

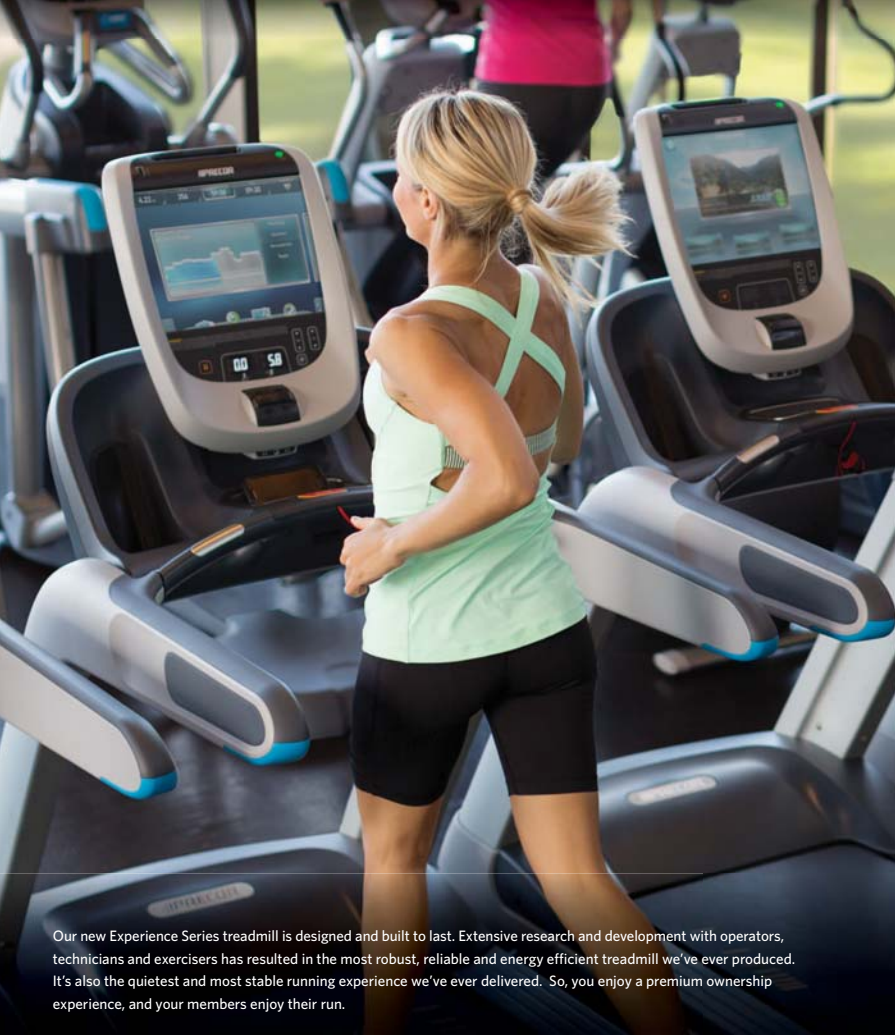
health club management

A group of people are running on a line of Precor treadmills in a gym. The treadmills are arranged in a row, and several people are using them. The focus is on a woman in the foreground, wearing a purple tank top and black leggings, running on a Precor treadmill. Other people are visible in the background, also running on treadmills. The gym has large windows in the background, letting in natural light.

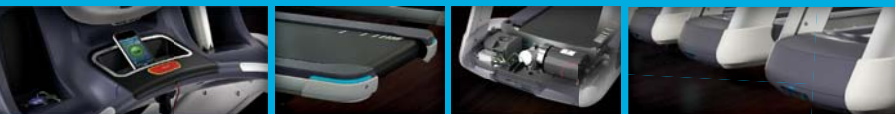
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AUGUST 2014

No 216

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MALCOLM McPHAIL

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


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Obesity responsibility

How should we define obesity – is it a disease, a disability or a lifestyle condition? And why does the definition matter?

In fact it matters a great deal, because the label we use has significant implications for the way people view obesity, and crucially for who's liable. While 'disability' marks it as something to be accepted and lived with, and 'disease' gives people an excuse to defer responsibility for their health onto the medical profession, 'lifestyle condition' makes the problem seem more reversible, with lifestyle change – our sector's area of expertise – clearly signposted as the logical solution.

So how are we currently defining it? That depends on where in the world you are: in the US, for example, obesity is now seen as a disease in its own right – not simply the precursor to other diseases such as type 2 diabetes – following an American Medical Association vote last year.

But in Europe, the debate has been raging recently over whether obesity is in fact a disability, thanks to a case brought to the European Court of Justice by a Danish childminder who claims he was sacked for being too fat.

The US definition didn't gain universal approval. Putting the onus on doctors to step in and provide informed support – and remunerating them for doing so – could in many ways be seen as a positive move. But at the same time, as Dr Chris Beedie of the UK's Aberystwyth University said at the time, by medicalising the condition "it puts the emphasis on treatment, not prevention, inevitably leading to expensive medical interventions to tackle what is a societal problem".

But if the US decision didn't win everyone over, the European debate has had commentators positively up in arms. Should obesity be deemed a disability, the emphasis wouldn't even be on treatment. Rather, it would be on accommodating obesity, with employers

across the EU facing expensive new obligations to adjust workplaces to cater for obese employees.

Quite aside from the impact on corporates, surely we can't let this happen? Simply accepting obesity as something to be catered for, rather than a tide to be turned, goes against everything our sector believes in. Indeed, as ukactive CEO David Stalker said when the story broke in June, the European deliberations distract focus from the more fundamental issue: "That obesity is a lifestyle condition that requires a balanced lifestyle, including regular activity and healthy



Should obesity be deemed a disability, the emphasis wouldn't be on prevention or treatment, but on accommodating obesity

eating. We should really be discussing the best means of delivering this message and the support needed to tackle obesity and other lifestyle conditions."

Stalker makes two important points, categorising obesity as a lifestyle condition but simultaneously stressing the need to focus not on labels but on solutions – both observations that sit well with the way the fitness sector markets itself. Rather than endlessly defining what the already very evident problem is, let's invest our energy into finding solutions, following ukactive's lead in moving the debate away from a focus on obesity towards a focus on physical inactivity.

Kate Cracknell, editor

katecracknell@leisuremedia.com  @HealthClubKate

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

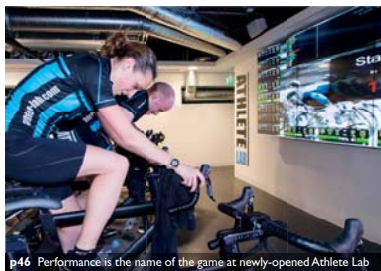
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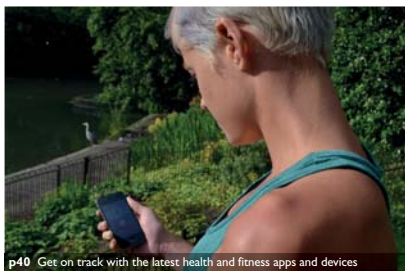
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Buyers' guide

For suppliers of products and services in the health club and spa markets, turn to **p79**



The Team

Email: contact's full name
@leisuremedia.com

Subscriptions

Denise Adams
+44 (0)1462 471930

Circulation manager

Michael Emmerson
+44 (0)1462 471932

Editor

Kate Cracknell
+44 (0)1462 471906

Editorial director

Liz Terry
+44 (0)1462 431385

Assistant editor

Katie Barnes
+44 (0)1462 471925

News desk

Jak Phillips
+44 (0)1462 471938

Helen Andrews
+44 (0)1462 471902

Tom Anstey
+44 (0)1462 471916

Product editor

Kate Corney
+44 (0)1462 471927

Design

Clara Nicol
+44 (0)1767 769645

Web team

Dean Fox
+44 (0)1462 471900

Emma Harris
+44 (0)1462 471921

Tim Nash
+44 (0)1462 471917

Michael Paramore
+44 (0)1462 471926

Publisher

Jan Williams
+44 (0)1462 471909

Sales

John Challinor
+44 (0)1202 742968

Astrid Ros
+44 (0)1462 471911

Julie Badrick
+44 (0)1462 471919

Finance

Denise Adams
+44 (0)1462 471930

Rebekah Scott
+44 (0)1462 733477



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Do you have a strong opinion or disagree with somebody else's views on the industry?
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PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/BIKEBELONDON

Letting employees hold work meetings outdoors can help combat stress

Managing workplace stress: the role of exercise and diet

I was interested to read your articles on mental health in the June issue (see *HCM* June 14, p30 and p56). As corporate gym specialists, we at Personal Touch Fitness are only too aware of the problems caused to employees by stress.

Unfortunately, although stress is a big cause of absenteeism – the latest research by the Health and Safety Executive shows that 13.4 million of the days lost annually to illness are attributable to stress, anxiety or depression – employees are often afraid to admit it to their bosses, which makes the problem even worse.

Stress management is a large part of what we provide. This not only includes telling people how to read the signs of stress, but also how to cope with it through exercise, which has been proven to reduce stress by as much as 30 per cent. Achieving 10,000 steps a day, as recommended in the government's physical activity guidelines, can play a significant role.

We also run courses specifically designed to aid relaxation in the workplace, including

yoga, pilates and tai chi. Appreciating the value of holistic therapies in relieving stress, we also offer massage to relieve tension. And because it takes place at work, it provides a legitimate excuse for people to get away from their desks and unwind.

Stress, and how to handle it better, is also one of our popular 'Lunch & Learn' talks.

Some of the solutions are incredibly simple and just require minor changes. For example, encourage staff to conduct their meetings outdoors. Walking and talking in the fresh air is highly recommended, and I guarantee people will enjoy getting outside the building. It will also help them achieve their 10,000 daily steps.

Last but not least, people should pay attention to their diet – cutting down on sugary foods and never skipping breakfast – and get lots of good sleep, ideally seven hours a night, and with all electronic devices turned off at least an hour before bed.

Chris Andrews
MD, Personal Touch Fitness

Gone are the days of a 'one size fits all' offering

I always read *Health Club Management* with great interest, but the June issue really made me take stock of where we are as an industry. It's an exciting time.

Mental health was debated well: it's heartening to see more providers recognising that these considerations can be as important as physical motivators.

It was also interesting to see how technology is improving the sector, not only tracking what we do but also being used to feed back on user experience. This is powerful stuff and will ensure the very best service delivery day in, day out.

I thoroughly enjoyed the feature on the Aspire National Training Centre, which has 3,000 disabled members (30 per cent of the user base). As a nation, we have so many different needs to be met; the opportunities for trainers to operate in a market niche are incredible.

Microgyms are a game changer for consumers, operators and indeed trainers – a very exciting development and one that will ensure innovation and hopefully long-term sector retention.

Gone are the days of a one size fits all approach to leisure delivery. It's not only providers that need to be flexible but the trainers too, adopting these new trends and indeed creating their own.

What a time to be in the industry! Here's to the next 12 months.

Julian Berriman
R&D director, Premier Training



Targeted offers are replacing a 'one size fits all' approach



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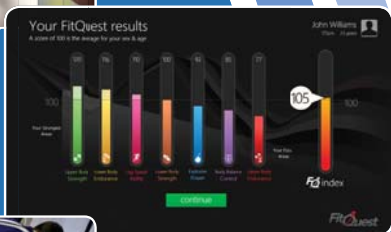
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Post-workout inactivity 'harmful to fitness levels'

A new study has suggested that extended sedentary behaviour of two or more hours could be just as harmful to fitness levels as short workouts are beneficial.

For the benefits of an hour-long workout, six hours spent sitting is as harmful to cardiorespiratory fitness, according to the study carried out by cardiologists at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Centre.

Using data from 2,223 participants in a national health survey, the study examined cardiorespiratory fitness levels in relation to exercise and the conjunctive amount of time spent sedentary. Participants included men and women aged 12 to 49 with no known history of heart disease, asthma or stroke, and fitness levels were assessed through a submaximal treadmill test, which was adjusted for differences in gender, age and BMI.

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=y7f6Y>

Total Fitness boasts profit increase from strong sales



Total Fitness is refurbishing all 16 clubs

Total Fitness Health Clubs, a gym and health club chain in the north of England, has experienced a significant increase in operating profit – from £620,000 in 2012 to £1.96m in 2013 – aided by £29.6m in sales.

The chain's consolidated group accounts published last month highlighted how trading results for the first half of 2014 show an 11 per cent like-for-like new member sales increase compared to the same period last year. Membership levels have also increased by over 5,200 members (8 per cent) in the last year.

This improved performance is attributed to the company's major investment programme – including refurbishments of all 16 clubs by the end of 2015. "The growth over the last 12 months is really pleasing and is the result of a lot of hard work from our colleagues across the business," says the CEO of Total Fitness, Richard Millman.

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=B7d6d>

Gymbox's £17m expansion pot

Gym chain Gymbox has gained investment capital of £10m from the Business Growth Fund (BGF), with Clearwater International securing the deal, plus an extra £7m in fresh loans.

Gymbox currently has five clubs across London and will use BGF's capital to continue its site roll-out in London, with three additional sites already secured. Beyond these, the company now has the funding in place to open further gyms in London and other UK cities.

Founded in 2001 by Richard Hilton, Gymbox opened its first gym in Holborn in September 2003 and today has clubs in Farringdon, Covent Garden, Bank and Westfield. The

company is expected to turn over £10m this year and has 13,400 members on its books.

Gymbox represents BGF's second investment in the UK fitness market, having backed Yorkshire-based low-cost gym group Xercise4Less in August 2013, which has subsequently grown to 23 gyms nationwide.

"The Gymbox brand has gone from strength to strength in recent years based on our contemporary club designs, exciting, original classes and our ability to offer customers new and unique ways of keeping fit," says Gymbox managing director Richard Hilton.

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=p4Y5a>



Gymbox is set to expand across London and the UK after obtaining funds totalling £17m

Net-a-Porter unites fashion and fitness

Online clothing giant Net-a-Porter has launched a new sportswear arm for women, marking the latest sign of convergence between the fashion and fitness industries.

The Net-a-Porter website will offer 37 activewear brands, covering 11 sports from tennis to surfing. Labels available include top names such as Adidas by Stella McCartney and Nike, as well as more niche offerings.

While sportswear brands like Sports Direct and JD Sports have this year made high-profile entrances into the health club market, the wider fashion industry has also been warming to the idea of physical activity, with a number of recent collections drawing inspiration from the



PHOTO: WWW.NET-A-PORTER.COM

Net-a-Porter: The convergence of fashion and fitness

"sports luxe" trend. The total value of the sport market – sport-related goods and services – in the UK in 2013 was £25.8bn, expected to reach £27bn this year, according to researchers SIRC.

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=u5r9M>

Flame Awards toast H&F titans



The Shaping the Future Generation award was won by Everyone Active and Fit for Sport

The cream of the health and fitness industry gathered in Telford last month, to do battle for 14 awards and three special gongs at the Flame Awards.

The ceremony took place at the Telford International Centre, held in conjunction with ukactive's annual Flame Conference. This year's event underwent a shake-up to better reflect how the leisure sector has evolved, as well as to give clubs, suppliers and stakeholders the chance to celebrate how their work impacts health.

The Flame Awards 2014, sponsored by Matrix, saw the introduction of new awards and, for the first time, operators and suppliers

went up against each other in a number of new categories. These included 'Workplace Wellbeing', 'Shaping the Future Generation', 'Go Green' and 'Go Outdoors'. Another addition was the 'Supplier of the Year' award, with Lifetime Training taking the gong.

"The Flame awards winners are undeniably the best of the best and a credit to our sector," said ukactive CEO Dave Stalker on the night.

To view the full list of winners across the 14 categories, as well as the three special achievement awards and further details, visit the link at the bottom of this story.

Details: <http://lei.sr/a=CZe9v>

Tesco continues growth in health and fitness



Tesco previously partnered Xercise4Less

Supermarket chain Tesco is to continue its push into the health and fitness market, with a new range of healthy food options, launching initially in 50 stores in London.

Having previously paired up with Xercise4Less to offer an in-store gym, the supermarket's latest incursion comes in the form of low-fat food range My Fit Lifestyle. Customers can sign up online to the My Fit Lifestyle eating plan, where they can list their goals and receive a plan to match, and choose meals to fit with their plan.

Details: <http://lei.sr/a=B7W8j>

High intensity workouts bring faster results: study



Intense exercise brings molecular change

A new study from the US has reinforced the old mantra of "no pain, no gain" on which high intensity training is founded.

A study published recently in the *EMBO Journal* found that the intensity of a workout, rather than the overall energy expended, is key to achieving the best results. Scientists at the Scripps Research Institute in Florida reported – through experiments on mice, it should be added – that intense exercise changes the body and muscles at a molecular level in ways that milder physical activity cannot replicate (see also p84).

Details: <http://lei.sr/a=B7h4E>

Gym Group, Pure Gym scrap merger

Low-cost health club operators Pure Gym and The Gym Group have announced the termination of their proposed merger.

The move comes in the wake of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) decision last month to refer the transaction to a second stage in-depth investigation, with the CMA expressing concern that combining the businesses may lead to "higher gym membership prices or a reduction in quality and choice for customers".

HCM editorial director Liz Terry, who's been analysing the health and fitness industry since 1983, questioned the rationale behind the CMA decision. "It isn't logical, The Gym Group



The Gym's John Treharne was to act as CEO for the chain

and Pure Gym's business model depends on the low-cost pricing structure to create a competitive point of difference with other health club operators," she said.

Details: <http://lei.sr/a=E3V8d>

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UK news update

1Rebel: crowdfunding success



(L-r) Ops director Kevin Yates, plus co-founders James Balfour and Giles Dean, with models

Fitness startup 1Rebel has raised more than £1m of investor capital for its fledgling business in under two weeks, thanks to an innovative crowdfunding venture.

The company launched on crowdfunding site Crowd Cube on 1 July, offering the public the chance to invest in the venture – a chain of high intensity studios using the ‘pay as you train’ business model – with 27.65 per cent of total equity up for grabs in return for £1.15m.

