

# health club management

JANUARY 2013

INTERVIEW

## RENE KALT

The head of recreation for  
Migros Zurich on a new health  
club brand for Germany



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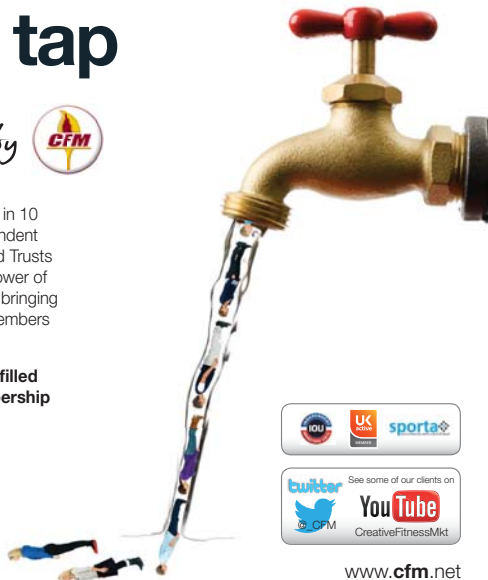
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# Medical breakthrough

Firstly, congratulations to the FIA on its rebranding as ukactive – a very appropriate choice in pushing forward the organisation's key message of 'More people, More Active, More Often'. The new name will open more doors for the organisation as it continues to broaden its remit into health, prevention and wellness.

We've known for years that in order for the fitness industry to assume its rightful place as a key provider of preventative wellness, we need to engage with the health service. ukactive's annual congress, held recently in London, saw an impressive turnout from the medical sector, showing just how far Dave Stalker and his team have come in building bridges with the NHS. Delegates were drawn from right across the health sector and participated strongly in the conference and seminar sessions, raising the level of debate on health issues.

Fitness trumps every other factor when it comes to wellbeing and longevity – you're better off being a fit smoker than an unfit non-smoker, and better off being fit and obese than thin and unfit, so exercise is the key to health. It's also highly effective in doing everything from preventing falls in the

elderly to treating mild to moderate depression and improving kids' school grades.

One of the industry's biggest challenges is engaging GPs and persuading them to prescribe exercise for relevant health problems, as well as prescribing it routinely for patients who aren't doing enough, but at the moment they're largely disengaged. This point was made most clearly by Dr William Bird, a strong proponent of the value of outdoor exercise, who told congress delegates he'd surveyed several hundred GPs in London and not one of them was aware of the Department of Health's current activity guidelines.

GPs get financial incentives through QOF (the Quality and Outcomes Framework) to prescribe non-exercise treatment for a range of health issues including asthma, mental health, diabetes, coronary heart disease and hypertension. However, in spite of extensive lobbying, exercise has failed to make the QOF list and in the eyes of the majority of GPs, remains outside their remit and training.

But hard on the heels of the congress came the exciting news that NICE – the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence – will recommend that physical activity is included in the QOF. This is a big breakthrough for the industry and although NICE doesn't have the power to insist this happens – the Department of Health and representatives from the medical profession are the ultimate decision-makers – Mike Kelly, director of health at NICE, in a recent interview with *Leisure Management* magazine, said: "Given the compelling evidence of its physical and mental benefits, physical activity is something we'll be pushing to the foreground as a candidate for QOF." (See *Leisure Management* issue 1 2013)

NICE has also announced a new set of activity guidelines around walking and cycling, advising people to make shorter journeys by foot or bike rather than car. "We've all got to own this problem," says Kelly. "It requires concerted effort involving the medical profession, government, and the food and health and fitness industries." Having NICE endorsing exercise is thrilling – and a great start to 2013 for the industry. Hats off to the lobbyists behind the scenes who've helped achieve this outcome.

**Liz Terry, editorial director** – [lizterry@leisuremedia.com](mailto:lizterry@leisuremedia.com) / twitter: @elizterry  
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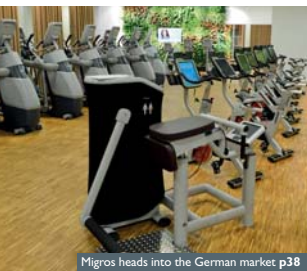
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### Buyers' guide:

For suppliers of products and services in the health club and spa markets, turn to p78



# CHAMPNEYS



# Champneys Health Spa Resorts go keyless

## with KitLock - securing their changing room lockers and improving guest satisfaction.

Champneys has four luxury health spa resorts in Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Leicestershire and Hampshire. Guests at Champneys resorts can relax in luxurious accommodation, be pampered with the finest beauty treatments and enjoy a wide range of fitness and relaxation classes. Each resort has a well-equipped gym, 25m swimming pool, sauna and steam room. Champneys has over 2,800 spa members who are regular users of the facilities.

### The trouble with keys

Before using KitLock, Champneys guests had to secure their changing room locker key to their wrists using a key chain. As many guests wear a robe to relax in whilst waiting for treatments and, as the key chain was awkward to wear on the wrist all day, very often guests would leave their key chains in their robe pockets and many of them ended up getting lost.

"The locker key and key chain kept coming up in guest questionnaires, so we knew our guests found them annoying to carry around all day," explained Alex De Carvalho, Managing Director at Champneys.

"Also, misplaced keys were expensive to keep replacing on a regular basis so we knew a more permanent solution was needed."

### Goodbye keys, hello KitLock

Champneys decided to remove the key-operated locks from all of their changing room lockers and replace them with KitLock cabinet locks instead. KitLock is a digital cabinet lock ideal for replacing traditional key cam locks supplied with many lockers. It uses a four-digit code rather than a key to operate and secure the locker. Guests simply enter a code, "lock and go". They are then free to enjoy the facilities without having to carry a key around with them.

### A more secure option

"The KitLock solution is more professional and, from a guest perspective, the lockers are now far more secure as keys are not left lying around in robe pockets," said Alex. "It's a smarter way to control the lockers and, to a certain extent, it takes the duty of care away from us, as the guests are responsible for using the lockers and selecting their own codes. And they look good too."



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# Write to reply



Do you have a strong opinion or disagree with somebody else's views on the industry? If so, we'd love to hear from you – email: [healthclub@leisuremedia.com](mailto:healthclub@leisuremedia.com)



Training instructors in functional training is just as important as selecting the right kit

## Instructors need more education in functional training

I felt compelled to respond to Rory McGown's comment in the October issue of *HCM* that "more instructor education on how to use functional equipment is needed to increase [customer] demand" (see *HCM* Oct 12, p64). I agree 100 per cent. When considering the development of a functional training space – either as part of an existing facility or as a standalone venue – investment in instructor education is every bit as important as kit selection. The two go hand-in-hand and should be attributed equal worth.

Instructors who have received training on specific pieces of functional kit will then be able to use it to prescribe an infinite number of exercise combinations. This variety helps maintain member engagement and motivation.

Functional training areas also provide instructors with much more opportunity to engage with customers than a traditional gym environment, as the equipment requires more explanation. Whether through the execution of small group exercise classes or one-to-one instruction, once trained, instructors have more freedom to demonstrate their professional worth.

But functional zones are only now becoming commonplace in gyms, and it's naive to assume instructors instinctively know how to use the kit to its full potential. Operators need to invest in their staff, and this includes ensuring gym teams are kept up-to-date with the latest training techniques and equipment.

**Scott Thomas-Fitch**

International marketing manager, TRX

## Schools must be practical about child protection

I was taken aback to read that Lea Valley High School in Enfield, London – a specialist sports college – has banned parents from attending sports events at the school under child protection rules (*Daily Mail*, 4 Oct 12). Even without my Right Directions health and safety hat on, as a parent who watches matches and acts as a swimming club official at galas, I think the ban is completely over the top.

Positivity on the touchline is hugely important. Why would kids put their all into a performance if there's no-one to cheer them on? I don't know a single UK pool that doesn't let parents attend a gala.

There are lots of easy measures that can be put in place rather than a ban. A school simply needs to be practical, with a policy that lays down what's expected and required of the kids, parents and other spectators. Alternatively, a rota system of CRB-checked parents could steward the matches. These events are held in such open places that any odd behaviour would be seen immediately.

Of course, there's nothing more frustrating for the referee than parents screaming abusive comments or crossing the line. However, in this case they need to deal with the specific problem. With knee-jerk decisions like this, we're in danger of losing our Olympic legacy before it's even got off the ground.

**Caroline Constantine**

MD, Right Directions Management



The right rules and checks can ensure safety for child sports spectatorship

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# Write to reply

## PT qualifications must teach people real-world skills

I read Scott Hopson's feature on personal training with interest (see *HCM* Sept 12, p54). While I agree with many of the points raised, I think there are more fundamental explanations and solutions to the challenge of making a successful career as a personal trainer.

We must first consider the environment newly qualified PTs enter. In the current economic climate, more gym operators are erring towards self-employed, rental-based models which guarantee revenues, as opposed to high quality service and continued employee training and development. This means graduates face a 'cliff' following qualification, having to fend for themselves.

At The Training Room, we've bridged this gap by being a full-service careers provider rather than merely a training company. You can have all the knowledge, qualifications and client skills in the world, but if you don't understand what's expected of you in the real

world, you're being set up for failure. We focus on an academy environment where students adhere to strict codes of conduct (similar to those of top club operators) and uniform standards from day one. We provide additional business training, presentations from large corporate operators and work experience during training to ensure that all our graduates are industry-ready.

I totally agree that making money from PT alone is challenging – we've always taught our graduates to work the different income streams available to them. We insist all our students study group exercise classes such as group cycling and boxing circuits, and also strongly encourage external income streams such as boot camps and weight loss classes. This leads to an interesting and lucrative initial career which can become more specialist in later years.

**Jonathan Davies**  
Founder & CEO, The Training Room



**Active Nation has a tiered offering to cater for different types of user**

### A tiered approach to cater for all levels of exerciser

I was interested to read the recent editor's letter, 'A broader church' (see *HCM* Nov/Dec 12, p3). If the fitness sector carries on delivering the same old journey in the same old way, we'll only get the same old results – and that's madness when it only appeals to 12–15 per cent of the UK population.

At Active Nation, we've torn up the rule book in a bid to persuade the nation to get, and stay, active. Our exercise experience is based around the real reasons, uncovered through research, why people don't commit to exercise: choice, variation, support and value.

Rather than pitching our starting point at the high intensity level, assuming that everyone is an experienced exerciser, we've created three levels of intensity – Discover, Explore and Excel – based on a psychological exercise behavioural model. 'Discover' is pitched at those who have never exercised before; 'Explore' is for people who have been exercising regularly for between one and six months; and 'Excel' is for those who've been exercising for the last six months or more. Each level comes with a huge range of exercise choices and an appropriate pathway for progression that also has synergy with our group exercise classes and personal training.

It's a solution that we find is welcoming new exercisers, but that's also flexible enough to accommodate high intensity trainers. When 70 per cent of new members each month are new to exercise, it's a route that we feel to be appropriate. The key to the success of our approach is in the diversity of activities we encourage people to get involved in: adding variety helps them reach their goals quicker and helps maintain their motivation.

**Stuart Martin**  
Group commercial manager, Active Nation



PT graduates face a 'cliff' following qualification, having to fend for themselves

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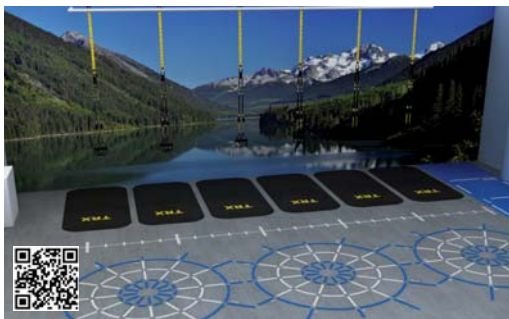


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## Walking and cycling 'key to better health' says NICE

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) has called for more emphasis to be placed on promoting walking and cycling to tackle physical inactivity in the UK.

Cycle use is lower in Britain than it is in many other European countries, a statistic NICE wants to improve by co-ordinated action to identify and address the barriers that may be discouraging people from taking to their bikes.

*Details: <http://lei.sr?a=25czh>*



The ukactive brand was unveiled in November

## FIA gets a new name and brand: ukactive

The Fitness Industry Association (FIA) announced its new name and brand at its annual summit in November (see p28).

As part of plans to expand its reach and become a representative body for the entire physical activity sector, the association will now be known as ukactive.

A new website has been launched ([www.ukactive.com](http://www.ukactive.com)) and new branding adopted to support the new identity.

ukactive states that its focus will be on a "long-standing and uncompromising vision to get more people, more active, more often". *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=H9B7z>*

## Study: Children failing to hit exercise targets

New research from the University of Alberta in Canada shows that children need just seven minutes of vigorous exercise a day to stay fit. However, most children fail to achieve this.

More than 600 children between the ages of nine and 17 wore monitors for seven days, which tracked their activity levels. They also had their weight, waist circumference and blood pressure regularly monitored. Shockingly, almost 70 per cent of their time was spent on sedentary activities, and only 0.6 per cent on vigorous activity. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=616is>*

## DLL to launch club in Worcester

David Lloyd Leisure (DLL) has unveiled a new £8m club in Worcester.

Located beside Worcester Warriors' Sixways Stadium, the club features three indoor and five outdoor tennis courts. The 5,600sq m (60,278sq ft) complex also includes a 25m indoor pool, a children's pool and a 20m outdoor pool. Two physiotherapy rooms and a wet spa area – including a spa pool, two saunas, a steamroom, heated beds and an ice machine – will also be on offer.

The club's 9,000sq m (9,688sq ft) fitness space includes three exercise studios, offering a range of group fitness classes including dance-fitness programme Bokwa.

Gym equipment includes Power Plate machines, free weight stations, and functional kit such as ViPRs. GRAVITY personal training



The 5,600sq m complex will include a total of eight tennis courts

and small group training is also available on Total Gym equipment.

DL Kids will offer a dedicated activity programme that will be synchronised with adult programmes. Other facilities include a Delicious cafe/bar lounge, an outdoor play area and a crèche. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=y0j4n>*

## Fit4Less to open two new clubs in London

Fit4Less, the budget club arm of health club operator énergie Group, is to further expand its portfolio in London with two new confirmed sites.

The group will open Fit4Less clubs in Kilburn and Enfield this month. The new sites will join existing clubs in Tower Hill and Caspian Wharf.

Rangel Sehalic, operations manager for the Fit4Less brand, says: "London is an important area for us, as the size of the gyms and the need for a concentrated population matches the Fit4Less concept."

The group has also confirmed a further site with the opening of Fit4Less in Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire in January 2013. Last month énergie Group open its 25th Fit4Less gym in Perth,



Fit4Less currently has 25 clubs open and is planning many more in 2013

Scotland. énergie Group also owns and operates the énergie Fitness For Women, énergie Fitness Clubs and SHOKKénénergie brands. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=x8n5C>*

## New wellness watchdog to be set up in Derbyshire

A new health and social care watchdog is being set up to improve the quality of services in Derbyshire.

Healthwatch Derbyshire will operate as an independent organisation and is set to launch before April 2013. It will replace the

existing Local Involvement Network (LINKs) The scheme aims to ensure that feedback on topics such as GP referral is collected and relayed back into the development and delivery of local health services. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=03v7a>*

Edited by Tom Walker. Email: [tomwalker@leisuremedia.com](mailto:tomwalker@leisuremedia.com)

## Budget brands join forces

Low-cost fitness operator The Gym Group is to partner with budget hotel chain Travelodge as part of plans to find 10 new co-location sites in London and the south-east.

The two companies will invest a total of £70m in the venture. As part of its expansion plans in London, The Gym Group has set itself the target of 20 gyms in the capital by the end of 2013.

Meanwhile, Travelodge is seeking to secure deals for an additional 50 hotels (5,030 rooms) by 2020.

The new deal is an extension of an existing partnership between the two companies: The Gym Group currently operates four clubs at Travelodge hotels, in Plymouth, Guildford, Waterloo and Wembley. Travelodge's MD for development, Paul Harvey, says: "The four co-locations with The Gym Group have worked enormously well for both parties, so it makes



The Gym Group and Travelodge will seek development sites together

absolute sense for us to look for, and secure, sites together. This really helps us with our growth plans for London and the south-east.

"Given the space requirements of both companies, as well as our compatible business models, it really is the perfect fit: The Gym Group on the ground or lower ground floor and Travelodge on the floors above."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=514d7>

## Confidence 'on the up' among managers

More than a third (42 per cent) of all senior managers working in the UK health and fitness industry are confident that the performance of their businesses will improve over the next 12 months.

The figure – from the latest Fitness Industry Confidence Survey (FICS), compiled by customer insight specialist Leisure-net Solutions, is considerably higher than two years ago, when only 17 per cent of managers were optimistic about their business' future.

The industry's confidence in improving primary income streams is also up – the figure has risen to more than a third (39 per cent) this year, up from 23 per cent in 2010.

However, when asked about the state of the UK economy as a whole, 40 per cent expect things to get worse and only 13 per cent are optimistic about the next 12 months – the remaining 47 per cent expect the economy to remain roughly the same. When asked about the one major challenge for 2013, 37



42 per cent feel their business will improve this year

per cent saw the economy in general as the main threat.

The uncertain economy and the rapid expansion of budget fitness chains has left its mark on the industry in 2012 – 59 per cent of health club managers said they had experienced increased competition for revenue in the past 12 months. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Rok3g>

## Vodafone invests in redevelopment of HQ gym

Telecoms giant Vodafone has appointed interior design and brand communication expert Platform to redevelop its employee wellness space at its HQ in Newbury, Berkshire.

Working with network of employee wellbeing services, Nuffield Health, which

operates the franchise within Edison House, Platform has been tasked with turning the gym into a dynamic exercise space that fits with the corporate branding.

The new space is spread over 1,430 sq m. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=K4U4p>

## Female-focused sports project Us Girls expands

Us Girls has launched a new national scheme designed to improve the wellbeing of young women in England through increased sports participation.

Us Girls Alive will add to the existing Us Girls sports participation programme – a female-only scheme delivered by a consortium of organisations and led by national sport development charity StreetGames. The initiative will support young female volunteers to assist in the development of Us Girls Alive clubs and to promote local physical activity programmes.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=2a9r2>



Xercise4Less has seven gyms in the north of England

## Xercise4Less secures new site in Hull

Budget fitness chain Xercise4Less has secured planning permission for a site in Hull. The chain currently has seven sites – in Bolton, Castleford, Wigan, Doncaster, Leeds, Wakefield and Stockton-on-Tees – and offers memberships for as little as £9.99 a month.

Following the blueprint, the Hull site will have 30,000sq ft of gym space zoned into different areas, including cardio, free weights and a combat zone with a full size boxing ring, a women-only area and space for personal training and indoor cycling classes. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=C2Y6l>

## Fraserburgh leisure centre ahead of schedule

Fraserburgh residents are to be given the chance to have their say in the running of a new £9m leisure centre, which is currently ahead of schedule and will be ready to open in February.

A public open day will give members of the community the opportunity to express their views on the facilities and how the amenities can be used to help as many residents as possible. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=r1W3z>

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\* In 2012 over 400 clubs took part with an average membership of 2,500 per site



## A million members to vote for club awards

Clubs can now sign up for the 3rd annual Members' Choice Health Club Awards, in partnership with media partner *Health Club Management*. Since their inception in 2011, the awards have captured the imagination of clubs and members, with winners being selected purely based on ratings from members.

More than a million health club members are expected to have the chance to take part in 2013. The awards are open to all private health clubs, gyms and leisure centres in the UK and are free to enter (although there is a £199 entry fee payable if clubs reach the shortlist stage).

