

# health club management

APRIL 2014 No 212



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## ON THE COVER

## Matt Roberts

The fitness entrepreneur on  
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# We must stay ambitious

## Subscriptions

Denise Adams  
+44 (0)1462 471930

Circulation manager  
Michael Emmerson  
+44 (0)1462 471932

Editor  
Kate Cracknell  
+44 (0)1462 471906

Editorial director  
Liz Terry  
+44 (0)1462 431385

Assistant editor  
Katie Barnes  
+44 (0)1462 471925

Head of news  
Jak Phillips  
+44 (0)1462 471938

News desk  
Tom Anstey  
+44 (0)1462 471916

Product editor  
Kate Corney  
+44 (0)1462 471927

Designer  
Clara Nicoll  
+44 (0)1767 769645

Web team  
Dean Fox  
+44 (0)1462 471900

Emma Harris  
+44 (0)1462 471921

Tim Nash  
+44 (0)1462 471917

Michael Paramore  
+44 (0)1462 471926

Publisher  
Jan Williams  
+44 (0)1462 471909

Sales  
John Challinor  
+44 (0)1202 742968

Astrid Ros  
+44 (0)1462 471911

Julie Badrick  
+44 (0)1462 471919

Financial administrator  
Denise Adams  
+44 (0)1462 471930

Credit controller  
Rebekah Wilkinson  
+44 (0)1462 471937



**T**he industry got some major national media coverage recently when ukactive released its new report, *Turning the Tide of Inactivity*.

Headlines focused on the shocking social aspects: the report found people in deprived areas are having their lives cut short by ill health as a result of inactivity and lack of access to exercise.

*Turning the Tide of Inactivity* found that in the most deprived areas, one in three people fail to raise their pulse for even 30 minutes a month, compared to one in four in the most affluent areas. And with the most deprived local authorities accounting for 13 of the 15 least active areas in England, there's a clear and provable correlation between wealth, activity and health.

**We must avoid the temptation to accept very low level behaviour change as being a successful outcome for purely financial reasons**

Establishing the extent of the challenge is a vital first step, but while it's great work by ukactive to be bringing a fresh focus to the inactivity debate, I'm less comfortable with what appears to be happening next.

That's because the conversation is quickly turning to the optimum ways in which changes can be made to save the government the most money via its NHS expenditure. This debate is becoming – in part – an exercise in low level thinking, with recommendations, for example, focusing on 'nudging' people to make very small changes to their daily routines.

**Liz Terry, editorial director** - [lizterry@leisuremedia.com](mailto:lizterry@leisuremedia.com) / twitter: @elizterry  
**To share your thoughts on this topic, visit [www.healthclubmanagement.co.uk/blog](http://www.healthclubmanagement.co.uk/blog)**

Talking about saving cold hard cash is the most effective way of getting the attention of government, and with this attention – importantly – comes the money to fund health interventions. However, the recommendations I've heard so far are so limited in ambition that we really must ask ourselves if this is the full extent of our aspirations as a sector.

The fitness industry has widened its remit to become part of the health community in recent years, and for the most part the two are a good fit, but while public health thinking is very much focused around making very small adjustments on a mass scale to achieve change, the fitness industry has always been very customer-centric and focused on achieving the best outcomes for each and every member.

We must avoid the temptation to only adopt health industry thinking, whereby we accept very low level behaviour change as being a successful outcome for purely financial reasons.

We don't just want to feel we've achieved our aims if we can just get people walking up the stairs once a week to save the government a few million pounds in blood pressure medication. We must be more ambitious than that and aim to get more people from deprived areas really engaged in an active, healthy lifestyle. Anything less is patronising and cynical.

The fitness industry was founded by people passionate about the importance and value of exercise and we know that, done regularly, it works. While it's great that we've found natural bedfellows with the health industry, we must continue to champion our everlasting goal of an active, healthy nation and not get sucked into the politics to the point where we lose sight of our original vision and purpose.

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Leisure Media, Portmill House, Portmill Lane,  
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### Buyers' guide:

For suppliers of products and services in the health club and spa markets, turn to p87



## WRITE TO REPLY



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



Results of the study didn't take into account concessions in the public sector

## People paying to use facilities don't represent wider population

It was interesting to read the recent article (*HCM* March 14, p32) based on my Black and White Retention reports.

The reports profiled almost 350,000 members – if published as an academic paper, this would make it one of the largest studies ever – and the operators involved represented the distribution of sectors across the UK, providing like-for-like information about membership retention. The results clearly show that people paying to use facilities don't represent the full breadth of the population.

The results don't take into account concessions, which may affect the proportion of public sector users, but these are not the intended participants of the study, which ultimately shows an increasing similarity in the profile of paying members across all sectors.

In the MOSAIC breakdown, by far the largest group was Liberal Opinions

(100,447); the next largest group was only one-third that size. In addition, while some operators may assume they are opening up new markets, seven out of 10 reported new joiners had previously been members elsewhere.

While it may not make us warm and fuzzy inside, the data is a reflection of the way we design and run our facilities and market and sell memberships. If we want the data to show something else, we must introduce new approaches.

Ultimately the public sector will not survive unless it can become commercially viable as well as community focused, while private sector operators must differentiate themselves from each other in order to carve out their place in the market and demonstrate growth.

**Paul Bedford**

Research director, Retention Guru

## Innovation vital to closing 'authenticity gap'

I was interested to read the recent business press coverage (Reuters, CNBC and the *New York Times*) of the latest Authenticity Gap study from global communications firm FleishmanHillard and its partner Leper Analytics, as I believe its findings should be a wake-up call for the health and fitness industry.

The research identified a significant discrepancy between consumers' expectations of leading brands and their actual experiences. This so-called 'authenticity gap', said to undermine customer confidence and business performance, was particularly pronounced in the area of innovation. The research looked at nine drivers of reputation, from 'doing right' to 'customer care'. Of all these drivers, UK respondents cited 'innovation' as the most critical for reputation in 75 per cent of the industries analysed – yet in 65 per cent of cases, their experiences did not meet their expectations.

Health clubs are not immune. It's vital that operators live up to consumers' expectations, particularly when it comes to technological advancements, in order to close its own 'authenticity gap' between consumers' expectations and experiences.

**Leon Houseman**

Marketing manager, Gladstone MRM



Innovation was found to be critical to a company's reputation



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## Women's weight training could boost gym market

Boosting awareness of strength training among women could be the key to growing gym membership, says a new study from fitness equipment manufacturer Precor.

Precor argues that increasing women's awareness of the benefits of strength training, such as improved workout results and calorie burn, could entice more women to join and stay members.

Research from IHRSA shows that female gym-goers favour group exercise, with only 47 per cent making use of weights.

Precor's poll of 500 women found many have negative perceptions of weights due to body image. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=m3f4N>*



Survey shows 27 per cent of adults attend a gym

## Fitness now world's biggest sport, says Les Mills survey

Fitness has been named as the world's biggest sport, with 61 per cent of regular exercisers now taking part in gym-type activities, according to the Nielsen-Les Mills Global Consumer Fitness Survey (2013).

Conducted among 4,600 people across 13 countries, the study has also revealed that 27 per cent of the adult population attend a gym, fitness centre or health club.

Numbers doing gym-type activities now rank higher than any other fitness activity, including running, cycling and swimming. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=N2n6K>*

## London 2012 Aquatics Centre opens to the public

The London Aquatics Centre, which was home to high drama in the London 2012 Olympics, opened its doors to the public on Saturday 1 March.

For the same price as a dip at a local pool, people will be able to swim in the Zaha Hadid-designed centre, where Tom Daley and Ellie Simmonds won medals for TeamGB. They may even spot Daley in training, since he is now based at the centre, which includes two 50m pools and a competition pool for lane swimming. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=trKzn>*

## Bannatyne Group eases debts

The Bannatyne Group has announced a £92m deal with M&G Investments for the sale and leaseback of the ground leases for 39 Bannatyne's Health Clubs across the UK.

The company has been grappling with debts resulting from a £180m loan from the failed Anglo Irish Bank, which was nationalised by the Irish government in 2009, and the deal will help Bannatyne's clear these loans, according to a statement.

Duncan Bannatyne, chair of The Bannatyne Group, had previously tried to buy out the debt with an offer in February of £111.5m.

Having announced the new leaseback deal, Bannatyne said: "M&G can see the long-term value of our business and has agreed to be our landlord over a very long lease term. Our premium business is sustainable and profitable



Duncan Bannatyne says the deal will not affect the clubs themselves

and we believe it's an ideal tenant to provide M&G's investors with reliable returns."

The move has been described as a "quasi-ground lease arrangement" where the initial rent is set lower than market value, to minimise risk of the rent becoming unaffordable for the tenant. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Q4ag9>*

## LAfitness plans to streamline operations

LAfitness has announced it wants to sell 33 of its 80 clubs as part of restructuring to help secure its long-term future.

This will enable the business to focus on a smaller portfolio and significantly reduce its debt burden, with more attention being paid to its remaining 47 facilities.

The company has also proposed landlord Company Voluntary Arrangements (CVAs). If these are approved, revisions on lease terms will be made at a number of its clubs to pave the way for the implementation of an agreed restructuring package.

If the process goes ahead, the business will reduce its debt burden by around £250m, while helping to put into place new loan facilities. It's proposed that Deloitte will be



The business will aim to sell 33 clubs as part of restructuring plans

enlisted to supervise each of the CVAs.

"It's a structural issue that's hampering us and through this process we will create a leaner, more operationally efficient business, with a sustainable future," says Martin Long, CEO of LAfitness. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=y6R8h>*

## David Lloyd Leisure in search for new club locations

DLL is seeking to identify suitable locations in the UK for the expansion of its portfolio of health clubs and high street studios.

With 81 clubs in the UK and 10 across Europe, the company - recently acquired by private equity firm TDR Capital LLP - has identified

a pipeline of more than 20 potential sites in the UK, as well as several M&A opportunities. It also aims to expand its non-membership high street health and fitness concept, David Lloyd Studio, with up to 20 new studios a year. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=q8p8n>*



## énergie to expand budget section

The énergie Group has outlined growth plans through concerted development of its budget gym offering in 2014, described by CEO Jan Spaticchia as the “biggest expansion plan in énergie’s 10-year history”.

The Milton Keynes-based fitness franchise group, which currently operates 94 gyms internationally, has said it will open 40 new sites in the UK by the end of the year, under a number of its different brands: the expansion is to consist of 30 Fit4less gyms, six énergie Fitness For Women sites and four énergie Fitness Clubs.

“These are all confirmed agreements, in the final stages of completion, to open this year and take our total number of UK and international sites to at least 125,” says Spaticchia.

The breakdown reflects the relative popularity of énergie’s Fit4less offering, as well



Jan Spaticchia says the group will operate 125 sites by the end of 2014

as the current strength of the overall budget gym sector, which continues to expand.

Despite this, the firm still sees growth potential in its Fitness For Women and énergie Fitness Club brands, with the latter model having undergone a makeover. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=D4S7m>

## Stalker: Activity strategy key for new city

Following Chancellor George Osborne’s announcement that the UK’s first garden city for 100 years would be built in Ebbsfleet, ukactive CEO David Stalker has called on developers to ensure spaces for physical activity are high on the planning agenda, saying a successful outcome could offer a breakthrough in solving the inactivity crisis.

Osborne said the Kent town of Ebbsfleet was selected for its prime location, availability of land and “fantastic infrastructure” – which includes a connection to the high-speed rail line linking London to continental Europe.

And Stalker, citing the UK’s widespread inactivity problem, believes a physical activity strategy must form part of the infrastructure for the proposed 15,000 home garden city. “Our sector can work in partnership with the urban development corporation to ensure physical activity is



ukactive’s David Stalker sees the creation of a new garden city as a big opportunity to tackle inactivity

embedded in the infrastructure from the outset,” he says (see also HCM March 14, p5). Details: <http://lei.sr?a=v7T9C>

## Xercise4Less announces £5.5m growth finance deal

Budget gym operator Xercise4Less hopes to launch 15 new sites across the UK this year, after securing a £5.5m package to fund the company’s next phase of expansion.

The Leeds-based company hopes to enter the Scottish and southern English markets

as part of its ambition to reach over 100 sites in the next five years. The news follows expansion announcements from other budget sector rivals, suggesting fierce competition will continue at the low-cost end of the gym market. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=G6z9F>

## Members’ Choice Health Club Awards open for entry

The Members’ Choice Health Club Awards in partnership with Health Club Management is now open for entry.

The award scheme is unique because the winning clubs are decided on ratings given by members through an online survey.

The awards measure quality of customer service, facilities and value for money.

The awards are now in their 4th year and over 50,000 are expected to take part.

This year, clubs can access new features via the competition website, including Member Feedback Reports providing analysis of each club’s weekly performance.

As well as recognising clubs, the awards will also put the spotlight on individual staff in the People Awards category.

The shortlists will be published in July and the winners announced at the Health Club Awards dinner on 30 September 2014 – the first night of LW (see also p64).

Competition entry is open until 1 May and voting closes on 16 June. To sign up, visit [www.healthclubawards.co.uk](http://www.healthclubawards.co.uk). Details: <http://lei.sr?a=D4S7m>



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Female admissions were double those of males

## Obesity hospital admissions “much higher for women”

For the 10th year running, UK hospital admissions for obesity in women were much higher than for those in men, according to figures from the Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC).

Results from 2012–13 show female admissions for obesity were more than twice as high as men, with 8,010 female cases recorded, compared to 2,950 male.

However, data also highlights that admissions with a primary diagnosis of obesity (10,960) fell 7 per cent.

There has also been an increase in admissions for patients aged 65 and over, with 590 obesity admissions recorded, compared to 560 during 2011–12.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=c2B8e>

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## NEWS

## Britain's workout habits revealed

Three in 10 Britons admit they rarely or never do sport or exercise, with many citing lack of motivation and expensive facilities as their main source of dissuasion, according to Mintel research.

Despite a raft of national and local initiatives, as well as the feelgood factor from the nation's recent Olympic successes, large sections of the public remain reluctant to get off the couch.

A quarter (24 per cent) of Brits say they struggle to motivate themselves to exercise alone, while an equal number say cost is the chief reason for not using public pools and leisure centres.

Continuing this theme, exercising at home is proving a big draw. A quarter of those who do exercise use weights, workout videos and computer games to do domestic workouts.



Three in 10 Britons admit they rarely or never do sport or exercise

"The leisure industry can engage with apathetic consumers in a number of ways; the most obvious way is trial," says Mintel leisure analyst Michael Oliver. "They could also use mobile facilities in the heart of neighbourhoods."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=W9h4a>

## Balfour invests in One Rebel gym chain

One of the founders of Fitness First is investing in a new chain of American-inspired high intensity gym studios, which uses a 'pay as you train' business model.

Mike Balfour, who helped grow Fitness First into a global brand, is becoming a non-executive director and investor for One Rebel gyms.

One Rebel hopes to secure £2.7m from investors, to open 10 to 20 gyms over five years.

The 'pay as you train' model will be adopted by One Rebel to compete with the low-cost gyms, eschewing joining fees and monthly subscriptions.

The first club is expected to open in London this September and will include two or three studios for cycling and treadmill classes,



One Rebel aims to cash in on the growing demand for interval training

plus either hot yoga or a fight club offering. Balfour's son James will be chief executive and Giles Dean will play the role of operations director. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=r4F9B>

## Psyche London pushing exercisers to face the music

A new health and fitness development in London is using inspirational music to help push exercisers further when taking part in its specially-curated cycling workouts.

Psyche London – the brainchild of former Fitness First CEO Colin Waggett – uses high

intensity interval and low-impact exercises conducted over 45 minutes on a bike.

The specialised music is essential to the workout, with specific playlists created to push participants using lyrically-driven, motivational songs. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=jsV7X>

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The image shows a person lying on their back on a black and red SMARTSTEP platform, performing a bench press with a silver SMARTBAR. The person's legs are bent and feet are flat on the platform. The barbell has large, black, circular end caps with red accents. The background is dark with some light patterns.

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## Listed building gym given a lift

The Curve, a brand new ladies-only gym in a restored Grade II listed Edwardian building in Bradford, has been given a slice of 21st century technology to complement its vintage facade, thanks to a complete fit-out from equipment provider Star Trac.

What was the Manningham Baths – an old-fashioned swimming bath for the local community – is now a modern 800sq m gym, which retains many of the old building's original features.

Helen Moore, club manager at The Curve – an independent club owned by Amjad Saddiq – believes the unique surroundings will ensure a steady stream of members for the new facility.

"The Curve has been designed to act as a safe place for women to work out and socialise in a luxurious environment," she says.

"I'm confident that the brand new equipment will inspire our new members to



The Curve was opened last month by Bradford Mayor Khadim Hussain

get fit and stay healthy in 2014."

Star Trac has installed a range of equipment including E-series CV – treadmills, cross trainers, upright bikes, recumbent bikes, StairMills and Steppers.

"The building's transformation is remarkable and the new kit looks superb in the space," says John Gamble, executive director of Star Trac EMEA. *Details:* <http://lei.sr?a=a8M6A>

## Hove's latest gym JRL Sports Training packs a punch

JRL Sports Training, which counts boxer Chris Eubank Jr and model Katie Price among its clients, has opened a new studio in Hove.

Aimed at all demographics and catering for beginners right up to elite athletes, the facility – which is supplied by functional fitness specialist Jordan Fitness – offers services including boot camps, group exercise classes and functional fitness for juniors.

"We believe introducing children to exercise at an early stage is very important to help with their development," says Jack Laing, owner of the Woodland Drive facility.

"In less than two generations, physical activity has dropped by 20 per cent in the UK.



Professional boxer Chris Eubank Jr is a regular at JRL Sports Training

We're working to increase youngsters' activity, moving them away from the television and video games that seem to be taking over their lives." *Details:* <http://lei.sr?a=E4t4g>

## Bankside HiiT Studios outlines vision for future growth

More details have emerged about former kickboxing champion Christian Thomson's new HiiT Studios facility in Bankside, with the owner declaring: "Gone are the days of gyms full of cardio and resistance machines."

The 465sq m site offers live blood analysis

to analyse metabolism, plus barefoot running classes and personalised nutrition delivery services, with plans to add a hypoxic chamber as part of a proposed expansion. Thomson has also hinted at additional sites in response to the strong market. *Details:* <http://lei.sr?a=H7U8F>



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## App in development to boost sports participation

Canadian software company Geosports is developing an app to try and increase participation in sport in an age in which the developer believes people are less involved in sports and physical activity.

The app allows users to advertise the sport they want to practise, plus the time and date they are available, with a notification sent out to other users with the same interest near their chosen location.

The app could also potentially be used to help teams or local clubs find new members, or discover other enthusiasts to cover for injured teammates.

*Details: <http://lei.sr?a=U7b5S>*



New course: Further employment opportunities

## Premier and Les Mills team up to offer new qualification

Premier Training and Les Mills have teamed up to deliver a new exercise to music qualification that will give instructors further employment opportunities while carrying out their training. The course provides learners with the knowledge to go on and complete any of the Les Mills programmes. "This is a great opportunity to drive the Les Mills name to graduates as we aim to create a fitter planet," says Les Mills' Jean-Ann Marnoch.

*Details: <http://lei.sr?a=mzk7U>*

## Microsoft launches fitness app for Windows Phone

Microsoft is the latest company to join the fitness app trend by releasing the Bing Health & Fitness Windows Phone app.

Initially released in beta format through the Windows store, the pre-release version offers a combination of fitness, health and nutrition-tracking features.

The app includes more than 100,000 foods to track daily calories, with nutrition information, health indicators, symptom checker and an exercise tracker, plus video browsing for workouts and yoga poses.

*Details: <http://lei.sr?a=s8m9W>*

## Samsung watch edges out Apple

Samsung has pipped Apple to the post in the race to release the next fitness tracking smartwatch, announcing two updated versions of its Gear product line at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona.

Apple is expected to announce a range of health and fitness focused offerings in the near future – including a smartwatch – but Korean company Samsung has stolen a march on its rival with the unveiling of the Gear 2 and Gear 2 Neo smartwatches.

Both models – updates of the original Galaxy Gear watch – feature slimmer designs and increased health and fitness functionality.

They use Samsung's own Tizen software in place of Google's Android, and are fitted with an accelerometer and gyroscope – capable of acting as a pedometer and an optical heart rate monitor. They can also play music via Bluetooth headphones without needing to connect to a smartphone or tablet.



