

health club management

APRIL 2015

No 223

Flying High

Bringing the buzz of parkour into gyms

The arrival of Apple Watch

Do health clubs need to worry?

ON THE COVER

HUMPHREY COBBOLD

The CEO of Pure Gym on driving the business beyond club walls



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***Engaging your members is
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MYZONE is helping clubs all over the world increase member retention and motivation. Our new online store makes it simple for users to purchase gear,

Working alongside GPs



Recent Ipsos MORI research has revealed that 57 per cent of people in the UK would ask a doctor, GP or nurse for health advice, but only 1 per cent would turn to a gym or personal trainer. That's disappointing given that 13 per cent of the UK population are members of a gym – people who ostensibly have bought into the whole notion of the gym as a place to improve their health. So what more can we do to establish our credentials, not just as a place to work out but as a credible health partner?

For starters, it makes sense to recognise people's natural instinct to turn to their doctor for health advice, seeing this as an opportunity rather than a challenge. If we can get more GPs recommending exercise, we move fitness into a far more compelling realm: research shows 64 per cent of people would exercise if recommended to do so by their GP (see Dr John Morgan's comment on page 28).

This will require education, says Morgan: "GPs are constantly receiving visits from pharmaceutical companies, but there isn't an advocate for physical activity. If the health club industry could approach surgeries, presenting research and offering a pathway for patients, and following it up with outcomes such as blood pressure readings for those who go on to exercise, GPs may start to listen."

ukactive is already making strides in this area with its Let's Get Moving programme – now live in Luton and Bedfordshire – which sees a range of exercise professionals, from PTs to swimming instructors, placed in-house in GP surgeries. There to advise and signpost patients into whatever local activity options most appeal, there's no immediate commercial incentive for gyms to get involved – but the scheme represents a significant long-term opportunity to build relationships with GPs, educate them about the benefits of exercise and perhaps, down the line, benefit from more active people wanting to join the gym.

We should aim to place an exercise professional into every GP surgery.

Then there's the latest initiative from payasUgym, which has given 8,000 London GPs access to free £5 passes to give out to patients. The chosen terminology raises questions: it has been positioned as exercise referral, a highly complex system for those with chronic health conditions that relies on the sort of solid data and expert support not all gyms can provide. However, if we view it instead as 'exercise recommendation' it can immediately be seen in a less controversial light. It may not be enough

Research shows that 64 per cent of people would exercise if they were recommended to do so by their GP

to encourage long-term behaviour change among a sedentary population, but we can't change everything overnight. If this scheme succeeds in getting exercise onto just a few more GPs' radar, it's to be welcomed.

Last but not least, how operators position their offering is also key. As Pure Gym CEO Humphrey Cobbold says on page 30: "At the moment we're a place people go to do stuff, but I don't see any reason why we can't become a content and advisory brand, a source of counsel and guidance." Gyms have a huge opportunity to offer health and lifestyle advice that goes way beyond the gym.

Kate Cracknell, editor

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Buyers' guide

For suppliers of products and services in the health club and spa markets, turn to **p93**



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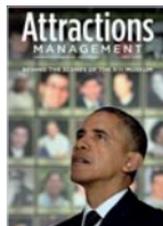
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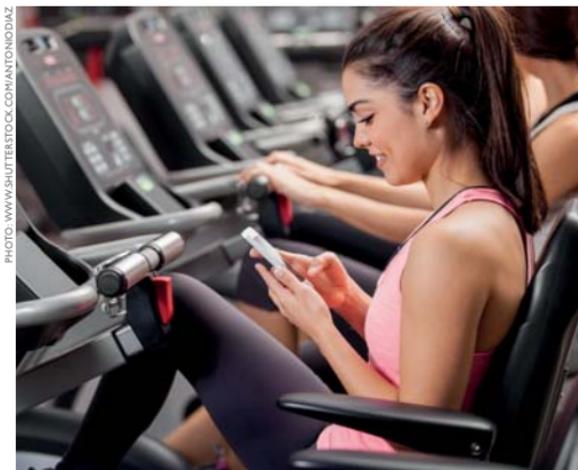


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Write to reply

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



Combining wearables with social media will enable clubs to get closer to members

Wearable technology is an opportunity, not a threat

I was interested to read the interview with futurologist Magnus Lindkvist in *HCM* February. As he says, wearable technology looks set to radically change the health club and leisure industry.

However, unlike Lindkvist, rather than view it as a disruptive influence that exposes operators to the risk of their customers leaving, I believe it represents a huge opportunity. The combination of social media and wearable tech truly presents a chance for organisations to get ever closer to their members; to create communities of like-minded individuals; and to offer even more personalised services to meet individual aspirations. At its most fundamental, it offers us all the potential to achieve what many of us aspire to: to help make the UK's population healthier and more active.

There's a second significant point that Lindkvist makes: the reason why clubs, PTs and fitness communities have a place is indeed because they offer "packaged knowledge". His argument that apps and wearable tech also offer that "packaged knowledge" is to an extent true – but imagine how much more powerful the combination of the two would be. The ability to harness this combined knowledge and insight and link this to an individual's personal data creates a hugely compelling proposition that will have a transformative effect on our sector.

Organisations that harness technology and achieve a new level of positive customer engagement will flourish.

Sean Maguire
MD, *Legend Club Management Solutions*

Does your club have a solid music strategy?

How we engage with sound has a profound effect on our nervous system. However, although clubs acknowledge the need to invest in high-quality music, licensing can cause confusion. Operators need an effective strategy, including understanding the difference between PPL and PRS, and recent changes in PPL licence fees.

Changes by PPL to the 'Exercise to Music' tariff in 2013 put the onus on clubs to hold a valid PPL licence for all classes using original artist music. Currently set at £1.25 per class, it will increase in May 2015 to £1.45 per class. Club owners and operators must be diligent; we've found that clubs often pay PPL licensing for all classes, even if some use music to which these fees do not apply.

A recent YouGov poll showed 87 per cent of exercise class participants prefer original artist music, but clubs should explore the options; you could reduce the amount of original artist music used and pay less in licensing, or eliminate PPL licensing costs, by using non-original artist compilations. Choose a solution that fits your business model and clientele.

Gemma Wallis
Music platforms & resources, FitPro



PPL fees can be reduced by using non-original artist music



Swimming can help improve overall fitness for all ages

Broadening the appeal of water-based activity

I wanted to write in response to your recent feature on maximising the value of swimming pools.

We recently looked at our pool programming to see how we could make all water-based activities more attractive across the whole community. We profiled non-swimmers and took a fresh look at the user journey – from antenatal to hydro mobility sessions – and found the main barriers to participation were fear and the perception that swimming is somehow boring.

To reverse these perceptions, we revisited our activity programme to include more specialist health and wellness classes, to give non-swimmers more confidence. We also introduced extra inflatable sessions during school holidays and weekends to boost the element of fun.

More people are now swimming to improve overall fitness, and many customers are having lessons to improve technique. Increasing water confidence in this way encourages participation in other water-based activities and classes too. We're very pleased to see more people taking part, especially against the backdrop of a falling national trend.

Peter Gunn

CEO, BH Live and chair, sporta



Many baby swimming providers have long waiting lists, indicating a big demand

Operators should capitalise on boom in baby swimming

It was interesting to read your 'Stop Treading Water' article in *HCM* February, because at that time we had just gone to press with the results of our national baby swim school survey, which confirmed a huge growth in the private swimming market over the last five years – proving there's great potential for pool owners to capitalise on this burgeoning sector.

Seventy per cent of respondents said they had waiting lists for baby swimming lessons, and franchise swim schools – of which 72 per cent said they hire health club pools, in addition to hotel, school and hydro pools – have the largest waiting lists at 81 per cent.

Almost 86 per cent also said the market had not yet reached its peak, although many warned that growth

could be capped because of pool time availability. With demand there, this provides a real opportunity for pool owners to maximise income in this growth area: 58 per cent say they charge £5–10 per 30 minutes, and more than 36 per cent charge £11 or more.

As the *HCM* article rightly points out, pools are an expensive overhead, so being proactive and innovative in your approach to managing a pool programme is essential. From babies to adults, offering a diverse mix of swimming, aquatic and fitness programmes is key to retaining customers and attracting new users into your facility.

Zoe Cooper

Head of accounts, STA

The responsibility of a manager is to optimise use of the facility

Reading the February issue of *HCM*, I was surprised to learn that many operators are not fully maximising the value of their pools.

My responsibility as the manager of a sports facility is the optimisation of its use, which includes creating programmes for the various groups in the local population – schools, pensioners, working adults, triathlon enthusiasts – as well as competitive sports events to ensure the pool is constantly in use.

Filling off-peak time is crucial, and we offer rehab and physiotherapy as well as sessions for seniors – developed in conjunction with town councils – and local schools.

It's also about diversifying the offer: we've had success with personal training in the pool, for example, and have branched out into sports holidays for kids.

I check usage stats every couple of weeks – we can evaluate, with a maximum error margin of 0.5, the frequency of users in sessions. We also have a best practice manual for all staff and teachers, and implement assessments of all classes and facilities.

Nuno Lopes

Technical director, Clube Oriental de Lisboa - Portugal

Write to reply

How to get women into strength training

I was very interested to read your strength training feature in *HCM* March, which looked at how to get women into strength training.

At Fitness Function in Penn Street Village, Buckinghamshire, we run GRAVITY Strength classes six days a week – and our membership is 95 per cent female, with classes running at 90 per cent capacity.

We've created a safe, female-friendly environment and, with just six people to a class, participants get a high level of one-to-one coaching.

In addition, I believe our approach is more appealing than using free weights for many women. There's no pumping of iron involved – the equipment involves using between 1 and 62 per cent of your own bodyweight as the resistance. This provides a challenge for exercisers of all levels, with great opportunities to progress, and there's a huge variety of exercises.

From my own experience, I know that this can lead to improvements in strength and fitness without women even feeling like they're doing a weights-based workout.

Julie Burfoot-Brown
Owner, Fitness Function



Small group classes can attract women into weight training



PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM / PETER BERNIK

Is it time for operators to start tracking members' results and publishing them?

The sector needs to do more to track members' results

I read with interest your editor's letter in the February issue of *HCM*, on the need to bring nutrition centre stage alongside fitness in gyms.

On the one hand it was pleasing to see so much sense being focused on the most important issue the health and fitness industry faces: meeting the wants (weight loss) of its customers. On the other hand it's disappointing that, when considering future trends, so many operators still spend most of their time trying to come up with new, way-out fads that continue to ignore this core issue.

It has always struck me as strange that, for an industry that places such an emphasis on professionalism and provides itself on the level of service it provides customers, it doesn't track the level of success it achieves. Operators continually

boast of the impact they are having on the health of their customers, but fail to back this up with proof. Why is this? What do they fear? Could it be that the promises being made during the sales tour or initial consultation are empty ones? I long for the day an operator publishes the results its members have achieved over the previous 12 months!

Is it not time that one operator stands above the rest and begins tracking the results of its customers? Even if they discover that their current programmes are not delivering what they had hoped, they will at least be in a position to change things for the better. This is, after all, what professionals would do.

Nic Jarvis
Senior partner, The Alignment Partnership

UK news update

Is Fitness First planning an invitation-only gym?



Fitness First CEO Andrew Cosslett

Fitness First is reportedly developing a new high-end gym concept that will see memberships available by invitation only.

With the chain embarking on a concerted push to conquer the Asian market, Singapore's *Straits Times* quoted a company source confirming that an exclusive invitation-only club targeted at well-heeled executives will launch in the sovereign city-state by the middle of this year. The report suggests that Singapore will be the test bed for the new concept.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=e2K3F>

LaSalle snaps up Virgin Active sites for £9m



Glamorgan Health and Racquet Club

LaSalle Investment Management, an independent subsidiary of US-based real estate giant Jones Lang LaSalle, has given a large vote of confidence to the trajectory of the UK health and fitness sector with a £9m investment in two Virgin Active health clubs.

A LaSalle spokesperson said the growing appetite for health and fitness across the UK made the clubs – near Glamorgan and Manchester – an “attractive investment proposition”. The purchase from Threadneedle Property Investments, with which Virgin Active has 22-year leases on each site, saw LaSalle pay £9m to purchase a combined 19,103sq m of health club space. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=r2P6H>

ukactive duo target trampolines

ukactive veterans David Stalker and Fred Turok are aiming to stay anything but grounded as they prepare for life after the physical activity organisation, by embarking on a mission to create a nationwide trampolining empire.

The project will see the pair lead wall-to-wall trampolining concept Altitude, with plans to open a minimum of 12 sites across the UK over the next two years. The duo have raised in excess of £2.5m for the venture, with support from Radius Equity and Jacaranda Capital Partners. The first Altitude site in west London is due to open in summer 2015, followed by a second park in November 2015.

Outgoing ukactive chair Turok and CEO Stalker (due to leave in June) will replicate these roles in their new business. With Altitude, they hope to mirror the success witnessed in the US and Australia markets, where more than 350 trampolining parks have sprung up following their first launch in 2004.

“We see a terrific opportunity not only to create the next evolution in leisure, but to also



David Stalker (left) will be CEO of Altitude, with Fred Turok taking on the role of chair

assist in our long-held quest to make Britain healthier,” said Turok, citing NASA findings that 10 minutes on a trampoline is a better CV workout than 33 minutes of running.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=w9T8h>

SLM owner acquires weight loss firm

The owner of Sports Leisure Management (SLM) has acquired wellness intervention provider Weight Management Centre as it bids to cement its position as a leading public health delivery partner.

Family-owned business Castle View – which led a buyout of SLM in 2000 – took control of Weight Management Centre last month for an undisclosed fee. SLM operates 102 leisure venues under the trading name Everyone Active and last year made moves towards wellness intervention with the launch of its public health division Everyone Health.

Established in February 2014, Everyone Health has won a string of contracts to



Everyone Active MD David Bibby: Exploring brand synergy

provide weight management services on behalf of local authorities, and the acquisition of Weight Management Centre will strengthen the organisation's overall public health offering. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=G9R4g>

Health clubs go to the extreme



Health-conscious consumers are increasingly willing to splash out on extreme events

The growing popularity of extreme fitness challenges such as Iron Man events and triathlons has led to a raft of new training tie-ups, as health clubs scamp for offer their expertise and facilities to the booming market.

Endurance events have become increasingly prevalent in recent years, with extreme fitness identified as a major trend in the Fitness Foresight section of the recently-published *2015 Health Club Management Handbook* (p20).

Since then, the industry has seen Virgin Active announce a partnership with Tough Mudder, while Xercise4Less last month unveiled a new tie-up with Total Warrior.

Holding six events in 2015 – in Leeds, The Lake District and Edinburgh – Total Warrior pushes participants to their limits across a brutal obstacle course challenge. The partnership sees Xercise4Less become the “official place to train” for people taking part in a Total Warrior event, and it will also urge its 200,000 strong membership base to take part.

Xercise4Less will also be offering discounted memberships to anyone who registers to take part in a Total Warrior event, as well as rolling out ‘Warrior Training’ at each gym site to harness the synergy between the two brands. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=J2Q9m>

ClassPass hits the London scene

London’s booming boutique fitness scene has led to it becoming the fastest growing market ever for studio subscription service ClassPass, says CEO Payal Kadakia.

Less than two weeks after its 9 March launch in the UK – on the back of huge success State-side where it was recently valued at more than US\$200m – ClassPass already had a portfolio of over 170 studios in the London area for its members to choose from.

The ClassPass offering is aimed at fitness class fans who want the option of varied workouts – from yoga and barre to group cycling and bootcamp – at an affordable price. From an operator perspective, clubs receive monthly payments for their services



Payal Kadakia's ClassPass has US\$54m in venture funding

from ClassPass, as well as the opportunity to convert new guests into members.

ClassPass has raised US\$54m in venture capital funding to date.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=P3j8s>

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UK news update

Thousands get active at work



Participants won points for organised sport, active travel and informal activity

Far from being a barrier to activity, the workplace can be an excellent place to promote active lifestyles, according to statistics from My Team 2015 – a national eight-week, workplace-based activity challenge.

Almost 12,000 people, at 2,300 workplaces, took part in the challenge between 5 January and 2 March. Participants won points for their workplace by logging involvement in organised sport, informal activity and active travel.

Participants could track progress and compare performance via an online leaderboard to see stats such as distance travelled, calories burned, CO₂ saved and

progress against the recommended 150 minutes of physical activity a week.

Those taking part reported improved communication, team spirit and a healthier workforce. More than 300,000 activities were recorded during the challenge, with walking, cycling and running the most popular activities.

The County Sports Partnerships delivered the challenge and offered advice and information about local opportunities. The 2015 challenge was supported by Sport England, which provided backing through its Get Healthy, Get Active fund.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=M9u2Y>

Fit For Sport draws on Looney Tunes for fitness



More than 250,000 kids will take part

Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck and the entire Looney Tunes gang could soon be putting UK kids through their paces as part of a new collaboration between Warner Bros Consumer Products UK and Ireland (WBBCP) and Fit For Sport.

Following its recent tie-up with the Power Rangers brand, child activity provider Fit For Sport has now teamed up with this second popular IP to support its ongoing efforts to get more youngsters moving.

This Easter, Fit For Sport will be bringing Looney Tunes-themed sports, games and even the beloved characters themselves to more than 250,000 children at 80 activity camps during school holidays across the country. Kids will do things like working up a healthy sweat like the Tasmanian Devil, or hopping through circuits like Bugs Bunny. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=B5K9R>

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Pilates star to host masterclass



San Miguel: One of only two known practitioners to have been certified by Joseph Pilates

A first generation pilates master, who trained under Joe Pilates himself, is heading to Scotland's largest studio to pass on her knowledge in a series of workshops.

Florida-based Lolita San Miguel – one of only two known practitioners to have been officially certified by Joseph and Clara Pilates – has more than 56 years' pilates experience and has released nine DVDs. Now focusing on training the next generation of pilates instructors, Miguel has been certified by Polestar Pilates Education and was awarded a gold certificate by the Pilates Method Alliance. Miguel is heading to Bálans Pilates

– an independent pilates studio based in Perth, Scotland – to host a weekend of workshops from 24–26 April, with sessions for both teachers and practitioners.

"It's an absolute honour to be working alongside such a well respected and highly regarded pilates elder," said Bálans Pilates owner and lead instructor Joakim Valsinger.

"This is the first time that members of the public in the UK will have access to Lolita's teachings and we're overjoyed to be able to present what promises to be an awesome, informative and educational event."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=K4U5r>

GP referral specialist indie gym gets upgrade



Life Fitness provided a range of kit

A Solihull club which has attracted 20 per cent of its members through its commitment to the GP exercise referral programme has added a range of new kit as part of a two-phase investment plan.

The Hampton, a gym which specialises in results-based exercise, has now completed the £62,000 refurbishment which has seen the addition of an extensive range of Life Fitness equipment. The chosen range is designed to provide tailored workouts for members and enhanced interaction to keep them engaged and motivated.

The club – launched in 2005 by PTs Paul Ebrey and Gareth Thomas – completed the first renovation phase last year with the introduction of 14 cardio stations. The second phase has also now been completed, with the addition of Optima single stations, Signature cable motion and Hammer Strength Athletic Series equipment.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Z3n3m>

Indie studio Urban Cave offers 360 degree wellness set-up

A new boutique studio in London's trendy Soho area is aiming to offer its clientele a 'complete circle of care' through the on-site provision of personal training, classes, massage and physio.

Owned by husband and wife personal training duo, Brett Durney and Sandra Calva, Urban Cave offers exclusive one-to-one pilates and a range of other fitness training sessions, which are complemented by physiotherapy, chiropractic and sports massage services.

The 1,000sq ft (93sq m) studio, which caters for just two clients at a time, launched early this year and currently runs approximately 80 one-to-one sessions a week.

The owners have incorporated physical activity monitoring system MYZONE so clients are able to constantly track their progress. "We know from our previous experience that we can train people much more effectively using MYZONE," said Durney. "It gives us the ability to set realistic targets at the beginning of a session, such as the number of calories burned or MEPs (MYZONE Effort Points), and we can also use it to highlight clients' results after their workouts on social media, which helps promote our work."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=b5u6M>



Husband and wife team Brett Durney and Sandra Calva

Training news

Active IQ unveils college course



The qualification is designed to provide students with "a clear line of sight to work"

Active IQ has unveiled a new two-year college diploma qualification, offering an alternative to the BTEC for further education students eyeing a career in the physical activity sector.

Launched to colleges in March – in time for a September course start date – the Level 3 Diploma in Physical Activity, Fitness and Exercise Science equips students with a broad range of knowledge, skills and competences to progress into employment and/or higher education. Taking two years to complete, with an exit point after year one, the diploma will provide students with an overview of the

exercise and fitness landscape, teach them how to plan and deliver fitness programmes, and will provide entry to the Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) at Level 3. Students will explore fitness and exercise knowledge, technology in sport and exercise, personal and professional development, motivational strategy, entrepreneurship and business skills.

"With the leisure industry growing rapidly we need high standard qualifications, truly valued by employers, providing a clear line to work," said Active IQ's Jenny Patrickson.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=y2Q4j>

InstructAbility plans northern expansion



Disabled people aged 16+ can apply

InstructAbility, the award-winning programme providing fitness instructor training for people with disabilities, is to roll out courses across the north of England for the first time this year.

Created by spinal cord injury charity Aspire and YMCAfit, the programme offers participants the opportunity to gain a Level 2 gym instructor qualification and gives them support to find a fitness industry job.

Ponds Forge International Sports Centre in Sheffield will be the first northern venue to host the programme. There are also plans to run InstructAbility courses in Liverpool and Manchester later in the year.

The free programme is open to any disabled person aged 16 and upwards and more than 50 per cent of graduates have been offered paid work in the industry following successful work placements. For case studies, please see feature on p64.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=v4D5n>

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Google targets body odour with new patent

Stinky armpits in gyms could soon be a thing of the past if Google is able to bring its latest patent to fruition.

The tech giant has filed designs for an 'odour removing device' that can be fitted under clothes and mask unwanted smells.

An activity sensor in the device would be able to predict the extent of an odour, while a 'fragrance emission' component would then emit a calculated burst of fragrance, with a fan to spread it around.

The product remains a long way from making its way under our armpits, but the trend for collaboration between technology and clothing companies means there's clear potential for incorporation into activewear. Google's latest foray into wearable tech with fitness applications comes on the back of Google Glass and several smartwatch collaborations.

