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health club management

OCTOBER 2014

No 218

A weighty problem

The battle to combat childhood obesity

The social network

Making social media work for you

ON THE COVER

AMEN ISEGHOHI

on his back-to-basics approach to fitness



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People should be active every day, with opportunities to do so designed into the very fabric of our environments and our daily lives.

That was the clear message of last month's inspirational Active by Design Summit, organised by the UK's Design Council. So how might this look in practice, and what does it mean for health club operators?

The event showcased an array of thought-provoking initiatives and brought together experts from a wide range of potentially collaborative fields. Leading architects and local council members alike spoke of the need for cities and streets to be designed with humans, not efficiency or cars, in mind. Active commuting was another topic, with initiatives such as Act Alarm clock grabbing the imagination – an alarm clock that varies the time it wakes you depending on the weather forecast, and whether you'll therefore be able to walk to work.

Active commuting is an area where we're already seeing positive initiatives. The Atlanta BeltLine is one great US example (see p73), while in the UK London mayor Boris Johnson has set out plans for two new cycle superhighways running from north to south and east to west London.

But it's not just about active commuting: as KaBOOM! CEO Darell Hammond urges on page 64, every city needs to be a playground, with play happening everywhere and for everyone. And indeed a handful of speakers at the Summit focused on this. We heard about Pop-Up Parks with active games designed into them. About a new GPS-based, real-world strategy game – Run an Empire – where you 'own' areas near you by physically running around them, but where other people can take them off you by doing the same, so you have to run again to claim them back. About StreetGym's use of street furniture such as bollards and cycle racks for a novel style of workout, and about slides in London and swings in Montreal – for adults.

And about a bridge in Reykjavik, Iceland, which is usually lit blue, but where each section turns pink as you step on it; run across it fast and you can turn the whole bridge pink.

If we can make our streets more appealing and even fun to use, we stand a chance of getting many more people active: as Transport for London's Lucy Saunders pointed out, even the so-called 'hard to reach' groups all have to use our streets – so that's where you start getting them active.

And this is where gym operators need to see the bigger picture. There may be some opportunities to get involved



Even the so-called 'hard to reach' groups all have to use our streets – so that's where you start getting them active

straight away – get your members to play Run an Empire and keep an updated map in the club, for example, or make your outdoor workouts more play-based.

But essentially operators need to understand they're just one piece in the jigsaw – never have I been clearer on that than after this Summit. If we join the movement to get our cities designed with physical activity in mind, in the long run we may benefit as people reach a level of fitness where they feel ready to try a gym. In the meantime, let's lead by example and not – as in one photo we were shown at the Summit – have escalators to bring members into our clubs.

Kate Cracknell, editor

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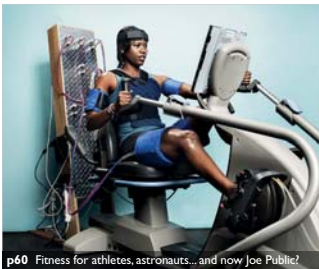
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For suppliers of products and services in the health club and spa markets, turn to **p95**



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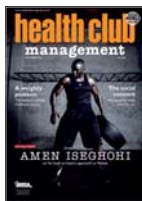
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If so, we'd love to hear from you – email: healthclub@leisuremedia.com



PICTURE: WWW.STOCK.COM/CANDIDEX IMAGES

Leisure providers should digest the new NICE guidance and seek advice

Don't let new guidelines put you off exercise referral

I read with interest the new draft NICE guidelines for exercise referral schemes. Changes to these services can be a daunting prospect for leisure providers, not least because – as they dwell in the medical rather than the leisure realm – many will have been unaware they were even in the offing. As a result, they may come as an unpleasant surprise.

Often this creates a knee jerk reaction, with wholly viable programmes simply stopping what they are doing because their service suddenly doesn't meet the new guidelines. It's crucial that providers of these essential programmes realise they don't need to do this.

Before taking such radical action, take time to thoroughly digest the guidance. Some services may not need to make any changes, but if changes are required, they must be identified;

the service provider should work with their commissioner to agree on a suitable solution for any gaps.

The suggested new guidelines, an update of those from 2006, suggest that an exercise referral service shouldn't be commissioned unless the scheme collects a minimum amount of data that can be externally verified. If concerned about external verification, service providers should be aware that this can be done by the commissioner of the service, a university or other academic institution, or even a company that provides exercise referral solutions. Most importantly, don't panic. Above all, make sure it's possible to demonstrate the effectiveness of the programme.

Stuart Stokes
Creative director, Refer-all

Driving participation through local sport

I read with interest your news story 'Too few community sports facilities in the UK' from July 25, in which a cross-party committee of MPs expressed concern over the declining number of affordable, flexible community sports facilities in the UK. It encouraged communities, local authorities and sports clubs to take a more creative approach.

While I agree a collaborative approach is needed, it seems there's little acknowledgement of the successful work leisure trusts are already doing to provide inexpensive, accessible sporting facilities across the UK. As a newly established trust, TMLT is already making headway: the most recent Sport England Active People survey showed a 4.65 per cent increase in participation in our area between 2006 and 2014.

The committee believes locally organised, locally promoted sport seems the most promising way of increasing participation. We couldn't agree more. We would encourage Sport England to actively promote the work done by trusts and involve sports members in the debate about how we can all do more.

Martin Guyton
CEO, Tonbridge & Malling Leisure Trust (TMLT)



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Exercise holds the key to wine vs CVD debate

The oft-cited maxim that a daily glass of wine can help stave off cardiovascular disease (CVD) may only be true when matched with physical exercise, according to a new study presented last month.

Ever since the early 1990s, evidence has been put forward to further the argument that moderate consumption of red and white wine can help increase levels of productive HDL cholesterol and reduce markers of atherosclerosis, the clogging of arteries through fatty deposits.

This latest piece of research has sought to directly observe the relation between red and white wine on markers of atherosclerosis over a long-term period.

It found that pairing exercise with red wine may help to lower a certain type of cholesterol, with the authors concluding there may be "some synergy", but that exercise was the more important factor.

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=G8f4M>

GP champions benefits of exercise prescription

PHOTO:WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/PRESSMASTER



Walking could be prescribed as treatment

The NHS should look to prescribe walking as a medical treatment for certain patients, according to a GP whose practice has yielded positive health benefits from 'exercise on recommendation'.

Dr John Morgan says that, after starting to suggest exercise and walking a decade ago, his patients' health improved and there were fewer hospital admissions.

Following an audit of his practice by students from Manchester University, it was found that a number of patients had found relief from chronic illnesses and disorders.

For example, 29 per cent of patients who were prescribed exercise at the practice were able to give up antidepressants, with 92.5 per cent also reporting improvements in their mood. As well as reduced blood pressure for most people, other findings showed that 61 per cent lost weight and 84 per cent exercised more than recommended.

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=T8D6m>

Treharne: Indies should lobby



Treharne says the fragmented nature of the sector means it's important to lobby at all levels

The Gym Group CEO John Treharne has highlighted the role individual MPs can play in lifting physical activity up the political agenda, noting that lobbying local representatives can be a particularly effective means for independent gyms to make their voices heard.

With less than a year until the general election, Treharne said it's important that politicians recognise the role the health and fitness industry has to play in reducing the strain on the NHS, noting that now is the time to reiterate the case for physical activity.

"It's a pity the government doesn't do more to support the physical activity sector – be it

through reducing VAT on gym memberships or incentivising employers to subsidise fitness programmes," Treharne told HCM.

He said the fragmented nature of the UK gym sector means it's vital discussions are taking place both at government and local level. "I think nationally, ukactive is an effective representative of the major players, but 80 per cent of UK gyms are small independents, making them difficult to mobilise," he added. "For these businesses, I think lobbying local MPs to get behind physical activity is the most effective way to ensure that policymakers take note."

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=g2D2u>

Second LAX site launches in South Ken

LA fitness has converted its flagship South Kensington club into the chain's second LAX site, signalling its commitment to driving forward with the new premium brand.

The £500,000 refurb of the site follows the launch of the first LAX in the City last year, marking the latest chapter in LA fitness's battle to banish the blues of its recent CVA (company voluntary arrangement).

Dubbed a "new breed of gym", the LAX concept has been designed specifically with time-pressured professionals in mind and offers small group training sessions in the functional area and on the gym floor in the shape of LAX20 and LAX30 – short, high intensity workout



A new 230sq m functional training floor has been added

sessions. The sessions have been added to the existing timetable, meaning there are now 80 trainer-led classes offered for free, including yoga, pilates and Zumba.

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=u2D2d>

Fitness First revs up rebrand

Fitness First will double the pace of its UK and Australia club transformation programme – citing encouraging business results – as the gym chain bids to ignite a roaring recovery.

The company is reporting the first growth in UK membership since 2009, with revenues up by between 5 to 15 per cent in each of the 19 UK clubs to have been rebranded so far this year, prompting the decisive march forward. As a result, 66 UK clubs and 50 clubs in Australia will be transformed by the end of 2014.

Of the rebranded sites, two of the outstanding performers have been the Tottenham Court Road and South Kensington clubs. Encouraged by this, Fitness First is now looking for potential sites in central London, amid plans to open up to 10 new clubs over the next five years.

This strategy came swiftly into force with September's launch of the new flagship Bishopsgate Fitness First, which is the gym chain's first new health club opening since its scrape with administration in 2012. "London has always been a strategic focus for



CEO Andy Coslett is intent on rejuvenating the business

us and opening a hi-tech club like Bishopsgate, our seventh club in the square mile, further stakes our claim as the capital's top fitness brand," said Fitness First CEO Andrew Coslett. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=w4P6D>

Tesco leads charity wellbeing campaign

Tesco has teamed up with Diabetes UK and the British Heart Foundation to form a charity partnership aiming to raise millions of pounds to promote healthy living.

The new partnership aims to take on two of the UK's biggest killers – cardiovascular disease and Type 2 diabetes – by focusing on ways to encourage healthy eating and healthy cooking habits, including making it easier to choose foods lower in sugar, saturated fats and salt.

The ultimate ambition for the partnership is to be a force for positive change in the health of the nation. It will launch in early 2015 and will see Tesco, its customers, colleagues and suppliers aim to raise millions of pounds for



Sweets will be removed from checkouts as part of the pledge

the two charities. The new partnership forms part of putting into practice Tesco's pledge last year to help customers and colleagues live healthier lives, through a range of initiatives. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=w7Y2P>

Cycling more popular than ever, says research



45% of Londoners are frequent cyclists

Cycling in the UK is more popular than ever, with a 14 per cent increase in bike sales over the last five years causing the market to grow from £639m in 2008 to £754m in 2014, according to new research.

In the year that saw Yorkshire host the start of the Tour de France, participation has grown across the country, with 35 per cent of adults describing themselves as cyclists and a further 31 per cent saying they would consider cycling in the future, according to research from Mintel.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=z9m3M>

Short bursts of exercise still effective, finds study



Short bursts were shown to be beneficial

Exercise may not be the all or nothing health remedy some consider it to be, with brief bursts of moderate physical activity still contributing to increased longevity, according to a new study published by the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*.

Despite 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise still being the recommended minimum weekly amount, the research found that just five minutes of aerobic exercise each day could cut risk of heart disease-related death by 45 per cent and other diseases by up to 30 per cent. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=u7d8U>

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UK news update

Industry leaders back NFD 2014



Fitness sessions took place across Britain in a bid to get the nation moving

An industry-wide coalition of physical activity advocates urged Britons to lace up their trainers and get moving on 26 September as part of National Fitness Day – the largest celebration of physical activity in the UK.

Founded by the *énergie* Group and co-ordinated by *ukactive*, the event saw thousands of people don their exercise gear and flock to gyms, health clubs, leisure centres and parks around the country to take part in free 'Power Half Hour' exercise events, such as Les Mills' city centre classes in three locations.

Better Gyms, British Military Fitness, Club Company, *énergie*, Everyone Active, Fitness

First, Lifestyle Fitness, Gym Group, Places for People, Pure Gym and Spirit Health Clubs were just some of the major fitness providers inviting the public to try a variety of free sessions at more than 1,000 sites – from indoor cycling, exercise to music classes and swimming to yoga, boot camp and pilates.

"We're a nation that just sits down too much. There's a multitude of reasons for that, but right at the top of the list are lack of accessible opportunities to exercise and lack of motivation," said David Stalker, CEO of *ukactive* and director of National Fitness Day. Details: <http://lei.sr/a=D4b8N>

Peppa Pig to 'inspire' active toddlers

Leisure operator Places for People is to harness the ubiquitous popularity of Peppa Pig in a bid to banish inactivity among children under five.

Entertainment One – creator of the all-conquering IP – has teamed up with activity programme design start-up Tumuv to produce the new Move with Peppa programme, which will begin to be rolled out across Places for People Leisure centres during January 2015.

Designed to build motivation, physical confidence, co-ordination and balance among two- to four-year-olds, the six-week programme will include a range of activities, a 'Peppa Steppa' exercise routine and an incentivising awards scheme.



The 45-minute sessions will 'inspire both parent and child'

"Despite the rising level of inactivity in under-fives, there's a surprisingly limited amount of physical activity provision for this age group," said Tumuv founder Holly Woodford. Details: <http://lei.sr/a=R4a5P>

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Fitness Centre Manager
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The Academy Harrogate gets £500,000 makeover

The Academy Health Club in Harrogate has undergone a comprehensive gym refurbishment which cost £500,000.

The refit saw the addition of Technogym's premium ARTIS line of equipment, including the new OMNIA functional training solution for small group training. Work on the gym refurbishment began on 15 August and the gym re-opened on 1 September, thanks to well-planned work which took just 16 days.

"We are proud to be the oldest, most established and most experienced club in Harrogate. We have a constant commitment to offering members the best experience from start to finish, whatever their choice of activity," says The Academy Health Club MD Philippa Shackleton. "With this, our fourth gym refurbishment over the years, we can safely say this exclusive installation puts us among the most up-to-date and technically advanced gyms in the country." Details: <http://lei.sr?o=T5V6h>

Gym creates beastly boot camp obstacle course



Staff showcase the new workout circuit

One of the south-west's largest independent health clubs has teamed up with a local timber merchant to produce a boot camp obstacle course designed to push even the fittest of gym-goers to the limit.

Fountain Timber has created a series of bespoke 'arm-numbing and leg-trembling' outdoor fitness stations in the grounds of the club at Cadbury House in Congresbury. The club is the first venue in the country to showcase Fountain Timber's new designs, which include a three-metre climbing wall, parallel bars, varied height chin-up bars, balance beams and monkey bars.

"Boot camps have grown in popularity because they're a great way to get in shape," says Tom Horton, fitness manager at the club. "This new course will drive participants even further. The exercise stations are all numbered, so people can participate in more varied boot camps all year round." Details: <http://lei.sr?o=55q4R>

Scarlets kicks off in new gym

Welsh rugby union team Scarlets have been gearing up for this season's on-field battles in the Guinness Pro12 League in the club's newly-refurbished performance gym.

Wales-based strength and conditioning equipment specialist Absolute Performance (AP) has carried out a major revamp of the gym used by the Llanelli club's first team and academy squad. AP created the strength and conditioning facility using high-performance flooring and custom-built equipment from the company's AP Power Series, as well as by renovating existing equipment. New training equipment includes a heavy-duty leg press, a

hack squat machine – to allow the players to replicate game-related movements – and a bespoke platform for Wattbike testing and general cardio work. The centrepiece of the facility is a customised 25m (82ft) track, featuring AP Evolution turf, enabling the squad to use conditioning sleds indoors, as well as perform specialist sprints and drills.

"Our experience of working with elite clubs such as the Scarlets means we can react quickly to deliver outstanding facilities for our clients," says Absolute Performance elite sport division consultant Simon Britton. Details: <http://lei.sr?o=z4t3x>



Scarlets' Phil Day trains alongside forwards conditioner Ian Gibbons in the new gym

Olympian Kate Haywood becomes PT

Double Olympic swimmer Kate Haywood has swapped the famous rings for REPs by embarking on a new career as a fitness instructor.

Former BBC Young Sports Personality of the Year, Haywood – who represented Team GB at the Beijing 2008 and London 2012 Olympics – has launched Straightline Energy fitness sessions, which will be held in parks across Wandsworth, London.

Haywood has taken her knowledge of fitness and nutrition from her days as an Olympic athlete and, having qualified as a REPs trainer, developed an extensive training programme to get Londoners fit and healthy. The sessions are designed to challenge and push those who are



Haywood won medals in breaststroke for Great Britain

either new to fitness or seeking to reach new goals. The variety of workouts on offer cover areas including strength, speed, endurance, aerobic and anaerobic training. Details: <http://lei.sr?o=h7G9W>

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T3 fight

payasUgym targets Bitcoin payments for gyms



PayasUgym co-founders Jamie Ward (left) and Neil Harmsworth (right)

Online gym pass provider payasUgym.com will soon begin testing Bitcoin as a form of payment across its network, paving the way for more than a third of UK gyms to be able to sell membership via the cryptocurrency.

The news marks a major step forward for the fitness industry, making it a relatively early adopter of a digital currency described by Bill Gates as a "technological tour de force".

Launched in 2009, Bitcoin is the 'currency of the internet' and has brought benefits to numerous industries, as it negates bank charges and currency exchange fees.

With more than 2,200 gyms and health clubs available through the recently-launched payasUgym marketplace – a shop window for operators that also offers thousands of independent gym reviews – customers would be able to use the online tool to quickly compare gyms in their area and then use Bitcoin to pay for their gym pass or membership.

Details: <http://llei.sr7a=f5A9Q>

RunKeeper to reward users with workout gifts

Fitness tracking application RunKeeper has partnered with mobile reward service Kip to give users gifts and brand samples when they reach their exercise goals.

The offering comes as a number of technology producers turn to the carrot and stick method for motivating fitness enthusiasts and people trying to lose weight.

In the latest move from RunKeeper, users will receive a pop-up congratulations message and the opportunity to click-through to redeem their gift when they achieve certain goals. Initially the service will offer 10 gifts and rewards, with smartwatch manufacturer Pebble, Quaker Oats and P&G's Secret Deodorant among the first brands to join the programme.

Details: <http://llei.sr7a=W77P>



Achieving fitness goals unlocks free gifts

Long-awaited Apple Watch unveiled



The Apple Watch will ship in the early part of 2015 for a base price of US\$359 (€270, £216)

Apple pulled back the curtain on its long-awaited Apple Watch at a special launch event at the Flint Center in California, US, with the new device featuring a whole host of health and fitness-related functions and features.

The watch interface features a home screen with a number of customisable applications, with users simply touching the screen to select their desired app. However, the brand has also introduced its own digital crown wheel that sits on the side of the watch, which functions as a scroll wheel to view users' messages or zoom in and out of the display without them having to obstruct the screen with their fingers. The crown also serves as a home button to take users navigate back from an app.

As predicted, the watch features photo-sensitive sensors on its back to help record pulse information, while connectivity with an iPhone allows wifi and GPS usage to keep track of movement, pace and distance travelled.

Apple has also looked to incorporate third party developers to interact with the watch using its WatchKit platform, with some of the early adopters working with the device including the likes of Facebook and Twitter.

Other fitness features on the watch include an accelerometer to measure total body movement as well as the quality and intensity of movements made. The device is due to ship in early 2015, priced US\$359 (€270, £216). Details: <http://llei.sr7a=b7J4X>

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escape 

Star Trac lands exclusive Fitness First deal

Star Trac has secured a global Spinner bike contract with Fitness First, as the health club giant bids to hasten its planned expansion.

The three-year global agreement covers the UK, Asia, Australia, Germany and India and promises to include over 1,500 bikes – including the new Spinner Blade IONTM, Spinner Blade, Spinner NXT and the eSpinner. The contract value is undisclosed.

In addition to the contract, Fitness First will also be a Star Trac partner for a variety of new products and will provide extensive feedback to assist Star Trac's product team in current and future development.

Following Fitness First's recent announcement regarding expansion plans in Asia, it comes as no surprise that Asia will receive the largest number of Spinner bikes, with an estimated total of 800 units to be delivered for new sites in Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. Details: <http://lei.sr7a=B7h3k>

Technogym lands Rio 2016 Olympics contract



Technogym will fit a total of 16 venues

The first Olympic Games to take place in South America will see all athletic preparation centre fitness equipment supplied by Technogym, after the Italian giant won an exclusive contract for Rio 2016.

The deal is the company's sixth Olympic partnership, in a fruitful and long-running relationship which has seen Technogym supply every Olympic Games since Sydney 2000. The company was also the Athletes' Village equipment supplier for the recent Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

In Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Technogym will provide a full range of equipment for the main 2,000sq m (21,527sq ft) training centre at the Olympic Village in Barra da Tijuca, open to all athletes taking part in the Games. It will also fit 15 centres with equipment-filled warm-up areas specifically designed for the different disciplines at the competitions venues.

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=B8m2d>

Parkour set to vault into gyms

Parkour Generations (PG) is hoping to give a leg-up to the increasingly popular parkour training discipline by launching its new MOV' concept, a group exercise programme designed for health clubs and leisure venues.

MOV' is based on the practice of parkour – which has expanded substantially since its development in France in the late 1980s – and has been designed by PG to bring the excitement and spontaneity of parkour into health clubs and expose it to a wider audience.

The new functional training programme – comprising five different modules – has been designed to encourage people to step out of

their comfort zone using the fundamentals of movement, all in an accessible environment. The programme encompasses jumping, climbing, running, vaulting and balancing, which its developers say leads to greater fitness levels, muscle strength and confidence.