The competition provides a host of benefits including a confidential customer feedback report; a ready-made local marketing campaign; a staff incentive scheme; and regional and national benchmarking. As well



The awards night will again take place during Leisure Industry Week

as recognising clubs in 12 regions around the UK, the competition will highlight the efforts of individual members of staff in a category called the People Awards.

Entry to the completion is now open and will run until 31 January. Voting will be live from 1 February. The awards gala night will again take place at LIW in September. Visit [www.healthclubawards.co.uk](http://www.healthclubawards.co.uk) to find out more.

## Fitness First completes restructuring

Health club operator Fitness First has completed its restructuring, following a turbulent two-year period during which the privately-owned group has struggled under a burden of debt. Announcing the company's full-year results for 2011, CEO Andrew Cosslett said: "It's no secret that 2011 was a difficult year for us.

"We have rationalised our portfolio of clubs so that we have fewer, more profitable sites across the world."

In February 2012, following a difficult period of trading, Fitness First parted company with its entire top team – including then chief executive Colin Waggett. He was replaced by turnaround specialist Chris Stone.

After setting the restructuring in motion, Stone handed over to Cosslett, a former CEO of InterContinental Hotels Group. The group is now controlled by Oaktree Capital Management and Marathon Capital.

Cosslett says that during the 12 months to 31 October 2011, Fitness First achieved more than



Fitness First chief executive officer Andrew Cosslett

£100m of pre-tax earnings (EBITDA) and that the company's "troubles are behind it". He adds:

"We have new owners who have completed a financial restructuring of the business that means we're effectively debt-free.

"In addition to our strong cash generation, we have capital available from our new owners which will allow us to invest in our clubs." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=X5S5l>

## Study shows exercise leads to a longer life

Physical exercise can increase life expectancy by up to 4.5 years, according to research from the National Cancer Institute, part of the National Institutes of Health in the US.

The research, which examined data on more than 650,000 adults, mostly above the

age of 40, proved that physical activity could help lengthen the lifespan of everyone, even if they are obese. The US Department of Health recommends adults aged 18–64 undertake 2.5 hours of moderate intensity exercise each week. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=O5P5Y>

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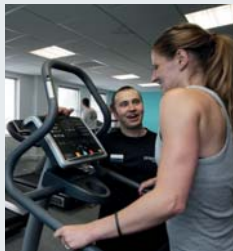
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## TRX secures renewal of Liverpool FC contract

Liverpool Football Club has renewed its partnership with TRX, the training company responsible for pioneering the TRX Suspension Trainer and Rip Trainer, as a training partner to the Barclays Premier League team.

The Liverpool Football Club squad and staff continue to train with experts from TRX, establishing specific training programmes that work to sustain excellent health and fitness levels among its first team and academy players.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=b1S6R>



The company has a network of centres in the UK

## Premier Training to open new centre in Leicester

Premier Training International (PTI) is set to open its latest training centre in Leicester this month. The new venue will be located at the city's David Lloyd Leisure health club.

The launch is part of PTI's strategy to expand its network of venues in the UK. In August, the company opened three new centres in Birmingham. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=3T2D2>

## RAPs prepares for January pilot

SkillsActive has launched the new Register of Aquatic Professionals (RAPs), an independent register for those employed in the aquatics sector.

RAPs will be operated by SkillsActive, with support from key industry partners: the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA), Swimming Teachers Association (STA) and The Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS). Building on the success of the existing Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs), the new register will initially be launched in England, followed by roll-outs in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The pilot phase will launch this month to test the new system, raise awareness across the industry and enable employers and individuals to engage in its development. The full register will be launched later in 2013.



The register will be launched in England and the rolled out across the UK

RAPs has been developed to increase professionalism in the sector and support the general public. It will become the single qualification framework structure for the industry, which will provide assurance that registered individuals hold relevant qualifications required for the job they undertake.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=A8R3b>

## FIE launches app to support workshops

Online training provider Fitness Industry Education (FIE) has released an app to support its certifications and CPD workshops.

The Mobile Student Desktop App allows FIE students to access their personal online course material via mobile devices.

FIE will make all of its course theory content, diagrams, animations, video content and podcasts available for the app, which is free to download from iTunes App Store (Apple) and Google Play Store (Android).

Michael Betts, director of FIE, says: "With this app, we're able to give students the option of learning on mobile devices anywhere and at any time, as long as they have a Wi-Fi or 3G connection."



The app will encourage learning on mobile devices

"This drastically cuts down on their learning time and gives them a valuable resource that they're able to keep after the course has been completed." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=c8V3r>

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## **INDEPENDENT NEWS**

**INDEPENDENT  
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### **Ladies-only gym opens in Essex**

Entrepreneur Shamir Choudhury has invested more than £80,000 in building a brand new ladies-only health club in Goodmayes, Essex, which he has kitted out with Star Trac equipment.

Choudhury, founder and owner of Energise Health Club, chose to launch the new club after identifying a need for a facility designed specifically for women. He felt that busy gyms were often off-putting for women, especially when working out with people with different fitness goals – an issue he wanted to tackle.

"Working out in a comfortable environment is a really important factor for a lot of women, especially if they're insecure about their bodies or are new to exercise and are not sure what to expect," he explains.

"There are so many barriers to women exercising, so I wanted to strip all that back and create an inviting, welcoming space where they want to spend time working out."



The club will look to attract women who are new to exercise and fitness

Star Trac equipment at the club includes pieces from the S-Series cardio range and dual and single station pieces from the Instinct strength range.

Crèche facilities are available on-site, as well as personal training, nutritional advice, health checks and body massage therapy.

Monthly membership at Energise Health Club starts from £30. Choudhury is already planning to open further Energise sites in the area. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=u3p3X>

### **Pure Power Studio invests in Power Plate**

Pure Power Studios – an independently-owned club in Tunbridge Wells, Kent – is the first UK studio to purchase the Power Plate pro7 machine, with the brand new studio installing four of the latest Power Plate models.

The club is owned by Claire Faircloth and Emma MacAuley, who are now officially qualified Power Plate trainers. Both Faircloth and MacAuley will also soon be completing the Post Natal Academy with Jenny Burrell, one of the UK's leading pregnancy and post-natal fitness professionals, after which they plan to launch post-natal Power Plate classes in the studio.



The new studio is the first to invest in Power Plate's latest pro7 machine

Faircloth says: "We are both passionate about Power Plate. The fact that we can offer a full-body workout in 25 minutes is something we believe will really appeal to the people of Tunbridge Wells."

### **Soho Gyms to open club in Manchester**

Independently-owned health club chain Soho Gyms has opened its third club in as many months, with its first club outside of London.

Soho Gym Manchester is the company's ninth in the UK and is located in a space that previously housed a Fitness First club.

The opening is part of London-based Soho Gyms' ongoing investment strategy, which has not only seen the opening of new clubs but which will also see several gyms getting new kit and cafes, and upgrades to changing facilities. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=07Z4D>



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## IN BRIEF...

**UFC GYM heads east**

UFC GYM has announced plans to open its first facility on the east coast of the US, on Long Island, NY.

The 24-hour, full-service facility is set to open for workouts in spring 2013 and will offer an array of programming for the entire family and every fitness level.

UFC GYM Long Island will feature a wide array of amenities that fuse martial arts and mainstream fitness, including a 32ft Octagon, BJJ Studio, Bag Room, strength training and cardio machines, battling ropes, agility ladders and other functional training equipment for explosive workouts.

There will also be a 230sq m group fitness studio offering a range of signature classes including Hot Hula, Women's Self Defence, Performance Cycling, and more.

**Vivafit's Indian expansion**

Vivafit has signed a master franchise agreement for North East India and West Bengal, the operator's third master franchise deal in India.

The first gym is scheduled to open next month in the city of Guwahati, with the contract allowing for the opening of 25 franchised centres in the region.

Vivafit also has its sights set on additional international markets, including Venezuela, South Africa, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Indonesia and Hong Kong.

**Portuguese market snapshot**

Portuguese trade association AGAP has published the second edition of its AGAP Barometer report, monitoring the performance of the local health and fitness market in the first nine months of 2012.

Topline findings include: 85 per cent of clubs surveyed said revenues were down year-on-year, by an average of 19 per cent; 11 per cent had seen an increase, and 4 per cent had remained stable. Meanwhile, 81 per cent of clubs had seen a decrease in membership numbers over the same period, down an average of 17 per cent; 11 per cent saw an increase.

**Fitness Hut continues expansion**

Portugal's premium low-cost operator Fitness Hut opened its fourth site in October, in central/downtown Lisbon.

The 1,800sq m club offers a 650sq m gym equipped by Star Trac, Concept2, TRX, Rogue, York and Jacobs Ladder.



The new club has a flexible studio space that can convert to gym space when needed

It also has three group exercise studios, with one – measuring 120sq m – designed in an 'open studio' format, whereby the area acts as additional gym space when not being used as a studio for group classes. "All future sites will be designed in this way," confirms founder and CEO Nick Coutts.

With its focus on functional and CrossFit-style training, the 'open studio' also offers six additional full Olympic lifting sets, including barbells, bumper plates, Rogue plyo boxes, pull-up stations and kettlebell sets.

Membership costs €4.40–6.60 a week. The operator's fifth and sixth sites will open in February: one in the city of Braga, in the north of Portugal, and another in the district of Odivelas, Greater Lisbon. These will be the first two of an expected 10 sites to open in 2013.

**Dansk Fitness opens 14th location**

Dansk Fitness, one of the major chains in Denmark, has opened its 14th club in the country, in the city of Aarhus.

The 500sq m facility offers a gym floor equipped by Star Trac, with S series CV kit – treadmills, upright and recumbent bikes, and cross-trainers – and strength equipment from the Inspiration range plus a Max Rack. TRX and kettlebells are also available. There's also an aerobics studio and a dedicated Spinning studio.

The operator aims to create affordable memberships, but at the same time offer high quality facilities. Bronze, silver and gold membership packages are available, ranging from 249–349 Danish Krone (£27–£37) a month.



The Dansk Fitness clubs offer bronze, silver and gold level membership packages

**Anytime makes non-fitness acquisition**

Health and fitness franchise operator Anytime Fitness has acquired Waxing the City, a US salon chain that specialises in waxing and hair removal services.

Waxing the City had five sites at the end of 2012, and Anytime has significant growth plans for the chain, beginning with "rapid expansion into franchise sales by April 2013". Projections are for 249 salons to be operating by the 2016 fiscal year.

The acquisition is Anytime's first outside of the fitness industry. However, the company now plans to look for more non-fitness businesses, within the

health and wellness sector, to acquire and expand through a franchising model.

John Kersh, VP of international development for Anytime Fitness, says: "I think it's a natural extension of our corporate mission, and it's a relevant new concept within the personal care/lifestyle industry, into which health clubs also fall.

"Fundamentally we're a franchise company, with the experience and resources to develop new business concepts through franchising. It's not a stretch to fold in new concepts using our skill set, although there will be new staffing requirements."



The new XFit concept has been inspired by the global CrossFit functional training trend

## New XFit model for Middle East

Fitness First Middle East last month launched the largest high-intensity functional training studio in the UAE, at its club in Dubai Knowledge Village.

The new studio, which operates under the XFit brand, has been inspired by the global CrossFit trend. XFit's approach includes Olympic lifting, barbell exercises, traditional gymnastic movements and bodyweight exercises "designed to get you to achieve your maximum potential of fitness and endurance".

XFit has been launched to cater for the high student population in the gym's catchment area, and is open to members and non-members. However, Fitness First members receive preferential rates.

Although it is located on-site at an existing club, its layout keeps it as a distinct unit with its own branding. Indeed, if the model proves successful, it will be rolled out as a standalone offering.

George Flook, COO for Fitness First Middle East, says: "We are proud to establish our new XFit studio, reiterating our commitment to continuously innovate our fitness solutions for our members and the community. The move reflects our keenness to closely monitor the market and identify emerging demands to proactively cater for customers who trust us with their fitness goals. We are confident that XFit will help push our members' fitness levels to a new high."

## Anytime Fitness launches in Spain

Anytime Fitness, the world's largest mixed-sex fitness franchise, has opened its first club in Spain.

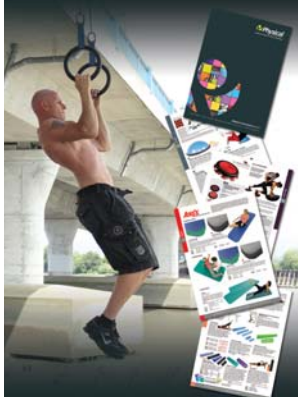
The club, located in the town of Sant Cugat del Vallès near Barcelona, opened in October – the first of three corporately-owned clubs scheduled to open in Spain by the end of 2012 or early 2013. In early 2013, Anytime Fitness will also begin selling franchise territories to qualified applicants throughout Spain.

Anytime Fitness' Spanish operation is being overseen by Rod Hill, a 20-year veteran of the European health club

industry. Hill started his career in England in 1992, working as a fitness director at the original Fitness First health club in Bournemouth. He was subsequently responsible for setting up the company's operations in Spain, Italy, France and Benelux.

"Spanish consumers are among the world's most frequent exercisers, and our concept is already being well received. We expect our upcoming franchising roll-out to be equally well-received," says John Kersh, VP of international development for Anytime Fitness.

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Walsh led the GB Team to bronze at London 2012

## Olympic medallist joins Promote PR

Specialist sport and fitness public relations agency, Promote PR, has appointed Great Britain women's hockey captain, Kate Walsh, as their newest recruit.

Walsh led the GB Women's Hockey team to Olympic bronze at London 2012, just days after having her jaw fractured in the qualifying rounds.

After the Sydney 2000 Olympics, Walsh completed a Sports Science degree at Brunel University, graduating with a 2:1 in 2003. Since then, her time has predominantly been spent playing hockey full-time for England and Great Britain. Prior to competing in Beijing 2008, Walsh's work experience included positions with Laureus, a charitable sporting organisation, and kit manufacturer Canterbury of New Zealand.

Promote PR managing director Sue Anstiss says: "Having worked with Kate this summer – as we promoted hockey participation around London 2012 – we've seen how natural she is with the media."

## Matrix announces new sales and marketing roles

Matrix Fitness has announced a trio of new positions to bolster its UK team.

Tracey Thake has been promoted to UK marketing and communications manager; Emma Waring joins as sales area manager for the North East and Midlands; and Dave Alstead joins as sales area manager for the North of England.

Jon Johnston, president and managing director of Johnson Health Tech UK, which owns the Matrix brand, says: "Tracey's impressive marketing experience is coupled with a relentless enthusiasm for getting people active by building on the legacy of this incredible year of sport.

"Likewise, Emma and Dave join us with impressive track records spanning public and private sectors."

## Grey-Thompson joins LLDC board

Mayor of London Boris Johnson has appointed former Paralympic champion Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson to the board of the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC).

Already a member of the boards of Transport for London and the London Marathon, and previously the UK Athletics board, Baroness Grey-Thompson will be actively involved in LLDC's legacy planning and decision-making.

Grey-Thompson says: "The Olympic Park was the heart and soul of the greatest Olympic Games ever, but in 2005 we set out a vision to not only bring new life to a neglected part of east London, but to provide a lasting sporting and community infrastructure.

"I'm determined to bring that vision to life and to be a part of this important final piece of the Games jigsaw."

Johnson has also made four other appointments to the LLDC board. To build on the board's commercial expertise, he has recruited Carphone Warehouse co-founder David Ross, while the mayor's long-standing



The Baroness will be involved in legacy planning

London 2012 adviser, Neale Coleman, is to become deputy chair of the board. Phillip Lewis, chair of the corporation's planning committee, has been re-appointed as Johnson's chief of staff, while Sir Edward Lister has been appointed the mayor's official observer for its meetings.

## Mytime Active appoints health director

Mytime Active has appointed James Watkins as its new director of health services. Watkins has a background in healthcare across the NHS and independent sectors and was previously chief executive of the social enterprise Community Dental Services.

He has spent 20 years in senior healthcare leadership roles, including at the leading mental healthcare charity St Andrew's Healthcare, where he was responsible for the successful development of five new multi-million pound hospitals, on-time and to budget, securing board approval for more than £100m of funding for these new hospital units. He holds an MBA from the University of Warwick Business School.

Watkins' role at Mytime, a social enterprise, will be to provide strategic leadership to the Mytime health division, ensuring safe and effective delivery of services to clients and service commissioners. He will also oversee a



Watkins has an established career in healthcare

regional growth strategy for Mytime Health's range of programmes aimed at boosting the wellbeing of local communities.

Watkins says: "Mytime Health has the skills, innovation and ambition to expand its offering to communities beyond its current reach."

## Former Gladstone sales manager joins Clarity

Clarity Leisure has appointed Andrew Marshall as its new UK head of business development after a recent merger with POS hardware company Digipos.

Marshall, previously regional sales manager for Gladstone Health and Leisure, recently joined Clarity to head up business

development in the UK. Andrew has 15 years' experience in account management and product development across the leisure and retail technology industries.

Following its merger with Digipos, Clarity now includes POS and kiosk hardware in its portfolio of services.

## PEOPLE PROFILE



### Charles Eugster

Eugster is a bodybuilder who has spoken on wellness at TED, starred in a music video and who acts as an ambassador for fitness. He's also 93 years old and only started exercising four years ago

#### **You are 93 and remarkably fit. What's your secret?**

The secret of successful ageing is work, diet, exercise, in that order of importance.

#### **Have you always been into fitness/sport/wellness?**

I only started fitness training at the age of 89!

#### **Is enough being done to promote active lifestyles among older people?**

No. The main problem is the fact that too little is known. Research on physical activity, diet or even the effect of work on health in old age is practically non-existent above the age of 70. It's a shocking fact that there are far too few healthy individuals above the age of 80 to be able to conduct meaningful research. Responsibility rests with research facilities and promotion by government, as well as health agencies.

#### **Are private health clubs doing enough to attract older people as members?**

Most private health clubs do little or nothing to attract older people as members, in spite of the fact that this group has the time and money to work out.

#### **What could/should clubs do?**

Older people prefer to train in groups of their own age, and ideally the coaches should be of the same age group too. More importantly, older members should be tested, goals set and then re-tested at regular intervals, with the results sent to their physician. These results would become part of the patient's medical history.

Club membership could, in certain cases – like it is in Japan – be restricted to those aged over 70, or there could be an off-peak membership for the elderly.

Treatment of disease by exercise is receiving more attention by the medical profession, but there is an extreme lack of co-operation between physicians and health clubs. This represents a huge opportunity.

Almost all over-65s have one or more chronic diseases. Some clubs in Germany are already licensed to treat diabetes with exercise. Clubs could certainly offer more along these lines, perhaps setting up a food service together with supplements.

There's so much more that clubs could do to attract more older people, and I'd be happy to discuss individually with every leisure chain CEO what could be beneficial.

#### **How often do you exercise yourself?**

The amount and type of exercise depends on my goals. At present I'm aiming for the World Masters Championship next year in athletics and rowing, and I'm currently training three to four times a week.

#### **If you were given free rein as health minister, what would you change?**

If the health minister were a dictator, food rationing would be an option to combat obesity. As health minister, I would drastically cut health insurance for the obese. Also a belly tax could be considered. We're facing medical costs that will be so dramatic that a new health system will have to be devised.

#### **What are your views on GP referrals?**

GPs prescribing exercise to patients is the future, but the fitness industry is not ready. Coaches must have the necessary training, and the exercise treatment must be covered by health insurance.

#### **What is the number one weakness in the fitness industry?**

It has many, but number one is the lack of a positive public profile, followed by the unprecedented turnover of members.

#### **And its greatest strength?**

The greatest strength of the fitness industry is that it has huge potential.