Details: <http://llei.sr?a=5P9j9>



The device could feature in activewear

Apple dials up fitness offering



Apple CEO Tim Cook reveals details of the Apple Watch, which goes on sale on 24 April

Apple has finally unveiled its new smartwatch collection, which will cost from US\$349 (€324, £231) to US\$17,000 (€15,800, £11,300) and is being hailed by some analysts as a game-changer for the wearable tech sector.

At a press event held in San Francisco, US, on 9 March, Apple unveiled a traditional model and a basic aluminium-based sport-branded version of the Apple Watch. With all available models, the Apple Watch will have 38 different variations based on either an aluminium, steel or gold-cased version. The higher-end editions will include more storage space and might

allow some of their parts to be upgraded at a later point in time. The smartwatch will last typically 18 hours between charges and will take 2.5 hours to fully charge.

From a health and fitness perspective, the Apple Watch features photo-sensitive sensors on its back to help record pulse information, while wifi allows GPS usage to keep track of movement, pace and distances travelled. The watch also includes an accelerometer to measure total body movement, as well as the quality and intensity of movements made.

Details: <http://llei.sr?a=s3B4g>

Wearable start-ups make leap into skipping rope sector

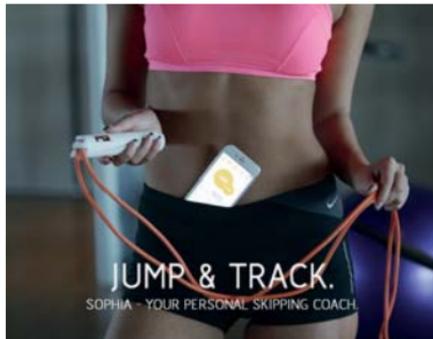
We've had smartwatches, smart glasses and even smart shoes. Now the humble skipping rope is the latest age-old object to be reinvented as a fitness-focused piece of wearable technology, with not one but two companies crowdfunding to bring skipping ropes into the 21st century.

Kickstarter – the crowdfunding website which has featured many a wearable tech product – has carried the campaigns of both products.

The first skipping rope, known as Sophia, is designed by Ireland-based start-up FitFox. Sophia is a Bluetooth-connected smart skipping rope with a high quality activity tracker in the handle that has the ability to measure jumps, speed and calories.

Meanwhile, the other skipping rope hoping to get users hopping to the shops is the Smart Rope by Tangram, a company that has previous form with products including remote controls and phone cases. Like Sophia, Tangram's Smart Rope features tracking capabilities, but it really comes into its own through the 23 LED lights inside the rope that actually display your jump count in mid-air while you're in motion. There's also a virtual trainer function on the app which enables users to set fitness goals and track progress.

Details: <http://llei.sr?a=b5u6M>



The Sophia smart rope is expected to begin shipping in May



The advent of Apple

What does the arrival of the Apple Watch mean to the gym industry? Technology expert Bryan O'Rourke offers his views

Rapidly advancing technologies are revolutionising almost every industry, and health and fitness is no exception, with a growing number of digital alternatives to working out in health clubs now available. Like the digital revolution of music, which destroyed record store business models, the explosion of digital fitness alternatives like wearables and mobile apps looms over traditional fitness business models; the overall wearable technology market looks set to reach as many as 1 billion units by 2020.

This month's release of the Apple Watch represents a significant event within this trend, with global sales set to exceed 30 million units in 2015 according to some reports. Apple's entry to the wearables market draws particular attention thanks to the company's status as king of consumer product development: ensuring the Apple Watch successfully fulfils consumer needs will be the brand's top priority.

No immediate blow

So what will the launch of the Apple Watch really mean to the health club industry?

In the near-term and based on what the Apple Watch, other wearables and mobile applications can do today, the technology won't immediately deliver a crushing blow to existing business models. While consumers are likely to purchase technologies to help them become healthier, these technologies are simply



Global sales of the Apple Watch are predicted to exceed 30 million units in 2015

not at the point where they can deliver results and fully replace bricks and mortar fitness services and experiences. As with predictions of flying cars decades ago, enthusiasm can outpace reality when it comes to emerging technologies.

However, despite some of the Apple Watch's initial limitations such as battery life, the technology of this product – and indeed others – will continue to advance. Over the next five years, we're therefore likely to see a variety of business disruptions resulting from tools – including the Apple Watch 2 and beyond – that will certainly begin to significantly impact the health club industry. Consumers will be offered more convenient and effective alternatives to gym memberships, and a real shift in consumer habits will most likely occur as a result.

Get the prep work done

It's therefore essential that gyms begin to consider service models that incorporate these consumer technologies. For example, coaching could use wearables to enhance feedback from trainers for client activities inside and outside the four walls of the gym, while the compilation of a variety of data from wearables, apps, fitness equipment, billing and CRM – including, of course, integration with Apple's own

HealthKit – could enable personalised member experiences in-club.

The list of possibilities is long, and the solution may well come from an industry outsider with a fresh perspective: Uber wasn't founded by cab drivers. But ultimately, as with other industries, if bricks and mortar fitness models don't embrace the shift towards a blend of digital and bricks and mortar service models, the prognosis might not be good.

In the interim, don't be worried that the Apple Watch will take away your clients as soon as it's launched – but be prepared for what's to come. Believe me, technology is revolutionising health and fitness for the better, whether we like it or not.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bryan O'Rourke is a health club industry expert, technologist, financier, shareholder and executive in several fitness companies. He is CEO of consulting firm Integerus and the Fitness Industry Technology Council (www.fit-c.org), CSO of Fitmarc and The Flywheel Group, and a member of the ACE industry advisory panel. Web: www.bryankorourke.com



The Apple Watch marks part of a revolution in fitness

Arianna Huffington: Wellbeing key to success

Without embracing wellbeing, we can never be truly successful and our bottom line will suffer, said Arianna Huffington during her keynote at the IHRSA 2015 conference in Los Angeles.

Huffington took to the podium to offer an enlightening and often amusing keynote under the theme 'Redefining Success: The Third Metric That Can Benefit Your Bottom Line'.

The Greek-born founder of *The Huffington Post* – who remains president and editor-in-chief – talked about her mantra for personal and professional success, and about the 'third metric' which defines wellbeing, wonder, wisdom and willingness as its cornerstones.

Society, she said, has become too obsessed with money and power as measures of success, but to only focus on these aspects "is like sitting on a two-legged stool – you will soon fall off". Her own fall came in 2007 when she collapsed, exhausted, in the office and woke in a pool of her own blood. "I asked myself 'Is this really success?'" she reflected, adding that she then embarked on her journey to the discovery of the third metric.

Huffington observed that a sea change in business is starting to reflect the notion that wellbeing has a major impact on performance – and ultimately a company's bottom line.



Huffington had a wake-up call in 2007 when she had an accident due to exhaustion

"2014 was the year of CEOs coming out as meditators," she said, noting that many of the world's most powerful business leaders have recently admitted that part of their success can be attributed to meditation and ensuring

they regularly get a decent night's sleep.

Fostering greater wellbeing is the subject of Huffington's latest book *Thrive: The Third Metric to Redefining Success and Creating a Happier Life*.
Details: <http://lei.sr?a=S2H8Q>

5 things loyal gym members care about most

Having friendly staff and PTs to make members feel welcome is the single most important factor for loyal gym users, according to a survey of more than one million customers.

The survey, which comprised feedback from members across 2,000 health clubs, showed that for loyal gym members (those who rate their gym's service as nine or 10 out of 10) cost is

not, in fact, a prime concern. After friendly staff, loyal members ranked an abundance of good quality equipment, a varied schedule of fitness classes, a clean facility and good customer service as their five most important factors.

The findings were presented at IHRSA 2015 by Listen360 executive VP Richard Thomas. Listen360 is a customer feedback system that

links to a company's Net Promoter Score (NPS), giving businesses a real-time overview of their strengths and weaknesses.

With NPS an established and reliable predictor of a firm's future growth, it's unsurprising that there's a growing interest among gyms in strengthening their score.

Retention Solutions director Jon Nasta – the European distributor for Listen360 – told *Health Club Management* that supply of integrated data not only helps drive business decisions, but also provides a 'prevention rather than cure' approach to retention.

"Today Listen360 is sharing analyses of more than one million member feedback comments, and this data allows health clubs to respond to operational demands of members before they decide to leave the clubs," he said. "It's the first time such a large amount of data is available to show what makes members happy."

As well as aiding member retention, the system has the potential to help strengthen a brand's standing and bring greater referral opportunities: gym chain Xercise4Less has seen its NPS jump from 31 to 54 per cent in its first year of using Listen360.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=R6j5N>



The feedback suggests friendly staff play a vital role in keeping members happy

Les Mills: On Demand classes



Mills says the on-demand service enables member engagement beyond the gym

Global fitness giant Les Mills is bidding to bring exercise classes into the home and on to the computer with the planned launch of a new on-demand streaming service.

Expected to be rolled out around January 2016, Les Mills On Demand will aim to help health clubs enhance their member offering by extending exercise classes beyond the gym.

Based on research that found 70 per cent of regular gym users also exercise frequently at home, Les Mills believes the service will provide clubs with an extra dimension, while also boosting member engagement. Speaking exclusively to *HCM* at IHRSA 2015, Les Mills

CEO Phillip Mills said: "We initially thought on-demand classes would compete with club classes, but we were wrong – they complement.

"It will be a high-class offering as we have the best content, filming facilities, instructors and licensed music. We'll be partnering with clubs to offer members cheaper access to a top quality streaming service."

The initial offering will see eight Les Mills classes available for users to access via a web portal: the three GRIT classes, Pump, Combat, RPM, SH'BAM and BodyBalance, with plans to also roll out Born To Move kids' classes.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=N6z6n>

Apple Watch no silver bullet: O'Rourke

Apple's smartwatch will not be the instant "silver bullet" to destroy health clubs as some have predicted. Rather, it will be the subsequent refinement of the product that will have the biggest impact, says analyst Bryan O'Rourke.

Speaking exclusively to *HCM* at IHRSA 2015, fitness guru O'Rourke said that, similar to the iPod, it will be further iterations of the watch that will really cause a shift in consumer habits, a process that could take three to five years.

"Apple as a brand has an excellent focus on the consumer, so ensuring the Apple Watch successfully fulfils their needs will be its top priority," said O'Rourke.

"Gyms are no longer the sole domain of fitness, so they will have to shift with changing consumer needs, although the Apple Watch won't be some silver bullet to deliver a crushing blow to operators. But operators will need to work out how to integrate it into business models. The solution may well come



Integerus CEO and founder Bryan O'Rourke

from someone outside the industry with a fresh perspective. For example, the Uber app wasn't founded by cab drivers."

For more analysis, see p19.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=f9x6N>

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Oxley: A wealth of leisure experience

John Oxley swaps Active Nation for PPL ops role

Active Nation MD John Oxley is to join rival operator Places for People Leisure (PPL) as operations director and will also sit on its main board of directors.

Oxley has spent seven years at the Active Nation helm and was previously operations director at Everyone Active, which is owned by SLM. His is the latest high-profile appointment at PPL, following the announcement of Sandra Dodd as the new CEO of the growing business.

"There's an immense amount of talent in the team at Places for People Leisure. It's a key time to be joining such a significant player in the leisure industry and I'm excited for what the future holds in my operations role," said Oxley, who takes up his new post on 20 April. "Making a real difference to the health of the nation and encouraging more people to become more active drives both my commitment to the sector, and my new employer."

PPL currently manages more than 115 facilities across England and partners with 36 local authorities, with plans for further growth during the course of 2015.
Details: <http://lei.sr?a=B9Y6E>

BMF founder takes MD post

The original founder of British Military Fitness (BMF), Harry Sowerby, has reassumed the top rank having been appointed as the outdoor training company's new managing director.

Sowerby recently returned to the company as chair, 11 years after he left to serve as a section commander in Iraq and Afghanistan. He replaces previous MD Rob Love, who is to remain with the company in a reduced capacity as he tends to family commitments, a spokesperson told *Health Club Management*.

Sowerby first conceived the BMF concept while working on the set of Hollywood blockbuster *Saving Private Ryan*. Having completed his Army PTI (Physical Training Instructor) course, Sowerby was asked if he would be interested in setting up a company to deliver British Army-style fitness classes in parks across London, prompting the first class to be held in Hyde Park in April 1999.

"I'm so proud of how far the company has come since its creation in 1999 and even prouder to be trusted with the reins of such a large and successful operation," said Sowerby.

"Taking a step back from BMF has allowed me to gain a lot of valuable experience in other roles, which I'll be bringing to my new position. I'm looking forward to taking the helm and seeing BMF continue to grow from strength to strength over the coming years."
Details: <http://lei.sr?a=Z4a4Y>



Harry Sowerby is back at the helm of BMF

Liz Holmes lands Virgin Active role



Liz Holmes joined Rockliffe Hall in 2009

Spa director Liz Holmes is to leave Darlington's Rockliffe Hall after six years at the helm to be national health and beauty manager with health club chain Virgin Active.

Holmes is to replace Emma Williams, who after nine years at Virgin is heading to The Joshua Tree day spa in Nottingham.

"While the scope and scale of the new role will change with 38 Virgin sites, many of the opportunities and challenges will be exactly the same," Holmes told *Health Club Management*. "Key for me will be to get to the hearts and minds of the already successful team and identify how we can all make a positive impact on the business together."
Details: <http://lei.sr?a=f9H3P>

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KELLY MCGONIGAL

The Stanford University psychologist has transformed 'willpower' from a concept into a science, and she explained how to use it at last month's IHRSA Annual Convention & Trade Show

How do you define willpower, and how important is it?

It's hard to underestimate the importance of willpower. It describes the ability to make choices and take steps that are consistent with your highest goals and values – even when it's difficult or when some part of you doesn't want to. For example, it's declining a tempting dessert to avoid gaining weight, or working out instead of watching TV.

Unfortunately, when most people talk about willpower, they think of it as forcing themselves to do things they don't want to do, and that's draining. That's why people have such a problem with resolutions. When you set up this sort of mental battle – where you feel you're trying to defeat your behaviour rather than advance your goals – it's hard to move forward. In the end, force doesn't work.

How can club operators, instructors and personal trainers better harness willpower?

I'd suggest that, to get started, they first make a point of cultivating "want-power" in their clients – examining and reinforcing their underlying motivation. People need to be clear about their values and goals, and recognise that they're making a conscious choice rather than forcing themselves to do something. That fosters a willingness to proceed, rather than imposing what seems like a kind of brutal self-discipline.

When initiating personal change, it's essential that you identify with and endorse the positive goals you're pursuing. If that isn't the case – if you simply feel you're repressing or suppressing your preferences, desires and instincts – that's actually a harmful exercise in willpower.

If you want to have more willpower, you have to learn to be a friend and mentor to yourself, rather than equating self-control with self-criticism.



McGonigal is a lecturer in management at the Stanford Graduate School of Business

How can fitness professionals leverage this understanding of willpower to help members succeed?

First, it's important to recognise the difference between a desire to change and what actually motivates that desire. People typically sign up for a membership for what they regard as negative reasons – guilt, shame, body hate, fear of health consequences – or because of the false-hope syndrome. "Maybe I weigh 300 pounds today, and I've never exercised, but starting tomorrow I'm going to work out two hours a day and lose all this weight. It's going to change my life!"

This dichotomy – a negative cause and punitive effects versus a positive goal and rewarding outcomes – predicts absolute failure in terms of behaviour change. They're contradictory stances – we're working against ourselves.

So what can clubs do? Instill the desire to use the club by ensuring they know there's

someone there who knows their name, cares about them, and is committed to helping them achieve their goals.

It's also very important to communicate the value of small behaviours. It's crazy that, in the fitness industry, we promulgate recommended activity levels that 10 per cent or fewer of Americans are meeting.

Meanwhile, research shows that just 10 minutes of activity a day reduces the incidence of depression, cardiovascular disease and all-cause mortality, while simultaneously increasing daily functionality and life satisfaction. Members need to pay attention to things that are easy to affect and control. It's important for club staff to encourage small, positive changes first. Such changes matter, and they do add up.

Anything you might warn them not to do when dealing with club members?

Yes. They might, for instance, be looking at someone who's overweight or very



It's important for gym staff to encourage small, positive changes among members

INTRODUCING KELLY MCGONIGAL

Kelly McGonigal, 37, earned degrees in communication and psychology from Boston University in 1999, and a PhD in psychology from Stanford University in 2004.

Before joining the faculty of Stanford in 2006, she taught group fitness classes, was a freelance writer, conducted research in psychology, and edited the *International Journal of Yoga Therapy*.

As a health psychologist with the Stanford School of Medicine, she developed a course called 'The Science of Willpower', which led to her writing of *The Willpower Instinct: How Self-Control Works, Why It Matters, and What You Can Do to Get More of It*. The book describes the latest scientific insights into what willpower is, why we have it, and how to develop it further.

McGonigal is currently a lecturer in management at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, as well as at the Stanford Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education, which is part of the School of Medicine's Institute for Translation Neuroscience.

PHOTO: WWW.HUTTERSTOCK.COM/WAIBR/FAKHIDA

much out of shape and thinking: "This person has a willpower struggle." But having taught, written and spoken about willpower for more than a decade now, I want to stress that everyone has areas in their lives where they feel a bit out of control – where it's difficult for them to consistently make the positive choice.

I'd refrain from assuming anything about anyone until they choose to share information with you.

Also, it's not what other people judge us for that we necessarily need to change. The real questions are: What are the things that matter to each of us individually? What are we not doing to support our own personal goals and values? Exercising your willpower instinct is really about devoting your attention, time and effort to what matters to you most – and helping your members do that same. It involves a very important discovery process.

You believe that willpower in action – whether successful or resulting in failure – is 'contagious'. Could you elaborate?

When researchers study epidemiological events, and how willpower struggles spread over time, they find – on the negative side – that you're more likely to become overweight or increase your drinking or become sleep-deprived if people in your social network have made that change already.

However, on the positive side, when someone we care about adopts a positive new goal or a healthier lifestyle behaviour, we tend to begin to incorporate their goals into our own goals, often unconsciously. And the more you like and spend time with someone, the more contagious they are.

The epidemiological data demonstrates that these behaviours tend to spread across networks, and a health club is a network – a very positive network.

You also say willpower isn't an unlimited resource, but some people – such as Sir Richard Branson, founder of the Virgin Group – seem to have no end of it. How do you explain that?

First of all, I'd challenge the utility of identifying anyone as a willpower role model. Everyone, no matter how successful they may appear, has an area in their life that's a bit out of control or self-destructive – it's just that those unique willpower struggles are often invisible to others.

If you're looking for a willpower role model, you'd do much better to look within your own circle of friends and acquaintances – for someone who's been successful and whose struggles you're aware of.

People tend, unconsciously, to choose individuals who don't appear to be struggling as their power exemplars. But, remember, willpower is the ability to do things that are difficult – and we all have difficulties in our lives. ●



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Diary

APRIL

8 | European Health & Fitness Forum

Venue Cologne, Germany
Summary

Leaders from fitness, politics and health will attend this annual event, offering seminars, networking and new research.
Web www.europeactive.eu

9-12 | FIBO 2015

Venue Cologne Messe, Germany
Summary

The world's leading trade show for health, fitness and wellness.
Web www.fibo.de

29-30 | Active-net 2015

Venue imago Burleigh Court and Holywell Park, Loughborough, UK
Summary

A networking event aimed at all suppliers and operators with a focus on the public leisure sector. With educational seminars, keynotes and seminars, one-to-one buyer/supplier meetings and networking.
Web www.active-net.org

MAY

14 | Retention Convention

Venue Institute of Engineering and Technology, Birmingham, UK
Summary

A line-up of global experts will explain how to develop and implement a strategy to improve member retention.



Rimini Wellness, which takes place in Italy in May, is now in its 10th year

Featuring Dr Paul Bedford, Dr Melvyn Hillsdon, Jan Middelkamp, Guy Griffiths and Rob Gregory.

Web www.retentionguru.co.uk

15-17 | BodyPower

Venue NEC, Birmingham, UK
Summary

BodyPower is the fastest-growing consumer fitness exhibition in Europe, attracting thousands of health and fitness enthusiasts from around the globe. The show offers an extensive exhibition, visual displays and interactive feature areas.

Web www.bodypowerexpo.co.uk

20-21 | SIBEC UK

Venue The Belfry, West Midlands, UK
Summary

A one-to-one meeting forum bringing together suppliers and buyers in the leisure, health and fitness sectors from the UK's local authority, trust and education markets.
Web www.sibec.co.uk

28-31 | Rimini Wellness

Venue Rimini Fiera, Rimini, Italy
Summary

One of the world's largest fitness and wellness shows is now in its 10th year.
Web www.riminiwellness.com

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escape

Getting off the couch

Sitting is now the new smoking, but not enough people realise the true dangers of being sedentary. As Public Health England issues a rallying cry to get moving, what can our industry do to help?

Everybody Active, Every Day is what Public Health England is calling for in its recently published national framework, which aims to make physical activity the social norm. But for this to happen, there needs to be change in many areas: opportunities for exercise in the street and the workplace, more GP referrals, inspiring and inclusive school sport, public health messaging and national interventions. And the health club industry could also be part of the solution, if it's willing to step up.

John Morgan, a GP who prescribes exercise above medication, argues that education is one of the main issues: "Much of the media messages lean

towards diet for weight management. We need to change people's mindset, so they realise weight isn't just about what they eat but being physically active as well."

One important change clubs could make would be to push the importance of being active over weight loss. Explain to disillusioned members that, even if the pounds are proving hard to shift, their lifestyle change will be benefiting their physical and mental health in many ways.

This is the approach ukactive is already adopting, trying to steer the focus away from obesity and towards physical activity. "Obesity has always been physical activity's larger, more visible, headline-stealing companion. Yet Cambridge University research shows that physical

inactivity is responsible for twice as many deaths as obesity," says ukactive CEO David Stalker, who argues that current exercise guidelines are confusing and offputting, and that targeted and supportive public health messaging is needed to get people off the couch.

So what's the best approach, and where does the health and fitness industry fit into all of this? Does a new 'active every day' culture have to start with schools, building the habit early, or perhaps with GPs recommending activity to patients? Do health clubs need to restructure their offering to appeal to non-gym goers, and do cities need to be designed to facilitate daily activity? We ask the experts for their thoughts...

Any ideas on how to push the PHE message? Email us: healthclub@leisuremedia.com

JOHN MORGAN

GP • Bucket and Sponge



"There has been too much emphasis on public health messaging as a way of communicating the need to get active. This approach has failed over time. GPs are in the best position to communicate this message, because they're seeing patients every day and have a 90 per cent satisfaction rate for the advice they give. According to research, 64 per cent of people would do exercise if it were recommended by their GP.