"Parkour is an art of movement, a holistic training discipline that allows for free movement through and over terrain," says Dan Edwardes, co-founder of PG. "We have designed MOV' with differing modules, so there will be a programme to fit each operator's needs or individuals goals."

Details: <http://lei.sr7a=D6t7g>



Parkour has risen remarkably from humble underground roots to mainstream popularity

Trott joins Matrix Fitness cycling team

Laura Trott, one of the stars of the London 2012 Olympics, has joined the Matrix Fitness -Vulpine cycling team.

As well as the sporting prowess Trott offers, Matrix Fitness managing director Jon Johnston believes there is "no better person to inspire youngsters to get active".

Trott, the current British road race champion, will join the team at the start of 2015, with Matrix Fitness-Vulpine recently announcing its intention to register as a UCI professional team next year.

Johnston says Trott is an ambassador for cycling, and a role model for young people, who "shares many values and objectives" with Matrix Fitness. These include increasing



Laura Trott will be inspiring young people to get active

awareness of the benefits of physical activity, and improving participation levels in sport and fitness, particularly among young people, in addition to addressing gender inequalities. Details: <http://lei.sr7a=V5V8A>



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International news

GoodLife ventures into budget club sector

Canadian operator GoodLife has unveiled plans to expand through growth of its current GoodLife Fitness club model, in addition to setting its sights on a new low-cost model, Fit4Less by GoodLife.

GoodLife plans to have 50 Fit4Less clubs by Christmas and intends to grow to 500 Fit4Less clubs nationwide. The ultimate goal is to have over 1,000 clubs in Canada under the GoodLife umbrella, which includes GoodLife Fitness, Fit4Less, and Énergie Cardio and EconoFitness in Quebec.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=y4n6H>

HealthCity launches genetic testing

HealthCity has launched a personalised training offering that's based on members' genetic responses to exercise and diet.

The DNAFit test – which won Spark of Innovation at this year's UKactive Flame awards – is now offered by HealthCity in all its clubs in the Netherlands and France.

The DNAFit Diet and Fitness tests scan up to 45 gene variants linked to a body's capacity to cope with training and food.

The tests reveals whether you may be best suited to endurance exercise (heavy cardio) or power exercise (weights and sprints), how much recovery time you need between training, your risk of soft tissue damage, and what kind of diet would best assist with weight loss.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=X9K9h>

Asia Pacific survey: A pathway to profit

The annual Fitness Industry Survey, conducted by Ezypay Australia, has identified an untapped opportunity for gyms in Asia Pacific to sell personal training.

The 2014 survey reveals that across the five countries surveyed – Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong – more than half of gym member respondents (54 per cent) have never used the services of a personal trainer.

In Hong Kong, 33 per cent of gym members have worked with a PT at least once. In Singapore the figure is 23 per cent, and in Malaysia just 20 per cent.

New Zealand leads the way, with 56 per cent of members having used a PT at least once, with Australia logging 46 per cent.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=E6R8C>

Dubai flagship for David Haye

Boxing legend and two-time World Champion David Haye has launched a flagship Hayemaker Gym in downtown Dubai, with plans to expand across the wider GCC and Middle East.

The high-end venture is to include a boxing ring, functional training zone for a wide range of HIIT classes, group exercise studio, cycling studio and a gym equipped with Technogym Artis stations, according to the website. Members signing up to a VIP package can even enjoy personal coaching and training sessions with David Haye throughout the year.

As part of the gym's 'everything on tap' philosophy, members will receive a Hayemaker Gym wristband to gain entry to the club, secure a locker and permit cashless payment for snacks and drinks within the club. It can also be used at the in-gym restaurant, Bench, to buy more substantial post-workout meals.

"Having been a frequent visitor to Dubai, I know it's a city where people demand the best and where they come to improve their lives," said Haye.



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ANTHONYBRYAN

Haye plans to open clubs across the GCC and Middle East

Beyond the opening of the first site, there are plans to expand into a number of smaller specialised units such as boxing studios and hypoxic training facilities.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=j9d4b>

It's all go at Finland's GoGo Express

Finland's GoGo Express budget chain is set to open two new clubs, taking its estate to a total of nine clubs. One of the new sites is located in Tampere, which already has five GoGo Express clubs, with the other in Jyväskylä.

Both clubs will measure 1,200sq m, with large gyms offering CV equipment, pin-loaded resistance and big free weight areas. Showers and locker rooms will also be available, but – as with the other GoGo Express clubs – there will be no group exercise.

The Jyväskylä club, opening this month, will be equipped by gym80 for resistance and Star Trac for CV, while the Tampere gym – opening in November – will be kitted out by Precor and Star Trac.

Membership costs just €18 a month on a 12-month contract, while PT costs €18 a session. In spite of these low costs, the gym is staffed at all times. There's also plenty of parking for members.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=H2n3Y>



GoGo Express clubs offer large gyms but no group exercise

US Fitness boosts empire

US Fitness has announced it has added Sport & Health's 23 clubs to its portfolio.

US Fitness was formed in 2011 as a partnership between industry veterans Kirk and John Galiani and New Evolution Ventures (NeV). It currently develops large multi-purpose clubs under its Onelife Fitness brand, of which there are nine locations with a further three under construction. It also operates five Crunch clubs in Virginia and Washington DC, with "many more" planned.

Meanwhile Sport & Health, founded in 1973, has 23 full-service health and fitness clubs – 20 owned, three managed – in and around the Washington DC metropolitan area under the leadership of Mark Fisher (CEO) and Scott Thomas (CFO).

The Galianis will be the co-executive chairs of US Fitness, while Fisher and Thomas will be named CEO and CFO respectively.

Rapid growth of US Fitness is now planned. Kirk and John Galiani commented: "Sport & Health provides us with a broad platform in a major metropolitan area, an experienced



Galiani brothers Kirk and John will be co-executive chairs

management team, and infrastructure to accelerate our growth through greenfield expansion and acquisition."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=TSY5d>

Genae: Fourth club open, fifth planned

French operator Genae Club has added a fourth club to its portfolio with the acquisition of a 2,400sq m facility from health club brand Elixia.

The club in Lyon, France, was rebranded overnight and opened on 1 August with the Genae pricing structure – down from €80 a month on a 12-month contract as Elixia, to €49 a month on a no-contract basis and a pay-by-the-hour system for classes.

It offers three studios, gym, spa area, pool and restaurant. Equipment is currently supplied by Technogym, but Genae has confirmed it will continue its partnership with Precor and Life Fitness.

Genae is already planning its fifth location, set to open next year in Toulouse.



The Genae model includes a pay-by-the-hour class system

Elixia will continue to operate its two other clubs in Lyon, and has plans to open one or two further clubs by the end of 2015 – also in the greater Lyon area.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=C8v5X>



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Marshall hopes to make an instant impact

Marshall back in the saddle at Gladstone

Andrew Marshall is back at leisure management software firm Gladstone Health and Leisure after a two-year break.

Marshall has returned as regional sales manager for the South East of England, having previously headed up the South West and Wales regions for eight years.

Marshall had been working as the business development manager for the leisure division of Omnicore Group before returning to Gladstone, providing valuable experience of working in vertical markets like entertainment, hospitality and retail.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=R7F2e>



Bowman joined Wexer last month

Bowman swaps Fit For Sport for overseas post

Fit For Sport commercial director Paul Bowman has left the company to take up a new post with virtual group exercise provider Wexer Virtual.

Bowman, who joined Fit For Sport in January 2013, departed last month to become the new global sales and marketing director at Danish company Wexer. The role will see Bowman taking on responsibility for all international markets, with a large emphasis on the UK/European market, as he looks to support Wexer Virtual's ambitious global expansion plans.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=m6P6m>

Holl quits Virgin to join TRX

Body weight training supplier TRX has announced the appointment of Alan Holl – previously head of fitness at Virgin Active UK – to operate as senior director of the Europe, Middle East, Africa and India (EMEA) region.

Holl has held senior fitness roles in the health club sector, with both Fitness First and Virgin Active, having previously had a 13-year career in the British military. In his most recent role with Virgin Active, Holl made a key contribution towards product development

and innovation, and his arrival offers a sizeable boost for TRX's growth ambitions.

"I'm extremely passionate about credible and progressive fitness training and education, so this role at TRX provides huge synergy as the company's education, product and programming is central to core values," says Holl.

As well as driving the delivery of education and programming in his new role, Holl is charged with accelerating TRX's expansion into the EMEA region. His task includes ensuring the distribution strategies are led with a consistent approach, and that the TRX brand is prominently positioned at the 'front and centre' of the functional training sector.

Paul Zadoff, TRX president, adds: "Alan brings with him a unique blend of experience, making him a significant new addition to our team. He has proved himself as an expert in fitness business management, education and programming. These are all elements we hope will drive TRX further within EMEA and I look forward to working with Alan."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=r6A7B>



Holl will lead TRX's charge into EMEA

Anderson named Fitness First CMO

Fitness First has appointed David Anderson as chief marketing officer to lead the latest phase of its brand transformation. Anderson is thought to have impressed group CEO Andy Cosslett during the pair's time together at hotel chain InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG).

Both joined IHG in 2005 and worked together for six years before Cosslett stepped down, later taking up the reins at Fitness First. Anderson subsequently worked for Virgin Australia Airlines, where he was general manager for brand strategy and performance, responsible for developing the company's customer, product and service strategy.

Following strong results revealed in September, Fitness First announced plans to double the pace of its club rebrand roll-out to reach 155 clubs globally and more than half a million members by the end of 2014.

Anderson will be expected to help nurture the company's ongoing recovery and comes at a time when the group is undergoing a £270m global makeover, implementing a widespread training overhaul and planning major expansions in Asia. Building on this platform, Anderson will be leading an 'innovation agenda' to create added value services, new fitness products and brand campaigns. Central to this will be the launch of a new fitness app and digital platform in January 2015 that will give members constant



Anderson worked with Cosslett at IHG

access to personalised fitness plans, expertise and wide range of detailed feedback.

"David played a key role in the growth of IHG's brands, including InterContinental, and helped design the system that commercialised them to great success," says Cosslett.

"His time working with some of the world's best-known customer-facing businesses makes him ideally suited to lead the next phase of Fitness First's journey from a traditional gym business to a 21st century fitness brand."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=d2C2V>



ON THE APP AND UP

One of the early adopters of the Gladstone MobilePro app explains how it has improved their business

As an established Gladstone customer, 1610 had a very clear reason for wanting to be an early adopter for the company's MobilePro app: by the start of this year, over 60 per cent of hits on our website were already coming through a mobile or tablet device. This equated to about 17,000 visits a month and 204,000 visits a year, and the figures were growing month on month.

Yet despite these impressive statistics, the number of online bookings remained very low, which we put down to the complicated process of booking via a mobile device. It was clear we needed a mobile app of our own if we were going to keep up with our customers' needs and demands.

What we liked about MobilePro was the fact that it was fully integrated into Gladstone's Plus2 member management and Connect online booking systems, meaning that customers could access real-time information when booking and paying for group exercise classes online. We were also hopeful the simple navigation would encourage more people to book in this way, easing pressure on our front-of-house team.

We launched the app last February in four of our 19 sites across Somerset, Dorset and Devon with fantastic results.

So far, there have been over 1,700 downloads and this continues to grow at a steady rate as new customers join our facilities. One site – Trinity Sports and Leisure in Bridgwater – has had an especially enthusiastic response, with almost 50 per cent of its membership database having downloaded MobilePro.

What's more, since we launched the app, online group exercise bookings have increased by an average of 200 per cent across all four sites. At Castle Sports Centre in Taunton, in particular, online bookings have risen by an incredible 1,000 per cent, and last month 92 per cent of all bookings at that site were made online. Front-of-house teams have also reported taking far fewer phone bookings, freeing up their time for other duties.

In addition to the success we've had with online bookings, the app's push notification feature is proving to be an invaluable tool for improving communication with customers, as well as helping centres to promote upcoming events, new offers, new classes or special opening times.

Although it's not an area we've fully utilised yet, there is also some great functionality within the app for customers to share information with family and friends on social media

platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. This is certainly a development area for us, as it has great potential for improving retention and brand loyalty with our online audience, as well as generating new custom by social referral.

We have found the Web Content management system very easy to use, and we have trained a nominated person at each centre to keep the app updated. The ability to add global content is a bonus as it means we don't have to add new content multiple times. And because Plus2 and Connect are fully integrated into MobilePro, the app automatically updates the class timetable when any changes are made via the main system, saving staff time and reducing the risk of errors.

We're also big fans of the reporting feature, which has been very useful in identifying what content our customers are engaging with at each site.

We now plan to roll the app out to six more sites by the end of the year, and to all 1610 sites within the next 18 months.

Rebecca Sawtell, 1610's head of marketing and communications

For more details on Gladstone MobilePro app contact:
TEL +44 (0)1491 201010
EMAIL sales@gladstonemrm.com
WEB www.gladstonemrm.com

Approaching the summit



ukactive CEO
David Stalker
looks ahead to this
year's ukactive
National Summit

It's hard to miss how far physical activity has risen up the political agenda over the last year. There's now a government strategy, 'Moving More, Living More', which aims to do exactly what the title suggests. Public Health England's *Physical Activity Framework*, launching later this month, will give advice and examples of good practice in designing physical activity back into everyday life to tackle the inactivity pandemic. And ukactive's own *Turning the Tide of Inactivity* report has helped to keep the issue front of mind among decision-makers.

This year's ukactive National Summit – which takes place on 13 November – will be the pinnacle of a year's work in moving the debate on physical activity to the top of the government's health agenda. It offers us the chance to take stock of these developments and scrutinise the intentions of our political leaders regarding incorporating physical activity into their plans up to, and beyond, the General Election in 2015.

We went out on a limb at last year's Summit and announced that, as a nation, we should have an ambition of nothing less than a 1 per cent year-on-year reduction in the level of inactivity – something we'd calculated would save taxpayers £1.2bn in just five years. And our statement had an immediate impact: at the Summit, Shadow Health Secretary Andy Burnham pledged to make "physical activity the cornerstone of Labour's public health policy".

Gathering evidence

But it's critical to keep this momentum going, and for that to happen we need credible evidence and examples of good practice. This year we'll therefore be revealing the findings of a recent ukactive Research Institute-led project that identified 'good' and 'promising' practice from a range of physical activity providers. This will provide insights into what's being



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ANDREW BASSETT

Collecting an evidence base on the effectiveness of physical activity programmes is key

done well and what needs to improve, as well as giving practical examples and advice on how we can most effectively get more people, more active, more often.

The response we got from our call for evidence was fantastic, with around 1,000 case studies submitted to us from all over the UK, making it one of the largest surveys of physical activity programmes ever carried out in England. Programmes submitted were wide-ranging in terms of activities offered, delivery settings, participation rates and target populations.

Most importantly, this survey also offers a valuable insight into the strength of the evidence base proving the effectiveness of

programmes being run across the country. It will help other operators understand what they can improve/change to ensure their own programming is as effective as possible in getting people active for health.

This information is essential to ensure resources are concentrated in the right places, and to encourage the use of physical activity in the prevention and management of chronic diseases.

With the election on the horizon and physical activity policy gathering a head of steam, this is a chance to understand the national direction of activity policy and to walk away with evidence-based examples of how to get people active. ●

Want to attend the summit?

The ukactive National Summit takes place in London on 13 November 2014, and tickets are now available. For information, please visit: www.ukactive.com/events/forthcoming-events/summit-2014



INSTRUCTORS THAT DRIVE YOUR RETENTION

How can you get more members attending more often and recommending your club to their friends and family? Les Mills has the answer... your instructors!

For many clubs and operators, the sole focus of efforts is on sales and profit – that's sensible, right? There is, however, another more sustainable way to grow membership and build a more profitable business. Engaged and regularly attending members renew their memberships, refer their friends and promote their clubs – in fact, 93 per cent of Les Mills users have recommended their current facility to friends and family, compared to 84 per cent of other group fitness attendees and 76 per cent of gym attendees. So what's the secret to achieving this sort of quasi sales force and increasing retention, member and user motivation and results?

The secret to success doesn't involve lots of numbers and percentages. There's one factor that will ensure class success, drive attendance, member results and motivation: Les Mills instructors. Keith Burnet, CEO of Les Mills UK, says of the instructor tribe: "Les Mills instructors come with a ready-made passion, energy and enthusiasm to motivate your members. Our instructors are the best of the best in the industry and have to meet very

exacting requirements, both at the start of their journey and throughout."

Initial training sets the standard: an intensive two days, along with minimum entry qualifications for all programmes, quarterly choreography and music updates. Instructors can benefit from ongoing training, including quarterly programme workshops and Advanced Instructor Modules, which focus on advanced technique training and specific programme coaching. Instructors and trainers can also attend the Les Mills GFX Series, a fitness festival delivering Les Mills programmes to thousands of instructors and fans.

Karen Armstrong, health & fitness co-ordinator for Falkirk Community Trust, says: "We launched our very first Les Mills programmes in 2013 with four key programmes: BODYPUMP, BODYCOMBAT, BODYATTACK and CX WORX. Our Les Mills account manager supported us in gaining qualified instructors, and in creating our timetable and marketing materials and ensuring we created the correct launch platform to maximise the potential of Les Mills."

Since the implementation of Les Mills, Falkirk's health and fitness performance

has exceeded expectations in many ways:

- The group fitness programme has increased over 50 per cent
- Health & fitness income increased over £240k in one financial year
- Membership base increased by over 20 per cent

95 per cent of our customers would recommend the leisure trust

Further and future development includes the implementation of further Les Mills programmes over the coming months. Burnet adds: "If you're reading this and asking yourself, 'can I do it cheaper myself', we'd ask you to consider the following questions. Who will sign off your classes from a safety and member experience perspective? How are you going to solve the rights to music issue, as well as training, updates and quality assurance?"

"Let me put it this way: would you build your own cardio equipment? Les Mills has 30 years' experience in the business of developing a world class group exercise system, and it's just as hard!"

For more information and for a FREE timetable review please email lmuk.clubcoach@lesmills.com

Consumer insight

IHRSA's new 2014 IHRSA Health Club Consumer Report offers valuable insight into consumers' usage patterns



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ANDREX

The 2014 report looks at club membership and growth, diversity and differentiation

Last month, IHRSA released *The IHRSA Health Club Consumer Report: 2014 Health Club Activity, Usage, Trends and Analysis*. While the demographics and participation data are specific to the US, club operators from around the globe can benefit from its content and the resulting improved understanding of their guests, members and prospective members.

The 2014 report also examines topics including membership growth, attrition and opportunities for club operators.

The report highlights a positive correlation between membership tenure and attendance, as members who stay on-board for at least 10 years say they use their club on average 139 days a year. Identifying member engagement strategies and implementing relevant ancillary programmes will help operators facilitate regular attendance and long-term tenure. The report delves into specific applications operators can employ, including loyalty programmes and customised personal and small group training offerings.

The 2014 report also covers:

- Macro health club membership trends: An examination of club and membership growth, diversity and differentiation, supply and demand.
- How members use clubs: Analysis of the activities and usage practices of club members, both present and future.
- The cost of membership – the value equation: Insight into the relationship of fees to the consumer price index, the member and club value equation, and where the industry is heading from a price value perspective.
- Member demographics and the impact on the industry: An exploration of gender, household, ethnicity and educational demographics, as well as how national demographics are influencing the health club industry.
- Overarching insights for operators: A summary of the opportunities for the health club industry, as well as the marketing and programming options for club operators.

New to this year's report are analyses of economic indicators, studio consumers, 'core' and 'super' personal training users, and insights for the future.

The 2014 IHRSA Health Club Consumer Report was compiled in partnership with ClubIntel, led by industry veterans Stephen Tharrett and Mark Williamson. This publication is available in PDF format at www.ihrsa.org/consumer-report for US\$99.95, or US\$199.95 for non-members.

IHRSA calendar

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

16–19 October 2014

14th Annual IHRSA European Congress
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

6 November 2014

Successfully Launch a Nutrition and Weight Management Program in Your Club (Webinar)

18–21 November 2014

ChinaFit / IHRSA China Management Forum
Guangzhou, China

11–14 March 2015

IHRSA 2015
Los Angeles, California, US



The 2014 winner was Kim Austin Kenyon of Gold's Gym Dutchess County

Community award: apply now

IHRSA is now accepting applications for its annual Outstanding Community Service Award, which will be presented during IHRSA 2015 in Los Angeles, California. This award is presented to an IHRSA member who has made a longstanding commitment to making a difference in, and beyond, their community. The 2014 winner was Kim Austin Kenyon of Gold's Gym Dutchess County (pictured above accepting the award from Brent Darden at IHRSA 2014). Log on to www.ihrsa.org/awards to apply by the 14 November deadline.

Industry unites against ALS

Hot on the heels of this summer's global internet phenomenon, the Ice Bucket Challenge, IHRSA highlights its own ongoing support for those looking to find a cure for ALS



Led by president and CEO Joe Moore, the staff of IHRSA readily accepted and completed their ALS Ice Bucket Challenge in August

This summer, it was impossible to turn on a computer without witnessing an Ice Bucket Challenge: someone dumping a bucket of iced water over their head to promote awareness of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) – a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and the spinal cord. When the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge was issued to IHRSA by Life Fitness, we gladly accepted. Led by president and CEO Joe Moore, the IHRSA staff completed the challenge on 22 August.

IHRSA is no stranger to supporting ALS research: in July, ASAE – the association

of associations – awarded IHRSA a 2014 ASAE Power of A Gold Award for its support of Augie's Quest. Named after Augie Nieto, the co-founder of Life Fitness who was diagnosed with ALS in 2005, the quest has raised over US\$41m in a bid to find treatments, making it the largest individual ALS fundraising programme.

