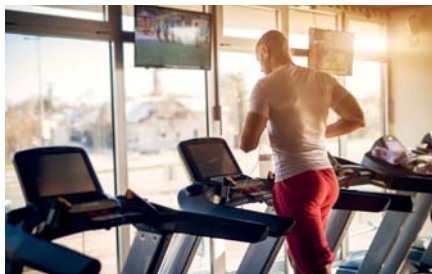
So where exactly should fitness facilities sit in the wellbeing equation? Do health club operators have a responsibility to walk the walk rather than just talk the talk where member health is concerned?

Let's be honest, sugar-packed protein bars and sports drinks are still more commonly sold in gyms than fresh, nutritious food options; lifts are regularly used instead of stairs; and gym marketing campaigns still feature fitness models with physiques that the average person will struggle to achieve without going to extremes.

But as we move into an age where gyms are increasingly expected to play a role in improving overall wellbeing, there's a need to discuss how to strike a balance.

Life Time Fitness members who were unhappy with the news ban told the US media that they weren't consulted in the decision-making process and have countered the company's 'negativity' explanation with claims that watching the news adds structure to their day and informs them of what's going on in the world – factors that are also important for wellbeing.

Perhaps then, the lesson to be learned here is the importance of maintaining choice and avoiding blanket




Some gyms are banning TV news because it is considered negative

Life Time Fitness' news ban makes one thing clear: gyms are no longer viewed as places to simply work out

assumptions when striving to meet the growing demand for truly health-focused gyms. While many people turn to health clubs to assist their pursuit of wellbeing, that definition differs from member to member, and that's something that operators cannot afford to lose sight of.

Dr Laretta Ihonor, editor
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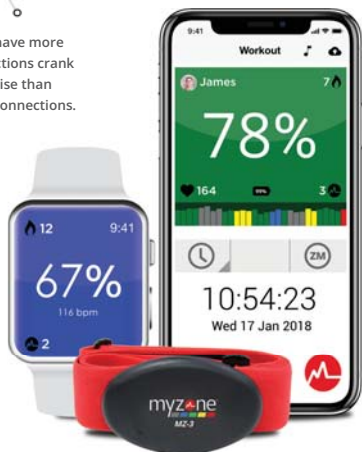


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PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



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MEET THE TEAM



EDITOR
Lauretta Ihonor

+44 (0)1462 471925



PUBLISHER
Jan Williams

+44 (0)1462 471909



DEPUTY EDITOR
Steph Eaves

+44 (0)1462 471934



EDITORIAL DIRECTOR
Liz Terry

+44 (0)1462 431385

For email use: fullname@leisuremedia.com

HEAD OF NEWS
Rob Gibson

+44 (0)1462 471902

SALES
John Challinor

+44 (0)1202 742968

DESIGN
Paul McLaughlin

+44 (0)1462 471933

PRODUCT EDITOR
Lauren Heath-Jones

+44 (0)1462 471922

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Denise Adams

+44 (0)1462 471930

HEAD OF TECH
Michael Paramore

+44 (0)1462 471926

FINANCE
Denise Adams

+44 (0)1462 471930

Rebekah Scott
+44 (0)1462 733477

WEB TEAM
Dean Fox

+44 (0)1462 471900

Emma Harris

+44 (0)1462 471921

Tim Nash

+44 (0)1462 471917

CIRCULATION
Michael Emmerson
+44 (0)1462 471932



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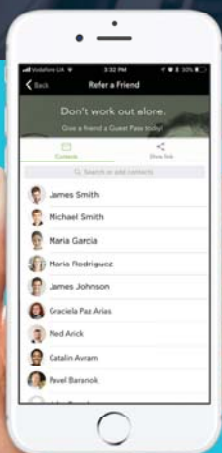
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Write to reply

Do you have a strong opinion or disagree with somebody else's views on the industry?
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A group class could be an ideal setting for JAM exercise

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Adding 'Just a Minute' of high impact exercise to group classes could make a big difference to women's bone health

Vicky Stiles, PhD, senior sport and health sciences lecturer, University of Exeter

Exercise undoubtedly plays an important role in maintaining good bone health at every stage of life; but last year at the University of Exeter, we were able to measure exactly how much activity at a particular intensity is

associated with better bone health in women.

Using wrist-worn activity monitors to measure short, dynamic and sporadic bursts of high-impact physical activity in a study of approximately 2,500 women, we found that those who did one to two minutes of activity per day at an intensity equivalent to slow running (for post-menopausal women) or faster running (for premenopausal women) had better bone health compared with those who did less.

While some women love to run, the women in our study did not. This means they most likely got the short daily dose of bone-specific activity

measured in the study in ways that were more accessible to them, possibly during group exercise classes.

Group exercise, which is especially popular with women, is generally considered good for bone health but not all classes provide activity that is optimal for bone health. This year, we're aiming to find out if Just a Minute (JAM) of bone

health activity exists in a range of group exercise classes and if it can be easily incorporated into all group exercise classes.

Bringing group exercise and JAM bone health activity together will help to promote all forms of group exercise while improving the nation's bone health, and the fitness industry is perfectly positioned to help with this.



Vicky Stiles

"Group exercise, which is especially popular with women, is generally considered good for bone health but not all classes provide activity that is optimal for bone health"



PTs provide the human interaction gym-goers desire

Technology, no matter how advanced, cannot deliver all the advantages a gym-floor PT can

Darryl Taylor, operations manager, networked fitness EMEA, Precor

I was interested to read industry opinions on the impact of data-driven CV training on the future of gym-floor PTs in the January issue of HCM (Data Driven Training, p36). As a provider of fitness equipment that incorporates user data to deliver a more personalised experience, I don't believe that a growth in the popularity of this type of training signals the end of gym-floor PTs either.

Data-driven CV training is pretty much like driverless cars; whilst the technology is available, few passengers seem comfortable trusting a computer with the multifaceted task of driving.



Darryl Taylor

Even if the technology can expertly take charge of making crucial decisions, such as when to accelerate, slow down and signal, human input will remain invaluable for providing the context needed to best make these decisions.

“Data-driven training is like driverless cars; whilst the technology is available, few passengers seem comfortable trusting a computer with the task”

I think there will always be a need for PTs to educate customers on how to use the technology and understand the data insights offered.

PTs should use this data to their advantage, to set measurable and achievable goals and to track, message and motivate their client. For the client, the data also provides the ability to monitor their performance and progress each session, helping

them to remain motivated and see improvements – which is the ultimate key to success.

Most people like to spend time with a good PT, even if it's primarily for the personal attention. However, the one-on-one interaction can also be the assistance or motivation gym-goers need to stay on track, whatever their fitness level. One size doesn't fit all and good PTs will tailor the digital experience for each of their clients.

PEOPLE

“ I often see clubs guaranteeing specific results for members, despite having little knowledge about their members' goals or current levels of health and fitness. I wanted to avoid falling into this trap ”

TIM BENJAMIN

FITNESS SPACE: FOUNDER AND CEO

You're best known as an Olympic athlete, what led you to start a gym chain?

I had a good career as a 400m athlete and when I finally hung up my spikes in 2009 I knew I wanted to stay in a related field. I took a closer look at the state of the fitness industry, in terms of market positioning, and I noticed that the budget clubs were prevailing and effectively cannibalising the middle market, while lifestyle clubs, like David Lloyd and Virgin Active, were enjoying continued success. However, what I couldn't see was a truly results-based service within the industry. That sparked the Fitness Space idea.

How did you bring Fitness Space to life?

Regardless of where you go in the UK, gym users are largely left to their own devices, so I set about trying to find a model that addressed that need. I wanted to speak to the 30 per cent of the population that, according to a Virgin Active survey, avoids going to the gym because of uncertainty about how to use the equipment and/or a feeling of being unsupported by the gym's staff.

At the same time, I could see the boutique offering rising within the sector and I really wanted to enter that marketplace by creating an intimately-sized high-end club that leveraged the

power of technology to create a results-based environment for its members.

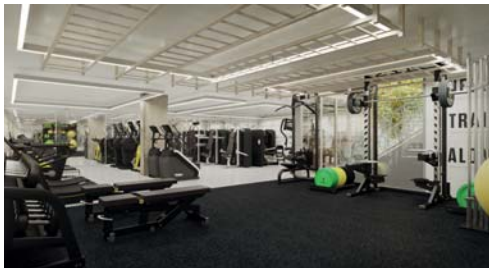
How central is technology to the success of Fitness Space?

Our partnership with Technogym has been a huge part of our success. We've worked together from day one and they've given us the support we needed to grow: from providing the cutting-edge equipment we have in our studios and the bespoke tech offerings we offer our clients, to supporting the training and development of our staff and franchisees.

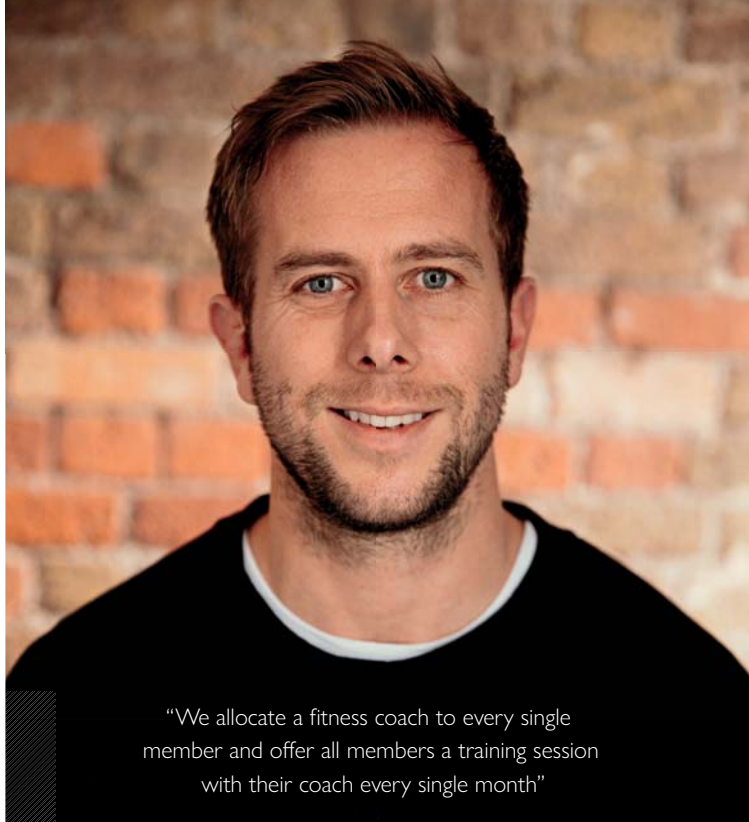
Tell us more about Fitness Space's USP

Because we're focused on helping our clients achieve real results, our model is based on coaching members rather than just telling them what to do. To achieve this, we allocate a fitness coach to every single member and offer all members a training session with their coach every single month. They can also contact their coach and/or access their progress information between those sessions via our comprehensive smartphone app.

Another key Fitness Space offering is DNA and blood testing. This was really important to me because I often see clubs guaranteeing specific results for members, despite having little knowledge about their members' goals or current levels of health and fitness. I wanted to avoid falling into this trap, so at Fitness Space all of our members receive body



High-tech equipment is central to the Fitness Space experience



“We allocate a fitness coach to every single member and offer all members a training session with their coach every single month”

Benjamin represented Great Britain in athletics at World Championship and Olympic level before retiring in 2009

composition and fitness testing as part of their coaching. This allows them to truly see and understand their progress.

I inadvertently learned a lot about the impact of this type of testing on performance during my athletics career and I wanted to take those lessons and apply them to the leisure industry.

What was the transition from athletics to business like?

It's been an interesting transition. As an athlete, my strength was my ability to apply myself, but my weakness was my analytical side – I would question everything, when I often just needed to go with the flow.

Fortunately, both my strength and weakness seem to serve me well in

business: I can apply my ambition, passion, knowledge and analytical mind to the industry and see the results more readily.

How has Fitness Space evolved since you launched?

The first Fitness Space studio opened in Ascot in 2010 and we now have 22 of them – three are company-owned and the rest are franchised operations. I didn't initially plan on going down the franchise route, but I wanted to expand across the UK and knew that as a very profitable concept that required a small 3,000 sq ft site, Fitness Space would be an attractive proposition to franchisees.

We decided to test the waters with a pilot franchise studio and saw great

success by the end of the first year. We knew at that point that we had an offering that was franchisable and formally adopted this model in 2016.

What's next for you?

We're still quite a young franchising operation and we're learning all the time from our franchisees. The ultimate goal is to expand internationally. It's going to take a lot of work to understand the best areas to expand into, but we've started that process by signing an area development agreement in Ireland.

We're starting to make international moves, but I very much want to ensure we haven't left any stone unturned before moving forward with global expansion. ►

“

Clear plans for a future capital realisation event, innovations such as ‘thé Yard’ and ambitious growth plans make this an exciting time to be joining énergie

”

NEIL KING

ÉNERGIE GROUP: CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

▶ Amidst a period of huge change, including international expansion, the launch of a new boutique fitness concept (thé Yard) and a network-wide rebrand, the énergie Group has announced that Neil King, the current managing director of 1Life Management Solutions, will be joining the fitness franchise group as its new chief operating officer.

Described by current CEO and company founder Jan Spaticchia as “a respected leader in our sector,” King will join énergie at the end of the month, at which time he will focus on the brand’s value proposition and operations.

Spaticchia said: “Neil’s appointment as COO is a clear statement of our intent. We have an ambitious agenda for growth and quality that requires us to add the very best talent to the énergie team.”

He added: “We’re looking at a capital realisation event at the back end of this year – it could be private equity or it could be an IPO – and this new appointment will give me the opportunity to work on that deal.”



King joins the énergie Group this month as COO

King’s industry experience spans 25 years, during which he’s held senior management roles at Everyone Active, Balance Fitness (Elixia) and Fitness First.

He joined 1Life Management Solutions, in June 2013, where he led a rebrand of the American-owned leisure management company, which currently operates 40 local authority sites across the UK, including swimming pools, leisure centres and golf clubs.

Speaking about his new role, King said: “I’m delighted to be joining énergie Fitness at this very important stage of its development.

“The new énergie brand presents a fantastic opportunity to own a unique space in the marketplace and the current diversity in the sector brings multiple opportunities for franchising.

“Clear plans for a future capital realisation event, innovations such as ‘thé Yard’ and ambitious growth plans make this a very exciting time to be joining the énergie Group.”

King will be replaced at 1Life by Mark Braithwaite – the managing director of one of the business’s two contract groups – and is expected to take over as énergie’s CEO in the near future, while Spaticchia will remain as chair.



The newly launched boutique franchise ‘thé Yard’ forms part of the énergie Group’s growth plans

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We want to help gym operators to leverage their space and maximise their earning potential



DALTON HAN

POPiN: FOUNDER

► What exactly is POPiN?

The POPiN mobile app, which launched in September 2017, gives customers access to premium membership-only fitness clubs at a time of their choice while asking them to pay only for the time spent working out – right down to the minute. The current app is a beta version, but it allows consumers to use premium facilities without worrying about expensive membership fees.

How and where can people use it?

At present, users have a choice of 13 New York gyms and health clubs that they can visit, including the CompleteBody Chelsea, Midtown East and Financial District gyms, Body Elite and Tribeca Health and Fitness. All you have to do is go to your preferred club and scan the code at the front desk to start your visit. Scan the code again on leaving the club and you'll only be charged for the length of your visit.

How did you decide on the cost-per-minute charged at each club?

It's a discussion that takes place when we sign up a new club. The cost of a day pass, monthly membership fee, club location and amenities are all taken into consideration.