The problem is, it's not only patients who need educating about the benefits of physical activity – doctors do too. The curriculum at medical schools needs to be changed to take into account new evidence about the health benefits of exercise. Referring people for exercise should be part of the QOF framework in which all GPs must participate – but the pressures of the job mean many GPs don't think outside of the box. Whereas they're constantly receiving visits from pharmaceutical companies talking about how their products work and providing a solution, there isn't an advocate for physical activity. If the health club industry could approach surgeries, presenting research and offering a pathway and solution for patients, and then follow it up with outcomes such as blood pressure and BMI readings for those people who go on to exercise, GPs may start to listen."

DEAN HORRIDGE

CEO and founder • Fit For Sport



"It's vital to form habits early: by the time they leave primary school, two-thirds of children have disengaged from playing sports because they've had a negative experience. Out of a class of 30, 10 will be naturally good and always have the ball. Those 10 will get the main focus, as they will be picked for school teams and go on to be active adults. To reverse this, the focus needs to be taken off sport and placed on being an active school. Schools should focus more on teaching all children how to run, skip, jump, catch and throw – then more will be able to take up sport itself.

Research shows active children perform better in all respects: academically, in their behaviour and how they eat and sleep. Schools need to provide the opportunity for children to be active for 60 minutes every day. One key focus for Fit For Sport is encouraging schools to meet this requirement by showing them how to deliver fun and engaging activities at break times and at lunch. With some upskilling of playground supervisors, engaging all kids in fun activities is very achievable.

Many leisure providers have the desire to work with schools. To do this, fitness instructors need to be trained in core skills to work with young people, so they can use their knowledge to get children active at their facilities during the quiet times."



Does a new culture of 'active every day' have to start in schools to build good habits early?

TOM WILLIAMS

Managing director • Parkrun UK

“The health club industry is well placed to educate its members to make the right choices outside of the gym and to make consistent activity a habit. The message it puts across needs to change from weight loss to becoming active.”

When I worked as a PT, the people who made the most gains were those who sought information during their sessions, which they then used during the rest of the week – not those who combined beating themselves three times a week with bad habits.

Health clubs need to offer workouts that are social and fun, because then people will want to keep coming back. They must help members build habits – and habits need to be enjoyable. Clubs have a wonderful opportunity to get outside their four walls with running clubs and walking clubs, for example.

Like health clubs, Parkrun UK – a series of free, weekly 5k and 2k runs across 350 UK locations – is just one small part of the solution, but we've been successful in mobilising 55,000 weekly runners. It's social, friendly and offers a community. Free entry has removed one of the barriers: even a nominal charge would change the culture. As the runs are the same time on the same day every week, it makes it easy to build the habit. Different locations means you can maintain the habit even if travelling.”



JOHN ALLISON

Founder • Street Gym

“Architects and urban planners need to consider how they can promote physical activity at the design stage. Things are starting to head in the right direction in the UK, with the London Design Council picking up on the work of the New York-based Center for Active Design. We're starting to see the needs of London's cyclists being factored into development schemes, for example – but now we need the same for those on foot. Every day in cities around the UK, people walk and run to work, so it's about time we built Urban Trim Trails in safe locations along commuter routes.”

Every year in London, we see many artworks positioned around the city, yet few of them are functional. I see this as a missed opportunity. The 'Endless Stair' – a temporary structure positioned outside Tate Modern during the London Design festival in 2013 – was an exception. You could walk, run and climb on and around it. My clients and I loved it.

Health club operators could offer innovative urban outdoor training sessions, which would appeal to a wider market. They have the opportunity to demonstrate that being active isn't just about the latest equipment or gym-based fitness activity, but that the streets people use every day can be the route to getting fit, if people are inspired to use them differently.”



HUMPHREY COBBOLD

The new CEO of affordable gym operation Pure Gym – now the UK's largest fitness chain – talks to Kate Cracknell about shifting the focus beyond the club walls, and thinking like an insurgent to stay on top



Cobbold joined Pure Gym from online retailer Wiggle, where he gained a passion for triathlon



Pure Gym received 20 million visits last year – “that’s 20 million opportunities for our members to love us or leave us”

“When you join us, you’re a member for life,” Humphrey Cobbold, the new CEO of Pure Gym, tells me when I meet him at the company’s London offices. “Sometimes you’ll be paying for our services, sometimes not – there’ll be times when it simply doesn’t work for you to be using a gym, and that’s fine. But we want to make your experience such that, when you do want to return, we’re your preferred place to go.

“Our core proposition is being there when people want us, not tying them in to contracts that commit them to us when it’s not convenient. Individuals want to be self-determining and you have to accept that – our members can leave and rejoin whenever they like.

“We need to get better at understanding why they’re leaving – that’s something we’re already working on – but in general I think it’s a much more honest, higher integrity position than selling people a 12-month contract when you know, on average, they’re only going to use four or five months of it.

“It does mean there’s no room for complacency though. Our COO Jacques de Bruin came up with a great expression at our last GM conference. He stood up and said: ‘Last year we had 20 million visits to our gyms. That’s 20 million opportunities for our members to love us or leave us. Every time they walk out of the door, ask yourself as a GM which one it will be. We’re only as good as the last experience you gave a member.’”

“

I don’t see any reason why we can’t become a content and advisory brand, a source of counsel and guidance. I believe we have a brand that increasingly will have the credibility and authority to do this

”

Finding ‘the one’

When we meet, Cobbold has only been in the role for five weeks, but what he professes to lack in detailed fitness sector knowledge is more than made up for by a raft of interesting ideas and perspectives, all built on the foundations of a diverse business background.

Cobbold spent 15 years with consultancy firm McKinsey – including setting up the South African office – before he had what he calls an “in

the shower moment”. Getting ready for work one morning, he realised he didn’t want his professional life to be predictably mapped out for the next 10 or even 20 years. He therefore made the leap client side, spending three years in publishing at Trinity Mirror, before moving into private equity for another three years with Candover. “You always think you understand the City until you actually work there,” he observes. It was, he says, an invaluable experience, but he admits he didn’t enjoy “being arm’s length as an investor”.

In early 2009 he therefore joined recent online start-up Wiggle. By that point, Wiggle had already grown to a £33m turnover and, having started out selling anything and everything, had evolved into a website focused on cycling and triathlon. It was, says Cobbold, “bigger than the founders felt comfortable managing”. Coming in with a brief to grow and professionalise the business, make it sustainable and ultimately sell it, Cobbold steered the company through a four-year period of “white-knuckle” growth, reaching a turnover of £118m by the time the business was sold for £185m in December 2011. This growth continued, with turnover reaching £167m by the time Cobbold left in September 2013.

“When I was at Wiggle, I felt really good about selling people stuff that made them happier and healthier and the world a slightly better place,” he says. “If we helped them run a bit more, cycle a bit more, or swim, I felt good about that. ▶



Pure Gym is a no contract model, with lower fees and round-the-clock access

“ We have to keep thinking like an insurgent. How do we tackle ourselves when we're the big guys on the block? Because if we're not going to think about it, somebody else is

”

► I felt we were doing it in a way that made better products more available, at better prices, anywhere in the world. That felt like a good thing to be doing.”

On leaving Wiggle, although he first took a bit of time off to indulge his passion for sport and triathlons, Cobbold was keen to find a new job that gave him a similar buzz. “I wanted to find something I felt really engaged and excited by, and where I knew could make a difference,” he explains. “I looked at 60 or 70 companies during 2014, and the only rule I had was that I would look at anything once and I would have at least one meeting on anything. I wouldn't rule anything out looking at it from a distance.

“Pure Gym is a great example actually. My first reaction was that it wasn't right for me. I discovered the great outdoors through what I was doing at Wiggle – I enjoy running in the park, swimming in open water, cycling on the open road. Although I'm happy in gyms, I'm not a gym bunny. But when I met Peter [Roberts, founder of Pure Gym], heard what he'd achieved to date and understood more about the business – the genuine enthusiasm in this young, growing business – I realised it was the one for me.”

That perfect fit was also down to Cobbold's personal interest in fitness. “Where you have enthusiasts among members and staff, you have to have that enthusiasm yourself to be credible as a leader,” he acknowledges. “Businesses can be efficiently managed by a good administrator, but if they

can be effectively led then they can be much, much better businesses.”

Growth potential

Fast-forward a few months and Cobbold is firmly embedded at Pure Gym – the 18th fastest-growing private company in the UK last year, according to *The Sunday Times*, and already the largest fitness chain in the UK. So how does he plan to continue this impressive growth?

“There's a right rate of growth for any business: too slow and you're ceding too much market territory to somebody else. Too fast and you're overstretching the business and will fall over at some stage. Plus of course percentage-wise you can grow much faster when you're smaller.

However, we're working very hard to be able to add 30 or so gyms a year in the UK for at least the next couple of years, including eight or 10 in London this year. That will mostly be through organic growth, but we're also open to acquisitions – the affordable sector will absolutely consolidate at some stage and to some degree, despite the CMA's intervention [ruling out Pure Gym's merger with The Gym Group] last year.

“I believe there's still plenty of room for growth. Last year, Pure Gym revenues were a shade under £70m, and I expect to add another £20–25m over the next year.

“I don't know exactly how many affordable gyms the UK will support, because you can't easily predict the demand-side consequences of adding supply into a market. We add facilities into markets we judge carefully, where we

think there will be demand, but you don't quite know what the demand will actually be until you open the doors. It's a bit of a 'build it and they will come – you hope' kind of strategy. That's the reality of it.

“But I believe the proposition we're offering is extremely robust and compelling for a large number of people out there – most of whom haven't even heard of it yet. And that's key: we need to drive awareness. Most of my friends don't even vaguely know what Pure Gym is, and that's because none of the affordable chains have done much marketing or presenting themselves outside of their very local area.

“Within the fitness industry, because we talk about it all the time, I think there's an assumption that the public is now fully aware of the generic USPs of the affordable gym sector – no contract, lower costs, round-the-clock access and so on. But I don't think that's actually the case. I don't think they're even halfway aware yet, so we have a job to do there.”

Unshackling the model

There's also, he believes, an argument for expanding the role of the health club. “Our mindset at Pure Gym is that we need to encourage regular participation of activity – wherever possible inside our gym, so we need to make our environment and community worth paying for.

“But if our raison d'être is to help people be more active, fitter, healthier – appreciating that exercise means very different things to different people – ►

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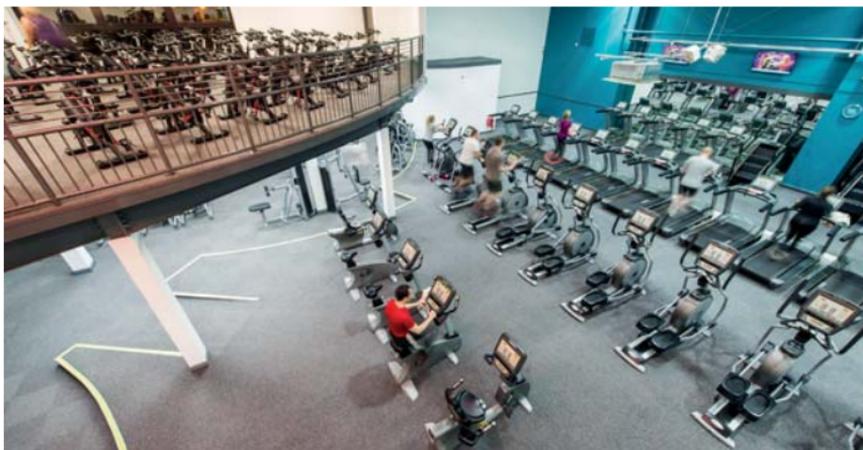
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Cobbold acknowledges there will be a limit to the number of 20,000sq ft sites; the company is investigating other models

► why would we constrain ourselves to the gym? What about the events people are doing, the walks in the park, the rides across the hills or a whole range of other things? Our role should be to enable and make that choice easy, not difficult. The constraint of exercise having to take place within the four walls of our gyms is a constraint we invent for ourselves. It's not a constraint invented by the consumer for themselves.

"For me, there are three or four parts to the role of a gym. There's the facility – safe and secure to exercise in at any time of the day or night. There are also experts in personal training and activity on-hand who you can engage with about what you're doing and why – you might even pay for PT or do a class.

"But given all the knowledge we have in-house, I'd be astonished if over time we're not publishing much more content and information and expertise – things you can do both in the gym and outside. At the moment we're essentially a place people go to do stuff, but I don't see any reason why we can't become a content and advisory brand, a source of counsel and guidance. I believe we have a brand that increasingly will have the credibility and authority to do this.

"And then finally, when I was at Wiggle, we actually sponsored, owned and even operated our own mass participation events. Some people actually knew us better for those than for our website and online retail business. I don't see any reason why we couldn't do something similar at Pure

Gym – I think there's a whole series of activities outside the club that we could, and should, either get involved in or else own and operate ourselves.

"Obviously you have to find a way of making that stuff pay, or at least accept that it's a cost that gets paid for somewhere else within the business. But those are the sorts of things the brand can do. We need to start from the point of view that our core proposition is an open-minded one – one that's based on being there when people want us to be."

Staying on top

But although Cobbold sees plenty of room for growth in the affordable sector, he also acknowledges the finite supply of suitable real estate: "There will be a limit to the number of 20,000sq ft facilities we can create. We don't quite know where that limit is – my suspicion is there'll be more than people currently recognise, because the proposition is so compelling. But when the growth curve flattens off, what will we do next? You don't have to be a rocket scientist to work out that there's lots of other stuff going on in the fitness arena – activity events, nutrition, active health management and so on – that people are spending time and money on. We're thinking hard about some of those things, but the plans haven't even left the drawing board yet, so it's a case of 'watch this space' for now."

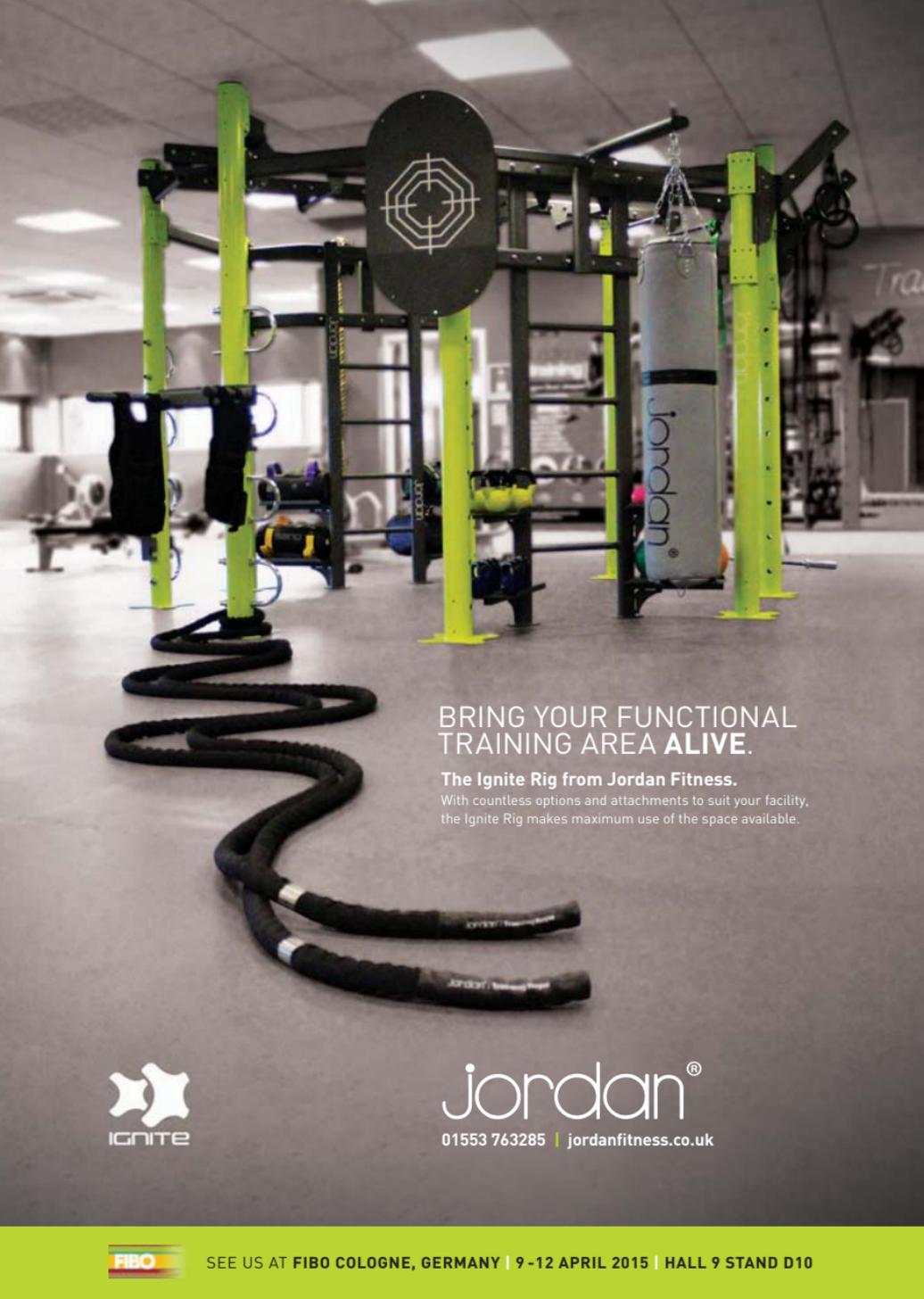
In the meantime, Cobbold is keen to draw out USPs for Pure Gym that go beyond price. "Anyone can lead on

price – that's not a hard model to copy," he says. "Our size allows us to create genuine USPs through scale. Some of those will be very obvious to consumers – being able to use any of our clubs, for example, rather than just their home club. But you can create USPs behind the scene as well. Consumer interaction is very close to my heart, and we can afford to invest in systems that will allow us to better manage the member relationship. Our online interface should be better than anybody else's in the marketplace. It's not at the moment, but it will be.

"Over time, we should also be able to build up partnerships with third parties that give value to our consumers: we're a marginally male-led proposition, with a large proportion of our members aged between 18 and 30. That's the hardest demographic to reach, and yet we have hundreds of thousands of them coming in to our facilities on a weekly basis. That makes us very attractive to third parties."

He continues: "There are, however, some real penalties to being big: you become less efficient, less nimble, less able to change. So you need to focus on the things that make being big worthwhile to your customers, continuing to innovate rather than being locked into defending what you have. If not, before you know it you become the incumbent you displaced.

"We have to keep thinking like an insurgent. How do we tackle ourselves when we're the big guys on the block? Because if we're not going to think about it, somebody else is." ●



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ALL CHANGE, BUT NO CHANGE AT ALL

Ahead of next month's General Election in the UK, ukactive strategy director Steven Ward gives his thoughts on what might – or might not – change for the fitness sector depending on who finds themselves in power



Who will be in power come next month – Ed Miliband, Nick Clegg, David Cameron – and what will that mean for the fitness sector?

Who knows? By some freak of political nature, you may be reading this in April with some form of clarity as to where the 2015 General Election is heading. From my vantage point writing this in early March, all that can be foretold about the outcome is that it's going to be the closest General Election for almost 100 years, with the make-up of the next government impossible to predict.

Too close to call

There are a number of factors that make it so hard to call. Despite genuine concern about the cost of living and the impact of the current government's ongoing austerity measures, Ed Miliband's Labour Party has yet to cut through with its own distinct narrative that engages a big enough proportion of the population to see them comfortably victorious.

It was once said that the current Labour Party is run by individuals who felt three-time election winner Tony Blair was the problem and Gordon Brown was the answer; the charge is that Miliband has abandoned the centre ground for a 'core vote' strategy that simply cannot deliver enough votes to win outright.

Secondly, while unpopular with many, the current government is credited with charting a path out of recession and both a spike in growth and a decline in joblessness. The build-up to the election will see a concerted attempt by the Conservatives to terrify an electorate already nervous about a return of the supposed profligacy of days past with these facts.

Thirdly, it's impossible to predict the likely staying power in the level of support attracted to the UKIP bandwagon. Typically the cold light of Election Day sways voters away from their previously declared

voting intentions towards safer and more reasonable choices; given that polling shows UKIP is drawing support not only from ex-Conservatives but also dissatisfied and disaffected Labour voters, both parties will be hoping this will be the case.

However, two by-election victories in a row show that the support has started to firm up. It's not just about the seats UKIP wins, but also the UKIP votes cast in seats it loses, thereby depriving other parties of victory – a concern most pronounced for the Conservative Party.

Minorities wielding power

Then there's the dynamic created following the Scottish independence referendum. In Scotland, Labour faces the prospect of annihilation at the hands of the SNP, who aim to storm Westminster with the intent of repatriating as many powers and pound coins north as the border as possible.



For all the supportive comments of the current government, activity was not one of the seven published priorities of Public Health England. We have to secure the establishment of a proper national strategy



The SNP will be impossible to ignore come negotiations for the formation of a coalition. The party willing to pay the most may be the party able to govern for the next five years. Beyond Scotland, the seats held by minor parties such as the DUP, SDLP, Plaid Cymru and the Greens could all come into the equation.

Finally, while devastation is on the cards for the Liberal Democrats, the rump that is left behind will still play a significant part in settling the outcome of the election. While there's a risk that key figures like Nick Clegg and Vince Cable may not even retain their seats, let alone Cabinet positions in a new coalition, the reality is the Lib Dems could well be in a kingmaker position once again.

Impact on our sector

So what does this mean for the physical activity sector? My view is that we have to rely on the underlying strength of our arguments, the momentum we've generated over the past few years and the developing evidence base we have at our fingertips to face up to whatever party wins the day at the General Election and wins the right to govern as the dominant party in a coalition that's likely to be of many parts.

We could spend our time analysing the discrepancies in the positions of the political parties: exploring why it is that the Conservative Party still seems wedded to an impression of activity formed on the sporting playing fields of the nation's gilded private schools, for example, or whether Labour will be tempted back into major national level investments to follow the scale of Free Swimming.

We could discuss the inevitability that both parties would officially divert investments made by Sport England away from a NGB-focused strategy of payment by results and towards a more diverse investment portfolio – one that might involve working directly with local authorities or third sector bodies like the National Trust, or potentially doing things on its own as it has already begun to do with the likes of its 'This Girl Can' campaign.

But doing so would be futile because the underpinning trends at play – austerity, the localism agenda, the public profile of activity and the need to save the NHS from bankruptcy – make such matters akin to rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic. The big issues to address remain the big issues.