"I heartily congratulate IHRSA for benefiting not just its own industry, but society at large," said Paul Pomerantz, chair of the Power of A Judging Committee. "It's heartening to see an organisation like IHRSA excel at bringing the fitness industry together, harnessing the power of the association for inspiring results."

The 'harnessed power' to which Pomerantz refers consists of the more than 35 members of IHRSA's leadership and membership who actively organise and promote the annual BASH for Augie's Quest; the roughly 1,000 annual BASH attendees; and the hundreds of clubs that have run individual fundraising events for Clubs for the Quest. The BASH, which raised more than US\$1.7m in 2014 and has averaged more than US\$1.5m per year over the past nine years, brings the entire industry together to show its support for Nieto and its determination to find a cure for ALS.

Lindkvist lined up for IHRSA 2015

Trendspotter and futurologist Magnus Lindkvist, who spoke at the 2013 IHRSA European Congress, will present 'Thinking About the Future in an Uncertain World' at IHRSA 2015. The following Q&A is excerpted from IHRSA's 2013 interview with him.

What are the key trends affecting the fitness industry? In no particular order, I see the blurring of ageing and age groups, the fading of industry boundaries, and the

start-up revolution. Millions of young people are growing up with no job security and an abundance of cheap technology at their fingertips: there's a tsunami of competitors, imitators and frenemies on the horizon.

How can operators put these trends to good use? One word: experimentation. Try, fail, remix and recycle failure. Learn and relaunch. But make sure your failures are cheap, and constantly find new metrics to identify your organisation's shortcomings.

About IHRSA

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

To learn how IHRSA can help your business thrive, visit www.ihrsa.org. Locate a quality IHRSA club at www.healthclubs.com



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The OM Yoga Show in October will feature around 200 exhibitors

OCTOBER

14-15 | EHFA International Standards Meeting 2014

Venue Amsterdam, the Netherlands
Summary

Now in its fifth year, this event is aimed at those in the fields of fitness education, training and standardisation. Keynote speakers will talk about pre- and post-natal exercise standards, standardisation versus commercialisation, game-changing innovations and retention.

Web www.ehfa.eu.com

16-19 | 14th Annual IHRSA European Congress

Venue Amsterdam, the Netherlands
Summary

This congress features presentations by executives from inside and outside the health club industry, providing thought-provoking commentary on trends shaping business and the fitness industry.

Web www.ihrsa.org/congress

22-24 | Club Industry Conference and Trade Show

Venue Chicago, Illinois, US
Summary

This independent event for fitness professionals will offer new education, events, exhibitors and tours, in addition to providing an ideal environment for networking with colleagues

Web www.clubindustryshow.com

24-26 | The OM Yoga Show London

Venue Olympia, London, UK
Summary

A total yoga experience under one roof, including free yoga and pilates classes, a range of workshops, children's yoga and more than 200 exhibition stands covering all aspects of yoga, pilates, ayurveda and natural products.

Web www.theyogashow.co.uk

NOVEMBER

5 | Understanding the Public Sector Leisure Market

Venue Loughborough University, UK
Summary

This free supplier insight half-day workshop is for supplier delegates who have signed up to attend Active-net's 2015 conference. Active-net events connect operators and suppliers in the public sector, whether from trusts, local authorities or universities/colleges. Understanding the Public Sector Leisure Market will include speakers from the local authority, trust and higher education sectors, explaining what they need from suppliers in the sector.

Web www.active-net.org

18-19 | Spa Life UK

Venue Center Parcs Woburn Forest, UK
Summary

The first day of the Spa Life UK event includes an invitation-only CEO Summit for spa operators based in the UK, as well as a buyer and supplier forum. The second day will include a conference featuring keynotes from inspirational business leaders, and a comprehensive programme of CPD sessions for existing and aspiring spa operators. There will also be a networking dinner, as well as a supplier showcase and expo.

Web www.spa-life.co.uk

19-22 | SIBEC Europe

Venue Pestana Casino Park Hotel, Funchal, Madeira
Summary

This event will bring the UK and Europe's major operators from the private, local authority and trust markets in health, fitness and leisure together with top suppliers to participate in a series of one-to-one meetings over two days.

Web www.mcleaneventsinternational.com



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Deliver the ultimate digital workout experience for your members

People are buying technology like never before, connecting to their content through smartphones, tablets, smart TV, PC and wearable devices. This trend has a huge impact on our industry and 'Wellness-on-the-Go' represents a great opportunity for all of us

Consumers now have more choice about how and where they choose to exercise, what they track and monitor and how they share workouts with their friends via social media.

Industry leader Technogym has developed mywellness cloud, a dedicated online fitness platform that can be accessed via connected Technogym equipment, and many personal devices, to keep operators and their customers constantly connected, thus providing a truly integrated and personalised training experience.

mywellness cloud for end-users

mywellness cloud is a platform that enhances people's workout experiences and allows users to access their activity data, favourite content and workout programmes wherever they are, turning physical activity into a truly personalised experience "on the go". Marketing director at Technogym, Alex Bennett comments: "In this era of the quantified

self, members know more about themselves than ever before. The challenge for our industry is how to tap into this data to gain useful insights to develop new services. mywellness cloud harnesses this approach, collecting data directly from equipment, and allowing members to aggregate their existing physical activity data from all the leading health and fitness apps in to one place."

In the Gym – Smart Machines
UNITY™ is Technogym's revolutionary cardio console. Built on an open Android 4 platform, it's available on all Technogym cardio equipment. With intuitive swipe-screen navigation, users can swipe, scroll and tap through websites, TV, emails, social networking sites and popular apps while exercising. Users can also log in to their personal mywellness accounts to access real-time training data and programmes.

On the Go

Developed as a free app by Technogym for both Android and Apple devices, the

mywellness app makes a member's workout experience more personal, fun and effective by enabling them to manage their workout routine, track their results and access data on the go.

Linked to consumer apps and wearable devices

The integration of the mywellness cloud platform with popular GPS activity tracking apps and health devices allows for tracking of indoor and outdoor training data and biometrics, keeping all lifestyle data in one place. Popular apps and wearable devices include Strava, RunKeeper, MapMyfitness, Myfitnesspal, Polar and SWIMTAG.

mywellness cloud for operators

In addition to the end-user website, mywellness cloud has seven business applications to help you manage your business, from end-user profiling to programme prescription and user engagement. Flexible, scalable and interactive, mywellness cloud allows you to choose the applications best suited for your business model.



Profile: An innovative app that offers your business insights into what motivates each person to workout using an online 'aspiration finder'.



Prescribe: Create truly personalised programmes that can be assigned to a user's mywellness account.



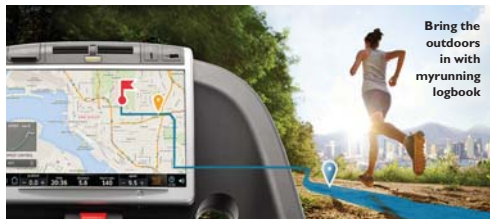
Self: Allow your members to select their own programme from a library linked to their needs, goals, sport or aspiration.



Challenge: Quickly and easily create challenges to motivate users and increase engagement with your facility and staff.

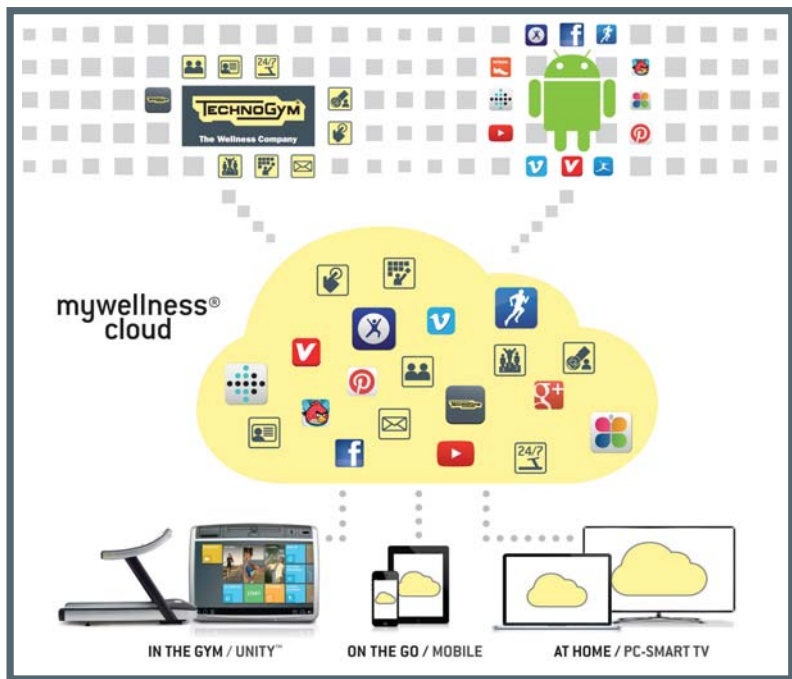


Coach: Stay in contact with your members even when they are not in your facility.



MYRUNNING LOGBOOK

Thanks to MYRUNNING LOGBOOK, your members will be able to replicate their favourite outdoor run inside your gym. By using mobile training apps or devices integrated with the mywellness cloud open platform (such as Runkeeper, Mapmyfitness, Strava, Polar, Garmin and more) members can track any outdoor run and make it instantly available on all Technogym treadmills equipped with the UNITY™ console.



Using mywellness cloud, members can track their workouts in the gym, access their data on-the-go and from home



Communicator: Each UNITY display can be transformed into a powerful marketing tool.

Promote activities, products and services and carry out online surveys directly through the console.



Asset: Asset remotely monitors the status of connected cardio equipment through the UNITY display.



Technogym app store: Choose the Android applications that your members can enjoy whilst using UNITY.

Open technology

UNITY and mywellness cloud is built upon a truly open API platform. This allows developers and third parties, to design apps and interfaces that will serve to streamline your business.

Increased member sales, improved retention rates and a higher level of member engagement at USN Bolton Arena

Feedback from Gwyn Hughes, commercial manager

Innovations in fitness and people's training needs are constantly changing and our decision to invest in the UNITY platform and mywellness cloud demonstrates our commitment to offer the very latest and best equipment currently available on the market. Since our installation in December 2013, we've seen a large impact in terms of increased member sales, improved retention rates and a higher level of member engagement.

The challenge app has been a fantastic tool and has engaged members in a way that previous club challenges never did. We used to have between 20-30 people taking part in a club challenge but now with a dedicated application and the benefit of technology, we've had up to 350 taking part in a single challenge. We're now starting to look at how we can use challenges to target different parts of our membership base, including our funded project 'Inspired to Action', a nine-week membership aimed at getting the sedentary active.

As part of our future planning, we are now looking at how we use the latest technology to continually develop the service delivery plan and member journey. We need to ensure that we are constantly adding value to our members' workout experience whilst using this to deliver our key business objectives, the advancements in technology is a core ingredient of our success.

TO FIND OUT MORE, VISIT: WWW.TECHNOGYM.COM, EMAIL: UK_INFO@TECHNOGYM.COM OR CALL US ON +44 (0) 1344 300236

EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT ...

FOCUS
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Expanding overseas

As the economy improves, will health and fitness operators start to eye new markets, bringing about the next wave of international expansion, or will they build on their current bases?

One year ago in this panel feature, we looked at how health and fitness brands could go global. At that point, however, the situation was not overly positive: Fitness First was the biggest global player but had sold off clubs in Benelux, France, Spain and Italy, as well as the UK. Few companies seemed to have ambitions to become big global players.

A year on, things have changed. The UK economy is growing again, house prices and consumer confidence are on the up and the health club industry appears to have toughed out the recession.

There's certainly a buzz about, but will this translate into the next wave of international expansion for operators?

A number of chains have announced they are looking at opportunities overseas. After some tough times, Fitness First is growing again, especially in Asia. Virgin Active is also expanding across borders, and Holmes Place has announced it's stepping up expansion in central Europe and the Iberian Peninsula; with 31 per cent of its membership now in continental Europe, the chain has designs on being the leading premium health club in the region.

Meanwhile, in the budget sector, easyGym says it's setting its sights on countries where easyJet has a strong presence, leveraging brand recognition. It expects to have 200 gyms, and one million members, in multiple countries

within the next six to seven years. And The Gym Group has also recently announced plans to expand into "Europe and beyond", kicking off in 2015.

Is this a trend more operators will follow? Will more budget chains look for new markets for their concepts as the competition gets tougher in mature markets? Or will barriers such as local market knowledge and capital costs make players more conservative?

Where are the main areas of opportunity, and will all the operators be fighting over the same territories? How risky is an overseas development strategy, and what part might technology play in international expansion? We ask our panel of experts for their thoughts.

ARE YOU LOOKING TO EXTEND YOUR OPERATION OVERSEAS? EMAIL US: HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM

MARK HUTCHEON

Director of communications • Fitness First

"Many operators are already expanding overseas: if you have a solid base in one territory, it makes it easier to go into markets with parallels.

At the moment, a lot of places are ripe for expansion. Fitness First looks for sites with rising populations and rising incomes – because of this, we think there will be a wave of expansion on a city by city basis, rather than country by country. Delhi, Istanbul and Rio are currently looking like they can be future hotspots. If you get in early with a flexible model and competitive proposition, when the penetration rate is still only about 5 per cent, there are good opportunities for expansion.

However, the risks are high. Overseas expansion is not a quick buck: it's a long-term proposition so plenty of capital, patience and above all integrity is essential to long-term success. Companies have to invest in service and standards – they can't cut corners and must continually differentiate to meet consumer demand.

Going forward, Fitness First's international expansion will be more about digital products and services, with differently priced online memberships that take our expertise beyond the gym to a potentially larger audience."



JOHN KERSH

International development • Anytime Fitness

"I'm not sure we're set for a rash of overseas development. Expansion across borders requires an immense amount of capital and the risk of failure is high. It's difficult enough for fitness

operators to stay relevant and successful within their own borders, much less when spread thin across multiple countries.

A major challenge when expanding is to not divert attention from domestic business, while also devoting adequate attention to localising the brand in new markets. Local competitors know the market much better than a foreign operator and can more easily exploit local opportunities. A foreign operator can run into unfortunate challenges by misreading the market or making mistakes with legal or financial assumptions.

Although we're seeing lots of interest from the Middle East and Asia, the challenge in both regions is the very low awareness of the benefits of exercise and joining a health club. I view these markets as a very long-term growth opportunity.

At least one Australian company is expanding into Europe now, and several Asian and Latin American companies are crossing borders within their own continents. A handful of American and British companies are dabbling with foreign expansion, although very few are making great strides."





Fitness First believes a lot of international locations are now ripe for expansion

PAUL LORIMER-WING

CEO • easyGym

I think we're ready for the next wave of international expansion, especially in the low-cost sector. As the world gets wealthier, the spending power of the middle class gets stronger; and as the world gets less healthy, the awareness of good health grows. All this will fuel the appetite for health clubs.

I think there are strong opportunities all over the world, especially in emerging markets. Even though the US is the market leader, I still see many opportunities for growth there, as well as across Europe, in parts of Asia, Brazil and Mexico. South Africa has opportunities and Nigeria has a large economy. The Middle East is also a strong contender.

The strongest, most capital-rich companies will go out and exploit these opportunities. If you don't have the capital capacity or the appetite for risk, you won't stand a chance – all these opportunities come with risk.

The main threats are not understanding the market and not having a local partner. A copy and paste approach is not the path to success: adaptation is necessary.

Neither is it a 'get rich quick' situation – it will require significant commitment and dedication, and finding the right properties at the right price will be crucial."



JAMES BALFOUR

CEO • 1Rebel

For companies that have an appetite for risk, the emerging markets can offer a huge amount of growth going forward. Meanwhile, both at home and in mature markets, there's the opportunity for a shake-up. However, I don't think the industry is set for the next wave of international expansion, as a lot of the major operators are laden with debt and acting cautiously.

One of the risks of expansion overseas is that operators take their eye off their core assets at home, neglecting their ageing estates and failing to attract new members. It's important for businesses to stay ahead of the game in all their businesses while they are pushing ahead with international expansion.

Various franchise operators are seeing continued overseas growth, as franchising offers speed to markets, and this is 1Rebel's preferred route for overseas expansion. We will be launching an international franchise department to take advantage of growing demand from key international cities, but we're still taking a conservative approach. We think 20 clubs over five years is appropriate. Our brand works best in transient markets where the population changes, so we will be looking at locations such as Hong Kong and Singapore."



INTERVIEW

"DREAM AS IF YOU WILL LIVE FOREVER
LIVE AS IF YOU WILL DIE TODAY!"

AMEN ISEGHOGHI

Inspired by his childhood in West Africa, Amen Iseghohi launched Amenzone, a chain of back-to-basics gyms that bans mirrors and uses recycled tyres to get its members fit. Magali Robathan finds out more



The walls of the gym are covered with messages to motivate members



We don't allow mirrors or TVs, and because people aren't plugged into their headphones, they communicate with each other a lot more



Launched by founder Amen Iseghohi in 2008, Amenzene Fitness is based on a minimalist approach that uses tyres and members' body strength and movement to get fit. Classes include boxing, primal fitness, yoga and rebel workout, each using tyres in different ways.

The first Amenzene gym opened in Scottsdale, Arizona, US in June 2008. Since then, Amenzene Fitness Corporate has opened two further gyms in Arizona, both in 2013. Amenzene launched its franchising business in 2012 and there are now six franchise gyms open across the US, with a further 23 franchises sold. The first Amenzene outside Arizona opened in Manhattan Beach, California in September 2013, with a second California gym in Santa Monica that opened this summer.

How did you get the idea for Amenzene?

I was born in Belgium but raised in London. When I was eight, my parents

decided they wanted me and my sister to have a deeper understanding of our heritage and a greater appreciation of what was really important in life, so they took us to live in West Africa.

At first I thought it was some kind of punishment – coming from somewhere we'd had so many privileges, waking up, eating cereal and watching cartoons, I suddenly found myself in a place with no TV, no electricity – it was very primal.

My grandmother, a former athlete, wanted to keep us active. The compound we lived on was filled with tyres, so she used them as a way of keeping us fit, but also as a tool to teach us about life. We'd race the tyres, and when we felt like giving up she'd say, no, you can't give up in life – you have to keep going. You need to move forward, just as a tyre turns and moves.

When I moved to America in 2003, I immediately noticed the high obesity rate. I realised it wasn't a local or city problem – it was a global epidemic. I thought about it and thought, this issue

isn't so much about a lack of fitness or good nutrition – it's a disease rooted in a problem that everyone seems to be ignoring. If you don't feel good about yourself, you don't care what you do to yourself. My grandmother used fitness as a tool to motivate us, but she was always focused on our self-esteem. I thought, that's it – the reason I'm in shape is that I feel good about who I am.

I decided to build my business, and the non-profit foundation that runs alongside it, on the same premise, which is that you should build self-esteem first. We're using fitness as a vehicle for self-empowerment.

I had corporate jobs when I first moved to the US – first for Coca-Cola, then for flooring company Shaw Industries. But my vision for Amenzene had already started with one kid and one tyre in a park. I gave up my corporate job, where I was making more than US\$100,000 a year, and took one of the biggest risks of my life to work on this new project.



AMENZONE FITNESS HISTORY

JUNE 2008

Amenzone Fitness launches its first gym, in North Scottsdale, Arizona, US

2012

Amenzone launches its franchising efforts

MARCH 2013

Amenzone Fitness opens in Fountain Hills, Arizona

JUNE 2013

Amenzone Fitness opens in South Scottsdale, Arizona

SEPT 2013

First Amenzone Fitness opens outside of Arizona, with the launch of Amenzone Fitness Manhattan Beach, California

OCT 2013

Amenzone Fitness opens in Biltmore Fashion Park, Phoenix, Arizona

NOV 2013

Amenzone Fitness Arrowhead opens in Glendale, Arizona

DEC 2013

Amenzone Fitness DC Ranch opens in Scottsdale, Arizona

JULY 2014

Amenzone's second California gym opens in Santa Monica

INTERVIEW

► How do you build self-esteem through your gyms?

We don't allow mirrors in our gyms and we have inspirational quotes on the wall, so instead of looking at themselves as they work out, members read powerful messages. We also don't have any TVs, and because people aren't plugged into their headphones they communicate with each other a lot more. That's been really successful, because a lot of folks are tired of going to gyms where you don't talk to anyone – where you just watch TV and run on a treadmill. Our approach is a way of going back to basics.

At the end of each class, the trainers pass on an inspirational message to the class, then they hold open the door for the members, shake each and every one of them by hand and thank them for taking the time to be there.

It means the trainers make a personal connection with everyone and get to know them. A small thing like that can make a big difference. At Amenzone it's about more than just fitness. It's about working from the inside out, working on the spiritual and the mental aspect as well as the physical aspect.

How do you use tyres in your fitness classes?

The tyres are really just a prop – we tell people they can use anything in their

environment. In my case, tyres were what I had, so that's what I used.

We have hundreds of exercises you can do with just one tyre. Once you've done our classes, you'll never look at a tyre in the same way again.

We do strength conditioning, upper body, lower body and core workouts. We use the tyres to help our members put on lean muscle mass. Anything you do in a regular fitness class, we'll do with tyres – we've even launched an athletic yoga programme that incorporates the tyres into the movements.