#### **What is your favourite life motto?**

"Trifles make perfection, but perfection is no trifle."

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## Keep it simple: The five-word test

• Jay Ablondi • Executive vice president of global products, IHRSA

Recently, I heard an interview with the CEO of a well-known, multi-billion dollar technology company. The reporter asked her to describe, in five words, exactly what her company did. As the CEO's answer rambled on – complete with buzzwords and typical business jargon – it was clear that this CEO couldn't do it.

To me it was fascinating, not only because this particular CEO is one of the highest-paid in her field, but also because it demonstrated how telling the five-word test can be for a business. Later that day, the company's stock dropped by more than 11 per cent (the revelation of an accounting scandal certainly didn't help).

So why take the five-word test?

Consider the following:

*Simplicity matters.* Our lives are complex enough. We don't have the time or patience for companies who add complications. People have an innate desire to understand what you and your company are all about. Decisions are influenced greatly by what people feel – much more than by what they rationalise. Do your customers 'get' you? Do they truly understand why your company exists?

*Simple is hard.* Apple founder Steve Jobs believed it took tenacity and hard

work to really delve into a problem to find an elegant solution. He said: "Simple can be harder than complex: you have to work hard to get your thinking clean to make it simple. But it's worth it in the end, because once you get there, you can move mountains."

*"Make everything as simple as possible, but not simpler."*

I share this Albert Einstein

quote to emphasise that

no-one wants a dumbed-down version of something. It

may not be enough to say that exercise will make people look and feel better. While it's a true statement, the key is to communicate this fact in a way that resonates with the potential customer you're trying to engage. Know your customer first. What drives them? What do they really care about? What problem(s) do they have? Only then will you be able to speak directly to their needs in a way that will resonate with them and drive them to act.

*Simple is liberating.* IHRSA 'helps clubs be more profitable'. Five words. For everything we do, or consider doing, the answer to the question "does it help our



Fitness clubs should be able to sum up their purpose in five words

members become more profitable?" must be "yes". By staying focused, we avoid wasting time and resources on things that stray from our core mission. This frees us up to do what truly matters.

A health club should be able to sum up its purpose in five words. Does yours 'make society healthier through exercise', 'help people reach wellness goals' or 'provide fun fitness for families'? I challenge you to go through this exercise with your staff. Come up with five words that best describe who you are and what you do. In the process, you may just discover how liberating a little simplicity can be.

## Ask the experts: Generating referrals from the medical community



*What can PTs do to generate referrals from the medical wellness community? Shapes Fitness for Women executive director Ann Gilbert offers her thoughts:*

"There are several factors that will determine the amount of referrals a PT will be able to generate from the medical and wellness community.

"The first, and probably the most important, will be the trainer's credentials. More than the basic knowledge of exercise contraindications, the trainer must display expertise in corrective exercise

and post-rehab programming. It's also suggested that the trainer finds the time and energy to work directly with a rehab facility. Many, having completed a post-rehab certification, will volunteer to assist in the facility in return for shadow or internship experience.

"Trainers who are successful in generating a steady flow of referrals have established a habit of consistent communication with the client's medical supervisor. Most send assessment results on a regular basis and always ask for input from the medical professional. Once the professional relationship has been established, it will be easier for the trainer to ask for the referral.

"Once the medical professional sends the client to the trainer's facility, there also

needs to be assurance that the facility is equipped with the latest functional resistance equipment.

"Inviting the medical professional to participate in a one-on-one workout at the facility is also recommended."

*Read more answers to this question at [ihrsa.org/industryleader](http://ihrsa.org/industryleader)*







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The new partnership will focus on helping mid-range health clubs to compete on service, not price

## Green, Fisher form MomentumBD Ltd

Momentum Business Development has unveiled a new incarnation of the company: MomentumBD Ltd.

The new company is a joint venture between Momentum MD Duncan Green and Kilian Fisher, who have launched the MomentumBD brand in both the UK and the Republic of Ireland. Fisher has taken on the role of group marketing director and, as well as joint strategic management of the companies, will also take the lead

in strategic and digital marketing for the MomentumBD group and its clients.

The new partnership will focus on 10 top services to support and add value to mid-range clubs, to compete on service and quality rather than price. These will build on the company's established services, in addition to the launch of a range of new services. MomentumBD will initially focus in the UK & Ireland, but already has plans for international expansion.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Don't miss IHRSa early bird

Those planning to attend IHRSa's 32nd Annual International Convention & Trade Show should register this month in order to save up to US\$100 on their rates.

Prices for the event – which this year takes place on 19–22 March at the Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas, Nevada, US – will increase after 25 January.

Highlights of this year's convention will include:

- Four general session presentations, all of which will be translated simultaneously into Spanish and Russian
  - Dozens of educational sessions on topics ranging from sales and marketing to technology and public policy, many of which will also be translated
  - Planet IHRSa: the international attendee reception, sponsored by Snap Fitness
  - Two-day trade show featuring over 330 of the world's top fitness industry suppliers
- All information and online registration can be found at [www.ihrs.org/convention](http://www.ihrs.org/convention)



Delegates enjoy the Planet IHRSa reception

## Events diary

Visit [www.ihrs.org/calendar](http://www.ihrs.org/calendar)

### 10 January 2013

Creating Member Loyalty with Service Excellence (webinar)

### 7 February 2013

Strategies to Increase Personal Training Sales (webinar)

### 19–22 March 2013

IHRSa's 32nd Annual International Convention & Trade Show – Las Vegas, Nevada, US

### 5–7 September 2013

14th Annual IHRSa/Fitness Brasil Latin American Conference & Trade Show – São Paulo, Brazil

## Entrepreneurs are healthier

Better health appears to be one of the perks of being an entrepreneur. In the US, entrepreneurs are less likely than other workers to report having ever been diagnosed with chronic health problems such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes. They are also much less likely to be obese: 19 per cent, versus 25 per cent among other workers.

Entrepreneurs report better health habits than other workers, which may be in part responsible. They are more likely than other employed adults to say they exercise frequently (60 per cent vs 54 per cent) or eat fruit and veg regularly (61 per cent vs 55 per cent), and are more likely to say they ate healthily all day 'yesterday' (67 per cent vs 61 per cent). However, smoking rates were about equal.

## About IHRSa

Founded in 1981, the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association is the only global trade association, representing more than 10,000 health and fitness facilities and suppliers worldwide.

To learn how IHRSa can help your business thrive, visit [www.ihrs.org](http://www.ihrs.org). Locate a quality IHRSa club at [www.healthclubs.com](http://www.healthclubs.com)

# Congress report: Views from Vienna

**More than 450 delegates attended November's IHRSA European Congress. Hans Muench reports**

**M**ore than 450 delegates from 35 countries attended the 12th annual IHRSA European Congress, which concluded on 4 November in Vienna, Austria. Industry federations from across Europe were also represented at the event.

Shaun Smith, founder and partner of smith & co in the UK, delivered the keynote address entitled: Bold - How to Be Brave in Business and Win.

"It was, once again, a very inspiring conference," comments Johan Vanhoutte of Wave Health & Fitness in Belgium. "I learned a lot, and accept that we still have a long way to go. Attending the European Congress and belonging to IHRSA strengthens our belief that we can rely on strong shoulders to build further on our great story in our market of Belgium."

"We had an amazing time in Vienna, meeting old and new friends, creating new networks, listening to leaders in our industry and contributing to the industry we are so passionate about," adds Mark de Wit of Optimal Business & Lifestyle in the Netherlands.

## rewarding leadership

Among the highlights of the event was the presentation of the 2012 IHRSA European Club Leadership Award to Rene Moos, CEO of HealthCity – the largest club



Rene Moos received the Club Leadership Award



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This year's IHRSA European Congress took place in Vienna, with Madrid to host the 2013 event

operator in Europe. The award recognises the European club leader who has done the most to advance both their own company and the industry.

Moos, a former national tennis champion in the Netherlands, opened his first tennis club 26 years ago in Hoofddorp, gradually adding fitness into the mix. In 2004, he and partners Dennis Aarts and Eric Wilborts combined their 11 all-inclusive clubs under the banner of HealthCity. Today the estate encompasses two brands – HealthCity and Basic-Fit – with a combined 265 facilities in seven countries.

"Rene cares and he shares," says Rasmus Ingerslev, IHRSA Europe Council member, in announcing Rene as the winner. "To give an example, he recently conducted a round of interviews with all of his managers to understand not only the numbers but also the people in his business."

Ingerslev noted that Moos loves to learn, "which makes him not only inspirational to others, but also a person who continuously seeks inspiration".

Moos participated in a panel discussion – Insights on the European Market: Key Drivers, Statistics & Trends (sponsored by Technogym) – along with Ståle Angel, CEO of Elixia Nordic in

Norway, and Gabriel Saez, president of Ingesport in Spain.

Also at the event, IHRSA launched its new mobile app, which can be downloaded at [www.ihrsa.org/app](http://www.ihrsa.org/app)

The 2013 IHRSA European Congress will be held on 17-20 October in Madrid, Spain.

## Thanks to our sponsors...

The 2012 IHRSA European Congress was sponsored by: aerobics Ltd., American Council on Exercise® (ACE), Anytime Fitness, LLC, Cybex, Fitness Equipment Depot Worldwide, Fit interiors, Fitness at., GANTNER Electronic GmbH, Johnson Health Tech Co, Ltd. / MATRIX FITNESS, Keiser Corporation, Kommunera Communications AB, Les Mills International, mailset, milon industries GmbH, National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM), OJMAR, Perform Better Europe, PLAYOKE GmbH, Polar Electro Oy, Precor, QualiCert - Qualitop International, Slim Belly, Star Trac UK LTD, Technogym SpA, Twid Oy, Vicore Fitness, X-Force AB and Zumba Fitness LLC.

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# New identity



CEO David Stalker explains why the FIA has rebranded – to ukactive – and why everyone should be involved



**health club  
management**  
Public Affairs Media Partner

**W**e have a new name – and with this comes a new logo, new colour palate and new vibrance. However, I will reiterate what I have always maintained: that it is not about our name but about our vision. I can promise that we will always live and breathe our longstanding and uncompromising focus of 'more people, more active, more often'.

## Rebranding process

The rebrand began with a stakeholder consultation, which questioned people on what they felt the organisation should focus on moving forward. Results were analysed and feedback collated to form our business strategy. An overriding theme was the broad scope of the organisations either directly or indirectly working with us – the feeling was that the name FIA (Fitness Industry Association) did not adequately describe this.

We then commissioned creative agency Mr B & Friends for the design of the brand, working with them to deliver a vibrant kitemark brand that works across the B2B market, to emphasise our trade body roots, but that can also be translated into a campaigning brand to get the nation active.

## A broader base

ukactive doesn't signal a massive change in direction for us, but more accurately

reflects what we have been doing for some time – supporting the sector to get more people, more active, more often to improve the health of the nation.

However, by moving away from the perception of the traditional private fitness industry, we will be more welcoming to a broader market: we will work with anyone who has some form of stake, benefit to be gained, or role to play as part of the coalition to embed active lifestyles into the DNA of the nation. Also, we'll promote all activity, whether in the gym, park, at home or at work; what matters is improving the nation's health through activity.

## As ukactive we will:

- Facilitate big impact partnerships and develop projects that increase physical activity
- Provide high quality services to our members and widen our base to welcome all those with a stake in the health and wellbeing of the nation
- Campaign for active lifestyles to be embedded into the DNA of the nation, working with strategic partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Champion innovation in the sector and drive new research and insight to inform best practice – then share that with anyone who will listen
- Champion the use of digital technology

to engage the population in physical activity and sport

## Implementation

The new brand has been well received to date, with comments such as this from Martin Long, CEO of LA Fitness: "We have evolved as a sector, and we now have a national organisation dedicated to helping businesses to get ukactive."

Following the launch of the new brand at the November Summit, we are now in full implementation stage. As many of you will know, it's never easy to rebrand a whole organisation, especially an organisation such as ours with such a broad partner base. We never expected our new brand to be everywhere overnight, which is why our plan has always been a phased approach.

A key focus for the next three months will be to ensure all partners are aware of ukactive and our key messages, working with organisations to replace co-branded materials, making our website the hub of the sector and linking in with new projects and partnerships. Our aim is to be fully ukactive across all channels for the start of the new financial year, April 2013. If you require the new logo and brand guidelines, please do not hesitate to contact us:

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

**Email:** [info@ukactive.org.uk](mailto:info@ukactive.org.uk)

**Tel:** +44 (0)20 7420 8560



The new brand acknowledges the broader market the organisation now represents...



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In March, Las Vegas will host both the IHRSA Annual Convention & Trade Show and ACSM's 17th Health and Fitness Summit

## JANUARY

### 28-29 | The Facilities Management Forum

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

#### Summary

For managers and directors with the responsibility for the purchase of their organisation's FM products and services.  
**Web** [www.forumevents.co.uk](http://www.forumevents.co.uk)

## FEBRUARY

### 3-5 | Spatex

**Venue** Hilton Metropole, Brighton, UK

#### Summary

The 17th annual exhibition – the UK's largest dedicated wet leisure event.  
**Web** [www.spatex.co.uk](http://www.spatex.co.uk)

### 21-23 | FORUMCLUB

**Venue** Bologna, Italy

#### Summary

International congress and expo aimed at owners and managers of health and fitness clubs, aquatic centres and sporting establishments.  
**Web** [www.forumclub.it](http://www.forumclub.it)

### 24-25 | Professional Beauty London

**Venue** ExCeL, London, UK

#### Summary

The UK's largest beauty exhibition, with hundreds of leading health and beauty brands.  
**Web** [www.professionalbeauty.co.uk](http://www.professionalbeauty.co.uk)

### 28-3 March | IDEA Personal Trainer Institute

**Venue** Alexandria, Virginia, US

#### Summary

Bringing together a limited number of personal trainers with world-class presenters, and including pre-conference sessions, lectures and workshops.  
**Web** [www.ideafit.com/ptrainer](http://www.ideafit.com/ptrainer)

## MARCH

### 4 | SMMEX

**Venue** Wembley Stadium, London, UK

#### Summary

A chance for buyers and specifiers to meet up with suppliers of unique products and services in a relaxed, informal environment.  
**Web** [www.smmexevent.com](http://www.smmexevent.com)

### 7-10 | ECA World Fitness Conference / OBOW Show

**Venue** New York City, US

#### Summary

ECA World Fitness is an international organisation representing the fitness and wellness sectors. The show highlights new ideas, products and concepts.  
**Web** [www.ecaworldfitness.com](http://www.ecaworldfitness.com)

### 12-15 | ACSM's 17th Health & Fitness Summit & Exposition

**Venue** Las Vegas, US

#### Summary

ACSM's signature fitness conference gives students, fitness enthusiasts, personal trainers, certified professionals and others

the full spectrum of programming, from scientific insights to practical application. The largest sports medicine and exercise science organisation in the world, ACSM has more than 45,000 members and certified professionals worldwide.  
**Web** [www.acsmsummit.org](http://www.acsmsummit.org)

### 19-22 MARCH | IHRSA 2013 Annual International Convention & Trade Show

**Venue** Mandalay Bay Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada, US

#### Summary

The 32nd IHRSA Annual Convention & Trade Show takes place at the Mandalay Bay Hotel – the first time in many years that the general sessions, educational concurrent sessions, exercise programming and trade show will be located in one building. On this occasion, the event will be held Tuesday–Friday, as Las Vegas does not schedule conventions and trade shows over weekend days.  
**Web** [www.ihrsa.org/convention](http://www.ihrsa.org/convention)

### 22-24 | International Fitness Showcase

**Venue** Winter Gardens, Blackpool, UK

#### Summary

Three days of dance, aerobics, step, combat, conditioning, lectures, workshops, mind/body sessions and more.  
**Web** [www.chrysalispromotions.com](http://www.chrysalispromotions.com)

## 26-27 | BASES Student Conference

**Venue** Cardiff Metropolitan University, Cardiff, UK

### Summary

With keynote lectures and a range of applied workshops, the conference focuses on the BASES accreditation pathways to practice, the application of knowledge developed through this process, as well as the advancement of health and performance as a result of scientific support.

**Web** [www.bases.org.uk/Student-Conference](http://www.bases.org.uk/Student-Conference)

## APRIL

## 7-10 | SPATEC Spring, North America

**Venue** Ritz-Carlton, New Orleans, US

### Summary

One-to-one meetings between corporate spa owners, directors and design/management companies with leading spa suppliers and vendors from a range of categories.

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

## 11-14 APRIL | FIBO 2013

**Venue** Exhibition Centre Cologne, Germany

### Summary

FIBO, synonymous with the Messe Exhibition Centre in Essen, is moving to a new site in Cologne from 2013. Over 600 exhibitors from 38 countries will present products to over 76,000 visitors from over 100 countries. Topics include fitness and training kit, wellness, beauty, health promotion, sports nutrition, services and equipment, plus music and fashion.

**Web** [www.fibo.de](http://www.fibo.de)

## 19-21 | Australian Fitness & Health Expo

**Venue** Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre, Sydney, Australia

### Summary

All the latest gym equipment, training aids, clothing, music, boxing kit and nutritional products, plus a wide range of information on health, fitness and sports science.

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

## 21-22 | Scottish Beauty

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

### Summary

Scotland's only professional beauty event, showcasing around 200 suppliers, brands and training providers.

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

## 24-27 | SPATEC Europe

**Venue** Ritz-Carlton's Abama Golf & Spa Resort, Tenerife

### Summary

A two-day forum of face-to-face meetings between around 65 UK and European spa owners and operators and more than 70 leading international spa suppliers. The first day will start with a seminar programme.

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

## 25-28 | Russian Fitness Festival

**Venue** Olympic Stadium, Moscow, Russia

### Summary

Claimed to be the most significant event in mass physical education in Russia, the CIS and the Baltic states and featuring a range of presenters from Europe, the UK and the US, the festival aims to popularise and develop a healthy lifestyle in Russia.

**Web** [www.fitness-convention.ru](http://www.fitness-convention.ru)



Networking activities at SIBEC UK

## MAY

## 17-19 | BodyPower

**Venue** NEC, Birmingham, UK

### Summary

New features for BodyPower 2013 include a preview day to explain the different products in sports nutrition, their effects and benefits. Also new is The Super Gym, a concept gym to showcase gyms of the future. Elsewhere, the Academy arena will see leading experts presenting on a range of topics.

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

## 19-20 | Holistic Health

**Venue** NEC, Birmingham, UK

### Summary

Holistic Health 2013 will continue to support the holistic and complementary therapy market, offering exhibitors the opportunity to showcase the latest products, treatment launches, equipment innovations and training courses.

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

## 19-20 | BeautyUK

**Venue** NEC, Birmingham, UK

### Summary

The Midlands' only professional beauty trade exhibition, linking products, equipment, services and training. Takes place alongside Holistic Health.

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

## 21-22 MAY | SIBEC UK

**Venue** TBC

### Summary

SIBEC UK brings together the most important and influential suppliers and buyers of the UK leisure, health and fitness sectors. Participants meet through networking activities, official meeting programmes, professional education programmes, and a supplier showcase.

**Web**

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



FIBO moves to a new venue this year, taking place in Cologne, Germany, in April



The 2013 FLAME Awards will be presented at a gala dinner on the evening of 3 July

## JUNE

### 24-25 | Facilities Management (FM) Forum

**Venue** Heythrop Park, Oxfordshire, UK

#### Summary

Specifically organised for FM directors and managers directly involved in the procurement of FM products and services. The forum is designed to offer an efficient and stress-free way to see what's new in the industry and make connections and partnerships.

