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MAY 2013 NO 202

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Pete Todd, Pontefract Squash & Leisure Club, Pontefract. UK Active Board Director, Independent Operator



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David Webster, Owner Energie Fitness, Newbury UK

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Social responsibility

Why do health clubs – operations that pivot around the idea of doing people good – have to work so hard, and spend so much money, to engage customers? That was the question posed by Ray Algar, MD of Oxygen Consulting, who spotted a discrepancy between the way in which gyms perceive themselves – as socially-minded operations that help people live healthier, happier lives – and the way the public sees them: as contract-wielding enterprises that take your money and then leave you to fend for yourself, not caring if you attend or not.

Was there something that could be done to shift public perceptions, wondered Algar, encouraging people to see gyms as businesses with a social agenda – businesses they would therefore be proud to be associated with? And could this social agenda be delivered without ignoring commercial realities?

Algar was inspired by the story of TOMS Shoes, a for-profit company with a strong ethos of corporate social responsibility (CSR). When TOMS sells a pair of shoes, another pair is given to an impoverished

child. When it sells a pair of glasses, part of the profit is used to save or restore the eyesight of people in developing countries. The model allows TOMS to be profit-making, but at the same time benefit from the huge goodwill of a public keen to buy from a company that makes them feel good about their purchase.

Recognising the huge impact of this on customer loyalty – an area in which the fitness industry has always struggled – Algar set about tracking down examples of positive social impact from within the fitness sector. A new website, Gympopia, was born to share these stories – “to curate the social good that gyms

and suppliers are doing around the world,” says Algar. Its intention is to showcase best practice and encourage other clubs to follow suit, putting social impact initiatives at the very heart of what they do: less the one-off charity event, more an integral part of the business. Algar believes this will create a true sense of community, allowing members to feel part of something, driving engagement and reconnecting with those who are disengaging from their club – not to mention acting as a selling point for prospective members and partners. “If a health club cares about its community, the community will care about the club,” he adds.

Due for imminent launch, Gympopia has already gathered a number of inspiring examples: Cia Athletica in Brazil, for example, which asks members to donate old trainers whenever they’re trading up to a new pair. These are laundered and donated to a local charity that gets underprivileged kids into sport. Vivafit in Portugal asked members to bring in a tin of food whenever they came to work out during April 2009: more than 60,000 items of food were collected and donated to a charity supporting young mothers and their babies. And in the UK, The Gym Group has added a simple question to its sign-up process, asking if people want to make a one-off donation to charity; over £60,000 is now raised each year.

Such initiatives are win-wins for clubs: quite aside from the feelgood factor for staff and members, they are likely to boost retention and, with it, income. If clubs can be creative, it can also be done at minimal cost to the business. I’m excited by Gympopia and hope it leads to a new CSR movement in the sector.

If you have a case study for Gympopia, please contact Ray@Gympopia.org

Kate Cracknell, editor - katecracknell@leisuremedia.com / twitter: @HealthClubKate

To share your thoughts on this topic, visit www.healthclubmanagement.co.uk/blog



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WELCOME TO HEALTH CLUB MANAGEMENT



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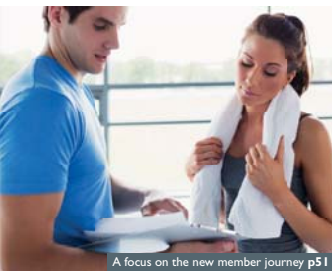
Exercise can effectively help to reduce appetite, says new research



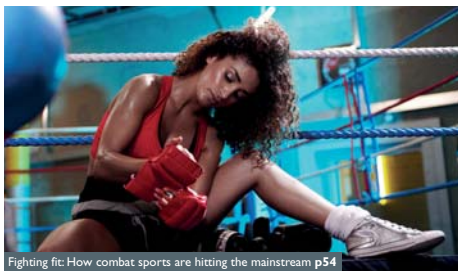
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Buyers' guide:

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



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



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Training people to be the positive face of a gym can add vibrancy to a club

Gym floor staff: Focus on those with a positive attitude

I was interested to read your recent feature on gym floor skill sets (see *HCM* March 13, p28). I accept that advice delivered on personal health and fitness must be delivered by people with a strong knowledge of anatomy, physiology and biomechanics. Other skills – empathy, diplomacy, attitude, communication, visualising and listening – are also required. Most importantly, there must be a strong element of trust and confidence established before a real bond can be formed between people.

What do you most remember about the London Olympics, other than the athletics performances? My abiding memory is of the Games Makers, a disparate volunteer group of 70,000 people who attracted accolades worldwide. They were elected and trained by McDonald's, echoing its own approach of recruiting employees based on qualities and attitude, and investing

in high-quality training to help them achieve their potential in the workplace.

Learning from this, *énergie Fitness Clubs* has developed an 'énégiser' scheme for people who have vast resources of energy and positive attitude, who are observant, and who easily adapt to the needs of others. We train them to be the welcoming face of the gym, and are already seeing increased trust and confidence between staff and members, better communications, and an added vibrancy in the clubs. Our *énégisers* are the catalyst for all departments – the glue that binds people together and helps form a member community, which we believe develops loyalty and improves retention.

So which way do we train: *énégisers* to PTs or PTs to *énégisers*? We're not sure yet...

Jim Durie

Franchise director (Leinster), *énergie*

Shaping up for a group exercise only offering

I read with interest your recent article about group exercise gyms (see *HCM* Feb 13, p28). I would like to introduce you to Shape Up Studios.

I've been in the fitness sector for many years, joining Fitness First at its inception before moving to Next Generation. I then had some time away from the industry before coming up with the idea for Shape Up Studios in spring 2011 – I felt there was an opportunity for a new approach to exercise.

One of the experts quoted in the article, Doyle Armstrong, says "no-one has yet done the full works with a mix of group exercise options". In fact, we do exactly this – and we've just celebrated our first birthday. Shape Up Studios is a group exercise concept that specialises in all manner of instructor-led group activities, from traditional offerings such as Step, through Zumba, pilates and group cycling to HIIT, Hot Yoga, toning tables, MX circuits and group Power Plate classes.

We also specialise in exercise for people affected by medical conditions such as MS and stroke, using power-assisted exercise equipment.

Our next step, now the pilot has proven itself, is to roll-out Shape Up Studios to other centres across the UK.

Annabel Glynn
MD, Shape Up Studios



After a promising pilot, Shape Up Studios is now being rolled out

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Council approves leisure centre for Preston, Surrey

Reigate & Banstead Borough Council has approved plans for an £8.7m leisure, community and youth centre in Preston, Surrey. The development would include a 25m six-lane swimming pool, teaching pool, 50-station gym, dance and exercise studios, four-court sports hall, football pitches, café, crèche, and wet and dry changing studios.

Construction is expected to start in autumn and be complete within a year. Banstead Leisure Centre will remain open until replacement facilities are completed.



The planned facility for Coleshill School

North Warwickshire council backs sports centre

Planning approval has been granted for a community sports centre to be built at Coleshill School in North Warwickshire.

The facility will replace the ageing Coleshill Leisure Centre, which according to planning documents would have been too costly and time-consuming to refurbish.

Despite attracting 100,000 visits a year, the leisure facility's popularity had dropped 14.5 per cent between 2008/09 and 2010/11. The new facility will have a four-court sports hall, two squash courts, a 40-station gym and dance studio.

Islington delivers tennis to get residents more active

Islington Council is offering free tennis for the over-60s in an effort to help more residents get active and encourage people to try the sport.

The council has also appointed Karen Dawson its new tennis development officer, funded with help from sports trust Aquaterra and the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA). Dawson will work with local communities to get more people to try the sport, including free sessions for children and young people, as well as older residents.

Exercise makes it onto the QOF

Two physical activity indicators have been added to the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) – a voluntary reward and incentive programme used by GPs across the UK.

The indicators, effective from 1 April, set thresholds for increasing physical activity for patients with hypertension – which affects 7.3 million people in England and Wales – and delivering lifestyle advice on physical activity.

A House of Lords committee report on Olympic health legacy last year recommended including physical activity in QOF, as did the Royal College of Physicians' 'Exercise for Life' report. Including physical activity in the QOF has been one of the primary policy objectives of ukactive, as part of a wider aim to establish physical activity as a core business of the NHS.



Hypertension affects 7.3 million people across England and Wales

ukactive CEO David Stalker says: "We hope that these new indicators for hypertensive patients are just the beginning of an opportunity to embed physical activity across a wider range of indicators for the management of chronic conditions, saving the NHS millions of pounds in the process."

KSL Capital mulls David Lloyd purchase

KSL Capital Partners is reportedly looking to purchase gym chain David Lloyd Leisure, thought to be worth around £900m.

The Sunday Times said the US-based private equity firm, which recently bought UK hotel chains Malmaison and Hotel du Vin, is one of several potential buyers; US investment house Blackstone is also thought to be mulling a bid. Investment bank UBS was reportedly hired to look at funding options for the business's planned expansion, which include possible new clubs in Europe.

The Hatfield-based gym group has 80 clubs across the UK and is named after former English tennis professional David Lloyd, who founded the business in 1980. His son, Scott, now runs the business.



David Lloyd Leisure has a reported price tag of around £900m

David Lloyd Clubs – a full-service offering targeting families – have a focus on racket sports with around 700 tennis courts, 180 badminton courts and 140 squash courts. It has around 450,000 members and employs 6,000 staff across its estate.

Lancaster London develops new £1m hotel gym

Lancaster London, part of the Preferred Hotel Group, has announced it will open its new £1m, 24-hour gym in June, on the second floor of the 18-storey hotel.

The 945sq m (1,012sq ft) gymnasium will include the latest equipment from Technogym.

Other features include high-impact flooring and white non-glare lighting.

For guests interested in outdoor exercise, the hotel can arrange bicycles, horse riding and outdoor swimming in the Serpentine, as well as jogging maps for adjacent Hyde Park.

Fitness First's £20m investment

Fitness First is launching a capital investment programme of £20m in 2013 in an attempt to return the brand to UK market leader.

The spend will cover essential maintenance, major refurbishment and an investment of £4.5m in fitness technology, marking the largest phase of innovation in the company's 20-year history.

Products and features at clubs will include hot yoga studios, cool-down air showers, interactive screens with virtual personal trainers and high definition screen treadmills on which members can run virtual routes in California, Europe and Africa.

The gyms will host Diversity and Victoria Pendleton fitness classes, with British Cycling Team-endorsed Wattbikes that offer exercisers feedback on their technique.

The average spend on fully refurbished clubs will be £750,000, with locations in Poole and London among the first to trial the new designs and training concepts. A further £1m has been invested in appointing more than 70 new club managers.



Fitness First: Investing in "high calibre fitness staff"

Managing director for the UK, Martin Seibold, says: "High calibre fitness staff, unique equipment and a more interactive member experience will put us at the forefront of the UK fitness industry."

Fitness First is one of the largest health club groups in the world, with more than 380 clubs in 15 countries. In the UK it has more than 85 clubs, with 50 in London alone.

Exercise could make NHS savings of £7bn

More than £7bn of savings could be made on the UK's health spending if everyone undertook the recommended daily amount of exercise. The findings, from a new report by the London School of Economics and healthcare charity Nuffield Health, show that 70 per cent of UK adults do not currently meet the target of 150 minutes' exercise a week.

The report, '12 minutes more...', uses data from the annual Health Survey for England and suggests that, if each inactive UK citizen were to do just 12 minutes' exercise each day, the UK could save £7bn in costs of associated NHS treatments, welfare and loss of earnings.

Health benefits attainable by simply moving more include decreased levels of cholesterol



Increasing daily exercise cuts the risk of lifestyle related diseases

and risk of high blood pressure; cutting the risk of lifestyle related diseases such as Type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease; and better control of body weight.

Active people are not only 7 per cent less likely than inactive individuals to be obese, but they also reduce their risk of poor mental health by 6 per cent.

Council backs £13.5m leisure centre for Blackburn

A £13.5m leisure centre for Blackburn has received backing from the local council to replace the ageing Waves Water Fun Centre.

The council approved £8.5m for the project, with Blackburn College providing the remaining £5m.

Facilities will include an eight lane 25m pool, 15m x 7m training pool, 80-station fitness suite, aerobics studio, health suite with sauna and steamroom, two four-court sports halls, and a sports science lab for college use.

Work is set to begin on the site in September.

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Marr stroke claim needs testing

The Stroke Association says more research needs to be done to confirm whether high-intensity exercise can trigger an attack, after BBC presenter Andrew Marr claimed his stroke earlier this year was brought on by a vigorous exercise session.

The 53-year-old presenter stated on his own programme, BBC 2's *Andrew Marr Show*, that he had been overworking in the year leading up to his stroke, but that it was sparked by an intense rowing machine workout.

It's estimated that 150,000 people in the UK will have a stroke each year, most aged over the age of 65. It's believed Marr experienced two transient ischaemic attacks, or mini strokes, that went undiagnosed at the time.

The Stroke Association has since released a statement explaining that regular exercise is in fact an important factor in stroke prevention and recovery. Spokeswoman Nikki Hill says: "We have heard anecdotally that some activities like vigorous exercise can sometimes cause blood vessels to burst. We need more



Andrew Marr says he will return to work at the BBC

research on the underlying factors that might make that happen."

She continues: "We do know that high blood pressure itself is the single biggest cause of stroke, so until more research is done on specific triggers, we'd suggest getting your blood pressure checked and taking steps to keep it under control. Exercise can help with that."

Launch of Asda Active Sports Leaders

A new partnership between supermarket chain Asda and community sports organisation Sports Leaders UK aims to improve the health and employment prospects of young people, supporting 150,000 individuals to get qualifications in sports leadership each year.

Launched at the House of Commons, the Asda Active Sports Leaders scheme will receive the Inspired by 2012 brand, launched by the DCMS last week.

Asda's decision following a survey last year of more than 5,000 mothers, which found their two biggest concerns to be their children's health and prospects for employment.

David Stalker, the CEO of ukactive – which facilitated the partnership – says: "ukactive exists for one reason: to get more people, more



Initiative aims to get more young people qualified in sports leadership

active, more often. We're delighted that we've been able to play such a role in bringing the two organisations together."

President of Sport Leaders UK, Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, says: "The generation we promised to inspire when we won the 2012 bid are exactly this generation that the Asda Active Sports Leaders programme is shaping."

Leicester doctors to prescribe free physical activity

Leicester GPs can now prescribe free six-month exercise programmes to residents, due to the new Active Lifestyle Scheme supported by the city council.

The sessions will include an exercise referral to a qualified fitness instructor for

patients suffering from medical conditions such as heart problems, diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity.

Activities prescribed will include swimming, gym sessions, aqua aerobics and walking.



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LA Fitness backs down on children's swimming prices

From June, children under four will be allowed to go swimming for free, with their parents, at LA Fitness clubs.

The gym chain was pulled up by the *Observer*, which claimed it was breaching the terms of its own contracts when, in January, it introduced a fee of £8 a month for children. Many members had joined because they could bring their children swimming for free.

Five- to 15-year-olds will have to pay £8 a month, or £3 per swim, unless they have previously been swimming for free.



Local projects have landed £1.2m from the fund

SportScotland distributes first 2014 Legacy grants

SportScotland has distributed the first grants from the £10m Legacy 2014 Active Places Fund to 24 community projects across the country.

The grant enables groups to develop and revamp sports and fitness facilities in the lead-up to the Glasgow Commonwealth Games. A total of £1.2m has been awarded to projects in 15 local authorities.

Projects that received funding include £38,000 for Edinburgh's Leith Links to develop tennis and petanque facilities, and Children in Edinburgh, which will receive £87,900 for tennis and cycling in the city.

The closing date for the next round of applications for the fund is 1 July 2013.

Beckham's new ambassador role

David Beckham has signed a long-term agreement with Sky Sports, to act as an ambassador, in an effort to get more people involved with sport at a grassroots level.

The global sports star will support Sky Sports Living for Sport – a free initiative that uses the stories and expertise of athlete mentors in a bid to inspire young people to learn new skills.

Around 30,000 young people from around Britain and Ireland participate in the programme each year.

Beckham says: "I've always been passionate about the importance of sport in the lives of young people.

"It's not all about winning. Just getting involved in sport gives you confidence and skills for life. I was lucky to have some amazing role models when I was younger, and



Beckham aims to inspire young people to take up sport in his new role

I'm excited about the opportunity to work with Sky to pass on some of that knowledge to the next generation."

Other athletes who work with Sky include Olympic gold medallists Jessica Ennis and Sir Bradley Wiggins.

Zumba Fitness: Fighting world hunger

Zumba Fitness has launched a new initiative aimed at helping to fight one of the world's greatest health risks – hunger.

The Great Calorie Drive initiative is a collaboration with US hunger-relief organisation Feeding America and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP).

From now through June 2013, participants are encouraged to shake off their calories in Zumba classes worldwide. Participants check into a Zumba class using a smartphone Zumba app. Each check-in is worth 750 calories – a typical class energy expenditure – which are captured into a microsite and go towards a rolling total. The target is 2.5 billion calories. For each check-in, Zumba pays US\$0.14 to the



Zumba will donate up to US\$1m over three months

two food charities up to a cap of US\$1m, which in turn will pay for 3.5 million meals.

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Council plans revamp for Finsbury Leisure Centre

Islington Council has revealed plans to rebuild and improve facilities at Finsbury Leisure Centre as part of a larger development earmarked for the St Luke's area. Included in the revamp would be improvements to squash courts, the sports hall and football pitches.

The council also wants to improve the layout of outdoor spaces for local people.

The proposals are part of the St Luke's Area Draft Plan, which is currently out for public consultation and includes proposals for council homes and new public spaces.



Facilities include a gym and 25m six-lane pool

Sandwell unveils £8m Tipton Leisure Centre

Tipton Leisure Centre has opened its doors to the public, at a formerly vacant site on Alexandra Road.

Facilities at the centre include a 25m six-lane pool, a 12.5m teaching pool, a dance studio and a fully equipped 54-station gym that overlooks the centre's pool.

Sandwell Leisure Trust will manage the new centre, which was designed by Sandwell Urban Design Architects – the council's in-house service.

Construction was led by Hertfordshire-based group Willmott Dixon.

Merger creates new social enterprise for East Kent

East Kent social enterprises Thanet Leisure Force (TLF) and Vista Leisure (VL) have merged, as of 1 April, to form Your Leisure Kent Limited. The new company remains a social enterprise.

The partners say the merger will improve the sustainability of leisure provision in East Kent and extend the range of services available to customers. TLF MD Steve Davis says: "This merger offers a significant opportunity for both organisations to take our businesses forward by consolidating resources and combining our strengths."

Free sport and fitness for Leeds

Leeds City Council is moving ahead with plans to provide free sports and fitness sessions in an effort to get the city more active and reduce the burden on the public health system.

Sport England has earmarked £500,000 in support for the Leeds Let's Get Active pilot, with another £500,000 being invested by the city council from its community health budget. The scheme will provide a free hour of gym or swimming sessions each day at council-managed leisure centres.

The idea is that the sessions will be open to anyone, but the scheme aims to specifically target those who do not currently take part in physical activity. Figures released by Sport England show the related cost of physical inactivity in Leeds in 2009-2010 was £10.95m.

Council member for health and wellbeing Lisa Mulherin says: "Apart from improving



The scheme will offer one free hour of gym or swimming each day

participation and health and wellbeing, there will also be significant benefits for the city in terms of reducing the pressure on health services, so it really has the potential to be a fantastic win-win all round."

Other elements of the scheme would include free running and walking groups in local parks, and packages for leisure centre access for as little as £5 for three months.

Build starts on Haltemprice leisure centre



Local construction company Hobson & Porter is leading the build, which will be complete by autumn 2014

A contractor has been appointed to begin work on Haltemprice Leisure Centre, in Anlaby, Yorkshire, which is expanding to include a doctor's surgery, library and customer service centre, as well as sport and fitness facilities.

The £6m makeover of the leisure centre was given planning approval on 18 December by the East Riding of Yorkshire Council, which also owns the facility.

Local construction company Hobson & Porter is leading the build, which is set to be complete by autumn 2014.

The build will take place in a phased approach, beginning with the transformation

of the rear of the building into the main entrance, as well as the refurbishment of outdoor pitches and the addition of car parking spaces.

The scheme will also see a Tone Zone fitness suite extended, pool and sports hall refurbished, and a new café.

Construction will also address a number of maintenance requirements and improve the building's energy efficiency.