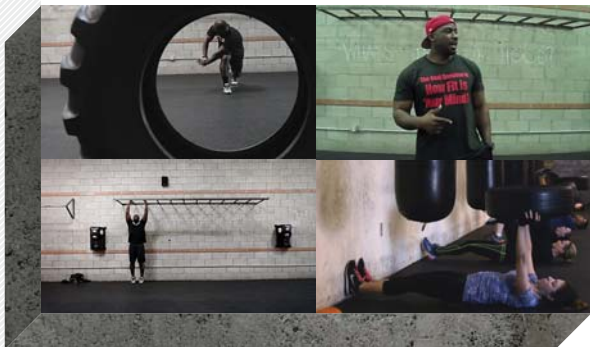
All of our tyres are recycled and colour-coded by weight. The green tyres are our lightest tyres at about 10–12lbs, the red tyres are our middle level tyres at about 15–20lbs, and the black tyres are our advanced tyres – they weigh 20, 25 or even sometimes 30lbs. They're for people who really want to take their bodies to the next level. We also have tractor tyres, which we use in our work with professional athletes.

What's the Amenzone Foundation?

It's a non-profit foundation with an established board. We partner with the Boys and Girls Clubs of America – which is similar to YMCA – to get our programmes into the community. It's a free after-school programme sponsored by corporates and angel investors.

United Healthcare is a partner of ours; the company has rolled out our programme to several schools and Boys and Girls Clubs. They liked our concept because it's unique and it works – what kid doesn't like to play with tyres? ►

The tyres are colour-coded by weight for different exercises, and instructors aim to connect with every individual member



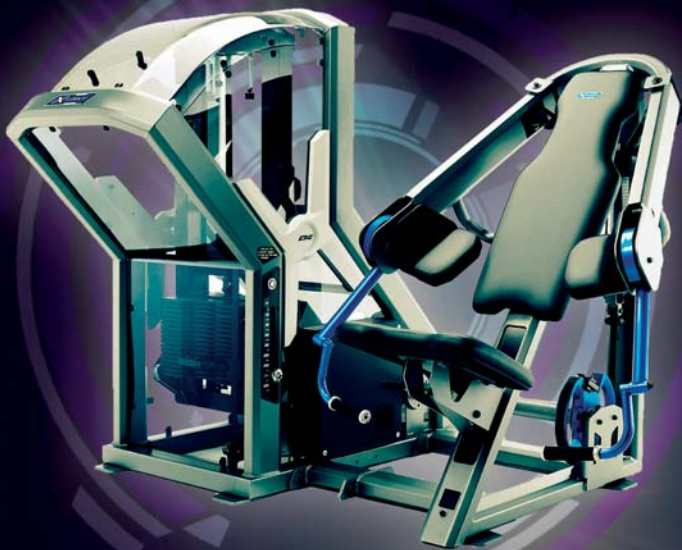


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The Amenzone Foundation offers a free after-school programme for the community



Any franchisee that comes on board has to be willing to make a difference in their community. I refuse to compromise on that



► We use fitness as a vehicle to build self-esteem and get our message out about the importance of physical and mental self-care. It's important that we focus on self-esteem as well as nutrition and fitness, and we monitor the progress of the young people in the programme. At the start, we carry out a range of tests and ask questions about fitness, nutrition and self-esteem. After a period of time, we go through all the tests again so that we can measure the effect the programme is having.

We go into a lot of very hard-hit, economically deprived communities to show these kids another way.

What about the next year?

Amenzone is such a simple, scalable model. We've already been approached by international groups who want to take it to Australia and the UK, but for

the next year we're focused on growing organically across the US via our franchise business. From a corporate perspective, our main focus is on New York and LA, which are both perfect markets for us, but we'll accommodate any other cities that fit our demographic and what we're trying to accomplish.

We've sold 10 franchises within the greater Los Angeles area and have two LA gyms open already. LA may just be our largest market. Our first Amenzone in New York will also open very soon.

And your long-term vision?

We'll have gyms across the globe. For every Amenzone Fitness gym location, we also want to have an Amenzone Foundation programme. I refuse to compromise on that. Any franchisee that comes on board has to be willing to make a difference in their community. ●

This feature first appeared in *Leisure Management*, issue 3 2014.





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Offshore fitness

Alison Bledge examines how the offshore industry is managing the health and wellbeing of its workforce, and looks at a new fitness facility onboard accommodation vessel Safe Scandinavia

The offshore environment can be an extremely inhospitable place where the health and fitness of the workforce can determine survival rates in an emergency situation. As a result, there's a growing focus on promoting the advantages of a healthy lifestyle within the UK offshore industry.

Offshore workers can be away from home for several weeks, so the comfort and wellbeing of this highly skilled workforce is also paramount. Living onboard a semi-submersible

accommodation vessel, which acts as a floating hotel that attaches to an oil rig, workers have access to a range of high standard facilities that introduce an element of creature comfort to the remote life at sea.

Safe Scandinavia, currently operating in the Norwegian Snorre oil field in the North Sea, is one such vessel. It offers rig workers a host of recreation and welfare facilities including a cinema, sauna, social areas, offices, internet café, galley and mess areas – and, crucially for the all-important health

and fitness levels, a gymnasium. This scope of offering is typical to most 'flotels', which are frequently used for platform commissioning as well as repair and modification work.

Safe Scandinavia is one of approximately 20 semi-submersible flotels in the world and is operated by Prosafe, the world's leading owner and operator of semi-submersible accommodation and service vessels. It has accommodation capacity for 583 people for worldwide operations, or for 292 single beds for Norwegian

Safe Scandinavia is one of around 20 semi-submersible 'flotels' in the world





The 'flotel' offers a gym as well as social facilities including a cinema and internet café



Life Fitness is the main supplier to the gym, with equipment installed by DG Fitness

DG FITNESS: OFFSHORE EXPERT

DG Fitness is a leading supplier to offshore platforms and vessels in both the UK and Norwegian sectors. Gary Ross, director at DG Fitness – who has worked offshore for over 30 years – set up the company in 1987, providing the offshore industry with expert knowledge and high quality fitness equipment to a wide range of platforms.

DG Fitness currently has over 120 rental sites in the UK, supplying a variety of sectors both onshore and offshore, with around £3m of gym kit currently rented out. Offshore clients include flots, platforms, drill ships, FPSOs (floating production storage offloading) and support vessels. Onshore clients include local authorities, universities and schools. All equipment comes with an annual service, as well as preventative maintenance through weekly and monthly health and safety checks.

operations (due to the high welfare regulations in Norway). Typically offshore workers have a 12-hour shift on their rig and will spend the remainder of their time on the flotel, sleeping in either individual or shared cabins.

As a moored vessel, Safe Scandinavia is anchored to the sea bed by 12 chains that keep her stable in the harshest environments. A gangway provides workers with access so they can walk back and forth to their rig or installation.

Safe Scandinavia has been on contract to major oil companies for many years and remains at the client's rig apart from when she is undergoing maintenance, with clients paying a daily fee for vessel hire. In the past, she has mainly worked in the Norwegian sector including at Valhall for BP and Snorre for Statoil. The vessel has also been contracted for emergencies, for example in 2005 when she was used at Shell MARS, in the Gulf of Mexico, after major platform damage caused by Hurricane Katrina.

But flots are in very high demand, with clients typically contracting a vessel many years in advance; there are very more rig projects than there are flots. Virtually all rigs are able to have a flotel

attached, although some modifications may be required to the rig in order for the flotel to connect properly.

Fitness as a priority

Built in 1984 at Norway's Aker Vardal yard, Safe Scandinavia was upgraded in 2003, 2009 and 2014: at the start of January 2014, the vessel underwent a five-year Special Period Survey. This is a requirement for every vessel worldwide to maintain their classification and safety standards, reducing the probability of any longer future yard stays and providing more earning capacity.

As part of the flotel's most recent refurb, a 172sq m gym was installed, fitted with Life Fitness equipment which was supplied by DG Fitness – a specialist company founded by director Gary Ross in 1987 (see briefing above).

The newly installed gym features the latest Discover Series cardiovascular and Optima Series resistance equipment from Life Fitness. This includes four treadmills, two cross-trainers, six bikes, 12 studio bikes and a range of Optima weight machines. There are also free weights including dumbbells and benches. The gym provides free access

to personnel ranging from 18 to 60 years of age and is open 24 hours a day to accommodate shift working.

Ross comments: "This highly skilled workforce needs to be physically fit to withstand the demanding working environment. But in years gone by, there were concerns about an ageing technical workforce at risk from conditions such as heart disease. There were also factors contributing to health risks, including physical inactivity and shift work that could lead to irregular eating and sleeping habits.

"Having a gym installed onboard the accommodation vessels is now seen as a high priority, especially for workers such as the offshore fire teams, who have to maintain a particularly high level of fitness.

"It's a requirement in the UK offshore oil industry that workers are medically examined to assess their fitness to work on offshore installations, so they have to complete a health questionnaire as well as undergo BMI, blood pressure and lung function checks as part of a comprehensive medical examination."

For personnel onboard Safe Scandinavia, incentive reward systems ▶



Good health and fitness among the workforce on the rig is vital, as it can determine survival rates in an emergency situation

▶ OFFSHORE SERVICE AND MAINTENANCE

"Safety is a huge requirement, so all gym equipment has to be fit for purpose and reliable," says DG Fitness' Gary Ross. "The contract states that if there's a fault, DG Fitness will repair it within 48 hours and if it can't be repaired, the equipment will be replaced within five working days. We hold around £50,000 of spare parts in Aberdeen, so we can guarantee a fast turnaround."

The company employs highly trained staff – all qualified with survival, medical and insurance certificates essential for offshore work – to safely install fitness

equipment to the highest standard, as well as carry out maintenance and repairs. DG Fitness technicians all have at least 12 months' experience before going offshore, as well as passing emergency response training or Basic Offshore Induction and Emergency Training (BOSIET).

When undertaking a site visit, the crew must report to the nearest heliport where they attend a briefing before an average 90-minute flight to the platform. Offshore, four to five hours is spent in safety briefings, including orientation of the platform, before obtaining a work permit.

have been introduced to help maintain fitness levels. Many of the personnel follow programmes that are written onshore and taken offshore to be monitored through LFconnect, Life Fitness' activity tracking system. Andy McLaughlan, public sector development manager at Life Fitness, comments: "LFconnect is an ideal solution for the gym onboard Safe Scandinavia, as it allows people to customise and track their workouts.

"Using connected cloud-based technology, LFconnect also provides DG Fitness with detailed data that means it's possible to monitor equipment usage, limit any downtime and ensure the best return on investment." ●

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A SENSE OF PURPOSE

UK-based Mosaic Spa & Health Clubs is using charity to re-discover the company's mission. Ray Algar reports

Recently I was presenting a summary of my *Fitness Sector Social Good Report* to representatives of the UK fitness industry. During questions, I was asked if there was evidence that being perceived as a compassionate and generous business generated a commercial return to the organisation. Do customers, staff and other stakeholders really care that an organisation is using its resources to solve social inequalities that may seem unconnected to its core business?

I was surprised by the question because the fitness sector is driven by an altruistic purpose – it exists to help others. Meanwhile businesses such as TOMS thrive because compassion and generosity are their ‘weapons of choice’ in the fiercely competitive world of shoes and eyewear, where their ‘buy one, we donate one’ is transforming lives and industries.

So this month, I want to share a story of how UK-based Mosaic Spa & Health

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. Gymtopia received an Outstanding Achievement Award in the ukactive Matrix Flame Awards 2014. **Read more stories and submit your own: www.Gymtopia.org**



Clubs (Mosaic) is using compassion to reinvigorate a 27-year-old business whose sense of purpose and direction had become lost following its sale to a publicly listed company.

Resetting the compass

Founded in 1987, by 2001 Fitness Express was operating 14 hotel-based health clubs across the UK, employing 300 staff. Demand for its friendly and personalised gyms was growing and the business was acquired by Crown Sports.

For three years, Fitness Express founders Dave Courteen and Steve Taylor adjusted to a listed company culture. However, business now felt very different and they yearned for their independence, so in 2004 they bought back the business.

“We had just bought the business back and found our original vision and mission had got a little lost. A friend told me about the charity Compassion, and I arranged to meet with its director to find out more,” says Courteen.

Releasing children from poverty

Compassion is an international Christian child development and child advocacy ministry, which for more than 60 years has been driven by the mission to free children from poverty. Its programmes focus on the spiritual, economic, social and physical needs of children through all stages of development, from age two to 24 years. It focuses its efforts in 26 of the world's poorest countries.

In a world where more than a billion children live on less than US\$2 a day,



In-club fundraising generated additional funds to build a playground

Doing well by doing good

In June 2014, the global information company Nielson published *The Global Survey of Corporate Social Responsibility*, polling 30,000 consumers from 60 countries (search ‘doing well by doing good’).

I was particularly struck by the responses from millennials – people born since 1982. They want to work for purpose-driven businesses, and as consumers they will seek out and pay more for goods and services provided by companies seen as more socially responsible.

Millennials comprise the backbone of the UK health and fitness industry, both as employees and as customers – so to me, compassion and generosity should be core values for all fitness sector companies, telling the world who you are and what your business stands for.



Mark Wood was one of the members of Fitness Express staff to visit Uganda

Compassion believes connecting one child with one sponsor is the most strategic way to end childhood poverty. Its Child Sponsorship Programme aims to provide long-term funding for food, health, hygiene and education.

For Mosaic – the new parent company brand for Fitness Express since 2011 – writing the occasional cheque to the charity was never going to be enough, and so it was the child sponsorship programme it focused on. Staff at Fitness Express and Imagine Spa, the company's two operating businesses, were invited to suggest a single country on which to concentrate their support. Uganda was eventually chosen from a shortlist of six countries.

A long-term commitment

Child sponsorship is no fleeting ice bucket challenge, as lifting children out of poverty takes patience and long-term funding. Mosaic agreed that, for every club and spa it operates, it would clothe, feed and educate a child in Uganda.

Mosaic's corporate mission is 'making a difference to people's lives', so this programme is perfectly aligned with the work it undertakes every day in its clubs.

As I write, the lives of 30 Ugandan children are being forever changed thanks to the compassion and generosity of Mosaic's staff and members. Over the past nine years of the partnership, the company has been quietly supporting 40 children and has invested £100,000.

Staff & member engagement

Each Fitness Express club has a Compassion board on display, to show how their sponsored child is progressing and to encourage members to participate. Staff write to sponsored children, send birthday cards and Christmas gifts, and the children write back depending on their literacy.

The clubs are encouraged to raise funds for the project over and above

their sponsorship for individual children; this pays for additional clothes, food and education. Members have also been inspired to directly sponsor other children, thereby creating a wider ripple effect. Meanwhile, in-club fundraising has provided more than £40,000 to help fund improvements in the communities where these children live, including a new playground to promote their physical and emotional development.

As Taylor says: "The Compassion initiative has been successful in providing a focus for Mosaic, its staff and customers to work together to achieve something that's very worthwhile. The visit of three of our managers to Uganda was also very powerful in the staff engagement process." ●

IN A NUTSHELL

Project by: Mosaic Spa & Health Clubs

Website: www.mosaicgroup.co.uk

Project status: Ongoing and long-term

Charity supported: Compassion UK

Impact: Uganda, east Africa

Gymtopia keywords: Clothing & Shelter, Education, Food & Nutrition, Health & Wellbeing, Helping Children



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/INBETUS

Social addiction

Manraaj Sunner offers his advice to operators wanting to develop an effective social media campaign

Social media is a true revolution: not since Vinton Cerf and Sir Tim Berners Lee invented the internet has something had so much impact on our lives. Consider this: Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Facebook, has influence over one-sixth of planet Earth's population.

A Facebook-sponsored study featured in the *Daily Mail* revealed that 89 per cent of people check at least three social apps on their smartphones within 15 minutes of waking up in the morning, and 47 per cent of respondents said they check Facebook while working out at the gym. It's arguably more than a revolution – it's an addiction that influences our decisions, our feelings and the way we live our lives.

Unsurprisingly, social media has also impacted our businesses in a very real way. The Retention People's latest survey – which was featured in a recent *Health Club Management* feature (see HCM May p59) – revealed that a massive

34 per cent of the 10,000 health club/gym customers surveyed said they valued receiving club communications via social media. So what does all this mean for gym operators?

Measurable impact

One of the many ways social media demonstrates its power lies in its impact on how we market our businesses: it offers a highly cost-effective tool to complement more traditional advertising.

The average cost of a full-page advert in a regional newspaper is approximately £300. Most regional newspapers have a distribution of around 30,000, and of their distribution I might have 100 people who actually stop and read my ad as opposed to just glancing over it on the page. So for £300, I've engaged 100 people directly – although in fact this figure is probably on the generous side.

Meanwhile, Facebook data suggests that an average of 16 per cent of your audience will organically see each of

your posts. Based on this, a Facebook page with 2,000 'likes' will have the same level of engagement, if not more, from just one posting; if you were to sponsor the post, this engagement can double or triple – plus it's all statistically measurable. And all this for £0–£12.

That said, this kind of engagement doesn't just happen, and this is very important to understand. Social media can never be the spearhead of your marketing efforts, because it requires other forms of marketing to make people aware of your existence in the first place. People see you on leaflets or in print ads, then they Google you, then they see your website, and only then do they like you on Facebook.

Some companies now only direct people to Facebook pages on their marketing, rather than directing them to their website, as it cuts out a step in the process and creates a captive audience of subscribers. But the upfront awareness advertising is still necessary.



Social media's key role is to make companies easier to relate to, adding a personal touch to what they do



Your main campaign theme must translate well across all channels, not just social media

PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/PI03



If all you're posting about are things your members can participate in or purchase, all you're trying to do is sell



Correct use of social media

A simple marketing campaign might comprise leaflets, posters, email, newspaper, radio, website updates and social media, with all of these considered integral and inter-dependent elements of your overall marketing communications mix. Your main campaign theme and message should therefore translate well across all these channels, including social media.

Social media is the only part of your marketing that's both interactive and accessible to anyone, so you should use it as a way for potential customers to get to know you better. Social media's key role from a business point of view is to make companies easier to relate to, adding a personal touch to what they do.

Importantly, social media isn't a broadcast medium. We've all been guilty of it, putting sales messages on our social profiles with last-minute promotions. The instantaneous nature of social media also makes it an attractive option for panic selling.

However, the short-term benefit often doesn't outweigh the long-term detriment. When social isn't kept 'social', you'll find engagement soon dwindles. A simple indicator of this is how many likes/retweets/+1's you get for each of your posts. If you've noticed this drop, it's time to do something about it.

What type of posts?

There are easy ways to communicate with your different user groups.

Members want to give feedback, they want to relate to messages, and they want useful information. They don't want sales messages or constant alerts about classes. A simple rule we use is commonly known as the 2-4-1 rule, which is that for every seven posts you create for your social media:

- **Two** should offer content concerning your business. Remember to keep it social, tell a story and involve your audience. A great method for engaging your audience in this scenario is tagging some of your fans in your posting – a common method used by entertainment profiles such as *The LAD Bible*.
- **Four** should offer topical information – a news article about the latest diet to sweep the nation, for example, or

To attract prospects,
make staff seem friendly
to minimise intimidation

PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/STOCKPHAGES

► answers to some common questions you've been asked that week. Be careful to make sure these complement what you offer as a service/product; if posting links to third party websites, be sure there's no inkling of a competitive product/service on that website.

- One can be an out-and-out sales message. Make sure there's a sense of urgency applied to this sales message and a clear call to action. For example, a 'no joining fee' offer needs to include details of how people should redeem it. Even an audience on social media needs to be guided in the right direction.

So what about prospects? Research done by www.sweatband.com found that, of all the types of social media updates, those relating to health, fitness, diet and weight loss were the ones people disliked the most: 53 per cent of people highlighted these types of update as their least favourite. This suggests that, from a prospect point of view, even on social media we aren't penetrating beyond the 13 per cent glass ceiling of gym members. For posts directed towards prospects, we should therefore avoid testimonials and focus more on the fears people have of joining. Make the gym look fun and the staff seem friendly to address intimidation.

Social media top tips

Creating a successful social media channel requires a combination of planning, spontaneity, the right tools and the ability to have fun. Here are a few ways to develop a solid social media strategy:

- Plan social media campaigns around your real-world marketing, so they're based on constantly changing themes rather than the same old class updates, joining offers and supplement offers.
- Pick a great management tool for your social media activity that ties in to your central marketing campaign: you can easily pre-schedule using a social media scheduling tool. There are plenty of free tools online, but we use Buffer, which is something many bluechip companies use nowadays. It gives you the freedom to keep your social media accounts ticking over with minimal management, which in turn gives you the freedom to have more spontaneous fun with your social media.
- Share so people care. Make sure you share those strange, humorous, exciting moments on your social media channels as and when they happen. Sharing things as they happen, no matter how odd or embarrassing, makes your business look more human and approachable.
- Don't broadcast. You may not think you're doing this very often, but you probably are. If all you're posting about are things your members can participate in, purchase or book, all you're actually doing is trying to sell. Try posting something solely for entertainment purposes and watch the change in response. Remember the 2-4-1 rule.
- Link your social channels to everything. Online, link all your activity back to your social media channels – email, website updates and blog posts. And do the same in reverse: whenever

you've updated content elsewhere, make sure it goes on your social channels and pretty soon you'll have the makings of a content network.

Just good friends

Whether your business is just you or you oversee an office of hundreds, whether you operate a small business or you run a multinational, social media is a force that can benefit any business if leveraged in the right way.

The key principle of your interactions should be to make your company appear as human as possible. If the buying public views your company as having its own personality, it makes your business more relatable. Social media is the only marketing channel available to you that allows customers to befriend your business – and we all trust the opinions and recommendations of our friends. ●

Manraaj Sunner has worked in the health and fitness industry in a marketing capacity for the last 10 years, with a number of multi-site operators. Recently, he founded 3one5 Marketing, a full-service agency dedicated to working with clients from the health, fitness and leisure industries, with a focus on integrating modern marketing techniques for optimum response.