The Samsung Gear 2 is only 10mm thick and weighs 68g (2.4oz)

The Gear 2 also features a 2-megapixel camera at the top of a 1.63" Super AMOLED screen – something the Gear 2 Neo lacks.

*Details: <http://lei.sr?a=n3x9A>*

## Precor partners YMCA to get youths active

Fitness equipment manufacturer Precor has announced a new corporate partnership with YMCA, the youth charity and largest provider of fitness training in the UK fitness industry.

Throughout the year-long partnership, Precor will support the development of a new YMCA Health and Wellbeing regional network – a forum for YMCAs to collaborate in further developing and delivering fitness and health activities in their local communities.

Precor, part of global sports equipment company Amer Sports, will also raise funds for the charity through a series of events. These efforts got off to a colourful start recently, when staff at Precor UK's Frimley head office took part in a 'More Than Just A Song' day, where teams dressed up as the



As part of the year-long partnership, Precor will be raising funds for the YMCA charity

Village People as they learnt more about the work of YMCA, as well as donating goods to be sold at YMCA charity shops.

*Details: <http://lei.sr?a=M2w7n>*

## Legend system to improve Inverclyde Leisure efficiency

Scottish leisure trust Inverclyde Leisure has chosen Legend Club Management Systems to improve the customer experience and bring operational efficiencies to regional leisure services. The organisation, which operates sports and community facilities throughout

Renfrewshire and services more than a million customers, will implement Legend's leisure management solutions across 13 facilities.

The solution gives customers real-time access to online services across a variety of platforms. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=P6u2F>*



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## Obesity to become 'the new norm' across Europe

The World Health Organization (WHO) has warned that obesity and overweight are set to become "the new norm" throughout Europe due to a "deadly" epidemic of physical inactivity and diets high in sugar, fat and salt.

Up to 27 per cent of Europe's 13-year-olds and 33 per cent of 11-year-olds are overweight, officials have reported.

Countries with the highest proportion of overweight 11-year-olds include Greece (33 per cent), Portugal (32 per cent) and Ireland and Spain (both 30 per cent).

Overall the UK is performing slightly better, but in Wales 30 per cent of 11-year-old boys are overweight.

*Details: <http://lei.sr?a=u2K6b>*

## Swedish chain bans 'selfies' in changing rooms

One of Sweden's leading gym chains has banned changing room 'selfies' at its Stockholm clubs in a bid to protect the modesty of its members.

Friskis & Svettis, which has branches across Sweden, has taken the step of telling visitors to its clubs in the capital that they can no longer pose for post-workout pictures in the changing area.

Famously photogenic, Swedes have enthusiastically embraced the 'selfie' – where people take pictures of themselves on smartphones and post them to social media – but the gym has decided to draw the line in the changing rooms, citing concerns that potentially naked fellow members could also be unwittingly snapped in the photos.

*Details: <http://lei.sr?a=m5Y5d>*

## Cochrane Collaboration teams up with Wikipedia

The Cochrane Collaboration has teamed up with Wikiproject Medicine to improve the reliability and accessibility of Wikipedia medical information online.

Cochrane is a global independent network of researchers, health professionals and consumers of healthcare. A not-for-profit organisation, it has collaborators in more than 120 countries producing credible health information.

Articles relating to medicine are viewed more than 180 million times a month on Wikipedia, yet fewer than 1 per cent of these have been peer reviewed.

*Details: <http://lei.sr?a=c2C6e>*

## World Class: Eighth Bucharest site

World Class International has opened its latest club – World Class Promenada – in Bucharest, the health club operator's eighth location in the Romanian capital.

The 1,500sq m club is located in the commercial district, within a shopping centre,



Facilities include a SYNRGY360 functional rig

with a view to meeting a strong corporate demand. It has been equipped by Life Fitness, including a SYNRGY360 functional training rig, with other suppliers including TRX and Escape Fitness/Reebok.

Alongside the gym and functional training area, additional facilities include a 45-bike Schwinn cycling studio and a 180sq m aerobics studio, as well as the provision of 'flying yoga' classes and running courses.

"World Class has created a stunning-looking facility and the Life Fitness equipment has been customised to complement the gym's vibrant and colourful interior perfectly," says Steve Newell, Life Fitness' senior account manager of distributor business EMEA.

World Class International was formed in Sweden in 1983 with a view to combining exercise, wellbeing and good health. It now operates 42 clubs internationally, across markets including Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Sweden.

*Details: <http://lei.sr?a=e9EGU>*

## YMCA Australia takes over Heartmoves

YMCA Australia has entered into an agreement with the National Heart Foundation of Australia to take over its long-standing Heartmoves programme.

Heartmoves targets people at risk of, or living with, chronic disease – or indeed anyone who may not have exercised for a while. Participants work at their own pace, guided by Heartmoves leaders either in groups or in one-to-one sessions. The programme is run by specially trained fitness and exercise professionals and is offered in a range of settings, including fitness and community centres and old people's homes.

*Details: <http://lei.sr?a=N9D9n>*



Heartmoves leaders guide groups or individuals

## David Barton puts Chelsea in the Limelight

New York City's historic Church of the Holy Communion – and former home of the legendary, celebrity-attended Limelight nightclub, owned by Peter Gatien – is being converted into a David Barton Gym.

This autumn will see the fitness group's 23rd Street health club relocate to the iconic Limelight building at 20th & Sixth in Chelsea.

The new landmark location will offer three floors featuring spacious halls, grand arches and stained-glass windows dating back to the original 1846 Episcopal building. New York's Studio Solfeld has been appointed with the task of creating a dynamic design that

successfully blends the building's integrity with David Barton Gym's requirement for a state-of-the-art, 1,860sq m (20,000sq ft) fitness facility.

The Limelight fitness club will be equipped with a new line of signature strength equipment and cardio incorporating swipeable tablet consoles, as well as fight training, yoga and pilates classes. A series of live DJ sets will also be hosted by international and New York City artists.

Limited pre-opening special rates have already been launched.

*Details: <http://lei.sr?a=V5Y7j>*

## Just Fit opens Cologne flagship



Just Fit's new 'light concept' club in Kerpen focuses on cardio and strength training and charges lower fees

German operator Just Fit is opening two new health clubs in Cologne, Germany, this month.

MediaPark – an urban regeneration area – will house a premium, 4,500sq m club set over four floors, including 280sq m dedicated to group exercise. Four separate group exercise studios will offer a wide range of classes, from group cycling to functional training, Zumba to Les Mills, and wellness-focused programmes.

Other facilities will include a large swimming pool, an exclusive wellness area with five saunas, and a Technogym-equipped gym with internet-connected CV equipment. Power Plate training will feature cyber sessions led by Swedish model Marcus Schenkenberg.

"The new MediaPark fitness club will be our flagship," says Just Fit founder Frank Böhme.

In line with the group's ethos of affordable fitness, monthly membership of the club – including free parking – will be offered for €54.90 for a limited period.

Close on its heels will be the opening of a smaller but more centrally located 2,200sq m facility equipped by Precor, Life Fitness, Technogym Kinesis and WOODWAY treadmills. Classes will include indoor cycling, yoga and outdoor group exercise.

Last November saw a Just Fit 'light concept' club open its doors in Kerpen, near Cologne – a cheaper membership option focused on cardio and strength training. The facility features a large equipment area and personal training, but does not offer classes.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=r553W>

## New LIFT parent company for franchises

Peter Taunton, the founder and CEO of 24/7 franchise operation Snap Fitness, has launched a parent company – LIFT Brands – to act as an umbrella organisation for the Snap Fitness, Kosama, Fitness on Demand, 9Round and STEELE 365 fitness franchises.

He says: "We're growing at a tremendous rate with start-ups and acquisitions, and needed to establish a company that reflected our elevated thinking, services, growth potential and variety of concept offerings."

LIFT Brands will oversee expansion plans by providing finance, construction, marketing and legal advice to franchisees paying between

US\$60,000 and \$250,000 to launch and operate their own franchise.

Taunton adds: "In addition to the wide range of offerings that already exist under LIFT Brands, we'll be adding several more concepts." Future plans include a new yoga concept, dubbed Yoga Fit, and the expansion of the standalone kickboxing 9Round concept, as well as widening the Fitness on Demand offering to limited-space areas like hotels.

Since its launch in 2003, Snap Fitness has grown to around 2,000 franchised fitness centres in 15 countries, attracting one million members. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=G7u6K>

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## PEOPLE NEWS

## Jenny Patrickson joins Active IQ

Active IQ has appointed Jenny Patrickson as its new commercial director to help drive forward the company's three-year strategy for growth.

Having most recently worked as head of central qualifications for YMCA, Patrickson has more than 25 years' experience in the sector and has implemented strategic planning, business development and process improvement in previous roles.

She has also developed international accreditation and quality assurance models for organisations including the European Health and Fitness Association (EHFA), Ireland Active and the International Confederation of Registers for Exercise Professionals (ICREPs).

"As one of the country's leading awarding organisations, Active IQ has a really distinguished and respected reputation in the active leisure industry," says Patrickson. "I'll be helping the company to explore and implement new business opportunities, as well as expanding its well-established portfolio of qualifications." Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Z9b2Q>



Patrickson most recently worked at YMCA as head of central qualifications

## FitPro recruits Fergus Ahern and Mel Spooner

Fitness training association FitPro has announced a new senior management line-up to take the company forward with its new product and service portfolio.

Fitness industry veteran Fergus Ahern has joined FitPro as director of commercial operations (Europe), while Mel Spooner has joined as UK head of commercial operations.

Ahern's role will see him work to expand the company outside of its current membership base. His 23-year career in the fitness industry spans health club and supplier roles, including a stint as a board director of the former FIA (now ukactive). Most recently, Ahern headed up the launch of MOSSA – formerly known as Body Training Systems (BTS) – to the UK market.

"My focus will be to promote FitPro to the wider fitness industry, outside of its membership base, as well as the new innovations we're launching this year, including FitPro Edge," says Ahern.

Spoooner began her career in fitness operations a decade ago and last worked as UK and Ireland commercial manager for TRX. Her role at FitPro includes overseeing the commercial and account management team, which supports a number of brands in the UK.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Ez8C>



Ahern previously oversaw the UK launch of MOSSA

## Matt Gleed climbs the ladder at TRX UK



Matt Gleed has been integral to TRX's UK success

Body weight training equipment supplier TRX has promoted former UK TRX senior master trainer Matt Gleed to a new role as education and sales manager for the UK TRX team.

Gleed has worked in the fitness industry for 12 years and has played a key role in the growth of TRX in the UK, working with high profile sports organisations and athletes including a number of Team GB athletes, three Premiership clubs and health club chains.

Gleed will oversee the planned expansion of TRX training courses for personal trainers and instructors. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=R5K8d>

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# Amazing results at One Leisure St Ives

Functional training is generating a real buzz both for members and for the balance sheet

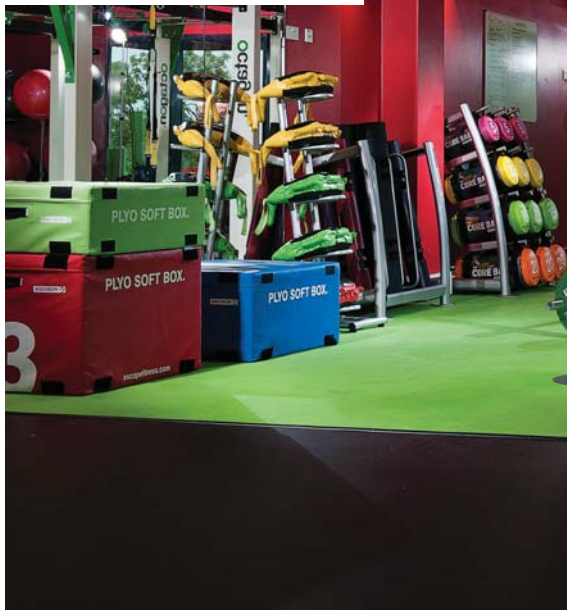
**O**ne Leisure St Ives is the largest of the five sites within the One Leisure portfolio and a recent major redevelopment programme was completed in September 2013, which included a brand new Impressions Fitness Suite.

The project has seen the creation of a specific functional training area which is supported by structured and engaging workout programming, delivered by Escape Training. The new-look space features the biggest ever Escape Octagon and a full range of functional equipment to offer their members great variety and to ensure workouts are always fresh and challenging. The results speak for themselves.

Ollie Ritch, Impressions fitness consultant and personal trainer, said: "In the first four months since the new functional training area was installed, we have achieved 80 per cent of our entire PT business from last year."

The investment in training is reaping rewards for members too. Rebecca Goode, wellbeing manager at One Leisure said: "The Escape Octagon is a fantastic piece of kit which allows maximum use of space with effective storage. It is also aesthetically pleasing and excites members visually and motivates their training. The classes being delivered in the functional area are fully booked, with people wanting to pre-book to ensure they get a space."

Tommy Matthews, director of education at Escape Training, said: "Our programming provides everything a club needs to turn on functional group training and make it a success.



When properly implemented by a club like One Leisure, members get to experience an exciting group programme that is always changing, allowing members to constantly develop and improve."

After the initial two-day intensive Move It training, including Octagon training, Impressions at One Leisure now delivers Escape Training's concept based Move It programme to its members – a 12-month group training programme to keep their members engaged and motivated.

Ollie commented: "The Move It training programmes are important because people see a class going on and it makes them want to get involved. A Move It circuit class is manageable for everyone."

To ensure both the equipment and members are supported during their workout, the Octagon sits on Pavigym Free Weight flooring. The flooring has been specifically designed and created to include the One Leisure logo and installed by the Escape Flooring team, providing a visually stunning, colour co-ordinated foundation for the space.





▲ The Escape Octagon is the centrepiece of the new functional training space

► Members have fully embraced the new Move It training programmes



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## Sector stats: A note from Belgium

• Eric Vandenabeele • Director • De Fitness Organisatie (DFO)

I think, to a large extent, the impact of the bad economic situation in Belgium came under the radar. While other markets crashed, the Belgian economy experienced zero growth, or at worst a small decline. Even with higher unemployment, most citizens' financial situation therefore isn't too dreadful.

That said, there has been some short-term pressure, as well as increased competition from low-cost solutions, which has meant that small enterprises in the fitness sector have had to lower their prices to prevent members from dropping out and switching to other clubs. Unfortunately, this has resulted in some closures.

In my mind, this could probably have been avoided, as recent studies show that Flemish people practise more sport than ever before and are willing to invest in their health. However, there's no gym-based participation among youngsters and only a small increase in adult participation; most people seek sport in various other environments. Running is, by far, the most popular sport, with 30 per cent of active adults saying they run.

I think the greatest challenge for the fitness industry is to latch onto this evolution and diversification of the way people exercise. This means stepping away



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ARONRICHALMANA

Running is by far the most popular physical activity in Belgium, with 30 per cent of active adults running

from the traditional fitness offering and looking for creative solutions, including a broader variety of activities, family offers, and most importantly out-of-club activities.

In addition, it's up to fitness industry leaders to lobby for better financial conditions for the club business, based on the economic value and the indirect and direct macro economic benefits through

the impact on public health. Of course, directly linked to this, our industry has to make actual participation in club activities a priority, rather than people simply 'joining the club'.

*This piece was excerpted from The IHRSA European Health Club Report: Size & Scope of the Fitness Industry, which was published in October 2013.*

## Ask the experts: Staff codes of conduct for social media

*Is it within our rights as an employer to have our staff sign a code of conduct agreement for social media use?* Josh Gerber,

marketing director for Brick Bodies Fitness Services, offers his thoughts:



"As an employer, it's well within your right to have your staff sign a code of conduct for social media. We allow our employees the option of joining the Brick Bodies social network, but employees must then be aware that, with any posts they make on their social media pages, they're making statements that are a representation of the company.

Some key points to include are:

- Employees cannot use the sites for anything personal during work hours.

- Employees cannot make any posts that give a negative connotation to the company or its employees.
- Employees cannot post anything illegal.
- Include information about how to handle friend requests from club members. If the employee chooses not to participate in the company community, they should direct members to the company's social media pages.
- Conversations via social media with current or potential members should be handled with the same level of professionalism as if they were talking to someone inside the club.

Ultimately, when they make posts, employees must always ask themselves: Does this help or hurt the brand?

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



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ANIBENYA STUDIO

Employees must be professional on social media

## New CEO for Russian Fitness Group

The Russian Fitness Group, which runs the World Class, World Class Lite and Fizkult fitness clubs, has named Irina Kutina as its new chief executive officer.

Kutina has been with the group for 20 years, since the company's inception, starting as a fitness instructor and working up through the ranks all the way to her most recent position as COO.

For the last few years, in addition to her responsibilities as COO, Kutina has filled the role of vice president for fitness, accountable for the whole operational business of the company, sales and fitness division. During this time, the efficiency of the fitness clubs has increased and the service and sales approaches were standardised. A loyalty and retention programme were also implemented.

Kutina was one of the first certified Reebok master trainers in Russia, and was the first Russian lecturer at IHRSA's International Convention & Trade Show. She is also the founder of the Russian



Irina Kutina was one of Russia's first certified Reebok master trainers

Fitness Professional Association. Russian Fitness Group president, Olga Sloutsker, says: "Irina is an ideal candidate for this assignment. We're expecting further development in terms of numbers of clubs, increasing the quality of the service and stable growth of the financial indicators of the Russian Fitness Group."

## Resource Partners enters Romania via acquisition

Private equity fund Resource Partners has acquired a controlling stake in World Class, the fitness chain, for an undisclosed sum, marking the fund's first investment in Romania. The deal was structured as a management buyout.

World Class operates through a network of 11 clubs in three Romanian cities, after opening the first club in 2000. The company has said it plans to continue expanding in the country.

"We believe in the company's growth and consolidation potential in Romania, both in Bucharest and other cities. This first project in Romania is very much in line with Resource Partners' strategy of investing in consumer-orientated companies and supporting competent management teams in Central Europe," says Dan Farcasanu, the fund's investment director.

Resource Partners was advised by RTPR Allen&Overy and EY. The private equity fund has investments in Poland and Latvia.

## April price break for IHRSA Institute

For over 20 years, IHRSA has provided industry-leading education through the IHRSA Institute.

This year's Institute will be held on 5-8 August at the Kenan-Flagler Business School at the University of North Carolina, US. It will include three full days of graduate-level education led by expert faculty, providing a balanced curriculum that covers every aspect of club management.

With limited class sizes, outstanding peer networking and social opportunities, the IHRSA Institute is where leaders learn to manage more effectively.

Visit [www.ihrsa.org/institute](http://www.ihrsa.org/institute) for details and to register. Registration rates increase after 25 April.

## Events diary

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

### 5-8 August 2014

The IHRSA Institute: Executive Education for Club Professionals Chapel Hill, North Carolina, US

### 28-30 August 2014

15th Annual IHRSA / Fitness Brasil Latin American Conference & Trade Show - São Paulo, Brazil

### 16-19 October 2014

14th Annual IHRSA European Congress - Amsterdam, The Netherlands

### 11-14 March 2015

IHRSA 2015: The Annual International Convention and Trade Show - Los Angeles, California, US

## Moderate exercise: Impact on stroke risk

Though the benefits of exercise abound, research presented in February at the American Stroke Association's International Stroke Conference 2014 shows that moderate exercise could cut stroke risk in women by 20 per cent, as well as offsetting the increased risk among women taking postmenopausal hormone therapy.

And the good news is that women can reduce their stroke risk by briskly walking, which was found to have the same benefits as if they were to run.

Indeed, the researchers - led by professor Sophia Wang of the Beckman Research Institute in California, US - say this decreased risk from moderate exercise is just as strong as that of strenuous exercise.

See <http://lei.sra-m6U6h> for further information on the methodology and findings of this research.

## 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](http://www.ihrsa.org). Locate a quality IHRSA club at [www.healthclubs.com](http://www.healthclubs.com)

# Trending now....

## Kristen Walsh picks out some of the highlights of IHRSA's new Trend Report

In February, IHRSA published *The IHRSA Trend Report: Volume 3, Issue 3*.

The quarterly trend report – conducted in partnership with the Leisure Trends Group – analyses health club consumer behaviour among Americans aged 16 and older. The latest report compares findings from the second and third quarters of 2013.