Stepping out alone: 'This Girl Can' marks Sport England's first significant solo initiative

So what are they? Top of my list remains the establishment of physical activity as an out-and-out top tier public health priority, once and for all. For all the supportive comments of the current government, activity was not one of the seven published priorities of Public Health England. We have to secure the establishment of a proper national strategy, bringing together the

resources and ambitions of all departments with an interest in this agenda with the leadership and resources they need to make real change happen.

For all the promise of Lord Coe's work to bring together departments across Whitehall for the *Move More, Live Longer* publication and PHE's *Everybody Active, Every Day*, physical activity remains Whitehall's



The fitness industry needs to get its own house in order, building on the evidence base that shows the positive results of exercise



Simon Stevens, CEO of the NHS, has stated that the NHS is unviable unless we contain demand through prevention of ill health... Physical activity has a major part to play in that



▶ “starving orphan child” as Shadow Health Secretary Andy Burnham once termed it. This must be addressed by getting a proper strategy in place, backed by resources.

Secondly, we must see the continuation of local level leadership embracing this agenda. Local authorities are stepping up to the plate, with 70 per cent increasing their physical activity budgets as a proportion of public health spending – yet this remains at 4 per cent of their public health grant and a poor relation to other public health issues.

I expect to see some exciting locally-driven initiatives as more power is devolved locally. We have already seen £6bn of health spending devolved to a single Manchester authority, bringing together public health with healthcare and adult social care. Could we not see Sport England’s participation budget – previously allocated to a wide ranging number of NGBs – devolved in the same way to core cities and aligned to match-funded investment from public health teams?

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, as this agenda rises up the pecking order we need to have our own house in order with an ever-improving evidence base that shows we can deliver the outcomes we claim.

The country needs us

Why am I so sure that the colour of the next UK government is irrelevant in the grand scheme of things?

There are some certainties. Whichever the government, austerity measures will continue, bringing great strain on local resources – yet we’ve never had a better moment to promote physical activity. We have the most permissive media, public and civil environment we could wish for.

Crucially, we have a need to succeed that binds us to one of the greatest policy challenges of our times: saving the NHS as a service that’s free at the point of need.

Simon Stevens, CEO of the NHS, has stated that the NHS is unviable unless we contain demand through prevention

of ill health. The evidence base is growing increasingly clear that physical activity has a major part to play in that. Our country needs our sector. Let’s not let it down. ●



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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The PERSONAL touch



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Health club members in the 25–44 age category are the most likely to use a personal trainer

In this latest article in the series of reports from TRP 10,000, we report on which members purchased personal training (PT), what their main reasons were for purchasing PT and how PT is associated with visit frequency, reported progress and retention.

Members were asked how many PT sessions they had purchased in the previous three months, with possible answers ranging from 'none' to '12 or more'. Members who purchased at least one PT session were asked what their main reason was for purchasing PT, selecting from four possible options or an 'other' category. Members were followed up for seven months, at which point it was recorded whether they had cancelled or not.

Who receives PT?

Overall, 10 per cent of members reported purchasing at least one session of PT in the three months prior to the survey; 4 per cent reported purchasing one to three sessions and 6 per cent purchased four or more sessions. Figure 1 shows how many sessions of PT members

Does personal training increase member retention? Dr Melvyn Hillsdon offers his insights on this topic, based on the findings of his ongoing TRP 10,000 study

have purchased by gender, age group and length of membership.

Females were more likely to purchase PT than males, as were members aged 25–44 years compared to younger and older members. Mid-term members (between six and 36 months since joining) were most likely to purchase regular sessions of PT compared to new or long-standing members, with the latter the least likely to have bought PT.

Why do people purchase PT?

The primary reasons for purchasing PT are shown in Figure 2. Just over half of

the members who purchased at least one session of PT said motivation and assistance with achieving goals more quickly were the main reasons (multiple answers were allowed).

A lower proportion of members reported purchasing PT to help with exercise confidence (36.7 per cent) and to get started with a programme (36.2 per cent). Other reasons given by a small number of members included 'help with a rehabilitation programme', 'training for a specific event' and 'help with weight loss'. Females were a little more likely to say they used PT for motivation than males (57 per cent vs 50 per cent), with little difference between age groups and length of membership.

The youngest age group was most likely to say they purchased PT to help them achieve goals quicker; those in the oldest group were the least likely to quote this reason (63 per cent vs 43 per cent). Similarly, a higher proportion of the youngest health club members said they had purchased personal training to increase their confidence for exercise compared to older members (43 per cent vs 34 per cent).



The survey showed that female members were more likely to purchase personal training services than males

There was little difference in gender, age and length of membership when it came to the proportion of members saying they purchased PT to get started with a programme, apart from members age 35–44 years who were least likely to say this (29 per cent).

Is PT associated with visit frequency?

The level of PT sessions purchased is positively associated with regular club visits (see Figure 3).

In addition, regular PT is associated with a much lower level of non-attendance. On average, health club members who purchased four or more sessions of PT in the previous three months averaged 1.4 more club visits a month than members who did not purchase personal training.

Do members who receive PT report greater progress?

Compared to members who don't purchase PT, members who do purchase PT report higher levels of progress in all areas they were asked about (see Figure 4). Not only was this ▶

FIGURE 1 Number of PT sessions purchased by gender, age group and length of membership (in months)

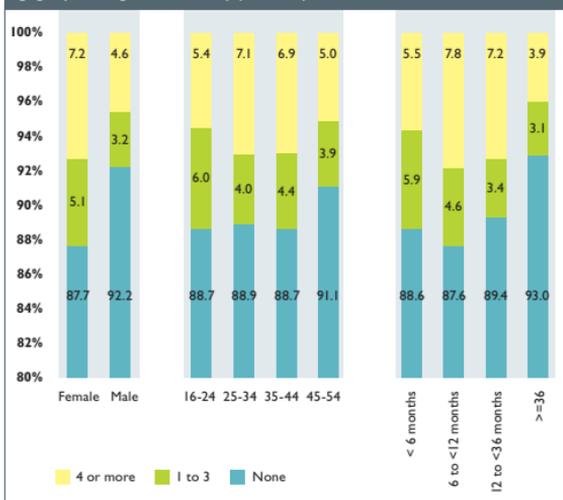
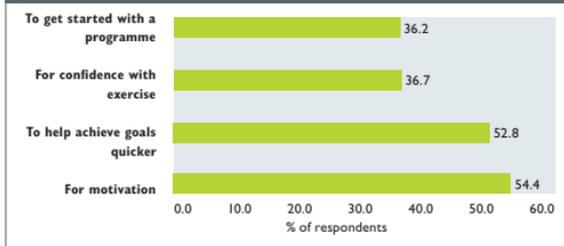


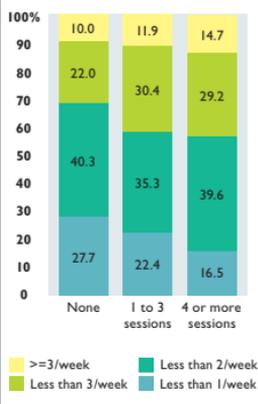
PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ITERA OSION

FIGURE 2 Proportion of members reporting main reasons for purchasing PT



“Despite reporting greater progress than non-PT members, members who only have an occasional session of PT actually have a lower retention rate”

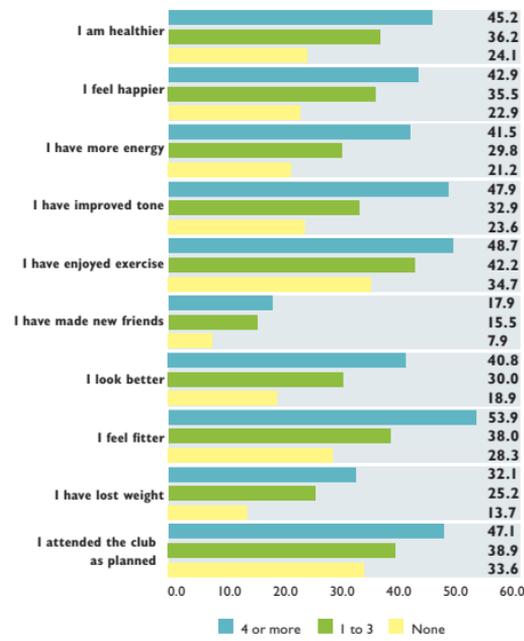
FIGURE 3 Level of visit frequency by level of PT sessions in the last 3 months

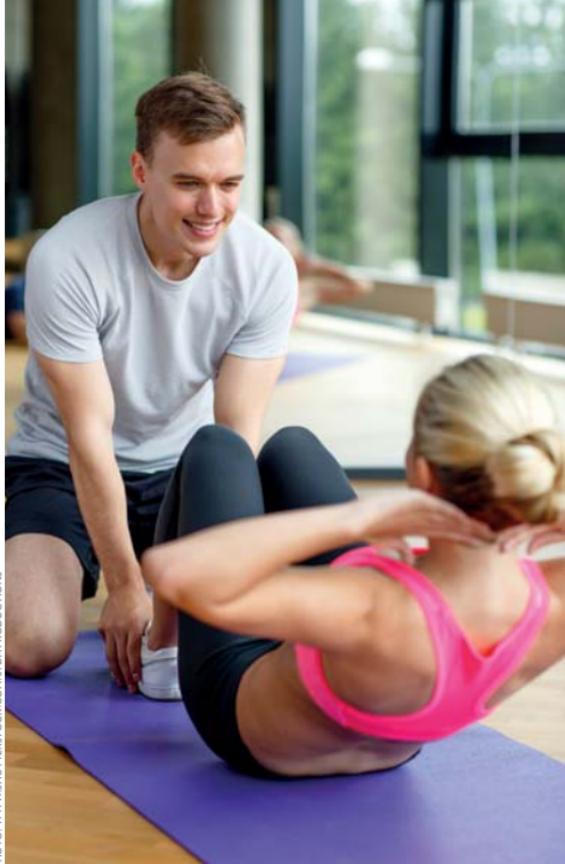


PT & retention: The key facts

- One in 10 members say they purchased at least one session of PT in the three months prior to the TRP 10,000 survey, with approximately one in 17 purchasing regular sessions.
- The main reasons for purchasing PT are for help with motivation and achieving goals quicker.
- Members who purchase PT regularly attend their club a little more than members who do not, and are much less likely to be non-attenders.
- Regular PT is associated with greater progress in a wide range of areas, both physical and social. The greatest difference in progress between regular PT members and non-PT members is weight loss and making a friend.
- Regular personal training is associated with higher retention and reduced risk of cancelling. This improved retention is not explained by higher visit frequency or better staff interaction, both of which are independently associated with retention.
- Surprisingly, members who report just one or two sessions of PT have a higher cancellation rate than those who don't purchase PT. This may indicate greater motivation struggles or unrealistic expectations about PT.

FIGURE 4 Proportion of members reporting progress in the previous three months by level of PT





Making progress with personal goals is a key factor in member retention

true for physical outcomes such as fitness and weight loss, but also for social outcomes and the enjoyment of exercise. PT members were also more likely to report that they had attended the health club as frequently as planned compared to non-PT members.

When considered all together, the two measures of progress most strongly associated with regular personal training was weight loss and making new friends. It's not clear whether the latter relates to a friendship with the trainer or another club member.

We have previously reported that progress with personal goals is one of the keys to improved membership retention, and based on the results reported here, clubs can confidently advertise that regular PT is associated with progress in a wide range of areas including general fitness, weight loss and the enjoyment of exercise.

Does PT increase member retention?

Figure 5 shows that a higher proportion of members retain their membership over seven months of follow-up if they have regular PT sessions compared to members who don't purchase PT.

However, despite reporting greater progress than non-PT members, members who only have an occasional session of personal training actually have a lower retention rate than members who don't purchase any PT.

This observation is reiterated in Figure 6, which shows the rate of cancellation by level of PT. For every 1,000 members, six fewer cancel each month if they have regularly purchased PT in the previous three months compared to members who haven't purchased any PT. But by contrast, each month there are over six more cancellations per 1,000 members among ▶

“If all members purchased the equivalent of four or more PT sessions in a 12-week period, we estimate that 29 per cent of observed cancellations would be avoided”

FIGURE 5 Retention rate by level of PT

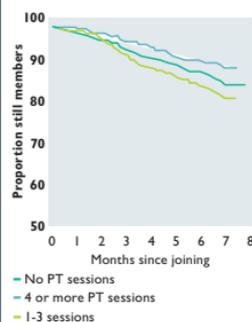
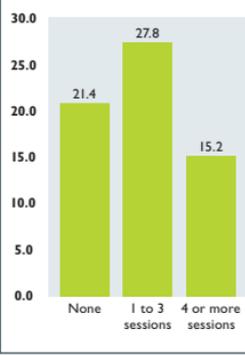
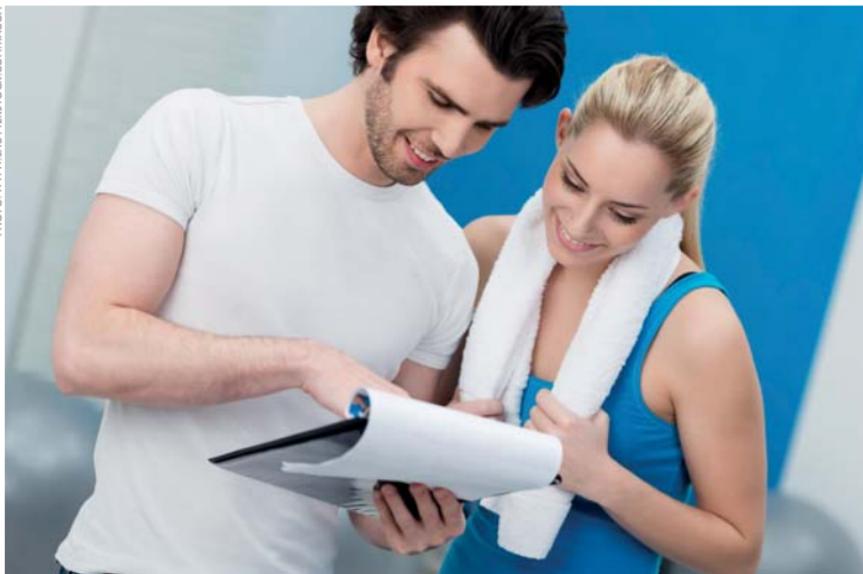


FIGURE 6 Rate of cancellation (per 1,000 members per month) by level of PT purchased in previous three months





If clubs notice significant numbers of members who try PT and then don't continue with it, they must review the service

members who have the occasional session of PT compared to members who have no sessions.

So why is this? It may be that some members who are not making much

progress try PT as a last resort, with unrealistic expectations for quick results. When results don't come in a couple of sessions, they give up all together.

Whatever the reason, members who try PT but don't continue should be treated as at risk of premature cancellation – and it's important for PTs to understand this extra risk. Firstly, they should make sure they understand client expectations for PT and manage them if unrealistic. Secondly they need to ensure the first PT session (including taster sessions) reflects member expectations and is sufficiently enjoyable/rewarding that the member wants to repeat the experience.

If clubs observe that significant numbers of members who try PT don't continue, they quickly need to review the service to avoid an increase in attrition. Is the service high quality and delivered by skilled trainers, or is it just another gym session with one of the existing fitness staff, rebadged as a PT?

Meanwhile, if we look at members whose retention is boosted by regular personal training, why is this? It's possibly due to increased interaction with fitness staff – we already know from our research that this reduces the risk of cancelling. It's also possible that the reduced risk of cancelling associated

with PT is due to the higher visit frequency that PT purchasers have.

However, when we test these possibilities statistically, regular PT is associated with a 30 per cent reduction in the risk of cancelling during the follow-up period compared to no PT sessions, and this reduction is not due to fitness staff interactions or visit frequency. In other words, PT, staff interactions and visit frequency all independently reduce the risk of cancelling.

An untapped opportunity

Yet despite the many benefits associated with PT – including its potential as a strong secondary income stream for clubs – take-up is very low, with just 6 per cent of members reporting four or more sessions in the three months prior to the survey, and only 2 per cent taking the equivalent of one session a week.

There's considerable scope to increase PT penetration rates, and this would greatly increase the number of members who meet their goals – which in turn would increase longevity and the level of member income.

If all members purchased the equivalent of four or more PT sessions in a 12-week period, we estimate that 29 per cent of observed cancellations would be avoided. ●

PT recommendations

- Ensure PT sessions are high quality – if people try them and give up after a few sessions, the risk of cancellation increases.
- Ensure expectations of PT are managed – if members try PT, find their expectations are not met and give up after a few sessions, the risk of cancelling their membership altogether increases.
- Giving away taster sessions could more than pay for itself, as long as sessions are good enough to get members hooked.
- Discount PT packages for more regular sessions to ensure members get a PT habit.
- Offer discounts or incentives for completing a number of sessions in a set time period.
- Promote the multiple benefits of PT.

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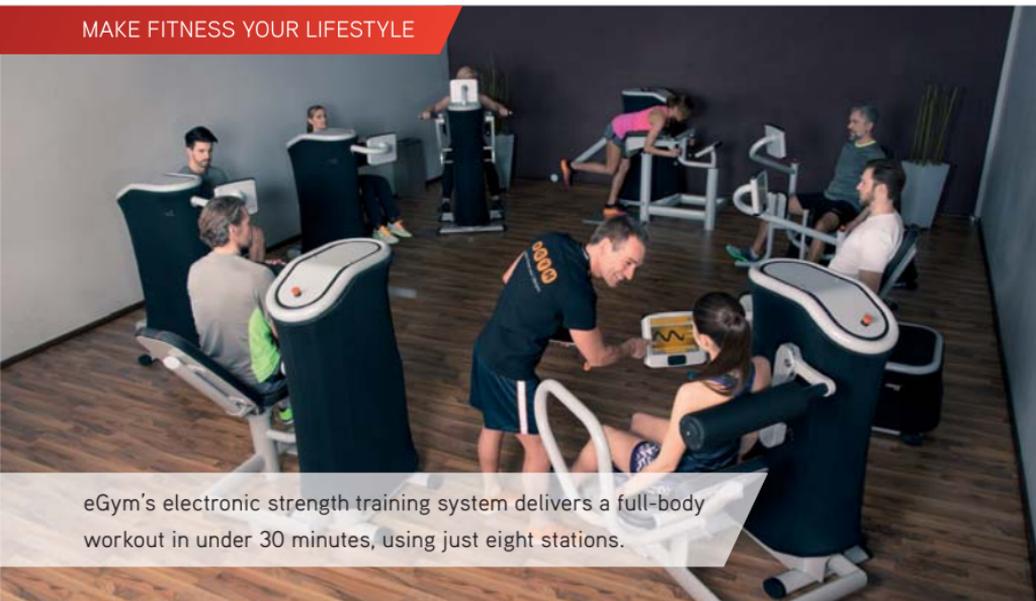
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INTRODUCING

eGYM

MATRIX

MAKE FITNESS YOUR LIFESTYLE



eGym's electronic strength training system delivers a full-body workout in under 30 minutes, using just eight stations.

eGym's functionality and full automation is truly unique; there is nothing else as innovative and efficient in the strength-training market that's as suitable for the masses.

The eGym software includes two training methods; 'regular' and 'negative', which are alternated periodically.

REGULAR/NEGATIVE TRAINING

- ▶ The 'regular' training method utilises a constant weight during the eccentric and concentric phases – akin to traditional training with free weights; which is particularly effective in building endurance.
- ▶ 'Negative' training increases weight during the negative movement phase (eccentric); helping to prevent muscle injuries, increase muscle strength, and improve coordination.

IMPORTANCE OF PERIODISATION

- ▶ Muscle cannot adapt to a single type of load, and instead needs to constantly adjust to a new training stimulus.
- ▶ Periodisation adds much more variety to fitness sessions and makes them more fun for members.
- ▶ Training progress stays at a high level, helping to avoid training plateaus.

No longer satisfied with their fitness memberships simply offering a conduit for improved health, today's commercially-savvy club members want a greater return on their fitness investment too; expecting faster results, the ability to analyse their outputs, and fun while they do it. Inevitably, club owners operating in increasingly saturated markets, with little scope for differentiation, are obliged to respond.

One solution currently taking Germany by storm is 'eGym' – a range of 18, fully electronic strength-training stations covering

all the main muscle groups. The individual stations can be linked together, and integrated with the eGym Cloud to record and actually *prescribe* a structured, periodised, exercise programme.

By combining eight stations, users can achieve a full-body workout in under 30 minutes.

The possibility for ticking the 'faster-results' box is obvious, but time-saving is just one attribute of this innovative system. Ranking among the best high-technology products on the fitness market, eGym offers a host of benefits for the club, trainer, and member.

A NEW DIMENSION IN 'PERSONAL' TRAINING



Personal training is no longer reserved for those with high disposable incomes, as the eGym system offers every user a tailored workout, with guidance every step of the way.

Maximum strength measurements are carried out regularly, and the results used to automatically recalculate and adjust the optimal training weights for each station and training method. Removing the guesswork helps members to avoid, as much as possible, over-exertion of the joints, or ineffective training with weights that are too light.

The fully automated equipment can be used to great effect; regardless of fitness level or training experience, and while the stations can be linked, individual or lower volumes will also generate results.

On-screen training guides users through the correct sequence of joint-friendly movements at the optimal repetition speed.

FOUNDATION FOR EFFECTIVE TRAINING

The eGym system has been developed according to the latest sports science research, and incorporates a host of features to please the member and studio owner.

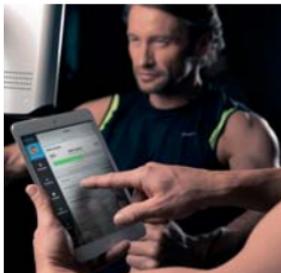
- RFID technology enables eGym stations to 'recognise' an individual on log-in and apply pre-programmed settings; preventing incorrect seating positions and saving time.

Faster throughput helps to reduce utilisation peaks; allowing for more efficient deployment of staff members, and ensuring a smooth flow during training sessions – dramatically improving efficiency over conventional equipment and training methods.

- In addition, automatic equipment settings and personalised training instructions, mean just one trainer is required to support a complete eGym system.
- Multiple adjustment points allow ergonomic and orthopaedically correct training.
- The low maintenance, modular design keeps servicing costs to a minimum.
- RFID transmission technology also ensures compatibility with a wide range of media: chip card, check-in card, wristband etc., making eGym suitable for use with existing fitness studio systems. Training data is transmitted to the eGym Cloud over a WLAN connection, with no need for a central server in the fitness studio.

