

# health club management

JULY 2014

No 215

## Run for a REASON

Making exercise  
socially useful



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# The feelgood factor

**W**hat really motivates you to exercise today? Are distant goals sufficiently engaging on a day-to-day basis, or will today's gym visit be more about simply wanting to feel energised and positive about the day?

In the last issue of *HCM*, we looked at the impact of exercise on mental health. Of particular note was a survey by mental health charity MIND, which found that seven out of 10 gym users with no mental health issues thought their mental wellbeing would suffer if they didn't exercise.

We're not even talking about depression here – just a day-to-day feelgood factor that feels both achievable for its immediacy, and desirable across the board. Quite simply, exercise makes you feel good: happier, less stressed, more alive, more energetic. This a very compelling, instant benefit that health clubs should absolutely be harnessing in their marketing.

Yet many operators still persist with appearance-orientated messages. Interesting, then, that new research by Dr Melvyn Hillsdon and The Retention People suggests that, even if members believe they look better as a result of their gym-going, this doesn't actually improve retention (see p48).

Meanwhile, in spite of a steady stream of 'exercise is medicine' stories in the media, there's also a question mark over the validity of this as a mass market message. Realistically, the average member of the public is unlikely to exercise today in the hope it might one day – 20 years down the line and with no guarantees – help them dodge the bullet of cancer or heart disease.

We therefore need to change perceptions of what exercise delivers, offering tangible reasons to get moving here and now, today – and that means bringing mental wellbeing into the marketing mix. Equally importantly, we must make doing that exercise feel genuinely achievable.

In fact, there is at least one UK operator already focusing on the mental aspect: at cycling microgym Psycle, the emphasis is on a positive mindset above all else, focusing on how people feel mentally during and after class to inspire continued attendance.

But what about making exercise feel achievable? This ties in with my recent editor's letter on the idea of '23½ hours' – the need to limit our inactivity to just half an hour a day. Surely we can all do that?

Life still gets in the way, and that's where the notion of 'precommitment' comes in (see p8). This is a concept



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**Make people believe they can be active today, and make them want to be by telling them how great they will feel – today**

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operators could use with both members and prospects, teaching them to curate their environment so they don't have to resort to willpower to do the things they've said they will, like going to the gym. Alternatively, talk to them about the 'one push-up challenge', whereby they commit to doing just one push-up a day – except the thing is, once they've started, they'll probably do more. It's just about talking about exercise in a way that makes it seem do-able.

Let's not over-complicate things. Make people believe they can be active today, and make them want to be by telling them how great it will make them feel – today.

**Kate Cracknell, editor**

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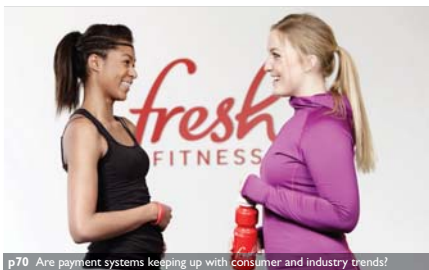
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# People

“Precommitment involves taking steps now to prevent our future self from gaining access to temptations”

## Molly Crockett

### What's your background?

I'm a neuroscientist based at University College London (UCL) and Oxford University, with a particular interest in the field of decision-making, especially where that involves some sort of dilemma or trade-off. That could be to do with self-control – short- versus long-term self-interest – or social decision-making, where you're weighing up your own interests against those of other people.

As part of that, I'm interested in the concept of precommitment as a tool to help enforce the decisions we make.

### What is precommitment?

Most of us struggle with self-control, whether it's over-eating, drinking too much, over-spending. We'll often say we're going to start exercising more often, eating more healthily, spending more wisely, working more effectively... but when the time comes we always find an excuse to back out of our plans.

### So how can we achieve today the goals we set for ourselves yesterday?

Willpower is one weapon at our disposal, but this isn't bulletproof – it can falter when we're tired or stressed and can be worn down over time.

Step forward precommitment, which involves taking steps now to protect our future self from temptation. Used well, it will mean we never need to resort to willpower. For example, if I have a writing deadline, I find an internet-free zone so I can't be distracted by email and Twitter. If I know I'll eat any chocolate in my house within 24 hours of bringing it home, I simply don't buy it in the first place. It's about curating our surroundings to stop temptation derailing our long-term goals.

### Has precommitment been scientifically proven to work?

Yes. My colleagues and I set out to directly compare the effectiveness of willpower



Molly Crockett is a neurologist based at UCL and Oxford University in the UK

and precommitment, placing them side-by-side in a series of experiments.

We presented volunteers with a choice: a small reward immediately, or a larger reward after a delay. In the willpower test, the volunteers had to use willpower to resist choosing the small reward while they waited for the larger one. In the precommitment test, they had the option to 'precommit' to the larger reward, removing the option to choose the inferior small reward while they waited.

Precommitment proved to be the winning strategy. Analysing people's brain scans, we found that simply giving them

the chance to precommit activated the brain's reward network – and the good news is that this was particularly evident among those with the worst willpower.

### How might precommitment work in the fitness sector?

By encouraging members to stick with their good intentions and regularly attend the gym, precommitment could just be the answer to the fitness sector's age-old retention battle.

In the area of fitness, it's about establishing a habit. When you first start to exercise, it's an intentional behaviour



**Curate your environment: If you know you'll eat chocolate in 24 hours of it being in the house, don't buy it in the first place**

that requires high levels of cognitive energy – you have to invest brainpower to make it happen. However, if you do it enough times, it becomes a habit and doesn't require the same levels of cognitive investment.

### **So how can precommitment help get people to the gym regularly enough to form a habit?**

From an operator perspective, using different pricing schemes can work. Experiments in the US have shown that, if gyms charge people more if they attend less frequently and less if they attend regularly, people come more often. The gyms effectively impose a cost of not working out, which boosts members' motivation to attend and circumvents the need to rely solely on a member's willpower.

Phone apps could also be used to tap into the powerful concept of consistency, tracking people's activity with a daily activity log and offering incentives. If users know they'll get a reward for doing something every day for a fixed period, and have this reinforced visually, they're more likely to precommit to it.

The real window of opportunity is when people sign up, when they're at their most motivated. Operators could make a requirement that

new members have a brief chat with a member of staff who can talk them through the challenges of making yourself regularly attend the gym, as well as offering them some tools.

One of those tools should be that clubs encourage members to make a plan, both when they join and on an ongoing basis. On what days will they exercise? What will they do? How will they get to the gym? Research shows that people are more likely to do what they say if they actually articulate a plan, rather than simply stating an intention to do something. If operators then offer a discount or other financial incentive for sticking to that plan, people's precommitment will be even stronger.

Meanwhile, individuals could implement a number of ideas. Research conducted by Katy Milkman at the Wharton School in the US has shown the benefits of members holding their favourite TV shows 'hostage'. If they're a fan of *Game of Thrones*, for example, they set up their personal viewing systems so they can only watch each new episode at the gym. In this way, they 'precommit' to going.

They could also buy an extra set of toiletries and have a gym bag packed at all times, with shampoo, deodorant, a spare set of underwear. The fewer obstacles that can get in the way of

executing an action you've precommitted to the better; having a gym bag ready will help you actually get out of the door.

### **How easy is it to precommit?**

Technology is already available to help, but today's devices require some level of self-knowledge – an awareness of your flaws. However, going forward we're likely to see new gadgets that track and quantify our behaviour in order to help us identify our weak spots. For example, you might get a text saying: "It's nearly your bedtime – how about switching off your wifi?" If the system also told you how many times you'd checked your emails between 2.00am and 6.00am the previous night, you may be more motivated to precommit to a good night's sleep by disabling the wifi.

All that said, particularly when it comes to things like exercise, there's no app that can completely replace self-control. There's a danger with 'nudge' theory (see *HCM* April 14, p44) that people will start to think technology can do everything for them and they won't have to lift a finger, but that isn't the case. Tools can make the process easier, but the last half a mile will still be down to the individual. That's important for members to know. They'll still have to get on the treadmill and sweat. ▶

## ► People

**“I have a dream – and I believe the fitness industry has the ability to make my dream come true”**

### **Dr Charles Eugster**

#### **Do you believe ‘exercise is medicine’?**

I’m a living example that functional training can prevent chronic disease and increase infection resistance in old age – I’m 94 years old, a competitive rower and bodybuilder, and have had no infections for the last four years.

However, the concept of exercise as medicine is being questioned because there’s no major benefit in exercise alone. Exercise cannot be prescribed generally for the treatment of disease, as everyone responds differently. In every exercise study there have been high, low or even adverse responders. This is mainly determined by genetics, but there are other factors involved such as nutrition and age.

So more exercise is not better for everyone. Some people need more, others less exercise. The major benefits of exercise can only be realised with nutrition tailored to type of exercise and to the genetics of the individual.

In addition, although exercise has been touted as the new wonder drug, medicaments require pre-clinical testing (three to six years), three-phase clinical trials (six to seven years), approval (six months to two years) and post-market surveillance. Even in physiotherapy, randomised trials are required. At the moment, exercise as medicine doesn’t seem to have been adequately researched or tested long-term.

That’s not helped by the fact that long-term exercise adherence for those with chronic disease remains low; exercise can’t be described as a wonder drug if patients struggle to take it.

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

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



Eugster has spoken on wellness at TED and acts as a fitness ambassador

PHOTO: FOTOCZNA.COM

In the German-speaking world, the relationship with the medical profession is on the right track: Medical Active offers co-operation between the medical profession and the fitness industry, whereby physicians prescribe exercise to be carried out in selected fitness clubs.

However, in the UK the relationship remains poor, as do links to academia.

#### **What do health clubs need to do better?**

Although the average age of a health club member is 40.6 years (SFGV Report 2013), most clubs sell ‘beach bodies’ for gentlemen and ‘Brazilian butts’ for the ladies, which often isn’t the key focus for 40-year-olds.

In addition, the training offered is based on sport science, which is designed to improve athletic performance in a younger age group. The result is a huge loss of members.

Perhaps the biggest missed opportunity lies with the older age group. In five years’ time, 50 per cent of the US population will be aged over 50 – the age group with the highest retention rates and the most wealth. Yet most private health clubs do little or nothing to attract older people as members. That’s not helped by the fact that coaches are on average five years younger than their clients (SFGV Report 2013). In my opinion, client retention would be better if instructors were five years older.

**Eugster says clubs need to specialise in three age groups, with functional training the focus for older members**

Neither does continuous education for coaches seem to be universally compulsory, while clients are inadequately assessed before and after training. Clients are simply not given what they need or want. The result is a 55 per cent annual loss of clients: more than half of clients are dissatisfied within one year! This is the biggest challenge facing the fitness industry.

As clients only stay for a short time, the industry can't conduct meaningful research to prove it consistently provides health and fitness as advertised. One of the biggest challenges for the sector is to demonstrate that it has a positive effect on national health, which at present it can't really do.

In summary, the fitness industry is not fit: parts of it are off the pace and it's under threat from new technology.

### **What's your vision?**

I have a dream in which the fitness sector has a good reputation with sports clubs, the medical profession and academia. Head coaches will have academic degrees, with instructors highly trained and receiving compulsory regular retraining. Older age groups will have older coaches.

Clubs will actively pre-assess, diagnose and continuously re-assess the physical condition and progress of their clients, with the results relayed to their physician to form part of the client's medical history. Genetic testing will also become the norm, giving valuable information on nutritional and physical type.

The results of these tests will form the basis of the nutrition and training plan. As no effective training plan can be made without knowledge of the client's activity outside the gym, tracking devices will also be used as standard.

Fitness centres will specialise in three age groups. For the 18–30 age group, they will specialise in sport training. The basis of training for the 30–50 age group will be functional training, to assess, rectify physical deficiencies and re-assess, so clients' daily function is improved.



PHOTO: POTOZINA.COM

The 50–90 age group will also be given functional training, but with an acknowledgement of other important factors: the gym should be close to home, the training supervised and with same age group. Building muscle lost due to sarcopenia, with hypertrophy exercises and supplements, will be extremely important and will have a huge impact in reducing dependency in old age.

As clients begin to understand that training is a long-term commitment, and as re-testing continually evidences their improvement, retention will become the norm and clients will sign up for long-term contracts such as three years.

The stream of long-term clients will also be greatly increased and augmented by

prescription from physicians, and payment will be guaranteed by health insurance.

For the first time, the fitness industry will have long-term clients and will be able to conduct extensive research to prove its status as one of the most important factors in public health, especially in combating age-related disease.

The huge reduction in client attrition will cause a dramatic increase in profitability, but in addition there will be considerable additional income from tests, food, supplements, rent or sale of tracking devices, heart rate monitors and so on.

This is my dream – and I believe the fitness industry has the ability to make my dream come true. ▶

## ► People

“This is the first time people will be able to see a photo-realistic 3D model of themselves on their smartphones”

### **Caroline Pugh Co-founder, VirtualU**

**A** 3D body scanner created by students at Virginia Tech University in the US has been launched to help gym users track their changing body shape as their fitness improves.

Users step into the VFit scanner, create a profile on the touch panel inside and get a 10-second scan. They can then download an app for their mobile or go online to view a photo-realistic model of their body. As they get fitter, they can scan their body over time, gradually building up a picture of how their stomach flattens or muscles increase.

The technology was originally devised as a tool for online shoppers to see how clothes would fit their body, but the company recently decided to switch its focus to health and fitness.

“We realised the potential to make a lot of impact in multiple markets,” says Caroline Pugh, who founded the business with Louis Cirillo. “The amount of data we collect on the human body allows us to calculate biometric measurements that some other technologies in the fitness market can’t – or at least, not with the accuracy we can.”

With 24 million points of reference in the scan, and accuracy to within 1.2mm, VFit means gym goers no longer have to go through extensive assessments to monitor their progress, says Pugh: “This is the first time people will be able to see a photo-realistic 3D model of themselves on their smartphones.”

For health and fitness operators, the system would validate the gym’s effectiveness, she adds: “For example, PTs can use our technology to pinpoint down to the millimetre if someone has gained muscle in a certain area, to show that the regimen is working.”

VirtualU secured US\$625k of funding in April following a trial in a handful of



**Caroline Pugh in the VFit scanner, which is accurate to within 1.2mm**

gyms across south-west Virginia, and the scanner is now scheduled to launch into the Washington DC and New York City markets in Q3 of this year.

There are also plans to integrate with wearable technologies, providing the user with, in Pugh’s words, a “dashboard for your body” for fitness tracking.

Looking ahead, the aim is to get more operators on board. “We’re looking forward to working with larger gym chains and expanding regionally across the US,” says Pugh. “The goal is to have everyone in the US within driving distance of one of our VFit scanners.”

Details: [www.virtualu.co](http://www.virtualu.co) ●

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The social side of outdoor group exercise can aid anxiety and depression

## For those with mental health issues, exercise can save lives

I read the articles about mental health in the June issue of *Health Club Management* with great interest (see *HCM* June 14, p30 and p56) and was moved to write this letter to show the impact we can all have.

Everyone has feelings of anxiety at some point in their life, whether it's preparing for a job interview or managing a household. Anxiety is one of the most common mental health problems in most countries and, if not managed, can take over your life.

Every week I get to hear about member success stories from across our 140 parks. To coincide with Mental Health Awareness Week in May, I learnt about the role BMF has, and continues to play, in the lives of some of our members who have mental health and wellbeing issues.

Quotes include: "I truly believe that BMF has been one of the largest, most crucial parts of my recovery and rehabilitation back to the community... Having classes at certain times helps me structure my days and helps motivate me to get there... it makes me feel better and stops me from withdrawing."

Many members cite the social side of BMF as being just as important as the physical benefits. But it's the following quote that I feel best sums up the impact we as a provider – and indeed the fitness industry as a sector – can have on people's lives: "Four and a half years later, with various counselling, CBT and medicines, my depression is much improved. However, above all those treatments, BMF has been the most helpful thing I've done."

"It's made such a big impact on my life and I don't know where I would be without it. I wish BMF were available on the NHS for people struggling with anxiety and depression... British Military Fitness is more than exercise to me – I would go so far as to say it's saved my life."

We as providers and a sector are saving lives. Our members are people and not just numbers, and making a real difference to their lives is what we are truly about.

**Rob Love**

MD, British Military Fitness

### Poor technique: How long can we let this go on?

From time to time, I get very wound up about what happens in at least some of our gyms. Recently this has been happening rather often.

The issue is this: a significant number of gym members exercise with very poor technique. This is particularly the case with resistance work, although lack of attention to form while using cardiovascular equipment happens too.

It's particularly worrying seeing clients practise poor technique when they are working with a personal trainer and it's not corrected.

Poor form reduces the benefit of the exercise and increases the risk of injury – so why is this problem not addressed? Can our gym staff not recognise poor technique? Do they lack the confidence and skills to talk with members and help ensure they're undertaking effective and safe exercise? Or maybe we're just not bothered – members pay their direct debits and what happens thereafter does not concern us.

The thing is, our gyms have the potential to make a huge impact on the health and fitness of their members and the wider population. It's an equally huge pity when this is not realised because members exercise badly.

**Dr John Searle**

Personal trainer



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ANDREW

**Personal trainers must ensure they correct poor technique**

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## 'Night owls' find it harder to exercise: study

'Night owls' – people who go to bed late and wake up late – are likely to be more sedentary and struggle to maintain an exercise schedule than those who get an early night, according to a new study.

Despite the growth in popularity of 24-hour gyms in recent years, it seems that late nights are more of a hindrance than a help when it comes to staying in shape.

Researchers at Northwestern University in Chicago, US, found that night owls reported more perceived barriers to exercise, including not having enough time for exercise and being unable to stick to an exercise schedule, regardless of what time they actually went to bed or woke up.

The study suggests that circadian factors should be taken into consideration as part of exercise recommendations and interventions (see HCM April 13, p62).

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=V4f8u>

## énergie signs five-club Fit4less deal in London



énergie Group CEO Jan Spaticchia

The énergie Group has signed a new franchise agreement to open at least five of its Fit4less branded health clubs in London over the next three years, as part of a new deal agreed with operator Gymstar.

The first site was scheduled to open in Bethnal Green as this magazine went to press, with two further sites planned this year. Gymstar will also, with partners, regenerate two énergie Fitness Club sites in Leighton Buzzard and Liscombe Park.

"We're committed to at least five Fit4less sites, but we're interested in opening as many as possible as we view the Fit4less brand as a hugely viable financial investment," says Gymstar operations director Chris Djuric.

Work has begun on Liscombe Park, which has already seen the introduction of new equipment and alterations to the tune of £250,000, with a further £2.25m to be invested over the next two years.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=p4p5y>

## Over 8 million UK members

The UK health and fitness industry has more clubs and members than ever before, plus a greater market value, with growth being driven by low-cost operators, according to the 2014 *State of the UK Fitness Industry Report*.