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

### 26-29 | Festival del Fitness

**Venue** Parco del Foro Italico, Rome, Italy

#### Summary

The 25th exhibition for the Italian fitness industry, this year aiming to promote the city of Rome's candidacy for the 2020 Olympic Games.

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

## JULY

### 3 JULY | ukactive FLAME Conference

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

#### Summary

This annual conference is ukactive's biggest networking and educational event of the year, attended by key decision makers and senior management from across the sector. The FLAME Awards gala dinner takes place in the evening.

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

### 29-1 August | 9th Annual International Conference on Kinesiology & Exercise Sciences

**Venue** Athens, Greece

#### Summary

Organised by the Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER) and the Pan-Hellenic Association of Sport Economists & Managers (PASEM). The conference is designed to bring together scholars and students from a wide range of applied and integrated health sciences.

**Web** [www.atiner.gr](http://www.atiner.gr)

## AUGUST

### 7-11 | IDEA World Fitness Convention

**Venue** Los Angeles, US

#### Summary

Claimed to be the world's largest, longest-running international fitness

convention and featuring diverse educational programming from world-renowned presenters.

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

## SEPTEMBER

### 3-5 | BASES Conference 2013

**Venue** UCLAN, Preston, UK

#### Summary

The annual conference of the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences, the professional body for sport and exercise sciences in the UK.

**Web** [www.bases.org.uk](http://www.bases.org.uk)

### 5-7 | Annual IHRSA / Fitness Brasil Latin American Conference & Trade Show

**Venue** São Paulo, Brazil

#### Summary

Latin America's premier health and wellness event, featuring three days of seminars, networking opportunities, and a trade show with more than 100 exhibitors and over 10,000 visitors.

**Web** [www.ihrsa.org/fitness-brasil](http://www.ihrsa.org/fitness-brasil)

### 8-11 | SPATEC Fall, North America

**Venue** San Diego, US

#### Summary

An appointment-based event that brings operators of leading hotel, resort, destination, athletic, medical and day spas together with leading domestic and international suppliers.

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

### 18-20 | Health+Fitness Business Expo & Interbike Expo

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

#### Summary

The event brings brands, retailers, press and industry influencers together for the business of fitness. Taking place alongside Interbike is also an Outdoor Demo event on 16-17 September.

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

### 18-20 | European Fitness Summit

**Venue** Barcelona, Spain

#### Summary

The summit offers suppliers from the fitness, wellness and health industries an opportunity to enjoy face-to-face meetings with decision-makers from leading fitness studios and wellness centres in selected European markets.

**Web** [www.european-fitness-summit.com](http://www.european-fitness-summit.com)



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## 24-26 SEPTEMBER | Leisure Industry Week

**Venue** NEC, Birmingham, UK

### Summary

Leisure Industry Week (LIW) is the UK's largest out-of-home leisure exhibition and provides a platform for companies to showcase their new products and services to more than 8,000 decision-makers in the industry. The show is made up of distinct sectors including Health & Fitness (which incorporates Sport), Play & Attractions, Leisure Facilities, Pool & Spa, and Eat & Drink.

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



Leisure Industry Week at the NEC attracts over 8,000 industry decision-makers

## OCTOBER

## 17-20 OCTOBER | 13th Annual IHRSA European Congress

**Venue** Madrid, Spain

### Summary

The event features presentations delivered by executives from both inside and outside the health club industry, offering commentary on trends shaping business and the fitness industry. Networking icebreakers, focus group discussions, and evening and lunch receptions will provide the opportunity to build relationships with European colleagues.

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

## 21-23 | ISPA Conference & Expo

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

### Summary

An opportunity for attendees to network with spa industry professionals, hear from educational speakers covering a variety of business-related topics, and discover the latest trends in spa products.

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

## 23-25 | Club Industry Conference and Trade Show

**Venue** Chicago, US

### Summary

Returning to its home town of Chicago for 2013, this independent event for fitness professionals will be offering new education, events, exhibitors and tours, plus networking opportunities.

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

## 25-27 | The Yoga Show London

**Venue** Olympia, London, UK

### Summary

The total yoga experience under one roof, including free yoga and pilates classes, pilates reformer sessions, a Yoga Teaching conference, teacher training taster sessions, children's yoga, demonstrations and lectures, together with a range of inspirational products.

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

## 26-29 | SIBEC North America

**Venue** The Ritz-Carlton Dove Mountain, Tucson, US

### Summary

A one-to-one meeting forum for owners, operators, CEOs and COOs of health, recreation, sports and fitness organisations to meet with leading executives from national and international supplier companies representing a wide number of related industry categories.

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

opportunities, as well as quality management education.

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

## 13-16 NOVEMBER | SIBEC Europe

**Venue** Don Carlos Leisure Resort & Spa, Marbella, Spain

### Summary

One-to-one meeting forum where Europe's leading operators from the health, fitness and leisure sectors meet face-to-face with suppliers. It will bring together more than 200 delegates in over 1,500 meetings.

### Web

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



The Yoga Show takes place in October

## NOVEMBER

## 13-14 | Spa Life UK 2013

**Venue** Daventry Court Hotel, Daventry, UK

### Summary

This UK event offers spa professionals a combination of exposure to new product innovations, shared industry insights, extensive networking





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Now your diverse client base is telling you what you already know: that CoreFitnessRoller™ opens new market sectors, represents fantastic value for money and is great for elite sportsmen, ante natal rehab, fitness fun for the healthy and is a life saver for the active ageing population.

Perhaps we should hear why they have joined the CoreFitnessRoller™ Revolution:

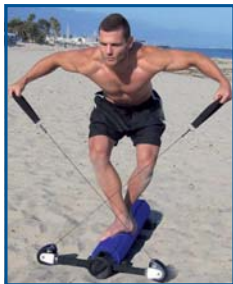
"For those of us who are over 55, who know what fitness is... weight loss is secondary to muscle control for us. Poor posture is the first sign that we have given up and moved into ageing without grace. Loss of stamina is the next most important sign that we have given up and cannot see our physical condition improving.

"If we give up, the impact on our psyche is almost irreversibly damaging. I believe

the CoreFitnessRoller™ has reversed the effects of these two issues for me... this is a great (if not the best) piece of equipment... I have only lost a few pounds over the last several weeks, but I have gained self-confidence, and that will make all the difference for how I approach the next several years of my life."

**Basha Millhollen (Retired)**

"As a triathlete, having a strong core is vital to being able to compete for long distances. Using the CoreFitnessRoller™ really pushed me and strengthened my core better than anything else I have tried. It is also great for building all the muscle



groups. I've never used a product with so many different ways to work out. If you want a compact, functional training device and want a challenging, fun way to improve your fitness, whether you are a beginner or seasoned athlete, then you need the CoreFitnessRoller™"

**Jim Johnson, Ironman Triathlete**

"After 20 years of teaching singing plus two 'C' sections, I was well aware of my core, but was afraid I would never have the core strength I had before the birth of my children. I thought the muscles were simply too compromised from the trauma. The CoreFitnessRoller™ was an answer to my prayers. After only five weeks of training on the CFR I began to see definition and have renewed stamina. What I learned and developed on the CoreFitnessRoller™ plus what I already teach my students regarding how we use our bodies in singing was a match made in heaven... The biggest surprise is my improved balance. Better balance changes everything, not how we move but how we optimise all of our activities. I feel 10 years younger.

"My car wouldn't start a few days ago and I immediately hopped on my bike and rode seven miles to my CoreFitnessRoller™ class because I couldn't imagine the day without this experience. I'm hooked!"

**Kimberly Ford, Vocalist and Mother.**

To experience CoreFitnessRoller™ and attend a CFR foundation workshop, call +44 (0)1993 517000 or email [info@mbodiesacademy.com](mailto:info@mbodiesacademy.com)  
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## Everyone's talking about . . .

# Gyms for all?

Is the health and fitness industry truly responding to everyone's needs? Or are we providing an offering which in practice means the fit get fitter, while the fat get fatter?

**T**here are still vast swathes of the population who are not walking through the doors of health clubs. Are we not meeting their needs? Or is it because they are put off by the media's representation of the sector?

Never has it been more timely to provide a service that caters for all. The obesity crisis reflects how important it is to bring the sedentary population into exercise, while the Paralympics were a great leveller, proving that having a disability does not preclude someone from participating. Elderly people and children, meanwhile – often insufficiently catered for – are in as

much need of interesting opportunities to participate in activity as anyone else.

So is the sector providing these opportunities, or are we too elitist? With hardcore workouts such as HIT and CrossFit grabbing the headlines, are we putting off the overweight 40-somethings who haven't done any exercise since school? (see *HCM* Nov/Dec 12, p3). Is the trade-off at least that HIT workouts succeed in attracting a younger audience, getting people into the habit of staying fit even though they no longer play team sport? Will this help prevent another sedentary generation?

How can we ensure clubs appeal to the super-motivated gym goers as well

as those who are just setting out on the path to a healthier lifestyle? Does segregating the hardcore crew from the newbies work? Or is it more motivating and aspirational to have everyone in together? Helen Tite, who runs The Core fitness studio in Cornwall, mixes cancer patients, people with disabilities and people of all abilities in her GRAVITY classes, and says the psychological impact for special populations taking part in a regular class can not be underestimated.

Are we in fact already offering the right mix of activities – do we simply need to get the message out there more effectively? We ask the experts...

**HOW CAN GYMS CATER FOR AN INCREASINGLY DIVERSE AUDIENCE? EMAIL US: [HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM](mailto:HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM)**

### Phillip Mills

Les Mills International • CEO



**T**he new HIT trend is bringing some valuable things to our traditional club industry. It's attracting a new, younger market to fitness: people who are not long out of school or university and who have stopped playing sport, but who are not attracted by the traditional club stereotype.

Typically delivered in a format which feels like traditional sports team training, HIT creates bonding and is likely to increase retention. It gets good results and is highly motivating. From a club point of view, people are prepared to pay much more than for traditional memberships.

Personally, I've found it difficult to attract people to low intensity workouts: even the deconditioned don't stay for long. People seem to respond far better to 'intimidating' campaigns that the PC line of thinking in our industry counsels against.

By all means use sensible induction processes, like booking people into introductory workouts and suggesting they do half classes for the first few weeks. Creating a separate area of the club for HIT workouts is also good practice for many reasons. But I'd suggest that, rather than trying to tone down this great opportunity, we jump on the wave and ride it."

### Mark Jones

Technogym • Business manager for health, medical and sport



**W**ith market penetration teetering around 12 per cent for 10 years, I don't think gyms are reaching out well enough to the people who don't exercise.

I believe outreach is key to engaging with non-exercisers. As a starting point, I would recommend finding out what health initiatives the PCTs and health boards are running in the area and linking in with them.

Also, to communicate the message that health clubs are for everyone, gyms need to strike up relationships with the local press. We're too used to hearing the same stories, such as everyone joining in January and leaving in March, or about the latest intimidating workout. We must feed the media positive stories: find champions in your club to use as case studies, based on real issues like weight loss and reduction in disease risk.

Once people have found the courage to walk through the doors, the induction is all-important. Staff attitude is vital to make all members feel welcome. On the gym floor, they need to focus their attention on those who need encouragement. To make gyms a lifestyle choice, we need to be constantly aware of members' aspirations and stay abreast of their goals."



**Gyms need to create the sense of being a community hub, linking members to outside activities such as walking clubs**

## Richard Coates

Stars Gym • Director



**S**tars Gym started out specialising as a martial arts gym, but we realised we needed to provide a broader offering to increase our membership at the rate we wanted and to encourage members to try new things.

I think the best way of making all user groups feel comfortable is to create a community. There are various ways of

doing this, including providing a mix of activities and people in one space. This removes barriers to trying new activities and breaks down preconceptions: boxers are often regarded as beefy men with tattoos, but this is not true, with bankers and mums among the converts. We've also started running gym circuits: a fun, social class where people feel they're part of a group and chat to other members, but in which they can also go at their own pace. A member-to-member notice board has also helped our members to interact.

Attention from staff is important to make everyone feel comfortable and stay motivated. We're now using KPIs to incentivise our staff to look after members. Newcomers have to be acknowledged quickly and staff are required to spend time with people on the gym floor."

## Geraldine Tuck

ukactive • Operations director



**P**artly as a result of the recession, the health and fitness sector has looked at provision and tried to be more inclusive, conveying the message that everyone is welcome. Local authority leisure centres are particularly strong in this respect.

Gyms need to create the sense of being a hub, linking members to other activities they can do outside of the club in order to maintain an active lifestyle – for example, creating links with walking clubs. Broader activities in-club can help with this too, such as running healthy eating sessions, or marathon and triathlon training, so clubs become places people value for lifestyle advice.

In some cases, clubs don't need to change their offering so much as improve the in-club marketing. Each member has to have their journey laid out, with human touchpoints along the way, and everyone must be treated individually.

Media representation is important too: ukactive is proactively working across all media channels to promote more stories about the importance of a healthy body image and body confidence. We have made great strides towards changing perceptions of the sector and encouraging active lifestyles."

Kate Cracknell talks to the head of recreation for Migros Zurich about the co-operative's new fitness venture in Germany

# RENE KALT



**"I**n the modern world, success will come to those who know how to construct a universe of ideas around their business." So said Gottlieb Duttweiler, who founded Swiss co-operative Migros in 1925. Migros might since have grown to become Switzerland's largest retailer, known primarily as a supermarket brand (see information panel below), but this philosophy – its own 'universe of ideas' – is still very much in evidence today.

Sustainable development – from an economic, social and ecological perspective – lies at the heart of the not-for-profit business, with Migros priding itself on its high ethical standards and corporate social responsibility. Value for money and quality of products are also key, as is customer service: with over two million members from a total Swiss population of just short of eight million, Migros is essentially owned by its customers and places high importance

on their buy-in. Finally on the list of company values are 'Swissness' and regional focus: the business operates as a federation of 10 distinct co-operatives across Switzerland, each of them delivering against a social and charitable agenda in their own region, as well as supporting local producers.

## FITNESS LEADER

Migros is not only a supermarket chain, however; among its other divisions, it's also Switzerland's leading health and fitness operator. And here too, the company's focus on customers and staff is evident. "Our mission is the health of our people," confirms René Kalt, head of the recreation division in the Zurich co-operative. "We're responsible for the health of our customers, and we need to offer fair, proven training to help them reach their goals."

Kalt originally joined Migros in 1995, prior to which he was coach of

the Swiss women's volleyball team, including overseeing the development of a new national training centre for the Switzerland Volleyball Federation. "Then I got the chance to join Migros and head up a health club: one of the federation's first in the country, and the first in the Zurich region. It was a premium club in Regensdorf, near Zurich, operating under the Fitnesspark brand. From there we began to expand, building more large, full-service health clubs and extending into golf courses too. We also took over a sports and leisure park that offered tennis, football, golf and so on.

"But we reached a point where we couldn't expand much more by focusing purely on such large-scale developments. We still wanted to develop the health and fitness offering though, so we decided to turn to smaller footprint clubs. We acquired a chain called Active Fitness and put our efforts into speeding up the growth of that business. We now have 19 of these clubs, and together with our Fitnesspark facilities, we cater for 60,000 members – around 6 per cent of the Zurich population. Adding in our other venues, probably around 12 to 14 per cent of the local population currently use our facilities.

"We don't know exactly what the other Migros co-operatives are doing, as we all operate independently using different sub-brands. However, Migros Zurich is easily the biggest co-operative: we generate probably 40 to 50 per cent of the group's total turnover."

## LAUNCHING ELEMENTS

The fact that the Migros co-operatives all operate independently meant that,

## MIGROS COMPANY OVERVIEW

Migros is Switzerland's biggest retailer, with a turnover of 24.8bn Swiss francs (around €20.5bn) in 2011. It's also the biggest private employer in the country, with more than 86,000 employees from over 140 countries. It operates as a federation of 10 regional co-operatives with over two million members; public companies and a series of foundations also form part of the Migros Group.

A fixed percentage of the turnover of the Migros co-operatives is donated

to cultural and social activities – equating to around €70m every year – making Migros the most important private promoter of cultural events across Switzerland.

Besides the traditional retail fields of food and specialised goods, other important branches for the group include general retail, travel and financial services. The majority of consumer goods sold by Migros are produced by Migros industrial concerns in Switzerland.



Migros serves around 60,000 members in Zurich, but had to look beyond Switzerland for its new venture (all images) so as not to compete with other Migros co-operatives

when Kalt and his team were eyeing up opportunities for further expansion, venturing into the territory of another co-operative was not feasible. The Zurich co-operative therefore looked across the border, to Germany, where – under the leadership of Kalt as CEO and André Ehrlich on the ground in Germany as COO – it launched its first club in November 2012.

The premium club was launched under a new brand, ELEMENTS, which was created specifically for the German market, and which has as its tagline: 'Swiss up your life'. So just how compelling is that as an advertising message in Germany, I ask? "To us Swiss, it sounds awful!" admits Kalt. "When the German advertising agency presented the idea to us, our immediate reaction was to say no – we're very modest in Switzerland and don't like to go around claiming to be the biggest or the best. But the research suggested it really was the right approach – that for the German market, being Swiss represented high quality, fairness, sincerity. The verdict was that, at least at first, we had to communicate that."

Fairness and sincerity would certainly seem to be strong selling points, as Kalt explains: "I have a lot of respect for other fitness operators – there are some very good clubs out there. But my gut feeling



“ Although Migros co-operatives do have to earn money, it's not our main objective. Our key goal is to support the health of our customers ”

is that a number of the big operators are in it more for the money than because they really want to give people health. That's a problem, because mistakes are made and the public loses confidence in gyms' way of training.

"The good thing about Migros is that, although the co-operatives have to earn money, it's not our main objective. Our primary goal is to support the health of our customers. If you take that approach, you do also earn money. But if the money comes first, it's always a problem."

So how about the perception that Swiss means high quality? How does the ELEMENTS offering deliver against this, and indeed how do the German clubs compare to those in Switzerland? "First of all, we can build slightly bigger clubs in Germany because costs are lower across the board – rent, as well as building costs and salaries," says Kalt. "But essentially the standards are very similar to our clubs in Switzerland."

"Perhaps one key area where we have applied learnings is in the scope





ELEMENTS has been equipped by suppliers including gym80



The ELEMENTS model, designed specifically for Germany, is a high-end brand with an extensive spa and relaxation offering

► of what we offer. We haven't tried to save money, but at the same time we're not just putting things in because we feel we ought to. We haven't aimed for unnecessary luxury – we've produced an Audi A8, not a Rolls Royce.

"It's all very high quality though, with high technical specifications, and not only in terms of what members actually see: the décor, the equipment and so on. We also focus on the invisible elements: the quality of the air in the club, for example, and the absolute purity of the water.

"However, we haven't included elements that members don't actually need and we're therefore able to deliver it at a very fair price: €85 a month."

Nevertheless, the ELEMENTS model is high-end, including an extensive spa offering. Subject to space, there are two different formats: essentially with or without a pool. "But if we have the chance, we'll always include a pool," says Kalt. "It's not a lap pool for swimming though. It's normally a big pool with hot water, around 34–36 degrees, that's designed for relaxation. That's complemented by the saunas – we aim to build very special saunas – and a whole hammam process, where you move from room to room before ending up in the relaxation area. Those are also special – we try to influence all the senses so they're not just rooms to lie down in.

We work with lighting engineers to create different moods, or perhaps use different types of flooring so it's soft underfoot. It's very sensual.

"We do have one or two treatment rooms, but that side of the spa is less of a focus for us – it's more about offering facilities to help our members relax."

#### SERVICE AND RESULTS

ELEMENTS gyms, meanwhile, focus heavily on achieving results for members to complement the relaxation of the spa area. Equipped by suppliers including gym80, CYBEX, X-Force and Concept2, nevertheless it's the programming and the customer service, rather than the facilities themselves, that represent the club operator's USPs from a health and fitness perspective.