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Use software to optimise sports pitch and court bookings

With reams of membership data available at the touch of a button, how can clubs use the information they have at their fingertips to make smarter business decisions? Kate Langrish reports

Things have moved on from the days when member data was just a list of names and addresses. The latest customer management software allows health and fitness clubs to mine detailed information about member preferences, motivations and habits – and use it to drive revenues and increase profits. So why do so many operators make so little use of it?

"Typically operators use basic statistical evaluations of the demographic build-up of their customer databank – gender, age, location and birthday," says Guenther Poellabauer, sales and marketing director for software provider TAC. "This is a very basic observation of a company's customer pool, and a very small percentage of what's being captured by the software."

In fact, a study by Harvard Business School found that, such is the volume of digital content and data generated by businesses across the board nowadays,

at least 80 per cent of the data captured remains unstructured and unused.

So within the health and fitness sector specifically, what sort of data is being captured that clubs aren't really using – or at least not using to its full potential?

Making use of space

Be honest, how often is your squash court/children's pool/sports hall/delete as appropriate, empty? One of the areas many clubs leak profit is in the under-utilisation of certain areas, and even certain classes.

"More and more, people want to understand how to make better use of their empty spaces, be it in bookable areas or classes. Software systems allow clubs to contact members who have done certain things before, and who would therefore be likely respondents in the future – for example, sending an email to five-a-side users if a pitch is free, or inviting parents to book a birthday party for their child 11 months after the previous booking," says Georgia Dowdeswell, senior product design lead at Gladstone Health & Leisure.

It's one thing knowing how many people are in your club at any one time,



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ZUBIRBETA

A previous party booking can be followed up 11 months later



Make sure you contact members well before they think about leaving

From static to active reporting

Sadly the challenge doesn't end with operators' limited use of data: what clubs do with the information they do successfully access often also misses the mark.

"They use reports to tell them what the numbers are – such as participation and finance – and they tend to pull off lists of this information. We call this static reporting," explains Ieuan Williams, bid manager for XN Leisure, who believes this sort of 'static reporting' is not worth the paper it's printed on, as many clubs don't have the time or skills to interpret the data and put changes into action.

In today's market, with profit being squeezed from all areas, static reporting no longer cuts it. Clubs need to be reacting quickly and efficiently – and the latest management software enables this by providing active solutions, such as automatically sending alerts to people who have used courts before if there's last-minute availability, or highlighting how a simple change in class time could turn a half-filled class into a sell-out.

"Nowadays, being able to respond swiftly to threats and changes is essential, and it's interesting how these business systems can facilitate that," says Sean Maguire, managing director of Legend Club Management Systems. "Where previously you would discover a problem a month or two in arrears – at best – you can now identify the same issues in real time and respond quickly."

PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ANASTASIA PHOTOGRAPHY

but understanding exactly where they're going can help you optimise space, as Dowdeswell explains: "Translating a list of attendances into hourly breakdowns can reveal the usage trends and help better manage classes, courses and resources/space. It can also enable managers to identify classes that are showing a decline over time. They can then take immediate action by getting customer feedback and potentially making changes to the class timetable or the way those classes are marketed."

Keep them coming

Client attrition and retention data is arguably the most important

information to have at your fingertips, and newer software allows for more sophisticated management than the standard 'we're sorry you've left' letter.

"We did a survey of clubs and found that many suffered the same problem of membership dropping off after the year anniversary. Very often, members were being contacted about renewal as the year approached or membership had already expired, but the feedback revealed they felt the club hadn't communicated with them," says Damien Brown, general manager at ClubWise. "You need systems in place that will contact members long before they think about leaving."

Having a member journey in place is vital, agrees Ieuan Williams of XN Leisure: "Text reminders for induction, motivational emails dependent on number of visits, getting clients back in for reviews to freshen up programmes and so on – all of this can help retention."

The latest systems also help manage retention on a month-by-month, even class-by-class, basis. "These reports can show you who 'no-showed' to a class so you can follow up with them, or who hasn't been to your health club in three months so you can email them with a 'We miss you!' email," says Stephanie Jennings, senior vice president of sales for MindBody. "There are a huge variety ▶



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► of automated emails and text messages that can be sent out to clients like these, and this can help with relationship-building as well as improving retention."

More for your money

Member data can also reveal other potential sources of revenue. "Analysing class usage, for example, means you can see opportunities for upselling," says Shez Namooya, business development manager for EZ-Runner. "Perhaps members who don't attend classes might be more likely to buy PT services. Or could you use it to track certain class attendees and influence what you cross-sell or promote?"

"Meanwhile, tracking turn-away bookings, or tracking the reasons you're unable to fulfil a booking, can create business cases to justify extra space or resources. What if a change in opening times could increase revenue by 10 per cent, for example?"

Online behaviour

With members increasingly demanding the convenience of booking through their computer, smartphone or tablet, tracking online behaviour becomes ever more important for clubs.

Clubs can track online behaviour via computer, phone or tablet bookings

"Studying customers' online behaviour is a big opportunity, and generally one that's under-exploited in the industry," says Legend MD Sean Maguire. "Our customers are able to study when customers browse their self-service web pages and smartphone apps. As a result, they can respond on the very same day to opportunities or unproductive campaigns. "Sometimes customers are put off by the perception of it being difficult to do, but this is much simpler than non-technical people might think it is."

It's all about the customer

Many club management software systems also offer indirect benefits to members of the club, which consequently helps increase loyalty and improve retention – a win-win situation.

"Gladstone's new reporting tool, eyeQ, allows clubs to really understand the value of the membership fee to each individual. It reveals high users and allows rewards to further their loyalty, and also identifies people attending less often, who may be at higher risk of leaving. In this case, it works hand-in-hand with our other products to create direct interactions to encourage retention," explains Dowdeswell.

"This enables members to feel like they're not just a number. There's no use in sending out texts and emails encouraging a member to make use of

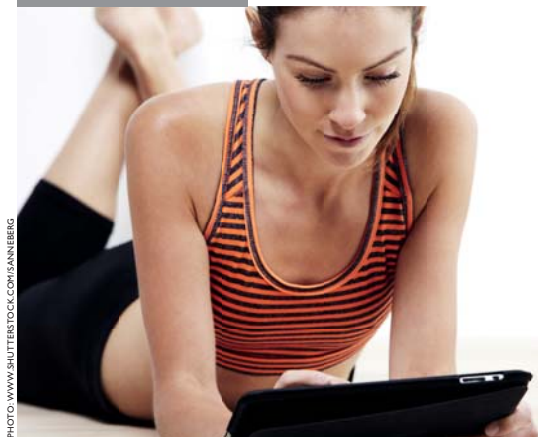


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Analysing group class usage could produce opportunities for upselling

your seldom-used weights room if she's only interested in classes. But send that same member targeted details about a new, similar class and she'll feel like you're talking just to her."

It's the nature of this direct interaction that's all-important, agrees Brown, and software isn't just a tool for managers. "The training area on our dashboard allows personal trainers to see their prospects, view and tap into client records. They can also create tasks and add notes on the member's record, increasing the sense of a personal, bespoke service."

The front desk can also impact on customer satisfaction, says Poellabauer, and with a general trend towards fewer staff behind the front desk, it's never been more important for them to have the right information at their fingertips.

"If a member's preferences are there, a receptionist will immediately know upon booking whether, for example, the customer prefers a male or female massage therapist. It all means better customer service," he explains.

"With wider automation due to pressure on costs, there's a lot more data being generated. But frontline staff still must service customers swiftly and properly," adds Maguire. "Trusting what's in front of you on-screen has become much more important as fewer staff service more customers."

What help is available?

With all this to gain, why aren't clubs making better use of software systems they have in place, or looking to invest in a new one? "In the past, specialist reporting software has been expensive and unwieldy to use. But these days, products like ours are designed for non-expert users," says Dowdeswell.

"Importantly, they have an intuitive user interface, so users can easily connect to data on members, attendance, bookings, class viability and subscriptions – but the system also has automated responses to action improvements."

This is a key development. Having reams and reams of data will not help a club's business if no-one is using it to make informed decisions. The good news is that the latest software management systems not only track data but can, if required, play an interactive role. "Reporting systems that simply spit out spreadsheets of customer data are no longer useful enough," explains Maguire. "A good reporting system must sit with all the customer data on it and must have the ability to set targets, budgets and KPIs, and generate alerting so staff can drive action in real time."

Namooya agrees: "As software suppliers, we have the opportunity to aid data analysis and extraction. You create the parameters and the system communicates to your members and lets you analyse the data."

"But the key is always to 'KISS': keep it simple, stupid! Don't over-analyse and stick to key areas and outline goals you are trying to achieve."

And don't be afraid to ask the software experts for help. "We do this day in, day out, so we can assess where the customer is and what will be the quickest wins," says Williams. "The process of automating communications can be extremely simple – and very beneficial." It's time to get to know your members that little bit better. ●

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RESEARCH ROUND-UP

Early start

Two new studies give insight into children's exercise. We take a closer look at the findings

Setting up exercise classes that include group activities for both mothers and kids, or that are held before school, could be a winning formula for health club operators, suggests new research.

Mum's the word

Scientists from Cambridge and Southampton universities in the UK have found there's a direct link between the physical activity levels of mums and their children. In fact, it discovered that youngsters are not naturally active and that mothers play an important role in the amount of exercise their kids get. This suggests clubs that want to get results from younger members would benefit from creating classes where parents and their kids exercise together.

The study*, published in the journal *Pediatrics* in March, was based on 554 mothers and their children who were aged four and not yet at school (but most went to nursery). All wore a heart-rate monitor and accelerometer continuously for seven days.

The data revealed that, for every minute of moderate-to-vigorous exercise a mum did, her child would be 10 per cent more active. Yet it was also noted that only 53 per cent of mothers performed 30 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous activity at least once a week.

Co-author Kathryn Hesketh, who's now a research associate at University College London, told the BBC: "The more active the mother did, the more active her child. Although it's not possible to tell from this study whether active children were making their mothers run around them,



If a mother is active, her child is likely to be active too

PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/INOCARDON/ILVA

it's likely that activity in one of the pair influences activity in the other."

Hesketh added that, while 10 per cent extra a week doesn't sound like much, it's more significant when looking at exercise over a month or even a year.

Helping with ADHD

Another piece of research**, published in the *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology* last month, found that before-school exercise may reduce the symptoms of ADHD in children at school and home; gym operators might look at scheduling exercise classes earlier in the day.

Researchers from Michigan State University and the University of Vermont, US, studied 202 early elementary students ranging from kindergarten years through to second grade. Some of the children showed signs of ADHD, while others did not.

The children were randomly split into two groups, with one conducting moderate exercise for 30 minutes before school, while the other group was asked to complete more sedentary tasks.

All children in the exercise group showed improvements in areas such as attention and mood compared to those who did no physical activity. These benefits applied to those with or without risk of ADHD symptoms.

Lead study author Betsy Hoza told the *Wall Street Journal*: "This is the first large-scale study demonstration of improvements in ADHD symptoms from aerobic physical activity using a randomised controlled trial methodology." She also said that "this shows promise as a new avenue of treatment for ADHD", and that the results were comparable to those expected from the treatment of ADHD by a trained professional.

It was suggested that further studies should investigate how the frequency and amount of physical activity can impact on children, with the issue of age-related benefits also being explored.

Alan Smith, chair of the kinesiology department at Michigan State, said: "This gives schools one more good reason to incorporate physical activity into the school day."

*Hesketh K et al. Activity Levels in Mothers and Their Preschool Children. *Pediatrics*. March 2014; "Hoza B et al. A Randomized Trial Examining the Effects of Aerobic Physical Activity on Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Symptoms in Young Children. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*. September 2014.

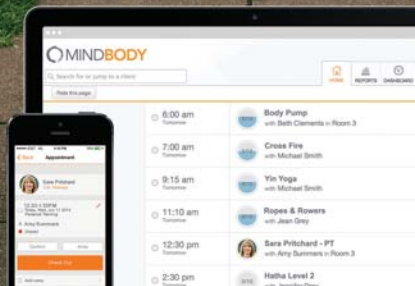
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PROINSIGHT™

MYSTERY SHOPPING FOR SUCCESS

David Hopkins, MD and founder of mystery shopping and research company Proinsight, talks about the company's future focus and how they're helping clients turn everyday insights into profits



David Hopkins

What's your background?

I've worked in sport and leisure for the past 15 years, starting out on the gym floor and rising to senior management positions at leisure chains such as Next Generation, David Lloyd and GLL.

In 2008, I became a partner at Proleisure, which manages high profile leisure and sport infrastructure projects for clients such as Manchester City FC, Les Mills and the Emirates Stadium.

Earlier this year, I headed up the launch of sister company Proinsight Research, which is leading the way with the latest techniques in consumer insight and research for leisure businesses.

Our executive directors are Andy Kay and Mhairi FitzPatrick, who each have a wealth of experience in the

industry. Andy and Mhairi founded the corporate wellbeing company, ARK Leisure Management, and they own the prestigious 37° health clubs in London. They've backed Proinsight under a new venture, Socius Investing, which invests in leisure businesses and works with the management to accelerate growth.

Why did you launch Proinsight and what services do you offer?

I'm a passionate believer in the value of good research. Most organisations use research a little too late in the business cycle. It's often used simply to validate what's been done, but when done early, it can fuel new ideas and innovations.

We offer a range of services designed to give insight into what's happening

when a customer interfaces with any part of a client's business – including mystery shopping, bespoke research projects, National Benchmarking Services, non-user surveys, exits surveys, and so on.

What sets you apart from other mystery shopper specialists?

We want our services to deliver a tangible return on investment for clients. For example, when we mystery shop an organisation's sales process, using our unique process, we expect to see uplift in revenue as a direct result.

We also deliver fast results, so clients can act on those findings and implement valuable changes to their business. We can mystery shop a health club, compile the report, validate the information and deliver the results to our client's mobile device within 48 hours. If our clients have customer-facing issues they want to fix them now, not next month.

What are some of your more niche services?

We use sophisticated technology to deliver HD visual recordings of the customer experience for some of our clients.

Results are compelling. To be able to listen to and watch a service encounter in HD is an incredibly powerful tool and can be a wonderful training vehicle.

Video shopping is the next level of mystery shopping for the sector.



**Proinsight has over 4,000
mystery shoppers putting
businesses through their paces**

Who else is on your team?

We're very excited to have appointed experienced research specialist, Anna Marangi, as our head of client services & research. Anna has worked on UK and international research projects for high profile clients in the medical, legal and energy sectors, and recently worked on a large project researching links between diabetes and obesity. She'll help us to grow the research arm of our business taking on bespoke projects for clients.

Our other employees work in our fulfilment department scheduling the mystery shops, reviewing each report and maintaining the highest quality.

And we have our 4,000 mystery shoppers nationwide, covering Cornwall to Inverness, Dublin to Norwich.

How do you find and grow that army of shoppers?

Our shoppers and field research teams come from a wide demographic which means our clients get insight from a relevant cross section of the population. We manage our database of shoppers tightly and recruit from targeted areas, from *Saga* to *Netmums* to *Student Job*.

Once they've passed the online assessment they get additional job specific training and guidance. Our shoppers are happy, engaged and we pay them well. They appreciate our efforts and they reward us by doing a great job.

The integrity of our research and data is paramount because it's on this that our clients base their business decisions.

Why should clients engage you?

Take one of our most popular products – a mystery shopping programme designed for a health club's sales team. Pound for pound, it's one of the best investments a health and fitness club manager will make.

It's an extremely detailed and cutting edge research process, covering anywhere between 200-300 evaluation points – both qualitative and quantitative research, plus the more emotional aspects of staff interactions.

The information we provide will help the club sell more memberships in a matter of days. There is no faster, clearer return on investment.



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Can you highlight a recent client success story?

We recently worked with Pro-active Camden (a partnership between the London Borough of Camden, NHS London and Camden's leisure facility operators) on the Give it a Go initiative.

The scheme gave a group of 1,000 hard-to-reach and inactive local residents the opportunity to take part in free physical activity.

Proinsight was responsible for measuring the impact that this scheme had on their mental, physical and emotional wellbeing during, after and a year later. The work was nominated for a ukactive Flame Award in 2013.

This kind of data will be essential for many organisations seeking continued or project funding for the future.

What do you see as the key trends in leisure currently?

Micro gyms and wearable technology are stealing all the headlines! These developments are great for the sector as they represent real vertical change as opposed to horizontal expansion.

The economy is picking up and there is much more investment. Businesses are changing hands and this is good news for us because new owners need research and independent insight.

ukactive is getting its message across. 'More people, more active, more often' is a clear brief and I think it's beginning to resonate with the industry. It's the

research behind the stats that tells us people need to get more active and this will need to be measured going forward.

It feels like we're in a good place, in a good industry at a good time.

How will these trends shape the future, and what could it mean for Proinsight and its clients?

Amid all this exciting change, nothing survives without great service. We help our clients understand where their service delights and where it falls short, so they can either reward staff or fix problems quickly.

With our clients, we're working on reward programmes to recognise those magic moments staff provide.

We're also launching our first benchmarking report this month, which will assist senior managers in understanding the key industry trends in commercial sales performance.

The future looks exciting, and we're the new kids on the block, full of energy and passion with an appetite to innovate and develop new products. Our energy is infectious, and it's reflected in the great work we do for our customers. ●

For more details on Proinsight Research, contact:

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COOL CUSTOMER

Vasper, a hi-tech fitness system based on cooling and compression, has been designed to reproduce the effect of a high-intensity anaerobic training session – in just 20 minutes. Katie Barnes reports



PHOTO © CODY PICKENS

Vasper helped Olympic athlete Erica Ashley McLain “recover faster than any doctors expected”

There's a new piece of cutting-edge equipment that's grabbing the attention of NASA researchers and

Olympic athletes alike, thanks to its ability to reproduce the effects of a high-intensity anaerobic training session in just 20 minutes. Vasper – which stands for vascular performance – uses cooling and compression systems to accelerate the activation of fast twitch muscles, placing them in an anaerobic state without the normal wear and tear on the body of a longer workout.

But it's not just astronauts and elite sports people who can benefit from Vasper: it's been created to optimise the health of any user at any level of fitness. So just how can it do this?

How it works

Designed by Peter Wasowski, an entrepreneur from Hawaii, the Vasper workout consists of a 20-minute intensive interval fitness programme, tailored to people's abilities, on a recumbent bike. So far, so apparently normal. But the Vasper system has two particular hi-tech features that make all the difference.

- **Compression:** Patented Vasper technology includes compression cuffs filled with cool liquid. According to Wasowski: "The cuffs place gentle pressure on the muscles of the upper arms and thighs to activate the fast twitch muscles and place them in an anaerobic state which, in turn, increases lactic acid."

"The build-up of lactic acid pushes the brain into a rebuild and recovery state, so it cranks up production of anabolic hormones such as human growth hormones (hGH) and testosterone."

It's these extra biochemicals that help rebuild and strengthen muscle tissue, and lead to additional health benefits associated with intense anaerobic exercise such as fat loss, increased muscle, more restful sleep, greater energy and an enhanced overall sense of wellbeing.

- **Core body cooling:** As well as the cuffs, the Vasper system includes a cooling vest, copper footplates and a helmet. These are filled with chilled liquid and are designed to keep the



Vasper inventor Peter Wasowski

Vasper reproduces the effect of a high-intensity anaerobic training session, but with less effort and less physical damage

body's core temperature lower during exercise. Clients can push themselves a lot harder without sweating and without wear and tear. It also means that fatigue is less likely to set in – as it does when the body's temperature rises – and strength, endurance and cognitive functions don't start to deteriorate as rapidly, if at all.

After the exercise, users rest for 10 minutes on a liquid-cooled mat to flush out lactic acid, lessen fatigue and further maximise the benefits of the workout.

The benefits

In short, Wasowski says the Vasper system has "been designed to reproduce the effect of a high-intensity anaerobic training session, but with less effort and less physical damage".

He adds: "Anaerobic exercise is traditionally only possible through heavy weightlifting or high-intensity interval training, which many people either can't perform or don't want to do."

Other media claim that the 20-minute programme gives the benefit of a two-hour workout, but Wasowski will not confirm this. What he does say is that: "Vasper provides easier access to these anaerobic benefits to anyone,

regardless of their physical ability or age." He adds that it should be used to complement existing workouts rather than completely replacing them.

Uptake to date

For the moment, members of the public can only try out Vasper at its offices in Silicon Valley, California and Hawaii, US. Prices for the 30-minute session start at US\$35 (£26, £21), but a number of packages and memberships are available. Once funding has been raised, the idea is to roll out the system in rehabilitation centres and to corporate clients.

One of its corporate clients includes Google, which installed Vasper at its Californian headquarters in May. It's also being trialled by number of athletes who've written testimonials on the Vasper website.

Patrick Marleau, the star of the San Jose Sharks ice hockey team, says: "Within 20 minutes of my first use, I had the endorphin rush that you can usually only achieve after a much longer workout. It helps with my recovery after strenuous workouts... When I do Vasper before my workouts, I have some of the best workouts. I can maybe compare it to a runner's high."

Another advocate is US Olympic triple jumper Erica Ashley McLain (pictured), who used Vasper for rehabilitation following a serious injury. She says: "I was told I would never run again. A year later, I posted the top triple jump distance in the US. I feel confident that adding Vasper to my standard rehabilitation programme helped me beat the odds of my injury and helped me recover faster than any of my doctors expected."