For the first time ever, health club member numbers have moved past eight million, market value has exceeded £4bn and the penetration rate is at an all-time high of 13.2 per cent. The penetration rate signifies the percentage of the UK population who are members of a health club and reflects a welcome improvement on last year's figure, which was 12.6 per cent.

The 2014 report highlights that the industry

has experienced another year of growth over the 12-month period to the end of March 2014, with increases across all three KPIs – 3.9 per cent in value, 1.5 per cent in number of facilities, and 4.5 per cent in member numbers.

The sector's gains continue to be driven by the low-cost market, which performed well across the metrics. But despite the strong returns, there were fewer new openings last year, suggesting the low-cost growth curve may be starting to tail off. Author David Minton warned that the figures are not as strong as they may seem, with 'pedestrian' progress a concern. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=U4t2a>



Low-cost operators like John Trehanne's The Gym Group continue to drive UK growth

## Sports Direct takes control of first site

Following reports of a possible acquisition of up to 33 LA fitness clubs (see HCM June 14, p10), Sports Direct confirmed it took over its first club on 18 June – a former LA fitness site in Sale, Manchester – with up to 30 further sites slated to open by early July.

A senior source confirmed the gym arm of the business will operate under the name Sports Direct Fitness.com.

Sports Direct head of leisure Winston Higham – recently joined from DW Sports Fitness – indicated that further activity was imminent in an exclusive interview with HCM last month, predicting that the new operator would take on six to 10 sites a week between mid-June and early July.

Extensive renovations are already said to be taking place at the Sale site, with Technogym the main supplier, alongside FreeMotion, True Fitness, Lonsdale and USA Pro.

Sports Direct is thought to be interested in



Ashley has long held ambitions to own gyms

the potential for synergy between gyms and the company's existing operations: it has over 600 sports stores in Europe and owns sports brands such as Dunlop, Everlast and Slazenger. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=6a65> & <http://lei.sr?a=W5K2U>

## Les Mills: Virtual reality classes



The Reebok-Les Mills pop-up box launched in London and will now tour Europe

Les Mills International has launched a brand new 'immersive fitness' product: The Project.

Working in partnership with Reebok, The Project brings together group exercise with cutting-edge entertainment to create a product which, in an exclusive interview with HCM, Les Mills CEO Phillip Mills described as "transformational for fitness".

The concept comprises a three-walled room onto which video content is streamed throughout a class. "It's like being inside a computer game – a complete virtual reality that changes with each song," says Mills.

Les Mills has made a significant investment

over the last year in producing video content, working with digital special effects experts to create three classes for the launch: cycling class The Trip, a BodyCombat/GRIT workout, and a BodyBalance/Bodyjam class.

"In the cycling class, for example, one minute you'll be cycling through the stars in the universe, the next it's as if you're in the Tron computer game, then all of a sudden you're climbing a vast mountain or cycling across the sea," says Mills. "This is as big as when we added exercise to music... It may be the biggest thing Les Mills has ever done."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=z358j>

## Right Directions to lead on ASA accreditation



The scheme aims to boost best practice

Health and safety specialist Right Directions – the company that delivers Quest on behalf of Sport England and UKactive's Code of Practice – will now co-ordinate the ASA's Learn To Swim accreditation scheme for facilities offering swim schools.

Right Direction's agreement with the ASA brings all three leading industry awards together, allowing operators to save time and money by achieving their ASA Learn To Swim accreditation and UKactive Code as part of their Quest assessment.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=U3n7U>

## Voting closed for Health Club Awards 2014

The official shortlist will be announced this month for the fourth annual Members' Choice Health Club Awards, sponsored by Physical Company and USN and in partnership with Health Club Management.

The awards aim to find out which clubs offer the best all-round customer experience based purely on ratings from members. This year, 400 clubs entered and just over 35,000 votes were cast between 1 March and 16 June: 150 clubs and leisure centres will make up the shortlist in regions around the UK (see also p36).

"The reaction we've had from clubs taking part this year has been fantastic. Teams have really embraced the concept of the competition," says managing director of the awards Simon Brown. "It's a great opportunity to increase interaction between staff and customers and the feedback from members is both valuable and really motivating to the clubs involved."

The winners will be announced at the Health Club Awards ceremony on Tuesday 30 September, held alongside LIW.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=B2g4S>

## Fitness First secures £115m bank loan

Fitness First has raised a new £115m debt facility that will be used to pay off an existing loan from shareholders and underpin the group's development plans.

The finance comes from four banks – HSBC, Barclays, UBS and IKB – and marks the first time the group has successfully secured an external loan since its Company Voluntary Arrangement (CVA) in 2012.

The package comprises a £100m term loan and a £15m revolving credit facility. The transaction marks a milestone in the restoration of the company's financial position and comes at a time when the group is undergoing a £270m global makeover, implementing a widespread training



Chief exec Andy Cosslett is leading the group's makeover

overhaul and planning major expansions in Asia. Chief financial officer John Wartig hailed the deal as signifying external lenders "growing confidence" in the company's strategy.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=e3U7W>



The image shows a person lying on their back on a black and red SMARTSTEP mat, performing a bench press with a silver SMARTBAR. The person's legs are bent and feet are flat on the mat. The barbell has red and black weight plates. The background is dark with some light effects.

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# UK news update

## Disney drafted in to get kids fit



The campaign runs for six weeks from 15 July, with activity packs available for schools

Change4Life and Disney have teamed up to launch a new campaign encouraging children to meet the minimum daily recommendation of 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise.

The '10 Minute Shake Up' scheme aims to get children to do extra 10-minute bursts of exercise each day, helping the country be active for an extra 100 million minutes this summer.

Disney will use its characters, which will feature alongside recognisable Change4Life animations, to create content for schools across TV, print and online media.

There will also be a focus on face-to-face events, with the aim of inspiring children to do

a number of extra activities each day.

Disney has conducted research finding that over three-quarters of mums claimed being active and physically fit should be fun, while over half said they wanted access to more resources to make healthy living easier.

"We hope this alliance will be a long-term strategic collaboration, with the aim of getting families eating better and moving more. We at PHE understand that it can be hard for parents to find things to keep the family busy and entertained during the school holidays," says Public Health England's Dr Ann Hoskins. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=M5V2q>

## EU could define obesity as a disability

The European Court of Justice is considering a test case which could oblige employers to treat obesity as a disability, leaving them with a duty to make adjustments to work environments.

Denmark has asked the court to rule on the case of a childminder Karsten Kaltoft, who claims that he was sacked for being too fat.

If the ruling deems obesity a disability, employers across

the EU could face new obligations to cater for obese employees' specialist needs.

Unlucky CEO David Stalker believes legalities are shrouding the key obesity issue. "Classifying disability for the purpose of workforce and employment tribunals is very complex and can distract from the more fundamental issue



UK employers could find their hands tied by the obesity ruling

that obesity is a lifestyle condition requiring a balanced lifestyle, including regular activity and healthy eating," he says. "We should really be discussing the best means of delivering this message and the support needed to tackle obesity and other lifestyle conditions."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=T9Z7w>

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Jacquie Douglas  
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# UK news update

## Apple debuts tracking platform



The software giant made the announcement at an event held in San Francisco, US

After much speculation, Apple has confirmed that it plans to soon launch a native health tracking platform – dubbed HealthKit.

The platform will come with a user-facing app simply called Health, and will feature a number of high-profile collaborations that Apple hopes will break new ground in the fledgling mobile health apps and fitness trackers sector.

The tech giant is working with renowned US health provider Mayo Clinic to integrate medical information via the new platform, which will be part of its new operating system iOS 8 when this is launched for both iPhones and iPads.

Apple will also consolidate heart rate, blood pressure, weight and other data from a range of apps and devices, including collaborator Nike.

"Developers have created a vast array of healthcare devices and accompanying applications – everything from monitoring your activity level, to your heart rate, to your weight, as well as chronic medical conditions like high blood pressure and diabetes," Apple senior vice president of software engineering Craig Federighi said at the unveiling.

"HealthKit provides a single place that applications can contribute to a composite profile of your activity and health."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=N5h2E>

## ukactive review to restructure board



CEO David Stalker is on the committee

ukactive has announced a formal review as it bids to refine governance structure and deliver on key objectives, including aligning the activity sector for future growth.

The move continues the organisation's repositioning, from being a health and fitness representative to becoming a wider physical activity advocate – something that began 18 months ago with the name change, having previously been known as the Fitness Industry Association (FIA).

Management expert Portas Consulting has already started work on the evaluation, which will also serve to ensure ukactive is in-step with the published best practice and good governance standards for non-profit organisations. The findings will be presented to the ukactive board in September with a conclusion at the November AGM.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=x9e3H>



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# SGT 101

## SMALL GROUP TRAINING ECONOMICS

### Case Scenario:

Personal Training:	1 client x £45 = £45/hour
Small Group Training:	6 clients x £25 = £150/hour
Group Exercise:	30 clients x £0 = £0/hour

### Exam Question:

Assuming you had six one-hour slots available daily, which offering generates the most direct revenue?

- ☐ £270 from personal training
- ☐ £0 from traditional group ex classes
- ☒ £900 from small group training

Answer T3

The PT-only model is ubiquitous and widely-recognised to be one for which the revenue ceiling is quickly reached. You can try to charge more to increase revenue, but members and clients have limits to what they can and will pay.

Alternatively, small group training can simultaneously decrease the cost of training for participants and significantly increase the club's financial yield from the same amount of time and personnel.

That's why we've designed eight T3 (Train.Track.Transform) 30-minute high intensity sessions which offer for the first time a coherent and systemised roster of small group training programmes to fully service a club's weekly fitness offering.



These pre-designed workouts are not choreographed and can be delivered by gym instructors, PTs or group exercise instructors, with or without music, on the gym floor or in the studio. With 16-week updates, programme cards and structured workouts for kettlebells, functional circuits, bodyweight training, metabolic conditioning, high-rep resistance work and step training, we've created programmes for the next generation of fitness clubs and professionals.

**fitness fx**

## Supplier and training news

### Olympic legend toasts refurb

London 2012 gold medal rower Katherine Grainger was on-hand to test out equipment at the newly-refurbished Cameron House Club, overlooking Scotland's Loch Lomond.

The gym, a key part of the five-star Cameron House Hotel, became the first in Scotland to offer Technogym's ARTIS Connectivity equipment as part of the £250,000 overhaul.

"I'm really impressed with this new equipment and I really can't think of anywhere better to launch the new range than Cameron House," said Glaswegian Grainger. "The Technogym team kitted out our gym at the Olympic Village and I know how passionate

they are about fitness, so the members here are really going to enjoy the new gear."

The resort also features an 18-hole championship golf course, a luxury resort spa with rooftop infinity pool and a range of outdoor activities from champagne cruises on Loch Lomond to team building and adventurous training pursuits.

Andy Roger, operations director of Cameron House, says: "It was wonderful to have Katherine Grainger here to put our brand new equipment to the test. What better way to inspire our fitness goals than this visit?"  
Details: <http://lei.sr?a=D8F4D>



Katherine Grainger CBE was on hand to re-open the gym alongside hotel staff

### New SkillsActive online training portal

SkillsActive has launched a new Quality Training Portal (QTP) – an online resource featuring thousands of quality assured training courses – which it says will help Britain's young unemployed find careers in the leisure industry.

The portal – which can be accessed by the general public – hosts a database of 3,000 pieces of quality assured training courses and qualifications from endorsed training providers within the sector.

It's designed to assist those wishing to enter and develop careers in sport, fitness, outdoors and playwork, as well as the hair or beauty sectors, by demonstrating how to acquire the relevant skills and qualifications.

The portal also houses detailed information on courses suitable for those seeking to progress their careers either through further qualifications, or by taking their expertise to the next level. Continuing



New portal: Detailed information on training

Professional Development (CPD) training is important for keeping up-to-date with the latest developments in the sector, and all courses available on the portal offer CPD points to members of SkillsActive's professional registers.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=G8Hlw>

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# International news

## 196-club Nordic merger finally signed off

In Scandinavia, the merger of SATS, Elixia and Fresh Fitness has been completed following a year-long anti-trust process.

Altor Equity Partners, the private equity fund that acquired the chains, confirmed to *Health Club Management* that the transaction closed on 6 June, bringing the three brands together under the umbrella of Health & Fitness Nordic.

The combined portfolio now comprises 196 clubs following anti-trust divestments, 567,000 members as at March 2014, and a turnover of NOK2.8bn in 2013.

For further details, turn to page 40 for an interview with Reynir Indahl, chair of Health & Fitness Nordic and senior advisor for Altor Equity Partners.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=C3t9Y>

## Jackie Joyner-Kersey joins forces with ACSM

Olympic legend Jackie Joyner-Kersey has joined forces with the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) with a shared vision to transform the health of families and communities.

Since her retirement, Joyner-Kersey has been a passionate advocate for healthy living in her hometown of East St Louis, working with public schools, community partners and corporate sponsors.

"It's critical that we continue to expand our efforts to engage families in understanding the importance of an active lifestyle and good nutrition," says Joyner-Kersey. "By partnering with ACSM, we can accelerate our reach by taking this message to under-served communities nationwide."

"The impact Jackie is having in her community has been exemplary," says ACSM president William Dexter. "We look forward to helping her expand this programme across the country."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=F4p9Z>

## Upgrade for Dutch club Fit Form Sport

Fit Form, based in the Netherlands, has recently upgraded its offering by installing top of the range equipment from Star Trac. The club now offers the embedded range of Star Trac cardio – including E-series treadmills and cross-trainers – which allows it to offer fitness testing.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=K7g9x>

## 'Fitness tax' for Washington?

Fitness enthusiasts in Washington DC have hit out at council plans to impose a 'fitness tax' on wellness facilities, warning the move could price poor people out of physical activity.

With nearly 35 per cent of US adults classified as obese, the proposals to subject Washington's gyms, tanning salons and yoga studios – among other businesses – to a 5.75 per cent sales tax from 1 January 2015 have met with opposition.

A 'Say NO to DC Gym Tax' Facebook group has about 750 members, while an online petition urging a council U-turn has attracted more than 2,671 signatures.

Graham King, owner of Roam Fitness in Glover Park, recently organised a protest involving a group exercise session outside the mayor's office. King is worried the tax will discourage poorer residents from working out, which could lead to the exacerbation of the nation's health crisis.

The council says its broad raft of tax changes is designed to offset a long-term consumer shift from spending on goods towards spending on services, while leaving the majority of residents better off. The final vote was due as this magazine went to print.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=R4p4T>



Opponents staged a workout protest outside the mayor's John A Wilson Building offices

## Sale of 24 Hour Fitness completed

Health club chain 24 Hour Fitness – one of the largest fitness chains in the United States, with nearly 4 million members and over 400 clubs across the country – has been sold by owners Forstmann Little to a group of North

American investors, for a reported figure in excess of US\$1.9bn.

AEA Investors, Fitness Capital Partners and Global Leisure Partners joined with Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan to acquire the portfolio,

which Forstmann Little grew by nearly 100 clubs since buying it for US\$1.6bn in 2005.

A new CEO and president will be installed at 24 Hour Fitness, with Mark Smith set to replace current CEO Elizabeth Blair this month.

Forstmann Little had been trying to sell the health club chain for nearly two years, as it bids to wind down its investments following the 2011 death of co-founder Theodore Forstmann.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=U1HSP>



24 Hour Fitness: Nearly 4 million members of over 400 clubs

## Anytime opens 2,500th club



Robert Jones of the US Embassy, director of Anytime Iberia Rod Hill, and Anytime CEO Chuck Runyon

US health club giant Anytime Fitness last month opened its 2,500th gym, located in the Spanish capital of Madrid, with plans to launch as many as 50 clubs across the country within the next three years.

The opening ceremony took place nearly 12 years after the very first Anytime Fitness club launched in the United States, on 28 May 2002.

"A very small percentage of US-based franchises can say that nearly a quarter of their units are located outside of the United States," said Runyon. "It's proof that our business model is attractive to potential franchisees and consumers worldwide. In fact, 2014 will

likely be the first year we open more gyms internationally than in the US."

The latest site – to be owned and operated by franchisee Alvaro Martin – is the sixth Anytime Fitness to open in Spain over the past two years and will follow the chain's modus operandi of operating 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The club is equipped by Life Fitness.

The health club chain now operates on five different continents and earlier this year was ranked number one on *Entrepreneur* magazine's Franchise 500 list, based on financial strength and stability as well as growth patterns.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=U6V4P>

## exhale opens three new studios in US

exhale, the US lifestyle brand that offers mind-body classes alongside spa and healing therapies, opened three studios in June.

The 130sq m exhale Flatiron in New York is the operator's sixth in the city. Exclusive to exhale Flatiron will be exhale's new HIIT class Core Fusion Extreme.

The 37sq m Hollywood studio is located on the fifth floor of the Loews Hollywood Hotel, overlooking the Hollywood Hills. Classes will also be held in a 16sq m outdoor tented studio by the hotel pool.

Finally, exhale South Beach in Miami features 16 spa therapy rooms, large changing rooms with steamroom and whirlpool, a mani-pedi lounge and an expansive gym with a mind-body studio. Classes will also take place on the beach.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=T8e8D>

## UFC GYM expands into Silicon Valley

UFC GYM has announced the autumn 2014 opening of a 24-hour gym that will serve the Silicon Valley community.

The 2,790sq m facility will feature a 30-foot Octagon, Brazilian jiu-jitsu studio, bag room, strength and cardio machines, battling ropes, agility ladders and other functional training equipment. There will also be a UFC GYM retail store and UFC GYM Kids' private training area offering youth fitness classes and mixed martial arts.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=K7m7k>

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"The number of middle class increased from almost nothing to 300 million in the past 15 years, and will continue to grow to 700 or 800 million in the upcoming 15 – 20 years."

CNN – Cable News Network



# People news



Luke Lancaster (above right) in action

## Young Pioneers help to tackle childhood obesity

An 18-year-old whose programme has helped to tackle childhood obesity, and assisted more than 5,000 young people in leading healthier lifestyles, has received an award from Prime Minister David Cameron.

Luke Lancaster is the country's youngest voluntary sector chief executive and set up the Young Pioneers charity back in 2008, after bullying left him feeling isolated.

He was presented with a Prime Minister's Points of Light award, recognising his volunteering efforts and anti-bullying work.

Young Pioneers' Be Healthy programme sees youth trainers go into schools to teach the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.

SportsArt supports the programme by donating a percentage of every equipment sale to the charity.