New features can be added at no extra cost to the operator, based on customer behaviour data. Members can also share their data via Facebook, enabling real-time comparisons with friends in the virtual eGym fitness team.

A SPORTS PROGRAMME FOR THE DIGITAL GENERATION



The eGym Trainer app opens up a whole new dimension of mobile access to member information and training functionalisation. Thanks to seamless data synchronisation, trainers can track activity and progress inside and outside the gym, enabling them to determine individual training recommendations for members, and create training plans on the move.

Once registered with eGym, club members can view, post, receive, and analyse information via any iOS or Android Smart device too using the eGym Cloud and app technology; even creating their own training plan based on a comprehensive exercise database. Personal apps and accessories can also be connected to the eGym Cloud, to ensure that data is as up-to-date and complete as possible. The training data from both eGym and partner equipment is still automatically captured and analysed to enable meaningful recommendations.

ADDING VALUE TO REDUCE COSTS

Although aimed primarily at the premium health market, clubs can attract a range of consumer demographics by offering this added-value solution, with the potential for cost-savings through reduced membership churn rates, and additional revenue streams, regardless of facility type.

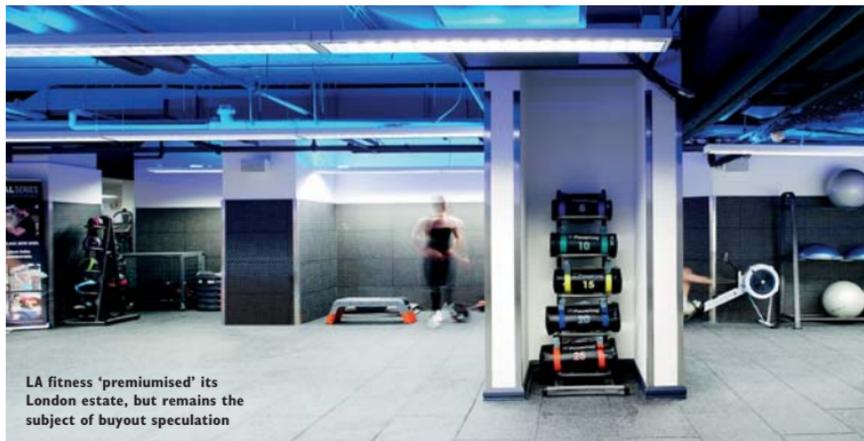
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LA fitness 'premiumised' its London estate, but remains the subject of buyout speculation

The middle man

Reinvention, repositioning, a return to growth – after a tough few years, what's next for the mid-market? Kate Cracknell asks a panel of industry experts

The mid-market has been a tough place in which to operate over recent years, squeezed from below by the burgeoning low-cost sector – which has all but stolen the 'affordable' mantle – and from above by an emerging boutique sector that's offering perceived value by delivering what people want, and only what they want, done very well.

The response from the mid-market has been varied. Some operators have reinvented their offering, staying within the mid-market segment but striving towards a more distinct positioning – think Fitness First and its recently stated ambition outlined by CEO Andy Cosslett: "We're moving upmarket, but it's a gradual process based on member perceptions. We want to be the top end of the mainstream market – the Audi A4 or BMW 5 Series."

Other operators have opted instead to diversify beyond their

"We know what low-cost operators believe in, and now I'm beginning to see what the mid-market operators will stand for"
– Ray Algar

mid-market heartland. In the UK, LA fitness 'premiumised' its London estate – upgrading a number of sites in the capital and rebranding them under its new LAX brand – while maintaining a mid-market positioning elsewhere in the UK. We wait to see if that strategy will get the company back to where it wants to be. At the time of going to press, LA fitness was the subject of speculation about an imminent buyout.

Meanwhile in Canada, recognising that the budget sector is here to stay, GoodLife Fitness launched a low-cost offering in mid-2014 – Fit4Less by GoodLife – to complement its existing mid-market GoodLife Fitness model. And in Europe, HealthCity's low-cost Basic-Fit brand is growing at the expense of its HealthCity estate which, although officially categorised as premium, is priced on a par with Fitness First in the UK.

Whatever the strategy adopted, after the initial shock of disruption, it seems mid-market health club operators have regrouped and set out their stall going forward. Indeed, in his recent report – *Review of the UK Health and Fitness Industry and Outlook for 2015* – Ray Algar predicts that, although low-cost operators will likely make further inroads, 2015 will be the year when the 'squeezed' middle market fights back.

Do our panel of experts agree with that verdict? We ask for their thoughts.



Fitness First: Taking more responsibility for helping members achieve their goals

Ray Algar

MD, Oxygen Consulting

For the past five years, the narrative in the private sector has been the disruptive change driven by the rise of low-cost gym brands. Consumers have rushed to join them, encouraged by the simplicity of the proposition, the easy-to-join, easy-to-leave agreements, and prices so low it left established operators in an initial state of disbelief.

In 2008, I wrote an article titled 'A swarm of low-costs' which was documenting the global rise of the low-cost gym movement and its implications for the UK mid-market. At the time, there were just nine UK low-cost gyms open, but the signals from Europe were clear to see because McFit in Germany already had 97 clubs, 630,000 members and revenues of €100m. In the same



article, a low-cost gym CEO confidently predicted that in five years, by 2013, the UK mid-market would have disappeared.

Thus began a period of my work considering the 'squeezed middle', analysing the anticipated strategic response from long-established brands ready to fight and reclaim their role in members' lives. But that response never came, because the established operators were content with the status quo and

extremely protective of the principles on which the industry had been built.

However, more recently I've witnessed a change in their outlook. Now I see a pragmatism, acknowledging that the competitive landscape of the industry has been enduringly changed, with 'legacy' brands re-defining their role and place with more urgency and genuine intent.

My opinion of legacy operators such as Fitness First and LA fitness is shifting from disappointment at their initial inertia to admiration. I can see their efforts to migrate from mediocrity by re-investing in staff and taking more responsibility for helping members achieve their aspirations. This is giving these brands a renewed purpose and reason to exist.

The industry is bifurcating down two pathways: self-service and supported. We know what the low-cost operators believe in, and now I'm beginning to see what the mid-market will stand for.



Paul Bedford
Director,
Retention Guru

I'm not convinced this will be the year the mid-market makes a comeback. The challenge for this segment remains justifying the fees some operators still charge when their product is pretty much the same as in facilities at the lower end of the market.

For the mid-range operators to regain some of their market share, they will need to distinguish themselves in the way they deliver their product. One area that's severely

lacking across the sector is service. While the niche and boutique market are striving to provide an excellent member experience each and every visit, the mid-market has traditionally floundered with the quality of the experience.

A good example of mid-market provision can be seen among the hotel health club operators. Post-recession these facilities are receiving substantial investment, as during the recession hotel operators realised a health club can

deliver a significant monthly revenue, even when business travel is being reduced.

These organisations have a service-based culture, a hotel infrastructure to support food and beverage, and laundries that can assist the member experience by supplying clean towels on every visit.

The smaller nature of the clubs also makes them attractive to older members, while managers spend more time focusing on member events and activities than the latest trends.



Martin Seibold
MD, Fitness First UK

In 2014, Fitness First UK returned to growth for the first time in six years. Sitting behind this revival is a new culture, rich consumer insights, science and psychology, fitness innovation and nothing short of a revolution in how we train and equip our teams to support members – all backed by investment.

Will the rest of the mid-market follow? Who knows. Budget gyms are strong competition and their headline low prices challenged the rest of us to go away, think hard and sharpen our brand proposition. We used this challenge to go in a different direction and have complete conviction it's the right one for the long term.

Next you'll see us accelerate our shift from traditional gym to premium fitness brand using technology to deepen our relationship with the member and find new audiences for our expertise.

Driving down prices commoditises the customer experience, with less focus on expertise and supportive staff, compromises on safety, and a dilution of the social togetherness people need to keep motivated on their fitness journey. We're happy to leave this market, whatever you want to label it, to others.

Meanwhile the 'premium' label can be misleading. Is the fitness experience premium at these gyms, or just the marble taps in the changing rooms? I think we should forget about the old labels of 'budget', 'premium' or 'luxury' and start to think of our industry in a different way. John Lewis gets it right because the store and digital channel service is seamless, staff believe in their purpose and the experience is fulfilling. I see these drivers being much more important than network size or price.

As fitness becomes a lifestyle, and the social currency of being fit gets even stronger, the part of the market that stands for expertise, community and innovation inside and outside the club is where the growth will be.

Malcolm McPhail
CEO, Life Leisure

The mid-market clubs have a considerable amount to offer. In 2015 and beyond I see four key battlegrounds.

First is the non-member market. Currently 87 per cent of the UK population are not members of gyms, and operators must find strategies that deliver health improvements to this mass market. Working with partners such as public health to achieve these results is a key step forward. My view is that the budget clubs lack the staff resource and the relationships with health authorities to deliver these programmes. This is an opportunity for the mid-market.

It's also my belief that the budget chains lack the resource to spend the time and effort needed to understand each individual customer's motivations and goals. Properly trained and motivated staff who actually deliver the promise of increased fitness and wellbeing are crucial. Again, the mid-market model already contains a staff resource budget to achieve this.

Thirdly, I believe the category that adapts, learns and evolves using market intelligence, customer feedback and competitor analysis will thrive. Those who rely on



a commodity approach without listening to customers will not.

Finally, value is the driver for the customer, but it's subjective – it may be perceived as health improvement, physical improvement, fun, social interaction or indeed a mix of all these elements. Operators who focus on price run the risk of being overlooked as people realise they need more than a room full of equipment to motivate them to reach their goals.

Mid-market providers have a great opportunity to win in these battlegrounds, but the key is change. Change means improvements in personal service, technological solutions and the inclusion in wider health programmes. But most of all, it means staff listening to customers and responding to their needs.



Operators must mobilise staff to listen and respond to customer needs

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Clubs could offer a menu-based fee structure to attract the budget-conscious as well as those who want the full bundle

Jan Spattichia

CEO, énergie Group

The expansion of the budget gym sector shows no signs of slowing, but we also recognise a growing consumer demand for a broader range of facilities and a more personal, results-orientated offering.

The key, whether in the mid-market or low-cost sector, is a great service at great value – but we certainly see the mid-market as an exciting space with significant untapped potential.

With this in mind, we're in the process of refreshing our mid-market énergie Fitness Club brand and reviewing the model. Since énergie Fitness Clubs launched in 2003, we've made numerous acquisitions which have led to an eclectic offering across the estate. But what we've learned from the low-cost Fit4Less brand, which launched in 2009, is that having smaller sites and more of a 'cookie-cutter' approach – a highly replicable model – facilitates faster growth.

Going forward, we'll therefore have a new model for énergie Fitness Clubs: the same size as Fit4Less, from 5,000–10,000sq ft, but with top-of-the-range equipment, larger studios, small coffee lounges, double the level of staffing, and crucially a 30-day results guaranteed programme – available only at our mid-market clubs – with five one-to-one half-hour PT sessions in the first 30 days.



“The budget sector shows no signs of slowing, but we also recognise a growing demand for a more personal, results-orientated offering”

The audience is different at énergie Fitness Clubs: they're older, and 40 per cent have never used a gym before compared to just 10 per cent at Fit4Less. If we can cater for them by holding their hand a bit more, and creating a different atmosphere from our low-cost clubs, we firmly believe there's space for both levels of offering.



Rob Barker

President, Precor

Although I predict more pain in the mid-market, I see many successful mid-market operators on my travels.

I see four main approaches. The first is to leverage the additional staffing through small group training, better programming, concept-based training and facilities. Secondly, become a personalised fitness partner, not a facility, using technology to support members 365 days a year. Thirdly, consider a menu-based fee structure to attract price-conscious exercisers, but upsell the bundled value too. And finally, if you have family offerings, promote harder to add more families; low-cost gyms struggle here.

But there are other possibilities. If there's space in your area for an upmarket or boutique style club, then invest and be that club. Alternatively, if you honestly feel you're going to win with adults mainly by offering straightforward, clean facilities with plenty of up-to-date equipment, then go low-cost and get on with it before it's too late. Beware though, even if you're low-cost, you will always need to differentiate in areas other than price. ▶

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Budget clubs are a new addition alongside the mid-market in Eastern Europe



David Patchell-Evans
 Founder and CEO,
 GoodLife Fitness

Vidmantas Siugzdinis
 CEO, Impuls, Lithuania

Eastern European, and particularly the Baltic, fitness markets are not yet as segmented as in the UK or Scandinavia. Most clubs are still operating in the mid-market, both in terms of price and quality, and have not yet been hit by the budget clubs which are just entering the scene – we opened our first Lemon Gym budget club in the Baltics in February 2015, while a few budget operators opened in Poland in 2014, including McFit.

I believe clearer segmentation will occur within two to three years, and there are lots of lessons to learn now from the developing markets as we expect the Eastern European markets to follow the same path.

For example, in response to more budget clubs opening and competition becoming fiercer, some mid-market operators will shift to the premium end of the market. However, they will first need to improve their knowledge of sales, retention and client service, as this is something that's generally lacking in Eastern Europe.

They will also need to heed local challenges: there's little fitness culture among the public in these markets, and income is relatively low. If mid-market operators choose to invest more in their customer proposition



“Fitness penetration remains very low across Eastern Europe, so there’s still space for operators in all segments to grow”

over the coming years, they need to ensure the costs of investment and running the clubs don't become too high to provide return on investment.

That said, I doubt many mid-market players will suffer too soon. Fitness penetration remains very low across Eastern Europe – between 2 and 5 per cent – so there's still space for operators in all segments of the market to grow.

Mid-market clubs in Canada continue to perform well, because Canadians are willing to spend a reasonable amount of money when they believe in the value offered.

According to a study published in the *New York Times* in April 2014, Canada's middle class is the wealthiest in the world. It's also relatively large, which allows GoodLife Fitness to provide a high value offering with beautiful facilities, exclusive classes and programming, experienced and knowledgeable fitness professionals and world-class equipment, all at a mid-range price – there's a significant portion of the population looking for this great value proposition.

Nevertheless, we do have a wide range of pricing options at our GoodLife Fitness clubs, offering flexibility for people with varying financial situations.

We've also created a low-cost, high-value brand called Fit4Less by GoodLife, but this has allowed us to expand our market rather than cannibalise it. We're able to use GoodLife's experience and reputation, which helps build Canadians' trust in this new Fit4Less brand, while offering the lowest national membership rate in the country at C\$8.99 a month.

Fit4Less has helped us reach a new market of potential members, while ensuring our mid-market GoodLife Fitness clubs continue to function at the same level of quality and service that our more than one million members have come to expect. ●



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FROM STREET TO STUDIO

Parkour has captured the imagination over recent years, but how can health club operators bring the buzz of this freestyle outdoor practice into the studio? Katherine Selby reports

Parkour is the sport of safe, efficient and fluid movement around an environment, including obstacles that must be navigated. Its philosophy is to be strong physically, mentally and ethically, and it's arguably the ultimate in functional training as people must master the fundamentals of movement to carry their bodyweight over the obstacles.

It's therefore not surprising that parkour has come onto health clubs' radar as a great group exercise option. So what are the options for operators wanting to embrace parkour within their offering?

It's no longer a risky option, with regulation and structures in place

to ensure participant safety (see 'Establishing a national body', p57). Health clubs also have a range of equipment options available, and instructors can choose from a selection of accredited courses.

There are already a number of impressive indoor parkour sites in the UK, like Parkour Generations' Chainstore in east London, The Parkour Project in Poole and the Airborn Academy in Liverpool, as well as in excess of 30 purpose-built parkour parks across the country.

But there's also a growing movement of parkour-inspired classes popping up in gyms. Here, five operators explain how they've brought parkour indoors.

PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.CO/KEVIN WANG

Establishing a national body

Born in France, parkour has significantly increased in stature in the UK over the last five years, in part due to Parkour UK being established as the National Governing Body for the sport.

Under its regulation, awards, CPD and qualifications have been established to encourage participants to train in the sport. Further regulation in the form of the Parkour Professionals Register brings

additional confidence among operators and consumers.

Some parkour organisations offer their own qualifications – Parkour Generations, for example, offers a Level 2 in Instructing Parkour Fitness.



Dave Downey

Community sports development officer,
K2 Crawley, Freedom Leisure

"Since 2006, we've worked with Crawley Borough Council and The Urban Playground (UPG – see p59) to provide a range of Parkour workshops at K2 Crawley. These workshops have also been offered at community settings in Crawley, including the UPG-designed Parkour Training Area (PKTA) in the Pocket Park in Bewbush, which opened in 2009.

"We were granted Sportivate funding via Active Sussex to run some taster sessions and six-week programmes. Our founding coaches were youngsters who had been practising parkour locally. We turned their enthusiasm into skills and their story helped attract other youngsters who were seeking an outlet for their physical energy.

"As our first winter season approached, demand was high for an indoor option. We set up indoor parkour in the gymnastics hall at K2 Crawley and had to put on an extra session as it was so popular. Our project won Best



Sportivate Project of 2014 at the Sussex Sports Awards, and we've just received a £5k grant from the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioners' 'Safer in Sussex' community fund to buy mobile parkour equipment to engage even more participants.

"Parkour attracts a hard-to-reach demographic of young people who don't necessarily want to play a sport or follow a structured fitness regime. Leisure centres in particular have a role to play within their locality, and getting potentially destructive, disengaged teens into self-esteem-building physical activity is pretty much on every council's list."



Where parkour and fitness meet

Freemove is a specialist provider of bespoke parkour rigs that emulate urban obstacles. It has also designed and built over 32 outdoor facilities across Europe, including two of the UK's largest parkour parks: the LEAP parkour project in London and Coatbridge Parkour near Glasgow.

"The advent of new fitness programmes such as MOV' means parkour and fitness are becoming increasingly connected," says Leon Wilson, urban sports manager at Freemove. "Our kit is designed to allow for movements such as jumping, vaulting, crawling patterns, balancing and climbing to help develop strength, agility, endurance, CV fitness, power and spatial awareness – delivering a full-body workout."

Freemove's equipment all conforms to the British Standard for Parkour Equipment BS10075:2013

Programmes such as MOV' are bringing parkour and fitness closer together, says Freemove's Wilson



Marc Dressen, MSc

Sport scientist and personal trainer

"I co-founded Europe's largest parkour and action sport gym – the Move Artistic dome in Cologne, Germany – in 2009 and witnessed its exponential growth.

"I now teach parkour classes at Fitness First Baker Street in London, UK, and I like to keep as many of the original principles of parkour as possible in my sessions. My aim is to open people's eyes to the opportunities around them, so for example a staircase isn't just to be walked up and down – you can crawl up it, climb down it, move sideways along it... I use the freestyle area in the gym with boxes to leap over, pull-up bars and so on.

"I teach from the heart: I believe it's important to convey parkour's key values, so I like

to bring an edgy aspect to my classes to capture the adrenalin rush and spirit of outdoor parkour. This particularly helps engage those hard-to-reach 18- to 24-year-olds, who enjoy a deep sense of satisfaction and achievement when they master the moves.

"I relish my one-to-one outdoor coaching, as people who opt for this are looking for genuine, original parkour moves and experience. That said, increasing numbers are asking for indoor parkour as they feel it's accessible, safe and contained. If indoor parkour brings more people to the sport, then let's do more of it!

"Clubs that have the space and invest in decent crash mats and well-trained instructors could do very well with parkour."



Parkour teachers need to be able to encourage learners to develop their own approach to the activity

The making of a great teacher

The Urban Playground designs indoor and outdoor parkour facilities, and offers training to individuals and small groups. Some of these have gone on to establish their own parkour communities.

One such success story is Displacement Parkour in Dublin, which started as a group of interested kids. After training with The Urban Playground team, the project was then developed further

to become the principal organisation for parkour in the Republic of Eire.

"The success of parkour relies on the standard of teaching," says Alister O'Loughlin from The Urban Playground team.

"A good understanding of parkour and an ability to teach movement are prerequisites, but an outstanding teacher will understand different learning preferences and

possess agility of thought. This ensures every participant is regarded in their own right and encouraged to develop their own approach, rather than drilling everyone to fit a routine or fixed outcome. To do anything else would be entirely missing the point of what parkour is about."

The Urban Playground says it designed the first permanent site in the UK in 2009, in Bewbush for Crawley BC

Kirsty Williams

Sports development manager,
Westminster Lodge, Everyone Active



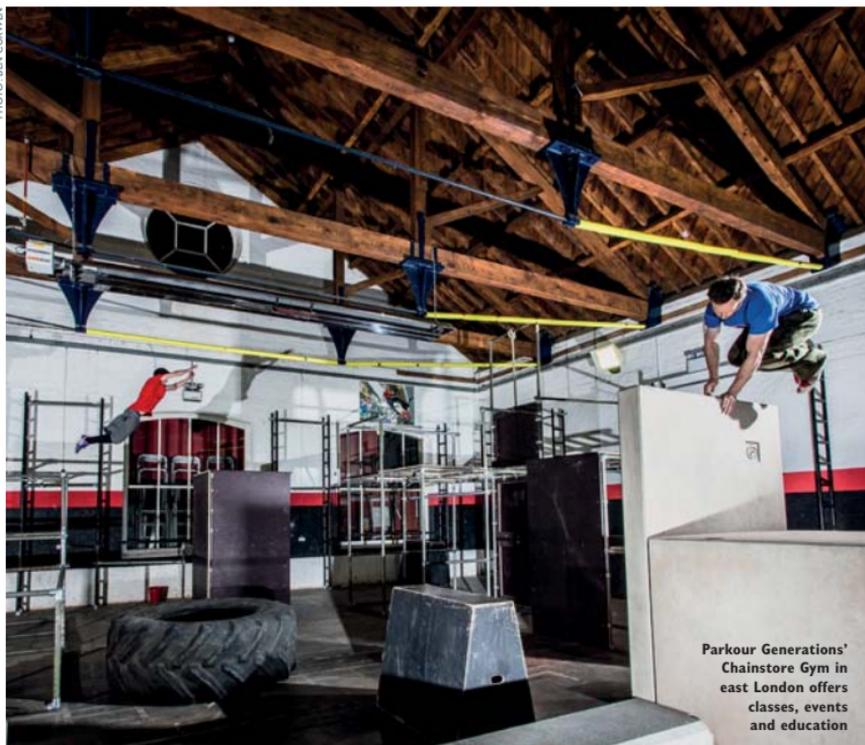
"Our session was originally set up for 14- to 18-year-olds after being awarded Sportivate funding, but was then adapted to suit children aged 11-18.

"We wanted to offer something a little different and unstructured to appeal to teenagers who like to 'create' their session and not follow the standard set-up of a class. So we run Friday evening sessions in the sports hall with a lead coach and assistant and set it up like a youth club.