In 2011, Vasper also signed a three-year agreement with US space agency NASA. Astronauts have to exercise for a least four hours a day in space to prevent muscle and bone loss, and NASA is interested in seeing how Vasper might reduce workout time. Dr Jeffrey Smith at the NASA Ames Research Center told CBS San Francisco: "We're not here to endorse them [Vasper], but we want to understand what they're doing, how it's scientifically possible, and what the potential of this technology might be for NASA." ●

Child's play

What can be done about the rising levels of childhood obesity around the world? Kate Cracknell talks to the people behind a range of initiatives designed to promote physical activity among children – all with a strong focus on fun and play

HEALTHY HABITS

Kathleen Tullie – founder of the BOKS initiative, a before-school programme funded by Reebok – explains how getting kids active before class can set them up for both learning and life



Kathleen Tullie, founder of BOKS

“BOKS’ founding principle is that physical activity can improve classroom performance and behaviour”

When was BOKS founded, and why?

BOKS (Build Our Kids’ Success) was founded in 2009 at one elementary school in Natick, Massachusetts, US – originally under the name Fit Kidz Get Up & Go, prior to Reebok’s involvement.

The reason was quite simple. After 18 years in the corporate world of real estate finance, I tried my hand at being a stay-at-home mum, but I only lasted a few months. I read the book *Spark* by Harvard Medical School professor Dr John Ratey, which describes the profound effect exercise has on the mind, and I was hooked.

I was inspired by the fact that physical activity, especially before school, can have an impact on both classroom

performance and behaviour. Yet the US school systems are sorely lacking in opportunities for our kids to be active: fewer than 4 per cent of elementary schools have daily PE, and only 57 per cent of schools have regular recess. It’s no wonder obesity rates are rising.

I was already getting my kids and others in the neighbourhood together for impromptu soccer matches and running races before the school bus arrived in the morning, and I wanted to see if I could activate other parents and their kids to get involved. I teamed up with two other mums – Jen Lawrence, a CrossFit enthusiast, and Cheri Levitz, who had a background as a lawyer – and we developed two 12-week curricula for the school year. Word started to spread in surrounding areas too, and I started getting calls from other parents wanting to start a programme at their schools.

So what is BOKS?

BOKS is a free, before-school physical activity programme designed for elementary school kids aged 5–11, although we’ve recently developed a curriculum for middle schools too – grades 5 to 8 (ages 11–14).

Its goal is to get kids moving in the morning and their minds ready for a day of learning. It teaches motor skills, functional fitness movements, and how to be part of a team and play with different ages. Its mission: to promote

BOKS is now offered in over 1,000 schools in the US and around the world





A popular offering: In BOKS surveys, when kids are asked if they want to come back next session, 96 per cent say yes

the profound impact of physical activity on a child's mind, body and community.

The founding principal of BOKS is that physical activity, especially before school, can improve classroom performance and behaviour – but it also plays a positive role in the obesity epidemic and kids' overall health and wellbeing.

Each day, BOKS trainers guide kids through a 45-minute lesson plan that includes a warm-up, a running-related activity, a skill of the week, group games and a BOKS Bit – an age-appropriate nutritional tip developed by Tufts Medical Center and designed for kids to learn and share at home.

How did the link with Reebok start?

One of the members of our school board was from Reebok, and they suggested we went in to pitch for promotional items. A senior executive joined the meeting and explained that Reebok had made it a priority to reverse the culture of spectatorship to become a culture of participation. He believed we had to start with young people, and that BOKS was the perfect way to give kids around the world access to physical activity. We realised Reebok could help us reach many more children: since then, with the support of our pro-bono partners, we've grown to over 1,000 schools.

How is BOKS run in schools?

The programme is designed to run for two 12-week sessions, once in the

autumn and then the winter/spring. However, the curriculum is created to be flexible and adaptable. There are schools that run three- to 10-week programmes, while other schools offer a BOKS drop-in programme every day during term time. In some towns, the local YMCA uses BOKS as part of its before-school programming. In others, they offer BOKS to the whole school.

Of the 1,000 schools enrolled in BOKS throughout the world, the highest concentration is in Massachusetts, US.

What difference does BOKS make?

I believe that BOKS has a tremendous power to effectuate change: I had one special needs teacher tell me they'd never known anything have such an impact on the children. We also run surveys at the end of our sessions, and one question speaks volumes: when we ask if a child wants to come back next session, 96 per cent say yes.

The simplicity of BOKS is what makes it so effective. Anybody can become a BOKS trainer, from parents and teachers to nurses and custodians – they just need the passion to make a difference in the lives of our children. All we need is one champion in every school. That's how, together, we can make a huge difference in children's lives.

I think one of the reasons we've seen success is that we're walking the walk. In schools where we have parent trainers/volunteers, the kids are seeing

that being active isn't only good for them but for their whole family. By looking at comments in the surveys, we notice that kids are encouraging their families to be more active. Instead of staying inside at the weekend, they're suggesting their families go on hikes or to the park. Kids are also becoming more aware of healthy nutrition and they're teaching their families about it.

BOKS helps the younger generation embrace the healthy habits that will help reverse the obesity epidemic over time.

How is BOKS funded?

The majority of the funding currently comes via The Reebok Foundation, for which BOKS is its primary programme. We've also received more localised funding through organisations like The Boston Foundation.

What are your main challenges?

One of the main challenges is continuing to build evidence to prove to the education system that physical activity on a daily basis is critical to academic performance, as well as the overall health and wellness of the student.

What can fitness facility operators learn from BOKS?

The biggest learning is that kids like to be active when given the opportunity. If physical activity is fun and engaging, kids will come back for more. It's our responsibility to provide opportunities. ►

PLAY FOR LIFE

Playgrounds are vital to children's welfare, says Darell Hammond, founder and CEO of KaBOOM!

"The whole city should be a playground. Play should happen everywhere"

What is KaBOOM! and why was it founded?

KaBOOM! is a national non-profit organisation in the US, dedicated to saving play for America's children. Our children are playing less than any previous generation, and this lack of play is causing them profound physical, intellectual, social and emotional harm.

Our mission is to create great play spaces through the participation and leadership of communities. We would like to see a place to play within walking distance of every child in America.

Why are playgrounds so important?

Play is the 'work' of kids. It's a way for them to exercise their mind, their body and their wiggles. It's the way they rationalise the world around them. It's the way they learn social connections. It's both very intricate and very simple, and it's the foundation for a lifelong ability to have relationships, to have health and to live a full life.

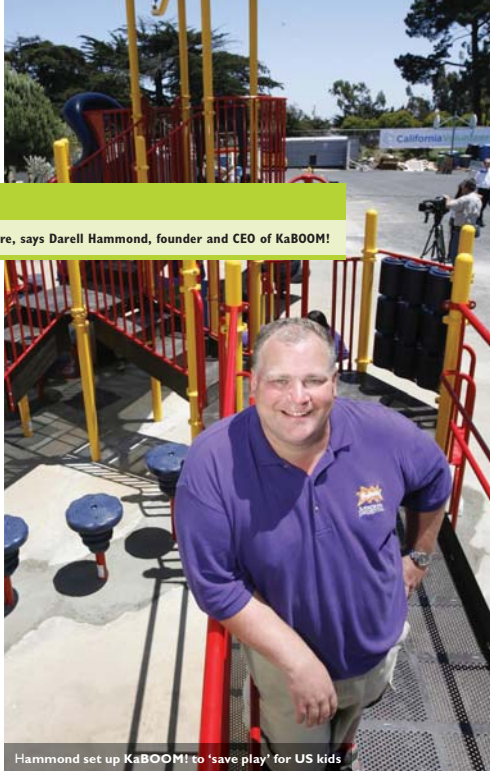
We therefore need to ensure all kids have access to safe places to play.

How many sites have you built?

Although not yet under the KaBOOM! name, the first KaBOOM! playground build took place in October 1995, in Washington, DC. KaBOOM! was officially founded in 1996 and has since raised more than US\$200m, rallied a million corporate and community volunteers, led the construction of over 2,600 playgrounds, and inspired a movement for a child's right to play.

What more can be done?

The problem is, we've designed kids out of cities. Not enough playspaces are being built, and those that exist are often



Hammond set up KaBOOM! to 'save play' for US kids

in disrepair. Fears surrounding lawsuits and safety are trumping common sense, resulting in sterile, uninspiring play environments. Recess is being eliminated from our nation's schools. Kids are overscheduled, and in their free time many choose to stay indoors, lulled by television, computers and video games.

At KaBOOM! we talk about creating 'playable' cities, by which we mean cities that take steps to ensure active play becomes the easy choice for every child, every day. People already talk about walkability and bike-ability, but those are generally focused on adults. We want to encourage communities to design family-friendly, child-friendly cities once again.

Are any cities doing it right?

We've recently set up the Playful City USA programme, in partnership with the Humana Foundation, and this year we've recognised 212 cities that we believe are on the right journey. They're

setting bold goals, they're trying to solve big problems using play as the solution.

Chicago, for example, and what the mayor's doing there – he's finding the money to build 300 new playgrounds, so there's one within a seven-minute walk of every person living in Chicago.

I'm excited by some of the examples we're seeing, but it's just the start. We need to intensify efforts, recognise best practice and aim for a domino effect whereby more cities adopt family-friendly, child-friendly policies. We get tens of thousands of applications every year for the 200 playgrounds we end up building, so we need other people to join the cause.

What must society as a whole do to reverse the rise in childhood obesity?

Cities need to offer amenities that allow families to socialise. Playgrounds are important, but the whole city should be a playground with parks, sidewalks and paths. Play should happen everywhere. ▶

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Some of Disney's most popular characters were used to encourage kids to do an extra 10 minutes' exercise a day

FUELLING THEIR IMAGINATIONS

This summer, Disney came on-board with the UK's Change4Life programme in a six-week partnership designed to get the nation's kids more active. Marianthi O'Dwyer, vice president and head of living well at Disney, explains why

Why did Disney want to get involved in Change4Life?

We conducted research and listened to thousands of parents across the UK with a view to understanding the healthy lifestyle goals they had for their family and how we could help. Our findings showed that over three-quarters of mums thought being active and physically fit should be fun, and nine out of 10 mums said a Disney healthy living programme would help their families.

What exactly was Disney's involvement in Change4Life?

At its heart, the Disney brand is all about storytelling and creativity, and the 10 Minute Shake-up campaign put these qualities to the fore. It used some of our most popular characters from film and TV to encourage children to do an extra 10 minutes of activity a day, with a view to getting the country moving for an additional 100 million minutes over the six weeks of the summer holidays.

The partnership was about bringing stories to life through fun activities that inspired children to get active. From classics like Mickey Mouse and Cinderella, to Disney Pixar



O'Dwyer: Disney head of living well

favourites like *Finding Nemo*, through to characters like Olaf and Elsa from our latest animation *Frozen*, the aim was to provide families with a wealth of fun and simple-to-follow 10-minute activities to really get hearts pumping.

How did it work?

This campaign, brought to families by Change4Life with a little magic from Disney, provided tools and games to shake things up and get kids more active – and ultimately healthier.

Free packs were available via the Change4Life website, each containing inspiration, ideas and tools to get kids doing fun bursts of activity for 10 minutes. There was also a stopwatch for timing 10 minutes of activity, a wall chart and stickers for monitoring activity in the home, and a pack of 10 Minute Shake-Up Disney activity cards.

How did this fit in with Disney's broader strategy?

We're proud that Disney plays such a big part in the lives of kids growing up here in the UK and around the world. We also know that the brand has the ability to impact people – and especially children – incredibly powerfully, and we take this responsibility very seriously. Bob Iger, chair and CEO of the Walt Disney Company, has therefore pledged the company's commitment to using the unique relationship that children have with Disney characters in a positive way, to help families lead healthier lives.

Our vision with the Change4Life partnership was to inspire families to flourish by encouraging life-long healthy behaviours through storytelling, imagination, fun and play. ●

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The Future of Fitness

Mega clubs, budget operators and out-of-club offerings – what does the future hold for the health and fitness industry? Michael Oliver analyses the findings of Mintel's *2014 Health and Fitness Clubs* report

The UK health and fitness club industry survived much of the economic downturn relatively unscathed, but the past two years have seen tougher conditions as consumers have had to cut their expenditure further in the wake of a prolonged period of real terms declines in living standards. The structure of the fitness industry has also changed significantly in this period, with budget clubs hitting the mid-market hard.

Expectations are for modest growth in market value and volume by the end of 2014, reflecting likely improvements in living standards in the second half of the year, as well as a rise in consumer confidence and falling unemployment. Forecasts suggest that the market will then grow by 5.9 per cent in the next five years, to a value of £2.823m by 2018.

Demise of the mega club?

The future of the mega club is a key issue in the market. Over the past three years, full-service clubs with wet and dry facilities have only grown in number by 5 per cent, compared to 9 per cent for larger dry clubs and 30 per cent for smaller gymnasiums/fitness suites (an area which includes many budget clubs).

Most of the growth in terms of new site openings during the economic downturn came from the budget sector and, more recently, from microgyms, which often specialise in one type of instructor-led group activity, whether that's cycling, dance or fitness classes.

This reflects a growing expectation on the part of consumers for personalisation and customisation of products and services. Additionally, it reflects the lack of availability of suitable

sites for the large club formats, and the fact that the market is almost saturated with this type of outlet.

Mintel believes that operators will have to start looking at 'infilling' with smaller clubs, in the same way that the major supermarket chains have switched to building smaller convenience stores serving local neighbourhoods. This has already been recognised by operators such as David Lloyd Leisure, which has begun to open its DL Studio sites in high street locations, as well as Fitness First with smaller clubs such as The Beat being opened near other full-service clubs operated by the chain; more such clubs will follow across London.

However, the problem for the larger operators is that many of these types of sites have already been taken by the burgeoning budget clubs sector.

Battle of the budgets

Another key issue in the market is the future of the budget sector. Between 2011 and 2014, the number of budget clubs in the UK has grown by 203 per cent, from 73 to 221. However, the annual rate of growth in budget club site numbers has decreased, from 95 per

Members who can't always get to their club might pay to have a live class streamed into their home

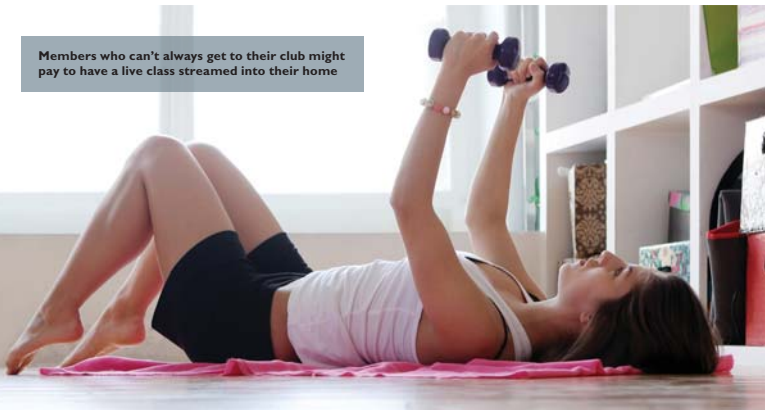


PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/EMO PHOTO STUDIO

Outdoor activities could attract those who don't want to work out in a club

PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/LUNAHAGES

cent in 2012 to 29 per cent in 2013 and 21 per cent in 2014.

The budget sector has thrived during the harsher economic times of the past five years, but conditions for the budget sector may become tougher in the next few years: the UK is in the early stages of what looks likely to be a strong economic recovery, consumer confidence has really bounced back and unemployment is falling much more rapidly than anticipated. The combined effect of these factors means that consumers may be more prepared to look at increasing their monthly outgoings again, which could potentially include trading up to a more expensive health club membership.

Additionally, there's some evidence that saturation of budget options (encompassing budget clubs, plus some local authority leisure centres) is being approached in some areas. This is leading to budget clubs cutting joining fees and, in some cases, monthly fees. Competition – whether budget club vs budget club, or budget club vs local authority gym – is likely to intensify, and this is not going to be good for margins.

Not only that, but the emergence of the budget sector has caused a tremendous polarisation within the health and fitness club market. Mid-market operators have either had to move further upmarket to more

clearly differentiate their offering from that of the budget operators, or else they have moved more towards a low-cost model in order to compete more effectively – and with it making the budget segment even busier.

In the meantime, the only mid-market clubs likely to continue to thrive are the established local sites with an extremely loyal local following and not much competition, which succeed because of the strong personal service they deliver.

Revenue growth

Finally, there's the issue of how clubs can increase revenues from existing members and non-users.

Other than perhaps some modest potential to increase ancillary spend as the pressure on household income eases, the indications are that the best opportunities for clubs to increase member spending lie in extending their services beyond the club environment.

So for example, a member may not be able to physically visit a club as often as they want to – perhaps because of childcare commitments, for example – but might be willing to pay extra for the option to follow classes at home using a live stream, or to be able to download classes from an online library.

They may also welcome the opportunity to rent fitness monitoring

equipment that will measure their activity levels throughout their day, not just when they are in the health club.

Others may not want to visit their club more often because they don't enjoy working out indoors. Offering a variety of outdoor activities led by a member of staff from the fitness club – outdoor classes in a local park, for example – may be one way in which members can be encouraged to do more without visiting their actual health clubs more regularly.

And for the non-user, as well as a desire to be offered a pay as you go option when they visit a club, there's almost certainly a market among potential users – and indeed among people who haven't yet expressed an interest in joining a health and fitness club – for at-home and outdoor services. This could be a home-based personal training session, the hire or sale of fitness equipment to use in the home, the hire of fitness monitoring equipment, or the running of outdoor classes.

Potentially there's a whole new audience who may never have had any desire to enter a physical club, but who would welcome the opportunity to take part in some outdoor or home-based structured fitness activity, whether that's an outdoor run or class in a park, or a class streamed to their home. ●

BIDDING FOR THE OBESITY BUCK

From health clubs and urban planners to science centres and drug companies, everyone is pitching to solve the problem of obesity. Kath Hudson takes a look at some of the groups and their proposals

According to the UK think tank Overseas Development Institute, one in three people worldwide are now overweight. Even developing nations are getting fatter, as incomes rise and diets become more and more fatty and sugary.

There's a large consensus of expert opinion that says the obesity epidemic is down to a combination of easy access to cheap, highly calorific food – which is often aggressively marketed – and increasingly less active lifestyles.

So what's the answer? Various industries have claimed they hold the key to tackling the obesity crisis and while the debate rages about whether obesity is a disease, a disability or a lifestyle illness (see *HCM* Aug 14, p5), this is a business opportunity where there'll always be plenty of demand.

We look at some of the proposals currently being put forward by groups aiming to own the opportunity.

SCIENCE CENTRES

On the basis that they can hold conversations with the public, science centres have recently put themselves forward as part of the solution to the problem of obesity.

For the past three years, 17 science centres across Europe have taken part in the EU initiative Inprofood. This asks the public if they think governments should take responsibility for the obesity epidemic, or if it comes down to individuals. This November, the results will be collated and the feedback from different nations compared.

In a separate initiative, Ecsite – the European organisation representing science centres, museums and



The Soil Association launched the Food for Life campaign in 2003



Science centres
across Europe are
exploring food issues
with young people

“We think the health sector should be setting an example, especially as good nutrition aids patient recovery”
Amy Leech, the Soil Association

institutes – created the PlayDecide discussion game, aimed at 14- to 21-year-olds, questioning them about issues such as eating disorders, food waste, sustainable eating and personal accountability for food choices.

According to Ecsite, the results so far show that the majority of people believe decisions and choices related to lifestyles should be left to citizens, but they think governments should regulate certain areas, such as food labelling and prices, and should support healthy food providers, provide infrastructure and encourage physical activities.

Respondents also believed healthy lifestyles should be part of the school curriculum and that school meals should be carefully chosen.

SCHOOLS

With its Food for Life partnership, the Soil Association has been campaigning for better school dinners since 2001. As well as driving up standards of food

in schools, with a Catering Mark to sign up to, the partnership also educates on cooking and growing food. Currently 20 per cent of schools have signed up to the Catering Mark.

According to Amy Leech, senior policy advisor at The Soil Association, independent evaluation of Food for Life saw a 28 per cent increase in primary school children eating five portions of fruit and vegetables a day. “Working with schoolchildren is incredibly important,” says Leech. “The habits we form in our youth stay with us for life.”

It’s encouraging to see that school meals are high on the government’s agenda, with the implementation of the School Food Plan, including plans to offer universal free school meals to infants, coming into effect from September. Now The Soil Association is aiming to tackle hospital food. “We think the health sector should be setting an example,” says Leech, “especially as good nutrition aids patient recovery.”

HEALTH CLUBS

Dave Stalker, CEO of trade association ukactive, argues that there needs to be more emphasis on getting people moving, since being physically active can lessen the chances of serious illness in overweight and obese people.

“Obesity is the loud, out-there issue, but inactivity is the silent killer,” he says. “Obesity will only be truly tackled when the food manufacturers reduce the sugar and fat content in food, so ukactive wants to move away from the obesity debate and engage in a debate on physical inactivity.”

According to ukactive, one-quarter of the UK population are physically inactive and this costs £20bn in public health funding each year. “Focusing on physical inactivity would have a knock-on effect on obesity. It would save the NHS and the health of the nation. You can be fat but still be fit,” says Stalker.

ukactive would like to see a rebalancing of public health spending. ►



ukactive CEO Dave Stalker thinks that the focus should move from obesity to inactivity



so that more is invested in promoting physical activity. "Our dream would be for there to be a fitness or community exercise professional in each GP surgery, counselling people to become more active," says Stalker. This approach has proved successful in a programme piloted by ukactive in Essex (see Let's Get Moving briefing, right).