For example, users can currently pay just 16 cents per minute – that's less than 10 dollars per hour – at CompleteBody's Financial District club, which provides access to the gym floor and facilities, including a juice bar, steam room, rock climbing wall and physical therapy services.

How did you come up with the idea?

Before developing POPiN, I worked as a consultant and I had a nomadic work



Han created POPiN to make premium gyms more accessible

lifestyle that made it difficult for me to commit to a specific gym. I also travelled frequently, which meant that I was often away from home for too long to justify a gym membership. However, I still wanted to have a consistent fitness routine.

I felt certain that others had to be experiencing the same problem. When I started to look at how to solve the problem, I discovered that many gyms also had an unmet need: they were struggling to retain members and their facilities were often underutilised. I also found that it was becoming difficult for smaller gyms to keep up with the large chains. POPiN was developed to solve these problems while creating an additional source of revenue.

Who is your target audience and how has POPiN been received by them?

Around 78 per cent of our users are aged 25 to 35 years old, which is ideal as

Millennials are our target audience. It's a pretty even split between male and female users. At present, we're finding that POPiN is popular with fitness professionals and serious exercise enthusiasts; however, we think this may change as more people become aware of our product and the number of clubs we work with grows.

The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. As a new business, our biggest challenge has been raising awareness, but whenever we tell people about POPiN, they instantly see the benefit – which is great!

Tell us about your professional background

My background is in tech. I worked as an instructor and consultant for

companies such as Microsoft, Cisco, and EMC for more than 15 years. Prior to founding POPiN, I ran an IT consulting company. I'm fortunate to be combining my personal passion for fitness with my professional passion for tech.

What is your ultimate goal with POPiN?

We want to make getting fit as easy as possible. Just as anyone can walk into any coffee shop and buy a drink, we want fitness enthusiasts to be able to be able to buy their workout from any fitness facility at any time. We also want to help gym operators to leverage their space and maximise their earning potential.

We're working to bring the sharing economy – which better reflects the buying behaviour of Millennials – to gyms and health clubs. We think it's time for gyms to join the modern economic trends that have shaped, and continue to shape, how we all work, travel and eat. ●

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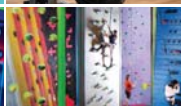
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"Having an Innovation award at Elevate keeps the fitness industry on its toes, it shows that we are moving forward and trying new things in health and fitness."

Ben Coomber



"I wanted to come today to find out more about innovation in fitness, and see what was disruptive, what was accumulative, what was creating buzz within the community."

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Planet Fitness to enter Mexican fitness market

Planet Fitness will continue to internationally grow its brand by entering the Mexican fitness market this year.

Due to open this spring in Santa Catarina, Monterrey, the new gym will be run by franchisee group Jeg-Fit LLC, which owns 19 other US sites.

"We're excited to announce our entrance into Mexico as we continue to expand our brand internationally," said Chris Rondeau, Planet Fitness CEO.

"We continue to see an increasing global enthusiasm for our brand and we look forward to introducing the Santa Catarina community to the Judgement-Free Zone."

The club will feature cardio and strength equipment, circuit training, changing

rooms, flat screen televisions and free small group classes. It will also have the brand's 'Lunk Alarm' – a purple and



We continue to see an increasing global enthusiasm for our brand and we look forward to introducing the Santa Catarina community to the Judgement-Free Zone

Chris Rondeau



Founded in 1992, Planet Fitness will open in Mexico this spring

yellow siren on the wall used as a light-hearted reminder that grunting, dropping weights or judging others is not allowed.

Black Card members will be able to bring a guest for free and have access to extra

services, including massage chairs and haircuts.

The chain recently opened its first gym in Hawaii, giving it a presence in all 50 US states.

More: http://lei.sr?a=s5Q2z_H

Portuguese market leader Fitness Hut sold to Viva Gym

Spanish firm Viva Gym has announced the acquisition of Portuguese brand Fitness Hut, creating the largest low-cost fitness group in the Iberian Peninsula.

The sale of Fitness Hut means Viva Gym will grow to almost 200,000 members, with the groups' combined revenues totalling more than €50m (US\$60.18m, £44.49m).

Led by Viva Gym CEO Juan del Rio Nieto, the combined group will continue to operate under two separate brands.

Fitness Hut has 31 clubs, providing gym facilities and

nutritional services to 110,000 members, and running 3,300 fitness classes a week.

"We're very excited about the opportunity for low-cost fitness in Iberia and we look forward to working with our new partners to become the market leader in Spain and Portugal," said Fitness Hut CEO Nick Coutts.

The groups both launched in 2011, with Viva Gym founded by private equity firm Magenta Partners.

The sale of Fitness Hut was advised by Clearwater International and was made possible by an investment by

Fitness Hut runs 3,300 fitness classes a week



Bridges, plus a co-investment from Magenta Partners, Hermes GPE and two other, unnamed, businesses.

Gareth Iley, partner and head of consumer at Clearwater International, said: "This

cross-border transaction brings together two strong companies with exceptional management teams, to form an unrivalled Iberian market leader."

More: http://lei.sr?a=K4P8R_H

Low-cost operators boost German membership rates

Budget operators are shaping the fitness landscape in Germany, with six of the top 10 for membership numbers targeting the low-cost market.

Analysis released by fitness and sports advisory firm Edelhelder showed that McFIT remained number one on the list, with 1.5 million members, followed by fellow low-cost brand Clever Fit, with 650,000 customers.

Mid-market club Fitness First came in third with 245,000 members.

The study found that at the end of 2017, the top 10 operators had approximately 3.47 million members and the number of members in the

list grew by 9.8 per cent from 3.16m in 2016.

The top 10 organisations accounted for a third of the



McFIT uses its established standing and its reach to target new customer groups in the fitness market with related products

Niels Gronau



McFIT remains in the top spot for membership numbers in Germany's fitness market

total membership market in Germany, which was 10.1 million at the end of 2016.

McFIT grew its membership base last year by 25 per cent, from 1.2 million in 2016, through diversification of its club formats John Reed and High5, according to the analysis.

Last year, its first female-only club opened in Berlin under the John Reed Women's Club brand. The group also

introduced in-house 'live classes' held by instructors and marketed under its Cyberotics brand.

"McFIT uses its established standing and its reach to target new customer groups in the fitness market with related products," said Edelhelder's managing director Niels Gronau.

More: http://lei.sr?a=s8u4s_H

eGym nets €25m for R&D

Fitness kit and software supplier eGym will receive up to €25m (US\$30m, £22.2m) to support its R&D and engineering.

The investment from the European Investment Bank (EIB) will also facilitate the expansion of eGym's assembly and production facility.

eGym, which was founded seven years ago in Munich, Germany, manufactures electric resistance machine

circuits supported by software updates and utilises an open cloud platform to connect machines produced by third parties, in order to target new customer groups in the fitness market.

eGym CEO Philipp Roesch-Schlenderer said: "From day one it's been eGym's vision to make the gym work for everyone."

More: http://lei.sr?a=u8q4V_H



The EIB's Ambroise Fayolle (L) with Roesch-Schlenderer

Lineup for fifth European Health & Fitness Forum announced

Staff retention, leadership culture and quality standards will come under the microscope at this year's European Health & Fitness Forum (EHFF).

The event, which takes place at FIBO in Cologne on 11 April, will bring together decision makers for high-calibre networking.

This year's forum will feature keynote speeches by Rainer Schaller, the founder and CEO of McFIT Global Group; and Focus Orange/Crunch co-founder Camiel Selker.

Other speakers at the event will include Kees van der Graaf,



Julian Berriman, EuropeActive

chairman of Basic-Fit NV's Supervisory Board; Technogym founder Nerio Alessandri; and director of the EuropeActive Professional Standards Committee Julian Berriman.

More: http://lei.sr?a=Y2E7z_H

Health, sport, tech leaders to build 'startup superhighway'

Leaders from the sport, fitness and technology sectors have unveiled a dynamic collaboration to stimulate growth for digital startups that help people get active.

Three distinct but complementary programmes by London Sport, the Open Data Institute and ukactive, will now be progressed together, with support from Sport England, creating a more joined-up approach.

The bodies will work together to support startups with the aim of tackling physical inactivity.

"The sport and physical activity sector continues to evolve and innovate to keep up with the digital expectations of its consumers," said Dave Newton, director of mass markets at Sport England.

"The creation of this startup superhighway for physical activity innovators is a strong step in the right direction."



Leading bodies from the worlds of sport, health and technology will come together to help digital startups change the physical activity landscape

The collaboration means digital startups will benefit from the combined expertise of the organisations, providing an accelerator for growth through mentoring, workshops and access to investors.

Targets for the project include expanding beyond

apps to see data used to better integrate physical activities into local services; creating more immersive outdoor fitness experiences using augmented reality; or wearable technology tools.

http://lei.sr?a=V2p3w_H

Fitness sector to chart next steps for boutique market

Fitness brands, startups and investors are set to debate the next phase of the boutique sector's growth, as Sweat returns for a second year on Thursday, 8 March.

Hosted by ukactive, Sweat 2018 will explore what it takes for boutique operators to stand out in an increasingly crowded market and how established operators can begin to upscale and expand.

"As this market matures, we want to support the sector in its next phase of growth by giving burgeoning operators the tools to reach their full potential in a globalised and highly competitive market, while ensuring the boutique boom represents a permanent shift in the market," said ukactive CEO Steven Ward.

More: http://lei.sr?a=T9a2c_H



The Sweat event debuted in 2017 and returns to London for a second year in March

Fitness First acquisitions set to bring DW Sports healthy returns

DW Sports expects to offset losses of £8m (US\$10.8m, €9m) from the last financial year as its new portfolio of Fitness First health clubs starts to bear fruit.

The group bought 62 clubs in the financial year ending March 2017, causing pre-tax profits to drop from £3.6m (US\$4.9m, €4.1m) in 2016 to losses of £8m in 2017.

But, the business saw turnover grow by 28 per cent to £203.5m (US\$275.6m, €228.8m), from £159.6m (US\$216.1m, €179.5m) in 2016, according to accounts submitted to Companies House.

The report states that the "acquisition of the Fitness First Clubs Ltd portfolio during the year provided the group with substantial presence in the London



Dave Whelan founded the DW Sports brand

market and is anticipated to bring significant benefits to the group and our members."

The group's operating losses are primarily attributed to the "timings of costs associated with new store openings, the acquisition of Fitness First and portfolio management costs surrounding site closures".

More: http://lei.sr?a=E3t3v_H

Gym Group reports fastest growth in budget sector

The Gym Group has increased its share of the budget gym sector by opening two-thirds of all new clubs built in the UK since March 2017.

In a trading update released on 16 January, the business reported an increase in market share – measured by number of sites – to 22.4 per cent in December 2017 from 17.7 per cent in March 2017.

The company had a strong year growing its new-build

portfolio, opening 21 new properties at a cost of £1.35m each.

It also completed the acquisition of 18 Lifestyle Fitness clubs in September and a site from Rush Fitness in December, bringing its total number of gyms to 129 – and pushing its debt to £37.5m, in line with expectations.

John Treharne, CEO of The Gym Group, told *Health Club Management*: “We’ve significantly increased our



The Gym Group acquired 18 Lifestyle Fitness clubs in 2017 and also opened 21 new sites in the same year

market share in the low-cost sector and we’ll continue to use our covenant strength to grow the business and we plan to open 15 to 20 more gyms this year.”

The Gym Group’s revenue grew by 24.3 per cent compared with 2016, driven by an increase in membership of 35.5 per cent.

More: http://lei.sr?a=y3K8d_H



Launched in 2004, YourZone45 began franchising in 2015

Boutique franchise YourZone45 to ramp up expansion plans

Fitness franchise YourZone45 is planning to open eight studios this year, starting with a flagship gym in Greenwich, London in March.

Launched in 2004, YourZone45 began its franchise operation in 2015 and has four studios in Bingley, Baintree, Colchester and Colliers Wood.

In addition to the Greenwich club, studios will also open in Woking and Southampton, while five other sites are yet to be confirmed.

“I’m confident that in the next 12 months we’ll achieve the targeted growth and have a number of established studios around the UK,” said YourZone45 founder Chris Elms.

Each franchise costs £70,000 (US\$99,990, €80,105) to set up and holds between 45 and 60 classes per week.

The 45-minute boot-camp-style workouts focus on heart-rate technology training.

More: http://lei.sr?a=F7B6X_H

Bannatyne Group introduces Speedflex to Scottish market

The Bannatyne Group has introduced Speedflex to the fitness market in Scotland as it continues to roll-out studios across its portfolio of health clubs.

The high-intensity, low impact fitness sessions are available to members at the group’s Dunfermline and Edinburgh (Queen Street) health clubs.

The two studios follow those at Bannatyne’s in Darlington, Mansfield and Couby Newham, with a further seven expected over the coming months.

“As a company, we strive to be innovative and deliver the latest industry concepts to our members,” said Justin Musgrove, Bannatyne Group chief executive.



Justin Musgrove
Bannatyne Group CEO

“With the introduction of Speedflex we continue to add to the investment and provisions rolled out across all of our clubs.”

Speedflex CEO Paul Ferris said: “Our ongoing partnership with the Bannatyne Group has been extremely effective.

“We hope the members in Scotland enjoy this fantastic fitness opportunity.”

More: http://lei.sr?a=q2F4F_H

Nuffield Health and National Marine Aquarium launch new class

Fish could be the secret ingredient for a better yoga, pilates or body balance class – if a new programme from Nuffield Health and the National Marine Aquarium proves a success.

The initiative, which launched in January, allows aquarium visitors to experience monthly wellbeing events in front of aquariums and fish tanks. It's thought that this may offer physical and mental health benefits.

"People lead increasingly busy lives, so public aquariums can help provide valuable calming experiences," said Josh McCarty, head of marketing at the aquarium.

He added: "Combining meditative exercise with the aquarium environment for the Nuffield Health sessions is a great combination and we hope those taking part will feel the restorative benefits."

Research carried out in 2015 by the National Marine Aquarium, Plymouth University and the University of Exeter found that looking at aquarium displays can lead to reductions in blood pressure and heart rate. In addition, higher numbers of fish helped to hold people's attention for longer and improve their moods.

Daniel Lewis, deputy general manager at Nuffield

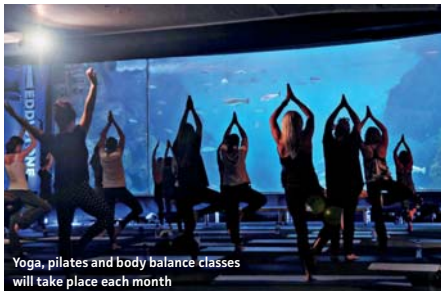


PHOTO: NATIONAL MARINE AQUARIUM

Health Plymouth, said: "All participants are really engaged and love the opportunity to try the classes they enjoy in a unique setting."

The classes accommodate up to 60 people and cost £5 (US\$7.10, €5.70) per person.

More: http://lei.sr?a=8a4d4_H

Exercise intervention programme to help arthritis sufferers

A six-week exercise programme to help relieve pain for people with arthritis will be tested across a UK county to see if it can be used nationwide.

Following successful small-scale trials, Dorset will become the first county to test the initiative, called ESCAPE-pain, which integrates educational

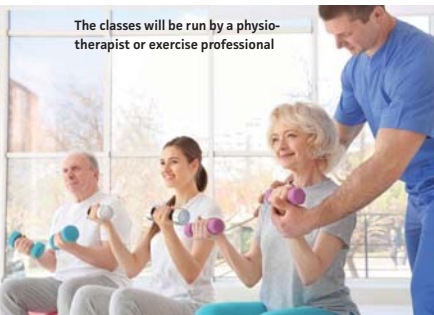


Physical activity is one of the ways we can really make a difference to community health

Mike Lyons



The classes will be run by a physio-therapist or exercise professional



self-management and coping strategies with a personalised exercise regimen for people with chronic joint pain.