The council stated that the partnership with the NHS, to provide a doctor's surgery at the centre, strengthened the link between keeping active and keeping healthy.

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VP of Group Fitness, 24 Hour Fitness

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*Except in China

Portugal: Separate nutrition and fitness contracts

Gyms in Portugal are beginning to separate nutrition services from their fitness offering in order to counter the issue of rising VAT.

In 2011, VAT on physical activity rose from 6 to 23 per cent. However, nutrition as a standalone offering currently incurs zero VAT. Health clubs are therefore increasingly developing distinct services, prompting the Portuguese association AGAP to seek legal guidance about this practice.

AGAP's current standpoint is that independent contracts are required for each service – fitness and nutrition – and that nutrition services must be carried out by registered, licensed professionals. However, it has a concern that retention levels may be impacted if nutrition is removed from the fitness membership package.

New opening for Indigo boutique hotel brand

Hotel Indigo, the boutique brand in the IHG portfolio, opened its latest property – in Wanchai, Hong Kong – on 1 April.

The hotel includes a small, guest-only gym kitted out by Star Trac. It's the third Indigo site in Asia, after Shanghai and Xiamen, to install Star Trac equipment.

Cycling-yoga offering launches in New York

Synstudio has opened in Brooklyn, New York, claiming to be the first boutique fitness brand in the city to host cycling and yoga classes under one roof.

The two activities are offered as distinct sessions, not combined classes, with day passes available for US\$25. In the cycling classes, participants stand out of their saddles the whole time, moving to the music with a dance influence.

Synstudio launched in April 2010 and has two clubs in Durham, North Carolina, with plans for further Manhattan sites.

GymAround: Expansion and evolution

Orange Fitness (Russia), Club Med Gym (Paris) and Club One (US), are among the recent sign-ups to GymAround – the network that gives business travellers access to gyms around the world. Clubs can join the network for free, with payment now made in person at the club – discounted for those with GymAround vouchers.

Trainmore opens two new sites

Dutch operator TrainMore opened two new clubs last month – one acquisition and one new gym.

Fresh Zaandam, a 1,200sq m gym in the centre of Zaandam, was re-opened as a TrainMore club on 23 April, while the

1,300sq m new club opened in the centre of The Hague on 29 April. Both fitness centres are located in historic buildings.

Facilities include fitness suites equipped by Technogym, group exercise studios, group cycling, sauna and bar.

The new club in The Hague is the first site to introduce TrainMore's new workout experience, creating distinct areas for activities such as boxing and TRX. The boxing area is brought to life with boxing videos to inspire people, while the wallpaper has been specially designed featuring old boxing matches, giving the feel of a traditional boxing gym. There is also a MoreSteel area for old-school power training, with a steel and concrete-wall design.

TrainMore was set up with the aim of motivating people to work out more often, with a sliding scale of charges based on usage levels. If people visit the gym three times a week, they pay only €1.95 a week; two add-ons such as sunbeds and health drinks means membership is free. When people work out twice a week, they pay €4.95 – a 50 per cent discount.



TrainMore has a sliding fee scale based on usage

Vivafit signs deals for Bahrain and Qatar

Women-only gym franchise Vivafit has signed two new master franchise contracts – its seventh and eighth – for Qatar and Bahrain.

The master franchise partner for Qatar is the company The Forum, represented by its founder and general manager Bassem Othman Rajab Majeed. The Forum operates in Qatar and in Dubai, specialising in engineering, franchising, beauty salons and now fitness.

Master franchisee for Bahrain is Portuguese businessman Joao Moedas, the co-founder of two other businesses: an advertising agency in Bahrain and a recruitment agency in Saudi Arabia that specialises in women.



Signing of the master franchise deal for Bahrain

énergie: First Fit4Less to open in Ireland

The énergie Group is opening its first Fit4Less club – the franchise operator's low-cost offering – in the Republic of Ireland this month.

Located in Tallaght – a suburb of Dublin with a population of 750,000 – the club currently measures 745sq m, to be extended to 1,115–1,400sq m to meet demand. It's owned by franchisees Greg Kenny and Shane Lynch: Kenny is a former track athlete, while Lynch is nine-time world kickboxing champion.

The gym will be kitted out by Precor, alongside functional training zones. Studios will follow in the autumn of 2013 – or before then if demand dictates.

Plans are to roll out 10 Fit4Less clubs in Leinster, the most populated province in the Republic, within two years, with further plans for the rest of Ireland to follow. énergie already has two Fit4Less clubs in Northern Ireland.

With this new club, énergie operates 14 clubs across Ireland: eight énergie Fitness Clubs, the full fitness format with swimming pools, extensive gyms, studios and ancillary facilities; three énergie fitness for women; and three Fit4Less clubs. This makes the franchise operator the largest provider of health and fitness facilities in the country, according to master franchisee Jim Durie.

Upgrade for French rugby centre



In addition to equipping the centre, Star Trac has provided Spinner bikes for players to warm up on match day

The training centre of the French national rugby team – in Marcoussis, in the suburbs of Paris – has begun an extensive redevelopment project in association with Star Trac.

The first phase of the renovation was completed earlier this year, with continued developments planned over the remainder of the year. The French Rugby Federation's aim is to take its team's fitness to the next level, and it was felt the training facilities needed to be upgraded to deliver optimum performance from the players. Phase one therefore involved a full refurbishment of the facility to improve the day-to-day training environment for the professional players: everything from interior design to improved air conditioning to new equipment.

The gym is now kitted out with Star Trac treadmills, cross-trainers, Spinner NXT and Spinner Blade bikes. Strength units from the Inspiration Strength, Impact Strength and HumanSport lines have also been installed. Jordan has also been involved in the installation. The fitness suite is complemented by extensive facilities for physiotherapy.

The facility currently measures 320sq m following phase one of the redevelopment – phase two will see more strength and conditioning facilities being added, which will see the training space expand to 800sq m.

Investment in the project has not been disclosed, but the equipment is part of a sponsorship package, with Star Trac directly supporting the development.

SportSetter: Rolling out to new markets

Helsinki-based SportSetter announced last month that it has raised €400,000 (£340,000) in angel funding.

The SportSetter concept is designed to give people taster sessions in activities they might not otherwise get a chance to try. Users sign up online at the SportSetter website, filling in details of the types of activities they're interested in. Then, for around €30 a month, SportSetter generates four passes for activities that fit the profile of each individual user. These can range from gym access to yoga classes, as well as more adventurous options like rock climbing, jiu jitsu and parkour.

SportSetter claims that a user's €30 gets them around €120-worth of activities. However, the idea is that – in contrast to daily deal websites where discounted price is the key motivator – the lack of a price tag for each individual activity makes it less likely to devalue the product, and more likely to act as an introductory session.

The company now has 30 partnerships in Helsinki, Finland, with each partner typically offering two or more activities. It now plans to launch in New York (US), with other markets on the radar including London (UK), Miami (US) and Berlin (Germany).



ukactive Flame conference and ball of fire

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Wilkie will be managing the training team

Education co-ordinator for Physical Company

Physical Company has appointed Sue Wilkie as education co-ordinator.

Wilkie will oversee marketing and administration of live and online education; ensure all courses meet the SkillsActive training provider requirements; and manage the training team.

Sales and marketing director John Halls says: "As we grow our live training dates and add the new EX:CEL online education platform, this appointment will help keep the standard of training provision at the high level our customers expect from us."

Legend expands senior team with COO appointment

Legend Club Management Systems has appointed a new COO. Paul Simpson joins the company to help expand its products and services, through investment in software development capability and customer service capabilities.

The company has seen tremendous growth year-on-year for the last three years, according to MD Sean Maguire. He says Simpson – with his strong IT background and management experience – will help build on this growth.

milom announces new UK distributor agreement

Fitness & Health Solutions Ltd (FHS) has been appointed as the exclusive UK distributor for milom.

FHS is a collaboration of Stuart Davis, who has 20 years' experience in the UK health and fitness industry, and Raf Swerts, the Benelux distributor for milom.

Swerts has introduced the circuit into 100 facilities during the last three years. He also owns 16 clubs that use the circuit and claims it helps retention and appeals to the deconditioned market.

Industry veterans join Les Mills

Les Mills is beefing up its senior team with three major new appointments.

Keith Burnett, CEO, says this is an exciting time for Les Mills: "We're in the process of building a team of fitness experts whose key purpose will be to help our club customers build better, more profitable businesses."

Martin Franklin, formerly COO at Holmes Place, joins as customer experience director to oversee the development of the business, with a focus on supporting club customers.

He says his primary focus will be to help clubs "unleash the power of our programmes."

Former REPS registrar Jean-Ann Marnoch is joining Les Mills as instructor experience director, overseeing the instructor experience strategy and working with new head trainer Dave Kyle. Kyle says: "I'm looking forward to



Jean-Ann Marnoch is Les Mills' new instructor experience director

further developing the existing trainer talent we have through better team cohesion and engagement. There's also a lot of new talent out there and we're looking to find more 'rockstar' instructors to help our future growth."

Les Mills has 90,000 instructors in 15,000 clubs around the world.

Nasta takes on expanded COO role

Retention Management Europe has named Jon Nasta as its COO. In his new role, the former MD will oversee the company's sales and marketing teams and manage the roll-out of new or expanded service offerings, as well as developing further strategic alliances and overseas growth.

Since joining the company in 2008, Nasta has overseen triple digit growth and has been instrumental in spearheading many new initiatives and enhancements.

"Jon's passion, experience and work ethic have always been an asset for us," says the company's CEO and founder Richard Ekstrom. "His new, expanded role as COO will be a positive influence for Retention Management, our alliances and our client base."



Jon Nasta has overseen triple digit growth since joining in 2008

Retention Management helps fitness centres increase retention, ancillary revenues, sales and profitability. The company offers email marketing and social media among its services.

DC Leisure grows business development team

DC Leisure has bolstered its business development team with the appointment of three new managers.

Kamran Tirmizey, Damian Watts and Jamie Woods, all former DC Leisure contract managers, joined the team in April and will

work alongside the two current business development managers. They will be supported by the newly appointed business development co-ordinator, Victoria O'Neill, who joins the company with extensive third sector experience.

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Casting a better light

• Patricia Amend • Editor • Club Business International

I've noticed recently how badly health clubs are portrayed in popular television shows. For example, in one episode of *The Good Wife*, the law firm Lockhart/Gardner defends a known drug dealer who has several "legitimate" businesses. A murder takes place at one of those: a health club. The victim is a young woman – a salesperson who's pictured in a video of the sales team celebrating the fact that they've sold more memberships than ever. The subsequent investigation not only delved into the murder but also revealed that the club's general manager was selling steroids, making US\$100,000 a month in the process.

A preview for another show, *The Mentalist*, shows a woman tripping on a treadmill and falling completely off it. The lead character, Patrick Jane, yells: "Man down!" Smiling.

On a re-run of *Monk*, Mr Monk enters a gym's locker room and hesitates to sit on the bench because of his obsession with cleanliness. And he does his typical site-gag, his "OCD dance" if you will. Once he does force himself to sit down, an overweight, sweaty man who's wrapped in a towel sits down next to him. What does the man say? "They never clean this place, and the equipment is always broken. And I keep paying my dues. I don't know what they're doing with my money."



Social media can hurt as much as it helps – but only if we let it. Clubs need a positive media strategy

I think you see what I'm getting at. For longer than we'd like to remember, this industry has had a slightly tarnished image. And it doesn't help when local newspapers run stories when a club closes its doors unexpectedly. There are often quotes from disgruntled members.

Social media can also hurt as much as it helps, when people post their issues on Yelp and other sites. The cumulative effect could be disastrous – if we let it. What can you do?

First of all there's the obvious: treat your members and employees as well as possible. Doing so is not only a good business practice but also makes you a good corporate citizen. And it will generate nothing but good word-of-mouth.

Get involved in your community. Join your local Chamber of Commerce. Attend town meetings and speak up. Create good relationships. Invite local physicians and politicians to visit your club.

Publicise your good deeds. Let local media outlets know when you're planning a fundraiser, or working with the elderly, young people's clubs or local schools. Invite local radio stations to co-sponsor your events and broadcast them live. Post videos of them on Facebook. Tweet what you're doing regularly.

Don't ignore the smaller community media outlets in your area. Weekly papers are often hungry for news. If you have someone on your staff with writing experience, why not offer your local paper a regular column with fitness, nutrition and wellness tips? Do you have a neighborhood cable TV station? Why not offer to do a half-hour community wellness show? In other words, if you don't already have one, come up with a real strategy to create a positive message about your club and the industry.

Don't leave it to the media to tell the story. Tell it yourself.

Ask the experts: CV equipment ratio



What's the industry standard for the number of aerobic pieces of equipment per member?
Joan Carter, vice chair of Cybex International,

offers her views on this topic:

"While those who specialise in the management of gyms and training facilities may be searching for a magic number, finding the ideal balance between certain forms of aerobic equipment is a tricky question.

"According to Steve Suchanek, Cybex International's director of product management, there's no industry standard for equipment. Instead, he says the ratio of equipment per member boils down

to one thing: What's your business plan?

For fully loaded facilities offering a broad variety of amenities, there may be less need for a large number of treadmills.

"Conversely a more basic gym – a gym that sets out in its mission statement to feature fewer amenities – may be more likely to include more treadmills, cross-trainers and strength training equipment as a result of the clientele it caters to, who are interested largely in a traditional gym workout.

"Suchanek says there can be relative ratios for equipment – from treadmills to cross-trainers to upright and recumbent bikes – based on the needs of member populations. He also notes treadmills tend to comprise 45 per cent of CV machines, with roughly 30 per cent cross-trainers and the balance made up of bikes and other pieces.



Treadmills usually make up 45 per cent of CV kit

"If members are asking for certain pieces of equipment – or if there are people waiting to get on machines – then clearly an operator should re-assess its equipment portfolio."

Read more answers to this question at www.ihrsa.org/industryleader



Boston is a strong and resilient community, and will not be cowed by the recent bombings

A heartfelt thank you from Boston

As a company that calls Boston home – and one that knows the importance of exercise and health, as well as the need for determination and perseverance, true essentials of a Boston Marathon participant – we at IHRSA were deeply affected by the tragic events that unfolded on 15 April.

Numerous companies and individuals across the country and the world – IHRSA members and non-members alike – have sent well wishes, thoughts and prayers. We would like to take this opportunity to

thank everyone for their concerns for us, the residents of Massachusetts and everyone involved in the Boston Marathon.

We would also like to send our condolences to the families affected by this horrific event, and thank all of the medical personnel, police, fire services, volunteers and bystanders who rushed to assist the injured.

Boston is a strong and resilient community. We will get through this stronger and show those responsible that their cowardly acts will not break us.

Events diary

Visit www.ihrsa.org/calendar

9 May 2013

Creative Marketing Strategies (webinar)

6 June 2013

Elevating Your Member Experience (webinar)

5-7 September 2013

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

17-20 October 2013

13th Annual IHRSA European Congress – Madrid, Spain

12-15 March 2014

IHRSA 2014 – San Diego, California, US

The benefits of lifelong exercise

While we can't defy ageing's impact on speed and fitness forever, research shows we can markedly slow the decline and postpone the 'tumbling off the fitness cliff' that some people encounter in old age. And the gains may transfer from athletics to the tasks of daily life.

When Scott Trappe – director of the human performance laboratory at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, US – and colleagues tested nine elite, lifelong athletes older than 80, they found their cardiovascular fitness to be "comparable to non-endurance-trained men 40 years younger".

The level of conditioning of these athletes – all had been top-flight cross-country skiers, and one had been an Olympic champion – was "associated with lower risk for disability and mortality", according to Trappe's 2012 paper published in the *Journal of Applied Physiology*.

Great vibes at CrediCare 2013 in Norway

More than 200 club owners and staff attended the CrediCare conference in Norway last month.

CrediCare is one of the largest companies in Norway that provides administrative support for financial transactions for the health club industry. The company is 31 years old, founded by Berndt Bertelsen. It has an education and medical division, and also has a company in Sri Lanka to assist with data processing and programming.

There were presentations and speakers from both inside and outside of the industry at the conference, focusing on improving business. IHRSA director of Europe Hans Muench gave a keynote speech and two sessions.

A festive casino night allowed the 230 attendees to wind down. Prizes were awarded, including the top prize to Mona Christiansen of Toten Treningssenter for an all-expense paid trip to IHRSA 2014.

IHRSA 2014: Speaker application deadline

IHRSA's Annual International Convention & Trade Show continues to offer a dynamic, open forum for the exchange of ideas, strategic planning and peer-to-peer networking. It is also accompanied by an extensive exhibition of products and services for business operations.

The event is your opportunity to share your expertise and professional experiences, by submitting an application to present an education session at IHRSA 2014, which will take place in San Diego, California, US, next March.

To be considered, log on to www.ihrsa.org/speaker-application and submit your application prior to 14 June 2013. Help shape the ideas and strategies that will influence over 3,000 top industry professionals.

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.ihrsa.org

Locate a quality IHRSA club at www.healthclubs.com

A prescription to get moving



David Stalker reports on ukactive's latest medical engagement work, and a new partnership that sees ukactive join forces with Sport England to put more weight behind its drive to put an exercise professional into every GP surgery

Engaging with the medical community is a ukactive strategic objective, as part of our desire to establish physical activity as a core business of the UK's National Health Service (NHS).

We were therefore very supportive of the news last month that two new physical activity measures have been added to the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) – the incentive programme for GP surgeries in England. For a number of years, ukactive has lobbied for change in this area, calling for physical activity to be recognised in the QOF and working with various professional medical bodies to add to strength to this message.

The new measures set thresholds for increasing physical activity in patients with hypertension, and delivering lifestyle advice on physical activity to hypertensive patients, of which there are currently 7.3 million in the UK.

Added to that very positive news, we are also on the threshold of publishing the findings of the ukactive Research Institute pilot study, as well as the long-awaited release of professional standards for the delivery of exercise in the management of disease, produced by the ukactive Joint Consultative Forum.

Into GP surgeries

We are also expanding our drive to put an exercise professional in every GP surgery. Last month it was announced that a ukactive-led partnership – involving NHS Bedfordshire, teamBEDS&LUTON and local authorities across Bedfordshire – has been selected as one of 14 pilots supported by a £5.8m Sport England fund designed to support inactive people to Get Healthy and Get into Sport.

This new partnership will see the motivational interviewing programme Let's Get Moving expand into



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM, MONKEY BUSINESS

QOF: Activity now recommended for hypertension

Bedfordshire and Luton, helping the most inactive members of the local community improve their activity levels.

For the first time, the Let's Get Moving physical activity care pathway – originally developed by the Department of Health, validated by Loughborough University and recommended by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) – will be further supported by being seamlessly integrated into the hugely successful Get Back Into programme pioneered by teamBEDS&LUTON and Re-Active8 by Bedford Borough Council. This will provide a direct entry route for

previously inactive people to try out a new sport in a friendly and welcoming environment.

The project follows the successful testing of the Let's Get Moving model by ukactive and a consortium of partners with five Primary Care Trusts in Essex (see HCM June 12, p24). This saw 504 previously inactive participants amass a total of 164 million steps, amounting to 48,000 active hours, 11.2 million kcal and 69,000 miles walked – a significant outcome that showed the scale of impact that can be achieved by taking a robust approach to public health interventions.

We believe that putting an exercise professional into every GP surgery can have a dramatic impact on the health of the nation, particularly when armed with motivational interviewing techniques, the ability to signpost into sports and activity sessions, and direct access to patients as part of the practice team. This project provides us with another opportunity to prove that case.

Activity pathways

As NHS Bedfordshire's Craig Lister has said, its programme will use sport in an innovative manner, supporting people to

move away from unhealthy lifestyles in a sustainable and enjoyable way. Using local professionals and a rapid referral system, while people are still in a position of wanting to change, should lead to improved outcomes and better health.

The backing from Sport England provides the necessary resources to deliver both sporting and health outcomes for inactive people in Bedfordshire, by testing whether the pathway can deliver sporting outcomes as well as getting people more active generally. It will also help us to further systemise this concept, to support its continued expansion into other areas of the country. ●



The Perfect Host

We talk to Bernice Coyle about how the Soho House Group have made their membership management software, Plus2, work for them

Globally we have 10 Houses and one stand-alone Hotel that use Gladstone Health and Leisure's Plus2 Membership Management Software.

We use the system mainly as a database to add new members and record their visits, but in the UK and Germany we also use Plus2 to run our Direct Debits. We moved to a Gladstone hosted system at the end of 2012 as we had outgrown our existing facilities.