The target was hit in under two weeks and £1.19m was reached by 16 July, with 188 investors buying equity by that date – the largest pledge being for £575,000. Ops

director Kevin Yates described the Crowd Cube response as “overwhelming” and said that, despite 1Rebel reaching its target early, investors can still grab a slice of the action as further equity is available – the company’s website listing will remain live until late August.

The brainchild of James Balfour – son of Fitness First co-founder Mike – and leisure start-up specialist Giles Dean, 1Rebel will comprise a range of boutique fitness studios solely focused on high intensity training. The first site has been secured in central London and is set to launch in October.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=h6N5f>

Fitness apps usage up 62% in 6 months

As the wearable tech market heats up, the latest figures from mobile research firm Flurry show that consumer appetite for fitness apps shows no sign of abating.

Often used in conjunction with wearable tech to provide analytics and workout feedback, daily usage of health and fitness apps has grown 62 per cent over the last six months, according to research firm Flurry. This represents a growth rate that is 87 per cent faster than the mobile apps industry as a whole (see also p40).

The growth of fitness apps lagged behind the wider app market in 2013, so what has sparked this sudden frenzy of activity?

US-based Flurry says it’s a combination of



Women aged 25 to 54 are a key driver in the growth of apps

increased product offerings from tech giants and greater integration with Facebook – making fitness apps a more social experience, although the sector remains largely niche.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=x3U4F>

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Independent news

Xen-Do martial arts kicking off



Xen-Do's instructors boast a range of international martial arts accolades between them

A family-run group of martial arts clubs in London is hoping the launch of the fourth Xen-Do site in Baker Street will be the catalyst for significant expansion of the brand.

Xen-Do – a combination of many martial arts including karate, kick boxing, jujitsu and taekwondo – is offered via group classes, personal training sessions or a combination of the two, with members paying as they go.

Having opened his first (dojo) club in 2002, eight times national martial arts champion Rafael Nieto has grown the Xen-Do concept, bringing in a professional team of eight full-time instructors, including his son Anthony.

With Baker Street joining existing sites in Camden, Golder's Green and Marylebone, Nieto now hopes to open a number of new locations in 2015. "We feel the market is ready for a world class martial arts brand – we would like to be the country's premier martial arts company," says Nieto. "For the time being we aim to grow in London and we're then looking to expand in the key regional cities such as Manchester, Birmingham and Bristol."

Though independent, Nieto adds that the company is also exploring the possibility of opening dojos inside existing health clubs. Details: <http://lei.sr?o=E8f6f>

truGym to launch flagship in Medway

Family-run gym operator truGym is on the verge of opening its latest UK site – a flagship 1,858sq m (20,000sq ft) facility in the Chatham dockside area of Medway, Kent.

The currently empty building – which forms part of a large commercial scheme on the marina – will be given the 2014 truGym fit-out, which has also been introduced at its Maidstone club and will soon be rolled out across the estate.

Due to open at the end of August, the Medway club will comprise 220 stations, including 25 treadmills, plus a large free weights area and functional training rig, as well as a dedicated group cycling room with 25 bikes and a large studio for group exercise



Medway's layout will be similar to that of the Maidstone club

classes. Equipment providers have not yet been confirmed for the new site, which will also feature saunas and steamrooms as part of the health club's changing facilities.

Details: <http://lei.sr?o=z8s4f>

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According to Microsoft expert Paul Thurrott, the wristband will work with Android, iPhone and Windows Phone systems

Microsoft poised to make first wearable play

Technology experts are tipping Microsoft to launch a new piece of wearable fitness technology this autumn, which is expected to be able to work in tandem with all three of the major smartphone operating systems.

Rumoured to be a rival to the Samsung Gear line, the new product will not focus on smartwatch capabilities, but more on health and fitness tracking, with the device being described as similar to a wristband. However, Microsoft expert Paul Thurrott

has suggested that the device may be able to display smartphone notifications as well.

The wearable will also aim to make ground where others have failed by ensuring it's compatible with more than two operating systems when syncing with a mobile device.

According to Thurrott, the wristband will work with Android, iPhone and Windows Phone systems. As well as making use of Microsoft's own health apps – Bing Health and Fitness, plus Healthvault

– the device will also be able to work with third-party applications.

The wearable fitness technology and app market has started to grow rapidly in recent months. Such is the importance for businesses of grabbing a share of the ever-increasing market that leading developers including Apple and Google, alongside sportswear giants such as Nike and Adidas, have made large investments as they bid to gain a foothold in the sector.

Details: <http://llei.sr?a=8M8r8>

Google marches into wearables market with AndroidWear



Samsung Gear Live: One of the first watches to run off AndroidWear

Google has beaten rival Apple to the punch by releasing its first smartwatch, which went on sale on 25 June after being unveiled at Google's I/O developer conference in San Francisco.

Apple is expected to release health-focused iOS8 and an 'iWatch' later this year, but Google's platform for wearable tech – AndroidWear – allied with its new fitness platform Google Fit, puts the search and tech giant in a strong position for success in the fast-growing wearables market.

The first watches to run off the AndroidWear platform – the LG GWatch and Samsung Gear Live – are now on sale and have several similarities. Both have the same shape, and the screens are virtually the same size – 1.65sq in (10.6sq cm) for the GWatch and 1.63sq in (10.5sq cm) for the Gear Live – although the former has an In-Plane Switching LCD screen and the latter a SuperAMOLED screen.

The devices can be controlled by voice commands, taps and swipes, and linked to apps loaded on a smartphone, with the information they display intended to be more "glanceable" than the "fiddly" offerings we've seen so far in the smartwatch market.

On the fitness front, information from apps and wearables will be conducted via Google Fit, an open platform designed to track goals and allow developers to dig into rival apps and combine data.

Details: <http://llei.sr?a=V9D6d>

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Supplier and training news

D2F Fitness secures UK distribution for Reebok

Global fitness supplier RFE International has granted exclusive UK distribution rights of the latest Reebok Professional line of fitness equipment to D2F Fitness.

RFE group marketing director Daniel Allinson told *Health Club Management* that rather than setting a fixed time period, the contract is ongoing and performance-based. He was unable to reveal the financial terms of the deal. The latest range of Reebok fitness equipment – produced by RFE – focuses on strength, function, aerobic, yoga and recovery to offer a comprehensive selection of training apparatus.

UK-based D2F Fitness – which designs, manufactures and installs bespoke functional training solutions to clients including Fitness First, David Lloyd Leisure, GLL and LA fitness – aims to complement its existing offering with the new Reebok range.

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=s3j6j>

Premier Global bought by US-based learning firm

Premier Global, the parent company of Premier Training and Active IQ, has been acquired by the US-based technology learning solutions firm Ascend Learning.

UK-based health and fitness trainer Premier Global launched in 1992 and founder Norman Basson believes the deal will kickstart its next development phase.

Having registered an 85 per cent growth in profit for 2013, Premier will join other companies in the Ascend portfolio such as the National Academy of Sports Medicine, Jones and Bartlett Learning and the National Healthcareer Association. The financial details of the deal have not been disclosed.

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=T8C7n>

Pulse supplies to MoD hit £2m



Pulse has supplied the Royal Guards room at Buckingham Palace, among other MoD sites

Supplier Pulse has stolen a march on competitors by providing £2m worth of fitness equipment to the Army, Navy and Royal Air Force in its first year as an approved supplier to the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

The armed forces placed orders for equipment across 130 sites to help keep troops in peak physical condition.

The company worked closely with the MoD, modifying several pieces of equipment to make them more suitable for the fitness needs of the armed forces. Adaptations have included adding fitness testing programmes to the CV range, extending the weight stacks and increasing the top speed of treadmills.

Over the last 12 months, equipment including free weights, CV machines, resistance machines and functional training kit has been supplied to military bases in Cyprus, Germany and the UK. UK

installations include RAF Marham, RAF Falklands, HMS Dauntless, Basingstoun Barracks and even the prestigious Royal Guards room at Buckingham Palace.

"As a British company, we are proud to be supporting British troops," says Pulse key account manager for government services, Ben Steadman. "Our equipment range is of the highest quality and durability and is also one of the most cost-effective in the world. This, combined with our ability to modify equipment to meet the enhanced needs of the armed forces, makes us the ideal supplier for the Ministry of Defence."

Pulse won a three-year contract to be an official supplier to the MoD in April 2013. In addition to its supplier status, the company is also the official sponsor of the Royal Army Physical Training Corps football team.

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=F4h4q>

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International news

IHRSA asks consumers #whygetactive?

Following a soft launch to the fitness sector in March, global trade association IHRSA launched its #whygetactive campaign to the consumer market last month.

The campaign revolves around everyday people sharing their answers on social media to the question: "Why do you get active?" It's designed to spotlight the benefits that regular exercise brings to our physical and mental health, productivity, economic stability and quality of life.

The campaign had almost a million unique users even prior to the consumer launch. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=u3n8f>

Nordic Wellness expands its estate

Scandinavian operator Nordic Fitness – which has an estate of over 100 clubs – is continuing to grow its portfolio.

Last month it opened a new club in Gothenburg, Sweden – a 1,800sq m facility with a fitness area spread over two floors.

It also acquired Energihuset in Örnköldsvik in May, taking over the 1,600m family-orientated club where the offering includes group training, strength training, senior fitness and physical therapy.

A 1,200sq m club is set to open in Malmö this autumn, with an agreement also signed on a 2,000sq m facility in Helsingborg, due to open in September 2015.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Q5d6f>

New ethos, new name for Club Med Gym

Club Med Gym – with its 22 clubs across Paris, France – has announced it is rebranding as CMG Sports Club. It will hold onto its roots through 'CMG' but aims to give the brand a more modern feel.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=q8D6h>

Vit'halles sells up – eight clubs change hands

French health club chain Vit'halles has sold its eight Parisian clubs to operator Cercle de la Forme. Vit'halles founders Christophe and Claudy Andanson still own the Montpellier club, and there's also a franchise site in Casablanca, Morocco.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=15e7K>

MACFit doubles Turkish estate

Turkish operator MACFit is rolling out its low-cost concept following the launch of its first budget club in Ankara in January.

The brand now has eight clubs already in operation, with seven under construction in the cities of Istanbul, Bursa, Izmir and Adana. Six of these new clubs will open in August, with the seventh opening in September.

The operator will add a further six sites in Q4 – in Istanbul, Bursa and Izmir – to bring the total estate to 21 clubs by the end of the year.

MACFit clubs typically measure 1,800sq m, encompassing a Life Fitness and Le Monde-equipped gym, an indoor cycling studio and a

separate group exercise studio. There's also a TRX area. Free cardio, strength and flexibility classes are available, with personal training on offer at an additional cost.

Membership costs 55 Turkish lira (£15, €19) a month, plus joining fee – or just 45 Turkish lira if you commit to an annual contract – which includes group exercise classes.

MACFit prides itself on the high quality of its offering, in spite of the affordable price tag. With the opening of its new locations this year, it will be the largest operator of high quality, high value clubs in Turkey.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=4q4h6>



The first low-cost MACFit facility opened in Ankara, Turkey, in January of this year

ACHMEA withdraws from health clubs

Dutch health insurance provider ACHMEA has withdrawn from the fitness sector, pulling the plug on its chain of ACHMEA Health Centers.

Only in November, ACHMEA and another Dutch operator Fitland had announced

plans to collaborate in the creation of a national chain. The agreement saw the two organisations bringing together their respective facilities into a chain of over 60 sites, with plans to expand further.

However, in an announcement at the end of June, ACHMEA confirmed it was closing 12 of its health clubs, with Fitland taking over the remaining 19 centres. The deal sees Fitland almost doubling in size, expanding from 22 clubs to 41.

ACHMEA Health Centres reportedly made a loss of over €6m in 2013, which has been attributed to a changing marketplace and changing consumer behaviour.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=B9e4t>



Budget brands like FitFree have challenged ACHMEA's model

Three new clubs for FFME



FFME's latest Abu Dhabi club is a Platinum-tiered facility catering only for females

Fitness First Middle East has announced the opening of three clubs in the UAE and Kuwait.

Fitness First at the Al Seef Village, Abu Dhabi – the fourth Fitness First club in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi – is a 1,300sq m Platinum-tiered health club catering exclusively for women. The club offers a variety of indoor exercise options, as well as an outdoor swimming pool.

Fitness First at Al Barsha, Dubai, is a Platinum-tiered club for both men and women but with an exclusive ladies-only facility. Spread over 2,100sq m, the club is fitted with dedicated cardio and weight training space, as well as a functional training FitZone hosting

daily FitZone classes. Yoga and group exercise is also available in the women-only facility.

The look and feel of this club is said to be significantly different from the existing clubs, as it reflects the new brand that will be unveiled later this year.

Fitness First Sama Sulaibkhat is the second club to open in Kuwait. A premium health club with separate facilities for men and women, the new facility is located in a local shopping mall. The Ladies' Club will open this month, incorporating top-end group exercise studios offering a wide range of classes.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=T3c7V>

PIXFORMANCE powers first LOVFIT

New operation LOVFIT Sports Club opened its first club in the heart of Berlin, Germany, on 30 June.

LOVFIT has been conceived as a smaller, community type of club, and the first facility has a total floor space of 600sq m. However, through efficient use of that space, it's able to provide members with a broad offering: conventional fitness equipment, group exercise, PT and a workout zone that allows members of any fitness experience to make functional training a key part of their routine.

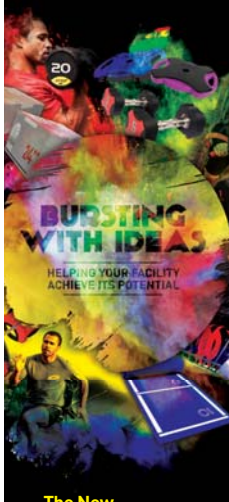
The functional training zone makes use of the new PIXFORMANCE system – a coaching and tracking system in which a large screen shows members what exercises should be



The PIXFORMANCE system shows what exercises to do

done, and simultaneously tracks the member and his/her results and progress. This allows LOVFIT to provide every member with a personalised training plan.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=X8V4a>



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People news



Cuthbert aims to develop UK sales

Pavigym appoints new UK sales director

Sports and health club flooring specialist Pavigym has recruited Alan Cuthbert as its new UK sales director.

Based in Cheshire, Cuthbert will use his 20+ years of experience in the health and fitness industry to drive UK sales, managing the business nationwide and working with existing distributors of Pavigym products.

Prior to his appointment at Spain-based Pavigym, Cuthbert's roles included 10 years as MD of an audiovisual company, as well as regional sales manager for a company that made and distributed play equipment. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=j3T3t>



(from left) Rufus, Boyd and Thomson

Focus Training makes triple tutor appointment

Fitness industry qualifications provider Focus Training has made a triple appointment to bolster its student support team.

Sarah Boyd, Becky Thomson and Zoey Rufus – all experienced personal trainers with knowledge and expertise across a wide range of disciplines – have become part of the telephone-based advisory service. The trio will be advising and guiding students throughout their training, ensuring that modules and workshops are completed on time and that students always have access to professional advice. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=q8E2c>

Matrix bolsters UK sales force

Health and fitness equipment supplier Matrix Fitness is strengthening its sales force with a series of high-profile appointments intended to kickstart a UK business expansion.

The recent recruitment drive sees former SportsArt Fitness UK MD Alan Ellis join the key accounts team, while Adie Meyer and Chris Maule have both made the move from Precor to become regional sales heads.

Ellis will hold the role of strategic account manager, responsible for developing new business channels. With over 15 years' experience in the health and fitness industry, Ellis previously spent eight years with Cybex International, most recently in the role of national key accounts manager.

Meyer arrives as head of sales for the north and, together with Maule (head of sales – Scotland and Ireland), will be focused on building and maintaining regional relationships, and developing new opportunities. Meyer brings experience at management, operational and sales levels, having worked at Bannatyne's, JJB Sports (now DW Fitness), Marriott Hotels and Dragons Health Clubs (now LA fitness) over the past 17 years. Prior to joining Matrix, Meyer held a dual role at Precor, operating as UK sales specialist for Preva Networked Fitness, as well as managing key accounts.

Meanwhile, Maule brings nearly 20 years' experience from a career that has seen him managing Bannatyne's clubs and driving sales for brands including Power Plate, Inspirit and most recently Precor, where he worked as account manager for Scotland.



New head of sales for the north Adie Meyer

Matrix Fitness managing director Jon Johnston welcomed the new recruits and said they would play an important role in driving the business forward. "All three of these individuals have demonstrated expertise in their previous roles, and bring valuable experience and knowledge to our wider team, reinforcing our operational excellence and supporting the continued growth of the Matrix Fitness brand," he added. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=j5f8p>

Brewster to chair IHRSA board

The International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA) has elected three new members to its board and appointed existing member Robert Brewster as chair, having been elected to the board in 2011.

Brewster – who is president of the The Alaska Club, a network of 18 facilities based in Anchorage, Alaska, US – will chair the IHRSA board of directors for the 2014/15 term.

"My primary priority is to engage as many clubs, worldwide, in IHRSA as possible, by communicating the value of membership and the importance of a strong association," he says.

The IHRSA board also welcomes three newly-elected members who will serve four-year terms. These are Brazilian swimming gym operator and former Olympic medalist Gustavo Borges; Derek Gallup, senior VP of Fitness & Retail for NeV fitness brands including Crunch and UFC Gym; and the founder of Stafford Hills Club, Jim Zupancic. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=K3T2H>



Robert Brewster will act as the chair of IHRSA for the 2014/15 term of office



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Movers & Shakers

IHRSA unveils the world's top fitness operators in this year's *IHRSA Global 25* report



Anytime Fitness reached an industry milestone of two million members worldwide

Last month, IHRSA announced the release of *The IHRSA Global 25*, which lists the top 25 health club companies worldwide in terms of revenue, memberships and units. This prestigious list of club operators is based on *The 2014 IHRSA Global Report*, which profiles nearly 400 clubs worldwide.

As a whole, the worldwide industry's revenues grew from US\$75bn to US\$78bn (+4 per cent) from 2012 to 2013. The number of facilities was also up, from 150,000 to 160,000 (+6.7 per cent), while the number of members grew from 132 million to 140 million (+6.1 per cent).