Up to 10 million people in the UK suffer from arthritis and estimates show that in Dorset up to 66,000 residents aged over 45 suffer from pain caused by hip or knee osteoarthritis.

Classes will be run by a physiotherapist or qualified exercise professional and will

be delivered across six venues by Active 4 Health and BH Live.

Mike Lyons, BH Live's director of sport and leisure, said:

"Physical activity is one of the ways we can really make a difference to community health.

"We encourage anyone affected by hip or knee osteoarthritis to get in touch to discover how we can help manage their symptoms."

More: http://lei.sr?a=T4s5f_H

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



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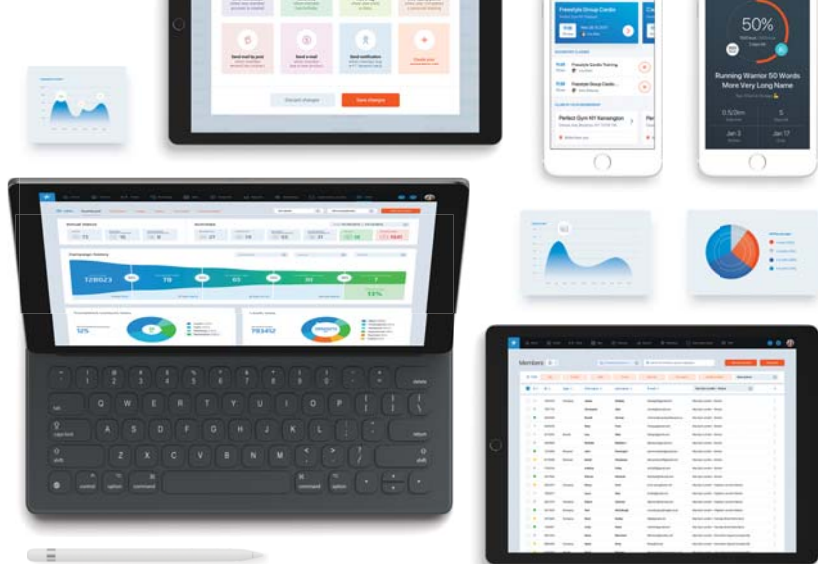
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Fitness app Sweatcoin receives US\$5.7m backing

A fitness app that rewards people who are physically active has secured financial backing of US\$5.7m (£4.1m, €4.7m) to help boost its presence globally.

Sweatcoin has received "seed funding" from Silicon Valley and European investors to help grow its next-generation

health and fitness app, which uses a smartphone's GPS and onboard accelerometer to track movement.

The free app pays people who are physically active through sweatcoins and converts individuals' outdoor steps into currency that can be used to buy gadgets, sports and fitness gear, services and



We are thrilled that our mission to create an entire Movement Economy powered by people's physical activity has been embraced by users and visionaries alike

Anton Derlyatka



Sweatcoin co-founders Oleg Fomenko and Anton Derlyatka

experiences from more than 300 retailers and lifestyle brands, including Boohoo.com, Graze and Hellofresh.

"We are thrilled that our mission to create an entire Movement Economy powered

by people's physical activity has been embraced by users and visionaries alike," said Anton Derlyatka, one of Sweatcoin's co-founders.

More: http://lei.sr?a=b4M7f_H

Black Box VR scoops CES award for gym eSport innovation

Virtual reality fitness

brand Black Box VR has been named a CES 2018 Innovation Awards Honoree for its resistance-based fitness technology system.

The Black Box VR studio has developed a fully automated cable resistance machine that integrates VR hardware and virtual eSport software.

The system uses an intense, time-dilated, custom workout while immersing users in challenging, gamified and competitive virtual reality fitness experiences, powered by HTC Vive software.

"In Black Box you'll utilise strength, agility, balance and speed in a larger than life virtual

world where we are able to harness the nature that is brought out in video games – dedication, determination, and longevity – and turn it into real, physical workouts that challenge both mind and body," said Preston Lewis, CCO of Black Box VR.

The business was founded in 2016 by Lewis and Ryan DeLuca, who had already built Bodybuilding.com into a major supplement retailer, with nearly US\$500m (£369.55m, £370.55m) in annual sales.

DeLuca, CEO of Black Box VR, said: "We are proud to have been honoured with a CES Innovation Award."

More: http://lei.sr?a=g5Z6V_H



The gym system uses an automated cable resistance machine that integrates VR hardware and eSport software

Steve Mann joins Places for People in new community role

Steve Mann has been appointed to the newly created position of head of healthy communities at social enterprise Places for People Leisure.

The research director has spent the past seven years working at the ukactive Research Institute, leading pioneering studies on how physical activity could be an

effective health intervention when delivered within communities.

"The role of leisure services has evolved, with facilities playing an important part in tackling health inequalities as they're often at the heart of local communities," said Mann.

"I'm excited to work more closely within the wide spread of local authority communities that Places for People Leisure partner and will be focusing on getting more of the inactive active through innovative solutions that really make a difference to individuals."

Places for People supports 36 local authority partners in the UK, managing 117 leisure centres and six Places Gyms.

“

I'm excited to work more closely within the wide spread of local authority communities that Places for People Leisure partner

Steve Mann

Rich Millard, partnership director at Places for People, said: "This exciting new role will mean we can support our local authority partners within their communities, and help tackle prevalent health issues through integrated health solutions accessible to all and based on the needs of the locality."

More: http://lei.sr?a=B9t3x_H

Steve Mann has helped shape the work of the ukactive Research Institute for the past seven years



PilatesPT founder partners with Mandarin Oriental London

Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group has teamed up with Hollie Grant – the founder of PilatesPT – to offer a menu of bespoke holistic wellness and fitness programmes at its Hyde Park property in London.

Grant begins her residence at the hotel this month, with the programmes being offered at the hotel's new PilatesPT Studio, housed within the wellbeing and fitness centre.

She is renowned for having created the Model Method, which combines HIIT training and Pilates for a results-driven wellness regime.

"I'm excited to take up a residency within such a highly regarded hotel," said Grant, who currently operates a PilatesPT-branded studio in Fulham.

"I cannot think of a more perfect location to open our second studio and I look forward to working with Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park, London, to help spread our message to a greater audience through our bespoke training sessions and workshops."

During her residence at Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park, Grant will offer three different programmes targeting men and women.

Grant, founder of PilatesPT, will take up residence at the hotel on 5 February



As well as the Model Method, she will lead classes in reformer pilates – a machine-based Pilates workout carried out in a private fitness suite – as well as offering traditional personal training.

Last year, Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group commissioned interior designer Joyce Wang to lead a multi-million-pound restoration of the hotel.

More: http://lei.sr?a=E2H4g_H



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FEBRUARY 2018

20-21 | Quest NBS and CIMSPA Conferences Chesford Grange, Warwick, UK

The keynote speaker at Quest NBS is Natalie Summers, co-founder of BG Epic Training and Bear Grylls' Personal Trainer. The 2017 event attracted more than 300 leisure industry professionals. www.questnbs.org

21-25 | ACSM Team Physician Course Sheraton San Diego Hotel, San Diego, CA, US

This course gives primary care, specialist physicians and other healthcare providers the knowledge needed to care for sports teams in the community. Presentations include new perspectives in the orthopedic, primary care and emergency medicine aspects of sports medicine and athlete care. www.acsm.org



MoonWalk participants are encouraged to decorate their bras

CHARITY CHALLENGE

12 May 2018 | The MoonWalk, Clapham Common, London

MoonWalk London is the original night walk, in which everybody – women and men – walks in a bra to raise awareness and funds for breast cancer. This year features a Wild West theme, with bras to be decorated accordingly.

Choose from walking the Full Moon Marathon (26.2 mi) or the Half Moon (15.1 mi) and see London's famous landmarks at night!

Registration is £49.50, which includes t-shirt, cap, bra, food and more.

Participants are also encouraged to help raise extra funds for the cause.

www.walkthewalk.org



The challenge takes participants through rural India

CHARITY CHALLENGE

2-11 March 2018 | India Golden Triangle Cycle Challenge, Rajasthan, India

Ride through Rajasthan, a region offering dramatic desert landscapes, fantastic wildlife, exquisite forts, bustling cities and a peek into the rural life of the locals.

The ride takes you across 500 km of varied terrain, and along the way you'll visit the Taj Mahal, join a sunrise safari at Ranthambore National Park and finish with a traditional banquet at the Maharaja's Old Palace in Jaipur.

Registration is £375 and participants are asked to raise funds for Railway Children, a charity that helps children living on the streets.

www.charitychallenge.com

21-23 | ForumClub-Forum Piscine Gallery, Fiera di Bologna, Bologna, Italy

For those who design, build and refurbish private, public and commercial fitness clubs, pools, wellness centres and spas.

www.forumclub.it

25-26 | Professional Beauty London ExCeL, London, UK

Showcasing skincare, spa, nail, beauty equipment, medical beauty and tanning.

www.professionalbeauty.co.uk/e/London

MARCH

1-4 | IDEA Personal Trainer Institute East Coast Alexandria, VA, USA

The industry event for personal trainers, fitness professionals, owners and managers aiming to ramp up the success of their fitness business.

www.idealift.com/fitness-conferences

5 | SMME International Wembley Stadium, London, UK

Provides a platform to network and strike up partnerships with some of the biggest sports clubs, associations and universities in the UK and beyond.

www.smmexevent.com

STEEN ALBRECHTSLUND

The CEO of Danish operator Fitness World talks to **Kate Cracknell** about his plans for a business that already counts 12 per cent of Danes as members

“When I joined Fitness World back in October 2015, I was surprised by the lack of differentiation between the brands in the market,” comments Steen Albrechtslund, CEO of Denmark’s largest health club chain, Fitness World. “There are the high-end boutiques that tell their own compelling story, but among the big chains – whether you’re in Europe, Asia or the US – there’s very little differentiation, very little attempt to tell a branded story within the four walls of the club compared to other retail sectors, such as apparel.”

He continues: “I came to Fitness World directly from a retail role and with a very strong retail background that

included running my own watch and jewellery company, which we ultimately sold to Fossil. In that business, we had our own branded channels – hundreds of our own retail outlets – and we very, very carefully managed the brand experience within those outlets.

“That’s the approach I’m now trying to apply here at Fitness World, because in my mind, we aren’t fitness operators. We’re health and fitness retailers.

LEARNING FROM RETAIL

He continues: “We’re setting out to tell a distinctive story in our clubs, including using signature colours, décor and equipment. We want to create a branded



Albrechtslund uses retail analytics to establish which classes are most popular, and schedule more of these

“ Think about when you go into a theatre – how you're catapulted into the environment and the experience. That's what we're trying to achieve from a consumer perspective





Fitness World offers a wide variety of class types, from group strength training to HIIT and cardio

- environment that strengthens the member experience, that has an impact the moment you come into the club. Think about when you go into a theatre – how you're catapulted into the environment and the experience. That's what we're trying to achieve from a consumer perspective in our clubs.

SPACE OPTIMISATION

"On the operational side of things, I'm extremely focused on the idea of space optimisation. When I travel around, both to other operators' clubs and to our own, I see a lot of high-value space being wasted.

"In retail, you have to optimise space by selling what sells best. That sounds pretty obvious, but ask yourself this: do you really analyse what sells best? In retail, you have people whose entire job is to analyse what SKUs are being sold and what SKUs aren't selling. The latter you remove from the retail space, replacing them with the former – and you also product/develop the former, so you have exactly the right colours, right price point, right materials and so on.

"You can apply exactly the same principle in fitness retail. Here, the SKU is the type of equipment. If you have a club profile where people are more into cardio, but a lot of the space is taken up by weights, that's not optimised.

"Similarly in the studio, do we have the right SKUs in terms of classes – which ones are popular in that location and which aren't? Get rid of the less popular classes and do more of what's popular."

THE ECOSYSTEM

This willingness to identify, and then prioritise, what's popular in each individual location has allowed

■ FITNESS WORLD FACT BOX

- ◆ Number of clubs in Denmark: **162**
- ◆ Number of members in Denmark: **450,000+**
(that's 12 per cent of the Danish population)
- ◆ Number of clubs in Poland: **17**
- ◆ Majority stakeholder: **Norwegian private equity company FSN Capital**
- ◆ Membership at Fitness World: **€25–30 a month**
- ◆ Membership at Urban Gym: **€15 a month**

Albrechtslund to apply what he calls an "ecosystem" approach to the Fitness World business.

He explains: "We went from being a single- to a multi-brand company in order to efficiently cover the market and tap into the different volume pools.

"Our core brand, Fitness World, sits in the low mainstream full-service segment, while our new Urban Gym brand is pure low-cost fitness. It's accessible via members' smartphones and has no staff or showers, just a small changing area in the middle of the gym floor – like you might see in a retail store.

"We launched Urban Gym with five clubs in the autumn of 2016 and we've now grown to 10 clubs.



Flagship gyms offer the full programme of classes, with the most popular then made available at smaller local gyms

They're all performing well ahead of forecast and we're opening another batch this year."

He continues: "In general, the Danish market is extremely focused on price – we have the highest penetration of all the discount grocery stores worldwide. That's why we operate in the low mainstream and budget sector: this price sensitivity, combined with the small size of the market, means it would be very, very difficult to create a premium concept with a lot of scale in Denmark.

"But in fact, there are three dominant drivers in the Danish fitness market: location, price and classes. We

“ There are three dominant drivers in the Danish fitness market: location, price and classes. We aim to own them all

aim to own them all. Location we certainly own: with it being such a small market, Danes expect everything to be nearby. We have 162 clubs, which means we're always close to wherever people are.

"We're also absolutely determined to own the entry price point in the Danish fitness market, as well as offering value for money across the board.

"And we offer the widest range of classes on the market, with about 60 different types of class.

"But this is where the ecosystem really kicks in, because it allows us to deliver even better value for money and even more choice for our members.

"Again, this goes back to my retail experience: big retailers will have a flagship store that has all their SKUs in all sizes and all colours, and then scattered around it are satellite stores in an ecosystem. These satellite stores operate according to the 80:20 rule – you only need to stock the most popular SKUs there because these account for the majority of sales anyway. Then, if someone wants something you don't stock, they don't have too far to travel to get to your flagship store.

"We've tried to apply the same model at Fitness World. In each of our ecosystems, we'll have one club that offers a wider range of classes and equipment, and then satellite stores – which might be Fitness World or Urban Gym – which only offer the most popular classes and the most used equipment in any given location. If you want specialist



Urban Gym is the company's low-cost brand

- equipment, or a more unusual class, you just hop on your bike and cycle a couple of kilometres to the flagship store.

"We've identified 28 ecosystems in the Danish market, with some volume pools that are still untapped. Obviously, when you have half a million members and 162 clubs in a population of 5.5 million – all living within a very small area – there are limits to your growth potential. However, there's certainly still room for profitable growth in the Danish market."

MOVING BEYOND DENMARK

"We've worked with a team of anthropologists to segment our market. We now have a detailed segmentation, spanning member age, gender and needs, which allows us to look at the whole Danish market to see exactly where we're over- and under-represented. That's a fantastic tool for us, because it allows us to create solutions that fill the spaces in which we're under-represented."

And it isn't only Denmark that Fitness World is fine-tuning its presence in. The brand currently has 17 clubs in Poland, and further growth is on its mid-term radar. "We want to have quite a significant penetration in certain parts of Poland that we find more interesting than others, but even here, we're looking at ecosystems more than we're thinking in terms of traditional markets or countries with borders."