► SLEEP EXPERTS

There's a growing body of evidence to suggest sleep deprivation can lead to obesity (see briefing below). Several theories have been mooted as to why. Sleep-deprived people may be too tired to exercise, or they might eat more as they're awake longer and snack at night. Also, lack of sleep disrupts the balance of key hormones that control appetite, so sleep-deprived people may be hungrier than those getting enough rest.

So should governments be increasing awareness about the benefits of a good night's sleep? And should there be more health interventions to help those who have difficulty sleeping?

A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

A study funded by cancer charities and carried out by the University of Oxford has found a link between light levels in women's rooms at night and their weight. Researchers speculated that melatonin might play a role, as it's a hormone whose production is inhibited by exposure to light and is thought to play a role in metabolism.

A study funded by the American Diabetes Association at Temple's Center for Obesity Research and Education in the US looked at the impact of sleep on children's eating behaviours. When the children taking

part in the study slept more, they consumed an average of 134 calories less per day, weighed half a pound less and had lower fasting levels of leptin – a hunger-regulating hormone which is highly correlated with the amount of adipose tissue – when compared to results monitored in a week when they had less sleep.

A study at Massachusetts General Hospital for Children analysed data from 1,046 children over a number of years by interviewing their mothers about their sleep patterns and, at the age of seven, measured their height

ukactive has piloted a programme, Let's Get Moving, which is aimed at previously inactive people in danger of developing chronic diseases related to their lifestyle choices.

Funded by Sport England and supported by local authority public health teams, the programme's aim is to create a pathway for sustainable involvement in sport and physical activity for those who are currently inactive. The pilot was carried out with a consortium of partners with five Primary Care Trusts across the county of Essex, UK. It saw 504 participants amass a total of 48,000 active hours, walking 69,000 miles.

Sleep psychologist Dr Andrew Mayers says he would like all GPs to be trained in sleep-related issues – or else be able to refer people on to someone who is. "This area of mental health is undervalued and has received a disproportionate amount of cuts," he explains.

Let's Get Moving uses a GP referral model based on motivational interviewing techniques, designed to elicit information on the basis of which the patient can be referred to a qualified exercise professional for a fully supported programme.

In the coming months, additional funding will come from Nesta, enabling the incorporation of a peer-to-peer element that will involve patients being mentored by a trained volunteer and introduced to a network of peer supporters. The programme will also go to new areas, starting with Essex County Council and then rolling out more broadly.

Privately-run sleep initiatives are springing up and it's likely the sleep industry will start to grow as part of the wellness industry. London already has a Sleep School and hospitality operators are beginning to offer retreats for insomniacs – such as the Deep Sleep Retreat at Grayshott Spa in Surrey.



LET'S GET MOVING



Evidence suggests that sleep disruption can lead to weight gain and obesity

and weight, lean body mass, waist and hip circumference, total body fat and abdominal fat. Researchers found an association between sleep curtailment and obesity.



The Atlanta BeltLine provides a network of public parks and trails along a railway corridor

URBAN PLANNING

PARKS

One of the reasons people have difficulty sleeping is because of stress, and this can also lead to weight gain. The stress hormone cortisol causes an increase in appetite, and when we're stressed we're more likely to reach for high-calorie comfort foods.

"One of the cures for stress is to eat sugar and fat: the body is designed to crave this, as it gives energy quickly," says Dr William Bird, founder of Intelligent Health. "When we were hunter gatherers, in times of stress, conflict and famine we would crave fat. When you're stressed, you become less active and eat the wrong things."

Bird believes a three-pronged approach is needed to tackle this issue: environment, community and purpose. He says the environment we live in has a great deal to do with our weight, stress and activity levels. "The more deprived the neighbourhood you live in, the more stressed you'll be," he explains. "That's why there are high levels of obesity and inactivity in areas of deprivation.

Ryan Gravel, senior urban designer at US architectural practice Perkins + Will, believes environment plays a key role in health. He came up with the idea for the Atlanta BeltLine Corridor – a 22-mile loop of green trails made out of old railway lines – around Atlanta, US. The trails link 45 neighbourhoods and have 100,000 people within walking distance of them. It has proved to be a magnet for both exercise and active commuting.

"The infrastructure we build really matters," says Gravel. "If we build sidewalks and greenways and public transit networks, then the market responds with compact, walkable urban districts. If all we build is highways, then we'll continue to have a very spread-out, separated, car-dependent

lifestyle. Car dependency clearly has negative impacts on public health, so at a minimum we should stop incentivising and even subsidising it."

Perkins + Will are consulting on more than 30 similar projects around the world. For more details, visit: www.beltline.org



The BeltLine was first conceived in a 1999 master's thesis by a student

"Green space offsets that stress, so if you live near a park or if you visit a green space regularly, it has been shown to increase your life expectancy because your stress levels drop and then your habits change: you become more active and eat better."

BARITRATIC SURGERY

Inserting a gastric band to inhibit appetite and reduce food consumption has become a mainstream solution since it was recognised by NICE in 2002.

The NHS has a framework whereby people are assessed to show they are



committed to change, and then have to engage in a year-long programme before surgery. Even then, however, it can be difficult to assess who'll do well and who won't, according to consultant bariatric surgeon at Nuffield Health Leeds hospital Simon Baxter.

"It's not a magic bullet, but it can kickstart a healthy lifestyle. The benefits last for around three months, so people have to change their lifestyles to achieve long-term weight loss and health benefits," says Baxter.

Studies show bariatric procedures cause significant long-term loss of weight, recovery in diabetes, improvement in cardiovascular risk factors and a reduction in mortality of 23 per cent from 40 per cent.

Baxter says studies are showing bariatric surgery shows a rapid return on healthcare costs. "If someone has a co-morbidity such as diabetes, it can be cheaper to operate on them than pay for the ongoing medical support," he explains. "The other thing is that severely obese people often don't work, whereas after surgery they may go back to meaningful work, pay taxes and contribute to the economy."

While it can help, Baxter adds that this approach is only scratching the surface of the problem of obesity.

MEDICATION

Obesity medication can lessen appetite, make people feel full sooner, or make it harder for the body to absorb the fat from food. However, these drugs are known to have some undesirable side-effects, including stomach pain, diarrhoea, constipation, headaches, dizziness and insomnia. The chance that the side-effects may outweigh the benefits is of great concern and the medical profession only prescribes them for serious health issues.

However, if a pill could be found that was effective in bringing about weight loss without side-effects, it could provide a solution that most people – and GPs – would prefer to use.

Whatever the answer, the clock is ticking. Food and drinks companies will continue to keep pumping glucose syrup into products until governments find they are spending more on treating obesity than they recoup from taxes and other economic benefits from these companies. Nations will continue to get fatter and health services will find it increasingly difficult to cope.

In the meantime, any help in terms of education and the promotion of healthy lifestyles is of value, as many people are worryingly ignorant about the causes and dangers of obesity.

According to research by Nuffield Health, which questioned 3,100 UK adults, many obese people think they are just overweight and don't realise they're putting their health at risk. Of those questioned, 44 per cent said they had no concerns that they were putting themselves at risk of serious illness or premature death as a result of their weight issues. ●

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**David Lloyd Leisure – Head of Sports,
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MANAGING RISK

In an easy step-by-step guide, Right Directions' Gill Twell explains how a bottom-up approach to risk management is the best way to ensure staff are working safely

Over the years, we've seen fantastic health and safety manuals that define an organisation's health and safety standards and processes. These manuals sit on a shelf (or on a computer) in an office within the facility, but when the site is audited we find unsafe practices being carried out on a daily basis. The question we are often asked is: Why are staff not following the defined standards?

By adopting a bottom-up approach to the management of health and safety, organisations can build a strong safety culture and ensure the standards and processes defined at the top are being cascaded down into the workforce – and with it, help protect

their business and the safety of their staff, customers and other visitors.

STEP 1 | Walk the walk

Walk around your facility on a regular basis – maybe weekly to start with, depending on what you find. Look at customer-facing areas as well as staff and maintenance areas, including plant rooms, store rooms and cleaning cupboards – anywhere that may be high risk, or where staff carry out duties.

You need to assess the real state of your day-to-day operations, including housekeeping in store rooms and plant rooms, watching your lifeguards in action, studying your staff setting up equipment... Is what they're doing safe, are they following procedures,

are they trained and qualified for the tasks they are carrying out?

Look at the daily internal monitoring records that should be completed, such as pool water testing, daily opening and closing checks, equipment checks... Have they been completed fully, correctly and at the appropriate time?

If everything is running as it should be, you could move to a monthly walkabout. If not, continue with frequent checks.

As a general manager, I used to walk around my sites with the duty managers every three weeks while they wrote down any actions we highlighted. These actions became their responsibility and they reported back to me weekly on progress, until the tasks were complete.

It's fine for the duty manager to devote tasks to other members of staff though: giving everyone accountability for risk management and health and safety on a day-to-day basis helps create ownership of tasks, will make staff more aware of their environment, and assists in creating a strong safety culture among all the staff from top to bottom. But remember, if the staff see the duty manager putting equipment away safely, lifeguarding a pool correctly or handling chemicals in a safe manner, they are far more likely to follow by example.

Ensure any issues you identify are actioned: add them to a risk reduction plan, identify a member of staff to complete the task, set a target date for completion and sign off the plan accordingly. Ensure a process is in place to monitor progress. Noting down problems will also act as a checklist to help prevent staff from falling back into old, unsafe habits.

STEP 2 | Danger zone

There are numerous acts, regulations and codes of practice setting out the requirements you should follow for the management of health and safety for all aspects of your business. A key

Assess the real state of day-to-day operations, including watching lifeguards in action



PHOTO: WWW.ISTOCK.COM



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

The devil is in the detail, such as ensuring staff know to stack steps no more than eight high

requirement is that you must be able to show what you have done and have this documented in site-specific risk assessments, which should be available to staff, in accordance with Management of H&S at Work Regulations 1999.

Many organisations use generic risk assessments across their site, so take a look at your risk assessments and check everything is applicable to your facility and assess if anything is missing.

Writing a risk assessment shouldn't be a desk-based process; you need to understand the risks first-hand. Take your laptop or tablet to where the activity will happen and ensure staff who normally undertake the activity have input. Ask them what they do, what's difficult, what's easy, what they feel are the risks and hazards, what training they've had and if they feel it's sufficient.

Under Control of Substance Hazardous to Health (COSHH),

processes and procedures should be created to manage the safe use, storage and handling of chemicals, including the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff handling chemicals; make sure they are actually using their PPE! Do you have a process to deal with new chemicals brought into the facility, and do maintenance staff know they can't just pop to the nearest DIY store for chemicals or paints? Do you have an itinerary of all chemicals, including where they are stored?

A site-specific Emergency Action Plan (EAP) should be developed for potential emergency situations, showing actions to take. Ensure each procedure is planned, implemented, reviewed and available to staff, along with suitable training so they understand their responsibilities in the event of an emergency.

Does your risk assessment identify first aid needs and provision? Do you

have sufficient first aid-trained staff? Is someone qualified on duty during all opening hours, and is suitable first aid equipment available?

All accidents and incidents should be recorded, with an investigation process in place. Do your staff understand Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulation (RIDDOR), including how to report accidents? Using a web-based accident tool such as STITCH (the CIMSPA-endorsed accident analysis platform) can help you review accident trends and potential hazards. Further details can be found at www.rightdirections-stitch.com

Is equipment servicing up to date and do you have monitoring and mechanisms in place to trigger alerts when servicing is due? Statutory inspections, services and checks should be completed in line with legislation and manufacturers' instructions, and ▶

A H&S review is not a desk-based process. Understand all the risks first-hand

In a nutshell: Five steps to success

- 1. Walk the walk:** Do the rounds, assess the state of play, draw up any necessary actions and allocate responsibility for these.
- 2. Danger zone:** Do a risk assessment covering areas such as first aid provision, accident reporting, equipment maintenance and handling of chemicals, and create a site-specific emergency action plan.
- 3. Take control:** Implement actions – such as staff training – to address potential hazards identified.
- 4. Watch out:** Always monitor progress on an ongoing basis.
- 5. Pen to paper:** Draw up a health and safety policy statement outlining all procedures and responsibilities. Review regularly and revise when needed, such as when new legislation comes into effect.

- records should be kept – but do you fully understand the frequency of inspections and what they should cover?

STEP 3 Take control

Look at the risks and each hazard identified in your risk assessment. This will help you decide what control measures need to be put in place, such as staff training. A programme that covers all aspects of tasks and activities staff undertake should be put in place, including job induction and ongoing training. Records, including copies of qualifications, should be maintained on-site and dated and signed by both the trainee and the trainer.

Having identified hazards that require further control measures, safe systems of work should be created in the form of easy-to-read, step-by-step guides. This could be as simple as a sign alerting staff and members that exercise steps should not be stacked more than eight high, or that there's a trolley for moving chairs in a nearby cupboard.

STEP 4 Watch out

What monitoring provisions do you have in place to evaluate if all of this is happening, and that staff are following procedures and processes and working safely? Monitoring what's going on in your site on a daily basis is vital to a safe working environment. This can be carried out in the form of both visual and recorded checks.

STEP 5 Pen to paper

Only now can you be confident the procedures in your health and safety manual are being implemented.

A health and safety policy statement should then be created and signed by the person responsible for health and safety. It should contain a commitment to providing a safe and healthy working environment, with effective systems and procedures that influence your organisation, arrangements, premises and equipment – covering all key activities for staff, customers and other visitors. It should also define who's responsible for what, and provide instructions and guidance on actions required to ensure a safe environment.

Procedures should be written down, updated when needed and regularly reviewed, as should the statement, taking into account significant changes in size or organisational structures.

But it doesn't stop there. Who keeps staff up to date on the latest legislation, and makes sure your processes reflect this? Is there a review process for new legislation? Who updates you on any changes to the law? Do you have a process in place to ensure this is cascaded down from head office, through managers and to the shop floor?

An outside pair of eyes looking at what your staff are doing and reviewing processes and procedures can help ensure staff are working safely and can assist in developing a strong safety

culture across the board. Doing an external health and safety audit at least once a year is the way to achieve this.

The Health and Safety Executive's *Managing for Health & Safety (HSG65) Plan, Do, Check, Act* model aims to achieve a balance between the systems and behavioural aspects of management. Hand-in-hand with our advice, it treats H&S management as an integral part of good management, not as a standalone system. For details, visit www.hse.gov.uk/managing/plan-do-check-act.htm

Working as a team is the only way to instil a proactive safety culture among all staff – without this, you will be back to square one within a few months. ●

Gill Twell is head of group operations for Right Directions, and has been working in the leisure industry for more than 30 years. Her role includes business and product development as well as playing a key role in the management and improvement of the Quest scheme operations.

Health and safety management specialist Right Directions delivers Quest on behalf of Sport England, as well as UKactive's Code of Practice and Flame Awards, and co-ordinates the ASA's Learn To Swim accreditation scheme.

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Technogym helps athletes to achieve new heights

The equipment choice of top athletes worldwide, Technogym powered the 2014 Commonwealth Games and is set to do the same for Rio 2016



Technogym was the Official Fitness Equipment Provider to the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games

Technogym, the Wellness Company, is a world leader in the design and manufacture of state-of-the-art fitness equipment that is renowned globally for innovative design and technology. Wellness is the ethos that drives everything Technogym does, thanks to its strong belief that Wellness represents a great social opportunity – for governments to reduce the costs of their health service, for companies to stimulate staff to be more creative and productive, and for all citizens to get more active.

Benefitting from decades of research and development with the world's top athletes, medics, researchers and academics, the company has developed an extensive portfolio of award-winning fitness, rehab and training equipment that combine cutting-edge technology with seamless design to create a perfect blend of functionality and performance.

Thanks to the unsurpassed calibre of its products, over the years Technogym

has been consistently chosen to supply its state-of-the-art training equipment to several international sports teams, athletes, organisations and elite sports centres. These include St George's Park, home of English football; F1 teams including Ferrari and McLaren; as well as major international football teams including AC Milan, Inter Milan and Juventus; and the Russia, Brazil and Italy national sides at the 2014 World Cup.

Technogym has also been an official supplier for the last five Olympic Games, including London 2012. It's been closely involved in efforts to create a permanent legacy of the London 2012 Games, such as GLL's transformation of the Copper Box Arena and Aquatics Centre in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park into public venues with state-of-the-art fitness facilities. Technogym also donated equipment used by London 2012 athletes to Wigan Youth Zone, the largest youth centre in the UK, in order to inspire a new generation of young people to engage in sports and fitness.

Glasgow 2014, the '#bestgamesever'

Most recently, Technogym served as the Official Fitness Equipment Provider for the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games. For what is touted as the 'best Commonwealth Games ever', Technogym worked with Glasgow Life to install equipment in the two Commonwealth Village Gyms to provide all 6,500 participating athletes and team officials from 71 nations and territories with accessible, versatile training tools that adapted easily to each sport.

These machines included cardio equipment from the professional Excite+ range (proven over the years to be the best-in-market range chosen by top athletes), strength machines from the Selection, Element and Pure Strength ranges, and versatile functional sets including Kinesis and Arke.

Technogym supported the Games with a #ChampionstrainwithTechnogym campaign, providing over 30 gym sites UK-wide with selfie boards that allowed



A look inside the athletes' gym at the Commonwealth Games Village, equipped with Technogym strength and cardio equipment

members of the public to share their own message of support to the athletes, which were broadcast via a TV screen in the Commonwealth Village gym.

To help operators get members inspired by the Games, Technogym also organised a nationwide digital Challenge with 33 UK fitness centres, challenging members to accumulate as many MOVES – Technogym's unit of measurement for physical activity – as possible to win the chance to donate equipment to a sports club of their choice.

Within three weeks, the centres collected almost 9.5 million MOVES, with the winning centre, USN Bolton Arena, achieving 2.4 million MOVES alone. Participating centres commented that the Challenge was an incredibly effective engagement tool to encourage exercise and friendly competition amongst members, reporting increased facility usage, conversions of casual memberships and overall gym loyalty.

Technogym at Rio 2016

Bolstered by its previous successes, Technogym was selected as the Official Fitness Equipment Provider again for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games – underlining its status as the benchmark setter for innovative tools and technologies for athletic preparation, rehab and wellness. Mr Nerio Alessandri, president and



founder of Technogym said: "We are very proud to have been chosen for the sixth time as the official supplier of the Olympic Games. This important achievement represents a victory for the whole Technogym team and a strong reference on our product innovation and quality standards."

In Rio, Technogym will design and equip 15 training centres with a full range of equipment catering to all sporting disciplines. This includes the 200sq m main training centre at the Olympic Village in Barra da Tijuca, which all athletes will train on in preparation for their events at the Games.

The project is estimated to include over 1,000 pieces of training and stretching equipment, as well as

the installation of Technogym's revolutionary mywellness cloud digital platform that will enable athletes and their coaches to track, record and analyse their training and performance data, access their personalised training programmes and stay connected to their favourite entertainment content and games whilst working out.

Technogym will also provide expert gym layout, technical and installation services, and a team of 50 professional athletic trainers will be on hand in the centres to support the athletes in getting the most out of the equipment.

Mr Alessandri added: "Rio 2016 will represent a unique social opportunity to promote wellness in Brazil and across the whole of Latin America." ●

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Integrated technology

Virtual classes, networked bikes and heart rate monitors: how can club operators make use of today's technology to maximise the impact of group exercise classes? Kath Hudson reports

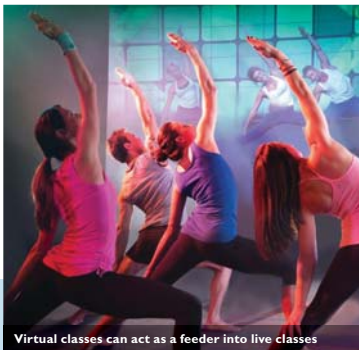
■ Going virtual

OPERATOR: Edinburgh Leisure
SUPPLIER: Les Mills

Les Mills believes virtual classes can broaden the audience: its research found that 92 per cent of the participants enjoyed the convenience of doing a virtual class when it suited them, while 89 per cent said it would encourage them to go on to try a live class having built confidence during the virtual programme.

It has therefore invested in this area with the recent launch of Les Mills Virtual – a Les Mills masterclass offering with classes delivered on-screen by international trainers. Five programming options are currently available: Body Pump, Body Combat, Body Balance, CX Worx and Sh'Bam.

"We can't escape from the speed at which technology is progressing, so we've decided to embrace it," says Les Mills CEO Keith Burnett.



Virtual classes can act as a feeder into live classes

Edinburgh Leisure has been trialling Les Mills Virtual at Craiglockhart Leisure Centre since April. "Attending a live class can be daunting for those who have never been before," says fitness manager David McLean. "The virtual class offers a taster and many people then progress to live classes. The sound, lighting and clarity of the film is incredible: the classes are so immersive that you really feel you're in a live class."

McLean also believes running virtual classes will prove a cost-effective way to help retention: "We offer 15 virtual classes a week with an average of two participants per class. That may not sound like much, but it's 30 more people who we're able to offer a class to at a time that suits them. If we have more than 12 regularly attending any virtual class, we consult with customers and replace with a live instructor."

■ The social aspect

OPERATOR: Hartham
Leisure Centre
SUPPLIER: Trixter

Hartham Leisure Centre uses Trixter XdreamV2 bikes – with their integrated screens allowing for virtual reality cycling, including ghost racing and live multi-player mode – to add an element of competition and to spice up small group training, with regular race nights and interclub challenges.