Migros has invested in extensive research and training to ensure the programming it puts together will genuinely deliver against members' health and fitness objectives. "The main thing for us is not to have the right equipment to keep members happy, but rather to ►

“ We haven't aimed for unnecessary luxury – we've produced an Audi A8, not a Rolls Royce. We also focus on invisible elements like air quality ”



# WHAT'S SHAKIN' IN YOUR CLUB AT 1 PM?

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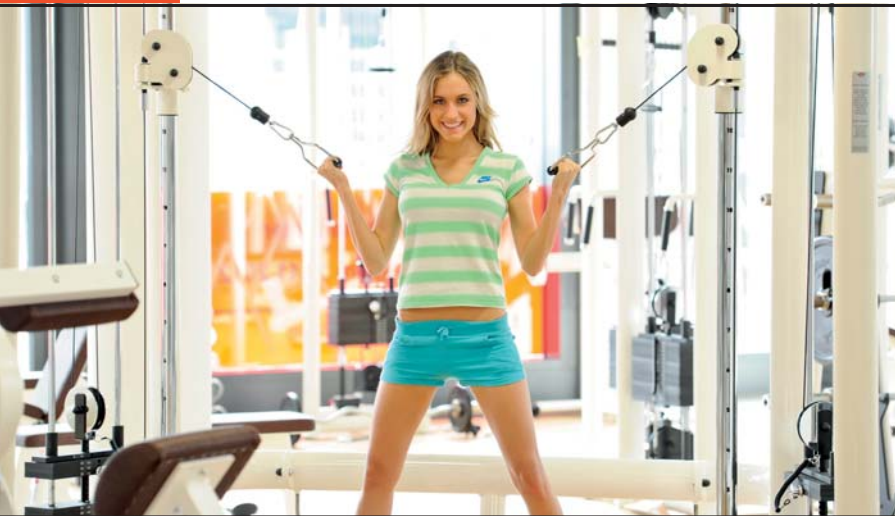
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► create a concept that's based on the latest scientific research," says Kalt. "We work with two external sports scientists to develop proven training concepts. They also educate our staff on a regular basis, so everyone's kept up-to-date with the latest research findings and how to apply these in the gym."

And from a customer service perspective: "We aim to copy the model of a five-star hotel, so members really feel as though they're our guests. Our job is to try and make their wishes come true. We've selected our staff based less

on their knowledge of training and more on their understanding of service. We believe we can teach them the training part, but not the service part. This you have to have in your blood.

"By taking this approach, I hope we can finally really make a difference for people. That's our main goal. I know how difficult it is – sometimes you just don't find the right people, and you start making compromises – but we're starting from the ground up and we'll put a lot of energy into getting it right. And if at any point members aren't happy, I hope they'll tell us and we'll try to resolve problems as fast as possible."

#### EXPANSION PLANS

So what are the plans now following the opening of the first club in November? "We aim to open a second site, also in Munich, at the end of April 2013. This will be followed by three further clubs in autumn 2013 – in Stuttgart, Frankfurt and Munich – and at least another two in the centre of Frankfurt in 2014. We want to build up to eight clubs across those three cities in the first year or two. If it works, we'll look to roll out around 50 clubs in the main cities across Germany."

Although the original intention had been to acquire an existing chain – both for speed of roll-out and "because it's hard to enter a new market, and buying

The company employs two external sports scientists to develop proven training concepts for the clubs

existing clubs also allows you to buy relationships" – most will in fact be new builds. "Actually, I'm now happy we're doing it this way," says Kalt. "It means we will expand slower, but we can do things our way, getting involved from the very beginning to ensure the building is designed exactly the way we need it."

He continues: "Other formats – smaller clubs, for example – could also be considered somewhere down the line, allowing us to venture into different sorts of locations. But that's not at all decided yet. For now we're just concentrating on the first eight clubs, assessing how the market responds."

"In the meantime, we're also diversifying our business in Germany – Migros Zurich recently acquired the German supermarket chain Tegut, and we'd certainly consider further development opportunities for the German market."

"We could also take the ELEMENTS model to other markets – why not? In my long-term dreams, that's certainly something I'd like to do. But first we have to succeed in Germany, and we can only do that one club at a time." ●



CEO René Kalt (right) with COO for Germany André Ehrlich (centre) and chair Jörg Blunsch

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# LIVING WELLNESS

Kate Cracknell pays a visit to Technogym's brand new headquarters – the Wellness Village – in Cesena, Italy

**M**any companies talk of corporate wellness initiatives for their employees; few have a wellness philosophy that visibly oozes from every pore of their headquarters. But that's precisely what has been achieved at the new Technogym Village in Cesena, Italy, which was officially opened in September 2012.

"We wanted to create a place that would inspire the industry about wellness," says Technogym founder and president Nerio Alessandri. "Wellness is not a concrete product. It's an experience, and in order to understand it, you need to live it. Wellness is made of design, technology, content, social relations, people. We wanted to create a destination where our customers, our partners and all the industry stakeholders could come and understand our vision by experiencing it for themselves – where we can both listen to and inspire people, and with that contribute to the future of our industry."

The new development, a long-time dream of Alessandri, creates one single

'home' for Technogym, encompassing administration, a large research and innovation centre – the R&D team is 200-strong – the training capacity of the Wellness University, product showrooms, production, warehousing, a large wellness centre and a staff restaurant.

"Over the last 28 years, the company has grown very fast, spreading beyond our original headquarters to new venues. By 2011, our operations were spread across 14 different locations," says Alessandri. "In creating the Technogym Village, we've consolidated all our operations, logistics and management, allowing us to be quicker, more efficient and to reduce costs, meaning more innovative products at more competitive prices."

## WELLNESS ON THE GO

Walking around the 60,000sq m development, designed by architects Antonio Citterio, Patricia Viel and Partners and set within 150,000sq m of land, there's an immediate sense of calm, with the buildings very much seeming to belong in their surroundings. The choice of materials

used throughout – wood, glass, aluminium – has created a highly sustainable building which, while huge in its footprint, has a sympathetic design that curves gently through the landscaped gardens.

Not only that, but the whole building has also been designed to embrace its environment in the way it operates. In the morning, the sun rises at one side of the Village, and as it tracks over the buildings, sensor-operated windows and blinds automatically respond: windows open where necessary to maintain heat and airflow, while blinds automatically lower if the sun is strong, ensuring light remains at a constant level in the office space. The idea is to create the ideal working environment – in terms of light, temperature, air quality, humidity and so on – by using nature, rather than having to rely heavily on heating or air conditioning.

The wellness philosophy is immediately apparent as you enter the offices – starting with the lack of chairs. Every desk, and most of the meeting rooms, are equipped with fabric Swiss ball-style 'wellness balls'. These carry a QR code





The Wellness Village has been designed to encourage activity, such as taking the stairs rather than the lift. The huge gym doubles as a showroom, while the canteen offers a range of healthy, organic food



that can be scanned to access suggestions of exercises to do while seated. Meeting rooms have high tables to encourage people to hold meetings standing up.

Meanwhile, pods of equipment from Technogym's glamorous new consumer range are scattered throughout the office for staff to use, in so-called 'active zones'. The ethos is one of 'wellness on the go' rather than only being about the gym.

Break-out areas in the office are particularly strong on the wellbeing message. Vending encompasses healthy snacks – with the items stocked chosen by staff – as well as coffee, and there are messages on the machines that stay just on the right side of patronising: little reminders of things we all know but don't always do, such as "Take stretch and exercise breaks at work" and "Start your day with a balanced breakfast". A couple of pieces of equipment are also placed in each of these zones, the idea being that staff can jump on for five minutes while they chat over a quick cup of coffee.

As former US president Bill Clinton said at the launch of the Village, which he

attended as keynote speaker, "the message that you are in control of your own life is at the heart of the Technogym Village".

The encouraging messages are in fact a theme throughout the Village; the elevator doors are even emblazoned with statements such as "Take the stairs to burn more calories". But this is nowhere more evident than in the large staff restaurant, which features long counters of beautifully fresh, organic, locally sourced food and where all dishes are low in salt and saturated fat. Here, a number of educational murals on chalkboard-style walls offer healthy living messages: reminders to drink plenty of water, for example. There's also a large illustration of The Wellness Lifestyle Pyramid, which outlines the different things people can do in their

everyday nutrition, movement and mental approach to improve their quality of life.

And this is where the 'wellness on the go' theme continues. Every member of staff is entitled to a personalised exercise and nutrition plan, encouraging them to develop healthy habits not only at work, but also at home. The chefs in the restaurant are on-hand to offer dietary advice for specific health conditions. And if the on-site activity options aren't enough, Technogym has also negotiated preferential rates for its staff at local sporting and medical facilities.

### ON-SITE OFFERING

That said – and quite aside from the 'active zones' – and quite aside from the possibilities for getting moving during the working day are impressive. Staff are issued with ▶



**“We designed the Village to be the healthiest workplace on earth – a corporate wellness prototype that can be exported elsewhere”**

- ▶ a brochure of activity choices, including outdoor options: there are running tracks throughout the grounds, also used for activities such as Nordic walking, plus a stretching/exercise platform on the lake and a basketball/volleyball court.

Meanwhile, the entire upper floor of the Wellness Centre comprises a 5,000sq m gym that's open to all staff at no cost, as well as to Technogym partners – customers, Technogym University students, and external universities and research centres co-operating on projects with Technogym.

Open from 7.00am–9.30pm, the gym offers the full Technogym range of equipment and is divided into zones: an Arke/Kinesis functional area, circuits, Kinesis stations, resistance, group cycling, stretching, and a section offering medical equipment. There's also a large CV area that looks out from the mezzanine balcony, over the ground floor consumer showroom, through the floor-to-ceiling windows that comprise the entire curving front wall of the centre, and into the gardens beyond. “People can choose to have a two-hour lunch break to be able to work out,” says Alessandri.

Complementing the gym, the Wellness Centre also offers an on-site medical centre and spa on the ground floor, with services such as physiotherapy, ECGs, VO<sub>2</sub> max testing and massage for an additional fee, as well as a hydropool, sauna, steamroom and relaxation area. Meanwhile, the Technogym University hosts educational seminars for staff on wellness-related topics such as sport, health, nutrition and psychology.

Says Alessandri: “We want to be world leader in the design and provision of a wellness solution. But in order to do that, we first need to work in a wellness environment ourselves, putting into practice what we promote: regular exercise, healthy nutrition and a positive mental approach.”

### THE TECHNOGYM ECOSYSTEM

“We designed the Technogym Village to be the healthiest workplace on earth,” continues Alessandri. “We want to create a corporate wellness prototype that can be exported elsewhere, to other companies. By investing in a corporate wellness programme, companies make a

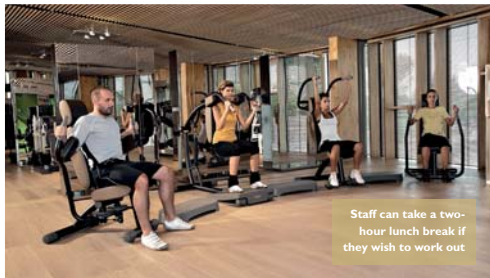
long-term investment in a more positive, creative and productive workforce. There's also a social contribution to the community, because healthy people require less expenditure on healthcare, and live a better, happier life. We see wellness as an economic development opportunity and a social opportunity.”

Alessandri is therefore keen to drive the message of wellness to a broader audience, beyond the corporates. With this in mind, the area around Cesena has been officially rebranded the Wellness Valley – indeed, ‘Wellness Valley’ now appears on road signs, and the concept has been embraced by all local stakeholders, from the authorities to the tourist industry and other local businesses.

“The Wellness Foundation, our non-profit arm, is very active in the Wellness Valley initiative, promoting health and preventative healthcare among the local population,” says Alessandri. “For example, during the summer – in conjunction with the mayor's office – we provide free wellness classes in the city parks, while our PlayWellness initiative has been launched in schools, educating kids about wellness using a system of structured games.”

It's all part of Technogym's new buzzword, ‘ecosystem’ – the notion that everyone must work together towards a larger goal, uniting people, technology and policy to bring wellness into as many lives as possible.

“The Village is the hub from which we plan to spread our strategic vision: the Technogym Ecosystem,” concludes Alessandri. “The infrastructure is ready, and now our focus is on how to leverage the Village to create a worldwide wellness community. We need to look at how to spread the message, generating new content and programmes with a clear goal in mind: taking the fitness industry's penetration from 10 per cent of the global population to 30 per cent.” ●



Staff can take a two-hour lunch break if they wish to work out

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# INVEST in the future

Is the health and fitness industry approaching kids' fitness in the right way?  
Kate Cracknell asks the experts


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A few years ago, I interviewed Magnus Scheving, aka *LazyTown's Sportacus*, about kids' fitness: how to motivate children to be active, how to make it fun, how to put all-encompassing programming together (see *HCM* March 07, p62). By that time, he'd already achieved outstanding results in his home country of Iceland, running initiatives in which every child in the country took part, leading to soaring sales of fruit and vegetables, plummeting sales of fizzy drinks, and 80 per cent of parents noticing a change in diet and motivation levels in their kids.

He was, when I spoke to him, turning his attention to the UK, and I admit I was genuinely optimistic about the prospects – there was something about his infectious energy and enthusiasm that made me feel, if anyone could get the UK's kids moving, it would be him. Yet here we are, almost six years on, and even the indefatigable Scheving seems

to have hit his head against a brick wall of British politics and 'can't do' attitude.

So what's going on in the UK – why can't we get our kids moving? Is the problem political, cultural, environmental, financial – or indeed all of the above? Certainly the recent insolvency of MEND – which saw a sustained drop in the number of its evidence-based programmes due to the transfer of public health to local authorities – suggests that reducing childhood obesity is something people prefer to talk about, rather than do anything meaningful about or pay for.

So is the fitness industry taking the leading role it could – indeed, should – in addressing these issues? Doug Werner, fitness industry veteran and author of *Abbie Gets Fit*, thinks not: "The industry could benefit tremendously from being the authority in a new youth fitness movement, taking the lead on battling childhood obesity. To date however, I believe that, with few exceptions, the industry has missed the boat on this."

So why aren't we being more proactive in this area? And when we do implement programmes and initiatives, are we going about it in the right way? A recent review – published in the *British Medical Journal* in September 2012 – looked at outcomes data from 30 kids' physical activity interventions published globally between January 1990 and March 2012. It found that the interventions almost never increased overall daily physical activity – the kids simply went back to their sedentary behaviour in between.

So if structured interventions aren't working, do health clubs and leisure centres need to change their model? Should activity be less formalised, with indoor/outdoor spaces clearly dedicated to play and fun rather than exercise? Are more outreach programmes with schools needed? Are parent-child sessions the way forward?

Overall, is our strategy right regarding kids' fitness? We ask the experts.



Most obese children also have one or more obese parents, who also need our help

Our industry  
could benefit  
tremendously by  
being the authority  
in a new youth  
fitness movement



Experts say children need one hour of moderate physical activity each day – more than the two hours of PE offered in schools

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## TAM FRY

Honorary chair, Child Growth Foundation, and spokesperson for the National Obesity Forum



Just over a year ago, I attended a Physical Activity Network seminar in Westminster, organised to report on the progress of this offshoot of the government's much-vaunted Responsibility Deal. The Deal, you will remember, is the government's strategy to lower obesity in the UK, and I had hoped to find that the work being led by the FIA (now ukactive) and supported by health clubs was significantly more successful than what I perceived to be the very limited achievements of the Deal's Food Network. I came away, however, bitterly disappointed. My impression was that the seminar had been a session going nowhere, populated by club owners far more interested in mixing with friends than in getting adults and children back into regular activity.

I had wanted to know, in particular, how advanced club owners' plans might be to ensure the government's pledge for an Olympic physical activity legacy

would be honoured. I didn't hear of any! How awful. The result is that today, just over a year later, children especially are finding it difficult or impossible to find the sporting facilities needed in their quest to emulate their Olympic heroes. Team GB exceeded its expected medal haul, but no owners appeared to have had the faith to plan for that possibility.

With the connections to Whitehall that this think-tank has, how much had it clamoured for the minimum hours of physical activity in primary schools to be mandatory rather than aspirational? Not much it seemed. Children need one hour of moderately intensive exercise every day; the two hours a week they get of scheduled time is paltry. In some schools they may not even get that. Owners of health clubs across the UK should now be urgently linking up with schools, offering schemes to get their pupils active, if they are not to fail the children on whom our success in Rio and Chicago will depend.

If there are enlightened club owners who are already doing what I ask, I will apologise rapidly for my criticism – I'm quite sure that I will be hearing from them. On the other hand, a minuscule number of rebukes received may prove my point. My email inbox awaits.

## DOUG WERNER

VP, Healthtrax Fitness and Wellness, and author of *Abbie Gets Fit*



Childhood obesity levels continue to rise dramatically. The NHS predicts a 10 per cent rise in the prevalence of obesity among people under 20 years of age by 2015, and 14 per cent by 2025. Meanwhile, a recent study by the Peninsula Medical School in Plymouth, UK, indicated that 75 per cent of parents of overweight children do not even realise their children are overweight. Parents, schools, the NHS and the community at large are not getting the job done.

Our industry could therefore benefit tremendously by being the authority in a new youth fitness movement, taking the lead on battling this epidemic. We need to ask ourselves: do we want to trust less informed, less resourceful influences to solve this problem and develop our future customers for us, or should we be taking the lead now?

To become the leaders in this worthy crusade, more clubs will need ▶





Gyms must do everything with the end consumer in mind – the child

▶ to form long-term strategies focused on developing these emerging markets patiently and systematically over time. This is counter-intuitive to our traditional monthly cash flow business model, whose success is frequently dependent on membership sales strategies that are short-sighted and intense. However, it's not necessarily a risky proposition either: consider the fact that most obese children also have one or more obese parents, who also need our help.

If I were a young and ambitious trainer today, I'd be spending time developing new business opportunities outside the four walls of the gym, targeting this market with entry level family training options that eventually prepare those people for enrolment into a gym as well. Our entire industry would do well to develop similar strategies to capitalise on this huge opportunity.

### JONATHAN WILLIAMS

Chief executive officer  
of kids' fitness franchise  
SHOKKÉnergie



**A**s a paediatric exercise scientist, this is something that's very close to my heart. Personally I have gone full circle with this debate, from supplier to now operator, and that was partly due to attitudes within the industry.

I have a burning passion for the youth activity market, and that helped form the original SHOKK concept and brand 15 years ago. In the early days, everyone loved what SHOKK did and appreciated our passion, but this is where the commitment and input seemed to stop.

The key to any successful delivery to children is to employ quality staff and keep it varied and fresh. Many other

activity offerings in this field criticised whether a youth gym could not only work but also sustain interest. "Kids should be running in the fields" was a typical response from some. To a certain extent I agree, but it shouldn't be forgotten that a physical activity venue offers all of the same advantages to a child as it does to an adult.

So what's the gap in thinking? Well it's not rocket science: you need great people, great service, varied and wide-ranging activities, and you must do everything with a smile on your face. Very importantly, you must also do everything with the end customer in mind – the child. Combine that with marketing to parents and children alike and you'll achieve sustained activity and the beginnings of adherence to exercise.

Unfortunately the philosophy of some operators suggests that kids are an afterthought, so it's no surprise when the business outputs reflect this. Put children to the top of your agenda and understand the parent and child requirements and you're halfway there. Drop in oodles of structured sales, marketing and retention activity – in the same way you would at a quality adult facility – promoting an environment that's been designed specifically for kids, and you've cracked it.