Does that mean other countries might be on the radar too? "We haven't done any in-depth analysis on that yet, because first of all, we want to make sure we have a very strong platform for growth. I took over a very successful company that had grown very fast; we ►



Albrechtslund is bringing retail principles to bear on fitness

“ Fitness World works with a team of anthropologists to segment its market by needs, age and gender to identify locations for new gyms



Fitness World, which is backed by private equity firm FSM Capital, has 17 clubs in Poland and is planning to open more



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Albrechtslund suggests gym operators build partnerships with complementary businesses such as sports clubs

“ There are segments of the Danish market we’re under-represented in. We’d like to provide solutions to cater for these, but whether this is done via existing or new brands hasn’t yet been decided

► now need to put new systems and structures in place before we can embark on a new growth phase.

“Firstly, we want to have profitable growth in Denmark: there’s some low-hanging fruit here. We need to explore all the different volume pools, assessing the number of potential members, but also their willingness to pay, which gives you the value pools.

“There are certain segments of volume and value pools in the Danish market that we’re currently under-represented in – where we have a lower market share than our overall market share. We’d like to provide solutions that cater for these segments. Whether that’s within our existing set-up or whether it’s via new brands and new propositions is still to be determined.”

He continues: “We also want to ensure we have all the moving parts in place in Poland: our clubs are performing positively, but we’re not quite there with our branding and marketing just yet.

“Then, when I feel it’s all running smoothly and we have the resources, that will be the time to investigate further growth opportunities – identifying new ecosystems and volume pools that are attractive to us, and looking at what solutions we might be able to bring to market within those ecosystems. It’s all about finding the right spaces with the right solutions.” ●

■ ALBRECHTSLUND ON TECHNOLOGY

“The fitness business needs to be on its toes when it comes to digitisation, not only in terms of the member experience, but also in terms of avoiding getting trapped in the lower part of the value stack. It has to make sure it still has an influence over what customers are buying, and how they’re buying it, rather than being sidelined by new innovations that create a new market.

“One solution I see is for strategic partnerships: a big operator could team up with other complementary providers, such as sports clubs, to create one single subscription that gives full access to their combined services via an app. The consumer would have far more choice, while the operator would retain control over the experience.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Kate Cracknell is the former editor and now editor-at-large of *Health Club Management*. Follow her on Twitter @healthclubkate

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MEN IN CLASS

Group exercise is usually associated with women, and while men are welcome in these classes, they remain the exception rather than the rule. **Lauretta Ihonor** turns to industry experts to discover what can be done to attract more men to this type of exercise

As group exercise was thrust into the fitness spotlight by dance aerobics workouts designed with a female audience in mind, it's unsurprising that women readily embraced the aerobics movement in its heyday. However, the group exercise concept has come a long way since the 1980s.

Dance aerobics has given way to classes that are not intrinsically gender-specific and incorporate almost every exercise modality, from circuit training to strength and flexibility. Yet despite these changes, figures from Exercise Movement Dance (EMD) – the UK's governing body for group exercise – show only 19.5 per cent of group exercise attendees are male.

So why are so few men drawn to fitness classes? Is it down to gender differences in coordination or instruction-taking – both considered key skills for group exercise classes? Research suggests not. Male and female brains are wired differently, but brain scan studies repeatedly show that male brains are better designed for tasks that require coordination.

Perhaps the problem lies with the marketing of group exercise or female-centric programming choices made by class creators. Of course, the influence of personal preference cannot be discounted. But what do the experts think?

Ross Perriam

Exercise Movement Dance (EMD)
Partnership, CEO

This is a really interesting question and as the national governing body for group exercise we tried to answer it when we carried out EMD UK's 2016 National Survey. The results from the survey showed us that group exercise is extremely popular at present, with 3.86 million weekly group exercisers recorded. When we looked specifically at gender, we identified a big divide, with 3.11 million female group exercisers and just 750,000 male group exercisers.

Our insight indicates that this difference in the uptake of group exercise may be because a higher proportion of women (70 per cent) than men (45 per cent) believe that group exercise helps them relieve stress. Women respondents said they generally preferred holistic and aerobics-based classes as well as the social element of group exercise, with 30 per cent attending classes with a friend. Men, on the other hand, said they preferred training on their own. And when they do attend group exercise classes, they prefer sessions that focus on strength and body conditioning.

I believe that increasing the variety of group classes available to all will result in a steady growth in male participation in the coming years – especially if the industry places more attention on promoting the benefits of group exercise. EMD UK is helping new group exercise



"Men said they preferred training on their own.

And when they do attend group exercise classes, they prefer sessions that focus on strength and body conditioning"

brands enter the market every year, and as more strength and body conditioning concepts break through, I expect to see an increase in male participation. To further support this, we'll also be running a campaign later this year to showcase the brands that offer men the benefits they desire from a workout.



Broga is designed to help get men into yoga and is often held on the gym floor rather than in a studio

Matthew Miller Broga, founder

It's true that group fitness is heavily dominated by women, but it's encouraging to see that more men have started to participate in group exercise over the past five years. This change has come about largely because of the growing functional fitness trend. But despite this, the majority of men remain turned off by the thought of going into a studio and just won't do it.

It's something that I've experienced myself. As a former professional American football player and bodybuilder, I had many old injuries, no balance and limited flexibility by the time I left competitive sport. I did some one-to-one work with world-class female yogis and instantly fell in love with the effects of yoga on my body.

But when I ventured into a group yoga class, I was incredibly turned



"Operators should host classes on the gym floor, outside the gym itself or on an indoor court. Doing so will help to get rid of the belief that if a class happens in a studio, it's for women"

off by everything about it: from the expectation of a uniform level of ability among all participants to the use of clichéd language by teachers.

Spurred by this experience, I started the two-year journey of developing my own brand of yoga, Broga. It's based on mindfulness, building in intensity and never assuming that everyone in the class can already do everything. Yes, we're focused on getting men into yoga, but we cater for anyone who may think yoga isn't for them – women included.

I would have to say that the answer to getting more men into group exercise is to think outside of the box – literally. Operators should try hosting classes on the gym floor, outside the gym itself or on an indoor court. Doing so will help to get rid of the belief that if a class happens in a studio, it's for women. We do this a lot with Broga by holding yoga classes on the gym floor. The end result is that the guys are eased into a studio space for other classes on the timetable without even realising it!



Results-driven classes like Grid and Heat are popular with women and men

► **Israel Rivera**
Virgin Active UK, head of group exercise

While many women tend to turn to exercise for fat loss, men often prioritise strength and muscle gains. Group exercise participation begins with mindset and the reality is that group exercise is generally not perceived as being as results-focused as functional training. I think that this perception is the main reason why men can be more hesitant to participate in group fitness classes than women.

When I joined Virgin Active UK, I noticed an interesting gender divide when I looked at our group fitness programming. Our strength, cycling and signature classes are often evenly split between female and male participants. Mind body classes are still female dominant, but



we're beginning to see a gradual increase in male participation, specifically in yoga and Pilates classes. Group fitness will always offer participants the benefit of variety to keep things fun and challenging, but I believe that if we can help male participants understand that group fitness is also capable of producing excellent fitness and strength results, they will readily come back for more.

"Group exercise participation begins with mindset and the reality is that group exercise is generally not perceived as being as results-focused as functional training"

We're really focused on this at Virgin Active UK, and as such, we've launched gender-neutral, results-driven classes such as Grid and Heat in recent years. By combining aerobic and strength exercises that can be adapted to suit a variety of fitness levels, these classes are doing a lot to show that group exercise is a challenging and enjoyable fitness option for both men and women. ►



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► **Steve Tansey**

Les Mills, head of research
and development UK

I believe it's the social experience, combined with intelligent, instructor-led coaching and guidance that attracts people to studio workouts in the first place, while the group environment motivates them to return. However, there are several reasons why not everyone is drawn to group exercise.

Firstly, some people feel that they need to have a good level of competence before they commit to a specific type of training, especially if their ability is showcased in front of a large group.

Secondly, some people think group fitness programmes can't deliver the results they seek. For example, if they're focusing on strength training, they may not believe group fitness classes can help them achieve their goals, but in reality, classes like Les Mills' Bodypump can improve muscular strength and endurance, as well as aerobic fitness.



"Some people feel they need to have a good level of competence before they commit to a specific type of training, especially if their ability is showcased in front of a large group"

We need to try to encourage both men and women to take part in group exercise. One reason is that we all need to train every part of our body in order to be healthy and group fitness delivers great total body workouts.

This means that we must educate people of both genders on the benefits of group classes. Strong role models are also needed in the female and male instructors who take charge of group fitness and instil trust in participants – they must believe that the instructor's experience and knowledge will ensure that time in the class is well spent.

Les Mills actively encourages everyone to discover the benefits of group exercise by offering a variety of classes that appeal to a wide range of individual goals and to both men and women. These classes vary from HIIT workouts, like Les Mills Grit, to the Bodypump barbell workout and the yoga-based Bodybalance, all of which are delivered by both male and female instructors.

It's incredibly important to the industry, and to the health of the nation, that both men and women feel the studio area is inviting and a place where they can rely on getting an effective workout. ●



Group fitness classes like Les Mills' Bodypump deliver a total body workout that benefits both sexes



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FITNESS FORESIGHT™

2018

Health Club Management's annual Fitness Foresight™ looks at the key trends, influences and opportunities shaping the health and fitness sector over the coming year – and beyond

NEW SENSATIONS

AUGMENTED REALITY

Operators have long relied on TV screens and loud music to keep gym-goers entertained and minimise the monotony of their workouts. However, the development of augmented reality (AR) technology is opening up a new realm of possibilities for health clubs. By allowing images to be superimposed onto a person's field of view, AR technology can enhance reality – adding sights, sounds, sensations and even smells that aren't really there.

This technology is already being developed for use in the attractions and engineering industries. For example, Disney

Research recently unveiled an AR 'Magic Bench' prototype that allows users to interact with animated characters, while Google has updated its Glass gadget, utilising AR to display instructions from manuals in the visual fields of mechanics carrying out complex tasks like assembling jet engines.

There's no reason why this technology could not be extended to gyms and health clubs in the future. Gym-goers may soon be able to feel the wind in their hair as they ride through the Pyrenees or experience the sights and sounds of an African sunset as they row down the Nile.



Augmented reality could allow fitness fans to exercise in exciting locations



Pills offering cardiovascular and muscle building benefits are on the horizon

FIT PILL

EXERCISE SUPPLEMENTS

The remarkable growth of the superfood and health supplement sector over the last decade suggests that consumers are actively looking for new ways to optimise their health. While weight loss and anti-ageing benefits remain the focus of existing supplements, results from recent mouse studies indicate that an exercise pill may be on the horizon.

Indeed, in 2017, scientists from the Salk Institute for Biological Studies in La Jolla, California, USA, unearthed a chemical compound that can increase

athletic endurance in mice by 70 per cent. Such a solution could be a game changer for the fitness industry, helping people get more from their workouts by being able to exercise harder and for longer without getting tired.

Elsewhere, researchers from Augusta University in Georgia, USA, have discovered another approach to creating an exercise pill. They've found that suppressing the production of the protein myostatin in mice increases muscle mass and improves heart health in the same

way as regular exercise. The focus is now on replicating these findings in humans, which, when successfully achieved, could set in motion the creation of a pill that provides the cardiovascular and muscle building benefits of a good workout.

But operators need not fear being replaced by such a pill, because myostatin suppression does not provide the full range of benefits associated with physical activity: improving mood, bone health, blood sugar control and fat metabolism.

FLEX IT

FASCIAL RELEASE

The incorporation of fascia release techniques into fitness classes and recovery sessions is set to grow as the importance of a supple fascial layer becomes better understood. As the thin fascial layer is responsible for the structural integrity of the whole body, when it's tight and inflexible, body efficiency is compromised – leading to long-term pain, poor posture and limited physical performance.

The beginning of the fascial release trend is already evident in active recovery classes such as New York's barefoot A.C.C.E.S.S class, Equinox's myofascial massage prehabilitation class RX, and Breathe London's Moving Stretch sessions, which all involve fascia release via foam rolling and resistance stretch movements. Watch out for a steady growth in such classes alongside the introduction of foam rollers and other fascial release devices into yoga, pilates and mind-body classes.



Fitness classes will feature fascia release techniques and equipment

Post-exercise recovery and wellbeing services could feature floatation tanks



PHOTO: FLOATATANK

► MAKES SENSE SENSORY DEPRIVATION

After falling out of fashion more than 30 years ago, floatation tanks are poised to return to the limelight as sensory deprivation experiences grow in popularity. Studies show that restricted environmental stimulation therapy (sensory deprivation) can positively affect body physiology, lowering cortisol and blood pressure, while increasing wellbeing and reducing blood lactate levels after

intense exercise. Unlike their predecessors (predominantly found in spas), we predict the new wave of floatation tanks will be in health clubs and offered as a post-exercise recovery tool and wellbeing service.

Sensory deprivation experiences will not be limited to floatation tanks. Expect a surge in the use of sensory deprivation within fitness classes as exercising for health overtakes exercising for aesthetics.

Based on research findings that suggest that when one sense is lost other senses are sharpened, early adopters are already offering sensory deprivation-focused functional classes. In Gymbox's new Blackout class, for example, participants are asked to perform functional exercises whilst blindfolded, with the aim of improving their body awareness, reaction time and overall proprioception.

STRENGTH OF MIND MENTAL FITNESS

Mindfulness has enjoyed good growth in recent years; however, it's a practice that's set to move from 'nice to have' to centre stage within fitness facilities, with its focus changing from peace of mind to strength of mind and resilience. This will be driven by the increased presence of the youngest generation, Generation Z, within the fitness sector as they come of age.

Generational analysts report that this health-conscious group considers mindfulness as integral to health and fitness, and as a result, expects to be able to incorporate mindful practices into standard workouts.

Expect to see a rise in physical and digital tools developed specifically for those interested in finetuning the art of mindfulness, as designers and operators strive to meet this need. Mental fitness apps are already growing in popularity, led by the likes of digital content group Lucid Performance. Its training app uses sport psychology principles,



Physical and digital mindfulness-focused tools will be more prevalent

rather than traditional meditation, to help users increase focus, self-belief and confidence. It's a strategy that has proven to be popular, with the California-based company reporting a 35 per cent weekly increase in user numbers following its launch in 2017.

Another area of change will involve the movement of mind gyms – originally developed to enhance work performance – from the office to the gym. Get ready to see people going to the gym to learn mind-sharpening strategies such as neurolinguistic programming.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

MIXED BAG

DIVERSIFIED BOUTIQUE OFFERS

When boutique studios burst onto the fitness scene a decade ago, most chose to specialise in a single exercise modality. From indoor cycling to pilates studios, niche branding and offerings have defined the boutique sector for years.

But as providers seek to hold onto the communities they have worked hard to cultivate, more will look to offer multiple studio concepts under one roof, ensuring that their fans have no need to go anywhere else to fulfil all of their workout requirements.

A case in point is SoulCycle. The pioneer of the boutique fitness concept recently launched SoulAnnex – a bike-free floor-based concept featuring dance, HIIT and active recovery classes – in New York's Flatiron District. And in the UK, London-based brand Psycle is leading the way in this area. Despite launching as an indoor cycling studio, the brand has now added independent HIIT, yoga and barre studio concepts to its portfolio. It's likely to be a matter of time before others in the sector follow suit.