### Millennial interest

According to the report, membership reached an all-time high during the quarter ending 30 June 2013, due largely to increased participation among Millennials (Generation Y: members between the ages of 21 and 30). One-in-four Millennials (27 per cent) reported belonging to a health club – the largest penetration rate of any generation to date.

“For health clubs wanting to attract and maintain Millennials, findings suggest focusing on programmes aimed at retaining these members beyond their short-term membership agreements,” says Jay Ablondi, IHRSA’s executive vice president of global products. “Targeted seasonal activity and sports-specific training programmes will also be effective at maintaining and improving membership levels among this group.”

Also reported are findings and club opportunities based on gender. When it comes to maintaining their membership, women say they continue using their club because they want to get in shape, it’s convenient, and they want to attend group exercise classes. Men say they return to have fun, because they feel an obligation to make use of the money they spend on their membership, and for social interaction.

Says Ablondi: “The social opportunities that come from attending a health club are increasingly important to consumers, and clubs should offer events that allow members to interact socially.”

For those who cancelled their memberships, expense was claimed as the number one reason; it was also the main factor claimed to put people off joining in the first place. “*The Trend Report* discusses ways to make price-sensitive consumers more comfortable, such as offering new member promotions and tiered membership



The social opportunities that come from joining a health club are increasingly important to consumers

options,” says Melissa Rodriguez, IHRSA senior research manager.

### Key questions

Each quarterly report contains responses and analysis based on the following questions:

1. Are you currently a member of a health club (a dues-paying member with a PAYG, monthly, seasonal or annual pass)?
2. What keeps you coming back to use the health club you currently belong to?
3. Which of the following are personal goals for using the club you currently belong to?
4. What keeps you from joining a club now?
5. Why did you leave your former club?

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more detailed findings and growth opportunities, download a pdf of *The IHRSA Trend Report* at [www.ihrsa.org/research](http://www.ihrsa.org/research). It’s free to IHRSA members and costs US\$99.95 for non-members.

### DEFINITIONS

#### MEMBERSHIP

- Members: Those who are currently members of a health club.
- Non-members: Those who are not currently members of a health club, and never were.
- Former-members: Those who were members of a health club at one time, but are not currently.

#### GENERATIONS

- Generation Z: Members between the ages of 16 and 20 years.
- Generation Y: Members between the ages of 21 and 30 years.
- Generation X: Members between the ages of 31 and 45 years.
- Baby Boomer Generation: Members between the ages of 46 and 65 years.
- Eisenhower Generation: Members over the age of 65 years.

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# PASSING ON THE FITNESS BUG



ukactive teams up with kids' activity campaigner and tennis coach Judy Murray to put

exercise back on the agenda for families. David Stalker reports

In the wake of declining rates of childhood fitness levels and an inactivity pandemic set to shatter the public health balance sheet, focusing on the role that the family unit has to play in getting kids active in and around the home before they reach school age should be an easy decision. But in recent years, the steady dip in the proportion of young children who regularly enjoy exercise has continued, with no signs of slowing down.

Many of the recent government attempts to get children more active have been focused on the school setting, where the majority of children still have their most meaningful, structured sporting and physical activity experiences.

However, there's a large body of research that says the home is an integral first-stage environment for young children to learn, develop and improve the basic physical competencies such as throwing and catching – all as part of a healthy, happy childhood.

## New report

ukactive has therefore joined forces with academic researchers and Judy Murray to deliver a report that sets out the true extent of childhood inactivity in the UK, and the steps that could be taken to reduce it by supporting parents to take the lead through active play in the home.

Released this month, the report – *Start Young, Stay Active* – offers a compelling case for early years physical activity to parents, teachers, family units and policymakers, with the aim of garnering additional support structures for parents to enable physical activity to become an intrinsic part of their children's lives.

The report recommends a variety of measures that could be taken to embed physical activity into the lives of children and families away from



Judy Murray (above) has launched the Set4Sport initiative in a bid to get more young children active

the school environment. The idea of introducing physical education into the homework curriculum, drawing a thread of collaboration between teachers and parents, is just one idea.

As Murray notes: "It's vital that parents encourage and foster an environment where activity is considered important, but it's also vital for schools, sports providers and authorities to give parents the tools they need to instigate this."

The long-term benefits of an active childhood are well documented. Studies have shown that more active children are more likely to turn into happy, active adults, less likely to develop psychological wellbeing issues and more likely to be free from chronic illness.

This new ukactive report argues that, where exercise becomes habitual – established before children even come to identify movement as being equivalent to exercise – we're onto a winning streak. It's this 'cradle to grave' approach of physical activity where significant health and wellbeing gains are made.

## Next steps

There's an ever-growing need for more research and analysis when it comes to

the effects of the home environment on children and young people's attitudes to physical activity as they move through life. Despite being data-poor, the evidence we do have suggests that a child's appetite for physical activity and aptitude for developing the associated skills grows into lasting behavioural habits with early-age exposure and the willing involvement of parents and other family members.

ukactive, alongside Judy Murray, urges families, schools and anyone who may influence how much children move at home to consider the report findings. The onus is on all of us to help families ensure that children have ample opportunity to grow up with an active lifestyle.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information on the report, or on Judy Murray's Set4Sport programme – a free collection of fun games for parents to play with their children to develop core sports skills – please contact Stan Jackson: stanjackson@ukactive.org.uk / +44 20 7420 8560



# Getting active ONLINE

New Gladstone software was introduced to all five of the local authority's leisure centres between February and May 2013

Gladstone's online software solutions have freed up staff time at Calderdale's leisure centres, with 20 per cent of monthly membership sales and 32 per cent of class bookings now going through online

**“W**e first introduced Gladstone's member management system at one of our leisure sites in the early 1990s, before rolling it out to all of our centres eight years ago. We now use a range of Gladstone products across our five membership-based leisure centres, including Plus2 member management, the Gladstone Management Console (GMC), the Tableau reporting tool and, most recently, the Connect online booking and Join@Home online joining systems. We've also recently installed Kiosks for self-service bookings and payments at two of our busiest sites: Brighouse Pool and Fitness Centre and Sowerby Bridge Pool and Fitness Centre.

Since the opening of our two newest sites three years ago, our membership population has doubled – but unfortunately, due to the current financial climate, our staff numbers have not. As a result our centres have been overwhelmed by demand at reception, both in person and by phone and email, leaving some customers unsatisfied with the response they have got.

Luckily, Gladstone's online software solutions Connect and Join@Home have provided us with a great, cost-effective way of dealing with this challenge. Since introducing them at all five of our

leisure centres in February and May 2013 respectively, we haven't looked back.

Both systems take care of run-of-the-mill transactions that would otherwise tie up valuable reception time, enabling our staff to concentrate on more complex enquiries and customer care. It's also much better for our customers, as every transaction that goes through online is one less phone call or reception visit they have to make. It can all be done from the comfort of their own home, or on the bus or train during the work commute, and at any time of day – there's no more standing in line or listening to the phone ring.

From an administration point of view, both systems are straightforward: price fixes, promotions and dealing with unpaid transactions are more or less self-running once set up. For Join@Home, being an early adopter of the system has been a great advantage, as it's enabled us to have a say in what is and isn't useful, rather than having to just accept the finished product. Because of this, changes have been made which have made managing the online membership process even simpler.

Overall, the set-up process for both systems has been painless, the problems minimal and Gladstone has been great in guiding us through the maze of banking regulations, testing and permissions. Where there have been glitches, they've been quick to help us, both during the process and after our go-live dates.



The Sowerby Bridge Centre has a computer in reception for customers to use for bookings

The results speak for themselves. From 11 February to 30 November 2013 we saw 45,284 completed bookings via Connect and a further 27,554 amendments to bookings. Meanwhile, from 20 May to 30 November we sold 371 memberships via Join@Home. In percentage terms, about 20 per cent of our monthly membership sales go through online, and about 32 per cent of all class bookings. Both percentages are expected to grow over the coming months as word gets out and confidence in our online systems grows.

To help with this, we've recently installed a computer in the reception area of our Sowerby Bridge centre, so members can also use the systems on-site. Once all the kinks have been ironed out there, we'll look at getting them set up at our other leisure centres, too.”

**Frances Durkan, data and information officer, Calderdale Council**

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## APRIL

## 8-9 | BASES

## Student Conference

Venue University of Portsmouth,  
Portsmouth, UK  
Summary

The conference will be a mix of keynote presentations from international sport & exercise scientists, expert-led workshops providing professional development experiences, and research presentations by student delegates.  
Web [www.port.ac.uk/bases2014](http://www.port.ac.uk/bases2014)

23-26 | Russian  
Fitness Festival

Venue Olympic Stadium, Moscow, Russia  
Summary

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

## 30-1 May | Active-net 2014

Venue Ricoh Stadium, Coventry, UK  
Summary

A new networking event launched by Leisure-net Solutions and aimed at the health, fitness and leisure sectors. It will bring together suppliers and operators from across the public sector, offering educational seminars and a business-focused networking event.  
Web [www.active-net.org](http://www.active-net.org)

## MAY

## 7-10 | SPATEC Europe

Venue The Sheraton Rhodes  
Resort, Rhodes, Greece  
Summary

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

10-11 | OM Yoga  
Show Manchester

Venue Manchester Central Convention  
Complex, Manchester, UK  
Summary

From boxing yoga to yoga disco, this show enables fans and instructors to try out different forms of this ancient Indian discipline. It will be held alongside the Mind Body Soul Experience.  
Web [www.omyogashow.com](http://www.omyogashow.com)



Visitors to the Om Show in Manchester can see the latest yoga class trends

## 16-18 | BodyPower

Venue NEC, Birmingham, UK  
Summary

BodyPower is the fastest-growing consumer fitness exhibition in Europe, attracting thousands of health and fitness enthusiasts from around the globe. The show presents a diverse cross-section of the health and fitness industry through an extensive exhibition, visual displays and interactive feature areas. The industry and preview day will also host thousands of fitness professionals for a day of networking and education.  
Web [www.bodypowerexpo.co.uk](http://www.bodypowerexpo.co.uk)

## 18-19 | Beauty UK

Venue NEC, Birmingham, UK  
Summary

The only major beauty event taking place in the Midlands in 2014, Beauty UK brings together professional products, equipment, services and training from the leading beauty, holistic, nail and tanning companies. The event also hosts a wide range of training seminars and workshops, plus the Midlands heat of WorldSkills UK.  
Web [www.beautyserve.com](http://www.beautyserve.com)

## 18-19 | Holistic Health

Venue NEC, Birmingham, UK  
Summary

Supporting the holistic and complementary therapy markets, and showcasing the latest professional products, treatments and training courses. There will be tastier treatments in the Chill Out zone, as well as industry networking opportunities.  
Web [www.beautyserve.com](http://www.beautyserve.com)

## 20-21 | SIBEC UK

Venue The Belfry, West Midlands, UK  
Summary

A forum for one-to-one meetings bringing together a range of suppliers and buyers in the leisure, health and fitness sectors. Delegates come from the UK's local authority, trust and education markets.  
Web [www.mcleaneventsinternational.com](http://www.mcleaneventsinternational.com)

27-31 | ACSM 61st  
Annual Meeting

Venue Orlando, Florida, US  
Summary

ACSM's annual meeting – which in 2014 will include the World Congress on the Role of Inflammation in Exercise, Health and Disease – will bring together more than 5,000 basic and applied scientists and clinical medicine professionals to learn, network and earn continuing education credits and medical education credits. This conference covers the science, practice, public health and policy aspects of sports medicine, exercise science and physical activity.  
Web [www.acsmannualmeeting.org](http://www.acsmannualmeeting.org)

## 30-2 June | Rimini Wellness

Venue Rimini Fiera, Rimini, Italy  
Summary

The show features a WPPro event with meetings and workshops for fitness professionals. It will also include 46 stages and more than 400 presenters showcasing the latest from pilates and dancing to group cycling.  
Web [www.riminiwellness.com](http://www.riminiwellness.com)

## EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT ...

# Exercise and the QOF

What does it mean now that physical activity has been taken off the QOF, just one year after being added – and how can we get it reinstated?

**T**he fitness industry was jubilant a year ago when exercise was added to the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) – a voluntary scheme that rewards GPs for patient care – for the treatment of hypertension. The hope was that it would be the first step towards greater collaboration between the healthcare and fitness sectors, with physical activity embedded across a wider range of indicators for the management of chronic conditions (see *HCM* Jan 14, p5).

But after just one year, it's been dropped in a dramatic slimming down of the QOF, which has seen QOF's scope cut by a third. Just as we thought we

were making headway in putting exercise on the radar of GPs who haven't bought into it yet, it's off the agenda again.

So what's the reason for these cuts? Are there questions about the validity of physical activity as treatment for medical conditions, or does the issue lie with QOF itself – is it a dying tool? Physical activity is, after all, just one of many indicators to be removed this month, suggesting it's less a reflection on the benefits of exercise and more about the QOF not working that well in general.

And might the whole thing be a political move? Last year, the Secretary of State wanted lots of indicators added; this year, following protest from GPs that they feel governed by tick boxes, a

knife has been taken to QOF. GPs have also been given more freedom and new payment arrangements in return for longer opening hours and various other service enhancements.

According to ukactive, the take-up of the physical activity indicator within QOF was disappointingly low – it was deemed to be more hassle than it was worth financially and not seen by GPs as a priority area of focus. Would this change even if it were reinstated?

Either way, it's still vital that we work to forge links with the healthcare sector and convince GPs that, whether exercise is on the QOF or not, they should be recommending it to patients. So what next? We ask the experts...

HOW CAN WE GET PHYSICAL EXERCISE BACK ON THE QOF? EMAIL US: [HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM](mailto:HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM)

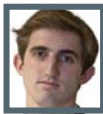
## STEPHEN WILSON

Public affairs director • ukactive

**"I**f the UK physical activity sector is to become a crucial part of the public health machine, we have to improve and expand our research and delivery of cost-effective, evidence-based programmes that work in a real world setting. We also have to show that a health professional prescribing physical activity is offering a tangible benefit to improving the health of the nation.

The problem goes deeper and beyond the QOF. The real issue that needs to be challenged is that health professionals receive almost no training on the physiological and psychological benefits of physical activity, or its role in preventing, managing and treating chronic illnesses. It's unreasonable to expect any significant use of exercise in primary care without such training. To become a health delivery partner to the medical community, we must continue to establish the evidence base for exercise as a health tool and demonstrate that it can be applied and prescribed by GPs.

Improving the training of primary care professionals and making evidence-based interventions available must be the next steps. ukactive is also working with key partners such as Public Health England to raise awareness of the health benefits of physical activity, and the negative impact of inactivity."



## PROFESSOR COLIN HUNTER

Chair of QOF advisory committee • NICE

**"T**here's a rigorous testing process for anything to go onto the QOF, and it must be based on good evidence. Physical activity passed all of the criteria and has a good evidence base; its removal was based on the need to reduce the size of the QOF. Last year, lots of indicators were added; this year, the negotiators decided to remove one-third, because GPs reported the QOF was too burdensome and they felt managed by tick boxes.

I don't think there's any doubt among GPs that physical activity is positive, both mentally and physically, for most of the population. The doubt lays in how effective their own intervention would be on the patient, given that they only have a 10-minute consultation. However, many GPs and practice nurses are still recommending exercise, along with eating healthily, drinking less and stopping smoking.

Physical activity was included on the QOF for a relatively small subset of hypertension sufferers, so I suspect that the impact of its inclusion and removal will be fairly minimal.

Going forward, the fitness industry needs to be aware that much of the UK's inactivity is a result of social inequality – many exercise initiatives currently exclude the most needy, and this needs to be addressed."

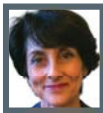




**Many doctors still need convincing about using exercise as an intervention**

## DR TELESILLA WARDLE

GP • London-based surgery



**“H**aving always exercised, I’m a strong believer that exercise is medicine. I’ve been instrumental in setting up an exercise group in my locality, to which I refer my patients who have complex musculoskeletal and cardiovascular problems that require expertly guided aerobic activity.

As GPs we can advise, but we can’t make people take their medication, exercise or eat properly. This doesn’t give us the excuse not to keep trying though. I believe GPs who don’t like to prescribe exercise are often those who don’t lead healthy lifestyles themselves and haven’t invested in the benefits of exercise.

Taking physical activity off the QOF will negatively impact patients. The trial period was too limited to produce any statistically significant data, but this doesn’t deny its value.

For the Department of Health to continue using exercise as an indicator that contributes to health, I think the fitness industry needs to become less frightening to body-conscious people, as well as more approachable financially. I think it would also be helpful if the fitness industry were to strike up relationships with GP practices to help set up cheap, entry-level exercise in the community, similar to the one I’ve helped to establish in Haringey.”

## DEAN HODGKIN

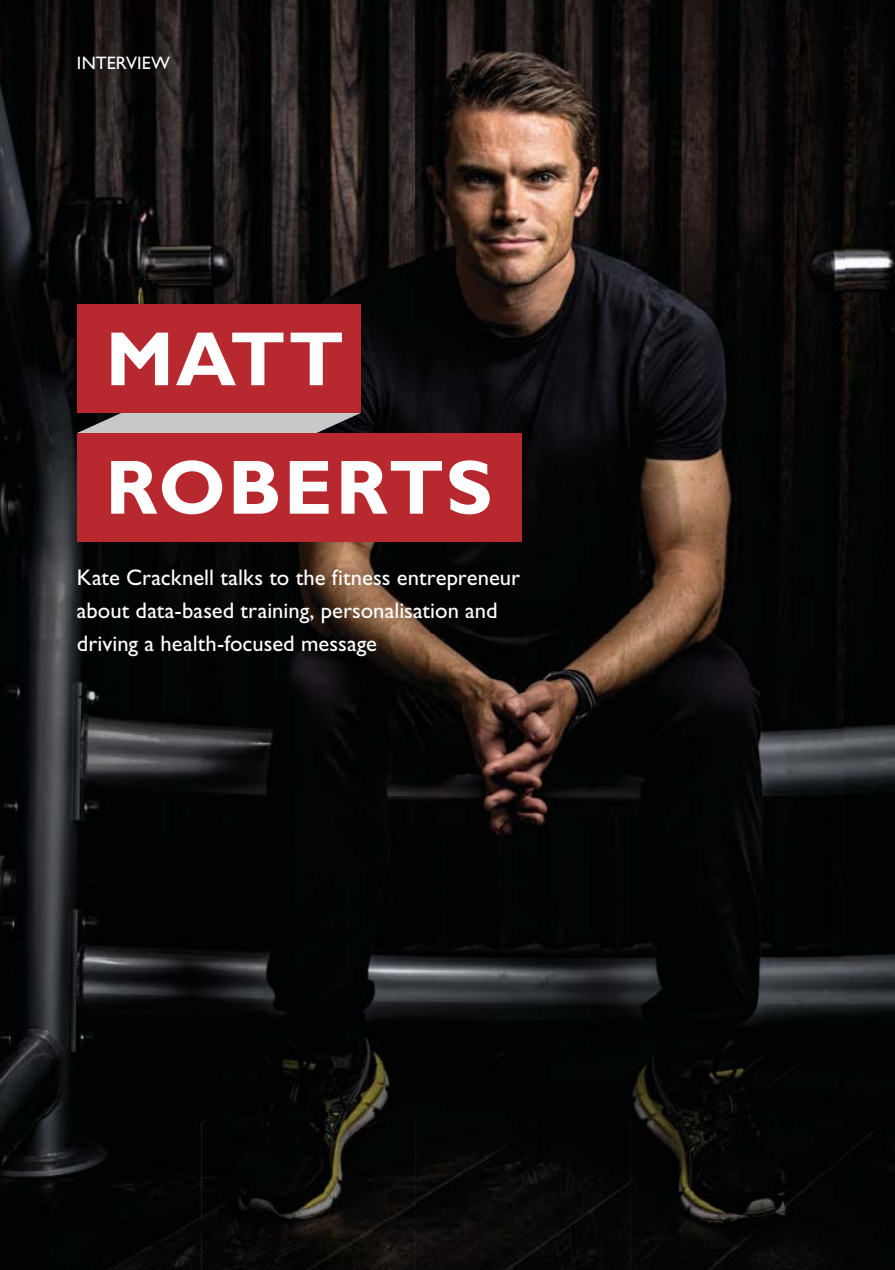
Consultant • Ragdale Hall & énergie



**“W**ithin the fitness sector, we’re well aware that research shows exercise is a viable alternative to prescription drugs as a mode of treatment for many life-threatening health conditions, but this isn’t common knowledge among health practitioners, let alone the man and woman on the street. Including it within the QOF conveyed its importance as an effective intervention, both to GPs and to the public at large.