"The different genders and broad age range mean we must tailor the moves for each group. The girls tend to like more structure and like moves they have

already planned in their head, whereas the boys want to bounce off the walls! We measure success by the youngsters' progression. We had six young girls join our first session who couldn't do a handstand. They can now all do that and much more besides. We have two boys who are able to do backward somersaults and the confidence boost they gained from mastering this is incredible.

"It's a fantastic fitness session that particularly encourages non-sporty individuals. Leisure centres will find that youngsters who perhaps don't want to play a sport or follow a structured set-up will respond well to parkour." ▶



Parkour Generations' Chainstore Gym in east London offers classes, events and education

Dan Edwardes

Founder and director, Parkour Generations

"Parkour Generations is entirely run by parkour athletes, and our series of five MOV' programmes – which have been designed for sports centres and mainstream gyms wanting to offer parkour-style classes – is based on the discipline of parkour offered at our facilities. This includes our flagship site, the Chainstore Gym, which recently opened in east London, offering classes, events and education.

"We have protocols for all ages, from toddlers to the over-50s, and also run adaptive parkour sessions for people with disabilities and

challenged movement skills. We've also just introduced parkour to schools.

"Health and fitness clubs should run parkour classes because, quite simply, they work. This type of bodyweight movement-based training is what we're designed to do. It's absolutely necessary for health and wellbeing.

"Parkour is hugely enjoyable and engaging, meaning people keep coming back for more. With parkour set to become an officially recognised sport in the UK this year, 2015 looks set to be the biggest year yet for the discipline."





Kids' parkour classes at SATS-Elixia are huge fun, encouraging youngsters to crawl like Spiderman and jump like a frog



Linda Gerstenmayer

National trainer, SATS-Elixia, Scandinavia

"Nordic health club operator SATS-Elixia was an early adopter of parkour, introducing it to many of its clubs as early as 2010. I now train instructors to deliver parkour classes within the group.

"Kids' parkour is by far the most fun class I've had the pleasure of teaching. I'm currently working with children as young as six and I find them very responsive: with parkour being non-competitive and using fun moves, it can engage non-sporty children, boosting their fitness and wellbeing while feeling more like play than exercise. They learn the key safety techniques and how to perfect

parkour rolls – one of the moves that they all want to know how to do.

"In its original form, parkour is an extreme sport with people jumping from rooftops and between bridges, and this certainly captures children's imagination. But we do parkour indoors and instead of rooftops, bridges and tunnels we use steppers, hurdles, rings and mats. The children love to crawl like Spiderman and jump like a frog. We create a playful area and put the emphasis on working together rather than competing with each other, which teaches them excellent social skills too." ●



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The secret behind our success

What do England rugby star Tom Youngs and Olympic gold medallist Joanna Rowsell have in common? Yes, they're both incredibly successful British athletes – but did you know they both use the Wattbike as a fundamental part of their training?

Olympic champion
and five-time
world champion
Joanna Rowsell



With the World Cup just around the corner, England and Leicester Tigers forward Tom

Youngs has bounced back from a shoulder injury he sustained in September to put himself in contention for a place in England's starting 15.

"I've taken a few hits on the rugby pitch, but I'll never forget my first three-minute test on the Wattbike," says Youngs. "Luckily an in-built competitive nature that runs in the family lends itself pretty well to pushing yourself to the max! Since then I've never looked back."

In September 2014, while playing for Leicester, Youngs suffered a shoulder injury that put him out of the game for the rest of the year, into surgery and facing a three-month rehabilitation period. "It's any athlete's worst nightmare. Any rugby player or fan will understand how frustrating this time was for me. Not only was the Six Nations just around the corner, but the World Cup was already in all our minds.

"Working hard to get myself back to full fitness, I set up a Wattbike in my garage. I already had a love/hate relationship with this fantastic piece of kit and knew that all the pain would be worth it.

"The whole England team uses Wattbikes in our warm-ups and recovery sessions, and for me personally, the bike has been key in helping me train through my rehabilitation: the level of accuracy and measurability allows me to train in the correct zones to ensure I progress properly.

"The bike has really improved my power output – a vital asset as a hooker in rugby – as well as my aerobic capacity and leg strength. The workouts push me, but keep me training 'smart'. The

Wattbike formed a key piece of kit during the Six Nations training and will do looking ahead to the competitive

World Cup selections later this year."

Meanwhile Olympic Gold medallist in the women's team pursuit and a five-time world champion Joanna Rowsell



Newly signed Wattbike ambassador Tom Youngs in action for England

Train like Tom with this Wattbike lactic tolerance session

This session is designed to work Youngs at his supramaximal level, creating a lot of lactate which mirrors what happens during a game. This will help him cope with the lactic acid build-up more effectively. Youngs uses a Wattbike Pro, but depending on your ability it's probably better to start off on the Wattbike Trainer. Remember – everyone has their own specific training zones, so you may need to adjust the setting for your own capabilities. You can find out more by visiting www.wattbike.com

Warm-up

- 3-minute cycle with several 5-second bursts, resistance 1

Block 1:

- Set the resistance to 5
- 200m as fast as possible (aim for under 12 seconds) – 50 seconds' rest – X 5 reps
- 2 minutes rest after last rep

Block 2:

- Set the resistance to 2/3
- 500m as fast as possible (aim for under 36 seconds) – 75 seconds' rest – X 4 reps
- 2 minutes' rest after last rep

Block 3:

- Set the resistance to 1/2
- 750m as fast as possible (aim for under 60 seconds) – 90 seconds' rest – X 2 reps
- 2 minutes' rest after last rep

Block 4:

- Set the resistance to 4/5
- 200m as fast as possible (aim for under 22 seconds) – 30 seconds' rest – X 3 reps
- 2 minutes' rest after last rep

has been an advocate of the Wattbike for many years.

"Training indoors is where the hard work is done to achieve big goals on the track and the road. The Wattbike offers training to power, which is by far the most effective and efficient way for any cyclist to improve on a bike. Plus it has benefits across a whole range of other sports: rugby, football, sailing... The fact that you can train with a combination of power, heart rate and cadence ensures that everyone can train at exactly the right intensity for any desired outcome."

She continues: "I've written a training plan that I hope you'll all enjoy. It's to help improve your fitness with the aim of going faster against the clock. It's suitable for specific 10-mile time triallists, triathletes and people wanting to increase threshold/sustained power. I used the sessions to help me on the way to my British National Time Trial Championship wins."

Visit https://wattbike.com/uk/guide/training_plans/wattbike_10_mile_time_trial_training_plan_with_joanna_rowsell to download the full training plan

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Access for ALL

Many gym operators are still falling short when it comes to catering for disabled people – but there are cases where the industry is getting it right. Abigail Harris reports

The gap in activity participation between non-disabled and disabled people is widening – this in spite of English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS) research which shows that 70 per cent of disabled people want to increase sport and physical activity engagement.

With the gym quoted as the second most popular activity after swimming, this latent demand presents a massive opportunity. But with two-thirds of those questioned citing a lack of options and low awareness of opportunities as barriers, what should the sector do to attract more disabled members?

We take a look at where the industry is getting it right, talking to disabled health club members and fitness professionals whose lives have been changed for the better by their fitness journey.

Gary Farmer is a former Paralympian in sledge hockey





Small has had to undergo 30 operations to date



The 112-mile South Pole trek will take a gruelling 31 days

FIRE TO ICE

Rob Small, 35, was badly burned in a house fire in 2010, leaving him with a 43 per cent total body surface burn and a 27 per cent chance of survival. He spent 200 days in hospital, with 30 operations to date.

This December he aims to complete Sir Ernest Shackleton's unfinished journey to the South Pole, a gruelling 31-day, 112-mile journey in temperatures of -20 to -50 degrees C. "I always intended to do a trip like this, but life got in the way," he says. "After the fire, everyone said it wasn't possible, and I don't like being told I can't do something!"

Since the fire, exercise has become even more important for the former

scuba diving instructor. "Literally years have been spent learning to walk again, and then to walk without a limp, retraining and strengthening my muscles," explains Small, a member at Anytime Fitness in Twickenham, UK.

Gym training is a key element of the preparation for the expedition, as Small's PT Dan Coles explains: "The mobility of particular joints has been impacted hugely by Rob's injuries and caused muscular imbalance around his entire body. I want him to perform optimally throughout the expedition. Without good posture, the muscular imbalances could further impact his ability to perform. For example, if his ankle isn't

moving well it will change the way he walks, which could lead to over-use and injury to another part of the body.

"To prepare him to last the distance, we'll get Rob doing endurance walks on the treadmill or elliptical cross-trainer for six hours, carrying a significant amount of weight to replicate Antarctic scenarios. His core must be strong because of the huge weight on his back, gravity and the weather conditions all working against him."

Coles adds: "Rob was the first burns survivor I've trained. The experience was invaluable in giving me confidence and I've since worked with a lady who suffered burns to her legs."

PARALYMPIAN INSPIRATION

Gary Farmer lost his leg in a car accident when he was five years old. As a Paralympian in sledge hockey at the Turin games in 2006, and a member of the Great Britain team for 12 years, Farmer has always sought to stay physically active and a year ago, aged 29, he qualified as a personal trainer with Lifetime Training.

"I wanted to use my experiences as a Paralympic athlete to inspire others – to give something back," he says. "That doesn't mean I want them to become Olympians or Paralympians – just to be the best they can."

"I chose Lifetime Training as I knew I would like the challenge of working abroad, and its courses are REPs-accredited so they

are recognised in other countries. Lifetime was attentive and supportive to my needs throughout. The course is well structured so there's plenty of tutor time and they always offered help if I needed it."

Farmer's first job was with DW Sports Fitness in Mansfield, and he believes his disability was in no way seen as an issue. "They treated me just like any other PT, which I greatly respected. Nothing needed to be changed in terms of layout or equipment or training. Most gyms have to be suitably designed to cater for disabled people nowadays anyway."

Oliver Pate, manager at DW Sports Fitness in Mansfield, says: "It was an easy decision to bring Gary on board. His disability



Farmer's sporting skills translate well into PT work

simply didn't impede him in any way. He was a real asset and inspired a lot of people." Farmer adds: "When you

go to the gym, you want to better yourself. That's something I can help with, regardless of ability." ▶



Amputee Osborne qualified as a fitness instructor through the multi-award winning programme InstructAbility

MAKING THE CHANGE

Aged 25, Sean Osborne was diagnosed with chronic myeloid leukaemia, which caused a gangrenous infection. To save his life, his leg was amputated at the hip. Previously a joiner, after recovering from his illness and operation and attending physio sessions in a gym, Osborne became interested in fitness. "I owe my health and recovery to the fitness industry, and I retrained so I could share my passions with others," he says.

In 2014, Osborne qualified as a fitness instructor through the InstructAbility programme, which offers disabled

people free gym instructor training plus a work placement. He took up his 12-week work placement at tmatvive's Larkfield Leisure Centre, working two sessions a week on the gym floor.

"When Sean began his placement, he received a job-specific induction which covered aspects of the role that might be unsuitable for him to do," says James Davies, health and fitness manager at Larkfield Leisure Centre. "As Sean was a qualified and competent instructor, the only task he was unable to complete was water tests in our spa, due to the potential slip risk. He didn't need any

additional support and was very able to work unsupervised."

"Some operators are concerned about not being able to provide the right support," says InstructAbility manager Hilary Farmiloe. "But one of the key outcomes of InstructAbility is enabling disabled people to demonstrate their competence as an instructor and challenge any negative, preconceived ideas that may have prevented them getting into the industry in the past."

"Seeing that my instructions are actually making a difference is a great feeling," concludes Osborne.

REACHING OUT



Welch played wheelchair basketball

Born with spina bifida, 29-year-old father of two Lee Welch has always been a wheelchair user with some limited walking ability. With an innate passion for sport and exercise, he joined his local wheelchair basketball club aged 13. Aged 17 he was scouted for the Team GB U23 squad, he began training with the senior team at 22, and he made his senior GB debut at just 25.

After retiring from basketball in 2012, Welch approached InstructAbility, which provides qualifications and opportunities to those with disabilities in partnership with YMCAfit. He completed his Level 2 Exercise and Fitness course and Level 3 Exercise and Disability Trainer qualification with YMCAfit and is now undertaking a 12-week placement at Everyone Active's Hartham Leisure

Centre two days a week. "Sport and fitness has given me so much in my life," says Welch. "I now have an opportunity to inspire people to get fit and give something back to the community."

With support from the Everyone Active team, Welch is now providing outreach to local organisations and disability groups, to encourage people with physical and learning difficulties to lead healthier, more active lifestyles.

Ian Ling, Everyone Active fitness manager at Hartham Leisure Centre, says: "Lee has helped us gain a clearer understanding of how we can better meet the needs of our disabled customers and staff. The psychological barriers he and others with disabilities have overcome are felt by able-bodied people as well." ►

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MIND OVER MATTER

One in four people in the UK live with a mental illness in any given year, and across the UK suicide remains the biggest killer of men under the age of 45. Rohan Kallicharan, 40, knew he had to take control of his life. He had lived with bipolar disorder since his late teens, had made two attempts on his life and was nearly 19 stone when he joined Anytime Fitness Edgbaston.

Two years on, having lost seven and a half stone, run the 2014 London Marathon in just three hours 25 minutes, raised over £8,800 for mental health charity Mind, and been awarded Anytime Fitness UK's 2014 inaugural Inspiration Award, his journey is well underway.

Diane Vesey, Anytime Fitness Edgbaston franchisee, comments: "Rohan was committed to losing weight

and getting fit, but we had no idea how far he would go."

The club's PTs worked with Kallicharan to establish a core strength and functional exercise regime, as well as endurance training, with long non-impact sessions on the AMT lasting up to two hours, alongside speed work, with different types of interval or short sessions at maximum resistance.

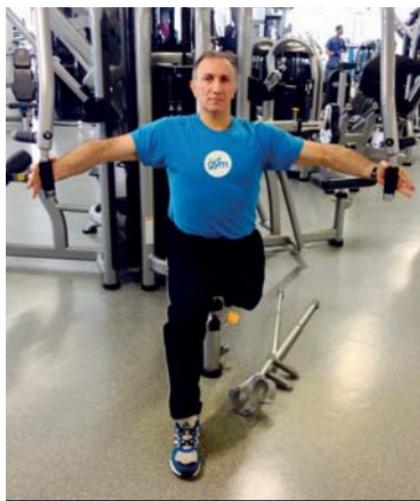
With the challenge of Paris, London and Berlin marathons ahead for 2015, Kallicharan is now happy, healthy and a true inspiration to others.

"Running is obsessive and my life has totally changed since joining Anytime Fitness. We're capable of so much more than the limits we impose on ourselves. Dare to push boundaries, believe in yourself and enjoy every second," he concludes.



Kallicharan was 19 stone when he joined Anytime Fitness

WITHOUT PREJUDICE



Amputee West is now taking an exercise referral diploma

At aged 19, Clive West was diagnosed with cancer and, as a result, his left leg was amputated above the knee. Having always been a massive gym fan, when the opportunity arose to train as a Level 2 fitness instructor at Hanwell Health Centre in 2000, he jumped at the chance.

After positive feedback from members, he was asked to cover a staff member's maternity leave, which involved qualifying as a personal trainer. West, now 46, explains: "I've always loved coaching people and enjoyed giving advice, so gaining my PT qualification in 2003 marked a natural progression.

"When I joined The Gym in Ealing three years ago, I really embraced the challenges involved

with training and advising clients with disabilities, as well as supporting their rehabilitation requirements.

"I've been accepted just like any other team member, and despite being an above-the-knee amputee I haven't faced any prejudices. It's an active, physical job and my disability hasn't held me back."

West, who is now taking an exercise referral scheme diploma, trains a number of clients at The Gym, including a 32-year-old man who suffered brain damage and paralysis to parts of his lower body following a cardiac arrest, where he was put into an induced coma.

"Disabled members approach me partly because they're drawn to someone who understands their fitness needs and considerations when using a gym," says West. ●

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Power to the people

The opportunities to be active on our streets are dwindling because of the priority given to cars above pedestrians. Riccardo Marini, director at urban quality consultants Gehl Architects, is one architect working to reverse this trend. Kath Hudson reports

What's your approach to architecture?

Architecture should be about people before buildings. Offer the right lifestyle choices and you'll get the right health outcomes: if places are designed with people in mind, people will be healthier.

The problem is, the bureaucratic systems we've created in the name of efficiency have destroyed the kind of places that bring joy to our hearts. We're using technology to make everything as efficient as possible, whereas the path to health, happiness, wealth and wellbeing is one that puts people, culture and art central to the planning process.

The way cities are designed today is also contributing to an increasingly sedentary lifestyle among the public. We're making it more difficult to navigate cities by foot and bike, and our consequent reliance on cars and technology takes away the everyday opportunities for exercise, such as going to the shops for groceries.

How can architecture and design help people to be active?

Copenhagen is a great example of this. People living in Copenhagen think it's natural to cycle to work, school or the pub, whether it's sunny, raining or minus 4 degrees centigrade. Research has shown this is because it's considered the easiest and most efficient mode of transport. Cycling is integrated with other forms of transport: you can take bikes onto trains and the underground and taxis have cycle racks. It's not rocket science or magic: if you make it easy to walk and cycle, then people will do it.

The next stage for Copenhagen is to tackle suburbia: encouraging people to cycle to the station, get on the train and pick up a hire bike in the city.

Can existing environments be enhanced and improved?

Most definitely. In the 1960s, Copenhagen was pursuing the American dream and was a sea of cars, but they realised this wasn't the way to go from a quality of life point of view. For the past



Health clubs have to be careful they don't offer a big shiny box that people can only drive to. They need to find ways of encouraging people to visit in an active way

40 years, they've been trying to reverse this mentality. It can happen anywhere – there just needs to be the political will and some skill and understanding.

What in your view are the barriers to change?

The usual criticism is that the city will die without cars, and people won't want to do business there. Our counter-argument is that global companies like Google want to put offices in places which are liveable, so they can retain staff. Cars don't make places liveable.

Can you give an example of bad design in a city?

I always compare Manhattan and Dubai. I love New York, which takes its roots from European cities. On the other hand, Dubai has taken the American dream but without the essential DNA of streets, pavements, public spaces and

active shop fronts. A fake environment has been created where you go from air-conditioned car to air-conditioned mall; street life does not exist. Shade should have been designed in to make people want to be in the streets.

How can the health club industry make sure it's not contributing to this problem?

Health clubs have to be careful they don't offer a big shiny box that people can only drive to. They need to be located in areas where there's footfall, or find ways of encouraging people to visit in an active way, like cycling.

Also, clubs can and should be social hubs that bring life to the communities where they're located, encouraging people to exercise in the streets, parks and pedestrian areas around the club – whether on their own or in group activities organised by the club.



Before



After

Times Square in New York City has been pedestrianised and now attracts café seating, concerts and even yoga classes

A GREENER CITY ■ NEW YORK, US

In 2007, Gehl Architects were engaged to advise on making New York a greener and more people-friendly urban environment, as well as how to encourage cycling as a healthy and environmentally-friendly mode of transportation.

Quantifiable aims included a 30 per cent

reduction in CO₂ emissions, implementing 300km of cycle lanes, ensuring everyone was within a 10-minute walk of a public space, doubling the percentage of cyclist commuters, and reducing traffic-related deaths by 50 per cent.

Since then, NYC has doubled the amount of

cycle lanes, reaching 725km in 2009. Combined with a new policy of allowing bicycle parking inside office buildings, as well as awareness campaigns, there has been a twofold increase in New Yorkers commuting to work and places of education by bicycle.

Almost 45,000sq m (500,000sq ft) has been

reclaimed as public space in the city, including Times Square which, having been pedestrianised, now attracts café seating, concerts, art exhibitions, yoga classes and spontaneous snowball fights.

Turnover has also improved at the local businesses.



Before



After

Since 2007, almost 45,000sq m has been reclaimed as public space in New York, making it a much more liveable city

A NEW VISION ■ BRIGHTON, UK

Gehl Architects created a vision for New Road in Brighton, UK, creating a shared-surface, multi-modal street. Today it incorporates the interests of many different user groups and encourages cycling, standing and walking activities, as well as simply encouraging people to sit and spend time there, based on people-focused public space programming.

Gehl Architects believe a place that works is somewhere you want to spend time and linger, and with this in mind it aims to create environments where the road is about more than just transit. A space becomes inviting when the street displays a mix of shops, interesting things to look at and opportunities to explore. It's about considering the person as



New Road has become a place where people like to linger, rather than just be in transit

the focal unit of measure in terms of scale, size, sensory experience and view – making things human-sized and giving them small things to focus on along the way, so they're encouraged to walk rather than drive.

New Road is now the fourth most popular place for people to spend time in Brighton. It has become a place where people linger – not just a transit street – and the amount of time people spend there

has increased by 600 per cent since its facelift.

English Partnership has selected this project as an exemplary best practice example for the Urban Design Compendium in the UK.

It's about creating an environment where human scale is considered, which helps change people's perceptions of distance and makes them more likely to explore the space

A NEW VISION ■ CHRISTCHURCH, NEW ZEALAND



The plan prioritises pedestrians and public transport

After the devastating earthquakes in 2010 and 2011, Gehl Architects were commissioned to develop a framework for the rebuilding of central Christchurch in New Zealand.

The masterplan included a network of neighbourhood parks and a redesigned transportation network. The plan prioritised pedestrians and public transport, linking all the most popular destinations in town with the aim of making people more inclined to leave the car at home.

It's now in the process of being redesigned as a lower-rise city, with a greater variety and more consistent density of activities and buildings. Creating density means bringing things down to the ground level, with visual stimuli at eye level that make it more interesting to walk down the street.

It's about creating a more appealing, people-focused environment where human scale is considered, all of which helps change people's perception of distance and makes them more likely to explore the space – once again encouraging activity within the city. ●

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A FOCUS ON EXCELLENCE

Having been at the helm of Focus Training for almost 15 years, managing director Bob Ellis has witnessed much development and expansion in the fitness training sector. Here he outlines the best ways to keep standards high and deliver the calibre of professionals that will shape the future of health and fitness

How important is quality training for today's health and fitness operators?

It's vital. Health and fitness operators need a well-trained, professional, competent workforce – because the better the training, through skills, knowledge and commitment, the better the membership retention through more individual coaching, bringing in further revenue.

Are you happy with the way fitness training has developed in the sector?