Boutiques will spread their wings to offer multiple studio concepts under one roof

ON THE AGENDA

PT MEDICAL TRAINING

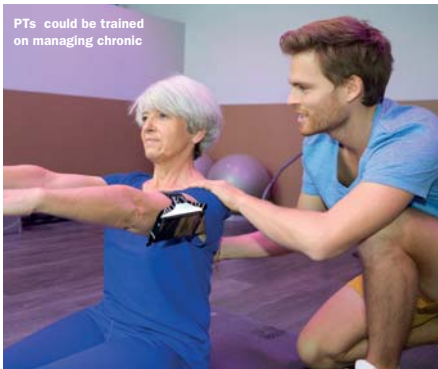
As physical activity gains continued recognition as an effective preventive health tool, medical schools are increasingly being called upon to place physical activity training higher on the agenda. As such, it's likely that the doctors of tomorrow will be armed with the knowledge needed to confidently hand out prescriptions for exercise, rather than just medication.

However, as tackling inactivity and its associated diseases needs both the medical and fitness industries to come together, the medical knowledge of PTs must also grow in the near future.

All PT qualifications, not just advanced specialist ones, could include training on common chronic diseases, such as stroke, hypertension, heart disease and diabetes.

PT education standards and qualifications are currently under reformation, led by CIMSPA, Active IQ and REPs in the UK; and EuropeActive and EREPs across the rest of Europe. As these bodies look to develop standardised, high-quality training pathways, the timing is perfect for the addition of teaching on disease aetiology, treatment and prevention to PT curriculums. ▶

PTs could be trained on managing chronic





Portable equipment like running machines will pave the way

THE DOORSTEP CHALLENGE

EQUIPMENT HOME DELIVERY SERVICE

Fitness equipment manufacturers are remaining firmly focused on developing innovative exercise machines that offer users better results, more convenience and maximum ease of use.

However, as machine iterations continue to increase in number, the savvy at-home exerciser who wants to keep up to speed with the latest fitness technology must overcome a big problem: a lack of space to store lots of bulky pieces of gym equipment.

However, it's a problem that presents fitness suppliers with the niche market opportunity of home-delivery equipment subscriptions. Fitness consumers can have the equipment they desire for their workout delivered directly to their door, keep it for a couple of hours, days or weeks, and then have it collected or exchanged for a different piece of kit they'd like to try.

Logistical limitations exist, such as machine size and weight, and this means that more portable devices, such as indoor bikes and rowers, are likely to lead the way in this field.

Nevertheless, these limitations present a key opportunity for manufacturers to start prioritising the portability of equipment during the design process.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

LIKE A PRO

EXPERT EXERCISERS

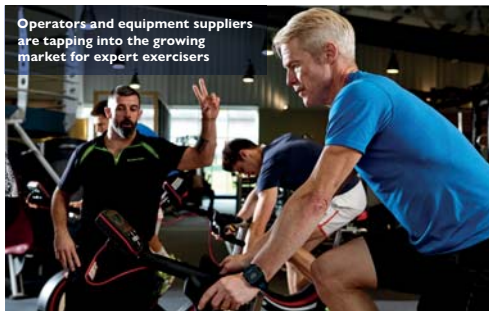
Technology is transforming the way in which fitness fans exercise by placing elite equipment at the disposal of the average person. Furthermore, professional athletes and their trainers are openly sharing their workout programmes on social media platforms, such as Instagram

and Snapchat – enticing mere mortals to try their techniques for themselves.

As such, training like an athlete is fast becoming a desire of gym-goers and we're seeing a rise in services catering specifically for expert exercisers. From gyms kitted out with high-performance specialist

equipment to fitness classes created specifically for those striving to achieve athlete-like fitness levels, it's a niche, yet growing area of opportunity for the elite end of the industry – one that London-based Metabolic is tapping into. Founded and backed by professional athletes – ex-premier league hockey player Lawrence Hannah and Olympian Denise Lewis – the studio's workouts have been designed using athletic training principles.

Seasoned gym-goers are increasingly looking for a challenge and it's not just operators that are responding; equipment suppliers are also tapping into this growing market. Wattbike, the indoor cycle manufacturer best known for preparing cyclists, rowers, rugby players and track and field athletes for world and Olympic success, recently released a home version of its best-selling indoor trainer, giving people at-home access to highly precise data-driven training previously reserved for athletes. As technology continues to grow more sophisticated, such offerings are likely to become more commonplace.



Operators and equipment suppliers are tapping into the growing market for expert exercisers



Recovery pathways for sport injuries among gym-goers will become streamlined

QUICK FIX

IN-HOUSE INJURY RECOVERY

With gym penetration rates rising across the UK, Europe and the US, and gym-goers remaining at significant risk of musculoskeletal injuries, operators must start to give attention to the absence of well-defined pathways for treating sports injuries among gym-goers if they are to maximise retention. After all, injured

exercisers are more likely to turn away from physical exercise if sprains and strains persist or recur.

Operators are, indeed, well placed to develop and execute the delivery of the convenient and streamlined injury recovery pathways that are currently lacking. Some will develop in-house musculoskeletal recovery

teams, with gym members given access to physiotherapists, sports massage therapists, chiropractors and other specialists housed within the gym premises. Other gym operators will choose to serve as tertiary referral centres, establishing databases of approved local musculoskeletal specialists for injured-member referrals.

ENERGY FLOW

CHAKRA WORKOUTS

As more people look to address the non-physical factors that may affect their overall wellbeing, spirituality looks set to make a move into the fitness sector.

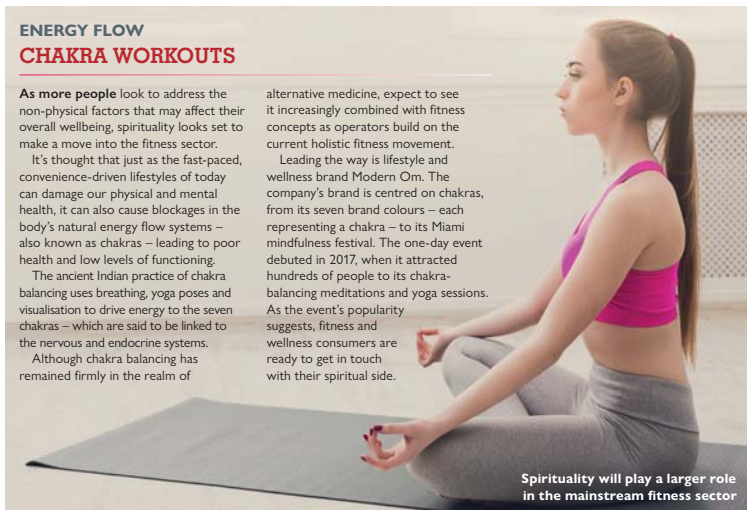
It's thought that just as the fast-paced, convenience-driven lifestyles of today can damage our physical and mental health, it can also cause blockages in the body's natural energy flow systems – also known as chakras – leading to poor health and low levels of functioning.

The ancient Indian practice of chakra balancing uses breathing, yoga poses and visualisation to drive energy to the seven chakras – which are said to be linked to the nervous and endocrine systems.

Although chakra balancing has remained firmly in the realm of

alternative medicine, expect to see it increasingly combined with fitness concepts as operators build on the current holistic fitness movement.

Leading the way is lifestyle and wellness brand Modern Om. The company's brand is centred on chakras, from its seven brand colours – each representing a chakra – to its Miami mindfulness festival. The one-day event debuted in 2017, when it attracted hundreds of people to its chakra-balancing meditations and yoga sessions. As the event's popularity suggests, fitness and wellness consumers are ready to get in touch with their spiritual side.



Spirituality will play a larger role in the mainstream fitness sector

CHILD'S PLAY

CHILD-LED EXERCISE

As **childhood obesity** levels continue to rise, finding new and effective ways of getting more children active, more often, will remain a focus for the industry. And with psychologists already drawing attention to the way young children naturally incorporate movement into play, its time for schools, leisure centres and even gyms to take notice.

Allowing children to have more influence on the design of their physical education lessons and sports and fitness classes is necessary if they're to truly enjoy physical activity and have fun exercising. With that in mind, watch out for a new wave of children's fitness – designed for children, by children.

Less popular activities, such as cross-country running or compulsory team sports, will give way to fitness sessions based on games, playground classics and imaginative play. It's a shift that presents opportunities for equipment suppliers, operators and designers alike, as the focus will be split between equipment-free activities – such as tug of war and sack racing – which make use of open studios and functional spaces, and activities that require specialist equipment, such as trampolines and climbing frames.



Making exercise fun is crucial for keeping children active

Leisure centre facilities are poised to rival boutique offerings



LAP OF LUXURY

LEISURE CENTRE LUXE

Leisure centres are showing no signs of slowing down in their mission to reinvent themselves. Faced with the threat of being made obsolete by the sophisticated, technologically advanced and often more aesthetically pleasing private gym and health club market, public fitness facilities will continue to add more upmarket offerings to their services, while also modernising their designs.

Local authority leisure operators are already venturing into the luxury market, with the addition of premium spa services, such as spa baths, ice features and salt rooms. But that's just the beginning.

Boutique studios offering cutting-edge fitness classes; high-tech equipment that wirelessly pairs with the latest apps; and shower facilities with amenities to rival premium health clubs will also become increasingly common – taking the humble local leisure centre to new heights.

While staying competitive is expected to remain the primary driving force behind the reinvention of leisure centres, the significant secondary spend opportunities presented by the addition of luxury services will continue to serve as great motivation to operators. ▶

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JUICE UP NATURAL ENHANCERS

As more and more exercisers look to take their fitness pursuits to the next level, the provision of safe and natural ways to maximise performance and workout results will grow in importance.

Operators stand to benefit from this upcoming growth in the popularity of natural performance enhancers as gym-goers often wish to consume them immediately before or after a workout – presenting an ideal on-site retail opportunity.

Look out for an increased presence of F&B products containing natural enhancers, such as beetroot juice – renowned for its ability to boost athletic performance and muscle recovery – and turmeric – which contains the muscle-healing anti-inflammatory substance curcumin.

Adaptogenic herbs, which help improve the body's response to stress, will also become a fitness supplement of choice, following the scientifically-supported revelation that herbs, such as rhodiola and Siberian ginseng, can help the body to adapt more effectively to intense exercise routines and recovery.

Growing demand for natural performance enhancers provides an ideal retail opportunity

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

PINCH PENNIES FREE GYMS

The arrival of the low-cost gym sector has played a big role in the recently observed surge in gym memberships, market value and penetration rates in the UK, US and beyond.

It's a finding that suggests that cost remains a big barrier to the uptake of gym memberships, and it's one that fitness operators are now seeking to address by simply doing away with membership fees altogether.

Leading the way is German fitness operator McFit. It plans to open The Mirai in 2019 – a gym in which users can train for free. McFit founder Rainer Schaller has said that the brand will bring in revenue through partnerships with industry key players. It has also been suggested that income could be augmented by cleverly using the space, which will sit on a 592,000sq ft (55,000sq m) plot of land in western Germany, to stage industry conferences and showcase fitness equipment.

Expect to see many more operators following suit, based on the success of The Mirai's free model, with each adopting increasingly creative ways of boosting their revenue. ●



Free gym membership is the hallmark of The Mirai



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lauretta Ihonor is editor of *Health Club Management*. She's also a qualified medical doctor and a health and nutrition specialist.

E: laurettaihonor@leisuremedia.com @Laurettaihonor [in/laurettaihonor](https://www.linkedin.com/in/laurettaihonor)

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A black and white photograph of a group of seven fitness professionals (four women and three men) posing together in a gym setting. They are all smiling and dressed in athletic wear. The Jordan Training Academy logo is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

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BARBARA DEN BAK

While the boutique fitness scene is booming in the US and UK, it remains in its infancy in the Netherlands.

Regardless, the co-founder of High Studios has high hopes for the sector and
tells **Kate Cracknell** that success rests on getting the model right

What's your background?

I worked in a number of media and advertising agencies in Amsterdam before moving into the fitness industry. I'd toyed with the idea of becoming a PT for years because I really wanted to make a difference in people's lives – and that certainly isn't what the advertising world is about!

In 2008, I qualified as a personal trainer and in the same year launched my first fitness company. It was an outdoor fitness concept called The Bootcamp Club. I invested six years in that business, which was an amazing period. We got into that market early and the company grew tremendously, with new regional franchises and spin-offs. But after six years I needed a fresh, creative challenge, so I sold my stake in the company in 2014.


How did High Studios come about?

I'd been following the boutique fitness trend since 2013. It's such a fascinating market and yet, to date, it really hasn't established itself in the Netherlands – even though there are currently a lot of popular innovative fitness concepts in Amsterdam's fitness scene.

After selling my Bootcamp company, I bumped into my current business partner Han Doorenbosch, who owns TrainMore and ClubSportive in the Netherlands. We saw an opportunity to fill the gap between the big budget operators and the smaller personal training businesses here in Holland. With this in mind, we teamed up to launch High Studios and we opened our first site in Amsterdam in March 2016. ▶



High Studios was designed with a Millennial audience in mind, and offers a variety of class types to keep them engaged



“ We'll be launching an international franchise programme in mid-2018. We have huge ambitions for this: we're aiming for 50 locations

den Bak founded a bootcamp brand prior to launching High Studios





The first High Studios site launched in Amsterdam in March 2016, offering classes and small group training

► What was the journey to that opening like?

People often underestimate the amount of work that goes into setting up a new brand. We spent almost two years developing and fine-tuning the concept before launching, and we faced a million obstacles along the way – we're still facing obstacles every day, but in my opinion that's what entrepreneurship is all about.

We wanted everything to be right, from the structure, product and location, to hiring the right people, our marketing, design and launch timing. And we're still learning and adjusting our offering based on customer feedback. Listening to your customers is key.

What is High Studios all about?

High Studios offers a beats-driven, high-intensity strength and cardio experience, delivered within a 45-minute group personal training workout. All of the classes involve three stations – Technogym SKILLMILL treadmills, plyoboxes and free weights – with rounds of 45-second strength and cardio exercises.

Millennials are our overall target market, but we offer a variety of classes to make sure we appeal to different interest groups. Some classes – such as High Upper Body and High Lower Body – are focused on specific muscle groups. We also have a monthly HIGH HELL special (the toughest class ever!); a weekly Runner's High class, with more interval training on the SKILLMILL for those who want to work on their running performance; and monthly live DJ workouts with vodka parties – it's all about balance, right?!

High Studios is very experience-focused, so we're constantly on the lookout for new classes, challenges

and collaborations with like-minded brands to keep our customers engaged. We try to do something different every month to achieve this engagement.

How has High Studios grown since opening?

In addition to our original club in Amsterdam, we have three in-house High Studios situated within TrainMore sites in Amsterdam and Rotterdam. Classes held in our boutiques and in-house studios have a maximum capacity of 36 and 24, respectively. We also offer private small group training for those who need more attention and/or specific training, such as marathon runners.

We've registered 6,000 users since we opened and average around 4,000 to 4,500 visits each month – excluding the numerous travelling expats we welcome.

Around fifty per cent of our members use High Studios exclusively, on a membership basis, with membership costing €90 (£79) a month for unlimited classes. The other half buys drop-in classes or packages on a pay-as-you-go basis.

Boutique fitness is a fairly new concept in our market and is taking its time to settle into Dutch lifestyles. However, we were cash flow positive after just three

“ People often underestimate the amount of work that goes into setting up a new brand. We spent almost two years developing the concept before we launched it



den Bak worked in media and advertising before becoming a health and fitness entrepreneur

“ I’ve found that if you offer a great product, pair it with the right marketing tailored to the right target group, and you remain open to feedback, it will eventually work

► months and we’re still a startup. We’re still growing in terms of members, visits and turnover.