A range of problems meant we didn't want to host from our own office; from the system going down at any time to the fact that we have an outsourced IT company that can't easily be on hand to reboot our server in the

Central London office. Consequently we had Houses worldwide that couldn't check the status of members coming in and needed a more reliable system - the hosted system via Gladstone was perfect for us.

It saves us costs on the maintenance of our system as well as calls to our external IT company's helpline, but the real saving long-term is likely to

be staff time. We can now offer a better customer service too. In the past, when the system went down the Houses overseas could not use it out of UK office hours, but this is no longer an issue, and the system is much quicker too as each House accesses the database via its own broadband. We now have a far more reliable system - backed up and fail proof.

We've been working with Gladstone since 2006, with plans to open several more Houses worldwide in the coming years, and won't hesitate to use Plus2 to manage these members' clubs.

Bernice Coyle
Soho House Group

"It saves us costs on the maintenance of our system as well as calls to our external IT company's helpline, but the real saving long-term is likely to be staff time. We can now offer a better customer service too"

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SEPT & OCT 2013

Questars

Questar adventure races involve stages of trail running, biking and kayaking for individuals or teams of two, three or four. Each stage has a range of checkpoints, with participants visiting as many as possible to earn the most points. The route is flexible and people decide what order and how long to spend on each stage according to their strengths – with the ultimate distances being up to 30km for running, 40km for biking and 8km for kayaking.

A one-day event takes place in Wyre Forest on 7 Sept, and a two-day challenge will be held on 5–6 Oct in the South Downs. Details: www.questars.co.uk



The bike stage is up to 40km

7 SEPT 2013

Edinburgh Night Ride

Explore the twisting, turning, cobbled streets of Edinburgh and its Georgian crescents avoiding the usual crowds on this 50-mile night ride. By the light of the moon, the route will take in the iconic sights of this beautiful city including the Scott Monument, the hilltop castle and the Royal Mile. It will also take participants past Arthur's Seat, provide nightscapes from the Royal Observatory and take in the Scottish Parliament and Holyrood Palace along the way. Registration for this open charity event, organised by Global Adventure Challenges, is £39 and minimum sponsorship is set at £160. Details: www.globaladventurechallenges.co.uk



The route takes in iconic sites

Will swimmers meet Nessie?



17 AUGUST 2013

Monster Swim 2013

The Monster Swim is an open-water 'wild' swimming challenge in Loch Ness, said to be home to the famous Loch Ness Monster and the biggest lake in Great Britain – it holds more water than all the lakes in Wales and England combined.

Participants can choose from the one-mile Big Yin course or the half-mile Wee Nessie, costing £35 and £25 for entry respectively. This year's official charity is Marie Curie Cancer Care, but there are many others to choose from. Details: www.monsterswim.co.uk

PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ILIAN DENG



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/VITAY PAKSINCHUK

The Organic and Natural Beauty Show takes place at ExCel in June

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

21-22 | SIBEC UK

Venue The Belfry, Wistow, UK

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.mcclaneventsinternational.com

JUNE

2-3 | The Organic and Natural Beauty Show

Venue ExCel, London, UK

Summary

An event dedicated to natural and organic beauty products from around the world, with around 150 exhibitors. Web www.naturalbeautyshow.com

11-13 | AVEX

Venue National Exhibition Centre (NEC), Birmingham, UK

Summary

One of the UK's largest exhibitions for vending and water machines featuring more than 150 exhibitors. New this year is the FM Vending Show – a show within a show for facilities managers. For more information, see p65. Web www.avexshow.co.uk

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

JULY

3 | 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. Web www.ukactive.com

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WHAT WE LIVE FOR

EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT ...

Sweating your assets

How much of your club is earning you money? Are the parts that turn a healthy profit having to subsidise other areas? With health clubs experiencing increased competition from lean online businesses, it's time to stop turning a blind eye to those areas of your facilities that aren't currently pulling their weight.

This situation is exacerbated by the "enormous change" going on in the industry, according to Rob Gregory, owner of Lifetime Health. He points to the polarisation of mature markets into low-cost and premium sectors, and the impact of digital solutions, as putting ever more pressure on club-based operators to make the most of their assets.

With online businesses and out-of-club fitness on the rise, how can facility-based operators respond? How can we get maximum value out of our buildings?

So what does all this mean for anyone running facility-based businesses? Will we start to see smaller clubs, with facilities being pared back? Will swimming pools be deemed too expensive to operate? Will cafés be seen as a luxury? With consumer trends showing that people increasingly don't want to pay for services they don't actually use, has less become more?

Could operators make larger clubs more profitable by sub-letting space

to tenants whose offering complements that of the club, and who could drive additional footfall? Should we find ways of engaging those who are taking fitness into their own hands: for example, offering specialist training for cyclists and triathletes who haven't considered a membership?

And how about those empty areas of the club that are just being used as storerooms or corridors: could a bit of reshaping bring unused spaces to life and turn them into income-generators?

Finally, if we are to remain facility-based, how can we make better use of technology to support that offering, making the club a vital, physical hub of a broader offering that also encompasses out-of-club activities? We ask the experts.

HOW CAN CLUB-BASED OPERATORS MAKE THE MOST OF THEIR ASSETS? EMAIL US: HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM

BAARD WINDINGSTAD

Evo Fitness • CEO

"Evo Fitness clubs are around 420sq m (4,500sq ft), and 85 per cent of the space brings in yield. Too many clubs think they are centre of the universe and provide too many facilities. We believe working out is just one part of life, and that people generally want to be in and out as quickly as possible, so we design clubs accordingly.

Pools and wet areas can be a great selling point, but then people find they don't have time to use them and start to see their membership as a waste of money. Our selling point to members is that they don't pay for expensive facilities they won't use.

Technology is part of this concept and is the heart, the brain and the soul of what we do. It helps us offer a high quality service but with minimal administration costs, leading to steady membership with a higher yield. For example, we track members' activity outside the gym and aggregate all their exercise data; they don't want to leave as they would lose this data. Members can also manage joining and leaving online, not only lowering admin costs but also removing a major barrier to joining in the first place.

Some clubs are too big today. I think focused, high quality services at favourable prices are the future. Bringing down the size, maintain quality and focus your business. This is the 'Ego' age: customers only want to pay for what they use themselves."



DENNIS PELLIKAN

Pellikaan • Co-owner and company director

"I believe there's still scope for large-format facilities. We run clubs of around 5,000–6,000sq m and like to offer variety. We believe in a total concept aimed at families and are looking to

become a one-stop shop – a place people can come for social, sports and medical services (see *HCM* April, p32).

However, we do need to get as high a yield as possible and have chosen to do this by sub-letting to other businesses. We can then promote these offerings as part of our overall brand. This works for us in two ways: it means we can create a higher yield for the space, and it means we can offer additional services to our members, all run by experts in their field.

One partnership that's working very well for us is with an after-school childcare provider. This is a very competitive market in Holland, but our partner, Kinderstad, has found that the use of our sports facilities has given them a USP. For us, it means we have been able to double the number of children's activities on offer, which is of great benefit to our members.

Other ways of getting maximum yield from the building is by cutting down the outgoings. With big buildings, we have high energy costs, but by working with a German consultancy we've managed to cut our energy bills by 15–20 per cent."





Club Pellikaan: Leasing space to a childcare provider drives revenue and broadens the clubs' offering

ROB GREGORY

Lifetime Health • Owner

"In order for club operators to maximise yield from their bricks and mortar assets, it's important to understand the utilisation of different areas of the club: whether there's unused capacity and where capacity is limited by bottlenecks. But it's difficult to translate this understanding into a hard metric, such as revenue per square foot generated in different areas of the club.

Two ways of increasing yield that I particularly like are offering casual usage on a 'per visit' basis (it's simple to do and a source of new membership) and virtual classes. Another under-utilised strategy is to allow members to charge purchases to an account that's settled at the end of the month – I've rarely heard of an example where this hasn't increased revenue. Use of technology is a component of all three options.

But the focus on the physical building is a limiting paradigm. Clubs must make better use of all their assets: staff, brand, content, members, IT infrastructure, digital capabilities, partnerships, competencies in service delivery. Operators also need to be more focused on the online opportunity.

No-one can be complacent, but there will always be a place for larger clubs, particularly where they offer more breadth of facilities and services."



SEAN TURNER

Holmes Place • Chief digital officer

"Traditional multi-club models are being challenged by the polarisation of the market, digital health and the emergence of high-quality niche concepts. The 'one size fits all' approach is shifting to an increasingly personalised, customer-centric focus involving a more engaging member experience – a shift that's necessary for large clubs to remain successful, as a positive member experience constitutes a valuable USP.

Large clubs with dedicated floorspace are evolving their gym-space allocation to favour open areas for group training and PT over traditional strength and cardio zones, boosting customer engagement and product yield. A trend toward the merging of the healthcare and fitness industries may also create lucrative profit-share opportunities and added-value client packages as space is converted and dedicated to health and medical services.

Technology has emerged as a major element in enhancing the member experience: successful premium operators have used such tools to add value inside and outside the club, while budget operators leverage technology to support their highly efficient, low-cost, value operations. Technology needs to enhance the member experience – if the technology is not adding value for the member, don't do it."



STEVE PHILPOTT & DAVID COWANS

By acquiring DC Leisure in December 2012, housing giant Places for People became a new player in the leisure arena. Julie Cramer talks to the heads of both companies

The health and fitness industry has seen its fair share of mergers and acquisitions over the years. The majority of those deals have been between fitness groups, or between fitness operators and larger leisure plc's eyeing a more diverse portfolio – but one recent business deal appears to mark a new departure for the sector.

Leisure management company DC Leisure, which operates leisure facilities for almost 30 local authorities across the country, was taken over by housing giant Places for People in December 2012, for an undisclosed sum.

As one of the largest property management, development and regeneration companies in the UK, Places for People – a not-for-dividend organisation with over £3bn in assets – currently owns or manages over 80,000 homes in 230 local authorities (see briefing, p32).

It's believed to be the first time – in the UK at least – that a housing provider has taken over a leisure company. However, given the way the market is moving, with fitness facilities reaching out from their sealed boxes and into the local community, perhaps it's a sign of things to come.

Adding value

The chief executive of DC Leisure, Steve Philpott, and his new boss David Cowans, chief executive of Places for People (PP), certainly see it as a mutually beneficial deal.

"Places for People is an owner that understands local government and community development – and that's essentially what we're about too," says Philpott. "However, it had no leisure provision and no understanding of leisure, and that's what's exciting both for them and us. They've taken us over to deliver that for them and to expand, which is a very positive situation for everyone in the organisation."

Meanwhile Cowans sees the deal as an opportunity to enhance and add value to the PFP portfolio, which he says is both "socially and commercially" driven. He explains: "We're a place-making business. Whether we're involved in creating a new community or regenerating an existing neighbourhood, our focus is on making places work. We have a long-term interest in adding value to places and providing people with facilities such as new schools, shops, leisure and job opportunities.

"For example, we established a chain of nurseries alongside some of our

housing developments. It wasn't that we particularly wanted to go into the nursery business, but we'd listened to what people were telling us they wanted. More and more, it's about the life experience of a place – a sense of community, feeling safe, family facilities and so on."

At this stage, says Philpott, it's hard to be specific about how joint projects might look, as this will depend not only on the objectives of the two companies but also the requirements of the local council – how the development sits within its property and asset portfolio. "However, it does make financial sense to build more than one type of facility in a location," he says. "DC Leisure has already developed sites such as Maltby, which includes a GP surgery, chemist, meeting spaces and council offices, while PFP offers facilities such as adult social care at some of its sites.

"Combining leisure facilities with housing makes good sense, and on future projects we'll be able to work together from the outset to deliver the best possible facilities."

Bigger pond

It may be natural to assume that the bigger organisation approached the

Meet the CEOs

Steve Philpott (left of picture) is no stranger to acquisitions. In the 1990s, he was marketing director for Whitbread, where he was charged with looking into the broader leisure market. It was Philpott who persuaded Whitbread to buy David Lloyd Leisure. He led the acquisition of DLL in 1995, running the health and fitness operation for five years before joining DC Leisure as chief executive

in 2003 as part of a management buyout from the original owners.

He also created énergie Global Fitness Management with Jan Spaticchia (Philpott is a shareholder).

David Cowans has solid experience in the housing and community sector, having been housing director and also director of public affairs for Birmingham City Council before joining Places for People in 1997.





Community activities complement many of PfP's housing developments

smaller one, but in fact, says Philpott, the deal came about because DC Leisure was actively looking for a company to take it over. "We were looking for the right kind of buyer and approached PfP. When we started to talk to them about it, they absolutely understood the fit and were extremely excited about what we could do together," he says.

"For PfP, it's about introducing more activities into its developments to improve the community. Its focus is on developing inspirational places in which people can live and spend their time. We spoke to them about the impact of leisure on a community, with the leisure centre as a real hub, and they realised the value this could bring to their developments."

So are there big changes afoot at DC Leisure? According to Philpott, yes and no. It may be some time before we see leisure integrated into PfP developments – for now, joint projects with PfP will amount to "perhaps a couple of gyms a year" – but going forward there will certainly be scope for new ventures. DC Leisure is keen to develop a



Places for People: The Wolverton Park development in Milton Keynes

community budget club concept, for example – "a smaller-scale offering that can work financially thanks to the new partnership," says Philpott. PfP's backing will also mean access to additional capital that will allow DC Leisure to explore other new opportunities, and there is likely to be a rebrand.

However, says Philpott: "We're very comfortable with what we offer. Although we're constantly innovating, we don't need to change what we do to

deliver the expansion of the business. Our fitness business is performing well, with like-for-like sales up 4 per cent in the last 11 months. Swimming has been particularly strong, up 7 per cent."

He continues: "In terms of our organisation and the way we're structured, as well as everyone's individual roles, it's pretty much business as usual." Indeed, the only visible changes following the acquisition have been the replacement of two of



Leisure will now join PIP's mix of housing, schools, surgeries and social care

Places for People – snapshot

Property management and development group Places for People (PFP) started life as a housing association in 1965 and is now one of the UK's largest property groups. It works in 230 local authorities, owning or managing 82,000 properties.

While it still has a housing association in the group, the organisation now builds and runs large-scale developments in areas of need, involving the regeneration of existing sites and the building of new ones. Developments are usually a mix of commercial and social housing – some offered on affordable rents – alongside other key facilities such as retail, social care, new infrastructure and new schools. With the acquisition of DC Leisure, it will now introduce leisure into its projects.

The watchword at PFP is “creating aspirational homes and inspirational places”. The environment is a key focus within

this: PFP invests millions into the research and development of low carbon technologies for both its new and existing homes each year, and in 2010 it became one of the few organisations in its sector to be awarded ISO14001. The creation of green spaces for all residents has also been a key priority: last year PFP completed a £15.6m project to turn more than 80 acres of redundant land into 84 new green community spaces.

But its achievements extend well beyond bricks and mortar. The group is a strong proponent of young people, for example, offering a variety of support schemes across some of the 600 neighbourhoods it manages. It has helped thousands of youngsters develop their skills and confidence by accessing training, education and employment opportunities in the past year.

- ▶ DC Leisure's non-executive board members – a part-time chair and a representative of the company's previous owners – with the PFP group chief executive Cowans and group chair Chris Philpotts.

The main change is, and will be, the significant growth opportunities that come from DC Leisure's new status as a subsidiary of PFP. Philpott explains: “Because we're now owned by a not-for-dividend organisation, with no shareholders, it means we will be competing for contracts on a level playing field with the leisure trusts.

“Not being able to do that was, without doubt, a serious handicap to our growth over the last four to

five years – we were operating with a significant tax disadvantage. It meant we were treading water, remaining static in terms of the number of councils we worked with and the number of sites we managed.

“With immediate effect we can be much more proactive, going out and bidding for more contracts.” Indeed, DC Leisure is already expanding its business development department, bringing in the required capacity to cope with the expected new flurry of tenders (see p20).

Says Cowans: “We're very keen to see DC Leisure thrive and succeed as it bids for contracts, and it now has the strength of the whole group behind it.”

Health agenda

DC Leisure's other immediate focus is on further developing its healthy living proposition. “We've already been delivering this through physical activity, nutrition and so on – our Gugafit programme for kids is a great example,” says Philpott (see briefing, p34). “Now, working with PFP, we can extend that offering into the community – into the places people live.

“Today's focus on healthy living has put the spotlight on housing conditions as much as on leisure. It's about creating a whole 'place' – from housing to adult social care, leisure and outdoor spaces to childcare – where people can live better, healthier lives.” ▶



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MATRIX



DC Leisure offers award-winning swim programmes

DC Leisure – snapshot

DC Leisure currently manages 95 leisure facilities for almost 30 local authorities, handling 25 million leisure visits a year. It has built 11 new facilities in the past six years, with £110m of investment through public-private partnerships and the Private Finance Initiative.

It offers a range of programming designed to create community engagement, social interaction and healthy lifestyles, and has made particular strides in getting more people involved in swimming. In 2011, its Swim4Health

programme won the first Spark of Innovation Award in the FIA (now rebranded ukactive) FLAME Awards – a programme that brought fitness for adults into the pool.

Expanding its offering in the area of healthy living is a key priority. It has successfully trialled the GugaFit (Get Up Get Active) programme for children and families, which has now been rolled out in most of its centres. For a small monthly fee, families record their eating and activity habits on a website and earn awards when weekly targets are met.

► And things are, as Philpott says, moving fast in this area, not only within the realm of the DC Leisure-PfP deal but across the UK as a whole. While both companies are well aware they're not going to change the housing and leisure development landscape overnight, the acquisition did come just ahead of rather auspicious times. The beginning of April 2013 saw the official launch of the new Health and Wellbeing Boards (see *HCM* April 13, p26 and p30) – a move that sees local authorities taking charge of NHS funds and directly delivering healthcare initiatives in the community. With no fixed rules, each board will develop its own methods of operation and delivery – making it a blank canvas for companies like DC Leisure and PfP to play their part in community wellbeing in the future.

Philpott says it's a major change and a major challenge – not least because, as it works with almost 30 councils, DC Leisure now has almost the same number of H&W boards with which it must forge a relationship. He feels it's a challenge the newly reinforced DC Leisure is well equipped to take on, and the company is already well ahead of

the game, creating a dedicated liaison role four years ago, with Susan Rossetto – previously in a public health role at Weight Watchers – currently in the post.

DC Leisure also has plenty of experience already in community-focused initiatives. "We're not just about sport and physical activity," says Philpott. "We already do a lot of work around community and cohesion – keeping kids active and off the streets, for example, which has a crime prevention element. Any leisure offering is an important part of community health and wellbeing, happiness and social cohesion."

He continues: "What's happening with healthy living is really exciting, and the leisure industry is increasingly being seen as a legitimate part of the public health and sickness prevention programme. We're now need to convince people that the money is well spent. Can we prove to them that a £1,000 investment in us is better than £1,000 invested in something else that might also have a health outcome?"

Building change

For PfP, all this represents new ground, but the organisation seems receptive to

new ideas and paths. "We're always looking for the next idea, the next thing to add value to what we do. We can learn as much from the bad examples as the good," says Cowans. "For example, the way US home-owner associations run leisure facilities in their communities. Is that a good idea? Yes. Would it work in the UK? I don't know. But these things are always worth exploring."

"Now we have DC Leisure, we have the expertise to look at possibilities that we haven't touched on before now."

Future plans are very much pre-drawing board, with neither side being able to go into specifics about how the housing/leisure mix might develop, but it's clear the union will be even stronger than the sum of its parts. "Every individual part of the group is strong in its own right, and when you bring all these strands together you have something really unique," says Cowans.

For DC Leisure, it's business as usual, although going forward that business looks set to expand and operate on a grander scale. Philpott says: "We can't change things overnight in terms of housing and leisure coming together, but the future has enormous possibilities." ●

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A GAME OF TWO HALVES

“We see The Second Half

Centre as a 21st century solution to the 21st century problem of an ageing population,” says its founder and chair Jill Shaw Ruddock, outlining its goal of improving the quality of people’s older years for the benefit of both individuals and society. “This isn’t a political issue – it’s cross-party politics. With population trends as they are, and the impact on society and the NHS, sustainable solutions have to be found. “It’s all about changing the healthcare model to focus on proactive, preventative care – we can’t afford to have an NHS that doesn’t do this.”