There’s no question that healthcare professionals, in some quarters, still require convincing of the value of exercise as an intervention so, as an industry, we must push for the proliferation of evidence-based studies.

Maybe their concerns centre around the integrity of our industry and our ability to deliver on our promise, so we must continue to drive the aspiration for high levels of service. A meaningful long-term partnership with the health sector can only exist if we can guarantee, at every point of contact, a quality exercise experience with understanding of, and appropriate advice for, members who present with health conditions. Operators and individuals must commit to ongoing training to upskill front-line staff, ensuring they’re comfortable in dealing with all health issues they might encounter.”

A full-page photograph of Matt Roberts, a fitness entrepreneur, sitting on a gym bench. He is wearing a black t-shirt, black pants, and black and yellow sneakers. He has short brown hair and is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. His hands are clasped in his lap. The background is a dark wooden wall with vertical slats. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting his face and muscles.

INTERVIEW

**MATT**

**ROBERTS**

Kate Cracknell talks to the fitness entrepreneur about data-based training, personalisation and driving a health-focused message



“It’s not about gyms any more. It’s about people, about professionals,” says renowned personal trainer and industry spokesperson Matt Roberts. “The industry is in a very interesting phase and operators have to really focus. They have to reinvent themselves, figure out what their product is and how that fits into someone’s overall pattern of activity. “I believe it’s about great professionals delivering great information in any setting, with the gym being just one of those.”

### IMPARTING INFORMATION

Rewind to 1995, when the then 22-year-old Roberts opened his first PT studio in London’s upmarket Mayfair area, and it’s clear this sort of knowledge gathering and dissemination has been at the heart of his vision from the outset.

“I grew up around sport – my dad was a footballer and I was a sprinter – and I loved competing. I competed at a high level as a junior. But even at the age of 15, the fascination for me lay in the physiology, the biomechanics, how to make the body perform better.

“Even at that young age, I was very clear that the industry needed fantastic personal training venues filled with amazing trainers, with nutritionists and physiotherapists on-hand, doctors on-call for consultations and so on, so that Joe Public could benefit from the sort of training I’d enjoyed. My idea was to create genuinely inspiring venues – creative spaces with a more bespoke offering that were more in-tune with what people really wanted to experience at a gym.

“Aged 22, I found a location in the middle of Mayfair – an abandoned art gallery in what was then a little

recession. I convinced the landlord I was a good bet to take the space on and jumped straight in.”

He continues: “Our USP – and I say ‘our’, although of course it was just me at that stage, because there was a big company mindset even then – was the same then as it is now: a focus on delivering high-end scientific information in a very user-friendly, intuitive way through staff who understand the client, and who don’t necessarily conform to the normal perceived view of what a gym instructor might be. From day one, I recruited people into my training team who were very worldly, highly educated, articulate and who understood how to tap into the mindset of the client.

“We created a setting that’s private, very bespoke, very much a reflection of the user’s home rather than a conventional gym space. Clients come to us feeling comfortable and secure, safe and looked after, but also informed. That’s proved to be an incredibly powerful combination.”

### GROWING THE BRAND

The business has grown steadily since the opening of that first facility. There are now five Matt Roberts clubs in London: four owned and one operated by Roberts’ trainers in the Belgravia-based private ladies’ club, Grace. A sixth location is set to open at the Forte Village in Sardinia this month. Retreats are also available – in the UK, and imminently in Sardinia – offering personalised exercise, nutrition and pampering to small groups of clients.

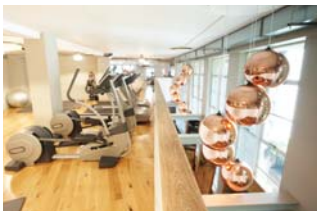
So how easy is it to grow a PT business where the owner is, as Roberts himself acknowledges, the brand? He explains: “If you’re a trainer and the company is your brand, the danger you face is that people only want to train with you – that they call and ask to train with you specifically. But at my clubs, 99 per cent of the time they don’t. People just want to come and train with a Matt Roberts trainer – someone doing the method I’ve created. For me, that’s the measure of brand success.”

So how has he achieved this? “We have phenomenal internal training processes and a great marketing and PR division. We make sure each thing we do is creative and innovative, and we give every employee an opportunity to be involved, to be part of the story rather than just a cog in a machine. We make sure the team really understands the brand so they can act as ambassadors and help take our company story to the broader public.”

But it’s not only the club portfolio that has grown: Roberts has also had great success with brand extensions such as nutritional supplements, fitness products, ▶



There are currently five Matt Roberts clubs in London, with plans to develop a standalone small group training concept this year



## INTERVIEW

The functional training trend is not new for Roberts – he says he's always trained clients in this way

► books and DVDs. "As well as opening multiple locations, the plan from day one was to take the brand and leverage it into new areas," says Roberts. "To do that, you have to create a trusted brand people buy into, where they know they can get reliable information. I only do things that are core to the brand, that I believe in, and that I would use myself."

### TRACKING TRENDS

The latest new initiative will see Roberts launch a standalone small group training concept, MX, over the next eight to 12 months, with a view to opening four or five locations over the coming year to two years. "I don't want to go into great detail yet, but it's going to be an interesting take on small group training in zones – a quick way to get results at a lower price point than we charge for PT," says Roberts.

He continues: "The industry has moved away from mass market clubs. The US has been struggling for a long time, with all the big players having to reinvent the wheel over and over again to make use of their massive buildings and all the CapEx on their equipment."

"What the public actually wants is something more like one-to-one training, except they can't all afford it. Small group work is that next step towards it, giving more flexibility over how you construct your week's exercise. Rather than going to one club and doing the same old thing, you pick and choose at a few different clubs. In the US, SoulCycle has been a massive hit, there



are various pilates formats going on, there are boot camps and so on. That's going to happen increasingly in the UK too, and the model clubs will therefore have to implement will be a small group approach inside their clubs."

So has the offering at Roberts' own clubs had to change over time?

"We have a development team that analyses any new trends, and it's certainly a case of constant evolution," he agrees. "The current 'hot ticket' items of functional training and high intensity training aren't really new: that's the way I've always trained my clients. However, I'd say our gyms are less filled with machines than they've ever been. There's far more open space, more functional training space than ever before. We've actually been taking machines out, so there's much more work with suspension training, kettlebells, functional training movements, primal movements. It's far more about mobility and flexibility, linking pilates and physiotherapy into the training sessions in a more integrated approach."

He continues: "We're doing a lot more sport-specific work nowadays too – there's increased demand from people to get fit for a real purpose – and

that's bringing us closer now to my core philosophy than we've ever been. Instead of people coming in saying they want to get fit, they're telling us they want to get fit because they're going to do a Mont Blanc climb or go on a skiing expedition."

"For me, one of the biggest things that will happen in the sector as a whole is a massive increase in specificity: far more detailed programming for individuals using things like DNA testing, personal monitoring devices, live data. Programmes won't be guesswork any more – there'll be a big drive towards bespoke, through very complex automation, and that's going to be very significant."

### DATA AND PERSONALISATION

In line with this increased specificity, one of the newer initiatives at Roberts' clubs is the use of DNA testing as the basis for personalised programmes. "It gives us more data about our clients: are they power-based or endurance-based, what's their risk of injury, what's their uptake of carbohydrates, how do they absorb salt or caffeine, what's their protein absorption like, what's their vitamin requirement?" explains Roberts.

Those tests aren't entirely prescriptive – some measures have been omitted so as not to seem overly ►



Roberts has had success with brand extensions such as supplements

A man with blonde hair, wearing a black sleeveless athletic top and black shorts, is running towards the viewer on a stone path. The path is surrounded by large, mossy trees in a lush forest. Sunlight filters through the trees, creating a bright, hazy atmosphere. The man is wearing a watch on his left wrist and running shoes.

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***SportsArt***

Roberts says his health clubs have more open space than ever before, with fewer machines

► intrusive – but as Roberts explains:

"They're a great steer, giving you a very good idea of the direction of travel. They also help you cut out the things people shouldn't be doing. We know from testing over the last couple of years that we can refine people's workouts to help them achieve goals they've previously struggled with.

"I also think it's important psychologically that people know they're going the right way. If you can tell them you're prescribing the correct approach for them based on their DNA, they're more likely to stick with the programme."

Alongside this is Cloud Tag, due to launch later this year, to which Roberts has exclusive rights from a PT perspective. "It's a device you wear on your body – a personal body monitoring system that links to the cloud and then gives the information back to your phone. It's essentially an incredible virtual trainer with me as your trainer, using your live data: heart rate, respiration rate, movement and so on.

"For us, information is king. It allows us to make sure we're delivering specific work for the right people at the right time. This sort of technology will change the way trainers work, but it needn't stop them working. It just gives them more information, more tools at their disposal to help their client.

"It does change things for anyone without a trainer though, giving them more information and therefore more control. But if gyms are smart, they'll use the technology to their advantage, interpreting the data and suggesting programme changes to help people reach their goals, not only at the gym but away from it too. It actually offers a way of providing ongoing feedback and care."

### SECTOR SWOT

If he steps back from his own business and looks at the broader sector, what does Roberts feel are the main strengths, weakness and opportunities to evolve?

"I believe we've made gym, fitness and exercise more accessible than it's ever been, getting more ideas out there, but the sector now needs to cast itself in a more premium light. I don't mean charging more money – just making sure we're seen as a bit cooler, sexier, more exciting. A lot of clubs are bland and boring, and people don't want to go there.



**"The sector now needs to cast itself in a more premium light – a bit cooler, sexier, more exciting"**

"We also need more women in the sector. Anyone in marketing will tell you that the market is female: if you get women in, you get their partners too. But gym environments are still very male. We have to make them far more female-friendly, and that includes employing female instructors. It's harder to find female trainers than it is male trainers, but when you do find them, they're terrific. We have to try and attract more women to the industry, because when they're good, they're really good.

"The sector has to be much better at making professionals out of its trainers too – paying them more and giving them a chance to earn a decent living. The industry gets bad press and it's largely unjustified: there are some very good people and the level of training has improved markedly. However, the sector has to create a far more professional outlook so that going to see a fitness trainer becomes a bit like going to see a doctor – viewed as a valid, central part of someone's life.

"In line with that, we have to work a lot harder on creating bridges with the true health industry, communicating with doctors, government and the health service to get information out to the whole nation about exercise being a vital component of health.

"There has to be less of an emphasis on short-term solutions. The current focus on HIIT, for example, is actually leaving people not doing enough exercise. We have to communicate that there are set minimums to be achieved in terms of intensity and duration of exercise. Right now, I think the media – and our message to the media – has too much of a focus on 'eight best ways to get your bum ready for the beach' or 'getting your six-pack back after Christmas'. We have to focus on long-term health, and we need to provide medical back-up to drive those messages home.

"That sort of information can be hard for the public to process, but if you're strict, it can be done. They did it in Finland 30 years ago with a big project that focused on encouraging activity and different eating habits, right down to changing children's school food. Finland went from having the highest rate of heart disease in Europe to the lowest, as well as achieving the highest activity levels. So it is possible.

"Doctors and health practitioners have a big role to play here, ensuring their message is consistent with what the fitness industry is saying. It happens occasionally, but not enough. Message delivery has to be solid and consistent enough to attract people in." ●



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WHAT WE LIVE FOR



# GX vs GYM



A fifth of TRP 10,000 respondents combine the gym with a class

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Group exercise versus gym only: who does what, and does this predict retention? Dr Melvyn Hillsdon reports, in the first of a new series based on the TRP 10,000™ survey

Imagine following a member from their point of joining, through all their visits, interactions, cancellation, joining your competitors, cancelling – all the time analysing their behaviour and asking how they feel and why they're making the decisions they are. Doing this with five people would generate incredible understanding; doing it with 10,000 would give our industry the knowledge it needs to grow the market, meaning a bigger slice for all.

And that's what the ambition has been with the creation of the TRP 10,000™ – the biggest and most comprehensive survey of member behaviour ever carried out in the health and fitness industry (see p39 for details).

Over the coming months, *Health Club Management* will publish the results from TRP 10,000 based on key themes. The focus of this first article will be on what club activities members do, and specifically who participates in group exercise and who uses the gym only. We'll also examine whether members who usually attend for group exercise have higher retention rates than members who work out in the gym only.

## Data and analysis

The results here are for members who completed the survey between July and September 2013, and who were followed up until the end of January 2014. During the follow-up period, 1,526 of the participating members cancelled their membership. From a list of 11 options – they could also tell us about things not on the list – they were asked what they usually visited their club for, and could give multiple answers. Members who listed either 'exercise class' or 'group cycling class' in their answers were classed as group exercisers, while those who only listed 'workout in the gym' were classed as gym-only.

**Table 1** Activity group by gender, age group, length of membership, club history and visit frequency

	GYM ONLY	GROUP EXERCISE
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	26.5	73.5
Male	64.4	35.6
<b>Age group</b>		
16-24	51.4	48.6
25-34	44.9	55.1
35-44	42.3	57.7
45+	39.3	60.7
<b>Months since joining</b>		
<6	49.7	50.3
>=6 to <12	48.3	51.7
>=12 to <36	45.0	55.0
>=36	27.7	72.3
<b>Club history</b>		
First club	34.6	65.5
1	38.8	61.2
2	41.1	58.9
3	44.0	56.0
More than 3	48.2	51.9
Monthly visits (mean)	6.0	6.3



Swimmers tend to do multiple activities when in the club

## Results

Figure 1 (p40) shows what members reported they usually did when they made a club visit. Clearly, working out in the gym is the most common reason for attending, followed by an exercise class, swimming and group cycling classes.

Forty-eight per cent of members reported just one activity as the usual reason for a club visit; 32 per cent reported two, and 20 per cent reported three or more. Figure 2 (see p40) shows how group exercise (group cycling combined with exercise class), swimming and gym workouts group together. Attending for a gym workout only was reported by 40 per cent of members, with nearly a fifth of members reporting a combination of gym and class. Just 13 per cent of members report visiting their clubs for a class only, with 66 per cent of class-goers also reporting they visit the

## About TRP 10,000™

The Retention People (TRP) launched the TRP 10,000 project to further understand member behaviour – from before members join, through point of joining, all the way to cancelling and re-joining.

TRP 10,000 asked 10,000 health and fitness members to complete a baseline survey of their exercise habits and membership behaviour between July and September 2013. During regular intervals over the coming years, they will be followed up to measure changes to their habits and membership behaviour.

More details of the study's methods and who took part can be found on page 40.

The survey included topics such as: membership history; reasons for choosing current club; frequency of club usage and activities; recent

progress; use and reasons for personal training; club communication strategies and how members value them; motivation for exercise; fitness staff activity; club hassles and uplifts; and the Net Promoter Score®.

The longitudinal study design allows us to examine what happens over the course of a membership, and in what way members' experiences – at a given time and during the whole life of their membership – determines retention rates.

Running alongside the TRP 10,000 series in *Health Club Management* will be a range of educational events, newsletters and LinkedIn discussions providing access to both findings and analysis of the research.

For details, please visit: [www.theretentionpeople.co.uk/contact-us](http://www.theretentionpeople.co.uk/contact-us)



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ANDRIS

Gym-only members tend to be young males, newly-joined

## TRP 10,000: Methods & members

### Methods

- Nearly 200 clubs from across the industry participated
- Online survey invitation sent to 250,000 members via email
- Members were included if they were aged 16 and over and had attended their club at least once within the last month
- 11,935 members opened the questionnaire between July and September 2013
- 11,887 members completed at least one page
- 85 per cent (10,062) completed all pages

### Who took part?

- Average age 41 (16 to 85 years)
- 56 per cent female
- Half of members had been a member for at least 12 months; 25 per cent less than six months; and 25 per cent more than three years
- It was the first ever club for 25 per cent of members
- 24 per cent had been a member of the current club before
- 67 per cent used their club less than twice a week

► gym (not in Figure). Similarly, swimmers tend to do multiple activities, with only one in 20 reporting swimming as their only reason for visiting the club.

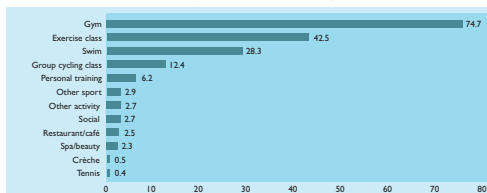
The rest of this article will focus on two groups of members: those who report using the gym only, and those who report their usual reason for attending is group exercise (exercise class or group cycling class) alone or in combination with another activity.

### Solo versus group

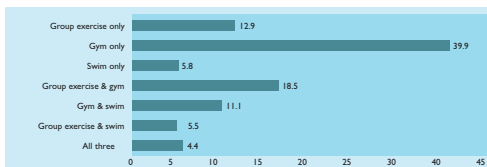
How do gym-only and group exercise members differ from each other? Those belonging to these two groups show variances by gender, age, membership length, club history and visit frequency (see Table 1, p38). As might be expected, group exercise was reported more by females than males; the reverse was true for gym workouts. Gym-only members tended to be younger, while the proportion of members reporting group exercise increased with age.

Longer-term members are less likely to report gym only and more likely to

**Figure 1** Proportion of members reporting activities they usually visit their club to do (activities are not mutually exclusive)



**Figure 2** Proportion of members reporting groups of activity





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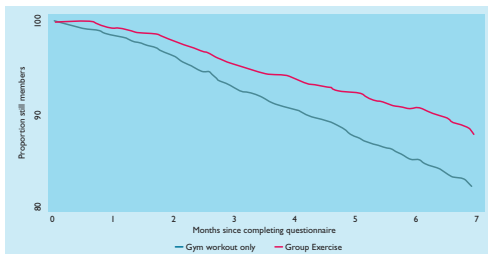
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## GROUP EXERCISE



A higher proportion of females than males attend group ex classes

Figure 3: Retention rate by type of exercise



- report group exercise compared to new members. Members who have been members of multiple clubs are more likely to report only working out in the gym compared with members for whom this is their first ever club. Finally, there is very little difference in visit frequency between the two types of members.

### Impact on retention

So does group exercise actually increase retention compared to gym-only, as has often been anecdotally reported?

Retention rates were calculated based on the time from survey completion (when all members were live) to either the cancellation date (for cancelled members) or 31 January 2014 for live members. Figure 3 shows the retention rate is higher for group exercisers compared to gym-only exercisers.

As of the 31 of January 2014, 88 per cent of group exercise members retained their membership, compared to 82 per cent of gym-only members. The risk of cancelling between completing the questionnaire and the end of January 2014 was 56 per cent higher in gym-only members compared to group exercisers (27.6 cancellations per thousand per month versus 17.7).

However, gym-only members differ from group exercisers by the factors in Table 1 – and these factors in themselves may affect retention and the risk of cancelling. Therefore, it's important to

test whether differences in cancellation rates are definitely due to group exercise rather than these other factors. When we do this, group exercisers are still 26 per cent less likely to cancel than gym-only members: there's something unique about group exercise that leads to better retention that's not fully explained by gender, age, membership length, club history or visit frequency.

### Summary

The results of this study are not a test of exercise classes versus gym, as 66 per cent of members who report group exercise as their usual reason for visiting also report working out in the gym.

What the results do tell, however, is that in both sexes and all age groups, including group exercise as part of a member's exercise routine increases retention compared to the four in 10 who exclusively work out in the gym.

Gym-only members tend to be younger males who are new joiners

entering the industry for the first time. The longer they're a member, the more likely they are to include group exercise in their routine. The challenge is there to encourage young males into group exercise earlier in their membership: if successful, this would improve their retention and their churn rate. ●

Melvyn's day job is associate professor of exercise and health at the University of Exeter, where he researches physical activity and population health.



Since his landmark retention report in 2001 (Winning the Retention Battle), his research into retention and attrition has led to the development of appropriate measures of retention, attrition and longevity that provide data for operators that can directly inform business decisions. In partnership with TRP, he has published numerous reports into the determinants of membership retention that have been presented in the UK and at IHRA annual conferences.



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# A NUDGE in the right direction

ukactive's 'Turning the Tide on Obesity' campaign is the latest to rely on nudging – but what is nudging and does it work?