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=k2r2P>

## OCL boosts outreach scheme

Oldham Community Leisure (OCL) has appointed two new health and physical activity development officers to its health and wellbeing team. The officers will be tasked with operating two of OCL's outreach schemes.

Julie Hilditch has been promoted to manage the Kids Active Zone. In April 2014, OCL launched the new junior exercise referral scheme, through which Oldham children registering a 'very overweight' reading in the national measurement scheme will be offered free or heavily subsidised memberships.

Hilditch has worked at OCL for more than 20 years as a swimming instructor. She also has two decades' experience as a health and social care worker within the NHS, so is well placed to provide valuable oversight.

Meanwhile, Peter Wolstenholme is the first full-time officer of OCL's in-house GP referral scheme, and has been appointed due to an increase in referrals. OCL's exercise referral scheme works with 17 GP surgeries, offering support to patients with various medical conditions. Once referred, patients receive a

consultation, health check and 12-week plan, plus access to subsidised physical activities.

Wolstenholme is a qualified gym instructor and personal trainer and has worked at OCL for more than five years, as a fitness team leader as well as a class instructor.

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=P4G9d>



Wolstenholme:  
Helping boost  
outreach efforts

## Sarah Edmonds joins Trainer Premier Global

Premier Global, the parent group of Premier Training International and Active IQ, has appointed Sarah Edmonds as head of standards and compliance, tasked with driving forward qualification and programme standards.

Edmonds has worked in the active leisure industry for more than 20 years and joins the company from her role as interim head of CYQ at Central YMCA Qualifications.

Having begun her career as a dance and fitness instructor, Edmonds then became a vocational tutor before moving on to quality assurance and compliance in the arena of examinations and awarding. Thanks to these roles, Edmonds has extensive knowledge of government regulated vocational qualifications, which Premier believes makes her ideally suited to the new role.

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=M6f3M>

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## Competing with the budget clubs

• Rafi Mohammed, PhD

**C**lub owners, like most businesspeople, are intimidated by things they don't understand. So they spend their time on marketing, membership and programming. But if they'd invest half a day, or perhaps a day, to create one or more intelligent pricing strategies, and then implement them, they could reap a huge return.

For example, most clubs recognise only two pricing levers: one to push prices up, and one to push them down. However, in my book, *The 1% Windfall: How Successful Companies Use Price to Profit and Grow*, I offer more than 50 different ways to think about pricing. Club owners just need to become proactive and creative.

Price is the compensation for the hard work companies do and the financial risks they take. You can create a foundation for better pricing by bringing price and value into alignment.

Keep in mind that value doesn't mean the lowest price. In fact, club owners are too quick to discount memberships because, while many offer great value, they tend to underrate themselves. Instead of trying to lure new members with low prices, they should consider offering different membership options. I'm a big fan of good, better and best versions of a membership

— a pricing strategy that allows customers to self-select and make value choices.

We see this in other service industries. Alongside their regular dinner menus, restaurants have long offered 'early bird' specials, which are great value for price-sensitive diners. The 'chef's table' offers equally great value for high rollers who want to splurge and interact with the chef.

Why, then, do clubs feel obligated to offer all-inclusive memberships? Why not break out group classes and other special offerings? This would, for instance, permit clubs to set prices a little lower for customers who don't sign up for classes.

It's important to recognise that a discount today hardly guarantees a pay-off tomorrow — it often simply devalues the club. That said, the proliferation of budget clubs is a hot topic because it's a real challenge. Unfortunately, if budget clubs offer the same equipment and services as yours, then you're commoditised and you'll probably have to lower your prices.

But it's rare that any two clubs are identical, so you need to identify what sets yours apart that justifies charging a premium. If a US\$11-a-month club just opened down the street, you should ask yourself: how should people choose my club over that low-priced club?

To answer that question, you need to create a value statement, and this isn't the time to be modest. This is designed, in part, to boost the confidence of your staff, so take the time to understand what sets your business apart and communicate those defining differences to your staff, your members and potential members.

Then you can focus on ways to increase value, from offering health and workout tips to expanding your menu of social activities. You have to be proactive, but when you really think about what your club has to offer, you'll be surprised at what you'll find.

*Rafi Mohammed, PhD, is a pricing strategy consultant who spoke at a recent IHRSA event.*

### 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)

## European Congress speakers named



Keynotes: Media entrepreneur Annemarie van Gaal and Skype creator Jonas Kjellberg

The general sessions speakers for the 14th Annual IHRSA European Congress have been announced: Jonas Kjellberg, one of the creators of Skype, and Annemarie van Gaal, a financial columnist in the Netherlands.

Kjellberg will speak on entrepreneurship and creating a winning sales culture.

In addition to being one of the creators of Skype, Kjellberg was the founder of Player.io, which was sold to Yahoo, and chair of iCloud, sold to Apple. He lectures on entrepreneurship and creating a winning sales culture at Stanford University and the Stockholm School of Economics. He is also an avid investor and coaches entrepreneurs.

Meanwhile, van Gaal will speak in a session entitled 'Doing Unconventional Business'.

In 1990, van Gaal co-founded the media company Independent Media in Russia. Due

to its unconventional approach to the market, Independent Media rapidly grew from a company with a turnover of US\$1.5m and 15 employees in 1992, to become the leading publishing house in Russia by 1998, with a turnover of \$80m and 700 employees.

Since 1998, Independent Media has been the leading publishing house in Russia and the Ukraine in the field of consumer magazines, newspapers and trade publications. Consumer titles include the Russian editions of *Cosmopolitan*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *Men's Health*, as well as a number of newspapers including English language daily *The Moscow Times*, *The St Petersburg Times* and *Vedomosti* – a Russian language daily produced in a joint venture with *Financial Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*.

In 2001, Independent Media was sold to Finnish company Sanoma Media and van Gaal left Russia for the Netherlands, where she now manages her own companies, is active as a private equity investor and is a columnist for the leading financial newspaper *Financieel Dagblad*. She's also the author of several bestsellers on financial subjects and was one of the 'dragons' in the Dutch version of *Dragons' Den*. Many of her activities and much of her time and profits go towards projects that help eliminate poverty in the Netherlands.

The European Congress is set for 16–19 October at the Beurs van Berlage in Amsterdam. Visit [www.ihrsa.org/congress](http://www.ihrsa.org/congress) for more information and to register.



This year's European Congress will be held in the lively Dutch city of Amsterdam

## Apply to serve on IHRSA board of directors

Those serving on the IHRSA board of directors work closely with a prestigious group of business leaders to set the strategic course for the association and the industry for years to come.

Each year, two to four board positions need to be filled as existing board members complete their terms of service. This ensures that seasoned board members sit side-by-side with new ones, providing a balance of ideas that can propel the global association to new heights of success.

Visit [www.ihrsa.org/governance](http://www.ihrsa.org/governance) to download the application for the 2015–2019 term. The deadline is 31 July.

## Free webinar on reducing attrition

IHRSA publishes dozens of research reports every year, and many are free to IHRSA members. Also free to members is 'Reduce Attrition Using IHRSA Research', a recent webinar presented by Melissa Rodriguez, senior research manager for IHRSA. In this webinar, Rodriguez explains how to use IHRSA's reports to improve your member retention rate.

To access the recording of this webinar (free for IHRSA members, US\$79 for non-members), log on to [www.ihrsa.org/webinars](http://www.ihrsa.org/webinars) and click on 'recent webinars'.

## Events diary

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

### 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

### 21–23 October 2014

IHRSA / Mercado Fitness Mexico City Conference & Trade Show – Santa Fe, Mexico

### 18–21 November 2014

ChinaFit / IHRSA China Management Forum – Guangzhou, China

# The activity alphabet

IHRSA has published a new A-Z book that's designed to educate children about physical activity from an early age

When Jay Ablondi, IHRSA's executive vice president of global products, was reading to his daughter Elle, now aged 3½, he noticed there were plenty of alphabet books on the market – but not many that had an exercise-focused message.

That gave him an idea. Rather, it sparked an old idea that had been shelved for more than five years. Ablondi and Stan Tran, IHRSA's association management systems administrator, had started work on a children's book in the late 2000s, but put it on hold due to time restraints and the recession. With his new revelation, Ablondi went to Tran and set a deadline for the two of them to finish and publish the book.

### A first for IHRSA

*Active from A to Z*, IHRSA's first foray into children's publishing, became available for purchase in May. The 56-page publication is full of bright illustrations by Tran that complement Ablondi's rhymes about animals being active and accompanying fun facts.

"I feel I have good editorial instincts, but I never thought myself as a writer or author," says Ablondi, who oversees IHRSA's magazines and reports. "But this idea took on a life of its own. It became easy to do because I immersed myself in children's early education books. It just flowed."

Tran is the man behind IHRSA's CBI magazine cartoon, *Out of Shape*.

IHRSA dipping into the children's book pool shouldn't be too surprising. Part of its mission is to help provide solutions for the growing obesity epidemic and dearth of activity among both adults and children; a book that IHRSA hopes will get kids interested in exercise, with their parents' participation, fits perfectly.

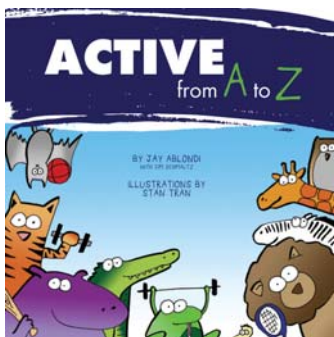
"Kids and parents need to understand that exercise should be an important part of their lives," says Ablondi. "The idea of the book is to help parents teach children that not everything is about sitting in front of a computer screen and watching TV."

With bears playing baseball, cheetahs on cycles and elephants on ellipticals, children will be introduced to new animals, physical activities and exercise equipment.

"This book will introduce children to new sports," adds Ablondi. "They can try things like racquetball or skateboarding over time, but why not expose them when they're first learning? It's never too early to instill healthy exercise habits."

### Getting kids active

Conveniently, another part of IHRSA's mission is to help grow the industry and its



A-Z brings the notion of exercise into learning the alphabet

member clubs – and those reading the book now could easily become members of IHRSA clubs in the future.

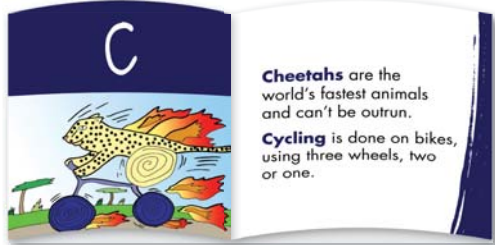
"Many health clubs don't cater to children, but they can still convey the message to parents that they should be instilling exercise habits and making it fun to exercise at an early age," explains Ablondi. "Parents want their children to live healthy lives. What better way than to have exercise as part of their daily routine?"

IHRSA associate member Helix, creator of the lateral trainer, sponsored the book. President Lenny Snyderman says the book struck a chord with him: "Today, we see fewer and fewer kids exercising, with limited freedom due to safety concerns as well as the growing dependence on electronic activities."

"I was very pleased to see someone taking the time to write about children and fitness, while using the power of IHRSA to raise a subject that really needs more focus in our country."

Jim Schmaltz, editor of IHRSA's *Get Active!* magazine, and Samantha Cuozzo, designer for CBI magazine, also contributed to the book.

Priced at US\$13.95, *Active from A to Z* is for anyone who wants to illustrate the virtues of physical activity to kids in an entertaining way. It's available in either print or PDF formats at [www.ihrsa.org/active-a-to-z](http://www.ihrsa.org/active-a-to-z), and through online retailers including Amazon. ●



The book exposes young children to the idea of fun physical activity while they learn

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# Partnering with Coca-Cola

Awkward marriage or golden opportunity? ukactive CEO David Stalker talks about a new tie-up with Coca-Cola

## What is Coca-Cola Zero ParkLives?

At the end of May, Coca-Cola Great Britain announced a national physical activity programme called Coca-Cola Zero ParkLives: a programme of free, fun activities in parks, delivered in partnership with local authorities.

## Why is ukactive involved?

When the opportunity arose to work with Coca-Cola, my first instinct was to immediately question why – as the national not-for-profit health body for the physical activity sector – we'd want to work with a soft drinks manufacturer. Surely a contradiction? But then I took a step back and considered what was at stake. The latest UK inactivity figures are shocking – enough to bankrupt the NHS within a decade. On the table was an opportunity to contribute to redirecting this trend.

ukactive's mission to get more people, more active requires partnerships with brands that have the profile to reach consumers at scale. But we must walk a fine line between retaining our value to our members and ensuring our relationships with the commercial sector remain true to our DNA. We believe Coca-Cola Great Britain is committed to playing its part in tackling the issue of obesity: its work to address inactivity goes hand-in-hand with the reformulation of some of its drinks and increased marketing of its zero-calorie brands.

## What is ukactive doing?

Alongside Coca-Cola GB, Public Health England and local authorities, we're helping shape the plans, we're leading the monitoring and evaluation of the project, and we're ensuring the views of the stakeholder community are heard.

We've sometimes been the awkward partner asking challenging questions. We've helped ensure project objectives include reaching inactive people, demonstrating an uplift in activity levels over time, signposting sustainable community opportunities and generating greater levels of usage of local parks and open spaces.

For those who wonder where we draw the line – when does a consumer brand



Jessica Ennis (above left) helped launch the ParkLives initiative in Birmingham in May

collaboration become an absolute no-go for us – I say this: we look to work with anyone who has a role to play in getting more people, more active, more often.

There are countless considerations that will vary from project to project, but what matters is a genuine and credible long-term commitment to getting more people more physically active.

## The activity agenda

Coca-Cola is a soft drinks business that will be judged 99.9 per cent of the time based on its actions in the area of soft drinks. But in 2013, it took a strategic decision to play its part in helping tackle obesity, most publicly through a series of high profile adverts promoting switches to the Coca-Cola Zero brand.

ParkLives will always have its critics, but the programme also has high profile supporters. Part of our commitment to improving the

health of the nation by promoting physical activity includes forming relationships with brands that share a similar ambition and commitment. A company like Coca-Cola GB has unique reach to be mobilised in the battle to turn the tide of inactivity. So with sincerity, I say see you in the park this summer.

## Want to take part?

Coca-Cola Zero ParkLives launched in Birmingham on 30 May, before travelling to Newcastle on 7 June, and will conclude in London on 24 July. All activities take place in the parks in these cities and consumers can book their attendance at [www.parklives.com](http://www.parklives.com)

The programme will be extended to incorporate additional cities each year.

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**Leisure Industry Week: The annual meeting place for leisure professionals**

## JULY

### 18-19 | FitPro Live

Venue ExCeL London, UK

#### Summary

Targeting personal trainers, instructors and fitness fanatics, this convention and trade show offers product demos, workouts and hands-on workshops, as well as educational sessions including seminars and masterclasses led by the world's leading presenters.

Web [www.fitpro.com/live14](http://www.fitpro.com/live14)

## AUGUST

### 4-7 | 10th Annual International Conference on Kinesiology and Exercise Sciences

Venue Athens, Greece

#### Summary

Brings together scholars and students of applied and integrated health sciences.

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

### 13-17 | IDEA World Fitness Convention

Venue Anaheim, California, US

#### Summary

Claimed to be the world's largest, longest-running fitness convention. It features a programme of educational sessions from industry-best presenters.

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

### 28-30 | 15th Annual IHRSA/ Fitness Brasil Latin American Conference & Trade Show

Venue São Paulo, Brazil

#### Summary

A key wellness event for Latin America, featuring three days of seminars, networking and a trade show.

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

## SEPTEMBER

### 10-11 | Health+Fitness Business Expo & Interbike Expo

Venue Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas, Nevada, US

#### Summary

Since 1997, this expo has brought manufacturers, suppliers, retailers, buyers, press, industry influencers and fitness professionals together.

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

### 18 | Active by Design Summit

Venue Coin Street Neighbourhood Centre, London, UK

#### Summary

UK charity The Design Council champions 'great design that improves lives'. It was instrumental in promoting the concept of inclusive design and now also focuses on waving the banner for environments that improve people's wellbeing. Its summit will see designers, built environment professionals and public health specialists come together for inspiring talks.

Web <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/events/active-design-conference>

### 30-2 October | Leisure Industry Week

Venue NEC Birmingham, UK

#### Summary

Leisure Industry Week's role is to provide the annual meeting place for professionals from all areas of leisure, connecting them with the latest products, services and innovations. The show covers a number of different sectors: Health & Fitness (incorporating Sport), Play & Attractions, Leisure Facilities, Pool & Spa, and Eat & Drink.

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



**Famous battle sites are visited**

## 17-21 SEPTEMBER 2014

### World War I Battlefield Trek

With the 100th anniversary of the start of World War I now upon us, this charity challenge based in Ypres – one of the major battlegrounds of the war – is a timely one. Over three days, participants will trek between some of the most famous battle sites and memorials around the city to raise funds for The Royal Star & Garter Homes, a charity that supports nursing and therapeutic care for injured and disabled ex-service men and women. [Details: www.discoveradventure.com](http://www.discoveradventure.com)



**Money raised goes to the RNIB**

## OCTOBER 2014

### Glow Neon

Run or dance around a night-time 3k course, with UV lights and while being sprayed with glow neon paints, to raise money for the Royal National Institute of the Blind. Four events will be held in October, in Newcastle, London, Ayr and Edinburgh. Live DJs will be in place to offer entertainment too. [Details: www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

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As in previous years, this year's awards will be presented by Mark Durden-Smith

# MAKING THE CUT

Are you in the running for an award? The shortlist is announced for the 2014 Members' Choice Health Club Awards

**T**he official shortlist has now been announced for the fourth annual Members' Choice Health Club Awards in partnership with *Health Club Management*. The awards hold a unique place in the industry, as shortlisted and winning clubs are decided purely based on ratings by members. This year, clubs of all shapes and sizes took part, from small independents to regional groups, hotel chains to corporates.

From March to June 2014, members were given access to an anonymous online survey, allowing them to rate their club on the quality of its customer service, facilities and value for money.

Simon Brown, who runs the Health Club Awards scheme, explains: "Every club that entered this year's awards sent a very clear message to new and existing customers. Taking part shows that a club is committed to providing the best member experience it possibly can and that it's prepared to prove it."

## Strong competition

Brown continues: "An all-time record of over 35,000 members got involved this

year, and scores have been incredibly high – for example, over 75 per cent of members rated their club as 'excellent' and worthy of recommending to friends. These sorts of figures reflect the intense competition for clubs to be shortlisted.

"From the 400 UK clubs that entered, only 150 have made it onto the shortlist and every single one of them should be extremely proud of that fact. There's no better endorsement for a club than approval by the customers who are using its facilities on a regular basis. Being an awards finalist is testament to how well these clubs are run."