We can learn from others too: go to the Disney store to see how it's done for the under-eights, or Apple for teenagers. ●

In the early days of SHOKK, everyone appreciated our passion, but this was where the commitment seemed to stop



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# NEVER SAY NEVER

NICK BATRAM LOOKS AT THE POTENTIAL FOR HEALTH AND FITNESS OPERATORS TO REJOIN THE UK STOCK MARKET

**E**arly last year, news that the énergie Group was looking to float on the London market brought back fond memories of a segment of the leisure industry that was once the darling of the stock market. At one point, there were almost a dozen listed companies that were either pure health and fitness club operators, or broader leisure companies with a significant presence in the fitness industry.

Today, with the exception of a few hotel groups, there is no listed health and fitness presence in the UK. So what went wrong?

## A MOVE TO PRIVATE EQUITY

Every company has a different tale to tell, but there are common themes. The explosion of health and fitness clubs onto the stock market gave operators access to capital that they had never

really had in terms of scale and cost. This, in turn, drove a land grab in what was still a relatively immature market. A combination of increased competition and quality control failure as far as property was concerned meant that returns started to decline and profit targets were missed. Operators began to fall out of love with the quoted market, and investors began to fall out of love with the fitness industry.



énergie's withdrawal from its prospective IPO should not be seen 'as an indication of the market's willingness to re-embrace fitness'



If budget operators are disciplined, they may interest the investment community

“The segment making the most noise at the moment is the budget sector.

There has always been good latent demand for a truly budget offering in the UK”

For the larger groups such as Cannons, Esporta, Fitness First, Holmes Place and LA Fitness, the answer appeared to be private equity. The belief was that the stock market was far too short-term, and that private equity had a greater appreciation of the fitness industry's long-term potential. However, we believe that for some operators this was more a case of looking for somebody to blame, rather than appreciating that the market was a

very different place from what it was in the 1980s and early 1990s: the trading climate was changing, competition was increasing, clubs could no longer charge the same level of joining fees, rents were going up, and these pressures were not temporary. Private equity in some cases worked, but in others all it did was overburden companies with debt – a situation exacerbated by the credit crisis.

It is perhaps no coincidence that Esporta and Holmes Place have been subsumed by Virgin Active – the one group that didn't indulge in the land grab 10–15 years ago, and that wasn't quoted on the market.

#### BUDGET POTENTIAL

So, more than a decade on from the heyday of the quoted health and fitness sector, how likely are we ever to see a listed operator again?

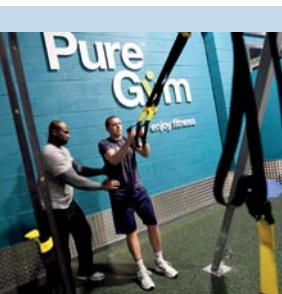
This was no doubt the question asked by énergie CEO Jan Spaticchia when he looked to IPO énergie earlier this year. Given that énergie ultimately withdrew from its prospective IPO, the answer would appear to be 'never'. However, we believe that this needn't be the case.

While not wishing to focus too much on énergie, the reality was that stock market sentiment deteriorated just at

the time it was looking to float. At the same time, the company's size restricted the potential investor base. Furthermore, énergie is not straightforward, as it's a combination of franchised and owned health and fitness clubs. Therefore, we don't necessarily view énergie's experience as an indication of the market's willingness to re-embrace the health and fitness sector.

The segment of the health and fitness club industry making the most noise at the moment is the budget sector. In our opinion, there has always been good latent demand for a truly budget offering in the UK. The problem was the availability of the right property at the right price. One of the few positives to come out of the recession and credit crunch is the increased availability of property at reasonable rents. This has enabled those companies with access to capital to accelerate the development of their estates. In turn, this has helped improve their respective covenants.

The Gym Group and Pure Gym have been major beneficiaries of this dynamic. The challenge for both groups – and the other budget operators – will be to maintain their discipline as far as property is concerned. They need to avoid the mistakes the industry made



Low property costs helped budget gyms



Virgin Active has been one of the success stories of the fitness industry in the past decade – and could be an attractive IPO candidate

“There has already been some major merger and acquisition activity in the industry and there may be more to come – this could end in a stock market IPO”

- ▶ in the past – ie don't overpay for rents and don't compromise on property. It doesn't matter how good the offering is, if the rent is wrong and/or the location is wrong, the financial model collapses. Whether for private equity or quoted market investors, this will be a particular concern. Nevertheless, if budget operators can convince the investment community their approach is disciplined, then the latter should be interested in a segment of the market that appears to offer significant growth potential.

#### A RESILIENT SECTOR

But is there life beyond the budget operators in the health club sector?

One of the major attractions of the industry back in the 1990s was its growth potential. With the exception of the budget sector, over the past few years, industry growth has been pedestrian. However, given the state of the economy and the unhelpful advice of many newspapers, which advised people to dump their gym membership when the recession hit, the industry has performed relatively well. Indeed, this addresses one of the major concerns prior to entering the recession: that membership would collapse when consumers came under real economic pressure. This clearly hasn't happened, and is in large part the result of hard work by operators, engaging more

effectively with members and becoming more involved with the broader health debate, led by ukactive (formerly the FIA). For us, this is a demonstration that the industry's quality of earnings is higher than many perceive it to be.

The success of Virgin Active also shows that it is not all about the budget sector. Indeed, Virgin Active is one of the success stories of the UK leisure industry over the past decade. CVC took a controlling interest in the company last year, but ultimately we see Virgin Active as an attractive IPO candidate.

For a number of the larger operators, the path to the stock market or new investment is made more difficult because of their capital structures and property hangovers from yesteryear, rather than the prospects for the industry in

general. In some circumstances, this is also compounded by shareholders being unwilling or unable to take a loss on their original investment. There has already been some major merger and acquisition activity in the industry and there may be more to come – ultimately this could end in a stock market IPO.

We don't believe the quoted equity market is permanently shut to the health and fitness industry. Indeed, with the number of quoted leisure companies having more than halved since 2000, there is a shortage of quality listed investment opportunities. However, a stock market flotation is a long way from being the default next step for operators, as it was around 15 years ago, and we doubt we will ever see a dozen listed health and fitness operators again. ●

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nick Batram is a leisure analyst for Peel Hunt. He has been involved in the investment industry for over 25 years, mostly specialising in small and mid cap leisure companies. Considered a leading health club analyst during the 1990s/2000s, he was involved in the IPO of LA Fitness. Other transactions/advisory roles included Virgin Active, Holmes Place, Esporta and Roko.

Peel Hunt is an independent specialist UK equities small/mid cap broking house offering a traditional full-service corporate broking model. It is highly regarded, being ranked in the top three brokers in the 2012 Extel Survey and having more top five sector rankings than any other broker. Peel Hunt is a partnership and is 75 per cent owned by staff.

# Research round-up

Short bursts of exercise can have an instant impact on memory in older adults, according to a new study from the US

## Brief encounter

In recent years, a number of research studies have heralded the benefits of long-term exercise on cognitive function. Few, however, have looked at how much exercise is needed to make a difference – and now a new study\* by scientists at UC Irvine (UCI) suggests that just a short burst of moderate physical activity can immediately improve memory in older adults.

It's an interesting finding considering the resurgence of high-intensity interval training that's taking place in the health and fitness industry at the moment (see our recent HIT series, *HCM* July, August and October 2012).

### Surprise test

The relatively small study, led by post-doctoral neurobiologist Sabrina Segal and her team at UCI, was based on 31 healthy adults and 23 patients who were recruited from the university's Alzheimer's Disease Center. Their ages ranged from 50–85 years.

For the study, the participants were split into two groups, with both groups starting out by looking at 20 emotionally positive images – such as pictures of nature and animals.

Participants then either exercised for six minutes on a stationary cycle at 70 per cent  $\text{VO}_2$  max, or rested quietly (the sedentary control group). An hour after the exercise or rest, participants were then surprised with a test where they were asked to describe the images they had seen in as much detail as possible.

Saliva samples were also taken before participants looked at the images and immediately after, as well as before the bike test/rest and at 10-, 30- and 50-minute intervals after that.



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Exercise could be used instead of drugs to help enhance memory in older adults

### Double-sided

The results revealed that the people who had exercised recalled significantly more images and details than those who had rested. This was the case among both healthy ageing adults and those with Alzheimer's.

In fact, in a surprise outcome, exercise appeared to aid memory even more effectively in the participants with Alzheimer's – this group saw almost a twofold improvement, compared to 1.3-fold among healthy adults. Segal says: "We found that a single, short instance of moderately intense exercise particularly improved memory in individuals with memory deficits [Alzheimer's]."

She adds: "Because of its implications and the need to better understand the mechanism by which exercise may enhance memory, we're following up this

study with an investigation of potential underlying biological factors."

One of the biological factors Segal believes is it at play is the exercise-induced release of norepinephrine – a chemical that is strongly linked to memory in the brain. In the study, she found that salivary alpha amylase – a biomarker reflecting norepinephrine activity in the brain – had significantly increased in the groups which exercised. And, in correlation with the memory test results, salivary alpha amylase was at a greater level among the people suffering from Alzheimer's.

"The current findings offer a natural and relatively safe alternative to pharmacological interventions for memory enhancement in healthy older individuals, as well as those who suffer from cognitive deficits," she concludes.

\*Segal et al. Exercise-Induced Activation Enhances Memory Consolidation in Both Normal Aging and Patients with Amnesic Mild Cognitive Impairment. *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*. November 2012



# COMMUNITY MATTERS

Football clubs are developing community outreach programmes that address social issues and build greater affinity with local people. Neena Dhillon looks at three clubs promoting health in pioneering ways, and setting an inspiring example to us all



Over the past five years the UK's football industry, backed by its major league and player associations, has taken great strides to further meaningful community engagement. This has involved football clubs positioning themselves at the heart of their respective communities by delivering programmes that seek to improve the wellbeing of people in their local areas. No longer is this work confined to a coach or player being sent to a school with a bag of footballs; today's schemes are diverse in their reach and target schoolchildren as well as vulnerable people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities.

The more advanced community models are based on a not-for-profit trust or foundation that reports into the parent football club while maintaining its structural and financial independence. Although it will be expected to raise finance through core activity strands such

as weekend and holiday football clubs and fitness facilities, trusts typically receive crucial 'in-kind' support including PR, HR, IT, legal and administrative resources.

External bodies and corporate sponsors are major sources of funding, and it's becoming increasingly common for multi-dimensional partnerships to be fostered with organisations such as primary healthcare trusts, the police, local authorities, National Lottery and Comic Relief. Football associations and governing bodies including the Premier League, FA and PFA also play a significant financial role; the Premier League, for example, invested £45m in 2011 to benefit projects that focused on sports participation, health, education or community cohesion.

## DERBY COUNTY IN THE COMMUNITY (DCITC)

Derby County Football Club's award-winning community programme, which

**The Movement is Derby County's flagship project, addressing the high level of inactivity among teenage girls**

achieved charitable trust status in 2008, currently engages over 20,000 adults and children annually, underpinned by funding of £1.3m that has been secured over the past three years from partner organisations. With this financing, DCITC runs football and other physical activity clubs, educational and enterprise initiatives, social inclusion programmes and mental health schemes.

Of particular note is The Movement, a flagship project set up by DCITC and Derby City Council in 2008 to address high levels of inactivity among teenage girls aged 11 to 16 years. Supported by the Premier League and PFA, The Movement has provided 3,000 local girls with affordable dance, gym, swim and workout sessions in schools, village clubs and council-run leisure centres; self-esteem courses; a Movement magazine and interactive website providing advice on healthy lifestyles; and access to a course offering a professional insight into multi-media careers.

DCITC head of community Simon Carnall explains how the initiative has broken down barriers: "Cost, logistics, self-esteem and body image were some of the factors stopping these young people from being active, so we provided safe, local and girls-only environments where they could exercise at affordable rates [£1-1.75 per class]. We focused on the activities they were interested



Derby County's community programme currently engages over 20,000 local people



Manchester City's player ambassador Joe Hart attends a Strike a Balance session, offering his support to local primary school children

in – such as dance, beauty and the media – rather than football. We gave them a membership card offering incentives to exercise more, as well as finding enthusiastic dance leaders to engage them in lessons and competitions. To date, this has resulted in a 19.5 per cent increase in activity levels among a group that was completely sedentary.”

The success of The Movement has resulted in Derby City Council approaching the trust once more, this time with the challenge of instigating behavioural change among adults suffering from substance misuse. Launched in June 2011 by a partnership formed between DCITC, NHS Derby City, Phoenix Futures and the council, Active Choices is a one-year programme that seeks to improve the physical and mental health of individuals aged over 18 entering Class A drug treatment services.

“We have 91 clients who have been referred to us by Phoenix Futures,” explains Carnall. “As adults returning to the community from prison, they have committed to staying clean during our 48-week holistic intervention programme, which works alongside traditional services. We use free weekly activity sessions – ranging from football to boxing, swimming to gardening – as well as boot camps and healthy eating lessons to keep our clients focused on the attainment of a healthy body and state of mind. Close family members also have free access to exercise as part of our rehabilitation approach. During these sessions, clients are accompanied by one of our motivational staff members,

who are qualified Derby County football coaches seconded to the trust.”

A year into Active Choices and the council has been delighted by the 0 per cent re-offending rate among participants, all of whom have maintained activity while on the programme. Of those completing their 48 weeks, 30 per cent have moved on to sustained club activity.

Carnall points out that free access to the council's leisure centres has been

WE FOCUSED ON THE  
ACTIVITIES THEY WERE  
INTERESTED IN – SUCH  
AS DANCE, BEAUTY AND  
THE MEDIA – RATHER  
THAN FOOTBALL

instrumental in the delivery of Active Choices, but he does see an opportunity for commercial providers to get involved in similar projects in the future.

He explains: “It's a brave new world in terms of community partnerships. Programmes today need to have real and hard outcomes, so we should all be thinking about how we can play our part. And after all, some clients will become future customers of the leisure centres to which they have been introduced by our projects.”

## CITY IN THE COMMUNITY (CITC)

Established as a pilot of the PFA's 'Football in the Community' initiative back in 1986, Manchester City's community scheme began with football coaching and is now one of the industry's longest-running programmes. Operating today as the self-sustaining City in the Community Foundation (CITC), it works with between 30,000 and 40,000 people a year across 32 projects based around the following five themes: skills and enterprise, health and activity, football and multi-sports, disability sports, and community cohesion.

Partnering with public and private sector organisations, charitable groups, the Premier League and Manchester City Football Club, CITC employs 21 full-time staff including a health & activity manager, Lisa Kimpton. “We started delivering physical activity and fitness sessions to local people about a decade ago,” says Kimpton. “NHS Manchester, which heard of our work, approached us to form a partnership through which we collaborate on conveying a variety of messages, including healthier lifestyles for adult men and mental health support.”

One of CITC's award-winning projects is Strike a Balance, which launched in February 2011 in collaboration with Healthy Schools Manchester and law firm Hill Dickinson to offer a free, five-week programme about healthy living to Manchester primary schools.

“Healthy Schools Manchester identified that children aged between nine and 10 are at an optimum age to receive information about what they should ▶

► be eating, ahead of their entry into high school when they will have more freedom over their meal choices," explains Kimpton. "Over five weeks, we provide one hour of classroom-based learning each week, looking at subjects like healthy eating, food groups, the psychological reasons that determine our food choices, physical activity and a tasting. This is followed by one hour of football-based fitness and movement.

"We find the classroom session on physical activity is always one of the most popular. I've just returned from one where we had all the kids do a Gangnam-Style dance, after which we took their pulses and discussed how their heart, blood and muscle groups would be reacting to the exercise."

In the last academic year, 86 schools took part, with over 3,000 Manchester children enrolled in the Strike a Balance programme. Based on questionnaires provided before and after the five weeks, CITC found that 91 per cent of participants understood how much physical activity they should undertake, with 78 per cent achieving one hour or more of activity using large muscle groups every day. A total of 83 per cent were still able to recognise a balanced diet five weeks after programme completion. CITC football coaches, all with RSPH Awards in Healthier Food and Special Diets, run the project – but it is undoubtedly appearances by player ambassadors such as Joe Hart and Gareth Barry which have helped give Strike a Balance a profile in the community.

"We would like to be seen as a community role model, rather than just a money-making football club," Kimpton says. "We achieve this by working to make a real difference to issues like childhood obesity."



## TOWN IN THE COMMUNITY

Huddersfield Town's Football in the Community department – funded mostly by the club, but with some support given by central bodies such as the Football League Trust – delivers fitness tips to hundreds of local youngsters through its soccer schools. Mental health is also on the agenda, with the community team using some league games to raise the profile of illnesses such as dementia among adult supporters.

Since Huddersfield Town's training ground, Canalside Sports Complex, is open to the public, the local community also has access to an on-site gym, football pitches, dance studio, bowling, croquet and hockey clubs at competitive prices. The team's technical and playing staff are regularly recruited to spread the word about the football club's fitness and community work.

Making local headlines of late has been Huddersfield Town's Keep It

Up campaign, a fundraising scheme that jointly and evenly benefits the Huddersfield Town Academy and local charity the Yorkshire Air Ambulance. Reaching out to the community, especially supporters, the campaign has seen large-scale sponsored walks and cycling events organised by the club to raise an impressive £720,000 over the past three years.

Huddersfield Town's 'Pedal for Pounds' cycling events promote physical activity while also raising money for charity

Appearances by Manchester City players like Gareth Barry help boost the profile of community initiatives

While the main motivating factor is the chance for fans to come together before a Championship game and make a genuine difference, Huddersfield Town also furnishes participants with health and training advice ahead of the flagship 'Walk for Pounds' and 'Pedal for Pounds' community events, which have a heavy emphasis on the promotion of the benefits of physical activity.

The latest walk, which took place in November 2012 and which garnered support from a growing set of businesses, saw the football club's chair Dean Hoyle and commercial director Sean Jarvis lead 175 fans across a 19-mile route to a game in Barnsley. Even more strenuous was the latest flagship cycle, in which 300 fans made the three- to four-day bike journey from Huddersfield to Yeovil in time for another match.

It's the overwhelming response to these, and other grassroots fundraising initiatives, that led to Hoyle setting up a registered charity in summer 2012. Charged with the mission of 'making a difference' in the West Yorkshire region, especially among young people who were in need, the Huddersfield Town Foundation has kicked off proceedings by initiating five breakfast clubs at junior schools, so that 250 kids from deprived backgrounds receive a nutritious and healthy start to the day.

Such is the commitment to the foundation that Huddersfield Town will double every pound generated by fundraising projects, enabling more Early Kick-Off breakfast clubs to be launched throughout 2013. ●



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The body will make vitamin D if bare, sunscreen-free skin is exposed to the sun

# RISE and shine

OLIVER GILLIE REPORTS ON HOW THE 'SUNSHINE VITAMIN' IS MAKING TOP ATHLETES MORE COMPETITIVE

**C**an you think of a powerful hormone that boosts athletic performance and is not only perfectly legal but also free if you train outdoors in a good climate? The word is going round, but still a lot of athletes and sports people do not know the answer. It is vitamin D, the sunshine vitamin, available from health stores – or for free if you can train in a sunny climate exposing a lot of skin to the midday sun.

Unfortunately the British Isles are far north and cloudy, so we don't get enough sun. Most of us, including many athletes, are short of vitamin D – even in the summer. In 2012 we had an exceptionally bad summer, meaning vitamin D levels among the population are unusually low. Athletes who train inside or use lots of sunscreen are particularly likely to have low blood levels of vitamin D: sunscreen blocks UVB rays from the sun, and it is these that make vitamin D in the skin.