Tom Walker explores

**“W**e know that, in retail, loyalty scheme customers can be convinced to change their behaviour for £33,” says Sir Keith Mills, founder of two such schemes: Air Miles and the Nectar card. “Incentivising change is possible, but people need to feel there’s a clear benefit from changing their habits.”

Mills, the former deputy chair of LOCOG, made his comments at last November’s ukactive summit, where instigating a change in people’s behaviour was very much on the agenda. At the summit, ukactive announced a new collective ambition for the UK’s active leisure sector: to reduce inactivity levels by 1 per cent year-on-year for the next five years.

## Giving a nudge

As there are no laws against inactivity, to achieve this ambitious target ukactive and its partners will have to rely on what Mills would call ‘nudging’ to change people’s habits. Nudging is a concept used in behavioural science, political theory and economics. The theory is based on the notion that positive reinforcement and indirect suggestions, which attempt to achieve non-forced compliance, can influence the motives, incentives and decision-making of groups and individuals more effectively than direct instruction, legislation or enforcement.

A book published in 2008 by American economists Richard H Thaler and Cass R Sunstein brought nudging into the general public’s consciousness. Simply entitled *Nudge*, the book draws on research in psychology and behavioural economics and defends the active engineering of the way people’s decisions can/may be influenced. While nudging has, arguably, always existed in some form, Thaler and Sunstein’s book was seen as groundbreaking in the depth of detail it offered on how nudging works and how it can be used.

There have been many examples of nudging successfully affecting people’s behaviour across a wide range of topics. One of these was the UK government’s efforts to entice households to invest in loft insulation to conserve energy. Despite large government subsidies, the initial uptake of the scheme was extremely slow.

Research to find out why people weren’t interested – despite it saving them money in the long run – returned a simple but rather unexpected answer. The hassle of clearing out an attic before it could be insulated was putting people off. To tackle this, a ‘nudge’ was created: from September 2011, insulation firms began offering to clear loft spaces and dispose of any unwanted junk. Within weeks, the uptake increased threefold, even though there was an additional cost.

## Target practice

There’s a rich history of nudge-based health campaigns too. In 1991, the US National Cancer Institute joined forces with the Produce for Better Health Foundation to launch the ‘National Five-a-Day for Better Health’ campaign. Over the past 20

years, this Five-a-Day programme – which encourages people to eat more fruit and veg – has spread from a California-based scheme to become the world’s largest public-private nutrition education initiative.

More recently in Boston, US, two Harvard students – Yifan Zhang and Geoff Oberhofer – came up with a fitness concept reliant entirely on behavioural economics. The duo were conducting research on how financial incentives can influence behaviour, when they realised their work had applications outside the classroom. The research was turned into a real-world business plan and as a result the pair launched GymPact in January 2012 (now known as Pact – see also p50). The service offers ‘motivational fees’ – customers agree to pay more if they miss their workouts at the gym.

**Five-a-Day has successfully ‘nudged’ people to increase their fruit and vegetable intake**



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/LIGHTPOET

Over 20 years, ‘Five-a-Day’ has grown from a California-based scheme to become the world’s largest private-public nutrition education initiative



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/SENIOR KOB VAKOV

Based on an iPhone app, users sign up to exercise a certain number of times each week and are charged for failing to meet their goals. At a minimum, GymPact users must commit to one 30-minute workout a week and agree to pay a US\$5 penalty for missing it. At the end of each week, GymPact charges those (via credit card) who fail to meet their goals; the money collected is distributed to users who kept their commitments.

Unlike most other incentive-based fitness apps, GymPact uses the inbuilt GPS of the iPhone to track movements and ensure users are honest. Each time a GymPact member checks in at a gym, swimming pool or a sports facility, they will receive credits to avoid being charged extra.

### Social pokes

GymPact is a great example of how social media and mobile technology can be harnessed to assist with a nudging campaign. However, not all 'nudges' are universal successes.

**In retail, customers of loyalty schemes such as Air Miles can be convinced to change their behaviour for just £33**

Another social media-driven initiative was the UK government's Change4Life campaign. The public health programme was launched

in 2009 by the Department of Health and was the country's first national social marketing campaign designed to tackle the causes of obesity.

The scheme encouraged people to adopt six healthy behaviours – relating to diet, activity levels and alcohol consumption – and adopted an integrated marketing approach. As part of this, the brand had a strong presence across a range of social media platforms, while NHS staff distributed more than 6 million items of Change4Life material to the public. Change4Life adverts were also broadcast in a variety of marketing channels – including television advertising created by Aardman Animations.

As far as establishing the Change4Life brand went, the campaign was successful. For the first year, the Labour government set a target of ensuring 44 per cent of mothers with children aged under 11 would recognise the brand. This



PHOTO SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/IRONKEY BUSINESS IMAGES

The nudging campaign that preceded the smoking ban helped ensure the legislation was widely supported by the public

► was exceeded, as nearly 90 per cent of mothers were able to identify the Change4Life logo a year after its launch. The overall success of the campaign in tackling obesity is still under debate, however, as obesity levels among young people have continued to rise.

In a campaign progress report, public health minister Anne Milton said: "In the past, we've generally tried to change attitudes as a precursor or accompaniment to changing behaviours. While this feels intuitively right, it's troubling that, in health, people's behaviours so often conflict with their stated attitudes.

"By changing the choice architecture – for example, by changing default options or changing perceptions of social norms – it may be possible to change what people do without necessarily changing their attitudes."

In 2011, the government announced its Public Health Responsibility Deal (RD) – a public-private partnership that aims to "tap into the potential for businesses and other influential organisations" to improve public health by "helping us to create this environment".

Consisting of core commitments, supporting pledges and collective and organisation-specific pledges, the initiative is another example of nudging in action. It has, however, come under criticism from public health advocates and others, who have suggested that it will be ineffective – and at worst perhaps even harmful.

### Removing the smoke screen

So while there are nudges that work, there are also cases where results achieved using the method are mixed. Might nudging's greatest strength – especially when used in large-scale public health drives – lie in preparing the ground for change, by altering perceptions and attitudes? Perhaps, rather than guaranteeing behavioural change, nudging might work best as a means to introduce legislation, softening the blow of forced compliance?

The overall success of Change4Life is under debate in spite of high brand recognition, as obesity levels among young people have continued to rise

The experience of the no-smoking campaign seems to back this view. For years, a number of campaigning groups, charities and health professionals attempted to make more people quit smoking. The nudge was obvious: stop smoking and your life expectancy will rapidly rise. Despite the aggressive ways in which this message was broadcast – the 'smoking kills' warnings on tobacco packaging being one – in most countries it wasn't until smoking was banned in public areas and heavy taxes were introduced that genuine progress was made.

While the bans have been fiercely opposed by the tobacco industry, they have been widely welcomed by the public: when the smoking ban was introduced in England in 2007, opinion polls showed strong support for it. It could be argued that the near-universal support experienced in both the UK and the US for the bans – countries that traditionally take a dim view of limiting the rights of individuals – are mainly thanks to a successful campaign of nudging. These campaigns helped people acknowledge the health threats of smoking to themselves, and identify the benefits associated with quitting, before measures were imposed.

Whether the approach used with smoking can – or should – be used in tackling obesity and inactivity by changing legislation remains to be seen. But it's clear something needs to be done: ukactive says that, if everyone in England were sufficiently active, nearly 37,000 needless deaths a year could be prevented.

"By 2020, the average Brit will be so sedentary that they will use only 25 per cent more energy than if they spent the whole day sleeping," says Fred Turok, chair of ukactive. "Over the last 50 years in the UK, physical activity levels have declined by 20 per cent. Even worse, they are projected to decline by a further 15 per cent by 2030."

While Turok stops short of wanting to change legislation, he wants funding streams to be altered to aid the nudging: "Our best indication to date suggests that, on average, no more than 5 per cent of public health intervention budgets are targeted at reducing inactivity, compared with approximately 40 per cent on smoking cessation programmes and another 20 per cent on weight management programmes. If we're to achieve our goal, this has to change." ●



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# REWARDING ACTIVITY

Can reward incentives influence behaviour? Nicki Petitt investigates

**F**itness tracking apps, wearable activity measuring devices and wireless gym equipment have all contributed to a re-invention of the way we, as a nation, exercise. Not only can health club members track and monitor physical activity, both inside and outside the gym or leisure centre, but they can now socially share their results too.

Not only that, but the data generated by this technology is also making it possible to reward individuals for the level of physical activity they're achieving, opening up a new world of opportunity for operators keen to influence user behaviour and encourage brand loyalty.

The idea of rewarding behaviour is nothing new: supermarket chains have been influencing purchase decisions and encouraging brand loyalty through the use of reward

cards for many years. It was back in 2002 that the Loyalty Management Group, chaired by Sir Keith Mills, launched the Nectar Card with BP and Sainsbury's. The initiative is now recognised as the largest loyalty card scheme in the UK, followed closely by the Tesco Clubcard programme.

However, thus far, most schemes in the fitness sector have focused on rewarding attendance, rather than rewarding actual activity undertaken.

So could the proliferation of activity tracking devices, and the opportunity these present to create reward schemes based on actual activity data, prove to be the key in finally getting people

exercising more often – and with it improve member retention?

We take a look at a selection of activity-based reward schemes to assess their impact.

## Relevant rewards

Launched in 2012, fitness rewards app Bounts was designed to encompass both indoor and outdoor fitness activities. It allows users to track their choice of activity and earn points that can be redeemed for rewards from local and national retailers – over 300 household brands such as Nike, Argos, Debenhams, Starbucks and Sainsbury's are involved, alongside smaller local business.

The Bounts platform and app control the reward points, but leisure operators have scope to decide how and why members should receive them up to a certain value.

**MYZONE** is based on Effort Points, which can be linked to actual, physical rewards







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Organisations can connect Bounts with their Legend or Gladstone membership software/online booking system, or use a simple reward tag offered by Bounts. But it's been the decision by Bounts to link up with a number of established third-party apps and devices – including Map My Run, Runkeeper, Nike+, Fitbit, Jawbone and the MYZONE heart rate monitoring system – that has really allowed its rewards to be tied in to actual activity rather than mere attendance.

Points are awarded for the distance completed and time spent exercising through the likes of Map My Run. Meanwhile, when a member uses MYZONE, expended effort is rewarded through MYZONE Effort Points (MEPs). Bounts points are then appropriately awarded, heightening the personalised approach to exercising and rewards.

Bounts has been adopted by a range of organisations, from an NHS project to Active Stirling, Fusion Lifestyle, Oxford City Council, Sport Aberdeen and a number of single-site gyms and charities. The Barn, an independent gym in Oxfordshire, saw a reduction in monthly attrition rates from 3.1 per cent to 1.9 per cent in the first six months of using Bounts.

John Stuart, founder of Bounts, says: "A simple reward for a positive behaviour can be a very powerful motivator. Plenty

**Above: Fitness rewards app Bounts has linked up with apps such as Map My Run**

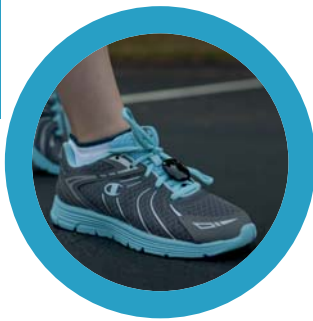
**Right: FitLinx's Pebble is smart enough to know if the user is genuinely active**

of studies in areas like smoking cessation have shown rewards to work in the short term. The key is whether rewards can lead to a sustainable difference over months and years, and sadly many existing reward programmes in the fitness sector fail to deliver sustainable results because they have limited appeal – they don't have the depth, breadth or frequency to engage people.

"If you want a reward to work, it has to have a high perceived value, but also has to be relevant to the individual. That's why you need to include many brands, as each person will be interested in different things."

### Can't cheat, won't cheat

If activity data is to be used as the basis for rewards, of course the data has to be watertight. MYZONE CEO Dave Wright says: "We found that too many systems could be easily gamed, whether it was swiping into a health club to sit in the sauna or shaking an accelerometer. That all undermines the purpose of reward: increasing physical activity.



"But you can't cheat your heart. With our system, it doesn't matter how fit or unfit you might be, or what sport or activity you do – it's all about the effort you put in."

FitLinx has also developed an intelligent device that can't be cheated. Accurately tracking steps, distance, calories and time spent exercising, the Pebble tracks the hard work and effort applied during a workout.

Colin Neale, director of business development at FitLinx, says: "The Pebble is smart enough to know whether the user is active or simply



- ▶ tapping their foot or driving a car; FitPoints are awarded for the actual physical activity completed.

"If tracking systems are to receive the wider support of the health promotion community, we must be able to prove that the activity measures are real. At the same time, there's no 'one size fits all' when it comes to a rewards programme. FitPoints are tailored to the individual – the 10 minutes that the retired teacher puts in on the bike are worth as much as a 10-minute interval run by a seasoned athlete – which keeps everything attainable."

FitPoints are automatically recorded when a member logs on to FitLinxx. Every minute of cardio exercise earns the member five points; 10 points for every strength station; and one point for every 100lbs lifted. Members progress through various award levels, ranging from 'White' (15,000 FitPoints) to 'Platinum' (500,000 FitPoints).

Facilities can use points as they wish, but for example could reward 2,500 points with a free cup of coffee, 15,000 points with a PT session and 125,000 points with a free month of membership.

When analysing the impact on retention, FitLinxx compared nine leisure sites managed by a leisure trust. Three were using FitLinxx technology, and these three sites reported 15 per cent better retention rates than the other six centres that hadn't yet rolled out the tracking technology.

### Healthy competition

Financial rewards are proving a successful tactic for US-based company Pact (originally launched as GymPact – see also p44). Compatible with both iOS and Android, the Pact app tracks increased exercise and healthy eating,

### Technogym's Challenge app helps clubs manage and measure member challenges

allowing users to earn cash paid by other members who fail to reach their weekly goals. And the data is robust: "GPS and photos are used as evidence for honest exercise reporting. All actions must be verified in order for them to count towards a Pact," says Marissa Window, Pact marketing lead. The app has motivated 6.5 million workouts since its launch in 2012, and is used by gym-goers for an average of six to nine months.

Also tapping into the competitive nature of today's members, Technogym's Challenge app allows operators to create, manage and measure effective member challenges via an online portal – challenges based not only on number of gym visits, but also on intensity of movement, calories burned and distance travelled. Launched in 2012, the app sits on the mywellness cloud platform, with a live leaderboard spurring members on to achieve higher rankings and – if the operator wishes – prize wins.

Not only does this approach help clubs build a relationship with their members, but it also establishes a club community – both factors that research has shown time and again to positively impact on retention.

### Virtual rewards

Goal-setting is another way to motivate increased physical activity. Precor's Preva Personal Accounts allows exercisers to set long- and short-term goals and choose relevant targets based on distance, calories or duration. Virtual rewards are then used to acknowledge

progress and keep members motivated towards their end goal, with badges awarded to mark milestones along the way – 'Golden Gate', for example, which is awarded for burning 232 calories, the average calorie burn when walking across San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge.

The virtual badges can be viewed in an online gallery and shared through social media, and prove that rewards don't have to be expensive for the operator – although feasibly an operator could allocate actual, physical rewards and prizes when members attain significant milestone badges.

At Wellington College's Total Body Gym in Berkshire, 89 per cent of the 2,500 members said that Preva increased the likelihood of them completing their workout; the gym also saw a 25 per cent reduction in membership cancellations over the course of 12 months after installing the networked system.

### Time will tell...

We already know that the easier it is for the user to accurately track their workout and see their results, the more likely it is that they will keep exercising and maintain their membership: Precor's research, for example, shows that exercisers who set a weekly goal through their Preva Personal Account visit their fitness facility, on average, one and a half times more per week than those who don't.

The longer-term question we must seek to answer, though, is this: to what extent are members motivated by their fitness goals in themselves – and to what extent do they need rewards to make them stick to the day-to-day actions needed to achieve those goals? ●

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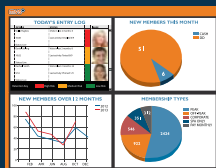
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# ORDERING PHASE

As a developer of leisure centres, Alliance Leisure brings strong supply chain benefits to clients – not just in terms of price, but range, quality and aftercare. Director Paul Cluett explains

## What kind of supply companies do you have relationships with?

We have supply chain relationships with key equipment suppliers that we've carefully built up and developed over the years. We try to keep it to a fairly select list of the products that we use most often in our developments. These include spa products, changing rooms and lockers, audio-visual equipment, soft play products, all weather pitches and climbing structures.

We'll usually work with several companies within these different sectors, so if our client favours a particular company or product for some reason, they always have a choice.

The one area where we don't have preferred suppliers is fitness equipment, as we find this to be a very personal choice for operators – so we work with all the fitness equipment suppliers. When we go to shows like Sibec, for example, we're there as both a supplier and a buyer looking for the latest and best products.

## How do you select suppliers?

There are two key factors. One is price – can they give us the most cost effective and best value deal? Secondly, and just as important, what are they like as a company? Do they have sound warranties, are their products durable, and are they skilled at installation? We also do financial checks on them.

Our leisure developments are only as strong as the weakest link. We could complete a fantastic scheme, only to find it compromised by a sub-standard piece of equipment. Our reputation is very closely aligned to how our supply chain performs.

## Do you only work with suppliers on your select list?

We can work with any products and suppliers, but obviously we've chosen to

## Follow the series

1. Scoping / Investigation
2. Conceptualisation
3. Viability assessment & full feasibility
4. Site investigation
5. Fixed price contracts
6. Overseeing the building work
7. **Ordering phase**
8. Client support (part 1)
9. Client support (part 2)

work with our supply chain because we regard them as the best, and they are also accustomed to our way of working and high standards.

Of course, our client can have any product they wish in their new facility, as long as they realise they might need to pay more for it and the overall budget will need to be adjusted. From our point of view, we need to ensure that we can work well with any new suppliers and trust them during the installation stage.

All our preferred suppliers, for example, are very strong on health and safety and are used to working in live environments like leisure centres. Most of the developments we do cannot

## ► CASE STUDY – Feel Good Factory, Blackbrook Pavilion, Somerset

The Feel Good Factory toning suite opened in early 2010 at Blackbrook Pavilion in Taunton, Somerset. Run by Tone Leisure, it was one of the first toning suites to open at a local authority leisure site.

Most operators are less familiar with this type of equipment, and Alliance worked with Tone Leisure to advise on the layout, room specification, operation and pricing, as well as supply of the equipment.

Alliance has been working with toning suite supplier Shapemaster for almost a decade, and has completed numerous successful projects with them. Like all companies in the Alliance supply chain, the toning table supplier has undergone and passed all the usual Alliance checks related to financial stability, product quality and durability, installation expertise and aftercare.

Alliance business development manager, Julia Goddard says: "Toning suites are an ideal product for centres to

consider, they do not compete with traditional health and fitness facilities but attract a new user profile to facilities.

"From an installation point of view, the machines only require a 13 amp socket and there are few maintenance issues. No air conditioning is required for the room, nor any dedicated changing rooms, as people can use the tables in their everyday clothes."

She adds: "Customers who can benefit often have a range of health issues, including: neurological disorders such as MS, fibromyalgia and cerebral palsy; musculoskeletal problems like arthritis and spine/neck/back injuries; cardiovascular issues – for example, following angioplasty and bypass surgery; chronic bronchitis and emphysema; diabetes; and obesity – especially morbid obesity."

Blackbrook Pavilion now boasts over 250 members, and has been so successful that Tone Leisure has since opened a second Feel Good Factory in South Hams.



**Blackbrook Pavilion was supplied with Shapemaster equipment**



**The suite is suitable for use by people with various health issues**

**Toning suites require minimal maintenance**



afford to close during the building phase, and so this aspect is very important from the point of view of end-user relations and consumer safety.

#### **What are the other benefits of working with your supply chain?**

Aside from price and quality, there's also the very important issue of aftercare. If it's a one-off deal and you've already signed the cheque then it can often be quite tricky to get things fixed if problems arise. Our suppliers are much more likely to jump in the car and get

any problems fixed quickly – especially when they have many more deals with us in the pipeline.

As we have national account status we can get things sorted out more easily. If there's a problem with a widget we can usually go directly to the manufacturer, rather than waiting for a regional account manager to get in touch!

#### **Are you always looking for new suppliers to add to your list?**

We are constantly market-testing suitable new products and all our

current suppliers know that, so that ensures that their prices are kept lean and competitive.