The awards also recognise individuals working in clubs, and there's a shortlist for the People Awards alongside the regional shortlist for clubs. "Fitness professionals are at the heart of the health club industry and integral to the customer experience," says Brown.

"Members often stay loyal to a club because of their relationship with key members of staff, so it's vital to recognise outstanding individuals. Over 300 individuals were nominated in this year's competition, so to make it to the shortlist is a great honour in itself."

## Getting involved

Two new sponsors – Physical Company and USN UK – are supporting the Health Club Awards this year.

Jason Oakley, MD of USN UK, says: "We're very pleased to be involved. Sponsoring the Health Club Awards is another way we can support the fitness industry and reward the clubs that demonstrate excellent service, care and professionalism."

John Halls, sales and marketing director at Physical Company, says: "We're proud to be associated with these awards, as they celebrate the high standards in customer service that we believe are so important in business."

Winners in all categories will be announced at an awards dinner and ceremony on 30 September – the first night of LIW. The black tie event, to be held at the National Motorcycle Museum in Birmingham, will be attended by 400 guests and will include an exclusive after-dinner party for guests.

For information about attending the awards, and to view the full shortlists of both clubs and individuals, please visit [www.healthclubawards.co.uk](http://www.healthclubawards.co.uk) ●

# REGIONAL AND NATIONAL **SHORTLISTS** REVEALED!



IN ASSOCIATION WITH



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



After **37,426 members votes** we can now reveal the shortlists for this year's awards. Every club and member of staff that's made it on the shortlist should be very proud of their success. The winners will be announced at the **4th annual Health Club Awards** on September 30th at LIW.

\* To view the shortlists and book tickets for the awards go to  
[www.healthclubawards.co.uk](http://www.healthclubawards.co.uk)

## EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT ...

# Attracting investors

The health and fitness industry has weathered a run of recessions. Now the economic climate is looking brighter, what should operators be doing to catch the attention of investors?

**T**wo years ago, when we ran a feature about investor relations, the overall picture wasn't very uplifting (see *HCM* June 12, p30). The UK was in the midst of a recession, the fitness sector was receiving negative press about contracts, Fitness First had run into financial difficulties and local authorities were implementing budget cuts.

But as the recession bit, there wasn't in fact the mass cancellation of memberships that had been predicted, which earned the sector some credibility.

In addition, as predicted in 2012, the low-cost chains emerged strongly. While mid-market clubs ran into well-reported problems, the budget chains worked hard

to create a niche for themselves, based not least on listening to consumers' desire for value and distaste for contracts.

And now, after a long and miserable recession, the outlook is more positive. The economy is doing better, with house prices rising again, along with consumer confidence. There's a buzz in the fitness sector too: Fitness First has come through its restructuring, new clubs are being built, and while the low-cost sector has driven the growth of the industry, premium microgyms are also popping up all over London.

Added to this, we're seeing some old faces – such as Allan Fisher, David Turner and Mike Balfour, who all founded chains in the past – back in the industry.

Against this backdrop, a number of operators have attracted new investors, among them David Lloyd Leisure, The Gym Group and Xercise4Less. Meanwhile payasugym has also received an initial £250,000 funding from Albion Ventures.

So what does this mean? Are the bad times behind us? Is the current buzz sustainable? And are investors starting to take another look at the health and fitness sector?

In fact Nicholas Batram, travel and leisure analyst at Peel Hunt, says the sector is not particularly on the City's radar at the moment, because there aren't any listed companies. So how do we gain the attention of potential investors? We ask the experts....

HOW CAN CLUB OPERATORS ATTRACT POTENTIAL INVESTORS? EMAIL US: [HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM](mailto:HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM)

## NIGEL BLAND

Partner • Deloitte Corporate Finance

**"G**rowth is cyclical, so now should be a good time to invest in the health and fitness sector, with the next three to four years looking promising.

Budget gyms are still flavour of the month, offering substantial market growth and attracting new members to the sector. The mid and upper markets are more difficult and operators need to convince investors they have a case for growth: not just rolling out, but looking for ways to segment, differentiate and originate new products.

Despite predictions, the sector has held up well in terms of membership during the recession. Now the economy is growing, I don't think memberships will necessarily grow much faster, but I do think people will be prepared to pay more if the service is good enough, so this should be a focus.

The balance sheet for the sector is generally looking healthier now. Some businesses ran into difficulties, but after restructuring most are now out the other side – but they will need to prove strong management to attract backing.

The general direction of travel should be easier now, with people better off. The demand for health and fitness will not go away, especially with the obesity issue, so the industry could do well if it can offer a solution to this problem."



## CHRISTOPH RUEDIG

Investment director • Albion Ventures

**"W**hen we assess whether or not a company is investable, we look at three areas: the management, the product and the market. We only back first rate management; the product has to be clearly differentiated, offering clear benefits to customers and stakeholders, and the market has to be stable, with a growing customer base and predictable revenues.

In the fitness sector, the old model of just opening a gym and hoping people will join is no longer working. The market is saturated and there has been a lot of erosion by budget gyms.

Companies that want to grow have to innovate – for example, with new fitness concepts and class franchising with well-known brands. However, innovation also brings about creative destruction, by threatening established players and creating more pressure to keep changing.

The UK fitness sector doesn't offer a lot of growth, which will be driven mainly by new product offerings and business models: lots of chains are looking outside the UK for growth.

Albion Ventures invested in payasugym as it's an innovative company. Its online gym directory and pay-as-you-go business model target less frequent gym users and ensure they receive good value for money."





Microgyms such as Fitness Mosaic are helping to create a buzz in the industry

## NICHOLAS BATRAM

Travel and leisure analyst • Peel Hunt

**T**he main concern in the City regarding the health and fitness sector was that membership might drop off during the recession, if people saw membership as a luxury or discretionary. But as in the US, this didn't happen. What actually happened was that usage increased. The industry has done well in a difficult time when consumers haven't had much money.

The test will come when someone wants to come to market. There's some negative history – it didn't end well in the City for Holmes Place. However, with the right company and the right valuation, the market could be open. There's been press speculation surrounding Virgin Active: the company has performed impressively over a long period of time. Equally, growth opportunities in the budget sector look exciting.

Technology – devices like Jawbones and Fitbits – are also an interesting trend, and it's good the fitness sector has embraced this rather than seeing it as a threat in the way the retail industry did. I think the industry needs to find ways to use technology in an innovative way to mobilise those who are inactive. While the government wants a healthier society, there's opportunity at both ends of the market to find ways to engage the inactive population. I think technology could play a key role here.”



## NEIL HARMSWORTH

Co-founder • payasugym

**T**o attract investment, the industry needs to demonstrate that it's a growth sector. The rise of budget gyms has created growth by widening the target audience, but this sector will quickly mature in UK, as it has done in other regions.

Now the industry has to focus on delivering the next growth opportunity, by looking for innovative solutions to engage new audiences and showing there's a real possibility of moving from 12 or 13 per cent population engagement to 25 per cent.

Market conditions are good, the investment market is moving into a strong period and customer disposable cash is increasing. If the sector can find a new way of engaging customers, there's an opportunity to capture a proportion of disposable cash and ensure it's dedicated to fitness.

Outside the budget sector, I expect little to happen in terms of investment. The first stage is for the leaders in the fitness industry to trial and test new models to demonstrate growth. Learning from other industries will be critical: a stagnant car rental market grew through the innovation of Streetcar/Zipcar, and the hotel market through AirBnB. Once business plans can be created, demonstrating a clear path to growth, then investment will follow.”



# REYNIR INDAHL

The senior advisor for Altor Equity Partners, and chair of Health & Fitness Nordic, talks to Kate Cracknell about the disruptive influence of technology, and the fundamental need for businesses to be useful

“**T**he whole global fitness industry seems to be behind the curve on technology,” says

Reynir Indahl, senior advisor for Altor Equity Partners – the private equity firm that last month completed the merger of Scandinavian health club chains SATS, Elixia and Fresh Fitness following a year-long anti-trust process – when I meet him on a flying visit to London.

“Operators have been thinking of themselves as suppliers of a physical gym product, but we have to turn this around. Gyms will always be a key part of what we offer, but the end consumer is changing and we need to look at things from their perspective, making sure we harness our resources in a way that addresses their needs.

“Customers simply want to reach their goals, sometimes training outdoors, sometimes indoors, sometimes while they’re away on holiday, sometimes when they live in a place where there’s no gym. They want to know if they’re improving and on-track to reach their goals, and they can do that much better digitally. That’s where our new technology strategy comes in, whereby our physical gyms will become just one of the products we offer – and hopefully over time not even our biggest product.

“That’s a major departure, essentially moving from a club-centred model to a customer-centred model, and it’s something the whole sector needs to do. If we’re not able to get out of the box –

**Indahl came to health and fitness via the fields of consultancy and technology**

and I mean that physically – we’re missing huge growth opportunities. But I see very few operators internationally who have achieved that shift. Coming into this sector, I’m a bit surprised by how old-fashioned it is. The industry is running the risk of being completely disrupted.”

## SATURATION POINT?

Indahl, now chair of Health & Fitness Nordic – the parent company under which the SATS, Elixia and Fresh Fitness brands continue to operate – may not have previous fitness industry experience, but his words are to be heeded. A business degree was followed

by a stint at management consultancy McKinsey, then an MBA at Harvard, after which he ran a technology company.

Joining Altor when it launched its first fund in 2003, he has since been involved in a number of technology company investments where the focus was on “growth, getting into new markets, launching new products”.

Indeed, Altor’s philosophy is to target companies where it can have a marked impact on growth or improvement. “We’re very active investors, getting involved in creating strategies and setting targets. Ours is a 15-year fund, but we typically bring in a





Health & Fitness Nordic is now Scandinavia's biggest operator, encompassing SATS, Elixia (above and below) and Fresh Fitness



The SATS and Elixia offerings are, says Indahl, very similar and may be brought together under one brand in the future

lot of changes in the first two to three years, so we tend to divest after five to seven years," explains Indahl.

The acquisition of SATS, Elixia and Fresh Fitness marked Altor's first venture into the fitness market, and the fund's second biggest investment to date, with the combined Health & Fitness Nordic now the biggest fitness operation in Scandinavia and the second largest in Europe – 196 clubs following anti-trust divestments, 567,000 members as at March 2014, and a turnover of NOK2.8bn (US\$468m, €345m, £278m) in 2013.

So what drew Altor Equity Partners to the fitness sector – arguably a fairly

saturated market for a fund looking for strong growth?

"I think the whole notion of saturation is wrong," says Indahl. "The market has strong growth potential, with people nowadays much more focused on being fit and well. The question is whether we have the right product, and I'm not sure we have. But the market itself is a very attractive one."

"It's over-saturated in the key cities of the Nordics from the perspective of square metres of gym space, especially in the mid-premium segment, so I don't think opening more gyms is necessarily the answer. But it's

definitely a growth market if we can create the right product."

#### PRODUCT OVERHAUL

What, then, would that "right product" look like, both in terms of the customer-facing offering and the business model behind it?

Certainly Indahl sees strength in the business as it stands, with high brand awareness among the general public and "a very, very strong presence in the key clusters of Stockholm, Helsinki, Oslo, Stavanger, to name a few of the key cities". He also highlights the group exercise offering as worthy of mention, ►

**All together now: 70 per cent of members regularly take part in group exercise classes**

► with 70 per cent of members regularly taking part in classes.

He continues: "Strategically, we also have the low-cost operation Fresh Fitness in our portfolio, and that's enabling us to compete in a different segment of the market.

"But that leads me onto our main weakness: the fact that, with SATS and Elixia, we have a 'one price fits all' mid-premium product – one price, one typical format. Value for money in the product is being strained – either it's too expensive for those who aren't doing group exercise, or it's actually too cheap for those who do a lot of classes – and the whole model is very, very hard to target.

"Going hand-in-hand with that, we have too high a market share of mid-premium clubs in the Nordics, leaving space for the more innovative low-cost players and niche players to grow. That's a fundamental challenge we must address."

So how will they do about this?

"We need to be much, much more differentiated, and I believe we have the scale and the brands to do that. We'll use Fresh Fitness to fight in the low-cost segment, and on the SATS-Elixia side we'll probably create a limited number of premium clubs in the main cities.

"But our main product – which I think over time will fall under one brand rather than separate SATS and Elixia brands – needs to be much more differentiated. We'll create different formats, with smaller clubs alongside the larger sites to fill the gaps within each key cluster, ensuring we're geographically



close to customers. We'll take the next three to five years to migrate into what we think is an optimal footprint.

"We'll see how 'micro' the clubs become, but we'll certainly vary the format to a much larger degree. We could have some group exercise-only gyms, for example, or personal training studios, or cardio-only clubs. We're thinking about yoga studios too, and maybe specialist cycling venues. We're looking at how we better integrate indoor and outdoor training too. But whatever we do, I want to keep everything within the family so the customer can always choose to go wherever he or she wants.

"In addition, we're looking at our pricing model to make sure the customer, whatever they pay, gets value for money – and I don't think that's the case today. If you don't do group exercise, if you don't have children in the daycare centre, why should you pay for it? On the flip side, if you want to book into popular classes, perhaps you'll pay a booking fee to guarantee a spot."

## WELCOME TO OUR WORLD

He continues: "We're looking into the corporate market too, at companies that want some kind of programme for their employees as a way of reducing sick leave. We've traditionally had very poor products for that market – we've essentially just offered them a discount for their employees to become members of our clubs, instead of really trying to understand employers' challenges and developing products for them. But we have some very cool programmes now, including using apps and gamification to make it fun to participate, and it's working really well.

"And even for our general members, I want to get away from the idea that you become a member of a club. Instead, you become a member of the SATS world – and that might even mean you don't attend a physical club.

"What I want is for members, wherever they may be, to come to us as their destination for the resources and information they need to reach their health and fitness goals. I want us to have the best technology, the best information, the best resources. Members should be able to stream our group exercise classes into their homes. We should have specialised one-to-one programmes, online personal trainers, we should follow up on activity tracking data... Anything and everything we can do to give people the encouragement they need.

"I also want our personal trainers to be much more like key account managers than PTs. If you look at the education sector, it's been completely transformed by technology: it's much better to sit at home watching a lecture on YouTube and then, when you're in the classroom, to actually work together and learn from each other.

"It should be the same in the fitness industry. If we have good enough ►



The company aims to try out new formats and sizes for its clubs

# MATRIX



Joe Townsend

Former Royal Marine Commando,  
Ironman World Championship Runner-up,  
Team Matrix Ambassador

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Having the low-cost operation Fresh Fitness allows Health & Fitness Nordic to compete in a different segment of the market

► systems, it would be much more affordable for the customer to do a few exercises on their own, with PTs using their competencies to monitor results and track progress. I want our PTs to spend the majority of their time following up with customers, whether that's congratulating them or encouraging them to get back to their programme, and only occasionally training with them.

"We'll have members who pay just £2 a month and others who'll pay £300, and we'll see where it averages out. Above all, each member has to feel they're getting good value for money."

While currently focused on developing the right products for the Nordic market, could all this ultimately lead to a global reach rather than a purely local audience? "If it works in the Nordics then yes, quite possibly. We don't need to own all of it – we're already in conversation with overseas operators to see if we can do something together – but I think we'll have a minority interest in some technology companies, so it's something we could potentially white label for other operators. We'll see how that develops."

### SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

But it's not just about technology for Indahl: "Our physical gyms remain extremely important, however much I talk up the digital strategy. We live in a digitised world where real intimacy and connections are fading away. Our gyms provide that social contact, which is something that can't be replaced by digital means. However, you do need a strong synergy between the two.

"For example, I want us to become an excellent platform for self-organising groups – connecting and co-ordinating

people who want to train together outside the club. Maybe there's no gym in their community: we can provide a platform for them, offering education and follow-up as well as linking people together using social media."

He continues: "We could even liaise with former athletes, employing them in some way whereby they offer group exercise classes and education, both inside and outside our gyms.

"Ultimately we have to integrate much more with the local community – local sports clubs, the after-school market, creating products for the elderly. We can't just create nice gyms for affluent parts of society if we're going to make a difference."

### BEING USEFUL

There have been quite a few mentions of 'making a difference' throughout our interview, so I ask Indahl to elaborate on his personal approach to investment. "My philosophy is to select companies that have the potential to contribute to society," he says. "That should be the very purpose of business, but we've somehow forgotten that over the last 20–30 years.

"When you look at the fitness industry, for example, it has a huge potential to contribute to society, but to date I don't think it's been particularly useful. Its impact on public health has been marginal – you can't even see it in the statistics and trends over the years. We're not doing any research on what's making people healthier, not putting the data together, systemising it or using it to develop a useful product. We're just looking around and picking up the latest new idea without even knowing if it's actually the best way of helping people reach their goals."

He continues: "As a general rule, the fitness industry has been far too focused on how to squeeze the last

dollar out of every customer, instead of thinking in a customer-centric way. But I'm not too focused on revenue per member – for me, number of members and how long they remain a member is much more important. My strategy is 'a member for life', and you can only achieve that by being genuinely useful to people. I want to have products that develop with our members: wherever they live, whatever they can afford, whatever their training needs or goals, we'll be able to follow them throughout their changing needs and lifestyles and keep them as a member for life.

"I recently challenged our management team to spell out what would define our success in five or 10 years, and all the usual answers came up: revenue growth, market share, EBITDA. In my view that's all very fine, but as the number one player in the Nordics with half a million members, if I can't see the health statistics of the Nordic countries shifting – evidence that we're making an impact – in my mind we won't have been successful."

He concludes: "SATS and Elixia are two of the largest, most profitable fitness players in the world – I think there are very few others that have been as successful financially – but I still view it as a turnaround project for us. But the problem is, I don't think the industry sees itself as being in need of a turnaround.

"I personally believe the train has already left the station and we have to run extremely fast to catch it up and jump on the last carriage, and a large part of the fitness industry hasn't even realised that. I do think we can accomplish it, but it's a hell of a job.

"We have to completely shift the mindset of the whole sector. If not, we'll be disrupted and will prove the world right that we are indeed a mature, stagnating market." ●

# 45 YEARS IN THE MAKING.....



Before Arthur Jones it was just bar-bells & dumbbells.

In 1972, Arthur Jones initiated a more-advanced plan with his negative-accentuated techniques. Jones proved the effectiveness of negative training, but was unable after many attempts to design and manufacture a machine that supplied it efficiently.

Ten, twenty, and thirty years passed and there was little progression – other than cosmetic – in the function of strength-training equipment. More recently, almost all leg, torso, and arm machines from popular manufacturers contained the same characteristics.