Revenue growth has continued uniformly among the organisations that submitted data for this year's *Global 25*. Category leader 24 Hour Fitness grew from US\$1bn in 2012 to US\$1.3 billion in 2013 – a 30 per cent increase. Anytime Fitness climbed to US\$634m (+31 per cent); Goodlife Fitness Clubs to US\$495m (+19 per cent); Planet Fitness to US\$211m (+32 per cent); Bodytech to US\$120m (+25 per cent); and the Russian Fitness Group to US\$176m (+14 per cent).

Anytime Fitness also reached an industry milestone of two million members worldwide, placing the franchise among the top five club companies in the *Global 25* in terms of members.

Also in the top five are Planet Fitness (4.8 million members), 24 Hour Fitness (3.8 million members), Gold's Gym International (3 million members), and Virgin Active (1.3 million members).

"Continued robust performance from leading club companies attests to the industry's strength and potential for growth," says Jay Ablondi, IHRSA's executive vice president of global products.

"IHRSA is pleased to recognise industry leaders who are playing a critical role in addressing the global epidemics of obesity and inactivity," adds Joe Moore, IHRSA's president and CEO.

"As part of a dynamic industry with more than 160,000 health clubs, leading club operators are providing stellar offerings in energetic settings, all in an effort to help nearly 140 million members with their health and fitness goals."

The *IHRSA Global 25* report is available for download at www.ihrsa.org

The 2014 IHRSA Global Report is available at www.ihrsa.org/ihrsa-global-report, either in print or as a PDF. It costs US\$74.95 for IHRSA members and US\$149.95 for non-members.

IHRSA calendar

Visit www.ihrsa.org/meetings for details and to register for these events

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

18–21 November 2014

ChinaFit / IHRSA China Management Forum
Guangzhou, China

11–14 March 2015

IHRSA 2015
Los Angeles, California, US



Fitness Hut's Nick Coutts (above left, with Brent Darden) was honoured last year

Be recognised for excellence

IHRSA is seeking nominations for the 2014 European Club Leadership Award, which will be presented at the annual IHRSA European Congress in Amsterdam in October.

The award recognises the European club leader who has done the most to advance his or her company, and the industry, through strong leadership and performance. Individuals may nominate themselves or others for the award.

The deadline for entries is 3 September. For further details, visit www.ihrsa.org/awards

Ask an expert: Hiring PTs



What should a club look for when hiring a personal trainer?
Frances Michaelson, owner of Muscle Up in Canada, offers
her thoughts on this topic

“Certification has become big business. I've been personally training clients for 18 years, and opened Muscle Up – a personal training centre in the West Island of Montreal, Canada – 12 years ago.

“I only hire trainers on a part-time basis and they're all contracted out employees. I'm not affiliated with any particular certifying organisation, and don't hire trainers according to their certification status. I believe a good trainer is somebody who's combined knowledge and passion with the ability to provide a high quality service to their clients.

“A certification alone is not enough and will not breed success. Continuing education is what's most important. There are too many quick, easy to get certifications available today, including online courses that teach nothing about communication or client-trainer relations.

“I'm well aware of many club owners who are not fitness professionals, and who therefore rely on trainers being able to show they are certified – but they have no idea if the trainer has really retained anything and if they can apply what they learned. These business owners hire based on the certification paper because they believe this is enough to ensure the client is in safe hands.

“Unfortunately, several individuals are now taking advantage of these cheap and quick



Michaelson looks for personality, a caring attitude and a desire to keep learning in her PTs

online certifications that teach very little about the anatomy, and of course teach nothing about people skills.

“It doesn't take a special person to be able to study and pass an examination, but it does require a certain talent to

keep clients motivated and achieving results. Personality, a caring attitude and a desire to keep learning is what's most important to me.”

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

Momentum gathering for European Congress

Last month's pages noted that the general sessions speakers for the 14th Annual iHRSA European Congress would be Jonas Kjellberg, one of the creators of Skype, and Annemarie van Gaal, a financial columnist in the Netherlands. Kjellberg will speak Friday 17 October on 'Entrepreneurship & Creating a Winning Sales Culture'. Meanwhile, van Gaal – whose session is on Saturday 18 October – will speak on the topic of 'Doing Unconventional Business'.

The congress will also offer a wide range of concurrent sessions. These will include:

- The future of the industry – CEO panel discussion
 - Wearable technology: Friend or foe to the health club industry? – Dave Wright, MYZONE.
 - Boost strength training participation among women: A presentation of a White Paper – Peter Borchert, Precor
 - Activate your local community: The evolution of commercial facilities into 'wellness hubs' – Francesco Arlotti, Technogym
- In addition, there will be seminars on topics including retention (Paul Bedford,

Retention Guru); leadership (Brent Darden, Brent Darden Consulting); virtual classes (Rasmus Ingerslev, Wexer Virtual); and membership sales (Doug Miller, Sales Makers International);

The European Congress will take place on 16–19 October 2014 at the Beurs van Berlage in Amsterdam. Keynote sessions and concurrent sessions will be simultaneously translated into Dutch, French, Italian, Russian and Spanish. For more information, please see *HCM* July 14, p29.

Visit www.ihrsa.org/congress for more information and to register.

Getting the UK active



David Stalker,
CEO of ukactive,
looks forward to
September's
National Fitness Day

When something like National Fitness Day is handed to an organisation like ours to develop, lead and manage, you can't help but feel more than a little excited. We're aiming to make Friday 26 September the biggest nationwide celebration of physical activity – not only in the sector's annual calendar, but for the nation.

We all know about the benefits of regular exercise: a healthier heart, freedom from chronic illnesses, a better quality of life – the list goes on. But the reality is, many people find getting active a lonely slog – and it really shouldn't be.

So when the énergie Group, founders of National Fitness Day, came to us with the proposition that we were best placed to steward National Fitness Day to become the platform it truly could be, we were delighted to take the baton.

Make it sociable

Research shows that, if you exercise in company, you're more likely to stick at it. A seductive combination of the social atmosphere, camaraderie and accountability among the group spurs even the most reluctant exercise novice to show up with a positive attitude and, most importantly, to have fun. That's what National Fitness Day is all about – providing people with the inspiration to move.

What does National Fitness Day involve?

Firstly, there's the Power Half Hour, where health clubs, gyms and leisure centres across the country will open their doors to everyone – members or non-members – to participate in free National Fitness Day Power Half Hour events, from group cycling and Zumba to BodyCombat and circuits.

Secondly, a series of mass participation fitness events will be held in high-traffic public squares in major UK cities. Hundreds of participants will sweat it out together, energised by great music and motivated by the fun of getting active together.



Can our industry help National Fitness Day become even bigger than Sport Relief?

Golden opportunity

The great thing about National Fitness Day is that it gives operators a unique opportunity to build a relationship with new customers and connect with existing members through a powerful, visible platform that taps into the fitness 'mood of the moment'. We're going big on the marketing too: we'll be driving maximum exposure for the event through a catalogue of high profile media outlets, including a national print and radio campaign.

We've also enlisted professor Greg Whyte, OBE, as our National Fitness Day

resident expert. As one of the country's pre-eminent sport scientists – and the man who trained Davina McCall, David Williams and Eddie Izzard for their incredible sporting challenges – he knows exactly what it takes to get the best out of your body.

I'm excited by the opportunity the event gives us – the chance to create a public legacy through a memorable experience that helps fuel the nation's appetite for fitness. It's also a great chance for our sector to demonstrate credibility, relevance and ingenuity to stakeholders such as brands, business and community.



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AUGUST

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

Venue São Paulo, Brazil

Summary

A key health and wellness event for the Latin American market, featuring three days of seminars, networking opportunities and a trade show, attracting 130 exhibitors and more than 10,000 attendees.

Web www.ihrsa.org/fitness-brasil

SEPTEMBER

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

Venue Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas, Nevada, US

Summary

Since 1997, the Health+Fitness Business Expo has been bringing together leading manufacturers, suppliers, retailers, buyers, the press, industry influencers and dedicated health and fitness professionals in order to conduct the business of fitness.

Web www.healthandfitnessbiz.com

14-17 | SPATEC Fall, North America

Venue Scottsdale, Arizona, US

Summary

SPATEC Fall 2014 will bring together the operators of America's leading hotel resort, destination, athletic, medical and day spas with key domestic and international suppliers to participate in a series of one-to-one meetings over two dedicated business days.

Web www.mcleaneventsinternational.com

18 | Active by Design Summit

Venue Coin Street Neighbourhood Centre, London, UK

Summary

The Design Council champions "great design that improves lives". The UK charity was instrumental in promoting the concept of inclusive design and now also waves the banner for environments that improve people's wellbeing (see also p52). Its annual summit will see designers, built environment professionals and public health specialists – and anyone else interested in healthy design – come together to listen to inspiring talks.

Web <http://designcouncil.org.uk/active>

30 – 2 October | Leisure Industry Week

Venue NEC Birmingham, UK

Summary

In the UK's diverse and vibrant leisure industry, LIW'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. Show sectors cover Health & Fitness (incorporating Sport), Play & Attractions, Leisure Facilities, Pool & Spa, and Eat & Drink.

Web www.liw.co.uk

OCTOBER

7-10 | SIBEC North America

Venue Ocean Reef Club, Key Largo, Florida, US

Summary

Operators in the health, recreation, sports and fitness sectors are brought together with national and international supplier companies in a series of one-to-one meetings.

Web www.mcleaneventsinternational.com



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EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT ...

Engaging ex-members

Your ex-members have already bought into the concept of paying for a membership at your club once, so it should be easy to convince them to do it again. Right?

In a panel discussion at the European Health & Fitness Forum in Cologne in April, the question was asked how we can move the fitness sector beyond 12 or 13 per cent penetration in the UK. Precor's new president, Rob Barker, argued that one way to do this would be to target lapsed (ex) members: there are legions of people who have once been members of a gym, but, for whatever reason, have left.

These people are already converted – they've already bought into the idea of exercise, and gym membership, once – so surely the industry stands a good chance of re-engaging them?

Or does it? Are these people once bitten, twice shy? Did their experience

put them off, or was it just a case of other factors getting in the way that caused them to leave? Did their experience as a club member springboard them into another type of out-of-club activity, or have they already joined another club?

Evidence suggests that, when people leave a club, they tend to stop exercising. Research by Teresa Hurley, head of the school of management at the Dublin Institute of Technology, revealed that 85 per cent of the lapsed members they surveyed had not joined another health club – but 54 per cent said they would consider rejoining if given an incentive.

In our bargain hunting society, a price reduction was the most popular sweetener to rejoin: 38 per cent said

they would be tempted by money off, while 8 per cent said a salon gift token would be enough to get them to reconsider. Hurley tested this finding further: a gift token received a 3 per cent response rate, while a price discount received a 27 per cent response rate.

So is a money-off voucher the way to go about re-engaging lapsed members, or does a cheaper membership devalue the experience and fail to get true buy-in? Are there other ways to go about getting people back into your gym? Most lapsed members start to disengage with the gym weeks or even months before they cancel their membership, so can they be caught earlier? We ask the experts....

HOW CAN WE GET EX-MEMBERS BACK INTO OUR GYMS? EMAIL US: HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM

GUY GRIFFITHS

Director • GG Fit

"Clubs with 1,000 members will probably have about 1,500 ex-members, many of whom are thinking about re-joining and just need a push. We regularly survey clubs' ex-members about their current exercise habits and usually find that over 50 per cent are currently doing nothing.

When making contact, email is the cheapest, easiest and provides intelligence in terms of opens and clicks. But email is also the easiest to ignore, so it's important to mix the communication up – for example, SMS, a phone call or even a hand-written postcard if you have some news that will really resonate with the person. In order to do this effectively, you will need to find out about their goals while they are a member.

Don't make messages too sales-like, or full of special offers: you risk devaluing the club with lots of discounts. Instead, talk about news that might be relevant, such as a new class or refurbished showers. Make sure the focus is on how you can help them as members if they come back.

The key is to focus on what the member is trying to achieve. Find out what they are interested in early on and use that to make the message more personal later on. You need to make them feel special and re-enthuse them about their goals."



IAN HASSETT

Group sales & marketing manager
• The Health Club Collection

"When the circumstances are right, lapsed members can be a significant source of new business and can be brought in with little effort and resource by using electronic communications and automations.

We maintain a high level of lapsed member communications for a variety of reasons: with our City clubs, people often relocate and come back after a few years, so we aim to be the first port of call on their return. Also, by maintaining positive engagement, they might still recommend our clubs to friends who live in the area. We also inform lapsed members about circumstantial changes. For example, when we launched a pay-as-you-go option for studio classes, we targeted lapsed members who had cited lack of use as a reason for leaving the club. There was a significant uptake, and many have since rejoined.

A lapsed member strategy should involve an online exit survey, then stay in touch via social media and keep them engaged on their own terms. Our e-newsletters contain non-club specific communications, such as different training techniques, and we use personal preferences so people can opt out. When you have a reason to contact them about rejoining, use your data to make it specific and personal."





Research showed 54 per cent of former members might rejoin if given an incentive

TERESA HURLEY

Head of School of Management • DIT

The lapsed member market represents an overlooked facet of business that health and fitness operators need to pay greater attention to: it can prove easier to re-engage this market and is more cost-effective than finding new members. Research has shown the net return on a new customer from an external source is 23 per cent, compared to a 214 per cent return from the reinstatement of a defected customer. So maintaining and utilising an accurate database of lapsed members is essential.

Establishing why members leave is the starting point of the re-engagement process and crucial to the success of any re-engagement strategy. However, my research showed that only 52 per cent of health and fitness operators in Ireland complete an exit analysis to find out why members leave. Clubs should be implementing a short exit analysis survey of every member who leaves, finding out what incentives would help re-engage them.

Importantly, this survey should form part of the overall customer service menu on offer in the club, with members regularly being asked their opinion of the service. This can provide an advance indication of members at risk of discontinuing membership, and affords clubs the opportunity to salvage potential lost business.”



ROB BARKER

President • Precor

Re-engaging lapsed members is not the only way to grow market penetration, and not as important as club location and ease of access, for example. However, I've spoken to many operators who say the lapsed member database is a good source of members. All lapsed members once valued the offering and had the exercise habit, so this is a good start.

One of the main obstacles to re-engaging lapsed members is that clubs don't usually have a deep understanding of why people joined, what they did when they were in the club, and what caused them to lose the habit and cancel their membership. If clubs can capture this information while people are still members, it gives them a much better chance of re-engaging them at a later date.

In order to get lapsed members back in, clubs need to offer easily consumable services that people will be interested in. Special offers can be a good way of getting people back into the club, but once they're there, you need to have a habit formation plan to retain them. If not, they will just yo-yo in and out of the door. It's worth investing in electronic ways to re-engage customers: you can still look after members even without lots of human resource.”



MAIN PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

The CEO of Life Leisure talks to Kate Cracknell about challenging the public health commissioners, and about changing the whole model of fitness facilities

MALCOLM

McPHAIL



Avondale Leisure Centre is pioneering the concept of a community 'health hub', stripping away the barriers of a traditional club

Malcolm McPhail, CEO of Life Leisure – the leisure trust formerly known as Stockport Sports Trust – is on a mission to get public health commissioners to think differently. "The first thing a GP will ask you when you go to see them is: 'How are you feeling?' It's a qualitative question, because improved health – the positive impact of an intervention – is judged qualitatively by the individual. Do they feel better? Has their life improved? The GP will then tick a box and that's when it becomes a clinical statistic. But 90 per cent of the time that clinical statistic is based on a qualitative answer from the patient.

"We have reams of qualitative data from the interventions and programmes we run, all of which evidences exactly this sort of impact – the real life stories from people whose lives we've changed – but if you put that in front of the commissioners, they simply dismiss it out of hand.

"And yet, by not acknowledging qualitative feedback – by focusing only on quantitative, clinical outcomes – they end up not knowing what they want to commission, because they're using a model that's not applicable to the outcomes they're looking for. They simply don't have a model to measure physical activity within a community.

"In the meantime, the clinical data is already there to prove beyond any

doubt that physical activity improves your health: the more you do, the more your health will improve. What the commissioners need to get their head around is that it's all good – quite simply any exposure to physical activity which means the individual becomes more active than they were before is going to improve their health. End of. Don't keep asking us to prove it. Don't keep telling us there's a lack of evidence. Help us solve the problem – don't just throw it back as our problem – because then we can make you look good as commissioners, because everyone will be physically fitter and healthier.

"I get angry when they say the fitness sector has no place on a health and wellbeing board; there should be exercise specialists on every single health and wellbeing board. We just have to convince them we're neutral enough that we'll be there to shape the health of the whole borough, not just to look after our own business interests."

CHANGING THE FOCUS

He continues: "We're our own biggest enemies though. We shoot ourselves in the foot because we set ourselves up to cater only for the 13 per cent of people who already use our gyms, and that just reinforces the commissioners' view that we're too focused on fitness and body image."

McPhail was therefore keen to try a new approach, and the trust's Avondale Leisure Centre was identified as the ideal test-bed: five years ago it had just 500 members and was losing £170k a year. "We had nothing to lose," says McPhail. "The centre was earmarked for closure and it was the last throw of the dice."

He and his team came up with the concept of a local 'health hub' in which they did "the complete opposite of everything that's been done in this industry". The physical environment within the centre was changed: all mirrors removed, partition walls brought in to offer privacy while exercising, bariatric chairs introduced, and an AlterG anti-gravity treadmill acquired to help larger individuals exercise. The programming was also overhauled, with new schedules introduced that used the pool for water-based activities and that put classes such as Legs Bums Tums in prime-time slots.

"It was very unsophisticated in its approach – just a case of stripping away everything that could act as a barrier to people being active," says McPhail.