We never rest on our laurels in this area, and must ensure that our supplier prices aren't slowly creeping up and becoming out of kilter with what the rest of the market is doing. ●

#### **Contact details:**

[www.allianceleisure.co.uk](http://www.allianceleisure.co.uk)  
Tel: +44 (0)1278 444944

# TAKE A SHOWER, BUILD A WELL

Ray Algar takes a look at an initiative by Fresh Fitness in Denmark to help fund fresh water wells in Uganda

**F**resh Fitness is a fast-growing chain of low-cost gyms in Denmark. With low-cost all about providing just the core experience and nothing more, and members paying only for what they use and value, CEO Rasmus Ingerslev and his team introduced a small charge of 3 Danish Kroner for any members choosing to take a one-minute shower – that's around US\$0.50. This achieves two things: water consumption is reduced and money is raised. However, this was never about the money, so what should they do with it?

## Let others be liberated by water

The insight Fresh Fitness had was that, while their members were enjoying a lovely post-workout shower, there were other people in the world with no access to clean, safe water. The idea was therefore to bring the two sides of this story together. Now, when a member takes a shower, the money they spend goes directly to the Danish Red Cross to finance new fresh water wells in Uganda.

## Long-term commitment

Fresh Fitness believes in making long-term commitments, so it has agreed a three-year partnership with the Danish Red Cross with a pledge to donate a minimum of 100,000 Danish Kroner (US\$18,000) a year. This is very different from much of the 'charitising' that takes place. What is charitising? It's advertising the business dressed up as a short-term act of charity.

## Results

As at January 2014, Fresh Fitness had already donated 200,000 Danish Kroner (US\$36,000). This has enabled the Danish Red Cross to build two new fresh water wells in the Karamoja area of north-east Uganda, providing safe and clean water for 500 people for the next seven years. Villagers are also taught how to maintain the wells, giving them complete control over this critical resource.

### IN A NUTSHELL

**Project by:** Fresh Fitness (Denmark) – [www.freshfitness.dk](http://www.freshfitness.dk)

**Project location:** Uganda, east Africa

**Project start date:** June 2012

**Project status:** Ongoing (three-year project)

**Impact:** National

**Financial commitment:** Minimum donation of US\$18,000 a year for three years

**Gymtopia keywords:** Environment, Health & Wellbeing, Helping Children

**Charities supported:** Danish Red Cross



Fresh Fitness raises funds to build wells in Uganda

## Gymtopia – a place where clubs do social good

Gymtopia was conceived by founder and chief engagement officer Ray Algar, who believes the global health and fitness industry has enormous influence and potential to do good in the world, beyond its immediate customers. The idea of Gymtopia is simple: to curate and spread remarkable stories in which the fitness industry uses its influence to reach out and support an external community in need. It was created with the generous support of various UK and overseas individuals and organisations.

**Read more stories and submit your own:**

[www.Gymtopia.org](http://www.Gymtopia.org)



## Clean water changes everything

Imagine, rather than waving your children off to school this morning with their school bag, instead giving them a 23-litre jerry can and sending them off for three hours to collect water from a stream contaminated with animal waste. The choice in places like Karamoja is simple: school or water. This is why locally available clean and safe water transforms lives. It's the building block for good health and unlocks time: time to read, to write, to attend school and to do what should be the right of every child – to play.

## So what can you do?

Identify a social cause that your customers, staff and other stakeholders care about. Water matters, but perhaps your organisation wants to use its influence in some other way. The important thing is to start something that matters. Why? That's easy – because you can. ●



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Science

## Speaks

From improving explosive power to building strength and boosting balance, studies show vibration technology is effective in a wide range of applications. Kath Hudson reports on some of the latest research

A few years ago, vibration training manufacturers seemed to be working on new research constantly, eager to back up the effectiveness of what might have been viewed as a 'too good to be true' form of exercise.

Previous studies have shown that whole body vibration training (WBV) can help with muscle development, improved cardiovascular/ cardiorespiratory endurance and lymphatic circulation, re-education of neuromuscular pathways and motor skills, better flexibility, greater strength and stability, pain reduction and regeneration and recovery.

However, in recent years the rate of research has slowed down, possibly because vibration training has now become more widely accepted by the industry. "Scepticism among health club operators in the early years has been replaced by positive opinion," says David Morrell, managing director of React Fitness, the UK distributor of VibroGym. "Personal trainers in particular realise that vibration training forms an integral part of their clients' programmes, and in many cases will be the key component of an effective and enjoyable workout."

**Powerx research: WBV can increase explosive power generation**

"This is particularly evident when training older clients or special population groups, with vibration training's potential to prevent and reduce many debilitating ailments."

### Falls prevention is better than cure

Historically there has been an emphasis on vibration training to build bone density, but Steve Powell, director UK training & education of Performance Health Systems – which produces Power Plate – says the key benefits of vibration training among special populations and the elderly are being overlooked: "While vibration training can help build bone density, the reality is that the most effective machine for this outcome is one that can deliver loading in many multiples of body weight, like our bioDensity device. To prescribe Power Plate for building bone density is missing the point: its primary benefits for special populations are to build proprioception, strength and balance for falls prevention."

The impact of falls is considerable. The Age UK June 2013 report *Falls Prevention Exercise – Following the Evidence* explains that falls and fractures in people aged 65 and over account for over 4 million hospital bed days each year in England alone, and the healthcare cost associated with fragility fractures is estimated at £2bn a year. There are around 70,000 hip fractures annually and these injuries are the leading cause of accident-related mortality in older people. After a fall, an older person has a 50 per cent probability of having their mobility seriously impaired, as well as a 10 per cent probability of dying within a year (Help the Aged, 2008, *Towards Common Ground*).

The Age UK report states that a tailored exercise programme can reduce falls by as much as 54 per cent, and draws attention to NICE guidelines on the assessment and prevention of falls in older people: namely, that strength and balance training should be a key component of successful multifactorial intervention programmes.

A one-year study of Power Plate training in elderly people showed improvements in mobility and stability, which resulted in reduced fall frequency and improvement in the response





VibroGym is used by the Target Performance centre, which offers rehab-based exercise prescription

“Scepticism among club operators in the early years has been replaced with positive opinion”

to surface rotations. A total of 220 healthy individuals aged between 60 and 80 years took part in the study. The Power Plate group performed static and dynamic exercises on the Power Plate for 47 weeks, three times a week.

After six months, the percentage of people who didn't fall in the most difficult conditions had risen to 79 per cent from 64 per cent at the start of the programme. After 12 months, this percentage had risen to 87 per cent of people not falling.

“We already know that WBV training can improve muscle strength and flexibility. By combining this with improved proprioception and balance, Power Plate training can be a very useful tool in falls prevention training for the elderly population,” says Powell.

“There are over 10.3 million people aged 65+ in the UK and the ageing population is growing. As a non-invasive, reflexive, neurological stimulus that can be completed in a

relatively brief timeframe, Power Plate offers an effective solution for this population, and an opportunity for the fitness industry to help improve these individuals' health and lifestyle.”

### Reducing the impact of chronic illnesses

Studies have also shown that WBV training offers great benefits and improvements in many conditions such as MS, chronic stroke, Parkinson's, arthritis, fibromyalgia and diabetes.

Last year, in a 12-week study of 50 non-insulin dependent type 2 diabetes sufferers – conducted at the University of Auckland in New Zealand – WBV was founded to be feasible, safe and effective in improving glycaemic profile, lipid-related cardiovascular risk factors and functional capacity.

A 2012 study reported in the *Health Science Journal* showed the effects of

WBV on a type 2 diabetes sufferer with damage to the peripheral nervous system, commonly associated with diabetes. The 52-year-old woman complained of night sleep disturbance, foot pain, tingling and fear of falling, and had tried medication without any effect. After six weeks of WBV, her pain levels, muscle strength, balance and flexibility improved and her neuropathy score decreased significantly.

On an anecdotal level, the Target Performance centre in Amersham – which has been using VibroGym for seven years, specialising in rehab-based exercise prescription – has helped many sufferers of MS, stroke, Parkinson's and osteoporosis. Stroke victim Robert Bright was referred to the centre by an occupational therapist in 2012, three years after suffering a stroke. Two sessions a week helped him walk more confidently, improved muscle tone, ▶

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## VIBRATION TRAINING

WBV's success with diabetes sufferers is particularly significant, considering there are now 3.2 million sufferers in the UK

- reduced the swelling around his ankles and brought back sensation to areas he couldn't feel before starting WBV.

According to centre director James Golden, Bright's physiotherapist has been amazed by the progress, and Bright has been so encouraged that he invested in his own vibration trainer so he could make the training part of his daily routine at home.

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease is another illness that can be aided by WBV. A 2012 study, using Powrx Active Evolution 3.5, was conducted at the sports academy of the Sporthochschule in Cologne, Germany, assessing the results of WBV on a group of 10 COPD sufferers. The study sample participated in an eight-week programme of two sessions a week, with exercises targeting upper body muscles versus lower body muscles on a 1:2 ratio. For the first three weeks, the vibration was set at 30Hz, and was then increased to 45 Hz. Where the patients were able to tolerate the intensity, the amplitude of the plate was changed from low (1–2mm) to high (3–4mm).

As a result of this trial, patients saw a 15–20 per cent improvement in how far they could walk in six minutes. Additionally, a 10–12 per cent improvement in overall strength was recorded in all patients.

### Benefits for athletes

In case this feature should suggest that WBV is only suitable for those suffering from chronic conditions, a German study shows that it can improve explosive power generation too.

The Sports Science faculty at the University of Leipzig conducted a study into whether WBV can make people jump higher. The scientists studied a group of 14- to 16-year-old male volleyball players to see whether the use of WBV as an integral part of the players' overall training plan would show a significant improvement in explosive



**Power Plate research: A key role for WBV in falls prevention**

power generation. The six-week study used a Powrx Pro Evolution 3.1. Training involved six intervals of 30 seconds at 30Hz, and also six intervals of 45 seconds at 30Hz, twice a week.

The trial participants were divided into two groups. Group A integrated vibration training into their usual training plan, whereas group B also integrated vibration training into their training regime but were not allowed to participate in any conventional explosive type of exercises. A control group adhered to conventional exercise.

The study showed a height increase of 3.73cm (8.51 per cent) in explosive high jumping ability in groups A and B, but only a height increase of 2.38cm (6.09 per cent) in the control group that did not incorporate vibration training.

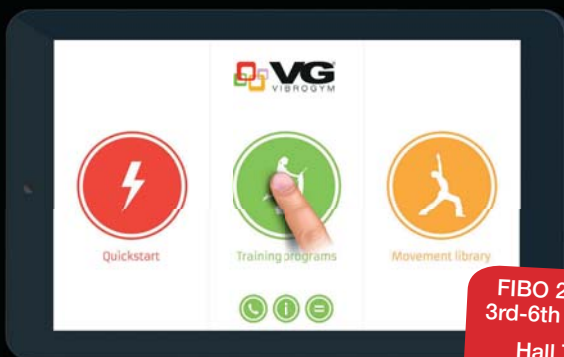
The study therefore concluded that significant improvements in explosive power can be achieved with the integration of vibration training, leading to an ability to jump higher.

### Ongoing research

The ongoing research certainly seems to justify vibration training's place in gym programmes. The results achieved among those with chronic diseases are especially important given the sector's enthusiasm for working more closely with the healthcare system.

WBV's success with diabetes sufferers is particularly significant considering the current NHS data, which shows that there are now 3.2 million sufferers in the UK – a number that's increasing all the time. ●

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# NEED NOT WANT

Carl Bennett looks at the importance of understanding consumer needs – not just those of your existing customers, but the needs of the community at large – before you refine your product and proposition

**D**o you ever stop to think about the needs your services are satisfying?

Most club managers will probably reply 'yes' to that question, but I would argue that many are in fact only thinking about the needs of their existing members. Admittedly this is a challenge in itself – analysing the profile of the members in your club, how they group into 'tribes', what their needs and motivations are – and one not all operators have yet cracked. But in the end, it's a matter of member research, profiling, segmentation, databasing... It's something all operators should, if they put adequate resource behind it, be able to do; after all, with penetration levels static, it's ultimately the same segments and same member types appearing in our clubs over and over again.

But in my mind, if providers continue to waste time and resources further segmenting the distilled pool of current customers, they lose traction time in engaging those who have far more to gain health-wise. I therefore believe it's far more important to spend time understanding the needs of those who aren't yet members of gyms – those who haven't bought into fitness. Continually reinventing what we already know to better understand existing users is not good enough when 70 per cent of the population remain inactive.

We have to understand and meet the needs of the whole community, and this is a far more complex challenge.


## Identifying need

Identifying need is therefore a public health priority. It's the basis on which interventions can be developed that will stand up to scrutiny – that have genuine value and impact. Understanding need is also core to understanding partnership investment opportunities.

Need is an interesting concept in itself, and there are clearly defined needs that any service provider must recognise if they want to ensure their offers match the needs of the public at large.

First is the category of 'normative need', which is often defined by an expert or professional. This generally means there are standards or measurements introduced to be able to say a need has been met. In our sector, the physical activity guidelines for children – the need to do from 60 to 180 minutes' activity a day – is a normative need.

Then there's 'felt need', which is what individuals believe they want. An example might be if someone wants to lose weight: they will seek out information that might help them action their felt need. The issue here is what people want and what people 'need' are two different issues. Fulfilling wants drives further want. Fulfilling need fills a



**It's important that fitness providers find interventions that get inactive people moving**

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/TUNGKATO

crucial lack of, or gap in, services across all sectors of the fitness industry.

'Expressed need' is what people actually say they need – a felt need that's been turned into an expressed request or demand, and which may conflict with a professional's normative need. You can measure expressed need by monitoring the use of a service or activity. The problem with measuring expressed need is that a service people want might not be available, meaning you can't measure its use, meaning gaps in service provision can't be identified.

Finally, 'comparative needs' can be identified by comparison between similar groups of clients, some of whom are accessing a service and some who are not. What I mean by this: we can look at the interventions one population accesses and compare these to other areas or populations that don't have



“  
The JSNA should be the basis  
for any initiative. If it's not on  
the JSNA, it's likely you're doing  
the wrong thing ”

access to the same things. This provides a baseline from which to build and helps providers develop interventions that have been proven to be effective in addressing specific issues among specific population groups. As an example, a large gym complex might work effectively with a cardiac rehab population in one part of a city, yet in another part of the city this population might not be able to access the same service and might have worse health outcomes as a result. A comparative case can be developed to extend the reach of that service based on this comparative need knowledge.

#### Understanding local needs

The key is to understand all of the numerous and varied needs in evidence within any given community, to ensure your offering ticks all the boxes for every population group.

Fortunately for operators, local needs are clearly identified in publicly available Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs). These are locally informed sets of indicators in which the local authority and their partner organisations – including the Clinical Commissioning Groups, the NHS, as well as voluntary and education organisations – are investing resources to improve.

These ought to act as the basis for any initiative or intervention launched by an operator: in my view, if it's not in the JSNA, it's likely you're doing the wrong thing.

Recently, another layer of priorities was introduced. These are specific public health priorities that can be found in your local Public Health Outcome Framework (PHOF) – for more information, see <http://lei.sr?a=n4y0c>

And it's just as important for the private sector to understand these

frameworks as it is the public sector. Understanding local priorities – and therefore understanding the needs of different populations – responds to core business principles.

However, I find many private sector organisations have set programming: they fail to engage new customers because they develop programming based on wants instead of needs. As a public health commissioner myself, I'm often approached by the private sector and asked for money to invest in their interventions, but most of these interventions are based on what they already do. They assume they can somehow bring in new people by doing the same thing they've done before, rather than developing new initiatives to specifically appeal to the inactive populations for whom I'm tasked with developing effective interventions. ►

**Fitness providers need to ensure their offerings tick all the boxes for every population group in society**

- I find this lack of change frustrating. The private sector has to be at the forefront of adaptation and change – and this change needs to be informed by need, not simply a new business idea.

### Segmentation

Once you've understood the actual needs of communities, you'll be required to communicate with the different populations within those communities to get across the specific messages you require them to hear.

Knowing what to say and how to say it is crucial to ensure you're getting your messages to the right receiver. For example, if you know that over 49 per cent of the local population has poor health literacy – a common challenge in the UK – and an average reading age of 11 years old, why would you plough ahead and use the same communication approach for the whole population?

Using segmentation as a tool to identify the 'who' and 'how' is therefore becoming the norm. There are many different ways to segment: for members you might segment according to attendance patterns, classes booked and so on, while Sport England offers a model of segmentation that might be appropriate for those wanting to better understand non-members – see <http://lei.sr7a=p0h0B>; MOSAIC groups and types are another.

In general though, the key is to find a way to group people into segments that are small enough to let you be focused and relevant in your messaging, yet large enough that you don't require hundreds of tailored marketing messages going out at an almost individual level. The more detail you can go into on your profiles the better, while keeping the number of segments manageable.

If used correctly, segmentation can also help you understand much more than marketing and communication techniques. It can help you understand social issues, prevalence of health issues, educational attainment, the type of work and therefore the disposable income available in a certain geographic

area of your catchment. It can help you identify sub-groups within specific population groups, to understand their very specific needs that you might be able to meet.

The real opportunity is in using segmentation to reach further into the untapped market, penetrating where very few competitors reach.

### Impact

Now you have all the above information within your programming design armoury, you should be better placed to design interventions that reach and respond to the needs – and likelihood of engagement – of both the population and specific population groups, creating programming offers that are fit for purpose and fit for the groups the sector currently struggles to reach. Hopefully these will match both the JSNA and PHOF priorities.

Designing need responses into your programming will also help you determine what it is you're trying to achieve and provide you with some measurable outcomes to help you demonstrate your impact. Long gone are the days when simple numbers were enough to help you argue your service's value: you really do need to begin to tell the story about impact and measurable change.

The difference being active makes is relatively easy to measure. Proving impact across a population group, or for the whole population, is a different ball game completely. Knowing what to measure, and how to measure it, is extremely important. Deciphering data to enable you to transform raw numbers into reliable information – information on which you can adjust an offer to better match need – is of paramount importance.

### The challenge

If I look across the sector as a whole, I see that current offers and programming approaches adopted by the physical activity providers do not match need. Nor do they provide enough choice, opportunity or value-driven offers.

It's time to re-set the compass and do things differently. Ultimately it's a leadership decision to adapt and change to match needs rather than wants – and these have to be the needs of society as a whole, rather than the small percentage of existing gym-goers. ●

Carl Bennett FCIMSPA is a senior health improvement specialist and public health commissioner working for Stoke on Trent City Council. He is also a trustee (elect) and the current chair of the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA). He has worked at the coalface of physical activity delivery and has supported many organisations to help them realise their value and impact.



**"The current programming approaches adopted by physical activity providers do not meet need"**



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The team from Sandwell Leisure Trust receive the Best Small Chain trophy from Liz Terry

## Has your club got the 'X' Factor?

**E**ntry is open and voting is now underway for the fourth annual Members' Choice Health Club Awards in partnership with *Health Club Management* magazine.

The awards measure the quality of customer service, facilities and value for money provided by clubs and leisure centres, asking customers to rate them in an anonymous online survey. This year, over 1,000,000 members are expected to get involved.

The success of the awards already has been largely down to the unique way clubs are rated: there's no judging panel, no submission to write, no phone interview – just the thoughts of members on how good their own club is.

The competition is open to all private health clubs and leisure centres in the UK and clubs compete in 14 regions, split into Budget, Mid Market and Premium categories.

### Feedback reports

Simon Brown, MD of the Health Club Awards, says: "When a club signs up, it sends a very clear message to new and existing customers. It proves the club is

The deadline is looming for this year's Health Club Awards – have you entered your club yet?

committed to providing the best member experience they possibly can – and that they're prepared to prove it.

"Members are invited to complete a questionnaire and can leave feedback on any aspect of the club they wish. This ensures club staff can see their strengths and weaknesses and improve facilities and services accordingly. Taking part in the competition also provides a great opportunity for staff to interact with members more by encouraging them to complete the survey."

This year, new online features will enable clubs to view anonymous feedback comments from members as they vote and send them out on their own Twitter accounts. They can also view weekly feedback reports showing how they are performing against other clubs in the competition.

Clubs also receive a comprehensive Member Feedback Report at the end of the competition, offering regional and national comparison data.