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MATRIX

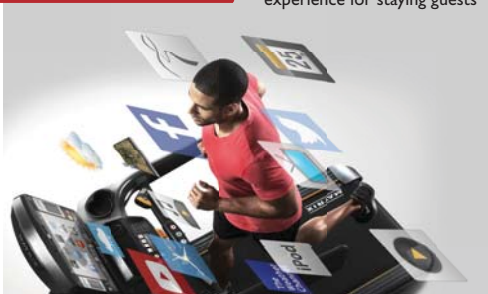
# An enlightened experience

The opportunity to work out while on the move has become an expectation – Matrix Fitness can help you turn it into an experience for staying guests

**T**he hospitality market is diverse, fragmented, and highly competitive, with different properties appealing to a variety of traveller demographics. For example, 'service select' options attract the economy traveller, while those who are less price-sensitive prefer full-service or luxury facilities. However, with the recent economic downturn having implications for the leisure market, attention has turned to the business traveller, for whom some degree of travel remains inevitable.

The importance of providing home comforts for those spending a significant amount of time away on business should not be underestimated. According to the 2013 *European Business Traveller Well-being Study*, "Forty-six per cent said staying with their current exercise regimens was a priority while on the road"; while a recent Spafinder Wellness 365 consumer survey found that 70 percent of travellers want gyms with cardio and weights.

With corporate wellness programmes becoming part of the 'norm', it naturally follows that hotels supporting wellbeing initiatives are likely to fare well in a competitive market. While UK hoteliers have some way to go to compete with their global counterparts – for example, the new EVEN brand by IHG, with best-in-class Athletic Studios and in-room training zones – token treadmills in a room reminiscent of a broom-cupboard



Intuitive operations make it easy for guests to get on the machine and go

are a thing of the past, especially with potential for secondary income from gym memberships.

## A full-service partner with complete, competitive solutions

Matrix Fitness offers a diverse product portfolio of cardio and strength equipment that embraces emergent trends and creates options for any customer in the hospitality market, regardless of size or budget. Intuitive operations make it easy for guests to get on and go, while the multi-language capability enables them to continue their exercise routines wherever they are.

Tech-savvy travellers will also appreciate the unique app interface –

available on 7xi cardio products – that integrates workout tracking, social media, and other web resources, plus the innovative mPower console technology, which provides unrivalled entertainment options, plus access to personal coaching and guided workouts.

From a facility perspective, high-quality materials and finishes minimise the signs of wear and tear to keep equipment looking newer, for longer, while Matrix Fitness' unique, automated Asset Management system – available on select cardio products – enables equipment management across properties in order to expedite maintenance and service and maximise machine uptime. In addition to automating maintenance scheduling,

## A world of wellbeing

Matrix Fitness supplies fitness equipment to luxury hotels and resorts around the world. Here is a small selection of those properties...



**JW Marriott – Grand Rapids**

## Brenner's Park Hotel & Spa – Baden Baden, Germany



## Andaz Maui Hotel at Wailea





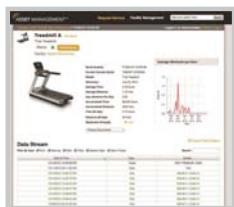
#### Case Study:

### Revive Leisure Club

Matrix Fitness was recently awarded the tender to supply all cardiovascular and resistance training equipment to the Revive fitness suite at The Holiday Inn, Telford, as part of a £100,000 refurbishment project.

Matrix supplied the site with a range of cardio products, including treadmills, ellipticals, and cycles – all of which feature interactive Virtual Active workouts for a truly immersive experience. A selection of top-of-the-range 'Ultra' Series strength equipment was also installed against a Matrix lifestyle backdrop, in addition to the Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) accredited Matrix Functional Trainer, ensuring that disabled and non-disabled guests can benefit from the facilities during their stay at the hotel.

The Revive suite includes an Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) accredited Matrix trainer suitable for disabled users



#### The Asset Management System ensures top performing machines

displaying machine usage data, storing important product information and streamlining service, the system also

functions as an effective communication tool; promoting events, up-selling and cross-selling other services, and reinforcing brand messages via the 7xi display console.

Matrix Fitness delivers a true partnership approach by crafting innovative solutions that resonate with individual hotel brand identities and guest profiles, and offers everything from expeditious turnkey product solutions to complete custom installations along with expert gym design assistance.

Explaining the decision to award the contract to Matrix Fitness, Tom Gray, CEO of Southwater Event Group, owners of Holiday Inn Telford / Ironbridge said:

"After carrying out extensive research, it was clear that Matrix offered the very best equipment on the market. The user experience of the virtual active equipment is far superior to anything else that we looked at; and the investment to completely refit our leisure club with Matrix reflects our commitment to deliver the very highest levels of service to our club members and our hotel guests."

#### Matrix

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Facebook: MatrixFitnessUK  
Twitter: MatrixFitnessUK  
Web: [www.matrixfitness.co.uk](http://www.matrixfitness.co.uk)

#### Four Seasons Resort – Maui



#### Four Points by Sheraton – Shenzhen, China



#### JW Marriott – Camelback Inn Resort & Spa





PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCKPHOTO.COM

# What drives YOU?

Lose weight, tone up, get fit – is this really what your members want from their club? Dr Melvyn Hillsdon takes a look at how different motivations and forms of progress impact on retention

**Table 1:** People reporting high motivation levels

	High motivation (%)			
	Fitness	Appearance	Enjoyment	Social
Overall	60.4	55.0	57.5	58.3
Gender				
Females	61.8	58.3	54.8	53.9
Males	57.7	50.9	61.3	55.9
Age group				
16-24	60.3	74.9	72.8	72.8
25-34	61.4	68.3	62.3	62.3
35-44	60.5	57.5	58.2	58.2
45-54	61.9	46.9	52.9	52.9
55-64	57.0	32.8	46.8	46.8
65+	48.8	20.8	44.4	44.4
Months since joining				
3 < 6	60.9	61.3	58.5	56.1
>=6 to <12	61.8	58.4	60.7	53.9
>=12 to <36	58.9	55.9	56.5	52.7
>=36	58.6	44.5	54.9	56.3
Visit frequency				
Less than 1x week	55.6	52.7	47.3	50.8
Less than 2x week	58.1	52.8	56.3	52.9
Less than 3x week	64.8	58.9	65.0	58.9
More than 3x week	68.5	62.3	73.3	63.7

**M**embers join their clubs with a variety of aspirations and goals regarding how they would like to see themselves in the future. However, until now no report has looked at whether clubs actually help members achieve their goals, or whether other unexpected changes occur for members through use of their club.

In the third of a series of reports from the TRP 10,000 (see p49), we will examine what members say motivates them to exercise, what progress they report in their most recent three months of membership, and how these two factors relate to membership retention.

## Data and analysis

Members were asked to select, from a list of 17 options, what motivated them to exercise. These were then categorised into four main types of motivation: being motivated by fitness, by appearance, by enjoyment and by social factors (friendship). They were also asked to report how much progress they had made in the last three months, based on a list of 10 possible outcomes that broadly reflected the categories of motivation.

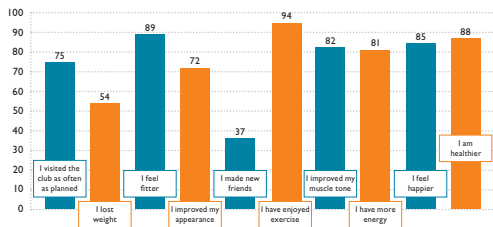
## What motivates you?

Table 1 (see left) shows the proportion of members who reported being highly



More females are motivated by appearance than males

**Figure 1:** Proportion of members reporting progress in the previous three months



motivated by fitness, appearance, enjoyment or social factors according to gender, age group, length of membership and visit frequency.

The proportion of members reporting high levels of motivation was similar across all categories, but marked differences were seen by gender, age, length of membership and visit frequency.

- A higher proportion of females than males report being motivated by fitness and appearance, but less so enjoyment.
- In general, the oldest health club members reported lower levels of motivation than younger members,

especially when it came to appearance as a motivator. Three-quarters of the youngest members reported being highly motivated by appearance, compared to just one-fifth of the oldest members.

- Length of membership was not strongly related to level of motivation, although long-standing members were less likely to report being highly motivated by appearance compared to newer members.
- In general, frequent club users are more highly motivated than low frequency club users. Members who are highly motivated by enjoyment tend to use their club more frequently.

## About TRP 10,000™

Conducted in partnership with The Retention People, TRP 10,000™ is the biggest and most comprehensive survey of member behaviour ever carried out in the fitness industry: 10,000 health and fitness members completed 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.

The results in this article are for members who completed the survey from July-September 2013 and who were followed up until the end of January 2014. In the follow-up period, 1,526 of participating members cancelled membership.

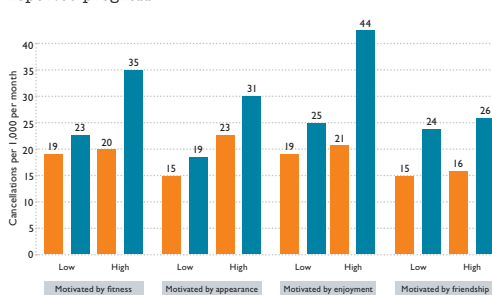
For more details of methodology, see part one of the series – HCM April 14, p38.

## Progress reports

So what do members say they have made progress on in the last three months?

Figure 1 (see above) shows that members report at least some recent

**Figure 2:** Cancellation rate (number of cancellations per 1,000 members per month) by level of motivation and reported progress



► progress on a wide range of factors.

The areas that most members report progress on are enjoying exercise, and feeling fitter and healthier. Factors where the lowest proportion of members report progress are losing weight and making new friends.

On average, members report progress on eight of the 10 factors in Figure 1, with no real differences by gender, age group or length of membership. However, members who use their club at least three times a week report significantly more progress than members who visit less than once a week.

But is the level of progress related to retention, and what are the most important factors? For each factor that members report they have made progress on, the risk of cancelling during the seven months after answering the question

reduces by 10 per cent. This is true for members at all periods of membership. This suggests it's always important for members to feel they're making progress, however long they've been a member.

Table 2 (see below) shows each of the measures of progress ranked by how much they reduce the risk of cancelling. Members who made a friend in the last three months were least likely to cancel during the seven months after being surveyed – they were 40 per cent less likely to cancel their membership than members who did not make a friend. In fact, if all members had made a friend in the last three months, 14 per cent (214) of the 1,526 cancellations during the study's follow-up period would have been avoided.

Attending the club at the level planned came second to making a friend – this reduced the risk of cancelling by 11 per cent. Improved appearance, having more energy and feeling happier were perhaps surprisingly not related to the risk of cancelling.

**Table 2:** Measures of progress ranked by risk of cancelling (1= lowest risk)

Factor	Rank
I made new friends	1
I attended the club as often as planned	2
I am healthier	3
I improved my muscle tone	4
I have enjoyed exercise	5
I lost weight	6
I feel fitter	7
I improved my appearance	8
I have more energy	8
I feel happier	8

### Motivation & progress

Do members need to make progress on the things they're motivated by to reduce the rate of cancelled memberships?

The orange columns in Figure 2 (see above) represent the rate of cancellation for members reporting high and low levels of motivation, and who also report progress on the same factor. For example, there are 19 cancellations per 1,000 members per month among those who aren't really motivated by fitness, but who nevertheless see progress in this area.

The blue columns represent the rate of cancellation for members who report levels of motivation but do not report



any progress on things they're motivated by – eg, there are 35 cancellations per 1,000 members per month among those who report being highly motivated by fitness, but who do not see results.

The first thing that can be seen is that all of the orange columns are lower than their corresponding blue columns, indicating that reporting progress always reduces the rate of cancelling compared to making no progress.

Secondly, members who report being highly motivated for each type of motivation – but who fail to report progress on those motivations – have the highest rates of cancellation. This group of members might be referred to as disappointed optimists. They might have had overly optimistic expectations about how much change they would see, and are then disappointed when they fail to achieve these anticipated changes.

This is particularly true for members motivated by enjoyment, who then find they're not enjoying their exercise. These members are more than twice as likely to cancel compared to those who are motivated by enjoyment and who report they have enjoyed their exercise.

The lowest levels of cancellation are seen among members who report having made friends in the last three months, irrespective of whether this was one of their stated motives for exercising in the first place.



PHOTO: WWW.LUTTERSTOCKPHOTO.COM

Attending the club at the level planned reduces cancellation risk by 11 per cent

The other group logging low levels of cancellation are members who were not motivated by appearance, but who nevertheless felt they improved the way they looked over the last three months.

This is in fact a general trend: members stating low levels of motivation in any particular area, but who then reported progress in that area, had lower levels of cancellation. We might refer to this group as surprised pessimists. They start out with low expectations, but surprise themselves with the progress they make.

One other observation stands out. Members who were highly motivated by appearance and who report looking better nevertheless have a higher rate of cancellation than those who weren't motivated by appearance and didn't believe they improved their appearance – almost as if the motivated group remained dissatisfied with their appearance even though they felt it had improved.

## Summary

A large proportion of members report some progress on a wide range of factors, although high levels of motivation vary by gender, age group, length of membership and the frequency of visits. Social motives such as making new friends are the most likely to improve membership retention.

It's imperative for members to perceive that they are making progress at all times – if not, the risk of cancelling

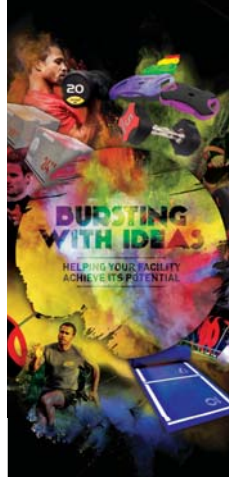
increases. Failure to achieve the things that members are highly motivated by is most likely to lead to cancellation. The lowest rate of retention (i.e. highest rate of cancellation) is seen among members who are highly motivated to enjoy exercise but then find they are not enjoying it. However, the pursuit of improved appearance – even if achieved – is not related to improved retention.

Based on the findings, we advise:

- Putting together a marketing strategy that conveys fun and friendliness
- Understanding members' motivations and setting realistic plans to achieve them
- Regularly reviewing members' progress and revising plans if needed
- Ensuring programmes are enjoyable
- Prioritising fun and friendship over fitness and thinness. ●

Melvyn Hillsdon 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.



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# A MATTER OF TRUST

Are you a manager or a leader, and are you getting the best out of your team?

Justin Tamsett explores the fascinating topic of employee management and motivation

When you Google 'managing staff', over 290,000,000 options pop up. Head to YouTube and there are 120,000 videos you can watch. The end result is information overload.

How you manage your team is your unique skill. It's what your team will love and respect about you. And there isn't a wrong way to do it – just different and perhaps enhanced ways. This article offers suggestions that you can morph into your own personality, allowing you to become the unique leader – not just a manager – of your team.

## Management versus leadership

Regardless of your experience, when working with a team you will get better performance from leading them rather than managing them. But what exactly is the difference?

Managers have a tendency to tell their team what to do, and perhaps even when to do it, while a leader works with the team to design a plan. A manager might jump in and take over because that's the easier option, while a leader will coach his troops to do the task. A manager will get frustrated or angry at mistakes; a leader accepts mistakes on the journey to peak performance.

In his book *Leaders Eat Last*, Simon Sinek explains that, in the US Marine Corp, the first people to eat at chow time are the lowest ranked. What's symbolic in the chow hall is deadly serious on the battlefield: great leaders sacrifice their own comfort – even their own survival – for the good of those in their care.

This principle has been true since the earliest tribes of hunters and gatherers. It's not a management theory

– it's biology. Our brains and bodies evolved to help us find food, shelter, mates and especially safety. We've always lived in a dangerous world, facing predators and enemies at every turn. We thrived only when we felt safe among our group.

Our biology hasn't changed in 50,000 years, but our environment has. Today's workplaces tend to be full of cynicism, paranoia and self-interest – the modern world dangers. The best organisations foster trust and co-operation because their leaders build what Sinek calls a 'circle of safety' that separates the security inside the team from the challenges outside. The circle of safety leads to stable, adaptive, confident teams, where everyone feels they belong and all energies are devoted to facing the common enemy and seizing big opportunities.

As the leader of your team, your challenge is to build your own circle of safety by developing deep trust.

## Building a team

In his book, *Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, Patrick Lencioni outlines – not surprisingly given the title – the five dysfunctions of any team (see Figure 1).

Similar to Sinek, Lencioni believes the most important way to build a team and drive maximum performance from them is to develop trust. Once trust is there, it's possible to have open and honest discussions – around performance, for example – without your team fearing such 'conflict'. They know these are constructive conversations that have no hidden agenda and thus shouldn't be taken personally.

To help build trust among your team, you might consider introducing the concept of 'rankings' into team meetings. Have your team rank their work life, family life and personal life out of 10 and ▶

**Figure 1: The five dysfunctions of a team**





Conducting interviews in less formal settings, such as over lunch at a café, can help you get to know the real person

## Selecting the right team

**D**o you know what you're looking for in a new team member? Generally, a manager's response will be "sure do", followed by rattling off a list of skills they believe the person will require for the job role.

A leader will think differently. A leader won't worry about the skills – these can be taught. A leader will be more interested in the potential recruit's attitude, core values and what drives them. If these exactly match the values and drivers of the organisation – similar values will not suffice – then even under pressure, the bond will be strong and the applicant will be a great fit. Even if sales are down and extra effort is needed, or a class covered, or improved data entry accuracy is required, your team will all have the same values and reason to be with the company, and no challenge will be too great.

To improve your staff selection process, you must ensure you do three things. Firstly, ask your applicant for examples where, in previous employment, they have demonstrated the core values you have in your organisation.

Secondly, ask scenario-based questions during the interview – for example, "what would you do if....." – where the scenario is values-orientated.

Finally, take the applicant out of the formal interview setting, as this allows you to see the real person. Consider conducting a workout interview, a lunch interview in a café or an interview over a game of golf.

Your challenge as the employer is to see the real person applying for the role, not the person who has 'dressed' for the role. This is a challenge for any leader, but will yield great staff selection results – and, in turn, business performance.

**If you care about your team and show your own vulnerability, they will trust you. When that trust is real, your team will engage and you can lead them. You may never need to manage them again**



**If your staff all have the same values, they will work well together as a team**

► explain why they gave these scores. This will help each team member learn more about the others, and perhaps even understand what makes them tick.

Other tools include 'Share Your Strength', whereby team members share with the group, in two or three minutes, what they think their strengths are. You then go around the room and have each member of the team tell that same person what they think their strengths are.