Unsophisticated perhaps, but at the same time a great example of fresh thinking. "In a way, Avondale isn't really a health club," adds McPhail. "It's almost like a self-help centre where we talk to members about things like discipline: they must be ready to work hard towards their goals. They also

The AlterG anti-gravity treadmill enables larger people to exercise more comfortably

► need respect for what they've been asked to achieve – an appreciation that it will bring about important changes in their lives. Finally, they must be given an understanding of why they're being asked to do certain things. Don't just tell them to go and run on a treadmill for 10 minutes – tell them why.

"We're really honest with people too. We tell them it will probably hurt a bit, and they might be stiff afterwards, but if they stick with us it'll change their life."

Support for the concept wasn't always there – "I couldn't get anybody to believe in it at first, so we just went ahead and did it with £250k of our own money," says McPhail – but it's proved highly effective. Membership is up to 1,500, the centre is on-track to turn a profit next year, it's tapped into new funding streams as a result of its achievements, and it's now held up as a best practice example within the borough and beyond.

"It just proves that tapping into the non-13 per cent can be commercially viable," says McPhail. "And it's absolutely something that could be replicated by any operator in the country, whether public or private sector. In fact, if we're going to have any impact on public health, the private sector operators have to be just as convincing as the local authorities and trusts in changing their tactics."

"The problem is, I think we as a sector hide behind the smokescreen of people blaming lack of exercise on lack of time. The real issue is that we can't be bothered to put something in place that actually meets the demands of the individual. That's what Avondale was all about."

PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

Besides the commercial rationale, McPhail also has a very personal reason for broadening the reach of his centres. He may now be a CEO who has grown his business from a turnover of £3.5m when he joined in 2007 to £11.5m in 2013, but his childhood was a tough one: "I came from a single parent family, I spent some time in care, my father was an alcoholic, I used to stand in free school meal queues being identified as poor and different from everyone else."

"When I questioned this, I was always told 'that's just the way it is', and I developed a hatred for that statement. Even today, it drives me to challenge tradition and conventionalism. For

me, 'that's the way it is' isn't acceptable as an answer to anything.

"Fortunately for me, I was a reasonable athlete: I was British Counties Champion and held numerous Scottish titles at 400 metres and 400-metre hurdles. Sport gave me the discipline and focus to make my life what I wanted it to be.

"Now I'm in a position where I can make a difference, although it sounds cliché, that's what I want to do. I don't want to provide health and fitness only for those who can afford it. I also want to give opportunities to people like myself."

"In any case, at some point the sector has to get sick and tired of fighting over the same people – the same 13 per cent. In a way I'm now glad the budget operators came along and forced us to rethink our model, because they can have the fit, healthy 16- to 25-year-olds. Their arrival has forced me into making that step to go after the other percentage, the silent majority, and I'm over the moon about it."

RETURN TO ACTIVITY

But reaching beyond the 13 per cent isn't just about changing the offering and pricing at leisure centres. At the heart of the Avondale experiment was the pilot of

an intervention known as *actiLife* – a 'back to activity' scheme that targeted local residents who were either overweight or felt too intimidated to use a gym.

"You can't expect these people to come straight to the gym," says McPhail. "You need an industrial-sized concept or intervention that just gets them interested in physical activity more broadly."

So what was the *actiLife* concept? Quite simply, it was to start people off by getting them walking, with a specially designed walking programme and walking officers on-hand to run sessions. McPhail explains: "Public health departments have confused the public with conflicting messages in the past, not to mention campaigns suggesting that all people need to do to get healthy is to walk. Walking alone isn't enough. However, it is the first step on the journey to health and fitness."

A total of 300 participants were recruited onto the 'pre-membership' scheme via a range of channels, including GP referrals and links with the local housing association and job centre. Running over a period of 12 months – *actiLife* was one of the interventions monitored in the 2012 *ukactive* Research Institute study – the results were



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► impressive: 33 per cent of participants reported a decrease in weight and blood pressure, 75 per cent reported more activity, and 90 per cent said they would recommend the programme to a friend.

Most important of all, they all felt more aware of their activity levels and more confident about taking responsibility for their own activity and weight in the future. Indeed, around three-quarters of participants went on to take up membership at Avondale. "When we felt they were at the threshold where a bit more physical activity would benefit them, we invited them into the centre to see what we could do – what classes might appeal to them, for example," says McPhail.

Life Leisure is now looking to mirror the success of actiLife in a new pilot, actiSport, which takes the same walking-based approach but as a re-entry point into sport rather than gym-based activity. Supported with new funding from Sport England, it's currently also offered through Avondale, which has introduced sessions such as walking football as a way to bridge the gap between inactivity and full-blown sport.

Going forward, the aim is for the full package – actiLife and actiSport, new software being developed to support them, and advice on the physical offering – to be made available at other Life Leisure sites, as well as to new contracts beyond Stockport. The decision is yet to be made if this will be offered on a franchise basis or as a commissionable package.

PREFERRED BEHAVIOURS

But Avondale is just one example of how Life Leisure is doing things differently.

One interesting new initiative is the organisation's scrapping of job descriptions in the belief that people generally know what their job involves; what makes the difference is how they behave while carrying out their job.

"We're moving towards what we call preferred behaviour models, whereby people don't have a job description but instead are given a model of behaviour we expect them to follow," explains McPhail. "There's a different model for each department, and that's what we'll measure and reward people against."

"Meanwhile, at a company level, the preferred behaviour is 'personal best'. We want our staff to strive to achieve personal best days every day."

"Within all that, I have a strategic group called 'sentinels' who help guide the



company in the right direction. There are about 25 of them at the moment – cleaners, PTs, junior managers, general managers – and hopefully that will grow, but they all have one thing in common: the correct behaviour and attitude.

"I believe this will help ensure we have a strong internal brand. Everybody talks about having a strong external brand, but you have nothing unless your own people believe in what you're doing. Nike employs hundreds of people to look after its internal brand, and I firmly believe our size is irrelevant in that respect. We should be acting like the big blue chip companies, delivering our vision and mission with a much higher level of sophistication."

"Everything I do in Stockport, I do as if I'm in charge of Adidas or Nike."

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

But the external brand is also important, and the rebrand to Life Leisure last year – besides lifting the geographical limitations imposed by having 'Stockport' as part of the organisation's name – also allowed the trust to bring in "a complete culture change" that

consolidated its links with the local community, further developing its partnerships and building on its already strong outreach foundations.

"By about 2018, there won't be any local authority funding for leisure facilities," says McPhail. "Whether we like it or not we're non-statutory, so we have to come up with ways to deliver our own funding. That might be by becoming more commercial – going after new contracts – or by expanding our horizons beyond public health, delivering interventions to tackle all the other strategic issues local authorities face, from dysfunctional families to disabled people to NEETs."

"Either way, I think we'll start to see a move away from the trust as we know it towards a hybrid trust model that's more commercial. Either that or trusts will develop separate brands, one delivering a commercial offering in a competitive market and the other delivering the social net value-type approach."

"Whatever happens though, the budget clubs have changed the market for good. Everybody's had to sharpen their sword and only the most creative will survive." ●

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Nielsen: Les Mills Global Consumer Fitness Survey (2013).

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Give back to move forward

Ray Algar reports on charity-powered gym The Movement

Recently I was undertaking some online research and stumbled upon an American search result that grabbed my attention: 'Charity-Driven Gyms Are Popping Up All Over The Country.' Gyms undertake random acts of charity all the time, but these new gyms are different in that they embed charity at the very heart of their business.

So, this is the story of The Movement, a recently opened boutique fitness studio in New York City, US, that operates according to the philosophy of 'give back, move forward' – enjoying the intrinsic joy and satisfaction of exercise while simultaneously helping others. It donates US\$1 per person per class to The National Brain Tumour Society, not just for a few days, but every day of the year. It's the first fitness business I've discovered that donates a portion of every single sale it makes.

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



Jordan and Dana Canino: Making a real difference



How the studio started

Jordan and Dana Canino are lifelong athletes who envisioned a studio that would allow them to make a positive difference to the lives of others. However, their definition of 'others' is far wider than just the customers who attend the hybrid cardio, strength and yoga classes at the 297sq m (3,200sq ft) facility. They started with the question: How do we create a place where people are not only changing their own lives, but also the lives of others?

Deeply embedded charity

When a business aligns itself with a charity, there should always be some compelling story that drives the partnership. Across the United States, according to the National Center for Charitable Statistics, there are more than 1.5 million non-profit organisations. Many would be worthy of our support – so how do we choose? Why did The Movement select The National Brain Tumour Society (NBTS) as its charity partner?

According to the NBTS, 700,000 Americans are living with a primary brain tumour and 69,000 more will be diagnosed this year – and in my research, I discovered that Andrea Canino, Jordan's mother, had died of a brain tumour when he was just 18. This was therefore a deeply personal cause, giving purpose and meaning to The Movement.

"Our hope is to start a true movement: the idea that, when you give back, you're enabling yourself to move forward. It motivates people not only to go to a class and get their sweat on, but also to help fight a terrible disease," he says.

Impact to date

IHRSA data suggests there are more than 30,500 gyms across the US, with boutique studios regularly popping up,



The couple have chosen a charity close to their hearts, as Jordan's mother died of a brain tumour when he was aged 18

so what does the American media have to say about The Movement? Well, for a small studio only open since May 2014, it's already generating quite a buzz: 'The Movement Ignites a Charitable Fitness Revolution', 'Fitness studio ready to stand out', 'The Rise of Charity Driven Gyms', 'Five Fitness Studios That Give Back' are just four headlines that show how its philosophy has captured the attention.

The new studio is currently only operating 30 classes a week while it gets up to capacity. However, this already translates into a donation to the National Brain Tumour Society of US\$1,000 a month. The expectation is that they will reach 56-70 classes a week by September 2014, meaning donations should double. Equally importantly, they're raising awareness of the charity every time someone interacts with the business.

I dedicate this workout to...

I recently read an article about The Movement written by Heidi Kristoffer, a highly rated American yoga instructor. In the article, she recalled a comment made by an instructor during a class she had attended at another gym: "If you feel like you can't do it for yourself, do it for someone else who needs this more than you do."

Kristoffer found the idea of mentally dedicating her workout to someone other than herself a very powerful concept. Now imagine this being amplified by everyone else in the class, across all classes, every day of the year. Suddenly that Tuesday evening class at 8.00pm that you're half-minded to skip takes on a whole new meaning. "Sometimes we need to do things for ourselves, but often the power of doing something with the intention of helping the greater good, or just one other person, can be life-changing," added Kristoffer.

So what can your business do?

Your organisation is probably already working with one or more charities, but the relationships may be superficial and only short-term. Here are a few ways you could maximise your social impact:

- Discover a charity partner that shares an authentic common purpose with your business.
- Ensure your charity partner and its cause genuinely mean something to your primary stakeholders (staff, customers, suppliers, investors).
- Commit to working together over the long term – think 'partner' more than 'a date'.
- Visualise a successful and socially useful outcome and plan towards it.
- Help drive a project rather than simply handing over money.
- Don't send out a press release until you have meaningful results to share. What matters is impact, not intention.

Well, I'm going now because I need to work out and I'm dedicating it to my late mother. Who will you be dedicating your next workout to? ●

IN A NUTSHELL

Initiative by:

The Movement – www.themovementfitness.com

Location: New York, US

Project status: Ongoing

Impact: National

Gymtopia keywords: Environment, Education, Health & Wellbeing, Medical Research



The future is here. Tech-savvy exercisers are using apps and devices to take health and fitness into their own hands, and with the tech giants set to enter the fitness sector, a revolution is coming. Is your club ready? Kath Hudson reports



Making it fun: The new mycloudtag app fuses gaming with fitness data

In 2012, 18 million fitness devices were sold in the US. So far, these appeal mainly to the fitness-savvy, but with Google, Apple and Samsung either about to enter the market or having already entered – and with Adidas and Microsoft also rumoured to be launching wearables – they will soon be mainstream. Even children are included: the launch of a slap bracelet activity tracker aimed at kids was announced in June. This new KidFit product allows parents to set goals for exercise and sleep that tie in with real-world rewards.

Innovations like this set the tone for the next generation: they are growing up with technology and they will simply come to expect it. By 2017, it's estimated that one-third of the US population will have a fitness tracking device. These devices look set to transform the health and fitness sector in much the same way that online shopping changed retail and MP3 changed the music industry.

App usage is also skyrocketing. In June, mobile research firm Flurry showed the

daily usage of health and fitness apps had grown by 62 per cent over the previous six months – the main driver being a thirst for fitness among women aged 25 to 54.

Meanwhile cycling app Strava, which allows cyclists to race virtually against themselves and others, announced in June that it had logged and mapped 77 million rides. So successful is it in uncovering the nation's cycling habits that it's even selling 'heat maps' of popular riding routes to local authorities, to aid town planning decisions.

The threat

Up until now, health and fitness clubs have generally been the guardians of fitness knowledge and data. The model within the industry has principally been to monetise this knowledge, charging members for a programme or a PT session if they want to gain greater insight into how to improve their fitness.

Apps and devices threaten this model by giving people the ability to bypass clubs, set their own programmes and monitor their own progress. Some apps

even give the nudges that clubs are failing to deliver. For example, Runkeeper asks users when might be a good time for a run or a cycle, then gives them a nudge via text just before that time.

Fitness technology expert Stuart Dyson says technology is democratising fitness knowledge: "Health clubs are not the sole gatekeepers of information any more. The new technology gives consumers a great deal more freedom: the days of being a 12-month membership prisoner are gone.

"Many health clubs currently only provide infrastructure, and don't readily give knowledge, so apps and technology are filling an information void. This could lead to health clubs being cut out unless they become more open."

So does this mean that health clubs will start to become the discarded middle man, as the nation arms itself with iWatches and – with the help of apps – walk, run and cycle themselves to fitness outside of health clubs?

Not necessarily. In the UK at least, the weather is too inclement to turn



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/WANWIBRAKEDIA

everyone into outdoor exercisers. In addition, as MYZONE CEO Dave Wright points out, clubs still provide a good variety of equipment to help tackle boredom and boost motivation.

However, operators do need to do some repositioning. The experts concur that, unless health clubs become more open, get on-board with technology and accept that not all exercise will take place within their four walls, they risk becoming obsolete. Operators, take note.

US consultant Bryan O'Rourke says some clubs – those that have a great location, or offer a special experience – may not necessarily need to adapt. But he believes every other club will. However, he's optimistic about the likely impact: "I think it's positive. Many record companies bemoaned MP3s, but it led to the music industry tripling in size. The same thing will happen for health and fitness."

The opportunity

The good news is that this technology offers as many opportunities as it does threats. Technology allows companies to have a relationship with people without even talking to them face-to-face – meaning an opportunity to engage with more people on a broader scale, and with it grow the market.

Women aged 25–54 are driving the demand for health and fitness apps

"This disruptive technology not only creates a new market, but has the potential to reach a new audience of like-minded people who love notifications and are in to the Quantified Self," says David Minton, director of The Leisure Database Company. He points out that the most important thing about this technology is that it makes fitness fun – and this is good news for the industry.

The new myclouddtag app certainly picks up on this potential for fun, with an approach that brings gaming into fitness – particularly appealing to the younger generation. Users have to complete challenges to move to the next level and unlock rewards.

"I think the industry can turn these lemons into lemonade," agrees Wright. "It's a massive opportunity for the industry to interpret data to help people achieve results."

Perhaps the biggest opportunity for health clubs to use this technology and make an impact is by harnessing its power to motivate and change behaviour. For the first time, this technology gives health clubs a 24/7 insight into members' lives, which facilitates a more holistic approach to their health.

"We're presented with a really exciting opportunity to add enormous value, build loyalty, appeal to different clientele and help people achieve their goals and get value for money – all of which can bring more punters through your doors and retain them for longer," says Paul Landau, CEO of Fitbug.

There's also the potential for the industry to gather evidence-based results about the impact of exercise. "This could be a massive opportunity for the industry to gather data to prove the health benefits of exercise and show people's progression over time," says Ben Beevers, associate director of Everyone Active. "It could bring to light some very powerful information that could be used as an argument to prove the benefits the industry could bring to the NHS."

The action

So what's the first step for clubs to take? Colin Neale, FitLinxx's director of business development health and fitness, says clubs should take professional advice and come up with a technology strategy. "Make technology part of the programme delivery," he explains. "Don't just sell devices – it needs to be baked into the offering."

Rather than simply thinking about what kit to invest in, operators now need to be considering how they can



► use technology to help people meet their goals. As an easy starting point, provide free wifi on the gym floor and recommend apps to members.

Landau suggests setting up social groups to generate a sense of community, and using the data from devices to create in-club leagues and challenges.

Andy Jackson, CEO of myclouddtag, suggests health clubs should invest in the health monitoring kit that consumers can't afford. This might include blood pressure monitors and intelligent scales, which automatically take data from people's phones. "There's no reason why health clubs shouldn't become health hubs where people come in to do their Quantified Self measurements. This could be a freely available DIY service, but with additional support available at a cost," he explains.

Gyms could also have more sensors around the club – for example, treadmills could use sensors to pick up data from a phone or device and give users a tailored programme for their workout.

Indeed, going forward much of the responsibility for change lies with equipment suppliers, which need to create open platforms that will easily sync with all the devices and apps to create a seamless experience.

"At present, most of the technologies are walled gardens that get in the way of inter-operability around the member," says O'Rourke. "We need tracking devices, apps and equipment from a variety of manufacturers to interact seamlessly. The industry is moving towards a recognition of this need."

Equipment could become 'smarter', prescribing workouts based on user data

Leon Rudge, UK technology solutions manager for Life Fitness, agrees the industry needs to embrace open computing models: "Equipment needs to interact with an ever-increasing array of tracking apps and devices entering the market. We also need to be much better equipped to extract information that trackers are logging."

Technogym has also confirmed it's working with partners and customers within the industry to harness digital developments and create new potential business models and revenue streams.

The future

Chris Moisan, CEO of AiT – which developed the SpeedoFit app – says the technology on offer isn't yet at the level where it will make a real impact by changing people's experiences. "At the moment, many devices are just glorified pedometers," he observes. "They just track what you do rather than changing behaviour. They're still quite expensive too. To drive mass adoption and really make an impact, devices must become both cheaper and more sophisticated, offering personalised insights and nudges."