Five a Day

Although understated when you first arrive, located down a corridor within the attractive old buildings of the NHS St Charles Centre for Health and Wellbeing in west London, as with so many of these projects it’s the attitude rather than the bricks and mortar that counts. And at The Second Half Centre, there’s a positive, ‘can-do’ attitude that’s driven from the top by its founder. “Our target audience deserves respect,” explains the receptionist while I wait to meet Shaw Ruddock. “We don’t want to be like a community centre. We run The Second Half Centre like a business – bright, professional and to the highest standards.”

The 316sq m (3,400sq ft) centre is bright, cosy and welcoming, with lots of natural light and a vibrant green and purple colour scheme. Along a short hallway from reception is a bookshelf-lined welcome area – the lending library – with a kitchen/café beyond, a quiet zone, a handful of rooms in

Kate Cracknell pays a visit to the Second Half Centre in London, UK, and speaks to its founder about her unique approach to successful ageing



Jill Shaw Ruddock (third from left) at the opening of the centre

PHOTO: RICHARD COLINGS / NEWS FEATURES

which classes are held, and a larger studio at the end that can be used for anything from group exercise to art classes. The centre also has the use of a large allotment area in a courtyard overlooked by the studio.

Meanwhile posters at the entrance introduce The Second Half philosophy. “This is what old looks like,” says one – illustrated by photos of Judi Dench, Maggie Smith, George Clooney, Nelson Mandela, Helen Mirren, Oprah Winfrey, Hillary Clinton... The Second Half Centre, it continues, is a place to discover the best half of your life.

So how does the centre go about helping people achieve this? Shaw Ruddock explains the background to the project: “I wrote a book, *The Second Half of Your Life*, which was published in February 2011 and which outlined my philosophy on ageing. That philosophy is based on what I call ‘Five a Day’ – the five things you have to do every day to ensure you age successfully.

“Firstly you need to have a passion. You also need a purpose greater than yourself. You need to exercise. You need to eat well, with good nutrition. And you need to stay connected to family and friends, because isolation changes your whole brain structure.

Isolation is what makes people ill, and it’s the greatest problem facing older people these days.”

Indeed, SAGA estimates that more than 60 per cent of people over the age of 70 experience intense loneliness; they are more prone to a range of illnesses, from poor mental health to heart disease, as a result. “Everyone suffers from social isolation at some point in their life, whether that’s down to the whims of popularity at school or after having your first child

and trying to adapt,” says Shaw Ruddock. “But I’ve seen what it does to older people and I wanted to do something about it. It’s a very widespread problem, but I don’t believe it’s hard to fix.”

Tackling isolation

Having written her book, Shaw Ruddock then set up a charity – The Second Half of Your Life Foundation, approved by the Charities Commission in May 2011 – to bring Five a Day to life. The next step was to find a venue in which her positive ageing philosophy could be brought to the public.

She continues: “In repositioning itself from a hospital to a centre for health and wellbeing, St Charles wanted to become a hub of the neighbourhood – somewhere people would go when they were well, not just when they were ill. But it didn’t really know how to go about this – how to overcome preconceptions and bring new people in to see what was on offer.

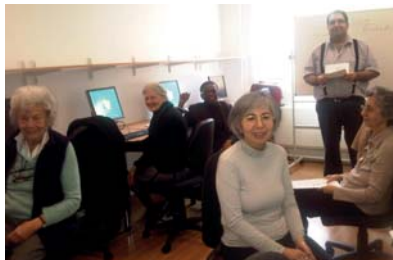
“It had some under-performing space which we agreed to rent from them in May 2012, and North West London PCT funded the renovation. On an ongoing basis, however, our funding comes primarily through trusts, foundations and mostly individual philanthropy.” ▶



From mosaics to cupcake making, the centre offers a broad range of programming to appeal to today's over-50s



Middle row: Cooking classes cover many international cuisines, while the exercise timetable is very diverse
Bottom photo: Computer classes cost as little as £2



"We don't want to be like a community centre. We run our centre like a business – bright, professional and to the highest standards"

"This age group is more, not less, open to change – they're not set in their ways and they want to try new things"

Second Half Centre members enjoy a trip to the theatre



► The centre opened on 29 October 2012 with a highly affordable offering courtesy of these funding streams. Membership is free until 1 June 2013, after which there will be a cost of just £20 a year for those who can afford to pay, or £10 for those on a bursary. Classes cost extra, but typically range from £2–5 a session. This is key, explains Shaw Ruddock, as North Kensington – where the centre is located – has high levels of social deprivation. Six out of 10 pensioners in the area also live alone.

"But isolation can happen to anyone," says Shaw Ruddock. "My own parents were very isolated. It just creeps up on you and happens to people you wouldn't expect. It's not a class issue – it doesn't discriminate. So we aren't only targeting one section of the community: our centre is for everyone, from all social backgrounds. And I think the fact that we haven't imposed class barriers by only targeting the less well-off – that we've aimed for a high quality offering that will appeal to all – means we're doing it better than anyone."

Creating a community

The Second Half Centre currently provides over 50 hours of activity a week, from IT classes to life coaching, theatre visits to cookery courses, art classes to gardening, group exercise to 'brain fitness' – current affairs sessions, for example – and visual history of art to history of literature.

"We use only the very best teachers," says Shaw Ruddock. "We have head chefs from top London restaurants teaching our international cooking courses, for example, and the head gardener from Kensington Roof Gardens comes in to run the sessions in the allotment."

"Around 30 per cent of our teachers are volunteers – we're lucky to have so many people who want to give back and share their expertise – and the rest we pay. This is how we're different: we pay to get the best. We have to. To

attract people from all socio-economic backgrounds, we need to have the best teachers. The volunteer teachers we have are fantastic and the best in their field; if they didn't volunteer, we would have to pay them. Because that's our model: everything has to be top quality."

The idea isn't simply to give members 'old people' activities to do: it's about ensuring those aged over 50 continue to be challenged and supported in getting the most out of life. "The government tends to think older people can't look after themselves, but in fact they just want to be given an opportunity to do precisely that," says Shaw Ruddock. "This age group is also more, not less, open to change – they're not set in their ways and they want to try new things."

Sessions therefore range from 'retooling for work and life' classes – CV writing, strategic thinking and IT skills for those who want to return to work, for example, or social media classes to help people stay connected – through to confidence and wellbeing workshops. New sessions are also added to the timetable all the time, as relevant volunteers offer their services – from advice on relationships and sex in older age to adult parenting skills.

There's also a strong group exercise schedule offering 13 different classes, including Zumba, salsa, stretch & tone, pilates, yoga, tai chi and 'learn about your body through movement' classes – the latter run by a former member of renowned ballet company Ballet Rambert.

Members can volunteer in the centre and mentor newcomers – there's already a waiting list to do this – which helps foster a real sense of community. "Everyone talks about addressing isolation, but you need to create places that give people something that belongs to them," explains Shaw Ruddock. Adding to this sense of community, members can have a coffee and socialise in the café after classes, while St Charles' own restaurant downstairs has been given a Second Half makeover

and seen custom rise significantly as a result, including the monthly – heavily subsidised – Second Half lunch.

The original target was for 170 members; by March there were already almost 700, with a revised target of 1,000. "But there's no maximum capacity. If we get full, we'll just find space to expand," says Shaw Ruddock unequivocally. Growth has been driven through numerous channels, from GP referral to links with third sector organisations, marketing in local venues such as libraries and cinemas, and word of mouth. There has also been a great deal of media interest.

A national roll-out?

There is also interest in the model at a governmental level: Shaw Ruddock has been in discussions with the Department of Health (DH) for the past 18 months. "What we're trying to do is create a template we can roll out nationally, and which ideally both the Department of Health and the Department for Work and Pensions will embrace," she says.

"There are lots of under-performing properties within the NHS, and I think there could ultimately be around 30 of these centres across the country, starting with five or six in London to make sure it works perfectly. With our model, running costs would be less than £300,000 a year per centre, while the long-term savings for the NHS would be vast.

"As a charity, I also don't think we should pay rent going forward. We're turning around under-performing space and delivering what the country needs.

"It would be great for society if the roll-out could happen under the banner of the DH – if they could own it and take credit for it – to help drive a wholesale mindshift in society. In fact, we're hoping to create the next Second Half Centre in the next 18 months through the DH. But we do need to make sure the concept isn't watered down. High standards lie at the very heart of our success and must absolutely not be lowered." ●

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The **ON-X** factor that's future-proofing provision

The £24m ON-X Linwood Centre is championing change and placing customer needs first

Changing provision is at the heart of a new multi-million pound leisure investment that will sustain premium offering in Renfrewshire for generations to come.

The £24m ON-X Linwood Sports and Community Centre is the jewel in Renfrewshire Leisure's crown, and its completion marks the conclusion of a £42m investment programme to ensure outstanding leisure provision for the next 25 years. "Leisure in Renfrewshire has gone from strength to strength since we took on the running in 2003," says Joyce McKellar, CEO of Renfrewshire Leisure, who oversees nine wet and dry centres on the council's behalf.

The new centre, which opened its doors on 25 March 2013, offers an extensive range of community facilities including an eight-court multi-purpose sports hall, athletics track, artificial 3G pitch, multi-use/dance studios, state of the art fitness suite, group cycling studio, squash courts and a facility for adults with learning disabilities.

hitting targets

"Our biggest challenge is balancing income generation with the social needs of the community," McKellar explains. "My key driver is to reduce the subsidy

level while remaining financially viable. We've already brought the council subsidy down by 35 per cent."

In 2006, the trust developed its first strategy for the council in a bid to raise participation levels, targeting a 25 per cent increase in user numbers – a figure that has since nearly doubled, to 47 per cent.

Key to successful design and delivery at Linwood was gaining an insight into customer needs and expectations. User

to meet the increasing demands of the modern user. Limited accessibility and facilities for the disabled and partially-abled were also highlighted."

Renfrewshire Leisure once again joined forces with leading manufacturer Craftsman Lockers, with whom they had successfully partnered on three earlier projects to deliver a scale and quality of changing provision fit for a diverse cross-section of potential usage.

Craftsman's longstanding expertise in design and concept shaped the layout and user experience of the changing provision to meet the centre's requirements.

McKellar adds: "The position, location and comprehensive range of lockers designed by Craftsman was crucial to meet the widest cross-section of users, from

The combination of lockers installed were in line with the responses from the customer survey Craftsman implemented to ensure the centre meets customer needs

and non-user surveys proved critical in collecting data and assessing how the centre should match needs with provision.

"The consultation brought out a number of important factors that were used in developing the new facilities, but one of the major areas where there was an tremendous response was on the quality of the changing facilities, particularly among women," says McKellar. "Most respondents felt our previous leisure centres did not provide changing rooms of a sufficient standard

families who require an enormous locker to stow away the belongings of three or four individuals, to the partially-abled who in some cases need wheelchair access. There was also a high demand from those who wanted to store items safely but didn't need to change, so lockers positioned outside our fitness studios were key.

"Craftsman's ability to supply a variety of sizes was unmatched: from lockers for casual users who wish to stow away sports bags containing belongings



This photo: Lockers cater for all needs – from big families to singles. Photos left hand page: The centre is breaking the design and use mould

together with shoes and mobile phones; to those designed for users on their way to and from work and need to hang a suit of clothes, while also storing away sports bag and shoes; down to users who arrive pre-changed ready for their activity and just require convenient lockers to stow away car keys, mobile phones, purses or wallets. We needed the full range."

Gibbs proved pivotal in the design, drawing on his 25 years of experience to help steer the architects. "John knows what works and what doesn't," says McKellar. "He knows how to design a space to accommodate the right numbers of units and to cater for the wide demographic at our centre."

"The architects couldn't understand why we needed such a range of lockers or separate wet and dry areas, so Craftsman's guidance was invaluable in this process. Without that input, we may not have got it right."

In total, 10 separate changing areas have been installed, with two upstairs spaces dedicated solely to gym-goers. All lockers serving the downstairs leisure provision are positioned outside the changing room itself, allowing for greater functionality.

quality look and feel

The right choice of colour and material was also key, and it was Craftsman's design nous which came to the fore once more. "When dealing with wet, dry and outdoor-use facilities, you need

the right materials to ensure they last the course," says McKellar. "Robust hinges and solid construction were essential and Craftsman offered the best, most comprehensive solution."

McKellar also stood firm on the colour pallet for Linwood, wanting to ensure the centre maintains a 'classic' look and feel for customers over the years ahead. "We wanted neutral tones that wouldn't age, focusing on natural shades and wood effect. It's best for longevity and in line with our future-proofing objectives," she explains.

"I fought hard to achieve what I wanted and not bow to pressure to opt for on-trend colours. Functionality over fad was paramount. We once opted for bright orange lockers. They looked great at the time, but now the colour scheme is dated. The colour pallet for Linwood is timeless, so we won't suffer the same problem again."

She adds: "Changing rooms are at the very heart of every facility, providing two opportunities: to impress or depress. If you're not comfortable in the changing rooms, especially when partially clothed, you're prone to feeling vulnerable, with the experience proving less than pleasant. You will not return, as generally people are slow to complain, preferring simply to go elsewhere."

Craftsman delivers bespoke changing solutions for wet and dry changing

rooms for leisure centres throughout the UK, offering a complete range of lockers from:

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MEASURE OF SUCCESS

In the new funding landscape, leisure trusts and operators will increasingly have to monitor and demonstrate social return on investment.

Julie Cramer reports on the progress being made

On 1 April this year, the public health funding structure took a whole new direction with the introduction of the new Clinical Commissioning Groups and Health and Wellbeing Boards (see *HCM* April 13, p26 and p30). Just a few months before that, on 31 January 2013,

the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 came into force, requiring all public bodies to consider how they can improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their local areas through the services they procure. Given the huge benefits that leisure and fitness can bring to the community, it has never

been more important for the industry to measure and monitor its successes and find ways to put a value on them.

While it has always been sound and essential business practice to measure return on investment (ROI), the new funding landscape will require that the social returns are also well articulated. For sport and leisure projects, it's generally accepted that such returns can be anything from improved health, happiness and confidence, to a reduction in crime and greater social inclusion.

Rich Millard, sports development director for DC Leisure – a leisure provider that works with 30 local authorities (see interview, p30) – says:

“As we bid for contracts in the future, all leisure providers will have to be able to demonstrate whether the schemes they are delivering will have a positive impact on public health, the community, and particular groups such as young people.

“In the light of the new public health agenda, we have to get better at articulating what we do, because the benefits in terms of preventative health or social engagement are massive.”

Popular methodology

Each leisure organisation will have its own methods for tracking its progress and expressing social value in general terms, but in recent years a defined methodology has emerged that can actually put a monetary value on such benefits: SROI, or Social Return on Investment (see <http://lei.sr?z=2Alh4>).

This methodology was first recognised in 2009 in the research of Scottish Enterprise and also set out in an HM Treasury paper. To date, very few organisations have produced detailed, accredited reports using this method, but there are workshops available where organisations can learn

◀ **Edinburgh Leisure's various initiatives deliver an SROI of at least £32.5m from an investment of £9m**

The seven principles of SROI

1. Involve stakeholders
2. Understand what changes
3. Value the things that matter
4. Only include what is material
5. Do not over-claim
6. Be transparent
7. Verify the result

SOURCE: The SROI Network (thesroinetwork.org)





The six stages of SROI analysis

1. Establishing scope and identifying key stakeholders
2. Mapping outcomes
3. Evidencing outcomes and giving them a value
4. Establishing impact
5. Calculating the SROI
6. Reporting, using and embedding

SOURCE: The SROI Network (thesroinetwork.org)

the basics of the approach and apply them in their own settings.

The SROI Network – a membership organisation – officially promotes the use and development of SROI methodology around the world, trains consultants who can then coach organisations, and accredits SROI reports. It defines the method as follows: “SROI measures change in ways that are relevant to the people or organisations that experience or contribute to it. It tells the story of how change is being created by measuring social, environmental and economic outcomes, and uses monetary values to represent them. “SROI is about value rather than money. Money is simply a common

unit and as such is a useful and widely accepted way of conveying value.”

Nevertheless, giving social benefits a financial value turns it into a powerful language for health and leisure providers. In April 2010, North Lanarkshire Leisure (NLL) – a charitable organisation that delivers sport and recreation in North Lanarkshire – commissioned consultants Baker Tilly to carry out a social impact evaluation on a proportion of its services. The report findings, which were published in December 2010, showed that NLL was delivering benefits to the community amounting to a value of £41m – four times greater than the level of public funding it received, meaning its SROI ratio was defined as 1:4.

▲ Leisure and fitness can bring huge benefits to a community, but the sector needs to find ways to put a value on this

**“SROI TELLS THE STORY OF HOW
CHANGE IS BEING CREATED BY
MEASURING SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL
AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES”**

NLL chief executive Blane Dodds described the report as “exciting and high impact”, while chair Jim Logue said the results defined the organisation as a “forward-thinking, innovative charity” that had clearly justified its place in the delivery of services to the community.

In June 2012, Edinburgh Leisure made equally eye-catching headlines when it published the findings of its SROI study, also conducted by Baker Tilly. The trust, which manages sport and leisure facilities on behalf of Edinburgh City Council, was found to deliver a return of nearly 3.5 times its funding level – an SROI of at least £32.5m from an investment of around £9m.

The report calculated that healthcare costs saved thanks to



The POD play bus has helped improve the lives of families in 70 communities in North Kesteven, East Midlands

“SOON AFTER THE SROI STUDY WAS PUBLISHED, WE APPLIED TO THE CITY COUNCIL AND GAINED AN EXTRA £600,000 IN FUNDING FOR NEW PROJECTS”

- Edinburgh Leisure's activities totalled £25.5m, while individual projects were also measured. For example, the Healthy Active Minds programme for adults with mild to moderate depression was found to deliver benefits worth over £2m a year.

Clearer direction

Edinburgh Leisure's chief executive John Comiskey says the catalyst for the report came from “a bit of soul-searching from within the organisation” in the face of ever-biting funding cuts. “We needed to be clearer about what we were doing and how we measured the difference we made in terms of getting more people more active,” he adds.

The study – which took around 10 months to complete – focused on seven key business areas that could be easily measured, such as its facilities' sports pitch use, adult swimming programmes and youth projects. The completed findings represented an in-depth look at around 65 per cent of the trust's business.

Comiskey says the impact of the report has been massive. Not only did it give Edinburgh Leisure clarity as an organisation, enabling it to identify and prioritise its efforts and resources, but it also helped motivate staff who could clearly see the results of their hard work. Perhaps above all, it strengthened the trust's business case for further funding in the eyes of the city council.

Comiskey explains: “It really made us think in a different way. Soon after

the study was published, we applied to Edinburgh City Council and gained £600,000 in additional funding for new projects. It gave us a strong selling point at a time when it was getting harder than ever to justify spending.”

The study has also helped Edinburgh Leisure focus attention on social inclusion projects: while projects in areas of deprivation often require a different and more costly delivery, and perhaps reach a limited number of people, they deliver a much higher SROI score when compared to a regular programme, according to Comiskey.

Impacts and outcomes

Edinburgh Leisure and NLL are still very much in a minority of leisure organisations that have calculated SROI data in this way. Both studies were very wide ranging, involving a lengthy process using consultants, and therefore represented a significant financial investment (although given the results they achieved, both organisations would no doubt argue that the payback was far greater than the expenditure).

So what about those who don't have the budget to invest in an official report – can any sport and leisure operator start measuring SROI on their own, even if only on a small scale? According to Brian Woodcock, senior associate consultant at leading sports and leisure consultancy Continuum, the answer is yes. Woodcock, who is also a member of the SROI Network, says he has seen

an upturn in interest in SROI, although most leisure organisations are still at the “conversation stage” for now.

“We help local authorities and leisure organisations plan more robustly to measure outcomes and impacts, and we've done a lot of workshops on the topic. SROI is just one of the methodologies, although it can be one of the simplest for organisations to employ themselves,” he says.

According to Woodcock, SROI has been developed and refined to permit a greater understanding of the social benefit and social value generated by everyday projects. For that reason, it doesn't come with the complicated research protocols that other methods do – methods that are therefore costlier, longer-term or needing to be delivered by the obligatory consultant team.

SROI studies can be evaluative, analysing outcomes that have already happened, or they can be predictive, estimating the social value if outcome targets are met. Woodcock says: “There's no official benchmark, but generally an SROI ratio of 1:1 and above is considered very good. So if you apply the methodology for a forecast study and the results come back as 1:1, you would probably want to reconsider putting your plan into action.