Then there's 'Speed Dating' – dividing your teams into two groups, with one group staying still while the other group moves on one place each time the bell rings. Propose one question for them to answer at each 'date'. Questions may be work-orientated, scenario-based or

personal. No more than 60 seconds on each date and go through the whole group.

Each team meeting should begin with this sort of trust-building exercise. The key is to be consistent with the exercises happening at every meeting. Trust needs to be part of your organisation's DNA.

### Meetings create momentum

Many teams criticise their managers for a lack of communication, so the easy solution is to create a meeting schedule to ensure there's transparent communication, as well as opportunities for feedback and time for learning.

A suggested meeting schedule might include daily meetings. These must be short – perhaps a stand-up,

five-minute daily huddle (two may be needed depending on shifts) – and they should adopt the same structure every day. It's an agenda that's actually just three items long:

- What's up: Each attendee shares 'what's up' for the next 24 hours. This lets people immediately sense conflicts, crossed agendas and missed opportunities. The key is for everyone to highlight specifics without simply reading out a 'to do' list.
- Daily measures: Next, review whatever daily measurements your company uses to track its progress, highlighting any unusual trends.
- Where are you stuck: You're looking for bottlenecks. There's something

## Personalised incentives and intrinsic motivation

There's no question that an incentive programme will engage your team: there's plenty of research to substantiate this. Most importantly for a deep, longer-lasting engagement, the incentive must be what they want.

When a new team member starts working with you, have them complete a questionnaire where you ask personal questions about their likes, dislikes and so on. This will enable small but powerful

rewards at low cost. Personalise the incentive scheme and your team will engage with the goal, be focused and achieve.

In his book *Drive*, Daniel Pink shows a mismatch between what science has proven and what happens in business. He says an 'if-then' incentive scheme – "if you achieve x, you'll receive y" – will work when there are simple rules and clear goals, but that this is often not the case in business.

But commissions are in any case not the be-all and end-all to driving your team. When you take money off the table – meaning they can't stress about it – just watch their performance soar. Indeed, in his book *Predictably Irrational*, Dan Ariely found that if a task required "rudimentary cognitive skill" a larger reward "led to poorer performance".

People actually like to do things because they matter, because they're interesting

and because it makes the individual part of something bigger. To help your team develop and perform, you must therefore appeal to their intrinsic motivation.

Pink highlights three key areas on which to focus: autonomy, urging team members to direct their own lives; mastery, helping them get better and better at something that matters; and purpose, doing what they do to help something larger than themselves.



Building trust among your team gives them the confidence to do their job well

powerful in having your team members verbalise – for the whole group to hear – their fear, their struggle, their concern. It's the first step to solving the problem, so scrutinise the person who reports "everything is fine!" or "no stucks today".

In addition to these, weekly meetings should be focused on issues and strategy gathering, based on successful daily huddles. The structure is simple:

- Five minutes – good news stories (personal or professional) from everyone, and fun in nature.
- 10 minutes – what are the numbers for the business in that week? Try to focus on three numbers that offer business insights.
- 10 minutes – look at feedback from team members and gym members. What issues constantly pop up or what are people hearing?
- 30 minutes – focus on just one large priority that needs to be worked on. This may not solve the priority, but will be something you chip away at.

Finally, the two-hour monthly meeting is all about learning – about you passing the culture or the DNA of the organisation to your team. You should review the income of the month, look at what is and isn't working operationally, and develop your team through learning.

This type of schedule will create rhythm and certainty in your team – the foundation for building trust. Ultimately, if you care about your team and show your own vulnerability, they'll trust you. When that trust is real, your team will engage and you can lead them. You may never need to manage them again. ●

## Want to learn more?

### Books we recommend

- *Drive* by Daniel Pink
- *Mastering The Rockefeller Habits* by Verne Harnish
- *Predictably Irrational* by Dan Ariely
- *Start with Why* by Simon Sinek
- *Leaders Eat Last* by Simon Sinek
- *Five Dysfunctions of a Team* by Patrick Lencioni

### Videos we recommend

- Dan Pink: <http://youtu.be/rrkrvAUbU9Y>
- Dan Ariely: <http://youtu.be/wfcr0SiM5vw>
- Simon Sinek: <http://youtu.be/qp0HIF3Sf14>
- Simon Sinek: <http://youtu.be/ReRcHdeUG9Y>

**Justin Tamsett** is founder and MD of Active Management, a business consulting company with a goal to reduce healthcare costs across the planet by enhancing businesses. He's a thought leader and speaker who aims to share practical ideas that can be implemented immediately, with hundreds of clubs receiving monthly education as members of Active Management.  
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# RUNNING FOR A REASON

Ray Algar reports on the GoodGym initiative, in which running is given a social purpose

**G**oodGym is a simply great concept powered by an insight that asks: 'How do we make the act of running more purposeful and socially useful?'

Instead of running in circles around a park, a GoodGym runner embarks on a mission to do some good in their local community, either alone or as part of a group. Rather than run straight past that nursing home, why not stop and spend time with someone who's craving companionship? Now the act of running is no longer a self-centred act but a generous and compassionate one.

GoodGym runners can harness their energy for all manner of social- and community-minded projects, helping them to "get fit by doing good".

## How the project started

Back in 2008, Ivo Gormley, an enthusiastic amateur runner, was

## 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 five organisations: Companhia Athletica, Gantner Technologies, Les Mills, Retention Management and The Gym Group.

Read more stories and submit your own: [www.Gymtopia.org](http://www.Gymtopia.org)



thinking about how to encourage more people to volunteer a small fraction of their time to help an elderly or vulnerable member of a local community. He wondered how volunteering could be made easier to integrate into someone's already busy life. So he posed the question: 'How

can the physical activity a person is already doing be channelled into doing social good?' It flipped the idea of running to serve ourselves into running to serve others.

## Making a run more purposeful

The simple idea was to connect a person's run with a visit to an elderly member of the community, offering companionship as well as bringing them a small gift (£1 or less), such as a newspaper or a treat from the local bakery. The home visit is not long, ranging from 10 minutes to an hour.

Duration is not the important measure here – it's the personal connection that helps break the long periods many elderly members of our communities spend alone and isolated. It sends a powerful message that the community cares about all its residents, not just the active and visible ones.

## Becoming a GoodGym member

Runners of all abilities register on the GoodGym website and select one of three cities where the project currently operates as at June 2014 – London, Bristol and Liverpool. Members need to be aged over 18 and go through a criminal record check due to contact with vulnerable adults.

GoodGym works with the NHS, charities and local community centres to match runners to a housebound elderly person who would like a



Time for a cuppa: GoodGymmers can break the loneliness of a pensioner's day



Supplying manpower for community garden projects is one of GoodGym's popular missions

regular visitor. Runners commit to a minimum of one weekly run.

### From one to many

As GoodGym began to develop, Gormley began exploring how the group's energy could be harnessed to undertake more tangible projects in the community. In a blog post, he asked: 'How can we expand this idea to give the good activity some kind of physical aspect? Could a group of people run somewhere and fix something, then run home again? Perhaps we could paint a wall, clear some rubble or help someone move into a new home?'

This idea quickly developed and now groups of runners meet with a specific mission. Recent GoodGym community missions have included:

- 14 GoodGymmers ran to a community garden in Bristol, south-west England, and undertook 40 minutes of gardening.
- 28 GoodGymmers ran between 4km and 8km to help two food-growing projects in Camden, north London.
- 12 GoodGymmers ran 4.5 km to a local hospital in north London and helped to move 3,000kg of soil for a new vegetable garden.
- 19 GoodGymmers ran to the Julian Trust Homeless Shelter in Bristol, where they all helped to sort through donated clothes and blankets.

This June, a Facebook post grabbed my attention: 'We've been asked to help a kid from Richard House Hospice. He's coming home soon and it would be



GoodGymmers helping out on a food-growing project in Camden, London

really great to get his garden cleared. He lives in east London, so if you're running the half-marathon, this could be a great reason to get in your final long run...

### So what can your business do?

Ask yourself: 'How could we harness our tribe of customers and develop a purposeful programme of activities, where all that physical energy is captured and put back into the community?' Go on, pick up the phone to your local school, care home or district nurse. See if you can find an

answer to this question: 'How can we get fit while doing some good?' Don't just be a gym, be a good gym. ●

### IN A NUTSHELL

**Initiative by:**  
GoodGym – [www.goodgym.org](http://www.goodgym.org)  
**Location:** UK  
**Status:** Ongoing  
**Impact:** National  
**Gymtopia keywords:**  
Environment, Health & Wellbeing

# Metro Fitness makes right impact with Gerflor

Metro Fitness in Stockport owned by European boxing champion Matthew Hatton and his father, Ray Hatton, installs Gerflor Taraflex™ flooring for gym complex

Just off the M60 lies the Merseyway Shopping Centre in Stockport, home to Metro Fitness where they truly believe that you won't have ever seen a gym quite like it. It was launched as a premium-offer budget gym in August 2012 and has since then gone from strength to strength, growing their membership year on year. Split over two levels, the fitness club has been laid out in a way that has been designed to provide a large selection of equipment and good amount of floor space. Metro Fitness offers specific workout zones including a women-only area, virtual spin, Vario suspension training, a large freeweight space, functional training area and Power Plate facilities. From the moment you enter, their mission is to make you feel like you really belong there, with professional staff on hand to provide personalised support and guidance along your fitness journey.

George Stylianou, Director, Metro Fitness said: "The growing popularity in functional exercise amongst our members had prompted research into further developing our existing space. I wanted to go with flooring that was highly

durable and that would cope with the volume of use, whilst being relatively forgiving to higher impact exercise. It was therefore no shock that Metro Fitness chose Taraflex™ from Gerflor- the No. 1 preferred indoor sports solution for over 60 years as their preferred floor covering throughout the gym."

## Getting results

The atmosphere at Metro Fitness is anything but sterile and detached from you as an individual. They truly want you to feel like you have a place amongst them, which promotes a real sense of belonging. What you personally do as a member is one of their highest priorities, alongside orientation courses intended to make you familiar with the layout of the gym and the safe usage of all their equipment. George Stylianou said: "This gym has attracted a whole new market, namely those who may have previously considered joining a gym but have been put off by the inflated prices, hidden extra costs and long term commitments. We are also attracting gym members who have become disillusioned with the lack of customer service, cleanliness and general upkeep of both equipment and facilities."

The Metro Fitness ethos is a simple one. They promise a fresh new approach to exercise and training modules, using their own unique way of working and a whole regime of exercise classes that enable the client to get results. Specifying a flooring product that would cope with the rigorous and arduous battering that most gyms have to endure would



Metro Fitness offers members a fresh new approach to exercise and training modules



Gerflor offers enhanced durability and comfort for Metro Fitness' functional zones

be pivotal in making their final flooring choice. Taking the business to the next level would be key for them therefore these flooring choices became crucial and sourcing both the manufacturer and the perfect product would feature heavily in the specification. Stylianou further commented: "Having noticed the Gerflor advert in Leisure Management, I felt that their new Taraflex™ product might be a good fit. I read the testimonials and having viewed the product for myself, I commissioned the installation, which I have to say, was extremely efficient and professional throughout".

### Market leader

Taraflex™ has been used in every summer Olympics since 1976 and is available in 17 colours and two wood-effect designs. The Sport M Evolution product offers a very high PI category shock absorbency which exceeds 25% and meets the EN 14904 Standard for indoor sports surfaces. Taraflex™ is recognised for providing durability, safety and comfort without impairing performance. The range also offers greater than 45% force reduction, making it unrivalled in the marketplace in terms of comfort for users. Bespoke designs are also available by either water cutting, HD printing or line marking. Taraflex™ also meets the EN Standard of 22196 for anti-bacterial activity (E. coli - S. aureus - MRSA) (3) returning >99% levels of growth inhibition. The product is also treated with Protocolsol®, which renders polish redundant. Taraflex™ has a double density foam backing and as another bonus, it's environmentally friendly.

Stylianou added: "The biggest compliment I can make is that the feedback is extremely positive, both from our resident professional boxers and coaches, including Matthew Hatton, and from our ever-increasing membership, who enjoy using the space; either when exercising alone with Battle Ropes, Kettlebells, Tractor tyres or as part of a group exercise class".

International flooring company Gerflor also take great pride in working hand in hand with architects, interior designers, equipment manufacturers and flooring contractors to provide the most effective flooring solution on the market today.

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The Taraflex product has been used in every summer Olympics since 1976

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# Picture this...

From big budget projects to modest but clever remodelling, Abigail Harris takes a look at a range of visually spectacular refurbishments

## AFTER

The new area was created in response to member feedback



## BEFORE



The café made way for the new functional area

## Fully functional

**Site:** City Fitness and Wellbeing Centre, London

**Operator:** Nuffield Health

**Project developer:** Escape

**Cost:** Not disclosed

**Design:** Based on member feedback, the café was redeveloped to create a multi-use area for group and team training, PT and physio rehab work. Old flooring was removed and multi-use durable flooring, with Nuffield Health's name and logo, installed along with functional training equipment including Dynamax balls, Eleiko kettlebells, battle ropes, Reebok medicine balls, core bags, ViPRs, TRX suspension and Rip. A new floor-to-ceiling glass door was installed to allow all gym visitors to view the new-look area.



**AFTER**

The centre's fitness suite was relocated and expanded to 100 stations, with Pulse supplying the equipment



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**

The Bridgend centre now has an ultra-modern exterior

## Extended offering

**Site:** Bridgend Recreation Centre, Wales

**Operator:** GLL in partnership with Halo

**Project developer:** Pulse

**Cost:** £4.5m

**Design:** The exterior of the ageing 1970s building has been transformed and the interior completely redesigned, including relocation of the entrance and the creation of a new café and viewing area.

The fitness suite was also relocated and enlarged to 100 stations, and gym users now benefit from new, inclusive changing rooms. Exercise studios have been created too, as well as a 10-metre climbing wall and a new conference room.

The sports hall has been redeveloped into a two-storey library, play kingdom and four-court sports hall. A luxurious thermal suite and spa in the former first floor lobby area – which includes an aromatherapy room, steamroom, ice igloo, rock sauna, bio-sauna and plunge pool – adds to the 'private club' feel of the centre. ▶



**AFTER**

The interior has been totally redesigned, including a new café

**BEFORE**



## Fresh new look

**Site:** Dorking Leisure

**Centre, Surrey**

**Operator:** Places for People Leisure

**Project developer:** Createability

**Cost:** £230,000

**Design:** Work started the same day DC Leisure (now Places for People Leisure) took over management of the facilities, expanding the existing gym into the balcony and foyer area to increase capacity.

The new 400sq m, 80-station fitness suite – including brand new Precor CV equipment – caters for over 3,000 members. A cycling studio was created in an old pool viewing area on the ground floor, while the café was remodelled. Dry-side changing areas were refurbished, and front of house now reflects the Places for People Leisure branding.

**AFTER**



A former swimming pool viewing area is now a smart cycling studio

**AFTER**



The new gym has been kitted out by Precor and Technogym

**BEFORE**



The existing pitch was removed to make way for an external facilit

**AFTER**



The dual-use site now offers a welcoming reception and viewing area

## Maximising space

**Site:** Ruthin Leisure Centre (dual use school site), Denbighshire, Wales

**Operator:** Ruthin Denbighshire Council

**Project developer:** Alliance Leisure

**Cost:** £1.4m

**Design:** Removal of existing all-weather pitch at the front of the building, replaced with an extension to the existing pool hall to create a new entrance, reception and viewing area, as well as a brand new 120sq m, 26-station fitness suite for members of the public. Changing facilities were also created to serve the gym and allow public access to the pool outside of school hours. A sand-dressed all-weather pitch with fencing and floodlighting was also created to the back of the building.

The original small, 50sq m gym is still used by the school during the day, though student memberships are also offered in the new gym. ●



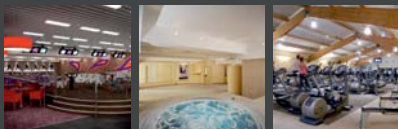
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# Industry in motion

Market growth and new opportunities. EuropeActive and Deloitte share the topline findings of their new European Market Report

**F**itness penetration in European countries is on the rise, with a current total of 46 million members of health clubs across the continent. This growth is being driven by increasing health awareness, diversification of the industry in more mature markets, and recognition of fitness as part of people's lifestyle in younger fitness markets.

In line with this, the largest European fitness club operators continue to grow, with investment companies strongly supporting their expansion. Equipment manufacturers also continue their positive development of recent years.

These are some of the key findings of *The European Health and Fitness Market*, published at the end of April by EuropeActive – formerly known as the European Health & Fitness Association (EHFA) – in co-operation with Deloitte.

## Member headcount

At the end of 2013, the 20 leading fitness companies in Europe accounted for a combined total of 7.8 million members – 17 per cent of the estimated total European health club membership.

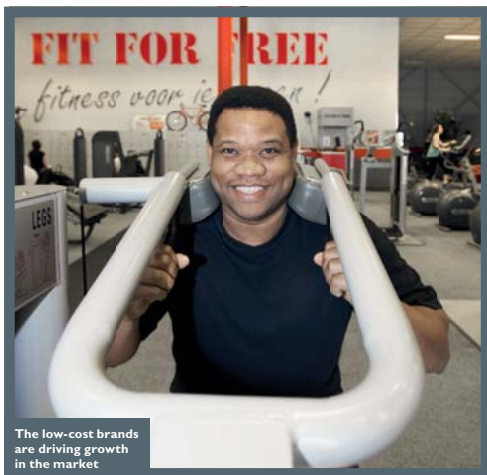
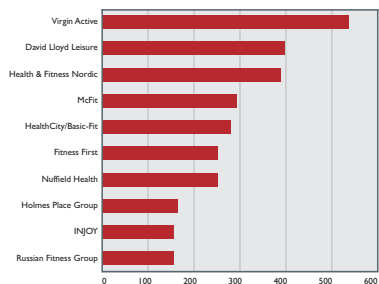
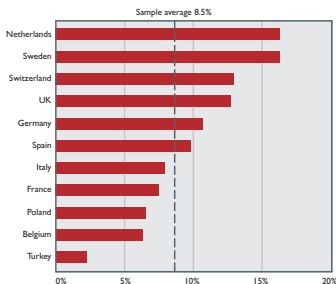


Fig 1 Top 10 operators by revenue (€m)



Source: European Health & Fitness Market, EuropeActive

Fig 2 Penetration rates across Europe



Source: European Health & Fitness Market, EuropeActive



Leisure Group Europe, which owns Health City and Basic-Fit, has the second largest number of members at 780,000



US brand Anytime fitness has recognised Europe's potential

Market growth and development is strongly driven by the booming low-cost operators – such as Basic-Fit, Fit for Free and Pure Gym – which are expanding their concept of affordable fitness both nationally and in other countries. The most successful player in the discount segment continues to be Germany-based operator McFit, which leads the overall membership ranking: 1.2 million people exercise in its close-on 200 clubs, paying just €19.90 a month for membership. Having opened its first clubs in Italy and Poland in early 2014, the company is expected to resume its growth, which had slowed due to its preparations for international expansion.