"There also needs to be more of a focus on tracking actual health and fitness rather than just activity."

Jackson believes a big shift in the near future will be a "move from inaccurate to accurate" in the data being produced by trackers, whereby the margins of error are reduced to an insignificant level.

Dyson believes the next big trend will be about context. So far, he says, it has been all about collecting content – the next step is to put that content into context. For example, technology will spot trends, such as 'if the user sleeps for eight hours, they're more likely to work out the next day'.

Meanwhile Wright predicts the future will be remote membership, with instructors using technology to analyse people's data and give them feedback and encouragement, regardless of where they are.

Digital strategist and consultant Stephen Davies also believes operators' approach to data will be absolutely key: "There's a huge amount of data being generated by tracking devices and apps, and the question now is what to do with it all. The people working in the fitness sector will need to become more like data scientists."

Chris Brown, MD of FitLinux, adds: "Trackers will increasingly monitor multiple metrics, and people will wear them 24/7. Clubs will need to manage which metrics they highlight with which client, to ensure the focus is relevant and engaging to each individual."

The key questions

Moisan believes there are two key questions going forward: What will be driven through smartphones and what through standalone tracking devices? And will devices become more stylish or more invisible?

Parisa Louie, CEO of Watchfit, thinks devices will get more stylish: "At the ►

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ACTIVITY TRACKING

The Biostamp is a stick-on patch that contains a series of sensors



► moment they are all quite sporty, but I think we will see funkier products to attract a younger, more fashion-conscious audience. Tracking systems integrated into clothing would also seem like a natural and practical development."

On the invisible side, Davies points to MCI0's Biostamp – a stick-on patch that contains a series of sensors that collect data such as body temperature, heart rate, brain activity and exposure to UV radiation. Using near field communication, it can upload its information to a nearby smartphone for analysis. Each stamp lasts for several days and stays on the whole time – meaning no gaps in data.

A huge opportunity

The technology certainly provides a challenge for operators to keep up and define their role. However, since the main aim of the industry is to improve the health of the nation and get people moving, this technology has to be seen as a good thing as it supports that goal. Embracing its potential could help unlock a huge new market, particularly young people; gain the industry credibility in the eyes of the healthcare sector; and change the profile of clubs. The next few months promise to be exciting. ●



TECHNOLOGY TRANSLATED TO THE CLUB

Everyone Active

When Everyone Active launched an online programme that allowed members to set targets and plan their exercise, as well as earn points for completing goals, it found members came an average of seven times more a month.

However, while swiping a card in the club automatically uploads the member's activity to the website, so far individuals haven't

been able to measure exercise undertaken outside the club. Plans are now afoot to link with activity trackers to capture that information and make sure it's automatically sent to the website.

Associate director Ben Beevers believes this will support members to become fitter and more active, rather than driving them away into other non-gym forms of exercise.

Nuffield Health

Nuffield launched its Healthscore app last year to try and change members' behaviour, by allowing them to take more control over their health. They can monitor their exercise regime, diet, sleep and even stress levels via a phone or laptop.

The app offering has recently been extended to include remote monitoring and coaching.

NEW GADGETS

Google released its first smartwatches in June. These sync with Google Fit to help people keep track of their goals, and also allow developers to dig into rival apps and combine data.

Samsung released its Gear 2 and Gear 2 Neo smartwatches in February, using Tizen software and offering an accelerometer and gyroscope, capable of acting as a pedometer and heart rate monitor.

Coming soon, Apple's Healthkit is the result of collaborations that include Nike and the Mayo Clinic. iOS 8 will collate data from health and fitness apps and systems, and integrate medical/wellness data.



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PEAK PERFORMANCE



British Cycling's Shane Sutton (second from left) has joined the team at Athlete Lab, bringing elite expertise to the programming

With its first UK site open just three months, the team behind indoor cycling studio Athlete Lab is already eyeing up more London sites. Approaching 50 per cent capacity in the first quarter since opening, the club's performance paints a positive outlook for quick growth for the brand, especially as it opened in what the owners expect to be their quietest time of the year.

Moving quickly is something the founders Michael Flynn, a former Glencore oil trader, and Neil Franks – head of South East Asia and Australia at Cordea Savills private equity group – know well, both in business and in the saddle. They met during cycle training sessions in Singapore, where they were both working at the time. Looking for better places to train, but failing to find quite what they were after, they decided instead to open their own studio where cyclists could bring in their own bikes to train indoors in a convenient location.

Within two weeks of the first Athlete Lab opening, the pair already had two sites: the inaugural site in Singapore and a club in Sydney, Australia. Two years later, Athlete Lab has arrived in London with a £1m studio targeting the cycling fanatics of the city's financial heartland.

David Thompson pays a visit to the new Athlete Lab cycle hub, to see how its focus on cycling enthusiasts rather than fitness fanatics is giving it a different spin

"London was the obvious next step for us," says Flynn. "Cycling is massively popular here, and it's very difficult to train year-round due to the infamous English weather. Wherever there are dedicated cyclists and triathletes who have busy jobs, there will always be a demand for convenient indoor training."

LONDON MODEL

Unlike the Athlete Labs in Singapore and Sydney, the London club only has fixed bikes, custom-made for an authentic experience – the other clubs have the option of bringing your own.

There are 20 bikes in the main studio and 10 more in the basement studio, along with a stretch and conditioning area. The bikes, called Adjustabikes, are made exclusively for Athlete Lab by Powerwatts, a Canadian company that developed the training hardware for Olympic athletes. They feature clip-in pedals (with shoes available from reception), gears and rear wheel of a real road bike, mounted on a modified frame which sits in a turbo trainer.

Data from the turbo trainer and sensors fitted to the pedals generate an impressive array of performance information. This data is displayed on a huge screen at the front of the studio, and this is the driving force behind the workouts. By matching power output and cadence (pedal speed) to the targets on-screen, you're guided through the ride. The system also links up with heart rate monitors and results can be sent to tracking programmes such as Strava. You also get a ride report sent by email.

There are ride programmes for endurance, sprint intervals, HIIT, five-minute intervals and Ironman triathlon training, all of which make up the club's regular schedule of 16–18 classes a day.

The rides at Athlete Lab have been developed by the in-house team of



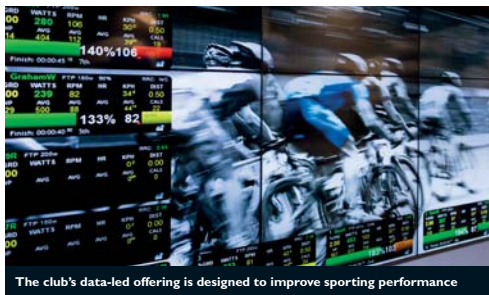
Athlete Lab London offers real bikes, so members can train as they would on the road

cycling coaches, and the recent addition of British Cycling's Shane Sutton will add even more elite expertise to the programming. "We're very proud to have Shane on board," says Flynn. "His knowledge and experience in training top level cyclists is invaluable to us, and it's fantastic to have him not only help with improving our rides with his own methodology, but to join the team as a shareholder of the London club."

PERSONALISED EXPERIENCE

"Our specially designed rides are central to our appeal to dedicated cyclists, covering all the bases across different disciplines," says Flynn. "Data is hugely popular, so we give all the data we can and it's extremely accurate."

Each ride is tailored to individual riders' ability by using a functional threshold power test (FTP) to produce a score on which to base the target power output. The FTP test is performed by every new member and involves riding as fast as you can on a 2 per cent gradient for 20 minutes, to calculate your maximum power output. For customers dropping in to a class for the first time, the coaches running the class will estimate the FTP based on general fitness level and experience.



The club's data-led offering is designed to improve sporting performance

Flynn says: "It's a simple system, but it works very well for getting the most effective training for each individual, regardless of ability, while enjoying the same class together. Our coaches are the key here – the FTP can be adjusted manually throughout the ride to make sure each rider is getting the most out of the workout."

SPORTS PERFORMANCE FOCUS

Athlete Lab London currently has around 100 members, with capacity set

at around 250–300. Unlimited access membership costs £129 a month, while ride packs of 12 (£288) and eight (£216) are also available, to be used over a three-month period. Alternatively, drop-in classes can be attended for £30.

"Our customers and members are about 50 per cent cyclists and 50 per cent triathletes at the London club so far," says Flynn. "We're not targeting fitness customers, but rather sports performance. Many cyclists look for fitness alternatives during the off-



Members at the London club are 50 per cent cyclists, 50 per cent triathletes, who want to complement their outdoor training

► season, and for a convenient substitute during the working week. Group cycling on flywheel bikes is great for cardio, but it doesn't replicate the true pedal stroke of a real bike.

"We offer all the convenience of a group cycling studio, but with much more beneficial training for cyclists – ours are real bikes, so you train just as you would on the road.

Add to that our personalised cycle coaches, on-hand to fine tune your

performance, and I think Athlete Lab is way ahead of the pack."

He continues: "It's been a bit of a challenge coming into the London market though, as nearly everyone has a gym membership already. That's very different from Singapore and Sydney."

Nevertheless, the team behind Athlete Lab is already starting to think about its next club, with an eye out for sites in some of London's most prestigious areas, such as the West End and Kensington.

"We're looking forward to building the social aspect in London's cycling community," says Flynn. "We have real rides where you can follow all the challenges of famous cycling routes, and race nights where members can race everyone else in the room, or against riders from Singapore and Sydney. As soon as we have more London clubs, we can host more challenges to make it an even more enjoyable and effective training experience." ●

FIRST PERSON EXPERIENCE – DAVID THOMPSON REPORTS...



Arrive at Athlete Lab and you could be

forgiven for thinking you'd stumbled into a Tour de France team's training centre. Everything is shiny and new: clean white lines and hi-spec finish in everything from the reception desk to the bar stools crafted from professional (read painful) looking bike saddles. After a warm but somewhat perfunctory greeting from the coaching team, I'm fitted out with some cycling cleats and taken through the large glass doors to the main studio.

With 30 bikes set out in three rows facing the huge screen, which takes up most of the front wall, the room still manages to feel spacious.

A full class with 30 riders must be a sight to behold, with all those gears whirring and legs spinning in unison, but in my class there were just four of us. The coach meticulously set up my bike position, making adjustments which I'm told they save and set up for members ahead of time when they've booked in for a ride – a nice touch.

Then we get down to the serious business of cycling. The characterless but energetic dance music plays, and my legs spin the pedals around, but similarities with other indoor cycling classes end there. This is not the place for supercharged fitness instructors: it's the place to get your training in because it's hard to get out for a decent ride when you're stuck in the office all week.

The two riders next to me are prime examples of Athlete Lab's target

market – City boys with money to spend and a keen (perhaps bordering on obsessive) interest in cycling. They talk the talk, and as I can see from the data on the screen as we match our leg speed and power output to our targets, they walk the walk.

The bikes are absolutely authentic and a single-minded determination to keep turning the pedals is required to get you through – just like being out on the road. There are only three things I could have asked for: swapping out their saddle for my own, the wind in my hair and the sun on my back.

If you're married to your bike and addicted to data, then Athlete Lab must be the perfect place to train. If you're after a good workout that happens to be on a bike, you might be better off at the nearest Spin studio.

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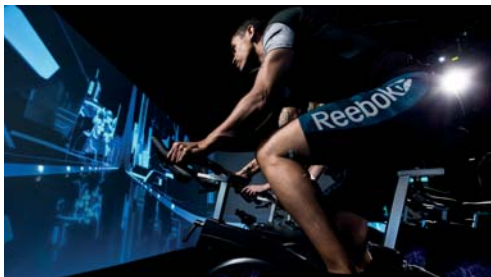
BLUETOOTH LINKS

Keiser UK will launch the brand new M3i group exercise cycle next month. Using Bluetooth technology, the M3i computer can be partnered wirelessly with either a phone or tablet.

To take advantage of this technology, Keiser has also developed a new group exercise projection system, the iKeiser. Unlike other systems that connect to a rider-worn monitor, the iKeiser is linked by Bluetooth to the bike and reflects the performance of the rider on a large TV screen, or even multiple screens.

Heart rate monitoring and resistance level awareness are still available via the onboard computer, with Keiser's non-wear magnetic resistance system and anti-slip belt also maintained in the new model.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **Keiser**



FULLY IMMERSIVE

Les Mills International has launched its 'immersive fitness' product in an initiative it's calling The Project, working in partnership with Reebok.

The concept comprises a walled room onto which video content is streamed throughout a class. Cycling class The Trip is one of the first to launch, featuring a range of landscapes that make the user feel as though they're cycling through a computer game.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **Les Mills**

PINPOINT ACCURACY

In exclusive partnership with the Indoor Cycling Group (ICG), Matrix Fitness announces the launch of the power-based Matrix IC7 Indoor Cycle and Coach By Color Power Programme.

The IC7 offers a two-stage drivetrain that enables a highly accurate (+/-1 per cent) direct wattage (power) meter, 100-step precision magnetic resistance, and 1:1 ratio high-speed flywheel. Performance metrics are delivered to the rider via the patent-pending Coach by Color Training Console – a console that displays the user's effort and power in various coloured zones.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **Matrix**



ON YOUR MARKS...

The new VismoX training concept and software from Body Bike allows clubs not only to track the performance of each individual in a cycling class, but

also to create new cycling challenges through the VismoX route maker.

Members can then compete in real-life races, powered by Google Maps, and even see video footage of the route on-screen. The system takes into account factors such as elevation and weight to calculate users' speed. There's also a consumer app to book sessions and track activity, including GPS-based data from outdoor activities.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

Body Bike

IT'S A DREAM

Pulse has unveiled its Trixter XdreamV2 bike, which offers a 23" touchscreen and high definition graphics.

The bike operates in three distinct modes. In addition to the virtual reality mountain biking mode, the new model also offers real video rides, where cyclists will find themselves riding through the cities of London, New York and San Francisco, as well as on tour in France, Italy, Spain and the UK. There's also a classic mode so the bike can act as a standard exercise bike.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

Pulse



TAKE PART IN THE TOUR

Fitness enthusiasts can experience the thrills and challenges of the Tour de France for themselves with the new Freemotion Tour de France Indoor Cycle.

The new cycle combines the existing S series of indoor cycles with a brand new touchscreen display, which features iFit – whereby riders can upload and track personal workout data – and Google Maps, offering an endless supply of real-time, interactive rides. The bike is equipped with a motorised terrain-replicating feature controlled by built-in video workouts, meaning it seamlessly declines and inclines from -10 to +20 per cent as the ride topography changes.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

Fitness Systems



AIR POWER

Star Trac has introduced a new air-driven bike – the Turbo Trainer – that delivers simultaneous upper and lower body exercise through an isokinetic resistance mechanism.

The Turbo Trainer's flywheel design displaces air at a rate that matches the effort put in by its user, meaning that the harder the flywheel is turned, the greater the isokinetic resistance.

Meanwhile a new Spin bike – the Spinner NXT Black Belt – brings the smooth, quiet ride of a belt to the Spinner bike family.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD Star Trac

THE SOUND OF MUSIC

Schwinn's new Class Tamer music player app assists cycling class instructors in leading effective sessions for group workouts. The app features scrollable notes pages to allow instructors to input and save cueing notes, music tags and BPM counts for specific songs. Other features include the ability to modify the tempo of songs during a ride, 10 sound effects to help add excitement to classes, and a stopwatch that operates independently of the song timer, allowing for interval training.

Schwinn has also made its Carbon Blue belt available on all its AC bikes.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

Schwinn

ACTIVE DESIGN

Jacqueline Bennett looks at whether, by adopting a new approach to design and city planning, we can make our cities – and their populations – well again

Even Mick Cornett, the enterprising mayor of Oklahoma in the US, couldn't have envisaged the huge impact his 'We're going to lose a million pounds' campaign would have on the city when he launched the initiative in 2008 (www.thiscityisgoingonadiet.com).

After 18 months – with support from local restaurants providing healthier options, and sports facilities offering special discounts – the city's residents had collectively lost half a million pounds in weight. But it was only after citizens agreed a seven-year, one cent increase in sales tax to fund new bike lanes, sidewalks, hiking trails, ice rinks, green spaces and wellness centres that the city finally reached its target in 2011.

Oklahoma reputedly now has the highest employment rate among adults of any city in the US, and firms are keen to invest and relocate there because the workforce is so much fitter than in other cities. Not only has the city become healthier, but it has become wealthier too.

Evidence and policy

Much is now being written about active design – designing, constructing and managing our environment in such a way as to encourage people to be active (see

HCM March 14, p5). It's an exciting idea and one that has had a long genesis in town planning in the UK.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) demonstrates how the planning system can play an important role in promoting healthy communities, leading to reductions in health inequalities, better access to healthy food, reduced obesity, more physical activity, better mental health and wellbeing, and improved air quality.

Meanwhile recent major reforms to planning and to health and social care – notably the National Planning Policy Framework 2012, the Health and Social Care Act 2012 (which created local Health and Wellbeing Boards) and the Localism Act 2011, which ushered in neighbourhood planning – now present many opportunities for joined-up thinking to improve people's health.

These opportunities have been highlighted by, among others, the Town and Country Planning Association through its recent project *Reuniting Health with Planning: Healthier Homes, Healthier Communities*. This report offers an overview of how local authorities can improve health and reduce health inequalities by bringing together related disciplines such



City planners are now looking at active design as one way to improve health

as housing, transport planning and regeneration. It includes a section designed to help local authorities and their partners identify links between public health objectives and how places can be shaped to respond to them.

Alongside growing statutory endorsement of the benefits of better town and city planning for improving health, fitness and quality of life, a raft of other documents and initiatives have emerged. In 2003, CABE Space – a specialist unit of CABE – was set up to champion the importance of urban public space, particularly parks and green spaces, in improving quality of life.

Meanwhile, in what has turned out to be a prescient document, Sport England published *Active Design: Promoting opportunities for sport and physical activity through good design* in the mid-2000s, integrating agendas around design, health and transport and setting out many examples encapsulating the three design objectives of improving accessibility, enhancing amenity and increasing awareness.