There have been some really good developments in fitness training over the years, especially concerning the range of courses available, leading to greater career pathways. Attempts to regulate the industry initially placed a huge emphasis on quality as various industry bodies started to work together. This added strength and rigour to the regulated qualifications, ensuring that graduates were equipped to meet the demands of the industry and employers.

However, more recently there's been a commercial drive within industry bodies to recruit greater numbers of training providers. This rush for growth has led to diminishing standards, through pressure of funding and growing bureaucracy. We need a powerful watchdog to ensure standards are met.

In addition, awarding organisations will be able to write their own qualifications in the near future. This



Ellis is a training industry veteran

could lead to further confusion and diminishing quality if employers and industry experts do not collaborate to establish qualification standards.

Although this could be a real problem for the industry, as training could be reduced to the lowest common denominator, it's also a huge opportunity for the sector to address the needs of our customers – both employers and students.

Employers will be key because they are at the coalface and are first to feel the financial backlash if their client base is unhappy. Some employers are already becoming more prescriptive about the quality of the training they're looking for on a CV. In other words, they're looking beyond the qualification and at the nature of the training – how that training has been delivered – because it really does impact on the outcome.



Fitness must be taught face-to-face

At the other end of the chain, we must ensure that students understand the choices they have when enrolling on a course. They're making a significant investment in their future career and need to understand what they're getting for their money. Unless we get standardisation across the industry, which is unlikely, we must clarify their choices for them – otherwise the reputation of the industry will suffer.

Focus Training qualifications have been given strong endorsement by awarding organisations. What do you believe are the most important aspects of your approach?

When we talk about standards and quality, we're referring to a wide range of elements that come together to create a robust, consistent product people can trust.

The journey starts when a student enrolls: effective and regular communication, high quality course materials, an understanding of how people learn, innovative learning methods, appropriate levels of tutor support and practical guidance delivered at suitable venues.

If you cut corners in any of these areas, it's detrimental to the student experience and inevitably affects student retention, pass rates and the professionalism, skills and knowledge of the graduates.



Trainees need to make sure their course has currency across the industry

I believe there are five key areas that potential fitness students should consider: the amount of learning and support; the provider's track record; employer recognition; progression opportunities; and recognition by the health and fitness industry (see the briefing box on the right).

What have been some of your latest training innovations?

Our newest product is our fitness professionals' toolkit, which is a two-day workshop that gives anyone with a Level 2 qualification four new skills to take to their clients. This is a unique course to Focus Training, and it's proving to be really popular.

The Diploma in Personal Training is the benchmark qualification for anyone wanting to be a successful PT. However, the growth in uptake of our specialist

courses proves that PTs are increasingly looking to capitalise on niche markets. Areas such as diabetes, obesity, exercise referral and sports massage reflect the diversity of practitioners that are now in demand in the sector.

Meanwhile, at entry level, we've seen an increase in kids instructors, again reflecting market forces.

As a company we're also working closely with corporate clients who, through our Staff Academy, employ Focus Training to come to them, using their venue to deliver both CPD and upskilling qualifications to staff, saving them time and money. ●

FIND OUT MORE

Web: www.focus-training.com
Tel: +44 (0)333 9000 222

Considerations for prospective students

1. Check the amount of learning and support

One of the easiest ways to assess quality is to look at the amount of time spent learning directly with a tutor. Having access to individual support from an experienced tutor – by telephone, email, or face-to-face – is critical to student success, both in passing the qualification and when they put their learning into practice in the workplace. Being a fitness professional involves competencies that need to be taught face-to-face.

2. The provider's track record

Find out how long the provider has been delivering training. Look for quality badges such as ISO9001 and if there are Ofsted reports. Focus Training has always used these quality benchmarks to drive everything we do. Since our ISO Quality Management System was implemented 10 years ago, inspections have revealed no major or minor non-conformities. That's a tough record to maintain, but one we're extremely proud of.

3. Employer recognition

Find out if employers recognise not only the qualification, but also if they only employ people who have qualified with quality providers.

4. Progression

Is there a progression route from the qualification? For example, can you use a Level 2 qualification to access a Level 3 qualification? Supporting a student throughout their career, from entry level through to becoming a specialist, is about the most rewarding thing we can do. We have a clear progression route, but that isn't always the case in the industry.

5. The qualification's currency

Make sure other industry bodies and training providers can recognise your qualification; recognition by REPS only is insufficient. Our qualifications are industry recognised, but that isn't always the case with other providers.

The very minimum is an awarding body certificate with an Ofqual logo. If this isn't evident, it can ultimately result in a student having to retake modules, at extra cost, in order to progress to a higher level.



PLATFORM FOR ACTION

The EU's Platform for Diet, Health and Physical Activity encourages key stakeholders to set up initiatives to improve the health of the population across Europe. EuropeActive's Cliff Collins reports on a couple of successful projects

How should we go about addressing inactivity and obesity across Europe? It's a challenge facing us all at an individual and a societal level, and one that health clubs across the continent strive to address on a daily basis. It's also a challenge the European Union (EU) is attempting to confront head-on.

Since 2007, there's been an EU strategy on nutrition, health and physical activity to help fight obesity and the chronic diseases that obesity is linked to. However, the EU has acknowledged that this problem can't be tackled with a single-pronged approach, but rather with a co-ordinated, holistic approach aimed at specific objectives: promoting healthy eating, promoting awareness of obesity-related health issues, reformulating food to make it healthier, creating opportunities for exercise, providing the right environment so physical activity becomes part of people's lives, involving schools and local communities, and so on.

It therefore set up the EU Platform for Diet, Health and Physical Activity – an action-orientated, co-operative kind of 'club' that meets four times a year and

that brings stakeholders from across the food and drink, medical and health, and physical activity sectors together with other interest group representatives. Encompassing everything from industry bodies and health NGOs to consumer groups, its aim is to help reverse the trend towards obesity and inactivity.

Welcome to the club

A majority of the Platform members are from, or have a direct interest in, the food and drink industry – including powerful groupings of strategists and lobbyists. Big hitters such as Nestlé, Coca-Cola, McDonalds and Danone are represented through a number of European associations. However, EuropeActive (formerly EHFA) has also been a member of the Platform since the early days, representing a minority of associations that are promoting health-enhancing physical activity.

The EU Platform is the responsibility of DG Health and Consumers (Sanco) of the EU Commission, which also chairs the meetings. Typically at each meeting there will be around 60 delegates, and twice yearly there are high-level meetings that include government

representatives from EU Member States. At these times, the director general and/or commissioner will attend to give updates on progress and priorities.

It's an important forum for the exchange of information and debates related to several policy areas, such as the provision of information to consumers at the point of sale, guidelines on daily amounts (GDA) labelling, the role of physical activity in reducing obesity, marketing to children, and reformulation of food and drink products to reduce sugar, salt and fat.

Platform Members pledge actions they will take to contribute to the overall Platform aim – namely reversing the obesity trend. There are six fields: marketing and advertising; composition of foods (reformulation), availability of healthy food options, portion sizes; consumer information, like labelling; education including lifestyle modification; physical activity promotion; and advocacy and information exchange.

The EU Commission has made several recommendations and directives off the back of Platform outcomes. These relate to the increasing regulation of advertising standards for food and drink, looking at reducing fat and sugar content of food, and reviewing food labelling requirements. It's also progressing with a specific strategy on childhood obesity. Here we review two member projects.

FOOD & DRINK GETS ACTIVE

Organisation: FoodDrinkEurope

FoodDrinkEurope represents the European food and drink sector, the largest sector in the EU in terms of turnover and employment. Its membership consists of 25 national federations, 25 European sector associations and 17 major food and drink companies.

As a founding member of the EU Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, FoodDrinkEurope strongly supports a multi-sector, multi-faceted approach to tackling obesity in Europe. It is a major contributor of concrete commitments to the EU Platform in areas such as product reformulation, consumer information and responsible advertising to children. In addition, many FoodDrinkEurope members are involved in initiatives promoting healthy and active lifestyles, in the belief that diet and lifestyle cannot be seen separately from one another.

One example of such a commitment is the Bielice Run programme by Mars. This started in 1994 as a simple programme promoting physical activity among children from the Sochaczew city area of Poland. Today, it's the biggest sporting event for children in Poland. In 2014, 2,400 pupils from 98 schools and 12 organisations for children with special care needs took part in 22 cross-country distance runs, with all runs tailored to participants' ages and conforming to all requirements of the Polish Athletic Association.

The focus of the Bielice programme is particularly on educating and motivating disabled children to engage in physical



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FoodDrinkEurope has a healthy workplace plan that includes nutrition advice

activities as much as their abilities allow them, and at the same time helping build a sporting spirit among children.

Another example is the EPODE European Network (EEN) programme, a community intervention plan that mobilises key players in local communities – teachers, healthcare professionals, sports teachers, shopkeepers, local companies and so on – to stimulate families to adapt their lifestyles to a less obesogenic environment. Examples of initiatives include building public playgrounds in primary schools and organising walks.

The programme itself is run by local public authorities, while the private partners facilitate co-funding. Among others, food companies Nestlé, Ferrero

and Mars are participating in this multi-stakeholder project which began in France and, following its success, has been expanded to the Netherlands, Spain, Greece, Belgium and Romania. This approach has resulted in significant reductions in childhood overweight and obesity – for example, more than a 20 per cent decrease in two pilot towns in Belgium in one school year.

Besides physical activity promotion in external communities, a number of food companies have put 'health in the workplace' programmes in place inside their own organisations to enhance employee wellbeing. For example, Unilever has a global employee health programme called Lamplighter, which addresses the top three health risks it has identified across its business: mental health; lifestyle factors (exercise, nutrition, smoking, obesity), and ergonomic factors (such as repetitive strain injury). The change in the risk factors is monitored over a period of time, looking at measures such as hypertension, cholesterol, obesity, nutrition, exercise and mental wellbeing.

The FoodDrinkEurope Secretariat also has a healthy workplace plan which includes exercise (including annual sport days), encouraging employees to drink water, and providing nutrition advice.

"Promoting more active lifestyles is a fundamental part of the fight against obesity and non-communicable diseases," says Dirk Jacobs, director of consumer information, diet and health at FoodDrinkEurope. "Partnerships are crucial to make the necessary impact and all actors have a role to play." ▶



The Bielice Run programme from Mars helps to get disabled children more active



EuropeActive aims to create a replicable model that will encourage more mature people to be active



EU Member States spend on average less than 3 per cent of their annual health budgets on prevention and health promotion



HEALTHY, ACTIVE AGEING

Organisation: EuropeActive

Europe faces serious demographic challenges. Each year, average life expectancy across the continent increases by three months; the number of people aged 65+ will double over the next 50 years, putting enormous pressure on our healthcare and social security systems.

Despite strong evidence showing that investment in promoting the importance of regular physical activity can result in higher quality of life and better health – including in old age – EU Member States spend on average less than 3 per cent of their annual health budgets on prevention and health promotion.

EuropeActive has been successful in its bid for EU funding for a project that aims to promote health-enhancing physical activity among older adults through supervised exercise programmes, thereby helping older generations to remain independent and

maintain a good quality of life for as long as possible. The plan – EuropeActive's current commitment to the Platform – aims to encourage longer-term take-up of activities among older people, as well as providing outcomes and learnings that can be applied by policy-makers and practitioners at a local, national or indeed European level.

The PAHA (Promoting Physical Activity in Health and Ageing) project is a tailored intervention for older adults with different functional capacities. Through a supervised and structured exercise programme for senior citizens aged 55–65 years, PAHA intends to convert currently inactive people into regular exercisers at a level that's beneficial to their health, supporting the EU guidelines on physical activity and tying in with the European Week of Sport in September 2015, which will have a strong active ageing element.

In each of the eight project partner countries – Denmark, Finland, Germany,

Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Portugal and the United Kingdom – three fitness centres will run three trial sessions of supervised exercise of six weeks' duration, with 15 participants in each session. For that purpose, the fitness coaches, instructors and other community workers involved in the project will receive specific training in both motivational skills and active ageing.

Through a comprehensive evaluation system, the PAHA project will develop standards that will be made available for sports and activity organisations across Europe. The aim is to create a methodology that can easily be adapted and replicated in different settings, allowing a larger number of mature citizens to take up regular exercise and health-enhancing physical activities.

The outcome of the project will be presented to the Platform in late 2016 as an example of an effective intervention for physical activity promotion. Details: www.health-club.co.uk/paha

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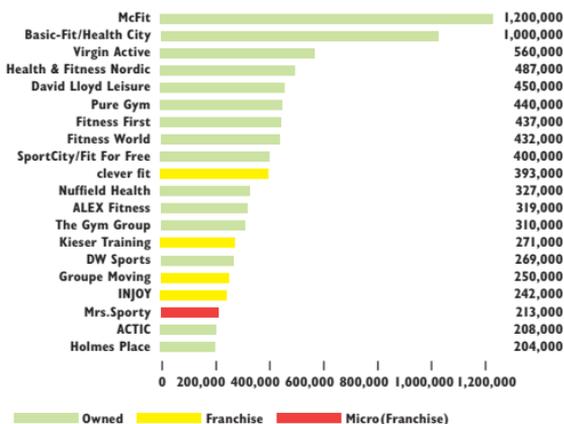
LEADERS of the PACK



Pure Gym moved from ninth to sixth place among the top 20 operators

The fifth edition of European market report *Leading Operators - Fitness in Europe* provides an analysis of the top 20 fitness operators in Europe. Authors Niels Gronau and Gregor Titze of consultancy firm edelheifer offer a summary of the key findings

Figure 1 Top 20 operators by members



In the 2014 edition of *Leading Operators - Fitness in Europe*, the top 20 fitness chains accounted for around 8.2 million members – an increase of 6 per cent, or 500,000 customers, on the previous year. On average, the top 20 operators had almost 2,400 members per club at their 3,400 facilities.

To be part of the top 20, operators needed at least 204,000 members in total across their estate at the end of 2014; for a place in the top 10, 400,000 were required.

Although growth of the leading chains was driven by a number of acquisitions in 2014, it's interesting to see that the overall composition of the top 20 remained almost unchanged compared to the previous year, with only one new entrant on the list – Actic Fitness.

In addition, the rankings remained relatively stable, with only low-cost operators such as clever fit and Pure Gym able to achieve significant improvements in their ranking: UK-based low-cost provider Pure Gym achieved the biggest change, moving from ninth to sixth place. After the opening of 30 facilities in the



HealthCity International has continued to rebrand and reposition many of its HealthCity clubs into low-cost BasicFit facilities

UK in 2014, Pure Gym’s management is planning a further 30–40 new clubs for 2015. In addition to ongoing growth in its domestic market, the company also intends to expand internationally. For a full interview with Humphrey Cobbold, CEO of Pure Gym, please see p30.

Pure Gym would have made an even greater leap had the merger with its national competitor The Gym Group been allowed to go ahead; it was eventually turned down by the competition authorities in the UK.

Together the two companies would have ended 2014 with 750,000 members, which would have taken them to third place in Europe in terms of member numbers.

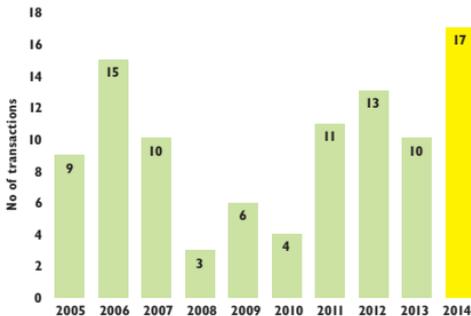
Meanwhile the leading operator in terms of members remains Germany-based low-cost provider McFIT (see Figure 1), and seven of the 10 largest players are at least partially operating in the low-cost segment. This demonstrates the continued growth and influence of the budget segment.

Top three by members

Looking in detail at specific operators, top of the list McFIT currently has more ►

“In 2014, Germany-based McFit became segment leader in the Italian market with the acquisition of Italian budget operator HappyFit”

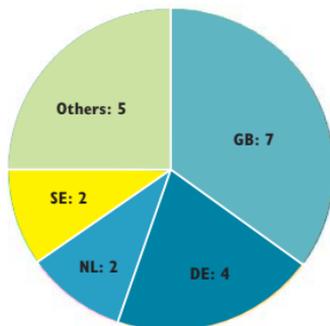
Figure 2 Development of fitness transactions in Europe





Fresh Fitness Denmark was bought by market leader Fitness World

Figure 3 Top 20 operators by home market



▶ than 1.2 million people exercising in its facilities in Germany, Austria, Poland, Spain and Italy. Its home market of Germany, with 166 clubs, is by far its strongest region. However, an important step in its international expansion was achieved in Italy in 2014: McFit became segment leader in the Italian market with the acquisition of Italian budget operator HappyFit – 14 facilities in northern Italy.

Basic-Fit / HealthCity realised the strongest absolute increase in memberships in 2014. One year after the entry of private equity firm 3i, the second-ranked company by members reduced the gap between itself and McFit, reaching more than a million members for the first time by the end of the year. In addition to opening new facilities, in the year since our previous report the company had also continued the repositioning and rebranding of former HealthCity clubs into the low-cost Basic-Fit concept.

The third place also remains unchanged. Although Virgin Active sold a small number of clubs to its British competitor Nuffield Health in 2014, the operator was still able to maintain its position in the top three by member numbers. It's reported that the company – part of Richard Branson's Virgin Group – is now preparing an IPO in Johannesburg, evaluating Virgin Active at around 2bn (£1.5bn).

With two acquisitions taking its estate to 150 clubs and 450,000 members, Danish market leader Fitness World moved closer to the top three. First, the company took over its national competitor Fresh Fitness in December 2014, before acquiring club operator Conditone in Poland in January 2015.

"The Polish market seems similar to what we saw in Denmark a few years back. Our ambition is to achieve in Poland what we have successfully done in Denmark, respecting that we are not yet familiar with this market and very aware that there are cultural and structural differences that need to be taken into account," commented Henrik Rossing, founder and chair of Fitness World, following the transaction.

Mergers & acquisitions

Although one of the largest transactions of the past year could not be closed – the merger of Pure Gym and The Gym Group in the UK, as noted above – the high number of acquisitions in 2014 and the first developments of 2015 confirm the major trends of previous years.

First, the consolidation among the major health and fitness providers in the market continues. Second, the ongoing interest of financial investors in the fitness industry is clear. One of the most recent examples is the participation of private equity company AFINUM in the German high-end operator MeridianSpa in early 2015, following AFINUM's acquisition of shares in Swiss fitness chain Let's Go Fitness in September 2014 – the investor's first entry into the fitness industry.

This investor interest is, we believe, well-founded: the health and fitness industry has grown significantly in the past and we believe it will continue this positive trajectory. Within the market, individual companies also offer great potential for expansion, both through the roll-out of new facilities and the acquisition of existing providers.

Between 2005 and the end of 2014, at least 100 transactions were completed

in which health and fitness operators were purchased (see Figure 2). Almost half of these acquisitions took place in the UK, again illustrating the stage of development of the UK market in comparison to the rest of Europe.

In fact, when we look at the geographical origin of the largest operators, a strong dominance of the United Kingdom and Germany becomes apparent: as Figure 3 shows, seven of the 20 largest providers are located in the UK, while four companies are headquartered in Germany. The only other countries where more than one top 20 operator originates are the Netherlands (two) and Sweden (two). ●

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Niels Gronau (left) is MD and Gregor Titze head of market research at edelhelfer GmbH – an advisory boutique set up to partner its clients at all stages of corporate development. The company was named after the super-domestique in cycling ('edelhelfer' translates into English as 'super-domestique') – the individual who works for the success of his team and team leader, supporting them in every element and stage of the race.

Leading Operators - Fitness in Europe (31 December 2014) is available on request at www.edelhelfer.eu/en

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PROJECT
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We take a look at recent projects by Matrix,
Life Fitness and D2F Fitness

EXCELLENCE AS STANDARD

Client: Limehouse Marina
Elite Fitness Health Club
Supplier: Matrix Fitness

The East End of London has a rich sporting history, with boxing at its heart. Businessman and ex-amateur fighter Alan Edwards is delivering a fresh approach to old traditions with the launch of London's premium health and fitness centre – Limehouse Marina Elite Fitness Health Club.

Inspired by the success of British athletes at the London 2012 Olympics, the club's CEO Dominic Stow and his team have transformed a derelict building in London's East End into a luxury waterside training facility – home to some of the city's most distinguished boxers and athletes.

Launched in November 2014 with the promise of "excellence as standard" for members, the forward-thinking facility

offers cutting-edge, hi-tech fitness provision, a pro boxing gymnasium, sports medical centre, TRX and MyRide studios, and a luxury relaxation suite – all housed in a carefully crafted space designed to support individuals with their fitness goals while providing a sanctuary for total relaxation.

Stow comments: "We want our clients to feel as if this is a home from home, and they need to be looked after like they're in a five-star hotel."

In keeping with every other aspect of the 16,000sq ft facility, Limehouse Marina Elite has invested in the latest CV and strength equipment, exclusively sourced from Matrix Fitness. Top-of-the-range cardio products – including treadmills, Ascent trainers and cycles from the brand's 7xi Series – feature an exclusive app interface, designed to deliver a refined experience tailored to the fitness environment. It's easy to use, so members don't have to break their rhythm to access entertainment, social media or messages from Limehouse staff. They can tune in to must-see TV shows, and keep up with social media feeds, while racing through virtual mountain trails as birds chirp from the treetops.

For those interested in strength building, there's something for everyone with a variety of products ranging from Matrix's Ultra series – for the ultimate in comfort and performance – to the Magnum range, built to withstand the rigorous demands of pro athletes.

Demand for places on the club's exclusive membership list is high, but quality definitely outweighs quantity for this elite facility, which has placed a cap on users in order to ensure it's able to deliver excellence as standard.

Andy Loughray, head of national sales for Matrix Fitness, says of the installation: "Limehouse Marina Elite is a jewel in the East End crown, and a fantastic show site for the Matrix brand. The high-class facilities are second to none, and the selection of products chosen by the Limehouse team perfectly complements their ethos for delivering an unparalleled experience."

Details: www.matrixfitness.co.uk

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The StrongBox at QDos Fitness in Heald Green, Manchester, is an official Hammer Strength training centre

THE FUTURE OF FUNCTIONAL FITNESS

Client: QDos Fitness
Supplier: Life Fitness

PROJECT PROFILE PROMOTION

Astroturf strips for sleds and prowlers, indoor climbing peg board, Olympic lifting and kettlebells, as well as the extensive range of strength training equipment in The StrongBox gym. Members enjoy a strong sense of community and the facility provides a vibrant and exciting training environment, with weekly DJ sets playing in the downstairs arena.