As boutique fitness is still a new concept in the Netherlands, how have you gone about selling the idea to your target market?

I’ve followed pretty much the same approach as I did with my previous company. Bootcamp fitness was brand new in the Netherlands when I launched The Bootcamp Club. I’ve found that if you offer a great product, pair it with the right marketing tailored to the right target group, and you remain open to feedback, it will eventually work. And of course, I’ve had to have a great team of people on board to execute the vision.

We’ve focused heavily on creating an experience that our members love: from a nicely designed studio with fresh towels available all day long, to high-tech kit, complimentary toiletries and fresh juices.

But most important of all are our staff, with their positive, can-do attitude. Passion is the secret of our success – the passion our employees bring to the table. Without this, we simply wouldn’t succeed, and finding the right staff has been our biggest challenge so far.

What is fitness culture currently like in the Netherlands?

We have a few great concepts in the Netherlands. TrainMore and Clubsportive were the first clubs in the Netherlands with in-house boutique studios, and they are really progressive and innovative. We also have a few great new boutique indoor cycling, yoga and Pilates concepts. That’s in addition to CrossFit-like brands that have developed a very strong community.

In Amsterdam, fitness is booming, from boutique brands to personal training, bootcamps, CrossFit and great running clubs, we have it all. Outside of Amsterdam, however, it’s a bit more traditional with big low budget operators still dominating the market.

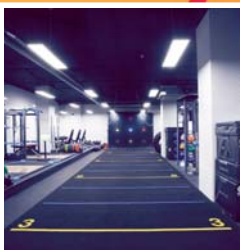
What are your plans going forward?

In the immediate future, High Studio projects include the opening of our second standalone studio in Amsterdam by the end of March, as well as another in-house studio in the TrainMore facility in Haarlem.

We will also be launching an international franchise programme in mid-2018. We have huge ambitions for this: we’re aiming for 50 locations. These will all be standalone studios, operating exactly the same model as our own studios in the Netherlands; we will continue to operate all locations in the Netherlands, with the franchise programme used for overseas development. It’s going to be an exciting year! ●

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Are independent operators changing the face of the mid-market sector?

The low-cost sector has dominated the industry of late, but are new mid-market concepts set to transform the landscape? **Kath Hudson** asks the experts

The booming budget fitness sector has resulted in clear market polarisation over recent years. Health club operators have increasingly chosen to align themselves with the low-cost or premium ends of the market, rather than sitting in the previously popular mid-market sector. It seems, however, that this space is being reinvigorated by entrepreneurial independent operators – operators that are keen to create an affordable and personalised experience for a potentially large audience of customers.

With concepts based on strength and conditioning, specialist sports advice, solid equipment and expert advice, but without a prohibitive price tag, these operators are proud to call themselves mid-market. They know and value each of their members and are focused on retention, rather than acquisition. And since they are independent operators, they're setting up shop all over the country instead of targeting big cities only.

Does this trend signal that a shift in the current market make-up is on its way? We asked the industry experts.

Louise Wylie

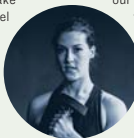
The Club Glasgow: co-founder

Surrounded by budget gyms in Glasgow city centre, we deliberately chose to create a mid-market offering that focused on affordability, good kit, a welcoming environment and excellent customer service. We wanted to create a community and make all our members feel they're valued.

There is definitely a gap in the mid-market and I think independent clubs are better placed to fill it than chains. We have full control over our decisions and we can respond to member requests immediately. We also have more freedom to

interact in a more personable way on social media, which is really important at a local level. At The Club, we work with local businesses to offer cross-promotions, such as a pop-up barbers, which beds us into the community.

As well as looking after our members, we have the freedom to look after our staff well. We're one of the few facilities in the area that pays staff for shifts and lets them keep 100 per cent of their PT earnings. Going forward, I think we will see more independent operators come into the mid-market, and a real demand for their service.



There is definitely a gap in the mid-market and independent clubs are better placed to fill it than chains

The Club, which boasts its own in-house DJ, focuses on offering quality equipment and good customer service at an affordable price point



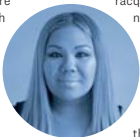
Strength and functional training are key offerings at Solan Fitness

Rachelle Solan

Solan Fitness: co-owner

Targeting the mid-market was intentional for Solan Fitness. We didn't want to be budget and we couldn't go high-end because we didn't have a spa. Our core values are strength and functional training in a boutique environment, and a hands-on approach to our customers – at a mid-market price.

We experience a lot of demand at our two clubs: the mid-market is a massive space that no one is currently dominating. The budget clubs have helped create a new mid-market audience as they're excellent gyms for introducing people to fitness. However, people plateau after a while and begin to look for more expert advice and attention to achieve better results. It's at this point that they're happy



to invest in themselves and trade up to a mid-market club.

It's not just former budget gym members that come to us. We also attract spa and racquet club users who

no longer want to pay premium prices for facilities they don't have time to use.

But it's true that independents remain limited by their inability to scale up. They get stuck at two or three clubs that need the personality, passion and energy of the owner to thrive. This is why we've chosen to launch a Solan Fitness franchise. We're systemising our approach and making cookie-cutters of ourselves, so lots of Solan Fitness clubs will all offer the same quality experience, but in a slightly different environment. We expect to have 15 clubs open by the end of 2018.

Independents remain limited by their inability to scale up. They get stuck at two or three clubs that need the personality, passion and energy of the owner to thrive

An additional strength of the independents is their ability to be agile and quickly respond to change

Stephen Tharrett

ClubIntel: co-founder

Independents have always dominated the mid-market in the US; the big players didn't evolve until much later. While some marginal mid-market clubs were chewed up by the club chains, the established ones withstood the threat.

There are a lot of successful mid-market players with a handful of clubs in the US. Their qualities are similar to boutiques in that they're local, tribal and build trust, but with the benefit of a lower price point.

An additional strength of the independents is their ability to be agile. Having no head office means they can quickly respond to change without having to verify their decisions with external management. Staff also tend to prefer working for them as they often offer

higher salaries and a better culture than the chains.

On the other hand, independent mid-market clubs have less access to capital than the chains, which can be a huge disadvantage. And if they've been around for a long time, they can become complacent –

assuming everyone knows them and thinking there is no need to tell their story. Or they run into trouble because they don't have a distinct brand personality or ethos.

Despite the advantages, the mid-market remains a shrinking sector because it's vulnerable to competition from budget and premium clubs. Although independent mid-market clubs will continue to thrive, I believe that they are too small scale to create massive growth. ▶





Independent clubs can tailor their equipment offerings to meet their members' needs

Sol Gilbert

Underground Gym: co-owner

Our clubs have grown out of a combat school and both offer the same concept: combat training, strength and conditioning, and functional training in a very personal environment.

We positioned ourselves in the mid-market because we wanted to be as inclusive as possible. We're in a price-sensitive location and we didn't want to accidentally create the type of elitist facility that high prices can encourage. The day may start with CEOs arriving in their Rolls Royces, but we also have many



students and other people who don't have high levels of disposable income.

People like the variety we offer and the results we help them to achieve.

Our focus is firmly on retention, not acquisition. In fact, we recently capped our membership and are running a waiting list, because we want to be able to properly service the needs of all of our members and get them to their goals.

Our experience shows that independents can use the opportunities the mid-market presents to set themselves apart from the club chains. ●



Underground Gym's concept grew from a combat school

We're in a price-sensitive location and we didn't want to accidentally create the type of elitist facility that high prices can encourage

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FIT TO WORK

With UK productivity levels trailing behind other EU economies, **Tom Walker** asks if fitness offers a solution and if operators can use their knowledge to improve their own productivity

The UK is in the grip of a productivity puzzle. Figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) suggest that the nation's output is so poor that the average German worker could go home on a Thursday afternoon, having produced as much as an average Brit who works the full week. In the time a British worker creates £1, a German one makes £1.35.

While the UK has lagged behind other developed nations in productivity levels since the 1980s, the 2008 banking crash seems to have hit Britain particularly hard. In 2007 – the year before the crisis – British productivity was 9 per cent below

the average for the 35 OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries. By 2015, the gap had widened to 18 per cent.

THE PRESENTEEISM PROBLEM

Productivity issues often arise from challenges relating to strategy or logistics – challenges such as poor management practices, outdated systems and run-down equipment. While such problems can often be remedied through capital investment and training, these solutions are less effective when poor productivity arises from employee absenteeism – staff taking time off through illness – and

presenteeism – turning up for work while sick or otherwise hindered.

However, the outcomes of an increasing number of wellness-focused initiatives now appear to suggest that fitness operators might be able to help tackle absenteeism and presenteeism.

Absenteeism is an issue faced by every business and one that can be monitored accurately. Analysis from the Centre for Economic and Business Research (CEBR) shows that workplace absence costs the UK economy around £18bn in lost productivity each year.

Presenteeism however, is a lesser-recognised issue, and it's one that often goes undetected by businesses.



Wellness-focused initiatives suggest fitness operators may be able to help tackle absenteeism and presenteeism



Existing data suggests that productivity is closely linked to employee health and wellbeing levels

According to Hanna Leahy, wellness business development manager at Sheffield Hallam University (SHU), presenteeism is an even bigger killer of productivity than absenteeism.

"Presenteeism is estimated to cost somewhere from two to seven times as much as absenteeism, per person per year," she says. "But it is near-impossible to observe or monitor."

"I liken it to an iceberg. Absenteeism sits at the top, where it's fully visible and easily measurable. But there's a huge hidden cost just below the surface that can't be seen or quantified."

According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), organisations are now becoming more aware of the problem, with an increasing number of UK companies taking steps to tackle the issue. In 2015, less than a third (31 per cent) of UK firms responding to a CIPD survey said they had taken action on presenteeism. By 2016, the figure had risen to nearly half (48 per cent).

However, while presenteeism might be hard to detect, it can also be alleviated – just like absenteeism – by improving employee wellness and health.

"All the underpinning science shows that productivity is related to health levels," says Leahy. "By investing in employee health and wellbeing, employers will see a ROI in reduced

absenteeism and presenteeism. The only question is to how to deliver the physical activities – as one size does not fit all and people's needs and abilities are different."

PERSONALISED APPROACH

For Leahy, the key to successful workplace wellness initiatives is providing individual plans that employees can commit to. This personalised approach is at the heart of SHU's own in-house wellness programme, SHU Wellness.

The programme includes an hour-long, one-to-one, annual health check. There are a number of physiological and medical tests on offer – from measuring cholesterol and blood pressure to a fitness test – but nothing is compulsory. The results obtained from these tests are then used to develop wellness goals and an action plan for achieving them: from going to the gym to walking or swimming.

"We've been doing it for about 12 years at the university and do more than 1,000 appointments a year," Leahy adds. "And it really does work. Our figures show that the initiative is achieving returns of around £4 to the £1, so it makes a lot of sense for employers."



All the underpinning science shows that productivity is related to health levels

Hanna Leahy

Wellness business development manager at Sheffield Hallam University

- Indeed, the scheme has been such a success that the university has begun to deliver it for a number of external partners and companies looking to boost productivity – from NHS Trusts to retailers like Next. SHU has also partnered with healthcare provider Westfield Health, which is “selling” the programme on behalf of the university.

SPORTING PRINCIPLES

While getting staff more active seems to do wonders for productivity, could fitness and sport be harnessed to increase output levels in other ways? Colin Wilson, Commonwealth Games medalist and co-owner of The Business Athlete – a company helping business leaders and executives improve their performance – certainly thinks so.

“The Business Athlete helps organisations to improve productivity using methods from sports and other high performance fields,” Wilson says.

“Our aim is to help companies create a high performance culture, but also a high satisfaction culture. Our goals aren’t about achieving short-term, quick win, narrow successes, but more about achieving long-term, sustainable success.”

BESPOKE SOLUTIONS

Wilson explains how The Business Athlete has taken 35 aspects of performance – adopted from specific principles or from sport – and translated those into a corporate context. Each can be applied at an organisational, team or individual level.

He adds that as all companies and their productivity challenges are different, they all require bespoke solutions. “A general rule of thumb is to understand what you can, can’t, should and shouldn’t take from high performance sport,” Wilson says.

“One of our principles at The Business Athlete is that each individual development plan within an organisation should be just that – individual – because everybody’s performance demand is different. A sports equivalent would be that you wouldn’t expect a striker like Harry Kane and a goalkeeper like Joe Hart to be doing the same training routine, even though they both play for England. Another principle that we use a lot is based on energy capacity and management. We want to encourage people to manage their energy levels and peak at the right moment.”



Aspects of sports and athletics can inspire ideas for workplace fitness

“For example, you could have a personal trainer or gym instructor, all pumped up and waiting for a class to begin. They might use lots of energy to get everything ready – maybe even going through the exercises. By the time the class begins, their energy levels might be depleted. That’s one of the things we can learn from sport, managing your energy so that you peak at the right moment.”



For a sports-related approach to work, you need to contextualise the methods to the company and its environment

Colin Wilson
Commonwealth Games medalist
and co-owner of
The Business Athlete

BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

Whether tackling productivity through wellness or a high-performance-focused approach, Leahy and Wilson agree that success depends on behaviour change.

“Just providing access to a gym doesn’t mean it will get used, because the approach misses the crucial step of helping people to change their behaviour,” Leahy says. “And that’s the biggest challenge for employers, because changing our behaviour is really, really difficult.”

“What we’ve seen that helps is a top-down buy in. If senior board level people say ‘we’ve put this on for you and we’re engaged in this’, it’s more likely to be seen as a carrot, not a stick. We worked with an NHS trust where the CEO was involved and promoting it, and the engagement was far better. It’s quite remarkable how it sends a message to the workforce.”

Wilson also underlines the importance of a focused, individual approach to help with engagement. “For a sports-related approach to work, you need to contextualise the methods to the company and its environment. You should start with the organisation or individual, then see how sport and the various sport principles could help. It’s not just about using sports psychology and expecting everyone to perform better. It’s about achieving results across the organisation, from top to bottom.” ●



Jordan is on a mission to get people moving and increase their energy levels

Q&A WITH CHRIS JORDAN

Director of exercise physiology, Johnson & Johnson Human Performance Institute (HPI)

The Corporate Athlete Performance (CAP) programme, which was developed by US-based Johnson & Johnson, takes techniques used in the development of top-level athletes and applies them to the corporate environment. Chris Jordan designed and implemented the movement and exercise components of the course, including the widely known 7-Minute Workout. An experienced international keynote speaker, author and performance coach, Jordan trains hundreds of corporate executives, including from Fortune 500 companies, every year.



Jordan's workout was showcased at the Global Wellness Summit 2017

Could you tell us about HPI and the CAP programme?

HPI was founded by Dr Jim Loehr, a sports/performance psychologist, and exercise physiologist Dr Jack Groppel. They initially combined forces to work on the minds and bodies of professional athletes to help them perform at the highest possible level.

They then developed the Corporate Athlete training programme, which teaches participants how to manage and increase their energy levels – physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually – so that they can consistently perform at their best.

How does CAP work?