## BODY CONTROLS

Vitamin D itself is a pre-hormone which is processed in the liver and kidney, and

also in most organs and tissues of the body, into a potent hormone called 1,25 hydroxy vitamin D. Feedback mechanisms that control the processing of vitamin D ensure that the body does not get too much of this active product – but in fact, as noted above, most of us in the UK and other northern countries get too little vitamin D. This is because of our long winters, when the sun is not strong enough to make vitamin in the skin; because our cloudy summer weather blocks out sunshine; and because cancer scares have instilled in us a fear of the sun.

Diet is not the answer, because the best balanced diet will not give you more than about 10 per cent of the optimal level of vitamin D.

## APPLIANCE OF SCIENCE

The East Germans and the Russians have known about the benefits of vitamin D for athletes since the 1930s, when knowledge of vitamin D and the benefits of sun in producing the vitamin was first discovered by science. Now, very late in the day, athletes in Europe, the US and

other advanced industrial nations are beginning to learn about its benefits. Top athletes and football players have started taking vitamin D in the last two or three years, and based on the findings of scientific studies (more on that shortly), it's possible that this will have made an important but unheralded contribution to the UK's success in the Olympics – more important for the Brits than for other nationalities because of our climate.

Critical observations and experiments by Graham Close and colleagues at the Research Institute for Sport and Exercise Sciences at Liverpool John Moores University in the UK show that vitamin D is important for muscle strength. They tested the vitamin D levels of 61 athletes from the worlds of rugby, soccer and horse racing. All the athletes were in full-time training or competing six days a week. Two-thirds of the athletes had inadequate blood levels of vitamin D in the winter months and only one athlete, a rugby player, had an optimal level. Two soccer players and two flat jockeys were severely deficient.

“THE VITAMIN D LEVELS OF 61 ATHLETES FROM THE WORLDS OF RUGBY, SOCCER AND HORSE RACING WERE TESTED. TWO-THIRDS OF THEM HAD INADEQUATE BLOOD LEVELS OF VITAMIN D IN THE WINTER MONTHS”



Athletes taking 5,000 IUs of vitamin D a day performed significantly better than those taking a dummy tablet



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The John Moores scientists went on to test the athletic ability of one group of football players who took a daily dose of 5,000 IUs of vitamin D compared with another group of players who took a dummy tablet. After only eight weeks, the group taking vitamin D performed better in both a vertical jump test and a 10-metre sprint. This is a startling result for a trial that continued for a relatively short time and involved only 10 players. It has been written up in a recent article in the *Journal of Sport Sciences*.

The John Moores result is news for us here in the UK, but it should not be. In 1938, Russian scientists reported that UV radiation treatment improved the speed of students by 7.4 per cent in the 100m dash compared with matched controls. And in 1944, German researchers found that medical students irradiated twice a week for six weeks improved their performance on a bicycle ergometer by 13 per cent compared with controls who showed no improvement. These are just two details from a masterly article by Jon Cannell and others reviewing this early pioneering work (*Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise* 2009).

### RISK VS REWARD

But the benefits of vitamin D go way beyond muscular performance. Another important benefit for sports people is resistance to infection during the winter

season, when vitamin D levels plummet in those who do not take a supplement. Training is stressful and may make an athlete more subject to infection, while vitamin D has been shown to protect against infections such as flu, TB and others. The sunshine vitamin stimulates immunity and induces the formation of active molecules which defend against infection. Other known benefits include a reduction in the risk of certain diseases such as diabetes, arthritis and certain cancers. Sports people should aim to get their blood level of the vitamin up to at least 100 nmols (nanomoles) per litre.

Unfortunately, advice from Cancer Research UK and the government has made many people afraid of the sun, to the point that they avoid it altogether by staying indoors or using sunscreen. The same reasoning led to the removal of sunbeds from many sports facilities. In fact, the risk of diseases caused by insufficient vitamin D has been found to be some 10 times greater than the risk of melanoma, the acute form of skin cancer.

Of course, people do not want to burn – but so long as you do not burn, there is no serious risk of skin cancer. My advice would therefore be that sunscreen should not generally be used without allowing some previous exposure to the sun, so that vitamin D can be made. If you are not used to the sun, a few minutes may be all you can tolerate to begin with,

but gradually increase the time you spend in the sun. Use sunscreen only when there is a risk of burning and you cannot wear more clothing or a hat, or cannot move into the shade.

The sun is free, so enjoy it. If you get at least half an hour of full sun on bare shoulders, arms and legs three or four times a week in the middle of the day in summer, you need not take any vitamin D until the days shorten in October. ●

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Oliver Gillie is a scientist and writer. He is former medical correspondent of *The Sunday Times* and former health editor of *The Independent*. He has won 17 awards for his scientific and medical writing in national newspapers. Most recently, he was elected health champion of the year by the Medical Journalists' Association, for his campaign to inform the public and professionals about vitamin D insufficiency disease.

He has also set up The Vitamin D Company, supplying vitamin D products – easy to take and suitable for all user groups – that offer the dose used in the John Moores trial.

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# MULTI-FUNCTIONAL

**Good programming and well-trained staff can unlock the potential of functional training areas for special population groups.**  
**Kath Hudson reports**



**F**or the uninitiated, functional training zones can appear to be playgrounds for the fitter member, with balls, pulleys and mysterious-looking equipment. The kit isn't as intuitive as an exercise bike or rower, so is in danger of being bypassed by the self-conscious gym user.

Of course, this doesn't need to be the case. With their focus on training the body to cope with everyday movements, functional zones are perfect for all types of special population user groups.

At present, suppliers are not generally positioning their equipment with special populations in mind – neither are many operators using it to cater for this market. Nonetheless, the following case



• The Merlin MS centre uses GRAVITY training with its patients

studies show how powerful functional training areas can be in impacting the strength and fitness of elderly people, children, those with limited mobility, illnesses and weight issues.

## MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

The Merlin MS Centre in Cornwall, which treats people with multiple sclerosis and other neurological conditions, uses GRAVITY training on Total Gym equipment to instigate muscle reaction, turn on core muscles and train functional movements.

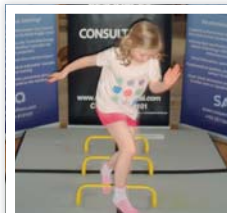
The variable resistance of Total Gym equipment enables those with limited muscle control to work with as little

as one per cent of their body weight, so strength can be maintained for as long as possible in the face of the degenerative effects of MS.

Confinement to a wheelchair compounds muscle degeneration symptoms, as patients cannot engage their lower limbs, but exercising in a low resistance environment allows patients to use their muscles again: GRAVITY training allows for hundreds of different movements to target specific areas. Dynamic squats on the Total Gym equipment have even enabled some patients to regain enough muscle strength to transfer to and from their wheelchairs unaided.

Exercise therapists at the centre have Level 4 qualifications in exercise therapy, postural stability and fall prevention. GRAVITY training is also required to use the Total Gym equipment and apply the method to the special population.

"Treating the physical symptoms of neurological conditions is easy once the physiological and medical effects of the condition are understood," says Helen Tite, exercise therapist at the Merlin MS Centre. "Balance is often lost due to these conditions, but also as a result of medication. If you understand and consider the symptoms when devising a programme, the physical issues that can be treated with exercise are the same as for any able-bodied person."



• SAQ offers an air-filled functional training mat suitable for use by children



## CHILDREN

SAQ International is currently running a number of pilot projects with independent organisations, children's centres, nurseries and school-based Special Educational Needs teams to assess the effectiveness of Aerofloor – SAQ's new air-filled functional training mat – in children's health.

The Aerofloor programme provides a platform for children to perform a range of functional movements, reducing impact on their joints while at the same time increasing the cardiovascular response: the reduced impact, even when bouncing as on a trampoline, means they can keep going for longer.

Results from the pilot study have shown that children following a structured programme improve and maintain their core stability and balance, bilateral integration skills and stamina. Improvements have also been noted in concentration, body control, proprioception and reading and writing.

A nationally recognised award (NCFE, REPS, Active IQ) has been designed to train staff on the science and use of the programme. "We have been in contact with and consulted major health club chains which currently run programmes for children and young adults," says SAQ International's managing director Alan Pearson. "The Aerofloor has a natural fit within these programmes and has



• Kinesis Stations: Suitable for everyone, from the very fit to wheelchair users

the ability to add fun, excitement and increase membership."

## LIMITED MOBILITY

Hereford Leisure Pool, part of Halo Leisure Trust, is using Technogym's Kinesis Stations as a key element in its Lifestyle Improvements for Today programme (LIFT), which is part of Herefordshire's long-running exercise referral scheme.

The centre has found that Kinesis Stations have improved the accessibility of the gym – thanks to the machines' ease of control and the fact that

movements are not fixed – meaning it can now offer targeted exercise programmes for special population groups, including wheelchair users.

"Many people believe strength training is the domain of big, beefy men," says centre manager Simon Gwynne. "We wanted a solution to demonstrate how strength exercise gives great results to those new to exercise, older clients and people who have been referred by their GP to increase physical activity."

Popular exercises on the Kinesis Stations include the core rotation, as this is good for those with restricted



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## FUNCTIONAL TRAINING



Deconditioned or elderly customers can feel intimidated by the gym – but by offering appropriate exercises, functional training zones can be comfortable spaces in which to start

► movement, with both the range and the speed of the exercise able to be steadily increased. The low row, meanwhile, improves posture and arm strength, with clients able to start with low weights.

Natural movements that mirror the activities of daily life are important, and the Kinesis Stations Step/Squat station can be used to replicate movements such as lifting shopping bags and walking up steps. To begin with, it can be used without the cable – which adds resistance – with users also able to hold the support arm if required. As a progression, resistance can be introduced in low intervals.

"Many customers come from other Halo sites to use Kinesis," says Gwynne. "I think the biggest rewards we are seeing are the customers with walking aids, and OAPs with limited abilities and compromised ranges of movement, being able to access the stations with ease. We currently have five new wheelchair users on the GP scheme using Kinesis."

Staff need to be at least Level 3 on the REPs register for the Halo GP referral scheme, and trained in fall prevention.

### SEVERELY DECONDITIONED

TRX has been successfully used at Fareham Leisure Centre – operated by Everyone Active – to bring overweight and obese patients into exercise via a GP referral scheme.

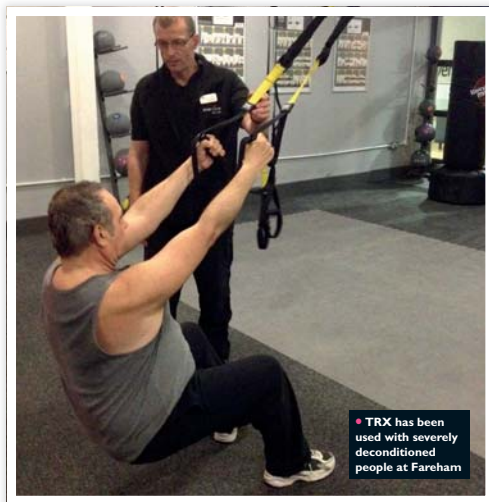
TRX allows progression of simple movements over the 10-week programme, starting with exercises such as assisted squats and chest presses.

"The kit is easy to use and easy to understand, so it's well suited to people who haven't exercised for a long time," says Cathie Bolwell, exercise referral manager at the centre. "Not only that, but deconditioned people often feel self-conscious when they're new to the gym – the functional zone allows them to build confidence in a quieter space."

The programme, which has been running since January 2008, sees a healthy conversion rate of participants to members: 67 per cent complete the 10-week programme and the centre has 160 members who joined after their GP referral scheme. In 2011/12, 14 per cent of referrals became members.

One of those members, Ted Azulay, has cut down his insulin and blood pressure medication as a result of exercise. Among the functional training exercises he did as part of his programme were assisted single squats to increase core engagement, balance work, and whole body movements – such as a woodchop – to awaken core muscles. The chest press was also used, as a simple move that's easy to progress as strength and fitness improves.

"Eighteen months ago I weighed 18.5 stone and had a 48-inch waist," says Azulay. "Now I'm 13.5 stone and my



## “THE BIGGEST REWARDS WE’RE SEEING ARE THE OAPs WITH LIMITED RANGE OF MOVEMENT BEING ABLE TO ACCESS STATIONS WITH EASE”

waist is 36 inches. I started slowly, doing exercise referral classes, but now do many different classes.”

All staff working on the GP referral scheme are Level 3 qualified and have completed TRX training.

### THE ELDERLY

Through its GP referral scheme, North Country Leisure in Penrith is targeting elderly people with psychological and physical illnesses.

Life Fitness’ functional training rig, the SYNRGY360s, is central to the programme, as it combines total body dynamic exercises that can be modified to the user’s ability. A large percentage of these exercises are also relevant to everyday life, and the instructor adapts exercises to stay within each client’s recommended exercise range.

SYNRGY360s’ step platform can be adjusted in height for step-up exercises to develop strength and elevate the heart rate, while the rebounder allows people to do a range of exercises, including simple throw-and-catch activities to develop the core – ideal for those who need a low-level option. The

TRX and resistance bands, meanwhile, allow for simple bodyweight exercises, with the individual able to adjust the resistance to a suitable level.

The GP referral programmes at North Country Leisure use SYNRY360s in conjunction with other gym kit. “The SYNRY360s allows us to offer a range of alternative exercises which are functional, and which help us keep the individual’s programme interesting and challenging,” says club manager Tim Bestford.

The programme has seen good results, with some patients able to reduce medication and improve their ability to perform day-to-day tasks. Some have even been able to leave the scheme and join as regular members. Plans are now underway to devise programmes for children and young people, which will also use the SYNRY360s.

All of the team working on the programme are qualified to at least Level 3 and were specifically trained for the SYNRY360s by Life Fitness Academy master trainers. The team is also trained in GP referral and cardiac rehabilitation. ●

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# Challenging the NORMS

Operators must investigate new revenue channels to grow in 2013, says Mintel's Michael Oliver

The UK health and fitness clubs market has endured particularly tough trading conditions during the past three years, as consumers have struggled to come to terms with their real disposable income contracting month-by-month due to a combination of flat earnings growth and high inflation. That's not to say that some businesses haven't seen growth, but as a whole the fitness market has been relatively flat.

The mid-market segment has been particularly affected, as consumers have traded down to the fast-growing number of budget clubs springing up all over the country. Clubs which target a more affluent and older audience, and which have a greater emphasis on customer service, have found themselves to be slightly better insulated from the cold winds of austerity than others.

Faced with reduced scope (and funding) for further significant expansion of their operations,

operators have been forced to look at maximising the revenues from, and efficiencies of, their existing estates. While there is undoubtedly further scope for improvement in these areas, the next few years are likely to be more about how the major health and fitness operators can extend their brand outside the walls of their clubs, particularly in terms of penetrating the digital space with products like apps and services which can be accessed digitally from the home.

These are some of the topline findings of Mintel's latest *Health and Fitness Clubs* - UK report, published in November 2012.

## LIFESTYLE CHOICES

Despite the tough trading environment, the market for health and fitness clubs has held relatively firm, with only a slight reduction in total member numbers over the past three years – this despite the lingering effects of two recessions and a period of government-induced austerity. Our report predicted there would be 5.32 million gym members in the UK by the end of 2012.

What this demonstrates is that, for many consumers, their health and fitness club membership is now regarded as an essential part of their lifestyle – something they are not prepared to give up. Instead, they are cutting back in other areas, such as food shopping and going out to pubs and restaurants.

Around one in six adults (16 per cent) now use a private health and fitness club, with around three-quarters of these (12 per cent) being members and the balance using clubs on a pay-as-you-go basis. Reflecting the maturity of the industry, almost 40 per cent of Brits have been members of a club at some stage, while just under a quarter (23 per cent) are lapsed members. On a positive note, around a fifth (21 per cent) show an interest in becoming members in the future.

Average revenue per member, which was boosted in 2010 and 2011 by two successive years of increases in the rate of VAT, is expected to have slipped back slightly in 2012 as a result of cutbacks in secondary spending, reduced joining fee income and the growth of more affordable budget clubs. By the end of 2012, total UK market value was expected to be around £2,650m, with an average revenue per member of £498.

Regionally, the impact of unemployment and government austerity measures seems to have been most marked in the north of England, with the result that this part of the country has proved a fertile breeding ground for the budget health clubs sector.

## FLEXIBILITY PLEASE

Mintel's research has found that flexibility is the key to making health club memberships attractive to



RFID technology facilitates more flexible membership options

THE NEXT FEW YEARS ARE LIKELY TO  
BE ABOUT HOW THE MAJOR FITNESS  
OPERATORS CAN EXTEND THEIR BRANDS  
OUTSIDE THE WALLS OF THEIR CLUBS



**A third of members would pay extra for massages, physio or dietary advice**

consumers. Many people have been deterred by long-term contracts and onerous terms and conditions; indeed, there continue to be a number of horror stories in the news which serve only to reinforce this impression.

But increasingly, operators have introduced more flexible membership packages, with 'easy-in, easy-out' options offering no contracts (for more money per month) or shorter-term memberships. This, according to Mintel's research, is the way to go.

Customisation is a key consumer trend at present, with the 'one size fits all' philosophy increasingly irrelevant in today's society. In our research, the strongest demand was found to be for a customisable membership where you only pay for the facilities you want to use, picking from a menu of options.

As well as a fully customisable membership, there is also some interest in a flexible membership package consisting of access to the fitness equipment, with a pay-as-you-use scheme for all other facilities.

Clearly, implementation could present some logistical challenges, but with access to new technology – such as the RFID wristbands/tags that are increasingly used at music concerts and major events – it is not beyond consideration.

Both of these options illustrate an underlying demand among consumers for more control over what they pay

for within the health and fitness club environment: almost half of all users (47 per cent) would like an element of flexibility and customisation in their membership package. Given the current difficult economic situation, with consumers' finances under considerable pressure, people do not wish to pay for facilities they do not use, preferring to have the option to pay for them only if they choose to use them.

## BRAND EXTENSION

With many of the major operators not considering any significant new openings, and member numbers flat or in some cases declining, it's important that they look to new revenue streams for growth. Mintel's research has found good levels of interest in products and services that would allow operators to extend their brands and generate more revenue from both members and non-members.

The most prominent of these is fitness assessments, which nearly two-fifths of consumers said they would be prepared to buy from health and fitness club companies. Around a third also expressed an interest in paying for advice on diet and nutrition, as well as physiotherapy, massage and medical assessments.

All of these are products that could be delivered inside or outside of the club environment. They also have the

major advantage of offering clubs a way of establishing a dialogue with non-members, providing a platform from which to try and encourage them to trade up to membership.

Additionally, there is an opportunity to make inroads into the at-home fitness sector, through the provision of exercise videos that can be downloaded and followed at home – perhaps even a live YouTube channel so people can follow classes at home. In our research, these concepts were particularly appealing to younger consumers.

Similarly, younger people were also much more likely than average to be interested in paying for mobile phone apps from health and fitness operators – another area that could help extend operators' brands beyond the confines of their clubs, generate incremental revenue and stimulate membership sales. ●

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Oliver is senior leisure analyst at Mintel. For details of the latest reports into the health and fitness sector, visit [www.mintel.com](http://www.mintel.com)

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# CHANGING PLACES

The days of sterile, tatty changing cubicles are disappearing as leisure centres battle it out with private health clubs. And with members reportedly spending up to 40 per cent of their time at a facility in the changing rooms, it's no surprise that one operator is even using top-class changing rooms as a marketing tool to upsell premium memberships. Abigail Harris reports



## PREMIUM CHANGING SPACE

Leisure build and design expert Createability recently completed an eight-week redevelopment project at Putney Leisure Centre in south-west London to provide exclusive members-only changing rooms.