The awards will also once again recognise the efforts of individual staff members in the People Awards category, as Brown explains: "The competition is about recognising clubs for their excellence, but we also want to highlight individual staff. All staff are eligible for this award, and it offers them the chance to be recognised locally and nationally for their hard work."

### Enter now!

The shortlists for all categories will be published in July and winners will be announced at the Health Club Awards dinner on 30 September 2014 at the National Motorcycle Museum in Birmingham – the first night of Leisure Industry Week (LIW). Gold, silver and bronze awards will be presented for the regions, with Grand Prix titles for the best Budget, Mid Market and Premium clubs in the UK also up for grabs.

Entry is open until 1 May. Voting will close on 16 June. For details and to sign up, go to [www.healthclubawards.co.uk](http://www.healthclubawards.co.uk)



# THIS YEAR IT COULD BE YOU...



The **Health Club Awards** are the only awards where winners are selected purely on ratings from members. Since their launch **100,000 members** have voted. Taking part helps motivate staff, engage members and win new customers.

New features this year include weekly **Member Feedback Reports**, live access to customer testimonials and auto Tweet facility.

Voting opens on **3rd March** so sign up now at [healthclubawards.co.uk](http://healthclubawards.co.uk)

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# Turning the TIDE

Is ukactive's strategy to address the UK's high levels of inactivity on track to achieve its ambitious goals? We ask a panel of leading industry figures for their views

A part of efforts to prevent 37,000 needless deaths a year, ukactive is spearheading a new campaign to 'turn the tide of inactivity' in the UK – with the scale of the challenge laid bare in a report of the same name.

The wording is intentional: rather than concentrating on obesity as has been the case across society in recent years, the focus is on getting people more active. Launched at the ukactive summit in November, the initiative has

got off to a strong start, with government, business and the NHS backing the scheme. There has even been an acknowledgment from Prime Minister David Cameron.

If the campaign reaches its target of reducing inactivity by 1 per cent every year for the next five years, the project could save tens of thousands of lives and save taxpayers £1.2bn – a tax reduction of £44 per household.

ukactive has set a course to ensure that a cross-party, cross-government national strategy on inactivity will be

embedded within the 2015 election manifesto of all parties. It has also called for councils to set health and wellbeing strategies where success is measured by reducing levels of inactivity rather than obesity – an important point, as a recent ukactive report showed that councils only spend 2.4 per cent of their health budgets on getting people more active.

But how is the programme different from other, similar initiatives in the past? We ask three leading industry figures for their views.



**Professor Kevin Fenton**

National director of health and wellbeing, Public Health England

The 'Turning the Tide of Inactivity' report highlights the complexity and breadth of the physical inactivity challenge, which has to be a central platform of public health efforts. It's been followed by a national cross-government commitment – through the new 'Moving More, Living More' campaign – to go further and faster on increasing physical activity.

Physical activity is undertaken across communities in a range of ways, from walking and cycling, through fitness, leisure and play to structured amateur and elite sport. We need to embrace and support this diversity through cross-sector collaboration. PHE is partnering with national and local organisations to reduce levels of physical inactivity and the associated health, economic and social burden on local communities.

Local government can develop and lead the approach across communities to reduce physical inactivity. Health clubs and leisure centres can be the leaders of the movement to promote active lifestyles and embed activity into daily

lives. There has to be a shared responsibility to drive the active agenda forward; I believe everyone can play their part.

Public Health England is leading the development of a National Implementation Framework for Physical Activity in England, which is drawing together evidence and case studies from across the country to help develop a tool that can truly deliver this whole system approach. People and organisations can input to the framework by emailing [PhysicalActivity@phe.gov.uk](mailto:PhysicalActivity@phe.gov.uk), and we will also be working with ukactive to deliver a series of regional events during May and June to engage with local stakeholders.

I'm passionate about making a difference to people's lives by making the public healthier. 'Turning the Tide of Inactivity' has revealed the evidence and allowed us to understand the scale of the problem. To move forward, we need to use the case studies within the report and other examples of best practice to implement practical ways of making a difference.



**Government bodies acknowledge much more must be done to promote exercise**



**Lord Coe, Chair,  
British Olympic Association**

Since the London Olympic and Paralympic Games, we've set out to deliver what no other host nation has done before: a lasting legacy that benefits future generations.

Legacy is a long-term programme and we've made an excellent start, including over £11bn of economic benefits, eight out of eight retained Olympic Park venues with their future secured, and 1.5 million more people playing sport once a week since we won the bid in 2005.

But one area where there remains work to do is securing the physical activity legacy from the Games. Still 44 per cent of adults fail to meet the Chief Medical Officers' guideline of 150 minutes' physical activity a week, and 29 per cent of adults fail to achieve even 30 minutes' physical activity over seven days. That's why I recently helped launch the government and mayor of London's 'Moving More, Living More' initiative to reduce inactivity. This initiative is bringing together government – working in a joined-up way across departments – with the mayor of London's teams, local government, business and, above all, individuals and community groups who know how to get people moving.

Turning the tide of inactivity is a hugely important outcome for our legacy story. I welcome the recent report from *ukactive*, whose analysis and recommendations have helped establish the scale of the problem and provide an important step towards tackling the issue. Turning the tide of physical inactivity must be viewed as a national priority and the report makes a persuasive case for action. I'm delighted that *ukactive* is working with us on the 'Moving More, Living More' campaign. ●

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/DUDANEY PITCHAL



**Mike Kelly**  
Director, Centre of Public Health, NICE

The *ukactive* report highlights the growing problem of physical inactivity and the fact that resources have not been directed to target this issue in certain parts of the country.

Inactivity has a huge societal cost. The fact that local councils spend just 2.4 per cent of their top-tier public health budgets on programmes aimed at promoting physical activity is disproportionately low compared to other top-tier concerns like substance misuse or smoking. We must prioritise investment into encouraging more people to get active.

*ukactive's* evidence-based recommendations are designed to help local government do just that, to

make the best use of its limited funds in improving public health. They are practical, cost-effective measures that will not only improve the health and wellbeing of their communities, but lead to cost savings in the long term.

We must also ensure that open spaces and built environments are better used to offer effective programmes and interventions to increase the number of people who lead an active lifestyle.

The findings from the report will be embedded within the priorities of the medical profession's considerations over the coming years to turn the tide on physical inactivity and improve millions of lives.

*This feature first appeared in Sports Management, issue 1 2014*



# MIX 'n' MATCH

Lauren Applegarth reports on an initiative by Telford & Wrekin Council to open multiple sites, each with their own specialism, with a reciprocal membership package

Since the start of 2014, residents of the West Midlands borough of Telford & Wrekin have welcomed two new fitness facilities: Oakengates and Newport Leisure Centres, which are the fourth and fifth sites to be opened by Telford & Wrekin Council in the last two years alone.

But with competition nearby from some of the health and fitness industry's well-known brands including Nuffield Health, DW Sports Fitness and the budget chains Simply Gym and Pure Gym, how do five local authority-run health and fitness facilities really stand out from the crowd?

## Creating a network

Abraham Darby Leisure Centre, the first in this series of new-build sites by Telford & Wrekin Council, opened in February 2012. Comprising a swimming pool with moveable floor, sports hall, health and fitness suite, aerobics studio

and outdoor tennis courts, the leisure centre is adjacent to Abraham Darby Academy, a renovated establishment funded by the government's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) Scheme.

The region remains one of the success stories from the BSF Scheme, an investment programme for secondary schools in England. As one of the first local authorities to secure funding, Telford & Wrekin Council continues to use this to support the development of the new sports facilities across the borough. "By 2015, three of our leisure centres will be partnered with secondary schools, and we've worked closely with schools and local clubs to identify complementary sports and activities to shape the new facilities," explains Sophie Griffiths, group service development manager for Telford & Wrekin Council.

Now two years on from the opening of this flagship site and the local authority is operating five gyms across

its borough, each offering its own unique specialism.

"With our diverse client base, it's important our gyms cater to a range of training requirements. Managing multiple fitness facilities in a small geographical area provides us with the opportunity to specialise within this network, giving members the flexibility to use different sites depending on their training needs and preferences," explains Matthew Newens, operations team leader (south) for Telford & Wrekin Council.

"We wanted to ensure that, through our network of centres, we were maximising the provision of sport and leisure within the region."

And the sites do just that. Thanks to the membership package – Aspirations – the gyms' members have access to all five of the leisure facilities located within a 10-mile radius. Priced at just £27 a month, Aspirations gives members access to all five facilities with no restriction on day or time of use. In addition, the council recently launched Aspirations Plus, an extended membership package which incorporates access to the fitness facilities as well as the borough's other leisure facilities, which includes an indoor tennis centre, the 18-hole Horsehay Golf Club, Ski and Snowboard Centre and the Telford Ice Rink – all for an additional £7 a month.

## Working in partnership

Central to the appeal of the new gyms is the range of equipment. Cybex International UK was awarded the contract following the installation at Abraham Darby Leisure Centre.

The key challenge was to determine the unique focus for each site – a process that's been aided by the council's close working partnership with Cybex. "We provide Cybex with a brief for each gym, consisting of our members' feedback, site specifications



Facilities at Abraham Darby include a pool with moveable floor



Abraham Darby (above) specialises in cardio training, while Oakengates (right) incorporates more Cybex strength training equipment

and knowledge of nearby competition. We then work closely with Cybex to design the new facility and come up with its USP," says Griffiths.

"Each gym requires a core set of cardio equipment, including treadmills, bikes and Arc Trainers, but what we do with the surrounding space is what makes each gym stand out," says Paul Steel, Cybex UK's regional sales manager. Rob Thurston, commercial director for Cybex UK, understands the manufacturer's shared responsibility in getting this right: "We need to ensure we're choosing the right mix of equipment to keep the members engaged, training varied and to support the council in its delivery of inclusive and accessible sport and leisure."

### Setting the USPs

Oakengates and Newport Leisure Centres – the most recent additions to Telford & Wrekin's gym portfolio, and located eight miles from one another – have both been designed with a focus on strength training.

"Oakengates is the largest gym in our network, so we decided a focus on strength and resistance was the best







The council's Wellington Civic Leisure Centre delivers an equal balance of strength and cardio equipment

option," explains Stuart Walker, operations team leader (north) for Telford & Wrekin Council. "The floor space available meant we could incorporate bigger pieces of equipment, such as Cybex's Big Iron lifting platforms and a larger functional training area, without jeopardising the space dedicated to core cardio pieces that are still essential to the gym's offering.

"Our research showed that the distance between Oakengates and Newport meant both sites were targeting different catchment areas. We therefore made the decision to tap into one of the industry's most popular trends and open two strength-focused gyms within the network, and they've been very well received."

He continues: "It's very important that we don't isolate our existing users, and we've proven that we can introduce training specialisms while still retaining our wide-ranging membership base. The new strength equipment isn't changing our demographic, but is adding value for existing members and attracting new ones." Indeed, both sites have already seen an influx of members demanding a well-equipped strength training facility.

### Specialising without alienating

The portfolio of facilities now delivers a wide range of training options to the council's growing membership base: Abraham Darby specialises in cardio training, with more equipment, a group cycle studio and aerobic-focused classes; Phoenix Leisure Centre attracts those demanding a larger space for workouts, concentrating on core strength and functional training, and includes a dedicated area with punch bags and

suspension training; Wellington Civic Leisure Centre delivers an equal balance of strength and cardio equipment; and Oakengates and Newport incorporate more equipment from Cybex's VRI1, VR3 and Eagle selectorised strength lines, alongside heavier weight increments for both dumbbells and medicine balls.

But it's not just the range of equipment that members are benefiting from – it's the chance to train across multiple sites too. "Training in a different environment, interacting with new staff and fellow members helps keep clients engaged and our offering varied and exciting," says Newens.

### Schemes and programmes

Thanks to the diversity of the leisure centres, Telford & Wrekin Council is able to dedicate facilities and funding to a wide range of sports and age-specific training programmes.

For example, NRGIZE is the council's health and fitness programme aimed at 11- to 15-year-olds; part-funded by the NHS, the scheme delivers fitness activities specifically for younger users. "At each of our sites, we've made allowances for younger gym users by incorporating NRGIZE rooms: a dividing wall creates a separate area to train in," explains Griffiths. "The space still houses a mix of cardio and resistance equipment, but means that NRGIZE instructors can lead private sessions in a quieter space – an area that younger users can train in without feeling intimidated by other members."

The sites' flexibility also means that during peak times, the dividing wall can also be removed to create a larger workout space.

All of the council's gyms are also home to an extensive range of stage

2 IFI-accredited equipment from Cybex's Total Access range. The equipment is designed to be accessible to the physically impaired without excluding other exercisers; the council runs its Inclusive Leisure Scheme to encourage volunteers to support disabled adults in the gym.

Other initiatives include the GP referral scheme, Tackle Your Health, Sportivate and Street Games, all of which are plans dedicated to improving the health and fitness levels of the borough's residents.

### Elite sport

While improved fitness for all remains the council's key focus, the new sites have attracted attention from a number of elite sporting bodies.

Abraham Darby Leisure Centre received funding from Badminton England to enhance the sports hall. Similarly, a grant of £1.5m from Sport England's Iconic Facilities fund assisted the renovation of Phoenix Leisure Centre and provided a sports hall, 3G synthetic turf pitch and national standard BMX track; this site is now a Centre of Excellence for netball, table tennis, BMX and also home to Rugby League National 3 side Telford Raiders.

"For our facilities to be recognised on a national level is a fantastic achievement and is something we're very proud of," comments Newens.

But it's the residents of Telford & Wrekin who remain at the heart of the local authority's approach, as Newens concludes: "What we offer is an all-inclusive, well-packaged product – our facilities are outstanding, our staff are excellent and our strategy to adopt gym-specific training specialisms is proving a great success." ■



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## RESEARCH ROUND-UP

# There's an idea

Exercise can help to spark the imagination and increase creativity, say scientists from the Netherlands

**“D**o keep a thesaurus, but in the shed at the back of your garden or behind the fridge, somewhere that demands travel or effort,” once said Roddy Doyle, author of *The Commitments*, when asked how to avoid writer's block. He's not alone in this kind of thinking, as over the centuries many authors and artists have claimed that moving the body helps to overcome mental block and aid inspiration. Now researchers from the Netherlands have found regular exercise does indeed help promote creativity.

### Thinking tasks

The research – which was led by Lorenzo Colzato, a cognitive psychologist at Leiden University in the Netherlands – specifically looked at the impact physical activity had on the two main ingredients of creativity: divergent and convergent thinking. Divergent thinking involves thinking up as many solutions as possible for a certain problem. Convergent thinking leads to one single correct solution for a given problem.

Ninety-six male and female adults aged around 20–21 years were recruited for the research. Half of them were athletes who'd exercised at least three times a week over the past two years, while the other half had led sedentary lives.

In the divergent thinking assignment, participants listed as many possible uses for six common household items, such as a pen, towel or bottle.

In the convergent thinking assignment, participants were presented with three unrelated words such as 'time', 'hair' and 'stretch'. They were then asked to find a common associate – which in this example was the word 'long'.

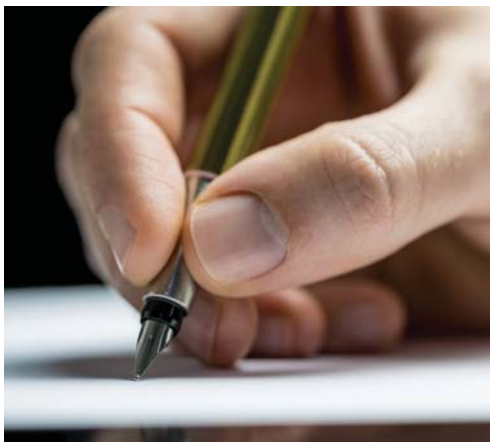


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/GALIS

**Beating writer's block: Scientists think exercise helps people think more flexibly**

Each task was undertaken three times by both groups. First, the tasks were carried out while participants sat on a static bike but, for control purposes, did not exercise. Following that, the tasks were completed while participants cycled at a moderate speed, and then while they cycled at an intense pace.

### Creative spark

The athletes performed better overall in the tasks, implying that exercise boosts creativity. However, it was also suggested that the fitness of the individual could have an impact, as well as the immediate exercise being carried out.

Non-athletes' performance was significantly impaired when they exercised, and they performed worst in the task where they had to exercise the most. Meanwhile, athletes performed slightly better in the convergent thinking

test when they exercised, specifically when they cycled the hardest. Further research is needed to look at why this is the case, but the scientists speculate that there could be a number of causes.

Colzato says: "We think physical movement is good for the ability to think flexibly, but only if the body is used to being active. Otherwise, a large part of the energy intended for creative thinking goes to the movement itself."

For the athletes, the actual act of exercise was automatic, so they had more capacity for thinking while they worked out. In addition, the scientists believe aerobic fitness training might enhance cognitive-control processes and the tasks relying on them. They suggest that "it's not unreasonable to suspect that even more active individuals would show reliable benefits in tasks relying on convergent thinking".

<sup>1</sup>Colzato, LS et al. *The Impact of Physical Exercise on Convergent and Divergent Thinking*. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*. December 2013

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# CHANGING PLACES

There's no longer a 'one size fits all' approach to changing rooms: they need to uphold an operator's brand qualities and complement the overall look and feel of a club. Health Club Management takes a look at some recent installations



The prints of naked silhouettes on lockers are now a 'defining part of the brand' at Russian health club chain I LOVE FITNESS

## DEFINING THE BRAND

**Client:** I LOVE FITNESS

**Supplier:** M Fitness/Foreman Lockers

I LOVE FITNESS is a contemporary chain of health clubs in Russia, described as Russia's equivalent of Virgin Active by Harry Harris, MD of M Fitness, which owns Foreman Lockers. The clubs have embraced current trends including boxing and MMA and use Moscow DJs to create the vibe.

"The style of the clubs goes against the norm in Russia, with a more Western approach," says Harris. "They wanted locker rooms that were

cheeky and sexy, and that continued the personality of the brand, creating something that was special and different."

In contrast to the décor usually favoured in Russia, I LOVE FITNESS is bright and colourful, using lime green and yellow. The brief also specified lots of different locker areas: the common area, a children's area, and a VIP area. The lockers had to be the same high quality across the facility, but also help differentiate each area.

"By using different designs, colours and finishes, we were able to create very clear differences between each changing area. The result looks a lot more expensive than it actually was," says Harris.

A Foreman speciality is putting images on lockers. Here, designers Lab 17 made it look like naked people are inside. "This locker style is now a defining part of their brand," adds Harris.

"By using different designs, colours and finishes, we were able to create very clear differences between each changing area"

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## CHANGING ROOMS

### COMBINED ACCESS CARD

**Client:** GLL/Better

**Supplier:** Safe Space Lockers & Ojmar

Space was at a premium at the GLL-run Charlton Lido, which meant that every square foot had to be maximised. For this reason, lockers were put in the gym as well as the changing rooms, which meant they had to fit with the new gym floor and new Technogym equipment.

Safe Space Lockers provided stylish wood and glass lockers, which Ojmar

complemented with a key-free OTS lock using its RFID system.

One crucial feature was that

Ojmar's partnership with Technogym meant that Technogym wellness keys could be used with the OTS locks, meaning gym members could have just one key for lockers, membership, fitness management and access into the facility.

"Previously, people would need a pound for a locker, a membership card, cash and a key, but the Technogym key



Changing rooms feature Corian tiles, solid beech seating and bright colours

### MADE TO MEASURE

**Client:** Rambert Dance Company

**Supplier:** Kemmlit

made-to-measure lockers in a variety of sizes and colours, to accommodate all the different needs of dancers, including

one of the UK's foremost dance institutions, Rambert Dance Company, created a new £8m headquarters on London's South Bank last December.

The facility includes three large dance studios, workshops, technical and administration facilities and changing rooms. There's also a dance archive and a reading room, both of which are open to the public.

Architects Allies Morrison specified a high build quality and the changing rooms had to be in keeping with this. The architects asked Kemmlit for 60

large bags and even some places to keep prosthetic limbs.

Corian tiles, glass cubicles, slatted solid beech seating and a mix of yellow, blue and white lockers were used to create a high quality finish.

"This project presented us with a number of challenges," says Julian Lidstone, head of Kemmlit's UK operation. "For example, the client wanted to incorporate coat hooks on the outside of the lockers, while retaining strength, and we had to manufacture in different sizes and colours within a tight timeframe."

allows all these technologies to be stored on one neat item," says Bev Sharpe from Ojmar.