In second place in terms of members is Leisure Group Europe, with its two brands: HealthCity and Basic-Fit. Thanks

particularly to the rapid expansion of Basic-Fit, the company reached 780,000 members by the end of 2013.

Virgin Active, part of Richard Branson's Virgin Group, ranks third with 598,000 members. Health & Fitness Nordic – the result of a merger combining the club brands SATS, Elixia, Fresh Fitness and Metropolis – comes in fourth, while Fitness First rounds out the top five by members.

If the announced merger between Pure Gym and The Gym Group in the UK is approved by the competition authorities, the combined company will be a top five candidate in the next year.

In the meantime, 2013's largest change in rank by membership numbers was for British budget operator Pure Gym, which climbed up nine positions to rank



Madonna's Hard Candy already has several European locations

ninth overall, with 300,000 members. German operator clever fit was able to improve by seven positions – the second largest shift – finishing 14th with its 252,000 members.

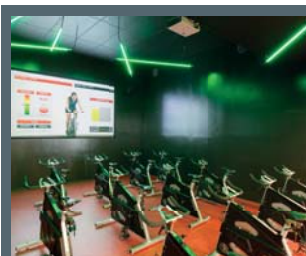
With 242,000 female members, Curves is the largest special interest operator and ranks 15th in the total membership ranking.

### Revenue generators

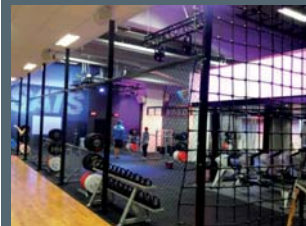
When it comes to revenues, other companies lead the way. Virgin Active is Europe's market leader (see Figure 1, p64). It operates clubs in the UK, Italy, Spain and Portugal and generates revenues of €532m. In second place is David Lloyd Leisure (€398m), with Leisure Group Europe close behind (€388m). McFit comes in fourth. ▶



Germany's McFit is top of the low-cost market



Health & Fitness Nordic ranks fourth in terms of member numbers after a merger



► "In 2013, the 10 leading fitness companies in Europe brought in total revenues of €2.8bn, and individual operators needed revenues of at least €150m to be in the top 10," says Niels Gronau, author of the new report and fitness industry expert for Deloitte.

In fact, in terms of total revenue, the European fitness market (€25.3bn) has overtaken the 'birthplace of fitness' – the United States – where annual revenues reached €17bn. With the younger European markets also looking set for strong growth, it seems probable that Europe will increase its lead in the coming years. Not surprising, then, that US operators such as Anytime Fitness, Hard Candy Fitness and Equinox have spotted this opportunity and are expanding their concepts into Europe.

"Given the current developments, it's very likely that the aggregated revenues will grow to over €3bn in 2014," continues Gronau. "Moreover, particularly driven by the commitments of investment companies, discount operators will extend their presence in the top 10 in the near future."

One of the latest examples of the ongoing interest of private equity companies in the fitness industry in general, and the low-cost segment in particular, is the acquisition of a 55

per cent share in Basic-Fit by 3i Group. Another example from the budget segment is Nord Holding's investment in Jumpers Fitness in Germany. Altogether, around 30 deals involving fitness operators have taken place since 2011.

### Supplier perspective

At the same time, equipment manufacturers were able to benefit from the positive developments among the operators. Indeed, after a substantial drop between 2007 and 2009 due to the economic crisis, aggregated revenues have since recovered and in fact surpassed pre-crisis levels.

Globally and in terms of revenues, the largest operator of commercial fitness equipment is US-based Life Fitness, with revenues of €520m in 2013, followed by the Italian manufacturer Technogym with more than €420m. Altogether, the seven largest international manufacturers have a market share of 50 per cent.

### Future potential

Turning to individual market performance, Turkey and Poland have the fastest growing fitness industries, with growth rates of more than 20 per cent. While both countries are still relatively new to the fitness landscape, each seems to

provide further growth potential, with a fitness penetration rate of only 6.4 per cent in Poland and 2.2 per cent in Turkey. In comparison, the proportion of the population holding club membership in Sweden and the Netherlands amounts to 16.1 per cent and 16.2 per cent respectively (see Figure 2, p64).

"By the end of 2013, 46 million members exercised in one of the 46,500 clubs in Europe. We're very confident this number will increase significantly in the future," concludes Herman Rutgers, board member at EuropeActive. "At EuropeActive, our goal is to achieve a total of 80 million members by 2025." ●

### Read it for yourself...

A copy of the report can be purchased via the EuropeActive website: [www.ehfa.eu.com/node/355](http://www.ehfa.eu.com/node/355)

Or from sports and leisure consultancy edelhelfer ([www.edelhelfer.eu](http://www.edelhelfer.eu)) at <http://lei.sr?a=F0B5Q>

The report costs €95 for EuropeActive members, or €195 for non-members, plus delivery cost.



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\*MusicWorks survey of 1000 UK businesses, conducted in April 2012



[ppluk.com](http://ppluk.com)



# PUTTING UP A RESISTANCE

## NEW LOOK FOR LIFE

Life Fitness' new Insignia Series of selectorised strength equipment has been designed with form and function in mind, offering fully customisable options.

Available in summer 2014, the range of 21 products replaces Life Fitness' Signature Series, providing a new look, improved feel and upgraded features, with enhanced biomechanics used in the design of the range. Machines such as the chest press and shoulder press feature independent movements to ensure both the left and right sides of the body perform equal amounts of work.

**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD

Life Fitness



## STRONG PERFORMANCE

SportsArt's new entry-level strength range launched in the UK last month. The Performance Series line will arrive in the country from the company's factory in Taiwan ahead of the first club installation, expected to take place in autumn 2014.

The range has been designed to be easy to use, providing both quality and value for any budget; in spite of its entry-level positioning and price point, each unit in the Performance Series line has been built using high quality materials. Every UK installation will also receive a three-year parts and service warranty. The new equipment will initially be on show at the company's UK headquarters.

**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD

SportsArt

## RESISTANCE & RESULTS

Precor has completed its Discovery Strength Series with five selectorised converging and diverging resistance pieces, with independently moving arms. The equipment features Advanced Movement Design (AMD) platforms to engage more muscles to functionally develop strength and stabilise movement.



**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD

Precor



## PROGRESSIVE RESISTANCE

FreeMotion's new cable-based strength training technology, the Live Axis, allows users to train against resistance with every move they make. The line includes a number of pieces of equipment, all fitted with live-sliding cables allowing for optimum activation throughout each movement. Users can also engage different parts of the body by changing their position.



**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD

Fitness Systems Limited

## THE EAGLE HAS LANDED

Cybox has unveiled a new 12-piece line of resistance equipment that features refined movements, restyled aesthetics and re-imagined user features.

The Eagle line offers patented Dual Axis Technology, which allows users to train with pre- or user-defined patterns of motion. Workouts can be optimised with an incremental weight system.

**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD

Cybox

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# Money talks

Consumers want convenience and clubs want to make it easy for them to spend money, so are member payment systems keeping up with both consumer and industry trends? Kath Hudson reports

**N**ew innovations in technology, changing consumer preferences and new business models adopted by health clubs, which are increasingly moving away from monthly direct debits towards more flexible usage patterns and payment schemes – all these trends are having an impact on the ways in which gym users expect to be able to pay for products and services.

But it seems the more ways there are to spend, the longer the list of considerations. Should clubs move towards a cashless system in-club that might encourage members to spend more money, but that also requires a not insignificant upfront investment? If people book into classes via their

smartphones, how should they pay – online, in-club or on account? Should clubs develop apps that allow for online bookings and payment?

And are there any facets of the health club business where direct debits still work well? For example Sean Maguire, COO of software provider Legend, has noticed some operators putting quarterly payments like swimming lessons onto direct debit, as this reduces the admin that comes with renewals and makes things easier for the customer as well as the leisure facility.

## Going cashless

According to Alexander Egele, business development manager at Gantner, with the low-cost sector causing membership

fees to fall across Europe, there's more pressure on clubs to make money out of secondary spend – including monetising services like showers.

"The best way to generate income while still giving members a good experience is by using cashless payments," says Egele. "This makes it easier for people to spend money, which means they're more likely to do so."

Going cashless involves using membership cards, or better still for a wet environment, wristbands. These can be used for access, lockers and to pay for products and services.

"There's still some hesitation in the UK, but cashless payment is now very popular in Europe. Some operators allow members to run up credit, but



Cashless payment devices can be installed around the club, allowing members to swipe in for optional services such as studio classes and showers



Quality vending can help a club avoid the costs of running a café



**One size fits all:** The same wristband can be used for club access, lockers and cashless payments around the club

if you persuade members to deposit money onto their card or wristband, this can provide operators with useful cashflow," says Egele.

Jacob Herborg Nathan, head of sales at Exerp, believes the start-up costs for installing a cashless system can be offset through ongoing cost savings – for example, having wristbands dispensed by a machine, and offering quality vending instead of operating a café.

This cashless approach has been fully embraced by operators such as Fresh Fitness in Scandinavia. Security was one of the main reasons the operator decided to go down the cashless route, but higher secondary spend has been a welcome side-effect (see briefing, p72).

### Power in your palm

Offering the option of booking classes and managing memberships online – particularly via mobile phones – is another trend that's continuing to gather pace, and operators must ensure they aren't left behind as consumers become more accustomed to this level of convenience (see also *HCM* June 14, p69).

"We're hearing a clarion call when it comes to payments," says Maguire. "There's a widespread desire to be able to make payments using mobile phones. Currently, we facilitate two million online smartphone bookings each month, many of which are done on people's commute to and from work."

And Kevin Scott, director at Harlands Group, says his company's services were



**Wristbands can be credited with money to pay for products in-club**

used to sign up over a million members online in 2013. "We now see over 50 per cent of members joining online via smart devices," he adds.

Using phones to credit wristbands for payments also looks likely to become more widespread in the near future. Ivan Stevenson, director at Debit Finance, points to the high levels of innovation in the area of virtual wallets, contactless smartphone apps and NFC technology. "These innovations lend themselves well to a health club point of sale/retail environment, where a member doesn't necessarily have cash or their wallet in-hand but typically has their phone," he explains.

In line with this, Gladstone is working on continuous payment authority, which will allow people to pay via their phone using a passcode. The aim is for this to remove barriers to purchase and make transactions as seamless as possible.

### Flexible models

Tom Withers, sales and marketing director at Gladstone, says the company has also been looking at other markets to see how they have evolved – the mobile phone sector, for example, which used to be almost exclusively subscription-based, but now offers multiple ways to pay, including options such as pay as you go and personalised monthly packages. ▶



At Psycle London there are no contracts or joining fees

## PSYCLE

**P**sytle London is a no-contract, premium group cycling studio in London, UK, where members buy credits and book classes online (see also *HCM* June 14, p40). When they register, customers also have the option of saving their credit card details so any in-club purchases can be charged straight to the card.

Co-founder and CEO Colin Waggett, former CEO of Fitness First, says this straightforward, no membership fee or contract approach was the obvious route: "Having come from an environment where contracts were such a source of confusion, I was really happy to leave all that behind and just focus on selling the product. Our system is simple and reflective of our customers, who know their own habits. They don't want to go to the same facility three or four times a week, but they'll use us twice a week and maybe go to Triyoga, work with a PT, or have a run in the park as well."

- ▶ The new breed of microgyms – including specialist cycling studios such as Psycle (see briefing above) – have embraced this sort of flexible model. This new style of club typically offers packages of perhaps 10 or 20 sessions, as well as a 'pay as you go' option where customers pay on a class-by-class basis.

"The fitness industry is already exploring this to a degree by charging a lower monthly membership and then offering top-up services," adds Withers. "As a software provider, we can facilitate this."

Going cashless means no need for wallets

## FRESH FITNESS

**E**xerp supports a cashless system at the 35-strong Scandinavian budget chain Fresh Fitness. Customers book online and, when they enter the health club, are given a Gantner wristband which they can use to access the club, buy drinks and snacks at the vending machine and enter a class. Any purchases are added to the next month's direct debit payment, with the credit capped at £50.

"When we founded the chain in 2010, we looked through all the processes including cash handling," says CEO Rasmus Ingerslev. "We run a partially staffed model, with staff not tied to the front desk. To have cash in one location and staff in another was a bad idea. We're also open 24 hours a day, but only staffed from 10.00am to 9.00pm. There's often only one member of staff present and we didn't want them to ever be in the position of being threatened for money. Finally, if we had cash in the club it would have to be counted at every shift

change, which is a manual process and we're allergic to manual processes!"

Fresh Fitness believes being cashless is also much better for the end user, as very often people go to the gym in their workout gear and don't want to carry wallets. "We strongly believe this system matches the needs of today's consumers, who are all about convenience," says Ingerslev. "Offering credit and products when they want them, without having to queue, is very much in-line with what people want. The percentage we make on secondary spend is higher than I've seen at any other club in my career."

Ingerslev concedes there is a danger people might run up accounts and cancel their direct debit, which is why credit is capped at £50. However, he says this has not been a major issue to date and believes the benefits of increased secondary spend far outweigh any disadvantages. In addition, he says the upfront investment in the technology is balanced by ongoing cost savings when it comes to staffing.

"By creating flexible applications, we enable operators to offer a range of membership packages to meet their customers' demands. Many choose to offer a single core fixed-benefit membership package and the option to buy additional benefits – for instance, a core gym membership with add-on swim, towel hire, locker hire, PT and so on. "It's about finding ways of keeping people as customers even if they can no longer afford a full monthly membership fee. As people's lifestyles change, the types of package on offer

to them must change too or you risk losing them completely. Offering limited time packages or pick and choose memberships are ideal."

He continues: "Each year, we hold a number of regional and national innovation summits where we talk to our customers about their changing business needs, which then supports and guides our future development programme."

Going forward it's going to be all about ease and efficiency, both for consumers to spend their money, and for clubs to collect it. ●

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## RESEARCH ROUND-UP

# Gut feeling

Irish scientists have found that exercise may reduce the risk of obesity because of its positive impact on good bacteria in the gut

**T**he health of our gut is garnering much attention of late, with a growing number of studies highlighting just how important it is to our overall wellbeing: it can have a powerful effect on anything from our mood to our immune system and our ability to fight disease. It's also believed to be a key factor in tackling obesity.

The gut contains 10 times more bacteria than all of the cells in the entire rest of the body, and the health of gut flora not only aids digestion but also helps to regulate the metabolism. Specifically, a high microbial diversity in the gut has been associated with better overall health, whereas a low diversity of gut microbes has been linked to many diseases and syndromes, including obesity.

Numerous studies have looked at the impact diet has on gut health, and last month, scientists from Ireland revealed how exercise, alongside food intake, can help too. The findings were published in the international journal *Gut*<sup>1</sup>.

### Researching rugby players

Researchers at the Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre at University College Cork and the Teagasc Food Research Centre based their study on 40 Irish professional rugby players at the peak of training for the 2011 Rugby World Cup. Stool and blood samples were taken to measure the variety of bacteria in their guts. The players also completed a food questionnaire detailing the intake of 187 different items of food over a period of four weeks.

Their results were compared to a control group of 46 men. These men weren't elite athletes, but they had the same mean age (29) as the rugby players. Half of them had an average BMI of 25 or lower, while the other half had a high BMI of 28 and above.



Dr Paul Cotter (centre) with co-researchers (left to right): Dr Eanna Falvey, Declan Kidney, Dr Eileen Murphy, Prof Fergus Shanahan and Dr Michael Molly

### Exercise and diet impact

Researchers found the microbial diversity in the gut was significantly higher in the athletes compared to the control group, especially those with higher BMI scores. The levels of certain types of good bacteria were also greater in the rugby players. This included higher levels of *akkermansiaceae* – a type of bacteria associated with a lower risk of obesity. Athletes also had lower inflammatory and improved metabolic markers compared to the other men.

These gut microbial results correlated with two other studies: firstly, unsurprisingly, that the athlete group took part in much more physical activity than the control group – indicated by far higher levels of creatine kinase.

Secondly, dietary analysis showed that protein accounted for considerably more of the rugby players' total energy intake (22 per cent), compared to the low BMI (16 per cent) and high BMI (15 per cent) control groups. The athletes' fruit and veg intake was higher too.

"The athletes are an exceptional group in terms of their dietary intake, fitness/endurance and now, we know, in relation to their gut microbiota," reports the Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre. "This high diversity is linked with exercise and protein consumption and suggests that eating specific proteins and/or exercise can provide a means of increasing microbial diversity in the gut."

Dr Paul Cotter, the principal research officer at Teagasc Food Research Centre told *HCM*: "We're not sure which is more important – diet, exercise, or a combination of both. We hope follow-up studies will make this clearer. We'll be looking at relatively unfit people to see if we can increase their microbial diversity [and, in turn, their gut health] through exercise and/or protein."

"The precise mechanism through which exercise might impact on the gut microbiota will also require further investigation. It could be related to the impact on the immune system, but it's too early to say."

<sup>1</sup>Clarke SF et al. Exercise and associated dietary extremes impact on gut microbial diversity. *Gut*. June 2014



# Achieving the impossible

When Active Newham was looking for a new software supplier it turned to leisure specialist Gladstone, which completed the switch over of its three leisure centres in just six weeks

After deciding to move from our previous supplier, we needed a fast turn around to a new software company. I had previous experience of working with Gladstone and knew that, not only were they a company we could rely on to deliver, their software and services could make a real difference at Active Newham.

During the switch over Gladstone worked tirelessly to get things ready and never said no to our requests, helping us to tailor the system to our needs. Active Newham runs three leisure centres in the London Borough of Newham and is the

preferred supplier of volunteers for the Olympic park. But Gladstone achieved the impossible, moving the leisure business without any help from the previous supplier in just six weeks.

We've really seen Gladstone's software develop over the last few years. They have brought to market a fantastic range of products that really speak for themselves. We bought into a wide range of support services over and above the Plus2 membership management software, including Connect online bookings, Join@Home online membership sign up, MobilePro smartphone app, Kiosks, Call Centre, Learn2 course management for our swimming, football and trampolining classes and Contact Manager for prospecting members.

But just one of the products alone, Learn2, could pay for our entire switch over in efficiency gains and control over course payments. Installing Learn2 helped us identify 2,000 spaces on the previous system that were filled with either duplicate students moving up to the next class or pupils that had left but not been removed. This loop hole meant they could potentially swim for free, which could represent a staggering £96,000 in lost lesson fees.