And in its City Health Check – published in 2012 and analysing health problems correlated to the amount of green and public space available in London and England's eight 'core cities' – the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) found that the areas of the UK's cities with the poorest health outcomes are those that have the least green space. Moreover it's the quality of streets and parks, as much as the quantity, that encourages people to walk more.

Then there's the Design Council in the UK, which is currently championing its own Active by Design campaign –

Areas of the UK's cities with the poorest health outcomes are those that have the least green space



Fitness trails and green gyms that can be accessed on foot or by bike could be healthy assets for any town

including a conference in London next month – to address the serious health issues facing us, brought on by a lack of physical exercise and poor diet. It aims to be a catalyst for change, finding new links and connecting aspects of the planning system, health service and the built environment sector, both public and private, where few currently exist.

So as the above testifies, there's now a plethora of advice, guidance and campaigns around improving our environment to benefit our health and wellness.

Theory into practice

So how is all this manifesting itself in practice? Initiatives so far range from the quirky – such as designing stairs to look like piano keys – to more

grandiose schemes such as the High Line in New York, US, where the old elevated railway track in lower Manhattan has been resurfaced and turned into a green walkway.

Meanwhile the Movement for Liveable London campaign is aiming for a more pleasant and healthy city by changing the way people move around it. This sits in line with Sport England's Active Design report, which talks about linking popular "everyday activity destinations" – so that's shops, schools, doctors' surgeries and main workplaces – via cyclepaths and good, pedestrian-friendly walkways.

Another nice example is Living Streets' Fitter for Walking programme, funded through the Big Lottery's Wellbeing Programme, which has provided support and information to residents and

promoted small-scale enhancements to streets in selected city areas across the UK. Increases in walking were recorded within almost all the targeted areas.

Connecting the existing network

Now, when we build anything new, we need to be aware of the enormous possibilities out there, and how even small changes to design can have a huge knock-on effect in terms of getting people active. But equally, we must not lose sight of the facilities we already have and how we can integrate them into the brave new world of active design, ensuring they are both viable and sustainable.

For example, the facilities laid out in our traditional recreation grounds during the mid-20th century – typically ▶

► a couple of football pitches, a cricket square, some tennis courts and a bowling green – represented a ‘keep fit’ package then aspired to, which suited people’s way of life. It would be taken for granted that you would cycle or walk there, although rarely along special cycleways or footpaths. However, their pattern and level of use is changing: for example, there’s a trend away from grass surfaces for adult 11-a-side football towards small-sided soccer on artificial grass pitches. There’s also a drop-off in demand for outdoor public tennis courts and bowling greens, leaving some of them sadly under-used.

Parallel to this, there has been an explosion in the number of running and cycling groups, clubs and events now taking place throughout the UK, catering for all levels of ability and demand.

Recreation grounds have adapted to some extent: adding children’s play areas, changing tennis courts to multi-use games surfaces, installing floodlights to extend hours of use and constructing ‘trim trails’.

But although there’s still a range of funding sources for developing and improving sports facilities, particularly for the voluntary sector, local authorities have seen their budgets for provision, enhancement and maintenance severely reduced, and also have fewer personnel to promote, supervise and manage them. Meanwhile, well over half of all sports facilities are located on school, college and university sites; we still need to encourage and support their use by the wider community, not only to make the best use of resources but also to show young people that to be physically active is important for their whole life.

We need to link all these existing facilities in to the Active Design movement, and try to bridge the divides that exist between fitness and sport, between indoor and outdoor facilities and between public, educational and commercial sites. It’s wonderful to



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/BEWORLDTRAVEL

Activity facilities in towns and cities should be linked via cyclepaths and walkways

have new cycleways and footpaths, but wherever possible let’s try and link them to other existing ‘activity destinations’ – sports centres, outdoor and indoor pools, floodlit astro turf pitches, grass pitches, tennis courts, allotments, beaches, rivers and school sports facilities.

We can use open space in parks more effectively too, by providing sheltered seating and meeting points, water fountains and outdoor showers, measured walking tracks, wildflower meadows and healthy food outlets. Many such projects are being funded through the Fields in Trust (formerly the NPFA) and its Queen Elizabeth II Fields initiative, which set out to permanently protect outdoor recreational spaces.

On a positive note, some sports centres are already using health sector funding to provide bicycles and are setting up local cycling networks; others are increasingly used as bases for running and cycling events. But as further food for thought, how about converting disused tennis courts to small allotment areas? Co-locating facilities in this way can bring many benefits in terms of increased use, more revenue, improved sustainability and better supervision.

Maximising use

In its *City Health Check* document, RIBA recommended the production of Healthy Infrastructure Action Plans in

local authorities that comprise less than 50 per cent green space and/or have a housing density of over 5 per cent, with the idea that these might be partly funded through the Community Infrastructure Levy.

A spin-off from this could be the creation of fitness trails that set out measured routes by foot or bicycle linking ‘activity destinations’, with opportunities to stop off along the way. It would be great to encourage people using these to become volunteers and responsibly monitor use of facilities, so that as well as benefiting their own health, they are helping others.

Indeed, some local authorities are already training up volunteers to check for litter and damage to play areas and paddling pools, so they can notify the local authority if there’s an urgent problem to attend to, thus making more efficient use of maintenance staff’s time.

As well as taking responsibility for our own health, we need to take responsibility for our active environment, as in this current era of reduced public sector expenditure we risk losing any sports and fitness facilities we don’t use. There are already many wonderful opportunities out there – let’s encourage their use as effectively as we can. ●

Jacqueline Bennett is a town planner based in the West Country, UK. She and her husband Kevin run a consultancy – belap – which specialises in planning for sport,



recreation and health, preparing strategies and studies for local authorities and other public, voluntary and private sector clients throughout the south of England. She is particularly interested in changing patterns of use and provision related to outdoor sports and recreation facilities.

Web www.belap.co.uk
Tel +44 (0)7870 698639

If you’d like to know more...

Some of the documents referenced in this feature can be found online:

- *Reuniting Health with Planning: Healthier Homes, Healthier Communities* – www.health-club.co.uk/TCPA
- *Active Design: Promoting opportunities for sport and physical activity through good design* – www.health-club.co.uk/sportengland_activedesign
- *City Health Check* – www.health-club.co.uk/cityhealthcheck

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?

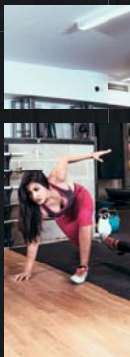
- ☐ £270 from personal training
- ☐ £0 from traditional group ex classes
- ☒ £900 from small group training

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

For the full range of T3 programmes and upcoming REPs-accredited training dates, visit www.fitness-fx.com or call 0870 257 8573 for more information.

SHOW THEM YOU CARE

Chris Lane reports on the link between good management and customer care



Work out with a member at no charge during off-peak times

For the purposes of this article, let's define customer service as meeting customers' expectations, and customer care as exceeding them. Customer service, no matter how good it is, does not make you money – largely because people expect it. Customer care, on the other hand, does make money.

You'd think that at the heart of customer care you'd find, well, the customer – and you'd be right. But it's probably not the customer you're thinking of. Counter-intuitive though it may seem, the external customer actually comes second in this process. It's only by caring about your internal customers – ie your staff – that you will develop a culture that delivers customer care to your paying customers.

Howard Shultz, CEO of Starbucks, summed it up when he said: "You cannot expect your team to exceed the expectations of your customer if you do not exceed their expectations of how they should be managed."

Humans have two fundamental needs. Firstly, they need to feel part of something bigger than themselves, something that adds to the meaning of their lives. Secondly, they need to be recognised and appreciated for their own contribution. An organisation that fulfils these needs in its people will invariably exceed the expectations of its customers.

Anita Roddick, late founder of Body Shop, said: "I wanted to work for a company that contributes to and is part of the community. I want something not just to invest in, but to believe in and give me a reason for getting out of bed."

So the message to managers is clear. Before you can even begin to look after your customers, you must look after your staff: understanding their need to be individuals and giving them opportunity to be so; asking their opinion and acting on it; and recognising and rewarding the behaviours you want to cultivate.

Top down...

In my experience, the way people are mostly managed in the health and fitness industry does not lead to, or support, a customer-focused culture.

The million-dollar question is: What style of management ignites the service flame in people? Because whatever it is, it has to start at the top: every company that delivers great customer care must have a commitment to excellence from the CEO downwards. What chance does a caring culture have to grow if the CEO walks



PHOTO SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Little details like filling a member's water bottle can make all the difference and turn them into vocal fans of your club

past people and ignores them, if he doesn't greet his management team by name, if he doesn't know what challenges they're facing in both their business and private lives; who treats his employees simply as a resource rather than the key to the success of the business?

Here are some steps to consider. Firstly, have a strong, clear vision of how your organisation should be run, and how it can contribute to the lives of both your internal and external customers. Have a clearly visible mission statement that makes it obvious to customers and staff what you're about. Have strong values and operating principles that bring the mission statement to life and are adhered to every day, by everyone from the CEO to the cleaner.

When I held my weekly management meetings, which would often last the entire morning, I would ask every head of department beforehand what they would like to see on the agenda, and I expected every one of them to make a relevant contribution on every topic. When they ran their own departmental meetings, I would have them stick to the same principle of team involvement.

Whenever a new GM came in, they always thought they could cut back on the length of the management meeting, only to find that after three or four weeks the team became twitchy and grumpy. They felt they were no longer being involved and kept in the loop. Invariably the meetings were, by public demand, reinstated back to their normal format. ►

In my experience, the way people are mostly managed in the health and fitness industry does not lead to, or support, a customer-focused culture

► ... or bottom-up?

In his book *The Practice of Management*, Peter Drucker says: "What we call management often consists of making it difficult for people to get their work done, with little consideration towards helping them be good at it."

So having said that it all starts at the top, arguably the real work in developing a caring culture starts from the bottom up. That's the style of management we advocate. It's a management mindset which recognises that people work with you, not just for you; that they're the greatest asset of the company. It's a style that believes in challenging and empowering people.

A bottom-up manager selects (not hires) the right people – those who love to serve others – and de-selects the wrong ones quickly. She sells the company's dream and walks the talk herself. She creates opportunities, sets challenges and gives the opportunity for everyone to get involved. She delegates effectively, with appropriate authority, but without abdication of responsibility. She creates structures that facilitate and encourage maximum individual and team performance. She recognises, rewards and reinforces behaviour throughout the company, turning ordinary team members into 'heroes' who, in turn, inspire others to extraordinary performance. She commits to helping her team develop and maximise its capabilities. She shows empathy by listening to others' feelings and perspectives. She's aware of her own strengths and weaknesses. And she always shows integrity, acting in a fair and transparent manner.

Recently, a survey by the Customer Care Institute (CCI) found that what employees are looking for from their employers is, in order of priority:

1. To feel a sense of purpose in what they do
2. To be kept in the loop at all times
3. To be set challenging goals and given responsibility
4. To see genuine transparency and commitment from management
5. To feel genuinely appreciated

In a similar survey run to find out what employers thought employees wanted from them, the top five were:

1. Good wages and bonus system
2. Job security
3. Promotional opportunities
4. Good working conditions
5. Interesting work

This discrepancy does not surprise me. In fact I believe it's the very essence of the matter. It's absolutely true to say that a person's commitment and engagement to a project is directly proportional to the input they're allowed to have. The solution is to give real ownership to your club managers, who then pass on that challenge to their heads of department, who in turn pass it on to

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ALX GONTAR



those on the shop floor. Managers need to have systems in place that constantly ask for input from operational staff and club members alike – input which is listened to and implemented where appropriate.

For example, in the Ritz Carlton Group, each under-performing area or aspect of the hotel was allocated a small group of frontline/operational staff. It was their responsibility to diagnose and solve the challenges that were being faced and report their findings and solutions back to the general manager, who would then either implement their findings or else discuss it further with them. Either way, the team knew their opinion was important and listened to.

This builds team engagement like nothing else. How many clubs have asked club members to be part of a customer focus group in exchange for a small reduction in their subscription? They become your biggest and most vocal supporters, simply because you're listening to them. Success is about implementing a genuine customer-orientated culture that totally engages both staff and customers.

Exceeding expectations

Sam Walton, the founder of Walmart, once said: "The goal as a company is to not just to have customer service that is the best, but to have customer care that is legendary."

Let me give you an example. A friend of mine recently took his Lexus car in for a service. His car was booked in efficiently by a friendly receptionist who urged him to 'have a good day' as she put the phone down. The car



Members expect good customer service – customer care is about exceeding those expectations

Showing you care

How do you say 'we care' on the gym floor? Here are a few options for you to discuss with your team:

- Never pass any member without acknowledging them
- Choose to work out with a member in a quieter, off-peak time at no charge
- Contact one of the 60 per cent that no one recognises each day
- Fill the member's water bottle
- Take fresh or dried fruit or mints around unexpectedly and for no reason
- Go up and ask a member for their opinion of the gym
- Do a free 'Ab Attack' to 10 members every hour – listen for the whistle!
- Track members' participation and, when they don't use the gym for more than 10 days, send them a 'we miss you' card
- Check members' pulse rates at random to show you're interested
- Publicly recognise members' achievements
- Acknowledge members' birthdays and membership anniversaries
- Say 'hello' and 'goodbye' to everyone, regardless of how busy you are

was serviced properly, ready on time and all for the price quoted. That's customer service.

When he got home he realised he'd left his briefcase in the reception area, so he rang the garage to ask whether they had found it, which they had. Without hesitation, the duty manager immediately dispatched a courtesy car, at no cost to my friend, to return his briefcase. That's customer care.

What do you think he was telling his friends about the next day? The efficiency of the car service or the fact that they dispatched a car to do a 20-mile round trip to return his briefcase at no charge? That's priceless.

I'll give you a favourite from our club. A female member came rushing to the front desk to check in one of her children for a kids' class. She had to take her other eight-year-old child to Guildford, about 10 miles away, for a piano lesson – but her car had a puncture and she asked if we could call a taxi to take the child to the piano lesson.

My duty manager, Charles, felt her child was too young to be put in a taxi on her own, so asked a female colleague to deliver the member's daughter to Guildford herself. He then asked our maintenance fellow to change the member's tyre. What was that member talking about the next time she met up with her friends?

When we talked about customer care and exceeding expectations, every team member – full or part-time – knew that, in the event of a customer being dissatisfied with any aspect of our service or product, they could spend up to £25 to recover the situation without consulting anyone. They were expected to take ownership

of any situation on the spot and that was the level of engagement I expected from the entire team.

As a manager, you have to create the mindset among your team to actively look for opportunities to show that, as a company, you genuinely care. The 'showing you care' list (see above) offers just a few simple suggestions.

Exceeding expectations

Your company needs to be like a stick of rock. No matter which way you cut it, and no matter who cuts it – your team or your customers – it must simply say: "We care."

If companies put their energies into what really matters, they create a culture focused on the internal customer, and this will ultimately engender a spirit of genuine care towards the external customer, which in turn will contribute significantly to the bottom line. •

Chris Lane built the award-winning Chris Lane Tennis and Health Club, which he sold in 2002 to Whitbread, then owner of the David Lloyd Leisure clubs.

He has recently launched a consultancy, Chris Lane

Consulting, which aims to help companies offer an outstanding customer experience by developing their awareness of the link between customer care, bottom-up management and the customer experience.

Email: chris@chrislaneconsulting.com

Web: www.chrislaneconsulting.com



The world's first

Let's Move for a Better World Challenge

Between 3 April and 2 May 2014, Technogym organised an innovative social campaign that called on facilities to 'donate' physical activity towards a good cause – that of getting local communities and a local school more active

Over 20,000 people from 176 facilities across 10 countries took part in Technogym's Let's Move for a Better World Challenge, collecting a total of 100 million MOVES – Technogym's unit of measurement for movement – over the one-month period of the challenge.

Gym-goers in participating facilities trained and donated their MOVES while sharing their training online with friends. The most active club in each country – i.e. the one collecting the most MOVES – won the chance to donate a Technogym Easy Line training circuit to a local school of their choice.

Benefits

The Let's Move for a Better World global challenge was unique in that it allowed facilities and members alike to unite for a common social cause. Participants were encouraged to share their progress on social media sites, and all their posts – including pictures and videos – were captured on a social wall on the challenge microsite, www.technogym.com/letsmove, to encourage them to keep going.

For members, it allowed them to work with their gym for a chance to make a difference in their local community. The challenge motivated them to visit the gym more often, and while there they tended to go further and exercise for longer than they normally would in a bid to win it.

Facilities and trainers found this gave them an ideal reason to talk to members and engage with them. The ambition to contribute to a social cause is a universal motivation, and trainers found gym-goers very open to the idea of 'donating'

their physical activity to help the gym win the Challenge. Ultimately it was an excellent tool to help facilities grow customer retention, gym footfall and member loyalty, as well as build a tangible member community.

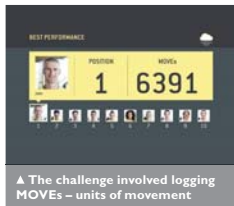
The results

In the UK, 34 facilities took part in the Let's Move for a Better World Challenge, gathering almost 10 million MOVES between them. To win the prize, many facilities organised innovative initiatives such as DJ parties, late opening hours and giveaways, motivating members and attracting new prospects in the process.

The USN Bolton Arena took the top spot with over 2.3 million MOVES, and decided to donate the equipment to Rivington and Blackrod High School in Bolton. Gwyn Hughes, commercial manager at the USN Bolton Arena, says: "The challenge gave our gym team a focus over the past few weeks, and our members got very competitive! It was also a great opportunity to try out the Challenge app, and we're now using it successfully to create our own member challenges."

Lisa Soderman, business development manager at second-placed Dolphin Centre, says: "We came in second in the Challenge and are looking into making the Technogym Key compulsory. The two top movers, Brenda and Francis, were over 70 years old and collected more than 100,000 MOVES!"

"For the next challenge, we will create two teams, one led by Brenda and the other by Francis – 70-year-olds encouraging younger members to be more active and to embrace technology!"