CAP integrates performance psychology, exercise physiology and nutrition in order to improve performance and productivity. The programme uses a number of principles:

1 Manage your energy

Make the most of the limited time you have by bringing your best energy and being fully engaged in the moment

2 Energy is four-dimensional

The programme states that there are four dimensions of energy (physical,

emotional, mental and spiritual). Each of them can influence the others

3 Oscillation/Recovery

Energy expenditure must be balanced with energy recovery. This can be achieved by incorporating short periods of energy recovery throughout the working day

4 Stress for success

Stress provides the opportunity for growth. Too much stress and too little stress can both cause a decrease in capacity and performance

A NEUTRAL STANCE

Gender neutrality has never been more topical, with high-profile restaurants and museums recently replacing their male and female toilets with gender-neutral facilities. We explore if it is time for all gyms to swap single-sex communal changing spaces for gender-neutral facilities

An interesting change has taken place in many leisure centres across the UK in recent years: traditional open-plan gender-specific changing rooms have given way to changing 'villages' that offer individual unisex changing cubicles and showers. It's arguably an effective way of addressing the privacy and safeguarding objections commonly voiced when the issue of gender-neutral facilities is raised. But what about smaller facilities?

Many gyms and boutique studios enjoy high levels of footfall, especially during peak times, but often they have limited space – making the provision of numerous individual changing areas and shower rooms both an impractical and expensive option.

Smaller fitness facilities looking for practical ways to make their communal areas gender neutral clearly have a challenge to overcome, but some in the industry are already doing just that. We took a closer look.

Name: TRIB3

Location: UK, Moscow, Barcelona

High-end boutique fitness concept Trib3 launched in Sheffield in 2017, and it did so with a millennial audience in mind. With an ethos centred on creating a strong sense of community among its members (as reflected by the brand's name), while exuding a relaxed urban feel, it's perhaps unsurprising that Trib3 chose to equip its three UK-based clubs with gender-neutral changing facilities.

The company is in the midst of a Europe-wide expansion, and its founder, Kevin Yates, has suggested it's likely that the gender-neutral facilities currently present in the UK sites will be replicated in many of the upcoming European sites (see Expert Insight).



A gender-neutral changing zone helps Trib3 pitch itself as a brand with a strong sense of community



Name: SoulCycle
Location: US-wide

Boutique indoor cycling giant SoulCycle is known for having gender-neutral facilities, particularly at some of its smaller New York-based sites. In certain locations, such as East 54th Street, users are provided with a communal locker room – which is also used by riders as a changing area.

In keeping with its gender-neutral approach, the brand recently announced that its first studio in San Diego – a 4,000 sq ft suite that's expected to open in the Westfield UTC mall this spring – will feature four gender-neutral showers.

SoulCycle provides communal locker rooms for members at some of its New York sites



Name: Everybody
Location: Los Angeles, US

LA gym Everybody, which opened in January 2017, was founded on the ethos of making fitness as inclusive as possible. To that end, its founders – Sam Rypinski and Lake Sharp – developed its changing and showering facilities with an awareness that "people do not always neatly conform to a binary system of gender" at the forefront of their minds. Rather than encouraging members to choose the gender they identify with when preparing for class or changing and showering afterwards, the studio has a single unisex locker room and a single unisex bathroom with individual bathroom stalls and changing rooms.



Sam Rypinski founded Everybody to provide a truly inclusive fitness environment



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EXPERT INSIGHT

While SoulCycle, Everybody and Trib3 have found ways to address gender inclusivity despite being boutique operations, the question remains: is there a need for the whole industry to follow suit?

Kath Hudson speaks to two industry experts whose facilities have taken different approaches

STICKING WITH TRADITION

Kate Starkie

Nuffield Health and Wellbeing:
project manager

We've continued to operate separate changing areas across our estate because this has been the general layout of the clubs we have acquired and our members are very happy with the situation.

I think, as a nation, we tend to be quite prudish and have grown up with single-sex changing areas, and so most people tend to feel more comfortable with this set up. Women don't have to worry about their towel slipping with men around, and they can have a proper shower and get ready for the day.

As a premium operator, we're not as constrained by budgets, so we try to give our members what they ask for.



This includes vanity areas in the male changing rooms, which are as extensive as in the female changing rooms and include hair dryers, hair straighteners and moisturiser. In clubs that have a high number of children visiting, we also offer family changing areas, so children aren't sent into the changing rooms alone.

"As a nation, we tend to be quite prudish and have grown up with single-sex changing areas, and so most people tend to feel more comfortable with this set up"

Looking to the future of our facilities, I think we're likely to stick to the present format, unless we start to receive feedback from our members that suggests that they would like us to change our approach. We're also standardising our changing areas so that every club has the same branding.



Single-sex changing areas are preferred by some gym-goers

► GOING GENDER-NEUTRAL

Kevin Yates
TRIB3: CEO

Our target market is millennials and they seem to be very happy about mixing in the changing areas. At Trib3, we are also expanding across Europe and we've found that many European nations are used to the mixed-gender concept – many of the top bars and clubs, for example, already have unisex toilets and washrooms.

For gender-neutral changing rooms to work, there needs to be a large enough space for users to shower and change privately, and the room needs to be located close to the locker area. It's fine for makeup and vanity spaces to be shared – I think they offer a good place for younger people to communicate.

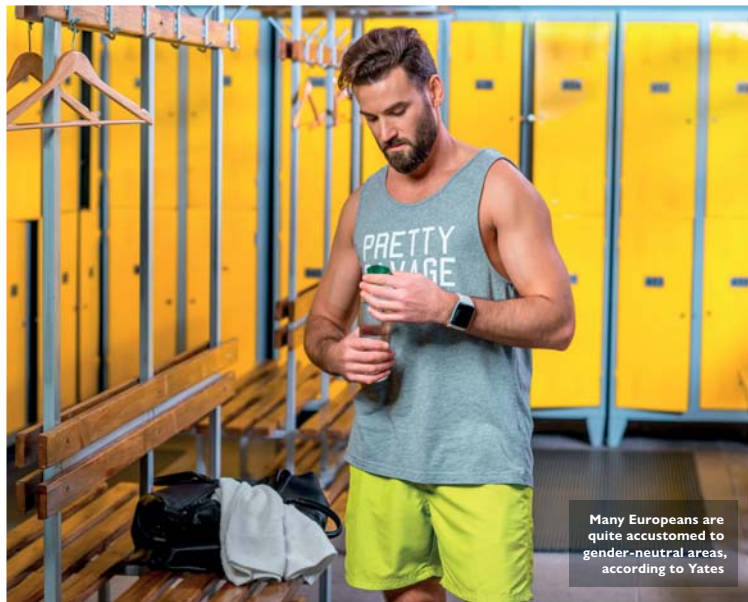
Gender-neutral spaces are cost-efficient and space saving, and they offer a

welcoming and inclusive environment to everyone, including the transgender population. They also aid the customer journey, as there might be times of day when there are far more women than men in the club, so it makes sense for them to be able to use all of the club's showers, rather than having to queue in the ladies' changing room, while six showers stand empty in the men's.



"For gender neutral changing rooms to work, there needs to be a large enough space for users to shower and change privately, and it needs to be located close to the locker area"

Where we do offer single-sex changing is in our Moscow club. We had to take a different approach there because it's so cold that people can't leave the club without showering and drying their hair – which can be time consuming. As they spend longer in the changing rooms than members in our other clubs, they want more privacy. We have also had to provide areas for hanging big winter coats and storing ski boots. ●



Many Europeans are quite accustomed to gender-neutral areas, according to Yates

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Workforce transformation

Legend successfully boosts employee activity levels by investing in Myzone gaming tech

The fitness industry tends, by and large, to keep fit people fitter – the challenge is adapting our offering, to appeal to and include all people,” says Myzone CEO Dave Wright. It’s a challenge that the leisure industry has long been eager to address, as obesity levels continue to rise in the UK and beyond.

As a technology company involved in the health and fitness industry, Legend recognised that Myzone’s wearable training technology and game-based platform presented an opportunity to lead by example by promoting better health and wellbeing amongst its employees, whilst creating a strong corporate team culture.

Sean Maguire, managing director of Legend Club Management Systems, explains: “We saw the Myzone initiative as a way of creating an advantage for our staff that was aligned with our corporate values. As a software provider, a large proportion of Legend’s staff are software engineers who spend their working days behind computer screens. We understood that without addressing their motivational triggers, providing subsidised gym memberships or wearable apps would not necessarily deliver the level of support required to motivate and achieve something truly sustainable.”



Myzone has had a hugely positive impact on us all. It has helped propel our employees into physical activity

Sean Maguire



REAL RESULTS

Through the symbiotic relationship of Legend and Myzone, many Legend staff have been transformed from infrequent exercisers to highly motivated individuals who now set and achieve their personal health goals.

Adam Brailsford, senior database administrator, at Legend says: “In addition to competing with each other, Myzone ensures that we can make good personal progress in the types of activities that aren’t necessarily easy to monitor without the belts.”

Since joining the Myzone rewards programme, Benedict Lindley, first line support engineer, has started running marathons; two star performers have logged incredible weight losses of over four stones each; and Legend’s workforce has consistently attained the average individual 1,300 MEPs required to hit the World Health Organisation’s physical activity guidelines – equating to 24,988 MEPs across the company or approximately 6,240 calories per person per month.

Through its Myzone initiative, Legend has proven that positive behavioural change can be achieved, and that community-led evolution in attitudes to exercise and fitness can be nurtured and encouraged. ●

SOCIAL AND INCLUSIVE

Making exercise social and inclusive was seen as crucial for creating staff interest and building a long term sense of community. It was with this rationale in mind that Legend turned to the Myzone platform rewards programme. The initiative provides a game-based platform and social experience in addition to bespoke and responsive user targets. By creating a personal handicap based on an individual’s maximum heart rate, greater effort is rewarded, which means everyone competes on a level playing field.

Myzone also encourages competition with other users through cloud-based challenges via a web-based account and app. Myzone effort points (MEP) leaderboards inspire individuals to train harder.

“Myzone has had a hugely positive impact on us all,” says Maguire. “It has helped propel our employees into physical activity. Overall, I’m delighted with the result.”



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University of Edinburgh opens new satellite gym to help students get and stay active



The new facility is located at the university's new Roslin Innovation Centre, just south of Edinburgh

Known throughout the world for its comprehensive multi-sport and fitness facilities as well as its leading educational achievements, the University of Edinburgh has recently opened a new satellite gym at its Easter Bush campus south of the city.

The new 250sq m fitness facility is part of the brand new £32m Roslin Innovation Centre, which has been specifically designed to support research in the Animal and Veterinary Sciences, Agri Tech and One Health industries, and is part of Europe's largest concentration of animal science related expertise.

POSITIVE EFFECTS

With continual pressure on students to perform well, the positive effects of being active have been highlighted by recent research conducted by ukactive's Research Institute, in partnership with Scottish Student Sport and leading fitness equipment manufacturer and supplier Precor. The study investigated the effects of physical activity on students' wellbeing and the results found that almost three-quarters of active students indicated that their thoughts about their future had changed positively since taking part in sports and physical activity.

Such findings spell good news for students at the University of Edinburgh as its newly opened satellite gym, along with the existing Pleasance Sports Complex and Gym, provides them with a means of working out at their convenience, while benefiting from cutting-edge fitness technology.

The newly-opened gym offers an integrated workout experience through networked cardio, which is maintained with the new Experience Series 700 Line treadmills, EFX with Converging CrossRamps and award-winning Adaptive Motion Trainers (AMT).

Cameron Ritchie, deputy director of operations at University of Edinburgh Sport and Exercise, said: "We were so impressed by the 700 Line's technological punching power, we're now trialling this kit to gauge member feedback in a live environment. It's receiving strong, positive reviews so far, particularly with the recent release of Preva 7.0 on the networked

consoles, which brings popular audio and video entertainment options, including Netflix and Spotify upgrades."

STRENGTH AND FUNCTION

The Precor Discovery Strength stations, Function Training Systems (FTS) Glide and Queenax functional fitness units offer students traditional strength exercise options as well as more functional strength training. The Queenax also opens up a much broader range of classes for students, helps enhance the gym's appeal by nurturing a community feel through group exercise and also keeps motivation high for students to continue being active.

Ritchie continues: "The Queenax is the first rig solution the university has bought and I'm pleased to report it's going down a storm so far. The local community has been blown away by the offer overall and requests have been made for us to run classes on it. We've already targeted the Queenax for our Circuit Blast classes and the team is now developing a Queenax-specific HIIT programme."

The Easter Bush gym location is convenient for those who move from campus to campus on a daily basis and ideal for a number of the university's performance athletes – particularly those in its rowing and rugby programmes, who also study veterinary medicine. The gym is also open to staff and students studying at the main University of Edinburgh campus, giving the university community access to high quality gym facilities and group exercise programmes regardless of where they work or study. ●



The Queenax is the first rig solution the university has bought and I'm pleased to report it's going down a storm so far

Cameron Ritchie

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The Wellness Company

Going high-tech

Technogym brings high-tech equipment to Roehampton Club as part of £4m refurb

The 2017 winner of the UK's Best Sports Club award, Roehampton Club, is set among 100 acres of parkland in south-west London.

The exclusive club features an impressive range of facilities, including an 18-hole golf course, 30 tennis courts, six squash courts, four international-standard croquet lawns, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, gym, fitness studios, and extensive catering and function rooms.

The health club forms a key part of Roehampton's offering and, as such, a £4m investment was made to refurbish and extend the facility in 2017. Phase one involved an upgrade of the outdoor pool and phase two consisted of a redesign of the gym and studios by Sparcstudio Designers to create a beautiful space that reflected the premium positioning of the club while delivering innovative technology.

"Technogym's top-of-the-range Artis cardio and strength equipment was the obvious choice to fit with the club's premium feel and experience," said Simon Baker, general manager at Roehampton Club. "Not only are the products beautifully designed, but the digital content they offer is really engaging and motivating for our members."

VIRTUAL COACH

Members can use the cardio equipment to enjoy virtual races, outdoor simulated environments, workout programmes and a host of entertainment options including Netflix and BBC iPlayer. The Unity Mini console found on the equipment acts as a

Technogym's Artis cardio and strength equipment is available in the gym



virtual strength coach to provide exercise guidance and real-time biofeedback.

"When planning the refurbishment, we worked with Technogym to gain insight into the current market trends and latest innovations. This ensured that we created a facility that had broad appeal for the widening demographic of our member base," said Baker. "It was important that we provided a variety of products that offer great choice for our members, as well as being effective and versatile tools for our personal trainers."

The club also selected Technogym's Skill Line athletic performance training range to complement the Artis equipment.

MYWELLNESS

Another significant new addition, Technogym's open cloud platform, mywellness, has enabled members to

track their physical activity across the club's facilities. Members can track their workout data inside the gym as well as other sporting activities performed in the club, such as swimming, tennis and squash. By linking their account to third-party apps, such as Strava and Runkeeper, they can also record activities outside the club.

Baker said: "We believe that mywellness is the ideal platform for Roehampton Club as it creates a seamless link between the many facilities we offer to our members. Our investment shows our commitment to creating a digital member journey that enhances the member experience and supports our fitness team." ●



Technogym's top of the range ARTIS cardio and strength equipment was the obvious choice to fit with the club's premium feel and experience

Simon Baker



The facility's refurbishment included a redesign of the gym and studios

Building a generation of global leaders



ukactive CEO Steven Ward discusses the need for a collaborative approach to solving issues in the sector

In the name of progress, we've managed to completely engineer physical activity out of our daily lives – with disastrous consequences.

This has made physical inactivity the norm in the UK and this in turn contributes to one in six deaths in the UK – amounting to 37,000 deaths a year.

The costs of inactivity aren't limited to the UK. According to the World Health Organization, physical inactivity is now the fourth largest cause of premature mortality, while the global cost of physical inactivity has been conservatively estimated at \$145.2 billion per year.

This is a global issue that requires a global response. The battle to re-embed activity into daily life is one of our greatest worldwide challenges, in line with the ambition to eradicate global disease and inequality.