Keiron Butcher, IT manager for Active Newham



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# NEW TO MARKET

We showcase some of the latest product launches for the sector

## TAKE PART IN THE TOUR

Fitness enthusiasts will be able to experience the thrills and challenges of the Tour de France for themselves with a newly-launched indoor cycle.

The FreeMotion Tour de France Indoor Cycle from Fitness Systems combines the company's existing S Series range of indoor cycles with the high-resolution touchscreen console from the home-use Tour de France bike.

The cycle is powered by Google Maps and is engineered with a 20 per cent incline and decline capability, a built-in power meter, and SMR (silent magnetic resistance). It also features the iFit tracker, enabling riders to upload and track their personal workout data.

**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD **Fitness Systems**



## REWARDING ACTIVITY

Gladstone has partnered with Bounts – a fitness app that motivates and rewards people for being active (see *HCM* April, p48).

All leisure operators using the Gladstone Plus2 system can activate the rewards app, which allows users to collect and redeem points – or bounts – against national brands and local retail outlets and services.

The app provides structured insight into exercise patterns, and was designed to motivate and incentivise individuals to increase their physical activity and use of health and leisure facilities.

Bounts can also link with other established fitness tracking apps and devices, enabling users to log effort and collect points for activity.



**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD **Gladstone**

## WATCH OUT!

A new community-driven fitness, diet and wellbeing app will allow trainers to track their clients' activities, food intake and progress.

WatchFit aims to build communities around particular fitness and dietary plans. Users of the app accumulate points when they follow a programme – by eating the correct meals and undertaking the right workouts – and these can then be measured against the progress of others who have also agreed to share their diet and exercise information.

Parisa Louie, who had the idea for the app, said the community and competitive aspects brought a sense of game-like fun and additional motivation. With an option to upload pictures of meals consumed, she said the app provided "a great way for trainers, conditioning experts and sports coaches to keep tabs on clients and ensure they are following a prescribed plan".



**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD **WatchFit**

## ON A HIGH

An international team of group exercise experts is launching a new class in the UK – Bosu 3DXtreme. The group class provides a 50-minute, high intensity workout combining functional training with cardio in a team training environment. It's been created by Jay Blahnik, Douglas Brooks, Candice Brooks, Julz Arney, Keli Roberts and Greg Sellar.

It's being launched in the UK by Physical Company – the UK suppliers of Bosu equipment – and Sellar will present the UK's first ever 3DXtreme classes at the FitPro Live convention and trade show this month. The class is based on the concept of 'triplex training', which mixes cardio, conditioning and core to achieve a lean and strong physique.

**fitness-kit.net** KEYWORD **Physical Company**





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David Stalker (centre)  
with the panellists

# THE BIG QUESTIONS

Katie Lewis reports on the key topics of discussion at SIBEC UK 2014

**Q** How can we ensure staff in our facilities are qualified to deliver positive outcomes that answer the needs of the government's health agenda?

## Tom Fairey

Most local authorities we advise are managing funding cuts and having to find new efficiencies in leisure services. Inevitably this means staff levels have been squeezed and it's already a challenge to find funding in the budget to meet mandatory training requirements.

While delivering health interventions that address the needs of special populations does create opportunities, I question where the funding for all the necessary, additional staff training will come from.

## Rachel Gomm

The delivery of GP referral programmes is not a new concept, but the introduction of the Health & Social Care Bill in 2013 – which encourages local authorities to take responsibility for the health of their local populations and offers access to an £8bn ring-fenced fund – creates a huge opportunity.

To take full advantage of this opportunity, staff need to be given sufficient knowledge and tools to offer professional advice and mentoring services to special populations. This

## Meet the panel

### Debate chair

- David Stalker, CEO, ukactive

### Panellists (left to right, above)

- Tom Fairey, business development manager, Alliance Leisure Services
- Michelle Dand, group fitness development manager, Everyone Active
- Rachel Gomm, business development manager, Birmingham Sport & Events
- Stuart Lockwood, CEO, Oldham Community Leisure

might include people dealing with cancer, mental health issues, emphysema and elderly people at risk of falling. We've already started to roll out REP's Level 4 training, but there's still a great deal of work to be done to ensure our sector is viewed as a true, go-to, results-driven solutions partner.

## Michelle Dand

SLM recently launched Everyone Health as a separate division from Everyone Active. This brand will bid independently for local health contracts, to deliver evidence-based preventative and treatment services for local authorities.

Working more closely with local authorities to address local health issues does create a massive opportunity, but to meet this need it's imperative that new training pathways are developed to help our staff gain the knowledge and skills they need to deliver relevant health services with positive, measurable outcomes.

## Stuart Lockwood

We need to find ways to work with the local authority to deliver more community health initiatives. I still feel, as a sector, we need to focus on service standards in our core business, and work harder to provide a top quality service to the general community with non-specific health needs. Once we crack this, then we can concentrate on catering for special populations.

**Q** Does the growth in mass participation events such as Tough Mudder, Cycling Sportives and fun runs – along with the more aggressive hunt for new participants by National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of sport – represent an opportunity or a threat to our sector?

## Tom Fairey

Mass participation events give people a training purpose, a goal to be achieved.



**Health and fitness professionals gathered at The Belfry in Wishaw, West Midlands, to discuss and examine industry topics**

These people will be looking for venues to train in and advice on how to prepare – great news for our sector.

Working in partnership with NGBs can help operators think more creatively about their provision. We've developed some really innovative, successful offerings – such as indoor 'extreme' – in partnership with clients who are willing to embrace change and give people what they want. Both operators and NGBs share an ambition to get more people involved in regular physical activity, so partnering makes total sense.

#### **Michelle Dand**

NGBs make fantastic partners, giving us access to new audiences. For example, we're working with British Triathlon to develop and deliver more affordable, accessible triathlon events in local communities. In addition to attracting more people into our centres to train, this also helps British Triathlon achieve Sport England participation targets.

#### **Rachel Gomm**

Working with NGBs has helped us take physical activity opportunities out to the community, expanding our reach beyond the confines of our leisure centres.

#### **Stuart Lockwood**

Mass participation events enable us to engage a larger slice of the local

population than if we just focus our attention on what physical activities we can provide via our leisure centres. We're currently working with Oldham Council and other community partners to deliver a local 5km, 7km and half marathon event.

In addition to encouraging more people to directly take part in physical activity, these events also engage other groups within the community – local volunteer organisations and youth groups, for example. This creates a pool of local talent for employers and gives volunteers an opportunity to gain vital work experience, which can then help them secure a paid job.



**What are your organisations doing to collect evidence-based data and measure user outcomes?**

#### **Michelle Dand**

Over the last couple of years, Everyone Active has developed an online offering to reach people in the community who are not using our leisure centres. This creates a huge data pool, and the next step is to work on collating and analysing that data.

In addition to this, we're also conducting audits of existing data, implementing minimum datasets for consistency and quality assured

measurable health outcomes to demonstrate effectiveness.

We do, however, recognise there's more to be done. In recognition of the need for data collection, Everyone Health is currently developing a bespoke software solution.

#### **Rachel Gomm**

Birmingham City Council has combined deprivation data with its own records and worked with partners to analyse the data. Findings have reported that, for every pound invested in Be Active – Birmingham's physical activity programme – there has been £22-worth of healthcare related benefits.

When we present results like this, it's difficult for local authorities and clinical commissioning groups not to take our sector seriously.

#### **Stuart Lockwood**

The key is being able to prove that health and fitness interventions result in behavioural change and, while we recognise a need to get to this point, we're not there yet.

We have isolated examples where we're achieving this – such as through our GP referral programmes – but this kind of measurement and analysis needs to become a standard rather than an exception if we're to secure significant public health funding. ●

# SUPPLIER SHOWCASE

We report on recent projects by Pulse Fitness, Wattbike and Les Mills



The partnership with Pulse has grown membership by 646 per cent

## Boosting membership

Client: Barnsley Premier Leisure  
Supplier: Pulse Fitness

**F**itness Flex, operated by Barnsley Premier Leisure (BPL), began working with Pulse Fitness in 2009. Over the last five years, Pulse has installed equipment at eight of its 10 sites, and a further £300k installation is now planned for September 2014 at the final two sites: VWorkshop and Retford Leisure Centres.

"Since we began working with Pulse, we've achieved a 646 per cent membership growth across all our sites," says Steve Roberts, head of business development for BPL.

In June 2013, Pulse kitted out a 75-station gym at Fitness Flex Pontefract and an 80-station gym at Fitness Flex Doncaster. Twelve months on, membership at Pontefract has increased by 45 per cent, while new site Doncaster has achieved an NPS score of 67 per cent. CV equipment, resistance equipment, free weights, plate-loaded machines and 'light to sound' functional

rigs were installed across the two projects, amounting to a total investment of £320k.

Despite a strong working relationship

spanning five years, Fitness Flex has not given Pulse preferred supplier status. "It's our policy to always put equipment contracts out to tender, but Pulse consistently comes out on top," says Tim Wilson, BPL chief executive. "Our partnership with Pulse adds significant value to our business. In addition to providing competitively priced, quality equipment with extensive warranty support, Pulse also delivers a comprehensive staff training programme, marketing support and a promotion and sales package. It has also advised us on creating effective and efficient gym floor layouts which maximise use of space."

Three Fitness Flex sites – The Metrodome, Royston Leisure Centre, Hoyland Leisure Centre – will be receiving a £400k Pulse equipment upgrade later this year. "We're excited about installing the Console 6," says Wilson. "It will allow our members to experience digital TV and radio while they work out, as well as full internet

browsing with social media access. The console also has personalised workout options via a web-based cloud solution."

In addition to installing fitness equipment, Fitness Flex has switched from a key system to the SmartCentre member management system at four of its sites. "Since switching to SmartCentre, membership has increased and there's been a significant improvement in attrition and retention figures," says Wilson. "At our flagship site, The Metrodome, retention has increased to 72 per cent."

Fitness Flex has worked with Pulse to make SmartCentre even more effective than the 'out of the box' solution, with several site-specific enhancements – particularly to the GP referral module, which has allowed the brand to convert more than 70 per cent of its patients to a fitness membership. Following this success, two additional sites will have the system installed later this year.

The Metrodome was also among the first to install L-Train, Pulse's lateral trainer, in 2012. Research carried out by an independent company showed that 82 per cent of members preferred the L-Train to the cross-trainer.

Details: [www.pulsefitness.com](http://www.pulsefitness.com)



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## Member experience

Client: Nuffield Health

Supplier: Wattbike

Wattbike is now installed in over 50 Nuffield Health locations

Nuffield Health is the UK's leading provider of preventative healthcare services. Through its 31 hospitals, 65 Fitness and Wellbeing centres and large number of corporate facilities, it offers patients and members a service that makes achieving and maintaining good health possible.

The organisation's success is attributed to its focus on putting its members, patients and clients first and providing them with high quality services. From offering all gym members a free, comprehensive health MOT to adding medical services to its Fitness and Wellbeing centres, the organisation is focused on offering integrated solutions to improve overall wellbeing.

It also adopts an innovative approach to the equipment and facilities it offers its members, to ensure exercise is accessible, sustainable and enjoyable. As part of this – and in line with the boom in cycling and triathlon – Wattbike has now been installed in over 50 Nuffield Health locations, including consumer, corporate and education sites.

Rick Crawford, fitness innovation and development manager at Nuffield Health, explains: "Both our existing and new members are excited to have access to Wattbikes. Cyclists and triathletes are very keen to use the bike, and we're pleased to see people who are new to fitness also trying them out and experiencing the benefits.

"Our members range from those who simply want to improve their lifestyle through to elite athletes. The flexibility of the Wattbike's set-up and in-built testing features means we can use it with all our members in different ways to help them get results."

As an accessible and reliable tool for fitness testing, the Wattbike is providing many of the teams within Nuffield Health with an additional way to measure fitness. Its live pedalling technique analysis, the Polar View, visualises imbalances and is used for assessment, intervention and the treatment of lower body injuries by expert on-site physiotherapists.

Crawford continues: "Many of our members like being able to record what they've achieved. The storage of data

on the Wattbike is really useful for this and can be used by our experts to help measure progress in a productive way. Members also love the feedback Wattbike offers, whether that be training to a certain power output or improving pedalling technique."

Nuffield has also introduced the Wattbike to its pioneering education sites. At the Fitness and Wellbeing site at Bilborough Sixth Form College in Nottingham, Wattbike is used for practical demos as part of the BTEC Subsidiary Diploma in Sport. Being able to undertake testing with instant feedback has enhanced a traditionally theoretical aspect of the course.

Richard Baker, commercial director at Wattbike, says: "Nuffield Health offers a fantastic example of how the Wattbike can offer versatility to an organisation that's focused on health and wellbeing.

"Wattbike provides a whole host of recordable fitness data that improves the overall ride experience. Every day, our commercial partners tell us that new members are signing up simply because they have invested in Wattbike for their sites."

Details: [www.wattbike.com](http://www.wattbike.com)

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**Lucy Gossage**

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Launched in London in May, The Project will tour major European cities until autumn 2014

## GLOBAL TOUR

Supplier: Les Mills

**G**lobal fitness brand Les Mills has pioneered a new approach to group exercise by launching The Project – its immersive fitness concept – which debuted in London on 28 May 2014.

Taking the form of a purpose-built studio, the travelling pop-up box brings together high octane video projections with pumping music and a live instructor-led class. The result is a multi-sensory experience that's already wowed 600 UK-based exercise lovers and is now set to take Europe by storm.

The Project, an event created by Les Mills and Reebok, sees cinema-quality imagery projected all around the participants, on three walls of the pop-up studio, to add a rich visual element to the exercise experience. The instructor then cues the moves in time to the music and graphics – for more detail, see [http://youtu.be/y\\_Q46bn0Wal](http://youtu.be/y_Q46bn0Wal)

In a cycle class, for example, participants might be riding up an impossibly steep glacier, or sprinting around a digital velodrome in a space age city. In a martial arts class, they will find themselves punching a computer game spaceship or ducking as they fly through an urban cityscape. Each class lasts 30 minutes, with the visual element ensuring that engagement and motivation levels remain high.



Blending technology and exercise provides an immersive experience

Les Mills came up with the idea for The Project following the 2009 publication of a white paper entitled *The Future of Fitness*, which explored central themes of connection, personalisation and convergence as key trends in fitness. One of the areas explored was the blending of technology into fitness and activity, also referred to as exergaming; this formed the foundations of immersive fitness.

The brainchild of Les Mills Jr, grandson of the Les Mills founder, and creative director Adam Lazarus, The Project has brought their vision of integrating technology, exercise education and creative design to life.

Following its debut in London and showcase at the Les Mills GFX convention at London's Alexandra Palace on 14 June, the live pop-up event will now embark on a promotional tour of major European cities during summer/autumn 2014. These will include Stockholm, Berlin, Amsterdam, Paris and Milan, giving fitness enthusiasts the opportunity to experience the event

for themselves, free of charge. A wider consumer launch in Europe and the United States is planned for 2015.

Les Mills CEO Phillip Mills comments: "The concept of immersive fitness is all about what the fitness community refers to as the 'zone' – that state of mind where people are performing at their peak; a place of focus, achievement and fulfilment.

"At Les Mills, we've been creating group workout environments that lead people to the zone for 30 years, through music, choreography and rock star instructors. The Project really takes it to the next level and we, along with our collaborator Reebok, are so thrilled to share this brand new fitness experience with the world."

Existing Les Mills workouts have been adapted for consumers to trial during the European tour of The Project. Workouts include The Trip (cycle class), BodyCombat/Les Mills Grit Immersive, and BodyJam/BodyBalance Immersive.

Details: [www.lesmills.com/immersivefitness](http://www.lesmills.com/immersivefitness)

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# LIGHTWEIGHTS

## HI-TECH MAT GIVES EXERCISE ADVICE

A new exercise mat with sensors and LED lights can recognise movement patterns and guide users through different types of workouts.

The Tera mat, which is still in its concept stage, has been thought up by design firm Lunar. It syncs with an app that takes users through exercise routines – such as yoga, pilates, Zumba and Thai bo – of varying difficulty. Meanwhile embedded sensors can detect the position of the user, as well as the pressure as they shift body weight. If the user makes a wrong move, the LED lights will illuminate to show the correct position.

The data is fed back to the app, so it can analyse the user's performance as well as logging their progress. Information can also be shared with a personal trainer across different social media networks.

The woollen mat has been designed as a piece of exercise equipment that blends in with home surroundings. Details: [www.lunar.com](http://www.lunar.com)



## RAVE YOUR WAY INTO EARLY MORNING FITNESS



PHOTO: ©ALICEFERRELL.COM

A freestyle rave session to a DJ in a London club. Sounds like a night of fun. But actually it's a fitness workout that sees people from all walks of life busting their moves to techno tunes at 6.30am, to lose calories before they start the day.

Morning Gloryville was created by events producer Samantha Moyo and therapist Nico Thoenmes just over a year ago. It started as a pop-up concept, but classes are now available in eight other countries.

Attendees can also get a sports massage to awaken their muscles and a smoothie or coffee. Details: [www.morningglorylondon.co.uk](http://www.morningglorylondon.co.uk)



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## FOOD TASTES DIFFERENT DEPENDING ON CUTLERY

The colour, weight, shape and size of knives and forks has a direct impact on how we taste food, according to researchers from the University of Oxford in the UK.

Their findings, published in the journal *Flavour*, showed that when people eat white yoghurt with a white spoon they think it tastes nicer, sweeter and more expensive than pink yoghurt, yet when eaten with a black spoon the pink yoghurt comes out on top.

It was found that the shape and size of cutlery also affects our perceptions. People believed the same type of cheese tasted saltier when they ate it with a knife, compared to eating it from a fork, spoon or toothpick.

## Mechanics are the fittest workers

Car mechanics are the most physically active professionals, exercising an average of 4.4 days a week, according to a survey by the British Heart Foundation based on 2,000 UK workers.

Although 78 per cent of bankers admitted they spent the majority of their working day sitting at a desk, they still came in the top 10 of the most active professionals, exercising an average of 3.38 times a week.

People in leisure and tourism were the second most active group, working out 4.1 days a week, followed by PRs and marketers. Those in nursing, and hairdressing and beauty, came in 10th – both groups took part in physical activity 3.2 times a week. The top three motivators for exercising were to improve physical fitness (60 per cent), to live a healthier lifestyle (55 per cent), and to lose weight (46 per cent).

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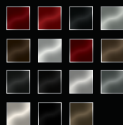
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