◀ Bolton Arena was the winning site, notching up 2.3 million MOVES



The Let's Move for a Better World Challenge called on facilities to engage members in exercising for a social good

About challenge – Engage, interact and retain

What is mywellness cloud?

mywellness cloud is the foundation of the Technogym Ecosystem of business and end-user applications, which allows you to become truly connected with members inside and outside of your facility through a range of web and mobile applications.

It can be accessed via Technogym equipment, personal computers, tablets and mobile devices, providing a completely integrated and personalised training experience for you and your users.

What is the CHALLENGE app?

The Challenge app allows you to create and manage interactive gym challenges for your users. These can be personalised with your logo and images, and are set up in less than five minutes.

Based on Moves, Calories, Distance or Visits, the challenges you create can be participative or competitive, for

mywellness cloud

OPEN PLATFORM



The mywellness Technogym Ecosystem

individuals or teams, and for all levels of users. Prizes can be offered if desired.

Members are notified via email and can join and monitor the challenges via www.mywellness.com, smartphones, or directly from interactive UNITY or VISIOWEB screens on the CV equipment

and connected pedestals. Real-time challenge rankings can also be displayed via an online leaderboard.

Benefits for your facility

- Creates a fun environment of friendly competition for members and staff.
- Motivates members to spend more time in your facility, to improve rankings.
- Grows member-staff engagement.

Benefits for your trainers

- Encourages regular interaction between trainers and members.
- Grows potential personal training leads.

Benefits for your end-users

- Join challenges on the go and view rankings anywhere, anytime.
- Increases motivation to go to the gym through a fun factor and feeling of achievement.

Joe Philip, fitness development manager at 1610 Trinity Sports & Leisure, which also took part in the challenge, says: "We saw a 29 per cent increase in member visits in April, a month which usually marks a decline from the new year joiners. The results really do speak for themselves. This is a clear demonstration of the success and impact of the Let's Move

for a Better World challenge! I'm looking to see if I can replicate that impact on a local scale." ●

To find out more about the Challenge app, contact us on +44 (0)1344 300236, email uk_info@technogym.com or visit www.technogym.com/challenge

What's **HOT** in SPA?

If you're planning to upgrade your spa area, why not try something a bit more adventurous? We take a look at some of the latest innovations in the area of hot – and cold – spa experiences

PUT IT ON ICE

SUPPLIER: Zimmer Medizinsysteme GmbH

Already used in the medical field, but new to spas and health clubs, icelab is a whole body cryotherapy experience with temperature chambers set at three different levels: -10°C , -60°C and finally 'the big chill' at -110°C .

Just a few minutes in the coldest room – bearable due to the almost 0 per cent humidity – has been shown to offer benefits such as increased sports stamina, faster recovery from injury, stress and pain relief, and even alleviation of clinical depression. It also promotes deeper relaxation and better sleep, as well as offering an instant feel-good sensation due to the release of endorphins.

Just a few minutes in
Zimmer's icelab can bring
multiple health benefits



(above) The snow room promotes detoxification; (below) Wolke 7 Cloud 9 will be limited to 111 locations worldwide

BRAVING THE ELEMENTS

SUPPLIER: KLAFS

Spa My Blend by Clarins, at the exclusive Velaa resort in the Maldives, offers the country's only snow room. The cabin is cooled to around -15 °C, with water and air then sprayed in which freezes and falls to the ground as powder snow. Coupled with the use of a sauna and/or steamroom, this promotes detoxification, boosting the circulation and stimulating the skin. In addition, it's said to help tighten cuticles and pores for shiny, clean, young-looking hair and skin.

Also at Velaa, the Wolke 7 Cloud 9 is a holistic, multi-sensory relaxation experience using colour therapy, mental acoustic therapy and a swinging pod for relaxation. ▶



Salt inhalation is said to cleanse the airways and revitalise the skin

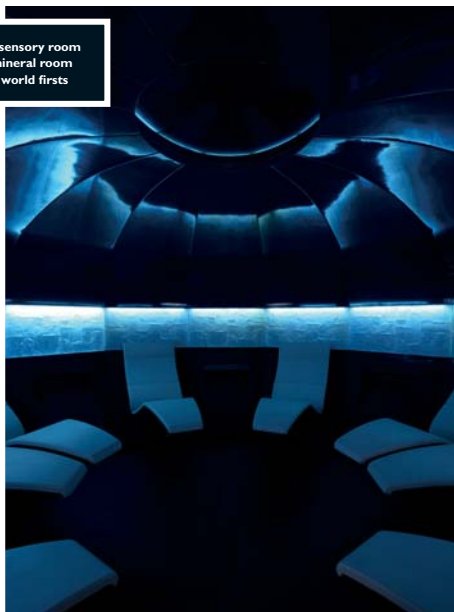
TAKE A DEEP BREATH

SUPPLIER: KLAFS

KLAFS last year bought the rights to a dry salt inhalation treatment, the Micronizer. In this treatment, the salt aerosol particles penetrate deep into the respiratory tract and the skin, cleansing the airways – improving hayfever, asthma, bronchitis, cystic fibrosis and COPD – as well as cleansing and revitalising the skin. Regular inhalation is also said to support the immune system.



Aqua Sana's sensory room (left) and mineral room (right) are world firsts



BACK TO NATURE

SUPPLIER: Schletterer

The Aqua Sana spa at the new Center Parcs Woburn Forest, UK, includes two "world firsts".

The mineral room infuses health-enhancing minerals and trace elements into the steam bath, alternating minerals every eight minutes: magnesium to support the recovery and stabilisation of skin, hair and respiratory organs; iodine and selenium to strengthen the immune system and combat free radicals; and lithium, also known as the good mood salt, to help relieve stress and restore vitality.

The Sensory Experience is a multi-temperature room with different levels of humidity and heat to reflect the four seasons of the year, all on a 20-minute cycle. There are sounds and images from nature, with steam and 'rain' also emitted into the room. It's said to heighten bodily and sensory awareness and foster mental regeneration.



The Combi sauna can be easily switched over from traditional to infrared heat

BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

SUPPLIER: Dalesauna

Infrared saunas use infrared light to heat the body directly for a more targeted, energy-efficient experience.

The technology is credited with offering a variety of physiological benefits beyond relaxation: it's said to be more useful than a conventional sauna for muscle recovery and

relieving aching joints after a workout, making it the ideal heat experience for health clubs. Fitness First is trialling Dalesauna's infrared saunas in some London sites, but Dalesauna Combi Saunas are also available. These offer the warmth of traditional saunas, but with infrared panels that can be instantly switched on.

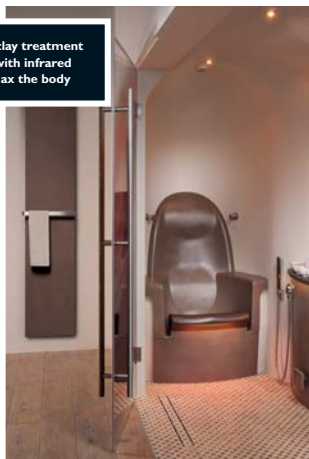


The healing clay treatment combines with infrared seats to relax the body

HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

SUPPLIER: Sommerhuber

Sommerhuber's Healing Clay Spa uses therapeutic mud treatments that – in conjunction with the steam in the room – are said to revitalise and rejuvenate the entire body, nurturing the skin, purifying the body and stimulating the metabolism. This combines with infrared heat radiation in the ceramic seats to offer an experience that relaxes the body and stressed muscles after a workout at the gym. ●



SAFE and SOUND

The NSPCC's Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) has been working with leading sports bodies for over a decade to protect children from harm. Now it's turning its attention to the leisure sector. CPSU director Anne Tiivas and senior consultant Nick Slinn explain



Anne Tiivas



Nick Slinn

What does the CPSU do?

AT: The Unit was set up in 2001 following a number of very high-profile cases of child abuse in sport, initially in swimming, yachting and football. This had a very negative impact on the sports in question, and they came to the NSPCC for help with creating policies and procedures. It quickly became clear that a more joined-up and long-term approach was needed, so the CPSU was formed as a partnership between the NSPCC and Sport England; Sport Northern Ireland and Sport Wales soon came on board too. Sport Scotland has a similar partnership with the charity Children 1st and we share information.

Our primary aim is to work with the UK sports councils, National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) and County Sports Partnerships (CSPs) to help them reduce the risk of children coming to harm while participating in sport. We published our minimum *Standards for Safeguarding and Protecting Children in Sport in England* in 2002, and subsequently published similar standards in Northern Ireland and Wales. Since then, around 200 sports bodies in the UK have met them, including every CSP in England.

Most importantly, we've seen a major shift in mindset within the funded sports sector, from seeing safeguarding as being just about catching dangerous people to being about creating positive,

child-friendly environments where harmful things are less likely to happen in the first place.

In 2010, we also launched the multi-agency Sports Safeguarding Children Initiative in England to enable a more collaborative approach. Participating groups include not only Sport England, NGBs and CSPs, but also UK Sport, which focuses on Olympic sport; the Sport and Recreational Alliance; sports coach UK, the national coaching agency; the Youth Sport Trust; a disability sport representative; and school partners.

There aren't yet any industry-wide standards specific to leisure centre or health club operators that cater for children. Is this something you're looking to address?

AT: It is. However, historically our funding has come from the sports councils and we're very small, so we have a limited capacity in terms of what we can focus on. That said, there's huge potential to help the leisure sector develop industry-wide standards. We're not funded to do that at the moment, but the relationships have been building and there are a lot of stakeholders that want this to be the next step.

The key stakeholders we're pulling together to work with us on this include local leisure heads and leading trade bodies such as CIMSPA, the Amateur Swimming Association and

Quest – the Sport England-backed quality scheme for sport and leisure.

NS: We also welcome involvement from the private sector. Any health clubs or other organisations that provide services to children – either as a core service or as part of a wider service to adults – ought to have safeguarding measures in place, and have a key role to play in any move to develop and promote safeguarding practice across the wider leisure industry.

When you talk about safeguarding children, what does that cover?

AT: In the beginning, the focus was on preventing the appalling cases of sexual and physical abuse we were seeing by adults in positions of trust. Now our remit has broadened to address a whole range of potential forms of harm.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/JAYSI





“ There’s huge potential to help the leisure sector develop industry-wide standards. We’re not funded to do that, but a lot of stakeholders want this to be the next step ”

Issues that are unique to sport include things like hazing or initiation ceremonies, as well as specific forms of bullying. There’s bullying everywhere, but in sport it can take a different form: bullying in teams, for example.

NS: Abuse of social media by both adults and children is another one. Most sports bodies we’ve worked with have come to us with issues around children in their care abusing each other on Facebook or Twitter, or adults that work in sport following children online.

There are also specific issues around body image and eating disorders. Some children may have eating disorders already, which – if coaches are unaware and unwittingly reinforce negative messages around diet or body shape – can be made worse by their participation in sport. In some sports,

▲ Health clubs or centres providing services to children should have safeguarding protocols

there are particular pressures around fitness, weight and diet that can actually cause young people to develop these kind of problems.

AT: That’s particularly true of weight-related sports – for example, martial arts where you need to meet a weight category. We’ve had cases of young people being sweated out in cling-film, and then being expected to perform in a competition while they were suffering from dehydration.

NS: Being given performance-enhancing drugs is another example of the harm that talented young people are particularly vulnerable to. We would view that as physical abuse.

Your standards include codes of conduct for parents as well as staff. Why is that?

AT: Young people can be put under pressure to perform by pushy parents. We would encourage all clubs and facilities to have codes of conduct for parents, to explain to parents at the outset what the expectations of their behaviour are, and to have mechanisms in place to challenge it.

However, these things tend to work better when done in partnership. One of the things we’ve done to promote positive parental behaviour is a video called My Magic Sports Kit, which shows children talking about how adults’ behaviour towards them changes when they put on their sports kit – so things like: “They treat me like I’m much older and expect much more of me.” ▶

Abuse of social media by adults and children is one area of concern

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ANTONIO GULEM



We've set up a working group to look at the issue of unsupervised children in leisure centres, as current guidance on this is very patchy



► **Have you identified issues specific to leisure centres and health clubs since you've started looking at the sector?**

NS: We've already set up a working group to look at the issue of unsupervised children in leisure centres, as current guidance on this is very patchy. If you ask what age is it OK for a child to be in a leisure facility unaccompanied, there's no definitive answer. In the case of swimming, there are rules around how old a child has to be before they can be in the pool unaccompanied – the question is what happens when they leave? Outside of that swimming session, they could be in the changing room or foyer or cafeteria without anyone being responsible for them, and that's worrying.

Nick, you've been working with Quest to create a Safeguarding Children module for the scheme. Can you tell us more about that?

NS: Right Directions, the organisation that manages Quest, contacted us through Sport England because they realised that, although there was some reference to safeguarding children in their existing modules, there was scope to have a specific module dedicated entirely to this issue. Since then, we've worked with them to develop an

optional safeguarding module for sports development teams and leisure facilities undergoing Quest assessments. We suspect that will grow legs as people see the benefit of it.

The modules cover all the basics, from having policies in place right down to clear guidance on what to do if an issue crops up.

Although Quest is only one arm of the work we're doing in relation to leisure facilities, it's been a good starting point for thinking about minimum operating standards for the sector.

Aren't facilities required by law to have these kinds of safeguards in place anyway?

NS: There is health and safety legislation and child protection legislation that spells out the statutory obligations of local authority leisure services, and indeed all those that provide services to children. Government guidance clearly sets out steps these organisations need to take to safeguard and protect the children they're responsible for.

But unfortunately, in practice, safeguarding often happens in reverse. In the event of something happening, a club or facility would be hauled over the coals and all these questions would be asked, but there isn't a safeguarding

policing team that goes around asking: "Have you got X, Y or Z in place?"

AT: One of the things we've tried to emphasise with our standards is that the aim isn't to have the standard – the aim is to put the safeguards in place. What the standards do, and what Quest will do, is benchmark the action you're already taking to illustrate to parents and other users what your stance on safeguarding is and what they can expect from you.

If a leisure centre or health club wants to raise its game in this area, where should it start?

NS: The resources on the CPSU website should be suitable for any sport or leisure provider, although we recognise we need to do more work with leisure operators to ensure the language and context used in these materials is appropriate and meaningful for them.

In addition, CSPs can often provide locally informed signposting, support and information for organisations delivering sport in their area – and this should include leisure providers as well as clubs linked to NGBs.

Local Safeguarding Children Boards can be another source of advice and guidance for leisure operators and other organisations seeking to put safeguards in place. ●

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Theory into practice

Amanda Baker investigates how much of an impact new research findings have on the way mind-body classes are delivered in gyms

“Why not try some gentle exercise, like yoga or tai chi?” Happily, this is a conversation that’s starting to occur more frequently between doctors and patients in GP practices throughout the UK. This is perhaps unsurprising given the wealth of scientific research regularly published in highly regarded journals by eminent scientists – research that demonstrates the numerous benefits of mind-body classes, from reducing high blood pressure to managing diabetes and heart disease.

But is this research being translated by fitness industry training providers for use by instructors in a class format? Is it possible to move from the theoretical to the practical realm, and is it appropriate to do so?

Cathy Spencer-Browning, vice president of programming and training at group exercise specialist MOSSA, clearly believes so: MOSSA has produced member marketing campaigns for clubs that feature research findings from the Mayo Clinic. In addition, she explains: “It’s vitally important that clubs and instructors communicate the benefits of mind-body classes. Often instructors are delivering the exercises and movements, but not coaching the benefits. In our system, in addition to coaching execution, we focus on coaching the ‘why’ so the participant understands the far-reaching benefits of the movements.”

But what exactly is the ‘why’ for the various disciplines, and do these influence the way a class is delivered? We take a look at just a few of the many pieces of research into mind-body techniques, and ask if and how these might be applied in a class setting.



It's important to coach members, not just lead a class

TAI CHI

Research

In a review of 26 published studies examining the effectiveness of tai chi for high blood pressure, 85 per cent showed a reduction in blood pressure. Yeh GY, Wang C, Wayne PM, et al. *The effect of tai chi exercise on blood pressure: a systematic review.* *Prev Cardiol.* 2008; 11:82-89.

Comment

Matthew Rochford
Director,

Tai Chi Nation

“During our instructor training courses, the project our students undertake specifically asks them to look at research, quoting sources. Over the



Tai chi helps lower blood pressure

years I’ve also been party to other forms of research first-hand. For example, one of my students was a nursing student. She measured the participants’ blood pressure before and after the class and demonstrated that practising tai

chi reduced blood pressure. To a large extent this qualified what we already knew from our own experience and anecdotal evidence, from individuals who came to our classes.

“However, it’s also crucial not to get carried away by research and make claims that might give class participants false expectations.

“In 16 years of teaching tai chi, I’ve found that the participant’s experience – rather than their age or any research into specific conditions they might have – has more of an impact on the way I teach them. Tai chi has an ‘internal’ approach – over time, students begin to understand tai chi from the inside out.

“The issue is how you teach a beginner and how they develop at their own pace, and less about research. It’s important participants are informed about what’s being taught, but it isn’t the main thing.”



PHOTO SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/SLAMID

Studies suggest that yoga can help reduce risk factors for diabetes and cardiovascular disease in healthy people

YOGA

Research

A research report into the therapeutic effects of yoga for health and wellbeing, prepared at the School of Health and Related Research (ScHARR) at the University of Sheffield, UK, for the British Wheel of Yoga (2013).

The study showed yoga can help reduce risk factors for diabetes and cardiovascular disease in healthy people, as well as improving indicators among those already diagnosed with risk factors or actually suffering from these lifestyle conditions.

For example, among patients with cardiovascular disease, positive results included improvements in blood pressure, pulse rate, fitness, stress, flexibility and blood serum markers. Positive trends

were also found for girth, quality of life and BMI. The studies of diabetes and cardiovascular disease often reported proxy outcomes relating to risk factors for disease, such as weight loss and lipid profiles. This is useful for studies into these conditions. Results across studies were mixed, but often displayed at least positive trends towards yoga.