Meanwhile the in-house physio room, run by TSM Sports Medicine, offers physiotherapy, sports rehabilitation and acupuncture, with the expert team of therapists able to formulate specific rehab programmes to help members return to full function and fitness.

Chapman continues: "Since opening our doors two years ago, demand for CrossFit classes has been – and remains – extremely high, but we recognise it works with a limited number of members. By diversifying our offering, we've extended our appeal in response to member demand and have evolved as an elite fitness facility."

James Ferguson, Life Fitness account manager, says: "Hammer Strength is synonymous the world over as being the leading brand for strength training. The new equipment differentiates QDos from the competition and engages exercisers on a whole new level."

Details: www.lifefitness.co.uk ►

QDos Fitness, in Manchester's Heald Green, was opened as a CrossFit facility in 2012. On 2 March 2015, it unveiled its latest offering for members: The StrongBox, an official Hammer Strength training centre.

The 11,000sq ft gym was the brainchild of its owner Adam Chapman, who worked with developers to take the site from wasteland through all the planning stages, tendering for construction and then overseeing the build before opening as a brand new CrossFit facility in 2012.

Now, the addition of the £100,000 StrongBox provides members with additional strength training equipment and has extended the appeal of QDos Fitness to a wider audience. The 4,000sq ft strength and conditioning suite comprises 26 pieces of strength equipment including Hammer Strength Select and Plate Loaded Range, including

a chest press, shoulder press, leg extension and prone leg curl.

One of the main centrepieces is SYNRGY360, the group training system from Life Fitness that combines various total body dynamic exercises into a single structure. QDos Fitness personal trainers can use SYNRGY360 to train groups of up to eight people at once, using a multitude of exercise methods and working an array of muscle groups.

Chapman comments: "CrossFit is an amazing system for gaining all-over fitness. However, fitness and strength isn't 'one size fits all'. There are still plenty of people who want to train incredibly hard, and for that reason we wanted to enhance our facility with the new StrongBox, so members can work out and train in their own way and at their own pace."

QDos Fitness rivals the facilities offered by many commercial gyms, with its outdoor strongman equipment,



INSPIRED BY TEAMWORK

The camaraderie and teamwork of group training and HIIT encourages exercisers with results.

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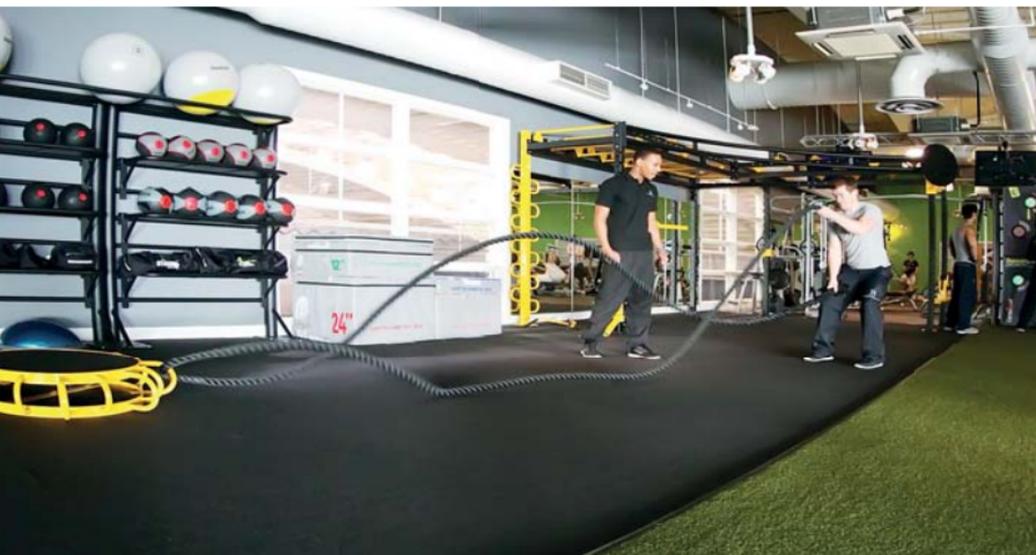
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WHAT WE **LIVE** FOR



Bannatyne's Chafford Hundred site includes an XCUBE training rig and rope training station BattleX

A FUNCTIONAL REALITY

Client: Bannatyne's
Supplier: D2F Fitness

PROJECT PROFILE PROMOTION

From its first club built in 1997, Bannatyne Health & Fitness – owned by entrepreneur and *Dragons' Den* star Duncan Bannatyne – has expanded to serve more than 170,000 members in over 60 clubs nationwide.

Its 65,000sq ft facility in Chafford Hundred has just made an investment to provide its members with state-of-the-art functional training areas. During a recent refurbishment at the club, 1,200sq ft of gym space was turned over to functional training, allowing members of all ages and abilities to participate in a range of different exercises and classes.

"The new functional area at Chafford Hundred has allowed us to expand our programming for members and offer a more comprehensive and varied range of innovative training equipment to enhance the user experience," comments Justin Musgrove, MD at The Bannatyne Group.

The dedicated functional area now includes a bespoke XCUBE functional training rig, a range of accessories from the new Reebok Professional fitness portfolio – including gym balls, medicine balls, slam balls, kettlebells and studio mats – a punch bag frame with four training stations, a CardioWall, and D2F Fitness' latest battle rope training station BattleX. An XSTORE functional training storage solution has also been installed at the gym to ensure the space remains free from clutter and is a safe area for members to train freely.

"The brief for Bannatyne's was to make the best use of every square foot of the available space," says John Lofting, national fitness manager at D2F Fitness. "Instead of installing a standard rig in the middle of the space, we designed and manufactured a bespoke XCUBE that uses the space along the perimeter of the functional training area."

The XCUBE can facilitate suspension training, as well as high intensity

bootcamp or circuit sessions using a number of fixed and removable attachments including a dip station, step-up plate, core trainer and monkey bars. Meanwhile, an expanse of open space in the middle of the functional training zone can be used to conduct group or personalised training sessions.

"Bannatyne's was also keen to incorporate a CardioWall," continues Lofting. CardioWall challenges members to test their balance, strength, agility and reaction times while providing a high intensity and additively fun workout. "There's a range of inbuilt games to choose from which help to develop speed, stamina, reaction times, hand-eye co-ordination and balance. As well as being great for general fitness, it's a fantastic piece of equipment for rehab programmes and has been IFI-accredited, so everyone can take advantage of the benefits," adds Lofting.

Musgrove concludes: "We've seen a fantastic uptake of the new functional area at Chafford Hundred. D2F Fitness has used every inch of space to create a zone that adds a great sense of fun and energy to the gym floor. This fits perfectly with our ethos to provide fun and friendly communities, and we hope to work with D2F again to replicate this success in other clubs."

Details: www.d2ffitness.com ●



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REVENUE DRIVERS

We round up some of the latest product launches that could help you drive secondary spend in your club

MONSTER SOUND

Monster's iSport headphone range has been designed for use in tough workouts, with models ranging from the water resistant iSport Victory with immersive sound to the wireless iSport Freedom, operated via Bluetooth and designed for runners wanting to hear ambient sound – such as traffic – for safety purposes.

Now Monster has added two in-ear wireless models to its iSport headphone range. With an integrated flat battery and folded circuit board design, the iSport Bluetooth Wireless SuperSlim is lightweight, water resistant and has a 50ft wireless range, and has been designed so it can be worn underneath a helmet or goggles. Meanwhile the iSport Bluetooth Wireless has a 30ft range and offers a tangle-free solution for listening to music while exercising. Both models have five hours of consistent playback time and feature full-frequency response to help users achieve their workout goals.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **Monster**



MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Mission Athletecare – which was co-founded by a group of athletes including tennis champion Serena Williams – has launched its EnduraCool instant cooling towel in the UK.

EnduraCool has been designed to prevent overheating, with patented technology meaning the fabric cools instantly when wet. According to Mission, the cooling effect is fast and sustained, and the fabric does not feel heavy or wet.

The product is intended for athletes at all levels of play. The cooling process does not involve chemicals and the towel is washable, re-usable and safe for the skin. It also comes in a range of different colours and patterns.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **Mission Athletecare**

CLEAN, COOL & FRESH

Activbod is a range of skin and bodycare products designed for active people by active people. Its range of products have been designed for pre, during and post exercise, to make sport and physical activity more appealing through better recovery and a pleasant bodycare experience.

Among the Activbod range is its Turn up the Heat roller gel, described by the company as a contemporary twist on traditional muscle rub products. Other products include a cooling finish lotion, which cools the skin as it moisturises, and Mind over Matter – a stimulating aroma stick balm.

Activbod says 10 per cent of net profits from sales will go to the Women's Sport Trust charity.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **Activbod**



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**The Health Club Management Handbook
is available to purchase at £50**

LEANER BODIES

A sports nutrition supplement designed to speed recovery and help attain a leaner body is being launched by USN.

The Lean-8 Multi-Phase Protein shake will be available in three flavours and launches this month. It contains an engineered composition of fast, medium and slow release proteins, including whey protein concentrate, whey protein isolate and milk protein concentrate. These help stimulate protein synthesis while inhibiting the breakthrough of lean muscle, enhancing muscle tissue recovery and growth.

USN is intending for the protein shakes to be sold directly at health and fitness clubs, but locations are still to be decided.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD USN



FEELING GOOD

Africa-inspired health and beauty brand Aduna has launched a baobab-based nutrition bar. Already available in a number of independent gyms and yoga studios, The Feel Good Bar contains two teaspoons (5.5g) of the company's vitamin C-rich baobab powder, and contributes to skin health while boosting the immune system.

The bar is made with 100 per cent organic, cold-pressed fruit and nuts, with no added sugar, preservatives or additives.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD Aduna

HEALTHY EATING

Designed exclusively for the fitness industry, Retention Management has launched a meal planning software service designed to help members reach their dietary goals.

Nutrition Complete is a personalised web-based healthy eating plan based on the principle that good fitness will not work if an individual's nutritional intake is poor. The service offers members access to what Retention Management says is the web's largest recipe database, so users can search for and create their meal programme. They can set goals, create grocery lists with a single click, and monitor their progress.

Members pay clubs a monthly fee to use the service, adding an extra income stream.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD Retention Management



EFFECTIVE REHYDRATION

Hydration drinks station HydrO+ has been developed with both the operational requirements of gyms and the hydration needs of members in mind.

Offering a zero calorie, clean alternative to high sugar sports drinks, the vending system offers six natural flavours. Drinks can be consumed before, during and after exercise to avoid the negative effects of dehydration.

Clubs can brand the cabinet in their own colours and the solution supports access control systems such as biometrics, RFID, PIN and swipe cards. Members either pay a weekly flat rate of £1.50–£1.99 to use the system, or alternatively HydrO+ can be offered as part of a premium membership.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD Hydroplus

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Run: for your life

A new treadmill test developed by scientists can predict a person's risk of dying and could be a useful measurement tool for fitness professionals

A group of cardiologists in the US have developed a new formula to predict the likelihood of death based on a treadmill test – and they say that fitness is the single most powerful indicator of death and survival, trumping other important variables such as diabetes and family history.

Researchers from the Johns Hopkins Medicine institution in Baltimore, US, say their formula can predict a person's risk of dying over the next decade, based on their ability to exercise on a treadmill at an increasing speed and incline.

For their research – outlined in the 2 March 2015 edition of the journal *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* – the cardiologists studied data on 58,020 people, aged 18 to 96, who underwent standard exercise stress tests for evaluation of chest pain, shortness of breath, fainting or dizziness. They then tracked how many of the participants within each fitness level died from any cause over the next decade.

FIT Treadmill Score

The results reveal that among people of the same age and gender, fitness levels – as measured by metabolic equivalents (METs) – and peak heart rate reached during exercise were the greatest indicators of death risk.

“The notion that being in good physical shape portends lower death risk is by no means new, but we wanted to quantify that risk precisely by age, gender and fitness level, and do so with an elegantly simple equation that requires no additional fancy testing beyond the standard stress test,” says lead investigator Haitham Ahmed.

“Stress test results are currently interpreted as ‘either/or’, but we know that heart disease is a spectrum disorder. We believe our FIT score reflects the complex nature of cardiovascular health and can therefore offer important insights to both clinicians and patients.”

Under the new algorithm, dubbed the FIT Treadmill Score, people are scored between -200 and 200, with those scoring above 0 having lower mortality risk and those in the negative range



PHOTO: WWW.SHALITRETOCK.COM/ROBERT_KAESCHKE

The FIT Treadmill Score can predict risk of death based on fitness levels

facing the highest risk of dying. Patients who score 100 or higher have a 2 per cent risk of dying over the next 10 years (i.e. two out of 100 people in this group will die over the next 10 years), while those with scores between 0 and 100 face a 3 per cent risk. Those with scores between -100 and 0 face an 11 per cent risk, while those with scores lower than -100 have a 38 per cent risk.

Published along with the study is a chart depicting death risk by age, gender and fitness level, which can be printed on placards for use in doctors' offices to guide clinical advice.

“The FIT Treadmill Score is easy to calculate and costs nothing beyond the cost of the treadmill test itself,” says senior study author Michael Blaha.

“We hope that illustrating risk that way could become a catalyst for patients to increase exercise and improve cardiovascular fitness.”

Implications for gyms

Given that many people are encouraged to seek a stress test from doctors before joining health clubs or embarking on exercise, the test has potential implications for gyms in terms of boosting motivation and quantifying exercise improvements. For example, those with a high risk of death in the next decade could be shown how that risk diminishes as their fitness improves.

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In the last 35 years Pulse has provided kit to over 32 countries across four continents. 2014 saw Pulse continue to expand abroad and 2015 is set to be another fantastic year. Pulse Fitness Sales Director of Europe, Middle East and Africa Jimmy Andrew tells us more...

When did Pulse go international?

It started in 1994 when I bought some Pulse equipment for my wife's gym, the Cheers Club, in Bochum, Germany. Chris Johnson, managing director of Pulse, approached me to start selling equipment in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. I've now been in the role for some 20 years, taking on additional responsibilities for the Middle East and Africa 10 years ago.

Please give details of your role.

As sales director of Europe, Middle East and Africa, my main role is to source, train and motivate both new and existing distributors to support the growth of Pulse Fitness in our key markets.

How has Pulse grown internationally over the last 20 years?

We've experienced incredible growth during this time. Today, Pulse works with more than 3,000 customers in Europe and 20 per cent of our equipment sales in 2014 were international. We currently have 34 international dealers to service that demand. Our clients include Holiday

Inn, Crown Plaza, Hilton Hotels, the Marriot Group, Mac Fit, Just Fit, Team World of Fitness, to name but a few.

What key trends are you seeing?

Clubs are embracing technology and our high end touch screen console with full entertainment that allows users to view data from home is proving popular. Operators also want to accumulate as much information as possible and value the data collection functionality of our SmartCentre system and cloud App. Elsewhere, there seems to be a tendency for more cardio equipment as clubs get bigger, and functional training is still a leading trend, which we serve with our new Titan line.

Pulse is one of the only companies to design equipment in the UK. Is this important for overseas customers?

Definitely. It gives us a unique selling point and earns us lot of cachet, particularly in the Middle East and Africa. It's also important in Europe – there aren't many European companies left, so it helps us to stand out from the competition.

What was your most exciting project in 2014?

There were a few including Oxygen Pro in Iran, which was one of our biggest projects from our dealer AKA Fitness. The Ghana Air Force contract negotiated by Pulse Ghana was an interesting project as well as our project for the British Embassy in Kathmandu, Nepal from Momentum. As you can see, we have an eclectic mix of clients.

What's 2015 looking like for Pulse Fitness internationally?

Busy! We've already been to Ghana to open the new gym from Chelsea footballer Marcel Desailly and IHRSA in Los Angeles. Then it's off to FIBO in April where we will present the new Dealer of the Year Award 2014.

We're also launching a 700sqm showroom in Dubai to serve our Middle East companies. As well as this, we're always on the lookout for new markets and opportunities

There's never a dull moment!



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Pulse acquires Trixter US

Following the successful integration of Trixter UK and Europe, Pulse has acquired Trixter US giving the company global rights for all Trixter products.

A strong brand in the US, Trixter has an established network, which Pulse Fitness aims to develop with a view to potentially introduce the rest of its portfolio to the American market.

As part of the acquisition, Pulse will have a dedicated Trixter office in the US in order to serve this important market.

Where to see us in 2015

FIBO 2015 - 9-12 April, 2015

The leading international trade show for fitness, wellness and health. *Cologne, Germany, Exhibition Centre Cologne*

FILEX 2015 - 10-12 April, 2015

Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre

SIBEC 2015 - 18-21 Nov, 2015

SIBEC EUROPE 2015 will bring together UK & Europe's major operators from the private, local authority and trust markets in Health, Fitness and Leisure to meet with key leading national and international suppliers
Melia Villaitana, Costa Blanca, Spain



Cirrus Console goes multi-lingual

Cirrus Console, Pulse's market leading 18.5" touch screen android tablet for its Fusion equipment range, is going multi-lingual.

Our development team are working closely with our dealers to incorporate other languages including German, Russian, French and Italian.

The new Console 6 allows users to access bespoke workout programmes, monitor their heart rate, set personalised targets, compete against a computerised pacer, and experience digital TV, radio and full internet browsing with social media access while they exercise.



Launch of new Ghana club

Chris Johnson and Jimmy Andrews flew over to Ghana on Valentine's Day to officially open a new Pulse Fitness gym.

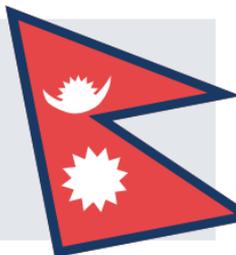
The new centre in East Legon, known as Lizzy Sports Complex, is owned by Marcel Desailly Investment. The Ghanaian-born French international footballer, who played for Chelsea FC, named the complex after his mother.

The facility includes a 90-station gym run by Ghana's Pulse dealer, Mr Kwaku Atta Afriyie, and featuring \$460,000 worth of Pulse equipment including 26 pieces of Pulse's Series 2 Fusion Cardio range, 21 Pulse Group Cycles, 39 pieces of resistance, freeweight and plate loaded equipment with a range of accessories. Operating under the Pulse Fitness brand, the gym has adapted some of Pulse UK's marketing campaigns including Sweat with your Sweetie.

Other facilities at the complex include a kids gym and two studios. The new club has already attracted approximately 450 members.

Finding sanctuary at British Embassy in Nepal

Staff working at the British Embassy in Kathmandu, Nepal, are set to benefit from new Pulse equipment. The company is installing equipment from its CV line in the embassy's on-site gym this April.



Pulse supports British military

Pulse has secured the contract to supply fitness equipment for the British military in the Falklands and Ascension Islands.

A total of 350 stations, including Fusion Cardio Series 1 and 2, resistance, plate loaded, freeweights and functional training equipment, left Pulse UK in February in 24 ISO containers and will arrive in the Falklands in early April. The equipment will be installed in two military gyms and 19 satellite sites in May.

The client previously sourced equipment from a variety of suppliers including Pulse, Life Fitness, Matrix and Technogym, but awarded the entire £540,000 contract to Pulse because of the company's ability to provide a total solution. As part of the four year lease agreement, Pulse will employ two dedicated service engineers for the contract.



Striking out in northern Germany

Caprice Fitness in Hamburg, Germany, has taken stock of 180 stations of Pulse Fitness equipment.

The 2,400sqm fitness studio benefited from a range of equipment including 40 stations of the Series 1 Fusion Cardio line: 130 stations of Pulse Evolve Resistance with a midnight grey frame and cocoa upholstery and a selection of plate loaded equipment.

The club, which also offers a separate ladies gym, sauna, classes as well as free beverages and personal training as part of membership, has some 1,800 members. Club manager Bianca Been, a former Pulse customer, aims to develop more Caprice clubs in northern Germany.

The project was delivered by our German distributor ScotFit and included a three year warranty.



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Brand benefits for Injoy Singen

The Injoy club in Singen, southern Germany, hopes to increase its membership by as much as 30 per cent after investing in a range of Pulse equipment.

Part of the European health club chain of approximately 200 clubs, Injoy Singen has installed 70 pieces of Pulse equipment, including Series 3 CV with Console 6 and SmartCentre. It is also the first Injoy club to install Pulse's new premium resistance equipment complete with bespoke branding to further support the Injoy brand within the club.

The contract, secured via ScotFit Germany, includes a three year warranty. The club's manager, Tom Soder, hopes the installation will further boost the club's already impressive 2,000-strong membership.



Update Fitness continues Swiss rollout

Private health club chain Update Fitness is continuing its expansion in Switzerland with another five clubs set to open in 2015.

To date, the group has launched 18 gyms in the country during a 10 year partnership with Pulse and its distributor ScotFit, which equates to approximately 2,000 pieces of gym equipment, all with a three year warranty.

The chain has set its sights on becoming the largest fitness group in Switzerland offering quality fitness solutions. With a total membership base of approximately 20,000 members, Pulse equipment has been vital to the success of the clubs, offering good value and unrivalled quality.

Flying high with Ghana Air Force

Following a competitive tender, buyers representing the Ghana Air Force travelled to Pulse HQ in the UK to view its equipment ranges and to discuss the company's service support.

Impressed with the quality and aesthetics of the kit, as well as the support offered by Pulse, the Ghana Air Force awarded the company a \$260,000 contract to supply its Series 2 Fusion and Evolve strength equipment and free weights to the force's Burma Camp in Accra, which serves 3,000 users.

Trixter XdreamV2 launches in Barcelona

David Lloyd Club Turó Barcelona has become David Lloyd Leisure's first club outside of the UK to offer the new Trixter XdreamV2 bike, with more sites set to follow in Brussels, Dublin and Amsterdam.

The new additions form part of a £1.5m refurbishment of the Barcelona club, which also includes new padel tennis courts, a Pilates studio, a multi-use studio and new changing rooms.

The latest version of the popular Xdream bike offers cutting edge technology and engaging new features. With a 23" HD Dell touch screen, impressive graphics and intuitive user interface, the Trixter XdreamV2 demonstrates a shift in exercise technology.

Expansion on the cards for Iran's Oxygen Pro

Oxygen Pro, the luxury health club that launched in Iran last summer, plans to develop more clubs furnished by Pulse Fitness.

At 2,600sq m, the club is one of the largest in the country. Designed for young professionals to elite athletes, the Tehran facility is equipped with more than 200 pieces of Pulse Fitness kit. Other facilities include a pool, sauna, spa and group exercise studio.

The club has achieved 200 members within its first six months and plans to open further sites in conjunction with Pulse in the future.

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