“The common denominator for comparison is always currency: if you spend £1, what do you get in return? It's about comparing value in a consistent way – not necessarily putting a value

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Edinburgh Leisure now builds in long-term measurement mechanics, to assess SROI, in all new projects

- judgement on something, but finding a way to describe it and put a value on it."

Another area to consider is how to measure results in the longer term – something the fitness and leisure industry as a whole tends not to do consistently, or consistently well. As Comiskey says: "With our report, there was a lot of scepticism about the fact that we may be able to show results for a 12-week programme, but how can we effectively measure what comes after that?"

As a result, Edinburgh Leisure is doing a follow-up study to its original 2012 report that will be published this autumn. Even more significantly, all new projects started after July 2012 are given built-in, longer-term measurement mechanisms from the outset, so Edinburgh Leisure can now measure SROI without external assistance.

Managing resources

The reality for any leisure organisation is that collecting and monitoring this type of data can be costly and time-consuming, and simply nowhere near as straightforward as measuring ROI.

Victoria Chapman is a youth outreach development manager for leisure management company Leisure Connection, which delivers projects such as the POD play bus to engage youngsters in North Kesteven. According to Chapman: "Some projects make a real difference to people's lives in many ways, from employment, health, wellbeing and mental health to general happiness.

"You can measure people's enjoyment and whether they've learned anything from the experience. However, it would be difficult for one individual to measure the impact on the NHS, for example – if it's made people more active in the short, medium or long term – or whether you've saved the police money by providing a diversionary activity that might have deterred someone from anti-social behaviour or crime. For this reason, you need links with the police and their statistics department, local GP surgeries and health referral programmes, so intelligence can be shared – thereby saving money."

According to Karen Burrell, sales and marketing director at Freedom Leisure – a not-for-profit leisure trust active in Surrey, Sussex and Kent – the industry must quickly learn to adapt to the new environment and find smarter ways to produce the information it needs. "Local authority partners are increasing their requirement for the trusts managing their facilities to measure SROI, but tracking is often done manually," she says. "That's resource-intensive and can be difficult to report. Technology is becoming more important in supporting the measurement of social impact."

To meet this need, Freedom Leisure is investing in a new software package to manage its health referral programmes. "This isn't being done to deliver a direct financial return, but it will provide tools to ensure the right people are being referred, given the support they need to get through the programme, and offered

pathways to continue with activity after the programme has finished," explains Burrell. While participants should benefit from the increased efficiency, Freedom Leisure will be also able to reduce its administration time and costs and use the outcome data to help support future funding bids.

Make yourself heard

The question to ask is: in an increasingly competitive funding landscape, can leisure operators really afford not to be paying attention to SROI?

Woodcock says there's still cynicism among some operators that it's just going to add to their workload. However, he holds a very different view: "The reason we are where we are is because people didn't pick up the funding challenge early enough. We reached the stage where funding had got to a critical point and started being reduced, and now it's almost a reaction mechanism.

"If the industry had acted on this 10 years ago and were able to demonstrate the benefits of X, Y or Z, we may not now be in the position where funding is being removed."

As the funding challenge gets ever more tricky, the operators who have picked up the SROI baton and are running with it should be ready to shout about their results loud and clear. As Burrell says: "Operators and contractors need to make sure their voices are heard – they can only grab a slice of the funding pot if they are visible and active." ●

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Change from WITHIN

In the first part of our new series on behaviour change, Debbie Lawrence looks at helping people build motivation, and whether we actually need to see the individual – rather than the coach – as the expert

At some point in life, most people change something, whether that's career, relationships or lifestyle habits, for example. The determining factors for successfully carrying out that change are likely to include:

- Their motivation and readiness – how much they want it
- Their perception of the difficulty – if they think they can handle the change
- Their resources and energy – emotional, mental, physical
- The available help and the extent to which this assistance is person-centred

Health clubs and personal trainers are often consulted by people who want help and support in making lifestyle changes to improve their health and

fitness. But how helpful is the support generally provided by clubs, and does it respect the barriers people face?

Barriers

When the desire to change arises, an individual will weigh up the benefits and sacrifices. Their inner processing may include: 'Why should I?', 'How much do I want this?', 'What's in this for me?' Feelings of fear or excitement may also arise, and the extent to which these feelings are perceived as manageable will be a key motivational factor.

These intrinsic decision-making processes and feelings continue throughout the process of change. People will be continually reminding themselves of the extent to which they can, can't, want or don't want change. On the one hand they see benefits: 'That would be wonderful'. On the other hand are fears: 'Can I handle this?' The power given to these feelings may determine their choice: to stay in their comfort zone or move forward.

Expert as expert

Health and fitness professionals have expertise in their field, and knowledge provides the know-how to get things achieved. This is of course helpful. However, if well-meaning advice is delivered as warnings – 'find time to exercise or find time for illness' – or in an expert-directed or controlled way – 'do this, don't do that' – this may evoke resistance from your members. It may also trigger feelings of blame, shame and helplessness, which reinforce any negative beliefs the person holds about their worth: 'I'm not good enough', 'no-one can help me'. The more 'not OK' the person feels, the greater will be their need to resist help and defend their self-concept and behaviours, lowering their motivation.

Experts who move conversation with the client too quickly towards the 'how can I?' rather than exploring the 'why should I?' are not actually being helpful. 'How' conversations place the focus on change; 'why' conversations place the focus on motivation. The expert's enthusiasm (external motivation) may fire the person up in the short term, but this will often burn out quickly. What's

If motivation gets you started, does habit keep you going? People develop habits because they have a high capacity to learn. Some reports suggest it takes just 21-28 days for new habits to become automatic; others suggest it can take anything up to around 254 days

The individual is always their own best expert, knowing why they choose certain behaviours



The role of the coach is to facilitate motivational dialogue by listening to the client with empathy and acceptance

needed is conversation that will ignite and maintain the client's own fire – their intrinsic motivation.

Person as expert

The person is always their own best expert. At some level, conscious or unconscious, they know why they choose certain behaviours. They live with their inner voice(s) that tell them why they can, can't, should, shouldn't act in a certain way. This inner dialogue concept is acknowledged in many psychological theoretical orientations, motivational interviewing, Gestalt, Transactional Analysis and so on.

If the aim is for positive change and self-care, these voices need to be heard, accepted and understood. Empathic listening from the helper supports this. When the person can openly discuss what stops them, and their reasons for wanting change, without feeling judged, they become more empowered. They start to learn to become more self-accepting and begin to understand themselves: their barriers, defences, emotions and motivators. With this acceptance and understanding, they can be their own 'best friend' and make their best decisions.

The helper's role is to facilitate this motivational dialogue by coaxing and encouraging the person to speak. The helper listens with empathy, positive regard, acceptance and a

curiosity to understand the person. They hold the space when internal discord, resistance and dissonance arise, without needing to 'fix it' or rescue the situation. Working in this way builds autonomy in the person being coached – it allows them the freedom to make their own decisions in their own time.

This type of helping relationship requires an attitude of trust and belief in the person being coached – something many 'experts' struggle with, especially when some behaviours they are witnessing are destructive to health. However, Carl Rogers, the father of person-centred working, believed a person only needed to experience these conditions once in a lifetime to build the resources they need.

The individual may fall, relapse and make mistakes, but when they are supported without criticism, judgement, berating or a need to fix things, they learn for themselves – all of which builds self-acceptance and strengthens the inner resources needed to maintain long-term motivation.

"Every human being has two sets of forces inside. One force clings to safety and defensiveness out of fear, tending to regress backward, hanging onto the past, afraid to grow, to take chances, to jeopardise what he already has, afraid of independence, freedom, separateness. The second force impels him forward toward wholeness and uniqueness of self, toward full functioning of all his capacities, toward confidence in the face of the external world at the same time that he can accept his deepest, real, unconscious Self."

Maslow, in Curzon (2004:115)

Skillful helping

Learning to help skillfully is a lifelong journey. It requires a desire to want to know and help, a desire to read between the lines of what clients say, an awareness and attention to their language, body language and an awareness of one's own responses, gut feelings, sensations and so on. ▶

Autobiography in Five Chapters, by Portia Nelson

I walk down the street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I fall in. I am lost... I am helpless. It isn't my fault. It takes forever to find a way out.

I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I pretend I don't see it. I fall in again. I can't believe I'm in the same place. But it isn't my fault. It still takes a long time to get out.

I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I see it there. I still fall in... it's a habit. My eyes are open. I know where I am. It is my fault. I get out immediately.

I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I walk around it.

I walk down another street.

The skills, knowledge and attitude needed to help in this way require study, experience and reflective practice. Some first steps include:

Learn to listen: Listen more than you speak.

- Helpful speaking involves using reflective statements to reflect back the client's own words and summarise key aspects of their conversation.
- Unhelpful speaking includes giving opinions, passing judgements or sarcastic comments that humiliate, ridicule or shame. These interfere strongly with learning and growth.

Release control and build independence: Do we really know what's right for someone else? Facilitate participative working, give the person some control, encourage their independence and provide opportunities for them to self-assess, evaluate and build self-reliance. Open questions can help this process – eg 'Why do you believe you're thinking about that now?' and 'How important is that for you?' Then listen and let them choose.

- Every choice they make is an opportunity for them to learn something about themselves, building their autonomy and personal power.
- Every choice someone else makes strengthens their reliance and dependence on others, reducing personal power. If the helper gets it wrong, they set the person up for failure and themselves up for blame.

A helpful attitude: Strengthen your attitude for compassion and trust in people. Hold hope for the person, so they can hold this for themselves when they are ready.

Remember it is the person being coached, not you, who has experienced their own life and struggles. Get to know their world as they experience it and let go of the need to judge based on your own views. Help them see the positive things they do and the resources they have/are building, rather than focusing on what they are not doing. This will help the person see themselves less critically.

Self-awareness: Be open to exploring and learning more about your own prejudices. We all make judgements. The more mindful and self-aware we become, the greater will be the potential for empathy for others

Building self-acceptance helps maintain long-term motivation

– and ultimately, one's own self. Many counsellors have supervision to help them explore their blocks that may form barriers to effective working.

Develop your knowledge: Keep learning. There are numerous courses and books that explain psychological theories and behaviour change models. Be eclectic and learn about many approaches.

One step at a time

Learning to work in a person-centred way is about developing a helpful attitude. Accepting and respecting the person, their life journey, experiences, struggles, successes and failures without judgement has the potential to help them see themselves with less judgement.

When the person accepts all aspects of themselves they can listen, learn, self-challenge and choose. They can seek out choices that reflect their movement towards greater self-care; not all at once, but small steps. •

Debbie Lawrence, MA, PG Dip Integrative Counselling, has worked in the fitness industry for the last 30 years, as a practitioner, teacher trainer, consultant and writer for various training providers and awarding organisations. She is a qualified integrative counsellor and the author of 13 books published by Bloomsbury Publishing, including *The Complete Guide to Exercise Referral*, *The Complete Guide to Activity and Mental Health*, and *The Complete Guide to Behaviour Change*. She delivers the Level 4 qualification *Activity for Persons with Mental Health Conditions* and is now working with Active IQ as qualification development manager.

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RESEARCH ROUND-UP

Hunger games

Contrary to popular belief, scientists have found that a workout can actually reduce your appetite. We chew over the matter

After burning calories during a workout, it's only natural that you should feel the need to replenish them by eating a big meal, right? Wrong. Exercise may actually reduce people's motivation to eat food, according to new research by scientists at the Brigham Young University (BYU) in Utah, US.

This is one of the first studies to focus specifically on neurological-derived food motivation after exercise. It was published in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* – the official journal of the American College of Sports Medicine – in October.

Appetising subject

Headed up by BYU professors James LeCheminant and Michael Larson, the study was based on 35 women. Eighteen of the women were of normal weight, with a BMI score of 25 or less, while 17 were clinically obese, with a BMI of 30 or more.

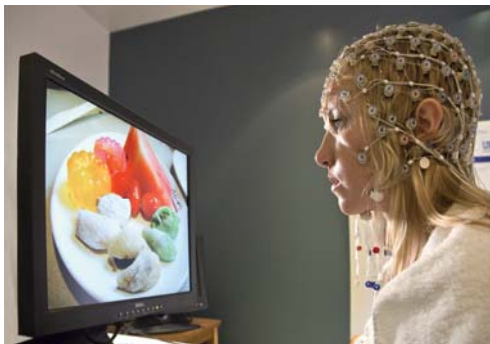
For the experiment, the women took part in 45 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous exercise one morning (at 8.00am) – a walk on a treadmill at a speed of 3.8mph, with no incline.

Straight after the exercise, the women looked at 240 images – 120 of plated food and 120 of flowers (for study control purposes). Electrodes on their heads were used to measure their neural activity and how aroused brain waves were in response to the images.

A week later, on the same day of the week and at the same time, the women were shown the pictures again, but without exercising beforehand. As part of the study, they also kept a physical activity log and food consumption diary on the days the experiments took place.

Food for thought

In the results, it was found that brain arousal in relation to pictures of food



After exercise, the women were surprisingly less stimulated by food images

was significantly lower when the women had been exercising. This finding was true regardless of the women's BMI.

This surprised the scientists for two reasons. Firstly, they expected the women to feel more stimulated by food pictures because of exercise – hence the notion of working up an appetite. And secondly, they expected the obese women to feel more aroused by food in either scenario. LeCheminant says: "We wanted to see if obesity influenced food motivation, but it didn't. However, it was clear that the exercise bout was playing a role in their neural responses to the pictures of food."

Also interesting is the fact that, on the exercise day, the women increased their levels of activity generally (not including the 45-minute walk), but didn't eat any more food than on the non-exercise day to make up for the expended calories. This suggests that burning calories doesn't necessarily lead to calorie consumption.

This backs up findings from a 2011 study published in *Obesity Reviews* which found that vigorous exercise reduced levels of ghrelin – a hormone that increases feelings of hunger – while at the same time increasing levels of PYY, a hormone that reduces the appetite.

Both pieces of research suggest that exercise may play more of a role in weight loss than just the amount of calories it burns. LeCheminant says: "This study provides evidence that exercise not only affects energy output, but it also may affect how people respond to food cues."

The next move will be to investigate for how long exercise may reduce the appetite, and also what effects long-term exercise might have when added into the overall equation. Larson concludes: "The subject of food motivation and weight loss is so complex. There are many things that influence eating, and exercise is just one element."

¹Hanlon, B et al. Neural Response to Pictures of Food after Exercise in Normal-Weight and Obese Women. *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*. October 2012

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Share new member journey details with the members themselves

THE NEW MEMBER JOURNEY

It's well known that the initial four to six weeks of membership are critical to building the exercise habit, and therefore key to member retention – yet so many clubs still get this wrong. Once the sale is made, many think the hard work is over. In fact, it's only just begun. Guy Griffiths reports, in the first of a three-part retention series based on his new book, *Stick Around*

“We sold 100 memberships last month!” Great, how many of them are still visiting? “Who cares? We have to hit 110 this month...”

Health club operators invest so much in recruiting a new member that it's crazy to lose interest once they've signed up – and in principle at least, most operators know there should be an equal focus on retaining members, particularly just after they've joined. In practice, however, clubs focus more and more on sales, particularly in today's economic climate and competitive market.

In any other industry, once a new customer is signed up, the supplier switches to delivery mode and will pull out all the stops to ensure the new customer is delighted with its service. In a new relationship, you're highly attentive in the early days, on your best behaviour and trying your best to please.

But even in clubs where new members are given due attention, the new member journey is the journey in many cases; a month or two after

the member joins, they can fall off the radar without being noticed. To boost retention, and thereby ensure the club survives and thrives, the member journey needs to continue onward. This will be covered in part two of the series, to appear in the next issue of *HCM*.

For now, let's focus on the all-important initial member journey. This should be kept simple, based on three key points: timeframe, measurement – in order to improve, you must measure – and member contact.

Timeframe

Your first decision is: how long will your new member journey last? Ideally this timeframe will apply to the majority of your members. One month is a fairly standard term for members to be considered as new. If you have lots of experienced joiners, it might be shorter, or if most of your new members are new to exercise, the standard length might need to be longer.

Alternatively, if you track the visits, your new journey could last for, say, six visits rather than a period of 30 days. ▶

To track the new member journey, clubs should focus on three key areas: timeframe, measurement and member contact

► Bolder, more systems-savvy operators might even ask members how long they want to be considered a new member. Ultimately, the timeframe needs to be simple enough to measure, while also catering for your typical member.

This period is the high-risk, sensitive, honeymoon phase when you are taking extra care and paying special attention to new members. Help them build an exercise habit, giving them all the encouragement they need to meet that first goal of becoming a regular member rather than a 'fresher'. Once they've cleared that hurdle, they will be moving towards their long-term goal at pace.

It's a good idea to share the new member journey details with members, so they know they are getting a little extra at the start of their membership with a view to achieving 'sign-off' as a full member. This assumes your ongoing journey is watertight, of course.

Sharing the journey time with the member is also good practice: they will know what to expect, and it will hopefully help you to deliver.

Some members – those with less experience, for example – may want or need to run through the new member journey twice. This is fine as long as it's only for a few members, otherwise consider extending your timeframe.

Measurement

Now you know the timeframe, define success. When a member reaches the end of the initial journey, must they have attended the gym recently, and if so, how recently? A simpler measure may be for the new member to achieve a minimum number of visits in the initial period. Depending on your system's sophistication, this number could be bespoke for each member.

The movement of time adds a little complexity. For example, January joiners – since they could have joined at any point up to 31 January – will not all have had the chance to have completed their first six visits until the end of February. So while you can report on January sales on 1 February, if you're running to a monthly timeframe you will not be able to report

on new member journey completion for January joiners until 1 March.

Now you know how long your new members stay 'new', you need to identify them. There are many ways of doing this with retention systems, new member reports or more basic methods.

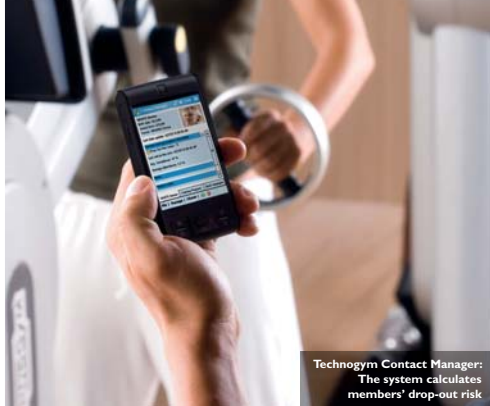
FitLinxx's console has a different colour screen depending on the Attention Level Indicator (ALI) of the member. This can be configured to recognise new members – different colours denote how new they are and how much attention they therefore need.

The Technogym Contact Manager 'Who's In' screen can be sorted by 'joined from' date, or new members identified with the grey traffic light, as members don't build up a DropOutRisk until their visit patterns develop.

Alternatively, you could report from your front-of-house system, and print a list of freshers each week for staff to study. If you have simpler systems, a new member wristband or bib is a really easy way to spot people who you should be touching base with on every visit.

Make your staff responsible for getting members to complete the new member journey by setting targets. This could be for the sales team, gym instructors, or both. As a KPI, this is just as important as a sales target. Selling memberships without checking subsequent usage is

"CLUBS THAT START TO MEASURE FIRST MONTH VISITS OR NEW MEMBER JOURNEY COMPLETIONS ARE OFTEN SHOCKED BY THE INITIAL FINDINGS"



Technogym Contact Manager:
The system calculates members' drop-out risk



FitLinx screens change colour depending on a member's Attention Level Indicator

like collecting leads or prospects and then doing nothing with them. And unless a new member is using the club, they're never going to refer a friend.

Interaction

You should interact with every member on every visit while they are on their new member journey. A quick check will tell you if they are on their way to completing the new member journey, or if there's anything they need help with. Journey stages like the induction, welcome, getting started, orientation, discovery session and review are all important appointments, but a brief contact with every new member on every visit will build rapport, confidence and a great relationship.

And what about the new members who are not visiting? Only a few weeks ago, they were keen enough to join up, and you have invested between £30 and £100 to recruit them. Phone calls, texts, emails or letters are small relative costs to try to save the relationship. You need to throw everything you have at a lapsed new member; the least you should accept is some feedback or a referral.

If you want to stick your neck out, offer a leaver's bonus: if they don't make the required visits in the first month, offer them a bonus or refund to leave. If they stay, start the clock again, and help them hit the target this time.