To keep up with customer expectations and the threat of increased competition, the centre – which previously only offered village changing for both swimmers and gym members – decided to create facilities on a par with private health clubs, but for use only by members paying all-inclusive rates.

Dave Jolliffe, area manager for DC Leisure – which manages the centre –

says: "The competition has increased significantly over the last few years, with the standard of changing facilities increasing all the time. Our NPS survey results, mystery shoppers and customer comments all showed that dated facilities can be a barrier to joining and a reason for leaving."

"While the gym and customer service has always been excellent, DC Leisure realised the changing facilities at Putney Leisure Centre required improvement," adds Ian Cotgrave, managing director at Createability. "Our aim was to create luxury changing rooms to provide all-inclusive members with the sense of comfort in their surroundings that

people might not normally expect of a local leisure centre."

The response has been extremely positive, with new members already appearing to favour all-inclusive membership when they join. "Although it's too early to say what long-term impact it will have on all-inclusive memberships, the signs look very positive. We're certainly getting more new joiners taking this option, and have seen higher than normal membership upgrades in the first month too," says Jolliffe, who will recommend the approach to other Wandsworth borough sites if the membership increases and associated payback continues to meet expectations.



The changing rooms before (above) and after (right). The members-only facilities have been a big hit



## 3D VISUALS

The award-winning Rainbow Leisure Centre in Epsom relied on Safe Space Lockers' unique 3D design service to create a private health club changing room experience.

The success of Safe Space Lockers' interior design and 3D rendering service led to the company's recent launch of a 3D fly-through service – a virtual walk-through of the layout and design.

Dominic Hyett, MD of Safe Space Lockers, explains: "Many clients see the 3D service as an essential tool, enabling them to visualise exactly how their changing rooms will look prior to commitment. The addition of the 3D video fly-through will act as a great marketing tool for operators, allowing them to show prospects what they can expect if they take up membership."

Rainbow Leisure Centre, managed by Greenwich Leisure Ltd (GLL), chose a combination of walnut veneer lockers and walnut veneer lockers with glass panelled doors. Changing cubicles and benching in walnut veneer were also

installed, along with dry vanity, wet vanity, WC and shower cubicles.

GLL was keen that the luxury health club experience continued right through to the detailed features, so card locks were supplied, enabling membership cards to be used to access the club as well as operate the lockers. Non-members are given the option to use a £1 coin to operate the lockers.

Hyett continues: "Following the centre's success at the 2011 FIA FLAME Awards, this further investment has definitely shown the local community that they can receive an excellent standard facility at a very reasonable price."



The changing rooms feature walnut veneer lockers with glass panels, and card locks for members



## GOING KEYLESS

Champneys has replaced its key-operated changing room locker locks with KitLock digital cabinet locks in a bid to enhance the spa experience for guests.

Previously guests had to secure their locker key to their wrists using a key chain, but many guests wear a robe to relax in while waiting for treatments – and very often would leave key chains in their robe pockets, with many getting lost.

Using KitLock CLI 200, guests select a four-digit code to secure their changing room locker on arrival, enabling them to enjoy the facilities without having to carry a key. This 'lock and go' solution not only offers better security, but also removes the cost of replacing lost or broken keys.

"The KitLock solution is more professional, looks good and, from a guest perspective, the lockers are far more secure as keys are not left lying around in robe pockets," says Alex De Carvalho, MD at Champneys. "It's a



Guests select their four-digit code

smarter way to control the lockers and, to a certain extent, takes the duty of care away from us, as guests are responsible for using the lockers and selecting their own codes."

KitLock operates with a single-use code setting. The guest enters a four-digit code, which will lock and open the locker only once, then be erased. The locker stays open until another guest uses a new code. A KitLock CLI 200 will perform 50,000 openings on two AAA batteries.

Ridgeway Furniture has also just completed changing facilities for the new

£4m spa development at Crow Wood Leisure in Burnley – and this, too, uses a keyless system.

Woodland Spa – built alongside Crow Wood's health club, soccer centre and equestrian centre – offers 10 treatment rooms, therapy areas and therapeutic pool areas. The lockers – a combination of space-saving Z-style lockers and suit lockers, all in a rich walnut veneer finish – are complemented by cream banquet-style seating and glazed screens, which include impregnated leaf patterns, designed to offer privacy and intimacy.

John Dibble, sales manager at Ridgeway Furniture, says: "It was imperative that a keyless system was introduced so guests don't have to carry keys from the pools to treatment rooms and relaxation areas. Using the latest technology and the eye-catching design of the Qjmar digital lock, we created changing rooms that not only look stunning but also work from both a member's and operator's perspective."





The luxury lockers at Pure Club Med Gym feature LED lights on the inside

## PURE CLASS

**F**it Interiors was challenged with creating changing rooms to fit in with the chic Parisian architecture of new city-centre Pure Club Med Gym, which limits membership to just 2,000 to offer a high-level space where members can escape city stress.

"We wanted the changing rooms to provide a welcoming feeling – a space where it's beautiful to spend one's time," says Giovanni Amati, export manager for Gruppo P&G's Fit Interiors, which is distributed in the UK by Gymkit UK. "On average, people spend 30 to 40 per cent of their gym visit in changing rooms, and this experience affects their overall perception of the club's value."

The red and purple locker interiors differentiate between male and female changing rooms, with a special white finish used for all the doors.

Warm LED lights inside the lockers increase the perception of value and luxury. The LED strip lighting detects movement, to prevent lights remaining on when a door is left open. Some lockers, fitted with digital combination locks, can be rented on an annual basis as a member's private space.

The rounded lines of the sofas, designed by Club Med's architects and made by Gruppo P&G, offset the square lines of the lockers.

"The beauty of the setting is based on the Italian design that Gruppo P&G represents," continues Amati. "In its 35 years, Gruppo P&G has uniquely joined the functionality and heavy duty needed in this industry with a stylistic look more typical of high-class house furniture brands. We constantly update finishes according to new trends emerging from the Milan furniture show."

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### Polar iPhone app to help users meet their goals

Polar has announced its new Beat training iPhone app. Polar Beat is designed to help users train smarter by providing intelligence about what their body has achieved and what to do to meet their desired goal. It works with the Polar H7 heart rate sensor and is designed to let users plan a training target, train at the right intensity, review the workout and track calories.

**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD

polar



### Fitech manual contains fitness testing

Fitech has produced an Aerobic Capacity Manual, which comes with a Metronome CD or MP3 file. Designed to support its software platform and range of assessing tools for health professionals, the manual is designed for gyms or personal trainers who do not necessarily have access to expensive laboratory equipment. The manual contains popular tests such as the Chester Step test, Astrand Bike, Walking test protocols plus other tests.

**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD

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### Bodystat tech tools to help retain clients

Bodystat has developed a free, secure iPhone app which contains analysis and feedback of user tests to help motivate them. The app is designed to be compelling and fun to use to help promote and strengthen client-trainer relationships and sustain member attendance. In addition, the new Body Manager software helps assist the concept and promotion of health and wellbeing. Its reports are made to provide specific, detailed information in a colourful, easy to understand way.



**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD

bodystat



**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD

powerbreathe

### Powerbreathe K5 for breathing training

Powerbreathe has launched the K5 for training breathing muscles to make them stronger and more efficient. The K5 can also be used to assess the breathing strength of new club members. The device uses weight training for the diaphragm and rib muscles, starting with a light resistance on around 30 breaths on the device twice a day for the first month. The product features a visual computer display of each breath taken, enabling the user to adapt their technique to improve their performance. It also features warm-up and cool-down modes of 30 and 60 breaths to help clear lactate.



## Tanita's BC-545N body composition monitor

Tanita has created the BC-545N segmental body composition monitor to provide information for shaping diet and fitness programmes. The BC-545N uses bio-electrical impedance analysis (BIA) to study body composition, calculating body fat, muscle mass, hydration level, metabolic rate, visceral fat and bone mass. Each body segment – arms, legs and abdominal area – is analysed, allowing users to track changes to body fat and muscle mass in targeted areas as training progresses. It's also aimed at helping with injury rehabilitation.

**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD **tanita**



**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD

**hur**

## The iBalance Plus testing platform by HUR

The iBalance Plus testing and training platform by HUR is designed for trainers and physiotherapists to identify those at higher risk of falls. It allows for baseline testing, continued monitoring, evaluation and training. The recently updated and award-winning iBalance System is designed to let the user see how balance training can reduce the chance of re-occurring falls. The iBalance Plus is a portable unit weighing 18lbs. It provides two standardised balance tests and four interactive training modes – chase, maze, tennis and static pattern. It includes the platform, foam balance pad, carrying case and software.



## BodyMetrix device uses ultrasound for testing

BodyMetrix by Intelamatrix is a portable, hand-held device that uses precision ultrasound technology to measure the body's fat and muscle tissue to the nearest millimetre. It allows the assessor to track fat loss and muscle growth. The system plugs into a computer's USB port and the test takes a few minutes. It's now available in the UK only from FitnessAssist.

**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD

**intelamatrix**



## Sigma's SC 6.12 stopwatch for all times

Sigma Sport's latest stopwatch records the time to the nearest hundredth of a second for up to 99 laps. The SC 6.12 has a water-resistant design and a memory for up to seven training sessions. The display has been designed to offer users a large display view of everything at a glance. The Best Lap Indicator enables the user to evaluate their training data, while the Easy Lap View gives an immediate indication of which lap was best.

**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD

**sigma**

# Question time

Can events such as the Olympics really have a positive impact on participation levels, and do we need to change our model to attract new audiences? Katie Lewis reports on discussions from SIBEC Europe 2012

## PANELISTS (left to right)

- **Martin Kay**, regional representative, sporta
- **David Stalker**, CEO, ukactive (the new name for the FIA)
- **John Treharne**, CEO, The Gym Group
- **Mark Botha**, group sales and marketing manager, Fitness First Middle East
- **Mark Lemmon**, managing director, the energie Group
- **Liz Holmes**, spa director, Rockliffe Hall



**T**he beautiful city of Budapest hosted the latest SIBEC Europe event, which took place in November 2012.

More than 200 suppliers and operators gathered to talk business, and to hear from some of the industry's leading figures on key issues affecting the sector.

In the opening session, Mike Hill, MD of Leisure-net Solutions and Berni Hawkins, founder of Hawkins Muiderman, compered a *Question Time*-style debate, with the panel discussing two key topics: Can events such as the Olympics really have a positive impact on participation

levels among the general public going forward? And do we need to change our model to attract new audiences?

**Q** Following a fantastic summer of sport in the UK, do you feel that large-scale sporting events really have the power to change the behaviour of the population?

**Mark Botha:** I really hope so. The London Games saw female athletes from Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Brunei compete for the first time. While none of the athletes reached the podium, for them the real achievement was in the

symbolism of their involvement in the Games. In the past, tradition and religious beliefs across the Middle East have prevented women from participating. This new inclusion suggests a cultural change, but only time will tell how significant this is.

**Liz Holmes:** Our facility services the premium end of the market and so far, from a purely financial perspective, the Olympics have had no direct impact on our business. That said, we have noticed an attitude shift among our staff and members, who seem more willing to give up time to get involved with some



Leading names in the fitness industry travelled to Budapest for SIBEC Europe



It remains to be seen whether the Games has sparked greater sports participation

## OLYMPIC EFFECT

Ahead of the SIBEC event, delegates were asked to complete an online survey which aimed to provide a snapshot of the perceived impact of the London 2012 Games on business.

- 34 per cent reported that the Games had made them personally more active
- 35 per cent achieve 5 x 30 mins of physical activity every week
- Only 20 per cent of facilities noticed an increase in volunteering after the Games
- 81 per cent of facilities were quieter than usual during the London 2012 Games
- 76 per cent said they felt large-scale spectator events would encourage more people to get active

of the fun added extras we organise. For example, post-Games, staff members and spa members have been much more willing to participate in our members' charity fitness challenges than ever before. This helps to unite our staff team and enhance the member experience.

**Martin Kay:** In these challenging economic times, it's a good mix of capital and revenue legacy that local authorities really need. If volunteer numbers increase, they will need to be managed, coached and organised. This will require investment in both capability and skill development. Harnessing the opportunity will be the challenge. What we need is longer-term consistency in government policy to enable us to build strategies on the back of the legacy.

**David Stalker:** While it's too early to start talking about whether the Games have initiated mass behavioural change, we need to start viewing the legacy from a different perspective. Rather than keep asking what the legacy is delivering for us, we need to start asking what we can deliver on the back of the legacy.

**Mark Lemmon:** Expecting large-scale sporting events to motivate a

couch potato from the sofa into a pair of trainers is unrealistic. I remain to be convinced whether the Olympic Games will promote a long-term mass population movement towards more physical activity.

**John Treharne:** It's difficult to deny the positive short-term community impact of the Games, but it's dangerous to assume the Olympics will result in a lasting increase in sporting participation. Following Wimbledon fortnight, the demand for tennis courts always rises, but this uplift is only ever temporary. Do people make a link between elite sporting performance and what they could personally achieve by regular visits to a gym? I'm not sure that they do.

**Q If we want to attract more people into our facilities, do we need to change our model?**

**Liz Holmes:** Yes, we need to be more reactive to market demands. We're finding, certainly at the premium end of the market, that people want to share their workout experiences with other like-minded people. They want to feel a part of a club. There may come

a time when providing a space where people train in isolation no longer draws enough numbers to sustain business. As operators, we need to become more flexible and able to quickly react to consumer needs.

**John Treharne:** I agree that the sector needs to pay more attention to the needs of the consumer if it's to continue to grow market penetration. This may mean radical changes in the type of facilities and services we provide. At The Gym Group, our clubs offer round-the-clock access at an affordable price. As a result, we're bringing new people into the sector: 40 per cent of our members have never belonged to a gym before. Innovation and bravery to try something new is what will be required to facilitate growth.

**Mark Lemmon:** The middle market will be squeezed because there just isn't enough differentiation in this space. Market penetration is stuck at 12 per cent and has been for some years. We cannot hope to positively influence this unless we think more creatively. We need to start pushing the right buttons when it comes to encouraging sedentary people to want to be physically active. ●





# [SUPPLIER SHOWCASE]

CYBEX RECENTLY INSTALLED A NEW SPORTS CENTRE IN NORTHAMPTON. WE TAKE A LOOK

## A FITNESS HAVEN

**Client:** Duston Sports Centre  
**Supplier:** CYBEX International UK

**D**uston Sports Centre in Northampton opened to the public for the first time in September 2012, offering a state-of-the-art gym and group exercise studio, sports hall for indoor sports and sport pitches. The old bowling green will also be brought back into use this year.

Councillor Alan Earle, chair of Duston Parish Council, said in advance of the site's launch: "We're delighted Duston Sports Centre is opening. It's something local people asked for and the centre brings much needed first-class sporting facilities into the heart of our community."

The centre, which is operated by Unity Leisure Trust, includes a £200,000 installation of cardiovascular and strength training equipment from CYBEX. It's the fourth Northampton-based site to be kitted out by CYBEX in a partnership dating back to 2006, when installations took place at Mounts Baths, Danes Camp and Lings Forum Leisure Centres; all three sites were originally installed with 60 pieces of CYBEX equipment, including IFI-accredited pieces.

Alan Ellis, key account manager for CYBEX UK, says: "Our longstanding partnership, which began with Northampton Borough Council and now continues with Unity Leisure Trust, is extremely important to us. We've worked closely

with the four sites on gym floor layout, equipment selection and design, providing a service that delivers more than just premium quality fitness equipment."

At Duston, CYBEX installed cardiovascular equipment from its 750 and 770 ranges – the site is one of the first in the country to offer the 770 series, which was officially launched to the UK at LIW 2012. Equipment from the 770 range was also fitted with the CYBEX E3 View, the company's most advanced personal entertainment console.

CYBEX also provided pieces from its VRI and VR3 strength series, plus the premium strength Eagle line, alongside the Jungle Gym, Bravo Functional Trainer and plate-loaded Smith press and benches. The equipment was manufactured in custom colours and with bespoke embroidery.

Ian Redfern, managing director of Northampton Leisure Trust – the trading name for Unity Leisure Trust, which operates the facility on behalf of Duston Parish Council – says: "Many people came along to have a look around the new centre prior to the opening, and the new facilities have had a very positive reaction."

Duston Parish Council residents are being offered half-price leisure card membership – an annual membership card that gives discounts and advance booking privileges at Duston Sports Centre, as well as at the other facilities which are operated by Northampton Leisure Trust: Lings Forum, Danes Camp and Mounts Baths.

The new facility is based on the site of the old British Timken sports centre. Local clubs including Kempo Karate and Northampton Aikido, plus local football clubs Duston Dynamos and the Falcons junior FC, will be based at the centre.

**For more information:** [www.cybexintl.com](http://www.cybexintl.com)



Duston Sports Centre is one of the first sites in the country to feature the new 770 series CV equipment from CYBEX



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# Lightweights

## UNBEATABLE MUSIC SYNCHS TO THE HEART

Jogging along and getting into 'the zone', the last thing runners want is to get distracted by music that's either too slow or fast. To avoid such a situation, Shahriar Nirjon, a computer science student at the University of Virginia, US, has created a biofeedback-based system for smartphones that synchs to the heart beat.

With the Musical Heart, a microphone is placed in the earphones which detects the pulse of the arteries. An app then selects tunes from a playlist based on that beat.

The really clever part, however, is that an algorithm refines the selection process by storing heart rate data and calculating the effects of the music. In time, it learns to select music to optimise the user's heart rate if they're working out, or can be programmed to help people relax.

The Musical Heart system is not on the market yet, but the good news is that it may only cost as little as US\$20. Details: <https://news.virginia.edu>



## ZOMBIE FEVER REACHES THE RACE CIRCUIT



Forget the dreaded stopwatch. Now there's another more sinister way to get your health club members to step up a gear – zombies!

And no, we're not talking about a phone app – we mean blood-spattered, growling zombies lunging at you as you run. That was the tack taken by organisers of the Zombie Evacuation Race held near Cambridge, UK, recently. The 5km run saw around 200 'evacuees' released in half-hour intervals into the countryside to contend with lurking zombie volunteers, smoke bombs and other obstacles. Details: [www.zombieevacuation.com](http://www.zombieevacuation.com)



## SAUNA IN A TENT AT NEW WELSH SPA

One of the UK's first outdoor log-fired sauna tents forms part of a new £2m spa at the Ruthin Castle hotel in north Wales.

Not to be put off by UK weather, The Moat spa also features other outdoor experiences including a hot tub with seaweed and herbs, a fire pit for BBQs and a spring water shower fed by the nearby Clywdian mountains.

The spa was designed by Blue Spa and Leisure and indoors it houses a gym, five treatment rooms, hot tubs also using the spring water, and Finnish, Siberian and Russian heat experiences.

It's open to hotel and non-hotel residents and offers a range of spa days, breaks and packages. Details: [www.ruthincastle.co.uk](http://www.ruthincastle.co.uk)

## Exercise excuses exposed

The number one reason people give for avoiding a workout is 'I don't have time' – this according to an article recently published by online newspaper *The Huffington Post*, which detailed the top 10 excuses people give not exercising.

Next on the list was 'I can't afford it', followed by 'I'm too tired', 'I'm too old' and 'I hate gyms'!

Weaker excuses included 'I'm too fat' and 'I don't have the right kit'.

If you work in the fitness industry, you've probably heard all these reasons on numerous occasions. But if you want to keep members engaged after New Year resolutions begin to fade, it might be time to start thinking up your counter arguments – or put in place initiatives – now. The advice offered in the article by personal trainer Neilon Pitamber might be a good starting point – see <http://lei.sr?a=W3flv>

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