"The element of competition adds something new. It brings the gym floor to life and is a huge motivator for many customers," says Ian Ling, Everyone Active fitness manager at Hartham Leisure Centre.

"Providing a social element to training is the key to keeping people



Providing a social, competitive element brings members back for more

involved and coming back for more. Customers want something fun, different and engaging – they want to be motivated and stimulated both physically and mentally."

The centre offers a class in the morning and afternoon, and has found many customers plan their workouts for the week around the sessions, with around 10 people in each class.



Wellbeats remembers which classes you've already taken



■ Building good habits

OPERATOR: Anytime Fitness Telford
SUPPLIER: Wellbeats

Telford-based 24-hour fitness club Anytime Fitness installed Wellbeats when it opened in May this year, to offer virtual classes that would be more convenient for members and offer a wider choice of classes. The club averages around 60 virtual classes a week. The Wellbeats system remembers which classes members have taken and suggests new classes based on the client's history, plus there are new releases every three months.

"We wanted to enable people who either didn't feel comfortable in group exercise, or who worked unsociable hours, to be able to experience classes on their terms. It was also a great USP for us, as no other gyms in our area have anything similar," says club owner Stuart Martin.

"One of our aims was to attract female members and Wellbeats has helped with that."

■ Tracking effort

OPERATOR: Village Hotels
SUPPLIER: MYZONE

Village Hotels installed MYZONE across the group in February 2013 to enhance its indoor cycling offering, but it has since become an integral part of its overall fitness product, mainly because it allows the instructors to keep track of members both in and outside of the facilities.

"We've experienced first-hand what an impact the technology has. It motivates members by providing real-time and ongoing feedback, and allows group exercise instructors to deliver more effective coaching," says Chris Southall, leisure and spa director of Village Hotels.

Simple colour-coded feedback is personalised to the effort each individual is putting in to the workout, with a game-based points system designed to reward effort and maximise the effectiveness of every session.

"Prior to introducing MYZONE, we had no way of providing accurate feedback to users on the effectiveness of our group fitness products, as tracking was limited to CV equipment or reliant on self-reporting," says Southall.



Technology like MYZONE can be a huge motivator

"However, we now provide instant feedback to our members, letting them know exactly how hard they've worked in every class and how many calories they've burned, which in turn helps prove the value of our group fitness offering, both in our studios and on the gym floor."



■ Introducing competition

OPERATOR: Cycle Rhythm

SUPPLIER: Keiser

Cycle Rhythm in Essex, UK, uses Keiser's new M3i bikes and brand new iKeiser group exercise projection system to bring a competitive element to its classes.

"The screens give the users feedback on information such as calories, distance and power generated," says the club's project manager Lucy Edwards. "A leader board system is in operation, so people can move up and down and race against their friends. It adds an element of fun and competition."

The classes have a capacity of 54 participants and are currently running at 40–45 people per class. "We believe the technology is a huge draw, as it's different from what's on offer at standard indoor cycling classes in the local area," says Edwards. "Feedback from customers suggests they're motivated by the Rhythm Board and look forward to trying to work their way up the ranks and set personal bests. Customers are sharing their performance data on social media too, and seem to be very excited about the feature on offer at the studio."

A popular application is the team-racing mode, where the room is divided into four groups to race against each other. The power generated in the groups is averaged, so even if there's one person in each group it still works.

■ Data for results

OPERATOR: MSF Fitness

SUPPLIER: Wattbike

Telford club MSF Fitness uses Wattbikes to help people reach their training goals. The Wattbike studio launched in June last year and demand has led to a 50 per cent increase in the number of classes over the last six months, with 25 classes a week now on offer.

"Wattbikes allow us to integrate all abilities in one class, from a 65-year-old lady to a GB athlete," says club owner Mark Fenn. "The data we work with ensures everyone works to their own ability without overtraining. The bikes allow us to do fitness tests, for example, so we can ensure each individual is set the right heart rate and power zones in which to work."

"We can also work on pedal technique to make sure people are engaging the right muscles, and that has transferable benefits to other training."

Fenn says the Wattbikes allow the club to offer a very bespoke service, which has led to people getting great results. "One of our elite riders won the Shrewsbury Grand Prix, while another member went from suffering from pneumonia to completing the Ride London 100 within 16 weeks," he says.



HOT OFF THE PRESS

New product innovations

Les Mills has worked with Reebok on The Project: Immersive Fitness, which takes virtual workouts to the next level through the use of 360-degree cinema technology. Moves are choreographed to the music and graphics, which are projected on floor-to-ceiling screens. Participants might find themselves cycling up a glacier, sprinting around a velodrome or dancing in a festival dance tent. It will be on general release next year.

New from **Matrix Fitness**, in partnership with the Indoor Cycling Group, is the IC7 bike. It features a Coach By Color training console: five coloured, user-friendly zones that allow users to quickly see their power and heart rate output, so they know whether to put in more or less effort. The instructors are also able to see the data.

New this year is the **Polar Flow** for Club, an iPad app that allows anyone wearing a Polar H7 heart rate sensor to see their live heart rates on screen, together with the heart rate zone they are in. This allows the instructor to guide class members to achieve their training goals. The system also allows classes to be scheduled, instructors assigned and members to view data via the Polar Flow online training community.

WebRacing has added a real life video and music module, making it easy to click between WebRacing and real life video. The system also allows the creation of video and music playlists, so instructors can build videos of climbs and scenery. A heart rate monitoring package is currently in development. ●

wattbike

Individual Results in a Motivating Group Environment

Individual Performance Data:

| Participant | Current | Goal | Time |
|---------------|---------|------|------|
| John McDaniel | 138 | 150 | 1:00 |
| Current | 140 | 150 | 1:00 |
| Training Zone | 124 | 127 | |

Group Activity:

Group Performance Data:

| Group | Current | Goal | Time |
|---------------|---------|------|------|
| Group 1 | 224 | 250 | 1:00 |
| Current | 226 | 250 | 1:00 |
| Training Zone | 214 | 217 | |

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Supplier showcase

We take a look at recent installations by Cybex, Matrix Fitness and the D2F Group

BUILDING AN EMPIRE

Client: Empire Gym

Supplier: Cybex International UK

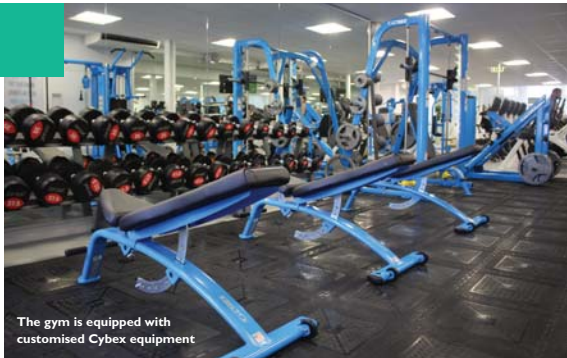
This summer, the town of Market Deeping in South Lincolnshire, UK, welcomed a new 465sq m (5,000sq ft) independent training facility, as Empire Gym opened its doors to the public.

Five years in the planning, the gym occupies Market Deeping's original Empire Cinema, which has been closed since 1963. As the site is in a heritage area, the building's Art Deco frontage was restored during renovations that began in November 2013 and took eight months to complete.

Empire Gym is owned by Steve and Lesley Weston, who migrated their business from the commercial catering service industry to the gym industry, taking their existing management team of five staff with them.

"We consider ourselves a family business in a broad sense: our staff includes immediate family members, but also others who have worked with us for many years and are equally considered family. And we've always had a collective interest in health and fitness," explains Steve.

"Despite working in the catering engineering industry, our existing management staff had qualifications in sport and fitness to complement impressive academic qualifications and workplace achievements. We already



The gym is equipped with customised Cybex equipment

employed a REPs-accredited PT, a sports scientist and an FA-accredited football coach. Combining these qualifications with years of experience in commercial and operational roles, I was very confident we had the right team behind us when the opportunity to open Empire Gym became a reality."

Empire Gym's mission is to provide its members with the best in quality and service across all aspects of the facility, as Steve explains: "From our gym layout to interior décor, gym equipment to changing rooms, training staff to classes, and air exchange to air conditioning, we've ensured that every detail of the gym is designed and delivered to a very high standard and that our members are at the forefront."

Members can choose from three-, six- or 12-month gym or studio-only packages, or combine the two. Daily and weekly memberships, single class and/or gym visits and discounted block sessions are also available.

"We understand the risks of offering flexible, short-term contracts, but we're very confident in the package we offer. Membership growth has been on target to date and we trust in our ability to deliver and maintain consistency in quality, which is the key to maintaining membership loyalty," explains Steve.

The gym is equipped with customised Cybex cardio and strength equipment – bespoke with blue frames and embroidered upholstery to incorporate the site's branding. Steve says: "My staff and I have trained on Cybex equipment for the last 10 years. We know it, we trust it and, being from an engineering background, we appreciate the high levels of quality and durability you get with every single Cybex piece."

In line with the gym's objective to meet the needs of all fitness enthusiasts, Cybex Total Access equipment was also installed to support the training needs of physically impaired individuals.

"Our membership base is very diverse, ranging from 16- to 82-year-olds of all abilities, requirements and fitness levels. This is reflected not only in the gym equipment and facilities, but also in our staff, who are trained to support members' wide-ranging requirements."

Details: www.cybexintl.com



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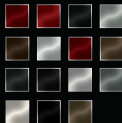
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The wide range of classes include Edge Cycle Bootcamp, which offers a mix of indoor cycling and bootcamp floor exercises

INDOOR CYCLING REINVENTED

Client: Edge Cycling

Supplier: Matrix Fitness

After repeatedly being told by their clients that indoor cycling was “too hard” and that “you need to be fit to do it”, Stuart Dickson and three personal training colleagues set out to prove them wrong. The result: a new club, Edge Cycling, which set out to reinvent indoor cycling. The boutique facility is said to be the largest indoor cycling studio in London.

“For many people new to indoor cycling, taking that first class is a daunting prospect,” says Dickson. “But indoor cycling is a brilliant workout and can be great fun. Our aim is to engage with more customers as it’s suitable for everyone, not just the super fit.”

To help overcome any pre-class nerves and to get those new to indoor cycling familiar with the experience, the Edge Cycle team offers a free Learn to Ride session. This covers everything, from what to wear and what to eat and

drink pre-workout, to how to set up the bike and how to cycle.

Once the rider is happy to proceed, a range of classes from 35 to 90 minutes in duration awaits. These include Edge Cycle, a session designed for the purist, and Edge Cycle Bootcamp, which consists of a mixture of indoor cycling and bootcamp floor exercises, giving a total workout for the body and core. Bike-based PT is also available.

The club provides everything from proper cycling shoes to complimentary towels and toiletries – ideal for the club’s corporate market. All the rider needs to supply is their own gym kit.

Explaining the decision to equip the studio with Matrix Fitness IC3 Indoor Cycles, Dickson says: “We chose to work with Matrix Fitness purely because of the quality of the bike, although the back-end service was also a major factor. We kept hearing the words ‘beautiful bike’ and ‘quality ride’

when we were reviewing the market. We’re likely to upgrade to the IC7 bike when it’s readily available, as it offers even more features than the IC3.”

The club has also been kitted out with a lighting system designed to immerse riders in their own world, and music that makes them want to take their workout to the Edge.

The format is clearly paying off, with the studio proving popular even through the height of the summer. New classes such as Cycle Combat – a 45-minute class with 15 minutes on the bike, followed by combat-specific training including plyometrics and HIIT – are planned for later this year, followed by the launch of a second venue in 2015.

Andy Loughray, national sales manager for Matrix Fitness, says: “Indoor cycling is one of the most popular studio workouts, but it’s great to see an alternative approach to traditional purist classes. While many facilities run sessions claiming to be suitable for those new to indoor cycling, the Edge Cycle team has made this market central to its success – another refreshing twist on the norm.”

Details: www.matrixfitness.com

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The Freestyle zones help members maximise results

BESPOKE OFFERING

Client: Fitness First

Supplier: D2F Group

Fitness First is one of the largest fitness brands in the world, with over 377 clubs worldwide reaching more than 990,000 members in 16 countries. In September, the group launched its first brand new site in the UK for five years – a club that cost £1.7m to build and occupies 1,022sq m (11,000sq ft) in Bishopsgate in the City of London.

In addition to traditional gym equipment, Fitness First Bishopsgate offers its members a large Freestyle functional training area. This includes a bespoke XCUBE functional training rig that was designed, manufactured and installed by D2F Group.

"The Freestyle zones provide the perfect playground to help maximise workout results, meaning everyone from complete novices to professional stuntmen can take their fitness to the next level," says Lee Matthews, UK head of fitness at Fitness First. "D2F's XCUBE functional training rigs are a fundamental component of these areas."

"The brief for Fitness First Bishopsgate was to design an XCUBE that provided the ability to run group sessions without impacting on the open space," explains John Lofting, national fitness sales manager at D2F Group.

After a review of the space available and consultations with the project team at Fitness First, D2F produced 2D and 3D CAD drawings that gave a visual



An integrated storage solution was provided to make the space look tidy

representation of how the Freestyle area would look. D2F worked with Fitness First on a number of revisions before a final design for a fully bespoke XCUBE with wing, TRX beam, core trainer and dip station was commissioned.

"Another prerequisite for the space was storage," continues Lofting. "With such a large Freestyle space on offer to members, the area ran the risk of becoming cluttered with accessories that can be used in the open space or in conjunction with the XCUBE, such as kettlebells, medicine balls and gym balls." D2F therefore engineered and installed an integrated storage solution that would keep the space tidy and also look great.

Fitness First Bishopsgate is not the only site in the chain to benefit from an XCUBE functional training rig. Over 20 XCUBEs have been installed to date

as the chain embarks on a rebrand and upgrade of UK facilities. Four XCUBEs were also designed and installed by D2F at new Fitness First sites in Asia last year.

Fitness First Tottenham Court Road became a pilot site to test new initiatives including Freestyle in 2013. Membership at the club rose sharply after new areas for group training sessions were introduced – a pattern that D2F has seen at many gyms where its XCUBE solutions have been installed.

"We strive to provide our members with unique and exciting training spaces that will keep them motivated," says Matthews. "D2F has proven its ability to support this initiative by designing and installing fully bespoke functional training rigs that are tailored to fit the unique spaces at each of the facilities."

Details: www.xcube.co.uk

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A CLASS APART

We round up some of the latest launches set to add a sparkle to your studio offering



STEPS TO SUCCESS

Escape Deck 2.0 (pictured above) is a multi-purpose, portable workout platform from Escape Fitness. With the ability to be configured in 16 different ways, it can be used as an aerobic stepping platform or as an adjustable strength training bench. The deck features two different stepping heights (205mm and 355mm) so it can be used by exercisers of all levels of ability, while new anatomic surface targets have been manufactured onto its anti-slip formula rubber mat surface. Escape Deck 2.0 also features added notched grooves for resistance tubes and power band work, an internal storage area for tubes, bands and hand weights, and an enhanced maximum load weight of 170kg.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **Escape**

GOING VIRTUAL

Les Mills has introduced its new Les Mills Virtual product. In this virtual class offering, five of Les Mills' most popular programmes – Body Pump, Body Combat, Body Balance, CX Worx and Sh'Bam – are delivered on-screen by leading international trainers. The system has been designed to help clubs maximise group training and studio programming, as well as schedule classes off-peak, with touchscreen panels outside the studio allowing members to check what's on offer and book themselves in.

Les Mills is also promoting its Smartstep – a Step that features a riser 'lock-in' system to help reduce slide on the floor. The company has also added Danish indoor cycle Body Bike to its product portfolio.

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



NEW AND REFORMED

Align-Pilates has launched what it's calling "a game-changer in the UK pilates world". The company's new A2 Pilates Reformer is a third generation model, with features and innovations including a wide bed to suit more body types, as well as an easily adjustable four-position spring bar, a multi-position locking foot bar, removable shoulder rests and collapsible stainless rope risers. The legs are also interchangeable, offering three height options. It's easily stacked and is on wheels for hassle-free movement.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **Align-Pilates**

SHIFTING SANDS

Physical Company has secured the UK distribution rights for a neoprene battling rope that contains shifting sand. The Hyperwear product, called SandRope, uses this movement of the sand to create a more challenging workout. It's three metres long and takes up less space than a traditional battling rope. In addition, it doesn't need to be attached to an anchor point, opening up a greater variety of exercises. SandRope is designed to be easy to grip and easy to clean, and is available in two weights: 15lbs and 30lbs.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

Physical Company



PHOTO: MERRITHEW

INTENSE INTERACTION

Designed to be adaptable and expandable, the Parallel Stability Barre from Merrithew Health & Fitness (pictured above) can be configured to suit any studio or class size. Featuring two connectors on each side for stability, the barre allows for intense exercises without fear of tipping. The nature of the product means instructors can clearly see all their class at once, and with exercisers facing each other there's the potential for improved interaction.

Merrithew has also launched the Halo Trainer (pictured right), an exercise device that provides a multi-dimensional approach to functional training. It offers a progressive approach to total body training by selectively controlling stability and bodyweight resistance.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

Merrithew



ROLLER RESISTANCE

A new workout tool combines the comfort of a foam roller with the challenge of weight resistance. Balanced Body's MOTR product (pictured above) allows members to work out in eight different body positions, and to quickly switch resistance while targeting different areas. The 43" cylinder comes in three different resistance levels.

Balanced Body has also introduced the Bodhi Suspension System (pictured below), which combines two independent ropes and four suspension points in one system. It allows for strength, stability, balance and proprioception exercises.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

Balanced Body



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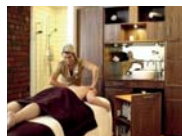
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LIGHTWEIGHTS



SELFIES TOP THE POLL OF GYM PEEVES

Selfie-snapping narcissists are the biggest pain in the gluteals for UK gym-goers, according to a national survey on annoying health club habits.

Seventy-six per cent of gym users listed fellow fitness enthusiasts taking endless photos of themselves pre, post and even during workouts as their biggest pet peeve, while equipment hogging, excessive changing room nakedness and late arrivals at fitness classes all made the top 10.

The survey – which saw gym chain Velocity Health & Fitness query 2,400 of its members – revealed that 70 per cent found men to be the most vain in the gym, whether flexing muscles or fixing their hair in the mirror. Other annoyances afflicting the UK's workouts included distasteful clothing being worn – such as tight tank tops, ill-fitting lycra and impractical wedge trainers – in addition to excessively loud headphones.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=j3B7u>

DEADLY ZOMBIE RACE SERIES IS A SCREAM



To get in the mood for Halloween, Zombie Evacuation Race is holding a series of 5k races across the UK throughout October.

Participants are given three tags which they need to keep safe from zombies on the course. Alternatively they can become a zombie to chase the runners. As well as dodging camouflaged zombies, runners tackle a series of obstacles, from dark abandoned buildings and billowing smoke to muddy trails.

If the dates aren't convenient, there's an event pack so people can arrange their own race.

Details: www.zombierunuk.com



FIT FOR PURPOSE: MULTI-GYM OFFICE

Employees can work out at their office desk or improve their fitness while on a conference call thanks to a new Multi-Gym Fitness Office Chair.

Those who don't move regularly at work can experience poor circulation and headaches from staring at screens. Now equipment provider Office Fitness has created the new chair, which combines several pieces of gym equipment, to counteract the ill effects of sitting still day in, day out.

Paul Matthews, director of Office Fitness, says the chair can "help to boost the productivity by allowing workers to stretch, reinvigorate their muscles, tone, lose weight and improve concentration. Workouts can be done in around 18 minutes". Details: www.officefitness.co.uk

Action movies bad for waistline

Watching an action-packed movie is, ironically, more likely to make viewers put on weight than other TV shows, according to a new study by Cornell University in the US.

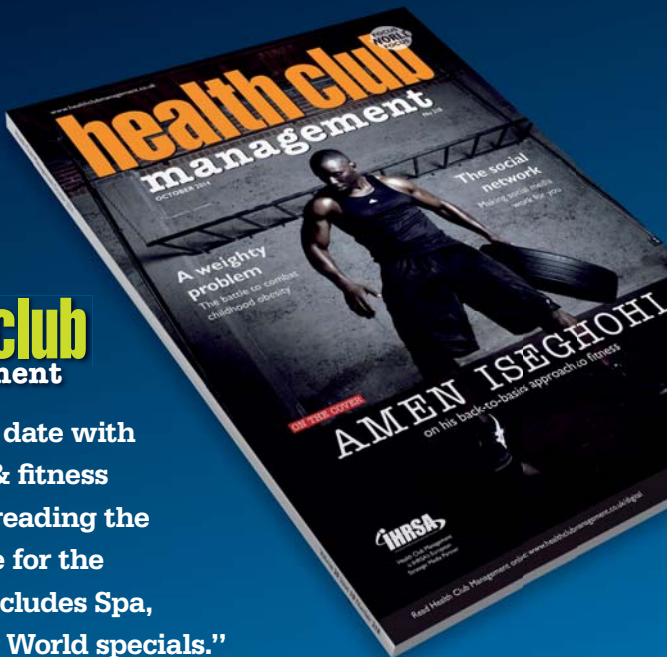
"More stimulating programmes that are fast-paced and include many camera cuts draw you in and distract you from what you're eating," says Aner Tal, a post-doctoral researcher at the Cornell

Food and Brand Lab. "They can make you eat more, because you're paying less attention to how much you're putting in your mouth."

In the study, people ate snacks while watching 20 minutes of different TV and film genres. Those who watched an action movie consumed almost twice as many snacks – 98 per cent more – than those viewing a news talk show.

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