Journey completion

"We sold 110 memberships last month!" High Five! "But the real result is that all 110 members made at least four visits by the end of their first month" Champagne!!

Clubs that start to measure first month visits or new member journey completions are often shocked by the initial findings: it's staggering how many members stop visiting in month one. Shift your focus on sales forward one month, and look at how last month's new members performed in terms of visits. If you can improve new member journey completion, you'll have a huge impact on overall member retention.

Suppose, for example, you run a club charging £30 a month, signing up 100 new members a month. If you increase new member journey completion from 70 to 80 per cent, you will make an additional £19,800 over the year. ●

Guy Griffiths works for GG Fit, an independent consultancy that helps clubs improve member retention by working with staff, systems and processes. His new book, *Stick Around*, is available from all good bookshops and online retailers.
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Think out of the

BOX

Combat sports are great for the physique and growing in popularity, but do they have a place in the mainstream? Kath Hudson reports



The launch of Boxing Yoga at Total Boxer is said to be an industry first

For a 30-something mum looking to get back into shape after a couple of babies, the idea of a boxing class might seem a bit intimidating – especially as google searches throw up black-bordered websites with aggressive-looking fighters. However, women like these are among those fuelling the trend towards boxing as a mainstream fitness activity: they have found the core work has relieved their bad backs, while the training as a whole has proved an excellent stress-buster that makes them feel empowered. The 'badass' attitude of combat sports isn't, it seems, as offputting as one might think.

MMA is now reportedly the fastest-growing sport in the world, while the Brits' Olympic boxing success has piqued the interest of many. Meanwhile, over the past year, personal trainers who specialise in combat training and who either fight or train fighters themselves say they've been inundated with work.

According to the experts, it's the dramatic results that can be achieved with combat training that's the biggest selling point. As a result, all the operators we spoke to reported social media and word of mouth, based on excellent results, as the main drivers of their business. Clearly, once people try combat sports, they get hooked on the fun, effective workouts. Sessions are also very much in keeping with current trends: combat classes tend to be offered as small group training, and the workouts tend to be short and sharp.

We speak to a selection of combat-focused clubs across the UK to understand how they are reaching out to new audiences...

TOTAL BOXER: FEMALE-FRIENDLY

Having recently celebrated its first birthday, north London-based boxing club Total Boxer is launching what it says is an industry first this month: Boxing Yoga.

Through his experience as a boxing coach, club owner Matt Garcia had noticed more people becoming interested in training but not wanting to fight, as well as more women getting involved. He therefore came up with the idea to marry boxing with yoga, working extensively with boxing, martial arts and yoga instructors to integrate the two disciplines into a challenging and effective workout. Comprising flowing, choreographed yoga postures with boxing postures, the class offers a strengthening and stretching workout.

"It encapsulates what we're about: get fit, not hit," says Garcia. "We're taking a holistic approach to boxing." Going forward, Garcia will be offering teacher training sessions and may introduce a grading scheme.



Gymbox: Classes aren't watered down for female members

From the outset, the club was designed to be welcoming to women, from the promotional material featuring a friendly female face to the airy studio flooded with natural light.

Sixty per cent of those registered with the club are women. Nurses and teachers are among the regulars, attracted by the fitness skills classes that include the main components of boxing, but without the risk of getting punched. "People love the rope work, the shadow boxing and hitting pads," says Garcia. "We've stripped out the intimidation and ego."

THE TRAINING SHED: COMMUNITY SPIRIT

The Training Shed in Daventry is a functional training club that strays into other areas including boxing, MMA, boxercise, group cycling, circuits, bootcamps and Olympic weightlifting. An ABA coach is used to deliver the group boxing sessions, which ensures the quality and authenticity of the experience; the club's owner Tom Haynes stresses the importance of providing top-quality instruction when running a combat sports programme.

Getting out into the community has proved the best way of generating interest in the club's offering, leading to recommendations via word-of-mouth and social media. For example, teenagers at a local academy who have fallen out of the school system come in once a week to do a boxing session, in order to learn how to use their energy in a more positive way.

Daventry rugby team has also used boxing to provide its players with training on how to react in pressure situations. "In our boxing sessions, players had to block punches being thrown at them but weren't allowed to

react," says Haynes. "Knowing how to keep calm under pressure can help a team win a game."

The club is supplied by sister company Indigo23, with kit including professional heavy punch bags, mitts, pads, skipping ropes, battling ropes, dumbbells for shadow boxing, kick shields, a speedball platform and a floor-ceiling ball, as well as tyres and hammers for conditioning drills and circuits.

RUNNING A COMBAT SPORTS PROGRAMME – TOP TIPS

1. Coaches are of paramount importance. To offer an authentic experience, make sure they are well qualified and have experience of either fighting or coaching a fighter. If you don't have the expertise in-house, bring in a freelancer and charge for the classes separately.
2. Make it scalable so people see progression. Offer beginner, intermediate and advanced classes.
3. Offer an open day or taster sessions.
4. Ensure people know they are training like fighters, but not being trained to be fighters.
5. If you want to appeal to the female market, use them in the promotional material.
6. If the brand images are very different, combat training can be launched as a sub-brand to your existing business.
7. Work the social media channels.
8. Link up with clubs in the community and offer them combat training sessions.
9. Make the combat area visible, so it creates a buzz.
10. Talk to your members, sell them the benefits and persuade them to have a go.

COMBAT READY: KEEP SOME ATTITUDE

Combat Ready and Brighton Kettlebells are combat training brands developed by boxing trainer Christian Vila, who operates in Brighton. With a reputation for working with fighters, including Oli Thompson, Vila found he was attracting interest from the mainstream for his strength and conditioning workouts.

"People are starting to realise the benefits of boxing training," he says. "They see the athletic build you can get and they want to look that way. Boxing uses the body in a natural way, plus it's primal, good fun and bashing pads is a great stress reliever."

One of Vila's most popular classes is Combat Strength, which includes 20 minutes of pad work and 20 minutes of strength and conditioning. It doesn't involve any contact. Boxing moves are combined with functional training using Jordan equipment such as tyres, sledgehammers, ropes, hammers and pull-up rigs.

"I see this as the future of gyms: moving away from machines and towards functional training, with shorter, more intense workouts," says Vila. "It's fun and it gets results. However, gyms need to be careful to strike a balance between making it appealing and unthreatening and not watering it down too much. There does need to be a bit of grunge and attitude with combat sports."

GYMBOX: CREATE A VIBE

"We've noticed an upsurge in interest in combat sports from women, especially since the Olympics," says David Cooper, operations director at Gymbox. "About 40 per cent of members are female and we don't water the classes down for them. Popularity has grown because combat sports doesn't just offer a cardio or a resistance workout – it encompasses everything: speed, power and endurance. People improve co-ordination and confidence through doing these classes."

Equipment includes Olympic-sized boxing rings, MMA cages and punch bags, plus functional training kit from Escape. Cooper's advice is to make sure the combat area is visible, as it will create a buzz in the club and encourage other members to give it a go.



Working out with punch bags can be a great stress reliever



Many classes at Combat Ready are non-contact activities

Between 70 and 80 per cent of combat classes are non-contact, geared towards exercise, but real boxing and MMA is also on offer. Gymbox helps to build awareness of its concept by running white collar boxing events, and has found social media a great marketing tool.

FIGHT SCIENCE: FEEDER SESSIONS

Nick 'Head Hunter' Chapman set up Fight Science in Aldershot, Hampshire, at the start of 2012. The club is sponsored by Life Fitness, which also provided a range of equipment. Spread over 1,860sq m (20,000sq ft), the club offers boxing, MMA, CrossFit, power lifting and Olympic lifting, with 15 martial arts classes each week. It's also a venue for MMA shows.

"I was so busy as a personal trainer that I had to start employing staff. However, I was spending so much in rent at other clubs that I decided it was more cost-effective to open my own club," says Chapman. "The business has gone crazy, with thousands of people coming through each week."

Chapman says a lot of his following is as a result of his success as a fighter. However, he marketed heavily when he launched, with a £30,000 campaign involving advertising, leaflet drops, guerrilla advertising and social media. Now word-of-mouth effectively does the marketing, while running shows also helps drive awareness of the club.

Acknowledging that the mainstream market might find the club intimidating, he set up separate businesses – branded Powerfit and Crossfit – to get people through the doors and act as feeder sessions.

"Once they realise it's a friendly, ego-free environment they keep coming," he says. "People like the way fighters look and perform and want to emulate that. I believe everyone either loves combat sports or doesn't know about it yet!" ●

Flooring

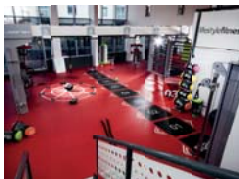


Gerflor installs Taraflex floor for Wigan Warriors

Wigan Warriors RLFC UK recently installed Gerflor's Taraflex indoor sports floor, the Sport M 12mm (P3). The installation covers a range of areas including sprint track, functional zone and boxing area, with the key criterion for the choice of flooring being a surface that would protect the players. The project was very time-sensitive as pre-season training beckoned.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

Gerflor



Lifestyle Fitness unveils 'wow' factor flooring

Lifestyle Fitness and Escape Fitness teamed up to give the operator's new Wembley club flooring the 'wow' factor. Escape and its partner ESC Creative installed BSW rubber flooring for the free weights area and a new seamless PU flooring solution for the functional playground at the new Lifestyle Fitness site, which is near Wembley stadium. The PU flooring is designed to be robust and durable, with many colours on offer.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

Escape

fitness-kit.net

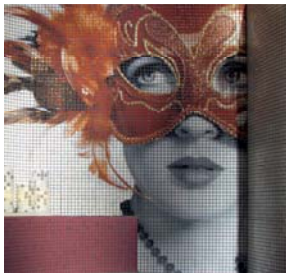
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Designworks: Eye-catching mosaic murals

Designworks, part of Original Style, is offering a bespoke mosaic mural design service. It can replicate any high resolution image as a mosaic mural for floors and walls, as well as in swimming pools. It is also offering the latest Dorset Wolliscroft range of anti-slip floor tiles, including Luna and Multidisc. Luna is a heavy duty product with a soft, textured structure for slip resistance in dry and wet areas of high footfall. The Multidisc is a general purpose tile with a round, raised surface structure for comfort underfoot.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

Designworks



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

Pavigym

Pavigym extends its flooring range with 3.0

Pavigym has launched its 3.0 (ThreePointZero) wall technology for gyms and health clubs. The 3.0 product, for floors and walls, helps members discover a new way to reach their goals. Users follow patterns of lights and symbols on the floor or wall, which provide a unique sequencing of movements. It comes with a variety of programmes that can be selected via a console. The technology also provides assessments of the user's reaction times and fitness based on movement. It can be used individually or in groups for inductions, express workouts or with a personal trainer.

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Out with the old, in with the 'LIKE NEW'

With remanufactured fitness equipment now offering the same performance and warranties as new kit, gym makeovers are so much more affordable. Kath Hudson looks at some recent installations

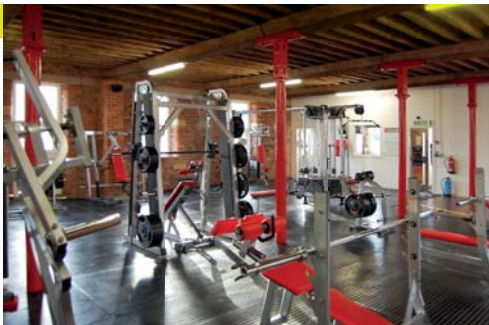
DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

SUPPLIER: PHYSIQUE
CLIENT: NR GYM
INSTALLATION: AUGUST 2012
INVESTMENT: £30,000

Launched by a couple of industry veterans jaded by what they saw as a lack of customer service in health clubs, NR Gym – a privately owned gym in Keighley, Yorkshire, UK – is a great example of a recession start-up company. Overheads are kept as low as possible, the gym is self-financed, and the business responds to trends and customer demands.

Co-owners Rousel Chowdhury and Nick Hindle took the functional training and combat sports route, as they felt this would achieve the best results for members. They opted for remanufactured kit as the most affordable option and turned to Physique Sports, which was able to source plate-loaded Hammer Strength and Hammer MTS, powder-coated in silver and finished with grey and red upholstery in line with the NR Gym brand. All kit came with a three-year warranty. "We're very much a back-to-basics gym," says Chowdhury. "No fads and no gimmicks. We don't need or want a lot of members and we focus on retaining the ones we have."

Already with a waiting list, the club has a strict membership policy whereby people's applications are assessed by a committee made up of both owners and some members. Chowdhury says they don't want intimidating gangs of lads grunting in the corner or hogging the weights. Each month, the club invests in another piece of refurbished kit from Physique. This is also chosen democratically, with a suggestion board and members allowed to vote for the kit they want.



The kit for NR Gym was powder-coated and re-upholstered to fit the brand

ENHANCING WORKOUTS

SUPPLIER: PULSE
CLIENT: WORKINGTON LEISURE CENTRE
INSTALLATION: DECEMBER 2012
INVESTMENT: £125,000

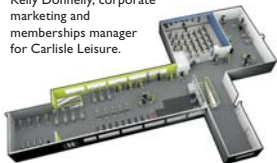
With the fitness suite not meeting the demands of its customer base, and with limited funds available, Workington Leisure Centre – a local authority site operated by Carlisle Leisure on behalf of Allerdale Council in the UK – approached Pulse to come up with a solution that would make better use of the available space and expand the 46-station offering. The intention of the refurbishment was to increase memberships and improve retention.

Pulse came up with the idea of expanding the fitness suite into a corridor, creating a dedicated free weights space in an under-utilised area under the stairs. The new 100-station fitness suite was

equipped with refurbished fitness equipment – a varied mix of CV, resistance and free weights.

Opting for refurbished kit – which was on average four years old "but looked as good as new" – enabled the leisure centre to extend and improve its suite, with better equipment, while staying within budget.

"Following the refurbishment, we've gained an additional 200 members in a two-month period. We're delighted with the results and are confident this will continue to grow as news spreads," says Kelly Donnelly, corporate marketing and memberships manager for Carlisle Leisure.



The fitness suite was expanded and now offers 100 pieces of equipment ▶

COST CONTROL

SUPPLIER: SERVICESPORT
CLIENT: ON THE LIMIT
INSTALLATION: JUNE 2012
INVESTMENT: £60,000

Adam and Kathryn Bell, owners of On The Limit – a health club in Tring, Hertfordshire, UK – already ran a ladies-only gym in the town, but could see a gap in the market for a mixed facility with a focus on personal training. As the existing site was not big enough and the equipment was getting tired, the pair sought a new site and decided to invest in new equipment.

Impressed by the Life Fitness CV equipment used at the existing ladies' club, Adam spoke to a number of companies about both new and remanufactured Life Fitness equipment. Considering the costs of relocating – and given that he was also investing in InStyle bikes, plus resistance stations and free weights – he decided he would get best value from buying remanufactured CV kit.

He chose to work with Servicesport thanks to its use



of only genuine Life Fitness parts and its two-year full warranty – the same as on new kit. "I needed both cardio and strength machines I could trust to last and work to their full potential, but I also had a budget," says Adam.

"The machines I chose for cardio are reconditioned Life Fitness treadmills, cross-trainers, bikes and steppers. You wouldn't know they have gone through any reconditioning. They're in mint condition and top working order."

Servicesport uses only genuine Life Fitness parts when remanufacturing



GROWING MEMBERSHIP

SUPPLIER: TECHNOGYM
CLIENT: LIFESTYLES@HOUGHTON
INSTALLATION: APRIL 2012
INVESTMENT: £20,000

Prior to its refurbishment and rebrand, the lifestyles@houghton centre – managed by Stevenage Leisure Limited (SLL) on behalf of Central Bedfordshire Council in the UK, and previously known as Houghton Leisure Centre

– had one small free weights room and a small studio-sized gym, with 15 stations that were all over 10 years old.

SLL wanted to give the gym an overhaul in a bid to push up memberships and footfall, including a gym extension and new equipment. However, due to a limited budget, it decided not to invest in new strength equipment. Technogym instead put forward the option of using Still Novo equipment – used equipment that has been fully dismantled, rebuilt and certified to provide the same level of performance as a new product. SLL installed 13 pieces of Still Novo

Selection Strength equipment to sit alongside its 32 Technogym Excite+ cardiovascular stations, and has received great feedback from users.

Meanwhile the old gym was converted into a 20-bike group cycling studio, while the former free weights room became a meeting and consultation room. In addition, further areas of the building were taken over and a drama studio and changing/storage area transformed into two gym facilities: a stretch/core area and a matted free weights and functional training area.

Since the refurbishment, the centre has grown its membership from 40 members to more than 1,500 in under a year, as well as building gym usage from under 250 visits a month to nearly 4,000.

"By working in partnership with Technogym on this project, Stevenage Leisure has been able to collaborate with Central Bedfordshire Council and Houghton Regis Town Council to rejuvenate a run-down leisure facility to become a thriving leisure centre," says Kieron Vango, SLL operations director.



The previously rundown centre has a brand new look post-refurbishment

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START-UP ASSISTANCE



CV equipment consisted mainly of the Star Trac Pro series

SUPPLIER: FIT4SALE
CLIENT: MARSHALL FITNESS
INSTALLATION: JANUARY 2013
INVESTMENT: US\$120,000

With this project, Kelly Marshall – owner of Marshall Fitness in Ohio, US – has, in just three months, turned her part-time career as a personal trainer into a viable business to support her family.

By purchasing remanufactured equipment from Fit4Sale, Marshall Fitness saved over 50 per cent, meaning the club could launch without being burdened by too much debt. With its One Stop Shop service, Fit4Sale provided

consultancy to negotiate better leases on the building, as well as operational, marketing and sales consulting.

"We've found that, by providing our clients with many of these support systems, we've taken much of the risk out of trying to open a small business," says Nick Pugh, CEO of Fit4Sale.

The equipment consisted mainly of Star Trac Pro series for the CV and CYBEX VR2 for the strength equipment. Strength and free weight benches were sand-blasted and powder-coated, with platinum silver frames and American Beauty red upholstery for a bright look. "Within three months, we've achieved 200 members – one-third of the way towards our goal of 600 members," says Marshall. ●

By providing clients with support services, we take much of the risk out of opening a small business



Marshall Fitness saved over 50 per cent with remanufactured kit

PEAK performance

St George's Park, England's National Football Centre, also caters for the general public with a series of packages available through its Perform centre. Kirstyn MacRandal reports

It's been eight months since the official opening of St George's Park in Burton-upon-Trent, but the excitement over England's new National Football Centre has hardly died down.

Uniting all of England's national football teams for the first time under one roof, the £105m facility serves as the Football Association's centre of excellence, training not only existing and future England international players, but also new football coaches who will be inculcated with the FA's vision of the future of English football.



But St George's Park doesn't just cater for the needs of England's top footballers. The facility is also home to Perform, a 23,230sq m (250,000sq ft), £1.4m state-of-the-art sports medicine, rehabilitation and performance centre operated by Spire Healthcare. It's one of the most advanced sports performance facilities in the UK – and is accessible to everyone, from high-

profile athletes and amateur teams to corporate groups, schools and the local community.

We talk to Phil Horton, director of Perform, to find out more about the centre's mission and services.

Q What are the objectives of St George's Park?

On one hand, St George's Park aims to provide a permanent home for English football, to improve the quality of the game, develop the professionalism of coaching and refereeing, and to improve the development of footballing talent among England's youth.

On the other hand, St George's Park also aims to be a centre of excellence in sports science and medicine that's open to everyone, offering medical screening, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation for human performance.

Q How did the idea of setting up Perform, a world-class sports performance centre at St George's Park, come about?

Spire Healthcare has a long tradition of providing the highest standards of private healthcare in the UK. Through market research, we began to recognise that there was a need for the provision of sports medicine, rehabilitation and performance, and developed a new sports medicine brand called Perform.

While we were researching Perform, the FA had just begun its search for a

healthcare partner for St George's Park. We were enormously excited by this opportunity, as we instantly recognised it would give us the chance to create a world-class centre of excellence.

In autumn 2011, we were selected by the FA as its partner and immediately began work at St George's Park – alongside other partners such as Technogym, the official fitness equipment supplier – to create this unique, accessible, multi-disciplinary facility that's dedicated to enhancing human performance.

Perform pulls together everything that Spire has learned about sports medicine over the past 30 years. We work with some of the finest sports and exercise physicians in the country, and Perform at St George's Park provides them with the tools to do the job: cutting-edge fitness equipment underpinned by carefully designed protocols that put the patient at the heart of what we do.