"This system also saves money as the key belongs to the member – if it's lost, they have to pay for a replacement. With an old-style £1 deposit locker, if the customer takes or loses the key and wristband, this has to be paid for and managed by the site. This can cost thousands of pounds over the course of a year."

A simple path-finding reader is sited near the lockers, reminding members which locker they have used. Additionally, the automatic opening



**Technogym keys open the lockers**

of the lockers at the end of the day stops customers from reserving them and maximises space, as all lockers are made available.

## WORKING THROUGH THE NIGHT

**Client:** The Hogarth Club

**Supplier:** Craftsman Quality Lockers

**G**aining access to the changing areas was the main problem when upmarket west London health club The Hogarth Club decided to update its changing rooms last year, fitting them in line with the rest of the club, which had enjoyed a number of recent investments.

"The old changing rooms and showers, fitted out about nine years ago, looked tired and dated and we realised we had to upgrade them to a standard in keeping with our members' extremely high expectations," says Ian Chaffey, the health club's operations director.

The club's interior design team worked closely with Craftsman Quality Lockers to create luxury changing areas with a subdued and relaxed ambience. A combination of three-quarter and half-height Maximiser style lockers were chosen, in a walnut finish. Light cream upholstery for the bench seating, and stone surfaces for the vanity and towel units, completed the look. A creative rethink of the available space created a number of discreet areas for changing.



**A combination of three-quarter and half-height lockers were chosen**

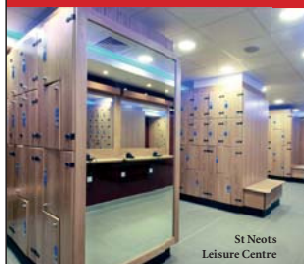
The challenge was to complete the refurbishment without closing the changing rooms, which meant predominantly carrying out the work overnight. Sited in a prime residential area, the club also had to ensure noise levels were tightly controlled, while cleaning operators moved on-site early each morning to ready the club for opening at 6.00am.

"Refurbishing changing rooms from floor to ceiling presented a huge challenge, especially as our members' expectations are high," says Chaffey. ●



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# GOING DEUTSCH

Dirk Kemmerling provides an overview of the German health and fitness market

**T**he German health and fitness market is booming: there were 8.55 million members in 2013 – a rise of 8.1 per cent on 2012, and equating to 10.6 per cent of the total population. The number of clubs was up 4.9 per cent to 7,940, and revenues up 12.1 per cent to €4.55bn (data from DSSV).

This growth is driven primarily by the growth of the budget sector. Surprisingly then, average dues per member per month (including VAT) remains fairly high at around €47 – although as the budget operators take even more market share, this is likely to go down.

And the budget operators do look set to continue their march, offering not only great value for money but also evolution in their product. Market leader McFit, for example, has added studios (three per club) with a stylish Apple-white design, offering a wide range of virtual classes. It has also made its clubs more female-friendly by moving free weights areas into separate rooms.

New challengers in the budget sector even offer instructor-led classes, ladies-only areas and complementary drinks in large (up to 2,800sq m) design-led clubs, manned by increasingly well-educated staff and with convenient joining processes and inductions.

This sector of the market is 'pulling' members with its innovation, as opposed to many mid-market operators



Circuit classes – such as milon (above) and freestyle – are popular in Germany

– lumbered with complicated overhead structures and a flagging quality of offering – who are trying to 'push' their products. Unless mid-market clubs offer additional facilities such as pools or large wellness areas, consumers are increasingly questioning why they should pay €50-60 for a monthly membership.

## FEMALE FOCUS

Women-only clubs are also strong in Germany, comprising around 9 per cent of all clubs – a number that's remained stable over the last 10 years. Why? First of all, there's a demand: 50 per cent of women claim not to like their body, and

prefer not to be exposed to the other gender while they work out.

Secondly, the successful women-only clubs understand their market, with an offer that's tailored to their specific needs: there's a higher focus on communication, motivation and interaction; club interior design is key; and group exercise is high on the agenda, including mind-body classes. Meanwhile, the marketing speaks direct to the women in a language they appreciate, and with a strong emphasis on the values and philosophy of the company.

With many mixed-gender operators failing to meet these demands, there's still plenty of opportunity for new entrants to the women-only sector: for example, Women's Gym Jopp & Jopp, a Berlin chain, opened about eight women-only clubs in the last two and a half years, with an average of 2,300 members per club in the otherwise crowded mid-market sector.

Meanwhile, Mrs.Sporty is an ongoing success story – a German women-only franchise operation that now operates over 550 clubs in eight European markets, but predominantly in Germany. Its recipe for success centres around attracting women over the age of 45

## How attractive is the German fitness sector as an employer?

"At first sight, the fitness industry in Germany is a very appealing employer. But in reality there are too few employment contracts that are sufficiently well-paid, and few chances for personal development. Many potential employees often have misconceptions about the job, both in terms of job content and the earning potential; they will consequently often

move towards other employers in the service and health sectors.

"The fitness industry has to focus on offering more attractive jobs in order not to lose the qualified human resources they require for their businesses to succeed."

Nicole Capelan, HR specialist and founder of [www.medicpro.de](http://www.medicpro.de)



**Female brand Mrs.Sporty developed its offer with tennis star Steffi Graf**

who mostly have never worked out before and who are overweight and out of shape. This market is willing to pay around €45 a month for a simple circuit training and nutritional consultancy offering; if you can meet their needs, they have the money to spend.

Other mixed gender operators are beginning to recognise this and are 'feminising' their offering where they can – but really the success stories in this field are those that embrace the female market in all dimensions of the business.

## TRENDING NOW

As in other markets, functional training is a strong trend. Fitness First, for example, is investing heavily in its 'freestyle' offering and making this the core of its marketing campaigns.

Circuit workouts also continue to have wide appeal, from high-end milon circuits through to high-intensity freestyle circuits that appeal predominantly to younger customers.

Clubs purely offering circuits are growing strongly thanks to their small footprint – less than 200sq m – which allows them to operate in convenient locations. PT studios are also developing along the same lines: sites of 200sq m or

less represent an affordable way for PTs to start their own business, often based on functional and EMS equipment.

## FUTURE OUTLOOK

Budget operators will continue to expand, bringing new exercisers into their facilities as well as attracting members from mid-market operators.

At the other end of the scale, more premium clubs will arise, offering additional value in the shape of pools, big wellness areas, outdoor spaces and first-class services. Healthcare will be more prominent, with clubs offering highly educated staff as well as specialist measurement and analysis to guide those with health issues. These clubs will be accepted and able to co-operate more closely with the health sector.

Smaller footprint clubs will become more significant as the trend towards convenience of location gathers momentum. Some will emerge as niche products – whether single-sex, focused on a clear customer proposition like pure muscle training or backcare, or standalone mind-body studios.

Functional training will also drive this small club trend, through CrossFit boxes for example – although more operators

will look to build concepts like CrossFit and MMA into their full-service clubs.

Integration of nutritional programmes run by competent staff and based on reward systems / gamification will also become a strong factor. And as everywhere around the world, digital interaction will play a huge role through the likes of apps and wearables – all of which will require new management skills and investment strategies.

New builds and refurbishments will be based on more professional data analysis upfront as the market gets more and more saturated. But the German market remains highly attractive: witness new international entrants like Migros (ELEMENTS) and Madonna's Hard Candy Fitness. I'm sure there's more to come. ●

**Dirk Kemmerling** is owner and MD of HMC Health Management Company GmbH in Germany. Prior to that, he was the authorised signatory, director of operations and business development for Fitness First Germany. He has also owned and operated several fitness clubs.

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# STUDIO SPECIAL

We round up some of the latest news and launches in the area of studio equipment and training

Log on to **www.fitness-kit.net** and type the company name under 'keyword search'



## GET RIPPED!

Fitness professionals wanting to integrate the TRX Rip Trainer resistance cord in studio settings can now sign up for a new eight-hour education course. The course aims to provide the knowledge and practice to safely use the Rip Trainer resistance cord, modify and progress exercises for members, and teach classes. By learning Group Rip Training fundamentals and two results-driven workouts, fitness professionals will be able to roll out Group Rip Training in their studios. Completion of the course will provide 8 REPs credits.

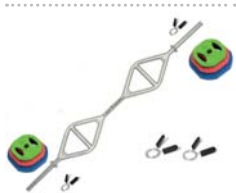
The Rip Trainer by Holman uses asymmetrical loading of the resistance cord to constantly challenge the exerciser's balance and force maximum muscle use. Group Rip Training workouts focus on total body strength and metabolic conditioning, and can be adapted to the group.



**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD **TRX**

## IGNITING THE STUDIO

Jordan Fitness has launched its new Ignite range of studio dumbbells and barbells for group exercise work, all with an anti-roll design. The new products include the Ignite Neoprene Studio Dumbbells, which range from 0.5kg–10kg. A set of 42 pairs and a rack is designed to let the user comfortably deliver sessions for at least 30 people – potentially more depending how much space is available.



## LITE TOUCH FOR STUDIOS

Fit Quote has introduced the T-Grip Lite functional exercise barbell with multi-hand grip options. The design is intended to help keep the shoulders in a natural position to reduce the potential strain on tendons and ligaments.

The T-Grip Lite is designed to be durable, lightweight – weighing 7lbs – and easy to carry between studios.

Fit Quote is now supplying the bar in white, complete with weights and grips, in the UK.

**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD **Fit Quote**

The Ignite Rubber Studio Barbells come with 2 x 1.25kg, 2 x 2.5kg and 2 x 5kg colour-coded plates and spring collars, with 2 x 10kg plates available. They can be purchased as individual sets or in sets of 12 for small/medium studios or 30 sets for large studios.

The Ignite Urethane Studio Barbells are designed to be highly durable, impact-resistant and shock absorbing.

**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD **Jordan**

## NO-SLIP COMFORT

Airex has launched its new Calyana line of yoga mats, currently comprising two different mat types: Calyana Professional Yoga and Calyana Prime Yoga.

Calyana Professional Yoga is ideally suited as permanent equipment for use in the yoga studio or at home. Available in stone grey, it measures 66 x 185 cm, with a thickness of approximately 0.68 cm – a large training surface with optimal cushioning and improved comfort.

Calyana Prime Yoga is a versatile portable product – it's slightly thinner and weighs less than 2kg. Calyana Prime Yoga comes either in ocean blue or in a lime green/nut brown dual-colour variant.

**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD **Airex**



Used for training athletes, Slastix bands can now also be used in gym classes

## ADDING RESISTANCE

Stroops has agreed a deal with Physical Company for the rights to distribute its patented Slastix resistance band products in the UK.

Slastix are multi-purpose elastic exercise bands that add resistance to natural, athletic movements in the full range of motion. The system is built around the demanding training regimes of professional sports, and is used by top athletes and sports teams. Stroops

programming teaches elite coaches and trainers how to use the resistance bands and attachments to identify weaknesses or imbalances in an athlete's movements.

But it's not just for elite athletes; the portability of the system means it can be used for bootcamps and gym-based PT and group training, adding bodyweight resistance into circuit class exercises and giving options for partner work.

**fitness-kit.net KEYWORD**

Physical Company

## GETTING A GRIP

With grip strength the foundation of all lifting exercises, Escape Fitness has created the GripR – a Grip Resistance Trainer that helps members develop grip strength and therefore fully maximise their studio experience.

The Grip Resistance Trainer is ideal for individual exercises but, as it has been manufactured to withstand the toughest of treatment, it's also perfect for small group training sessions and studio work where it can be used for throwing and catching drills.

The GripR has a bright, bold design and is available in five different weights, allowing beginners to progress.



**fitness-kit.net KEYWORD** Escape

## BOX CLEVER



Star Trac has launched BoxMaster education – instructor training to accompany its BoxMaster boxing training station.

With its spring-loaded pads that give slightly on impact, the BoxMaster has been designed to replicate punching a focus mitt and is arranged to cater for any type of punch or combination of punches. BoxMaster education complements this equipment to ensure a significant reduction in the risk of injury.

**fitness-kit.net KEYWORD** Star Trac

## HAVING A BALL

Distributed in the UK by GymKit UK, the Ugi ball combines the squish of a beanbag with the bounce-back of a stress ball. The balls are used in a 30-minute class-based workout. Developed by kinesiologist and personal trainer Sara Shear, the functional workout engages the entire body in every routine, involving hoisting, balancing on and swinging the ball for a non-stop 30-minute workout.

The balls come in various weights and can be used on the gym floor, with a PT, in bootcamp or in a class.

Ugi ('U Got It') is part of the portfolio of equipment-based education company Mad Dogg Athletics – the creator of Spinning, Cross Core and Peak Pilates.



**fitness-kit.net KEYWORD** GymKit

# SUPPLIER SHOWCASE

We take a look at recent projects by Matrix Fitness, Technogym and Escape Fitness

## New life for period property

Client: The Reynolds Group  
Supplier: Matrix Fitness

**T**he Reynolds Group – specialising in gyms, spas and training, including performing arts, beauty therapy, personal training, horticulture and now apprenticeships in catering and hospitality – has awarded Matrix Fitness the contract to supply fitness equipment to its new fitness spa site: Reynolds Retreat in Sevenoaks. It will be the fourth gym in the group's portfolio to be equipped by the supplier.

With a tendency for unique venue choices, Reynolds Fitness Spas blend period properties with top-of-the-range fitness equipment to offer members a luxurious and comfortable experience in a non-intimidating environment.

Since opening its first Performing Arts School in 1987, the family-run Kent-based business has demonstrated steady growth: it had opened three luxury gyms in venues across the county by 2013. The Gym in Bexley is located in a magnificent 19th century Victorian chapel, while The Gym in Rainham is a beautiful, 350-year-old Grade II-listed Queen Anne period property. The Gym in Sittingbourne is the only site to buck the period trend: a modern facility with all the benefits of the latest building and environmental technologies. Sevenoaks will open this summer.

Each gym has been thoughtfully designed to complement its unique



Each Reynolds gym has been designed to complement its unique environment

environment, and so it was crucial that the selection of fitness equipment reflected the quality and design evident in the various locations. Matrix Fitness was seen to fit the bill, with its complete cardio and strength product ranges – so much so that, when the decision was recently made to refurbish The Old Parsonage in Rainham, Matrix Fitness was supplier of choice.

The cardio equipment has been re-energised with the introduction of Matrix Fitness 7xe series products, including treadmills, Ascent Trainers and cycles – all of which feature Virtual Active technology, the forward-motion video experience designed to enhance cardio workouts.

Meanwhile, the strength equipment has been upgraded to Matrix's premier Ultra Series, featuring redefined ergonomics, improved comfort and performance, and an integrated tracking system. The latest black finish was also chosen to create a sleeker look – one of the first sites in the UK to showcase this new option.

MD Jason Hall comments: "We've worked with Matrix for over eight years.

They've always offered great equipment at a competitive price for all of our gyms.

"We're so pleased with our relationship that we've also asked them to supply the gym within our new retreat – a beautifully refurbished and extended Victorian property, surrounded by 16 acres of park and woodland in Borough Green, Sevenoaks, when it opens this summer.

"Fitting a 4,000sq ft gym is no mean feat, and we needed people who could supply the best technology and who we knew could be trusted with the project."

Reynolds' gym memberships include complimentary one-to-one personal training sessions and can be extended to incorporate spa access. Members visiting the Sevenoaks site will also be able to relax in the Waterleaf, the retreat's fine dining restaurant, where the chef director is Michelin starred Mark Sargeant, who has worked alongside the likes of Gordon Ramsay and runs several Kent restaurants.

For more information:  
[www.matrixfitness.co.uk](http://www.matrixfitness.co.uk)



Matrix Fitness has been supplying the Reynolds Group with equipment for over eight years

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### Driving group functional fitness

Client: Chelsea Health Club & Spa  
Supplier: Technogym

Members like how versatile and fun the OMNIA workout is, says manager Stuart Parker

Owned by Chelsea Football Club, Chelsea Health Club & Spa is an iconic site widely regarded as one of the top premium health clubs in London. It prides itself on providing the best service and facilities to members, some of which include athletes, celebrities and other public figures.

As part of its commitment to offer members the very best in the market, Chelsea Club underwent an extensive refurbishment in December 2013 to equip itself with Technogym's new ARTIS range of cardio, strength and functional machines. This included OMNIA, the new all-in-one functional apparatus that provides functional training options for all disciplines, including strength, resistance, stability, flexibility, co-ordination and speed.

Stuart Parker, general manager at Chelsea Health Club, says: "With the refurbishment, we wanted to re-energise the fitness suites and create a real sense of vibrancy within the club. Given the premium nature of our facility and the rising trend of functional fitness, the OMNIA solution was ideal, particularly with our strong focus on personal training and members' results. It has become the

focal point on the gym floor and is a perfect area for trainers to lead personal training sessions and interact with members."

To date, Chelsea Health Club has had overwhelmingly positive feedback about the new equipment. It organises over 13 OMNIA 'fast classes' every week, with more than 80 participants. These classes are very particularly scheduled to drive participation – for example, around popular group exercise classes – signposting OMNIA as the ideal way for members to complete a total body workout. Trainer advocates are also always on-hand to guide members who want to experiment on OMNIA by themselves.

Parker adds: "Our members and staff love how versatile and fun it is to work out with OMNIA, and the fact that it allows for endless progressions makes it appealing to everyone. OMNIA is a key component of our programming to give members more variety and choices for total body training."

To help the club achieve its goals, Technogym provided six workshop sessions to support and educate Chelsea Health Club's trainer team on the possibilities offered by the



apparatus, as well as on how to design and implement effective functional classes and group sessions.

Craig Swyer, product manager at Technogym, says: "OMNIA allows for infinite possibilities in training, and with this product we've focused heavily on offering a full solution. Not only is OMNIA a hugely versatile apparatus, but through the Wellness Institute we also equip clients with the necessary knowledge and programming to implement the solution to its full potential. This is vital for OMNIA as it caters to so many user groups, needs, goals and aspirations. The key is to tailor programmes to users' motivations rather than to try a 'one size fits all' approach."

For more information:  
[www.technogym.com/omnia](http://www.technogym.com/omnia)



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competitive edge

### Functional focus

Client: DW Huddersfield  
Supplier: Escape Fitness

In a bid to develop its group training offering, DW Huddersfield has dedicated almost 1,000sq ft to a functional area – including the installation of an Escape Octagon.

DW Sports Fitness GM Lee Trainer says: "Group training is becoming more popular within the industry and we're looking to develop this further within our clubs in 2014. The Escape Octagon is a fantastic selling point for DW Huddersfield, setting us apart from the competition. Personal trainers are able to use the frame to educate and

demonstrate the endless possibilities of functional training, and to enhance the training of both the experienced and the inexperienced member."

The Octagon, installed with its own storage system, allows trainers to free up the floor space so more members can make use of the frame and work out safely without any danger of trip hazards. A full range of functional equipment has also been provided to offer a huge variety of workout possibilities.

Trainer adds: "The Escape functional frame is an innovative piece of kit that gets members thinking outside the box and keeps motivation levels high. Whether they're aiming for fat loss, muscle gain

or rehabilitation, there's an exercise for everyone – whatever their goal or ability. The frame is versatile and can be set up in many different ways to fit different spaces, and the number of stations that can be used on the frame is fantastic."

PT Graham Hogg says: "The frame is an interesting piece of equipment, is extremely versatile and can be used to achieve many different training systems and techniques. I've used the rig with all of my clients and use it for my own training with great success."

PT Ben Green adds: "Most of my time around the frame is used for metabolic circuit training, because of the number of exercises available in close proximity to each other. The response from all of my clients has been very good."

Matt Morton, Escape's head of UK business and global strategic accounts, says: "The Escape Octagon has gone down fantastically well with the members and staff at the club. The feedback so far is that the functional area as a whole has really helped to attract members to the club and helped convert those visits into sales."

"It's great to see the staff ensuring that members are engaged in functional training workouts. It will no doubt lead to stronger retention if that strategy is continued long-term."

For more information:  
[www.escapefitness.com](http://www.escapefitness.com)



The frame is versatile and can be set up in many different training configurations

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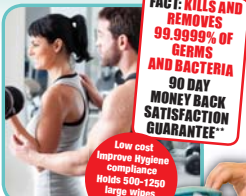
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