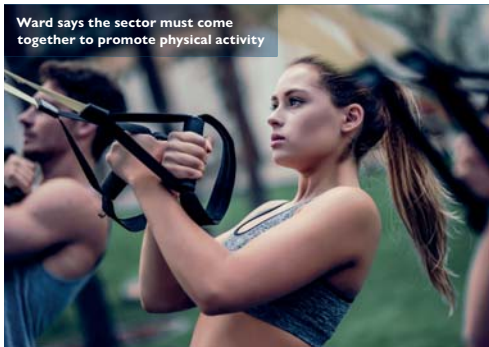
LEADING THE WAY

We sit at the vanguard of a global movement to turn the tide of physical inactivity. Our sector has the expertise and reach to lead the battle against this major threat – and it's time for us to take charge. To put solutions into practice at scale, we must align on what needs to be done and how. We need a brigade of leaders across the globe, ready to take this fight forward.

Our sector is full of leaders of the highest quality – but even the best athletes need access to a coach. That's why ukactive has established The Global Active Leaders Programme – to support the continued learning and development of the leading lights of our sector, as they drive worldwide change.

Every single person invited to participate in the Global Active Leaders Programme is a leader in their own right, running fantastic organisations, delivering outstanding results to their customers, shareholders and staff. But we must recognise that we all have even more to give.

Ward says the sector must come together to promote physical activity



Our sector is full of leaders of the highest quality – but even the best athletes need access to a coach

A COLLABORATIVE SOLUTION

The programme has already attracted sign-ups from 30 top executives across a range of nations for the three-day course at the world-renowned IESE Business School in Madrid. Global Active Leaders will support and develop this broad coalition of sector figureheads from across the globe to become the driving force behind the international physical activity movement.

There are top-tier business issues facing us as a sector that need concerted, collaborative solutions – the executive training programme will provide attendees with new perspectives and connections to drive their company on to greater success, building a cohort of true figureheads for global physical activity.

The agenda has been tailored to the specific needs of the sector, based on consultations with current CEOs, company founders, senior directors and key Government stakeholders who interact with the activity sector.

This year represents a real opportunity for physical activity providers the world over. Our mission is clear – we must turn the tide of inactivity. The Global Active Leaders Programme marks the start of a conscious decision to raise our game to meet this aim, creating a real and lasting impact on the global stage. ●





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IHRSA 2018



Kristen Walsh takes a look at what we can expect from IHRSA 2018, taking place in San Diego this March



San Diego, California, the site of IHRSA's 37th Annual International Convention & Trade Show, is often known as the 'City in Motion'. From 21 to 24 March, at the San Diego Convention Center, this will certainly be true, as an estimated 10,000 fitness industry practitioners and enthusiasts, including club owners, operators, developers, fitness professionals, investors, researchers and media representatives are set to converge from some 80 countries around the world.

From keynote speakers to associate members on the trade show floor, all will be there to share industry insights, ideas and fresh information about trends, programmes, products, services, club operations and business models.

More than 100 club owners, consultants and other authorities will be

overseeing the educational sessions, assisted by some 350 exhibitors, and aiming to help delegates to sharpen their competitive skills and advantage.

Delegates will also be challenged to examine their business, their life and even the world in a completely different way.

As always, the convention and trade show offer a fantastic opportunity for delegates to reconnect with colleagues and old friends and to embark on new relationships as they toast the industry's achievements and consider what lies ahead. The 13th Annual BASH for Augie's Quest, on 23 March, is an excellent setting for this. As well as being a great social event, this party also raises funds for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).

SAN DIEGO

San Diego is a beautiful setting for such a popular event, and is known for its

beaches, parks and balmy climate. "It's easy to understand why San Diego is one of our favourite venues for the convention and trade show," observes Joe Moore, president and CEO of IHRSA. "It has great weather, the lure of the ocean, a long list of must-see attractions, great food and a healthy fitness lifestyle. That's why we continue to return to the city and why so many people from throughout the world are so eager to join us there."

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

IHRSA 2018 promises more than 150 educational sessions, including keynote presenters who will each bring their own unique perspective and focus.

On 21 March, Lisa Bodell, the founder and CEO of Futurethink, will kick off the first day's activities with a provocatively titled address: 'Kill the company: End the

IHRSA 2018 KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Lisa Bodell,
CEO of futurethink



Leah Busque,
Founder of TaskRabbit



Josh Linkner,
Entrepreneur & guitarist



Isaac Lidsky,
Entrepreneur & author



“San Diego has great weather, the lure of the ocean, a long list of must-see attractions, great food, and a healthy fitness lifestyle”

Joe Moore, president and CEO of IHRSA

status quo and start an innovation revolution'. Futurethink creates training programmes for major companies, including 3M, GE and Johnson & Johnson.

In her speech, Bodell will propose that everyone has the potential to be a change agent, and will describe exercises to ignite innovation.

On 22 March, Leah Busque, who founded TaskRabbit, an on-demand service marketplace that was instrumental in launching the 'sharing economy', will speak on 'Making ideas happen'.

Busque started her career at IBM as a software engineer, working on Domino and Lotus Notes, but then, in 2008, she launched TaskRabbit, pioneering the concept of 'service networking'. She raised US\$50m in venture capital to grow the company, taking it international, and recently sold it to IKEA.

FROM IDEAS TO RESULTS

The next day, on 23 March, Josh Linkner, an author, serial entrepreneur, investor and jazz musician, will tackle the topic: 'Harnessing innovation: Turning raw ideas into positive results'.

A talented guitarist, Linkner combines business knowledge with the improvisational nature of jazz to offer a fresh take on unleashing creativity. The best businesses, he says, have developed a systematic process for transforming their team's imaginative notions into viable products and services.

Finally, on 24 March, Isaac Lidsky, an attorney, author, entrepreneur, consultant and successful CEO, will deliver the final IHRSA keynote address. Though born with a degenerative disease of the retina that eventually took his sight, Lidsky

graduated with degrees in maths and computer science from Harvard University at the age of 19, and, subsequently earned a law degree from Harvard. He co-founded an internet startup, which sold for US\$230m and, most recently, transformed a struggling US\$11m concrete subcontracting business into a US\$150m construction firm.

He says his blindness conferred a new 'eyes-wide-open' perspective on life that he now shares with others.

EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Along with the four keynotes, there are also lectures, tutorials, roundtables, orientations, summits, receptions, forums, 'Fast Track' continental breakfasts and IGNITE!, a fast-paced format that gives presenters five minutes each to make their case.

The 150-plus sessions during IHRSA encompass every aspect of club operations, including leadership, programming, exercise classes, supplier

seminars, management and operations, membership sales and marketing, customer service and retention, research and industry trends, fitness and personal training, health promotion and wellness, and technology and social media.

Furthermore, all keynote sessions and select educational sessions will be translated into Portuguese, Russian and Spanish. In addition, select keynote and educational sessions will be translated into Chinese and Japanese.

TRADE SHOW

The extensive trade show takes place on 22 and 23 March. The 2018 edition will showcase the fitness products and services of more than 350 manufacturers and suppliers. This not only provides an opportunity to examine and test-drive the latest offerings, but also to benefit from the expertise of company representatives, who are some of the most knowledgeable sources of intel on industry developments, trends and future prospects. ●

ABOUT THE SHOW

To access the most up-to-date list by booth number, visit www.ihrsa.org/trade-show and consult the exhibitor directory, or log on to the IHRSA 2018 app. This app, which can be downloaded to your iPad, iPhone or Android device, can also help you pinpoint and track sessions, speakers and special programmes in real time, navigate the convention centre and contact other attendees. To download it, go to www.ihrsa.org/app

To obtain more information or to register for IHRSA's 37th Annual International Convention & Trade Show, log on to www.ihrsa.org/convention



PRODUCT INNOVATION

Lauren Heath-Jones rounds up the newly-released products in the health & fitness market

Surge Storm takes hydro-inertia training to the next level, says **John Halls**

Physical Company has launched the Surge Storm hydro-inertia training system, an updated version of its Surge system.

The Surge Storm is designed to destabilise users in order to maximise their

training, increase motor skills and optimise movement. It is capable of holding up to 65 lbs (29.4 kg) of water and offers users more training options than the previous model. Users can also create customisable workouts by adjusting the water levels.

It features a number of restructured handles with which the user can target different muscle groups by performing a range of different exercises, including grip overhead lifts, single arm farmer carries and battering rams.

The Surge Storm boasts a sleek, angular appearance and is available in two colours.

John Halls, managing director at Physical Company, says: "Surge

Storm incorporates innovative design updates that offer new challenges in hydro-inertia training.

"Surge is a best-seller for us. People love the challenge of attempting to resist and control the water as it crashes from end to end. Surge Storm takes this to the next level and gives greater scope of movement to bring fresh challenges."

Users can customise their workout



Surge Storm incorporates innovative design updates that offer new challenges in hydro-inertia training
John Halls



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

PHYSICAL COMPANY

Andrew Kolman on the launch of Matrix Connected Solutions

Matrix Fitness is set to launch a new digital platform that has been designed to change how health clubs do business. Matrix Connected Solutions is billed as a 'new digital ecosystem' that focuses on a club's goals. It offers a range of digital solutions that can

be tailored to the individual needs of a gym or health club.

These solutions include: an asset management tool that allows operators to optimise equipment rotation by tracking usage patterns; a customisable interface that can be used for targeted promotions and branding; a workout tracking



Our digital ecosystem is built on an open platform, so business owners can use the data they collect to better manage their facility
Andrew Kolman

network that keeps track of member's fitness data, and a PT portal that connects members with trainers.

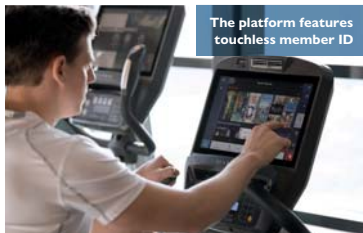
Additional features include Sprint 8, a HIIT programme designed to give users visible results and radio frequency tags for touchless member identification.

Andrew Kolman, global director of Technology at Matrix, says: "Our digital ecosystem is built on an open platform, so business owners can use the data they collect to better manage their facility. We also update the software we provide free of charge, so we're continually raising the bar for technology for the industry."

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

MATRIX

The platform features touchless member ID



Ken Reeve welcomes Taurus ISO series to Powerhouse Fitness

Powerhouse Fitness has announced an exclusive distribution partnership with German fitness equipment manufacturer Taurus – a deal that will launch



Professional athletes, leisure users and sports scientists were consulted early in the development and design process

Ken Reeve

the Taurus ISO series into the UK market this month.

The 16-piece Taurus ISO line consists of strength training equipment developed in collaboration with professional athletes and sports scientists.

The line is designed to withstand intense use in demanding gym environments and features a plate load squat, abdominal trainer, chest press, lat pulldown, shoulder press, low row, leg press, ISO row, rear kick, 45-degree plate load leg press, bicep curl, tricep dip, leg extension, leg curl and standing calf raise machine.

Ken Reeve, MD of Powerhouse Fitness says: "We're excited to bring the Taurus ISO series to the UK."



The new Taurus ISO line includes a shoulder press

Reeve adds: "The new Taurus range offers durability and safety even for intensive use. Professional athletes, leisure users and sports scientists were consulted during the development process to ensure

the Taurus products are fit for purpose whether being used by an athlete or a gym newcomer."

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
POWERHOUSE FITNESS

Dave Wright on Myzone partnering with Hatton Boxing to launch new initiative

Wearable tech company Myzone has partnered with Hatton Boxing to offer 'boxing for fitness' training sessions at Myzone facilities across its EMEA network.

Hatton Boxing will develop up to 200 different training sessions that operators can sign up for. Personal trainers and fitness instructors will then be able to deliver these sessions via Myzone screens.



The concept eliminates the hard work and science that goes into programming and simply allows the operator to focus on form and motivation

Dave Wright



Clubs will be able to offer Hatton Boxing sessions

Club members will be able to track their progress and earn points to achieve status rankings via the Myzone Live Display.

Gyms that sign up will be provided with staff training via the Hatton Academy's Fundamentals course, which teaches instructors how to safely and effectively incorporate boxing into fitness programmes.

Dave Wright, creator and CEO of Myzone, says:

"We're extremely excited to partner with Hatton Boxing and to display their world class boxing programmes in the Myzone system. The concept eliminates the hard work and science that goes into programming and simply allows the operator to focus on form and motivation."

Jon Eade, managing director of Hatton Boxing and founder of Hatton Academy, says: "We're really excited to

roll out our training sessions to the growing network of Myzone facilities. Boxing is fantastic for fitness and the new partnership will provide members with access to new training content and a means to track progress via Myzone technology, whilst also further expanding Hatton Boxing's reach into fitness."

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
MYZONE

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Extroverts prefer
to exercise
with others



Fitness personalities

A new study by researchers at the British Psychological Society suggests that personality type can impact the effectiveness of a person's exercise regime as it influences their preferred workout style, frequency and location

The fitness industry has long been focused on finding new ways to attract more people to undertake regular exercise. Yet despite the development of new and exciting initiatives, classes and equipment, many operators struggle to retain their gym members.

New research presented last month at the British Psychological Society's annual conference of the Division of Occupational Psychology in Stratford-upon-Avon now suggests that personality may play a big role in the way people like to exercise – indicating that this may be a reason why some people do not enjoy going to the gym, regardless of the kit or classes on offer.

THE PERSONALITY LINK

In the study, 794 individuals completed an online survey designed to investigate the relationship between personality type, exercise frequency and choice of activity.

Personality was defined according to the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI),

which covers four areas of personality: introversion versus extraversion; sensing versus intuition; thinking versus feeling; and judging versus perceiving.

The results showed that two aspects of personality – sensing versus intuition and thinking versus feeling – significantly influenced how frequently a person exercises. Specifically, intuitive personalities were more frequent exercisers than people with sensing personalities, and thinkers exercised more frequently than feelers.

A MATTER OF PREFERENCE

Exercise preferences were also found to be in line with the expectations of the researchers, Richard Thompson

and John Hackston. For example, the research showed that extroverts displayed a greater preference for exercising at the gym and with other people, whereas introverts had a greater preference for exercising at home when compared with extroverts.

Hackston said: "The most important piece of advice to come out of this research is that there is not one type of exercise that is suited to everyone.

"There can be pressure to follow the crowd to the gym or sign up to the latest exercise fad, but our research suggests it would be more effective for them to match their personality type to an exercise plan that is more likely to last the test of time." ●

“ The most important piece of advice to come out of this research is that there is not one type of exercise that is suited to everyone ”

Thompson, C and Hackston, J. Personality, exercise, job satisfaction and turnover intention: Are they related? British Psychological Society (BPS), 11 Jan 2018

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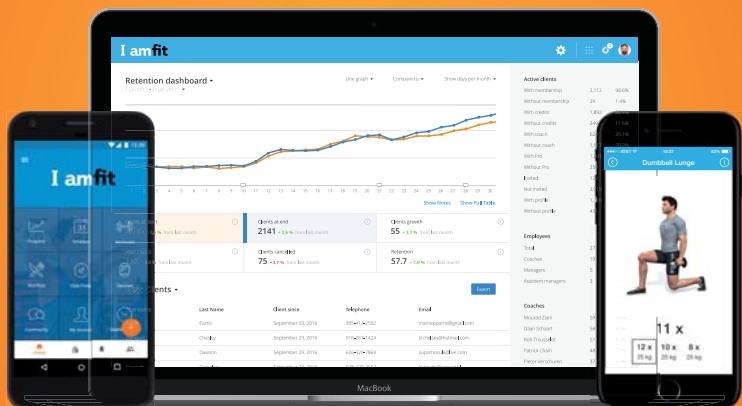


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