Q What's the vision and philosophy behind Perform at St George's Park?

The vision of Perform is to be a world-class, internationally-renowned

centre of excellence for sports and exercise medicine, performance science, injury rehabilitation and also strength and conditioning.

Our mission is to bring together the best people, all dedicated to developing excellence and delivering the highest quality outcomes – helping people achieve performance beyond their expectations, for sport, for life and for work. We have therefore staffed Perform at St George's Park with top-class sports medics and sports scientists to maximise the impact of the state-of-the-art facilities.

Perform is open to all individuals, not just the professional sports world. The general public, as well as corporates, can access the rehabilitation and sports science facilities, whether on a self-pay basis or through private medical insurance. 'Perform for Life' and 'Perform for Work' are health assessment packages available to ensure that individuals and company employees 'know their health numbers'.

Once we have a picture of their health, we can then link this into their personal goals, performance objectives and help them Perform.



Perform offers packages for athletes, corporates, students and individuals

Perform Packages

Perform offers tailored packages to suit the needs of teams and individuals, schools, corporates and sports teams.

Corporate packages include Perform for Life, targeting senior executives (£950 for a four-hour session). This comprises a lifestyle and physical assessment with personal consultation, including bodyguard sleep analysis, fitness testing in the Human Performance Lab, guidance on how to improve lifestyle and physical performance, and annual testing.

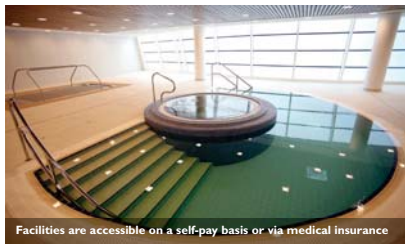
Perform for Work is a two-day residential corporate training workshop combining physical performance analysis and tips with health and leadership seminars. Sessions for junior executives are also available, as bolt-on options in a conference package.

For amateur athletes or individuals, packages include Perform Physiotherapy (£40–£150 for 30–60 minutes), Perform Lifestyle Analysis (£135) and Perform Fitness Analysis (£295).

The Perform Experience for schools costs £39 per student – a half-day sports science talk and demonstration for those studying for A-level PE or sports science at college.



Technogym is the official fitness equipment supplier at the facility



Facilities are accessible on a self-pay basis or via medical insurance

"Perform pulls together everything Spire has learned about sports medicine in the past 30 years. We work with the finest sports and exercise physicians in the UK"



The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge officially opened St George's Park

Q What kind of facilities are on offer?

We run a strength and conditioning gym, overlooking the Wembley replica pitch, that's dedicated to building stamina, strength, endurance and muscle tone. It's equipped by Technogym with best-in-class equipment ranging from Excite+ cardio and Group Cycles to Kinesis Stations, Arke, dual-adjustable pulleys and Pure Strength machines. There are also ESPT Total Power racks.

We also have a specialist rehab gym, with equipment including Technogym's brand new Selection Med Leg Press and Kinesis One. There's also a Batak board, aeroflooring, functional training equipment and pilates equipment – all overlooking an indoor 3d pitch and 100m sprint lane.

Vital to our work is the full sports science assessment Human Performance Lab, which includes an altitude chamber with a Run Med Treadmill, Med Bike and Group Cycles from Technogym, alongside Wattbikes and an Alter G anti-gravity treadmill. It's also equipped with Cosmed and Medgraphics Metabolic Cart, which fully link to the Technogym medical equipment.

All three gyms are integrated with Technogym's Mywellness Cloud, a wireless technology software application that allows users and their trainers to view and analyse their personalised goals, training programmes and progress. The accelerometer-based Mywellness Key is also used by corporate clients, allowing us to monitor and manage employees' daily movement/physical activity when they're away from our facilities.

Further to this, a hydrotherapy suite offers a multi-purpose area that can be used for everything from recovery and rehabilitation, through cardiovascular

workouts, to gait analysis to name but a few. The suite consists of a VarioPool, contrast therapy pool and a HydroWorx underwater treadmill.

Q How do you balance the needs of elite users and Joe Public in one venue?

We offer best-in-class services and solutions that can be scaled up or down to suit different customers. By providing elite medical expertise, combined with leading technology, we analyse and track the needs and performance of each and every user, regardless of their level, with the aim of enabling each individual to perform at their very best.

We cater for athletes in all sports disciplines and at all levels, from school teams within the local community to elite athletes and, of course, England's 24 national football teams, from junior to senior levels. We also work with corporate groups that are trying to improve the overall health and wellbeing of people within their organisations.

Q What sort of expertise do you have in-house?

All of Perform's services are delivered by an expert team led by clinical director Dr Charlotte Cowie and Steve Kemp, our elite physiotherapist. Dr Cowie has amassed an impressive 20-year career in sports medicine, with experience not only in football medicine but also numerous other sports such as tennis, athletics, synchronised swimming, boxing and cycling.

She was previously medical officer to the English women's football squad, and head of medical services at Tottenham Hotspur FC and Fulham FC. Most recently, during London 2012, she worked as part of Team GB at her third Olympic Games.

Kemp is a member of the Musculoskeletal Association of Chartered Physiotherapists (MACP) and a gold-accredited member of the Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Sports Medicine (ACPSM). He has over 12 years of experience as a physiotherapist in a sports environment, with recent elite football clinical experience as head of medical services for Wolverhampton Wanderers. He has also worked as a private physiotherapist with athletes from many other sporting professions.

Q What are your future plans for Perform?

We recently announced an exciting partnership with Michael Johnson Performance, founded by four-time Olympic Champion and current 400m world record holder Michael Johnson. The partnership brings together two teams of world-class performance coaches and sports and exercise scientists, who work daily with elite athletes across the globe. It will be the first time young people in Europe will have the chance to perform and train using MJP coaching techniques outside of an academy environment, using the best testing and training equipment usually reserved for elite athletes.

This forms part of our commitment not only to develop the future generation of England's sporting stars, but also to make Perform's services accessible to everyone. Our development is still in its early stages, but we plan to continue growing and expanding Perform and the packages we offer by building more relationships and affiliations with teams, organisations and individuals, bringing together the finest minds in sports, medicine and healthcare to serve people in a sustainable, financially viable way. ●

SHOW PREVIEW

Avex 2013

AVEX 2013 TAKES PLACE IN JUNE, AND IS SET TO BE THE BIGGEST AND BEST YET

AVEX, the UK's largest biennial exhibition for the vending and water industries, is gearing up for its best year yet. With all aspects of the vending industry gathered together under one roof, AVEX offers its trade visitors the opportunity to seek industry-specific advice, attend free seminars and gain access to all the key suppliers in the industry.

Showcasing over 150 businesses – including names such as 3M, AG Barr, Douwe Egberts, Kraft Foods UK, Vivreau and Mars Chocolate UK – all areas of vending are covered, including the major manufacturers, leading operators and service companies.

Highlights of this year's AVEX include the FM Vending Show, which has been specially created with facilities managers in mind; the healthy vending seminars run by industry expert 24Vend; the judging of the University Food

Development Award; and an engineers' fault-finding competition.

Show highlights

For the first time in the history of the show, there will be stands dedicated to facilities management – the FM Vending Show – which will include seminars by the Facilities Management Association (FMA) and pre-arranged 'Meet the Buyer' sessions. FM buyers visiting the show will have the opportunity to meet with operators face-to-face to discuss their vending requirements. Confirmed operators exhibiting include Snacktime, WISE group and COVER group. The FMA-hosted seminars will take place on the afternoon of 11 June.

On 12 June, the focus of the events programme shifts to healthy vending. This part of the show will be launched by 24Vend, with a morning conference that will include sampling a range of healthy new products across snack and beverage categories. It will also include a light, healthy networking lunch. The seminar programme will focus on how to incorporate healthy options into existing vending portfolios to attract new vending consumers as well as driving profits.

The AVA and University College Birmingham have been working together on a groundbreaking project, in which final year BA Culinary Arts students were tasked with developing healthy solutions for the vending industry. On the afternoon of the 12 June, the students will present their products for judging by an expert panel, for the chance to win the University Food Development Award.

The students were asked to create new food and packaging concepts for six different vending markets, addressing some of the key issues faced today such as obesity, recycling of packaging, allergens and government regulations regarding salt and sugar levels. The



Avex 2013 will showcase more than 150 different businesses

winner will be announced at the inaugural Vending Industry Awards on the evening of 12 June.

New for this year's awards, the engineers' fault-finding competition takes place on 13 June. Vending machine engineers will pit their wits against one another as they battle to repair the preset faults in a variety of machines under time-pressured conditions. Combining fun with expert knowledge, this session will highlight the importance of ongoing professional training and will be run by the AVA's training partner Vending Intelligence.

Register now for your free entry to AVEX 2013 at www.avexshow.co.uk



The trade show will include stands dedicated to facilities management

Visitor information

Dates 11–13 June 2013
Venue Hall 3, NEC, Birmingham, UK
For more information or to register: www.avexshow.co.uk

LOCAL TOUCH

In *HCM* March, we reported on sporta's unsung heroes of the north-west of England. In this issue, we take a look at some life-changing community-focused projects being delivered by leisure trusts in the south-west of the country

MOBILE FITNESS

ORGANISATION

Teme Leisure

PROJECT

Outreach mobile gym

Church Stretton is a small, close-knit community nestled in the shadows of the Long Mynd in rural Shropshire, in an area of outstanding natural beauty that attracts the older generation looking for peace and tranquillity. Over 60 per cent of the town's population are of retirement age and above.

While many residents are active, not only within the leisure centre but also outdoors, Teme Leisure was very conscious that the demographic meant a large section of the ageing community had physical limitations in regard to mobility, strength and co-ordination.

The local Mayfair Community Centre already offered falls prevention classes, but no extension or progression once this stage had been passed. After consulting with the Mayfair team, Teme Leisure therefore launched a trial 10-week programme in June last year, for 10 people who were identified from the falls prevention programme as requiring progression in order to address mobility, strength or general motor skills.

The trial – which was led by Teme Leisure's health co-ordinator Kletos Trachonitis at the Mayfair Community Centre – proved highly successful, with all participants improving across all

areas. All 10 also reported an improved sense of wellness. The trial included the use of mobile Technogym Easy Line fitness equipment, as well as core stability balls and wobble-boards, which were transported to the community centre in the back of a van each week.

"At the end of the 10-week trial, 40 per cent of participants were able to migrate to the leisure centre to continue their strength and conditioning training, again with Kletos as 'the friendly face' at the centre," says Lee

Hassan, general manager at Teme Leisure. "The scheme has now run four 10-week courses, all with great success, improving people's health and wellbeing including weight loss, lower blood pressure, greater flexibility and improved lung function capacity."

Teme Leisure's next aim is to discuss this success story with the new director for health at Shropshire Council, with a view to rolling the service out to other local communities to improve residents' health and wellbeing across Shropshire.

The scheme is improving people's health, including weight loss, lower blood pressure, greater flexibility and improved lung function capacity



Health co-ordinator Kletos Trachonitis ran the trial at the Mayfair Centre



The more opportunities we can offer people in a community setting, the more we can contribute to decreasing the level of chronic diseases, as well as helping individuals maintain a healthy body and mind

POSITIVE PARTNERSHIPS

The Active Lifestyles post at Tone Leisure was created in 2006, in partnership with Somerset Primary Care Trust (PCT), to develop and promote active and healthy living for all residents across Taunton Deane and offer opportunities for them to become more physically active. To ensure communities and individuals have access to local, community-based activities, a joint work plan was put in place in April 2010.

"Partnership working plays a huge part in our ability to offer the many initiatives that we do," says Joel Chapman, commercial director for Tone Leisure. "We've built strong partnerships with local groups and hubs to ensure we engage with as many people as possible in those communities. The partnerships enable us to carry out needs analyses and consultations, ensuring initiatives are what the residents want and need."

Tone Leisure's physical activity strategy encompasses a variety of approaches to ensure it's beneficial to both individuals and community groups. Its volunteer programme for example, which launched in April 2012, has 95 volunteers working in seven diverse

ORGANISATION

Tone Leisure

PROJECT

Active Lifestyles Programme

roles with one common objective: creating physical activity opportunities for residents of Somerset. Roles include customer-facing and delivery roles – such as Health Walk leaders, leisure assistants and promotional assistants – as well as behind-the-scenes administration jobs.

NHS Health Checks is another programme benefiting individuals in a non-medical, community setting. The preventative programme is intended to help people stay healthy for longer, and provides an assessment of cardiovascular risk to all 40- to 74-year-olds who do not have existing diagnosed vascular disease, including chronic kidney disease, diabetes, renal disease or hypertension.

The programme, initiated and run by NHS Somerset, is delivered by Tone Leisure in a community setting to ensure

targeted groups of people can access the free service at a convenient location. To date, more than 280 residents have received a check, which can lead to referral to their GP or advice on lifestyle interventions.

Flexercise is another initiative that runs across Somerset to promote mental health and wellbeing through regular chair-based activity. Originally designed to benefit older people in nursing and residential homes or sheltered housing, as well as older people attending day care centres, the 15- to 45-minute sessions also help people with physical disabilities, learning difficulties and rehabilitation after a stroke. The programme – which involves equipment, songs and games – can also benefit people at risk of social isolation or exclusion and people with, or at risk of, mental health problems.

Chapman continues: "Tone Leisure believes that, the more opportunities it can offer people in a community setting, the more it can contribute to decreasing the level of chronic diseases, as well as helping individuals maintain a healthy weight, body and mind, for health and social benefits."

BUILDING INDEPENDENCE

ORGANISATION

Circadian

PROJECT

Choices 4 U

Choices 4 U is a day care provision scheme for adults with learning difficulties, hosted at Circadian's leisure centres. The service, which is operated by South Gloucestershire Council's Community Sport and Adult Day Care teams, aims to promote independence and build confidence.

A team of experienced staff are on-hand to support with activities, which are delivered at Kingswood, Yate and Bradley Stoke Leisure Centres for minimal costs to the local authority, saving money on day care provision while dramatically increasing a range of outcomes for attendees.

A support worker creates an individual plan for every attendee, highlighting their needs, goals and choices. Meanwhile the timetable of activities, which is based on the interests of the users, is reviewed and revised every nine weeks to meet users' desired and shared outcomes.

Choices 4 U supports attendees to:

- Take part in activities that interest them and try new things
- Access leisure centre facilities to improve health and build confidence
- Spend time with friends as well as make new friends
- Think about work opportunities and get help and advice on how to do this
- Learn how they can travel independently with support from the Travel Buddy Scheme
- Develop independence and living skills
- Learn new skills through training

To date, 12 per cent of users are now accessing further education; 47 per cent are accessing leisure facilities independently; and 100 per cent are benefiting from increased physical activity, with a rise in knowledge around healthy living and exercise and a marked reduction in BMI.

To date, 12 per cent of users are now accessing further education, and 47 per cent are accessing leisure facilities independently



Circadian's Choices 4 U encourages attendees to try new activities

There have been other notable successes too. Working in partnership with agencies, Choices 4 U has supported seven users towards gaining employment by raising personal expectations, providing information and guidance on supported paid work.

Nine users have competed in a regional competition with the National Boccia League and may be able to compete in the 2013 National Special Olympics. Eight users have competed in regional and national swimming galas, with four continuing to train with support from the Disability Development Squad. And, in partnership with the British Red Cross, 10 users have been trained in first aid and awarded an 'Everyday First Aid' certificate.

Choices 4 U has trebled in size in just over three years, serving more than 50 clients every week. The service is available to all adults with learning difficulties in the west of England.

Feedback from users includes: "I like being able to go off and do my own thing, but it's nice to know someone's there if I have a problem", "Choices 4 U has helped me keep fit and active and has helped me to be more involved in my community" and "Choices 4 U is the best thing that has ever happened to me."

JUST A GAME

ORGANISATION

Bay Leisure

PROJECT

The LC Games

Taking place at Bay Leisure-operated The LC in Swansea, Wales, LC Games was set up to continue the Olympic legacy in Swansea. To date, more than 20 schools and 2,000 children have taken part. The project offers outreach programmes to schools, although so far all schools have chosen to attend the facility.

Each school can tailor the sessions to suit their needs and wants, and can use any of the facilities including the play area, climbing wall or any sporting activities like badminton, table tennis, basketball, netball, rugby and football. Mini Olympics and Multi Sports are themed for primary schools, while Fun & Games targets three- to five-year-olds. Access to the iZone – an interactive gym and workout area for teenagers – is also available, offering Expresso bikes that can race against each other and link to social media sites, as well as rowers, a dance mat, Wii Fit and a reaction wall.

"The free sessions have been a great success," says Richard Proctor, CEO of Bay Leisure. "Many class visits have resulted in the whole school coming."

The LC also runs Shape Up Plan, a nutritional and fitness scheme designed to help members lose weight in a healthy and sustainable way rather than crash dieting. Shape Up Kids has seen more than 60 children take part so far, with pupils educated in both fitness and the nutritional aspects of various foods. ●



Sessions can be tailored for schools

Product Round-up



Disq Group programme inspired by speed skating

Disq Group is a new group fitness programme that uses the Disq – a belt with two disks attached to it that's worn by the user, and that has cables running to ankle-cuffs and hand-held handles. It has eight resistance settings. Using the Disq, Disq Group combines cardio and strength training for indoors and outdoors. Exercises include swings, bicep curls and goblet squats.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

Disq



Stilum: New outdoor range of equipment

Stilum has revealed its range of outdoor fitness equipment. Designed in conjunction with sports physicians, the outdoor fitness equipment allows users to train to their own ability by adjusting the tension levels. Where relevant, integrated saddle seats put the body in the right position for the exercise, with each station targeting the core as well as specific muscular groups. The devices are all weather-proof.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

Stilum

fitness-kit.net

the search engine for leisure buyers



Wherever you are in the world, find the right products and services 24/7 by logging on to *Health Club Management's* free search engine www.fitness-kit.net

Precor's iPhone app lets users track all exercise

Precor has introduced new features to Preva, its open platform networked fitness solution, including Preva Mobile. The iPhone application gives members a way to log and track all fitness activities, even when they are away from their club, and wherever they are in the world. The extensive list of activities that can be recorded include swimming, cycling, jogging, skiing and playing team sports. Preva Mobile is now available from iTunes.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

Precor



Technogym reveals a united fitness concept

Technogym has launched its Artis range of premium equipment and its Unity console alongside its new Wellness on the Go concept. Artis includes 30 pieces of CV, strength and functional equipment incorporating seamless design, interactive technology and eco-sustainability. The range is integrated with Technogym's mywellness cloud, an open cloud computing platform, and equipped with Android-based Unity interactive consoles, giving access to training data, the web and video calls via a webcam. Designed to reduce energy, some machines also power the displays by harnessing human energy.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

Technogym



WATCH THIS SPACE

The Health and Wellness Knowledge Venturing team at global foresights firm The Futures Company share their thoughts on the hottest trends impacting the health club spa industry worldwide

Affordable indulgence
A holistic approach to wellbeing is innate to the millennial generation and something they're reluctant to sacrifice, despite the economic uncertainty and financial constraints that surround them.

Eighteen- to 33-year-olds in western Europe have grown up accustomed to a society where it's acceptable to focus on yourself as an individual and dedicate time to your own mental and emotional wellbeing. Yet times are tough for this group, particularly at the younger end of the age spectrum, as they attempt to establish themselves on the career ladder against a backdrop of austerity. They're increasingly worried about their future and are having to plan for the long term in a way that previous generations managed to avoid. Emotional wellbeing is under threat as anxiety over job security, debt and future prospects takes hold.

Should the health club spa industry be worried about a cash-strapped younger generation? Reassuringly, in this climate, little luxuries are more important than ever for this age group. Whether it's a cup of their favourite coffee or a weekly music download, millennials are normally unwilling to sacrifice the boosts that help them to maintain an even keel and deal with the pressures they are under.

The spa industry should take note: luxury treatments will be out of budget, but affordable, everyday treats such as express manicures or day passes to use spa facilities are just what this population group needs and craves. If the spa industry can offer a range of treatments that meet a £10–20 budget, there's an opportunity to reach out to this younger audience.



LEV DOLGACHOV/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Spa 'gamification'

Gamification is fast permeating every part of the health and wellness industry – not only fitness (see *HCM* June 12, p46 and *HCM* Oct 12, p50), but also spas.