Comment

Richard Adamo
Chair of the
training committee,
British Wheel of Yoga



Our teacher training course at the British Wheel of Yoga is very thorough. As part of it, we go into common ailments people suffer from and cover how to adapt classes to suit them, in terms of enabling people to be included in a mixed

ability class. Also, we provide specialist postgraduate modules that focus on specific areas of the population.

"Having said that, everyone is an individual, so one person's experience of being ill is not going to be the same as someone else's. It may be that in the future, as an organisation, we look to develop more postgraduate modules, but there's also nothing to stop an individual with special conditions going to an ordinary class. This is one of the wonderful things about yoga – it's a form of 'controllable' exercise, with a key focus on participants observing their own feelings during the class, so it's ideal for a deconditioned user.

"In my experience, research is important but it's also crucial, as a teacher, to be aware of the individuals in your class and encourage them to flourish, whatever their age or ability." ►



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Students are motivated by how much better they feel after the fascially-inspired segments of a workout, says O'Clair

► PILATES

Research

Schleip, R, Jager, H, Klingler, W (2012), 'What is 'fascia'? A review of different nomenclatures', *Journal of Bodywork & Movement Therapies* 16, p 496-502.

The article includes the terminology from the International Fascia Research Congress (2012), defining fascia as a "soft tissue component of the connective tissue system that permeates the human body" and the "fibrous collagenous tissues that are part of a body-wide tensional force transmission system".



Using rollers or balls can release the fascia before an exercise

Comment

Chris Onslow
MD, Mbodies
Training Academy

"In pilates today, we regularly see instructors who have been taught simple 'self release' techniques using rollers or balls focusing first on fascial release before commencing with the focus of an exercise.

"This technique can prepare the body for exercise, including among special population groups. For example, a fascial focus is prevalent in training by The UK MS Society, which is working with mind-body instructor and MS sufferer Mariska Breland. For the MS sufferer, myofascial pain is very common and linked to spasticity in muscles. For this population, short duration releases are recommended pre-exercise, with long duration releases combined with stretching for post-exercise sessions.

"There is, however, the ever-present dilemma of 'what is the role of the medical therapist and what is the role of the fitness instructor?' There's no question that, to maximise the benefits of fascial release for special populations, a practitioner will need to be medically trained or highly specialised as a non-medical therapist. However, fitness professionals are more than capable of understanding, learning and developing very effective sessions using surface level tissue release."



Comment

PJ O'Clair
Master instructor trainer,
Merrithew Health &
Fitness and owner of
Northeast Pilates, US



"A fascially-inspired group exercise class might include instruction on alignment and posture, breathing exercises using balls and bands to explore the fascial recoil of the respiratory diaphragm, bouncy spring-like elastic jumps in varying directions, and SMR (self myofascial release) techniques with rollers or balls.

"My students love how they feel after fascially-inspired segments. We ask them to reflect on how they feel after doing exercises on one side before moving on to the other, and they're motivated by how much better they feel on the side they have worked.

"The protocols in training the fascial body are quite simple and do not require a lot of time, advanced skill or knowledge by the participant: anyone can do some level of fascial workout without risk of injury, and we should be able to reach new markets, especially the deconditioned and special populations. Physios and doctors, when educated about these new types of programmes, could send patients to fascially-inspired classes with confidence.

"But while there's a lot of talk about training the fascia, education on how to do it properly is currently limited." ●



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SUPPLIER SHOWCASE

We take a look at recent projects by Dalesauna and GYMetrix



High quality local authority spa offerings are a growing trend

A holistic approach to health

Client: Dalesauna

Supplier: Wyre Council

Dalesauna is developing a new spa at Poulton Leisure Centre in Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancashire, UK, as part of an investment of more than £5m to reinvent local leisure provision.

Wyre Council is the latest local authority to complement its fitness facilities by investing in a substantial spa offering, to provide a one-stop shop for health and wellbeing. Designed by Dalesauna, the new spa is the first of its kind in the area. It will feature a range of heat experiences including a spa pool, sauna, steamroom, aromatherapy room, salt room, monsoon showers and an ice feature. There will also be four treatment rooms on offer.

"This is an ambitious project, but we're an ambitious authority and we like to push the boundaries. We want to make sure we offer customers the best spa

experience we can, with a mix of facilities that come together to offer a full spa journey," says Michael Ryan, corporate director of people and places at Wyre Council.

The facility, which is being developed by contractor ISG, will be managed by Fylde Coast YMCA – the current operators of Poulton Leisure Centre.

"By setting high standards, delivering a high level of service and value for money, I'm confident we will be able to serve existing leisure centre users and attract new people to the facility," says Ryan.

Dalesauna has carried out a number of similar projects in the public sector over the last 18 months, creating modern spas at Ramsgate, Wimbledon, Westminster Lodge and The Lagoon Leisure Centres, in addition to the ground-breaking development at Pendle Leisure Centre more than six years ago.

The new spa at Poulton Leisure Centre is yet another example of a local authority taking a more holistic

approach to health. "The health of the local population is very important to us. We already do a lot of work to improve the fitness of children and adults, and the new spa will allow us to offer users the additional health benefits of a wellbeing and relaxation experience," explains Ryan.

Gerard McCarthy, sales director at Dalesauna, adds: "We're delighted to be working with construction services company ISG and Wyre Council on this prestigious project. This development is part of a growing trend among local authority and trust operators, which are broadening their health and fitness services to provide a wider wellness offering that has a much broader appeal across the age ranges."

He concludes: "Stress accounts for a very high proportion of visits to the GP, and mental wellbeing is at least as important as the physical, if not more so."

The project at Poulton Leisure Centre is due to be completed at the end of the year, with the new spa likely to open in early 2015.

Details: www.dalesauna.co.uk



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Mental wellbeing is at least as important as physical fitness, and a growing number of Local Authority operators are recognising this.

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Research showed that SIV members wanted a bigger free weights area, which has seen high usage since being installed

Knowledge is power

Clients: Sheffield International Venues & University of Dundee

Supplier: GYMetrix

In today's economic climate, few operators can afford to waste money on equipment that may look great, but members won't use. Whether it's an upgrade or a complete refurbishment, operators need to make informed decisions to maximise their investment and improve the customer experience. And for that they need reliable data.

Sheffield International Venues (SIV) and the University of Dundee wanted a clearer insight into members' usage patterns and equipment preferences before investing in new facilities, to ensure these met customer demand.

The University of Dundee's 450sq m Institute of Sport and Exercise (ISE) gym is one of the largest in the region, with some 6,200 members comprising students, staff and the general public.

"The results of the GYMetrix study showed the layout of the gym and the balance of equipment did not meet the needs and expectations of

our customers," says Brian Ewing, director of sport at ISE. Members were frustrated by the shortage of treadmills and cross-trainers, while some pieces of kit were barely used at all. As a result, customer satisfaction measured by the Net Promoter Score was just 42.

Guided by the results of the GYMetrix research, ISE increased the number of treadmills from 17 to 23 and its cross-trainers from 15 to 21 to meet member demand. It also removed the equipment found to have very low usage.

The changes resulted in an increase in membership, a 12 per cent rise in gym usage, and an improvement in customer satisfaction – the facility now reports a Net Promoter Score of 53.

SIV had similar success at the English Institute of Sport Sheffield, the country's largest multi-sports training centre, after following the recommendations of GYMetrix, which it had appointed to establish the optimum mix of equipment for its new three-storey gym.

"The new facility represented a significant investment for us and we had to be sure it would meet customer demand. We worked with GYMetrix to find out exactly how we should equip the gym to keep our members happy and capitalise on our investment," says SIV's corporate health and fitness manager Peter Clark.

The results of the research were surprising. "We had planned to offer a large cardio area with a small free weights section, as we believed this would appeal most to our members. But the research showed that members wanted a far bigger free weights area," says Clark.

Acting on the findings, SIV created a dedicated free weights gym – one of the largest in Sheffield. "GYMetrix encouraged us to be bold – we would never have considered investing in such a large free weights gym," says Clark. "But it's really worked for us. Usage figures are through the roof. People are travelling across the city to use our facilities and we haven't had any negative comments. In fact, our Net Promoter Score, which was in the low 20s, is now in the high 40s."

Details: www.gymetrix.co.uk



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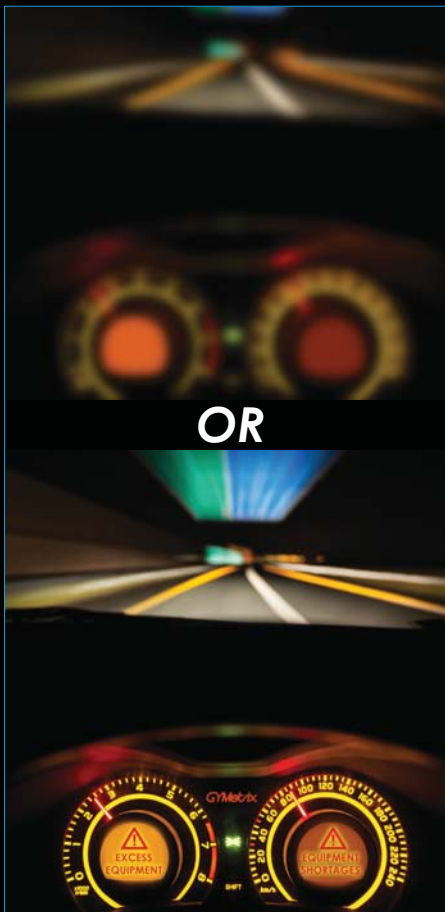
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DRINK IT IN

We round up some of the latest news from the beverages sector

WONDER HERB POWERS HEALTHY COFFEE

The debate about the health pros and cons of coffee is a longstanding one – but Health Choice Coffee believes it has a genuinely healthy option. The secret ingredient in its Organo Gold Coffee drink is the ancient Chinese herb ganoderma. With more than 1,800 published articles about it in medical journals, the company says the herb is – among other benefits – proven to provide more energy, support the immune system, and promote health and longevity.

Sports nutritionist Dr Bob Rakowski, who worked with London 2012 Olympic Games athletes, says Organo Gold Coffee has an alkalising effect on the body which boosts performance, whereas regular coffee is acidic.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **Organo**



A BALANCED APPROACH

A US coconut water rehydration drink, developed by a team of sports medicine and nutrition experts, is launching in the UK.

Coco5 naturally contains a balance of five electrolytes that the body loses during exercise. Steve Barton, former director of wine company Brand Phoenix, has set up Innovation Drinks, under which the Coco5 brand is being traded. An international roll-out is also being implemented, with the drink initially being launched in Australia, the UAE, Sweden, Norway and Ireland.

The drink has no artificial flavours, sweeteners or colours and it contains just 80 calories per 473ml bottle. It's available in six flavours: natural coconut, tropical passion, lemon, cherry crush, citrus splash and pineapple.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **Innovation**

TOTAL FITNESS UPS CAFÉ OFFERING

Total Fitness has selected Soho Coffee Co to replace the in-house café facility at its Wilmslow club. The move represents a shift away from simply offering a convenient catering facility for a captive audience to offering a quality proposition that can be benchmarked against high street experiences.

Soho Coffee Co will offer organic and fairtrade Arabica coffees as well as its in-house range of fresh, ice-blended frappés, including an 'unadulterated' banana smoothie made from only organic milk, bananas and ice. The company has also created a bespoke, made-to-order protein shake menu for Total Fitness members.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **Soho**



HEALTHY OPTION FOR SPORTS DRINKS



A new isotonic sports drink is aiming to position itself as the healthy option in the sports drink market.

According to its makers, iPro Sport differentiates itself from other isotonic drinks by being a more suitable option for the average active person – not being specifically targeted at professional athletes.

The drink uses natural sugar replacement stevia – which has zero calories – and contains vitamins B12, B6 and pantothenic acid as well as 40 per cent of the daily recommended dose of vitamin C.

The drink comes in three flavours – citrus blend, orange and pineapple, and berry mix – and doesn't contain any artificial colours.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **iPro**

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
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RESEARCH ROUND-UP

Getting intense

Scientists in Florida have found that, to get the greatest benefits from exercise, people need to up the intensity

Over the last few years, there's been much focus on the benefits of short bursts of intense exercise – namely high intensity interval training (HIIT). Indeed some workouts such as Tabata claim to deliver results in just four minutes.

This might all sound too good to be true, but an interesting new study from the Florida campus of The Scripps Research Institute (TSRI) in the US shows that intense exercise has an impact on the muscles and the body at a molecular level that doesn't occur in milder forms of physical activity. Although the study was based on changes in mice, the findings add to a growing body of evidence which suggests that, if people want fitness results, they must push themselves beyond their comfort zone.

CRTC2 release

The study, published in molecular biology title *The EMBO Journal*¹, is one of the first to look at the effect of high-intensity exercise at a cellular level.

Scientists have known for some time that the body's sympathetic nervous system – or the 'fight or flight' response – is turned on during exercise, specifically during intense workouts. The general consensus was that there were no other benefits besides a short-term kick-start, but the team at TSRI thought differently and focused on a protein called CRTC2 to prove otherwise.

CRTC2 – which is released during intense exercise – integrates signals from the adrenaline and calcium pathways and has a direct impact on the muscles that are being used. For the study, the scientists bred mice with genes that would produce much more CRTC2 when faced with a two-week strenuous physical activity programme.

The genetically modified animals saw a 15 per cent increase in their muscles.



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Intense exercise stimulates production of the fitness-enhancing protein CRTC2

Metabolic parameters, indicating the amount of fuel available to muscles, also improved substantially – triglycerides went up 48 per cent, while glycogen supplies rose by a startling 102 per cent.

In addition, the endurance in the genetically modified mice soared. It went up by 103 per cent in the exercise stress test, compared to only an 8.5 per cent improvement in the mice who did not have the enhanced CRTC2 protein.

Exercise enhancements

The findings open the door to potential exercise enhancements, says Michael Conkright, a TSRI assistant professor and the study's lead author. "The sympathetic nervous system gets turned on during intense exercise, but many had believed this wasn't specific enough to drive adaptations in exercised muscle.

"Our findings show that not only does it target specific muscles, but it improves them – the long-term benefits correlate with the workout intensity."

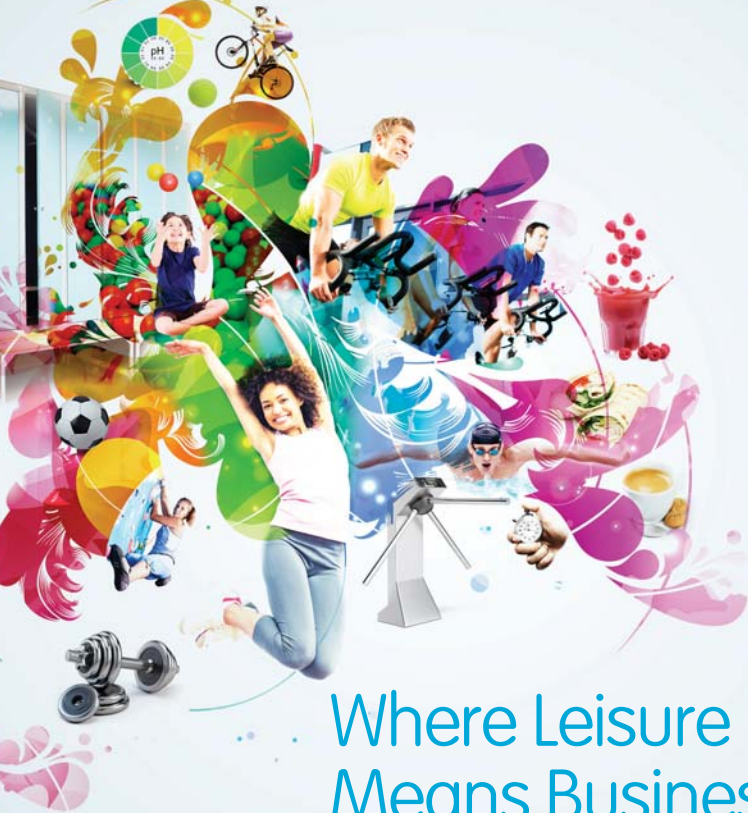
The study highlights the importance of ongoing workout programme assessments in health clubs. Conkright told the *New York Times* that, once someone reaches a fitness plateau, the sympathetic nervous system is not stimulated, adrenaline is held back so the CRTC2 protein is not activated, and changes in the body will not be so great.

What he does say, however, is that "intensity is a completely relative concept" – a brisk walk might be enough of a push for someone who's not fit, but it wouldn't cut it for a regular gym-goer.

Staff scientist Nelson E Bruno, who worked on the study at the Conkright laboratory, adds: "Nothing can supplement exercise. However, just by activating one protein, we clearly improved performance in animal models.

"We're now searching for molecular therapeutics that will activate the CRTC2 protein, so that even an average exercise routine could potentially be enhanced and made more beneficial."

¹Bruno, NE & Conkright MD et al. Creb Coactivators Direct Anabolic Responses and Enhance Performance of Skeletal Muscle. *The EMBO Journal*, 2014



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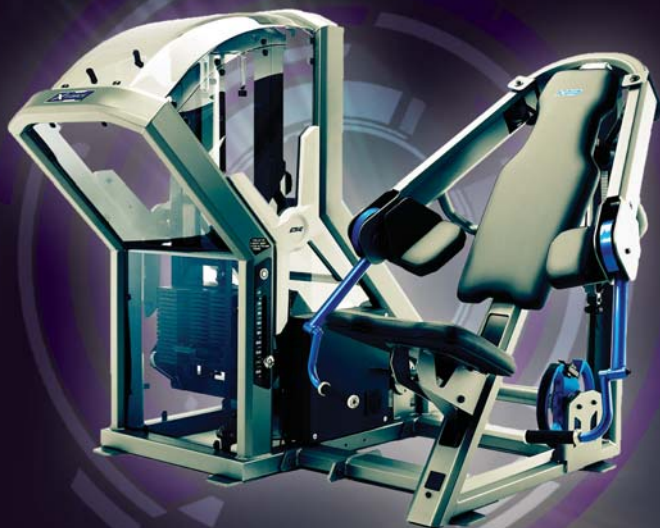


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