Social gaming offers an important means to enrich client relationships. Facebook has already been used by many brands to educate and engage with clients and staff through social gaming: Clarins' *Spa Life*, for example, is a game in which Facebook users must manage virtual customers in a virtual spa.

More recently, pharmaceutical group Boehringer Ingelheim created *Syrum*, a Facebook game in which players solve global pandemics and diseases by discovering cures, creating a stable drug, and then testing it through clinical trials.

It's easy to imagine how this type of immersive social gaming might be used to educate spa clients about treatments

If spas can hit a treatment price point of £10–20, they can attract a younger audience

offered, especially treatments and technologies that are new to the market.

In the future, we might also expect to see spas using gamification to improve loyalty schemes. An app that rewards clients for purchases could replace physical loyalty cards, for example. Businesses could incentivise clients to return for more treatments – especially those who do not make regular visits – by offering them points to trade in against discounted or even free treatments and trials. Tracking features – already common among apps focused on more goal-orientated aspects of health, such as diet and exercise – could also be incorporated to help clients record and comment on treatments they have enjoyed.

Gaming can help deliver a higher level of client engagement, which can only benefit health club spas and their clients.



Clarins' Spa Life: A game where users manage a virtual spa

Body and mind

We're living hectic modern lives and often tensely balancing work and leisure time: the NHS reports that work-related stress has risen 40 per cent since 2005. This is driving consumers to take greater responsibility for their mental wellbeing: where once mental health was complex and stigmatised, it's now emerging as a concern on a par with physical wellbeing.

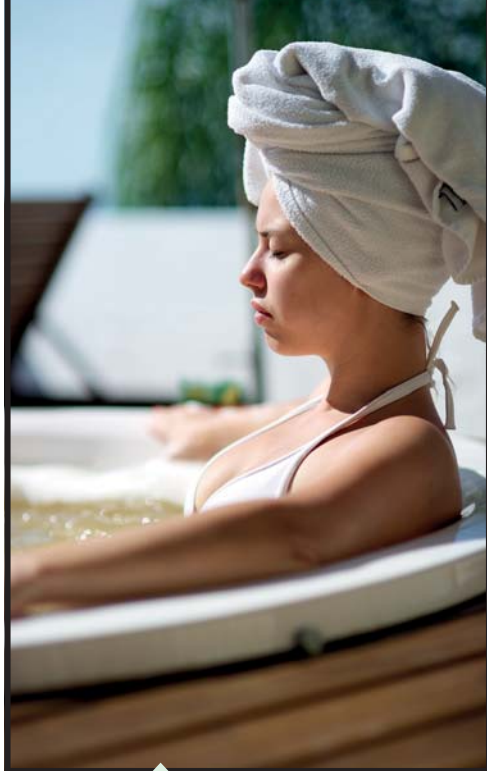
In this context, the health club spa offers an accessible way for people to take time for themselves, invigorate the senses and improve their mental outlook on life. From massages to manicures, spa activities are proving to be a one-stop-shop for boosting self-esteem and mental wellbeing. Simple, non-time intensive spa treatments in the home, from masks and facials to hot baths and scented candles, can also help create a positive mental balance – such products could be promoted and sold in health club spas.

For those wanting to develop this side of their offering even further, a growing number of 'alternative' holistic treatments are emerging that aim to promote mental wellbeing. Examples include the growth of 'mindfulness meditation' to boost mental harmony and the Zen Sound Therapy programme, by Vermont's Stowe Mountain Lodge in the US, which aims to reduce anxiety through music therapy.

In the future we will see more people taking responsibility for their mental health by embracing the world of the spa, in their own time, at their own pace.

The rise of the 'bio-citizen'

When it comes to their health and wellness, many consumers find navigating the huge diversity of options confusing, intimidating and very



SCHIND CHRISTOPHER/ISTOCK.COM

Spas are now being seen as places to improve mental as well as physical wellbeing

complicated. They continue to find their own way through this complexity, whether by relying on networks of trusted advisers and professionals, or seeking advice from peers who have faced similar situations and choices.

People are becoming increasingly familiar and willing to share personal health information with those outside of their circle of friends and family. For example, Facebook recently included health and wellness updates to its list of Life Events, ranging from broken bones to illnesses overcome.

Some consumers are actually forming social affinities around health and biological identities. With the help of new media, 'bio-citizens' – people who join social networks, on and offline, based on shared interest in health concerns – are generating and sharing specialised scientific and medical

knowledge of their conditions. They are becoming experts in their own right and are therefore increasingly influential.

As engaged and informed consumers share their private health information, they will expect spa and wellness solutions to be more innovative and flexible, tailoring services to meet their specific needs.

Urban sanctuaries

According to 2012 data from the Population Reference Bureau, 51 per cent of the global population live in an urban environment, compared to 30 per cent in 1950. In Europe, over two-thirds of people live in towns and cities, making it hard for them to remain active.

This urbanisation is a growing threat to our activity levels, as green space and outdoor exercise locations are threatened. In addition, air pollution can ►



As urbanisation spreads and people feel less safe in their environment, spas can provide a sanctuary

► make it unpleasant and even a threat to our health to exercise outdoors. In some cases, people are too afraid to exercise in built-up areas for fear of crime. The outdoor environment is becoming a less attractive place to exercise, and people are seeking a safe, healthy space to retreat to.

Health clubs are seeking to address this by introducing innovative ways of bringing the outside indoors. For example, some urban gyms create the sensation of exercising outdoors by doing things like increasing natural light and projecting images of natural scenery on the walls: the Virgin Active health club in Aldersgate, London, has a group cycling studio with a floor-to-ceiling projection screen and up to 150 different outdoor image videos.



On trend: Virgin Active in Aldersgate, London, uses outdoor video footage in its large indoor cycling studio

But this trend is not only interesting for health clubs and gyms: it could lead to a new growth opportunity for the spa industry. As urbanisation continues to rise, people will increasingly seek a sanctuary to escape to, and the benefits of visiting a spa will become even more widely appreciated.

Holistic ageing

Today, there are 1.5 billion people aged over 50 globally, and this is set to rise to 1.9 billion by 2020, according to Euromonitor International and the UN. For the first time in history, the world's older population will be the fastest-growing age group.

Older consumers are not necessarily bound by life-stage stereotypes. Faced with the prospect of living for longer, they are not only looking for solutions that will help them better manage the health conditions they have, but that will also help slow or prevent age-related decline in their bodies and minds.

From beauty creams and pills to Chinese placenta medicines and even functional drinks said to prevent the early onset of Alzheimer's, the market for anti-ageing products has been rapidly expanding. At its most extreme, it includes treatments such as replacing healthy joints with artificial ones to prevent joint deterioration in the first place. However, these solutions are not for everyone, and many older people want more holistic treatments that can be integrated into their lifestyles.

The spa industry is already responding with a growing number of anti-ageing treatments. In addition, healthy ageing spa holidays are being offered to consumers wanting to stay one step ahead of the ageing process. These holidays feature tailored programmes that combine nutrition advice, tests to assess functional health and metabolism, non-abrasive anti-ageing treatments and facials, and the ancient therapies of yoga, ayurveda and meditation to assist the cellular renewal process that naturally slows with age.

Spas in the future should focus on promoting longevity, youthfulness and vitality, offering treatments that may help prevent premature ageing and disease, and that are easy to replicate at home to ensure ongoing benefits. ●

A version of this feature first appeared in *Spa Business* 1 2013, p46.



About The Futures Company

The Futures Company is a strategic insight and innovation consultancy, with particular expertise in futures and foresight work. The company has teams in the US, Mexico, Brazil, UK and Argentina and partnerships in China, India and Poland. By exploring the future needs, motivations and behaviours of consumers, and the broader dynamics shaping the marketplace, The Futures Company unlocks new sources of growth for its clients.

Web: www.thefuturescompany.com

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SUPPLIER SHOWCASE

WE TAKE A LOOK AT RECENT PROJECTS FROM MATRIX, CYBEX AND DALESAUNA

ADDING VALUE

CLIENT: CHESHIRE EAST LOCAL AUTHORITY, UK

SUPPLIER: MATRIX FITNESS



Macclesfield:
A "far more
welcoming space"

Cheshire East Council operates 15 leisure facilities, all providing a range of services for the local community. As part of a continuous drive to improve service provision, the authority wanted to equip the sites with top of the range cardiovascular and strength equipment that would deliver a 'wow' factor.

Following a tender win to provide Knutsford Leisure Centre with fitness equipment for their refurbished site in 2011, Matrix secured a subsequent contract to supply five additional sites: Crewe, Nantwich, and Shavington, plus two completely refurbished fitness suites at the authority's leisure centres in Macclesfield and Wilmslow.

Each facility now offers something for everyone, including products from the Matrix Universal Series (U-Series), which are accredited by the Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) and ensure that accessibility is not a barrier to improving health and independence for the residents of Cheshire East.

As the user experience was a key priority for the authority, Matrix 7 Series products were also selected, enabling gym users to watch films and TV programmes while they work out. This range also incorporates Virtual Active software, which engages exercisers on all levels via workouts that include music and ambient soundtracks in addition to dynamic video footage. This is displayed on the console, linked to gradual terrain changes underfoot, for a totally immersive exercise experience. Alternatively, gym members can listen to their favourite tunes while they work out, thanks to iPod docking stations on each piece of CV equipment.

The sites also cater for members preferring strength training, following the installation of Matrix G3 strength equipment, as well as selected free weights.

"Since the refurbishment of the fitness suite at Macclesfield Leisure Centre, our existing customers have been impressed



The inbuilt media system on the CV kit is proving very popular

by the vastly improved range and quality of the equipment, especially the entertainment systems within the CV equipment," says Maria Tatters, Macclesfield Leisure Centre manager. "The refurbishment has been widely welcomed, making the fitness suite a far more welcoming and efficient space. We have seen a rapid increase in usage and memberships attracted by the refurbished facilities and new equipment."

Matrix was involved in the facility design and planning of equipment layout, as well as providing pre-sales marketing support materials. The authority has also benefited from the Team Matrix ambassador programme, with both Olympic cyclist Dani King MBE and GB triathlete Jodie Stimpson on-hand to support site launch activity. Matrix Fitness sales director Chris Austin says: "After previously supplying the authority's facility in Knutsford, we were delighted to be a key supplier to Cheshire East Council, supporting the authority with its plans to deliver first-class fitness facilities to the local community."

For more information: www.matrixfitness.co.uk



The gym acts as a showcase site for CYBEX

MAKING AN IMPACT

CLIENT: SOLE FITNESS

SUPPLIER: CYBEX INTERNATIONAL UK

Sole Fitness opened in January 2013 in Glenfield, Leicester, UK, with over 50 pieces of equipment manufactured by CYBEX International UK. The brand new gym – located just a few miles from CYBEX UK's headquarters in Measham, Derbyshire – will be used as a showcase site for CYBEX, providing potential and existing clients with the opportunity to experience many of the manufacturer's most popular pieces of equipment.

Sole Fitness offers products from CYBEX's new 770 cardio range, including treadmills, lower body and total body Arc Trainers and both upright and recumbent bikes.

Incorporated in a number of pieces of equipment are E3 View embedded monitors, the latest innovation from

CYBEX. Available on all products in the 770 range, the E3 View provides users with three viewing modes: 'exercise' for a detailed analysis of the workout; 'entertainment', where users can watch video from TV, iPod or iPhone while still monitoring their progress; and thirdly, the 'escape' view, where the screen is filled entirely with video from the preferred source.

Selectoris strength equipment from CYBEX's Eagle, VRI and VR3 ranges were also installed, alongside a multi-station Jungle Gym, lifting racks, benches and Bravo functional trainers.

Much of the equipment frames and upholstery were customised in the gym's corporate colours – a bespoke service provided by CYBEX across its strength and cardio product ranges. Wall graphics have also been designed and produced by CYBEX, complementing the overall look and feel of the gym.

Sole Fitness is the first gym for owner Simon Sole, who was introduced to CYBEX by a colleague. He says: "I had little experience of using CYBEX equipment until my colleague suggested it as an option when we were reviewing suppliers for Sole Fitness. When he described its equipment as 'the best on the market', I had to find out more.

"I visited Hatton Health & Fitness, which houses a wide range of CYBEX equipment, and was immediately impressed by what I saw, particularly the strength lines. I now tell everyone that, once you've used CYBEX equipment, you won't find anything better and the feedback from our members is proof of that."

CYBEX business development manager Paul Steel led on the agreement with Sole Fitness. He says: "Sole Fitness is a superb, high quality independent facility that offers a fantastic sense of community – a friendly atmosphere with highly approachable and experienced staff who take a real interest in the club's members. The bespoke equipment, alongside the branded wall graphics, also creates a great impact when you walk in."

As well as the state-of-the-art gym, Sole Fitness has a group fitness studio, beauty salon and sauna facilities.

For more information: www.cybexintl.com



CYBEX matched frame colours to the gym's own branding

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SPA EDUCATION
CLIENT: VISION WEST NOTTS
SUPPLIER: DALESAUNA

A college in Nottinghamshire has invested millions of pounds in a new campus with a health spa to meet an unprecedented demand for spa education.

According to Vision West Notts college – formerly known as West Nottinghamshire College – applications for its hair, beauty and complementary therapy courses have risen more than 200 per cent in the last five years.

The college in Mansfield has invested £11m in a new extension to accommodate students who want to study hair, beauty and spa courses. The 4,000sq m learning space – which represents the college's biggest-ever single investment in educational facilities – includes modern classrooms, ITC suites, hair and beauty salons as well as a specialist health spa.

Dalesauna was appointed by the main contractor, Mansell Construction Services, to design and equip the spa's 140sq m thermal area. Its brief was to provide a facility that would allow the delivery of the NVQ Level 3 Diploma Spa Therapy curriculum, a vocational course that prepares students for work in spas and salons.

As well as an educational facility, the spa operates commercially to equip students with vital industry experience, while also providing the college with additional income opportunities. The brief therefore also called for high quality fixtures and fittings to meet the needs of the public.

The new health spa therefore includes a pine sauna, steamroom, spa pool and rasul mud treatment room. Both the steamroom and rasul were finished in quality tiles, using both large format and mosaic to provide visually pleasing yet practical finishes.

The offering also includes a Jouvence dry flotation system, an ice feature and a monsoon shower. LED lighting floods the shower with a vibrant red light when hot water is in use and a cool blue for the cold water experience. Foot spas and a relaxation area with tiled heated loungers complete the offer.

"Dalesauna supplied and equipped the very first spa college facility at Buxton, and since then has supplied many of the leading new-build facilities," says Gerard McCarthy, sales director at Dalesauna. "Vision West Notts is certainly among the very highest standard of provision, offering more facilities than required under the basic curriculum. The standard of finishes throughout the college is extremely high: the thermal suite could just as easily be in the very latest private sector spa as in a teaching facility."

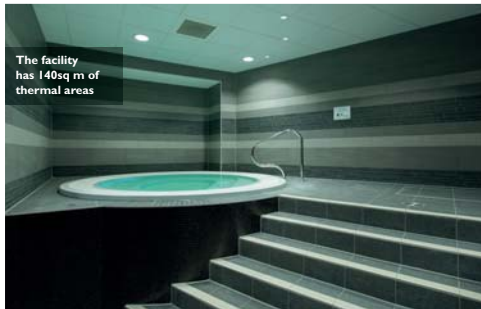
He continues: "The demand for trained therapists is high, and grows daily as new spas continue to open in the UK and further afield. Students fortunate enough to train at West Notts Vision will be well equipped to take on a role in any spa in the world, with the confidence that they have trained on the very latest equipment." ●

For more information: www.dalesauna.co.uk

The educational spa also operates commercially



The facility has 140sq m of thermal areas



The relaxation area offers tiled heated loungers





ROTHAY GARDEN HOTEL

Overview:

The Rothay Garden Hotel in Grasmere is one of the finest luxury hotels in the Lake District. Surrounded by the majestic Lakeland Fells the contemporary boutique hotel is renowned for its chic and stylish personal and attentive service.

Project Brief:

We were appointed by the owner of the hotel to enhance the property's offering with a bespoke spa. With no space to accommodate the facility within the hotel, the logical location for the new spa was in the picturesque two acre garden surrounding the property.

After several design meetings, the final layout and specification was complete and work commenced on this small but perfectly formed new spa.

The Solution:

The Riverside Spa is located alongside the banks of the River Rothay and is accessed from the hotel by a covered walkway. The Spa features a semi circular glazed rotunda to make the most of the stunning views that take in the river and the mountains.

Connection to the gardens and the landscape was an essential part of the design and traditional Lakeland materials of slate, stone and timber were employed to embed the Spa in its location.

Designed exclusively for the relaxation of hotel guests, the Spa features a hydrospace, herbal pine sauna, aroma room, monsoon showers, reflexology walk and infra red loungers.



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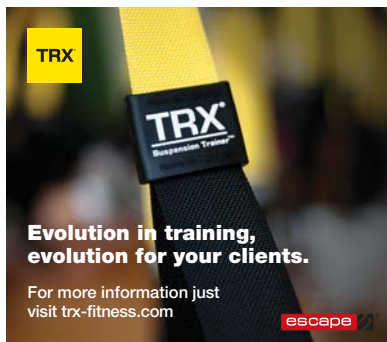
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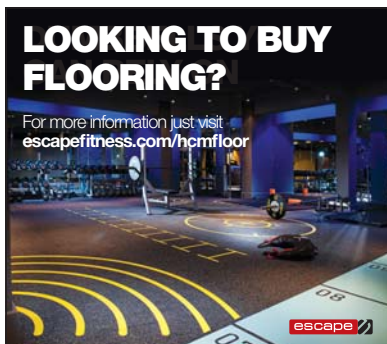
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Lightweights

HOT OPPORTUNITY FOR POP-UP YOGA BUSINESS

Hotpod Yoga, the UK business based on inflatable heated yoga studios, has announced it's open to franchise partnerships to help roll out its concept across the country and internationally.

The lightweight studio has a floorspace of 8x9m (enough for 20 people) and is 3m high. It's kitted out with heating and humidity systems, glowing lights and built-in sound ready for hour-long sessions of Hotpod's own choreographed vinyasa yoga, which has been designed for all abilities.

Hotpod launched in January in five locations across London and completed more than 100 pop-ups. Initially, the company targeted the corporate market, where a company was assigned a pod and Hotpod provided teachers to assemble it and carry out sessions whenever and wherever required.

Hotpod is now ready for expansion via franchising. Franchisees will be given their own inflatable studio, or numerous studios if required. Details: www.hotpod yoga.com



SKIP TO IT FOR UK JUMP ROPE FESTIVAL



The festival will start off with a demonstration gala

Get inspiration for new group workout classes by attending the UK skipping festival, taking place at the Lilleshall National Sports Centre, Shropshire, on 19 May.

Jump Rope UK is a celebration of rope skipping in the UK. It will kick off with a demonstration gala, with teams of six to 20 people showcasing their two- to five-minute routines. In the afternoon there will be a two-hour jump rope workshop to help improve people's knowledge and skills, so they can take part in next year's event. Entry costs £8 per participant and £2 for spectators. Details: www.jumpuk.com



24-HOUR CHALLENGE ON A BAMBOO BIKE

Many people have signed up to this year's RIDE24 challenge, the non-stop 24-hour cycle event taking place on 7-8 September, but only one – Adam Herriott from Woking – is aiming to complete it on a bike that he's built himself... out of bamboo.

Using bamboo is an emerging trend in bike construction – the ride is light, stiff and smooth thanks to the material's natural ability to absorb vibration. Herriott was inspired to make a bamboo bike after reading about its benefits online.

RIDE24, organised by children's charity Action Medical Research, is open to individuals and teams of four. It will be held on the 2.4-mile Thruxton Motor Circuit, with the winner being the person and team to complete the most laps in 24 hours. Details: www.action.org.uk/ride24

Make-up in gym down to habit

Women who wear make-up while working out do so out of habit – rarely leaving the house 'without their face on' – according to a poll by discount website myvouchercode.co.uk

Last issue we reported on a survey by Asda, which found that seven in 10 women wear make-up to the gym (see HCM April 13, p90). In this poll, the percentage was lower, with only 26 per cent of women saying they made the

effort, while another 8 per cent said they did depending on circumstances.

Most (38 per cent) of women said they did so as wearing make-up is part of their daily routine, while others did it to raise self-esteem (26 per cent), because they had bad skin (15 per cent) or to impress men (11 per cent).

Worryingly, 51 per cent of women said they didn't exercise as hard, as they didn't want to ruin their appearance.



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